

Partners-in-arms. Medieval military associations: From the Iberian *cabalgada* to the American *entrada*

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In one of his brief but insightful essays on the projection of the Iberian medieval conquests into America — “that never-ending conquest” — Miquel Barceló finds, among the proposals set forth by Bartolomé de Las Casas and the responses of his adversaries, remote but clear echoes of the armed bands of “popular knights” that supported the Castilian-Leonese offensive upon al-Andalus during the 12th century. As shown by his arguments, the filiation between these groups and those that carried out the conquest of the New World is so obvious that it would be quite unjustifiable to ignore it.¹ In fact, this sort of argument appears in no small number of well-known works. What we are truly lacking are studies that focus specifically on this relationship, which involves examining the emergence and organisation of these groups from their earliest manifestations to the evolved forms present on American soil. The present work aims at palliating, to a certain extent, this problem, which I would like to blame on the pigeon-holing characteristic of academic organisation rather than on other motivations.

It would be unfair to ignore previous, and more or less ambitious, attempts carried out in this regard by the scholarship on the Spanish Indies. Everyone knows that America was not conquered by large royal or imperial armies directly sent forth and funded by the crown. It was, in contrast and as pointed out by Carmen Mena, a long process of territorial penetration enacted by groups of combatants under the authority of prestigious leaders, either self-funded or often financed with the contribution of investor partners.² The specific nature of these groups has prompted scholars to refer to them using particular terms that are unknown in the records of the time: *hueste indiana*, *milicia indiana* and *bandas de conquista*. The complete list of publications on the subject would be too long to summarize here, but the work published by the Chilean Mario Góngora half a century ago must be given special regard. He recognised the decisive role of the expeditions launched by autonomous companies (*entradas*,

1 Miquel Barceló, “Loquella barbarica (V),” *Faventia* 27:2 (2005): 83–99.

2 Carmen Mena, *El oro del Darién. Entradas y cabalgadas en la conquista de Tierra Firme (1509–1526)* (Seville and Madrid: Junta de Andalucía and CSIC, 2011), 221–2. See also her contribution, “Medieval factors in the conquest of America: organisation and war practices in the incursions into Darién”, in this volume.

jornadas, bandeiras) in the Spanish expansion in America in the 16th and 17th centuries, and did not hesitate to establish a filiation (“genetic relationship”) between these enterprises and medieval frontier raids (*cabalgadas*) and, more directly, the later expeditions unleashed upon the Maghreb and the Canaries. In the balanced opinion of Góngora, the “persistence over time” of these “war bands” between the 12th and the 16th centuries is self-evident; in view of this conclusion, a full understanding of the processes of conquest can only be achieved through the “isolation of the social reality of these groups.” This idea could well be used to entitle a research proposal.³

A few years later, the Spanish specialist in American history Demetrio Ramos dedicated many a page to showing the differences between medieval hosts and armed retinues on the one hand, and the wrongly termed *hueste Indiana* on the other. What this author intended, at any rate, was to stress the “non-seigneurial” nature of the groups involved in the Spanish conquest of America, which in his view was as much as to say “non-medieval.” He admitted that these expeditions operated under “rules established some centuries before” their implantation in America. Here he was not, however, referring to the medieval *cabalgada*, but to the launching of naval expeditions from the Cantabrian coast, initiated by 13th century whale hunting parties. His arguments were interwoven with a discourse dominated by a sense of ideological awe before “audacious men” supposedly bred from such enterprises (“school of intrepidity”) and rich in “entrepreneurship.” In order to sustain his proposals medieval frontier raids (*cabalgadas*) had to be fully expunged from the equation. This he did with uncharacteristic expeditiousness, in clear contrast with the thorough attention to detail shown in dealing with much less important points. He stated simply that the medieval raids had been executed by “closed” groups, necessarily cemented by relationships of vassalage or neighbourhood.⁴ These two kinds of relationship were set together as though they were the same, and the reasons why they made for “closed” groups were also left quite unexplained.

These arguments are being brought forth because of the influence that they still have on more recent publications on the issue. I am referring, in particular, to the important work by Mena, in which an effort is made to reconcile the proposals of Góngora and

3 Mario Góngora, *Los grupos de conquistadores en Tierra Firme (1509-1530). Fisonomía histórico-social de un tipo de conquista* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Chile, 1962), 66–7, 95.

4 Demetrio Ramos, “Determinantes formativos de la ‘hueste indiana’ y su origen modélico,” *Revista Chilena de Historia del Derecho* 4 (1965): 14–5, 25–33.

Ramos. Her view on the genealogy of the conquest bands in the Spanish Indies thus presents some difficulties. She admits, for instance, that this sort of group already existed in the form of medieval Iberian *cabalgadas*, but not before the emergence of a later modality of expeditions sent across the sea (against the Canaries and the Maghreb), even assuming that the latter was inspired by the practices of “Muslim pirates.” Another problem is raised when the targets of the *cabalgada* are made incompatible with operations aimed at territorial conquest. This is only true from a strictly formal point of view (the raids could eventually result in the conquest of territory, even if this was not their primary aim). According to Mena, the American *entradas* reproduced the warfare techniques of medieval raids, but were always aimed at creating new settlements and at territorial control.⁵ Yet the *cabalgada* was not just a military technique, but a whole way of conceiving and organising war deeply rooted into the original violence of feudal society. The important thing was not the action itself, but the people who participated in it, resulting in such a singular and decisive phenomenon as the organisation of associations of combatants and military companies aimed at gaining a profit that went beyond the mere results of plunder. The *quid* of the question therefore resides in the genesis of these war bands, which will be the main concern of the present paper.

“We are all princes”

The host was defined not only in terms of size, the command of a king or prince, or the presence of armed retinues and paid combatants. The host fully exemplifies the *auxilium*, the military obligation of the vassal towards his lord. This does not imply that all vassals, especially the most important among them, would mobilise the entirety of their resources every time. The fact that from a certain point this obligation could be commuted or reduced with cash payments does not affect its fundamental nature as vassals’ duty. As a service provided by vassals, more than anything else the host required the presence of knights and members of the nobility. In the Iberian Peninsula, however, the host was also joined by the quantitatively formidable forces mustered by urban militias.

The presence of warring colonists with no connection to the aristocracy can be tracked in Castile as far back as the 10th century. It is likely that small bands of these ventured at the time into the ample frontier region known as Extremadura (between the river

5 Mena, *El oro del Darién*, 220.

Duero and the Cordillera Central). The formal incorporation of these combatants into the king's forces was connected with the creation of urban councils (*concejos*) in the region from the last quarter of the 11th century. The obligation to provide military assistance was in this case referred to by the old term *fonsado* (Lat. *fossatum*). Although originally the term may have been loaded with a servile undertone, these *concejos*, supported and endorsed with charters or local laws (*fueros*), were corporations of free townsmen with no servile obligations. This not only laid down the legal basis for the organisation of urban militias but also for their obligation to assist the king militarily, like the rest of the king's vassals. The word *hueste*, in fact, did not become common to refer to urban-based military service in the Iberian Peninsula — with the exception of Catalonia — until well into the 12th century: it features for the first time in the local charter of Viguera (1120), given by Alfonso I the Battler. As pointed out by James F. Powers, the word, borrowed from French feudal terminology (Lat. *hostis*, Fr. *ost*), had entered the western Iberian Peninsula through Aragon and Navarre. The regular presence of urban militias in the royal armies favoured the adoption of the term “host” in Castile from the late 12th century (in Leon this had to wait until the early 13th), in coexistence with the word *fonsado* which survived as a synonym — similarly to *exercitus* — or was used to refer to second order expeditions.⁶

The unique character of the Hispanic urban militias seems beyond doubt, but it may have been overemphasised. According to Powers, the fact that military service was an obligation consubstantial with the condition of citizen is “an iberian phenomenon unique in the medieval West,” but it is also true that, as with the Iberian Peninsula, urban militia were common throughout the whole of western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries as a manifestation of the growing political autonomy of towns and cities, which in this way turned war into a collective, common endeavour. In communal Italy, most particularly, the phenomenon acquired dimensions at least comparable to the Iberian case.

Many other key features also make both cases comparable. The communes were set up as corporations of armed free men, some on foot and some mounted, gathered around *collaciones* and led by a group of privileged urban knights. Communes were capable of

6 *Fuero de Viguera y Val de Funes*, ed. José M. Ramos Loscertales (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1956), chap. 47; James F. Powers, “The origins and development of municipal military service in the Leonese and Castilian Reconquest, 800-1250,” *Traditio* 26 (1970): 95–6; Carmela Pescador, “La caballería popular en León y Castilla,” *Cuadernos de Historia de España* 33–40 (1961–64): [2]:123–6.

sending considerable forces into the battlefield and could act on their own initiative; that is, regardless of royal or imperial orders.⁷ These features can be applied almost to the letter to the Hispanic case; if anything, Italian militias were more autonomous than the Hispanic ones. The specificity of the Iberian case rests, instead, on the presence of an “external” factor: the frontier and its decisive impact on the action, composition and organisation of military corporations.

In the Extremadura and afterwards in the southern plateau — where extensive, largely uninhabited areas could be found — the militias became involved with the protection of itinerant livestock moving towards the borders of the most densely populated territories in al-Andalus (the Guadalquivir valley or the coastal areas to the east). Their key activity was, however, raiding. The frontier, despite the considerable risk and frequent failures, represented an inexhaustible source of booty or *ganancia*; this opportunity to come upon sudden riches also carried the possibility of social promotion, from *peón* (foot combatant) to knight, and life became organised around the seizing of loot. Mostly, this activity absorbed the energy of the knights — in certain towns this group comprised up to a fifth of the total adult male population — also committing, though to a lesser degree, the rest of the community.

The periodic injection of external resources gained outside their own human and social medium allowed Hispanic militias to grow in numbers, technical proficiency and organisational complexity. Italian communal militias and institutions were increasingly suffering by internecine strife and the lack of opportunity for breaking out and directing operations against external enemies (with the exceptions of the large maritime communes), whereas in the Iberian Peninsula *concejos* played a very prominent role in the expansion of the Christian kingdoms, sharing amply in the spoils of conquest and proliferating as fast as the frontier was being pushed to the south.⁸

7 Powers, “Origins,” 91; Aldo A. Settia, *Comuni in guerra. Armi ed eserciti nell’Italia delle città* (Bologna: Clueb, 1993); Roberto Greci, “Esserciti cittadini e guerra nell’età di Federico II,” in *Federico II e le città italiane*, ed. A. Paravicini Bagliani and Pierre Toubert (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994), 344–63; Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini. Guerra, conflitti e società nell’Italia comunale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004); Paolo Grillo, *Cavalieri e popoli in armi. Le istituzioni militari nell’Italia medievale* (Roma: Laterza, 2008), 109–28.

8 Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini*, 140–7, recalls that Sardinia was the “Pisan Eldorado”; and during the Fifth Crusade (1217–21) several communes in northern Italy sent contingents to Egypt, including representatives of enemy urban factions: James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213–1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 69–74. Each of these cases demonstrates that external action was possible, but the absence of a terrestrial frontier made it unviable as a sustained effort.

In principle, however, the Iberian militias were less capable of autonomous action than the Italian. Communes had finally been recognised by the Emperor Frederick I precisely because of their proven combat worth. The *concejos*, in contrast, owed their existence to the king's will. During the second half of the 12th and the first half of the 13th century, the *fueros* defined the military service which urban communities owed the crown (the ultimate expression of this was the massive army mustered for the conquest of Seville, 1248), but also the different forms of autonomous armed action carried out outside this official duty. At any rate, in the 1130s, that is, before these institutional developments had taken place, the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* (CAI) already shows the existence of considerably well organised council armies capable of launching — either alone or in combination with forces from other towns — lengthy looting raids deep into Andalusi territory.

Far from undermining the authority of the crown, the autonomy of the councils could be understood, as long as it was exercised in the frontier, which was normally the case, like a projection of the king's sovereignty; in the words of Francisco García Fitz, these raids were effective in maintaining a “seasonal but recurrent military pressure” on Andalusi lands.⁹ In fact, this type of action would soon be embraced by another notion extracted from the normative language of vassalage: the *cabalgada*, conceived as a complement to the host. Apart from its most common meaning, as a swift and minor expedition, the *cabalgada* (Lat. *cavalcata*, Fr. *chevauchée*) represents a form of, not always compulsory, military service. The term was introduced to the western Christian kingdoms of the Peninsula in the same *Fuero de Viguera* (1120) that also included the earliest mention of a “host,” and is presented as a type of action not connected with the services due to the king, and from which, in consequence, no exemption can ensue.¹⁰

The term *cabalgada* spread in the charters granted in Leonese Extremadura by Alfonso IX (1188-1230) and in those that followed the model they set. In these charters the *cabalgada* is presented as the main type of military action as far as urban councils were concerned.¹¹ It was also mentioned in the *fueros* of Cuenca and Teruel (c. 1190-5) — perhaps the most complete among all local regulations, including the military dispositions — where the management of the booty was precisely defined (in the vernacular version *cabalgada* and *ganancia* become synonymous). They also showed

9 Francisco García Fitz, *Las Navas de Tolosa* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2005), 214–5.
 10 *Fuero de Viguera*, ch. 61, 261, 265–7; Powers, “Origins,” 103.
 11 Pescador, “Caballería popular,” [2]:136–42.

that *cabalgadas* were open to foot combatants.¹² Both charters recognise the *cavalcata* as the second most important type of offensive action, after *exercitus*. The latter, not necessarily organised in conjunction with a royal host, was conceived as an expedition organised by the local government and committing all townsmen to serve the *concejo* with arms.¹³ The *exercitus* is regulated with great detail, providing for the defence of the town in its absence and establishing penalties for those trying to shirk from this collective obligation.

The official nature of these expeditions was made explicit — as with the defensive obligation of the *apellido* — by the presence of the standard of the *concejo* (*vexillum concilii*), in contrast with the autonomous raids launched aside from council discipline by groups of the local cavalry force or impromptu war bands. In this regard, Alfonso X's *Partidas* also made the distinction between *cabalgadas concejeras* and *encubiertas*. Obviously, the former type was that called for by the council (*se fazen concejaramente*), and in local charters is called *exercitum*: these were substantial enough as to be capable of staging an exhibition of force (including raising tents, lighting fires, etc). Such was generally avoided in the latter, which were carried out by small fractions of the militia who tried not to be detected while in enemy territory due to the limited numbers employed.¹⁴

It has already been said that these offensive actions carried out by members of the *concejos* predate in fact the legal and institutional formalisation of the practice. A well-known passage of the *CAI* referring to the waning military initiative of the Almoravids against the Christians, around 1133, also mentions that, regardless, and before that date “the Christians living in the Transierra and the Extremadura used to gather every year” in their thousands (knights and infantrymen) to launch punishing and looting expeditions into Andalusi territory; although no evidence for this sort of action before

12 *Fuero de Cuenca* [hereafter cited as *FC*], ed. Rafael de Ureña (Madrid: Academia de la Historia, 1935), 30.58–9, 30.63–4; *Fuero latino de Teruel* [hereafter cited as *FT*], ed. Jaime Caruana (Teruel: Instituto de Estudios Turolenses, 1974), ch. 188, 257, 444–5, 463. I accept the chronology supported by James F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War. The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000–1284* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 49–50, 220–8.

13 The *fuero* of Lorca (1271) establishes that if the militia marches with the king, they must follow no other flag but the king's, but when acting independently they must fly the standard given by the monarch to the council: *Colección de documentos para la historia del reino de Murcia*, ed. Juan Torres Fontes (Murcia: Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1973–97), 3:123–31.

14 *FC* 30.39, 31.11; *FT* 436, 448, 451; *Las Siete Partidas del Rey don Alfonso el Sabio* [hereafter cited as *Partidas*], ed. Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807), II:II.23.28. In another passage, the *Partidas* (II.23.13) mention the council's flags, called *cabdales*, which are similar to those carried by military orders and by the lords with over a hundred knights at their command.

the 12th century has been preserved, the *Anales Toledanos* (written in the early 13th century) date it to as far back as 1109.

The militias under the major *concejos* in the Extremadura seem to have played a particularly prominent role: Ávila (whose troops are known to have launched at least 26 expeditions), Segovia, and Salamanca, along with Toledo. In any case, the *CAI* does not use the term *cavalcata* or any other specific word to define the nature of these expeditions which, often, combined *cohortes praedatorias* from several different locations; in contrast, the distinction between autonomous campaigns and those carried out within the “imperial” host is always made clear. With this distinction, a factor of ambiguity which was to last for a long time was also introduced: on the one hand, these *viros bellatores* who lived on the frontier and scored important successes for the crown and the Church were regarded with admiration, but at the same time their aptitude for independent action was regarded with deep suspicion. “We are all princes and the masters of our own heads” (*omnes sumus principes et duces capitum nostrorum*), the defiant knights from Salamanca reputedly replied after being encircled and before being massacred by the Almoravid emir, who asked for their leader. This disaster and others before it were, according to the chronicler, due to an excess of pride (“they trusted their strength, not God”). In different circumstances, a section of the militias from the Extremadura decided to detach themselves (*sine praecepto imperatoris*) from the host mustered by Alfonso VII in 1138, in order to sack the regions beyond the Guadalquivir; on their return, the flood cut them off, and they readied themselves to die without chance of succour from the rest of the army. Among pious admonitions shouted across the river, the chiefs of the host reprimanded the lost expedition by using the river metaphorically: “a great chasm has opened between you and us.” Although the chronicler emphasises the king’s grief over the inevitable annihilation of the gallant combatants, the whole episode implicitly conveys the message that an excess of independence inevitably results in an evil — and deserved — outcome.¹⁵

Castes and confraternities

15 *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* [hereafter cited as *CAI*], ed. Antonio Maya (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), II.20, 228, 36–9; *Anales Toledanos, I y II* [hereafter cited as *AT*], ed. Julio Porres Martín-Cleto (Toledo: Diputación Provincial, 1993), 83. Miquel Barceló, “Loquella barbarica (V),” 83–92, identifies the “doers of iniquity” of *CAI* II.63 with frontier town combatants.

Commenting upon the famous passage in the *CAI* where the knights of Salamanca declare to be their own masters, Luis M. Villar suggests that this shows “a rejection of princes and dukes,” seen as competitors for riches and fame: *non demus nomen glorie nostre ullo principi aut duci*.¹⁶ The terms *princeps* and *dux* are not allusive to specific aristocratic ranks but are simply classic Latin terms to refer to the, obviously aristocratic, commanders of an army or host. In my opinion, however, the true significance of the passage lies instead in the affirmation of status equality between urban knights. The stress lies not upon the contraposition with the aristocracy, but the independence of their own actions; the subordinate and hierarchical nature of the host is contrasted with the freedom and voluntary character of their own association.

The possibility of setting up groups through associative links expressly for the organisation of military expeditions is clearly shown by the passages that the *CAI* dedicates to the actions of Munio Alfonso. Ashamed at the loss of Mora, of which he was governor, to the Muslims in 1138, he organised a force of *amicis viris bellatoribus* from different towns designed to fight independently. Soon afterwards the king appointed him as governor of Toledo with authority over the knights and foot combatants of the Transierra (the frontier zone to the south of the Cordillera Central). He seems, indeed, to have exercised this authority, by selecting nine hundred *milites* from among the best of Toledo, Ávila and Segovia, and one thousand *pedites electos*, to launch an expedition against the region around Córdoba (1143). It must, however, be noted that this chronicle exceptionally refers to Munio Alfonso’s men as *sui socii*; this is done so insistently that there can be no doubt of intentionality. The text clearly declares that, regardless of being formally compelled to do it, the knights followed the governor willingly. This is, in any case, of little relevance. The truly significant point is that the troops were not marching under *signa principum*, that is, the ensigns of great nobles, but under those of Munio Alfonso—a simple *miles* acting as a warlord—and some of the King, as a reminder that the expedition was undertaken in his name. The chronicler implied that, following the lack of internal aristocratic hierarchies, the armed contingent was made up of equals.¹⁷

This equality, however, was limited to the very strict boundaries of a well-defined social group; that formed by men in possession of arms and horses and who periodically

16 Luis M. Villar, *La Extremadura castellano-leonesa. Guerreros, clérigos y campesinos (711–1252)* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1986), 195–6.

17 *CAI* II.48–9, 67–71, 74–8, 84, 87.

participated in raids. It does not seem strange that their inclination for warlike activities and the need to compensate their exclusion from the blood aristocracy (*milites per naturam*) soon favoured the emergence of a strong sense of caste which would eventually crystallise in the construction of crosscutting identities along frontier towns.¹⁸ The term *pardo*, used to refer to certain combatants in the Extremadura is widely known and has been amply discussed. It is unfortunate that we know little about the criteria followed for its application. In its only occurrence in the *CAI* — around the unclear episode resulting in the death of Sayf ad-Dawla in 1145 (*supervenerunt milites quos dicunt pardos*) — it seems that the chronicler is using the term as a way to clearly establish difference with the *milites* that march under the command of the counts as vassals or members of their armed retinue. The mention appears to stress the autonomy of the so-called *pardos* and, by association, to make them fully and uniquely responsible for the death of the emir. The first anonymous chronicle of Sahagún already recorded their existence around 1110-11 by indicating that the “men living beyond the Duero are popularly known as *pardos*,” and that a great number of these *pardos* supported King Alfonso I the Battler, and caused great trouble in his struggle against Queen Urraca for the throne of León and Castile. They were not specifically defined as mounted troops, which certainly does not imply that they were not, but they were clearly associated with a specific region, between the Duero and the Cordillera Central: the Extremadura.

This connection between term and specific geographical context seems to be confirmed by the third and last text where the term is used; the *Historia Turpini* in the *Codex Calixtinus* (last quarter of the 12th century). This enumerates the regions supposedly conquered by Charlemagne in Hispania, among which are listed the “land of the highlanders” (*tellus Serranorum*) and the “land of the *pardos*” (*tellus Pardorum*), different from the lands of the Castilians, the Portuguese and the Navarre. In a different passage, the text lists *serranos* and *pardos* among the multitude of infidels enlisted in Agolant’s army (also including Saracens, Moabites, Ethiopians and Africans). Their inclusion in this list seems to suggest the “wild” and untrustworthy nature of these frontier warriors.¹⁹

18 The Portuguese *fuero* of Leiria (1142) makes a distinction between *milites per naturam*, who regardless of whether they could afford horses or not always retained the honour of chivalry, and *milites qui non fuerint per naturam*, whose consideration was entirely dependent on the possession of a horse: Pescador, “Caballería popular,” [I], 121–2.

19 *CAI* II.98; *Crónicas Anónimas de Sahagún*, ed. Antonio Ubieto (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1987), 24, 26. I have accessed the relevant passages of the *Historia Turpini* through Diego Catalán, *El Cid en la historia y sus inventores* (Madrid: Fundación Menéndez Pidal, 2002), 142.

The *serranos* are alluded to, and not exactly in laudatory terms, in the letter in which the Archbishop of Narbonne reports the result of the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212). Arnaud Amaury identifies them simply as Castilian horse and foot troops. On the other hand, the *Crónica de la Población de Ávila*, written in the vernacular in the mid-13th century, offers a much more detailed characterisation. According to this text, the *serranos* were a well-differentiated group among the settlers who arrived in Ávila in the late 11th century. The first reason for this distinction appears to be their alleged common geographical origin in the mountains of the Sistema Ibérico, and maybe the easternmost region of the Cordillera Central. It must be remembered that the so-called *serranos* in Salamanca, probably the earliest Castilian inhabitants of the city, kept their own separate identity (*natura*) in the neighbourhood (*collación*) around the old Cathedral *civitas*. Secondly, the chronicler from Ávila also singled out this group for their constant dedication to the military profession and to *cabalgadas*, without other occupation. This apparent specialisation would have been rewarded by the crown, which allowed them to hoard council offices. It is not unlikely, however, that the chronicler was trying to legitimise the position of power that had been achieved by this group by the time the chronicle was written.

According to José M. Monsalvo, the control exercised by non-noble knights over the *concejos* was a lengthy process initiated in the mid-12th century and not fully realised until the second quarter of the 13th century. It seems at any rate clear that until then the group had cultivated a strong sense of caste which, once the summit of local power had been taken, tended to disappear. According to the chronicle from Ávila, the members of this group never married into merchant or artisan families, and they would not do so for anything in the world; the only chance of marrying outside the group was with blood knights (*cavalleros fijosdalgo*), which were placed above them in the social hierarchy. This was not, however, a fully closed caste. Access to the group was achieved through wealth. All townsmen (*vecinos*) that could afford the horse and full mounted-warrior equipment could enter the group regardless of origin. Not all knights, on the other hand, took to military specialisation, which is the basis of the exclusivity enjoyed by this dominant section of the urban cavalry identified with the *serranos*.²⁰

20 Marqués de Mondéjar and Francisco Cerdá, *Memorias históricas de la vida y acciones del rey don Alfonso el Noble, octavo del nombre* (Madrid: Imprenta Antonio de Sancha, 1783), cvi; *Crónica de la Población de Ávila*, ed. Amparo Hernández (Valencia: Anubar, 1966), 18–20, 22–3, 26–8; Ángel Barrios, *Estructuras agrarias y de poder en Castilla: el ejemplo de Ávila (1085–1320)* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1983), 1:179–83; Villar, *Extremadura*, 186–98. José M. Monsalvo, “Frontera pionera, monarquía en expansión y formación de los concejos. Relaciones de poder en el realengo concejil entre el Duero y el Tajo (c. 1072–c. 1222),” *Arqueología y territorio medieval* 10:2 (2003): 69–83, has questioned

In the second half of the 12th century, as the distance between their bases and the frontier widened, the knights from the Extremadura slowly shifted their focus to the management of rents resulting from the growing agricultural wealth, and to the assumption in exclusive of governmental responsibilities in increasingly complex and robust councils.

In this context, and in order to maintain the “symbolic capital” hitherto earned by their commitment to war at the frontier, some sectors of the warrior castes formed select, restricted groups, such as the confraternities. One of the earliest emerged precisely among the *serranos*: the *fratres* in Ávila, which in 1172 merged into the Order of Santiago. The Order, in fact, had emerged from another brotherhood, the *freiles* in Cáceres, created not long before with the objective of supporting the defence while the town stood as a Leonese outpost.

The confraternity of San Julián del Pereiro, created before 1176 by knights from Salamanca and the origin of the Order of Alcántara, possibly poses a similar case. Although the evidence available is rather late and imprecise, we may also mention the confraternity of *los Quiñones*, in Segovia, which unlike the others did not evolve into a military order.²¹ According to Carlos de Ayala, this phenomenon is a kind of “sacralised council militias,” or in other words, the sacralisation of the relationship between the members of certain factions within council-cavalry. This author considers that their model is very different from that followed by the famous Aragonese confraternities in Belchite and Monreal, created by Alfonso I the Battler in the 1120s. Their key differential feature, besides the royal patronage, resided in their commitment to take part in periodic campaigns against the Muslims as defined by the spirit of the crusade; this involved participating in the appropriate system of indulgences but without assuming any form of religious ordination.²²

this proposal, according to which the *concejos* were already under the control of the *serranos* and *caballería villana* (non-noble knights) by the early 12th century.

21 Monsalvo, “Frontera pionera,” 93-103; Derek W. Lomax, *La Orden de Santiago, 1170–1250* (Madrid: CSIC, 1965), 4; Villar, *Extremadura*, 198; Julio González, *Regesta de Fernando II* (Madrid: CSIC, 1943), 91, 444–5; Juan de Vera, “El quiñón de San Martín de Segovia,” *Estudios Segovianos* 23 (1973).

22 Carlos de Ayala, “Tópicos y realidades en torno a las Órdenes Militares,” in *Tópicos y realidades de la Edad Media (II)*, ed. Eloy Benito Ruano (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2002), 114–6; Peter Rassow, “La cofradía de Belchite,” *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 3 (1926), 200–26; José A. Lema Pueyo, *Instituciones políticas del reinado de Alfonso I el Batallador, rey de Aragón y Pamplona (1104-1134)* (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 1997), 219–21; Alain Demurger,

The trajectory of this second type of “crusader” confraternities was very short, because they must have disappeared around the middle 12th century at the very latest, after the consolidation of the Ebro frontier and the increasing presence of true military orders had made them redundant. In contrast, the proliferation of urban knight *cofradías* — in many different forms and shapes — continued throughout the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. A key feature of these corporations seems to have been their pious and charitable activities (including compensations for the loss of a horse, payment of ransoms, repatriation of corpses, suffrage of funerals), for example with the confraternity of Nuestra Señora del Salor in Cáceres (1345) and the knights of San Ildefonso in Priego (1426).

At any rate, the main aim of these corporations was to distribute prestige among their members. In 16th century documents, the knights from Ciudad Rodrigo recalled that in past times the *cofradías* focused their energy on the organisation of parties, banquets, bullfights and other events. It is also true that in regions closer to the frontier the brotherhoods addressed more practical issues with a true military outlook; for example, the Sant Jordi *cofradía* of cavalry troopers from Murcia, created in the early 14th century (in fact, nothing more than a company of paid combatants organised as a “confraternity” as a way to commit the group to solidary compensation for the horses lost by individual members). Most commonly, these resulted in the creation of companies of crossbowmen, for example in Orihuela, Baeza and Calahorra. Another example is that of the brotherhoods organised in Jaén and nearby villages in the 15th century for the purchase and maintenance of *espingardas* (a kind of slender harquebus).²³ Evidence for the presence of this kind of military *cofradía* in war actions and operational performance is, on the other hand, almost completely lacking.

“Belchite, le Temple et Montjoie. La couronne d’Aragon et le Temple au XII^e siècle,” in *Knighthoods of Christ*, ed. Norman Housley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 123–135.

²³ Pescador, “Caballería popular,” [IV], 247–249; José-L. Martín, “Ordenamientos jurídicos de la ‘Extremadura’ medieval,” *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita* 78–79 (2004): 318–20; Miguel A. Ladero, “La organización militar de la Corona de Castilla durante los siglos XIV y XV,” in *La incorporación de Granada a la corona de Castilla*, ed. Miguel A. Ladero (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1993), 216; Maria T. Ferrer Mallol, *Organització i defensa d’un territori fronterer. La Governació d’Oriola en el segle XIV* (Barcelona: CSIC, 1990), 194–201, 362–368; Juan A. Barrio, “Un repartimiento inédito: el repartimiento de Orihuela de 1330,” in *VI Estudios de frontera. Población y poblamiento*, ed. F. Toro and J. Rodríguez Molina (Jaén: Diputación, 2006), 80; Manuel González Jiménez, “La caballería popular en Andalucía (siglos XIII al XV),” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 15 (1985): 327–328.

The case of the confraternity of Calatayud during the *repartiment* of Valencia is in this regard exceptional. In 1240, the lands around the village of Montcada, very close to the city, were distributed among *centum confratres* from Calatayud. No further details are provided, but it seems that this group must have been created — we do not know when — by a faction within the council militia in order to draw a sacred bond between its members for the achievement of their collective targets and as a way to distinguish themselves from the rest of the force. On the other hand, the fact that all beneficiaries sold their allocated land-prize to the Templars, which successfully aimed at gaining control of the district around Montcada, within the following six years, suggests that these “hundred brethren” already possessed considerable wealth in their region of origin, making it not worth colonising the small amount of land received (barely a *jovada*: 3 ha).²⁴ It seems reasonable to suppose that these were top members of the militia; rich and well equipped knights; a closed group, as suggested by the ostensibly round figure chosen for their membership.²⁵

Regarding the distribution of the territorial booty of the conquest, the “hundred brethren” from Calatayud acted as a unit. The group received the whole of the prize and distributed it afterwards among its members. This suggests that the group also operated militarily as a unit, during marches and in combat, but we lack similar cases with which to determine the true significance of this example. In fact, by this date more flexible and open forms of military association were already being assiduously practiced, as shown by documents recording the *repartiment* of Valencia from 1242. Despite their variability, as a rule confraternities maintained a clearly local character and, more importantly, very restricting exclusivity principles that turned these groups into classist, elitist, and difficult to access honour-based corporations.²⁶ Most of the military

24 Enric Guinot, “El desplegament feudal sobre el País Valencià. Repartiment i colonització a l’Horta de València: Montcada (1239–1246),” in *El feudalisme comptat i debatut. Formació i expansió del feudalisme català*, ed. Miquel Barceló et al. (Valencia: PUV), 361–88; Enric Guinot and Ferran Esquilache, *Moncada i l’Orde del Temple en el segle XIII. Un comunitat rural de l’Horta de València en temps de Jaume I* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2010), 39–43. See also his contribution, “Council and urban Militias in the Crown of Aragon during the 13th Century: from conquering Militias to monetary Exemptions”, in this volume.

25 One hundred is sometimes the number of members chosen for lay, not necessarily military, brotherhoods, for example Sant Jaume, created in Valencia in 1246, and made up by a hundred selected laymen: Robert I. Burns, *The Crusader Kingdom of Valencia. Reconstruction on a Thirteenth Century-Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1:126–127.

26 We may point out that the formula of the *cofradía* was used by James II of Aragón on a large scale in the expedition organized in 1315 against the Muslim corsairs. The confraternity was advertised through public predication and private visits, and joining up was rewarded with ecclesiastical indulgences in proportion to the amount of money put down by each subscriber. This non-military *cofradía* clearly reproduced the Crusader model of the period: Archivo de la Corona de Aragón [hereafter cited as ACA]

brotherhoods created in the Guadalquivir Valley from the 13th century onwards (and to a lesser degree elsewhere in the kingdom of Castile), were corporations of noble knights; the lesser aristocracy of the *hidalgos*, which in some cases survived for a long time.²⁷ These groups, however, have no prominence in the numerous and detailed accounts of the feats of arms that occurred at the frontier with the kingdom of Granada. Everything seems to indicate that these corporations never had in practice a true military content.

Urban militias as organisational model

Burdened by their own rigid nature and lacking the discipline of true military orders, confraternities proved to be an inadequate organisational model for those units operating outside the scheme of the aristocratic armed retinues. This role was instead performed by the societies organised within urban militias. Such a phenomenon was not exclusively Hispanic, because knights' associations were also organised within Italian communal militias for the autonomous management of the booty from their depredations and, above all, the ransoms obtained for their captives.²⁸ However, the Iberian frontier offered a uniquely favourable environment to this kind of association.

It was council militias, and not these alternative forms of corporation represented by confraternities, that were the origin of autonomous military associations, which therefore often closely reproduced their organisational patterns, shaped by the periodic experience of war. Initially the *exercitum*, organised collectively by the council, was formed of mixed troops — one unit per parish or *collación* — including horse and foot combatants. Each of these had a *cuadrillero* for the safe-keeping and distribution of booty. Operationally, however, the basic unit in both the march and in combat was smaller and was known as *posada* (Spanish) or *pausata* (Latin).

In spite of their importance, these smaller units have received little historiographical attention to date. As shown by their name, they were camp sections organised according to links of affinity and vicinity. These camp sectors were identified through a specific ensign known as *pendón posadero*. The central role played by the *posada* is shown by

Cancillería, reg. 322 (*Registrum Confratrie ordinate per dominum regem pro divinis serviciis ac pro salute animarum fidelium et ad destruccionem Sarracenorum fetide nationis*).

27 González Jiménez, "Caballería popular," 327.

28 Maire Vigueur, *Cavalieri e cittadini*, 140-74; Grillo, *Cavalieri e popolo*, 125-7.

the *fueros* of Cuenca and Teruel, compiled in the 1190s and the most comprehensive texts for the regulation of the councils' war effort, as well as by the legal "offspring" of the former, both in the shape of local charters (Alarcón, Alcaraz, Huete, Zorita, Iznatoraf, Úbeda, Baeza, etc.) and in the so-called *Fuero del fecho las Cabalgadas*, which is examined below.²⁹

The importance of the *posada* as a basic organisational and operational unit is shown by the rule according to which, if the detachment of a force (*algara*) from the camp or from the marching *exercitus* was deemed advisable, each *posada* had to contribute with half of its men while the rest remained in the rear.³⁰ On the other hand, the strength of the solidary bonds between the members of the *posada* was also displayed by the fact that, if a member of the group committed a serious offence such as robbery or treason and managed to escape unpunished, the whole group was considered collectively responsible for his crimes.³¹ Additionally, the identity of the members of each *posada* was carefully recorded in writing: each member of the expedition was enlisted into a *posada* by the council's officials. This was aimed at dissuading the men from committing serious transgressions, but also at facilitating the fair allocation of the booty. Frauds such as double-enrolment were heavily penalised. It is interesting to note that the *Cantar de Mío Cid*, written around the same time as the *fueros* of Cuenca and Teruel, during the golden age of urban militias, clearly alludes to the practice of making lists of recruits with these same purposes.³²

Another relevant normative aspect regarding *posadas* is the specific denomination for the relationship between their members. These were known as *socii* or *sociorum pausate*, while the *posada* in itself could be referred to as *societatis pausate*. In the vernacular, the terms used were equivalent to company (*companna*) and companions (*companneros*). The *posada* was therefore conceived as a company; a group of combatants organised according to the regulations of the corresponding council militia. Aside from this, however, the regulations show the possibility of forming more

29 Pescador, "Caballería popular" [II], 142–145; Powers, *Society*, 101–4. On the *pendón posadero*, *Partidas* II.23.14.

30 FC 30.13; *Fuero sobre el fecho de las Cabalgadas* [hereafter cited as *FFC*], ed. *Memorial Histórico Español* 2 (1851), ch. 69.

31 FC 30.37; *FT* ch. 426; *FFC* ch. 68.

32 FC 30.12, 30.37–8; *FT* caps. 426, 433–4; *FFC* caps. 68, 85–6; *Partidas* II.25.4, II.26.27, II.28.2, 8; *Cantar de Mío Cid*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1980), v. 1255–1262. This system was still practiced during the war of Granada: María Martínez, "La cabalgada de Alhama (Almería) en 1500," *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana* 11 (1984): 73–74.

spontaneous and informal groups. It was indeed established that when the councils called for defensive mobilisation (*apellido*), those men that happened to be outside the town were not obliged to join (*societatem habere, aver companna*) other men with whom they had fortuitously met, thus implicitly recognising this as a possibility.³³ The *societas* could therefore supersede bonds of vicinity and the rules of local corporation based-militias. In fact, in the unification of local regulations carried out in Alfonso X's second *Partida*, references to the *posada*, which inevitably contextualises the aggrupation of *socii* within the council militia, almost totally disappear in favour of the more neutral "company." Additionally, the same text expressly stresses the operational and tactical capacity of this kind of group, considered the basic combat unit in battle (*tropol*, or "group of men making a company").³⁴

If the *posada* can be identified with the *societas*/company, the latter was beyond doubt the subject of autonomous incursions (that is, expeditions conducted without previous summons by a lord of vassals). Although the term *cabalgada* was introduced into the western Iberian kingdoms at a relatively late date — in these regions the word *algara* (from the Arabic "*ghāra*," "incursion") was always more popular — the practice appears to be as old as urban-based cavalry. Describing certain events in 1133, the *CAI* narrates some incursions conducted outside royal authority (*sine imperio regis*) by groups of knights called *algaras* (*magnae turbae militum quod nostra lingua dicitur algaras*), thus confusing the action and the group carrying it out, as was to be, in fact, the norm thereafter. Moreover, the *fuero* of Cuenca, where *algara* and *cavalcata* coexist with some minor distinctions (the former is identified as an incursion detached from a larger expedition), also applies the second term to the booty, so the word *cabalgada* ends up simultaneously referring to the action, the group, and its captures. In contrast, the *fuero* of Teruel, written in the kingdom of Aragon, where the term had first been introduced, the denomination *cavalcata* and its related terms clearly predominate over *algara*, which is given a much more restricted meaning, similar to that reflected in Castile at a later date (in the second *Partida*).³⁵ The detailed regulation of these actions was consigned for the first time in the *fuero* of Cuenca, which also shows that, despite

33 *FC* 31.2; *FT* ch. 448; *FFC* ch. 103.

34 *Partidas* II.28.2, 9; II.23.16.

35 *CAI* I.36, 38; *FC* 30.13–15, 43, 58–9, 62, 64, 66; 31.11, 16; *FT* ch. 188, 237, 257, 426, 444–445. The *Partidas*, II.23.28–9, do not clearly distinguish between *cabalgada* and *algara*, equally swift actions aimed only at looting: the only difference seems to lie in the superior cunning and knowledge of the terrain required for the *algara*, which in practice becomes a *cabalgada encubierta*.

their name, these operations were not limited to cavalry but were open to mixed or even infantry units.³⁶

As is well known, the military rules of Cuenca are the most perfected of all local *fueros*, which is why they were fully incorporated into the controversial Castilian legal compilation known as *Fuero del Fecho de las Cabalgadas* or *Fuero del Emperador*. This text is only known through a late copy (15th century) and was apocryphally attributed to Charlemagne.³⁷ Despite the arguments presented in Carmela Pescador's classic analysis, where a connection is drawn between the compilation and Emperor Alfonso VII, suggesting an inverse sequence for the transmission of the text (the military chapter of the *fuero* of Cuenca would in this case be the copy of a pre-existing text, and not the other way around), it is clear that the text was put together during the reign of Alfonso X, to a large degree based upon the charter of Cuenca.³⁸ It must be stressed, however, that the text is divided into two well differentiated halves: the first, which with all certainty was composed later than the second, includes the most original entries; the second is little more than a transcription, with a few corrections, of chapter 30 (*De regimine exercituum*) of the charter of Cuenca. The relevant fact, however, is that this compilation of rules for the execution of raids was successful, and remained the reference text for the solution of the booty-related disputes arising at the Nasrid frontier, both in the Guadalquivir valley and Murcia throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. To the best of my knowledge, the earliest appeal to the *Fuero del Emperador* known to date took place in 1334 for the settlement of a dispute between some Murcian knights involved in a raid. The document shows that during this period the compilation was ignored in the royal court but was very popular among expedition chiefs (*adalides*). This was so much the case that it was invoked even outside Castile. As early as 1290, at the southern frontier of the Crown of Aragon a local *adalid* was able to justify his actions with reference to the *Fur de l'Emperador* before the justice official in the town of Cocentaina without said official given the slightest sign of surprise. This seems to suggest that the charter of *cabalgadas* is not as late as it is usually assumed to be. It

36 FC 30.20, 30.58; *FFC* ch. 64, 99.

37 Nearly half of the 103 entries (*FFC* ch. 57–103) reproduce FC 30.1–64, 31.1–2 quite literally, and are to some degree a repetition of the contents of the first 56.

38 Pescador, "Caballería popular," [I], 166–173; Powers, "Origins," 106–8; Juan Torres Fontes, "Apellido y cabalgada en la frontera de Granada," *Estudios de Historia y Arqueología Medievales* 5–6 (1985–6): 186.

must have been compiled during the years of Alfonso X's imperial aspirations, probably not much later than his failed proclamation in 1257.³⁹

This law of *cabalgadas* or *del Emperador*, however, is not only relevant for its dissemination and the alternative it posed to other legal *corpora*, but for its far reaching implications. For one, it gave legal backing to the emancipation of raids from the corporate discipline of councils, contributing to the increasingly strong links drawn between this practice and the formation of companies (*companyas*), understood as groups of men (*companyeros*) freely associated for the occasion; these could be cavalry troopers, foot combatants or could even go by sea. The text regulated essential aspects such as the distribution of shares, the splitting up of the group, prizes, and penalties that could involve the loss of booty-rights (*desorteamiento*). This close connection between raids and companies is also clearly reflected in the second *Partida*; each *cabalgada* forms a company, and if two *cabalgadas* meet, they should ideally merge into a single company.⁴⁰

As we have seen, companies emerged from council militias, where the appropriate operational scale was defined and where the relationship and mutual interdependence of the *socii* were drawn. This origin was the basis of the command principle adopted by the company, which was ultimately crucial for the cohesion and efficiency of these societies of combatants. I am referring to the figure of the *adalid*, the origins of which are, by the way, yet to be satisfactorily tracked down. The term is of course Arabic (*dalīl*, “guide”), and was apparently used in al-Andalus to designate those in charge of determining the offensive routes to be followed by the forward troops since the major campaigns carried out in the Umayyad period. The mechanism of its spread into the Christian kingdoms remains obscure. In the earliest references found in Leonese records the term is used as a toponym and, perhaps, as a nickname.⁴¹ The *CAI* reserves the word

39 Torres Fontes, “Apellido y cabalgada,” 188; *Llibre de la Cort del Justícia de Cocentaina (1269, 1275–1278, 1288–1290)* [hereafter cited as *LCJC I*] ed. Josep Torró (Valencia: PUV, 2009), 505–506. An example of late dating in María Martínez, “La cabalgada: un medio de vida en la frontera murciano-granadina (siglo XIII),” *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana* 13 (1986): 54. The clear link with the text of the *Fuero de Cuenca* and other features disallow the suggestion that the *Fuero del Emperador* was inspired by the second *Partida*, as stated by Pedro A. Porras, “Dos casos de erechamiento de cabalgadas (Murcia, 1334–1392),” in *Estudos em Homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques* (Porto: Faculdade de Letras, 2006), 4:262. Catalan translations of the *Fur del emperador Carles Maynes* were available in the 15th century: Ramon d’Abadal, “Les “Partidas” a Catalunya durant l’Edat Mitjana,” in *Dels visigots als catalans*, (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1986), 2:350.

40 *FFC* ch. 5, 12–6, 19–21, 26, 30, 32, 37, 43, 46, 50–3, 56; *Partidas*, II.28.21–3.

41 Évariste Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l’Espagne musulmane, II. Le siècle du califat de Cordoue* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1950), 98–99; Dolores Oliver, “Los arabismos en la documentación del

to designate the famous Andalusí *adalid* Faraj of Calatrava, who doggedly fought the Christians of Toledo between 1133 and 1145.⁴² Unless I am mistaken, the earliest references to *adalides* from the other side of the frontier are dated to immediately after this. After becoming a Christian outpost in 1147 the important frontier fortification of Calatrava became the base of a Christian *adalid*. A certain Don Melendo held this position from at least 1171, being replaced around 1185 by a Don Domingo, in his turn replaced by his son Pedro, who was in post by 1193. It is possible that this *adalid* “of Calatrava” (implying that he was the only, or at least the main one) served the homonymous military order, created in 1158 after the Templars renounced the defence of the stronghold, but we cannot forget that an urban council also existed here, under the *aegis* of the *fuero* issued immediately after the conquest and also under the lordship of the order.⁴³

At any rate, the case of Calatrava cannot be isolated from the context of the frontier in the region of Toledo. The earliest Christian *adalid* that I have been able to find (Pedro Muñoz, 1150) seems to have had some connection with Toledo or with one of the councils in its territory. Additionally, the Arabic documents from the Toledan see include an interesting collection of *adalides* dated to between 1160 and the first quarter of the 13th century. In some cases, at least, these were members of the significant community of Arabic-speaking Christians or *Mozarabes* living in the region (such as Zināluh, Rodrigo ibn al-Zayd, Tamām and others). These men were therefore particularly suitable for incursions beyond the Andalusí frontier and for gathering intelligence regarding the lay of the terrain or the position of Muslim forces. In fact, the narration of the preliminaries to the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) offered in the *Chronica Latina* stresses the frequent expeditions lead by Christian *adalides* across the hills that separated the Castilian plain (La Mancha) and the Guadalquivir valley.⁴⁴

Reino de León (siglos IX-XII) y Glosario de arabismos,” in *Orígenes de las lenguas romances en el reino de León: siglos IX-XII* (León, Centro de Estudios e Investigación San Isidoro: 2004), 2:159.

42 CAI II.15, 35, 83-5, 88, 95. In AT 121, 108 there is a mention of his death, as well as the demise of an earlier Andalusí *adalid* called *Nacar* (1125).

43 Ángel González Palencia, *Los mozárabes de Toledo en los siglos XII y XIII* (Madrid: Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1926-30), I, docs. 98 (1171), 154 (1181), 172 (1185), 242 (1193); II, docs. 401 (1213), 407 (1214), 581 (1243); IV, doc. 1174 (1219); Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea, “Documentos para el estudio de la Orden de Calatrava en la meseta meridional castellana (1102-1302),” *Cuadernos de Historia Medieval. Secc. Colecciones Documentales* 2 (1999): doc. 62 (1181); Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII* (Madrid: CSIC, 1960), III, doc. 730 (1202). On the village of Calatrava, Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea, “Calatrava. Una villa en la frontera castellano-andalusí del siglo XII,” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 30/2 (2000): 807-849.

44 M. Isabel Pérez de Tudela, *Infanzones y caballeros. Su proyección en la esfera nobiliaria castellano-leonesa (siglos IX-XIII)* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1979), 396. In addition to those cited in the previous note, see González Palencia, *Mozárabes*, I, docs. 63 (1160), 154 (1181), 181 (1186), 205 (1189), 207 (1183-91), 278 (1197), 321 (1202), 333 (1204); II, doc. 447 (1219); III, docs. 826 (1282),

In the second half of the 12th century the *adalides* were not restricted to the most recent frontier south of Toledo and the Transierra. They were also active in the more northerly councils of the Extremadura, most particularly in the well-known case of Ávila. The *adalid* García Ximeno is already mentioned by 1151. He was very in all probability related to other military chiefs of considerable prowess, as shown in the *Crónica de la Población de Ávila*: these include the *adalides* Sancho Ximeno and Gómez Ximeno, the commanders of Ávila's militia during the sack of Seville's countryside in 1158. The former was considered a good reader of omens (*buen agorador*) as well as a good warrior, despite being a hunchback (if we believe the Andalusí chronicler Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalā, who dedicates an entire passage to him, narrating his defeat and death after laying waste to Écija and Córdoba's hinterland in 1173). The latter was said to have taken part in 43 battles and to have been accompanied by his son, Don Yagüe, who also became a renowned *adalid*: his most famous actions took place in 1197 and 1214.⁴⁵ If the *Mozarabe* records from Toledo show the *adalides* as well-placed and respected men, worthy of the title of "don" and remembered by their sons and grandsons as a matter of family prestige, the chronicle from Ávila confirms the often hereditary nature of the occupation. The sons of these men were instructed in the art from an early age — we must remember that this was a very hazardous occupation, in which death and captivity were frequent — including not only combat abilities but also more subtle and arduously acquired skills such as finding and interpreting tracks. This may explain why they were sometimes credited with esoteric powers. We must bear in mind at all times, however, that the chronicle carefully distinguishes between these men and important knights in the town, some of whom led raids, such as the famous Zorraquín Sancho.

The art of leading raids (*condux sive adalill; cavalgatam minaverit*) inevitably assumes the full command of the *adalid*; this authority was to be given legal shape in the late 12th century in the charters of Cuenca and Teruel, where his right to a double share of the booty was also laid down. In the case of autonomous raids, the power of the *adalides* becomes yet more apparent, as it was they and not the *cuadrilleros*, who decided upon the allocation of the booty. They also assumed the responsibility of putting aside the fifth of the captures due to the king, and of estimating the value of

898 (1167), 903 (1188), 953 (1214), 984 (1217); *Chronica Latina Regum Castellae* [hereafter cited as *CLRC*] ed. Luis Charlo Brea (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), ch. 23.

45 Pérez de Tudela, *Infanzones*, 396; *Crónica de la población*, 23–26, 32–33, 37; *AT* 133–134, 181–182; García Fitz, *Las Navas*, 214–215.

horses and supplies given to the expedition by persons not actively participating in it (these two responsibilities are not included in the charter of Teruel). Above anything, the *adalid* would have the power to resolve the disputes arising between members of the party.⁴⁶ This judicial dimension of the *adalid*, which is only reflected in the local regulations in question, is probably the most significant, and lies at the foundations of subsequent developments resulting in the future charter of *cabalgadas* (at least in its first half, which unlike the second does not literally copy the *fuero* of Cuenca). We must not forget that the earliest allusions to the implementation of this *Fuero del Emperador* refer precisely to judgements passed by *adalides*. One of the initial entries in the charter indicates that the purpose of the document is to guide the *adalides* in “laying the law” among the raiders. Nobody but an *adalid* could pass judgement as far as *cabalgadas* were concerned, and this function was rewarded with a tithe of the penalty imposed. In order to increase the efficiency of their judicial authority, they were allowed to impose fines on those who failed to respond to their summons and, more importantly, to pursue and incarcerate those accused of robbery without suffering the interference of lordly justice, as well as being able to impose heavy fines to those encumbering the process.⁴⁷

The *Partidas* also recognises the *adalides*’ judicial power in *cabalgadas* and a certain measure of responsibility in the distribution of prizes and compensations, but they completely overlook the basis of this jurisdiction. Furthermore, they carefully set the boundaries of this authority to within manageable limits (thus reinforcing the position of the king and aristocracy), without compromising their efficiency in the field. It is clearly stated that their appointment was the prerogative of the king or of some other lord, although the adequacy of the candidate to the post was reviewed and judged by a board of twelve *adalides*, who had to decide on the basis of a wide range of carefully inventoried abilities. The ceremony of acceptance into the post was ostentatious. The fact that a member of the high aristocracy had to fasten a sword around the new *adalid* is reminiscent of the ceremony with which knighthood was conferred, but it is also indicative of submission to the aristocracy. Additionally, Alfonso X’s law clearly determined that the *adalid* could lead (*cabdillar*) his social superiors — noblemen and knights — by the use of the word alone; only infantrymen and mounted *almogávares* could be physically punished for not obeying his orders.⁴⁸ Inasmuch as it restricts the

46 FC 30.40, 59, 60, 62, 64–65; FT caps. 188, 189, 426, 437, 444–5; FFC ch. 88, 100, 102.

47 FFC ch. 3, 5, 6, 8–10, 30, 40–41, 48–50. In contrast, the *fuero* of *cabalgadas* left the allocation of the booty to the *cuadrilleros*, although the *adalid* is given seven infantryman’s shares or *peonías*. For an example see Torres Fontes, “Apellido y cabalgada,” 188 (1329).

48 *Partidas* II.22.1–4.

adalid's judicial and punitive powers, the second *Partida* can be interpreted as a reaction to the *Fuero del Emperador*.

On the other hand, one aspect in the occupation of *adalid* is worth paying special attention to. The charters of Cuenca and Teruel only granted *adalides* the double share if they “were known” by the council, while contemplating the possibility of more than one *adalid* taking part in a single action; they even admitted the eventuality of having a Muslim *adalid*. This may have been the case of the “Moor that had turned Christian” who led the first Christian assault upon Cordoba in 1235. (In fact, throughout the 14th and 15th centuries the *adalides tornadizos*, opportunely converted and extremely useful former Muslims, abounded along the frontier with the emirate of Granada).⁴⁹ Similarly, *adalides* were not required to be from the town whose militia they served with, or to have, in fact, any connection with them whatsoever. The *adalides* mentioned in the *repartimiento* of Seville (1253) are not expressly connected with specific companies or groups, and were all granted houses in the same discrete areas.⁵⁰ We may therefore conclude that these men formed a proud corporation of specialists whose highly demanded trade — war at the frontier — could at least in part be supplied itinerantly. In a certain sense, they prolonged the concept of a warrior caste developed long before by the raiders known as *pardos* and *serranos*, at a time when the descendants of these men were increasingly concerned about maintaining a hegemonic position in the councils and promotion into the ranks of the *hidalgo* aristocracy. The *adalides*' ability to organise and lead expeditions would soon propitiate the creation of entire associations of combatants around their charismatic figures.

Almogávares: the value of foot combatants

From at least the mid-13th century, the *adalides* started to coexist with other, minor military chiefs: the so-called *almocadenes* (from the Arabic “*muqaddam*”: “chief”). The use of this term was new in Castile, and in the crown of Aragon it would take longer still to hatch (it came into use there after 1270). The *Partidas* simply says that “those that we used to call commander of infantrymen (*cabdillos de los peones*) we now call *almocadenes*’. The adoption of such a specific term, however, cannot have been accidental; it probably responded to the need to refer to changing models of military

49 FC 30.40, 59; 31.15; FT ch. 437, 452; FFC ch. 88; CLRC ch. 69.

50 *Repartimiento de Sevilla*, ed. Julio González (Madrid: CSIC, 1951), 2:99–100, 104–105, 238, 249–250, 282–285.

association which also demanded new forms of leadership.⁵¹ Indeed, the *almocadenes* directed groups of foot combatants which were no longer integrated into the larger unit of the urban militia, but which soon acquired operational autonomy. The *repartimiento* of Seville refers to a total of 35 groups led by *almocadenes*, with between four and thirty men. The earliest attempt to regulate the action of these leaders can be found in the *Fuero del Emperador*, where it is determined that in order to access the position of *almocadén* a minimum of three raids must have been organised with the subsequent *almonedas* (auctions) to dispose of the booty having taken place in a walled town. In contrast, in the *Partidas* the appointment is left to the discretion of the *adalides*, who are thus given the authority to promote an infantryman to *almocadén*. Additionally, the ceremony performed on these occasions was inspired by the ritual carried out for the appointments of the *adalides* themselves, in which the newly appointed chief received a small ensign or *pendón posadero* as an emblem for his company. Obviously, the *Partidas* reflected the king's will to control companies by introducing a stable hierarchy and a formal route for promotion, from infantryman to *almocadén* to *almogávar a caballo* to *adalid*. In any case, the relevant point is that the text confirms that raids were also carried out by simple associations of combatants on foot.⁵²

In fact, throughout the 13th century, and in particular after the major Christian conquests in the south and east of the Iberian Peninsula (Guadalquivir Valley, Murcia, Valencia) and Mallorca, infantrymen became increasingly important in companies detached from or created outside council militias. The term *almogávares* was in use to refer to these groups by at least 1230. Once more, this is a loan word from Arabic: “*mughāwir*” literally means “he who takes part in incursions” (*ghāra*, sing.); that is, the *algaras* of Latin and Vernacular texts. The charter of Cuenca and its legal progeny granted certain privileges to those detaching themselves from the main militia force to launch *algaras* (*illi qui in algaram perrexerint*; “*algareros*” in Huete's Vernacular version). It seems likely that the most inclined to act autonomously when the occasion allowed it were the members of these vanguard forces, who knew the terrain and were both able hunters and good fighters.⁵³

51 *Partidas* II.22.5.

52 *FFC* caps. 9, 56; moreover, in the absence of an *adalid*, three *almocadenes* could put aside the portion of the booty due to the king (*FFC* ch. 30); *Partidas*, II.22.4-7. These hierarchic principles are clearly laid out in a letter by Alfonso X to the frontier council of Lorca (1265) in which the participants in *cabalgadas* are distributed by rank as follows: knights, *adalides*, mounted *almogávares*, *almocadenes*, crossbowmen and infantrymen: *Colección de documentos*, III, 86.

53 *FC* 30.14; Pescador, “Caballería popular” [2]:172–176. The account offered in *CLRC* ch. 53, of the coup that took Ibn Hūd to seize power in Murcia (1228) defines this frontier soldier of obscure origins

The *almogávares* start to feature almost simultaneously in the chronicles of the major conquests achieved by Castile and Aragon. The conquest of Córdoba, in 1236, began after a risky operation which, according to Lucas de Tuy, was carried out “by brave Catholic men that live on the frontier with the Moors and who are called *almogávares*”, whereas Jiménez de Rada identified them as “knights (*milites*) who in the Arabic language are called *almogávares*.” On the other hand, Alfonso X’s *Estoria* (later in date, but more detailed) stresses that the action was carried out by a group of *hidalgos*, *adalides* and *almogávares*, mounted and on foot, from Andújar, including several who spoke the Arabic language well. The same chronicle mentions the “Christian *almogávares*” — a qualification upon which the author appears keen to insist — present in the host of Ferdinand III and the (not always successful) *cabalgadas* launched during the siege of Seville in 1248, “whenever they thought that something could be taken off the Moors”.⁵⁴ The subsequent *repartimiento* of the city shows the prizes granted to foot (with their leaders, the *almocadenes*) and mounted *almogávares*. It was therefore inevitable that the great legal compilations sponsored by Alfonso X paid some attention to this increasingly well-defined breed of combatant, different from the cavalry and from the ordinary infantry enrolled in council militias. While the *Fuero del Emperador* only mentioned them briefly, the second *Partida* made a somewhat spurious attempt to meticulously regulate the position of the *almogávar* within the framework of formal military hierarchy, distinguishing once more between the mounted (superior to the *almocadén* and subordinate to the *adalid*) and the foot *almogávar*, which is simply referred to as *peón* (infantryman).⁵⁵

Regarding the crown of Aragon, James I’s *Book of Deeds* described several actions carried out by the *almogávares* during the conquest of Mallorca and Valencia in 1230 and 1233-44 respectively. These men are shown as taking part in the *cabalgadas* organised by noblemen, military orders, and the king himself, launched in combination with other cavalry and infantry forces, urban militias and armed retinues (*mesnadas*).

as an *almogar plebeius*, a term closer to the Arabic *mughīr*, with the same root as *mughāwīr* and a similar meaning.

⁵⁴ Lucas de Tuy, *Chronicon mundi*, ed. Emma Falque (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), IV.101; Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispanie sive Historia Gothica*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), IX.16; *Primera Crónica General de España*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Gredos, 1977), II, 729–730, 759. *CLRC* ch. 69 narrates the same episode, but without using the term explicitly.

⁵⁵ *Repartimiento de Sevilla*, II: 100–102, 104–109, 122–126, 249–250, 273–280; *FFC* ch. 44, 48; *Partidas* II.22.3, 4, 6.

No express mention of mounted *almogávares* exists. It seems that in the crown of Aragon — less responsive to attempts at classification made in Castile by Alfonso X's laws — this role was performed by mounted parties whose members were generically referred to as *adalides*; indeed, as we shall soon see, from the 1270s the *almogávares* of the Catalan-Aragonese texts were, almost without exception, infantry troops. At first they were, in any case, small groups; in the royal *cabalgada* down the river Júcar (1233) there were only 150 *almogávares*, along with 130 knights of rank and 700 ordinary infantrymen; similar figures feature in the modest force that started the siege of Valencia (1238). In this case, and with total disregard to their limited strength, they launched with the support of other infantrymen a reckless action against the nearby village of Russafa. This raid, strongly reminiscent of the one carried out in Córdoba barely two years before, would have ended in disaster had the king not intervened. After the city fell they maintained their *modus operandi*, forming heterogeneous groups under the command of a nobleman, frequently indulging in depredations and making captives of already subjected “Moors of peace.”⁵⁶

This latest aspect is important. In the crown of Aragon the proliferation of groups of *almogávares* was increasingly connected with practices carried out in violation of the king's authority, especially with regard to the guarantees given to Muslim communities in the recently conquered regions. This kind of action escalated immediately after the entry of James I into Valencia and was replicated once more with the Muslims expelled from Murcia in 1266, despite the guarantees granted by the Aragonese king. The end of the campaigns and the reduction of opportunities for booty across the frontier accentuated the recurrent confusion between *almogávares* and *malefactores*. After the arrival of the Marinid army and the Castilian defeat at Écija in 1275, bands of *almogávares* from the crown of Aragón and from part of the crown of Castile fell uncontrolledly upon the subjected Muslims still living in the kingdom of Valencia, who were officially under the protection of the king. These events resulted in the promulgation of several persecutory orders between 1275 and 1280. These had, however, to coexist with contradictory measures of grace due to the essential role

56 *Llibre dels feits del rei en Jaume* [hereafter cited as *LF*], ed. Ferran Soldevila, Jordi Bruguera and Maria T. Ferrer (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2008), ch. 103, 187, 203, 225, 255, 257, 295, 306, 315, 333; Josep Torró, “Guerra, repartiment i colonització al regne de València (1248–1249),” in *Repartiments a la Corona d'Aragó (segles XII-XIII)*, ed. Enric Guinot and Josep Torró (Valencia: PUV, 2007), 253–255.

played by these armed bands in putting out the widespread Muslim rebellion which they had worked so hard to inflame.⁵⁷

In the Guadalquivir Valley and in other regions conquered by Castile where the Muslim communities had almost completely disappeared after the 1264-66 war, these groups turned to forms of banditry that were deemed less acceptable; i.e. aimed at Christians and their property. One of Alfonso X's *cantigas* mentions the gathering of certain *almogávares* "on foot, who were very good but also very big thieves" in the chapel in Jerez Castle soon after its conquest (1264), where they made the decision to seek redemption by "being good through doing the Moors evil" (*hacer mal a moros con muy buenos corazones*). Eventually, the term *almogávares* was reserved for those predatory bands acting on the last Muslim frontier — with the Nasrid emirate in Granada — while the groups involved in assaulting and murdering travellers and in stealing beehives and livestock in the sparsely populated regions around the former frontier, between the Montes de Toledo and Sierra Morena, were to be known thereafter as *golfines*. The earliest occurrence of this term dates to 1254; Alfonso X's (somewhat belated) chronicle stresses that the king was willing to pardon the "large companies of *golfines*" if they took part in an expedition against Granada. This appeal failed, and orders for their capture and execution were issued in 1281. However, the offer must have had some effect because Diego Pérez de Montenegro, one of the *almocadenes* who embarked that same year on the expedition against Algeciras, was nicknamed *el Golhín*. Clearly, the conversion of *golfines* into *almogávares* presented no technical difficulties. In fact, a good proportion of them soon after joined the companies of *almogávares* mustered by Peter III of Aragon. Significantly, the only extant description of these evildoers is provided by the Catalan chronicler Desclot, who must have met them on this occasion. According to him, they were ruined men of *paratge* (i.e. high ancestry), "with no rents to live on, or having gambled and squandered all away" being thus forced to assault Christians and Muslims in the Muradal Pass (Sierra Morena). Although the Catalan term *paratge* formally designates a special group assimilated into the lowest level of the nobility, its use here to generically refer to a level below that of the noble knights may signify that it was also meant to embrace outcast urban knights, maybe even including true *hidalgos*. At any rate, their considerable numbers and the graphic

57 Bernat Desclot, *Llibre del rei en Pere d'Aragó* [hereafter cited as Desclot], ed. Ferran Soldevila, Jordi Bruguera and Maria T. Ferrer (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2008), ch. 49, 65, 67; *LF* ch. 295, 306; *Llibre de la Cort del Justícia de València (1280–1282)*, ed. E. Guinot, M. A. Diéguez and C. Ferragut (Valencia: PUV, 2008), 78; Robert I. Burns, "Social Riots on the Christian-Moslem Frontier (Thirteenth-Century Valencia)," *American Historical Review* 66 (1961): 378–400.

representation of them found in one of the books of *cantigas* — where the miniature represents the *golfines* as a large group of infantrymen armed with lances and javelins — call into question Desclot's generalisation.⁵⁸

During the brief interval between the beginning of the “second war of Granada” (1275) and that of Aragon's expansive policy in the Mediterranean (1282), the dimensions of this phenomenon, the growth of bands of freebooters, started to have a significant effect on their potential as a military force. The proliferation of these groups at the new Nasrid frontier is clearly shown by the list of miracles of Saint Domingo of Silos, composed by the monk Pedro Marín in the late 13th century. This text relates the escape from the Muslims of numerous prisoners who had been captured while taking part in raids against Granada. At least 26 of the cases narrated (of a total of 91) are directly connected with *cabalgadas* carried out between 1276 and 1285 by groups of “*compañeros*” — a dozen men, or a few tens of men at the most — led by *almocadenes*. Given the considerable bias of the sample we can assume that these *miráculos romançados* present but a pale resemblance of the true magnitude of this sort of action during this period.⁵⁹

It was not at the frontier of Granada, however, but in the south of the crown of Aragon that these small contingents, hard to pin down and highly mobile, started to unite in much larger groups of several thousand men at a time. Eight thousand *almogávares* from Valencia, Catalonia and Aragon gathered in 1275 to sack the *huerta* of Alicante; and up to thirty thousand that operated between Valencia and Murcia — including Castilian *golfines* — had followed their *adalides* and joined Peter III's call to participate in his 1282 African expedition. Finally, only half of them were permitted to embark. Desclot's figures must not be dismissed. According to the campaign's expense records, during the war against the Muslim rebels in the kingdom of Valencia (1276-77) there were autonomous companies formed by groups of up to 2,000 infantrymen apiece;

58 *Cantigas de Santa María de Don Alfonso el Sabio* (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1889), II, 523-4 (ch. 374); *Crónica de Alfonso X*, ed. Manuel González Jiménez and María A. Carmona (Murcia: Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1999), 215; Pedro Marín, *Miráculos romançados*, ed. Karl-Heinz Anton (Burgos: Abadía de Silos, 1988): 135; Desclot ch. 79; Carmen Mela and José M. Sánchez, “Para el estudio del bandidismo medieval. Golfines y seguridad en los montes,” in *I Congreso de Historia de Castilla-La Mancha* (Toledo: Junta de Comunidades, 1988), 5:197-203; José M. Sánchez, “Hermandades y delincuencia rural entre el Tajo y Sierra Morena (siglos XIII-XV),” *Clío & Crimen* 3 (2006): 134-66. Illuminated *Cantiga* num. 102, Escorial codex.

59 Pedro Marín, *Miráculos*, 50-57, 61-65, 67-68, 79-80, 84-91, 93-101, 106-111, 120-123, 139-140, 142-144, 157-158, 179-180; Francisco García Fitz, *Castilla y León frente al islam. Estrategias de expansión y tácticas militares (siglos XI-XIII)* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998), 127-135.

additionally, Desclot's and Muntaner's accounts indicate that at the beginning of the campaigns in Ifrīqiya and Sicily the *almogávares* were organised in groups of between 1,000 and 3,000 troops. This can be confirmed by the archival evidence cited in the modern editions of these chronicles. On the other hand, references to the activity of bands of *almogávares* at the Iberian frontiers (especially in the records corresponding to the crown of Aragon) also multiply in this period.⁶⁰

These infantry forces described by Desclot and Muntaner fully demonstrated their prowess and efficiency in the long war following the Sicilian Vespers and in the subsequent expedition to the Byzantine Empire. In his 1305 and 1309 treatises on the recovery of the Holy Land, Ramon Llull presented the *almogávares* as *pedites bellatores*, foot combatants selected for their strength and valour, "very necessary men in any conquest" and a key factor in the military superiority of the Christians.⁶¹ But this is well known; the reasons behind this efficiency have not, in contrast, been satisfactorily explained. Their equipment — in line with a carefully outlandish general attire — was characterised first by the total absence or, at best, extreme subtlety of body armour. It seems clear that mobility was one of their key assets not only in harrying operations but also in hand to hand combat against heavier troops, which they did not avoid. They fought with javelins, lances and knives, changing their weapons according to the needs of the battle. Their key technique or, at any rate, the most specialised was javelin-throwing, which they could perform with unique force and accuracy.⁶² This allowed them to attack heavy cavalry and to participate in naval combat, complementing from prow and stern the fire power of the crossbowmen stationed on the central platforms of the ships (*ballesters en taula*).⁶³ Their skills with the javelin set these units apart from other foot soldiers and became their mark of identity, as was the

60 Desclot ch. 67, 79, 84; ACA Cancillería, reg. 33, f. 123r-124r (1276); Ramon Muntaner, *Crònica* [hereafter cited as Muntaner], ed. Ferran Soldevila, Jordi Bruguera and Maria T. Ferrer (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2011), caps. 62, 66, 93, 102; Elena Lourie, "Anatomy of Ambivalence: Muslims under the Crown of Aragon in the Late Thirteenth Century," in *Crusade and Colonisation. Muslims, Christians and Jews in Medieval Aragon* (Aldershot: Gower, 1990), 10–11, 19–20.

61 Ramon Llull, *Liber de Fine*, in *Raimundi Lulli. Opera Latina*, IX, ed. Alois Madre (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 278–279; *Liber de Acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*, ed. Eugène Kamar, *Studia Orientalia Christiana* 6 (1961): 107–108.

62 Desclot ch. 89, 102–3; Muntaner ch. 107, 122, 134, 159, 191–192, 195, 203, 221, 275–276; Llull, *Liber de Fine*, 279.

63 Justly considered one of the causes of Roger de Lloria's uninterrupted series of naval victories gained in conditions of numerical inferiority: Lawrence V. Mott, *Sea Power in the Medieval Mediterranean. The Catalan-Aragonese Fleet in the War of the Sicilian Vespers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 191–196. See the actions of the *almogávares* in naval combats in Desclot, ch. 113, 127; and Muntaner, ch. 83, 130, 152. In 1316 all seamen and combatants in the navy organised by James II had to use javelins (*darts*): ACA Cancillería, reg. 322, f. 18v–19r.

longbow to the English archers in the Hundred Years War. Other European infantry forces did not use this technique, and Muntaner openly scorns the clumsiness with which the French soldiers threw their javelins in naval battles.⁶⁴ Therefore, according to the Catalan chronicles this infallible *modus operandi* made the *almogávares* an unstoppable war machine in the forty years between the Vespers and the Sardinian campaign.

We cannot, however, forget that these successes were to a large degree due to the considerable dimensions of the units, very different from the small bands engaged in the conquest of Mallorca, Córdoba, Valencia, Seville and Murcia, where they always played a subsidiary role. The increase in their numbers was, on the other hand, surprisingly rapid, occurring in barely a decade, as I have pointed out before. Is it possible for so many men to become proficient in a certain combat technique in such a short period of time? In fact, there was a solid basis for this training, because the combination of lance and javelin was already common among Iberian urban militias from the 12th century.⁶⁵ According to the charter of Cuenca — in a provision replicated in the *Partidas* — in order to have the right to a share in the booty an infantryman must carry lance and javelin (*lanceam et siculum*). This was not a trivial requirement: the anonymous *Poema de Fernán González*, written in 1250-52, portrays Castilian infantrymen as hard, light-footed men fighting in the vanguard with lances (*azconas*) and javelins (*dardos*) which they could throw with precision, opening breaches in the enemy lines for the cavalry to target. A non-literary text, the court proceedings corresponding to a hearing in Cocentaina concerning the disagreement between several infantrymen involved in the sack of the *huerta* of Alicante (1275), repeatedly describes the same combat position: “low lance and brandishing the javelin.”⁶⁶

The infantrymen involved in this incident were, no doubt, part of that large group — supposedly around eight thousand — of men whom Descloit already labelled as

64 Dennis E. Showalter, “Caste, Skill and Training: The Evolution of Cohesion in European Armies from the Middle Ages to the Sixteenth Century,” *The Journal of Military History* 57 (1993): 412–414; Muntaner, ch. 130. In other parts of Europe the *pedites* carried defensive equipment and fought with long lances or pikes, long hooks, crossbows and longbows: John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of Crusades, 1000–1300* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 25–28, 66–9; Kelly DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 194–195; Settia, *Comuni in guerra*, 193–195.

65 It seems likely that the use of javelins, also related to deer-hunting, had been borrowed from al-Andalus; in the social network of Christian towns its use would acquire hitherto unknown dimensions.

66 *FC* 30.5; *FFC* ch. 61; *Partidas* II.26.28; *Poema de Fernán González*, ed. H. Salvador Martínez (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1995), strophes 193, 308, 456, 462; *LCJC* I, 225–226. Some miniatures in the Escorial codex represent infantrymen armed (only) with lance and javelin: nums. 22, 96, 102 and 175.

almogávares in his narration of the events occurring after the Battle of Écija. At this moment a significant number of militiamen, with some military experience after their participation in royal hosts and major *cabalgadas*, found it relatively easy to join the small bands of full-time *almogávares* involved in frontier raids — one or two day rides, covering a distance of between four and six leagues — and in providing other armed services.⁶⁷ With all certainty *adalides* and *almocadenes* played a crucial role in this process of integration. These chiefs commanded more or less dedicated militia units and true *almogávares* (i.e. specialised combatants) and could facilitate the transition from one category to the other. The new recruits may not have been as skilled as the old hands but were at least familiar with the key techniques of their new units. This swelling of the phenomenon probably caused some alarm in Peter III's court, showing the advantages of giving them employment abroad, especially with the 1282 African (and afterwards Sicilian) expedition.⁶⁸

Just as with certain groups among the urban cavalry militias since the early 12th century, the emergence of the *almogávares* presented certain social sectors with the possibility of a full-time dedication to predatory war, particularly in this case with those that could not afford to fight on horseback. In the mid-13th century, at the end of the great Christian conquests, the urban cavalry's interest in an increasingly difficult and squalid *ganancia* at the frontier declined; their focus shifted towards the reinforcement of privileges, the exploitation of urban taxation, and social promotion. Yet the emergence of the *almogávares* indicates that the risky option of frontier raids was still a viable option under the new circumstances.⁶⁹ At first sight the change suggests the reduction in size of the social sectors involved, but in fact it was more of a transformation of the social groups committed to looting. The close identification with respectable cavalymen in control of urban councils — *boni* and *probi homines* — was in any case lost. This transformation soon resulted in a rapidly expanding and almost uncontrollable phenomenon, capable of destabilising the public order in the kingdoms.

The Catalan-Aragonese provenance of *almogávares* has been overstressed, to the extreme that the phenomenon is often considered exclusive to the Aragonese crown and, in particular, of Catalonia. The *almogavería* emerged pretty much simultaneously in all

67 Desclot ch. 79; Llull, *Liber de Acquisitione*, 107.

68 Josep Torró, "Viure del botí. La frontera medieval com a parany historiogràfic," *Recerques* 43 (2001): 17–30.

69 Powers, *Society*, 88–89, 210.

Iberian Kingdoms, persisting in all of them until the late 15th century. In Portugal, in fact, it lasted even longer with the proliferation of *almogávares* — referred to by that name — in the Portuguese Maghreb.⁷⁰ The large number of Catalan *almogávares* is, by contrast, truly in need of an explanation. Indeed, if autonomous associations of combatants had emerged in the framework of council militias which, as pointed out by Powers, projected urban structures and expressed their strength, little could be expected from Catalan towns in this regard.⁷¹

Catalonian urban institutions crystallised considerably later than their Western and even their Aragonese counterparts. The earliest, still unstable, forms of urban association under charters of franchise did not appear until the late 12th century; more developed forms of organisation and a jurisdiction based on written legislation had to wait until the 1220s. Lleida, conquered in 1149 and for a long time influenced by the nearby Aragon, was the city where the term *universitas* (Cat. *universitat*, “corporation”), used in Catalonia to refer to a community of neighbours, was adopted for the first time (1217) and where the first body of local laws (*Consuetudines Ilerdenses*) was enacted (1228). According to these “customs” local citizenship was conditional to participation in the *exercitum*.⁷² However, the military units from Catalonian towns lacked the strict regulations ordering urban militias elsewhere in the Peninsula and were in no way comparable to the autonomous council armies raised in Castile, León and Aragon. They did not play a significant role in the royal host until the conquest of Valencia (1238). Certainly, the record of the distribution of land prizes (*repartiment*) after the conquest of Mallorca already reveals the collective participation of “men from towns” and Catalonian cities in the campaign (1229-30), but their corporate integration into the framework of the *universitas* did not crystallise until the conquest of Valencia.⁷³ As in France, military requirements of free men were limited to the obligation to participate in hosts and *cavalcatae* affecting all vassals — including clerics and noblemen —, and in

70 Roger Sablonier, *Krieg und Kriegerum in der Crònica des Ramon Muntaner* (Berna-Frankfurt: Verlag Herbert Lang, 1971), 57–61 criticized the “patriotic” perspective in Ferran Soldevila, *Els almogàvers* (Barcelona: Barcino, 1952). Desclot, ch. 79, claims that *almogávares* were Catalans, Aragonese and *Serranos* (no doubt, Castilians). According to Lull, *Liber de fine*, 279, they abounded in *Catalonia, Aragonia et Castella*; the *Liber de acquisitione*, 107, locates them in *Hispania, Catalonia et etiam Aragonia*. There are multiple 16th century references to Portuguese *almogávares* and their *almocadenes*: see Bernardo Rodrigues, *Anais de Arzila*, ed. David Lopes (Lisboa: Academia das Ciências, 1915–19).

71 Powers, *Society*, 93–111.

72 José M. Font Rius, *Orígenes del régimen municipal de Cataluña* (Madrid: CSIC, 1946); *Costumbres de Lérida*, ed. Pilar Loscertales (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1946), ch. 93.

73 *Còdex català del llibre del repartiment de Mallorca*, ed. Ricard Soto (Palma: Govern Balear, 1984); *Llibre del repartiment del regne de València*, ed. María D. Cabanes and Ramón Ferrer (Zaragoza: Anubar, 1979–80), I.

the general duty to defend the prince's (i.e. the Count of Barcelona) land in case of danger, as set forth in the legal compilation of the *Usatges* (c. 1150). These militias, therefore, lacked developed organisational structures, including well defined units (*collaciones* and *posadas*) and specialised commanders (*adalides*).⁷⁴

The associative agreement and its function

Despite all of this, and as pointed out by Antoni Virgili, there were groups carrying out autonomous *cabalgadas*, by land and by sea, on the Catalan Ebro frontier during the second half of the 12th and the early decades of the 13th century. These were the *cavalcadors*, a frequent sight in Tortosa, where they sold captives and robbed livestock; this practice was well regulated in the local laws, compiled in a late document (1272) based on common uses and customs which are indeed more characteristic to the period predating the conquest of Valencia.⁷⁵ The process by which the companies of freebooters regulated in Castile by the *Fuero del Emperador* and the *Partidas* branched out of the formally organised structure of council militias was completely lacking in Catalonia. However, the possibility of setting up an association in order to launch independent raids — besides the obligation to participate in those organised by the count — was recognised in the *Usatges* by the mid-12th century. The *Usatges* even declares the soundness of the associative covenant (*comunie et conveniencie*) individually agreed between knights and men on foot for carrying out *cabalgadas* or hunting expeditions. This means that, from a formal perspective, urban organisation was not a necessary condition for the creation of societies of combatants. In fact, this same possibility is openly contemplated in the charters of Cuenca and Teruel which, apart from the chapters dedicated to the council militia, guaranteed the validity of *societates ad lucrandum* created, as with the Catalan case, to regulate predatory actions (*expeditione, exercitu, cavalgata*) and hunting parties, including — in contrast with the *Usatges* — a commercial dimension (*negociacione*). It therefore seems clear that these

74 Powers, *Society*, 37–8, 82–3; Donald J. Kagay, “Royal Power in an Urban Setting: James I and the Towns of the Crown of Aragon,” *Mediaevistik* 8 (1995): 161–170; *Usatges de Barcelona*, ed. Joan Bastardas (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1991), ch. 30–31, 64. From 1258 the king and the church promoted the organisation of *rustici* armed with crossbows, swords and lances in the parishes around the Llobregat to repel hostile actions by other aristocrats; this was known as *sometent*, an irregular military expression of local solidarity: Flocel Sabaté, “El sometén en la Cataluña medieval,” *Clío & Crimen* 3 (2006): 209–304.

75 Antoni Virgili, “War and booty as incentives for emigration. Tortosa and al-Andalus (12th–13th centuries),” in this volume; *Costums de Tortosa*, ed. Jesús Massip (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1996), 9.7.8.

societies were formed *extra villam*; that is, outside the boundaries of urban institutions, although they were also protected by them.⁷⁶

While regulating the activities of the *societas* (Cat. *companyia*), later legislations in Tortosa (1272) and Valencia (1261) precisely avoided the laying down of their aims. It was declared that the duration of the associations would be set forth in the foundational agreement (this could be a matter of hours or years, or could be indefinite) and that a good understanding between all parts must prevail. Naturally, the participation of the partners (*socii*) in the profits would also be established in the foundational agreement, but it was bluntly asserted that not all forms of profit were legitimate, expressly excluding gain resulting from robbery, homicide, and other bad actions (*maleficiis*) which were in fact considered harmful to the legitimacy of the society at large (*turpis et feda societas*). In this same period Castilian councils issued similar prohibitions against *cofradías y ayuntamientos malos*.⁷⁷ This is an important introduction, as it shows the royal will to control this kind of association; indeed, a specific terminology, with a certain literary background, was soon adopted to refer to those associations aimed at non legitimate profiteering: *confraternitates*, *sacramentalia*, and *conspirationes* can be understood as synonyms of “bad enterprise” and were rigorously prohibited.⁷⁸ The prosecution of companies of infantrymen or *almogávares* involved in the 1275-76 attacks, just before the Muslim revolt in the kingdom of Valencia, and for which reason they were treated as vulgar evildoers, was based on these legal foundations.⁷⁹ It was important to stop these free associations of armed men, created outside the corporate framework of the urban militias, from violating in one way or another the authority of the king and the political order of the kingdom.

We do not have much evidence regarding the actual way in which these associations were formed. This is particularly the case in the western kingdoms, where literary texts are often our only source. The *Cantigas*, for example, allude to the agreement reached by 16 *almogávares* from Lisbon to launch an expedition into the Algarve (presumably before 1248). No doubt the pacts could be markedly informal and based on verbal oaths,

⁷⁶ *Usatges*, ch. 66; *FC* 25.2; *FT* ch. 237.

⁷⁷ *Costums de Tortosa*, 4.20.1–6; *Fori Antiqui Valentiae*, ed. Manuel Dualde (Madrid: CSIC, 1967), LXX.1–3; XVIII.2, 5, 11; Monsalvo, “Frontera pionera,” 118.

⁷⁸ *Fori Antiqui Valentiae* XVIII.9. In Tortosa the government of the *universitat* adopted a similar decision in 1285 to stop associations of citizens from uniting against the aristocrat Ramon de Montcada: ACA, Cancillería, Pergs., Pere II, 453, 475–476, 478.

⁷⁹ *LF* ch. 554–5; *LCJC* I, 227; Ferran Soldevila, *Pere el Gran* (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans: 1950–62), 1:405–407; Burns, “Social riots,” 394–399.

but we must not forget that usually all partners had to submit their names to a registry in order to declare their responsibility and to record their claim to a part of the booty. For example, in 1277 a townsman from Cocentaina was not granted his modest share (15 *sueldos*) of the profits of a raid because the group leader claimed that he was not on the roll.⁸⁰

The risks involved in the actions of these groups to the life and property of their members were too great not to commit agreements to writing. A notarial record from Vic, coeval with the conquest of Mallorca, contains entries referring to the constitution of two societies (*firmam societatem*) created to go *ad lucrandum* to the “land of the Saracens”; and to that of another two which were, somewhat more explicitly, to join the *exercitu Mayoriche*. The terms of these agreements are not substantially dissimilar to those found in the same book and concerning the setting up of commercial societies created for trading with Muslim countries: they determine the duration (several months; two years; indefinite), establish the proportional distribution of profits, and record the partners’ commitment to mutual loyalty and assistance in the case of illness. It must be stressed that these agreements are nearly always between just two people, including two brothers, with one very interesting exception; in this, a group of ten men with different family names created in the usual terms a society *firmam et stabilem* with the purpose of participating in the military operations taking place on the island and profiting from them.⁸¹ This sort of group would thus also form elsewhere in Catalonia under the stimulus of the conquest. This has left clear traces in the *repartiment* of Mallorca, where there are several entries referring to “men from towns.” The leaders of at least seven such groups — three of which were connected with the coastal city of Tortosa — are also mentioned, along with their *socii* (Cat. *companyons*) whose number is only specified in two cases: five and twelve companions.⁸²

This kind of *socii* group only appears sporadically in the earliest land distributions executed in Valencia, and in which the urban councils, by opposition, played such a

80 *Cantigas*, II, 388–389 (ch. 277): “et atal preito poseron ontre ssí que correr fossen o Algarue”; *LCJC* I, 306: “no s’escreví ab él.”

81 *Manual primer de l’Arxiu de la Cúria Fumada de Vic (1230–1233)*, ed. by Rafael Ginebra (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1998), docs. 531, 866, 1190, 1203. I want to thank Prof. Antoni Mas (Universitat de les Illes Balears) for pointing out this source to me.

82 *Còdex català*, 53, 59–62, 64–68, 81–83. This can be checked with the published Latin version of the *Repartimientos de los reinos de Mallorca, Valencia y Cerdeña*, ed. Próspero de Bofarull (Barcelona: Archivo de la Corona de Aragón: 1856), 7–141. The data have been systematised by Guillem Rosselló, “Mallorca 1232: colectivos urbanos, órdenes militares y reparto del botín,” *Aragón en la Edad Media* 19 (2006): 461–83. For the groups from Tortosa see Virgili, “War and booty,” in this volume.

crucial role. In contrast, societies of combatants had a very predominant position in the *repartiment* carried out in 1248-49, during the so-called “al-Azraq war.” James I launched this campaign with the purpose of eliminating the latest enemy redoubts and proceeding with the general expulsion of Muslims. Due to the lack of enthusiasm shown by the lay aristocracy on this occasion the king decided not to call for a host, and thus left out not only the aristocracy, who were generally opposed to the enterprise, but also the urban militias. He believed that the lure of generous land prizes would be enough to attract sufficient forces, mustered *ad hoc*. The truth is that ninety groups of *socii* are mentioned in the record of this distribution, including an overall figure of 2,177 men, 72% of the total number of beneficiaries. The most common case is for these societies to be formed by ten men, and at any rate to oscillate between 5 and 20 members. This coincides with the groups of *almogávares* and infantrymen taking part in the *repartimiento* of Seville, formed by between 8 and 10 men. In the case of Valencia, however, some exceptionally large groups (of up to 200 members) can be found; these were very likely the result of the aggregation of smaller units. Similarly to Mallorca, each of these associations had at least one leader, whose task it was to distribute the land prizes granted to the group among its members, as clearly shown by the record.⁸³

Towards the mid-13th century military societies thus proliferated greatly throughout the whole of the Iberian Peninsula, especially among men with little means who fought on foot. It seems clear that as a part of this process Catalanian combatants, both specialised (*almogávares*) and part-timers, assumed the experience of Castilian and — more directly — Aragonese militias despite not having participated in similar urban armies. The model followed has three key features. First, the size of the basic unit, around ten men, was aimed at ensuring manoeuvrability on the march and on the battlefield by the men’s ability to join and separate at will, at the same time giving them the option of attacking or defending by themselves.⁸⁴ Second, command was bestowed on individuals of recognised merit such as *adalides* and *almocadenes*; the former are documented in the conquest of Valencia since at least 1237, and the latter some time later.⁸⁵ Finally, similar rules for booty management and distribution were observed, as shown by the dissemination of the *Fuero del Emperador* in Catalan-Aragonese territory.

83 *LF* ch. 365; Torró, “Guerra, repartiment,” 210–212, 246–252.

84 Powers, *Society*, 97; Mott, *Sea Power*, 163.

85 Torró, “Guerra, repartiment,” 254–255.

The most relevant factor in this process is not, however, the quantitative aspect, but the qualitative leap between the society of the *cabalgada*, created with the sole purpose of grabbing movable property (livestock, captives), and the companies operating as a conquering force and as an instrument of colonisation, attracted by the prospect of land prizes in advantageous conditions. It is clear that this transformation could not have occurred without the availability of a critical mass of willing man power. The truth is that while the creation of autonomous societies of combatants was spurred by the great conquests, it did not cease once these had come to an end. Instead, the 1270s and 1280s saw a rapid increase of bands of freebooters. The explanation of this phenomenon lies in the blocking of traditional routes to social promotion, for example by increasingly restricting access to the urban elite, and the conditions prevailing in the colonisation of conquered territory. The limited amount of land distributed and the difficulty of access to the necessary equipment and labour, compared with the relative ease with which war gain was acquired (and the social prestige it conferred), were without doubt significant factors. It is, in any case, a very complex issue, the analysis of which is well beyond the scope of this paper. Naturally, the society of *cabalgada* did not disappear; the direct grasp of booty always remained an option. The really important point here is that the aims of the association validated nearly every form of (legal) profit, including, of course, the retribution of services in the form of a land grant or any other form of payment.

As previously mentioned, by 1275 the phenomenon had reached a level that the Catalan-Aragonese crown was beginning to regard as dangerous. However, confronted by the general insurrection of Muslims in the kingdom of Valencia — to a degree caused by the uncontrolled action of these groups — the king did not hesitate to show support to many of these companies and even to facilitate the creation of new ones for their use as crack troops, with the promise of distributing the lands taken from defeated enemies as reward. Up to 44 letters were addressed to villages in Catalonia, Ribagorza and the Aragonese Pyrenees, to mention just a few examples, asking for armed infantrymen with the promise of land prizes as a reward. An *adalid* called Sancho La Serra and his two hundred men (who held no property of their own) were offered lands in the valley of Pego if they took part in “this war against the Saracens”; soon after, the

almocadén Bernat Duran and his *pedites socios* (up to a hundred) received several hamlets in the vicinity of Calpe.⁸⁶

While the military and the colonising operations could occasionally be efficiently combined, they had to be neatly delimited because of the clear disproportion between the amount of land available for distribution and the potential number of beneficiaries. In fact, during this war some societies of combatants seem to have worked for a daily wage. In 1276 the 2,000 infantrymen under Falconet and others were allocated 6 *diners* a day for their upkeep alone. The 40 infantrymen in Gil Martínez de Oblites' company, on the other hand, received 5 *sous* per day; ten times more.⁸⁷ The amount paid probably reflected the dangers of the service, the quality of the troops (whether they were part timers or *almogávares*), and also, perhaps, the prestige of their leader. It is essential to note that these military societies started at this stage to act as a paid or mercenary force; as such, they were to play a crucial role in the forthcoming Mediterranean campaigns.⁸⁸

In addition to their quantitative growth, these companies were increasingly recognised as autonomous military units during this period. Similarly, the identification between units and their commanders, *adalides* or *almocadenes*, by whose name they were identified, became ever closer. A column of 1,190 infantrymen led *in frontaria sarracenorum* by the previously mentioned Falconet was made up of eighteen companies of between 14 and 200 men, each commanded by a named chief (two in the case of the largest companies).⁸⁹ The considerable difference in size shows that these units had not been created "artificially," as in modern armies, but were instead groups of men associated under the command of a leader whose charisma and prestige undoubtedly played a part in the group's ability to attract members and even smaller units. It must not be considered strange that the army of *almogávares* that embarked in Peter III's fleet some years later for the Ifrīqiya campaign and the war following the Sicilian Vespers showed an identical organisational pattern; they were *grosso modo* the same men. Desclot's and Muntaner's chronicles show that incorporation to the royal host did not affect the cohesion of these companies, which remained apart from the

86 ACA Cancillería, reg. 23, f. 52v (1276); reg. 22, f. 45r (1276); 39, f. 221v, 222v (1277); reg. 40, f. 10r (1277). Soldevila, *Pere el Gran*, II, 95, 100–101.

87 ACA Cancillería, reg. 33, f. 123r (1276); reg. 19, f. 16v (1276).

88 Also, Castilian *golfinos* would serve as mercenaries for the different sides at war during the reign of Sancho IV (1284–1295): Mela and Sánchez, "Para el estudio," 200–201.

89 ACA Cancillería, reg. 23, f. 49v (1276).

aristocratic armed retinues.⁹⁰ The companies were of between 20 and 50 men and mustered around a prestigious chief. The accounts of Roger de Lloria's fleet between 1288 and 1292, indicate that the *almogávares* on board the ships were organised in *societates* of between 6 and 27 men under the command of *almocadenes*.⁹¹

In short, it could be said that the organizational pattern regulating the forces on which the Aragonese crown's Mediterranean campaigns in the late 13th century relied was a continuation at a larger scale of practices of military associationism already in operation during the "Saracens war" in the kingdom of Valencia. At the head of one of the eighteen companies under Falconet in 1276 we find a character called Bernat de Rocafort. It is impossible to be absolutely certain, but it seems likely that this is the same chief of *almogávares* who gained control over several castles in Calabria (ennobled as *miles*) and was appointed commander of the Catalan Company on the death of Roger de Flor, in 1305. If this identification is correct, we are facing a long *cursus honorum* carried out over thirty years and modestly begun as a young and little-known *almocadén* followed by a small company of barely 25 men in the mountains of Valencia, and also a suggestive example of the continuity just mentioned.

From frontier to empire

The proliferation of military societies, therefore, peaked in the last quarter of the 13th century. The critical situation caused by the uncontrolled multiplication of these groups prompted the reaction of the Hispanic monarchs, who combined repression with the taming of such forces for their own aims; this slowed down the process but did not stave it off completely. Thereafter, the experience accumulated in the constitution of partnerships for looting, conquest or mercenary employment reproduced itself in two different ways. One of them was spectacular but relatively short-lived: the Catalan Company. The other was less sensational but more constant and had, in the long term, more decisive effects: the raiding parties working along the frontier of Granada, the last redoubt of al-Andalus. It was here that the practices of military association were

90 In 1290 James of Aragón, King of Sicily, congratulated two *adalides* and their respective *societates* of *almocadenes* and *almogávares* for their conquests in Calabria: *Codice diplomatico dei re Aragonesi di Sicilia (1282–1355)*, ed. Giuseppe Lamantia (Palermo: Società Siciliana per la Storia Patria, 1918–56), I, docs. 206–207.

91 Desclot, ch. 84, 101; Muntaner ch. 70, 170; Mott, *Sea Power*, 161–163.

effectively preserved until the time was ripe to, as it were, transfer them from frontier to empire, to use Angus McKay's discerning expression.⁹²

A confidential report addressed to James II in 1305 confirmed Muntaner's account of the problems that could have been caused by the permanent presence in Sicily, after the Peace of Caltebellotta (1302) had been signed, of "a multitude of *almogávares*" with no occupation and prone to "violence, looting and robbery." Thus, the report supported Roger de Flor's initiative to turn these men into a force at the service of the Byzantine Emperor. The King of Sicily, Frederick, would have liked to keep at least some of them, but this could not be done against their will, and would have contravened all the "traditions of the *almogávares* from Hispania" (*secundum quod est de ritu seu more armugavarorum Hispanie*). In conclusion, it is clear that the companies had maintained their structure and their autonomous nature during the long Sicilian conflict. They were in this way able to prolong their existence through the Catalan Grand Company (i.e. a company of companies), acting first as mercenaries for Andronicus II and then as freebooters on their way from Thrace to Thessaly. The conquest of the Frankish Duchy of Athens in 1311 gave them sovereignty over the territory and the chance to collect taxes regularly, reducing their need for raiding. This situation, however, did not drive the company to disband. The corporate spirit of the company prevailed even after handing the dominion of the duchy to the princes of Sicily, as was necessary to secure political recognition, and when their vicars tried to enforce their authority (although David Jacoby prefers to use the expression "co-dominion" to describe the new situation).⁹³

We cannot therefore lose sight of the exceptional nature of the position achieved by this military society, the legal-political position of which was extremely ambiguous, as shown by the multiplicity of denominations used to refer to it. Enemies and rivals used short expressions — *Cathalani*, *Societas*, *Compagna* and *Colligationem* — often accompanied by derogatory terms, most particularly in Papal and Angevin documents

92 Angus MacKay, *Spain in the Middle Ages. From Frontier to Empire, 1000–1500* (London: Macmillan, 1977). I have not taken piracy and corsair naval actions into consideration, even though these were of significance in the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula from the last third of the 13th century. The considerable weight carried by the ship-owners in these enterprises makes it difficult to assess the real scope of partnership practices in this sort of operation.

93 *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català* [hereafter cited as *DOC*], ed. Antoni Rubió (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1947), doc. 15; Muntaner, ch. 199; Robert I. Burns, "The Catalan Company and the European Powers, 1305–1311," *Speculum* 29 (1954): 751–771; David Jacoby, "La 'Compagnie Catalane' et l'État Catalan de Grèce. Quelques aspects de leur histoire," *Journal des Savants* 3 (1966): 78–103.

(*nefandam, funesta, prava societas*).⁹⁴ In more formal contexts the company was referred to as *Societas/Compagna Cathalanorum, Societatis exercitus Catalanorum*, or *Magna Societate Catalanorum*.⁹⁵ These latter denominations deviated little from the expressions used by their protectors, especially the Sicilian crown, with two differences. First, the Sicilian chancellery replaced the demonym “Catalonian” with “Frankish,” less susceptible to offending the other identities also represented in the army, mostly Aragonese, although Catalan was still the main language in formal written communication. The second exception was the addition of the adjective “happy” to the name, for example in *Societas felicitis exercitus Francorum*.⁹⁶ Both distinctions were inspired by the company’s discourse of self-representation, with the qualification that the documents produced by the company’s own chancellery neither referred to the institution as “society” nor as “company” but as *Universitas*.⁹⁷ This term was used in the Catalan tradition to designate the legal dimension of a community of townsmen, and it was probably chosen in order to emphasise the corporate, lasting and honourable nature of the group.

The continuity of a body with these characteristics — *Universitas exercitus* — could not be sustained indefinitely without constant stress being laid on its military dimension. But the fact is that once the company was solidly in control of Attica and Central Greece, the offensive drive began to wear off. In the peace treaty signed with Venice (1321) the company relinquished the right to possess galleys or any other kind of oar-propelled ship, effectively renouncing maritime expeditions, strategically essential in the Aegean theatre. In addition, the evidence suggests that by 1340 the infantry fighting techniques which had yielded so much success for the *almogávares* had already been abandoned. In fact, from 1310 the term *almogávar* itself (*compagnam almugavarorum*) is completely absent from the company’s internal documents and almost totally so in external references.⁹⁸ The original military *universitas* tended to transfer its prerogatives to the few urban *universitates* created by “Frankish” citizens. It was these urban

94 *DOC*, docs. 31, 33, 86, 93, 94, 102, 105–107, 119, 122–123, 129–131, 136, 162, 165, 167, 173–174, 176, etc.

95 *DOC*, docs. 43, 48, 120, 164, 177, 182, 188–189, etc.

96 *DOC*, docs. 83–84, 88, 95, 103, 109, 116, etc.

97 *DOC*, doc. 53 (1312?): *Universitas exercitum Francorum in Romania partibus existentibus*; núms. 70, 71 (1314): *Universitas exercitus foelicitis Francorum*...

98 *DOC*, docs. 109 (1319), 116 (1321), 189 (1346), 46 (1310).

universitates — most particularly Athens — which ultimately negotiated the cession of sovereignty to the Aragonese crown in 1380.⁹⁹

Naturally, the Catalan Company's intervention in Greece was no novelty regarding either the provision of mercenary services (provided by groups lacking any social or political link with their employers); or recourse to indiscriminate predatory practices whenever payment failed. This kind of contingent with a large proportion of infantrymen is documented from at least the second half of the 12th century in the wars waged by Henry II Plantagenet in south-western France, and their use was condemned by the Third Lateran Council in 1179. We do not know whether these combatants were fully dedicated to war, or how they were organised.¹⁰⁰ It seems however unlikely that these troops had as much experience as the members of the Catalan Company with its complex and deeply-rooted military tradition. It is, on the other hand, plausible that the Company strongly influenced other mercenary groups which proliferated in Italy and France from the 1330s onwards. These groups reproduced the Catalan Company's model: "great companies," "free companies" or companies "of fortune" formed from the merging of smaller companies, which retained their own chiefs but were under a unified command.¹⁰¹

Paradoxically, however, the form of large scale military association inaugurated by the Catalan Grand Company was not reproduced in the Iberian Peninsula itself. As is well known, the free companies taking part in the 1351-69 wars (caused by the succession conflict in Castile, which also had repercussions in the crown of Aragon) were for the most part French in origin. In contrast, the existence of small societies of combatants acting at the frontier with the emirate of Granada — from Cádiz to Murcia and the southern reaches of the crown of Aragón (Orihuela) — lived on throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. The scale of this phenomenon had significantly decreased from the

99 David Jacoby, "L'état catalan en Grèce: société et institutions politiques," in *Els catalans a la Mediterrània oriental a l'Edat Mitjana*, ed. Maria T. Ferrer (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2003), 90-92; *DOC*, doc. 391.

100 John D. Hosler, "Revisiting Mercenaries under Henry Fitz Empress, 1167-1188," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men. The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 33-42; France, *Western Warfare*, 70-74.

101 Grillo, *Cavalieri*, 148-157; Kenneth Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries. Volume I: The Great Companies* (Oxford: Blackwell 2001), 2-6; Norman Housley, "The Mercenary Companies, the Papacy and the Crusades, 1356-1378," *Traditio* 38 (1982): 253-280. Among these companies "of fortune," the internal rules of the so-called Compagnia del Fiore are particularly well known. This was created in 1342 to serve the lord of Turin and was formed by Catalan and Aragonese troops (*sociorum de terris Cathalanis et Aragonis*). Their constitution and rules were carefully put down in writing: Gaudenzio Claretta, "Gli statuti della società militare subalpina del Fiore dell'anno 1342," *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 16 (1880-81): 651-673.

formidable boost of the years 1270-80 and, at this stage, the dimension of these groups and of those operating from the other side of the frontier (*almogávares moros*) were pretty much symmetrical. Such “micro-groups,” or “primary groups,” in the words of Manuel Rojas, continued to reproduce 13th century practices, with short incursions carried out by a small number of men (between ten and twenty) who could either be professional *almogávares* or simple townsmen acting as such on occasions.¹⁰² Also following traditional practice these bands often acted outside of the formal political framework, ignoring truces and auctioning captives along with the rest of their booty and outside the royal jurisdiction (for example, if they were Castilian, they would carry out the auction in the Kingdom of Valencia). Sometimes they fought with each other and even took Christian captives for sale in Granada, making themselves liable not only to moral sanctions as “children of perdition” but also to implacable earthly punishment.¹⁰³ This level of transgression suggests that its perpetrators had indisputably moved beyond the margins of the social order from which they came.

It is thus unsurprising that the ambiguity with which these groups were originally regarded by the political powers was still fully in place. This notwithstanding, frontier urban councils still used them profusely. First, the councils did not hesitate to support their low-intensity raiding activities as long as the booty was legally validated (*de buena guerra*) by public auction undertaken inside the towns and the part corresponding to the king or his beneficiary — between a fifth and a seventh — was duly handed over. Secondly, councils also paid these bands for security and intelligence services; retributions to motivate the defenders included bonuses for the heads of “Moors” killed during skirmishes.¹⁰⁴ The crown itself requested the cooperation of *almocadenes* and *almogávares* for sieges and other large-scale military operations. On these occasions their role was increasingly ancillary; they often played auxiliary roles particularly well suited to their specific skills, such as tracking.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, we must not forget

102 Manuel Rojas, *La frontera entre los reinos de Sevilla y Granada en el siglo XV (1390–1481)* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1995), 247–260; *Hechos del condestable don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo*, ed. Juan de M. Carriazo (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940), 278, 324–325.

103 Juan de M. Carriazo, *En la frontera de Granada* (Sevilla: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1971), 97–101; Maria T. Ferrer Mallol, *La frontera amb l’Islam en el segle XIV. Cristians i sarraïns al País Valencià* (Barcelona: CSIC, 1988), 429–430.

104 Rojas, *La frontera*, 268–269, 376; Manuel González Jiménez, “La frontera entre Andalucía y Granada: realidades bélicas, socio-económicas y culturales,” in *La incorporación de Granada a la corona de Castilla*, ed. Miguel A. Ladero (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1993), 116–8; Maria T. Ferrer Mallol, *Organització i defensa*, 259–263; Carriazo, *En la frontera de Granada*, 140–141, 213; *Hechos del condestable*, 442.

105 Juan Torres Fontes, “Los fronterizos murcianos en la Edad Media,” *Murgetana* 100 (1999): 15; Ferrer Mallol, *Organització i defensa*, 264–284.

that the frontier with Granada was the stage of two parallel wars: first, the permanent action of companies of *almogávares* operating — in the words of Henry IV's chronicler — without insignia, trumpets or tents, and the less constant activity of "powerful folk" (*gente poderosa*); that is, the high aristocracy in whose hands the Castilian crown had left the responsibility of looking after the frontier in the late 13th century.¹⁰⁶ These aristocrats would organise, especially in the 15th century, large expeditions, *cabalgadas* or *entradas*, into the territory of Granada, including not only their own armed retinues and ordinary paid men, but also groups of experienced *almogávares*. By this stage council militias had lost all initiative. Although at times they would eventually contribute with large numbers, they did so against their will, often contesting the figures they were ordered to submit. At the same time their military performance was far from satisfactory, despite organisational efforts and the enactment of rules imposing the maintenance of horses and equipment to townsmen above a certain rent (*cuantía*) and the frequent inspections (*alardes*).¹⁰⁷

At any rate, *cabalgada* specialists were still able to act independently in bands or companies organised for raiding; these groups were certainly audacious but their actions were increasingly regarded as marginal. Although they were considered necessary, political authority — *concejos*, frontier nobility and the crown — never ceased in trying to domesticate them through different means. The rank accorded to the *adalides* stands as a clear example of the determination to tame these irregular forces. The decreasing military importance of councils, already apparent in the late 13th century, and the reduction in the number of autonomous companies created unfavourable conditions for the prestige of these professionals. There were still *adalides* but their formal recognition was increasingly dependent on their subordination to the authorities hiring their services. There was a restricted body of royal *adalides* (*del número*), while others were appointed by the *concejos*, for example in Murcia, Jerez, Priego and Sevilla; the most remarkable case, however, is that of the *adalides* at the service of the frontier nobility, most of whom seem to have been *tornadizos* (convert Muslim deserters).¹⁰⁸ The

106 Alonso de Palencia, cited by González Jiménez, "La frontera," 113. This duality is clearly shown in one passage from the *Hechos del condestable*, 450–453, 460 (1470–71).

107 Carriazo, *En la frontera de Granada*, 75, speaks of "mediocre military value;" Rafael Sánchez Saus, "Las milicias concejiles y su actuación exterior: Sevilla y la Guerra de Granada (1430-1439)," *En La España Medieval* 10 (1987): 393–418; Manuel González Jiménez, "Las milicias concejiles andaluzas (siglos XIII-XV)," in *La organización militar en los siglos XV y XVI* (Sevilla: Catedra General Castaños, 1993), 231–237.

108 Rojas, *La frontera*, 236–244; Juan Torres Fontes, "El adalid en la frontera de Granada," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 15 (1985): 352–357, 362–365.

narratives composed to praise the deeds of personages such as *condestable* Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, governor of Jaén (1458-1471) and Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cádiz (1462-1489), among others, are full of references to this *adalides*. In these two chronicles the *adalides* are shown in command of the *mesnadas* and forces mustered by the aristocrat, who is portrayed as the *adalid*'s lord. These field commanders are said to be amply experienced but not always effective or reliable. Many among them are labelled as renegades and men of fickle loyalties, including conversions to Islam. As shown by these chronicles the role of *adalides* is closer to that of guides or rangers, instead of the respected commanders of the past.¹⁰⁹ We do not know if, or how, they maintained the judicial powers that they had exercised in the 13th century. At any rate, the loss of autonomy and of corporate homogeneity must have accelerated the deterioration of their professional standing. This process must have affected the entire group of raiding specialists, and it is therefore not surprising that from the late 14th century the term *almogávar* was at times replaced by expressions such as “trackers” or “rangers” (*fieles del rastro, hombres del campo*).¹¹⁰

It must also be taken into account that during the second half of the 15th century the raids, which previously had been exclusively launched against Granada, began targeting a different frontier: the western Maghreb coastline.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, the evidence (narrative or archival) available for this phenomenon is apparently not very abundant, and has therefore not been studied in depth. The better known, and most often quoted, piece of evidence is the so-called *Memorial de la guerra de allende*, written by an unnamed *adalid* around 1505 in order to offer King Ferdinand advice on the organisation of major military expeditions in the region.¹¹² According to this account, the groups of raiders divided areas of action on the basis of geographic proximity: men from the towns in the Gulf of Cádiz (Jerez, Puerto de Santa María, Cádiz, Sanlúcar, Duchy of Medina Sidonia) sacked the Atlantic coast between Larache and Wādī Šibka (*Berbería de Poniente*); while raiders from the Kingdom of Murcia (Cartagena and

109 *Hechos del condestable*, 86–92, 107–109, 137–146, 188–189, 417–418, 443–447; 454, 458–460, 464–467; *Historia de los hechos del marqués de Cádiz*, ed. Juan L. Carriazo (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2003), 185, 195–200, 205, 215–224, 234, 258, 265, 290; Torres Fontes, “El adalid,” 351, about an *adalid* from Lorca that “turned Moor.”

110 Torres Fontes, “Los fronterizos,” 13–16.

111 Although used as a precedent, the incursion of the Castilian knight Pedro Niño in the coast of Tunisia and Oran (1404) was not organised as a company of *cabalgada*, but as a corsair operation: Maria T. Ferrer Mallol, “Els corsaris castellans i la campanya de Pero Niño al Mediterrani. Documents sobre ‘El Victorial,’” *Anuario de estudios medievales* 5 (1968): 298–301.

112 Published by Marcos Jiménez de la Espada, “La guerra del moro a fines del siglo XV,” *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 25 (1894): 171–181. Antonio Rumeu de Armas, *España en el África atlántica* (Madrid: CSIC, 1956), 153, dated the document wrongly to 1494.

Lorca, in particular) focused on the Mediterranean coast between Béjaïa and Tétouan (*Berbería de Levante*). All of them, says the anonymous author, “have the custom of going to Africa and plundering the land,” and therefore knew the coast well. The fruit of their depredations, mainly captives — of which hundreds were taken on each raid — was a considerable source of wealth. According to the public accounts, the profit gained by the city of Cádiz from African raids in 1485 doubled the amount collected in ordinary city rents.¹¹³

In contrast with the “micro-bands” operating in Granada the new maritime frontier required expeditions of a certain scale, with naval crews, horses for exploration and fast movement, and more numerous troops. For example, the expeditions organised by the townsmen of Jerez and other settlements in the Bay of Cádiz against the Atlantic coast of the Maghreb between 1461 and 1498 mobilised around 500 men.¹¹⁴ The anonymous memorandum mentions up to 700 infantrymen and 50 mounted knights. Embarking and equipping these expeditions was a costly endeavour, which encouraged the participation of financing partners; naturally, after equipping ships and men these partners exercised strict control over the enterprises, sometimes even acting as captains. This was especially common in the raids launched from the Canaries. The booty, however, was still shared according to the traditional associative principles “*fuero y uso de España*” (three parts for the knight, two and a half for the seaman, two for harquebus-men, one and a half for the crossbowmen, and one for the infantrymen); these expeditions did not hire paid men with a fixed remuneration. The financial and military direction of these operations invariably fell to noblemen. For this reason, Canarian *cabalgadas* prior to the intervention of the crown (1477) have been labelled as *señoriales*. They were in any other respect coherent with the *modus operandi* of the *compañías de conquista* deployed for the capture of the minor islands in the archipelago. Incursions organised from the Peninsula were similar, although they were generally under the command of a member of the lower urban aristocracy, as suggested by the anonymous *adalid* in his reference to the company under Francisco Estopiñán, a citizen of Cádiz and member of a noble but only modestly wealthy family from Jerez. This same family also produced Pedro Estopiñán, who conquered Melilla (1497) while serving the Dukes of Medina Sidonia

113 Eduardo Aznar, “Corso y piratería en las relaciones entre Castilla y Marruecos en la baja Edad Media,” *En la España Medieval* 20 (1997): 413–415. A significant proportion of the profits, the royal fifth, had to be handed over to the king, the city or the shipowners.

114 Aznar, “Corso y piratería,” 416–417.

and Pedro Estopiñán Cabeza de Vaca, son of the former and co-explorer of the Río de la Plata along with his famous cousin Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.¹¹⁵

Notably, in the organisation of expeditions against the coast of the Maghreb, urban knights seem to have regained some of their past importance. It seems that the raids launched against Larache and Azemmour were convened on the initiative of the knights from the city of Jerez.¹¹⁶ The willingness of these men was such that the 1505 memorandum expresses the opinion that the royal expedition would not need to spend any money on hiring knights for a salary because the number of volunteers would fill all available places, as it happens “every time a *cabalgada* is announced.” In the opinion of this anonymous author the reasons are obvious: the knights and *adalides* “who were the terror of the African coast” participated in these expeditions because they had “no rents.” It seems that the overabundance of urban aristocrats, a costly legacy of the times of the frontier in Andalusian cities, could only be sustained by the arrival of external wealth through raiding. Naturally, due to their increasingly critical economic position the members of this impoverished group were not only willing to seek new places to raid, farther and farther away and therefore more dangerous, but also to put themselves under the command of financing partners from wealthier families of their own class.

Indeed, in regions like Andalusia and Murcia the lower urban aristocracy had never truly abandoned the frontier, in the defence of which they had always played a determinant role, through institutions such as the *caballería de cuantía*, and through taking part in hosts and major operations launched by the king or on the king’s orders. Now we witness the “return” of urban knights to autonomous companies and *cabalgadas*. In this context the role played by specialists — *adalides*, *almocadenes* and *almogávares* — in the raids continued with their progressive decline. In a letter with recommendations for the conquest of Oran, dated to 1509, Hernán Pérez del Pulgar makes a detailed examination of the abilities and skills of *adalides*, also suggesting the marginal nature of these characters and their scarcity. The *adalides* known to be active during the late 15th century were under the orders of noble houses or were Muslim converts; often they were both. Some reached the New World (the list of citizens of Panama includes an *adalid*) but the term soon disappeared. Obviously, the bands of

115 Eduardo Aznar, “Exploración y colonización en la configuración de la Europa Atlántica,” *Historia, instituciones, documentos* 35 (2008): 53–54; Aznar, “Corso y piratería,” 415; Hipólito Sancho de Sopranis, *El comendador Pedro de Estopiñán, conquistador de Melilla* (Madrid: CSIC, 1953).

116 Rumeu de Armas, *España en el África*, 152–153.

conquistadores used experienced guides, but only rarely (the case of the so-called *baquianos* in Tierra Firme for instance) were these in command of the expeditions or acting as charismatic leaders. Regarding *almogávares* from rank and file the aforementioned letter indicates their usefulness (*buenos almogávares a pie y a caballo*) but only as auxiliary forces for exploration. In addition, it seems to imply that they were already hard to come by. According to the letter, if looked for in earnest they could be found, “although broken”; that is, undisciplined and bent to evil practices.¹¹⁷

The important idea, in any case, is that the *cabalgada* and the *compañía* were reproduced on the other side of the ocean. There, in fact, particularly favourable conditions ensued, resulting in the amplification of the phenomenon which soon became the main drive of the Spanish expansion in America. The changes were, as a matter of fact, smaller than is generally assumed, and were mostly due to the need to adapt well-rehearsed practices to the vast and unknown field of operations now unfolding. It is true that the term *cabalgada* disappeared. It was normally replaced by *entrada*, with which it coexisted for several decades in America. It must be pointed out, however, that this substitution had already started in some texts dating to the reign of Alfonso X in the 13th century and that by the second half of the 15th century the term *entrada* is shown increasing preference in the chronicles recording the actions in Granada. The change seems to be a logical one if the original connotations of the word *cabalgada* are taken into consideration, especially with regard to the fact that the formal aim was limited to movable booty. Much stress has been laid on this point, causing an overemphasis on the differences between medieval expeditions and the conquest of the New World, where enterprises tried, as far as it was possible, to explore every possibility for profit offered by the vastness of the newly “discovered” lands, including the capture of slaves, *rescates* (asymmetrical exchanges with the natives), conquest and colonisation. On the other hand, we must not forget that the medieval *cabalgada* had not renounced blindly to the achievement of bigger targets when they made themselves available. The widespread charter of Cuenca recognised and provisioned for the possibility of stable occupations resulting from raiding expeditions.¹¹⁸

On the other hand, short-range expeditions carried out by just a few men did not cease at all, and in fact played a decisive role in areas such as Tierra Firme, where the

117 Carriazo, *En la frontera*, 77, 82; Torres Fontes, “El adalid,” 365–366; Góngora, *Los grupos*, 14, 35, 95; Mena, *El oro del Darién*, 223.

118 FC 31.5.

colonists lacked the income offered by the rents paid elsewhere by sedentary and populous native groups. Reflecting the tone of 12th century texts — the century in which all this began — the chronicler González de Oviedo sarcastically qualified the colonists that Bartolomé de Las Casas tried to settle there as peaceful farmers (in exchange for the unlikely promise of turning them into nobles as “golden spurs knights”) rapidly drifting into assaulting the natives, as *míletes pardos*. In reality, no such exceptional circumstances were necessary. Towards 1524, after the conquest of the very rich and populous Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and once Cortés had gone, those *conquistadores* that were unhappy after the distribution of prizes would “get together, fifteen or twenty of them and go around the villages, taking women by force and robbing blankets and chickens, *as though they were in Moorish lands*.” As though they were in Valencia in 1238, we might add. The *Brevísima relación* of Las Casas could be considered to some extent a compendium of actions carried out by that sort of band.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

It is clear that the forms of organisation adopted and the ends pursued by the *entradas* were in the New World more varied than in the Iberian frontier, although it is also true that this transformation had already started in the Peninsula in the mid-13th century, when the companies of combatants began to act as conquering force and as instruments of colonisation, not to mention their employment as mercenaries. Organisational flexibility would also be an unmistakeable feature of the companies acting during the 15th century in the Canaries and the Maghreb. The organisation of bands fully made of partners (regardless of the specific proportions contributed to by each member) was also imported into the Indies but its importance dwindled before the growing presence of salaried men (who were paid fixed wages) or the participation of capitalists partners in the companies, such as rich captains, shipowners, merchants and moneylenders authorised to do so by a royal permit or *capitulación*.¹²⁰ It must be stressed, however, that the changes occurring in America did not substantially alter the two pillars on which the activity of autonomous companies had rested since the 12th century; first, the military association, on the basis of the proportional distribution of profit (regardless of the nature of said profit and of the exact conditions set forth in each agreement), as a

119 Barceló, “Loquella Barbarica (V),” 92–98; Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, ed. Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María (Barcelona: Planeta, 1992), ch. 162.

120 Mena, *El oro del Darién*, 221–2, 239–244.

profit-seeking and at the same time conquering endeavour; and second, the role played by urban communities as centre and base of these forms of military association.

Half a century ago Charles Verlinden suggested that the “modern” colonisation of America had been made possible by the reproduction of associative institutional models developed in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula in the previous centuries (first in the Mediterranean and latterly in the eastern Atlantic). He was referring to companies of a commercial and a colonial nature and to urban communities, closely connected with military associations and which, according to him, were based on similar principles. This author did not take the analysis further, although he must be given his due credit for drawing this essential link. Indeed, companies of freebooters could only form and operate in the environment offered by communities of inhabitants. Urban communities presented all the necessary conditions for the organisation of these groups: a social network, rich citizens willing to invest, a legal framework and a market where the booty could be made legal merchandise (through the payment of royal dues) and transformed into coin (by public auction). Everything was there. The correspondence between urban communities and autonomous military companies was not unidirectional, because the latter could also evolve into the former. It happened in Catalan-Aragonese Greece and also, on a larger scale, in America. Verlinden’s comparison of the internal agreements regulating the operation of the Catalan Company and the measures put into practice to control their Greek dominions with the methods implemented two centuries later by the *conquistadores* in Mexico and Peru is, in this regard, not gratuitous.¹²¹

To a degree, Verlinden anticipated, though perhaps with less precision, Robert Bartlett’s thesis, according to which Medieval Latin Christendom had expanded by the reproduction or replication of elemental, codified institutional units.¹²² One of the key examples set forth in Bartlett’s theory referred to the legally autonomous community of townsmen, even if this author had not fully realised how virulent these dynamics of *cell*

121 Reedited essay by Charles Verlinden, *The Beginnings of Modern Colonization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 3–32. In an allusion to the origins of the city of Coro (Venezuela) (c.1533) Góngora, *Los grupos*, 64–66, suggests that “the band of conquerors has taken a new shape as city council, and is duly represented in the *cabildo*.” This author highlights what he calls “a growing lack of distinction between the city and the band of *conquistadores*,” as shown by the custom of distributing the booty also among the citizens that remained whilst others were out on an expedition. This was, incidentally, also observed in the charter of Cuenca (FC 30.2).

122 I have supported this idea elsewhere: Josep Torró, “Colonizaciones y colonialismo medievales. La experiencia catalano-aragonesa y su contexto,” in *De Tartessos a Manila. Siete estudios coloniales y poscoloniales*, eds. Glòria Cano and Ana Delgado (Valencia: PUV, 2008), 91–93.

replication had become in the Iberian frontier.¹²³ The increasingly sophisticated methods put into practice for the distribution of profit (*ganancia*) in the Iberian Peninsula from the 12th century onwards constituted the technical basis for the allocation of the gains, including real estate, following the great conquests of the 13th century (*repartimientos*), the scale of which could not have been handled by the royal administration without the support of urban councils (*concejos, universitats*) and their experts. These actions resulted in the creation of new communities which simply replicated the formula by constituting councils and consequently militias and autonomous companies eager to bring the war across the new frontier.¹²⁴ In this regard, the imbalance between the distribution of real estate and rights of access to the native workforce (which were uneven and limited), and the potentially lucrative returns of predatory activities played a crucial role. As long as the second factor compensated the first, the dynamics proceeded unchanged.

Incidentally, this was not so in the opposite case. The capture of sedentary alien populations and the imposition of a tax system upon them deactivated the reproduction of the Catalan Company as a society of freebooters. In America the same mechanism ensued in zones with a consolidated Spanish presence, especially in *encomiendas* and *haciendas* — with *buenos indios* — granted to *conquistadores*. This did not stop the arrival of new groups of colonists attracted by the perspective of *ganancia*, “lazy people” in the words of Las Casas, who threatened to “exhaust” and “destroy the Spanish *haciendas* in a region or a province.”¹²⁵ This was the same argument used two centuries earlier for the removal of the *almogávares* from Sicily, and similar measures were now taken, such as the organisation of expeditions to remote places like El Dorado (1560), an enterprise aimed at keeping poor or discontent troops away from Peru, where they could be a source of trouble. This famous episode is another reminder of how easily these autonomous companies could turn into marginal and unwanted bands of desperados. This had already happened at the frontier with Granada. Before reaching these point-of-no-return extremes, however, the mechanism had worked for long enough to be the vehicle for major territorial gains.

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