SANCTITY AND WAR IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN AND BEYOND



Edited by

Javier Albarrán

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Sanctity and War in the Medieval Mediterranean and Beyond

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To Elsa and Mariana, truly my saints

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Javier Albarrán
Granada, 2026

SANCTITY AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE AGES: AN INTRODUCTION

Javier Albarrán*

The justification of violence through religion reaches its highest expression when it leads to the sacralization of war.[1] As expected, given the variety of human religious experiences, it is possible to detect multiple notions of a similar phenomenon, or rather, numerous modalities of sacralising a military conflict. The deity can determine the outcome before the battle begins or even fight on behalf of its people. Furthermore, the people can fight on behalf of the deity (or what it symbolises), the ideals of the religion, or against the false ideas of opposing religions or peoples. Similarly, divine authority for war can be established directly through the word of God communicated through speech or writing, or indirectly through a prophet, priest, or religious official who determines the order of the deity, for example, through oracular means. Such a broad spectrum reflects the varied cultural and religious environments in which this process can be found, and the different ways in which it is manifested: military acts directly inspired by divine will, military confrontations led by religious authorities, wars fought in defence of religion or for its expansion, campaigns in which the combatants are spiritually rewarded, etc. Many of these elements can be found in different religious traditions and contexts, such as the Christian or the Islamic.

The concept of the sacralization of war offers a more effective analytical framework than that of holy war for examining the relationship between warfare and religion in the medieval world. This choice is both methodological

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[1] For different approaches to the study of the relationship between religion and warfare, see, for example, the recent volume I. Ploinskaya, A. James and I. Papadogiannakis (eds), *Religion and War from Antiquity to Early Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024)

and historiographical. Rather than starting from the notion of holy war, which has long dominated scholarly discussions, it is more useful to examine the multiple ways in which warfare was endowed with sacred meaning through discourse, ritual, practice, and memory in specific historical contexts. The concept of holy war, although widely used, is fundamentally a modern scholarly construct. Historiography has produced a wide range of definitions – juridical, theological, ideological, or functional – without achieving a stable consensus.[2] This definitional instability has progressively weakened the analytical effectiveness of the term, which often risks imposing doctrinal coherence, intentionality, and normative clarity on medieval societies that did not necessarily conceptualise warfare in such abstract or unified terms. From the perspective of conceptual history, this problem is particularly acute, as medieval Christian and Islamic sources employed diverse and context-dependent vocabularies to articulate the relationship between violence and religion, without operating with an explicit category equivalent to the modern notion of holy war.[3]

By contrast, sacralization of war is understood not as a fixed typology but as a dynamic and historically situated process. Drawing on sociological and anthropological approaches to religion and power, sacralization of war refers to the mechanisms through which warfare was progressively invested with sacred meaning and integrated into religious worldviews. This process unfolded through concrete practices: ritual gestures, liturgical frameworks, narrative constructions, performative acts, and material symbols. Blessings of arms, prayers and vows, processions, fasting, the invocation of saints or martyrs, the display of relics, and providential interpretations of victory and defeat all

[2] Alexander P. Bronisch provides a useful overview of them. A. P. Bronisch, *Reconquista y Guerra Santa. La concepción de la guerra en la España cristiana desde los visigodos hasta comienzos del siglo XII* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2006), 277 ff. See also H. W. Goetz, "'Holy wars'? 'Religious wars'?: The perception of religious motives of warfare against non-Christian enemies in ninth-century chronicles", in *Early medieval militarisation*, eds. Ellora Bennett, Guido M. Berndt, Stefan Esders and Laury Sarti (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 211-228; J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos. Yihad y memoria en al-Andalus (siglos X-XIII)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2020).

[3] In the Turkish-Ottoman context, for instance, *ghazat*/*ghazwa* is more common than *jihād* in the context of war sacralization, just as *ghāzī* is more common than *mujāhid*: see B. K. Bayrı, *Warriors, martyrs, and dervishes: Moving frontiers, shifting identities in the land of Rome (13th-15th centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020) 178 ff. Likewise, in one of Islam's founding political documents, the so-called "Constitution of Medina," while there is no use of *jihād* we do find the expressions *qitāl fī sabīl Allāh* (fighting in the path of God) and *ḥāraba fī l-dīn* (fight for the religion), both of which denote a link between religion and violence. On the "Constitution of Medina" see, e.g., M. Lecker, *The "Constitution of Medina": Muḥammad's first legal document* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004).

contributed to transforming warfare into a religiously meaningful experience. In this sense, sacrality was produced and negotiated rather than presupposed.

This process-oriented approach allows us to move beyond normative or teleological models that tend to define holy war in relation to ideal types such as crusade or *jihād*. Instead, it highlights variability, gradation, and change over time. Warfare could be intensely sacralised in certain moments or contexts and deliberately de-sacralised in others, depending on political objectives, social actors, audiences, and modes of remembrance. Such flexibility is essential for understanding medieval warfare as a social practice embedded in broader systems of belief and power. Finally, the notion of sacralization provides a productive comparative framework for the study of Christian and Islamic societies. It enables the identification of shared ritual grammars and analogous mechanisms of legitimation across the medieval Mediterranean, while fully respecting doctrinal, institutional, and cultural specificities, offering a transcultural perspective on the religious dimensions of medieval warfare.

In this sense, this volume understands the sacralization of war as a mechanism intended to justify military practices that functions as a discursive tool appealing to religious elements that are accepted and shared by those to whom it is directed, with which a large scheme of legitimization for different actions is constructed and from which great doses of authority are obtained. In this sense, we must understand it not so much as a specific action with well-established limits, but as a flexible framework of action that adapts to different contexts and is used by various actors to justify their activities.

Furthermore, this discursive tool possesses its own language, expressed through symbolism, distinctive features, and performative dimensions: liturgy and ritual, which the German tradition has described as the 'phenomenology of holy war'. In this sense, as Carsten Colpe observed, since most wars resemble one another in their conduct, determining whether a war is holy – or, as we prefer, is sacralised – requires an inquiry into the morphology and function of those phenomena and actions that are unmistakably religious, or at least more clearly so, and thus merit the designation of sacredness.[4] The following list summarizes the most important discursive features when analysing the sacralization of war and its language, which also show their own elements of ritualization, that is, a phenomenology.

[4] C. Colpe, *Der "Heilige Krieg". Benennung und Wirklichkeit, Begründung und Widerstreit* (Bodenheim: Athenäum Hain Hanstein, 1994). For this conceptual approach, see for example, J. Albarrán, "Can we talk about "holy war" in al-Andalus? Ǧihād -and beyond- in 10th century Umayyad Iberia", in *The Medieval Jihad: Texts, Theories and Practices*, eds. Mehdi Berriah and Abbes Zouache (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2025), 109-146.

- The presence of God in the conflict and His aid to His warriors. This can be observed through images such as the appearance of angels and saints in battle, or miracles. A variety of symbols and rituals also demonstrate God's direct involvement in the war, such as blessed banners, military liturgy, the use of relics as a means of connection with the divinity in the military context, etc.
- The missionary nature of the war and the defence of the true religion against adversaries conceptualised as enemies of God. This is displayed, for example, through rituals such as the invitation to conversion, campaign announcements, or the purification of the conquered territory and the destruction of the enemy's religious symbols.
- The meritorious and even salvific nature of the war from a religious point of view. The best discursive evidence of this feature is martyrdom, although there are also others such as the need for warriors to enter battle in a state of purity and right intention.

This volume is dedicated to the first of these discursive features, namely, the presence of God in war and His aid to His faithful. Particularly, the volume focuses on one of the ways in which this image can be expressed: the multifaceted relationship between sanctity and war.[5] From Late Antiquity to the late Middle Ages, from the Atlantic Ocean to Armenia, via Portugal, Castile, Aragon, France, North Africa, the Italian maritime cities or Egypt, this volume aims to study, for the first time in this geographical and chronological framework, the presence of holy men and women in the context of war,[6] from a holistic perspective: not only do we refer to their direct participation on the battlefield, but also to issues such as the processes of sanctification through battle, the use of relics or liturgies in war, the cult of warrior-saints, their hagiographic depictions, their participation in war preaching, or the political use of their memory. This broad approach to the phenomenon allows us to address it from a cross-cultural perspective, considering the realities of different religious traditions such as Islam and Christianity. Likewise, the focus has been

[5] Sanctity in the medieval world can be defined as a socially recognised form of religious authority grounded in perceived proximity to the sacred, arising from charismatic qualities – such as asceticism, moral exemplarity, ritual efficacy, or divinely sanctioned action – and subsequently stabilised through communal validation, institutional mediation, and the regulation of memory. Rather than a purely spiritual attribute, sanctity functioned as a mechanism of social legitimation, capable of conferring prestige, structuring collective identities, and authorising power.

[6] In this sense, by holy men and women we mean all those individuals – and all the cultural manifestations associated with them – with a special link to the divine, channelling supernatural aid.

placed on the Mediterranean as the geographical axis of analysis – although its limits will sometimes be crossed – since, as will be seen in this book, it was a space in which ideas of sanctity, war, holy men and women, and the objects associated with them, circulated and were exchanged throughout the Middle Ages.

I. On Saints and War in the Middle Ages: a multifaceted relationship

A. The Christian Tradition

a. The Warrior-Saint

Holy men and women (or, saints), venerated for their holiness, piety, and moral integrity, are typically associated with values of peace, compassion, and non-violence. Yet throughout history, many saints have been closely connected with war, whether as military figures, defenders of the faith, or symbols of moral guidance in times of conflict.[7] As Peter Brown argues in one of the seminal studies on the functions of the holy man in Late Antiquity, one such role was the protection of an individual or of the community of a city.[8]

Ever since the earliest Christian communities, theologians have agreed that it was unrealistic to imagine societies without war, because societies here on earth can never be without evil, and it is therefore necessary to fight against evil,

[7] See for example H. Delehaye, *Les Légendes Grecques des Saints Militaires* (Paris: Picard, 1909); A. F. C. Webster, "Varieties of Christian Military Saints: From Martyrs under Caesar to Warrior Princes", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 24 (1980), 3-35; R. Cammilleri, *I Santi militari* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 1992); A. M. Orselli, *Santità militare e culto dei santi militari nell' impero dei romani (secoli VI-X)* (Bologna: Lo Scarabeo, 1993); C. Holdsworth, "An 'Airier Aristocracy': The Saints at War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996): 103-122; C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); J. MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070- ca. 1200," *Church History* 73/2 (2004): 317-345; D. Barthélemy, *Chevaliers et miracles. La violence et le sacré dans la societé féodale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006); M-F. Baslez, *Les persécutions dans l'Antiquité. Victimes, héros, martyrs* (Paris: Fayard, 2007); P. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); M. White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); E. Dehoux, *Saints guerriers. Georges, Guillaume, Maurice et Michel dans la France médiévale* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014). J. France, "Holy War and Holy Men: Erdmann and the Lives of the Saints", in *The Experience of Crusading: Vol. 1: The Western Approaches*, eds. Marcus G. Bull and Norman J. Housley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193–208.

[8] P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

both spiritually and physically.[9] Saints participated in warfare as intercessors and symbols, and in this capacity they became closely integrated into both the preparations for war and the conduct of battle itself.

Of course, these realities assumed very different forms in medieval societies. The mention of one or more saints at the head of an army introduced a crucial element of legitimation: it strengthened the position of the leader who launched the expedition, affirmed that the cause he defended enjoyed God's support, and at the same time helped to define the *bellator*'s position and role within society.[10]

The most prominent figures in this context are saints remembered for their military service or their association with battle. St. George, among the most widely venerated military saints, and the first to receive imperial favour as early as the fifth century, is often portrayed as a knight slaying a dragon, a symbol of the triumph of good over evil.[11] His image was embraced by Christian soldiers, particularly in the crusading era, as a powerful emblem of divine protection and righteous warfare.

In this sense, starting in the eleventh century, an image of the saint spread, appearing miraculously during battle on a white horse and killing the infidel enemy, a reference of clear biblical origin (2 Maccabees, 11:8-10).[12] The Byzantine

[9] See for example P. Brock, *The Military Question in the Early Church: A Selected Bibliography of a Century's Scholarship* (Toronto: privately printed, 1988). See also J. F. Shean, *Soldiering for God: Christianity and the Roman Army* (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2010).

[10] E. Dehoux, "*Adest noster exercitus previis apostolis cum Mauricio et Carpophoro*. Des saints sur le champ de bataille (XIe-XIIe siècles)," in *Le miracle de guerre dans la chrétienté occidentale*, ed. Philippe Desmette and Philippe Martin (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2018), 55-64.

[11] C. Walter, "The Origins of the Cult of St. George," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 295-326; H. A. Badamo, *Saint George between Empires: Image and Encounter in the Medieval East* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023).

[12] The dual model of militant resistance and self-sacrificial piety embodied by the Maccabees became a powerful paradigm in medieval Christian thought, particularly from the eleventh century onward, when crusading ideology sought scriptural validation for religious violence. The Maccabees were thus invoked both as *milites Dei* (God's warriors) and as martyrs, legitimizing armed struggle in defence of the faith and presenting death in battle as spiritually meritorious. Scholars have argued that the emulation of the Maccabees preceded and prepared the ground for the formulation of crusading ideology, especially in Carolingian and Ottonian discourse, where references to Old Testament warfare were already being used to frame contemporary campaigns as divinely ordained. In this sense, the Maccabees functioned as both historical and symbolic antecedents for Christian conceptions of *bellum sacrum* and redemptive suffering. See, for example, D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). On the figure of the saint as a helper in battle, see F. Graus, "Der Heilige als Schlachtenhelfer - Zur Nationalisierung einer Wundererzählung in der mittelalterlichen Chronistik," in *Festschrift für Helmut Beumann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke

military aristocracy established in the provinces of Anatolia and Asia Minor adopted him as their patron, and he became a favourite of the Macedonian dynasty. Along with Theodore and Demetrius,[13] he also became the co-patron of the Comnenian dynasty. General and Emperor John Tzimiskes, for example, dedicated his triumphs in battle to him.[14] In this same context, the Crusaders exploited the legend of the martyr soldier who suffered for his Christian faith in the same places they traversed on their way to Jerusalem, eventually establishing him as the patron of the fight against the Muslims. Thus, the imagery carried by the Crusaders to Western Europe reproduced the archetype of the military saint who has defeated the dragon, which is directly linked to the processes of conquest and the foundation of cities.[15] The *sanctus bellator* resembles the warrior of the time, appearing at the heart of the battle, armed and fully acquainted with the concrete realities of warfare.

The cult of warrior saints thus first emerged in Western Europe on the eve of the First Crusade. Prior to this, individual warrior saints had achieved varying degrees of prominence at the local level, yet there is no evidence that Western knights or clerics had recognized a universal group of saints specifically

and Reinhard Wenskus (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1977), 330-348; C. Holdsworth, "'An Airier Aristocracy': The Saints at War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6 (1996): 103-122; K. Schreiner, *Märtyrer, Schlachtenhelfer, Friedenstifter: Krieg und Frieden im Spiegel mittelalterlicher und frühneuzeitlicher Heiligenverehrung* (Opladen: Springer, 2000); S. Rüther, "Heilige im Krieg – Zur Sakralisierung von Kriegsschauplätzen im Mittelalter," in *Heilige, Liturgie, Raum*, ed. Dieter R. Bauer et al. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 2010), 247-268; L. Berezhnaya (ed.), *Die Militarisierung der Heiligen in Vormoderne und Moderne* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2020).

[13] In Byzantium, St. Theodore was one of the favourite martyrs, since he combined the distinctive features of the original warrior-saint, who confronted paganism, with the added function of defender of the Christian faith against the Muslim enemy. Likewise, he also had another feature specific to the warrior-saint: the exercise of divine protection for the urban communities, being the patron saint of Eucacita (today Beyözü, Turkey), located in the frontier territory between Byzantium and the East. In this context, Theodore became a symbol of the Christian struggle against the infidel throughout the empire. C. Walter, "Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 57 (1999): 163-210; J-C. Cheynet, "Le culte de Saint Théodore chez les officiers de l'armée d'Orient," in *Le société byzantine. L'apport des sceaux*, ed. Jean Claude Cheynet (Paris: Association des Amis du centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2008), 307-321. On St. Demetrius see E. Russell, *Demetrius of Thessalonica. Cult and Devotion on the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010); J-M. Spieser, "Le culte de Saint Démétrios à Thessalonique," in *Des dieux civiques aux saints patrons (Vie-VIIe siècle)*, ed. Jean Pierre Caillet et al. (Paris: Picard, 2016), 275-291.

[14] M. Casas Olea, "La *passio* de San Jorge," in *Héroes santos: textos hagiográficos y religión popular en el cristianismo oriental*, ed. Matilde Casas Olea (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2019), 147-232.

[15] See J. MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety," 317-345.

associated with military life. In this sense, it is possible to identify two distinct sets of clerical attitudes towards these saints and their perceived role in influencing knightly piety: one that regarded the warrior-saints primarily as pious exemplars, the other that regarded them as potent intercessors.

The phenomenon of military saints served as both warriors and symbols of divine intervention in times of war. These saints represent a synthesis of religious devotion and military service, which became particularly significant in medieval and early modern Christianity. In contrast to other stereotypes of anchorite or civilian saints who distance themselves from their previous life, the warrior-saint does not renounce his military career, but reaffirms himself in it by becoming part of the heavenly army as a "soldier of Christ" in the *postmortem* miracles.

These functions were fulfilled not only by warrior-saints, but also by other figures such as the Virgin Mary, who progressively became a kind of goddess of war. Not only did the veneration of the Virgin become even more widespread during the twelfth century than before, but it also became deeper and more emotional.[16] Because of her all-absorbing maternal love, Mary could also be all-absorbing in her wrath and anger against those who fought against her Son. This may explain why during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, she also became perhaps the most popular saint for warriors fighting against infidels: Mary was used as a unifying symbol during battle, depicted on icons carried in front of the troops, or more often on banners, as can be seen in one of the sources analysed in Alexander Korte's chapter, *Cantigas de Santa María*.

b. Sanctification Through War

The role of the warrior-saint in Christian tradition often suggests the possibility of sanctification through war, particularly in certain historical contexts such as the Crusades, where warfare was framed as a holy endeavour and a means of spiritual purification. Soldiers who participated in these wars were promised spiritual rewards, including the remission of sins, as a form of sanctification.[17] On many occasions, this process of sanctification was linked to rulers. A

[16] E. A. Johnson, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church" in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation,* ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 394-414; J. Montoya Martínez, *Las colecciones de Milagros de la Virgen en la Edad Media: El milagro literario* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1981); M. Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); A. G. Remensneyder, *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[17] See, for example, A. L. Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence. Spiritual Rewards and the Theology of the Crusades, c. 1095-1216* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

paradigmatic example is that of Louis IX of France, who participated in two Crusades and ultimately died of an epidemic while besieging Tunis in 1270: he is a prime example of a medieval ruler who combined saintly virtue with military leadership. His early canonization in 1297 was a direct result of his reputation as a pious king who fought in the service of Christianity. His participation in battle and his saintly status blurred the lines between the warrior and the saint, making him a model of sanctity through military service.[18]

Another well-known saint of this Crusader context is the Danish duke Canute Lavard, who was killed in 1131. Soon after his murder, a cult began to develop around his grave in Ringsted. In 1146, Canute's son and his nephew attempted to have him canonized, immediately before a crusade against the pagan Wends. Twenty-five years later, Canute Lavard was canonized by papal authorization. In the official liturgy used during the translation of his body, Canute is presented as a warrior who, while alive, fought to defend and expand Christianity, and who therefore became a martyr and died for the faith. He thus fits in with several kings who were canonized during the twelfth century, in a context immediately preceding the crusade, or directly related to it.[19]

However, there are also examples of this type of sanctification before the Crusader context and the changes it brought to the Christian conception of holy war. One example is that of the Norwegian King Olaf, who sought to Christianize Scandinavia.[20] Olaf fell at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, and miracles were soon recorded from around his grave. After his death, he continued to participate in wars against infidels. For example, in 1043, he appeared in a vision to his son Magnus the evening before the great battle at Lyrskov Heath in southern Denmark against the pagan Wends. When fighting began the next day, the air was filled with the sound of the great church bell in far-away Trondheim, and Magnus swung his father's big battle-axe, named Hel, and killed Wends in great numbers. His influence extended even to the Mediterranean East through the Crusader connection, and in the twelfth century the story spread that Olaf had not died, but had moved to Syria and was now

[18] See, for example, C. M. Gaposchkin, *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[19] K. Villads Jensen, "Creating a Crusader Saint. Canute Lavard and others of that Ilk," in *Of Chronicles and Kings: National Saints and the Emergence of Nation States in the High Middle Ages*, eds. John Bergsagel, Thomas Riis, and Erland Kolding Nielsen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2015), 51-72.

[20] See S. Bagge, "Warrior, King, and Saint: The Medieval Histories about St. Óláfr Haraldsson," *Journal of English and German Philology* 109 (2010): 281-321; K. Villads Jensen, "Saints at War in the Baltic Region," in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea: Identity, Literacy and Communication in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carsten Selch Jensen et al. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), 251-272.

riding his horse and leading the Christian troops against Muslims, a *topos* appearing also, as we will see in this volume, in the case of Islamic rulers sanctified by their military activity.

And, of course, this phenomenon of sanctification through the exercise of war is also observed in the case of the Eastern Christian tradition. An example of similar chronology is that of the prince-martyrs Boris and Gleb of Kyivan Rus (d. 1015), who began to be venerated as saints after their death and officially canonized in 1072. According to their *passio*, they had excelled, for example, in leading armies against the Pechenegs.[21] But undoubtedly, the most well-known case is that of Aleksandr Nevsky, who had distinguished himself through his military feats against the Swedes and Teutons. After the death of the Rusian ruler in 1263, his body was moved to Vladimir, where he was prince (in addition to Novgorod and Kiev), and buried in the cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Monastery. Since then, a local cult began around his figure, although his official canonization by the Rusian church did not occur until 1547. Shortly after his death, the *Life of Aleksandr Nevsky* was written, a military narrative with some religious and sanctifying episodes that aimed to give the text Christian features to justify the local cult held in his honour in Vladimir. For example, in the account of the Battle of the Neva River (1240), where he defeated the Swedes, Aleksandr not only constantly asks God for help, but there is also a premonitory vision before the fight: a guard named Pelugio had a vision induced by God, where the saints Boris and Gleb appeared before him on a boat. Pelugio heard Boris suggesting to his brother to help Aleksandr in the battle and ensure victory. Moreover, in 1380, just before the Battle of Kulikovo between the Russian troops and the armies of the Golden Horde, a miraculous event occurred in which Aleksandr, already considered a saint at least unofficially, would help achieve victory. The sacristan of Vladimir's cathedral had a miraculous vision while praying near the prince's tomb, asking for help against the Mongols. The candles lit up, and two men emerged from the tomb, starting to pray for divine aid. Aleksandr himself joined them after rising from his grave.[22]

[21] E. Santos Marinas, "Los príncipes mártires Borís y Gleb," in *Héroes santos: textos hagiográficos y religión popular en el cristianismo oriental*, ed. Matilde Casas Olea (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2019), 649-779; M. White, "Byzantine Saints in Rus' and the Cult of Boris and Gleb," in *Saints and their Lives on the Periphery: Veneration of Saints in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe (c. 1000-1200)*, eds. Ildar H. Garipzanov and Haki Antonsson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 95-114.

[22] M. Peña Escudero, "Aleksandr Nevskj," in *Héroes santos: textos hagiográficos y religión popular en el cristianismo oriental*, ed. Matilde Casas Olea (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2019) 781-834; D. Ostrowski, "An Ideal Prince for the Times: Alexander Nevskii in Rus' Literature,"

c. Miraculous Interventions in Battle

All these warrior-saints became part of a broader narrative which depicted holy figures as intervening in earthly battles, to ensure victory and safeguard the faith. The sanctification of warriors also bears witness to clerics' sensitivity to the situation of *bellatores* and the place they occupied within society. For them, it was a question of proposing examples adapted to the realities of the time and to the expectations, social, political and spiritual, of the lay aristocracy.[23]

At the heart of the belief in the miraculous intervention of saints in battle was the theological idea that saints acted as intercessors between God and humanity. Saints, due to their proximity to God in heaven, had the power to intercede on behalf of the living. This belief extended to the realm of warfare, where saints were thought to possess the ability to influence the outcomes of battles through divine power.

For medieval Christians – and likewise for Muslims – divine favour in battle did not depend solely on military prowess but rather on the moral righteousness of the cause and the faithfulness of the combatants. The fact that God permitted the defeat of His own could only be understood as punishment for their sins: this is the notion expressed by the formula *peccatis exigentibus*, that is, "by the demand of sins."[24] Saints played an essential role in sanctifying the battle, ensuring that those who fought for Christian ideals were protected and guided by divine power.

Numerous battles throughout the Middle Ages are steeped in accounts of miraculous intervention by saints. The saints' miracles in these contexts were typically seen as signs of God's favour, ensuring that Christian forces would triumph over their enemies. As early as the seventh century, in the work of John

Palaeoslavica 16/2 (2008): 259-271; M. Isoaho, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy in Medieval Russia: Warrior and Saint* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[23] See, for example, T. R. Sands, "The Cult of Eric, King and Martyr, in Medieval Sweden," in *Sanctity in the North. Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Thomas A. Dubois (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 203–238; E. Dehoux, "À l'épreuve de l'an mil. Grandeur et déclin du culte de saint Julien de Brioude (IXe-XIe siècle)," in *Brioude aux temps carolingiens*, eds. Alain Dubreucq, Christian Lauranson-Rosaz and Bernard Sanial (Le Puy-en-Velay: Almanach de Brioude, 2010), 279-304; E. Dehoux, "*Bien vos connois au cors et au visage, as poinz quarrez et as leës espaules*: autour des enseignes de pèlerinage à l'effigie de Guilhem, guerrier saint de Gellone," *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 54 (2019): 239-256 and the chapter by Esther Dehoux in this volume.

[24] C. de Ayala, "Religiosidad Militar y Cancillería Regia: El discurso sobre la Guerra Santa en el Reinado de Alfonso VII (1135-1157)," in *Cister e a Ordens Militares na Idade Média. Guerra, Igreja e Vida Religiosa*, eds. José Alburquerque and Carlos de Ayala, (Tomar: Studium Cistercium et Militarium Ordinum, 2015), 47-72; M. Alvira, *Las Navas de Tolosa 1212. Idea, liturgia y memoria de la batalla* (Madrid: Sílex, 2012), 129.

of Thessalonica, it is recounted that St. Demetrius appeared in the guise of an infantryman upon the city wall during the siege of Thessalonica by the Avars and Slavs in 597, repelling the assailants and even leaving drops of his blood on the battlements to mark the spot of his manifestation. This scene finds a striking parallel in the miraculous story of St. Thecla, discussed by Eduard Juncosa in this volume, in which the saint protects the city of Seleucia during a siege by appearing upon the wall, rousing the inhabitants, and directing the troops against the enemy.[25] Within the Byzantine tradition one also finds striking examples, such as that of St. Theodore who, according to the chronicle by John Skylitzes, appeared mounted on a white horse, breaking the enemy lines during John Tzimiskes' victory over the Russians in 971.[26]

St. George is undeniably one of the most iconic saints associated with miraculous intervention in battle. For example, during the Battle of Antioch (1098), crusaders attributed their unexpected victory to the intervention of the saint, who was believed to have appeared in the sky to guide them to victory – along with others such as Demetrius or Mercurius, depending on the source.[27] In Iberia, St. George became the patron saint of several cities in connection with the patronage he exercised among the kings of the Crown of Aragon during the successive conquests of Huesca, Valencia, and Majorca.[28] He is said, for instance, to have aided Pedro I at the battle of Alcoraz in 1096, and to have intervened

[25] Á. Narro, "Tópicos retóricos en las primeras colecciones bizantinas de milagros," *Eclás* 151 (2017): 93-122; Á. Narro, "Versiones del Martirio de San Demetrio de Tesalónica," in *Héroes santos: textos hagiográficos y religión popular en el cristianismo oriental*, ed. Matilde Casas Olea (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2019), 473-509.

[26] J-C. Cheynet, "Le culte de Saint Théodore," 307-321.

[27] See J. MacGregor, "Negotiating Knightly Piety," 317-345; C. Gaposchkin, *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); E. Lapina, *Warfare and the Miraculous in the Chronicles of the First Crusade* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

[28] The Islamic-Christian frontier in Iberia gave rise to the appearance of many warrior-saints. Another example is St. Demetrius, whose image was used by King Sancho Ramírez of Aragón at the end of the eleventh century. M. Poza, "Byzantine echoes at the end of the eleventh century in the kingdom of Aragon. Sancho Ramírez and the relics of Saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki, fact or historiographic fiction?", in *Romanesque saints, shrines and pilgrimage*, eds. John McNeill and Richard Plant (New York: Routledge, 2020), 173-185. Likewise, the kingdom of Pamplona used, from the tenth to the twelfth century, the image of St. Michael as protector of the monarchy, especially in the confrontation against the Muslims. F. Miranda, "Ascenso, auge y caída de san Miguel como protector de la monarquía pamplonesa (ss. X-XII)," in *Mundos medievales: espacios, sociedades y poder. Homenaje al Prof. José Ángel García de Cortázar* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 2013), vol. I, 759-768. On the cult of St. Michael see J. C. Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Saintly Cult, c. 300–c. 800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

again during the conquest of Majorca.[29] The saint also appears in other Mediterranean contexts on the eve of the Crusades, as in Sicily, where Geoffrey of Malaterra recounts that St. George came to the aid of a Norman army at the battle of Cerami as early as 1063.[30]

In this sense, the appearance in battle of these saints was also acquiring an important "national" meaning.[31] For example, a slightly later and more French-speaking text, the *Chanson de Jerusalem*, mentions, in the context of the battle of Ramla, the help of a host formed by Sts. George, Barbarus, Demetrius, Maurice and Denis. Although St. Denis, the martyred apostle of the Franks, was not traditionally seen as a warrior-saint, it is probably his association with the kingdom of France that best explains his transformation into an armed combatant in the fight to liberate Jerusalem. The *Chanson de Jerusalem* was a poem composed in French for a French-speaking knightly audience to praise the heroic deeds of the Franks in the Holy Land.[32] It was not unprecedented since other non-warrior-saints, most notably St. James in Iberia, also found themselves transformed into warrior-saints within the context of armed conflict with Muslims.[33] The *Chanson of Jerusalem* shows that the ranks of the warrior-saints

[29] James I of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon. A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets*, trans. Damian J. Smith and Helena Buffery (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), ch. 84.

[30] Geoffroy Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris ejus*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1924), 43-44.

[31] See, for exemple, F. Graus, "Der Heilige als Schlachtenhelfer", 330-348; A. T. Thacker, "'Pecularius patronus noster': The Saint as Patron of the State in the Early Middle Ages," in *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell*, ed. John R. Maddicott and D. M. Palliser (London, Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 2000), 1-24.

[32] G. M. Spiegel, "The Cult of St Denis and Capetian Kingship," *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975), 43-69.

[33] The origins of the cult of St. James in the Iberian Peninsula can be traced to the late eighth century, notably in the hymn *O Dei Verbum* attributed to Beatus of Liébana, where it is connected with the establishment of Islamic rule in al-Andalus. It is not until the late ninth century, however, that St. James first appears in association with a military context, and only by the thirteenth century does he emerge as a warrior figure on the battlefield – most prominently in the tradition recounting Ramiro I of Asturias' victory over the Muslims at the battle of Clavijo (844). Finally, in the fourteenth century St. James was associated with the Castilian monarchy. See K. Herbers, *Der Jakobscult des 12. Jahrunderts und Der « Liber Sancti Jacobi ». Studien über das Verhältnis zwischen Religion und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Steiner: 1984), 108-163; L. Fernández Gallardo, "Santiago Matamoros en la historiografía medieval: origen y desarrollo de un mito nacional", *Medievalismo: Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales*, 15 (2005): 139-174; K. Herbers, "Santiago Matamoros. Mito o realidad de la Reconquista?," in *El mundo de los conquistadores*, ed. Martín Ríos Saloma (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2015), 307-320; Th. Deswarte, "St. James in Galicia (c. 500-1300): Rivalries in Heaven and on Earth," in *Culture*

were open and could be adjusted depending upon a variety of factors including the geographical location of the battlefield and/or the geographical origins of the combatants.

The saintly military interventions of Aleksandr Nevsky as a saint must be understood in the same "national" sense. Aleksandr's miracles are found accompanying the writing of the extensive *Vita* elaborated in 1591 by Iona Dumin. In the collection there are three miracles that portray the warrior-saint as a helper of princes and tsars in battles crucial to the history of the constitution of the Rusian state and its defence against the infidel: that of the battle of Kulikovo (1380) already mentioned, and two in the time of Tsar Ivan IV, the subjugation of the Kazan khanate in 1552 and the Rusian victory over the Crimean khanate in 1572. In the latter, Aleksandr appeared escorted by a choir of holy princes on white horses to a clergyman who marched armed to help the tsar.[34]

d. Relics at War

The participation of saints in battles was not only performed through a miraculous intervention, but could also take place through the presence of their relics in the context of war and its liturgy.[35] Relics were considered to be imbued with sacred power, and their veneration was a key part of medieval religiosity.[36] The relics of saints – such as bones, clothing, or objects associated with their lives – were thought to possess the ability to heal, protect, and intercede on behalf of those who invoked them. The presence of a relic was believed to bring divine favour, making it a powerful tool in the religious and military culture of the time. Relics were often housed in churches, monasteries, and shrines, where pilgrims would come to venerate them. However, they also played a crucial role in military settings, particularly when armies faced the threat of war. Relics were used as focal points for civic identity, to subdue enemies, and even as hostages.

and Society in Medieval Galicia: A Cultural Crossroads at the Edge of Europe, ed. James D'Emilio (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2015), 477-511; A. García Sanjuán, "Santiago Matamoros, pasado y presente de un mito medieval peninsular," in *Almanzor y Carlomagno: el Camino de Santiago ante el islam en la época medieval*, ed. Inés Monteira Arias (Oviedo: Trea, 2023), 185-207.

[34] M. Peña Escudero, "Aleksandr Nevskj," 781-834.

[35] See, for example, R. Kotecki, J. Maciejewski, and G. Leighton (eds.), *Religious Rites of War beyond the Medieval West,* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

[36] N. Herrmann-Mascard, *Les reliques des saints. Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975); J-L. Deuffic (ed.), *Reliques et sainteté dans l'espace médiéval* (Saint Denis: Pecia, 2005).

The capture of relics, *furta sacra*, was seen as a sign of divine favour.[37] They were considered war trophies, symbols of victory, and a means of asserting political superiority. There was a blending of relics, war trophies, and *spolia*, particularly in religious buildings. They were symbols of supremacy and reminders of past conflicts. Nevertheless, the use of holy relics in warfare appears to have been limited during the Middle Ages, with most evidence pertaining to the remains of the True Cross.[38] Their use in battle is attested in contexts such as the Byzantine Empire, the Carolingian world or the Visigothic kingdom following Reccared's conversion to Catholicism,[39] as well as in the later Crusader context.

[37] P. J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1978). As Simone Lombardo shows in his chapter, most relics were transferred from the East to Italian cities, which were seen as repositories of Christian treasures. Venice, for example, had a strong religious connection with the Levant before the crusades, acquiring relics from the 9th and 10th centuries. The narratives of these translations emphasized the idea that the Christian East had failed to guard the relics. See also F. Cardini, "Crociata e religione civica nell'Italia medievale," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne (Chrétienté et Islam)*, *Actes du colloque (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993)*, ed. André Vauchez (Roma: École française de Rome, 1995), 155-164; J. Durand, "Reliquie e reliquiari depredati in Oriente e a Bisanzio al tempo delle crociate," in *Le crociate. L'oriente e l'occidente da Urbano II a San Luigi 1096-1270*, ed. Monique Rey-Delqué (Milano: Electa, 1997), 378-389; H. A. Klein, "Eastern objects and western desires: relics and reliquaries between Byzantium and the west," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 283-314; A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris. I Genovesi, la Crociata e la Terrasanta (secc. XII-XIII)* (Rome: Isime, 2017); A. E. Lester, "Translation and Appropriation: Greek Relics in the Latin West in the Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade", *Studies in Church History* 53 (2017): 88-117; K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation in the Italian Maritime Cities, 1000-1150* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); M. Papasidero, *Translatio sanctitatis. I furti di reliquie nell'Italia medieval* (Firenze: Firenze University Press 2019); M. Papasidero, *Thefts of Relics in Italy. From Late Antiquity to the Central Middle Ages (300-1150)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2025).

[38] A. Frolow, *La relique de la Vraie Croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte* (Paris: Institute Français d'Études byzantines, 1961).

[39] M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 357-358; E. J. Goldberg, "'More Devoted to the Equipment of Battle than the Splendor of Banquets': Frontier Kingship, Military Ritual, and Early Knighthood at the Court of Louis the German," *Viator* 30 (1999): 41–78; H. A. Klein, "Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen, Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. Franz A. Bauer (Istanbul, 2006), 79-100; J. Á. Castillo Lozano, *La sacralización de la guerra en el mundo visigodo. Ceremonias, ritos y símbolos* (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2024), 117 ff. It is also evidenced in the Kyivan Rus: R. Kotecki, "Pious Rulers, Princely Clerics, and Angels of Light: Imperial Holy War Imagery in Twelfth-Century Poland and Rus'," in *Christianity and War in Medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Carsten S. Jensen and Stephen Bennett (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021), 159-188.

[40] The Crusades are among the most well-documented examples of the use of relics in battle as tangible symbols of that divine support. For example, the relic of the True Cross was carried by the Crusaders during the battle of Hattin in 1187, where Saladin captured it. The relic was believed to ensure the success of the Crusader forces and was a potent symbol of Christ's presence on the battlefield.

Beyond the crusades, relics were also used in other warfare contexts. For example, Constantius II took the body of St. Mercurius of Caesarea from Cappadocia to serve as protection and a sign of faith to his soldiers during the military campaign he launched in 661 against the Longobards in southern Italy. According to the hagiographer of the *Historia translationis*, it was an alleged military custom that involved the presence of the remains of protective saints during the battle.[41] The emperor intended to take the remains to Benevento, but by the inspiration of the saint himself through some monks, they were abandoned in Quintodecimo. Almost a century later and in the context of his fight against the Franks, Arequis II (d. 787), duke of Benevento, undertook the search for the remains and the transfer of the relics to the basilica of Saint Sophia in Benevento, founded or completed by the *princeps* in the second half of the eighth century.[42] As will be seen in the chapter by Carlos de Ayala Martínez, relics took on a more belligerent emphasis in Iberia, from the eleventh century onwards, becoming a guarantee of victory in the theatre of war.

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[40] G. Ligato, "The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross among the crusaders and in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: An Example of 1185," in *Autour de la première croisade. Actes du colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East (Clermont-Ferrand, 22-25 juin 1995*), ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 315-330; M. Tsurtsumia, "The True Cross in the Armies of Georgia and the Frankish East," *Crusades* 12/1 (2013): 91-102; A. V. Murray, "'Mighty against the enemies of Christ': the relic of the True Cross in the armies of the kingdom of Jerusalem," in *The Franks in Outremer. Studies in the Latin Principalities of Palestine and Syria, 1099-1187*, ed. Alan V. Murray, (Farnham: Ashgate 2015), 217-238; C. Gaposchkin, "Louis IX and the Triumphal Cross of Constantine," *French Historical Studies* 46 (2023): 3-35. See also E. L. Bowerman, "The Spanish Emperors and the True Cross: The Variable Uses of the Lignum Crucis of Sahagún in Early Twelfth-Century Iberia," *Comitatus* 55/1 (2024): 29-61.

[41] S. Mergiali-Sahas, "Byzantine Emperors and Holy Relics," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 51 (2001): 41-60; A. Kaldellis, "The Military Use of the Icon of the Theotokos and its Moral Logic in the Historians of the Ninth-Twelfth Centuries", *Revista de Estudios Bizantinos* 1 (2013): 56-75.

[42] Á. Ibáñez Chacón, "San Mercurio de Cesarea (Capadocia)," in *Héroes santos: textos hagiográficos y religión popular en el cristianismo oriental*, ed. Matilde Casas Olea (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2019), 331-410.

e. The Military Orders

Relics also performed several important roles for the military orders, institutions closely linked to Holy War and crusade. Above all, they served as a crucial means of promoting military activity to the wider public, emphasizing the orders' geographical and spiritual connections with events in the East. They were likely a persuasive recruitment tool, especially so during periods of military reversal, and the very presence of relics demonstrated God's approval of their enterprise. In this sense, there is also evidence of its use in battle. For example, it has been suggested that a mid-twelfth century reliquary from the Hospitaller conventual church in Jerusalem was carried with the campaigning army, and this is probably also true of small reliquary altars, such as a late 14th century triptych decorated with the images of St. Catherine and St. George, which is known to have belonged to the Teutonic order.[43]

The rise of military orders in the Middle Ages further solidified the relationship between sainthood and warfare. These orders, which combined religious life with military service, promoted the idea that spiritual perfection and warfare were not mutually exclusive but could be combined in the service of God.[44] In this sense, the military orders encouraged devotion to martyr-saints.[45] For example, the Templars may have translated relics of the supposed early fourth-century military martyr St. Varus from Jezreel in Palestine to northern Italy, suggesting that they saw him as a possible role model for members of the order.[46] Likewise, St. George's relics could be found at the Templar grand priory of Auvergne in 1292, while his arm and iron from his lance were recorded at the Hospitaller site at Moures on Cyprus between 1418 and

[43] T. Borowski and C. Gerrard, "Constructing Identity in the Middle Ages: Relics, Religiosity, and the Military Orders," *Speculum* 92/4 (2017): 1086–87.

[44] See, for example, A. J. Forey, *The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1992); A. Demurger, *Chevaliers du Christ. Les ordres religieux-militaires au Moyen Âge (XIe-XVIe siècle)* (Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 2002).

[45] H. Nicholson, "Saints venerated in the Military Orders," in *Selbstbild und Selbstverständnis der geistlichen Ritterorden*, eds. Roman Czaja and Jürgen Sarnowsky, (Toruń: Ordines Militares Colloquia Torunensia Historica XIII, 2005) 91–113; H. Nicholson, "'Martyrum collegio sociandus haberet': Depictions of the Military Orders' Martyrs in the Holy Land, 1187–1291", in *Crusading and Warfare in the Middle Ages: Realities and Representations. Essays in Honour of John France*, eds. Simon John and Nicholas Morton (London: Routledge, 2014), 101-118.

[46] D. Woods, "Varus of Egypt: A Fictitious Military Martyr," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 175-200.

1420.[47] Other military saints were also represented: St. Maurice, together with St. Mary, was depicted on the banner of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic order.

These classical warrior-saints were not the only saints with whom the military orders, and therefore their warrior activity, had a relationship. Figures such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, contemporary to the crusades, played an important role not only in the consolidation of the sacralization of war, but also in the very creation of these institutions.[48] Kyle Lincoln's chapter will delve into this kind of relationship between sanctity and war, in which the religious activity and preaching of holy men will be one more tool in the fight against the infidel.

B. The Islamic Tradition

a. Jihād and the Awliyā' Allāh

Sacralised violence was one of the most powerful discursive and legitimizing tools, and Islam was no exception.[49] From very early on, a series of religious and salvific merits were associated with *jihād*, shaping it as one of the most important means of sanctification. The connection between sainthood, saints and warfare in the context of medieval Islam is a complex and multifaceted topic.[50] Following the Islamic tradition, and being aware that the term "saint" does not belong to it, I equate this concept to that of *wālī Allāh* (pl. *awliyā' Allāh*), i.e., "friend of God," one who is close to God, who can perform miracles (*karāmāt*), and who possessed *baraka*, a kind of divine grace that flows through the nature of people, which can be accumulated, transmitted and lost, and which believers seek in contact with the saints, in visits and pilgrimages to their tombs. In the saint's relationship with the community, he occupies a place of mediation because of

[47] T. Borowski and C. Gerrard, "Constructing Identity," 1056-1100.

[48] H. Nicholson, *The Knights Templar* (Amsterdam: University Press, 2021); See also B. M. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145–1229: Preaching in the Lord's Vineyard* (Woodbridge: York University Press, 2001).

[49] See R. Bonney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); P. Heck, "Jihad revisited," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32/1 (2004): 95-128; D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2005); M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History. Doctrines and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); A. García Sanjuán, *Yihad. La regulación de la guerra en el islam clásico* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020).

[50] See, for example, G. Cecere, "Jihad and Sanctity in Damietta: in the Footsteps of Šayḫ Šaṭā" (d. 21AH/642AD?)," in *The Medieval Jihad. Texts, Theories, and Practices*, eds. Mehdi Berriah and Abbès Zouache (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2025), 67-108.

his relationship with God.[51] Their elevated spiritual status often led them to be regarded as intercessors between the divine and the earthly realm. Their prayers and blessings were seen as capable of securing divine favour and victory for those fighting on behalf of Islam. This sense of divine support through sainthood was especially important in times of conflict, as Muslim warriors often believed that the intercession of saints would lead to military success or divine protection. Likewise, the idea of spiritual warfare, in which the inner battle against sin and temptation parallels the outer battle against enemies of Islam, provided a framework for understanding the role of saints in both personal and military conflict.

Therefore, among the many motifs encountered in stories of God's friends is that of the *wālī Allāh* as warrior for the faith. Anecdotes of saints fighting the enemies of Islam or rendering miraculous assistance to Muslim armies are common throughout the Sufi hagiographical tradition.[52] As Harry Neale points out, "scholarship in European languages has often overlooked the militant component of Sufism, preferring instead the study of Sufism's mystical and aesthetic aspects instead." [53] Both perspectives are valid, and they are not mutually exclusive.

God's friends often assisted in waging war against the unbelievers, either by sending aid from afar or by taking part in battle as a *mujāhid* or *ghāzī*. For example, the saint Abū Isḥāq al-Kāzarūnī (d. c. 1035) – his military activity caused him to be called *Shaykh-e Ghāzī* – appeared as a great warrior on horseback and routed the Byzantines, all while remaining in Kazarun. Sometime after his death, his spiritual successor called upon him to aid the Muslims of Kazarun in their campaign against a Christian city, which they had besieged. Abū Isḥāq's spirit tells his successor what the Muslims must do to defeat the Christians, which leads to the fall of the Christian city and victory for the Muslim host.[54]

God's friends also played a significant role in the Islamization of some regions, particularly the Indian subcontinent, where they contributed to the

[51] See J. Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint. Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); C. Mayeur-Jaouen, *Le culte des saints musulmans: des débuts de l'islam à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 2024).

[52] See A. Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press); H. S. Neale, *Jihad in premodern Sufi Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 57-73; H. S. Neale, *Sufi Warrior Saints: Stories of Sufi Jihad from Muslim Hagiography* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022); J. Eden, *Warrior Saints of the Silk Road: Legends of the Qarakhanids* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[53] H. Neale, *Sufi Warrior Saints*, 5.

[54] H. Neale, *Sufi Warrior Saints*, 52 ff.

spread of Islam through both proselytising activities and participation in military *jihād* to expand Islam. In this sense, the tradition of *ghāzī* friends of God has remained an important component of popular Sufi shrine worship in Muslim India.[55]

b. Asceticism and War

The model from which these *ghāzī*-saints originated is that of the warrior-scholars who began to stand out in the last decades of the eighth century, particularly along the Byzantine-Arabic border. I refer to figures such as Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī (d. 802),[56] author of the *Kitāb al-siyar*, a work on conduct in war, and his friend the Iranian scholar and ascetic ʻAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 797),[57] author of *Kitāb al-jihād*, one of the first treatises on the topic that has survived and which consists of a collection of 206 prophetic traditions. Both represent, better than anyone, the authority of the frontier scholars derived from the imitation of the Prophet and his companions in military action. These figures were credited for their war activities but were also known for their intellectual deeds, especially the transmission of hadith, and for their asceticism.[58]

This concern with *jihād* was closely linked to asceticism in the thought of Ibn al-Mubārak and others like him.[59] There was no contradiction between being an ascetic and a warrior or, in other words, war was a form of asceticism and

[55] See R. M. Eaton, *The Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); R. M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

[56] M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War. Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1996), 113 ff.

[57] See M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 122 ff. R. Bonney, *Jihad*, 62-63; M. Bonner, *Jihad*, 99-100; R. Denaro, "From Marw to the *Ṭuġūr*. Ibn al-Mubārak and the Shaping of a Biographical Tradition", *Eurasian Studies* VII/1-2 (2009): 125-144; C. Melchert, "Ibn al-Mubārak's Kitāb al-Jihād and Early Renunciant Literature," in *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur'ān to the Mongols*, eds. Robert Gleave and István Kristo-Nagy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 49-69; F. Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī Identity in the Second Islamic Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 77 ff.

[58] Al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) described Ibn al-Mubārak as "the pride of the *mujāhidīn*", and al-Fazārī was known as "master of the *sunna* and the *ghazwa*". Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi*, 33-34; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 113 ff.

[59] Ibn al-Mubārak also composed a *Kitāb al-zuhd*, "Book of Asceticism". Ibn al-Mubarāk, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa al-raqā'iq*, ed. al-Raḥmān al-ʻAẓamī (Beirut: Malegaon, 1998). See F. Salem, *The Emergence of Early Sufi*, 36 ff; A. Sinno, "Le *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq* de ʻAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (m. 181/797)," in *La littérature aux Marges du 'Adab. Regards croisés sur la prose arabe classique*, ed. Iyas Hassan (Beirut: Diacritiques Éditions-Presses de l'Ifpo, 2017), 32-60.

renunciation of the world, another characteristic of this group (*al-zuhd fī al-dunyā*).[60] This is clearly seen in the famous hadith transmitted in his work: "Every community has a form of asceticism (*rahbāniyya*, a term also understood as 'monasticism'), and the asceticism of my community is *jihād* in the path of God".[61] Thus, the struggle became a spiritual activity, both internal and external, an issue that undoubtedly continued religious trends from Late Antiquity, as Thomas Sizgorich studied.[62] Moreover, performing pious acts guaranteed military success: "Perform good deeds before the battle, for you fight through them".[63] A good example is that of Abū Mu'āwiya al-Aswad, an ascetic who lived in the border city of Tarsus throughout the eighth century.[64] His displays of piety and asceticism combined continuous lamentation or constant night prayers with participation in expeditions against the Byzantines or border surveillance activities.[65]

c. Sanctification through War

Another significant theme is the notion of sanctification through warfare in Islam, a subject explored in chapters 8 and 9 of this volume. The idea of sanctification through war in medieval Islam is a nuanced and complex concept that intertwines the spiritual, social, and political dimensions of warfare. It tends to focus on the notion of *jihād* and the spiritual rewards or purification associated with fighting in the name of Islam. *Jihād* was not only seen as a military duty but

[60] C. Melchert, "Ibn al-Mubārak's Kitāb," 49-69. Another of their features, according to Deborah Tor, was their adherence to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and their struggle against what they considered heretical through the precept of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf*, especially against Kharijism. D. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the 'Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World* (Istanbul-Wurzburg: Orient-Institut-Ergon Verlag, 2007). On the precept of "commanding good and forbidding evil" see M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Tor, in fact, goes further and sees in this group of warrior-scholars one of the reasons for the consolidation of traditionalism, especially Hanbalism.

[61] Ibn al-Mubarāk, *Kitāb al-jihād*, ed. Hammād (Beirut: Dār al-Nūr, 1971), 36. In his *Kitāb al-zuhd* he quotes similar hadiths. For example: Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, nº 845. On this tradition see C. Sahner, "'The Monasticism of My Community is Jihad': A Debate on Asceticism, Sex, and Warfare in Early Islam," *Arabica* 64/2 (2017): 149-183.

[62] T. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity. Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[63] Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-jihād*, 30.

[64] On the city of Tarsus as the epicentre of the activity of *jihād* volunteers see C. E. Bosworth, "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier in Early and Middle Abbasid Times," *Oriens* 33 (1992): 268-286.

[65] D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, 44.

also as a means of spiritual purification. The soldier who participated in it was believed to be engaging in a process of self-purification, where the hardships of battle would lead to divine favour, and therefore his intention (*niyya*) must have been pure. The ultimate goal was the reward of paradise for those who died as martyrs. Thus, martyrdom in war was central to this process of sanctification. Martyrdom was viewed as the highest possible spiritual achievement for a Muslim warrior, and the act of fighting in battle for the defence of Islam was considered an act of deep devotion that could bring the soldier closer to God.[66]

In this sense, those who, for example, fought in battles of the "sacred history" of Islam, such as Badr (624), were honoured and regarded as spiritually elevated, and their participation in the battle was believed to have guaranteed their salvation.[67] The martyrs of Badr were revered not just for their military prowess, but for the spiritual merit they gained through their sacrifice. Their example became a model of sanctification through battle for subsequent generations.

This sanctification would also be transferred to many of the participants in the *futūḥ* or the first conquests of Islam. For example, the tomb of Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, a companion of the Prophet who was buried under the walls of Constantinople during the first Islamic siege of the city, became an important pilgrimage centre,[68] known today as the Eyüp Sultan Mosque. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the remains of this companion of the prophet were "rediscovered" at this location. It was at this *locus* of memory of the sacralised war and of the origins of the *umma* that, significantly, the Ottoman sultans received the sword of Osman ('Uthmān Ghāzī, d. 1326), founder of the dynasty, thus representing the ascension to power. This was also the site where they blessed their ceremonial weapons before each military campaign.

[66] D. Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[67] Badr is without any doubt the most important and most commemorated battle, with the most symbolic capital and prestige in the history of Islam, at least in terms of religiosity and sacredness. The participants of Badr are the most excellent among Muslims after the *rāshidūn* and ten of the Prophet's companions, and they are guaranteed entry into paradise. A. Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 57 ff. See also M. Yazigi, "*Ḥadīth al-'ashara* or the Political Uses of a Tradition," *Studia Islamica*, 86 (1997): 159-167; T. Khalidi, *Images of Muhammad. Narratives of the Prophet in Islam Across the Centuries* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 87 ff.

[68] M. Booner, *Jihad*, 2006: 79; D. Cook, *Martyrdom*, 2007: 23-30; C. Picard, *Sea of the Caliphs: The Mediterranean in the Medieval Islamic World* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 57-58. In the Sind there is also a veneration of a series of tombs belonging to companions of the Prophet who would have participated in its conquest. M. A. Asif, *A Book of Conquest. The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 150 ff.

These burial sites, associated with martyrdom, marked the limits of Islamic expansion during the conquests, thus establishing a sacred frontier: a territory of *jihād* in which the tombs served as milestones along the path of sacralised warfare. The importance of tombs in processes of sanctification will be discussed in Chapter 8. In the eastern case there are very remarkable cases: for example, the poet Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī took part in an expedition against Byzantium in the time of 'Umar and was mortally wounded on the return from the campaign. He ordered his nephew, who had stayed behind with him in enemy territory, to bury him there. And it used to be said: "the Muslims had penetrated far into the land of the Byzantines. From the tomb of Abū Dhu'ayb onwards there is no longer any known burial place of the people of Islam".[69]

In the Islamic West, we likewise find several instances of the creation of a sacred frontier through martyrdom and burials – a boundary that was, of course, mobile and volatile, continually shifting, and which, with the passage of time and the eventual transfer or disappearance of the frontier itself, was recontextualized, altered in its sacred function, or even effaced altogether. One example is the martyrdom and tomb of Zuhayr b. Qays and his companions near Darna, tombs that are known even today.[70] Or the Mosque of 'Uqba b. Nāfi', a mosque built where 'Uqba b. Nāfi' – conqueror of Ifriqiya and the Maghreb – allegedly died as a martyr and was buried, located in the nowadays and town of Sidi Okba.[71] Likewise, the geographer al-'Udhrī (d. 1085), in his *Niẓām al-murjān fī-l-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, recounts the existence in Saragossa of the tombs of Ḥanash b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣan'ānī and 'Alī b. Rabāḥ al-Lakhmī, two *tābiʿūn*, i.e., successors of the Prophet's companions, who would have participated in the conquest of al-Andalus.[72] The text further notes that it was a place of veneration and pilgrimage in search of divine favour, a holy place where miracles took place.[73]

[69] M. Lecker, "On the burial of martyrs in Islam," in *The Concept of Territory in Islamic Law and Thought*, ed. Hiroyuki Yanagihashi (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), 37-49.

[70] R. G. Khoury, "Zuhayr b. Kays", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Volume XI: W–Z* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 559.

[71] J. Albarrán, "*This is your miḥrāb*: sacred spaces and power in Early Islamic North Africa – al-Qayrawān as a Case Study," *Religions* 14/5 (2023): 674.

[72] M. Marín, "Ṣaḥāba et Tābiʿūn dans al-Andalus: Histoire et légende," *Studia Islamica* 54 (1981): 5-49.

[73] Al-ʿUdhrī, *Tarsīʿ al-akhbār wa tanwīʿ al-āthār*, in Fernando de la Granja, "La Marca Superior en la obra de al-ʿUḏrī," *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón* 8 (1966): 447-545.

d. Relics at War

Connected to the issue of *ghāzī*-saints' tombs is the use of sacred objects in military settings.[74] The baraka associated with sacred relics and objects was believed to provide military forces with divine assistance and protection, contributing to their success in battle. This practice can be linked to the larger Islamic tradition of veneration of the Prophet and other holy figures, even if Islamic doctrine tends to distance itself from overtly material forms of sainthood and relic worship, which are common in other religious traditions like Christianity.

For example, the Prophet Muhammad's sword, Dhū al-Fiqār, is one of the most famous relics in Islamic history. It was believed to have belonged to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muḥammad. The sword was highly revered as a symbol of divine justice and courage in battle, and was seen as a spiritual object that could provide victory in warfare. For example, in the context of the confrontation against the rebel Abū Yazīd (d. 947), the Fatimid caliph Ismā'īl (d. 953) appeared on the battlefield bearing the legendary sword. Following his triumph, he proclaimed himself al-Manṣūr, the "victorious one."[75]

Another powerful example – reminiscent of the Christian war liturgy around relics such as the True Cross – is that of the departure on campaign of the Almohads, a dynasty that based its legitimacy, among other things, on *jihād* and the memory of the early days of Islam.[76] In the war parade, two Qur'ans were displayed in front of the caliph. The first of these was the alleged Qur'an of 'Uthmān, third "rightly-guided" caliph, which was carried on a camel on a red canopy (*qubba ḥamrā'*) that protected it.[77] Its covers were decorated with all kinds of precious stones, one of which was in the shape of a horse's hoof said to have belonged to Ibn Ṭūlūn, lord of Egypt and famous leader of the *jihād*. This Qur'an had belonged to the Umayyads of al-Andalus and was recovered in Cordoba itself by 'Abd al-Mu'min. It was the codex that, according to some traditions,

[74] On relics in Islam see, for example, A. Bursi, *Traces of the Prophet: Relics and Sacred Spaces in Early Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

[75] See H. Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: the Rise of the Fatimids* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 313-320; M. Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Tenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 176-8, 203-205; M. Brett, *The Fatimid Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 24-5, 57 ff.

[76] On this parade see J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos. Yihad y memoria en al-Andalus (siglos X-XIII)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2020), 302 ff.

[77] On this Qur'an see, for example, A. Bennison, "The Almohads and the Qur'an of 'Uthman: the legacy of the Umayyads of Cordoba in twelfth century Maghrib," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 19/2 (2007): 131-154; M. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade (1120-1269). Une nouvelle lecture anthropologique* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2014), 337 ff.

'Abd al-Raḥmān III had carried into battle, specifically to Simancas (939). Moreover, according to these same traditions, this Qur'anic codex, copied by hand by 'Uthmān himself, was the one with which the third caliph was praying when he was killed, as attested by the blood stains that could be observed on its folios.[78] The second codex preceding the caliph in the parade was the Qur'an of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart, founder of the Almohad dynasty, transported on a mule and adorned with gilded silver.[79]

In these objects, the Almohads found charismatic authority as well as the projection of divine grace, *baraka*.[80] This idea should be related to the fact that the catafalque that kept the copy of 'Uthmān was called *tābūt*, a term used in the Qur'an to designate the Ark of the Covenant.[81] The use of this term indicates that this codex could function in the same way, representing God's presence and his help in the conduct of war. In this sense, it is curious to note how in the context of the Crusades the Qur'an of 'Uthmān also appears in a warlike setting, that of the 1148 defence of Damascus. His function was not to preside over the march to battle, but to be the recipient of the supplications and petitions for victory of the Damascene population in the Great Mosque. And, according to Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, it worked.[82]

C. Parallel Features in Christianity and Islam

In summary, and following these introductory pages, it is possible to identify a number of shared features in the construction of warrior-saints and in the relationship between sanctity and warfare in both the Christian and Islamic worlds. In many cases, saints were not merely symbolic figures but were believed to participate directly in warfare: they were said to appear on the

[78] See T. Zadeh, "From Drops of Blood: Charisma and Political Legitimacy in the translatio of the ʿUthmānic Codex of al-Andalus," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008): 321-346.

[79] M. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 346 ff.

[80] T. Zadeh, "From Drops of Blood," 321-346.

[81] M. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 337 ff. This ark, according to the descriptions previously mentioned, could be similar to the one created by the Ottomans to keep the Prophet's banner. See S. Ağka Diker, *Apartment of the Holy Relics* (Istanbul: Anatolian Cultural Entrepreneurship, 2018). It is worth remembering that in the biblical account the Ark of the Covenant also appears related to the war context and to God's help in battle. For example, during the attack on Jericho, the Israelite army led by Joshua, following divine instructions, marched for six days around the city with seven priests carrying seven ram's horn trumpets before the Ark. On the seventh day, after circling the enclave seven times, blowing the trumpets and shouting a war cry, the walls collapsed. See Joshua 6: 1-16.

[82] See J. Albarrán, "'He was a Muslim knight who fought for religion, not for the world'. War and religiosity in Islam: A comparative study between the Islamic east and west (12th century)," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 27/3 (2015): 191-206.

battlefield, to manifest themselves to military leaders in visions prior to combat, or to be invoked through prayers during the fighting itself. Alongside this, narratives of saints who suffered martyrdom at the hands of infidels – either in battle or through violent persecution and torture – played a central role. Such stories, already prominent in accounts of Roman persecutions of the early Church and in the formative battles of Islamic sacred history, were frequently retold in frontier societies or to soldiers on campaign, where they could function as exemplary models to be emulated in real warfare.

Within these religious traditions, the figure of the warrior-saint also points to the possibility of sanctification through war, especially in contexts of holy war understood as a path to salvation. This process was often closely associated with rulership, so that participation in battle and saintly status became intertwined, blurring the boundary between warrior and saint and producing an ideal of sanctity achieved through military service. Central to the belief in the saint's intervention on the battlefield was the theological notion of intercession: saints, by virtue of their closeness to God, were thought to act as intermediaries between the divine and the human. This capacity to intercede was extended to warfare, where saints were believed to influence the outcome of battles through divine agency, thereby contributing decisively to the sanctification of combat itself. Finally, the power of the saint was not confined to narrative or belief alone but could also be embodied in material form, particularly in relics, which might be displayed on the battlefield or incorporated into military rituals as tangible vehicles of sacred power.

At the same time, important divergences emerge. In the Islamic tradition, although early sacred history also celebrated figures who died in battle and were remembered as martyrs, the emphasis tended to fall less on posthumous saintly mediation – as in Christianity – and more on exemplary conduct in life and on God's direct support for the fighters. This difference shaped the way narratives of martyrdom circulated: while Christian accounts often highlighted the cult of the saint and the continuing efficacy of his or her presence after death, Islamic sources more commonly presented martyrdom as a culmination of righteous action rewarded immediately by God.

The relationship between warfare and sanctification likewise reveals both convergence and contrast. In Christianity, the idea that participation in war could lead to sanctification was often mediated through the figure of the ruler or knight who embodied both military and spiritual virtues, blurring the boundary between warrior and saint. In Islam, although rulers and commanders could acquire enhanced religious prestige through their participation in *jihād*, sanctity was less frequently personalised in individual holy figures acting as

intercessors and more closely tied to adherence to correct belief, law, and conduct within a divinely sanctioned struggle.

Finally, material culture illustrates another point of divergence. In Christian contexts, the power of the warrior-saint could be physically located in relics, which might be displayed on the battlefield or incorporated into military ceremonies as tangible sources of sacred protection. In Islamic warfare, while objects such as banners, Qur'anic inscriptions, or other symbolic items could carry strong religious meaning, the veneration of bodily relics played a far more limited role, reflecting broader doctrinal reservations about their use. Taken together, these similarities and differences highlight a shared language of sacralised warfare across the medieval Mediterranean, while also revealing distinct theological and ritual logics that shaped Christian and Islamic understandings of sanctity in war.

II. The Present Volume

From Late Antiquity to the late Middle Ages, from the Atlantic Ocean to Armenia, via Portugal, Castile, Aragon, France, North Africa, the Italian maritime cities or Egypt, this volume aims to study, for the first time in this geographical and chronological framework, the presence of holy men and women in the context of war, from a holistic perspective. Following these notions of sanctity and war presented above, this broad approach to the phenomenon allows us to address it from a cross-cultural perspective, taking into account the realities of different religious traditions such as Islam and Christianity. Likewise, the focus has been placed on the Mediterranean as the geographical axis of analysis – although its limits will sometimes be crossed – since, as will be seen in this book, it was a space in which ideas of sanctity, war, holy men and women, and the objects associated with them, circulated and were exchanged throughout the Middle Ages. Moreover, the presence of these holy men and women in a military context is understood in a broad manner: not only do we refer to their direct participation on the battlefield, but also to issues such as the processes of sanctification through battle, the use of relics or liturgies in war, the cult of warrior-saints, their hagiographic depictions, their participation in war preaching, or the political use of their memory.

These topics are organized in three different sections – Sanctifying War: Rituals, Relics and Symbols; Making Saints Through War; Narratives of Saints and War – which highlight the most important features in the link between sanctity and war: how war is sanctified through saints and the cultural manifestations associated with them; how war can help in the process of sanctification of certain individuals; how the participation of holy men and

women in war is narrated. In this sense, the volume addresses, among others, the following issues: involvement of holy men and supernatural aid in the context of warfare (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12); sanctification through war (e. g. chapters 7, 8 and 9); the cult, worship and/or memory of warrior-saints (e.g. chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10); relics and war (e. g. chapters 2, 4 and 5); hagiographic literature in war, war in hagiographic literature (e.g. chapters 4, 7, 10, 11 and 12); holy men, liturgy and war (e.g. chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6); holy men and the preaching of war (e.g. chapters by 1 and 11); textual and material depictions of holy men and warfare (e.g. chapters by 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10), and holy women at war (e. g. chapters 3, 6 and 12).

The first section begins with a chapter by Huertas Gómez - "Ecclesiastical Attitudes Towards War in the Visigothic Kingdom" - in which he analyses the relationship between the Visigothic church and war, as well as the mechanisms it implemented in order to sacralise the act of war. The Hispanic clergy during the Visigothic period was far from being clearly enthusiastic about war. Without needing to oppose the various military enterprises of the Visigothic monarchy, there was never an interest in active participation in warfare. This chapter examines the different ideals that existed within the Visigothic Church regarding war, analysing, for example, the views of Saint Isidore of Seville, among others, but also the available casuistry regarding the active participation of the clergy and the supernatural in war, and their attitude towards it.

For the church leaders, the decisive issue was the role of religion in the context of war. It was the king's Catholic faith that allowed divine grace to be mediated through his actions, transforming warfare into a positive force. Consequently, a ruler's military capacity was always subordinated to his function as protector of the Church. In effect, this amounted to the sublimation of the traditional features of Gothic military kingship, redirected to the service of Christianity. In this light, Reccared's conversion to Catholicism marked a pivotal moment, for the new king's Catholic identity enabled God's grace to be bestowed upon the Goths in war as well. In this process, St. Julian of Toledo played a key role in the sacralization of war. He depicted King Wamba as an Old Testament ruler endowed with sanctity, interpreting his struggle against Duke Paul as a *iudicium Dei*, a manifestation of divine justice. It was also during this period that a war liturgy was systematized: one *ordo* to be observed when the king set out on campaign, and another for his return. Among its elements, for instance, were daily masses offered for the health of the king and his army.

Huertas Gómez concludes that the sacralization of war developed from tensions among the Church, the monarchy, and the nobility. Since the ecclesiastical order could not take direct part in warfare because of its moral constraints, the war liturgy and sacralization of martial actions became a means

of its engagement in the military sphere. The emergence of a sacralised discourse on warfare, shaped within the ecclesiastical sphere and disseminated by bishops through liturgical ceremonies associated with campaigns, was thus in some sense a response to the inability to act directly on the battlefield.

The second chapter of this section, "War and Religion: Conquest Narratives in Southern Portuguese Cities", by Luis Filipe Oliveira, remains within the Iberian Peninsula, though in a considerably later period, when the religiously sanctioned warfare was fully established in the Christian West. Based on the conquest narratives of Santarém, Lisbon, Silves and Alcácer, this chapter summarizes the various manifestations of the sacred, from prayers to the presence of ecclesiastics and religious symbols in the armies, to the ritual celebrations that punctuated the progress of the fighting, or the demonstrations of God's support, evident through prodigies and miracles. Among other things, the invocations in battle of the Virgin and St. James, the use of relics such as a fragment of the *Lignum Crucis*, or the appearance of miracles associated with the tombs of martyrs of the siege of Lisbon are analysed.

In the third chapter, "Holy Warriors in Space and Time: Jihād Narratives in Arabic Folk Epics", Oleg Sokolov takes us to the other side of the Mediterranean analysing *jihād* and the portrayal of holy warriors in Medieval Arab Folk narratives, exploring the relationship between religion and ethnicity in these stories. The study draws from popular *sīra* epics such as *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*, *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, and tales from *The Thousand and One Nights*, a highly popular genre of folk art widespread in the Middle East during Mamluk and Ottoman eras among the urban and rural population, and one of the sources in which the memory of the crusades has been preserved. These narratives are a valuable source for understanding popular perceptions of the sacralization of war and martyrdom in the medieval Islamic world, reflecting and shaping mass ideas about these concepts. An important feature of these texts is the creation of an image of an eternal war against the Franks by placing confrontations with them in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, which emphasizes a permanent need for defence from these kinds of invaders. Thus, the folk culture shaped images of idealized holy warriors, both Muslim characters and pre-Islamic monotheists, facing the Franks, which involved the process of re-actualization of the narratives about the Muslim holy warriors of the Abbasid-Byzantine frontier.

The fourth chapter – "Saints at War: Military Use of Relics and Hagiographic Narratives in Castile and Leon (10th-13th Centuries)" – brings us back to the Iberian Peninsula, in this case to deal, guided by Carlos de Ayala, with one of the main resources for the sacralization of war as well as for the linking of holiness and war: the use of relics. In the cases analysed by Ayala, this use of

relics for military purposes did not involve the displacement of these sacred objects to the battlefield, but the association of liturgical ceremonies of special significance with the launching of campaigns against the Muslims. This connection between relics and war played a particularly important role in the legitimizing process that accompanied the change in the balance of power that took place in the mid-eleventh century: faced with the hegemonic predominance of Islam until then, the Christian powers, and in particular the powerful Castilian-Leonese monarchy, took the lead in the conquering offensive. This implied a further step in justifying war. In this process of justification, relics become an indispensable tool in reinforcing the change that has taken place with supernatural elements. For example, one of the analysed episodes is the well-known *translatio* of the body of St. Isidore from Seville to León by Ferdinand I of Leon, and action linked to an anti-Muslim offensive, specifically the attack on the Taifa Kingdom of al-Mu'tamid of Seville in 1063. His successor, King Alfonso VI, added, through relics such as the "Holy Ark", the Jerusalemite factor, typical of the crusader environment in which his reign took place.

Relics continue to be the focus of attention in the fifth chapter – "Relics at Sea and War: The Use of Saintly Remains by Italian Maritime Cities in Late Medieval Military Conflicts". Here, Simone Lombardo turns to Italy, exploring the relationship between war, Italian maritime cities, and the use of holy relics during the 11th to 14th centuries. These sacred remains were considered both tangible signs of the divine and tools with political and social significance, and their use by Italian maritime cities shows the connections between public power, violence, religiosity, and the construction of a civic identity.

Since the very early crusades, the military expeditions to the Levant by Italians coincided with a season of "holy theft" to obtain relics from Eastern deposits. Relics were prey for war and, at the same time, were the sign of the link with the holiness of military exploits, increasing the spiritual prestige of the city. Relics were also stolen from opponents, a practice which intensified during the fourteenth century, when the flow of relics from the East diminished. In 1354, for example, the Genoese admiral Paganino Doria stole some bodies of saints from the Venetians and transferred them to Genoa. Relics were also taken to war against other Christian enemies – for example, the Genoese took a fragment of the True Cross aboard the admiral galley of the fleet headed against the Pisans in 1242 –, in order to invoke God's favour, while depictions of saints, whose bodies were kept at the centre, appeared on banners and military-political *signa*. Relics were, in sum, one of the focal points of the relationship between Italian maritime cities, war and God.

Sanctity, the sea, and warfare also form the focus of the sixth chapter, "'Ab honor e victòria': The War Activity of the Archbishop of Tarragona Pedro de

Urrea," by Eduard Juncosa. The chapter analyses the role of the archbishop of Tarragona Pedro de Urrea (1445-1489) as captain of the fleet of galleys that joined the crusading fleet organised by Pope Callistus III to cut off the Turks on their march to invade Europe after the fall of Constantinople. The prelate was to advance with his ships to the aid of the Christian islands in the Aegean and Ionian Seas, but the papal project failed due to the disloyalty of King Alfonso the Magnanimous, who used the crusading fleet to devastate the domains of his enemies. The prelate remained at the service of the ruler and was accused of being a traitor and a pirate by the pope until victories at sea led to a subsequent reconciliation between them. The archbishop claimed to have achieved these victories against the infidels "with the help of God and the intercession of the blessed Saint Thecla", patron saint of Tarragona whose image, together with that of St. Peter, appeared on the banners blessed by the pope and carried by the fleet. Thecla's cult became popular in Tarragona especially after the arrival of her relic – one of her arms – in 1321 from Antioch. Despite some former evidence, Thecla's role as a protector in war did not gain significant prominence until this episode studied by Juncosa. In this sense, the *Breviary* of Archbishop Pedro de Urrea, uses language full of military imagery in the prayers and sermons associated with the mass on the patron saint's feast day: "Thecla, soldier of God, make your people good soldiers. Martyr, you are our shield, you are our lance. Victress of sorrows, give us victory over the world."

The second section of the volume, "Making Saints Through War," begins with a chapter – "Defeat as Martyrdom or Family Tradition? The Tension Between Hagiographic and Ethnographic Memory in Mamikonian Dynastic Histories" – through which Kevin Vogelaar explores the development of the legend of Vardan Mamikonean, an Armenian prince who led a rebellion against Sasanian Persia in the year 451 and is considered the first Christian battle-martyr. Examining several key historical texts such as the *Buzandaran*, the *Primary History*, or Ełišē's *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, Vogelaar focuses on how claims of Chinese ancestry for the Mamikonean clan were used to enhance Vardan's image and garner support, and how, over time, the narrative shifted toward a more universally Christian understanding of martyrdom, drawing on biblical precedents like the Maccabees. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of considering Armenian sources in the study of the development of Christian sacralization of war, demonstrating that it is more complex than previously recognized.

In the eighth chapter, the second of this section – "Jihād and the Sanctification of the Almohad Caliph Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr" –, we travel across the Mediterranean, from the twelfth to the twentieth century, to analyze the process of sanctification through warfare of the Almohad caliph al-Mansur. The night

before the Battle of Alarcos (1195), in which the Almohad army defeated the Castilian King Alfonso VIII, the Caliph Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr saw in a dream that an angel, depicted as a knight riding a white horse and carrying a green banner, announced to the sultan his imminent victory by the grace of God. The successful participation of al-Manṣūr in *jihād*, one of the legitimizing pillars of the Almohad movement, invested him with a sacred aura that was gradually consolidated after his death. Using chronological, hagiographical and geographical sources, composed between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries and written throughout the Islamic world, the chapter analyses the process of sanctification of this Almohad caliph based on his participation in *jihād*, as well as the memory surrounding this holy warrior. In this regard, one of the most interesting testimonies analysed is a manuscript preserved in the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech, which contains a protective talisman associated with the memory of this *mujāhid*-sultan, entitled *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, i.e., "the talisman of our lord Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr".

Due to his victories in *jihād*, particularly at Alarcos, his charitable and pious status, and the vicissitudes of his death, several popular traditions emerged that turned al-Manṣūr into a saint. Such an image, in turn, was consolidated due to the Marinid production context, a framework in which the link between sultans and saints was growing and the boundary dividing kingship from sainthood was dissipating. Later on, new popular traditions were introduced in the Maghreb, intensifying the degree of sanctity which had been built up since the thirteenth century. The late nineteenth century accounts reflect a series of popular traditions that have probably been developing for some time before, and which grant al-Manṣūr an undisputed degree of sanctity. The Almohad ruler appears as the builder of the thermal baths of Mulay Ya'qūb, near Fez, where he controlled genies who permanently heated the water, and where people went to receive the *baraka* of the Almohad caliph to be cured. Likewise, he also appears as the black sultan, Sultan al-Akḥal, and as the first disciple of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, eponym of the Sufi *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya who lived in the mid-twelfth century.

In the last chapter of this section – "Jihād as a Tool for Sanctifying and Constructing the Image of Qutuz as a Mujāhid Sultan" – Mehdi Berriah takes us back to the Mamluk period to explore, through an analysis of Mamluk chronicles, the existence of various narratives that tend to sanctify Quṭuz – victor at ʿAyn Jālūt in 1260 over the Ilkhanid troops – both by his leadership in battle, his allegedly noble origins and the fact that he was chosen by God to fight and defeat the Mongols. Cross-referencing and cross-checking the accounts of the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt told by the Mamluk-era chroniclers fully brings out the intention of some authors to sanctify the character of Quṭuz by giving him a

special religious aura, through certain literary *topoi*, the majority of which are related to the fight against the Mongol threat. The mobilization of *jihād* as a political instrument is a phenomenon that is especially evident during times of external threats, such as the crusades and Mongol invasions. Rulers like Nūr al-Dīn, Saladin, and Baybars were sanctified post-mortem through *jihād*. However, Quṭuz is a unique case, being the only Mamluk sultan whose name was sanctified by *jihād* despite reigning for less than a year and in the context of a single major battle. He is presented as a *mujāhid* par excellence, devoted to the cause of God, and some texts even stipulated that God had ordered that believers should be eternally grateful to the sultan, as if it was a religious obligation, thus trying to establish a kind of worship around his figure.

The third section of the volume, "Narratives of Saints and War," begins with a chapter by Esther Dehoux – "*[…] signiferi et duces esse dicuntur Georgius, Mauricius, Mercurius et Demetrius.* Appearances of Warrior Saints on the Battlefields (tenth-thirteenth centuries)" – analysing various narratives from the tenth-thirteenth centuries, present in sources such as chronicles, hagiographical texts, or songs, recounting the intervention on the battlefield of saints such as George, Maurice, Michael or James. These narratives are set in a particular context, marked by the Gregorian Reform, the political and spiritual demands and expectations of the warriors, but also the military campaigns conducted in the East and on the Iberian Peninsula. These appearances not only served to legitimize military actions but to define the role of warriors within Christian society.

Dehoux demonstrates that the presence of saints like George, Maurice, and Michael in battles was used to signify divine approval of a cause or military campaign, and shows how the specific saint chosen often reflected the nature of the conflict and the desired image of the warrior. However, these apparitions were also part of a larger pastoral effort to integrate the warrior class into Christian society, offering a path to salvation that was not necessarily monastic. The Church presented warrior saints as role models for men-at-arms, encouraging them to imitate the virtues of these figures. A diachronic analysis of these texts in terms of the vocabulary adopted and how the identity of these saints is highlighted enable Dehoux to show how these patron saints were appropriated by men of war and how a distinctive form of piety came to flourish. Over time, the depiction of saints shifted from distant figures to examples of nobility and military valour. This shift led to a decline in the number of battlefield apparition accounts by the thirteenth century as the figures became a natural and expected element of war, with the focus shifting towards martyrdom as well.

In the next chapter – "*Post mortem episcopi Oxomensis cepit crux adversus Albigenses in Francia predicari*: Dominic of Osma, the Early Preachers Movement, and Early Thirteenth Century Crusading" – Kyle Lincoln presents an examination of the crusade-related work of Dominic of Osma, founder of the Order of Preachers, during the period before the Order's formal chartering. It pays specific attention to the ways that crusade and holy war were frequent in the world of Dominic's early work and training. In doing so, it argues both for a reinterpretation of the Dominicans as a kind of tertiary crusader order, supporting the overall goals of the Las Navas de Tolosa, Albigensian, and Fifth Crusades, without overtly engaging in the direct actions of warfighting. In doing so, it also demonstrates that recent crusade historiography's emphasis on the all-encompassing nature of crusading in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century is, while occasionally overstated, not beyond the bounds of possibility as reflected by the early Dominican evidence. In effect, it provides a kind of test case for how frequently and how dynamically crusade motivations influenced the early Order of Preachers and vice versa. Drawing on the hagiographical, cartulary, and chronicle sources, it demonstrates how an originally provincial group of Castilian clerics came to represent the local and urban context of wars first in the Toulousain, and then spread outward to encompass increasingly larger holy wars.

Lincoln shows how the Albigensian Crusade is central to St. Dominic's early work, who was deeply involved in the crusade. In this sense, Dominic's early actions included engaging in debates with heretics, ransoming captives – a common enough practice in military contexts –, and confronting spiritual needs. The language used to describe the mission of the early order was frequently militarized, as were Dominic's miracles, such as the famous debate at Fanjeaux where his book leaped from the flames while the heretics' book burned, emphasizing spiritual combat. Moreover, Pope Honorius III's letters equated the Dominicans to soldiers of Christ. As Lincoln states, in the context of crusading, preaching occupied an important part of the wider "spiritual warfare" arm of the campaign that medieval thinkers understood to be essential to the success of the military project, and the reports about St. Dominic and his involvement in the crusade show another way in which a holy man could participate in war.

In the last chapter of the volume – "Conscripting the Virgin: Holy Mary's Mediterranean Crusade in Alfonso X's Cantigas De Santa María (Ca. 1275)" – Alexander Korte brings us closer to the quintessential holy woman, the Virgin Mary, and how her role as intervener in war and protector of the faith is narrated in the *Cantigas de Santa María* (ca. 1275). The chapter explores fictional retellings of thirteenth-century Castilian military campaigns in the *Cantigas* as a manifestation of imperial anxieties over a new and hostile Mediterranean

seascape, and how Alfonso X of Castile used the *Cantigas* to project an alliance between the authority of the Virgin Mary and his own imperial interests, in the context of the crusades in the Mediterranean during the thirteenth century. Alfonso sought to cultivate a unique relationship with the Virgin Mary, especially in relation to her martial authority, to legitimize his military efforts against his Mediterranean rivals, such as the Marinid empire of Morocco and the Nasrid kingdom of Granada. The *Cantigas* employs crusading rhetoric to present the Virgin as a defender of the faith, referring to campaigns in the Holy Land, as well as local crusading events, such as the conquest of Seville in 1248 and the African crusade of 1260. The figure of the Virgin is highlighted as the patron of martial piety, replacing the traditional Saint James "Matamoros".

In sum, this volume explores the nexus between sanctity and warfare across a wide array of sources, contexts, regions, periods, and analytical methods. The very heterogeneity of these approaches enriches the discussion and allows a coherent picture to emerge. Saints – and, at times, their putative remains – move across an interreligious Mediterranean, while relics, talismans, and other sacra associated with holy figures circulate within martial and protective settings. War liturgies place saints, and sainthood itself, at their centre; battlefields and sieges become spaces where prayers, sermons, and ritual celebrations articulate divine favour through prodigies and miracles. Iconographies of the warrior-saint travel between cultures, not least in the recurrent image of the white horse, and diverse strategies of sacralising warfare take shape. Figures tied to the exercise of war, particularly sacralised war, undergo processes of sanctification; martyrdom offers one pathway, and the cults of warrior-saints expand in tandem with their roles as protectors of cities and communities. Throughout, sanctity, violence, and political legitimacy are tightly interwoven, and the image of the warrior-saint evolves with shifting social and cultural parameters surrounding both war and holiness. Considered together, these trajectories suggest that the relationship between sanctity and warfare in the medieval Mediterranean was, in important respects, transcultural.

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PART I

Sanctifying War: Rituals, Relics and Symbols

ECCLESIASTICAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS WAR IN THE VISIGOTHIC KINGDOM

Jesús Huertas-Gómez*

I. Church and War: An Ambiguous Relationship

The society which shaped the socio-political reality of the *regnum Gothorum* was the result of the integration between Hispano-Romans and Gothic populations. The synthesis of both groups took place in a long historical process that reached its peak at the juncture between the celebration of the Third Council of Toledo (589), when the Goths were converted to Catholicism, and the Fourth Council of Toledo (633), when the king, the bishops and the nobility laid the foundations of the political and religious project for the kingdom.[1] The Goths came from a highly militarised society. War, plunder and looting were necessary for the consolidation of the dominant family group over the others.[2]

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[1] Isabel Velázquez, "'Pro patriae gentisque Gothorum statu' (4th Council of Toledo, canon 75, A. 633)," in *"Regna and Gentes": The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut and Walter Pohl, Transformation of the Roman world 13 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 161–217; J. Wood, *The Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville*, Brill's series on the early Middle Ages 21 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2012).

[2] On the militarization of Gothic society, see P. Poveda Arias, "The Role of the Military Factor in the Political and Administrative Shaping of the Visigothic Kingdom (Sixth to Seventh Century)," in *Early Medieval Militarisation*, ed. Ellora Bennet et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 115-29. On the role of booty, see P. Poveda Arias, "¿Hacia la unidad de Hispania? Explicaciones sociales a las ofensivas militares visigodas en la Península Ibérica (siglos VI-VIII)," *Gladius* 40 (2020): 73–92; S. Orlowski, "Los reyes visigodos de Toledo y el botín de guerra. Reparto y destino," *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie III* 37 (2024): 855–78; F. Ruchesi, "Violencia, factores económicos e identidad. La formación de cohesión social y los grupos guerreros en el reino visigodo de Toledo," *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum* 18 (2024): 377-92.

In fact, the acquisition of wealth and land and its subsequent redistribution among the *fideles* of the king was one of the central elements for the proper political functioning of the kingdom.[3] By this point, the Church had ceased to be merely a religious institution and had become the most direct heir of the Roman Empire, both administratively and ideologically, following the Empire's dissolution in the West.[4] The Church aimed to guarantee social stability, harmony, and unity among the kingdom's different actors through communion in orthodoxy. There was a relationship of mutual influence between the Gothic aristocracy and the Church that resulted in a certain pacification of Gothic political ideals through Christianity and, on the other hand, a certain militarisation of the Church and its thinking.

The Church's position on war had evolved throughout history. From a more anti-war stance during the first centuries of Christianity's existence, it had moved towards a progressive justification of war, violence and coercion.[5] Throughout this chapter, I will examine the relationship between the Church and war in the Visigothic kingdom of Toledo, focusing primarily on ecclesiastical perceptions of this phenomenon. What can be said from the outset is that the Church's position on war was openly ambiguous. Although, because of its moral and religious convictions, the Church tended to seek to build social consensus through non-violent means, there was never a categorical condemnation of war either.

Within the Hispano-Visigothic Church, various factions and groups coexisted, and their actions were not uniform. The ecclesiastical elites engaged in the same power dynamics as other noble groups within the kingdom.[6] For

[3] P. C. Díaz Martínez, "Rey y poder en la monarquía visigoda," *Iberia* 1 (1998): 175–95; P. C. Díaz Martínez and P. Poveda Arias, "Hacia una caracterización política del 'regnum Gothorum' hispano," in *Los procesos de formación del feudalismo. La península ibérica en el contexto europeo*, ed. Iñaki Martín Viso (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2023), 144–52.

[4] On the leaderships exercised by bishops in Late Antiquity, see C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, The Transformation of the classical heritage 37 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). On the other hand, on the development of the Church in *Hispania* during the fifth century with the consequent assumption of new social responsibilities, see P. Ubric, *La Iglesia en la Hispania del siglo V* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2004).

[5] The most complete study to date is that carried out by J. Fernández Ubiña, *Cristianos y militares. La iglesia antigua ante el ejército y la guerra* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000). Also, see J. Shean, *Soldiering for God and the Roman Army*, History and Warfare 61 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2010); and D. Iosif, *Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service*, Gorgias studies in classical and late antiquity 1 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013).

[6] M.ª R. Valverde Castro, "La Iglesia hispano-visigoda: ¿fortalecedora o limitadora de la soberanía real?," *Hispania Antiqua* 16 (1992): 381–92.

this reason, throughout this chapter, I will seek to reflect, as far as possible, the diverse perceptions of ecclesiastics operating in different spheres. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that the Church, as an institution of power embedded within the kingdom, tended to project an appearance of consensus and unity – even while fully aware of the underlying conflicts and internal dissensions.[7]

A. The Meaning of War and Its Ecclesiastical Perception

In the post-Roman world, war was fully naturalised as a social and historical phenomenon, framed by a Christian understanding of history and reality rooted in divine providence.[8] Within Christian thought, historical events were often interpreted as manifestations of God's providence, with the belief that he had a plan of salvation for individuals, peoples, and kingdoms. Thus, particular occurrences could be perceived as stages in the unfolding of that theological history. God was perceived as engaging with humanity through a system of punishment and reward: when people sinned excessively, he withdrew his grace as a form of chastisement. Through a period of penance, the faithful could regain divine favour. Conversely, God rewarded the faithful with various temporal blessings.[9] In this framework, the evils afflicting society were seen as consequences of sin.[10] Periods of war or peace were likewise understood through this language by which God communicated with his people.

King Sisebut addressed a letter to the Longobard king Adalald and his mother, Theodolinda, in which he urged the king to abandon Arianism and embrace Catholicism.[11] One of his central arguments rested precisely on the linking of the Arian period of the Goths as a time of calamity, misfortune and war, whereas God had rewarded the later orthodoxy of the Goths with the

[7] R. L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589-633* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000); P. Poveda Arias, "Límites y usos del consenso político en el reino visigodo hispano," in *El estado y la Alta Edad Media. Nuevas perspectivas*, ed. Álvaro Carvajal Castro and Carlos Tejerizo García (Vitoria: Universidad del País Vasco, 2023), 131–48.

[8] E. Sánchez Salor, *Historiografía latino-cristiana. Principios, contenido, forma*, Hispania antigua 1 (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2006), 128–50.

[9] Isidore, *Sententiae*, 2.5.1, ed. Julio Campos and Ismael Roca (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1971), 310.

[10] On the meaning of evil in Isidore, see P. Cazier, "Isidore de Séville et la naissance de l'Espagne catholique," *Théologie historique* 96 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), 92–96.

[11] O. Dinarès, "La carta de Sisebuto a Adaloaldo y Teodolinda. El reino arriano en la perspectiva de un rey visigodo del siglo VII," *Hispania sacra* 71.144 (2019): 379–88.

peace and prosperity of the *imperium Gothorum*: "Then it oppressed this very insolent people with immense calamities and different very harsh needs, frequent wars and daily miseries, lack of fruits and noxious wounds with time turned back; afterwards a starry brilliance struck the hearts of the faithful and orthodox faith sprang out of blind minds, the catholic faith was increased, with the Lord favouring, and the empire of the Goths thrives."[12]

This association of the peace granted by God with the reward for human faithfulness was far from incidental. At the time, the model of community had shifted from a civic to an ecclesiological conception: it was now membership in the Church that defined one's integration into the social body.[13] In this sense, Isidore of Seville linked belonging to the Catholic Church with the promise of eternal peace free from adversity.[14] Being part of the community of the baptised was thus to partake in a state of peace – both individual and social – that was a consequence of close communion with God.

The Visigothic Church, continuing the pre-existing intellectual tradition of Christianity, understood that war had a parenetic and moralising function. God allowed wars to exist in order to purify the Christian people of their sins and help them to return to the path of righteousness. The presence of these ideas in texts of different kinds only shows us how present they were in the mentality of the time. Sometimes God used enemy peoples to restore his people's desire for the things of heaven. This is, for example, Isidore's interpretation of the Roman Empire's clashes against the Huns, whom he called "virga furoris dei."[15] War was the punishment by which he achieved the necessary change of attitude in his people to bring about their salvation.[16]

[12] *Epistulae [Wisigothicae]*, ep. 8, in *Miscellanea Wisigothica*, ed. Juan Gil, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla. Filosofía y letras 15 (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1972), 21. For English translation, see "A Letter from King Sisebut of the Visigoths (616-620)," https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/44.html.

[13] J. Wood, "Elites and Baptism: Religious 'Strategies of Distinction' in Visigothic Spain," *Studies in Church History* 42 (2006): 3–17; N. P. Chase, "From Arianism to Orthodoxy: The Role of the Rites of Initiation in Uniting the Visigothic Kingdom," *Hispania sacra* 72.146 (2020): 427–38.

[14] Isidore, *Etimologiae*, 8.1.6, ed. trans. and ann. José Oroz Reta and Manuel A. Marcos Casquero, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 647 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2004), 676-77.

[15] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 29, ed. and trans. Cristóbal Rodrí
guez Alonso (Leon: Centro de estudios e investigacion "San Isidoro," 1975), 218.

[16] The awareness of punishment as part of God's language was deeply rooted. See, e.g, Isidore, *Sententiae*, 3.1–4, ed. Campos and Roca, 398-99.

A similar perspective is offered by Braulius of Saragossa in his *Vita Sancti Aemiliani*.[17] Aemilian, a hermit saint from the second half of the sixth century, had a vision in the twilight of his life in which the destruction of Cantabria was revealed to him. He brought this prophecy to the senate of Cantabria. Most of the senators listened with reverence, but one of them, a certain Abundantius, dismissed him as a senile old man.[18] In Braulius's eyes, the destruction of Cantabria could be interpreted as divine retribution for the offence against the saint.[19]

The connection between sin and war made wartime a time of penance and spiritual purification. Bishop Eugenius II of Toledo, the most celebrated poet of Visigothic Hispania, articulated this link in one of his *carmina*, presenting war and suffering as consequences of sin. For this reason, the verses of this beautiful liturgical hymn beseech God for deliverance from a twofold affliction: on the one hand, the suffering caused by sin itself; on the other, the suffering caused by war.[20]

Within the dominant ecclesiastical paradigm, kings too sought to interpret the hardships and misfortunes of their reigns in light of the people's sin.[21] The fall of the kingdom in 711, in particular, was interpreted in this very manner. The author of the *Mozarabic Chronicle* refrains from passing moral judgement on the conquest, likely due to the context in which the text was composed –

[17] S. Castellanos García, *Poder social, aristocracias y hombre santo en la Hispania Visigoda. La "Vita Aemiliani" de Braulio de Zaragoza*, Bibliotecas de investigación 29 (Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, 1998).

[18] *La vita di S. Emiliano scritta da Braulione vescovo di Sarragozza. Edizione critica*, ed. Ignazio Cazzaniga, *Bolletino del Comitato per la preparazione della edizione nazionale dei classici greci e latini. Nuova serie* 3 (1954): 33.

[19] The appearance of divine punishment in Visigothic hagiography was an ideological device that sought to delegitimise a particular political faction, as shown in S. Castellanos, *La hagiografía visigoda. Dominio social y proyección cultural* (Logroño: Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla, 2004), 331–73.

[20] *Eugenii Toletani Carmina (CPL 1236), carmen* 5b, in *Eugenii Toletani opera omnia*, ed. Paulo F. Alberto, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 114 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 213-215. See also A. Pilarski, *Der "Libellus Carminum" des Eugenius von Toledo. Poesie als Lebensbewältigung und spirituelle Praxis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 155–58; J. Á., *La sacralización de la guerra en el mundo visigodo. Ceremonias, ritos y símbolos*. Guerra Medieval Ibérica (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2024), 89-91.

[21] This can be seen in the *prologus* of the XII Council of Toledo (681), ed. Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez, *La colección canónica hispana, VI* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002), 137-40; or in the *tomus* given by Egica to the bishops at the XVI Council of Toledo (693) ed. José Vives, *Concilios visigóticos e hispanorromanos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963), 483-88.

under the conquerors' rule.[22] This, however, does not prevent the chronicler from presenting the events as unfolding according to God's will.[23] Moreover, he inscribes the conquest in a bitter tone within the framework of the great misfortunes of salvation history.[24] More explicit is a liturgical hymn, called *De tempore belli*, which seems to have been composed immediately after the Arab conquest. The tone of lamentation is similar to that found in the *Mozarabic Chronicle*, but the plea for forgiveness of sins is much more evident.[25] In any case, it was in the Asturian monarchy of the ninth century, and subsequently in the later Christian kingdoms, that a comprehensive providentialist interpretation of these events came fully into view.[26]

Thus, if war formed part of the divine plan for the salvation of Christians, it represented a social reality that had to be accepted as an element of earthly existence. Even so, the suffering generated by armed conflict was seen as an evil to be avoided as far as possible.[27] At the same time, contemporary authors were clear that war was not the preferred condition of society. It is not by chance that Sisebut, counted among the most pious of Gothic kings, is one of those who were most pained by the sufferings of the wars he had to face.[28] The

[22] A. P. Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa. La concepción de la guerra en la España cristiana desde los visigodos hasta comienzos del siglo XII* (Granada: Universidad de Granada–Universidad de Oviedo–Universidad de València, 2006), 124–41.

[23] *Cronica Mozarabe de 754. Edición crítica e introducción*, chap. 54, ed and trans. José Eduardo López Pereira, Textos medievales 58 (Zaragoza: Anúbar, 1980), 70-73. S. Marschner, *Das neue Volk Gottes in Hispanien. Die Bibel in der christlich-iberischen Historiographie vom 8. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Münster, Berlin, Vienna, Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2023), 88-94. On God's providence in Visigothic sources, see Castillo Lozano, *La sacralización de la guerra en el mundo visigodo*, 25-56.

[24] Ibid., chap. 55, ed. López Pereira, 72-75.

[25] M. C. Díaz y Díaz, "Noticias históricas en dos himnos litúrgicos hispanovisigodos," *Antigüedad y cristianismo* 3 (1986): 448–52; Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 141–47.

[26] C. de Ayala Martínez, "La memoria del 711 en la historiografía cristiana medieval y actual," *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos* 39 (2011): 113–48; A. García Sanjuan, "Las causas de la conquista islámica de la península ibérica según las crónicas medievales," *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam* 53 (2004): 101–27. On conceptions of divine providence in the Visigothic period, see E. Sánchez Salor, "El providencialismo en la historiografía cristiano-visigótica de España," *Anuario de estudios filológicos* 5 (1982): 179–92.

[27] I. Cabello Llano, "'Heu pro dolor! Pacem rogamus, pacis infer copiam.' Guerra y paz en textos de la Spania tardoantigua y visigoda," *Brocar* 46 (2022): 43–95.

[28] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 60, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 270-273; *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with Its Continuations*, 4.33, ed. and trans. John M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Oxford University Press; rprt.: Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981), 21-22; *Cronica Mozarabe de 754*, 13. See also M. A. Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios. Cultura y*

Frankish chronicler Pseudo-Fredegarius put into his mouth the following words, which he uttered "pietate plenus" on contemplating the slaughter of Romans carried out by his men: "Woe is me, that my reign should witness so great a shedding of human blood!"[29] In the king's negotiations with the Byzantine patrician Caesarius, the same attitude is evident in his efforts to reach an agreement that would enable both sides to avoid bloodshed.[30] Another quite clear example of this awareness can be found in the letters that *comes* Bulgaranus exchanged with a Frankish bishop as part of diplomatic negotiations.[31]

However, this was one of the areas in which some clergymen's stance on war was particularly ambiguous. The criticism of the war was not ontological in nature; what was lamented were the contingent consequences of conflict – in short, the suffering caused in specific circumstances. Taio, bishop of Saragossa between 651 and 680, exemplifies this ambiguity of the Hispano-Visigothic clergy. In the letter-preface he dedicated to Quirico of Barcelona in his *Sententiae*, Taio offers the most precise description we have of the rebellion of Froia.[32] Naturally, Taio perceives Froia's usurpation as a calamity and laments all the crimes that are taking place in the course of that war.[33] Although he is pained by the surrounding reality, it becomes clear that his concern is not with war as such, but specifically with the conflict instigated by Froia. First of all, Taio interprets Froia's actions not only as a political revolt, but above all as a religious one. The rebellion is presented as an attack on God himself.[34]

poder en la Antigüedad Tardía y la Alta Edad Media (Madrid: Actas, 2008), 266–72; Cabello Llano, "'Heu pro dolor!,'" 66–76.

[29] *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, 4.33, ed. Wallace-Hadrill, 21-22.

[30] M. Vallejo, *Hispania y Bizancio. Una relación desconocida* (Madrid: Akal, 2012), 344–56; *La Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda en las fuentes epistolares. Antología y comentario*, ed. José Carlos Martín-Iglesias, Pablo C. Díaz Martínez and Margarita Vallejo Girvés. Nueva Roma 52 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2020), 517–23.

[31] Cabello Llano, "'Heu pro dolor!,'" 61–66. For Bulgaranus's letters, see the edition in *Epistulae [Wisigothicae]*, ep. 10-15, ed. Gil, 30-43. On these letters, see discussion in *La Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda en las fuentes epistolares. Antología y comentario*, ed. Martín-Iglesias, Díaz Martínez and Vallejo Girvés, 488–97.

[32] Taio, *Epistula ad Quiricum*, 4-16, ed. and trans. Julia Aguilar Miguel, "'Epistula ad Quiricum Barcinonensem antistitem' y 'Epigramma operis subsequentis' de Tajón de Zaragoza. Estudio, edición crítica y traducción," *Euphrosyne* 46 (2018): 181-204; *La Hispania tardoantigua y visigoda en las fuentes epistolares. Antología y comentario*, ed. Martín-Iglesias, Díaz Martínez and Vallejo Girvés, 656–58;

[33] Cabello Llano, "'Heu pro dolor!,'" 77–80.

[34] Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 90; idem, "Cosmovisión e ideología," in *La carisa y la mesa. Causas políticas y militares del origen del Reino de Asturias*, ed. Juan Ignacio Ruiz de la

Accordingly, Taio claims that his intention was to subdue "christianam patria"; he would not hesitate to describe Froia in religious terms: "illum uero tyrannicae superstitionis auctorem." For his part, the actions of Recceswinth, the legitimate and orthodox king, are interpreted as God's answer to the prayers of the poor. Recceswinth appears as a valiant warrior, aided by God himself. The narrative sets up a stark opposition between the model king and *tyrannus*.[35] The destruction of the rebels is even celebrated with the Song of Moses, a detail that points to the appropriation of Old Testament imagery in representations of warfare.[36] This makes clear that Taio does not regard war as inherently problematic; rather, it is violence not sanctioned by God and directed against the king that is understood as truly evil.

It was a king's Catholic faith that enabled God's grace to be channelled through his actions and thus war to become a positive element. The reign of Leovigild is a good example of this. His campaigns against the Byzantines, the Suevi, and various local communities that remained beyond central control find some justification in John of Biclaro or Isidore of Seville. Biclaro, for his part, did not hesitate to give a positive assessment of the king's conquests.[37] Leovigild's Arian affiliation is left entirely unjudged. Isidore of Seville, by contrast, while expressing a degree of admiration for Leovigild's military accomplishments, adds a notable caveat: "But the error of his impiety tarnished the glory of his great success."[38] The criticism is not harsh because we must

Peña Solar and Jorge Camino Mayor (Oviedo: Asociación de Amigos de la Carisa, 2010), 323.

[35] J. Á. Castillo Lozano, "La figura del 'tyrannus' en la tradición literaria del reino visigodo de Toledo a la luz de las obras de Juan de Bíclaro, Isidoro de Sevilla y Julián de Toledo," (unpublished PhD thesis, Universidad de Murcia, 2018), 29–30.

[36] Exod 15:6-8. The same chant is said to have been sung by the inhabitants of Merida in celebration of the victory over the Narbonese rebels during the reign of Reccared (*Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, 5.12, ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 116, [Turnhout: Brepols, 1992], 94). See also M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 304–5. On the influence of the Old Testament on early medieval politics, see W. Ullmann, "The Bible and Principles of Government in the Middle Ages," in idem, *The Church and the Law in the Earlier Middle Ages: Selected Essays* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1975), 181–227.

[37] Some examples in *Juan de Biclaro. Obispo de Gerona. Su vida y su obra*, a. 569, 4; a. 572, 2; a. 574, 2, ed. Julio Campos (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1960), 80, 82, 84. See also Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa,* 78. A critical view of the planned quest for peninsular unity in Poveda Arias, "¿Hacia la unidad de Hispania?," 73–92.

[38] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 49, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 252-55. English translation from K. B. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011 [1st ed.: 1990]), 67–90. Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 80–88.

remember that in Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* the Arian Goths are not portrayed primarily as heretics, but rather as future Catholics – people who are part of the divine plan.[39]

The shift in mentality took place with Reccared's conversion to Catholicism. The new king's embrace of the Catholic faith made it possible for God to extend his grace to the Goths in warfare as well. On this point, John of Biclaro is unequivocal. In recounting Reccared's victory over the Franks at the Battle of Carcassonne, he presents "gratia divina" and "fides catholica" as decisive elements of the triumph: "In this battle divine grace and the Catholic faith – which King Reccared along with the Goths had faithfully taken up were at work, since it is not a difficult thing for our God to give victory to a few over the many."[40] Moreover, he further imbues the victory with biblical resonance, likening it to Gideon's victory over the Midianites and considering the Goths as *populus Dei*. In doing so, John of Biclaro reveals how the conception of the *gens Gothorum* as a people of a new covenant was already taking shape in the heart of the Hispanic Church.[41] Isidore also considers it to be the greatest victory of the Goths.[42] A similar account is found in the *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, where the hagiographer describes the confrontation between certain Arian factions in Narbonensis and King Reccared at the outset of his reign. Composed in the 630s, this narrative shows a further development in the religious interpretation of warfare.[43] Here, God is not merely acting through Reccared: he becomes the principal agent in the battle itself. In response to the king's prayers, God personally exacts vengeance for the slaughter of Christians: "After this, sublime Almighty God did not delay to fight back against his enemies with his celestial power, avenging through the prayers of the most excellent prince Reccared the blood of the innocents, and exacting a wondrous immediate retribution on his enemies with his avenging scythe."[44]

For Isidore, the military prowess of the kings is an important quality that deserves recognition in historical narrative. For this reason, from the very

[39] Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 19.

[40] *Juan de Biclaro. Obispo de Gerona. Su vida y su*, a. 590, 1, 97-99. English translation after Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 51–66. See also Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 78–79. J. A. Castillo Lozano, "La sacralización de la guerra en la Antigüedad Tardía. La batalla de Carcasona (589) y los otros 300," *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar* 7.14 (2018): 94–114.

[41] Bronisch, "Cosmovisión e ideología," 319–20; Marschner, *Das neue Volk Gottes in Hispanien*, 498-99.

[42] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 54, ed. Rodríguez Alonso 262-65.

[43] Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 89.

[44] *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, 5.12, ed. Maya Sánchez, 93. English translation after A. T. Fear, *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, Translated texts for historians 26 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 45-105.

opening of his *Historia Gothorum*, he praises the military strength of the Goths and celebrates the military victories and triumphs achieved by their kings. His intention was to affirm the military superiority of the Goths over other peoples.[45] In *De ortu et obitu patrum*, Isidore proposes King David as a model of kingship, but presents him more as a military leader than as a figure of wisdom.[46] In his thought, both war and peace are legitimate instruments of political rule.[47] However, the Isidorean ideal was far from the exaltation of war. His description of Reccared, in deliberate contrast to his father Leovigild, is telling: "He was a devout man, very different from his father in his way of life. For while the one was irreligious and had a very warlike disposition, the other was pious and outstanding in peace; while the one was increasing the dominion of the Gothic people through the arts of war, the other was gloriously elevating the same people by the victory of the faith."[48] For Isidore of Seville, peace through faith is a higher value than military conquests. Isidore went on to write about the reign of Reccared: "The provinces which his father conquered in war, Reccared preserved in peace, administered with equity, and ruled with moderation."[49] Through such writings, the Church, with Isidore at its head, sought to promote a model of kingship in which *iustitia* and *pietas* were the defining virtues of the monarch.[50] From these qualities would derive his style of governance shaped by the ideal of the *princeps christianus* as proposed by Gregory the Great.[51] The king was to be, above all, an

[45] Some examples in Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chaps. 54, 58, 61, 62, 64, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 262-65, 268-71, 272-75, 274-77, 278-79. See also Wood, *The Politics of Identity*, 161–79.

[46] Isidore, *De ortu et obitu partum*, chap. 33.1, ed. César Chaparro Gómez (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), 152-153. See also Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios*, 276–77; D. Castro, "Modelos bíblicos para reyes visigodos. Un estudio a partir de las 'Sentencias' de Isidoro de Sevilla," *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie III* 28 (2015): 260.

[47] P J. E. Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power, and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111–12. Isidore defines war in Isidor, *Etimologiae*, 18.1, pp. 1214-1217. He confines himself to distinguishing its constituent elements and the various types of war, consistently following Ciceronian thought.

[48] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 52, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 260-61.

[49] Ibid., chap. 55, ed. Rodríguez Alonso 264-67.

[50] For his model of kingship, see especially Isidore, *Sententiae*, 3.48–51, ed. Campos and Roca, 493-500. See also Cazier, *Isidore de Séville*, 235–62; M. Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville*, Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 243 (Rome: Ecole Française de Roma, 1981), 505–97; Wood, *The Politics of Identity*, 138–47; Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios*, 272–81; Castro, "Modelos bíblicos," 255– 73.

[51] On the Gregory the Great's ideal of kingship, see Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature latine*, 441–503.

administrator committed to building up the common good of his subjects, guaranteeing physical and spiritual integrity.[52] He could – and indeed should – resort to warfare when it was necessary to maintain the *pax* and *securitas* of the kingdom and the Church. Thus, the king's military capacity was always linked to his role as protector of the Church.[53] In essence, the project aimed to sublimate the traditional features of Gothic military kingship and redirect them to serve Christian purposes. The underlying logic of this ideological program was to reorient the monarch's martial duties toward the defence of orthodox faith and the unity of the Church —understood also in its territorial dimension.[54]

From the Third Council of Toledo (589) through the Isidorean period (d. 636), the ideological foundations of the kingdom were laid. During this time, some of the Gothic elites increasingly articulated an identity that cast the *gens Gothorum* as a people forging a new covenant with God. This process unfolded alongside the development of a biblical origin myth for the Goths, shaped deliberately by Isidore of Seville to support the emerging ideological framework of the kingdom. In the first redaction of the *Historia Gothorum*, Isidore simply traced the origins of the Goths back to the Scythians. However, in the second redaction – produced around 626, at a time when the politico-religious vision later codified at the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) was already taking shape – he revised this account. In this case, he places them as descendants of Magog, son of Japheth and grandson of Noah.[55] The origins of the Goths are thus directly linked to the Jewish Old Testament tradition. This reinterpretation of Gothic history proved central to Isidore's conception of war. This is why his *Laus Spaniae* is a praise of *Hispania* as a promised land chosen by God for the Goths to inhabit.[56] Through this subtle interplay of rhetorical strategies, the Goths are granted a privileged place in the unfolding of salvation history.

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[52] Reydellet, *Le royauté dans la littérature latine*, 541–43.

[53] M.ª R. Valverde Castro, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real en la monarquía visigoda. Un proceso de cambio* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2000), 233–36; Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios*, 276. On the other hand, the gradual preference for royal titles linked to the Christian vision of royalty to the detriment of those that made military allusions is significant, see M. C. Díaz y Díaz, "Titulaciones regias en la monarquía visigoda," *Revista Portuguesa de História* 16 (1976): 133–41; idem, "Más sobre epítetos regios en la Hispania visigótica," *Studi Medievali* 19 (1978): 317–33.

[54] Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios*, 272–78; Reydellet, *La royauté dans la littérature* latine, 534–35.

[55] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 1, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 172-73. See also Bronisch, "Cosmovisión e ideología," 315–20.

[56] Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 84–88; Wood, *The Politics of Identity*, 179–88.

The attitude of the ecclesiastical hierarchy towards the war must be understood in the light of these efforts to shape new collective memory and the development of the politico-religious theory of power.[57] Authority was believed to originate in God, who entrusted it to a king of His choosing. The role of the nobility and clergy, at least in theory, was to confirm a decision already made by divine will. This doctrine found its ultimate expression in the ceremony of royal anointing and resulted in the sacralization of the figure of the monarch.[58] By receiving the status of *christus meus* – the Lord's anointed – the king was called to enact God's will for his people. Over time, the image of kingship shifted from a model resembling the imperial to one increasingly imbued with religious significance, closer to that of bishops or biblical kings.[59] The implications of this change were important, as it conferred a certain sacred character upon warfare itself.

In the late Visigothic period, Julian of Toledo devoted special attention to the issue of war.[60] Julian undertook the task of systematizing ideas favourable to war that already circulated in the mindset of his time. From the outset, he presents an ideal model of kingship in the figure of Wamba, portrayed as the living image of an Old Testament monarch subjugated to God's will.[61] Likewise, his depiction of the campaign against *dux* Paul is replete with Old Testament allusions, which serve not only to frame the war in biblical terms but also to Christianize it – that is, to render it acceptable to Christian conscience through scriptural justification. In this framework, war is no longer

[57] Valverde Castro, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real*, 195–215.

[58] A. Barbero, "El pensamiento político visigodo y las primeras unciones regias en la Europa medieval," *Hispania* 115 (1970): 245–326; P. C. Díaz Martínez and M.ª Rosario Valverde Castro, "The Theoretical Strength and Practical Weakness of the Visigothic Monarchy of Toledo," in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson, The transformation of the Roman world 8 (Leiden, Boston MA and Cologne: Brill, 2000), 74–84; S. Teillet, *Des goths à la nation gotique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2011 [1st ed.: 1984]), 607–11.

[59] Teillet, *Des goths à la nation gotique*, 586–87.

[60] Regarding Julian of Toledo, see esp. J. N. Hillgarth, "St. Julian of Toledo in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21.1-2 (1958): 7–26; J. C. Martín-Iglesias, "Julián de Toledo," in *La Hispania visigótica y mozárabe. Dos épocas en su literatura*, ed. Carmen Codoñer, Obras de referencia 28 (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2010), 155–72. The most comprehensive study on this figure and his writings is S. Pabst, *Das theologische Profil des Julian von Toledo. Das Leben und Wirken eines westgotischen Bischofs des siebten Jahrhunderts*, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae 165 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

[61] Teillet, *Des goths à la nation gotique*, 599–602; G. García Herrero, "Julián de Toledo y la realeza visigoda," *Antigüedad y cristianismo* 8 (1991): 201–55.

perceived as a mere political instrument but becomes a genuine *iudicium Dei*.[62] When conducted in accordance with God's will and the dictates of divine law, war is by its very nature just.[63] It becomes an expression of God's justice, made manifest through the agency of the king. In this case, martial values are embedded in an exemplary context, serving as a behavioural model for the warrior aristocracy.[64] Military *virtus* is to be shaped by loyalty to the legitimate sovereign, piety, clemency, and a striving for justice – always within an Old Testament framework.[65] Underlying this vision is a nascent glorification of war conceived as sacred. This tolerance of violence in the name of justice clearly surfaces in Julian's *Antikeimena.* In one of the questions, he contrasts *Psalm* 4:5 with the *Epistle to the Ephesians* 4:26,[66] posing the problem of the relationship between anger and sin. For Julian, there is an anger that comes from an irrational impulse, traditionally condemned as a vice. But there is also a righteous anger – *zelus iustitiae* – which is positive, for it leads to the

[62] See esp. Julian of Toledo, *Historia Wambae regis*, chaps. 10, 12 and 25, ed. Wilhelm Levison, in Iulianus Toletanus, *Sancti Iuliani Toletanae sedis episcopi opera. Pars I*, ed. Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 115 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 226-27; 228-29; 239-40. Also, *Iudicium in tyrannorum perfidia promulgatum*, 1, ed. Wilhelm Levison, in Iulianus Toletanus, *Sancti Iuliani Toletanae sedis episcopi opera. Pars I*, ed. Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 115 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 250-51. See also Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 91–96. On war as divine judgement, especially in intracultural contexts, see M. Clauss, "Der Krieg als Mittel und Thema der Kommunikation. Die narrative Funktion des Gottesurteils," in *Gottes Werk und Adams Beitrag. Formen der Interaktion zwischen Mensch und Gott im Mittelalter*, ed. Thomas Honegger, Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich and Volker Leppin, Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung. Beihefte 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 128–41.

[63] Isidore. *De differentiis*, 1.20, ed. and trans. Carmen Codoñer, Auteurs latins du Moyen Âge 8 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992), 94-95.

[64] Rodríguez de la Peña, *Los reyes sabios*, 294–96. On the work as *exemplum*, see R. Collins, "Julian of Toledo and the Education of Kings in Late Seventh-Century Spain," in *Law, Culture and Regionalism in Early Medieval Spain* (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1992): 20-22.

[65] The Old Testament models were addressed to the laity, while the New Testament models were proposed for the religious, see Cazier, *Isidore de Séville*, 241.

[66] Julian of Toledo, *Antikeimenon*, 1.62, ed. José Carlos Martín-Iglesias, in Iulianus Toletanus, Felix Toletanus, Iulianus Toletanus (Ps.), *Opera II: Elogium Ildefonsi, Vita Iuliani (auctore Felice Toletano), Antikeimena, Fragmenta, Ordo annorum mundi*, ed. José Carlos Martín-Iglesias and Valeriano Yarza Urquiola, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 115B (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 198-201. On the *Antikeimena*, see Pabst, *Das theologische Profil des Julian von Toledo,* 300–51.

establishment of justice.[67] It is this distinction that underlies Julian's broader reflection on war: for him, the act of war becomes a work of divine justice. What had traditionally been regarded as a vice could be channelled in a valid way for Julian.[68]

This shift in perceptions of war gave rise to the formation of a war liturgy. It is difficult to determine the precise moment when this liturgical *ordo* was composed. Bronisch has argued that the parallels between the war liturgy and Julian of Toledo's *Historia Wambae* suggest Julian's involvement in its composition.[69] According to the biography of Julian written by Felix of Toledo, the bishop undertook a liturgical reform primarily aimed at codifying the liturgy.[70] Although Julian may have systematised the war liturgy as part of this reform, it cannot be ruled out that he may have been working with liturgical materials that predated him by several decades.

It was through the development and consolidation of the liturgy of war that the Church participated more fully in warfare. The liturgy included both an *ordo* for when the king went on military campaign (*Ordo quando rex cum exercitu ad prelium egreditur*), with a rich ceremony full of allusions to the Old Testament and to God's role as *Deus exercituum*,[71] and another for the king's return

[67] Isidore does not seem to make this double distinction of anger. He sees it as a vice to be repressed by patience and continence. See Isidore, *Sententiae*, 2.37.4, ed. Campos and Roca, 373; idem, *Etymologiae*, 10.C.35, ed. Oroz Reta and Marcos Casquero, 798-99; idem, *De differentiis*, 1.23 and 1.92, ed. Codoñer, 96-97 and 130-31. In fact, he expresses strong disapproval of irascible bishops, see Isidore, *Sententiae*, 3.40, ed. Campos and Roca, 479. Later authors, however, continued this line of distinction between the vice of anger and anger as *zelus iustitiae*. See E. Mitre, *Pecados y pecadores de la Edad Media. Ortodoxos frente a disidentes* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2023), 116–18.

[68] This tension between anger as a vice and anger as *zelus iustitiae* is present in both classical authors and Christian authors such as Gregory the Great and Augustine, for example. On this question, see S. J. Spencer, *Emotions in a Crusading Context, 1095-1291* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 177–83.

[69] Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 108.

[70] See *Vita s. Iuliani (BHL 4554)*, chap. 6, in José Carlos Martín-Iglesias, "Relatos hagiográficos sobre algunos obispos de la España medieval en traducción. Ildefonso y Julián de Toledo (*BHL* 3917 y 4454), Isidoro de Sevilla (*BHL* 4488) y Froilán de Léon (*BHL* 3180)," *Veleia* 28 (2011): 218. On Julian's liturgical reform, see J. Janini, *Liber missarum de Toledo*, vol. 2 (Toledo: Instituto de estudios visigóticos y mozárabes, 1983), XXXII-XXXV.

[71] *Le "Liber Ordinum" en usage dans l'Église wisigotique et mozarabe d'Espagne*, ed. Marius Férotin. Monumenta Ecclesiae liturgica 5 (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1904), cols. 149–53. English translation in J N. Hillgarth, *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 93–95. On this *ordo*, see J. Janini, "El 'ordo' ceremonial de la reconquista cuando el rey y su ejército salían a la guerra," *Anales Valentinos* 11.21 (1985): 148-50; McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 297–327;

(*Orationes de regressu regis*), which would consist mainly of prayers to give thanks for the return and to implore for the king's health and the maintenance of peace.[72] Furthermore, according to Collins, the missing rubrics would deal with the manner in which the relic of the cross that had been taken to war was returned in times of peace.[73] Likewise, since the Council of Merida (666), daily masses were to be offered in all the churches of the kingdom for the safety of the king and his army, as well as for victory on the battlefield.[74]

The liturgical regulation of war constituted an ideological intervention by some sectors of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This could be interpreted in two ways. The first would be that the Church became the ultimate authority, able to confer legitimacy on the king's military initiatives. The second, on the other hand, could imply a further degree of subordination of the Church to the crown, which would have to bow to the king's wishes and limit itself to granting them religious validity. It could also be a combination of the two, a logical consequence of the dynamics of collaboration and tension between the king and the episcopate.

It was expected that the spirit of penance and spiritual purity would be maintained during military campaigns. This was deemed the only way to maintain communion with God and thus to secure his favour for the final victory. One of the most striking examples is that of King Wamba after the victory against the Vascons. Julian of Toledo recounts how the soldiers were dulled by the lust for plunder and how they raped the Vascon women. Wamba, who is presented as a model of a Christian king, understood that he bore the responsibility for correcting the sin of his people. As a form of punishment, he ordered the foreskins of the offending soldiers to be cut off. Julian places in the background the biblical passage of Eli who suffered death for not rebuking his sons for their misconduct.[75] Certain excesses were impermissible in a war understood as a divine *examen* – a sacred trial in which the moral conduct of the combatants was subject to God's scrutiny.[76] On the other hand, particular

Bronsich, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 101–12. On the hymn *De profectione exercitus*, which was to be sung during the departure of the army for the campaign, see also Díaz y Díaz, "Noticias históricas," 445–48.

[72] *Le "Liber Ordinum,"* 49; Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 113–16.

[73] R. Collins, "Continuity and Loss in Medieval Spanish Culture: The Evidence of MS Silos, Archivo Monástico 4," in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict and Coexistence*, ed. Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 8.

[74] Council of Mérida c. 3, ed. José Vives, *Concilios visigóticos e hispanorromanos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas), 327-28. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 305.

[75] Julian of Toledo, *Historiae Wambae regis*, chap. 10, ed. Levison, 226-27.

[76] Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa*, 105: Michałowski, "Christianisation of the Piast Monarchy in the 10th and 11th Centuries," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 101 (2010): 26-28.

behaviours were praised that served to temper the violence of war. The most telling example is that of Sisebut, who, in the course of a campaign against the Byzantines ordered the release of prisoners taken by his troops.[77] His clemency appears as one of the key virtues of the warrior-king – one who should not be bloodthirsty, but merciful.[78] Finally, warfare itself was subject to a temporal framework of sacred observance. In keeping with classical Roman tradition, fighting was permitted on designated *praeliares* days, while others – such as Sundays and Easter – were to be respected and reserved for the Lord.[79]

In short, war was one of the instruments that monarchs had at hand to fulfil their function of justice and the maintenance of order. However, the king, as God's anointed, has become the only authority competent to declare wars legitimately and to exercise violence against rebels and seditionists in order to maintain the political and social coherence of the kingdom. It was the Church's role to bestow religious sanction upon the king's martial actions, interpreting them as efforts in the service of *pax* and *iustitia*.[80]

B. Monasticism, Sanctity and War

Within the Church, monasticism represented a distinct and particular reality. First of all, the choice of monastic life entailed a renunciation of the world – including secular glory, and by extension, warfare – which made the two lifestyles incompatible. Yet the monks did not renounce the world for nothing, but rather in pursuit of a higher good. The path to salvation required a life of asceticism, prayer, and the cultivation of virtue. In short, a sustained spiritual

[77] Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 61, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 272-74.

[78] Cazier, *Isidore de Séville*, 244-–48. This balance between the warrior and clement character of a monarch is again illuminated by the figure of David in Isidore, *De ortu et obitu partum*, chap. 33, ed. Chaparro Gómez, 152-55.

[79] See Isidore's *De natura rerum*, 1.4, ed. Jacques Fontaine, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études Hispaniques 28 (Bordeaux: Féret et fils, éditeurs, 1969), 178-79. This is evident in several passages from sources, where it is explicitly noted that war should not be waged during Easter (Orosio, *Historias. Libros V-VII*, 7.37, ed. and trans. Eustaquio Sánchez, Biblioteca clásica Gredos 54 (Madrid: Gredos, 1982), 261-65; *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the "Consularia Constantinopolitana,"* ed. Richard W. Burgess (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), chap. 194 [199], p. 113, or on Sundays (Isidore, *Historia Gothorum*, chap. 42, ed. Rodríguez Alonso, 242-43).

[80] Peace was conceived as a phase of the cycle of war by Isidore, see Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 18.1.11, ed. Oroz Reta and Marcos Casquero, 1216-17. This martial conception of peace is reflected in the Council of Mérida, opening, ed. Vives, 325, or III Council of Zaragoza, closure, ed. José Vives, *Concilios visigóticos e hispanorromanos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas), 480-81.

labour aimed at ongoing personal conversion and ever-deeper conformity to the models of sanctity.[81]

The ways of life prescribed in various monastic rules were hardly compatible with those of the earthly *militia*.[82] Within the communal setting of the monastery, monks tried to overcome their vices and strengthen their virtues in order to live fully dedicated to God. In this sense, the monks had to avoid the use of any kind of violence.[83] In this regard, the case of Fructuosus is particularly illustrative. His systematic and radical rejection of violence extended even to shielding a roe deer from hunters in order to spare its life.[84] Another noteworthy episode involves Fructuosus's nonviolent resistance in the face of aggression by a villager who had mistaken him for a fugitive.[85] It is striking that the monastic authors do not differentiate between the two types of anger as Julian of Toledo did, but instead unanimously consider anger a vice to be controlled to achieve inner peace.

The case of Ildephonsus of Toledo is particularly revealing. The bishop, a member of one of the great families of the *urbs regia*, had previously embraced the monastic life at the monastery of Agali.[86] His monastic formation left a lasting imprint on him. In his treatise called *De itinere deserti*, a continuation of

[81] P. C. Díaz Martínez, "La conversión personal como instrumento de salvación en el eremitismo y en el monacato visigodo," in *Œuvrer pour le salut. Moines, chanoines et frères dans la péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge*, ed. Amélie de las Heras, Florian Gallon and Nicolas Pluchot (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2019), 17–37.

[82] An apt description of the way of life of the monks in Isidore, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, 2.16.11–15, ed. Christopher Lawson, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 113 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 77-78. On the Visigothic monastic ideal, see A. Linage Conde, "El ideal monástico de los padres visigóticos," *Ligarzas* 1 (1968): 79–97; J. A. Testón Turiel, *La vivencia monástica en las tradiciones regulares de San Isidoro de Sevilla y San Fructuoso de Braga. Origen y diferencia de una doble corriente espiritual en la antigüedad tardía hispana*, Publicaciones de la Facultad de Teología del Norte de España, sede de Burgos 81 (Burgos: Facultad de Teología del Norte de España, 2015); P. Barata Dias, "L'idéal monastique, les moines et les monastères du monde wisigothique selon Isidore de Séville," *Antiquité Tardive* 23 (2015): 143–54.

[83] There was a type of legitimate violence in the monasteries that was used to punish the monks' faults and to correct them. However, this type of violence was exercised by the authority of the monastery. The monks, on an individual level, renounced violence. See P. C. Díaz Martínez, "Violencia en el monasterio, violencia contra el monasterio: conflictividad en el monacato hispano del siglo VII," in *Conflicto y violencia en los monasterios hispanos medievales*, ed. José Ángel García de Cortázar and Ramón Teja Casuso (Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2021), 15–35.

[84] See *Vita Fructuosi*, chap. 10, in *La vida de san Fructuoso de Braga. Estudio y edición crítica* (Braga: Empresa do Diário do Minho, 1974), 94-97.

[85] Ibid., chap. 11, 98-101. Another example of peaceful resistance, see *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, 5.6, ed. Maya Sánchez 62-71.

[86] Martín-Iglesias, "Relatos hagiográficos," 212–15.

his earlier work *De cognitione baptismi*, Ildephonsus proposes a desert as a metaphor for earthly life – an image that clearly echoes the exodus of the people of Israel. Across several chapters of the work, he outlines a spiritual itinerary leading toward eternity. Its particular value lies in the way Ildephonsus adapts monastic spirituality for Christians living in the secular world, offering them a path by which they too might attain salvation. In line with monastic tradition, the bishop of Toledo identifies a number of spiritual diseases to be avoided: contentions (*contentiones*), rivalries (*aemulationes*), anger (*irae*), rifts (*rixae*), dissensions (*dissensiones*), factions (*haereses*), envy (*enuidiae*) or homicides (*homicidia*).[87] In the next chapter, continuing his commentary on the *Epistle to the Galatians*, Ildephonsus presents the virtues that nourish the soul and draw the baptized toward spiritual fulfilment: charity, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, patience, gentleness, moderation, self-control, chastity.[88] The model of life he proposes for the laity is thus shaped far more by the evangelical spirituality cultivated in monastic settings than by the prevailing martial ideals of his time.

Participation in wars could hinder the monk's path to salvation, exposing him to the dangers of greed, lust and the exercise of unnecessary violence. While monastic and ascetic texts do not contain an outright condemnation of war, they clearly present an incompatibility between the monastic vocation and the life of the soldier – an incompatibility that occasionally gave rise to tension.[89] A compelling indication that monasteries functioned outside the military dynamics of the kingdom is their frequent role as places of exile and political banishment.[90] Tonsure effectively removed individuals from the political sphere; those who received it were excluded from holding power. Cases of politically motivated tonsure are numerous, though the most famous is undoubtedly that of Wamba, which became a matter of considerable debate at the Twelfth Council of Toledo.[91] The contrast between these two social spheres – monastic and military – is vividly illustrated in a passage from the *Vita Fructuosi*. According to the hagiographer, several *duces* complained to the king about the overwhelming popularity of the Fructuosian movement,[92]

[87] *Santos Padres españoles, I. San Ildefonso de Toledo*, ed. Julio Campos, Biblioteca de autores cristianos 320 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1971), 397.

[88] Ibid., 398.

[89] D. Pérez Sánchez, *El ejército en la sociedad visigoda*, Acta Salmanticensia 57 (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1989), 143–45; A. Isla, *Ejército, sociedad y política en la Península Ibérica entre los siglos VII y XI* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 2010), 94.

[90] A. Prego de Lis, "La pena de exilio en la legislación visigoda," *Antigüedad y cristianismo* 23 (2006): 515–29.

[91] XII Council of Toledo, c. 2, ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, 155-58.

[92] *La vida de san Fructuoso de Braga*, chap. 14, 104-7.

claiming that no one was willing to join the army. This was not the only military-related conflict associated with Fructuosus. When the saint decided to found a monastery on his lands, he had a confrontation with his brother-in-law, Visinand. According to Amancio Isla's interpretation of this episode, the dispute's root was military. By compelling the family's servants to enter religious life, Fructuosus was effectively reducing the military potential of the kin group, and by extension, that of Visinand himself.[93]

Monasteries, while espousing an ideal of asceticism and renunciation of the world, were deeply embedded in the fabric of society.[94] They responded to societal needs while uniting the heavenly and the earthly through communal liturgy and prayer.[95] It was likely owing to this indispensable religious function that monasteries were consistently exempted from military obligations. In any case, as far as the available evidence suggests, no specific war liturgy was developed within monastic contexts during the Visigothic period. Their liturgical responsibility was limited to offering masses for the king's victory, as mandated for all churches of the kingdom at the Council of Merida (666).[96] Nonetheless, military language was deeply familiar to Late Antique societies and exerted a strong influence on Christian discourse.[97] This led to an assimilation of military imagery into the ascetic life. Though such metaphors originated in the Late Roman period, they gained particular prominence in the seventh century. The monks were envisioned as *milites Christi*, engaged in the most important of battles – one not waged with violence or death, but with spiritual weapons – fighting against the evil that dwelled in the world.[98]

In monastic environments, there was a preference for a way of life far removed from conflict and external violence. There is no ontological rejection

[93] Isla, *Ejército, sociedad y política*, 103–8.

[94] P. C. Díaz Martínez, *Formas económicas y sociales del monacato visigodo*, Acta Salmanticensia 53 (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1989).

[95] F. Gallon, "Médiations monastiques et salut dans le Moyen Âge ibérique," in *Œuvrer pour le salut*, 97–103. A monographic study on this reality of the monasteries in the Carolingian world in R. S. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer and the Monastic Ideal in the Time of the Carolingian Reforms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[96] Council of Mérida, c. 3, ed. Vives, 327-28.

[97] L. Sarti, *Perceiving War and the Military in Early Christian Gaul (ca. 400-700 A.D.)*, Brill's series on the early Middle Ages 22 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 330-334. On the development of the language of spiritual combat and its implications during the Middle Ages, see K. A. Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, Studies in the history of medieval religion 37 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 9-38.

[98] On the perception of evil in the Visigothic kingdom and its reflection in hagiography, see G. M. Favaro Esteves, "Entre santos e demônios. A percepçâo do Mal na teología e hagiografías do Reino Visigodo de Toledo (séculos VI-VIII)" (unpublished PhD thesis, Universidade Estadual Paulista, 2015).

of war – since it is seen as an obligation of the warrior aristocracy – but there is a greater sensitivity to alternative conceptions of society. This outlook also finds expression in the social projection of the figure of the *holy man* through hagiography. By this time, the *holy man* was no longer exclusively a monk; also, clerics and bishops could be regarded as bearers of sanctity. In large part due to the influence of Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*, the episcopal office would acquire an ascetic and contemplative dimension, one meant to complement the bishop's pastoral responsibilities.[99] The Visigothic saint functioned as a unifying force within society.[100] For this reason, the image that the hagiography of the seventh century attempts to project – most notably in the *Lives of the Holy Fathers of Merida* – is that of the Catholic community bound together in the shared joy provoked by the presence of the holy man.[101] The role the Church sought to assume in society – or at least the role envisioned by certain ecclesiastical circles – was that of the cohesive centre of the Christian community, unified through the sanctity of its exemplars. These holy men not only fostered concord but also spurred Christians to lead lives of deeper holiness. This is the model of idyllic social pacification. A similar vision of governance is articulated by Valerius of Bierzo in his admonitions to the powerful. He exhorts them to care for the needy in society, to be compassionate, affable, to keep their eyes always on the heavenly realities that await them and to "perfectam plenamque propagate pacem."[102] The perfect peace he envisioned is not merely the absence of armed conflict, but the possibility of the construction of a more just and unified social body through genuinely evangelical attitudes.

It is significant that the authors who most explicitly depicted the sufferings of war often emerge from monastic backgrounds. The intense spiritual and intellectual formation fostered in the monasteries, – designed to lead monks

[99] T. Renna, "The Idea of Peace in the West, 500-1150," *Journal of Medieval History* 6.2 (1980): 149–50. On the model of holiness proposed in the *Pastoral Rule* and its influence on the Iberian Peninsula, see J. Fernández Alonso, *La cura pastoral en la España romanovisigoda* (Rome: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1955), 121–35.

[100] S. Castellanos, "The Significance of Social Unanimity in a Visigothic Hagiography: Keys to an Ideological Screen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11.3 (2003): 387–419. On the virtues of these peacemaking leaders, see P. Ubric, "Destrezas y atributos del líder hacedor de paz. Reflexiones desde el cristianismo tardoantiguo," in *Estudios en cultura de paz, conflictos, educación y derechos humanos. In memoriam Francisco A. Muñoz*, ed. Cristina E. Coca Villar et al., Psicología / Educación 13 (Madrid: Síntesis, 2015), 199–208.

[101] One of the most significant passages is *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium* 5.5.3-7, ed. Maya Sánchez, 56-58.

[102] Valerio del Bierzo, *Epitameron de quibusdam admonitionibus vel rogationibus*, 8, ed. Manuel Cecilio Díaz y Díaz, in his *Valerio del Bierzo. Su persona. Su obra*, Fuentes y estudios de historia leonesa 111 (León: Centro de estudios e investigación San Isidoro, 2006), 346.

and young men to renounce worldly ideals and embrace the fullness of the spiritual life – undoubtedly shaped this distinct sensibility. Despite his ambivalent stance on war, shaped in part by the prevailing attitudes of his time, Taio was quite crude in showing the sufferings that the Froia revolt had caused. Before becoming bishop, Taio had served as abbot of a monastery near Saragossa, a background that likely informed his perspective.[103] Eugenius II of Toledo, by contrast, was initially trained within the Toledo clergy but later withdrew to embrace a monastic and eremitical life in the monastery of the Eighteen Martyrs in Saragossa.[104] He would become the most celebrated poet of Visigothic Hispania, having bequeathed more than one hundred *carmina*. Peace is one of the most recurrent themes in Eugenius's poetry. One of his liturgical hymns, composed around 653 in the context of Froia's rebellion, is a prayerful plea for the restoration of peace and tranquillity.[105] The desire for peace that Eugenius expresses is far from abstract; it is grounded in concrete experience reality and shaped by his direct witness to the horrors of war.[106] Closely related is *carmen* 36, entitled *Redintegratio pacis*, written shortly thereafter in celebration of the return to peace.[107] The poem conveys great joy at the re-establishment of the order willed by God. Yet without doubt, Eugenius's most beautiful composition on peace is the *De bono pacis*.[108] In this poem, he expresses the fullness of the peaceful ideal characteristic of Christianity in general and monastic spirituality in particular. Rooted in the conviction that Christ is the true source of all peace, Eugenius affirms that peace radiates outward from the person who harbours it within, flowing into and transforming the wider fabric of society.

Other figures, such as Valerius of Bierzo, Fructuosus of Braga or Ildephonsus of Toledo, have already been mentioned in this regard. While this tendency may in part be explained by the greater volume of texts produced in monastic settings, I am inclined to believe that the very nature of monasticism itself also played a formative role. Nevertheless, this remains an area that will require further investigation in future research.

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[103] *Braulionis Caesaraugustani epistulae*, ep. 35, in *Braulionis Caesaraugustani epistulae et Isidori Hispalensis epistulae Braulionem*, ed. Ruth Miguel Franco and José C. Martín, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 114B (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 107-13.

[104] See *De viris illustribus*, 13.1, in *El "De viris illustribus" de Ildefonso de Toledo. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. Carmen Codoñer (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1972), 132-33.

[105] *Eugenii Toletani Carmina*, *carmen* 5b, ed. Alberto, 213-15.

[106] Cabello, "'Heu pro dolor!,'" 85.

[107] Pilarski, *Der "Libellus Carminum,"* 179–84.

[108] *Eugenii Toletani Carmina*, *carmen* 4, ed. Alberto, 210. See also Pilarski, *Der "Libellus Carminum,"* 154–55; Cabello Llano, "'Heu pro dolor!,'" 84–85.

II. Final considerations: Church, War and the Struggle for Power

To conclude this chapter, I would offer a brief reflection on the following question: why did the sacralization of war gain momentum in the second half of the seventh century? I find this question particularly compelling, as it sheds light on the complex and often ambiguous relationship of the Church and warfare in the Visigothic kingdom. While the Church formally rejected the participation of its members in armed conflict and acknowledged the suffering war inflicted upon society, it was simultaneously entering into a process of religious military exaltation. It may be tempting to view this development as part of an unbroken sequence beginning with Constantine the Great, culminating inevitably in the sacralization of war in the early Middle Ages. Yet while the alliance between Church and political power undoubtedly had far-reaching consequences for Christian conceptions of warfare, such a teleological reading must be set aside. Instead, each historical moment must be examined on its own terms, with careful attention to the specific contexts and contingencies that shaped ecclesiastical attitudes toward war.

As I have argued throughout the chapter, Reccared's conversion to Catholicism marked a considerable change in mentality. The Goths began to perceive themselves as a new people of God and thus came to understand their role as one of privileged participation in the unfolding of salvation history. The growing use of the Old Testament imagery in relation to warfare facilitated a reinterpretation of war – not merely as a consequence of sin, but as a moment in which God might manifest his grace and favour upon his chosen people. In short, although war remained a time of penance, it was increasingly conceived as a time of grace as well.

The Church, alongside the monarchy and the nobility, constituted one of the three pillars of the Visigothic kingdom.[109] These institutions both shared and contested power, and it is within the framework of their mutual tensions that the Church's seemingly contradictory relationship with war must be understood. The Church's level of influence varied depending on the monarch who occupied the throne. The reigns of Chindasuinth and Recceswinth were marked by significant restrictions on ecclesiastical power.[110] Both kings sought

[109] On the role as counterpowers of the Church and the nobility, see Valverde Castro, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real*, 255–75.

[110] On the reigns of Chindasuinth and Recceswinth, see E. A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 190–217; F. J. Guzmán Armario, "Los reinados de Chindasvinto y Recesvinto. Un misterio hagiográfico sobre el concepto de segregación social en la *Hispania* visigoda," in *Marginados sociales y religiosos en la Hispania tardorromana*

to consolidate royal authority at the expense of the Church, which was the true hegemonic institution. During these central decades of the seventh century, the political tension between the kings, the nobility and the Church gave rise to a broader social preoccupation with peace.[111] Wamba, for his part, was opposed by certain sectors of the Church because of his particularly interventionist approach to ecclesiastical affairs.[112] However, the rise of Erwig was a real turning point for the Church. This king was particularly weak in exercising his power and needed all possible support from the bishops to secure his position.[113] The price he paid was the subordination of the crown to the Church. Not surprisingly, this period coincided with the episcopate of Julian of Toledo, who wielded the highest degree of influence of any Hispano-Visigothic bishop in the *regnum*.[114]

It is within this context, I believe, that we must situate the Church's specific development of its perspective on war. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, warfare was an essential instrument of political legitimation for the warrior aristocracies of the Visigothic kingdom. The Church, however, was unable to participate directly in this power struggle through its clergy due to its own moral and spiritual principles. In this sense, war was – *a priori* – a domain in which only the king and the nobility could assert and reinforce their authority.

This, in short, was part of the development of the politico-religious theory that had begun with the Third and Fourth Councils of Toledo. Through the sacralization of the monarch, the Church had already secured a role in legitimising one magnate over others. Now, by sanctifying war itself, it positioned itself as an authority capable of bestowing religious legitimacy on the campaigns waged by kings. This did not mean, of course, that the king lost his own authority. On more than a few occasions, the Church yielded to the will of the monarch, as had occurred repeatedly throughout the seventh century. Nevertheless, through the development of liturgical rites and the

y visigoda, ed. Raúl González Salinero, Thema mundi 5 (Madrid and Salamanca: Signifer, 2013), 317-38; D. Ungvary, "The Voice of the Dead King Chindasuinth: Poetry, Politics, and the Discourse of Penance in Visigothic Spain," *Early Medieval Europe* 26.3 (2018): 327–54.

[111] Kershaw, *Peaceful Kings*, 112–17.

[112] Among the main causes of friction would be his military law or his attempts to create new episcopates in *Aquae* or in the basilica of the Holy Apostles in Toledo, see Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, 228–31.

[113] The subordinate role of Erwig to the Church is reflected in the acts of the XII Council of Toledo, both in the *tomus regius* and in c. 1 (ed. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, 140-55), in which the bishops reaffirm their ability to sanction the legitimacy of a monarch.

[114] L. A. García Moreno, "Disenso religioso y hegemonía política," *Ilu* 2 (1999): 59-63.

adoption of a benevolent view of warfare, the Church was entering the political arena. At the ideological level, the Church would participate in the monopoly of state violence. It provided the basis for the monarchy to justify its monopoly on war and to consolidate its power in cooperation with the Church, without the Church being completely involved in the act of war.

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WAR AND RELIGION: NARRATIVES OF CONQUEST OF SOUTHERN PORTUGUESE TOWNS[*]

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Only a small number of medieval narratives recount Christian conquests of the southern Portuguese cities during the *Reconquista* from Muslims. They have been known since António Brandão published two of them in *Monarquia Lusitana*[1] – those of Santarém and Alcácer – and, even more so, since Alexandre Herculano used them in his *História de Portugal* and collected most of them in *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica*.[2] Given their wealth of information,[3] they have

[*] A first version of this paper was published in L. F. Oliveira, "Guerra e Religião:. As narrativas de conquista das cidades do Sul," in *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y guerra santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV),* ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez and J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva (Madrid: Sílex, 2018), 523–40. The current version has been revised and updated in several points.

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[1] A. Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, vol. 3, ed. António da Silva Rego *et al.* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1973), Appendix nº 20, 289v.-291 and vol. 4 (1974), Appendix, nº 9, 264v.-257v. (reprint of the 1632 edition).

[2] A. Herculano, *História de Portugal. Desde o começo da monarquia até o fim do reinado de Afonso III*, vol. 1, ed. José Mattoso (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1980), 479–84, 486–526, and endnotes 21 e 22, and vol. 2 (1980), 40–68, 254–71 and endnote 5; *De expugnatione scalabis*, ed. Alexandre Herculano, *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica. Scriptores* 1 (Lisbon: Academia das Ciências, 1856), 93-95, *Gosuini expugnatione Salaciae Carmen*, ed. Alexandre Herculano, *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Scriptore*s 1, 101-104, *De Expugnatione Olisiponis,* ed. Alexandre Herculano, *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Scriptore*s 1, 391-405.

[3] For the editions and the problems involved, see A. do Nascimento, "O júbilo da vitória. Celebração da tomada de Santarém aos mouros (A.D. 1147)," in *Ler Contra o Tempo. Condições dos textos na cultura portuguesa (recolha de estudos em Hora de Vésperas)*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Universidade de Lisboa, 2012), 1:465–81; *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros. Relato de Um Cruzado*, ed. Aires do Nascimento, introd. Maria João Branco (Lisbon: Nova Vega, 2001);

never ceased to attract the attention of researchers, whether to establish their text, authorship, chronology and historical reliability, or to address other issues they raise. Though triumphalist in tenor and conducive to selective remembrance, these texts have been shown to offer unique – and at times precise – information, frequently from an eyewitness perspective. Unsurprisingly, they have been used to study both the towns themselves and their Christian conquests: to reconstruct urban landscapes and regional significance – gates, walls, people, and wealth; to examine siege operations and military contingents; and to highlight the political weight of these conquests in consolidating the monarchy and shaping the kingdoms.[4]

Although widely read and valued for documenting Portugal's expansion, these narratives have been largely overlooked as sources on how war was perceived in the Iberian West. Few studies have examined their insights into conflict ideologies or the influence of the crusading spirit on the *Reconquista*.[5] This is no minor point. Drafted between the middle of the twelfth century and

"Narratio de Itinere Navali Peregrinorum Hierosolymam Tendentium et Silviam Capientium,' A.D. 1189," ed. Ch. Wendell David, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 81-85 (1939): 591–676; A. do Nascimento, "Poema de conquista. A tomada de Alcácer do Sal aos mouros (1217)", in *Ler Contra o Tempo*, 1, 483–516. For the Lisbon account, also J. Mattoso, *D. Afonso Henriques* (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2006), 167–79; M. G. Martins, *1147, A Conquista de Lisboa na rota da Segunda Cruzada* (Lisbon: Esfera dos Livros, 2017).

[4] Among others, see M. Barroca, "A História das Campanhas", in *Nova história militar de Portugal*, ed. Manuel Themudo Barata and Nuno Severiano Teixeira, 5 vols. (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2003), 1:22–68; M. J. Branco, *D. Sancho I. O filho do fundador*, Reis de Portugal 2 (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2006), 118–40; H. Vilar, *D. Afonso II. Um Rei sem Tempo*, Reis de Portugal 1 (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2005), 131–49. For their use in urban studies, G. Pradaliè, *Lisboa. Da Reconquista ao Fim do Século XIII* (Lisbon: Palas, 1975), 16-20; M. L. Pereira, *Alcácer do Sal na Idade Média* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2000), 46–51, 62–63; M. Viana, *Espaço e Povoamento numa vila portuguesa (Santarém, 1147-1350)* (Lisbon: Caleidoscópio, 2007), 60–74.

[5] S. Boissellier, "Réflexions sur l'idéologie portugaise de la reconquête. XIIe-XIVe siècles", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velàzquez*, 30.1 (1994): 150–57; M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística do feito da tomada de Alcácer (1217)," in *D. Afonso Henriques e a sua época. Actas do 2º Congresso histórico de Guimarães*, 4 vols. (Guimarães: Câmara Municipal, 1996), 2:321–57; A. Pereira, "Realidades e ideologia na conquista de Silves em 1189," in *Poder e Sociedade. Actas das Jornadas Interdisciplinares*, ed. Maria Ferro Tavares, Colecção de estudos pós-graduados 9–10, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 1998), 1:229–43; idem, *Representações da Guerra no Portugal da Reconquista* (Lisbon: Comissão de Portuguesa de História Militar, 2003), 55–60, 82–141; A. Norte, "As elites intelectuais e a Guerra. Manifestações ideológicas e modelos proselitistas na génese do reino português," in *A Guerra e a sociedade na idade média. Actas das VI Jornadas Luso-Espanholas de Estudos Medievais*, 2 vols. (Torres Novas: Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Medievais, 2009), 1:377–91; A. Azevedo, "As Representações das Conquistas Cristãs: Lisboa (1147) e Silves (1189)" (MA thesis, Universidade do Algarve, 2012).

the second decade of the subsequent century, as will be seen below, their time of writing coincides with the period in which the Apostolic See was fostering closer ties between the various fronts in the fight against the infidels, from the Holy Land to the Iberian Peninsula and the Slavic lands.[6] They thus offer a valuable lens for the observation of the dissemination of crusading ideals, all the more so since three of the narratives were written by crusaders who took part in the conquests of Lisbon, Silves and Alcácer. Only the author of the Silves account produced an independent narrative, free from the patronage or vested interests of the Portuguese kingdom's civil and ecclesiastical authorities.[7] Moreover, all three texts also concur with an increase in religious antagonism in the Iberian Peninsula, driven in part by the uncompromising stance of the Almoravids and especially the Almohads, and in part provoked by the presence of Frankish clerics and the actions of the Crusaders.[8]

Important as the crusade may be, it is not the only framework through which martial violence was legitimised.[9] From the ninth century onward, Hispania cultivated a discourse rooted in Old Testament models, where war was framed as part of a covenant between God, the king and the people: victory signified fidelity to divine precepts, while defeat reflected their breach. This view, which cast war as a moral test and granted God the role of leader of the victorious army, later evolved around the ideas of recovery and restoration—seen as

[6] J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (London: Continuum, 1990), 93–104; C. Ayala Martínez, *Las Cruzadas* (Madrid: Sílex, 2004), 44–49; C. Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin, 2007), 304–17; W. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095-c. 1187* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 129–78.

[7] M. J. Branco, "Introdução. A conquista de Lisboa na estratégia de um poder que se consolida," in *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros*, 11, 31, 38–39; Pereira, "Memória cruzadística," 325–28; Nascimento, "Poema de conquista," 494–95, 500. On the identity of the author of the Silves report, see A. Pereira, "Silves no itinerário da terceira cruzada. Um testemunho teutónico," *Revista Militar* 62 (2010): 77–88.

[8] J. Mattoso, *Ricos Homens, infanções e cavaleiros. A nobreza medieval portuguesa nos séculos XI e XII*, 2nd ed. (Lisbon: Guimarães, 1985), 192-207; Roy Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade in Spain c. 1050-1150," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 37 (1987): 37–38, 42–46; J-P. Molénat, "Sur le rôle des Almohades dans la fin du christianisme local au Maghreb et en Al-Andalus", *Al-Qantara* 18.2 (1997): 389–413.

[9] A. Bronisch, *Reconquista y guerra santa. La concepción de la guerra en la Espana cristiana desde los Visigodos hasta comienzos del siglo XII*, Monográfica. Biblioteca de humanidades. Chronica nova estudios históricos 99 (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2006), esp. chap. IV.; *idem*, "La (sacralización de la) guerra en las fuentes de los siglos X y XI y el concepto de guerra santa," *in Orígenes y Desarrollo de la Guerra Santa en la Península Ibérica. Palabras y imágines para una legitimación (siglos X-XIV)*, ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Patrick Henriet and J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez 154 (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2016), 7-30. Also J. Flori, *La guerre sainte. La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier 2001), 246–52.

essential for regaining divine favour and protection.[10] If the peninsular struggles against Islam therefore assumed the form of territorial expansion, they also acquired an inherent sacred dimension, even without the presence of holy warriors,[11] the character of a pilgrimage, or the spiritual benefits associated with crusading.[12] As might be expected, practical realities could diverge from these erudite and pious constructs, admitting the alliances, coexistence and movement of warriors between the two "religious camps."[13] Yet the moral value of these conflicts was widely recognised; they were never seen as purely political or military affairs. From the middle of the eleventh century, the papacy began to emphasise these religious characteristics, encouraging external support and reinterpreting the peninsular campaigns as acts of penance.[14] It was therefore increasingly difficult to classify them as purely secular wars.

The following lines are not intended to fill the gap on how war was represented and justified in the Iberian West, nor to solve all the problems associated with it. Drawing on the conquest narratives of Santarém, Lisbon,

[10] Bronisch, "La (sacralización de la) guerra," 11–13; Luís Krus, "Tempo de Godos e tempo de Mouros. As memórias da Reconquista,", in *A Construção do Passado Medieval. Textos inéditos e publicados* (Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2011), 106–12.

[11] It was not until the beginning of the twelfth century that warrior saints began to appear on the Peninsula, P. Henriet, "Y a-t-il une hagiographie de la « Reconquête » hispanique (XIeXIIIe siècles)?", in *L'expansion occidentale (XIe - XVe siècles): formes et conséquences. Actes du XXXIIIe Congrès de la Société des médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public (Madrid, 2002*) (Paris: Sorbonne, 2003), 53-58.

[12] Ph. Josserand, "Croisade et reconquête dans le royaume de Castille au XIIe siècle", in *L'expansion occidentale (XIe - XVe siècles)*, 75-85; Th. Deswarte, "Entre historiographie et histoire: aux origines de la guerre sainte en Occident", *in Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte. Guerre, idéologie et religion dans l'espace méditerranéen latin (XI-XIII siècle)*, ed. Daniel Baloup, Philippe Josserand (Toulouse: Université Toulouse, 2006), 67-90. For the role of pilgrimage in the Crusade, J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and Idea of Crusading* (London: Athlone, 1995, 22-30. J. Flori, *La Guerre Sainte*, 310-320. The relationship between crusade and reconquest is not always clear, J. Rodríguez García, "Historiografía delas Cruzadas", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Hª Medieval 13 (2000): 341-395; A. Pereira, "*Terminus Gentium et Ecclesiae*. Narrar a cruzada no território hispânico ocidental, 1147-1217", PhD project submitted to FCSH-UNL, Lisbon [available at: https://fcsh-unl.academia.edu/Armando Pereira; consulted in December 2017].

[13] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada em Portugal* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1940), 5-6, 17-19; J. Mattoso, *Ricos Homens*, 193-198; R. Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade", 35-8. For specific cases, J. Ruiz-Domènec, *Atardeceres Rojos. Cuatro vidas entre el islam y la cristiandad en la época de las cruzadas*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 2007).

[14] R. Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade", 42-47; J. Flori, *La Guerre Sainte*, 277-291; J. Flori, *Guerra Santa, Yihad, Cruzada. Violencia y religión en el cristianismo y el islam* (Granada: Universidade de Granada, 2004, 223-232; A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 147 and ff.; W. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality*, 120-138.

Silves and Alcácer, the goal is to identify the various manifestations of sacralization – ranging from prayers and the presence of ecclesiastics and religious symbols in the armies, to the ritual celebrations that marked the course of battle and signs of God's support expressed through prodigies and miracles. Based on this material, questions will be asked as to how war was combined with religion, how religion assisted its conduct and elevated it to a higher plane; and how, to varying degrees, it became an essential component of martial actions. To assess the degree of integration of these two spheres – war and the sacred – and, ultimately, to identify the ideals of the Crusade and the Reconquest, we will also examine how the sources portray the justifications for war, the motivations of the combatants, and the image of the enemy.[15] These elements are essential for understanding how the conflicts were framed and how the status of those who died in them was construed. Each text will be analysed individually rather than as part of a unified whole, allowing their differences, commonalities, and developments over time to be properly brought into perspective.

I. Santarém

Certainly, written in Coimbra, perhaps in the monastery of Santa Cruz,[16] the account of the conquest of Santarém is unlikely to be much later than 15 March 1147, the date of the city's capture.[17] It is a celebration of the victory written by a learned canon who used numerous biblical references and the liturgy of the choral office – the invitatory of matins and the second nocturn of that hour – to

[15] For a joint analysis of the accounts of Lisbon, Silves and Alcácer, without comparing them with the one for Santarém, A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 109-141.

[16] On the relation of the text to the hagiographic productions of Santa Cruz, *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*, ed. Luís Findley Cintra (Lisbon: INCM, 1951), vol. I, 391-394; A. Pereira, "A conquista de Santarém na tradição historiográfica portuguesa", in *D. Afonso Henriques e a sua época: actas do 2º Congresso*, vol. 5, 300-302. Contrary to what A. do Nascimento suggests ("O júbilo da vitória", 469-470), the relationship that the text establishes with all the clergy of the city does not invalidate the previous observations, nor places its writing within the cathedral of Coimbra.

[17] A. Nascimento, "O júbilo da vitória", 471. The suggestion is based on the fact that the text omits any reference to the conquest of Lisbon, shortly afterwards, although the proximity to the *Life of St Teotonio* does not allow us to date the text to the period before the end of the 1160s, as noted A. Pereira, "A conquista de Santarém", 301. Other evidence points to a later date (A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 55; J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin's Song of the Conquest of Alcácer do Sal: Editions and Translations of De Expugnatione Scalabis and Gosuini De Expugnatione Salaciae Carmen* (London: Routledge, 2021, 4-6), but the reworking of this text by Goswin (J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin,* 135-137) is unlikely, given the contrast to the way the *Carmen* depicts war.

organise the narrative.[18] The initial call to prayer and jubilation soon defines the subsequent terms of the exposition, put as words of the king, by presenting the conquest as a *magnum prodigium* achieved by a small force through God's favour, and thus surpassing the ancient exploits of Abraham and Gideon.[19] The monarch's speech does not claim the merits of the victory[20] but rather confirms, with the solemnity of an oath, the divine benevolence with which the feats of the biblical kings and other contemporary monarchs (such as Afonso VI of León, the king's grandfather) were surpassed.[21] The conquest of Santarém was thus part of a divine plan, while the monarch became an instrument of God's will.[22] This can be seen in the image used to close the text – the king on his knees, praying at the newly opened gate[23] – a testimony of praise and of submission to God's designs.

Presented as a work of God, the conquest was justified on more prosaic grounds. Familiar with the geography of the region and its routes,[24] but also with the Arabic toponymy of the town,[25] the writer associated ideas of death and danger with that toponymy,[26] which becomes evident in the harshness of the place and in the quality of its natural and man-made defences.[27] The town is said

[18] A. Nascimento, "O júbilo da vitória", 465-467. The edition used is published here (472-476 (latin), 476-481 (translation), with its original title *Qomodo sit capta Sanctaren ciuitas a rege Alfonso comitis Henrici filio,* hereafter *Sit Capta Sanctaren*. For the description of the Alcobaça codex that transmits this text, as well as the Alcácer poem, and which must be from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, A. Nascimento,"O júbilo da vitória", 468, note 12; J. Soalheiro, "«Traditio fundationis»: O mosteiro de Santa Maria de Alcobaça e a interpretação do passado cisterciense do reino de Portugal em tempos medievais", in *De Cister a Portugal: o tempo e o(s) modo(s). XI Encontro Cultural de S. Cristóvão de Lafões*, ed. Maria Alegria Marques and Luís Carlos Amaral (Lafões: Mosteiro de Lafões, 2016), 74.

[19] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 472. For comments on the liturgical resources and the discourse structure, J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin,* 25-29, 43-47.

[20] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473: "Testor deum celi, oculis cuius nuda et aperta sunt omnia."

[21] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473.

[22] M. L. Rosa, "A religião no século: vivências e devoções dos leigos", in *História Religiosa de Portugal*, ed. Carlos Moreira Azevedo (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2000), vol. I, 450. As noted there (448-449), the hagiographic texts of Santa Cruz offer a different image of the monarch, stressing his inexperience and the need to be advised by the priors of the monastery.

[23] *Sit capta Sanctaren*, 476: "In medio ergo porte fixis genibus que orauerim uel ex quanta profunditate animi scit deus."

[24] A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 56.

[25] M. S. Conde, "*Madînat Shantarîn*. Uma aproximação à paisagem da Santarém muçulmana (séculos X-XII)", in *Horizontes do Portugal Medieval. Estudos históricos* (Cascais: Patrimonia, 1999), 49.

[26] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473: "ut lingua arabica uocetur Alhafa, id est, timor … uocatur Alhanse, id est, coluber."

[27] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 477-478.

to have had the best fortifications in Hispania,[28] to be totally impregnable, and added to the power of its walls was the richness of its surroundings, an abundance – in cereals, vineyards, olive groves, fish and cattle[29] – only comparable to the lands of Egypt and Puglia and akin to the garden of delights.[30] Basically, it was this combination of power and wealth that made it a threat to Coimbra, since thence came the attacks that endangered the town, an idea repeated twice throughout the text.[31] If the conquest of Santarém was seen as a miracle or a marvel,[32] it was entirely justified by the need to ensure the defence of the kingdom and to protect Coimbra and its people in particular.

On the other hand, the king's exposition grants the war a largely secular character. All the concrete actions, from the planning to the conducting of the campaign, were the exclusive responsibility of the ruler. Although important details are omitted, such as the absence in Seville of an essential part of the town's cavalry,[33] the account reflects a particular attention to the most diverse technical issues, from the choice of combatants to the preparation of provisions, from route planning to the number of days' march and the encampments, and from breaking the truce to launching the assault. The initiative was naturally assisted by the prayers of the canons of Santa Cruz and the other clergy and people of Coimbra,[34] but it was practised from a distance, in another sphere, without any cleric taking part in the expedition, or without it being associated with religious symbols or any particular ritual. It also relied on the help of God, manifested in two simultaneous prodigies,[35] both read as harbingers of victory, and also in two miracles to put the sentries to sleep and alter the initial plans,[36] aspects that evoke the role of God in leading the armies, even if these

[28] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 472: "omnium [H]ispanie ciuitatum munitissimam."

[29] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473-474.

[30] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473.

[31] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 474: "Fuit hec ciuitas, quia fortissima et fecundissima, semper bellicosa insidians Colimbrie … Nostis quanta mala fecerit ciuitati uestre et uobis omnique meo regno."

[32] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 473: "nouis mirabilibus non renouat, sed supergreditur antiqua mirabilia."

[33] I. Lourinho, "Fontes cristãs e muçulmanas em confronto. Reflexões sobre as conquistas de Santarém e Lisboa em 1147", in *Lisboa Medieval. Gentes, Espaços e Poderes*, ed. João Luís Fontes *et al*. (Lisbon: IEM, 2017), 141-145. Also I. Lourinho, *Fronteira do Gharb Al-Andalus: Terreno de confronto entre Almorávidas e Cristãos (1093-1147)* (Lisbon: Universidade Lisboa, 2020), 514-518.

[34] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 475 "Hodie, sicut credo, fit pro nobis communis oratio et canonicis Sancte Crucis, quibus predixi hoc nostrum negotium, et in quibus confido, et a cetero clero simul cum omni populo."

[35] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 475.

[36] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 475-476.

interventions, however decisive, do not influence the outcome. The clearest indications of the use of the religious elements during this campaign can therefore be found in the double invocation of the Virgin and of St. James at the time of the final assault,[37] and above all in the thanksgiving of the monarch, on his knees before the finally open gate of the city.

Even without resorting to the notions of recovery and restoration, Santarém's account does not stray far from the ideals of the *Reconquista*: a war waged by the king, situated largely outside the explicitly religious sphere, yet reliant on the support of the kingdom's clergy[38] and subject, above all, to the judgement of God, who can turn it into a prize or a punishment. It was thus recorded as a higher history, updating or renewing the wars of the Old Testament, but its sacredness depended essentially on the judgment and on the will of God. The greatest objection to this reading, with which the story is linked to earlier traditions, is found in the call for the extermination of the inhabitants of Santarém, read in two passages[39] and which has been understood as an exhortation to intolerance and associated with the behaviour of the crusaders in the conquest of Lisbon.[40] The last of these passages may only have contextual value, as it occurs during the initial fighting on the ramparts,[41] but the previous one was put into the king's mouth before the assault on the city. This, however, is a literary resource that summons the biblical past to the present – it is a quotation from Joshua 6:21[42] – without the fact modelling the fighting or translating it into concrete and generalised practices. As has been recently emphasised, it is also possible that such an appeal to extermination is a way of concealing other realities, brought about by the collaboration of some of the inhabitants in the conquest,[43] or by an agreement negotiated with their defenders after entering the city.[44] In any case, they were not all killed and many of them took refuge in Lisbon, as attested in the description of the crusader

[37] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 476: "Sancte Iacobe, et beatissima Maria Virgo, succurrite."

[38] According to the biography of St. Teotonio, first prior of Santa Cruz in Coimbra and royal advisor, the king's victories were already ascribed to his prayers. See A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 53–54.

[39] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 475, 476.

[40] A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 58; J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin,* 4-5.

[41] *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 476.

[42] For the biblical quotations, A. Nascimento, "O júbilo da vitória", 472-476 and the notes to the text edition.

[43] J. Mattoso, *D. Afonso Henriques*, 172. Although presented as a sweet lie, the king had previously announced that some of the town guards were willing to cooperate, *Sit Capta Sanctaren*, 475.

[44] The surrenders of Lisbon, Silves and Alcácer were negotiated, and capitulation agreements were frequent even in the Holy Land, A. Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions to the Franks in the Levant, 1097-1291* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 23-30.

Raul.[45] The preservation of the city and of the people who wanted to stay in it, or who were unable to leave it, therefore took precedence over hatred of the Muslims and episodes of generalised slaughter.

II. Lisbon

The conquest of Lisbon, which was already being prepared, certainly posed other, far more complex problems. Instead of an assault by a handful of men in the dead of night, as in Santarém, a siege was being planned – and this was the second time it had been attempted[46] – which apparently had both the support of St. Bernard's preaching as part of the Second Crusade and the collaboration of Northern crusaders.[47] The siege would therefore have to accommodate local capacities and interests to the motivation and personal commitment of pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land. It would have to captivate them or at least entice them into a military enterprise in which they would expend effort and resources, but which would divert them from their destination, jeopardising their own vows. As has been observed, the risk lay in a perversion of the pilgrimage,[48] an uncertainty that had already manifested itself during a storm in the Bay of Biscay, on the Crusaders' journey to Porto, but which would be revealed yet on another occasion.[49]

Certainly, written by a cleric named Raul,[50] perhaps in the last quarter of the twelfth century,[51] the account of the conquest of Lisbon would not fail to deal with some of these problems, all the more so since it was already seen as a model

[45] *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros*, 78. This volume also contains a new edition of *De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi* (pp. 54–146), which will henceforth be cited as DEL.'.

[46] A. Herculano, *História de Portugal*, vol. I, 449, 494-495; L. S. Machado, "Os ingleses em Portugal", *Biblos: Boletim da Biblioteca da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra* 9 (1933): 384, 392*n*1, 394-5, 553; L. Villegas-Arristizábal, "Revisiting the Anglo-Norman Crusaders' failed attempt to conquer Lisbon c. 1142", *Portuguese Studies* 29-1 (2013): 7-20.

[47] Above all, the synthesis by J. Mattoso, *D. Afonso Henriques*, 167-171.

[48] J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War in the *De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi* (*The Conquest of Lisbon*)", in *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, Studies In Church History 36 (Cambridge: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2000), 131; A. Forey, "The siege of Lisbon and the second crusade", *Portuguese Studies* 20 (2004):13*n*62; Ch. Tyerman, *God's War*, 311.

[49] DEL, 56, 106. The last reference concerns the miracle of the bread consecrated in blood, the meaning of which has been emphasised by A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 133-134.

[50] M. J. Branco, "Introdução. A conquista de Lisboa", 28-34, 38. Based on a suggestion by this author (30-31), J. Wilson ('Enigma of the De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 9-1 (2017): 108-11) identified the author as Roberto, dean of Lisbon Cathedral, but the problem is far from being solved.

[51] J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", p. 127; M. J. Branco, "Introdução. A conquista de Lisboa", 9.

for guiding a successful crusade, or for linking it to the *Reconquista*.[52] Two of the speeches transcribed in it, by the king and by the archbishop of Braga, justify the aggression in terms of the *Reconquista*'s own ideology. The first reduced it to the context of the continuous wars against the Muslims, a fact that decreased his assets and forced him to offer the fruit of the looting to the Crusaders,[53] the other invoked the recovery of a previously Christian town, a place of history and martyrdom of kings, saints, and bishops.[54] Two other speeches, by Bishop Pedro Pitões and by a Frankish cleric, perhaps Raul himself,[55] made on arrival in Porto and before the final assault, materialise the crusading perspective. Both underline the just cause of this conquest, to defend the Church and repress the violence to which it was subjected, or to recover stolen goods, with the Muslims described as thieves and robbers.[56] But both also insist on maintaining the condition of penitents and pilgrims, and therefore on the detachment from vices of all kinds,[57] and on the right intention of the crusaders.[58] This topic is repeated in other passages and it even emerges, as a negative, in the response of the elderly Muslim to the archbishop of Braga, who accuses him of expressing a vice – territorial ambition – as a virtue.[59] On the other hand, there is a clear appeal to arms, combat and violence,[60] with one of the reporters announcing that death

[52] J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 127; J. Wilson "Enigma of the *De Expugnatione*", 112.

[53] DEL, 82: "A Mauris enim semper inquietatis."

[54] DEL, 92-96. For an analysis of the discourse, A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 95-99.

[55] *De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi (The Conquest of Lisbon)*, ed. Charles Wendell David (New York: Columbia, 1936), 41; J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 137.

[56] DEL, 66, 122.

[57] DEL, 62, 64, 66, 118, 120, 122.

[58] DEL, 70 ("Sed quoniam armati eunistis, eia! ut boni milites agite. Quia non est peccatum militare, sed propter predam peccatum est militare"), 122 ("Nolite, fratres, nolite sperare in iniquitate, et rapinas nolite concupiscere"). At that time, the Templars were also concerned about the right intention and the legitimacy of plundering and pillaging, D. Poirel, "Les Templiers, le diable et le chanoine: *le Sermo ad milites Templi* réattribué à Hughes de Saint-Victor", in *Amicorum societs. Mélanges offerts à François Dolbeau pou son 65e anniversaire,* ed. Jacques Elfassi *et al*. (Florence: SISMEL, 2012), 635-664.

[59] DEL, 96. For a commentary on the passage, J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 136; S. Lay, "The Reconquest as Crusade in the Anonymus *De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi*", *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 8 (2002): 127-128.

[60] DEL, 68 ("Vos, igitur, fratres, cum hiis fortitudinem armis suscipite"), 122 ("Nolite, fratres, nolit timere; nolite expauescere; contristari fugit; stupefieri uilipendite"). The Bishop of Porto's speech was not seen as a crusading sermon, unlike that of the outspoken cleric, C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 23; R. Fletcher, "Reconquest and Crusade", 43-44; Ch. Tyerman, "Where there any crusades in the twelfth century?", *The English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 563-564, republ. *in The Practices of Crusading. Image and Action from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth*

occurred in this context as a personal *gain*,[61] while the other insists that the murder of the Muslim was not a *sin*,[62] in a line which recalls a similar passage in the primitive rule of the Templars.[63]

With this presentation of the conquest as a commendable deed, without making Lisbon a diversion but rather a stage on the road to Jerusalem,[64] the right conditions were created, on the one hand, to demonise the Muslim and, on the other, to deem the deaths of the crusaders as a form of martyrdom. Raul's story recalls both. The negative image of the enemy is not, however, a constant throughout the text. In the speech of the archbishop of Braga, the continued Muslim presence in the town is accepted as positive, or at least as a lesser evil, and Muslims are offered the preservation of their goods and customs, provided they hand over control of the castle.[65] In other passages, Raul also shows some sympathy for the fate of the inhabitants and, just as the archbishop of Braga had done, he also expressed his desire that some Muslims convert to the faith of Christ.[66] Their harmful attributes, however, are clearer and more copious[67]. Seen as adversaries of the Cross and as oppressors of the Church,[68] they are described

Centuries (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, nº VI). However, similarities with other sermons reveal knowledge of essential values of Cross Spirituality, P. Baubeta, "Toward a history of preaching in Medieval Portugal", *Portuguese Studies* 7 (1991): 1-18; J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 127-133, 136-138; J. Wilson, "Enigma of the *De Expugnatione*", 117-118.

[61] DEL, 124: "Hic ergo uiuere gloria est, et mori lucrum." These alternatives (death as a gain or glory in life) are the same ones that St. Bernard had suggested to the English when he preached the Crusade, J. Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 73, 162. Also J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 138.

[62] DEL, 68: "Nolite, fratres, nolite timere. Non enim in huiusmodi actionibus homicidio uel taxatione alicuius criminis notabimini."

[63] *The Templars. Selected sources translated and annotated*, ed. Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (Manchaster: Manchaster University, 2002), 47, n. 48.

[64] DEL, 68. For further commentary, see J. Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 130-132.

[65] DEL, 94. Before this proposal (DEL, 92), the archbishop had invited them to go freely to Moorish lands.

[66] DEL, 94, 146.

[67] For an overview, Jean Flori, *La Guerre Sainte*, 227-260; J. Flori, *Guerra Santa, Yihad,* 121-143; Ph. Sénac, *El occidente medieval frente al islam. La imagen del otro* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2011). To the perception of the Muslim in the Aragonese sources and in the bulls of Innocent III, M. Alvira Cabrer, "Expresiones de la guerra santa en las fuentes del reinado de Pedro el Católico, Rei de Aragón y Conde de Barcelona", in *Orígenes y Desarrollo de la Guerra Santa*, 127-154; D. Smith, "La guerra contra los musulmanes en España «en palabras» del papa Inocencio III", in *Orígenes y Desarrollo de la Guerra Santa*, 212-214.

[68] DEL, 66 (*seruitutis iugo*), 68 (*depressam Hiyspanorum ecclesiam*), 70 (*aduersariis crucis*), 94 (*ecclesiarum ruine*), 106, 142 (*crucis aduersarios*).

either as disloyal and robbers, or as pagans, impious and impure, capable of the greatest insults to the Virgin, to Christ, and to the Cross.[69] Their wickedness was so commonplace that it was reflected in an disorderly town dominated by vice.[70] Ultimately, it was this vision that robbed them of their human dignity and justified the violence and atrocities of the Crusaders.[71] But it was also a way of combating evil that allowed for the redemption of the living, or for the recognition of the dead as martyrs of the faith, as was mentioned before. In the cemetery arranged for the Flemish and the Colognian contingents, perhaps adjacent to one of the town's burial grounds, the account recorded the miraculous healing of two mute people,[72] a success attested to by other testimonies and other miracles, with news of the regrowth of a palm tree in that place and the organisation of a proper cult,[73] if not very significantly spread.

On the other hand, the whole campaign was announced as a religious phenomenon, marked by various manifestations of the sacred. Upon leaving Dartmouth, all the crusaders had committed themselves, morally and practically, to securing the presence of a priest on each of the 160 ships, transforming them into a collective parish, with weekly confession and communion on Sundays.[74] This considerable ecclesiastical framework was joined in Porto by the town's bishop and by the archbishop of Braga, and later in Lisbon by the bishops of Lamego and Viseu, all of whom testified to the agreement between the king and the crusaders.[75] Many accompanied the fighting, such as the bishop of Porto, who absolved and blessed those who left the camps to take part in the assault on the suburbs, those who distributed holy bread before the attacks on the wall, or the archbishop of Braga, who consecrated

[69] DEL, 68 (*impii*), 120 (*impurissimi*), 94 (*fides lesa*), 104-106 (*iniuriam*), 122 (*fures*, *latrones*), 144 (*gentilitas*).

[70] DEL, 78.

[71] For some episodes of this kind, DEL, 112, 138.

[72] DEL, 106.

[73] A. Pereira, "Guerra e santidade: o cavaleiro-mártir Henrque de Bona e a conquista cristã de Lisboa", *Lusitânia Sacra* 17 (2005): 15-38; J. Wilson, "Tactics of Attraction: Saints, Pilgrims and Warriors in the Portuguese Reconquista", *Portuguese Studies* 30-2 (2014): 2014-221. However, this link between the saints of Lisbon and the attraction of pilgrims and the transformation of the city into a stage on the road to Jerusalem is poorly articulated with the limited importance of the cult of Henry of Bonn or the scant diffusion of the cult of Saint Vincent outside the kingdom.

[74] DEL, 54-56. As suggested by Ch. Tyerman, *God's War*, 309-310, such forms of cohesion reflected the organizational culture of the crusaders' hometowns.

[75] DEL, 60, 72, 90.

the final offensive with prayers and holy water.[76] On this occasion, a pre-battle sermon was also preached by an outspoken cleric[77], armed with a relic of the Holy Wood, before which all bowed down, and with which he said he was willing to share dangers and fatigue by standing next to a war machine.[78] Moreover, all of them, the archbishop, bishops and other clergy, took part in the solemn procession which travelled through the town after the surrender, when songs of jubilation and purification were sung – the *Te Deum laudamus* and the *Asperges me* – while the banner of the Cross was raised.[79]

As expected in this context, wonders and miracles punctuate the entire narrative. The first occurred before the siege of Lisbon: one near Coruña in Galician waters, the other at the mouth of the river Tagus, both serving above all to foretell victory and the end of idolatry in Hispania.[80] On the other hand, miracles accompany the fighting, either to help the crusaders control the suburbs, to denounce the wicked and maintain proper behaviour, as in the case of the bread consecrated in blood, or to reward the efforts with the discovery of an abundance of supplies in the conquered town.[81] God's support and mercy are also manifested in other contexts, almost always military in nature: in raising morale through the discovery of a letter from inhabitants requesting assistance, in ensuring the protection of a siege engine, and in maintaining unity and dispelling fear at the moment of a town's surrender.[82] More than the result of the actions of devout and pious men, the conquest thus corresponded to a divine plan – foreseen, announced, and carried out by God Himself. Such, at least, was the conviction of the cleric Raul, who acknowledged this plan, attributed the victory to God, recalled the spontaneous conversions he claimed to have witnessed, and insisted that it was He who had ultimately fought for the Crusaders.[83]

[76] DEL, 100, 106, 116. The distribution of holy bread before the battles, only alluded in DEL, 106, is confirmed in the account of the foundation of the Monastery of St. Vincent. See *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros*, 186.

[77] For this type of sermon, preached to encourage fighters before battle, Bachrach, David S. "Conforming with the Rhetorical Tradition of Plausibility: Clerical Representation of Battlefield Orations against Muslims, 1080-1170." *International History Review* 26, no, 1 (2004), 7-9; Throop, Susanna A. "Christian Community and the Crusades: Religious and Social Practices in the 'De expugnatione Lyxbonensi.'" *Haskins Society journal* 24 (2012), 95–126.

[78] DEL, 116-126. For further commentary, see Phillips, "Ideas of Crusade and Holy War", 138.

[79] DEL, 138.

[80] DEL, 58, 74. Also A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 131-134; A. Azevedo, *As Representações das Conquistas*, 127 and ff.

[81] DEL, 102, 106, 140.

[82] DEL, 108, 128, 130.

[83] DEL, 106, 142, 144, 146.

III. Silves

Despite the parallels with Lisbon – namely the cooperation of other fleets in a conquest initiated by another king[84] –, the anonymous account of the conquest of Silves, likely written in the early thirteenth century[85] by a German cleric and participant of the Third Crusade, presents a markedly different reality. In part, this is because the text was written outside the kingdom – the narrative abruptly ends in Marseille in October 1189[86] – without the sponsorship or complicity of the Portuguese authorities, and thus reflects the greater difficulty in reconciling the aims of those authorities with the interests and motivations of the crusaders. An essential aspect that the Lisbon text did not silence but resolved.

Disagreements arose as soon as the Crusaders and Portuguese forces arrived on the coast of the Algarve. The commander of the royal detachment proposed redirecting the campaign to a different target,[87] instead of moving to Silves, and further divergences were shortly revealed. Conflicts arose among the Crusaders themselves, with the Flemish either seeking to abandon the siege or adopting reprehensible behaviour.[88] Clashes then followed with the Portuguese, who were accused of cowardice, of refusing to fight, and of repeatedly attempting to desert the battlefield.[89] The most serious disagreements, however, concerned King Sancho I, who was reproached for breaking the pact with the Crusaders and for the lack of justice and probity in the distribution of the loot, or criticised for not delivering the tithe of the land to the Holy Sepulchre, thus disrespecting the vow he had made.[90] Fundamentally, the perspectives proved irreconcilable, especially for those Crusaders who were merely passing through and viewed the campaign primarily as a chance for plunder and failed to grasp that Silves was not beyond the kingdom's borders, but within its sphere of expansion – as underscored by the king's return to his domains after the conquest.[91] For the author of the account, these disagreements with the monarch were the chief

[84] For the royal preparation of the conquest, see M. J. Branco, *D. Sancho I*, 119-130.

[85] See David, "'Narratio de Itinere Navali,'" 597–98. For the souce edition, 610–42 there, henceforth cited as *Narratio de itinere navali*. For the Portuguese translation, *Relação da derrota naval,* 2-53. On the identity of the author, A. Pereira, "Silves no itinerário", 84-85.

[86] *Narratio de itinere navali*, 642.

[87] *Narratio de itinere navali*, 619.

[88] Ibid., 623-624, 628-9, 632. Also A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 134-135.

[89] *Narratio de itinere navali*, 626, 627, 629-630.

[90] Ibid., 632. Also A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 136-137.

[91] *Narratio de itinere navali*, 632: "Rex vero VI die abinde, rebus dispositis, et urbem principe milicie sue et multis militibus muniens, ad propria rediit."

reason why the whole region was not fully subdued at that time, and why relations ended on a less friendly note than they had begun.[92]

These accounts suggest that the king's invitation to the expedition against Silves was accepted primarily because of the expectation of plunder. This was the central element of the pact with the crusaders, which granted them the spoils of the city[93] and which they repeatedly insisted on being honoured.[94] It was, in fact, the breach of this agreement that sparked the conflict with the monarch, even if the Flemish complaints were driven more by the breaking of promises than by greed alone.[95] For the author of the account, and likely for his companions, the sacking of a Muslim city in Hispania was not incompatible with the status of a pilgrim on a journey to reconquer Jerusalem.[96] It did not signify deviation from their goal, nor did it raise the kinds of concerns voiced in Lisbon about the risk of corrupting the crusade. Thus, not concerned about issues of right intention or just war, Crusaders saw the loot as a legitimate reward for their efforts, or at least as a necessary means to offset the costs of their pilgrimage.[97] Perhaps this was because they increasingly saw this combination of war and religion as a means of redeeming their sins. This idea emerges right at the beginning of the narrative,[98] and it justified their subsequent trust in God's help and their courage in the face of the adversaries.[99]

Nevertheless, there is no overt demonisation of the Muslims in the account. The city is described in relatively neutral terms, with even some admiration for how it was organised, the large number and quality of its houses and buildings and especially its extensive fortifications.[100] As in the case of Santarém, it was the strength of these defences, the size of the population, and the wealth of the

[92] Ibid., 632 ("et ideo peregrini iniuriose tractati minis amice ab eo separati sunt"), 636 ("et terram illam, que Algarbia dicitur, integraliter Christianis possidendam reliquissemus, si odium regis et quorundam nostrum execranda festinatio non prohibuisset").

[93] The agreement with the crusaders was revealed only after the surrender of Silves but it had been negotiated in Lisbon at the invitation of the king (Ibid., 617), as the author points out later (631): "Ex prima convencione nostra erant omnia mobilia."

[94] Ibid., 628, 631, 633.

[95] Ibid., 628-629, 632.

[96] Ibid., 610: "peregrinis Ierosolimam tendentibus." For other mentions, 610, 616, 618, 628. Also A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 126-129.

[97] To the role of material rewards in the motivation of the crusaders, Ch. Tyerman, "Paid Crusaders. '*Pro honoris vel pecunie*'; '*stipendiarii contra paganos*'; money and incentives on crusade", in *The Practices of Crusading*, nº XIV, 1-40.

[98] *Narratio de itinere navali*, 610: "predicationis tuba cum indulgentia."

[99] Ibid., 619, 622, 623. As noted by A. Pereira, "Silves no itinerário", 85, some passages (Ibid., 632, 638-639) seem to regard episodes of devastation, destruction, looting and violence as natural.

[100] Ibid., 619-621, 622.

surrounding region[101] that made it seem impregnable and the principal threat to the Christians of Hispania.[102] Once conquered, the security of the territories between Silves and Lisbon would be secured – a point the author makes explicitly.[103] Presented as rich and powerful enemies,[104] the Muslims are portrayed as equally harsh and rigorous in their discipline, beheading the first among them who left their positions on the walls.[105] References to their religion, however, are limited; they are simply described as pagans[106] and even as enemies of Christ.[107] However, the account does highlight the cruelty they inflicted on Christian captives—reporting that three were hanged and killed on the city walls, and that only those willing to assist in the city's defence were given food.[108] Still, the narrative lacks the level of hostility and negative stereotyping found in the Lisbon account.

As has been noted, the Silves account makes no mention of Christian preaching or miracles, nor of martyrs or heavenly warriors supporting the crusader forces.[109] Nor is there any indication of involvement or assistance from the Portuguese clergy. The only priests mentioned, of unspecified number, are those who accompanied the crusaders from the North Sea. Little is said of their duties or actions other than the celebration of two masses and the administration of communion to the combatants: the first before the initial assault, when the suburb was taken, and the second on the following morning, prior to the attack on the upper town.[110] However, some religious figures are mentioned among the king's troops – Templars, Hospitallers, and friars from the Orders of Avis, St. James and the Holy Sepulchre[111] – identified thanks to the author's careful

[101] Ibid. 617, 624.

[102] *De Itinere Navali*, 629 ("in Ispaniis munitior non esset civitas, et Christianis tam infesta"), 630 ("quod inexpugnabilis esset munitio").

[103] *De Itinere Navali*, 635: "sed nunc tutissimam Christiani habent manssionem in felicissima terra dum possedet Silviam."

[104] *De Itinere Navali*, 618, 621, 624, 626.

[105] *De Itinere Navali*, 622.

[106] *De Itinere Navali*, 623, 626, 628, 629.

[107] *De Itinere Navali*, 626.

[108] *De Itinere Navali*, 623, 629.

[109] A. Azevedo, *As Representações das Conquistas*, 130-131; A. Pereira, "Silves no itinerário", 85-86.

[110] *De Itinere Navali*, 621-622.

[111] *De Itinere Navali*, 630-631. For the Holy Sepulchre in Portugal, *Ordens Religiosas em Portugal: Das Origens a Trento. Guia Histórico,* ed. B. Vasconcelos e Sousa, 3rd ed. revised and extended (Lisbon: Horizonte, 2016), 215-218.

attention to detail.[112] It was the first time they were mentioned in these texts, although the Knights Templar had already participated in the conquest of Santarém and perhaps in that of Lisbon as well.[113] Their presence certainly underscored the religious element of the battles, even though the author of the narrative, with his rather focused interest in the more profane aspects of war,[114] did not forget to point out that they lived and fought on the battlefield as the other warriors.[115] Nonetheless, supernatural forces were not absent; they appeared in various moments as signs of divine assistance. The first such instance occurred during the capture of the suburb, described as having been subdued through God's will.[116] Others might have served to encourage the crusaders and intimidate the defenders – explaining their retreat from the walls, in this case through the intercession of the Virgin, or to miraculously maintain the unity of the crusading forces.[117] Though not numerous, these manifestations are shown as accompanying the progress of the battle and clearly contributing to its outcome.

IV. Alcácer

As in Silves, and especially in Lisbon, a fleet of crusaders was expected to join the siege of Alcácer in 1217. Two years earlier, the Bishop of Lisbon, Soeiro Viegas, had made the first contacts with the papacy at the Fourth Lateran Council, which had resolved to launch a new expedition to the Holy Land.[118] He secured from Innocent III the concession of indulgences for the peninsular combatants who fought the Muslims, though he was forbidden to redirect

[112] A. Azevedo, *As Representações das Conquistas*, 105. Although they are described as Knights of Jerusalem, the identification of the brethren of St. James is made possible by reference to their insignia and their way of life, *De Itinere Navali*, 630: "Iherosolimitani milites qui ferunt gladios in vestibus, qui ducunt uxores, et assidue movent guerram Sarracenis."

[113] *Documentos Medievais Portugueses. Documentos régios*, ed. Rui de Azevedo (Lisbon: Academia de História, 1958), t. 1, n.º 241 (de IV-1147); L. F. Oliveira, "Lisbonne", in *Prier et Combattre. Dictionnaire européen des ordres militaires au Moyen Age*, ed. Nicole Bériou, Philippe Josserand (Paris: Fayard, 2009), 545-546.

[114] A. Pereira, "Silves no itinerário", 81-82.

[115] *De Itinere Navali*, 631: "sed cum in expeditione sicuti reliqui homines."

[116] *De Itinere Navali*, 622.

[117] *De Itinere Navali*, 624, 625, 630. Also A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 132.

[118] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 44. For the bishop's biography, M. J. Branco, "Reis, Bispos e Cabidos. A Diocese de Lisboa durante o primeiro século da sua restauração", *Lusitânia Sacra* 10 (1998): 70-84.

pilgrims to the war in Hispania, as noted in the *Chronicle of Eumónio*.[119] Possibly encouraged by the support of Rome for Las Navas de Tolosa's campaign of 1212 – marked by the preaching of the crusade and the granting of indulgences[120] – or perhaps hoping for the election of a new pope in mid-1216, the bishop did not abandon his plan to attack Alcácer. A letter addressed to Honorius III in October 1217, recounting the conquest of Alcácer, confirms that the campaign had been carefully and deliberately prepared. The crusade was preached not only in the dioceses of Lisbon and Évora but throughout the Portuguese kingdom, to recruit combatants and impose upon them the sign of the cross.[121] Many members of the kingdom's clergy and religious orders were involved, from the bishops of Lisbon and Évora to the abbot of Alcobaça and the superiors of the orders of the Temple, Hospital, St. James and Avis.[122] Although King Afonso II was neither absent from the preparations – being in Lisbon between April and May 1217[123] – nor disconnected from those who took part,[124] all evidence suggests that the initiative came from the Bishop of Lisbon.[125]

The *De expugnatione Salaciae carmen*, likely composed in Lisbon by a North European cleric—possibly Goswin—well-versed in rhetoric and literary technique,[126] reflects the context of its composition and the challenges it sought

[119] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 44; J. Wilson, "Tactics of Attraction", 214-215. For the *Emonis Chronicon*, MGH SS 23, ed. Ludwig Weiland (Hannover: Hahn, 1874), 479. Also *Quinti Belli Sacri. Scriptores Minores*, ed. Reinholds Rõhricht (Génova: Fick, 1879), 63. This source has been republished, with translation into English and analysis by L. Villegas-Aristizábal, "A Frisan Perspective on Crusading in Iberia as part of the sea journey to the Holy Land, 1217-1218", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 15 (2018), 67-149.

[120] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 42-44; C. Ayala Martínez, *Las Cruzadas*, 312-314; C. Ayala Martínez, "El discurso de la Guerra Santa en la Cancillería castellana (1158-1230)", in *Orígenes y Desarrollo de la Guerra Santa*, 171-180.

[121] *Monumenta Henricina* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1960), vol. I, n. 25.

[122] *Monumenta Henricina*, I, n. 25. For the sometimes-forgotten participation of the brothers of Avis/Calatrava, *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, n. 29 (de 26-I-1218); *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium*, MGH SS 23, ed. Paul Scheffer-Boichrost, (Hannover: Hahn, 1874), 905 (Anno 1217).

[123] H. Vilar, *D. Afonso II*, 138, 261.

[124] M. J. Branco, "Reis, Bispos e Cabidos", 73-74; H. Vilar, *D. Afonso II*, 145-149.

[125] The bishop claimed the credit for the victory on his tombstone at Lisbon Cathedral, M. Barroca, *Epigrafia Medieval Portuguesa (862-1422)* (Lisbon: FCT, 2000), vol. 2-I, nº 302, 745-748.

[126] For available data on the author, M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística", 322-331; A. Nascimento, "Poema de Conquista", 500-501. More recently, J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin,* 74, 79-101, 105-109, has suggested that he should be identified with Goswin of Bossut, cantor of the abbey of Villiers, recovering from a proposal of Fortunato de São Boaventura.

to address.[127] Dedicating the poem to Soeiro Viegas, on whose patronage he relied, or hoped to rely (the first draft had been given to another recipient),[128] Goswin elevated the bishop as the principal architect of the campaign and the victory. He attributed to him the will and initiative, the persuasion of the crusaders through preaching, the recruitment of troops, the commitment of forces and resources, and the counsel and assistance necessary for the campaign's completion.[129] No other individual actors—whether from within the kingdom or abroad—are mentioned. Apart from the names of the patron and the author, which are concealed in acrostics,[130] the poem omits all personal references, framing the operation instead as a collective endeavour. Only the pilgrims (or crusaders) and the local participants, namely the friars of St. James, to whom the city and territory were entrusted, are acknowledged.[131] However, he did not remain silent about the problems caused by the diversion of the crusaders to Alcácer, referring to the division of the fleet – part of which continued on to Marseilles[132] – and the doubts raised during the siege about the approach of the Muslim relief army, when some argued to leave since this was not the land where they were meant to fulfil their vows.[133] As the bishop suggests in the sermon, this detour was made possible by delays in reaching Lisbon, at a time when the journey was becoming increasingly difficult[134]. It is

[127] The edition used is by A. Nascimento ("Poema de conquista", 503-508), who restored the original title (*Quomodo capta fuit Alcaser a Francis*), henceforth called *Carmen*, followed by the verse numbers. Reprint and English translation in J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin*, 138-152

[128] *Carmen*, v. 227. Also A. Nascimento, "Poema de conquista", 500-501. It has rightly been suggested that the poem's first addressee was Walter of Utrecht, Abbot of Villiers, J. Wilson, *The Conquest of Santarém and Goswin*, 107-112.

[129] *Carmen*, vv. 205-212.

[130] *Carmen*, vv. 221-224. The absence of individual names had already been noted, M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística", 345; A. Nascimento, "Poema de conquista", 494.

[131] *Carmen*, vv. 86 (*Indiginis*), 203 (*Militibus gladii*). In a note to the Portuguese translation (A. Nascimento, "Poema de Conquista", 512, nt. 68), another verse was associated with the brethren of St. James, although it refers only to the cross on the crusaders' robes, *Carmen*, v. 100: "Magnanimos reddit, sua signa colunt."

[132] *Carmen*, vv. 87-89. This is confirmed by other accounts, notably the Eumonius and Frisan chronicles, MGH SS 23, 479; *Quinti Belli*, ed. R. Rõhricht, 63; L. Villegas-Aristizábal, "A Frisan Perspective on Crusading", 89-94, 128-129.

[133] *Carmen*, vv. 123-127. Some of them even complained about the place where they were and the enemies they were fighting (vv. 125-126): "Non hanc, sed gentem nos debellare iubemur / Que Christi tumbam, que loca sacra tenet."

[134] *Carmen*, vv. 75-78. The delay in the journey to Lisbon was recalled in the aforementioned letter to Honorius III, *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, nº 25. On the chronology of the crusaders' travel, A. Herculano, *História de Portugal*, vol. II, 254-258; A. Nascimento, "Poema de conquista", 494.

therefore likely that the detailed account of the storm off the Portuguese coast served both to justify the delay and to support the campaign of Alcácer.[135] At any rate, in a later passage, God would again move the waves and winds to the aid of the crusaders.[136]

The Alcácer expedition was thus presented as an opportunity granted by divine providence, and from the very first verses it is framed as a work of God carried out through the actions of the crusaders.[137] The bishop's sermon followed in the same line, declaring that it was God who had led them to Lisbon so they might use their weapons to break the Muslim yoke and merit entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.[138] The bishop is said to identify the Crusaders as servants of Christ and of the Cross, and above all as opponents of the enemies of the Cross and models of martyrdom.[139] He invites them to take part in the conquest and warns them of the dangers of idleness, which corrupts dignity and virtue[140] – a theme that also underpins the poem itself.[141] The sermon, however, makes no mention of the expectation of plunder; the issue of spoils arises only at the end of the text, in the account of their distribution to the crusaders and the injustice suffered by the bishop, who received nothing[142] – a clear indication that this was no trivial matter.

The narrative justified the campaign primarily through the demonisation of the Muslims. More than the walls or the military prowess of the men who defended them – both of which were soon acknowledged[143] – it was the perceived evil nature of the Muslims' presence that made Alcácer a particularly dangerous stronghold for Christians.[144] Exploiting the Arabic name of the town, the bishop turned it into a "fortress of the pagan gods" ("castrum deorum"), a sort of bloodthirsty sanctuary that demanded the sacrifice of a hundred Christians every year, dead or captured, around fifteen thousand in the last

[135] The description takes up 15 verses of the poem (Carmen, vv. 35-49), more than half of which is devoted to the bishop's sermon (vv. 59-86), a clear sign of the importance attached to it.

[136] *Carmen*, vv. 168-172.

[137] *Carmen*, v. 7, 14. For other references to crusaders, vv. 25, 27-8, 100, 144.

[138] *Carmen*, vv. 61-62, 73-74. For a analysis of the sermon, M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística, 333; A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 103-106.

[139] *Carmen*, vv. 59-60 ("O fratres, famuli Christi, crucis hostibus hostes / Spretores mundi, martyriique decus"), 83 ("Ergo crucis famuli sitis crucis hostibus hostes").

[140] *Carmen*, vv. 79-84.

[141] *Carmen*, vv. 01-05, 10-12.

[142] *Carmen*, vv. 195-196, 205, 214.

[143] *Carmen*, vv. 97-99.

[144] *Carmen*, vv. 63-64: "Est prope nos castrum, super omnia castra nociuum / Christicolis, nomen Alcaser illud habet."

quarter[145]. In this portrayal, the Muslims are reduced to instruments of cruelty and become the enemy par excellence, referred to only as "the enemy."[146] As previously noted,[147] the violence of the crusaders – confident of God's support and proud of the signs of the cross on their garments – was directed squarely against the Muslims[148]. As enemies of evil, they engaged in an almost primal brutality that terrified their opponents, left many dead, and spilt blood from weapons onto the earth,[149] as if such violence were required to purge and renew both the land and its people.

In the *Carmen*, therefore, the campaign of Alcácer appeared to be an essentially religious endeavour. The ecclesiastics and religious men present were few – only the bishop of Lisbon and the brethren of St. James – contrary to what is stated in other sources, such as the episcopal letter of October 1217 to Honorius III.[150] There is also no mention of the celebration of the Eucharist before or during the battles, nor of any liturgy designed to attract divine support and protect the warriors. Yet all participants are identified either as crusaders or as pilgrims,[151] bearing vows to fulfil and the sign of the cross on their garments[152] – thereby assuming a temporary, though no less meaningful, religious identity. At the very least, the visible presence of symbols of faith was assured.

Signs of God's support also punctuate the narrative, ranging from prodigies to miracles, as though war served as the primary setting for divine intervention. Two prodigies are presented as encouraging the crusaders and easing their fears: the sudden arrival of thirty-two ships as the Muslim relief army approached,

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[145] *Carmen*, vv. 65-66 ("Al deus est, castrumque Caser: castrumque deorum / Fertur apud gentes, id uenerantur, amant"), 69-72 ("Castrenses suo regi dant quolibet anno / Centum christicolas, soluimus ista quidem; / In quinis lustris hominum tria milia quina / Illi ceperunt siue dedere neci").

[146] *Carmen*, v. 59, 74, 83, 92, 136, 140, 147, 153, 173, among others.

[147] A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 127-128. On the relationship between violence and the Word of God, or trust in its support, G. Cipollone, "La parole, les paroles de Dieu: la guerre sainte (1187-1216), in *La Guerre, la violence et les gents au Moyen Âge. I Guerre et Violence*, ed. Philippe Contamine, Olivier Guyotjeannin (Paris: CTHS, 1996), 25-34.

[148] *Carmen*, vv. 100, 144.

[149] *Carmen*, vv. 139, 176-8 (blood), 154-159 (dread), 159-164 (deaths).

[150] *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, nº 25. For other sources, *Monumenta Henricina*, nº 26 (de X-1217), nº 28 (de 12-I-1218), nº 29 (de 26-I-1218). Also, M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística", 325, 336-337, 345; P.-V. Claverie, "«Contra Soldanum de Coine» ou la contribution des templiers portugais à la défense de la Syrie franque" in *As Ordens Militares e as Ordens de Cavalaria entre o Ocidente e o Oriente, Actas do V Encontro sobre Ordens Militares (15 a 18 de Fevereiro de 2006)*, ed. Isabel Cristina Fernandes (Palmela: CMP, 2009), 411-412.

[151] *Carmen*, vv. 7, 25, 27-8, 100, 124-126, 144, 195-196.

[152] *Carmen*, vv. 100, 144.

and the sinking of the enemy's galleys before the final assault[153] – both echoing earlier reported wonders.[154] Miracles, three in total, are depicted as decisive in the Muslims' defeat, all occurring during the field battle.[155] They reflect an escalating manifestation of God's presence: from the arrival of 500 knights on the eve of combat to the appearance of a banner of the cross in the sky during the struggle, and finally the intervention of a supernatural army – knights in white robes bearing pink crosses – whose aid ensures victory.[156] As in the narratives of Las Navas de Tolosa,[157] God is represented as the main actor in the war and the true author of the triumph, which takes place on a festive day dedicated to two martyrs,[158] or to receive the glory of the conquest itself.[159] The immediate conversion of the Muslim castellan, baptised three days later,[160] is portrayed as the natural culmination of this total victory.

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Often considered the first Portuguese crusade,[161] the campaign of Alcácer must have contributed to a definitive change in the status of war, giving it a commendable character and emphasizing its religious component. From then on, with the intermittent presence of the monarchs in military campaigns, military orders took over the fight against Islam and were responsible for the conquest of most southern territories.[162] It was during this period that the

[153] *Carmen*, vv. 115-118, 168-172.

[154] *Carmen,* vv. 127-128.

[155] As A. Pereira has pointed out (*Representações da Guerra*, 105-106), all three are recorded in the letter of October 1217 to Honorius III. The accounts of other crusaders (*Quinti Belli*, 32-33, 241) also mention these miracles.

[156] *Carmen*, vv. 133-4, 145-6, 149-52.

[157] For the miracles recorded in the Navas of Tolosa, including the appearance of a cross in the sky, A. Huici Miranda, *Las Grandes Batallas de la Reconquista durante las Invasiones Africanas*, *fac-simil* of the 1956 edition (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000), 312; C. Ayala Martínez, "El discurso de la Guerra Santa", 175-176.

[158] *Carmen*, v. 165-166. For a comment, A. Nascimento, "Poema de conquista", 498.

[159] *Carmen* v. 200.

[160] *Carmen*, v. 201. Also M. L. Pereira, "Memória cruzadística", 326.

[161] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 45. This statement was challenged by A. Pereira, *Representações da Guerra*, 106, nt. 88, from a more traditional point of view, stressing the absence of a papal summon. On the peninsular appropriation of the crusade, C. Ayala Martínez, *Las Cruzadas*, 314-319; C. Ayala Martínez, "Fernando III: Figura, significado y contexto en tiempo de Cruzada", in *Fernando III, Tiempo de Cruzada*, ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Martín Rios Saloma (Madrid: Sílex, 2012), 63-76, 85-91.

[162] A. C. Henriques, *Conquista do Algarve (1189-1249). O Segundo Reino* (Lisbon: Tribuna, 2003), 50-83; H Fernandes, *D. Sancho II* (Lisbon: Círculo Leitores, 2006), 204-208; L. F. Oliveira, "A ordem de Santiago e a conquista das terras do Sul", *Cuadernos de Estepa* 3 (2014): 89-102.

brothers of the orders gained social visibility, as their presence was recorded in the writings of the seigneurial courts[163] and the themes of pilgrimage and crusade spread among the troubadours.[164] The indulgences granted by the Apostolic See also became more frequent in the thirteenth century,[165] helping the campaigns to lose their profane character and to appear more and more as a religious experience that allowed for the remission of sins. Their meritorious status was thus somehow assured.

It could also be argued that the frontier battles took the form of penance.[166] The most famous case is that of the Infante of Serpa, who in December 1239 was sentenced by Pope Gregory IX to remain in Serpa, on the border of the kingdom, in order to fight the Muslims.[167] The pontiff guaranteed Holy Land indulgences to all who joined him: sinners, the excommunicated, or others who aided his cause.[168] Another later success was that of the knight Afonso Novais, a vassal of Afonso IV, who was excommunicated for his part in the murder of the bishop of Évora in March 1321, but was acquitted in 1338 after spending several years on the border of Granada.[169] These few but significant examples only serve to formulate a hypothesis and to identify a problem that has not been studied with the necessary depth. It is also possible that the convents of the military orders

[163] C. Neto, "Anónimos e Domésticos. Os freires das Ordens Militares nas cantigas dos trovadores", in *Comendas Urbanas das Ordens Militares*, ed. Luís Filipe Oliveira (Lisbon: Colibri, 2016), 229-246. Also C. Neto, *As Ordens Militares na cultura escrita da Nobreza — 1240-1350. Representações nas cantigas de escárnio e de mal dizer*, Master Dissertation (Lisbon; FCSH-UNL, 2012), 7-12.

[164] L. F. Oliveira, "A Cruzada e o Ultramar: Dos trovadores ao conde de Barcelos", in *Cristãos contra muçulmanos na idade média peninsular. Bases ideológicas e doutrinais de uma confrontação (séculos x-xiv)» / Cristianos contra musulmanes en la edad media peninsular.bases ideológicas y doctrinales de una confrontación (siglos x-xiv)*, ed. Isabel Cristina Fernandes, Carlos de Ayala Martínez (Lisbon: Colibri, 2015), 323-335.

[165] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 47-49; A. Dinis, "Antecedentes da Expansão Ultramarina Portuguesa", *Revista Portuguesa de História* 10 (1962): 45-54.

[166] Towards the association of war with penance and martyrdom in the Castile of Alfonso VIII, C. Ayala Martínez, "El discurso de la Guerra Santa", 174-177.

[167] C. Erdmann, *A Ideia de Cruzada*, 47-48; S. Boissellier, "Réflexions sur L'Idéologie Portugaise de la Reconquête", 143 and nt. 17; A. Pereira, "O Infante D. Fernando de Portugal, senhor de Serpa (1218-1246): História da vida e da morte de um cavaleiro andante", *Lusitânia Sacra*, 2nd ser., 10 (1998): 107-111.

[168] A. Pereira, "O Infante D. Fernando de Portugal", 109-110.

[169] AN/TT, *Colecção Especial*, Cx. 24, s/ n. (former n. 1183). For data concerning him, L. F. Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores: As Ordens Militares de Avis e de Santiago (1330-1449)* (Faro: Universidade do Algarve, 2009), 346 and nt. 375. On the death of Bishop Geraldo in the context of the civil war of 1319-1321, L. Krus, *A Concepção Nobiliárquica do Espaço Ibérico (1280-1380)*, (Lisbon: FCT, 1994), 111, nt. 222; H. Vilar, *As Dimensões de um Poder. A Diocese de Évora na Idade Média* (Lisbon: Estampa, 1999), 76 and nt. 194.

were places of pilgrimage and penance for other knights. Such at least is implied by the existence of a free lodge in the convent of the friars of Évora-Avis, certainly from the end of the twelfth century,[170] who welcomed pilgrims as well as the poor and captives fleeing from Muslim lands, according to the bull of Innocent III of 20 May 1214.[171] This could explain why secular knights were often associated with military orders, either as volunteers or mercenaries – a pattern seen during the conquest of Mértola in 1238, as well as in Paio Peres Correia's later campaigns in Portugal and Castile.[172] Even though these events may have other explanations, it was the same reality that was observed in the castle of Salvatierra at the beginning of the thirteenth century, where the convent of the Order of Calatrava was located at that time. According to a letter sent by the Almohad caliph to his governors on 13 September 1211, after regaining control of the fortress, it was indeed considered a sanctuary and a place of pilgrimage among Christian clerics, rulers and knights.[173]

Despite the spread of crusading values – which became apparent from the mid-twelfth century and were more evident in the following century – the discourse of the *Reconquista* did not disappear. It was still present in the narratives of the conquests of Santarém and Lisbon, and perhaps also in that of Silves too, due to the difficulty of reconciling local interests with those of the passing Crusaders. Having remained as an alternative discourse for justifying violence, it reappeared in the literate culture of the Portuguese aristocracy in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.[174] It was then combined with

[170] C. S. Tarouca, "As Origens dos Cavaleiros de Évora (Avis) segundo as Cartas do Arquivo da Sé de Évora", *A Cidade de Évora* V, 13-14 (1947), 30-31, doc. n. 2. The diploma doesn't have a specific date. However, it should be from 1200 or 1201, as suggested H. Vilar, *As Dimensões de um Poder*, 256-257.

[171] *Bulário Português. Inocêncio III (1198-1216)*, ed. Avelino Jesus da Costa, Maria Alegria Marques, (Coimbra: INIC, 1989), nº 201.

[172] R. Azevedo, "Período de formação territorial: expansão pela conquista e sua consolidação pelo povoamento. As terras doadas. Agentes colonizadores", in *História da Expansão Portuguesa no Mundo*, ed. de A. Baião, H. Cidade e M. Múrias (Lisbon: Ática, 1937), vol I, 64. The document cited by Azevedo contains other information about Martim Anes' later life and was published by M. López Fernández, "Medina de las Torres y Martín Anes do Vinhal. Un repoblador portugués en tierras de Extremadura", *Revista de Estudios Extremenos*, 58-2 (2002): 517-537.

[173] A. Huici Miranda, *Las Grandes Batallas*, 236. For Salvatierra as a pilgrimage destination and a place of penance, E. Varela Agüí, "Salvatierra: simbolismo y poder en una fortaleza de Ia Orden de Calatrava", in *Mil Anos de Fortificaçoes na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500): Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos* (Lisbon: CMP, 2002), 637-639, 643.

[174] L. F. Oliveira, "Da Reconquista e da Cruzada na Fronteira Portuguesa", in *La Reconquista: Ideología y Justificación de la Guerra Peninsular*, ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Fernandes, J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019), 131-133.

crusading values to render the Iberian knights morally responsible for fighting the Muslims and liberating Hispania from Islamic rule.

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HOLY WARRIORS IN MEDIEVAL ARAB FOLK NARRATIVES: MARTYRDOM AND ETHNICITY

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The Christian-Muslim confrontation in the Mediterranean lasted throughout the entire Middle Ages. An important aspect of the analysis of these historical events is the study of the mutual perception of the sides of this struggle, while of particular interest is how the opposing parties imagined each other's motivations, primarily the role of religion in the actions of the enemy.

In the case of Medieval Muslim sources, this issue is being examined almost exclusively in materials of elite culture (chronicles and theological treatises), while the perception of the concept of holy war in the Folk narratives of the Muslim Middle East remains poorly researched. Most studies of the phenomenon of the *jihād* in the Islamic world do not resort to these types of sources,[1] or only briefly mention the presence of the holy war discourse in them.[2] At the same time, historians of the crusades point to the importance of studying folk narratives. Carole Hillenbrand, in her research on the Islamic perspectives of the Crusades, emphasises the importance of the folk epics: "This literature is a vast and largely untapped source of popular attitudes, beliefs and stories which helped to create Muslim stereotypes of the Franks."[3] Jonathan Phillips

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[1] See, for example: R. Firestone. *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); D. Cook. *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); S. Hashmi, ed. *Just Wars, Holy Wars, and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[2] M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 146.

[3] C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 267.

also highlights the significance of studying these sources for the analysis of the memory of the Crusades.[4]

Among the studies of Arab folk narratives, it is necessary to note the publications of Malcolm Lyons[5] and Niall Christie,[6] devoted to the image of the Crusaders and Europeans in these sources; however, they do not focus on the topic of the sanctity of war in these texts.

In this chapter, I am aiming to analyse two important aspects of the image of holy warriors and holy war in Medieval Arab folk narratives. I will try to analyse what makes Christian and Muslim warriors holy, and what the relationship is between religion and ethnicity in the images of Muslim warriors.

According to *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, the best-known type of Arabic folk narratives from the postclassical period is the popular *sīra*, the mixed verse and prose Epic. Over a dozen of these Epics appear in the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth century and have remained popular until the present. They are distinguished by their extraordinary length. Some contain a great deal of magic, sorcery and other supernatural elements, while others are primarily heroic and semi-realistic in tone. They all share a basically historical framework and purport to tell biographies of heroic characters from the pre-Islamic, early Islamic and medieval periods.[7] In this research I will consider the following Epics:

Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād (Life of ʻAntara ibn Shaddād). The main character of this Epic is the semi-legendary pre-Islamic poet ʻAntara ibn Shaddād (c. 525–608), a well-known warrior from the Banū ʻAbs tribe and the author of famous poems. Although the story takes place in pre-Islamic times, the protagonist travels throughout the Mediterranean, with many of his adventures involving him fighting the Franks and Byzantines.

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[4] J. Phillips, The Image of Saladin: From the Medieval to the Modern Age. European Receptions of the Crusades in the Nineteenth Century. Franco-German Perspectives. International Workshop – Research Group 'Myths of the Crusades'. Eckert. Dossiers 4. 2011. https://repository.gei.de/bitstream/handle/11428/129/ED_2011_04_06_Phillips_Reputation_of_Saladin.pdf (accessed June17, 2025).

[5] M. Lyons, "The Crusading Stratum in the Arabic Hero Cycles.," in *Crusaders and Muslims in twelfth-century Syria*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 147-161; Lyons, Malcolm. "The Land of War: Europe in the Arab Hero Cycles," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki Laiou, Roy Mottahedeh (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 41-51.

[6] N. Christie, "Exploring Europe through Medieval Islamic Folk Literature," in *The Historian of Islam at Work: Essays in Honor of Hugh N. Kennedy*, ed. Maaike van Berkel, Letizia Osti (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 503-520.

[7] D. Reynolds, "Popular prose in the post-classical period," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Vol. 6. Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and Donald Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 259-260.

Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma (Life of Dhāt al-Himma). The main heroine of the epic is Fāṭima Dhāt al-Himma, a warrioress from the Banū Kilāb tribe. The epic also features her son ʻAbd al-Wahhāb and emir Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl as key characters. The action takes place on the Arab-Byzantine frontier in the early Abbasid period, but in addition to the Byzantines, the Arabs are also regularly attacked by the Franks. The main villain is ʻUqba, a Christian posing as a Muslim and trying to cause all sorts of harm to the main characters and the Muslim Ummah.

Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars (Life of al-Ẓāhir Baybars). The plot of this epic is built around a real historical figure of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars I (1223-1277). A significant part of the narrative is occupied by the protagonist's struggle against the Franks, who are incited to attack the Muslim world by the main antagonist Juwān (John).

Alf layla wa layla (The Thousand and One Nights). This collection of tales contains large narratives, involving the struggle against Christians. In this article, I will consider "The Tale of King ʻUmar ibn al-Nuʻmān," the story that describes the confrontation between Arab king ʻUmar ibn al-Nuʻmān and his sons and the Christian kings, and "The Tale of ʻAlī Nūr al-Dīn and Maryam the Girdle-girl," in which the Frankish princess Maryam is captured by Muslims, and after the conversion to Islam, falls in love with the main character Nūr al-Dīn. *The Thousand and One Nights* also includes two smaller tales touching the struggle against the Franks: "The Tale of the Man of Upper Egypt and His Frankish Wife" and "The Tale of ʻAlāʼ al-Dīn Abū al-Shāmāt". Qasem Abduh Qasem rightly notes that more than 200 nights in the collection are associated with the memory of the Crusades. He also suggests that the appearance of these stories in *The Thousand and One Nights* is an artistic response of the common people to the shock of the First Crusade.[8] This assumption, however, seems controversial, primarily because of the abundance of religious war rhetoric in these stories, which was not typical for the first decades after the First Crusade, which allows us to attribute their genesis more likely to the time of the active propaganda of *jihād* during the times of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī (1118-1174), Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (1137-1193) and Mamluk sultans. In this chapter, I will use the reissue of the Calcutta II edition of *The Thousand and One Nights*, which in turn is based on Būlāq edition.

The choice of these sources is due to their wide distribution and popularity in the Levant and Egypt in the late Middle Ages and early Modern times, which was unanimously noted by European travellers and researchers of the

[8] Qāsim ʻAbduh Qāsim, "Al-Ruʼya al-shaʻbiyya li al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībiyya fī alf layla wa layla [People's view of the Crusades in The Thousand and One Nights]," *Al-Maʻthūrāt al-shaʻbiyya* 6 (1987): 88.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9] If in the case of the epics there is no doubt about their active circulation among the masses of Egypt and the Levant, then with *The Thousand and One Nights* the situation appears to be more complicated. Discussions continue about its popularity in the Middle East before the wave of European interest in it in the eighteenth century. However, as it will be shown below, structurally the narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*, containing the discourse of holy war, are similar to the above-mentioned epics, as they presumably depict the same realities of the crusades, so it seems logical to consider them in the same context as the aforementioned Epics.

In Medieval Arabic folk narratives, almost all military operations of Christians against Muslims are carried out by *ifranj* and *rūm.*[10] While the term *ifranj* can be accurately translated as Franks, i.e. Europeans in general, the term *rūm* has a much more complex nature. In addition to the direct translation "Byzantines," it is also necessary to take into account that many of the contexts where *rūm* act in folk narratives, are most likely related to the events of the Crusades; respectively, this lexeme designates the crusaders, and secondly, in medieval Arabic-language monuments it could also designate Western Europeans. In this case, it seems important to make a digression and give an example of a written monument of elite origin, demonstrating the confusion in the use of these terms, namely *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār wa 'ajā'ib al-asfār* (A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling) by the famous traveller Ibn Baṭṭūta (1304-1369). It is noteworthy that the author uses both terms to refer to the crusaders in the Holy Land. While in the following passages about Acre and Damietta the crusaders are called *ifranj*, in the fragments dedicated to Jerusalem and Tripoli Ibn Baṭṭūta speaks about *rūm*:

> Waṣaltu ilā madīnat 'akka wa hiya kharāb wa kānat 'akka qā'idat bilād al-ifranj bi al-shām wa marsā sufunihim[11] (And I arrived in the city of Acre, and it was in ruins, and Acre was the base of the country of *ifranj* in [the lands of] Levant and a harbour for their ships).

[9] O. Sokolov, "Vanquishers of the Crusaders: Mujāhidūn Characters in Arabic Folk Epics," *Religions* 14, no. 8 (2023): 1042.

[10] The only exception is the epic *Sīrat sayf ibn ḏī yazan* [Life of Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan], where the principal opponents of the main characters are Ethiopians.

[11] Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār wa 'ajā'ib al-asfār* [A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling] (Winsūr: Mu'assasat hindāwī, 2017), 44.

> Wa dumyāṭ hādhihi ḥadīthat al-binā' wa al-madīna al-qadīma hiya allātī kharabahā al-ifranj 'alā 'ahd al-malik al-ṣāliḥ[12] (The current city of Damietta is newly built; the old city was destroyed by *ifranj* during the time of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ).
> Wa ammā ṭarābulus al-qadīma fa kānat 'alā ḍiffat al-baḥr wa tamallakahā al-rūm zamānan fa lammā istarja'ahā al-malik al-ẓāhir khuribat wa uttukhidhat hādhihi al-ḥadītha[13] (The old city of Tripoli was on the seashore and was held for some time by *rūm*, and when it was recaptured by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir [Baybars], it was destroyed and this new [city] was founded [in its place]).
> Wa kāna al-malik al-ṣāliḥ al-fāḍil ṣalāḥ al-dīn bin ayyūb jazzāhu Allāh 'an al-islām khayran lammā fataḥa hādhihi al-madīna hadama ba'ḍ suwarhā thumma istanqaḍa al-malik al-ẓāhir hadmahu khawfan an yaqṣidahā al-rūm fa yatamanna'ū bihā[14] (The pious and noble king Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn bin Ayyūb, may Allah reward him with good in the name of Islam, when he captured this city [Jerusalem], destroyed part of its walls, and subsequently al-Malik al-Ẓāhir [Baybars] completed its destruction out of fear, lest *rūm* [again] occupy it and defend themselves in it).

As can be seen, Ibn Baṭṭūta is well aware of the history of the Crusades and calls Acre the main city of *ifranj*. He also talks about them in the case of the siege of Damietta by the army of Louis IX of France (1214-1270) on 5-6 June 1249 during the Seventh Crusade (1248-1254). However, mentioning the reconquest of Tripoli, which remained in the hands of the crusaders for 180 years, he refers to the Muslim opponents as *rūm*. It should be noted that although the city was taken in 1289 by Mamluk Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (1279-1290), Ibn Baṭṭūta attributes this victory to Baybars. Ibn Battūta's mistake is notable because it demonstrates how popular tradition had already focused on Baybars as the hero who drove out the crusaders.[15] At the same time, Ibn Baṭṭūta also mentions Qalāwūn, but only in the context of his conquest of the Syrian fortress of Marqab, and the Sultan's opponents in this case, as indicated, were also *rūm.*[16]

[12] Ibidem, 46.
[13] Ibidem, 47.
[14] Ibidem, 42.
[15] H. Gibb. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D., 1325 – 1354* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), vol. 1, 88.
[16] Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār*, 59.

In another case, Ibn Baṭṭūta calls the Alfonso XI of Castile (1311–1350), an opponent of the Marinid Sultan Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī I (c. 1297–1351), a "tyrant of *rūm*":

> Wa kāna dhalika ithr mawt ṭāghiyat[17] al-rūm alfūns[18] (And this was right after the death of Alfonso, a tyrant of *rūm*).
> Fataḥahu mawlānā abū al-ḥasan riḍwān Allāh ʻalayhi wa istarjaʻahu min ayday al-rūm baʻda tamallukihim lahu ʻishrīna sana wa nayyifan[19] (Our lord Abū al-Ḥasan, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, conquered it [al-Jazīra[20]] and returned it from the hands of *rūm* after they had ruled it for more than twenty years).

Moreover, the term *ifranj* is not used at all by Ibn Baṭṭūta in relation to the description of the confrontation in al-Andalus. At the same time, for example, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), a contemporary of Ibn Baṭṭūta from North Africa, who also lived in the Levant, clearly distinguished between *rūm* and *ifranj*.[21] Thus, the topic of the relationship and use of the terms *ifranj* and *rūm* in the late Middle Ages deserves further research.

Based on all the above, let us move on to consider the features of the depiction of the holy war in Medieval Arab folk culture.

I. Images of Holy War and Holy Warriors in Medieval Arab Folk Narratives

First of all, it should be noted that many of the heroes of both sides of the Muslim-Christian confrontation in Arab folk narratives represent holy warriors, i.e. those who fight a just war for the cause of the true faith, with all their typical attributes.

It is essential to highlight that these narratives emphasise that the motivation and reasoning of Christians attacking the Middle East are not simply plunder or seizure of territory, but their conviction in the need to spread their faith and suppress the representatives of other cults. In particular, typical of the narratives under consideration are general calls for a holy war with the gathering of all Christians in order to establish Christianity throughout the world. For example,

[17] This term was used in Arabic sources to name Christian rulers in Andalusia, in order to emphasize the illegitimacy of their power.

[18] Ibidem, 481.

[19] Ibidem, 481.

[20] I.e. Algeciras.

[21] See, for example, the description of the interactions of the Crusaders with the Byzantines before the fall of Edessa: ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʼrīkh ibn Khaldūn* [History of Ibn Khaldūn] (Bayrūt: Dār al-fikr, 2000), vol. 5, 273-277.

Juwān, the main antagonist of *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, calls for a holy war, citing the will of Christ:

> Mā ataytu illā qahran ʻannī fa inna al-masīḥ amaranī an aṭūfa ʻalā sāʼir ṭawāʼif ummatihi min rūm wa ifranj wa arman wa aqbāṭ āmuruhum bi al-jihād ʻan millatihi ḥattā takūna jamīʻ al-umam masīḥiyya[22] (I came only by submission, [because] Christ ordered me to come around the rest of the communities of his people of Franks and Byzantines and Armenians and Copts and order them [to wage] a holy war for his religion, so all the peoples become Christians).

In addition to statements by Christian leaders about the need to wage a holy war and prepare for it, it is also important to note the direct threats to Muslims, as in the case of Dhat al-Dawāhī, the mother of the king of *rūm* in *The Thousand and One Nights*:

> Wa lā budda an naghzūkum wa naqtulukum wa naʼkhudhu minkum al-diyār fa tahlikūna ʻan ākharikum wa lā yabqā minkum dayyār wa man yanfukhu al-nār illā man yaʻbudu al-ṣalīb wa al-zunnār[23] (We must invade you, kill you, and take your homes, so you will perish to the last of you, and none of you will remain, nor anyone who blows the fire, except those who worship the cross and the *zunnār*-belt).[24]

The appearance of the Franks features the abundance of symbols of religious war, primarily a large number of crosses and clergy in their ranks. This feature is well illustrated by the description of the Frankish army in *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād*:

> Wa aqbalat al-ifranj bi al-ṭawāriq wa al-ṣulbān ʻalā ruʼūs mulūkihā wa al-sādāt wa imtalaʼat bi al-ruhbān yaqraʼūna al-injīl wa yuʻaẓẓimūna al-ṣulbān[25] (And the Franks approached, bringing

[22] *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* [Life of al-Ẓāhir Baybars] (Al-Qāhira: al-Hayʼa al-Miṣriyya al-ʻĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1996), vol. 4, 2179.

[23] *Alf layla wa layla* [The Thousand and One Nights] (Al-Qāhira: Muʼassasat hindāwī, 2022), vol. 1, 422.

[24] *Zunnār*-belt, a belt of a certain colour that *dhimmis* – Christians and Jews in the Muslim regions – were required to wear.

[25] *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād* [Life of ʻAntara ibn Shaddād] (Al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʻArabiyya, [s.d.]), vol. 4, 211.

> misfortunes, and the crosses were on the heads of their kings and lords, and their [ranks] were filled with monks reciting the Gospel and worshipping the crosses).

As for Muslims, the same as in the case of Christians, we find an active demonstration of the symbols and attributes of the holy war. This circumstance is exemplified by the character from *The Thousand and One Nights* calling on his brothers-in-arms during the battle against Christians: "Fa irfa' al-'alam al-akhḍar wa ṣiḥ qā'ilan Allāh akbar[26] (So raise the green banner and shout: 'God is the Greatest')."

The main characters of most Arabic folk epics also have a well-known reputation as holy warriors, such as Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl, the character of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, feared by "all who bear the cross":

> Fa kull man 'alā wajh al-arḍ min rūmī wa ifranjī wa armanī wa kull man yaḥmilu al-ṣalīb wa yarkabu al-khayl wa yaḍribu wa yaṭ'anu bi al-rumḥ al-kull yakhāfūna minka wa yahībūka ḥattā inna al-ṣaghīr idhā kāna fī hajr ummihi wa 'ayyaṭa taqūlu lahu uskut wa illā yajīka Abā[27] Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl[28] (And everyone on the face of Earth from Byzantines and Franks and Armenians and everyone who wears a cross and rides a horse and strikes and pierces with spear, everyone are afraid of you and tremble before you, so the child if he is in the care of his mother and he cries, she says to him: 'Hush, otherwise Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl will come for you').

In this fragment, it is also important to pay attention to the description of the key features of the image of the Christian as an enemy: the one who wears a cross, rides on horseback and strikes with a spear, which paints an undisguised picture of a crusader knight.

The use of terms of the holy war we see in another example, derived from *The Thousand and One Nights*. The ship of the daughter of the Frankish king, heading on a pilgrimage to a monastery located on a remote island, is attacked by Muslims who went to sea not just to plunder, but to wage a holy war:

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[26] *Alf layla wa layla* [The Thousand and One Nights] (Al-Qāhira: Mu'assasat hindāwī, 2022), vol. 1, 434.

[27] From the point of view of the grammar of the literary language, there should be a form "abū".

[28] *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* [Life of Dhāt al-Himma] (Bayrūt: al-Maktaba al-Sha'biyya, 1980–1981), vol. 1, 754.

> Fa lammā qarubat min al-dayr kharaja markab min marākib al-muslimīn al-mujāhidīn fī sabīl Allāh[29] (And when they approached the monastery, a boat of Muslims fighting for the sake of God appeared).

No less noteworthy are other contexts from this monument concerning *jihād*. For instance, in one of the episodes of the war against *rūm* and *ifranj*, the vizier tells Sharkān, the son of 'Umar ibn al-Nu'mān, and his brother, that God granted them victory over the Christians because they entrusted their souls to him and left their families and their homeland for the sake of the holy war:

> I'lamā ayyuhā al-malikān anna Allāh naṣarnā ḥaythu wahabnā anfusanā Allāh 'azza wa jalla wa hajarnā al-ahl wa al-awṭān[30] (Know, O two kings, that God helped us as we gave ourselves to God Almighty and left our families and homelands).

Next, I will focus on the concept of martyrdom as an important attribute of the image of Muslim holy warriors in the folk narratives, which deserves special attention.

Niall Christie notes that Arabic Folk tales present Franks "as suitable villains of the stories that are told about them; thus they are worthy opponents for the Muslim heroes, and victories over them are both clearly justified and reassurances of the power of good to defeat evil".[31] Although from an ontological point of view, Christie's interpretation of the main conflict in Arab folk narratives as a confrontation between good and evil is undoubtedly correct, what is also important is the presentation of this struggle in the narratives as a holy war for both sides of the conflict and, essentially, the prevalence of the idea of martyrdom, which has not been analysed so far in the sources of this type.

Earlier I briefly touched upon this topic and gave some examples,[32] and now I will give more, since they are in abundance in the folk narratives under consideration.

For example, we see typical cases of the implementation of the martyrdom pattern in *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*:

[29] *Alf layla wa layla*, vol. 6, 31.
[30] Ibidem, vol. 1, 444.
[31] N. Christie. "Exploring Europe through Medieval Islamic Folk Literature," 518.
[32] O. Sokolov, "Vanquishers of the Crusaders: Mujāhidūn Characters in Arabic Folk Epics," 1042.

> Fa naẓara al-muqaddam Ismāʻīl ilā hadhihi al-fiʻāl fa qāla tawakkaltu ʻalā al-karīm dhū al-jalāl Allāh al-kabīr al-mutaʻāl bi annihā fī sabīl Allāh yā kilāb al-mushrikīn in ʻishtu aʻīshu saʻīdan wa in muttu amūtu shahīdan[33] (And the commander Ismāʻīl looked at that and said: 'I yielded myself to God The Noble The Lord of Majesty The Most High submitting it in the way of God, o, heathen dogs, if I live, I will live happy, and if I die I will die as a martyr').

Or in another episode: "Anta takūnu min al-mujāhidīn fī ṭāʻat Allāh wa lā tamūtu illā shahīd al-jihād[34] (You will be a *mujāhid* in obedience to God, and you will not die except as a martyr of *jihād*)."

We see similar situations in which heroes demonstrate a readiness for self-sacrifice in the war for faith in the case of Muslim heroes of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*:

> Lā akhāfu min qudūm al-mawt baʻda iẓhār kalimat al-tawḥīd wa yakūnu sababan li naṣrat Allāh al-malik al-majīd fa immā an ablugha mā urīdu wa immā an uqtala fa amūtu shahīd[35] (I am not afraid of the coming of death after the revealing of the word of monotheism, so it will be a cause of the victory of God The All-Glorious King, and I am going to get what I want, that is to be killed and die as a martyr).

Or as in another context of the same work: "In ʻishtu ʻishtu saʻīd wa in muttu muttu shahīd[36] (If I live, I would live happily, and if I die, I would die a martyr)."

Examples from *The Thousand and One Nights* are also of significant interest. For instance, before one of the battles against Christians, the herald addresses the Muslim army before the fight with the words:

> ʻAlaykum bi aʻdāʼ al-dīn ya muḥibbī al-nabī al-mukhtār hādhā waqt irḍāʼ al-karīm al-ghaffār yā rājī al-najāt fī al-yawm al-mukhawwif inna al-janna taḥta ẓilāl al-suyūf[37] (Turn on the enemies of religion, o those who love the Chosen Prophet, this is the time to please The Generous and Forgiving, o you who hope for salvation in the fearful day, Paradise lies under the shades of the swords).

[33] *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, vol. 3, 1829.
[34] Ibidem, vol. 4, 2575.
[35] *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 370-371.
[36] Ibidem, vol. 1, 689.
[37] *Alf layla wa layla*, vol. 1, 435.

Here, the quotation from the Islamic sacred text, namely the famous hadith (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 2818), is important.

In another episode, the sorceress Dhat ad-Dawāhī uses magic to take on the image of a Muslim ascetic in order to gain the trust of the Muslim protagonists. Talking about her fictitious captivity in *rūm*'s fortress, she says that she wanted to return to her country to die in *jihād*:

> Li ajl an amūta taḥta ḥawāfir khayl al-mujāhidīn allādhīna hum ba'da al-qatl aḥyā' ghayr al-amwāt[38] (In order to die under the hooves of the *mujāhidīn*'s horses, who after being killed are alive and not dead).

In this case, it is crucial that what she says is within the horizon of expectation of the Muslim characters, and they completely trust her, seeing the piety of the ascetic. Later in the same story, King Sharkān and his brother want to meet with the "pious hermit" before going to besiege Constantinople in order to receive his blessing to participate in the holy war, from which Sharkān does not plan to return:

> Wa anā al-akhar ashtahī an arā hādhā al-zāhid la'allahu yad'ū lī bi qaḍā' naḥbī fī al-jihād wa liqā' rabbī fa innī zahadtu al-dunyā[39] (And the last [thing] I desire is to see this ascetic, perhaps he will pray for me to end my life in *jihād* and to meet my Lord, for I am fatigued of this world).

It is important to note that although we observe an active circulation of jihadist rhetoric in the "crusader" tales in *The Thousand and One Nights*, and specifically the implementation of the concept of martyrdom, the discourse of holy war in this collection was not considered as part of the global narratives about it in the medieval Islamic tradition. In particular, the monograph *The Islamic Context of The Thousand and One Nights* does not analyse this factor, although it looks highly important for studying the Islamic context of the monument[40]. The authors of *The Arabian Nights: An Encyclopedia* note only that "Christian-Muslim relations are described as being governed by religious rivalry and war, as in the tales of 'Umar ibn al-Nu'mān or 'Alī Nūr al-Dīn and Maryam the Girdle-girl".[41]

[38] Ibidem, vol. 1, 447.

[39] Ibidem, vol. 1, 448.

[40] M. al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of The Thousand and One Nights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[41] U. Marzolph and R. Van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLI, 2004), 523.

Similarly, the irreconcilable hostility between Christians and Muslims here is noted by Nabil Matar.[42] The concept of martyrdom in the *Nights*, however, is not touched upon in the above-mentioned studies. In this case, it is important that self-sacrifice and martyrdom are more complex and deep concepts than simple religious enmity or the struggle between good and evil, which are usually discussed in the studies of the Arabic folk epics.

In the key works on the concept of martyrdom in the Islamic tradition, Arab folk narratives are not considered as a material for studying the mass perception of this phenomenon, although this is a relevant source, on the one hand, reflecting, on the other hand, shaping popular ideas about it. David Cook does not delve into the discourse of religious martyrdom on the path of *jihād* in folk narratives, and notes that "[the Epic of] Baybars lack any obvious martyrdom themes,"[43] although, as we have seen above, this epic contains episodes about self-sacrifice on the path of the holy war. At the same time, he marks the presence of the motif of martyrdom in the episode of the death of Sharkān in *The Thousand and One Nights*, but does not consider a much wider context of the use of this theme in this tale. This type of source is also neglected by the more recent collection of articles on martyrdom in Islam.[44]

It should also be noted that in most cases the idea of self-sacrifice remains declarative, since the main characters, rushing into battle with superior enemy forces, almost always survive. There are, however, examples of Muslim protagonists dying on this path, such as the case of Sharkān in *The Thousand and One Nights*. Going to war with the infidels, he said that he was "tired of this world," and indeed found death in *jihād*.

It is also important to note that Christians in Arab folk narratives do not share the concept of martyrdom.

II. Ethnicity in Medieval Arab Folk Narratives of Holy War

Another important aspect that needs to be discussed in the case of holy war narratives in medieval Arab folk culture is the interactions of the various ethnic groups of the warring parties.

One of the most common plots is the gathering of various ethnic groups of Christians throughout the land for the cause of holy war. This is well illustrated

[42] N. Matar, "Christians in The Arabian Nights," in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 145.

[43] D. Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106.

[44] M. Hatina and M. Litvak (eds.), *Martyrdom and Sacrifice in Islam Theological, Political and Social Contexts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

by an episode from *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, in which the antagonist Juwān persuades one of the Christian kings to attack the Muslims:

> Wa anā ʻalā an ajmaʻa laka al-umarāʼ wa al-mulūk wa al-qirānāt min al-ifranj wa al-rūm kulluhum yusāʻidūnaka thumma inna al-malʻūn Juwān qaʻada yaktubu wa Martīn al-Abrash yakhtimu ʻalā al-kutub wa yursiluhā Juwān ilā mulūk al-naṣārā fa kull man atāhu al-ʻāqil yaḥfaẓu al-kitāb ʻindahu wa yaqʻudu fī baladihi wa al-jāhil yajmaʻu ʻaskarahu wa yatawajjahu ilā barshinūna fa yalqāhu Juwān wa yugharrihi ʻalā al-kufr wa al-ṭughyān[45] ('I am on to gather for you lords and kings and peers of Franks and Byzantines, all of them will help you', and then damned Juwān sat to write and Martīn the Spotted was putting stamps on the letters and Juwān was sending them to the kings of Christians, and all of them who received letters, the smart ones kept the letters to themselves and stayed in their countries, and the ignorant ones gathered their troops and marched to Barcelona, and Juwān was meeting them and inciting to arbitrariness and infidelity).

At the same time, *ifranj* often fights against *rūm*, who, in their opinion, show insufficient zeal in the war against Muslims. In particular, *ifranj* often encroach on the lands of *rūm*, and in some cases even vow to wage war against their coreligionists. In the following example from *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the king of the Franks wants to seize the lands of the *rūm*, particularly Constantinople, and "attach them to the lands of the Franks":

> Malik al-Burghul qad nazala ʻalā bāb al-dhahab wa qad ḥalafa bi al-masīḥ wa al-ṣulbān wa al-ḥawāriyyīn wa al-maṭrān bi annahu lā budda lahu an yamlika bilād al-rūm bi kull makān wa yuḍīfahā ilā bilād al-ifranj wa al-yūnān[46] (King Burghul landed near the Golden gates, and he had sworn by Christ and the crosses and the Apostles and the Archbishop, that he must take possession of all the places of the lands of Byzantines and attach them to the lands of Franks and Greece).

Moreover, although the main mission of the Franks is precisely the capture of the Holy Land, on the way to this goal they are ready to subjugate the Byzantines. For example, in *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād*, Khalijān, the King of the

[45] *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, vol. 3, 1806.
[46] *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 654.

Franks, claims that the Byzantine emperor is too frightened to wage war against the infidels, as he is not ready to dedicate his life to this, therefore he must die:

> ʻAwwaltu an […] wa aʻūda ilā dhālika al-malik al-khāmil allādhī ishtaghala ʻan ākhiratihi bi-dunyāhu wa lā azāla kadhālika ḥattā uʻajjila qatlahu wa amlika baʻdahu bilād al-masīḥ wa uẓhira fīhā al-ʻadl al-ṣaḥīḥ[47] (I decided […] and to come back for this half-hearted king, who devoted himself to the mundane life instead of the Hereafter, and to keep on this until I hasten his killing and rule the land of Christ after him, and impose true justice there).

As for the Muslim side, I have previously noted the eternal and global nature of *jihād* in Medieval Arab folk narratives, since the war against *rūm* and *ifranj* has been going on since pre-Islamic times, where the Franks were opposed by ʻAntara, and the fact that it covers a large part of the Mediterranean and other regions known to medieval Muslims.[48]

It is important, however, to pay attention to the peculiarity of the depiction of *jihād* and its warriors, which lies in the fact that although the Islamic pathos predominates in the narratives under consideration, it is the Arab origin and Arabness[49] of the holy warriors that is actively emphasised. This circumstance seems substantial for the study of the Muslim narratives of holy war in the Middle Ages.

For instance, in *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād*, the Byzantine emperor explains to the Frankish king that it was because of the bravery of the Hijaz Arabs, allies of the Persians, that he maintained peace with the latter:

> Wa qāla malik al-rūm qayṣar li Khalijān mā sāʼnā siwā qallat al-tadbīr fa natadāraku qaḍiyyatnā maʻa haʼulāʼi al-andhāl wa illā khasirnā wa ṭāla ʻalaynā al-miṭāl wa inkasarnā li annanī aʻrifu shajāʻat shayāṭīn al-ḥijāz wa qad raʼaytu fiʻālahum fī al-maʻāmiʻ wa fī al-birāz wa min ajlihim kuntu uhādī al-malik Kisrā wa al-Nuʻmān[50] (And the king of Byzantines Caesar said to Khalijān: ʻNothing harms us, but [our] weak coordination, so we [should] solve the problem with those cowards, otherwise we will lose, and

[47] *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād*, vol. 4, 238.

[48] O. Sokolov, "Vanquishers of the Crusaders: Mujāhidūn Characters in Arabic Folk Epics," 1042.

[49] It is important that in the Arabic language the lexeme *ʻarab* denotes not only Arabs, but also Bedouins.

[50] *Sīrat ʻAntara ibn Shaddād*, vol. 4, 237.

> the deal will last for too long, and we will suffer a defeat, because I know the bravery of the Hijazi devils, I saw their deeds in battles and duels, and because of them I was keeping peace with Khosrow and al-Nu'mān').

It is remarkable that in the same story the Frankish leader himself notes that it is the Arabs who are his principal opponents: "'Awwaltu an aḥmila bi-'asākirī 'alā hawlā'i wa ajtahida an aksira haʾulāʾ al-ru'āt fī aqṭār al-fulāt[51] (I decided to attack those with my forces and to strive to smash those cattlemen in the desert lands)."

In *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* we find a description of the strife between the "King of the Arabs" and the "King of the Franks." In this episode, the Frankish king, having smeared himself with the excrement of the patriarch and received his blessing, tries to attack first the right and then the left flank of the Muslim army:

> Fa mā makkanahu malik al-'arab bal ta'arraḍa lahu bi kull sabab wa arāda an yusqīhi ka's al-'aṭab fa raja'a 'alā 'aqbihi min al-maydān wa kharaja al-tarjumān wa nādā bi lisān al-'arabiyya wa qāla yā ahl millat al-islām i'alamū anna hādhā al-malik 'Imlāq wa huwa malik al-ifranjiyya wa ayḍan innahu nā'ib al-sayyid al-masīḥ 'alā jamī' al-naṣrāniyya[52] (But the king of Arabs did not let him [do so], and he confronted him with all the cause and wanted to make him drink a chalice of doom, and he [the Frankish king] withdrew from the field, and the interpreter stepped forward and declared in Arabic, saying 'Oh, people of Islam, know that this is the king Giant, he is the king of the Franks, and he is also the vicar of Lord Jesus for all Christians').

In another episode of the same Epic, one of the main characters, 'Abd al-Wahhāb says that he is ready to defeat all the Byzantines and Franks with the Arabs:

> Wa jā'at arba'īn alf min banī kilāb aṣḥāb al-ṭi'ān wa al-ḍirāb ṭā'atan li al-amīr 'abd al-wahhāb fa lammā naẓara 'Abd al-Wahhāb ilā dhalika qāla wa dhimmat al-'arab innanī aqdiru bi idhn Allāh ta'ālā ulqī bi ha'ulā'i al-'arab kull rūmī wa ifranjī sharqan wa gharban[53] (And forty thousand of Banū kilāb came [who were] masters of tilts and strikes under command of 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and when he

[51] Ibidem, vol. 4, 238.
[52] *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 396.
[53] Ibidem, vol. 1, 918-919.

> looked at that, he said: '[I swear] by the integrity of the Arabs, by the will of God Almighty, with these Arabs I can vanquish all Byzantines and Franks to the East and to the West').

Also, in the epics under consideration one can find numerous descriptions of direct clashes between the Franks and the Arabs on the battlefield, such as the following:

> Wa ḥamala malik ifranja fī mi'at alf khalanjiyya wa istaqbalathum al-'arab bi al-rimāḥ al-khaṭṭiyya wa ḍāqat al-falawāt wa kathurat al-za'aqāt wa irtafa'at al-aṣwāt wa zādat al-ḍajjāt[54] (And the king of the Franks charged with hundred thousand knights and the Arabs met them with the long spears and the wilderness grew narrow and the cries intensified and the voices raised and the noises got louder).

In this case, the description of the Frankish cavalry attack probably paints a picture of the standard tactics of the Crusader knights. In the scene from *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād* we also see a case of hand-to-hand combat between the same opponents:

> Wa ṣadamat al-rijāl wa lama'at burūq al-niṣāl wa jā' al-ḥaqq wa zahaqa al-miḥāl wa qātalat al-ifranj ay qitāl wa abṣarat al-'arab minhā al-ahwāl[55] (And the men clashed, and the lightings of the blades flashed, and the truth came, and the plots faded, and the Franks were fighting by all means of fighting, and the Arabs witnessed fears from them).

Further, it is necessary to emphasise another important circumstance in the depiction of holy war in the Medieval Arab folk narratives. It is salient that it is the Arabs who are fighting the Byzantines and the Franks, and they are only helped by the Turks, Kurds and Persians, who, with rare exceptions, are presented not as equal allies, but as subordinates, staying under the overall command of the Arab rulers and warlords.

In *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* we see, for example, the following passage, in which the Turks and Kurds are subjected to the Arab commander:

[54] Ibidem, vol. 1, 395.

[55] *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*, vol. 4, 202-203.

> Fa mā qawlikum yā ikhwān fī mi'at alf 'anān min al-ifranj ḥamalat bi al-qinṭāriyāt al-khalanjiyyāt ḥamlatan wāḥidatan fa ṣārū ka annahum sadd min ḥadīd wa naẓara al-amīr 'Āmir ilā fi'alihim fa qaddama al-atrāk bayna yadayhi wa ja'ala al-akrād maymana wa maysara wa al-'arab fī al-maysara thumma baraza bi nafsihi yaṭlubu yaksiruhum 'an al-ḥamla[56] ('What would you say, brothers, about a swarm of a hundred thousand Franks [who] attacked at once with spears, emerging as an iron wall?', and prince 'Āmir looked at what that they were doing, and put the Turks forward in front of him, and placed the Kurds on the right and left [flanks], and the Arabs on the left [flank], and then he rushed forward himself to break their [Franks] charge).

Likewise, in *The Thousand and One Nights*, the Turks and Daylamites are also commanded by the Arab kings:

> Ra'ū Bahrām muqaddam al-daylam wa rustam muqaddam al-atrāk wa ma'hum 'ishrūn alf fāris muqbilīn 'alayhim ka al-luyūth al-'awābis[57] (They saw Bahrām the commander of the Daylamites and Rustam the commander of the Turks and with them twenty thousand riders coming at them as grim lions).

In *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*, the Arabs even save the Persians from the Franks. Moreover, although various Arab tribes and alliances fight against each other during the storyline, the main positive characters and, first of all, 'Antara himself and the Hijaz Arabs in alliance with the Persians fight against the Franks, Byzantines and Ghassanids (Christian Arabs). In the end, it turns out that the initiators of the war were the Franks, who put pressure on the Byzantines.[58] In another case the monotheist sage 'Amr at the court of Khosrow, who foretells the coming of Muḥammad, supports the alliance of Arabs and Persians against external enemies[59].

III. Conclusions

Thus, the confrontation depicted in the Medieval Arab folk narratives can be described as a holy war, and it is such for both parties of the conflict, while each

[56] *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 855-856.
[57] *Alf layla wa layla*, vol. 1, 461.
[58] *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*, vol. 4, 202-241.
[59] Ibidem, vol. 1, 258-260.

of them understands that there is a religiously motivated enemy on the opposite side.

An important pattern is the readiness of Muslim warriors for self-sacrifice, and they in some cases even desire death in *jihād*, which is the highest level of dedication to the holy war. There are a lot of examples of martyrdom discourse in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* and in the "crusader" tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*, but it is not present in *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*. It is also necessary to emphasise that Christians, despite all the descriptions of their religious motivation, do not share this concept in the considered narratives.

Regarding the interethnic interactions of holy warriors, one should note that the Franks in many stories put pressure on the Byzantines, accusing them of insufficient religious zeal in conducting military operations against the infidels. As for the Muslim side, it has been demonstrated, that two parallel processes took place in Arab folk narratives. On the one hand it is the Islamization of the Arab past, primarily tribal narratives, especially pre-Islamic ones, by placing the struggle of the monotheist heroes with the religiously motivated Franks in pre-Islamic times (or placing the Frankish invasions into early Islamic times). On the other hand, we witness the Arabization of the very fighting against Christians, Franks and Byzantines, by emphasizing the role of Arabs and reducing the role of Turks, Kurds and Persians and subordinating representatives of these ethnic groups to Arabs in the narratives under consideration. Although *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* equally celebrates the contributions of Arabs, Turks and Kurds to *jihād*, in *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*, *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* and *The Thousand and One Nights* we see a strong emphasis on the role of the Arabs. This circumstance may be explained by the fact that *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* is the newest of the narratives that emerged in the multi-ethnic environment of Mamluk Cairo.

It is also important that the Arabic folk epics are practically not utilised to study the history of Arabness and the origins of the concept of Arab nationalism, however, as has been demonstrated, they are undoubtedly of particular interest as sources for the study of these concepts.

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RELICS AND HOLY WAR IN THE KINGDOMS OF LEÓN AND CASTILE (11TH-12TH C.)

Carlos de Ayala*

I. Introduction

Relics occupied a central place in medieval Christianity, shaping devotion, legitimising power, and mediating the miraculous. Patrick Geary has emphasised that their significance reached a new intensity in the central centuries of the Middle Ages. While their importance had been acknowledged since Antiquity, the Carolingian era and, later, the Peace of God movement created fertile ground for the extraordinary flourishing of belief in their miraculous efficacy around the year 1000. In the West, the influence of Cluny in the tenth and early eleventh centuries further accelerated this process, making relics not only objects of veneration but also instruments of social cohesion and political authority.[1]

This reality also extended to the Iberian Peninsula, where the martial dimension linked to the military leadership of kings assumed particular importance from the eleventh century onwards. Relics, traditionally regarded above all as channels of healing grace and as protective force against manifold dangers, acquired at that time a more overtly belligerent character, becoming guarantors of victory on the battlefield. In the earlier centuries of the Iberian Middle Ages, this latter function was associated with the *lignum crucis* granted by the papacy, which, from the reign of Reccared I, the Hispano-Visigothic monarchy carried into war.[2] The ultimate fate of this relic remains unknown, but

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[1] P.J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1978): 31-50.

[2] For a general overview of this highly prized relic of the *lignum crucis* in the western Iberian context, see A. García de la Borbolla, "El culto y la devoción al *lignum crucis* en los reinos

it is clear that in the first centuries of the Christian offensive against Islam there is no reliable evidence for the military use of relics.

The situation changed substantially in the mid-eleventh century. This shift, most evident in the western kingdoms of Spain, though not confined to them, should be read against the altered balance of power following the disintegration of the Caliphate of Cordoba. Indeed, until that time, the Iberian confrontation between Christianity and Islam had developed, on the Christian side, as a just war legitimised by Islamic aggression. Its defensive nature meant that its propagandistic discourses of justification, always religious, were not excessively sophisticated. This was not necessary because the idea of defence in the face of aggression was paramount.

Against this earlier defensive framing, the decline and fragmentation of Islamic power on the Iberian Peninsula from the mid-eleventh century recast the Christian kingdoms as offensive actors. Accordingly, justificatory rhetoric grew more elaborate, and the sacral register intensified. The aim was no longer merely to vindicate defence, but to warrant victory understood as enabling the elimination - or at least the neutralisation - of Islam, construed from a Christian perspective as an intolerable evil; its subjugation, and at times even eradication, came to be framed as a moral imperative.

In addition, the climate of the Latin West into which the Iberian Peninsula was progressively integrated helped to consolidate this shift in legitimation. In the West shaped by the emergent Gregorian Reform, the crusade took shape as the most fully articulated expression of Christian holy war. Cluny and, above all, the papacy furnished the ideological foundations for this leap, a transformation that required a developed apparatus of persuasion and mobilisation to sustain warfare and justify even the most radical courses of action; sermons, synods, epistolary networks, and monastic circuits helped standardise the language of legitimation and amplify its reach.

In this regard, a telling example is the letter that Pope Alexander II most likely sent to all the bishops of Hispania in 1063, on the eve of the armed intervention in which a force composed largely of warriors from beyond the Pyrenees briefly seized the strategic position of Barbastro in 1064. In the letter, the pope wanted to make a clear distinction between Jews and Muslims. The former were not to be bothered by those who marched "against the Saracens in Hispania;" the latter, on the other hand, it was right to fight them because they persecuted the Christians and expelled them from their cities and possessions: "In illos, enim, qui Christianos persequuntur et ex urbibus et propriis sedibus pellunt, juste

occidentales de la península ibérica (vii-xv)," in *Reliques et sainteté dans l'espace medieval (Pecia. Ressources en médiévistique, 8/11),* ed Jean-Luc Deuffic, (Saint Denis, 2005), 565-600.

pugnatur."[3]

The pope not only blessed the campaign against Muslims; he also endowed it with a penitential and meritorious character by granting, apparently for the first time, a lifetime indulgence.[4] What emerges is a strongly sacralised, ideological framing of war, further intensified with the rise of the great Berber empires, whose militant identity was deeply rooted in the concept of jihad. Faced with such adversaries, the Christian kingdoms sought to respond with comparably powerful ideological instruments.

In any case, this intense sacralization and ideologization drew upon a wide range of instruments, among which the systematic use of relics for military purposes played a prominent role. This use did not typically entail bringing sacred objects onto the battlefield – as the Visigoths had once done with the *lignum crucis*, or as the Umayyads of al-Andalus would later do with the famous Qur'an of 'Uthman – but rather consisted in associating special liturgical ceremonies with the launching of campaigns against the Muslims. The transfer of relics from one place to a more solemn or appropriate one was a particularly valued circumstance, since such a transfer not only confirmed the sacredness of the body or remains being transferred, but also made their power visible through the materialisation of miracles and prodigious deeds that the hagiographic *translationes* usually report. This blurring of the natural and supernatural levels created an atmosphere favourable to considering their association with an imminent military campaign as a demonstration of the divine support that such a campaign was to receive.

II. "Religious Politics" and the Use of Relics During the Reign of Ferdinand I of León and Castile (1035-1065)

The reign of Ferdinand I of León offers a particularly illuminating example of these dynamics. Some of his more or less distant predecessors had been involved in the transfer of saintly bodies from al-Andalus to the north of the peninsula,

[3] Ph. Sénac and C. Laliena Corbera, *1064, Barbastro. Guerra sainte et djihâd en Espagne* (Gallimard, 2018), 86 and 191.

[4] In the papal letter addressed probably in 1063 to the clergy of San Vincenzo al Volturno it is expressly stated: "Eos qui in Ispaniam proficisci destinarunt … qui iuxta qualitatem peccaminum suorum unusquisque suo episcopo vel spirituali patri confiteatur … Nos vero auctoritate sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli et penitentiam eis levamus et remissionem peccatorum facimus, oratione prosequente." Sénac and Laliena, *1064, Barbastro*, 85 and 191. See also A.L. Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence. Spiritual Rewards and the Theology of the Crusades, c. 1095-1216* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), 57-58.

including those of St. Eulogius[5] and St. Pelagius, but these are still relatively isolated examples. In contrast, there is little doubt that under Ferdinand I, and especially during the final decade of his reign,[6] the attraction of relics assumed the proportions of a deliberate and coherent strategic program. For Patrick Henriet, this practice was without precedent and undoubtedly constituted one of the pillars of Ferdinand I's "religious policy".[7]

There were three significant milestones in this phenomenon, all of which are closely linked chronologically to the final "military decade" of Ferdinand's reign. The first is the transfer of the remains of St. Pelayo to Oviedo at the end of 1053; the second is the reception of the relics of Sts. Vicentius, Sabina and Cristeta at the Monastery of Arlanza, probably in 1062; and the third – and most spectacular the solemn reception of the body of St. Isidore from Seville to the Leonese monastery of St. John and St. Pelagius, which was soon renamed in his honour as the monastery of St. Isidore.

A. St. Pelagius, Symbol of Anti-Muslim Resistance

The first of the milestones mentioned is that of the transfer of the remains of St. Pelagius on the occasion of the restoration, in 1053, of the monastery in Oviedo dedicated to him. The body of the martyred saint had been originally transferred from Cordoba to León a little less than a century earlier, in 967, but the threat of

[5] The transfer of his remains, together with his work, to Oviedo would have taken place at the request of the Asturian king Alfonso III in 883. The historicity of this transfer in such an early chronology presents some difficulties, among others, that of not having contemporary testimonies to support it, but the truth is that it is not possible to deny that this transfer really took place. Tradition affirms it by placing it on that date, and that date coincides, moreover, with an embassy sent to Cordoba by King Alfonso III and entrusted to a cleric of Toledo named Dulcidio, of which the *Chronicle of Albelda* informs us, and which would not have been completed at the time of the writing of the text in 883. See Ariel Guiance, "Eulogio de Córdoba y las reliquias de los mártires," *Revista Historia Autónoma*, 11 (2017): 296-297; *Chronica Albeldensis*, in *Chronica hispana saeculi VIII et IX*, ed. Juan Gil, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 65 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 474.

[6] Indeed, Ferdinand I's sustained offensive against Islam was largely confined to the final decade of his reign, after he had resolved the territorial and political consolidation problems that for over fifteen years had manifested as intra-Christian conflict. Following the Council of Coyanza in 1055, whose acts speak of the "restoration of our Christianity" ("ad restaurationem nostrae Christianitatis"), Ferdinand set in motion operations against Muslim polities that continued until his death. The phrase appears in one of the two surviving redactions of the conciliar acts, the Oviedo version. A. García Gallo, "El Concilio de Coyanza. Contribución al estudio del Derecho canónico español en la Alta Edad Media," *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 20 (1950): 286.

[7] P. Henriet, "La politique monastique de Ferdinand Ier," in *El monacato en los reinos de León y Castilla (siglos VII-XIII). X Congreso de Estudios Medievales, 2005* (León, 2007), 123-124.

Almanzor to the capital of the kingdom had prompted the relocation of numerous relics – including those of Pelagius – to the more secure Asturian stronghold of Oviedo. The event therefore took place at the end of the tenth century, certainly not after March 996, when Bermudo II granted a privilege to the monastery of St. John the Baptist and St. Pelagius in Oviedo. The transfer in 1053 does not imply, therefore, a change of location, but simply the transfer of the relics to a new tomb within the same church. The ceremony was an important court event in which the role of Queen Sancha was decisive. The royal chancellery wished to record the supernatural and miraculous effects of the transfer; specific reference is made to the "marvellous translation (*translationem mirificam*)".[8] The timing of this first *translatio* of Ferdinand's reign – so close to his anti-Muslim military campaigns – is unlikely to have been coincidental. Nor is the selection of the saint without significance.

St. Pelagius was, in fact, a significant martyr of the resistance against Islam. His *passio*, written by Raguel, a Cordoban priest of the mid-tenth century and a contemporary of the events, relates that the young Pelagius, nephew of Bishop Ermogius, took his uncle's place as a hostage after the prelate had been captured by the troops of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III during what Raguel describes as a brutal persecution of Galician Christians. Since, according to Raguel, it was the custom of the Christian king to take bishops with him on his campaigns, this is the reason why Ermogius had been taken prisoner, giving rise to the ransom that cost the life of his nephew Pelagius.[9] Leaving aside the ensuing hagiographic embroidery, which culminates in Pelagius's martyrdom after he refuses apostasy and the caliph's advances, the young Christian quickly became a symbol of resistance to what contemporary Christian sources construed as Islam's overbearing and seductive power.

By the time Ferdinand I ascended to the throne of León, the growing mythification of the figure of St. Pelayo had become unstoppable and seemingly limitless. The most familiar testimony is Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim's early-eleventh-century poem, composed at a Saxon abbey closely tied to the Ottonian court and in regular contact with Cordoba; by her own report, a Christian from Cordoba recounted to her the young martyr's fate.[10]

[8] P. Blanco Lozano, *Colección diplomática de Fernando I (1037-1065),* León, 1987, doc. 47, 136-138.

[9] J. Gil, "La Pasión de S. Pelayo," *Habis*, 3 (1972): 161-200; P. Henriet, "Raguel (*Passio Pelagii*)," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, II (900-1050), eds. David Thomas and Alex Mallet (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010), 377-380.

[10] J. Martos and R. Moreno Soldevila, *Rosvita de Gandersheim. Obras completas* (University of Huelva, 2005), 53-64. See thoughtful comments in L.A. McMillin, "*Weighed down with a thousand evils*: Images of Muslims in Hrotsvit's *Pelagius*," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim. Contexts, Identities, Affinities and Performances*, eds. Phyllis R. Brown, Linda A. McMillin and Katharina

What is of real interest here is the way this information was transmitted at the time. In Hrotsvitha's account, Pelagius is not the nephew of an obscure bishop but the son of the *Doge* of Galicia himself, that is to say, the political leader of the people who, being faithful to Christ, was not willing to submit to the Caliphate's sovereignty but to raise the banner of rebellion against the infidels. It is more than likely that this political-religious emphasis on the figure of Pelagius and his growing representativeness as a symbol of resistance to Islam was not alien to the Leonese environment of the mid-eleventh century. Seen in this light, when King Ferdinand and Queen Sancha made the relics of St. Pelagius the centrepiece of a solemn liturgy in Oviedo, the cradle of "reconquista" ideology, they helped revive the militant spirit against Islam, which soon broadened into a program of military initiatives

B. Sts. Vincent, Sabina and Cristeta and Their Dynastic Significance

By the time this calculated program of relic deployment had fully coalesced, a second major milestone was discernible: the reception of the remains of Sts. Vincent, Sabina, and Cristeta at the Monastery of Arlanza. According to tradition, these three siblings suffered martyrdom at Ávila during the final great persecution under Diocletian and Maximian.[11] Their *passio*, probably composed in the early seventh century, follows a familiar hagiographic template that centres on a cruel governor – here named Dacian – held responsible for their deaths. In this case, the persecutors are Roman pagans rather than Muslims; yet in popular consciousness, where the cult of these saints was deeply rooted, the two frames of enmity often overlapped.

The earliest account of the transfer of the relics of the martyrs from Ávila to the Monastery of St. Peter in Arlanza on the initiative of Ferdinand I is found in the *Vita Dominici Siliensis* by the monk Grimaldus in the final decade of the eleventh or the first decade of the twelfth century. It recounts that, during Ferdinand's reign, García, the venerable abbot of Arlanza, received a revelatory dream instructing him to recover from Ávila the neglected remains of the martyrs Vincent and his sisters Sabina and Cristeta. The abbot undertook the

M. Wilson (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 40- 56, and L.A. McMillin, "Hrotsvit of Gandersheim," in *Christian- Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, II (900-1050), eds. David Thomas and Alex Mallet (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010), 293-297; M. Fierro, "Hostages and the Dangers of Cultural Contact: Two Cases from Umayyad Cordoba," in *Acteurs des transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale, eds.* Rania Abdellatif, Yassir Benhima, Daniel König and Elisabeth Ruchaud (Paris: Ateliers des Deutschen Historischen Instituts, 2013), 73-83.

[11] P. Riesco Chueca, *Pasionario Hispánico (Introducción, Edición Crítica y Traducción)*, (Universidad de Sevilla, 1995), 214-225.

task, and the ensuing translation drew a great concourse of bishops, abbots, and clergy of every rank, together with princes, nobles, and commoners.[12] Strikingly, the king plays no role in the narrative.

This, unsurprisingly, is not the version shared by the court chroniclers. Although the *Historia Silense* is curiously silent, Bishop Pelagius of Oviedo does address the matter. Drawing on an unknown source, Pelagius does not report that the relics of the three saints were brought together at the monastery in Burgos. Rather, he claims that the relics were divided: those of Vincent ended up in León, those of Sabina in Palencia and those of Cristeta in Arlanza.[13] He gives no date but situates the event at the very end of the reign, after noting the translation of St Isidore's body.

Thirteenth-century accounts tend to present a more nuanced perspective. In his *Historia Gothica*, Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada makes a revealing connection between Ferdinand I's expansionist campaigns and his policy of relic acquisition. He recounts that the bodies of the martyrs were rescued from the destroyed and abandoned city of Ávila, but he does not state with certainty where they were ultimately placed.[14] Rather, the archbishop records the various possibilities: that they finally remained in Ávila, that they were deposited together in St. Peter of Arlanza or that they were divided between León and Palencia. Doing this, too, he does not indicate any specific date. Lucas of Tuy, for his part, states that the king transferred the body of St. Vincent and part of the relics of his sisters to the León monastery of St. Isidore, although the bodies of the latter were also donated to St. Peter of Arlanza, though portions of their relics were also sent to Palencia. In any case, the transfer from Avila would have taken place after the *translatio* of St. Isidore to León.[15] Finally, the *Estoria de Espanna* written at the initiative of Alphonso X draws on Lucas of Tuy regarding León and Arlanza as destinations for the relics, but it also echoes Jiménez de Rada's uncertainty about their true locations. The novelty of the *Estoria* is the precise date it assigns to the event: 1050.[16]

Late accounts by the great Benedictine chroniclers of the early seventeenth century, Prudencio de Sandoval and Antonio de Yepes, supply considerably more detail about this tradition, which they justify by appealing to "ancient" documents preserved at the monastery of St. Peter of Arlanza. In their versions,

[12] V. Valcárcel, *La "Vita Dominici Siliensis" de Grimaldo. Estudio, Edición Crítica y Traducción* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1982), 246-249.

[13] B. Sánchez Alonso, *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo* (Madrid, 1924), 74.

[14] Jiménez de Rada, Rodrigo, *Historia de Rebus Hispaniae sive Historia Gothica,* in *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis,* LXXII, ed. J. Fernández Valverde (Turnholt: Brepols,1987), 91-192.

[15] Lucas Tudensis, *Chronicon mundi*, ed. E. Falque (Turnholt: Brepols, 2003), 292.

[16] *Primera Crónica General*, ed. R. Menéndez Pidal and D. Catalán (Madrid, 1977) II, 491.

St. Peter emerges as the principal beneficiary of the king's initiative, while royal agency is reconciled with the prominent role of Abbot García, portrayed as the providential inspirer of the royal decision. As for the date of the *translatio*, Sandoval places it before 1062,[17] whereas Yepes proposes 1049.[18]

What can be said with some certainty about this event? As for the date, the most convincing option is 1062.[19] In a royal charter issued on 20 April of that year, the names of Sts. Vincent, Sabina and Cristeta appear for the first time alongside the traditional titles of the monastery.[20]

This probable date – spring 1062 – also follows a certain political and strategic logic. At that moment, Ferdinand I had just emerged victorious from the confrontation with his nephew, King Sancho Garcés IV of Pamplona, a conflict over protectorate and taxes (*parias*) of the Taifa of Saragossa which ended with a resounding and lucrative success for the king of León. In the wake of this triumph, Ferdinand I planned a decisive intervention against Muslim possessors of Toledo, which took place in the summer of 1062 and culminated in the subjugation of al-Ma'mūn of Toledo. Between these major episodes – the victories over Pamplona and Saragossa, and the offensive against Toledo – Ferdinand and Sancha are documented as having made a brief stay at the monastery of St. Peter in Arlanza.[21] Only one month later, the royal document mentioning the Avilan saints for the first time was issued.

At this precise juncture – when all spiritual collaboration was deemed essential for the success against the Muslims – the attention given to the newly acquired relics of three widely venerated saints offered a considerable source of legitimizing assurance.[22] Arlanza monastery was undoubtedly the main beneficiary of this sacred initiative, though by no means the only one. The event was framed as a solemn and highly publicized court act, underscoring its political and religious significance. Perhaps the rationale for this initiative should be understood in relation to the dynastic role the monastery had come to play. It housed the tomb of Count Fernán González, a mythologized hero of the wars against Muslims, and would later receive the remains of King Ferdinand

[17] Quoted in M. Risco, *España Sagrada*, vol xxxv (Madrid, 1786), 85.

[18] A. de Yepes, *Crónica General de la Orden de San Benito*, ed. Fr. J. Pérez de Urbel (Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Madrid, 1959) I, 128.

[19] A. Sánchez Candeira, *Castilla y León en el siglo XI. Estudio del reinado de Fernando I* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1999), 213-214.

[20] P. Blanco, *Collection of Ferdinand I*, 163-165.

[21] L. Serrano, *Cartulario de San Pedro de Arlanza: Antiguo Monasterio Benedictino* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1925): 124-125.

[22] TH. Deswarte, *De la destruction à la restauration. L'idéologie du royaume d'Oviedo-León (VIIIe-XIe siècles)* (Brepols, 2003), 171.

himself.[23] This dynastic and symbolic significance was undoubtedly cultivated by Abbot García, a close advisor to the monarch. His proximity to the throne, and possibly even his presence at decisive events such as the victory at Atapuerca in 1054, a crucial turning point that marked the beginning of Ferdinand's final decade of military successes, situates him as a major actor in this convergence of relic policy, royal ambition, and ideological projection.

C. Saint Isidore: the Failed Invocation of the Kingdom

In the use of relics as a sacralising element of the aggressive military attitude of Ferdinand I, the crucial episode is undoubtedly the well-known *translatio* of the body of St. Isidore from Seville to León. This event stands as the most significant initiative of this kind, and, as with previous cases, it is closely linked with an anti-Muslim offensive – specifically the offensive on the *taifa* of al-Mu'tamid of Seville in 1063.

The evidence suggests that this campaign was not conceived as a routine military expedition. Rather, it was designed to signal continuity with the zeal of Ferdinand's Leonese predecessors for territorial expansion. Within the ideological framework of the *Reconquista*, that expansion was cast as the recovery of the unity of the ancient Hispano-Visigothic monarchy. The campaign was preceded by two actions of deep symbolic resonance: the creation of a funerary chapel in the Leonese basilica of Sts. John and Pelayo, where the remains of former monarchs were gathered; and the decision by Ferdinand and Sancha to designate this same chapel as their own burial place, thereby abandoning their earlier choice of St Peter of Arlanza.

With these two decisions in place, King Ferdinand opened a campaign against Seville in the summer of 1063. The *Historia Silense* is the principal source. It relates that the king mustered an army and advanced into Baetica and Lusitania, ravaging fields and burning farmsteads. Confronted with this devastation, ʿAbbād al-Muʿtaḍid of Seville approached the Christian ruler with lavish gifts and begged him to halt the offensive. Moved by pity for the "old barbarian", Ferdinand relented and convened his most trusted men to deliberate on the plea. The counsellors agreed to accept al-Muʿtaḍid's offer on two conditions: that he deliver the promised gifts and consent to the transfer of the

[23] The king's decision dated from 1039, in the context of a generous donation to the monastery (P. Blanco, *Collection of Fernando I*, 66-68; Th. Deswarte, *De la destruction à la restauration,* 174). A document dated March 1062, on the eve of the revocation of the decision, referred to the funerary destination of Kings Ferdinand and Sancha in Arlanza (L. Serrano, *Cartulario de San Pedro de Arlanza*, doc. 61, 124-125).

relics of the martyr St. Justa to León. The Sevillian ruler assented.[24] The *Silense* breaks off at this point, but Ibn Bassām's *al-Dhakhīra* adds that al-Muʿtaḍid entrusted the negotiations to Sisnando Davídiz, a Christian from the Coimbra region who had been captured by the Sevillian ruler and subsequently rose to high office at his court.[25]

The sources indicate that the *parias* – tribute payments that Christian kingdoms in medieval Iberia demanded from Muslim *taifas*, usually in exchange for military protection or political recognition – negotiated between al-Muʿtaḍid and Ferdinand I took the form of a one-off tribute in kind, supplemented by the relics of the Sevillian saint. A pecuniary component is plausible; nevertheless, the salient elements were the material gifts and, above all, the relics, which signalled political submission.[26] Why, then, the specific demand for the body of St. Justa? Unlike many martyr cults, the *passio* of Justa and her sister Rufina appears to be of comparatively late origin, most likely Visigothic and perhaps even fostered by Isidore of Seville. In any case, it was already widely disseminated, not only in Baetica but across other regions of the Iberian Peninsula. Their liturgical prominence is evidenced by their inclusion in the León *Antiphonary*, compiled in the mid-tenth century at the Leonese monastery of San Cipriano del Condado.[27]

[24] J.A. Estévez Sola, ed., *Historia Silensis. Corpvs Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaeualis,* LXXI, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018) § 41, pp. 220-221. On the chronology, see A. Sánchez Candeira, *Castilla y León enel siglo XI*, 177.

[25] E. García Gómez Emilio and R. Menéndez Pidal, "El Conde mozárabe Sisnando Davídiz y la política de Alfonso VI con los taifas," *Al-Andalus,* 12 (1947), 29-30. Mention of the high responsibility achieved in Seville can be found in a document from 1086 containing the constitution of the chapter of the Coimbrian church, preceded by a description of the conquest of the city by Ferdinand I. There it says that this conquest had been advised by Count (*consul*) Sisnando *qui antea honorifice in urbe Hispali morabatur et sublimis habebatur*: *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica*. *Diplomata et chartae*, I, fasc. iii, (Lisbon, 1870), 392. Sánchez Candeira describes him as a vizier: A. Sánchez Candeira, *Castilla y León en el siglo XI*, 178.

[26] There are many studies on sumptuary gifts from the Taifa kingdoms, especially sumptuous textiles. For example, see J. Senra Gabriel y Galán, "Dos telas islámicas encontradas en el monasterio de San Zoilo de Carrión de los Condes," *Goya. Revista de Arte*, 303 (2004): 332-340. It is true that the *Memoirs* of ʿAbd Allāh also provide evidence of Alfonso VI's apparent indifference toward such luxury goods: E. Leví-Provençal and E. García Gómez, eds. *Las "Memorias" de 'Abd Allāh, último Rey Zīrí de Granada destronado por los almorávides (1090)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial,1982), 160.

[27] A. Fábrega Grau, *Pasionario Hispánico (siglos VII-XI)* (Madrid-Barcelona, 1953). I, 131; P. Riesco Chueca, *Pasionario Hispánico,* xii; C. García Rodríguez, *El culto de los santos en la España romana y visigoda* (Madrid: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1966), 232-234.

An anonymous account incorporated into the *Historia Silense*,[28] relates that when Ferdinand I's envoys failed to locate the relics of St. Justa, they instead discovered, miraculously, those of St. Isidore, the quintessential figure of the old Visigothic kingdom. The narrative further reports that al-Muʿtaḍid, "although an infidel," did not oppose the translation of the saint's body, although he deeply regretted parting with a relic he regarded as extraordinarily beneficial to his city. His cooperation with Ferdinand's delegates becomes especially apparent at the moment of departure, rendered with a touch of drama: in a gesture of marked reverence, the "king of the Saracens" is said to have draped the sarcophagus with a richly embroidered cloth and to have recited a prayer aligning himself with the saint's cause, expressing the hope that the saint's beneficent favour would never depart from him.[29]

For María Judith Feliciano, the rich embroidered cloth should be understood in connection with the *khil'a* ceremony – an investiture ritual in which a garment, often a luxurious cloak previously worn by a figure of high status, is bestowed as a mark of honour.[30] What is particularly striking is that this relatively sympathetic depiction of the Muslim leader, found in a Christian text almost contemporaneous with the events, remained unaltered when the account was incorporated shortly thereafter into the *Historia Silense* – a chronicle otherwise unequivocally committed to constructing a discrediting image of Islam.

Regardless of other considerations that might be drawn from this episode, what remains clear is the central role of the relic as a guarantor of peace and as an instrument of vassal subjugation of considerable symbolic weight. Once transferred to León, the relics were deposited in the dynastic pantheon, which from that moment onward would assume the name of the Basilica of St. Isidore. On the occasion of the *translatio* – in December 1063 – King Ferdinand I convened an extraordinary assembly, during which two decisions of great importance were taken: the conquest of Coimbra and the formal regulation of the succession to the throne.

That this convergence of elements was no mere coincidence is borne out by the charter narrating the *translatio*. In its preamble, the text links St. Isidore directly to the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, which occurred seventy-five years after his death, then recounts the deeds of Pelagius and

[28] J.C. Martín-Iglesias, "La *Translatio S. Isidori Legionem anno 1063* (*BHL* 4488): Introduction, study and critical edition," *Exemplaria Classica. Journal of Classical Philology*, 15 (2011): 225-253.

[29] *Ecce recedis abhinc, Ysidore, uir uenerande / Ipse tamen nosti tua qualiter et mea res est / Vnde mei memorem te semper deprecor esse*. J.C. Martín-Iglesias, "La *Translatio S. Isidori*", 251.

[30] Mª J. Feliciano, "Sovereign, Saint and City: Honor and Reuse of Textiles in the Treasury of San Isidoro(León)," in *The Medieval Iberian Treasury in the Context of Cultural Interchange*, ed. Therese Martin (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020), 123-124.

Covadonga and extends their legacy to the kings of León, singling out Ferdinand as a true persecutor of the Saracens. There is little doubt that, in these instances, the presence and perceived efficacy of the relics functioned both as a catalyst for the anti-Islamic offensive and as a guarantor of its success.

III. Reign of Alfonso VI: A Further Step in the Sacralization of War and the Military Use of Relics

A not dissimilar dynamic can be observed during the reign of Alfonso VI, the conqueror of Toledo. Under his rule, the sacralization of the war against Islam advanced further, coinciding with the emergence of a formidable adversary: a reinvigorated al-Andalus under the leadership of the Almoravids, whose military resurgence was driven by a powerful ideology of jihad. Their arrival on the Iberian Peninsula triggered widespread alarm, including at the highest levels of the Church. In the early years of the twelfth century, the chronicler Guibert of Nogent, in his *Dei gesta per Francos*, noted that Pope Urban II, on the eve of launching the universal crusade, was paying close attention to the troubling reports reaching him from Hispania.[31]

It is therefore not surprising that in the new sacralising turn in attitudes to war, discernible during the reign of Alfonso VI, the influence of the contemporary Eastern Crusade was particularly evident. This influence extended even to the way relics were employed, not merely as objects of veneration, but as potent instruments of legitimacy for the war against Islam.

In any case, discussion of relics under Alfonso VI chiefly concerns the celebrated Holy Ark (*arca sancta*) of San Salvador de Oviedo. Tradition places the solemn opening of the chest by the king in the year 1075. The charter attesting to this event is of doubtful authenticity, but the tradition to which it alludes may be based on relatively plausible foundations and, in the document, itself could be dated before the end of the eleventh century. Notably, the event to which it refers most probably occurred during the pontificate of Bishop Arias, who left the see of Oviedo in 1093.[32] On the other hand, the evidence indicates that the oak chest, sheathed in silver plaques and bearing a Latin inscription that foregrounds Alfonso VI and his sister Urraca, was most likely produced for this

[31] R. B. C. Huygens, ed., *Guibert de Nogent. Dei gesta per Francos et cinq autres textes*, *Corpvs Christianorvm. Continuatio Mediaeualis*, cxxvii A, (Turnholt: Brepols, 1996), II, 107.

[32] R. Alonso Álvarez, "El obispo Arias y la apertura del Arca Santa de Oviedo: la reforma litúrgica antes del concilio de Burgos (1080)," *Medievalia*, 17 (2014), 79-102, especially 92-95.

purpose in the final decade of the eleventh century.[33] This dating is supported by the presence of Kufic inscriptions along the edges of the lid as well as on the front and sides, which accords with the stylistic and chronological markers of the period.[34]

The early stratum of the *arca sancta* tradition does not explicitly refer to Jerusalem: the ark, first placed in Toledo, contained relics which the Christians hid there after the Islamic conquest; and then, when the persecution against them increased, they moved it to a safer place in the north. Even so, the inventory of relics, including fragments of the True Cross, and of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Shroud of Christ, among others, plainly evokes Jerusalem associations. Moreover, there exists intriguing evidence that, albeit indirectly, supports the *translatio* of Jerusalem relics to Oviedo before the end of the eleventh century: a letter sent by Bishop Osmundo of Astorga, probably written between 1087 and 1096, to Countess Ida of Boulougne, mother of Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin I, the first rulers of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem.[35] Finally, although its chronology remains uncertain, the famous Codex of Valenciennes 99 points to a Jerusalem provenance for the Oviedo relics; its first editor, Donatien de Bruyne, cautiously dated it to the closing years of the

[33] C. García de Castro Valdés, "Datos y observaciones sobre el Arca santa de la Cámara santa de la catedral de Oviedo," *Nailos. Estudios Interdisciplinares de Arqueología*, 3 (2016): 121-163, especially pp.158-160. A reliable testimony of bishop Pelayo of Oviedo places the ark in the Holy Chamber in 1102: R. Alonso Álvarez, "*Patria uallata asperitate moncium*. Pelayo de Oviedo, el *archa*de las reliquias y la creación de una topografía regia," *Locus Amoenus*, 9 (2007-2008), 17-29, especially p.22; R. Alonso Álvarez, "La obra histórica del obispo Pelayo de Oviedo (1089-1153) y su relación conla *Historia legionensis* (llamada *silensis*)," *e-Spania*, 14 (2012): 5.

[34] This ornamental script features phrases of blessing and praise to God, which were common on Andalusi luxury objects from the eleventh century onward. In this case, the inscriptions were likely executed by goldsmiths with limited knowledge of Arabic, drawing inspiration from the epigraphic style found on the tombstones of the Banū Dhī l-Nūn dynasty in Toledo. Mª A. Martínez Núñez, "Inscripciones árabes en la Catedral de Oviedo: El Arca Santa, la Arqueta del obispo Arias y la Arqueta de Santa Eulalia," *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 11 (2016): 23-62, especially 43-44.

[35] Ida had learned that a large number of the Virgin's hairs were kept in Astorga, and she approached Alfonso VI to request that some be sent to an abbey she had founded. The countess, however, demanded proof of their authenticity. When the bishop of Astorga was consulted, the king was able to provide both assurances and a portion of the relic, explaining that the hairs had originally been brought to Toledo by the Apostolic Men – disciples of St. James and, like him, evangelizers of Spain. Following the Islamic conquest, the relic had been transferred to Astorga. P. Henriet, "La lettre d'Osmundus, évêque d'Astorga, à la comtesse Ide de Boulogne (avant 1096)," *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 11 (2016): 63-75.

eleventh century.[36]

Shortly afterwards, around 1120, both Bishop Pelagius of Oviedo, in his *Liber Testamentarum* and the *Corpus pelagianum*, together with the author of the *Historia Silensis*, consolidated the version that traced the ark's origin from Jerusalem,[37] while simultaneously diminishing the role of Alfonso VI that is evident in almost all of the earliest testimonies.[38] In any case, by the mid-twelfth century the magnetism of the Oviedo relics was such that the author of the *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*, probably an Anglo-Norman who took part in the conquest of Lisbon in 1147, could assert that the church of San Salvador at Oviedo housed the most precious relics in all of Spain.[39]

With regard to relics connected to the Holy Land, special mention should be made of the fragment of the *lignum crucis* that Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) is said to have presented to King Alfonso in 1101. Setting aside the relics associated with the arca sancta tradition, the matter of the *lignum crucis* appears in the *First Anonymous Chronicle of Sahagún*, which records that the sacred relic was given to Alfonso VI in that year by the Byzantine emperor.[40] The

[36] D. de Bruyne, "Le plus ancien catalogue des reliques d'Oviedo", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 45/1, (1927): 93-96.

[37] F.J. Fernández Conde, *El Libro de los Testamentos de la Catedral de Oviedo* (Rome: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1971), 111-118; J.A. Estévez Sola, *Historia Silensis* § 16, pp. 158-159. The dating of all these works remains a matter of debate; in particular, the *Liber testamentorum* is now thought to have been produced between 1109 and 1112: Mª J. Sanz Fuentes, "Estudio codicológico," in *Liber testamentorum Ecclesia Ovetensis (*Barcelona, 1995), 77-84.

[38] A useful account of all the manuscripts containing versions of the tradition of the Holy Ark in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: P. Henriet, "Oviedo, Jérusalem hispanique au XIIe siècle. Le récit de la Translation de l'*Arca Sancta* selon l'évêque Pélage d'Oviedo," in *Pèlerinages et lieux saints dans l'Antiquité et le Moyen Âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maravall,* eds. Beatrice Caseau, Jean-Claude Cheynet and Vincent Déroche (Paris, 2006), 235-248, especially pp. 246-248. The collection of nearly all these testimonies in M. Guscin, *The History of the Sudarium of Oviedo*, (Ayuntamiento de Oviedo, 2006), 198-229, is also very useful.

[39] *... Distat autem a ciuitate Oueti miliaria X, in qua est ecclesia Saluatoris et totius Hyspaniae preciosissimae reliquiarum*. A.A. Nascimento, *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros. Relato de um Cruzado* (Nova Vega, 2007), 58. P. Linehan, *Historia e Historiadores de la España Medieval,* (Salamanca, 2012), 299. This is not the earliest attestation of the "fame" surrounding the Oviedo relics. The previously mentioned text from Codex 99 of Valenciennes may in fact be a kind of "certificate" issued by the ecclesiastical authorities of Oviedo to a pilgrim from what is now northern France, where the manuscript is preserved: A. García de la Borbolla, "El culto y la devoción al *lignum crucis*," 577.

[40] According to the text, in that year the emperor sent the king a large, intricately carved, and richly decorated cross made from the *lignum crucis*. As noted in the accompanying inscription, the wood came from one half of the True Cross that Constantine had taken to Constantinople after his mother, Empress Helena, decided to divide it into two parts.

precise dating of the *First Anonymous Chronicle* is difficult to establish, since the text clearly underwent a complex process of compilation: an initial version seems to have been written in the second decade of the twelfth century, with later additions incorporated over time. According to Carlos Reglero, the passage concerning the *lignum crucis* likely derives from one of these early interpolations.[41] Yet it cannot be much later, since the same episode appears in the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, composed in the mid-twelfth century and likely dependent on the Sahagún chronicle for this detail.[42] Whether or not the donation occurred,[43] what is beyond doubt is the importance that Castilian-Leonese historiography in the first half of the twelfth century attached to this emblematic Christian symbol, an emphasis that vividly reflects the crusading spirit of the age.[44]

A further issue is to unveil the explanatory background of such a singular event. As a hypothesis, we might think that the Byzantine emperor, accused of hindering the crusade as it passed through his lands, was using this gesture of generosity to counteract this image, by giving a gift to a western monarch who was not part of the expedition but related to the most distinguished of all the crusaders. It should be remembered that Count Raymond of Toulouse, towards whom Alexius I showed less animosity than towards the other Christian warlords, had become the son-in-law of Alfonso VI.[45]

Carried in a solemn procession, the cross was eventually placed in the monastery of Sahagún. A. Ubieto Arteta, *Crónicas Anónimas de Sahagún (*Zaragoza, 1987), 17-18.

[41] C.M. Reglero de la Fuente, "Estructura y proceso de elaboración de la *Primera Crónica Anónima de Sahagún*," in *Histoires, femmes, pouvoirs. Mélanges offerts au Professeur Georges Martin*, (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018), 255-269, especially 268-269.

[42] As is well known, according to the *Chronicle* of Sahagún, the relic was stolen from the monastery by the Aragonese king Alfonso "el Batallador." It is precisely this episode of the plundering that the emperor's chronicle takes up, with both texts displaying evident connections. S.H. Martínez, "Arnaldo, bishop of Astorga (1144- 1153) and the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*," *Argutorio* 38 (2017): 4-29, especially 20-21.

[43] In principle, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the imperial donation. B. Reilly even speculates on who might have served as the emissary responsible for ensuring its delivery: Count Fernando Díaz of Asturias, a participant in the First Crusade. B. Reilly, *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI (1065-1109)* (Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1989), 331. Count Fernando, who was El Cid's brother-in-law, signed as a witness a Sahaguntine document stating that it was the *anno quo uenit ex Iherosolimis*. See S. Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 235.

[44] E. L. Bowerman, "The Spanish Emperors and the True Cross: The Variable Uses of the 'lignum crucis' of Sahagún in Early Twelfth-Century Iberia," *Comitatus* 55.1 (2024): 29–61.

[45] C. de Ayala Martínez, "On the Origins of Crusading in the Peninsula: The Reign of Alfonso VI (1065- 1109)," *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum* 7 (2013): 225-269. The truth is that the granting of

In sum, Alfonso VI can be linked to several traditions, some securely attested, concerning relics of Jerusalem origin. Among the best documented is that of the "Holy Ark," associated with the year 1075. This was also the year in which the ideological renewal connected to St. James began, marked by the construction of the cathedral in Compostela, and the year that saw the launch of Alfonso's first major anti-Islamic campaign. This offensive took some time to materialise. Bernard F. Reilly attaches great importance to a royal assembly that likely convened in October 1077. The surviving documentary evidence from that gathering is the earliest in which Alfonso VI adopts the title *imperator totius Hispaniae*;[46] according to the British historian, it may have been on this occasion that the decision was formally made to colonise and militarily secure the region of Tras-Duero.

In sum, Alfonso VI can be associated with several traditions, some securely attested, concerning relics of Jerusalem origin. Among the best documented is the "Holy Ark", linked to 1075. That same year witnessed an ideological renewal centred on the cult of St. James, marked by the construction of the cathedral at

such a central relic of the faith was by no means a routine matter. It has been suggested that the German Emperor Henry IV had also received the same relic from Alexius I in the 1080s, as a way of forging ties in response to the threat posed by the Normans, a common adversary. (A. Frolow, *La relique de la vrai Croix. Recherches sur le développment d'une culte* (Paris: Institute Français d'Études byzantines, 1961), 83-84); although Robinson does not explicitly mention the *lignum crucis*, he does mention the gifts of great value that Henry IV received from Alexius I, relying, among others, on the text of Benzo of Alba which speaks of the shroud, wood of the cross and crown of thorns: I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056-1106* (CambridgeUniversity Press, 1999), 223). But it is now known that Alexius I probably never made this donation to the German emperor. In fact, this appears to have occurred only in the imagination of Bishop Benzo of Alba, Henry IV's panegyrist. In his *Liber ad Heinricum*, Benzo crafted a parallel narrative between Henry and Charlemagne to justify the emperor's aspiration to "universal dominion", a narrative in which the relics of the Passion of Christ – previously received by Charlemagne from the Patriarch of Jerusalem – played a role of extraordinary symbolic significance. A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World. Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013) 103-108. In fact, the only documented shipment of relics through the *Alexiad* made by Alexius I to the German emperor did not contain any fragment of the cross of Christ (H.A. Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West," *Dumbarton Oaks*, 58, 2004: 283-314). Whatever the case may be and even admitting that the reception of such a sacred relic was historical – and that it was returned to the Sahaguntine sanctuary after its plundering by the Aragonese king (J. Pérez-Embid Wamba, *Hagiología y sociedad en la España medieval. Castilla y León (Siglos XI-XIII)* (Huelva: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Huelva, 2002), pp. 64-65), the fact is that it has left very little trace in the tradition of the monastery, which is suspicious given the extraordinary category of the relic (L. Agúndez San Miguel, "Memoria y cultura en la documentación de Sahagún: la respuesta de las fórmulas 'inútiles' (904-1230)," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 40/2, 2010: 847-888, especially pp. 866-867).

[46] A. Gambra, *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio*, II. *Colección diplomática* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1998), doc. 50, 129-132.

Santiago de Compostela, and the launch of Alfonso's first major campaign against Islam. Although the offensive took time to materialise, Bernard F. Reilly assigns particular weight to a royal assembly likely convened in October 1077: the surviving documents provide the earliest instance of Alfonso styling himself *imperator totius Hispaniae*,[47] and, as Reilly argues, the decision to colonise and secure the Tras-Duero region may have been formalised on that occasion. In any case, Alfonso's realms were becoming a veritable arsenal of relics, many bearing the prestige of a provenance linked to Jerusalem and to the Islamic world; the kingdom of León, long a bulwark against Islam, increasingly presented itself as a vast reliquary suffused with Jerusalem associations.

IV. Relics and Warfare in other Iberian Christian Kingdoms?

To place the Castilian-Leonese monarchy in a broader setting, this section considers parallel developments elsewhere on the Peninsula. In the neighbouring Crown of Aragon, the intensified military deployment of relics appears later than in Castile and León and is already closely bound to an explicitly crusading ideology present in royal discourse from the reign of King Sancho Ramírez (1063–1094). This chronology is intelligible considering the monarch's special ties with Rome, forged during his visit to Pope Alexander II in 1068 and reinforced two years later through his marriage to Felicia, sister of Count Eblo II of Roucy, one of the Apostolic See's most prominent military supporters.[48]

From that point, the attraction exerted by relics linked to Rome or associated with military initiatives intensified. Sancho Ramírez brought from Urci near Almería the relics of St. Indalecius, one of the Seven Apostolic Men said to have evangelised the Iberian Peninsula at St. Peter's behest and deposited them at the monastery of San Juan de la Peña. More significant still were the remains of St. Demetrius, a Byzantine military saint whose cult gained renewed prominence during the First Crusade after a reputed apparition at Antioch, credited with aiding Bohemond of Taranto against the Turks. Prior to this, his body was kept in the chapel of St. Peter at the fortress of Loarre, at the very moment when operations against Zaragoza's Banu Hūd were intensifying in the 1080s.[49]

[47] A. Gambra, *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio*, II. *Colección diplomática* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1998), doc. 50, 129-132.

[48] C. Laliena Corbera, *La formación del Estado feudal. Aragón y Navarra en la época de Pedro I* (Huesca, Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 1996), 82-86; A.I. Lapeña Paúl, *Sancho Ramírez. Rey de Aragón (¿1064?-1094) y rey de Navarra (1076- 1094)*, (Gijón, Editorial Trea, 2004), 73-84.

[49] M. Poza Yagüe, "Byzantine echoes at the end of the eleventh century in the kingdom of Aragon," *Romanesque Saints, Shrines and Pilgrimage* (2020), 173-185.

The association of relics and war was further intensified in the days of one of the archetypal crusader rulers, King Alfonso I the Battler (r. 1104-1134), son of the above-mentioned Sancho Ramírez. In the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* it is stated that his campaigns were always accompanied by a chest of pure gold in which were kept fragments of the Cross of Christ, which he had stolen from the monastery of Sahagún, as well as other chests full of other relics. During the expeditions, they were placed in the tent in which the chapel was erected, guarded by clerics, and very close to the tent occupied by the king.[50]

V. Conclusion

The points developed in these pages may be summarised in five key conclusions. Firstly, the prominence acquired by relics in the central centuries of the Middle Ages and their effective presence, directly or indirectly, in contexts of war. Secondly, this connection between relics and war played a particularly important role in the legitimising process that accompanied, in the Iberian Peninsula, the change in the balance of power that took place in the mid-11th century: faced with the hegemonic predominance of Islam until then, the Christian powers, and in particular the powerful Castilian-Leonese monarchy took the lead in the conquering offensive. This implied a further step in justifying war, no longer as a just defence against aggression, but as the moral requirement of those who had to impose the predominance of their creed. In this process of justification, relics become an indispensable tool in reinforcing the change that has taken place with supernatural elements. Thirdly, this change is clearly shown during the reign of Ferdinand I of León and Castile, whose policy in relation to the use of relics and their link with key moments of military expansion is a significant novelty. Fourthly, this novelty was inherited and strengthened by his successor, King Alfonso VI, giving it a distinctly crusading orientation with a Jerusalem focus. Finally, the pattern observable in Castile and León appears to have no close parallel elsewhere in Iberia. The Aragonese material points in a different direction. Whereas in Castile and León sacred objects were deployed to consolidate royal leadership of a holy war while maintaining a certain distance from the papacy, in Aragon the political–military use of relics tended, not exclusively but with greater intensity, to reinforce the kingdom's legitimating dependence on Rome.

[50] A. Maya Sánchez, "*Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*", in *Chronica Hispana saeculi XII(Corpus Christianorum, LXXI)*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 174.

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FURTA SACRA AND THE MILITARY USE OF RELICS BY ITALIAN MARITIME CITIES (11TH-14TH CENTURIES)

Simone Lombardo*

The remains of saints were rarely static: they moved, crossed the sea, and were transferred from distant places. Often, these journeys are narrated in celebratory texts, produced by the inhabitants of the involved cities. In this contribution, I will attempt to investigate the relationship between war, Italian cities with a strong maritime projection, and relics of saints. It is a complex and intertwined story, as relics have been considered tools and have been used as such. There is a significant tradition of studies on the theme of the translation of relics in medieval Italy and on the role of sacred remains. Patrick J. Geary's seminal work on *furta sacra* paved the way for the study of a very broad phenomenon.[1] During the early Middle Ages, the cities of the Italian peninsula deepened their identification with their patron saint, resulting in a form of symbolic appropriation of the saints. In turn, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, a pantheon of patron saints of foreign origin emerged, frequently displacing the cathedral's established titular patrons. The presence of relics, therefore, was essential in the formation of this practice. Their cults were public, regulated by municipal statutes and overseen by civic officials. Relics constituted objects of exceptional value in medieval society, endowed with political significance no less than religious significance. They united citizens in moments of crisis, served to symbolically subjugate enemies, and could even function as hostages. Yet relics should not be regarded solely through the prism of their political and symbolic uses, for they were also believed to possess

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[1] P. J. Geary, *Furta sacra: Thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

intrinsic value as tangible manifestations of the divine. As such, they were interwoven with every sphere of human activity, including that of violence.[2]

Relics served as focal points around which civic identity, prestige, and the yearnings for spiritual protection converged. To analyse this phenomenon, we must delve into the study of common cult construction and the concept of collective memory. The idea of a shared, internalised, and transmissible memory within a group sparked a historiographical debate shaped by social anthropology.[3] Historical anthropology, for its part, clarified medieval perceptions of relics and showed how they reshaped collective memory in ways closely bound up with the political and institutional dynamics of the period. While most scholarship has approached hagiographic texts primarily through philological or devotional lenses, the political and identity-forming dimensions of the saints' physical presence – and their effects on the collective imagination – have received less sustained attention. A significant proportion of studies adopted a localised focus, often tethered to a specific hagiographic tradition, and produced by local historians; comprehensive syntheses remain relatively scarce. Notably, the broader Euro-Mediterranean maritime context has not yet been explored as a shared arena in this sense. The present study foregrounds the distinctive outward orientation of the Italian Peninsula's maritime cities. Venice, Pisa, Genoa, and other centres in southern Italy assumed leading roles in appropriating relics from distant, often Eastern, contexts, whereas mainland

[2] On formation of identity and symbolic competition between cities: *Identità cittadina e comportamenti socio-economici tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, Paolo Prodi, Stefano Simonetta (Bologna: Clueb, 2007); G. Schizzerotto, *Sberleffi di campanile. Per una storia culturale dello scherno come elemento dell'identità nazionale dal Medioevo ai giorni nostri* (Florence: Olshki, 2015). On the concept of civic religion in communal Italy, I refer to: A. Vauchez, "La religione civica," in André Vauchez, *Esperienze religiose nel Medioevo* (Roma: Viella, 2003), 247-252; A. Rigon, "La religione civica nel medioevo. Passato e presente di un tema di ricerca," in *Scritti di storia medievale offerti a Maria Consiglia De Matteis*, ed. Berardo Pio (Spoleto: Cisam, 2011), 601-614; A. Vauchez, "La religione civica: alcune riflessioni attorno a un concetto storiografico," in *Beata civitas: pubblica pietà e devozioni private nella Siena del '300*, ed. Anna Benvenuti, Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016), 3-9.

[3] P. Nora, "Mémoire collective," in *La nouvelle histoire*, ed. Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, Jacques Ravel (Paris: Retz, 1978), 398. I refer to the first conceptualisations of this sociological paradigm, which originated in the 1920s from the ideas of Maurice Halbwachs: M. Halbwachs, *On collective memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); M. Bloch, "Mémoire collective, tradition et costume," *Revue de synthèse* 11 (1925), 73-83. Halbwachs' vision was complemented by the work of Aleida and Jan Assmann, who focused on memory transmission and ritual. J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011); A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999).

Italian *comuni* operated within more circumscribed spheres of influence and faced greater obstacles to undertaking furta sacra over long distances. Violence, accordingly, emerges as an inseparable thread in this history of saints, war, and the sea.

I. Violent capture of relics in the East

During the early Middle Ages, the possession and transfer of relics by some Italian maritime cities were closely linked to violence. The acquisition of sacred remains, endowed with a powerful legitimising force for the civic community, almost always took place by force, whether through theft or looting. Such acts were publicly celebrated by the communities and duly commemorated, and relics, while regarded as possessing supernatural efficacy, also served as war trophies—symbols of victory and booty that asserted political supremacy over rival centres. At the same time, the remains of saints increased the spiritual prestige of the cities to which the new relics were moved and kept, guaranteeing the centre's divine protection (or its loss). Scholars have emphasised the construction of a civic identity around the bodies of saints, while victory in conflict and the capture of relics testified to divine favour. Relics, during the central Middle Ages, were often transferred to the Latin West from the East, and often by force. It was precisely the Eastern provenance – as a repository of treasures of the Christian faith – that caused a predominance of Italian maritime cities as protagonists of the *furta sacra*.

The Venetian case of St. Mark remains one of the best known. Venice's religious ties with the Levant long predated the crusades: the appropriation of Eastern relics reaches back to the ninth and tenth centuries, when the remains of Sts. Zacharias, John the Baptist, Sabas and - above all - Mark, stolen from Alexandria, were brought to the lagoon. These translations shaped the Venetian devotional landscape more than any other acquisitions. The narratives of the translation of St. Mark's body, probably dating to the eleventh century and transmitted in several recensions, became a cornerstone of Venetian hagiography. In this context, the basilica of Saint Mark assumed the character of a sanctuary, seeking recognition as a major sacred centre and even a site of pilgrimage. Equally well-known is the case of Saint Nicholas and his connection to Bari in southern Italy, a relationship that preceded the theft of his relics in 1087. Numerous legends emerged to justify the theft, whereby the saint himself is said to have appeared to declare his wish to relocate. Saint Nicholas no longer wished to remain in a place under the rule of the infidels, as was Myra in the late eleventh century. The story of the theft of Saint Nicholas's relics had a great echo, and was narrated in various sources, including two *Historiae translationis* and the

"Legend of Kiev" included in the Kyivan *Primary Chronicle*. In 1087, some sixty sailors from Bari, who had sailed eastward to trade in grain, learned that the Venetians intended to seize the relics in Antioch. Anticipating their rivals, they removed the saint's remains from Myra, then under Turkish control.[4] The translation of St. Nicholas's body to Bari profoundly shaped the devotional landscape and civic identity of the Apulian port, further consolidating its maritime vocation. Yet the cult of Nicholas soon transcended the borders of Puglia, and he came to be widely revered as the patron saint of seafarers. His role as protector of those at sea is given particular prominence in Jacobus de Voragine's *thirteenth-century Legenda Aurea*.[5]

A similar dynamic unfolded in Pisa, which stole particles of Saint Bartholomew. The saint had been martyred in Armenia, and his relics were gradually transferred westward, ultimately arriving on the island of Lipari off the coast of Sicily. In 1035, the Pisans conquered Lipari from the Arabs in a naval expedition and seized some relics of Saint Bartholomew's from the cathedral, bringing them back to their city.[6] Yet in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Pisan cultural expression was defined by the intensive use of Islamic spolia, particularly ceramic basins, incorporated into ecclesiastical architecture and juxtaposed with Roman *spolia*. This practice reflects a triumphalist strategy of appropriation, enacted both through warfare and through trade.[7] Although

[4] R. Bianco, "Il santo, il mare, le 'caravelle'. I viaggi di san Nicola da Myra a Bari," *RiMe. Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 1/2 (2017): 34-35.

[5] On the role of Saint Nicholas as protector of seafarers: I. Aulisa, "I santuari visti dal mare: l'Adriatico nel Portolano Sacro," in *I santuari e il mare. Atti del III Convegno Internazionale (Vicenza. 15-17 aprile 2013)*, ed. Immacolata Aulisa (Bari: Edipuglia, 2014), 142-143; M. Bacci, *San Nicola. Il grande taumaturgo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2009), 148-159; R. Bianco, "Il santo, il mare," 42-49; P. Corsi, *La traslazione di san Nicola: le fonti* (Bari: Centro studi nicolaiani, 1987).

[6] W. Dolfi, *Le reliquie del Duomo di Pisa* (Pisa: Opera della primaziale pisana, 2004); G.La Greca, *Lipari al tempo degli arabi: le reliquie di San Bartolomeo trafugate a Pisa* (Lipari: Centro studi-Lipari, 2009); V. Giustolisi, *Della conquista di Lipari araba da parte della flotta pisana nell'anno 1035 e della presunta asportazione delle reliquie di San Bartolomeo apostolo: con un saggio sul culto di San Bartolomeo a Pisa e nel suo territorio* (Palermo: Centro di documentazione e ricerca per la Sicilia antica "P. Orsi", 2010). On the role of relics in Pisa in early Middle Ages: M. L. Ceccarelli Lemut, G. Garzella, "Sulle rotte dei santi. Circolazione di culti e di reliquie a Pisa (VI-XII secolo)," *Pecia* 8/11 (2005): 227-244; M. L. Ceccarelli Lemut, "Il Mediterraneo dei Santi. Culti e reliquie a Pisa, secoli VI-XII," *RiMe. Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 1/2 (2017): 7-29; D. Di Pinto, "Il trasferimento forzato delle reliquie di Santo Stefano dal Monastero di Colonna di Trani a Pisa," *Neda* 1/2 (2019): 71-88.

[7] K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation in the Italian Maritime Cities, 1000-1150* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 110-111, 115-125. The basins of Pisa are extensively studied. They were ceramics of Islamic provenance, used for aesthetic purposes. The aim of the basins was also to increase the importance of churches where relics were kept or places

conflicts with the Muslim world often carried a pronounced religious dimension, they did not exclude peaceful forms of exchange. The integration of Islamic spolia into Pisa's sacred architecture, including the Duomo, responded to a complex interplay of political-religious, civic, and economic motivations, while also serving a distinctly aesthetic purpose.[8] The prominence of Islamic artefacts in Pisan churches contrasts with the relatively limited presence of stolen relics, revealing a conscious orientation of the city's symbolic and artistic identity toward engagement with the Muslim world rather than toward the appropriation of saints' remains - a choice partly conditioned by the more limited opportunities for relic theft in the western Mediterranean and along the North African coast. Maritime and political preeminence was thus articulated both through dialogue with the Muslim world and through the city's self-legitimisation in terms of *romanitas*.

The most intense period of violent acquisition of relics began with the First Crusade, in which Genoa and Venice emerged as the principal protagonists among the Italian city-states.[9] In Genoa, in particular, the paucity of indigenous saints accentuated the importance of relics brought from abroad. The massive influx of sacred remains was closely linked to the city's military expeditions: the first translations from the East coincided with the campaigns of the late eleventh century during the crusade itself. The connection with the Holy Land was essential in the construction of the devotional identity: the *passagium* – expedition – had been crowned by obtaining relics and holy objects, which testified to the military commitment to the Christian cause, enhanced its prestige and nourished its spiritual life.[10] This is not the place to examine in detail the references to the Holy Sepulchre and Jerusalem in Genoese tradition.[11] What

of apostolic importance, such as San Piero a Grado. Islamic ceramics could arrive in Pisa mainly in three ways: looting, gifts, or trade. Actually, there is no evidence of an explicit connection between military campaigns and ceramics as booty. Most probably, basins were obtained through trade. K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 125.

[8] K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 144.

[9] On the analysis of a phenomenon that included not only Italian maritime cities, but the entire crusader world: J. Durand, "Reliquie e reliquiari depredati in Oriente e a Bisanzio al tempo delle crociate," in *Le crociate. L'oriente e l'occidente da Urbano II a San Luigi 1096-1270.* Roma, Palazzo Venezia, 14 febbraio - 30 aprile 1997, ed. Monique Rey-Delqué (Milan: Electa, 1997), 378-389.

[10] F. Cardini, "Crociata e religione civica nell'Italia medievale," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne (Chrétienté et Islam)*, *Actes du colloque (Nanterre, 21-23 juin 1993)*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: École française de Rome, 1995), 158.

[11] In Genoa probably existed a church dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre near the Hospitaller commandery of Prè. A. Musarra, "Memorie di Terrasanta. Reliquie, traslazioni, culti e

should be emphasised, however, is that the earliest and most striking consequence of the Genoese exploits in the Holy Land was the transfer of relics to the capital, as the chronicles repeatedly underscore. According to a later narrative, the ashes of Saint John the Baptist, later to become the patron saint of the Tyrrhenian city, had arrived from Myra in 1098 or 1099 thanks to the participation of the Genoese in the First Crusade.[12] Upon the army's return, tensions between rival factions, divided between pro-imperial adherents and supporters of ecclesiastical reform, seem to have reached a critical point. The arrival of the saint's relics is said to have calmed hostilities and averted the outbreak of civil war. Deposited in the baptistery of the cathedral, the relics became the focal point of civic rituals of reconciliation. Soon thereafter, the merchant Guglielmo Embriaco set sail with two galleys, took part in the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, and emerged as one of the celebrated heroes of the First Crusade.[13]

The cult of Saint John the Baptist only became predominant in Genoa after some time, sanctioned by the laws of the *comune*.[14] In 1323, his relics were placed in the cathedral, and a few years later, in 1327, the saint was officially proclaimed

devozioni a Genova tra XII e XIV secolo," in *Come a Gerusalemme. Evocazioni, riproduzioni, imitazioni dei luoghi santi tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, ed. Anna Benvenuti and Pierantonio Piatti (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013), 541-547. On the importance of the devotion to Jerusalem in Europe during the Middle Ages: A. Hendrik Bredero, "Jérusalem dans l'Occident médiéval," in *Mélanges offerts à R. Crozet à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire*, I (Poitiers: Société d'Études Médiévales, 1966), 259-271; F. Parente, "La conoscenza della Terra Santa come esperienza religiosa dell'Occidente cristiano dal IV secolo alle crociate," in *Popoli e paesi nella cultura altomedievale*, I (Spoleto: Cisam, 1983), 231-326; A. I. Galletti, "Gerusalemme o la città desiderata," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 96 (1984): 459-487; F. Cardini, "La devozione al Santo Sepolcro, le sue riproduzioni occidentali e il complesso stefaniano. Alcuni casi italici," in *7 colonne e 7 chiese: la vicenda ultramillenaria del Complesso di Santo Stefano in Bologna* (Bologna: Grafis, 1987), 18-49; R. Salvarani, *La fortuna del Santo Sepolcro nel Medioevo. Spazio, liturgia, architettura* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2008).

[12] On the way back, after the conclusion of the siege of Antioch, it seems that the fleet of galleys raided Myra, where the Genoese seized the relics. The events are, however, handed down by Iacopo Doria, while the absence of this information in the works of Caffaro, chronicler and eyewitness, is at least singular. Probably, there was a work by Caffaro expressly dedicated to the topic and today lost. V. Polonio, "L'arrivo delle ceneri del Precursore e il culto al Santo a Genova e nel Genovesato in età Medievale," in *San Giovanni Battista nella vita sociale e religiosa a Genova e in Liguria tra medioevo ed età contemporanea. Atti del convegno (Genova, 16-17 giugno 1999)*, ed. Claudio Paolocci (Genoa: Amici della Biblioteca Franzoniana, 2000), 44; A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris. I Genovesi, la Crociata e la Terrasanta (secc. XII-XIII)* (Rome: Isime, 2017), 608-611.

[13] A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris*, 123.

[14] V. Polonio, "L'arrivo delle ceneri del Precursore," 35-65.

"Pater civitatis." – "Father of the City." This marked the first conscious attempt to construct a civic cult explicitly centred on his figure.[15] Veneration of the saint acquired a consistent and enduring form toward the close of the fourteenth century, owing largely to the initiative of civic authorities' intent on reinforcing communal identity by anchoring it to exclusive cults. Thus emerged a city-wide devotion polarised around relics preserved locally but originating from the Levant.[16] The chronicler Giorgio Stella, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, underscored the close association between crusading exploits and the acquisition of relics, emphasising in his account of the conquest of Myra the discovery of those belonging to the saint.[17]

Another emblematic object of Genoese piety and prestige was the Sacro Catino, likewise acquired during the First Crusade. As William of Tyre records, the green glass vessel was taken in 1101 during the sack of Caesarea, in which the Genoese played a significant role.[18] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Sacro Catino was prized chiefly for its material splendour, believed to be a dish of emerald, rather than for its sacred associations. Only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did the belief arise that it had been used at the Last Supper; yet even then it never became the focus of widespread popular devotion. Nonetheless, preserved in the cathedral, the Sacro Catino remained one of the most striking symbols of Genoa's enduring ties with the East.[19]

The crusading ventures of Venice prolonged the period of relic acquisition in the East, sustained by a tradition of sacred theft and by the city's close relations with the Byzantine world. The sequence of furta sacra began almost simultaneously with Genoa: in 1100, the body of St. Nicholas, declared authentic in opposition to the remains already seized and venerated in Bari, was carried from Myra to the lagoon. In the same year, the relics of St. Stephen were removed from Constantinople and brought to Venice. Soon afterwards, the remains of

[15] V. Polonio, "L'arrivo delle ceneri del Precursore," 53-54. Iacopo da Varazze was the author of a history of the arrival of the ashes of John the Baptist in Genoa: Iacopo Da Varagine, "Istoria sive legenda translationis beatissimi Johannis Baptiste," in *Due opuscoli di Jacopo da Varagine*, ed. Amedeo Vigna (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1874), 457-491.

[16] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," in *Genova, Venezia, il Levante nei secoli XII-XI*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli, Dino Puncuh (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 2001), 352-353.

[17] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 353.

[18] William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, I, ed. Robert Burchard Constantijn Huygens, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, 63-63A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 471; R. Müller, "Il Sacro Catino," in *Intorno al Sacro Volto: Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI - XIV)*, ed. Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti, Colette Dufour Bozzo, Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), 94-95.

[19] On the discussion around the *Sacro Catino* I refer to: A. Musarra, "Memorie di Terrasanta," 549-553.

numerous other saints, among them Isidore, Anastasius, and Donatus, were likewise taken in the East and translated to the Venetian centre.[20] Throughout the twelfth century the Byzantine Empire remained the principal source from which the Venetians appropriated relics, and the very concept of *translatio* was consistently framed as a movement from East to West. The underlying notion was that the Christian East had failed in its duty to safeguard the relics entrusted to it. The remains of the saints, therefore, were destined to move westwards, where they would receive the veneration they deserved.[21] Geary has observed that the mechanisms of translation varied according to the political relationship with the former custodians: Venice pursued this appropriation by violent means, seizing relics from the Byzantine Empire as a symbolic assertion of cultural and political ascendancy.[22] The forcible capture of sacred treasures thus articulated an overtly hostile posture towards Byzantium. Such acts of spoliation were celebrated as exploits that humiliated Venice's rivals by demonstrating that the Empire was unworthy of preserving holy objects. In this way, Venice symbolically subjugated one of the great powers of the Mediterranean.[23] As Karen Rose Mathews has noted, secular *spolia* and looted relics in Venice functioned as mutually reinforcing symbols. The sacred aura of the relics magnified the prestige of individual churches, which themselves came to be conceived as monumental reliquaries. Conversely, the incorporation of columns, capitals, and sculptures taken from antiquity and from the Byzantine world enhanced the splendour of the church-reliquary and, at times, even underpinned its legitimacy. Already in the twelfth century, the bodies of saints were understood as war trophies, a potent emblem of Venetian triumph over a formidable and threatening adversary, one that was culturally alluring yet ultimately cast as antagonistic.[24]

[20] A. Rigon, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo veneziano," in *Genova, Venezia, il Levante nei secoli XII-XI*, ed. Ortalli, Puncuh, 398-399.

[21] K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 78.

[22] P. J. Geary, "Sacred commodities: the circulation of Medieval relics," in *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 189; K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 79.

[23] K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 79.

[24] K. R. Mathews, *Conflict, Commerce, and an Aesthetic of Appropriation*, 84-85; D. M. Perry, *Sacred plunder: Venice and the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); H. Westermann-Angerhausen, "Spolia as Relics? Relics as Spoils? The Meaning and Function of Spolia in Western Medieval Reliquaries," in *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia J. Hahn, Holger A. Klein (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks 2015), 173-192.

This period of sacred theft and *translationes* reached its culmination in 1204 with the sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, which unleashed a new wave of Eastern and Byzantine relics. Among the treasures seized were the bodies of St. Lucy and St. Simeon, an arm of St. George, an ampulla containing the blood of Christ, as well as numerous icons and holy images.[25] Venice thus became the heir to a vast religious patrimony transferred from the East to the lagoon. The subsequent influx of relics throughout the thirteenth century was remarkable: the remains of St. Helena arrived in 1211, those of St. Marina in 1213, St. John of Alexandria the martyr in 1216, St. Paul the martyr in 1222, St. Paul the Hermit in 1240, St. Eutychius in 1246, and St. John the Merciful in 1249.[26] This continuous stream of sacred bodies and objects profoundly shaped Venetian devotions, determining the dedications of churches both in the lagoon and on the mainland. In this way, Venice sought to fashion itself as a new sacred centre, with St. Mark's Cathedral assuming the character of a vast reliquary designed to house this holy treasure. Unlike many Italian cities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Venice appeared reluctant to cultivate devotions centred on contemporary lay saints associated with penitential practices, though such figures were not altogether absent. Instead, the city's cultic life remained oriented toward saints from distant lands, whose relics, brought from the East, were domesticated within the Venetian devotional landscape through the city's overseas projection. The most prestigious of these relics, naturally, derived from Constantinople and the Holy Land.[27]

During the following centuries, the appropriation of relics was seen as the longest lasting and most impactful achievement of Venetian enterprises in the Holy Land. The fourteenth-century chronicles of Andrea Dandolo and the anonymous Pseudo-Enrico Dandolo, describing the events of the Venetian crusade of 1123-1126, do not dwell on the military exploits, but on the description of the theft of relics from the Levant. Pseudo-Dandolo focuses on how the Venetians obtained the body of Saint Nicholas. The chronicler even engaged in a comparison of sources: while one tradition located the finding of the relics near Myra, another named the city of Patras, "che è in Romania bassa."[28] In any case, the bodily remains of Saint Nicholas were moved to the Lido, although Venetian sailors left a part of the saint near Bari.[29] Similarly, in

[25] S. Tramontin, "Influsso orientale nel culto dei Santi a Venezia fino al secolo XV," 807-808.

[26] A. Rigon, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo veneziano," 405; A. Niero, "I santi patroni," in *Culto dei santi a Venezia*, ed. Tramontin, 87-88.

[27] A. Vauchez, "La difficile émergence d'une sainteté des laïcs à Venise aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles," in *Genova, Venezia, il Levante nei secoli XII-XI*, ed. Ortalli, Puncuh, 345-347.

[28] *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo: origini-1362*, ed. Roberta Pesce (Venice: Centro di studi medievali e rinascimentali "E.A. Cicogna", 2010), 55.

[29] *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo*, 55.

that same period Callixtus II's crusade mostly resulted in obtaining a stone on which Christ sat down to preach, "cum sí aduxe et tolse quella de Thyro."[30] The stone was transported by ship to Saint Mark's Cathedral in Venice. In the author's time, it was still standing by the altar of Saint John the Baptist. On the Greek island of Chios, the body of Saint Isidore was recovered and placed in the relic container that had become Saint Mark's Basilica. With a certain pride, the anonymous author recounts how the body of Saint Stephen was also furtively taken by the Venetians from some monks in Constantinople.[31] Likewise, amidst the seizure of the Byzantine capital during the Fourth Crusade, the author insisted on the large amount of *spolia* taken by force, which allowed the Venetians to embellish their cathedral.[32]

What brings Pseudo-Dandolo's attention to events overseas is a logic of appropriation. In the earlier chronicles, the same literary position was accompanied by descriptions of facts and events. In the anonymous, these descriptions were considerably reduced, while the reports on the theft of relics remained of the same length. The *furta sacra*, the true material legacy of the time of the crusades and still visible in 14th-century Venice, is the focal point on which the Pseudo-Dandolo wants to centre his attention. In short, relics are one lasting result of a successful war. The description of the crusade was reduced to an examination of how sacred objects were transported from the East to the capital, which inherited sanctity from those lands.[33] The Fourth Crusade was an unavoidable moment for all Venetian chronicles, which felt an apologetic duty towards the operations of their own city.[34] Even smaller towns like Ortona, on the Adriatic coast, obtained their share of relics. The bones of Saint Thomas the

[30] *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo*, 59.

[31] *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo*, 60. Andrea Dandolo also recounts the appropriation of the relics of Saint Isidore in Chios, although the focus on this event is just a part of a longer narrative. Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta, aa. 46-1280 d.C.*, ed. Ester Pastorello, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, ser. II, 12/1 (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1938-1958), 234.

[32] *Cronica di Venexia detta di Enrico Dandolo*, 78.

[33] For a general overview of the theft of relics, and particularly the case of Venice: M. Papasidero, *Translatio sanctitatis. I furti di reliquie nell'Italia medievale* (Florence: Firenze University Press 2019), 37-46. For the English version of the book: M. Papasidero, *Thefts of Relics in Italy. From Late Antiquity to the Central Middle Ages, 300-1150* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025).

[34] On the relationship between Venetian chronicles and the Fourth Crusade: Ş. Marin, ""Dominus quartae partis et dimidiae totius Imperii Romaniae". The Fourth Crusade and the Dogal Title in the Venetian Chronicles' Representation," *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* 3 (2004): 119-150; Ş. Marin, "Between Justification and Glory: the Venetian Chronicles' View regarding the Fourth Crusade," in *The Fourth crusade. Event, aftermath, and perceptions*, Thomas F. Madden (Aldershot: Ashgate 2008), 113-121.

Apostle had been moved from the Greek island of Chios to Ortona in 1258 by galleys. The transfer would turn the small town on the Abruzzo coast into a devotional centre, enhancing its political identity.[35]

II. Relics and secular spolia. Holy plunders in wars between maritime cities

While the violent appropriation of relics from the East continued between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we can also witness other dynamics. In particular, the mutual theft of relics between Italian maritime cities had taken hold. Holy relics were no longer just plundered from the East, stolen from the Byzantine Empire or from the lands of Syria and Palestine, but also from the Italian rivals themselves. Relics could be spoils of war, meaning moral and political superiority, or even used as hostages. The inhabitants of the maritime cities of the peninsula were therefore not only perpetrators of spoliation, but also its victims. Ana Marinković has likewise traced the systematic removal of relics by Venice across its Adriatic dominions, emphasizing the political function of such thefts, which were carried out in accordance with St. Mark's logic of subjugating subordinate communities.[36] A hagiographical text written in 1203 recounts the 1171 Venetian assault on Traù (today Trogir), then under Byzantine rule, during which the Venetians stole an arm from the body of Saint John, a local bishop venerated in Traù since the 12th century.[37] The narrative describes divine punishment striking the Venetian fleet and later relates Traù's unsuccessful attempt to recover the relic through envoys. According to the text, the arm miraculously returned on a comet, borne by angels. In reality, it was more likely restored following Traù's submission to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1180. As Ana Marinković has argued, the relic functioned as a hostage to secure the city's loyalty, and was consequently transferred to Traù's new lord.[38]

This was not an isolated case. St. Chrysogonus came to be venerated as one of the protectors of Zadar from a precise moment: in 1190 his intercession was believed to have secured the city's victory in the war against Venice. In 1205, following the events of the Fourth Crusade, Zadar concluded peace with Venice

[35] R. Di Martino, "Il viaggio di San Tommaso Apostolo da Chios a Ortona," in *Dai Giustiniani all'Unione Europea: un percorso continuo. Atti del convegno Bassano Romano, 17 aprile 2004*, ed. Enrico Giustiniani (Bassano Romano: Comune di Bassano Romano, 2005), 301-305.

[36] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control in the Eastern Adriatic," in *Ein Meer und seine Heiligen. Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Mediterraneum*, ed. Nikolas Jaspert, Christian A. Neumann, Marco Di Branco (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöning, 2018), 275-296.

[37] D. Farlati, *Život sv. Ivana Trogirskog: po izdanju Daniela Farlatija*, ed. Kažimir Lučin (Split-Trogir: Matica hrvatska - Književni krug, 1998).

[38] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 279-281.

and accepted its rule. The Venetian decision to remove the relics of St. Chrysogonus was most likely linked to the symbolic role the saint had acquired after 1190. The relic was transferred to the lagoon and venerated there. The story of its return to Zadar is transmitted in several versions, with the date ranging between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries.[39] In any case, the aim of the Venetian doges was to reaffirm their control over the rebellious cities of the Adriatic. One means of ensuring such subjugation was to seize a city's relics and keep them in the capital as hostages. The body of another patron of Zadar, St. Simeon, was likewise requisitioned and temporarily transferred to Venice around the middle of the fourteenth century. Retained there as a guarantee against renewed rebellion, the relic was only restored to Zadar after the cession of the city to the King of Hungary in 1358.[40]

During the fourteenth century, a certain narrowing of horizons among the Italian maritime cities can be discerned, as Benjamin Kedar has suggested, linked to the contraction brought about by the prevailing socio-economic conditions.[41] The provenance of holy relics likewise shifted. No longer were the *furta sacra* directed primarily eastwards; instead, the Italian peninsula itself, once an importer, was transformed into a reservoir of sacred remains. The wars between Genoa and Venice are indicative of this trend. In 1354, the Genoese admiral Paganino Doria, during the conflict against Venice, stole with his fleet the bodies of Saint Maurus and Saint Eleutherius kept in Parenzo (today Poreč, Istria), and moved them to the Genoese church of San Matteo, managed by the Doria family.[42] The war of Chioggia is, perhaps, the most emblematic moment to show the war of relics, which ran parallel to the fighting at sea. By 1379, the Genoese captured a number of Veneto-Istrian towns: Caorle, Grado, Trieste, Rovinj, Umag, Cittanova (today Novigrad). In some of these they had confiscated relics and brought them to Genoa. The bodies of Saint Pelagius and

[39] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 281-283.

[40] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 284-285.

[41] B. Z. Kedar, *Merchants in crisis. Genoese and Venetian men of affairs and the fourteeth-century depression*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

[42] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 389. On the sack of 1354 and the subsequent problems with the recovery of the relics: G. Cuscito, "I santi Mauro ed Eleuterio di Parenzo. L'identità, il culto, le reliquie," *Atti del Centro di Ricerche Storiche Rovigno* 16 (1985-1986): 53-56. In the eighteenth century, Bishop Vincenzo Maria Mazzoleni succeeded in regaining two femurs of the saints from the Doria family. They were brought back to Poreč, where in 1749 Bishop Gaspare Negri finally consecrated an altar to Saint Maurus: G. B. Contarini, *Memorie storiche delle sacre reliquie de' SS. martiri Mauro ed Eleuterio protettori della città e diocesi di Parenzo* (Venice: Simone Occhi, 1749). The relics were only fully returned from Genoa to Poreč on 10 June 1934: E. Migliorini, F. Forlati, P. Sticotti, M. Brunetti, "Parenzo," in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Rome: Treccani, 1935).

Maximus, patrons of Cittanova, are documented in the Genoese church of San Matteo in 1381.[43] In 1380, a fleet of galleys commanded by Matteo Maruffo attempted to rescue the besieged Genoese and Paduans in the lagoon of Chioggia. Despite their failure, Maruffo's fleet was festively welcomed in Genoa for bringing back a great number of relics, stolen from Venetian territories in the Adriatic. The arrival of the relics was celebrated with solemn processions, in the presence of the clergy and officials of the government, and the relics were divided between the cathedral of San Lorenzo, the *comune*, the patrons of the galleys and some city churches. It was a meagre attempt to balance the military defeat. Many of the relics were not even known to which saint they belonged: a sign that the true prestige of the *furta sacra* was having taken sacred objects from the enemy, even more so than the relic itself.[44]

Instead, the body of Saint Euphemia, the patron saint of Rovinj, was taken by the Genoese army to Chioggia. After the Venetian victory in the siege, the commander Vittor Pisani recaptured the relic and brought it to Venice, to the church of San Canzian.[45] In 1401, the lay representatives of Rovinj begged for its return, which was finally granted. Also, during the War of Chioggia, in 1378, a Venetian fleet under the command of Vittor Pisani attacked Kotor, a subject to the King of Hungary. During the conquest, the hand of Saint Tryphon, the town's patron saint, was stolen. The relic was transported to the Venetian church of San Fantin.[46] The citizens of Kotor protested: a first document shows a request for restitution in 1400, repeated in 1423. Both pleas were refused. Vittor Pisani's insistence on keeping the remains of Saint Tryphon in his parish church, San Fantin, despite the fact that it was not the most important relic, shows a clear political message and the asymmetrical relationship between the two cities.[47] Marinković interprets even these episodes through the concept of a "hostage-relic situation": uncertain of the loyalty of Rovinj and Kotor, Venice retained its

[43] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 286.

[44] The relics were conserved in the cathedral of San Lorenzo, inside a chest with three different locks, the keys of which were given to as many people. Other relics were given to various city churches, such as San Giorgio and San Luca, which received the remains of their respective saints. The list of relics is in: Archivio di Stato di Genova (ASGe), *Archivio Segreto, Diversorum* 497, ff. 45v.-46r. Genoa, 6 March 1382. Edited in: S. Lombardo, *La Croce dei Mercanti. Genova, Venezia e la Crociata Mediterranea nel tardo Trecento (1348-1402)* (Paderborn: Brill, 2023), 566-567.

[45] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 286; *Translatio corporis beate Eufemie*, ed. Mate Križman, Josip Barbarić (Pula: Zavičajna naklada "Žakan Juri", 2000), 186-191.

[46] N. Jakšić, "Un gruppo di reliquiari trecenteschi da Cattaro a Venezia e Chioggia," in *Letteratura, arte, cultura tra le due sponde dell'Adriatico*, ed. Guido Baldassarri (Zadar: Sveuciliste, 2008), 219-237.

[47] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 289.

relics, just as it might have held men in order to guarantee the fidelity of subject communities.[48] This hypothesis does not, however, exclude a straightforward Venetian eagerness to appropriate relics, particularly in the case of subjugated cities deemed inferior. Beyond political calculation, one must also consider the perceived spiritual prestige that came with preserving sacred remains in Venice itself. Once again, the city sought to fashion itself as a new Byzantium.

In the same conflict, the Venetian admiral Carlo Zen arrived in Liguria with his fleet of galleys. He managed to steal some relics of Saint Venerio del Tino from Portovenere. The Genoese chronicler Giorgio Stella states, however, that they were fake relics, perhaps to downplay the impact of the theft.[49] Devotional horizons narrowed, and civic competition seemed to be the real devotional focus. On 26 September 1386, the Roman Pope Urban VI, who was in Genoa at the time, issued an indicative privilege: those who went on the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist to venerate his relics, kept in the Genoese cathedral, were granted the same indulgences enjoyed by the Venetian Basilica of Saint Mark, for the feast of the Ascension.[50] The Genoese did not even ask for the exact terms of the indulgences, which in fact are not stated on the papal bull. They just wanted the equivalence with the church and the patron saint of the rival city. The veneration of saints, spiritual benefits or *furta sacra* seemed a matter of civic prestige in the aftermath of the Chioggia war.[51]

In the fourteenth century Philippe de Mézières did not hesitate to describe Venice as one of the centres of lay religiosity in Europe.[52] The nature of translations, however, had shifted, and the flow of relics from the East came to an end during this period.[53] Venetian efforts were redirected, at best, toward Eastern Europe and the Slavic lands, as in the case of the remains of St. Gerard of Csanád, a Venetian martyred in the eleventh century, which were brought to the lagoon in 1384.[54] In the fourteenth century, translations also took place within the city itself, as relics were transferred to other churches or relocated to

[48] A. Marinković, "Hostage relics and Venetian Maritime Control," 287-289.

[49] The chronicler Giorgio Stella claimed to have spoken personally with the abbot of the San Tino monastery. The abbot swore that he had never known to whom the relics removed by the Venetians belonged, but that they were definitely not those of Saint Venerio. *Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses*, ed. Giovanna Petti Balbi, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, ser. II, 17/2 (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1975), 174.

[50] The papal bull is in: ASGe, *Bolle e brevi* 1554, doc. 12. Genoa, 26 September 1386. Also Giorgio Stella quotes it: *Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses*, 193.

[51] The *furta sacra* were also a way of humiliating the enemy, taking away his otherworldly protection references. V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 390.

[52] A. Vauchez, "La difficile émergence d'une sainteté des laïcs à Venise," 347-348.

[53] A. Niero, "Reliquie e corpi di santi," 192.

[54] A. Niero, "Reliquie e corpi di santi," 205.

different sites within the urban fabric.[55] Certainly, the arrival of relics, images, and Greek icons from the East never ceased altogether, at least until the fifteenth century.[56] These, however, were isolated instances, almost all dating from the fifteenth century, when efforts were made to safeguard the Byzantine sacred heritage from the advance of the Turks. Only a handful of such cases can be observed.[57] More characteristic of the period was a tendency to re-evaluate ancient cults, often dispersed among the churches, *Scuole*, and sanctuaries of the lagoon, especially in response to particular events or moments of danger. Venice no longer had to legitimise its own greatness with new acquisitions through violence, but had to jealously defend its religious heritage from external assaults, such as Genoese attacks, or from internal theft. This defensive effort culminated in the compilation of catalogues of relics kept at the *Scuole*. Relics were often reserved for use by the confraternity that possessed them and were governed by restrictive regulations. In fourteenth-century Venice, the priority was to defend against *furta sacra*. The earlier dynamism of new acquisitions had given way to the static concern of preservation.[58] New arrivals might come through personal donations, such as the fragment of the True Cross presented in 1370 by Philippe de Mézières to the Scuola of San Giovanni Evangelista.[59] When linked to war, new acquisitions occurred within the Italian context. In Venice during this period, the preference was to safeguard the patrimony amassed over the centuries rather than to enlarge it with further relics from the Levant. Relics circulated instead through mutual theft between Italian cities or were obtained from neighbouring regions.

The bodies of saints, obtained by force during military expeditions, took on a strong internal value in maritime cities. They strengthened cohesion in the face of challenges and adversities. Their value was also external, as signs of identity, which could and should be stolen from the adversary. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, there was a strong mobility of relics, which were plundered in the East and then in conflicts between Italian maritime cities. As a result, the pantheon of city saints increased through war, raids and *furta sacra*. Instead, the fiteenth century witnessed a certain crystallisation of cults, which became

[55] A. Rigon, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo veneziano," 409.

[56] S. Tramontin, "Influsso orientale nel culto dei Santi a Venezia fino al secolo XV," 808-809, 818-819.

[57] The only late fourteenth century case is that of the relics of the blessed Gentile from Matelica, a Franciscan friar martyred in Persia in 1340. He was a modern saint, compared to the more prestigious ancient Eastern fathers. A. Rigon, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo veneziano," 409.

[58] A. Rigon, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo veneziano," 411-412.

[59] K. Petkov, *The Anxieties of a Citizen Class. The Miracles of the True Cross of San Giovanni Evangelista, Venice 1370-1480* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 15-16.

institutionalised within each community. Relics, the legacy of past conflicts, were transformed into static and defining elements of the political organism. Scholars such as André Vauchez or Franco Cardini, with regard to the Italian context, investigated the medieval "civic religion" in this sense. While the cult of patron saints was traditionally overseen by the bishop and the cathedral clergy, from the twelfth century onwards civil institutions began to appropriate the figure of some saints. Relics, as well as depictions of patron saints in military-political banners, *signa* and seals, were a key element in this development. The *comune* and the urban aristocracy legitimised and sacralised their power by grafting themselves onto the body of a saint and the rites related to him. The interplay between the sacralisation of civic power through religious commitment and the secularisation of religion was complex, particularly in the fourteenth century.[60] The association with military exploits was strong, and religious festivals frequently overlapped with the commemoration of battles. In 1402, Marshal Boucicaut, in his reorganisation of Genoese festivities, abolished several civic celebrations that had assumed religious forms and imposed a drastic reduction in the number of *pallia* to be offered. Only four were henceforth permitted each year, foremost among them that of the Epiphany in the church of San Giorgio, offered "for all the victories of the Genoese, since Saint George is our standard-bearer." In this rite, the *comune* solemnly celebrated its military triumphs.[61]

In the Italian maritime communities, a certain ambiguity can often be discerned between *spolia*, war trophies, and relics, for in many cases their functions overlapped. These categories were repeatedly associated with confrontation against enemies and with civic self-representation. Trophies and relics alike were preserved and displayed in the same settings, such as churches and other religious buildings, so that the boundary between them was blurred. *Spolia* were frequently regarded as secular relics and assumed an almost sacred value as symbols of supremacy, linked to past clashes. Medieval war trophies and their public display are the result of an ancient tradition. Relics, especially when stolen from enemies in distant contexts, were a sign of divine favour in war and protection granted to the centre. *Spolia* and relics performed similar functions, reassuring and comforting. Civic and religious values often intersected. After all, did not the trophies stolen by the Genoese from the Venetians represent the lion of the evangelist Saint Mark, whose relics were kept in the cathedral in the lagoon? The ambiguity between relics and secular *spolia* could be easily observed within Italian maritime cities.

[60] A. Vauchez, "La religione civica: alcune riflessioni attorno a un concetto storiografico," 3-9.
[61] *Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses*, 259.

The Genoese in the Middle Ages brought many war trophies back to the city, which confirmed the need for symbols to legitimize their identity. Rebecca Müller focused on the analysis of the Genoese *spolia*, although she did not consider the relics as such.[62] Most of the trophies were related to the wars against Pisa and Venice. The *spolia* were therefore publicly displayed in city churches, particularly in buildings other than the cathedral of San Lorenzo.[63] The Genoese had taken possession of the chains that closed the port of Porto Pisano in 1288-1289: this was an evident sign of superiority over their adversary. Besides the two city gates, parts of the chains had been hung on the facades of at least eleven churches in Genoa, where they remained for almost six centuries.[64] Similarly, a Venetian lion plundered in Pula in 1380 is still walled on the Genoese church of San Marco al Molo.[65] The civic value of churches, on the other hand, is not a new phenomenon. Precisely on the façade of the church of San Matteo in Genoa several inscriptions displayed victories against rival cities, in which the members of the Doria family played a key role. The battle of Meloria against the Pisans, those of Curzola, the Bosphorus and Pola against the Venetians are described.[66] These were widespread phenomena. In the thirteenth century, the Venetians plundered the stones of the Genoese tower in Acre after its destruction in the Saint Sabas war. A large square stone, taken from the foundations of the Genoese tower, was placed by Lorenzo Tiepolo near the doors of the church of San Pantaleon in Venice.[67] The Pisans, on the other hand, detached some stones from the communal palace of Lucca in 1314 and walled them up in the cathedral of Cagliari, to demonstrate their dominance in Sardinia.[68] In short, the distinction between relics of saints seized from the enemy and political trophies taken under the same conditions was often tenuous. By the end of the Middle Ages, civic politics and urban religiosity appeared closely intertwined. In short, the

[62] R. Müller, *Sic hostes Ianua frangit. Spolien und Trophäen im mittelalterlichen Genua* (Weimar: VDG, 2002).

[63] R. Müller, "Genova vittoriosa: i trofei bellici," in *Genova: opere, artisti, committenti, collezionisti e l'Europa mediterranea*, ed. Clario Di Fabio (Milan: P. Boccardo, 2005), 96.

[64] R. Müller, "Genova vittoriosa: i trofei bellici," 103.

[65] In the caption under the lion of Saint Mark, which can be seen on the left side of the church of San Marco al Molo in Genoa, one can still read: "Iste lapis in quo est figura sancti Marci delatus fuit a civitate Polae capta a nostris MCCCLXXX die XIII ianuarii."

[66] For the text of the inscriptions of San Matteo: S. Origone, A. Silva, C. Varaldo, *Corpus inscriptionum medii aevi Liguriae. 3. Genova: centro storico* (Genoa: Università di Genova, 1987). Also: A. Musarra, *Il Grifo e il Leone. Genova e Venezia in lotta per il Mediterraneo* (Bari: Laterza, 2020), 240-241, 257-258; B. Bernabò, R. Cavalli, "San Matteo in Genova: chiesa gentilizia e "monumento" celebrativo della famiglia Doria," in *Verso Genova medieval* (Genoa: Grafema, 1989), 25-40.

[67] R. Müller, "Genova vittoriosa: i trofei bellici," 102.

[68] R. Müller, "Genova vittoriosa: i trofei bellici," 102.

distinction between relics of saints seized from the enemy and political trophies taken under the same conditions was often tenuous. By the end of the Middle Ages, civic politics and urban religiosity appeared closely intertwined.

III. A relic of war. The True Cross and the Genoese

We shall now consider the issue of bringing relics into battle by the armies and fleets of the *comuni*. The most accessible evidence concerns the relics of the True Cross in the crusader armies. A durable tradition, rooted in imperial ideology and widely imitated, encouraged the carrying of relics of the Holy Cross on military campaigns. In the Byzantine Empire such relics were likewise employed in warfare, as well as in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. [69] Crusader sources, often programmatically attuned to the sacred dimension of war, emphasise these practices, potentially exaggerating the prominence of relics. Some scholars investigated the wartime use of relics of the True Cross, which had the function of raising the morale of combatants in the Holy Land.[70] Between 1099 and 1187 the relic was carried onto the battlefield on at least thirty-one occasions. Enclosed in a large cruciform reliquary, it was borne into battle by the Patriarch of

[69] For the wartime use of relics in Byzantium: A. Frolow, "La Vraie Croix et les expéditions d'Héraclius en Perse," *Revue des études byzantines* 11/1 (1953): 88-105; J. T. Wortley, "The Marian Relics at Constantinople," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45/2 (2005): 171-187; D. F. Sullivan, "Siege Warfare, Nikephoros II Phokas, Relics and Personal Piety," in *Byzantine religious culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. Denis F. Sullivan et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 395-409; J. Serrano del Pozo, "Relics, Images, and Christian Apotropaic Devices in the Roman-Persian Wars (4th-7th Centuries)," *Eikón Imago* 11 (2022): 57-69.

[70] The True Cross is one of the relics with the highest impact in the history of Christianity. In general: C. Mercuri, *La Vera Croce. Storia e leggenda dal Golgota a Roma* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2014). On the use of the True Cross by the crusader armies: A. V. Murray, "'Mighty against the enemies of Christ': the relic of the True Cross in the armies of the kingdom of Jerusalem," in Alan V. Murray, *The Franks in Outremer. Studies in the Latin Principalities of Palestine and Syria, 1099-1187* (Farnham: Ashgate 2015), Pt. XV, 217-238. Also: A. Benvenuti, "Reliquie e soprannaturale al tempo delle crociate," in *Le crociate. L'oriente e l'occidente da Urbano II a San Luigi 1096-1270*, 355-361; G. Ligato, "The Political Meanings of the Relic of the Holy Cross among the crusaders and in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: An Example of 1185," in *Autour de la première croisade. Actes du colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the latin East (Clermont-Ferrand, 22-25 juin 1995)*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 315-330; D. Gerish, "The True Cross and the Kings of Jerusalem," *The Haskins Society journal* 8 (1996): 137-155; F. Caroff, "L'affrontement entre chrétiens et musulmans. Le rôle de la vraie Croix dans les images de croisade (XIIIe-XVe siècle)," in *Chemins d'outre-mer. Études d'histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, ed. Damien Coulon (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), 99-114.

Jerusalem or his deputy and was protected by a contingent of Templars.[71] However, the relic did not leave the borders of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and was always used in defensive campaigns, with great caution. Its loss at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 had therefore come as a shock to the Latin Christian world.[72] Other fragments of the True Cross were also used in a similar way in the Kingdom of Georgia, but maybe as an adaptation of the Byzantine pattern.[73]

The evidence emerging from Italian maritime cities is especially noteworthy. The stories of the fragments of the True Cross are particularly linked to Genoa. Some of these relics have been stolen by the Genoese in corsair actions, or arrived in the city following warlike events. A first fragment of the True Cross arrived in the capital between 1187 and 1191: we have the narratives of the chronicler Iacopo Doria, annalist and archivist of the *comune* at the end of the thirteenth century, and of Iacopo da Varagine, Archbishop of Genoa at the same time. The piece of wood, kept in a precious case, was donated to the Genoese by Conrad of Monferrat for their help in defending Tyre from Saladin's assaults. The marquis, in fact, praised the behaviour of the Genoese in the battle.[74] According to Doria, Conrad had come into possession of the fragments in Acre after its conquest, so the date of the donation would shift to 1191. In any case, the relic of the True Cross witnesses the active warlike role of the Genoese in an anti-Islamic function.[75] A second fragment arrived in Genoa in 1195 in a daring manner. Iacopo da Varagine's narration of the events is included in his *Chronica civitatis Ianuensis*, a text composed more than a century after the events, between 1295 and 1297. Caution is needed, given the archbishop's programmatic intent to educate the readers.[76]

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[71] M. Tsurtsumia, "The True Cross in the Armies of Georgia and the Frankish East," *Crusades* 12 (2013): 92-93.

[72] C. Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 379-380.

[73] There is no scholarly consensus as to whether the use of the True Cross was more directly associated with Jerusalem or tied to Byzantine ideological models: M. Tsurtsumia, "The True Cross in the Armies of Georgia and the Frankish East," 91-102; S. Nikolaishvili, *Byzantium and the Georgian Worlds c. 900-1210: Ideology of Kingship and Rhetoric in the Byzantine Periphery*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Central European University, 2019, 97-98; M. Janjalia, "Between Jerusalem and Constantinople: Revisiting the Eleventh Century Georgian Religious Art," *Convivium* 9/2 (2022): 62-81.

[74] *I Libri Iurium della Repubblica di Genova*, I/2, ed. Dino Puncuh, Fonti per la Storia della Liguria, 4 (Genoa-Rome: Società Ligure di Storia Patria, 1996), doc. 331, 334: 137-140, 144-146.

[75] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 363-364; A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris*, 619-620.

[76] The *Chronica* is written according to a historiographical model, in which God is both the inspirer and the recipient. As noted by Stefania Bertini Guidetti: "Iacopo non si preoccupa

> In the time of this archbishop [Boniface, the third of this name], namely in the year of the Lord 1195, the True Cross of Christ, referred to by antonomasia as the Holy Cross, was brought to Genoa. The patriarch of Jerusalem used always to carry this Holy Cross into battle and would obtain victory. However, as a consequence of sins, it happened that Saladin captured Jerusalem along with the patriarch and the Holy Cross. Later, when the Emperor of the Greeks came to an agreement with Saladin, the said Saladin sent the aforementioned Cross to the Greek Emperor on a certain ship. But some Genoese and Pisan galleys seized that ship by armed force. While they were dividing the spoils, a certain Pisan named Forte secretly stole that Cross and hid it in the castle of Bonifacio, which the Genoese had once destroyed but the Pisans had rebuilt. Three ships and some galleys of the Genoese then captured the said castle. Seeing this, the said Forte, trusting in the power of the Holy Cross, placed it on his chest and, passing safely through the midst of the enemy, exited the castle and hid himself in a certain forest. But at length he returned to the castle and gave the Cross to the *comune* of Genoa, becoming a citizen of Genoa. It is also said that Forte, having taken the said Cross and trusting in its power, began to walk over the sea as if on solid ground; and while he thought he was fleeing and moving away from the castle, by the will of God, he suddenly found himself back in the castle. And thus, the Genoese, having received that Cross, sent it to Genoa.[77]

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di approfondire con troppa cura le personalità dei singoli […], ciò che effettivamente interessa all'autore è la loro funzione all'interno del disegno globale della storia, di cui Dio è l'unico vero artifice." Iacopo da Varagine, *Cronaca della città di Genova dalle origini al 1297. Testo latino in Appendice*, ed. Stefania Bertini Guidetti (Genoa: ECIG, 1995), 20.

[77] "Tempore quoque istius archiepiscopi [Bonifacius, archiepiscopus tercius], scilicet anno Domini .M.C.LXXXXV, vera Crux Christi, que sancta Christi antonomastice dicitur, Ianuam est delata. Ipsam quidem sanctam Crucem patriarcha Ierosolimitanus semper in preliis deferebat et victoriam obtinebat. Accidit autem, peccatis exigentibus, quod Saladinus Ierusalem cum patriarcha et sancta Cruce cepit. Tempore autem procedente, cum imperator Grecorum cum Saladino composuisset, remittebat dictus Saladinus ipsi imperatori Grecorum in quadam nave Crucem predictam. Quedam autem galee Ianuensium et Pisanorum supradictam navem manu armata ceperunt. Dum vero spolia dividerent, quidam Pisanus, nomine Fortis, Cucem illam latenter subripuit et in castro Bonifacii, quod olim Ianuenses destruxerant, sed Pisani reedificaverant, servandam reposuit. Tres naves et quedam galee Ianuensium dictum castrum ceperunt. Quod cernens dictus Fortis, de virtute sancte Crucis confidens, ipsam pectori suo apposuit et per medios hostes secure transiens, de castro exivit et in quadam silva se abscondit. Sed tandem ad castrum rediit et ipsam

With these words, Iacopo da Varagine narrates the arrival in Genoa of the "vera Crux Christi, que sancta Christi antonomastice dicitur." According to the archbishop, the Genoese had come into possession of the very fragment that the Patriarch of Jerusalem customarily carried into battle, a source of divine favour through which he "obtained victory." Though he offers no precise details, Iacopo clearly identifies this relic with the one believed to have been lost at the Battle of Hattin in 1187. In his account, the True Cross was sent by Saladin to the Emperor of Constantinople as part of a diplomatic arrangement. The relic ended up in Bonifacio, Corsica, whose fortress was at that time at the centre of the conflict between the Genoese and the Pisans, and then in Genoa.[78] The archbishop does not appear to have been well informed about the actual course of events, since the Patriarch of Jerusalem was not present at Hattin at the time of the battle. Iacopo may therefore be referring to a different fragment of the Holy Wood, distinct from the one lost at Hattin in 1187. Rather, it appears to have been another relic associated with Latin ecclesiastical circles in Jerusalem, perhaps intended to be worn around the neck. Naturally, the absence of any explicit reference to the battle of Hattin cannot be taken as evidence to the contrary. Indeed, few possessions could have conferred greater prestige upon the Genoese than the custody of the relic whose loss was lamented throughout Europe. Today, no trace of this fragment remains, although it was still reportedly visible in Genoa at the end of the eighteenth century.[79] A further Genoese source echoes this same narrative: an interpolated version of the *Regni Iherosolymitani brevis historia*. Originally composed by an anonymous author between the late twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century, the text survives in a redaction attributed to Iacopo Doria. Doria explicitly refers to an earlier written source as the basis of his account. It seems likely that this now-lost source also informed Iacopo da Varagine's version, given that both authors recount the events in an identical sequence. According to Doria:

Crucem communi Ianue dedit et civis Ianuensis effectus est. Dicitur etiam quod dictus Fortis, supradictam Crucem accipiens et de eius virtute confidens, super mare tanquam super terram solidam ire cepit, et dum putaret se fugere et castro se elongare, nutu Dei, in castro subito se invenit, et sic Ianuenses Crucem illam accipientes Ianuam transmiserunt." Iacopo da Varagine, *Chronica civitatis Ianuensis ab origine urbis usque ad annum MCCXCVII*, in *Iacopo da Varagine e la sua Cronaca di Genova dalle origini al MCCXCVII*, 2, ed. Giovanni Monleone (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1941), 362-363.

[78] On Bonifacio's role in the Middle Ages: Jean-André Cancellieri, *Bonifacio au Moyen Âge entre Gênes, Corse, Sardaigne et Méditerranée* (Ajaccio: Centre régional de documentation pédagogique de Corse, 1996); G. Petti Balbi, *Genova e Corsica nel Trecento* (Rome: Isime, 1976).

[79] A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris*, 621-623.

> And then the patriarch of Jerusalem was captured, along with the True Cross, which he always carried into battle against the enemies of God. This Cross was later brought to Genoa by certain Genoese, in the following manner. After the city of Acre was subsequently captured by Saladin, in time he made a truce with Isaac, the Emperor of the Greeks, under the following terms: among other things, the Emperor would build a mosque in the city of Constantinople for the use of the Saracens, and in return Saladin would restore to him the True Cross which he had taken. When Saladin sent it to him on a certain ship along with many other gifts, a certain Genoese named Guglielmo Grasso and a Pisan named Forte, who lived in Bonifacio, which at that time was held by the Pisans, came to an agreement, although they had formerly been enemies. Since both were pirates, they seized the said ship; and when Forte learned from one of Saladin's messengers that the True Cross was among the cargo, he secretly took that part and brought it to Bonifacio. Later, when three Genoese ships captured Bonifacio, Fortis took the Cross and, fleeing over the sea with dry feet, was pursued and captured by the Genoese along with the said True Cross. It was brought to Genoa with great joy, and to this day it is shown to the people on every Friday of each month.[80]

The two versions differ in minor details and, to some extent, complement one another. Doria reports the name of Guglielmo Grasso, a well-known Genoese

[80] "Et tunc captus fuit patriarcha Iherusalem cum vera cruce, quam ferebat in prelio semper contra innimicos Dei, quam post quidam Ianuenses detulerunt in Ianuam hoc modo. Nam capta postea civitate Acon per Salaadinum, procedente tempore treguas fecit cum Iursachio imperatore Grecorum hoc modo, quod inter cetera imperator in civitate Constantinopoli construeret musoca ad usum Sarracenorum, ipse vero eidem redderet veram crucem quam ceperat. Quam cum eidem mitteret in quadam nave cum multis aliis donis, quidam Ianuensis, nomine Willermus Grassus, et quidam Pisanus, nomine Fortis, qui habitabat in Bonifacio quem Pisani tunc temporis possidebant, cum antea ad invicem inimici essent, convenerunt in unum, cum ambo essent pyrate, et dictam navem ceperunt; et cum dictus Fortis intellexisset per unum de nunciis Saladini, quod ibi esset crux vera, eam autem partem subrupuit et Bonifacium deportavit; et cum postmodum tres naves Ianuensium Bonifatium cepissent, dictus Fortis, eam accipiens, super mare siccis pedibus fugens, per Ianuenses insecutus et captus cum dicta vera cruce, Ianuam est cum gaudio magno delata, et in quolibet die Veneris cuiuslibet mensis populo ostenditur." Caffaro, "Regni Iherosolymitani brevis historia," in *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, I, ed. Luigi Tommaso Belgrano, Cesare Imperiale Di Sant'Angelo (Genoa: Tipografia del R. Istituto sordomuti, 1890-1929), 140-141.

corsair who lived in the second half of the twelfth century.[81] Indeed, letters sent by Isaac II to the Genoese and the Pisans confirm that in 1192 Grasso actually attacked a Venetian convoy returning from Alexandria.[82] On that occasion, while releasing the Genoese, Pisan, and Venetian merchants, he instead plundered the Byzantine and Saracen envoys. Among them were Muslim ambassadors *en route* to Constantinople with lavish gifts for Emperor Isaac II, who were killed and their valuable cargo, worth an estimated 6.675 *hyperpyra*, was seized.[83] Isaac II reacted harshly and retaliated against the Genoese merchant community in Constantinople. Initially, the *comune* of Genoa tried to deny any complicity with Guglielmo Grasso, but the insult, along with the theft of goods belonging to Emperor Isaac's brother Alexius, valued at 96.000 *hyperpyra*, provoked the looting of Genoese ships and warehouses in Constantinople. Hostilities ceased after merchants paid 20.000 *hyperpyra* as a preliminary indemnity. Genoa then dispatched ambassadors Guglielmo Tornello and Guido Spinola, who persuaded Isaac of the *comune*'s good faith, claiming Grasso and his accomplices had been banished and would be surrendered if caught. The treaty was reinstated, and the compensation was reduced. The story of the Genoese capture of the relic of the True Cross therefore has a kernel of truth. Iacopo Doria found information on the facts "in the books of the church of San Lorenzo" or in the archives of the *comune* under his jurisdiction. This was believed to be an important relic, although it is impossible to know whether it was really related to the fragment captured in Hattin. Above all, Emperor Isaac's complaints to Genoa do not mention the True Cross among the stolen objects. It is an omission difficult to sustain in the case of such an important relic.[84]

Two further violent episodes involving the Genoese and the relics of the True Cross took place in the immediate aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. One of these concerned a fragment of the Cross known as Saint Helena's, which had been kept in Constantinople, encased in a precious reliquary. In 1204, following the conquest of the city, the relic – along with other treasures – was loaded onto a Venetian ship. As both Iacopo Doria and Iacopo da Varagine report, the vessel was intercepted and plundered by a Genoese corsair, Dondedeo Bove de Fornari, who seized the relic. While Iacopo Doria has no problem admitting the piratical activity of his fellow citizen, the archbishop, on the other hand, is silent on embarrassing details. According to both chroniclers, Dondedeo donated the

[81] E. Basso, "Guglielmo Grasso," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 58 (Rome: Treccani, 2002), 716-720.

[82] *Codice diplomatico della repubblica di Genova*, III, ed. Cesare Imperiale Di Sant'Angelo (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1942), 78-80, 101-107.

[83] E. Basso, "Guglielmo Grasso," 718.

[84] *Codice diplomatico della repubblica di Genova*, 78-80, 101-107.

True Cross to the *comune* and the cathedral, while he kept the other relics for himself. The De Fornari family would celebrate the exploits of their illustrious ancestor, a devout pirate, over the following centuries.[85]

There is also a record of another fragment of the True Cross seized in the course of naval violence. The chronicler Ogerio Pane writes that in 1204, a Genoese squadron of six or seven galleys surprised a ship loaded with precious goods in the port of Methoni, Greece. The vessel was plundered, and the prize was transported to Genoa.[86] The action had serious repercussions, since one of the damaged parties was the pope. The Venetian ship, in fact, had sailed from Constantinople laden with money, valuable goods and relics: these were gifts from Baldwin of Flanders, the new Latin Emperor of Constantinople, addressed to Pope Innocent III and the Templars. The pope wrote a letter of heavy complaint on 4th November 1204 to the Podestà of Genoa, listing the robbed goods and threatening an interdict against the city. Among the stolen objects was a relic of the True Cross.[87] Most of the objects were probably returned to their original owners, as the crisis with the pope did not continue. However, some relics remained in the city. In particular, the booty of a galley from Portovenere included a "Holy Cross," probably a particle of the wood of the Cross in a case. The relic was donated to Genoa and in return the men of Portovenere in 1205 were granted tax exemption on goods from the capital.[88]

[85] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 364-365. Dondedeo Bove de Fornari was celebrated for his theft of the True Cross in later centuries. A miniature on a mid-sixteenth century Genoese manuscript, commissioned by the De Fornari family, recalls this fact. The illustrations show Dondedeo Bove de Fornari in front of the cathedral, holding the fragment of the Cross. The caption reads: "Dondeubos de Fornarii anno 1203 capta per Venetos et alios Christianos principes Constantinopoli partem Sanctae Crucis lamnis argentei et aureis ac margaritis ornatam." The manuscript is the property of the antiquarian bookshop Dr. Jörn Günther. The four miniatures are illustrated in the catalogue: *Miniatures and illuminated leaves from the 12th to the 16th centuries* (Catalogue n. 6) (Hamburg: Jörn Günther Antiquariat, 2002), 219-227, n. 70 (*Four full-page miniatures, on leaves from a family chronicle on vellum of the Genoese Fornari family, Italy, Genoa, after 1553*). Also: E. De Laurentiis, "Da privilegio di nobiltà a oggetti d'arte: La Genealogia De Fornari miniata da Evangelista della Croce," *La Berio* 1-2 (2014-2017), 5-36.

[86] "multi Ianuenses undique congregati cum galeis VI. Romaniam intrassent, inter quas fuit quedam galea de Portu Veneris, invenierunt quamdam navem de Constantinopoli redeuntem, in quam ceperunt magnam pecunie quantitatem, et multas reliquias sanctorum et cruces dominicas, et inter se diviserunt." *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, II, 93.

[87] The letter of Pope Innocent III is in: P. Riant, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae*, II (Geneve: Fick, 1878), 56-57.

[88] For the tax exemption granted to Portovenere: *I Libri Iurium della Repubblica di Genova*, I/3, ed. Dino Puncuh, Fonti per la Storia della Liguria, 10 (Genoa-Rome: Società Ligure di Storia

The history that bound the Genoese and the remains of the True Cross was continually intertwined with bloody deeds and assaults on the sea. The sources are deliberately ambiguous about the fragments of the True Cross. One must recall the proliferation of relics that occurred in the late twelfth century in the Holy Land and after the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. In times of danger, portions of relics were detached and further subdivided. New relics were also created through contact with graves, the remains of saints, or the collection of dust, oils, and bodily fluids.

The Genoese history of the fragments of the True Cross also provides a noteworthy example of using the relic as a battle talisman. In 1242, the Genoese were again preparing for war against the Pisans. A year after their heavy defeat on the island of Giglio in 1241, the Genoese Guelphs, "in reverentia Vere Crucis," took up the cross and sewed the crusaders' cross on their right shoulder. The Genoese then placed a relic on board the admiral galley of the fleet headed against the Pisans and Ghibellines of Frederick II.[89] We don't know if it was one of the fragments of the True Cross obtained by the Genoese in the raids, or another particle. The episode was also described by the Genoese notary Ursone da Sestri in his *Historia de victoria quam Ianuenses habuerunt contra gentes ab Imperatore missas*, who, describing the fleet as it set sail, notes a "sacraria" containing a particle of the Cross.[90] In *Annali genovesi di Caffaro* the military enterprise is described as a crusade against Pisa, an ally of the excommunicated Emperor Frederick II:

Patria, 1998), doc. 597: 336-338. On these events: V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 365; Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris*, 353-354, 624-626.

[89] *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, III, 129. In the fourteenth century, the sacristy of the cathedral of San Lorenzo held a Cross called "bategeria." D. Cambiaso, *L'anno ecclesiastico e le feste dei Santi in Genova e nel loro svolgimento storico* (Genoa: Società Ligure di Storia Patra, 1917), 452; A. Musarra, *In partibus Ultramaris*, 628.

[90] "Inque die Domini classem pro litore solvit / et cruce signatas acies Dominique catervas / aequoris in liquidas misit feliciter undas. / Utque magis trepident hostes, sacraria verae / fert ad bella crucis, Satanae pressura sequaces, / cuius honore nitet per climata Ianua mundi": Ursone da Sestri, *Historia de victoria quam Ianuenses habuerunt contra gentes ab Imperatore missas*, ed. Clara Fossati (Florence: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2021), 110. He reiterates the importance of the symbol of the cross for the Genoese in several parts of the poem: "Signa Dei, vexilla crucis stant edita muris." Ursone da Sestri, *Historia de victoria*, 104. Afterwards, he writes again about the cross, although it is not easy to understand whether he is referring to the relic or the banners: "solvuntur statione rates, et littora linquunt, / excutiunt crebris spumantes ictibus undas / aequoris impulsu, remis agitatur aquarum / plana superficies, sub verbere pontus nundat. / prima ducem, vexilla crucis, felicia signa, / portans, concussum mare puppis lapsat eundo, / et remo luctante praeit; post caetera classis/ subsequitur distincta locis certoque tenore": Ursone da Sestri, *Historia de victoria*, 124.

> On Sunday, the 27th of July, so that they might gather and better prepare themselves for war, all went with galleys and transports to San Pier d'Arena, where there was such a marvellous and countless multitude of noble warriors and people that it could scarcely be described in writing. The sight and number of armed galleys and ships was so joyful and immense that there was no space left in the entire square to stand. Once all the galleys and transports had been made ready and firmly equipped, the *podestà* set out with them from the said place, and that very day, with a marvellous fleet, he went to the Bisagno river. On the following Monday, the True Cross, always triumphant in every battle, was solemnly taken from the cathedral of San Lorenzo with great reverence and placed on the strongest transport vessel. The army then proceeded swiftly to Sestri Levante. And when it was heard that the enemies, by land and sea, had besieged the castle and town of Levanto with all their forces, on the penultimate Wednesday of the month of July, while the rest of the army, in honour of Holy Church and in reverence of the True Cross, were in penitence and each had taken the cross upon his right shoulder, early in the morning, with great haste and vigour, a mighty and powerful fleet of galleys and transports was assembled at sea off Deiva. There, the *podestà* boldly raised the triumphant banner of Saint George against the enemy.[91]

The Genoese episode of 1242 is the earliest attested instance of this practice. Over the preceding two centuries no source reports that any relics acquired by the Genoese after the First Crusade, including the relics of St. John the Baptist, were carried into battle. The custom perhaps appears only after relics of the True

[91] "[…] et die dominico .XXVII. iulii, ut monstra fieret et melius ornarentur ad bellum, iverunt omnes cum galeis et taridis apud Sanctum Petrum de Arena, ubi tanta fuit mirabilis et innumerabilis bellatorum proborum et gentium multitudo, quod de facili non posset scribi. Galearum et lignorum armatorum tanta fuit iocunda et visio et multitudo, quod in tota plazia nullo modo stare poterant. Paratis itaque galeis et taridis omnibus et viriliter premunitis, movit potestas cum ipsis de loco dicto, et ipsa die cum mirabili stolo ivit in Bisannem. Die vero Lune sequenti, assumpta de ecclesia Sancti Laurentii cum magna reverentia vera cruce, que semper in omnibus bataliis extitit triumphatrix, et posita in fortiori tarida exercitus ivit cum festinantia usque ad Sigestrum. Et audito quod inimici mari et terra cum omni eorum exfortio castrum et burgum Levanti obsederant, de Mercurii penultima mense iulii, dum ceteri de exercitu ad honorem sancte Ecclesie et in reverentia vere crucis penitencianti essent, et crucem quilibet assumpsisset in spalla dextra, summo mane cum magna festinantia et vigore facta maxima et potens schera galearum et taridarum in mari supra Devam, erexit potestas triumphale vexillum beati Georgii viriliter contra hostes […]": *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, III, 129.

Cross reached Genoa. A parallel is noted by Iacopo da Varagine: in 1295 Oberto Doria, then *capitano del Popolo* and admiral, sailed from Genoa for Sicily, "carrying with him the saving, triumphant sign of our salvation - namely, the banner of the True Cross."[92] In the fourteenth century, the inventories of objects kept in the cathedral of San Lorenzo speak of a "crux argentea que vocatur bategeria cum cateneta argentea in [qua] est de ligno vere crucis."[93] It is not clear if the term "bategeria" refers to its old use in battle, recalling the ancient custom of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to carry that cross in battle, or to the more recent Genoese use on war fleets. Iacopo Doria and Iacopo da Varagine did not hesitate to link that cross with the one carried on the battlefield by the crusaders. Apart from the two Genoese examples of 1242 and 1295, it is difficult to encounter other episodes in which relics were carried into battle against Christian enemies. The only relic authorized for this was the fragment of the True Cross, and even then, only in a couple of episodes of particular relevance in the thirteenth century. Thereafter, we have no further record of such use of the True Cross. Certainly, the relics of the Cross would have been the object of a city cult during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The feasts of the Cross appear amongst the most important Genoese solemnities and were subject to a particular devotion.[94] There are several later testimonies of processions and religious celebrations.[95] However, they appear totally unrelated to any reference to war.

Rather, the remains of saints were a treasure to be defended and jealously preserved at home to avoid theft, not to be risked on the battlefield. In any case, the active connection between relics and aggressive wars does not seem particularly strong. Rather, sometimes relics could be used in rituals of internal city pacification, during factional struggles.[96] Along with icons of the Virgin and

[92] "anno igitur Domini .M°.CC.LXXXV. de mense ianuarii nobilem virum domnum Ubertum Aurie admiratum generalem constituunt […] recessit de partibus Ianue cum suo stolo dominus admiratus ad parte Sicilie profecturus, habens secum salutis nostre signum salutiferum triumphale, scilicet vere Crucis vexillum." Iacopo da Varagine, "Chronica civitatis Ianuensis," 105.

[93] I refer to: "Inventario della sacrestia di San Lorenzo," in D. Cambiaso, *L'anno ecclesiastico e le feste dei Santi*, 452, n. 5.

[94] In Genoa, the cult of the True Cross grew in importance by the thirteenth century. In 1278, the feasts of the Cross appeared in the Statutes of the Chapter of San Lorenzo among the most important Genoese solemnities. D. Puncuh, "I più antichi statuti del capitolo di San Lorenzo di Genova," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, n.s. 2/2 (1962): 48. The relics were also subject to theft, but were ransomed upon payment of a large sum. V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 369.

[95] In the fourteenth century, devotion to the Holy Cross was strong, as evidenced by the processions. *Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses*, 136, 198, 223, 278.

[96] In general, for the pacification rituals in the Italian cities: K. L. Jansen, *Peace and Penance in Late Medieval Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

saints, relics were strongly used in processions to ward off natural disasters. The fourteenth century would see their systematic use against epidemics or cataclysms, even in Italian maritime cities. In Genoa, the relics of the True Cross occupied a place of prominence, along with those of Saint John the Baptist, against natural disasters: fragments of the Cross were carried in procession, associating themselves with the ashes of the patron Saint John.[97] In December 1245, the city's clergy carried both relics in procession to the dock of the harbour. Together, the sacred rests managed to calm the stormy sea.[98] More than a century later, however, the role of the Cross faded into the background, in favour of the patron alone. In 1391, only the relics of Saint John the Baptist were carried through the streets, due to a violent sea storm that had hit the district of San Marco al Molo. Relics were used to invoke protection from further damage.[99] Some deeply territorialised saints stood as protectors in times of adversity, made present through their relics.[100] Yet their direct association with warfare is not reflected in the sources. Although the banners of the *comuni* often bore the symbols of these patron saints, the relics themselves were not linked to the practice of Christian warfare.[101] They may have been acquired through violence or military campaigns, but they were not carried into offensive expeditions against fellow Christians. From the perspective of the citizens, these relics may have come from foreign wars, but their role was ultimately one of peace.

[97] V. Polonio, "Devozioni di lungo corso: lo scalo genovese," 371.

[98] "Die vero sabbati .XVI. mensis decembris circa mediam noctem validissima fortuna maris et temporis fuit in portu Ianue, ita quod multe naves iverunt ad terram, alie in portu Ianue afondate, galee multe tam comunis quam civium, et alia multa ligna in mari et terra destructa, et deterius accidit lignis que erant in terra quam illis de mari. Modulus fractus fuit et numquam per aliquos viventes visa fuit tanta malicia maris et temporis tempestatis. Que postquam beatissimum corpus sancti Iohannis et crux vera Beati Laurentii cum aliis reliquiis fuerunt per civitatem ad partes moduli et ripe per religiosos deportata, sedata fuit et requievit maris et temporis fortitudo et tempesta": *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori*, III, 165.

[99] *Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses*, 198.

[100] A. Benvenuti, "Riti propiziatori e di espiazione," in *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo Medioevo europeo: realtà, percezioni, reazioni*, ed. Michael Matheus (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), 85-86.

[101] We must notice that also banners could function as contact relics, especially in pre-expedition ceremonies, when they were at the presence of primary relics. Through this ritual association, banners could share the spiritual power of the relics themselves. In general: R. W. Jones, *Bloodied Banners: Military Display on the Medieval Battlefield* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 151-159.

IV. Conclusions

The relationship between war, Italian maritime cities, and holy relics is complex. By their very nature, maritime cities were compelled to establish connections with distant places. They were the first to be captivated by the deposits of holiness in the East, which they frequented and knew well. Their trade routes touched ports where early Christianity had expressed its first saints. Italian maritime cities were, therefore, the first in Western Europe to have the opportunity to directly access these great treasures of the Levant, including relics. This led to a long history of *furta sacra*. The phenomenon, which began well before the year 1000, peaked in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, during the time of the crusades. It had a tremendous impact on the definition of the identity of the involved cities. The relics came from the Holy Land, Anatolia, or the Greek and Byzantine world. The relics were obtained violently, through raids, acts of piracy, or during military campaigns. Genoa and Venice were the main protagonists in this accumulation. The remains of saints served multiple internal functions: they were primarily used as objects with a supernatural aura that ensured protection for the communities. The cities increased their spiritual prestige with a growing number of sacred relics preserved within them. The pantheon of venerated saints expanded, and relics were functional to the construction of civic identity. Furthermore, relics were also war trophies, emphasising the political superiority of a centre over its adversaries. In this sense, the boundary between religious relics and lay *spolia* – largely exposed in religious buildings – often appears blurred in cities like Genoa, Venice, and Pisa. This dynamic intensified during the fourteenth century, when the East disappeared as the place of origin of relics: they were stolen in conflicts between the maritime cities themselves. The bodies of saints had become treasures to be defended.

The True Cross in Genoa is an indicative, and in some ways unique, case for examining the interplay between relics and warfare in a medieval maritime commune. The Genoese acquired several fragments by force, though by varied means: one testified to their campaigns against Muslims in the Holy Land; others stemmed from the maritime exploits of Genoese corsairs, especially against Venetians or Pisans; still others were linked to conflicts in the Aegean and to battles in Corsica. All reached Genoa in the wake of armed events. The relics of the Cross are the only ones that can truly be regarded as battle relics and are attested as having been borne aboard war fleets. It happened in 1242 on an extremely grave occasion, conceived the same as a crusade, and possibly some years later. More generally, the Genoese were reluctant to hazard precious relics in naval engagements. Does this mean relics were not used in war, or is the True

Cross singled out precisely because of its exceptional status? Relics permeated daily devotion, and numerous portable altars containing sacred fragments were routinely carried on campaign. It is therefore plausible that transporting lesser relics into conflict was so 'normal' as to go unremarked in the sources, yet the evidence is insufficient to confirm this. In any case, the paucity of notices concerning relics borne by armies on overseas expeditions is unsurprising. Apart from the True Cross—with its longstanding martial associations—other relics are consistently cast as instruments of peace. They might originate in war and be its spoil, but they do not appear to have contributed materially to the conduct of war or to have accompanied campaigns beyond the walls. Relics crossed the sea as arrivals, brought into port from distant lands or rival communities, rather than as companions of fleets; taken from war, they tended toward civic peace.

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"WITH HONOUR AND VICTORY": THE WAR ACTIVITY OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF TARRAGONA PERO DE URREA AND THE SACRED PROTECTION

Eduard Juncosa Bonet*

I. Introduction

Over several centuries, a large pennant adorned with the papal arms hung prominently in the central nave of the cathedral of Tarragona. For a long time, it was believed that this banner had flown victoriously during the battle of Lepanto (1571). However, certain key details suggest that it was made just over a century earlier. On both sides of the three-metre-high banner, alongside the tiara and the keys of St. Peter, patriarchal coats of arms are painted in the lower corners, attributed to the archbishop of Tarragona and patriarch of Alexandria Pero de Urrea.[1]

Pero Ximénez de Urrea belonged to one of the most prominent noble lineages of the Kingdom of Aragon. He was a recognised illegitimate son of Pero Ximénez de Urrea – viscount of Rueda and lord of Épila, a fervent supporter of Ferdinand of Antequera during the Interregnum (1410-1412).[2] His stepbrother, Lope

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[1] J. Serra i Vilaró, "El pendón del arzobispo de Tarragona Pedro de Urrea," *Butlletí Arqueològic. Reial Societat Arqueològica Tarraconense* 31-32 (1950): 175-182; J. Villanueva Astengo, *Viage literario a las Iglesias de España* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), t. XX, 17-18; E. Morera Llauradó, *Tarragona Cristiana. Historia del arzobispado de Tarragona y del territorio de su provincia: Cataluña la Nueva* (Tarragona: Diputació de Tarragona, 1997 [1954]), t. III, 185-186; R. López-Monné, *La catedral i la ciutat de Tarragona. Història d'una relació* (Tarragona: Arola Editors - Fundació privada Mútua Catalana, 2024), 209-211.

[2] P. de Funes, *Recopilación del linaje de la Casa de Urrea* (manuscript from the ducal House of Híjar-Aranda, c. 1530), f. 10r.

Ximénez de Urrea, took part in the conquest of Naples, served as viceroy of the Two Sicilies and as grand chamberlain of King Alfonso the Magnanimous.[3]

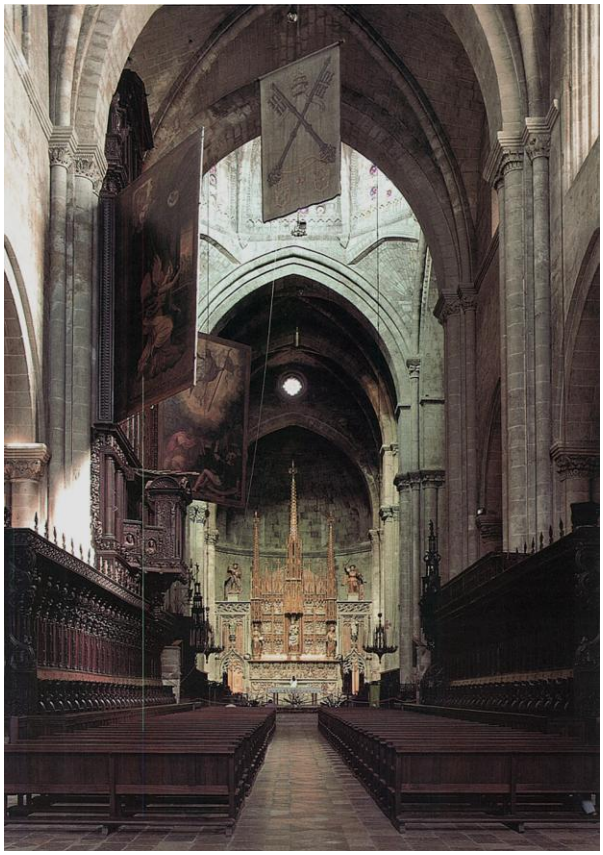

Fig. 1. View of the central nave of Tarragona Cathedral
with Pero de Urrea's pennant hanging in a prominent position (c. 1990)
[Wikimedia Commons]

Born in Saragossa at an unknown date, Pero de Urrea was canon and treasurer of the See of Tarragona, canon and major prior of the cathedral of San Salvador in Saragossa until his appointment as archbishop of Tarragona – one of the most important archdioceses of the Iberian Peninsula – on 24 June 1445. His elevation to the dignity of metropolitan without having previously occupied any other episcopal see indicates a high degree of protection for his person,

[3] The most comprehensive study of his reign is still A. Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, Naples, and Sicily, 1396-1458* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). See also the articles in the monographic "Alfonso el Magnánimo y su tiempo," *Debats* 104 (2009/2).

likely owing to his noble lineage, one of the staunchest defenders and most loyal collaborators of the Trastámara dynasty on the throne of the Crown of Aragon.[4]

Described as a "man more inclined to arms than to letters,"[5] it is precisely his warrior profile that will be the focus of this chapter.

II. Pero de Urrea's Participation in the Crusade Against the Turks

The Fall of Constantinople on 29 May 1453 marks one of the most significant turning points in world history. This event not only heralded the end of the Byzantine Empire, but also marked the rise of the Ottoman Empire as a dominant power in the Mediterranean basin.

Following news of the conquest of Constantinople, Pope Nicholas V sought to organise a great crusade against the Turks. However, his efforts garnered limited support,[6] and the plan ultimately failed. Despite this setback, his successor, Calixtus III, made the crusade the main objective of his pontificate.[7]

The election of the Valencian Cardinal Alfons de Borja to the papal throne on 8 April 1455 was largely influenced by several factors: his advanced age, the

[4] On his figure and prelature, see J. Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi de la Santa Església Metropolitana i Primada de Tarragona* (Tarragona: Diputació de Tarragona, 1985 [c. 1660]), vol. II, 111-121; E. Morera Llauradó, *Tarragona Cristiana. Historia del arzobispado de Tarragona y del territorio de su provincia: Cataluña la Nueva* (Tarragona: Diputació de Tarragona, 2001 [1955]), t. IV, 57-66; L. Pagarolas i Sabaté, "Pero Ximénez de Urrea," in *Història de la Generalitat de Catalunya i dels seus presidents (1359-1518)*, dir. Josep M. Solé i Sabaté (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya - Enciclopèdia Catalana, 2003), vol. I, 165-169.

[5] Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi*, 111.

[6] C. Marinescu, "Le Pape Calixte III, Alfonse V et l'offensive contre les Turcs," *Bulletin de la Section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine* 19 (1935): 77-87; M. Navarro Sorní, *Calixto III Borja y Alfonso el Magnánimo frente a la cruzada* (València: Ajuntament de València, 2003), 23-26.

[7] On Pope Calixtus III see, among others, L. Pastor, *History of the Popes, from the close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and other original sources* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & CO., Ld., 1891), vol. II, book III; J. Sanchis Sivera, "El obispo de Valencia don Alfonso de Borja (Calixto III), 1429-1458," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 88 (1926): 241-313; G. Hofmann, "Papst Kalixt III. und die Frage der Kircheneinheit im Osten," in *Miscellanea G. Mercati* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946), vol. III, 209-237; J. Rius i Serra, *Regesto ibérico de Calixto III* (Barcelona-Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1948); P. Brezzi, "La politica di Callisto III. Equilibrio italiano e difesa dell'Europa allà metà del sec. XV," *Studi Romani* 7 (1959): 31-41; M. E. Mallet, *The Borgias. The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969); S. Schüller-Piroli, *Die Borgia Päpste Kalixt III. und Alexander VI.* (München: Oldenbourg, 1980); M. Batllori i Munné, *La familia de los Borjas* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1999); M. Navarro Sorní, *Documents per a la història d'Alfons de Borja, papa Calixt III* (València: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2008); Ó. Villarroel González, *Los Borgia. Iglesia y poder entre los siglos XV y XVI* (Madrid: Sílex, 2013).

interference of the King Alfonso of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, and the rivalry between the Colonna and Orsini factions, which divided the College of cardinals.[8] Nevertheless, the pope always held a firm conviction that his election was a result of Divine grace rather than political manoeuvring. He viewed his accession to the See of Peter as a providential mission entrusted to him by God.[9]

Throughout his reign, the new pope made it clear that he wanted to be "the protector and champion of Christianity against the Turks," considering his election as a providential mandate to fulfil this aim.[10] Upon his election, Pope Calixtus took a solemn vow before the altar of the chapel where the conclave was held. In this oath, the pope promised the Holy Trinity, the Virgin, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and the entire "heavenly host" to dedicate himself wholly – even at the cost of his own life if necessary – to the reconquest of Constantinople (taken and ruined by Mehmed II "as punishment for the sins of men"). His vow also encompassed the liberation of Christian captives from the infidels, and the exaltation of the Catholic faith, including the eradication of "the diabolical sect of the reprobate and faithless Mohammed"[11] in the East.

"Hoc vovi Deo. Ut fidei hostes perderem elexit me"[12] was precisely the motto that the pope engraved on a medal commemorating his vow to liberate

[8] The pope was crowned the following 20th April. One of King Alfonso the Magnanimous's emissaries to attend the ceremony and pay tribute to Calixtus III was the archbishop of Tarragona, Pero de Urrea. In this regard, see Morera, *Tarragona Cristiana*, t. III, 184.

[9] In fact, the election of Calixtus III as pope was against the odds ("de quo minor erat expectatio populi," stated in his memories Pope Pius II). A few decades earlier, the famous preacher Vicent Ferrer had predicted that Alfons de Borja would become Pope and canonise him: "My son, I congratulate you; remember that you are called to be one day the ornament of your country and of your family. You will be invested with the highest dignity that can fall to the lot of man. I myself, after my death, shall be the object of your special honour. Endeavour to persevere in your virtuous course of life": ed. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 326.

[10] There are many documentary testimonies praising the pope's commitment: "misser Alfonso de Borgia, primo cardinale de Valencia et ora nominato Kalixto papa tercio … è persona multo intelligente e virtuosa, et affectata a la impresa contra li turchi et altri infideli per deffensione et augmento de la catolica fede" [Tr. "monsignor Alfons de Borja, first cardinal of Valencia and now nominated Calixtus Pope the third … is a very intelligent and virtuous person and is involved in the enterprise against the Turks and other infidels for the defence and increase of the catholic faith"]: Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó (ACA), Cancelleria (C), reg. 2798, ff. 158-159; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 51.

[11] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 346. The news of Cardinal Borja's election was met with great jubilation in the city of Valencia ("fon una tan gran alegria en la present ciutat que los vivients no havien vista tal cosa"), and three days of festivities were held: Arxiu de Protocols del Corpus Christi (APCC), Protocol 9541, Jaume Vinader, s./f.; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 56.

[12] Tr. "I made this promise to God. He chose me to destroy the enemies of the faith".

Constantinople from the Turks. This served as a testament to his faith in the mission entrusted to him by Divine providence.[13]



Fig. 2. Commemorative medal of Pope Calixtus III [Numista CC BY-SA]

Despite the lukewarm response and even outright indifference of Western European nations, which were deeply divided by internal discord, Calixtus III remained resolute in his determination to fulfil his oath by giving a new and powerful impulse to the crusade, setting the defence of Christianity against the infidels as the first priority.[14] To advance the expedition, the pope imposed tithes to fund the crusade, sent preachers to proclaim it, and sent nuncios and legates to rally support from Christian princes.[15]

A few weeks after his coronation, on 15 May 1455, the pope published the bull "Ad summi apostolatus apicem," which confirmed all the graces and indulgences granted by Nicholas V to those who would take part in the crusade. The bull also designated 1 March of the following year as the departure date for all those setting out against the "enemies of Christendom". On 8 September, Calixtus III personally conferred the cross on cardinals Alain de Coëtivy and Juan de Carvajal as well as on the archbishop of Tarragona, Pero de Urrea, who

[13] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 19. According to L. Pastor (*History of the Popes*, vol. II, 438), the medal was struck to commemorate the victory of the papal squadron over the Turks at Mitylene (August 1457).

[14] It was said of him that: "The pope speaks and thinks of nothing but the crusade": ed. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 348). See also Marinescu, "Le Pape Calixte III," 84.

[15] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 352-358.

was tasked with hastening to the aid of the Christian islands in the Aegean and Ionian seas with a naval force.[16]

The pope's preferred candidate to command his fleet was the Venetian Angelo Morosini. However, he was a prisoner of the Genoese, who held him captive until his execution. Consequently, the pontiff nominated Pero de Urrea. According to the bull of appointment, Urrea's selection was based on his extensive knowledge and experience in maritime affairs, his leadership abilities, wisdom in command, military skill, and his esteemed qualities of humanity, prudence, and prestige.[17] Nonetheless, it is likely that Urrea's appointment was also influenced by the desire to gain favour with the King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, to whom the archbishop was both an adviser and a trusted confidant.

On 23 September 1455 – the feast of St. Thecla –, the pope blessed and entrusted the banners to be carried by the ships of the fleet. One pennant featured the image of that saint (to whom the cathedral of Tarragona is dedicated), another depicted St. Peter, and the remaining three bore the pope's arms. Archbishop Urrea immediately set sail with the five galleys, though they were insufficient to carry out his mission properly. However, the pope did not wish to delay his expedition so that the news of his departure would reach the East, thereby encouraging Christians and instilling fear in the Turks. By the end of November 1455, the papal fleet was still anchored in the port of Syracuse, awaiting reinforcements and more favourable sailing conditions. Unfortunately, the destination of the expedition – which gradually expanded – was not what the pope had originally intended.[18]

The Christian prince most vocal in proclaiming his desire to crusade was Alfonso the Magnanimous, former sovereign of Pope Calixtus.[19] While the intentions of the pontiff and the king initially seemed to align, this common enterprise soon became a source of conflict between them.

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[16] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 348; Marinescu, "Le Pape Calixte III," 90; Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 26. This solemnity took place in the church of St. Peter, and the pope showed the greatest devotion and shed many tears during the whole event. Pope Calixtus named Pero de Urrea patriarch of Alexandria.

[17] Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (AAV), Registri Vaticani, 454, f. 245v; ed. O. Rinaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (Paris: Ex typis consociationis Sancti Pauli, 1880 [c. 1660]), tome XXIX, 36-37.

[18] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 103-108 and 114; P. Paschini, "La flotta di Callisto III (1455-1458)," *Archivio della R. Società Romana di Storia Patria* LIII-LV (1930-1932): 177-254.

[19] The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople encouraged the expansion of the End of the World psychosis, which was reinforced by Byzantine prophecies linking it to the fall of that city. In this context, Alfonso the Magnanimous was identified with the apocalyptic monarch of the Last Days. In this regard, see E. Juncosa Bonet, "El rei Alfons i la promoció de la magnanimitat," in *Capitula facta et firmata. Inquietuds artístiques en el Quatre-cents*, coord. M. Rosa Terés (Valls: Cossetània Edicions, 2009), 148-149.

The strategy devised by Calixtus III to achieve his goals was based on the coordinated action of a considerable armed force on both land and sea, aiming to force the Turks to divide their troops and make them more vulnerable. Meanwhile, immediate assistance was to be provided to the Christian regions under the greatest threat (the Aegean islands and the Albanian coast) by directing some ships there to support the Christian resistance.[20]

For his part, Alfonso the Magnanimous's attitude towards the crusade was closely tied to the great political and economic interests he pursued in the eastern Mediterranean basin, which he sought to use as a means of advancing his own interests. After several postponements,[21] on 1 November 1455, King Alfonso received the cross in a solemn ceremony in Naples's cathedral and publicly pledged to join the crusade,[22] but his plans were focused on Albania, which faced grave danger following the defeat of Berat. The monarch skilfully wielded his vow to take part in the crusade, adjusting his enthusiasm as

[20] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 15-29. See also Paschini, "La flotta," 177-254.

[21] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 92-98.

[22] This is how the Milanese orator at the Neapolitan court recounted the ceremony to the duke of Milan: "In questa gloriosa festa de Ogni Sancti passata la serenissima maestà del re, siandogli prima conceduta e presentata la bulla da la santità del nostro signore in la forma che luy rechedeva, poxo la solempne celebratione de la messa e molte altre digne cerimonie … presente tuto questo popullo, ha preso molto devotamente e vigorosamente da lo reverendissimo patriarcha de Alexandria, delegato apostolico, lo sacro e triumphale signo de la sanctissima croce per andare a la impresa contra el turcho. E poy la sua maestà, molti signori, cavaleri e gentilhomini, molti etiamdio archiepiscopi, vescovi, prelati e altre persone, che credo pasasseno lo numero de più de dua milia, le qualle questa matina hano receuto questo sancto signo, et era tanta la multitudine a prendere la croce che per fine a XXI hora nuy stessemo in la ghesia … La santità del nostro signore non gli limita tempo in le bolle a andare a questa impresa, ma gli commete de andare quanto più presto e habelmente el gli poterà andare" [Tr. "On this glorious feast of All Saints' Day the most serene majesty of the king, having first been granted and presented with the bull by the holiness of our lord in the form that he requested, after the solemn celebration of Mass and many other dignified ceremonies … all this populous being present, took very devoutly and vigorously from the most reverend patriarch of Alexandria, apostolic delegate, the sacred and triumphal sign of the most holy cross to go to the enterprise against the Turk. And then his majesty, many lords, cavalrymen and gentlemen, many archbishops, bishops, prelates and other people, who I believe numbered more than two thousand, who this morning received this holy sign, and there was such a multitude taking up the cross that by the end of the 21st hour we were in the church … The holiness of our lord does not limit him time in the bulls to go to this enterprise, but commissions him to go as soon and well as he can go"]: Archivio di Stato di Milano (ASM), Fondo Sforzesco, Potenze Estere (SPE), *Napoli*, 195, 25-26; Naples, 8 November 1455; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 141. See also Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 359-360; Marinescu, "Le Pape Calixte III," 87-88.

circumstances required.[23] If the pope wanted the Aragonese-Napolitan fleet to join his own, he would need to offer compensations, such as recognising the succession rights of the monarch's illegitimate son in the Kingdom of Naples, providing vacant episcopal sees in the Crown of Aragon, or surrendering the apostolic tenth of his realms.[24]

From the outset, Calixtus III did not align with King Alfonso's plans, and rejected most of his demands. What the sovereign initially considered to be excessive prudence on the part of the old pope, later proved to be a deep aversion and implacable opposition in several areas.[25] Regarding the crusade, they both reproached and blamed each other for failing to do enough and for hindering its progress, each pursuing their own initiatives and often showing their misgivings.[26]

For example, the king was very angry when the pope forbade the Archbishop of Tarragona, Pero de Urrea, legate of the papal fleet against the Turks, from meeting with the king. The prelate respected the order, which only served to inflame the monarch's ire:

> And also sending the pope some galleys to Rhodes and having deputed as legate an archbishop, brother of the viceroy and deputy of the king, he ordered him not to come to the king's majesty in any way; and since he was in Gaeta with the galleys sent by the king to speak to him, he excused himself not to come … for which the king was greatly disturbed.[27]

In any case, the archbishop's loyalty to the pope was broken after a few months, as we will see below. Likewise, King Alfonso's stance on his collaboration with

[23] When the king made the decision to take his vow to wage war against the Turks, he told the members of his council that he was doing so "offerint a Déu la vida, libertat, stat e regnes, puix per Ell los tinch e posseexch" [Tr. "by offering to God my life, liberty, state and kingdoms, since it is through Him that I hold and possess them"]: ed. Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 90. See also A. Beccadelli, *Dels fets e dits del gran rey Alfonso* (Barcelona: Editorial Barcino, 1990 [c. 1455]), 290-295; J. Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2003 [1579]), book XVI, chapter 33.

[24] For further details, see Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 29-79.

[25] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 240-241.

[26] See for instance Navarro, *Documents*, docs. 93 (Naples, 16 August 1455), 104 (Naples, 29 August 1455), 127 (Naples, 10 October 1455). See also Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 86-89.

[27] ASM SPE, *Napoli*, 195, 50-56; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 134 (Naples, 22 October 1455): "E anche mandando el papa certe galee a Rodi e habiando deputato per legato uno arcivesco, fratello del vicerè e subdito del re, gli commesse che per modo alcuno el non venisse da la maestà del re; e siando luy a Gaeta cum le galee rechesto dal re che·l gli venisse a parlare, se excusa de non potere venire … de che lo re molto se n'è alterato".

the crusade also changed, at least outwardly. At the end of March 1456, Alfonso the Magnanimous wrote an autograph letter in Catalan to Pope Calixtus III apologising for not being able to go on the crusade personally, but promising that the fifteen galleys pledged to accompany the papal fleet for a year would be ready soon. The humble and submissive tone of the royal letter, along with the commitment it conveyed, pleased the pope to such an extent "that of sweetness he wept".[28] After several months, the king's fleet had still not sailed, so the pontiff urged him to fulfil his pledge.[29]

In the meantime, the pope stripped the archbishop of Tarragona of his captaincy, accusing him of having committed very serious offences: "of that reprobate archbishop of Tarragona and his cohort, who sail in a piratical manner offending God, bringing disgrace upon the Apostolic See and ourselves, scandalising many, insulting and contemptuous of the Catholic faith, and disturbing all of Christianity".[30]

Pero de Urrea, Antoni Olzina and Antonio de Frescobaldi, instead of employing the vessels which had been procured with money raised for the crusade to fight the Turks, attacked the Genoese, and waged war against the ships from other Christian powers. The archbishop of Tarragona disregarded the pope's orders to direct his fleet toward the island of Chios, instead remaining in the waters of the Strait of Sicily where he plundered passing ships under the

[28] "che de dolceza el piangeva": ASM SPE, *Roma*, 43, 222; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 165; Roma, 5 April 1456. The king's promise had been set out at the end of the previous year by his ambassador to the Roman Curia, as is noted in his memorial: ACA, C, reg. 2697, ff. 168v-169r; ed. ibidem, doc. 152 (Venosa, 8 December 1455).

[29] Navarro, *Documents*, docs. 168 (Rome, May 1456), 177 (Rome, July 1456). See also Rinaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, t. XXIX, 61-62.

[30] "illius reprobi archiepiscopi Terraconensis et sequatium, que ~~vagant~~ navigant more piratico in Dei offensam, opprobium Sedis Apostolice atque nostrum, et in scandalum pluriorum, fideique catholice vilipendium et contemptum ac totius cristianitatis turbationem": AAV, Arm. XXXIX, 7, f. 37v; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 178; c. 9 July 1456. The bull by which the pope removed the archbishop of Tarragona from the captaincy general of his fleet was issued on 15 April 1456; it is published in part in Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 544-545: "concessionibus sibi per nos factis uti nescientes seu potius ingratitudinis vitio excecati uti nolentes ac eorum temeritatis cornua extra eis datos limites improbe extendentes nonnullos christianos invaserunt ipsosque eorum rebus, bonis, navibus et navigiis indebite spoliarunt ac alia plurima nephanda perpetrarunt propter que capitaneatu … et aliis commissis officis merito privandi existent" [Tr. "not knowing how to take advantage of the concessions we had made to them, or rather not wanting to take advantage of them because of the vice of ingratitude, and extending the horns of their recklessness beyond the limits we had given them, they invaded some Christians and plundered their things, goods, ships and boats, and committed many other nefarious things for which they are deprived of the captaincy … and other offices entrusted to them"]. On this issue, see also Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 179.

pretext that they were carrying goods forbidden to the infidels.[31] As soon as the first faint rumour of these events reached the ears of the pontiff, he immediately sent urgent protest letters to King Alfonso the Magnanimous:

> Oh, traitors! Your ships might have defeated the Turks, raised up the Christians of the East, and delivered Hungary from the danger which threatens her. Instead of this, you have shamefully betrayed us with the help of our own money. The vengeance of God and of the Holy See will surely overtake you! Alfonso, King of Aragon, help Pope Calixtus! If you refuse, you will incur the wrath of heaven![32]

Although Pero de Urrea was removed from his position as captain general of the papal fleet,[33] in a subsequent brief, the pope agreed to pardon his serious offences and allowed him to remain part of the navy. By compensating for his detestable actions with good service, the pontiff hoped Urrea could regain his favour.[34]

The archbishop of Tarragona continued to form part of the papal fleet until the end of May 1457, when he returned to Naples with his galley and offered his service to Alfonso the Magnanimous, who used his vessel in the war against Genoa.[35]

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[31] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 114-119.

[32] Tr. and ed. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 365-366.

[33] Ludovico Trevisano (or Scarampi), patriarch of Aquileia, was appointed the new captain of the papal fleet to replace Pero de Urrea.

[34] "Volumus igitur harumque serie facultatem tibi damus, ut satisfacto per dictum archiepiscopum et alios prefatos, illis venetis, ianuensibus ac aliis de eisdem querelantibus, de pecuniis, rebus et bonis, quibus se spoliatos asserunt, si pro utilitate classis nostre tibi faciendum videbitur, possis eidem archiepiscopo et ceteris salvum conductum dare et eos assecurare, ut bene serviendo et operando, mala commissa et detestabilia bonis et gratis serviciis compensando ad gratiam nostram reduci valeant" [Tr. "We therefore wish, and by this document grant you the authority, that – once satisfaction has been given through the aforementioned archbishop and others to the said Venetians, Genoese, and others making complaints on the same matters, concerning the money, goods, and property which they claim to have been despoiled of – you may, if it seems beneficial to our fleet, grant safe-conduct to the said archbishop and the others, and assure them, so that by serving well and acting diligently, by offsetting the wrongs and detestable acts with good and loyal service, they may be able to return to our favor"]: AAV, Arm. XXXIX, 7, f. 34v; ed. Navarro, *Documents*, doc. 193; Rome, 18 August 1456. See also Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 366-368; Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 142-143.

[35] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 113 and 119; J. M. Madurell i Marimon, *Mensajeros barceloneses en la corte de Nápoles de Alfonso V de Aragón, 1435-1458* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963), doc. 514.

The previous summer, the papal fleet joined the galleys armed by King Alfonso in Sicily and together they sailed towards the East. Prior to their departure, the pope issued a bull to all patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and abbots urging them to encourage prayers, fasting and penance among their congregations, while also focusing on the spiritual reform of the faithful under their care. On the first Sunday of the month a solemn procession of supplication was to be held to avert the danger of the Turks, accompanied by a Mass "contra paganos," during which the following prayer was to be recited: "Almighty, everlasting God, to whom all power belongs, and in whose hand are all the rights of all nations, protect Thy Christian people and crush by Thy power the pagans who trust in their fierceness". Indulgences were attached to the performance of these devotions, granted for these prayers. Furthermore, in all churches, between noon and vespers, one or more bells were to be rung daily for the recitation of three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys.[36] Beyond the papal demands, some Catalan cities instituted a perpetual feast in honour of St. George,[37]

> so that, through the virtue of the said glorious knight monsignor Saint George, captain of the House of Aragon and of the Principality [*of Catalonia*], the excellent lord king blessedly regnant, entrepreneur of the conquest of Constantinople, and his vassals, may obtain victory and destruction of that son of iniquity called the Great Turk and his vassals, to the praise and exaltation of the holy Catholic faith.[38]

The Christian fleet achieved some modest victories, even regaining three Aegean islands from the Ottomans, but it did not cause serious damage to the Turks, as its forces were insufficient. Meanwhile, in Hungary, the Crusader troops fought an uneven battle with the Turkish armies, inflicting on them a spectacular defeat at Belgrade in mid-July. The news of this victory reached Rome on 6 August 1456, and the pope, seeing it as the work of Divine providence, regarded it as a

[36] Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, 400.

[37] On the importance of St. George in the late medieval Crown of Aragon, see S. M. Cingolani, *Sant Jordi. Una llegenda mil·lenària* (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2014).

[38] "per ço que migençant la virtut del dit gloriós cavaller monssenyor Sent Jordi, capità de la Casa d'Aragó e del Principat, lo dit excel·lent senyor rey beneventuradament regnant, emprenedor de la conquesta de Constantinopla, e los seus vasalls obtinguen victòria e termini d'aquell fill de iniquitat apellat Gran Turc e de sos vasalls, a laor e exaltació de sancta fe Cathòlica": ed. Santiago Sobrequés i Vidal, "Sobre el ideal de cruzada en Alfonso V de Aragón," *Hispania: Revista española de historia* 47 (1952): 251-252. See also Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 125.

miracle worthy of celebration. In remembrance of the triumph, attributed more to the grace of God than to human courage,[39] the pontiff declared the date as the day of the Transfiguration of Christ. Curiously, it was on 6 August two years later that Pope Calixtus III died unable to realize his dream.[40] A few weeks before, King Alfonso the Magnanimous had also died.

Upon returning to his archdiocese, Pero de Urrea justified his prolonged absence to the clergy by recounting his struggles against the infidels in parts of Turkey, and his fight for the honour of God and the maintenance and defence of the Catholic faith. The prelate claimed to have returned to his Church "with honour and victory," achieved through Divine help and the intercession of the blessed St. Thecla, patron saint of the city and of the *Tarraconensis* diocese.

In his statement, the archbishop emphasised the countless expenses he had to incur, going into debt and parting with a considerable amount of patrimony. Bearing in mind the purpose for which he had to do so, Pero de Urrea requested that the members of the cathedral chapter and other diocesan clerics provide financial assistance to offset his losses. After a brief colloquy, in which they expressed their joy at his return and at the victory and honour achieved by his lordship, and considering the immense efforts he had undertaken, the clerics presented the archbishop with a silver plate weighing one hundred and ten marks as a memorial of the triumph, a gift that the entire diocese would celebrate.[41]

[39] See Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. II, doc. 73.

[40] Navarro, *Calixto III Borja*, 149-154; Villarroel, *Los Borgia*, 59-69.

[41] "Nós, en Pere, per la divinal miseració de la sancta sglésia de Tarragona Archebisba, al universal e amat clero de la ciutat et diòcesis nostres et singulars de aquella, salut et dilectió. Recomptat per nós al dit clero que com per honor de Déu e de mantenir e de defensar la fe cathòlica hajam vaccat per dos anys e mes en les pars de Turquia contra los pèrfidos infahels per defensar la fe cristiana ab innumerables despeses, que no solament de pecunies de rendes, más de argent e altres obres nos siam haguts a desaxir, retornats ab la ajuda de ntre. sor. Déu e intercessió de la Benaventurada madona Sancta Tecla patrona nostra, ab honor e victória en nostra sglésia deguéssem pensar e veure los insuportables treballs e despeses per nos sostengudes e com allegats nostres degudament subvenir en aquellas, e oyda per lo dit clero la dita exposició justa per lur sor. feta, hagut poch colloqui entre ells ab no poca alegria de la tornada e de la vitória e honor a la sglésia de Tarragona per sa Reverendíssima senyoria guanyada, moguts de la acostumada devoció e voluntat aguda a lur senyor e prelat, esent bé serts dels grandíssims treballs personals e despeses moltes sopartades e fetes per sa Reverendíssima paternitat, considerat devot respecte proseguir, li és estat forçat alienar la sua vaxella de l'argent, vehent tant principal e prelat metropolità sens argent no poder estar a sa honor liberalment e graciosa com a fahels súbdits li han presentada una vaxella de cent deu marchs d'argent, obrat, no res menys per memòria de la venguda de tanta victòria, de la qual tota la diòcesis se deu rahonablement alegrar, confiant de sa acustumada cleméncia, li han demanat e supplicat fos de sa mercè otorgar al dit clero algunes gràcies contengudes en una cèdula scrites": ed. Serra, "El pendón del arzobispo," 178-179.



Fig. 3. Detail of the predella of the altarpiece of St. Thecla in Tarragona Cathedral (Pere Joan, c. 1430)
[Photograph by Rafael López-Monné. All rights reserved]

III. Thecla of Iconium, a Protective and Bellicose Saint

Thecla of Iconium, a revered Christian martyr venerated as a saint by both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, is celebrated for her unwavering faith and courage in the face of persecution. Believed to have lived during the 1st century AD, her story is primarily preserved in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a Christian apocryphal text. Although the historical details of her life remain uncertain, the account of her devotion and bravery has inspired generations of Christians. Saint Thecla's significance lies not only in her personal sanctity, but also in the groundbreaking role she played in early Christianity, particularly in advocating the active participation of women in the faith.[42]

[42] See Á. Narro (ed.), *Vida y milagros de santa Tecla* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2017).

Thecla was born in Iconium (modern-day Konya, Turkey), and she was betrothed to a wealthy young man named Thamyris. Her life took a dramatic turn when she encountered the apostle Paul, whose preaching profoundly moved her. According to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, she made the radical decision to abandon her marriage plans in favour of following Paul and embracing the Christian faith. This decision faced fierce opposition, especially from her family and the local authorities. Despite being condemned to death by burning, Thecla miraculously survived, and her subsequent escape further cemented her status as a symbol of Christian resilience and divine protection.

After these events, she decided to go to Antioch with St. Paul, where she found a new family in Tryphonia, a wealthy woman, and a community of devoted women. But, once again, she had to overcome obstacles: the judge Alexandros, in love with her, wanted to take her by force and Thecla defended herself. For this, she was condemned to the wild beasts for attacking a nobleman. The bears and lions turned on each other, leaving the proto-martyr unharmed. The judge then ordered her to be thrown into a lake with aquatic beasts. As she entered the water, she baptised herself and the ferocious creatures died. Seeing that no harm came to Thecla despite these tortures, she was finally released. From then on, she preached the word of God until her death in old age. Another version of the hagiography recounts that Thecla was pursued by two men who sought to rape her. They chased her, and just before they were about to catch her, the earth opened up and swallowed her.[43]

The narrative of Thecla's life is deeply intertwined with themes of virginity, faith, and defiance against societal norms. Thecla's actions – such as performing miracles and preaching the gospel – demonstrate her role not only as a follower of Christ, but also as an active participant in the spread of Christianity. Her courage in the face of danger and her unwavering devotion earned her widespread veneration among early Christians, particularly in regions like Asia Minor and Syria, where her legend flourished. But the cult of St. Thecla also reached the western Mediterranean, where she became the patron saint of the city and Church of Tarragona.[44]

The first preserved document explicitly mentioning St. Thecla in relation to the old imperial capital is Pope Urban II's fundamental bull "Inter primas Hispaniarum urbes," issued in Capua on 1 July 1091. This source made the

[43] B. Amorós Òdena, "Santa Tecla, patrona de Tarragona: vida i llegenda," *Kesse* 47 (2013): 12-17.

[44] A. Puig i Tàrrech, "The Cult of the Female Proto-Martyr and Apostole Saint Thecla in Hispania," in *Thecla: Paul's Disciple and Saint in the East and West*, ed. Jeremy W. Barrier et al. (Bristol: Peters, 2017), 240-282; M. Pérez Martínez, "*Sancta Virgo Thecla*. The Origins of the Cult of Thecla in Tarragona," in ibidem, 304-326.

restoration of the Church of Tarragona's metropolitan dignity after nearly four centuries under Islamic rule.[45]

During the medieval centuries, devotion to the saint grew increasingly widespread and deeply rooted. Thecla became the epicentre of the festive liturgical celebrations, a cohesive figure for the city's inhabitants and a protector and ally during times of great upheaval. Beyond the Provincial Councils,[46] and the fundamental role played by Art,[47] one of the most impactful events was the arrival of the relic of the virgin proto-martyr's arm in 1321. It was brought to Tarragona after a successful diplomatic mission to the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia promoted by King James II of Aragon.[48]

The importance of the spectacular reception of the relic at both an institutional and popular level led to the establishment of the solemn celebration of the octave of St. Thecla from 1359, as well as the publication of the "Ordinacions de Santa Tecla" (1370), putting the importance of the celebration of the patron saint's festivity on a par with that of Corpus Christi.[49]

In addition to all this, a widely circulated legend, dating back to at least the early fifteenth century, recounted how the saint appeared to King Peter the Cerimonious shortly before his death in 1387. Giving the king a slap in the face, Thecla demanded the restitution of the patrimony that the monarch had seized from the archbishop of Tarragona's temporal jurisdiction over the city and its

[45] L. J. McCrank, "Restauración canónica e intento de reconquista de la sede tarraconense (1076-1108)," *Cuadernos de Historia de España* 61-62 (1977): 145-245; E. Juncosa Bonet, *Estructura y dinámicas de poder en el señorío de Tarragona. Creación y evolución de un dominio compartido* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2019 [2015]), 71-108.

[46] J. M. Pons i Guri, "Constitucions conciliars tarraconenses (1229-1330)," *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia* XLVII (1974), 65-128; ibidem, XLVIII (1975), 241-363.

[47] In this regard, see E. Liaño Martínez, "El retablo mayor de la catedral de Tarragona," in *L'arribada del braç de Santa Tecla en el 700 aniversari*, coord. Maria Bonet and Joan Menchon (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2023), 61-84; E. Lozano López, "*Vidit dominum in specie Pauli [...]* Tecla i el frontal d'altar de la catedral de Tarragona," in ibidem, 85-99.

[48] M. Serrano Coll and E. Lozano López, "The Translation of the Relic of Saint Thecla (1321): The Religious and Urban Context," in *La cattedrale nella città medievale: i rituali*, ed. Vinni Lucherini and Gerardo Boto (Roma: Viella, 2020), 285-309; E. Juncosa Bonet, "*Pro honore dicte sedis et vestri*. La missió diplomàtica per a l'obtenció de les relíquies de santa Tecla," in *L'arribada del braç de Santa Tecla en el 700 aniversari*, coord. Maria Bonet and Joan Menchon (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2023), 13-38; J. Bertran i Luengo, "L'entrada del braç de Santa Tecla de 1321: inici de la teatralitat del cicle de Santa Tecla, el Corpus i les entrades espectacularitzades en la Corona d'Aragó," in ibidem, 101-111.

[49] A. Tomás Ávila, *El culto y la liturgia en la catedral de Tarragona, 1300-1700* (Tarragona: Institut d'Estudis Tarraconenses "Ramon Berenguer IV," 1963), 143-159 and 171-185; F. Español Bertran, "Santa Tecla i Tarragona: la construcció d'un culte civic," in *L'arribada del braç de Santa Tecla en el 700 aniversari*, coord. Maria Bonet and Joan Menchon (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2023), 131-147.

hinterland. The legend is enlightening as it reflects the peak of tensions between civil and ecclesiastical powers over territorial control.[50]

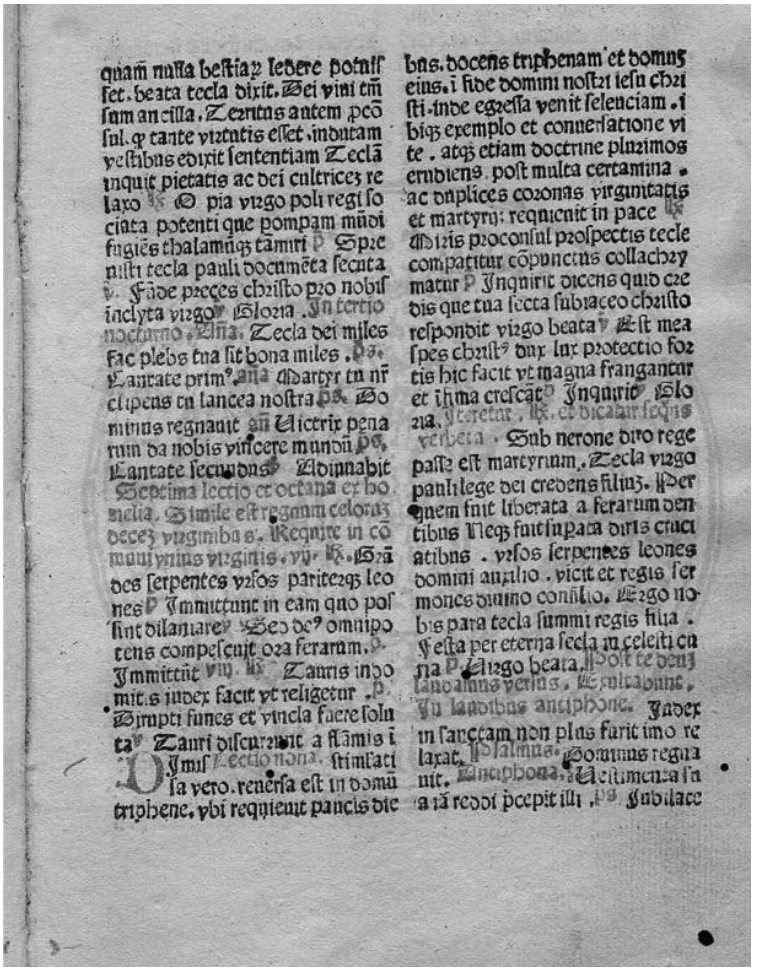

Fig. 4. Breviary of Archbishop Pero de Urrea (1484).
[ACCT, Catedral, *Breviari de Pere de Urrea*, image 862. All rights reserved]

However, despite some earlier evidence during the Christian conquests of the kingdoms of Valencia and Mallorca in the thirteenth century, Thecla's role as protector in war did not acquire significant prominence until the episode recounted above. It should be added that, in this respect, the Breviary of

[50] E. Juncosa Bonet, "La bofetada de Santa Tecla al Rey Pedro el Ceremonioso: el reflejo legendario de las luchas por el control jurisdiccional de Tarragona," *En la España Medieval* 33 (2010): 75-96.

Archbishop Pero de Urrea, preserved in the Chapter Archive of Tarragona Cathedral, is of special interest.[51]

In the prayers and sermons associated with the Mass on the patron saint's feast day, Thecla is lauded with virtues and achievements befitting her status as a virgin proto-martyr. Among the most striking descriptions are: "Thecla, soldier of God, make your people good soldiers. Martyr, you are our shield, you are our lance. Victress of sorrows, give us victory over the world".[52] This language is full of bellicose imagery that aligns seamlessly with the intercession that the archbishop attributed to the saint during the campaigns in the crusade against the Turks.

IV. Pero de Urrea and the Catalan Civil War

Barely a couple of years after Pero de Urrea's return to the archdiocese he presided over, his war activity regained great importance in the context of the Catalan Civil War (1462-1472).[53] The two factions, the royalists who supported John II of Aragon and the Catalan constitutionalists, disputed the extent of royal rights in the principality of Catalonia.

One of the main triggers of the conflict was the imprisonment of Prince Charles of Viana – accused of conspiracy – by order of his father. Among the representatives of the Catalan institutions to plead with the monarch to end his son's captivity was the archbishop of Tarragona, who proclaimed the following speech addressed to King John:

> If justice, most serene prince, and reason demand that your son Charles be deserving of punishment, we by no means attempt, though you are his father, to beg your pardon. For if paternal love and natural compassion do not move or incite you to pardon him, in vain shall we attempt to ask for it in our speech. Especially since among us authority must be held more by true reason than by effeminate pity.
> We knew him through you, all fidelity and obedience, as king and true lord, are due to you and not to him. What moves us should

[51] Arxiu Capitular de la Catedral de Tarragona (ACCT), Catedral, *Breviari de Pere de Urrea* [un. cat. 4275].

[52] "Tecla, Dei miles, fac plebs tua sit bona miles. Martyr, tu noster clipeus, tu lancea nostra. Victrix penarum, da nobis vincere mundum".

[53] See S. Sobrequés i Vidal and J. Sobrequés i Callicó, *La guerra civil catalana del segle XV* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1973); A. Ryder, *The Wreck of Catalonia: Civil War in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

move you, though no love surpasses paternal love; likewise, what we try is as if someone were to spur a swift horse. You must be willing to forgive your son more than we are. But we cannot suffer or bear it with sorrow that, since we hear it from everyone everywhere, you have fallen into cruelty, after abandoning the clemency in which you were ahead of other princes. What, then, can it be that prompted you to revolt against your own flesh and blood? Almost all love their offspring, favour them, and protect them from injury. What could be weirder than for a father to send his son to prison? So, since this is laid before our eyes, and to rage against a son, as well as against oneself, seems to us unnatural, we wish to know what guilt or what detestable crime Charles has committed to deserve imprisonment. You have over him a double jurisdiction, one, as a father, is common to you with the humblest men, the other, as a king, is common to you only with kings. But neither one nor the other seems to us that you should exercise against Charles.

Certainly we fear the future and I know not what atrocious disaster and calamity our minds forebode to these kingdoms. We cannot in so great an affliction repress tears; a deep sorrow torments and wounds us vehemently, and the more so because we are all ignorant of the cause of so sudden a change. Moreover, though we may wish to deceive ourselves, we cannot convince the people that Charles has contrived against you anything worthy of imprisonment. We all know that you, a few months before, willingly and favourably disposed, had forgiven Charles all his wrongs; but we are ignorant what can now impel you to arrest him. To me, most serene prince, although I would like to say many things, pain prevents me, hurts me and makes me weep when I consider with what rejoicing and festivities you celebrated in Barcelona the reconciliation with your son and to what madness and confusion we have returned. It only remains to ask you and, by the immortal God, to beseech you that these most opulent kingdoms that your ancestors left you by right of blood, that you try to preserve them in peace and that, in order to defeat external enemies more easily, you avoid internal wars as long as you can.[54]

[54] Ed. J. Fernández Cacho, *Gonzalo García de Santa María, Vida de Juan II de Aragón. La guerra en Cataluña de 1461 a 1472* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2020), 100-103: "Si iusticia, serenissime princeps, et ratio expostulant, ut Karolus filius tuus poena dignus sit,

The king responded by justifying his decision with different arguments,[55] and ended his speech with some very harsh words in reference to his own son: "I wish I had never begotten him or, as soon as he was born, he would have been carried from the maternal womb to the grave".[56]

nequicquam conamur, cum pater sis, abs te veniam exorare. Si enim paternus amor et naturalis caritas te non movent aut pungunt ut eius misereri debeas, frustra nos oratione id impetrare nitimur. Eo vel maxime quod apud nos plus vera ratio quam effeminata pietas est auctoritatis habitura. / Nos eundem per te cognovimus, fides omnis atque obedientia tibi tanquam regi et vero domino debetur, non illi. Quod nos movet te movere deberet, cum enim nullus amor vincat paternum; quicquid conamur perinde est ac si quis pernici equo calcaria adigeret. Ad clementiam erga filium pronior quam nos esse debes. Non possumus tamen pati et moleste non ferre, cum audiamus ab omnibus passim, te immanitatem quandam, deposita clementia qua ceteros principes antecellebas, induisse. Quid enim esse potuit quod te ut in tua viscera converteres impulit? Fere omnes amant suam sobolem, fovent, tutantur ab iniuria. Quid ergo admirabilius quam quod pater in carcerem filium coniiciat? Cum igitur haec ante oculos nobis proposita sint et contra naturam videatur, sicut in se ipsum saevire in filium, scire optamus quae tanta culpa quodue crimen tam detestabile fuerit Karoli, ut carcere dignus videatur? Tu in eum duplicem iurisditionem habes, una quod pater tibi cum quibusque infimis hominibus, altera quod rex cum solis regibus communis est. Neutram autem ut in Karolum exercere debeas nobis videtur. / Nos futura quidem timemus et nescio quid pesimae aerumnae et calamitatis regnorum nostrae mentes praesagiunt. Non possumus in tanta afflictione lacrimas vincere; intestinus dolor nos vehementer coquit et exulcerat, eo vel maxime quod causam tam repentinae novitatis omnes ignoramus. Quin esti nos ipsos fallere velimus, tamen plebi persuadere non possumus Karolum quicquam dignum carcere adversum te fuisse machinatum. Scimus omnes laeto vultu et grato animo paucis ante mensibus te Karolo omnia errata pepercisse. Ignoramus autem nunc quid ad eum capiundum te impellere potuerit. / Me autem, serenissime princeps, plura dicere volentem impedit dolor et exulcerat lacrimarique cogit considerantem qua ex iocunditate et quibus ex ovationibus ob reconciliationem tuam cum filio Barchinonae celebratis, in quam calamitatem et perturbationem animorum recidimus. Solum te deprecari restat et per inmortalem Deum obsecrare ut regna haec opulentissima quae tui maiores iure sanguinis tibi reliquerunt, in pace conservare velis; atque, ut facilius exteros hostes superare possis, intestina bella, quoad fieri poterit, caveas".

[55] The King alleged that Prince Charles "in meque nuper machinatus est, ut Dignitatem et statum meum regium elevet. Omnia et cariora quam vita mea esse videntur. Saluti meae insidiari non cessat. Exultat si quid nobis adversum accidit; contristatur si quando nobis fortuna arridere videtur. Cum rege Castellae … quem capitalem mihi hostem esse non ignorat, arctissimam ut me everteret copulavit amicitiam" [Tr. "conspired against me to undermine my royal dignity and status. Everything seems to be dearer to him than my life. He never ceases to lurk against my integrity. He rejoices if some misfortune befalls us, he grieves if fortune ever seems to smile on us. With the King of Castile, [...] who is my greatest enemy, he has made a very close alliance to destroy me"]: ed. Fernández, *Gonzalo García de Santa María,* 102-104.

[56] "Vtinam eum nunquam genuissem, aut initio nativitatis fuisset de utero translatus ad tumulum": ibidem, 104.

Despite this, John II finally agreed to free his eldest son. Prince Charles passed through Tarragona after his release. He asked to see the relic of St. Thecla's arm and worshipped it many times. In the same way, he wanted to see the predella of the high altar of the cathedral up close, where he listened with delight to the explanation of the martyrdoms suffered by the apostle proto-martyr, sculpted in polychromed alabaster by Pere Joan. Archbishop Urrea was probably not in the city, in order to avoid encountering the prince, who died shortly afterwards in Barcelona.[57]

It was in this context that the Capitulation or Concord of Vilafranca del Penedès was subscribed. This landmark treaty was signed on 21 June 1461 between Queen Juana Enríquez – acting on behalf of her husband, King John II of Aragon – and the delegates appointed by the *Generalitat* of Catalonia. The charter saw the monarchy accepting nearly all the demands of the rebellious institutions of the principality. Among its clauses, it was stipulated that the king could not initiate civil and criminal proceedings without the endorsement of the Catalan institutions. Additionally, the ruler was prohibited from entering Catalonia without their permission.[58]

Tensions between the monarchy and the Catalan authorities grew, partly fuelled by the rumour that the widely admired Prince of Viana, who was increasingly regarded by the population as a saint with miraculous powers, had been poisoned.

As events continued to unfold to the detriment of King John, Pero de Urrea chose to switch allegiances and become one of the sovereign's main allies. At the outbreak of the war, it was once again the archbishop of Tarragona who delivered a new speech worth noting:

> Although on many occasions, most serene prince, you have proven the ancient loyalty of the Catalans, this juncture, however, does not guarantee the security of your position. What does not happen in many years usually happens in an instant. It is true that an uprising of the people is not to be feared, but neither is it to be disdained. The fact that they have taken up arms openly declares that they wish to separate from you. By defending our lives, we shall lessen the danger that threatens us. Far be it from us to encourage your subjects any further by our fear. There is nothing to be feared, for

[57] Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi*, vol. II, 111-112.

[58] On the Capitulation of Vilafranca, see F. Foronda, *El espanto y el miedo. Golpismo, emociones políticas y constitucionalismo en la Edad Media* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2013), 160-171. For an overview of the reign of John II, see J. Vicens Vives, *Juan II de Aragón (1398-1479): monarquía y revolución en la España del siglo XV* (Pamplona: Urgoiti editores, 1953).

> this fortress is protected by nature and by human artifice, and we also have enough people and soldiers. So, in my opinion, we must wait to see what course the matter takes. Your departure without taking leave, as it is said, will be sufficient cause for the outbreak of war, for in your absence they will commit reckless acts sooner than if you were present. I only know this, and experience has taught me, that in the end he will be victorious in the war who is not inclined to or afraid of rumour and revolt, but rather he who can control the fears produced by them.[59]

Not heeding advice, King John II decided to leave Lleida to avoid being assassinated by the conspirators. From that moment on, the Archbishop Pero de Urrea followed the king's armies, pledging to offer his life and wealth to the service of the royal cause.[60] After having put up intense resistance, the city of Tarragona was one of the first places to succumb to the king's forces in 1463:

> the king went on to lay siege to Tarragona; and the captains having recognised the siege and defences of that city, it seemed [*to the king's captains*] to be inexpugnable because it was sited on a steep, rocky hillside and surrounded by very strong walls that the passage of many centuries had not availed to wear them away and because it was on the sea from which it could very easily receive help. There survived some towers and walls of Roman buildings founded on boulders so huge that it seemed impossible they could be moved

[59] Ed. Fernández, *Gonzalo García de Santa María,* 112-113: "Quamquam multis in rebus, princeps serenissime, priscam fidem Catalanorum expertus es, ea tamen res nullam statui tuo securitatem promittit. Quod in compluribus annis non accidit, puncto accidere interdum solet. Populorum quidem tumultus formidandus non est, verum nec idcirco despiciendus. Hos a te aperte deficere velle declarant arma per eos capta. Periculum imminens nostram tutando vitam longe minus faciamus. Nihil timendum nostra formidine subditis tuis maiorem animum faciamus. Nihil timendum est, cum atrium hoc et natura et arte munitum sit, abundemus quoque gente atque militibus. Quapropter expectare iudicio meo debemus quem exitum sit res habitura. Hinc enim sic hospite, ut aiunt, insalutato discedere causa erit belli inchoandi, citius enim, te absente, quamcumque agredientur temeritatem, quam si praesto fueris. Hoc unum scio experientiaque doctus sum, eum demum in bello victoriem fore qui non ad omnem auram tumultumque movetur ac pavet, sed fortitudine animi incussos timores tolerare potest".

[60] "Fortunas autem nostras vitamque tibi offerimus, ut libet, uti poteris": ed. Fernández, *Gonzalo García de Santa María,* 154. Due to his favourable stance toward the royalist cause, Pero de Urrea was declared an "enemy and defier of the Principality of Catalonia" by the deputies of the *Generalitat*. See J. M. Sans i Travé (dir.), *Dietaris de la Generalitat de Catalunya* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1994), vol. I, 172.

by the machines and skill neither of those times nor those men, and their mines and caverns reached to the shore.[61]

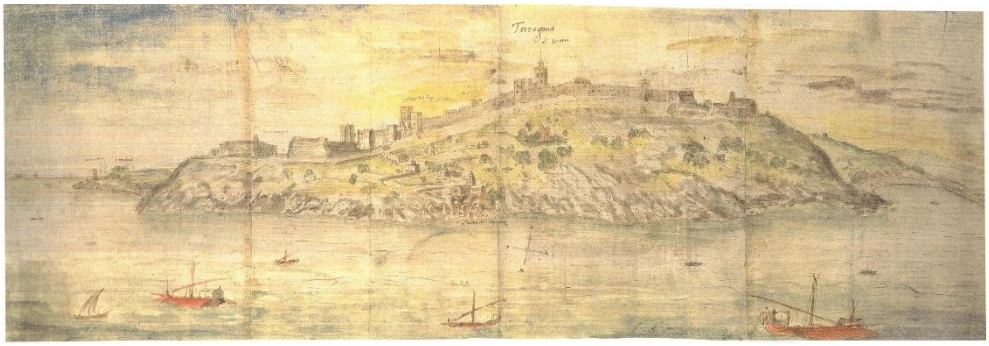

Fig. 5. View of Tarragona from the sea (Anton van den Wyngaerde, 1563) [Wikimedia Commons]

After several assaults, the inhabitants of the city began to fear that persevering in their resistance would lead to devastating looting and slaughter, so they turned to the archbishop to negotiate a surrender. Once conquered, Tarragona became the seat of the royal court and council for the rest of the war.

Upon his return, the prelate punished several insurgents and acted harshly against the rebellious towns around the capital.[62] The actions of the archbishop of Tarragona, who served as captain of the royalist armies in several campaigns,[63] were decisive at different points in the conflict, which ultimately ended with the Capitulation of Pedralbes on 24 October 1472.

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[61] Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragón*, book XVII, chapter 44: "pasó el rey a poner cerco sobre Tarragona; y habiéndose reconocido por los capitanes el sitio y defensas de aquella ciudad, parecióles ser inexpugnable por estar puesta en una áspera ladera de rocas y cercada de muros fortísimos que no había podido consumir la antigüedad de tantos siglos y estar sobre la mar en tal sitio que puede recoger el socorro muy fácilmente. Duraban algunas torres y muros de edificio romano fundados sobre tan disformes y grandes peñascos que no parecía que podían ser movidos por máquinas y artificio ni destos tiempos ni destos hombres, y sus minas y cavernas llegaban a la mar".

[62] For further details, see Sobrequés and Sobrequés, *La guerra civil catalana*, vol. I, 397-399; Ryder, *The Wreck of Catalonia*, 134-135.

[63] For instance, "en lo any 1469 ere aquest archebisbe general de la gent de guerra que dit senyor rey tenia en lo Panadès en frontera de Barcelona, y se portà molt bé en aquest càrrech, defensant dels enemichs la terra y vilas se li avien encomenades, y fent entrades y mal en las enemigas" [Tr. "In the year 1469, this archbishop was general of the troops that the said king had in the Penedès, on the border of Barcelona, and he behaved very well in this position, defending the land and towns that had been entrusted to him from the enemies, and launching incursions and doing harm in the enemy ones"]: ed. Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi*,

V. Epilogue

Despite the long episcopate of Pero Ximénez de Urrea at the head of the archepiscopal See of Tarragona (1445-1489) – the longest ever held by any archbishop in the diocese –, he did not hold any Provincial Council. Apart from some devotional objects (vestments, cloaks, candles, a cross and a mitre rich in precious stones), and the institution of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Pero de Urrea's main legacy in the cathedral was the impressive choir stalls, whose construction he promoted. However, the archbishop was unable to complete the payment of the high price stipulated (65,000 *sols*.) as he was heavily indebted to his creditors, even after the auction sale of his personal property following his death.[64] It was precisely in the choir where the prelate chose to be buried according to his will.

Although the chronicles describe him as a "very valiant prelate," "man of merit in his prudence, speech and dignity," "a magnanimous and eloquent man," or "man of good governance,"[65] there are also controversial allegations surrounding him. The most serious accusation concerns his supposed niece, Margarita de Urrea. In a lawsuit filed by the Grand Prior of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem in 1505, when Margarita was elected prioress of the convent of Alguaire, she was identified in the legal proceedings not as the archbishop's niece, but as his daughter. Furthermore, she was accused of having had incestuous relations with her father, the late archbishop-patriarch.[66]

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vol. II, 113. See other examples in Fernández (ed.), *Gonzalo García de Santa María,* 181, 209, 227 and 267, or in A. de Bofarull i Brocà, *Anales históricos de Reus* (Reus: Edicions del Centre de Lectura de Reus, 2007 [1845]), t. I, 141-149.

[64] See I. Companys Farrerons and N. Montardit Bofarull, *El cadirat del cor de la Seu de Tarragona. Història i iconografia dels medallons* (Tarragona: Ind. Gràfiques Gabriel Gibert, 2000); A. P. Martínez Subías, "S'ornamenten, cobreixen i moblen espais," in *La catedral de Tarragona*, coord. Francesc Roig Queralt (Tarragona: Arola Editors - Fundació privada Mútua Catalana, 2024), 323-331; López-Monné, *La catedral i la ciutat*, 211-214.

[65] The quotations are taken respectively from J. Sánchez Real (ed.), *El Archiepiscopologio de Luis Pons de Icart* (Tarragona: Real Sociedad Arqueológica Tarraconense, 1954), 145-146; Fernández (ed.), *Gonzalo García de Santa Maria*, 113; Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi*, vol. II, 111.

[66] J. Miret i Sans, *Sempre han tingut béch les oques. Apuntacions per la historia de les costumes privades* (Barcelona: Impr. F. Badia, 1905), 75-81: "és molt cert que la prioressa que vuy és no és estada canònicament elegida per les raons següents: primo, perquè no és legítima y natural, abans és filla del patriarcha de Tarragona Don Pedro de Urrea … e lo que és pijor e fama pública, que lo patriarcha, son pare, la emprenyà e que la una filla és filla del dit patriarcha y és la que vuy és monja en dit monestir, que són coses que han greument ofès a Déu y la fan inhàbil de la dignitat prioral" [Tr. "it is very certain that the current prioress has not been canonically elected for the following reasons: firstly, because she is not



Fig. 6. Choir stalls in Tarragona Cathedral (Francisco Gomar, 1479-1493)
[Photograph by Rafael López-Monné. All rights reserved]

Alongside his episcopate, Pero de Urrea was appointed ecclesiastical deputy of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia during the triennium 1446-1449, royal chancellor (1454-1480), and played an active role in the crusade against the Turks, as well as in the development of the war against Genoa and the Catalan Civil War. All of this suggests that he was more a man in the service of the monarchy – in spite of his fluctuating positions according to the circumstances and his personal interests – than in the service of the Church.[67] Perhaps this explains the succinct epitaph that covers his sepulture in the cathedral:

legitimate and natural, but is the daughter of the patriarch of Tarragona, Don Pero de Urrea … and, worse still, public rumor held that the patriarch, her father, impregnated her, and that one of Margarita's daughters is also the daughter of the said patriarch, and is the one who today is a nun in the said monastery, which are things that have seriously offended God and make her unfit to hold the dignity of prioress"]: ibidem, 78. Such slanders have been challenged by some authors, like E. Morera (*Tarragona Cristiana*, vol. IV, 66), who considered it to be mere hearsay.

[67] "Era muy alentado para las cosas de la guerra, y diestro en su política y manejo" [Tr. "He was highly encouraged in the things of war, and skilful in his politics and management"]: Villanueva, *Viage literario*, t. XX, 17.

*Hic iacet R[*everendissi*]mus in Christo Pater d[*omi*]nus Petrus de Urrea, Patriarcha Alexandrinus et archiepiscopus Tarraconensis, qui fecit hunc chorum. Obiit autem nona die septembris anno D[*o*]m[*i*]ni 1489.*[68]

In any case, the devotion he showed throughout his life to the patron saint of his archdiocese (St. Thecla) is evident in several ways, to the point of making her the intercessor and protector of the war campaigns in which this "pirate archbishop" took part.

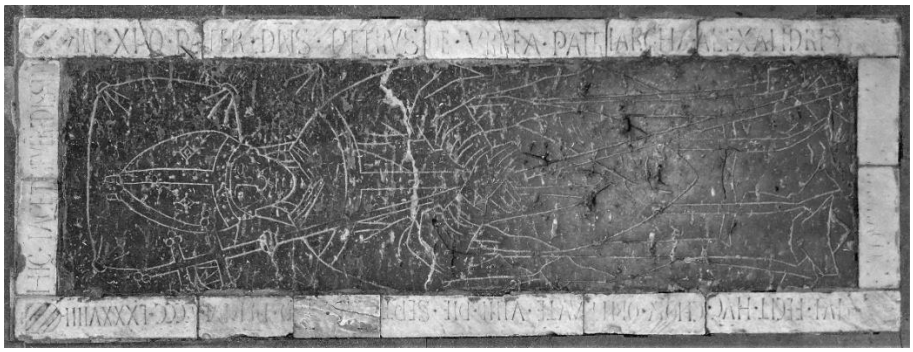

Fig. 7. Sepulchral slab of Archbishop Pero de Urrea in the presbytery of Tarragona Cathedral [All rights reserved]

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[68] Ed. Blanch, *Arxiepiscopologi*, vol. II, 121. [Tr. "Here lies the Most Reverend Father in Christ, Lord Peter Urrea, Patriarch of Alexandria and Archbishop of Tarragona, who made this choir. He died on the ninth day of September in the year of our Lord 1489"].

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PART II

Making Saints through War

CLAIMS OF CHINESE ANCESTRY AND ACCOUNTS OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM IN BATTLE

Kevin Vogelaar*

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, it is to introduce the source material on Vardan Mamikonean's martyrological legend to a wider audience interested in late antique and medieval conceptions of holy war and martyrdom. From 450-451 CE, Vardan led a rebellion of Christian princes from Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania against Sasanian Shah Yazdegerd II (r. 438-457 CE), called "Yazkert" in Armenian sources, when the Shah attempted to impose Zoroastrian religious observances upon them. This rebellion ended in the rebels' defeat at the Battle of Avarayr in 451 CE, but the Shah would soon thereafter rescind his religious policy and return the empire to its prior custom of toleration.

Most of the rebel princes died at Avarayr, including Vardan, and the Armenian Church declared them all martyrs less than a century later. Vardan became the face of this collective beatification, and is therefore the first Christian saint to be martyred in battle. However, Armenian sources on Vardan's legend and the 451 rebellion have been largely overlooked in scholarship on the development of Christian holy war, likely owing to the prevailing ambiguity of Vardan's cult. Vardan's earliest hagiographers were well aware of how novel the notion of martyrdom through battle was, and they approached it carefully. They sought to place Vardan's actions in-line with the longer heroic tradition of the Mamikonean clan's history, reaching back to their claimed royal ancestral origin in China. Later narratives would disentangle Vardan's martyrdom from the Mamikonean claimed Chinese origins, thereby creating competing traditions.

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This chapter's second purpose is to offer a reassessment of the claims of Chinese ancestry in late antique and early medieval Mamikonean dynastic histories by recontextualizing them in their wider Eurasian milieu. Most prior work on this subject has focused on ascertaining the claims' historical veracity.[1] This chapter follows the example of Alison Vacca's mnemohistorical approach to the vital role of Balkh (in Bactria, mod. Afghanistan) in Armenian Arsacid dynastic origin narratives, which were produced around the same time the Mamikonean Chinese origin claims are first textually evidenced.[2] However, rather than looking at history writing as a means of memory creation alone, this chapter takes a literary-historical approach to the Chinese origin claims with attention paid to why the claims were made and who their intended audiences may have been. While the claims were certainly meant for the Armenian elite, this chapter asserts that the specific focus on a Chinese origin was meant to create a rhetorical and historical basis for appealing to the Huns north of the Caucasus for alliances against mutual foes: the Sasanians.

This study assumes that the Huns were connected to or otherwise descended from the so-called Xiongnu 匈奴. The Xiongnu Empire covered most of the Mongolian Plateau and lasted from the third century BCE to the first century CE, after which it split between Northern and Southern groups. The Xiongnu forced the Yuezhi 月氏 westward into Central Asia in the second century BCE and was a major rival to the Qin (221-206 BCE) and Han (202 BCE-9 CE/25-220 CE) dynasties. The Southern Xiongnu gradually integrated into the Han political orbit, but retained their independence.[3] The Northern Xiongnu faded from the political stage.

That the Huns are connected to the Xiongnu is not a new assertion, but remains highly controversial. Based on comparative philological analysis, many have speculated that the Huns may be a splinter of the Northern Xiongnu. The results of such studies have been inconclusive. However, more recent scholarship paying greater attention to material sources and archaeology has proven close cultural connections between Eurasian steppe polities, including the Huns and the Xiongnu.[4] Kidarite kings assumed Kushan titles while still

[1] For a historiographic overview, see R. Bedrosian, "China and the Chinese according to 5-13th Century Classical Armenian Sources," *Armenian Review* 31/1 (1981): 17-24; A. Vacca, "Bahl Šahastan in the land of the K'ušans: Medieval Armenian memories of Balkh as an Arsacid capital," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (2001): 1-27.

[2] A. Vacca, "Bahl Šahastan."

[3] S.-K. Psarras, "Han and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations II," *Monumenta Serica* 52 (2004): 37-93.

[4] É. Miklós, "Archaeological continuity between the Xiongnu and the Huns: Eight connections supported by written sources," *The DSCA Journal* (2008): 11-24; idem. "Xiongnu and Huns-

calling themselves rulers of various Hunnic tribes, and the Kidarites were called the "Huna" by the Kushans.[5] The Kushans, themselves, incorporated the Yuezhi who previously conquered the Greco-Bactrian kingdom after they were forced out of their original territories by the Xiongnu. This author takes the view of Étienne de La Vaissière, who suggested that the Huns may have been part of the Xiongnu, but that the Huns need not have been Xiongnu in order to claim or express some connection to them as part of the Huns' own history-making.[6]

That the Huns migrated from formerly Xiongnu territories is not without precedent. The Alans similarly made their way westward from northern Asia, and are often included as the Alankʿ [Ալանք]/ Alanatsʿn [Ալանացն] with the Huns, or Honkʿ [Հոնք]/ Honatsʿn [Հոնացն], north of the Caucasus in early Armenian sources. Recording events of the early first through late second centuries CE, the fifth-century *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 [*Book of the Later Han*] calls the Alans the Alan liao 阿蘭聊 [the Alan Nation], while the third-century CE *Weilüe* 魏略 [*A Brief History of the Wei*] refers to them simply as the Alan 阿蘭.[7]

The third purpose of this chapter is to take the seemingly disparate themes of the first Christian battle-martyrdom and the Mamikonean claim of Chinese origin and demonstrate how each is directly pertinent to the literary-historiographic and mnemohistorical development of the other. From how the first battle-martyrdom and Chinese ancestry narrative strands interact over time, we can observe both how cautious late antique Armenian writers were to directly engage with the idea of a Christian battle-martyr, and how the notions of Chinese ancestry were initially integral to Vardan's portrayal as a martyr and holy warrior.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first covers the Mamikonean claims of Chinese ancestry and looks specifically at the circa 470 CE *Buzandaran*,[8]

One and the Same: Analyzing Eight Archaeological Links and Data from Ancient Written Sources," *Eurasian Studies Yearbook* 81 (2009): 5-36; A. Khazanov, "The Scythians and their Neighbors," in *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change: The Mongols and their Eurasian Predecessors. Perspectives on the Global Past*, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 32-49.

[5] É. de La Vaissière, "The Steppe World and the Rise of the Huns," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 175-191.

[6] Ibid.

[7] For a comprehensive list of Alan naming conventions, albeit with some now dated interpretations, see A. Alemany, *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation*. Handbuch der Orientalistik 8: Central Asia, Vol. 5: Sources on the Alans (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[8] *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand: (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')*, trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). For the Armenian text, which cannot be included here for reasons of length, see 03Buz, *Classical Armenian-English Key-Word-In-Context Concordance*, eds. Tom Samuelian, Armen Simonyan, Haik Hakopian,

the fifth-to-sixth-century *Primary History*,[9] and the late eighth-century history of Movsēs Xorenacʿi,[10] each read in their wider Eurasian context. The second section includes the histories of Łazar Pʿarpecʿi written around 500 CE,[11] and Ełišē from the sixth century,[12] both of which were written specifically on Vardan and the 451 rebellion. Though pertinent, this chapter will not extensively address the allusions to Maccabees made throughout Ełišē's and, to a lesser degree, Pʿarpecʿi's, accounts, which have already been thoroughly addressed by Robert Thomson and Nina Garsoïan.[13]

II. Claims of Chinese Ancestry

A. The Buzandaran

The *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk'* [Բուզանդարան Պատմութիւնք, *Epic Histories*] was written ca. 470 CE.[14] The *Buzandaran* covers the time from the death of Gregory the Illuminator, the first bishop of Armenia, through the partitioning of the Kingdom of Armenia (ca. 331-387 CE). The *Buzandaran* follows three main narrative threads: an ecclesiastical history of the hereditary succession of *catholicoi* descendant from Gregory the Illuminator (the "Grigorids"), a royal

and Hovhannes Asryan (Yerevan: Arak29, 2022), https://www.historians.armenian cathedral.org/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2024).

[9] "Appendix A. The 'Primary History,'" in *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians*, trans. and comm. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[10] *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians*, trans. and comm. by Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). For the Armenian text, see 06Khor, *Classical Armenian-English Key-Word-In-Context Concordance*, eds. Tom Samuelian, Armen Simonyan, Haik Hakopian, and Hovhannes Asryan (Yerevan: Arak29, 2022), https://www.historians.armeniancathedral.org/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2024).

[11] *The History of Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991). For the Armenian text, see 05Parp, *Classical Armenian-English Key-Word-In-Context Concordance*, eds. Tom Samuelian, Armen Simonyan, Haik Hakopian, and Hovhannes Asryan (Yerevan: Arak29, 2022), https://www.historians.armeniancathedral.org/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2024).

[12] *Eļishē, History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, comm. and trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). For the Armenian text, see 04Yegh, *Classical Armenian-English Key-Word-In-Context Concordance*, eds. Tom Samuelian, Armen Simonyan, Haik Hakopian, and Hovhannes Asryan (Yerevan: Arak29, 2022), www.historians.armeniancathedral.org/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2024).

[13] R. W. Thomson, "The Maccabees in Early Armenian Historiography," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1975): 329-341; N. G. Garsoïan, "Reality and Myth in Armenian History," in *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia*. Variorum Collected Studies (London: Routledge, 1999), Ch.xii.

[14] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, 11, 14.

history of the gradually degrading Aršakuni (the Armenian branch of the Parthian Arsacids), and the Mamikonean history extolling the holders of the *sparapet* [սպարապետ, commander-in-chief] office hereditary to the Mamikonean clan. The text is a compilation of Armenian oral traditions and some very early textual sources. It is replete with epic and hagiographic interjections and notes about individual princely houses; including some anachronistic descriptions of fourth-century events as if they foreshadowed fifth-century events.[15]

A pertinent example of this anachronistic foreshadowing is the entry on Vačʿē Mamikonean's death in the mid-fourth century against the Sasanians in a mutually destructive battle.[16] In a eulogistic speech, a bishop likens Vačʿē and his army to martyrs in a way clearly evocative of Vardan Mamikonean and the rebels after the 451 CE Battle of Avarayr. This includes paralleling Vačʿē and his army with the Maccabees, which Ełišē's *History* would go on to develop into a hagiographic focus of his account. This demonstrates that the *Buzandaran* was compiled with an eye toward incorporating Vardan's developing legend as a martyr into a longer heroized history of the Mamikonean dynasty as a whole, making his martyrdom a function of the role of *sparapet* borne by the clan's patriarchs across generations.

This effort to foreshadow the 451 rebellion without explicitly discussing it is noteworthy given that the *Buzandaran* also includes the earliest surviving version of the Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative. This hints at a possible discomfort with explicitly including the 451 rebellion and the Chinese origin narrative in the same text. The themes of hagiographic treatments of the 451 rebellion are included here anachronistically only, while the text is not extended into the later fifth century to include the rebellion itself.

The *Buzandaran*'s first mention of the Mamikonean Chinese origin claim comes in the context of conflict with the Aršakuni.[17] In the mid-fourth century, Urhnayr, king of Ałuankʿ [Caucasian Albania], joined with the Sasanians against an allied Armenian and Byzantine army. He asked Shah Shapuh (Shapur II, r. 309-379 CE) for the reward of facing *sparapet* Mušeł Mamikonean in battle while Shapuh focused on the Greeks. Urhnayr was granted his request, but Urhnayr also issued orders to his soldiers and, presumably, some Persian soldiers as well to take as many Greeks (Byzantines) prisoner as possible, so that they can be taken "in fetters to Ałuankʿ to work as brickmakers, stonecutters, and masons for the needs of our cities, palaces, and other needs."[18] The Ałuankʿ and Sasanian

[15] Ibid. 2-3, 8-11.

[16] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, III.xi; 03Buz, T. Samuelian et al, 3:11.

[17] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.iv.

[18] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.iv: 198; 03Buz, T. Samuelian et al, 5:4.11.

army lost, and Mušeł allowed Urhnayr to flee. Mušeł's detractors used his sparing of Urhnayr to slander him before the Aršakuni king, Pap, saying Mušeł intended to betray the king. Pap was already weary of Mušeł and had previously attempted to disallow Catholicos Nersēs from giving Mušeł a blessing before the battle, though Nersēs ultimately prevailed in convincing Pap to permit the blessing by shaming him for his own sinful behaviour.

Mušeł, responding to the accusations, confronted Pap and demonstrated that he would rather die at Pap's hands than permit it to be said that he would kill a king, even an enemy king.[19] At this, Pap embraced Mušeł and, weeping, said:

> Those who dare speak ill of a man as valorous and honourable as Mušeł deserve death. For he is a man of as honourable a race as ours, and his ancestors were like ours. For his ancestors abandoned their kingdom in the realm of the Čenkʿ [China; Ճենաց (Čenatsʿ)] and came to our ancestors. They lived and died for our ancestors, his father died for my father, and he has faithfully toiled to the [very brink] of death. Many times God has granted us victory through the prayers and supplications of our wondrous father Nersēs, and he has granted us much peace by the hand of this [man]. How [can] they speak such words to me as: "Mušeł is plotting your death?" For he is a loyal man indeed. If he has spared foreign kings through friendship, how could he raise his hand against his true lord?[20]

The asserted Chinese origin of the Mamikoneans serves here as a means of demonstrating loyalty to the Armenian Aršakuni dynasty. Pap explicitly recognizes that the Mamikoneans do not share the same ethnic origin as the Arsacids, but their service to the Arsacids/Aršakuni makes their foreign origin a marker of authority and legitimacy rather than of "otherness" or distance. This is likely a reference to the claimed Parthian Arsacid and, by extension, Aršakuni origin in Balkh, to where the Mamikonean progenitors would have presumably fled from China.[21] It is the mutual connection to Balkh which unifies the Mamikoneans, the Aršakuni, and the Grigorid *catholicoi*. Pap's speech confirms this by his reference to Nersēs's prayers for peace being enacted by God through the tireless efforts of Mušeł. It is the foreign origin of the Mamikoneans in China which allows them to have a legendary connection to Balkh and thence to the Arsacids. Pap's speech is almost penitential, wherein he recognizes the sacred link between his own Arsacid/Aršakuni line, the Grigorid *catholicoi*, and

[19] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.iv:204; 03Buz, T. Samuelian et al, 5:4.66-67.
[20] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.iv:204; 03Buz, T. Samuelian et al, 5:4.68-69.
[21] A. Vacca, "Bahl Šahastan."

Mamikonean *sparapets* which his own actions have jeopardized by failing to live up to the standards of his Parthian Balkh ancestors. Pap was acting in breach of his own ancestral role: first by his refusal to allow Nersēs to bless Mušeł, then by his distrust of Mušeł's loyal service, and then by his condemnation of Mušeł for not killing Urhnayr, who, as a king, only Pap had the right to do.

Mušeł's decision to spare Urhnayr demonstrates that the Mamikoneans continue to fulfil their sacred duty to the Aršakuni, just as Nersēs's chastisement of Pap continues to uphold the legacy of Gregory the Illuminator. On a practical level, Mušeł's decision is further validated when Urhnayr later sends word of another Sasanian invasion force to Mušeł, giving the Armenians and Byzantines the chance to prepare and secure another victory.[22] That Urhnayr is here made the king of Ałuankʿ is also noteworthy. Urhnayr is called the king of the Honkʿ, the Huns, in the tenth-century *Vita of St. Nersēs*.[23] By having Urhnayr as the king of Ałuankʿ, Mušeł's victory is against Caucasian Albania during a brief time in which it was allied with the Sasanians, and the Huns are not made into an enemy force at all.

Indeed, Mušeł's victory can be read as a victory against the enemies of the Huns as well. The emphasis the *Buzandaran* places upon Urhnayr's desire for Greek slave labourers to build his cities, palaces, and meet "other needs" may be speaking to the Sasanian-era expansion of cities and fortifications in Caucasian Albania against the Huns, including the "Gates of Darband." These "Gates" are the heavily fortified city of Darband on the Caspian coast (also called the Caspian Gates) which served as the main bastion of a network of forts and, later, a 42 km-long wall extending from the Caspian coast into the Caucasus Mountains.[24] Garsoïan noted that Urhnayr's desire for Greek labourers parallels the Sasanian use of Roman prisoners in other royal building projects.[25] However, that Urhnayr specifically desires Greek labourers, not Armenian, for the development of Ałuankʿ speaks to this period of Sasanian build-up against the Huns in Caucasian Albania, where the Gates of Darband came to be associated with the Gates of Alexander raised against the Unclean Nations of the north.[26] This association extended in Armenian eschatological thought through the early

[22] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.v.

[23] Ibid. 309n3.

[24] A. Kazaryan, "Urban Planning and Architecture of Caucasian Albania. Main Monuments and Trends of Development," in *Caucasian Albania: An International Sourcebook*, eds. Jost Gippert and Jasmine Dum-Tragut (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 356.

[25] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, 309n9.

[26] First attested in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* VI, 40; see M. Bais, "Caucasian Albania in Greek and Latin Sources," in *Caucasian Albania: An International Sourcebook*, eds. Jost Gippert and Jasmine Dum-Tragut (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 8-10.

invasions of the Mongols.[27] The *Buzandaran* may be implying here that Urhnayr wanted Greek labourers to expand upon the "Greek" fortifications established in the past, but also that he did not trust Armenian labourers to not open the way for Hunnic allies to invade Ałuankʿ and Persia.

Such an alliance between the Huns and Alans and Vasak Mamikonean was struck in the mid-fourth century and would happen again later, during the 451 rebellion and the alliance between Vardan Mamikonean and Attila. That the *Buzandaran* already foreshadows the 451 rebellion at points throughout its narrative allows the possibility that this later alliance was also in the compiler's or writer's mind. The *Buzandaran*'s first mention of Mamikonean Chinese ancestry overlaps with simultaneous allusions to the Huns and the enmity they share with the Armenians against the Sasanians.

Though Pap is presented as a failure, he did nonetheless repent of his own sins and for falling short of the Arsacid/Aršakuni legacy. After Pap's death and the ascent of Varazdat to the throne in circa 374 CE, this lesson would be immediately forgotten. Varazdat conspired with Bat, the chief of the Saharuni clan, to execute Mušeł after he was falsely accused of having killed Pap.[28] Varazdat then bestowed the title of *sparapet* upon Bat.[29] This betrayal leads to the *Buzandaran*'s second assertion of Mamikonean Chinese origin, this time bluntly stated by the Mamikoneans themselves, but also contested by the new Aršakuni king.

While Varazdat was betraying Mušeł, two Mamikonean brothers, Manuēl and Koms, were being held captive by Shapuh (Shapur II).[30] As captives, Shapuh sent them with his army against the "great Aršakuni king of the Kushans, who held the city of Balh [Balkh]."[31] This is a reference to the Parthian Arsacids and their traditional origin in Balkh in Armenian historiography, from whence they continued to resist the Sasanians after the Parthian Empire was overturned.[32]

The Persian force lost to the Kushans. Manuēl and Koms were the only survivors, and when they reported back to Shapuh, he angrily dismissed them back to Armenia. Upon their return to Armenia, Manuēl assumed control of the Mamikonean clan, and named himself *sparapet*, as the office was hereditary to the Mamikoneans and held irrespective of royal confirmation.[33] At this point,

[27] K. Franklin, *Everyday Cosmopolitanisms: Living the Silk Road in Medieval Armenia* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 9-10.

[28] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.xxxv.

[29] Ibid. V.xxxvii.

[30] Ibid. V.xxxvii.

[31] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.xxxvii:242; 03Buz, T. Samuelian et al, 5:37.5.

[32] A. Vacca, "Bahl Šahastan."

[33] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, 327n9.

Koms disappears from the narrative. Manuēl then issues an ultimatum to Varazdat:

> In return for all the services that our clan faithfully rendered to you Aršakuni from the earliest times … Behold that valiant man Mušeł my brother,[34] who from his youth wore out his life for your sake, who routed and slaughtered your foes and whom the foe could not kill, you seized and strangled him on a banqueting-couch. You, then, are not true Aršakuni but a bastard child, this is why you have not acknowledged the faithful servants of the Aršakuni. Indeed, we are not even your vassals but your equals and [even] greater than you, for our ancestors were kings in the realm of the Čenkʿ. And on account of quarrels [between] brothers, and because much blood flowed, we set out to seek a haven and settled [here]. The first Aršakuni kings knew who we were and whence [we came], but you, since you are not Aršakuni, go from this realm, lest you die by my hand![35]

Varazdat outright dismisses Manuēl's accusation and attempts to use the Chinese origin of the Mamikoneans against his claim of inherited authority:

> But you are not from this realm, for you yourself have said, "Indeed we are from the land of the realm of Čenkʿ [where] we were kings by nature, and we have come here as strangers." Then do not die like your brother,[36] for out of my beneficence I let you go free. Go to the land of the Čenkʿ, live there and rule there in your own land![37]

Manuēl asserts here that Varazdat's betrayal of Mušeł and failure to recognize Mamikonean loyalty breached the sacred trust between the Arsacids, Grigorids, and Mamikoneans, thereby excluding Varazdat from the right to call himself a true Aršakuni king. As a result, Manuēl could impose himself over Varazdat, whose invalidated royalty made him a lesser lord beneath the *sparapet*. But, Manuēl's authority as the *sparapet* is based on his clan's descent from the kings of China. The Mamikonean royal progenitor's decision to remove himself from China to end violent brotherly strife was recognized and appreciated by the

[34] եղբայր [brother] here denotes kinship, not literal siblinghood. Ibid. 328n11.
[35] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.xxxvii:243-244; 03Buz, T. Samuelian, 5:37.16-20.
[36] See note 34 above.
[37] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, V.xxxvii:244; 03Buz, T. Samuelian, 5:37.21-22.

Parthian Arsacids, who gave the clan the hereditary *sparapet* title out of respect and to secure their service.

As with Pap's speech, Manuēl recognizes the ethnic distinction between the Chinese origins of the Mamikoneans and the Arsacids/Aršakuni, though this again serves to demonstrate authority and loyalty rather than "otherness." The Mamikoneans are the *sparapets* because of their progenitor's royalty, but their loyal and capable service to the Aršakuni has demonstrated that they continue to live up to their ancestral legacy. However, Varazdat's response to Manuēl employed this same ethnic distinction to "other" the Mamikoneans, asserting that their natural place is in China, with the implication that they deserve the strife their progenitor fled from and do not have any claim to inherited position outside of that kingdom.

In circa 378 CE, after further exchanges of insults and threats, Manuēl and Varazdat go to war. The Mamikonean army defeats the royal army with ease and Manuēl nearly beats Varazdat to death with the king's own lance in a mounted duel. Despite Manuēl's prior threat, he spares and exiles Varazdat because he was still a king, even if an illegitimate one. The other conspirators in Mušeł's death were all executed. Pap's wife, Queen Zarmanduxt, ruled as regent with Manuēl as *sparapet*, advisor, and tutor of Pap's young sons, Aršak and Vałaršak, the former named after the founder of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty and the latter after the founder of the Parthian Aršakuni branch.[38]

Varazdat shows how the claim of Chinese origin may have been used against the Mamikoneans from the earliest times of its oral circulation and translation to text. As we will see, Xorenacʿi will later use a similar means of ethnic "othering" to undermine Mamikonean claims to authority by rewriting the terms under which their progenitor(s) arrived in Armenia. However, the version of the Chinese origin story in the *Primary History* matches many details offered in the *Buzandaran* and maintains a pro-Mamikonean tone.[39]

B. The Primary History

Preserved as the first seven chapters of the *History* attributed to Sebeos, the *Primary History* is a hyper-condensed history of Armenia from its legendary founding to the end of the Aršakuni line. Much of its current form likely dates

[38] Manuēl tutoring Pap's sons reconfirms his loyalty and subservience toward the Aršakuni and Zarmanduxt as the reigning regent, despite his successful rebellion against Varazdat. For more on how tutorage and fosterage were used to establish hierarchies in the Parthian aristocracy, see J. Nabel, *The Arsacids of Rome: Misunderstanding in Roman-Parthian Relations* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2025).

[39] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, 328n14.

to the late seventh century, when the *History* attributed to Sebeos was finally compiled from many sources.[40] The *Primary History* appears to have been taken wholesale from whatever source Xorenacʿi used for the same material in his own history.[41] Numerous similarities between the compilation of Sebeos and the *Buzandaran* further suggest the *Primary History*'s core narrative has a relatively early date,[42] possibly the late fifth or sixth century.[43]

The *Primary History's* compiler or author claims to have heard about the Mamikonean origins in China from a Chinese embassy to Armenia.[44] This Chinese ambassador confirmed that he was fully aware of the Mamikoneans from Chinese oral tradition: "The bards in our country also say in their songs that Mamik and Konak were two valiant men and blood brothers of eminence, sons of Prince Karnam who was the second [in rank] in the kingdom of China."[45] "China" is rendered here in a more Persianate or Iranian ճենաստան [Čenastan],[46] as opposed to the Ճենաց [Čenatsʿ] and Ճենք [Čenkʿ] in the above examples from the *Buzandaran*.

The *Primary History* begins its account of Mamikonean Chinese origins with a blunt statement of the clan's foreign ethnicity: "They are [not] descendants of

[40] For more on the *History* attributed to Sebeos as a compiled text, see T. Greenwood, "Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-Evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos," *Le Muséon* 115/3-4 (2002): 323-397. Some scholars have questioned whether the *Primary History* is original to Sebeos, based on stylistic or similar grounds. However, the compiled nature of the Sebeos *History* makes stylistic analysis irrelevant, given just how many styles of writing are evidenced throughout the text. The editorial choices the Sebeos compiler(s) made allow us to analyse the *History* on narratological and thematic grounds (as Greenwood does), but not stylistically. Furthermore, the *Primary History* includes information on Mamikonean origins which agrees with the details on the clan's claimed Chinese ancestry in the *Buzandaran*. However, Xorenacʿi parodies the narrative of Mamikonean Chinese origins preserved in the *Primary History* (see the following section on Xorenacʿi). Thus, the *Primary History* preserves a version of the Mamikonean Chinese origin story which largely agrees with the fifth-century *Buzandaran*, but which was modified by Xorenacʿi in the eighth century. This would place the Mamikonean origin story preserved in the *Primary History*, and likely the *Primary History* itself, in a period between the writing of the *Buzandaran* and Xorenacʿi's history, during which time the compilation of the seventh-century *History* attributed to Sebeos also took place.

[41] *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos: Parts 1 and 2*, trans. R. W. Thomson, comm. J. Howard-Johnston (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxxiii, lix.

[42] Ibid. xli, xliv-xlvi, lix-lx.

[43] R. Bedrosian, "China and the Chinese," 19.

[44] "'The 'Primary History,'" R. W. Thomson, 367.

[45] Ibid. 367.

[46] *Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի* [Patmutʿiwn Sebēosi, History of Sebeos], ed. Gevorg Varagi Abgaryan (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Gitutʿyunneri Akademiayi Hratarakchʿutʿyun, 1979), Ch. 4.12.

the forefather of our nation, Aramaneak, but they came from China in the years of Artavan, king of the Parthians, and of Khozrov the Great, king of Armenia."[47] This opening statement demonstrates some concern about Mamikonean "Armenianness." This concern about "Armenianness" was expressed in different terms in the *Buzandaran*, where Mamikonean authority was rooted in both their royal Chinese heritage and their service as *sparapet*. Here, there is a distinction between Mamikonean hereditary authorities: their Chinese ancestry is recorded independently of their Armenian military and political careers. However, that Mamik and Konak were from a family second in rank only to the king of China nonetheless seems to foreshadow their clan's later appointment as *sparapet* by the Arsacids/Aršakuni. This distinction between hereditary authorities served as a means of "othering" the Mamikoneans when Varazdat turned against them, saying that their hereditary authority was rightfully limited to China, but the *Primary History* takes a more positive tone, presenting the clan progenitors Mamik and Konak as "valiant" and naturally prone to being the first among aristocrats, whether they are in China or Armenia. It may be inferred that the *Primary History* is making the Mamikoneans sound as if they had always been something like *sparapets*, even before entering into Parthian service.

Also noteworthy is that the *Primary History* claims a Chinese ambassador as confirmation of what was known already in Armenia about Mamikonean origins. More is said of this "embassy" below, but this confirmation of Chinese ancestry from a Chinese source seems aimed at dissuading audience disbelief or criticism. The opening passage assumes some among the audience would disbelieve the claimed ancestry or use the foreign origin against the Mamikonean clan as Varazdat does in the *Buzandaran*. That the Chinese ambassador knows about the Mamikoneans from supposed oral bardic traditions performed contemporaneously in China would have made this narrative more relatable to an Armenian audience of the time, considering the vast conversion of oral traditions to text following the fifth-century invention of the Armenian alphabet. Likewise, that this confirmation came from a Chinese ambassador assumes that China was, indeed, politically relevant to Armenia, suggesting to the *Primary History's* audience that the foreign origins of the Mamikoneans may not have been as far away culturally as it was geographically.

The *Buzandaran* alludes to the Mamikonean Chinese progenitor migrating westward to extricate himself from brotherly bloodshed. The *Primary History*

[47] Thomson's edition included a typo excluding the negative ոչ [voch', "no"] from this line. It has been reinserted in the quote following Abgaryan. "The 'Primary History,'" R. W. Thomson, 367; *Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի* [History of Sebeos], G. V. Abgaryan, Ch. 4.11-13.

offers a more complete narrative, wherein Mamik and Konak were the sons of Prince Karnam, who was second only to the Chinese king, the Chenbakur.[48] Upon Karnam's death, the king took Karnam's wife in marriage and they had a son who eventually succeeded the king as the new Chenbakur. This prompted Mamik and Konak to rebel: "Bringing over a section of the princes and the army, they took an oath of unity. They hatched a wicked plot to murder their brother, Chenbakur, king of the land, and to seize his kingdom."[49]

Despite the brothers being described as valiant, their plan to overthrow the king is here called "wicked" and starkly contrasts with Mušeł's and Manuēl's refusal to harm kings in the *Buzandaran*. However, in Mamik and Konak rebelling against the new Chenbakur, presumably due to some perceived slight against their own titles or inheritances, we can see some literary-historical paralleling with Manuēl and Koms rebelling against Varazdat, who deprived the Mamikoneans of their ancestral title.

The *Primary History* says the rebel army rose up in multiple places across the country, but was defeated by the king:

> Mamik and Konak gathered their forces against him in one area of their country; the army of the country was divided into two. When Chenbakur heard this news, he too gathered the army of his part and went out to oppose them in battle. They attacked each other, smote [each other] with the sword, and the rebel army was destroyed.[50]

This differs from Manuēl's speech in the *Buzandaran*, which has the Mamikonean progenitor leaving China voluntarily to end bloodshed, rather than in flight from defeat. After their defeat, Mamik and Konak fled to the Arsacid court in Bahl-Shahastan [Balkh] "in the land of the Kushans," and Chenbakur initially demanded their return, threatening war.[51]

Pap's speech in the *Buzandaran* simply says that the Arsacids saw the value of the Mamikonean progenitors. The *Primary History* gives a more detailed

[48] This is a combination of the Armenian ethnonym ՉԷն, "Čen," [China] with Middle Iranian *baypuhr* [son of God]. *Baypuhr* was used to render *tianzi* 天子 [Son of Heaven], the traditional title for the Chinese Emperor. It is likely that this title entered Iran from the Kushans, who used *tianzi* for their own kings, during the time of the Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom (c. 230-365 CE). X. Liu, "Migration and Settlement of the Yuezhi-Kushan: Interaction and Interdependence of Nomadic and Sedentary Societies," *Journal of World History* 12/2 (2001): 261-292, at 278-279; A. Vacca, "Bahl Šahastan," 12-13.

[49] "The 'Primary History,'" R. W. Thomson, 367.

[50] Ibid. 367.

[51] Ibid. 367-368.

account: the Arsacid king sent a letter refusing Chenbakur's demand: "'Let the treaty of peace,' he said, 'remain firm between us, for I have sworn to them that they will not die. But I had them taken to the West, to the edge of the world, to that place where the sun enters its mother.'"[52] Chenbakur accepted this response, and the Parthian Arsacid king sent the brothers with their families and retinues to the Armenian Aršakuni king: "And there they multiplied greatly, and they became a great clan from Mamik and Konak."[53] The Arsacid king's decision to send the brothers westward is the reason why the brothers would go on to found an Armenian clan. There is no mention of how the Mamikoneans became the *sparapets*, though, as explicitly stated in the *Buzandaran*, their princely Chinese heritage may be assumed to play a role in their ascendancy here.

As noted above, the *Primary History's* Chinese origin narrative curiously relies upon supposed Chinese ambassadorial confirmation. This detail may hint at how the Chinese origin narrative may have developed in Armenian oral tradition prior to its textual recording. There are no Chinese or other Armenian records of the embassy mentioned in the *Primary History*. Westward mission attempts from the Han period are well documented in Chinese sources. In 139 BCE, Zhang Qian 張騫 was sent by Emperor Han Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE) to make an alliance with the (Da) Yuezhi (大)月氏 in Bactria against the Xiongnu. The Xiongnu had generations prior forced the Yuezhi out of the steppes northwest of China (in the region of modern Gansu 甘肅), and the Yuezhi eventually moved south, conquered the Indo-Greek Bactrian Kingdom, and later became part of the Kushan Empire. Zhang Qian's report was preserved in the 91 BCE *Shiji* 史記 [*Records of the Grand Historian*], by Sima Qian 司馬遷. Zhang Qian did not reach past Da Xia 大夏, part of northern Bactria, and the Yuezhi ultimately refused the Han's offer.[54] Zhang Qian's mission put him roughly in the region around Balkh. Memory of Zhang Qian's mission, possibly preserved in the Kushan and Kushano-Sasanian kingdoms and recalled again upon the invasion of the Kidarites/Huna at around the same time as Armenian involvement in Sasanian conflicts in the region, may have inspired the *Primary History's* assertion of a Chinese-Arsacid embassy.

That Zhang Qian's mission may have been remembered in some form in late antique Kushan or Kushano-Sasanian territories is not farfetched. Zhang Qian's fame as a traveler and agent of the Han was such that he was later included as a protagonist in a legend of how Buddhism came to China. Sengyou 僧祐 included the legend in his early sixth-century CE *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [*Collected*

[52] Ibid. 368.

[53] Ibid. 368.

[54] See note 57 below.

Records Concerning the Tripitaka]. In this legend, Zhang Qian is anachronistically made into an envoy of Emperor Han Ming 漢明帝 (r. 28-75 CE), and his westward mission was to bring back Buddhist scriptures which were to become the first translated into Chinese.[55] This Chinese Buddhist legend spread westward, reaching the monastic and trading center of Dunhuang 敦煌 by the seventh or eighth centuries, prior to the region coming under Tibetan rule.[56] It is possible that Zhang Qian left a comparable impression in the western places he visited, the written records of most of which have not survived.

The embassy of Gan Ying 甘英 in the late first century CE went much farther afield. He was sent to Da Qin 大秦 [Rome] and his travels and report are recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* 88.10. Gan Ying made it to Tiaozhi 條支 [Antioch-on-the-Orontes] but sailors of Anxi 安息 [Arsacid Parthia] did not take him across the sea due to their concerns about storms and the length of the voyage. Antioch by the late first century CE was under Roman rule, so it is surprising that Gan Ying seemed to rely more on Parthians than Romans, or that the governor of Syria did not ensure his arrival in Rome. There is a question of whether Tiaozhi could have meant Antioch on the Persian Gulf, where it would make more sense that Gan Ying would rely on Parthian guides and transportation, assumedly sailing thence to Egypt using established lines of trade across the Indian Ocean.[57] Either way, news of Gan Ying's travels through Arsacid Parthia may have reached Armenians in some form, inspiring either on its own or in tandem with some knowledge of Zhang Qian's embassy the *Primary History's* imagined Chinese interlocutor.

[55] J. Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations: Texts from the Eastern Han* 東漢 *and Three Kingdoms* 三國 *Periods*. Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica 10, ed. Hiroshi Kanno (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2008), 35-37.

[56] Mogao Cave 323 (Early Tang Dynasty), *Dunhuang Caves on the Silk Road: Online Exhibitions & Speaker Series* 丝路上的敦煌石窟: 虚拟展览及演讲系列 (Dunhuang Academy 敦煌研究院, University of Washington Tateuchi East Asia Library 华大馆内东亚图书馆, Dunhuang Foundation 美国敦煌基金会) https://www.dunhuang.ds.lib.uw.edu/mogao-cave-323-early-tang-dynasty/ (accessed June 19, 2025).

[57] For more on Zhang Qian and Gan Ying, see J. Yang, "Hellenistic Information in China," *CHS Research Bulletin* 2/2 (2014), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn3:hlnc.essay:YangJ.Hellenistic_Information_in_China.2014 (accessed May 12, 2024); idem., "Some Clues of the Hellenistic World and the Roman East Hidden in China's Early Four Historical Books," *Talanta* 46-47 (2014-2015): 121-143; H. P. Zanous and J. Yang, "Arsacid Cities in the Hanshu and Houhanshu," *Iran and the Caucasus* 22 (2018): 123-138; R. Kauz and Liu Y., "Armenia in Chinese Sources," *Iran and the Caucasus* 12/2 (2008): 175-190.

C. Movsēs Xorenacʿi, Patmutʿiwn Hayocʿ

Movsēs Xorenacʿi's *Patmutʿiwn Hayocʿ* [Պատմութիւն Հայոց, *History of the Armenians*] covers the history of Armenia from its mythic founding to the death of Mesrop Maštoc', the inventor of the Armenian alphabet, in 440 CE. In his introduction, Xorenacʿi claims to be a disciple of Mesrop Maštoc' and Catholicos Sahak I (r. 387-438 CE), placing him in the early fifth century. However, internal evidence and a lack of references in other texts before the tenth century point toward a later date of composition, with Robert Thomson suggesting a later eighth century date.[58] One of the reasons for this is the text's distinctly pro-Bagratuni and anti-Mamikonean sentiments. The Bagratuni and Mamikonean clans were in a bitter rivalry for favour from the Umayyad and then ʻAbbasid caliphs. The office of the *sparapet* was taken from the Mamikoneans and given to the Bagratuni in 732 CE, prompting several failed Mamikonean rebellions. ʻAbbasid Caliph al-Muʿtamid ʿAlā ʾllāh (r. 870-892 CE) recognized Ašot I Bagratuni as king of Armenia in 884/5 CE, well after the Mamikoneans had fallen from relevance. Thus, Xorenacʿi's clear political priorities make the most sense in a mid-to-late eighth-century context.[59]

Xorenacʿi uses the *Buzandaran* as a source, though he does not name it in his text.[60] He covers much of the same subject matter as the *Primary History*, albeit with far more detail. As in the *Primary History*, Xorenacʿi locates the origins of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty in Balkh.[61] Where Xorenacʿi differs most from the *Primary History* and *Buzandaran* is in his portrayal of foreignness in Armenian lineage and political authority. Because of this, his version of the Mamikonean Chinese origin is decidedly negative and "others" the Mamikoneans apart from the rest of the Armenian nobility, but in terms quite different from what was expressed by Varazdat in the *Buzandaran* and anticipated in the *Primary History*. Xorenacʿi does not dismiss the Mamikoneans because of their supposed Chinese heritage. Rather, he rewrites the context under which their migration traditionally occurred in order to isolate them from the origins of the Aršakuni and Grigorids.

Part of Xorenacʿi's pro-Bagratuni program is his claim that they descended from a Jewish leader sent by Nebuchadnezzar to Armenia, thereby making the Bagratuni active participants in Jewish and Christian sacred history.[62]

[58] *Moses Khorenats'i, History of the Armenians*, trans. and comm. Robert W. Thomson. Revised Edition (Ann Arbor, Caravan Books, 2006), 2-3, 59.

[59] Ibid. 59.

[60] *Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan, 4, 20.

[61] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, I:7-8; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:2

[62] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, I:22.

Accordingly, Xorenacʿi denies any Bagratuni relation to Aramaneak and Armenia's legendary foundation, just as the *Primary History* does for the Mamikoneans.[63] As we will see, Ełišē links Vardan Mamikonean and the martyrs of 451 CE with the Maccabees, and as noted above, the *Buzandaran* extends this sentiment retroactively to Vačʿē Mamikonean and his army when they fell in battle with the Sasanians. Xorenacʿi, by making the Bagratuni Judaic descendants, undercuts this narrative. Though defeated by the Babylonians, the Kingdom of Judah nonetheless bore the Davidic line, which leads to Mary and Christ according to the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.[64] The Judean exiles in Babylon likewise successfully resisted Nebuchadnezzar's and then Darius's attempts to compel apostasy, and God's divine intervention protected the resisters from having to face martyrdom, though they were ready to endure it nonetheless.[65] The Mamikonean panegyric narratives from the *Buzandaran* and the chronicles of the 451 rebellion present the Mamikoneans as martyrs, but Xorenacʿi makes the Bagratuni descendants from those willing to be martyrs but who were saved by God from that fate. Likewise, Xorenacʿi has this Judean ancestor establishing the Bagratuni clan in Armenia via his own descendants aiding the Parthian Arsacid conquest, making the Bagratuni relevant to the Arsacids well before the Mamikonean progenitor leaves China in the *Buzandaran* or *Primary History*.[66] Foreignness is less an issue for Xorenacʿi than the circumstances under which a clan arrived and became established in Armenia.

Xorenacʿi excludes the Mamikoneans from the sacred relationship with the Arsacids and Grigorids by simply placing their migration from China at the beginning of the Sasanian period, after the Parthian Arsacids had already been overthrown. During the reign of "Shapuh, son of Artashir, son of Sasan" [Shapur I (r. c. 240-270 CE), second Sasanian Shahanshah]: "there came to Armenia the ancestor of the Mamikonian family from the northeast, from a valiant and noble land foremost among all the nations of the north, I mean the land of the Chinese, of whom the following is told."[67] Xorenacʿi applies positive aspects, "valiant and

[63] Ibid. I:22.

[64] Matthew 1. Scriptural references are to the 1805 Zohrab edition of the Armenian Bible.

[65] See Daniel 3 for the salvation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace and Daniel 6 for Daniel's own protection in the lion's den.

[66] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II:3.

[67] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II:81; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:81.3. Several other medieval Armenian texts place China in the "north" of the world, seemingly across the Caucasus Mountains. Because these other texts do not discuss Mamikonean origins, they are not discussed here. However, that some Armenian texts attempt to locate China to the north may demonstrate a close association made between China and Eurasian steppe

noble," to the nation of China itself, not to the Mamikonean progenitors as does the *Primary History*. This separates the Mamikoneans and China as independent topics, which the *Buzandaran* and *Primary History* do not do.

In the same year as Artashir's death: "a certain Arbok Chen-bakur, which means in their tongue 'honor of the kingdom,' had two foster brothers called Bldokh and Mamgon, who were great princes."[68] We see the same title of Chenbakur used here for the king of China as in the *Primary History*. Robert Thomson suggested "Arbok" could be a variant of "Arbakes," a relatively common name in Iran and the Caucasus.[69] This naming scheme is interesting, in that it includes a distinctly Persianate element added to an otherwise well-established Armenian rendering of *baypuhr/tianzi*.[70] Xorenacʿi's use of a Persianate name for a Chinese figure may speak to Xorenacʿi's awareness of how reliant the Sasanians had become upon the Tang dynasty over the mid-seventh through eighth centuries; more on this is said below.

Where the *Buzandaran* vaguely alludes to Mamikonean familial connection to the Chinese king, the *Primary History* makes Mamik and Konak the king's elder half brothers and inheritors of their own familial prestige as sons of the second-ranked prince. Xorenacʿi modifies the *Primary History's* narrative to make the Mamikonean progenitor merely a foster brother of the king. This alteration maintains the closer connection offered in the *Primary History* while depriving the Mamikoneans of a legitimate family tie to the Chinese throne, thereby invalidating the clan's claims of royal heritage without denying their origin in, and subsequent exile from, the royal household. The progenitor's status as a foster brother further makes his station as a "great prince" contingent upon the royal family's beneficence, as opposed to multi-generational inheritance.

The *Primary History* names Mamik and Konak the brotherly founders of the Mamikonean line, which is symbolically echoed in the *Buzandaran*'s Manuēl and Koms, who restore the Mamikoneans to their rightful place. Xorenacʿi has Mamgon and Bldokh, a radical departure from the M/K naming convention of the prior texts. This revision extends into the brothers' relationship, as Bldokh slanders Mamgon before Arbok, who in turn condemns Mamgon to death.[71] This conflict between brothers leaves Mamgon the sole eponymous progenitor of the

polities like the Alans, Huns, Avars [Rouran 柔然], and Turks, who were recognized as having come from the direction of China. On the Avars/ Rouran, see Guido Alberto Gnecchi-Ruscone, Anna Szécsényi-Nagy, István Koncz, ..., Zuzana Hofmanová, Choongwon Jeong, Johannes Krause, "Ancient genomes reveal origin and rapid trans-Eurasian migration of 7th century Avar elites," *Cell* 185/8 (2022): 1402-1413.

[68] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.81; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:81.4.

[69] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, 230n3.

[70] See note 48 above.

[71] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.81.

future Mamikonean clan. Being slandered before the king is a common trope in Armenian histories and in Mamikonean histories in particular, as we have seen already in the *Buzandaran*. However, the slanderer is usually from a rival clan or is a traitor to the kingdom. Xorenacʿi, contrarily, makes the first slanderer against a Mamikonean another *de facto* Mamikonean.

Part of this slandering trope includes the victim willingly appearing before the king to argue in his own defence. In the case of Mušeł Mamikonean in the *Buzandaran*, this ended well with Pap but poorly with Varazdat; but both cases led to evocations of Mamikonean Chinese origins as part of their defence (the latter by Manuēl avenging Mušeł). However, Xorenacʿi has Mamgon flee when faced with Arbok's summons to court:

> But when Mamgon heard of this he did not heed the king's summons but fled with his entourage and came to Artashir, king of Persia. Arbok sent messengers to seek his extradition, and when Artashir refused, the king of China prepared for war against him. But at that point Artashir died and Shapuh came to the throne.[72]

This generally follows the *Primary History*, but does not make any mention of Balkh as the refuge, according to the replacement of the Arsacids with the Sasanians as the Mamikonean progenitor's hosts. Likewise, Xorenacʿi seems to imply that Artashir and Arbok may have gone to war were it not for the ascension of Shapuh, whereas the *Primary History* has the Parthian king cleverly avoid hostilities from the start. This makes the arrival of Mamgon a threat to the *status quo* between the kingdoms, contradicting the *Buzandaran* and, less overtly, the *Primary History* which both have the Mamikoneans received as assets by the Arsacids/Aršakuni. Intriguingly, despite Xorenacʿi's anti-Mamikonean tone, he does not include the *Primary History's* note about the Mamikonean progenitor(s) engaging in a "wicked plot" against Chenbakur. Indeed, that Mamgon is subject to slander makes him out to be innocent, where Bldokh is the offender. Xorenacʿi's reversal of roles in his reworking of the Chinese origin narrative is all-encompassing.

That Mamgon's arrival posed more of a problem than a benefit is clarified in Shapuh's decision to send him and his retinue to Armenia:

> Now although Shapuh did not hand over Mamgon to his lord, nonetheless he did not allow him [to remain] in the land of the Aryans but sent him with all his entourage, as if exiled, to his governors in Armenia. And he sent word to the king of China,

[72] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.81; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:81.6-8.

> saying: "May it not displease you that I was unable to hand over to you Mamgon, because my father had sworn to him by the light of the sun. But to cause you no trouble I have expelled him from my country to the edge of the earth in the west, which is equivalent to death for him. So let there not be war between you and me." And because, as they say, the Chinese are the most peace loving of all the inhabitants on the face of the earth, he agreed to make peace. So it is clear that the Chinese nation is truly devoted to peace and life.[73]

Shapuh sent Mamgon west, to Armenia, in exile as a punishment equivalent to death in order to uphold Artashir's promise of refuge and appease Arbok. Thus, Xorenacʿi makes the Mamikonean presence in Armenia a product of exile and punitive compromise to keep the peace, not of appreciative acceptance or recognition of value. Similarly, Shapuh sending Mamgon to his "governors in Armenia" makes Mamgon a direct product of the Sasanian gradual conquest of the Aršakuni kingdom, completely reversing Mamikonean claims of service to the Aršakuni and casting their actions against the Sasanians into question.

Xorenacʿi interrupts his narrative at this point to include a brief description of China's vast natural wealth and beauty derived from Anania Širakacʿi's seventh-century *Ašxarhacʿoycʿ*, [Աշխարհացոյց, *Geography*][74] favourably comparing its luxury and beauty with that of Armenia.[75] Xorenacʿi often includes passing references to other texts as demonstrations of erudition, but the purpose of this interlude may be to highlight just what Mamgon lost, just as the prior references to China as a peace-loving nation make Arbok's pursuit of Mamgon stand out all the more.

Xorenacʿi develops upon this last point further. He has Mamgon and his retinue encounter the Aršakuni king Trdat III (d. 330 CE), who would later be converted by Gregory the Illuminator and become the first Christian king of Armenia. However, this meeting is less than auspicious:

> So Mamgon, having come to our country against his will, met the returning Trdat. He did not turn back with the Persian army but advanced with all his entourage to meet him with great presents. Trdat received him but did not take him with him in his war against Persia. However, he gave his entourage a place [in which to settle]

[73] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.81; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:81.9-11.
[74] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, 231n7.
[75] Ibid. II.81.

> and a stipend for food; he changed their residence from place to place for many years.[76]

Mamgon's reluctance to go west reconfirms Shapuh's likening of Armenia to exile. However, that he took his retinue and presented himself before Trdat with gifts makes him out to be somewhat ungrateful, even treacherous, toward his Sasanian hosts, whose escorting army had to withdraw. Thus, Mamgon switched sides, and bought Trdat's favour rather than fulfil Shapuh's promise to send him to the Sasanian authorities in or near Armenia. If Mamgon was going to Shapuh's own people in Armenia, then it is implied that he was expected to serve Shapuh in some capacity. Xorenacʿi having Mamgon switch sides to Trdat and the Aršakuni comes across as deceitful.[77] This deceitfulness may be a reason for why Trdat does not take Mamgon into his military service against the Sasanians, echoing Pap's and then Varazdat's uncertainty about Mušeł's loyalties in the *Buzandaran*, but this time without the intervention of a Grigorid to chastise the Aršakuni king's judgment. Trdat does give Mamgon and his retinue a place to live, though this is not a stable residence, and a stipend for food, making Mamgon entirely reliant upon Trdat's beneficence, just as he was upon that of the royal family of China.

In a later chapter titled "The massacre of the Słkunikʿ by the Chinese Mamgon,"[78] Trdat leaves Armenia to meet Constantine in Rome. This prompted Shapuh to attempt a campaign in Armenia and Sluk, prince of the Słkuni clan, rebelled in collaboration with Shapuh.[79] Trdat returned before Shapuh's army arrived and engaged the Sasanians' regional allies, forcing Sluk to withdraw to his family's castle of Ołakan in Taron, in southern Armenia. This prompted Trdat to issue a general order against Sluk: "The king said to all the princely houses of Armenia: 'Whoever brings to me the prince of the Słkuni family, to him I shall give, with perpetual jurisdiction, villages and estates and all the

[76] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.81; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:81.15.

[77] Xorenacʿi may be drawing upon the history of Armenian nobles freely switching sides between the Byzantines and Sasanians and caliphs in an effort to paint the Mamikoneans as unstable and unreliable. For more on the history of Armenian nobles playing their imperial neighbours against each other, see J. Preiser-Kapeller, "Aristocrats, Mercenaries, Clergyman and Refugees: Deliberate and Forced Mobility of Armenians in the Early Medieval Mediterranean (6th to 11th century A.D.)," in *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone*, eds. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt, and Yannis Stouraitis. Studies in Global Migration History 13, ed. Dirk Hoerder. Studies in Global Social History 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 327-386.

[78] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:84.1.

[79] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84.

domains of the Słkuni family.' This Mamgon, the Chinese, undertook."[80] Xorenacʿi again reiterating that Mamgon was Chinese further separates him from the rest of the Armenian houses. As stated above, Trdat did not require service from Mamgon, and Mamgon was not included in the princely houses expected to take up the royal order, so Mamgon's only intention for getting involved here would presumably have been to secure the Słkuni properties for himself. Thus Xorenacʿi paints Mamgon less like a loyal servant of the Aršakuni and more like an opportunist and schemer the likes of whom are vilified in the histories of the 451 rebellion by Łazar Pʿarpecʿi and Ełišē.

Xorenacʿi has Mamgon approach Sluk as if pledging his support for the rebellion under the pretence of avenging insults done to him by Trdat.[81] Sluk readily received Mamgon as a supporter, but it took many rounds of promises and oath-swearing before Sluk allowed Mamgon into Ołakan. Then, once inside the fortress, Mamgon persuaded Sluk to go out hunting with him:

> During the hunt he [Mamgon] shot an arrow into the middle of his [Sluk's] back and struck the rebel to the ground. Hastening with his men to the gate of the fortress, he seized the castle and imprisoned all those inside. He also decided to destroy the family of the Słkuni, and he slaughtered them all. But two escaped in flight to the land of Tsop'k'.[82]

When Mamgon informed Trdat, the king readily gave Mamgon the promised reward, thereby establishing the "Mamgonean" [Մամգոնեան] house in Taron. However, Trdat also ordered Mamgon not to pursue the remaining Słkuni.[83] Though Trdat accepted the outcome of Mamgon's actions, Xorenacʿi clearly describes these events in a negative light. Mamgon's feigned rebellion mirrors his earlier abandonment of the Sasanians, and his deception and murder of Sluk and most of his family went well beyond the remit of Trdat's actual order, as evidenced by Trdat's intervention against Mamgon's extermination of the entire Słkuni line. Similarly, despite the Mamikonean clan being established by Trdat himself, the very king who would be converted to Christianity by Gregory the Illuminator and thereby make Armenia the first Christian kingdom, Mamgon remains "the Chinese" in Xorenacʿi's account. In this narrative, the Mamikonean progenitor, and his clan by extension, are denied full integration into Armenian history and linger as problematic transplants.

[80] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:84.7-8.
[81] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84.
[82] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84; 06Khor, T. Samuelian et al, 2:84:12-14.
[83] *Moses Khorenats'i* (1978), R. W. Thomson, II.84.

Xorenacʿi was writing to exalt the Bagratuni during a time in which they were still competing with the Mamikoneans for ʻAbbasid favour. As such, he was writing for both Armenian and Baghdadi audiences. The East Syriac Christian (meaning here the Church of the East) *Jingjiao* 景教 [Luminous Teaching] community in Tang China had risen to such prominence that they were permitted to erect a monument in the capital, Chang'an 長安 (modern Xi'an, Shaanxi Province), in 781 CE—the so-called "Xi'an Stele."[84] They were also mentioned in letters by East Syriac Catholicos Timothy I in Baghdad (r. 780-823 CE).[85] Xorenacʿi may have heard something about the Syriac church of China from information emanating outward from Baghdad, or, perhaps more likely, from the eighth-century East Syriac metropolitanate in Ahlat, on the western shore of Lake Van, just south of Bagratuni territory.[86]

Utilizing East Syriac sources, Xorenacʿi may have heard information about China relevant to his own day, and was not reliant solely upon Anania Širakac'i. If this is the case, then he may have also been aware of the conflicts between the Tang and ʻAbbasid dynasties. The Tang had hosted the Sasanian dynastic family in exile and actively backed several reconquest campaigns against the Umayyads through the first half of the eighth century.[87] Immediately after the ʻAbbasid Revolution and the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750 CE, the Tang attempted a westward expansion which resulted in the 751 CE Battle of Talas, when the Tang were defeated by an ʻAbbasid-Tibetan alliance. If Xorenacʿi was aware of these conflicts, then his portrayal of Mamgon "the Chinese" as a destabilizing force may have been intended to capitalize on ʻAbbasid concerns about the war and tensions with the Tang. Such tensions are evidenced on the other side of this conflict as well, with the Xi'an Stele inscription's bilingual

[84] For an overview, see M. Nicolini-Zani, *The Luminous Way to the East: Texts and History of the First Encounter of Christianity with China*, trans. William Skudlarek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[85] Timothy I, "Letters 41 and 47," in *Invitation to Syriac Christianity: An Anthology*, eds. Michael P. Penn, Scott F. Johnson, Christine Shepardson, Charles M. Stang (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 359-360.

[86] J. M. Fiey, "Khilat," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* [Dictionary of Church History and Geography] 28 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000-2003), 1427. For more on the connections between the Church of the East and the Armenian Church during this time and Armenian awareness of the Syriac Church in China, see K. Vogelaar, "Locating The Xi'an Stele On the Four-Hundredth Anniversary of its Discovery," in *Visual Culture in Medieval Syriac Traditions*, ed. Emily R. Chesley. Sense, Matter, Medium 13 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025), 327-389.

[87] H. Takahashi, "Syriac Christianity in China," in *The Syriac World*, ed. Daniel King. The Routledge Worlds (London: Routledge, 2019), 633; H. P. Zanous and E. Sangari, "The Last Sasanians in Chinese Literary Sources: Recently Identified Statue Head of a Sasanian Prince at the Qingling Mausoleum," *Iranian Studies* 51.4 (2018): 499–515.

Syriac and Chinese colophon attempting to distance the *Jingjiao* community from their ecclesiastical subordination to the East Syriac see in Baghdad in order to avoid being associated with the Tang's new rival.[88] Xorenacʿi's positive description of China itself facilitates his narrative appeal to a domestic Armenian audience by how it selectively agrees with prior Armenian texts, while his vilification of Mamgon the Chinese transplant is aimed at a Baghdadi or 'Abbasid audience in the midst of a tumultuous relationship with the Tang.

D. Comparative Overview and Recontextualization

Xorenacʿi's version of the Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative demonstrates his intended dual Armenian and 'Abbasid audiences. The *Buzandaran* evokes the Chinese origin claim during Aršakuni challenges to Mamikonean legitimacy and hereditary authority, and is clearly meant for an Armenian audience. Likewise, the *Primary History's* pre-emption of criticism against the Chinese origin narrative also speaks to a desire to defend the Mamikonean clan's position before an Armenian audience. However, just as Xorenacʿi wrote for two audiences, one foreign and one domestic, the *Buzandaran* and *Primary History* demonstrate another possible intended audience beyond the Armenian elite–the Huns.

The Armenians were constantly interacting with migrating and post-migration steppe polities originating from northwest of China–the Alans, the Yuezhi/Kushans, and the Huns to name only those pre-sixth century CE. The Kushans form a consistent point of Armenian reference for Arsacid Balkh origins, tying the story of the Arsacids and Grigorids to the land of the Kushans/Yuezhi and creating a literary-historical context ideal for Mamikonean Chinese origin claims and memory creation. The story of Mušeł's defeat of Urhnayr in the *Buzandaran* makes numerous contextual references to Sasanian frontier conflicts with the Huns and ends with Urhnayr later aiding Mušeł. The Chinese origin narratives in the *Buzandaran* and *Primary History* place the Mamikoneans in the narrative continuity of the Arsacid emergence and anti-Sasanian endurance in the "land of the Kushans," but they do so in a way that, in a wider context, makes the Mamikonean clan into one of many roughly contemporaneous westward-migrating groups leaving the political Sinosphere for the Persian frontiers.

Though the *Buzandaran* offers only a truncated version of the Chinese origin claim compared to the *Primary History*, the clear parallels between the stories of Mamik and Konak and Manuēl and Koms speak to the *Buzandaran*'s awareness of the narrative tradition from which the *Primary History* draws. Thus, we can

[88] K. Vogelaar, "Locating the Xi'an Stele," 343-345.

discuss their commonalities which speak to an intended Hunnic audience. Both of these texts have the Mamikonean progenitors rebel against the Chinese king with whom they shared some vague relation. The ensuring rebellion results in brotherly conflict, with the *Primary History* placing blood-relations Mamik and Konak on the same side. The rebels lose their conflict, or otherwise abandon it, and flee westward to seek Arsacid refuge.

The *Buzandaran* vaguely places the Mamikonean migration during the Arsacid period, but the *Primary History* sets it specifically during the reigns of the Parthian Arsacid "Artavan" and Aršakuni "Khosrov the Great." Given that Khosrov the Great (Khosrov II), ruled after the Sasanian overthrow of the Arsacids, it is likely that the *Primary History* is conflating him with Khosrov I (r. c. 191-216 CE).[89] Khosrov I ruled Armenia contemporaneously with the last Arsacid Shah, Artaban IV (r. 213-224 CE), "Artavan,"[90] aligning with the *Primary History's* regnal citations. This places the Mamikonean progenitors' defeat and flight from China during the late second or very early third centuries: around the same time that the Yellow Turban Rebellion ended in China, sealing the fate of the Han dynasty.

The Yellow Turban Rebellion, so named for the yellow dye the rebel army applied to their clothing, lasted roughly from 184-205 CE. The rebellion was led by Zhang Jue 張角, a Han general and Daoist leader, and his brothers, Zhang Bao 張寶 and Zhang Liang 張梁. Zhang Jue claimed that the Han had lost the favour of Heaven through misrule, thereby resulting in crop failures, natural disasters, and a plague (possibly the Antonine Plague) spreading across China.[91] The Yellow Turbans thus appropriated the colour yellow as a sign of their intention to restore the legacy of the legendary Yellow Emperor and ideal imperial rule while simultaneously demonstrating their belief that the Han had failed to live up to that legacy. The rebels were supported by other Chinese nobles and a branch of the Southern Xiongnu which had split along pro- and anti-rebel lines.[92] Though the Han were victorious in the end, the dynasty never recovered and the Southern Xiongnu began their own slow disintegration. The

[89] This is a common mistake in Armenian historiography. N. Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty (A.D. 12-[180?]-428)," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, I: The Dynastic Periods From Late Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 71.

[90] Artaban IV is often misidentified as Artaban V. See N. Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 71; K. Schippmann, "Artabanus (Arsacid kings)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, II/6 (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation; Brill, 1986) 647-650, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/artabanus-parth/(accessed July 19, 2025).

[91] R. de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23-220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 514-515.

[92] S.-K.Psarras, "Han and Xiongnu II," 70-75.

Zhang brothers each led their own army, which rose up in different provinces across China, but all three brothers had been killed by 185 CE.[93]

Set against this wider backdrop, it is striking that the *Primary History's* Mamikonean origin story emphasizes the rebellion of high-ranking Chinese brothers against a king who had run afoul of their estimation set in the very time when such a rebellion was actually going on in China. That Mamik and Konak each led his own army across China seems a superfluous detail until read in relation to the Yellow Turban Rebellion, where the Zhang brothers initially led their own armies in different provinces. Likewise, the *Primary History* and the *Buzandaran* both recognize that the Mamikonean progenitors lost their rebellion or otherwise withdrew from the conflict, which seems a strange narrative choice when trying to make the Mamikoneans appear strong and valiant from their foundations. However, if the *Buzandaran's* and *Primary History's* Mamikonean progenitors are in fact patterned after the Zhang brothers or Yellow Turbans, even if only vaguely, then their defeat is a necessary plot device to ensure a reason for them to make for Balkh and the Arsacids. As with Manuēl and Koms in the *Buzandaran*, whose defeat at the hands of the Kushans makes them appear weak, but ultimately leads them back to their family's appropriate and natural place in Armenia, Mamik and Konak had to lose in China to become *sparapet* of the Aršakuni. It seems apparent that the *Primary History* is preserving a narrative tradition informed by a vague awareness of the Yellow Turban Rebellion. That the *Buzandaran* also focuses on brotherly conflict, rebellion, and defeat/withdrawal confirms that the *Primary History* is drawing upon an older narrative tradition.

Through constant interactions with Alans and Huns north of the Caucasus and Yuezhi/Kushans and Kidarites/Huna in Bactria, Tocharistan, and in the Sasanian court when the Kushano-Sasanian kingdom still existed, some general information about the rebellion which toppled the largest kingdom east of Persia likely made it to Armenian ears. This information continued to circulate in Armenian oral tradition and was appropriated by the Mamikoneans, who used it as a means of inserting their clan's history into the origins of the Arsacids and Grigorids in Balkh, where the existence of the Yuezhi and Kushan polities would have made a Chinese migration story quite plausible. The Mamikoneans, thus appropriating a history of relation to and resistance against Chinese royal power, would have been able to appeal with ancestral rhetoric to the very steppe and Central Asian polities from whom Parthians, Sasanians, and Armenians likely heard about the great rebellion in China to begin with.

[93] *Hou Hanshu* 8, 71. For an overview of the Yellow Turban Rebellion, see R. de Crespigny, *Fire Over Luoyang: A History of the Later Han 23-220 AD*. Sinica Leidensia 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 361-473.

Whether the Alans or Kushans were receptive to such appeals, or even heard them, is unknown. It is instead the Huns who loom large in late antique Armenian historiography as allies and enemies who eventually become allies against the Sasanians. The Huns, as inheritors of or claimants to the legacy of the Xiongnu, may have been particularly interested in the prospect of allying with a powerful neighbour asserting a shared history of resisting – and surviving – the same imperial enemies. Just as the Mamikoneans and Huns fought the Sasanians in the present, so too, would Mamikonean histories assert that their ancestors fought against the Chinese king in the past. This lends the Mamikoneans and Huns to being natural allies, which we see panning out several times in the *Buzandaran* and elaborated upon in Łazar Pʿarpecʿi's account of the 451 rebellion.

III. 451 CE, the Battle of Avarayr, and Vardan's Martyrdom

A. Łazar Pʿarpecʿi's Patmutʿiwn Hayotsʿ

Łazar Pʿarpecʿi's *Patmutʿiwn Hayotsʿ* [Պատմութիւն Հայոց, *History of the Armenians*] was written not long before 500 CE, though the extant text does include some later additions.[94] Pʿarpecʿi wrote at the behest of *sparapet* Vahan Mamikonean for the purpose of committing to record the deeds of spiritual and valiant men for later generations to learn from.[95] Vahan was made the *marzban* (Sasanian governor) of Armenia as a concession to end his uprising in the 480s after Shah Peroz I (r. 459-484 CE) died in battle against the Hephthalite Huns in Central Asia.[96] Pʿarpecʿi and Vahan were raised together, though Pʿarpecʿi was sent at an undetermined time for additional education and training in Greek territory. Pʿarpecʿi then joined a monastic community in Vałarshapat, though he was so unpopular that he had to flee, and Vahan had to intervene on his behalf to arrange his return.[97] Pʿarpecʿi is unreservedly pro-Mamikonean. His history of the rebellion focuses on the Mamikonean family's *bnik* [բնիկ, natural] role as political, moral, and martial leaders of Armenia.[98] Pʿarpecʿi depicts the Mamikoneans as the successors of the Aršakuni, whose later kings failed to live up to their own dynastic legacy. This sentiment is central to the Mamikonean

[94] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, 5, 12.
[95] Ibid. I:4.5.
[96] Ibid. 5-6.
[97] Ibid. 7.
[98] For more on the concept of *bnik*, see ibid. 28; 36n5.

history in the *Buzandaran*, and Pʿarpecʿi wrote his history as a continuation, and possibly correction, of that text.[99]

Pʿarpecʿi begins his narrative with the self-imposed exile of King Aršak (Aršak III, son of Pap and Zarmanduxt) following the Byzantine-Sasanian partitioning of Armenia in 387 CE. Though not the last Aršakuni king (the dynasty ended in 428 CE),[100] Pʿarpecʿi makes Aršak's exile out to be the spiritual end of the dynasty. Aršak, overburdened with the unworthiness into which his family had descended, was simply unwilling to deal with what he almost prophetically knew would come with Sasanian subjugation:

> For this reason, Aršak, king of Armenia, journeyed away from the province of Ayrarat as if to captivity. He thought it better to retire to the smaller part of divided Armenia, to a Christian country, and be subject to the Greek king, than to remain in such a charming and delightful land and see the daily outrage of the faith, the enmity towards the holy church, the insults which the ministers of God's clergy would have to endure from the impious magi,[101] the collapse of his own family and kingdom before the haughty rule of the Persian princes. He considered it preferable to spend the short and numbered span of this life in Christian fashion and in peace than to live here in false glory and despised, to be deprived of eternal life and handed over to the eternal and unquenchable flames. With all these thoughts in his mind and with remorse in his heart, distraught he left the noble inheritance of his ancestors and entered the service of the Greek king.[102]

Pʿarpecʿi's description of Aršak's retreat from responsibility and conflict will later serve as the point of comparison between the Aršakuni's spiritual and moral failure and Vardan Mamikonean's victory in martyrdom. Aršak's retreat here also demonstrates narrative themes which Xorenacʿi would later use against the Mamikoneans in his version of their Chinese origin legend. Pʿarpecʿi's Aršak and Xorenacʿi's Mamgon share this same narrative arc: one brother (Aršak; Mamgon) leaves another brother (Vałaršak; Bldokh)[103] behind in

[99] Ibid. 9-10, 28, I:3.4.

[100] N. Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 85.

[101] Meaning Zoroastrian priests.

[102] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, I:8.11-12; 05Parp, T. Samuelian et al, 2:8.2-4.

[103] After Aršak left Armenia, the Armenian nobility successfully appealed to the Persian court to replace Vałaršak (d. c. 386 CE) with Khosrov IV (r. c. 384-389/c. 414-417 CE), who also had a Persian tutor. It is not clear if Vałaršak died before or after Khosrov IV was appointed king. N. Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 92.

order to go west (to the Byzantines; to the Sasanians) as if in punishment ("with remorse in his heart;" "having come to our country against his will") so as to avoid a righteous struggle (against domestic impiety; against familial slander) and, in so doing, abandons a beautiful homeland (Armenia as "charming and delightful;" China as quoted from Širakacʿi's *Geography*). Xorenacʿi reworked the Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative preserved in the *Primary History*, but his narrative was clearly informed by Pʿarpecʿi's portrayal of Aršak's failure.

Though Armenian historiography remembers the Arsacid and the majority of Aršakuni kings as primarily Zoroastrian, their line includes Trdat III and Gregory the Illuminator, who traditionally inaugurated the Christianization of the Armenian kingdom in the early fourth century. This Christianization occurred approximately one century after the Arsacids had already been overthrown by the Sasanians and only a few decades after a brief period of Sasanian rule in Armenia (224-298 CE).[104] This resulted in a late antique literary-historiographical association between Armenian independence and the advancement and protection of the Armenian Church. Pʿarpecʿi's negative description of Aršak's retreat relies upon an existing equation between Aršakuni royal legitimacy and their protection of an independent Armenian Christianity, not necessarily with the political independence of the Armenian kingdom itself. It is not their subjugation to a new Persian imperial master which Pʿarpecʿi says heralds the extinction of the Aršakuni, but their own refusal to fill their ancestral role. The Aršakuni could have remained the legitimate kings of Armenia, despite their Sasanian subjugation, if they had continued fulfilling their divinely-appointed *bnik* purpose in the face of impending conflicts and religious impositions from Ctesiphon.

Pʿarpecʿi reiterates this point when describing the Armenian response letter to Yazkert's edict compelling Zoroastrian conversion. Pʿarpecʿi has the Armenians differentiate between their own religion and their loyalty to the Sasanians, highlighting their excellent service to the shahs while still practicing their own faith.[105] The letter goes on to say that the Armenians refuse to justify their faith out of loyalty to the Shah, since engaging in a debate over the merits of Christianity and Zoroastrianism would result in the Armenians having to discredit Yazkert's religion, giving offense to the Shah. This letter, written by a council of princes and clergy, does not offer a defence of the church, but an argument against conflating religious faith with political loyalty.

An actual defence of the Christian church is not offered until the Armenian, Georgian, and Caucasian Albanian princes respond to Yazkert's summons to court to answer for their refusal to accept conversion. The Christian princes

[104] Ibid. 71-75.

[105] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:24:45.

reaffirmed their loyalty to the Shah, but were met with an ultimatum: convert to Zoroastrianism and receive honours, or die and doom their countries to destruction.[106] Yazkert recognized the Christian princes' excellent service, but promised to disregard all of it if they persisted in refusing to convert. Pʿarpecʿi then has *sparapet* Vardan Mamikonean step forward and individually give an account of his own service to Yazkert before promising even greater service in the future. However, instead of accepting the conversion order, Vardan issues his own ultimatum to Yazkert:

> But the religion which I have learned from God and from my childhood it is impossible to abandon and exchange for fear of a man. For if I had received from a man the righteous teaching which I have confirmed in my mind, and knowing it to be true I denied it, I would consider myself pitiable. How much the more [pitiable] to exchange that religion which I have received and learned from the mouth of God for the fear of a man and for vain glory. Far be it! That is my answer, for which I prefer to die than live in apostasy without God.[107]

With no Aršakuni kings to speak, the first singular voice to oppose Yazkert's order is the *sparapet's*. Vardan's ultimatum to Yazkert is to either accept his service and benefit from it, or kill him to the Shah's own detriment, but he will not abandon his religion. Vardan, like Aršak, prefers to live a Christian life over pursuing worldly glory. Unlike Aršak, Vardan decides to stand in defence of his faith, rather than abandon Armenia to preserve his own life. Pʿarpecʿi is clearly having Vardan echo Mušeł's ultimatum to Pap in the *Buzandaran*, wherein he tells Pap to either accept his demonstrated loyal service or kill him, but that he would never harm a king. This ultimatum confirms Vardan's authority as the *sparapet* in-line with his forebears and proves that the Mamikoneans have retained their legitimacy where the Aršakuni have lost theirs.

The Christian princes ultimately chose to feign conversion in order to placate Yazkert; a plan which Vardan initially rejected. They returned to their lands with gifts and with "magi" to oversee the conversion of the populace. At this point, Vardan, overcome with guilt, gathers his household, retinue, and serfs and announces his intention to leave Armenia and seek penance, inviting those who felt similarly to come with him.[108] Here, Vardan comes to the same conclusion Aršak did, and moves to abandon his appointed role as *sparapet* while effectively

[106] Ibid. II:26.48.

[107] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:26.49; 05Parp, T. Samuelian et al, 3:26.15-17.

[108] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:30.56-57.

disbanding the Mamikonean clan and the last remaining Arsacid-era Armenian authority. The Grigorid line of hereditary *catholicoi* had come to an end with the death of Sahak I in 438 CE. Upon Sahak's death, Grigorid properties came under Mamikonean control due to the marriage between Sahak's daughter and Hamazasp Mamikonean.[109] Thus, Vardan in Pʿarpecʿi's history likely represents two-thirds of the three Armenian Arsacid-era powers recorded in the *Buzandaran*.

What calls Vardan back from his plan to leave is the emergence of the rebellion, and Armenian princes and priests, including the treacherous *marzban* Vasak Siwni, asking the *sparapet* to lead them in battle once more. Vardan agrees to lead the rebellion only when he is promised martyrdom, and the rebel nobles all commit to death in battle in penance for their outward apostasy.[110] Vardan nearly succumbs to the same failure Aršak did, but he is ultimately convinced to stay in Armenia for the exact reason Aršak fled: to face a doomed conflict over the religious independence of Armenia. Despite the rebels having lied and now committed to a rebellion, Pʿarpecʿi presents them as martyrs accepting their fates. Instead of enduring tortures as a form of spiritual combat, as is typical in late antique hagiographies and martyrologies, these rebel-martyrs would endure actual combat for spiritual purposes.

The Christian princes swear oaths of loyalty and mutual purpose several times throughout Pʿarpecʿi's narrative. The last time an oath is sworn prior to the rebellion's start is when Vardan and the rebels demand that the *marzban* Vasak Siwni, who was not-so-secretly loyal to Yazkert, reaffirm their purpose for martyrdom when he learned that the rebellion was beginning.[111] Up to this point, Vasak had been stalling the rebellion under the guise of appealing to the Byzantines for aid and suggesting that the rebels pay the Huns to get involved, despite Vasak claiming that the Huns were already sworn to him by oath since

[109] A. Terian, *Patriotism and Piety in Armenian Christianity: The Early Panegyrics on Saint Gregory*. AVANT 2 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 76; C. Toumanoff, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour le Caucase chrétien (Arménie-Géorgie-Albanie)* (Rome: Edizioni Aquila, 1976), 225.

[110] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:30.58-31.60. Vardan's desire for martyrdom in battle is reminiscent of the Roman ritual of *devotio*, in which a military commander dedicated his life to the gods with the intention of dying in battle to secure victory. However, Vardan's desire for martyrdom was shared by all the rebelling princes and their purpose was penance, not victory in a military sense. Yazkert's policy of forced Zoroastrian observance was rescinded after the Battle of Avarayr, but that was not the objective of the rebellion as presented by Pʿarpecʿi and Ełišē. For an example of *devotio*, see Livy, *History of Rome*, 8.9; *Livy. History of Rome*, trans. Canon Roberts (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1912), http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts :latinLit:phi0914.phi0018.perseus-eng3:9 (accessed July 16, 2025).

[111] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:32:61-62.

he became the *marzban*, the seat of which was Darband.[112] Vasak later breaks the rebels' oath when he betrays them, informing on them to Yazkert's general and abandoning them before the Battle of Avarayr. The swearing of such oaths is an Armenian literary *topos*. However, the association between this particular oath-swearing and the rebellion stands out for how closely it parallels the oath sworn by the rebel princes who joined Mamik and Konak before beginning their uprising against Chenbakur in the *Primary History*.

The way Pʿarpecʿi has Vardan effectively succeeding the failed Aršakuni evokes Manuēl's rebellion against Varazdat in the *Buzandaran*. Both Manuēl and Vardan initiate rebellions due to their kings' failures to live up to the legacies and expectations of their dynasties: Varazdat and Aršak both betrayed their Arsacid/Aršakuni lineage, and Yazkert is responsible for devaluing the service the Christians of his empire gave to him and to his predecessors. This paints Vardan as a new Mušeł and Manuēl, with these *sparapets* first attempting to prevent a renegade king from failing the legacy of his forebears and then rebelling when the king refuses to be swayed. Vardan's ultimatum to Yazkert clearly evokes Mušeł's defence before Pap, but his actual rebellion follows the example of Manuēl. We can see how Pʿarpecʿi is both making Vardan stand out from his forebears by his emphasis on martyrdom, while still placing his actions in continuity with the past *sparapets*. Though Pʿarpecʿi is recording the 451 rebellion, he is also continuing the *Buzandaran* and its Mamikonean narrative.

However, though the rebels intended to die as martyrs, they also bore the responsibility to defend their home countries, and they sold their lives as dearly as possible. Pʿarpecʿi describes the first engagements of the rebellion as sweeping victories for the rebels, and Sasanian and apostate soldiers died in droves. As a larger Sasanian army approached, Vardan moved his force north to make contact with the Huns. The rebels moved into Ałuankʿ and took Darband by force. Vardan placed a Caucasian Albanian prince of the royal line in charge of the fortress and made him his ambassador to the Huns and other garrisons in the region. Once contacted, the Huns eagerly accepted the offer of alliance, with no mention of payment: "Willingly and readily they agreed to help, and confirmed it with an oath."[113] Vardan and his Caucasian Albanian royal emissary clearly had a better relationship with the Huns than Vasak claimed to have. By this time, the Huns were unified under Attila's rule, so if any alliance of military and political significance was offered, he or someone representing him would have to have approved it. The Huns never made it south in time to aid the rebels, likely due to their campaigns in Gaul. The Battle of Avarayr would come too soon for the alliance to bear any fruit, though the

[112] Ibid. II:33.63, 45.83.

[113] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:35.66; 05Parp, T. Samuelian et al, 3:35.17.

Huns moved into the Southern Caucasus and took control of the Sasanian fortifications at Darial, the "Gate of the Alans," by circa 466 CE.[114] However, Pʿarpecʿi does not condemn the Huns for their failure to arrive in time to aid the rebels, so this alliance seems at first to be an almost superfluous narrative detail in his text.

Ełišē also discusses the rebel-Hun alliance, though his narrative presents the Sasanians as a mutual threat to both, thereby giving the Huns more of a practical reason to get involved. More is said on this below. Pʿarpecʿi's note about the Huns seems to function only as a transition to the events leading to Avarayr. However, Pʿarpecʿi's constant reiteration of themes and narrative points from the *Buzandaran* requires us to read his reference to the Huns here in a broader narrative-historical frame. As noted already, Vardan lives up to his clan's legacy where Aršak failed to live up to his own. But the means by which Pʿarpecʿi demonstrates this are highly referential of Mušeł's and Manuēl's struggles with recalcitrant Aršakuni. Both of these references are also to the same episodes in the *Buzandaran* which make the Mamikonean claim of Chinese origin. Even Pʿarpecʿi's emphasis on the rebels swearing oaths of unity, admittedly a *topos*, seems nonetheless in this case to parallel the *Primary History's* curious note about Mamik and Konak swearing oaths with their rebel allies against Chenbakur. The Huns, connected as they were in fact or legend to the Xiongnu, eagerly accepting Vardan's offer of alliance against the Sasanians seems to bring the Mamikonean Chinese origin story full-circle. Pʿarpecʿi, as per his continuation of the *Buzandaran*, is integrating the themes of the Chinese origin narrative into his account of Vardan's martyrdom.

The Mamikonean Chinese origin claim drawing upon vague accounts of the Yellow Turban Rebellion allows us to contextualize Vardan's alliance with the Huns. The Xiongnu, a constant threat to the Han against whom the Han expanded and built early versions of the Great Wall network, allied (partially) with the Yellow Turbans against the Han. The Huns, a constant threat to the Sasanians against whom the Sasanians built networked fortifications and eventually a wall from the Caspian coast through the Caucasus range, allied against the Sasanians with Christian rebels claiming descent from rebels against the Han. In both cases, the rebels claimed that their ruler had failed the legacy of his forebears. From the Hunnic side, the overlaps in historical narratives may have been quite clear. Ełišē, who does not make references to the Chinese origin claims at all, confirms that the Huns did indeed ally with the Christian rebels. Thus, historically, we may see the actual formation of an Armenian-Hunnic

[114] J. Banaji, "On the Identity of Shahrālānyōzān in the Greek and Middle Persian Papyri from Egypt," in *Documents and the Early Islamic World,* eds. Alexander T. Schubert and Petra M. Sijpesteijn. Islamic History and Civilization III (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 34-35.

alliance as a product of the successful application of Mamikonean Chinese origin narratives in creating a rhetorical foundation for assertions of ancestral mutuality and common cause. The main point of difference is that the Mamikoneans of 451 CE did not run from defeat as their claimed non-Christian Chinese progenitors did, but embraced it as martyrdom.

Focusing on that one point of difference, Pʿarpecʿi thus presents Vardan's martyrdom and the 451 rebellion as a total renewal of Armenia.[115] The Mamikonean origin narrative is effectively reenacted, culminating in the Battle of Avarayr rather than a withdrawal to refuge in a neighbouring western empire, as the Mamikonean progenitors did in the *Buzandaran* and *Primary History* and as Pʿarpecʿi says Vardan was tempted to do. As a result, Pʿarpecʿi spiritually "naturalizes" the Mamikoneans, with Vardan ultimately answering Varazdat's challenge to Manuēl by "returning" to his country in rebellion and seeing it through to the end. After 451 CE, the Mamikonean clan retained the *sparapet* title, and Vahan Mamikonean, later appointed *marzban*, filled the gap left by the Aršakuni, making the Mamikoneans the only remaining Arsacid-era authority from the *Buzandaran* remaining in power in Armenia. Just as the 451 rebellion is anachronistically foreshadowed in the *Buzandaran*, Pʿarpecʿi describes the rebellion and its aftermath with reference to the *Buzandaran*'s Chinese origin claims.

Further support for this last point comes from the Huns themselves. By the time of Attila's rule, their nomadic polity was in the process of sedentarization. Priskos's account of the 449 CE Roman mission to Attila has the Hun chief ruling from a town made up of wooden buildings with a Roman-style bath. Likewise, the details of the battles fought during Attila's campaigns in Gaul and Italy demonstrate that he relied much more heavily on infantry than he did on cavalry.[116]

That the Huns under Attila had adopted some elements of Roman culture is clear. Among these adoptions is the infamous legend of Attila discovering the "Sword of Mars." Cameron Barnes has convincingly argued that the story, recorded in Priskos and repeated in Jordanes's sixth-century CE *Getica*, was invented by a Roman in Attila's court to place Attila's rule in-line with the

[115] We must remember here that Vardan was asked to lead the rebellion as a whole, including the rebelling princes of Georgia and Caucasian Albania, as a unified front. However, Pʿarpecʿi and Ełišē are naturally most interested in the rebellion's history and ramifications for their own country.

[116] R. P. Lindner, "Nomadism, Horses, and Huns," *Past & Present* 92/1 (1981): 3-19; A. Khazanov, "The Eurasian Steppe Nomads in World Military History," in *Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires*, ed. Jürgen Paul (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2013), 195. For a critical response, see C. Barnes, "Rehorsing the Huns," *War & Society* 34/1 (2015): 1-22.

established Classical representation of the Scythians, who supposedly worshipped a war god in the form of a sword.[117]

We can observe a surprising contemporaneous rhetorical and propagandistic parallelism between the Huns and Mamikoneans. Prior to the time of Attila and Vardan, both groups claimed or expressed a connection to an East Asian imperial polity via ancestors who had migrated westward once they were defeated by the Chinese king. During and after Attila's and Vardan's time, this rhetorical line changed toward "naturalization" in their respective territories through divine recognition in warfare against imperial foes. For Attila, this divine naturalization comes from the blessing of God/Mars in the form of the legendary sword, which marks Attila as the inheritor of the Scythians. In the case of Vardan, his and his army's martyrdom at Avarayr constitutes a divine blessing leading to beatification and makes the Mamikoneans the full inheritors and successors of the Aršakuni branch of the Arsacid Parthians. The first Christian to find martyrdom in battle and the Scourge of God emerge as two sides of the same alliance.

The Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative linked them to the Arsacid and Grigorid origins in Balkh, thereby providing a reason for them to retain the authority of the *sparapet*. However, their reason for focusing on a specifically Chinese origin was likely meant to appeal to the Huns and/or other steppe peoples, who had a historical and cultural frame of reference for it. The success of their communication can be seen in how Vardan's and Attila's panegyrists shifted their rhetorical bases of authority in similar ways at the same time during and after their attempt at an alliance.

The Mamikoneans appealed to the Huns with a Chinese origin narrative that the Huns, evidently, were amenable to. That the Huns threatened Byzantium was not a significant issue for Pʿarpecʿi, despite his Hellenophilia. He makes Aršak's retreat to Byzantine territory a sign of the Aršakuni's total failure and blames Emperor Marcian (r. 450-457 CE) for listening to poor counsel and not following through on Theodosius II's (r. 402-450 CE) prior promise to Hmayeak Mamikonean, Vardan's brother, to aid the rebels.[118]

Pʿarpecʿi devotes very little to the actual Battle of Avarayr. He spends only two short chapters on the rebels' commitment to martyrdom and the actual battle itself.[119] Pʿarpecʿi's emphasis is on the Mamikonean fulfilment of their natural *bnik* role in progressing toward Avarayr. In effect, Pʿarpecʿi makes Vardan's martyrdom contingent upon his role as the *sparapet* and, in turn, reliant

[117] C. Barnes, "Attila and the Sword of Ares," *Journal of Late Antique, Islamic and Byzantine Studies* 2/1-2 (2023): 1-11.

[118] *Łazar Pʿarpecʿi*, R. W. Thomson, II:41.73-74.

[119] Ibid. II:38-39.

upon his supposed Chinese ancestry. Ełišē, however, completely disentangles the martyrdom at Avarayr from any connections to Mamikonean Chinese origin traditions, and refocuses the 451 rebellion on the Armenian Church itself.

B. Ełišē, Vasn Vardanay ew Hayots' Paterazmin

Ełišē wrote his *Vasn Vardanay ew Hayots' Paterazmin* [Վասն Վարդանայ եւ Հայոց Պատերազմին, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*] at the behest of the otherwise unknown David Mamikonean sometime in the sixth century.[120] He claims to be an eye-witness to the events of the war, but he appears to borrow heavily from Pʿarpecʿi and shares many of the same sources.[121] Ełišē's focus is less on Vardan than on the theme of upholding the *ukht* [ուխտ, covenant] of the Armenian Church, defined as the *awrinawkʿ* [աւրինաւք, tradition and customary law] all Armenians are born into.[122] To this end, Ełišē borrows heavily from the Armenian version of Maccabees in his depiction of the rebels, and has the rebels martyred not for God's sake, but for the sake of the Armenian covenant with God, placing the clergy at the head of the rebel movement. Ełišē makes no reference to Mamikonean Chinese origin claims, entirely replacing the older sign of Mamikonean hereditary authority with a more general Armenian inheritance of the Maccabean legacy. Though Ełišē actually includes more references to the Huns than Pʿarpecʿi does, he does so in a way that highlights their struggle with the Sasanians in the present, thereby making them strategic allies in the context of the immediate war, rather than natural or ancestral allies of the *sparapets*.

This shift in priorities is evidenced from the beginning of the text. Ełišē makes no mention of Aršak's exile, but alludes to prior conflicts with the Sasanians along with a brief mention of Sasanian religious tolerance until Yazkert's reign.[123] Ełišē actually spends more time describing how Emperor Theodosius appeased Yazkert in order to avoid war after the Persian sack of Nisibis, including sending many gifts and even Persian Christian refugees back to Yazkert to face persecution.[124] It seems Ełišē's Yazkert is a conflation of Yazdegerd I (r. 399-420 CE) and II (r. 438-457 CE). Yazdegerd II was in power during the 451 rebellion, but it was Yazdegerd I who oversaw the official establishment of the Church of the East at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 CE. Theodosius is here Theodosius II, who oversaw the exile of Nestorius of

[120] Ibid. 12.

[121] Ibid. 12-14. For reasons of length and to facilitate a closer comparison with Pʿarpecʿi, this chapter does not cover Ełišē's narrative past the Battle of Avarayr.

[122] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, 10-11, 13.

[123] Ibid. I:6.

[124] Ibid. I:7.

Constantinople and his followers after their anathematization at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, with many fleeing to Persian territory for refuge. This is also the same Theodosius who Pʿarpecʿi said promised aid to the rebels of 451 CE, which never materialized. Ełišē thus misattributes the flight of anti-Ephesian Christians from Byzantium as a surrender of refugee Persian Christians back to Ctesiphon. Likewise, there was no Persian sack of Nisibis during the time of Theodosius II; the city had been under Sasanian rule since 363 CE, when the Romans ceded it in a treaty after Julian's (r. 355-363 CE) disastrous invasion of Persia.

It is during this early contextualization that Ełišē reveals Yazkert's desire to forcibly convert the Christian population of his empire to curtail their growth.[125] Yazkert's council of "magi" offered a plan to forcibly convert the Christian population under the guise of a new war against the Huns:

> Valiant king, the gods have given you your empire and success. They have no need of human honour; but if you convert to one religion all the nations and races in your empire, then the land of the Greeks will also obediently submit to your rule. But do you, king, immediately fulfil one counsel of ours. Raise an army and gather a force; march to the land of the Kushans; assemble all nations and bring them through the Pass, and there make your dwelling. When you detain and enclose them all in a distant foreign land the plans of your desire will be fulfilled; and as it seems to us in our religion, you will rule over the land of the Kushans, and the Greeks will not venture forth against your power- on condition you exterminate the sect of the Christians.[126]

The "Kushans" here are the northern Huns, demonstrated by the mention of the "Pass," which must be the Darband Pass (Chor Pass) because there is no such pass mentioned in other texts as a gateway to the Kushans in the east. Likewise, as noted in Pʿarpecʿi, Darband served as the seat of the region's *marzban*, making it a more appropriate place for the Sasanian Shah to establish himself for an extended period of time.[127]

Just as he excludes the Mamikonean Chinese origin claims, Ełišē also shows no interest in the origins of the Arsacids. This is likely because both extend to non-Christian peoples in non-Armenian lands, reaching beyond the *ukht* and *awrinawkʿ* of the Armenian Church. This opening scheme hatched by the

[125] Ibid. I:8.

[126] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, I:9; 04Yegh, T. Samuelian et al, 1:1.21-24.

[127] See also *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, 63n6.

Sasanians shows how even Darband is considered beyond the Armenian Church's *ukht* in Ełišē's estimation, despite its proximity to Armenia in allied Caucasian Albania. Being on the frontier with the "Kushans," Darband is far enough from the Armenian Church's *ukht* that the gathered Christian princes would be vulnerable to Yazkert's pressures to convert. This shows how much weight Ełišē places upon the Armenian clergy as the spiritual protectors and guides of the princes.

Yazkert follows through on this scheme, and assembles the Christian princes in Darband to make war on the "Kushans."[128] After years of war, Yazkert began to push the Kushans, and he took the opportunity to build and expand his new residence on the frontier, presumably Darband.[129] Yazkert accomplished little by way of conversions amongst the Armenian princes, despite his overwhelming generosity and gift-giving. This is likely because, as Ełišē records, the princes had brought priests, deacons, and sacred texts to live with them in the war camp.[130] Though beyond the bounds of the Armenian *ukht*, and therefore vulnerable, the presence of the clergy reinforced the continued practice of *awrinawkʿ*.

Yazkert declared himself victorious when he saw that the Byzantines were keeping to their prior non-aggression pact and that the Huns were no longer crossing the Pass of Chor (Pass of Darband) and that their king was ruined. Among his celebratory commands was an edict to seize the properties of all Christians in the empire.[131] The actual edict of forced conversion came when the king of the "Kushans" finally retreated into "the impregnable desert," giving the Sasanians free reign to take many cities, captives, and plunder.[132] This reference to the desert suggests Ełišē means the Kushans of Central Asia or even the Hephthalites, though the war up to this point was focused on the northern frontier. However, Yazkert, at the suggestion of the magi, moved to convert the Christian princes by force by ordering them back to Darband and subjecting them to torture and humiliation until they relented. Some of those who did not convert were sent back to war in "the desert" and died.[133] At the same time, heavy taxes were levied upon the Christian princes' countries meant to lessen the church and convince the people to abandon their religion.[134] It is when these

[128] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, I:10.
[129] Ibid. I:11-12.
[130] Ibid. I:10-11.
[131] Ibid. I:12.
[132] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, II:17-18; 04Yegh, T. Samuelian et al, 2:2.31-38.
[133] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, II:19-21; 04Yegh, T. Samuelian et al, 2:2.41-50, 3.51-55.
[134] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, II: 22-23.

efforts bore no fruit that Ełišē tells us Yazkert issued the edict of forced conversion.

After the Armenian refusal and response letter, here with a much longer theological and polemical repudiation of Zoroastrianism than in Pʿarpecʿi, the princes were summoned to Yazkert's court from Darband and from Armenia proper.[135] This is the first time Ełišē actually names Vardan Mamikonean, though he continues to not actually demonstrate much of a presence in the narrative. This part matches much of what Pʿarpecʿi describes, and the Christian princes defend themselves by separating their religion from their political loyalties. However, they also argue to Yazkert that the Christian God gave him his rule over the Christian princes, and so he should not be concerned about heterodoxy in his empire.[136] Vardan is given no individual speech, but sentiments attributed to him by Pʿarpecʿi are expressed by the princes collectively before Yazkert. Yazkert then decides to send the princes to Sagastan to die in the heat or be left in prison while his armies would ravage their home countries, annihilate their churches, and deport their families.[137] This is similar to Yazkert's ultimatum in Pʿarpecʿi's history, but Ełišē actually has Yazkert decide upon this course of action in direct response to the Christian arguments against conversion. Ełišē elaborates upon the situation by having a secret Christian in Yazkert's court help the princes stall the Shah's order, but it is ultimately an attack by the king of the "Kushans" that inadvertently saves the princes. Yazkert was forced to send the Christian princes as cavalry against the invaders.[138] During this war, the Christian princes decided to form a covenant to uphold their faith and sent an ambassador back to Yazkert announcing their false conversion. Yazkert eagerly accepted this turn, and sent the Armenian princes with magi back to Armenia to convert the people by the time he had defeated the Kushans.[139]

Here, the Kushans, conflated with the Huns, are the main reason why the Armenian princes were able to escape Yazkert's decision to eliminate them all outright. Though the Armenians and Kushans are fighting against each other, they are nonetheless both portrayed as victims of Yazkert's schemes. The war against the Kushans only started as a cover for Yazkert's plan to eliminate Christianity from his empire. This gives a reason why the Huns would ally with Vardan without any prior claims of ancestral connection. Ełišē offers a twisting narrative bordering on a romance and in the process confuses numerous time

[135] Ibid. II:42.
[136] Ibid. II:45-48.
[137] Ibid. II:47-48.
[138] Ibid. II:49.
[139] Ibid. II:49-51.

frames, events, and polities in order to write a rebellion narrative entirely about the defence of the Armenian Church's *ukht* and its self-contained *awrinawkʿ*.

From here, Ełišē's narrative continues mostly as in Pʿarpecʿi's history, though with increasing references to the Maccabees. The Zoroastrian conversion of Armenia progresses, though the clergy lead a scattered popular resistance against the magi and socially anathematize the Armenian princes for their apparent apostasy. Far more time is spent on describing the treacherous schemes of Vasak Siwni than anything having to do with Vardan Mamikonean. It is only when the clergy remove themselves from Vasak, who had begun to openly demonstrate his true apostasy, that they went to Vardan, who, unlike in Pʿarpecʿi, was not contemplating self-exile. The clergy questioned Vardan and found that he did not truly abandon his religion, whereupon they absolved him and accepted him as the head of the resistance, thereby drawing out many more Armenian princes who kept their religion.[140] It was likewise the bishops who ultimately demanded Vardan begin an open rebellion, and they blessed the oaths the rebels swore on a Gospel the clergy brought with them for that purpose.[141] Unlike in Pʿarpecʿi, Ełišē has the rebels giving up all their properties and titles before slaughtering Persian magi and apostates and razing Armenian towns and fortresses so as to deny them to the Sasanians. Somewhat bafflingly, this destruction came to the benefit of the church, which received furniture and vast quantities of loot the rebels took from across Armenia and from Persian soldiers. The rebels, including clergy, even founded new churches and installed new deacons with the funding.[142]

As in Pʿarpecʿi's text, the rebels ask Theodosius for aid, but he dies before deciding. Marcian follows poor advice and maintains the non-aggression pact.[143] Vardan moves his army into Ałuankʿ, as he does in Pʿarpecʿi, and takes Darband by force before sending a Caucasian Albanian ambassador:

> to the land of the Huns and to many other barbarian nations who were allied with the Huns in order to come to an understanding with them and make a pact that the alliance would be kept indissoluble. When these [nations] heard all that had occurred, they immediately rushed to the spot and saw with their own eyes the victory that had been won. They did not hesitate to enter into a pact

[140] Ibid. III:64.
[141] Ibid. III:65-66.
[142] Ibid. III:66-69.
[143] Ibid. III:72-73.

> with an oath in accordance with the ritual of their own religion; they also took a Christian oath to keep a firm alliance with them.[144]

Unlike in Pʿarpecʿi, the Huns here confirm the rebels' victories against the Sasanians before agreeing to an alliance. This may have been to confirm both the rebellion, as the princes were only recently warring against the "Kushans," and also to confirm their competence against the Sasanians. Ełišē's depiction of the Huns makes them more cautious than Pʿarpecʿi's does, and there is some degree of negotiation before the Huns and their own allies join the Christian rebels. Ełišē's Huns are a neighbouring but still foreign people, and there are no implied ancestral links between them and anyone in Armenia, let alone the *sparapet*. That the Huns swear oaths both according to their own religion and that of the Christians further cements their "otherness" apart from the Armenians and Caucasian Albanians.

Also unlike in Pʿarpecʿi, Ełišē has the alliance with the Huns actually bear some fruit, albeit because of Ełišē's total confusion of them with the Kushans. After the rebels allied with the Huns, Yazkert had to withdraw to Persia, having been defeated by the Kushans.[145] Just as the Kushan invasion unknowingly saved the Armenians from Yazkert, Ełišē has the Armenian absence from the Kushan front result in the Kushan's victory. However, once the Battle of Avarayr comes, the Huns are again nowhere to be found, and Ełišē, like Pʿarpecʿi, does not condemn them for their tardiness.

Where Vardan's death in Pʿarpecʿi's history is depicted as a fulfilment of the Mamikonean family legacy and a renewal of Armenia, Ełišē likens them to the Maccabees. Ełišē even has Vardan reading passages from Maccabees to his soldiers to strengthen their resolve before the Battle of Avarayr and to convince them to abandon the world for spiritual glory in death.[146] Ełišē wrote a narrative which focused on the Armenian Church and its inheritance of the Maccabean legacy which, as part of Jewish and Christian scripture and sacred history, would not have been considered foreign to the Armenian *ukht*. However, by referring to scripture, and specifically Maccabees, as his main source for precedent, Ełišē simultaneously offers an example of how any war between Christian and non-Christian polities could be deemed holy. At the same time, Ełišē's text would still have been thematically compatible with some prior Armenian narratives, such as the death of Vačʿē Mamikonean in the *Buzandaran* retroactively described as a martyrdom in Maccabean terms.

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[144] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, III:78; 04Yegh, T. Samuelian et al, 3:8.198-200 (04Yegh 3 is incorrectly listed in the online text as 04Yegh 4).

[145] *Eḷishē*, R. W. Thomson, III:83.

[146] Ibid. V:152-157.

IV. Conclusion

Late antique and early medieval Armenian history writers were keenly aware of how important and novel Vardan Mamikonean's martyrdom in battle was in the emerging traditions of Christian hagiography. As the first such Christian battle-martyr, Vardan's legacy was met with a complicated reception by his own historians and hagiographers. Pʿarpecʿi clearly sought to root the legitimacy of Vardan's martyrdom in his role as the *sparapet*, which, in itself, was contingent upon his clan's claimed Chinese princely ancestry as recorded in the *Buzandaran* and *Primary History*. The Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative was likely used to appeal to the Huns in a prolonged diplomatic effort that facilitated their alliance during the 451 rebellion and possibly at other times prior. This would certainly have confirmed the importance of Vardan's legendary ancestry to his early hagiography. Pʿarpecʿi thus seems to have been unsure about how to frame Vardan's martyrdom in battle, and sought to root it in the heroic legacy of the Mamikonean *sparapets* while still emphasizing how Vardan's actions stand out from those of his forebears. The novelty of Vardan's battle-martyrdom was not lost on Pʿarpecʿi, but it was somewhat counterbalanced by Pʿarpecʿi's emphasis on the continuity between Vardan's actions and those of Vačʿē, Mušeł, and Manuēl. That the *Buzandaran* and Pʿarpecʿi's history make numerous cross-references between the 451 rebellion and Mamikonean Chinese origin claims but never explicitly reference both in the same text, demonstrates that Pʿarpecʿi was not alone in his uncertainty about how to address the novelty of Vardan's martyrdom.

Ełišē, contrarily, emphasized the role of the Armenian Church in the 451 rebellion. In so doing, Vardan's martyrdom is entirely disentangled from his lineage, and his role as the *sparapet* is valued for his capacity to defend and serve the church. Paradoxically, Ełišē making the 451 rebellion entirely focused on the Armenian Church also resulted in a more generic narrative foundation, where the role of the Christian protagonists was defined by their spiritual continuity with the Maccabean Revolt; a continuity which any armed Christian group opposing a non-Christian group could claim.[147] Ełišē's disentanglement of Vardan's martyrdom from his clan's legendary origins in China is reflected in

[147] For more on this, see Elizabeth Lapina, "Maccabees and the Battle of Antioch," in *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old-Testament Faith-Warriors (Maccabees 1 and 2) in Historical Perspective*, ed. Gabriela Signori. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 206 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147-159. This is opposed to the Syriac Christian hagiographic example, where the evocation of Maccabean precedent focuses on the unarmed resistance to Antiochus. Y. Nu'emah-Kremer, *(Ha)Šmuni(t): The Antiochian Legacy of the Syriac Cult of the Maccabean Mother and its Jewish Beginnings* (Master's dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2022).

Xorenacʿi's later history. Xorenacʿi similarly separated Vardan from the Mamikonean Chinese origin narrative, but he does so by simply ending his history a few years before the events leading to the 451 rebellion occur. By excluding Vardan from his narrative, Xorenacʿi gave himself the ability to rewrite the *Primary History*'s Chinese origin narrative so as to paint the Mamikoneans as problematic and overly ambitious transplants without running the risk of actually insulting the beatified Vardan.

We thus see two narrative trends emerge from Vardan's early hagiography: one which carefully places Vardan in-line with his heroic lineage legendarily going back to princes of China, and one which separates Vardan's beatification from his clan's claimed origins while engaging both topics separately. These conflicting narrative trends may be partially responsible both for Vardan's incredible popularity throughout Armenian history, and the ambiguity with which his cult is practiced. There are no pilgrim shrines dedicated to St. Vardan, nor are there any relics supposedly associated with him, though he was the subject of a romantic monumental statue in Yerevan raised in 1985, and the first Armenian Apostolic cathedral in the United States was dedicated to him in 1968 in New York. The Battle of Avarayr is a common decorative motif in Armenian hymnals and liturgical texts, but only from the fifteenth century on.[148] This ambiguity invites further analysis and consideration from scholars interested both in the development of Christian concepts of holy war, and in lines of Eurasian cultural contact: two fields of study which, according to our current disciplinary divides, many would assume have as little to do with each other as a clan's claims of Chinese origins and the hagiography of the first Christian battle-martyr would.

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[148] E. Piñon, "Revival of Early Narratives in Manuscripts," in *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 208-210.

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JIHĀD AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE ALMOHAD CALIPH YA'QŪB AL-MANṢŪR*

Javier Albarrán**

I. *Jihād* – a Salvific and Sanctifying War – and Its Connection with Power

Violence and war, as a phenomenon and institution, have constituted a fundamental feature of medieval societies. In order to justify them, different traditions raised a variety of discourses that were adapted to collective ideals and received significant social recognition. Among them, religious discourse played a leading role from an early stage.[1] The strong symbolic value it carried turned sacralised violence into one of the most powerful discursive and legitimizing tools, and Islam was no exception.[2] From very early on, a series of religious and salvific merits were associated with *jihād*, shaping it as one of the most important means of sanctification.

In this regard, Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1176) included in his treaty of forty hadiths about *jihād* a tradition of the Prophet in which he was asked which aspect of religion was the most important. He answered that it was belief in Allāh. He was

* This chapter is an update, revision, and translation of J. Albarrán, "De ángeles, tumbas, ŷinns y talismanes: el yihad y el proceso de santificación del califa almohade Ya'qub al-Manṣur," in *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y Guerra Santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, ed. Carlos de Ayala and Santiago Palacios (Madrid: Sílex, 2018), 261-295.

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[1] See recent works such as Th. Sizgorich, *Violence and belief in late antiquity. Militant devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[2] See works such as R. Bonney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); P. Heck, "Jihad revisited," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32/1 (2004): 95-128; D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2005); M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History. Doctrines and Practices* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); A. García Sanjuán, *Yihad. La regulación de la guerra en el islam clásico* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2020).

then asked which was the next most important aspect, and replied without hesitation that it was *jihād* in the way of God. Likewise, the Damascene traditionist transmitted a hadith according to which God has prepared the worst of tortures for those who do not support *jihād*. Concerning the rewards for those who wage war, he included several hadiths, such as one informing that the merits of the *mujāhid* do not remain immutable, but accumulate and multiply, something that will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment.[3] Likewise, in his *Kitāb al-jihād*, written immediately after the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem, al-Sulamī (d. 1106) quotes the following definition from al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820): "the *jihād* is a kind of campaign that is conducted to exalt the word of God, to demonstrate His religion, to suppress His enemies, the polytheists, and to attain the reward that God and His prophet have promised to those who perform it."[4]

Moreover, Muslims who died fighting for Islam became martyrs and secured their entrance to Paradise.[5] Not surprisingly, examples of salvific warfare multiply in the frontier territory of al-Andalus and the Islamic West. For instance, according to Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 1075), in the expedition launched by the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (d. 961) against the Castilians in the summer of 917, the *qāʿid* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad found martyrdom after desperately seeking it.[6] In this regard, it is interesting to see how Ibn Simāk, the author of *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, explains, through the speech of King Alfonso VI (d. 1109) of Castile and Leon, the doctrine of Islamic salvific warfare: in a letter supposedly written before the battle of Zallaca (1086) in which the Christian king challenged the Almoravid emir Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (d. 1106), he informs the Muslim ruler that he knows the Islamic belief according to which Muslims who die in battle fighting the infidels will go to Paradise.[7]

Leading *jihād* was also one of the duties of the ruler. In this sense, a conception of *jihād* was developed that imposed the burden of war and the obligation to intervene on the frontier onto the ruler, a notion which was complemented by the literary image of the "*ghāzī*-caliph" embodied most

[3] J. E. Lindsay and S. A. Mourad, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period: Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (1105-1176), and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn Asākir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihad* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 134, 155, 159, 169 and 171.

[4] Al-Sulamī, *The Book of the Jihād of ʿAlī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 1106): Text, Translation and Commentary*, ed. Niall Christie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), 208.

[5] D. Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[6] Ibn Ḥayyān, *Crónica del califa ʿAbdarraḥmān III An-Nāṣir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V)*, trans. María Jesús Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1981), 110-111.

[7] Ibn Simāk, *Al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1952), 57.

famously in the figure of the Abbasid Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809).[8] The caliph, successor of the Prophet, appeared as the only person suitable to call others to *jihād* in the way of God. Averroes (d. 1198) explains this clearly in the chapter on *jihād* within his legal manual *al-Bidāya*: the caliph was supposed to call to *jihād* once a year and to lead the troops to the most exposed side of the Islamic territories.[9]

Therefore, due to the religious merits of *jihād* and the duty of its leadership by Islamic rulers, it is not surprising that the sources provide us with numerous examples of rulers who attained salvation through its performance. In this regard, it is interesting to recall a passage narrated by Ibn al-Athīr: a pious man saw Zenkī (d. 1146) – the Turkish leader who confronted the Crusaders in the second quarter of the twelfth century – in a dream and asked him what God had decided about him. Zenkī replied that He had spared him exclusively because of the conquest of Edessa. That is, the fight and victory against the Crusaders was a meritorious struggle which helped Zenkī to reach Paradise by erasing all the impious acts that he had committed.[10]

II. Performing *Jihād* in the Time of the Almohad Caliph al-Manṣūr

At the beginning of the twelfth century, in the Maghrebi Atlas, a revolutionary movement arose changing the entire political, social and religious landscape of the Islamic West.[11] Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart (d. 1130), founder of this new trend, together with the Maṣmūda Berber tribes that supported him, gradually preached and imposed his doctrine against the Almoravids, lords of the Maghreb and al-Andalus at that time. The new and puritan doctrine of the *mahdī*, as Ibn Tūmart was thus proclaimed,[12] consisted of a syncretic religious phenomenon of enormous complexity, which proclaimed the radical divine

[8] M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 99 ff. On the figure of the "warrior-caliph" in al-Andalus see J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos. Yihad y memoria en al-Andalus (siglos X-XIII),* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2020).

[9] R. Peters, *La yihad en el islam medieval y moderno* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998), 19-21.

[10] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Ta'rīkh al-al-bāhir fī al-Dawla al-Atābakīya*, ed. Tulaymāt (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Kathīra, 1963), 70. See J. Albarrán, *El Sueño de al-Quds: los musulmanes ante la conquista cruzada de Jerusalén* (Madrid, La Ergástula, 2017), 85-86.

[11] On the Almohad movement see A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del Imperio almohade* (Tetuán: Instituto General Franco,1957); A. J. Fromherz, *The Almohads. The rise of an Islamic Empire* (New York: Tauris, 2010); M. Fierro, *The Almohad Revolution: Politics and Religion in the Islamic West during the Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2012); A. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

[12] On Ibn Tūmart see, for example, M. Fierro, "El *Mahdī* Ibn Tūmart: más allá de la biografía oficial," in *Política, sociedad e identidades en el Occidente islámico (siglos XI-XIV)*, eds. Miguel Ángel Manzano and Rachid El Hour (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2016), 73-97.

unicity, or *tawḥīd*, above all creation. Accordingly, his followers were known as *al-muwaḥḥidūn*, Almohads, that is, the supporters of the unicity.[13]

The appeal to *jihād* was pivotal for the Almohads: it was to be conducted against all those who did not accept their vision of Islam, the only true one.[14] After the flight to Tinmal, a renewed Hijra, they considered themselves as the new *muhājirūn*, emigrants, who had come out of the corrupt society and who would now end it through a *jihād* conducted from Tinmal, the new Medina.[15] In this sense, the Hijra represented the entry into a state of war and the necessity of performing *jihād*. This *hijra-jihād* equivalence was common in the early days of Islam, a time that the Almohads wanted to emulate. Thus, some Qur'anic verses link performing *hijra* with the duty to fight, *qitāl*, alongside the believers.[16] Likewise, the garrison-cities built by the Muslim conquerors and used to control the territory and continue launching campaigns of conquest were called *dār al-hijra* and their inhabitants *muhājirūn*,[17] terms also used by the Almohads.

Jihād was soon extended against the Christians, specifically since the campaign of Ifrīqiya carried out by caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min in the year 1158.[18]

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[13] R. Brunschvig, "Sur la doctrine du Mahdī Ibn Tūmart," *Arabica* 2 (1955): 137-149; M. Fletcher, "The Almohad *Tawḥīd:* Theology which relies on Logic," *Numen* 38 (1991): 110-127.

[14] On the Almohad *jihād* see, for example, M. Fierro, "La palabra y la espada: posturas frente al «otro» en la época almohade," in *La Península Ibérica en tiempos de Las Navas de Tolosa*, eds. María Antonia Carmona and Carlos Estepa (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014), 53-77; J. Albarrán, "Ruptura, memoria y guerra santa: una lectura del yihad almohade," in *Órdenes militares y construcción de la sociedad occidental (ss. XII-XV),*, eds. Raquel Torres and Francisco Ruiz Gómez (Madrid: Sílex, 2017), 279-306; A. García Sanjuán, "Violencia, yihad y revolución en los orígenes del movimiento almohade," in *Al-Muwaḥḥidūn. El despertar del califato almohade*, eds. Dolores Villalba Sola (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y el Generalife, 2019), 89-113; J. Albarrán, "Arengas de *ŷihād* en época almohade," *Talia Dixit. Revista Interdisciplinar de Retórica e Historiografía* 15 (2020): 33-55; J. Albarrán, "The Almohads and the 'Qur'anization' of War Narrative and Ritual," *Religions* 12/10 (2021): 876.

[15] Al-Baydhaq, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart* (Algiers: al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1975), 71-72; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 78 and Bennison, *The Almoravid*, 67. For the different meanings of *hijra* and its connection to *jihād* see, for example, M. Ebstein, "The Connection between *Hijra* and *Jihād* in Classical Islam," *Jamā'a* 15 (2005-2006): 53-85. The Kharijids, who carried out a policy of *takfīr* and *jihād* similar to the Almohad one, also saw themselves as *muhājirūn*. R. Bonney, *Jihad. From Qur'an to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 56.

[16] See, for example, Q. 3: 195.

[17] See P. Crone, "The First Century Concept of Hiğra," *Arabica* 61 (1994): 352-387; I. Lindstedt, "*Muhājirūn* as a Name for the First/Seventh Century Muslims," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74/1 (2015): 67-73.

[18] On this expedition see, for example, A. S. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banū Ghāniya* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 55 ff.

Four years later this ruler crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and announced, during the feast of the Sacrifice, the forthcoming *jihād* against the Christians.[19] The figure of the "*ghāzī*-caliph" therefore reappeared: the sovereign who personally leads *jihād* against the enemies of God, a matter that the Almohad state apparatus was to take great care of through tools such as highly planned parades.

During the reign of the caliph al-Manṣūr (d. 1199), *jihād* was also of paramount importance for his ideological construction and legitimization. He was known as a great warrior, an extraordinary "mujāhid fī sabīl Allāh" who was enthusiastic about "the great ideas of *jihād*".[20] Ibn Abī Zar' describes him as a "lover of *jihād* (*muḥibban fī al-jihād*)",[21] while Ibn al-Kardabūs portrays him as a great victorious conqueror, as a destroyer of infidelity, and as a renewer of religion.[22] This reputation spread to the East, where Ibn al-Athīr states that he was a lord of *jihād* against enemies (*kāna dhā jihād li-l-'aduww*) and that he raised the banner (*rāyat al-jihād*).[23]

This reality is confirmed in a letter sent by Saladin to the Almohad caliph in his search for allies to face the new wave of crusaders. Asking for help, Saladin reminded the Maghribi ruler that he was renowned for his performance of *jihād*, so this was a suitable time to prove it. However, the Ayyubid ambassador eventually returned to Alexandria on 11 July 1191, shortly before the fall of Acre, without the required help.[24] Likewise, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī relates that the caliph al-Manṣūr, being one day discussing with the Maliki jurist Abū Bakr b. al-Jadd about the reasons for diversity of opinion (*ikhtilāf*), told him that only the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet, namely the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwud,

[19] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī: *Kitāb al-Mu'jib fī Taljīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib* (Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1955), 189; Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Valencia: Anubar, 1964), vol. 2, 401.

[20] Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib. Los almohades*, trans. A. Huici Miranda (Tetouan: Instituto General Franco de estudios e investigación Hispano-Árabe, 1953), vol. 2, 159, 205.

[21] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 426.

[22] Ibn al-Kardabūs, *Kitāb al-iktifāʾ fī akhbār al-khulafāʾ. Historia de al-Andalus*, trans. Felipe Maíllo Salgado (Madrid: Akal, 1986), 148-149.

[23] Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-tarikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), vol. 2, 300, vol. 3, 42.

[24] A. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads*, 146 ff., and M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Une lettre de Saladin au calife almohade," in *Mélanges René Basset* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1925), vol. 2, 279-304. This account is transmitted by several Arabic sources. See, for example, Ibn Khallikān: *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, trans. Barón De Slane (Paris: Oriental translation fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843-1871), vol. 4, 344, or Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 137.

on the one hand, and the sword, *jihād*, on the other, could stand.[25] In this account, two of the great pillars of the Almohad movement merge: the return to the primary sources of Islam and the performance of war against the enemies of Islam.

But, undoubtedly, it was the great victory over the hosts of Alfonso VIII – king of Castile and Leon – in the campaign of Alarcos (1195) that elevated Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb as the caliph-*mujāhid* par excellence and which granted him the epithet of al-Manṣūr, the victorious. The sources call it "the noble expedition (*al-ghazwa al-karīma*),"[26] and claim that "Alarcos is among the most celebrated campaigns of Islam (*al-Arāk min al-ghazawāt al-madhkūra al-mashhūra fī al-islām*), for it was the greatest made by the Almohads."[27]

If there is one account that shows the religiosity with which the sources described this campaign and which begins to suggest how the process of sanctification of al-Manṣūr took place and why it happened, it is that of the oneiric miracle recounted by Ibn Abī Zar': the caliph al-Manṣūr had a dream just before the battle of Alarcos, in which a knight, identified as an angel, riding a white horse and carrying a green banner, announced to the Almohad leader his imminent victory by the grace of God ("I have come from the Lord of the worlds to announce victory to you, to yours and to the warriors who follow your banners in *jihād*, eager to achieve the divine bounties").[28] This narration is undoubtedly based on places of memory such as the victory of the Prophet in the battle of Badr and the presence of angels therein.[29] In this struggle in the early days of Islam, the Muslims did not charge alone against their enemies, for God had promised them (Q. 8: 9 and 12) the help of angels.[30] The presence of these

[25] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib*, 232. M. Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's Bidāyat al-Mujtahid," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10/3 (1999): 226-248.

[26] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 445.

[27] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 446.

[28] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 438.

[29] Within the *maghāzī* accounts, i.e., of the Prophet's expeditions, angels appeared on the day of Uḥud, where Michael and Gabriel made their appearance; at the beginning of the expedition against the Banū Qurayẓa, when Gabriel, dressed in his full panoply, orders Muḥammad to advance against that clan; and in the expedition of Ḥunayn, where angels descended as a black cloud of ants. Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 404 ff., 461 ff., 566 ff.; Al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad. Al-Wāqidī's Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (London-New York: Routledge, 2011), 55, 244 ff., 435 ff.

[30] Al-Manṣūr's dream is not the only case of the appearance of angels in a war context in the Almohad period. For example, in a poem about an Almohad triumph written by the poet Sulaymān al-Muwaḥḥidī, also known as Abū al-Rabī' (d. 1207), reference is made to the

servants of God was felt by all, as a strength for the believers and a fear for the pagans, although they were only visible to a few.[31]

Badr is, without any doubt, the most important and most deeply commemorated battle, with the greatest symbolic capital and prestige, in the history of Islam, at least in terms of religiosity and sacredness.[32] The participants of Badr are the most excellent among Muslims after the *Rāshidūn* and ten of the Prophet's companions, and they are guaranteed entry into Paradise.[33] Already Mūsā b. 'Uqba, an early author of a *maghāzī* work that circulated widely in al-Andalus,[34] compiled lists of participants in Badr,[35] something that would be reproduced in the Islamic West over the centuries.[36] Thus, the Muslims who followed the Almohad caliph at Alarcos, like the ruler himself, were new Badrites, and were guaranteed salvation.

The account of the dream before Alarcos, probably constructed during the thirteenth century and written down at the end of that century, is one of the first steps in the process of sanctification of al-Manṣūr. This phenomenon, mainly of oral tradition and probably generated as a spontaneous popular devotion, will

armies of God (*junūd Allāh*), as well as to the help of Ḥayzūm, the horse of the archangel Gabriel. Abū al-Rabī', *Dīwān al-amīr al-shā'ir Sulaymān al-muwaḥḥidī* (Rabat, Université Mohammed V, n.d.), 32.

[31] Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat*, 289 ff., and al-Wāqidī, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 11 ff.

[32] Ka'b b. Mālik claimed that it is the most esteemed battle in the eyes of Muslims. Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. and trans. Sean W. Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 130.

[33] A. Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 57 ff.

[34] J. Schacht, "On Musa b. 'Uqba's Kitab al-Maghazi," *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1953): 288-300.

[35] J. Horovitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002), 29 and 70.

[36] See, for example, Ms. Khizānat al-Ḥasaniyya (Rabat), n. 52: 15 ff. Copies of these works on the participants in Badr can be found in almost any corner of the Maghrebi geography, such as in the library of the *zāwiya ḥamzawiyya* in Er-Rachidia: Ms. Zāwiya Ḥamzawiyya n. 364. Other texts on the excellences of the people of Badr were also composed, such as poems. Some of these works have been preserved in the Islamic West, such as a *qaṣīda 'alā ahl Badr* ("Poem on the people of Badr"): Ms. BNRM n. 749d. This issue has been addressed by 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Samlālī in his introduction to the edition of Ibn Idrīs al-Sanūsī's *Sayf al-naṣr bi-l-sāda al-kirām ahl Badr* (d. 1886), a versified text on the combatants at Badr and their merits. He describes this battle – and its participants – in the historical imagination of the Islamic West as the one that has contributed most to the defense of Islam, as well as the most important and noble of all expeditions. He also collects a total of 50 manuscripts of works on the *ahl Badr* preserved in different North African libraries. Al-Sanūsī, *Sayf al-naṣr bi-l-sāda al-kirām ahl Badr*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Samlālī (Rabat: al-Rābiṭa al-muḥammadiyya li-l-'ulamā', 2014), 37-46. On the memory of the Prophet's battles in the Almohad context see J. Albarrán, *Ejércitos benditos*.

be reflected in the sources until the twentieth century, with the addition of other saintly attributes together with the military element.[37]

In the following pages, this process will be analysed through a chronological commentary on a set of fragments about the Almohad caliph collected in various sources.[38] They will be used, therefore, to reconstruct this process of sanctification. The analysis of these fragments will focus primarily on two aspects: the main virtue that is repeated over and over again about al-Manṣūr and that I consider the cause of his sanctification, namely his leading of *jihād*, although without leaving aside other representations of this caliph; and the accounts of his death and burial, a key issue in the processes of sanctification in the Islamic world.

III. Al-Manṣūr's Sanctification Process Through the Sources (thirteenth-fifteenth c.)

The first preserved account regarding al-Manṣūr is that of 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (d. 1224), an author very close to the Almohad milieu. This narrative was probably written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, very close, therefore, to the death of the caliph. To begin with, he depicts the victory of Alarcos as a great triumph achieved by God and the help He gave to al-Manṣūr.[39] Likewise, he represents the caliph as a ruler always ready to help the most deprived, a quality which he emphasises through al-Manṣūr's construction of a magnificent hospital.[40] Thus he portrays al-Manṣūr as combining the two

[37] Following the Islamic tradition, and being aware that the term "saint" do not belongs to it, I equate this concept to that of *wālī Allāh*, i.e., "friend of God," one who is close to God, who can perform miracles (*karāmāt*), and who possessed *baraka*, a kind of divine grace that flows through the nature of people, which can be accumulated, transmitted and lost, and which believers seek in contact with the saints, in visits and pilgrimages to their tombs. In the saint's relationship with the community, he occupies a place of mediation because of his relationship with God. See J. Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). On the figures of saints in the medieval Islamic West see, for example, V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint. Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); F. Rodríguez Mediano, "Religiosidad en al-Andalus: El hombre santo en el Islam andalusí," *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares* 54 (1999): 145-168.

[38] Some of these accounts have been collected in J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb al-Aqṣā* (Tetouan: Asociación Tetuán Asmīr, 2013), vol. 1, 158 ff.

[39] "On Wednesday, the 3rd of *sha'bān* of this aforementioned year (13 July 1195), the Muslims and their enemies met and God brought down His help on the Almohads, granted them their resistance and delivered the backs of the Christians to them." 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 235.

[40] 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

virtues of *jihād* and charity.[41] On the other hand, and around his death, 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī narrates that it took place early in 595 h. (1198-1199) and that he was buried in Tinmal next to his relatives, something which almost certainly happened.[42] However, another element is introduced in this account: an unfulfilled intention to travel to the East to purify Islam there, a matter that may be the origin of other narratives of a legendary nature that will be discussed later. Thus, three elements must be emphasised in this first fragment, which was written close to the time of al-Manṣūr's death and which, despite showing a certain nature far from mythification, introduces issues that will become fundamental in the process of sanctification of this ruler: *jihād* and charity – where the battle of Alarcos and the construction of a hospital stand out – as the main virtues of the caliph, his burial in Tinmal, and his unfulfilled desire to travel to the East.

The second account closest to the life of al-Manṣūr is the brief note by the eastern historian Ibn al-Athīr, who died in 1233. He places the death of the caliph in Salé, in Jumādā I of 595 h. (March 1199), and claims that the Almohad ruler was a great lord of *jihād* against the enemies (*dhā jihād li-l-'aduww*), thus emphasising, in this totally aseptic note, the element that would remain a constant portrait of al-Manṣūr, which is the waging of war.[43] At the end of the thirteenth century, with the account of Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282) in his biographical dictionary, we already find the first mention of a popular tradition advocating that the caliph had gone to the Mashreq, where he died. That is to say, in less than a century the idea – never accepted, however, by the majority of scholars – that the caliph did not die in the Maghreb but rather went to the East, where he lived as a wanderer, was developed.[44]

[41] "I learned that before his departure for this campaign, namely that of the great battle (Alarcos), he distributed in alms 40000 dinars". 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

[42] "I heard from more than one that he announced to the Almohads the journey to the East and that he began to mention the country of Egypt and what was reprehensible in it and said: 'We, God willing, will purify it,' and this did not cease to be his purpose until he died early in the year 595 (November 1198), as has been referred to, and was buried in Tinmal with his parents." 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *Kitāb al-Mu'jib,* 236-240.

[43] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī-l-Ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), vol. 10, 258 ff.

[44] The tradition of the "wanderer" as a form of asceticism and piety has a long history, appearing in the Qur'an through the term *sā'iḥ* (Q. 9: 112; Q. 66: 5). See also M. Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*: *Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean* World, A.D. 300–800 (Philadelphia: Penn University Press, 2005); A. Salamah-Qudsi, "Crossing the Desert: Siyāḥa and Safar as Key Concepts in Early Sufi Literature and Life," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2/2 (2013): 129-147.

Ibn Khallikān's account begins by highlighting the role of al-Manṣūr in *jihād*.[45] Likewise, in the most interesting fragment of Ibn Khallikān's text, the two main virtues of al-Manṣūr are re-emphasised:[46] his zeal for war and his charitable spirit. On the other hand, four different narratives about his death are collected, some of which have already appeared and others which are repeated in later texts. The first of these is his renunciation of power and his journey to the East to die there in anonymity, being buried in a mausoleum near the valley of al-Bikā' in modern-day Lebanon. Ibn Khallikān, the first author to mention this account, does not deny, as other authors will do, this information, which he seems to have received mainly through oral transmissions in Damascus.[47] Perhaps the origin of this account should be connected with al-Manṣūr's unfulfilled desire to travel to the East mentioned by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, and even with Saladin's request for help from the Almohad caliph, which was undoubtedly known in the East. Likewise, and probably through the sources previously analysed ('Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, who wrote his work in Egypt, and Ibn al-Athīr), he also mentions his possible death in Marrakech or Salé. Finally, he introduces a new element that will also be repeated by other authors in the future: al-Manṣūr's desire to be buried near the road, so that his tomb could be visited by travellers who could pray for his soul. Thus, the idea that the Almohad caliph had the hope of his grave being venerated appears.

In the Islamic West, however, the next author in chronological order, Ibn Abī Zar' (d. c. 1320), does not yet collect these accounts about the death of al-Manṣūr, focusing on the most plausible option which is his death in Marrakech on 22 Rabī' I of 595 h. (22 January 1199) and his burial in Tinmal with the rest of the Almohad rulers.[48] He points out elements already commented on here, such as the charity of the caliph, but also introduces some new features such as his good treatment and closeness with the men of religion. He also emphasises his achievements in *jihād*, a quality that he glorifies with the account of the dream before the battle of Alarcos that has already been mentioned.[49]

[45] "He held the banner of *jihad* … his reign was prosperous and his conquests extensive". Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, 335-336.

[46] Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 4, 341-342.

[47] "Some claim that he abdicated the throne and wandered the earth until he reached the East, where the insignificance of his appearance prevented him from being recognized and where he died in anonymity … I should add that in the year 680 (1281-2), a number of people told me in Damascus of a mausoleum situated near al-Hamāra, which is a village not far from al-Mijdal, a town in the dependencies of al-Bikā' al-Azīzī (Caelosyria). This monument is the tomb of Amir Ya'qūb, king of al-Gharb."

[48] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 425-431.

[49] Ibn Abī Zar', *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 438.

This dream is one of the first indications of the sacralization that the figure of al-Manṣūr experienced after his victory at Alarcos against the infidels. In the Islamic context and its sources on dream interpretation, the appearance of angels represents divine aid as well as the ennoblement of the dreamer and his destiny as a martyr.[50] Likewise, the angel is nothing more than a spokesman for God, and the fact that He communicates with the dreamer confirms that his sins will be forgiven. This victory is portrayed as causing the caliph to be forgiven all his previous sins, such as the murder of some family members,[51] something similar to what happened to Zenkī after the capture of Edessa. It is also worth noting the importance of the moment of the dream, since the early morning of Friday is a blessed hour.[52] For example, the battle of Zallaca (1086) between an Almoravid-Andalusi coalition and the Castilian-Leonese army, in which the Almoravid emir Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn emerged victorious against King Alfonso VI, began in the early morning of Friday 23 October 1086. Interestingly, according to the *Rawḍ al-Mi'ṭār*, prior to the battle, the Prophet appeared to a *faqīh* announcing the victory.[53]

Contemporary to Ibn Abī Zar' is the account of Ibn 'Idhārī, who wrote his *al-Bayān al-Mughrib* around the year 1312. He emphasises al-Manṣūr's charity and good relationship with the men of religion as well as his conduct of *jihād*, stating in the battle of Alarcos that "he made all the previous victories of the Muslims be forgotten and remained in their mouths his memory until their death".[54] Ibn 'Idhārī adds an account which had not appeared previously and which is tremendously interesting: the caliph, after seeing his father in a dream asking him the reason why he had his uncle and brother killed, and after seeking

[50] P. Lory, *Le rêve et ses interprétations en Islam* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2003), 145-149. See also Ö. Felek and A. D. Knysh (eds.), *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012). For another example of dreams, miracles and the sanctification of a performer of *jihād*, see J. Albarrán, "*This Is Your Miḥrāb*: Sacred Spaces and Power in Early Islamic North Africa—Al-Qayrawān as a Case Study," *Religions* 14-5 (2023): 674. See also J. Renard, *Friends of God*, 67 ff. This account finds certain parallels within the Christian tradition, such as Constantine's dream prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which – according to Eusebius of Caesarea – Christ appeared to him and instructed him to inscribe the *labarum* on his banners. See, for example, W. Harris, "Constantine's dream," *Klio* 87 (2005): 488-494.

[51] Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 212-3.

[52] J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb*, vol. 1, 161.

[53] A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio almohade* (Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1956-1957), vol. 1, 366.

[54] Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 85 ff. and 189-204. On the memory of this battle see J. Albarrán, "Victorias que hacen olvidar éxitos pretéritos: la memoria en torno a las batallas de Zalaca y Alarcos," in *Memoria y fuentes de la guerra santa peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, eds. Carlos de Ayala, Santiago Palacios and Francisco García Fitz (Oviedo: Trea, 2021), 241-261.

forgiveness for these deeds, decides to hand over power to his son and hide himself as penance, notifying the people that he had died.[55] This narrative connects with the account of al-Manṣūr's death written by the Maghribi chronicler. He mentions that, without any doubt, he died in Marrakesh on Friday night, the 12th of Rabī' I of the year 595 h. (12 January 1199) and was buried in Tinmal. Two years later, in 1275-76, Abū 'Alī al-Milyānī, stationed by the Marinids in Aghmat, reportedly desecrated and destroyed the tomb of al-Manṣūr, confusing it with that of the *mahdī* Ibn Tūmart. Likewise, Ibn 'Idhārī comments that the death of the caliph was hidden from the common people, so the crowd, due to the love they had for him, began to propagate tales that placed him performing *ribāṭ* in al-Andalus or as a pilgrim in Mecca. He also gathers, from eastern sources, the idea that his tomb was in Syria.[56]

Etymologically, *ribāṭ* means "binding" and it may consist – at least in one of its manifestations – of moving to frontier areas to carry out a military activity, which could be active and offensive, but which was generally more pious, passive and defensive. The *ribāṭ* was, therefore, a way of performing *jihād*. It was shaped as a recommendation of devotion freely adopted by pious Muslims desiring perfection in their spiritual life: the believer offered his services for defence if required, while developing his spirituality through ascetic practices such as Qur'an reading sessions, meditation, fasting or austerity in clothing.[57] In other words, this realisation of *ribāṭ*, once again, depicted the Almohad caliph as a warrior and pious ruler, an image which contributed to his sanctification.

The image conveyed by the North African chronicler is that, although in fact al-Manṣūr died in Marrakech and was buried in Tinmal, due to the love that people felt for him, his death was hidden, as had happened with that of Ibn

[55] "They report, and God knows best, that from the time of this vision he intended to abdicate the kingdom (*yakhtala' al-mulk*), and remain in the service of God until his death, and that he handed over power to his son al-Nāṣir, made his last recommendations to him, and went into hiding (*ghāba*), informing the people that he had died." Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 212 ff.

[56] "He deceived about his death all the mob (*kudhiba al-kāfa min al-'āmma bi-wafāti-hi*), who used to shout, wherever they went, that he lived. Sometimes they placed him in a *ribāṭ* (*murābitan*), in the country of al-Andalus, as a stranger (*'alā istiktām*), and sometimes they placed him as a pilgrim going to the house of God (*ḥājjan ilā bayt Allāh al-ḥaram*), driven by the love to his power and following the inclination of the soul in enjoying the remembrance of him. Al-Ḥājj b. Murīnoh told me: 'I was referred to by some Easterners in their country that the tomb of al-Manṣūr, king of the Maghrib, was in Syria.' But there is no doubt or disagreement that … his tomb is in Tinmal." Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, vol. 1, 214 ff.

[57] See, for example, J. Albarrán and E. Daza, "Hacia la construcción de una geografía del *ribāṭ* en al-Andalus: práctica y materialidad," *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Fortificación* 6 (2021): 57-107.

Tūmart,[58] and therefore false news began to be propagated that gave the ruler an important aura of sanctity, such as his life as a *murābiṭ* defending the Andalusi border, a report linked to his always outstanding action as a caliph-*mujāhid*. Thus, the Maghrebi author is already tracing a possible account of the sanctification of al-Manṣūr: a caliph much loved by his people because of his victorious performance of *jihād* and his acts of piety and charity, whose death is concealed from the crowds due to the love they felt for him. Thereupon, as a result of this occultation, people begin to produce glorifying stories about the ruler. To this idea is added, for the first time in the Islamic West, the information originated in an eastern context suggesting that the tomb of al-Manṣūr might be in Syria.

Shortly after, Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf al-Sabtī al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1358), a Ceutan based in Granada, would rush – as Ibn 'Idhārī had done in giving credit only to Tinmal's burial – to deny all the information propagated by the population, such as the idea that he was making *ribāṭ* in al-Andalus or that, disinterested in power (*zāhidan fī l-mulk*),[59] he had gone to the Hijaz and was buried in Medina next to the tomb of the Prophet.[60] This will be the general trend to be found around the death of al-Manṣūr: some authors transmit oral information of popular origin to later deny it, or simply point out that his death and burial took place in Marrakech or Tinmal.

The next source worthy of mention has a different nature from the previous ones, since it is a *riḥla*, a travel chronicle. This is the monumental work of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1369),[61] in which, discussing his visit to Beirut, the Tangier traveller recounts that there was a mausoleum where the people said that Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, sultan of Morocco, was buried. His tomb, he states, is in the place known by Noah's Karak, in al-Biqā' al-Azīz. In its vicinity, he continues, there is a marabout where they offer food to travellers, financed by Saladin or, according to others, by Nūr al-Dīn.[62] He also says that people relate how the Maghrebi ruler had arrived in Damascus after leaving his royal dignity, and had been living as

[58] Several sources state that Ibn Tūmart's death was hidden for two years, a time that 'Abd al-Mu'min, his successor, used to consolidate his power as caliph. A. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, vol. 1, 85 ff. and M. Fierro "El *Mahdī* Ibn Tūmart," 73-97.

[59] This is another *topos* usually linked to the piety, spirituality and asceticism of scholars and Sufis. See, for example, M. Marín, "Inqibad 'an al-sultan: 'ulama' and political power in al-Andalus," in *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam* (Madrid: AECID, 1994), 127-139; C. Melchert, *Before Sufism: Early Islamic renunciant piety* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 125 ff.

[60] Al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī, *Rafa' al-ḥayb al-mastūra 'an al-maḥāsin al-maqṣūra* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1997), vol. 2, 155.

[61] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través del Islam*, trans. Serafín Fanjul and Federico Arbós (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), 33 ff.

[62] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través*, 171-173.

an ascetic and working in a garden owned by Sultan Nūr al-Dīn, with whom he established a relationship and who, after the performance of a miracle (the transformation of copper into gold) by al-Manṣūr, had ordered the construction of a magnificent hospital.[63]

Throughout this account, of which several elements are worth highlighting, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa merely develops the popular Eastern tradition first collected by Ibn Khallikān according to which, after renouncing power, al-Manṣūr travelled to the East, lived as a wanderer and was buried in a mausoleum where, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, a notorious cult and pilgrimage took place. Therefore, we must understand the reference to Abu Ya'qūb Yūsuf, father of al-Manṣūr, as a mistake by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa himself or his informants, who would have been referring to Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, an otherwise normal error due to the resemblance of both names. On the other hand, the chronology also appears already diffused in this popular tradition, since the death of al-Manṣūr (1199) was not contemporary with either Saladin (d. 1193) or with Nūr al-Dīn (d. 1174), although the difference in years is not very significant.[64] What is certain is that these two rulers with whom the Almohad caliph is related were also recognized as *mujāhid*, in addition to the fact that, as we have already said, Saladin contacted al-Manṣūr for military support against the Crusaders. Two more elements are noteworthy in this account. Firstly, the linkage of the Almohad caliph with the construction of a hospital appears again, in this case executed by Nūr al-Dīn.[65] Secondly, it is interesting to consider how al-Manṣūr appears performing a miraculous deed, a further hallmark of the process of sanctification in which his figure was immersed.

Neither Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), nor Ibn Simāk with his *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya* (c. 1381), nor Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), offer new elements in their accounts, thus distancing themselves from the popular narratives examined so far. The Syrian Ibn Kathīr follows Ibn al-Athīr closely: he emphasises al-Manṣūr's dedication to *jihād* and places his death in Salé.[66] It is curious that, despite being from the East, this author does not collect information about the burial of the Almohad caliph in Syria. It is very likely that he knew it, since it appears in such an important work as that of Ibn Khallikān, although he possibly did not give any credit to it. Similarly, Ibn Simāk also highlights al-Manṣūr's performance in war and remarks that he died in Marrakesh in Rabī' I of 595 h. (January 1199) and was

[63] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *A través*, 171-173.

[64] J. Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Sulamī, *al-Usṭūra wa-l-Maghreb*, vol. 1, 169-171.

[65] Nur al-Din was in fact recognized for his foundation of pious buildings, including a hospital. See Y. al-Tabbaa, *The Architectural Patronage of Nur al-Din*, PhD Dissertation (New York: New York University, 1982), 100-102.

[66] Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1998), vol. 16, 687.

buried in Tinmal next to his father and grandfather.[67] As for Ibn Khaldūn, he only states that he died in Marrakech, also in Rabīʿ I of 595 h. (January 1199).[68]

Much more interesting is the account about al-Manṣūr transmitted by the Maghrebi Ibn al-Sakkāk (d. 1415) in his *Nuṣḥ mulūk al-islām bi-l-taʿarīf bi-mā yajibu ʿalay-him min ḥuqūq Āl bayt al-kirām*, a work halfway between a mirror of princes and a text of veneration of the Prophet's family. Ibn al-Sakkāk was a follower of the Maliki legal school and the Sufi mystical way, a combination of trends that was on the rise in the Maghreb, and defender of the rights and preference of the *ahl al-bayt*,[69] – the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. He recounts that the Andalusi poet Sufyān Ibn Idrīs al-Mursī, who was famous for his baraka and performed miracles (*karāmāt*), often lamented the misfortunes of al-Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet. He describes al-Mursī travelling to Marrakech in the time of al-Manṣūr to propose a judicial consultation. The caliph replied favourably due to having seen the Prophet in dreams (*raʾā rasūl Allāh fī l-nawm*), who told him that Sufyān did great service for them (*Sufyān al-mashghūl bi-khidmati-nā*) feeling severe affliction for his descendants (*al-tafajjuʿ li-waladi-nā*), and that he should therefore give him whatever he needed.[70]

First of all, in this account it is worth noting that Ibn al-Sakkāk has chosen to feature al-Manṣūr in his mirror of princes as an example of a good ruler and a caliph concerned about the rights of the descendants of the Prophet. This concern is not reflected in any other source and will be discussed later on. Thus, this shows the positive memory of the Almohad ruler in the Islamic West. On the other hand, Ibn al-Sakkāk again resorts to a dream in which al-Manṣūr encounters the Prophet, once again a sign of sanctification.

In summary, in these accounts collected so far – going from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth century –, several issues can be highlighted. Among all of them, the only account to be inserted into the sphere of Almohad production is that of ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī. It emphasizes the *mujāhid* nature of al-Manṣūr, something that will be constantly repeated, his piety and charity, highlighting the construction of a hospital and the treatment of orphans, and his presumed desire to go to the East, specifically to Egypt, to purify Islam. It should not be forgotten that this author finished his work in the country of the Nile, so either he himself circulated this information

[67] Ibn Simāk, *Al-Ḥulal*, 189-190.

[68] Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères et des dynasties musulmanes de l'afrique septentrionale*, trans. Baron de Slane (Paris : Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1968-1969), vol. 2, 215.

[69] M. Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine sous les Mérinides et les Wattasides* (Rabat, 1974), 368-72; S. Sqalli Houssini, *Contribution à l'Étude du discours politico-réligieux sous les derniers Mérinides: les Lettres d'Ibn Abbad de Ronda au Sultan Abu Faris et le Nush Muluk al-Islam d'Ibn As-Sakkak.*, PhD Dissertation (Université d'Aix-Marseille, 1992).

[70] Ibn al-Sakkāk, *Nuṣḥ mulūk al-islām* (n.p. 1898), 2-3.

in those lands, having brought it from the Maghreb, or it is possible that these rumours were already settled in the Mashreq, perhaps due to the contacts that Saladin maintained with al-Manṣūr. As will be seen, some of the Eastern accounts discussed earlier bring us closer to this second possibility.

The first of the oriental accounts, that of Ibn al-Athīr, is very aseptic and only highlights al-Manṣūr's performance of *jihād*. However, the next one analysed, that of Ibn Khallikān, besides reinforcing the idea of the Almohad caliph as a *mujāhid*, pious and charitable ruler, adds two interesting features: the first is al-Manṣūr's possible desire to be buried beside a road so that travellers could pray for him there. The second is that al-Manṣūr may not have died in the Maghreb but rather was buried in a mausoleum in al-Bikā'. Thus, already at the end of the thirteenth century, and perhaps because of those contacts between al-Manṣūr and Saladin, and due to the rumour recorded by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī about the desire of the Almohad caliph to go to the East, it is clear that in the Mashreq there was a popular oral tradition describing the Almohad ruler as having been buried there. This popular tradition would continue its development in the Mashreq, as evidenced by the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. It is also interesting to note how al-Manṣūr is depicted as performing a miraculous deed, yet another element of the sanctification process. The fact that later on, Ibn Kathīr, in his passages on the Almohad caliph, returned to Ibn al-Athīr's account, again emphasizing his effort in *jihād* and placing his death in the Maghreb, proves that these traditions around the supposed burial of al-Manṣūr were of popular origin.

In the Islamic West, several points can be noted regarding the accounts of Ibn Abī Zar', Ibn 'Idhārī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf, Ibn Simāk and Ibn Khaldūn. The first is their shared focus on two main virtues of al-Manṣūr, which may have been the origin of his popularity and sanctification. These are his realization of *jihād*, which gives the caliph a clear aura of sanctity through the dream prior to the battle of Alarcos, and his piety and charity, underlined by the construction of the hospital in Marrakech. Also added to this repertoire of virtues is the caliph's kind treatment towards men of religion. For the first time, in some of these sources the account according to which the caliph could be buried in the East also appears, a rumour that seems to have come from the Mashreq itself. Likewise, and especially through Ibn 'Idhārī, mention is also made to the idea that the Almohad caliph might have abandoned power or that his death might have been concealed from the population, which is why the people, due to their

love for this ruler, began to circulate stories marked with sanctity, traditions such as that he might actually be in al-Andalus performing *ribāṭ*.[71]

Thus, the process of sanctification traced by Ibn 'Idhārī seems to fit: faced with the concealment of his death and the rumours that al-Manṣūr might have abandoned power, moved by their love for this caliph and the popularity he enjoyed, people began to spread tales of a legendary nature that would mystify and sanctify his figure. This idea could have been consolidated with the disappearance of his tomb in Tinmal at the end of the thirteenth century due to the destruction caused by the Merinid troops. In any case, it should not be forgotten that most authors would deny the veracity of these legendary accounts of popular origin, something that is very clearly seen in the text of Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī.

Among all these works composed in the Islamic West between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, those which have provided the most information and different accounts are Ibn Abī Zar''s *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās* and Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī's *Bayān*. And both have something in common that should not be overlooked when trying to understand the portrait of al-Manṣūr that they show: they are written in a context of Merinid production, in the case of Ibn Abī Zar' even directly related to the power of this North African dynasty that ruled the Maghreb between the years 1244-1465.

In the Merinid context, several processes took place through which the passages about al-Manṣūr must be understood. First, during the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries "corporate" Sufism, Sufism organized in *ṭarīqas* – religious orders within the Sufi mystical path –, became institutionalized, as well as Maghrebi sanctity, which began to be another agent in power relations.[72] From the time of Abū Yūsuf al-Marīnī (d. 1286) an official version of the Maliki legal school was promoted as a major ideological element of the Marinid regime alongside this institutionalization of Sufism, which caused it to proliferate among the scholars. For example, the famous courtier Ibn Marzūq al-Tilimsānī (d. 1379) was a member of the *ṭarīqa* Suhrawardiyya.[73] Another good example is

[71] This phenomenon of hiding his death from the masses is very interesting and cannot be dismissed completely, since it was already put into practice with Ibn Tūmart and was not uncommon in the medieval Christian world. An example is that of Henry I of Castile (d. 1217), whose death took a long time to be revealed in order to favor the enthronement of Ferdinand III over the interests of the kingdom of León. See *Chronica latina regum castellae* in *Chronica hispana saeculi XIII*, eds. Luis Charlo Brea, Juan Antonio Estévez Sola and Rocío Carande Herrero (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 7-118.

[72] V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 123.

[73] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc a la fin du «Moyen-Age» (XIVe-XVe)*, (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), 279; V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 124-130. See also Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine*.

Ibn ʻAbbād al-Rundī (d. 1390), preacher of the great mosque of al-Qarawiyyin between 1374 and 1390 and promoter of *shādhilism*, another Sufi trend.[74] A similar process is evident among the *awliyāʼ Allāh*, the saints, and the rulers. The sultans recognized the spiritual authority of the saint and regulated (and politically neutralized) it through, for example, the granting of certificates of distinction (*ẓāhir al-tawqīr wa-l-iḥtirām*). Meanwhile, the saints supported the political power with their influence over the people, in return for that recognition and the prerogatives it entailed.[75] Likewise, the Marinid rulers included numerous mystical-Sufi elements in their discourse. For example, in the monetary reform introduced by Sultan Abū Yūsuf Yaʻqūb, a Qur'anic verse (Q. 57: 3) of important mystical connotations appears, since it speaks of God being the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*, the external and the internal, the exoteric and the esoteric.[76]

It is not surprising, therefore, that, as their biographies developed a discourse of power and social legitimization, some accounts of Merinid sultans with certain saintly attributes began to appear.[77] Such is the case of several of the biographical accounts of ʻAbd al-Ḥaqq (d. 1217), founder of the dynasty, where he is represented as a wise ruler, just and concerned about the weak and helpless, as an uncorrupted, pious and ascetic Muslim, a sultan reputed for his scruples, his sanctity and his *baraka*.[78] In fact, some of the biographical works of

[74] H. Ferhat and H. Triki, "Hagiographie et religion au Maroc médiéval," *Hespéris-Tamuda* 25 (1986): 17-51; H. Ferhat, *Le soufisme et les zaouias au Maghreb* (Casablanca: Toubkal, 2003); É. Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et Syrie sous les derniers Mameloucs et les premiers Ottomans: Orientations spirituelles et enjeur culturels* (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1995), 149-152 and 207-208.

[75] M. El Mansour, "Saints and Sultans: Religious Authority and Temporal Power in Pre-Colonial Morocco", in *Popular Movements and Democratization in the Islamic World*, ed. Kisaichi Masatoshi (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-32.

[76] S. Gubert, "Les Mérinides. Cheminements symboliques et retour à Fès," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 424-429; P. Nwiya, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Université Saint-Joseph, Institut de lettres orientales, 1970), 170-176; S. Gubert, "Pouvoir, sacré et pensée mystique: les écritures emblématiques mérinides," *al-Qantara* 17/2 (1996): 391-427; S. Gubert, *Le Maître dans tous ses états: sujétion, théologie, politique et royauté (dynastie mérinide)*,, PhD Dissertation (Paris: EHESS, 2004), vol. 2, 443.

[77] In this sense, see M. Á. Manzano, "De ulemas y santos magrebíes en la guerra santa contra los cristianos de la península durante la baja Edad Media," in *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y Guerra Santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, eds. Carlos de Ayala and Santiago Palacios (Madrid: Sílex, 2018), 297-313.

[78] M. Á. Manzano, "Biografías y poder político: la imagen de los sultanes magrebíes en la Baja Edad Media," in *Biografías y género biográfico en el Occidente islámico*, eds. María Luisa Ávila and Manuela Marín (Madrid: CSIC, 1997), 249-265.

Marinid sultans, such as those of Ibn al-Aḥmar (*Al-Nafḥa al-nisrīniyya wa-l-lamḥa al-marīniyya* and *Rawḍat al-nisrīn fī dawlat Banī Marīn*, which were composed in 1387 and 1404 respectively), follow the model of the biographies of *awliyā' Allāh*.[79] Another example is the glorification of sultan Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 1351) in the *Musnad* of Ibn Marzūq, who depicts this sovereign as an exemplary figure in terms of spiritual values. Among other qualities, Ibn Marzūq emphasises the Sultan's solicitude for people consecrated to God and how precious his faith in them was, the consideration he kept for whoever had a saintly ancestor, his preference for those who were wise, his effort in building hospitals, and his compassion and affection for orphans. He also emphasises that "it is to be known that our Imam was the ruler on earth who best fulfilled the obligation of *jihād*". In other words, he portrays Abū al-Ḥasan as pious, charitable, close to the men of religion, and a leader of the war against the enemies of Islam, qualities that led him to be described in terms resembling those of a saint.[80] Undoubtedly, this portrait is very similar to the one about al-Manṣūr transmitted by the sources, a fact that should lead us to consider that these passages are strongly influenced by the conception of kingship and sanctity that was dominant in the Merinid context.

Due to his victories in *jihād*, particularly at Alarcos, his charitable and pious status, and the vicissitudes of his death, several popular traditions emerged that contributed to the sanctification of al-Manṣūr. This image, in turn, was consolidated due to the Marinid production context, a framework in which the link between sultans and saints was growing and the boundary dividing kingship from sainthood was dissipating.

This socio-cultural process of interconnection between power, Sufism and sainthood was to be reinforced and culminated with the progressive institutionalisation of *sharīfism*, i.e., the authority and prestige granted to the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. With the officialization of the celebration of the *mawlid*, the anniversary of the Prophet's birth, in the year 1292 by Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf,[81] the Marinids thus inaugurated the *sharīfian* policy,

[79] Shatzmiller, *L'historiographie mérinide*, 104.

[80] Mª J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan, sultán de los benimerines," in *Biografías y género biográfico en el Occidente islámico*, eds. María Luisa Ávila and Manuela Marín (Madrid: CSIC, 1997), 403-423.

[81] It seems clear that the celebration of the *mawlid* in the Islamic West was first introduced in Ceuta by al-'Azafī (d. 1236), judge of the city. Some Almohad rulers, such as al-Murtaḍā, may have also celebrated it. J. D. Latham, "The rise of the 'Azafids of Ceuta," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 263-287; Benchekroun, *La Vie intellectuelle marocaine*, 101; H. Ferhat, "Le culte du prophète au Maroc au XIIIe siècle: organisation du pèlerinage et célébration du Mawlid," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Ecole

which would reward and protect the descendants of the Prophet through the line of Idrīs II (d. 828), whom Ibn Abī Zar', in his *Rawḍ al-Qirṭās*, made the founder of Fez.[82] This phenomenon of sanctification and resignification of Fez, the Merinid capital, would culminate in 1437, when the alleged tomb of Idrīs II, Mulay Idrīs, was found in the mosque of the *shurafā'*.[83] A century earlier, in 1318, an uncorrupted corpse had been discovered in Volubilis and identified as Idrīs I (d. c. 791).[84] Progressively, the historians of the dynasty would carry out a complete translation of this ideology by giving a *sharīf*, and therefore Arab, ancestry to the founder of the dynasty, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq. This idea came to flourish with Abū 'Inān (d. 1358), who would call his state *al-dawla al-sharīfa*.[85]

This new *sharīfian* affiliation, realised mainly through marriage alliances, is clearly seen in the works of Ibn al-Aḥmar, especially in his *Rawḍat al-nisrīn*.[86] The sultan's authority thus enabled him to act as a regulator of *sharīfism* and sanctity, whether he himself was or not a *sharīf*. His prophetic ancestry, already fully recognised in the Sa'adi and 'Alawid dynasties,[87] reinforced, rather than

Française de Rome, 1995), 89-97; Z. Benramdane, *Ceuta du XIIIè au XIVè: siècles des lumières d'une ville marocaine* (Mohammedia: Université Hassan II-Mohammédia. Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 2003), 302 ff., and B. Boloix, "Las primeras celebraciones del Mawlid en al-Andalus y Ceuta, según la Tuḥfat al-mugtarib de al-Qaštālī y el Maqṣad al-šarīf de al-Bādisī," *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 22 (2011): 79-96. See also N. Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday Festival. Early History in the Central Muslim Lands and Development in the Muslim West until 10th/16th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), and M. Katz, *The birth of the Prophet Muhammad: devotional piety in Sunni Islam* (London-New York: Routledge, 2007).

[82] H. Ferhat, "Le culte du prophète au Maroc", 89-97. See H. Beck, *L'Image d'Idris II, ses Descendants de Fas et la Politique Sharifienne des Sultans Marinides (656-869/1258-1465),* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[83] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc*, 291-302 and 324-330; Beck, *L'Image d'Idris II*, 198-251; S. Gubert, *Le Maître dans tous ses états*, vol. 1, 35; A. Khaneboubi, *Les Institutions gouvernementales sous les Mérinides* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 181-185. On Idrīs II as patron saint of Fez see A. Sebti, "Hagiographie et enjeux urbains au Maroc. Une biographie d'Idrîs II," in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et moderne*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome : Ecole Française de Rome, 1995), 77-88.

[84] B. Tuil, *Inhumation et baraka. La tombe du saint dans la ville de l'Occident musulman au Moyen-Âge (XIIe-XVe siècle),* doctoral dissertation (Paris: Université Paris IV Sorbonne, 2011), vol. 2, 11-12.

[85] M. Kably, *Societe, pouvoir et religion au Maroc*, 261-262.

[86] B. Tuil, "Reformer le royaume idrisside: Fès et l'historiographie officielle mérinide," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 432-435.

[87] M. García-Arenal, "Mahdi, murabit, sharif: l'avènement de la dynastie sa'dienne," *Studia Islamica* 71 (1990): 77-114; See also A. Cour, *L'établissement des dynasties des chérifs au Maroc:*

generated, this attribution, since these two charismatic powers were combined under him. This pro-*sharīfian* policy of the Marinids was launched to take advantage of the growing popularity of the Sufis, who had incorporated the principle of the *shurafā'* into their doctrine.[88] The portrait of Abū al-Ḥasan in the *Musnad* provides another good example. According to Ibn Marzūq, one of the features that this Merinid sultan took most care of was his relationship with the members of the "House of the Prophet of God", and the protection he granted to this noble lineage.[89]

It is in this context of consolidation of *sharīfism* within Merinid and North African politics where the account of Ibn al-Sakkāk quoted above should be inserted. As we have seen, this Maghrebi author, a strong defender of the rights of the *shurafā'*, transformed al-Manṣūr into a firm supporter of the protectors of the Prophet's descendants, the members of the *ahl al-Bayt*, in addition to his sanctification through his vision of the Prophet in a dream. Beyond anticipating by a few decades, the process of institutionalisation of the influence of the *shurafā'* in the Maghreb, Ibn al-Sakkāk chose the Almohad caliph as a symbol of a sultan who protected the descendants of the Prophet, a matter that illustrates the importance that this ruler, who had become a sacralised sovereign, had in the collective Maghrebi imaginary. Thus, the victory of Alarcos and his *mujāhid* status had been the origin of this sanctifying process that had been enriched by the different contexts of production through which it had passed.

IV. Al-Manṣūr's Sanctification Process Through the Sources (sixteenth – twentieth c.)

From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, the accounts concerning al-Manṣūr continued these tendencies, consolidating and intensifying them. The soldier and historian Luis del Mármol Carvajal (d. 1600), who lived for years in North Africa first as a prisoner and then as a traveller, mentions in his *Descripción General de África*[90] that, after a dispute with a marabout, al-Manṣūr decided, as a penitence, to abandon all his dignities and leave in 1206 to be "a pilgrim around

et leur rivalité avec les turcs de la régence d'Alger, 1509-1830 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), and A. Sebti, "Au Maroc: sharifisme citadin, charisme et historiographie," *Annales E.S.C.* 41 (1986): 433-457.

[88] M. El Mansour, "Saints and Sultans: Religious Authority," 1-32.

[89] M. J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan," 403-423.

[90] F. Rodríguez Mediano, "Luis de Mármol Carvajal. Veintidós años en África," in *Exploradores españoles olvidados de África* (Madrid: Fundación Airtel, 2001), 49-80, and J. Castillo, *Entre Granada y el Magreb. Vida y obra del cronista Luis del Mármol Carvajal (1524-1600),* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2016).

the world," dying in Alexandria where he worked as a baker.[91] This portrayal emphasised the image of al-Manṣūr's respect for the men of religion and the saints, as well as his journey and death in the East, dispossessed of his wealth and power. Likewise, the idea that people thought he had disappeared to perform the pilgrimage, from which he would never have returned, is repeated. It is interesting to point out that most of the information that Luis del Mármol includes in his work was obtained through oral sources during his stays in North Africa. Therefore, these accounts about the Almohad ruler must have been deeply rooted in the popular Maghrebi imaginary.

In the *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, the North African historian al-Maqqarī (d. 1632) is once again very sceptical. Despite mentioning the various accounts (abdication, journey to the East, burial in al-Biqā'...), he denies their veracity – with the exception of the burial in Tinmal – following the line of al-Sharīf al-Gharnāṭī, whom he also quotes explicitly.[92] Likewise, he again stresses two issues already emphasised: the importance of al-Manṣūr's *jihād* and the transmission of popular narratives about his last days.

In the East, no significant change occurs. For example, the Syrian Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1679), in his *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, a biographical dictionary by way of a compilation of obituaries, again emphasises al-Manṣūr's *jihād* as well as his asceticism, characterised by his woollen clothing, something common to Sufis and holy men (*yalbas al-ṣūf* [...]). On the other hand, he collects two of the accounts about his death that were in circulation in the East and had already been collected by Ibn Khallikān, whom he quotes.[93] He does not contribute, therefore, anything new, limiting himself to reproducing the narratives that were already in circulation through the Mashreq.

In the Maghreb, however, new popular traditions were introduced, intensifying the degree of sanctity which had been built up since the thirteenth century around the figure of the Almohad caliph. Two works from the late nineteenth century reflect this trend. The first of these, the *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā li-Akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā*, was written at the end of the nineteenth century

[91] Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Descripción General de África, 1º parte* (Granada: René Rabut, 1573), f. 185v. It seems that al-Manṣūr had been concerned, at least in some cases such as those of Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī (d. 1204), or Abū Madyan (d. 1198), to establish contact with important mystics. In fact, it seems that he even came to be considered a disciple of Abū al-'Abbās al-Sabtī himself, who resided in Marrakech. See H. Ferhat, "Abu l-'Abbas: contestation et sainteté," *al-Qantara* 13/1 (1992): 185-204; H. Ferhat, *Sabta des origines au XIVème siècle* (Rabat: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1993), and V. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 79 ff.

[92] Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1988), vol. 1, 104.

[93] Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), vol. 6, 525-526.

by Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī (d. 1897). Considered the greatest of nineteenth century Moroccan historians, al-Nāṣirī was a prominent scholar, a member of the family that had founded the Nāṣiriyya Sufi brotherhood in the seventeenth century. His work is a general history of the Maghreb and the Islamic West from the Arab conquest to his own time, finishing it shortly before he died.[94] In the passages concerning al-Manṣūr, in addition to collecting earlier traditions by quoting authors such as Ibn Abī Zar' or Ibn Khallikān, he adds: "the people of the Maghreb claim (*wa mā taza'umu-hu 'āmmat al-Maghrib*) that the hot springs (*ḥamma*) of Abī Ya'qūb, which are near the city of Fez, are attributed (*mansūba*) to Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr, who had two demons (*'ifrītīn*) there emitting flames eternally, heating their waters. The healing (*al-shifā'*) achieved by those who bathe was due to the *baraka* of Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr".[95] Immediately afterwards he hastens to deny this popular information by explaining that, in fact, the heat of the water and the healing it causes is due to the sulphur (*al-kibrītiyya*) it contains, something that – he claims – occurs in other natural springs as well.[96]

Almost simultaneously, these popular traditions are confirmed by the scholar from Fez Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Idrīs al-Kattānī (d. 1927) in his monumental work on the saints and scholars of Fez, *Salwat al-Anfās*, the first lithographed edition of which appeared in 1898.[97] About the baths of Ya'qūb, he states: "Many people (*kathīr min al-nās*) believe that this place was a private compound of Sultan Abī Ya'qūb, who had the *laqab* of al-Manṣūr, known to the people (*al-'āmma*) as Sultan al-Akḥal (the black sultan), to whom is attributed the shrine (*mazāra*, place of pilgrimage) known in the East, where there was already worship before his move there, and he was the first disciple of the shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī."[98] That is, he adds that the Almohad caliph was known as the black sultan and had a shrine in the East where there was a cult prior to his

[94] D. Robinson and J-L. Triaud, *Le temps des marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale francaise v. 1880-1960* (Paris: Karthala, 1997), and R. C. Pennell, *Morocco Since 1830: A History* (New York: New York University Press), 109 ff.

[95] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā li-Akhbār duwal al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā* (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1997), vol. 2, 203 ff.

[96] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, vol. 2, 205.

[97] See E. Burke III, "The Moroccan Ulama, 1860-1912: An Introduction," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 93-125; B. Dennerlein, "Asserting Religious Authority in late Nineteenth/Early Twentieth Century Morocco: Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Kattânî and His Kitâb Salwat al-Anfâs," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Middle Eastern Islam*, eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 128-152, and S. Bazzaz, "Reading reform beyond the State: Salwat al-Anfas, Islamic Revival and Moroccan National History," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13/1 (2008): 1-13.

[98] Al-Kattānī, *Salwat al-Anfās* (Fes: al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥajariyya, 1898), vol. 3, 216.

alleged arrival, as well as linking him, as the first disciple, to one of the greatest actors in the history of Sufism: ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166).

These late nineteenth-century accounts reflect a series of popular traditions that have probably been developing for some time before, and which grant al-Manṣūr an undisputed degree of sanctity. The Almohad ruler appears as the builder of the thermal baths of Mulay Yaʻqūb, near Fez, where he controlled genies who permanently heated the water, and where people went to receive the *baraka* of the Almohad caliph to be cured. Likewise, he also appears as the black sultan, Sultan al-Akḥal, and as the first disciple of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, eponym of the Sufi *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya who lived in the mid-twelve century. In these traditions there are several issues to be analysed.

The first of these is the control over the *jinns* that the saints could exercise, as well as the protection they granted against them. Al-Manṣūr is thus represented as commander of an army of *ʻifrīt*, beings whom he uses for the benefit of humanity, specifically the healing of the sick through the *baraka* of the caliph-saint himself. These types of *jinn*-demons, who appear in chapter 27 of the Qur'an, are considered the most powerful of the *jinns*.[99] God granted the Prophet power over them, an ability now attributed to al-Manṣūr. The account also enhances the comparison of the Almohad caliph with another prophet, in this case Solomon. The figure of Solomon appears in the Qur'an as an example of a ruler who excelled in the performance of his responsibilities because of his wisdom. Solomon is the prototype of a wise king and a clear predecessor of Muḥammad, and the protection of the people is among his duties. One of his virtues is the mastery and control of evil forces: God granted Solomon the ability to subdue evil creatures and use them for the benefit of mankind. In the Qur'an, the son of David controls, as does al-Manṣūr, an army of *jinns*. It is also narrated how the queen of Sheba was brought in the presence of Solomon by the *ʻafārīt*, so that he also had control of the most powerful jinn. Likewise, Q. 34 narrates that the *jinns* built for Solomon various structures.[100]

These ideas also circulated in the oral tradition and popular Maghrebi religiosity. For instance, for the Ghzawa tribe Solomon is the king of the animals and of the *jinns*, and he roams the earth with his army of *jinn*. He is thus considered sultan of the *jinns*, as is Mulay ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī,[101] another figure who, as mentioned above, appears in the account of al-Manṣūr provided by the *Salwat al-Anfās*. It is clear that al-Jīlānī – who will be discussed later –

[99] A. González Vázquez, *Mujeres, islam y alteridades en el norte de Marruecos* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2015), 46.

[100] R. Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'ān and Muslim Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 35 ff. See Q. 2: 102; Q. 21: 81-82; Q. 34: 12-14, and Q. 38: 36-38.

[101] A. González Vázquez, *Mujeres, islam*, 56 ff.

could not have been a teacher of the Almohad ruler since they never met and his teachings had not even reached the Maghreb when the caliph died, but the fact that the Almohad ruler is related to this great Sufi master is further evidence that the sanctification of al-Manṣūr was already absolute and had overflowed the boundaries that had been established between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Likewise, another ruler who was also known, at least in Salé, as the sultan of the *jinns*, was the Marinid Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī (d. 1351).[102] Interestingly, this ruler was also known as the black sultan, Sultan al-Akḥal,[103] a denomination that al-Manṣūr also receives in al-Kattānī's narrative. There is a certain parallel of this identification of the Almohad caliph with the black sultan in the oral traditions collected by Raymond Jamous in his work *Honneur et Baraka*: Sultan Mulay Yaʻqūb witnesses the prodigies of a *sharīf,* decides to abdicate in favour of his son, who is known as Sultan al-Kḥol, the black sultan, and sets off across the country to meet prestigious *shurafāʼ* and benefit from their *baraka*. He thus arrives in *iqarʼiyen* territory, where he is humiliated and forced to dance. Then, enraged, he writes to his son, the black sultan, who sends an army and kills all the tribesmen.[104]

According to other oral traditions concerning the Chellah of Rabat, collected in this case by Basset, people believed that one of the sultans buried there, again Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī, was the black sultan.[105] The fact is that this Merinid ruler was occasionally referred to as such because of the Abyssinian origin of his mother.[106] In this sense, according to Ibn Abī Zarʻ al-Manṣūr's mother was also black.[107] Other traditions identify, however, the ʻAlawid sultan Mulay Ismāʻīl (d. 1727), also the son of a black slave, with Sultan al-Akḥal.[108] For example, the black sultan of the oral tradition analysed by the anthropologist Zakaria Rhani in *Le pouvoir de guérir* is a mythical figure superimposed on the image of Mulay

[102] A. S. Ettahiri and B. Tuil, "Chella, de la nécropole mérinide au royaume des djinns," in *Le Maroc Médiéval. Un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne* (Paris: Musée du Louvre-Hazan, 2014), 502-505.

[103] Al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-Istiqṣā*, vol. 3, 118. For more information on the black sultan, see D. Eickelman and B. Draioui, "Islamic myths from western Morocco: three texts," *Hesperis-Tamuda* 14 (1973): 195-225; Kh. Naamouni, *Le culte de Bouya Omar* (Casablanca: EDDIF, 1993), and M. Maarouf, *Jinn Eviction as a Discourse of Power: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Moroccan Magical Beliefs and Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[104] R. Jamous, *Honneur et Baraka. Les structures sociales traditionneles dans le Rif* Cambridge-Paris: Cambridge University Press-Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1981), 231 and 232.

[105] H. Basset, *Le Culte des Grotes au Maroc* (Algiers: Ancienne Maison Bastide-Jourdan, Jules Carbonel, 1920), 92, and A. Ettahiri and B. Tuil, "Chella, de la nécropole mérinide," 502-505.

[106] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir. Mythe, mystique et politique au Maroc* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 80.

[107] Ibn Abī Zarʻ, *Rawd al-Qirṭās*, vol. 2, 425.

[108] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir*, 13.

Ismā'īl. That is, Rhani's informants identify the black sultan with the 'Alawid ruler, especially in legends such as that of the saint 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yeffu of the Doukkala region.[109]

The idea emerging in the background of all these popular narratives is that the figure of the black sultan represents the enormous, sometimes unstoppable, power of the ruler, of the *makhzen* – the Maghrebi government – a power that has an ambiguous and shifting relationship with the saints and *shurafā'*. While in the account collected by Jamous this power is attracted by that of the *shurafā'*, in the narratives studied by Rhani, identifying Sultan al-Akḥal with Mulay Ismā'īl, the ruler appears mostly confronted with the power of the saints and even defeated by it, thus serving his figure to legitimise and recognise the attributions of the marabouts.

Another remarkable issue and one that returns us to the victorious leadership of *jihād* at the origin of al-Manṣūr's sanctification process is the fact that these other two sovereigns identified as black sultans were also remembered as great *mujāhidūn*. Concerning the Merinid Abū al-Ḥasan, Ibn Marzūq's portrait of him shows this perfectly.[110] Mulay Ismā'īl, on the other hand, led numerous victorious campaigns against infidels, such as the conquest of Larache from the Spanish or Tangier from the English.[111] War, therefore, was also at the root of the legendary imaginary surrounding these sultans.

VI. Manuscript 3/164 from the Ibn Yūsuf Library in Marrakech: the Talisman of al-Manṣūr

An unpublished miscellaneous manuscript, preserved in the Ibn Yūsuf library in Marrakech, contains a hitherto unknown text confirming al-Manṣūr's sanctification process.[112] Entitled *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, i.e., "the talisman of our lord Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr," this text of nine folios and Maghrebi script is probably a copy of the statements to be written on a protective amulet, which consisted of a piece of paper to be carried on the body folded and tucked into a cover.[113] The manuscript mentions al-Manṣūr as the blessed one, al-

[109] Z. Rhani, *Le pouvoir de guérir*, 64 and 81.

[110] M. J. Viguera, "La exaltación biográfica de Abū l-Ḥasan," 403-423.

[111] J. M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 230 ff.

[112] The Ibn Yūsuf library in Marrakech was founded by the Almoravid Amir 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshufīn (d. 1143). See J. Hendrickson, "A Guide to Arabic Manuscripts Libraries in Morocco, with Notes on Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Spain," *MELA Notes* 81 (2008): 15-88.

[113] On talismans, see, for example, E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers: Typographie Adolphe Jourdan, 1909), 143 ff., and C. Hamès (ed.), *Coran et talismans: textes et pratiques magiques en milieu musulman* (Paris: Karthala, 2007).

Mubārak, and it is the *baraka* bestowed by God on him, along with that of the Prophet and the power of the prayers written on it, that protects its bearer. The text begins by saying that whoever possesses this *ḥijāb* will know no harm or pain, and God will protect him from a considerable number of problems, of which, significantly, those of a warlike and violent nature (iron, arrows, projectiles, spears, stones, lead...) stand out.

It then goes on to list the different Qur'anic verses that must be written and that will protect the bearer. Two of the most important chapters are included in full: the first, the *fātiḥa*, and number 112, which according to Islamic religiosity comprise the entire Qur'an. Surahs 113 and 114, chapters clearly linked to protection, are also included. According to the *Tafsīr* – Qur'anic exegesis – of al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273), Muḥammad asked through them for God's protection on behalf of his grandchildren, and even the companion of the Prophet Ibn Mas'ūd (d. c. 653) went so far as to say that they were not part of the Qur'an, but were invocations of protection. Likewise, in al-Qurṭubī's *Tafsīr*, the fourth verse of Surah 114 is used to discuss the lawfulness of the use of talismans. That is, these are Qur'anic fragments closely linked to these objects and to safeguarding. The rest of the verses that are included suggest the idea according to which man can only seek protection in God, who is the only refuge, and that everything is predetermined.[114]

Up to this point the content of the manuscript does not offer many clues as to the context in which it may have been written, since it follows the basic outline of this type of writing and includes the Qur'anic passages common to them: chapters 1, 112, 113 and 114, as well as the verse of the throne (Q. 2: 255-6).[115] One of the best examples of this genre is the famous treatise *Shams al-Ma'ārif wa Latā'if al-'awārif*, by the North African al-Būnī (d. 1225).[116] In this work, al-Būnī outlines all the magical and esoteric practices known in his time concerning astrology, talismans, magic squares, invocations, the occult science of letters, and white magic. Among the forty chapters that make up this encyclopaedia of esotericism, some rituals based on the power of the Qur'anic text are described, including a series of surahs and verses for magical and protective purposes coinciding with those of the manuscript.

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[114] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, Khizānat Ibn Yūsuf bi-Marrūkush, manuscript 3/164, f. 1-8 (folios are counted as if they were pages, since this is how they are numbered in the manuscript itself). Al-Qurṭubī: *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān. Compendio del Tafsir del Corán "Al-Qurtubi"*, trans. Zakariya Maza Abu Mubarak (Granada: Cdad. Musulmana Española, 2005-2013), vol. 10, 325-331.

[115] See A. Labarta, *Libro de dichos maravillosos. Misceláneo morisco de magia y adivinación* (Madrid: CSIC, 1993), 35.

[116] P. Lory, "Magie et religión dans l'oeuvre de Muhyi al-Dîn al-Bûnî," *Horizons Maghrébins* 7/8 (1986): 4-15.

At the end of the manuscript a series of names appears to attest the power of the talisman, and which provide further context for the production of this text. These names include those of the four *rāshidūn* caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī), those of various companions of the Prophet, daughters of the Prophet (Fāṭima or Umm Kulthūm, for example), or the most prominent wives of the Prophet, Khadīja and 'Ā'isha.[117] Two other names are included which bring us closer to a mystical, Sufi context. These are Uways al-Qarnī (d. 657) and Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 815-820), two alleged "proto-Sufis," the former a companion of the Prophet.[118]

Nevertheless, the name mentioned in the text and which can undoubtedly help the most in providing a correct dating of the writing and, therefore, in understanding the circumstances in which it was composed, is that of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, or al-Kīlānī, as it appears in the manuscript.[119] It is clear that the name of this great Sufi master, the inspirer if not founder of the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya, brings us back to a mystical context. The first thing to be considered is when this master, or his teachings, began to have influence in the Maghreb. It seems that knowledge about his thought may have reached the Islamic West early through the Sufi 'Abd al-Laṭīf b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Hibat Allāh al-Hāshimī al-Baghdādī, who is said to have written a work on al-Jīlānī entitled *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Manāqib al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, and travelled to al-Andalus where he received numerous pupils, dying there in 1226.[120] Nevertheless, the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya and its spread did not reach the Maghreb until the fifteenth century, driven by the descendants of two sons of al-Jīlānī, who, departing from al-Andalus, introduced the brotherhood in Fez and founded the great family of the *shurafā'* Jīlāniyūn or Qudiriyūn.[121]

Being a text of a popular character, it seems more accurate to place the *terminus post quem* in those dates and not in the thirteenth century, where the knowledge of the Persian *shaykh* would have been reduced to much smaller circles. As for the *terminus ante quem*, nothing can be stated for certain, since the production of this text could reach the twentieth century where, it should be

[117] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9.

[118] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9. From Uways derives a form of mysticism that consists of the transmission of spiritual knowledge between two individuals without the need for physical interaction between them. As for Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, he constitutes the penultimate step in the so-called golden chain of Sufism, before reaching the Prophet himself.

[119] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 9.

[120] His biography can be found at Ismā'īl Pāshā Al-Bābānī, *Īḍāḥ al-maknūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), vol. 2, 642.

[121] Th. Zarcone, "La Qadiriya," in *Las sendas de Allah. Las cofradías musulmanas desde sus orígenes hasta la actualidad*, eds. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 1997), 567-575.

remembered, al-Manṣūr was related to al-Jīlānī in al-Kattānī's *Salwat al-Anfās*. In any case, the fact that the name of the *shaykh* appears in its oriental form (al-Kīlānī instead of al-Jīlānī) suggests that the text is from the 15th-16th centuries, a time when the fame of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī was reaching the Maghreb precisely from the East. In a later period, the name of the *shaykh* appears in the Maghreb fully fixed as al-Jīlānī. Likewise, mentioning al-Jīlānī just after the Prophet's companions and family, ahead of Uways al-Qarnī and Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, indicates the pre-eminence of the latter and that, therefore, the *Ḥijāb* was composed in the milieu of the *ṭarīqa* Qādiriyya.

The fact that the protection of the *Ḥijāb* includes primarily bladed weapons, but also [projectiles of] lead,[122] i.e., firearms, also suggests that it was composed at a time of transition between the two types of weaponry, where firearms did not yet dominate the battlefield. This chronology coincides with the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.

Similarly, the other texts accompanying the *Ḥijāb* in the miscellaneous manuscript do not suggest a later date: the *Talkhīṣ al-shams wa-l-qamar wa-l-shuhūr wa-l-zallāzil* by the astronomer and mathematician Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Bannā' (d. 1321),[123] i.e., a work of the early 14th century; a text on paradise and hell by 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad al-Qāḍī (ca. eleventh c.),[124] a work popularized by al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) in the fifteenth century;[125] and several hadith.[126] Therefore, if it is accepted, at least provisionally, the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries as those of the creation of the *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, this text confirms the degree of sanctification reached by al-Manṣūr from his death until that period, a sanctity also clearly including his intermediation between God and the believers. Likewise, this talisman also certifies the socio-cultural process of interrelation between power, Sufism and sanctity, a phenomenon which was taking place since Merinid times, and which affected the figure and memory of the Almohad caliph. The talisman is, moreover, deeply associated with a key feature of the memory of al-Manṣūr: the protection of believers, a matter that he had carried out through charitable works such as the construction of a hospital

[122] *Ḥijāb Mawlā-nā Ya'qūb al-Manṣūr*, f. 1, 3.

[123] H-P-J. Rénaud, "Sur les dates de la vie du mathématicien arabe marocain Ibn al-Bannā' (XIIe-XIIIe s. J.C.)," *Isis. A Journal of the History of Science Society* 27/2 (1937): 216-218.

[124] *Daqā'iq al-akhbār fī dhikr al-janna wa al-nār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al'Ilmiyya, 1984).

[125] See Sh. Tamari, *Iconotextual Studies in the Muslim Vision of Paradise* (Wiesbaden-Ramat-Gan: Harrassowitz Verlag-Bar-Ilan University, 1999); N. Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire. Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), and S. R. Burge, *Angels in Islam. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik* (London-New York: Routledge, 2012).

[126] Khizānat Ibn Yūsuf bi-Marrūkush, manuscripts 1/164, 4/164, 5/164 y 6/164.

or, above all, his leadership of *jihād* and his successful defence of the borders against the infidels.

VII. Final Remarks: from Warrior-Caliph to Saint

The earliest sources create the image of al-Manṣūr as a leader of *jihād*, as a victorious warrior-caliph, who surrounded himself with men of religion and who also stood out for his piety and his charitable acts. It is this depiction as *mujāhid*, the only one that is repeated over the centuries, which is the basis of his memory and of his "sacralization". That is to say, it is the victorious *jihād* materialised in the battle of Alarcos, which prevented al-Manṣūr from the *damnatio memoriae* that, however, did occur in other Almohad rulers or in the Almohad movement in general, and even allowed this caliph to be used as an example of a good sultan.

On the other hand, the first accounts of a "legendary" nature, and thus the first traces of the sanctification of al-Manṣūr, appear in Eastern sources, due perhaps to his image of *mujāhid* there and which is clearly presented in the letter sent by Saladin, or to the idea of him having a desire to travel to the East, a notion that may have been popularised there by ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, who finished his work in Egypt. Curiously, it is in the East where a popular cult existed in his mausoleum, since it is the only place where a tomb of al-Manṣūr has "existed" for a prolonged period of time. In this sense, one might wonder if the early disappearance of his tomb in the Maghreb due to the Merinid destruction of the Almohad burial places may have contributed to the appearance of all those narratives that we have seen.

In the Islamic West, from the fourteenth century onwards, narratives of a legendary and sanctifying nature also began to appear, closely linked in these early centuries to *jihād*, such as the dream recounted by Ibn Abī Zarʿ or the alleged departure of the caliph to carry out *ribāṭ* at the Andalusi frontier. In most cases, the testimonies of the sources seem to indicate, or at least discursively construct, that this process of sanctification was from "bottom to top": it began from the sphere of popular religiosity rather than from the scholars and men of letters who wrote these sources, who always keep a certain distance from these accounts and even on many occasions deny their veracity. Again, it is possible that the early destruction of the caliph's tomb due to Merinid action, and even the plausible occultation of his death mentioned by Ibn ʿIdhārī, may have helped the emergence of these traditions in the popular substratum. Likewise, the strong influence that the conceptions of kingship and sanctity hegemonic in the Merinid ideological context had on these accounts and on this first evidence of

sanctification in the sources of the Islamic West, from the fourteenth century onwards, must also be emphasised.

Gradually elements belonging to other great saints, such as the dominion of the *jinns* or the protection and healing power of his *baraka*, were added to this sanctification derived from his activity as a *mujāhid*, a motif of sacralization that gradually faded. Although this last phase of sanctification has been dated through al-Kattānī and al-Nāṣirī at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, we cannot discard its creation much earlier in contexts of popular religiosity, a hypothesis that the Marrakech manuscript helps to concretise. From this process, it is noteworthy that the Almohad ruler came to be included in such prestigious Sufi circles as that of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, or his identification as sultan al-Akḥal, a certainly ambiguous figure that, although sometimes having a pejorative character, represented the almost unlimited power of the sovereign.

Thus, war – along with other elements linked to piety and religiosity – became a means of sanctification in medieval Islam, just as it had been in other traditions such as Christianity.[127] And, of course, the case of al-Manṣūr was not the only one. A very widespread and significant example is the veneration surrounding the burial places of the Prophet's companions, or their successors, who participated in the expansion of the frontiers of Islam, a phenomenon encompassing the entire geography of medieval Islam. For example, in Sind, the veneration of a series of tombs belonging to companions of the Prophet who participated in its conquest was carried out.[128] Similarly, on the other side of the Islamic realm, in Saragossa, the geographer al-ʻUdhrī (d. 1085), in his *Niẓām al-murkhān fī-l-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, reported the existence of the graves – and their veneration – of Ḥanash b. ʻAbd Allāh al-Ṣanʻānī and ʻAlī b. Rabāḥ al-Lakhmī, two *tābiʻūn*, i.e., successors of the Prophet's companions, who allegedly were part of the conquering armies of al-Andalus.[129] In these cases, as in that of the Almohad caliph, the memory of active participation in *jihād* was intermingled with other elements of sanctification, such as closeness to the Prophet.

[127] See, for example, the cases of St. Canute – Canute IV of Denmark (d. 1086), – or the crusader king St. Louis – Louis IX of France (d. 1270).

[128] M. A. Asif, *A Book of Conquest. The Chachnama and Muslim Origins in South Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 150 ff.

[129] Al-ʿUdhrī, *Tarsīʿ al-akhbār wa tanwīʿ al-āthār*, in F. de la Granja, "La Marca Superior en la obra de al-ʿUḏrī," *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón* 8 (1966): 447-545.

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JIHĀD AS A TOOL FOR SANCTIFYING AND CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF QUṬUZ AS A *MUJĀHID* SULTAN

Mehdi Berriah*

The institutionalisation of *jihād* by the *ʿulamāʾ* – scholars – as a religious obligation within the framework of Muslim political authority, whether it be *jihād al-ṭalab* (offensive) or *jihād al-dafʿ* (defensive), has, in effect, transformed *jihād* into a tool that can be mobilised for political purposes. It was probably the Umayyads who made *jihād* central to their policy to the extent that it largely became the Umayyad *raison d'être* and the driving force of the dynasty, at least until the end of the reign of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 125/743).[1] The mobilisation of *jihād* as a political instrument is particularly evident in periods marked by acute external threats, such as during the Crusades and the Mongol invasions.[2] Yet this politicisation of *jihād* by Muslim rulers does not exclude the

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[1] K. Y. Blankinship, *The End of the Jihâd State. The Reign of Hishām Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[2] E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade. Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient), 1968, 59-130; C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 89-255; M. Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", in *Les Mamelouks: les cavaliers de l'Islam. Études sur l'art de la guerre chez les Mamelouks*, ed. Mehdi Berriah (Paris: Héritage, 2022), 176-215; M. Berriah, *L'art de la guerre chez les Mamelouks (1250-1375): stratégies et tactiques* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 152-157; M. Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya: between Praise and Criticism," *Arabian Humanities* 14 (2020): 11-28; M. Berriah, "Représentations, sunnanisation et sacralisation de la *furūsiyya* à l'époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 67 (2020): 234-237; M. Berriah, "Combattre par la plume, le prêche et l'épée: les représentations du rôle des ulémas dans l'effort du *jihād* mamelouk (moitié viie/xiiie — début ixe/xive siècles)," in *Représentations*

presence of deep religious conviction - quite the opposite: it often accompanies or reinforces it. This double register – instrumentalization and conviction – is not contradictory in the sources: it is the very grammar by which chronicles render *jihād* both politically necessary and theologically salvific.

Posthumous sanctification through *jihād* is a rarer phenomenon, exemplified most notably by rulers such as Nūr al-Dīn al-Zinkī (d. 569/1174), Saladin (d. 589/1193), and Baybars (d. 676/1277), who arguably represent its most compelling instances. This sanctification can be explained by the extent and intensity of their *jihād*-related activities as well as by the array of instruments employed in its pursuit – ranging from the mobilisation of human and material resources, to the engagement of the *ʿulamāʾ* and religious devotees, and the use of propaganda aimed at rallying support, raising awareness, and motivating as broad a spectrum of Muslim forces as possible in the struggle against the Crusaders and, in Baybars's case, the Mongols – against whom they achieved a number of significant victories.[3]

The case of Quṭuz stands apart from the examples above and is, in several respects, unique. He was the only Mamluk sultan – and likely the only Muslim ruler more broadly – whose name was sanctified through *jihād* despite a reign of less than a year, and this on account of a single major confrontation: the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt in 658/1260. It was his victory over the Ilkhanid forces commanded by Kitbugha (d. 658/1260), operating under Hülegü (d. 663/1265), and the potent symbolism associated with this triumph, that elevated Quṭuz to the pantheon of Islamic holy warriors.

An analysis of the Mamluk chronicles reveals that the sanctification of Quṭuz through *jihād* was articulated through three principal narrative strands: his leadership at the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, his purportedly noble lineage, and his portrayal as divinely chosen to confront and defeat the Mongols. Close cross-referencing of Mamluk-period accounts of the battle highlights the tendency of certain chroniclers to confer upon Quṭuz a distinctive religious aura, shaped through the use of specific literary *topoi*.

et symbolique de la guerre et de la paix dans le monde arabe, ed. Sylvie Denoix and Salam Diab-Duranton (Cairo: Ifao, 2024), 254-255.

[3] Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade*, 67-120; A. Troadec, "Baybars and the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām: The Construction of Legitimacy," *Mamluk Studies Review* 18 (2014-2015): 121-132, 137-146; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", 179-211. See also A. Fuess, "Ottoman Ġazwah- Mamluk Ǧihād. Two Arms on the Same Body?," in *Everything is on the Move. The "Mamluk Empire" as Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2014), 271-275.

While R. Chapoutot-Rémadi, in her unpublished dissertation *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamelouke*, devoted a section to this theme,[4] the present article seeks to complement her study by bringing forward a number of additional elements.

Methodologically, the sources examined here belong to distinct genres – chronicles, *furūsiyya* treatises, poetry, and biographical notices – each shaped by its own narrative conventions and rhetorical purposes. Rather than approaching them as uniform repositories of "facts," the analysis that follows treats them as constructive frameworks that selectively monumentalize Quṭuz. As far as possible, an attempt has been made to establish cross-attestation among the sources.

This article analyses the construction of Quṭuz's sanctified image through *jihād* as presented in the Mamluk chronicles. Drawing on narrative sources, the study first sheds light on the context in which Quṭuz emerges. In a second step, the study identifies the recurring motifs shared across various accounts. It then examines the modalities and narrative strategies through which the figure of Quṭuz is shaped as a heroic combatant in the cause of *jihād*. The article concludes with a synthesis of the insights gained from this textual analysis.

I. Quṭuz in the Sources

Little is known of Quṭuz's life prior to his seizure of power on 24 dhū al-qaʿda 657/12 November 1259. His name appears for the first time in the sources at the beginning of the reign of al-Muʿīzz Aybak al-Turkumānī (d. 655/1257). To better understand Quṭuz's rise to prominence and his trajectory, it is necessary to review the key events surrounding the early foundation of the Mamluk Sultanate.

In the wake of the failure of the Seventh Crusade, led by Louis IX, Tūrān Shāh, son and successor of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 647/1249), founder of the Baḥriyya Mamluk regiment, was assassinated by his father's Mamluks. No matter what system of government was put in place, the monopoly of power was henceforth held by the army or, in other words, by the Baḥriyya Mamluks, who constituted its main element.[5] Seeking to preserve the appearance of Ayyubid sovereignty,

[4] R. Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke sous les premiers sultans Baḥrides: 648/1250-741/1340*, PhD dissertation (Aix-en-Provence: University of Provence, 1993), vol. 1, 412-452.

[5] S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols. The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193-1260*, (Albany: New York, 1977), 303-304. On the Baḥriyya regiment see D. Ayalon, "Le régiment Bahriya dans l'armée mamelouke," in *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt (1250-1517)*, ed. David Ayalon

the Baḥriyya therefore decided to recognise as *sulṭāna* the wife of their former master al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, Umm Khalīl, better known as Shajarat al-Durr (d. 655/1257), who became one of the rare Muslim women to exercise sovereign power, after the famous example of Raḍiyya, *sulṭāna* of Delhi in 634/1236.[6] What distinguishes Shajarat al-Durr is that she was the only woman of servile origin to have exercised power in an Arabic-speaking region of the *dār al-Islām*, where Islamic religious traditions of political authority persisted uninterrupted from the period of the conquests, excluding women from any form of political governance. Nevertheless, the brief episode of Shajarat al-Durr's exercise of power had no consequences for the place of women in Muslim politics.[7]

The murder of Tūrān Shāh, followed by the appointment of Shajarat al-Durr, definitively marked the transfer of power to the Mamluks.[8] However, Shajarat al-Durr's legitimacy, which rested on her status as the wife of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, was too fragile for her power to be recognised. As a woman, she had no legitimacy to rule; Sunni Muslim tradition is clear on this point.[9]

The other Muslim rulers did not recognise Shajarat al-Durr's sultanate under any circumstances. Proof of this rejection is in the derogatory and humiliating remark made by the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿṣim (d. 656/1258), who suggested, in a letter he sent to the *sulṭāna* in 648/1250, that if there were no more men in the country, he should send one to govern Egypt.[10] However, it was above all the claim to the throne by the Ayyubids of Syria, towards whom there remained

(London: Variorum, 1977), part III, 133-141; S. Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army," *Studia Islamica* 45 (1977): 65-99; S. Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army (Conclusion)," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 147-182; L. Northrup, "The Baḥrī Mamlūk sultanate, 1250-1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Islamic Egypt*, *640-1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 247-251.

[6] M. Athar Ali, "Raḍiyya," *EI²*, vol. 8, 384. On the historical figure of Shajarat al-Durr see S. Soetens, "Šağarat ad-Durr: A comparative Study of Three Historical Sources," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 30 (1999): 97-112.

[7] A. Levanoni, "Šağar ad-Durr: A Case of Female Sultane in Medieval Islam," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras III, Proceedings of the 6th, 7th and 8th International Colloquium, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1997, 1998 and 1999*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Jo van Steenbergen (Louvain: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 209-210; 217-218.

[8] S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 304; Ammann, "Shadjar *al-Durr*", *EI²*, vol. 9, 181.

[9] The following hadith is reported: لن يُفلح قوم وَلّوا أمرهم امرأة "A people who entrust their affairs to a woman will never prosper." al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Ibdāʿ, 2020), 523, hadith 4425.

[10] إن كانت الرجال قد عدمت عندكم فأعلمونا حتى نسير إليكم رجلًا

Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1997), vol. 1, 463-464.

a certain loyalty,[11] in particular to al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (d. 659/1261), that constituted the Achilles heel of the young Mamluk sultanate. Aware of her weakness, Shajarat al-Durr decided, in order to strengthen her position and consolidate the sultanate, to marry the *atabeg* (commander-in-chief of the armies) Aybak al-Turkumānī, who took the title of al-Malik al-Muʿīzz and to whom she ceded power.[12] In all likelihood, this appointment of Aybak was initially intended to be no more than a temporary solution until a more durable one could be found.[13]

However, Mamluk power was not recognised as legitimate, and Aybak was well aware of this. The Mamluks still had to try to follow in the footsteps of the Ayyubids. To this end, Aybak offered the Ayyubids a little power by elevating to the rank of sultan the Ayyubid al-Ashraf Mūsā, a young descendant of the Ayyubid dynasty, aged barely six. The latter was only a front sultan since, as al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd reports, "diplomas and rescripts were drawn up in the name of both sovereigns, but it was al-Muʿīzz [Aybak] who held the government and administration of the kingdom, and all that remained to the child was his title".[14]

This strategy was intended to counter the political plans of the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, master of Damascus, who clearly had designs on Cairo. Seeing no change in the consideration of the Mamluk sultanate by the neighbouring Ayyubid powers in Syria, Aybak was determined to fight al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, who would sooner or later attack Egypt to seize the power for which he had the most legitimate claim. As the grandson of Saladin and the most powerful Ayyubid prince in Syria, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf possessed a far stronger dynastic claim than Aybak, the former Mamluk of his late cousin and sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.[15]

Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf sent his forces to Gaza to conquer Egypt and overthrow Aybak. However, the Ayyubid troops were defeated by the emir Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy, leader of the Baḥriyya, in Rajab 648/October 1250.[16] In Dhū al-qaʿda 648/January 1251, it was again Aqṭāy who was commissioned by Aybak to fight

[11] S. Runciman, *A History of the* Crusades (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), vol. 3, 275.

[12] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Mohamed Rahim, *Die Chronik des ibn Wāṣil. Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil. Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb. Kritische Edition des letzten Teils (646-1248-659/1261) mit Kommentar. Untergang des Ayyubiden und Beginn des Mamlukenherrschaft* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 90; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra fī tārīkh al-hijra*, ed. Donald Richards (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1998), 3-4.

[13] Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 303.

[14] Al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd, *Kitāb al-majmūʿ al-mubārak, Chronique des Ayyoubides (602-658/1205-6-1259-60)*, french translation Françoise Micheau and Anne-Marie Eddé (Paris: *L'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 16, 1994), 90. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 464.

[15] Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 320-321.

[16] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 465.

the Ayyubid coalition from Syria, still led by al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. The confrontation took place in a locality called Kurāʿ, near al-ʿAbāsiyya, and ended in another defeat of al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, who was forced to flee the battlefield and return to Damascus, leaving several of his relatives to be captured by Aybak's army. Among the prisoners were al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrānshāh, one of Saladin's sons, his brother Nuṣrat al-Dīn Muḥammad, al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā b. al-Manṣūr, the emir of Homs, and al-Malik Ṣālih ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. al-ʿAdil, emir of Damascus.[17] In the wake of this victory, Aybak ordered Aqṭāy to seize part of southern Palestine, including Gaza, and the Syrian coast.[18] To consolidate his power in Cairo further, Aybak, in 650/1252, removed the young al-Ashraf Mūsā from the throne to take sole possession of the title of sultan of Egypt, and he appointed Quṭuz *nāʾib al-sulṭān* (vice-sultan).[19]

Aybak took a dim view of the growing popularity and influence of Aqṭāy and the Mamluk Baḥriyya after their successes against the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and the rebellion of the Bedouin of Upper and Middle Egypt led by the chief Ḥisn al-Dīn Thaʿlab in 652/1253.[20] Aybak believed the power of the Baḥriyya chief posed a threat to his authority. On Wednesday 3 Shaʿbān 652/18 September 1254, Aybak invited Aqṭāy to the citadel and had him assassinated. Among the three assassins identified by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), Quṭuz is mentioned first.[21] When rumours of Aqṭāy's murder were confirmed, the Baḥriyya Mamluks, including Baybars al-Bunduqdarī, Qalāwūn al-Alfī and Sunqur al-Ashqar, fled to Syria and the Seljuq sultanate of Rūm. Aybak ordered the plundering of Baḥriyya Mamluk properties and the confiscation of their goods, and he seized Alexandria, which Aqṭāy had owned as an *iqṭāʿ* since 650/1252. Those who could not flee were imprisoned or executed.[22]

Quṭuz returned to prominence after the assassination of his master Aybak on 23 Rabīʿ I 655/10 April 1257, commissioned by Shajarat al-Durr, who maintained epistolary relations with Quṭuz, as Youssef Ragheb has highlighted.[23] In addition, one version of the Shajarat al-Durr assassination implicates Quṭuz.[24] A few years later, the arrival of the Mongols in the region completely upset the

[17] They were released in 651/1253 as part of a truce negotiated between the two sides through the mediation of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿṣim, who sent Najm al-Dīn al-Badrāʾī to Cairo.

[18] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 472, 476.

[19] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 96; al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd, *Chroniques des Ayyoubides*, 90; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 477.

[20] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 16; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 479-481.

[21] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 483. The other two are Bahādur and Sanjar al-Ghanmī.

[22] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 12-13; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 479-481, 483-485.

[23] Y. Ragheb, "Une lettre de Šağar al-Durr au futur sultan Quṭuz," *Annales Islamologiques* 48/2 (2014): 135-165.

[24] Ragheb, "Une lettre de Šağar al-Durr," 154-155.

balance of power in the Near East and put a definitive end to the dream of the Ayyubids of Syria of one day recovering Egypt. By sweeping into Syria, Hülegü's troops abruptly and definitively changed the political situation between the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, ending the former's existence in the region.

Faced with the Mongol threat, at the end of 657/1259, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf sent the historian Kamāl al-Dīn b. ʿAdīm (d. 660/1262) to ask for help from the Cairo sultanate, which was now headed by Quṭuz. Indeed, faced with the mortal danger posed by the Mongol advance, the latter removed al-Malik al-Manṣūr, son of Aybak, from the throne and proclaimed himself sultan.[25] The request for help from al-Nāṣir Yūsuf was well received by Quṭuz,[26] as it constituted de facto official recognition of Mamluk power. When he set off for Cairo, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf stopped once he reached the border, deciding not to continue his journey. Most likely, he feared that once in Cairo, he would be at the mercy of Quṭuz, in whom he had no confidence. In the end, his torpor and indecision prevented him from reaching either destination, as he was caught by Kitbughā, Hülegü's commander, who sent him under escort to his master. He remained there until his execution, following the announcement of the defeat of ʿAyn Jālūt on 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260 in a battle in which the new master of Cairo, Quṭuz, distinguished himself.

II. Quṭuz's Reputation as a Warrior

As is evident from the preceding discussion, Quṭuz, though now a sultan, is consistently portrayed in the sources as a warrior – one whose reputation for martial prowess had been established well before the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt. Quoting al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1326), Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī (d. 8th/14th) records a depiction of Quṭuz as the most expert horseman and the most valiant among the Turks.[27] The Arabic term "Turk" or the expression "dawlat al-Turk" (dynasty of the Turks) is occasionally used by Mamluk-era chroniclers to refer to the Mamluks and the Mamluk Sultanate, which, through its campaigns against the Mongols, Franks, and Armenians, came to be regarded as "the embodiment of

[25] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 46; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 507.

[26] Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1990-2000), vol. 48, 45-46; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Turkī (Giza: Dār hajr, 1998), vol. 17, 387-388; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-wathā'iq al-qawmiyya, 2010), vol. 1, 218-219.

[27] كان السلطان المظفّر رحمه الله رجلًا شجّاعًا مقدامًا حتى قيل إنه لم يركب الفرس قبله من الترك أفرس ولا أشجع منه

Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, ed. Bernd Ratke *et al.* (Cairo: al-Maʿhad al-almānī li-l-āthār bi-l-Qāhira, 1960-1994), vol. 8, 41.

the spirit of *jihād*."[28] This perception of the Mamluks as a divinely chosen martial elite is echoed in the writings of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) and his contemporaries, for whom the rise of the Turks marked a providential intervention in defence of Islam. As Ibn Khaldūn writes:

> فكان من لطف الله سبحانه أن تدارك الإيمان بأحياء رمقه وتلافي شمل المسلمين بالديار المصرية بحفظ نظامه وحماية سياجه بأن بعث لهم هذه الطائفة التركية.[29]
>
> Among God's largesse and mercy, the fact that He revived the faith [Islam] when it was about to die out and that He preserved the Muslims of Egypt by protecting its state and borders by sending this group of Turks.

Within this framework, the *laqab al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn* operates as a performative title. It casts Quṭuz as a figure of salvific militancy – a role the narrative retroactively maps onto earlier episodes (acts of valour, exhortations, prayers) and then projects forward onto ʿAyn Jālūt. The title does not simply denote an accomplished status; it actively helps to authorise it by inscribing the ruler into a narrative in which victory, piety, and rightful command mutually reinforce one another.

The sources depict Quṭuz as invoking precisely this image of the divinely sanctioned warrior-ruler in legitimising his seizure of power. In justifying the dethronement of the young al-Malik al-Manṣūr, he is represented, in the accounts, as arguing that, given the gravity of the Mongol threat, the state required not a child at its head, but a seasoned military commander – an image the sources attribute to him and that chroniclers were keen to reinforce. As al-Yūnīnī writes:

> كان السلطان المظفّر رحمه الله رجلًا شجّاعًا مقدامًا حتى قيل إنه لم يركب الفرس قبله من الترك أفرس ولا أشجع منه.
>
> Sultan al-Muẓaffar – may God have mercy on him, was a brave man and a great leader, so much so that it is said of him that none before him rode among the Turks as good a horseman and as brave as he.[30]

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[28] P. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades. The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517*, (London: Longman, 1986), 95.

[29] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar wa dīwān al-mubtadaʾi wa l-khabar fī ayyām al-ʿarab wa l-ʿajam wa l-barbar wa man ʿāṣarahum min dawī al-sulṭān al-akbār*, ed. Khalīl Shaḥḥāda and Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 2000-2001), vol. 5, 418.

[30] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 41 quoting al-Yūnīnī.

Quṭuz is described in the sources as demonstrating considerable mastery in the discipline of *furūsiyya*. Two sources in particular advance this depiction. Baybars al-Manṣūrī notes that one of the principal factors contributing to Quṭuz's acceptance among the emirs was his renown for personal bravery (*al-shajāʿa*) and his expertise in *furūsiyya*. In this context, the term denotes not simply horsemanship in the literal sense, but a codified martial discipline aimed at cultivating a broad array of military skills. It encompassed proficiency with multiple weapons, versatility in combat across various terrains and conditions, and the ability to fight both mounted and on foot.[31] Further evidence is provided by the prominent Syrian lance-master of the early Mamluk period, Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ (d. 695/1296), who credits Quṭuz with the authorship of a tactical procedure in his treatise *Kitāb al-furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya* ("*The Book of Furūsiyya and Warlike Procedures*"). This attribution is used to associate Quṭuz with the codification of military knowledge in the early Mamluk era. In one passage of the treatise, al-Rammāḥ refers explicitly to Quṭuz in the following terms:

الباب السابع
من تصنيف الأستاذ الأجَلّ، المجاهد المرابط في سبيل الله – تعالى – سيف الدين قطز أحد مماليك المقرّ العالي، الشمسيّ، شمس الدين، نائب السلطنة المعظمة بحلب المحروسة. قال الأستاذ: أذا كنت أنت قدّام، وجاءك خصمك من خلفك بقبض الروماني فيكون عملك أنّك ترمي رمحك (ب)تبطيل إلى خلفك أكثر من ثلثيه، فإذا أقرب إليك رأس رمحه وصار عند كتفك (ف)بطّل رمحه، وأسْبح رمحك، فما يخطئُ صدره أبدًا، إن شاء الله – تعالى – واطلب رأس الميدان، وانظر الأقران.

[31] For more information on the *furūsiyya* see D. Ayalon, "Notes on the Furūsiyya Exercises and Games in the Mamlūk Sultanate," in *The Mamlūk Military Society*, ed. David Ayalon (London: Variorum 1979), part II, 31-62; S. Conermann, "Muḥammad zu Pferde im Kampf. Ein Beispiel für das Genre der *Furūsiyya an-nabawiyya* während der Mamlukenzeit (1250-1517)," in *Pferde in Asien: Geschichte, Handel und Kultur*, ed. Bert G. Fragner *et al.* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschafter, 2009), 51-61; A. Carayon, *La Furūsiyya des Mamlûks : une élite sociale à cheval (1250-1517)*, PhD dissertation (Aix-en-Provence: university of Provence, 2012); A. Zouache, "Une culture en partage : la *furūsiyya* à l'épreuve du temps," *Médiévales* 64 (2013): 57-75; A. Carayon, "Représenter son identité, imposer son pouvoir. Les jeux guerriers des Mamelouks et la symbolique de la *furūsiyya*," in *Guerre et paix dans le Proche-Orient medieval (Xe-XVe siècle)*, ed. Mathieu Eychenne, Stéphane Pradines and Abbès Zouache (Cairo: Ifao, 2019), 87-133; M. Berriah, "Représentations, sunnanisation et sacralisation de la *furūsiyya*", 229-246; M. Ibrahim, "Les manuscrits à peintures de *furūsiyya* : illustrations d'un art militaire équestre de la période mamelouke," *Les Cahiers de l'École du Louvre* 21 (2023) http://journals.openedition.org/cel/29244; M. Ibrahim, "Dirāsa li-makhṭūṭāt ʿilm al-ramy bi-l-qaws wa l-sahm fī al-ʿaṣr al-mamlūkī (648-923/1250-1517)," in *Représentations et symbolique de la guerre et de la paix dans le monde arabe*, ed. Sylvie Denoix and Salam Diab-Duranton (Cairo: Ifao, 2024), 305-332.

> Chapter Seven
> From the work of the illustrious master, the diligent fighter in the path of God – the Most High – Sayf al-Dīn, Quṭuz, one of the Mamluks of very high rank, al-Shamsī, sun of religion, *nā'ib* of the honourable sultanate, in Aleppo, the guarded. The master said: when you are in front and your opponent comes at you from behind holding his spear in the manner of the Romans, you must act as follows: place more than two-thirds of your spear towards the back, and when he (the opponent) approaches the tip of his spear until it reaches the level of your shoulder blade, then pare his spear (by striking it) and extend yours, and under no circumstances miss his chest if God, the Most High, wills. Reach the entrance of the *maydān* and look at your opponents.[32]

Although the existence of this tactical procedure and its attribution to Quṭuz are attested solely by Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, and the accuracy of such a solitary claim may reasonably be questioned, the very fact that a renowned master of *furūsiyya* – specifically of the spear tradition – cites Quṭuz and credits him with a warlike innovation is itself revealing. It speaks to the level of expertise and the martial reputation that Quṭuz had evidently come to embody within the culture of *furūsiyya*.[33]

In this light, attributions in the *furūsiyya* corpus likewise participate in the sacral-martial construction of authority: technical expertise, tactical invention, and bodily discipline are folded into a pious politics of war. The ascription to Quṭuz in al-Rammāḥ's *Kitāb al-furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya* thus reads less as neutral reportage than as a generic gesture that binds technical mastery to righteous rule. Given that this attribution is uniquely transmitted by al-Rammāḥ, its evidentiary value is limited; its rhetorical value, however, is clear, especially in the case of Quṭuz, whose reputation relied heavily on narrative and symbolic markers of legitimacy.

A final element of particular significance is Quṭuz's choice of *laqab* (honorific title): al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn ("The Triumphant One, the Sword of Religion"). This designation is read in the sources as an effort on Quṭuz's part to present himself as the new defender of Islam and the Muslim community – a role that, especially in times of crisis and external threat, was among the most crucial sources of political legitimacy available to a Muslim ruler. Beyond the image of the warrior that emerges from cross-referenced accounts, Mamluk authors

[32] Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, *al-Furūsiyya wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyya*, ed. Fārūq Aslīm (Abu Dhabi: Zayed Center for Heritage & History, 2007), 275.

[33] Najm al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, *al-Furūsiyya*, 275.

further contributed to Quṭuz's sanctification by constructing his persona as a hero of Islam, drawing upon well-established literary and ideological *topoi*.

Recent scholarship has underscored that the sacralization of military leadership through *jihād* rhetoric took shape well before the Mamluk ascendancy, most clearly in twelfth-century Damascus, and was later systematised under Mamluk rule. Early programmatic texts such as ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir al-Sulamī's *Kitāb al-jihād* cast warfare as both a communal obligation and an act of piety, offering a repertoire of legitimising motifs that rulers and scholars would continue to draw upon.[34] Under the Mamluks—especially from Baybars onward – *jihād* discourse became constitutive of state ideology and public ritual, integrating chancery language, *khutba*, and ceremonial into a coherent grammar of rule.[35] Against this broader backdrop, the image of Quṭuz as divinely sanctioned warrior-ruler belongs to a well-attested idiom, even if the brevity of his reign renders the narrative scaffolding unusually prominent in his case.

III. First *Topos*: The Hidden Noble Lineage of Quṭuz

Among the Mamluk authors who most actively contributed to shaping the image of Quṭuz as a hero of Islam, two figures stand out: Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī and al-Maqrīzī. Their efforts begin with an attempt to ennoble Quṭuz's origins, as evidenced in a vivid anecdote related by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī. He recounts that, long before his arrival in Egypt, Quṭuz was in Damascus in the service of a man named either Ibn al-ʿAdīm or Ibn al-Zaʿīm. One day, over a minor fault, his master struck him in the face and uttered curses against the Mamluk's parents.[36]

[34] Al-Sulamī, ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir, *Kitāb al-jihād*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, *Arbaʿa kutub al-jihād min ʿaṣr al-ḥurūb al-ṣalibiyya* (Damascus: al-Takwīn, 2007), 41-165; ed. N. Christie, *The Book of the Jihād of 'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106)* (Burlington: Ashgate, Farnham: Surrey), 2015; N. Christie and D. Gerish, "Parallel Preachings: Urban II and al-Sulamī," *Al-Masāq* 15/2 (2003): 139-148; N. Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders. Christianity's Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources* (London/New York: Routledge, 2014), 43-62, 153-155; S. Mourad and J. Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsakir and the Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihād Ideology in Crusader-Era Syria," in *Just Wars, Holy Wars & Jihāds. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Encounters and Exchanges*, ed. Sohail Hashmi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 107-124; S. Mourad and J. Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihād Ideology in the Crusader Period. Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (1105-1176) and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn ʿAsākir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihād* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), 2013; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks," 176-215.

[35] S. Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 89–90; J. Berkey, "Mamluk Religious Policy," *Mamluk Studies Review* 13/2 (2009): 9-10; Berriah, "La construction de l'image du sultan *muǧāhid* chez les Mamelouks", 176-215.

[36] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 39.

Quṭuz withdrew to a corner, wept profusely, and refused to eat. As the master was about to depart on a journey, he entrusted the care of the young Mamluk – whom he favoured more than others – to one of his servants, al-Ḥājj ʿAlī al-Farāsh, instructing him to look after the boy. Attempting to console him, al-Ḥājj ʿAlī told Quṭuz that the blow he had received was insignificant compared to one delivered on the battlefield by a sword. But Quṭuz replied that he was not grieving because of the physical pain, but because of the insult to the memory of his parents – who, he asserted, were nobler than those of his master. At that point, the servant remarked that Quṭuz was merely a Turkish slave, born of infidel stock like so many others, with no claim to honourable ancestry. Quṭuz, however, revealed that he had always been a Muslim, and that his family had belonged to Islam for generations. His real name, he said, was Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd, and he was, in fact, the son of the sister of the ruler of the Khwarezm Shāh.[37]

Another account worth mentioning in this context is likewise transmitted by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī. In this version, Quṭuz is said to have consulted an astrologer (*munajjim*) from the Muslim West, asking him to foretell who would rule Egypt after his master, Sultan al-Muʿīzz Aybak, and who would be the one to halt the Mongols. The astrologer performed a divinatory reading in the sand but was perplexed by the presence of five undotted letters. He explained to Quṭuz that, since his name comprised only three letters, he could not be the one indicated by the signs.

At that moment, Quṭuz smiled and asked whether the name appearing in the sand might in fact be Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd. The astrologer, astonished, confirmed that this was indeed the name he had discerned. Quṭuz then revealed his true identity as Maḥmūd b. Mamdūd and, by implication, the one destined to overcome the Mongol threat.[38]

IV. Second *Topos*: Quṭuz the "Chosen One" to Fight the Mongols

In the image constructed by Mamluk authors, Quṭuz's claim to legitimacy was not limited to his alleged descent from the Khwarezm Shāh family. Another account, preserved by Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, combines this political dimension with religious legitimation. According to the narrative, while al-Nāṣir Yūsuf was encamped at al-Birza toward the end of 657/1259, several couriers arrived from Egypt with the news that Quṭuz had seized power. Al-Nāṣir Yūsuf instructed his secretary, Tāj al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, to read him the letter. When the secretary left the sultan's tent, Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī

[37] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 40.
[38] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 40-41.

came to meet him and asked if he had heard the news that Quṭuz had become sultan. The secretary, who had to keep the information secret, did not confirm this. Nevertheless, Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī persisted and confirmed the information to the secretary without having read or listened to the contents of the letter. Intrigued, Tāj al-Dīn b. al-Athīr asked Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Barakatkhānī what could make him think that. It was then the emir, who was Quṭuz's former *khushdāsh*[39] (companion, brother-in-arms) during their childhood, who told him that, one day, when he was delousing Quṭuz, the latter confided to him that in his dream he was to become an emir of fifty. Quṭuz replied that he would give him that rank. When pressed about the basis for such a prediction, Quṭuz confided that he had seen the Prophet in a dream, announcing that he would take power in Egypt and defeat the Mongols.[40]

The invocation of dreams and visions to justify political action and sanctify leadership is a well-attested narrative device in medieval Islamic historiography.[41] In particular, dreams of the Prophet serve as signs of divine favour and as instruments that bridge the gap between providential design and concrete rule. The Quṭuz dream account thus belongs to a broader typology in which visionary experience supports claims to righteous warfare and providential authority, rather than offering direct access to "what actually happened."

The account of this premonitory dream endows Quṭuz with the image of a divinely chosen warrior, sent by God to deliver Islam from a threat foretold – according to several *ʿulamāʾ* – by the Prophet himself. As reported by Abū Hurayra, the Prophet said:

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[39] A kind of "Mamluk companion pact". For more information see K. Yosef, "Ikhwa, Muwākhūn and Khushdāshiyya in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 346-352. Julien Loiseau writes: "La fraternité d'armes des jeunes esclaves soldats, faite tout à la fois d'intimité, de rivalité et de solidarité, représentait une puissante logique d'intégration à la société militaire – dont le caractère spécifique se marquait par l'emploi d'un mot persan (*khushdash* ou *khujdash*) pour désigner ce lien exclusif." Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks XIIIe-XVIe siècle. Une expérience du pouvoir dans l'Islam médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 76. See also M. Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya: between Praise and Criticism," §36.

[40] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 41-42. There are two other accounts of the preaching of the Mongol defeat. See Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke*, vol. 1, 433-445.

[41] M. Hanaoka, "Dreaming of the Prophet" in *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries*, ed. Mimi Hanaoka (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 70-98; J. K. Weststeijn, *A handful of red earth: dreams of rulers in Tabari's history of prophets and kings*, PhD thesis (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2009).

لا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حتَّى تُقاتِلُوا التُّرْكَ، صِغارَ الأعْيُنِ، حُمْرَ الوُجُوهِ، ذُلْفَ الأُنُوفِ، كَأنَّ وُجُوهَهُمُ المَجانُّ المُطْرَقَةُ، ولا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حتَّى تُقاتِلُوا قَوْمًا نِعالُهُمُ الشَّعَرُ.

> The hour will not be established until you fight with the Turks; people with small eyes, red faces, and flat noses. Their faces will look like shields coated with leather. The hour will not be established until you fight with people whose shoes are made of hair.[42]

Dreams involving the Prophet occupy a special status in Islam, as affirmed in the well-known prophetic tradition: "Whoever sees me has truly seen me, for Satan does not assume my form." Such visions are regarded as signs of divine favour: the one who sees the Prophet in a dream is understood to be beloved of God, who conveys glad tidings through the noblest of His messengers and the most exalted of His creatures. In this light, the vision attributed to Quṭuz reinforces his image as the chosen saviour of Islam at a moment of existential threat.

Later *ʿulamāʾ*, including figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), would echo the idea that Quṭuz and the Mamluks had saved Islam from the Mongols.[43] This type of premonitory dream narrative, linking rulers to divine guidance in moments of crisis, appears elsewhere in Islamic historiography and is often associated with other sultans and major turning points in the history of the Muslim world.[44]

Another account likewise presents Quṭuz as the one appointed to fight the Mongols. During his return journey from Syria to Cairo, Quṭuz was assassinated by his peers, leaving the throne vacant – soon to be claimed by Baybars. Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī preserves a particularly intriguing narrative, attributed to the emir Badr al-Dīn Baktūt al-Atābikī, who had been a *khushdāsh* of both Quṭuz and Baybars. One day, the three of them – Quṭuz, Baybars, and Badr al-Dīn – are said to have visited an astrologer. Quṭuz went first. The astrologer, after a moment of silent observation, told him that he would one day rule Egypt, defeat

[42] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 349, hadith 2928. See also hadiths 2927 and 2929. Muslim reports several slightly different versions of this hadith. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Ibdāʿ: Cairo, 2020), 677-678, hadith 2912.

[43] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, ed. ʿĀmir al-Jazār and Anwār al-Bāz, (Beirut, Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2011), vol. 14, t. 28, 289-290; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, vol. 5, 428. For more information on Ibn Taymiyya's perception of the Mamluks as the saviours of Islam see Berriah, "The Mamluk Sultanate and the Mamluks seen by Ibn Taymiyya", §11-28.

[44] Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ʿalā al-rawḍatayn* (Beirut: dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2002), vol. 5, 336-337; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān*, vol. 3, 434-435.

the Mongols, and be assassinated.[45] Did this story emerge only after Quṭuz's death, perhaps as a means of reinforcing the salvific dimension of his character? There is no definitive evidence to confirm or disprove such a hypothesis.

V. Third *Topos*: Quṭuz, the *Mujāhid* Par Excellence

A close analysis and cross-examination of Arabic sources reveals that some authors present Quṭuzas the archetypal *mujāhid* – a fighter wholly devoted to the cause of God, fearless and above reproach. This image of the *mujāhid* par excellence is constructed primarily through the prism of the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, one of the most celebrated engagements in the history of Islam.[46] The Mamluk victory at ʿAyn Jālūt occupies a central place in the chronicles of the seventh-ninth/thirteenth-fifteenth centuries. On the one hand, the battle was exalted by Muslim ulama and historians; on the other, it was strategically instrumentalised by the Mamluks for political purposes. The victory at ʿAyn Jālūt came to be seen not merely as a military success, but as tangible proof of the Mamluks' devotion to the defence of Islam.[47] For Amalia Levanoni, the battle constitutes the cornerstone of the Mamluk political edifice.[48] Being the ultimate symbol of triumph over the Mongols - who, in the eyes of contemporary observers, represented a mortal threat to Islam - the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt continues to be cited in modern religious discourse. Multiple sources emphasise the piety and courage of the sultan.[49] Abū Shāma, for instance, highlights Quṭuz's "diligence in prayer, his bravery, and the fact that he did not drink wine."[50]

During the army's halt at al-Ṣāliḥiyya, a group of Mamluk emirs told Quṭuz of their reluctance to fight the Mongols, whom they regarded as an "invincible" enemy. The sultan rebuked them sharply, accusing them of clinging to the comforts of worldly life and preferring the illicit appropriation of funds from the *bayt al-māl* over fulfilling their obligation to fight for the cause of God.[51] He concluded his harangue by insisting that anyone who failed to perform *jihād* in such circumstances would be held accountable on the Day of Judgement. These few words touched the reluctant emirs, who dispersed in silence. That same

[45] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 43.

[46] S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3, 313.

[47] M. Berriah, "ʿAyn Ǧālūt (658/1260): Re-evaluating of a So-Called Decisive Battle," *Annales islamologiques* 55 (2021): 65.

[48] A. Levanoni, "The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt: A Paradigmatic Historical Event in Mamlūk Historical Narratives," in *Ulrich Haarmann memorial lecture* 11, ed. Stephan Conermann (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2014), 14.

[49] Berriah, "ʿAyn Ǧālūt (658/1260)", 65-66.

[50] Abū Shāma, *al-Dhayl ʿalā al-rawḍatayn*, vol. 5, 321. بمواظبة الصلاة والشجاعة وتجنب الخمر

[51] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 515.

evening, Quṭuz made a solemn declaration: he would go to meet the Mongols, and anyone who wished was free either to follow him in *jihād* or to return home. As soon as the emirs saw him depart, they followed him back onto the road.[52]

An analysis can be significantly enriched when multiple sources recount the same event. Within the Arabic corpus, Quṭuz is consistently depicted as exemplary and resolute. Al-Maqrīzī narrates that upon leaving Gaza, the army followed the coastal road and passed near Acre, where they encountered representatives of the Franks. In al-Maqrīzī, the Franks are portrayed as cooperative and even offering military aid, which Quṭuz politely refused, handing out robes of honour to some.[53] However, this amicable depiction is contradicted by contemporary Christian sources. Indeed, al-Maqrīzī himself notes another, more confrontational aspect to the encounter: according to his account, before departing, Quṭuz sternly warned the Franks of Acre that should even a single Frankish soldier attack his forces, he would immediately turn back and engage them, postponing his confrontation with the Mongols until he had dealt decisively with this threat.[54]

Quṭuz is also presented as a fervent *mujāhid*, reckless and risking his life without hesitation for religion. Again, according to al-Maqrīzī, prior to the battle, Quṭuz gathered his emirs and passionately exhorted them to *jihād*, reminding them of the atrocities and devastation wrought by the Mongols throughout the Muslim lands they had conquered. He sternly warned the emirs of divine retribution awaiting anyone who fled the battlefield and urged them instead to fight wholeheartedly for the triumph of Islam. Moved by the sultan's speech, the emirs wept and swore to fight the Mongols and deliver Syria.[55]

Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī reports that, on the day of the battle, the young Mongol – formerly attached to Hülegü's envoys and later incorporated into Quṭuz's Mamluk corps – tried to kill the sultan by shooting an arrow at him. Miraculously, the arrow struck only his horse, which collapsed beneath him. The young Mongol was immediately seized and killed by the emirs and soldiers. In the heat of the moment, the emir Fakhr al-Dīn Māmā offered Quṭuz his own horse, but the sultan refused.

When the battle was at its height, some turned to Quṭuz and warned him that if any misfortune were to befall him, it would spell the end of Islam. To this, he is said to have replied:

[52] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, p. 515.
[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.
[54] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.
[55] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 516.

> أما أنا فكنت أروح الجنة، وأما الإسلام فما كان الله ليضيعه، فقد مات السلطان الملك الصالح رحمه الله، وقتل ابنه المعظم، والأمير فخر الدين بن الشيخ مقدم العساكر، وبعد ذا نصر الله الإسلام وحده بغير ملك بعد اليأس.
>
> As for me, [if I die], I go to Paradise; as for Islam, God will not make it disappear; Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ is dead – may God have mercy on him – his son al-Muʿaẓẓam has been killed, as has Fakhr al-Dīn b. al-Shaykh, leader of the armies, and despite this, God caused Islam to triumph alone, without a king, and after despair.[56]

Another symbolic episode that powerfully encapsulates the ideal of sacrifice for the sake of Islam is the way the sources narrate Quṭuz's victorious charge. When the Mongols charged the Mamluk army and one of its wings was in trouble and seemed almost to give way, Quṭuz, in a last burst of hope, took off his helmet, threw it down, and led a charge, shouting *wa Islāmāh* (*Oh Islam*).[57] Following the Mamluk victory, the sultan is said to have performed two units of prayer (*rakʿatayn*), giving thanks to God for having granted him success at such a critical moment.[58] The narrated shout *wa Islāmāh* and the post-victory *rakʿatayn* turn the battlefield into liturgical space: they ritualise violence as worship, recentre the community's salvation on the ruler's embodied courage, and close the action with thanksgiving that ascribes the outcome to divine favour. Such ritual cues are integral to the sacralization of leadership; they convert contingency (a turning charge, a narrow escape) into signs that the ruler fights as Islam's servant and is rewarded accordingly.

This narrative assigns Quṭuz the image of a believer full of humility and grateful for God's favours, as opposed to that of a self-centred triumpher full of pride. To complete this depiction, one may cite the verses of Baybars al-Manṣūrī, who, in poetic form, contributes to the sanctification of Quṭuz's character as portrayed in the narratives above:

هلك الكفر في الشآم جميعًا واستجد الإسلام بعد دحوضه
بالمليك المظفر البطل الأر وع سيف الإله عند نهوضه
ملك جاءنا بعزم وحزم فاعتززنا بسمره وببيضه
أوجب الله شكر ذاك علينا دائمًا مثل واجبات فروضه

[56] Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, 50.

[57] This cry passed into posterity, as it was used as the title of the film produced in 1961 by Enrico Bomba and Andrew Marton in which Quṭuz and the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt feature prominently.

[58] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, vol. 1, 517.

Unbelief has perished throughout Syria
Islam has been renewed, after declining

By al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, the pious hero
Sword of God, on his awakening
A ruler came to us resolute and determined
And we were honoured by his spears and swords

God has made it obligatory for us to thank for this
Forever, like the religious obligations He has prescribed for us[59]

Although these words are undoubtedly dithyrambic in tone, they nonetheless reflect the central place the sources accord to Quṭuz as the architect of victory at ʿAyn Jālūt, whose leadership was widely regarded as one of the decisive factors in the outcome of the battle.[60] Less well known is the account of Quṭuz's allegiance to Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, who had been invested as Abbasid caliph under the title *al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh*, as well as his expressed support for restoring the caliphate in Baghdad in the aftermath of the victory.[61] Taken together, such narratives make it clear that the defence of Islam constitutes the central motif in the construction of Quṭuz's image – a

[59] Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikra*, 52.

[60] R. Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: the Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44-45; R. Amitai, "'Ayn Jālūt Revisited," *Tārīḫ* 2 (1992): 144-145; Berriah, "'Ayn Ǧālūt (658/1260)", 77.

[61] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan had managed to escape the massacre of his family during the capture of Baghdad by Hülegü in 656/1258 and found refuge with the tribe of the Khaffāja, to whom he claimed he was a descendant of the caliph al-Mustarshid (d. 529/1135). The emir of the Khaffāja had the new caliph and his companions accompany him to Syria, where they met ʿĪsā b. Muhannā, an influential chief of the powerful Āl Faḍl tribe, who granted them safety and hospitality. After the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, ʿĪsā b. Muhannā informed the Mamluk authorities of the presence of the new caliph. Qutuẓ is said to have instructed the emir Sayf al-Dīn Qilij al-Baghdādī to pledge allegiance on his behalf to the new Abbasid caliph answering to the name of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh and to escort him with the aim of recovering Baghdad. After some initial successes, including the capture of a number of towns in the Euphrates region, al-Ḥākim was forced to withdraw and return to Salāmiyya in Syria in the face of the advance of a large Mongol force commanded by Qarābughā. Writers of the eighth/fourteenth century report that Qutuẓ ordered ʿĪsā b. Muhannā to send the new caliph to Cairo to be invested with the caliphate in an official ceremony. Qutuẓ was assassinated two months later without it being possible to fathom his intentions towards the new caliph in the long term. See M. Banister, *The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo 1261–1517. Out of the Shadows* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 29-34.

representational pattern that echoes the depictions of other celebrated figures such as Saladin and Baybars.

When set against figures such as Nūr al-Dīn, Saladin, and Baybars, Quṭuz stands out less for the repertoire of symbols he employs than for the intensity with which they are concentrated: *laqab*, visionary claims, exhortations, poetic consecration, and a single emblematic victory are all compressed into one tightly woven narrative. Whereas longer reigns permitted the gradual routinization of authority through chancery style, *khutba*, and ceremonial codification, Quṭuz's sacralization relied instead on narrative force and ritual intensification. This economy of signs helps explain both the exceptional prominence of ʿAyn Jālūt in his legacy and the relative absence of durable institutional imprints linked to his name.

Within this historiographical frame, Quṭuz neither inaugurates nor concludes the sacralization of *jihād* leadership. Rather, he illustrates an escalating pattern in which military triumph, ritualised piety, and narrative sanctification converge. In contrast to Baybars – whose longer tenure allowed *jihād* to be systematically institutionalised as a state idiom – Quṭuz's profile appears more narratively compressed. This does not reduce the historical significance of ʿAyn Jālūt; instead, it clarifies the ways in which the sources invest that victory with meaning.

VI. Conclusion

Was Quṭuz truly a descendant of the Khwarezm Shāh, as some of the accounts above claim? It is difficult to offer a definitive conclusion. The claim of Islamic ancestry tied to the family of the first Muslim ruler to resist the Mongols, whose lands fell under the Mongol yoke, would indeed provide Quṭuz with political legitimacy in addition to the religious legitimacy conferred by his duty to lead *jihād*. However, despite the complex framework of legitimacy surrounding Quṭuz, there remains considerable room for doubt and caution regarding the veracity of these genealogical assertions. It is not impossible to think that what we have here is an attempt to construct a legend around the Mamluk sultan – similar to the way the figure of Saladin was mythologised in Arab narratives.[62] While the myth of Saladin is often regarded as a "political construction",[63] as noted by Rachida Chapoutot-Rémadi, in the case of Quṭuz, it may be more accurately described as "political recuperation".[64] Given that religious

[62] A.-M. Eddé, *Saladin* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008), 575.

[63] Eddé, *Saladin*, 575.

[64] Chapoutot-Rémadi, *Liens et relations au sein de l'élite mamlūke*, vol. 1, 428. The author sees this anecdote as both a political and a religious recuperation.

legitimacy played a central role in consolidating political power, it is unsurprising that authors would emphasise this aspect in their portrayals of Quṭuz.

The narrative in which Quṭuzis presented as a *mujāhid* chosen by God casts him, in a way, as the embodiment of the divine sword – striking down idolatry while also enacting divine justice. By defeating the army of Hülegü, grandson of Genghis Khan, who invaded and ended the dynasty of the Khwarezm Shāh, Quṭuzavenged his supposed forefathers. Therefore, the authors of the Mamluk period contributed to a posthumous mythification of Quṭuz, constructing the figure of a heroic defender who triumphs over the pagan Mongols and saves the *dār al-Islām*, thereby securing him a place in the pantheon of Islamic holy warriors. However, this position remains markedly inferior to that of Saladin, whose image resonated with enduring force in both East and West and continues to occupy a prominent symbolic place in the Arab world today.[65] Compared to other Mamluk sultans, Quṭuz's position is not the same as that of Baybars, who is compared to the great figures of the past and became the central character in a popular novel bearing his name during the Circassian period from the ninth/fifteenth century onwards.[66]

Furthermore, these narratives served to confer both political and religious legitimacy upon the Mamluk sultanate. Cast as a divinely chosen warrior, victorious in a battle foretold by the Prophet himself, Quṭuz triumphed over the infidel Mongols – Islam's most formidable enemy at the time. In the wake of this

[65] Eddé, *Saladin*, 541-582. See also A. Zouache, "Saladin, l'histoire, la légende", in *Le Bilād al-Šām face aux mondes extérieurs. La perception de l'Autre et la représentation du souverain*, ed. Denise Aigle (Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012), 41-72.

[66] An edition is in progress, several parts of which have already been published by Georges Boas, Katia Zakaria, Salam Diab-Duranton, Iyas Hasan et *al*. See also J. Sublet, *Les trois vies du sultan Baïbars* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992); A.-M. Eddé, "Baybars et son double. De l'ambiguïté du souverain idéal," in *Le Bilād al-Šām face aux mondes extérieurs. La perception de l'Autre et la représentation du Souverain*, ed. Denise Aigle (Damascus/Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012), 73-86; R. Amitai, "Some remarks on the inscription of Baybars at Maqam Nabi Musa," in *Mamluks and Ottomans. Studies in honour of Michael Winter*, ed. David J. Wasserstein and A. Ayalon (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 45-53; D. Aigle, "Les inscriptions de Baybars in le Bilād al-Šām. Une expression de la légitimité du pouvoir," *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 68, 74-77; Y. Frenkel, "Baybars and the Sacred Geography of Bilād al-Shām: a Chapter in the Islamization of Syria's Landscape," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 153-170; F. De Polignac, "Une rencontre en Syrie: Alexandre le Grand, Baïbars, Tamerlan et autres conquérants à Homs," in *L'Orient au cœur en l'honneur d'André Miquel*, ed. B. Halff, et *al*. (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001), 237-245; Troadec, "Baybars and the Cultural Memory of Bilād al-Shām", 137-140; J.-C. Garcin (ed.) *Lectures du roman de Baybars* (Paris: Parenthèses/MMSH, 2003).

victory, the Mamluk regime positioned itself as the new and legitimate standard-bearer of Islam in the Near and Middle East.

In sum, Quṭuz's case clarifies how Mamluk texts make *jihād*-leadership signify: through titles that prefigure piety, visions that authorise command, battle scripts that moralise obedience, and technical attributions that embody righteous skill. The sanctified ruler emerges at the intersection of these operations, not apart from them.

The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, described by some as a "paradigmatic historical event,"[67] provided the Mamluks with a foundational moment of legitimation - one that would be further reinforced and ultimately solidified by the military campaigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn.

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[67] A. Levanoni, "The Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt", 6.

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PART III

Narratives of Saints and War

"SIGNIFERI ET DUCES ESSE DICUNTUR GEORGIUS, MAURICIUS, MERCURIUS AND DEMETRIUS": APPARITIONS OF WARRIOR SAINTS ON THE BATTLEFIELDS (11TH-13TH CENTURIES)

Esther Dehoux*

In the months following the English victory at Mons in August 1914, some people claimed to have seen medieval archers led by St George, others a luminous cloud or warrior angels. Though varied in detail, these accounts all trace back to a short story titled *The Bowmen*, published on 29 September 1914 by the fantasy writer Arthur Machen.[1] While clearly fictional,[2] the narrative enjoyed considerable appeal, reflecting the long-standing affinity between imaginative storytelling and propaganda. Indeed, visions of saints - whether warriors or not - were not uncommon on historical battlefields, and many texts from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, a period marked by profound transformation associated with the fragmentation of the Carolingian Empire and the reform movements within the Church, attest to such phenomena. Chronicles, hagiographic accounts, and old French epics all feature these saintly apparitions. In these writings, the *sanctus bellator* resembles the warrior of the time, appearing at the heart of the battle, wielding weapons, and closely familiar with the concrete realities of warfare. This essay aims to demonstrate how these diverse sources contributed to broader efforts to legitimize warfare and, through the development of a pastoral discourse attuned to the social and political

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[1] The text can be accessed at the following website: https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/U Books/Bowm849.shtml

[2] G. Blondeau, *"Des archers dans la cité de Saint-Georges: la légende des anges de Mons (1914-1918),"* in *Le feu et la folie: l'irrationnel et la guerre (fin du Moyen Âge-1920)*, ed. Laurent Vissière and Marion Trévisi (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 19-38.

conditions of the time, to affirm the place and define the mission of the man-of-war.

I. Legitimising arguments

In medieval narratives, the presence of saints on the battlefield often serves as a powerful literary and ideological device. By describing one or more saints leading an army, medieval authors introduced a key element of legitimisation that not only validated the military action but also strengthened the authority of its initiator by presenting the cause as divinely endorsed. Yet the choice of saint is far from arbitrary. Invoking the Apostles, the Archangel Michael, or martyr-warriors such as George or Maurice shifts the focus from legitimising a specific campaign to articulating the social and spiritual role of the *bellator*.

A. Defending a cause[3]

In the *Liber ad Henricum IV imperatorem*, written in 1085–1086, Benzo of Alba - a fervent supporter of Emperor Henry IV - recounts the confrontation that took place in Rome on 14 April 1062. The clash pitted the supporters of Peter Cadalus, bishop of Parma and (anti)pope elected by partisans of Empress Agnes, the emperor's mother, against the forces loyal to Pope Alexander II. Known as Honorius II, Cadalus is portrayed by Benzo as victorious, with the imperial armies prevailing in the conflict. Twenty years after the event, tensions between the Empire and the papacy remained high. Benzo of Alba, recounting both the battle and the entrance of the Cadalus into Rome, emphasised that the antipope was accompanied by saints to underscore that his undertaking enjoyed heavenly assistance and, consequently, divine favour.[4] Twice he specifically mentions the presence of the Apostles. In the first instance, he attributes the victory over the Normans allied with Alexander II not to the strength of Cadalus's supporters, but explicitly to the intervention of Christ's apostolic companions. In a later episode, Benzo recounts how these same Normans attempted to ambush the imperial troops, but the attack was thwarted - again, thanks to the guidance and support of the Apostles.

[3] This paragraph builds in part on findings presented in an earlier contribution by the author: "*Adest noster exercitus previis apostolis cum Mauricio et Carpophoro*. Des saints sur le champ de bataille (XIe-XIIe siècles)," in *Le miracle de guerre dans la chrétienté occidentale*, ed. Philippe Desmette and Philippe Martin (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2018), 55-64.

[4] Benzo of Alba, *Ad Henricum IV imperatorem*, ed. Georgius Heinricus Pertz, in *M.G.H., Scriptores*, XI (Stuttgart, 1854), II, 18, 620-621.

Two features lend Benzo of Alba's narrative its distinctive character. The first is the collective presence of "the holy Apostles", or simply "the Apostles". Tradition holds that they divided the world among themselves for missionary work; yet in Benzo they appear united at Rome, accompanying Peter Cadalus and leading him "to the church of blessed Peter", indeed '"o the temple of blessed Peter", in opposition to the adherents of Alexander II. Notably, Benzo does not ascribe any hierarchical order among them; even Peter holds no privileged place. Simply unity, not primacy, is the governing principle. The second distinctive feature lies in Benzo's vexillological precision. He describes each of the Apostles as bearing a *labarum* - an ensign reminiscent of those carried by the imperial legions after Constantine's visionary dream in 312 - specifically, a *vexillum* surmounted by a Chrismon. Arrayed in this manner, encircling Cadalus, the Apostles symbolically link the Empire to its Late Antique predecessor, presenting it as the embodiment of the true *Ecclesia*, governed through the cooperation of emperor and pope willed by God.

Other details in Benzo of Alba's account also attest to divine approval of the election of Peter Cadalus by the bishops and notables of the Empire and Lombardy, assembled by the Empress Agnes. Notably, the author twice employs the possessive pronoun "his" in relation to God, referring to the Apostles explicitly as *his* ("Apostolos suos"). This rhetorical choice serves to emphasise that the Apostles intervened on the battlefield as God's agents. While the theological meaning is clear, the grammatical construction invites closer scrutiny. In its first occurrence, the possessive refers not only to God, but specifically to the Trinity - whose glory is praised by the people, and who, through *his* Apostles, grants victory. A few lines later, the same possessive is used again to signal that God, through *his* Apostles, continues to bestow new *mirabilia*. His reference to the Trinity, rather than simply to God, evokes not only the Father and the Son but also the Holy Spirit - who, according to tradition, is intimately connected to the Apostles, but who, since the promulgation of the bull *In nomine Domini* in 1059, has also been invoked as the one who inspires the cardinals in the election of the pope. By depicting "*his* (God's) Apostles" surrounding Peter Cadalus, Benzo seeks to overturn that claim and to confer undeniable legitimacy on the candidate of the imperial camp. Further on, referring to the wonders performed through the Apostles, Benzo speaks of God rather than the Trinity. He refers to Acts 5:12, when Luke notes that "many miracles and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the Apostles." This verse concludes the account of the divine punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, whom Peter condemned for lying to and testing the Holy Spirit by secretly withholding part of the money from the sale of their land.[5]

[5] *Acts* 5, 1-11.

Through his rhetorical strategy, Benzo implicitly presents the election of Alexander II as an offence against the Holy Spirit and the subsequent defeat of his supporters as divine retribution. In his view, God disapproved of both the manner and the outcome of Alexander's election. By stating that the Apostles had fought "for the freedom of the Empire" and that Cadalus was "Dei designatione apostolicus" - a friend of the Apostles by God's own appointment - Benzo affirms that God favoured the bishop of Parma and, more broadly, the older tradition of imperial involvement in papal elections.

"*Electus*": this is how Benzo of Alba twice describes Peter Cadalus, underscoring that his claim to the Roman cathedra is in no way illegitimate – it is because he has been chosen that he intends to assume this office. Benzo further reinforces Cadalus's status by referring to him five times as "domnus," a title connoting "a mark of significant respect," "no doubt due to the virtue that those who know him discern in his religious life."[6] This designation adds another layer of legitimacy, pointing to Cadalus's moral and spiritual authority as a consecrated servant of God. On two occasions, however, Benzo refers to him more specifically as "noster domnus," acknowledging that, at that point, Cadalus was recognised as a legitimate pontiff by the imperial camp. The situation changed when the Romans were reconciled and, united in singing the *Kyrie Eleison* and raising their standards, saluted the prelate - thereby acknowledging the validity of his claim, his personal virtues, and his authority. Benzo writes that Cadalus went to Saint Peter's as a "domnus electus," accompanied by the people of Rome, but was enthroned simply as "domnus." In this final instance - uniquely in the text - there is neither possessive nor adjective, for the pontiff is presented, at least in Benzo's eyes, as fully legitimate and universally recognised.

Unity now prevailed, but it required qualification. When Cadalus arrived in Rome, it was not the Romans who opposed him, but only the Normans. Benzo, aware of the role played by the great Roman families in the election of Cadalus, carefully distinguishes between the inhabitants of the city and the supporters of Alexander II. Once the Normans had fled, it was "all the people" who sang the glory of God and accompanied the prelate from Parma. Still, Benzo acknowledges that after the final battle, "our Romans took pity on the other Romans who had gone with the Normans." Unity was therefore recent, but it required qualification, but when Peter Cadalus headed towards Saint Peter's, it was indeed "tota Roma" that accompanied him, with the army and the people standing together on the steps as he sat on the cathedra.

[6] H. Oudart, *Robert d'Arbrissel, ermite et prédicateur* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2010), 138 and 113.

The population rallied behind the Cadalus, but according to Benzo another Roman beat them to it. He writes that the Apostles led Cadalus's troops, but adds two other saints to the ranks: Maurice and Carpophorus. The latter, one of the Four Crowned Saints of Albano, was venerated alongside Secundus, Severian, and Victorinus in one of Rome's oldest basilicas.[7] By highlighting Carpophorus's presence, Benzo signals that this ancient figure of the Roman *sanctorale*, like the Apostles, stood with Peter Cadalus against Alexander II, his counsellor Hildebrand - later Gregory VII - and their Norman allies. Along with Carpophorus, it shows that the Roman saints saw in the Parmesan bishop a defender of both the Church and the Roman people. This claim would have held particular resonance in 1085–1086, when Benzo was writing, since the basilica housing Carpophorus's relics had been destroyed in the great fire set by Robert Guiscard in May 1084.[8] While the devastation caused by the Normans who had come to rescue Gregory VII was still visible - while those same Normans expelled the Antipope Clement III and Emperor Henry IV from the city, and Gregory VII, having fled Rome, was now dead and his successor not yet elected - Benzo recalls events from more than twenty years earlier. In 1062, he writes, Carpophorus had stood among those whom the not-yet Gregory VII opposed. Despite the support of the saints, including Carpophorus, Peter Cadalus was ultimately not chosen. And now, as if in divine retribution that could not be denied, the church of the Four Crowned Saints - along with the city itself - lay in ruins, devastated by Gregory VII's own allies. In 1085–1086, at the height of the controversy - when Clement III, Emperor Henry IV's candidate, could plausibly be regarded as the legitimate pope due to the vacancy of the See of Peter - Benzo entered the fray. Recounting events from decades past, he crafted a narrative often marked by supernatural interventions, using it to support those aligned with his position, to caution his contemporaries, and to urge them, through the lessons of history, to take the emperor's side.

Subsequently, alongside Carpophorus, Maurice also appears at the head of the Cadalus and his supporters. His presence in Benzo's account is far from incidental: it reflects the prominent role the saint had come to occupy within the religious and political imagination of the Empire by the tenth century. From 926, when Henry I acquired Saint Maurice's spear - previously held by the king of Burgundy - the Ottonian kings and later emperors increasingly sought to obtain

[7] J. Guyon, "Les Quatre couronnés et l'histoire de leur culte des origines au début du XIe siècle," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Antiquité* 87 (1975), 505-561.

[8] H. Taviani-Carozzi, *La Terreur du monde. Robert Guiscard et la conquête normande en Italie. Mythe et histoire* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 459-468; L. I. Hamilton, "Memory, Symbol, and Arson: Was Rome 'sacked' in 1084?," *Speculum* 78.2 (2003), 378–99.

relics associated with the Theban legionaries.[9] Beginning in 937, these relics were venerated in the Abbey of Saint Maurice in Magdeburg, founded by Otto I and elevated to the status of a metropolitan cathedral in 960, largely due to the wealth of its treasury.[10] The transfer of the Burgundian regalia to Henry III in 1018, followed by the incorporation of Burgundy into the Empire in 1032, marked the culmination of the "Germanization"[11] of the saint of Agaune: he evolved from a personal protector into the dynastic patron saint and, ultimately, the spiritual guardian of the entire Ottonian realm.[12] Thietmar of Merseburg could thus write, at the beginning of the eleventh century, that Maurice was watching over "the salvation of the homeland"[13] and Benzo of Alba recalled, in 1085-1086, that Maurice accompanied Cadalus in 1062. In doing so, they positioned Maurice not simply as a heavenly supporter, but as a divine witness whose presence affirmed the righteousness of the cause and the alignment of the imperial camp with God's will.

Maurice, indeed, is a singular martyr. Two texts written in the fourth and fifth centuries relate his life and the circumstances of his death.[14] According to these accounts, the Theban legion, summoned to Gaul at the emperor's request to suppress a revolt, refused to act when ordered to honour the pagan gods before taking up arms - or, as Eucherius of Lyon relates, when they realized that obedience would mean fighting against fellow Christians. Declared guilty of insubordination, Maurice and his men were tortured and ultimately executed

[9] L. Ripart, "Saint Maurice et la tradition régalienne bourguignonne (443-1032)," in *Des Burgondes au royaume de Bourgogne (V^e^-Xe s.)*, ed. Pierrette Paravy (Grenoble: Académie delphinale, 2002), 225-232. [In fact, the early history of the Lance is very hard to establish. For the recent state of research, see M. Schulze-Dörrlamm, "Die heilige Lanze in Wien: Die Frühgeschichte des karolingisch-ottonischen Herrschaftszeichens aus archäologischer Sicht," *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 58 (2011): 707–42; F. Kirchweger, "Die Forschung zur Heiligen Lanze," in *Die Heilige Lanze in Wien: Insignie - Relique – Schicksalsspeer*, ed. Franz Kirchweger (Wien: Schriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums, 2005) 10–21.

[10] P. Bertrand, "Le trésor des reliques de Magdebourg sous les Ottoniens," in *Autour de saint Maurice. Politique, société et construction identitaire*, ed. Nicole Brocard, Françoise Vannotti, Anne Wagner (Saint-Maurice, Fondation des archives historiques de l'abbaye de SaintMaurice, 2012), 209-218.

[11] L. Ripart, "Saint Maurice et la tradition régalienne bourguignonne," 225.

[12] Ibid., 229.

[13] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, in *Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre Korveier Uberarbeitung*, *M.G.H., ss. rer. Germ. ns* 9, ed. Robert Holtzmann (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1935), II, 17, p. 58.

[14] É. Chevalley, "La Passion anonyme de saint Maurice d'Agaune," *Vallesia* 45 (1990), 37-120; "*Passio Acaunensium martyrum auctore Eucherio episcopo Lugdunensi*," in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum ævi Merovingici et antiquiorum aliquot*, ed. Bruno Krusch, *M.G.H., srm*, 3 (Hanover, 1896), 20-41.

by beheading. In both versions, Maurice dies not simply because he is a Christian, but because he refuses to obey an unholy command - one that directly contradicts God's will. His presence in Rome in 1062, alongside the Apostles and Carpophorus, is therefore a sign of God's support for Cadalus and the defenders of the imperial cause. It also serves as a warning: Maurice, who gave his life rather than betray the demands of the faith, cannot be imagined as accompanying the papal army whose actions - according to Benzo - run counter to God's will. By pointing out that Maurice was accompanying Cadalus and his men, Benzo of Alba declares the undertaking to be aligned with divine intention. In doing so, he positions Maurice not merely as a heavenly supporter, but as a witness whose presence confirms the righteousness of the imperial cause. To oppose Cadalus - as Alexander II and his allies had done - while Maurice is among his celestial companions, is, in Benzo's view, to resist the fulfilment of God's plan. His words, written in 1085–1086, thus function as encouragement to the emperor's supporters, exhortation to those wavering in their allegiance, and warning to those aligned with the papal cause.

B. Defining a place and a role

In the eleventh century, other saints were likewise invoked to legitimize military campaigns, particularly those directed against Muslims. Such is the case in a poem composed in Pisa following the joint Pisan and Genoese victory over the North African cities of Mahdia and Zawila in 1087.[15] To encourage the troops before the battle, the bishop reminded them of the Old Testament accounts of David and the Maccabees, who had triumphed with God's help. The soldiers then confessed, received communion, and collectively praised Christ, invoking his name as they marched into battle. As the armies rushed towards each other, a most terrible sound was heard: the Archangel Michael appeared, intervening in the fight and attacking the Muslims as though they were the dragon of Revelation. At his side was the Apostle Peter, brandishing both cross and sword. Their visible, active presence not only comforted the Christian warriors but also led them to victory.[16]

The idea of the Archangel and the Apostle intervening in a battle between Christians and Muslims was not new. Half a century earlier, in the 1040s, Andrew of Fleury, a monk of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, wrote a continuation of the

[15] For a critical edition and accompanying study, see H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Mahdia Campaign of 1087," in *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*, ed. Herbert E. J. Cowdrey (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), XII 1-XII 29.

[16] H. E. J. Cowdrey, "The Mahdia Campaign," XII 26.

Miracula sancti Benedicti.[17] In it, he reports that, frustrated by the disasters caused by Saracen incursions into Catalonia, four counts of Barcelona – Guifred II of Cerdanya, Ermengol II of Urgell, Bernat Tallaferro of Besalú and Ramon Borell of Barcelona[18] – decided to join forces to combat these raids. Although there were only 500 of them to fight 20,000 opponents, Bernat Tallafero reassured the Catalan warriors that they had nothing to worry about, as they would only have to fight enemies who were outnumbered ten to one, as Sts. Michael, Peter and the Virgin Mary would take care of the other three quarters of the Muslim fighters.[19] Encouraged by this assurance, the Catalan troops launched themselves into battle and emerged victorious.[20] Andrew of Fleury offers no further details of the battle itself, but in the following chapter, he reports that a cleric from Monte Gargano – at the sanctuary dedicated to the Archangel Michael – received a vision of the rejoicing of the angels and the Virgin in the aftermath of the triumph they had secured for the Christians on the Iberian Peninsula.[21]

While the Archangel's intervention during battle had served to legitimise earlier expeditions and to encourage future campaigns against the same adversaries, this role gradually recedes in later narratives. St Michael ceases to be the central figure of divine intervention on the battlefield. Instead, other holy warriors take centre stage, as the Church increasingly associated the Archangel with clerical ministries - an association intended to emphasise both the singularity and the pre-eminence of the ecclesiastical estate.[22] This shift is evident in Geoffroy Malaterra's account of the deeds of Roger I, count of Calabria and Sicily, and his brother Robert Guiscard, written between 1098 and 1101. Among the events he relates is the Battle of Cerami in 1063. Although the Muslim forces vastly outnumbered the Christians, Roger's rousing speech dispelled any fear. As he finished speaking, a warrior appeared, mounted on a

[17] On this point, see the thesis by C. Dejardin-Bazaille, *Les miracles de saint Benoît d'André de Fleury. Hagiographie et histoire: transcription, traduction et commentaire historique* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 2003).

[18] To identify these four counts, we have relied on the genealogical tables II, III and V provided in M. Aurell, *Les noces du comte. Mariage et pouvoir en Catalogne (785-1213)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 558-559 and 561.

[19] Similar motif appears in Raymond of Aguilers's account, who reports that St. Andrew urged the crusaders to engage only one-tenth of the opposing forces, assuring them that George, Demetrius, and Theodore would take on the remaining nine-tenths. See J. Flori, *La guerre sainte. La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien* (Paris: Aubier, 2001), 342.

[20] *Les miracles de saint Benoît écrits par Adrevald, Aimoin, André, Raoul Tortaire et Hugues de Sainte-Marie*, l. IV, X and XI, ed. Eugène de Certain (Paris: Renouard, 1858), 187-190.

[21] *Les miracles de saint Benoît*, 190-191.

[22] E. Dehoux, *Saints guerriers. Georges, Guillaume, Maurice et Michel dans la France médiévale* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 151-220.

white horse and bearing a spear surmounted by a cross, with a pure white standard. He rode straight toward the front lines, ready for battle. As the fighting commenced, his bravery and martial prowess were evident to all, as he fearlessly charged into the densest ranks of the enemy. Stunned and elated, the Norman soldiers followed him, invoking both God and the mysterious rider - whom they believed to be none other than St. George.[23]

Around the same time, Saint George came to the fore in crusade narratives, particularly in accounts of the Battle of Antioch in June 1098. After seven months of a difficult siege, the Crusaders took the city. However, the citadel remained in the hands of the Muslims led by Shams ad-Dawla, the son of the governor of Antioch, and continued to resist Christian assaults. On 5 June, Kerbogha's troops, who had come as reinforcements, encircled the city, placing the crusaders in a precarious position. Internal tensions, desertions, and the weight of prolonged hardship compounded their difficulties. Visions announcing began to multiply, but it was the discovery of the Holy Lance on 14 June that truly revived the crusaders' morale and enthusiasm. With negotiations having failed, confrontation became inevitable. The battle took place on 28 June and ended in a resounding victory for the Crusader forces. Chroniclers writing in the early twelfth century consistently portray the outcome as miraculous. While Fulcher of Chartres notes only that the Muslims were frightened by a sign from heaven,[24] others describe divine intervention in more concrete terms. Raymond of Aguilers, for example, states that, by the power of God, the Crusader troops increased from eight to thirteen divisions and thus became equal in numbers to their enemies.[25] A letter sent to the clergy of Lucca reports that the Christian warriors saw a white banner at the head of their army and a multitude of fighters whose origin was unknown.[26] Most strikingly, the anonymous *De gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* describes a moment when the battle seemed lost - until an innumerable host of horsemen clad in white descended from the mountains and turned the tide of battle. This heavenly army, the author specifies, was led by none other than Sts. George, Mercury, and Demetrius.[27]

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[23] Geoffroy Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris ejus*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1924), 43-44.

[24] *Fulcheri Carnotensis historia hierosolymitana (1095-1127)*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1913), 255-258.

[25] J. Flori, *Pierre l'Ermite et la première croisade* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 384-385.

[26] *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100*, ep. 17, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1901), 167.

[27] *Histoire anonyme de la première croisade*, ed. Léon Bréhier (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1964), 151-159.

This episode was widely picked up by later chroniclers who drew on the earliest accounts to shape their own versions of events.[28] One of the most prominent was Peter Tudebode, who, following the *De gesta Francorum*, refers to the miraculous intervention no fewer than three times. According to him, an innumerable host of warriors on white horses - led by Sts. George, Demetrius, Mercury, and even Theodore - swept down from the surrounding hills. They joined the Christian army and drove back any Muslim fighters who had not already been killed.[29] Baldric of Bourgueil also describes this heavenly cavalry: a multitude of horsemen, bearing standards as white as their mounts, descended from the mountain under the command of George, Demetrius, and Mercurius to aid the Christians.[30] In his *Gesta Dei per Francos*, Guibert of Nogent speaks of this "adjutorium," or divine assistance, witnessed by many and led by the "glorious martyrs" George, Mercurius, and Demetrius.[31] Hugh of Fleury, a Benedictine monk, repeats the two key details - the testimony of numerous witnesses and the leadership of the saintly martyrs[32] –, as do Robert the Monk in Reims,[33] and the Englishmen Henry of Huntingdon[34] and William of Malmesbury,[35] all following the author of the *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnatnium*, an anonymous work, though traditionally attributed to Bartolf of Nangis.[36] A few years later, around 1126, inspired by Peter Tudebode's account,

[28] About this point: E. Lapina, *Warfare and the Miraculous in the Chronicles of the First Crusade* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); B. C. Spacey, *The Miraculous and the Writing of Crusade Narrative* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020).

[29] Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, ed. John Hugh Hill, Laurita Lyttleton Hill (Paris: Libraire orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1977), 111-113; Petrus Tudebodus, "*Historia peregrinorum euntium Jerusolymam ad liberandum Sanctum Sepulcrum de potestate ethnicorum*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens Occidentaux* III (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1866), 173 and 183.

[30] *The* Historia Ierosolimitana *of Baldric of Bourgueil*, ed. Steven Biddlecombe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 80-84.

[31] Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Beprols, 1996), 240-242.

[32] Hugh of Fleury, "*Itineris Hierosolymitani compendium*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, V (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 365.

[33] Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolimitana*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, III, l. VII, ch. XIII, 832.

[34] Henri of Huntingdon, "*De captione Antiochæ a Christianis*," in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux*, V (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 378.

[35] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed Roger A.B. Mynors (Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), l. IV, 365.3, 638-639.

[36] *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnantium*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux* III (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1866), 496.

the author of the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent* describes the fighting around Antioch and again mentions the intervention of Saint George and his companions.[37]

Whether attested in the Holy Land or in Rome, these apparitions helped to endorse the cause being defended, whether it was that of an anti-pope or that of Christianity, which had to be protected, or Jerusalem, which had to be reconquered. They attest to the support of God and the heavenly hosts for the undertaking. At the same time, they contribute to shaping St. George - and, to a lesser extent, the saints who accompany him - into models held up by clerics for imitation by the men of war. In doing so, these narratives reinforce the place of the warrior within Christian society by defining his mission: to serve an earthly authority that initiates the expedition, distinct from the eschatological authority claimed by the Church itself.

II. Saintly Apparitions as Testimonies of Pastoral Care *ad status*

By invoking St. Michel, then Georges and his companions, the chroniclers were continuing a pastoral approach that had been developing since the tenth century - one that gradually sought to assign the warrior a defined place within Christian society, a role, and ultimately a specific path to salvation. These saints found their way not only into the songs that entertained and preserved memory of the past, but also into narratives that served the purpose of spiritual instruction and conversion. Like certain images, paintings and stained-glass windows, such accounts attest to the success of preaching. They offer evidence for the emergence, particularly from the final decades of the twelfth century onward, of a form of piety specific to the warrior class.

A. Supporting pastoral discourse

In referring to Sts. George, Demetrius, Maurice and other holy warriors, the chroniclers were not introducing anything new. They were simply repeating the names long familiar from preaching - saints commonly invoked when clerics addressed men of war. Their references also serve as testimony to this pastoral practice. Baldric of Bourgueil, for instance, states that in Antioch, the crusaders "saw" what they had already "heard."[38] St. George fighting for the faith. His remark not only confirms the prominent place granted to the Cappadocian warrior in the religious instruction offered to the *bellatores*, but also - though briefly - affirms the notion of war as just, good, even holy. This is evident, for

[37] *La chronique de Saint-Maixent 751-1140*, ed. Jean Verdon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1979), 160-163.

[38] *The* Historia Ierosolimitana *of Baldric of Bourgueil*, 102.

example, in the *laudes* of Autun from the tenth century,[39] and in those of Arles and Besançon in the eleventh,[40] where St. George's protection is explicitly invoked on behalf of the *exercitus* - now referred to as the *exercitus christianorum* rather than, as in earlier times, the *exercitus Francorum*. This shift reflects the broader social and political transformations linked to the disintegration of the Carolingian empire. The *ordo ad armandum* of Cambrai, dated 1093, also includes a prayer asking God to grant victory "per merita sanctorum martirum tuorum et militum Mauricii, Sebastiani, Georgii." However, the intended beneficiary is not the Christian *exercitus* as a collective force, but rather the individuals who compose it - those who have just taken up arms.[41] By at least the end of the twelfth century, the holy warrior was no longer invoked solely as a protector of armies. He was also expected to extend his benevolence to individual combatants themselves, as the crusaders at Antioch experienced when St. George appeared at their side in battle.

Geoffroy Malaterra confirms this latter point. In his account of the battle of Cerami, he notes that the "quidam eques" who led the Norman troops into combat was immediately and unequivocally identified as St. George.[42] Such a swift recognition can only be understood in light of the established association between conflicts against Muslims and the apparitions of warrior saints - foremost among them St. George - on the battlefield. This connection suggests the existence of a specific pastoral discourse directed to warriors, which praised the military virtues of the Cappadocian saint, emphasised his concern for the fate of Christian troops, and celebrated his active role in fighting the enemies of the faith. The "militarisation" of saints - such as Julian of Brioude, whose personality and hagiographic tradition had become increasingly out of step with the socio-political realities of the time,[43] and the parallel "sanctification" of warriors, most notably Count William - known as St. William of Gellone - also bear witness to the Church's attentiveness to the status of the *bellatores* and the role they occupied within society. For clerics, the challenge was to offer

[39] E. H. Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies," *The Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 56-81.

[40] "*Laudes seu* acclamations," in *Sancti Protadii Vesuntini episcopi liturgia*, *PL*, 80, col. 411; A. Prost, "Caractère et signification de quatre pièces liturgiques composées à Metz en latin et en grec au IXe siècle," *Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France* 7 (1876): 178-180.

[41] J. Flori, "Chevalerie et liturgie. Remise des armes et vocabulaire 'chevaleresque' dans les sources liturgiques du IXe au XIVe siècle," *Le Moyen Âge* 84 (1978): 437-438.

[42] Geoffroy Malaterra, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis*, 43-44.

[43] E. Dehoux, "À l'épreuve de l'an mil. Grandeur et déclin du culte de saint Julien de Brioude (IXe-XIe siècle)," in *Brioude aux temps carolingiens*, ed. Alain Dubreucq, Christian Lauranson-Rosaz, Bernard Sanial (Le Puy-en-Velay: Almanach de Brioude, 2010), 279-304.

exemplary figures adapted to contemporary conditions and to the social, political, and spiritual expectations of the lay aristocracy.[44]

Orderic Vitalis makes explicit reference to these saintly figures a few decades later, in the years 1131-1140, when he notes that Gerold, chaplain to the earl of Avranches and Chester, "invited the people of the court as much as he could to correct their lives by offering them the example of their predecessors," among whom he cites Sts. Demetrius and George, Maurice, Eustace and his companions,[45] and that he is interested in the life of William, the count who became a monk at Gellone. These are the saints of the armies - figures whom the Anglo-Norman cleric presents as exemplars to his audience, exhorting them to imitate their virtues, to persevere in the Christian faith and to labour for its propagation, or even its defence, to the point of martyrdom if necessary. For Orderic, as for Gerold, William is the "holy athlete who, after long struggles, renounced the world and fought gloriously for the Lord under the monastic rule."[46] For both men, only two forms of death are truly worthy of a Christian warrior: one that occurs on the battlefield, in defence of the Church or in the effort to expand Christendom, and one that is embraced far from the world, in the silence and discipline of the monastery.[47]

When he copied the *Vita Guillelmi*,[48] the religious of Saint-Évroult did not discard the passages recalling the political and military career of the saint of Gellone and, drawing even on epic tales that mentioned the capture of Nîmes and Orange. He carefully distinguishes between the hagiographic narrative, which he regards as a "relatio," a true and authentic account "read with reverence by studious readers and listened to in the community of brothers," and the "cantilenae" sung "in the vulgar tongue" by *jongleurs*.[49] His reservations about the latter are evident, yet Orderic Vitalis does not condemn the profession of arms. Rather, he urges warriors to "leave the world" and enter "the sheltered harbour of regular life," convinced that a man of war cannot hope to end his days rightly without renouncing the sword. His primary aim, however, appears to be the edification of his fellow monks - perhaps particularly those who struggled with the rigours of monastic life and longed for the worldly past they had left behind.

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[44] M. Aurell, "Conclusions," in *Entre histoire et épopée. Les Guillaume d'Orange (IXe-XIIIe siècles)*, ed. Laurent Macé (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2005), 268-276.

[45] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, III, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 216.

[46] Ibid.

[47] J. B. McGregor, "The Ministry of Gerold d'Avranches: Warrior-Saints and Knightly Piety on the Eve of the First Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003): 219-237.

[48] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 216-227.

[49] Ibid., 218.

The ambiguity surrounding the figure of William of Gellone reflects the spirit of the time. The model he embodied fulfilled both the spiritual and social aspirations of the aristocracy – but it was the *dux*, the military leader, who truly captivated the imagination, and the clerics were well aware of this. In Brioude, where William laid down his arms before leaving the world, they kept the memory of the episode alive, displaying the count's shield for the faithful, and perhaps placing greater emphasis on his military exploits and physical strength than on his renunciation of worldly life.[50] At Gellone, although pilgrims could obtain a token bearing the effigy of the saint they venerated, the variety of representations offered was limited. William was not depicted as a monk or religious figure. Instead, he appears as a mounted warrior: helmeted, bearing a shield, lance, and standard, and often associated with a tower. He also carries a horn - a reference to his *cort-nez*[51] - and, although the *Vita* makes no mention of it, he is sometimes depicted with an unusually large nose, a clearly deliberate and conscious borrowing from the epic tradition.[52]

Although not favoured by Orderic Vitalis, epic songs nonetheless played a role in the moral and spiritual formation of men of war - just as Arthurian romances contributed to the conversion and edification of their audiences.[53] *La naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, composed at the end of the twelfth century, recounts, for instance, how newly knighted young men returned to the "moster Saint-Wimer" after a modest supper to stay up all night and listen as a *jongleur* recited the life of Saint Maurice.[54] Crusade songs were no exception: in urging *bellatores* to take up the cross, they readily invoked the apparitions of heavenly armies and their saintly leaders fighting alongside Christian warriors. The

[50] *La Prise d'Orange. Chanson de geste de la fin du XIIe siècle*, ed. Claude Regnier (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983), 79, states that those who "go to Saint Gilles" can see the "escu Guillelme et la targe florie". On this point, see K. A. Smith, "Ungirded for Battle: Knightly Conversion to Monastic Life and the Making of Weapon-Relics in the Central Middle Ages," in *Between Sword and Prayer: Warfare and Medieval Clergy in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Jacek Maciejewski and John S. Ott (Leiden, Boston (MA): Brill, 2018), 182-206, 182-183.

[51] L. Macé, "Icône du saint, figure du héros: les déclinaisons du cor sur les sceaux et les monnaies dans la Provence et le Languedoc des XIIe-XIIIe siècles," in *Entre histoire et épopée*, 139-154.

[52] E. Dehoux, "'Bien vos connois au cors et au visage, as poinz quarrez et as leës espaules': autour des enseignes de pèlerinage à l'effigie de Guilhem, guerrier saint de Gellone," », in *L'Église et la violence (Xe-XIIIe siècle)*, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 54 (2019): 239-256.

[53] On this point, see M. Aurell, *La légende du roi Arthur, 550-1250* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 447-510; C. Gîrbea, *Communiquer pour convertir dans les romans du Graal (XII -XIII^ee siècle)* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010).

[54] In the *Naissance du chevalier au cygne*, it is noted that the newly knighted young men returned to the "Saint-Wimer moster" after a "little supper" to stay up all night and listen to a "juggler" "tell" them about the life of the Theban (v. 3176-3195).

Chanson d'Antioche, originally composed by Richard the Pilgrim and later revised by Graindor de Douai in the final years of the twelfth century,[55] recounts the miraculous intervention of St. George and his companions during the capture of the city.[56] Two additional episodes in the poem also highlight the protection these martyr-saints offered to the crusaders. The first one is when Suleiman's men had just been defeated by the troops of Raymond of Saint-Gilles at the Battle of Dorylaeum on 5 July 1097. As the Muslims were preparing to encamp in the Valley of Gurhenia, they were attacked by Sts. George and Demetrius. The two of them caused such panic that Muslim soldiers turned on one another in confusion, slaying each other in the chaos. Those who survived fled in terror, abandoning their weapons and supplies to the Christian victors.[57] Later in the story, Godfrey of Bouillon stands guard as the crusaders rest near Antioch. Alert to the stealthy approach of Muslim forces, he quickly dons his *haubert* and helmet, seizes his sword, shield, and standard, mounts his horse, and rides out to confront the enemy - accompanied by two mysterious knights whom he neither recognises nor addresses. The Saracens, having identified Sts. George and Demetrius among his escorts, are seized with fear and flee. Some are unable to escape and fall to the blades of the three warriors. At daybreak, the Christian troops awaken to find the severed heads of their enemies strewn in the sand - an image that fills them with joy as they realise what has occurred.[58]

La conquête de Jérusalem, another crusade song composed in the last years of the twelfth century, also features the apparitions of holy warriors. After their success in Caesarea, Bohemond, Tancred and their men advanced to Ramla, where the arrival of Muslim reinforcements from Ascalon and Caesarea sparked off a violent confrontation. The situation quickly became dire for the crusaders - if not altogether hopeless - until the miraculous intervention of Sts. George, Bartholomew, Demetrius, and Denis turned the tide.[59] Later in the poem, the saints reappear during the climactic assault on Jerusalem. The city, besieged since 7 June, had stubbornly resisted. But on 15 July, Godfrey of Bouillon

[55] L. A. M. Sumberg, *Étude historique et littéraire de la* Chanson d'Antioche (Paris: Picard, 1968), 361 sees Graindor's poem as an incitement to the Third Crusade and dates its writing to after the Christian defeat of 1187. S. Duparc-Quioc believes it predates the capture of Jerusalem (*La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Suzanne Duparc-Quioc (Paris: Librairie orientaliste P. Geuthner 1977), 139).

[56] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 9052-9079.

[57] Ibid., v. 2156-2191.

[58] Ibid., v. 2759-2796.

[59] J. Subrenat (trad.), "Richard le Pelerin, Graindor de Douai, *La Conquête de Jérusalem*," in *Croisades et pèlerinages: récits, chroniques et voyages en Terre sainte (XIIe-XVIe siècle)*, ed. Danielle Régnier-Bohler (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997), 191-192.

launched a final offensive. With the aid of George and Demetrius, the crusaders succeeded in breaching the walls and entered the city in triumph.[60]

Recounted by the chroniclers of the First Crusade and evoked in epic narratives directly or indirectly linked to the Eastern expeditions, the intervention of St. George - and, with him, Mercurius, Demetrius, Theodore, and even Maurice – at Antioch in 1098 stands as an essential episode in the promotion of the *sancti bellatores* in Western Christianity. The encouragement to take part in military expeditions to the Holy Land is clear, but the portrayal of the saint on horseback, wielding a lance and striking down an adversary, does more than merely honour the crusader. It enhances the value of the man-of-war in general. It conveys to the warriors that the saints invoked in their prayers are not indifferent to their condition but accompany them on the battlefield. The miracles reported on the battlefields of the Holy Land confirm this message, and, as the chroniclers insist, the witnesses were many.

B. Internalising the message

The French epics offer valuable insights into how this message was received and internalised by warriors. This is particularly evident in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, composed around 1190, in which St. George approaches Roland, reassures him just as he is about to confront the giant Mandaquin, and invites him to shout his name as he charges.[61] George, once honoured for securing victory and later invoked for the protection of armies, now appears as the one whom the warrior calls upon in the heat of battle - summoned like a comrade-in-arms. This marks a significant development. No longer confined to the *laudes* or prayers recited during rituals such as the presentation of arms, the devotion being encouraged had evolved into something more intimate and personal: a relationship in which the warrior regarded the saint as his "particular patron."

In this passage, the *Chanson d'Aspremont* presents the backstory behind the invocation "Saint Georges!," a formula which, like other expressions of the type or those following the model "Par saint X," appears frequently in romances, *chansons de geste*, and fabliaux. Invoking the saint in this way serves to affirm the truth of a statement and to underscore the seriousness of a commitment.[62] The

[60] Ibid., 282-283.

[61] *Aspremont. Chanson de geste du XIIe siècle*, ed. and trad. François Suard (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), v. 8143-8157.

[62] *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1958), v. 10838-10843 and 13665-13667; "Des ii changéors," in *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles imprimés ou inédits d'après les manuscrits*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon, Gaston Raynaud, I (Paris: Burt Franklin, 1877), v. 100-105.

choice of a warrior among the figures of the *sanctorale* may be linked to the military context in which he is invoked. For example, in the early years of the thirteenth century, Vivien, who declared his intention to become a "good knight," called upon St. George to witness his vow.[63] Such invocations could also echo the formulaic cries of battle. In the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, written at the end of the twelfth century, it is noted that when Baudouin leads his men into battle,[64] they would "hoot and cry 'Holy Sepulchre' and 'Saint George'". Shortly thereafter, in *L'Escoufle*, Jean Renart wrote that the Christians would charge to the cry of "Traï, traï! Ferés, ferés! / Felon paien, n'i garirés, / S'onques Diex fist rien por saint Jorge!"[65] The saint's assistance is not only invoked but expected - indeed, taken as certain. This confidence strengthens the troops' resolve, yet the battle cry can also shift into something more urgent and personal, becoming a desperate prayer when the warrior fully grasps the brutality of the conflict and the threat to his own life. Such is the case in the *Chevalerie Ogier*, where Ogier the Dane, seeing the grass soaked red with blood, calls upon the Virgin, St. George, and his "company" to protect him and preserve his life amid the chaos of battle.[66]

This closeness can also be expressed through the term "friend," which St. George uses to address Godfrey of Bouillon in the *Chanson de Jérusalem.*[67] The term conveys the privileged - indeed, almost exclusive - nature of their relationship.[68] It is inseparable from the proposal George, the Cappadocian saint, makes to the Christian leader: he invites Godfrey to join the saints in battle so that they might test his mettle and he, in turn, might demonstrate his valour. This allusion is unmistakable in a northern French version of the song, composed in a region where tournaments were especially popular. It becomes even more explicit in the account of the apparition of the *sancti bellatores* near Ramla, where, after the fighting had ended, George and his companions are said

[63] *Les Enfances Vivien*, ed. Magali Rouquier (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 841-842.

[64] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, ed. Nigel R. Thorp (Tuscaloosa-London: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), v. 8852-57.

[65] Jean Renart, *L'Escoufle, roman d'aventure*, ed. Franklin P. Sweetser (Geneva: Droz, 1974) c. 935-937.

[66] Raimbert de Paris, *La chevalerie Ogier de Danemarche. Poème du XIIe siècle*, ed. Joseph Barrois (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1969), c. 12506-12512.

[67] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, v. 5977-5984.

[68] We find the same idea in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*. St. George approaches Roland and speaks to him "softly, laughing" (v. -81538154). His message is intended to be reassuring, as the young man is about to face Mandaquin, but the laughter and thoughtfulness show the friendship that unites the two combatants, and François Suard uses the adverb "amicalement" to describe the phrase "doucement an riant" (*Aspremont*, 521).

to have gathered to joust.[69] Warrior saints and earthly knights share the same culture.

The growing prominence of the cult of warrior saints in aristocratic circles led, over time, to a fewer heavenly armies appearing on the battlefield. By the thirteenth century, such interventions were no longer deemed necessary. Some authors, such as Johannes Codagnellus and Albertus Miliolus, explain the rapid and disconcerting departure of the troops of al-Kamil, the Sultan of Cairo, in February 1219 as the result of an intervention by St. George.[70] The chronicles of Ernoul and Bernard, treasurer of St. Peter of Corbie, also mention, around 1230, Saint George's participation in the Battle of Montgisard on 25 November 1177.[71] Such episodes could still be reported, but they no longer provoked astonishment. James I, King of Aragon and Count of Barcelona, offers a telling testimony of this shift. Reflecting on the conquest of Majorca in 1229, he recalled having heard Muslims speak of a white rider bearing white arms who appeared at the head of the Christian forces. James concluded that the figure was St George and affirmed this interpretation. In his view, the identity of the mysterious warrior was clear: it could only have been the Cappadocian saint, whose appearances among Christian armies fighting against the Saracens had become well known through numerous accounts.[72] While Saint George's intervention may still provoke astonishment among the defeated, it no longer does so for the Catalan prince. For him, it appears almost self-evident - or at the very least, unexceptional. The aid of the *sanctus bellator*, often described in tangible terms, is accepted by those who invoke him, entrust their fate to him, or fight in defence of the Christian faith as a natural, even legitimate, element of warfare. Late thirteenth century copyist of BnF Français 25516 even implies that the Saracens themselves were aware of this. In a variant he includes in his version of the *Roman de Robert le Diable*, he notes that although the Muslims did not know the

[69] *La Chanson de Jérusalem*, v. 851-854.

[70] Johannes Codagnellus, *Gesta obsidionis Damiatæ, 1217-1219*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *M.G.H.*, *ss*, 31 (Hanover, 1903), 475; *Alberti Milioli notarii Regini Liber de temporibus et ætatibus et cronica imperatorum*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *M.G.H.*, *ss*, 31 (Hanover, 1903), 474. St. George, accompanied by innumerable fighters, is said to have passed through the al-Adiliya encampment, announcing the death of all those who did not leave the area, thus causing the soldiers protecting Damietta to flee and enabling the Crusaders to begin the siege of the city under favourable conditions.

[71] *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. Louis de Mas-Latrie (Paris: Renouard, 1871), 43-45.

[72] Jaume I, "*Crònica o llibre dels feits*," in *Les quatre grans cròniques*, ed. F. Soldevila, (Barcelona: Ed. 62, 1971), 48.

knight's identity, upon seeing him charge with shining white arms, they assumed he must be Saint George.[73]

Familiarity favours quick recognition. Jacobus de Voragine offers a telling example in chapter 56 of his *Legenda aurea*, dedicated to St. George. He recounts that when the Christians were preparing to lay siege to Jerusalem, a young man of striking beauty appeared to a priest, identifying himself as St. George, "general of the Christians." He urged that some of his relics be taken to Jerusalem, assuring them that his presence would accompany them. During the siege, when the Christians hesitated to scale the ladders due to fierce resistance from the Saracens, St. George appeared once more - this time clad in white armour bearing a red cross. He assured them they could ascend safely under his protection and would succeed in taking the city. Encouraged by the vision, the Christians launched their assault, captured Jerusalem, and slew the Saracens.[74] The famous hagiographer claims to have found this account in the "History of Antioch," but the *Historia Niceana vel Antiochena* makes no mention of any intervention by the saintly dragonslayer apart from the one at the Battle of Antioch.[75] It was rather William of Tyre's chronicle that had served as a more direct source. Both William of Tyre and Jacobus de Voragine recount the appearance of a mysterious warrior on the Mount of Olives, who encouraged the crusaders to advance their siege engines and ladders in order to seize the Holy City. Yet neither author focuses on the identity of the figure. William of Tyre refers merely to a "quidam miles" who never returned to the camp, while in earlier narrative, those by Raymond of Aguilers, we can read that the participants of the battle "were never able to find out who this knight was."[76] Jacobus de Voragine may have recalled the scene on the Mount of Olives - the siege equipment, the crusaders' discouragement - and, like James I of Aragon, inferred from the description that the mysterious figure could only have been St George.[77]

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[73] *Robert le Diable*, ed. and trad. Élisabeth Gaucher (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 369 for the variants of verses 2550 *et sq*.

[74] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Florence: Sismel- Ed. del Galluzzo, 1998), 398.

[75] *Balduini III historia Nicæna vel Antiochena*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, *Historiens occidentaux* 5 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895), 171-172.

[76] Willelmus Tyrensis archiepiscopus, *Chronicon*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), l. VIII, chap. 16, 407-408.

[77] The *Conquête de Jérusalem* recounts that St. George, accompanied by St. Maurice, charged onto the battlefield alongside Godfrey of Bouillon and, at the end of the day, led the Christian forces "safely into Jerusalem," disappearing once the gates and exits were secured. The notable differences from Jacobus de Voragine's version suggest that he was not drawing on the crusade song as a direct source. (p. 282-283).

From the last decades of the twelfth century onward, the presence of the holy warrior alongside the earthly one was no longer surprising; within the narrative, it served above all to encourage the latter to identify with the former. Also, the terminology used to describe or refer to warrior saints evolved over time. Between the composition of the chronicles of the First Crusade and Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, the term *sanctus* or *saint* continued to be employed. Yet even when Jacobus de Voragine recounts the saint's torments in vivid detail, the emphasis on martyrdom becomes less central.[78] Terms such as *bellator*, *miles*, *eques*, "knight," or simply "warrior" continue to identify the saint primarily as a man of war. However, these designations are increasingly accompanied by adjectives like *ber*, *bon*, *baron*, or *noble*, which underscore the qualities attributed to and expected of the holy combatant. His military prowess and noble lineage are thus equally celebrated, and - when combined with descriptions of his rich and distinguished armour - position him squarely within the cultural and social ideals of medieval nobility. The desire for *captatio benevolentiae* is evident - but there is more at stake. The identity of the troops commanded by the saints, and by St. George in particular, had evolved. In the early twelfth century, terms such as *deductor*, *ductor*, and *dux* were used to describe the leader of the horsemen descending from the mountains to support the crusaders on the plains. But only a few decades later, titles like *sire*, *mesires*, or *Monseigneur* were used to affirm the authority of St. George over Christian forces. The expression *dux christianorum*, used by Jacobus de Voragine to describe St. George, serves both as evidence and as the culmination of this cultural shift.[79] Like the other honorifics gradually adopted, it reflects the warrior's recognition of the saint's authority. At the same time - and because such language always carries an idealized dimension and is meant to instruct - it invites the warrior to deepen his connection with the one who, as a master of warfare, preceded him into eternity. The relationship between the *sanctus bellator* and the earthly warrior is one of reverence; it may even be understood as a form of spiritual kinship. In the *Chanson d'Antioche*, for instance, the man who demonstrates unwavering resolve in facing the Saracens is honoured with the title "son of Saint George."[80]

Finally, visual culture offers compelling evidence of the *sanctus bellator*'s recognition as a patron saint. A striking example is found in the church of Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets.[81] The Descent into Limbo depicted on the southern wall of

[78] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, 394-398 and 965-970.

[79] Ibid., 398.

[80] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 6051-6067.

[81] About these paintings, see E. Dehoux, "Peintures de chanoines. Images et messages à Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets," in *Convaincre et persuader: communication et propagande aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: CESCM, 2007), 563-614.

this modest sanctuary was covered, in the middle of the thirteenth century, by another scene: a succession of five-armed horsemen whose names are revealed in the inscriptions. The deterioration of the painting means that it is no longer possible to identify the last two men, but it still shows that they rode, along with Matthew and Hugh, behind Saint George, who has now disappeared even though he is clearly identified. The Cappadocian was not a newcomer to the local sanctuary. He was the patron saint of the Abbey of -Saint-Georges-du-Bois, to which the priory-cure of Saint-Jacques-des-Guérets belonged, and had been depicted in one of the sashes of the axial window a few decades earlier, as a warrior during a spiritual battle against Evil. The painting added to the nave in the thirteenth century is even better preserved. It bears witness to the reception of the teaching given. Having been exhorted to imitate Saint George and, in so doing, to make virtues triumph over vices, the aristocrats who commissioned the paintings added to the south wall of the nave demonstrated their desire to follow the saint from Cappadocia and the resolutely warlike example that he embodied.

Philippe of Courtenay and Guillaume of Tanlay opted for a different image of Saint George. In the stained-glass window they commissioned between 1210 and 1225 - where they themselves are depicted - the saint appears as a man of war, but also as a martyr.[82] This dual representation is significant. The chronicles of the First Crusade had already reported that George and his companions died for their faith, readily drawing a connection between those who had given their lives for Christ and those about to risk their own in battle. The *Chanson d'Antioche*, composed in the final decades of the twelfth century, was even more explicit: it proclaimed that the warrior who died in combat, having lived without neglecting works of mercy, would join the company of those who had gone before him.[83] This message was not new, but for a long time, the prospect of dying in battle was one that those concerned considered only to reject. The goal was to survive and, ideally, to perform the heroic feat that would secure honour and lasting glory. To represent the death of the *sanctus bellator* is therefore to signal that the model embodied by the saint had become fully internalised - so much so that combatants were now capable of envisaging an *imitatio sancti* that extended even to martyrdom. The appearance of martyrdom in visual representations - particularly when such images were commissioned by lay patrons - thus attests to the deep and lasting appropriation of pastoral discourse by the early thirteenth century.

[82] *Les vitraux du Centre et des Pays de la Loire* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1981), 37-38.
[83] *La Chanson d'Antioche*, v. 1305-1320.

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Over the decades, as the story was written and rewritten, its narrative structure changed little - far less, in fact, than the identity of the saints that were invoked. Archangel Michael and the Apostle Peter may have been called upon to encourage Christians departing from Pisa, Genoa, Rome, and Amalfi to fight the Muslims in Mahdia and Zawila, or - like Peter, in association with the other Apostles - to support the cause of an anti-pope. But from the twelfth century onward, these figures gradually gave way to others: George, Demetrius, Maurice, Mercurius - saints who were resolutely martial, who had died for their faith, and who were presented as models for the *bellatores*. The accounts of their apparitions portray holy warriors who closely resemble their earthly counterparts, leading them into battle and accompanying them into the heart of combat - thus affirming the reality of the protection being invoked. In doing so, these narratives helped define both the mission and the role of the Christian warriors, offering them not only a framework for action but also a place within the divine order. The social and even political status of the *milites Christi* was thereby affirmed and consolidated, just as the broader organisation of Christian society was reinforced. By this time, the Archangel Michael had come to be more closely associated with the clergy, whose primacy and authority were now supported by the eschatological dimension of their ministry. Yet the spiritual aspirations of the warrior class were also acknowledged - and fulfilled. These texts worked toward the recognition of a distinct path to salvation, one that did not necessarily pass through the cloister. This message, conveyed through a wide array of channels - from prayers to songs - bore fruit: the evolution of terminology reveals a growing intimacy between holy warriors and their earthly counterparts, with the former increasingly recognised as the "special patrons" of the latter.

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"CEPIT CRUX ADVERSUS ALBIGENSES IN FRANCIA PREDICARI": DOMINGO DE CALERUEGA, THE EARLY PREACHERS MOVEMENT, AND EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY CRUSADING

Kyle C. Lincoln*

The long twelfth century witnessed a proliferation of religious orders, famously culminating in the Fourth Lateran Council's prohibition against new rules and foundations without license from Rome itself.[1] Notably among these for the circumstances in which they were founded in this period are the Military Orders and the Mendicant Orders, both of which seem to be responding to the emerging circumstances of the crusading movements and the increasing urbanization of Latin Christendom.[2] In most readings of the historiography of the period, the Order of Friars Preachers, founded by Domingo de Caleruega in the first years of the thirteenth century, are regarded as belonging to the "mendicant orders side" of the historical survey rather than to the body of military orders.[3] This essay, while not challenging this judgement, argues that the foundation of the

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[1] On Fourth Lateran Council's prohibitions, see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. and trans. Norman P. Tanner, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:242.

[2] The development of new religious movements in the long twelfth century received a classic treatment by Grundmann, but new scholarship has also shown that the situation is more complicated: H. Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links Between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan, (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1995); E. Freeman, "The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the Prohibition against New Religious Orders, and Religious Women," *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures,* 44, no. 1 (2018): 1–23.

[3] See, for example: L. K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

Order of Preachers should also be construed as having a strong crusading pedigree; put briefly, the Preachers do appear to be a mendicant order emerging from the urbanization of the long twelfth century and its spiritual consequences, but they were also strongly influenced by and deeply involved with the crusades that were launched during Domingo's lifetime. This essay, then, examines the evidence produced by the Preachers as well as contemporary crusading events to show that the early Preachers were deeply involved with crusading and that bright-line judgements positioning them within the historiography as a purely mendicant and urban phenomenon are unsustainable.

The early life and career of the founder of the Order of Preachers has little concrete evidence about its events, but is rich in circumstantial and legendary evidence; the former provides strong context for sorting through what material might be trustworthy about the latter. Taken together, they elucidate a few key elements about St. Dominic of Osma's early life as Domingo de Caleruega.[4] We know that Domingo de Caleruega's was from the hamlet of Caleruega, in the region around Soria, within the diocese of Osma.[5] Hagiographical sources suggest that he was born sometime between 1170 and 1175, a fact which comports with some of the wider contours of his life and career.[6] During that same decade, of course, the conquest of Cuenca added a frontier territory in the archdiocesan province of Toledo, and the additional settlement of Plasencia in the following decade brought increased attention to the Kingdom of Castile as a bulwark of Christendom "on the march."[7] It is difficult to affirmatively label the

[4] In this paper, I use Domingo de Caleruega to refer to the historical person, St. Dominic of Osma to refer to the saint as portrayed in hagiographical literatures.

[5] This fact is unchallenged in hagiographical and historical treatments, see Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum," ed. H-C. Scheeben, (Rome: Institum Historicum Ordinis Praedicatorum, 1935), 25-88; Petrus Ferrandi, "Legenda sancti Dominici," in *Petri Ferrandi Legenda Sancti Dominic*, ed. Simon Tugwell (Rome: Angelicum University Press, 2015), 261-382.

[6] The date of Domingo's parent's marriage is given as 1170 by the later thirteenth century hagiographer Dietrich von Apolda: Dietrich von Apolda, *Libellus de Vita et Obitu Sancti Dominici*, ed. Johannes Sollerio et al., in *Acta Sanctorum, Aug. Tom. I*, cols. 566D. Domingo died in 1221, so we could reasonably assume that he was in his mid- to late-forties at the time of his death, a not too-young age given his widely remarked upon ascetic practices: L. Boyle, "The Death of Dominic in 1221," *Doctrine and Life,* 21, (1971): 438-46; S. Tugwell, "Notes on the Life of Dominic, IV: Dominic's Date of Birth" *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 67 (1997): 27-57. See also, Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 27-29.

[7] The contours of the last three decades of the twelfth century and Castilian entrenchment in the wider crusading movement are sketched in: P. Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (New York: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1993); C. de Ayala Martinez, *Las*

conquest of Cuenca or the foundation of Plasencia as crusading enterprises, but the addition of urban settlements on the southern frontier with the Almohads, which were likely also raiding outposts, does suggest that some occasional belligerence may have been foreseen by the royal sponsors of the settlements and their ecclesiastical leaders. At Cuenca, the first bishops were all formerly archdeacons of Calatrava in the archdiocese of Toledo and the patrimony of the church included several fortresses.[8] Plasencia's archival documents from before 1238 are lost, but the appointment of clergy from the royal monastery of Santa Maria de Valladolid (if Julio González's hypothesis is indeed correct) would suggest that a royal favourite was selected to complement the work of Ávila's militia and the clergy that urged them to action in the growing region of Castilian Extremadura.[9]

I. Preaching before an Order

We know that he first appears as a canon of Osma, during the period when he was likely studying in Palencia, in an 1191 hermandad between Osma and Sigüenza, two dioceses whose quarrels had been raging for nearly half a

Cruzadas, (Madrid: Silex, 2004); J. F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); J. F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); F. Garcia Fitz, *La Reconquista,* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2010); F. Garcia Fitz, *Castilla y León frente al Islam: Estrategias de Expansion y tácticas militares (siglos XI-XIII)*, (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2001). For specific scholarship on the establishment of these two dioceses, see the following note.

[8] J. M. Nieto Soria, "El equipamiento económico de una sede episcopal castellana de nueva creación: Cuenca, 1180-1280," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 12 (1982): 311-40; J. M. Nieto Soria, "La fundación del Obispado de Cuenca (1177-1183). Consideraciones político-eclesiásticas," *Hispania Sacra,* 34, no. 69 (1982): 111-130; J. F. Powers, "The Early Reconquest Episcopate at Cuenca, 1177-1284," *The Catholic Historical Review* 87 (2001): 1-16; J. Díaz Ibáñez, "Los fortalezas medievales de la Iglesia de Cuenca," In *La Fortaleza Medieval: Realidad y Simbol,* ed. Juan Antonio Barrio Barrio and José Vicente Cabezuelo Pliego, (Murcia: Compobell, 1997), 305-12; J. Díaz Ibáñez, "La iglesia de Cuenca en la Edad Media (Siglos XII-XV). Estructura y relaciones de poder," PhD Thesis, (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2002).

[9] B. Palacios Martin, "Alfonso VIII y su política de frontera en Extremadura," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 19 (1989): 155-65; B. Palacios Martin, "Alfonso VIII y su política de frontera en Extremadura: la creación de diócesis de Plasencia," *En la España medieval* 15 (1992): 77-96; J. F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War,* 29-30, 46-7; J. González González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, (Madrid: CSIC, 1960), 1: 471-2.

century.[10] The chapter at Osma had been suffering from its own internal turmoil—a fact that it shared with Sigüenza—as the reform movements of the twelfth century worked their way into and then through both chapters.[11] These reforms were probably, at least in part, influenced by the disastrous defeat at Alarcos, a crusade hamstrung by poor coordination and which was already (in the weeks prior to the climactic battle) provoking papal anxieties because of the internecine rivalries among the kings of Christian Iberia.[12] Internal pressure for reforms to provide both stronger leadership of administrative units that were essential to the good working order of the kingdom and a greater spearpoint for the spiritual warfare that was understood to operate alongside crusades likely were factors that lay alongside another episode in Domingo's early life. The first Master-General of the Order of Preachers, Jordan of Saxony, narrated in his *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum:*

> In that same time when he was studying at Palencia, there was a great famine throughout nearly all of Hispania, then that same [Domingo] moved by the neediness of the poor … selling also his books … setting them up as alms and giving them to the poor. His example of piety stirred up the spirit of the theologians the other masters, so that because of the generosity of this young man they should give more abundantly in alms thenceforth.[13]

Domingo's own motivations to sell all of his books (and perhaps his furniture and surplus clothing) to alleviate a famine that took place either in 1193 (as part of an ecologically-caused shortfall recorded in the *Analaes toledanos*) or as a result

[10] For this 1191 document, see: T. Minguella y Arnedo, *Historia de Sigüenza y de sus obispos*, (Madrid: Imprenta de la "Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos", 1910-3), 1:471-2; A. Rucquoi, *Dominicus Hispanus: Ochocientos años de la Orden de Predicadores,* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2016), 46; A. Rucquoi, *Dominicus Hispanus: Saint Dominique Avant la fondation de lórdre des Prêcheurs. Saint Dominic before the Foundation of the Order of Preachers,* (Toulouse: Centre d'études de Fanjeaux, 2018), 39 and 159. On the Sigüenza-Osma conflict, see: A. Holndonner, *Kommunikation-Jurisdiktion-Integration: Das Papsttum und das Erzbistum Toledo im 12. Jahrhundert (ca. 1085-ca.1185),* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 599-625.

[11] I have examined these reform movements in detail elsewhere: K. C. Lincoln, "'It pleased the Lord Bishop': Episcopal Agency and Cathedral Chapter Reform in the Kingdom of Castile at the End of the Long Twelfth Century (c.1195-1205)" in *Episcopal Power and Personality in Medieval Europe, 900-1480,* ed. Peter Coss, Melissa Julian-Jones, Angelo Silvestri and Chris Dennis, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 247-66.

[12] On papal hesitancy leading up to the campaign: M. D. Gomez and K. C. Lincoln, "'The Sins of the Sons of Men.' A new letter of Pope Celestine III concerning the Crusade of Alarcos" *Crusades*, 16, (2017): 55-63.

[13] Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum," 30-31.

of the Almohad Caliph's 1196 and 1197 raids of Castile and Leon, which were only turned back when the Castilian king received military aid from his longtime ally, the Count-King of Aragon.[14] Although early Dominican sources were confused about the timing of Domingo's recruitment to the chapter at Osma, they do make this incident of book-selling and almsgiving the explicit cause for his being called (*recte*: recalled) to Osma.

If, as seems likely, Dominic returned to Osma in 1197 or 1198, the congratulatory letter that Innocent III sent to the bishop of Osma, *Religionem plantare,* in 1199 noted that the reform of the chapter had eliminated secular canons.[15] Within those same few years, the Castilian crown expanded aggressively into the northeastern part of the peninsula, conquering Alava, Guipuzcoa, and Vitoria as part of a broader campaign.[16] There are no formal indicators that, like the 1196 crusade promulgated against the Leonese monarchs, there was a bull of crusade against the Navarrese territories that the Castilians were taking possession of, although Sanç VII of Navarra was not in high favour at Rome.[17] Nor was the Castilian church—Osma included—beyond any potential threat from holy wars, as the contemporary example of the bishops of Plasencia being taken hostage by the Almohads.[18] By the first years of the

[14] J. Porres Martín-Cleto, *Los Anales Toledanos I y II,* (Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1993), 160-2; F. Garcia Fitz, *Castilla y León frente al Islam,* 448-9; M. Alvira Cabrer, "'Si possides amicum, in Temptatione Posside Illum:' Alfonso VIII and Peter the Catholic," in *King Alfonso VIII of Castile: Government, Family and War,* ed. Miguel D. Gómez, Kyle C. Lincoln, and Damian J. Smith, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 185-203; K. C. Lincoln, ""*Mihi pro fidelitate militabat:* cruzada, guerra santa y guerra justa contra cristianos durante el reino de Alfonso VIII de Castilla según las fuentes episcopales," in *Hombres de Guerra y Religion [Men of War and Religion],* ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez and J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva, (Madrid: Silex, 2018), 13-33.

[15] D. Mansilla, ed., *Documentación pontificia hasta Innocencio III,* (Rome: Instituto español de estudios eclesiásticos, 1955), 205-206.

[16] L. J. Fortún Pérez de Ciriza, "La quiebra de soberanía navarra en Álava, Guipúzcoa y el Duranguesado (1199-1200)," *Revista internacional de los Estudios Vascos,* 45, no. 2 (2000): 439-494.

[17] On the 1196 crusade: D. J. Smith, "The Iberian Legations of Cardinal Hyacinth Bobone," in *Pope Celestine III: Diplomat and Pastor*, ed. John Doran and Damian Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 84-115; K. Lincoln, "Mihi pro fidelitate militabat," 24-27.

For Sancho VII of Navarra's Roman reputation: K. C. Lincoln, "'Holding the Place of the Lord Pope Celestine:' The Legations of Gregory, Cardinal-Deacon of Sant'Angelo (1192-4 / 1196-7)," *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesias,* 24 (2013): 491-93.

[18] Al-Himyari comments on the captivity of the leader of Plasencia, given the disappearance of the bishops of Plasencia from royal records at this time, I have elsewhere (I think credibly) speculated that this may have been the bishop or the royal merino, perhaps both: Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Himyari, *Kitab ar-Rawd al Mi'tar*, trans. María Pilar Maestro

thirteenth century, though, the growth of the Castilian crown's political ambitions enveloped other campaigns and territory further afield.

The growth of the Castilian monarchy into Gascony in the first decade of the thirteenth century is a hotly contested historiographical territory. Scholarly consensus has it that the Castilian monarchy's attempt to conquer Gascony was part of a dual effort to expand Castilian influence in Latin Christendom beyond the Pyrenees and to recover the putative dowry of Leonor Plantagenet in the region.[19] There is some diplomatic evidence to suggest that the prelates of Castile accompanied Alfonso VIII on the campaigns to the region, although witness lists are not the strongest evidence given their often-formulaic natures.[20] Geographically, Osma was one of the dioceses that was closest to Gascony. It is likely, however, that Diego of Osma and his then-subprior Dominic were sent more for their reputation at the court than for any geographical happenstance. Jordan of Saxony reports that: "it happened that at that time Alfonso, king of Castile, desired a marriage between his son Fernando and a certain noble girl from the Marches. For which cause, he approached the bishop of Osma, [Diego] seeking that he be made procurator of this work."[21] Although they may have left from either Osma or Gascony, the trip to the court of the Margraves of Brandenburg,[22] was an important part of Dominic's early career, since their journey seems to have included extended time in the Toulousain, where contemporary heretics had been drawing increased attention since Bernard of

González, (Valencia: Gráficas Bautista, 1963), 39; K. C. Lincoln, "Beating Swords into Croziers: A case study of Warrior Bishops in the Kingdom of Castile, c.1158-1214," *Journal of Medieval History*, 44, no. 1 (2018): 83-103.

[19] For the dowry campaigns: M. Alvira Cabrer and P. Buresi, "'Alphonse, par la grâce de Dieu, Roi de Castille et de Tolède, Seigneur de Gascogne' Quelque remarques à propos des relations entre Castillans et Aquitains au d'ebut du XIIIe siècle," in *Aquitaine-Espagne (VIIIe-XIII siècle)*, ed. Phillippe Sénac. (Poitiers: Universite de Poitiers, 2001), 219-232; J. M. Cerda, "La dot gasconne d'Aliénor d'Angleterre Entre royaume de Castille, royaume de France et royaume d'Angleterre," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 54, 2011,225-242; J. M. Cerda, "Leonor Plantagenet y la consolidación castellana en el reinado de Alfonso VIII," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales,* 42, no. 2, (2012): 629-52.

[20] M. Alvira and P. Buresi, "Alphonse, par la grâce de Dieu, Roi de Castille et de Tolède, Seigneur de Gascogne," 228-229.

[21] "accidit itaque tunc temporis Alphonsum, regem Castelle, inter filium suum Ferdinandum et quondam nobilem de Marchiis desiderare connubium. Quam ob causam adiit prefatum episcopum Oxomensem, postulans fieri eum huius procuratoruem negotii": Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum", 33.

[22] I have recently provided a reappraisal of the evidence for the putative alliance with the Margraves of Brandenburg, with a strong Danish connection, in a paper for the *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum:* K, C. Lincoln, "'Ad Marchias Daciae': Revisiting the Gallén Thesis about the Mission of Diego d'Acebo to the Court of Orlamünde with Respect to the Castilian Evidence," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum,* Nova Series, 8 (2023): 5-26.

Clairvaux's missions in the preceding century.[23] When their diplomatic mission had been frustrated by the untimely death of the proposed bride, the Osman delegation was forced to change its perspective.

Early Dominican sources make it clear that Diego d'Acebo wanted to retire from the episcopate and become a Cistercian monk, but Innocent III allegedly denied the first half of the request and (tacitly) allowed him to take a Cistercian habit.[24] The crusading *bona fides* of the Cistercians are well-established and their influence on both the Templars, internationally, and the order of Calatrava, within the Iberian context, only further underlines their support for the wider crusade movement.[25] Without a more extensive narration of his *conversatio,* we cannot conclude which motivations were the most impactful on Diego, but the confluence of these factors was certainly behind the events that followed. The preaching campaigns in the region against the so-called "Good Men" of the Toulouse region were spearheaded by Cistercians, with substantial papal backing, and it is within this context that we get a useful glimpse into the dynamics of the religious orders as they attempted to root out the heretical groups in the region.

II. The Albigensian Crusade and Dominic's Mission

Even before the murder of Pere de Castelnau, the sources that chronicled the Albigensian Crusade made clear that the region was under immense tension. Given the later role that Dominic and his followers played in the region and the relationship they cultivated with Simon de Montfort, it is no surprise then that the Albigensian chronicles, *chansons des gestes* and hagiographies dedicated some of their coverage to Dominic and his actions. Examining the role of Dominic and the early group of followers that were attached to him before the formal foundation of his Order of Preachers puts the Albigensian Crusade front and centre, and requires that we examine the narrative evidence, cartulary evidence, and the diplomatic evidence in their own milieu, in order to best

[23] About St. Bernard's preaching in the region: B. Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy, and Crusade in Occitania,* 78-109.

[24] Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 35.

[25] On the Cistercians and crusade: M. Gervers, ed., *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians,* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1992); W. J. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in Iberia and the Holy Land, c. 1095-c.1187,* (New York: Boydell, 2008), 86-119.

For their involvement with the Temple: M. Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple,* (New York: Camridge University Press, 1993), 1-63. About Cistercian influence over Iberian military orders: C. de Ayala Martinez, *Los Órdenes Militares Hispánicas en la edad media,* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2007), 65-148; S. Zeno Conedera, *Ecclesiastical Knighthood: The Military Orders in Castile, 1150-1330,* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 45-60.

engage with the material preserved from the period. Within the body of this evidence, it is clear that Dominic's early mission has a very clear crusade context, but the degree of engagement needs to be teased out carefully so that the precise nature of that engagement can be traced.

Chronicles of the early Order of Preachers are not wary about putting the Albigensian Crusade movement at the core of Dominic's early vocation in the region.[26] After Diego returned to Osma, Dominic remained in the region to keep the mission alive, and Jordan of Saxony noted that "after the death of the bishop of Osma, the Crusade against the Albigensians in *Francia* began to be preached."[27] Although Diego's death in 1207 was before the formal launch of the crusade in the region, there was, of course, an extensive preaching campaign against the "Good Men" for decades prior to this period.[28] This preaching was famously—perhaps, too famously to be a wholly credible notion—the result of "dumb dogs who do not bark" and the result of poor ecclesiastical leadership in the region.[29] Although this has since come into question from scholarship, early Dominican Chronicles make the problems of the Church in the region no secret, and align with the contemporary feeling at Rome that something needed to be done to bring religious attitudes back into alignment with Roman norms.[30] Preaching campaigns, too, were a part of a wider understanding of spiritual warfare in the medieval world, and their support for military affairs was well

[26] The early Dominican narrative hagiography is consistent in this emphasis: Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 31-2; Petrus Ferrandi, *Legenda sancti Dominici*, 278-82; Constantine of Orvieto, "Legenda Sancti Dominici," ed. H.C. Scheeben in *Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica,* vol. 16 (Rome: Institutum Ordinis Praedicatorum Historic, 1936), 292-3; Humbert of Romans, "Legenda sancti Dominici," ed. Tugwell in Simon Tugwell OP, ed., *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2008), 459-60

[27] Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 41.

[28] For biographical details about Diego, see: K. C. Lincoln, *A Constellation of Authority: Castilian Bishops and the Secular Church during the Reign of Alfonso VIII,* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023), 147; K. C. Lincoln, "A Prosopography of the Castilian Episcopate," in *King Alfonso VIII of Castile: Government, Family and War,* ed. Miguel D. Gomez, Kyle C. Lincoln, and Damian J. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 200-202.

[29] For the "dumb dogs" sentiment from Rome and scholarship about this papal claim: D. J. Smith, *Innocent III and the crown of Aragon: the limits of papal authority,* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 39-40.

[30] For recent reappraisals of the state of ecclesiastical leaders in the region: W. Reid Cosgrove, "Clergy and crusade: The church in southern France and the Albigensian Crusade," PhD Dissertation (Saint Louis University, 2012), 32-154. On preaching movements in the region prior to the thirteenth century: B. Mayne Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy, and Crusade in Occitania, 1145-122*: *Preaching in the Lord´s Vineyard,* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2001), 78-134

understood in the crusading context.[31] As part of a broader appeal to piety linked to Constable's "monasticization of the laity" argument for the long twelfth century, preaching and liturgical innovations in the late twelfth century underscored wider spiritual surges.[32] The murder of Peter de Castelnau, while the overt casus belli, was part of a wider and more diabolical (from Rome's perspective) movement to undermine ecclesiastical power in the region, using the shortcomings of contemporary prelates as its *cause celebre,* and a measure by which all of the spiritual progress witnessed widely in Latin Christendom was to be soon undone.[33]

We are fortunate that several contemporary accounts of the crusade have been preserved about the progress of the Albigensian crusade and that these, occasionally, attend to the growth of the Order of Preachers. *Chansons des geste*, like that of Guillhelm de Tudela and his anonymous continuator, and wider chronicles, like that of Guillaume de Puylarens, make it clear that the crusade was a major undertaking from the beginning and that religious and cultural attitudes provoked by the conflict made it hard to remain a neutral party.[34] Both of these sources mention Diego, although only de Puylarens notes Dominic's role, and in both cases the contest between the heretics and the crusaders takes centre stage; intricately included, however, are the intellectual clashes and preaching confrontations that were a key part of the anti-heresy movement. Of course, even the Crown of Aragon was in a double-bind: Raymond of Toulouse was an Aragonese vassal, but the Count-Kings were themselves sworn to the pope; the overlap of loyalties made the stakes of preaching political and with that, military, as well.[35] In de Puylaren's account, one of Dominic's earliest companions debates the sister of Raymond Roger of Foix, described as a

[31] I have made this case elsewhere: K. C. Lincoln, "Fighting on a Prayer: Liturgical and Physical Engagement of Warfighting by Clergy in High Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1000-1250," in *Religious Rites of War beyond the Medieval West,* ed. Radosław Kotecki, Jacek Maciejewski, and Gregory Leighton, (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 1: 30-68.

[32] G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 125-167.

[33] The best military history is Marvin's, but Innocent's bull announcing the crusade makes the proximal cause of the campaign clear: Othmad Hageneder, Andrea Sommerlechner et al., *Die register Innocenz' III. Band XI. 11. Pontifikatsjahr 1208/1209. Texte und Indices* [The Register of Innocent III: Volume 11, Pontifical year 1208/1209], (Wien: Verlag de Österreichenischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), 29-36; L. Marvin, *The Occitan War: A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[34] William de Tudela and Anonymous, *Song of the Cathar Wars*, trans. Janet Shirley, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1996), 12; Guillaume de Puylarens, *Chronique, 1145-1275,* 53.

[35] D. J. Smith, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition in the Lands of the Crown of Aragon (c. 1167-1276),* Leiden: Brill, 2010), 13-40.

heresiarch in her own right.[36] Such a confrontation with a heresiarch and a woman makes aligns with Dominic's early mission—Prouille itself was founded explicitly for the reconciled women who had taken a role in the heresies of the region—but also points at the key supporting role played by women in crusading contexts, suggesting that the rescuing of prodigal souls was, itself, part of the wider effort to erode support for heretics in the region.[37] Additionally, the few letters that we have preserved from Dominic fit this notion of challenging and confronting the spiritual needs of women and reconciling heretics,[38] which aligns with the emphases of the chansons texts, and also aligns with the hagiographical treatment of Dominic's actions during the height of the conflict in the Toulousain.

Hagiographical accounts about Dominic and his early movement make clear how important the crusading period was to Dominic's life. The testimonials gathered as the *Acta canonizationis* were collected from Bologna and Toulouse, and in the case of the Toulousain, the corpus was clearly focused on his zeal, preaching, and miracles.[39] Jordan's *Libellus* includes, a story about Dominic's sense of charity within the context of hostage-ship, a common enough practice in military contexts, and debt-servitude:

> Once he was exhorting an unbeliever to return to the bosom of Mother Church and the latter pleaded that temporal necessity bound him to the heretics, who gave him all he needed for a living, because he could not get them in any other way. Deeply moved by compassion for this man, Dominic resolved to sell himself and use the money to relieve the poverty of this soul. And he would have done so, had not the Lord, who is rich towards all, provided another means of supplying that man's needs.[40]

[36] Guillaume de Puylarens, *Chronique, 1145-1275,* 54.

[37] On the role played by women on crusades, see: N. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, (New York: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 36-52.

[38] The three letters from Dominic have been edited and translated: http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0002.htm

[39] S. Tugwell, "Notes on the Life of Dominic III," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 66 (1996): 59-137; *Acta Canonizationis S. Dominici,* ed. R. P. Angeli Walz, in *Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica,* vol. 16 (Rome: Institutum Ordinis Praedicatorum Historic, 1936), 169-87.

[40] Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 35. Above, I have used the translations from the larger "St. Dominic—Biographical Documents," preserved online by the Dominican Central Province: http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/default.htm.

A nearly identical story was then added by Petrus Ferrandi's early *Vita* of Dominic, but he appended that Dominic was "known to have done something like that while he was still living in his own country. For a woman came to him weeping that her brother was being held captive by the Saracens. But filled with a spirit of charity he was moved to compassion and offered to sell himself as a ransom for the prisoner."[41] We know, too, that Dominic was not merely concerned with "loss prevention" in the theatre of spiritual warfare, but with active confrontation too. Fr. Stephen Hispanus, who seems to have joined the order sometime after 1218, notes that when Dominic inducted him into the Order he said, "I wish to give to you the weapons with which for the whole of your life you ought to battle against the devil (*Ego volo dare tibi arma cum quibus toto tempore vite tue debeas pugnare contra diaboloum*)."[42] Whether in ransoming hostages or in the arming of a novice for spiritual combat, the militarized language of the early order's hagiographical texts makes the confluence of Dominic's own frontier-oriented youth and the crusading-era context of the early Order clearly construed as being in zones of active conflict. The preservation of both Dominic's work and the growth of the order were most certainly read as being themselves miraculous, as one extended episode where heretics were converted makes clear.

Jordan of Saxony makes the conversion of heretics a focus of considerable mirabilographical material, noting especially how Dominic's preaching was often accompanied by miracles or small signs. One example, the famous debate at Fanjeaux, bears repeating to serve this point:

> On one occasion, a famous debate was held at Fanjeaux, for which a large crowd of believers and unbelievers was assembled. Several of the believers had composed tracts containing arguments and authorities to support the faith. When these were all examined, the one which was considered best and was most generally approved of was one by the blessed Dominic, so this was the one chosen to be submitted to the three judges who had been appointment … The heretics too had written a tract, which was also to be submitted. Whichever side submitted the work which the judges ruled to be more reasonable, the faith of that side was to be considered the winner.

[41] Petrus Ferrandi, *Legend of St. Dominic,* cap. 21, trans. Lehner, (http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0001.htm): Petrus Ferrandi, ed. Tugwell, 303. On this translated text, see the previous note.

[42] On Stephen of Spain, see: S. Tugwell, "Notes on the Life of Dominic III," 122-6; *Acta Canonizationis*, 155.

> There was a long verbal tussle, but the judges could not agree on a verdict in favour of either party. Eventually they had the idea of throwing both books into the fire. Should either of them chance not to be burned, that one was to be regarded as undoubtedly containing the true faith.
>
> A big fire was lit, and both the books were thrown in. The heretics' book burned up immediately, but the other one, the one written by the man of God, Dominic, not merely remained unharmed by the flames, it actually leaped a long way out of the fire. They threw it in again, and it jumped out again. When the same thing happened a third time, this plainly proved but the truth of the faith and the holiness of the book's author.[43]

In the context of crusading, preaching occupied an important part of the wider "spiritual warfare" arm of the campaign that medieval thinkers understood to be essential to the success of the military project.[44] The miraculous leaping of the book's—repeated three times in a manner replete with biblical parallels to Elijah or Peter, for example—physical corpus itself signalled the condemnation of the heretical text to fire in direct opposition to Dominic's book being saved from the fires; fire, quite transparently, was equivalent to Hell itself. The miracle was thus

[43] "Contigit autem apud Fanum Iovis celebrem quondam disputationem inslitui, ad quam convocati sunt tam fid elium quam infidelium plurima multi ludo. Plerique igitur fidelium suos interim conscripsere libellos, rationes atque auctoritates confirmationem fidei continentes, inter quos omnibus inspectis beati viri Dominici libellus plus celeris commendatus est et communiter approbatus quatenus de tribus arbitris, de assensu de partium ad sententie diffinitionem electis, cum libello hereticorum, quem et ipsi pro se conscripserant, presentari deberet, et cuius partis libellum rationabiliorem arbitri iudicarent, eius fides prestantior haberetur. Cumque multa verborum disceptatione ad alteram partem arbitri convenire non possent, tandem incidit eis consilium, ut libellos utrosque flammis iniicerent, et si quem illorum non comburi contingeret, ille veram fidem proculdubio contineret. Accensus est igitur ignis magnus, utrumque librorum iniiciunt. Liber hereticorum confestim exuritur, alter vero, quem conscripserat vir Dei Dominicus, non solum permansit illesus, scd et de flammis palam omnibus in longinquum exsiliit; iterumque reiectus et III totiensque resiliens monstravit aperte et fidei veritatem et eius, qui libellum conscripserat, sanctitatem": Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus,* 38.

[44] On the importance of crusade preaching as a part of the spiritual warfare that accompanied the military campaigns and its impact on wider understanding of crusading: J. Bird, "'Theologians know best': Paris-trained crusade preachers as mediators between papal, popular, and learned crusading pieties," *Journal of Medieval History*, 49 no. 3, (2023) 320-338; J. Bird, "Preaching and Crusade Memory," in *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading*, ed. Megan Cassidy-Welch, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 13-34.

both spiritual combat and intellectual combat reified by the miraculous event. In the earliest narration of the crusading period, Dominic is noted as having preached while enduring violence from the Albigensians.[45] In a similar fashion, Dominic offered to sell himself into slavery to free a heretical adherent from the indebtedness that had bound him to the heretical movement in the region; in this fashion, offering himself as a bodily hostage to ransom a spiritual captive.[46] Conversion, as an arm of spiritual warfare, was an important marker of the ways that the aims of clergy worked at mutually-beneficial purposes; both as a kind of loss prevention—keeping those who may have supported heretics in the region from doing so—and as a means of garnering divine favour—understood for since at least the Second Crusade as a key component of a successful crusade—the episodes of converting heretics via miraculous encounter was an important indicator of the early Dominicans' involvement in the region.

Early charters to the nascent preachers around Prouille under Dominic's leadership demonstrate that the notion of bringing back heretical women into the Rome-aligned flock was one of Dominic's early success stories.[47] While the Toulousain was several hundred years removed from the late Visigothic world's emphasis on virginal women as a marker of familial piety,[48] the role played by women as leaders in the heretical movement in the region did nevertheless render their conversion a powerful symbolic and social victory.[49] Although founded in 1206, the location of the convent, too, near Fanjeaux and not terribly far from Toulouse put the convent deep in the heart of Trencavel territory and quite near to the lands of the Counts of Toulouse by the time the war broke out in the next year.[50] Foundations of women's convents in conflict zones, by the end of the thirteenth century, as manners for ensuring; for a Castilian like Dominic,

[45] Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus,* 41-42.

[46] Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus,* 42-3.

[47] Jordan of Saxony notes that Prouille was chosen as a site because it was between Montpellier and Fanjeaux, which also places it in the heart of the conflict: Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 39.

[48] L. K. Pick, *Her Father's Daughter: Gender, Power, and Religion in the Early Spanish Kingdoms,* (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press, 2017).

[49] On the role of women in the heresy that broke out in the regions around Toulouse: M. G. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246,* (New York: Princetone University Press, 2001), 118-120; C. Taylor, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Medieval Quercy,* (New York: York Medieval Press, 2011), 165-8; R. Abels and E. Harrison, 'The Participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism', *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979), 215–51, cited by C. Sparks, *Heresy, Inquisition and Life Cycle in Medieval Languedoc,* (New York: York Medieval Press, 2014), 2 n.7. See, as the obvious point working in the opposite direction, i.e. the deployment of women's monastic communities to retrench orthodoxy: A. Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns: The Women's Religious Movement and Its Reform in Thirteenth-Century Champagne,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011) 147-170.

[50] L. Marvin, *The Occitan War,* 4-11.

the similarity of female cultural or religious influence in a contested region to the *Infantazgo* probably was another factor that recommended its success.[51] However challenging its setting must have been, the planting of the convent in the region was a major success, given the later patronage of Dominic's mission and the expansion of the order to other provinces.

The protection of Simon de Montfort of the early Dominican movement was a major boon for both the recovery of heretics and for the development of a nascent network in the region. The overlap of a variety of movements in the region makes the situation enormously complex for scholars, especially since it seems quite likely that movements were understood as being either "Catholic" or "Heretical" based on the judgements of individual viewers even while they certainly must have existed along a spectrum where those delineations existed on paper more than in person.[52] The planting of individual priories and the development of the first communities around Dominic seems to have been derived from Dominic's own efforts at recruitment, with the patronage of nobles and burghers in the area providing the financial backing for these efforts.[53] Scholars who work on the military orders have long noted that the planting of chapters of these "ecclesiastical knights" along frontiers that were vulnerable have found that elite patrons were thought to receive the most credit for helping

[51] On the foundation of monasteries in contested regions: E. Jamroziak and K. Stöber, eds., *Monasteries on the Borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Interaction,* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2014). I am grateful to Hannah Jones for this reference. For the Infantazgo region as an economically, culturally, and politically potent region: G. Martin, "Reforma litúrgica, infantazgo y protagonismo femenino bajo el reinado de Alfonso VI," in *Alfonso VI y su legado: actas del congreso internacional, Sahagún, 29 de octubre al 1 de noviembre de 2009, IX centenario de Alfonso VI, 1109-2009,* (León: Universidad de León, 2012), 115-120; T. Martin, "Hacia una clarificación del infantazgo en tiempos de la reina Urraca y su hija la infanta Sancha (ca. 1107-1159)," *e-Spania: revue interdisciplinaire d'études hispaniques médiévales et modernes*. https://e-spania.revues.org/12163; T. Martin, "Fuentes de potestad para reinas e infantas: El infantazgo en los siglos centrales de la Edad Media," *Anuario de estudios medievales,* 46, no. 1 (2016): 97-136; J. Bianchini, "The Infantazgo in the Times of Alfonso VIII," in *Alfonso VIII: Government, Family, War,* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 59-79.

[52] There is an exhaustive scholarship on the various movements, including: M. Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages,* (New York: Longman, 2000); J. H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); R.I. Moore, *The War on Heresy,* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2012); R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society,* 2nd Ed, (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007); C. Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval Quercy*; Damian Smith, *Crusade, Heresy, and Inquisition*; M. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels.*

[53] Jordan of Saxony notes that the founding of priories was Dominic's own initiative: Jordan of Saxony, "*Libellus,*"39-40, 46-7. The gifts that make note of Dominic are listed below in note 49.

where their gifts could do the most good.[54] Given that during the Albigensian Crusade internal fault-lines along political and religious differences cracked open into frontiers, it seems unlikely that a similar phenomenon was not at work in the development of the Dominican movement, placing houses of women to engage in zones where the spiritual warfare of recovering lost sheep might help the greater work of the crusade; monasteries in the Latin East played a similar role.[55] During the decade between the outbreak of the war and the death of Simon de Montfort, which Jordan of Saxony says prompted Dominic to send his brothers out in missionary groups to sites that had already favorably received them, there were more than 51 gifts to Dominic and his early convents from 1207 to 1219.[56] Prouille, which was the flagship house of this growing network, received six major gifts in its own right from the Count de Montfort and his family in the first decade.[57] Patronage on this scale was not enough to demonstrate or secure every possibility, but the development of a movement is noticeable in the archival sources.

Papal and episcopal confirmation of the Order of Preachers and early support for the mission suggest that they were born from and suited for missionary work in an active warzone, and military language was frequently used in describing the mission itself. Initial, perhaps tacit, approval for the growth of Dominic's movement in the Albigensian crusading theatre must have come well before Fulc of Toulouse issued a privilege in June or July of 1215 that made their work in his diocese official.[58] While papal protection came during the Fourth Lateran

[54] For understanding military orders as "ecclesiastical knights" and the implications this framework, see: S. Z. Conedera, *Ecclesiastical Knights,* 141-144. The patronage of the military orders in frontier zones in Iberia, the Baltic, and the Holy Land have received extensive scholarship, but exemplary work includes: C. de Ayala Martinez, *Las Órdenes Militares* ; J. Riley-Smith, *Templars and Hospitallers as Professed Religious in the Holy Land,* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 9-42. Extensive scholarship on military orders has also been curated and published in a series of volumes produced by Routledge.

[55] Hannah Jones has made similar conclusions in the much more wide-spread (re)implantation of Clarissan houses in the fourteenth and fifteenth century: H. Jones, "'Hostile people invading the country': Urban Life in the Midi and the Forced Relocation of the Poor Clares during the Hundred Years War" PhD. Diss, (SUNY-Binghamton, 2024).

[56] On Jordan's narrative of the dispersal of the early brothers: Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 48-51. The gifts to Dominic's personal mission have been edited by Koudelka and Loernertz: V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Fratrum Praedicatrum Romae ad S. Sabinae, 1966), no. 5-7, 13-25, 27-29, 32-37, 39, 41-50, 54-7, 60, 62, 64, 68-75; p. 13-16, 23-6, 27-30, 32-7, 38-39, 39-45, 47-9, 51, 53-6, 58, 64-71.

[57] For the development of Prouille, see: M. Jean Giraud, *Cartulaire de Notre-Dame de Prouille*, tome 1 (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1907), no. 75-81, 52-6.

[58] V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 64, p. 58.

Council's side sessions in November of the same year,[59] early Dominican sources make clear that the council's prohibition against new rules and orders stymied the formal recognition of an order proper, albeit only temporarily.[60] The early privileges do not provide great descriptive detail beyond the confirmation of properties and the observation of episcopal authority, but Fulc's early recognition does make clear that the preaching was aimed "at rooting out heretical depravity and expelling of vice," language that has some similarity with the work of the crusade proper.[61] Honorius's 1216 letter to the early Preachers did allow them to offer certain religious services during the interdict that was levied during the Albigensian crusade, noting that the Preachers could receive converted heretics into their houses for pastoral care.[62] In the following year, a letter from Honorius to the scholarly community at Paris equated the Dominicans with those who banished vice and envy, rescued the faithful from the dragon's den, and worked with indefatigable zeal.[63] A letter that same month heightened the military stakes of the mission, saying "so just like recruits of the unconquered Christ armoured with the helmet of health and the shield of the faith, not fearing those who are able to kill their bodies."[64] The confluence of military language and the presumption of potential martyrdom aligns with the kind of language used in the recruitment of crusaders.

Evaluating Dominic's legacy in the context of crusading is practically and methodologically challenging. We do not have contemporary records to suggest that Dominic ever formally took the cross as a crusader, yet the bulk of his preaching mission—from 1204/5 to 1218, when Simon de Montfort died—took place in a zone that was an active crusade theatre more often than not. The Chapters General's record do not survive from before the end of the Albigensian Crusade, making it difficult to know much about what the Order's members felt about the ongoing conflict.[65] What we do know, though, is that papal letters record the Friars Preachers in eschatological contexts—calling them, together with the Friars Minor, the horses that would pull the fourth chariot foreseen by the prophet Zachariah—and construed him as a new Daniel and an athlete

[59] V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 65, p. 59.

[60] See, for example, Jordan of Saxony's narration of the moment: Jordan of Saxony, Libellus, 45-6.

[61] V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 63, p. 56-7.

[62] V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 77, p. 71-6.

[63] V. J. Koudelka and R. J. Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 78, p. 76-8.

[64] "sic sicut invicti Christi adlete scuto fidei et galea salutis armati, non timentes eos qui corpus possunt occidere." Koudelka and Loernertz, *Monumenta Diplomatica Sancti Dominici,* no. 79, p. 78-80.

[65] B. M. Reichert, *Acta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum* [Acts of the Chapters General of the Order of Preachers], vol. 1, (Rome: In domo generalitia, 1898), 1-3.

pursuing the paths of justice.[66] With such a high opinion of the Order, the early papal endorsements for Dominic's Preachers became the stuff that catalysed Dominic's legacy. For the thirteenth century, the Dominicans grew into an arm of crusade preaching and the spiritual warfare that accompanied it.

III. An Order among Crusaders or a Crusading Order?

In the decades following Domingo's death, the Order adapted to changing circumstances. The Order's language schools, likely influenced by Domingo's own life and experience with language-learning, played a key role in the development of a wider papal strategy to support communities of Christians living under Muslim rule and to convert both Muslims and Jews more broadly.[67] Coupled with the foundation of houses in zones where pastoral care for Christians "under siege," it is hard not to read their activities as the kind of "spiritual medic" in active campaign theatres. Scholarship has long demonstrated that the role played by spiritual warfare was substantial in crusading zones, so it stands to reason that spiritual offense, whether through prayer or liturgical invocations of saints, was just as important as the defence represented by the pastoral care for members of frontier armies.[68] We know that, in the years of Domingo's youth, chaplains in Castilian raiding parties were paid in slaves, while other leaders of the host were compensated far less generously.[69] Toledan archbishops gained, for the canons that went with hosts against the Almohads, the concession from the papacy that, if captured, they could still receive their benefices, in order to affect their eventual ransom.[70] These factors, coupled with the wide array of Dominican houses planted along frontiers—for example, in newly recaptured Mallorca or the Holy Land—suggest that we envision convents of Dominicans as part of the wider logistical infrastructure that cared for the spiritual health of campaigns, much as Domingo himself had done in the Toulousain.

[66] Gregory IX, "Fons Sapientiae," ed. R. P. Angeli Walz, in *MOPH 16,* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Praedicatorum, 1935), 190-4.

[67] A. C. Boland and K. C. Lincoln, "'"However many priests instructed in Latin and Arabic of good reputation and letters you may find:' Dominican Traditions about Language Acquisition and Missionary Preaching, c. 1190-1250," *Al-Masaq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 36 (2024): 105-24.

[68] K. C. Lincoln, "Fighting on a Prayer: Liturgical and Physical Engagement of Warfighting by Clergy in High Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1000-1250," 1:30-68.

[69] J. F. Powers, ed. and trans., *The Code of Cuenca: Municipal Law on the Twelfth-Century Castilian Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 165-6.

[70] K. C. Lincoln, "Beating Swords into Croziers," 103.

Domingo's own successor, Jordan of Saxony, portrays his predecessor's time in the Toulousain bleakly. On a number of occasions, he notes that there were threats against his life and that a number of snares were laid along his path.[71] The development of the Order, at first, appears to have gone toward two poles: the universities at Paris and Bologna, where many of the early Preachers had been trained, and the areas where religious hostilities were still ongoing.[72] Jordan of Saxony himself died, while *en route* home from visiting the Dominican chapters of the Holy Land in 1237, then preparing for the potential expiration of Emperor Frederick II's treaty with Al-Kamil and the potential resumption of crusade and jihad in the region.[73] The end to the formal hostilities of the Albigensian Crusade, only eight years earlier, had initiated a new phase of spiritual combat as the drive to extirpate heresy in the region gained greater momentum.[74] Wherever conflict generated by some force of evil was presumed to beset Christians, the historical evidence makes clear that Dominicans were not far from the front lines and that they made considerable efforts to shape and reshape events in their midst.

This chapter has argued that reading the history of the Order of Preachers must take into account their contributions in crusading theatres and reconcile their participation in these campaigns as a key part of their overarching historiographical identity. The evidence makes it quite clear that the early Preachers were deeply invested in the crusading activities of their patrons and took part in the spiritual warfare that underscored the efforts of, inter alia, Simon de Montfort and the crusade's leaders. This certainly stemmed from Domingo's own early experience with holy war and its development in Iberia. It is, however, probably inaccurate to claim that the Dominicans were first and foremost a crusading or military order; their name makes clear their focus as

[71] Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus," 41-4.

[72] For the early records of the Chapters General and the assignation of provinces: B. M. Reichert, *Acta Capitulorum Generalum Ordinis Praedicatorum,* vol. 1, 1-11.

[73] On Jordan's death: Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order, vol. 1: Origins and Growth to 1500,* (New York: Alba House, 1965), 219; M. Aron, *Saint Dominic's Successor: The life of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, Master-General of the Dominican Order, 1222-1237,* (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1955), 177-180. For the treaty between Frederick and al-Kamil: J. M. Powell, "Church and Crusade: Frederick II and Louis IX, " *The Catholic Historical Review,* 93, no. 2 (2007): 256-7; D. Jacoby, "The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Collapse of Hohenstaufen Power in the Levant," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* 40, (1986): 83-101; P. Jackson, "The Crusades of 1239-1241 and their Aftermath" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 50, no. 1 (1987): 35-38.

[74] On one effort to bring lasting peace, stability, and good order to the region, see: C. Taylor, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Medieval Quercy,* 102-4. These efforts, scattershot in the crusade theatre, faltered and were eventually replaced by inquisitions: M. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels,* 28-44.

itinerant and mendicant preachers. To that same point, though, we cannot disregard their focus on conflict zones between Christians and non-Christians. Put simply, we might not know that a majority of their identity was not as a crusading or military order, but such a connection was a close second place.

The development of the Order of Preachers, from its beginnings in the school of Palencia and the chapter at Osma to the Preachers movement under Fulk of Toulouse to the widespread deployment of chapters in conflict zones, makes it clear that the Preachers were deeply invested in the work of crusading and holy war. If they were so enmeshed in the crusading work of the period and were a religious order, by default they should at least be plotted on the spectrum of crusading enterprises; how much of a crusading order they were is an open question—they were certainly less invested than the Temple or the Hospital, perhaps a bit behind the Mercedarians, but more involved than Carthusians certainly. In part, Domingo and his followers were engaged in the work of the Albigensian Crusade and the campaigns that preceded and paralleled it because they were some of the major issues of the day that commanded the attention of educated and engaged clergy.

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CONSCRIPTING THE VIRGIN: HOLY MARY'S MEDITERRANEAN CRUSADE IN ALFONSO X'S *CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARÍA* (CA. 1275)

Alexander J. Korte*

This article explores the problematic legacy of Castile's thirteenth-century Mediterranean crusades as reimagined in the *Cantigas de Santa María,* a collection of 420 narrative poems dedicated to the miracles of the Virgin Mary and attributed to King Alfonso X "el Sabio" of Castile (r. 1252-84). Dubbed the "Emperor of Culture" by Robert Burns, Alfonso is best known as a patron of letters who commissioned many legal, historical, scientific, and poetic works during his reign.[1] Unfortunately, his artistic successes did not find their parallel in the political sphere, where he struggled to continue his father Fernando III's goal of expanding the empire into North Africa and beyond.[2] Assuming the

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[1] Works attributed to Alfonso and his team include the legal compendium *Siete partidas* (1256-65), histories like *Estoria de Espanna* (known also as the *Primera Crónica General,* c. 1270) and *General Estoria* (c. 1274), and the poetic *Cantigas de Santa María* (ca. 1257-1281). For general studies on Alfonso X of Castile, see *Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance,* ed. R. I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); S. R. Doubleday, *The Wise King: A Christian Prince, Muslim Spain, and the Birth of the Renaissance* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X el Sabio* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2004); J. E. Keller, *Alfonso X, el Sabio* (New York: Twayne, 1967); F. Márquez Villanueva, *El concepto cultural alfonsí* (Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2004); J. O'Callaghan, *Alfonso X, the Justinian of his Age: Law and Justice in Thirteenth-Century Castile* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019) and *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

[2] Fernando III was Alfonso X's predecessor (r. 1217-52). Canonized in the late seventeenth century, he is best known for annexing large portions of al-Andalus (at that time controlled by the Almohads, who ruled from Marrakesh) through military campaigns that culminated in the conquests of Cordoba in 1236 and Seville in 1248. For more on this period, see J. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of

throne shortly after Fernando's conquest of Seville in 1248, Alfonso would spend the first decade of his reign preparing the new southern reaches of his kingdom to support his own *cruzada* in North Africa. Then, in 1260, he finally deployed his warships against Morocco in a campaign that, by all accounts save those portrayed in the king's later histories and poems, resulted in disaster.[3] Although the Castilian navy returned home with some booty and captives to ransom, the campaign ultimately failed to secure any lasting foothold from which to fulfil Rome's hopes or advance the monarch's own imperial aspirations. Alfonso would never resume his crusade in Africa, preoccupied instead by an unsuccessful bid at Holy Roman Emperor, the revolt of his Muslim subjects, and a capricious alliance with the neighbouring kingdom of Granada. In his final years, facing a debilitating illness that threatened the legitimacy of his rule, a counter-invasion by the emerging Marinid empire of North Africa brought the crusade to Castile's doorstep. Shortly thereafter, in 1284, Alfonso died amid a succession crisis.

Produced in various iterations that span the length of Alfonso's reign, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* attempts to make sense of this period as it unfolded.[4] Written in Galician-Portuguese, the *Cantigas* are part of a larger pan-European tradition of Marian poetry that became especially popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and strives to elevate the image of the Virgin through narratives that reveal Her power to intervene in our lives through miracle,

Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 78-123. On Fernando's goals for conquest in North Africa, see *Primera crónica general,* ed. R. Menéndez Pidal, 2 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1955), 2.770-1, ch. 1131.

[3] M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X,* 133-41; J. O'Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 25-29.

[4] The *Cantigas* are extant in four manuscripts that each date to the thirteenth century: "E" Escorial ms. B.I.2 (Codex of the Musicians); "T" Escorial ms. T.I.1 (Rich Codex); "F" Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Banco Rari 20; and "To" Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, ms. 10069. According to Mettmann's audit, there are a total of 427 *cantigas,* of which 273 are miracle narratives and 154 are *cantigas de loor* (songs of praise) dedicated to the Virgin's glory. The "To" manuscript is the earliest edition containing a total of 127 songs with brief musical notation included. The "F" collection of 133 songs (of which 113 differ from "T") is thought to be an incomplete continuation of "To." The "T" manuscript, with 193 songs, is also called the *Códice Rico* for its accompanying miniatures and musical annotation. Finally, the "E" manuscript contains 401 poems and is considered the most modern. Scholars generally accept the years 1257 as the start date and 1281 as the end date of the project. Mettmann suggested that the first collection of 100 miracle poems was completed between 1270-74, the following 200 between 1277-82, and the remaining between 1277-82. See *Alfonso X el Sabio,* ed. W. Mettmann, 3 vols., (Madrid: Castalia, 1986-89), 1.21-24; *Alfonso X el Sabio: Cantigas,* ed. J. Montoya (Madrid: Cátedra, 2008), 33-44; J. O'Callaghan, *Alfonso X and the* Cantigas de Santa María: *A Poetic Biography* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 8-13.

spiritual reward, and divine punishment.[5] Complete with sheet music and nearly 2,000 accompanying miniatures, the *Cantigas* offers a trove of information on medieval daily life and the cultural practice of the thirteenth-century western Mediterranean.[6] The illuminations and narratives depict scenes of hunting, praying, leisure, gambling, domestic affairs, and, notably for the purposes of this study, conquest and crusade. Alfonso, together with his team of musicians, poets, and manuscript illuminators, adopted the genre into a uniquely Iberian context by highlighting local characters and historical events. The collection's miracle narratives of war against Muslim armies both in the Peninsula and beyond attempt to remember and articulate Castile's emerging role as a maritime power struggling to compete on a new Mediterranean frontier.

Because Alfonso X thoroughly oversaw the production of, and, in some instances, may have even authored certain poems in the collection, my reading stresses Alfonso's dual role as artist and ruler—as crafter of a cultural product and cultivator of an official narrative.[7] That is, central to my argument is the idea that Alfonso treated this collection of poems not only as a personal, religious text to express his devotion to the Virgin (and thus secure his salvation), but also as a political tool intended to reappropriate unflattering military losses into laudatory testaments of imperial strength. Political readings of the *Cantigas*, broadly understood, have garnered more attention in recent years. Michael

[5] The Cistercian monk Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is credited with elevating Mary into a central devotional figure in the medieval era. In the Iberian context, Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* was also key to Her rise in popularity. See E. A. Johnson, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church" in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation,* ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 394-414; J. Montoya Martínez, *Las colecciones de Milagros de la Virgin en la Edad Media: El milagro literario* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1981); A. Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); M. Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[6] J. Keller, *Daily Life Depicted in the* Cantigas de Santa María (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

[7] My framing of authorship follows J. Snow, "Alfonso as Troubadour: The Fact and the Fiction," in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and his Thirteenth-Century Renaissance,* ed. Robert I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 124-40, and "Clues to Authorship of the *Cantigas de Santa María* from the Toledo Manuscript," *Romance Quarterly* 66.3 (2019): 135-46. Snow constructs authorship in broad terms that considers how Alfonso crafts an image of himself as "the kind of person he wanted to be (and be remembered as) and not always the historical king whose public life we know best" ("Clues to Authorship" 137). Mettmann is more literal, concluding that Alfonso authored only eight or ten poems in the collection (*Cantigas,* 1.17-20). See also M. Schaffer, "Questions of Authorship: The *Cantigas de Santa María*," in *Proceedings of the Eighth Colloquium,* ed. Andrew M. Beresford and Alan Deyermond (London: Queen Mary and Westfield College Department of Hispanic Studies, 1997): 17-30.

Gerli, for example, writes of a growing alliance between the intelligentsia and the state in thirteenth-century Castile that was instrumental in "constructing, and critiquing, the mythologies of power for a monarchy with imperial aspirations."[8] For Francisco Márquez Villanueva, the cultural products that emanated from the royal Alfonsine scriptorium reflect "una clara extensión de su proyecto politico."[9] Connie Scarborough argues that Alfonso "was less concerned with clarity and accuracy of historical data than imparting a political message."[10] Similarly, Edward Holt interprets the *Cantigas* as "devotional statecraft," Henry Drummond considers the collection a retelling of "court-approved accounts… in the retelling of political history," and Nicholas Parmley sees in the work not only reconstructions of historical events but also traces of "a planned and imagined Alfonsine Empire that exceeds the borders of the Iberian Peninsula."[11]

Alfonso relied on the public dissemination of the miracles as a means of propagating his political messages. The poems were sung throughout the realm on public feast days and as part of court ritual, giving the monarchy a direct channel through which to deliver devout but also propagandistic messaging to its subjects.[12] Alfonso relied on this strategy up through the final years of his reign, when a succession crisis threatened his legitimacy in all parts of the realm save Seville and sections of Murcia, two of his most cherished holdings.[13] Both

[8] M. Gerli, "The Destiny of Empire: Alfonso X and the Cultural and Political Significance of the *Libro de Alexandre*" in *Essays in Homage to John Esten Keller,* ed. Roger D. Tinnell (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2012), 93-109.

[9] F. Márquez Villanueva, *Concepto cultural,* 37.

[10] Connie Scarborough, *A Holy Alliance: Alfonso X's Political use of Marian Poetry* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2009), 50.

[11] H. T. Drummond, *The* Cantigas de Santa María*: Power and Persuasion at the Alfonsine Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 217; E. L. Holt, "*Cantigas de Santa María*, Cantigas de Cruzada: Reflections of Crusading Spirituality in Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa María," *Al-Masāq* 27.3 (2015): 213; N. M. Parmley, "Alfonso X's Imagined Mediterranean Empire: Shipwrecks, Storms, and Pirates in the *Cantigas de Santa María," Hispanic Review* 85.2 (2017): 200.

[12] C. Scarborough, *Holy Alliance,* 23-36, and H. Drummond, *Power and Persuasion,* 1-34. Keller elaborated a tripart consideration of the reception of the *Cantigas* that considers the textual, visual, and auditory modes. See J. Keller, "The Threefold Impact of the *Cantigas de Santa María*: Visual, Verbal, and Musical," in *Studies on the* Cantigas de Santa María*: Art, Music, and Poetry: Proceedings of the International Symposium on the* Cantigas de Santa María *of Alfonso X, el Sabio (1221-1284) in Commemoration of Its 700th Anniversary Year 1981,* eds. Israel Katz, Samuel Armistead, Joseph Snow and John Keller (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987), 7-34.

[13] Alfonso suffered a debilitating illness in the final years of his reign. In 1282, two years before his death, his son and heir Sancho IV openly rebelled against his father's rule, with the

his love for the city of Seville as well as his esteem for the collection are attested in his final will, in which he ordered that "todos los libros de los Cantares de loor de Sancta Maria sean todos en aquella iglesia [de Sevilla] do nuestro cuerpo se enterrare, e que los fagan cantar en las fiestas de Sancta Maria" ("may all the books of the Songs of Praise of Holy Mary be kept in that church [of Seville] where our bodies will be entombed, and may they be sung on the feasts of Holy Mary").[14] As his last words attest, Alfonso planned for the scope of his literary empire to extend even beyond his own life.

As this article will demonstrate, Alfonso laboured in the production of the *Cantigas* to cultivate a unique relationship with the Virgin Mary especially as it related to Her martial authority and, by extension, the potency of the king's military endeavours against his Mediterranean rivals—especially the emerging Marinid empire of Morocco and, to a lesser extent, the Nasrid kingdom of Granada. As such, the *Cantigas* offers a valuable perspective not only on medieval ideologies of war, but it also demonstrates how Alfonso sought to leverage such attitudes to cleanse the historical blemishes of a lost crusade. Specifically, this study progresses in four sections. In the first, I consider how the figure of Holy Mary operates as a symbol for broader crusader rhetoric as well as Castilian military power. I then explore various portraits of Seville in the collection to demonstrate how Mary comes to champion the imperial interests of the monarchy by supporting campaigns of territorial expansion in al-Andalus. In the final two sections, I focus on the *Cantigas* account of the 1260 crusade to Salé and Castile's subsequent years of defensive wars against the Marinids to explore how Alfonso attempted to reconcile these turbulent years in poetic form. Because space is limited, I cannot offer a complete catalogue of crusader miracles, but instead aim to highlight some of the most informative, including *Cantigas* 169, 292, 328, and 401, among others. Ultimately, I suggest that the *Cantigas* present a form of cultural redemption that sought to project literary strength and control over a theatre of war that was historically unconquerable during Alfonso's reign. The corpus of poems that I consider serves as a literary testament to the Castilian conquest and crusade that outshines the historical events themselves, demonstrating how the king sought to transform uncertainty and failure into stability, strength, and success.

support of many of the Castilian nobles. Alfonso disinherited Sancho for a time, but apparently reinstated Sancho's rights on his death bed. For more on these years, see M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X*, 353-71.

[14] *Diplomatario Andaluz de Alfonso X*, ed. Manuel González Jiménez (Seville: El Monte, Caja de Huelva y Sevilla, 1991), 560, no. 521. My translation.

I. A Crusader Mentality

Alfonso X infused the *Cantigas* collection with crusader rhetoric to promote an image of the Virgin Mary as a defender of the faith and an ally in the king's own imperial projections. Almost every phase of Alfonso's long crusading career is represented in the *Cantigas.* There are multiple references to the Holy Land as both a real and desired space. In addition, the *Cantigas* portrays many local crusading events, including the conquest of Seville in 1248, the African crusade of 1260, and Marinid invasions of 1275 and 1277, among others. While some references are complete narratives that treat historical names and events, others appear more subtly, either as brief asides, or hinted at in the accompanying miniatures or melody, or simply baked into the collection's larger ethos. Because many of these allusions have been addressed previously by the likes of Joseph O'Callaghan, Henry Drummond, Connie Scarborough, and Edward Holt, my aim in this section is to explore some of the general ways that Alfonso cultivated an especially martial image of the Virgin in efforts to promote his Mediterranean crusades and project the imperial goals of his reign. Establishing Mary as an ally in Alfonso's crusading campaigns will allow for a more nuanced discussion, in the following sections, of the miracle narratives that recount the campaigns against Seville (1248) and Africa (1260).

One of the most overt ways that the *Cantigas* collection engages crusader rhetoric is through references to campaigns in the Holy Land (*Ultramar*). For example, *Cantigas* 46 recounts how Holy Mary converted a Muslim crusader after a statue of Her that he had carried from battle transforms into living flesh.[15] The narrative begins by describing how a "mouro… con ost' en Ultramar / grande foi, segund' oý, / por chrischãos guerrejar / e roubar" (Moor… went to the Holy Land with a great army to make war on Christians and pillage their lands) (1.171).[16] Extremely successful in his campaign, the man returns with a statue of the Virgin that he decorates with gold-spun clothing and sets in his home. Contemplating the image, he expresses doubt that Mary is God reincarnate but nonetheless declares that he will convert to Christianity if God somehow manifests Himself. At this point, the statue's breasts turn to flesh and "deitar / leite come per canudos" (begin to flow with milk in gushing streams) (1.173). This prompts the man to receive baptism and compel his followers to

[15] *Cantigas* 46 appears in the early "To" manuscript as well as manuscripts "T" and "E." I employ the numbering system established by Mettmann in his standard critical edition. Parenthetical references refer to volume and page number.

[16] All English translations of *Cantigas* are taken from Alfonso X, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: A Translation of the* Cantigas de Santa María, trans. K. Kulp-Hill (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000).

similarly convert. In another song set in the Holy Land, *Cantigas* 165, we learn how Holy Mary prevented the sultan of Egypt from attacking the poorly defended city of "Tortosa d' Ultramar" (Tartus in Syria) (2.164).[17] However, when the sultan advances on the city, he is surprised to see an ethereal host of knights stationed on the ramparts. One of the sultan's men informs him that the knights have appeared "per mandado da Virgin, Madre d'Iça" (on the order of the Virgin, Mother of Iça) (2.166). The sultan then invokes the Quranic Mary's virginity as justification for abandoning his campaign.[18] In the end, he declares that he will not fight against Her and turns his army around: "guerra per nulla maneira con ela" (I will wage no war on her) (2.167).

Compared with other *cantigas* that treat crusading campaigns in the Holy Land (*Cantigas* 5; 193), *Cantigas* 46 and 165 stand out for the tensions they create between competing ideas of the Virgin. Both the unidentified crusader of *Cantigas* 46 and the sultan of Egypt in *Cantigas* 165 exhibit a reverence for Holy Mary that initially corresponds to Her role within the Quranic tradition. However, as the narratives progress, we see Mary challenge these assumptions by intervening to inspire conversion and protect a stronghold of the faith. As Holt has outlined, Alfonso was not the first to employ Mary's image in this way, but his Marian collection was instrumental in supplanting the traditional Spanish crusader Saint James "Matamoros" (*the Moor-slayer*) with the Virgin, making her "the preeminent and unrivalled patron of martial piety" in the king's time.[19] The above poems, which José Manuel Rodríguez García has identified as instruments used to preach the crusades, helped foster this image. The *Cantigas* is, after all, a collection of carefully crafted rhetorical messaging meant to inspire both religious and political devotion. These particular songs would encourage spiritual righteousness and, as Rodríguez García explains, "atraer a posibles cruzados y luego reconfortarlos, guiarlos y animarlos una vez tomada la cruz."[20] The songs are, in effect, a call to crusade, but one that came with assurances that Holy Mary will offer protection as an agent and defender of the Christian faith.

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[17] *Cantigas* 165 appears in manuscripts "E" and "T." The sultan is identified as "Bondoudar," a likely reference to the Mamluk sultan Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, who reigned from 1260-77. See M. García-Arenal, "Los moros en *Las Cantigas* de Alfonso X el Sabio" *Al-Qantara* 6.1 (1985): 139. Because the siege of Tortosa took place in May 1268, we might surmise that this *cantiga* was composed after that time (J. O'Callaghan, *Poetic Biography*, 97).

[18] Quran, 3: 47

[19] E. Holt, "Cantigas de Cruzada," 218. In medieval Iberia, Mary also came to serve as the preeminent guardian and liberator of Christian captives. By the thirteenth century, she had surpassed Eulalia as the patron saint of the Mercedarian order, an institution dedicated to the redemption of captives (A. Remensnyder, *Conquistadora*, 99-105).

[20] J. M. Rodríguez García, La *cruzada en tiempos de Alfonso X* (Madrid: Sílex, 2014), 121.

Although scholars differ on the exact definition of crusade especially as it relates to the Iberian context, the Castilian wars of the thirteenth century against the Muslims of al-Andalus can reasonably fall under this category for the general characteristics befitting such designation: international armies who "take the cross," papal support in the form of financing and the granting of indulgences, and offensive military campaigns in defence of the faith.[21] In Christian Iberia, crusader zeal also paired conveniently with the ideological imperative to "reconquer" the lands of Hispanic Christendom following the Muslim victory over the Visigoths in the eighth century.[22] Almost immediately thereafter, Christian writers began articulating the idea that the Castilian kings were direct heirs to the Visigoths by way of the royal Asturian line.[23] It was the Visigoths who, following Roman imperial tradition, cultivated Christianity in the Peninsula and, from their capital in Toledo, exercised political authority even into Mauritania, which then served as part of the larger Diocese of Spain. Consequently, the Castilian kings considered it their birthright and moral imperative to recover the domains of their ancestral Visigothic empire, including al-Andalus but also North Africa.[24] In line with this spirit, multiple popes granted crusading privileges to support the campaigns of reconquest, including those organized by Fernando III and Alfonso X in the thirteenth century. For these Castilian monarchs, war with Islam was thereby informed by a combination of crusading fervour and imperial reclamation.

[21] For a thorough review of these topics, see H. Drummond, *Power and Persuasion,* 179-187; E. Holt, "Cantigas de Cruzada," 208-9; J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar Crusade,* 14-17 and *Reconquest,* 17-22; J. M. Rodríguez García, *Cruzada en tiempos de Alfonso X,* 19-31. Alfonso never received the full international aid that he desired, but his first collection of *cómitres,* or sea captains, did represent a diverse coalition of international seamen.

[22] The Catalan philosopher Ramón Llull (1232-1315) developed the idea that the crusades should begin in Morocco and then extend to the Holy Land. See E. Holt, "Cantigas de Cruzada," 210; J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar Crusade,* 21 and *Poetic Biography,* 98.

[23] J. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest*, 3-7.

[24] Here and throughout this article, I use the term al-Andalus to refer to the loose collection of Islamic polities in southern Iberia, including Niebla, Seville, Murcia, and Granada. With the exception of Nasrid Granada, which remained a relatively independent vassal state until its conquest by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492, all of these kingdoms were annexed by Castile by the middle of the thirteenth century. In recent years, scholarship as rightly problematized the notion of a continuous and unified seven-hundred-year Christian struggle to retake the lands of al-Andalus from the invading Muslims. While the term *Reconquista* can be helpful in a nominal sense, the idea fails to account for the complexities of interfaith relationships in the Peninsula. See A. García Sanjuán, "Weaponizing Historical Knowledge: The Notion of the *Reconquista* in Spanish Nationalism," *Imago temporis: Medium Aevum* 14 (2020): 133-62; D. Wacks, "Reconquest Colonialism and Andalusī Narrative Practice in the *Conde Lucanor*," *Diacritics* 36.3/4 (2006): 87-103; J. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest,* 3-4, 17-22.

In addition to narrative episodes set in the Holy Land, the *Cantigas* include many allusions to the monarchy's local crusading efforts. These include both shorthand references and longer, more developed illustrations of Castile's supremacy over Islam. Representative of the former is *Cantigas* 256, which uses Fernando's conquest of Capilla, in the province of Badajoz, as a simple historical framing for the poem's central narrative concerning how Mary cured the pregnant queen Beatriz of an illness.[25] Accordingly, we hear how Beatriz's sickness occurred "quando o mui bon Rei gãou, / Don Fernando, a Capela e de chrischãos poblou" (When the good King don Fernando won Capilla and settled it with Christians) (2.256). In interpreting this poem, Remensnyder has concluded that because of Mary's intervention, Fernando "owed her not just his life, but also his throne."[26] The queen falls ill during the campaign, but Mary intervenes to cure her and, by extension, ensure the security of the royal line through the child's birth. In addition, the reference to Fernando's settling of the town with Christians (*de chrischãos poblou*) demonstrates how territorial conquests and efforts to evangelize operate in tandem with the Virgin's protections over the royal family. As one body grows, so does the other.

While this is only a passing reference, other poems are more explicit in their construction of Mary as Alfonso's crusading ally. Such is the case with the very first poem in the original "To" manuscript, referred to as "Prologue A" by modern editors.[27] In this brief, seven stanza poem that serves to introduce the first 100 songs of the collection, we learn that:

> Don Affonso de Castela,
> de Toledo, de Leon
> Rey e ben des Conpostela
> ta o reyno d'Aragon. (1.53)
>
> (Don Alfonso of Castile, of Toledo, of Leon is king from Compostela as far as the kingdom of Aragon)

The poetic voice introduces king Alfonso of Castile *and* Toledo, making the implicit link between his birthplace and the political capital of the former

[25] Beatriz of Swabia (1198-1235) was Fernando's wife and Alfonso's mother. It was through his mother's Hohenstaufen line that Alfonso justified his claim to the seat of Holy Roman Emperor. Fernando conquered the town in 1227. *Cantigas* 256 appears in the "F" and "E" manuscripts.

[26] A. Remensnyder, *Conquistadora,* 48.

[27] This poem appears in "To", "T", and "E."

Visigothic empire. The song goes on to document the extent of Alfonso's holdings, which include Cordoba, Jaen, Seville, Murcia, the Algarve, "que gãou / de mouros e nossa ffe / meteu y," (which he won from the Moors and established our faith there) as well as Badajoz, Niebla and Jerez "que tolleu / a mouros," (He then took Niebla and Jerez from the Moors) in addition to Vejer and Medina and Alcala. The long list of place names conflates campaigns carried out by his father (Cordoba 1236, Seville 1248) with those of Alfonso himself, especially his pacification of Jerez and Murcia following the 1264 revolt of his Muslim Mudéjar subjects.[28] The song goes on to identify Alfonso as "dos Romanãos Rey (king and lord of the Romans) (1.54). In this prologue, the military conquests of al-Andalus frame Alfonso's imperial strength through a holy lens that casts the Moors as enemies in Castile's expansionist policies. Alfonso controls the lands of the south not only because he wrested them from Muslim hands, but also because he afterwards brought the Christian faith into the region (*nossa ffe / meteu y*). The poem then turns to the Virgin, establishing a causal relationship between Her spiritual power and Alfonso's secular conquests: "Poren dos miragres seus / Fezo cantares e sões" (Therefore, from Her miracles he composed songs and melodies). Therefore, the prologue concludes, Alfonso composed the following collection of songs and melodies to honour and praise the Virgin's miracles.

As Walter Mettmann has pointed out, Prologue A's reference to Alfonso as "King of the Romans" is a clear allusion to his aspirations to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire.[29] After the death of Emperor Frederick II, Alfonso had a legitimate claim to the seat through his mother's line, and he was in fact elected in 1257. However, his claim was challenged and ultimately unsuccessful. Despite years of lobbying, Alfonso was finally convinced to relinquish his claim in 1275.[30] This is an important component of Alfonso's reign that occurred simultaneously with his crusading designs, suggesting that "his aspiration to ascendancy in Spain, his projected African crusade, and his quest for imperial title were all linked together."[31] His wars with Islam offered the dual benefit of

[28] The *Mudéjares* were Muslim subjects living in Christian Iberia. In 1262, encouraged by support from the Muslim king Ibn al-Aḥmar of Granada (r. 1232-73), Alfonso's Mudejar subjects revolted across large swaths of al-Andalus. The bloody rebellion lasted two years before it was quelled. See M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X*, 163-190.

[29] W. Mettmann, *Cantigas de Santa María,* 1.54.

[30] M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X,* 111-19. This was the same year as the first of two Marinid invasions into the Peninsula. Alfonso was delayed in responding to the attack because he was abroad lobbying his case for Holy Roman Emperor at the time. In addition, an illness prevented him from traveling for many months.

[31] J. O'Callaghan, *Learned King,* 198 and *Gibraltar Crusade,* 16, 21.

increasing his kingdom's size while also serving as public *bona fides* in his campaign for Holy Roman Emperor.

Finally, various *cantigas de loor* contain personal entreaties to the Virgin to drive the Moors from Spain and the Holy Land. These "songs of praise" occur every tenth poem in the collection and act as a sort of poetic pallet cleanser by singing praises to the Virgin without recounting miracles *per se.* In *Cantigas* 360, for example, the poetic voice takes four stanzas to laud Holy Mary as the earthly manifestation of God the Creator. In the final stanza, the song concludes with a pointed supplication to rid Spain of the sect of Mohammed: "E por questo te rogo… que de Mafomet a seita possa eu deitar d'Espanna" (Therefore, I beg you… that I may expel the sect of Mohammed from Spain) (3.231).[32] It is this rhetoric that has led Scarborough to identify the *Cantigas*'s image of Mary as "an agent of the Reconquest, a divine helper in the fight against Moorish invasions and incursions in Castilian territory."[33] In an even more explicit example, *Cantigas* 401 (the *Petiçon*) entreats the Virgin to eviscerate the infidel Moors: "queira que os encreus / mouros destruyr possa" (I may be able to destroy the infidel Moors) (3.303). Composed in the first-person perspective of the king, the *Petiçon* reflects deeply personal sentiments, suggesting that it may have been written by Alfonso himself.[34] As the song goes on, Alfonso petitions for strength and power to expel the Moors from Spain but also the Holy Land: "e que contra os mouros, que terra d'Ultramar / tẽen e en Espanna gran part' a meu pesar, me dé poder e força pera os en deitar" (against the Moors who hold the Holy Land and great portions of Spain, to my great regret, so that I may drive them out) (3.304). Of course, the absolutist rhetoric on display in these *cantigas de loor* contradicts Alfonso's policies that seemed to embrace (or at least tolerate) certain Muslim populations in the Peninsula.[35] Yet, as Drummond points out, such passages do not necessarily reflect realistic aims, but rather function as "rhetoric, designed to reaffirm Alfonso X's idealized personality as a crusader king."[36] As these songs of praise demonstrate, the references not only to the Muslims of Spain but also to those who occupy the Holy Land inflects the praise poems with a crusader mentality that signals Alfonso's concern and preoccupation with the task of holy war.

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[32] *Cantigas* 360 appears in manuscripts "F" and "E."

[33] C. Scarborough, *Holy Alliance,* 24.

[34] J. O'Callaghan, *Poetic Biography,* 8. In the earliest "To" manuscript, this song expressed Alfonso's desire to compose 100 miracles, but the line was removed in later manuscripts to account for the growth and development of the collection.

[35] There were many reasons why Castilian monarchs tolerated a continued Muslim presence in Castile following the annexation of their lands, including economic viability, cultural vitality, and political convenience (or any combination of the three).

[36] H. Drummond, *Power and Persuasion,* 184.

As this section has demonstrated, Alfonso infused the *Cantigas* collection with various references to Mary as an agent in his crusades. In songs set in the Holy Land, Mary appears to Muslim crusaders to sway undecided worshipers and protect Christian strongholds. In other poems, the Iberian theatre of the crusades are put on display to cultivate an image of Mary as a patron of (re)conquest and an ally in the king's imperial goals. Finally, various *cantigas de loor* conflate reconquest rhetoric with crusader zeal to articulate and project Alfonso's goals for future conquests. Having established an image of Mary as a patron of martial piety, the following section turns to Mary's role in the Castilian conquest of Seville in 1248.

II. Seville, Door to the Mediterranean

For the Castilian monarchs of the thirteenth century, war with Islam was not just an ideological mandate informed by crusader rhetoric and theories of reconquest. In addition, the campaigns against al-Andalus served Castile's imperial goals of expanding the southern borders of the kingdom and thereby establishing a zone of influence in the Mediterranean. Crucial to this objective was Fernando III's conquest of large parts of al-Andalus, including Cordoba (1236), Murcia (1243), Jaen (1244), and Seville (1248). Prologue A invokes all four of these holdings together as a great boon which God bestowed on Alfonso: "u gran ben / lle fez Deus" (where God bestowed on him a great boon) (1.53). The acquisition of Seville in particular, located along the Guadalquivir, was extremely beneficial in this regard. Not only was the region a prosperous commercial centre, but it also came to serve as a staging ground for Alfonso's military campaigns against Morocco and Granada. Near the end of Alfonso's reign, he made plans to inter the remains of his parents in the city's cathedral. This and many other local histories are featured in the *Cantigas* collection, affirming the kingdom of Seville as a central character in the king's rhetorical project. Especially in the narratives that detail the transition of the city from Muslim to Christian hands, Seville emerges as a significant setting of Castilian military posturing and a potent symbol of Alfonso's royal authority.

In total, there are twenty-five poems in the *Cantigas* collection that either reference Seville or use the city as a setting for miracle accounts.[37] Some of the earliest poems on the list frame the region as a Muslim-controlled territory of transgression, captivity, and violence. Broadly speaking, these narratives correspond to the time when, following the Almohad's abandonment of the city, Seville was controlled by independent governors in nominal allegiance to the

[37] Prologue A, 124, 169, 227, 257, 292, 323-5, 328, 344-5, 347-8, 366-7, 371, 375-6, 378-9, 382, 385-6, 389.

Tunisian emir.[38] In *Cantigas* 124, a Christian subject is taken prisoner in Seville and sentenced to death for travelling too often to the region without permission: "porque foi a Xerez / e a Sevilla quand' eran de mouros, mais dũa vez, / foi acusado e preso" (Because he went to Jerez and Seville more than once when they belonged to the Moors, he was accused and arrested) (2.72).[39] This poem contains also one of the earliest descriptions of the kingdom, wherein we learn that the lands of Seville rest "ena terra que está / Mui preto d' ambo-los mares, do gran que corr' arredor / da terra e ar do outro que é chamado Mẽor" (in the land which is near both seas, the large one which encircles the land and the other one called Minor). These references to the Atlantic (*gran*) and Mediterranean (*Mẽor*) bodies of water serve to establish the kingdom as an important geopolitical zone of maritime influence. This theme, expressed also in *Cantigas* 328, plays out repeatedly in many other poems that document trade, travel, and settlement in the region.[40] We are not told why the Christian prisoner of *Cantigas* 124 travels to Seville, only that he piously fasts each year in celebration of the Annunciation.[41] It is for this reason that Holy Mary is said to work her miracles for the man. The Moors subject him to a brutal execution that includes stoning, impalement, and the cutting of his throat. Despite all this, the man does not die until Mary intervenes to grant his petition for confession. The narrative ends with the poetic voice supposing that, now that Mary has granted the man last rights, his soul will ascend to heaven.

In another poem set in Seville, *Cantigas* 227 narrates how Holy Mary frees a Christian soldier who falls prisoner after travelling to the region in times of war: "foi por sa besonna / a Sevilla ena guerra, caeu en cativ' enton" (he was then obliged to go to Seville in the war and fell into captivity) (2.297).[42] As Ryan Szpiech has demonstrated in his study of medieval captivity narratives, imprisonment could often act as a demonstration of "concrete knowledge

[38] J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar*, 112.

[39] *Cantigas* 124 appears in manuscripts "T" and "E."

[40] See for example *Cantigas* 367, 371, 376, 379, 382. A key passage from the *Estoria de España* documents the city's lively maritime trade industry at this time: "Vienen a Sevilla navíos cada día desde la mar por el río. E las galeras e naves apuertan fasta dentro en los muros, con todas mercancias cuantas son en todas partes del mundo. De Tánjar, de Ceuta, de Túnez, de Alexandria, de Genua, de Portogal, de Ingratierra, de Pisa, de Lombardia, de Bordeos, de Bayona, de Sicilia, de Gascoña, de Aragon, e aun de Francia venian ende muchas, e de otras muchas partes en allende mar e de tierra de cristianos" (C. Fernandez Duro, *La marina de Castilla desde su origen y pugna con la de Inglaterra hasta la refundición en la armada española* (Madrid: Progreso editorial, 1894), 54).

[41] Held on March 25, the Annunciation celebrates the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary (Luke 1.26-28).

[42] *Cantigas* 227 appears in manuscripts "F" and "E."

transfer" facilitated by intercultural contact and theological disputation between master and slave.[43] While this is true for some narratives in the collection (Szpiech focuses on *Cantigas* 192 and 265), others, such as *Cantigas* 227, reveal only the brutality of confinement. Beaten, tortured, and thrown into a dark dungeon, the man's only recourse is to pray to the Virgin for mercy. Her answer comes when She illuminates the dungeon and unlocks the irons around his body. This allows him to sneak past the guards, who are too distracted by their prayers to notice what is going on. In this *cantiga,* captivity becomes a stand-in for war itself, and Mary's liberation of the Christian captive serves to reaffirm her support for the Castilian cause. The song's refrain affirms Mary's position as a political liberator, thereby extending her spiritual aid into the realm of war: "ben pode guiar os presos, pois o[s] saca de prijon" (She… can well guide prisoners, for She frees them from bonds) (2.297).

In one final example from this era, *Cantigas* 344, Mary actually prevents two opposing armies from engaging one another on the battlefield.[44] This occurs near a church in Tudia, near Badajoz, at a time when the Muslims controlled Seville: "No tempo quando de mouros foi o reino de Sevilla" (In the time when the kingdom of Seville belonged to the Moors (3.196). It is presumably from this kingdom that the host of Moors sets out to attack the Christian forces. At nightfall, each army takes up a position near the church, yet the Virgin causes them not to notice one another until the following day. Amazed at what has occurred, both sides declare the event a miracle and agree to a truce that prevents bloodshed, at least that day. Because Holy Mary intervenes on the behalf of both armies, as the refrain makes clear, this *cantiga* reinforces the message that She protects all those who acknowledge Her power despite confessional allegiance. We have already seen this theme at work in *Cantigas* 46 (in which a statue of Mary begins to lactate in the presence of an incredulous Muslim, resulting in his baptism), and similar messages appear throughout the collection.[45] Ultimately, however, Mary's appearance in *Cantigas* 344 demonstrates her favour for the Castilian army, whose soldiers have found themselves the target of a surprise nighttime offensive from the Moors of Seville. Identified as the patron of the church at Tudia. Her presence in the conflict not only prevents bloodshed but also ensures the integrity of Her place of worship.

[43] R. Szpiech, "Prisons and Polemics: Captivity, Confinement, and Medieval Interreligious Encounter," in *Polemical Encounters: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Iberia and Beyond,* eds. Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 274.

[44] *Cantigas* 344 appears only in manuscript "E."

[45] See *Cantigas* 379, in which Holy Mary protects a group of Muslim merchants doing business in Puerto de Santa María who are attacked by Catalan corsairs.

The narrative concludes when both armies, in awe of Mary's intercession, disengage one another peacefully.

The conquest of Seville, a campaign in which Alfonso participated as prince, is alluded to in *Cantigas* 292.[46] Contrary to relating the events of the siege, however, the poem focuses instead on the city itself as a symbol of the spiritual and secular inheritance that Fernando III leaves to his son. The song begins by invoking the esteemed military career of Fernando. His successful campaigns, we are told, are the result of the mutual love that Holy Mary and the king hold for one another. Notoriously devout (Fernando III "el Santo" was canonized in 1671), the song relates how, whenever he conquered a city, he would place a statue of the Virgin in the portico of the mosque: "quand' algũa cidade de mouros ya gãar, / ssa omagen na mezquita põya eno portal" (When he conquered some city from the Moors, he placed Her statue in the portico of the mosque) (3. 78). As Remensnyder has pointed out, many Christian writers best remember Fernando's appropriation of Córdoba's famed red-and-white hued mosque after his conquest of that city in 1236, but in the *Cantigas,* Alfonso chose to highlight his father's work in Seville, thereby fashioning "a flattering prince's mirror in which to gaze at his own reflection" and ultimately legitimating in lineage "his own practice of Marian monarchy."[47] In *Cantigas* 292, Mary repays Fernando's devotion by supporting the king in all his endeavors: "en todo'los seus feitos atan ben o ajudou, / que quanto começar quiso e acabar, acabou" (in all his deeds She aided him so well that all he chose to begin and carry out, he achieved). Here, the implication is that Fernando's extraordinary military success are the direct result of the symbiotic relationship that he cultivates with the Virgin, who rewards his piety with territorial acquisitions. Her favour for King Fernando extends even beyond his death. After his passing, She grants him renown and, furthermore, the security of his son's seat in the "capital" city of Seville:

> E ar fezo-ll' a ssa morte que polo mellor morreu
> rei que en seu logar fosse, e fez per que o meteu
> el Rei seu fill' en Sevilla, que Mafomete perdeu
> per este Rey Don Fernando, que é cidade caz. (3.78)
>
> In return, She granted that at his death he should be acclaimed the best king ever to hold the throne and caused him to place his son in Seville, a capital which Mahomet lost because of this King don Fernando.

[46] *Cantigas* 292 appears in manuscripts "F" and "E."
[47] A. Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora,* 49-50.

These stanzas mark the Castilian acquisition of Seville, expressed through a religious lens that uses the prophet Mohammad as a symbol of Muslim power in the region, now lost (*que Mafomete perdeu*). The king in reference is of course Alfonso X, who inherited the kingdom following his father's untimely passing just a few years after the city's conquest. The passage serves the dual purpose of legitimizing Alfonso's authority in Seville by way of divine sanction and imperial inheritance. Holy Mary works together with King Fernando to legitimize Alfonso's rule in what will become Castile's new, unofficial capital in the Mediterranean.

Having legitimized Alfonso as the heir to Fernando's campaigns of conquest, the narrative then skips to Alfonso's time as king to relate two interconnected miracles involving his deceased parents. In the first, Alfonso discovers that their bodies have remained uncorrupted after many years of interment. As the narrative relates, this miracle occurs when Alfonso has the remains of his mother Beatriz transferred to Seville, where he has commissioned a rich sepulchre in the cathedral that will serve as the final resting place for the royal couple. We learn that God and Mary have together prevented the decomposition of the bodies because they so favoured the pair (Fernando and his wife Beatriz): "ca ambos eran ben seus / quites" (because both were favoured by Him) (3.79). The second miracle occurs after the interment, when Fernando appears to an artisan involved in the construction of the sepulchre to express displeasure with its design. The message, which he delivers to a ring maker identified as Master Jorge, finds its way to Alfonso, who then expresses pleasure at the man's dream vision.

The miracles of *Cantigas* 292 are dense with meaning. First, we know that the historical transfer of Beatriz's remains occurred sometime late in Alfonso's reign, probably 1279. This means that *Cantigas* 292 was likely composed sometime after this time, in the final years of Alfonso's life.[48] In fact, while some, more general crusading poems (like *Cantigas* 46 above) were part of the original collection of 100 poems, most of the more Iberian-specific narratives only appeared in the later "T" and "E" versions. This is an important consideration that suggests that Alfonso was most committed to tailoring a complementary image of his military campaigns precisely at a time when his legacy as a monarch was most in doubt. The final decade of his reign—beginning with his lost bid for Holy Roman Emperor and ending with the destruction of his cherished port town El Puerto de Santa María by North African armies—was perhaps the most politically disheartening for the king. Besieged on multiple fronts by an invading Marinid army and a debilitating illness that caused tension with his heir and questioned the legitimacy of his rule, it made sense that Alfonso would work at this moment

[48] J. O'Callaghan, *Poetic Biography*, 50-55.

to craft a rhetorical image of himself as the rightful inheritor of his father's divinely sanctioned imperial pursuits.

Second, the central image of the narrative is of course the statue of Fernando, which Alfonso initially commissions to have seated on a throne, wearing a silk robe, an ornate gold ring, and holding a sword in his hand. It is with this sword, the poetic voice reminds us, that Fernando administered the decisive blow to Islam: "con que deu colbe a Mafomete mortal" (with which he had dealt a fatal blow to Mahomet) (3.79). Statues appear throughout the *Cantigas* collection (such as we saw in *Cantigas* 46), symbolizing by way of metaphysical imposition the power of the Virgin to transpose Her spiritual self into the secular plane.[49] Here, Fernando demonstrates similar capabilities, channelling his likeness as a means by which to appear to Master Jorge. In Master Jorge's vision, Fernando requests that a statue of the Virgin replace his statue in the cathedral to better demonstrate Mary's position of superiority. Notably, Fernando specifies that a specific statue be used—one that he brought from Toledo: "con que vin ben des Toledo" (which I brought all the way from Toledo) (3.80). With this request, Fernando is symbolically transferring the ancient seat of Visigoth power to the newly controlled throne at Seville, thereby affirming the city's supreme value for the monarchy. He additionally requests that the ring that Master Jorge has worked be removed from his statue's finger and placed on Mary's. This act, Fernando explains, will serve to recognize Her gift of rule: "ca dela tiv' eu o reyno" (from Her and Her Beautiful Son I received the kingdom) (3.80). Jesús Montoya Martinez has pointed to this stanza, in which Fernando additionally references his knighthood in Burgos, as a demonstration of the *Cantigas* collection's "mentalidad caballeresca" vis-à-vis the Arthurian tradition.[50] In addition, Fernando's words emphasize Mary as the principal patron of Castilian empire. The intergenerational dynamics on display in this song reminds us that Mary's protection over the realm is multifaceted and demonstrative of what Scarborough calls his "royal arsenal of power."[51] Mary grants the kingdom to Fernando (*dela tiv' eu o reyno*), who later relies on Her aid to extend the borders of the realm into Seville, thereby dealing Islam a fatal wound (*colbe mortal*). Seville then becomes Alfonso's birthright, the physical manifestation of his father's exemplary military career, and the symbol of his monarchy's might in al-Andalus.

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[49] In *Cantigas* 324, for example, Mary's statue cures a deaf-mute. In another instance, *Cantigas* 345, an invading army of Moors attempts to burn a statue of the Virgin, but they fail to destroy the likeness. Both narratives occur in Seville.

[50] J. Montoya Martínez, "La literatura caballeresca en la obra de Alfonso X," *Revista Filología Románica* 14.2 (1997): 300.

[51] C. Scarborough, *Holy Alliance*, 154.

Following the conquest of Seville, Castile became the largest and most powerful Christian kingdom in Iberia, stretching nearly the entirety of the Peninsula from Compostela and Santander on the northern Atlantic coast, to Cádiz and Cartagena on the shores of the Mediterranean. Thanks largely to the military exploits of his king father Fernando III, Alfonso X inherited a kingdom that had nearly doubled in size since his birth in the ancient Visigothic capital of Toledo. The major wars of reconquest that came to define the later eleventh and twelfth centuries had all but passed. However, judging from Fernando's last words to his son as recorded in the *Primera Crónica General,* more work remained:

> Fijo, rico fincas de tierra et de muchos buenos vasallos, mas que rey que en la cristiandat ssea; punna en fazer bien et ser bueno, ca bien as con que. Ssennor te dexo de toda la tierra de la mar aca, que los moros del rey Rodrigo de Espanna ganado ouieron; et en tu sennorio finca toda: la vna conquerida, la otra tributada. Sy la en este estado en que te la yo dexo la sopieres guardar, eres tan buen rey commo yo; et sy ganares por ti mas, eres meior que yo; et si desto menguas, non eres tan bueno commo yo.[52]

If we are to believe that these were the king's final words to his son, Fernando left him a clear mandate to continue his campaigns of conquest in the region and beyond. The declaration additionally served to qualify Alfonso's reign relative only to territorial acquisition and imperial aggrandizement. It was presumably with these words in mind that Alfonso set out to prepare for his African crusade. Never had Castile been so close to its goal of "recovering" the African lands that once made up the southern reaches of the ancient Visigothic empire.

III. African Crusade

Upon taking the throne in 1252, Alfonso immediately set to work preparing for his African crusade. With each of the three remaining Ibero-Muslim kingdoms

[52] "My son, you are richer in lands and good vassals than any other king in Christendom. Strive to do well and to be good, for you have the wherewithal. My Lord, I leave you the whole realm from the sea hither that the Moors won from Rodrigo, king of Spain. All of it is in your dominion, part of it conquered, the other part tributary. If you know how to preserve in this state what I leave you, you will be as good a king as I; and if you win more for yourself, you will be better than I, but if you diminish it, you will not be as good as I" (J. O'Callaghan, "Image and Reality: The King Creates His Kingdom" in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance,* ed. Robert I. Burns, S.J., 14-45 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 15). Original text appears in *Primera Crónica General,* ed. R. Menéndez Pidal, 772-3, ch. 1132.

of Niebla, Granada, and Murcia recognizing Castilian suzerainty, Alfonso freely prioritized the commercial and military development of Seville. He incentivized Christian settlement of the region and conscripted the kingdom's first standing navy. In addition, Alfonso lobbied his international allies for support. While England refused the opportunity to campaign in Morocco, both Marseilles and Pisa pledged galleys. Pope Innocent IV also granted indulgences and financing for the campaign. Finally, after years of preparation, Alfonso launched his crusade. Curiously, however, his ships did not target Tangier or Ceuta, the two most strategic African ports in the Strait, but instead landed at Salé on the Atlantic coast.[53] The expedition lasted only a few short weeks and failed to establish any lasting foothold in Morocco.

Many of the king's efforts to fortify the southern reaches of his kingdom are reflected in the *Cantigas* collection. In *Cantigas* 376, for example, we learn that Alfonso makes his residence in Seville to oversee the development of his naval fleet: "na çibdade de Sevilla, u fazia sa morada / el Rey por guardar a terra e que fosse ben pobrada / e ouvesse per mar frota, per que fosse mais temuda" (in the city of Seville where the king resided in order to protect the land and see that it was well colonized. He maintained a fleet upon the sea so that he might be more feared) (3.264).[54] It is likely that these verses refer to the early years of Alfonso's reign when he chose Seville as his permanent residence in order to personally oversee the security of his growing kingdom (*per guardar a terra*). The Machiavellian reference to the fear that the king's fleet inspires (*per que fosse mais temuda*) is a clear rhetorical flourish intended to inspire confidence in the king's naval *apparati*. Additionally, in *Cantigas* 385, we learn of a church stronghold that Holy Mary herself builds on the shores of Seville: "fez y na marinna / pera guardar os creschãos dos mouros e ser bastida / Pera guerrejar or mouros d'Espann' e os afriçaos" (She quickly built a church on the shore in which She could be devoutly worshipped and which would protect the Christians from the Moors and be an assault tower to wage war on the Moors of Spain and the Africans) (3.284).[55] As the poetic voice indicates, the church is at once a setting for worship as well as a fortified stronghold (*bastida*) from which to make war (*guerrejar*) against the Moors of Spain and Africa. Both poems sketch a strong

[53] The fourteenth-century Tunisian scholar Ibn Khaldūn testified to the importance of this area when he wrote that Tangier and Ceuta were considered the most important seats of power for the Almohad Empire "because they were both maritime fortresses, seaports, arsenals for shipbuilding, and points of embarkation for those wishing to participate in the Holy War" (J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar Crusade,* 4-5).

[54] *Cantigas* 376 appears only in the final "E" manuscript.

[55] *Cantigas* 385 appears only in the final "E" manuscript.

image of Castile's new coastal border, one that is fortified by spiritual and military infrastructure.

The development of the first standing Castilian navy was not unique to Alfonso's reign, but rather an extension of his father's incipient naval force that was used to blockade the city of Seville during the 1247-8 campaign.[56] In 1251, Fernando authorized a *fuero* granting the seamen of the city's shoreline neighbourhood their own *alcalde de la mar*.[57] By the following year, the first of Alfonso's reign, the completion of the Royal Dockyards offered a permanent place to harbour his warships. This achievement coincided with the publication of fixed price and wage schedules, and for the first time customs duties began to contribute substantially to the war efforts.[58] In the following years leading up to the Salé campaign, Alfonso established the first *almirante de la mar* and contracted with a total of twenty-one sailors to serve as the admiral's *cómitres*, or captains. From the sixteenth-century Spanish historian Argote de Molina, we know that the names of the initial contracted *cómitres* represented a diverse Mediterranean conglomerate reflective both of Castilian origin (Cantabria), but also Italian, Catalan, and French, among others.[59] Among the justifications that Alfonso gave for the creation of the admiral position, it is recorded that "we greatly desire to carry forward the work of the crusade overseas for the service of God and the exaltation of Christianity."[60] The lands and estates that Alfonso gifted to each captain came with the responsibility of arming and maintaining a war galley that could be deployed for a service of three months every year.[61]

[56] As narrated in the *Primera Crónica General* (ch. 1075), Fernando contracted with the marine captain Ramón Bonifaz to convene "la mayor flota que podiese et la meior guisada" and "quebrantar el fuerte et alto capitolo del coronamiento del Andalozia." Bonifaz succeeded in this task, leading a fleet up the Guadalquivir to blockade the city from the water while Fernando, with help from Jaime I of Aragon and Ibn al-Aḥmar (Muḥammad I) of Granada, led the ground siege. For these reasons, Bonifaz is sometimes credited with being the first admiral of the incipient royal fleet. In reality, the first person known to hold the title of *almirante de la mar* was actually Roy López de Mendoza, who enjoyed this distinction via royal charters from December 1253 to January 1260. See José Luis Infiesta Pérez, "El Almirante Bonifaz y la conquista de Sevilla," *Historia 16* 212 (1993): 49-54 and Florentino Pérez-Embid, "La marina real castellana en el Siglo XIII," *Anuario de estudios medievales* 6 (1969): 141-57.

[57] J. O'Callaghan, *Justinian*, 92-3.

[58] J. O'Callaghan, "Image and Reality," 21. According to Pérez-Embid, Alfonso's marines served a tripart role of "armadores, combatientes, e intermediaries en el movimiento mercantil del puerto" (F. Pérez-Embid, "Marina real castellana," 156).

[59] Some of the names documented include "Guillén Juan Ruiz, Nocolos Tazo, Per de Vayona, Miguel Calafat, and Per Arnalt de Burdel (F. Pérez-Embid, "Marina real castellana," 163).

[60] J. O'Callaghan, "Image and Reality," 24.

[61] J. O'Callaghan, *Justinian*, 93-4.

These efforts are codified in Alfonso's legal compendium *Siete Partidas,* which defines in minute detail the structure of his navy and the obligations of its mariners.[62] Although this law code was never employed during Alfonso's reign, the encyclopaedic amount of information on maritime law and duty attests to the king's committed vision to a strong naval presence on his Mediterranean frontier.

In the ninth summer of his reign, in the year 1260, Alfonso finally launched his African Crusade. This short-lived campaign is recounted in terse detail in *Cantigas* 328. Considered the introductory poem to the Cycle of El Puerto de Santa María, the central narrative concerns the renaming of the port town of Alcanate (Ar. al-Qanāṭir) to El Puerto de Santa Maria.[63] Officially, this change occurred in 1260 and coincides with Alfonso's repopulation efforts in the region.[64] Located at the mouth of the Guadalete River opposite Cádiz, El Puerto provided a sheltered harbour and immediate access to the Atlantic Ocean. That summer, Alfonso resided in El Puerto to outfit a naval base in direct preparation for the assault. In *Cantigas* 328, the poetic voice recounts the campaign in a two-stanza aside:

> Ond' en este logar bõo foi pousar hũa vegada
> el Rey Don Affonso, quando sa frota ouv' enviada
> que Çalé britaron toda, gran vila e muit' onrrada,
> e o aver que gãaron de dur seria osmado.
>
> El pousand' en aquel logo e ssa frota enviando
> e yndo muitas vegadas a Cadiz e ar tornado,
> e do que mester avia a frota ben avondando
> per que fosse mais agỹa aquel feit' enderençado
>
> Non catou al…

[62] *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, ed. Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807), 3 vols. See "Título XXIV Que fabla de la Guerra que se face por mar," II.258-267. Topics range from necessary supplies, to rank qualifications, to types of vessels. For an English translation of the *Siete Partidas,* see R. I. Burns ed., *Las Siete Partidas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 5 vols. Title XXIV ("Concerning War Waged on the Sea") appears in vol. 2, *Medieval Government: The World of Kings and Warriors (Partida II),* 462-469.

[63] In total, twenty-four songs are included in the cycle of poems dedicated to El Puerto de Santa María: 328, 356-359, 364, 366-8, 371-2, 375-9, 381-2, 385, 389, 391-3, 398. See J. O'Callaghan, *Poetic Biography,* 172-91 and C. Scarborough, *Holy Alliance,* 55-80.

[64] M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X,* 144. Alfonso would have to authorize a new town charter in 1281 following El Puerto's destruction at the hands of the Marinids.

> In this fine spot King don Alfonso stayed once when he had sent his fleet which destroyed Salé, a great and highly honoured city. The booty which they won could scarcely be calculated. While staying in that spot and commanding his fleet and going to Cádiz and back many times, supplying his fleet well with all it needed so that the enterprise might be more speedily carried out, he paid no attention to anything else…

From these verses we learn of the king's careful administration of the campaign. Giving the project his undivided attention (*non catou al*), Alfonso travels many times from Cádiz across the bay to El Puerto de Santa María to personally command his fleet. He makes sure to supply his forces with all necessary supplies to ensure a speedy victory (*mester avia… feit' enderençado*). As a result, the ships return with a hoard of treasure too extensive to count (*de dur seria osmado*). The narration then returns to the central miracle of the song, and the Salé digression is complete.

The events of the Salé raid as recounted in *Cantigas* 328 are accurate, yet conveniently brief. Sometime in early September, as the celebration of Ramadan was ending, the crusaders landed at Salé to little resistance. Morocco was, at that time, in a state of political uncertainty following the rise of the Marinid emir Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq (1258-86), whose rule oversaw the end of the Almohad dynasty based in Marrakesh. Abū Yūsuf's nephew, Ya'qūb, was then in possession of Salé and, in an apparent attempt to distinguish himself from his uncle, solicited an alliance from Castile in the form of some 200 cavalry.[65] This detail may help explain why Alfonso's campaign targeted Salé instead of the more strategic Mediterranean ports of Tangier or Ceuta. It could also explain why the Castilian soldiers encountered so little resistance despite Ceuta having warned the coastal towns earlier that summer of an impending attack.[66] The contingent of Christian soldiers then spent the next two weeks destroying the city and harassing its residents. They returned to Castile with some 3,000 captives, many of whom were later ransomed. What the *Cantigas* narrative omits, however, are the embarrassing details of the fleet's return. In a matter of days, Abū Yūsuf mustered a counterattack on the town that drove the Christian soldiers into a clumsy retreat. Leaving puppets on the parapets, the crusaders

[65] This probably occurred sometime in late 1259 or early 1260 (J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar Crusade*, 26).

[66] O'Callaghan suggests that the governor Ya'qūb may have changed his mind after his initial request for aid (*Gibraltar Crusade* 28). Another possibility is that he let the Castilians in but after seeing their bloodlust he quickly appealed to his uncle, who led the successful counterattack.

carried their booty onto the ships and burned everything else. Insufficient water supplies plagued the withdrawal, and one crew had to land at Larache to sell fifty-three Muslim captives in exchange for potable water. There were whispers of mutiny. Some sailors were reportedly so disgusted by the management of the affair that they deserted in favour of service to Abū Yūsuf. By early October the fleet started to limp back into the shelter of El Puerto de Santa Maria. Of the thirty-seven vessels that set out on the expedition some weeks previous, only twenty-five returned. Meanwhile, Abū Yūsuf ordered Salé restored. He reconstructed mosques and houses and built a defensive wall along the riverbank to prevent future attacks.

The *Crónica de Alfonso X,* a royal account of the king's reign produced in the century following his death, reported that Alfonso was pleased with the campaign's outcome: "desque lo sopo, ovo ende grant plazer" (upon hearing the news, he was greatly pleased).[67] Given this document's positioning within the royally sponsored histories of the realm, this perspective is understandable. And yet, it seems strange that, given the many years of preparation that went into the campaign, Alfonso would be pleased with these relatively fruitless results. Holt reads in the king's collection of profane poetry, *Cantigas d'escarnho e de maldezir* a more truthful indication of the king's feelings toward the campaign. Accordingly, Alfonso decried against poorly prepared and cowardly troops who neglect their duties.[68] Ultimately, Alfonso's plans for establishing and maintaining a foothold in Morocco shrivelled in the sweltering heat that gave his retreating navy such troubles on their return to El Puerto de Santa María. The Moroccan historian Ibn 'Idhārī contradicted the royal Castilian histories when he wrote that Alfonso "was about to explode and die of grief" upon learning that the Marinids had so quickly recovered Salé.[69] Writing also with the benefit of hindsight but from an opposing perspective, 'Idhārī's account is equally understandable, if not entirely believable. By all accounts, Alfonso had failed his first great test of kingship relative to the final words of his father. Admittedly, in the following years Alfonso did succeed in conquering the neighbouring kingdoms of Jerez (1261) and Niebla (1262), but his dreams for an empire that extended beyond the shores of Iberia would never come to fruition.

IV. Alfonso's Last Stand

Contrary to the expedition's ultimate objectives, the events of Salé did more to destabilize Castilian interests in the region than anything. As it turns out, the

[67] M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X,* 139 n. 28. My translation.
[68] E. Holt, "Cantigas de Cruzada" 220.
[69] J. O'Callaghan, *Gibraltar Crusade,* 27.

attack antagonized the Marinid emir Abū Yūsuf and created, in the words of González Jiménez, a "conflicto diplomático" that plagued the remainder of Alfonso's reign.[70] Shortly after the campaign, Alfonso's long-time ally in Granada, Ibn al-Aḥmar, broke the truce with Castile and began to plot with Abū Yūsuf against neighbouring Castile. In addition to his bid for Holy Roman Emperor, as well as navigating a contentious succession dispute, Alfonso would be forced to spend the rest of his reign in various defensive campaigns that further threatened the progress of his imperial designs and ultimately stopped the advance of his territorial conquests.

In 1264, encouraged by support from Morocco and Granada, the Muslim Mudéjar subjects of Castile rebelled from Jerez to Murcia.[71] These events are recounted in *Cantigas* 345 and 169. In *Cantigas* 345, we hear "dos mouros como gãaron Xerez con seu gran poder" (the Moors rebelled and won Jerez with their great power) (3.198).[72] The poetic voice equates Alfonso's struggle to overcome the rebellion with the cause of the Virgin herself: "da Reynna dos ceos tĩia bando / contra mouros e crischãos maos" (He fought the Queen of Heaven's cause against Moors and bad Christians) (3.198). Despite Alfonso's quick mobilization of troops from Seville, the Moors succeeded in causing great damage to the town. During the assault, they destroy the church and carry out a statue of the Virgin that they intend to burn. As in *Cantigas* 46 and 292, the Virgin Mary again takes focus in the form of her material likeness (*omagen*). In a dream, Alfonso sees Holy Mary running from the burning church with baby Jesus in her arms and, upon waking up, he understands that the castle is lost. However, as the narrative concludes, we learn that God ordained the recovery of the city and the restoration of the statue: "quiso Deus que gaannada / Xerez este Rei ouvesse e de crischãos pobrada, / e a omagen da Virgen en acapela tornada" (God willed that Jerez be conquered by this king and populated with Christians, and the statue of the Virgin be returned to the chapel) (3.201).

Cantigas 169 is set in Murcia and similarly recounts the time when "ss' alçaron mouros des Murç ata Sevilla" (the Moors rebelled from Murcia to Seville) (2.173).[73] Reportedly, this occurs when "Aboyuçaf, el sennor de Çalé" (Aboyuçaf, lord of Salé) passes by with a great host: "passou con mui gran gente" (passed by with a great army) (2.174). This is one of a few references in the *Cantigas* collection to the Marinid emir Abū Yūsuf. Curiously, his name is not mentioned in *Cantigas* 328's reference to the Salé campaign, but does appear in several poems that document the later Marinid invasions into Iberia during

[70] M. González Jiménez, *Alfonso X*, 140.

[71] For the events that led to the revolt, see J. O'Callaghan, *Learned King*, 181-2.

[72] *Cantigas* 345 appears in manuscript "E" only.

[73] *Cantigas* 169 appears in manuscripts "T" and "E."

the 1270s.[74] Here his presence is meant to illustrate his role in fomenting the sedition of Alfonso's Muslim subjects in the cherished Murcian holding. The narrative stands out for conflating two seemingly separate periods in history. While a small contingent of Marinid forces landed at Tarifa to aid Ibn al-Aḥmar around 1263, Abū Yūsuf himself did not participate in this campaign. Rather, he was most active during the later Marinid invasions of 1272, 1275, and 1277. As Scarborough has suggested, the reason for such an historical transposition lies in Alfonso's own displeasure at having lost to the emir during the 1260 campaign in Salé.[75] Finding the idea of memorializing this loss in his *Cantigas* collection unappetizing, he instead recast the Marinid foe as an antagonistic foil in a more praiseworthy narrative that highlights the Moors' inability to destroy the church. As the narrative concludes, we hear how Holy Mary intervenes to thwart the plot and drive Her enemies from the region: "Desfez a Virgen santa, que os ende sacou, / que ena Arraixaca poucos deles leixou; / e a sua eigreja assi deles livrou" (However, the Holy Virgin undid their treacherous plot, for She drove them out of there and left very few of them in La Arrijaca. Thus, She freed Her church from them) (2.174). In this way, Alfonso inverts his historical defeat at Salé into a more favourable account of a victory at Murcia.

Abū Yūsuf's subsequent invasions in the decade of the 1270s are also alluded to in *Cantigas* 215 and 323. This period coincides with Alfonso's establishment of the Order of Saint Mary of Spain, a naval order reflective of Alfonso's desire to "build maritime infrastructure on the Mediterranean coast and in the Strait."[76] Despite the order's establishment in 1270, Abū Yūsuf and his Marinid army managed to infiltrate the Peninsula clandestinely through Algeciras, which was still in possession of Granada (ruled at that time by Ibn al-Aḥmar's successor Abū 'Abd Allah, (or Muḥammad II, r. 1273-1302). As *Cantigas* 323 narrates, the Marinid emir succeeds in burning many lands in the kingdom of Seville: "Aboyuçef passou ben pelo estreito / d'Algizira e a terra de Sevilla tod' a eito / correu, e muitas aldeas forna dos mouros queimadas" (Aboyuçaf passed through the Strait of Algeciras and rapidly invaded all the land of Seville, and many villages were burned by the Moors) (3. 148).[77] The army passes through

[74] See also *Cantigas* 181 (Manuscripts "T" and E"). This poem relates Abū Yūsuf's assault on the Almohad caliph 'Umar al-Murtaḍā (r. 1248-66) in Marrakesh. Notably, while the Marinids succeeded in ousting the Almohad government from Morocco, this *cantiga* portrays the military defeat of Abū Yūsuf and his Marinid forces after al-Murtaḍā's hosts display Holy Mary's banner. The poem therefore stands as another likely instance of Alfonso reappropriating the military histories of his realm to his own aims—in this case projecting the military weakness of one of his greatest political rivals.

[75] C. Scarborough, *Holy Alliance,* 50.

[76] N. Parmley, "Imagined Empire" 208.

[77] *Cantigas* 323 appears in manuscripts "F" and "E."

Coria, a village some ten kilometres south of Seville, destroying everything in its path: "os mouros logo deitaron / sas algaras e correron e roubaron quant' acharon" (the hordes of Moors fell on them and raided and plundered everything in their path) (3. 149). The poem, which focuses on the grief of a man whose son has just died, does not offer a resolution to the invasion except through the words of the boy, whom Holy Mary revives. Prompted to explain his miraculous recovery, the boy declares that Mary had been with him and also defended him from the Moors (*guardara dos mouros*).

Cantigas 215 similarly recounts one of Abū Yūsuf's crossings, describing the terrible destruction that he brings to the frontier: "passou el come a furto con muitos mouros barvudos; / e poren forn as vilas e os castelos corrudos / e polos nossos pecados muita eigreja britada" (he slipped across the border with many bearded Moors. Hence the cities and castles were sacked, and, because of our sins many churches were destroyed) (2.273).[78] The poetic voice employs the common trope of assigning blame for the incursion not on any specific oversight or military floundering, but on the sins of the realm itself (*pelos nossos pecados*). The North African army ravages the countryside as far as Jaen, some 150 kilometres inland, where they snatch a statue of the Virgin Mary from the local church. In attempting to destroy Her likeness, they first try to smash it with a sword, then burn it, then finally sink it to the bottom of a lake. In the first two instances, God intervenes to prevent the statue's destruction, while in the third Holy Mary prevents Her likeness from sinking. It is after the third instance that they finally realize the Virgin's potency, and promptly remove it from the water and send it to Granada, where Muḥammad II has it returned to the Castilian monarch.

As these *cantigas* demonstrate, the legacy of Alfonso's Salé crusade was not imperial stability but rather continuing warfare in the form of Marinid counterattacks in the heart of Castilian territory. Beginning with the Mudéjar Revolt of 1264, the second half of Alfonso's reign was defined in opposition to his first. Whereas the decade of the 1250s was spent in preparation for the African crusade, the latter half of the 1260s and 1270s were spent in defensive wars that demonstrated the ineffective consequences of the Salé campaign as well as threatened the future stability of the realm. Despite these political uncertainties, or perhaps because of them, Alfonso transposed these martial episodes into inspirational narratives that demonstrate Mary's allegiance to God and the crown at the expense of African invaders and Castile's own subversive subjects.

[78] *Cantigas* 215 appears in manuscripts "F" and "E."

V. Conclusions

The final verses of *Cantigas* 169 are perhaps the most explicit indication of Alfonso's designs for his Castilian empire. Having just attributed the recovery of the church of Murcia to the power of the Virgin Mary, the poetic voice continues by declaring that She will moreover thwart Islam in the Peninsula and beyond: "que nunca Mafomete poder y averá; ca a conquereu ela e demais conquerrá / Espanna e Marrocos, e Ceta e Arcilla" (for never can Mohammed hold power there because She conquered it, and furthermore, She will conquer Spain and Morocco and Ceuta and Asilah) (2.174). With these words, Alfonso conflated two of his most urgent political goals: to fight Islam and expand the kingdom into North Africa. As this essay has demonstrated, the *Cantigas* collection repeatedly invokes this message in songs that narrate local crusading miracles as well as feats in the Holy Land. In many narratives, such as the recounting of the 1260 African campaign, historical accuracy is replaced instead by a rhetorical flourish that turns problematic losses into victories made possible through Alfonso's devotion to, and faith in, the Holy Mary. Through Her power of intercession on behalf of Christian armies and strongholds, Mary becomes an ally in Alfonso's imperial projections.

In the very final years of his rule, Alfonso turned his attention once again to the southern shores of his kingdom. Securing yet another crusading indulgence from Pope Nicholas III, his fleet laid siege in 1278 to the port city of Algeciras in efforts to cut off the Marinid invasion route that had so distracted his quest for control of the Holy Roman Empire. The siege was even more disastrous than the Salé campaign, and like his previous naval assault it too led to more all-out war, this time against the kingdom of Granada. However, by this point, Alfonso's illness had progressed to such a state that he was forced to cede control of most of his kingdom to his son, the infante Sancho, with whom he had feuded almost constantly since the beginning of the succession crisis some years earlier. Neither the siege of Algeciras nor the subsequent war with Granada is recounted in any substantive detail in the *Cantigas* collection. By this very late point in his career as poet-politician, Alfonso either ran out of time to include these events in the collection or was simply too infirm to oversee the delicate process of turning such historical losses into literary feats of Castile's Marian-inspired strength.
On 4 April 1284, Alfonso passed away. In his final will, he ordered that his heart be taken to "the Holy Land of Ultramar to be buried in Jerusalem on Mount Calvary, where some of our grandparents lie."[79] This was the same document in which he designated that his *Cantigas* collection be stored in the cathedral of Seville and engaged on the feast days of the Virgin. Of course, his body never

[79] J. O'Callaghan, *Poetic Biography*, 98.

made the journey east, but was instead interred at the foot of his parents' tomb in the cathedral of Seville. In many ways, the king's *Cantigas* collection serves as a testament to some of his most personal and urgent desires. As expressed in the pages of his miracle accounts, he desired to worship his patron Lady, and he hoped that She would, in turn, offer aid to his plans for crusade and conquest. Like the *Cantigas* collection, however, these plans were only partially realized.

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The relationship between sanctity and warfare constitutes a significant aspect of the religious, political, and cultural history of the medieval Mediterranean and beyond. This volume examines the mechanisms through which warfare acquired a sacred dimension, military activity contributed to the construction of sanctity, and holy figures became associated with the conduct and representation of war in Christian and Islamic societies.

The contributions are organised around three thematic axes: the sanctification of warfare through rituals, relics, and symbols; the construction of sanctity through military activity; and the representation of saints and holy figures in narratives of war. Particular attention is devoted to ecclesiastical attitudes towards warfare, the military use of relics, martyrdom, the role of *jihād* in the construction of sacral rulership, the intervention of warrior saints on battlefields, and the significance of preaching and religious narratives in the context of crusading.

The comparative study of Christian and Islamic traditions provides a framework for examining the interplay between religious authority, military activity, and political legitimacy. The volume thus contributes to a broader understanding of the reciprocal relationship between warfare and sanctity, as well as of the religious practices and discursive strategies through which this relationship was articulated in medieval societies.

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