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THE ARMIES OF THE MILITARY ORDERS IN MEDIEVAL IBERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This article considers the composition of the armies of the religious military orders in medieval Iberia, as well as their qualitative and quantitative contributions to the Reconquista and other armed conflicts of the period.*

The characteristic that distinguished the military orders within the varied and complex universe of the Catholic Church's religious orders was precisely their dedication to the defense of Christendom.¹ It was their *raison d'être* and the main reason for their creation. Thus, military operations constituted the most important of the activities carried out by the orders. Understanding the characteristics of the orders' military might is therefore essential. In order to do so, we will focus on the composition of the armies and on a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the order troops. Although this subject has been studied, to some extent, in regard to the Holy Land,² the armies of the military orders in medieval Iberia have not received sufficient scholarly attention.³ Precisely for this reason, we thought it opportune to devote an article specifically to this matter.

I. COMPOSITION OF THE ARMIES

The armies of the military orders, like other medieval armies, consisted of heterogeneous contingents. Both the organic diversity of the orders and the existence of different recruitment models seem to underscore this heterogeneity. With this premise in mind, we can identify five different groups among the contingents that composed the orders' armies.

1.1. *Brother Knights*

Due to their qualitative importance, the first contingent consisted of the brother knights. These were members of the orders belonging to the highest echelons of the social hierarchy, and they composed the main dignitaries of each institution: the commanders, subcommanders, and the rest of the brethren not assigned to an *encomienda*.⁴ As part of the social elite of each institution, they represented a specialized unit of mounted knights. Hence, these brother knights went into battle fully equipped with a coat of mail, full mail breeches, sabatons, a helmet with eye and mouth openings, a double-edged straight sword, a lance, a shield, a destrier, a palfrey, and the company of a horseman and a number of foot soldiers.⁵ The Statutes of the Order of Santiago of 1274 specifically state that a brother commander had to be accompanied by a brother residing in the *encomienda*, two additional horsemen, and five foot soldiers.⁶

Thus, the brother knight belonged to the exclusive mounted knights that were a hallmark of Western Christian society. The most suitable bridle and bits for the horses, saddle, and stirrups enabled the Christian fighter to have an increased impact in a closed charge of mounted knights. Furthermore, this heavy cavalry unit also participated in other military maneuvers, including flank attacks or foot combat as part of the heavy infantry.⁷

1.2. *Brother Sergeants*

Sergeants were brothers, probably because they were born into a lower social class than the knights. These sergeants fought on horseback, but they were not as well equipped as the knights. Their helmet was lighter and their mail breeches and coat shorter. The crucial difference between them and the knights was that the sergeants only had one mount and lacked the support of squires. These circumstances occasionally obliged the sergeants to engage in foot combat. Only the five Templar sergeants who held positions of authority in the East had the right to two mounts and a squire.⁸

At first the sergeants were not attached to an *encomienda*. Generally speaking, they were military personnel linked to the services of a monastery or to those of the highest-ranking lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries of each order. The Statutes of the Order of Santiago of 1274 state that when the order was not at war with the Muslims or called upon by the king to render services, the dignitaries would have *freyres escuderos de cauallo* (brother squires on horseback, referring to the sergeants) at their service; the master would have ten, grand commanders would have six, priors would have three, and simple commanders would have two.⁹

TABLE I Men Who Accompanied the Dignitaries of the Order of Santiago According to the Establishments of 1274.

	SQUIRES ON HORSEBACK	FOOT SOLDIERS	OTHER BROTHERS
MASTER	10	30	—
PRIORS	3	2	3
GREAT COMMANDERS	6	15	5
COMMANDERS	2	5	1

This category of lay brothers played an important role in the ranks of the Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonics. In terms of the Iberian orders, however, they are documented only in the Orders of Santiago and Alcalá de la Selva as well as in the orders that were direct heirs of the Temple such as the Orders of Montesa and Christ.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is possible that this category could have appeared under different names, such as *escudero* (squire), within these orders and others.

The number of sergeants seems to have exceeded that of the knights within the Hospitallers and Templars of the Iberian Peninsula even though the percentage of knights was greater in comparison to other European territories without open frontiers with the “enemies of Christendom.”¹¹ On the other hand, in the Holy Land the number of knights was overwhelmingly higher in comparison to the limited presence of sergeants and clerics.¹²

While the number of sergeants may have been significant within the international military orders, their presence within the Iberian Orders was rather limited. This is reflected in at least a few isolated pieces of information. The first ordinances of the Order of Christ show that the percentage of sergeants did not exceed seven percent of the total number of the Order’s knights.¹³ At the important Chapter of the Order of Montesa held in 1330, where resources were distributed among the *encomiendas*, there is only one mention of a brother sergeant.¹⁴

1.3. *Temporary Associated Combatants*

The military orders also relied on voluntary combatants for their war efforts, who joined the institutions for a specific period of time. Once this period came to an end, these combatants were no longer linked to the orders unless they renewed their commitment to this association. The associated combatants were usually knights, but foot soldiers may also have occasionally taken on this temporary commitment.

The essential goal that drove these laymen into an association with a military order lay in the attainment of spiritual benefits; these could include the pardoning of sins or being freed from keeping certain vows.¹⁵

The most well-known examples of this type of fighting men are the *milites ad terminum*, who appear as associates of the Templar Order. These individuals entered into association with the institution for a period of one to two years, and during this time they served as though they were knights. This is why they were also referred to as *fratres clientes*.¹⁶ Although they were more common in the Holy Land, there are some documented examples related to the Iberian realms.

Another type of temporary combatant consisted of individuals who accepted papal privileges granting them indulgences in return for participating in order campaigns or in the fortification, guarding, and defense of the fortresses the military orders maintained on the Iberian Peninsula. These volunteers were on a par with the crusaders and thus benefited from the same privileges shown to the latter. As early as 1158, and in light of the threat facing the Iberian Templar possessions, Pope Adrian IV (1154–59) sent several bishops to convince those willing to head to Jerusalem in exchange for a pardon of their sins to stay in the Iberian territories and collaborate with the Templars for a year or two. In return, they would receive the same spiritual benefits that they would have obtained in the Holy Land.¹⁷

We can probably also include the *seglares* (laymen) in this category of associated knights, who—according to an account by the Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada—lived in Calatrava in 1214 with the brethren of the order and were saved from starvation by the prelate himself, the nobles, and other knights.¹⁸ Shortly thereafter, in 1220, Pope Honorius III extended the indulgences associated with the crusader vow to anyone who would fight alongside the Calatravans at their frontier castles. Later on, the Roman pontiffs awarded a bull to each of the three main Castilian orders, putting anyone who fought and died in the ranks of the Orders of Alcántara (1238),¹⁹ Calatrava (1240),²⁰ and Santiago (1250)²¹ on equal footing with the crusaders. The bull awarded to the Order of Santiago specified that its privileges could also be extended to anyone who sent combatants to fight in the order's host at their own expense, as well as to the soldiers themselves.²²

A third type of volunteer consisted of those combatants who participated in certain military expeditions of the orders because of a connection between their lineage and the institution in question. We can name two examples that refer to the Order of Santiago during the mastership of Pelayo Pérez Correa. In 1269 the Order's master ceded various holdings in Guadiana to Juan Pérez de Badajoz as a reward for his and his family's direct involvement in battles the institution had fought in what is now Extremadura. In the same year the order ceded the property

of Padrones (in the municipality of Ourique) and the mills of Medina (in the district of Montemolín) to the Portuguese knight Martim Eanes do Vinhal and his heirs for life provided that he settle them. The cession was in return for the military collaboration and financial aid the Lusitanian knight, and his family had provided in putting down the Mudejar Revolt of 1264, particularly in the Sierra de Segura region and the areas around Murcia.²³

1.4. *Mercenaries*

Early on, large contingents of mercenary troops were used by the military orders in their wars in the Holy Land, the most renowned being the Turcopoles, who constituted a remarkable light cavalry unit.²⁴ Information on the Iberian Peninsula is less abundant, but there is little doubt that the military orders did use mercenaries to complete the ranks of their armies. According to the account of Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, as early as 1158, during the events leading up to the founding of the Calatravan confraternity, the abbot Raimundo de Fitero provided wages and *viaticum* (an allowance for traveling expenses) to a large number of combatants who had followed him from the Navarrese monastery to defend the Manchegan fortress.²⁵ Later on, in the original Calatravan Statutes of the early thirteenth century, allusions are made to the existence of *mercenarii*. These were probably salaried peasants, although it is possible that they were mercenary troops.²⁶ The mercenaries mentioned in documents of the Order of Alcántara were probably also farmers hired by the order.²⁷

While the documents of the Order of Santiago do not specifically mention the term mercenary, it is possible that the Muslim crossbowmen who served the order in Castile in 1242 were actually mercenaries hired by the order. On the other hand, they may also have been Mudejar vassals from the order's seignior. A scant four years later, the master Pelayo Pérez Correa promised the Emperor Baldwin II a contingent of three hundred knights, two hundred crossbowmen (half on horseback, the other on foot), and one thousand foot soldiers as military assistance to the Frankish ruler of the Latin Empire of Constantinople for a two-year period. It is highly probable that the master had planned to assemble this contingent, which never actually materialized, using mainly mercenaries paid by the order. During the first half of the thirteenth century, the masters Pedro Arias and Rodrigo Íñiguez used *gente de sueldo* (hired hands) for their campaigns against the Muslims, according to information provided by the chronicler Francisco de Rades.²⁸

Almost a century later, in the Chapter of 1330, the master of Montesa and several of his commanders were assigned *compañías* (companies), which can only

be interpreted as contingents of mercenaries attached to certain dignitaries of the order. A few years later, in 1336, the masters of Calatrava and Santiago mobilized one thousand horsemen, who might also have been mercenaries, at their own expense, to fight alongside the powerful magnate Don Juan Manuel.²⁹

1.5. *Vassals*

Part of the contingents that made up the armies of the military orders consisted of vassals from their jurisdictional seigniories. The vassals did not form part of the orders' permanent troops but were summoned for specific military expeditions such as the *fonsado* (an offensive campaign, usually led by the king), the *hueste* (host), the *cabalgada* (cavalry raid), the *apellido* (defensive militia), or the *guarda* (military escort). These were all expeditions for which troops could be summoned by virtue of a privilege that, in principle, belonged to the royal authority and indicated functions that were clearly governmental in nature.

These kinds of military privileges were perhaps the most difficult to detach from regal authority. However, the warlike nature of the military orders and their advanced position along the open frontier with the Muslims allowed them to enjoy many such military prerogatives, either through a grant from the Crown or by conferring these powers on themselves. In the *fuero* (charter) of the Zorita township, granted in 1180 by Alphonse VIII and the Calatravan master Martin Pérez de Siones, it is established that the knights of Zorita could go on a *fonsado* with either the king or their lord (in this case, the Order of Calatrava), and in either case they were required to hand over a fifth of the booty. Here it is the monarch himself who allows the order to summon the knights of Zorita to a *fonsado*.³⁰

The master, as the highest dignitary of the orders and lord of his vassals, was normally responsible for summoning military expeditions, although sometimes other dignitaries, including the respective area commanders, could summon and lead their vassals into battle. As early as the year 1170, when Muslim forces seized the castle at Almodóvar, we find a reference to the Calatravan master, Martin Pérez de Siones, making a counterattack with all of the people he could gather in the Calatravan domains.³¹

We should bear in mind, however, that the orders did not have the prerogative of summoning their vassals to join their armies in all of their seigniories. And even in some of the places where they did enjoy this privilege, certain restrictions applied. Some restrictions were of a qualitative and quantitative nature, specifying kind and number of vassals who were obliged to render military service. Thus, according to the original *fuero* of Zorita, only a third of the knights had

to respond to a *fonsado* summoned by the Calatravan master. Foot soldiers were not required to go on this expedition, although they served in the *guarda*, but it remains unclear whether they served under the king, under the order or under both simultaneously without differentiation. In Uclés and all of the Manchegan towns that received their *fuero* (charter) between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, foot soldiers were also exempt from joining the *fonsado*.³² The Portuguese *fueros* of Avis (1223) and Mértola (1254) raised the percentage of knights having to participate in expeditions summoned by the Orders of Avis and Santiago to two-thirds of the total number available in each town.³³

Less frequently, we encounter restrictions of a geographic nature. For example, in the *fueros* of Salvaleón (1253) and Villabuena de Gata (1256), both belonging to the Order of Alcántara, it is specified that the vassals in these two townships were required to render military services only within the limits of a demarcated geographic area.³⁴ Even less frequently, we find restrictions of a temporal nature. The *fuero* of Usagre, for example, a township of the Order of Santiago, specified that vassals had to fulfill their military obligations to their lord during the course of one month.³⁵

In other cases, however, restrictions were practically nonexistent, and the orders had all sorts of vassals at their disposal to use as they saw fit, without geographical or temporal restrictions. The *carta puebla* of Miguelturra (1230), for example, clearly states that its residents had to join the host and the *apellido*, under either the order's master or their commander.³⁶ Also, in the *Campo de Calatrava*, the order's headquarters and largest seignior, the Calatravan Order seems to have had the authority to summon its vassals to both the host and the *fonsado*. As a result, in 1281 Alphonse X ordered the Calatravan master to exempt the residents of Zarzuela, Darazután, Villa Gutierre, El Viso, and La Hiruela (all towns in the aforementioned region) from the obligation of reporting for both expeditions.³⁷

By contrast, in certain seigniories, the Order of Santiago did not have the authority to summon military expeditions since their vassals were only required to respond when summoned to the royal army. This was the case in the towns of Dos Barrios and Ocaña, although in the latter the order granted the knights some concessions in return for their pledge to join the seigniorial host for a period of three months and to absorb all of the costs resulting from this commitment. If the expedition lasted longer than the period of time agreed upon, the order was responsible for providing for the men and animals involved.³⁸

With regard to the seigniories of the Hospitallers, the *fuero* of Peñalver stipulated that any local resident who of his own accord wished to join the *fonsado* with *el señorío y en la tierra* (the seignior and on the land) was free to do so, although his only obligation was to respond to the *fonsado* led by the king. The same obligation

was established by the *fuero* of Alhóndiga, which specified that no Hospitaller vassal was required to respond to the *fonsado* except under the king's orders.³⁹

Certainly, among all of the vassals of the military orders' seigniories, the knights were of particular value to military expeditions. They constituted a specialized light cavalry unit that was particularly suited to the *cabalgadas*, quick incursions into Muslim territory that had to be carried out on horseback. Some charters, such as the *fuero* of Uclés, specified the kind of equipment required of a knight: lance, sword, shield, and two spurs. Their equipment placed them within the military elite of an order's vassals, and clearly distinguished from the foot soldiers, who were simple peasants required to render military services.

Very early on the *fueros* of the military orders' domains recognized the social hierarchy that separated the simple foot soldiers from the knights. As early as the last quarter of the twelfth century, the Calatravan *fueros* began to dictate the monetary value a horse had to have in order for its owner to be considered a knight exempted from paying *pecho* (territorial tribute). For example, in Zorita (1180) and Miguelturra (1230) the value of the mount had to be equal to twenty maravedis,⁴⁰ whereas in Huerta de Valdecarábanos (1204) this amount was only twelve maravedis.⁴¹

More than two centuries later, at the Chapter General of the Order of Santiago in 1440, the master-infante Henry established a more precise hierarchic structure for the vassals who performed military duties in the order's seigniories. At the very top were the knights, who had to have an income equal to or exceeding 20,000 maravedis, own a horse valued at no less than 1,500 maravedis and the appropriate light cavalry equipment (sword, lance, and leather shield). Another possibility was studied, namely that every vassal capable of maintaining the equipment typically used by the heavy cavalry could serve the order with it. The second tier consisted of foot soldiers with an income equal to or exceeding 10,000 maravedis. These foot soldiers had to report for military duty with a windlass crossbow or, at the very least, the simpler belt and claw crossbow. The third tier consisted of foot soldiers with an income equal to or exceeding 3,000 maravedis, who had to report for duty with a lance and, if they could afford it, a shield.⁴²

As we can see, the development of the art of war and the new military necessities of the late Middle Ages brought about a reassessment of the role and specialization of simple foot soldiers.⁴³ Just like the knights, they had to pass muster, showing their respective captains that their equipment was in good condition. Thus, a military hierarchy of the orders' vassals was established that clearly reflected the existing social hierarchy and was divided into different units such as the mounted knights, light cavalry, crossbowmen, and lancers. The *espingaderos*, foot soldiers

equipped with an *espingarda* (harquebus), should also be added to this list. With the rise and spread of firearms, their presence in the armies and in the hosts of the Church's military orders became common during the fifteenth century.

Nevertheless, in many towns within the military orders' seigniories, a fee known as a *fonsadera* could be paid in lieu of military service, particularly the *fonsado*. In fact, during the difficult years of the open frontier in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the orders probably preferred to collect a fee from peasants, who were ill prepared for battle, that would release them from their military obligations. The amount received from this transaction could then be used to hire mercenary troops whose military performance was likely to be far better than that of the peasants.

The vassals of the orders' seigniories could also be summoned to provide pack animals for logistical support or for supplying provisions to the army under what was known as the *derecho de acémila o bestias* (privilege of pack mules or beasts of burden). This privilege was tightly controlled by the monarchies due to its vital role in army logistics. Despite this governmental control, however, records show that the Calatravans enjoyed this privilege in Cogolludo and Zorita as did the Order of Santiago in Castrotorafe.⁴⁴

The last privilege that should be mentioned relates to the orders' right to summon vassals for maintenance work on their fortresses. Although the summons' objective was military in nature, the privilege actually referred to manual labor and did not necessarily imply that these vassals joined the military garrisons that were defending the fortresses.⁴⁵ As a result, the men summoned to this task generally did not join the ranks of the orders.

2. A QUANTITATIVE ESTIMATE OF THE TROOPS

In order to accurately evaluate the military role the orders played on the Iberian Peninsula, it is useful to try to estimate the number of troops these institutions could contribute to a military campaign. It should be noted from the outset that the numbers we have at our disposal are incomplete and chronologically discontinuous. Under no circumstance should these numbers be seen as reflecting the entirety of the orders' armies, given that it is possible to calculate numbers only related to professed members, particularly the brother knights.

2.1. *An Estimate of the Number of Brothers in the Orders*

Naturally, the number of brothers who were members of a military order fluctuated over time. During the difficult early years, the orders did not have many

professed members. As the orders become more established, however, the number of brothers gradually increased until they reached a maximum at the dawn of the fourteenth century. From then on, until the end of the Middle Ages, the number of brothers remained fairly steady, although it did decrease from time to time depending on the circumstances.

The developments described thus far correspond to the most important and well-established military orders. The number of troops of the smaller orders, which did not come into existence until the late Middle Ages, was significantly smaller. Sometimes their numbers would decrease so drastically that the order would become extinct. On the other hand, the military orders founded during the first quarter of the fourteenth century restricted the number of members. This move came in response to an adjustment in the distribution of resources, which were limited and had little chance of being significantly increased at a time when territorial expansion had come to an end, in both Portugal and the Crown of Aragon.⁴⁶

We can begin our quantitative estimate with members who joined smaller orders that merged with larger ones. The Order of Monfragüe, a Castilian branch of the Aragonese Order of Montjoy-Hospital of the Holy Redeemer of Teruel, was founded in 1196 by its master Rodrigo González and another six brothers of the institution. That same year, the Aragonese branch of the order merged with the Order of the Temple.⁴⁷ Two years later, in justifying this course of action before Pope Innocent III, the brothers declared that the reason for the merger was that the aforementioned seven brothers had abandoned the Redemptorist order, taking with them horses, weapons, and other assets. This had brought about the ruin of the Santo Redentor and forced the remaining members to join the Templars in order to alleviate these dire circumstances.⁴⁸ Other humble orders, such as the Order of St. George of Alfama, shared a similarly exiguous situation. Records show that throughout its entire existence, from 1201 to 1400, the order consisted of barely more than fifty brothers. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, when the decision to incorporate it into the Order of Montesa was made, the troops of the Alfama Order amounted to perhaps half a dozen.⁴⁹ The situation of the Order of Selva Mayor,⁵⁰ also based in Aragon, was probably quite similar.

With regard to the Templars, information from 1310, based on interrogations by the diocese of Lerida of the order's members, tells us that at that time there were 32 brothers in the district: 9 knights, 19 sergeants, and 4 chaplains. In the Kingdom of Castile and Leon, 86 Templars were summoned to interrogations held around the same time. In 1319, after the order had already been dissolved, a total of 109 former Templars remained in the Kingdom of Aragon; they depended on pensions paid by the castellany of Amposta and the priory of Catalonia, the two Hospitaller districts within the confines of the Aragonese confederation.⁵¹

In the mid-fourteenth century, there were no fewer than 123 Hospitallers in the castellany of Amposta, of which only around 10 percent would have been knights. As for the priory of St. John in Catalonia, the number of brothers fluctuated between 200 and 250, of which only about 40 would have been knights. The number of Hospitallers in the Crown of Aragon probably rose after their order absorbed the Templar properties in Catalonia and the Kingdom of Aragon. The loss of Hospitaller patrimony in the Kingdom of Valencia, due to the creation of the Order of Montesa, did not diminish the order's numbers. Estimates for the Navarrese priory indicate that the order could have had more than a hundred members during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵²

The quantitative figures we have for the international brotherhoods and military orders are incomplete and none of them refers to the totality of the Hispanic territories. In order to find overall figures for the orders in all of the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, we must focus our attention on the Iberian orders. An interesting example can be found in a document from the year 1301 in which the master of Santiago, Juan Osórez, requested that James II of Aragon (1291–1327) return to the order the assets that he had seized in the Kingdom of Murcia. The reason given by the master was that the alms received by the order were used to support one thousand brother knights and noblemen of the institution who were devoted to the service of God and the defense of the kings and Christendom.⁵³ The round and symbolic figure of one thousand knights seems unduly large. It is possible that the master chose to exaggerate the number of his knights so as to impress the Aragonese monarch with the troops dependent on the order and thus bring about a speedy and favorable response to his request. The figure most likely corresponds to the total number of the knights of Santiago in all of the kingdoms and probably also includes the noblemen, that is, lay brothers associated with the order on a temporary basis. In any case, the reference is not a valid source for determining the real number of the knights of Santiago, because the figure is either exaggerated or includes an indeterminate number of knights who were not members of the order. Furthermore, the figure would also need to include the number of brother clerics and other lay brothers of the order.

The figures we have for the other great Iberian order, the Order of Calatrava, from the same time period, provide a more accurate picture of the numbers. For example, 150 brothers, including both knights and clerics, attended the Calatravan General Chapter of 1302. Obviously, this figure does not account for all of the order's professed members, but it definitely constitutes a large percentage of the total number of Calatravan brothers.⁵⁴ The Calatravan documents from a few decades later (1350–1450) reveal 320 Calatravan brothers in the Castilian area alone.

In terms of numbers, is the most impressive figure within the entire order. Of these, 258 were brother knights, 56 brother clerics and 6 were brothers of unclear status, since the documents do not provide details on whether they were knights or clerics. In other words, a minimum of 80 percent were knights as compared to 20 percent, if that, from the clergy, assuming that the 6 brothers of unclear status were indeed clerics. However, it is possible to introduce qualifications with regard to the aforementioned figures. Clearly, the numbers in question are not absolute. During the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries there were undoubtedly more Calatravan brothers than appear documented in the records.⁵⁵

The following Calatravan General Chapters for which we have specific attendance records show rather unimpressive numbers. The Chapter of 1397 listed thirty-two attendees, three of whom were clerics; thirty-five Calatravan brothers attended the Chapter of 1434, of which at least six belonged to the clergy; the landmark Chapter of 1464 was attended by fifty-eight members of the order, including those physically present and those who had designated other brothers as their representatives. Those fifty-eight members consisted of forty-four knights and fourteen clerics. At the equally important Chapter of 1469, the total number of brothers either physically present or represented by others came to sixty-two Calatravans, of which fifty-one were knights and eleven clerics.⁵⁶ The Chapters in question were very important. Decisive issues regarding the order's future were discussed, and they were attended—either physically or via representation—by a majority of the Calatravan knights from the Castilian area. The total would also have to include the brothers from the Crown of Aragon.

Modest figures regarding the number of brothers abound in other numerical records referring to the Order of Calatrava during the fifteenth century. The first piece of information refers to the mastership election of 1445 when thirty-three brothers, two of them clerics, gave their vote and pledged allegiance to the master Pedro Girón, while seven knights and fourteen clerics supported the grand commander Juan Ramírez de Guzmán. Thus, a total of fifty-six Calatravan brothers were documented, once again excluding the Aragonese members of the order. A little over half a century later—in June 1496—we come across the first index of living Calatravan commanders and priors. The list features forty-seven Castilian commanders, nine Aragonese commanders, the sacristan, seven Castilian priors, and two Aragonese priors, coming to a total of sixty-six Calatravan brothers,⁵⁷ to which we should add the prior of Calatrava, the brothers not attached to an *encomienda*, and the remaining brother clerics.

The figures are definitely modest, which raises two points. The first is that the 150 attendees of the Chapter in 1302 represents a figure that is probably close

to the order's total number of members at the time. Second, the number of Calatravan brothers probably dropped during the fourteenth century. This probable decrease—like that of the later military orders—reflects the institution's need to adjust its membership to its available resources.

However, it is precisely the later military orders that can provide us with more reliable figures about their membership. The mandates of the Order of Christ of 1326 documented an overall number of eighty-six members, consisting of seventy-one brother knights, six brother sergeants, and nine brother clerics. A scant year later, the statutes of the divided Santiago of Portugal mentioned sixty-one brother knights, to which we would have to add the sergeants and clerics as well as the *seglares* (laymen) that the institution would have needed to adequately perform its duties. Shortly thereafter, the Chapter of the Order of Montesa of 1330 recorded data that seem to indicate the presence of almost thirty brother knights as well as a sergeant and four priors.⁵⁸ The figures in question are modest, befitting mid-sized orders that were founded during a time in which expectations for growth were limited. Thus, a realistic policy was imposed that struck a balance between the number of order members and the resources available for their upkeep. Consequently, these figures cannot be used as a point of reference for the largest and most important military orders.

2.2. An Estimate of the Orders' Number of Troops

The figures presented thus far refer to only the members of military orders and the potential number of knights and sergeants who could form part of their army. They do not indicate the full contribution that the orders made to the Christian armies, nor do they provide information on the number of soldiers who did not belong to the orders, but could form part of their host.

The scattered and fragmented information available on the armies that the orders could mobilize during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries make it impossible to formulate solid conclusions. However, the information does illustrate the weak institutional structure of the respective orders, the scarcity of soldiers, and the inability to provide a well-organized and consolidated military strategy. Even so, members of the military orders represented a permanent military force that was reinforced by the number of brothers available at any given time. Although these forces did not generally add up to a significant number, it should be remembered that most armies at that time were not particularly large.⁵⁹

We can start exploring the matter through partial figures provided by a reference in a later chronicle. Around 1198, the Calatravan Martín Martínez was able

to lead an expedition of four hundred knights and seven hundred foot soldiers, vassals of the Order of Calatrava, from Ciruelos, Zorita, Cogolludo, and other towns, into Muslim territory in the area of Manzanares. They managed to capture the castle of Salvatierra, taking advantage of the fact that its garrison was rather small. The conquered fortress would become the main Calatravan monastery until Muslim forces took it back in 1211. These figures seem inflated, however, when compared to other figures relating to the military orders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and have the added drawback of coming from a chronicler who was writing in the sixteenth century.⁶⁰

Sometime earlier, not far from the site mentioned above, nineteen brothers of Santiago lost their lives during the Battle of Alarcos (1195) while fighting alongside the Christian army. During the same battle, almost all of the Calatravan brothers perished; their numbers are probably similar to the number of the brothers of Santiago who died in the skirmish. In addition, the *Calenda* or *Obituario de Uclés* (Obituary of Uclés) tells us that four brothers of Santiago died during the siege of the Extremaduran fortress of Reina (1247) and another twenty-three knights of the same order died during the conquest of Seville (1248). During that campaign, the order's master led 280 knights into battle, most of whom were probably not members of the order. The same sixteenth-century chronicler mentioned above states that during the disaster of Moclín (1280), fifty-five brothers of Santiago lost their lives. Later on, the chronicler Ferrán Sánchez de Valladolid estimates that this number represents the majority of the brothers of Santiago.⁶¹

The information we have on the western territories of the peninsula also depends upon figures that are not particularly impressive. For example, in 1232, the master of Alcantara, Arias Pérez, occupied the Extremaduran region of La Serena with five hundred knights and *muchos peones* (many foot soldiers). Shortly thereafter, his successor as master of Alcantara, Pedro Ibáñez, gathered six hundred knights and two thousand foot soldiers from his vassals to participate in the conquest of Cordoba (1236). Almost two decades earlier, in 1217, the Order of Santiago had managed to mobilize three hundred knights to recover the strategic fortress of Alcácer.⁶²

The information from the Crown of Aragon supports the general tendencies shown thus far. For example, during the siege James I waged against the city of Valencia, the Aragonese Calatravans contributed thirty knights, whereas the Templars joined the campaign with twenty knights.⁶³ Before receiving the Templar assets, the Hospitallers provided the Aragonese monarchs with contingents that ranged from seventy to one hundred knights. Once the territories had been conquered, the kings of Aragon demanded permanent troop contingents for their defense. The number of knights requested from each order is shown in Table 2.⁶⁴

TABLE 2 Knights of the Military Orders Requested by the Aragonese Monarchy (1287–1342).

	ALPHONSE III	JAMES II ^a	PETER IV			
	1287	1303	1339	1340	1341	1342
HOSPITAL	30	60	80–90	60 (of the castellany of Amposta)	110	110 (70 of the castellany of Amposta + 40 of priory of Catalonia)
TEMPLE	30	100	—	—	—	—
CALATRAVA	20	30	30	20	30	—
SANTIAGO	—	20	10	15	15	15
MONTESA	—	—	50	40	60	60

a. Requested troops; the king actually obtained only 20–30 Templar knights.

From the available figures, it is possible to deduce the relevance of the military contribution the different orders made to the Aragonese monarchs. It seems logical to assume that this military contribution stood in direct relation to the importance of the seigniorial holdings that the various institutions held within the territory of the Aragonese Crown. Thus, the predominance of the Templars as a crucial military force among the orders seems clear, distantly followed by the Hospitallers, whose role was nevertheless notable. In third and fourth place we find the Calatravans and the Order of Santiago. On the other hand, the two Aragonese orders that survived into the thirteenth century, Alcalá de la Selva Mayor and St. George of Alfama, played a distinctly peripheral military role, further proof of their failure. The dissolution of the Templar Order changed the playing field. The Hospitallers, strengthened by the Templar possessions in Aragon and Catalonia, became the main military power among the orders. The knights of the Order of Montesa, heirs of the Templars and Hospitallers in Valencia, went on to occupy second place. The role of the Calatravan troops was reinforced, and they increased their relative participation at a time when the Aragonese monarchs supported more than a few attempts at independence by the *encomienda mayor* of Alcañiz. Finally, both the absolute and relative participation of the troops of Santiago declined.

It is precisely during the transition years from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century that the military orders culminated their institutional development and nearly completed the consolidation of their patrimonial domains. They also endowed the *encomiendas* with enough economic autonomy to maintain a

military force that could become an authentic operational unit if a mobilization became necessary. All of this led to an increase in and more precise regulation of their contributions to the military needs of the respective monarchies. Although the precise date is unknown, we know that the concept of the *lanza* (lance)—both a military and fiscal entity—emerged from this context. The lance was related to the new and more efficient organization of the orders in responding to the military summons issued by the royalty.

Experts in the field do not have a single, uniform criterion when it comes to characterizing the Hispanic lances. Most likely they were units smaller in size than the Burgundy lance, consisting of nine men, or the French lance, made up of six men. It seems plausible that a Hispanic lance consisted of at least one knight, equipped with the horse and armor corresponding to a mounted knight and accompanied by another lesser mount and one to three assistants.⁶⁵

It is not until the mid-fourteenth century that the lance takes on a prominent role in the Iberian realms as an essential military element in mobilizations. The Luso-Castilian War during the decade of 1380 showed that the involvement of lances had already become a practical reality. As a consequence of this conflict, both kingdoms realized the need for military reform in order to provide each territory with the minimum number of armies required to defend the realm. The Portuguese estimated that this army should consist of 3,200 lances, whereas in 1390 the Castilians set their sights on 4,500 lances and 1,500 cavalrymen. The cost of these troops was estimated at nine million maravedis. The military orders were obviously given an important role as part of the Castilian military reform. Therefore, the masters of the Orders of Santiago and Calatrava, along with three representatives of the highest nobility, participated in the preparatory commission that worked out and ultimately decided on the armies that were required to defend the kingdom. A muster decree was added to the lance decree, obliging all of the king's vassals, the troops of the nobility, and the troops of the military orders to undergo an annual review.⁶⁶

This important military reorganization raises the question as to how effective the military orders were in terms of troop mobilization. A document by Henry III of Castile (1390–1406) states that the master of Santiago had to provide five hundred lances and the master of Alcántara two hundred lances to defend the border with the Kingdom of Portugal.⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, during the taking of Antequera (1410), we know that the Order of Alcántara mobilized eighty lances from their two administrative areas in Extremadura in addition to the military contingents provided by the *encomienda* of Morón.⁶⁸ Around the same time, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, John I of Portugal established the code

of lances for his kingdom. He estimated the total number of lances required to guarantee the defense of the kingdom at 3,200. The military orders were required to contribute 340 lances, which was equal to 10.62 percent, divided as follows: 100 from the Order of Santiago, 100 from the Order of Christ, 80 from Avis, and 60 Hospitallers.⁶⁹

Although we lack information of this kind for the other kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, the context of the Granadan war, fought during the late fifteenth century, sheds light on the mobilizing potential of the three main Castilian orders. In 1480, the dignitaries of Santiago managed to contribute 519 lances: 301 from the province of Castile and 218 from the province of Leon. We should also add the lances provided by the master, whose resources would have yielded a number similar to that of the rest of the order. In 1493, a year after end of the Granadan war, when the lances identified within the Calatravan *encomiendas* were being assigned, it was determined that they had to provide 293 lances, of which 60 came from the *encomienda mayor* and 45 from the *encomienda* of the *clavería* (office of the key bearer). Based on what we know about its available revenues, the *mesa maestral* (a group of estates controlled by the master) would clearly have been capable of closely matching the number of lances provided by the commanders. On the other hand, in 1495, the lay dignitaries of the Order of Alcantara were able to mobilize 142 lances. Taking into account the resources available to the *mesa maestral* at the time, this number could probably have been more than doubled.⁷⁰

The information regarding the actual participants in the war of Granada provides us with a clearer picture of the true contribution the orders made to the Castilian troops overall, as can be seen in Table 3.⁷¹

TABLE 3 Troops That the Military Orders Contributed to the Granadan War.

	KNIGHTS	FOOT SOLDIERS	TOTAL
1482	270	—	270
1483	770	1,000	1,770
1484	196	1,486	1,682
1485	1,163	2,618	3,781
1486	933	2,175	3,108
1487	2,350	2,995	5,345
1488	2,265	3,055	5,320
1489	2,265	3,055	5,320
1491	1,290	2,178	3,468
1492	1,505	2,079	3,584

The troops belonging to the Iberian military orders were a noteworthy contingent among those provided by the nobility and the ecclesiastical prelates during the Granadan war. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada has estimated that, between 1478 and 1489, the troops of the orders contributed about 27 percent of the royal army.⁷² The military orders not only contributed troops to the Granadan war effort but also provided financial loans. Thus, in 1487, the master of Santiago issued a loan in the amount of 2,000,000 maravedis for this purpose, much like the prior of St. John did two years later, in the amount of 390,000 maravedis.⁷³

3. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY ORDERS' CONTINGENTS

Previously, we attempted to provide an estimate of the number of brothers in the military orders. We will now attempt to establish a qualitative assessment of the orders' military contingents. For a start, it is useful to explore the importance of the order troops in relation to the armies as a whole. In this case, we must clearly distinguish the Hispanic sphere from the other two frontiers of Christendom. The differences are significant enough so as to conclude that on the Eastern Germanic frontier and in the Holy Land the contributions by the military orders to the Christian army were clearly decisive, whereas on the Iberian Peninsula their quantitative presence, in relative terms, was decidedly modest. In some exceptional circumstances, however, the host of the military orders took on an extraordinary leading role even in the Iberian territories. In light of such reduced contingents, the question as to why the monarchs were so actively interested in the military orders' involvement in their territorial projects becomes inevitable. The answer can be found in a qualitative assessment of the orders.

The military orders were primarily valued for their lifelong military service. This was the essential characteristic of their qualitative contribution. The armies of the medieval West were defined by their heterogeneity and temporary character. The permanent military contingent was the exception to the rule and consisted solely of the royal armies and the fortress garrisons. This situation was particularly pronounced during the twelfth century when the military orders were first established. It was precisely the rarity of the permanent military contingents that led the monarchs of the Iberian realms to foster the introduction or creation of the military orders.⁷⁴ During a time of open war against the Muslims, the monarchies, which were beginning to extend their royal power, needed permanent armies that they could count on. This is what led to the birth of the military orders. The

host of the military orders thus joined forces with earlier permanent contingents. The united permanent contingents were, however, always a minority within the armies, which consisted primarily of temporary contingents provided by the aristocracy or the councils. Therefore, it was precisely their unusual character as a permanent army as well as their outposts along the Islamic frontier in the furthest and most dangerous positions that made the military orders so valuable.

The continuous nature of their military service and the immediate availability of their contingents earned the orders a permanent role in the royal armies. This trait was of particular value to the monarchy, which could thus count on the orders when it came to executing swift incursions into Al-Andalusian territory or organizing small-scale military operations between larger campaigns. The expedition organized by Alphonse VIII in February-March of 1213 provides a good example. The Orders of Calatrava and Santiago participated in this expedition and, assisted by only a modest number of troops, managed to take the fortresses of Cuevas, Alcalá, Dueñas, Eznavexore, Alcaraz, and Riopal.⁷⁵

The second characteristic trait of the orders' qualitative contribution was the fact that they were a highly trained and perfectly organized military elite. Their hierarchic structure and their adherence to a vow of obedience made for a very disciplined, well-trained, and permanently available contingent. Due to this vow of obedience, the military orders represented a structured, hierarchic force with a clearly defined chain of command. Therefore, internal cohesion, discipline, and professionalism were also values inherent to these institutions. The strict discipline displayed by their troops derived from the fact that they were religious orders who lived by a rule. These rules enabled them to readily accept and comply with the orders of their superiors and maintain proper formation in battle. It should be emphasized that breaking the vow of obedience was severely punished under the various rules of the institutions.⁷⁶

The orders' lifelong military vocation resulted in a high level of specialization, turning their contingents into elite units particularly suited to special operations: assaults, ambushes, strategic covers, supply lines for the garrisons, and other logistical operations. Thus, the order brothers were chosen for complex operations that required the kinds of skills and abilities that the orders were famous for. For example, when the siege of Seville began in 1247, Ferdinand III assigned control of Aljarafe to the brothers of Santiago. The operation was both complicated and risky due to a limited number of troops, the superior Muslim forces, and the fact that the Order was cut off from the rest of the Christian troops.⁷⁷ Furthermore, given their specialization, the orders probably held particularly vulnerable positions in the host formation such as the vanguard and rearguard, as they did

in the Holy Land. In short, the military orders constituted a veritable “specialized army unit serving the Reconquest.”⁷⁸

Thirdly, the military orders also played an important role as fortress garrisons, a crucial element in territorial control and dominion, which was seen as the main justification for the war against the Muslims. Control of the space enabled the frontiers and communication routes to be guarded and defended. Furthermore, the fortress garrisons could fulfill an offensive function by waging a war of attrition. Due to their permanent condition, these garrisons were perfectly positioned to inflict systematic damage on a specific area.⁷⁹

The military orders were also valued for their experience in battle and their knowledge of the enemy troops, their military tactics, and the frontier areas. This was precisely what enabled the brother knights to predict the maneuvers of the Muslim enemy troops and use their own tactics against them. Hence, the monarchs often used the brothers to provide advice or help in planning military actions. We know, for example, that the master of Santiago, Pelayo Pérez Correa, played an important role in organizing the military operations for the conquest of Seville. Furthermore, all of the orders were deeply involved in the campaigns led by Ferdinand III to conquer Andalusia. Shortly before that, in 1224, the Castilian monarch himself requested the immediate presence of the Calatravan master and the archbishop of Toledo in Carrión, where a curia was being held to deliberate whether or not to declare war on the Muslims.⁸⁰ The orders’ knowledge of the Muslim military capacity also allowed them to act prudently in battle and to advise the monarchs how to deal with their adversaries.⁸¹

Finally, the image projected by the military orders was linked to the militant crusade of the Church and the monarchies. This image had important, psychological repercussions, both among the Christian troops, for whom the participation of the orders justified the use of violence in defending the just cause of the Church and the Christian monarchies, and among the Muslims, who considered them the most dangerous, ferocious, and formidable enemy to face in combat. The Muslim chronicler saw in the Calatravans defending the advanced position of Salvatierra the true right hand of the king of Castile, to put it simply, his armed wing.⁸² In short, the military role of the orders was valued for their permanence, training, and organization, their role as fortress garrisons, their knowledge of the enemy, and their close connection to the Church.⁸³ All of these reasons explain why the troops of the medieval Iberian military orders were regarded so highly, a regard that far exceeded their quantitative contribution to the Christian army overall.

We should not, however, forget that the orders did not always live up to their reputations. In fact, they stood at the center of several resounding military fiascos,

although in some cases they bore only part of the responsibility. This was true for the Battle of Alarcos (1195), during which the Castilian army was thoroughly beaten by the Almohads. Although the Castilian monarch was largely responsible, it cannot be denied that the orders played a significant role. And the outcome could not have been more disastrous. As a result of this battle, the Order of Trujillo vanished, the Order of Calatrava lost their headquarters between Montes de Toledo and Sierra Morena, including their founding monastery-fortress, and the Order of Santiago saw an outstanding contingent of their brother knights lose their lives on the battlefield. On other occasions, however, the military orders were solely responsible for the failed military operations. During the disaster of Moclín (1280), for example, the knights of Santiago suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the Granadan Muslims, costing the order's master and most of the brother knights their lives. A little over a century later, the expedition led by the master of Alcántara, Martín Yáñez de Barbudo,⁸⁴ was equally ill fated. After leading his troops into the lowlands of Granada in 1394, the master and his knights were defeated by the much larger Granadan army. The master and all of the three hundred knights in his company died during the battle.⁸⁵

These two defeats point to another military characteristic of the orders, namely that they occasionally acted with complete independence, sometimes even going so far as to wage war against the Muslims during a truce. The expedition led by the master Martín Yáñez de Barbudo falls into this category. On other occasions, the orders obtained important benefits from acting on their own initiative, as can be seen in the Calatravan conquest of the fortress of Salvatierra (1198),⁸⁶ apparently launched when the Castilian kingdom and the Almohads had already agreed to a truce. Obviously, this freedom of action came with one important restriction: the orders could never act against the interests of the monarchies in question.

In light of these qualitative values and the limitations on the military orders' actions, the question arises as to whether the institutions effectively fulfilled the original purpose that had led to their creation and represented their *raison d'être*. The answer is somewhat complex.

First of all, we must remember that the military orders were systematically called upon to serve in whatever important, large-scale war efforts the monarchs were embarking upon. After all, the monarchs had created the institutions and helped to support them with new infusions of patrimonies and assets. This continuous support is an indication of how interested the monarchs were in the orders. In return, the orders fulfilled certain military assignments for the monarchs. The fact that the orders did not always live up to expectations did not alter this relationship. Perhaps the expectations of the ruling class and the orders were

simply too high, particularly in the early days when the orders had neither the human nor the financial resources nor the institutional maturity to meet them. Nevertheless, the monarchs continued to rely on the orders as they consolidated their respective territorial domains. With regards to their permanent commitment, the orders' quantitative contribution was far less important than the qualitative values discussed above. Their identification with the ideals of the militant crusade earned them the respect of Christians and inspired fear in their Muslim adversaries. The image of the *fratres* was a strong draw for Christians and could act as a demoralizing force on enemy troops.

The knights of the orders thus became true holy war professionals, knights or athletes of Christ, as they were referred to in documents of the time.⁸⁷ In other words, these were warriors sanctioned to fight in the Crusades, which were seen as the most just and holiest of all possible wars since they defended the cause of Jesus Christ and his Church. As a result, the use of violence was considered thoroughly justified. For this reason, the order brothers were compensated with indulgences,⁸⁸ which were also granted to anyone collaborating with them. In the most extreme cases, an example being the Order of Santiago, the institution itself received the Crusade Bull (early fourteenth century)⁸⁹ and was responsible for spreading its word.⁹⁰

In fact, the military orders had participated in the monarchies' most important military campaigns from the very beginning. After all, they did not have much of a choice. Whether they consistently and unfailingly displayed the military efficacy that was expected of them, however, particularly during the early days, is a very different question. Around the second third of the thirteenth century, when the institutions were starting to consolidate, the orders became more actively involved in the military campaigns of the monarchies, and they played a crucial role in several milestones of the Reconquista.

Toward the end of the thirteenth century, however, a certain reluctance to assume their military obligations against the Muslims could be perceived among the brothers. For decades only Castile had had an open Christian-Islamic frontier. Territorial expansion had slowed down and monarchical power had weakened. The principal cause was rooted in economic difficulties, which were exacerbated by a drastic decline in donations and the brothers' involvement in conflicts with other Christians.⁹¹ In the Kingdom of Aragon, monarchs like James I or Alphonse III saw their repeated demands for troops met with evasion. As a result, they were forced to seek papal assistance and to threaten the orders' estates if they did not send contingents for the war against the Muslims. Finally, the orders reluctantly gave in to these demands.

In terms of the Castilian territories, we have a representative example related to the complicated situation surrounding the minority of Alphonse XI (1312–25). In 1319, Pope John XXII had to urge the knights of Calatrava and their master to defend Christendom against the infidels by arguing that the political crisis affecting the kingdom had left the frontier in a precarious position.⁹² Toward the end of the following year, the pontiff himself put his apostolic legate William, Bishop of Sabina, in charge of an investigation into the assets of the four orders with Castilian roots—Calatrava, Santiago, Alcantara, and Hospital—to provide an exact estimate of the contingents they could send to the Granadan frontier. The pope also asked his legate to put pressure on the institutions to send the necessary troops to the Granadan frontier. In doing so the pope was echoing the insistent rumor that accused the orders of investing considerable sums *in usos illicitos*, thus neglecting the war against the Muslims.⁹³

This point definitely marked the beginning of a period during which the brothers were less involved in campaigns against the Al-Andalusian Muslims and increasingly participated in wars against other Christians.⁹⁴ The orders were involved in a process that was making them more aristocratic in nature. They were becoming involved in conflicts that differed greatly from their original, founding purpose, and, over time, this distanced them from their commitment to the holy war against the Muslims. It should be noted, however, that these interventions were responding to monarchical demands that forced the brothers to fight against other Christian troops. There were exceptions, of course, such as their participation in the war for the Strait of Gibraltar as well as occasional campaigns against Granada. The brothers' commitment to the fight against the Al-Andalusian Muslims was, in fact, proven during the definitive battle against Granada, in which the active involvement of the Orders of Santiago, Calatrava, and Alcantara was indisputable.⁹⁵

If the orders' military effectiveness in fighting the Muslims experienced ups and downs, we should also consider how reliable they were in protecting the fortresses under their care. Several accounts concerning this matter exist, and they indicate a scarcity of human resources and materials at the fortresses. During the early years, the aforementioned institutional weakness of the orders would explain why practically the entire network of castles within the *Campo de Calatrava* collapsed like a "house of cards" during the Almohad invasion of the summer of 1195.⁹⁶

During the last two medieval centuries, when the orders' immaturity no longer constituted a sound argument, accounts of abandoned fortresses, some of them referring to frontier enclaves, crop up with increasing frequency. For example, from 1300 onward, the Order of Calatrava lost several frontier castles to the Muslims.

A significant number of brothers blamed the master García López de Padilla, who, in their opinion, had neglected his duties. He had failed to provide adequate supplies as well as the sums needed to maintain the fortresses. He ended up losing his position in 1325 as a result of this accusation.⁹⁷ During the mid-fourteenth century, Caravaca and Cehegín, important castles belonging to the Order of Santiago, languished in a state of complete abandonment, leading Peter I of Castile to order the master Don Fadrique to repair them in 1352.⁹⁸ Fortresses were abandoned for many reasons: the high financial cost required for their adequate maintenance, their decreasing ability to withstand a siege (particularly evident with the advent of firearms), and the fact that their commanders showed less interest in using them as a place of residence, preferring the comforts of palatial homes instead. These factors became increasingly important during the fifteenth century, when the abandonment of castles, particularly if they were not located along the Granadan frontier, became widespread.

4. CONCLUSION

The military function was the *raison d'être* of the military orders and one that distinguished them from other religious orders. The main purpose of this activity was to fight the Muslims on the Andalusian frontier, during the period that stretched from the mid-twelfth century, when the Iberian orders were created, to the mid-thirteenth century, when Christian expansion began to lose its impetus. Although they continued to contribute to military campaigns against Muslims after this period, they were also frequently called upon by the peninsular monarchs to fight against other Christian kingdoms or even to engage in conflicts inside their own kingdoms. These activities inevitably led to confrontations, not only between military orders on opposing sides but also between members of the same order.

The orders' contribution to military campaigns in Iberia was not as important as in the Holy Land. By the mid-thirteenth century, when the major conquests had been completed, the two foremost Iberian orders, Calatrava and Santiago, probably had no more than about fifty knight-brethren each. The war of Granada, to which the orders contributed a most important contingent, was an exception.

On the other hand, the military orders' qualitative excellence was always greatly appreciated, due to the factors cited above. It is therefore the military orders' qualitative value that explains their outstanding contribution, especially by brothers of Calatrava and Santiago, to the main campaigns of the thirteenth century, such as Navas de Tolosa, Alcácer, and the conquest of some of the most important

strongholds in Valencia, Murcia, Extremadura, Portugal, and Andalusia. Although they were also contributors to resounding defeats, such as those of Alarcos (1195, Calatrava) and especially Moclín (1280, Santiago), we should not lose sight of the orders' outstanding contributions. When the Reconquista began to lose its force (after it had been completed in Portugal and in the Crown of Aragon), the military orders continued to participate in the most significant warlike enterprises undertaken by the Castilian monarchy, such as the campaign to conquer the peninsular side of the Straits of Gibraltar and the series of wars against the Nasrid emirate of Granada (1482–91), including the final offensive that led to its liquidation.

With the incorporation into the Crown of the *maestrazgos* of the Castilian orders (1489–94), however, these military orders began the final stage of their existence. They had now become completely stripped of their original *raison d'être*, and they were finally converted into mere instruments of social honor and prestige.

NOTES

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86. Rades y Andrada, *Chronica de Calatraua*, fol. 21v.

87. See, e.g., Aguado de Cordova et al., *Bullarium Equestris Ordinis S.Iacobi de Spatha*, 178.

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90. Ayala, *Las Órdenes militares Hispánicas*, 596–98.

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94. Forey, “Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest,” 230–34.

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97. *Crónica de Alfonso Onceno*, in *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla*, I, ed. Cayetano Rosell, "Biblioteca de Autores Españoles" (Madrid: Atlas, 1953), 171–392, see 200.

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