

Laurence W. Marvin, *The Damietta Crusade, 1217-1221: A Military History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024.

Martín Alvira Cabrer

(Universidad Complutense de Madrid)¹

The Fifth Crusade (1213-1221) was a great military enterprise, whose operations lasted several years (1217-1221) and which had real possibilities of success; nevertheless, it ended in resounding failure. The author of this new study calls it the “Crusade of Damietta”. In the preface he argues, following the opinion of other specialists, that it is better not to number the Crusades, since the origin of the numbering is not medieval and the traditional list, which has changed across time, usually leaves out some expeditions that should be included in it (p. xxxi-xxxiii).

There are recent works concerning the Damietta Crusade, in addition to the already classic work of James M. Powell², but the military history that would address the Fifth Crusade in its strategic, operational, tactical and even human dimensions, and one from both the Christian and Muslim perspective, has been lacking. This is the objective achieved by Laurence W. Marvin, professor of History at Berry College (Mount Berry, Georgia, USA), already a renowned specialist in the military and political history of the Albigensian Crusade³. Indeed, several military aspects

1 I thank my colleague and friend Damian J. Smith for correcting the English of this text.

2 James M. POWELL, *Anatomy of a Crusade 1213-1221*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1986; Thomas W. SMITH, *Curia and Crusade: Pope Honorius III and the Recovery of the Holy Land, 1216-1227*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2017; *The Fifth Crusade in Context: The Crusading Movement in the Early Thirteenth Century*, Elizabeth Jane Mylod, Guy J. Perry, Thomas W. Smith and Jan Vandeburie (ed.), Routledge, London, 2017.

3 *The Occitan War. A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008; “The White and Black Confraternities of Toulouse and the Albigensian Crusade, 1210-1211”, *Viator*, 40-1 (2009), p. 133-150; “The

Marvin had studied concerning the Occitan war are again very present here and more of this anon.

The book is organized into seven chapters and a conclusion. The text is accompanied by seven simple black and white maps (the medieval Mediterranean; the western Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the 13th century; the military operations in the center of the Syrian-Palestinian coast in 1217; the Egyptian coast and Nile Delta in 1218; the crusader camps and fortifications built in 1218 and 1219; the area of the Nile Delta where operations took place), a glossary of thirty medieval and modern military terms (p. 205-206), and the essential (and not always present in Spanish-Portuguese books) topo-onomastic index (p. 225-230).

Marvin builds his study from a broad and up-to-date bibliography, although almost entirely in English (p. 211-223)⁴. This is the main criticism that can be made of this work. Some books are cited in French (and some French works translated into English) and a few more in German. A few English-speaking specialists are enough to compose what he writes about Spain and Portugal⁵ and, in Spanish, only the classic study

Albigensian Crusade in Anglo-American Historiography, 1888-2013", *History Compass*, 11/12 (2013), p. 1.126-1.138.

- 4 He has only missed a few studies, some unpublished and the last one published too late to be incorporated: Christopher E. TAYLOR, *Waiting for Prester John: the Legend, the Fifth Crusade, and Medieval Christian Holy War*, M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2011 (unpublished); William J. PURKIS, "Memories of the Preaching for the Fifth Crusade in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*", *Journal of Medieval History*, 40 (2014), p. 329-345; Jan VANDEBURIE, "The Historiography of the Fifth Crusade", *The Fifth Crusade in Context: The Crusading Movement in the Early Thirteenth Century*, Elizabeth Jane Mylod, Guy J. Perry, Thomas W. Smith and Jan Vandeburie (ed.), Routledge, London, 2017, p. 5-11; Thomas W. SMITH, "Pope Honorius III, the Military Orders and the Financing of the Fifth Crusade: a Culture of Papal Preference?", *The Military Orders. Volume 6.1: Culture and Conflict in the Mediterranean World*, Jochen Schenk and Mike Carr (ed.), Routledge, London, 2017, p. 54-61; Jan VANDEBURIE, "The Preacher and the Pope: Jacques de Vitry and Honorius III at the Time of the Fifth Crusade (1216-27)", *Papacy, Crusade and Christian-Muslim relations*, Jessalynn L. Bird, Brenda Bolton, Anne J. Duggan and Damian J. Smith, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2018, p. 131-154; Christopher MIELKE, "A Queen's Crusading Connections: Yolanda of Courtenay, the Fifth Crusade, and the Military Orders", *Genius loci - Laszlovszky 60*, Dóra Mérai et al. (ed.), Archaeolingua, Budapest, 2018, p. 25-27; Thomas W. SMITH, "Papal Communication and the Fifth Crusade, 1217-21", *Communicating Papal Authority in the Middle Ages*, Minoru Ozawa, Tom W. Smith and Georg Strack (ed.), Routledge, London, 2023, p. 100-115.
- 5 Joseph O'CALLAGHAN, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2003; Stephen LAY, *The Reconquest Kings of Portugal. Political and Cultural Reorientation on the Medieval Frontier*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2009. See *infra*.

by Derek Lomax on Santiago is included⁶. Otherwise, references to the Iberian military orders are limited to studies published in English, with no mention of the vast literature in Spanish and Portuguese. The traditionally scant attention paid by English-speaking historians of medieval warfare to Iberian historiography seems a result of the lack of knowledge of the languages. Yet the silence remains somewhat disappointing when these specialist issues of Iberian history are addressed without acknowledgement of Iberian historians. Of course, the problem is not exclusive to Marvin (far from it). One cannot help in wondering just what comment would be made on a Spanish or Portuguese historian who wrote about Lord Edward's Crusade (sometimes called the Ninth Crusade) without citing a single work written by an English historian!

The first chapter (p. 1-31) explains to the reader how the Fifth Crusade was preached by Pope Innocent III in April 1213 through the bull *Quia major* (p. 1-8)⁷. Marvin mentions the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (although forgetting the participation of King Sancho VII of Navarre), but does not point out its decisive importance in the genesis of the Fifth Crusade; it was the grandest moment in the life of Innocent III and, as the pope saw it, a sign from God that Christians could press home an advantage in the East⁸. Its impact on the propitiatory liturgies of the crusade should also be noted⁹. It is striking that Marvin calls Las Navas de

6 Derek LOMAX, *La Orden de Santiago, 1170-1275*, CSIC, Madrid, 1965.

7 The expression « Latin Kingdom of Constantinople » (p. 7) rather than Latin Empire is strange when he describes the general situation in the East.

8 Bouvines, instead, is again considered “one of the largest pitched battles in the High Middle Ages” (p. 5). On the massive dimensions of the battle of 1212, see Martín ALVIRA CABRER, *Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212. Idea, liturgia y memoria de la batalla*, Sílex, Madrid, 2012; and Francisco GARCÍA FITZ, *Las Navas de Tolosa. La batalla del castigo*, Desperta Ferro Ediciones, Madrid, 2024 (1st edition 2005).

9 The importance of Las Navas de Tolosa in the genesis of the Fifth Crusade was already pointed out by Michele MACCARRONE, “Orvieto e la predicazione della crociata”, *Studi su Innocenzo III*, Antenore, Padua, 1972, p. 3-163, at 100-101; John C. MOORE, *Pope Innocent III (1160/61-1216). To Root Up and to Plant*, Brill, Leiden, 2003, p. 203-227; Damian J. SMITH, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon. The Limits of Papal Authority*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, p. 114; Martín ALVIRA CABRER, *Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212...*, p. 478-481; Damian J. SMITH, “La guerra contra los musulmanes en España en palabras del papa Inocencio III”, *Orígenes y desarrollo de la guerra santa en la Península Ibérica*, Carlos de Ayala, Patrick Henriët and J. Santiago Palacios (ed.), Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 2016, p. 207-218, at 217-218; Miguel D. GOMEZ, “Papado, obispos, y apocalipsis en el tiempo de Las Navas”, *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y guerra santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, Carlos de Ayala and J. Santiago Palacios (ed.), Sílex, Madrid, 2018, p. 343-360; Carlos de AYALA, “Honorio III, la cruzada y la Península Ibérica”, *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y guerra santa en la Edad Media*

Tolosa a battle, but never a crusade (p. 1, 6, 10, 37). Moreover, in the preface (p. xxx), when he describes the historiographical debate on the Crusades –the current of the “traditionalists” (Jerusalem) and the current of the “pluralists” or “revisionists” (other fronts)– the examples of crusades not directed to the Holy Land are those of the Baltic and the Albigensian, without mentioning the Iberian Crusades.

In this introductory part, the Christian and Ayyubid combatants and armies are presented (p. 8-21). The participation of Iberian crusaders –praised in the life of St. Francis by Tomasso da Celano¹⁰– is briefly mentioned (p. 8, 109, 127) but, unlike other contingents (Scottish, Polish, Croatian, Norwegian), is not accompanied by bibliographical references¹¹. In the description of the troops, and throughout the book, popular combatants of urban or communal origin are present (as well as women and children- at least, sometimes), a topic that has interested Marvin since his doctoral thesis and his first publications¹². The chain of command of this infantry of the crusader armies “still largely elude scholars” (p. 15), so it might be worth comparing it with the Iberian municipal militias or, at least, the Italian ones. Command and control of troops is another om-

peninsular (siglos X-XV), Carlos de Ayala and J. Santiago Palacios (ed.), Sílex, Madrid, 2018, p. 419-468, at 429-430; Miguel D. GOMEZ, “Archbishop Rodrigo, Honorius III, and the Fifth Crusade in Spain”, *The Fourth Lateran Council and the Crusade Movement*, ed. Damian J. Smith and Jessalynn Bird, Brepols, Turnhout, 2018, p. 193-217 (here without handling the bibliography in Spanish either); Martín ALVIRA CABRER, “La convocation du Quatrième Concile du Latran et la Croisade contre les Albigeois”, *The Fourth Lateran Council and the Crusade Movement*, Damian J. Smith and Jessalynn Bird (ed.), Brepols, Turnhout, 2018, p. 77-91, at 80-82.

10 Ferdinand Marie DELORME, “Les Espagnols à la bataille de Damiette”, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 16 (1923), p. 245-246.

11 Few specific names are known. In addition to the Portuguese cardinal legate Pelagius of Albano, in Egypt were present the bishop of Girona Ramon de Palafox, the bishop of Barcelona Berenguer de Palou II, and Pelayo, a cleric with a benefice from the cathedral of Orense. More uncertain is the participation of an archdeacon of the cathedral of Palencia who was named canon of Burgos; a canon of Coimbra; the notary (Occitan?) Bernat de Vilafranca; the moneylender Gui de Valença (an Occitan?); the Castilian nobles Rodrigo Díaz de los Cameros and Pedro González de Marañón, and the Viscount of Béarn Guillem Ramon de Montcada. See Carlos de AYALA, “Honorio III...”, p. 431-439; Martín ALVIRA CABRER, “*Destruir aquels qui renequen lo nom de Jhesuchrist*. El obispo de Barcelona Berenguer de Palou (1212-1241)”, *Hombres de religión y guerra. Cruzada y guerra santa en la Edad Media peninsular (siglos X-XV)*, Carlos de Ayala and J. Santiago Palacios (ed.), Sílex, Madrid, 2018, p. 361-418, at 377-378; James M. POWELL, *Anatomy...*, ap. II, p. 225; Damian J. SMITH, *Innocent III...*, p. 166-168.

12 *Warfare and the Composition of Armies in France, 1100-1218: An Emphasis on the Common Soldier* PhD, dir. Donald E. Queller and John A. Lynn, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1997; “...Men famous in combat and battle...: Common soldiers and the siege of Bruges, 1127”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 24-3 (1998), p. 243-258.

nipresent aspect in this book, which is logical considering that Marvin has dedicated several important works to it¹³. Although some authors have treated this issue in relation to warfare in the Iberian Peninsula in the 12th-13th centuries¹⁴, it would certainly be worthwhile for another scholar to delve deeper into this issue, using Marvin's contributions as a reference.

In this first chapter, several modern concepts are defined that Marvin considers applicable to the operations carried out in the Nile Delta –“blue water” (deep water naval warfare), “green water” (coastal warfare), “brown water” (naval or amphibious warfare on coasts, lakes, rivers)–, all of them in a context of superiority and, almost always, Christian naval supremacy. Marvin also explains to the reader several relevant military concepts, such as grand strategy, strategy, campaigns, operations, and tactics. The application of modern military terminology (in many cases taken from US Army doctrine) to the medieval past is one of the virtues of this book (“reconnaissance-in-force”, “comandos”, “partisans”) far from distorting the meaning of medieval warfare, gives a contemporary feel to the action and maneuvers of medieval armies, making them more understandable for today's reader. The author's military experience, as a sailor for several years on the nuclear-powered fast attack submarine USS Richard B. Russell (SSN-687), is perhaps the origin of this decision. Equally successful are Marvin's allusions to episodes of contemporary wars (especially from the Second World War) and the comparisons with present military reality, for example, regarding communication problems (the slowness of news), the consensual nature of medieval military authority, the limitations of intelligence ser-

13 “Medieval and Modern C2: Command and Control in the Field During Western Europe's Long Twelfth Century (1095-1225)”, *War & Society*, 35-3 (2016), p. 152-179; “King Louis VII as General on the Second Crusade: A Failure of Command, Control and Communication”, *Louis VII and His World*, Michael Bardot and Laurence W. Marvin (ed.). Brill, Leiden, 2018, p. 29-49; “Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse”, *The Worst Military Leaders in History*, John M. Jennings and Charles Steele (ed.), Reaktion Books, London, 2022, p. 217-231; “Philip II's Eye of Command and the Battle of Bouvines”, *The Journal of Medieval Military History*, 21 (2023), p. 129-146; “Command in Latin Europe, ca. 500-1453”, *Oxford Handbook to Medieval Military History*, John France, Clifford J. Rogers and Daniel Franke (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press (forthcoming).

14 Carlos Filipe AFONSO, *A Guerra Cristã na formação de Portugal (1128-1249)*, Colibri-Comissão Portuguesa de História Militar, Lisboa, 2022, p. 463-466; Martín ALVIRA CABRER, “El Llibre del Fets de Jaime I de Aragón como manual militar”, *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 40-1 (2022), p. 35-62; *Comandantes hispánicos medievales: siglos XII-XIII*, Desperta Ferro, Madrid, 2022 (Cuadernos de Historia Medieval, 5).

vices, as well as logistical and health problems. We believe that these comparisons could also be applied more frequently to studies on medieval warfare in an Iberian context.

In the final part of the introduction, the rich documentary and chronicle sources for the Fifth Crusade are presented –Oliver de Paderborn, the letters of Jacques de Vitry, the *Chronique d'Ernoult*, the *Quinti Belli Sacri scriptores minores*, the *Testimonia Minora de Quinto Bello Sacro*, the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Wasil (via al-Maqrizi's writing), among others–, all deftly handled and exploited by the author (p. 25-31 and 207-210).

The second chapter describes the expedition of the Frisian and German crusaders in 1217-1218 (p. 32-61), including the conquest of Alcácer do Sal from the Almohads (p. 38-41). Marvin handles the poem of the conquest in its English translation¹⁵ and mainly through the studies of the specialist Lucas Villegas-Aristizábal¹⁶, although lacking the Iberian and especially the Portuguese bibliography on the subject¹⁷. Iberian af-

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- 15 *De expugnatione Salaciae carmen*, ed. and English transl. Jonathan Wilson, *The conquest of Santarém and Goswin's song of the conquest of Alcácer do Sal. Editions and translations of "De expugnatione Scalabis" and Gosuini "De expugnatione Salaciae carmen"*, Routledge, London, 2023. See also Aires Augusto NASCIMENTO, "Poema de conquista: a tomada de Alcácer do Sal aos mouros (1217)", *Poesía latina medieval (siglos V-XV). Actas del IV Congreso del "Internationales Mittellateinerkomitee"*, José Manuel Díaz de Bustamante and Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz (ed.), SISMELE-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005, Firenze, p. 619-637; and Maria Teresa TAPIA S. and F. Lopes PEREIRA, "Memória Cruzadística do Feito da Tomada de Alcácer (1217) (Com base no Carmen de Gosuino)", *2.º Congresso histórico de Guimarães. Actas do congresso*, 4 vol., Camara municipal de Guimarães, Guimarães, 1996, vol. II, p. 319-358.
- 16 Lucas VILLEGAS-ARISTIZÁBAL, "Did Savary of Mauléon Participate in Alfonso IX's Failed Siege of Caceres 1218?", *De Medio Aevo*, 7-1 (2018), p. 99-118; "A Frisian Perspective on Crusading in Iberia as Part of the Sea Journey to the Holy Land, 1217-1218", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd Series, 15 (2018), p. 67-149; "Was the Portuguese Led Military Campaign Against Alcácer do Sal in the Autumn of 1217 Part of the Fifth Crusade?", *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 31-1 (2019), p. 50-67.
- 17 Carlos Filipe AFONSO, "Técnicas e tácticas de assédio e defesa dos castelos em Portugal no contexto da Reconquista - O caso de Alcacer do Sal, 1217", *Fortificações e território na península ibérica e no Magreb séculos VI a XVI*, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes (coord.), Edições Colibri-Campo Arqueológico de Mértola, Lisboa, 2013, p. 517-540; Francisco GARCÍA FITZ and Feliciano NOVOA PORTELA, *Cruzados en la Reconquista*, Marcial Pons, Madrid, 2014, p. 125-130; Carlos Filipe AFONSO, "Um castelo que é, de todos, o mais ameaçador: A conquista de Alcácer (1217)", *"Fechos de armas". 15 hitos bélicos del Medievo ibérico (siglos XI-XVI)*, Martín Alvira Cabrer and Miguel Gomes Martins (ed.), La Ergástula, Madrid, 2021, p. 73-86; José Manuel Henriques VARRANDAS, "O assédio a Alcacer. Alguns problemas de historia militar", *Da conquista de Lisboa à conquista de Alcácer, 1147 - 1217: definição e dinâmicas de um território*

fairs are contemplated from a perspective more attentive to the situation in the East. This is due to the absence of Iberian bibliography, but also, probably, to the traditional lack of awareness (likewise evident in the Spanish and Portuguese historiography) of the connections from the very first moments of the crusading movement, between the crusades in the East and the Iberian crusades, especially from the perspective of the papacy. Marvin focuses on the annulment of the benefits of the Hispanic crusade established in the Fourth Lateran Council (p. 2 and 37), but not on the reopening of the “Iberian crusader front” by Pope Honorius III when he appointed Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo as legate *a latere* in Spain (January 1218), which gave rise to several crusading campaigns in Iberian territory parallel to the Egyptian crusade¹⁸.

Once in the Holy Land, the first operations of the crusaders focused on Mount Tabor, a position of strategic importance for Innocent III. Marvin describes the problems of command that characterized the entire crusade, as Honorius III wanted the King of Hungary, Andrew II, to lead it, although Andrew had little interest in the crusade, while the King of Jerusalem, John I of Brienne, was the best tactical leader in the army. Marvin also points out the lack of a concrete strategic objective, which had probably decided at the Fourth Lateran Council, but was not fully defined until late 1217 or early 1218.

The third chapter (p. 62-90) recounts the Crusaders’ landing in Egypt and the siege of the famous Chain Tower, an advanced fortification of the city of Damietta situated on the coast, which had to be neutralized before attacking Damietta and then advancing towards Cairo. The fierce fighting until its conquest at the end of August 1218 is described with great precision, given Marvin’s expertise in siege warfare, which he had already studied in detail in the case of the Albigensian Crusade¹⁹. In

de fronteira, Isabel Cristina Ferreira Fernandes and Maria João Violante Branco (ed.), Colibri, Lisboa, 2019, p. 365-390.

- 18 Francisco GARCÍA FITZ, *Relaciones políticas y guerra. La experiencia castellano-leonesa frente al Islam. Siglos XI-XIII*, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla, 2002, p. 134-138 and 151-156; Miguel D. GÓMEZ, “Archbishop Rodrigo...”, p. 193-217 (cited by Marvin, although not exploited for this issue); Carlos de AYALA, “Honorio III...”, p. 429-431 and 440-457.
- 19 “War in the South: A First Look at Siege Warfare in the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218”, *War in History*, 8-4 (2001), p. 373-395; “The Massacre at Béziers July 22, 1209: A Revisionist Look”, *Heresy and the Persecuting Society in the Middle Ages. Essays on the Work of R. I. Moore*, Michael Frassetto (ed.), Brill, Leiden, 2006, p. 195-225; “Los más temibles asedios, 1209-1215”, *Desperta Ferro. Antigua y Medieval*, 56 (2019: *La cruzada contra los cátaros I. La batalla de Muret*), p. 52-57.

these pages we appreciate the difficulties faced by the Crusaders when carrying out an amphibious assault, aggravated by the climatic conditions (storm, wind, floods) and geography, fundamental aspects in the development of a military campaign to which the author pays merited attention. In the specific case of Egypt, the flooding of the Nile River significantly disrupted the capabilities of the besieging army, and the currents often hampered the movements of the Christian fleet. A great storm in November 1218 greatly weakened the Christians besieging Damietta.

The continuous relief of combatants in the crusader army (an indulgence was granted for one year of service) was another of the great problems of the Fifth Crusade. Marvin had already detected the negative military consequences of this time-limit when studying the Albigensian Crusade²⁰. When the crusaders had fulfilled their vow, they abandoned the army, depriving it not only of a significant number of troops but also of men who had acquired invaluable military experience and of leaders who, at times, were irreplaceable due to their status, charisma and leadership. This question of military experience is another topic that deserves the attention of specialists in medieval Iberian warfare, where the sources allow it.

The operations around Damietta occupy the fourth chapter (p. 91-120). While the siege failed to advance, the strategic situation changed in February 1219 following a plot against the Ayyubid sultan al-Kamil. His hasty escape allowed the crusaders to take his camp without fighting. This success, however, was not exploited in the following months. The strategic actions of the Ayyubids in Palestine (destroying the walls of Jerusalem) weakened the pressure from the crusaders in Egypt. The new assaults coordinated by the legate Pelagius of Albano crashed against the walls of Damietta. One reason for this, Marvin suggests, is that the sultan could anticipate when the crusaders were preparing an attack and, thus, attack their camp at the same time. The failures caused unrest among the Christians and led to the search for a head-on clash to draw al-Kamil's army away from the siege. The result was the Battle of Fariskur (29 August 1219), already studied by Marvin in a previous work²¹. In these pages he recognizes something traditionally under-

20 "Thirty-Nine Days and a Wake-Up: The Impact of the Indulgence and Forty Days Service on the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218", *The Historian*, 65-1 (2002), p. 75-94.

21 "The Battle of Fariskur (29 August 1219) and the Fifth Crusade: Causes, Course and

valued by historiography – “the sophistication of medieval soldiers in planning joint operations” (p. 114). Fariskur, which was a tactical defeat despite the good-ordered retreat of the Crusaders, did not change their general strategy.

In the fifth chapter (p. 121-145) the famous negotiations between al-Kamil and the Crusaders (September-November 1219) are discussed. The Sultan’s offer is seen as proof of the Christians’ position of strength despite their defeat at Fariskur. Marvin warns that medieval authors had already taken sides (a posteriori) on the rejection of the agreement in order to share the blame for the defeat. He then finely analyses in detail the characters and arguments of the army’s leaders, without getting carried away by previous interpretations, especially those condemning the attitude of the legate Pelagius of Albano (*Paio Galvão* in Portuguese, although he does not indicate his origin)²². The author is very interested in this character, whose organizational and leadership skills he reappraises²³. Pelagius’s initiative led to the capture of the city of Damietta in November 1219. The Crusaders then strengthened their position by taking control of Tinnis, on the eastern shore of the great Lake Manzala.

In the years 1220-1221, the Crusaders went from being in a favourable position to conquer Egypt to being defeated and expelled from the country (chapter six, p. 146-167). Marvin explains why the Christians did not take advantage of the opportunity by recalling how important it is for the military historian (and not only military historians) to interpret the facts from the reality of the moment of a campaign and not a posteriori, from its already known outcome. The great expectations of the Christian army were affected by an increase in internal problems (disputes over supreme command, revolts over the division of the spoils) and the distrust of the troops towards their leaders. A new strategic di-

Consequences”, *The Journal of Military History*, 85-3 (2021), p. 597-618.

22 The legate was also studied by Otto HASSLER, *Ein Heerführer der Kurie am Anfang des 13. Jahrhunderts: Pelagius Galvani, Kardinalbischof von Albano*, Druck von E. Ebering, Berlin, 1902; by two Spanish historians in the mid-twentieth century: José María FERNÁNDEZ CATÓN, “El Cardenal leonés Pelayo Albanense (1206-1230)”, *Archivos leoneses*, 7-14 (1953), p. 97-116; Demetrio MANSILLA REOYO, “El Cardenal hispano Pelayo Gaitán (1206-1230)”, *Anthologica annua*, 1 (1953), p. 11-66; and more recently by Christian GRASSO, “Cardinale Pelagio d’Albano legato papale e predicatore della quinta crociata”, *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 108-1 (2013), p. 98-143.

23 “Pelagius of Albano: Eminence Grise of the Fifth Crusade”, *Kill Them All, God Will know His Own. Clerical Violence and Violent Clerics in Medieval Europe*, L.J. Andrew Villalon and Donald J. Kagay (ed.), Brill, Leiden (forthcoming).

version led by al-Mu'azzam, brother of Sultan al-Kamil, attacking Christian positions in Syria, caused John of Brienne to withdraw to his lands with a good part of his best troops. Cardinal Pelagius wanted to relaunch the offensive, but he lacked sufficient military authority to convince the nobles and knights. The expected arrival of Frederick II was another key factor in Christian passivity during 1220. Marvin does not forget the spread of prophecies related to Prester John which encouraged the crusaders (although not enough to relaunch the offensive).

The seventh chapter (p. 168-194) analyses the new negotiations offered by the sultan, the development of the offensive desired by the legate (without the approval of the pope or Frederick II), and the final failure of the Fifth Crusade. The Christians advanced towards Cairo after the return of John of Brienne with sound military and moral preparation. The offensive was carried out adequately and had good prospects for victory despite the intrinsic difficulties of war in the Nile Delta, which, again, are well explained by Marvin. In his opinion, the Crusader defeat has much to do with the military talent of Sultan al-Kamil, who carried out a skilful operational withdrawal and blocked the Christians in front of the Nile canal located next to Mansoura. Just as with the first phase of the Seventh Crusade (1248-1250), led by Louis IX, the blockade generated serious logistical, disciplinary and health problems in the Crusader army. The desperate retreat northwards was a disaster, the grave consequences of which were mitigated by al-Kamil's willingness to negotiate. To avoid further casualties among his troops and, above all, to ensure the recovery of Damietta, the Sultan accepted the surrender of the Crusaders on generous and intelligent terms. Marvin sees al-Kamil as a humane leader, as well as a good politician and a great commander.

In the conclusion (p. 195-203) a comparison is offered with the Seventh Crusade, in which the events of the Fifth were repeated almost point by point, even though it did not suffer from the same military problems (such as the coming and going of troops or the lack of unity of command). Marvin convincingly explains the causes for the defeat: the problems derived from the lack of operational command; the disputes for command between John of Brienne, the best military leader, and the legate Pelagius, a great organizer and the only one with a strategic vision; the absence of Frederick II, which conditioned everything, because he was always awaited; and the political and military virtues of al-Kamil. The demanding military circumstances of the Fifth Crusade,

led by a multi-ethnic Christian army without a single command, forced to practice amphibious warfare in Egypt, a particularly difficult theatre of operations, and against a capable and skilful Muslim enemy, led Marvin to wonder not about the success of the expedition, but how the crusaders were able to fight on for so long.

We end with another theme that is ever present in this new military history by Laurence W. Marvin: the discipline of medieval combatants²⁴. He recalls the ordinances established by the Frisian and German crusaders in 1217-1218 (p. 34-35) and by the entire Christian army on the eve of the final assault on the city of Damietta to impose order and the authority of the commanders (p. 134-135). We see here other clear parallels with the Iberian campaigns, specifically with the rules imposed on the armies of King James I of Aragon, first in December 1229, just before the assault on the city of Mallorca, and then in November 1265, on the army that was to enter the lands of the kingdom of Castile²⁵. The awareness of discipline among medieval Iberian commanders, as well as its concrete application, are surely topics pending fuller treatment for Spanish-Portuguese military historians. In this aspect, as in many others, this excellent new book by Laurence W. Marvin offers us interesting new terrain.

24 He had already studied it in "Frontier Fighting in Ireland and Livonia, 1170-1220: Technology, Discipline, and Non-Knightly Soldiers", *Themática*, 1 (1994), p. 4-16.

25 Martín ALVIRA CABRER, "Guerra e ideología en la España del siglo XIII. La conquista de Mallorca según la *Crónica* de Bernat Desclot", *En la España medieval*, 19 (1996), p. 37-50, at 45-47; Martín ALVIRA CABRER, "El *Llibre del Fets*", p. 48.