

# The Scars of War in the Portuguese Border Zone (1250-1450)

## Las cicatrices de la guerra en la frontera medieval portuguesa (1250-1450)

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### Resumo

Neste artigo procuraremos perceber, ao longo do período compreendido entre 1250 e 1450, quais os efeitos da guerra nos territórios portugueses mais próximos da fronteira (marítima, mas sobretudo terrestre) e, por isso, mais expostos às armas inimigas. Mas porque os efeitos da guerra não eram provocados apenas pelas incursões adversárias, teremos também que dedicar uma atenção particular aos abusos cometidos pelas autoridades e forças portuguesas nos territórios que estavam encarregadas de defender. Observaremos, portanto, quais os efeitos imediatos e de curto-prazo da guerra, mas também aqueles que, provocados por um e por outro lado, permaneceram muito depois da partida dos exércitos, assim como as medidas tomadas pela Coroa para atenuar esses danos.

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## Palavras-chave

Guerra na Idade Média; Fronteiras; Portugal medieval; Exércitos medievais ibéricos.

## Abstract

In this article we will consider the period between 1250 and 1450 in order to understand the effects of war in the Portuguese lands closest to the border (maritime, but mainly terrestrial) and therefore more exposed to enemy weapons. But because the effects of war were not only caused by enemy incursions, we will also pay a particular attention to the abuses committed by the Portuguese authorities and forces in the territories they were responsible for defending. We will thus see the immediate and short-term effects of war, but also those which remained long after the departure of the armies; at the same time, we will identify the steps taken by the Portuguese Crown to mitigate those effects.

## Keywords

War in the Middle Ages; Frontiers; Medieval Portugal; Iberian medieval armies.

## Introduction

### *Constructing the “frontier”*

When we use the word “frontier” today, it is easy to forget that this too has a history. The “frontier” has not always been that rigid line of almost mathematical precision; that deep sudden gash in the landscape of language and law; that implacable stroke announcing the transition between two countries, two societies and two administrations clearly demarcated from one another; that gateway into a new world.

Etymologically, the Portuguese word *fronteira* (“frontier”) derives from *fron*, which means, according to Maria Helena Coelho, to “confront”, or “face”<sup>1</sup>. In Portuguese royal documentation, the first occurrence of the word *fronteira* (in the modern sense of the term) occurs in the year 1296. A little earlier, however, in around 1263, we can find the term *frontaria* (“front line”), used in much the same way as it would be today. Before this, *fronteira* had long been synonymous with *fron*, used specifically to refer to the “front” in the war against the Moors<sup>2</sup>. This meant that it was a fluid oscillating boundary that could vary according to the incidences of war.

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1 Cf. COELHO, “As relações fronteiriças galaico-minhotas à luz das Cortes do século XV”, p. 59.

2 Cf. GOMES, “A construção das fronteiras”, pp. 359-360.

Until the middle of the 13th century, the most stable spatial boundaries were religious rather than political in nature – the limits of the dioceses. Only after peace was signed between Portugal and Castile in 1411 there was an attempt made to bring the boundaries of the bishoprics into line with those of the Portuguese kingdom. As Rita Costa Gomes has pointed out, between 1260 and 1340, the first demarcations of the kingdom using the word *termo* (i.e. “end” or “limit”) began to appear. However, it was only between 1460 and 1520 that we get systematic records and lists of *termos* and *lugares extremos* (“demarcation points”), and the first cartographic attempts to represent the Portuguese border zones. The first printed map of the kingdom appeared in 1561, by Fernão Álvares Seco<sup>3</sup>.

At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, there was a change in the way that space and its limits were conceived, nicely illustrated by King Dinis’s policy of placing castles all along the Portuguese border, following the signing of the Treaty of Alcañices in 1297 with Ferdinand IV of Leon and Castile. Some of these fortresses were built from scratch, while others were restored to equip them for a new and important mission – the defence of the kingdom’s “frontier” against its powerful Iberian neighbour. When plotted on a map, the castles form a line of dots that trace out a primitive border. But even more interesting is the magnificent album of designs and plans known as the *Livro das Fortalezas* (“Book of Fortresses”), drawn up two centuries later by the squire Duarte d’Armas at the request of King Manuel I (1495-1521), which includes no less than 60 frontier castles covering the whole of Portugal’s land border, with the routes between them and their respective distances (in leagues)<sup>4</sup> carefully marked! This is a fabulous document, unique in Europe, which offers important information about those giant stone edifices that formed the main markers of the boundary between Portugal and Castile at the end of the Middle Ages.

In short, the medieval frontier was a permeable line without connotations of rigidity or rigour. Instead it was associated with movement and interpenetration, and hosted multiple functions (legal, fiscal, military, ideological, etc). It was far from being a prohibitive or uncrossable boundary, either in peace time, when it was associated to work, trade

3 *Ibidem* (pp. 360-362 e 375-376).

4 D’ARMAS, *Livro das Fortalezas*.

and festivals, or in war, when trade did not necessarily stagnate and where other functions and activities were actually able to emerge. It was a political separator but not an absolute one, as it was overlain by other more profound and often intangible divisions, such as those of religion, language and culture<sup>5</sup>.

The Portuguese medieval frontier space was a place of both encounter and conflict. Smuggling and petty thieving had always taken place there, and throughout the whole of the Middle Ages, there was a natural tension resulting, on the one hand, from conflicts between local nobility, and on the other, from the rivalry between neighbouring counties. As Rui Cunha Martins has noted, these oppositions ultimately led to the delimitation of local micro-frontiers that circumscribed and gave a new life to the larger-scale political division that lay beneath the still-vague notion of the “frontier”<sup>6</sup>.

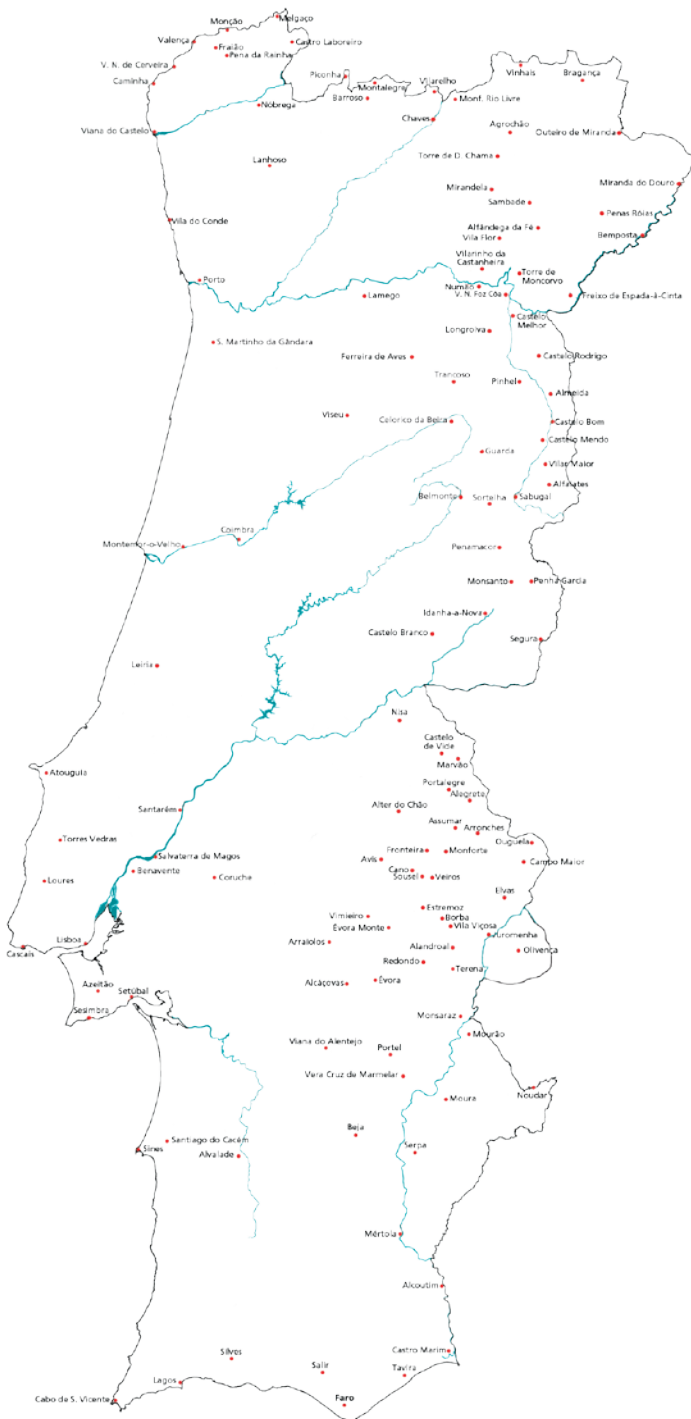
The end of the Portuguese *Reconquista* (c.1250) did not put an end to royal concerns with the border. The fact that the Muslim “front” no longer existed on Portuguese territory, allowed the Crown to pay more attention to its frontiers with Castile and Leon to the East and North, as is shown by King Dinis’ castle project and military campaigns. Indeed, it is that extensive land border with Castile that will concentrate our attention, although the long sea frontier will also be taken into account – in the Algarve (dominated by cities such as Lagos and Silves) and along the Western coast (where most of the Portuguese population lived, in cities like Viana do Castelo, Oporto and Lisbon). In each case, we will give voice to the most important actors, namely the monarchs (mostly through the royal charters issued by the Royal Chancery) and the county procurators, who represented their constituencies in the general meetings of the Courts, conveying grievances and petitioning the king for help to redress injustices. Where necessary, we also draw upon Portugal’s most well-known chroniclers (particularly Fernão Lopes, that wrote his chronicles somewhere between 1433 and 1448). In all cases, our focus will be upon the scars left by war upon the broad area of the Portuguese frontier between 1250 and 1450.

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5 Cf. COELHO, “As relações fronteiriças galaico-minhotas à luz das Cortes do século XV”, pp. 60-61 e 70.

6 Cf. MARTINS, “La frontera medieval Hispano-Portuguesa (El punto de vista de la guerra)”, pp. 112-113.

# THE SCARS OF WAR IN THE PORTUGUESE BORDER ZONE (1250-1450)



### *The pains of war*

The common folk hated war, as it was they that suffered most from it and paid the highest costs. Not surprisingly and as shown by the Portuguese sources, they wanted to have their say before it broke out. In the 1371 Lisbon Courts, the procurators asked the monarch not to take decisions related to war, currency and other delicate matters until the citizens had been heard<sup>7</sup>. In the following year, in Oporto, these procurators complained bitterly of the terrible consequences (in terms of damages and hardship) wreaked by King Fernando's war with Castile and of not being asked for their opinion about it beforehand, begging the monarch to do everything possible to restore peace<sup>8</sup>.

This reluctance to put up with war is understandable. For even before the destruction, wounds and death that the conflict itself inevitably brought, the military campaigns demanded huge sacrifices of the people: financial contributions; the provision of food, horses and other commodities; the preparation and maintenance of the castles and fleet; the felling of trees to make war machines; forced displacement to Castile, etc.<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, military activity was open to abuse by the officials and royal dignitaries, and monarchs often confessed to being powerless in the face of such widespread exploitation. Then, there were the specific hardships involved when men were posted to inhospitable places. These included Ceuta, where the service was unpleasant and the men felt uprooted;<sup>10</sup> the Alentejo border near Elvas-Badajoz, which was very exposed and dangerous (so much so, in fact, that the King of Castile ordered a special allowance to be paid to the 100 cavalymen permanently stationed in Badajoz, ready to go to war along the border and beyond);<sup>11</sup> or even on the northwest coast, where the seas were seething with French and Breton corsairs, who would attack Portuguese fishing vessels, large and small<sup>12</sup>.

7 Cortes de Lisboa de 1371, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 1.º; published in *Cortes portuguesas. Reinado de D. Fernando I*, p. 16.

8 Cortes do Porto de 1372, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 8.º; publ. in CDF, I, p. 82.

9 Cortes de Leiria de 1372, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 5.º; publ. in CDF, I, pp. 126-127.

10 Cortes de Leiria-Santarém de 1433, Capítulos Gerais do Povo: Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra [BGUC], Ms. 696, cap. 154, p. 176.

11 Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Elvas, art.º 33.º: Coimbra, Instituto de História Económica e Social [IHES], Coleção de Cortes, fl. 124v.º.

12 Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Viana do Castelo, art.º 5.º: Coimbra, BGUC, Ms. 700, pp. 243-244.

In short, war inspired great fear, and there were many that tried to evade it. When this was not an option, they would try to serve for as short a time as possible. Thus, they asked the king to respect the ancient custom that citizens of Portugal should not serve more than six weeks a year in the war at the expense of their respective towns and cities, and that if the Crown wished to extend their commissions, it should ensure due payment, as it did with the nobles<sup>13</sup>.

Another factor that reinforced the terror of war was the custom (particularly notorious in periods of civil war, such as in 1319-1324 or 1355-1356) of allowing criminals to serve in the royal armies as way of settling their accounts with justice (a problem that had already been raised in the Santarém Courts in 1331 with regard to the outcasts and villains that made part of the entourages of the noblemen, knights, prelates and abbots<sup>14</sup>). In fact, the armies' disorderliness was clearly related to the presence of these "outlaws"<sup>15</sup>, and the extent of the problem can be seen by the fact that, in the Courts of Coimbra in 1385, the people asked the newly-crowned King João I to revoke the practice of pardoning murderers in exchange for service in the royal army<sup>16</sup>. The monarchs did not much like committing themselves to this, and even if they did, there was still the risk that concentrations of combatants at embarkation and disembarkation points would lead to serious riots that affected the local coastal populations, such as in the Algarve<sup>17</sup>. According to Bronislaw Geremek, war stimulated depravation and a general disregard for rules and customs, fostering a taste for the easy life and bringing numerous moral dangers<sup>18</sup>. As Christopher Allmand has pointed out, amongst the

13 Cortes de Lisboa de 1371, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 23.º; publ. in CDF, I, pp. 25-26.

14 Cortes de Santarém de 1331, Capítulos Gerais, art.º 42.º: published in *Cortes portuguesas. Reinado de D. Afonso IV (1325-1357)*, p. 42.

15 This aspect has already been pointed out by various authors and even by ourselves in other works: cf. MARTINS, *Para bellum. Organização e Prática da Guerra em Portugal durante a Idade Média (1245-1367)*, p. 767.

16 Cortes de Coimbra de 1385, Capítulos Gerais do Povo: BGUC, Ms. 698, cap. 18, p. 80.

17 In the Courts of Leiria-Santarém in 1433, the people complained that combatants travelling to or from Ceuta would bring their weapons to the embarkation/disembarkation points where they would form gangs, causing great trouble: Coimbra, BGUC, Ms. 700, cap. 97, pp. 79-80.

18 Cf. GEREMEK, "O marginal", p. 241.

authors of the end of the 14th century, a veritable chorus of protests was raised against the gratuitous violence and destruction, which many monarchs and princes appeared to tacitly authorize<sup>19</sup>.

This destruction often began long before the formal start of hostilities. Preparations for a siege, for example, would frequently involve scorched-earth policies (to ensure that there was nothing left in the terrain that the enemy could use as food), the demolition of buildings near the walls, and the felling of large trees to expose the assailants to crossbow fire and machines of war, or to prevent them from covertly undermining or scaling the walls<sup>20</sup>. In the Middle Ages, the modern distinction between “civil” and “military” targets only existed in theoretical literature about just warfare, but was very seldom observed in practise. On the contrary, generals would often deliberately ensure that the common folk bore the brunt of war, thereby limiting the human resources available to the enemy and reducing its tax base<sup>21</sup>; that is to say, this was a way of further weakening an enemy already starved of funds at a time when there were not yet permanent armies and where all logistic operations involved considerable effort.

Within this scenario, the border zones were choice targets in military campaigns: the enemy was there at hand; incursions required few human, financial or logistic resources; and after the attack, the attackers could be back home safely in only a couple of hours. In many cases, these operations were carried out by the garrisons of the frontier fortresses (sometimes supported by the armed forces of neighbouring counties) as a form of guerrilla warfare (though in some cases, when planned by the Crown, they might also have a much longer range and mask aspirations to territorial expansion)<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the border regions suffered repeated onslaughts, which made them into “martyred areas” that had serious problems in recovering economically. These campaigns generally aimed to destroy cultivated fields, vines and fruit trees, and would

19 Cf. ALLMAND, “War and the non-combatant in the Middle Ages”, p. 265.

20 Cf. MARTINS, “Ficou aquela terra estragada que maravilhosamente era de ver. Guerra e paisagem no Portugal medieval (1336-1400)”, pp. 143-144. As we have pointed out in another work (cf. Miguel G. Martins, *op. cit.*, p. 145), wartime was not only a period of destruction, but was also conducive to the construction of new buildings, such as castles, city walls, etc.

21 This aspect has already been pointed out by authors such as ALLMAND, “War and the Non-Combatant”, p. 261.

22 Cf. MARTINS, “Ficou aquela terra estragada”, pp. 129 e 141.



often involve the large-scale theft of livestock. As a result, farms were frequently forced to close, investments would be lost, meat for consumption was scarce, and essential infrastructures (such as stables, cowsheds and barns) would be destroyed. Burning houses and equipment was in fact rather easy, given the widespread use of highly inflammable building materials, such as wood and cork. Far were the days when frontier areas, particularly the southern ones, were seen as lands of opportunities and as a mean of gaining fortune and, in some cases, liberty.

### *The Crown's concerns with defending the frontier*

Given this situation, the Crown naturally gave special attention to protecting the Portuguese border zone, particularly the land frontier with Castile. Five examples are enough to illustrate this concern.

Firstly, there was the creation of refuges or sanctuaries for convicted criminals to whom was given the opportunity to have their punishments reduced in return for settling, populating and defend these strongholds situated in frontier zones that had been deserted because of war (and which therefore constituted a serious security hazard for the region). The first such outlaw refuge was in Noudar, in the Alentejo, founded by King Dinis in 1308. This appears to have been an isolated act, as the practice was not continued in the reigns of Kings Afonso IV (1325-1357) and Pedro I (1357-1367). However, with King Fernando, the policy was resumed, leading to the creation of refuges in Guarda (in 1371), Marvão (in 1378), Miranda do Douro and Penamacor (both in 1379). These refuges sheltered a variable number of criminals, depending upon the size of the town or village in question. However, offenders were not obliged to go to these refuges; they could, if they preferred, give themselves over to the authorities or take asylum in churches or monasteries. The system expanded under King João I (1385-1433), who issued a royal law in 1406 to better regulate the outlaw refuges of Noudar, Marvão, Sabugal, Miranda and Caminha. This document alleges that these border towns were dangerously underpopulated as a result of past wars, and stipulates that they could therefore be used to accommodate outlaws on the run, at risk of losing their property, as there was a danger (in war time) that they might serve the enemy or reveal secrets about the territory. The outlaws were allowed to leave the refuge twice a year to tend their property and could even travel to Castile and other kingdoms, provided that they resided in the respective refuge (and had their home there) for

at least six months a year<sup>23</sup>. King João I created many such outlaw reserves, including places such as (from north to south) Melgaço, Caminha, Monforte de Rio Livre, Chaves, Outeiro de Miranda, Penarróias, Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta, Castelo Mendo, Belmonte, Penha Garcia, Segura, Aronches, Ouguela, Fronteira, Juromenha, Monsaraz, Mértola and Castro Marim<sup>24</sup>. In subsequent reigns, this policy continued, and other refuges were founded or enlarged (such as Numão, Alfândega da Fé, Vilar Maior and Monforte). There was also a “Book of Outlaws” (none of which has come to this day), which would probably have contained information about these settlements and about the protection of the land frontier<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, special attention was given to frontier castles, compared to the hinterland fortresses. This policy meant that many castles in the interior of the kingdom fell into ruin, while most on the frontier were safeguarded. However, some of the castles from the seaboard chain were preserved, as was the case of Sesimbra, the fortress that protected the coast against seaborne enemies by means of sentinels and codified long-distance signalling systems.

A third aspect concerns the conscription of men from the cities, towns and villages of the kingdom into the royal army. We know<sup>26</sup> that the Crown developed ways of regularly assessing the assets of each house-owner in the kingdom, using first local authorities and then officials appointed by the Crown (initially the district magistrates or *corregedores*, later military officers called *coudéis*). On the basis of those assessments (known as *quantias*), the monarchy obliged each individual (or *aquantiado*) to own a certain amount of military equipment, and, when they could afford it, a horse. Thus, we know from the *Regimento dos Coudéis* of 1418 (regulations issued by Infante D. Duarte governing the activities of those royal officers) that the value of the *quantias* was much lower in the frontier regions. That is to say, in the *comarcas* (i.e. provinces) of the Alentejo and Algarve, where borderland military operations were frequent, an indi-

23 Cf. MORENO, “Elementos para o estudo dos coutos de homiziados instituídos pela Coroa”, pp.134-138. As this author explains, it was up to the judges of the refuges, whatever the decision, to record the names, date of arrival and offences committed by the outlaws in question, and also to ensure that they lived there for the period required.

24 Cf. MORENO, “Elementos para o estudo dos coutos de homiziados”, pp. 108 onwards.

25 Cf. VENTURA, “Os coutos de homiziados nas fronteiras com direito de asilo”, pp. 601-625.

26 Cf. MARTINS, *Para bellum*, pp. 114-155; and MONTEIRO, *A Guerra em Portugal*, pp. 44-58.

vidual would be obliged to own a mount or high-quality defensive equipment with half the personal wealth of someone in Estremadura. This inequality was so blatant that county procurators often asked the king to alter the value of the *quantias* in more exposed areas at the meetings of the Courts. However, these petitions were not always successful, as the Crown was very concerned about the quality of the military equipment owned by the inhabitants of areas more vulnerable to attack from Castile.

A fourth point, related to the previous one, concerns the number of crossbowmen that each town or village was obliged to have. The system of calculating the number of crossbowmen originated in the Alentejo with King Dinis (1279-1325), but was stimulated and organized in later reigns. In 1421, Prince Duarte (already at the helm of government) prepared a register stipulating that there should be 300 recruitment units of crossbowmen dispersed throughout the country (involving some 5000 archers altogether). This interesting list (which may be used, with caution, for the purpose of demographic counting) reveals that the provinces of the Alentejo, Algarve and Beira – which were by no means the most densely populated – supplied 60% of the total number of crossbowmen in the kingdom<sup>27</sup>. In this matter too, the Crown appears to have been reluctant to negotiate alterations, whenever a petition was made in Court meetings to reduce the number of crossbows allocated to a frontier town or village. For example, in the Courts of Lisbon of 1439, the procurators of Pinhel (Beira Alta), alleging that the population of their town had dropped from 1500/2000 to 700 inhabitants due to plague and war, requested that the number of crossbowmen required be reduced. However, the king did not authorise any alterations to the 1421 list, beyond agreeing that the four officers required could be included in the group of 30 (which effectively reduced the total number of people involved in the recruitment unit from 34 to 30)<sup>28</sup>. This was the most that the monarchy was prepared to do to avoid compromising the efficiency of the military response in a region that served as the gateway to Portugal for the main Castilian armies (the so-called “Beira highway” or *estrada da Beira*).

27 On the system used for calculating the number of crossbowmen required in the Middle Ages, see MARTINS, *Para bellum*, pp. 155-179; and MONTEIRO, *A Guerra em Portugal*, pp. 58-71.

28 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Pinhel, art.º 8.º: Coimbra, IHES, Coleção de Cortes, fl. 302; publ. in COELHO & RÊPAS, *Um Cruzamento de Fronteiras. O discurso dos concelhos da Guarda em Cortes*, pp. 153-154.

Finally, the fifth point concerns the royal practice (which also occurred in Castile with the *adelantados*) of appointing *fronteiros* or *fronteiros-mores* – designated only during military agitated periods – to command frontier fortresses, thereby guaranteeing better protection of border zones. These officers were almost always chosen from the high nobility of court and were often members of the royal family itself. For a limited period of time, they were awarded exceptional military powers, which placed them not only above all other military dignitaries but also above the regional and local justices. The appointments generally covered a large region (often a whole province, such as the Alentejo, Algarve and Beira), but there were also cases of militarily important cities (such as Lisbon, Oporto, Santarém and Ceuta), and even small towns and villages, having their own *fronteiros*. In the latter cases, this was usually due to their relative proximity to Castile (or the coast), as with Torre de Moncorvo, Castelo de Vide, Portalegre, Arronches, Campo Maior, Elvas, Estremoz, Vila Viçosa, Olivença, Redondo, Santiago do Cacém and Serpa.

The *fronteiros* were responsible for maintaining and repairing their fortresses, keeping watch over the gates of the castle and city, and protecting the border zone. As well as defensive tasks, they could also carry out offensive military operations, as they would generally have contingents of some 100 to 250 armed men at their disposal, mostly recruited from the county militias. As might be expected, they were responsible for many of the abuses suffered by the local populations in wartime, and this led to the presentation of many grievances in the Courts (eg. in the Lisbon Courts of 1371, 1389 and 1446). In some cases, the King was asked to get rid of these officers, or at least to decommission them in peacetime<sup>29</sup>. In true medieval manner (there was of course little specialization in this period, and military and judicial duties were often mixed), some of the *fronteiros* also served as *alcaldes* (i.e. commanders of castles) in the same (or other) garrisons, or controlled frontier trade (which was always open to smuggling) – when they did not hold important posts in the royal curia or in the Military Orders.

Despite the existence of some important studies on the Portuguese frontier, such as the aforementioned works by Maria Helena Coelho, Rita Costa Gomes and Rui Cunha Martins, none of them analyses the

29 Cf. Examples in MONTEIRO, *A Guerra em Portugal*, pp. 139-143.

effects of war. Therefore, it was impossible for us, as authors, to compare our points of view with others on the same subject. So, instead of another type of approach, namely the presentation of a “model” or a “thesis”, this study presents itself as a first attempt to look at the scars of war in the Portuguese border zone, a circumstance that led us to elaborate a survey of the main situations caused by the armed conflicts and portrayed by the sources. This option was also dictated by the purpose of reveal the Portuguese reality of the Middle Ages before an international audience (III International Symposium “Conducting war in the Middle Ages - Medieval Frontiers in War” held in Cáceres in 2010, in which a first version of this paper was presented), showing the perverse and enduring effects of war in the medieval Portuguese frontier landscape from the mid-Thirteenth Century, until the mid-Fourteenth Century.

Being a very long chronological period, we chose to divide it in two: one between 1250 and 1350 (studied by Miguel Gomes Martins) and another between 1350 and 1450 (analyzed by João Gouveia Monteiro). But this partition is not merely a formal option. In fact, we are in the presence of two periods with significant differences between them, which reinforces the need of such a division. The first period, marked by the reorganization (also military) resulting from the end of the Portuguese Reconquista, is essentially, and despite being interrupted by internal armed conflicts and short periods of war, marked by peace with Castile; the second period, on the other hand, is also characterized by civil wars, but specially by long years of intense (land and naval) war with the neighbouring Castilian kingdom, which can be largely traced to the Hundred Years’ War.

## **1. The scars of war between 1250 and 1350**

This century, marked not only by the various wars with Castile (in 1250, 1252-1253 [little is known about these first two], 1296 and 1336-1338), but also by confrontations between King Dinis and his brother D. Afonso at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and by the Civil War of 1319-1324, bears fewer scars of war than previous and subsequent periods. Indeed, the sources themselves, which are scarcer and less detailed than those of the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, may give the impression that the marks left by military activity were only superficial, only really affecting the borderlands, scene of most of the conflicts.

Nevertheless, there are clear signs that many of those scars, which did not result exclusively from combat or war, were deep and difficult to heal. In fact, life on the border was, by nature, dangerous. Its peripheral location in relation to the larger towns and cities was itself enough to generate an atmosphere of instability and insecurity amongst the local population, exacerbated by the constant proximity of the enemy, Castile. The population also felt ill-protected against the many abuses committed there by Portuguese officials, which were rarely confronted and corrected.

In times of war, this “gunpowder keg” would explode, making even more difficult a lifestyle that was in itself harsh and arduous. Indeed, as the authorities of the Beira settlement of Segura pointed out in a letter to King Dinis in 1299, “they lived on the border with Leon and (...) [therefore] suffer great losses and damage from the wars on their territory”<sup>30</sup>.

Of course, when discussing the risks of living on the border and the greater exposure to enemy attacks, we should not overlook the coastal areas, where settlements were equally at risk of seaborne raids. In particular, the larger cities such as Lisbon were attractive targets for pirates, especially Moorish ones. Indeed, the area of Lisbon closest to the River Tagus was so susceptible to pirate attack that a waterside wall was built between 1294 and 1295 to protect it<sup>31</sup>. The seaboard, particularly the Alentejo coast, was just as dangerous as the land border, or even more so, as it was less well guarded; as King Dinis pointed out in a charter of privileges granted to the residents of Odemira, south of the Tagus, “you are next to the sea on the Moorish frontier”<sup>32</sup>. The further south one went, the greater were the risks run by those that lived near the sea. Lagos, for example, was considered one of the most dangerous places in the Algarve, due to the risk of devastating onslaughts from the North African Moors<sup>33</sup>.

This section of the article aims to shed some light upon life on the frontier (to the extent permitted by the sources), focusing particularly on the land border, though hopefully without neglecting the extensive seaboard. Consideration will be given to the periods before, during and after war, within a timeframe stretching from the end of the Portuguese *Reconquista* to the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

30 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 7v.º (de 20.Aug.1299).

31 Cf. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa – Arquivo Histórico [AML-AH], Livro II de D. Dinis, D. Afonso IV e D. Pedro I, doc. n.º 4 (de 4.Jun.1294).

32 Cf. IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 2 de Odiana, fl. 283v.º (de 30.Nov.1321).

33 Cf. Ch.DP, doc. n.º 576, p. 263 (de 5.Jan.1361).

### 1.1. *The destruction of dwellings*

One of the most visible results of war was the destruction of buildings, particularly dwellings. We know that much of this destruction was in fact carried out by the victims themselves, in order to prevent the enemy from finding resources that could fuel their activities, and to avoid them being used to scale or undermine the walls (when they were adjacent to them). Moreover, the locals also needed to have a good view of the enemy, which meant that any obstacle that could block this view was likely to be demolished. Buildings near the walls ran the risk of being reduced to rubble in the event of a siege, if there was time enough to do it. This is what will have happened to some of the houses adjoining the walls of Oporto during the Civil War of 1319-1324 and, years later, during the Portuguese-Castilian war of 1336-1338<sup>34</sup>.

However, in most cases, it was the enemy that destroyed the dwellings of the settlements they overran, particularly those that did not have defensive walls. The fact that they were often built of inflammable materials meant that they would burn easily. All the attackers had to do was to set fire to them and then proceed on to their next target. Not even the churches, where many tried to take refuge from enemy violence, were spared, as can be seen during the 1296 conflicts with Castile<sup>35</sup>. Sometimes, whole settlements were completely razed by the flames, as seems to have happened with the Alentejo village of Assumar, which was burnt by the army of Alfonso XI during the campaign of 1337<sup>36</sup>.

### 1.2. *The destruction of lands and farming equipment, and the plunder of livestock*

In less well-protected settlements, the destruction of buildings was usually accompanied by the devastation of crops, fields and farming equipment, and often the theft or slaughter of livestock. For example, when the Castilian royal army was stationed near the walls of Elvas in 1337, Alfonso XI sent out various detachments to ravage the vegetable plots, vineyards and olive groves all around that stronghold<sup>37</sup>. Natu-

34 Cf. RAMOS, "O Poder e a História no Livro da Demanda do Porto de 1354", p. 66.

35 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, cap. 98, p. 173.

36 Cf. *Poema de Alfonso Onceno*, Est. 603, p. 155.

37 Cf. *Gran Cronica de Alfonso XI*, vol. II, cap. CCVI, p. 182.

rally, the armies would destroy or steal anything that could be useful to the enemy, such as livestock and crops, needed for food. Such actions were not undertaken at random; on the contrary, this was the most efficient way of creating supply problems, not only for the populations directly affected, but also for all those who depended upon them. However, this plunder and destruction of livestock, harvested crops and agricultural fields also created serious supply problems for the armies based in the area, and for the garrisons of the region that stocked their storehouses with provisions produced in the surrounding district. For example, an attack on the borderland village of Sambade, in Trás-os-Montes, not only affected the inhabitants of the village itself, but also the garrison at Alfândega da Fé which was supplied by it<sup>38</sup>.

But, in leaving such a swathe of destruction behind them, the armies also fulfilled another clearly-defined strategic purpose. As has already been pointed out by Christopher Allmand, the property of non-combatants was intimately bound up with the practice of war, as it was this that defined the fiscal basis used for taxation, which would ultimately finance the military operations. Thus, any attack upon the property of these populations would immediately lead to a reduction in that tax base and consequently, to a drop in income for the Crown and a weakening of its military capacity<sup>39</sup>. This can be seen in the various grievances aired in the courts: the complaints brought by the inhabitants of Monforte do Rio Livre in September 1338 that it was impossible for them to fulfil their tax obligations due to economic hardships caused by the Castilian incursions of the previous year<sup>40</sup>; and the problems of the residents of the region of Barroso, who in 1341 complained that they could not pay the rent owed to the king because of the destruction in previous years of their agricultural lands, their main source of sustenance<sup>41</sup>. Thus, underlying much of the destruction, which often seems excessive or even gratuitous, was a very concrete strategic purpose: to deprive the enemy of food and economic resources, thereby weakening and ultimately paralysing its military activity.

38 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 63v.º (de 15.Jul.1308).

39 Cf. C. ALLMAND, "War and the non-combatant in the Middle Ages", pp. 261-263.

40 Cf. *Chancelaria de D. Afonso IV* [Ch.DA], doc. n.º 250, pp. 382-384.

41 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. III, doc. n.º 295 e seguinte, p. 100 (30.May.1341). Cf. also IAN/TT, Gavetas da Torre do Tombo, Gaveta XIII, M 3, doc. 18 (24.Apr.1341).



But crops and livestock were also targeted because they were necessary to maintain an army in enemy territory and extend the campaign. Indeed, it was often the abundance or otherwise the lack of food supply that would dictate the course of a particular incursion or even the strategic objectives to be attained. The second Castilian campaign of 1337 bears witness to this. At the beginning of July, after having crossed the River Guadiana near Alcoutim, the army of Alfonso XI headed to Castro Marim, the main stronghold on the estuary of that river. However, the fortress put up unexpected resistance, which meant that the siege dragged on longer than had been anticipated. Eventually, the besiegers were obliged, through lack of victuals, to up camp and advance against Tavira, “a place of much meat and many vegetable plots”<sup>42</sup>, where they hoped to find the necessary supplies to enable them to go on with their campaign.

### ***1.3. The plunder of personal property and other abuses***

There is no doubt that there existed a distinct war economy, based largely upon the plundering and pillaging of enemy regions. All military activity favoured this activity, which, if all went well, might even yield wealth. Thus, the pillaging carried out during military incursions was ‘normal’ behaviour, whether by land or via the dangerous sea border. For example, during the 1296 attack on Lisbon, ships from the Castilian armada entered the Tagus estuary and captured various ships that were moored at Restelo, taking them away on their return trip, along with the cargo that the captured ships carried in their holds and which had not yet been offloaded<sup>43</sup>.

This kind of plunder was almost always associated with a context of war or heightened military tension and agitation for enemy soldiers. For this reason, it is perhaps worthwhile to look at the other side of the coin, as many such abuses suffered by the borderland populations were perpetrated by the ones that people expected to protect them against the enemy.

It appears that in most cases, these excesses were connected with the practice of *apostatadoria*, which was the right of the most important members of society to install themselves in any man’s home. In fact, many of the complaints recorded by the sources (perhaps because

42 Cf. *Gran Cronica*, vol. II, cap. CCIX, p. 190.

43 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, cap. 96, p. 171.

they were successful before the authorities) concern the lamentable behaviour of soldiers and their commanders while stationed at a particular frontier stronghold or passing through those lands on their way to enemy territory. This was what happened in Trancoso, for example, which was a busy transit zone. The problems resulting from the need to accommodate so many people, such as soldiers, particularly during the periods of greatest agitation, dragged on for over two hundred years, as we shall see. In this context, there were a great many grievances, such those presented by the procurators of Lamego to the Courts of Lisbon in 1352, concerning the conduct of Gil Vasques de Resende, who had arrived with “very bad company and seized from the farmers the straw from the threshing floors so that (...) they had nothing with which to feed their oxen which they used to plough their fields, and the oxen all starved to death, and they took chickens and clothes and sucking pigs and breeches and fruit and herbage to live off and cut down their chestnut trees”<sup>44</sup>. The excesses committed by such entou- rages and armies in transit also involved the theft and destruction of farming equipment and goods found in the barns, wine cellars, ovens, wine or olive presses and other buildings where the troops were usually billeted or their horses stabled<sup>45</sup>!

Probably because these borderlands were so far from the cities where the king and courts were found, many felt free to commit all kinds of offences against the populations that they were supposed to protect. At the top of the list were almost always the alcaides. The alcaide of Castelo Rodrigo, for example, was accused in the Courts of 1340 of seizing food and other goods that he had refused to pay for. In this, as in other similar situations, the king did what was expected of him and forbade the practice once more, obliging the alcaide in question and any others that incurred a similar charge to pay for everything they had requisitioned from the populations<sup>46</sup>.

44 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1352, Capítulos Especiais de Lamego; published in CDA, pp. 143-144.

45 Cf. Cortes de Évora de 1325, Capítulos Especiais de Santarém; published in CDA, p. 15; and *Cortes portuguesas. Reinado de D. Pedro I (1357-1367)*, [henceforth referred to as CDP], Cortes de Elvas de 136, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, p. 60; Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. 21, p. 42 (de 15.Feb.1336); and *Ibidem*, vol. I, doc. 374, pp. 385-386 (1330-1336).

46 Cf. COELHO and RÊPAS, *Um Cruzamento de Fronteiras*, pp. 77-78: Capítulos Especiais de Castelo Rodrigo às Cortes de Santarém de 1340.

The military orders also committed similar abuses in the towns and castles under their jurisdiction. The county procurators of the Alentejan town of Avis protested against members of the Military Order based there who, according to a document dating from 1331, would seize meat from butchers, fish from fishermen and muleteers, and bread from the bakers<sup>47</sup>. These were, it seems, recurrent situations, as can be seen by the complaints brought against the authorities of the Orders of Christ, who were accused of seizing pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, bacon, wheat and barley from the villages in their area of jurisdiction (much of which was located in the eastern Beira region)<sup>48</sup>.

However, those whose goods had been destroyed or stolen were undoubtedly lucky compared to the victims of physical violence. Once more, this was committed both by enemies and friends, though the ones that suffered most were those that were captured and held prisoner; indeed, if they could not be rescued or bought free their fate was usually death.

There are constant (though undetailed) references to ‘civilians’ taken prisoner during armed incursions into enemy territory or after the conquest of a stronghold, particularly in the regions that were most exposed to the actions of enemy armies (i.e. those on the border zone). For example, during the campaign launched by Afonso IV against the region of Badajoz in the summer of 1336, the Portuguese detachments killed many people and took numerous prisoners, both men and women<sup>49</sup>. In response, the Castilians attacked first the Alentejo border zone, carrying out numerous raids and taking many prisoners<sup>50</sup>, and then weeks later, the eastern Algarve, where they also took a significant number of prisoners<sup>51</sup>.

The southern coast of Portugal seems to have been particularly attractive for such ‘manhunts’. Moorish ships would launch regular attacks in order to capture prisoners. The frequency of these raids and the large number of prisoners taken led the king to order the *corregedor* of the Algarve to appoint an emissary to negotiate the release of

47 Cf. IAN/TT, Ordem de Avis, M. 4, doc. n.º 373 (de 6.Jun.1331).

48 Cf. IAN/TT, Ordem de Cristo, Convento de Tomar, M. 80, doc. n.º 6 (de 16.Jun.1325).

49 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, cap. 154, p. 250; e *Gran Cronica*, vol. II, cap. CCVI, p. 182.

50 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, cap. 155, p. 252.

51 Cf. *Gran Cronica*, vol. II, cap. CCIX, p. 190.

the captured Portuguese (till then, this function had been performed by some Castilians, whose improper behaviour probably also contributed to the king's decision)<sup>52</sup>.

Imprisonment was, therefore, a possible fate for all who were most exposed to the action of enemy armies, particularly those living in the border zones. However, danger did not only come from across the land or sea frontier. In fact, the 'Wild West' climate of political and military instability in the borderlands was propitious to acts of banditry which, as José Matoso points out, did not always cease when hostilities came to an end<sup>53</sup>. This was probably the case with the band of thieves and outlaws who, in the reign of King Dinis, devastated the region of Braganza killing and wounding men and women, and kidnapping the children of the wealthier men of the council in order to demand a ransom for their release<sup>54</sup>.

But imprisonment would have been an attractive option when the only alternative was death. The sources record swathes of death left behind after the passage of armies, especially in the border regions where these incursions were more frequent. We might cite, for example, the entry of a Castilian force into the Alentejo border zone in 1296, after which it "mercilessly killed and captured many men and women from Portugal"<sup>55</sup>; or the "chevauchées" of Afonso Sanches – then exiled in Castile – against Portuguese territory in 1325, "burning and killing and capturing people"<sup>56</sup>.

Cruelty from one side was naturally matched by even harsher cruelty from the other: "And in this way the Castilians did to the Portuguese what the Portuguese did to the Castilians, whom they captured and sold as slaves to whoever would buy them, but some Castilians were such heretics and so devoid of humanity that, when they captured the Portuguese, they would fire at them with their crossbows as if in sport"<sup>57</sup>. This image was repeated many times, with slight differences in nuance, on both sides of the border, targeting both 'soldiers' and 'civilians'.

52 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1352, Capítulos Gerais, artº 16º; published in CDA, p. 132.

53 Cf. MATOSO, "A Crise de 1245", p. 69.

54 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 78v.º (1279-1325).

55 Cf. PINA, "Coronica DelRey Dom Diniz", , cap. VI, p. 245.

56 Cf. *Livro das Leis e Posturas*, p. 242 (4.Jul.1326).

57 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, cap. 97, p. 172.

The role played by ‘non-combatants’ in the war effort meant that the enemy armies saw them not as accidental victims or collateral damage, but as a target to be aimed at. The attacks would also form part of a policy of intimidation in which terror was one of the most effective weapons. But ultimately, in the context of war, even the most heinous acts were justified by the need to dominate the enemy at all costs.

#### *1.4. Depopulation of lands and settlements*

The constant threat of violence and plunder suffered by border communities, combined with the prospects of death or captivity, often led to depopulation of the area. Prisoners that had been released (and not everyone had that luck) were often reluctant to expose themselves to the same dangers, preferring to begin a new life in a safer place, preferably in a large walled town, as far from the border as possible<sup>58</sup>.

Whether depopulation was actually a strategic objective of the cross-border raids, it is impossible to know. It was, however, often a consequence of them, as occurred, for example, with the village of Quintela de Candelho near Braganza, only a few kilometers away from the castilian frontier<sup>59</sup>.

Though it took place all along the border zone, the problem was most severe in the castles and walled towns, a sign of their inability to defend the site. For example, the castle of Lamego, according to the procurators sent to the Lisbon Courts in 1352, was now abandoned and deserted<sup>60</sup>. Even some of the fortresses nearest the border suffered this fate to some degree; for example, the poor state of conservation of the castle of Castro Marim, recorded in 1347<sup>61</sup>, could have resulted from its constant exposure to danger, due to its proximity to the border (as indeed was seen in 1337, when it was attacked twice)<sup>62</sup>.

There was little that could be done to stem this trend. The authorities sought ways to avoid depopulation and attract new settlers to those places, as in the case of the castle of Alvor, which the Crown

58 Cf. COELHO, *O Baixo Mondego nos Finais da Idade Média*, vol. I, p. 33.

59 Cf. Arquivo Distrital de Bragança, doc. 019 P – v.º (de 18.May.1346).

60 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1352, Capítulos Especiais de Lamego, artº 25.º; published in CDA, pp. 148-149.

61 Cf. IAN/TT, Ordem de Cristo, Docs. Particulares, M. 2, doc. n.º 26 (4.Jul.1347).

62 Cf. MARTINS, “Ficou aquela terra estragada”, pp. 65 e 67-68.

tried to repopulate in 1314 by providing houses and other buildings, and granting fiscal privileges to anyone that would settle there<sup>63</sup>. We shall return to this matter later.

### *1.5. Disruption of work and public life:*

Penalized by the whole “monotonous dossier of tragedies”, in the words of Michel Mollat du Jourdin<sup>64</sup>, the inhabitants of those border regions most exposed to the effects of war also saw their lifestyles severely disrupted. This exacerbated the feeling of insecurity amongst the populations, causing them to lose faith in the authorities that were supposed to protect them but who seemed indifferent or powerless to stop such actions. There would, therefore, have been many who, like the prisoners released by Alfonso XI at the end of his 1337 campaign against the eastern Alentejo, “cursed the king [Afonso IV] (...) who had brought about that war”<sup>65</sup>.

One way of escaping the effects of war was to flee from an approaching enemy force as quickly as possible. This was what some of the residents of Elvas did in the summer of 1337, when they realised that a column of the Castilian army was advancing towards them. Amongst those that fled were some of the town’s most important dignitaries, including magistrates, representatives of the king and council officials. The council members that had stayed behind were furious at this and promptly deprived those officials of their authority, issuing an announcement, confirmed by Afonso IV, that “none of those that have remained here shall again respond to those that have fled, even if they claim the right”<sup>66</sup>. Thus, the war also brought about a renewal of the local elites, particularly those that held seats in the various administrative bodies.

But this was not the only way that war disrupted and altered municipal administration. During that same conflict of 1336-1338, a Castilian column attacked the region of Montalegre, destroying many buildings including the town’s council houses, where many documents were burned. One document that was lost in this way was the charter

63 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 86v.º (de 15.May.1314) and fl. 88 (3.Oct.1314).

64 Cf. MOLLAT DU JOURDIN, *La Guerre de Cent Ans Vue Par Ceux Qui L’ont Vécue*, p. 137.

65 Cf. *Gran Cronica*, vol. II, cap. CCVI, p. 183.

66 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 107, pp. 202-203 (20.Jul.1338).

of privileges, granted by King Dinis, which, according to the county procurators sent to the court of Afonso IV, had led to abuses on the part of fiscal agents<sup>67</sup>.

No one was spared by these disruptions. Even the religious authorities, which might otherwise have helped attenuate the disorder introduced into the lives of those men and women, had their job complicated by the fact that the incursions did not always spare the churches, as was seen in 1296<sup>68</sup>.

But it was not only religious and administrative life that was upset by war. Particularly badly affected was production, which, as we have seen, was disrupted not only by the destruction of agricultural fields, crops, livestock and equipment, but also by the temporary stoppage of activities due to the need for manpower for the armies and armadas. For example, D. Afonso, seigneur of Portalegre and landowner of the city of Guarda, forced many of the inhabitants of that city to join the contingents sent to support Álvaro Nuñez de Lara in 1286<sup>69</sup>. Similarly, the inhabitants of the town of S. Martinho da Gândara were often ordered to enlist in the forces commanded by the *fronteiros* of the Minho region<sup>70</sup>.

Along the seaboard, men were also subject to compulsory recruitment, such as the residents of Paredes, forced by the admiral, during the war with Castile, to join the armadas that were often organized there<sup>71</sup>. Sometimes, forced mobilization to ships would affect individuals who, in theory, should have been dispensed from having to serve at arms, such as “married clergy”<sup>72</sup>, the “farmers that live in Ribas dos Rios”, or even those that “have never been to sea”<sup>73</sup>.

But the war also brought other indirect economic problems. In such situations, the officers responsible for collecting the various taxes and levies imposed by the Crown (such as customs officers) were always drastically reduced at times of war. Thus, when Afonso IV, in 1336,

67 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 234, p. 360 (de 26.Jun.1340).

68 Cf. *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, p. 173.

69 Cf. BRANDÃO, *Monarquia Lusitana*, Quinta Parte, cap. LIII, fl. 125v.º.

70 Cf. BRITO, “Os Pergaminhos da Câmara de Ponte de Lima”, doc. III, pp. 181-184 (30. May.1360).

71 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 79, pp. 151-152 (5.May.1337).

72 Cf. Cortes de Elvas de 1361, Capítulos do Clero; published in CDP, p. 14; and IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 129v.º (9.Feb.1320).

73 Cf. Cortes de Elvas de 1361, Capítulos Gerais do Povo; published in CDP, p. 47.

leased to Vasco Gonçalves and Vicente Anes the right to collect tolls between Lisbon and Martim de Rates, he nevertheless included a clause stipulating that, if war should break out for a period equal to or longer than the contract, they would only have to pay part of the amount initially agreed<sup>74</sup>.

Moreover, while many people were impoverished by war, others found in these moments of great instability excellent opportunities for enrichment, especially at sites designated for the gathering of armies. Indeed, the arrival of large military units, such as that commanded by Prince Pedro (son of Afonso IV), was enough to cause a dramatic rise in the prices of staple foods, as happened in Braganza in 1350-1351<sup>75</sup>.

### *1.6. Indemnities, exemptions and rewards due to the needs of war*

In such a context, which, as we have seen, often culminated in the depopulation of border towns and villages, the Crown naturally sought out ways of fixing populations in the border communities and, where possible, attracting new settlers. Thus, a series of benefits, rewards and exemptions were granted to many borderland communities, particularly those that had most suffered the effects of war. For example, the residents of the Algarve town of Tavira, attacked in the summer of 1337, were granted royal exemption from the payment of the tithe on all foodstuff brought from outside Portugal<sup>76</sup>, as well as a substantial reduction in the taxes imposed on the sale of wine<sup>77</sup>.

The pardoning of debt and temporary reduction of (or even total exemption from) from certain taxes owed to the Crown might also have been a way of trying to mitigate the problems caused by war, as is clearly expressed in the example of that Algarve town. A similar thing happened with the residents of Monforte de Rio Livre, who had suffered serious damages through the war with Castile. They asked the king to reduce their annual rent of 600 pounds on the grounds that, should he refuse (which did not happen), the town would lose many of its inhabitants<sup>78</sup>. In fact, exemption from certain fiscal obligations was (at least

74 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 37 (de 2.Apr.1336).

75 Cf. Arquivo Distrital de Bragança, doc. n.º 026 P (12.Jan.1351).

76 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 134, pp. 232-233 (1.Sep.1338).

77 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 133, pp. 231-232 (31.Aug.1338).

78 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 250, pp. 382-384 (7.Sep.1340).



in theory) a way of preventing depopulation and of stimulating the re-settlement of less attractive areas, such as the border zones. Thus, King Dinis in 1295 dispensed the residents of Moura, Serpa and Noudar from the payment of levies imposed upon their mounts<sup>79</sup>. Sometimes, the king would emphasise that the privileges were due to the fact that these communities were located on the border, such as when he granted the settlers of Além Sabor exemption from the *fossadeira* (a fine imposed on anyone that refused to accompany the king on incursions into enemy territory)<sup>80</sup>.

In some places, only individuals that owed weapons and horses could benefit from these exemptions and privileges granted by the Crown, which would have stimulated the existence of well-equipped cavalry contingents (particularly important in regions closest to the enemy), while at the same time making life in those places a little less unpleasant by reducing the burden of taxation. Thus, in 1331, D. Afonso IV exempted all the knights (*aquantiados*) of Braganza from payment of the *maninhádigo* (tax paid by those that died childless)<sup>81</sup>. Of course, the concern with border populations was not always compatible with defence needs. Hence, in many cases, the monarchy chose to grant privileges that did not undermine the military capacity of the inhabitants of those regions and communities. It is perhaps for this reason that the knights (villeins and later *aquantiados*) of some border towns were granted exemption from having their horses, crossbows, weapons, clothing and oxen seized for the payment of debt, as was the case of the residents of Faro, Moura and Noudar<sup>82</sup>.

### **1.7. Emergency measures and special authorizations:**

Of course the measures described above were only superficially effective in attenuating the effects of war and lightening the burden of constant exposure to the possibility of enemy attack from beyond the border. Thus, it was necessary to resort to extraordinary measures,

79 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro II, fl. 117v.º (6.Dec.1295).

80 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 1, fl. 166v.º (1279-1325).

81 Cf. Cortes de Santarém de 1331, Capítulos Especiais de Bragança, art.º 5º: publ. in CDA, p. 55.

82 Cf. IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 2 de Odiana, fl. 296v.º (4.Mar.1303); IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 4 de Odiana, fl. 189v.º (de 16.May.1302); and IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 61v.º (16.Jan.1308).

such as the granting of privileges for those that provided services of a military nature. Of course this was an extremely delicate matter, as these benefits could jeopardize a town's defensive capacity or military organization.

As might be expected, it was the regions most exposed to possible enemy attack that most needed to maintain strong well-equipped contingents. This may have been why the Alentejan-born militia of cross-bowmen – which appeared between 1299 and 1322 only in the region south of the Tagus (with the exception of Guimarães) – saw the greatest increases in the number of recruitment units until the start of the reign of D. Pedro I. Cavalry contingents were also more necessary in border zones, which was why the limit upon the obligation of the acquisition and maintenance of mounts was much lower in those areas. This is shown by the fact that, in Lisbon, that limit was fixed at 1000 pounds per person between 1317 and 1363, while in certain parts of the Alentejo borderland, it was around 400 pounds<sup>83</sup>. Thus, the Crown ensured that the borderland settlements were in a position to supply a large number of mounted combatants for the local militias, royal army and above all for the contingents commanded by the *fronteiros*.

However, in response to the many complaints coming from the Alentejo (particularly Alter do Chão and Arronches), Afonso IV and Pedro I agreed to increase this amount to 500 pounds, a measure that naturally reduced the number of “lances” (mounted men-at-arms) available in those two locations, but which served to calm the annoyance of the inhabitants, in particular those who were obliged, through their fortune, to comply with this obligation<sup>84</sup>. A more spectacular situation occurred with regards to the county of Évora, where the courts of Santarém of 1331 or 1340 managed to increase the amount that obliged ownership of a horse from 500 to 1000 pounds<sup>85</sup>.

The need to ensure well-equipped cavalry contingents also led to the creation, confirmed by King Dinis, of societies of knights (*confrarias*) in some borderland regions. We know of those in Sabugal and Trancoso, founded in 1307 and 1309 respectively<sup>86</sup>, which adapted a model that had

83 Cf. MARTINS, *Para Bellum*, pp. 120-122.

84 Cf. Ch.DP, doc. n.º 639, p. 297 (10.May.1362).

85 Cf. Túlio Espanca, “Inventário do Primitivo Cartório da Câmara de Évora”, p. 179: Cortes de Santarém de 1331 ou 1340, Capítulos Especiais de Évora.

86 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 59 (de 5.Jan.1308); e fl. 71 (de 9.Dec.1309).

appeared in 1297 in the city of Beja<sup>87</sup> and which aimed, amongst other things, to foster collaboration and mutual assistance between members, particularly as regards the acquisition of acquisition of horses.

Of course none of these measures in fact made the ownership of arms and a horse more attractive; thus, complementary ways of achieving that aim had to be found in order to ensure the maintenance of an armed population that could be counted on when needed. Authorization to bear arms (a particularly attractive privilege), granted in 1293 to the residents of Vila Real and extending to anyone that might come to live there in the future, was clearly a means of achieving that objective, while at the same time encouraging the settlement of that border town<sup>88</sup>.

But exemptions and special privileges granted to some border communities could also affect other duties related to the defence of the realm. For example, exemption was often granted from the obligation to participate in building and renovation works on the chain of fortresses running along most of Portugal's land boundary (*anúduva*). This would have seemed particularly attractive, as anyone constrained by this service had to temporarily abandon their professional activities. Perhaps this was why the charter of privileges of Monforte de Rio Livre in Trás-os-Montes in 1273 included exemption from *anúduva*, thereby attracting more settlers<sup>89</sup>. In some cases, the building and restoration work would keep residents occupied for long periods of time, as happened with the residents of Cabeço de Vide, who in 1337, in the middle of the war with Castile, were obliged to work for six months on the fortress of Noudar<sup>90</sup>. However, not even the Crown was always in a position to dispense whole communities. For this reason, sometimes only certain sectors of society benefited from these privileges, such as the "alcaldes" (magistrates) and clerk from the county of Guarda<sup>91</sup>, or the 10 notaries from Lisbon<sup>92</sup>.

Even in peacetime, the frontier zone was profoundly marked by the effects of war during the period considered here. This was because the

87 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 3, fl. 4v.º (de 28.Jul.1297).

88 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 2, fl. 53v.º (de 24.Feb.1293).

89 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso III, Livro 1, fl. 125-125v.º (de 4.Sep.1273). Published in *Chancelaria de D. Afonso III* [henceforth referred to as Ch.Af.III], Liv. I, vol. 2 (2006), doc. n.º 580, pp. 161-162.

90 Cf. Ch.DA, vol. II, doc. n.º 105, pp. 199-200 (21.Jul.1337).

91 Cf. *Portugalice Monumenta Histórica: Leges et Consuetudines*, vol. 2, p. 5 (s.d).

92 Cf. IAN/TT, Gaveta XII, M. 4, doc. n.º 3 (1.Sep.1302).

neighbour of today could easily become the enemy of tomorrow (as indeed had been seen many times before), and these borderland communities had to be prepared for that eventuality.

## 2. The scars of war between 1350 and 1450

Let us now look at the consequences of war on the Portuguese borderlands during the course of the next century, the last in the Medieval period. There were many open wounds in the economy and daily life of the citizens, and they were also extremely deep. Here we shall consider some different but complementary aspects, seeking to give concrete examples and allow the sources to speak for themselves, as they do most vividly.

### 2.1. *The destruction of dwellings*

One of the most predictable consequences of war was the destruction of dwellings. This was mostly caused by the actions of enemy armies, as happened in Lisbon in 1384, during the military operations conducted by the army of King Juan I of Castile. Proof of this is the fact that, a few weeks after the lifting of the siege, the Master of Avis endowed the capital with a series of privileges, which he justified on the grounds of the sacrifices made by the people of the city during the recent war, referring specifically to the destruction and burning of homes<sup>93</sup>.

But, as in previous eras, houses were often destroyed by the locals themselves in reaction to the military campaign that was imminent. For example, we know that stones from Lisbon houses were used to build the Fernandine wall around the capital, besieged by Enrique II of Castile in 1373. Finding these dwellings half-destroyed, the Castilian king burned what remained of them, reducing them to ruins<sup>94</sup>. In Alegrete, between 1384 and 1385, the residents from outside the city walls had to destroy their own houses during the war between Portugal and Castile and build others within the walls for their own protection. This was done on land belonging to the king, to whom they now appealed not to be expropriated<sup>95</sup>.

93 Cf. Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais / Torre do Tombo [IAN/TT], Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 56v.<sup>o</sup>-57 (12.Oct.1384).

94 Cf. IAN/TT, Mosteiro de Santa Clara de Santarém, M. 8, doc. 411.

95 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 118v.<sup>o</sup>-119 (3.Apr.1385).

More difficult to understand, though it was a common occurrence, was the destruction of houses by allied forces. This was what happened in Vimieiro in 1381-1382, when English mercenaries in the service of the Earl of Cambridge (an ally of King Fernando in the third war against Castile), angry for not having been paid for a long time, went on the rampage in the Upper Alentejo frontier region, where they had been stationed upon the orders of the Luso-British command, attacking the local population. According to the municipal aristocracy of Vimieiro, the residents of that town were “destroyed by the English” that had been stationed there, who took part of their property and demolished their houses<sup>96</sup>.

## ***2.2. The destruction of lands and farming equipment, and the plunder of livestock***

The demolition of houses was often accompanied by the destruction of cultivated fields or arable land. Numerous sources testify to this, so we shall only cite three examples from different parts of the country. The first concerns Vilar de Vacas (today Ruivães, Montalegre) in the extreme north of Portugal. A document from the Chancellery of King Fernando recounts a donation made to an individual called Gonçalo Rodrigues Araújo in compensation for lands that had been burned during the Fernandine wars with Castile<sup>97</sup>. The next year saw the indemnization, mentioned above, by the Master of Avis of the city of Lisbon for the sacrifices made and damages suffered during the siege of 1384, which amongst other things had destroyed the city’s vineyards<sup>98</sup>. The war against King Juan I was, however, far from over, and proof of this was the order given by the Castilian monarch in May 1385 to proceed to military mobilization in typically feudal manner, with a view to entering Portugal at the Elvas-Badajoz border. At the same time, Juan I ordered the archbishop of Toledo and certain knights and vassals to gather in Ciudad Rodrigo and, using the so-called “Beira highway”, to invade Portugal, devastating vineyards and fields, and generally causing as much damage as they could<sup>99</sup>. The Castilians were of course very

96 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 7v.º (1.Mar.1382).

97 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 66 (20.Apr.1383).

98 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 56v.º-57 (12.Oct.1384).

99 Cf. LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I da boa memória, Parte Segunda* [henceforth referred to as Cr.DJ, II], , cap. XIX, p. 37.

pleased to receive these orders from their monarch, especially as May (when the fields were well filled) was a very propitious moment for such incursions.

Not only houses and lands but also farming equipment fell victim to the armies. One document, brought to light a few years ago by José Marques, mentions a raid upon a farm in Santa Iria da Azóia (Loures, region of Lisbon) in 1381, perpetrated by combatants in the service of King Juan I. According to the report ordered by the Canon of Braga, the men, who were travelling in 87 ships of the Biscay fleet, not only burned down the archbishop's residence and other smaller buildings, but also destroyed five wine presses (knocking down the roofs, doors, and in some cases, even the walls of the buildings that housed them, and wrecking the presses themselves), the equipment in the wine cellars (vessels, vats, barrels, etc.) and even destroying the dovecote, old sheds, porches and doors of the production unit. In short, "there remained not one single building where rain did not gush in"<sup>100</sup>. Another document from a much later date was an unusual one in which King Duarte (1433-1438) confirmed a charter granted by his father King João I (dated 1413) relative to the walls of the town of Lagos. This states that, whenever there was war, an oven near the walls that had been leased to João Martins and his heirs and successors would be destroyed, for which reason the respective rent on it could not be paid; later, when the war was over, the usufructuary would have to rebuild the equipment and start paying rent on it again<sup>101</sup>. Clearly, war was a constant threat, even after peace had been signed, and the local economy had to adapt to it, especially in the more exposed regions.

Finally, let us look at the plundering of livestock, which in border regions was often the main motive behind enemy raids, particularly in areas of great plains, such as the Upper Alentejo. However, let us begin with an example from Trás-os-Montes. In 1381, the residents of Torre de Moncorvo complained to King Fernando of the damages suffered by them due to their proximity to Castile: the theft of livestock, burning of surrounding areas, etc. As a result, they managed to obtain some privileges from the monarch, justified on the grounds of services rendered by the

100 Cf. José Marques, "Devastações biscainhas na Quinta da Azóia (1381)", p. 191-217.

101 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Duarte, Livro 1, fls. 109v.<sup>o</sup>-110 (3.Mar.1435); published in *Chancelarias Portuguesas, D. Duarte* [henceforth referred to as Ch.DD], vol. I, tomo I, doc. n.<sup>o</sup> 662, pp. 406-407.

petitioners during the war against Castile<sup>102</sup>. Much more vivid is Fernão Lopes' description of the chevauchée of Antão Vasques (a knight from Lisbon, ally of the Master of Avis) through Castilian lands in October 1385. Antão Vasques did not arrive in the Alentejo in time to be included in the army of the constable Nuno Álvares Pereira who, in the middle of that month, fought the Castilians in Valverde (east of Badajoz, on the banks of the River Guadiana). Nevertheless, Antão Vasques decided to take advantage of his trip from Lisbon to the Alentejo and put out a proclamation in Évora, calling for anyone that wished to accompany him on an incursion into Castile. In this way, he gathered 400 footsoldiers, 15 men-at-arms, 20 crossbowmen and 40 mounted scouts. They left from Serpa, heading on to Aroche, Cortegana and Cortechã, and returned to Portugal afterwards via Ribeira de Chança (where they were forced to engage in a small battle against an army of 800 Castilians). Having succeeded in that conflict, they returned in triumph to Serpa with their booty of 4000 cows, 5000 sheep and 1000 pigs.<sup>103</sup> Another Alentejo county that was constantly at risk of enemy incursions for the theft of cattle was Mourão. In the Courts of Lisbon of 1439, the county procurators explained to the Regent [Prince Pedro: 1439-1448] that the town, being on the border, had to be constantly prepared, with men-at-arms and horses at the ready in peacetime, as well in wartime. Therefore, they added, when the enemy came to steal animals from the nearby Castilian villages, the men of Mourão were always at their posts, ready to respond appropriately, preventing the plunder and protecting the people and animals. As a reward, King João I, knowing that many residents of Mourão, not being vassals of the king, owned horses and arms of their own free will, endowed them with the privileges enjoyed by vassals<sup>104</sup>.

### ***2.3. The plunder of personal property and other abuses***

A third calamity inevitably brought by war was the loss of personal property and personal abuses and ill-treatment of all kinds. Once more, the main culprit was the old right of *aposentadoria*, which served as a pretext for many excesses. Let us look at the case of the Beira village of Trancoso, which Castilians would always pass through when they invaded Portugal

102 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 26v.º (24.Dec.1381).

103 Cf. LOPES, Cr. DJ, II, caps. LIX e LX, pp. 144-149.

104 Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Mourão, art.º 2.º: Coimbra, IHES, Colecção de Cortes, fl. 261.

via the “Beira highway”. In 1365, D. Pedro I had to deal with problems between the population of Trancoso and the Portuguese knights and squires that often passed through there on their way to and from the border<sup>105</sup>. In the same year, the king was obliged to order that, in Trancoso, the practice of *apostatadoria* was also borne by Jews, who were numerous and very rich, and not only by the *homens-bons* (most wealthy, respected and honoured members of the community) who had horses and arms to be used in service of the king<sup>106</sup>. Further north, there was the town of Chaves, which appealed to King Fernando for help in 1380, alleging that it was being depopulated due to the abuses of *apostatadoria* committed there<sup>107</sup>.

These cases are important because they help us to understand the ease with which the *coudéis*, *fronteiros* and *fronteiros-mores* took advantage of their presence (and exceptional powers) in the borderland regions in the context of war. Documentation from the Lisbon Courts of 1371 indicates, for example, that during the Fernandine wars, in places where the king had placed *fronteiros*, the *coudéis* avoided dispatching the troops of the *fronteiro* to the towns and villages where a guard was to be set up, but instead sent the resident populations of other villages, so that they could then take over their houses and property<sup>108</sup>.

One of the laws of war involved the pillaging of enemy territory. All medieval armies practised it, including those from Portugal. During the siege of Chaves in the early months of 1386, King João I often ordered certain detachments out on food raids to the other side of the border. Fernão Lopes reports that, during the course of these foraging expeditions, they would go some 8 to 10 leagues into Galician territory with good captains guarding their many mules (some 2000 each time). They would then return laden with bread, meat, chestnuts, walnuts, wine and other foodstuffs extorted from the residents of those locations<sup>109</sup>. The other side of the coin was obviously the pillaging of Portuguese territory by the Castilians. In 1453, the inhabitants of Moura complained bitterly of this<sup>110</sup>.

105 Cf. IAN/TT, *Leitura Nova*, Livro 1 da Beira, fl. 208v.º (1.Feb.1365).

106 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, fl. 106 (1.Feb.1365). Published in *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, D. Pedro I [henceforth referred to as Ch.DP], doc. n.º 978, pp. 457-458.

107 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 2, fl. 70v.º (26.Aug.1380).

108 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1371, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 42.º; publ. in CDF, I, p. 35.

109 Cf. LOPES, Cr.DJ, II, cap. LXV, pp. 155-156.

110 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 3, fl. 34v.º (1.Mar.1453).



On the southern coast, the residents of the town of Tavira also complained to the Regent in 1442 that certain ships and other armed vessels from Seville would cruise along the Algarve coast in search of Portuguese boats transporting bread to feed the residents of the kingdom. This led to the closing of the ports, which would certainly have resulted in a shortage of bread in the territory. For this reason, the county of Tavira, with the authorization of the chief *fronteiro*, decided to contract a loan and use it to equip some boats, which would disarm and drive away the Sevillian ships. They now asked the Regent to order the payment of that money that had been so well used<sup>111</sup>.

Stranger than this was when the populations were pillaged in their homes by their allies. As has already been mentioned, this was what happened to the populations of the Upper Alentejo in 1381-1382, thanks to the presence of mercenary troops of the Earl of Cambridge. According to the Fernão Lopes' report (drawn up around 1440), the disturbances and impositions acquired completely unprecedented proportions. As they had not been paid, and with the war stopped for long months, the English began to pillage, mistreat people and rape women as if they were their enemies. The destruction and stealing continued, with great loss of foodstuffs. The numbers of murders and rapes multiplied, particularly in the area of Vila Viçosa and Vimieiro. These mercenaries in revolt even fought the Portuguese settlements of Borba, Monsaraz and Avis, and tried to scale the castle of Évora-Monte! Fernão Lopes explains that the matter acquired such proportions that the local people began to react and kill these adversaries in their dozens, in bread ovens, and using any means at their disposal, to the extent that they destroyed almost a third of them<sup>112</sup>.

A final aspect had to do with the forced requisition of goods in order to prepare fleets for large-scale military operations. As these goods were generally unpaid for, this too could be seen as a form of pillaging, in this case organized and managed by the Crown itself. This was what happened when the armada was being prepared for the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, and again in the following reign, with the armada of 1437 destined for Tangiers. These matters dragged on for years, without any solution be-

111 Cf. Cortes de Évora de 1442, Capítulos Especiais de Tavira, art.º 3.º: Coimbra, IHES, Coleção de Cortes, fl. 394.

112 Cf. LOPES, *Crónica de Dom Fernando* [henceforth referred to as Cr.DF], cap. CXXXII, pp. 465-467.

ing found that was remotely satisfactory for the populations concerned, as the Crown never showed any inclination of paying. Thus, it is scarcely surprising that, in the Courts of Torres Vedras of 1441, the influential procurators of the county of Oporto demanded that the debts of King João I and King Duarte be paid with regards to the items (weapons, materials and foodstuffs) that had been requisitioned for the armadas of Ceuta, the King of Tunis and the Canaries. It was to no avail. Prince Pedro replied that he would like to be able to do all that, but could not at that moment<sup>113</sup>.

#### 2.4. *Depopulation of lands and settlements*

Let us now look at the problem of depopulation, which severely affected the borderlands as a result of repeated military operations. This is one of the most recurrent themes in the documentation of the Medieval Portuguese Courts. As has already been noted by Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, Luís Miguel Rêpas and Rui Cunha Martins, amongst others, the procurators of the borderland counties over the course of decades perfected a clever rhetoric to persuade the Crown to yield to their requests; this involved the threat of depopulation<sup>114</sup>. There is clearly no doubt that war played a big role in the depopulation of those border towns and villages (particularly in the Beira, Alentejo and Algarve) that were most exposed to the regular passage of enemy armies and which had little hope of being able to rehabilitate their devastated lands and properties given the repeated nature of the attacks. Even so, we would like to call attention to the fact that the people's speeches in the Courts tended to be, as shown by Maria Helena Coelho, somewhat over-dramatized in an attempt to make monarchs aware of the risk of losing the border territories<sup>115</sup>.

With caution, then, we can observe some of the more interesting cases, from different times and geographical locations. The first example is from Trás-os-Montes and is reported by Fernão Lopes in his description of the campaign of Enrique II during the first Fernandine war. He explains that, learning of the Castilian siege of Guimarães, the

113 Cortes de Torres Vedras de 1441, Capítulos Especiais do Porto, art.º 6.º: Coimbra, IHES, Coleção de Cortes, fl. 324; Published in AZEVEDO, *Documentos das Chancelarias Reais anteriores a 1531 relativos a Marrocos* [henceforth referred to as DP], Supl. ao vol. I, doc. n.º 109, p. 139.

114 Cf. COELHO e RÊPAS, *Um Cruzamento de Fronteiras*, p. 51; and MARTINS, “La frontera medieval Hispano-Portuguesa (El punto de vista de la guerra)”, pp. 107-108.

115 Cf. COELHO, “Relações de domínio no Portugal concelhio de meados de Quatrocentos”, p. 285.

Portuguese king marched northwards to assist the Minho town and face his rival. However, the Castilian king gave up on Guimarães and instead went after Vinhais, Bragança, Outeiro de Miranda and other strongholds. It is at this point that Fernão Lopes comments on the ease with which Enrique II carried out these operations, explaining that in those months of August and September 1369, entire villages in Trás-os-Montes had fled to the mountains because of the war<sup>116</sup>.

Royal charters were relatively common that granted privileges to anyone prepared to live within the castle (or town) walls in the frontier settlements most exposed to war. For example, in 1361, Pedro I granted the residents of the old walled town of Serpa (on the left bank of the River Guadiana) exemption from serving in the Algarve and escorting prisoners, unless for the defence of their own town and surrounding lands or by special mandate of the king. With this, he tried to ensure that they were better populated<sup>117</sup>. Further south, on the Algarve coast, Silves was endowed by King Fernando in 1372 with a series of exemptions granted to anyone that resided or settled within the city walls. The royal charter explains that Silves was the most depopulated stronghold in the whole of the Algarve, due to plague, earthquakes, war and the regular manning of galleys. The people that lived within the walls (those that were already there and any future inhabitants) were declared exempt from service by land and sea, unless to defend the city of Silves or its surroundings. The king also warned the magistrates and other people from the town that they should not appropriate the bread, wine and other food that the residents kept within the walls, but should authorise the sale of those goods to anyone that wanted them. This privilege also extended to farmers that could not live continuously within the city walls of Silves because they had to tend their crops and livestock, provided they had residences in the city that were occupied and maintained, containing their property and provisions, which they could return to when necessary<sup>118</sup>. In the following year, another important Algarve town, Faro, received exemption to serve at sea, as it too was becoming depopulated as a result of many wars and armadas (which had caused many residents

116 Cf. Fernão LOPES, Cr.DF, cap. XXXV, pp. 115-117.

117 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, fl. 60 (de 15.Apr.1361); publ. in Ch.DP, doc. n.º 561, p. 245.

118 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fl. 117v.º (21.Dec.1372); publ. in CDF, I, pp. 137-138 (Cortes de Leiria de 1372, Capítulos Especiais de Silves, art.º único).

to leave for Castile, leaving others undefended)<sup>119</sup>. In the far north of the kingdom, there were comparable situations. In 1376, Chaves received all the privileges and freedoms that the Crown had already granted to the castle of Guimarães, to better populate and guard the area within the town walls, which was essential due to its strategic position<sup>120</sup>. In 1414 it was the turn of Outeiro de Miranda to receive from King João I exemption from taxation for residents that made their homes within the town walls, which had just been built, in order to safeguard the respective settlement<sup>121</sup>. Therefore, whatever the geographic position or the reign, the concern was always the same: to reinforce the fixed defensive structures of the most exposed border towns and ensure that they were well-populated and therefore well-defended when the moment arrived.

In some cases, documentation does not refer to the construction or settlement of walled towns and castles, but reveals the same anxiety about the depopulation of border communities. For example Sortelha in 1377 was granted privileges by King Fernando for the settlement of the town, which had become quite depopulated<sup>122</sup>. Similarly, the Alentejo village of Vera Cruz de Marmelar (around 50 km from the frontier but accessible in little over a day across the vast Alentejo plain) had the right to a special privilege: In 1397, in order to ensure its population, King João I granted 20 residents exemption from the obligations to own horses and arms, keep guard over the city walls, escort prisoners or money, and serve in the *anúduvas* (i.e. in works on the walls) of Viana do Alentejo<sup>123</sup>. The same monarch endowed Caminha in 1401, because it was depopulated and was on the frontier with Galicia (region of La Guardia): In order to attract 100 new residents to the stronghold, the king promised exemption from serving at land or sea outside the town, and also from being posted as *galientes ou vintaneiros* (i.e. from serving in the navy in war time) or as crossbowmen<sup>124</sup>.

More unusual was the request from the procurators of the borderland town of Elvas to the Courts of Lisbon in 1412: They asked that up to 100 settlers from the villages of Alcáçova and Corujeira be exempt from

119 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fl. 127v.º (15.Jun.1373).

120 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fls. 186-186v.º (de 28.Jan.1376).

121 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 3, fls. 170-170v.º (de 26.Jul.1414).

122 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 2, fl. 19 (de 11.Oct.1377).

123 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fls. 152v.º-153 (de 5.May.1397).

124 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fls. 177 (de 9.Nov.1401).

paying *pedidos* (extraordinary taxes, decreed in meetings of the Courts) and loans, and from serving in the *anúduvas* and other county obligations. This was because those places, the highest and strongest in the area, were very depopulated, due to the fact that access was very rocky and difficult<sup>125</sup>. Also adjacent to the border was the Alentejo stronghold of Terena, which had to be resettled the following year (1413) because it had been simply “depopulated and razed during the war with Castile”<sup>126</sup>.

Finally, let us look at what are probably the two most interesting cases of the Crown’s investment in the resettlement of dangerously depleted frontier towns. One of these was Castro Marim, in the extreme east of the Algarve, first seat of the Military Order of Christ. In the Courts of Lisbon of 1439, its procurators reminded the regent that the town was at the very limit of the kingdom and bordered onto all Andalusia; thus, it was the main “key” of the realm. They spoke of the work undertaken and the suffering that each year was involved in combating the Castilians with lances, so that “they don’t come fishing in our land”. Thus, the procurators asked that, for Castro Marim to be better populated, the king should exempt it from various financial obligations<sup>127</sup>.

The other case is Castelo Rodrigo (in Beira Alta, opposite the Castilian settlements of Nave Redonda and Almofala). In the Courts of Lisbon of 1459, the town’s procurators argued that the village lay at the “extremity” and that it had become depopulated through war and work. They explained that the lands that had always been cultivated were now abandoned. Therefore, when peace returned, some of the villagers, already 50 or 60 years old or more, set about restoring it, producing cereals and wine very successfully, without therefore having to pay tax on this produce (except for the tithe owed the Church). However, they had learned that some people wanted to reclaim those lands that they had cultivated. Alarmed, they asked King Afonso V (1448-1481) to defend them. Their argument must have been convincing because the king agreed to their request. Thus, it quite clear what must have been like to have lived in a border town in time of war<sup>128</sup>.

125 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 3, fl. 141 (de 13.May.1412).

126 Cf. RAU, *Sesmarias medievais portuguesas*, p. 81.

127 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Castro Marim, art.º 1.º: Coimbra, IHES, Coleção de Cortes, fl. 86.

128 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1459, Capítulos Especiais de Castelo Rodrigo: IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 36, fl. 163v.º (de 30.Jul.1459); public. in COELHO and RÊPAS, *Um Cruzamento de Fronteiras*, pp. 86-87.

## 2.5. *Disruption of work and public life*

Let us now try to capture another dimension of the effects of war, the disruption of daily life, expressed on various levels. We shall recount a series of small but painful stories, which together form an interesting jigsaw.

The first concerns a social support institution that had ceased functioning because of the war. This was the Hospital of Saint Elói in Lisbon, whose buildings (which were perhaps rather near the walls) had been destroyed at the beginning of 1373, during Enrique II of Castile's siege of the Portuguese capital. 21 years later, these buildings were still unrepaired, which led to them being appropriated by the council of Lisbon<sup>129</sup>.

A similarly touching case is that of the Cathedral of Guarda, which had to be destroyed during the Fernandine wars with Castile because it was outside the city walls, and would therefore have posed a risk for the city and for neighbouring towns and fortresses, if it fell into the hands of the enemy. King Fernando intended to rebuild it and in fact made some donations for that purpose. However, in 1435, we have news of a negotiation between King Duarte and the Bishop of Guarda, which shows that the works were unfinished<sup>130</sup>.

We also have information about various municipal documents (charters of privileges, registers, etc.) which had been lost during the war, having been stolen or burned by the enemy. There is the case of Alter do Chão, which, because of a betrayal by an alcaide in the time of King Pedro I, enjoyed a privilege that allowed its residents to bear arms throughout the whole kingdom. However, these privileges had been lost through the "needs of wars"; hence, in 1439, the town's procurators asked the regent to reaffirm them<sup>131</sup>. Also in these first Courts of the Regency, some of the Beira strongholds placed similar matters before Prince Pedro. For example, the procurators of Penamacor alleged that the Castilians had taken the chest, containing the municipal

129 Cf. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa – Arquivo Histórico [AML-AH], Livro dos Pregos, doc. n.º 205 (1394).

130 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fls. 163v.º-164 (de 25.Jan.1375); e IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Duarte, Livro 1, fls. 121-122v.º (de 9.Jul.1435); publ. in Ch.DD, vol. I, tomo 2, doc. n.º 731, pp. 19-24.

131 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1439, Capítulos Especiais de Alter do Chão, art.º 2.º: Coimbra, IHES, Colecção de Cortes, fl. 27v.º.

deeds and seal<sup>132</sup>, while those of Monsanto said that the same enemies had burned their privileges and deeds<sup>133</sup>. Twenty years later, the procurators of Almeida explained to King Afonso V in the Courts of Lisbon that their privileges and registers had burned in war time, and that they were therefore being governed by those of Castelo Bom and Castelo Rodrigo<sup>134</sup>.

From Trás-os-Montes comes a unique case of municipal documentation was rendered inoperative as a result of the war, described in a statute issued by King Manuel I in 1500. The king says that the council of Agrochão (in the district of Braganza) presented him with a charter drawn up by King João I, dated 1404, addressed to a judge in the town of Braganza. It explains that the county and residents of Agrochão had all fled in fear with their livestock and chattels when the nobleman João Afonso Pimentel had rebelled with the town in the name of Castile (at the end of 1397 or beginning of 1398). When this happened, a respected inhabitant of Agrochão hid the privileges in a cave on the hillside. When a truce was called between Portugal and Castile, the people returned to their town. However, when they went to retrieve the privileges from the cave, they found them “destroyed” or “ruined” by rainwater, to the extent that they were no longer legible... For this reason, they were now being obliged by magistrates to pay taxes and perform services from which they should rightly have been exempt.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, we also have reports of people having to abandon their jobs for long periods of time because of war. This was what happened with a notary from Viseu who was unable to practice for three years as a result of King Fernando’s military campaigns; for this, he was dispensed from payment of a professional tax due to the monarch<sup>136</sup>. In 1398, Estêvão Anes, a clerk, received from King João I permission to be paid despite having gone to war without arranging a replacement, something

132 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 2, fls. 17-17v.º. Quoted by COELHO, “Relações de domínio no Portugal concelhio de meados de Quatrocentos”, p. 266.

133 Quoted by COELHO, “Relações de domínio”, p. 266.

134 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1459, Capítulos Especiais de Almeida, art.º 3.º: IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 36, fls. 163v.º-164; publ. in COELHO and RÊPAS, *Um Cruzamento de Fronteiras*, p. 71. The procurators wanted to transfer those privileges into a charter in order to (as stated by Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho and Luís Miguel Rêpas) “recover, in the perpetuity of writing, their ancestral uses and customs”.

135 Cf. IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 1 de Além-Douro, fls. 29-20v.º (de 23.Sep.500).

136 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 75v.º (de 12.Jul.1383).

which – the monarch warned – he should do in the future<sup>137</sup>. However, there were also some men who, after the war, no longer wanted to return to their former jobs. This was what happened in 1385 with some farmers from Santarém who had become *almogávares* (scouts); aware of the danger, the recently-crowned King João I ordered them to go back to their fields, threatening them with the death penalty if they did not<sup>138</sup>. On the other hand, there were many other people that wished to return to their normal lives, but in order to do so had to recover particular privileges that they had lost in the wars. Amongst these were the carpenters and other craftsmen that served on the galleys and in the shipyards of Lisbon, whose various privileges were confirmed by King Duarte on Christmas Eve of 1434, just as his father, King João I and some of the monarchs from the first dynasty had also done<sup>139</sup>.

## ***2.6. Indemnities, exemptions and rewards due to the needs of war***

War generated great destitution that the Crown could not ignore. For this, it made use of indemnities, exemptions and rewards for the frontier areas that had been most harshly exposed to military hostilities, in order to keep those spaces liveable, motivate residents and guarantee their loyalty. Knowing this, people often played hard in Court meetings that were particularly tense or if the monarchs were weak (for example, when they had only recently taken up office or because of a controversial regency).

With regards to indemnities, the great example is Lisbon, particularly the charter, already mentioned, granted by the young Master of Avis on 12th October 1384, replete with gratitude and praise for a city that had effectively been the ‘military key’ to the kingdom, having stoically resisted a harsh land and sea blockade for over three months, personally led by Juan I of Castile. For the sacrifices made and damages suffered, for the houses that had been destroyed and burned, the vineyards that were devastated, the capital received from the Master,

137 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 5, fl. 35 (de 10.Sep.1398).

138 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 96-96v.º (de 2.Sep.1385); also in Cortes de Coimbra de 1385, Capítulos Especiais de Santarém, art.º 5.º: Coimbra, BGUC, Ms. 699, pp. 90-91. José Mattoso has already called attention to the fact that war was conducive to the formation of gangs of bandits, who were not easily absorbed when peace came: cf. MATTOSO, “A Crise de 1245”, p. 69.

139 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Duarte, Livro 1, fls. 103-103v.º (de 24.Dec.1434); publ. in Ch.DD, vol. I, tomo 1, doc. n.º 629, pp. 378-379.



with the agreement of many prelates and noblemen of the reign, exemption from numerous taxes, and above all, the promise of ample rewards if King João triumphed in the Succession Crisis of 1383-1385<sup>140</sup>.

Other important exemptions, also clearly motivated by war, were received by the Beira strongholds of Castelo Rodrigo in 1382 (residents were dispensed from paying tolls for the transportation of food for the duration of the third Fernandine war)<sup>141</sup>, Guarda in 1385 (whose inhabitants received exemption from tolls due to the proximity with Castile)<sup>142</sup> and Monsanto, in 1389 (King João I ordered that residents should not pay tolls or tithes while the war between Spain and Portugal lasted)<sup>143</sup>. In the plains of the Upper Alentejo, privileges were granted to the residents of Ouguela in 1391 to help them bear the hardships of war (they were dispensed from having to serve on land or sea, for being located in a town situated at the “extremity of Castile” that was already very depopulated)<sup>144</sup> and of Marvão, in 1403 (who were exempted by King João I from payment of tolls because they were “very poor because of the war”)<sup>145</sup>. In the Minho, Melgaço was exempted by King João I in 1402 from various payments (present and future), given the damages they had suffered during the war with Castile<sup>146</sup>. On the central coastline, there is the case of Torres Vedras, whose county in 1388 received exemption from the tax launched at the Courts of Coimbra, again in light of the great losses and damages suffered “in this war”<sup>147</sup>.

But the Crown’s policy of protecting and incentivising borderland communities also involved the granting of rewards for good service already provided in war. This was the case of Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta, whose residents were dispensed in the Courts of Coimbra of 1385 from the obligation to own horses against their will, taking into account the good military services they had supplied in a land that was a “great frontier” and which was now much “diminished”<sup>148</sup>. The same thing

140 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 56v.º-57 (de 12.Oct.1384).

141 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 9 (de 22.Apr.1382).

142 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fl. 115v.º (de 3.Apr.1385).

143 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fl. 42 (de 24.Nov.1389).

144 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fls. 59-59v.º (de 30.May.1391).

145 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fl. 188v.º (de 19.Jan.1403).

146 Cf. IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 1 de Além-Douro, fls. 254v.º-255 (de 9.Jan.1402).

147 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 5, fl. 2v.º (1388). We believe that the Courts mentioned are those held in Coimbra in 1385.

148 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fl. 115v.º (de 3.Apr.1385).

occurred, in the same year, with the Trás-os-Montes stronghold of Montalegre. At the plea of cleric João Longo, who conquered the town, the residents were exempted from the payment of tolls<sup>149</sup>. Barely six years later, King João I granted the county of Pinhel in Beira Alta a charter of mercy to hold a tax-free fair as a reward for good service provided in the war against Castile<sup>150</sup>. In 1394, it was the turn of Redondo whose residents were granted exemption from farmland tax (*jugada*), in consideration of their deeds during the war and of the fact that it was a frontier zone that had suffered much damage and destruction that had led to its depopulation<sup>151</sup>. Finally, in 1451, a privilege was granted to all residents of the Alentejo town of Alegrete in the mountains of S. Mamede, right next to Spain: they were dispensed from taxes and other levies for having been loyal to the Crown and for having always defended their town in time of war<sup>152</sup>.

As we can see, all across the country, from north to south, east to west, the monarchy was attentive and spared no effort to cultivate the loyalty and combativity of its border strongholds. This occurred particularly during the most delicate military contexts, which in this period were: the three Fernandine wars against Castile (1369-1371, 1372-1373 and 1381-1382); the Crisis of 1383-1385 (whose sequellae dragged on almost until peace was signed in 1411); and the Regency of Prince Pedro (between 1439 and 1448).

## 2.7. *Emergency measures and special authorizations*

However, it was not always enough to encourage the borderland populations and attenuate their hardships by granting attractive privileges. The open wounds caused by the activity of armies were of such magnitude that it was sometimes necessary to resort to emergency measures (which often scandalized local magistrates and generated tension between neighbouring villages) or to grant special temporary authorizations, relating to the bearing of arms, the realization of fortification works, the guarding of towns and villages or arrangements for war.

149 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 1, fls. 148.º-149 (de 20.Dec.1385).

150 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fl. 53 (de 12.Feb.1391).

151 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 2, fl. 78v.º (de 20.May.1394).

152 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 11, fl. 22v.º (de 11.Feb.1451).

As regards special authorizations, the most recurrent cases seem to be related with the licence to carry arms throughout the whole kingdom (or in certain districts), going against general rulings on this matter. For example, in 1360, the residents of Lagos received from King Pedro I authorization to bear arms “in the whole kingdom of the Algarve”<sup>153</sup>. The following year, the same king authorized all *homens-bons* resident in Serpa and its district that had good horses with which to serve the king to bear arms throughout the whole kingdom<sup>154</sup>. Two days later, the king’s Chancellery recorded a similar authorization granted to another town in the same region, even closer to Castile: the residents of Moura that owned a horse and arms for the service of the king were also granted licence to bear arms, given that they were in a “frontier zone”; however, in this case, the licence was only valid inside the town and its district. The document stipulated that the alcaide of the castle and the royal magistrates were required to respect it, unless the weapons were used at night or improperly<sup>155</sup>. As can be seen, the Crown negotiated, restricting the much-desired right to bear arms to those that had horses that could be used in defence of those lands on the left bank of the River Guadiana. King Fernando had, for the most part, pursued this policy from the start of his reign. In 1370, for example, he authorized the residents of Elvas to bear arms throughout the whole of Portugal<sup>156</sup>, and in 1382 satisfied the complaints of the residents of neighbouring Campo Maior, who alleged that the royal charter that entitled them to bear arms throughout the district was not being respected<sup>157</sup>.

In other cases, special licences aimed at ensuring that necessary work was carried out building and repairing castles and town walls. In the same time frame, there were cases of this kind relating to: Marvão – in 1361, King Pedro I granted residents not only the licence to bear arms in the town and its respective district, but also exempting them from serving in the Algarve and in fortification works in neighbouring

153 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, fl. 27v.º (de 15.Sep.1360); publ. in Ch.DP, doc. n.º 489, p. 196.

154 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, Livro 2, fl. 52 (de 14.Apr.1361); publ. in Ch.DP, doc. n.º 525, p. 215.

155 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, fl. 63v.º (de 16.Apr.1361); publ. in Ch.DP, doc. n.º 570, pp. 258-259.

156 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fl. 55v.º (de 15.Jan.1370).

157 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 62 (de 30.Mar.1382).

towns - this because the town was on the frontier and was depopulated (and “on the point of becoming more so”)<sup>158</sup>; and Alfândega da Fé (district of Torre de Moncorvo, in the jurisdiction of Trás-os-Montes) – in 1382, residents were dispensed by King Fernando from paying the extraordinary tax (*pedido*) decreed by the king, so that they could have the necessary funds to build three round towers that were much needed for the defence of the town, which was becoming deserted as the inhabitants were poor and had been robbed in the war<sup>159</sup>.

The duty of guarding frontier communities, many with castles or extensive walls, also required special attention from the Crown to ensure that it was effective while, at the same time, not too burdensome for counties with limited demographic resources. For example, there is the case of Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta, where people that lived within the city walls were dispensed by King Fernando from having to do service in other places, due to the frontier position of their town and the need to guard its castle and the ports on the River Douro (where, during the summer, crossing points appeared that were useful for the passage of Castilian armies)<sup>160</sup>. Similarly, in 1394, the villagers residing in the district of Vilar Maior (Beira Alta) received from King João I an important privilege: in wartime, all people and property would gather in the castle to help *velar e roldar* (keep watch over) the walls and guard the gates of the fortress; as a truce had now been declared with Castile, they requested exemption from such duties, which the judges and alcaides of Vilar Maior were reluctant to grant; the monarch, however, agreed that they should be exempted while the country was not at war<sup>161</sup>.

Another aspect of the special authorizations granted by the Crown concerned the obligation to own arms and horses, or the respective *quantias*. Let us consider some cases from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning with the Minho, in 1410, the residents of Monção that had good horses at the service of king and land were effectively granted the rights of vassals by King João I; this was so that there might be more mounted men, and therefore better defensive conditions in

158 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Pedro I, fl. 64v.º (de 9.Jul.1361); publ. in Ch.DP, doc. n.º 577, pp. 264-265.

159 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 35v.º (de 2.Dec.1382).

160 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fl. 62v.º (de 22.May.1370).

161 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 3, fls. 28v.º-29 (de 26.Sep.1394).

time of war<sup>162</sup>. In 1432, the king confirmed for the residents of Elvas an ancient privilege that restricted the holding of office in the county to those that owned a horse<sup>163</sup>. As alleged by the procurators of Elvas in the Courts of Lisbon of 1448, this was the city with the most horses in the kingdom; in time of war, when some eventuality occurred in some part of the region, the neighbours of Elvas could be helped precisely because of the many horses. Thus, Badajoz and other nearby places in Castile had always been *assombrados* (intimidated) by the number of horses in Elvas. For this reason, if the young King Afonso V renounced the policy of restricting the performance of council functions to those that had their own mounts, this would dry up the main source of horses in the kingdom<sup>164</sup>. A final example comes from the Algarve. This concerns Tavira and is dated 1442. Due to the problems experienced by residents in obtaining straw, barley and pasturage, the county procurators asked the Regent that those that were *aquantados* as having a horse should instead have a crossbow for firing and a complete suit of armour, being dispensed, exceptionally, from owning a horse<sup>165</sup>. This was a lesser evil: if they could not have mounts to defend the land, at least their offensive and defensive equipment should be reinforced.

Another kind of special authorization is recognisable in the documentation. We may recall the case of the crossbowmen of Cascais, whom the regent, Prince Pedro exempted from being called up to serve, unless by special mandate from the king, given the town's proximity to the coast, from where came many enemies that could be bad company<sup>166</sup>. As we can see, it was not only the land frontier that counted.

Let us now consider some of the “emergency measures” adopted. These mostly concerned the pasturing of livestock in times of war in the towns and villages closest to the frontier (and therefore most exposed). All the cases that could be cited come from the region of Entre-Tejo-e-Guadiana (i.e the Alentejo), as might be expected. They are all quite similar. We shall give only one example, from the Succession Crisis of 1383-1385, which had Estremoz as its scenario. The war in

162 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 3, fl. 119 (de 20.May.1410).

163 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 4, fls. 139-140v.º (de 23.Aug.1432).

164 Cf. Cortes de Lisboa de 1448, Capítulos Especiais de Elvas, art.º 4.º: Coimbra, IHES, Colecção de Cortes, fl. 115v.º.

165 Cf. Cortes de Évora de 1442, Capítulos Especiais de Tavira, art.º 4.º: Coimbra, IHES, Colecção de Cortes, fl. 394.

166 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Afonso V, Livro 25, fl. 62v.º (de 6.Nov.1443).

progress obliged the residents of the town and district to bring their livestock closer to the settlement; thus, they clearly “trespassed” and encroached upon protected lands, something that the local magistrates and rent collectors wished to avoid at all cost. But the owners of the livestock had no choice. If they took their animals too close to the Spanish border, they would lose them in a flash. Understanding the situation, King João I authorised the residents of Estremoz and its district to bring their animals to graze and drink near the town, even on the king’s lands, for the duration of the war, provided that they did not destroy cultivated fields, fertilized vineyards and vegetable plots that were there<sup>167</sup>. As Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho observes, “the interests of the livestock owners (...) clashed with the interests of the agriculturalists. It was sometimes difficult to please both sides”<sup>168</sup>.

Finally, we shall consider some emergency measures of a different kind. In books of the Chancellery of King Fernando datable to March-April 1383, we found a charter from this king which explained that, two years before, because of war, the cereal harvest in Castelo Bom had been very poor; for that reason, the king authorized the residents to take food from any city, town or village in the kingdom, particularly from neighbouring towns, without incurring any fines as a result<sup>169</sup>. Finally, it was announced in the Courts of Lisbon in 1389 that the clergy of the kingdom was prepared to sacrifice its tithes to benefit “the war that we are engaged in with our heretic enemies”, i.e. the schismatic castillians<sup>170</sup>. The scars of war affected everyone, and the least that could be done by those that did not have to fight or support the hardships and risks of life on the frontier was to help reduce those costs or heal the wounds.

## Conclusion

The geographic distribution of the effects of war over the period between 1250 and 1450 can be observed following the tracks of the enemy armies. For this reason, these effects can be detected a little throughout the whole territory: from great cities like Lisbon (besieged

167 Cf. IAN/TT, Leitura Nova, Livro 1 de Odiana, fls. 26-26v.º (de 8.Apr.1385).

168 Cf. M. H. da Cruz Coelho, *Relações de domínio...* (p. 278).

169 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 3, fl. 65v.º (1383?).

170 Cf. IAN/TT, Chancelaria de D. João I, Livro 5, fl. 3 (de 5.May.1389).

in 1372 and 1384) to small villages of the East, as Assumar, devastated in 1337; from southern strongholds like Castro Marim, attacked twice in 1337, to fortifications of the extreme north of Portugal like Torre de Moncorvo, wasted during the Fernandine Wars; from coastal settlements such as those on the Algarve coast, attacked by a Castilian fleet in 1337, to others in the interior, such as Arronches, target of a violent Castilian incursion in 1296. However devastating the effects of war may be, it is in the border regions that these effects are deeper and therefore more visible, as these were the most frequently affected areas, not only because their fortresses and settlements were clear strategic objectives, but also because they were permanent places crossed by the armies towards other targets.

And, as we have seen, the effects of war affected lives in the border communities of medieval Portugal in many different ways. Houses were destroyed, fields and vineyards devastated, essential equipment vandalized, livestock stolen, families threatened and abused, villages deserted, public and private life disrupted ... the wounds were many and deep, and reconstruction often took decades.

And this seems to be a common scenario both for periods of more intense and longer military activity, with armed actions being spread over large stretches of the border (such as between 1350 and 1450), and for those in which war was less prolonged and when enemy incursions had a more circumscribed geographically impact practically limited to border regions (such as between 1250-1350). One of its most visible effects and the longest consequence is undoubtedly the depopulation caused by enemy invaders (and one must remember that many settlements were repeatedly targeted), but also by the permanent exposure to opposing weapons.

But the very fact that military activity was particularly prevalent in these regions meant that those responsible for the attacks were not only the enemy forces, but also those who were stationed in those areas (sometimes allied forces such as the contingents of the Earl of Cambridge in 1381-1382) and from whom the local populations expected, above all, protection but from whom often got robbery, rape, confiscation of goods, and destruction, many times under the pretext of *aposenadoria*.

Conscious of this tragedy, the Crown sought to mitigate the evils, looking for ways to repopulate the frontier towns and villages by

granting exceptional authorizations to attract those that might be willing to risk living on the borderland, decreeing emergency measures in exceptional situations (tax exemptions, special permits to carry arms, among others). However, these means were precarious and not always effective. The monarchy depended (more than it would have liked) upon the loyalty of the local noblemen and royal officials, over whom it had no truly effective mechanism of control, a scenario aggravated by isolation, but also by the distance and the difficulties of communication between the center and the peripheries. Thus, it would offer favours, rewards and privileges to those that it believed could best contribute to the safety and integrity of the border territories, harshly punishing those that put them at risk. The documentation from the medieval Royal Chancelleries in Portugal is replete with charters issued in this spirit. But what can't be observed is, on the other hand, an effective and systematic set of actions against the abuses committed by these authorities, even when the complaints against their action regularly arrived at the royal court, most probably because the king was quite aware that these abuses were part of the price to pay for the security that these authorities and the forces under their command, nonetheless, conferred on those regions.

From time to time, in the general meetings of the Courts, the king would hear the grievances and proposals of the local notables, try to understand the true dimension of the problems and decide the matter to the satisfaction of both people and Crown. In all matters covered here, and many others that we have not had the chance to analyse – such as the construction of fortresses, their maintenance and surveillance (day and night, in wartime and peacetime), the jurisdiction of border communities, the conditions for the development of commercial activities, etc – the Crown sought a balance that was difficult to achieve in the context of recurrent war, which produced deep wounds that were hard to heal. Perhaps because of this, many of the problems in the period between 1250 and 1350 remain unresolved and continue to appear in the next 100 years.

The people knew what war brought, and when called to pronounce on the matter, did not mince their words. They spoke of a war that they hated and wished at all cost to avoid, as was explained in the introduction to this work: a war in which they were compelled to serve by royal officials, who often used force or threatened to detain relatives; a war



in which they wished to serve the shortest time possible, no more than the traditional six weeks so that they could return as soon as possible to their jobs or fields, or to their commercial activity (whether legitimate or based upon smuggling), because this was a source of prosperity for the populations and a source of wealth for the Crown. The king, whichever he happened to be, had to learn this quickly, once and for all. Or if he persisted with the war, he could not come complaining: ‘Is bread scarce in the towns and villages? Is labour unavailable in key sectors? Have the customs ceased to yield? Were the ports closed? Responsible for all this was the war that the king waged without the consent of his people’. Thus spoke the county procurators, curtly and crudely, in the name of the whole people, at the Courts of Leiria in 1372. They spoke well and told the truth. King Fernando had no choice but to recognise it. He backed down, agreeing that it was not their fault, that the kingdom had in fact been neglected and that together they would have to work out “how we can maintain our state and the burdens that we have in the Kingdom”<sup>171</sup>. These words were worth little, for war broke out time and time again. Perhaps, he needed to participate in the daily lives of his people, especially those men and women who, living on the border, had new challenges to face every day...

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171 Cf. Cortes de Leiria de 1372, Capítulos Gerais do Povo, art.º 7.º; publ. in CDF, I, pp. 127-128.

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