HOLY WAR, CRUSADE AND *RECONQUISTA* IN RECENT ANGLO-AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY ABOUT THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

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Abstract

In contemporary Western societies, who are going through a neo-romantic stage, the Crusades have led to an immense literature and a remarkable popularity. In the scientific field, this phenomenon has encouraged the debate on the ideological and cultural issues surrounding Crusade. Since that in the Iberian Peninsula had developed fights between Muslims and Christians before 1096, it is inevitable that historians have wondered about the influence of the reconquest in the origins of the crusading movement. In this paper, we critized the widespread view among Anglo-Saxon historians, according to which secular piety and spirituality were instrumental in the development of the First Crusade, and struggles carried out in the Iberian Peninsula did not influence in the extraordinary adhesion of the European nobles to this issue. In addition, other concepts that may help to explain the intensity of the response, such as "aristocratic networks," and at the same time help to understand the weight of the Hispanic experience in this movement[1].

Keywords

Crusade, (Re)conquest, First Crusade, Anglo-Saxon historiography, Aristocratic Networks, Lay Aristocratic Cultures.

Capitalia Verba

Cruciata, (Re)Conquista, Prima Cruciata, Historiographia Anglo-Saxonum, Retes Aristocratiae, Cultural Aristocratiae Laicae.

1. Introduction

Even before the economic crisis, the recent turn of the century was characterised by an exceptional tide of pessimism, shown by the success of fictional works describing planetary catastrophes or post-apocalyptic societies, where the return to an almost primordial violence recalls many images of the medieval universe in the *media*. In fact, fantasy literature, television series or cinematographic sagas are largely inspired in the Middle Ages to evoke huge dramas of legendary kingdoms and dynasties, in which classic monsters of medieval roots frequently appear to accentuate the evident inspiration in really medieval representations. In the context of global insecurity that surrounds us and that sustains a good part of the scatological mentality reflected in these fictions, the last quarter century has also been characterised by a new upsurge of the Middle Eastern conflicts, whose strange kinship with Western expeditions to the Holy Land starting with the first crusade has been pointed out by all involved.[2] Inevitably, the shift in focus from, for example, peasant wars like the one in Vietnam to the oil wars, like the Gulf War or the conquest of Iraq, has led historians to redirect their attention (to continue with the example) from the anthropology of peasant societies to the ideology of the crusades. This is not exactly new, given that, as Christopher Tyerman writes in the introduction to his book about the reality and the myth of the crusades, the Western imagination is plagued with multiple references related to these aspects that constantly interweave from the 18th century.[3] Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this situation is precisely the rebirth of a powerful historiography about the crusades in the context of an exacerbated presence of this historical phenomenon in such a peculiar global cultural arena as Internet.

The revitalisation of the history of the crusades, especially the first and most successful one, responds to a real demand, both social and academic, for new commentaries, new explanations, sometimes simply an adaptation to the times, of the traditional presentations about Western expansion in the Mediterranean. Over the last fifteen years, historians have worked to fulfil this demand from the editorial and, to an extent, scientific, markets with notable results. In contrast with what habitually happens with history books, the works on the crusades are translated into many languages, constantly republished and spread very widely through the commercial circuits. In fact, they make up an authentic editorial niche market with multiple formats, from scholarly works to paperback editions. In this sense, the historiography and mythology of the crusades fits well into the powerful neoromantic current referred to above, that mixes very varied proportions

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2. Holsinger, Bruce. *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism and the War of Terror*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007.

3. Tyerman, Christopher. *Las Cruzadas. Realidad y mito*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2005 (originally published as: *Fighting for Christendom. Holy War and the Crusades*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

of a sharp sense of social disintegration, nostalgia for fantasy nourished by epic swords and dragons, and an accentuated sense of otherness regarding these fantasy worlds, but also indirectly towards the past and the non-Western. In these years, the narrative of consumption and, of course, Internet have experienced a massive avalanche of this type of material, among which very conventional versions of the crusade always stand out.

The most significant aspect of the rebirth of interest in the history of the crusades is undoubtedly the inclination towards the ideological contents of this vast movement. Most historians of the crusades reject a crudely 'materialist' approach, according to which they were the result of the mobilisation of a mass of second-rate nobles, led by some kings and magnates, who aspired to improve their lot in Palestine at the expense of the Muslims. A formulation of this type, that enjoyed a certain earlier acceptance, has clearly lost validity and been replaced by explanations in which the diverse components of the ideology of the crusades are much more important. At this point, the debate becomes more for specialists and focuses around a fundamental concept, holy war, and another subsidiary one, just war, that have the interesting virtue of making the notion of crusade more vague and blunting some of its edges (all societies throughout history have justified war through religious arguments). This discussion also has chronological and spatial components that can be summed up in the question: when and where are these concepts applicable? These are not new problems, given that, in the 1980s, Carl Erdmann posed them with notable precision and, after him, historians have chosen from among the possible responses, often mimetically repeating previously expressed ideas. What is interesting in this orientation of the studies into the crusades and holy war is precisely the choice of the ideological field for the historiographical discussion. This slide is no exception in historical studies, where one can perceive nowadays a certain disparagement of social history and economic analysis in favour of the classic ('political', biographic, military), neo-institutional and, especially, cultural history in a broad sense, a phenomenon that is particularly visible in this sector of medievalist historiography.

Naturally, on scrutinising the complexity of the concept of crusade, historians have frequently posed questions about the existence of crusades beyond the Holy Land. In the same way, the origins and context in which the crusading movement arose at the end of the 11th century have been questioned. It is probable that there is a certain consensus regarding these questions around what has become known as a "pluralist" approach, more or less nuanced. This position states that defining a military expedition as a crusade requires a series of specific requisites that were met by a range of interventions in scenarios both Eastern and European, that affected heretics or enemies of the papacy (and not only Muslims), and took place over a very wide chronological range, that goes beyond the end of the 13th century when the Western presence in Palestine came to an end.[4] In the same way, there is general agreement with Tyerman's proposition, in which the crusade was the

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4. Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *¿Qué fueron las Cruzadas?.* Barcelona: Acantilado, 2012: 13-14 [original edition: *What Were the Crusades?.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 (4th ed.)].

product of a society that converted war and violence into structural traits of its organisation, so that the distinctive feature of the crusade was its 'idealism', the religious mobilisation.

In this series of reasoning, there is no need to emphasise that the history of the Iberian Peninsula is of considerable importance. Centuries before Urban II's preachings, the Iberian area was a theatre for clashes between Muslims and Christians the result of which result was a deep ideological conviction among the aristocratic elites of the Christian principalities that they were fighting the enemies of the faith, who they aimed to expel to return to a previous situation, that of the Goth and Christian *Hispania*. As this military action and the ideological discourse tend to coincide with those proposed by the popes at the end of the 11ᵗʰ century (in more general terms), it is inevitable that the historians of the crusades have revised the problems generated by the *Reconquista* and its links to the origins of the crusading movement.[5] Over the last twenty years, various Anglo-Saxon historians, most from the J. Riley-Smith school, have reflected on this question and it is worth debating the validity of their conclusions and, in general, the conceptual framework they use.[6] At the same time, it might be interesting to introduce other notions, little or never used by scholars, that emerge from the analysis of the local sources, and that also fall within cultural parameters, but somewhat distanced from the religious dimension that has dominated the arguments of the historians of this school.

2. Modern times

The definition of the crusade among medievalists includes the ideas of a holy and just war, with a penitential content for its participants who received spiritual indulgencies and material protection; a war that was destined to combat the enemies of the Christian faith whether these be Muslims in the East, pagans in Slavic Europe, heretics or, simply forces hostile to the papacy.[7] In this definition, 'holy war' implies an evident religious base, while 'just war' supposes a call by the pope, management by legitimate authorities, a justified cause and, more subjectively, what Jonathan Riley-Smith calls 'a right intention'. The penitential aspect derives from the inherent difficulties of the journey and suffering experienced by the fighters but also from the close relation with the pilgrimage to Jerusalem that was

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5. The Spanish historiography about the *Reconquista* is enormous and goes beyond the scope of this review. See García Fitz, Francisco. "La Reconquista: un estado de la cuestión"". *Clio & Crimen*, 6 (2009): 142-215 [https://www.durango-udala.net/portalDurango/RecursosWeb/DOCUMENTOS/1/2_1945_6.pdf]. After the drafting of this work, Francisco García Fitz and Feliciano Novoa Portela published *Cruzados en la Reconquista*, Madrid, 2014, that deals with some of the issues raised here, but does not analyse the perspective of the Anglo-Saxon historiography. In this sense, it is a complementary study to this one.

6. In consequence, this work does not aim to be a general historiographical summary and thus, the works by other historians outside this well-defined group are not cited or commented on.

7. Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *¿Qué fueron las Cruzadas?*...: 23-32.

an inseparable part of the campaigns and the crusaders' participation in these. The spiritual benefits were progressively set, but the most significant appeared from the beginning in the papal predication, and the crusades far from the Eastern world had an equivalent protection, also from the start of the 12th century. All these aspects are reiterated in the abundant general bibliography about the crusades. However, among this set of ideas accepted by the scientific community, the discussion about the ideological factors that contributed to constructing the innovative notion of holy war in Palestine stands out. A century of careful analysis of the texts has led to an enormously developed comprehension of the process of forming the idea of crusade. Nowadays, the patristics, the works of the Carolingian epoch or the papal bulls, hide few secrets for the researchers, who have examined in minute detail the value of the words and concepts related with Christian holy war, the way in which the pacifism of the Christian doctrine accepted the possibility of deploying an acceptable violence, especially when the cause that triggered it was religious. If this almost *institutional* perception of holy war was the legacy of two generations of historians of the crusade from the 1930s on, the sign of the times has marked the historians of the beginning of the 21st century decisively with the insistence on *idealism* with religious roots, motivations related to the profound beliefs of the crusaders. It would be absurd to deny validity to ideological reasons for adhesion to the Jerusalemite expeditions (and especially the first), especially when during the last century and a half, we have contemplated extraordinary and very rapid mobilisations in this sense.[8] However, it is significant that some medievalists, following J. Riley-Smith, emphasise the importance of spirituality in the decision to take the cross.[9] Here Marcus Bull and William Purkis stand out among those we are interested in this commentary.

Marcus Bull argues in detail that secular cultural values were secondary in the motivations of crusaders at the end of the 11th century. He states that a kind of 'Frank' identity existed before the crusade, but that this grew extraordinarily during the expedition of 1096. The chivalrous *ethos* was equally important, but family honour and personal prestige, basic in the aristocratic world of the times, underwent a considerable shift towards the classic model of medieval chivalry thanks precisely to the crusade. In short, the substratum that facilitated the incorporation of armed combatants in the first crusade was the appeal to piety, or, more generally, the religious values lay people related to piety and the penitential experience. Bull indicates that some of the historians of the crusade have identified these religious values with the concepts developed by the clerical elite to make it possible to wage a holy war against the infidels and, in concrete, to liberate Jerusalem. In this sense, he dismisses God's Peace and, as we shall see, the fight against the Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula as significant elements in forming the underlying ideological and religious basis of the first crusade. According to this author, the same occurs with

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8. The outbreak of the American Civil War or the First World War generated waves of volunteers ready to fight to a great extent for strong *ideals*, against slavery or out of patriotism, in these cases.
9. Riley-Smith, Jonathan. "Crusading as an Act of Love". *History*, 65 (1980): 177-192.

the epic literature in vernacular languages, posterior to, and very influenced by, the crusading phenomenon. In contrast to these general factors of persuasion, Bull believes that the enthusiasm for crusading was forged in local environments, in the connection between the communities of monks and canons, and the aristocratic families who exercised patronage over them and gave them some of their members. The close relation of these kinships with the monastic communities created the channels through which religious ideas circulated and which would later become decisive for transmitting the crusading message, with the pilgrimage as a form of fundamental devotion in this field.[10]

William Purkis purports to integrate the crusade into the context of reform of the Church, and, especially, within what is called the 'spirituality of the new monasticism', that had two crucial aspects: the imitation of Christ and the apostolic life. His study deals with how 'these ideals' were expressed in spirituality of the crusade throughout the 12th century. He believes that detachment from material goods, pilgrimage as the expression of this abandoning, and the symbolic adoption of the cross in the rituals of joining the crusade, were acts that developed the imitation of Christ. These were not the only ones: the journey to the Holy Land as such meant following God's path in a literal sense, the *via Christi* in Jerusalem, while the sufferings of the crusaders was parallel to those of Christ and his disciples. In the same way, the unanimity and spirit of concord that ruled the behaviour of the crusaders (according to the chroniclers and the papal letters) showed their desire to be an apostolic community. Against the possibility that these ideals were a product of the ideology of the clergy more than the crusaders themselves, Purkis states that 'there is also no reason to think that the ideals of the imitation of Christ or the apostolic life were so abstract that they would have been alien to laymen in the first instance'.[11]

3. Distant horizons

Both authors pay considerable attention to the influence of the Christian *Reconquista* on the formation of these ideals of piety, pilgrimage and *Christ-mimesis* that, in their opinions, encouraged the forming of the crusades from the end of the 11th century. Their conclusion is negative: M. Bull thinks that from beginning of the first Frankish expeditions in Spain, Barbastro in 1064, these are enigmatic in conception, not very clear in their development and, finally, affected a minimum number of the Frankish aristocratic elites who would later be firmly linked to the crusade. The initiatives that led to these expeditions lay, according to Bull, in the matrimonial alliances of the peninsular leaders with the Dukes of Aquitaine, Burgundy and other lineages

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10. Bull, Marcus Graham. *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade. The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-c. 1130*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993: 1-20.

11. Purkis, William J. *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095-c. 1187*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008: 57.

from the north of France. These dynastic links were the connections that led to their participation (when this did in fact happen, given that some of the campaigns, such as that one by Ebles of Roucy, organised in 1073, probably did not take place). From Bull's viewpoint, these marriages were important for military cooperation, but 'it suggests that the extent of French military involvement in Spain before the First Crusade was placed within strict limits'.[12] Consequently, the spread of the idea of crusade in the Iberian world came after Urban II's predication and, over all, as a repercussion of the success in the Holy Land. The identification of the fight against the Muslims in the Peninsula with a crusading holy war was the result of the association made *a posteriori* as the 12th century went by and the papal letters systemised the doctrine and spread it to the Hispanic monarchs.

Meanwhile, William Purkis states that the belief that the military activities in the Peninsula significantly influenced the consolidation of the idea of crusade is a 'position no longer tenable',[13] given that for the Frankish fighters in the second half of the 11th century, these expeditions did not have a religious or penitential nature and the most important, Barbastro, remains an isolated event. He aligns himself with authors like Angus MacKay and Richard Fletcher who assure that the war on the frontiers of al-Andalus was conditioned by political and material imperatives rather than ideological impulses. Moreover, he claims that the novelty of the call of Clermont means there are no clear precedents in the Western world and even fewer in the Peninsula. On the available evidence, he states, there is nothing to suggest the combination of a meritorious war and penitential pilgrimage in the Iberian area prior to 1095. Lastly, he makes it clear that the military activity of the Hispanic warriors was aimed at reaping material benefits, exactly what was prohibited in the mandates approved by the council. Only after the conquest of Jerusalem did the above-mentioned notions penetrate into the ideological atmosphere of the Hispanic nobles and knights, encouraging them to take part in the crusading movement, something repeatedly prohibited by the popes to avoid leaving the Christians frontiers undefended. The equation between the journey to the Holy Land and military activity against the Muslims in the Peninsula soon followed. This had its central point at the siege of Saragossa (1118), when the Christian forces received promises of spiritual remunerations similar to those granted to the Eastern crusaders. Purkis also discusses the importance of the proposals for a special route to Palestine from Spanish territory, which began to become relatively frequent in the 1120s.[14]

A third historian of the crusades who has recently dedicated a wide reflection to the links between the war on the Iberian frontiers of Christianity and the crusade is Christopher Tyerman. Like the above authors, he emphasises the contemporary

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12. Bull, Marcus. *Knightly Piety*...: 70-114, citation, p. 89.

13. Purkis, William J. *Crusading Spirituality*...: 6.

14. Purkis, William J. *Crusading Spirituality*...: 120-138. Purkis dedicates the final chapter of his book to examining the contents of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* and the *Historia Turpini* of the Codex Calixtinus to certify the implantation of the contents of the crusade in the Hispanic area, as well as other indications from the campaign in the Balearics (113-1115), the conquest of Lisbon (1147) and the expedition against Almería (1147).

connections that were appreciated between the struggle against Islam in the Near East and the Peninsula, but notes that, although the conflicts between the Christian kingdoms and their adversaries were on occasions tinged with shades of atonement and received papal support, their essence was the combination of 'expansion y colonisation'. These processes relied on the 'myth' of the *Reconquista*, which had a strong dose of 'religious language', distilled over the centuries and especially during the 11th. However, this ideological flow did not clash at all with a material motivation: the tributes of the taifa states were decisive for the consolidation of the Christian kingdoms and contributed to installing the idea of holy war in the Iberian world and which were of growing importance on the European scale. From this perspective, in line with M. Bull, the influence in this field flowed *from* Europe *to* the feudal peninsular principalities and not the other way round: 'the stimulus to the application of holy war was probably a foreign import'. Tyerman is more cautious than M. Bull and assumes that in Barbastro and other campaigns by the Franks, the popes were watching closely for the possibilities these granted to expand Christianity. He finds the key to the revitalization of the holy war in Spain in the appearance of the Almoravids and the development of the papal policy of encouraging the war of atonement that led to the first crusade. After the Council of Clermont and the conquest of Jerusalem, the notion of crusade decisively impregnated the armed struggle against the Muslims in the Hispanic lands, which was soon cloaked in all the formal apparatus of the crusade. However, the crusade was a broad cloth to cover the later evolution of the wars between Christians and Muslims, a resource handled in a gradual and incomplete way, but that did not impede peaceful interaction between them. Ultimately, the use of the legal, ideological and material aspects of the crusade was subordinated to the necessities and demands of politics in the peninsular states.[15]

Angus MacKay and Richard Fletcher have been mentioned, but we must add Derek Lomax, Peter Linehan and more recently, Joseph O'Callaghan and Simon Barton, among the Hispanists whose interpretation of the period of an unstable balance between the feudal principalities and the taifa states, has become a touchstone in Anglo-Saxon historiography.[16] In contrast with the above (J. Riley-Smith, M. Bull, W. Purkis, C. Tyerman, and, before them, H. E. J. Cowdrey), the problem that concerned them was not the formation of the idea of the crusade, but rather, with various nuances, Christian expansion in the Peninsula. The question that concerns

15. Tyerman, Christopher. *Las guerras de Dios. Una nueva historia de las Cruzadas*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2007: 832-866 (original edition: *God's Wars. A New History of the Crusades*. Cambridge (Mass.): Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

16. MacKay, Angus. *La España de la Edad Media, Desde la frontera hasta el Imperio (1000-1500)*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1985 [original edition: *Spain in the Middle Ages: from Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977]; Fletcher, Richard. "Reconquest and Crusade in Spain, c. 1050-1150", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 37 (1987): 31-48; Lomax, Derek. *La Reconquista*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1984 [original edition: *The Reconquest of Spain*. London-New York: Longman, 1978]; Linehan, Peter. *Historia e historiadores de la España medieval*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2012 [original edition: *History and Historians of Medieval Spain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]. The works of Joseph F. O'Callaghan and Simon Barton are cited in the following notes.

them, like many Spanish historians, is the process of conquest of al-Andalus and the creation of a dense ideological web destined to justify this, give it meaning and place it into a long historical continuity. This is what is habitually called *Reconquista*, a concept that, as is well known, has generated very wide-ranging debates about its usefulness and explanatory power. These historians are very aware of the historiographical complexity of this notion. Perhaps the person who has developed a fullest analysis is Joseph O'Callaghan, who echoes the appearance of the neo-Gothic ideology in ecclesiastic circles in the Astur-Leonese kingdom, centred round the belief in the 'loss of Spain, its 'inevitable' recovery and continuity between the Astur-Leonese kingdom (or its successors) and the Visigoth Hispania. He states that 'the Christian struggle against Islamic Spain can be described as a war of both territorial aggrandizement and of religious confrontation'.[17] This duality depends on the fact that Islam and medieval Christianity were incompatible civilisations, so that those who conserved the opposite faith within each of these civilisations were minorities, accepted, but not integrated. Inevitably, the confrontation took on religious tones and thus, the aspect of a holy war. In this approach, Joseph O'Callaghan takes a pragmatic posture to the *Reconquista*, indicating that this term can be used to define a prolonged process, whose real origins must be sought at the end of the 11th century and start of the 12th, when the Christians were first in conditions to defeat the Muslims. He remarks, with a touch of humour, that the reconquest of Hispania was not the work of the heirs to the Goths in the 9th century but rather of the Christians during the 11th-12th centuries, something very different.

While the *Reconquista* was a process for O'Callaghan, the crusade was a specific event: the Iberian kings and princes used this ideological weapon from the papal arsenal to split the first crusade into multiple instances to give greater force to their military expeditions. Being given the legal privileges of the crusade reinforced their military campaigns. Thus (and this is the first conclusion), the development of the idea of crusade influenced the process of the *Reconquista*, and not the other way round. In second place, the inseparable mixture of territorial expansion (in some moments, not even this, simply the gathering of tributes from the Muslim taifa states) and the religious content that this war of conquest was furnished with, enables the purely Hispanic aspect to be distinguished clearly from the European holy war, as it expanded from the times of Gregory VII.

In general, these two propositions form a decisive part of the range of arguments used by the Anglo-Saxon researchers of the crusade: the war against the Muslims in the Peninsula, although furnished with an evident religious content, did not intervene in the dramatic eruption of the crusade that followed the call at Clermont and, on the contrary, the conquest of Jerusalem significantly changed the perspective of the war in Spain. Moreover, the struggle against the Muslims had an evident aspect of territorial expansion and material enrichment of the warrior elites that it contrasts drastically with the break inherent in the crusade, an authentic armed

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17. O'Callaghan, Joseph F. *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003: 7.

pilgrimage at the end of the 11th century and an unclear mixture of both throughout the following century.[18] With greater or lesser emphasis, the Hispanists who have worked on this period in the Iberian world over the last few years, from Richard Fletcher to Simon Barton among others, have adopted this general perspective.[19]

4. Persistent errors

The tight defence of the Anglo-Saxon historiography derived from Jonathan Riley-Smith's seminal work on the origin of the crusade based on the religious idealism of the European aristocratic elites furthered by the reformist popes, has a fundamental problem: it does not answer the question of why this phenomenon appeared at the end of the 11th century and not some other moment. The good question is not only *how* the spirit of the crusade was created but also *when*. The implicit response is to attribute it to Urban II, whose call was decisive in this sense, but, without being erroneous, this claim is not at all satisfactory.[20] There are indications in this sense. Marcus Bull suggests that the propensity to participate in the crusade was a consequence of a long tradition of secular piety based on close relations between aristocratic families and local religious institutions, whom the papal predication influenced.[21] Meanwhile, Jonathan Riley-Smith develops a fundamental idea: 'many early crusaders are clustered into certain kindred groups. The most likely reason for this seems to be that some families were willing to respond favourably in various ways to the call to take the cross'.[22] Thus, the connections between religious institutions and family traditions would explain the favourable reception of the message from Urban II during the solemn journey of 1095-1096. These are powerful arguments that undoubtedly should appear among those that explain the growing involvement of a wide swathe of European nobles in the Holy War during the second half of the 11th century. However, they are not enough, given that the aristocratic kinship links with the monasteries and canonical communities date back before the year 1000, and moreover, a host of these show no special relation with

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18. Tyerman, Christopher. *The Invention of the Crusades*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998: 8-30.

19. Fletcher, Richard. "Reconquest and Crusade in Spain"...: 31-48; Barton, Simon. "From Tyrants to Soldiers of Christ: the nobility of twelfth-century León-Castile and the struggle against Islam". *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 44 (2000): 28-48. This author, in Barton, Simon. "El Cid, Cluny and the Medieval Spain Reconquista". *English Historical Review*, 126/520 (2011): 517-543, offers a specific example of the workings of these propositions: El Cid, an antihero who aspires to triumph in very competitive noble circles by conquering Valencia, through the bishop used an ideological programme with a Cluniac base generically connected to the holy war against Islam.

20. "The quasi-regal grandeur, penitential atmosphere, and sheer novelty value of the pope's passage through south-western France helped to generate enthusiasm for the crusade": Bull, Marcus. *Knightly Piety*...: 258.

21. Bull, Marcus. *Knightly Piety*...: 250-281.

22. Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1997: 21.

the pilgrimage or the crusade in the East. And Riley-Smith's proposal is projected towards the future (the expeditions after the victory in the Holy Land), more than to the reasons for the appearance of this phenomenon.

In my opinion, it is necessary to systemise these ideas from a fundamental concept, that of aristocratic networks, that seems particularly effective for explaining the combination of personal decisions and family options regarding the crusade to the Holy Land, but also under other scenarios of war, like the frontiers of al-Andalus and Sicily. The notion of social network is intuitive enough not to need a very precise definition, at least for our purposes. The contacts with the monasteries or the family frameworks evoked above are good examples of this network structure, one that enabled the dominant class to become closely united through links of kinship, affinity and alliance, vassalage and spiritual patronage with ecclesiastic patrons. Naturally, the use of this metaphor, that leads us towards social relations and group strategies more than individual religious idealism, is not strictly a novelty. However, I would like to emphasise that these networks became denser during the 11th century and, above all, they became structured spatially. Although all the historians cited from the Anglo-Saxon school are aware that there were groupings of knights around some great princes and magnates, with a strong regional component, they tend to underestimate the importance of this factor, considering it obvious. Marcus Bull examines regional loyalties, but emphasises above all the local perspective. The nobles of Limousin and Gascony, "whose mental map was most likely very localized (apart from possible experiences of some distant places through pilgrimage)",[23] necessarily had very narrow family and religious connections, with a horizon that was limited to the nearest communities of monks and canons. This focus depends greatly on the use of documents from the archives of the religious institutions, and these tend to concentrate on patrimonial problems and alliances with nearby noble families. If we accept this vision of 11th-century Europe through the eyes of the monks, the West appears like an archipelago of regional areas barely connected to each other. In fact, the crusade would become one of the elements of European interconnection from 1096.

This perspective is far from false and underlies many studies of regional history from the last half century. However, perhaps the moment has come to think that the noble networks were ranked socially and spatially, up to the level of the territorial princes and, through proximity to these privileged circles, their members participated in experiences on a European dimension. The information available about these relations and experiences is rather poor, but, when available, it shows a very wide-scale activation of these networks. The 1064 Barbastro campaign is a good example of how various aristocratic European networks (from Poitou, Champagne, Normandy and even Italy) suddenly came to the fore in Spain to participate in the attack on a city in al-Andalus and to devastate the Muslim-ruled Ebro Valley.[24] Fifty or sixty years

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23. Bull, Marcus. *Knightly Piety*... : 14.

24. Sénac, Philippe. "Un château en Espagne. Note sur la prise de Barbastro (1064)", *Liber largitorius. Études d'histoire médiévale offertes à Pierre Toubert par ses élèves*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy, Jean-Marie Martin. Paris: Droz, 2003: 545-562 and Laliena, Carlos. "Guerra santa y conquista feudal en el noreste

later, these networks remained operative, given that they framed the participation of the Anglo-Norman nobles and those from Champagne and, to a lesser extent, Aquitaine in the conquest of the Ebro Valley. Although much research is still needed in this terrain, the considerable complexity of these noble associations can be seen through the intervention of Norman lords and vassals in Aragon during the 1123-1134 period.[25] Without going into details which I have addressed in another work, it seems essential to note the importance of Rotrou of Perche and his connections to the great Anglo-Norman magnates from the end of the 11th century and beginning of the 12th final, namely Nigel d'Aubigny, Gilbert de L'Aigle and the monastery de Saint-Évroul, that explain the presence in Aragon and Navarre of a long series of knights from an area that stretched from Northampton and York in England to Turenne, in the French Limousin. It is well known that Rotrou was a cousin of Alfonso I, on their mothers' side and they were both nephews of Ebles of Roucy, who Gregory VII entrusted to head a military expedition to Spain in 1073. Normally, it is understood that Rotrou, a distinguished participant in the first crusade, answered a call from Alfonso *el Batallador* responding to their family ties at the start of the 12th century. However, I believe that these maternal links were less important for Rotrou than the profound impact the crusade had left on him and that pushed him to continue fighting against Islam. At the same time, I think his decision to take the cross in 1096 was partly determined by a family tradition that dated back to the Barbastro campaign and recalled his duty to fight against the Muslims.[26]

Rotrou's distinguished career also enables attention to drawn to the circulation of information over these European-wide networks. For half a century, this great noble from the Norman frontier moved between the royal courts of England, France, Aragon and Navarre, and also those of the Dukes of Anjou and Blois, without the enormous geographic scope of these contacts seeming to have caused him any apparent difficulties, except if we accept the accusation of disloyalty to Alfonso I or his nobles that Orderic Vital made in connection with a first journey that must be dated from the beginning of this monarch's reign (ca. 1108).[27] From this point of view, Marcus Bull's idea that the perspective of Western nobles at the end of the 11th century nobles was limited to the regions where they lived is reductionist.

de la Península a mediados del siglo XI: Barbastro, 1064", *Cristianos y musulmanes en la Península Ibérica: la guerra, la frontera y la convivencia. XI Congreso de Estudios Medievales. León, del 23 al 26 de octubre de 2007*. Avila: Fundación Sánchez Albornoz, 2009: 187-218, with the previous bibliography.

25. Laliena, Carlos. "*Larga stipendia et optima praedia*: les nobles *francos* en Aragon au service d'Alphonse le Batailleur". *Annales du Midi*, 112/230 (2000): 149-170 and especially 157-164.

26. For Rotrou of Perche's long career, including his activity in Aragon and Navarre, Thompson, Kathleen. *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The Country of Perche, 1000-1226*. Woodbridge-New York: The Boudell Press, 2002: 54-85. K. Thompson indicates (and it is important) that Rotrou went to Jerusalem with Robert Courtheuse, Duke of Normandy, which supposes that loyalty also weighed on the decision to take part in the crusade. See also Thompson, Kathleen. "Family Tradition and the Crusading Impulse: The Rotrou Counts of Perche". *Medieval Prosopography*, 19 (1998): 1-33.

27. Chibnall, Marjorie, ed. *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978: VI, 394-397. Rotrou's stay in Aragon-Navarre in this period is not documented in the local sources; Thompson, Kathleen. *Power and Border...*: 60, accepts the data offered by Orderic Vital: Lema, José Ángel. *Alfonso I el Batallador, rey de Aragón y Pamplona (1104-1134)*. Gijon: Trea, 2008: 73-75, accepts it with reservations.

Conversely, it is preferable to think that the glorious traditions of armed expeditions in the distant lands of Spain were handed down within family lineages and, thanks to these networks of kinship, alliance and vassalage, were transmitted to large sectors of the aristocracy from the north of Europe, from Burgundy to England. On the other hand, there were channels of information that have been excessively underestimated in this context. The relations between Arnau Mir de Tost, lord of Ager, in the Catalan County of Urgell, with Pope Alexander II and the monastery in Cluny in the 1060s, illustrate perfectly the existence of these two channels (the papacy and Cluny) that had a European resonance.[28] Arnau was one of the leaders of the war against the Muslims, who he fought tirelessly for thirty years, a shining example for his contemporaries, in line with the titles the Pope granted him in his bulls (*nobilissimum et religiosissimum uirum, inimicorum Dei agarenorum aduersarium et debellatorem).*[29]

Thus, the argument of the Anglo-Saxon historians of the crusade, according to which the enormous intensification of the war against Islam that began in the mid 11th century in the Iberian Peninsula was not important in the ideological amalgam of the nobles who joined the crusade in 1096, is based on two erroneous suppositions: that the aristocratic networks of the north of Europe did not reach as far as Spain (with the exception of the marriages of the Hispanic kings); and that knowledge of what was happening on the Mediterranean frontiers of Christianity did not spread to the rest of the European aristocratic universe. [30]

The corollary of these suppositions is that the family tradition that described the exploits of their ancestors or relatives and friends of these forebears in the military expeditions that started with the one to Barbastro, the enormous generosity of the Hispanic kings and the halo of sacredness given off by the continuous fighting on the frontiers in the valleys of the Ebro and the Tagus did not weigh on the willingness of northern European nobles to join the crusade. And this is probably an erroneous conclusion.

The insistence on the pilgrimage (and the importance of Jerusalem) and the almost monastic forms of secular piety completely mask the enormous power of the secular memory of the lineages, hidden by the almost exclusively ecclesiastic nature of our sources. Dedicated to the narrative and ecclesiastic sources, it is no surprise that the above-mentioned authors paid little attention to the *chansons de geste*, the vernacular epics, with the excuse that the versions we have date from after the first crusade and are heavily influenced by the crusading environment of the mid 12th century. However, it is evident that the epic legends were circulating *before* the crusades and linked what we could call the 'subject of Spain' with references to Charlemagne and the heroes of the Carolingian past. Suffice to recall that, around 1070-1080, a Riojan monk took the necessary data from these oral traditions to add a brief summary of the battle of Roncesvalles and the death of the fathers of

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28. Laliena, Carlos. "Guerra santa y conquista feudal...": with the documentary references.

29. Chesé, Ramón. *Col·lecció diplomàtica de Sant Pere d'Àger fins 1198.* Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 2011: 266-288 (No. 44) [15 April 1060], bull by Nicolas II.

30. A similar reasoning could be applied to the conquest of Sicily (1060-1091), absent from the approaches to the crusade, despite the Sicilian Normans intervening actively in the former.

France to a historiographic work, the *Chronica Albendensia*, in order to fill it out with prestigious details.[31] And, according to Francisco Bautista, in the same epoch, a legend began to spread about Bernardo, the Ribagorzan who freed of the lands of the county of the same name from the Muslims and vassal of the emperor, a legendary tale that probably formed the basis for a *chanson de geste* about Bernardo de Carpio at a later date.[32] Thus, some decades before the preaching of the crusade, epic narratives that evoked the memory of Charlemagne and his vassals circulated from Normandy to La Rioja and contributed to intensifying the values of a chivalrous *ethos* that considered the fight against the Muslims highly meritorious.

It would not be fair not to indicate at this point that some works related to the school of Jonathan Riley-Smith are orientated towards showing the power of these traditions of lineage. This is the case of Nicholas Paul, who has also paid attention to displays in this sense in Catalonia during the second half of the 12th century.[33] It seems to me that this is the right way to go to move beyond a certain historiographical *impasse* dominated by excessive attention to religious idealism as the central element of the mobilisation of the European aristocracy in the crusading movement. It is not a question of denying the importance of religious inspiration in the emotional atmosphere that surrounded the adhesion to the cross, but rather of valuing the most opaque side of our information, the duties inherent in belonging to lineages inside complex political networks and with broad strategies, as well as the incorporation of cultural patrons based on a warrior culture, in which honour was a vital element in the social reproduction of the elite. From this perspective, the involvement of some sectors of the aristocratic groups of the European nobility in the violent confrontation of the Christian principalities with the taifa kingdoms of al-Andalus is deeper than the Anglo-Saxon historiography admits. In second place, the local documentation, especially from the frontier Marches of Aragon and Catalonia, shows that from the 1040s the fight against the Muslims was not simply a question of territorial expansion and obtaining tributes, but that right across the social spectrum, but especially among the nobles, it was deeply impregnated with the conviction that their fight was sacred and brought spiritual benefits. What is perhaps even more important is that this local documentation shows the existence of ways of communication that informed important circles at a European level about what was happening on these frontiers of Christianity. Omitting these aspects, as Anglo-Saxon historians of the crusade do supposes mutilating a decisive component in the formation of the crusading movement in the second half of the 11th century.

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31. The "Nota emilianense" has generated a large bibliography; I will only cite a recent work that recompiles and comments on it: Bautista, Francisco. "Memoria de Carlomagno. Sobre la difusión temprana de la materia carolingia en España (siglos XI-XII)". *Revista de poética medieval*, 25 (2011): 47-109 and especially 58-60.

32. Bautista, Francisco. "Memoria de Carlomagno…": 60-69, with an exhaustive bibliography.

33. Paul, Nicholas L. *To Follow in Their Footsteps. The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012; Paul, Nicholas L. "Crusade, memory and regional politics in twelfth-century Amboise". *Journal of Medieval History*, 31 (2005): 127-141.