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a cura di
Marco Merlo, Antonio Musarra, Fabio Romanoni e Peter Sposato

Società Italiana di Storia Militare

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Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma
Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma
info@nadirmedia.it

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Chivalric Deaths in Battle in Late Medieval Castile

by Samuel Claussen

Abstract: This article seeks to clarify the issue of whether the chivalric elite (knights and men-at-arms) were in serious danger of death in battle. Scholars have sometimes assumed that the martial elites of medieval Europe were removed from any serious danger of death in battle, arguing either that medieval warfare was a relatively ritualistic engagement in which knights were protected from the risk of death due to gentlemanly norms of warfare or that the really deadly parts of battle were the burdens of common soldiers and levies, preserving knights from the risk of death through a hierarchical martial arrangement. Through a case study of late medieval Castilian chronicle evidence, this article argues that death in battle was a very real part of the medieval chivalric world. Knights and men-at-arms did die regularly on the field of battle, in sieges, in domestic disturbances, and so on. The risk of death in battle was not an imaginary concern of genteel noblemen, but a serious concern.

Keywords: chivalric, knights, deaths in battles, Castile, Late Medieval

> "'[T]o put yourself in such danger amounts to your seeking to lose your life and even your soul, for those who knowingly put themselves in the path of death when being able to avoid it, kill themselves.' 'Father,' said Don Galaor, 'God will do His will with me, but the battle I shall not abandon under any circumstances.' The good man began to weep and said, 'Son, may God help and give you strength, since in this matter you do not wish to do anything else, and I am pleased at finding you to be of exemplary life.'" –
>
> Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Amadís de Gaula*

Medieval knights lived a life characterized by violence. As highly trained warriors who claimed a monopoly on martial skill, their purpose in society was to go to war. The same skills could be used in defense or augmentation of their personal or familial honor as well. As men whose divinely ordained calling was to fight and suffer on the battlefield, the knights and men-at-arms of the late medieval Spanish world thought a lot about the prospect of death in battle. In particular, the fear of death weighed troublingly on the

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minds of chivalric warriors and writers. Fear itself was an object of scorn for such men, being an emotion that sapped their prowess and masculine honor. In the quotation above, the Arthurian hero Galaor, a character in the romance *Amadis de Gaula*, refused to be afraid of his likely death in battle, welcoming God's will with open arms. It might seem self-evident, given the martial nature of the chivalric elite of medieval Europe, that knights and other members of the chivalric elite (squires, men-at-arms, etc.) would constantly be at significant risk of dying in battle.[1] Yet the historiographical discussions surrounding the issue are somewhat murkier. The question of whether knights were likely to die on the battlefield is tied conceptually to larger debates among historians about the nature of medieval warrior life and culture. We might identify two broad schools of thought: on the one hand, those who emphasize the courtly, refined, and gentlemanly approach to warfare, and on the other hand, those who affirm the intensely violent lifestyle of knights and men-at-arms.

In the first school of thought are scholars such as David Crouch and Maurice Keen. Crouch, for example, has argued that historians must not see the Middle Ages a childlike and inherently violent, instead arguing that chivalry acted to improve the behavior of noblemen and to bring them closer to clerical prescriptions for society.[2] Crouch's work has in many ways grown out of the scholarship of Maurice Keen, who argued that warfare and a martial lifestyle were certainly a part of chivalric life but that true chivalry "was at war with a distorted image of itself"; the distortion, in Keen's mind, being the more brutal and bloody tendencies. The purer ideal of chivalry, for Keen, was one that encouraged gentlemanly behavior both at war and at home.[3] In this approach, knights were less likely to die in battle because the pure ideal of chivalry would encourage capturing and ransoming an enemy knight rather than killing him.[4]

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1 Iain MacInnes points out that the chivalric elite might have been less likely to die in battle than poorly armored commoners, but that they still suffered wounds and death. Iain MacInnes, «One man slashes, one slays, one warns, one wounds.' Injury and Death in Anglo-Scottish Combat, c. 1296-c.1403», in Rogge, Jörg, (ed.)*Killing and Being Killed: Bodies in Battle, Perspectives on Fighters in the Middle Ages,* Bielefeld 2017, 65-77.

2 David Crouch, *Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England France, 900-1300,* Harlow 2005, pp. 87-93. See also, Crouch, *The English Aristocracy, 1070-1272: A Social Transformation,* New Haven 2011.

3 Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven 1984, pp. 233-37.

4 For some other scholars who might be included in this school of thought, see Philip-

In the second school of thought are scholars such as Richard Kaeuper and Peter Sposato. Kaeuper has argued over the course of the last two decades that medieval chivalry placed a premium on violence, which was used to defend or augment a man's honor.[5] For Kaeuper, the emphasis on violence was so profound that medieval knights were confident that God Himself ordained their bloody profession and rewarded them for it in the next life. Indeed, the idea of dying on the battlefield was a key aspiration which manifested in chivalric literature.[6] Kaeuper has also argued that the effects of this violence were ubiquitous throughout society to the point that medieval states (especially in England and France) struggled with the disorder brought about by knights and their chivalric ideology.[7] Sposato, a student of Kaeuper, has carried Kaeuper's approach to the Mediterranean, arguing that the violence inherent in the chivalric system was at least as important as civic or humanistic virtues in late medieval Florence.[8] For Kaeuper, Sposato, and other scholars who embrace this approach, the violence inherent in the chivalric lifestyle meant that the risk of death was ever present.[9]

This article will resonate more strongly with the second school, emphasizing the violent realities of knightly life. It will present a case study of late medie-

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pe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages,* trans. Michael Jones, New York, 1984, pp. 291, 305-306; María Concepción Quintanilla Raso, *Nobleza y caballeria en la Edad Media,* Madrid, 1996, pp. 59-65; Cecilia Devia, *La violence en la Edad Media: la rebellion irmandiña*, Vigo 2009, p, 21.

5 Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford 1999. See Also Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*, Philadelphia 2009; and Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, Cambridge 2016.

6 Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry,* pp. 284-99.

7 Richard Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order,* Oxford 1988.

8 Peter Sposato, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars: Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Florence*, Ithaca 2021.

9 For other scholars who emphasize the role of violence in knightly culture, see Susanna A. Throop, *Crusading as Act of Vengeance*, Burlington, VT, 2011; Craig Nakashian, *Warrior Churchmen of Medieval England, 1000-1250: Theory and Reality,* Woodbridge 2016; Samuel A. Claussen, *Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Castile*, Woodbridge 2020; and L.J. Andrew Villalon, «Deudo, Property, and the Roots of Feudal Violence in late Medieval Castile», in Donald J. Kagay, L.J. Andrew Villalon (eds.), *The Final Argument: The Imprint of Violence on Society in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Woodbridge 1998, pp. 55-72. Craig Taylor has sought to navigate a middle ground between the two schools, reconciling their more extreme positions. Yet he still agrees that violence was a key component of the chivalric lifestyle. See Craig Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 91-98.

val Castile, using chronicle evidence to begin correcting the narrative regarding chivalric deaths. As in so much of western Europe in the Late Middle Ages, the knights of the Kingdom of Castile were constantly at war. The Hundred Years' War raged throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, civil and dynastic wars wracked the kingdom down to the local level, and in the 15th century, Castilian knights and monarchs began prioritizing the holy war against Islamic Granada more vigorously and more regularly. Mortal violence was a very real part of the medieval chivalric world; knights were not somehow insulated from the bloodshed that animated their lifestyle. The ideas, norms, and rituals of chivalric warfare carried real meaning for the men who embraced it, as their very lives might be at stake when they took up arms. Late medieval warfare should be understood neither as a ritualistic engagement in which the chivalric elite were largely protected from death by gentlemanly norms of warfare nor as a stratified arrangement wherein common soldiers suffered hard fighting and death while noble captains stood above the fray.[10] Chroniclers in the late medieval and early modern Spanish world regularly recorded not only the numbers of knights killed in battle but, more importantly, the names of notable knightly personages who perished on the battlefield. To ignore the deadly nature of knighthood recognized by medieval knights and chroniclers risks trivializing medieval warfare and misunderstanding chivalric culture.

Deaths in Major Battles

Many knights who died in battle in late medieval Castile perished during some of the most significant martial encounters of the period. Three major battles of the late Middle Ages illustrate this point very effectively. The battle of Nájera in 1367, the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, and the siege of Málaga in 1487 were all significant encounters for which we have good chronicle evidence about the participants generally and specifically the men who died on the field.

The battle of Nájera pitted King Pedro and his English champion, Edward the

10 Alastair J. MacDonald, has argued that late medieval battlefields became more dangerous for the chivalric elite largely because of the increase in commoners on the battlefield, who did not respect chivalric norms preventing death in battle. Alastair J. MacDonal, "Two Kinds of War? Brutality and Atrocity in Later Medieval Scotland," in Rogge (ed.), *Killing and Being Killed* cit., p. 211.

Black Prince of England, against Enrique de Trastámara, Pedro's half-brother and claimant to the throne, together with his Aragonese and French allies, captained by the renowned French knight Bertrand du Guesclin in April of 1367. The victory of Pedro and the Black Prince would be fleeting, as Enrique would ultimately be successful in claiming the Castilian throne, but it nonetheless was one of the more significant battles of both the Hundred Years' War and the war between Pedro and Enrique. The work of Andrew Villalon on the battle is unrivaled in Anglophone military history. One of the most important contributions that Villalon makes to our understanding of mortality in medieval battles is his summary of the Castilian noblemen who participated in the battle alongside a list of those who died in the battle.[11] The data is revealing. In Enrique's army, almost all of his noble Castilian supporters were present. The chronicler Pedro López de Ayala, who was present at the battle himself, names 39 Castilian noblemen who fought on the side of Enrique (this number includes Enrique de Trastámara himself). Additionally, when Ayala lists the elite men who were captured or killed in the battle, he adds another fifteen names, bringing the total of named elite warriors in the battle to 54. Of these 54, four were killed in the battle and another six were executed as prisoners after the battle. Additionally, Ayala claims that some 400 men-at-arms who remain unnamed also died.[12] If Ayala was right in claiming that this represented almost all of the noblemen who supported Enrique's claim, then Enrique lost a fifth of his major supporters in a single battle.

Even if Ayala exaggerated, the four men Ayala names as having died on the field were significant persons. Garcilaso de la Vega, one of the most prominent men killed at Nájera, was the head of the House of la Vega, a rising family whose patriarchs often came to violent ends; Garcilaso's father had been killed by King Pedro in 1351[13] and his grandfather had been killed in 1326 as he supported King Alfonso XI against a seigneurial rebellion.[14] Also dead on the field was

11 L.J. Andrew Villalon, «Spanish Involvement in the Hundred Years War and the Battle of Nájera», in L.J. Andrew, Villalon and Donald J. Kagay (eds.), *The Hundred Years War, A Wider Focus,* Leiden, 2005, pp. 3-74.

12 Pedro López de Ayala, *Crónica del Rey Don Pedro*, in *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla* [hereafter CRC], vol. II, *Biblioteca Autores Españoles* [hereafter BAE], 66, Madrid, 1919, p. 557.

13 Ibid., 415.

14 *Cronica de Don Alfonso el Onceno de este nombre, de los reyes que reynaron en Castilla y en León*, Madrid 1787, 120.

Suero Pérez de Quiñones, the Lord of Luna, who served as *adelantado mayor* of León and Asturias (an important judicial and military officer) for both Pedro and Enrique II. When he pledged his allegiance to Enrique, he was rewarded with significant holdings throughout Asturias.[15] The other two named men who died during the battle were Sancho Sánchez de Rojas, the Lord of Poza, and Juan Rodríguez de Sarmiento, a younger son of the Sarmiento family of Galicia and a *comendador* of the Order of Santiago. For Ayala, these four represent the quality of the hundreds of knights who perished at Nájera.

If Ayala did not record enough of the names of the deceased warriors in 1367, he did a better job in his later history. The Battle of Aljubarrota, fought between King Juan I of Castile and King João I of Portugal in August of 1385, is arguably one of the more important battles in late medieval Iberian history. Not only did it function as an Iberian extension of the Hundred Years' War, with both English and French knights joining the fray, but the decisive defeat of the Castilian warriors also marked the effective end of Castilian ambitions in the Middle Ages to claim the Portuguese throne and the potential union of Castile and Portugal.[16] Numerical assessments of the battle suggest that somewhere between three and four thousand Castilians were killed on the field at Aljubarrota, while several thousand more were slaughtered as they fled from the battle.[17] Undoubtedly many of these casualties were common soldiers, but many were not. As the chronicler Pedro López de Ayala emphasized, "many very good Lords and Knights were killed"; it was not simply the average Castilian soldier who died on the field.[18] Ayala names 32 men who lost their lives at Aljubarrota. Though this is admittedly a small proportion of the thousands of dead, it represents a more significant portion of the chivalric elite, especially since most of these 32 were not just knights

15 Braulio Vásquez Campos, "Suero Pérez de Quiñonez," in Real Academia de Historia, *Diccionario Biográfico electrónico,* Accessed June 15, 2021, http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/61490/suero-perez-de-quinones

16 For a recent and thorough assessment of the battle, see Luís Adão da Fonseca, João Gouveia Monteiro, Maria Cristina Pimenta (ed.), *The Aljubarrota Battle and its Contemporary Heritage*, Leeds 2020.

17 Miguel Gomes Martins, João Gouveia Monteiro, «Portugal, Part II – The Late Middle Ages 1249-1367: A time of reforms and royal consolidation», in Francisco García Fitz and João Gouveia Monteiro (eds), *War in the Iberian Peninsula, 700-1600*, London 2018, p. 238.

18 Pedro López de Ayala, *Crónica del Rey Don Juan Primero*, in CRC, vol. II, BAE, 68, Madrid 1877, p. 105. "é fueron Muertos y muchos é muy buenos Señores é Caballeros."

but noblemen and even grandees. Among them were titled men both great and small, such as Juan, Lord of Aguilar and Castañeda; Pero Díaz de Ivear, the Prior of San Juan; Rui Barba, the Lord of Castrofuerte[19]; Fernán Carrillo, Lord of Cotillas and Pliego[20]; and Diego García de Toledo, Lord of Mejorada. Some were cadet branches of the royal families, as was the deceased Pedro de Aragón; not only was he a great-grandson of King Jaume II of Aragon, but he had married the daughter of King Enrique II of Castile, making him the brother-in-law of his liege. Also a man of royal blood was Fernando Sánchez de Castilla, whose paternal grandfather was Alfonso XI of Castile and maternal grandfather was Pedro I of Portugal. Others were of sufficient status to hold offices in the royal government. Such was the case with both Diego Gómez Manrique, the Lord of Amusco who was the *adelantado mayor* of Castile, and Juan Fernández de Tovar, the Lord of Berlanga and the Admiral of Castile. Similarly, both Diego Gómez Sarmiento and Pero González Carrillo died on the field; the former, in addition to holding the lordship of a number of towns in Castile, was the Constable of Castile while the latter was apparently the Constable of Castile under Juan's father, Enrique II. Pero's relative, Gonzalo Díaz, also died, while Gonzalo's cousin, Ferrán Carrillo, served as the king's cupbearer and, while he did not die at Aljubarrota, did perish in the broader war with Portugal. [21] Pedro González de Mendoza, the Lord of Mendoza, served as Juan I's *mayordomo mayor* (roughly equivalent to the English royal steward).[22] Two members of the elite Portuguese nobility who had joined the Castilian party also died in the battle: João Afonso Telo, the queen's uncle and the Count of Mayorga as well as Pedro Álvares Pereira, who was created Master of the Order of Calatrava by Juan I for his loyal service. In addition to the titled nobility and officers of the court, several that Ayala lists as dead on the field of Aljubarrota were younger sons of the high nobility. Such was the case

19 Luis Vilar y Pascual, *Diccionario histórico, genealógico y heráldico de las familias ilustres de la monarquía Española*, Madri, 1860, p. 79.

20 Francisco de Asís Veas Arteseros, *Itinerario de Enrique III*, Murcia 2003, p. 1393.

21 Miguel Ángel Castán y Alegre, «Figure señera de la Caballeria española. Don Francisco Carrillo de Albornoz y Montiel. Primer Duqeu de Montemar (1671-1747)», *Hidalguia: la revista de genealogía, nobleza y armas* 314, 2006, p. 12.

22 The Mendoza family would assert that Pedro died saving King Juan's life in battle, though this is historically dubious. See Ana Belén Sánchez Prieto, *La casa de Mendoza hasta el tercer Duque del Infantado (1350-1531): El ejercicio y alcance del poder señorial en la Castilla bajomedieval*, Madrid 2001, p. 162.

with Juan Pérez de Godoy, who was the second son of Pedro Muñiz de Godoy, a Master of Calatrava. In the case of the Godoy family, death in battle struck twice in one year, as the Master perished in the battle of Valverde a few months later.[23] Ayala names seventeen other knights and lords in his account of Aljubarrota and also comments that "many other knights" of Castile and Portugal died for King Juan there.[24]

Through much of the fifteenth century, chroniclers did not note the names of the dead knights and nobles in major battles. For the siege of Málaga in 1487, though, the royal chronicler Fernando del Pulgar, returned to the older practice of recording the notable deceased. Indeed, Pulgar not only notes the names of the deceased, but he often mentions their names as he recounts each component part of the siege. The conquest of the Granadan city by the forces of the Catholic Monarchs, Isabel and Fernando, was arguably the most important moment in the Granada War. As the major port of the Kingdom of Granada, the loss of Málaga to the Christians was a grievous blow to the last Muslim state in Iberia, though the conquest of Granada would take several more years.[25] The siege of Málaga lasted through most of the summer of 1487 and witnessed multiple techniques of siegecraft due to its strong walls, towers, and castle; this included efforts to scale the walls, the use of gunpowder artillery, mines and countermines under the walls, naval support activity, and direct fighting between the Muslim defenders and the Christian attackers.

One particularly important component of the siege was the effort on the part of the Christians to capture the castle of Gibralfaro, which sat on a high hill above the city itself. After the king's artillery had damaged several towers and a wall of the castle, some of the Christians hesitated to assault the castle, correctly thinking that they would be in too great a danger in doing so. But they also did not move far enough away from the castle as the enemy prepared a counterattack. The two sides fought for several hours in the hills and ravines around the castle and the Christians were pushed back. A number of notable knights were left dead in

23 Gloria Lora Serrano, «Los Muñiz de Godoy: Linaje y caballeria en la Córdoba del siglo XIV», in *Historia. Instituticiones. Documentos* 34, 2007, p. 162.

24 Ayala, *Juan Primero*, 105.

25 Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Last Crusade in the West: Castile and the Conquest of Granada*, Philadelphia 2014, pp. 159-67.

the fighting, including the famous knight and *alcaide* of Atienza, Garci Bravo[26] together with his son-in-law, Iñigo López de Medrano, the Lord of Cabanillas.[27] Pulgar also mentions the deaths of Gabriel de Sotomayor – a knight whose prestige is unclear other than to be sufficient to be named in the chronicle – and two Galician captains, Pedro Pamo and Vasco de Meyda. Finally, three unnamed captains of the military forces called the *hermandades* were killed in the battle.[28] Even the Marquis of Cádiz, Rodrigo Ponce de Leon, was wounded in the arm with an arrow during the fighting, though he did not lose his life.

As the effort to capture Gibralfaro faltered, other detachments of the Christian forces sought to scale the walls of the city of Málaga and capture several towers in the walls. The first man to reach the top of the walls was a knight named Pedro de Quexana. Unfortunately, his comrades were not able to assist him. Fighting by himself against the defenders of Málaga, he was killed on the top of the wall.[29] After Quexana perished, other Christian knights did manage to ascend the wall, but they were unable to take the towers, as the defenders set fire to them and forced the attackers to flee. Before the skirmish was over, at least nine knights and men-at-arms were dead, including Juan de Virues, who Pulgar simply describes as a *comendador*, as well as the knights Alonso de Santillana and Diego de Mazariegos.

A few months after it had begun, the siege of Málaga concluded with a negotiated surrender of the city and the castle of Gibralfaro to the Catholic Monarchs.

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26 Alonso de Palencia, *Cuarta* Década, trans. José López de Toro, vol. 25, part II, Madrid, 1974, p. 71.

27 Fernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Señores Reyes Católicos Don Fernandro* y Doña Isabel de Castilla y de Aragón, in CRC, vol. III, *BAE* 70, Madrid 1923, pp. 460-61.

28 Pulgar, 461. It is likely that these were captains of the famous *Santa Hermandad*, but we cannot be certain. Antonio Álvarez de Morales reminds us that despite being peopled by common soldiers, the *hermandades* of the Catholic Monarchs were typically captained and led by noblemen. See Antonio Álvarez de Morales, «La evolución de las Hermandades en el siglo XV», in *En la España medieval* 6, 1985, pp. 93-104.

29 Pulgar, 467. In Málaga today, there is a street named Calle Pedro de Quejana, which is located near the place where the Catholic Monarchs had set up their camp during the siege and where it is likely that the knight in question died. There is no concrete record that the street was named for this man before the year 1930. I am thankful to Adela Rubia Lozano at the Archivo Municipal de Málaga for investigating this issue for me. Given the nationalistic medievalism that permeated segments of Europe at this time, it is possible that the street was named in the modern world for the deceased medieval knight.

It was considered a signal victory at the time. The royal chronicler Andrés Bernáldez diligently recorded the names of all the great lords who were present, "for they should have part of the glory".[30] Absent from Bernáldez' triumphant showering of plaudits are the knights and men-at-arms who perished. Yet even in a major victory such as the siege of Málaga, death on the battlefield was a real possibility. Indeed, the siege was one of the signal battlefields of the period and, like in the battles of Nájera and Aljubarrota, knights could and did die while fighting.

Deaths in Minor Encounters

But knights did not only die in the marquee battles of their kings. In smaller scale seigneurial warfare, too, the chivalric class could expect to meet their end on the field of battle. In 1473, a war was raging in Andalucía between two of the most powerful regional families: the Guzmanes, headed by the Duke of Medina Sidonia and the Ponces de León, headed by the Marquis of Cádiz. As the two families sought to "make cruel war" upon one another, a group of knights from the Guzmán side targeted the Ponce de León fortification of Alcalá de Guadayra. The chronicler Diego de Valera specifies that the hundred and fifty mounted attackers – some of the principal knights of Sevilla – went to Alcalá de Guadayra "with the intention of hacking up those of Alcalá, if they should encounter them in the field".[31] By the time the attackers arrived, the defenders had called for allies and stood ready to defend the village and fortification with some 350 knights and mounted men-at-arms. In the vigorous fighting that ensued, several notable persons were killed. Valera mentions by name both Pedro and Alonso de Guzmán, who were bastard brothers of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the patriarch of the Guzmán family.[32] Indeed, the two men were apparently targeted *because* of their high status, with Valera claiming that one of the men of the Marquis of Cádiz took the brothers alive and then, recognizing who they were, killed them on the

30 Andrés Bernáldez, *Historia de los Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel,* in CRC vol. III, *BAE* 70, 632. "Los nombres de los Grandes de Castilla que se hallaron presents en la dicha Victoria, no es razon que queden en silencio, pues que ovieron parte de la gloria de ella…"

31 Diego de Valera, *Memorial de diversas hazañas,* in CRC III, vol. III, *BAE* 70, p. 75. "[F]asta ciento ó cinquenta de caballo de hombres muy principales de aquella ciudad, con intencion de acuchillar á los de Alcalá, si en el campo los fallasen."

32 Ibid.

battlefield. Valera assures his reader that the Marquis was much aggrieved by this behavior.[33] Aside from the Guzmán brothers, Valera simply mentions that fifteen squires lost their lives at Alcalá de Guadayra and that "many knights" died on both sides, without offering either names or numbers. In fact, it would seem that Rodrigo was not the only one shedding chivalric tears, as "the victors returned with all the spoil to the ville of Alcalá, though they were sad for the deaths of those knights."[34] Such sentiments are a prime example of how we might misread chivalric evidence. Simply because Rodrigo and his men were saddened by the killing of the Guzmán brothers and all the other knights does not mean that death in battle was necessarily avoided. The reactions of chivalric men to death in battle often expressed remorse or regret, but such reactions became almost ubiquitous precisely because death in battle was common enough.

Occasional deaths of renowned knights in minor encounters are strewn throughout the chronicle evidence. In 1378, during a war between Navarre and Castile, a knight of the King of Castile named Ruy Díaz de Rojas, who was the *adelantado mayor* of Guipuzcoa, was killed in an encounter with some Gascon allies of the King of Navarre.[35] Rojas came from a noble family and had served King Enrique throughout his wars, perhaps most notably by leading a Castilian fleet to France where they fought against the English.[36] In 1384, during King Juan I's war with Portugal, the monarch dispatched several noblemen to repel a small Portuguese force that was raiding the Castilian frontier near Badajoz. The Castilians were defeated and among the dead was the Master of the Order of Alcántara, Diego Martínez.[37] As the war with Portugal continued into 1385, chivalric honor and the fear of shame drove more Castilian knights to a battlefield death. As a company of Castilian knights marched into Portugal near the castle town of Trancoso, the Castilians saw a Portuguese company arrayed on the field outside the town and debated whether or not they should engage in battle. Some

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid. "é así vitoriosos con todo el despojo, se volvieron á la villa de Alcalá, aunque tristes por la muerte de quellos caballeros é de algunos otros con quien deudo tenian."

35 Ayala, *Crónica del Rey Don Enrique, Segundo de Castilla,* in CRC, vol. II, *BAE* 68, 34.

36 Ibid., 13-14. Jose Luis Orella examines the leading warrior elites of Guipúzcoa and includes a brief analysis of Ruy Diaz de Rojas. See José Luis Orella, «Las orígenes de la Hermandad de Guipuzcoa (las relaciones Guipúzcoa-Navarra en el siglo XIII-XIV)», in *Vasconia: Cuadernos de Historia-Geografía* 3, 1984, pp. 63-64.

37 Ayala, *Juan Primero*, 89.

said that there was no reason to fight but they were overruled by others who were worried that if they saw the enemy with their own eyes and chose not to fight, their fellow Castilians would hear of it and they would all be shamed. And so they fought. Two of the three leaders of the Castilian company, Juan Rodríguez de Castañeda, the Lord of Las Hormazas[38], and Pero Suarez de Toledo[39], the Lord of Casarrubios del Monte, were killed in the battle, together with "other Knights and Squires, in such manner that many of the men at arms who were there died."[40] It is worth noting here that Ayala does not draw clear distinctions between "knights and squires" on the one hand and "men at arms" on the other, suggesting that his term "men at arms" *included* members of the chivalric class. In 1429, during the wars between King Juan I and the *Infantes* of Aragon, the king's forces stormed the Navarrese castle town of San Vicente. During the fighting in the street, the Lord of Butrón, a Vizcayan knight named Gonzalo Gómez, watched as his son was overwhelmed by the Navarrese and taken prisoner while some of his men were slaughtered in the fight. Gonzalo rushed into the press with very few men to save his son and was killed in the battle together with a few of his men.[41] For the Butrón lineage, death in battle lasted for three generations. Gonzalo's grandson, Gómez was killed in an ambush after the burning of the city of Mondragón in Navarre in 1448.[42]

Occasionally, men at the lower end of chivalric society also died in small skirmishes, sieges, or martial activity. In 1429, as King Juan I was challenged by his relatives, the *Infantes* of Aragon, the Constable of Castile, Don Álvaro de Luna, led armies along the various frontiers of the kingdom. In one instance, outside the village of Alburquerque, the constable's camp was set up within range of enemy crossbowmen. One of Luna's squires took a crossbow bolt through the face and

38 Luis de Salazar y Castro, *Historia genealógica de la casa de Lara*, Madrid 1696, p. 190.

39 Salvador de Moxó, *Los antiguos señoríos de Toledo*, Toledo 1973, p. 173.

40 Ayala, *Juan Primero*, 98-99. "é mataron y á los dichos Juan Rodriguez de Castañeda, é Pero Suarez, é otros Caballeros é Escuderos, en manera que todos los mas omes de armas que y eran morieron."

41 Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, *La Crónica del Serenísimo Príncipe Don Juan, Segundo Rey deste nombre en Castilla y en León*, in CRC, vol. II, *BAE* 68, pp. 474-5.

42 Lope García de Salazar, *Bienandanzas e Fortunas*, Ana María Marín Sánchez (ed.), (Parnaseo: Universitat de Valéncia), Accessed June 10, 2021, http://parnaseo.uv.es/Lemir/Textos/bienandanzas/Menu.htm, Book 22.

died.[43] In 1442, Juan Ramírez de Guzmán, a *comendador mayor* of the Order of Calatrava, and Fernando de Padilla, the *clavero* – the chief castellan – of the same order, fought a battle at the fields of Barajas over who would be the next Master of the Order as the previous Master lay dying. Guzmán lost the battle and was imprisoned while four of his nephews, who are not named in Fernán Pérez de Guzmán's chronicle, died in the battle.[44] King Juan, hoping to secure his cousin's illegitimate son as the new Master, sent the *Infante* Enrique to take the castles and fortifications of the order and remove Padilla from his position of power. As Padilla was besieged by the *Infante* at the fortification of Convento, one of his squires threw a stone from a weapon at the enemy camp and hit Padilla in the head with it. He died from the wound a few days later and the king's candidate became the Master of Calatrava.[45] The troubles of Juan II's reign also yielded the death of the young knight Lorenzo Dávalos, the chamberlain (*camarero*) of the *Infante* Enrique, who in 1441 died of the wounds he received during a battle between the *Infante* and Álvaro de Luna.[46]

Often knights suffered death not at the hands of a fellow knight or a religious enemy, but by commoners or the general soldiery. During the intrigues over the Mastership of Calatrava in 1443, the old master's son, Juan de Guzmán, fought a battle against a *comendador* of the Order of Santiago, Rodrigo Manrique, in which 40 men-at-arms perished, including the knight Juan de Merlo. Juan de Merlo was the *alcaide* of Alcalá de Real who was considered by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán to be "a very good knight" who always served the king very well.[47] His son, Diego de Merlo would go on to serve with distinction during the final war against Granada in the 1480s.[48] During the battle in 1443, Juan de Merlo "fought

43 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 472.

44 Ibid., p. 609.

45 Ibid., pp. 612-13.

46 Ibid., pp. 578-79. Dávalos' death was famously lamented by the poet Juan de Mena in his *Laberinto de Fortuna;* Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego has argued convincingly that Dávalos' death in the poem was meant to lament death in civil war and instead recommend death in the glory of the holy war against Islam. See Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego, «La muerte de Lorenzo Dávalos (*Laberinto de Fortune,* cs. 201-207)», in *Actas del IX Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*, 2005, pp. 157-174.

47 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 613. "de la muerte del qual el Rey ovo gran sentimiento, porque era muy buen caballero, é le habia sienpre bien servido."

48 For the life of Diego, see Antonio Herrera García, «El testament del Asistente de Sevilla, Diego de Merlo (1482)», in *En la España medieval*, 1, 1980, pp. 155-68.

so much amongst the enemy that he was left alone, and when he wanted to return to the pass of a bridge, he encountered peons of the enemy who killed him."[49] Knights might have imagined their deaths at the hands of a powerful and impressive enemy knight, but it certainly happened that they were instead overcome by the common soldiery.

Even outside of formal battles, knights and men-at-arms, by the very nature of their martial calling, often found themselves fighting and sometimes dying in those fights. At times these took the forms of riots or civil unrest; other times they took the form of street brawls or acts of righteous vengeance. In 1371, for example, an Aragonese knight named Felipe de Castro travelled to Paredes de Nava, part of a series of holdings which his brother-in-law, the newly enthroned Enrique, had granted him. According to Ayala, Castro demanded that the citizens of Paredes de Nava give him "a certain quantity of something" and they refused. When he arrived in the city after their refusal, "he arrested some of them, and chastised others; and those of [Paredes de Nava] went out into the street, and fought with him and killed him."[50] Though this was not a formal battlefield, Castro died as a knight in a skirmish after asserting his seigneurial rights. Indeed, Castro's death was avenged by his comrade in fine chivalric fashion. Pedro Fernández de Velasco ran into some of the citizens of Paredes de Nava and "fought with them, and killed many of them, and entered into the place, and made great damage."[51]

A much more prominent figure than Felipe de Castro managed to die in a much more ignominious fight. In 1374, Sancho, the Duke of Alburquerque and the brother of Enrique II, came to the city of Burgos, where the king was preparing for the expected invasion of Castile by the English prince, John of Gaunt. Ayala claims that Sancho instigated a fight in the city with the companies of the powerful Pedro González de Mendoza, the Lord of Mendoza, who, as we saw above, would ultimately die a decade later at Aljubarrota. As Sancho went out

49 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 613. "metióse tanto en ellos que quedó solo, é quando quiso Volver al paso de una puente, halló peones de los contrarios los quales lo matáron…"

50 Ayala, *Enrique, Segundo,* p. 9. "envoi demander al logar de Paredes de Nava, que le diese cierta quantia de algo; é non se avinieron con él. E él fué para el dicho logar á prender algunos dellos, é escarmentar otros; é los del logar salieron al camino, é pelearon con él é mataronle."

51 Ibid., pp. 9-10. "é peleó con ellos, é mató muchos dellos, é entró en el logar, é fizo y grand daño."

fully armed into the street, "a man, not knowing who he was, gave him a blow with a lance through the face, and a few hours later that day, he expired."[52]

And sometimes, knights ended up dead in battle even if they were not struck down by an enemy's weapons. In 1436, the Count of Niebla, Enrique de Guzmán led a small force by sea to assault the Granadan city of Gibraltar. As they skirmished with the Granadans at the foot of the walls, they were unwittingly led into a mortal trap. The Granadans, knowing the tidal patterns, intentionally drew out the skirmish so that some of the count's knights were trapped as the tide came in, threatening to drown them. The count, together with some forty of his principal knights, went to the rescue of the men trapped in the tide to aid them. The vessel capsized and the count and the forty with him all drowned.[53]

Deaths in the Holy War

Chroniclers lamented the deaths of knights on the field even as they celebrated their glorious deeds in battle – especially those knights who fought against the forces of the Muslim Kingdom of Granada. By the fifteenth century, the ideal of holy war, even if it was not actively embraced by every Castilian knight, exercised an outsized influence in the martial ideology of chivalry.[54] In 1407, war broke out between Castile and Granada as the result of several skirmishes along the Andalucian frontier. The *Infante* Fernando, the young King Juan II's uncle and co-regent, led a major Castilian campaign that was successful in taking the city of Antequera from Granada even as small groups of Castilian raiding parties harassed their Muslim enemies along the frontier. As a result, the chronicles of the fifteenth century are littered with examples of knightly deaths suffered against Muslim enemies in battles and skirmishes large and small.

Before the *Infante* formally undertook his campaign against Granada, skirmishes along the frontier led to the deaths of numerous Castilian knights. In the spring of 1407 a number of knights from Lorca captured the Granadan castle of Hurtal. Unfortunately for the Castilians, they were not able to defend the castle

52 Ibid., p. 22. "é un ome non le conosciendo, dióle con una lanza por el rostro, é luego á poca de hora finó aquel dia." My thanks to Rafaela Fiore-Urízar for assisting me with the linguistic niceties of this passage.

53 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 528.

54 Claussen, *Chivalry and Violence*, pp. 107-26.

against a Granadan counterattack and the castle was taken. Although it seems that most of the Castilians were taken prisoner, some portion of the knights died during the siege of the castle when the Granadans mined one of the walls, causing it to collapse and killing all of the Castilians defending that part of the wall. Our chronicle does not disclose how many men that included.[55] In another early skirmish, a small Christian force had the victory over a larger Muslim force. Fernán Pérez de Guzmán narrates a colorful anecdote in which a Muslim survivor is convinced that God and the Apostle Santiago aided the Christians. Nonetheless, one Christian horseman was killed in the battle out of the forty-two who had fought.[56] At the end of July, the Master of Santiago sent 50 horsemen to raid the territory around the Granadan village of Teba. They were met in a skirmish by 250 enemy horsemen but still had the victory. Two of the fifty Castilians apparently died in battle. A few weeks later, in the middle of August, the King of Granada led a much larger army – Pérez de Guzmán says some 7,000 horse and 100,000 foot – against the Castilian town of Baeza. The Castilians put together a large army to relieve Baeza and before the battle was joined the King of Granada abandoned the siege and instead captured and burned the castle town of Bedmar, killing both "the knight called Sancho Ximenez, *comendador* of the Order of Santiago" as well as "most of those who were in the castle."[57] Finally, at the end of October, the knights Pedro de Barriéntos and Juan and Lope de Pórras, who were brothers, led a very small group of men-at-arms against a larger force of Granadans. They were all killed in the ensuing skirmish. In these early skirmishes, Pérez de Guzmán is eager to emphasize how *few* Castilian knights and men-at-arms were killed in battle. Yet it is remarkable that even in relatively minor skirmishes in the early days of the *Infante*'s holy war, knights and men-at-arms were regularly meeting their deaths on the battlefield.

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán attributes the outbreak of war to an attack by the Granadans on the Castilian city of Priego. In this attack he records a single knight's death: that of the unnamed *alcaide* (castellan) of the fortification of Priego; yet the deaths of Christians at the hands of the Muslims formed part

55 Pérez de Guzmán, pp. 286-87.

56 Ibid., p. 287.

57 Ibid., p. 290. "é murió allí un Caballero llamado Sancho Ximenez Comendador de la Órden de Santiago, é muriéron los mas que en el castillo estaban…"

of the justification for the Infante's decision to lead an army south.[58] Pérez de Guzmán also examines the case of the Castilian knight Lope Ortiz de Estúñiga, the *alcalde mayor* (a judicial office often controlled by regional nobles) of Sevilla. During a major battle between the Muslims and Christians in the mountains outside Antequera, Estúñiga saw a large group of enemy knights attack his coreligionists. Thinking he would be aided by his fellow knights, he charged into the fray. Unfortunately for Estúñiga, only six of his 80 horsemen joined him. He was wounded, fell from his horse, and died. Pérez de Guzmán assures his reader that "he died as a very good knight, fighting with his sword as long he lived."[59] Such a statement is not unusual in chivalric commentary on knightly deaths in battle, confirming that the expectation of death on the battlefield was common enough that chivalric writers could rely on established sentiments. Aside from Estúñiga, Pérez de Guzmán gives no other names of knights who fell in the battle in the mountains, instead simply noting that 120 Christians died in the battle, not offering a specific breakdown of the dead by rank or status.

As the Antequera campaign progressed, Pérez de Guzmán continued to record the deaths of the chivalric warriors, often from artillery blasts. As the *Infante*'s siege of Antequera began, Pérez de Guzmán notes that "many Christians, as much men-at-arms as peons" were killed by the enemy's artillery.[60] A man named Martín Ruiz de Avendaño was killed during the siege, apparently by artillery fire, whom Pérez de Guzmán simply calls "a good Vizcayan knight"; in fact he came from one of the most prominent lineages of the Basque Country.[61] His ancestors – the lords of Urquizu – had fought on land and sea against the enemies of their lords and the kings of Castile. Martín Ruiz de Avendaño himself had led an expedition to the Canary Islands, where he may or may not have slept with the wife of the Guanche king and produced the legendary Princess Ico. He then served alongside the famous knight Pero Niño during the Hundred Years' War, raiding the English coast before ending his life in the holy war against Granada.[62] Not

58 Ibid., p. 312.

59 Ibid., p. 320. "é murió como muy buen caballero peleando con el espada quanto la vida le duró."

60 Ibid., p. 321. "E los do la villa tenian tan grande lombardería, que mataban é ferian cada dia muchos de los Christianos, así hombres darmas como peones…"

61 Ibid., p. 322.

62 For the life of Martín Ruiz de Avendaño and a prosopography of the Avendaño *linaje,* see

only was this man a good Vizcayan knight, he was a storied knight whose life was full of martial and chivalric adventure.

While the main action was taking place at Antequera, the *Infante* sought to bring war to other parts of Granada in order to press his enemy more effectively. In what was a very successful attack by the Castilians, they defeated a Granadan army in a skirmish and burned the crops, orchards, and almost everything else they could find outside the city of Málaga. Even in a skirmish that was a great success for the Castilians, knights' lives were at risk. Only one "man of account" was killed in the battle, according to Pérez de Guzmán: Fernando de Guzmán, the son of Juan Ramirez de Guzmán, a man who had a career as a *gran comendador* of the Order of Calatrava.[63] After taking Antequera itself, the *Infante* ordered knights to go and capture three castles in the surrounding countryside to better secure the defenses of Antequera. In the ensuing fights, before the Muslim defenders of each fortification surrendered, one squire of Valladolid named Christóbal Ruiz was killed, together with a small number of other Castilian soldiers.[64]

As the siege and conquest of Antequera was progressing, a group of young knights decided to audaciously raid further into Granada on their own, seeking glory in battle. They encountered a very large Granadan army and fought with them. In what must have been a disheartening thing for the chronicler to write, he notes that more Christians were killed than Muslims; typically, Pérez de Guzmán and other chroniclers emphasize that many more Muslims were killed in battle than Christians. During one encounter of the the battle, three Muslim horsemen were killed and five Christians. Feeling pressed by the enemy's superior numbers, twenty-five Christian horsemen came together with the prominent knights Fernando de Tórres and Pero Muñiz de Tórres. Fernando and eighteen other horsemen died in the battle, while Pero Muñiz and the remaining seven survived. Pérez de Guzmán records a total of sixty Christians who died in this skirmish and 233 who were captured, this of a total of 120 horsemen and 240 footmen who

Ernesto García Fernández, «El linaje Avendaño: Causas y consecuencias de su ascenso social en la baja edad media», in *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 37/2, July-December 2007, pp. 541-42.

63 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 324. Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla, «Juan Ramírez de Guzmán», in Real Academia de Historia, *Diccionario Biográfico electrónico,* Accessed June 15, 2021, http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/71058/juan-ramirez-de-guzman

64 Ibid., p. 332.

entered the battle. Pérez de Guzmán's account of this skirmish is a bit puzzling, as he claims at the beginning of his narration that 300 horsemen were lost in this encounter, yet only records 120 entering the battle. Regardless, his narrative of the skirmish clearly shows knights and men-at-arms perishing on the battlefield.[65] Similarly, Pérez de Guzmán records the death of Fernando de Sayavedra, a young Castilian knight and *alcaide* of Cañete who fought against the Muslim enemy on his own initiative, seeking to advance the chivalric imperative of holy war against a religious enemy. He took thirty horsemen with him and raided the territory around the mountain town and castle of Setenil. The Granadans put together a force of some hundred horsemen and two hundred footsoldiers and laid an ambush. Sayavedra and his men were caught in the trap and they all perished except for eleven horsemen who were made prisoners.[66] Pérez de Guzmán offers all of these instances as didactic evidence of the rash and impulsive behavior of young knights. Where older and more experienced men have the proper prudence on the battlefield, young men are likely to get themselves killed.

Of course, the holy war progressed at other moments than during the Antequera campaign and members of the chivalric elite fell during Castilian victories and defeats. Such was the case in 1434 when Diego de Ribera, the *adelantado mayor* of Andalucía, who had also served as the Notaría Mayor (a significant royal appointment) of Andalucía, was killed while fighting at the town of Álora.[67] The siege of Álora, together with Ribera's death, would be immortalized in a frontier ballad called *Álora la bien cercada.*[68] In the same year that Ribera died at Álora, five squires were killed as they scaled the walls during the successful Castilian conquest of the Granadan castle of Huesca. Pérez de Guzmán lists a man simply called "The Sicilian", a brother of a Castilian *alcaide*, as well as Pero

65 Ibid., p. 321.

66 Ibid., p. 323

67 Ibid., . p516. For what little we know about Ribera, see Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, «De Per Afán a Catalina de Ribera. Siglo y medio en la historia de un linaje sevillano (1371-1514)», in *En la España Medieval* 4, 984, pp. 460-66.

68 The tone of this poem has attracted a great deal of critical, historical, and literary analysis over the years. See, for example, David William Foster, «A Note on the Rhetorical Structure of the Ballad 'Álora la bien cercada», in *Romance Notes*, Winter, 1973, pp. 392-396; David Hook, «Advancing on 'Álora'», in Andrew M. Beresford (ed.), *Medieval Hispanic Studies in Honor of Alan Deyermond*, Woodbridge, 2013, pp. 121-38.

Sánchez de Fórnos, Juan de León, García de Albuera, and Nicolás de Ortuño.[69]

If in such a victory few Castilian warriors died in battle, in defeat many men were likely to die. Later the same year, the Master of Alcántara, Gutierre de Sotomayor, led some 800 horsemen and 400 footmen into Granada in a campaign to take several places. The terrain became difficult and the Castilians were forced into a narrow mountain pass in which they had to proceed single file. The Granadans rained destruction down upon them with arrows and stones and Pérez de Guzmán claims that of the 1200 who joined Sotomayor, only a hundred returned, others killed or imprisoned. The chronicler names twenty principal men who perished in the battle, among them eight *comendadores* of the Order of Alcántara and a number of other men who, though difficult to identify, appear to have been younger sons of some noble families, such as Diego de Sotomayor and Ruy González de la Puebla.[70] Similarly, in 1438, the *adelantado* Rodrigo de Perea entered Granada with 400 horsemen and 1,000 footmen. The enemy learned of his entry and sent out a much larger force to repel him. Perea died together with all of his men, save some 15 or 20 who escaped.[71]

At other times in late medieval Castilian history some knights seem to have intentionally sought mortal encounters in a war against Granada. Rodrigo de Perea's death in 1438 was immortalized in the poet Juan de Mena's 1444 *Laberinto de Fortuna*, where the author fêted Perea for preferring death on the field, saying "Perea, seeing the struggle, / his men dead, he did not want to live; / before he begins, dying, to say: / To those whom I leave behind, I leave behind my virtue".[72] Fifty years earlier, in 1394, the Master of the Order of Alcántara, informed King Enrique III that he would be sending messengers to the King of Granada demanding that he renounce Islam and going to war should the Muslim king refuse. The Master was rebuked by King Enrique and his council because there was a truce between Castile and Granada. Nevertheless, the Master persisted. He led some 300 lances into Granada in what was essentially a crusading

69 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 516.

70 Ibid., pp. 519-20.

71 Ibid., p. 548.

72 Juan de Mena, *Laberinto de Fortuna* (Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes), Accessed June 14, 2021, http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/laberinto-de-fortuna--0/html/fedd608a-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_5.html, Stanza 195.

suicide mission. They all died.[73] In a less quixotic moment, in 1446, two Castilian castle towns were taken by the Granadans: Benamaurel and Benzalema. Upon capturing Benamaurel the Granadans took the *alcaide* prisoner and insisted that he speak with the *alcaide* of Benzalema to convince him to surrender without a fight. The *alcaide* of Benzalema, a knight named Álvaro de Pecellín, angrily refused to surrender, even upbraiding his countryman, saying that "it would never please God to give the ville and fortification to the enemies of the faith for fear of death. And he chose honorable death over a debased and shameful life."[74] According to Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, the Granadans wanted to take Pecellín and his men prisoner in the ensuing battle, but the Castilians resisted so vigorously that Pecellín and thirty of his men avoided living that debased and shameful life.

The final war against Granada that began in the early 1480s under the leadership of Queen Isabel and King Fernando was a triumph of the state-building (and army-building) efforts of the Catholic Monarchs and their predecessors. Yet the growing power of the Isabelline state was not sufficient to prevent knights and nobles from falling on the field during the war that eventually saw the conquest of Granada by Castile in 1492.[75] Early in the war, in July 1482, the Christians suffered a setback at the siege of Loja. As the Christian host retreated, the Master of Calatrava, a 26-year old knight named Rodrigo Téllez Girón took an arrow under the arm through a gap in his armor and died soon thereafter.[76] A few years later, as the Christians fought in the villages around their recent conquest of Álora, another young man perished. This time, during skirmishes with the Granadans near the village of Casarabonela, the 24-year old knight Gutierre de Sotomayor, the Count of Belalcázar, died as he charged into a skirmish in an effort to lead his

73 Pedro López de Ayala, *Crónica del Rey Don Enrique, Tercero de Castilla y León*, in CRC, vol. II, *BAE* 68, pp. 221-3. For a further analysis of this episode in the context of chivalric ideas, see Claussen, pp. 127-28.

74 Pérez de Guzmán, p. 650. "E Alvaro de Pecellin, Alcayde de Benzalema, ovo muy grande enojo de lo quel Alcayde Juan de Herrera le decia, é dixo que nunca pluguiese á Dios que por miedo de morir él diese la villa é fortaleza á los enemigos de la fe; y escogió muerte honrosa mas que vide aviltada y vergonzosa…"

75 For an assessment of the armies of the late fifteenth century as a product of the powerful state building on old medieval traditions, see Miguel-Ángel Ladero Quesada, «Formación y funciamento de las huestes reales en Castilla durante el siglo XV», in *La organización military en los siglos XV y XVI: Actas de las II Jornadas Nacionales de Historia Militar*, Málaga 1993, 161-72.

76 Pulgar, p. 372.

men out of a losing battle.[77]

During the Catholic Monarchs' campaign against the region around Málaga in 1485, the Christian forces entered the village of Coín, where they encountered vigorous resistance from their Muslim foes, being forced out of the breach in the city's walls. In an episode that echoes the attitude of Pecellín in 1446, the captain of the besieging camp, a knight named Pero Ruiz de Alarcón, saw his soldiers fleeing and said "I did not enter [the village] to fight only to flee from that fight." He then "fought with great exertion, wreaking havoc among the Moors, who surrounded him completely; and not being able to suffer any more the great wounds which he had, he fell dead fighting with the fame of a good knight."[78] In the same battle a knight named Tello de Aguilar also perished. King Fernando was apparently quite angry when he heard of the deaths of these Christian knights because they had begun fighting the enemy before the king had ordered them to do so. The chivalric impulse to fight in battle and welcome death should it come complicated the efforts of generals on the battlefield at the end of the medieval period, just as it had in the previous centuries.

In late medieval Castile knights did indeed die in battle. Warriors drawn from the royal family, the high and middle nobility, and from rising new families perished. They died in great set piece battles, in small skirmishes, and in street brawls. Knights were struck down on the battlegrounds of the holy war against Islam, the sieges of dynastic and internecine warfare in Castile, and during domestic unrest. Death came by sword, the lance, the siege engine, the arrow, and unusual means such as drowning. Old men and young men died. Fathers, sons, and brothers perished, sometimes together and sometimes decades apart. The reality of medieval chivalric warfare was no game or gentlemanly theatrics. Death was common on the medieval battlefield in both expected and unexpected ways.

This article has examined chronicle evidence of roughly a hundred years of one corner of Europe and counted 142 deaths of men that were either named as leading knights or noblemen or otherwise clearly identified as knights. Addition-

77 Ibid., p. 403.

78 Ibid., p. 415. "No entré yo á pelear para salir de la pelea fuyendo.>> E peleó con gran esfuerzo faciendo estragon en los moros, los quales le rodearon por todas partes; e no podiendo mas sofrir las grandes feridas que tenia, cayó muerto peleando con fama de buen caballero."

ally, more than 2,100 others were counted who were described as men-at-arms, squires, or other terms denoting chivalric men who might not have been formally knighted. Nonetheless, they occupied a space in the chivalric world, often embracing chivalric worldviews and knightly ideas. This does not include the numerous others that died that chroniclers failed to mention, nor the men of lower estate when chroniclers simply say "many died." To be sure, these numbers (25 deaths per year) do not sufficiently make the case that a knight was likely to die in any given year. What they do show is that enough knights died in any given martial encounter that death on the battlefield was a very realistic possibility. In considering the martial and chivalric world of medieval Europe, we ought to remember that warfare was not simply a game for the chivalric class but instead an undertaking with deadly consequences.

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Altorilievo su pannello di alabastro, Spagna, XIII secolo,
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