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# South of the Pyrenees: kings, magnates and political bargaining in twelfth-century Spain

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## Abstract

The twelfth century has been regarded as a milestone for changes at almost all levels of medieval society. Some scholars consider it a starting point to trace back the origin of more centralised political structures with power over a specific territory: the feudal kingdoms. This paper tries to describe how these changes occurred in the Iberian kingdoms. It presents the co-existence of powerful kings and strong nobilities during the twelfth century. It analyses the baronial rebellions against the kings and the peace treaties signed by the monarchs against them. One central aspect of these struggles was the definition of upper decision-making levels above the nobility which were attained through a dynamic of war and pacts made between enemy courts. The paper attempts to demonstrate the long-term outcome in favour of royal power and concludes that kings succeeded in setting themselves above the nobility and becoming centres of political networks by an increasing spiral of treaties negotiated with their hostile equals. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Medieval Spain; Politics; Kingship; Peace treaties; Warfare; Friendship

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## 1. The European framework

The organisation and emergence of the feudal monarchies in Western Europe could be considered as part of a larger debate about ‘the formation of States in Western Europe’. That long-term historical process has been portrayed in very different ways by different historiographical schools. For example, liberal and institutional historians focus their attention primarily on the development of bureaucracies and cen-

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tral apparatus of government.<sup>1</sup> Classical sociologists refer rather to the shifting from personal to impersonal ties, or to the emergence of corporations, associations, and formal institutional relations. Some of them emphasise the shifting of the balance of power from the centrifugal-feudal to the centripetal-state level.<sup>2</sup> More recent historical sociologists look at how the ‘state’ transcended the ‘local political power-base’ of the nobility and expropriated fiscal, military, judicial, legislative and executive powers.<sup>3</sup> Marxist historians tend to explain the state formation as the outcome of a ‘process of political accumulation’, the re-organisation of the nobility to preserve their class position by improving their mechanism of political domination – in other words, as an exchange of lordly personal power for more efficient coercion through centralised state taxes.<sup>4</sup>

The twelfth century has been traditionally regarded as a milestone for changes at almost all levels of medieval society. Despite the discomfort of many early and late medievalists who fairly argue that nothing really changed before or after ‘the year 1100’, the twelfth century is considered by some as a starting point to trace back the origin of the emergence of more centralised political structures with power over a specific territory. In my opinion there were important previous attempts to create territorial monarchies, but nothing comparable to the different scenarios that Europe presented in 1075 and in 1215. By just a quick glance, we can see the formation of the larger units of the thirteenth century, a map that we almost recognise as today’s, emerging from the odd landscape of varied and fragmented political units of the late eleventh century.

From the Gregorian Reform to the Fourth Lateran Council (c. 1075–1215), Western Europe experienced a steady process of territorial convergence under the power of higher political authorities. These authorities were basically the kings. The process implied a first step in the major re-accommodation of the balance of power between the aristocracy and the kings; a profound bargaining process – that involved war and diplomacy – inside the ruling groups which ended up with a relative imposition of some segments over others. As a consequence, larger political and territorial structures appeared. Such a portrait does not imply, by any means, that the new structures were a step forward towards a more ‘rational’ or ‘efficient’ politics, or a steady and unstoppable process toward the ‘nation-state’. It did not mean either that in the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state* (Princeton, 1970); Luis García de Valdeavellano, *El feudalismo hispánico y otros estudios de historia medieval* (Barcelona, 1981); *Génesis medieval del estado moderno: Castilla y Navarra (1250–1370)*, ed. Adeline Rucquoi (Valladolid, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Norbert Elias, *The civilising process: the history of manners, and state formation and civilization* (1939, Eng. tr. Oxford 1994); Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organisation* (1947, Eng. tr. New York 1964); Otto Hintze, *The historical essays of Otto Hintze* ed. F. Gilbert (Oxford, 1975), 314–17; Otto Gierke, *Political theories of the middle ages*, trans. F.W. Maitland (Bristol, 1996), 61–7.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Mann, *The sources of social power* (Cambridge, 1986), vol. I; *Bringing the State back in*, ed. P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge, 1985); Linda Weiss and John M. Hobson, *States and economic development. A comparative historical analysis* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Perry Anderson, *Passage from antiquity to feudalism* (London, 1974); Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the absolute state* (London, 1974); *The Brenner debate: agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe*, ed. T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin (Cambridge, 1985).

cess the lordly power was undermined, rather that it was transformed. This paper tries to describe how these changes occurred in the Iberian kingdoms.

## 2. Medieval Iberia

Medieval Spain was not a ‘special case’ compared with other regions of Europe, or rather it was a ‘special case’ in the sense that all socio-political formations of the time were to a great extent different and particular.

The statement is not innocent and has been the origin of fierce debates in Spanish historiography in the attempt to define the particular Spanish *sonderweg*. The question, at the turn of the century, was whether feudalism in the Iberian peninsula was the product of the Spanish kingdoms’ internal development or whether it was imported from north of the Pyrenees. The debate concerned Castile and Leon, totally disregarding the specificity of Catalonia. We are not interested in these discussions for this paper, except to remind the reader that Castile was presented either as a society of free peasant-warriors under the authority of almighty kings, leaders of their hosts, and as a reaction some decades after, as one with a distinctive feudal structure at all levels since the times of the Visigoths.<sup>5</sup>

In the early eighties of the last century, more balanced and subtle approaches were developed. Castile, Leon, Aragon and Catalonia were presented as different and peculiar regions. For example, there always were kings in Castile and Leon, but not in Catalonia. In Castile and Leon, serfdom was not fully developed in regions south of the Duero River, but distinctive fragmentation of power and personal dependency were powerfully at work. As well as kingdoms, there were also big princedoms such as the County of Albarracín, and ecclesiastic estates such as the domains of the monastery of Sahagún. Equally, all kings directed war, but so did major nobles (occasionally allied to the Muslims), and so did the ‘concejos’ (frontier towns). Kings were strong but they granted their lords important territorial, political and jurisdic-

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<sup>5</sup> Traditional Spanish historiography, following the outstanding Spanish medievalist, Sánchez Albornoz, argued that processes of feudalisation undergone by Visigothic society were checked by the Muslim invasion and were unknown in Castilian society until French influence affected the region at the end of the eleventh century. The political picture was as follows: (1) Castile was a land of freemen where, owing to the Reconquest, peasants generally enjoyed favourable tenancy conditions; there was spare land, therefore lords never sought to subject the population. Their political economy was based on war and booty which in turn prevented internal political conflicts. Feudalism was imported in the twelfth century through the Cluniac reform, the Camino de Santiago, and the Crusades; (2) kings played a central role in Spanish politics and they were respected, except rarely, when, during minorities or periods of civil war, the nobility rebelled (Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico* (Madrid, 1977)). Since the 1970s and the historiographical turning point marked by Barbero and Vigil’s book about the origins of feudalism in the Iberian Peninsula (*La formación del feudalismo en la península Ibérica* (Barcelona, 1978)), social historians have argued that Spain started its own way towards feudalism during the late Roman empire, and became completely feudalised with the Visigoths. This approach undermined the idea of the Iberian peninsula as a non-feudal region in terms of economy and society, but has yet to affect the political interpretation.

tional privileges. Thus, powerful kings co-existed with long periods of autonomous nobility.<sup>6</sup>

In the long and non-linear process of the formation of the Iberian monarchies, the twelfth century appears as a period of subtle transformations. It presents three major features: constant war among Christians; development of noble lineages and policies of marriage between families from distant regions; and the changing service of the major lords to different kings.

In an apparent contradiction, the twelfth century in Spain happened to be a time of civil wars, urban uprisings, and powerful nobility, and simultaneously a time when monarchical government laid the foundations for future developments. Without doubt, the nobility took its chances during this century to control castles, land and men, and to take over resources of power. However, kings – in what at first glance might well be regarded as an increasing process of competition between monarchies – were setting in motion identical mechanisms to their Western European partners to consolidate their position over other groups.<sup>7</sup> Kings agreed among themselves in order to constrain the nobility's strategies. Hence, although the strength and vitality of the regional noble families should not be ignored, Iberian monarchs managed to take the upper hand through a combination of war and treaties with other kings. They became the centre of wide networks of allies and armies, the representatives of the only possible order. Their power would be of a rather different nature compared to the family organisation and personal relations of the nobility.

This paper presents the changes in the co-existence of increasingly powerful kings and rising nobilities during the twelfth century. It has three parts. In the first I will review some basic political events that occurred during the century. In the second part, working primarily on the chronicles, I will analyse the baronial rebellions against the kings. In the third part, referring to the peace treaties, I will illustrate the long-term outcome in favour of royal power.

### 3. A brief review of the twelfth century

The period opened, at the turn of the eleventh century, with the increasing contact between regions beyond the Pyrenees and the Spanish kingdoms: the pilgrim route

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<sup>6</sup> The changes of Spanish historiography in the last 25 years are barely known to most European and American medievalists, except for the specialists in Spanish history. Some seminal works about current perspectives on feudalism in the central middle ages are: Reyna Pastor, *Resistencias y luchas campesinas en la época del crecimiento y consolidación de la formación feudal Castilla y León, ss.X–XIII* (Madrid, 1980); Pascual Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos Occidental: poblamiento, poder y comunidad del siglo X al XIII* (Valladolid, 1985); Carlos Estepa Díez, 'Formación y consolidación del feudalismo en Castilla y León', *En torno al feudalismo hispánico* (León, 1989), 157–256; Jose María Monsalvo Antón, 'La sociedad política en los concejos castellanos de la Meseta durante la época del regimiento medieval', *Concejos y ciudades en la edad media* (León, 1990), 359–413; Ignacio Alvarez Borge, *Poder y relaciones sociales en Castilla. Los territorios entre el Arlanzón y el Duero en los siglos X al XIV* (Valladolid, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Esther Pascua, *Guerra y pacto en el siglo XII* (Madrid, 1996) and 'Pacts among equals: an approach to twelfth-century treaties', *Paper for the 69th Anglo-American Conference, 2000* (forthcoming).

to Santiago de Compostela; the marriages of Alfonso VI to various Burgundian princesses; the settlement of two Burgundian princes in Leon and Portugal by Alfonso VI (Raymond and Henry of Burgundy); the first attempts of the Catalan counts and the Aragonese kings to exert their influence over the French Midi; and the royal welcome of Cluny and Gregorian Reform (between 1070 and 1080, the Roman rite replaced the Mozarabic one).

Twelfth-century Christian Spain could be called the period of ‘Christian taifas’ as a comparison with the contemporary ‘Muslim taifas’. The northern part of the Peninsula experienced a continuous division and merging of territories, wars and contending royal candidates, which indicate deep transformations within that society. Portugal, Galicia, Asturias, Leon, Castile, Aragon, Navarre, Albarracín, Catalonia and the Pyrenees counties of Pallars, Urgel, and Cerdaña were virtually independent regions.

The internal problems of the different political units reached a crowning point when faced with the two Berber waves which took control of the south of the peninsula: the Almoravids (c. 1085–1135) and the Almohads (c. 1146–1220). As a consequence, after the stability reached during the reign of Alfonso VI (1062–1109), almost all the kingdoms were involved in a war. From 1109 to 1126 the throne of Castile-Leon was disputed by three candidates: Urraca of Castile, her son Alfonso Raimúndez and his Galician followers, and Alfonso I, king of Aragon.

Throughout the century, a continuous partition and union of realms occurred: Castile and Leon merged under Alfonso VII (1126–1157); Portugal moved away from Castile-Leon in the decade of the 1140s and Navarre from Aragon in 1134. Aragon and Catalonia merged in 1137, while Castile and Leon split up again in 1157. The war between Portugal and Leon, both in their northern Galician frontiers and in the areas of expansion of the Extremadura, was constant. Likewise Leon and Castile struggled from 1162 to 1165 for what is called the ‘*Infantado*’ of Tierra de Campos (quasi-independent land in the frontier along the Cea River usually held by the single sister or daughter of the king). There was no war between Castile and Aragon, the two biggest powers in the Peninsula, interested in the conquest of Navarre, its satellite the county of Albarracín, and Muslim territories.

From this short summary it can be easily deduced that Christian kings did not brandish an almighty authority versus a tame nobility. Historians have often taken for granted the strength on royal power in Castile on the basis of the power of early medieval chieftains of the Cantabrian and Navarrese mountains or the late medieval monarchies of Castile and Aragon. When looking at the twelfth century we are dealing with a period of great uncertainty in terms of the political outcome. Spanish twelfth-century chronicles depict in full detail all the problems that kings had to contend with to make their titles effective.

#### **4. Baronial rebellions**

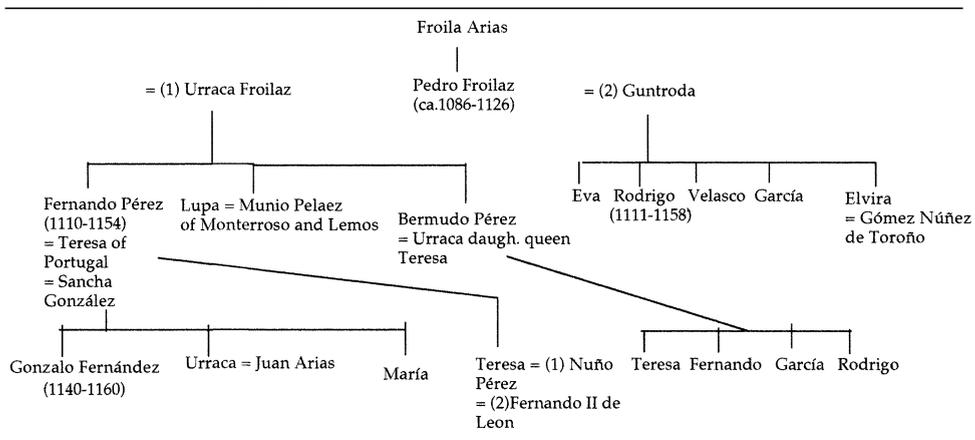
It is difficult to make general statements about Iberian nobility with the data and the regional studies available at the moment. Nevertheless, Iberian aristocracies seem

to have been more locally based, if compared to their French or English counterparts, at the turn of the eleventh century. It was precisely at that point that steady families and lineages and trans-regional marriages began. As we will see later, these emerging households held similar strategies: to diversify the services of family members between various kings, change fidelities according to the political situation, and gain control over the castles at the frontiers of the Christian kingdoms. The phenomenon of lords passing from one kingdom to another and serving different kings was paramount, becoming the most prominent feature of the twelfth-century aristocracy. The pattern is similar to elsewhere in Europe, so it would be interesting to look at it in some detail with a few examples.

The *Historia Compostelana*, one of the three major chronicles of the first half of the twelfth century, provides a magnificent example of noble rebellion.<sup>8</sup> Sectors of the most prominent Galician family, the Traba, after supporting their own candidate for an independent Galicia in the figure of Alfonso Raimúndez, the son of Queen Urraca, got involved in the political problems of the southern region of Portugal (Table 1). Some of the descendants of Count Pedro Froilaz (c. 1086–1126), such as his eldest son, Fernando Pérez (c. 1110–1154), and one of his brothers, Bermudo, moved to the *terra Portugalensis* – at this time no more than a territory south of the Miño river (*finis Galleciae*) – which was under the authority of Teresa, another

Table 1

Lineage of the Traba family (Galicia). Note: the genealogical tables are not exhaustive and only the members mentioned in the paper are included



<sup>8</sup> *Historia Compostelana*, ed. Emma Falque Rey, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1988), vol. LXX. The other major works of the period are: *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1990), LXXI, 112–267; *Crónicas Anónimas de Sahagún*, ed. Antonio Ubieta Arteta (Zaragoza, 1987). The reliability of the latter is put in question by many historians because the manuscripts, written in the vernacular, come from 1656.

daughter of Alfonso VI.<sup>9</sup> Fernando de Traba became the partner of Teresa (widow of Henry of Burgundy), and his brother Bermudo married her daughter, Urraca. The *Historia Compostelana* talks about a ‘Galician party’ around the countess, pursuing claims against the king of Leon-Castile, since 1126 Alfonso VII, their former ally. The Portuguese families who heavily disliked these newcomers, gathered together around the figures of Teresa’s son and future heir, Alfonso of Portugal, and the bishop of Braga.<sup>10</sup>

From 1121 to 1128, the Traba controlled castles and power below the Miño river. But even after the son of Teresa and the local nobility who followed him defeated the so-called ‘Galician party’, they were not expelled from the region. Fernando Pérez de Traba was still lord of Coimbra in 1131, his brother Bermudo had fundamental power in La Beira, despite their being outside the court. Ultimately, after their rebellion at Seia it seems that they were expelled from the kingdom, since Bermudo was captured in the battle of Valdézvez (1141), fighting on Alfonso VII’s side, and in 1132–33, Fernando, with Rodrigo Vela (c. 1092–1144), fought the new Portuguese lord in La Limia and Toroño. In contrast, Rodrigo Pérez de Traba (1111–1158), step-brother of Fernando and Bermudo, who held important fortresses in the frontier of Galicia and Portugal, and his brother-in-law, Gómez Núñez de Toroño, appear to have supported Alfonso I of Portugal, as they witnessed his documents from 1137.<sup>11</sup>

This was the typical ‘double play’ of frontier lords, splitting their allegiances between rival kings or lords. It is also probable that these big names who witnessed royal charters were only the tip of the iceberg, since their movements in between kingdoms may well have been accompanied by that of a lower dependent nobility of knights, vassals and relatives.

We have another important source for the period: the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* (the Chronicle of Alfonso VII the Emperor, king of Castile and Leon from 1126 to 1157). It tells us of some rebel Castilian aristocrats who, between 1126 and 1134, openly supported the king of Aragon, the main Castilian enemy. Many of them did not recognise Alfonso VII after the death of Queen Urraca. When Alfonso VII travelled through villages and the main towns to receive the pledge of fidelity of the local lords, the chronicle shows the dithering of the major magnates, waiting

<sup>9</sup> The Traba brothers were connected to other ascendant families, the Pelaez and Bermúdez (Lupa Pérez de Traba married Munio Pelaez, tenant of Monterroso y Lemos, c. 1105–1142; her step-sister, Elvira, married Gómez Núñez de Toroño; Eldara Pérez married Arias Pérez, a knight from a more humble origin). They all were major supporters of Alfonso Raimúndez in the war against his mother (Simon Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century Leon and Castile* (Cambridge, 1997), 28–30 and 51; J. Barreiro Somoza, *El señorío de la Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela* (La Coruña, 1987), 387.

<sup>10</sup> Five ‘Portuguese’ families the Paio, Mendes, Moñiz, Nuñez and Soares, capitalised on the secession of Portugal through the see of Braga. Paio, the Bishop of Braga, belonged to the first of these families (J. Verissimo Serrao, *Historia de Portugal* (Lisboa, 1977–78), vol. 1, 82). Alfonso Enríquez knighted himself in the cathedral of Zamora in 1125 without the consent or the presence of Alfonso VII or Queen Urraca.

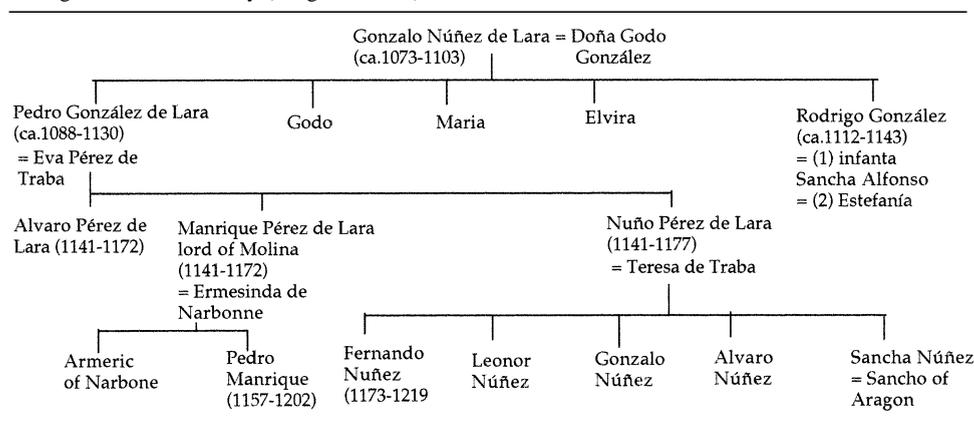
<sup>11</sup> Gómez Núñez perhaps revolted as well because he was deprived of his Portuguese possessions and replaced by Gonzalo de Sousa (A. Brandao, *Monarquia Lusitana* (Lisboa, 1974), vol. 3, 108–12).

for the reaction of the others. The tenants-in-chief of the towers of Leon, Rodrigo (c. 1110–1138) and Osorio Martínez (c. 1120–1160), members of the Leonese lineage of the Froilaz, hesitated to release the major towers to the new king.

The brothers González de Lara, Pedro (c. 1088–1130) who was married to Eva Pérez de Traba, and Rodrigo González (c. 1112–1143), who belonged to Urraca and Alfonso I's circles, never surrendered the new Castilian heir (Table 2). The anonymous chronicler considers them traitors and enemies of the king, and claims that the Lara brothers did not help in any of the royal campaigns against Aragon.<sup>12</sup> It is no coincidence that their strongholds were in the borders of Castile-Aragón (Lara, Valdavia), the last regions of the Aragonese power in Castile nor that they were related to Don Beltrán, the last Aragonese tenant of the fortress of Castrojeriz.<sup>13</sup> As these brothers were enemies of the closest noble to Alfonso VII, the count Suero Bermúdez, they did not submit to the king until January or March 1127. It is well known that Pedro de Lara participated in the siege of Bayona conducted by the Aragonese king in 1130. His brother, Rodrigo González, was expelled from the kingdom of Castile in the same year. Then he served the count of Catalonia (Ramón Berenguer IV), holding the castles of Huesca and Jaca in 1139–41, and later the new king, García Ramírez de Navarra.

In the first ten years of the rule of Alfonso VII, rebellions were quite common in the northern parts of the kingdom. In 1130, the Chronicle records the uprising of Pedro Díaz and Pelayo Froilaz in the tower of Valle and equally, in the same year, that of Jimeno Iñiguez. In 1132, Rodrigo Gómez and Gonzalo Pelaez were insurgent in Proaza, Buanga and Alba de Quirós. It took two full years to suffocate the

Table 2  
Lineage of the Lara family (Burgos, Castile)



<sup>12</sup> 'sed comes Petrus de Lara et frater eius comes Rodericus et gentes et amici illorum nouerint ire in auxilium regis Legionis' (*Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, 6–10).

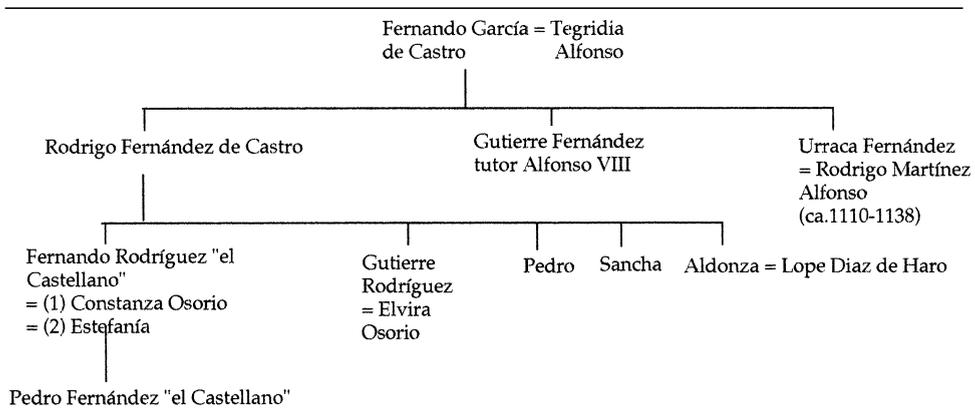
<sup>13</sup> Count Bertran of Risnel had married Count Pedro and Queen Urraca's bastard daughter Elvira (Barton, *The aristocracy*, 113).

rebellion. In 1134, Gonzalo Pelaez passed to Portugal and helped Alfonso Henríquez to plan an attack against the Galician and Asturian coasts.<sup>14</sup>

It seems safe to say that the arrival of Alfonso VII on the throne and the organisation of his court provoked a recomposition within the nobility. It also seems clear that these magnates invariably looked for protection and a platform for action in other kingdoms. This is the case of Don Ladrón, a powerful lord in the Navarrese–Castilian frontier, who held Alava, Haro and Momacastro. He was captured by Alfonso VII in 1137, became his vassal and fought against his own king, García Ramírez. In 1143, he appeared again in Navarrese documents as *comes Alavensium*, but he kept on witnessing documents of Sancho III, King of Castile. Don Ladrón's son, Vela Ladrón, and other prominent lords of Navarre, Marcos de Rada and Oxaba de Navarre, passed to the service of the Castilian king.<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to notice the relationship between inter-noble marriages and recurrent rebellions. One of the emerging families of the Castilian Extremadura was the Castro (Table 3). They connected with the Froilaz of Leon in a double marriage: Fernando García married Tegridia Alfonso, and Rodrigo Martínez married Urraca Fernández de Castro. It is no accident that during the war against the Lara and the

Table 3  
Lineage of the Castro family (Extremadura, Castile)



<sup>14</sup> 'et rex Portugalensis suscepit eum cum magno honore et promisit ei magnos honores: fiduciam enim habebat faciendi bellum in Asturias et in Galleciam' (*Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris*, 20, 22, 28, 38–9). Some authors establish a connection between the Lara family and the Asturian rebellion (M.E. García García, 'El conde asturiano Gonzalo Pelaez', *Asturiensia Medievalia*, 2 (1975), 39–64).

<sup>15</sup> Antonio Ubieto Arteta, 'Navarra-Aragón y la idea imperial de Alfonso VII de Castilla', *Estudios de edad media de la Corona de Aragón*, VI (1953–55), 54.

minority of Alfonso VIII, they took refuge in Leon with the support of the king, Fernando II.<sup>16</sup>

The next generation of the Castro still produced more interesting examples. The son of Rodrigo Fernández, Fernando Rodríguez, reinforced his position in the new court through his marriage to Constanza Osorio, a member of the Leonese lineage of the Froilaz. However, at some point before the war between the Castro and the Lara (1162–1165), he repudiated his wife to marry the sister of the Leonese king, Estefanía Alfonso (no doubt helped by the power of his own aunt, Urraca Fernández de Castro, the king's lover). The father of Constanza, the count Osorio Martínez (1120–1160), tenant of Aguilar, Arnales, Becilla, Campos, Cotanes, Mayorga, Melgar and other castles in the lower Cea river, broke the oaths he had made with King Fernando II of Leon and passed to the service of the Castilian king, that is, to the side of the Lara.<sup>17</sup> From 1172 to 1175, Fernando Rodríguez enjoyed several tenancies, some from his ex-father-in-law, such as Mayorga and Melgar.<sup>18</sup>

It is very difficult to guess the consequences of these movements of magnates from one court to another, but there is no doubt that the arrival of some dynasties affected the position of others around the king. This probably explains the brief and mysterious presence, and absence, of names in the royal documents.

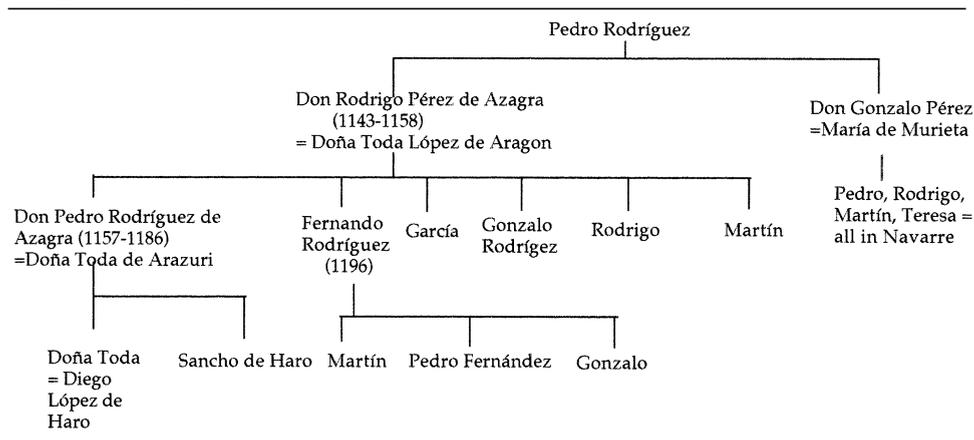
A final and interesting example is the family of Azagra because they owed services as vassals to different kings and managed to found an independent principedom lasting until 1370 (Table 4). The conquest of the Muslim town of Almería in 1147 opened new horizons for the northern Navarrese nobility enrolled in the campaign. Through military service to the Castilian king, Alfonso VII, people like Rodrigo and Gonzalo Pérez, lords of Valtierra (1142), Estella, Lerín (1143–1155), Tudela (1152–1158), and therefore vassals of the king of Navarre, acquired important possessions in the

<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon can be regarded as a major strategy of the high nobility according to the numerous cases that we know. The Castro were also related to the family of Haro from La Rioja. Lope Díaz, count of Nájera and lord of Biscay, married Aldonza de Castro, and his daughter, Urraca López, married Nuño Menéndez, an important magnate of the Leonese area. In 1124, his son, Diego López de Haro, revolted against Alfonso I, king of Aragon. Deposed of his lands of Biscay and Haro, he passed to the kingdom of Castile. His son appeared as one of the *fideles* of the king and tenant of Nájera-Biscay on the other side of the frontier (Salvador de Moxó, 'De la nobleza vieja a la nobleza nueva, la transformación nobiliaria castellana en la Baja Edad Media', *Cuadernos de Historia*, 3 (1969), 1–209, 46; J.M. Canal Sánchez, 'La Casa de Haro en León y Castilla de 1150 a 1250', *Archivos Leoneses*, 85–86 (1989), 55–97, 62). An example of how common these geographical movements between different kingdoms could become is the fact that Fernando Rodríguez de Castro was known as 'the Castilian' in Leon and as 'the Leonese' in Castile.

<sup>17</sup> Count Osorio was killed in 1160 in the battle of 'Lobregal' where he supported the Lara brothers against his son-in-law, Fernando Rodríguez (Barton. *The aristocracy*, 271, note 1).

<sup>18</sup> His brother, Gutierre Rodríguez, married to Elvira Osorio, held Melgar de Arriba and Mayorga from 1180–1184. As is said above, Count Osorio's brother, Rodrigo Martínez, was also married to a Castro, therefore, the Castro-Froilaz, despite the family grievance, controlled all the fortresses of the frontier of Castile and Leon in a period of war (Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII* (Madrid, 1960), vol. 1, 153–72; Pascual Martínez Sopena, 'El conde Don Rodrigo de León y los suyos. La 'casata' de Alfonso Díaz', *Studia Historica*, V (1985), 33–87).

Table 4  
Lineage of the Azagra family (Albarracín, Navarre)



southern Sierra, Murcia and Albarracín. The offspring of Rodrigo settled down in Castile, while their cousins stayed in Navarre.

Pedro Rodríguez, who held the tenancy of Estella, Gallipienzo and Tudela from 1157 to 1164, appeared in Castilian royal documents from 1164 to 1170.<sup>19</sup> Somehow, Pedro entered into relations with Muhammed Ben Mardanis, the king of the taifa of Murcia and Alicante, the so-called ‘Wolf King’. Although unfortunately there is no charter of the donation of Albarracín to Pedro Rodríguez, the concession of the fief was probably related to the difficult situation of the ‘Wolf King’, under the double threat of the Almohads from the south and Ramón Berenguer IV, count of Barcelona, from the north.<sup>20</sup> After that, the survival of the territory depended on the ability of the Azagra family to have the support of the king and bishop of Pamplona, and to fuel the rivalries between the Castilian and Aragonese kings both competing for Navarre. Their strategy was to pledge vassalage to all the kings and to relate their family to all the local nobility on both sides of the border. Equally they allocated the fortresses in different kingdoms to different brothers and so they managed to control most of the castles of the Jiloca river from Tarazona, Calatayud and Daroca to Teruel.<sup>21</sup> And indeed, they succeeded since the family kept the territory until 1370.

It is clear, therefore, that during the twelfth-century Iberian kings were dealing with a relatively organised nobility, for the first time capable of developing system-

<sup>19</sup> 29 September 1166: Alfonso VIII granted to him the villages of Murillo and Resa, in the frontier of Navarre and Castile (I. Rodríguez de Lama, *Colección diplomática documental de La Rioja* (Logroño, 1976), vol. 2, doc. 224).

<sup>20</sup> Martín Almagro, *Historia de Albarracín y su tierra* (Teruel, 1959), vol. 1, 47–55.

<sup>21</sup> Pedro Rodríguez de Azagra married the daughter of the important Navarrese lord, Pedro de Arazuri; Diego López de Haro married the daughter of Pedro, Doña Toda. When Pedro received Calahorra and Daroca in 1177, he transferred all the Navarrese properties to his second brother, Fernando Rodríguez. Another younger brother, Martín Rodríguez, held Alcañiz (1179), Estella, Ocón and Puente la Reina.

atic strategies in different kingdoms and playing to several sides. They were generally welcomed by an opposing king, and usually held prominent positions at the expense of the local nobility. They diversified family policy in different areas in order to have a refuge in case they fell into the king's disfavour, the *ira regis*, and in order to find an ally against their own lord. Royal hatred seems not to have had fundamental consequences: the same lords repeatedly appear and disappear in the documents, and they repeatedly won and lost castles and land, often being given frontier fortresses against their previous lord or companions.<sup>22</sup> The nobility appears to have enjoyed all kinds of political, social and economic resources. As a logical consequence, kings should be regarded as holding merely honorific title over a fictional territory, violated by the manoeuvres of a nobility who enjoyed increasing real power.

This nobility could well be compared with the families of Languedoc, such as the Baux, who played the counts of Toulouse, the counts of Barcelona, and the German emperor off against one another. They could also be compared with minor branches of the powerful houses of Aquitaine, such as the Lusignans, who manipulated the kings of Navarre, the family factions of the dukes of Aquitaine and the kings of England, and the kings of France. Or even with those of the Norman Vexin, portrayed by Ordericus Vitalis or Suger of Saint Denis. There might be even some parallels with the few noble lineages who acquired crowns, such as the houses of Anjou and Blois in this period. In Spain there were notable examples of families rising to kingship, rather than simply playing kings off against one another. For example, García Ramírez, a former member of the royal household of Navarre, succeeded to the crown after the death of Alfonso I in 1134, and separated the region from Aragon; Ramón Berenguer IV, from the family of the counts of Catalonia, succeeded as king of Aragon. Such examples show the threat a major lordly family might pose to a king.

From such conclusions, it could be argued that the power and resources that the nobility enjoyed in the twelfth century hint at the deep feudalisation of the political power in the Iberian Peninsula and contradict the myth of strong kingship. But if we look not only at the major resources in the hands of the nobility, but also at changes in power throughout the century, the landscape is rather different. This becomes apparent from the study of peace treaties and truces.

## 5. The kings' treaties

One of the most prominent features of this century of constant war among Christians was the existence of what is known as the '*vistas reales*', a period of direct diplomacy, of open-air meetings between kings who usually performed mutual homage for the clauses of the treaties they signed. This practice produced numerous charters, especially in the second half of the century, which provide a detailed picture

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<sup>22</sup> A thorough study of the region of Tierra de Campos shows the high coincidence between the location of royal castles held as tenancies and that of the patrimonial properties of a family. This made it extremely difficult to remove completely any of these families from a region (Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos Occidental*, 403).

of the relationships between the different royal courts and their nobilities. Despite the conflicting interests of kings, they had two things in common; the need to assert their authority over the rest of the people of the territory, particularly upon the nobility, and the certainty that ultimately they could only do it with the help, or at least without the opposition, of the other king, theoretically the former enemy.

And yet it would not be accurate to talk of ‘royal collaboration’ as a conscious strategy developed by kings against magnates. We should rather talk of an unintended outcome of a long-running process of contending and competing political positions, both within and without territories whose boundaries and governmental jurisdiction were not fully defined. Due to the equal terms on which nobility and kings competed, monarchs occasionally sat on the same side.

Spanish treaties, like other Western European treaties, used the following types of terms: *confederatione et amicitia, pacem et ueram amicitiam, pax et concordia, bonam fidem et convenientia...contra omnes*. Who were these *omnes*? Sometimes they were kings, but not always. More frequently they were other lords. In the well-known peace of Sahagún of 1158 after the death of Alfonso VII, his sons came together, *contra omnes qui iniuriam nobis facere voverint, excepto contra comitem Barchinonie, qui auunculus noster est et vinculum amicitie nostre*. The count of Barcelona, Ramón Berenguer IV, and king of Aragon at the time, had mediated the treaty between his two nephews, Sancho III, king of Castile and Fernando II, king of Leon, both sons of his sister, Berenguela.<sup>23</sup> The mediation of Ramón Berenguer IV was not voluntary nor an obligation of kinship, but a feudal act. During the reign of Alfonso VII, the emperor of Leon and Castile, the relationships between the new kings of Portugal, Navarre and Aragon were defined as personal ties of dependency such as those between vassal and lord. Three months before the treaty of Sahagún, Sancho III had had problems with his uncle, the count of Barcelona. They came to an end with the submission of the Catalonian count to the new king of Castile. In the treaty of Najima, February 1158, Ramón Berenguer, *avunculus suus*, made homage to Sancho, *nepote suo*, for the land of Zaragoza and its territory.<sup>24</sup>

Spanish documents between kings are more prone to underline the kinship bonds between the parties of a treaty than their European contemporaries. Most royal houses in the twelfth century were related, as descendants of Sancho ‘el Mayor’ of Navarre (1030–1035). Treaties emphasise the beneficial effects of blood ties. In contrast, the term *vassallus* is not common in the Iberian treaties, but the obligations attached to the word *homo* clearly indicate personal subordination to someone in relation to a particular issue, either a territory or an agreement.

War in the Christian territories, internal conflict with the nobility, urban uprising or the arrival of the African Berbers in the South, did not prevent treaties and negoti-

<sup>23</sup> Treaty of Sahagún, 23 May 1158 (Julio González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 44, 79). See also the pact of 1177, at the siege of Cuenca between the kings of Castile and Aragon: ‘Contra omnes christianos et sarracenos, excepto rege Ferrando [the king of Leon], et habeamus comuniter pacem el guerram cum aliis omnibus’ (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 288, 473).

<sup>24</sup> ‘faciat hominum prenominato Sancio regi...et sit homo eius de isto honore’ (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 36, 66).

ations about the future rights of expansion of each kingdom. These treaties meant a recognition of the exclusive rights of kings to lead and decide on areas of influence and reconquest, by implication not recognising the rights of third parties. Four treaties between the kings of Castile and Aragon (Carrión 1141, Tudején 1151, Cuenca 1177 and Cazola 1179) concern the division of *Hyspania* (the Muslim land) and Navarre; one between Leon and Castile concerns the division of Portugal and al-Andalus.

On 27 January 1151, at Tudején, Ramón Berenguer IV of Barcelona-Aragon and Sancho III of Castile divided all Navarrese and Muslim territories between them. They describe the pact as *vera pax et firma conveniencia ac perpetua concordia*.<sup>25</sup> They established an equal relationship as relatives, and they made reciprocal homage. The expression used is: *propter hoc* [the Count of Catalonia–King of Aragon] *facit ei hominum suis propriis manibus. Simili...* [the king of Castile] *facit hominum sepe dicto comiti suis propriis manibus, quod eo faciunt*. The terms of the pact are complex and point out the character of vassallic ties in royal treaties as agreements on specific issues rather than general statements of personal status. Both parties swore not to cause any evil to the other, not to raise any quarrel, and not to retain any men living in the other's land (*de terra tua*).

These treaties show a significant step forward towards a notion of territorial jurisdiction as the power of kings over coherent and compacted regions. Kings recognised absolute property rights for themselves and they guaranteed that they would not interfere in each other's territory. In the treaty of Cazola of March 1179, Alfonso VIII of Castile and Alfonso II of Aragon again divided Muslim Spain and concluded that every ruler was to have their allotment without any interference from the other king. The pact is very general and was signed against Christians, Muslims, nobles and kings.<sup>26</sup> On this occasion, the charter is explicit using the expression: [they] *fecerunt sibi inuicem hominum*, that is mutual homage.

The collaboration between two royal parties regarded as equals became more defined in other charters. Several regular clauses forbade the support, protection or 'employment' of people of the other king against the other's will.<sup>27</sup> In the treaty of Zaragoza, 1170, by which the kings of Castile and Aragon promised to help one another against all Christians except the king of England, they agreed that they should inform each other of the vassals who had lost their king's mercy, in order to be able

<sup>25</sup> Ramón Berenguer IV was to have Valencia, Denia, and Murcia. The king of Castile was to have all lands to the West of these (*Liber Feudorum Maior*, ed. F. Miquel Rossell (Barcelona, 1945), vol. 1, doc. 29, 39–42).

<sup>26</sup> *super divisionem terre Hyspanie...et in perpetuum possideant libere, solide et absolute, non interueniente aliqua contraria ab uno ad alterum* (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 319, 528–30 and doc. 320, 530–2). The king's pact 'contra cunctos homines christianos et sarracenos et nominatim contra regem Nauarre'.

<sup>27</sup> 'et convenimus [Sancho III] tibi predicto comiti [Ramón Berenguer IV], quod aliquem hominem de terra tua nec retineamus nec adiuvemus in aliquo contra tuam voluntate aliquo modo per fidem, sine engan' (*Liber Feudorum Maior*, vol. 1, doc. 29, 42).

to prosecute them elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Similar policies were practised in northern France by the French and Angevin kings to allocate areas of Normandy, Touraine, Berry, Auvergne, Perigord, Angoulême and Toulouse. The impact of such clauses in both regions was to move military conflict from the core of their territories to the frontiers.

In August 1176, Sancho VI of Navarre signed a truce with Alfonso VIII of Castile concerning their border disputes. Three representatives for each region were to go to the English royal court in order to defend their claims (*pro iudicio regis Anglie sibi satisfacerent*). In the meantime, the kings exchanged castles and their tenants did *hominium* to the opposite king, being subjected to double fidelity. A clause pointed out what could be called royal 'sovereignty' rather than suzerainty, when it was established that the truce affected everybody living in both their territories.

By the judgement of the English king, there was issued on 15 April 1179 a *pactum et amicitia et concordia* between the kings of Navarre and Castile. Sancho VI of Navarre had to submit to Alfonso VIII of Castile the villages of Logroño, Antelena, Navarret, Ausejo, Autol and Resa. The Castilian king was to give them (*in fidelitate in manu*) to one Navarrese baron, either Pedro Rodríguez de Azagra or his brother, Martín Rodríguez, or Martín Guillermo (*vassallorum Aldefonsi*). It is interesting to note the complex cross-border fidelity in understanding the position of these nobles. The three candidates to the castles were originally from Navarre but had become vassals of the Castilian king. The three had to take an oath of loyalty to their natural lord, Sancho. If the three died, the king of Navarre was to choose as a replacement any of the vassals of the king of Castile born in Navarre, and they had to take first an oath of fealty to him (*faciat eidem hominium et pactum*). Overlapping fidelities and services, interwoven links, are a major feature of these treaties. The tenants would hold the castles for ten years and were not to release them to any of the kings.

The notion of territorial kingship appears again when it is stated that 'if any lord of the king of Castile attack Sancho's kingdom, he will lose all estates and fiefs granted by the king of Castile, and his favour, and will never recover them. And if the king is not able to seize the castles, both kings will help to take them'.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, they made common cause to act against nobles who moved to other kingdoms, and to control their own *naturales*. Sancho assured that if any of his *naturales* seized the land which went from Navarre to Old Castile, that is, the area of Burgos, Bureba,

<sup>28</sup> 'et si aliquis nostrum disfidaverit aliquem hominem, significet alteri per litteras suas vel per notos nuncios, et ex tunc, similiter disfidet disfidatum et adiuet disfidantem, et faciat ei omnem malum quodcumque facere poterit' (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 147, 250–3).

<sup>29</sup> 'Item, si quis nobilium regis Nauarre per se uel cum alio intraverit cum exercitu in terram regia Aldefonsi Castelle, perdat hereditates et honores quos a rege Nauarre tenens erit et amorem eiusdem, et non recuperet hec nec amorem regis Nauarre nisi cum voluntate regis Castelle. Et, si forte malefactor habebit castrum uel castra de quibus rex Nauarre nequeat eum exheredare, dicti reges militent super eum et iuuent se ad inuicem ad capiendum castra per bonam fidem et sine enganno' (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 321, 532–7, 534).

Soria, Agreda, Cameros and Cincovillas, Sancho would oblige them to give it back. If he could not do so, he would help the king of Castile to recover it.<sup>30</sup>

The question at issue here is the interesting concept of the *naturales*. The *naturales* are all those born within the boundaries of a territory. Their natural lord was the king or the queen of that territory. The concept is very different from liege lord, since in the Iberian kingdoms the natural lord is the lord of someone because of the simple fact of having been born into a territory. It could be defined precisely as the opposite of the feudal lord. It is very frequently the case that magnates, who had a natural lord, were feudal vassals of other lords. The origin of this vernacular term needs a systematic study. It has been argued that the territorial dimension of the Reconquest, combined with the Visigothic notion of the *regnum* as separated from the *rex*, accounts for the idea.<sup>31</sup>

The term is extensively defined in Alfonso X's *Partidas* and *Speculum* in the thirteenth century. It is interesting to note that it does not appear in the charter (*carta de arras*) given by Alfonso 'the Battler' to Urraca of Castile and the dowry charter that she issued in exchange in December 1109. Both documents attempt to define the double fidelity that the people of both kingdoms owed to the two, king and queen.<sup>32</sup> We have to wait until thirteenth-century chronicles to find the word *naturales* applied to this particular episode. Allegedly, Count Pedro Ansúrez added his loyalty to his natural queen, Urraca, to his duties with his feudal lord, the king, Alfonso of Aragon. But to compensate for such a decision, he went to his court with a rope tied to his neck and put his life into his hands.<sup>33</sup>

A marvellous example of royal peace-making carried out against a noble family is found in the problem of royal control over the county of Albarracín. The Azagra family, discussed above, put Navarre, Aragon and Castile face to face. On 21 January 1186, Alfonso VIII of Castile and Alfonso II of Aragon, his cousin and now brother-in-law, agreed 'that neither of us receive Pedro Rodríguez, nor his brothers or relatives who live at his expense, nor his followers except Gonzalo Rodríguez [of the

<sup>30</sup> A reciprocal arrangement was made by Alfonso VIII for the area between Pamplona and Castile: Huarte, Leguín, Sangüesa and San Sebastián as a zone that the Castilian king should protect from Castilian raids (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 321, 535).

<sup>31</sup> 'subditi', 'gentes', 'vasallos naturales' were the inhabitants under the authority of the *rex* or the *princeps* (Luis García de Valdeavellano, *Curso de historia de las instituciones españolas* (Madrid, 1993), 411–13, 429, 467).

<sup>32</sup> The terminology used by both monarchs is the same. Alfonso I states that, 'totos illos homines que honorem tenent hodie per me, vel in antea inde tenuerit, queod totos iurent vobis fidelitatem et deveniant vestros homines de boca et de manibus... Et si vos quesieritis partire de me sine mea voluntate quod totos illos homines de vestra terra et de illa mea departant de vobis' (J.M. Ramos Loscertales, 'La sucesión del rey Alfonso VI', *Anuario de historia del derecho Español*, 13 (1936–41), 68–69). The Poem of El Cid is a good example of the generalised use of the word to refer to the priority relationship of Alfonso VI and El Cid as different from that of El Cid and other kings that he served (*The poem of the Cid*. A bilingual edition, ed. Rita Hamilton, Ian Mitchell (Manchester, 1975), 90).

<sup>33</sup> Both Jiménez de Rada and the Chronicle of San Juan de la Peña refer to the episode using the word 'natural queen' to name the relationship between the Count and Queen Urraca (*Historia de Rebus Hispaniae*, ed. Fernández Valverde, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. LXXII, Turnhout, 266; *The chronicle of San Juan de la Peña*, trans. L.H. Nelson (Pennsylvania U.P., 1991), 28–9).

Azagra] who is the vassal of lord Alfonso'.<sup>34</sup> Pedro Rodríguez died in November of the same year, and it might well be that the two kings intended that a member of the family succeed him in Albarracín. This treaty was a major concession of the king of Aragon who was under a lot of political and military pressure in the Midi.

Only nine months later, on 5 October, the kings (*facimus pacem, contrahimus concordiam et firmamus amicitiam*) divided up Albarracín. Alfonso II of Aragon allowed the king of Castile to have most of the castles of the county (Ariza, Algeciras), while he only retained for himself the foremost castle, Santa María de Albarracín, and received the castle of Berdejo from Alfonso VIII. They took an oath to recover any fortress conquered by Pedro Rodríguez, and made an explicit alliance against Navarre, the power behind the Azagra family.<sup>35</sup> The two kings made agreement on absolutely equal terms. This series of treaties against the Azagra of Albarracín clearly shows the attempt to make the county a satellite of Aragon through Fernando Rodríguez, the only possible heir, who would pledge himself a vassal of Aragon. In the small village of Sauquillo on 30 September 1187, Alfonso VIII and Alfonso II threatened Fernando Rodríguez unless he became the vassal of Aragon and tenant of the castle of Santa María. Any rearrangement of the tenancy would have to be agreed by both kings.<sup>36</sup> If he did not obey, both kings would attack him.

As a final point, it is necessary to mention the role of the Church in the relationship of kings and nobility. The Church played a major part in determining the consolidation of some political authorities and not others, and in launching proceedings to settle political conflicts. While magnates played the role of arbiters, tenants of castles and witnesses in the treaties of the eastern kingdoms (Navarre, Aragon and the eastern frontier of Castile) and in the treaties between Leon and Castile and Leon and Portugal, the Church's involvement, especially in the activity of bishops and masters of the military orders, was notorious. It is important to remember that the 'Infantado' and Tierra de Campos were the main homelands of most powerful monasteries. In addition, it could be said that Leon was probably where the balance of power between king and nobility lay more in favour of the latter. Alfonso IX had to lean heavily on the power of bishops to counterbalance the lay aristocracy. In these western frontiers, it was usual that ecclesiastical authorities oversaw the treaties, the pope stood as ultimate guarantor of the peace and other clauses, and spiritual punishments acquired greater importance.

The two major treaties of the century between Leon and Castile account for the remarkable improvement in procedures, rules, and representation of royal figures. The disputed frontier established at the death of Alfonso VII (1157) was a source of constant conflict between the two kingdoms, and monasteries in the frontier saw

<sup>34</sup> Treaty of Agreda: 'ut nullus reciperet Petrum Roderici, nec eum nec fratres suos, nec parentes suos qui ad suum proficium ibi essent.. nec aliquibus hominibus qui ad proficium Petri Roderici forent, preter Gonzaluum Roderici, qui tunc temporis erat uassallus domini Aldefonsi' (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 449, 770–1).

<sup>35</sup> 'conuenimus nobis ad inuicem quod iuemus nos,...contra Sarracenos, contra regem Nauarre et contra Petrum Roderici de Azagra' (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 460, 786–90).

<sup>36</sup> 'recipiat F. Roderici statim pro uassallo' (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 485, 837–8).

their estates divided between two political units. The treaty of Medina de Rioseco in 1181 aimed to define the limits around the Ceia river. The context for the treaty lies in the tensions of a war that ran from 1179 to 1183. Alfonso VIII of Castile and Fernando II of Leon signed *pacem et concordiam et amicitiam firmam in perpetuum* to keep the division made by their father and grandfather, Alfonso VII. The expression of full royal territorial right is clear, *et uterque nostrum sit dominus et rex omnium qui continentur infra limites regni*.<sup>37</sup> Each party placed five castles as pledge to Pedro Fernández, the master of the Order of Santiago, and Pedro de Areis, prior of the Hospital. Bishops had to place excommunication and interdict over the kings for any breach of the treaty. They also tried to foresee and regulate all the future possible problems that vassals of either kingdom might create.

Two years later, on 1 June 1183, another charter explains all the phases of the process preliminary to the signing of the treaty of Fresno-Lavandera. The master of Santiago, the prior of the Hospital, the archbishops of Compostela and Toledo, and the bishops of Ciudad Rodrigo and Avila had a *colloquium* in Paradinas to give peace to the kingdom. Later on, the kings signed what they had arranged *per communem consensum et deliberationem et per communem scripturam*. Part of the committee withdrew to Fresno and the others to Lavandera (between Salamanca and Medina del Campo) to write out the conditions of the treaty.

If the peace was broken, the prelates of Compostela, Toledo, Avila, and Ciudad Rodrigo were responsible for imposing interdict, and were to meet in order to restore the peace. If they could not agree which of the kings was at fault, the heads of the military orders were to decide. Regular and systematic meetings were agreed, *ita quod singulis annis uno certo loco et die pro conseruatione pacis huius conueniamus*. And finally, royal interference was restricted because ecclesiastics were never to allow any king to compel the head of the military orders in decisions about castles pledged. As an unmistakable sign of papal policy, the kings promised not to have truces with the Muslims, and to bring war against them.<sup>38</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

As can be seen, the relationships between the monarchs and the nobility in the Iberian kingdoms are not so different from what we have elsewhere in Western Europe at this time. On the one hand, we have emerging noble lineages which began to settle down in specific areas at the same time that they developed trans-regional policies of alliances. On the other hand, royal dynasties were closely tied to these noble families, even though at the same time their interests often conflicted, leading to frequent internecine struggles. One central aspect of this struggle, the definition

<sup>37</sup> Treaty of Medina de Rioseco, 21 March 1181 (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 362, 614–23).

<sup>38</sup> ‘separo me statim a pactione sarracenorum. Et promittimus ambo inuicem quod de cetero numquam alteruter nostrum habeat pacem uel treguas cum sarracenis’ (González, *El reino de Castilla*, vol. 2, doc. 407, 701–8).

of upper levels of decision-making above the nobility, was shaped by the exigencies of war and by pacts made between enemy courts. The political dynamic of the twelfth century thus imposed a major change in the relations between the king and the nobility. This had two main consequences. Firstly, the progressive ascription of the nobility to geographical and political frameworks under the authority of the king. Secondly, the development of systematic procedures and institutions of diplomacy that made noble rebellion more difficult.

This profound reorganisation of forces within the kingdoms explains why there was no effective territorial expansion during the twelfth century in Spain. The boundaries between kingdoms became more defined but hardly changed. It is necessary to wait until the early thirteenth century to witness the most impressive change of territories: 1212 in the Iberian peninsula with the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa; 1213 in southern France with the imposition of the French over southern society in the battle of Muret.

To conclude, I would add that this interpretation of the century leads to three main proposals. The first is methodological. I argue that the political development of the century can be more accurately analysed if we treat ecclesiastical and lay lords, from lower levels of viscounts, counts and dukes to kings, as political units competing in a political arena with uncertain results, and therefore we avoid teleological analysis which takes into account the shape of the later monarchies. It is a way to avoid the idea of kings 'recovering' their power from usurping aristocrats.

The second proposal attempts to offer a causal explanation. It seems to me that the overall advance in royal power was not related to the strength of the kings, but to the bargaining needs of an aristocracy wishing to implement social and political order, to settle its conflicts, and to clarify proceedings and hierarchies. The kings turned out to be the only possible and stable reference point around which to build networks of alliances.

The third proposal refers to matters of interpretation. Kings succeeded in setting themselves above the nobility and becoming centres of political networks by an increasing number of treaties negotiated with their hostile equals. It is to demonstrate this final point that treaties are interesting. Nobles do not appear in them as equal partners to kings, rather, the latter frequently ended up settling their own conflicts at the expense of the political position and territories of lesser lords.

As I hope was made clear in the paper, treaty clauses made any uprising of the nobility much more difficult. Large elements of the lay and ecclesiastical nobility were involved in the treaties, the interests of others were left out, and pacts were made against those who did not accept the stipulations. Most magnates could not compete against an offensive by two kings, or against a king and his court, that is, the faction of the nobility engaged in royal pacts. At the same time, lords were caught in several traps not directly related to kingship: the conflicting interests of members of their own class in their own kingdoms; the interests of nobles coming from other regions and holding good positions in the new courts; and the increasingly aggressive discourses and punishments for rebels imposed by the Church and the Papacy. Treaties make manifest key aspects of the gradual development of royal power: the use of rules, fixed dates and places for set proceedings, authorised arbiters,

courts, royal officials, as well as discourses of legitimation emanating from the Church. In the long run, political bargaining would become the business of kings and their courts.

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