

Rethinking the Arthurian Legend Transmission in the Iberian Peninsula

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The story of King Arthur is well-known to everyone. How, as a child, he did not know his parentage and was fostered; how he pulled the sword Excalibur from a stone and proved himself the rightful king of Britain; how he held court at Camelot with the knights of the Round Table and married Guinevere; how he had a son with Morgan le Fay; how Guinevere betrayed him with Lancelot; how she was rescued from burning at the stake by Lancelot; and how Arthur died during the war with Mordred. That is the legend.

The Arthurian legend flourished in England and France and, from there, spread to the rest of Europe, including the Iberian Peninsula. The modes of transmission of the Arthurian legend in the Iberian kingdoms are still currently debated. Castile's hegemony in the transmission of the Arthurian legend through the Plantagenets (1170) needs reevaluation. The arrival of the legend to the Iberian Peninsula is not exclusive to Castile. It is our belief that there is a need to expand the means of transmission of the legend and texts to Spain: Through the Vikings, the Plantagenets and Angevin kings, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, and the Norman and Aragonese influence. First, however, we have to differentiate between three ways that knowledge of Arthur's tale could be transmitted: legend, folklore, and written texts. A 'legend' (Latin *legenda*, "things to be read") is a narrative of human actions that are perceived both by teller and listeners as taking place within human history and possessing certain qualities of verisimilitude. 'Legend' can also be defined as a story that comes down from the past, and which is considered historical although not verifiable. A 'legend' includes no happenings that are outside the realm of possibility, but which may be transformed over time, in order to keep it fresh, vital, and real in appearance. The moment that an event, person, or action is labeled as a 'legend,' its authentic qualities begin to fade and recede.

Legends may be transmitted orally –passed on person-to-person– or, in the original sense, through a written text; they may be crystallized in literary works that fix and affect the future direction it will take. For example, the story of the historical Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (Heroe / Historical persona) becomes the character in the *Poema de mio Cid*. Just like El Cid, legends that we "know" today may have their basis in historical events or characters, as has proven to be the case with King Mark of Cornwall and may also be true of King Arthur.

'Folklore' encompasses the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, legends, superstitions, and practices current among a particular ethnic population that are transmitted orally. The term was coined in 1846 when an Englishman wanted to use the term 'Anglo-

Saxon' to label what until then was called 'popular antiquities.'¹

The term 'text' in linguistics refers to a system that is defined by a conceptual dyad: 1) system of communication and text, and 2) text and speech. In the first, text is the product of the ability of the speakers to communicate using verbal signs. The second defines text as written text and speech as spoken text. However, in literary theory, a 'text' is the object being studied, whether it be a novel, a poem, a play, or anything else with a linguistic component.²

Legends, folklore, and texts intermingle when it comes to the transmission of the Arthurian legend, and the line between each other is not clear. Roger Sherman Loomis (1927, 1949, 1959, 1963) believes that there are two principal modes of transmission of the original folkloric Celtic stories (and some early texts regarding King Arthur) to the French: from the (1) English Celts to the Anglo-Normans in England and then from those Anglo-Normans³ to the French, and / or (2) directly from bilingual Bretons (Celts who already lived in Normandy),⁴ and who were mainly responsible for developing and transmitting the legends both to the Anglo-Normans and the French. Thus, Geoffrey of Monmouth may not have been the only source of information about the legend that was to become the Matter of Britain, or its only architect. Even before Geoffrey's time, bits and pieces of Arthurian folklore must have traveled far. The Norman expansion into the Mediterranean, for example, led to the spread of the legend

¹ John Anthony Cuddon clarifies all three terms. While folklore can contain religious or mythic elements, it typically concerns itself with the mundane traditions of everyday life. Sometimes folklore is religious in nature, like the tales of the Welsh *Mabgonion* or those found in Icelandic sagas. Also, it can evolve into a quasi-pejorative sense, as when the tales of Odin the Wanderer, which have a religious value to the Norse, enter the realm of folklore, because they do not fit into a Christian mold per se. Folk literature, "under this general and somewhat vague term one may include folksong, ballad, fairy tales, drama, proverbs, riddles, charms and legends. For the most part, folk literature (or, perhaps, more properly, *folklore*) is the creation of primitive and illiterate people –and therefore much of it belongs to oral tradition. It becomes literature in the correct sense of the work only when people gather it together and write it down. When this happens, it is usually a sign that the folk literature in question is in decline" (Cuddon 322).

² Cuddon defines 'text' as "a number of meanings may be distinguished: (a) the actual words of a book in their original form orally form they have been transmitted in or transmuted to; (b) a book of such words; (c) the main body of matter in a book –apart from notes, commentary, glosses, index, appendices, etc.; (d) a short passage taken from the Bible as the theme or subject or a sermon" (907).

³ The Anglo-Normans were the descendents of the Normans who ruled England following the conquest by William of Normandy in 1066. They spoke the Anglo-Norman language. That is, the Norman nobility spoke a langue d'oïl (spoken in Northern France and bordering areas), a form of Old French (language spoken in the northern half of modern France 1000-1300) called Norman (the name Norman-French is sometimes used to describe not only the modern Norman language, but also the administrative languages of Anglo-Norman and French Law used in England). This became the official language of England and later developed the unique insular dialect now known as the Anglo-Norman language.

⁴ Breton is a branch of the Celtic languages spoken in Brittany, the northwest peninsula in France. Around 500 AD, the Roman troops were withdrawing from England. Some British authors (Nennius, Gildas) spoke of Britons fleeing to Armorica to escape the invading Anglo-Saxons and Scots. These Britons gave the region its current name and contributed to the Breton language, related language to Welsh and Cornish. Conan Meriadoc, the mythic founder of the house of Rohan is mentioned by medieval Welsh sources as having led the settlement of Brittany by Welsh mercenaries.

in Southern Italy,⁵ where an archivolt on the north doorway of Modena Cathedral (1106) has carvings depicting Arthur rescuing his queen from an abductor, and which predates Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136-37?; Ashe 7).⁶

It is not clear how the Arthurian legend was transmitted from England to the rest of Europe. However, it is evident that the main texts of the Matter of Britain were written in France and then spread to the rest of Europe in translations and adaptations. Critics have posited four possible agents of transmission of the legend and its texts: the Vikings, the Plantagenets, the pilgrims to Saint James of Compostela, and the Norman and Aragonese rulers of Southern Italy before the Sicilian Vespers war (1282).⁷

The term Viking has pejorative connotations because of the savage legend that accompanies it. Vikings made violence an everyday threat for the populations they conquered. However, Viking influence went beyond violence. They consolidated their positions by taking command in key trading locations, particularly in England and Normandy.⁸

The Vikings also raided the Iberian Peninsula in 844, 858-61, 966-71, and 1008-38 (Almazán 21). The first expedition to Jakobusland (Santiago's Land) occurred in 844 when the Vikings passed by the kingdoms of Galicia and Asturias. King Ramiro I (842-50) opposed them forcefully, and the invaders were defeated on land and sea. A diminished, though still formidable, fleet escaped around Cape Finisterre and sailed

⁵ This does not seem an out of the ordinary conjecture since Roger II (1130-54), a Norman, controlled that area.

⁶ Art historians from Italy, Germany, England, and the United States are almost unanimous in dating this sculpture between 1099 and 1120.

⁷ As the reader will note I chose to invert the chronological order of events because the Norman influence in the Mediterranean is barely prior to the publishing of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136-37) and, therefore, the transmission of Arthurian legend in the Iberian Peninsula can be retraced back to the Vikings (844).

⁸ Their story is directly related to the Danish conquest of England (980-1016) and settlement of Normandy. The main raid into the British Isles began in 865, when the Danes began their incursions into East Anglia and conquered Northumbria and Mercia, settling this coast about the 870s. Alfred the Great (849, ruled 871-99) fought them in Wessex and repelled them back into France (879-92). However, the first settlement of any importance was in Armorica (France), where Rollo Ganger gave allegiance to Charles III, the Simple (879-929), and giving way to the formation of the Duchy of Normandy. In England and Scotland, these Viking / Danes disrupted power and eliminated the kings of East Anglia, Northumbria, and Mercia, leaving only Wessex to the Anglo-Saxons. The culmination of Viking dominion occurred with the establishment of the Danelaw, by name and definition that part of England in which Danish, not English, law and custom prevailed. This period lasted about fifty years and culminated when King Cnut (994/5-1035) established a Viking dynasty on the English throne. Before this moment, the Vikings had already ruled parts of England since 866, when they took York and governed it under a puppet king. At this time Brittany and Normandy were independent duchies. The best way to understand the Vikings is to consider their political base: York (918-54), Ireland (795-873 and 874-1014), Scotland (800-1014), Normandy (911-1051), Brittany (836-939), and Southern England (1007-13). King Cnut, after his conquest in 1015-16, became the first Viking ruler of all England. After his death in 1035, his empire was divided. His son ruled Denmark and his brother Harald England. Yet by 1042, Edward the Confessor (1042-66) retook England from exile. And finally, another Viking descendant from Normandy, William the Conqueror (1066-87) took England for good.

south to Lisbon, after attacking Gijón and La Coruña (Jones 213-14). Later they sailed to Sevilla, Cádiz, Medina Sidonia, and Asilah (North Africa).

The second expedition (859-62) was better planned from the beginning and was the largest pillage enterprise that had ever been assembled. The leaders were ‘jarls’ Bjorn ‘Iron Rib’ and Hastein.⁹ They followed the same route as the first incursion and landed in North Africa at Mazimma, from there, unto Orihuela, Formentera, Majorca, and Minorca. Soon they reached France and attacked Narbonne, Nimes, Arles, and Valence (France). The latter is located on the Rhône River and about ninety kilometers south of Lyon. In Italy they attacked Luna –which they took for Rome–, Pisa, and Fiesole. There is some speculation that they may have even crossed over to territories controlled by Byzantium. On their way back, they sailed up the Ebro River and some of its tributaries to attack Pamplona and captured King Garcí Iñíguez (851-70), who was released after the Navarrese paid a bountiful ransom. Later, they spent the winter of 859-60 in the Camargue, at the mouth of the Rhône River. After the initial expedition around the Spanish eastern coast, they preferred targets that were not too challenging.

The third incursion came between 966-71, when a combination of Danes and Normans, who had helped Richard the Fearless fight the French, invaded Spain. In 968, 100 boats and about 8000 men under ‘jarl’ Gundraed plundered the Galician coast for two consecutive years and even attacked Compostela in 970. As impressive as their army was in those days, it was unable to hold Compostela for any length of time.

The most interesting attacks came in 1008-38 when no other than Olaf Haraldsson (1015-30) –St. Olaf– is reputed to have led the attack. He seemed to be a true Viking warrior, and was even forgiven all his cruelty in battle by the Catholic Church. If Olaf Haraldsson ever stepped on the Iberian Peninsula it was between 1007 and 1014. During these years, he was abroad as a Viking and only returned to Norway to be crowned king on April 3, 1015. It is believed that he participated in the attack of Tuy in 1015, when the Vikings sailed up the Miño River, destroyed the city, and took prisoner bishop don Alfonso. From there, they burnt monasteries and towns in the same region all the way to Portugal, and there are documents that confirm such events as the assault on the castle of Vermoin on September 6, 1016 (Almazán 110-11).

There were more expeditions in the XII century, imputed to the Viking inhabitants of Orkney Islands and to the Norwegian King Sigurd, who, in his journey to the Holy Land, stopped in Galicia for the winter (1109). At first he did not realize that the region was already Christian, but once he knew, he defended the Galicians from other Norse attacks.¹⁰ From there he sailed to Formentera, where he fought ‘bluemen,’ and

⁹ Jarl Hastein, mentioned in Wace’s “Roman de Rou”, is probably the same Hastein who carried out the great raid in the Mediterranean between 859 and 862, which culminated in the sacking of the Italian city of Luna, which they mistook for Rome. The approximate date given for Hastein’s raid on the Channel Islands is 850. His companion on this raid was Bjorn Ironside, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok (796-865), who became king of Uppsala, Sweden.

¹⁰ “Bold Vikings, not slow / To the death-fray to go,

afterwards to Ibiza and Minorca, where he won more battles. He left the Iberian Peninsula to go to Sicily at the same time that Duke Roger of Sicily was made king. This is the same Roger I that conquered Apulia, and to whom we refer below.¹¹ It is possible that King Sigurd was witness to the stabilization of Roger I's power in Sicily.

The Viking raids are confirmed by Arab, Spanish, and Nordic contemporary sources (Almazán 114).¹² The *Chronicon Albeldense* (881) brands the Vikings as

Meet our Norse king by chance, / And their galleys advance.
The bold Vikings lost / Many a man of their host,
And eight galleys too, / With cargo and crew" (*Saga of Sigurd the Crusader* 4; ver *Heimskringla* [OMCL]).

¹¹ "In spring King Sigurd came to Sicily and remained a long time there. There was then a Duke Roger of Sicily, who received the king kindly, and invited him to a feast. King Sigurd came to it with a great retinue, and was splendidly entertained. Everyday Duke Roger stood at the table, and had wiped their hands, King Sigurd took the duke by the hand, led him up to the high-seat, and saluted him with the title of king; and gave the right that there should be always a king over the dominion of Sicily, although before there had only been earls or dukes over that country" (*Saga of Sigurd the Crusader* 8; ver *Heimskringla* [OMCL]).

¹² The Arab texts were translated, early on, into Castilian and French. These extremely valuable documents reveal the precise locations of Viking attacks on the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish sources are possible eyewitnesses' accounts that make their way into texts like *Chronicon Albeldense* (c. 881), the *Chronica Alfonsi III* (reigned 866-910), the *Chronica Sampiri* (982-1041), the *Chronica Silensis* (1115), the *Chronicon Regnum Legionensium (Pelagii)* (982-1109), the *Historia Compostellana (Registrum)* (1140), and the *Chronicon Iriense* (982). Of special interest are several church documents referring to the reconstruction of churches and monasteries due to Viking raids and settlements. The Nordic sources are fewer in quantity. Written at a later time (c. 1240-70) by an anonymous author, they recount the Viking incursions into Galician lands: *Saint Olaf's Saga (Heimskringla)*, *The Earls of Orkney Saga (Orkneyinga saga)*, and *King Canut's Saga (Knytlinga saga)*. *Heimskringla (Saga of Olaf Haraldson)* has a particular moment dedicated to St. Olaf's visit to Spain:

Then King Olaf proceeded westwards to Grisluþollar (Castropol), and fought there with Vikings at Williamsby (Vilameá); and there also King Olaf gained the victory. So says Sigvat:

'The eleventh battle now I tell,
Where it was fought, and what befell,
At Grislipol (Castropol) our young fir's name
O'ertopped the forest trees in fame:
Brave Olaf's honour –nought else was heard
But Olaf's name, and arm, and sword.
Of three great earls, I have heard say,
His sword crushed helm and head that day.'

Next he fought westward on Fetlafjord (Betanzos), as Sigvat tells:

'The twelfth fight was at Fetlafjord (Betanzos)
Where Olaf's honor –seeking sword
Gave the wild wolf's devouring teeth
A feast of warrior doomed to death.'

From thence King Olaf sailed southwards to Seljuþollar (Rivas del Sil), where he had a battle. He took there a castle called Gunvaldsborg (González), which was very large and old. He also made prisoner the earl who ruled over the castle and who was called Geirfin. After a conference with the men of the castle, he laid a scat upon the town and earl, as ransom, of twelve thousand gold shillings: which did those on whom it was imposed also pay. So says Sigvat:

'The thirteenth battle now I tell,
where it was fought, and what befell,

“Normadum gens antea nobis incognita gens pagana et nimis crudelissima,” later on, already Christianized, however, they appeared to have favored pilgrimages to Santiago of Compostela and founded settlements in the area (Gómez Moreno 562 et ss.). The *Historia Compostelana*¹³ mentions them as *Anglici*, that is, Vikings established in England. The fact remains, as stated previously, that the Vikings were everywhere in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Normandy, therefore, they were possibly familiar with the Arthurian legend prior to the existence of the French texts of the 13th century and may have transmitted some of their knowledge to the Spanish. This is even more plausible when we examine their influence on the Plantagenets and Angevins.

‘Plantagenet’ is a dynastic label that refers to the kings of England that claimed that France was their inheritance, because Geoffrey of Anjou (1113-51), who acquired the Duchy of Normandy through marriage to the last Viking duchess, wore a sprig of bloom (*planta genesta*) in his hat. The Plantagenets were also known as Angevins, a reference to the county of Anjou from which they derived,¹⁴ and a term that has wider application to refer to the political empire amassed by the counts of Anjou in about eighty years after 1144, and their area of influence. That year, Geoffrey of Anjou (also known as Geoffrey Plantagenet) became Duke of Normandy, and his successor, Henry II (1133-89), added to their possession the duchy of Aquitaine when he married Eleanor. For the next fifty years they held an empire that stretched from Scotland to the Pyrenees.¹⁵

Later, Normans of French / Angevin descent extended their control to the Mediterranean under a minor noble from Normandy, Roger II (1093-1154), who opposed an alliance between Venice, Genoa, and Pisa to regain control of the Sea (Hoyt and Chodorow 310). Sicily and Southern Italy remained under French / Norman

I Selkupal was fought the fray,
 And many did not survive the day.
 The king went early to the shore,
 To Gunvaldsborg’s old castle-tower;
 And a rich earl was taken there,
 Whose name was Geridin, I am sure.’ (*Saga of Olaf Haraldson* 16; ver *Heimskringla*)

The spelling of these Spanish places seems odd but R. Rodríguez Blanco mentions that they coincide with the places and battles fought against Vikings in other documents. *Heimskringla* is a saga written by Snorri Sturlson (1179-1225) in Old Norse (c. 1225) and the English translation was by Samuel Laing (1844). This particular saga makes reference to the kings of Norway from about 850 to 1177.

¹³ This work tells the story of the prelate Diego Gelmírez, a key figure in Galicia’s medieval history. The events presented in this story encompass the years (1110-40), that is, the time he was bishop of Santiago of Compostela and the remaining years until his death.

¹⁴ The name “Angevin” was used to designate their holdings and it is of late coinage (Gillingham 3). In 1887, Kate Norgate used ‘Angevin’ for the first time to label the period between 1154-1204, when the Plantagenets ruled England and some French territories. The term also applies to the whole Plantagenet family as far as the 15th century and designates the ‘Angevin,’ the taxes Henry II (1133-89) levied on the French and the English. The French were to pay ‘angevins’ and the English ‘sterlings.’

¹⁵ However between 1202-04, John I (1166/7-1216) lost Anjou, Normandy, and part of the Poitou to Philip Augustus (1165-1223), a Capetian king.

rule. However, Henry II Plantagenet (1154-89) tried to reinforce his influence in Bavaria and Saxony, Castile, and Sicily through the marriage of his daughters. Matilda married Henry the Lion, duke of Bavaria and Saxony, on February 1168; Eleanor married Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1170; and Joanna married William II of Sicily on 13 February 1177 (Hallam 148).

It is quite possible that the expansion of the Arthurian material into Castile and Sicily is due to Eleanor's marriage to Alfonso of Castile and Joanna's marriage to William II. Of keen interest to the Arthurian legend is the fact that Henry II had financed Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136-37). Most likely, Eleanor and her Norman courtiers furthered the expansion of the Arthurian legend by telling Arthur's tale to their Castilian counterparts, and the Castilian court members spread the tale in Castilian. Based on these historical facts, William J. Entwistle attributed the transmission of the Arthurian legend in the Iberian Peninsula to Plantagenet influence.

Entwistle's research on the Arthurian legend in the Iberian Peninsula began with the article called "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Spanish Literature" (1922) in which he concluded that we owe to Eleanor (1161-1211), born in Normandy to Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and married Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1170, the transmission of the Arthurian legend –fashioned by Monmouth 'per amor del Rey Anrich.'

Although knowledge of Arthur is not reflected in the works of the monks of the *mester de clerecía* or the epic poets of Burgos, Entwistle assumed that from this time on, the Castilian court was aware of the Arthurian legend (Entwistle 1922, 382), and its concerns over reactivation of the Reconquista, which shifted the interests of readers and listeners from the epic and pious tale to the chivalric narrative. Entwistle further found that an allusion to King Arthur was both welcomed and understood at the Castilian court in 1211 (1922, 381).

George Tyler Northup criticizes Entwistle's theory of a Plantagenet influence based directly on his own expertise on the Tristan legend and, more specifically, the romances. Between 1912 and 1913, Northup had published two important articles on the origins of the Tristan and, in 1928, he published the edited version of *Tristan de Leonís*, where he defends in detail the Portuguese origin of that text. He flatly states that: "Many years of study convince me more and more that the Spanish versions are one remove further from the French than the Italian," meaning that they were transmitted by intermediary versions (Northup 1927, 483).

David Hook (1991) has since challenged both Northup's and Entwistle's dating of the introduction of the legend in Spain. Hook has found several legal documents that prove that knowledge of the Arthurian legends probably predates the literary translations of the corpus, because Arthurian names appeared in baptismal and legal documents that are dated before the texts. The first of these documents is from as early as 31 March 1136/9, when a Martín Galván (Gawain) signed as a witness to an agreement between Don Pedro, bishop of León and D. Vilielmo, Prior of the Holy Sepulcher and the brethren of the Holy Sepulcher, also in León. As a witness to a legal

contract, Martín Galván had to have been at least fourteen years old in order to sign,¹⁶ therefore, he must have been born about 1122. Thereafter, the name Galván appears in several documents (Hook 1991, 11 et ss.). Later documents (n. 388-89) dating between 1206-09, and kept at Burgos cathedral, show that the scribe Juan de Riolazedo was witness to a contract between the cathedral chapter and Don Elías, son of Guillermo Reudol. In 1209, a dispute arose over a vineyard in Fuenteloma belonging to a Don Artux (Hook 1990-91, 162 et ss.; 1993). Hook points out that the implication of the occurrence of the name Artux in these documents is of extreme importance for the diffusion of the Arthurian material in Spain.

The third route of transmission is pilgrimages, which may have been another source of the diffusion of the legend and texts, more particularly, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, undertaken mostly by French and English pilgrims. Christian pilgrims sought alternative places of pilgrimage when Muslims conquered the area.¹⁷

¹⁶ The *Fuero Juzgo* states: “De quibus annis possunt testificari minores: Haec aetas erit constitutis in minoribus annis ad testimonium admittenda, ut postquam puer aut puella quattuordecim vitae suae annos impleverint, sit illis in causis omnibus testificandi indubitata licentia” (30). The old Spanish version of the *Fuero Juzgo o libro de los jueces*, Book II, Title IV, Law XI-XII, under the title “de las testimonias é de lo que testimonian,” states: “El ninno ó la ninna pues que ovieren complidos xiiii. annos, mandamos que puedan ser testimonias.” This codex is a compilation of laws from the VI to the XII century. Therefore, since 633, a person could not testify in any legal matter until they were fourteen years old. Most of these early documents are property contracts, which mean that the individuals had to be legal adults in order to purchase or sale property.

¹⁷ Any pilgrim had the benefit of many shrines places between his place of origin and his final destination. The smaller places of worship received a considerable amount of benefits from the trade that the pilgrims brought to the area. These places embodied a reality higher than the normal and were blessed by the continued presence of the great departed (Webb ix). By going to these places people could share in the protection of those who had achieved sanctity (Webb 3-9). We should be aware that not everyone was keen on taking to pilgrimage, but those that began their journeys were well aware of the dangers involved. There were three main reasons to embark on such voyage: voluntary, atone for a sin, or forced for committing an offense. These endeavors began as a religious activity as early as the 4th century when they based their routes in the Bible, as witness by the ‘Bordeaux Pilgrim’ and the nun Egeria o Aetheria from Spain or southern Gaul, who toured the Holy Places at the end of the century. Among those pilgrims, some took up residence in such locations, like Jerome († 420) and his follower, Paula, who established a nunnery near his own center. Alongside Jerome, we should remember those pilgrims, who searched for enlightenment in harsher conditions, know as the ‘Desert Fathers.’ These men shun conventional urban existence to live as hermits in deserted areas of Syria or Egypt –although not too far from a populated town–; such was the case of Antony of Egypt († 356). This type of hermit has recurrent appearances in literature, the most famous being Mary of Egypt who, to atone for her sins, disappeared into the desert to purify her soul. In the west, other saints appeared, these men and women became notorious because they bore witness to their faith by their labors and sufferings that they did during their lives. The key elements in their sainthood were not the miracles that occurred during their lives (*in vita*), which were important in creating the initial reputation for supernatural powers, but rather the pilgrimage to their burial grounds normally began when miracles occurred *post mortem*. Reported miracles could lead to canonization under the condition that there was no magical or superstitious element in the miracles. The miracles and the possible canonization soon gave way to the explosion of a new market: relic trading. Relic speculation, just like corporation shares in Wall Street, became a sought after prime commodity and they exchanged not only hands but also locations. The church, abby, or monastery that guarded such relics were rewarded with a flux of pilgrims, who were allow to view

Santiago of Compostela, in the northwest coast of Spain, became an important site of pilgrimage in the IX century, and the shrine expanded its influence around 1100.¹⁸

Alfonso III (866-910), king of Asturias-León, actively promoted the shrine and its legend, and consecrated a church devoted to the Saint in 899 (O'Callaghan 168).¹⁹ As the Reconquista claimed new territories in the southern frontier of Castile, the path to Compostela became safer from Muslim raids, although in 968, the Vikings killed its bishop and, in 997, Al-Mansur sacked the town and took the bells of the Church. However, by that time, St. James had become the patron saint of the Reconquista, as early as the reign of King Ramiro I of Asturias (842-50), the Saint supposedly helped the king in the battle of Clavijo in 844. Bishop Diego de Gelmírez of Compostela (1100-40), who ordered the *Historia Compostelana* (1140), was key in the fomenting of the pilgrimage. He had asked Pope Calixtus II (1121-24), as a favor, to praise and recommend his church. The Pope is supposed to have done so in the *Codex Calixtinus*, by substantiating the veracity of the relics of Compostela and many other churches, some of which had relics that were fraudulent.²⁰

These pilgrims who traveled to the shrine of St. James needed food, lodgings, bankers, hospitals, and clothing. Nobles, priests, monks, soldiers, administrators, and merchants needed servants to attend to them, horses to carry them, and places to sleep. Men like Siegfried, Bishop of Maine, Alfonso VI (León 1065-1109), or even Duke William X (1099-1137) of Aquitaine did not arrive at their destination dirty or hungry, and many would not sleep under the stars. Most likely, their servants, squires, and attendants would provide the comforts they needed. Many turned the pilgrimage into a memorable tourist trip and become truly devout only in the last miles. They would relieve their boredom by watching cock-fights, by listening to tales from far away places and times, by dancing to the new rhythms of musicians from Muslim lands, by listening to *chansons de geste*, or even, despite warnings of pilgrim's guide books, by

them around the church or when they brought them outside the vicinity during special occasions. Once the persecutions of Christians had ended, the missionary work began. Certain missionary locations were extremely dangerous, some evangelists became martyrs, like Boniface of Essex, who was killed by the Frisians in 754, or the Vikings, who made Edward, King of East Anglia a martyr, and thus creating a very large and lucrative shrine in the region. The creation of shrines also affected the Iberian Peninsula.

¹⁸ The common belief is that the disciples of St. James brought his body to Galicia after his martyrdom in Jerusalem. This was also linked to the 7th century legend that the saint had preached in Spain and then returned to Jerusalem. It is believed that James began preaching in Caesar Augusta in 40 A.D. and there, he was visited by the Virgin Mary. According to legend, he had no success in Galicia but on his way back to Jerusalem, while he was resting near the Ebro River, the Virgin standing on a pillar told him to continue his preaching and as a remembrance for her visit she left such pillar and gave her protection to Spain. Even if the Virgin wanted him to stay, later he returned to Jerusalem and was beheaded and his body deposited outside the city walls. His friends recovered the body and head and placed them on a boat that took them to the coast of Galicia. There they found resistance and finally buried him eight miles inland in a place called Libredón. The burial site was forgotten for eight centuries. This is the story as it appears in the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, which was recorded by several scribes.

¹⁹ It is important to notice that Alfonso had revived the idea that a king should be anointed and what better backing up of his work than to have St. James as his personal patronage.

²⁰ The most valuable book of the *Codex Calixtinus* is the fifth book that is a guide for pilgrims.

indulging in a little light-hearted dalliance away from home (Smith 24). Texts that dealt with the stories of King Arthur are likely to have been among their possessions to relieve the tedium of the trip.

Finally, the expansion of Norman power in the central Mediterranean was even more impressive than the Reconquista in Spain given the distances, but the Normans had been Viking seafarers only a century or two earlier than the writing of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136/7). Their adventurous spirit led some minor Norman nobles to establish themselves in Southern Italy, where they exchanged a life of plunder and adventure for a slightly more settled lifestyle.

As we have mentioned, the spread of Norman influence into the affairs of Southern Italy began with Rollo, or Hrolf (911), and solidified around the Norman dukes of Sicily and the Southern Italian peninsula. During a second wave of Norman migrations that happened in 1017, Pope Benedict VIII (1012-24) recommended to several wandering Norman mercenaries that they fight for a nobleman by the name Melo, who had planned to overthrow the Byzantine provincial leader in Apulia. The duke of Naples subsequently gave the county of Aversa to Rainulf I in 1029, thus establishing the first Norman principality in southern Italy. Several sons of Tancred of Hauteville, a nobleman with fourteen children from a minor domain in Normandy, extended the influence of the Normans in Southern Italy, and changed the political landscape in the Mediterranean (Hoyt and Chodorow 308).²¹

In 1046, two of these children, William of the Iron Arm and Drogo, fought in a revolt against Byzantium and settled in Southern Italy. Quick recognition by the Western emperor, Henry III (1039-56) and the pope, followed.

William of the Iron Arm, became lord of Apulia in 1043; he was succeeded by his brother Drogo and by another brother, Humphrey. Another son of Tancred, Robert Guiscard (the 'wary' or 'canny') took Apulia and Calabria by force and was later recognized as the rightful lord of these territories and the island of Sicily by Pope Nicolas II (1059-61). His brother, Roger I, actually conquered Sicily, which became a kingdom under Roger II in 1130 and united the two Norman states of Apulia and Sicily. Roger II's power over the sea routes gave him the control over trade and commerce in the area until the Angevins began to expand their power.²²

²¹ Since the eldest would inherit a small patrimony, some of the other brothers sought their fortune in Southern Italy. They were: William of the Iron Arm, Drogo, Robert Guiscard, and Roger.

²² In 1189, Richard I (1189-99), son of Henry II Plantagenet, followed his father's example by forging a marital alliance with Berengaria, Sancho VI of Navarre's daughter, in order to protect his southern possessions. This friendship with Navarre is traced back to 1176-78 when Richard I aided the count of Bigorre, a vassal of the Navarrese king, in a struggle. Later during Richard's crusading expedition to the Holy Land, he stopped in Naples, where he took care of family business. King William II, his brother-in-law, had died without heirs, so Richard, in order to secure Plantagenet influence in the Mediterranean, came to the rescue of his sister Joanna in 1189 and safeguarded her kingdom and properties. Pope Clement III (1187-91), in order to prevent Angevin control of Sicily, formed an alliance with Tancred (1190-94), King William's cousin, to get Richard out of Sicily. However, the latter fell prey to his own cupidity, and agreed to take back his sister for 20,000 ounces of gold. On 6 March 1189, in an act of goodwill, Richard gave Tancred *Excalibur*—the name now preferred for King Arthur's sword—as a token of friendship. This is the first mentioning of an *Excalibur* sword. In 1192,

These Normans had shown an exceptional ability to adapt and rule their conquered areas. Although they were exceptional fighters, as their contemporary reputation attests, they surpassed the local rulers in guile, brutality, and treachery (Hoyt and Chodorow 308).

Angevin influence in Mediterranean affairs began with Charles of Anjou's (1265-85) personal dream of a Mediterranean empire. Pope Clement IV (1265-68), under extreme duress to secure the Mediterranean for Christian travelers, convinced Louis IX of France (1226-70) that a friendly power in Sicily was necessary for the peace of Christendom and for a successful Crusade. Accordingly, in 1265, Charles of Anjou was granted the kingdom of Sicily as a papal fief with the condition that he would make a substantial payment against the papal debt and to give an annual tribute in recognition of papal lordship, which he had no intention to respect, but Angevin tenure was brief. Sicily passed into the hands of Aragon during that kingdom's maritime expansion (1276-1337) (Hoyt & Chodorow 487-88).²³

The endeavor was accomplished by Pedro III (II in Catalonia, 1276-85), Alfonso III (II in Catalonia, 1285-91), and Jaime II (1291-1327). The Aragonese moved into Sicily after a bloody anti-French riot erupted in Palermo on Easter Monday 1282, just as the church bells were ringing for Vespers. By the following morning all the French who had not escaped from the city were dead. The revolt, the so-called Sicilian Vespers, spread throughout the island. The natives' resentment against excessive taxation and foreign rule led to the slaughter of several thousand French. The throne was offered to Pedro III (1239-85) of Aragon, who was married to Constance, the daughter of Manfred, Emperor Frederick II's natural son.

The Sicilian war dragged on for twenty years, but in the end, Aragonese sea power was decisive. Charles of Anjou (1265-85) withdrew to the mainland, where his descendants ruled the kingdom of Naples, while Pedro III of Aragón (reigned 1282-85) and his descendants ruled a separate kingdom of Sicily. The two kingdoms were not united until 1435 when Alfonso V (1394-1458) the Magnanimous, already king of Sicily, succeeded to the throne of Naples and became king of the Two Sicilies (Hoyt and Chodorow 488). Aragon's political and socio-cultural circumstances during the XIIIth-XIVth centuries provided a fertile ground for the translation of Arthur's legend.

Richard I was captured by Duke Leopold –whom he had publicly insulted in the course of the crusade– and was handed over as a prisoner to the Emperor Henry VI (1165-97). The Normans ruled Sicily until the kingdom of Aragon intervened with its massive expansion into the Mediterranean to control the commerce between eastern Spain and Southern Italy with the purpose of protecting her from the naval power of the northern cities of Italy (see Gillingham).

²³ However, the Angevin's thirst for power suffered a complete reversal: "A bloody anti-French riot erupted in Palermo on Easter Monday 1282, just as the church bells were ringing for Vespers. By the following morning all the French who had not escaped from the city were dead. The revolt, the so-called Sicilian Vespers, spread throughout the island. The natives' resentment against excessive taxation and foreign rule led to the slaughter of several thousand French. The throne was offered to Peter of Aragón, who was married to Manfred's daughter. The Sicilian war dragged on for twenty years –Phillip III's "crusade" against Aragón in 1285 was an incident in the struggle– but in the end, Aragonese sea power was decisive" (Hoyt and Chodorow 488).

In conclusion, the narratives that encompass the Arthurian legend share a common inheritance in the traditional lore of Briton-speaking Celts, who inhabited an area extending from the 'old North' down to Wales and Cornwall, and across the channel into Brittany. As shown above, knowledge of the tale of Arthur could have come many years before the texts were produced through the Vikings, Normans, Anglo-Normans, and Italo-Normans via the Aragonese. Even if not concretely proven, the coincidences point to a massive spread of the legend into the Iberian Peninsula due to its strategic location along Mediterranean trade routes.

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