

ON THE ORIGINS OF CRUSADING IN THE PENINSULA: THE REIGN OF ALFONSO VI (1065-1109)

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Date of receipt: 9th of April, 2011

Final date of acceptance: 12th of December, 2012

ABSTRACT

Alfonso VI of Leon-Castile's reign coincided in time with the origins and first development of the Crusading phenomenon, promoted by pope Urban II from 1095 onwards. This fact influenced the very nature and character of warfare against Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula. This caused a trend to further sacralisation of the Reconquest, increasingly considered as a genuine Holy War. This article intends to analyze the patterns of this trend throughout Alfonso VI's reign¹.

KEY WORDS

Alfonso VI, Leon and Castile, Reconquest, Holy War, Crusade.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Alfonsus VI, Legio et Castella, Armis facta recuperatio, Bellum sanctum, Sacrae Crucis militia.

1. This study is part of the research project *Génesis y desarrollo de la guerra santa cristiana en la Edad Media del occidente peninsular (ss. X-XIV)*, financed by the Subdirección General de Proyectos de Investigación. Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (HAR 2012-32790).



1. Approach

The beginning of the crusades that characterised the development of western Christendom for over two hundred years coincided with the reign of Alfonso VI in Leon and Castile. When he succeeded to the throne of Leon in 1065, hardly a year had passed since the first papal intervention that converted the reconquest into a penitential struggle in Barbastro.² Then, after his banishment in 1072, when Alfonso finally took control of the kingdoms of Leon and Castile, we were on the brink of theoretical offensive by Gregory VII against Hispanic territories that was designed in 1073 with the aim of returning these to the domain of Saint Peter³. It was also chronologically very close to another papal action, no less theoretical, that aimed to succour the beleaguered eastern Christians reaching its own *Sepulcrum Domini* in 1074⁴. Then, in 1087, barely two years after the Castilian-Leonese occupation of Toledo, and only one after Alfonso's defeat at Zalaca (according to Erdmann, a stimulus for the Hispanic idea of crusade)⁵, Pope Victor III organised a campaign

2. Pope Alexander II was directly involved in the operation. The pontiff not only issued a call to the Christian knights to go to Barbastro, a call answered by Aquitainians, Normans and other Franks of very varied origins, but also, especially, took two decisions of deep political-religious significance. In first place, for the first time, he emphatically expressed the legality of fighting and eliminating the Saracens who, by unjustly seizing Christian lands, had shown themselves to be authentic malefactors, and in second place, he conceded automatic satisfaction of imposed penances and remission of sins to those who participated in the operation. Good summaries of the Barbastro "proto-crusade" can be found in: Lalién Carlos. "Encrucijadas ideológicas. Conquista feudal, cruzada y reforma de la Iglesia en el siglo XI hispánico", *La reforma gregoriana y su proyección en la cristiandad occidental. Siglos XI-XII. XXXII Semana de Estudios Medievales. Estella, 18-22 de julio de 2005*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2006: 302-306; Lapeña, Ana Isabel. *Sancho Ramírez, rey de Aragón (¿1064?-1094) y rey de Navarra (1076-1094)*. Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2004: 74-76 and 159-162. The pontifical documents in: Leewenfeld, Samuel. *Epistolae pontificum romanorum ineditae*. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1885 (reprint 1959): docs. 82 and 83.

3. Only a few days after his election, on 30 April 1073, Pope Gregory VII decided to send two letters related to the Peninsula to different recipients but both closely related by their contents. In the first of these, he announced that cardinal Hugo Cándido was being sent to Hispanic lands to support the mission of Count Ebles of Roucy, who the Apostolic See had entrusted with fighting the Muslims and reconquering the territory that had belonged *ad honorem sancti Petri* since ancient times. All the operations were under the authority of the papal representative, Cardinal Hugo, and those princes who wished to participate in these had to respect the rights of Rome. The second missive was for these princes. Mansilla, Demetrio. *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965-1216)*. Rome: Instituto Español de Estudios Eclesiásticos, 1955: 10-12 (docs. nº 5 and 6). Flori, Jean. "Le vocabulaire de la reconquête chrétienne dans les lettres de Grégoire VII", *De Toledo a Huesca. Sociedades medievales en transición a fines del siglo XI (1080-1100)*, Carlos Lalién, Juan F. Utrilla, eds. Saragossa: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1998: 247-267.

4. Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. "Pope Gregory VII's Crusading Plans of 1074", *Outremer*, Benjamin Z. Kedar, Hans E. Mayer, Raimund C. Samail, eds. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982: 27-40 (reed. Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*. London: Hambledon Press, 1984); Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. *Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998: 481 and following; Flori, Jean. *La guerra santa. La formación de la idea de cruzada en el Occidente cristiano*. Granada-Trotta: Universidad de Granada, 2003: 299-303. The series of papal documents that illustrate this, in: Caspar, Erich. *Gregorii VII Registrum. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Epistolae Selectae*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1923: II 1, 49, 2, 31 and 2, 37: 75-76, 165-168 and 172-173). English version in: Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. *The Register of Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085. An English Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002: 54-55, 122-124 and 127-128.

5. Carl Erdmann's great intuition was to relate this critical moment in Alfonso VI's reign with the genesis of the idea of the crusade in the Peninsula: Erdmann, Carl. *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*.



against Mahdia in present-day Tunisia, very close to the crusading plans concocted by Urban II in Clermont only eight years later⁶. In fact, the first crusade, announced in 1095 and consummated in 1099 with the seizure of Jerusalem, coincided with one of the many intense Almoravid attacks that Alfonso VI's domains would suffer during his reign. The fourth landing by the emir Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn and the Christian defeat at Consuegra took place in 1097. In fact, the Almoravid offensive, reinforced by the new Christian defeat at Uclés in 1108, did not end until Alfonso's death a year later, in 1109. The first years of the 12th century were also very difficult, especially in the rarefied panorama of the Latin Holy Land⁷.

It is evident that this complex crusading reality clearly affected the kingdom of Aragon, whose leader took up the cross⁸, and also directly affected some of Alfonso VI's subjects who, as we shall see, travelled to the Holy Land. It would also have an impact on the development of the reconquering guidelines of the Castilian-Leonese monarch, especially when he became one of the first kings concerned with events outwith the Peninsula. In any case, we must not lose sight of the fact that these guidelines had already undergone a qualitative leap during Ferdinand I's earlier reign, a result of both internal and external circumstances⁹. Therefore, in this sense, Alfonso VI can be seen as a worthy successor to his father, continuing many elements of his anti-Islamic policy, undoubtedly then in the context of a clearly expansive western Christendom.

The degree to which this integration conditioned the belligerent activity of Alfonso VI towards Islam is a question that I will attempt to answer in the following pages. I will also attempt to define those attitudes, motivations or circumstances in the monarch's anti-Islamic policy that could be related to the growth of the idea of crusade.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977: 288.

6. Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. "The Mahdia Campaign of 1087". *The English Historical Review*, 92 (1977): 1-29 (reed. Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*. London: Hambledon Press, 1984); Flori, Jean. *La guerra santa. La formación de la idea de cruzada...*: 160 and 290-291.

7. An illustrative example is the crusade, with the blessing of Pope Paschal II, between 1105 and 1108 that confronted Prince Bohemond of Antioch and the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I. Flori, Jean. *Bohemundo de Antioquía*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 2009: 349-361.

8. In February 1101, Peter I of Aragon *acceptit crucem per ad Iherosolimitanis partibus*, as stated in a document from San Juan de la Peña (Ubieta, Antonio. *Colección diplomática de Pedro I de Aragón y de Navarra*. Saragossa: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1951: 113 (doc. n° 6), and in fact, his condition as *rex crucifer* was fully accepted by the society of the time when he was besieging Saragossa that year (Goñi, José. *Catálogo del Archivo Catedral de Pamplona, I (829-1500)*. Pamplona: Institución Príncipe de Viana, 1965: 21 (doc. n° 84). About the crusading character of Peter I, see: Goñi, José. *Historia de la bula de la cruzada en España*. Vitoria: Editorial del Seminario, 1958: 67; Laliena, Carlos. *La formación del Estado feudal. Aragón y Navarra en la época de Pedro I*. Huesca: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 1996: 310-312. Reilly expressed some reticence about the crusade to Jerusalem that Peter I wanted to command: Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI (1065-1109)*. Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1989: 330.

9. de Ayala, Carlos. "La sacralización de la *reconquista*. Las claves de Fernando I de León". *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 17 (2011): 67-115.



To do so, we start by reviewing Alfonso's policy towards the Muslims, his strategic games of pressure on the taifas, his territorial achievements and finally, his retreat in the face of the Almoravids. Only by doing so can we really confirm the importance of this political-military activity in the complex programme and sophisticated ideology of the monarch.

Besides the political-military events, the motivations and reasons that sacralise the act of war must be taken into account. In this sense, both the arguments inherited from the previous reign and those that appeared with the evolution of the times must be considered. The two types of reasons allow us to show the military acts and to explain their role and the ideological elements behind them and that linked them to the rise of the ideology of the Crusades.

Finally, as a conclusion, we will present a brief review of the image projected by the king. Depending on their outlook, his contemporaries, and some of those wished to conserve his memory after his death, saw him as an authentic champion of the faith or an unworthy persecutor of the Muslims. Some of these assessments came from abroad and are thus especially significant. They are the most evident proof that the King of Leon knew how to exploit the idea sketched out by his father Ferdinand that the "reconquest" was rather more than a local legitimating discourse. This was, and more so at the time, a declaration of Christian holy war that turned its proponents into authentic champions of Christendom.

2. Alfonso VI and the fight against the Muslims

The oldest surviving biography of Alfonso VI is the one by Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo in his well-known chronicle, and that presents a very schematic and idealised view of the monarch¹⁰. The idealisation is more than understandable in the writings of a faithful court prelate written only a few years after the monarch's death. We will return to this below, but here we are more interested in another facet of the text, its schematism. Only a few lines are required to say that his large army had guaranteed the payment of annual tributes from more than a few Saracen cities and castles, and that these same armies had devastated the domains of the Muslims and besieged and conquered a long list of towns and fortresses, from Guadalajara, Cuenca and Valencia in the east to Coria and Lisbon in the west, passing, naturally, through Toledo and numerous enclaves in its old kingdom. However, his efforts were not restricted to destroying and conquering, but also to populating and colonising, as he did with *totam Strematuram*. Nevertheless, so much prosperity and exaltation provoked the inrush of the Almoravids, these *extraneas gentes* from Africa, who

10. Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo*. Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1924: 79-88.



clashed with the king on numerous occasions culminating in the Battle of Sagrajas in 1086¹¹.

No more can be said in so few words. The bishop reviewed all the victorious initiatives that could be attributed to Alfonso VI highlighting the drain that paying the *parias* meant for al-Andalus power and the final blow of dismantling them through the seizure of a significant portion of lands and cities. This brief review ends with the mention of the Almoravids, which was necessarily aseptic, given that the balance ended up so negatively for Alfonso VI, but without circumventing the painful wound of Sagrajas.

This short summary serves to introduce the description of the facts that can be divided into three easily differentiated periods. The first is the first twenty years of his reign, from the unstable beginnings to the firmness of the 80s that ended with the seizure of Toledo. In this period, the offensive against Islam rose to a *crescendo* that combined diplomatic pressure and military threat with very profitable economic results and no less important territorial advances. The second period, from the incorporation of Toledo with the disastrous presage of Sagrajas, through the following decade, contemplated the new and decisive factor of the Almoravids. However the taifas, in danger of collapsing, bet for a political-strategic ambiguity that notably favoured the hegemonic position of Alfonso until at least 1095. From then, and over the nearly fifteen remaining years of his reign, the Almoravid offensive was pitiless on the monarch, up to the point that the defensive withdrawal to the kingdoms of Leon and Castile could hardly impede the rampant manifestation of a crisis that would bleed the country through at least the first third of the 12th century.

2.1. Diplomatic-military pressure and *parias* (1068-1085)

There are some difficulties involved in verifying Alfonso VI's first move against the Muslims. This would have taken place in 1068 against the Aftasid *taifa* of Badajoz, and according to Menéndez Pidal, based on Ibn Hayyān and Ibn Bassām, this was not one, but rather two interventions¹². Despite this information, it is not easy to imagine two military expeditions in one year, especially in the confusing panorama in which Alfonso VI, still holding the throne of the kingdom of Leon, was in dispute with his brothers Sancho and García over the conditions of Ferdinand I's will. What is most probable is that this was only Alfonso using a dispute about succession that he himself had encouraged. In fact, we know that the king, al-Muzaffar, died in 1068, his two sons embarked on a fratricidal war that Alfonso VI did not hesitate to

11. Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo...*: 80-83.

12. Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La España del Cid*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1969: I, 166-167. Reilly seems willing to accept this twin campaign, even venturing chronology: spring 1068, the first, and the second in the later months of the same year or perhaps the beginning of the following. (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 76-77). On the other hand, Francisco García Fitz talks about one single campaign: García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra. La experiencia castellano-leonesa frente al Islam. Siglos XI-XIII*. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2002: 40.



exploit and that allowed to him to obtain economic and even territorial advantages¹³, and all this while the Badajoz *taifa* was still in the sphere of influence of his brother García, the Galician king. It is not easy to find more details about this.

In fact, Alfonso VI's offensive against al-Andalus did not begin seriously until after 1072, when freed from his banishment, he took control of his old kingdom of Leon and also Castile as a result of the timely death of his brother Sancho II. Nothing can be claimed for sure, but it is probable that this recovery of power was preceded by an agreement with the emir of Toledo, al-Ma'mūn, his host during his banishment. Without any need to push the imagination too far, and independently of whether his time in Toledo would have been useful for Alfonso VI as a chance to get to know the al-Andalus *taifas*¹⁴, it seems quite clear that the Toledo monarch would not let his forced guest leave, nor would the latter have wished to do so, without signing a treaty of friendship and mutual aid that he would appeal to on many occasions¹⁵.

1074 is the first year from which we have details of a campaign of any great size by Alfonso against Andalusian Islam. A hypothetical move against the Banu Hud kingdom of Saragossa that year is merely a conjecture¹⁶, not so, the offensive against Abd Allāh, the then newly-crowned Zirid monarch of Granada.

The *taifa* of Granada was no example of ethnic-population and political cohesion. This, combined with his effective alliance of the Toledan petty monarch al-Ma'mūn, allowed Alfonso VI to penetrate the territory of Granada and seize the strategic fortress of Alcalá la Real. With this prize under his belt, the Leonese monarch sent a faithful collaborator Pedro Ansúrez to negotiate the collection of the *parias*. Although the immensely popular *Memorias* by Abd Allāh gives an account of the events¹⁷, the fact is that these are not at all clear. Something like this is as evident for us as it was for Abd Allāh himself at the end of the 11th century. Alfonso VI had by then begun a policy of diplomatic pressure that, with a view to the inalienable conquest of the Andalusian territories, had two advantages in its favour: his military superiority and the patent disunity of Andalusian Islam, whose *taifas* rivalled each other for the Leonese monarch's favour and with it, greater

13. The information is mainly from the later chronicler Ibn al-Jatīb (14th century). Viguera, María Jesús, ed. *Los Reinos de Taifas. Al-Andalus en el siglo XI. Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1994: VIII-1, 85.

14. It is well-known that the passage in the *Silense* mentions Alfonso VI's time in Toledo as something providential because in nine months of walking around Toledo at will, he could detect the "Achilles heels" of the city's defences to be used to conquer it later. *Historia Silense*, Justo Pérez, Atilano González, eds. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1959: 120.

15. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 87, 41.

16. Reilly mentions the possibility that Alfonso VI may have tried to restart the collection of *parias* in the *taifa* of Saragossa, after the strengthening of ties of friendship between the Hud kingdom and the monarchy in Pamplona against the "crusade" of 1073 designed by Gregory VII against the Spanish Muslims (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 100). García Fitz indicates that the campaign that took Alfonso VI to Saragossa that year was probable (García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra...*: 42).

17. Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona. Las "Memorias" de 'Abd Allāh, último rey Zirí de Granada destronado por los Almorávides (1090)*. Madrid: Alianza, 1982: 153 and following.



territorial power, always at the cost of their own neighbours and Muslim brethren; this was the mirage that allowed them to feed their will to survive.

This is what we find in the interesting juncture of 1074-1075¹⁸. It seems that in an imprudent moment of dignity, Abd Allāh refused to pay the tributes to Alfonso VI, and it was then that Alfonso's diplomacy allowed al-Mu'tamid of Seville to satisfy his desire to expand into the lands under Granada with its active collaboration to fortify the enclave of Belillos, near Granada, and from where it was easier to fight. At the same time, Alfonso VI allowed al-Ma'mūn of Toledo to occupy Cordoba, conquered a few years later by Seville. This was a way to compensate him for his services throughout the campaign and preventing al-Mu'tamid from growing excessively strong. This was a real piece of diplomatic-military engineering from which Alfonso VI expected, not unreasonably, to obtain lucrative results.

Reilly lends much credence to a *curia regia* that probably met in October 1077. The surviving documentary evidence about this is the first in which Alfonso VI used the title of *imperator totius Hispaniae*¹⁹, and according to him, this could well have been when the decision was solemnly taken to colonise the Tras-Duero region²⁰. Naturally, to talk about colonising is to talk about conquest and military holding, an aim that had been in the monarch's mind for years. Obviously, to a great extent, the key for all this was in the northern domains of the kingdom of Toledo that thus started to be perceived as an hurdle to be overcome²¹.

In fact, this it was great obstacle, more so when Ma'mūn had been assassinated in 1075 just after his conquest of Cordoba, and had been succeeded by his grandson al-Qādir, a man of very little political stature and who soon fell victim to the insatiable territorial longing of his Muslim neighbours. The territorial decomposition shortly preceded the political breakdown. This began with the loss of Cordoba to the Sevillans and, much more serious, with the independence of Valencia that fell into the orbit of the powerful king of Saragossa, al-Muqtadir.

None of this took place without the supreme arbitrage of Alfonso VI. In fact, al-Muqtadir had to pay 100,000 dinars into Leonese coffers to compensate Alfonso for taking control of Valencia, according to Ibn Bassām's estimate. In the end, the Christian king became the "protector" of both Toledo (the loser with the segregation of Valencia) and Saragossa (the beneficiary of this)²². In fact, very few taifas escaped his control. One of these was Granada, which had avoided paying tributes until the "assault" of 1074. Then in 1078, Abd Allāh had to go back on his earlier

18. Summaries of the events are found in: Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 103; Viguera, María Jesús, ed. *Los Reinos de Taifas. Al-Andalus en el siglo XI...*: 48; García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra...*: 42-43.

19. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio. Colección diplomática*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1998: II, 129-132 (doc. n° 50).

20. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 168.

21. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 137-138.

22. García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra...*: 44.



plans. That year, again with the help of Seville²³, Alfonso VI obtained the desired “compensation” from Granada, a sum of 30,000 meticals and a promise of an annual payment of 10,000 in the future. It was not necessary to resort to violence. Exerting political pressure through the Leonese ambassador, Sisnando Davídiz, was enough to extract this advantageous offer, further completed with transfers of land. Alfonso VI received Estepa, Castro del Río and Martos in exchange for Alcalá la Real, which he had occupied in 1074, and Bedmar, an enclave belonging to Toledo that the king of Leon had no qualms about using as a negotiating gambit as if it were his own²⁴.

In fact, it was Alfonso VI who contributed the most to encouraging the territorial crisis in the kingdom of Toledo and, as mentioned above, the parallel political crisis. The sectors unhappy with the appeasing attitudes of al-Qādir grew in strength despite repression by the monarch, or precisely because of this. The truth is that the territorial mutilation of the kingdom, along with the growing economic drain demanded by the insatiable Leonese “protectorate”, led to the outbreak of a revolt in Toledo, surely spurred on by the ulemas, always ready to condemn such anti-Quranic financial abuses as payments to an infidel king. We do not know the

23. Seville wished to collaborate with Alfonso VI in an operation against Granada that would leave it under their control. The Leonese monarch was naturally not prepared to let this happen, nor that al-Mu'tamid could escape from a regular regime of parias. In fact, shortly after subjecting Abd Allāh in Granada, al-Mu'tamid would sign a pact with the Leonese monarch leaving him equally subjected to the annual tribute. The *Historia Roderici* tells us about this pact. One of its passages, whose historicity has been placed in doubt, and whose chronology, according to Menéndez Pidal, must be placed in 1079 or 1080 (Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La España del Cid...: II*, 923), states that Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar was sent as an ambassador by Alfonso VI to collect parias from the king of Seville. That was where the famous confrontation took place with the person who would become his irreconcilable enemy, count García Ordóñez. Indeed, El Cid's stay in Seville coincided with the attack against the lands of the king of Seville by the Christian count, who was in fact a royal lieutenant, in the company of other nobles of Navarrese origin together with the troops of the king of Granada. El Cid, who, on negotiating the delivery of the parias by al-Mu'tamid, considered the latter to be under the protection of the Leonese king, wished to avoid the advance of the army from Granada allied to the Christians but was not successful, and was forced to face them next to the fortress of Cabra. The Granadan forces were defeated and their Christian collaborators were taken prisoner by El Cid, who held them for three days and seized their tents and other belongings. García Ordóñez would never pardon this affront by El Cid. Then, after this serious standoff, that according to the chronicle, lasted *ab hora diei tertia usque ad sextam*, it tells us that al-Mu'tamid handed over the parias due to Alfonso, and also showered him with gifts after signing the corresponding peace (Falque, Emma. *Historia Roderici vel Gesta Roderici Campidocti. Chronica Hispania Saeculi XII. Pars I*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1990: 49-50 (par. 7-9). The meeting in Cabra has often been interpreted as an unfortunate incident of the coincidence of two missions from Alfonso VI to collect tributes: The one by El Cid in Seville and that of the lieutenant García Ordóñez in Granada (Martínez, Gonzalo. *El Cid histórico. Un estudio exhaustivo sobre el verdadero Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1999: 98-102; García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y Guerra...: 45*), but in fact, it cannot be deduced from the text of the chronicle that the count and his Navarrese retinue were in Granada to collect the parias. It would be very rare for a mission of these characteristics to dare to carry out such an attack led by a tax collector. Reilly suggest, and it seems more reasonable, that García Ordóñez and his fellow travellers were in fact refugees in al-Andalus, under the protection of Abd Allāh of Granada, who had shown himself to be very ill-disposed towards the demands of the Christian monarch. It is by no means very adventurous to think in this as a temporary rupture between Alfonso VI and his lieutenant, who disappeared from the court between 1074 and 1080 (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...: 153*).

24. Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...: 157-162*; Viguera, María Jesús. *Los Reinos de Taifas...: 48*.



inside workings of the 1079 revolt in which al-Qādir was forced to flee to Cuenca, but given the above, it is not difficult to imagine. In any case, his downfall only quickened from then on.

The Aftasid king of Badajoz, al-Mutawakkil, was very aware of this and took the chance to seize control of the headless taifa of Toledo. As was to be expected, al-Qādir pleaded with Alfonso VI to intervene. It was an unsurpassable opportunity to begin to control the Tras-Duero, a priority that the Christian monarch had set less than two years earlier. To start with, he simply imposed the conditions for helping al-Qādir. As well as considerable sums of money, these included the possession of some especially strategic Toledan castles such as Zorita and Canturias, which left two of the most important accesses to the Toledo taifa in the hands of Leon. Naturally, Alfonso VI did not restrict himself to demanding compensations, and in 1079, we find him *in fossato* on the banks of the Guadarrama very close to Toledo, accompanied by three bishops, four counts and some other nobles²⁵. Coming in the same year Coria fell, this was a warning to the usurper al-Mutawakkil and a dangerous precedent. For the first time, Christian troops held a strong position on the Tagus, the historical limit of Muslim containment. It is no surprise that this was when the king of Badajoz, fleeing from Toledo, made his first attempt to summon the Almoravids of emir Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn²⁶.

Al-Qādir's return to the throne of Toledo in 1080 did not really solve anything. The unrest of his subjects had not diminished and Christian demands had reached the limits of what was bearable, to the extent that the inability to meet these meant that al-Qādir had to hand another fortress over to Alfonso VI, in this case, Canales²⁷. This place has not been clearly identified but it seems likely that it was a fortified enclave, now in ruins, only thirty kilometres north of Toledo²⁸.

Without taking too literally the seven years that some Christian sources attribute to the siege of Toledo²⁹, it is evident that the occupation of the old Visigoth capital was

25. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 156-158 (doc. n° 63); Burón, Taurino. *Colección Documental del Monasterio de Gradefes, I (1054-1299)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1998: 8-10 (doc. n° 5).

26. Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La España del Cid...*: I, 264; Turk, Afif. *El Reino de Zaragoza en el siglo XI de Cristo (V de la Hégira)*. Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 1978: 146-147. This was the second letter from al-Mutawakkil to the Almoravid emir that lets us know about the first, written as a result of the fall of Coria: Huiçí, Ambrosio. *Colección de Crónicas Árabes de la Reconquista*, Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1952: I, 48-51.

27. Ibn al-Kardabūs. *Historia de al-Andalus (Kitâb al-Iktifâ')*, ed. Felipe Maíllo. Barcelona: Akal, 1986: 103-104.

28. Miranda, José. "Reflexiones militares sobre la conquista de Toledo por Alfonso VI", *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes*. Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabes, 1987: I, 267; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 156.

29. Beginning with the document of endowment of the new Toledo cathedral from December 1086 which states: *Quamobrem amore christiane religionis dubio me periculo submitbens, nunc magnis et frequentibus preliis, nunc occultis insidiarum circumuencionibus, nunc uero apertis incursionum deuastacionibus, septem annorum reuolucione gladio et fame simul et captiuitate, non solum uius ciuitatis sed et tocius uius patrie abitatores afflix...* (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 227 (doc. n° 86). Jiménez de Rada



then more than a mere future variable. However, it could not be done immediately. The pressure applied by Alfonso VI, both economic and military³⁰, was not only focussed on Toledo, although that was where it was felt most intensely at that time. A new, and this time unsuccessful, revolt in Toledo in 1082 showed the feeling of saturation in al-Andalus and that, naturally, was also shared by the Muslims in other taifas.

The king of Seville, al-Mu'tamid, was one of the Andalusian leaders who began clearly to stand up to Alfonso VI. We do not know exactly what happened in the Sevillian court in the final months of 1082, but the numerous sources that explain it, including the panegyrist courtier Ibn al-Labbâna, perhaps a witness to the events, tell us about a Christian mission charged with collecting the agreed parias and made up, among others, of a Jew by the name of Ibn Salîb, who enjoyed the king's full trust. The dissatisfaction of the envoys at the delay in payment, or the poor quality of the money handed over, led to new demands being made, in this case territorial. Faced with this, al-Mu'tamid reacted forcefully: prison for the Christians and a death penalty for the Jew. This *casus belli* forced the king of Seville to seek the help of the emir of the Almoravids, the second such request, and provoked the immediate response by Alfonso VI. In spring 1083, two columns were sent against Seville, the first entrusted with first raising the lands of the Algarve and the second, led by the king in person, went directly to Seville subjecting the surrounding areas and advancing as far as Medina Sidonia and Tarifa. It was an authentic show of force against which al-Mu'tamid was powerless. His response consisted of helping the emir Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn to take Ceuta in the hope that this would accelerate the latter's intervention in the Peninsula³¹.

Another restless front in those years was the deep turbulence that was affecting Saragossa, especially when al-Muqtadir's ill health since 1081 presaged the civil crisis that erupted on his death at the end of the following year. Once again, Alfonso

later included the data: Jiménez de Rada, Rodrigo. *Historia de Rebus Hispaniae sive Historia Gothica. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. Juan Fernández. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010 (Spanish trans. by the same author: Fernández, Juan. *Historia de los Hechos de España*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989: lib. VI, cap. xxxii.

30. Evidence for this climate of military mobilisation is found, for example, and as we shall see below this was no isolated case, from Count Diego Ansúrez's will dated September 1081. We had seen him with the king *in fossato* next to Toledo in 1079 (n° 25). Now two years later, he dictated his will establishing the corresponding possibilities: death in combat with or without his body being found, in the second case the booty seized went to the king and to rescue captives. *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León (775-1230), IV (1032-1109)*, ed. José Manuel Ruiz. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1990: 500-501 (doc. n° 1224); Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 154. Exactly one year later, in September 1082, it was count Gonzalo Salvadorez who, preparing to sally forth with the king to fight the Muslims –*positus in prociutu cum domino meo contra mauros*, made a large donation to the monastery of Oña that would remain invariable whether or not he returned alive from the expedition; in the second case, his body was to be buried in the monastery next to his ancestors: *Colección diplomática de San Salvador de Oña (822-1284). I (822-1214)*, ed. Juan del Álamo. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1950: 113-114 (doc. n° 77).

31. Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (almorávides, almohades y benimerines)*. Madrid: Universidad de Granada, 1956: 21-26; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 185-186 and 188; Turk, Afif. *El Reino de Zaragoza en el siglo XI...*: 147.



VI wanted to take advantage of the situation and give a new twist of the screw to the unsustainable Andalusian situation, although this time he did not enjoy so much luck³².

However, his attention was really focussed on the outcome of the crisis in Toledo, which was then coming to a head. The unsuccessful revolt of 1082 showed the definitive inviability of the Muslim kingdom of Toledo. That was the moment when a sector of the population contacted Alfonso VI to offer an agreement to hand over the city. However, this was not the only offer. King al-Qādir also sought an honourable way out. He proposed taking over the Valencian taifa in exchange for handing over Toledo. Yet, the appearances were kept up, and the city was encircled in the autumn of 1084³³. Undoubtedly, not all the population were willing to surrender so tamely to the Christian king. The latter began to make plans for the restoration of the archdioceses of Toledo in the final months of 1082³⁴, but the capitulation³⁵ did not come about until May 1085 with the king's entry into the city, accompanied, among others, by contingents from the bishops of Santiago, Ourense, Burgos and Palencia³⁶.

2.2. *The Almoravid factor and Leonese hegemony (1086-1095)*

The occupation of Toledo led to a new factor being added to the strategy of diplomatic-military pressure used by Alfonso VI against al-Andalus during the first

32. In fact, at the end of 1082, King Alfonso had led a force towards the taifa of Saragossa. Associated with this move was a disastrous Christian defeat at the castle of Rueda de Jalón, 35 kilometres west of Saragossa. In the confusing situation created by the death of al-Muqtadir, the warden had offered the fortress to the Leonese king. However, suspicious, he did not personally go to take possession, but sent some of his men instead. It was then that the warden executed his plan of betrayal and fell on the representatives of the Christian king, who were literally massacred. The events seem to have taken place in January 1083, and meant an immediate withdrawal by the Christian army from the Saragossa area (Falque, Emma. *Historia Roderici vel Gesta Roderici...*: 55-56; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 187-188).

33. García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y guerra...*: 50; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 190.

34. Gamba thinks that Alfonso VI probably designated Bernard II of Palencia to the archbishopric of Toledo when the city was about to fall and that justifies the title of archbishop by which he is designated in half a dozen documents from the end of 1082 to the middle of 1085 (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: I, 623). In contrast, Reilly believes that 1082 was an early date to think about the restoration of the Church in Toledo, and that it was the Palencia see Alfonso VI aimed to convert into a metropolitan one: Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 134 and 163-164.

35. Julio González reconstructed and systemised the terms of the capitulation: The lives and properties of the Toledan Muslims would be respected; Those who wished to leave could do so with their property and with the possibility of returning; Those who stated would pay the confessional tributes that they had been paying the kings for many years; The function of the main mosque would be respected; the goods of the Muslim king were to become property of the Christian king (González, Julio. *Repoblación de Castilla la Nueva*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1975: I, 78). Alfonso VI's commitment to help al-Qādir to seize the kingdom of Valencia must be added to the above (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 194-195).

36. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 196.



twenty years of his reign. This was namely the participation of the Almoravids in the confrontation between Christianity and Islam in the Peninsula. That strategy had led al-Andalus to a dead end. With only their own efforts, the Spanish Muslims could not deal with a situation that, while also economically unviable, after the experience of Toledo, now threatened to lead to the final conquest.

This is shown by some specific moves toward permanent occupation, like that of Aledo³⁷ and especially Alfonso VI's operation, after taking Toledo, against al-Musta'in in Saragossa, with a siege of the city included, in the spring-summer of 1086. The sources and historiography agree that the aim of the offensive was not, as before, the immediate objective of obtaining or adjusting the payments of parias. There was a real desire for conquest³⁸. Only the landing of the Almoravids in Algeciras on 30th July 1086 obliged Alfonso VI to withdraw.

Although, as we know, it was probably al-Mutawakkil of Badajoz who first contacted Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn following the loss of Coria in 1079, it was al-Mu'tamid of Seville who took up the initiative in 1082. It was also he who, shortly after, in view of the events in Toledo, organised a mission that also included representatives of the kings of Badajoz and Granada to request Almoravid help formally. Finally, after the conquest of the old Visigoth city, he went in person for an audience with the Almoravid emir near Ceuta. Al-Mu'tamid of Seville was thus the main instigator of this dangerous step because, as the well-known quote attributed to him says, he would rather become a camel driver than a swineherd³⁹.

The battle of Zalaca or Sagrajas, on a plain a few kilometres west of Badajoz, was the marked the first landing on the Peninsula by Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn. It took place on 23rd October 1086 with the emir's troops, allied to those of the kings of Seville, Granada, Malaga and Badajoz, against the forces of Alfonso VI, supported by King Sancho Ramírez and even, if we believe the *Chronica Gotorum* or *Chronicon Lusitanum*, some French knights⁴⁰.

The Christian army's ability to withdraw, largely to the safety of Coria, and the rapid return of Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn to Morocco for dynastic reasons, meant that the disaster was not as serious as it could have been for Alfonso VI. However, it is obvious that Sagrajas was a turning point in the king's policy towards the Muslims, a

37. The eastern position of Aledo, near Lorca, was not conquered by Alfonso VI's troops but rather those of the noble García Jiménez in 1086, in all probability before the Almoravid landing at the end of July. This was an enclave isolated from Castilian possessions, depending at the time of its conquest on the eastern possessions of King al-Mu'tamid of Seville, and it became a veritable headache for the Muslims, to the point that, as we shall see, the second landing by Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn in the Peninsula was aimed at recapturing Aledo.

38. Turk, Afif. *El Reino de Zaragoza en el siglo XI...*: 150-154. In this sense, it must be said that Reilly disagrees with the majority opinion: Alfonso VI could not have been thinking about conquering a kingdom just after occupying another and the tasks of pacifying and organising all his scattered territories required large sums of money, which precisely is what he aimed to obtain from al-Musta'in in Saragossa (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 201).

39. Turk, Afif. *El Reino de Zaragoza en el siglo XI...*: 148.

40. ... *convenerunt cum Rege nostro Christiani a partibus Alpes, multique Francorum in adjutorium ei affuerunt...* *España Sagrada*, XIV: 476; *Portugaliae. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*, Lisbon: 1856: I, 10.



reorientation that was not so much qualitative but more quantitative. The Christian monarch was not prepared to give up the *parias*, but the traditionally excessive rate now needed a certain moderation to avoid forcing the Andalusian kings to plead for the help from the Almoravids. The ambiguity of the *taifas* about the presence of the emir in the Peninsula, simultaneously desired but feared, favoured a moderated return to the regime of *parias*, especially given that Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn's second invasion of the Peninsula ended in dismal failure in 1088 before the walls of the Christian fortress of Aledo⁴¹. From then on, Alfonso VI had the chance to re-establish the regime of *parias* first with Saragossa⁴², then with Andalusian lands in the Levante⁴³, and finally with Granada⁴⁴.

This ambiguity of the *taifas* was more than the pious Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn and the religious party of the Andalusian ulemas who supported him could bear. This explains the third disembarkment by the Almoravid emir in the Peninsula in 1090. It began with a propagandistic siege of Toledo that showed who the real enemy of the Almoravid regime was⁴⁵. However, Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn's energies were very soon

41. The strategic position of Aledo, conquered in 1086 (see above note 37), was becoming so damaging for the Muslim domains in the area that al-Mu'tamid did not hesitate to appeal again to Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn to destroy the Christian enclave. This was no easy task because the *taifa* of Murcia, suspicious of Seville's expansionism and encouraging the secession of the area before Mu'tamid, secretly helped the Christians. The siege by Almoravids and Andalusians was a failure: the various kings of the *taifas* again showed an individualistic self-interest that scandalised the Almoravids. This, and the announcement of reinforcements commanded by Alfonso VI in person, was enough to cause the Muslim campaign to end fruitlessly (Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la reconquista...*: 83-99; García, Francisco. *Castilla y León frente al Islam. Estrategias de expansión y tácticas militares (siglos XI-XIII)*. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998: 186-187).

42. Initially, the battle of Sagrajas had not led to harmony between Alfonso VI and al-Musta'īn in Saragossa. After all, the Christian king had been forced to lift the siege of Saragossa precisely to face the Almoravids at Sagrajas. Therefore, the first aim regarding al-Musta'īn was to harm him by collaborating with Sancho Ramírez in the attempt to conquer Tudela in the winter of 1087. Moreover, Alfonso VI had led his Frankish allies there who had been hurriedly summoned on hearing of the Almoravid landing the previous year. Odo, Duke of Burgundy, Viscount Guillaume Le Charpentier de Melun, and surely Henry of Burgundy, Odo's brother, and his cousin, Raimundo responded to the call. There are more doubts about the presence of the future count Raimundo IV of Toulouse (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 214-217). A year after the siege of Tudela, when the Almoravid attempt to recover Aledo had been frustrated, Alfonso VI signed an agreement with al-Musta'īn that updated the outstanding payments of *parias* (Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...*: 225).

43. The memoirs of Abd Allāh associate the pact Alfonso VI reached with Saragossa after Aledo, with the one obtained "with the other princes of the Levante" (Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...*: 225).

44. It was in the early months of 1089 when Alfonso VI, still in the wake of the fiasco at Aledo, sent Pedro Ansúrez to the court of Abd Allāh in Granada to demand the three outstanding annual payments (Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...*: 227-230; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 233). Francisco García Fitz emphasises that, in the context of moderation of the time, Alfonso VI "desisted from demanding new contributions and restricted himself to reclaiming the three annual payments" that he had been owed since 1086 (García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y Guerra...*: 72).

45. The siege took place in the summer of that year. On this occasion, Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn did not count on the kings of the *taifas*, and the simple announcement of a Christian army commanded by Alfonso VI and the participation of Sancho Ramírez of Aragon was enough to persuade him to lift it. The royal



turned towards what was then considered the priority: replacing the Andalusian kings with a centralised political system directly dependent on the Almoravid authorities. The economic drain in favour of the Christian king of Leon that Islamic Spain was still suffering had to finish. In fact, Alfonso VI was aware that the regime of *parias* had its days numbered. It could well have been significant that the establishment of a new fiscal figure, the *petitum*, that the Christian king demanded from his subjects, coincided with the dethroning of Abd Allāh in 1090 and the end of the Zirid kingdom of Granada at the hands of the Almoravids⁴⁶. Seville and its king, al-Mu'tamid, so ready in other circumstance to request the help of Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn, now became his second target. Alfonso VI sought to sustain him and it is even possible that his marriage to princess Zaida, who had been al-Mu'tamid's daughter-in-law, had something to do with an attempt to build closer ties, but it was all in vain. In 1091, al-Mu'tamid lost the throne, and like Abd Allāh, was deported to Morocco, although not precisely to drive camels. He died in Āgmāt, in the Atlas, "earning a living from the work of the spinning wheels of his daughters"⁴⁷. Al-Mutawakkil of Badajoz would survive somewhat longer, but his clamorous territorial concessions (Santarem, Lisbon and Cintra) in search of Alfonso VI's support did not ensue him a throne he lost in 1094⁴⁸. The fact is that these territorial concessions did not remain in the hands of the Christian king for long⁴⁹.

By 1095, it was evident that despite the agonising maintenance of the taifas of Saragossa and Valencia, the Leonese monarch would finally have to abandon his

fossato happened in August, as shown by a private document in Leon Cathedral from that date (*Colección Documental de la Catedral de León...*: IV, 539-540 (doc. n° 1250); Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 243-244. The data of the participation of the Aragonese king comes from the later Chronicle of San Juan de la Peña: (Orcástegui, Carmen. *Crónica de San Juan de la Peña. Versión aragonesa. Edición crítica*. Saragossa: Cuadernos de Historia Jerónimo Zurita, 1986: 37) Lapeña, Ana Isabel. *Sancho Ramírez...*: 185-186.

46. The memoirs of Abd Allāh present his last days of governing Granada and his exile in Morocco (Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...*: 261-278); they also deal with the dethroning and banishment of his brother Tamīm, king of Malaga (Lévi-Provençal Evariste; García, Emilio, eds. *El Siglo XI en 1ª persona...*: 278-280). In his time, Sánchez Albornoz drew attention to the chronological coincidence of these events with the exceptional new tax that consisted of two *sueldos* from the noblemen and citizens of Leon mentioned in two judicial documents from 1090 and 1091, a figure that was compensation for only one year for the privileges granted; the documents expressly relate the new tributary demands with *ille lite de illos almurabites* (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II (docs. n° 105 and 114). Claudio Sánchez Albornoz only mentioned the second of these: Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio. "Notas para el estudio del *petitum*", *Viejos y Nuevos Estudios sobre las Instituciones Medievales Españolas*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1976: II, 932-934.

47. Various Arab sources inform us about the efforts to approach Alfonso VI that al-Mu'tamid had tried in the final moments (García, Francisco. *Relaciones políticas y Guerra...*: 74). Specifically, we owe the news about the last years of the life of the great king of Seville to Ibn al-Jatīb (Viguera, María Jesús. *Los Reinos de Taifas...*: 114).

48. Viguera, María Jesús. *Los Reinos de Taifas...*: 86.

49. Viguera, María Jesús, ed. *El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus. Almorávides y almohades. Siglos XI al XIII. Historia de España Menéndez Pidal*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1997: VIII-2, 53. The *Historia Compostelana*, narrates the heroic attempt by Count Raimundo of Burgundy to retake Lisbon in 1095. On that occasion he was accompanied by the future bishop Gelmírez: *Historia Compostelana*, ed. Emma Falque. Madrid: Akal, 1994: 391-392; the Latin edition in: *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1988.



practice of extortion as a strategy for weakening Andalusian Islam. Alfonso VI's new enemy would no longer be a space debilitated by political fragmentation, but a powerful and centralised empire that had recovered the Tagus as the frontier of its domains.

2.3. Almoravid offensive (1097-1109)

Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn reached the Peninsula for the fourth time during 1097⁵⁰. On this occasion, he focussed his jihad on Toledo, a target, as it had to be, very esteemed by the African emir. The epoch of the taifas and their kings' occasional support of Alfonso was over, and the offensive by the centralised Almoravid emirate became something more than a potential danger. For the first time, the king felt a crippling need for defence and that necessity became painfully obvious after the defeat at Consuegra on 15th August of that year and the siege of more than a week that Alfonso himself was subjected to in that fortress⁵¹.

The critical situation of the domains of Alfonso VI advised the calling of a council, the one in Palencia in 1100 presided over by a papal legate, that adopted measures for the defence of the realm. We will return to these later. Here I only wish to mention that the conclusion of a peace guaranteed by the Christian kings and funding could have been two of the issues discussed.

Yet, the coming years did not see many Christian-Muslim clashes, and the consolidation of the Almoravid positions (the conquest of Valencia and protectorate over Saragossa (1102)) only helped to consolidate Alfonso's military policy from a merely defensive outlook. For example, the siege of Medinaceli in 1103, that ended a year later with the Christians taking the place, was aimed at cutting communications between the new Almoravid Valencia and Saragossa, now an ally of the African emir.⁵² There were other specific expeditions, like the one Alfonso VI led against Sevillian territory in the summer of 1104⁵³.

Meanwhile, in 1106, Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn, who had last visited the Peninsula in 1102-1103 to proclaim his son 'Alī ibn Yūsuf as his heir in Cordoba, died, not many years before Alfonso VI. However, his successor, the new Almoravid emir, tightened

50. For the second time, an Almoravid landing caused an army under Alfonso VI on route to Saragossa to turn around. In fact, in early 1097, from Leon, the king led an impressive army perhaps with the intention of punishing Peter I of Aragon and helping al-Musta'īn of Saragossa to win back Huesca. The army turned round after hearing about the disembarkation of the Almoravid emir (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 310-311).

51. The text in the *Anales Toledanos I* is expressive enough: *Arrancada sobre el Rey D. Alfonso en termino de Consuegra, día de Sabado, e día de Santa Maria de Agosto entro el Rey D. Alfonso en Consuegra, e cercaronlo y los Almoravedes VIII días, e fueronse. Era MCXXXV (Los Anales Toledanos I y II*, ed. Julio Porres. Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1993: 69). Then, on the Cuenca sector of the frontier, the Christian troops commanded by Alvar Fáñez suffered another defeat (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 313).

52. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 340-341.

53. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 344.



the rope around the Christian king's neck. In fact, just after taking power, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf (1106-1143) decided to call a holy war and again turned Toledo into the target of the renewed military impetus. However, the focus of the campaign, entrusted to his brother Tamīn, governor of Granada, was the strategic enclave of Uclés, where the Christians suffered a resounding defeat in May 1108 that included the death of Sancho, the heir to the throne and the person in charge of the defence of Toledo⁵⁴.

The harassed monarchy of Alfonso VI was unable to respond to the defeat at Uclés. The last journey to Toledo by the king and his court at the end of spring 1109 perhaps sought to organise a full response against the Almoravids, but the death of the king on the 1st of July prevented this⁵⁵.

3. Motivations and sacralising keys

Since the middle of the 11th century, the Leonese monarchy had made a quantitative and qualitative leap in order to justify its programme of reconquest. Ferdinand I had to face a very different panorama to that of earlier periods. The fight against Islam had stopped being a question of survival to become a moral imperative⁵⁶. The struggle against the Muslims was no longer a necessity, because the fragmentation of a weakened al-Andalus did not threaten the safety of the Christians. This fight was the expression of God's justice, the materialisation of his unsatisfied will at the spoliation perpetrated centuries ago by the Muslims and which had turned a good part of the Peninsula into an infidel domain.

As part of the campaign in Barbastro in 1064, Pope Alexander II had made this abundantly clear. Indeed, it was lawful to combat and eliminate the Saracens because, although it is evident that the Christians were not allowed to spill the blood of another human being, the exception being without doubt that of criminals and evildoers, and the Muslims, by unfairly occupying land not belonging to them, had made themselves guilty of death: fighting them was something worthwhile⁵⁷.

54. Reilly makes a full analysis of the possible casualties among the lay magnates, as well as the serious consequences of the defeat (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...: 378-382*), but it is still recommendable to consult Ambrosio Huici classic work (Huici, Ambrosio. *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista...: 101-134*). See also: Slaughter, John E. "De nuevo sobre la batalla de Uclés". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 9 (1974-1979): 393-404.

55. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...: 387*.

56. de Ayala, Carlos. "La sacralización de la reconquista...": 74-95.

57. It was probably in 1063 with the expedition to Barbastro when Alexander II wrote to the archbishop of Narbonne and also to all the Spanish bishops on the legality of fighting the Muslims for having appropriated Christian lands unjustly. In his letter to the archbishop, the Pope reminds him of the prohibition about the spilling blood, except that of criminals and Saracens:... *Omnes leges tam ecclesiasticae quam seculares effusionem humani sanguinis dampnant, nisi forte commissa crimina aliquem iudicio puniant, vel forte, ut de Sarracenis, hostilis exacerbatio incumbat...* (Leewenfeld, Samuel. *Epistolae pontificum...: 43* (doc. n° 83). The missive from the bishops included a clear differentiation of the treatment that should be meted out to Jews and Saracens:... *Dispar nimirum est Judaeorum et sarracenorum causa. In illos enim, qui Christianos persequuntur et ex uribus et propiis sedibus pellunt, juste pugnatur; hi vero ubique parati sunt servire...* (Alexander



Note what makes it lawful to kill a Muslim is not his religious creed but rather his criminal occupation of others' lands. The logic of the reconquest, in the Pope's eyes, was the means that could best justify a holy war dressed up as a crusade.

This was the ideological inheritance that Alfonso VI received at the beginning of his reign. The sacralisation of the reconquest was a fact. Thus, it had to be accompanied by gestures, specific motivations and circumstantial elements able to make this reality visible, especially when the fight against the infidel was not always accompanied by the always-convincing martyr's death. While there were taifas to exploit, Alfonso VI preferred economic extortion to blood-letting, and this is what happened for over two thirds of his reign. It is true that over time, the strategy of wearing them down was more effective than anything else, and its final aim was the defeat of the members and not their perpetuation. However, something that was undoubtedly quite evident to Alfonso VI and his court circles was probably also clear to everyone. Making the sacredness of reconquering clear was a priority for the Leonese monarch, and to this end, he employed such well-known elements as the patron saints or the protection garnered from the relics. He also resorted generously to the friendship of Cluny, the complicity of the Pope and the unconditional collaboration of his bishops. Nothing radically new, however, but with some touches of Jerusalemite novelty here and there. The king, a close contemporary of the preparatory climate of the crusade, its predication and first successes, continued to use its resonances to reproduce some of its beneficial effects in his realms. We are on the verge of crusading in the Peninsula.

3.1. *The role of the patron saints of the monarchy*

For centuries, Santiago had been the patron saint of the monarchy, but during the reign of Ferdinand I, there was a desire to present this protection as specially linked to the monarch's final decade, the one most actively dedicated to fighting the Muslims. This was an interesting precedent that his son, Alfonso VI, continued.

We have seen that the years 1074-1075 were when the beginning of a serious Leonese diplomatic-military offensive against Islam was contemplated. It is not by chance that this offensive coincided with the start of the works on the Romanesque cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, the one designed to replace the old building from the epoch of Alfonso III. In fact, it was in 1075 when, by mutual agreement

II. *Epistolae et diplomata*, cols. 1386-1387 (n° 101). Flori, Jean. "Réforme, reconquista, croisade...": 321-322; Flori, Jean. *La guerra santa...*: 276-277. Moreover, the Pope conceded automatic satisfaction of imposed penances and remission of sins to those who participated in the operation. That is what we are told in a letter that the Pope sent to the *clero Vulturvensi*, probably in Castel Volturno, a pontifical enclave recently reconquered in Campania. The text states: *Clero Vulturvensi. Eos qui in Ispaniam proficisci destinarunt, paterna karitate hortamur, ut que divinitus admoniti cogitaverunt, ad effectum perducere summa cum sollicitudine procurent; qui iuxta qualitatem peccaminum suorum unusquisque suo episcopo vel spirituali patri confiteatur, eisque, ne diabolus accusare de impenitentia possit, modus penitentiae imponatur. Nos vero auctoritate sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli et penitentiam eis levamus et remissionem peccatorum facimus, oratione prosequente* (Leewenfeld, Samuel. *Epistolae pontificum...*: 43 (doc. n° 82); Goñi, José. *Historia de la bula de la cruzada...*: 50-51).



with the king, bishop Diego Peláez ordered the start of the works on the new and monumental basilica⁵⁸. It is probable that Alfonso VI visited Santiago frequently in person that year⁵⁹. Reilly even believes that on that occasion, and to promote the building of the new cathedral, he made the booty he had obtained the year before available to the Apostle⁶⁰. It is a conjecture, but it is evident that the monarch wished to associate his anti-Islamic offensive with the splendour of the see and he was prepared to commit part of his present or future exchequer to facilitate this association.

However, it seems that it was no so much during the first part of his reign, when Alfonso VI recalled the patron saint, as in the second, when the Almoravid danger crudely displayed the most aggressive face of Islam. It is not evident that the king's stay in Galicia during 1088 was accompanied by any act of presence in Compostela⁶¹, nor does it seem that his journey to Santiago in early 1090, if we can adequately contrast this, had any direct relation with the sanctuary in Compostela and the campaigns he had to organise that year to defend Toledo⁶². Prior to 1097, this relationship could not be confirmed, and it is still not yet absolutely clear.

58. From 1075 on, an organised team of officials and craftsmen is documented working on the *Obra de Santiago*. Portela, Ermelindo. "Le bâtiment à Saint-Jacques de Compostelle (1075-1575): demande, financement, travail et techniques". *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 31 (1985): 16; Castiñeiras, Manuel. "La meta del Camino: la catedral de Santiago de Compostela en tiempos de Diego Gelmírez", *Los caminos de Santiago. Arte, historia y literatura*, María del Carmen Lacarra, dir. Saragossa: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2005: 218-219.

59. Reilly believes this (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 104) basing himself on a royal document in favour of San Lorenzo de Carboeiro supposedly dated 1 January 1075 in Santiago de Compostela before a wide representation of the court. Gamba considers the document suspicious, and while it may reflect the testimony of a church meeting held in Santiago around those dates, he does not believe the king's presence there probable. However, Gamba does not go so far as to consider the document an outright forgery (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 54-56 (doc. n° 25). I think that the king's presence in Santiago would not be strange when the decisive works on the new Compostela cathedral were formally begun around then, an act that went well beyond the purely religious.

60. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 104. However the recovery of the *parias* from Saragossa in 1074 was not a possibility, and it does not seem that those from Granada were received from that same year on.

61. It would have more to do with the rebellion that Count Rodrigo Ovéquiz had started a year earlier in Lugo in favour of the imprisoned King García and in which all indications are that the bishop Diego Peláez was involved. He was formally dispossessed in the council of Husillos in 1088 and his successor Pedro, abbot of Cardaña named. Reilly suggest that from Lugo, where the king had gone to put down the last sparks of the rebellion, he would have gone to Santiago to attend the takeover of the new bishop, and that was probably when a diploma was given to the monastery of San Martín de Pinario in Compostela (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 223-224). The documents that accredit this presence are not, however, reliable: Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 244-254 (docs. n° 93-95).

62. Alfonso VI's visit to Santiago at the beginning of 1090 —the year of Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn's third landing on the Peninsula— is shown by a document dated 28th January *in domo Petri Imaret in cogitate Sancta Incubi*, in which the monarch conceded a wide privilege of exemption to Montessori Monastery (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 270-272 (doc. n° 104). Reilly has no doubts about its authenticity (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 239 (doc. n° 22), but, in contrast, Gamba classifies it directly as a forgery. Without going into exegetical controversies about the



Reilly states that in November of that year, after the defeat at Consuegra in August, but also after Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn had withdrawn without fulfilling the aims of his fourth disembarkment in the Peninsula, Alfonso VI “would set off for Santiago de Compostela, perhaps on a thanksgiving visit to the Apostle for the protection he had dispensed to his realm against the recent Almoravid attack”⁶³. The truth, however, is that we have no surviving document from the monarch that could prove this “thanksgiving visit”⁶⁴, like the one issued on 9th December of that year, by his son-in-law, Count Henry of Portugal, on behalf of the church in Compostela, specifically in favour of his vassals in Correlhâ, to go to the sanctuary *causa orationis*⁶⁵. Of course, it is not impossible that the court met in full in Santiago, as Reilly wishes, to celebrate the feast of the Apostle⁶⁶. In any case, this is still only guesswork.

With this conjecture, Alfonso VI’s possible or probable visits to the sanctuary of Compostela ended. This does not mean that some important donations after that moment to the apostolic basilica did not carry the explicit label of the request for help in specially complicated moments against the Almoravids. For example, this happened with the donation of half the monastery of Piloño and the one in Brandáriz to the cathedral chapter of Santiago in January 1100⁶⁷. In the preamble of the document, the king refers to the *auxilium* that implores the Apostle, and further on, in its wording, the contents of this *auxilium* are detailed: a canon, paid from the income obtained by the chapter, should hold a daily mass for him and his triumph over the pagans⁶⁸. In truth, it was not an easy time. Since the previous spring, specifically after the fall of Consuegra in June, Toledo was once again unprotected and a predictable target for the Almoravids⁶⁹. All 1100 was a time of preparations for war and difficulties (in September, Henry of Burgundy was vanquished by the Muslims in Malagón)⁷⁰, to the point that it ended with the announcement of a

document in question, the truth is that this possible stay by Alfonso VI in Santiago does not coincide with any “political-religious” visit to the sanctuary in Compostela.

63. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 313.

64. Based on Risco, Antonio López states that Alfonso VI had visited Santiago the previous year: López, Antonio. *Historia de la Santa A.M. Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*. Santiago de Compostela: Imprenta del Seminario Conciliar Central, 1900: III, 194.

65. Lucas, Manuel. *Tumbo A de la Catedral de Santiago. Estudio y edición*. Santiago: Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro, 1998: 208-209 (doc. n° 97).

66. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 314. Reilly makes the timely observation that the feast day of the Apostle was then liturgically on 28th December.

67. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 154: 400-402. The other half of the monastery of Piloño had been handed over by Princess Elvira to the *inuictissimo ac triumphatori, glorioso apostolo Iacobo* in 1087, and she ratified her donation on her deathbed in that year of 1100 (Lucas, Manuel. *Tumbo A de la Catedral de Santiago...*: 190-193 (docs. n° 87-88)).

68. *...in uita mea cotidie sacrificium offerendo omnipotentis imploret ut, corporis michi tradita sospitate uiteque prolixate, paganorum sub pedibus meis conterat superbiam et fidei sue iugo eorum subiciat perfidiam...*

69. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 319-320. López Ferreiro stated graphically that Alfonso VI made this concession *al tiempo en que tenía convocado a su ejército para contener y reprimir la audacia de los almorávides* (“at the time when he had gathered his army to contain and repress the audacity of the Almoravids”). López, Antonio. *Historia de la Iglesia de Santiago...*: III, 202.

70. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 325.



council, in Palencia, in which measures would be adopted against the Almoravid threat⁷¹.

Something not very different occurred with the donation by the king in February 1103 from Cea in favour of the church and bishop of Compostela, giving them half the burgh of Trabadelo and declaring it exempt. The aim of the donation was that the Apostle, whose church was being built, be shown as a suitable intercessor before God⁷². The moment was just as delicate as the previous one. While work progressed on the sanctuary⁷³, Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn landed for the last time in that year of 1102-1103, and we know that in June 1103, Alfonso VI laid siege to Medinaceli to block communications between the Muslims in Saragossa and Valencia, both out of his control. This was an important operation to judge by the rapid Islamic response, with contingents sent by the Almoravid governors of Granada and Valencia coming to the aid of the besieged, although with little success⁷⁴.

We have a final and important privilege granted by Alfonso VI to Compostela, the famous right to mint coins, that can probably be dated from 14th May 1107⁷⁵ when the king sallied forth from Burgos at the head of a expedition against *uascones et aragonenses*. The nature of this campaign is not well defined⁷⁶ but it took place, in any case, in the midst of a very murky panorama as far as the anti-Islamic offensive is concerned. Indeed, it was in that year of 1107, when the new Almoravid emir, 'Alī ibn Yūsuf, crossed over to the Iberian Peninsula, entrusting his brother Tamīm with a full-scale offensive against the nucleus of Alfonso VI's Christian domains that would end with the debacle of Uclés in May 1108.

Despite the difficulties caused by the meagre documentation available, it seems we should have no doubts about the privileged place that the apostle Santiago occupied in the Alfonso VI's warrior ideology. The other great patron saint of the

71. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 327.

72. ... *Hoc autem Facio pro remedio anime mee et parentum meorum et ut ipsum apostolum cuius ecclesiam subleuo in terris propitium merear habere et intercessorem apud Deus in celis...* (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 443-444 (doc. n° 171).

73. We believe that the consecration of the apse chapel of El Salvador, the apse aisle and the transept date from only two years later, in 1105. Nodar, Victoriano R. "Alejandro, Alfonso VI y Diego Peláez: una nueva lectura del Programa Iconográfico de la Capilla del Salvador de la Catedral de Santiago". *Compostellanum*, 45 (2000): 628-629. By the same author: Nodar, Victoriano R. *Los inicios de la catedral románica de Santiago: el ambicioso programa de Diego Peláez*. Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 2004.

74. Specifically, the governor of Granada died in the battle with the Christians near Talavera de la Reina. Reilly links this victory to the privilege conceded on 22 June 1103 to archbishop Bernard of Toledo. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 340-341; Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 454-456 (doc. n° 176).

75. Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 481-485 (doc. n° 189).

76. We have two documents that mention it: a royal document dated 8th May 1107 which refers to the army then gathered to travel to Aragon: *Roborato uero in Castro de Monzon, coram omni sue expeditionis multitudine, dum iter tenderet ad Aragon post celebratum concilium apud Legionem* (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 478-481 (doc. n° 188), and the cited document from Compostela of mintage sent very few days after *quando rex de Burgis egressus, cum sola castellanorum expeditione, super uascones et aragonenses iter direxit*. About this enigmatic expedition: Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 350-351.



realm, Saint Isidore, had yet to acquire the military connotations he would later display. Lucas de Tuy, the grand mentor of “Isidorian militarisation”, assigns him decisive role in the conquest of Toledo, but we cannot speak of apparitions or miracles by the warrior saint from Seville until very late in the 12th century at the earliest⁷⁷. This is undoubtedly why, during his reign, Alfonso VI did not exploit this Isidorian vein to legitimate the anti-Islamic offensive. In fact, in the surviving documents that were sent from the royal chancery to the saint’s Leonese basilica do not show any element usable in this sense⁷⁸. Naturally, this does not mean that the court circles wished to unlink the monarch from the halo of the protective sanctity that the image of the bishop of Seville projected, the paradigm of political unity built on the solid base of orthodoxy. The famous episode of water flowing from the stones of the altar of the basilica, associated with the monarch’s death, reported by Bishop don Pelayo, is well known⁷⁹.

3.2. *The shielding of the relics*

Relics were the most appreciated religious objects in the Middle Ages. They had the virtue of keeping alive here on Earth the supernatural power of the now glorified bodies that they belonged to or with whom they had been in contact. Proximity to a relic guaranteed bodily healing and also spiritual purification. We know that the worship of relics in peninsular lands dated from long before, but increased notably, translated into political terms, during the reign of Ferdinand I of Leon and Castile⁸⁰.

77. The saint’s intervention in the taking of Baeza by Alfonso VII in 1147 was the first military miracle attributed to Saint Isidore in the *Historia Translationis Sancti Isidori*, composed by a canon in the Leonese monastery at the end of the 12th century or beginning of the 13th. (*Historia Translationis Sancti Isidori. Chronica Hispana Saeculi XIII. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. Juan A. Estévez. Turnhout: Brepols, 1997: LXXIII, 169-171). This episode, together with other miracles in the work, was later reproduced by Lucas de Tuy in his *Miracula Sancti Isidori* in the early decades of the 13th century. Henriët, Patrick. “Hagiographie et politique à León au début du XIII^e siècle: Lucas de Tuy, les chanoines de Saint-Isidore et la prise de Baeza”. *Revue Mabillon*, 8 (1997): 53-82. Taking this already militarized image of the saint, Lucas de Tuy added the episode of Isidore and the conquest of Toledo by Alfonso VI using the mediating figure of the old bishop Cipriano. Although the Latin text of the work is unpublished, there is a Castilian translation from the early 16th century (de Robles, Juan. *Milagros de San Isidoro*. Salamanca, 1525), reproduced by: Pérez, Julio. *Vida y milagros del glorioso San Isidoro, Arzobispo de Sevilla y Patrono del Reino de León*. León: Universidad de León- Cátedra de San Isidoro de la Real Colegiata de León, 1924: 133-138; Henriët, Patrick. “Un exemple de religiosité politique: Saint Isidore et les rois de León (XI^e-XIII^e siècles)”, *Fonctions sociales et politiques du culte des saints dans les sociétés de rite grec et latine du Moyen Âge et à l’époque moderne. Approche comparative*, Marek Derwich, Mihail Dmitriev, dirs. Wrocław: LARHCOR, 1999: 79 (doc. n° 14).

78. We refer to the donation of the Leonese monastery of Santa Marina, in 1099, and a general confirmation of goods from 1103 (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: 375-378 and 451-454 (docs. n° 148 and 175).

79. Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo...*: 84-86. Lucas de Tuy would later also seize on this prodigy, referring to it and another miracle that occurred during Alfonso VI’s reign, specifically that of the knight named Pelayo condemned to death by Alfonso VI, and saved by the saint from the isolation he was subjected to in the basilica thanks to these miraculous waters.

80. de Ayala, Carlos. “La sacralización de la reconquista...”: 78-95.



The growing influence of Cluny would be a decisive factor. The extraordinary power of the Burgundian abbey rested largely on it being the basilica-reliquary of the holy remains of Peter and Paul. This is recognized in a diploma sent from King Alfonso VI to Cluny⁸¹. It is evident that this more-than-abundant apostolic grace, comparable to that enjoyed by Rome, was an encouragement in its areas of influence to create or consolidate new sacred spaces, built on the logic emanating from the relics, generating protection and all kinds of spiritual and material benefits.

However, mention of relics during the reign of Alfonso VI is, first and foremost, mention of the “Holy Ark” of San Salvador in Oviedo. We know that Alfonso VI, with a full court in train, was in the old capital of Asturias in March 1075⁸², the moment when the tradition situates the solemn act of the opening of the “Holy Ark” under the king’s initiative. The document that bears witness to this is somewhat more than suspicious⁸³, but the tradition it refers to can feed off more or less old beliefs.

Let us summarise its contents. God wished to punish the sins of the Christians by allowing the Muslims to conquer practically all Spain. The Christians then took all the relics they could find to Toledo and placed them in an ark. When the persecution against them intensified, they decided providentially to take the ark to a safe place, where a temple had been built in God’s honour. It remained hidden there until a virtuous bishop named Ponce wished to check the marvels that were told about the ark’s contents, and, in the company of some abbots and clergy, he opened it. Nevertheless, so bright was the blinding light that flowed out of it, that it was impossible to see anything and he closed it again. However, God’s will was for King Alfonso to be the instrument to reveal its hidden contents. For this, the monarch, who had gone to the temple of San Salvador in Oviedo in Lent of 1075 in the company of his sister, Urraca, and the bishops Bernard of Palencia, Jimeno of Oca and Arias of Oviedo. He ordered both them and other members of the court and all the people to dedicate themselves to especially intense Lenten practices and commanded the Toledan clergy and the followers of the Roman rite to employ their prayers to ask God to allow him to know the marvellous contents of the ark. So, on the 13th of March, at the Third Hour, after a mass and a solemn procession, it was opened, thus revealing an incredible treasure. Outstanding among these were relics of Christ himself (fragments of the cross and bread from the Last Supper, the torn tunic, his sepulchre and shroud, the soil he trod on, even some of his blood), from

81. This was the donation of the monastery of Santa María in Nájera to the abbey in 1079. (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 161-165 (doc. n° 65); Iogna-Prat, Dominique. *Ordonner et exclure. Cluny et la société chrétienne face à l’hérésie, au judaïsme et à l’Islam, 1000-1150*. Paris: Aubier, 1998: 85.

82. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 104.

83. Gambra qualifies it as such, despite being aware of this being a forgery: Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 60-65 (doc. n° 27).



the Virgin Mary (clothing and milk), Saint Peter, the other apostles, prophets, and saints and martyrs in an incalculable figure⁸⁴.

We do not know when it was written, but it is worth drawing attention to the central role that Toledo acquires as the original home of the ark and thus the source of later legitimations. The text itself highlights the harmonic role of traditional Toledan practice together with the new Roman liturgy. It would no surprise if this was a story concocted in liturgically conservative circles, keen to show the perfect compatibility between the Hispanic ritual tradition and the novelty of the “Roman custom”⁸⁵. So perhaps we could say that this was not part of a later tradition but rather from a few years after the formal Romanisation of the Roman rite and thus, still in the late decades of the 11th century.

The other versions of the legend of the ark linked to the reign of Alfonso VI date from the early 12th century and introduce its Jerusalemite origin. This is the case of the *Historia Silense*⁸⁶ and, of course, with the version from the Pelagian work⁸⁷. For the latter, the ark had been made in Jerusalem by disciples of the apostles. When the Holy City was occupied by the Persians, the ark was taken to Africa, and from there, to Toledo in the times of King Sisebut. However, the sins of the Gothic kings and the resulting Muslim invasion forced it to be moved to Asturias where, after an arduous odyssey, it finally reaching Oviedo. There, Alfonso II had it placed in the temple built for that purpose. After detailing the monarch’s architectural works, the text then moves on directly (with no mention of its opening by Alfonso VI) to describe the relics in the ark, a list that differs from that of the reports, and seems to reproduce an old inventory from Oviedo in the 11th century⁸⁸. Again, it highlights the relics from Christ himself (a bottle with his blood, fragments of the cross, the Holy Sepulchre, the crown of thorns, the shroud and his tunic, the bread that was multiplied and from the Last Supper, soil from the Mount of Olives, one of the

84. A total of 83 relics are listed. The actual list (first part of the document) was added as thanks to God for the delivery of the jurisdiction of Langreo to the church of San Salvador. It is interesting to consult the work by: López, Enrique. *Las Reliquias de San Salvador de Oviedo*. Oviedo: Madú Ediciones, 2004, that supplies a full overview of the problem and whose appendices reproduce all the documentation.

85. Bishop Ponce is described as *hacedor de costumbre romana* in the Oviedo see in a spurious document by Ferdinand I (*Colección diplomática de Fernando I (1037-1065)*, ed. Pilar Blanco. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación “San Isidoro”, 1987: 149 (doc. n° 54). Remember that the records present him as a virtuous bishop who was unable to see the contents of the ark because God did not permit him to. God did not allow it. His fame as a severe “Romanist” may have been the evil that prevented this according to the logic that presided over the event. It is no more than conjecture that would reconcile the role of this bishop near Cluny in the development of the worship of relics, that the report credited with the frustrating role assigned to him.

86. Faced with the pagan menace, the ark would have been taken by sea from Jerusalem to Seville then, shortly after, on to Toledo where it would remain for a century. However, the Moorish offensive made the Christians hide the ark and take it along back routes to the sea where it was embarked for the Asturian port of Gijón. King Alfonso II would soon build the adequate place to keep it in. (*Historia Silense...: 138*).

87. *Colección de Documentos de la Catedral de Oviedo*, ed. Santos García. Oviedo: Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 1962: 511-515 (doc. n° 217); Fernández, Francisco Javier. *El Libro de los Testamentos de la Catedral de Oviedo*. Rome: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1971: 111-118.

88. Fernández, Francisco Javier. *El Libro de los Testamentos...: 115-116*.



vessels from the wedding at Cana, etc.). The total number listed is significantly lower than those that appeared in the reports.

In short, we can say that there was already a solid tradition of the Holy Ark by the time of Alfonso VI's reign. The date of the act, independently of whether its detailed contents were later, speaks of 1075 as the year of the opening of the macro-reliquary, which fits well with the king's itinerary. Moreover, this date coincides with the Jacobean ideological rearmament, the start on the work on the new cathedral in Compostela⁸⁹ and also the beginning of the king's renewed offensive against Islam. The virtuality of the relics was a successful endorsement in the hands of King Alfonso, the man chosen by God to show the world the marvels of the Holy Ark and its significant Jerusalemite imprint.

However, if we speak about relics with a Jerusalemite imprint, mention must be made of the fragment of the *Lignum Crucis* that Emperor Alexius I Komnenos (1081-1118) gave to King Alfonso years later, in 1101. This news is presented with full details in the first of the *Crónicas Anónimas de Sahagún*⁹⁰, although it fails to mention what would be most interesting to know, namely, the reasons behind the donation. Did the emperor seek to counter his obstructionist image towards the crusade by showing generosity to a western monarch who was not involved in the expedition but related to the most distinguished of all the crusaders, the only one to whom he showed a certain appreciation, Count Raymond of Saint-Gilles?⁹¹ Reilly suggests that the cross reached Alfonso's hands through Count Fernando Díaz of Asturias, who took part in the first crusade⁹².

This was not the only relic the Alfonso VI received from someone of such importance. Years earlier, in 1079, it was Pope Gregory VII who had distinguished him with a fragment of the chains of Saint Peter, although on that occasion we

89. It has even been suggested that "the solemn opening of the Ark in 1075 before Alfonso VI meant a gesture in favour of the balance between his kingdoms, in evident contention of Santiago". This is what Francisco Márquez states based on the comments by Serafín Moralejo. (Márquez, Francisco. *Santiago: trayectoria de un mito*. Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2004: 139 and 156).

90. The chronicle, which, as is known, can be dated from the decade after Alfonso's death, in effect states that in that year the emperor sent the king a cross, not very small, made of the wood of the *Lignum Crucis* and richly adorned. The relic, as indicated by the attached annotation, belonged to the half of the cross that Constantine took to Constantinople after his mother, the empress Helena, decided to split it in two. The relic, carried in solemn procession, was placed in the monastery of Sahagún in a ceremony presided over by the bishop of Palencia. *Crónicas Anónimas de Sahagún*, ed. Antonio Ubieto. Saragossa: Anubar, 1987: 17-18.

91. As I have mentioned, it is not clear that Count Raymond IV of Toulouse (1093-1105) actually fought in Spain under King Alfonso's call of 1086, but the truth is that in 1094 he was already married to Elvira, the daughter of the Leonese monarch, and mother of the future Count Alfonso Jordán: Benito, Eloy. "Alfonso Jordán, conde de Toulouse, un nieto de Alfonso VI de Castilla", *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes*. Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabes, 1987: I, 83-98.

92. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 331.



can nothing in the pontiff's intentions do not seem to hide anything that can be interpreted in a crusading context⁹³.

Be that as it may, the truth is that under the political-religious impulse of King Alfonso, his domains were turning into an authentic arsenal of relics to resort to in case of need. This is what none other than Ida of Lorraine, the mother of Godfrey of Bouillon, the first Christian in charge of governing the Jerusalem after its conquest, did. She was profoundly religious, founded many monastic centres and maintained correspondence with Saint Anselm. Among her establishments was the abbey of Lens, probably founded in 1059⁹⁴. Naturally, one of her concerns was to supply her foundations with relics worthy of veneration, and it was this interest that led her to contact King Alfonso VI to request information about the hair of the Virgin Mary kept in Astorga Cathedral. Her intention, if the veracity and credibility of the relic were shown, was to obtain at least part of it to dignify her foundation in Artois. The king passed her request on to Bishop Osmundo of Astorga. We know the letter that the latter sent to the countess, and that was copied in the 17th century by the Benedictine Mabillon⁹⁵. The letter is not dated, and in it, the prelate responds to the countess's concerns referring her to what he has been able to find in *sententiis librorum nostrorum*. In summary, this stated that due to persecution by the gentiles in Jerusalem, seven disciples, including Torquatus and Hesychius, sailed to Hispania taking the relic of the hairs of the Virgin that were deposited in Toledo, and were received by the king and all the people with the due veneration. When the *gens Saracenorum* later invaded Hispania, the bishops and all the religious men took refuge in *ad nostras Alpes, videlicet Astoricenses, quae ab Astorica habent nomen*. They carried the relics to Astorga and Oviedo. Consequently, and following the king's mandate, the bishop then sent a good part of this hair to the countess, while requesting her to remember the Church of Astorga. The letter, forwarded to the king, was confirmed by him personally and sent to the countess.

93. The relic consisted of a *claviculam auream, in qua de catenis b. Petri benedictio continetur*. This is more a gesture of authority in the context of the negotiations to normalise the Roman Rite in Alfonso's domains. The letter that informs us about this precious gift is from October 1079, and with it, while the Pope denounced the errors still present in his kingdoms, he seems to reinforce the king's orthodox spirit by offering him such a significant Petrine relic. *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965-1216)*, ed. Demetrio Mansilla. Rome: Instituto Español de Estudios Eclesiásticos, 1955: 29-31 (doc. n° 17). Incomprehensibly, Reilly identified the gift "with a Golden Rose as a sign of papal pleasure". (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 126).

94. Vázquez, Luis; Lacarra, José María; Uría, Juan. *Las Peregrinaciones a Santiago de Compostela*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1948: II, 483 (doc. n° 62).

95. Flórez takes it from his *Vetera Analecta* (1675, I) and includes it in Flórez, Enrique, *España sagrada*. Guadarrama: Revista Agustiniiana, 2005: 16, 447 (with Spanish translation on 191).



3.3. *The Papacy and the Jerusalemite horizon*

Following the “first crusade”, and thus during Alfonso VI’s reign, there was a decisive change in the attitude of the Papacy towards the war against Islam in the Peninsula. Before the “first crusade”, the Vatican, that had been developing the idea of “pontifical reconquest” since the mid 11th century⁹⁶, only envisaged that scenario in Spain. An anthological pontifical text that we can read in a long bull by Gregory VII dated June 1077, summarises the papal point of view well. Ancient “constitutions” (probably referring to the famous “Donation of Constantine”) prove that the *regnum Hispanie* was the property of the Church in Rome. Various reasons prevented the Papacy from dedicating itself to this, which, in turn, explains why no great efforts were made to recover the area invaded by the Saracens. Now that God was conceding notable victories to the Christians, it was necessary for the Spanish princes to assume the honour and glory of recovering the Peninsula for the see of Saint Peter⁹⁷.

The reconquest of the Peninsula concerned the Pope, and although now he could count on the Spanish kings, it had not really always been that way. This is shown in the taking of Barbastro and the documentation of Alexander II that we know and is especially clear in the campaign that Gregory VII had organised in 1073 and placed in the hands of Count Ebles de Roucy with the aim of fighting the Muslims and winning back the invaded lands for the Church⁹⁸.

The Pope no longer wanted to ignore the Spanish kings, but still thought that this reconquest was only properly legitimate if it worked to Rome’s benefit. However, this posture would not last. Gregory VII had to put up with radical opposition from Alfonso VI to an approach of this type⁹⁹, and pragmatism ended up winning the day. This realism, but especially the rise of the new idea of the crusade, resituated the reconquest of the peninsula in terms acceptable to everyone. It must be said that the role of Urban II, as the “inventor” of the crusade, was fundamental in this change.

The justification of the crusade, a universal mobilisation led by the Pope, was not based on the mere violation of the rights of the Church. It was something much more serious that legitimated its organisation: Islam was waging a decisive struggle against Christianity, a battle that threatened the honour of Christ and could endanger Christendom’s existence. The concept of Papal reconquest fell very short in its response to the new danger. Christianity was a whole that went beyond the real or potential domains of the Church, a whole that the Pope aspired to lead and, thus, to defend on fronts, the eastern and the western, because both

96. *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III...*: 24 (doc. n° 13).

97. The letter was aimed generically at the “kings, counts and other princes of Spain”, so, although we know that the document was fundamentally a letter of presentation for the papal legates sent to Catalonia and Aragon, the allusions included affected all the kings on the Peninsula. Cowdrey, Herbert E. J. *Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998: 473.

98. *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III...*: 10-12 (docs. n° 5 and 6).

99. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 123-124.



were threatened. Thus, Spain stopped being the appendix of the papal domains to become a frontier of a broader Christianity under threat¹⁰⁰. Placing the emphasis on the totality without establishing schemes of sovereign dependence was a way of involving the local leaders more deeply in an endeavour that concerned everybody.

We know that Urban II was deeply concerned about the situation in Spain. Guibert of Nogent, the abbot chronicler of the first crusade, expressly states that the Saracen invasions of the Peninsula (the Almoravid conquest) notably affected him¹⁰¹. In this sense, we do not know if the threats, if true, that Alfonso VI sent beyond the Pyrenees after his disastrous rout at Zalaca by the Almoravids, had the desired effect. On that occasion, this would have placed the French leaders in the dilemma of whether to help him or force him to acquiesce to the Muslims crossing peninsular territory towards the Pyrenees¹⁰². The truth is that straight after becoming Pope in 1088, Urban II concerned himself with the Spanish situation. In October, he confirmed the election of his old companion from Cluny, Bernard, as archbishop of Toledo. Bernard became the primate of all Spanish bishops and archbishop of any dioceses that lacked metropolis or where this had not been restored. Such an exorbitant privilege included a hymn to the merit of the conquest of the city by Alfonso VI and urged the new archbishop to work to convert the infidels¹⁰³. The latter was not an exhortation, but rather a rhetorical resort that expressed the desire for radical change¹⁰⁴. To make this change possible, the Pope dedicated a good part of his efforts in 1089 to trying to guarantee the restoration and defence of Tarragona. This was a strategic point, a symbol of the old Spanish Church, and the Pope used it to develop the ideas about spiritual retribution in consonance with his own conception of crusade. In this, contributing to the restoration and defence of the old dioceses could be considered an effective penance that meant *remissio*

100. It is known that the Pope participated in a common providentialist conception that he knew how to put to the service of his idea of crusade: the Muslims were God's punishment of the sinful Christian society; only a duly reformed Church unquestioningly submitted to papal authority could face the danger that the new situation meant for Christianity as a whole. The purifying rehabilitation of the latter passed through military triumph over the Muslims: Christians were not involved in the fight to retake ecclesiastical lands but rather in a struggle for freedom from evil on all fronts. For the Pope's theological approaches and the inclusion of the crusade in his providentialist view of history: Becker, Alfons. *Papst Urban II (1088-1099)*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1988: II, 352-362, 374-376 and 398-399. Others echo his approach, including: Flori, Jean. *La guerra santa...*: 280, and: Tyerman, Christopher. *Las Guerras de Dios. Una nueva Historia de las Cruzadas*. Barcelona: Edhasa, 2007: 84; de Ayala, Carlos. "Definición de cruzada: estado de la cuestión". *Clio y Crimen. Revista del Centro de Historia del Crimen de Durango*, 6 (2009): 236.

101. de Nogent, Guibert. "Gesta Dei per Francos", *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*. Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1879: IV, 135; Goñi, José. *Historia de la bula...*: 56.

102. Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La España del Cid...*: I, 340.

103. *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III...*: 43-45 (doc. n° 27).

104. Rivera Recio drew attention to this curious extreme and its frequent use in documents since abbot Hugo of Cluny employed it in his letter to Bernard, encouraging him to accept his new episcopal responsibility. (Rivera, Juan Francisco. *La Iglesia de Toledo en el siglo XII (1086-1208)*. Rome: Instituto Español de Historia eclesiástica, 1966: I, 207).



peccatorum, an indulgence that was equivalent to that obtained by a pilgrimage to Jerusalem¹⁰⁵.

For the first time, and before the formal promulgation of the crusade, the Jerusalemite horizon, associated with the idea of the purifying pilgrimage, loomed over the situation in the Peninsula, converting a project limited purely to Spain into a spiritual path, as meritorious as that of the pilgrimage, to the central focus and *raison d'être* of Christianity. The Pope was concerned about the situation in the Peninsula, and it is no absurdity to think that his conception of crusade was largely spurred on by the Hispanic experience. The perception of threat generated by the Islamic offensive came not so much from the eastern front where the situation was not especially tense in 1095¹⁰⁶, but rather from the Hispanic situation where the Almoravids, a people converted to expansive jihadism, defeated the most powerful king in 1086¹⁰⁷.

Perhaps the Almoravids were more present in the background at Clermont than we might at first sight think, and although the Pope considered the Islamic threat as indiscriminately totalising, it is clear that Jerusalem was the only objective capable of awakening universal enthusiasm, as effectively happened. If we believe the Norman monk and chronicler, Orderic Vitalis, this enthusiasm reached the deepest Galicia¹⁰⁸. Another contemporary chronicler, Sigebert, the monk from the Benedictine abbey of Gembloux in Brabant, tells us that the response by westerners to the crusading call at Clermont was really so enthusiastic that it involved everyone, including bishops, clergy and monks, rich and poor, young and old, nobles and serfs, from a long list of regions that the chronicler heads with *Hispania*¹⁰⁹.

However, this geographically indiscriminate response was not part of the plans of Urban II's call. Because the Pope was especially aware of the Almoravid threat, he did not want the Christians in the Peninsula to become involved in the general crusade; they had their own crusading front and this was perfectly comparable to the one in the Holy Land. That is how he expressed himself with regard to the familiar theme of the restoration and defence of Tarragona in a letter from around 1096, or perhaps slightly

105. On 1st July 1089, the Pope addressed Count Berenguer Ramón II of Barcelona and the bishops and dignitaries of the old Tarragona province in these terms. (*La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III...*: 46-47 (doc. n^o 29).

106. Many years ago, Emmanuel Sivan insisted that on the eve of the Crusades, the Seljuk Turks dedicated much more efforts to the anti-Fatimid jihad than the one against the Christians. (Sivan, Emmanuel. *L'Islam et la Croisade: Idéologie et Propagande dans les réactions Musulmanes aux Croisades*. Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1968: 15-20; Cahen, Claude. *Oriente y occidente en tiempos de las cruzadas*. Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001: 92).

107. However, it is of course excessive and absolutely disproportionate to interpret the "first crusade" as a operation subordinated to the fundamental aim of countering the Almoravid offensive in the Peninsula, as some authors have suggested at various times, based on some isolated data. Goñi Gaztambide emphasises this, without going as far as to identify himself with this hypothesis (Goñi, José. *Historia de la bula...*: 62).

108. ... *Apostolicae jussionis fama per totam orbem perniciousiter volavit, et de cunctis gentibus praedestinos ad summi Messiae militiam commovit (...)* Immo britannos et Guascones, et extremos hominum Gallicos fama perniciousiter succrescens animavit et armavit... (Goñi, José. *Historia de la bula...*: 59).

109. "Chronica et annales aevi Salici", *Monumenta Germanica Historica. Scriptores (in Folio) (ss)*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. Stuttgart: Mierseman, 1844: VI, 367.



later, to the counts of Besalú, Ampurias, Roussillon and Cerdanya and their knights. What he wrote was effectively that if anyone fell *pro Dei et fratrum dilectione*, they should have no doubts that, through God's mercy, they would certainly find pardon for their sins and eternal life, as they would if this had occurred in the Holy Land, as in both cases they were collaborating in the same task of defending Christendom¹¹⁰.

It is clear that a radical change in the papal concept of the struggle of the Christians in the Peninsula against the Muslims came about under Urban II. Before him, this fight should be understood as a chapter in the papal reconquest of the legacy of Saint Peter. With Pope of the crusade, the idea of pontifical reconquest was abandoned and the action in the Peninsula became an element of the crusade itself, an element that, split off from the main front principal of the sacred struggle, was left in the hands of the local kings. It is evident that this message, interpreted in terms of perfect autonomy, could only work to the benefit of the peninsular monarchies. Alfonso VI of course interpreted it this way, and his attitude towards Urban II's successor, Pope Paschal II, must also be interpreted in this perspective.

The new Pope, Cardinal Raniero de Bieda, knew Spain well. He had been sent to the Peninsula as Urban II's legate, presiding over the Council of Leon in 1090, which was decisive for organising the administration of the Castilian-Leonese church¹¹¹. In October 1100, Pope Paschal sent a letter to Alfonso VI, addressing him as a *Hispaniarum regi*, and in which he expressed interest in the threat to the frontiers of his lands (*proximorum tuorum finibus providentes*). This interest led to two important decisions: the first was to prohibit the *milites* from his domains from joining the Jerusalemite crusade, and the other spiritually protecting those domains by excommunicating, or, more accurately, excluding from forgiveness for their sins, those who attacked them: *litteras insuper hoc ipsum prohibentes et peccatorum veniam pugnatoribus in regna vestra comitatusque mandavimus*. In the document, that also addresses the issue of the consecration of archbishop Gelmírez, the Pope expresses his concern for what the king has told him about Christian captives, and ends by wishing the Church and the king victory over their enemies: *Omnipotens Dominus Ecclesiae et tibi de inimicis suis victoriam largiatur*¹¹².

The papal letter is fascinating. Perfectly in tune with Urban II, Pope Paschal considers the peninsular as a scenario for the crusade in which obviously, the same spiritual benefits were obtained as in the Holy Land¹¹³, and which it was certainly not licit to

110. Kehr, Paul. *Papsturkunden in Spanien. Vorarbeiten zur Hispania Pontificia. Katalanien*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1926: I, 287-288 (doc. n° 23) [dating it between 1089 and 1091]; Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. London: The Atholene Press, 1993: 19-20 (dating it sometime after the Council of Clermont); Mayer, Hans Eberhard. *Historia de las Cruzadas*. Madrid: Istmo, 1995: 47 (dating it between 1096 and 1099); Flori, Jean. *La guerra santa...*: 283-284 (dating it after a 1096). According to Flori, most historians place it between 1096 and 1099.

111. The papal letter in which Cardinal was ordered to carry out his legation, in: *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III...*: 48-49 (doc. n° 31).

112. *Historia Compostelana...*: I, 88 (chapter IX).

113. In a later document, probably from March 1101, Pope Paschal II addressed the clergy and laity of Leon and Castile to reproach them for their disobedience of the precepts of the Apostolic who had long enjoined them not to abandon their lands, frequently attacked by incursions *maurorum et moabiturum*,



abandon in benefit of Jerusalem¹¹⁴. However, the Pope also recognizes the king as a faithful supporter of the Church, a legitimate representative of its interests, whose domains, like those of any good crusader, should be protected from the attacks of other Christians¹¹⁵. In fact, from the papal perspective, as the document sates at the end, the triumph of the king is also that of the Church.

The success could not have been greater for royal propaganda. The monarchy's politico-military action had the Pope's blessing and, especially, the legitimacy that derived from the idea of crusade, an idea that had taken deep root in the Peninsula. In this sense, it is evident that the Jerusalemite lure awoke concern and adherents, and also did so in the territories of Alfonso VI. The testimonies in the chronicles that we have referred to indicate this, the papal prohibitions for those who wished to go to the Holy Land confirm it, and the significant cases of Castilian and Leonese subjects who wished to embrace the cross with destination in Jerusalem, illustrate it¹¹⁶. In any case, these subjects likely to abandon the realm were also the clearest proof of the challenge that King Alfonso still had to face, that of making the Hispanisation of the crusade that the papal directives urged fully effective, also in the awareness of his subjects. It would be his successors who were responsible for completing the task.

to march on Jerusalem. Consequently, he ordered the return of both the clergy and the laymen he had been able to see, including Munio, Diego and Nuño. They carried the letter that prohibited anyone from slandering or maligning them for this reason. The Pope reiterated that the recipients should remain on their lands and fight for them with all their might against *moabitas et mauros*, and thus take there their penance and obtain *remissionem et gratiam* from Saints Peter and Paul and the apostolic Church (*Historia Compostelana...: I*, 146-147 (chapter XXXIX). The editor dates the document "possibly" from 25th March 1109, "after the defeat at Uclés" (30th May 1108). The 1101 date is from Jaffé-Loewenfeld. See: *Historia Compostelana...: I* 147 (doc. n° 357).

114. See previous note, and also the papal document of 14th October 1100 (the same date as the one sent to the king) in which bishops Pedro of Lugo, Alfonso [of Tuy] and Gonzalo [of Mondoñedo] and all the clergy of Santiago were informed of the prohibition on both *milites* and clergy from the domains of King Alfonso from marching on Jerusalem and abandoning their *Ecclesiam et Provinciam*, so frequently harassed by the ferocity of the Almoravids —*moabitarum feritas*— (*Historia Compostelana...: I*, 87 (chapter IX).

115. At that time, the king perhaps feared the possible effects that the actions of Peter I of Aragon and Navarre against the Taifa of Saragossa, theoretically protected by Alfonso VI. It was a meritorious action in the eyes of the Church, a real crusade, by Pedro I, and which ended with the taking of Saragossa in 1101 (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...: I* 330; Laliena, Carlos. *La formación del Estado feudal...: I* 193-194). Did Alfonso VI think, and is this what he transmitted to the Pope, that this expansive race could finally work against his interests?

116. We have the study by: Barton, Simon. "From tyrants to soldiers of Christ: the nobility of twelfth-century León-Castile and the struggle against Islam". *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 44 (2000): 28-48. Prominent among the names of the nobles from Alfonso VI's domains who went to the Holy land were Count Fernando Díaz of Asturias, Nuño Pérez and Pedro Gutiérrez (Barton, Simon, "From tyrants to soldiers of Christ...": 35).



3.4. *The friendship of Cluny*

In another place, I have emphasised the importance of Cluny among the sacralising keys to the reconquest in the times of Ferdinand I¹¹⁷. This is a recurring theme and one dealt with from long ago. It is obvious that, independently of the maximalist postures that misguidedly attribute a decisive role in the development of the Christian holy war to Cluny, the black monks formed part of the background supporting and legitimizing the idea. It is also well known that while Ferdinand I began a new and more than enviable period of relations with Cluny, much closer than under his father Sancho *el Mayor*, and certainly connected with the bellicose final decade of his reign, it was undoubtedly his son Alfonso VI who turned these links to the Burgundy abbey into an authentic vehicle legitimising political expression, in this case, associated with the anti-Islamic offensive.

In contrast with what happened under his father, Alfonso VI maintained close relations with Cluny almost right from the start of his reign. A consolidated tradition among those at Cluny, contained in the *Crónica Najerense* in the second half of the 12th century, even awarded the abbot Hugo a decisive role as an intercessor to free the king, held prisoner by his brother Sancho in 1072¹¹⁸. The truth is that straight after taking control of his kingdom of Leon and also Castile, he gave the monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas to the abbey in 1073¹¹⁹.

Naturally, while Alfonso VI's triumphant offensive against the taifas lasted, including the first years when the Almoravids began to pose serious problems (until 1190), there was a very important flow of money to the abbey of Cluny¹²⁰, and also specific donations of new priorates or simple monastic inheritances¹²¹. This close link between Alfonso VI's military success and the Leonese diversion of assets and property to Cluny ended with a flourish when in the spring of 1090, the abbot

117. de Ayala, Carlos. "La sacralización de la *reconquista*...": 96-103.

118. The author of the chronicle says that Alfonso, when a prisoner, had sent messengers to the abbot to seek spiritual intercession from him and his community to secure his release. Some days later, Alfonso received a nocturnal visit by Saint Peter to announce not only his release but also his tremendous future political victory, and this while his brother Sancho, also visited by the Apostle, was ordered to release the prisoner (*Crónica Najerense*, ed. Juan A. Estévez. Madrid: Akal, 2003: 177).

119. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 36-38 (doc. n° 18).

120. In fact, an authentic qualitative leap took place in July 1077. The king converted the not very well defined census that his father Ferdinand I had authorised in favour of the monastery in Burgundy, into a quantity that duplicated the former amount (it would now be 2,000 pieces of gold) and this became a hereditary obligation (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 119-123 (docs. n° 46 and 47). Later, perhaps unable to fulfil his commitments for an annual payment, the king compensated the abbot with the delivery of 10,000 pieces of gold, which were decisive for the great architectural works by Saint Hugo: Cluny III (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 268-269 (doc. n° 103). As Biskho states, it is evident that Cluny benefited much more generously from Alfonso VI than from any other European monarch: Biskho, Charles L. "Liturgical intercession at Cluny for the Kings-Emperors of Leon". *Studia Monastica*, 3 (1961): 61 [reed. with additional note in: *Spanish and Portuguese Monastic History, 600-1300*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1984, VIII].

121. Reglero, Carlos M. *Cluny en España. Los prioratos de la provincia y sus redes sociales (1073-ca. 1270)*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 2008: 152-155.



travelled to the Peninsula in person and had a private audience with the king in Burgos¹²². Regarding this inextricable connection, the Cluniac monk and chronicler, Bernold de Saint Blaise transmits the idealised image of a Catholic king and in good relations with Cluny, a determined fighter against the pagans, a king, in fact, who would have entered the Burgundian monastery if his abbot had not advised him not to continue *sub seculari habitu*¹²³.

However, there were no more payments after 1090. The regime of *parias* had disappeared with the Almoravid unification of al-Andalus, and with Alfonso VI on the defensive, and in need of finance to sustain the war, he could no longer fulfil his commitments.

These circumstances, although already irreversible during the remains of the Leonese monarch's reign, did not tarnish the patent alliance between Alfonso VI and Cluny during the first twenty years of his rule, an alliance that gave the monarch indisputable political benefits, although the estimate of their value differs depending on one's historiographic perspectives. The fact is that, for a long time, Cluny was the effective ally who could counterbalance an invasive presence of the pontificate in the domains of King Alfonso¹²⁴, who, by the way, the abbey of Cluny had no trouble recognising as *imperator*¹²⁵. The Burgundian abbey had been the great moral backer, and also indirect beneficiary, of Alfonso's military successes while these lasted. Of course, this was unthinkable from a non-sacralised consideration of that activity.

3.5. The role of Alfonso VI's bishops

The importance of the bishops in so many sacralising instances of the war throughout the Middle Ages was basically on two levels. These were first as the ideologists able to build legitimations and, consequently, sanction the military

122. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 287-290 (doc. n° 110); Biskho, Charles L. "Liturgical intercession...": 70-72. It was surely as a result of this audience that the abbot published a liturgical rule that formally included spiritual intercession before God on behalf of King Alfonso VI and all his family. The text is known as *Statuta sancti Hugonis abbatis Cluniacensis pro Alfphonso rege Hispaniarum tanquam insigni benefactore* (Biskho, Charles L. "Liturgical intercession...": 72-74).

123. In his *Chronicon*, referring to the year 1093, the chronicler writes:... *His temporibus rex Hispaniae Adefonsus, in fide catholicus et in conversatione Cluniacensis abbatis obedientiarius, sepissime contra paganos pro christianis viriliter dimicavit, multasque aeclesias iam dudum penitus devastatas in pristinum statum restauravit. Ipse etiam Cluniaci maiorem aeclesiam a fundamentis aedificavit, ad cuius aeclesiae aedificationem infinitam pecuniam Cluniacum direxit, qui etiam iam dudum se ibidem monachum fecisset, si dominus abbas ad tempus eum sub seculari habitu retinere non satius iudicaret...* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores. Scriptores in folio*. Hanover: Impensis bibliopolii aulici Hahniani, 1844: 457). The latter statement seems to be an interested assessment by the monk. Cowdrey, Herbert Edward J. *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970: 146-147.

124. Not many years ago, Mínguez insisted on the political value of the alliance with Cluny to the point that it could even have avoided the military campaign in the Peninsula organised by the pontificate in 1073-1074. Mínguez, José María. *Alfonso VI. Poder, expansión y reorganización interior*. Hondarrabia: Nerea, 2000: 220.

125. Reglero, Carlos M. *Cluny en España...*: 193.



activity of the kings on the basis of religious criteria. Moreover, they could influence the military aspect by conferring their testimonial contribution to the image of what was consistent with God's will.

We do not have much data about this theme from the reign of Alfonso VI nor is this always very eloquent, but it is significant enough for us to see these as factors in the sacred war.

In fact, many of the ideologues whose vision of the war against Islam presented it as an authentic religious confrontation came from among the episcopal intelligentsia. In truth, not many of Alfonso VI's bishops have left deep intellectual marks, but there are some interesting examples. The most spectacular and best known is undoubtedly Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo. He was bishop of the Asturian see from 1101, at the end of the reign. He outlived the king by many years, and has left us a brief biography of the latter, the colophon to a no less brief personal chronicle that serves as the final contribution to the so-called *corpus pelagianum*, a recompilation of old chronicles. His biography of the king is very idealised and schematic, and does not offer an explicit vision of the king's military activity as similar to or close to a crusade. However, he does transmit two very interesting ideas. The first is that Alfonso VI was the "father and defender of all Spanish churches"¹²⁶. Significantly, this statement that makes the king responsible and turns him into the Church's protective shield, was formulated immediately after having presented all the monarch's military activities, including those against the Almoravids. In fact, the king's military work is firstly presented as the defence of the Church. In this sense, towards the end of the chronicle and with regard to the king's death, the bishop offers us a biblical image of the sovereign: he is the pastor entrusted with the flock that, with his demise, is left at the mercy of the Saracens "and wicked men"¹²⁷. The consequence that can be extracted from this peculiar perspective is that the war against the Muslims was a ministerial task for the king whose basic objective was to defend the Church. There is no explicit sacral formulation of military activity, but implicitly this is unambiguously a holy war.

Apart from Bishop Pelayo of Oviedo, some other prelates also shone culturally during Alfonso VI's reign. One of these was another bishop named Pelayo, in this case from Leon. He was elected to the see, not by Alfonso, but by his father Ferdinand I in 1065, the last year of his rule. What little we know of the earlier history of the new prelate of Leon, is through a later document by the same Pelayo¹²⁸. He tells us that he had been born in Galicia, and was carefully educated in ecclesiastical affairs in the see in Compostela up to his ordination as a priest¹²⁹. From the start, he showed

126.... *Iste Adefonsus fuit pater et defensor ómnium ecclesiarum hispaniensium, ideo hec fecit quia per omnia catholicus fuit...* (Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo...*: 83).

127.... *Cur pastor oves deseris? Nam commendatum tibi gregem et regnum inuadent enim eum Sarraceni et maliuoli homines...* (Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo...*: 87).

128. Dated 1073: *Colección Documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León...* IV, 438-447 (doc. nº 1190).

129. *Ego enim Pelagius (...) in Galletia prouintia hortus, adoleui in sede Sancti Iacobi ibique, doctrinis ecclesiasticis adprime eruditus, ad gradum usque leuitici ordinis promotus sum...* Ruiz Asencio, the text's editor, identifies the *orden levítico* with the sacerdotal. This is not the interpretation that Flórez gave in his time (*España*



unwavering loyalty to Alfonso VI despite the king not having been responsible for his election¹³⁰.

Right from his accession to the Leonese chair, Bishop Pelayo, a member of the Compostelan circle of Cresconius, felt the need for restoration. He was a good representative of Hispanic reformism, a man ready but alien to the guidelines of Roman renewal that, during his time as the head of the Leonese see, would be embodied by Gregory VII. It is in this perspective that the contents of his well-known document of 10th November 1073, mentioned above, must be understood¹³¹. In it, he explains the material restoration of the cathedral church and also its resulting consecration in a solemn ceremony presided over by the king and the royal family. He also proposed a full programme of restoration, symbolically centred on the material and cultic reconstruction of the old church of Santa María and San Cipriano, seat of the dioceses. It was in the context of this programme that the bishop designed his own version of the reconquest.

For Pelayo, it was King Ordoño II who restored the church in Leon and converted the city of his seat into *caput regni*. The church prospered from then on, but the problem was that many years after the death of Ordoño, the Muslims —*gens perfida hismahelitorum*—, very similar to the old idol worshippers, rose against the Christians, destroying churches, knocking over altars and profaning sacred objects. The kingdom (*prouintia*) was depopulated and its rights extinguished, while the Leonese see, spoiled and contaminated by the wickedness of their enemies (*malitia hostium*), would remain without honour for many years, until the times of Alfonso V and Sancho III, the father of the king who had chosen him as bishop. God then wished mercy on his people who had learned the lesson of the punishment for their sins, and the Christians could free themselves from the yoke of the Muslim, who they then expelled from their kingdom. Now, in the times of Alfonso VI was when peace had been found and was thus the appropriate moment to set about the definitive restoration of the Leonese Church.

Bishop Pelayo's particular vision of the reconquest illustrates a process of conservative neo-Gothic resonances in which the wickedness of Islam (probably focussed through the memory of Almanzor) is described as the just punishment for the sins of the Christians. The kings of the reformist restoration, Alfonso V and

Sagrada, 35: 102). For the latter, *ordo* corresponded to the deaconate. More recently, we find the same line of interpretation in: Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía hispánica entre los siglos X y XI*. Jaén: Universidad de Jaén: 104 and 111.

130. In this sense, the information supplied by the chronicle of Bishop Pelayo about Sancho II's self-coronation in León after defeating Alfonso VI and banishing him from the kingdom in 1072 is very eloquent (Sánchez, Benito. *Crónica del obispo don Pelayo...*: 78). As Reilly states, the irregular self-coronation was not an act of political arrogance, but more the result of the refusal by the city's bishop to take part in a ceremony that he would have to have conducted and that he was not at all willing to legitimate. (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 66 and 80).

131. *Colección de la Catedral de León...*: IV, 438-447 (doc. n° 1190). Linehan suspects that the document might have suffered some not well-defined additions. (Linehan, Peter. "León, ciudad regia, y sus obispos en los siglos X-XIII", *El Reino de León en la Alta Edad Media*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1994: VI, 440-441).



Sancho III, were the ones who began the effective fight against the enemies of the faith, and the process culminated with the peace that Alfonso VI's reign brought. It was he who generated the objective conditions that allowed the Church to be restored in Leon, as an image of the kingdom as a whole. Pelayo's discourse is as unmistakable as that of his homonym from Oviedo: the struggle against Islam is translated into the restoration and defence of the Church, something that only the pacifying triumph of Alfonso made possible.

Let us look now at the third bishop, Pedro, who succeeded Pelayo in Leon, probably after a very brief pontificate by one by the name of Sebastián. He held the post from late 1086 or early 1087 until after Alfonso VI's death. He was undoubtedly one of the king's men¹³², and would have the chance to show that in the most active phase of the ideologisation of political power since Alfonso VI began his reign, and which, after the occupation of Toledo, was orientated towards consolidating the definitive link between the Leonese and Castilian domains and the rest of western Christendom. This connection would follow two main paths: the partial reception of the pontifical programme of Gregorian reformism and the confrontation with an Islam that had begun to be perceived as dangerous beyond the Pyrenees.

Bishop Pedro was undoubtedly a faithful collaborator with the king in the verification of these two key lines of political-ideological legitimation, and it certainly would not be surprising for him to be the author of a chronicle of courtly inspiratuin of the reign such as some later witnesses claimed¹³³. It is true that the fact that we find no trace of it prior to the mid-16th century is not a good guarantee for its existence. It is equally true that the few indirect and novelised vestiges that have been preserved through these late testimonies sometimes present unacceptable anachronisms¹³⁴. Yet maybe we should not reject out of hand the existence of a primitive text, undoubtedly interpolated, that could respond to a primeval biographic outline of Alfonso VI. If this were so, it could well, as has been insistently claimed since the 16th century, have been written by Bishop Pedro of Leon¹³⁵, as long as we

132. There are many indications that corroborate this, but unequivocal evidence is not lacking, among which is that the king, presumably at the end of his days, entrusted certain quantities of gold, silver and money to Bishop Pedro that had to be distributed, to save his soul, among churches, the poor and the clergy, *tam in Hispania quam ultra portos*. Ruiz, Irene. *La reina doña Urraca (1109-1126). Cancillería y colección diplomática*. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 2003: 556 (doc. n° 125).

133. Risco collected these in the 18th century (*España Sagrada*, 35: 151-152). Among others, he cites two chroniclers of Charles V, Pedro Mexía and the archdeacon Lorenzo Padilla, Nicolás Antonio, the late 17th-century author of a very useful *Bibliotheca hispana vetus sive hispani scriptores* from the epoch of Octavian Augustus to 1500, and naturally, friar Prudencio de Sandoval, the bishop of Pamplona who published a *Historia de los Reyes de Castilla y León*, in 1615, covering the reigns from Ferdinand I to Alfonso VII.

134. I am thinking, for example, in the passage in Pedro Mexía which tells about a naval battle between the king of Tunis and the king of Seville, the latter allied with Alfonso VI, in which *ciertos tiros de hierro o lombardas, con que tiraban muchos truenos de fuego* may have been used. Mexía himself was astonished by the date and adds *lo cual, si así es, debió de ser artillería, aunque no en la perfección de agora, y ha esto más de cuatrocientos años*: Mexía, Pedro. *Silva de Varia Leci6n*, ed. Isaiás Lerner. Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 2003: 84.

135. Amancio Isla rejects this possibility branding the remains of the alleged late chronicle as *material apócrifo, novelesco y tardío* ("apocryphal material, romantic and late"): Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía...: 236-238*.



understand that the supposed authorship of the hypothetical chronicle need not be linked in any way to the authorship and writing of the *Historia Silense*, as has been proposed some times¹³⁶.

The bishop's unequivocal perspective regarding the two key themes around which the argument legitimising the reign of Alfonso VI pivot after the incorporation of Toledo (reformism and confrontation with Islam) is supplied by the Leonese prelate himself in the brief introductory text of a well-known document from 1091 that reflects the dissension between the bishop and the abbot of Sahagún about the collection of a third of the tithes¹³⁷. The bishop resorts to an argument very similar to the one we saw used by his predecessor Pelayo. He portrays Alfonso VI as the monarch thanks to whose endeavour, peace has returned to the Church after the ferocity of the Saracens had made the ecclesiastic order disappear, destroying episcopal sees and, with these, any possibility of governing over clergy and churches. Thus, the king's military action created the conditions to allow the ecclesiastic order to be rebuilt, which, for the bishop, (and this was his goal from the beginning of his pontificate) meant restoring clerical discipline and recovering the episcopal rights symbolised by the collection of these thirds¹³⁸.

The fight against Islam and restoration of ecclesiastical life were again the arguments deployed. This is not surprising as this had long been a twin theme in Astur-Leonese political historiography, which now acquired a renewed meaning after the recovery of Toledo. The fight to reconquer was no longer the expression of an endogenous process of restoration and little or not at all harmonised with the reformist guidelines from Rome. These not very realist demands for centralisation had been abandoned and transformed into "conciliatory" norms that Alfonso VI was willing to promote in his own domains¹³⁹. The peninsular reconquest this became an undertaking that was homologous beyond the Pyrenees: a reactivated undertaking

136. In its time, Risco rejected such an authorship (*España Sagrada*, 35: 153-155). For Amancio Isla, although it would not be entirely far-fetched to attribute the authorship of the *Historia Silense* to Bishop Pedro, it was highly improbable. That is why a new name was proposed for this important source of this chronicle of chronicles or history of the Pseudo-Peter: Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía...*: 238-240.

137. *Colección Catedral de León...*: IV, 553-556 (doc. n° 1260).

138. *...Siquidem deperierat ordo ecclesiasticus nec more ecclesiastico ecclesie uel clerici tractabantur, quia sedes episcopales destructe fuerant sarracenorum ferocitate; moderno autem tempore industria Ildefonsi gloriosissimi regis et labore aliquantula pax reddita est Ecclesie, ei ipsa Ecclesia cepit iam tractari cum aliqua religione. Postquam ergo dominus Petro in Legione suscepit kathedram episcopali, cepit cogeré clericós ad ecclesiasticam religionem et ex iure episcopali tertias inquirere, secundum canonum auctoritatem...*

139. Some years ago, García y García reminded us about the three different stages of the Gregorian reform that are normally accepted: the moderate (1049-1073), the rigid (1073-1085) and the conciliatory (1088-1123). He also stated that there was even an evolution under Gregory VII himself, a change of tactics that showed a certain harmony between the Pope and Alfonso VI. García, Antonio. "Reforma gregoriana e idea de la *Militia Sancti Petri* en los reinos ibéricos". *Studi Gregoriani*, 13 (1989): 242 and 256. The change that came about during Gregory VII's papacy is certainly easy to perceive: de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino en la España Altomedieval. Iglesia y poder político en el Occidente peninsular, siglos VII-XII*. Madrid: Sílex, 2008: 323.



that, despite being progressively equated with a crusade, was conducted under the unequivocal leadership of the monarchy.

In any case, it is evident that the Leonese prelate was very receptive to viewing the war against the Muslims from the religious point of view. This was explicitly reflected in some royal donations, like that of the tithe on the cattle of the Somozas in favour of the Church of Leon in 1094, compensated for by prayers for long life for the king and his victory over the Muslims¹⁴⁰. We see the same in the king's concession of his rights in the monastery of San Salvador in Santa Colomba de Polvorera to the Church in 1097¹⁴¹.

The episcopal testimonies in chronicles or other types of documents that we have seen until here are undoubtedly revealing about the religious ideology of the time, but it is worth now looking into its possible conversion into personal commitments of contributions to, or even participation in, the king's military actions against Islam. Of course, it is not easy to show the presence of bishops among the troops mobilised by Alfonso VI. However, we do know that, at the capitulation of Toledo in 1085, the king was accompanied by the bishops Raimundo of Palencia, Diego of Compostela, Ederonio of Orense and Gómez of Oca¹⁴². It is impossible to clarify the extent to which they participated in the operations, otherwise *sui generis*, that led to the capitulation of the old Visigoth capital.

It would have been interesting to know the possible participation of bishops in the battle of Zalaca in 1086. Reilly suggested the possibility that two Galician bishops, Vistruario of Lugo and the aforementioned Ederonio of Orense, died there, but the argument used (they stopped appearing in the documentary subscriptions between late 1085 and early 1086) does not seem sufficient¹⁴³.

However, we can have no doubts about the warlike inclinations of Bernard of Cluny, the first archbishop of Toledo. As is known, he was of French origins (from La Sauvetat (de Blancafort) near Agen in Aquitaine) and responsible, together with his great protector King Alfonso, for the introduction of a set of French clergy into his domains in Leon and Castile, a factor that was decisive for the adaptation of the

140. ... *et uso patri meo Petro episcopo, una cum uestris clericis Sancte Marie sedis, rogetis ad Dominum meum pro peccatis meis, ut illi faciat mihi habere in hoc saeculo et in presenti uitam longinquam et super inimicis meis ysmaheliticis uindictam...* (Colección Catedral de León...: IV, 592-594 (doc. n° 1282); Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 335-337 (doc. n° 131). It is significant that this is one of the few documents of the reign in which, among the clauses condemning offenders, the impossibility of seeing the property in Jerusalem and the peace in Israel is cited (...*et non uideat que bona sunt in Hierusalem nec pax in Israhel...*). Bear in mind that the document was written only a year before the appeal for a crusade in Clermont, in full "Jerusalemite effervescence". The formula was repeated in a private document from 1105 (Colección Catedral de León...: IV, 646-647 (doc. n° 1319).

141. The donation was "*pro anima*" *et ut contra gentem paganam oracionum uestrarum instancia possim iuuari* (Colección Catedral de León...: IV, 608-610 (doc. n° 1293); Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 362-364 (doc. n° 141).

142. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 196. The document that conforms this is from the 29 of May 1085, dated in Toledo: Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 214-218 (doc. n° 83).

143. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 215; de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 331-332.



territory to the Gregorian renewal. Bernardo was well-trained intellectually, but was no stranger to the profession of arms, which he had dedicated his youth to¹⁴⁴. Of course, his more than probable religious intransigence¹⁴⁵ seems to point towards a clearly crusading spirit. We know he accompanied Pope Urban II on the odyssey that took him from the seat of the council in Piacenza to Nîmes, passing through the decisive one in Clermont¹⁴⁶, that served as a prologue for the armed pilgrimage that led to the taking of Jerusalem in 1099. It seems he had to be dissuaded by the Pope himself from beginning a march on the Holy Land¹⁴⁷. Despite this record, it is no easy task to show the archbishop's active participation in armed action during the reign of Alfonso VI¹⁴⁸, but it is easy to imagine his active participation in defensive tasks in the successive and difficult moments Toledo was going through, under the Almoravids threat following the rout at Zalaca¹⁴⁹. This must have happened after the disastrous events at Uclés in 1108. What we do know in all certainty is that, years after the death

144. We know some details about Bernardo's origins and early career thanks to a primitive *Vita* of the future archbishop, nowadays lost and, according to Reilly, that Jiménez de Rada had used in his chronicle to compose his biographic trajectory. (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 249; Jiménez de Rada, Rodrigo. *De Rebus...*: VI (chapter xxiv); Rivera, Juan Francisco. *El Arzobispo de Toledo Don Bernardo de Cluny (1086-1124)*. Rome: Iglesia Nacional Española, 1962; text later presented in: Rivera, Juan Francisco. *La Iglesia de Toledo en el siglo XII...*: I, 125-196; Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: I, 633-636.

145. The importance that certain traditions, reported by archbishop Jiménez de Rada, give to Bernardo in the conversion of the main mosque in Toledo into a cathedral, contravening supposed pacts previously established by the king, is well known (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 204-205).

146. Bernard was not the only of Alfonso VI's bishops who went to the Council of Clermont. Dalmacio of Compostela and Amor of Lugo were also there, but their reasons for going do not seem to be related to calling a crusade (de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 348).

147. O'Callaghan, Joseph F. *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002: 34. It is true that Bernard was in Rome in 1099, and could have been persuaded by the Pope to abandon his crusading plans. However, he did not make a second journey to Rome in 1104, although this has been suggested. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 288, 295, 319 and 361.

148. We know, of course, that he accompanied the king in the campaign organized in May 1097 to Saragossa. In Reilly's opinion it was a punitive expedition against Peter I of Aragon or perhaps an attempt to collaborate with the king al-Musta'in of Saragossa to recover Huesca, but the truth is that a new Almoravid landing on the Peninsula prevented them from fulfilling this target (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 310-311). Then, on 19th May 1097, Alfonso VI granted a privilege to the monastery of Silos, in *Aquilera, super flumine Dorio, rege exercitum ad Zaragoza ducente*. Sandoval released the list of characters who were on record as confirming this privilege granted by Alfonso VI to the monastery of Silos, and there is no doubts about this. The following churchmen are mentioned there: archbishop Bernard of Toledo, García Aznárez of Burgos, Raimundo of Palencia, Pedro of León, and the abbots Juan of Oña, Diego Núñez of Cardaña, Martín of Arlanza and Fortunio of Silos (Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 364-365 (doc. n° 142). According to Reilly's calculations, the army mobilised by the king on this occasion could have been made up of 3,600 men, of whom, a third were recruited through ecclesiastical institutions, bishoprics and the great abbeys. Reilly's deduction is based on the hypothetical mobilisation of 50 knights, plus their corresponding squires and servants, for each of the great ecclesiastical lords who answered the royal call. (Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 310-311; his numerical reasoning is more developed on pages 209-211). Anyway, this would not be the only campaign in which we see the archbishop and other bishops next to the king (n° 160).

149. de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 367.



of Alfonso VI, the archbishop occupied Alcalá de Henares by force¹⁵⁰. Naturally, the archbishopric's generous incomes must have been enough to raise a large army¹⁵¹.

Nor should one lose sight of the military capacity and bellicose attitudes of the holders of the Compostelan see. As we have seen, Bishop Diego Peláez accompanied the king in the moments prior to the occupation of Toledo. However, less than ten years later, it was Bishop Dalmacio, with a brief pontificate, who, in 1094-1095 was in the retinue of count Raymond, the king's son-in-law, on a campaign against the Muslims, designed to retake the city of Lisbon, which the Almoravids had just seized. On that occasion, bishop Amor of Lugo and Diego Gelmírez, then Compostelan canon and chancellor to the count were also present¹⁵². In hagiographic terms, *Historia Compostelana* presents the news about how Gelmírez managed to escape miraculously from the dangers of that campaign¹⁵³.

Gelmírez, bishop of Compostela in 1100, constitutes a chapter in himself of the military engagement of the Alphonsine prelates. The work of his apologists, the above-mentioned *Historia Compostelana*, calls him "the unshakeable shield of the entire country"¹⁵⁴, and know much about his work of fortification and defence of the Galician coasts against Saracen piracy¹⁵⁵. However, his military activity began more forcefully after the days of Alfonso VI, even to preaching a crusade. Before the death of the King of Leon, we know, however, that he mobilized his military resources—*suorum militum multitudinem*—to attempt to counter the negative effects of the Christian defeat at Uclés in 1108¹⁵⁶. Perhaps it was then, though certainly with little success, when he requested military help from Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury to deal with the Muslims, an early indication of the very important role that the future archbishop attributed himself in the peninsular concert¹⁵⁷.

150. de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 398.

151. A memorial from the 12th century in Huesca Cathedral alludes to the potential of a thousand knights that the archbishop of Toledo could count on. The number is surely exaggerated, but gives us an idea of the power attributed to the dioceses at that time (*Colección diplomática de la catedral de Huesca*, ed. Antonio Durán. Saragossa: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1965: I, 141-144 (doc. n° 117).

152. We know the members of the count's military delegation through a document dated in Coimbra on 13th November the same year: López, Antonio. *Historia de la Iglesia de Santiago...*: III, 183-184.

153. *Historia Compostelana...*: 391-392.

154. *Historia Compostelana...*: 191-192.

155. de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 397.

156. *Historia Compostelana...*: 125.

157. *Didaco reverendo Sancti Jacobi episcopo Anselmus, servus Ecclesiae Cantuariensis, gratiae supernae auxilium et consolationem. Cum semper nos Christiani invicem congaudere debeamus et condolere, tunc utique maxime cum prosperitatem et exaltationem Christianitatis et adversitatem ad ejusdem humiliationem cognoscimus pertinere; vestri itaque timoris atque doloris ex litteris vestris causam cognoscentes, unde timetis, inde timemus, et quod doletis, pariter dolemus. Quia milites nostros contra Sarracenos ad vestrum auxilium commoneri desideratis, libenter pro opportunitate nostra eos commonebimus, et ad subventionem Christianorum commovebimus. Sed noverit sanctitatis vestra quia regum Anglorum bellorum contra se undique surgentium nuntio fere quotidiano commovetur, unde satis vereor ne contingat nos pro vobis minus prodesse, quia nobis hostes timemus obesse. Nam dum quisque curat tueri propria minus potest curare communia. Conabimur tamen, Deo annuente, hoc efficere orationum devotione, quod non valemus militum collectione. Speramus autem in misericordia Dei quia non relinquet virgam peccatorum super sortem iustorum, neque tradet bestiis animas confitentes sibi. Omnipotens Deus adiutor in opportunitatibus,*



There were surely more warlike bishops in the court of Alfonso VI. One of these was in all likelihood, Jerome of Perigueux, the bishop of Valencia and later holder of the seat in Salamanca, who cannot be separated from his idealised portrait offered in the later *Poema de Mio Cid*¹⁵⁸. Pedro of Leon may also have been a bellicose bishop, one that we have had an opportunity to refer to above and to whom later traditions attribute authentic military feats¹⁵⁹. On previous pages, we have also seen this same bishop and others accompanying the monarch on military expeditions, though again it must be said that this type of data does not clarify the actual role taken by the mentioned prelates¹⁶⁰.

Finally, we must refer to the council held in Palencia at the end of 1100. We have no hard evidence, only reasonable indications that this was when all the bishops of the kingdom took joint action regarding the burning problem of the Almoravid advance. The council was presided over by Cardinal Ricardo, Paschal II's legate, and took place shortly after the Pope had formally identified the fight against the Muslims in the Peninsula with the crusading struggle in the Holy Land, banning a Spanish knights and clergy from marching on Jerusalem¹⁶¹. It is significant that the papal legate was attended by Ghibbelin of Sabran, archbishop of Arles, an experienced clergyman who would be appointed papal legate in the kingdom of Jerusalem in 1108 and, one year later, Latin patriarch of the Holy City¹⁶².

The Almoravid offensive was something more than a potential threat and the bishops were probably required to become deeply involved in seeking resources of all types to neutralise it. With regard to the council, Reilly echoes possible pacts between the Christian kings aimed at sustaining the kingdom of Valencia, which was about to the Almoravids, and he naturally considers it more than likely that the king used the

in tribulatione, subveniat vobis secundum necessitatem vestrae tribulationis. Amen. The letter, with no date, has been dated from between 1100 and 1109.

158. de Ayala, Carlos. "Los obispos de Alfonso VIII", *Carreiras Eclesiásticas no Occidente Cristao (séc. XII-XIV). Encontro Internacional*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa-Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2007: 171-172; Lacombe, Claude. *Jerónimo de Perigueux (¿1060?-1120), obispo de Valencia y de Salamanca: Un monje-caballero en la Reconquista*. Salamanca: Centro de Estudios Salmantinos, 2000.

159. I refer to the passage in the chronicle of Alfonso VI allegedly compiled by Bishop Pedro and picked up in the early 17th century by the Benedictine bishop Prudentius of Sandoval (de Sandoval, Prudentio. *Historia de los Reyes de Castilla y León*. Pamplona: Carlos de Labàyen, 1615: f. 95 and 96r). According to the text, Bishop Pedro would have been a prominent figure in Alfonso VI's alleged confrontation with the Muslims in the battle of *Salatrices* in 1106. Obviously, this confrontation never took place, but it cannot be ruled out that this tradition, in which later data and information are mixed and the chronologies certainly confused, really refers to the battle of Zalaca in 1086. I am currently preparing a short study of this question.

160. Another example is the problematic campaign against the *uascones et aragonenses* that Alfonso VI organised in 1107. From the documents that accredit it (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 478-481 (doc. n° 188), we know that the archbishops Bernard of Toledo and Gerald of Braga, and the bishops Pedro of Leon, Pelayo of Astorga, Raimundo of Palencia, García of Burgos and Jerome of Salamanca participated in it.

161. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 327.

162. Hamilton, Bernard. *The Latin Church in the Crusader States. The Secular Church*. London: Ashgate Variorum, 1980: 57-61.



Palencia assembly as a platform to seek the active military and economic collaboration of his bishops¹⁶³.

4. Conclusion: Images of a king

We have seen above the characterisation by chroniclers and ecclesiastical courtiers of the image of King Alfonso as the great defender of the Church. This was the man who, through his fight against the Muslims, had known how to protect a la flock entrusted to him and had created the conditions of peace and freedom required to spread Christian worship. Thus, the image projected by the king from his own propagandistic circles was that of a minister of God entrusted with protecting the Church by defending it from its Muslim enemies. This is not very different from the view offered by the anonymous author of the *Silense*¹⁶⁴, whose aim had been, without finally carrying it out, “to write about the most important feats of the king, the orthodox Emperor of Spain”. For the supposed monk chronicler, there are two notes that outline his mission: the rule over the Church and the extension of his kingdom through the recovery of the territories torn from the sacrilegious hands of the “barbarians”¹⁶⁵.

There is no more sacralised vision of the political-military action of a king, and this same view was shared by observers far from the Iberian Peninsula. Think of Sigebert of Gembloux, referred to above with regard to Urban II's call for the crusade and its repercussion in Spain. Sigebert was a monk chronicler, a contemporary of Alfonso VI. From the distant Benedictine abbey of Gembloux in Brabant, he summarily described the conquest of Toledo (which he dates in 1088) as the result of a determined offensive by King Alfonso against the Saracens, and that led to the spread of Christian

163. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 327; de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 354-359.

164. Nowadays, there is no argument about the authorship of *Historia Silense* has to be attributed to a well-educated Leonese clergyman. From here on, everything is open to conjecture. There is no shortage of researchers who have identified, at least as a hypothesis, the monk of *domus seminis* (as the chronicler called himself when young) with a bishop. There have been three candidates: Pedro of León (1087-1112) (Amancio Isla, has summarised the evidence in: Isla, Amancio. *Memoria, culto y monarquía...*: 236-239), Alón of Astorga (1122-1131) (based on certain conjectures by Pérez de Urbel, Antonio Quintana Prieto noted this as a very plausible hypothesis (Quintana, Antonio. *El obispado de Astorga en el siglo XII*. Astorga: Publicaciones del Archivo Diocesano de Astorga, 1985: 167-169), and Pelayo of Oviedo (1101-d1130/1142-1143) (Ubieta, Antonio. “*La Historia Silense*”, *Orígenes de los reinos de Castilla y Aragón*, Antonio Ubieta, ed. Saragossa: Universidad de Zaragoza, 1991: 205-239). None of the candidates offered full guarantees. The conclusion is that *Historia Silense* was drawn up by an educated Leonese clergymen in the early decades of the 12th century, and who made the restorationist scheme the central theme of his work. The latest and most convincing about this subject is due to: Henriët, Patrick. “*L’Historia Silensis*, chronique éxrite par un moine de Sahagún. Nouveaux arguments”. *e-Spania*, 14 (2012).

165. *Historia Silense...*: 118-119.



worship¹⁶⁶. This is the image of an authentic champion of the faith, in whom devotion and religious piety are expressed through the meritorious value of military action¹⁶⁷.

It seems that the image of the monarch was the same among contemporary, and also later, Muslim chroniclers, although in this case it was logically negative¹⁶⁸. For example, around 1200, Ibn al-Kardabūs wrote in his *Historia de al-Andalus* that *el Maldito* (the accursed one), referring to Alfonso VI, wanted to seize control of all the Peninsula by constantly attacking the Muslims, and there was certainly nobody who “dared attack the meanest of his dogs”. Moreover, the image of the Christian monarch that Ibn al-Kardabūs transmits a century later, is that of someone who was willing to take on the all-powerful emir of the Almoravids on his own terms. It is no wonder that, according to the chronicler, his death was a real and providential relief for Muslims¹⁶⁹.

However, the most significant aspect of this is that the image of an implacable enemy of Islam that Alfonso VI projected among the Muslims was linked directly with the crusading offensive in the East very shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. Indeed, only six years after that conquest, some intellectuals perceived it as a premeditated action within a wide programme of moves against Islam by, among others, Alfonso VI. This is the case, for example, of the pious jurist, the imam of the great mosque of Damascus, Alī ibn Tāhir al-Sulamī, whose *Kitāb al-yihād* or “Book of Holy War” presents the crusades as a kind of Christian *jihād* on the three fronts of Sicily, Spain and Syria.¹⁷⁰ The slightly later Islamic historiography (from second half of the 12th century) maintained the same approach. Thus, the Syrian chronicler al-Azimi included the crusade of 1095-1099 in a wide Christian plan that included the conquest of Toledo and the seizure of Mahdia in Tunisia. However, above all, around 1200, the great Muslim chronicler of the crusades, Ibn al-Athir, insisted that the Frankish attack on Syria and Palestine was heralded by a series of actions

166. *In Hispania rex Galliciae Amfūl Saracenos fortiter debellat, et Toletum, maximam eorum urbem, per aliquot annos obsessam tandem expugnat, et cultum christianitatis in ea dilatat* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*...: VI, 366).

167. The equation faith-belicosity is no propagandistic novelty, and Alfonso VI could in no way be alien to it. Grimaldo, the French-origin monk who wrote a life of the King of Leon in *Vita Dominici Siliensis*, expressed this clearly when narrating the burial of the saint in December 1073 in the cloister of the monastery of Silos. It seems that the decision to move the body to a more honourable place inside the church had the approval of the monarch, the *Hispaniarum rex*, who is described as illustrious for his devotion, his bravery in war and his Christian piety (*omni deuota pietate et bellicosa uirtute christianaque religiositate pollentis*). Valcárcel, Vitalino. *La “Vita Dominici Siliensis” de Grimaldo. Estudio, Edición Crítica y Traducción*. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1982: 310-311.

168. Reilly attributes the image of “arch-enemy of Islam” that Alfonso VI enjoyed among Muslim narrators and chroniclers, that Ibn Idhārī later collected, although probably based on 11th-century testimonies, to the legendary incestuous relation between the monarch and his sister Urraca. Ibn Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mugrib*, trans. Ambrosio Huici. Valencia: Caja de ahorros y monte de piedad de Zaragoza, Aragón y Rioja, 1963: 120-121; Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 93.

169. Ibn al-Kardabūs, *Historia de al-Andalus (Kitāb al-Iktifā’)*, ed. Felipe Maíllo. Barcelona: Akal, 1986: 97-140.

170. Chevedden, Paul E. “The Islamic View and the Christian View of the Crusades: A New Synthesis”. *History*, 93 (2008): 184.



in the Western and Central Mediterranean. The first of these was the fall of Toledo and other territories of al-Andalus in the year 478 (1085-1086) and the subsequent attack on Sicily in 484¹⁷¹.

Unsurprisingly, the Muslims had few doubts about the crusading nature of King Alfonso or, at least, the identification of his actions with the ulterior offensive of the Frankish crusaders. However, what image of his own mission did the king wish to project?, Referring to the most significant event of his reign, the taking of Toledo, there is a document that can give us some idea about this image. This is the document dated 18th December 1086 that contains the restoration of the Toledo see¹⁷².

As is known, the document is problematic. Until recent years, most authors believed it to be original. However, after having done so for some time, Reilly decided that it was not¹⁷³. For Gamba, the anomalies that appear among the cosignatories mean that the originality of the document should be rejected, but not its authenticity. In fact, Gamba proposes two possible explanations. This is either a document manipulated from an earlier donation, or it authentic, but drawn up by the royal chancery after 1086¹⁷⁴.

This latter hypothesis seems quite reasonable and allows us to use its rich contents (specifically the narrative justifying the Christian occupation) to follow what the figure of the person who conquered Toledo meant from the chancery itself. The text states the following. Toledo had been occupied by the Moors for 376 years. This occupation had basically meant two things: the outrage against the name of Christ, in whose place of worship the name of the evil Mohammed (*Mahometh*) was invoked, and the expulsion, mistreatment and death of the Christians. Thus, after the death of the monarchs Ferdinand and Sancha and the reception of power (*imperium*) conferred by God, Alfonso VI began his war *contra barbaras gentes* and, thanks to his help, obtained populous cities and strong castles. In this context, and inspired by God, the king mobilised his army against the city of Toledo where his forefathers had ruled with power and force. Thus, following God's will, the king, under the leadership of Christ, proposed to return to the Christians what had been seized from them by perfidious people under the evil leadership of Mohammed. Consequently, putting his love of the Christian religion before his own safety, the king used a range of warlike strategies over seven years (frequent set battles, hidden ambushes and devastating sweeps) submitting the population of the city and the territory (*patrie*) to the sword, hunger and captivity. The result was that, hardened by the evil, God's wrath fell on them and thus led to their ruin, and they were finally forced to open the gates of the city to hand it over to the Christian king, so that the power they had previously obtained as the victors, they now lost as the vanquished.

171. Hillenbrand, Carole. *The Crusades. Islamic Perspectives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999: 51-52.

172. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 224-229 (doc. nº 86).

173. Reilly, Bernard F. *El Reino de León y Castilla bajo el Rey Alfonso VI...*: 213.

174. Gamba, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 226.



As can be seen, the text brings together four very significant ideas regarding the theme we are dealing with. The first is that the Islamic occupation was no mere human injustice but rather a direct outrage against God that the Christians suffered in their own flesh. The result, and this is the second idea, was the divine inspiration that led the king to regain the reconquering initiative that also meant restoring the ancestral legitimacy. In third place, this initiative was of an eminently sacral nature: it was the struggle between Christ himself, their leader, and the followers of Muhammad. Therefore, fourthly, the King, God's instrument, who did not avoid running the clear risk of martyrdom, ended up succeeding thanks to God's decisive will. The sacralisation of the phenomenon of reconquest had not only been consummated but also took on an eminently crusading character.

The demonisation of the enemy was one of the characteristic features of this irreversible drift. The document analysed above describes the Mosque in Toledo as the "home of demons" (*abitacio demonum*), that from then on, and as a result of its consecration, would be a "sanctuary of heavenly virtue" (*sacrarium celestium virtutum*). It is evident that over his reign, Alfonso VI's became ever more convinced about his sovereignty, and through this, rejected those who were ideologically different. He was evolving into a supreme leader with an overriding crusading mentality. The strategy of the pact, that had dictated the political initiatives of the Christians kings in their anti-Islamic offensive since the mid 11th century, finally gave way to the imposition of an unequivocally sacral leadership.¹⁷⁵ The fall of the taifas, accelerated by the pressure of the monarch's extortion and finally consummated by the intervention of the Almoravids, ended up leaning the royal perspective towards the inevitable ideological solution of he who sought effective control of the Peninsula: the imposition of sovereignty over the assumption of religious exclusion. A well-informed Muslim historian, the Andalusian Ibn Bassâm of Santarem, who died in the mid 12th century and was thus close to the events he narrated, tells us that, following the conquest of Toledo, the king's advisers suggested that he "should encircle the crown and wear the clothing of the Christians who dominated the Peninsula before it was conquered by the Muslims". The king would have rejected the proposal in the hope of being able to occupy Cordoba. This was the centre of Islamic power in the Peninsula, and there he to symbolise his political power and the Christian pre-eminence, he had a sophisticated and very costly bell made that was to be hung at the highest point of the mosque in the Andalusian capital¹⁷⁶.

This anecdotic question finally leads us to reflect briefly about a well-known fact that is clearly worth mentioning, even if we are aware that the problematic that it supposes is still far from being resolved. I am referring to the title of "emperor of the two religions" (*al-Imbratūr dhū-l-Millatayn*) or similar that Alfonso VI had awarded himself after the conquest of Toledo, in some documents probably written in Arab

175. The contradictory information and different versions about the non-compliance of the famous pacts agreed with the Islamic community in Toledo after its conquest (see note 35) show the mismatches of a whole evolution (de Ayala, Carlos. *Sacerdocio y Reino...*: 331).

176. The text by Ibn Bassâm used, in: García, Emilio; Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. "El Conde mozárabe Sisnando Davidiz y la política de Alfonso VI con los taifas". *Al-Andalus*, 12 (1947): 31-33.



and sent to the various Muslim authorities, specifically the king of Seville al-Mu'tamid and the Almoravid emir Yūsuf ibn Tāsufīn. To the late and unreliable anonymous chronicle that contains these supposed letters (*al-Hulal al-Mawshiyya*)¹⁷⁷, we must add a second Arab, specifically Egyptian, source, also from a late date but independent and much more trustworthy, that confirmed the veracity of this title¹⁷⁸.

The title is certainly debatable. It is obviously alien to the letter of the king's Latin chancery, although perhaps not so much its spirit¹⁷⁹, and anyway we know that some private documents of the reign, whose authenticity has not been questioned, include equivalent formulae. These include the well-known *regnante rex domino Adefonsus in Toletto et imperante christianorum quam et paganorum omnia Hispanie regna* in a document from Sahagún from 1098¹⁸⁰, that caught Menéndez Pidal's attention at the time¹⁸¹.

The projection of effective sovereignty over all the Peninsula fit easily with the expansionist aims of a monarch who deployed very significant and effective efforts to reach the levels of justification that these pretensions required. In this sense, would it be too simplistic to state that the reconquest, while still the same, was turning into a crusade? Independently of how we respond to this question, it seems clear that the qualitative change from a secular reconquest to a new ideological-political reality marked by the crusading spirit, had by then become irreversible in the Christian scenario in the Peninsula.

177. "Al-Hulal al Mawšiyya", *crónica árabe de las dinastías almorávide, almohade y benimerín (traducción española)*, ed. Ambrosio Huici. Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1951: 52-53 and 56-57.

178. In line with Menéndez Pidal, but against the opinion of Huici and other contemporary authors like Norman Roth, Angus Mackay and Muhammad Benaboud have argued for the veracity of the title since the end of the 1970s: Mackay, Angus; Benaboud, Muhammad. "Alfonso VI of León and Castile, *al-Imbrtūr dhū-l-Millatayn*". *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 56 (1979): 95-102; Mackay, Angus; Benaboud, Muhammad. "The authenticity of Alfonso VI's letter to Yūsuf b. Tāsufīn". *Al-Andalus*, 43 (1978): 233-237; Mackay, Angus; Benaboud, Muhammad. "Yet again Alfonso VI, 'the Emperor, Lord of [the Adherents of] the Two Faiths, the Most Excellent Ruler': A rejoinder to Norman Roth". *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 61 (1984): 171-181.

179. In fact, the first use of *Hispania-Spania* in Alfonso VI's royal title and especially his imperial one, has a clear totalising dimension in the peninsular setting that obviously does not exclude the Islamic domains. These are implicit in the many well-known formulae of which *imperator super omnes Spanie nationes* is but one, although one of the most significant. This formula was first used in 1087 (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: II, 236-237 (doc. n.º 89). Gambra's review of the full panorama of the fortunes of the projection around the Peninsula of the royal-imperial title is very revealing (Gambra, Andrés. *Alfonso VI. Cancillería, Curia e Imperio...*: I, 683). The connection of the ideas about an *Imperio Hispánico* that were behind his ambitious projection of sovereignty over the Islamic domains in the 70s was first suggested by Estepa: Estepa, Carlos. *El reinado de Alfonso VI*. Madrid: Spainfo Ings., 1985: 26.

180. *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún (857-1230)*. III (1073-1109), ed. Marta Herrero. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación "San Isidoro", 1988: 358-360 (doc. n.º 1022). Nor did formulae used in private documentation, like *imperante Adefonsus principis Toletto et tota Spania*, mean anything else (*Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún...*: III, 200-201, 255-256, 287-289 (docs. n.º 886, 927, 955).

181. Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La España del Cid...*: II, 730-731.

