

THE 'RECONQUEST': A NEW PROPOSAL OF DEFINITION

CARLOS DE AYALA MARTÍNEZ
UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID
SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

In the following pages, we propose to rehabilitate the use of the term “reconquest” (*reconquista*). We understand and appreciate the reasons that have rendered it controversial, and are aware of the legitimate circumstances that have led to “condemnation” of usage of the word, which has been misrepresented and ideologically manipulated in the past and even today. We believe, however, that it is time to reclaim the instrumental value of a term that defines with precision a medieval ideology that arose to justify the expansive war of the Christians in the north of the Peninsula at Islam’s expense. This ideology is rooted in very old and extensive accounts throughout the Peninsula, reflecting different models of understanding, not always alluding to a Visigoth past or the legendary Battle of Covadonga. In any case, albeit intermittently, it is an ideology that permeated the Peninsula throughout the entire Middle Ages.

KEYWORDS

Reconquest, Iberian Peninsula, Middle Ages.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Restauratio Hispanica, Peninsula Iberica, Medium aevum.

1. Presentation¹

To discuss the usage of a term entails assigning words a value much greater than their instrumental one. In a way, by ascribing words certain intentions, which is very frequent and, often, unavoidable, we are only “essentializing” their content, turning words themselves into objects of study. This is what has happened with the word “reconquest”. Of course, its spread was infused with ideology when, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the nationalist conservatism of the 19th-century Bourbon Restoration began to popularize it. It designated, at that time, a process that served to characterize the construction of the Spanish nation. This process, according to the narrative that was advanced, had been initiated by a set of kings in Asturias who demanded the recovery of the legacy they inherited from the Catholic, unitary monarchy of the Visigoths who preceded them. The objective was to recover the political/religious unity that a people entirely alien to the Spanish reality had destroyed, having imposed a faith and a culture foreign to it. It was, therefore, a quest to expel them by making the values of unity and Christianity prevail, which came to define Spain’s essence, its *raison d’être*, though accepting part of the invaders’ artistic/cultural legacy, already integrated into that essence.²

This rhetoric was widely and forcefully articulated throughout the last third of the 19th century and into the first of the 20th. Actually, the Second Republic did not modify it. The idea that the Middle Ages on the Peninsula constituted a scenario characterized by the recovery of territory and culture was maintained, and this process was sometimes defined as a “war of independence”.³ Naturally, it was the most conservative sectors of the republican political spectrum that radicalized its instrumentalization; Gil Robles did so in a famous speech at Madrid’s Teatro Monumental (theater) in 1933.⁴ This same tone was that inherited and taken up by General Franco, “Caudillo de la Nueva Reconquista”, taking it to his most grotesque

1. This article is part of a research project entitled “Violencia religiosa en la Edad Media peninsular: guerra, discurso apologetico y relato historiográfico (ss. x-xv)”. (Religious Violence in the Middle Ages on the Peninsula: War, Apologetic Discourse and Historiographic Narrative R&D (10th-15th centuries)” (HAR2016-74968-P), financed by the Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad (Spain).

2. Ríos Saloma, Martín F. *La Reconquista. Una construcción historiográfica (siglos xvi-xix)*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2011; Ríos Saloma, Martín F. *La Reconquista en la historiografía española contemporánea*. Mexico-Madrid: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México y Sílex Ediciones, 2013; Ayala Martínez, Carlos de. “La Reconquista: ¿ficción o realidad historiográfica?”, *La Edad Media peninsular. Aproximaciones y problemas*, Ángel Gordo Molina, Diego Melo Carrasco, coords. Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2017: 127-142.

3. This was the case with the 1935 edition of the *Dalmàu Carles Encyclopedia*: Hidalgo Herrera, Manuel. “¿Han evolucionado los libros de texto? Análisis comparativo del Medioevo en manuales escolares del siglo xx y Xxi”. *CLIO. History and History teaching*, 40 (2014): <<http://clio.rediris.es>>.

4. *Era necesario ir a la reconquista de España con deseo de abrazar a los que vengan a luchar las batallas por Dios y por la Patria. Se quería dar a España una verdadera unidad, un nuevo espíritu, una política totalitaria* (“It was necessary to undertake the reconquest of Spain with a desire to embrace those who come to fight the battles for God and for the homeland. The aim was to give Spain a true unity, a new spirit, a totalitarian regime”); González Requena, Rafael, ed. *La Segunda República española. Una propuesta didáctica*. Consejería de Administración Local y Relaciones Institucionales, 2014: 280 < https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/sites/default/files/2020-04/La_Segunda_Republica_Espanola.pdf>.



manifestations,⁵ both in the uprising that triggered the Civil War, and throughout the dictatorship that was instituted after it. This well-known question does not require further attention.⁶ Also well known is the reaction of Spanish medievalists in the wake of the establishment of democracy, as again the term was imbued with and connoted a reactionary political ideology.⁷

However, now well into the new century, we are witnessing a new change in assessments of and attitudes towards the term. For a little over ten years now, some medievalists have had no qualms about retrieving the word "reconquest" in its strictly instrumental dimension, stripping it of all kinds of ideological connotations acquired in modern times, and even at the very moment of its initial, nineteenth-century use.⁸ This recovery has certainly not been widespread, but those of us who endorse it believe that the word "reconquest" is the most appropriate to define an perfectly documented ideology in the Middle Ages, one based on the aspiration to reconquer a territory seized by the Muslims and that, in the past, had been the site of a flourishing and profoundly Christian society. The architects of this ideology - which, as we will see, featured multiple and diverse manifestations - did not use the word "reconquest", in any case, because such a term did not exist in Latin or in Iberian Romance. The verb "reconquistar" does occasionally appear in a text dating from the second half of the 12th century,⁹ but what is evident are expressions, over the centuries, of the idea of returning to an idealized past that the Muslims had destroyed and that required, therefore, their defeat, expulsion, and, in any case, recovering from them the lands that they had seized.

There has been speculation about the possibility of designating this ideology with another name devoid of the stigmatization of "reconquest", but these initiatives have not been successful. The term "restoration",¹⁰ which does appear in the documentation, is more related to the re-establishment of Christian worship and the ecclesiastical framework making it possible, and does not seem to do justice

5. *Caudillo de la Nueva Reconquista / Señor de España, que en su fe renace...* These are the first two verses of the well-known poem that Manuel Machado dedicates to Franco: D'Ors, Miguel. "¡La sonrisa de Franco resplandece! (Notas sobre un topos de la literatura "nacional" de la guerra de 1936-1939)". *RILCE. Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 8 (1992): 19.

6. An interesting iconographic overview, in: Moreno Martín, Francisco J. "'Gesta Dei per Hispanos'. Invención, visualización e imposición del mito de cruzada durante la guerra civil y el primer franquismo", *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, José Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019: 483-518.

7. García Fitz, Francisco. "Crítica e hipercrítica en torno al concepto de reconquista. Una aproximación a la historiografía reciente", *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, José Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019: 79-98; García Sanjuán, Alejandro. "Cómo desactivar una bomba historiográfica: la pervivencia actual del paradigma de la Reconquista", *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, José Santiago Palacios Ontalva, eds. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019: 99-119.

8. García Fitz, Francisco. *La Reconquista*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2010; Ayala, Carlos de. "La Reconquista...".

9. Ayala, Carlos de. "La Reconquista...": 127 and note 3.

10. Ríos Saloma, Martín F. *La Reconquista. Una construcción...*: 331.



to the political and clearly territorial dimension of an ideology that sought to legitimize a change of dominion over Iberia. Speaking of “feudal conquest” or simply “conquest”,¹¹ meanwhile, refers to a process of military occupation, rather than the ideology that justifies it, such that it does a disservice to those of us who do not believe that this military process alone (not as continuous, generalized, or unambiguous as has sometimes been thought) can be said to characterize the period in question.

The word “reconquest”, applied exclusively to the ideological framework sustaining Christians’ conquering expansion at the expense of Islam, does not even require seamless continuity, as ideologies are not processes, and, at times, they remain latent until their use is necessary again. However, it must be conceded that reuse of the term is not without its dangers. The fact that some academics use it, even if it is only in the sense indicated, may still give rise to an abusive and unqualified use more akin to the old, conventional idea than with the proposed reinterpretation of it. Hence, those of us who advocate for its reuse face the challenge of trying to explain exactly what the “reconquest” is, and what it is not: an ideology of the past that should not be extrapolated outside the context in which it was conceived; and that, in any case, does not designate a historical period, much less a supposed 800-year war between Christians and Muslims that never took place in the way traditionally envisioned.

Of course, this recent rehabilitation of the term “reconquest” is not supported by a consensus of the academic community. In fact, in a recent study, Professor García Sanjuán, opposed to its usage in any case, established a classification in Peninsular medievalism with reference to the term, identifying three different groups of researchers:¹² those who reject it as unacceptable given its irremediable ideological undertones; those who, in accordance with the more traditional interpretation, though to varying degrees, understand and accept the ‘reconquest’ as that formative period of the Peninsular reality without which it impossible to understand the realities of Spanish history; and, finally, those of us who propose to recover the term by applying it exclusively to the ideological dimension to which we are referring, without the term itself or its underlying ideology authorizing us to embrace an unqualified and clearly reductionistic interpretation of our Middle Ages, reducing it to a struggle between Christians and Muslims only resolved upon the taking of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs. Professor García Sanjuán defines us as “reformists”. I am not clear on what we are supposed to be reforming, according to this suggestion, because we are not trying to make a conception of the past more palatable, or acceptable, but rather simply to recover the instrumental value of a word.

11. Torró, Joseph. “Pour en finir avec la Reconquête. L’occupation chrétienne d’alAndalous, la soumission et la disparition des populations musulmanes (XII^e-XIII^e siècles)”. *Cahiers d’Histoire. Revue d’Histoire Critique*, 78 (2000): 79-97.

12. García Sanjuán, Alejandro. “Cómo desactivar una bomba historiográfica...”.



To this end, we are going to present, in the next few pages, the process behind the development of a narrative, that of the reconquest, whose formulation is very old; one that is widely manifest throughout the Peninsula, appearing under models having different conceptions; and one that is, of course, very persistent over time, encompassing - undoubtedly, with significant interruptions - the entire medieval period.

2. A very old narrative

It is frequently affirmed that the earliest of the reconquest stories is the neo-Gothic account found in the Asturian historiographical series by Alfonso III, shortly before the year 900. In reality, however, there is an account a hundred years older, dating back to about the year 800, linked to the first decades of the reign of Alfonso II (791-842). Of course, it does not feature an articulation as complete as that from a century later, and it also differs from it in that it is devoid of the Neo-Gothicism that characterizes the latter.

Its reconstruction is possible thanks to two documents of extraordinary interest. The oldest is what has been called the *Laterculus regum Ovetensium*, a list of kings from Pelayo to Alfonso II himself, composed when the latter rose to the throne, or very shortly thereafter, and that is considered the first of the historiographical manifestations of the Asturian monarchy.¹³ The list is preceded by a mini-chronicle in which we are summarily told that, after dominating *Ispania* for almost 400 years, the Goths were driven from their kingdom (*expuli sunt*) in the year 711, when dominion passed to the Saracens, who held it for five years before Don Pelayo came to reign.¹⁴ To this we must add another curious complementary fact. In the year 742 a copyist proceeded to reproduce John of Biclaro's chronicle, and added an epilogue containing a speculation about the end of the sixth millennium, with which historical time would conclude, and everything seems to indicate (the text is damaged) that this moment would come in the year 801. The copy has been preserved for us in a manuscript that also includes the laterculus in question.¹⁵ Regardless of where that copy might have been produced, the connection between this apocalyptic speculation and a list of kings culminating in the rise of Alfonso II a few years before the prophetic fulfillment, could well constitute a sign of expectations of victory associated with the monarch's triumph over the Muslims. Let us not forget - as some

13. Collins, Roger. *La conquista árabe, 710-797. Historia de España*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1991: III, 62; Huete Fudio, Mario. *La historiografía latina medieval en la Península Ibérica (siglos VIII-XII). Fuentes y Bibliografía*. Madrid: Universidad autónoma de Madrid, 1997: 15; Bautista, Francisco. "Breve historiografía: Listas regias y Anales en la Península Ibérica (Siglos VII-XII)". *Talia Dixit*, 4 (2009): 128-131.

14. Bautista, Francisco. "Breve historiografía...": 129.

15. Collins, Roger. *La conquista árabe...: 62*.



specialists have pointed out¹⁶ - that the apocalyptic sentiment focused on the year 800 was closely related to intellectual circles in Andalusian Christianity opposed to Islamic domination, and it is entirely conceivable that the first ideologues of the Asturian monarchy wished to link the dawn of the new era of God's reign with the victorious figure of its king.

Alfonso II, according to the laterculus, inherited the legacy of a series of kings, Pelayo chief among them, who, although they were not direct heirs of the Goths, did aspire to put an end to an Islamic dominion in the same area where the Goths had ruled; that is, though the Asturian kings were not the successors of the Goths, they did aspire to control their ancient kingdom.

This idea connects with the second document we have from Alfonso II, his well-known *testamentum*, or endowment of the Oviedo Church, dating from 812.¹⁷ Its preamble tells us of the glory of the Goths, favored by God until their pride brought down upon them punishment in the form of the "Arab sword". According to it, the kingdom lost its glory, along with its king, Rodrigo, but God, in his mercy, did not wish for its misfortune to be irreversible. Thus, through his servant Pelayo, freed from punishment and elevated to the rank of prince, he fought against its enemies, defending the Christian and Asturian people. Alfonso II, Pelayo's great-grandson (as he himself made sure to underscore), offers God the gifts allowing him to overcome the adversaries of the faith and to secure the forgiveness of sins for those working for the recovery of the house of the Lord.¹⁸

The message is clear: Alfonso, Pelayo's direct heir, is called upon to defeat those who brought an end to the kingdom of the Goths, this with the assistance of God and of all those who helped to recover his house. Regardless of the real meaning of this last idea, ambiguous and not entirely clear,¹⁹ it is obvious that Alfonso II hoped to regain control over the kingdom of the Goths, justly wrested from them by a wrathful God.

The Gothic monarchy appears, thus, as an indirect object of desire. It was considered to have collapsed, without a doubt, as a consequence of its sin, such that it was not a question of restoring it. However, as of 800 it came to be seen as having wielded a glorious power and reigned over an area that had be recovered.

16. Díaz y Díaz, Manuel C. *Libros y librerías en La Rioja altomedieval*. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1991: 134; Gil, Juan. "Los terrores del año 800", *Actas del Simposio para el Estudio de los Códices del 'Comentario al Apocalipsis' de Beato de Liébana*. Madrid: Joyas Bibliográficas, 1978: I, 219.

17. Today, qualifications aside, the document, although not original, is considered authentic: Fernández Conde, Francisco Javier. *El Libro de los Testamentos de la Catedral de Oviedo*. Roma: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1971: 119-123; Isla Frez, Amancio. "Monarchy and Neogothicism in the Astur Kingdom, 711-910". *Francia*, 26 (1999): 45-50; Ruiz de la Peña Solar, José Ignacio. "La monarquía asturiana (718-910)", *El Reino de León en la Alta Edad Media*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1995: III, 164 and note 4; Sanz Fuentes, María Josefa. "Estudio codicológico, paleográfico y diplomático", *Testamento de Alfonso II el Casto. Estudio y contexto histórico*. Oviedo: Madú Ediciones, 2005: 78.

18. García Larragueta, Santos, ed. *Colección de Documentos de la Catedral de Oviedo*. Oviedo: Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 1992: 4-9.

19. Bronisch, Alexander P. *Reconquista y guerra santa. La concepción de la guerra en la España cristiana desde los visigodos hasta comienzos del siglo XII*. Granada: Universidad de Granada-Universidad de Oviedo-Universitat de València, 2006: 163 and 165-167.



The idea, obviously, came from the south, from the Christian settings that, subjected to Islam, soon began to idealize the Gothic past and project on it a distorted and falsified image of a politically united kingdom, strong in its Catholic foundations, and cohesive from a territorial point of view, though a kingdom whose sin had brought about its collapse. In Andalusian spheres, some of this can be seen very early, in what has been dubbed the *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*. It does not contain a providential explanation, associated with sin, to explain the kingdom's demise, but its profound lamentation over its destruction contrasts with the image it previously projects of a flourishing and united kingdom²⁰. According to the chroniclers, this kingdom had only occasionally been shaken by some fleeting episodes of political or military instability. In any case, it was portrayed as a kingdom capable of putting an end to the Jewish problem,²¹ successfully fighting against heresy, strengthening Catholic doctrine, winning Rome's admiration, and governing itself through frequent council meetings at which wise and virtuous clergy shone.²²

This idealized image must soon have reached the "resistant" north, a territory not precisely characterized by a strong institutional implantation of the ancient Gothic kingdom. The image, nevertheless, continued to be refined over the course of the 9th century in Andalusian settings, and we have some interesting samples of this dating from the middle of the century. In his *Memoriale sanctorum*, penned in 851, Eulogius of Cordoba confirms that, because of sin, power in Hispania had fallen into the hands of infidels, after the fall of the kingdom of the Goths, once distinguished by their devotion to Christian worship, the dignity of their venerable bishops, and the construction of admirable basilicas, erected in a "time of peace."²³ Very shortly thereafter, at the end of that same year, 851, Eulogius was more precise, assigning the Church responsibility for this unfortunate fall: the *res publica* of the Goths, which had flourished thanks to the good government exercised by the bishops, was now in the hands of the followers of the abominable prophet of Islam, this being a consequence of God's just designs, as he had punished the Church's submissive conformity towards the Andalusian authorities.²⁴

This idealized image, in contrast to the Muslims' unjustified persecution of the Christians, decried by Eulogius himself and his followers, was decisive in developing the narrative of reconquest that would soon materialize in the north. Eulogius himself, while offering us his particular vision of the Gothic past, concocts a stereotypical image of the confrontation between the Christians and Muslims as an

20. In the wake of Isidorian historiography, Suintila was depicted as the one who was able to victoriously control *totius Ispanie monarchiam*. López Pereira, J. Eduardo, ed. *Crónica Mozárabe de 754. Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 2009: 186-187.

21. López Pereira, J. Eduardo, ed. *Crónica Mozárabe...*: 184-185.

22. López Pereira, J. Eduardo, ed. *Crónica Mozárabe...*: 184-187, 200-201, 208-215, 218-221.

23. Gil, Juan. *Scriptores Muzarabici saeculi VIII-XI. Corpvs Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*, LXVA. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020: II, 775; Herrera Roldán, Pedro. *San Eulogio. Obras*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2005: 96. The last expression to refer to the Gothic period as a "time of peace" comes from the last part of the work, Book III, written a few years later, in 856: Gil, Juan. *Scriptores Muzarabici...*: II, 841; Herrera Roldán, Pedro. *San Eulogio...*: 147.

24. Gil, Juan. *Scriptores Muzarabici...*: II, 875; Herrera Roldán, Pedro. *San Eulogio...*: 184.



ongoing and arduous fight,²⁵ and, shortly thereafter, before the end of the century, the *Passio de Nunilón y Alodia*, two “voluntary martyrs” in Huesca, allude to the mountains *ubi christiani habitant* offering safe haven for those who felt persecuted by the Muslims.²⁶

Such were the foundations upon which the most primitive formulation of the story of reconquest was constructed in Alfonso III’s court at Oviedo at the end of the 9th century. Let us not forget that, in all likelihood, it was the legation of Bishop Dulcidio, sent by Alfonso III to Córdoba in 883, of which the *Codex Vigilanus* informs us, that took Eulogius’s remains, along with his work, to the court of the Asturian monarch.²⁷

Based on this, and, naturally, a whole wealth of propaganda shrewdly manipulated, Alfonso III’s “historiographical series” features a story of a providential nature, undoubtedly very much to the taste of a monarch who aspired to overcome the frustrating limitations inherited from his predecessors by organizing a major, precedent-setting, expansionist offensive. The *Codex Vigilanus*, reminding us of the words of Eulogius in his letter to the Bishop of Pamplona,²⁸ tells us that the Christians fight the Saracens day and night, continuously.²⁹ The idea of expulsion is present, and the king’s actions seem to point in that direction: the establishment of a border worthy of the name at the Duero and raids into important territories of Al-Andalus, without overlooking a clear strategic agreement with the young monarchy in Pamplona.³⁰ All this stoked the idea of an impending end of the war, the restoration of the Gothic kingdom, and the Christian reunification of Hispania, aspects constituting the story of the *Prophetic Chronicle* (*Crónica Profética*).³¹ This augury of imminent Christian triumph probably emboldened Alfonso III to consider the prospect of obtaining an imperial crown.³²

25. ... *Semper inter se utrique graui conflictu certantes*... He expressed himself in these terms in a letter addressed in November 851 to Bishop Wiliesindo of Pamplona: Gil, Juan. *Scriptores Muzarabici*...: II, 914; Herrera Roldán, Pedro. *San Eulogio*...: 223.

26. Riesco Chueca, P. *Pasionario Hispánico (Introducción, Edición Crítica y Traducción)*. Universidad de Sevilla: 298-299.

27. Gil, Juan. *Chronica hispana saeculi VIII et IX. Corpvs Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*, LXV. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2018: 474; Gil, Juan. *Scriptores Muzarabici*...: II, 717. Fernández Conde, Francisco Javier. *Estudios sobre la monarquía asturiana*. Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2015: 154-161. Some doubts about the historicity of the transfer at such an early date: Guance, Ariel. “Eulogio de Córdoba y las reliquias de los mártires”. *Revista Historia Autónoma*, 11 (2017): 296-297.

28. See n. 25.

29. *Et cum eis [sarracenis] Christiani die noctuque bella iniunt et cotidie confligunt*: Gil, Juan. *Chronica hispana saeculi VIII et IX*...: 460.

30. Ruiz de la Peña, J. Ignacio. *La monarquía asturiana*...: 99-105.

31. *Quod etiam ipsi Sarrazeni quosdam prodigiis uel a[us]trorum signis interitum suum adpropinquare predicunt et Gotorum regnum restaurari per hunc Nostrum principem dicunt; etiam et multorum Xpianorum reuelationibus atque ostensionibus hic princeps noster gloriosus dominus Adefonsus proximiori tempore in omni Spania predicetur regnaturus*. Gil, Juan. *Chronica hispana saeculi VIII et IX*...: 483.

32. As is known, a little more than 15 years ago Patrick Henriët challenged, as apocryphal, the traditional consideration of the 906 document that Alfonso III was said to have sent to the canons of St. Martin of Tours: “La lettre d’Alphonse III, rex Hispaniae, aux chanoines de Saint-Martin de Tours (906)”, *Retour aux*



The truth is that a narrative built on these arguments required a legitimizing, intensely providential version of events to justify the restoration of the old Gothic Hispania, one that would have as its starting point a dramatic advent, tinged with sacredness: the one featuring Pelayo and the legendary Battle of Covadonga. The latter episode, and the events that surround it, as is well known, are the result of a combination of highly varied hagiographic and liturgical materials. The battle itself constitutes an archetypal account whose basic structure - the refuge taken by "the good men" in the mountains, surrounded by the wicked, and the Divinity's salvific intercession on behalf of the former through miraculous actions - are already present in the *Oracles of Hyspaspes*, an apocalyptic text written around the beginning of our era, and that is preserved, to a large extent, in the work of Lactantius.³³

Curiously, this narrative of reconquest soon omitted the legend of Pelayo, almost immediately after creating it, and it would not be recovered until practically the 12th century. In the 10th and 11th centuries there are clear accounts that, reflecting a consciousness of reconquest, explain the events related to the expansive progression of the Leonese Christians at the expense of Islam, but none of them alludes to either Pelayo or Covadonga. We have analyzed them elsewhere.³⁴ It should suffice to indicate here that these accounts allude to the *regnum Spanie*,³⁵ to recuperating *quod nostrum est*,³⁶ or liberating the Christian territories from the presence of the Arabs by driving them³⁷ out. They are often related either to cities not linked to the Oviedo tradition, such as Santiago; or to the need to emphasize their leading role outside of it, such as León or Toledo. And, at times it seems that the Christians drive to recapture lost territory is more a response to the memory of Almanzor and his devastating campaigns than those of the first Muslim conquerors of the Peninsula.³⁸

sources. Textes, études et documents d'histoire médiévale offerts à Michel Parisse, Sylvian Goughenheim, ed. Paris: Picard, 2004: 155-166.

33. We have summarized the information in Ayala Martínez, Carlos de. "Pelayo y Covadonga: La formación del discurso reconquistador", *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, eds. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes, J.S. Palacios Ontalva. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019: 17-52.

34. Ayala, Carlos de. "Pelayo y Covadonga...": 30-34.

35. Original of Vermudo II de 996: Fernández Conde, Francisco Javier, Torrente Fernández, Isabel y Noval Méndez, Guadalupe de la, eds. *El Monasterio de San Pelayo de Oviedo. Historia y Fuentes*, I. *Colección Diplomática (996-1325)*. Oviedo: Monasterio de San Pelayo, 1978: 20.

36. Forged document attributed to Ordoño II, allegedly from 915, later dated to the second half of the 11th century. Lucas Álvarez, Manuel, ed. *Tumbo A de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela*. Santiago: Cabildo de la Santa Apostólica y Metropolitana Iglesia Catedral, 1998: 89-92. The chronology is pushed back somewhat: Deswarte, Thomas. *Une Chrétienté romaine sans pape. L'Espagne et Rome (586-1085)*. Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2010: 562-566.

37. Document by Bishop Pelayo de León, from 1073, on the occasion of the restoration of his church; and endowment document of the Toledo Cathedral, from 1086: Ruiz Asencio, José María, ed. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775-1230)*, IV (1032-1109). León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1990: 438-447, y Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio*, II. *Colección diplomática*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1998: 224-229.

38. This is what the document on the restoration of the church of León, from 1073, suggests.



The scenario changed at the beginning of the 12th century when the *Historia Silense* recovered rhetoric of reconquest in which Pelayo plays a prominent role, based mainly on the chronicles of Alfonso III, but we will revisit this later. In any case, we will point out here that the void prior to the “neo-Gothic” version of events found in the *Silense*, featuring a heroic Pelayo, was exploited in an effort to consolidate, in this western sphere of the Peninsula, another vision of reconquest that had nothing to do with not only Pelayo, and Covadonga, but any upholding of a Gothic past. Elsewhere, where we have studied it, we have dubbed this “Carolingian reconquest.”³⁹ Here we will limit ourselves to indicating that the influence of the epic *Chanson de Roland*, in combination with that of the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James), and the following it generated, from which the Church in said city great benefitted, ended up giving rise to a vision of the reconquest that exalted and glorified the role played by the Church of Santiago. Charlemagne, at the behest of the Apostle, managed to defeat the Muslims and recover the Peninsula for Christianity, laying all the fruits of his heroic action at the feet of Santiago and its archbishop, who would control all of Hispania. The *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, inserted into the *Liber Sancti Iacobi* in the mid-12th century, contains precisely this story, which Archbishop Gelmírez drew upon in 1125 to call for a crusade to free the entire Peninsula from the Muslim yoke. This was a reconquest now clearly converted into a crusade.⁴⁰

3. A very widespread narrative

The narrative of reconquest, in addition to being very old, was widespread throughout the Peninsula and, of course in areas outside the Asturian/Leonese territories.

We must first refer to the primitive kingdom of Pamplona ruled by the Jiménez Dynasty, from the Court of Nájera, in which, at the end of the 10th century, a very particular version of the Asturian Neo-Gothic account was developed. It would crystallize in the drafting of the Albelda and Roda codices under the auspices of Sancho II of Pamplona (970-994). Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz drew attention to the “reconstruction of the Visigothic state and church” then taking place in this area of La

39. Ayala Martínez, Carlos de. “¿Reconquista o reconquistas? La legitimación de la guerra santa peninsular”. *Revista del Centro de Estudios de Granada y su Reino*, 32 (2020): 12-14.

40. Portela, Ermelino. *Diego Gelmírez (c. 1065-1140). El báculo y la ballesta*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2016: 115-121.



Rioja.⁴¹ The Alfonsine chronicle's rhetoric of reconquest, after the Asturian-Leonese failure, was, thus, embodied in a vibrant and renewed Pamplona monarchy.⁴²

If we shift to the Pyrenees, some of the oldest accounts, such as the *Chronicle of Moissac*, composed shortly after 800, are limited to providing an account of the Saracens' conquest as divine punishment for the degenerate life and bad example set by Witiza for his clergy and people. They also speak of the success of the invasion over almost all of *Spania* in a record time of two years, and of the consequent end of the Visigoths' kingdom after Rodrigo's defeat.⁴³ This does not mean, by any means, that in Catalanian areas the cultural and political continuity of the Gothic heritage was denied, whose importance in the genesis of medieval Catalonia was rightly underlined by Zimmermann.⁴⁴ The Franco-Carolingian literary chronicles and accounts from the first half of the 9th century, regarding the conquest of Barcelona by Louis the Pious in 801, recognize Gothic leadership in the task of territorial recovery. Ermoldo el Negro (The Black), for example, tells us about their presence in the Carolingian army, and that Count Bera and the Goths were entrusted with its subsequent government.⁴⁵ The political leadership of the "reconquest" was Carolingian, but, in part, its protagonists and, of course, its ultimate beneficiaries, would be the Goths, whose differences with the Franks are gradually accentuated in the historiographic evidence available to us.

In any case, it is obvious that in the accounts of Frankish origin we find Goths, but nothing constituting a bona fide narrative of reconquest. It would not be until the 11th century - despite the fact that at that time it was still very present in the consciousness and, above all, the legal practices of the Catalanian counties⁴⁶ - that the Gothic past would no longer be a decisive element when it came to legitimizing their origins. What would be decisive was the idea of "reconquest". As of the mid-11th century this notion - devoid of any references to Pelayo or Covadonga, of course - was employed by Ramón Berenguer to contextualize the consecration of the Cathedral of Barcelona in 1058. The document that contains it alludes to the

41. Díaz y Díaz, Manuel C. *Libros y librerías en La Rioja...*: 71; Martín Duque, Ángel. "La realeza navarra de cuño hispano-godo y su ulterior metamorfosis", *À la recherche de légitimités chrétiennes. Représentations de l'espace et du temps dans l'Espagne mé diévale (IX^e-XIII^e siècle)*, Patrick Henriët, ed. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2003: 225-241.

42. Ayala, Carlos de. "La Reconquista...": 129-130; Ayala Martínez, Carlos de. "Realidad y percepción de Hispania en la Edad Media". *eHumanista*, 37 (2017): 211.

43. Pertz, Georg Heinrich, ed. *Annales et Chronica Aevi Carolini. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum*. Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1925: 290 (year 715). Regardless of the dating of the chronicle, according to Collins, it contains genuine materials from the 8th century: Collins, Roger. *La conquista árabe...*: 81-82.

44. Zimmermann, Michel. "Conscience gothique et affirmation nationale dans la genèse de la Catalogne (IX^e-XI^e siècles", *L'Europe héritière de l'Espagne Wisigothique*, eds. Jacques Fontaine et Christine Pellistrandi. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1992: 51-67; Sabaté, Flocel. "Frontera peninsular e identidad (siglos IX-XII)", *Las Cinco Villas aragonesas en la Europa de los siglos XII y XIII. De la frontera natural a las fronteras políticas y socioeconómicas (foralidad y municipalidad)*, ed. Esteban Sarasa. Zaragoza: Institución "Fernando el Católico", 2007: 19.

45. Martínez, H. Salvador. "Historia y epopeya en el poema de Ermoldo el Negro a la conquista de Barcelona". *Anuario de Letras. Lingüística y Filología*, 16 (1978): 96 and 102.

46. Zimmermann, Michel. "Conscience gothique et affirmation nationale...": 63-64.



city of Barcelona's history of invasion/liberation, and the fact that, through the hereditary succession of the Christian counts, the city had ended up in the hands of the consecrator, put forth as a "warrior and wall of the Christian people".⁴⁷

But it is in the biography of Wilfred *the Hairy*, who begins by presenting the *Gesta comitum Barchinone et regum Aragonie*, where the concept of "reconquest" is depicted as inseparable from the identity and historical memory of medieval Catalonia. As is known, the primitive narrative of las *Gesta* ("the feats") was drawn up at the Monasterio de Ripoll between 1162 and 1184. In that biography we are told that the County of Barcelona belonged to the *Rex Francorum* (King of the Franks), and that, after his violent death at the hands of Frankish soldiers, the son of the murdered count, Wilfred, was handed over by the king to the Count of Flanders to be raised at his court. When he was barely a teenager Wilfrid got the latter's daughter pregnant, and her mother, the countess, after demanding that Wilfred pledge to marry her daughter once he had taken over the County of Barcelona, returned him to his land. There, with the support of dignitaries and magnates of the homeland, he took effective control of the County of Barcelona, *a Narbona usque in Hispaniam*, after killing the count of Frankish origin that had ousted his father, whose honor was thereby restored. Later, as he had promised, he married the daughter of the counts of Flanders, for this travelling into the lands of the Franks, from whose king he ended up receiving the investiture of the County of Barcelona. He remained for a long time in their palace, and it was while there that he received the news that "his homeland" had been invaded and conquered by the *Saracens* (*Saracens in suam patriam advenisse totamque pervasisse et obtinuisse simul fere*). Wilfred immediately asked the king for assistance to expel them (*ad depellendos*). The king, occupied with other matters, refused, but he did state, at the count's urging, that if Wilfred were able to expel the Saracens from his territory by his own means (*si a predictis suis finibus ipse per se agarenos valeret expellere*), the county would remain under his power and lineage in perpetuity (until then it had never been granted based on hereditary succession, but rather only for the time established by the king). Wilfred proceeded to expel the Saracens from his territory, driving them back to the border with Lleida, thereby courageously recovering (*recuperatum*) the county. This is how the county passed from royal authority into the hands of "our counts of Barcelona". After the Saracens were expelled, Wilfred had the Ripoll Monastery built in 888⁴⁸.

The text is of extraordinary interest. Evidently fictionalized, this aspect is the result of the more than probable epic origins of a narrative that was incorporated into the *Gesta* based on a *cantar*, a song composed between 1117 and 1146 at the monastery of San Miquel de Cuxà, perhaps by Abbot Gregorio, Archbishop

47. Petrus de Marca. *Marca Hispanica sive limes hispanicus*. Paris: Franciscum Muguet Regis & Illustrissimi Archiepiscopi Parisiensis Typographum, 1688: text 1.113; Ayala, Carlos de. "Reconquista o reconquistas?...": 16 and note 33.

48. Cingolani, Stefano M., ed. *Gestes dels comtes de Barcelona i reis d'Aragó. Gesta comitum Barchinone et regum Aragonie*. Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2012: 62-69.



of Tarragona between 1139 and 1146⁴⁹. In this case, we would be dealing with a legend, a tradition impossible to date with chronological precision.

For our purposes here, the crux of the text is that the identity of Catalonia under the rule of its count, and its hegemonic Barcelonan lineage, as conceived by the monastic circles of Ripoll, is associated with the invasion of the territory by the Muslims. This incursion, therefore, triggered the development of an identity whose memory had just taken shape under the reign of Alfonso II (1162-1196), the precursor of the future Crown of Aragon. According to the chronicle, until the Islamic conquest, the County of Barcelona was under the authority of the Frankish king. Its independence came when this king, unable to give his vassal the assistance he had requested⁵⁰, recognized Wilfred the Hairy's remarkable feat: the recovery of his homeland and the expulsion of its invaders, the Muslims; that is, the "reconquest" of the territory.

The account, in any case, seems to somehow connect with the "Carolingian reconquest" to which we referred above. On the one hand, the connection between the Barcelona house and the Flemish county that we find in the narrative is no accident. It was a way of legitimizing the lineage by associating it with Carolingian ancestors. Theoretically, Wilfred's father-in-law was, supposedly, the almost mythical Baldwin I of Flanders (Iron Arm), in turn the son-in-law of Charles the Bald, and one of his most prominent champions. The obsession of many houses of local lineages with establishing their legitimacy by substantiating their Carolingian ancestry is well known⁵¹. But there is more. The primitive wording of the *Gesta* is practically contemporaneous with another cultural initiative by the Ripoll Monastery: the 1173 copying of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle*, to which we also referred above. The almost complete copy of this text, along with other sections of the *Liber* in which it was found, was produced by a monk from Ripoll, Arnau de Mont, who traveled to Santiago in that year. In an interesting article, Jaspert has shown us the extent to which the court of Raimundo Berenguer IV, Alfonso II's father; and, of course, the *scriptorium* of Ripoll, were entirely amenable to and welcomed the neo-Carolingian approach, as it provided instruments legitimizing a political group that

49. Coll i Alentorn, Miquel. *Guifré el Pelós en la historiografia i en la llegenda*. Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1990: 16-20; Jaspert, Nikolas. "Historiografía y legitimación carolingia. El Monasterio de Ripoll, el Pseudo-Turpin y los condes de Barcelona", *Movilidad y religiosidad medieval en los reinos peninsulares, Alemania y Palestina*, ed. Nikolas Jaspert. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2020: 195-196.

50. As is known, the episode featuring the Frank's inaction in response to the the Catalanian counts' appeal for assistance in the face of Almanzor's aggression actually took place in 985, almost a century after Wilfrid's death.

51. Jaspert, Nikolas. "Historiografía y legitimación carolingia...": 201. Over the course of the 12th century, most of France's baronial families claimed their Carolingian ancestries through matrilineal lines, and this was also reflected, although at that time in a certainly exceptional way, in the reigning Capet dynasty. This is what came to be called the *reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni*, the doctrine reflected in 1196 by the Flemish chronicler Andrew of Marchiennes in his history of the French kings; in it, this ancestry is underscored for Prince Louis, heir to Philip II August, through his mother Isabella of Hainaut: Baldwin, John. *Philippe Auguste et son gouvernement. Les fondations du pouvoir royal en France au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Fayard, 1991: 467. It was probably this trend - of aristocratic origin, we should not forget - that seems to inform the narrative of the *Gesta*.



aspired to a definitive victory, in open rivalry with the hegemonic pretensions of the Capetians⁵². Like Charlemagne, his indirect successor, Wilfred the Hairy, had managed to cement control over his land by taking up arms against the infidels, from whom he recovered occupied territory.

In the Aragonese sphere, *per se*, until the constitution of the Crown of Aragon, however, we do not see any Carolingian elements, even in a discourse as infused with the notion of reconquest as that found in the endowment of the Cathedral of Huesca, bestowed in 1097 by Peter I of Aragon and Pamplona, which tells us that the Muslims had occupied almost all of Hispania for 460 years, and did nothing but oppress the Christians. God took pity on them, and the oppressed ended up throwing off the Muslim yoke, as Peter I had just done. In the story there is, of course, no Visigothic monarchy to rebuild, nor is anything owed to Pelayo or Charlemagne. There is an occupation of Hispania, and a liberating war to free it from this oppressive plight. In this account, the territory is recovered not by a specific hero, but by an entire people, that of Hispania, who, thanks to God, overcome their subjugation through their kings.⁵³

As we can see, the rhetoric of reconquest does not correspond to a single model, the neo-Gothic, as has been commonly believed. In fact, its adaptation to different scenarios and circumstances is striking. We are now going to look at another scenario, on the opposite side of the Peninsula: the kingdom of Portugal. Do we find a rhetoric of reconquest there? This is not a question that, generally speaking, has greatly concerned our Portuguese colleagues. In reality, Portugal's contact as a kingdom with Islam, and military confrontation with it, barely lasted a century. Was a legitimizing narrative, based on the idea of "reconquest", articulated at that time? The answer is affirmative, it was indeed, and we can illustrate this quite well by looking at one of the first sources that sought to justify, in political and ideological terms, the great "reconquering" event with which the first Portuguese monarch, Alfonso I (aka Henriques) initiated his reign, through which he aimed to demonstrate to Christendom the fledgling kingdom's viability: the conquest of Lisbon, in 1147.

The main source for knowledge of this is the *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi*, a detailed chronicle in the form of a letter that a priest named Raul most likely addressed to Osbert of Bawdsey, a clergyman linked to the Premonstratensian monastery of Butley, in Suffok. It is almost certainly a text by an Anglo-Norman participant in the expedition, a man close to the monarch, who would have had access to the royal chancery⁵⁴. In any case, the text should be considered quite reliable in its descriptions of the events narrated, and as suggested by Maria João Branco, it is possible that

52. Jaspert, Nikolas. "Historiografía y legitimación carolingia...": 202-203.

53. Ayala, Carlos de. "Reconquista o reconquistas?...": 15-16.

54. Livermore, Harold. "The 'Conquest of Lisbon' and its author". *Portuguese Studies*, 6 (1990): 8-12. This identification, while it cannot be ruled out, is far from definitive, and surrounded by various problems: Mattoso, José. *Don Alfonso Henriques*. Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2007: 222. See the detailed analysis of this question in: Branco, Maria João. "Introdução", *A Conquista de Lisboa a os Mouros. Relato de um cruzado*, Aires A. Nascimento, ed. Pontinha: Nova Vega, 2007: 28-34, and the very divergent opinion of Livermore



this writer, who worked in Portugal, and who offered not a “heroized” but, at least, a positive depiction of the king, and who really had access to the documentation in his chancery, did not write on his own initiative, but rather responding to a certain “official”⁵⁵ behest.

The text contains two interesting sections that narrate a good part of the story and that feature ideas clearly reflecting a consciousness of the concept of reconquest. These are the exhortation by the Bishop of Porto, Pedro Pitões, addressed to the crusaders who arrived in his city; and, above all, the preaching of Archbishop João Peculiar, near Lisbon. The former is of the utmost importance, but it is not that which best reflects the idea of reconquest. Rather, it is a clearly an exhortation in which the justification of the campaign as a just war to recover a lost territory is obscured by the prominence of a holy war line of discourse verging on the endorsement of a crusade.⁵⁶ Actually, this should not surprise us, as we are dealing with a speech by one who represented the king and was charged with welcoming the expeditionaries embarked on a crusade. Obviously, what has come down to us is not the fruit of “notes” taken *in situ* by an eyewitness, but rather a very elaborate and carefully calculated text, one better grounded from the doctrinal point of view, and drafted to be a true reflection of the “official” perspective of a king determined to portray himself as the leader of a crusade. For the bishop it was the power of God’s law and the impulse of the Holy Spirit that had spurred the expeditionaries to the Peninsula, where long before the invasion by the Moors and Moabites had been a form of divine punishment. In response to the servitude that they had imposed on the Christians, it was licit for the latter to act, without their response constituting acts of murder or cruelty.⁵⁷

The address by the Archbishop of Braga presents other characteristics that render it more in line with the tradition of reconquest on the Peninsula. The argument wielded was the legitimacy of a fight against those who, for 358 years, had unjustly occupied a territory that was not theirs. Of course, this argument is not unlike those advanced by the popes to⁵⁸ justify the Crusades, though it is true that, in contrast to the kind of radical proposals for persecution and extermination that

de: Lay, Stephen. “Escribiendo la Reconquista: la consolidación de la memoria histórica en el Portugal del siglo XII”. *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 29 (2011): 138.

55. Branco, Maria João. “Introdução...”: 38.

56. We shall not pause to focus here on the inevitable connection between the just war and crusade concepts. The well-known definition of a renowned just war theorist, Russell, is highly significant: “the crusade became a strange hybrid of holy war and just war marked by an increasingly explicit chain of command”. Russell, Frederick H. *The Just War in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 1977: 2. Neither do we need to discuss the ideas of the celebrated 13th-century canonist John of God, for whom the crusade was nothing more than a type of holy war. *Ibid.*: 199. See: Hashmi, Sohail H., ed. *Just Wars, Holy Wars and Jihads. Christian, Jewish and Muslim. Encounters and Exchanges*. Oxford University Press, 2012: 7.

57. Nascimento, Aires A., ed. *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros. Relato de um cruzado*. Pontinha: Nova Vega, 2007: 60-71. See: Maria João Branco’s comments on the discourse: Branco. “Introdução...”: 36-37.

58. A line of discourse that they also managed to adapt to the ideological framework of the reconquest of the Peninsula. In fact, elsewhere we reflect on the model of the “pontifical reconquest”: Ayala, Carlos de, “¿Reconquista o reconquistas?...”: 16-18.



usually characterized this pontifical discourse, that of João Peculiar is clearly more moderate, with connotation of “natural justice” theory according to which the Muslims might be forced to abandon the lands and leave them to the Christians, or offered a pact by which they would not have to renounce their faith or lose their possessions⁵⁹, ideas more akin to the ideology of reconquest, rather than crusading. In conclusion, the narrative of reconquest was not alien to the kingdom of Portugal, even during an era when it sought to legitimize its independence. Obviously, João Peculiar’s sermon lacks the references to the legendary Pelayo found in the neo-Gothic discourse. It does not, however, dispense with the glorious past of the Gothic monarchy, in which a thriving conciliar church had developed, which later collapsed, to which the head of the church in Lisbon had belonged.⁶⁰

The narrative of reconquest, with or without the presence of an idealized Gothic past, therefore, is found throughout the Christian bastions of the Peninsula in the central centuries of the Middle Ages. The curious thing is that it was found even in Al-Andalus itself. The presence of this narrative in Islamic sources is well known,⁶¹ and it is certainly surprising that the Muslims were so aware of the discourse that was intended to legitimize their own defeat and expulsion. Apart from the old accounts of Pelayo and his 300 “wild asses” perched on a steep mountain, provided by Aḥmad al-Rāzī in the 10th century, mainly ones like that of Sisnando Dávídiz, who cited Abd Allāh in his well-known “Memories”, from the 11th century; and Ibn Bassam’s account of the “two Rodrigos”, from the 12th century, that are the most striking, because they do not contain the supposedly recurrent demand to abandon “their country” that Ibn ‘Idārī attributes to Ferdinand I of León, circa 1300.⁶²

But there is more. The glorious Gothic past as a factor legitimizing a power installed in Al-Andalus may have been what inspired the famous rebel ‘Umar ibn Hafsun, a convert to Christianity in 899, probably at that time or almost immediately thereafter, to write, or order the drafting of a genealogy (by all indications fallacious) that identified him as the descendent of a Christian count named Alfonso, a contemporary of the Islamic conquest.⁶³ Professor Fierro suggests that this may have been a legitimizing tactic adopted to allow the rebel “to rule as a Christian king in Al-Andalus.”⁶⁴ If so, this would be a very particular and indirect reading of the

59. The Archbishop’s displays of flexibility accord with the idea he expresses of how Christians had received the faith freely and without impositions through the preaching of James and his disciples. Nascimento, Aires A., ed. *A Conquista de Lisboa...*, 2007: 92-97.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Lapedra Gutiérrez, Eva. “Reconquista cristiana y pérdida de al-Andalus en las fuentes árabes: dos discursos complementarios”. *eHumanista*, 13 (2018): 296-314; Albarrán Iruela, Javier. “Una reconquista de la reconquista: la reacción ideológica islámica al avance cristiano (ss. XI-XIII)”, *La Reconquista. Ideología y justificación de la Guerra Santa peninsular*, eds. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes and J.S. Palacios Ontalva. Madrid: La Ergástula, 2019: 233-257.

62. We have gone over the information in Ayala, Carlos de. “Reconquista o reconquistas?...”: 18-20.

63. Wasserstein, David. “Inventing tradition and constructing identity: the genealogy of ‘Umar ibn Hafsun between Christianity and Islam”. *Al-Qantara*, 23 (2002): 291-294.

64. Fierro, Maribel. *Abderramán III y el califato omeya de Córdoba*. San Sebastián: Nerea, 2011: 87.



reconquest narrative: a justification of a Christian power that, in confrontation with Andalusian authorities, pointed to the Peninsula's pre-Islamic past.

4. Conclusion: a very enduring tale

In addition to being ancient and widespread, the narrative of reconquest was highly sustained throughout the Middle Ages, especially, though not only, in its primitive neo-Gothic version, in which Pelayo played a key role. Its "rediscovery" in the *Historia Silense* at the beginning of the 12th century contributed decisively to this,⁶⁵ but, even more, and on the same basis, its "officialization" by the great Latin chroniclers of the 13th century, especially Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada. The Archbishop of Toledo's aim was to furnish the Kingdom of Castile with a Peninsular leadership that, in some way, would allow it to shape the identity of Hispania, to this end drawing upon the indispensable rhetoric of the heirs of the unitary Gothic monarchy, who demanded the re-establishment of Christian faith across the territory. This line of discourse would survive and be significantly revitalized, through the *scriptorium* of Alfonso X, during the time of the Catholic Monarchs.⁶⁶

This narrative would transcend the Castilian sphere, albeit adapted to the peculiarities of each kingdom. A case in point is the significant prologue to the *Fuero General de Navarra*, which, in the mid-13th century, spoke of the "perdition of Spain", including an account of the key role played by Julian, Count of Ceuta, in the Islamic conquest; and, of course, that of Pelayo, who was of the lineage of the Goths, and fought *de Asturias a moros et de todas las montaynas*.⁶⁷ The most common phenomenon, however, was an adaptation of this discourse, eluding anything that could justify Castilian hegemony. This is what we find in Portugal, where, before the end of the 13th century, chroniclers proclaimed that the Portuguese kingdom was, in fact, the legitimate heir of the Goths.⁶⁸ Within the realm of the Crown of Aragon the Gothic legacy tended to be dispensed with more readily, but the idea of a Hispania that had to be saved through the actions of its kings, capable of deciding its destiny, had been present since the *Llibre dels Feyts* ("Book of Deeds", an autobiographical chronicle of the reign of James I of Aragon) until the Chronicle of *Pere el Ceremoniós* (*Chronicle of*

65. Ayala, Carlos de. "Pelayo y Covadonga...": 34-40.

66. We shall not dwell here on aspects extensively covered in other works. See, for example, the interesting historiographic overview by Fernández-Ordóñez, Inés. "La denotación de "España" en la Edad Media. Perspectiva historiográfica (siglos VII-XIV)" *Actas del IX Congreso Internacional de Historia de la Lengua Española* (Cádiz, 2012), ed. J.M. García Martín. Vol 1, coords. Teresa Bastardín Candón and Manuel Rivas Zancarrón. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2015: 49-106. We already had the opportunity to synthesize these questions in other works cited in these pages.

67. Utrilla Utrilla, Juan, ed. *El Fuero General de Navarra. Estudio y edición de las redacciones protosistemáticas* (Series A y B), I. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1987: 151-152.

68. Miranda, José Carlos. "Na Génese da Primeira Crónica Portuguesa". *Medievalista online* 6 (2009) <<http://medievalista.iem.fcsh.unl.pt/>>.



Peter IV of Aragon, the Ceremonious).⁶⁹ Even later, in 15th-century Catalonia, at a time of special exaltation of the Carolingian mythography,⁷⁰ Pere Tomic's account of the legend of Otger Cataló, seeking to explain the origins of Catalonia, makes references to the Goths and to Pelayo - although, of course, in no case presented as legitimizers of his discourse.⁷¹

Where this rhetoric, in its most conventional and primitive form, really takes shape is, as we have already mentioned, in the context of the crusade-like war in Granada waged by the Catholic Monarchs. There are anthological testimonies, already repeatedly cited and commented on.⁷² It is interesting, however, to note three aspects. In the first place, the ideology of reconquest, harking back to and taking up the old prophetic designs of the Alfonsine historiographic cycle, called for the unconditional eradication of the Muslims; that is, its arguments were substantiated through radicalization: no compromises, concessions or half measures were to be tolerated in exchange for tributes. Ferdinand the Catholic clearly expressed this in 1485 when he issued instructions to his ambassadors in Rome to convince Pope Innocent VIII of the need to renew the corresponding crusade bull: the war, the king argued, was not motivated by greed, such that any material offer in exchange for peace was out of the question. Rather, the point was to eliminate the danger posed by the infidels, who had to be uprooted and driven from *Spanna*.⁷³ Second, that war of eradication was a response to an aggression carried out more than 700 years ago against the kings' peaceful predecessors, Spain's peaceful masters. Connections with "Visigothic legality" are evident in a line of discourse strongly suffused with the primitive neo-Gothic model. All the correspondence generated - and the versions by the historians Alonso de Palencia and Hernando del Pulgar - regarding the mediation by the Egyptian Sultan Qā'it Bay (1468-1496) in the Granadan conflict is very revealing in this regard, with it also shedding light - and this is the third aspect to highlight - on the figure of Pelayo, who is expressly cited, and upheld as the icon of an action returning the Christian faith to the whole of Spain, wresting it from the tyranny imposed by the Muslims.⁷⁴

69. Soldevila, Ferran, ed. *Jaume I, Bernat Desclot, Ramon Muntaner, Pere III. Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*. Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1971: 144-145 and 1.148.

70. Jaspert, Nikolas. "Carlomagno y Santiago en la memoria histórica catalana", *Movilidad y religiosidad medieval en los reinos peninsulares, Alemania y Palestina*, ed. Nikolas Jaspert. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2020: 237-238.

71. Sabaté, Flocl. "El nacimiento de Cataluña. Mito y realidad", *Fundamentos medievales de los particularismos hispánicos. IX Congreso de Estudios Medievales (2003)*. León: Fundación Sánchez Albornoz, 2005: 256-257 y 263-265; Valdeón Baroque, Julio. *Las raíces medievales de España*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2002: 38.

72. A sweeping and very complete vision is found in: Peinado Santaella, Rafael G. "*Christo pelea por sus castellanos*: el imaginario cristiano de la guerra de Granada", *Las tomas: antropología histórica de la ocupación territorial del reino de Granada*, eds. José Antonio González Alcantud and Manuel Barrios Aguilera. Diputación Provincial de Granada, 2000: 453-524.

73. Goñi Gaztambide, José. *Historia de la bula de la cruzada en España*. Vitoria: Editorial del Seminario, 1958: 72; Peinado, Rafael G. "*Christo pelea por sus castellanos...*": 464-465.

74. García Fitz, Francisco. *La Reconquista...*: 86-88; Peinado, Rafael G. "*Christo pelea por sus castellanos...*": 465-466.



In other words, in a way, the conquest of Granada was closing a discursive circle that had begun in Asturias, identified as the “rest” of a Spain with which it was potentially identified. The Catholic Monarchs adopted the neo-Gothic version of the narrative of reconquest, which, though the oldest and most fully developed, was by no means the only one. Apart from it, other models of reconquest, adapted to the particularities of other political ambits, had been advanced, and would continue to be, to justify the expansive campaign for conquest by all the Peninsula’s Christian kingdoms at the expense of Islam.

