

# RESTORATION, RECOVERY OR RECONQUEST? THE IDEA OF TERRITORIAL RECOVERY FROM ISLAM IN LATE MEDIEVAL CASTILE

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## ABSTRACT

Over the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century numerous chronological texts were written that revisited and reconsidered the discourse on the recovery of the Hispano-Christian kingdoms from Islam, each in accord with their own particular political, cultural and historiographical contexts. This article aims to analyze the way in which the Crown of Castile's border expansion was viewed by some of the most important authors of that century. An analysis of the different terms used to refer to the same historical process and the political project of territorial expansion has made possible an in-depth analysis of the religious, political and linguistic elements with which the Castilian expansion was legitimized during the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## KEYWORDS

Castile, Middle Ages, Iberian Peninsula, Reconquest, Fifteenth Century.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Castella, Medium aevum, Peninsula Iberica, Restauratio Hispanica, Saeculum quindecimum.

## 1. Did the Reconquest exist? An ongoing debate

Throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> the concept of the Reconquista (Reconquest) was central to Spanish historiography, the focal point of the historical dynamics of conflict between Christians and Muslims existing in the Middle Ages. During the previous century, the urgent need of the different Spanish political and cultural factions to forge a national identity that would bring together a series of peoples and provinces that still conserved their own languages, in order to achieve a long-awaited political unity, in a context characterized by the widespread conformation of nation states, the Islamic invasion of the year 711 was interpreted by different historians as an incursion by a foreign people seeking to appropriate the wealth of Spain, while the struggle carried out by the Christian sovereigns, from Don Pelayo to Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, was understood as a reconquest of lost territory, with nationalism taking up once again the old providential paradigm of Spain's loss and restoration.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Spain mirrored the different historiographic currents generated in Europe, that nationalist interpretation prevailed, and not only among historians affiliated with or sympathetic to Franco's regime - such as Enrique Herrera Oria or Justo Pérez de Urbel - but even among republican historians like Ramón Menéndez Pidal and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz.<sup>2</sup>

Pierre Guichard's interpretation of the development of an Islamic society in the West - "no longer an Islamic Spain"<sup>3</sup> - opened up new hermeneutical horizons. Little by little, the essentialist vision of Peninsular medieval history was abandoned, although the concept of the Reconquest was not discarded as the focal point of Spanish historical development, partly due to its roots in the historiographical tradition, partly because of its usefulness as an overarching concept, and partly for the sake of convenience. Hence, in the 21st century, in 2006, Julio Valdeón published a book entitled *La Reconquista. El concepto de España: unidad y diversidad*, in which, more than theorizing about the legitimation of the war of conquest and the dynamics of territorial expansion, the Valladolid professor presented a synthesis of the history of Spain across the Middle Ages that echoed the work of José Antonio Maravall and a certain historiographical essentialism.<sup>4</sup>

In the last decade, however, various authors have returned to the problem of the Reconquest from a scientific perspective in order to define both its rhetorical and ideological components and its instrumentalization during the medieval centuries. In the debate, it is possible to identify the existence of two clearly defined positions. On the one hand, there is that of authors such as Carlos de Ayala, Francisco García

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1. Ríos Saloma, Martín. *La Reconquista. Génesis y desarrollo de una construcción historiográfica (s. XVI-XIX)*. Madrid-México: Marcial Pons-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2011.

2. Ríos Saloma, Martín. *La Reconquista en la historiografía contemporánea. Un siglo de investigaciones*. Madrid-México: Marcial Pons-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2013: 53-60.

3. Guichard, Pierre. *Al-Andalus. Estructura antropológica de una sociedad islámica en Occidente*. Barcelona: Barral, 1976.

4. Valdeón Baroque, Julio. *La Reconquista. El concepto de España: unidad y diversidad*. Madrid: Espasa, 2006.



Fitz and Santiago Palacios who, while recognizing that the word “Reconquest” was normalized and accepted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the formation of European nation-states, posit that the idea of Reconquest already existed in the Middle Ages, and that it should continue to be used as a category of analysis that is not only useful, but also typical of the time. On the other hand, historians like Alejandro García Sanjuán and this author argue, while recognizing the existence of the idea of territorial recovery in the Hispanic-Christian sources of the Middle Ages, that using the term “Reconquest” is imprecise and anachronistic, not only because the word is not found in medieval sources - though, as Carlos de Ayala demonstrated, the verb *reconquistar* (reconquer) is - but because this would mean projecting into the past an interpretation generated a *posteriori* (four centuries later in the best-case scenario) and distorting medieval historical realities, sustaining a certain essentialism and a certain teleology.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, this academic debate has come to the fore and taken on a new relevance because of the manipulation of the Peninsular medieval past by groups (“parties” would be more precise) of Spanish politicians on the right and the far right. In fact, in order to legitimize a series of political proposals opposing immigration from Muslim countries, and the historical, idiomatic and cultural identities of the autonomous communities that formerly made up the Crown of Aragon, uphold an essentialist vision of the history and essence of Spain in order to defend the homeland’s alleged unity. At the same time, these parties propose a long-standing political project anchored in centralism and - reading between the lines - Christianity as a Spanish hallmark, in the face of Islam, once again perceived as a threat. In this way, the academic debate around the Reconquest has ceased to interest only scholars of the medieval period and has spill over into public debate and the media.<sup>6</sup>

The longevity of the debate, the erudition of the discussions and the multiple perspectives from which the question has been approached combine to show that is still unresolved, and that our knowledge of medieval historical processes is far from complete given the fragmentary and dispersed documentation, the evolution and transformation of the legitimizing rhetoric articulated from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and, finally, the geopolitical diversity of the Iberian Peninsula.

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5. I offer three recent titles, representative of collective works that include works by these authors and other scholars who have addressed these problems: Carlos Ayala Martínez; Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y guerra santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*. Madrid: Sílex, 2018; Carlos Ayala Martínez; Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes; Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019; Ayala Martínez, Carlos, García Fitz, Francisco and Palacios Ontalva, Santiago, coords. *Memoria y fuentes de la guerra santa peninsular (siglos X-XV)*. Gijón: Trea, 2021. Of individual authorship, the works by Ríos Saloma cited above, and the text by Francisco García Fitz can be consulted. *La Reconquista*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2010.

6. As an example: Eduardo Magallón. “La Reconquista que no existió. Los historiadores cuestionan el término porque lo consideran más fruto de la ideología que de la realidad” (“The Reconquest did not exist. Historians question the terms because they consider it more a fruit of ideology than reality”), *La Vanguardia*, 8 December 2019. 7 July 2021 <<https://www.lavanguardia.com/historiayvida/20191208/472055743507/historia-y-vida-reconquista-al-andalus-historia-rae-don-pelayo-covadonga.html>>.



In order to contribute to and enrich the debate, these pages' central objective is to analyze the way in which the expansion of the Crown of Castile's borders into the Kingdom of Granada was conceived by historians and chroniclers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the understanding that an analysis of the different words used throughout said century to designate the historical process and the political project of territorial recovery should allow us to determine the elements with which the historiographic discourse that legitimized the Castilian expansion in the period between the times of John II and the Catholic Monarchs was constructed, and to observe both continuities and possible rhetorical changes.

The sources we will turn to on this occasion are the chronicles by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (1377/1379-1458/1460), Alvar García de Santa María (1380-1460), Alonso de Cartagena (1384-1456), Diego de Valera (1412-1488), Hernando del Pulgar (1420/1435-1492) and Andrés de Bernáldez (1450-1513), all of them extensively studied, individually and collectively, by authors like Robert Tate,<sup>7</sup> Laurette Godinas,<sup>8</sup> Gonzalo Pontón<sup>9</sup> and Fernando Gómez Redondo,<sup>10</sup> among many others. The historiographic and cultural context - both European and Castilian - that made such a profusion of history possible has also been studied, so it is not necessary to return to it, nor to trace the general lines of that century's political development. However, we must acknowledge, from the outset, our debt to Michel de Certeau,<sup>11</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel<sup>12</sup> and Jaume Aurell,<sup>13</sup> whose theoretical and methodological proposals are based on the analysis of historiographic discourse, understood as units that only acquire full meaning depending on where they were articulated and the context in which they were developed, in turn giving meaning and form to the reality they portray.

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7. Tate, Robert. *Ensayos sobre la historiografía peninsular del siglo XV*. Madrid: Gredos, 1970; Tate Robert. "El cronista real castellano durante el siglo XV", *Homenaje a Pedro Sainz Rodríguez*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1986: III, 659-668; Tate, Robert. "Los trabajos del cronista cuatrocentista". *Studia Historica. Historia moderna*, 13 (1995): 27-46.

8. Godinas, Laurette. "Alonso de Cartagena y la así llamada Anacephaleosis o las vicisitudes de un texto histórico del siglo XV". Aurelio González, Walde der Von, Concepción Lilian y Company, eds. *Visiones y crónicas medievales. Actas de las VII Jornadas Medievales*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - El Colegio de México-Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2002: 131-145.

9. Pontón Gijón, Gonzalo. *Escrituras históricas. Relaciones, memoriales y crónicas de la Guerra de Granada*. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona - Bellaterra, 2002.

10. Gómez Redondo, Fernando. *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana. III. Los orígenes del Humanismo. El marco cultural de Enrique III y Juan II*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002; Gómez Redondo, Fernando. *Historia de la prosa de los Reyes Católicos: el umbral del renacimiento. I*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2012.

11. Certeau, Michel de. "La operación historiográfica", *La escritura de la Historia*. México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1993: 67-120.

12. Spiegel, Gabrielle. *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

13. Aurell, Jaume. *La historiografía medieval. Entre la historia y la literatura*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2016.



## 2. The war against Islam in the time of John II (1405-1454)

As is known, the first years of the reign of John II of Castile, who succeeded his father at age two, were characterized by the regency exercised by his mother, Catherine of Lancaster, and his paternal uncle, Ferdinand I of Aragon.<sup>14</sup> The monarch's minority was exploited by Ferdinand I (aka of Antequera) to advance his own interests and secure for himself a prominent place among the members of the court and the nobility of the kingdom. It was in this context that the military venture that he oversaw between 1409 and 1410 should be understood, which ended with the conquest of the town of Antequera - which would give him the nickname he would go down in history with (before becoming the king of Aragon, after Martin I's death).<sup>15</sup>

Over the years, firmly seated on the throne, John II became a great promoter of humanism of Italian roots, fomenting in Castile the cultivation of letters, a taste for erudition, and a love of truth and beauty as approaches to life and the world.<sup>16</sup> History, a genre that since ancient times had a well-earned prestige as an instrument for the education of princes and knowledge of the republic's affairs, saw notable development, with authors such as Alvar García de Santa María, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán and Alonso de Cartagena.

Alvar García de Santa María (c. 1380-1460), a descendant of Jewish converts to Christianity (*judeoconversos*) and a native of Burgos, entered the royal court at the edge of 1403, was a chamber clerk (*escribano de cámara*) in 1408, and participated in Ferdinand's military campaigns on the Granada border. After the victory at Antequera in 1410, he was appointed chronicler and actively participated in Castilian political life, leaving valuable accounts of the events in which he participated and those he witnessed, his records covering until the year 1435, when, according to Álvarez Palenzuela, he was relieved of his duties as chronicler.<sup>17</sup>

The protagonist of the first part of the *Crónica de Juan II* was, actually, the infante Ferdinand, whose military exploits are recounted. From the analytical perspective that we have adopted, the *Prologue* is revealing, as in it the royal chronicler, following the historiographic line of Pedro López de Ayala and his historical vision of the non-interruption of dynastic legitimacy, underscores the importance that the Wise King had attached to History, and chooses to take his chronicle all the way back to the time of the great conquests of the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, thereby associating the reigning

14. Valdeón Baroque, Julio. *Los Trastámara. El triunfo de una dinastía bastarda*. Madrid: Planeta, 2010: 100-102; 121-126.

15. Muñoz Gómez, Víctor. *Fernando "El de Antequera" and Leonor de Alburquerque (1374-1435)*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla-Ateneo de Sevilla, 2017: 85-164.

16. Pérez, Joseph. *El humanismo en el Renacimiento español*. Madrid: Gadir Editorial, 2013: 17-30; González Rolán, Tomás, López Fonseca, Antonio and Ruiz Vila, José Manuel. *La génesis del humanismo cívico en Castilla: Alonso de Cartagena (1385-1456). Edición y estudio de textos seleccionados sobre el saber, la diplomacia y los estudios literarios*. Madrid: Guillermo Escolar Editor, 2018.

17. Álvarez Palenzuela, Vicente Ángel. "Alvar García de Santamaría". *Diccionario biográfico español*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 7 julio 2021. <<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/10348/alvar-garcia-de-santa-maria>>.



sovereign with his illustrious ancestors and the historical enterprise spearheaded by the kings of Castile and Leon, that is, Spain:

*[...] el muy alto é muy noble, poderoso Rey é Señor Don Alonso el Sabio, hijo del muy alto é muy noble é muy poderoso é sancto Rey é Señor Don Fernando, que conquistó é ganó á Sevilla é á Córdoba, é á las otras cibdades é villas é comarcas del Andalucía, é metió so el su señorío todas las tierras Despaña, que quedaron en poder de los Moros hasta la mar con mucho trabajo[...] mandó a hazer y ordenar la Corónica de España [...].<sup>18</sup>*

Against this backdrop, it was natural for the royal chronicler to dedicate the first chapters of his work to portraying the way in which the infante Ferdinand - in the end, a member of the royal family - continued with this historical task. Thus, the text explains the way in which the infante proposed the war to the queen mother and the court, the preparations for the campaigns are described, and the main military acts that culminated in the taking of Antequera are recounted very vividly.

Of the different passages I find three particularly representative. The first of them is the one in which the infante Fernando, convening the Cortes (parliaments) in Segovia, after having received news of the Christians' victory in the town of Vera - which *entráronla por fuerza de armas*<sup>19</sup> - took the floor in front of the nobles, prelates, procurators of cities and towns, and knights gathered there, and reminded them, as before

*[...] del fallecimiento del Rey mi Señor e mi hermano, yo estaba en propósito de le servir con mi persona y Estado en esta guerra, como la razón, e la lealtad e debdo me obliga, e ya vedes como el verano se viene, e sería razón que yo estuviese ya en el Andalucía, et por ende a vos Señora suplico e pido merced, que dédes orden como yo me pueda partir. E todos vosotros, así Perlados como Caballeros, llaméis vuestras gentes.<sup>20</sup>*

The passage is very striking for four reasons: first, because it clearly reveals the fact that the infante wish to legitimize his position as regent by waging war against the Muslims; second, because he specifically distinguishes "this war", that is, that against Islam, from other wars; and third, because it reflects the extent to which, at

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18. García de Santa María, Alvar. *Crónica del señor don Juan segundo de este nombre en Castilla y en León. Corregida, enmendada y adicionada por Lorenzo Galíndez de Carvajal*. Valencia: Imprenta de Benito Monfort, 1779: XIX. "[...] the very tall and very noble, powerful King and Lord Alonso the Wise, son of the very tall and very noble and very powerful and holy King and Lord Fernando, who conquered and won Seville and Córdoba, and the other cities and towns and regions of Andalusia, and brought under his lordship all the lands of Spain, which had remained in the hands of the Moors, until the sea, with great effort, [...] ordered the Chronicle of Spain to be written, and ordered [...]."

19. García de Santa María. *Crónica...*: 27. "They entered by force of arms".

20. García de Santa María. *Crónica...*: 27-28. "[...] if the death of the King, my Lord and my brother; it was my intention to serve him with my person and State in this war, as reason, loyalty and duty oblige me to do; and you can see that the summer is coming, and I ought to already be in Andalusia; therefore, I beseech you, Madam, and ask you to mercifully give the order so that I might leave. And may all of you, Prelates as well as Knights, summon your people".



the dawn of the fifteenth century, the venture of the conquest of the Nasrid emirate had been clearly formulated, since the infante presented war before the Cortes, and not only requested the permission of the Queen, who spoke on behalf of the sovereign, but also summoned the whole of the kingdom to place its economic and human resources at the service of the cause; and, fourth, because the plea does not speak of reconquering the kingdom of Granada, but rather of continuing a war that was envisioned as enduring.

The second fragment is, precisely, the answer that Queen Catherine gave the infante Ferdinand, in which she expresses to him that his words revealed who he was.

*[...] y el debdo é naturaleza que tenéis con el Rey mi hijo, y el amor que siempre habéis mostrado á estos Reynos, donde tan grandes debdos tenéis: é vos place así por todo lo dicho, como por el provecho é bien destos Reynos, ir personalmente en la prosecución desta guerra: é confío en nuestro Señor que vos ayudará en tal manera, que daréis de vos la cuenta que se espera, é sojuzgaréis estos Infieles enemigos de nuestra Santa Fe católica, y ensalzaréis la Corona destos Reynos, é por vuestros notables hechos será puesta su Tierra so el señorío del Rey mi hijo [...].<sup>21</sup>*

Here the bellicose discourse clearly formulates the conflict as a war of conquest whose objective was to “subdue” (*sojuzgar*) the enemies of the faith and submit the Nasrid lands to the “lordship” (*señorío*) of the kings of Castile, for the greater glory of the kingdom. And this was a war that would be led in person by the king’s representative, placing his life in danger. Although Ferdinand was only a regent, and he describes his action as being undertaken in the service of the legitimate king, his nephew, it is evident that the infante, in this way, by taking command of the Christian armies, assumed a historical role befitting the sovereign, thereby bolstering his political position.

The third passage is the one in which, meeting in Córdoba in April 1410 with the notables of Andalusia, the infante requested their counsel on the campaign that he proposed to carry out against the Kingdom of Granada, telling them that *yo vos embié llamar por vos hacer saber como yo quiero entrar en Tierra de Moros por continuar esta guerra que el Rey mi Señor e mi hermano dexó comenzada*.<sup>22</sup> And so, the infante Fernando asked the people versed in war whether it was *tiempo de entrar y a cual parte [debía] entrar porque más daño resciban los Moros; lo tercero* -the infante said-, *si vos parece que debo poner cerco sobre alguna villa o logar, o si debo andar por la Tierra talando e haciendo daño,*

21. García de Santa María. *Crónica...*: 28. “[...] And the debt and nature that you have with the King, my son, and the love that you have always shown to these Kingdoms, where you have such great debts: you propose, in accord with all that has been said, as well as for the benefit and good of these Kingdoms, to go out personally and wage this war; and I trust in our Lord that he will aid you in such a way that you will do yourself proud, and together you will subdue those Infidels, enemies of our Holy Catholic Faith, and exalt the Crown of these Kings, and for your remarkable deeds the Land will be placed under the lordship of the King, my son [...]”.

22. “I summoned you to make it known that I wish to enter Land of the Moors to continue this war that the King, my Lord and my brother, started”.



*esperando batalla si el Rey de Granada la querrá dar.*<sup>23</sup> After talking it over at length, the knights were in agreement that: *no era tiempo para entrar*,<sup>24</sup> because it was still raining a lot and there was not enough grass to feed the animals. However, on the second question there were different opinions, and the words of Garcí de Santa María in this regard show the different verbs that were used to refer to the conquest of a city:

*Unos decían que debía entrar a Baza, e poner sitio sobre ella porque era llana e creían que prestamente la podían tomar; e otros decían que podía ir a Gibraltar, pues que tenía flota e la mandaba mucho acrecentar, e la podía cercar por mar e por la tierra; otros decían que debía de cercar a Antequera [...]. Vistas las razones que los unos e los otros decían, el Infante determinó luego de entrar e ir a poner sitio sobre Antequera.*<sup>25</sup>

The words of the royal chronicler clearly illustrate how the Christians conceived of the kingdom of Granada as a different one, separated from Castile by a border that had to be crossed, thereby “entering” (*entrar*) it; and that this was not only geographical and political, but religious, linguistic and cultural. Thus, such entrances could have - as García Fitz explained in his day - the purpose of raiding the land, burning the fields, stealing cattle, taking captives, or “besieging” (*sítiar*) a population in order to “take” it (*tomarla*). We can also perceive the existence of at least two planes in their conception of war: one, ideological and rhetorical, depicting the war against Islam as an uninterrupted one that should be continued by each Castilian sovereign as a historical obligation and a source of political legitimacy; and another of a military and a pragmatic nature, seeking to conquer the border cities one by one, taking advantage of circumstances, means and moments in the best possible way.

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (1377/1379-1460) belonged to the highest political circles in the Kingdom of Castile. A nephew of Chancellor Pedro López de Ayala and uncle of Íñigo López de Mendoza, Marquis of Santillana, he held a privileged position that allowed him to participate and witness the most important events of the reign of John II. Pérez de Guzmán also maintain a close relationship - according to Rosa Vidal - with Alonso de Cartagena and Alvar García de Santa María himself, which would place him at the center of that outstanding constellation of Castilian humanists from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> The author of various poetic and historiographical works, as well as some translations, he followed up on the *Crónica*

23. García de Santa María. *Crónica...*: 77. “[...] time to enter and which part [he should] enter by so as to inflict the most damage on the Moors” and, added the infante, “whether you believe that I should lay siege to some town or place, or instead cross the land slashing and doing damage, ready for battle should the King of Granada wish to wage it”.

24. “it was not time to go in”.

25. García de Santa María. *Crónica...*: 77. “Some said - the chronicler points out - that he should enter Baza, and lay siege to it, because it was flat, and they believed they could take it quickly; others said that he should go to Gibraltar, since he had a fleet that he was ordering be expanded, and he could besiege it, surrounding it by sea and by land; others said that he should besiege Antequera [...]. After listening to their arguments, the infante decided to enter and lay siege to Antequera”.

26. Vidal Doval, Rosa. “Fernán Pérez de Guzmán”, *Diccionario Biográfico Español*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 7 July 2021 <<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/5412/fernán-pérez-de-guzmán>>.





de Juan II, although on this occasion I will focus my attention on his *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, or *Pen Portraits of Illustrious Castilians* (c. 1450) in order to show how this biographical collection, which imitated the models of Plutarch and Suetonius, referred to the war against Islam.<sup>27</sup>

I shall not examine the very interesting prologue, in which the author discusses at length the characteristics the stories should have in order to “be done well and rightly”, and the damage done by “suspicious and truth-lacking chronicles,”<sup>28</sup> to focus instead on the pages dedicated to Ferdinand I of Aragon, “noble and Catholic prince,”<sup>29</sup> who, as a virtuous act, *muerto su hermano el rey [...] luego partió para la frontera [...] e por la dolencia que le recresció non pudo entrar en el reino de Granada fasta en fin de septiembre y no pudo hacer más, [...] salvo que cercó la villa de Setenil e por que es muy fuerte e el invierno se venía, non la pudo haber; pero enviando gentes por toda la tierra hicieron gran daño en el reino, e ganó desta vez Asara [...]*.<sup>30</sup> Three years after the death of Henry III, the infante Ferdinand *[...] tornó a la guerra e en el mes de mayo cercó la villa de Antequera [...] e tovo cercada Antequera más de cinco meses, e tomola en el mes de octubre, e ganó otras fortalezas cerca della [...]*.<sup>31</sup> The death of the King of Aragon, Martin I, was the reason why the infante Fernando - in the words of our historian - *[...] cesó de la prosecución de la guerra de Granada, ca en otra manera, según el estado en que la que él la tenía e voluntad que él había de la continuar, sin duda la conquistara*.<sup>32</sup>

The scale and political dimension of infante Ferdinand’s military project is again revealed in the pages that the lord of Batres dedicated to John II, whose first years in power were shaped by the figure of his uncle Ferdinand. And so, Pérez de Guzmán writes:

*Lo que el infante fizo en el año e otro siguiente en quella guerra [...] non se dice aquí más, salvo tanto que si a nuestro Señor non provocara a indignación los pecados de Castilla, para que viniese en ello algún embargo, sin duda este noble infante diera fin a la dicha guerra e tornara a España en su antigua posesión, lanzando los moros de ella e restituyéndola a los cristianos.*<sup>33</sup>

27. Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. *Generaciones y semblanzas*. Dueñas: Simancas Ediciones, 2005: 93-154.

28. Pérez de Guzmán. *Generaciones...*: 94-95.

29. Pérez de Guzmán. *Generaciones...*: 103.

30. “after his brother the king died [...] then left for the border [...] and due to the ailment that affected him, was unable to enter the kingdom of Granada until the end of September” and could do no more, “[...] except surround the town of Setenil, but, because it is very strong, and winter was coming, it could not be; but by sending people throughout the land, they did great damage to the kingdom, and he took Asara this time [...]”.

31. Pérez de Guzmán. *Generaciones...*: 104-105. “[...] returned to war and in the month of May, surrounding the town of Antequera [...] for more than five months, and he took it in the month of October, and other fortresses near it [...]”.

32. Pérez de Guzmán. *Generaciones...*: 105. “[...] ceased to continue the war in Granada, which, otherwise, had he been in another state, given his intention regarding this matter, he would have continued, without a doubt conquering it”.

33. Pérez de Guzmán. *Generaciones...*: 136. “What the infante did in the year and the following one in that war [...] let no more be said here, but that if our Lord had not been provoked to indignation by the



In these lines we see even more clearly how the old myth of the loss and restoration of Spain was taken up by John II's generation of humanists: just as in the time of King Rodrigo the sins of the Goths were said to have led to the loss of the kingdom, through punishment inflicted by the Muslims, so were the internal discords that had devastated Castile after the death of Henry III blamed for preventing the Muslims expulsion and the restoration of the Christian monarchs dominion over all of Spain.

The work that best demonstrates the revisiting and continuation of the myth of the loss and restoration of Spain during the time of John II is, undoubtedly, the *Genealogía de los reyes de España* (*Genealogy of the Kings of Spain*) by Burgos archbishop Alonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) whose ancestors were converts from Islam, and who finished the work in 1456, a few months after the sovereign's death.<sup>34</sup> As is known, the work aimed to offer a summary of the history of Spain from the creation of the world to his own time, devoting most of its attention to the era between the Muslim invasion and the reign of John II. The historical text is accompanied by instructions on what the miniatures (illustrations) should look like that were to complement the reading. This iconographic set has been extensively studied by Luis Fernández Gallardo, who has underlined the fact that the monarchs who distinguished themselves for their campaigns against Islam - Alfonso VI, Ferdinando III, Alfonso XI - were portrayed on horseback, as was Henry IV.<sup>35</sup> This allows us to focus on two of the *depingitur* that I consider most important for our analysis.

The first is the one devoted to explaining how the Islamic invasion and its key figures should be represented, and here we find the idea of territorial recovery clearly formulated. It is worth quoting at length:

*Píntase a la margen los dos alevos autores de tan grande traición, conde Don Julián y Arzobispo don Oppas, para que como los retratos de los varones ilustres son despertadores de nuestra memoria, así los traslados de la gente facinerosa sean padrones de su ignominia [...]. También se pinta aquí el retrato de Tarif, caudillo de los moros, para que nunca se caiga de nuestra memoria que desta gente brava fueron ocupadas nuestras provincias y entendemos que cuando auyentamos esta canalla de nuestros fines no ganamos nuevas empresas sino recuperamos las que perdimos.*<sup>36</sup>

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sins of Castile, and hampered it ... without a doubt this noble infante would have put an end to said war and reclaimed for Spain its former possessions, driving the Moors from it and restoring it to the Christians".

34. The bibliography on Alonso de Cartagena is very large, so I only refer to the works of one of his main scholars: Fernández Gallardo, Luis. "La obra historiográfica de dos conversos ilustres, don Pablo de Santa María y don Alonso de Cartagena". *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie III, Hª Medieval*, 6, (1993): 249-286; Fernández Gallardo, Luis. *Alonso de Cartagena (1385-1456): una biografía política en la Castilla del siglo XV*. Madrid: Consejería de Educación, 2002; Fernández Gallardo, Luis, "Guerra justa y guerra santa en la obra de Alonso de Cartagena", *eHumanista*. 24 (2013): 341-354.

35. Fernández Gallardo, Luis. "Idea de la Historia y proyecto iconográfico en la *Anacephaleosis* de Alonso de Cartagena". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 40/1 (2010): 317-353.

36. Alonso de Cartagena. *Genealogía de los reyes de España*, traducción y estudio de Yolanda Espinosa Fernández. Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1989: III, 1185. [...] *Depingitur etiam in margine iuxta eum sceleratissimi proditores Iulanus comes et Oppa archiepuscopus. Decet enim, ut sicut proborum virorum depingitur imagines ut ad memoriam nostra [...] Tarif quoque infidelis machometista depingitur, qui cum eis venit in excidium hspanorum, ut a memoria nostra non cadet ab istis machometistis terras*



The second is the *depingitur* dedicated to Henry, a monarch that the wise archbishop from Burgos legitimized by equating him to the great conquering kings, representing him on horseback: *Píntese el rey don Enrique sobre un caballo a la gineta, porque usó mucho de esta suerte de caballería, armado porque desde las primeras estrenas de su reinado rompió guerra con los moros.*<sup>37</sup> Cartagena could say little more about the new monarch's military activity, as the truth was that at the time when the *Genealogy* was being completed the Cortes had only been able to meet in Cuéllar (1455), where Henry IV called for the resumption of war against Granada.<sup>38</sup> These campaigns were more frontier raids than formal sieges, and were ended with the truces of 1456 between Castile and Granada.<sup>39</sup> However, the representation of the last sovereign - whose genealogy dates back to the time of Pelayo - as a conquering king can definitely be interpreted as a promise for the future.

### 3. The time of the Catholic Monarchs and the conquest of Granada

On the War of Granada (1482-1492) and its legitimation there are numerous well-known monographic works by specialists that spare us from presenting its development, characteristics and importance to the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, in particular, and Spanish history, in general, such that we can focus directly on the texts of the royal chroniclers selected.<sup>40</sup>

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nostras occupatas fuisse, ut cum eos debellamus non existimemus quod a terris suis illos expellimus sed quod nostras quas violenter occuparunt recuperamus (Fernández Espinosa, I: 550-551). "Paint, on the margins, the two illustrious perpetrators of such a great betrayal, Count Don Julian and Archbishop Don Oppas, so that, just as the portraits of illustrious men awaken of our memories, so the depictions of malefactors are reminders of their ignominy [...]. The portrait of Tarif, leader of the Moors, is also to be painted here, so that it never fades from our memory that these audacious people occupied our provinces, and we understand that when we drive this scoundrel from our land, we do not win new ones, but rather recover those that we lost."

37. Cartagena. *Genealogía...*: III, 1262. "Paint King Henry mounted on horseback, with shortened stirrups, and armed, because from the earliest days of his reign he waged war against the Moors."

38. Ana Arranz presents the king's speech, recorded in the *Crónica de Juan II* by the chronicler Enríquez del Castillo. According to his account, the king exclaimed: "[...] peleemos contra los moros que usurpan nuestra tierra, tomada por gran traición a aquellos que ge la dieron [...] Por donde espero en la infinita bondad de nuestro redentor que nos dará vencimiento de ellos tal, e de tal manera, que tornaremos con honra, e recobremos lo que nuestros antepasados perdieron". Let us fight against the Moors who usurp our land, treacherously taken from those who gave it to them. Where I hope that our Savior, in his infinite goodness, shall allow us to vanquish them in such a way that we return with honor, and regain what our ancestors lost." Arranz Guzmán, Ana. "El episcopado y la guerra contra el infiel en las Cortes de la Castilla Trastámara". Nieto Soria, José Manuel, dir. *La monarquía como conflicto en la Corona castellano-leonesa (c. 1230-1504)*. Madrid: Sílex, 2006: 253-298, 288.

39. Pérez Castañera, Dolores María. *Enemigos seculares. Guerra y treguas entre Castilla y Granada (c. 1246-c. 1481)*. Madrid: Sílex, 2013: 107-110.

40. I cite only three classics: Mata Carriazo, Juan de. "Historia de la guerra de Granada", *La época de los Reyes Católicos*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1978: XVII, 385-929; Ladero Quesada Miguel Ángel. *Castilla y la conquista del reino de Granada*. Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1993 [1967]; Peinado Santaella, Rafael. *La fundación de Santa Fe (1491-1520)*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1995.



The first of them is Mosén Diego de Valera (1412-1488), who was linked to the court of John II as of 1427, where he held different positions as a *doncel*, or squire, to Prince Henry, in addition to his service in diplomatic missions and the holding of various positions, such as the *corregidor* (*mayor/magistrate*) of Palencia and mayor (*alcaide*) of Puerto de Santa María. In 1476 Fernando named him head steward (*maestresala*), and in 1477 he joined the Royal Council, functions that he combined with the exercise of different *corregimientos* (administrative districts) and writing work.<sup>41</sup>

Valera's *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos* contains a detailed account of the reign of Isabella and Fernando from their rise to the throne until the year of their death, and we are, naturally, interested in the chapters dedicated to the War of Granada. From among the multiplicity of passages reflecting the perspectives of the royal councilor on the War of Granada, I will cite four that are especially significant.

The first of them is the one in which the chronicler provides an account of the conquest of the city of Alhama. It is striking that no mention is made of the Muslim incursion into Zahara; rather, the incursion on the city of Granada is presented as an initiative of the Marquis of Cádiz, Rodrigo Ponce de León, who, informed of the weakness of the defenses of that town, *determinó de se poner a todo peligro e trabajo por facer tan grand servicio a Dios y al rey e Reyna nuestros señores en tomar aquella ciudad.*<sup>42</sup> After the city's conquest by Christian forces it was besieged, in turn, by troops under the Emir of Granada. Valera adds that when the "serene king" (*serenísimo rey*), who was with the queen in Medina del Campo, heard this news, *acordó de se partir [...] e llegó a Córdoba para socorrer al marqués e a los otros cavalleros que en el Alhama con él estaban, y enbió mensajeros [...] a todos los cavalleros del Andalucía que se juntasen para este socorro.*<sup>43</sup> To this call for help was added that of the Marchioness, who asked *a todos los grandes del Andalucía que por merced socorriesen al marqués, [...] en lo cual harían gran servicio a Dios e al rey, e cumplirían aquello que la fe católica e la nobleza les obligaba.*<sup>44</sup>

If I stop at these lines it is to underline the improvisation that marked the conquest of Alhama. This does not mean that it had not been planned, since both Valera and Pulgar point out in their texts that first there was news of how poorly equipped the square was and then the border lords came to it with weapons, ladders and a sufficient number of hosts. But, unlike what had happened at the beginning of the century in the conquest of Antequera, such an incursion had not been backed by the sovereigns or the nobility of the kingdom of Castile, nor did it have as its

41. Salvador Miguel, Nicasio; Moya García, Cristina. "Diego de Valera", *Diccionario Biográfico español*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia. 07 July 2021. <<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/4811/diego-de-valera>>.

42. Valera, Diego de. *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, Juan de Mata Carriazo, ed. Madrid: José Molina Impresor, 1927: 136. "[...] resolved to assume all due danger and undertake all the work to render such a great service to God and the king and queen, our lords, by taking that city".

43. "He agreed to leave [...] and arrived in Cordoba to help the Marquis and the other knights who were with him at Alhama, and he sent messengers [...] to all the knights of Andalusia so that they might also provide assistance".

44. Valera. *Crónica*...: 142. "All the notables of Andalusia to, out of mercy, help the Marquis [...], thereby doing great service to God and to the king, and fulfilling their obligations as Catholics and as nobles".



ultimate objective the conquest of the Nasrid kingdom, but just conquer a rich population located in the heart of the Nasrid emirate. In this sense, the action of King Ferdinand in Valera's text is not interpreted as a response that put the Crown's resources into motion with the aim of conquering Granada, but as a hasty reaction to help a vassal in grave danger. In this sense, the Marquise's letters show that no one thought of recovering lands subjected to Islam after several centuries, but only helping some Christians placed in compromising circumstances due to their own imprudence and recklessness.

The nature of the war changed a few weeks later and, therefore, the second passage is from the war council held in the city of Cordoba, presided over by the monarchs. It contains three elements of great relevance: first, Isabella and Ferdinand's commitment to "the war against the Moors" (*la guerra de los moros*), for which they travelled from Castile to Andalusia; that is, they went to the border; second, that the initial improvisation gave way to a planning and organization of the strategy to be followed, the result of a council at which different opinions were expressed and where it was possible to reach an agreement; and, third, that the military activity against the people of Granada ceased to be a private enterprise of Andalusian nobles to obtain booty, and became, instead, a large-scale political project, an issue of State, ultimately, formulated in this way not only in accord with the kings' will, but also thanks to the conviction and support, in the form of economic and human resources, of the kingdom's notables. It is worth letting Valera speak, as it were, to highlight the stature of those present - whose importance the reader will appreciate - and to show how the start of the Granada War was the result of an agreement between the kings and his nobles:

*Estando estos serenísimos rey e Reyna nuestros señores en la cibdad de Córdoba, en el dicho año [1482], ovieron su consejo de la forma que en esta guerra se avía de tener, en que ovo grand diversidad de consejos. E a la fin se determinó se pusiese cerco sobre la cibdad de Loja, porque quella se tomando sería grand ayuda para meter la recua a la cibdad de Alhama [...] E el marqués de Cádiz, como toviese mayor experiencia de la guerra de los moros [...] fue de contraria opinión. [...] E los grandes que en este consejo se hallaron son los siguientes: don Luis de la Cerda, duque de Medinaceli, don Enrique de Guzmán, duque de Medina Sidonia, los maestros de Santiago e Calatrava, don Alonso de Cárdenas e don Rodrigo Téllez Girón, el condestable conde de Haro, don Pedro Manrique, duque de Alburquerque, don Rodrigo Ponce de León, marqués de Cádiz, don Rodrigo Téllez Pacheco, marqués de Villena, don Enrique Enríquez, tío del rey, don Gutierre de Cárdenas, comendador mayor de León, el conde de Ureña, don Alonso de Aguilar, señor de Cañete e Montilla, Martín Alonso de Montemayor, señor de Alcaudete, Luis Portocarrero, señor de Palma, Martín Fernández, Alcaide de los Donzeles, don Gonzalo Chacón y Rodrigo de Ulloa, contadores mayores, e otros muchos cavalleros e doctores. E con este acuerdo, el rey se partió el miércoles que fueron tres días del mes de junio del dicho año, e fue a poner su real cerca de la villa de Estepa [...] e otro día a la Peña de los Enamorados, donde mandó fazer alarde, e se falló que llevaba poco más de seis mil de a cavallo e diez mill peones. E allí el rey tornó a entrar en consejo con los dichos cavalleros, por acordar dónde e cómo se avía de poner el sitio sobre Loja.<sup>45</sup>*

45. Valera. *Crónica*...: 147-148. "Being the most serene king and queen, our lords, in the city of Cordoba in that year [1482], they heard this counsel as to the way that in which the war ought to be waged, there being a great diversity of views in this regard. And in the end it was determined that the city of Loja



The third passage is that of the surrender of Vélez Málaga, to which “the most serene king” had laid a twenty-day “siege” (*cerco*), lasting from April 7 to 20, 1487.<sup>46</sup> After the city’s surrender, in part due to a lack of any aid from the king of Granada, the Castilian sovereign organized a transition ceremony that announced what would happen in January 1492:

*[...] mandó al conde de Cifuentes e a Berna Francés e a muchos continuos de su casa que, armados e a cavallo, fuesen a la cibdad, e con ellos los reyes de armas e trompetas, e llevasen la vandera de Nuestra Señora y el pendón de Santiago e los pusiese en e alcaçava, e debaxo dellos su guión, todo lo cual se hizo con mucha solenidad e grand sonido de trompetas e atabales, pregonando los reyes de armas en alta voz: Castilla, Castilla, por el rey don Fernando e por la Reyna doña Isabel, nuestros señores.<sup>47</sup>*

The ceremony materialized the fact that the war against the emirate undoubtedly had a religious dimension, as Rafael Peinado pointed out at the time and has recently been highlighted by José Fernando Tinoco Díaz.<sup>48</sup> Also, the ceremony present how the monarchs considered the conquered cities to have returned to Christianity, an act of spiritual recovery symbolized by the placement of images of the Virgin and the apostle. In the same way, the acclamation pronounced by the criers made it clear that the conquered cities not only came under the sovereignty of the monarchs, but were fully integrated into the Crown of Castile. It should also be pointed out that

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should be besieged, as taking it would be of great help in getting the men to the city of Alhama [...] The Marquis of Cadiz, as he had more experience in war against the Moors [...] was of the opposite opinion. [...] The notables comprising this council were the following: Don Luis de la Cerda, Duke of Medinaceli, Don Enrique de Guzmán, Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Masters of Santiago and Calatrava, Don Alonso de Cárdenas and Don Rodrigo Téllez Girón, the Constable-Count of Haro, Don Pedro Manrique, Duke of Albuquerque, Don Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cadiz, Don Rodrigo Téllez Pacheco, Marquis of Villena, Don Enrique Enriquez, the King’s uncle, Don Gutierre de Cárdenas, Commander of Leon, the Count of Ureña, Don Alonso de Aguilar, Lord of Cañete and Montilla, Martín Alonso de Montemayor, Lord of Alcaudete, Luis Portocarrero, Lord of Palma, Martín Fernández, Alcayde (mayor) de los Donzeles, Don Gonzalo Chacón and Rodrigo de Ulloa, Lord Treasurers, and many other knights and doctors. And with this agreement the king left, on Wednesday, which was three days in June of that year, and went to lay royal siege to the town of Estepa [...] and another day the Peña de los Enamorados (a mountain), where he boasted that he had more than 6,000 cavalry and ten thousand foot soldiers. And there the king returned to seek the council with the said nobles, to agree as to where and how he ought to lay siege to Loja”.

46. Valera. *Crónica*...: 215.

47. Valera. *Crónica*...: 233. “[...] He ordered the Count of Cifuentes and Berna Francés and many members of his household to, armed and mounted, go to the city, and with them the kings of arms, and with trumpets, and carry the banner of Our Lady, and the banner of Santiago and put them in the fortress and below them its banner, all of which was done with great solemnity and to the sound of trumpets and drums, the kings of arms proclaiming in a loud voice: Castile, Castile, for King Ferdinand and the Queen, Isabella, our lords”.

48. Peinado Santaella, Rafael, “Christo pelea por sus castellanos: el imaginario cristiano de la guerra de Granda”, *Las tomas: antropología histórica de la ocupación territorial del reino de Granada*, Juan Antonio González, Manuel Barrios, eds. Granada: Diputación de Granada, 2000: 453-524; Tinoco Díaz, José Fernando, *La cruzada en las fuentes crónicas castellanas de la guerra de Granada* (PhD Thesis). Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 2017: 455-564.



the idea of the restitution or restoration of the political order that existed prior to the Muslim invasion was also due to a political program with a marked messianic and providential dimension drawn up by the Castilian sovereigns.<sup>49</sup>

The last passage is the one that closes the chapters dedicated to the “siege” (*cerco*) of Malaga, about which King Ferdinand had resolved *de jamás partir fasta tomar aquella cibdad por fuerça o por trato*,<sup>50</sup> and where a ceremony similar to that at Vélez Málaga had been held, with the royal banner and that of Santiago being displayed. [...] *E dadas por todos muy grandes gracias a Nuestro Señor e a la gloriosa Virgen su Madre de la victoria avida -our chronicler affirms-- , los reyes de armas en alta voz pregonaron tres veces diciendo: Castilla, Castilla, Castilla, por el rey don Fernando e por la Reyna doña Isabel* and then a *Te Deum* was sung.<sup>51</sup> Valera offers a reflection that is significant to our analysis, stating that *es esta çibdad muy notable e muy grande, e muy fuerte e muy fértil e abundosa de todas las cosas a la vida de los hombres neçesarias. E ser tomada -añade- fue a los moros de aquel reyno tan grand quebranto e daño que de todo lo restante ellos mismos ninguna cuenta hazen*.<sup>52</sup> The royal chronicler concludes his story by pondering the role of King Ferdinand and *las cosas muy dignas de memoria, no vistas ni oydas que príncipe tan grande en esta España hiciese*.<sup>53</sup> The first being having founded a hospital.

*Fue la segunda -añade Valera-, el rey aver puesto tantas veces su persona en peligro [...] e aver por su brazo peleado e muerto e ferido moros [...] Fue la tercera, que dio los más ricos hornamentos e cruces e cálices e campanas de mayor valor que nunca príncipe en España dio a lugares que ganase. Fue la quarta, que mandó consagrar un gran templo en que fuesen enterrados los cristianos que en el cerco de aquella cibdad muriesen. Fue la quinta, e no menos principal, que no se hallará destrucción de las Españas príncipe que en tan breve tiempo haya hecho tan grand conquista, ni en tierra tan áspera*.<sup>54</sup>

Hernando del Pulgar holds a privileged place among the chroniclers of the Catholic Monarchs. Born between 1420 and 1435, he clearly represented a new generation of humanists who had entered court circles during the time of John II, continuing

49. Nieto Soria, José Manuel, “Propaganda política y poder real en la Castilla Trastámara: una perspectiva de análisis”. *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 25/2 (1995): 489-517.

50. Valera. *Crónica*...: 255. “Never to leave before taking that city, by force or by accord”.

51. Valera. *Crónica*...: 269. “[...] And, with all giving great thanks to Our Lord and to the glorious Virgin, his Mother, for the victory - our chronicler affirms - the kings of arms shouted three times saying: Castile, Castile, Castile, for King Ferdinand and the Queen Isabella”.

52. Valera. *Crónica*...: 269-270. “this city is very remarkable and very large, very strong, fertile and abundant in all things necessary to the lives of men. And being taken - he adds - was such a great loss and blow to the Moors of that kingdom that they themselves speak of nothing else”.

53. Valera. *Crónica*...: 275. “things very worthy of remembrance, neither seen nor heard before, that such a great prince in this Spain did”.

54. Valera. *Crónica*...: 275. “The second - adds Valera- was that the king placed himself in danger so many times [...] having fought, wounded and killed many Moors [...] And the third, giving the richest ornaments, crosses, chalices, and bells of the greatest value that a prince in Spain ever gave to places that he had won. The fourth, having ordered the consecration of a great temple in which the Christians who died in the siege of that city would be buried. The fifth, though no less important, was that no Spanish prince may be found that in such a short time had achieved such a great conquest, nor in such rough territory”.



later in the service of Henry IV. In 1457 he was already linked to the royal notary, and there is evidence that he travelled to Rome the same year.<sup>55</sup> The first document preserved with his signature as royal secretary is dated in the year 1458, and we know that his support of Isabella in the War of Succession was rewarded in 1480 with his appointment as royal chronicler, in order for him to write “with the help of the very high God, the truth about the things that transpired.”<sup>56</sup>

Pulgar’s *Chronicle of the Catholic Monarchs* covers the period from the time of Henry IV to the year 1490. Of the multiple passages in the work that could be cited, I shall focus on two that I believe reflect with great clarity the monarchy’s conceptions of war and its ideological foundations.

The first of them is the chapter that serves as a prologue and with which the narrative of the war begins, illustrating conceptions of the time:

*El rey e la Reyna, después que por la gracia de Dios reynaron en los reynos de Castilla e de León, conociendo que ninguna guerra se debía principiar salvo por la fe e por la seguridad, siempre tovieron en el ánimo pensamiento grande de conquistar el reyno de Granada, e lanzar de todas las Españas el señorío de los moros y el nombre de Mahoma.*<sup>57</sup>

In another work I have referred to this passage,<sup>58</sup> but it is worth stressing that the war against Islam was considered just because it sought to restore the dominion of the Castilian monarchs by fighting the enemies of the faith and overcoming their dominion. Naturally, it was not considered a “reconquest”, but it was viewed as the culmination of a historical task whose execution was incumbent upon the kings of Castile.

The second account is even clearer. This is the letter that Isabella and Ferdinand sent to the pope in response to the claims of the Sultan of Egypt, and that the royal chronicler inserted into his discourse. In their reply to the pontiff, the monarchs stated that

*[...] era notorio por todo el mundo, que las Españas en los tiempos antiguos fueron poseídas por los reyes sus progenitores, et que si los moros poseyan agora en España aquella tierra del reyno de Granada, aquella posesión era tiranía et non jurídica. E que por escusar esta tiranía, los reyes sus progenitores de Castilla y de León, con quien confina aquel reyno,*

55. Pontón Gijón, Gonzalo. “Fernando del Pulgar”. *Diccionario Biográfico Español*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 07 July 2021 <<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/10435/fernando-de-pulgar>>.

56. Pulgar, Hernando del. *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, Juan de Mata Carriazo, ed. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1943: I, 3.

57. Pulgar. *Crónica...*: II, 4. “The King and the Queen, who by the grace of God reigned in the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, conscious that no war should be commenced, except for faith and security, always harbored the noble thought of conquering the kingdom of Granada and ridding all Spain of the dominion of the Moors and the name of Muhammad”.

58. Ríos Saloma, Martín. “El imaginario sobre la guerra santa en la crónica castellana de la baja Edad Media (s. XIII-XIV)”, Carlos Ayala Martínez; Patrick Henriët; Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. *Orígenes y desarrollo de la guerra santa en la Península Ibérica. Palabras e imágenes para una legitimación (siglos X-XIV)*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez - Universidad Autónoma de Madrid - Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, 2016: 115-124.





*siempre pugnaron por lo restituir a su señorío, segund que antes avía sido. Otro si, añadía Pulgar, le escriuieron [los Reyes al Papa] que allende de tener los moros tiránicamente esta tierra de Granada, avían fecho e facían guerra continua a los cristianos, sus súbditos et naturales, que morauan en las çibdades, e villas e tierras que confinaban con aquel reyno [...] Lo qual veyá bien Su Santidat que no era de sofrir, e que les era necesario cobrar lo suyo guerreando, et defender los suyos resistiendo.*<sup>59</sup>

Few passages formulate the idea of territorial recovery more clearly than these lines by Pulgar, reproducing an official letter; that is, using the royal language. The phrase “recover what is yours by fighting” (*cobrar lo suyo guerreando*) clearly reflects the extent to which territorial recovery had become, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the crux of the discourse, perhaps even more than the religious aspect, of the fight against Islam. Thus, around 1490, *deseando el Rey e la Reyna dar fina la conquista que principiaron del reyno de Ganda, mandaron poner gran diligencia a las cosas conscernientes a la guerra*,<sup>60</sup> which would conclude two years later.

The last chronicler that we shall cite is Andrés de Bernáldez (1450-1513), who managed to live into the 16<sup>th</sup> century and who, beginning in 1468, served as parish priest in the town of Los Palacios, Seville, until his death. Removed from the court but living during the events in question, his *Chronicle of the Catholic Monarchs* also boasted a very vivid narrative.<sup>61</sup> Due to Pulgar’s silence regarding the last stage of the war in Granada and the conquest of the Nasrid capital, Barnáldez’s work has become a rich source of information and testimonies. Though there are more, in two fundamental passages we find the idea of a territorial conquest clearly reflected, accompanied by a profound religious motivation spurring the author - also a priest - to define the taking of Granada as a “holy conquest” (*santa conquista*). In the first passage, the author states that the kings

*[...] partieron de Sevilla [...] para ir a poner cerco sobre Granada [y que el rey Fernando] [...] asentó su real en agosto, donde edificó la villa de Santa Fé [...], a vista de la ciudad de Granada, muy fuerte e de muy fuertes edificios, y de muy gentil hechura, en cuadro, como hoy parece, para enfrenar a Granda e el rey le puso Santa Fe, porque su deseo el de la Reina, su mujer, era siempre en acrecentamiento en favor de la Santa Fe Católica [...].*<sup>62</sup>

59. Pulgar. *Crónica...* II, 398-399. “[...] It was well-known throughout the world that Spain, in ancient times, was overseen by kings, their ancestors, and that if the Moors now controlled that land of the kingdom of Granada in Spain, its possession was tyrannical and illegal. And that to overcome this tyranny, the kings of Castile and Leon, bordering on that kingdom, always fought to restore their dominion to what it had been before. Pulgar added that they wrote [the King and Queen to the Pope] that the Moors, in addition to tyrannically taking this land of Granada, had waged and continued to wage continuous war against the Christians, their subjects and natives who lived in the cities, towns and villages bordering that kingdom [...] Which His Holiness decided should not be tolerated, and that it was necessary to maintain what was theirs by fighting, and to defend their own by standing up to them”.

60. Pulgar. *Crónica...* II, 449. “The King and Queen wishing to end the conquest begun against the Kingdom of Ganda, they ordered that great diligence be exercised with matters concerning the war”.

61. Fernández-Carrión, Miguel Héctor. “Andrés Bernáldez”, *Diccionario Biográfico Español*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 07 July 2021 <<http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/8543/andres-bernaldez>>.

62. de Bernáldez, Andrés, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel*. Sevilla: Imprenta de José María Geofrín, 1870: 291-292. “[...] left Seville [...] to go to lay siege to Granada [and King Ferdinand]



In the second, when describing the occupation of the Alhambra by the Castilian troops, Bernáldez uses different verbs, but never to *reconquistar* (reconquer):

[El rey envió al...] Marqués de Villena, é con otros muchos caballeros é con tres mil de á caballo é dos mil espingarderos entrar en el Alhambra é se apoderar de ella; é fueron, é entraron, é la tornaron, é se apoderaron de lo alto y bajo de ella, é fueron, é entraron, é mostraron en la más alta torre primeramente el estandarte de Jesuchristo, que fue la Santa Cruz, que el Rey traía siempre en la santa conquista consigo; é el Rey, é la Reina, é el Príncipe, é toda la hueste se humillaron á la Santa Cruz, é dieron muchas gracias é loores á nuestro Señor [...].<sup>63</sup>

By way of conclusion: a conquest with that looked back to the past and forward to the future. After this tour that we have conducted through the texts of five of the most important chroniclers and historians of the Crown of Castile in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we can draw a series of conclusions.

The first of these is that none of the authors used the word “reconquest” (*reconquista*) to refer to either the ideological discourse that legitimized the military actions or the military maneuvers carried out by the Christian monarchs. In fact, war-related verbs were used to refer to these y actions: “lay siege” (*cercar*), “win” (*ganar*), “take” (*tomar*), “enter” (*entrar*), “conquer” (*conquistar*), “have” (*haber*), and so on. Within this plurality of terms and phrases, undoubtedly the most used was “lay siege” (*cercar*), as it conveyed the way in which the war was predominantly waged throughout the Late Middle Ages: sieges of towns and cities.

The second conclusion is that the verbs “recover” (*recuperar*) and “regain” (*cobrar*) were used less frequently. In the selective reading that we have made of the sources, we find the former verb, for example, once in Alonso de Cartagena, while Pulgar uses the latter just once. However, in both cases they are highly relevant, as they show the extent to which the idea of territorial recovery did inform the ideological discourse of the era, with both Pérez de Guzmán and Hernando del Pulgar speaking of “returning to its old possession” (*tornar a la antigua posesión*) and “reinstating” (*restituir*) dominion. It is surprising, however, that the verb “restaurar” (*restaurar*) is not found, which would establish a link between these authors and the rhetoric articulated by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, who spoke of the “loss and restoration of Spain” (*pérdida y restauración de España*). This does not mean that the term was unknown, since Alonso de Palencia himself in his *Universal vocabulario en latín y*

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[...] established his royal palace in August, where he built the town of Santa Fé [...], within sight of the city of Granada, very strong, with very strong buildings, and of very great workmanship, reticular, as it is today, to face Granada, and the king named it Santa Fe, as it was always his desire, and the Queen, his wife's, to bolster the Holy Catholic Faith [...].”

63. Bernáldez. *Historia...*: 303. “[The king sent the...] Marqués de Villena, and with many other knights and with three thousand on horseback, and two thousand *espingarderos* (Soldiers equipped with early models of the shotgun, or fielding piece) to enter the Alhambra and seize it; and they went there, and they entered, and took it from top to bottom, and they ran up, in the highest tower, the banner of Jesus Christ, which was that of Holy Cross, which the King always carried on the holy conquest with him; and the King, the Queen, the Prince, and all the troops humbled themselves before the Holy Cross, and gave many thanks and praise to our Lord [...].”



*romance* consigns these words and defines the verb *restaurare* as “renovar y de nuevo fazer entero”; the word *restituere*, for its part, is defined as “tornar por entero et reducir en su propio lugar o en el honor que primero tenía o en el grado primero”.<sup>64</sup> It is necessary, then, to carry out a systematic reading of the chronicles and an exhaustive review using computer tools in order to establish precisely the frequency with these different terms were used by the various authors in question.

The third conclusion consists of the possibility of establishing that, together with territorial occupation - the expansion of Castilian borders, to put it another way - the war against the Muslims sought to subject the Muslims to the dominion of the Castilian kings and restore their full sovereignty over illegitimately occupied lands – “tyranny” (*tiranía*), writes Pulgar. “Subjection” (*sujeción*), “dominion” (*señorío*), and “restitution” (*restitución*) are the terms used to refer to the political and legal dimensions of the confrontation. It is interesting to note that only in Pulgar the idea of definitively expelling the Muslims from the Peninsula clearly expressed.

The fourth conclusion is that, in light of the accounts, it is possible to state that, for our chroniclers, contemporaries of and participants in, in many cases, the military operations of which they wrote, the “war against the Moors” was a peculiar kind of war, in any case different from civil clashes between nobles, or wars waged on other powers. What elements made this war unique? Undoubtedly, the fact that it was being fought against the enemies of Christ – “holy conquest” (*santa conquista*)- writes Bernáldez - but also that it was a struggle to expand Christianity and recover for Christendom those territories under Islamic rule since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The conversion of mosques into churches, their endowment by the monarchs, the presentation of the banners of the Virgin and of Santiago, as well as the holding of masses and processions, and the singing of the *Te Deum*, clearly illustrate the spiritual dimension of the struggle and the importance of liturgy to the reintegration of the sites recovered into Christianity

We can, moreover, detect the existence of a historical consciousness and a particular identity hinging on the notion of territorial loss and the generation of an expectation of territorial expansion, subjugation of the enemy, and the triumph of Christianity. In this sense, the “war against the Moors” (*guerra contra los moros*) was conceived as an ongoing fight that had begun in the time of Pelayo, featured memorable episodes in the time of Ferdinand III, and that, with interruptions and setbacks, would not be concluded until all the lands of Islam were subjected to the Christian monarchs’ dominion. In this sense, it was a process of conquest inherited from the past, but with a view to the future, allowing the different monarchs to legitimize their political positions. Hence the efforts of Ferdinand I to wage war on the Muslims, taking advantage of the minority of his nephew; and those of Queen Isabella once the War of Succession had ended and the kingdom was pacified.

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64. dePalencia, Alonso, *Universalvocabularioenlatínyromance*, Sevilla, PaulodeColoniaimpresor, 1490. Digital Edition. Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2005, t. II, f. CCCCXVIIIr. 18 April 2022. <[https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/universal-vocabulario-en-latin-y-en-romance-tomo-ii--0/html/003fa87a-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_262.html](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/universal-vocabulario-en-latin-y-en-romance-tomo-ii--0/html/003fa87a-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_262.html)>.



The aforementioned elements can be associated with the concept of Reconquest, as it was conceived by the historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the fact that fifteenth-century Castilian historians had not used this term, should make contemporary historians to reflect on the relevance of using historiographical category of Reconquest which, in addition to having served as tool of analysis more or less useful, she have also been used as discursive element that underpinned a particularly vision of the past not exempt from a certain teleology. In this sense, it would be much closer to historical reality to refer to that long multidimensional conflict simply as the war between Christians and Muslims, thus avoiding reproducing in contemporary studies the sense of illegitimacy that fifteenth-century Castilian chroniclers gave to the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula. This would not prevent, in any way, recognizing the existence of a political and historical project aimed at expelling Muslims from the Hispanic lot or, at least, to submit them to the authority of the Castilian sovereigns.

The war in Granada has traditionally been considered the framework in which the fight against Peninsular Islam ceased to be a border war and become a matter of State, led by its monarchs. This is unquestionable, but, examining the sources themselves, a final point that must be highlighted is Castilian society's express resolve in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century to wage a total war, and the parallels between the infante Ferdinand I of Antequera and Ferdinand V if Castile are clear and striking: both proposed war before the nobles of the kingdom, gathered in *cortes*; both asked for extraordinary resources, both summoned the nobility and their vassals to arms, both looked to artillery for a pivotal technological advantage, and neither hesitated to lead their armies, despite the danger involved. The fact that the throne of Aragon was left vacant after the death of Martin the Humane derailed Castilian military efforts between 1407 and 1410, but not the political project for the recovery of the entire Peninsula.

Although it might seem that everything been said about the Reconquest, it is necessary to continue examining and pondering the linguistic and ideological constructions that legitimized the expansion of the Hispano-Christian kingdoms in order to purge them of the nationalistic connotations that were attached to them in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to be able to define and to better characterize the medieval realities and conceptions of the time, avoiding anachronisms and revealing, at the same time, the complexity of those linguistic formulations that supported the Castilian monarchy's political agenda.

