

Religious motivations or feudal expansionism? The Crusade of James II of Aragon against Nasrid Almeria in 1309-10

¿Motivos religiosos o expansionismo feudal? La cruzada de Jaime II de Aragón contra la Almería nazarí en 1309-1310

Vicent BAYDAL SALA

Universitat Jaume I de Castelló
baydal@uji.es

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Resumen: Más allá de las motivaciones ideológicas basadas en la guerra santa, al servicio de Dios, realizadas en los documentos públicos de la baja edad media para justificar las conquistas cristianas contra el Islam, el análisis detallado de la campaña de Jaime II de Aragón contra la Almería nazarita en 1309-1310 revela una minimización del factor religioso y una elevación de otras causas políticas, sociales y económicas, plenamente vinculadas al expansionismo inherente a toda dinastía feudal gobernante.

Palabras clave: Cruzadas, Guerra Santa, Corona de Aragón, Al-Ándalus, Baja Edad Media, Expansionismo.

Abstract: Beyond the ideological motivations based on the Holy War, in service of God, made in the public documents of the Late Middle Ages in order to justify the Christian conquests against Islam, the detailed analysis of the campaign of James II of Aragon against Nasrid Almeria in 1309-10 reveals a minimization of religious factors. On the contrary, it shows the importance of other political, social and economic motivations, fully linked to the expansionism inherent in every ruling feudal dynasty.

Key Words: Crusades, Holy War, Crown of Aragon, Al-Andalus, Late Middle Ages, Expansionism

Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. Crusade preparations. 3. The course of the military conflict. 4. Conclusions. Sources and bibliography

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1. Introduction

In the spring of 1304, Jimeno de Lenda, who was thereafter the final Templar Grand Master of the Crown of Aragon, wrote a letter to James II of Aragon urging him to attack the Muslims:

La fe de la Christiandat deguéssets exalsar et la fe dels enemichs de la creu baxar et minvar, axí como vostre avi ni vostre pare acostumaren de fer.¹

That reference to the family dynasty, to his predecessors James I the Conqueror and Peter III the Great, who were responsible for conquering extensive Islamic territories and crushing Muslim uprisings, is consistent with historical interpretations that closely relate the Spanish *Reconquista* to religious causes. There is no shortage of historians who have insisted on the central role of the religious struggle in the Christian crusades and conquests of the Iberian Peninsula.² In fact, after recovering financially from his wars in Sicily and Murcia, the next great military endeavour of James II, following the words of Jimeno de Lenda, was precisely against the Muslims. With Ferdinand IV of Castile, he attacked the Nasrid Emirate of Granada, despite the previous treaties between the two Crowns stating that this territory would be reserved as Castilian. The project received the papal bull of Crusade in 1309, although the expedition eventually did not achieve its military objectives. However, the chronicles of the subsequent decades rhetorically and publicly extolled the religious justification of the attempted conquest. For example, the Catalan chronicle of Ramon Muntaner (1325-1328) states that:

Així podets entendre lo senyor rei d'Aragon si és volenterós de créixer e de multiplicar la santa fe catòlica con en aquella conquesta, qui sua no era, anà tenir setge; que siats certs cascuns que, si lo regne de Granada fos de la sua conquesta, gran temps ha que fóra de crestians.³

¹ “The Christian faith should be extolled and the faith of the enemies of the Cross brought down and diminished, just as your father and grandfather used to do.” (Heinrich FINKE, *Acta Aragonensia: quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291-1327)*, Berlin-Leipzig, Walther Rotschild, 1908, vol. 1, doc. 99 (23-V-1304)).

² Daniel BALOUP, “Guerre sainte et violences religieuses dans les royaumes occidentaux de péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge”, in Bertrand Michel and Cabanel Patrick (ed.), *Religions, pouvoir et violence*, Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2004, p. 15-32; Philippe JOSSELAND, “Croisade et reconquête dans el royaume de Castille au XIIe siècle. Éléments pour une réflexion”, in *L'expansion occidentale (XI^e-XV^e siècles). Formes et conséquences*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003, p. 75-85; Jean FLORI, “L'Église et la Guerre Sainte: de la ‘Paix de Dieu’ à la ‘croisade’”, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 47 (1992), p. 453-466; Jean FLORI, “Réforme, ‘reconquista’, croisade. L'idée de reconquête dans la correspondance pontificale d'Alexandre II à Urbain II”, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 160 (October-December 1997), p. 317-335.

³ “So you may understand whether the Lord King of Aragon is desirous of increasing and multiplying the Holy Catholic faith, when he went to conduct a siege in a conquest which was none of his; you may all be certain that, if the Kingdom of Granada had been of his conquest, it would long ago have belonged to the Christians” (RAMON MUNTANER, *Crònica*, Ferran Soldevila (ed.), Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2011, chapter CCXLVII).

Equally, the Castilian chronicle of Ferdinand IV (1340- 1352) also points to the same religious causes:

Fabló luego el rey D. Fernando con el rey de Aragón en su poridad e díxole como en su voluntad era de servir a Dios, señaladamente contra los moros de aquende mar e, pues su pleyto avían amos asosegado e puesto su amor, que fuesen unos para este fecho e que le quería dar el rey parte en la conquista del Reyno de Granada, e el rey de Aragón le respondió que le plasía mucho de la entinción que avía e que lo faría muy bien, e que esto mesmo quería él faser e que punaria de servir a Dios en este fecho.⁴

Therefore, when consulting chronicles or other documents from the ecclesiastical domain, we only find religious reasons as justification for the battle against the Muslims. If we only had these sorts aforementioned arguments, it would be difficult to deny the prime importance of the Christian faith in the crusades and conquests against Al-Andalus. In fact, this argument tends to prevail in the case of Castile, given the paucity of medieval sources aside from the chronicles and other documents from the highest echelons of power. However, the case of the Crown of Aragon is different, given that the royal archives has conserved an extensive series of documentary sources from the mid-thirteenth century. Therefore, consulting these rich sources allows a much more detailed examination of the campaigns against Islam, highlighting the complexity of motives that drove them, with religion being one but not the main. Through the study of the Aragonese Crusade against the Nasrid city of Almeria in 1309, this is what we shall highlight in this text. Numerous documents and the role of James II indicate that religion was not the main motive, which also has implications for the very concept of *Reconquista*.⁵

⁴ “King Ferdinand spoke privately to the King of Aragon, and told him that his will was to serve God, especially against the Moors from this side of the sea, and, given that they had made peace between them, they could unite in such a cause and he wanted to give him a share of the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada; and the King of Aragon replied that this delighted him and he wanted to do the same, and he would exert himself to serve God in that fact” (FERRÁN SÁNCHEZ DE VALLADOLID, *Crónica del rey don Fernando IV*, Antonio Benavides (ed.), Madrid, José Rodríguez, 1860, p. 211).

⁵ This campaign has received extensive historiographical attention: Antonio GIMÉNEZ, *El sitio de Almería en 1309*, Barcelona, Casa provincial de Caridad, 1904; Antonio GIMÉNEZ, *La Corona de Aragón y Granada. Historia de las relaciones de ambos reinos*, Barcelona, Casa provincial de Caridad, 1908; Charles Emmanuel DUFOURCQ, *L’Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIII et XIV siècles*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1966; Maria Àngels MASIÀ, *Jaume II: Aragó, Granada i Marroc*, Barcelona, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989; Carme Maria MARUGAN, “El sitio de Almería de 1309: El desarrollo de la campaña militar”, in *Almería entre culturas (siglos XIII-XVI)*, Almeria, Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 1990, vol. 1, p. 171-188; Cynthia L. CHAMBERLIN, “Not All Martyrs or Saints: The Aragonese-Castilian Crusade against Granada, 1309-1310”, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23-1 (1992), p. 17-45; Maria Àngels MASIÀ, *Relación castellano-aragonesa desde Jaime II a Pedro el Ceremonioso*, Barcelona, Consejo Superior de



Fig. 1. Kingdoms and Sultanates of the Iberian Peninsula and the North of Africa at the beginning of the fourteenth century

2. Crusade preparations

The Christian victory at the Battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212 prompted the disintegration of the Almohad Empire and a rapid southerly territorial advancement of the Crowns of Castile, Aragon and Portugal. Nevertheless, the appearance of four new Islamic states in the mid-thirteenth century slowed down that expansion: the Nasrid Emirate was consolidated in Granada (Al-Andalus), the Marinid Sultanate in Fez (Morocco), the Zayyanid Sultanate in Tlemcen (Tlemcen) and the Hafsid Emirate in Bugia (Ifriqiya) (see Fig. 1). From then on Muslims fought against Christian conquests on repeated occasions: the Muslim population under Castilian control rebelled in Murcia in 1264, the Marinids landed on the peninsula with a considerable army in 1275, prompting a

Investigaciones Científicas, 1994; Wenceslao SEGURA, “Tarifa y el sitio de Algeciras de 1309”, *Al-Qantir. Monografías y documentos sobre la historia de Tarifa*, 1 (2003), p. 1-45; Antonio PELÁEZ, “Un año crítico de la historia nazarí: Naṣr (1309-1310). Precisiones y rectificaciones”, *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos*, 54 (2005), p. 117-142; Vicent BAYDAL, “‘Tan grans messions’. La financiación de la cruzada de Jaime II de Aragón contra Almería en 1309”, *Medievalismo*, 19 (2009), p. 57-154; Carme Maria MARUGAN, “El ejército de la corona de Aragón en la expedición contra Almería de 1309”, *Medievalismo*, 19 (2009), p. 199-242.

significant Moorish revolt in the Kingdom of Valencia, whose southern inland territories were later devastated by the Nasrids in 1304. In this context James II of Aragon led a crusade against the Nasrid city of Almeria in 1309, which was coordinated with another carried out by Ferdinand IV of Castile against the city of Algeciras. This combined attack represented a renewed attempt by the Christian Crowns to end Islamic state power on the Iberian Peninsula.

The idea was born in May 1308, when the Marinid Emir of Fez, Abu Thabit, suggested that James II conquer the city of Ceuta, which had been recently snatched from the Moroccans by the Nasrids of Granada. The pact was initially dismissed by the Aragonese King, given that the Emir of Granada was formally a vassal of Ferdinand IV of Castile, and James II did not wish to proceed without Castilian approval.⁶ Nevertheless, that was the starting point for the beginning of the negotiations that led to the start of the war. Abu Thabit died a few months later and was replaced by Abu l-Rabi', the new Marinid emir with whom James II signed a friendship treaty.⁷ Thereafter, in December 1308, the Kings of Aragon and Castile met to forge an important alliance. They promised their eldest born children in marriage and, as part of the agreement, James II would receive one sixth part of eastern Granadian territory when it was conquered.⁸ The secret treaty of Alcala de Henares was signed a few days later, through which they promised to attack the Nasrids from 24 June 1309 until the Emirate of Granada was fully conquered.⁹ The Castilian monarch's army would attack from the West against the city of Algeciras, while the Aragonese army would do so from the East against the city of Almeria (see Fig. 2).

Consequently, James II obtained authorisation from Ferdinand IV to make a commitment with the Marinids against the Nasrids.¹⁰ He immediately sent two emissaries to Fez to inform Abu l-Rabi' that they would help him to conquer Ceuta if he, in turn, abstained from helping Granada, and offered funds to finance the war. This needs to be emphasised in order to highlight that the King of Aragon exploited an aspect of the existing political situation to initiate the attempted conquest: that is to say, the bad relationship between the two Muslim powers –the Nasrids from Granada and the Marinids from Morocco. In order to achieve out his objectives, he had no problem in reaching an agreement with both a Christian and Muslim sovereign. In fact, the letters exchanged between the courts of Aragon and Morocco do not offer any justification for the conquest, let alone a religious one. They simply discuss a friendship treaty between two rulers who wish to safeguard their own strategic interests.

⁶ The Aragonese legate Vidal de Vilanova related this to the Pope after the failure of the expedition: GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. XIII (16-III-1310).

⁷ GIMÉNEZ 1908, p. 122-123 (26-IX-1308).

⁸ César GONZÁLEZ, "Fernando IV de Castilla y la guerra contra los moros: la conquista de Gibraltar (1309)", *Medievalismo*, 19 (2009), p. 171-197.

⁹ MASIÀ 1994, vol. 2, doc. 119/338 (19-XII-1308).

¹⁰ MASIÀ 1994, p. 157-158.

During those same weeks, other Aragonese emissaries negotiated the concession of a bull of Crusade at the papal Curia in Avignon, along with the corresponding spiritual indulgences it entailed. Furthermore, the Pope also granted James II a special four-year tithing which he had previously assigned for the conquest of Sardinia but had still not spent.¹¹ Therefore, more than a third of the cost of the war preparations came from ecclesiastical rents. This was possibly as a result of the promise made by James II to actively participate in the crusade to the Holy Lands that the Pope was currently organising.¹² In fact, his envoys proclaimed him as the best prince in the world to lead the conquest of the Holy Lands, while his vassal, Ramon Llull, simultaneously presented the *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*.¹³ These negotiations contrast enormously with those undertaken in Fez, where it was alleged to the Pope that the objective was to expel the “execrable mahometi” from Spain and increase divine worship in the service of God and the Church.¹⁴ However, the true aim of all this rhetoric was to obtain the privilege of crusade and the necessary ecclesiastical funding to undertake the campaign. What is more, it is for this reason that Aragonese envoys deliberately concealed the negotiations that were taking place with the Marinids from the Pope, as the religious justification given would have been completely redundant. Even so, there were certain cardinals from the papal Curia who doubted the religious fervour of the Iberian kings and accused them of starting the war with the singular objective of increasing the *parias* that the Muslims paid, without really aiming to expel them from the peninsula.¹⁵

Despite this, on this occasion the kings of Aragon and Castile really wanted to conquer lands. However, they concealed their plans from Denis I, the King of Portugal, because they were not willing to share territorial gains. Only when all the agreements were finalised did James II write to him to inform him of the plans of conquest and made the tokenistic gesture of inviting him to participate in the war against Granada “a servicio de Dios e a gran pro e honrra de todos Nos,

¹¹ The pontiff asked the Aragonese legates if the conquests of Majorca and Valencia had received the crusade privilege, to which they replied that they had always heard that the indulgences given for the Holy Land were also given for the conquests in Spain. The accompanying bull was issued a month later: MASÌÀ 1994, vol. 2, doc. 123/45 (22-III-1309); Francesc MIQUEL, *Regesta de letras pontificias del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón: sección Cancillería Real (Pergaminos)*, Madrid, Cuerpo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Arqueólogos, 1948, doc. 341 (24-IV-1309).

¹² BAYDAL 2009, p. 115-120.

¹³ The book proposed the conquest of Ceuta and the Christian control of North Africa as a base to attack the Holy Land also from the South: MASÌÀ 1994, vol. 2, doc. 123/45 (22-III-1309); RAMON LLULL, *Darrer llibre sobre la conquesta de Terra Santa (Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae)*, Pere Llabrés (ed.), Barcelona, Proa, 2002.

¹⁴ “Execrable Mohammedans” (Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Royal Chancery, register 335, fol. 258v).

¹⁵ GIMÉNEZ 1904, p. 40.

reyes de Espanya”.¹⁶ In few documents such as this letter is the Aragonese monarch’s battle purpose so well explained. The war was certainly fought to serve God, which cannot be doubted in medieval society, but religion does not explain everything. The conquest was undertaken for the benefit and in honour of the King, as this way he could acquire new territories that would grant him the consequent political prestige. Furthermore, the new domains acquired would enable the distribution of lands and incomes between his vassals, consolidating his leadership among the nobility and urban elites. Ultimately, the king would obtain more power and wealth for himself and his heirs: one of the main reasons that motivated the constant expansionism of feudal dynasties.¹⁷

The attitude of the Castilian aristocracy also demonstrates that religion was not the main justification for the conquest. Before starting the campaign, Ferdinand IV had to reveal the conquest project to the *Cortes* held in Madrid with the aim of receiving the financial support of his subjects. The nobility refused however, given that at that moment they preferred to carry out a simple raid and looting of the territory of Granada. As such, the Castilian nobility were more interested in maintaining a frontier system of warfare rather than expelling the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁸ In other words, they wished to carry out raids to capture jewels, goods, livestock and people, who could then be rapidly sold to gain profit. Besides, the nobility did not trust James II of Aragon, due to the fact that a short while before he had tried to conquer the Castilian territory of Murcia, which lay between the kingdoms of Valencia and Almeria (see Fig. 2).¹⁹ They were therefore suspicious of the Christian fervour that the monarch displayed against the Muslims of Granada, as seen in the chronicle of Ramon Muntaner previously mentioned, and they suspected his final intentions could harm Castile.

Conversely, the announcement of the military campaign in the *Cortes* of Madrid ruined the element of surprise that the conquest required. Once the Granadians found out the news in March 1309, they deposed Emir Muhammad III and replaced him with his brother Nasr.²⁰ He immediately pleaded for help from the Marinid Emir Abu l-Rabi, who, according to James II’s spies in Fez, was only willing to collaborate in full with him if he returned the territory of Ceuta.²¹ However, despite these rumours, and the fact that they still had not reached an agreement, the Aragonese monarch trusted in the willingness shown

¹⁶ “In service of God and in great benefit and honour of all of us, the Kings of Spain” (GIMÉNEZ 1904, p. 36).

¹⁷ Perry ANDERSON, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, NLB, 1974; Alain GUERREAU, *Le Feodalisme, un horizon théorique*, Paris, Sycomore, 1980.

¹⁸ GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. X (17-III-1309).

¹⁹ James II attacked Murcia between 1296 and 1302, appropriating the North of this territory. If he obtained Almeria it would be probable therefore that he attacked again in order to get the whole Murcia and unite both territories.

²⁰ GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. X (17-III-1309); PELÁEZ 2005, p. 123.

²¹ MASIÀ 1989, p. 352-354 (10-IV-1309).

by the Marinids in previous conversations. It was, after all, they who proposed the attack. Therefore, the Aragonese fleet headed for Almeria to block the Strait of Gibraltar and stop the Nasrids receiving any kind of support from the north of Africa, whilst the Marinids initiated the siege of Ceuta.²²

Thus, without having reached a definitive agreement, the Christians and the Muslims from Morocco jointly began to attack the Muslims from Granada. Furthermore, the admiral of the Aragonese navy, Jaspert de Castellnou, spent three weeks in Fez negotiating an official treaty to consolidate the joint effort. However, only a verbal agreement was agreed to conquer Ceuta, according to which it would return to Moroccan hands, while the loot obtained in the conquest would be taken by James II. What is more, the Marinid Emir paid 7,000 golden *doblas*, promising the concession of some mercantile taxes and certain quantities of cereal for the campaign against Granada.²³ At that moment, the Christian armies were ready and only awaited the fall of Ceuta in order to attack. Therefore, when admiral Castellnou confirmed the fall of Ceuta at the end of July and the willingness of the Moroccan Emir to fulfil what was agreed, the Castilians initiated the siege of Algeciras and the Aragonese that of Almeria.²⁴

3. The course of the military conflict

The events that took place during the first two months of the sieges made the success of the expedition look feasible: Aragonese troops gained a resounding victory against the Granadian army on 23 August, the Castilian army took Gibraltar on 12 September and James II began to distribute plots of land surrounding Almeria on 1 October, using the same form of documents that his grandfather, James I, had used in the conquest of Valencia.²⁵ However, being the armies ready from the end of June, the planned four month campaign should end in October and the Nasrid resistance began to exceed the financial reserves of the Christian monarchs. As a result, James II sent envoys to the papal Curia in Avignon with the aim of obtaining a new ecclesiastical tithe for a further three years. The justification given was once again religious, “in Dei servitium ac exaltationem catholice fidei totiusque Christianitatis profectum”,²⁶ but on this occasion the Pope flatly refused, claiming that the funds already granted were very large. Besides redirecting the quadrennial tithe initially destined to the conquest of Sardinia, he had also granted another annual tithe exclusively for the

²² MASIÀ 1989, p. 354 (10-IV-1309); GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. X (14-IV-1309); PELÁEZ 2005, p. 126 (12-V-1309).

²³ DUFOURCQ 1966, p. 360-361 (6-VII-1309).

²⁴ Antonio GIMÉNEZ, *Don Juan Manuel, biografía y estudio crítico*, Zaragoza, La Académica de F. Martínez, 1932, doc. 196 (8-VIII-1309); BAYDAL 2009, p. 89.

²⁵ BAYDAL 2009, p. 58 and 90; SEGURA 2003, p. 38-39.

²⁶ “In service of God, exaltation of the Catholic faith and the benefit of all Christendom” (Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Royal Chancery, register 344, fol. 70v-71r (24-IX-1309)).

Almerian crusade.²⁷ These economic problems were compounded by new confrontations between the Castilian nobility and Ferdinand IV, which put the ongoing siege of Algeciras at risk.²⁸ Despite this, James II of Aragon continued to show unshakeable confidence in the success of the conquests and in mid-October 1309 wrote to the Catalan Earl of Urgell and to the son of the French Count of Clermont to assure them that he would gain the long-awaited victory “contra barbaras nationes”.²⁹



Fig. 2. The Emirate of Granada and the area of military operations

Nevertheless, having granted a part of the taxes agreed for the capture of Ceuta during the summer, at precisely that moment in time the Marinid Emir sent a letter to James II informing him that he had agreed to the peace demands of the Nasrids.³⁰ He claimed justification of “Islamic Law”, which rigorously demanded

²⁷ BAYDAL 2009, p. 92. The pontiff only issued bulls exhorting the priests and preachers to encourage the faithful to give charity for the crusade against Granada, with some indulgences: Francesc MIQUEL 1948, doc. 353-355 (12-XI-1309).

²⁸ MASIÀ 1989, p. 369-371 (1-IX-1309); MASIÀ 1994, vol. 2, doc. 126bis/363 (1-X-1309).

²⁹ “Against barbarous nations” (Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Royal Chancery, register 344, fols. 84r (6-X-1309) and 101r (12-X-1309)).

³⁰ Jaspert de Castellnou had informed James II that the Emir had paid 2.000 golden *doblas* at the beginning of September and a royal officer would move to the Marinid court to receive the

reconciliation, harmony and leniency with fellow Muslims, even more so considering that men respected for their virtues, pious marabouts and those who committed to the Holy War had taken part in the negotiations.³¹ As such, Abu l-Rabi compared the situation to any other conflict among the Christians themselves, in which good men, friars and preachers had brought about peace.³² Obviously, the Marinid Emir was not concerned about the Holy War or Islamic Peace when he reached an agreement with the Aragonese King to snatch Ceuta from the Nasrids. Nevertheless, once he had taken control of Ceuta, he decided to break the verbal agreement with the Christians and support the Muslims of Granada, invoking religious motivations. Therefore, he ended his relationship with the Aragonese monarch, who at the end of October informed his Castilian counterpart of that complete defection: “d’aquí adelant por enemigo lo podemos tener”.³³ In fact, this was the main criticism the Pope directed at James II once the crusade was over:

Bé·s podia pensar lo rey d’Aragó que, per grans ofensions que·l rey de Granada hagués feytes al rey de Marochs, lo rey de Marochs no degra voler que·l regne de Granada tornàs en mans de christians.³⁴

As things stood, Abu l-Rabi and Nasr signed a treaty through which the cities of Ronda and Algeciras would pass into the hands of the former in exchange for military aid that would immediately disembark on the peninsula (see Fig. 2).³⁵ Consequently, between the 15 and 21 October, a significant Islamic army appeared in Almeria with the aim of harassing the Aragonese camp.³⁶ Simultaneously, the situation worsened at the siege of Algeciras, given that the main Castilian noblemen, Don Juan and Don Juan Manuel, threatened to leave immediately due to profound disagreements with the King of Castile.³⁷

rest: MASÌÀ 1989, p. 369-371 (1-IX-1309). However, the lack of news urged the King to send some letters by the end of the month: GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. XI (27-IX-1309); BAYDAL 2009. In the end, probably in mid-October, he received the letter of Abu l-Rabi quoted in the following note.

³¹ Maximiliano ALARCÓN and Ramón GARCÍA, *Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, Madrid-Granada, Imprenta de Estanislao Maestre, 1940, doc. 82 (1-X-1309).

³² GIMÉNEZ 1908, p. 156 (1-X-1309).

³³ “From now on he could be stated as our enemy” (MARUGAN 1990, doc. 2 (27-X-1309)).

³⁴ “The King of Aragon may have thought that, despite the grand affronts that the King of Granada had carried out against the King of Morocco, the King of Morocco would not want the Kingdom of Granada to fall into the hands of the Christians” (GIMÉNEZ 1904, doc. XIII (16-III-1310)). In fact, two informers had warned James II months before, in April, that “all the Muslim pilgrims and Moors of Morocco are very displeased hearing about the destruction of the King of Granada” (MASÌÀ 1989, p. 353-354 (10-IV-1309)).

³⁵ PELÁEZ 2005, p. 133-134 (c. 7-X-1309).

³⁶ BAYDAL 2009, p. 94.

³⁷ MASÌÀ 1989, p. 371 (21-X-1309); GIMÉNEZ 1932, doc. 197 (22-X-1309).

Nonetheless, James II was determined to complete the conquest and wrote to his vassals requesting economic aid in order to continue with the siege. It is worth noting here that in order to receive their aid the justification given was different in each case. He claimed funds from the Aragonese people for the extension of the Christian faith and the King's territories, and also for themselves as his vassals. In the case of the Valencians, he added that they would benefit especially (given that the Kingdom of Valencia was the closest to Granada and constantly suffered Muslim attacks). On the other hand, the justification given to the Jews and Muslims who lived in the kingdoms of James II was totally different. The monarch asked the Jews for funds against the "King of Granada", with no religious claims whatsoever, whilst he told the Muslims that he simply needed the money "ratione viagii in quo sumus", without even mentioning the Emirate of Granada.³⁸ Once again, royal rhetoric therefore changed depending on the interlocutor.

In any case, the situation went from bad to worse for the Christians. At the end of November, Don Juan and Don Juan Manuel left the Castilian camp with their hosts³⁹ and then, in mid-December, the meeting of many Nasrid and Marinid horsemen and vessels in Ceuta made any Christian attempt to occupy Algeciras and Almeria futile.⁴⁰ In fact, the Aragonese monarch's financial reserves were depleted by mid-December and the new collaboration between Granadians and Moroccans condemned to failure any possibility of Christian success. As a result, from that week onwards, peace negotiations started between Castile, Aragon and Granada with the Christian camps still in place. The negotiations lasted weeks, given that the Muslims refused to accept the conditions offered, although in January 1310, an Aragonese envoy finally negotiated peace between Ferdinand IV of Castile and Nasr of Granada. However, he was unable to secure an agreement for his own King, James II, given that the Aragonese army fled due to lack of funds, meaning the Nasrid Emir did not need to sign any treaty of peace with him. Ultimately, the crusade against Almeria in 1309-10 was a military failure for James II of Aragon, due precisely to the excess fragility of the diplomatic agreements that were required to guarantee its success.

4. Conclusions

As we have seen, when taking abundant information and documentation into account, the primary causes of the attacks against the Muslims go beyond religious motivations, which, in turn, grant them lesser importance. As was to be expected in a society dominated by the Christian world view, it is true that faith played a very important role. However, it was an ideological justification, especially stressed by the public expressions and documents of power, such as

³⁸ "Because of the trip we are on" (Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó, Royal Chancery, register 326, f. 11r, 20r-v, 23r (10-XI-1309)).

³⁹ GIMÉNEZ 1932, doc. 198 (22-XI-1309).

⁴⁰ The Aragonese vice-admiral saw 20 ships and 1.000 Muslim horsemen in Ceuta: MASIÀ 1989, p. 375-376 (15-XII-1309).

royal chronicles and ecclesiastical texts. The Holy War and war in service of God appears in them as the main cause of the struggle against Islam. In fact, the description of Muslims and other groups that were considered to be heretics by the Church as “barbaras naciones”, those who were seen as inferior beings, was an essential element of the expansionism carried out by the Europeans in the medieval centuries.⁴¹ However, despite this, we should not lose sight of the justification and true origins of this process because of it.

For example, we have seen in the case of the Crusade against Almeria in 1309-10 that the Aragonese monarch used different arguments to justify the war depending on the interlocutor, their aims and the level of privacy of the documents. To begin with, he reached an agreement with the Marinid Muslims from Morocco without claiming any religious motives. He needed to conceal that agreement from the Pope to be able to obtain the bull of Crusade. Similarly, the Marinid Emir had no problem in reaching an agreement with a Christian king, although he later cited Islamic Law in order to go back on his word. On the other hand, the attitude of the Castilian nobility, who preferred to carry out raids instead of consolidating the conquest, clearly reflects their economic and political interests. The King was after all the maximum beneficiary of a definitive campaign in Islamic territories, which could extend its power and gain support through the distribution of lands and incomes. In fact, this was one of the main motives defended by the King of Aragon when he spoke to another king; not only service to God but also benefit and prestige for his dynasty. These reasons cannot be ignored, as they lie at the heart of the behaviour and strategy of royal power. The inherent expansionist tendency of feudal dynasties was what drove constant war, whether it was against the Muslims or other peoples. The very same Aragonese example shows it. Up to the defeat at Muret in 1213, their attacks were not only directed against Islam but also against Occitanian lands. From then on, with the option of extending north impossible, the Aragonese kings, James I and Peter III, directed their military campaigns towards the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean Islands.

Related to all this, the minimisation of the religious factor in Iberian expansion also affects the very concept of *Reconquista*. To begin with, as Martín Rios Saloma has clearly demonstrated, we should bear in mind that the term was created in the eighteenth century, taking the idea of Christian restoration of the Castilian medieval chronicles, which were inspired by texts of the Visigoth monarchy. It assumes an idea of continuity between the Visigoth society of the seventh century and the feudal societies of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries that led the Christian conquests of Al-Andalus. However, the changes in that period were too great. They were not the same societies. After all, a diversity of kingdoms and feudal counties (Portugal, Castile, Leon, Navarre, Aragon, Barcelona) came about from where there had been one Visigoth entity. Besides, the only ones who claimed to be the successors of the Visigoths were the Castilian-Leonese, who were also the only ones to use the argument of the *recovery* of lands, since the other Iberian kings did not use it. The Portuguese,

⁴¹ Dominique IOGNA-PRAT, *Order & Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam, 1000*

Navarres, Aragonese or Catalans could not *recover* or *reconquer* any Visigoth territory as they did not exist at that time as political societies. Neither were the Castilian-Leonese people Visigoths, despite their claims.

As Robert Bartlett has demonstrated, a series of profound changes occurred in the structure of feudal Europe around the year 1000, which converted it into an expansionist society. Not only did the Spanish attacked the Muslims in the south of the Iberian peninsula, but the Anglo-Normans also attacked the Celtic peoples of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, the Germanic peoples attacked the Baltic peoples, the Slavs and Magyars in northern and eastern Europe, the Normans attacked the Muslims in the south of Italy, and the Italic peoples along with the collective crusade movement attacked the Muslims, Byzantines and Hellenic peoples of the eastern Mediterranean.⁴² A new Christian-Latin society was responsible for those conquests, in which the so-called *Reconquista* is encompassed. But in reality, it was not a *reconquest* of land lost by one particular society, rather a newly-moulded conquest led by a society that was very different; the Christian people who conquered Al-Andalus from the eleventh century onwards had very little in common with seventh century Visigoths. The new feudal order that appeared in Europe in the eleventh century was clearly expansionist, not for religious reasons but because their social structures propelled them into constant war. Religion was an ideological justification, but not the main reason behind the phenomenon. As Josep Torró has highlighted, it is for this reason that the very concept of *Reconquista* should be discarded and simply replaced by *conquest*.⁴³ Should this not happen, we run the risk of reproducing an ideological standpoint that emanates from medieval powers in order to explain a process with much more complex causes and justifications.

⁴² Robert BARTLETT, *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1993.

⁴³ Josep TORRÓ, “Pour en finir avec la ‘Reconquête’. L’occupation chrétienne d’al-Andalus, la soumission et la disparition des populations musulmanes (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)”, *Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique*, 78 (2000), p. 79-97; Josep TORRÓ, “Colonizaciones y colonialismo medievales: La experiencia catalano-aragonesa y su contexto”, in Gloria Cano and Ana Delgado (ed.), *De Tartessos a Manila. Siete estudios coloniales y poscoloniales*, Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2008, p. 91-118. On the other side, many authors defend the validity of the concept of *Reconquest*, always from the Castilian point of view: Pierre-Alexander BRONISCH, *Reconquista und Heiliger Krieg. Die Deutung des Krieges im christlichen Spanien von den Westgoten bis ins frühe zwölfte Jahrhundert*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1998; Manuel GONZÁLEZ JIMÉNEZ, “Sobre la ideología de la Reconquista: realidades y tópicos”, in José Ignacio de la Iglesia and José Luis Martín Rodríguez (ed.), *Memoria, mito y realidad en la historia medieval: XIII Semana de Estudios Medievales, Nájera, del 29 de julio al 2 de agosto de 2002*, Logroño, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2003, p. 151-170; Miguel Ángel LADERO, “La ‘Reconquête’, clef de voûte du Moyen Age espagnol”, in *L’expansion occidentale (XI^e-XV^e siècles). Formes et conséquences*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003, p. 23-45; Francisco GARCÍA FITZ, “La Reconquista, un estado de la cuestión”, *Clío & Crímen: Revista del Centro de Historia del Crimen de Durango*, 6 (2009), p. 142-215.

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