

Pacifism and Crusade in Ramon Llull

Gabriel Ensenyat. Department of Catalan Philology, Universitat de les Illes Balears

One of the aspects of Ramon Llull that has usually been emphasised is the peaceful nature of his missionary projects.¹ However, it is also true that the Blessed Ramon expressed the need to undertake crusades against the “infidels” and he even devoted whole works to this issue, mainly after 1292, with the writing of the *Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles* and the *Quomodo Terra Sancta recuperari potest*. These two brief texts were later developed in the *Liber de fine* (1305) and in the *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae* (1309), in which Llull, now a theoretician of the war against the “infidels”, sets out concrete strategic plans to carry out a large-scale offensive against Islam.²

Nevertheless, as we will see, this is not the paradox it seems, given that for Llull the crusade did not have the same objectives as before but was instead another tool to achieve his missionary purpose.³ In fact, Llull did not agree with the traditional concept of crusade, based on the physical destruction and annihilation of Muslims, but rather the aim of the enterprise he proposed was to have captive audiences listening to his preaching. In other words, the crusade had to be at the service of preaching,

in the same way that such things as literature, science and so on were also at the service of his missionary and reforming projects.

Therefore, when approaching the subject that we are endeavouring to explain we must, once again, leave aside any kind of view of a contradictory Ramon Llull, who says one thing here and another thing there. Ramon Sugranyes has already pointed out that in Llull’s thought there was no contradiction between converting the infidels through preaching or through the crusade.⁴ Moreover, the approaches that he formulates are always the result of the context of his time, which moves in one direction or the other, according to specific circumstances. For this reason, when analysing his proposal, we talk of a realistic and well-informed Llull who is, moreover, capable of great pragmatism in his approach.

The starting point for this is, of course, his early works, enormously optimistic and pacifistic, such as the *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, where we find an exclusive commitment by the author to debate and persuasion: gentiles can be convinced through argumentation. There is nothing here that calls for crusade but rather for the exchange

1. For instance, F. de Urmeneta, “El pacifismo luliano”, *Estudios Lulianos*, vol. II, no. 2, 1958, pp. 197-208.

2. On this question, see G. Ensenyat, “La qüestió de la cavalleria (i algunes altres) en la idea de croada de Ramon Llull”, *Treballs sobre Ramon Llull*, Palma de Mallorca, 2007, pp. 91-119.

3. In relation to this aspect, see P. Drost Beattie, “‘Pro exaltatione sanctae fidei catholicae’: Mission and Crusade in the Writings of Ramon Llull”, in L.J. Simon (ed.), *Iberia and the Mediterranean Word of the Middle Ages. Studies in Honor of Robert I. Burns*, S.J., Leiden, Brill, 1995, pp. 113-129.

4. R. Sugranyes, “Les propostes de Ramon Llull. *De modo convertendi infidels*”, *Studia Lullistica. Misc. In Honorem Sebastiani Garcias Palou*, Palma de Mallorca, Maioricensis Schola Lullistica, 1989, pp. 93-100.

of ideas. Later, however, Llull will introduce the use of force as an additional element to be borne in mind in order to carry out conversion. The earlier pacifistic Llull finally becomes a crusader – something to be kept in mind in order to avoid a distorted image of an eminently peaceful Llull who rejected violence – although from a perspective quite different from what had been the initial ideal of the crusade. However, in order to explain this, we must take one step at a time.

If Llull did not commit to crusade in a traditional sense it was because the 13th century meant the realisation of the failure of the primary idea of crusade

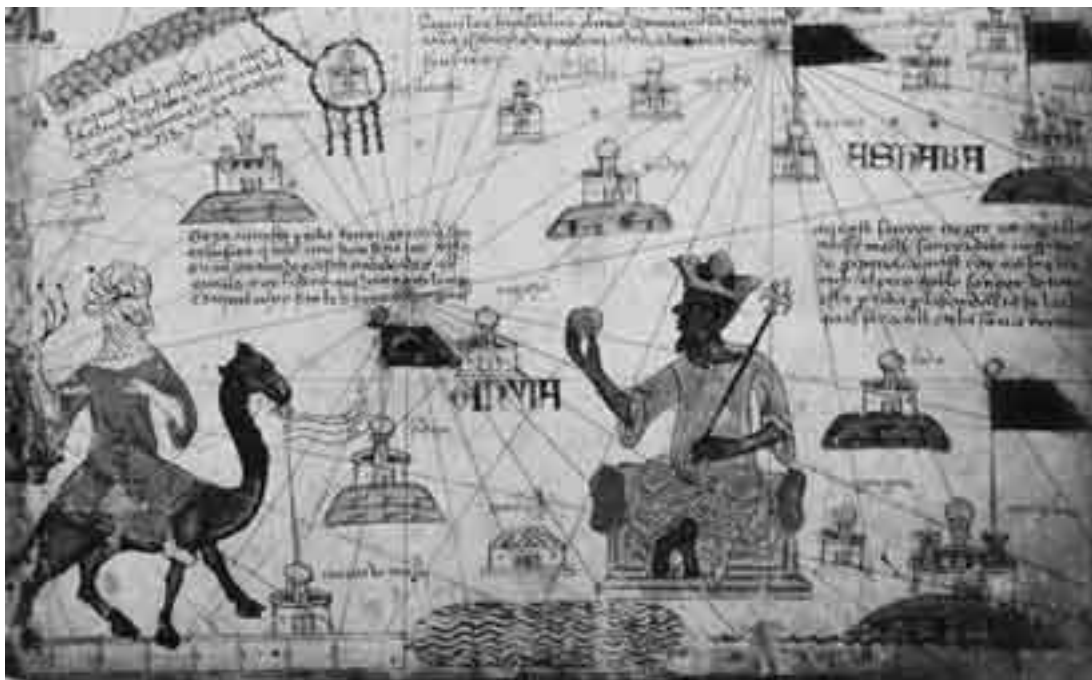
The first aspect to be considered is that if Llull did not commit to crusade in a traditional sense it was because the 13th century meant the realisation of the failure of the primary idea of crusade, based on the occupation of Muslim territory and their annihilation. It was the so-called “solution of the Frankish”, a notion promoted by the order of Cluny and which was implemented on the occasion of the first crusade (1096). The objective was to dispossess Muslims of their territory and, if necessary, also of their lives. In fact, before reaching Palestine, the crusaders who went through Europe on foot already did this – mainly the dispossessing of lives – in relation to the Jewish communities in the towns. The wave of anti-Semitism provoked by the first crusade is quite well-known and thousands of Jews were murdered by the feudal troops going to the Holy Land.⁵ Once settled in Jerusalem (1099), as is also well-known, Christians executed the whole Muslim population. Similar events were repeated following other later conquests in Palestine, even contravening the previous agree-

ments reached between crusaders and Saracens. The crusade, therefore, had a dual objective of occupation of the territory and extermination of the infidel population. It is worth saying that in the medieval Iberia sometimes actions of this kind took place, with “crusade” attempts. This early peninsular spirit of the holy fight against the infidel was manifested in three enterprises carried out by the Kingdom of Aragon, which were preceded by a papal bull of the crusade.

The first was on the occasion of the – ephemeral – conquest of Barbastro, in 1064. The campaign was undertaken under the protection of the bull promulgated by Alexander II. This meant that the army of Sancho Ramírez of Aragon had the assistance of the troops of Duke William VIII of Aquitaine and of warriors from Champagne at the orders of Ebles of Roucy. The second was an almost personal “crusade” of the aforementioned Ebles of Roucy in the lands of the River Ebro, in 1073, promulgated by Gregory VII, without achieving any significant success. The third enjoyed the support of a bull by Urban II, some years before this pope called the first crusade against Palestine (1095). Then, a contingent of French knights participated in the conquest of Huesca (1089). And, in the meantime, we must bear in mind the Castilian conquest of Toledo (1085), undertaken by Alfonso VI again with the collaboration of French crusaders.

When these war-like enterprises were successful, the destiny of the defeated population oscillated between disappearance and the previously agreed submission to a new political reality. However, sooner or later, the Islamic community disappeared, subjugated by the feudal power. In the Catalan sphere, the conquests of Majorca (1229), Ibiza (1235) and Minorca (1287) did involve an immediate and drastic

5. A recent work on this aspect is that of M. Forcano, *A fil d'espasa. Les croades vistes pels jueus*, Barcelona, La Magrana, 2007.



Map of Abraham and Judafà Cresques, 1375 (detail, Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

disappearance of the natives. Here there were no agreements, unlike in Valencia (1232-1245), allowing the defeated a precarious continuity. And there were intermediate cases such as that of Tortosa (1149) where, following an agreement, the natives at first remained there although submitted to a very burdensome fiscal pressure and were prevented from practising their own religion, and therefore soon became a marginal and marginalised group gradually dying out until one day there were no Muslims in Tortosa.

Returning, however, to the crusade against the Holy Land, after the success of the first enterprise, we witness its stagnation. The following crusades were made to counteract certain Muslim conquests. The second crusade sought to recover the county of Edessa, retaken by the Saracens. The third was called after Saladin had occupied Jerusalem. Leaving aside the failure

that these expeditions meant, the truth is that in the 13th century we see the reverse of the previous model: the objective was no longer to gain new territory but to preserve the territory held. But the purpose was not achieved – except for some specific action, such as the ephemeral retaking of Jerusalem by Emperor Frederic Hohenstaufen –, so that the 13th century meant the almost definitive crisis of the classical concept of crusade.

In fact, the last two crusades in history took place in Llull's lifetime and he witnessed their failure. Both were monopolised by the King of France, Louis IX, the future saint Louis. And, if we analyse them, we can see the increasingly less prosaic motivation that inspired them. The penultimate target was the Egypt of the Mamelukes. From the third crusade, when the Europeans realised that a frontal attack against Jerusalem was a hiding to nothing as long as

the Egyptian sultanate managed to defend the holy town, the preferred objective was the Mamelukes. The fourth crusade, for example, was organised to attack Egypt but the political and commercial interests diverted it to Constantinople (1204). In 1248 Saint Louis attacked the country of the Nile and, although the enterprise started well – well for his interests, of course –, with the occupation of the strategic port of Damietta, some months later he was defeated in Mansurah. The defeat was very costly for the French: a large part of the cavalry lost their lives and many other knights were taken prisoner, including the king himself, for whom an exorbitant ransom had to be paid.

The last crusade, still led by Louis IX (1270), was an enterprise of high political significance at the service of French geostrategic interests. The objective was far from Jerusalem or Egypt, because the campaign was directed against the king of Tunisia. After the occupation of Occitany in the early 13th century – which provided the kingdom of France with the exit to the Mediterranean – and of Sicily in the middle of the century –, which allowed the French to strengthen their position in the western Mediterranean, the objective was then to obstruct Catalan trade with the north of Africa and thwart the policy of James I of creating a series of protectorates in Maghrebian lands, allowing the Catalan-Aragonese Crown to maintain a political and mercantile hegemony there. Moreover, all of this was in the context of the growing Catalan-Angevine rivalry. The crushing defeat of the French king, who lost his life on the Tunisian beaches, and the loss of Sicily twelve years later, which passed into the Catalan sphere, ended the aspirations of the Anjous of controlling the western Mediterranean, for the time being and, in the long term, perhaps the whole Mediterranean.

In short, the young Ramon Llull – before the conversion and the nine years devoted to study prior to undertaking his task – experi-

enced and had first-hand knowledge of the failure of the idea of crusade in the classical sense and even the “adulteration” of the concept. From a crusade conceived against infidels we pass to the crusade against the heretics – following the crusade against Catharism – and, finally, to the crusade at the service of the king of France, first still against the “unfaithful” Tunisian lands but, in the end, against Peter the Great, because of the occupation of Sicily. And, in addition, some years later Llull would learn of the liquidation of the final Christian stronghold in the Holy Land: Saint John of Acre (1291). Everything must have influenced his way of analysing things.

What was becoming clear throughout the 13th century was that Islam could be militarily thrown out of gear

What was becoming clear throughout the 13th century was that Islam could be militarily thrown out of gear. As the crusade failed, in Europe several reports were produced on the causes and what was most appropriate to do with a view to the future, especially during the 1240s. One of the most notable of these reports is that of William of Tripoli, who did not believe in weapons but in missionary activity while accusing westerners of not learning languages. Crusades, as we well know, had important effects within western Christianity as they contributed to European expansion, fostering navigation and improving knowledge of other places. Moreover, they encouraged travel beyond familiar lands and expeditions increasingly headed to remote places. But what was never undertaken in any circumstances were evangelising enterprises, although it was a very propitious moment with the direct contact with the infidel and the existence of captive audiences. But the “solution of the Frankish” took another path. The Church, in these circumstances, did not produce any missionary

projects because it simply did not form part of its plans. Undoubtedly, with the passage of time, in Europe many must have thought that a good opportunity had been missed.

Thus, the realisation of the failure of the crusade, of the impossibility of undermining Islam, meant the emergence of apologetic enterprises. Given that it was no longer possible to liquidate those societies, the plan was to convert them. It is what Robert I. Burns has defined as the “dream of conversion” that lasted throughout the 13th century: the belief that it is possible to change the faith of those infidels.

This is the dream that Llull follows.⁶ Before, as is well-known, the Catalan Dominicans had started an organised apologetics initiative which Llull, however, did not support because he considered that the method failed because it did not contemplate the “provable or demonstrative reasons” of Christian faith that Muslims always demanded. Llull must have thought that these reasons, which the Art sought to provide, in principle had to be sufficient to achieve the evangelising aim, but the truth is that during the last decade of the 13th century we find an increasingly disappointed Ramon Llull – as we can observe in poems such as *Cant de Ramon* or *Lo desconhort* –, when he realised that his projects did not work as he had thought either within Christianity or when applying them to Islam. For this reason, in relation to the Muslim world, he increasingly insisted on the need for a crusade.

This Lullian crusade endeavoured to ensure captive audiences. Llull never suggested the physical elimination of the infidels but rather

their conversion. However, as years went by the Blessed Ramon believed that it was necessary to complete the apologetic action with the use of force because otherwise the emotional resistance of the Saracens to conversion greatly overwhelmed the missionary efforts. Dominique Urvoý has analysed the psychological resistance that Llull’s missionary task came up against among the subjects he sought to convert: on the one hand, the profound resistance because of the difficulty that the individuals “informed” by the mental universe of a religion had in order to adapt to a considerably different mental universe; on the other, the specific resistance involved in his peculiar method of argumentation and the presuppositions on which it was based.⁷

Although Llull never envisaged a crusade as an end in itself or as the core aspect of his proposition, it was necessary in order to achieve the objective of conversion

This resistance made any evangelising project unviable. For this reason, although Llull never envisaged a crusade as an end in itself or as the core aspect of his proposition, it was necessary in order to achieve the objective of conversion. In other words, if on the one hand military enterprise is always subordinated to spiritual objectives, on the other it eventually forms part of the Lullian strategy to achieve the aim pursued.

Thus, the use of force was to oblige Muslims to attend preaching as otherwise they simply would not go. We must remember that Mus-

6. A presentation of the Lullian Art as a general science suitable for dialogue between the three monotheist religions that coincide in the Crown of Aragon in the second half of the 13th century can be seen in Ch. Lohr, “Ramon Llull and Thirteenth-Century Religious Dialogue”, in H. Santiago-Otero (ed.), *Diálogo filosófico-religioso entre cristianismo, judaísmo e islamismo durante la Edad Media en la Península Ibérica*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1994, pp. 117-129.

7. D. Urvoý, “Les musulmans pouvaient-ils comprendre l’argumentation lullienne ?”, *Estudi General. El debat intercultural als segles XIII i XIV. Actes de les I Jornades de Filosofia Catalana*, Girona, Col·legi Universitari de Girona, no. 9, 1989, pp. 159-170.

lims – like Jews – were not longing to receive missionaries; they were not waiting for them with open arms. They must not even have had any special interest in debating questions of faith with Christian apologists. When Llull travelled for the first time to Tunis (1293) he had to deceive the wise men to rouse them to debate, telling them that if they convinced him about the authenticity of Islamic faith he would convert.

The same happened with the communities of Jews and Saracens in Christian territory. Although at the beginning the Christian apologists needed royal permission to undertake their sermons in order not to continuously irritate those people with indiscriminate preaching, the royal permission, in the end, had some pitfalls. Jaume Riera⁸ has warned us that in the Christian kingdoms and, specifically, in the Catalan-Aragonese Crown, Jews and Muslims were obliged to listen to Christian sermons because otherwise they would not have attended. And even more: once present, the infidels were obliged to debate with the missionary; in other words, to answer the questions of the preachers to ensure that they would pay attention to the sermons.

In fact, Llull obtained one of these royal licences in 1299 in order to preach in the synagogues and mosques of the Jews and Saracens of the Crown of Aragon.⁹ The concession involved the obligation of being present in the exposition of Christian dogmas but, in this case, there was no obligation to debate with the missionary if they did not wish to. It should be noted that in the same year of 1299, Llull, in

his *Dictat de Ramon*, addressed the Catalan-Aragonese king requesting him:¹⁰

*que'm donets poder
per vostres regnes e comtats,
castells, viles e ciutats,
que'ls serraïns faça ajustar,
e los judeus, al disputar
sobre'st novell nostre dictat,
[...]
e adonchs mostrarem tot clar
que nostra fe és veritat
e que'ls infels són errat.*¹¹

The crusade therefore was not an end in itself but a complement to preaching. For this reason Llull was interested in it especially after the fall of Acre, when there were no Muslims within reach, who were possible captive audiences. It is then when he wrote the *Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles* and the *Quomodo Terra Sancta recuperari potest*, in which he formulated strategic plans to carry out the military attack against Islam, which we mentioned earlier. These two brief texts are an early exposition of the crusade, which would later be completed with two works in which he explains their viability: the *Liber de fine* (1305) and the *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae* (1309). The context in which they were written is within the real crusade plans that were hatched in the Catalan-Aragonese courts and that Jocelyn N. Hillgarth has examined at length, analysing the variants that the Blessed Ramon introduces on how to recover the places occupied by the Muslims as well as the causes

8. J. Riera i Sans, "Les llicències reials per predicar als jueus i als sarraïns (segles XIII-XIV)", *Calls*, no. 2, 1987, pp. 113-143.

9. G. Llabrés, "Permiso concedido a Ramon Llull para predicar en sinagogas y mezquitas", *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lul·liana*, III, 1890, p. 104.

10. *Obres de Ramon Llull*, vol. 19, *Rims*, Majorca, 1936, p. 273.

11. To give me power / So that through your kingdoms and counties, / Castles, villages and towns, / I can assemble the Saracens / And also the Jews in order to dispute with them / Based on our new text, / [...] / So that we will clearly show / That our faith is true / And the infidels are wrong.

of his changes of strategy, in keeping with the political context of each moment.¹²

It is worth saying here that the crusader spirit remained latent despite the failures of the enterprises and periodically re-emerged. Without going any further, in Spain, James I, who was not disturbed by the struggle against the Moors, prepared a crusade to conquer the Holy Sepulchre in 1269.¹³ The enterprise had in principle to be supported by the Tartar khan Abaqa. It sought to put into practice the so often planned alliance between Christians and Mongols that had to destroy Islam forever. Or, at least, in this case, the first goal of that so ambitious aspiration. These initiatives, which never materialised, were very common in the late 13th century and early 14th century and Llull supported the idea and also promoted it. Its main exponent was the diplomatic mission sent by the Persian monarch Argun Khan to Europe in order to offer an alliance against the Mamelukes. The ambassador was a Nestorian monk and bishop, Rabban Sauma, who remained one year on European lands, between 1287 and 1288, during which he met with the pope (Nicholas IV) and the king of France (Philip the Handsome) and of England (Edward I). The question was also discussed in the Middle East, where the Mongols were present, with similar proposals that emerged even in Armenia.¹⁴

The squadron amassed by James I finally sailed in September but, according to the account of the *Llibre dels fets* ("The Book of Events"), it encountered a heavy storm that dispersed the vessels. Some reached their objective but most of them, including the royal

galley, took refuge where they could and later returned home. The crusade thus ended before it began. However, the Conqueror still resumed the plan, with a new attempt in 1274, explained to the General Council of the Church held in Lyons. But, finally, the king had to give up, as it seemed that among all those attending the only one who was really interested was the pope.

Philip the Handsome from time to time considered the possibility of organising a new crusade similar to that of his predecessors, although he never made up his mind

Later, at the beginning of the new century, his grandson James II thought on some occasions about a large scale attack against the kingdom of Granada. Also in France, Philip the Handsome from time to time considered the possibility of organising a new crusade similar to that of his predecessors, although he never made up his mind.¹⁵ Even at a peninsular scale, the same year of the fall of Acre (1291) James II of Catalonia-Aragon and Sancho IV of Castile had signed the Treaty of Monteagudo in which they divided up the north of Africa for future enterprises, taking for granted the future liquidation of the Nassari kingdom. It was the "natural" continuation of future treaties – Tudillén (1151), Cazorla (1179), Almisra (1244) – in which the two crowns had fixed the limits of their respective peninsular expansion in order to avoid conflicts. On that occasion the dividing line would be the River Mouloûya, in eastern

12. J.N. Hillgarth, *Ramon Llull i el naixement del lul·lisme*, Barcelona, Curial, 1998, pp. 73-163.

13. E. Marcos, *La croada catalana. L'exèrcit de Jaume I a Terra Santa*, Barcelona, L'esfera dels llibres, 2007.

14. See Aitò de Gorigos, *La flor de les històries d'Orient*, Albert Hauf (ed.), Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Medievals de Catalunya, 1989, which contains an excellent introduction to the subject (pp. 5-71) and a specific section devoted to contrasting the points of view of Aitò de Gorigos and Ramon Llull on the coexistence of the Christian-Mongol alliance (pp. 44-51).

15. On these Catalan and French projects from the early 14th century, which made Llull dream so much, see the aforementioned work by J.N. Hillgarth.

Morocco. James II reserved for himself the territories located to the east of the river (Algeria, Tunisia, etc) while the Castilian king did so with the area of Morocco. This event, it should be noted, meant an important strategic evolution with respect to the previous expansionist policy, given that the Christian kingdoms were then broadening the future field of expansion outside the peninsular area.

All this happened in the late 13th century and early 14th century and, obviously, was bound to have repercussions on the tactics and possible approaches on the issue of a person as well informed about reality as Llull. The viability of attacking Islam existed, at least on paper, and the crusade plans floated in the air.¹⁶ This was perhaps more hypothetical than realistic, but for the contemporaries it must have seemed more than merely a theoretical initiative. Indeed, at the time there seemed to be a real popular clamour for the crusade.¹⁷ Consequently, when Llull strove to make this a reality he had the justification of historical

circumstance together with the usual motivation.

In short, through Ramon Llull we can see an ideological change, largely forced by circumstances, to the concept of crusade. The initial objective, as we have said, was to recover the territory rather than the unfaithful society, which had to be physically liquidated, if possible, or destabilised, in order to make the reform possible, based on other religious, political and social parameters. The crusade, therefore, had no missionary meaning and did not envisage conversion formulae. Its idea was based on the bestialisation of the enemy ("Saracens, who are almost beasts," states the *Carmen* that celebrates the expedition against Almeria of 1087).¹⁸ Llull, in contrast, credits Muslims with intellectual capacity: they can be persuaded through words. However, if they do not want to listen to the missionaries, they must be obliged to attend the sermons. The crusade, prior and complementary to the apologetic action, is therefore necessary.

16. On the crusade attempts after Acre, see N. Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580: From Lyons to Alcazar*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.

17. With reference to the preaching of the crusade at the end of the 13th century, see: S. Schein, *Fideles Crucis: The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the Holy Land (1274-1314)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991; A. Leopold, *How to Recover the Holy Land: The Crusade Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000. In relation to the closer Iberian sphere, see: J. Gofii Gaztambide, *Historia de la bula de la cruzada en España*, Vitoria, Editorial del Seminario, 1958; J.M. Rodríguez García, "Historiografía de las cruzadas", *Espacio, tiempo y forma*, serie III, Historia Medieval, no.13, 2000, pp. 341-395.

18. M. Barceló, "... Per sarraïns a preïcar..." o l'art de predicar a audiències captives", *Estudi General. El debat inter-cultural als segles XIII i XIV. Actes de les I Jornades de Filosofia Catalana*, Girona, Col·legi Universitari de Girona, no. 9, 1989, pp. 117-132.