

The History of the Crusades Podcast presents  
Reconquista: The Rise of Al-Andalus and the Reconquest of Spain  
Episode 69  
The Kingdom of Portugal and the Second Crusade, Part 1

Hello again. Last time we saw the collapse of Almoravid rule both in northern Africa and on the Iberian peninsula. While the Almohads have taken all the territory formerly belonging to the Almoravids in northern Africa, as at the end of the last episode they had only managed to conquer the south-western portion of Al-Andalus, securing Badajoz, Seville and Cordoba. Now, in the wake of the collapse of Almoravid rule in Al-Andalus, and while the Almohads are scrambling to secure territory for themselves, will the Christian rulers in the Iberian peninsula take advantage of the situation? Yes, they absolutely will.

Basically, all three Christian kings who rule territory located near Al-Andalus have a wish-list of places they wish to annex, and all three of them will work to conquer the Muslim land on their wish-lists while the Almohads struggle to assert their authority. Happily for the Christian rulers, the crusading movement is in full swing once again and will provide a perfect opportunity for them to utilise the Crusades to their advantage.

Over in the Holy Land, the jubilation following the success of the First Crusade and the conquest by the Christians of Jerusalem is beginning to fade. The Muslims have been steadily clawing back the territory conquered by the Christians, culminating in the fall of the city of Edessa to the Muslim leader Zengi in the year 1144. Zengi then proceeded to defeat the entire crusading state of Edessa, a move which sent shock waves out across Europe. News of the fall of Edessa prompted Pope Eugenius III to issue a papal bull, calling for a new crusade, in December of 1145.

This new crusade, which will eventually become known as the Second Crusade, took some time to gain momentum, and it wasn't until the summer of 1146 when King Louis VII of France, agreed to become involved that preaching for the crusade began in earnest across Europe, with by far the most effective spruiker for the campaign being Bernard of Clairvaux. In his book "The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain", Bernard Riley speculates that King Alfonso VII likely became aware of the fall of Edessa via Archbishop Raymond of Toledo, who had travelled to Rome in summer of the year 1145. Bernard Riley states that the Christian kings from the Iberian peninsula would have kept a close eye on matters and would likely have become aware of King Louis' endorsement of the new crusade, especially since Count Alfonso Jordan of Toulouse made crusading vows following the French King's decision. As a footnote, I should mention that Alfonso Jordan will subsequently travel to the Holy Land on crusade, and will in fact die there. Anyway, if the Christian kings of the Iberian peninsula were aware that the Catholic Church was about to launch a massive multinational military campaign, would they have been keen to channel some of that energy towards their own struggles against the Muslims of Al-Andalus? Yes, I think we can confidently say that they would have.

One of the kings keen to utilise the resources of the crusading movement for his own ends was King Alfonso I of Portugal. At the present point in time, only about half of the territory which now comprises the modern country of Portugal was under King Alfonso's control. The Kingdom of Portugal covered the northern half of what today is the country of Portugal. The southern half was under Muslim control. At the top of the King of Portugal's wish-list was his desire to conquer the city of Lisbon, a thriving, bustling seaport which lay at the mouth of the Tagus River. He had been working towards the conquest of Muslim

Lisbon ever since his rise to power. His southernmost outpost, the fortress at Leiria, had likely been constructed not only to prevent Muslim incursions into the Christian parts of Portugal, but also as a base from which to launch a future assault on Lisbon.

Back in the early 1140's, King Alfonso of Portugal made arrangements to attack Lisbon with the assistance of some Anglo-Norman crusaders who had arrived unexpectedly at Porto on their way to the Holy Land. According to Joseph O'Callaghan in his book "Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain", the crusaders arrived on a fleet of around 70 ships. Deciding that this was an opportunity too good to let slip through his hands, King Alfonso of Portugal convinced the leaders of the expedition, a man called William Viel and his brother Ralph, to help the Portuguese Christians besiege the Muslim city of Lisbon before setting sail on the rest of their journey to Jerusalem. Unfortunately, we don't know much about what happened next, although it looks like the siege never took place, with ill feeling developing between the crusaders and King Alfonso, whom the crusaders accused of failing to keep to his side of their agreement.

During the six years which have passed since this incident, King Alfonso I of Portugal has taken advantage of the deterioration of Almoravid rule by pushing further southwards into Muslim territory. On the 15th of March in the year 1147 he managed to capture the Muslim town of Santarem, which was only 46 miles to the north of Lisbon.

With the overland route taken by the crusaders to Jerusalem on the First Crusade having earned a well-deserved reputation for being brutal in both its length and its harshness, many crusaders embarking on the Second Crusade, who could afford to do so, were intending to travel to the Holy Land by sea instead of by land. Like the Anglo-Norman crusaders who had preceded them, many of the ships carrying the Crusaders would likely stop off at the friendly port of Porto in Portugal before continuing their journey down the coast into the Strait of Gibraltar, and King Alfonso I likely thought that it would be a good idea to divert some of these ships to his use, in an attack on the Muslims of Lisbon, before they resumed their journey to the Holy Land.

Now, traditionally, it had been thought by historians that King Alfonso I's initial approach to the crusaders had come after they had docked at Porto. However, the current thought is that King Alfonso I arranged with the crusaders prior to their departure from England for them to provide him with the assistance he required. The reason for this new line of thinking is in the timing of the departure of the ships from their port of origin. The fleet set sail from Dartmouth in England on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in the year 1147. If they had sailed straight to the Holy Land from Dartmouth they would have arrived on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea in late summer of 1147. Considering the fact that the main French and German crusading armies weren't intending to start off on their long trek to the Holy Land until the summer of 1147, this would have meant that the English fleet would have faced a lengthy, frustrating, and expensive waiting period hanging around in the Mediterranean Sea, eating their way through their supplies, for a number of months before the main crusading armies arrived. It makes much more sense for the fleet to have set sail early, knowing that they were planning to spend a few months in the Kingdom of Portugal on the way, assisting King Alfonso I to take Lisbon from the Muslims.

It is also likely that King Alfonso's recent conquest of Santarem was undertaken with the upcoming attack by the Crusaders on Lisbon in mind. Also assisting matters was the fact that Rome had extended the ambit of the Second Crusade to include campaigns against the Muslims of Al-Andalus, although in his book "The Contest of Christian and Muslim Spain", Bernard Riley notes that there is no indication that King Alfonso of Portugal lobbied

Rome to include campaigns by Portugal within the crusading parameters. Rather, it was King Alfonso VII and Ramon Berenguer IV who had successfully applied to the Papacy to broaden the crusading boundaries.

Anyway, the fleet which set sail from England was impressive. It consisted of 164 ships containing around 13,000 crusaders, from not only England but Germany, Flanders, and Normandy. Only three days after setting sail, the fleet spotted the coastline of Brittany in the distance, however their celebrations were short lived, as a massive storm blew in and scattered the fleet in all directions. Some of the more superstitious crusaders viewed this as divine punishment for having taken the easy sea route to the Holy Land rather than toughing it out with the majority of the participants, who were about to embark on the extremely challenging overland trek to the Crusade. Anyway, the storm eventually died down, and the fleet regrouped, with most of them arriving safely at the port town of Tambre in Galicia during the first week of June. The port of Tambre was the closest port to the famous pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela, and many of the Crusaders made the journey to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, where they likely gave thanks for their safe delivery from the storm and sought divine favour for their Crusade.

On the 16th of June the fleet arrived at Porto in the Kingdom of Portugal, where they were greeted by the Bishop of Porto on behalf of King Alfonso I, who was unable to welcome the crusaders personally as he was already in the southern part of his kingdom making preparations for the upcoming campaign. Interestingly, the speech given by the Bishop of Porto was delivered in Latin and then translated into English, German, or Flemish for the various crusader audience members.

Now, this speech given by the Bishop on behalf of the King of Portugal was lengthy and complex, and was designed to convince the crusaders to sail to Lisbon and join King Alfonso I in a siege of the city. In his book "The Second Crusade", Jonathan Phillips gives a detailed analysis of the different parts of the speech. I won't dig too far down into the weeds other than to state that it commenced by extolling the virtues of crusading and drew on the types of arguments used by Bernard of Clairvaux to talk up the value of taking up arms on behalf of the Christian Church. The Bishop then proceeded to provide a summary of the history of religious conflict on the Iberian peninsula, with an emphasis on the negative aspects of Muslim rule for the Christian residents of the peninsula. The Bishop emphasised the destruction wrought by the Muslims on Christian property and Church property, even offering a personal anecdote, describing how seven years ago the insignia and ornaments from one of his own churches had been stolen by some Muslim fighters after they had, and I quote, "slain the clergy and taken them captive" end quote.

Then came the speech's finale. The Bishop depicted the Church in Portugal in terms of a woman who had been beaten and brutalised, and who was appealing for assistance from the crusaders. Here is an excerpt from this part of the speech, and I quote "To you the mother church, as it were with her arms cut off and her face disfigured, she appeals for help. She seeks vengeance at your hands for the blood of her sons. She calls to you, truly she cries out loud, execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people. Therefore, be not seduced by the desire to press on with the journey that you have begun, for the praiseworthy thing is not to have been to Jerusalem but to have lived a good life along the way, for you cannot arrive there except through the performance of His works. Therefore, re-clothe her soiled and disfigured form with the garments of joy and gladness." End quote.

Basically, what the Bishop of Porto is doing here is telling the crusaders that the heavenly rewards for crusading come from doing good works on behalf of the Church, and that liberating Lisbon would be a good work, worthy of reward. In fact, Jonathan Phillips argues that by framing the request to join the King of Portugal in a siege of Lisbon in terms of providing clothing and medical assistance to a mutilated and traumatised woman, the Bishop is implying that failure to go to Lisbon would in itself be sinful. The Bishop then told his audience that King Alfonso had already left on campaign and was waiting for them outside Lisbon, and that if the crusaders joined the King of Portugal in an attack on Lisbon they would be rewarded not only spiritually but with money, and I quote “as far as the resources of the royal treasury will permit” end quote. Jonathan Phillips points out that this hard sell of the campaign by the Bishop was required because many of the crusaders had been rattled by the storm which had struck the fleet in the Bay of Biscay and were worried that it was a sign of divine displeasure about their campaign.

A few of the ships from the fleet were still at sea at this time, so the leaders of the expedition decided to await their arrival before making a decision about whether to sail to Lisbon or keep going to the Holy Land. Jonathan Phillips states that the Bishop told the sailors he was more than happy for them to wait for the latecomers and that wine and other luxuries would be supplied to them free of charge while they waited, courtesy of King Alfonso.

When the stragglers dropped anchor at Porto, the leaders of the Crusade met and came up with a plan. They would sail to Lisbon, with the Bishop of Porto and the Archbishop of Braga as escorts, and once at Lisbon they would meet with King Alfonso I of Portugal, and discuss with him directly just exactly what would be required from the crusaders, and most importantly, just exactly what the King would be willing to provide to the crusaders in exchange for their assistance.

Join me next time as the crusading fleet meets up with King Alfonso outside Lisbon. Until next time, bye for now.

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