

BATTLE IN THE MEDIEVAL IBERIAN PENINSULA: 11TH TO 13TH CENTURY CASTILE-LEON. STATE OF THE ART

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Date of receipt: 30th of July, 2015
Final date of acceptance: 3rd of February, 2016

ABSTRACT

Since the 19th century, the analysis of planning and execution of battles, tactics and strategies in Castile-Leon during the High Middle Ages had been in the hands of professional militia and was strongly influenced by positivist assumptions. Starting in the 1970s, the gradual extension of major historiographical currents —mainly *Annales* and Marxism— which were highly focused on socio-economic aspects, at Spanish universities, along with certain political prejudices existing at that time, kept these topics on the periphery of professional medievalism interests. Only starting in the mid-'90s would a renewal in these fields begin to come about, with influences from English-speaking and French historiography, which has made it possible to bring this subject into the academic mainstream at the present time.¹

KEYWORDS

Medieval war, Tactics, Strategies, Castile-Leon, Central Middle Ages, State of the art.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Bellum mediaevale, Res militares, Strategiae, Castella et Legio, Centralis Medium Aevum, Status quaestionis.

1. A society organised for war

An analysis of the historical evolution of the Christian kingdoms on the Peninsula during the Middle Ages highlights a reality that is hard to deny: in all of them, war had become an innate element of society, which had to adapt its structures, means of organisation and relational mechanisms to the constant demands of omnipresent military conflict. This panorama is so wide-spread amongst scholars that it is now commonplace to assert that medieval Iberian societies were 'societies organised for war', to use the highly successful expression coined by Elena Lourie in 1966 to refer to the Hispanic world.²

Of course, this consideration could also be extended to the entire medieval period of peninsular history and to all its kingdoms, but there is no doubt that the frequency, intensity and relevance of the armed conflicts did not remain steady throughout the entire period, nor were all the societies on the peninsula equally affected or dependent on the 'phenomenon of war' to the same extent. In this regard, it can be asserted that Castile-Leon—taken either as a unified kingdom or as two distinct political entities—experienced events between the 11th and 13th centuries that make it a particularly interesting and exceptional subject of study for the analysis of war and of the historiography that has developed in recent decades regarding this phenomenon. However, it cannot be ignored that the other Christian kingdoms on the peninsula also experienced similar historical circumstances and that many of the historiographical trends discussed in this paper, referring specifically to Leon and Castile, could also be applied, with certain clarifications, to those other entities.³

As Georges Duby pointed out, western European civilisation as a whole in that period, from the 11th to the 13th century, was *toute entière dominée par le fait*

1. This paper was written within the framework of research projects: *Las selecciones de discursos historiográficos desde la antigüedad hasta el renacimiento II: función retórica e historiográfica, fortuna literaria e influencia ideológica* (FFI2012-31813) and *Génesis y desarrollo de la guerra santa cristiana en la Edad Media del Occidente Peninsular (ss. X-XIV)* (HAR2012-32790), funded by the Ministry of the Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain, and is part of the activities of Research Group Arenga from the University of Extremadura (HUM023) in the catalogue of Research Groups of the Region of Extremadura. The first version of the paper was given as a presentation at the *I Symposium Internacional. La conducción de la guerra (950-1350). Historiografía*, held in Cáceres from 18 to 20 November 2008. Although the organisers of that meeting agreed to publish the works presented, in fact, by mid-2015, they had not yet been published. As one might imagine, seven years later, some of the references and conclusions stated there have become obsolete or overcome, and therefore certain information has been updated in this text.

2. Lourie, Elena. "A society organized for war: Medieval Spain". *Past and Present*, 35 (1966): 54-76. Years later, the expression would be taken literally by: Powers, James F. *A Society Organized for War. The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1988. More than a few authors have repeated the same idea.

3. This is the case of the Kingdom of Aragon, whose historiography on war seems to have followed similar trends to that of Castile-Leon: Orsi, Mario. "La guerra en la Corona de Aragón (siglos XIII-XV). Aproximación metodológica a través de su historiografía", *VI Jornadas Luso-espanholas de Historia Medieval: A Guerra e a Sociedade na Idade Média*. Torres Novas: Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Medievais-Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2009: I, 551-571; Orsi, Mario. "La Història Militar de la Corona d'Aragó a la Baixa Edat Mitjana: passat, present i futur". *Ex novo: revista d'història i humanitats*, 7 (2011): 181-201.



militaire,⁴ but in the context dealt with here, one can see that, in addition to a level of conflict comparable with that of the rest of the West — wars between kingdoms or monarchies, dynastic disputes, clashes between monarchy and nobility or amongst members of the nobility — there was a specific type of conflict that makes the bellicosity of medieval Iberian societies as a whole distinct from those of the rest of Europe: the war against Islam.

For some time now, historians have been highlighting the notion that the ongoing conflict with the Muslims had a profound effect on the features of these communities. The influence of war and military expansion at the expense of the Islamic community on the peninsula, on every aspect of their lives, has been pointed out repeatedly: in the political organisation of the kingdoms and the creation of strong monarchies through leadership that was belligerent to the Muslims; in the classic feudal institutions, whose growth was stunted precisely by the power that the kings held as a result of their central position in war and in the military organisation of the kingdoms; in the creation of the noble elite, who found, in the fight against the Muslims, a way of life and a purpose that justified their dominance; in the creation of a highly permeable society thanks to the possibilities for moving up in rank and the changes caused by border conflict; in economic structures and activities, the development of which was closely associated with the gains and losses resulting from war activities; in the creation of a unique mentality, ideology and religious sensitivity that not only converted armed anti-Islamic conflict into a form of piety, but also acted as the foundation for historical, legal and sanctified grounds — the ideology of the Reconquista — to justify the destruction of Muslim political powers on the Iberian Peninsula. In this regard, although numerous authors and titles could be listed, for merely illustrative purposes, it would suffice to recall how Sánchez Albornoz, in the mid-20th century, did not hesitate to identify the creation of an alleged Hispanic essentiality, which of the *homo hispanicus*, based precisely on *la acción de la multiseccular pugna con el Islam*.⁵

Disregarding Albornoz's 'essentialism', it is indeed true that war in medieval Hispania arises constantly as an essential feature in understanding its historical realities. In fact, twenty years after the great historian from Avila so emphatically stressed *las proyecciones históricas de esa larga y compleja empresa [la guerra contra los musulmanes] en la cristalización de muy variadas facies de vivir hispano*,⁶ Angus Mackay would return to the same idea, this time highlighting the extraordinary influence that the frontiers with Al-Andalus would have in the configuration of the peninsular societies:

4. "entirely dominated by the military concept". Duby, George. "Guerre et Société dans l'Europe féodale: Ordonnement de la Paix", *Concetto, Storia, Miti e Immagini del Medio Evo*, Vittore Branca, ed. Florence: Sansoni Editori, 1973: 449.

5. "action of the centuries-old struggle against Islam". Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio. *España, un enigma histórico*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 1991: 1263 (The first edition dates back to 1956).

6. "the impact on history of that long and complex enterprise [the war against the Muslims] in the crystallisation of a wide variety of facets of the Hispanic experience". Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio. *España, un enigma histórico...: 725*.



Muchos de los rasgos peculiares del desarrollo histórico ibérico [he asserted in 1977] se explican en términos de la experiencia fronteriza y la dureza de una empresa, la reconquista, que había conseguido casi la totalidad de sus objetivos a finales del siglo XIII... La existencia de una frontera militar permanente significaba, virtualmente, que la España medieval era una sociedad organizada para la Guerra...⁷

No medievalist has failed to see that the Reconquista, understood in the aseptic and neutral sense, as the territorial expansion of the Christian peninsular kingdoms to the detriment of Al-Andalus or, as Antonio Ubieto put it, the *ocupación violenta de tierras pobladas por gentes musulmanas, tras una acción military*,⁸ usually represents the necessary first stage of a series of transcendental and irreversible changes to which the conquered societies and territories would be subject in the course of their integration into the political, socio-economic and cultural structure of the conquerors.⁹

2. Reasons for historiographical exclusion

However, despite the objective importance of the military concept in the development of medieval Iberian kingdoms, the fact remains that Hispanic medievalism, at least up until the end of the last century, has paid much less attention to the analysis of strictly war-related aspects of the expansion process than to the political, socio-economic and cultural consequences resulting from it. Thus, compared to the meagre or non-existent lines of research related to medieval war, academic historiography, which benefited from the theoretical or methodological innovations of the major historiographical currents of the 20th century, focused its interests on the demographic dynamics that came about as a result of the annexations, the social organisation of the conquered spaces, the changes experienced in the use of the land and ownership systems, the influence on trade networks and activities and on new institutional developments introduced by the conquerors in the cities or territories overtaken from the Muslims.

7. "Many of the peculiar features of Iberian historical development [he asserted in 1977] therefore, are to be explained in the terms of the frontier experience and of the arduousness of an enterprise, the reconquest, which had virtually achieved most of its objectives by the end of the thirteenth century... The existence of a permanent military frontier virtually meant that medieval Spain was a society organised for war". Mackay, Angus. *La España de la Edad Media. Desde la frontera hasta el Imperio, 1000-1500*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1980: 12 (The original English edition is from 1977).

8. "violent occupation of lands inhabited by Muslim peoples, through military action". Ubieto, Antonio. "Valoración de la reconquista peninsular". *Príncipe de Viana*, 31/120-121 (1970): 214.

9. García de Cortázar, José Ángel. "La Reconquista en el siglo XI: ¿Geográfica o cultural?", *IX Centenario da dedicação da Sé de Braga. Congresso Internacional: O Bispo D. Pedro e o Ambiente Político-Religioso do Século XI*. Braga: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1990: I, 695-696. For the diverse meanings of the concept of the Reconquista in historiography, see: García Fitz, Francisco. *La Reconquista*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2010: 35-56.



Most of the studies that discuss these topics assume that war activity acted as the precursor for the profound transformations that would take place in the annexed area, but, until the 1990s, the action of war itself almost never merited the interest of Hispanic medievalism, which had begun to see a renewal in academic circles in the 1970s and '80s. To loosely paraphrase a well-known British specialist, John Gillingham, it could be said that Spanish historians had been so busy studying what happened once the armies accomplished their goals —issues that, on the other hand, are of unquestionable relevance— that they hardly had the chance to devote themselves to analysing what these armies did while making war to achieve such goals.¹⁰

What could be the reason for this obvious lack of interest? As mentioned almost twenty years ago now in certain reflections that will be returned to here,¹¹ in order to understand why Spanish medievalism avoided this field of study, one must consider certain deep-rooted historiographical, political and sociological prejudices that existed for many years in the Spanish university world. In this regard, perhaps the first thing that can be confirmed is that, since the 19th century, but especially during the 20th century, academic historians have approached the study of many facets of war, such as military obligations, urban militias, spoils or the holding of fortresses, to name a few areas of research, in a completely natural way because they considered —not unreasonably— that these subjects were interwoven into the history of institutions, social history, economic history or urban history, as elements that fully belonged within the main lines of work in 20th century historiography and, thus, were worthy of attention by professional researchers.

However, until the second half of the 1980s, the history of battle forms, or how to wage war, was still considered an issue suited to the military, handled by members of the military with scholarly aspirations for colleagues keen on historical subjects. In fact, university historians viewed such subjects as if, in order to approach them, certain tactical or strategic knowledge only available to professional members of the military was required, or simply as if the way to carry out a certain military operation was of no interest and, thus, they avoided any research of this aspect of reality. Therefore, during the 19th and 20th centuries, most of the titles on these topics were published by *amateur* authors, so it is not surprising to note the evident disassociation of military history from other specialised fields of historical research.¹²

10. Gillingham, John. "Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages", *Anglo-Norman Warfare. Studies in late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman military organization and warfare*, Matthew Strickland, ed. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992: 194.

11. García Fitz, Francisco. *Castilla y León frente al Islam. Estrategias de expansión y tácticas militares (siglos XI-XIII)*. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998: 25-26.

12. Ladero, Miguel Ángel. "La organización militar de la Corona de Castilla durante los siglos XIV y XV", *La incorporación de Granada a la Corona de Castilla*, Miguel Ángel Ladero, ed. Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1993: 195; González Jiménez, Manuel; García Fitz, Francisco. "Historia política y estructura de poder. Castilla y León", *La Historiografía Medieval en España. Un balance historiográfico (1968-1998)*. *Actas de la XXV Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella (14 al 18 de julio de 1998)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999: 201-202.



Even so, it can be argued that this first observation is insufficient in explaining the lack of interest by professional Spanish historians in this subject. It could be held that in order to comprehend this abdication, another particularly relevant intellectual phenomenon must be considered: i.e., the gradual expansion, in Spanish university circles starting in the sixties, of the two major historiographical currents from the 20th century, the *Annales* School and historical materialism. The emphasis that these two approaches placed on economic and social history, along with their evident disdain for political history, managed to further distance the research conducted in Spanish universities from studies on war. After all, in the eyes of the new currents, which were promoting the panorama of Hispanic medievalism with unheard of force, military history was identified with the most antiquated form of positivism, devoted to mere narration of military events that, together with other specific political events and a useless jumble of dates, subsequently constituted the framework for a *histoire événementielle*, or “history of events”, which they forswore.¹³

Yet, in addition to historiographical prejudices, in the Spanish case, one might assert that there are also sociological and political prejudices at the heart of this renunciation: as mentioned above, approaches to these subjects came primarily from military spheres which, after the Spanish Civil War, were closely identified with the Franco regime. In turn, National Catholicism systematically resorted to the use of events, individuals and ideas related to the Reconquista as propaganda devices, giving rise to publications written with heroic, grandiose overtones, a sort of military history *de tambores y trompetas*, to use the term with which American historiography sized it up,¹⁴ which served to further the militaristic, nationalistic, Catholic values of Francoism and saw, in the deeds of Pelayo, El Cid, San Fernando or the Catholic Monarchs, examples from the past worthy of imitation, either for their struggle against foreigners or infidels, or for their defence of a unified homeland. With this background, almost inevitably, the still budding but certainly growing rejection of Spanish university historiography in the sixties and seventies to the Francoist political propositions also extended to a field—that of military history—whose output had been so closely identified with that regime.¹⁵

Evidently, prejudices are longer lasting than the objective circumstances that create them, and therefore it is no surprise that, although institutional Francoism disappeared in the ‘70s and both ideological militarism and National Catholicism were in decline even prior to that time, the university world’s precautions regarding

13. This attitude was not exclusive to Hispanic historiography or medievalism, but rather was part of a much broader current that can be seen in other academic spheres and for any period of history analysed. In this regard, see: Espino, Antonio. “La renovación de la Historia de las Batallas”. *Revista de Historia Militar*, 91 (2001): 159-174.

14. “drums and trumpets”. Borreguero, Cristina. “Nuevas perspectivas para la historia militar: la “New Military History” en Estados Unidos”. *Hispania*, 54/1, 186 (1994): 148-149.

15. In this sense, the disdain for the history of war in the Hispanic Middle Ages in university circles during the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s as a result of being identified with Francoist militarism ran parallel to that experienced by the concept of the Reconquista. In this regard, see: García Fitz, Francisco. *La Reconquista...*: 18-20.



the study of medieval war remained intact for at least two more decades, in other words, almost an entire generation.

It is estimated that *algo así como el 95% de los trabajos de tema medieval generados en España en toda su historia* were published between 1968 and 1998, thus going *casi 'de cero al infinito'* in thirty years.¹⁶ This productive explosion ran parallel to the development of a solid infrastructure for teaching and research activities, reflected in the proliferation of university centres in general and Medieval History Departments or Knowledge Areas in particular, in the creation of foundations and specialised centres for study and research of medieval topics and in the tremendous growth in the number of specialised journals. All of this, in turn, was directly reflected in “the proliferation, perhaps somewhat disproportionate, of symposia, conferences and national, international and local academic meetings with varying degrees of specialisation in the subject”, some of which were circumstantial in nature, others of which were held regularly.¹⁷ However, with respect to the exclusion of studies on military activities in medievalism, not only is the scarcity of publications on this topic coming from academic spheres prior to the ‘90s¹⁸ deemed to be highly significant, but there are also two other circumstances worth mentioning: firstly, that the only long-standing specialised journal, the *Revista de Historia Militar*, founded in 1957, answered to—and continues to answer to—the Ministry of Defence, was managed by the military and its collaborators were mainly military professionals—almost 90% of the articles on medieval military history published before 1990 were written by military professionals—;¹⁹ and secondly, that the longest-running and most prolific periodic meeting devoted to these issues, the *Jornadas de Historia Militar* of the General Castaño Chair in Seville, was, from the outset and up to the present, organised by a

16. “something like 95% of the work on medieval themes published in Spain’s entire history”; “from virtually nothing to infinity”. García de Cortázar, José Ángel. “Glosa de un balance sobre la historiografía medieval española de los últimos treinta años (I)”, *La Historiografía Medieval en España. Un balance historiográfico (1968-1998). Actas de la XXV Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella (14 al 18 de julio de 1998)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999: 813-814.

17. Ruiz de la Peña, Juan Ignacio; Sanz, María Jesús. “Instrumentos, cauces y expresiones de la actividad investigadora”, *La Historiografía Medieval en España. Un balance historiográfico (1968-1998). Actas de la XXV Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella (14 al 18 de julio de 1998)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999: 789-798.

18. The only summary about medieval Hispanic armies, published in 1984, was authored by professional members of the military. Redondo, Fernando. *Historia del ejército español. 2. Los ejércitos de la Reconquista*. Madrid: Servicio Histórico Militar, 1984.

19. The other main journal with content closely related to the history of warfare, *Gladius*, specialising in the study of ancient and medieval weapons and military history, which was first published in Spain starting with its second issue, in 1963, under the auspices of the Hoffmeyers, remained virtually disconnected from the Spanish university world until the second half of the eighties, despite the fact that, starting in the mid-sixties, it had institutional ties to the Spanish National Research Council (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-CSIC*). Only after the aforementioned date have certain departments and a limited number of historians discovered not only the value of this publication but also the scientific potential of the *Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas* (Institute of Studies on Ancient Weapons), located in Jaraíz de la Vera (Caceres), which supported it. For the history of the Institute and the journal, see: García Vuelta, Óscar. “El Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas (CSIC). Una aproximación a su historia (1960-1998)”. *Gladius*, 26 (2006): 119-147.



military command centre rather than by university or scientific institutions, although in this case the participation of authors coming from academic circles has always been considerable. A similar case is the *Congresos de Historia Militar* in Saragossa, which has ties to the General Military Academy, although a growing number of academic researchers and institutions have become involved in recent years.

In this context, it should not be surprising that, as recently as 1994, precisely during the *IV Jornadas de Historia Militar* held in Seville, one young researcher pointed out that

*mientras que la guerra en Tierra Santa ya cuenta con dos magníficos trabajos generales al respecto [en referencia a las obras de Raymond Charles Smail y Christopher Marshall], la guerra en la Península todavía no ha merecido algún trabajo que intente englobar de manera sintética pero comprensiva su desarrollo, elementos y significación social.*²⁰

What he said was no doubt true, even though, as he himself noted, a few partial contributions had been made and, while he could not know this, the foundations were already being laid at that time for the panorama to change in relation to this subject.

Certainly, the position of Hispanic medievalism concerning the study of forms of warfare was rather paradoxical: from the 11th to the 13th century, the Iberian kingdoms, and quite particularly, that of Castile-Leon, had been responsible for expansion of such a magnitude that it dwarfed that of the rest of the Christian kingdoms in the West over the same period and in other comparable contexts.²¹ Of course, Hispanic Historiography had always been aware of the importance of these processes, and for this reason it has paid close attention, at times almost exclusively and to the detriment of other fields, to certain aspects of this military history: meticulous reconstruction of the events and chronology thereof, for example, was the leitmotiv of positivist output for many decades. Likewise, documentary and legal sources had made it possible to approach not only the study of economic resources, social structures, political institutions and the ideological sources that generated them, but also the analysis of the social, economic, population and ideological consequences thereof. However—and this is where the historiographical paradox mentioned above lies—on the threshold of the 21st century, researchers had almost no knowledge about

20. “while there are now two excellent general overviews on the war in the Holy Land [in reference to the works by Raymond Charles Smail and Christopher Marshall], the war on the Peninsula has yet to merit any works endeavouring to cover, in a concise but comprehensive manner, its development, elements and social meaning”. Rodríguez García, José Manuel. “Fernando III y sus campañas en el contexto cruzado europeo, 1217-1252”, *IV Jornadas Nacionales de Historia Militar: Fernando III y su época*. Seville: Diputación de Sevilla, 1995: 217.

21. Lomax, Derek. *La Reconquista*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1984: 204. See also: García Fitz, Francisco. “Las formas de la guerra de conquista: el contexto hispánico medieval (siglos XI al XIII)”, *El mundo de los conquistadores. La península ibérica en la Edad Media y su proyección en la conquista de América*, Martín Ríos, ed. Mexico-Madrid: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Sílex, 2015: 457-458.



how commanders waged war or how they allocated, moved and distributed their military resources to impose their will upon their adversaries.²²

In sum, almost nothing was known about the 'strategies' and 'tactics' that were used in this process, despite the fact that, beyond the interest that such knowledge could have in and of itself,²³ the analysis of an army's way of doing battle provides more than a few clues about aspects of the community waging the war, from the possibilities and limitations of their material resources —logistics and funding methods— to their social or moral values —by applying chivalric ethics, or the study of how defeated enemies were treated— to their institutional resources —for example, those that acted to recruit and organise an army—, the exercise of power —by analysing leadership formulae and channels—, the status of technological development or the formulation of ideological discourses to justify the armed conflict. Perhaps the assertion by Espino, who stated that *se podría estudiar dicha sociedad [la que despliega un ejército en un campo de batalla] a todos sus niveles teniendo como punto de partida sus encuentros militares* may seem too categorical, but the truth is that a siege, a campaign of destruction or a pitched battle *no deja de ser un compendio de las características, cualidades, defectos, virtudes y límites de la sociedad que lo organizó*.²⁴

3. Historiography prior to the nineties

Perhaps the above assertion on how little was known about forms of warfare prior to the nineties is overly categorical and certain clarifications should be made to bring it to fair terms:²⁵ focusing specifically on the historiography of the kingdoms of Leon and Castile, it must be noted that, both in the past and in the present, traditional

22. While the classic work by Sánchez Albornoz on the army of Asturias and Leon runs up to the 11th century, it does not address the expansion that began in the second half of that century. Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio. "El ejército y la guerra en el reino asturleonés". *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo. Ordinamenti militari in Occidente nell'alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 30 marzo-5 aprile 1967). Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1968: 1-136.

23. Suffice it to recall here the unusual attention that these subjects have sparked in recent years amongst videogame designers and their wide-ranging audiences or amongst the increasing numbers of historical recreation fans. Regarding the former, see: Jiménez Alcázar, Juan Francisco. "El arte de la guerra medieval: combates digitales y experiencias de juego". *Roda da Fortuna*, 3/1-1 (2014): 516-546, as well as the more specific collaborations by: Echeverría, Ekaitz. "Abriendo Brecha: La imagen de la guerra de asedio medieval en los videojuegos". *Roda da Fortuna*, 3/1-1 (2014): 547-563; Testi, Darío. "Medieval Total War II: veicolo della conoscenza dell'Arte della Guerra nelle nuove generazioni". *Roda da Fortuna*, 3/1-1 (2014): 564-589; Negro, Adrián Elías. "Representaciones de la guerra en la actualidad: el caso de Age of Empires II y su campaña del Cid". *Roda da Fortuna*, 3/1-1 (2014): 590-610.

24. "this society [which deploys an army on a battlefield] could be studied at every level, using its military encounters as the starting point"; "is indeed a summary of the characteristics, qualities, defects, virtues and limitations of the society that organised it". Espino, Antonio. "La renovación de las Historia de las Batallas...": 171.

25. The list of titles that appears in the following notes does not aim to be comprehensive. Due to space restrictions, a selection of works has been made, but these are by no means all the works published on these subjects in recent years. Furthermore, although every effort has been made to be meticulous in the



positivist historiography, as well as a good number of contributions recently made and supported by more up-to-date historiographical criteria, have made tremendous efforts to narrate the facts and sequence of the conflicts, taking the succession of military events as the common theme. In this regard, the biographies of some of the main monarchs of Castile-Leon are worth recalling, which often address these issues in detail, sometimes even monographic in nature, not to mention other more general works in which the description of these expansion processes represents the main plot.

Furthermore, studies on medieval Castilian weaponry benefited early on from the work done by Mr and Mrs Hoffmeyer at the *Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas*: in 1972 and 1982, Ada Bruhn de Hoffmeyer herself published two important monographs on weapons and armour in medieval Spain²⁶ and her proposal soon had repercussions in Hispanic medievalism, as regards both Catalonia,²⁷ and the territory at hand here, Castile-Leon, to which Álvaro Soler del Campo made an essential contribution in 1990 with his thesis on *La evolución del armamento medieval en el reino castellano-leonés y al-Andalus (siglos XII-XIV)*.²⁸

Likewise, prior to the early 1990s, monographic works had been published on some specific campaigns, especially those in which Alfonso VII and Ferdinand III were involved, as two monarchs with long and intense military careers, which also enjoy the luxury of having well informed and relatively detailed contemporary sources.²⁹

Similarly, the existence of a relevant number of studies from before the nineties, as mentioned above, must be highlighted in relation to certain military operations that had particular repercussions on the balance of the war between Castile-Leon and the Muslims, such as the case of sieges of important Muslim cities: that of Toledo in 1085, those of Jaen and Seville in the middle years of the 13th century and

choice, some significant works may have been left out due to oversight or unawareness. Should this be the case, an apology is in order.

26. Bruhn de Hoffmeyer, Ada. *Arms & Armour in Spain. A Short Survey. Vol. I. The Bronze Age to the End of High Middle Ages*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas, 1971; Bruhn de Hoffmeyer, Ada. *Arms & Armour in Spain. A Short Survey. Vol. II. From the End of the 12th Century to the Beginnings of the 15th Century*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas, 1982.

27. Victoria Cirlot, who defended her PhD thesis on *El armamento catalán de los siglos XII al XIV* in 1980, had been in close contact with the aforementioned Institute (Cirlot, Victoria. *El armamento catalán de los siglos XII al XIV*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona (PhD Dissertation), 1980).

28. Soler, Álvaro. *La evolución del armamento medieval en el reino castellano-leonés y al-Andalus (siglos XII-XIV)*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid (PhD Dissertation), 1991 (published in: Soler del Campo, Álvaro, *La evolución del armamento medieval en el reino castellano-leonés y al-Andalus (siglos XII-XIV)*. Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del EME, 1993). This author also had a productive relationship with the *Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas*.

29. Regarding Alfonso VII: Díaz, Esperanza; Molina, Providencia. "Las campañas de Alfonso VII en Andalucía: un precedente de la conquista de Córdoba", *Actas del V Coloquio Internacional de Historia Medieval de Andalucía (Córdoba, 27- 30 de noviembre de 1986)*, Emilio Cabrera, coord. Cordova: Diputación de Córdoba, 1988: 63-70. Regarding Ferdinand III: González, Julio. "Las conquistas de Fernando III en Andalucía". *Hispania*, 6 (1946): 515-631; Eslava, Juan. "La campaña de Quesada (1224)". *Cuadernos de Estudios Medievales*, 12-13 (1984): 5-23.



that of Tarifa in the later years of the same century.³⁰ In most cases, however, the interest is not focused on the analysis of siege tactics and techniques so much as on the reconstruction of the sequence of events.

But above all, the studies on certain operations and on the practice of war had placed the emphasis on the major battles that mark the conflict between Castile-Leon and the North African empires —Almoravids and Almohads— that had gained control over Al-Andalus between the 11th and 13th centuries. Thus, the series of pitched battles that took place during these centuries —Zalaca (1086), Uclés (1108), Alarcos (1195), Las Navas de Tolosa (1212)— in themselves summarised the panorama of military history.³¹

There is no doubt that this viewpoint corresponded to a long tradition dating back to the 19th century, the features of which have been outlined on several occasions by specialised historiography,³² which focused its attention on the pitched battles and left out the study of other aspects of war, thus magnifying the relevance of the former and underestimating the latter. Of course, the few non-Spanish authors that had addressed an analysis of the Castilian-Leonese military reality in the Middle Ages merely reproduced such approaches: it is noteworthy, for example, that in analysing the ‘military art’ of medieval Spain, Ferdinand Lot devoted a great

30. For Toledo: Lévi-Provençal, Evariste. “Alphonse VI et la prise de Tolède (1085)”. *Hespéris*, 12 (1931): 33-49; Miranda, José. *La Reconquista de Toledo por Alfonso VI*. Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigóticos-Mozárabes de San Eugenio, 1980; Miranda, José. “Reflexiones militares sobre la conquista de Toledo por Alfonso VI”, *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo: Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20-26 mayo 1985)*. Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigóticos-Mozárabes, 1987: 251-294; Izquierdo, Ricardo. *Alfonso VI y la toma de Toledo*. Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1986. For Jaen: Ballesteros, Manuel. “La conquista de Jaén por Fernando III”. *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 20 (1953): 63-138. For Seville: González, Julio. *Repartimiento de Sevilla*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1951: I, 141-221; Martínez Valverde, Carlos. “La campaña de Sevilla y su conquista por Fernando III”. *Revista de Historia Militar*, 22 (1978): 7-43. For Tarifa: Gaibrois, Mercedes. “Tarifa y la política de Sancho IV de Castilla”. *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 74 (1919): 418-436, 521-529; 75 (1919): 349-355; 76 (1920): 53-57, 123-160, 420-449; 77 (1920): 192-215.

31. For decades, the mandatory reference material on the major battles of the Reconquista was the extraordinary work by Ambrosio Huici (Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956), which contains monographic studies on Zalaca, Uclés, Alarcos, Las Navas and, beyond the chronological timeline dealt with here, El Salado (there is a new edition with an introductory study by Emilio Molina y Vicente Carlos Navarro Oltra in Granada: Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2000). See also: García Gómez, Emilio; Oliver, Jaime. “Novedades sobre la batalla llamada de al-Zall~qa (1086)”. *Al-Andalus*, 15 (1950): 111-155; Lagardère, Vicent. *Le vendredi de Zallaqa*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989; Slaughter, John E. “De nuevo sobre la batalla de Uclés”. *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 9 (1974-1975): 393-404; Martínez Fronce, Félix Manuel. “La dinámica estratégica hacia Uclés y sus puntos de encuentro”. *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 6 (1987): 75-91; Eslava, Juan. “Tácticas en la batalla de las Navas de Tolosa”. *Cuadernos de Estudios Medievales*, 6-7 (1981): 39-53.

32. The first criticism of the definition of battle as the focus of military activity of medieval armies came from: Smail, Raymond Charles. *Crusading Warfare (1097-1193)*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1956: 12-15 (there is a second edition with a bibliographical introduction by Christopher Marshall in Cambridge: Smail, Raymond Charles. *Crusading Warfare (1097-1193)*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1995). His propositions are part of the current historiographical paradigm.



number of pages to the main clashes on the open battlefield —Zalaca, Alarcos, Las Navas de Tolosa— but decided to overlook an analysis of the conquest of Andalusia by Ferdinand III, expressly citing the fact that this was a war of sieges rather than battles to justify his disinterest.³³ Hispanic historiography was not far removed from these assumptions and thus, here too, battles were considered the fundamental benchmarks of the Spanish military experience. In sum, from the perspective of war, the Castilian-Leonese Reconquista, defined as a territorial expansion process, was substantially reduced to a series of pitched battles.³⁴

However, in order to properly assess the situation of studies on high medieval war in Hispanic medievalism, the limited repercussions it has in academic life is at least as significant —or perhaps even more so— as the small number of contributions or the clear bias toward the analysis of pitched battles. A brief review of the bibliography cited in the main summary works or university texts on Medieval History in Spain published during the seventies, eighties and even the early nineties is sufficient to discern that just two or three titles are devoted to these subjects, which could well be an evident sign not only of the shortage thereof but also of the limited repercussions they have on university historiography. Significantly, the only work often repeated is the aforementioned book by Huici on the major battles of the Reconquista, which, in practice, at least until the early 1990s, became almost exclusively the sole academic reference of university textbooks for subjects related to military tactics. This in turn shows how strongly rooted the image of the pitched battle as synonymous with medieval war still was at that time.

4. Historiographical renewal starting in the nineties

4.1 The impact of French and English-speaking Historiography

Not until the late '80s did specialists' interest slowly awaken in discovering in greater detail the strategic and tactical approaches of the monarchs and armies of Castile and Leon in their conflict against Islam during the high Middle Ages.³⁵ In

33. As an example of this attitude, one need only compare the 16 pages devoted to the study of the battle of Las Navas to the three that summarise the 30 years it took to conquer the Guadalquivir Valley. Lot, Ferdinand. *L'art militaire et les armées au Moyen Âge en Europe et dans le Proche Orient*. Paris: Payot, 1946: II, 162-297.

34. See, for example, what is stated in: González Simancas, Manuel. *España Militar a principios de la Baja Edad Media: batalla de Las Navas de Tolosa*. Madrid: Talleres del Depósito de la Guerra, 1925: VI-VII; Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista...*: 9.

35. It should be highlighted that this state of the art focuses solely on studies about ways of war, strategies and tactics in high medieval Castile-Leon, and excludes the important historiographical output concerning the High and Late Middle Ages, as well as other aspects of war that have also received attention by specialists in recent years and developed considerably, such as the role of the Military Orders or castellological, archaeological, organisation or ideological studies. All of these deserve specific states of the art.



this regard, it is only fair to point out that the changes that took place in this field of Spanish medievalism are closely related to the work of certain French authors, whose texts were known in Spain since the seventies and early eighties, such as the cases of Georges Duby and Philippe Contamine.³⁶

Above all, however, this historiographical renewal³⁷ is greatly indebted to the extraordinary current on this subject that was developed in the English-speaking world throughout the second half of the 20th century: six decades ago now, studies on the way of waging war took a qualitative leap in British historiography and managed to become fully integrated into the horizon of university medievalism. The now classic, acclaimed work by Raymond Charles Smail on war during the Crusades in the 11th and 12th centuries was the driving force behind this leap and it was also the work that had the earliest impact on Spanish output interested in the analysis of combat: perhaps Eslava, in the late seventies, was the first to confirm that some of Smail's assertions were highly useful in understanding the tactical behaviour of the troops that clashed at Las Navas de Tolosa, yet it was in the mid-eighties when it started to become clear in Spain that the great British specialist had provided, besides some very significant specific data, an authentic explanatory model that could feasibly be applied to the study of the military experience on the Iberian Peninsula. This was confirmed when the war advice given by Don Juan Manuel in his works was approached from this new perspective.³⁸

On the tails of Smail's work, there followed quite a productive line of research that continued to develop his methodological proposals over the following decades, although especially starting from the late eighties and early nineties. Historians such as Reginal Allen Brown, John Gillingham, Bernard Bachrach, Christopher Marshall, Matthew Strickland, Randall Rogers, Jim Bradbury, John France, Michael Prestwich, Stephen Morillo, Matthew Bennett, Kelly DeVries, Clifford Rogers o David Nicolle,

36. By Georges Duby, the book that would have the earliest impact on Spanish historiography concerned with these subjects was: Duby, George. *Le dimanche de Bouvines—27 juillet 1214*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973. The influence of Philippe Contamine would come through two major works: Contamine, Philippe. *Guerre, Etat et société à la fin du Moyen Âge. Etudes sur les armées des rois de France, 1337-1494*. Paris: Mouton, 1972; Contamine, Philippe. *La guerre au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980. They all began to circulate quite early in Spain, and certainly before the editions came out in Spanish.

37. The idea that studies on medieval Hispanic war experienced a profound renewal starting in the 1990s has been pointed out on several occasions by specialists who have had the opportunity to reflect on recent trends concerning these studies. Sometimes, the concept of 'new military history' has even been used to define the historiographical output on these subjects that developed in Spain starting from said period. For example: Gouveia Monteiro, João. "Estratégia e risco em Aljubarrota: a decisão de dar batalha à luz do 'paradigma Gillingham'", *A Guerra e a Sociedade na Idade Média. VI Jornadas Luso-Espanholas de Estudos Medievais (Alcobaça – Batalha - Porto de Mós, 6-8 de Novembro de 2008)*. Coimbra: Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Medievais-Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2009: I, 79; Orsi, Mario. "La guerra en la Corona de Aragón...": 568; Arias, Fernando. "The Many Histories of Medieval Spain". *The Medieval Journal*, 2 (2012): 85-86; Rodríguez García, José Manuel: "Reconquista y cruzada. Un balance historiográfico doce años después (2000-2012)". *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie III. Historia Medieval*, 26 (2013): 389.

38. Eslava, Juan. "Tácticas en la batalla de las Navas de Tolosa...": 39-53, García Fitz, Francisco. "La guerra en la obra de Don Juan Manuel", *Estudios sobre Málaga y reino de Granada en el V Centenario de su conquista*, José Enrique López de Coca, ed. Málaga: Diputación de Málaga, 1987: 55-72.



directly or indirectly followed in their wake, opening up a specific field of research within English-speaking medievalism and establishing analysis models that, it must be insisted, proved to be perfectly applicable to Hispanic scenarios.

While the works overall by these authors and others that began to publish their own shortly afterwards have had a considerable influence on specialised Hispanic historiography, the fact is that some of them in particular were received at the time with decisive impact on Spanish medievalists who, while still few in number, had begun to show growing interest in these issues since the mid-eighties and had been working in these lines of research. In this regard, it is definitely worth highlighting at least four important contributions that served as models and stimuli for the study of the Iberian case: firstly, the monograph published in 1992 by Christopher Marshall on the war in the Latin East during the 13th century, a chronological continuation of the work by Raymond Charles Smail, which provided a splendid example of what could and should be done when studying the military experience on the western frontiers of Christianity; secondly, the three masterful articles by John Gillingham —on Richard the Lionheart, William the Bastard and William Marshal— which Matthew Strickland wisely selected and published jointly in his *Anglo-Norman Warfare*, also published in 1992, works that, with the passing of time, would constitute what would end up being known as ‘the Gillingham paradigm’; thirdly, the analysis by John France of the roots of the victory of the Crusades in the East, published two years later, whose explanations transcend the Eastern realm and could be transferred to the West; and finally, the study that Stephen Morillo devoted to war in the Anglo-Saxon world, also published in 1994.³⁹

4.2 Pitched battles: the inevitable attraction of extraordinary events

These texts have, without a doubt, been decisive in the renewal that, as mentioned before, took place in Hispanic historiography on these subjects in the field of the kingdom of Castile and Leon between the 11th and 13th centuries. However, within the framework of this transformation, perhaps the first thing that draws one’s attention is that the studies about certain major confrontations on the open battlefield have remained in the spotlight of specialised Spanish output, but now the forms of analysis and perspectives of study that were created in connection with more recent and innovative trends in English-speaking and French historiography, have made it possible to move beyond mere narration of the events to embark on

39. Marshall, Christopher. J. *Warfare in the Latin East, 1192-1291*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1992; Gillingham, John. “Richard I and the Science of War...”: 194-207; Gillingham, John. “William the Bastard at War”, *Anglo-Norman Warfare. Studies in late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman military organization and warfare*, Matthew Strickland, ed. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992: 143-160; Gillingham, John. “War and Chivalry in the History of William the Marshall”, *Anglo-Norman Warfare. Studies in late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman military organization and warfare*, Matthew Strickland, ed. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992: 251-263; France, John. *Victory in the East. A military history of the First Crusade*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1994; Morillo, Stephen. *Warfare under the Anglo-Norman Kings. 1066-1136*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994.



detailed research of the components of armies, the strategic role of battles in the general context of territorial expansion, tactical formations, movements of troops or the mentalities and ideologies of the protagonists and the authors that reported their acts and words.

In this regard, the series of scientific meetings held in 1995 on the occasion of the centennial of the battle of Alarcos helped give a new boost to the specific study of this clash and the overall circumstances surrounding it, spotlighting certain sources that had almost never been used before in this type of study, such as archaeology, and giving way to a new means of approaching the phenomenon.⁴⁰

However, perhaps the pitched battle that has most benefited from this renewed interest in analysing the military experience is that of Las Navas de Tolosa. Certainly, the works by Martín Alvira Cabrer, published during the mid-nineties as forerunners to his PhD Thesis, defended in 2000, marked a turning point in the knowledge that researchers now have of the battle and opened up new horizons for historical research applied to the study of war, placing special emphasis on the universe of the war mentality and ideology within the setting of a major head-on clash on the open battlefield, based on the interpretation models proposed by Georges Duby.⁴¹

The wealth of sources related to this battle and the numerous options for study they afford have prompted the creation of several monographs in addition to the previous ones, from other viewpoints more closely related to logistics, weaponry, tactics or the organisation of opposing armies, in some cases endeavouring to offer the necessary contextualisation so that each of the elements, factors and specific circumstances involved in the battle can more easily be placed in the perspective of general modes of waging war in the medieval West.⁴² Furthermore, the analysis of

40. Zozaya, Juan, ed. *Alarcos 95. El fiel de la balanza*. Toledo: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, 1995; Izquierdo, Ricardo; Ruiz, Francisco, coords. *Alarcos 1195: Actas del congreso internacional conmemorativo del VIII centenario de la Batalla de Alarcos (Ciudad Real, 3-6 de abril de 1995)*. Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996. Prior to this commemoration, a few interesting approaches had been published, such as that of: Muñoz, Juan; Pérez de Tudela, María Isabel. "La batalla de Alarcos". *Ejército*, 643 (1993): 60-69, and an interesting summary of this battle that has recently come out, see: Ruiz Moreno, Manuel Jesús. *La batalla de Alarcos, 1195*. Madrid: Almena, 2015.

41. Alvira, Martín. "Dimensiones religiosas y liturgia de la batalla plenomedieval: Las Navas de Tolosa, 16 de julio de 1212". *XX Siglos*, 19 (1994): 33-46; Alvira, Martín. "La muerte del enemigo en el Pleno Medievo: cifras e ideología (el modelo de Las Navas de Tolosa)". *Hispania*, 55/2, 190 (1995): 403-424; Alvira, Martín. "De Alarcos a Las Navas de Tolosa: Idea y realidad de los orígenes de la batalla de 1212", *Alarcos 1195. Actas del congreso internacional conmemorativo del VIII centenario de la Batalla de Alarcos (Ciudad Real, 3-6 de abril de 1995)*, Ricardo Izquierdo, Francisco Ruiz, coords. Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996: 249-264; Alvira, Martín. "El desafío del *Miramamolín* antes de la batalla de Las Navas de Tolosa (1212). Fuentes, datación y posibles orígenes". *Al-Qantara*, 18/2 (1997): 463-490; Alvira, Martín. *Guerra e ideología en la España medieval: cultura y actitudes históricas ante el giro de principios del siglo XIII. Batallas de Las Navas (1212) y Muret (1213)*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid (PhD Dissertation), 2000.

42. Vara, Carlos. *El Lunes de Las Navas*. Jaen: Universidad de Jaén, 1999; Rosado, María Dolores; López Payer, Manuel. *La batalla de las Navas de Tolosa. Historia y Mito*. Jaen: Caja Rural de Jaén, 2001; López Payer, Manuel; Rosado, María Dolores. *La batalla de Las Navas de Tolosa*. Madrid: Almena, 2002; García Fitz, Francisco. *Las Navas de Tolosa*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2005.



the 1212 summer campaign offers a paradigmatic case for the study of the crusading ideology, practice and culture in the 13th century.⁴³

This list of works, which alone is already quite long in number and analysis perspectives, was enhanced as a result of the commemorative celebrations held throughout 2012 to mark the eighth centennial of Las Navas de Tolosa, although most of the contributions did not focus on analysing tactics or battle forms. On the one hand, several national and international scientific meetings were held on the occasion of the event that helped broaden the knowledge not only of the battle, but also of the critical moment in history in which it took place, which would represent a milestone within the Iberian context, as well as in Europe and the Maghreb.⁴⁴ On the other, the commemoration of the battle not only spurred the publication of several summary and dissemination works⁴⁵ and the re-publication of several titles, some of which, like that of Huici, authentic essential classics on the subject, despite the years that had elapsed since its first edition,⁴⁶ but a number of journals also

43. Holt, Edward Lawrence. *Out of Many, One?: the voice(s) in the crusade ideology of Las Navas de Tolosa*. Durham: Duke University (PhD Dissertation), 2010; Holt, Edward Lawrence. "Out of Many, One?: the voice(s) in the crusade ideology of Las Navas de Tolosa". Duke University. 15 September 2015 <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2518/Holt_Edward_Thesis_final.pdf?sequence=1>; Gómez, Miguel Dolan. *The Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa: The Culture and Practice of Crusading in Medieval Iberia*. Tennessee: University of Tennessee (PhD Dissertation), 2011; Gómez, Miguel Dolan. "The Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa: The Culture and Practice of Crusading in Medieval Iberia". University of Tennessee. 15 September 2015 <http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/1079>.

44. Already in 2010, issue XXXVII of the *Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella* was devoted to reflecting on 1212-1214. *El trienio que hizo a Europa*. The scientific meetings held throughout 2012 in Jaen, Najera and Baeza must be highlighted, as well as those held within the framework of the 47th *International Congress on Medieval Studies*, organised by the *Medieval Institute* of Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo (USA), at which four of the sessions were devoted to the study of the battle. The conference held every four years by the *Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, which was held in Cáceres from 25 to 29 June 2012, also served to commemorate the battle. Except for the latter two, the publication of which is unknown to date, the results of these encounters were published in subsequent years: 1212-1214. *El trienio que hizo a Europa*. XXXVII *Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella* (19 al 23 de julio de 2010). Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2011; López Ojeda, Esther, coord. 1212, un año, un reinado, un tiempo de despegue. XXIII *Semana de Estudios Medievales (Nájera, 30 de julio al 3 de agosto de 2012)*. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2013; Cressier, Patrice; Salvatierra, Vicente, eds. *Las Navas de Tolosa. 1212-2012. Miradas Cruzadas*. Jaen: Universidad de Jaén, 2014; Estepa, Carlos; Carmona, María Antonia, coords. *La Península Ibérica en tiempo de Las Navas de Tolosa*. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014.

45. Pavón, Julia; Arzoz, Íñigo. 1212. *La batalla de Las Navas de Tolosa. Ocho siglos después*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2012.

46. Huici, Ambrosio. *Estudios sobre la campaña de Las Navas de Tolosa*, Roldán Jimeno, ed. Pamplona: Pamiela, 2011 (the first edition is from 1916); Melo, Diego, ed. *Dos estudios en torno a La batalla de al-ʿIqāb o Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) en al-Andalus: los reinos cristianos de la Península Ibérica frente a los Almohades*. Coquimbo: Centro Mohammed VI para el Diálogo de Civilizaciones, 2012 (includes publications: García Fitz, Francisco. "Las Navas de Tolosa, ¿un punto de inflexión en las dinámicas históricas peninsulares?", *Dos estudios en torno a La batalla de al-ʿIqāb o Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) en al-Andalus: los reinos cristianos de la Península Ibérica frente a los Almohades*, Diego Melo, ed. Coquimbo: Centro Mohammed VI para el Diálogo de Civilizaciones, 2012: 11-58; Vidal, Francisco. "Al-ʿIqāb: Las Navas de Tolosa en las fuentes árabes", *Dos estudios en torno a La batalla de al-ʿIqāb o Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) en al-Andalus: los reinos cristianos de la Península Ibérica frente a los Almohades*, Diego Melo, ed. Coquimbo: Centro Mohammed VI para el Diálogo de Civilizaciones, 2012: 65-78).



devoted sections or entire issues to the topic.⁴⁷ Finally, but perhaps most significantly as regards our knowledge about Las Navas de Tolosa, the commemoration of the battle coincided with the publication of the most important monograph devoted to this pitched battle in recent decades, authored by Martín Alvira Cabrer.⁴⁸

While it may seem, due to the quantity and quality of the work on pitched battles published in the last two decades,⁴⁹ that these continue to be the mainstay of war activities, the fact is that, paradoxically, what some of these studies have pointed out and most authors acknowledge by now, such events were exceptional within the war panorama, even though their impact on contemporaries and on the memories created by their occurrence was truly extraordinary.⁵⁰

4.3 The struggle for control over territory: sieges, frontiers, fortresses and war of attrition

Indeed, what the most recent works have revealed is that medieval war, especially when it had an impact on control over territory—as in the paradigmatic case of the expansion of Christian peninsular kingdoms at the expense of Islam—was geared primarily toward domination of the strongholds that organised the space—castles, walled cities, etc.—and thus, the furtherance of studies not only on sieges, but also on the military functioning of fortresses, comes as no surprise.

Once again, the output after the decade of the nineties returned to specific examination of sieges of large cities that had been studied in previous decades. This time, however, the proposals are not limited to linear narration of the facts, but rather go into a full analysis of these events from comparative viewpoints, placing the blockades into the general context of the ways of waging war and leading

47. This is the case of: Fernández de Córdova, Álvaro, ed. “Cristianismo e Islam en el siglo de las Navas de Tolosa (1212)”. *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 20 (2011): 101-362; Doubleday, Simon; Gómez, Miguel, eds. “On (de)commemoration: rethinking the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa”. *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 4/1 (2012): 1-134; “La batalla de las Navas de Tolosa o al-‘Iqāb (1212)”. *Alcazaba. Revista Histórico-Cultural*, 12-13 (2012-2013): 45-138.

48. Based on his previous work and in particular, his PhD thesis, defended in 2000, in 2012 this author published an exceptional monograph, which is probably the most comprehensive study in recent decades on this battle. Alvira, Martín. *Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212. Idea, liturgia y memoria de la batalla*. Madrid: Sílex, 2012.

49. In addition to the foregoing, the monographic study on the battles of El Cid published in 2005 by: Montaner, Alberto; Boix, Alfonso. *Guerra en Šarq Al-‘andalus: las batallas cidianas de Morella (1084) y Cuarte (1094)*. Saragossa: Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Próximo Oriente, 2005, must also be mentioned, and it must also be recalled that the study of the battle of Las Navas and its circumstances has not ceased to raise interest and generate new proposals for interpretation since the commemoration in 2012. Thus, for example: Peinado, Rafael. “El pastor de Las Navas o trampa ideológica de una imagen de cruzada”, *La literatura no ha existido siempre. Para Juan Carlos Rodríguez, teoría, historia, invención*, Miguel Ángel García, Ángela Olalla, Andrés Soria, coords. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2015: 439-453.

50. García Fitz, Francisco. “La batalla de Las Navas de Tolosa: el impacto de un acontecimiento extraordinario”, *Las Navas de Tolosa. 1212-2012. Miradas Cruzadas*, Patrice Cressier, Vicente Salvatierra, eds. Jaen: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Jaén, 2014: 11-36.



campaigns, and from other angles scarcely contemplated in previous historiography, such as logistics, receiving supplies, funding, technology or tactical movements.

In certain cases, thanks to the wealth of sources, it has been possible to analyse in detail and flesh out actual models for action: for the Castilian-Leonese crown, the siege of Seville in 1248 represents a case that has made it possible to approach and contemplate, as if from a watchtower, the ways of setting up the blockades, battle systems and techniques, weaponry and assault technology or the composition and size of a central medieval army organised to face the enormous challenge of conquering a large city. The celebration of the 750th anniversary of its annexation in 1998 was a perfect excuse to delve deeper into a military phenomenon of tremendous historical relevance.⁵¹

For their uniqueness, the assault machines and techniques used in the major blockades have been the subject of specific studies focusing not only on description, typology and operation thereof, but also on how they were deployed during a blockade, analysing their effectiveness and assessing their usefulness.⁵²

Moreover, works have also started to appear that offer comprehensive views of the siege war on the Iberian Peninsula and that go beyond specific cases to endeavour to analyse this type of operation within broader time or space frameworks which at any rate cover the subject of Castile-Leon. For example, for the 12th century, Randall Rogers proposed a wide-ranging contextualisation of the major Hispanic blockades within the general panorama in the Mediterranean world, which makes it possible to put the conquests of Majorca, Saragossa, Lisbon, Almeria or Tortosa into proper perspective.⁵³

The armed conflict between Christians and Muslims, its strong territorial nature and as a struggle for control over space and the focus on strongholds in the development of the confrontations required taking a new look at these geopolitical areas in which the clash was more obvious and everyday, in other words, at the border between the two worlds. It is evident that in these areas the forms of conflict were strongly affected by the great degree of fortification of the territory. Thus, in recent years, specialists have addressed two intertwined realities: firstly, the analysis

51. García Fitz, Francisco. "El cerco de Sevilla: reflexiones sobre la guerra de asedio en la Edad Media", *Sevilla, 1248. Congreso Internacional conmemorativo del 750 aniversario de la conquista de Sevilla por Fernando III, Rey de Castilla y León (Sevilla, 23-27 de noviembre de 1998)*, Manuel González Jiménez, coord. Seville: Fundación Areces, 2000: 115-154. See also the informative contribution authored by: García Fernández, Manuel. "1248. La conquista de Sevilla". *Desperta Ferro*, 13 (2012): 44-49.

52. García Fitz, Francisco. "Tecnología militar y guerra de asedios. La experiencia castellano-leonesa, siglos XI al XIII", *Military Studies in Medieval Europe*, Guy de Boe, Frans Verhaeghe, eds. Zellik: Instituut voor het Archeologisch Patrimonium, 1997: 33-41; García Fitz, Francisco. "¿Machinis validas? Tipología y funcionalidad de las máquinas de asedio en el medioevo hispano. Castilla-León, siglos XI al XIII", *Actas del III Congreso de Castellología Ibérica (Guadalajara, 28 de octubre-1 de noviembre de 2005)*, Amador Ruibal, coord. Guadalajara: Asociación Española de Amigos de los Castillos-Diputación de Guadalajara, 2005: 219-254.

53. Rogers, Randall. *Latin Siege Warfare in the Twelfth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. For the same period, also see: Powers, James. "Life on the Cutting Edge: The Besieged Town on the Luso-Hispanic Frontier in the Twelfth Century", *The Medieval City under Siege*, Ivy A. Corfis, Michael Wolfe, eds. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995: 17-34.



of the war-related functioning of fortifications, pointing out that their defensive abilities, which had always been emphasised in historiography, were supplemented with other clearly offensive capabilities that were essential to the accomplishment of the territorial expansion projects within the frontier setting.⁵⁴

Secondly, this realisation has prompted numerous authors to delve deeper into the study of the relationships and connections of military, political, fiscal, logistics and visual natures existing between different fortresses, enabling us to speak of

54. Castrillo, María Concepción. *La tenencia de fortalezas en la Corona de Castilla durante la Baja Edad Media (Relaciones de poder entre monarquía, nobleza y ciudades). Siglos XIII-XV*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense (PhD Dissertation), 1997; García Fitz, Francisco. "Pora acreçentamiento de muestros regnos. Las funciones ofensivas de los castillos de frontera", *La fortaleza medieval. Realidad y Símbolo*, José Antonio Barrio, José Vicente Cabezuolo, eds. Alicante: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 1998: 75-89; García Fitz, Francisco. "Funciones bélicas de las fortificaciones en el Medievo Extremeño". *Castillos de España*, 118, (2000): 13-25; García Fitz, Francisco. "El 'reflejo obsidional' y su plasmación en la normativa medieval castellano-leonesa de la Plena Edad Media", *III Estudios de Frontera: Convivencia, defensa y comunicación en la Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 18 al 20 de noviembre de 1999)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 2000: 269-292; García Fitz, Francisco. "Guerra y fortificaciones en contextos de frontera. Algunos casos hispánicos de la Plena Edad Media", *Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos. Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500) (Palmela, 3-8 abril 2000)*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Colibrí, 2002: 519-532; García Fitz, Francisco. "Guerra y fortificación en el Medievo hispánico", *El castillo medieval en tiempos de Alfonso X el Sabio*, Ángel Luis Molina, Jorge A. Eiroa, eds. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009: 41-76; Molénat, Jean-Pierre. "Des fortifications islamiques aux fortifications d'époque chrétienne dans la région de Tolède à travers les textes, du IX^e au XV^e siècle", *Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos. Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500) (Palmela, 3-8 abril 2000)*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Colibrí, 2002: 251-258; Molero, Jesús; Arcos, María del Carmen; Molina, Manuel. "Vigilar caminos, defender la frontera: la fortaleza almohade de Miraflores (Piedrabuena, Ciudad Real)", *Las Navas de Tolosa. 1212-2012. Miradas Cruzadas*, Patrice Cressier, Vicente Salvatierra, eds. Jaen: Universidad de Jaén, 2014: 577-591; Palacios, J. Santiago. *Fortalezas y poder político. Castillos del reino de Toledo*. Guadalajara: Aache, 2008: 185-240; Rodríguez-Picavea, Enrique. "Fortalezas y organización territorial en el Campo de Calatrava (siglos XII-XV)", *Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos. Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500) (Palmela, 3-8 abril 2000)*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Colibrí, 2002: 623-632; Valera, Enrique. *La fortaleza medieval: simbolismo y poder en la Edad Media*. Avila: Junta de Castilla y León, 2002: 79-158. Relating to the functions of frontier fortresses controlled by military orders and the role of these institutions in frontier contexts, in particular, see: Ayala, Carlos de. "Las fortalezas castellanas de la Orden de Calatrava en el siglo XII". *En la España Medieval*, 16 (1993): 9-35; García Fitz, Francisco. "Las órdenes militares castellano-leonesas y la acción de frontera en el siglo XIII", *Identidad y representación de la frontera en la España medieval (siglos XI-XIV)*, Carlos de Ayala, Pascal Buresi, Philippe Josserand, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez-Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2001: 123-157; Ayala, Carlos de. *Las órdenes militares hispánicas en la Edad Media (siglos XII-XV)*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003: 561-590; Ayala, Carlos de. "Frontera y Órdenes Militares en la Edad Media castellano-leonesa (siglos XII-XIII)". *Studia Histórica. Historia Medieval*, 24 (2006): 87-112; Forey, Alan. "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries". *Traditio*, 40 (1984): 197-234; Rodríguez-Picavea, Enrique. *Los monjes guerreros en los reinos hispánicos. Las órdenes militares en la Península Ibérica durante la Edad Media*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2008: 154-165; Ruibal, Amador. "Funciones de las fortalezas en los territorios de las 'órdenes militares'", *II Estudios de Frontera. Actividad y vida en la Frontera Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 19-22 de noviembre de 1997)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 1998: 709-718; Ruiz Gómez, Francisco. "Las huestes de las órdenes militares", *Las Órdenes Militares en la Península Ibérica*, Ricardo Izquierdo, Francisco Ruiz, coords. Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2000: 416-426; Valera, Enrique. "Salvatierra: simbolismo y poder en una fortaleza de la Orden de Calatrava", *Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos. Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500) (Palmela, 3-8 abril 2000)*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Colibrí, 2002: 633-648.



castral systems, networks or structures. While the presence of wide-ranging types of relationships between many of the strongholds erected within a single frontier space is unquestionable, an extensive debate has developed concerning the way in which the existence of such connections may have determined the war activities of the different frontier garrisons. Often, the idea that the frontier fortress networks could have operated as authentic defensive lines or systems designed to prevent, stop or block invasions has been hinted at in a good number of works devoted to these subjects, although such complex action as coordinated activity of this kind seems incompatible with the human resources normally available to frontier fortresses and with the ways of making and understanding war during this period.⁵⁵

55. Every two years since 1995, scientific seminars are held at Alcalá la Real (Jaen), focused on studying the world of medieval frontiers and published under the generic title of *Estudios de Frontera*, coordinated by José Rodríguez Molina and Francisco Toro Ceballos. Within this framework, a good number of works has appeared that addressed the study of frontier defence systems, particularly issues II and III of José Rodríguez Molina y Francisco Toro Ceballos, cited in the note above, and V *Estudios de Frontera. Funciones de la red castral fronteriza (Alcalá la Real, 14-15 de noviembre de 2003)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 2004. Interesting work can also be found in the volumes compiling the findings of the two main symposia on fortifications held in Palmela (Portugal) in 2000 and 2010: *Simpósio Internacional sobre Castelos. Mil Anos de Fortificações na Península Ibérica e no Magreb (500-1500)*, cited in the note above, and *Fortificações e Território na Península Ibérica e no Magreb - Séculos VI a XVI*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Edições Colibri-Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, 2013. Contributions concerning the organisation of space, frontiers and fortifications date back to the mid-'80s, as shown in certain titles listed below, but they multiply in number during the nineties. Specifically for the Castilian-Leonese area during the period dealt with here, see: Alcázar, Eva. "Las fortificaciones del concejo fronterizo de Jaén. Siglos XIII-XV", *Fortificações e Território na Península Ibérica e no Magreb - Séculos VI a XVI*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Edições Colibri-Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, 2013: 199-208; Bernal, Ángel. "La frontera en la Extremadura histórica medieval: convivencia y enfrentamientos bélicos", *II Estudios de Frontera. Actividad y vida en la Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 19-22 de noviembre de 1997)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 1998: 125-138; Castillo, Juan Carlos. "Sistemas fronterizos en la Campiña Giennense". *Arqueología Espacial*, 13 (1989): 207-218; Clemente, Julián. "La Extremadura musulmana (1142-1248). Organización defensiva y sociedad". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 24 (1994): 647-701; Clemente, Julián; Montaña, Juan Luis de la. "La Extremadura cristiana (1142-1230). Ocupación del espacio y transformaciones socioeconómicas". *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 21 (1994): 87-103; Galbán, Carlos J. "En ese país que por siglos fue el final de la tierra. Una aproximación a los orígenes del sistema castral del obispado de Iria-Santiago (ss. IX-XI)". *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 8 (2013): 85-103; García Fitz, Francisco. "La defensa de la frontera del Bajo Guadalquivir ante las invasiones benimerines del siglo XIII", *Relaciones de la Península Ibérica con el Magreb (siglos XIII-XVI)*, Mercedes García Arenal, María Jesús Viguera, eds. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1988: 275-325; García Fitz, Francisco. "Fortificaciones, fronteras y sistemas defensivos en al-Andalus, siglos XI al XIII", *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre "Fortificaciones en al-Andalus" (Algeciras, 29-30 noviembre y 1 diciembre 1996)*. Algeciras: Ayuntamiento de Algeciras-Fundación Municipal de Cultura "José Luis Cano", 1998: 269-280; García Fitz, Francisco. "Guerra y fortificaciones en la Plena Edad Media peninsular: Una reflexión en torno a la existencia y funcionalidad bélica de los 'sistemas defensivos'", *V Estudios de Frontera. Funciones de la red castral fronteriza (Alcalá la Real, 14-15 de noviembre de 2003)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 2004: 223-242; García Fitz, Francisco. "El sistema castral sevillano en la Baja Edad Media", *Fortificações e Território na Península Ibérica e no Magreb - Séculos VI a XVI*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Edições Colibri-Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, 2013: 569-588; García Oliva, María Dolores. "Un espacio sin poder: la Transierra Extremeña durante la época musulmana". *Studia Historia. Historia Medieval*, 25 (2007): 89-120; Gallego, David. "Un espacio fortificado: el Campo de Montiel en tiempo de Las Navas (1150-1250)", *La Península Ibérica en tiempo de Las Navas de Tolosa*, Carlos Estepa, María Antonia Carmona, coords. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014: 155-166; Gutiérrez, María Victoria; Castillo, Juan Carlos. "El control del territorio en la comunidad de villa y



Studies of the great political and military expansion processes carried out by Western European society during the Middle Ages have made it clear that, with a few highly extraordinary exceptions, the great territorial conquests were the outcome of a successful strategy of annexation and storming of strongholds, as occurred in the Holy Land, for example. On the Iberian Peninsula, things were no different, as demonstrated in the aforementioned works referring to the great sieges of walled cities, or certain ones that studied in detail other, simpler, ways of conquest based on speed, working at night and acting by surprise which, as a general rule, was only successful for taking small fortifications.⁵⁶

However, while these operations are attention-grabbing, the fact remains that in the Holy Land and on the Peninsula, the ultimate fate of a siege —especially when it affected main urban centres whose annexation was decisive to the conquest of entire regions— was dependent to a great extent upon the degree of efficacy with which a long previous phase of systematic destruction of the surrounding area was carried out, based on smaller-scale raids that gradually weakened the enemy's economic, military and moral resources over months or years.

Precisely for this reason, one type of operation that had been ignored or disregarded in traditional historiography —cavalry raids, *razzia* or *algazúas* raids, for example—the immediate goal of which was often nothing more than looting, capturing some men, burning crops and devastating small farming villages, has in recent years become a subject of study in its own right. Proof has been found that in frontier

tierra de Baeza (Jaén): apuntes desde la arqueología espacial", *Fortificações e território na Península Ibérica no Magreb- Séculos VI a XVI*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, coord. Lisbon: Edições Colibri-Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, 2013: 227-242; Molero, Jesús M. "Sistemas de defensa y control en el Campo de San Juan: del dominio musulmán al cristiano (siglos X-XIII)", *Actas del IV Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española (Alicante, 4-9 de octubre 1993)*. Madrid: Asociación Española de Arqueología Medieval, 1993: II, 399-405; Novoa Portela, Feliciano; Villalba, Francisco Javier. "A propósito de los 'sistemas defensivos' de fortificaciones en la Edad Media peninsular". *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie III, Historia medieval*, 16 (2003): 215-228; Novoa Portela, Feliciano; Villalba, Francisco Javier. "Aproximación al estudio de los sistemas defensivos de la Orden de Alcántara", *II Jornadas de Historia Medieval de Extremadura*, Julián Clemente, Juan Luis de la Montaña, coords. Cáceres: Editora Regional de Extremadura, 2005: 165-174; Ruibal, Amador. *Calatrava la Vieja. Estudio de una fortaleza medieval*. Ciudad Real: Instituto de Estudios Manchegos, 1984; Vann, Theresa. "Twelfth-Century Castile and its Frontier Strategies", *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages. Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, Donald J. Kagay, L. J. Andrew Villalon, eds. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999: 21-31.

56. On the frontiers of the Christian kingdoms of the peninsular West, it is possible to confirm the existence of groups of warriors specialised in taking over fortresses and surprise attacks. In this regard, undoubtedly the best known individual from this period is Gerardo Sempavor, a military commander of Portuguese origin who, thanks to these practices, during the central years of the 12th century managed to gain dominion over lands located between the Tagus and the Guadiana rivers. Lapiedra, Eva. "Giraldo Sem Pavor, Alfonso Enríquez y los almohades", *Bataliús. El reino taifa de Badajoz*, Fernando Díaz, ed. Madrid: Letrúmero, 1996: 147-158; Lapiedra, Eva. "El ardid de la escala nocturna y el engaño a los vigías: posible origen almohade de un pasaje de la toma de Santarém y de la leyenda de Giraldo sem Pavor". *Hesperia, Culturas del Mediterráneo*, 16 (2012): 69-100; Porrinas, David. "La actuación de Giraldo Sempavor a mediados del siglo XII: un estudio comparativo", *II Jornadas de Historia Medieval de Extremadura*, Julián Clemente, Juan Luis de la Montaña, coords. Cáceres: Editora Regional de Extremadura, 2005: 179-188; Pereira, Armando de Sousa. *Geraldo Sem-Pavor. Um Guerreiro de Fronteira entre Cristãos e Muçulmanos*. Porto: Fronteira do Caos, 2008.



regions this was the common way of waging war and the necessary mechanism for bringing about future annexations, and therefore these operations have now begun to be considered an integral part of the armed conflict and expansion strategies.⁵⁷

4.4 Other perspectives for analysis: military careers, warfare at sea and fate of the defeated

Moreover, in addition to the study of certain war operations, the sources have made it possible to reconstruct and analyse the war-related careers of certain monarchs⁵⁸ and the military careers of some specific individuals such as Rodrigo Díaz, El Cid, spotlighting not only the common ways and means of war used by frontier men, but also the way in which the entire frontier society approached this armed struggle against the enemy. This case is unique in that no other historical Castilian-Leonese figure has been fortunate enough to have such a wide range of sources—including his own chronicle and an epic poem—for the study of his military career.⁵⁹

57. Martínez Martínez, María: “La cabalgada: un medio de vida en la frontera murciano-granadina (siglo XIII)”. *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana*, XIII (1986): 49-62; García Fitz, Francisco. “Una frontera caliente: la guerra en las fronteras castellano-musulmanas (siglos XI-XIII)”, *Identidad y representación de la frontera en la España medieval (siglos XI-XIV)*, Carlos de Ayala, Pascal Buresi, Philippe Josserand, eds. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez-Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2001:159-179; Torres, Margarita. *El Cid y otros señores de la guerra*. Leon: Universidad de León, 2000; Alvira, Martín. “Prendiendo el fuego de la guerra. Operaciones militares en las fronteras cristiano-almohades entre 1209 y 1211”, *Iglesia, Guerra y Monarquía en la Edad Media: Miscelánea de estudios medievales*, José Peña, Manuel Alejandro Rodríguez, eds. Madrid: CEU Ediciones, 2014: 139-192.

58. For example, see: Ruiz, Francisco. “La dimensión bélico-territorial del reinado de Alfonso VIII de Castilla (1158-1214)”, *1212, un año, un reinado, un tiempo de despegue. XXIII Semana de Estudios Medievales (Nájera, 30 de julio al 3 de agosto de 2012)*, Esther López Ojeda, coord. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2013: 139-169; Ayala, Carlos. “Fernando III: figura, significado y contexto en tiempo de cruzada”, *Fernando III, tiempo de cruzada*, Carlos de Ayala, Martín Ríos, eds. Madrid-Mexico: Sílex-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2012: 17-91.

59. Corral, José Luis. “Método arqueológico y cantares de gesta”, *Simposio Internacional: El Cid en el Valle del Jalón (Ateca - Calatayud, 7-10 de octubre de 1989)*. Calatayud: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1991: 31-46; Corral, José Luis. “Realidad y ficción en el Poema del Cid: historia, literatura y arqueología”, *El Cid Histórico y el Cid en la Leyenda*, Salustiano Moreta, ed. El Burgo de Osma: Ayuntamiento de El Burgo de Osma, 2000: 93-126; García Fitz, Francisco. “El Cid y la guerra”, *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre El Cid. Poema e Historia*. Burgos: Ayuntamiento de Burgos, 2000: 383-418; García Fitz, Francisco. “War in ‘The Lay of the Cid’”. *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 10 (2012): 61-87; Montaner, Alberto. “La toma de Alcocer en su tratamiento literario: un episodio del Cantar de Mio Cid”, *Simposio Internacional: El Cid en el Valle del Jalón (Ateca - Calatayud, 7-10 de octubre de 1989)*. Calatayud: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1991: 129-160; Montaner, Alberto. “La batalla de Tévar”, *Actas del Congreso Internacional sobre El Cid. Poema e Historia*. Burgos: Ayuntamiento de Burgos, 2000: 353-382; Montaner, Alberto; Boix, Alfonso. *Guerra en Šarq Al‘andalus: Las batallas cidianas de Morella (1084) y Cuarte (1094)*. Saragossa: Instituto de estudios islámicos de Oriente Próximo, 2005; Moreta, Salustiano. “Y el héroe tascó la hierba”, *La Guerra en la Historia. Décimas Jornadas de Estudios Históricos*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1999: 28-43; Oliver, Dolores. “Las batallas del Cantar de Mio Cid desde la perspectiva de la historiografía árabe”. *Revista de Historia Militar*, 73 (1992): 15-52; Oliver, Dolores. “Una nueva interpretación de la batalla de Alcocer”. *Revista de Historia Militar*, 74 (1993): 15-44; Peña, Francisco Javier. *El Cid. Historia, leyenda y mito*. Burgos:



For obvious geographical reasons, the wars that took place in the kingdoms of Castile and Leon occurred primarily on land and therefore, except for the odd outstanding episode —i.e., the naval policy of Diego Gelmírez—, it would not be until the middle of the 13th century that a navy was created and that naval operations— recall the siege of Seville in 1248, and starting in the '90s of the 13th century, the development of the *Guerra del Estrecho*—would take on a relevant role in the panorama of war.⁶⁰

This review of studies concerning military practices would not be complete without mentioning one aspect directly related to them, which has received the attention of specialists in recent years: namely, the treatment of enemies once they are defeated. From surrender or accord to captivity and exile to indiscriminate massacre, the analysis of these consequences of armed conflicts lay before us certain customs that are sometimes considered the 'law of war' and occasionally represent the pragmatic execution of the fighters' values, prejudices, fanaticism or political or economic calculations.⁶¹

Dossoles, 2000; Porrinas, David. "Una interpretación del significado de Campeador: el Señor del Campo de Batalla". *Norba. Revista de historia*, 16/1 (1996-2003): 257-276; Porrinas, David. "La percepción de la guerra del *Poema de Mío Cid*: entre la realidad y la distorsión". *Revista de Historia Militar*, 94 (2003): 163-204; Torres, Margarita. *El Cid y otros señores de la guerra...*

60. Besides the classic studies on this subject, in recent years, in addition to the PhD thesis by García de Castro (García de Castro, Francisco Javier. *La marina de guerra de la Corona de Castilla en la Baja Edad Media. Desde sus orígenes hasta el reinado de Enrique IV*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid (PhD Dissertation), 2011; published by the University of Valladolid in 2014: García de Castro, Francisco Javier. *La marina de guerra de la Corona de Castilla en la Edad Media (1248-1474)*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2014), the following are of note: Aznar, Eduardo. "La guerra naval en Castilla durante la Baja Edad Media". *En la España Medieval*, 32 (2009): 167-192; Calderón, José Manuel. *El almirantazgo de Castilla: historia de una institución conflictiva (1250-1560)*. Madrid: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2003; Flores, Manuel. "La interrelación de las fronteras terrestres y marítima en el período de la Reconquista", *II Estudios de Frontera. Actividad y vida en la Frontera (Alcalá la Real, 19-22 de noviembre de 1997)*. Jaen: Diputación Provincial, 1998: 253-268; Flores, Manuel. "Una nueva orientación en la historiografía naval. El ejemplo castellano medieval y el asalto contra Salé de 1260", *La Península Ibérica entre el Mediterráneo y el Atlántico. Siglos XIII-XV*, Manuel González Jiménez, Isabel Montes, eds. Seville-Cádiz: Diputación de Cádiz-Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2006: 819-831; Rodríguez García, José Manuel. "La marina alfonsí al asalto de África, 1240-1280. Consideraciones estratégicas e historia". *Revista de Historia Naval*, 85 (2004): 27-55. See also the state of the art published by: Flores, Manuel. "Historia militar y naval española medieval. Un acercamiento al estado de la cuestión". *e-Humanista*, 10 (2008): 244-273.

61. Fierro, Maribel; García Fitz, Francisco, eds. *El cuerpo derrotado: cómo trataban musulmanes y cristianos a los enemigos vencidos (Península Ibérica, ss. VIII-XIII)*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2008; Rodríguez de la Peña, Alejandro. "Añadiendo muertos a los muertos: el destino de los vencidos en la frontera de Al-Andalus en la cronística latina plenomedieval", *Hacedores de Frontera. Estudios sobre el contexto social de la Frontera en la España medieval*, Alejandro Manuel Rodríguez de la Peña, dir. Madrid: CEU Ediciones, 2009: 27-58; Echevarría, Ana. "La política respecto al musulmán sometido y las limitaciones prácticas de la cruzada en tiempos de Fernando III (1199-1252)", *Fernando III, tiempo de cruzada tiempo de cruzada*, Carlos de Ayala, Martín Ríos, eds. Madrid-México: Sílex-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2012: 383-413. On captivity in particular, the bibliography is quite extensive, but it is worth noting at least the recent comprehensive view provided by: Calderón, José Manuel; Díaz González, Francisco Javier. *Vae Victis: Cautivos y prisioneros en la Edad Media Hispánica*. Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, 2012.



4.5 Comprehensive views and comparative studies

The progressive development of the work done on medieval war and, in particular, on the ways of practising armed confrontation with the enemy led to the creation, in the mid-’90s, of a comprehensive work that offers an overall analysis of the way in which, from tactical and strategic perspectives, the territorial expansion of the kingdom of Castile-Leon took place during the central centuries of the Middle Ages, covering sieges and battles as well as raids and the war of attrition.⁶²

However, by the late ’90s and the early years of the 21st century, the need was felt to offer an all-encompassing view of these subjects, which not only spanned the entire medieval history of Castile-Leon chronologically but also covered all the Christian kingdoms of the peninsula geopolitically. This meant taking the Hispanic realm as a single backdrop for the study of ways of waging war and of the Western frontier between Christianity and Islam, duly extended so that it also covered the precedents from the Visigoth period. To a certain extent, this was a return to the path set out in the late ’70s by Derek Lomax,⁶³ this time applying the new approaches that were prominent twenty years later in the historiography on medieval war.

Precisely along these lines, two interesting contributions came from Italian medievalism by Alessandro Vanoli,⁶⁴ although it was Joseph O’Callaghan, with his publication between 2003 and 2014 of a monumental trilogy centring on the analysis of the conflict between Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain, who decisively contributed to this task.⁶⁵ This is compounded by the publication in 2010, under the patronage of the Spanish Royal Academy of History and the Spanish Military History Commission, of the second volume of the *Historia Militar de España*, devoted to the Middle Ages, which Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada was in charge of coordinating.⁶⁶ There is also an interesting cartographical contribution to the general process of the war against Islam on the Peninsula and the subsequent territorial expansion of the Christian kingdoms.⁶⁷

Based on what is now known, it has even been possible to create an initial comparative study of the military experience on the two frontiers of Western Christianity against Islam —on the Iberian Peninsula and in the Holy Land— to highlight the common patterns and evident differences that arise in the conquest on

62. García Fitz, Francisco. *Castilla y León frente al Islam...*

63. Lomax, Derek. *La Reconquista...* (The original version in English was published in 1978).

64. Vanoli, Alessandro. *Alle origini della Reconquista. Pratiche e immagini della guerra tra Cristianità e Islam*. Turin: Nino Aragno Editore, 2003; Vanoli, Alessandro. *La reconquista*. Bologna: Il Molino, 2009.

65. O’Callaghan, Joseph F. *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003; O’Callaghan, Joseph F. *The Gibraltar Crusade. Castile and the Battle for the Strait*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011; O’Callaghan, Joseph F. *The Las Crusade in the West. Castile and the Conquest of Granada*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

66. O’Donnell, Hugo, dir. *Historia Militar de España. II: Edad Media*, Miguel Ángel Ladero, coord. Madrid: Ediciones Laberinto-Ministerio de Defensa, 2010: II.

67. Sabaté, Flocel. *Atlas de la “Reconquista”: la frontera peninsular entre los siglos VIII y XV*. Barcelona: Península, 1998.



one side and the other of the Mediterranean.⁶⁸ At the same time, more specifically, the tactical models of the military orders employed in these two settings have also been analysed in a comparative manner.⁶⁹

4.6 *Politics as the continuation of war*

At any rate, one thing that has been learned and therefore analysed in detail within this field of study is that unfriendly confrontation between kingdoms or societies was not merely a matter of war. On certain occasions, to paraphrase the well-known statement by Clausewitz which asserts that war is the continuation of politics by other means, it has been indicated that, in some contexts and certainly when dealing with the medieval Peninsula, politics are a continuation of war by other means. Thus, politics becomes a unique form of confrontation, sometimes an alternative and other times a supplement to physical combat.

Of course, forceful imposition of one party's will on the will of another is usually taken as a military challenge, but it was not unusual for politics to be used as one of a series of resources for weakening or destabilising the enemy, such that, while subjugation was not a direct result of the game of political or diplomatic relations, such relations at least contributed decisively to the ultimate defeat or conquest.

Therefore, politics is just another strategic tool in that it is used to wear down the enemy, deepening internal divisions, negotiating with dissident groups arising in the opposition, exploiting their weaknesses and permanently impoverishing the adversary by imposing agreements that involve onerous tax demands, justified as the necessary compensation for ending hostilities, for not starting them or in consideration for alleged protection against third parties.

In the middle or long term, the political exchange, taken as a strategic instrument, ends up generating tensions between rulers and subjects, breaking down social cohesion for the opposition, exhausting its possibilities of resistance and, in sum, facilitating the implementation of territorial annexation schemes. Of course, these political or diplomatic operations usually seem to be combined with the use of military force, wielded either as simple threats or a means of coercion or used as an element of direct pressure to reach profitable agreements from a political, territorial or financial viewpoint, for which reason the border between politics strictly

68. García Fitz, Francisco. "Las prácticas guerreras en el mediterráneo latino (siglos XI al XIII)", *Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte. Guerre, idéologie et religion dans l'espace méditerranéen latin (XI^e au XIII^e siècle)*, Daniel Baloup, Philippe Josserand, ed. Toulouse: Centre national de la recherche scientifique-Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 2006: 323-358.

69. Monteiro, João Gouveia. *Entre Romanos, Cruzados e Ordens Militares. Ensaios de História Militar Antiga e Medieval*. Coimbra: Salamandra, 2010: 255-301 (Chapter: "As Ordens Militares e os modelos tácticos de combate de um e de outro lado do Mediterrâneo - uma abordagem comparada").



speaking and completely war-related action is sometimes blurred to the point of disappearance. The Castilian-Leonese experience is proof of this.⁷⁰

5. To conclude: achievements, shortcomings, limitations and risks

In view of what has been explained above, it cannot be denied that in the last twenty years considerable progress has been made in the study of warfare in the kingdoms of Castile and Leon during the High Middle Ages. However, it must be noted that this progress still has certain shortcomings that must be remedied with new studies. There is relatively detailed knowledge of the war customs and practices that were characteristic of the confrontations between Christians and Muslims, but this fact contrasts with the limited or non-existent attention paid to such customs and practices in the course of clashes between Christian kingdoms or within the kingdoms themselves, such as dynastic disputes or clashes between monarchies and the nobility, for example. From a war viewpoint, this field still awaits new contributions.⁷¹ Comparative studies with a broader scope and dimension are also urgently needed in order to establish differences and points in common with other geohistorical fields in the same period.

Despite these shortcomings, one must recognise that the progress made has been considerable. Just a little over twenty years ago, medieval military history in Spain was a topic for members of the military and was restricted to battle history. Today, it is fully part of academic medievalism, there is an internationally known bibliography that is essential reference material⁷² —although efforts to internationalise what it is already known on the Hispanic war experience are still needed—, PhD theses have

70. García Fitz, Francisco. "Alfonso X, el reino de Granada y los Banu Asquilula. Estrategias políticas de disolución durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIII". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 27/1 (1997): 215-237; García Fitz, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra. La experiencia castellano-leonesa. Siglos XI al XIII*. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2002; García Fitz, Francisco. "Alfonso X y sus relaciones con el emirato granadino: política y guerra". *Alcanate. Revista de Estudios Alfonsies*, 4 (2004-2005): 35-77; Melo, Diego. "Conflicto y Diplomacia en el nacimiento del Emirato Nazarí de Granada". *Studi Medievali*, 54 (2014): 565-592; Rojas Gabriel, Manuel. "A Decisive Century in the Struggle against Islam in Iberia, ca. 1031-1157: Grand Strategic Perspectives", *The Medieval Way of War: Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*, Gregory I. Halfond, ed. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015: 185-204.

71. Recently, the study of chivalry in Castile-Leon during the central centuries of the Middle Ages has highlighted the importance of clashes between Christians in the development of the chivalric ideal, and attention has focused on the need to address this type of confrontation if the aim is to have a complete image of war rather than focusing solely on the fight against the Muslims. Porrinas, David. *Guerra y caballería en la Plena Edad Media: condicionantes y actitudes bélicas. Castilla y León, siglos XI al XIII*. Caceres: Universidad de Extremadura (PhD Dissertation), 2015.

72. As an example, see the presence of the Hispanic bibliography specialised in these subjects in the four states of the art published by Claude Gaier: Gaier, Claude. "De quelques tendances actuelles de l'historiographie militaire médiévale". *Le Moyen Age*, 104/2 (1998): 291-303; Gaier, Claude. "De l'Empire romain d'Orient à la Renaissance, à travers l'histoire militaire". *Le Moyen Age*, 108/2 (2002): 345-354; Gaier, Claude. "Dire et faire la guerre au Moyen Âge". *Le Moyen Age*, 112/3 (2006): 643-655; Gaier, Claude. "De re militari... et quibusdam alii". *Le Moyen Age*, 115/3 (2009): 607-612.



been and are being written,⁷³ research projects have been and are being developed,⁷⁴ Spanish universities and research centres are constantly organising series of conferences, summer courses, study workshops, seminars and conventions on these subjects and, since 2013, one Spanish university, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence, offers a Military History Chair in which the presence of medieval studies is significant.⁷⁵

Furthermore, within this general framework of interest in military history in the academic world, certain specialised journals⁷⁶ have also appeared in recent years and a number of associations have been created for the study of the history of war.⁷⁷ However, they are closely focused on modern and contemporary periods, so the presence of medieval war experiences is limited in these publications and associations. To fill this gap, in June 2015, the *Asociación Ibérica de Historia Militar (siglos IV-XV)* [Iberian Association of Military History, 4th-15th centuries] was founded to bring together prominent Spanish and Portuguese specialists on these subjects who aspire to *dinamizar, coordinar y divulgar la investigación científica que se realiza en el mundo hispánico sobre historia militar*⁷⁸ in the period spanning from the final phase of the Roman world to the beginning of overseas expansion, to which end it intends

73. Just in the last fifteen years, more than a dozen PhD Theses have been defended at Spanish universities —the number is surely higher, but only those known to the author have been counted here— that discuss the topic of war from highly diverse perspectives and methodologies. Of course, these works do not focus solely on the kingdom of Castile-Leon, on the High Middle Ages or on the analysis of the way of waging war, but rather, they span all the Christian kingdoms on the Peninsula, a vast period going from the 11th to the 15th century and their contents and analysis methods are, as mentioned above, highly varied, but on the whole, they are proof of the robustness of these lines of research.

74. To cite just a few recent national research projects funded by the competent Ministries at the time, one might point out the one developed from 2008 to 2010 entitled *La Conducción de la Guerra (c. 950-c. 1350): planteamientos y perspectivas*, led by Manuel Rojas Gabriel, at the University of Extremadura (HUM2007-64897); the one carried out at Rovira i Virgili University by Amancio Isla Frez from 2010 to 2012 about *La guerra en los reinos cristianos peninsulares. Dinámicas sociales e ideológicas* (HAR2009-13225), which is currently being further developed (2014-2016) thanks to the project entitled *Memorias de la guerra medieval hispana* (HAR2013-45266-P); and the one developed from 2009 to 2011 at the Autonomous University of Madrid, led by Carlos de Ayala Martínez and entitled *Iglesia y legitimación del poder político. Guerra Santa y Cruzada en la Edad Media del Occidente Peninsular (1050-1250)* (HAR2008-01259/HIST), which also continued from 2012 to 2015 under the title of *Génesis y desarrollo de la guerra santa cristiana en la Edad Media del occidente peninsular (ss. X-XIV)* (HAR2012-32790).

75. This Chair has already organised two scientific meetings: *I Congreso Internacional de la Cátedra Complutense de Historia Militar*, held in Madrid from 22 to 24 October 2013 and *I Seminario Internacional de la Cátedra Extraordinaria de Historia Militar de la Universidad Complutense. Frontera y fortificación*, held in Madrid from 21 to 23 October 2014.

76. In addition to the continuing publication of *Gladius*, published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid published *Militaria. Revista de cultura militar* from 1989 to 2003, and from 2012 to the present the *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar* has been published. *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar* (RUHM). “Inicio”. *Revista Universitaria de Historia Militar*. 15 September 2015 <<http://ruhm.es/index.php/RUHM>>.

77. Thus the *Asociación Española de Historia Militar*, founded in 2013, has now held two conferences: *I Congreso Internacional de Historia Militar “La historia militar hoy: nuevas perspectivas”*, 28-30 May 2014 and *II Congreso Internacional de Historia Militar “Novela Histórica e Historia Militar”*, 27-29 May 2015.

78. “mobilise, coordinate and spread scientific research being done in the Hispanic world on military history”. *Associação Ibérica de História Militar, séculos IV-XVI*. “La Fundación de la Asociación Ibérica



to sponsor scientific meetings, joint publications and other activities. Notably, this includes the creation of a specialised online journal —*e-Strategica. Journal of the Iberian Association of Military History (4th-16th centuries)*—, the first issue of which will be published in 2016.⁷⁹

As Emilio Mitre recently pointed out, with his long-running experience in the subject, when one sees how many proposals there are, it gives the impression that medieval war has become quite fashionable for historiography, just as the study of social conflicts, religious dissidence and death once were. Yet this case is unique in that, just three decades ago, it was *una especie de tema maldito* in Hispanic academic medievalism.⁸⁰

It is clear, then, that the era in which the study of war was little more than a marginal phenomenon within a setting marked, precisely, by war, in which those who devoted themselves to this subject were viewed with certain mistrust by many colleagues, seems to have come to an end. The work done over the last three decades has not only made it possible to firmly place, or normalise, as it were, the military aspect of history within the field of academic medievalism, but this has also been done in connection with English-speaking and French historiography, which had been setting the pattern for this type of study. The case of Castile-Leon in the High Middle Ages is just one example of the profound historiographical renewal experienced in this field in recent times, but it would not be misleading to assert that specialised Spanish historiography, in relation to the experience of war in the other medieval Iberian kingdoms and other medieval periods, has also experienced a similar evolution.

However, this presentation must not end by giving the impression of acritical complacency: this field of study remains absent in some, but not all,⁸¹ states of the art devoted to presenting the main trends in Hispanic medievalism,⁸² which is a sign that its presence must yet be extended and influence gained in the panorama of academic medievalism. This can only be accomplished through rigour and by proving that the history of war, the history of the ways of waging war, is not only not unrelated—in content or in methodology—to historical research, but rather,

de Historia Militar (SS. IV-XVI)". *Associação Ibérica de História Militar, séculos IV-XVI*. 15 September 2015 <<http://aihmlitar.wix.com/site#!sobre-2/c1j3s>>.

79. Associação Ibérica de História Militar, séculos IV-XVI. "Página principal". *Associação Ibérica de História Militar, séculos IV-XVI*. 15 September 2015 <<http://aihmlitar.wix.com/site>>.

80. "something of a shunned topic". Mitre, Emilio. "La paz entre cristianos y el síndrome turco a fines del Medioevo. De Nicolás de Cusa a Erasmo de Rotterdam", *Guerra y paz en la Edad Media*, Ana Arranz, Pilar Rábade, Óscar Villarroel, coords. Madrid: Sílex, 2013: 55.

81. For example, see: García Fitz, Francisco. "Historia política y estructura de poder. Castilla y León", *La Historia Medieval en España. Un balance historiográfico (1968-1998)*. *Actas de la XXV Semana de Estudios Medievales de Estella (14 al 18 de julio de 1998)*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1999: 201-220; Arias, Fernando. "The Many Histories of Medieval Spain...": 84-86.

82. Aurell, Jaume. "Tendencias recientes del medievalismo español". *Memoria y Civilización*, 11 (2008): 63-103; Menjot, Denis. "L'historiographie du moyen âge espagnol: de l'histoire de la différence à l'histoire des différences Étude et bibliographie". December 2009, *e-Spania*, 8. 15 September 2015 <<https://e-spania.revues.org/19028?lang=es#text>>.



it represents a watchtower from which to gain perspective on some of the most decisive historical features of medieval societies.

Yet in order to do this, it is essential that the study of combat must not become an isolated facet of analysis on war. Instead, it must be able to coherently and convincingly create ties to other aspects of military activity —leadership, military organisation, logistics, weaponry, justification, and so on— and, above all, to the main lines of historical dynamics, in other words, the exercise of power, possibilities and limitations of economic production, means of hierarchical and legal organisation of society, the status of technology and ideological developments, to name a few. The historiographical challenge is difficult and complex, but some of the works cited herein have soundly risen to the challenge. Even so, it is advisable to never forget that the ultimate goal of any academic research on these subjects should be to endeavour to contribute, from the perspective of war, to general historical knowledge and to avoid, at all cost, the risk of isolation, marginalism or even ‘freakiness’.

