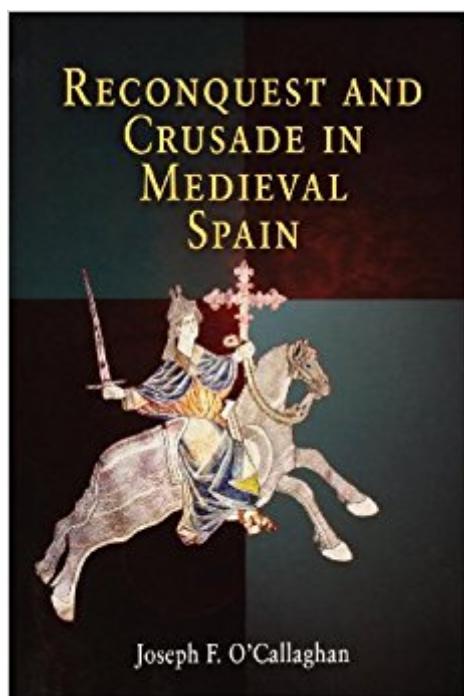


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# Reconquest And Crusade In Medieval Spain (The Middle Ages Series)



## **Synopsis**

Drawing from both Christian and Islamic sources, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* demonstrates that the clash of arms between Christians and Muslims in the Iberian peninsula that began in the early eighth century was transformed into a crusade by the papacy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Successive popes accorded to Christian warriors willing to participate in the peninsular wars against Islam the same crusading benefits offered to those going to the Holy Land. Joseph F. O'Callaghan clearly demonstrates that any study of the history of the crusades must take a broader view of the Mediterranean to include medieval Spain. Following a chronological overview of crusading in the Iberian peninsula from the late eleventh to the middle of the thirteenth century, O'Callaghan proceeds to the study of warfare, military finance, and the liturgy of reconquest and crusading. He concludes his book with a consideration of the later stages of reconquest and crusade up to and including the fall of Granada in 1492, while noting that the spiritual benefits of crusading bulls were still offered to the Spanish until the Second Vatican Council of 1963. Although the conflict described in this book occurred more than eight hundred years ago, recent events remind the world that the intensity of belief, rhetoric, and action that gave birth to crusade, holy war, and jihad remains a powerful force in the twenty-first century.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"A survey of royal military activity in Spain from the late eleventh through the mid-thirteenth centuries. . . . The author scrutinizes the ecclesiastical sources of the period to establish the

interconnection of papal and Iberian royal plans for warring against the Muslim opposition, . . . arguing for an expanded concept of the Crusades that would include the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. . . . Highly recommended."•Choice"With this study, it becomes difficult to doubt that a broad array of medieval people viewed the conflict against Muslims in Iberia in religious terms and that these wars were appropriately sanctioned by the papacy as crusades."•Catholic Historical Review"O'Callaghan's book is the first to place the Reconquista within the context of papal support for military action against Islam."•Religious Studies Review"This is a welcome book. It explains the development of crusading in almost all of its aspects in medieval Iberia as well as situates the Iberian crusades within the context of those to the Holy Land. Indeed, Joseph O'Callaghan demonstrates that the crusades in Iberia and to the Middle East evolved in tandem, and that understanding one movement is requisite for understanding the other."•The Medieval Review"On the one hand, a masterful synthesis of work done in both crusade and reconquest history and, on the other, a fresh look at the intersection between the two fields, this engaging book tackles the contentious issue of categorizing the Christian military campaigns against Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula."•Historian

Joseph F. O'Callaghan is Professor Emeritus of History at Fordham University. He is the author of many books on Spanish history, including *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait*, also published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, and *A History of Medieval Spain*.

Joseph O'Callaghan's book *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* provides readers with an overview of military action in the Iberian Peninsula from 1063-1248. He outlined the constant struggle between Islam and Christianity for dominion of the area and successfully showed the complexities and difficulties faced by the Christian kings and nobles. As in the Levant, occasionally a Christian king would ally with a Muslim leader if it was temporarily beneficial. Many truces and treaties were signed between enemies in attempts to stall war, they were not always honored. The genealogical tables for both the Christian and Muslim leaders provided in the book were a very good resource to have. O'Callaghan mentioned so many names, and the tables provided assistance in knowing who was who and when they ruled. Without the tables the reader is likely to get lost. The maps provided a good visual representation of where boundaries were and showed when territory changed hands. O'Callaghan made a differentiation between Reconquest and crusade. Reconquest efforts occurred by the Christian kings for centuries as they fought to regain lands that were under Muslim control. Officially crusades only occurred when there was clerical support and backing which

granted the crusaders specific rewards. Crusade activity generally was considered Reconquest activity, but not all Reconquest activity had crusade status. To the Christian kings, the exact status might not have mattered; they were fighting for the sake of Christianity to defeat the Muslims and enlarge their kingdoms. O'Callaghan provides several chapters on general crusading issues as they related to the Iberian campaigns including warfare and tactics, the difficulty of financing crusades, and the involvement of the Church. The chapters provide an overview of the crusading process and would benefit readers new to the crusade era. However, more experienced readers may find these sections repetitive of other works. O'Callaghan closes each chapter with a brief summary, this seemed like a good way to pull the chapter together, restate the main themes, and prepare for the next chapter. The final Muslim kingdom, Granada, fell in 1492. With its fall the Reconquest in Spain was finished and further expansion ideas were beyond Crusade goals. No new bulls were issued, but the Spanish and Portuguese still had strong Crusade mindsets. The peninsular Christians had spent 400 years fighting Muslims but finally were successful. In the Levant the Crusader kingdoms fell after a couple hundred years. In the end, the Iberian crusades proved to have brought about permanent changes and to have had the only lasting positive advances for Christendom.

Joseph O'Callaghan's wide-ranging yet relatively brief book takes what is often regarded as a parochial subject and makes the case for the "influence of crusading ideology" on "the evolution of the reconquest ("reconquista") from the late eleventh century until the middle of the thirteenth." In other words, the battles in the Spanish frontier after 1050 or so should be--must be--viewed in terms of the Crusades as a whole. Following an introductory chapter, he describes this era chronologically and proceeds to examine the military, financial, and religious aspects of this Spanish Crusade. Whether the battles against the Muslim principalities in southern Iberia are called "reconquista" or "crusade" might seem an argument over semantics, but the focus is much broader: what is important is not what we call the conflicts now but how they were thought of then--and the difference matters a great deal. What is clear from O'Callaghan's book is that Europeans as a whole, and the papacy especially, regarded the Iberian fighting as part of a broader struggle. The reconquest was not a local offensive in the Spanish frontier but (at the risk of oversimplification) the western front of a two-front war. And, from the perspective of Christian contemporaries, it was the successful half of a struggle that, in today's view, failed. "Christian success in Spain owed much to papal encouragement," O'Callaghan concludes, and that support took many pivotal forms: the fulfillment of Crusader's vows granted to those who stayed in or traveled to Spain rather than to the Holy Land, the remission of sins granted to Crusaders, and financial and material aid. Bishops and

surrogates preached the taking up of arms for spiritual gain, a cult of martyrdom developed mirroring that in the East, the cross was worn and religious banners were flown--all these elements famous for the eastern crusades were equally prevalent in the west. In fact, the evidence is so persuasive that it is often just as accurate to discuss (as the author does) the significant influence of the Spanish conflict on the characteristics of the crusades in the Holy Land. Although O'Callaghan does not assume that the reader is a specialist, his book is, unapologetically, a monograph and his marshaling of evidence might prove overwhelming for the lay reader. But his prose is jargon-free, and readers with interests in either medieval Spanish history or the Crusades will find here a treasure trove of material that is both relatively unknown and utterly fascinating.

Excellent history of the period, although not actually a detailed military history. It does bring some order to chaos.

Let me start by saying I enjoyed the book and learned many thing from it. The problem with it is it's 'readability.' The writing style is very dense and is quite difficult to 'get in the zone' so to speak with this book. Reading history is probably my primary free time activity. What I am not is a professional historian and so found myself rereading my sentences or paragraphs. A great book for a professional history, and very good for historians like myself!, but if you buy this book, be prepared for the writing style and format.

This book is not chronologic, but is a very good book, you get to understand the times and the process

A very thorough study of the reconquest but it can get confusing with so many kings and kingdoms! I do recommend it though.

GREAT

Joseph O'Callaghan is an expert on Medieval history and makes his thesis very clear that the history of the Spanish Reconquista should be included when studying the history of the crusades. Very convincing and well researched!

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