

PREFACE

In the order of study... First learn History and diligently commit to memory the truth of what has happened, reviewing from beginning to end what ..., when ..., where ..., and by whom something has been done ... This field of endeavor, well cultivated by your plough, will bear you a manifold harvest ... The first place and foundation of sacred learning is History...
Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3 (1120s)²

Gaging from the Human Gnome project, human life is now known to be a 60,000-year-old phenomenon. Migrations out of Africa occurred in the last quarter of that span, and people arrived in Europe circa 8,000 years ago not across the straits but overland from the great steppe lands of Euro-Asia.³ Put in such perspective of “deep history,” this inspection of late antique and medieval history is relatively short, barely a dozen centuries; and within a relatively small area, the frontier of New Aragón-Catalunya. Quite minuscule. However, in view of so many histories inside national frameworks that focus on much less time and even smaller areas, this scope must still seem expansive. This is ‘Big History’ with a sweeping panorama. This study leads-off with historiographic and geographic prologomena, each an interpretative essay to provide a framework for understanding the subsequent historical treatments of subjects by periods. The ample prologue sets up this two-part study, namely the reconquest and restoration of Tarragona (the city and its territory, the see and its province, the *Tarraconensis*); but first, what was there to be conquered in the first place, or was thought to have been, and what needed repair, or worse, what had been destroyed and had to be recreated anew. One part without the other is incomplete.

This is critical history, for itself with its haunting visions and moral questions about warring religions that proclaim peace; for Catalunya and Spain in their crucible; and indeed for all of Europe with the birth of the territorial and nation state; and for the rise of the West and expansion of the Christendom on a collision course with the contrapuntal spread of Islam and its explosion out of North Africa. It explores the initial situation, conflict and stalemate, and resolution and the troubled relations between the Christian and the Islamic worlds across the Mediterranean. This is history with us still today.

I call this *The Tarragona Vortex* to denote a variety of currents in history that converged in this region for a millennium, making it the pivotal point for tremendous change with far-reaching consequences. The metaphor works so much better for the modern reader than the age-old dramatic image of a stage, roles, and scripts as if there were a single master writer and technicians changing scenes and setting the stage, while historical agents were actors in a known predictable narrative because it is, after all, History. Although cliché can be used because it is so classical, there is something misleading about play-acting, as if the story were just fiction. It is not. Granted reconstruction and interpretation, the reality behind it all gives meaning beyond mere imitation and make-belief. This is not simply a “Linguistic Turn.” History is, however, often surprising when revealing itself, confusing until ordered by imposed rationality, and subject to multiple interpretations from various vantage points. Yet there is in History a subject, objects and agents, and direct and trace evidence to be considered and reconsidered. A different paradigm was sought, other than the classic play with its sense of dualism and polarity, a pre-ordained plot as in late-antique divine providence or the much criticized master narrative, medieval notions of Fortune or Chance to explain hell on earth, or the extremes of modern socio-economic determinism in the Social Sciences vs. History reduced simply to Literature in post-modern Humanities-- all dissatisfying to this historian. The idea of telling a story is appealing, however, with interwoven

themes, digressions here and there, like a mystery in which the historian is sleuth and narrator, critic and judge.

Why 'Vortex'? The word comes from the Latin *verto*, to turn, or more precisely turning around something. Revolving produces revolutions which seem to propel others so that continual action results that is hard to stop. It takes on a life of its own, enlarging time and space, indeed, overcoming its own history. Like the whirlpool of activity in physics, the concept is appropriate because it denotes a center that can be something, in this case a city, or a central hollow or kind of cavity, as when this city was depopulated and was merely a geographic site. Pinpoint or mass, no matter what goes around is change; combined actions in the whole is what counts: multi-dimensional, variable, and unpredictable. Eddies, waterspouts, whirlwinds, etc., are all examples of such natural phenomena having peripheral action around a narrowing column of nothing that nevertheless has a center, a point of contact or place of origin. Descartes used the idea in the early 17th c. to account for the movement of heavenly bodies, in a space defined by motion more than anything else, where each object in motion exerted some influence over the others. Although his hypothesis was overtaken by Newtonian Physics where the sun as the center of gravity for this solar system replaced self-sustained whirling motion, the Cartesian model works for this historical case better than the idea of gravity because the Newtonian image from an energy-centered solar system has one overpowering pivotal point, when in a vortex as in the history surrounding Tarragona one can have a void, like the emptiness and quiet in the eye of a storm, and other mini-vortices whirling around, and the whole butting against other entities, mixing it up on the periphery which can influence even the innermost circles.

Why Tarragona?

First, Tarragona is central to a lot of history. Zaragoza and Barcelona often seem part of it as well, and even far-away Toledo and Rome tugged at the Tarragonan vortex. These vortices interacted, sped up contact, mixed politics and cultures, and at different times reinforced each other or slowed things down by their counteraction. In the rise and fall of local powers, other vortices spun around closer to central action, sometimes seeming to vie with the mainstream of change. At times these coalesced in parallel courses as if to form a ring of multiple layers, i.e., a vortex ring. In physics, such rings can have opposite motions between the inner and outer portions of the ring, but the vortex remains nevertheless with its hollow core or solid pivotal center around which all things can be located. The ring itself may be invisible until objects glide into its path and are sucked into its motion, as in a smoke ring, where the vortex is at the origin of this motion and the circulating ring of air extends from it, made visible by the smoke but the smoke particles are not themselves cause of the motion. They are in motion because the smoke is caught up in the vortex. History is often like this, complex and subtle, not immediately visible, incomprehensible without some penetrating close-up inspection combined with another look, long-range from a distance and over time. That is what this history attempts, perusing an entire frontier where different powers and cultures rub against each other, while viewing things from a focal point, that is, medieval Tarragona.

Secondly, the historic winds surrounding Tarragona seem to have multiple speeds at different times, and the circular motion suggested by a vortex means that the winds whirled in all directions. The prevailing direction from the classical notion has always been East to West, without much attention to backdrafts, undercurrents, and turbulent changes in direction. Calm may have prevailed at the center when things seem to revolve around the site when Tarragona was abandoned, and at other times things are sucked into the center as when the city was reconquered and repopulated. Grand themes spawning seemingly minor episodes that are given larger meaning from the greater context. They are interwoven to create an identity and culture in processes now called more scientifically ethno-genesis as if history were some great experiment and yet the random combination of ingredients, indigenous and foreign, with events, forgettable in themselves but memorable overall, and sometimes cataclysmic, seems close to what medievals called *fortuna*. All of this today evokes chaos theory, a self-ordering of seemingly anarchic processes, or the merging of histories into a retrospective overview -- a history.

Thirdly, rather than peace and tranquility or change by consensus and undisturbed evolution, vortex suggests revolution, rapid change -- violent even, when people are drawn to it, trapped in its action, interact, and some stay while others are thrown outward again, into a wider orbit but nevertheless within its grasp. The winds of change, like a storm, when they accelerate too fast, do violence and the destruction can be awful; when gentle, they cleanse and refresh the air, bring rain and sun, and rotate the seasons. The change results in something new, reformed, and restored. Such History is characterized by a sense of underlying urgency, a need to make sense of things and to react, accept or control, make better. Such discomfort is itself telling, for the storyteller and the hearer, historian and reader. History in a vortex model is continuously changing, revolving and evolving. As Toynbee understood,⁴ it is not change itself that is so disturbing, but fluctuating rates of acceleration. Even in the short-term dynamic change seems chaotic, but when over time, seen as long term, changes are made sense of from a point of view, a central vantage-point, from where the story is told and retold. It is as if all history unfolded in it many layers or rings from a vortex. For this history, Tarragona is that viewing point. Imagine yourself sitting atop the castle of Tarragona overlooking the land or on the balcony of the looking-out to sea, taking-in their history. Look, listen, and feel History!

From the heavenly gaze above in the fullness of time, this is macro-history because its events had such long-range influence. However, the localization at a center, with a few outer points of reference, gives this history both locality and regionalization; it is grounded history, delimited by geography, and evidenced in records and artifacts that are local and compose information systems and identifiable social space. Its chronological scope, albeit with considerable background, focuses on two centuries -- not long in an evolutionary view of mankind. In this regard, this is micro-history. Although not exhaustive, it is therefore an intensive look at an episode when and where Europe and Africa once overlapped, where cultural and political boundaries were defined, when human individual and group interaction was one of intermittent coexistence in a delicate balance of power pulsed by peaceful periods and outbreaks of war that increased in frequency, intensity and scale in a quest for dominance of one people over the other. Its theme is therefore human conflict and its ultimate resolution with the establishment of a new regime and the final incorporation of the peninsula into Christendom and Europe.

This episode of history is perhaps small in scale and short in time as seen from a global perspective of the history of humankind; but it was one of momentous importance beyond its limited geographic and chronological dimensions. In terms of medieval history, this is a huge story -- the reconquest and restoration of medieval Tarragona and the frontier of New Catalunya -- one of tremendous proportion, impact, and lasting consequence. It involved hundreds of thousands of people, a clash of cultures on a cataclysmic scale, in an arena which like the Holy Land was a territory perpetually traversed by different peoples where conflict and creativity were common and inextricably united. Although Tarragona is the focal point of this study, the subject is hardly local, since people caught up in this history came from as far north as England and Normandy, France and Italy, the papacy specifically, and from the whole of the Iberian peninsula; and indirectly, spectators as far off as Germany and contributors to these events through correspondence, travels and witnessing, and passing along oral tradition and stories with personal interest and embellishment, as well as those engaged in the crusades. It involved all of Europe.⁵

On the Muslim side, the players came from all over *al-Andalus* with their family connections in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and the crossroads of the Near East, with interest and indirect influence from the very cradle of civilization between the Tigris and Euphrates at the *Abbassid* capital of Baghdad, Arabia and Yemen, Egypt, and the entire North African coast to Morocco -- especially the lands of the *Barbar*/Berbers. While traditional European histories tell of crusaders marching to the Holy Land, and traders crossing the Mediterranean with colonies in Tunis and other exotic ports, less well-known are the phenomenal waves of Semitic immigration from Africa into the Iberian peninsula and diffusion along the whole coastline of southern Europe. Tribesmen from the desert gave up their nomadic ways, city-dwellers packed their bags as well, to migrate thousands of miles to a land unknown, fabled perhaps, but still too distant for any direct

knowledge... in what was perhaps the greatest such migration since the barbaric invasions of Europe from the steppes of Euro-Asia, until the cross-Atlantic embarkation to the New World. These, with their religion as the only lasting unifying influence against diversity in traditions, languages, and perspectives as well as seemingly unparalleled political factionalism, apparently saw the prospect of a better life for themselves on the north side of the Gibraltar straits – lands already claimed, mostly occupied, and in mentality, heir to the Hispano-Roman empire.

The mass movement of these peoples was stopped in the Tarragonan frontier. If this had not been so, where would the lines of engagement have been drawn; where would the frontier have stabilized; how much of Europe would have become part of the western Islamic empire? The Midi of France? Along the Loire Valley? Up the headwaters of the Rhone River? The piedmont of the Alps? How different European history would have been, had it not been for events in the frontier of New Catalunya. Indeed, how different world history would have been. The Iberian experience cannot be viewed just as a local affair.

Not only is this history centered at Tarragona and a radiating sphere of related events in the frontier of New Catalunya with concentric circles of influence, like ringlets in a pool radiating out from a plunge of a stone into quiet waters, to the entire Iberian peninsula and most of Europe and North Africa, its magnitude is measurable as well in time. From 711 until 1492 with the fall of Granada to the Catholic Kings, the kingdoms of Spain were perpetually at war. For those who see the conquest of the New World, the Luso-Hispanic trade empires of the early modern era, and Spain's stance in the Counter-Reformation through the Council of Trent and after, and much of European expansionism and Euro-American world domination, all as continuation of impulses unleashed in the reconquest and restoration movements of the era studied here, history is woven in continuous threads with one series of events resonating in others. The ripple effect in space is repeated in time as well. The two are somehow linked, but often seem asynchronous. That is the essence of complexity, the root of chaos theory. Local events can have large results. Historical hindsight, seldom as penetrating soon after the events as when time passes, often matures only through the centuries.

The chronology of this story can be prolonged indefinitely, therefore, but a critical period can be identified when the Muslim push is halted and then slowly reversed, when one can detect a crescendo of events and a coalescence of episodes into movements, and when there is finally a confrontation of gigantic proportion that decided for all time the fate of Christian Europe and of the western Islamic empire. Although there are antecedents to be noted, the defining movements are the internal Gregorian Reform and the robustness of Europe in the 12th c. 'Renaissance' that in the conflict with Islam, is characterized most by the Crusades. The ideological component can be discerned first, with a reform party in the Church overriding divergent parochial self-interest of secular authorities; then a political component with the unification of counties of northwestern Spain into a tributary and then territorial state under the hegemony of the House of Barcelona; these start to converge in the late 11th c., precisely at the time that the always fragile unification of Islam in the peninsula under the caliphate of *Qurtuba* began to disintegrate. Some kind of accommodation may have been worked out regionally were it not for renewed intervention from Africa in the form of highly conservative, reactionary and virulently militant Islam which as "challenge and response" theory explains, provoked a more radical reaction from Christians forces that in the early 12th c. became more united, coordinated, and reinforced with northern European crusaders. When the African invasions in the decades of 1110 and 1120 threatened to push the frontier back to where it had been in the 800s, older generations of intermittent conflict exploded into a conflagration of monumental proportion which ensured for all time in the 1140s that the frontier was pushed across the Ebro River into the borderlands of *Balansiya*. The Crown of Aragón was born of dynastic union in the 1130s, the Christian regime consolidate territory behind the lines during the 1150s, and the frontier was consolidated as part of a new, enlarged and invigorated Christian state united with a coterminous Church which by the 1170s stabilized a new frontier with a border along the small Senía River separating them from Muslim Valencia. The stage was set for

continued Christian advances throughout the following century under Jaume I “the Conqueror.” Two generations in the 12th c. turned the tide forever. They are the core of this study.

If this arena and historic affair are so important and the events studied so momentous, why is the Tarragona episode so little known? European medieval history remains focused on the so-called core of France, England and Germany largely because of presentism – that is, an historical perspective overwhelmed by more contemporary history. Nationalism has played its part too. The dominance of the modern nation state replacing the older territorial state has not only placed political history as the central theme in modern historiography, but has moved toward national master narratives that suppress the diversity, dissonance, and separatism of peripheral parts of the state, so that, for example, the identities of Languedoc, and Provence to the east or Gascony to the west, are folded into that entity called France when in the Middle Ages their peoples had no such identity except in allegiance to a distant secular authority in much the same way that Christians respected authority emending from the papacy without experiencing the presence of the pope in their daily lives. This national tendency in historiography has always emphasized the core over the periphery,⁶ in much the same way, to adopt an illustrative medical metaphor, vital organs are those central that can produce immediate death, while the skin is seldom seen as an organ at all, but is equally important over time if it were ineffective as a barrier to infectious disease or other forms of invasion from without. The European periphery has always been neglected in preference to what is seen as the core. The ideal, of course, is to balance the two and aim for a holistic perspective of the whole organism, the entire culture, that is Western Civilization then perceived as Christendom.

Modern nationalism has also downplayed the history of those countries like Spain and Italy which were tardy in national unification, confusing the intricacy of their individual histories with a historical backwardness and contemporary political ineptitude. Finally, in the Anglo-American world History still suffers from a WASPish⁷ Hispanophobia and American Nativism where anti-Catholicism born of modern conflict is superimposed subjectively and often unconsciously on a different past, and where since the threat of the Armada English sensibilities toward the Spanish have always been to hold the latter suspect, if not in disdain. One could speculate about the prospect of English traditional views on Spain if instead of an early-modern Spanish armada threatening the independent little isle with a different language and its incipient Protestantism with an overriding Catholicism, the real and lasting threat would have been a Muslim force ravaging Frankland on the scale that the Romano-Visigothic kingdom in Hispania was overtaken, posed to cross the channel as effortlessly as they had crossed the Straits of Gibraltar. In either case, such intervention in English insular history would surely have attracted the attention of Anglo-American historians to the Iberian peninsula for all time.

The Spanish themselves, long aware of the Tarragona episode as important, have not always elevated this subject to its rightful status in European historiography or that of Spain itself because the latter has been centralist in perspective as well, focused on the core of Castilian hegemony, while Catalunya in this perspective is also peripheral. Just as after the failures of the Spanish Republics in the 19th c. and dictatorship of Generalissimo Franco while Nazi Germany resurrected the specter of the Holy Roman Empire in the Third Reich, there was a wave of concern in Hispanic historiography about kingship, legitimacy in government, and Spain’s identity as a unique entity or part of Europe, a mid-century anxiety focused on what it meant to be Spanish – more than speaking the dominant language, i.e. Castilian, or being born in the peninsula. The famous Américo Casto vs. Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz debates were largely an aftermath of such soul-searching.⁸ The former searched for authenticity in a Spanish history that had continuity to the Romano-Hispanic past and hence treated the Goths as interlopers and the Muslim interregnum as an accident set up by the failures of the Visigothic state in rescuing the classic regime, culturally as in the classics, and politically as a unified state. The latter, characterizing Spain as an “enigma” nevertheless brought it into the orbit of pan-Europeanism and made Spain a part of Europe, if imperfectly feudalized on the model of medieval central France, steadfast in its adherence to classic Christianity and loyalty to the papacy, and detoured, interrupted, if not permanently scarred by the Muslim intrusion from Africa. Again, couple this historic paranoia and hyper-critical

tendency in historiography with ingrained perspectives and modern nationalism, and the fact that the Republic of Catalunya lost the Spanish Civil War. Just as Catalan was suppressed as a language under the Franco era, so too was its history regionalized and marginalized as something that deterred the nationalist program. Remember also that the Catalans, from the birth of the Crown of Aragón onward, with the buildup of Barcelona, a maritime city, as its capital, along with the economic and political dominance of Catalunya over Aragón and its inland capital of Zaragoza, have never been totally focused on the Iberian peninsula, but have long cast their gaze, and hence much of their identity, over the greater Mediterranean world. While Castile-León concentrated on the inland reconquest of the peninsular core, a column right down the center from north to south, with Portugal defining its western flank and Aragón-Catalunya its eastern termini, the latter looked east and involved itself from the 13th c. reconquest of the Balearics, in Mediterranean affairs, in the affairs of Languedoc and southern France in constant conflict from the Albigensian Crusades onward with France; in Sicily and Naples; and then Greece itself. None of this was lasting. If one allowed speculation as offered previously about the onslaught of *Islam* in Europe, think of the economic and political power of the medieval Crown of Aragón versus Castile-León had the former not been distracted overseas but had pushed the limits of New Aragón westward from Teruel to Cuenca and into La Mancha, and if the early exploits against Almería had resulted in the permanent Aragón-Catalan reconquests of Murcia and under the Sierra de Granada instead of keeping its attention so close to the coastline. Morocco and much of North Africa would have been Spanish and Christian, but instead much of the New World was colonized and Christianized -- the processes of reconquest and liberation, restoration, etc. diverted to a New World. The Anglophone United States has always emphasized its English heritage, even though its western territories owe so much to the Iberian background. In Europe, the histories of England, France and Germany have been privileged, when those of the Mediterranean world have been slighted even though it was older and greater in scale than the former. And North Africa, attached as it is to sub-Saharan Black Africa, has been seen as another continent, Islamic and non-western, apart from Europe and the West, even though Africa and Hispania were often seen as united and from the vantage point of the ancient East were both part of the Far West. In so many ways, modernist Eurocentric perspectives distort how late antique and medieval peoples saw their world.

In terms of the Iberian peninsula, Spain or all five of them, Spains, or the cultural affinity of Hispania, would have been more equally divided throughout its history between the Far West or Portugal, the central plateau of greater Castile-León, and the Levant or East, i.e., Aragón-Catalunya, without the dominance of the middle-ground. Indeed, if a civil war had broken out earlier instead of dynastic unification, Aragón-Catalunya might have overpowered Castile-León, but the latter shifted eastward to butt against Navarra and its march of Aragón and Castilian, not Catalan, became the dominant language of the peninsula. If not, then the frontiers of New Aragón-Catalunya would have become more prominent in Iberian historiography than has been the case with the Reconquest being seen largely as Castilian only, in the same way that the Crusades are misconstrued in European historiography as applying only to the Near East, as if those in the West were not part of the confrontation with Islam. While the Crusades in the East failed, those in the West were successful. Had the Catalan domination of southern France, Sicily, Naples and much of Italy, as most of the Mediterranean lasted into the modern era, Crusades historiography would likewise be more balanced between East and West. Alas, such “what if” speculation may enable revision and encourage reflective inspection of one’s historical perspective, but it is not history. So, what happened? This study tells the story of the re-establishment of Christendom in former Islamic lands in the West and the pull of the entire Iberian peninsula into Europe. If one insists on seeing medieval history as the precursor to the modern, then it also counterbalances the Castilian dominance of peninsular history as a force of its own with a more holistic perspective where Aragón-Catalunya is in the middle of the Castilian and Moorish Empires and the rest of Europe, i.e., what came to be incorporated into southern France, Italy and Sicily, and a far-flung trade empire that would stretch all the way into Greece.

Reconsider the parochialism of local history when it is never set in a larger context. The history of Tarragona has been told often, but mostly just as a history of Tarragona city, which in modern perspective is always seen as somewhat provincial under the preponderant influence of Barcelona. It has had the character of small-town history, not unlike its counterpart in American history where local historical societies dominate the agenda. The closer the history, the more meaningful, but for a smaller audience. The larger the scope, the more abstract it is unless one becomes a discerning tourist. In Tarragona's environs, its history is possessed, loved and owned while ironically it is also dispossessed and distrusted as somehow a failure, second-rate experience in contrast to Barcelona. Of course, its history needs to be cherished for its own sake, but at the individual, local, regional, national, and international levels all at the same time.

The history of the See of Tarragona as a metropolitanate is more regional, but in terms of the peninsular history is always juxtaposed to the dominance of the Primatial See in Toledo, in the same way that Castilian foci dominate peninsular secular historiography and the central government has dominated regional provinces. It is rarely considered as a crusader principality, which it was, where its archbishops were, like Mainz, princes not just in the Church but ruling over a small territorial state. Its religious and secular aspects must be considered together. Moreover, the Tarragona Church boasts of few saints, while the later medieval spiritual traditions in Catalunya center again in Barcelona. Some of this is a matter of mathematics, population density, etc., rather than spirituality as such; but the archiepiscopal line after the restoration period has had some real characters, brick and mortar men, and political savants to be sure, but not the kind of religious leaders that through charisma, learning, and example, could dominate the religious scene in Spain -- not since the extraordinary example of Saint Oleguer, but then he too was a Barcelonan. The See of Tarragona has never been a stepping stone to the papacy, and since the most famous episode of a churchman from the Tarraconensis attempting elevation to the Holy See resulted in scandal and schism, one might see the 12th c. as a heyday and brilliant burst of spiritual leadership in the person of Apb. Oleguer never again to be surpassed or even closely emulated. So, ecclesiastical history in the Tarraconensis has remained provincial, not national, nor international either in mainstream historiography, but that does not reflect medieval realities.

Finally, locally the history of Tarragona has been captured by 19th c. Neo-classicism and Romanticism that has glorified its Roman foundation at the expense of its medieval reincarnation. Of course, its monumental remains are awesome, and more so if one continues to have them unveiled as the medieval and early modern overbuilding is stripped away to restore the ancient past as the *sine qua non*. Indeed, the classical under-layer is impressive while the over-layer is by comparison ramshackle, piecemeal, and drab. As will be seen in this reconstruction of Tarragona's history, there is slight continuity between the history of Tarraco and Tarragona. Pirenne's thesis applies totally in this case, where the discontinuity in the city's history was not the barbarian invasion, but the Muslim interregnum when *Tarrakūnah* was but a small town and had to be rebuilt and civic life generated anew.⁹ Tarragona is not a classical city, but a medieval recreation. Then why ignore the latter, as has been done in so much of Tarragona's local history, to glorify an ancient past that has so little continuity, except in artificially recreated corporate memory, with the Tarragona of yesterday and today? Why does historical re-enactment occur annually in Tarragona with citizens in Roman military attire guarding the walls and marching through the streets for tourists and locals alike, instead of the *Cristianos y Moros* festivals and holiday pageants of other, more southern cities? Tarragona is not a medieval Carcassonne in its presentation to the public, but it should be; nor in its case to UNESCO to be designated an historical site for posterity largely on the basis of its Roman foundations, not its medieval recreation. One might have expected instead the cast of *Medieval Times* to come into play or some other rendition from the nearby theme park, to do justice to Tarragona's history by emphasizing its rebirth and medieval past.¹⁰ Maybe this study can do just that -- put Tarragona into its deserved place in a larger History.

One of the problems in retelling a history that is known in outline form and only locally, is to enter into a comparative mode of thought on a regional if not national or international, continental scale. The ancient and medieval need to be connected, of course, and this requires also a new look

at the Islamic intervention. Certainly the whole of European medieval history provides overarching context for interpretation, but regionally the focus here on the frontier of New Catalunya rather than just the territory and city of Tarragona and its Campo shows how integral are the histories of medieval Lleida and Tortosa with that of Tarragona. The latter is also entwined with Barcelona and Vic. Tarragona is in many ways the nexus between the former and latter cities, at the intersection of a horizontal X wherein the terminus of each extension is in the top Vic and Barcelona, and the bottom, Llieda and Tortosa. The top is located in Old Catalunya with connections to southern France, the Pyrenees, and the early stages of reconquest, resettlement, and reconstruction of medieval Christian societies in northeastern Spain; the bottom from the cross-over down, Tarragona, not only constitutes the principle triad of New Catalunya, but the termini are in once thoroughly Muslim territory. The reconquest of *Tarrakūnah* and restoration as Tarragona were neither complete or secure until the fall of *Lārida* and *Ṭurṭūšah* and their restorations as Lleida and Tortosa. Tarragona itself, at the nexus, in the historic “no man’s land,” is where the two culture were blended anew. That makes possible opportunities for comparison at the local and regional levels which may contribute to our overall understanding of Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages, frontier phenomena, medieval urbanization, and Church history both with a different sense of local phenomena and on the larger scale. More may be brought to bear on the local from a regional perspective, and the result has greater potential for relating to the supra-regional in an overarching historiographic view.

This study opens with a bibliographic and historiographic essay before plunging into the exposition of this history chapter by chapter, period by period, topic by topic with an overall chronological order. In each, the nomenclature changes by language and usage, even if the location were the same, the place was different. The extensive frontal essay addresses key concepts, subjects and themes, historiographic controversies, and notable contributions to such a study, so that the latter can also tell a story without having to digress into explanations, backgrounds, or extensive notes and citations for the essential bibliography. It asks key questions addressed in the actual study, introduces interpretations and revisionism in the exposition, and exposes a certain disposition of the author some might call bias for subjects where it might be safer to take a politically correct position on controversial topics. It offers opinions on unresolved issues where proof seems impossible for lack of direct evidence, but which seem similar in other venues. Such are conditioned by lifelong study. Finally, it pays homage to the many archaeologists, historians and art historians, psychologists and sociologists, ethnologists and geographers, experts in theology, church history, and canon law who make this interdisciplinary study possible. Because of them this is not a typical history, just a narrow, single-period or limited-focus study as in local history, but one that attempts to put a heritage centerpiece into broad comparative context.

These comments and stress on larger contexts for interpretation are not meant as any deprecation of local history or local historians. Even as hobby-craft, their expertise and exposure to place are always remarkable. All history is in one sense local, even individual and momentary. Tarragona has been blessed with local savants whom I hold in particular esteem; they figure prominently in this study and credit to their work is amply provided in my notes and bibliography. An American historian could not possibly compete with them or the new generation of Catalan historians and archeologists who are daily adding to our knowledge of both ancient and medieval sites in northeastern Spain. They can easily recheck their sources in local repositories, take another look at any particular site, or talk with colleagues as frequently as they desire, while this American historian must traverse the Atlantic at considerable expense, rely on notes taken over the years without much opportunity for rechecking them, and cross a language barrier to use Castilian if not Catalan to communicate with colleagues infrequently in person, and only with persistence and diligence can one from afar identify, retrieve and assimilate their scholarship into such a history as this. What an American historian can provide is the distant perspective and craft of comparative medieval history -- an American invention -- to offset the subjectivism and confines of local history; a credibility for the importance of the subject in this broader context, if by nothing else than the devotion over one’s career to the historical investigation of a foreign history, someone

else's history, in another place and time motivated not by self-interest, but the subject's intrinsic interest and importance; and the ability to lift this history out of not only the local context in which most of it is written into an international arena, but across the language barriers that keep too many historians in Spain from following the critical work of American historians in medieval Iberian studies, and into English where its history is more widely accessible to an international readership than Catalan or even Spanish can provide. Finally, I hope to provide herein a history that is critical, accurate, and reliable as an honest brokering and reconstruction of the facts and interpretation of the larger scenarios they constitute; one that is readable and understandable to a modern audience beyond the environs of where this history took place; and one that provides lasting knowledge, an enduring interpretation, and an inspiring appreciation, empathy even, for those who lived this history so that in so much as possible, they become real at another time, in another dimension, and in the context of all human experience.

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