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# Social Mobility in Medieval Italy
# (1100-1500)

*edited by*
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# The Christian Kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula (1100-1500): Concepts, Facts and Problems Concerning Social Mobility*

## 1. *Introduction*

 With my contribution to this congress my aim is to assess the way the subject of social mobility in the Iberian Peninsula from the twelfth to the fifteenth century has been treated by historians. I shall focus particularly on the research referring to the territories eventually incorporated into the Christian kingdoms in that period, and I shall look above all at the analyses relative to the Crowns of Castile and Aragon and the Kingdom of Portugal and, to a somewhat lesser extent, a few studies concerning the Kingdom of Navarre.

 As is usually the case in syntheses of this kind, with the Iberian Peninsula one also has to admit that it is not an easy task to summarize the many studies written previously by different authors, sometimes with contrasting methodological points of view and arguments, who moreover deal with lengthy periods of time and different regions and political entities. Beyond certain parallels or common foundations, disparate amounts of documentary records are available for these regions and entities; they occasionally developed differently, and were moreover characterized by varying institutional, social and economic structures.

 Due to the above, there is always a risk of excessively simplifying the historiographical and historical realities. Firstly, because the inevitable personal choice of studies and lines of interpretation may lead one to construct an overview in which certain aspects that appear to be important are actually not; they may even be regarded as irrelevant by other experts. Secondly, if one aspires to look for major dynamics and trends in history, the variety implicit in the wide range of territorial, sectoral and individual situations entailed in any period of the past is hidden.

 Assuming these problems to be unavoidable, I nevertheless believe that the work done by historians on the Christian part of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages does initially allow one to make two general statements, which coincide with conclusions presented in the book *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo*, published in 2010 and coordinated by Sandro Carocci.[1]

In the first place, in medieval Iberian studies social mobility has not until recently been a specific, main subject for examination, although there have been a few exceptions.[2] Most of the data and analyses of this mobility are dispersed in a large number of studies, focusing above all on political or socioeconomic issues, which attest to the processes of social transformation that took place in the Christian kingdoms of the peninsula. As proof of this, one only has to refer to the volume *Historia social de España, 1400-1600* published by Teófilo F. Ruiz in 2001 (in English) and 2002 (in Castilian). On one hand, it includes numerous examples with respect to the aforementioned processes. On the other, however, only one chapter is specifically about social mobility. This section includes the last three pages of the book, where it acknowledges that the principal features of Spanish society in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries included the fluid nature of social strata, the growing subversion of the boundaries between these strata and the considerable breakdown of barriers between all groups, but especially between the middle classes and the nobility.[3]

Secondly, despite these factors that condition our knowledge of the subject, the social mobility that can be discerned in the work of Iberian historians presents an immense series of arguments, at once complex and problematic. This is so because, among other reasons, researchers in the Iberian Peninsula have been advancing in a line similar to that which was identified for Europe in the above-mentioned book of 2010: attesting to and gaining a greater understanding of the complexity and the multidimensional nature of medieval societies.[4] If I may be permitted to draw a parallel, one might say that, upon gaining a greater understanding of this complexity, the ideas of Iberian medievalists have evolved in the same way as social thinking did in the Middle Ages, at least from what can be seen in the work of different Castilian and Aragonese authors of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

1. *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo*, ed. by Sandro Carocci, Rome, École française de Rome, 2010. The conclusions in this volume to which I refer appear in the articles by Sandro Carocci, "Introduzione: la mobilità sociale e la 'congiuntura del 1300'. Ipotesi, metodi d'indagine, storiografia", pp. 1-37: 19, and Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Conclusioni. Mobilità e identità sociale", pp. 577-589: 577.

2. One of these exceptions is Miguel Rodríguez Llopis, "Procesos de movilidad social en la nobleza conquense: la Tierra de Alarcón en la Baja Edad Media", in *Tierra y familia en la España meridional, siglos XIII-XIX. Formas de organización doméstica y reproducción social*, ed. by Francisco García González, Murcia, Universidad de Murcia, 1998, pp. 45-85. Exceptions too, but far more recent, are Paulino Iradiel, "*Ego... considerans me devenisse ad maximam penuriam et inopiam*. Mecanismos de promoción y pobreza de la burguesía urbana", in *Ricos y pobres: opulencia y desarraigo en el occidente medieval*, XXXVI Semana de Estudios Medievales (Estella, 20 a 24 de julio de 2009), Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra, 2010, pp. 275-305; and *Categorias sociais e mobilidade urbana na Baixa Idade Média. Entre o Islão e a Cristandade*, ed. by Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar and Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros, Lisbon, Colibri and CIDEHUS/UE, 2012.

3. Teófilo F. Ruiz, *Historia social de España, 1400-1600*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2002, pp. 272-274.

4. Carocci, "Introduzione", pp. 8 and 12.

When designing the organization of society, in these authors one sees the passage from the traditional, rigid, simplistic notion of the famous "three orders" to the more nuanced and variable idea of the existence of diverse "estates of the world".[5]

With the above in mind, I have not approached my text with the intention of being exhaustive in either bibliography or argumentation. My aim is to show different patterns of concept, method and content that I feel are significant in order to guide oneself through the historiography concerning the Christian parts of the Iberian Peninsula from the twelfth century onwards.[6] In choosing these patterns, I have attempted to avoid being too repetitive with respect to the articles in the 2010 volume which referred precisely to the example of the Iberian Peninsula, in some cases also with a palpable wish to assess the current state of knowledge.[7] The areas of research with which I am most familiar will be very important: the towns and cities of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in the later Middle Ages, from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. Finally, I should add that in seeking out the patterns of social mobility, I have been guided by the broad definitions in this respect put forward by Sandro Carocci: social mobility should be understood as any movement of individuals, families and groups on the ladder of economic inequalities, any changes in the sphere of consideration and prestige, in the forms of political participation, and in any other relevant aspect in a given society.[8]

## 2. *Questions of vocabulary, concept and method*

The confirmation of the processes of relocation to which I have just alluded has made it possible to see, in the Iberian Peninsula, an initial series of conceptual and methodological aspects that are comparable to those existing in other European regions.

A possible initial perspective may be the great deal of vertical and horizontal movement that historians have noted in peninsular societies. Of the two, the tendency has been to stress the vertical, particularly when mobility was upward. However, we ought not to overlook what has been explained about one Iberian city (Valencia), above all in the fifteenth century, in relation to one of the pathways of

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5. José María Monsalvo Antón, *La Baja Edad Media en los siglos XIV-XV. Política y cultura*, vol. 10 of *Historia de España. 3.ᵉʳ milenio*, dir. by Elena Hernández Sandoica, Madrid, Síntesis, 2000, pp. 303-309.

6. When dealing with this historiography, I include not only that generated in Spain and Portugal, but also that produced by historians from other countries. Therefore, if throughout the study I use expressions such as "Iberian historiography" or the like, these must be understood in the broad sense that I mention.

7. *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo*, above all the contributions of Carlos Laliena Corbera ("Las transformaciones de las élites políticas de las ciudades mediterráneas hacia 1300. Cambios internos y movilidad social", pp. 147-185), Pascual Martínez Sopena ("La movilidad de la nobleza (España, ca. 1250-1350)", pp. 209-238) and Jorge Díaz Ibáñez ("La formación de las élites eclesiásticas. Aportaciones de la historiografía castellana y portuguesa", pp. 309-339).

8. Carocci, "Introduzione", p. 2, and Id., "Social Mobility and the Middle Ages", *Continuity and Change,* 26 (2011), pp. 367-404: 369.

social advancement that has almost always been thought of as very common: that which led from the bourgeoisie to the nobility. This process could be slow, related to a minority only, and in some cases it could point to intergenerational change. In actual fact, the overriding factor among the bourgeoisie was not the step up to higher aristocratic status, but a veritable circle of wealth that led to mobility within the same stratum.[9] Such a conclusion tells us two things: on the one hand, we must be cautious about being too free with the term "social ascent" in the cities and towns of the later Middle Ages; on the other, we need to look more closely at the internal or horizontal trends that may have existed in them.[10]

Be that as it may, any mobility strategy presents us with the problem of defining the individuals or groups that were involved in each movement, and the elements that distinguished one group from another. It is a problem of concepts and of the relationship between the past and the present, given that the question is one of dealing with the vocabulary of the medieval sources and their translation into the language of contemporary historical knowledge. The importance of this aspect has of course led scholars in the peninsula to give it a certain degree of attention, far more so when they have realized how ambiguous the sources can be or when they have perceived that the contrast between documents, studies and authors has occasionally resulted – not just in the Iberian Peninsula – in a "conceptual and theoretical jungle".[11] In my opinion, the importance of this point has been clearly appreciated in recent decades in Spain and Portugal in two research objectives.

The first one deals with the analysis of the social elites. These, often in accordance with European initiatives, have been observed from territorial or sectoral perspectives, or those emphasizing the foundations of their respective backgrounds. On the basis of these different approaches, numerous initiatives all over the Iberian Christian kingdoms have paid attention to the existence of a variety of elites – urban and rural, political and economic, municipal, and peasant, mercantile, artisanal and ecclesiastical.[12] There has even been talk, as in fifteenth-

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9. Iradiel, "*Ego*", pp. 296-299. Note the contrast between these assertions and the ones by Teófilo F. Ruiz that I have reproduced.

10. It has been underlined thus at a European level by Maire Vigueur, "Conclusioni", pp. 584-585, and Giuseppe Petralia, "Problemi della mobilità sociale dei mercanti (secoli XII-XIV, Italia e Mediterraneo europeo)", in *La mobilità sociale nel medioevo*, pp. 247-271: 247 and 249.

11. Jan Dumolyn, "Later Medieval and Early Modern Urban Elites: Social Categories and Social Dynamics", in *Urban Elites and Aristocratic Behaviour in the Spanish Kingdoms at the End of the Middle Ages*, ed. by María Asenjo-González, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013, pp. 3-18, the citation on p. 7.

12. Some of these initiatives, a consequence in quite a few opportunities for research projects or academic gatherings, can be seen included in the following publications, which I place in chronological order: dossier *Oligarquías políticas y elites económicas en las ciudades bajomedievales (siglos XIV-XVI)*, ed. by Rafael Narbona, *Revista d'Història Medieval*, 9 (1998), pp. 7-214; dossier *Ciudades y élites urbanas en el Mediterráneo medieval*, ed. by Paulino Iradiel and Rafael Narbona, *Revista d'Història Medieval*, 11 (2000), pp. 7-187; *Elites e redes clientelares na Idade Média. Problemas metodológicos*, ed. by Filipe Themudo Barata, Lisbon, Colibri and CIDEHUS/UE, 2001; Antoni Furió, "Las elites rurales en la Europa medieval y moderna. Una aproximación de conjunto", in *El lugar del campesino. En torno a la obra de Reyna Pastor*, ed. by Ana Rodríguez, Valencia, Universitat de València and Consejo Superior

century Castile, of an *élite del "común"*, that is, a select group of people from the unprivileged strata of Castilian cities that rose above others of their status. They generally came from mercantile and artisanal backgrounds, had accumulated wealth and patrimony, and aspired to socio-political progress.[13]

The word "elite", if we disregard the ideological connotations that it acquired in the early twentieth century, has been widely used – in the Iberian Peninsula at least – to reproduce the discontinuity that characterized the social fabric of the Middle Ages and the presence of minorities in a position of political, social, economic and cultural supremacy.[14] It has done so despite the vagueness or scope that the concept may have, or precisely due to this, and for reasons of pragmatism or intellectual convenience.[15] It has also done so despite the other terms that historians have had at their disposal to refer to the said minorities, and the inevitable parallels, overlaps and contrasts caused by using different words to describe the same situation, or in order to describe a particular aspect within that situation. This is the case with research into cities, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries especially, and the relationship that must be established between notions such as urban "elite", "oligarchy" and "patriciate", and even that of "bourgeoisie".[16]

In any event, studies on this subject have made it possible to demonstrate the existence of plural and multifactorial elites. The full significance of the growth of elites was only achieved within a particular network of different kinds of relationships, which can be understood by examining the macro and micro levels of society.[17] In the dialectical play between the two levels, what historians have defined as typical of elites is an amalgam of conditions in which those associated with political power and institutional office or economic power almost always stand out, jointly or separately. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the models already defined of the rural elites in Castile and the mercantile elites of the Crown of Aragon may be good examples of this.[18] Nevertheless, attempts to verify these

de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007, pp. 391-421; Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, "Municipal Power", in *The Historiography of Medieval Portugal (c. 1950-2010)*, ed. by José Mattoso, Lisbon, Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2011, pp. 209-230: 210-212; *Urban Elites*.

13. María Isabel del Val Valdivieso, "Ascenso social y lucha por el poder en las ciudades castellanas del siglo XV", *En la España medieval*, 17 (1994), pp. 157-184: 166-176, and "Elites urbanas en la Castilla del siglo XV (Oligarquía y Común)", in *Elites e redes*, pp. 72-83; Yolanda Guerrero Navarrete, "Poder patricio e identidad política en Burgos", *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 (2009-2010), pp. 63-91: 68-69.

14. David Igual Luis, "La formación de élites económicas: banqueros, comerciantes y empresarios", in *La Corona de Aragón en el centro de su historia, 1208-1458. Aspectos económicos y sociales*, ed. by José Ángel Sesma Muñoz, Saragossa, Grupo de Investigación de Excelencia CEMA, 2010, pp. 137-160: 139-140.

15. Dumolyn, "Later Medieval", p. 3.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8; Adelaide Millán da Costa, "Elites and Oligarchies in the Late Medieval Portuguese Urban World", *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 3 (2009), pp. 67-82: 71-72; Rafael Narbona, "Introducción", in *Oligarquías políticas*, pp. 7-15: 12-14.

17. Filipe Themudo Barata and others, "Introdução", in *Elites e redes*, pp. 7-23: pp. 8-9 and 10-11.

18. Besides the bibliography on the subject that I cited in note 12, see two studies by me and their corresponding bibliographies: "La formación"; "Los mercados rurales en la Corona

conditions have sometimes experienced the difficulty of determining the clearer or more ambiguous boundaries of each elite.

The possible vagueness of the boundaries between groups is also the main point of the second research objective that I mentioned: that of the so-called middle or intermediate sectors of society. The problem has been discussed in forums devoted specifically to it,[19] but this has resulted in the subject being dispersed in some areas of the work of Iberian historians, who have paid varying degrees of attention to it. Ultimately, many observatories have been able to detect the middle groups, as a reality or a hypothesis: in the nobility,[20] in the peasantry,[21] in the cities[22] and, generally, in any area in which individuals and families whose status is unclear have been found, and who have had to be placed immediately below what is classed as the elite.

The different criteria applied by historians and, occasionally, the wording of the documents and the different social structures of the Iberian kingdoms, have led to the word "intermediate" taking on a variety of meanings. Once again, this phenomenon is important in urban circles, especially during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In some cases, the intermediate position of the oligarchies that held political power in the cities has been pointed out, as they could be placed between the greater nobility and the popular classes.[23] Likewise, the merchants and craftsmen, whom the medieval sources place among the "middle ranks" of urban society;[24] the *élite del "común"* that I described for Castile;[25] and a combination

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de Castilla", in *Industrias y mercados rurales en los reinos hispánicos (siglos XIII-XV)*, ed. by Germán Navarro Espinach and Concepción Villanueva Morte, Murcia, Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2017, pp. 125-144.

19. This occurred at the sessions "The Intermediate Rulers: the Contribution of the Nobility to Urban Domination in the Medieval Spanish Kingdoms and the Burgundian Netherlands, I and II", organized by María Asenjo-González and others in *Seventh European Social Science History Conference*, Lisbon, University of Lisbon, 2008.

20. José Mattoso, "The Medieval Portuguese Nobility", in *The Historiography*, pp. 401-424: 416 and 418-419.

21. Mercedes Borrero Fernández, "Élites rurales y mercado en la Andalucía bajomedieval", in *Pautes de consum i nivells de vida al món rural medieval*, Col·loqui Internacional (València, 18-20 de setembre de 2008), online <http://www.uv.es/consum/borrero.pdf>, p. 2 (last consulted: 15-11-2016).

22. Iradiel, "*Ego*", pp. 287-299; Jelle Haemers, Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, "Are 'popular groups' powerless? Towards a research agenda", in *Los grupos populares en la ciudad medieval europea*, ed. by Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu and Jelle Haemers, Logroño, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2014, pp. 545-553: 545.

23. Enric Guinot Rodríguez, *La Baja Edad Media en los siglos XIV-XV. Economía y sociedad*, vol. 9 of *Historia de España. 3.er milenio*, dir. by Elena Hernández Sandoica, Madrid, Síntesis, 2003, p. 253. See also María Asenjo González, "Las ciudades", in *Orígenes de la Monarquía Hispánica. Propaganda y legitimación (ca. 1400-1520)*, ed. by José Manuel Nieto Soria, Madrid, Dykinson, 1999, pp. 105-140: 113-115.

24. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, "Sociedad y poder real en tiempos de Isabel la Católica", *Medievalismo*, 13-14 (2004), pp. 11-28: 21-22.

25. Guerrero Navarrete, "Poder", pp. 69-70; Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez, "La Andalucía de las ciudades", *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 (2009-2010), pp. 111-132: 126-127.

of merchants, artisans, royal and municipal officials, notaries and other liberal professionals, whose ranks were sometimes swelled by the channels of migration and who gave rise to the true bourgeoisie of the period.[26]

The differences suggested by these definitions stress, along with other points that I have been making, not only how hard it is for scholars to agree upon a single lexis when describing medieval society, but at the same time how complicated it is to fit historical reality into the mould of any classification, regardless of whether this was devised in the Middle Ages or in the present. One must assume that any fragmentation into groups, however we define them, may excessively shackle this reality, and it may also become too comfortable a way of framing the behaviour of people. Moreover, the desire to classify may lead us to distinguish between sectors so well compartmented that they could end up being treated, quite rigidly, as a kind of institution. One must be cautious of the risk of institutionalizing society.[27] In this way we shall achieve the conditions for properly appreciating elements whose great importance in the Middle Ages has been demonstrated: on one hand, the "grey areas" in which the different groups met and mixed;[28] on the other, of course, the examples of permeability and mobility on the social ladder.

The use made of some methods of analysis has been particularly productive when verifying the elements that I have just mentioned. Prosopography, for instance, has a long history in the Iberian Peninsula and has been used in the territories of all the former Christian kingdoms.[29] As is known, the process is effective for combining multiple sources, locating countless individuals and strategies and incorporating a wide variety of social and economic data. But it has its limitations, due both to the heuristic and material difficulties involved in conducting it, and to the danger that, without the proper precautions, there is the possibility of leaving essential questions outside the field of exploration (the political and institutional ones, for example), or of painting a picture of a society that is excessively individualized and static, paying little attention to intra- and inter-group connections.[30] Therefore, as a complementary or alternative solution, other more recent proposals have advocated using networked relational analyses

26. Iradiel, "*Ego*", pp. 278 and 280-281.
27. María Asenjo González, "Cuestiones de método en historia social. Las oligarquías urbanas en Castilla", in *La prosopografía como método de investigación sobre la Edad Media*, Saragossa, Universidad de Zaragoza, 2006, pp. 55-76: 57-58. See also Barata and others, "Introdução", pp. 12-13, and Adelaide Costa, "Prosopografia das elites concelhias e análise racional: a intersecção de duas abordagens", in *Elites e redes*, pp. 63-70: 65-67.
28. Ruiz, *Historia social*, p. 72.
29. The prosopographic studies were carried out in the framework of systematic research programmes or through more one-off initiatives. See *La prosopografía* (with contributions on Castile, Aragon, Navarre and Portugal) and, more specifically about Portugal, Armando Luís de Carvalho Homem, "Medievalismo en libertad: Portugal: años 70/años 90", *Medievalismo*, 11 (2001), pp. 79-106: 98-99, and Maria Elena da Cruz Coelho, "O que se vem investigando em história da igreja em Portugal em tempos medievais", *Medievalismo*, 16 (2006), pp. 205-223: 209-218.
30. Asenjo González, "Cuestiones", pp. 68-70; Costa, "Prosopografia", pp. 68-69, and "Elites", pp. 72-74.

that, fully implemented, have led to the application of the formal and reasoned postulates of "social network analysis".

The clearest paradigms of networked examination have been specified for the old Kingdoms of Portugal and Castile, either as initial methodological approaches[31] or as research carried out that has shown itself to be useful for verifying the rates of hierarchization of a particular society and the fluidity or lack of it between the various groups in it.[32] In any case, the shift towards the reticular pattern that has been detected for some time among historians – not without its own problems either –[33] is one step further on the path towards understanding the social complexity to which I referred at the beginning. For the modern reconstruction of social relationships in the Middle Ages this complexity obliges us to consider other circumstances in addition to political and economic events, for instance those associated with kinship, sociability, communication, the establishment of different alliances, the use of personal intermediaries and the ties of patronage and clientelism.[34]

## 3. *Some aspects of social mobility in the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula*

There are of course countless phenomena of social mobility already attested to in the Iberian kingdoms, which raise questions such as those I have summarized. Of all the examples, I have chosen just a few with the aim of illustrating some possibilities for research, their principal results and, in passing, certain chronological inferences, with suggestions about the hypothetical development of these phenomena in the peninsula. I shall begin with a series of examples arising from a situation that was mentioned by Sandro Carocci in his summaries of social mobility in Europe: the process of feudal conquest pursued by the Christian kingdoms against the Islamic states in the Iberian Peninsula.[35]

### 3.1. *The Christian conquest, frontier society and the development of the nobility*

Let us remember that the duality of Christians and Muslims is a crucial aspect of the medieval history of the Iberian Peninsula. It was the basis for countless dynamics, the outstanding ones being warfare and the existence of frontier situations affecting huge areas. From the Christian perspective, it has classically

31. Asenjo González, "Cuestiones", pp. 60-61; Costa, "Prosopografia", pp. 69-70; María Ángeles Martín Romera, "Nuevas perspectivas para el estudio de las sociedades medievales: el análisis de redes sociales", *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 28 (2010), pp. 217-239.

32. Especially María Ángeles Martín Romera, *Las redes sociales de la oligarquía de la villa de Valladolid (1450-1520)*, unpublished thesis, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 2012. See also *Redes sociales y económicas en el mundo bajomedieval*, ed. by David Carvajal de la Vega, Javier Añíbarro Rodríguez and Imanol Vítores Casado, Valladolid, Castilla, 2011.

33. Martín Romera, "Nuevas", pp. 225-229.

34. Asenjo González, "Cuestiones", p. 61; Costa, "Elites", p. 76.

35. Carocci, "Introduzione", p. 21, and "Mobilità", pp. 18 and 50.

been considered that warfare, conquest and the frontier were the basis, from the eleventh century onwards, of various situations of interest to us: the militarization of social groups and the important role that the warrior nobility played everywhere; the open nature of the frontier zones, reflected in the channels of social mobility; and the multiple opportunities for advancement and enrichment that, in the end, frontier life provided.[36] These situations remained more or less completely unchanged in the southeast of the peninsula until the late fifteenth century, since the last territory under Muslim control – Granada – was not conquered by Castile until 1492. However, the major campaigns of Christian conquest had already ended by the late thirteenth century. From then on, warfare and the frontier with Islam became less important in the peninsula.

The progress of the military occupations up to and including the thirteenth century may be interpreted as one of the Iberian manifestations of the expansion that in those years every Christian society in Western Europe experienced, especially in terms of population and economic growth. This period in Europe has been considered to be one of intense social mobility, fuelled essentially by an economic boom. Conversely, the period following the famous *conjoncture de 1300* would witness, depending on the region, the slowing down of the process of mobility, or perhaps it is better to call it a readjustment. The latter was due to the specific nature of social rises that were more individual than collective, more dependent on political circumstances than on economic ones.[37] Nevertheless, only with respect to economic terms should the two periods in general be linked to a premise that associates the increase and decrease of the number of processes of mobility with positive and negative economic situations.[38]

In Iberian Christendom, conquest and frontier did not monopolize the pathways of mobility. But the way these factors evolved, together with the development of the population and the economy, may allow us to establish a turning point here also in 1300 with regard to the nature of this social mobility. Before then the situation was favourable for this dynamic, due either to the consequences of a war that the Christians were winning, or to the profits from the economic and demographic growth that the Iberian Christian kingdoms were experiencing at the same time. Thus, prior to the fourteenth century there would be a combination of different kinds of mobility: for economic and politico-military reasons or, to use Sandro Carocci's words, due to "autogenous" mechanisms (subordinated to the ordinary functioning of society) and "exogenous", or conflict-based, ones (associated with violence and war).[39] After 1300 the confrontation with Islam subsided, although

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36. Angus Mackay, *La España de la Edad Media. Desde la frontera hasta el Imperio (1000-1500)*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1981, pp. 57-62. See also *Las sociedades de frontera en la España medieval*, Saragossa, Universidad de Zaragoza, 1993. Much more recently, *La historia peninsular en los espacios de frontera: las "Extremaduras históricas" y la "Transierra" (siglos XI-XV)*, ed. by Francisco García Fitz and Juan Francisco Jiménez Alcázar, Murcia, Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales and Editum, 2012.

37. Carocci, "Introduzione", pp. 3-6 and 11, and "Mobilità", pp. 36-37; Maire Vigueur, "Conclusioni", pp. 578 and 582-583.

38. Iradiel, "*Ego*", p. 284.

39. Carocci, "Mobilità", pp. 49-50.

warfare and the frontier did not disappear altogether: the enduring nature of the consequences of earlier conquests, events on the border with Granada, and the wars between the Christian kingdoms, with their own frontier situations, continued to play a part in the patterns of mobility. Adverse economic conditions hindered this mobility from time to time, but it was now taking place in new or renewed conditions. In common with other parts of Western Europe, in the Christian Iberian kingdoms the phenomenon of social mobility in the later Middle Ages seems to have been restructured. Supporting this hypothesis there are some fairly clear pointers referring, for example, to the nobility, one of the social sectors most influenced (if not *the* most influenced) by the conquest and the frontier.

For the Crown of Castile, Marie-Claude Gerbet has insisted that the Christian conquest paved the way for the formation of a solid and diversified nobility. At the same time, the accession in 1369 of the House of Trastámara to the throne provided other opportunities. As she put it,

> this period was characterized by an important renewal of the greater nobility, by large-scale social mobility and by the appearance of a 'middle-ranking nobility', in a state of gestation, whose chief characteristics were then beginning to be defined. During this period, nonetheless, anonymous mass access to the nobility came to an end, and individual ennoblement by the king in person, more restrictive in terms of numbers, prevailed.[40]

In fact, of all the nobility's means of advancement from the late fourteenth century onwards, especially the middle and lower ranks, that of collaboration with the royal institution became important. As María Asenjo says, the Trastámaras incorporated into the court a large number of advisors, officials and members of the nobility, with the aim of creating a hierarchical structure to facilitate the government of the kingdom.[41] Up to 1500, as other studies show, service – bureaucratic or military – to the monarchy became one of the cornerstones of the Castilian nobility.[42] In other words it was the obligations inherent in the ties of vassalage that provided pathways for ascent or the consolidation of positions.[43]

We also have information of a similar nature for Portugal. In the case of Évora, Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar has stressed how, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, royal service, ties with the ecclesiastical institutions and alliances of marriage and dependence encouraged processes of social distinction

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40. Marie-Claude Gerbet, *Las noblezas españolas en la Edad Media. Siglos XI-XV*, Madrid, Alianza, 1997, p. 194.

41. María Asenjo-González, "Aristocratic Ambitions in Oligarchic Urban Society. Social and Political Consequences in Fifteenth-Century Castilian Towns", in *Urban Elites*, pp. 49-60: 53.

42. María Isabel del Val Valdivieso, "Aproximación al estudio de la estructura social de una villa mercantil castellana a fines de la Edad Media: Medina del Campo", in *Les sociétés urbaines en France méridionale et en Péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge*, Actes du Colloque de Pau (21-23 septembre 1988), Paris, CNRS, 1991, pp. 73-104: 79-80; María Concepción Quintanilla Raso, "Los grandes nobles", *Medievalismo*, 13-14 (2004), pp. 127-142: 136-138; Rodríguez Llopis, "Procesos", pp. 79-80. However, as is well known, at the end of the Middle Ages in Spain services to the monarchy and a career at court became everywhere, apart from in Castile, a good means of social promotion (Gerbet, *Las noblezas*, pp. 366-367 and 381-382; Martínez Sopena, "La movilidad", pp. 227-228 and 232).

43. Rodríguez Llopis, "Procesos", p. 79.

and aristocratic behaviour.[44] But more significantly, during the previous centuries Vilar sees in Évora the change between a social organization rooted in the twelfth century – after the Christian conquest of 1165 – in terms of the warrior hierarchy, and another pattern, visible towards the end of the thirteenth century. In this, the old frontier society gradually disappeared and new divisions became apparent, based on slow change and the growing complexity of urban social structures.[45]

This context provided the conditions for the emergence of urban knights (*caballeros villanos*). They played an outstanding role in several parts of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon and in the kingdom of Portugal, particularly in the *extremaduras* that lay between the rivers Duero and Tagus and on the Lower Ebro. The status of these knights was ambiguous, and it could vary according to the territory and the period. In the area around Teruel, in Aragon, for example, urban knights eventually began to behave like aristocrats and to enjoy exemptions and privileges, but they did not formally and fully become part of the nobility.[46] In any event, their story corroborates the role played everywhere in Iberian societies by warfare, and how confusing the boundaries between groups in frontier zones could be. The urban knights' rise was based on their duties of attack and defence against the Muslims, which they performed in many cities and towns. They later benefited more from the prerogatives obtained, control of urban political power and connections with the monarchy.[47] At least in the regions that ended up as part of Castile, the origins of the urban knights lay in groups of free landowning peasants who were at the same time soldiers.[48] We first see these knights occupying positions of power in certain localities in the twelfth century, and their privileged position and institutional authority were generally confirmed in the thirteenth.

44. Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, "Da vilania à nobreza: trajetórias de ascensão e de consolidação no sul de Portugal (séculos XIV-XV)", in *Categorias*, pp. 157-161. More generally about Portugal, see the role of the monarchy and its court in the late medieval development of the nobility, also in Mattoso, "The Medieval", pp. 412-419, and José Augusto de Sotto Mayor Pizarro, "A nobreza portuguesa no periodo dionisino. Contextos e estrategias (1279-1325)", *En la España medieval*, 22 (1999), pp. 61-176: 110-176.

45. Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, "A construção da identidade urbana no século XIII. O caso do sul de Portugal", *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 (2009-2010), pp. 133-156: 140.

46. Carlos Laliena Corbera, María Teresa Iranzo Muñío, "Poder, honor y linaje en las estrategias de la nobleza urbana aragonesa (siglos XIV-XVI)", *Revista d'Història Medieval*, 9 (1998), pp. 41-80: 44; Alejandro Ríos Conejero, "Los caballeros villanos de Teruel. Un acercamiento a la identidad del grupo y su cultura en la Baja Edad Media", in *Identidades urbanas Corona de Aragón – Italia. Redes económicas, estructuras institucionales, funciones políticas (siglos XIV-XV)*, ed. by Paulino Iradiel and others, Saragossa, Universidad de Zaragoza, 2016, pp. 115-129. See also Carlos Laliena Corbera, "Cambio social y reorganización institucional en la Corona de Aragón en torno a 1200", in *La Península Ibérica en tiempos de Las Navas de Tolosa*, ed. by Carlos Estepa Díez and María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, Murcia, Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2014, pp. 337-366: 363-366, above all with the nuances (pp. 365-366) in the very idea of "urban knights".

47. María Asenjo-González, "Foreword", in *Urban Elites*, pp. VII-IX: IX; Gerbet, *Las noblezas*, pp. 86-88; Ríos Conejero, "Los caballeros", pp. 116-119; Vilar, "A construção", pp. 137-138, and "Da vilania", pp. 154-155 and 160.

48. Asenjo-González, "Aristocratic", p. 49.

Consequently, as Yolanda Guerrero points out, what began life as a military aristocracy was transformed into a political one.[49]

Nevertheless, we must remember that it was not only the nobility that took advantage of the opportunities offered by warfare and the frontier. The Christian victories gave rise to vast population movements, as a rule from north to south and under the supervision of kings and noble lords. Among the people on the move were thousands of peasants who, either under duress or of their own free will, settled the new lands that had been conquered and helped to replace the Muslim structures of agrarian settlement and production with the feudal system of the Christian conquerors.[50] But there were also merchants and craftsmen, including men who had worked as such in their homeland and those who entered these professions after the appropriate process of development. In this respect, the Catalan city of Lleida, after it was taken by the Christians in 1149, is a good example. Its capture culminated a typical expansionist advance by the nobility, although the city soon filled up with a mixture of people including aristocrats and clerics, and prosperous qualified people working as craftsmen, traders and moneylenders, who could be said to constitute a bourgeoisie, as well as more humble, even poverty-stricken, groups. However, in the end it was the strata that could be described as "bourgeois" who profited the most from the conquest: as early as the second half of the twelfth century, noblemen owned just 12.8 % of farmland, while the majority of it (54.4 %) fell into the hands of this bourgeoisie.[51]

### 3.2. *Cities, between economics and politics*

The example of Lleida allows me to introduce a second series of examples. These have to do with the cities. Their importance in the context of social power in the Middle Ages was growing, and everywhere they were home to dynamic and attractive societies, subject to countless ups and downs.[52]

If we look at the urban success stories, these are already recorded before 1300 at an ever-increasing rate. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, in Portugal[53] and in Castilian cities such as Valladolid,[54] those named in the sources as "good men" did well. They generally, but not always, started out as merchants,

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49. Yolanda Guerrero-Navarrete, "Gentlemen-Merchant in Fifteenth-Century Urban Castile: Forms of Life and Social Aspiration", in *Urban Elites*, pp. 143-160: 143.

50. As we have been reminded recently in relation to the Crown of Aragon (Laliena Corbera, "Cambio", pp. 339 and 347-350; Antoni Furió, Ferran Garcia-Oliver, "The horizons of the city. Rural mobility in a frontier land (the Valencian Country, 1250-1350)", in *La mobilità*, pp. 517-530).

51. Flocel Sabaté, *Alta edat mitjana*, vol. 2 of *Història de Lleida*, ed. by Lluís Pagès, Lleida, Pagès, 2003, pp. 291-302, 326, 355-366 and 400.

52. Carocci, "Introduzione", pp. 5-6 and 23; Laliena Corbera, "Las transformaciones", p. 183.

53. Arnaldo Sousa Melo, Maria do Carmo Ribeiro, "Os grupos populares nas cidades medievais portuguesas: problematização e inserção no espaço urbano", in *Los grupos*, pp. 109-131: 111-115.

54. Adeline Rucquoi, *Valladolid en la Edad Media. I: Génesis de un poder*, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 1987, pp. 239-241.

traders and craftsmen and were beginning to be regarded as a prestigious class in the hierarchy. The formation of incipient economic elites was also clearly defined at that time in the territories that eventually formed part of the Crown of Aragon. In the twelfth century, in both Catalonia and the Kingdom of Aragon proper, these elites progressed for a number of reasons: the feudal profits of the aristocracy, commercial and manufacturing action, and the production of and speculation in agricultural produce. But in the thirteenth century, again in Catalonia and now in Valencia, these reasons had more to do with the importance demonstrated by moneylending and speculation, the increase in trade linked to maritime traffic and the circulation of farm produce, and the magnitude achieved by textile manufacturing. It is therefore no surprise that in Catalonia and Valencia drapers and money changers constituted highly dynamic groups in the thirteenth century. It could even be said that they were the precursors of those who from then on would be outstanding merchants or merchant bankers.[55]

For the later Middle Ages, historians continue more than ever to witness the materialization of pathways of mobility in cities. Attention remains focused on them due to the purely economic variables, although other elements are now being heavily brought into play, either alternatively or coincidentally: once again, political and institutional elements, of course; those concerning human and social issues (such as biological and generational succession or the construction of communal and family ties); those associated with questions of identity and culture (among other things, instruction and learning or the adoption of certain forms of conduct and symbolic strategies), and even religious ones (mainly in relation to the Jewish converts to Christianity, the *conversos*, who lived in the peninsula).[56]

In some cases it is arguable whether or not these pathways were conducive to group or collective mobility.[57] However, the fact remains that those taking them were usually individuals or families, more or less consciously ambitious, who changed their status in the fabric of urban society. This took place in an upward or sideways direction through the exchange, the development and the simultaneous practice of professions and social customs among merchants, notaries and artisans, for example.[58] It is also the case, in the highest echelons of

55. Igual Luis, "La formación", pp. 148-152; Paulino Iradiel, "Les funcions econòmiques del patriciat urbà en el segle XIII", in *Jaume I i el seu temps, 800 anys després. Encontres acadèmics de Castelló, Alacant i València (2008)*, ed. by Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, Valencia, Universitat de València and Fundació Jaume II el Just, 2012, pp. 207-226.

56. On the variables and elements that I have just mentioned, I refer to the bibliography in the following notes. To complement them I add two recent collective works: on cultural issues, *Consumo, comercio y transformaciones culturales en la Baja Edad Media: Aragón, siglos XIV-XV*, ed. by Carlos Laliena Corbera and Mario Lafuente Gómez, Saragossa, Grupo Consolidado de Investigación CEMA, 2016; and on religious ones, *En el primer siglo de la Inquisición española. Fuentes documentales, procedimientos de análisis, experiencias de investigación*, ed. by José María Cruselles Gómez, Valencia, Universitat de València, 2013.

57. David Igual Luis, "Social Rise of the Mercantile Elite in Cities of the Medieval Kingdom of Valencia", in *Urban Elites*, pp. 161-170: 167.

58. These situations have been successfully contrasted in Valencia (Enrique Cruselles Gómez, *Los mercaderes de Valencia en la edad media (1380-1450)*, Lleida, Milenio, pp. 59-

society, with two processes that have been argued for all parts of the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and which, although they are closely linked to one another, do not concern exactly the same phenomena.

One is the tendency towards the formation and spread of oligarchies. I am referring not only to the consolidation of a layer of urban political power, concentrated in municipalities (the oligarchy), but also the triggering of mechanisms that, depending on the circumstances, shaped the structure of access to the institutions, ensured maintenance and reproduction in them, and could ultimately lead to their monopolization. The possible reiteration of reforms in urban political and institutional systems and the endless infighting amongst those who aspired to control them were perhaps the most striking manifestations of the propensity for the formation of oligarchies.[59] Nevertheless, in the peninsula as a whole, the dates at which this materialized vary greatly. There is also great disparity in the extent to which oligarchies were open or closed and the diverse nature of their composition, especially with regard to the relative importance of the members of aristocratic or bourgeois extraction in each one.[60]

With regard to this situation, and bearing in mind some warnings formulated not just by Iberian historians, one must first be careful not to automatically define any attempt to control admission to the urban administration as the oligarchy "closing ranks".[61] Secondly, one must closely observe the hierarchy of city offices and institutions, seeing as not all of them were on the same level; applying for them, therefore, did not always have the same significance.[62] Finally, one must assume that the quest for political pre-eminence was not necessarily the ultimate aim of distinguished individuals or groups in the city, particularly if they had

93; José María Cruselles Gómez, *Els notaris de la ciutat de València. Activitat professional i comportament social a la primera meitat del segle XV*, Barcelona, Fundació Noguera, 1998, pp. 273-288).

59. Some examples: Asenjo González, "Las ciudades", pp. 119-121; Luís Miguel Duarte, "Os melhores da terra (um questionário para o caso português)", in *Elites e redes*, pp. 91-106: 100-103; José Antonio Jara Fuente, "Negociando la dominación: las elites urbanas castellanas en el siglo XV (el ejemplo de Cuenca)", in *La gobernanza de la ciudad europea en la Edad Media*, ed. by Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea and Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu, Logroño, Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2011, pp. 399-426: 401-404; Laliena Corbera, "Las transformaciones", pp. 147-185; *Oligarchy and Patronage in Late Medieval Spanish Urban Society*, ed. by María Asenjo-González, Turnhout, Brepols, 2009.

60. More examples, about these last-mentioned cases: Collantes de Terán Sánchez, "La Andalucía", pp. 122-123; Guerrero Navarrete, "Poder", p. 70; Guinot Rodríguez, *La Baja Edad Media*, pp. 128-129 and 252-253; Laliena Corbera, "Las transformaciones", pp. 168, 171-172 and 184; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, "La Corona d'Aragó al segle XV: la monarquia i els regnes", in *Història de la Corona d'Aragó*, ed. by Ernest Belenguer, Barcelona, Edicions 62, vol. I, pp. 351-396: 363-368; Vilar, "Da vilania", pp. 155 and 160.

61. Carocci, "Introduzione", p. 7. Along these lines, Laliena Corbera, "Las transformaciones", p. 168.

62. José Antonio Jara has pointed this out repeatedly, based on the Castilian case of Cuenca and the definition, here, of "a politico-constitutional model open to different forms of participation in the exercise of control" (Jara Fuente, "Negociando", pp. 404-405).

amassed their wealth as merchants or financiers.[63] This could essentially be linked to certain situations detected in Castilian and Aragonese cities: those in which high socioeconomic mobility up to the middle and upper echelons of society was not matched by similar fluidity when it came to reaching the top of the political tree;[64] and those in which there appears to be a distinction, not without mutual bonds, between economic elites (based on commerce and finance) and political elites (on the institutions).[65]

The second process is a tendency towards aristocratization that appeared particularly among the middle and bourgeois classes of cities. The dynamics of this process are undeniable. However, two exceptions must be borne in mind: the one mentioned at the beginning of this article, in the sense that some manifestations of this trend (the final step up to the nobility) became confined to a minority; and also how problematic it is at times to tell aristocratic behaviour apart from supposedly different patterns, like for example those that can be defined as "bourgeois" or "mercantile".[66] In any case, there were a number of ways in which aristocratization could take place. They ranged from the spread of a mere imitation of noble ways to the complete culmination of the authentic "road to ennoblement", through the adoption of economic and patrimonial practices that in principle should be considered as typical of the aristocracy, for instance investment in rents or property.[67]

These practices, verified territorially at equally varying dates, could be associated directly or indirectly with oligarchization, but not always.[68] Nevertheless, as they spread outstanding figures appeared, such as the above-mentioned urban knights or, in Portugal[69] and the Crown of Aragon,[70] "citizens"

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63. Petralia, "Problemi", p. 263; David Igual Luis, "Los grupos mercantiles y la expansión política de la Corona de Aragón: nuevas perspectivas", in *Il governo dell'economia. Italia e Penisola Iberica nel basso Medioevo*, ed. by Lorenzo Tanzini and Sergio Tognetti, Rome, Viella, 2014, pp. 9-32: 20-21.

64. See the comment by Sergio Tognetti, "Economia e società a Valencia nel Basso Medioevo. Note a margine del libro di Enrique Cruselles", *Archivio Storico Italiano*, CLX/592 (2002), pp. 369-376: 376, apropos of Cruselles Gómez, *Los mercaderes*.

65. Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez, "La élite financiera en la Sevilla bajomedieval: los mayordomos del concejo", *Revista d'Història Medieval*, 11 (2000), pp. 13-39; José Antonio Jara Fuente, "Hombres de negocios y poder. Las relaciones entre *élites* comerciales y *élites* políticas en la Castilla del siglo XV: el ejemplo de Cuenca", in *Il governo*, pp. 33-57.

66. I have discussed the implications of this latter exception in Igual Luis, "Social Rise", pp. 168-170, and "La formación", pp. 147 and 157-159.

67. Examples of all this, referring to the Crowns of Castile and Aragon and the Kingdom of Navarre, appear in *Urban Elites*. I in fact take the expression "road to ennoblement" from one of the contributions to this study (Eloísa Ramírez Vaquero, "The Elites of Pamplona at the End of the Middle Ages: the Road to Ennoblement", pp. 61-86). On Portugal, see Duarte, "Os melhores", pp. 104-106, and Vilar, "Da vilania", p. 160.

68. Gerbet, *Las noblezas*, p. 87.

69. Duarte, "Os melhores", p. 96; Melo, Ribeiro, "Os grupos", p. 113; Vilar, "A construção", pp. 137-139.

70. Josep Fernández Trabal, "De 'prohoms' a ciudadanos honrados. Aproximación al estudio de las elites urbanas de la sociedad catalana bajomedieval (s. XIV-XV)", *Revista d'Història*

or "honourable citizens". Many merchants in Barcelona, Valencia and Saragossa aspired to this status as it was the best way of getting close to or joining the oligarchy, due to the relationship established in the three cities between the statute of citizenship and tenure of municipal power. Besides, the existence of organizational models such as that of Castilian knightly "lineages" has been interpreted as a consequence of the spread of aristocratic attitudes in cities. Let us remember that these lineages were horizontal social groupings, unified and constructed through bonds of loyalty, friendship, kinship and even vassalage.[71] Their function would become fully significant in connection with the machinery of council government, but they were also effective in absorbing non-nobles through clientelism and, consequently, ensuring a certain degree of vertical permeability, even though restrictive measures were taken to counter this movement. This has been demonstrated in Valladolid for the years 1450 to 1520.[72]

Upward or horizontal social changes were occasionally associated with factors of geographical mobility and the capacity of cities to attract new inhabitants. In relation to this kind of mobility, however, it would be wise to avoid the virtually automatic equation – that has arisen so often in historians' work – of migratory movement with social advancement, or of the successful integration of migrants in a city with an improvement in their status.[73] Here, several things have to be borne in mind: the social failure that could affect some of the people who had moved, regardless of their class; the fact that many of the newcomers were already from humble backgrounds and did not manage to integrate properly, failing to find work or make new contacts; and of course, the fact that cities were places where people could just as easily fall down the social scale and lose their standing, and where, therefore, they could become poverty-stricken and find themselves socially, culturally and ideologically marginalized.

As regards the financial poverty, it is clear that cities took in poor people and they also created them. Paulino Iradiel has pointed this out in reference to Valencia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Here, as in other contemporary urban centres, various mechanisms of decline above all worried the middle classes and threatened their status: biological insecurity, the result of natural calamities and catastrophic death rates, but also of the personal uncertainty and risk inherent in

*Medieval*, 10 (1999), pp. 331-369; Enrique Mainé Burguete, *Ciudadanos honrados de Zaragoza. La oligarquía zaragozana en la Baja Edad Media (1370-1410)*, Saragossa, Grupo de Investigación de Excelencia CEMA, 2006; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, *Valencia, municipio medieval. Poder político y luchas ciudadanas. 1239-1418*, Valencia, Ajuntament de València, 1995.

71. María Asenjo González, *La dinámica urbana a fines de la Edad Media: La villa de Valladolid (1450-1520)*, Madrid, forthcoming; Rafael Sánchez Saus, "Los patriciados urbanos", *Medievalismo*, 13-14 (2004), pp. 143-155: 149-150.

72. Martín Romera, *Las redes*, especially pp. 538-539, 541-542, 547 and 549.

73. We are warned about these equations in Carocci, "Mobilità", p. 40; Maire Vigueur, "Conclusioni", p. 582; and Raúl González Arévalo, "Integración y movilidad social de las naciones italianas en la Corona de Castilla: genoveses, florentinos y venecianos en la Andalucía bajomedieval", in *La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano. 1. Competenze, conoscenze e saperi tra professioni e ruoli sociali (secc. XII-XV)*, ed. by Lorenzo Tanzini and Sergio Tognetti, Rome, Viella, 2016, pp. 375-402: 376.

travelling on business; professional insecurity, arising from the precarious nature or disadvantages of jobs and salaries, depending on the type of work done; and family insecurity, when the increase in the size of the family and the difficulty of paying for a house aggravated the limitations of modest incomes and led to the spiral of debt.[74]

## 4. *Final considerations*

By way of conclusion, as I mentioned earlier the aim of my article has been to illustrate some of the various patterns and examples that might serve to guide one through the work of historians who have researched the old medieval countries of Portugal, Castile, Aragon and, to a lesser extent, Navarre. I have also endeavoured to present the aspects chosen in parallel to questions posed for Europe as a whole. This has enabled me to insist on the following points, among others:

1. The terminological and conceptual problems involved in studying social mobility, especially with regard to the determination of social groups. Such problems may expose difficulties in the job of the historian, but also reproduce the real flexibility and fluidity of social strata in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages. Peninsular societies may have been very hierarchic, but less so than in later periods.[75]

2. The different directions taken by the dynamics of mobility, vertical or horizontal, the role played by territorial movements, or a combination of reasons in which the complementary, alternative or evolutionary duality of politico-institutional and economic aspects stands out.

3. The significance for the peninsular kingdoms of the turning point around the year 1300, although with one peculiarity: that of including in the reasoning the consequences and the timing of the Christian conquests, as a phenomenon that encouraged social circulation at the time. In this context, the difference between the years before and after 1300 may have affected quantitative aspects of greater or lesser mobility at one stage or another, but it most surely lay in the materialization of qualitative changes in this mobility.

4. The multiple opportunities to change one's status that converged in medieval cities, and which eased social tensions in the urban environment.[76] In the Iberian Peninsula, as in the rest of Christian Europe, these cities are good laboratories for

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74. Iradiel, "*Ego*", pp. 299-305. More generally on the Iberian Peninsula, and taking into account not just economic marginalization, see Ricardo Córdoba de la Llave, "La ruta hacia el abismo. Factores de marginación y exclusión social en el mundo bajomedieval", in *Ricos y pobres*, pp. 367-394, and Luís Miguel Duarte, "When Those on the Margins Took Centre Stage", in *The Historiography*, pp. 499-511.

75. As it is suggested in Barata and others, "Introdução", p. 11.

76. Guinot Rodríguez, *La Baja Edad Media*, p. 128; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, "Municipio, familia y poder en las ciudades de la Corona de Aragón durante el Antiguo Régimen", in *Sociabilitat i àmbit local*, Actes del VI Congrés Internacional d'Història Local de Catalunya (Barcelona, 30 de novembre i 1 de desembre de 2001), ed. by Carles Santacana, Barcelona, L'Avenç, 2003, pp. 55-75: 59.

exploring countless scenarios of mobility and, in doing so, corroborating both their complexity and the fact that they are not scenarios to which one could gain access easily.

In 2001, several Portuguese colleagues wrote that to think about a society is, almost necessarily, to simplify it, to look at it in one way and not another, to choose some angles of observation to the detriment of others.[77] This is undoubtedly the case with my article. Nevertheless, as I pointed out at the beginning, I trust that these situations have not obscured the ultimate complexity of not only the events associated with social mobility but also, more generally, of the design and functioning of the Christian societies in the Iberian Peninsula.

(Trans. Andrew Stacey)

77. Barata and others, "Introdução", p. 12.

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*Surveys*