

# Chivalry in Medieval Portugal

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## Abstract

This article seeks to understand the different stages in the spread and development of chivalric ideals as a feature that marked the identity of the main socio-political groups in medieval Portugal. For this purpose, a diachronic approach is adopted, while, at the same time, a comparison is made with other European areas, especially the Iberian Christian kingdoms. The sources used for the writing of this study ranged from chronicles to genealogical literature, legislative compilations, chivalric treatises and diplomatic documents.

## Keywords

Knight; knighthood; chivalry; aristocracy; nobility

## Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo compreender as etapas de difusão e construção do ideal cavaleiresco enquanto marca identitária dos principais grupos sociopolíticos no Portugal Medieval. Para isso segue-se uma perspetiva diacrónica, mantendo igualmente uma visão comparativa com outros espaços políticos, nomeadamente os reinos cristãos peninsulares. Articular-se-á um conjunto diferenciado de fontes, englobando textos legislativos, tratadísticos, genealógicos e cronísticos.

## Palavras-chave

Cavaleiro; cavaleiros; cavalaria; aristocracia; nobreza

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In a letter addressed to his brother, King Duarte (r. 1433-1438), at the beginning of the 1430s, Prince João stated that the grandees of the kingdom could not be considered to be good men if they had not attained the honor of chivalry, which could be gained by performing an unquestionable feat of arms, under dangerous and even rash conditions (*Livro dos Conselhos de el-rei D. Duarte*: p. 47). The prince's way of thinking provides clear evidence of how, in the fifteenth century, the chivalric spirit was considered a fundamental benchmark, not only for the monarchy and the nobility, but also for some of the urban elites that wished to rise up within the social hierarchy by undertaking armed deeds and thus adopting a lifestyle that was associated with the aristocracy. This was, nevertheless, the reality that one faced in the late Middle Ages.

The relatively belated manifestation in Portugal of these chivalric values has already been underlined by both José Mattoso and Oliveira Marques (Mattoso, 1985: p. 116; 1993: pp. 152-154; 1995: pp. 117-125. Oliveira Marques, s/d: pp. 26-28).<sup>2</sup> However, Portuguese historiography has never taken a particularly exhaustive look at the main stages in the spread of chivalric ideals, so that all that one really has are just a few works that have centered their attention on the last centuries of the medieval period.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, no attempts have been made to explain the time lag that occurred in the manifestation of these phenomena in Portugal: either in relation to the territories lying beyond the Pyrenees or in comparison with the country's Peninsular neighbors.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to explain this gap, seeking to understand how this ideology came to be established in the western strip of the Iberian Peninsula. In order to do this, an attempt will also be made to understand what, at some times, restricted the development of this ideology, and what, at other times, helped to guarantee its consolidation. The study is divided into two parts. In the first section, which covers the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, the aim is to observe the role played by knights in the shaping of Portuguese society and the way in which the *Peninsular knighthood*, frequently centered upon towns and cities, came to adopt some of the typical features of *classical chivalry*, which had especially developed on the other side of the Pyrenees. In the second section, our analysis will focus on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, seeking to discover how the chivalric spirit became established as a distinguishing mark of the identity

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<sup>2</sup> Some foreign historiography has also shown an awareness of this situation (Flori, 1986: p. 35; Barber, 1995: p. 2).

<sup>3</sup> I am referring here to the studies by André Bertoli, Carlos Guilherme Riley, and Tiago Viúla de Faria, which are mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this paper.

of the kingdom's socio-political elites, and under what particular circumstances this happened.

### I. Twelfth to thirteenth centuries: the rise of the knighthood

In Portugal, it was only towards the end of the twelfth century, and above all in the following century, that the term *miles* began to take on a double meaning, being used simultaneously to designate a warrior who fought on horseback and an individual who belonged to the nobility (Mattoso, 1985b: pp. 171-178; 1995: pp. 117-125; 1997: pp. 149-150). Until then, the predominant acceptance of the first meaning had given the impression that the knight's importance was due, most of all, to his military role, which was particularly crucial in a "society organized for war" (Lourie, 1966; Powers, 1987). The various municipal charters that were issued, especially in the townships bordering upon the Muslim territories and the kingdom of Leon, clearly highlighted the role that equestrian warriors played in the governance of communities, where they were considered to be equivalent in importance to the *infanções*.<sup>4</sup> The attribution of a superior status was due to their possession of weapons and a horse to ride upon (Reis, 2002; Powers, 1987). Furthermore, the technique of fighting wars by making greater or lesser raids on horseback was already a widespread practice, and was, in fact, commonly performed even by noble troops (Barroca, 2003: pp. 148-150; García Fitz, 2005: pp. 59-170; Martins, 2014: pp. 338-360).

It can therefore be inferred that, in the society existing at the time of the Reconquest, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the functional dimension of chivalry was highly important. The apparent social fluidity in the border region, paving the way for the upward progression of those who devoted themselves to launching attacks in enemy territory, shows that the war had become a mechanism for personal enrichment and social promotion. In fact, both this martial role and the actual fighting on horseback were not the exclusive preserve of the nobility (Barroca, 2003: pp. 87-92). The territory of the kingdom of Portugal was mainly constructed through the alliance between the monarchy and the local urban militias and military orders, with the aristocracy having played a fairly minor role (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 2009: pp. 143-155).

By this time the aristocratic conception of the term *miles* had already begun to take root in other European regions (Barber, 1995: pp. 3-45; Duby, 1988: pp. 34-53 and 83-116; Flori, 1986: pp. 119-141 and pp. 223-248; Saul, 2012: pp. 7-20). In other words, one can see

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<sup>4</sup> *Infanção* was the name of an aristocratic category (nobles of the second rank) that was in regular use in Portugal until the fourteenth century.

that the chronological gap between Portugal and other European regions, in terms of the theoretical understanding of the knights' role, began at a very early stage, even though the role that such knights had played in the Hispania of that time had been highly significant. What may perhaps be considered different, however, is the way in which an apparently similar phenomenon was perceived. The greater social fluidity made possible by the Reconquest may have prevented such a rapid crystallization of the knight's noble status, since not all of them hailed from the environment of a socially superior family. It is even logical to admit that this dynamic of social ascension through war continued to prevail in the border regions until the conquest of the Algarve was finally concluded, in 1249. The charters that were granted to townships would seem to confirm this, since they continued to give privileges to men who possessed their own horses and weapons, while also maintaining a permanent incentive for the warlike facet of these communities.

The relevance of the *cavaleiros vilãos* may have played a decisive role in shaping the global ideology of chivalry. Since such knights owed their whole status to the fact that they fought upon horseback, it would be natural for them to use this image to prove their superior condition. It is not surprising therefore that the nobles should resort to other symbols and arguments to establish their own identity, even if they fought in a similar way and had a similarly bellicose mentality. In this way, it can be understood why it took such a long time for chivalry to become established as a superior honor and ideal, materialized in the form of a culture that was endowed with its own concepts, practices and mythology.

Even though there exist some data for an earlier period that might lead us to believe the opposite, one should stress that these episodes need to be interpreted with some caution. I am referring here to the formal investitures of the emperor Alfonso VII (r. 1126-1157) and Afonso Henriques (r. 1128-1185), the sons of two Burgundian nobles—Raymond and Henry—married to the daughters of Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile (r. 1072-1109). In these cases, the blessing of their arms on the altar seems to have served the eminently practical purpose of promoting them to a specific political status (Palacios Martín, 1988: pp. 156-165; Mattoso, 2011: pp. 54-56).

Yet the thirteenth century was a period of great transformation in Portuguese society, permitting the slow rise of an ennobled vision of the knight. First of all, as the Reconquest neared completion, there was a progressive reduction in the importance attached to the functional dimension of 'free' chivalry, such as that which was found in the border regions, while at the same time hierarchies were established and the perhaps more open and dynamic spirit of earlier times began to fade. In many townships, the former

knights began to be designated as *homens-bons*. However, and in particular in those municipalities that had for many decades found themselves at some remove from the southernmost *limes*, it is quite likely that the knights had become incorporated into the nobility, either through marriage (Mattoso, 1985: p. 133) or through their own definitive imposition within the local community (Ventura, 1985: pp. 31-71; Viana, 2012: pp. 61-81). Some twelfth-century charters were already beginning to draw a distinction between those who enjoyed this status *per naturam* and those who had been raised to knighthood in a new generation.

The thirteenth century should be considered as the period when knights definitively entered the ranks of the nobility.<sup>5</sup> For the first half of the century, this interpretation is confirmed, above all, by the diplomatic sources. Having begun to make their first appearance in the twelfth century, yet only truly ‘exploding’ in the thirteenth century, the songs of the troubadours also bear witness to the ennoblement of knights, who were now considered to be members of the aristocracy with full entitlements (Miranda, 2004; Oliveira, 1994).

It is quite likely that this process began to accelerate around 1248, the first year in the reign of Afonso III (r. 1248-1279). When returning to Portugal after his long exile in France, where he had been made Count of Bolougne and also where he had been an assiduous member of the court of Louis IX (St. Louis), the new king and his peers played an important role in bringing Arthurian literature to Portugal (Castro, 1983: pp. 81-89; Miranda, 1996: pp. 93-99; 1998: pp. 1562-1564). Towards the middle of the thirteenth century, such conditions underpinned the triumph of the *classical* conception of chivalry: this was the thinking that had turned the knight into one of the essential symbols of feudal society, the bearer of a characteristic ideology and a warrior inspired by a particular mythology, although this was not originally a specificity of the Peninsular territory.

Whatever the case, the reality is that this literary genre fitted the newly formed socio-political structure like a glove. In the fourteenth century, Nuno Álvares Pereira was a fan of the stories of Galahad and the Round Table (*Estoria de Dom Nuno Alvrez Pereyra*: Ch. III, p. 8), which it seems were greatly appreciated by the Hospitaller friars. In the fifteenth century, King Duarte had the books of Tristan, Merlin and Galahad in his library (*Livro dos conselhos de el-rei D. Duarte*: p. 207).

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<sup>5</sup> In a similar chronology to that of the other Peninsular Christian kingdoms (Grassotti, 1969: vol. II, pp. 49-69), Alfonso IX of Leon (r. 1188-1230) promulgated a law in which the sons of villeins were forbidden from being made knights. The *Fuero de Navarra* also imposed the same restrictions (quoted by Martínez Ruiz, 1944: p. 208).

But the most useful view of this hierarchy can perhaps be obtained through the extensive and extremely rich Portuguese genealogical literature.<sup>6</sup> Here, the knight is effectively portrayed as a *fidalgo*, as is proved by expressions such as “cavaleiros fidalgos” (*Livro de Linhagens do Conde D. Pedro*: vol. I, 36F9), “boo” or “mui boo cavaleiro” (*Livro de Linhagens do Conde D. Pedro*: vol. II, 43B3 and 43B5, pp. 10-11). However, such mentions relate to families who, despite the fact that they gravitated around the royal court, only in fact held an intermediate position in the hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> At a lower level were to be found yet other lineages, such as the Urrôs, who were referred to as “cavaleiros de uu escudo e de ua lança” (knights with a shield and a lance) (*Livro de Linhagens do Conde D. Pedro*: vol. II, 44T4, p. 28). Although they were considered nobles, it is understood that the expression essentially referred to those to be found at the base of the aristocratic pyramid. In some cases, these were lineages that enjoyed a merely regional expression; on other occasions, they belonged to the world of the court and were ready to rise up in the hierarchy through the granting of royal favors. Also living from the service of arms, one can also find “cavaleiros vassalos de rico-homem”<sup>8</sup> (knights and vassals of a *rico-homem*).

The main families portrayed in this literary genre dispense with the need for chivalric panegyrics. The legitimization of the place that they occupied was based on other arguments, mainly ones that were genealogical in nature. Nonetheless, certain concepts need to be clarified. In fact, some of the principles that would later embody the chivalric ethic were already being followed, since these were expressions that were peculiar to a feudal and vassalic society. This was the case with the importance given to honor in the thinking of the nobility, being something that was obtained through feats of a warlike nature.<sup>9</sup> The prologue of the *Livro Velho de Linhagens*, composed between 1270 and 1280, announced that the book’s intention was to tell the story of the lineages that, through the force of arms, had built the kingdom of Portugal (*Livro Velho de Linhagens*: prologue). In parallel to this, both the genealogical literature and the troubadour songs demonstrated a profound concern with loyalty, the exercise of power, violence and courtly love, revealing the contradictions and changes to be found in the society of those times. What can be understood is that, although these principles already formed an integral part of the

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<sup>6</sup> Produced fundamentally between entre 1270 and 1340, although there were also some reworkings made of this literature until the end of this century (Mattoso, 2011: pp. 267-280).

<sup>7</sup> Such as the Portocarreiros or the Cunhas (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 1997: vol. II, pp. 909-912 and 941-944).

<sup>8</sup> *Rico-homem* was an expression that referred to the highest level of the Portuguese aristocracy until the first half of the fourteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> To use the concept of Richard W. Kaeuper, this was the “worship of Demi-god Prowess” (Kaeuper, 1999: pp. 129-160).

mentality of the Portuguese nobility, and, in particular, of certain segments of the group, they had not yet been synthesized into the globalizing ideology of chivalry that had appeared in the meantime on the other side of the Pyrenees (Keen, 2005: pp. 42-43), and which would only later triumph in Portugal.

In any case, it is possible to observe a series of changes in the second half of the thirteenth century. On the one hand, the figure of the knight had been ennobled and had conquered its place among the membership of the aristocratic class. On the other hand, a process had begun for the *elitization* of chivalry. Without losing sight of the existence of the military segment that occupied the bottom rungs and the intermediate positions of the nobility, the representation of knighthood and its mentality began to be attractive for even the most powerful sectors. At the turn of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, the long reign of King Dinis (r. 1279-1325) proved to be an essential stage in the centralization of royal power. Among other things, the king sought to adopt all the cultural symbolism that characterized the aristocracy. Just like his grandfather Alfonso X of Leon and Castile (r. 1252-1284), Dinis was an active troubadour, and until then this cultural expression had been, above all, the voice of the nobility. But still symbolically, the king used a new image for his seal of authority, causing himself to be represented as an equestrian figure.

At this level, Dinis followed the political line of his Castilian grandfather, the “inventor of chivalry,” to use the expression of Jesús Rodríguez-Velasco (Rodríguez-Velasco, 2006: pp. XI-XXX).<sup>10</sup> Naturally, it was not a question of highlighting a social group, but rather of crystallizing its legal existence and ennobling it as a class. Until then, as Rodríguez-Velasco said, “no quiere decir que los ricos hombres y los otros hombres honrados no sean caballeros, solamente que no es la caballería lo que los caracteriza” (I do not mean that rich men and the other honored men are not knights, only that it is not chivalry that characterizes them) (Rodríguez-Velasco, 1993: p. 60).<sup>11</sup> Title XXI of the *Segunda Partida* described in great deal the role that knights played in society and the need for them to be nobles. Furthermore, it also justified the place that they occupied in the political hierarchy, determining what was to be expected from them in terms of their behavior, and how the ceremony of their investiture should take place (*Segunda Partida*: título XXI, pp. 178-192). Almost two centuries later, this title was transcribed almost

<sup>10</sup> On the reception and construction of the chivalric ideology in Leon and Castile, see also Palacios Martín, 1997/1998: pp. 79-100.

<sup>11</sup> In the article that is quoted here, the author emphasizes the importance of Alfonso X’s reign as a time when a view of chivalry was synthesized that included, on the one hand, the multiple senses that the word had taken on in Iberian tradition, and, on the other hand, an honorary and political dimension that, above all, resulted in trans-Pyrenean influences.

completely into Portuguese law: in this case as the *Ordenações Afonsinas* (*Ordenações Afonsinas*: livro I, título LXIII, pp. 360-386).<sup>12</sup>

Even though the legislation that had been developed in the reign of the king known by the nickname of “The Wise” only came to have any concrete application in the time of Alfonso XI (r. 1312-1350), with the promulgation of the *Ordenamentos de Alcalá* in 1348 (Rodríguez-Velasco, 2006: p. XXX). Furthermore, other texts written in Hispania more or less within this same chronology had exalted the importance and honor of the warrior on horseback. Ramón Llull wrote that, through their honorable deeds, they had become lords and administrators of lands, the arms of the law and defense, while at the same time underlining the need for everyone to be knights: from the emperor to the king, and even all the way down to the simple knight with a shield (*Livro da Ordem de Cavalaria*: pp. 18-26). Don Juan Manuel referred to knighthood as the most honorable estate among laymen (*Libro del Caballero et del Escudero*: p. 44).

In the early fourteenth century, the field was already more favorable for the emergence of chivalry as a global ideological paradigm that was the hallmark of the king, the aristocracy and certain municipal elites wishing to break through the theoretically tri-functional hierarchy of society.<sup>13</sup> The days of the original and early form of Iberian knighthood, free and even popular in nature, were numbered.

## II. Fourteenth-fifteenth centuries: the triumph of the *honor of chivalry*

The late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries turned out to be an essential period in the theoretical construction of chivalry, conceiving of it as an *honor*. In fact, it was no longer a condition that applied only to the local warrior of a township or a nobleman of small or medium rank. It was now an important element that identified *fidalgos* and those skilled in the handling of weapons, while also representing a status that had its own code of values, shared by all those who had been dubbed as knights, whatever their socio-political origins.

A new conception was now being disseminated, which was clearly expressed in the episodes and sources that now bear witness to them. This is how one should understand the importance that King Pedro I (r. 1357-1367) attached to the dubbing of João Afonso Telo and his entry into knighthood when he was made Count of Barcelos. The ceremony

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<sup>12</sup> A compilation of Portuguese laws, published between 1446 and 1448.

<sup>13</sup> The tri-functional model is described clearly in all the texts of a legislative nature and all the treatises mentioned so far.



began with a nocturnal vigil by the new count at the monastery of São Domingos, in Lisbon, culminating in huge festivities the next day (*Crónica de D. Pedro*, Ch. XIV, pp. 60-61). The difference, however, was that João Afonso Telo was not a mere aristocrat: on the contrary, he was one of the most prominent *fidalgos* in fourteenth-century Portugal (Gomes, 1995: pp. 64-72).

The significant increase in the number of reported dubbing ceremonies, the use of a specific terminology and the descriptions of epic feats were also part of the chronicles written in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The writings of Fernão Lopes, Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Rui de Pina all shed a new light on chivalry, describing martial feats in incisive detail, rejoicing in the victory and boldness of the warriors and praising those who behaved with sufficient merit to earn the right to enter this higher order. At the same time, a new lexicon appeared in the Portuguese sources. For the first time, one can witness the appearance of such expressions as “estado cavaleiroso” (chivalric estate), “ordem de cavalaria” (chivalric order) (*Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta*: cap. VIII, XIX and LXXXV, pp. 24, 61 and 230), and “honra de cavalaria” (chivalric honor) (*Livro dos Conselhos de el-rei D. Duarte*: p. 47). Furthermore, such important figures as kings now began to be included under the umbrella of chivalry, as when Fernão Lopes referred to João I (r. 1385-1433) fighting at the Battle of Aljubarrota like a valiant warrior, behaving like “a simple knight wishing to gain fame” (*Crónica de D. João I*: vol. II, Ch. XLI, p. 107).

Throughout this process, exogenous cultural influences continued to be important: not only those who arrived from the French regions, but also those that, in the late Middle Ages, were brought over by the English. These came, first of all, through the military alliance between Portugal and England, in the Peninsular conflicts in which the latter were involved (Russell, 2000), and which brought to Iberian battlefields men such as the Black Prince (Barber, 2003: pp. 192-206) and Edmund of Langley. It is important to remember that they were both the sons of Edward III, a king who was greatly influenced by the ideals of chivalry, the founder of the Order of the Garter and the victor of the Battle of Crécy (Saul, 2012: pp. 93-113). Secondly, influences of family nature must be taken into consideration, namely the marriage of King João I to Philippa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt and the granddaughter of the same Edward III. In fact, everything would seem to suggest that Philippa played a decisive role in the education of the so-called *Illustrious Generation* (Santos Silva, 2014: pp. 168-177), since she was imbued with a superior

cultural background, and, according to the sources, was highly sensitive to the chivalric culture.<sup>14</sup>

Completed in 1450 by Gomes Eanes de Zurara, the *Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta* had as its guiding thread the dubbing of the princes, stating that these had placed pressure on their father to organize a large-scale military expedition, seeing in the glory of victory the ideal moment for being knighted (*Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta*: Ch. IX, p. 29). Furthermore, it was under the orders of these men and their successors that the fifteenth-century Portuguese chroniclers wrote their works. This shows that, in the late Middle Ages, the royal court was the main center for the dissemination of this whole culture, the fruit of a fusion between chivalry and royalty that, to a certain extent, emptied chivalry of its original singularity as the expression of the men from the townships and of the ‘rebellious’ nobility that resisted the monarch’s authoritarian power. In the same way, the aristocracy was seduced into sharing its values with the kings, which was also a strategy for the political consolidation of the new ruling dynasty that had established its position after its victory at the Battle of Aljubarrota, in 1385. Chivalry began to be the common language of the privileged class, being materialized in the form of a code of values that was obeyed by all those who were dubbed: from the king right down to the most insignificant knight.

The summary written by King Duarte containing the points that were to be included in the sermon to be delivered at the funeral of Nuno Álvares Pereira, the constable of the realm, (*Livro dos Conselhos de el-rei D. Duarte*: pp. 225-229) included references to his warrior virtues, as well as his manifestations of loyalty and piety, stressing the example that Nuno Álvares had been for knights: by truly and loyally loving his lord the king, to whom he had always been loyal and obedient, and by living in harmony and understanding with everyone. Despite everything, it cannot be ignored – and perhaps it should even be highlighted – the fact that this is an idealized vision, belonging to a ceremony that was conceived as an instrument of royal propaganda. On several occasions, Nuno Álvares Pereira entered into open disagreement with the king and acted without the latter’s knowledge. The best example is to be found in the antecedents of the Battle of Aljubarrota, when the sources tell us that the constable abandoned the royal troops in order to engage by himself in battle with Juan I, king of Castille (r. 1379-1390) (*Crónica de D. João I*: vol. II, Ch. XXX, pp. 69-72).

Whatever the case, the important thing here is to analyze the broader details of the theoretical construction of the role of the knights, who by this time were fully integrated

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<sup>14</sup> This was the generation of the children of João I: King Duarte, the Infantes Pedro, Henrique (Henry the Navigator), João, Fernando and Isabel, who was married to Filipe *the Good*, Duke of Burgundy.

into a much more clearly defined hierarchy of powers. Hence, the importance that was attached by King Duarte to the constable's feats is always to be considered in keeping with his service to the king, never mentioning the extent to which his desire for honor and glory might run counter to the king's orders and even be at odds with the ultimate good of the kingdom. In the same way, the summary held by King Duarte consciously ignores the individualism that runs throughout the whole of the constable's biography, where Nuno Álvares is presented as a man who was always keen to perform resounding feats of arms, even if this meant disobeying his superiors (*Crónica de D. Fernando*, Ch. CXI-CXIII, pp. 433-439, Ch. CXXXVII-CXXXVIII, pp. 481-484; *Estoria de Dom Nuno Alvrez Pereyra*: Ch. X, pp. 19-21; Ch. XII, pp. 25-33).

This portrait did not clash with the *fortaleza* (fortitude) that was expected of knights. The prologue of the section that is dedicated to knights in the *Ordenações Afonsinas* begins by stressing the "effort, honor and power" that characterized them and placed them in the position of *defenders*, responsible for protecting and expanding the kingdom (*Ordenações Afonsinas*: Livro I, título LXIII, pp. 360-361). This is why Prince João said that the men of his estate could not be honored unless they achieved chivalry, and unless this was obtained after a clear demonstration of prowess. At this time, examples were evoked that had been told in the Arthurian romances, whose adventures had inspired a wide audience.

It was the profound inculcation of this mentality that inspired the warlike feats that took place in North Africa, beginning with the adventure of Ceuta (1415), so greatly desired by the Infantes. Some years later, in around the 1430s, it was the Infante D. Fernando who demanded to be given a similar opportunity to gain his spurs (*Crónica de D. Duarte*: Ch. X, pp. 512-514). It was not sufficient to organize great festivities in order to be dubbed: it was necessary to go into the battlefield, undertake a perilous deed and run the risk of losing one's life.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately for the Infante, his wishes were brought to an end in the ill-fated expedition to Tangier in 1437, which resulted in his being taken prisoner in Fez, where he died in 1443.

When he gave his opinion on the war in North Africa, Prince João placed it on a set of scales whose two weights were *wisdom* (*siso*) and *chivalry*. Wisdom told him that the war should not be fought, while, in the meantime, he lined up the arguments that sustained that position. Next, the Infante listed the reasons for the display of chivalry. His opinion led him to establish a clear dichotomy: wisdom and chivalry were, in the eyes of Prince João, two quite separate and incompatible things. The first of these told him that one

<sup>15</sup> Such as the situations that João I attempted to organize in order to make it possible for his three eldest sons to become knights (Zurara, *Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta*: Ch. VII, pp. 24-26).

shouldn't sacrifice what is certain in favor of the uncertain; the second, on the contrary, called for the taking of risks, even if they were truly rash (*Livro dos Conselhos de el-rei D. Duarte*: pp. 43-49).

The late Middle Ages in Portugal have bequeathed us enough testimonies to prove that this ideology was deeply felt and that it was taken literally by those who were familiar with it. Quoted as typical examples are the almost suicidal episodes involving the young constable Nuno Álvares Pereira, but also the somewhat risky wishes of Afonso V (r. 1438-1481), who is portrayed to us as a king "with a desire to do battle" (*Crónica do Conde D. Duarte de Meneses*: Ch. CLIV, p. 352). The most striking episode was the mounted attack that the monarch sought to launch in the Benacofu hills, in 1464. Ambushed by the enemy, the king and his knights retreated hurriedly, but not before D. Duarte de Meneses, the captain of Alcácer-Seguir, had sacrificed his life in order to protect the monarch (*Crónica do Conde D. Duarte de Meneses*: Ch. CLIV, pp. 354-355). As can be seen, such wishes did not always end well. While it is true that Afonso V escaped, although his salvation cost the life of one of the most illustrious Portuguese warriors in North Africa, others were not so lucky. This was the case with Prince Fernando, condemned to a long period of captivity until his death, but also with another famous Portuguese knight: Álvaro Vaz de Almada. After a life of adventures, spent serving Prince Pedro on his journeys across Eastern Europe (Martins, 2013: pp. 322-323), Álvaro Vaz de Almada, the Count of Avranches and one of the Portuguese knights of the Order of the Garter, was to meet an epic end. Following the end of Prince Pedro's regency, which had lasted until such time as Afonso V reached his majority and was old enough to reign, and the conflicts which duly arose from this, Álvaro demonstrated unbreakable loyalty to his lord and master. Both had sworn that, were one of them to die, the other would not outlive him, as did in fact come to happen in the ill-fated Battle of Alfarrobeira. After receiving the news of the Infante's death, the Count of Avranches threw himself into the midst of the enemy and fought until his death, after which he was beheaded and lay for several days unburied on the battlefield (*Crónica de D. Afonso V*: Ch. CXXII, pp. 747-748; Faria, 2006: pp. 61-86).

During the fifteenth century, the permanent warfront in North Africa became the setting for keeping alive the chivalric spirit. Kings and grandees passed through there, hoping to perform a great feat, as well as aristocrats of a lesser standing or even many members of the common people, inspired by their search for the honor of chivalry, an ennoblement, or just some material gains. The various chronicles of Zurara are full of such examples. Countless incursions into enemy territory are recounted, at the end of which new

knights were frequently made. These raids involved a mixture of “*honra e proveito*” (honor and self-interest) (Sousa, 1997: p. 368). Meneses’ chronicles relate the deeds of the captains of the North African strongholds, organizing heroic resistance to endless sieges and leading raids into enemy territory, killing and pillaging. These were model knights, rising in rank through the exemplary service that they rendered to the king’s cause.

However, just as or even more important than what effectively happened in Africa was the recording of these feats in written form. For, otherwise, one would not understand the care that the late medieval chroniclers took in narrating all of these episodes in such detail. The details of the battles and the heroic feats, crowned with the making of a new knight, certainly delighted those who read these accounts and the many people who listened to these stories being told at court: whether at the king’s palace or at the palace of a great lord (Monteiro, 1997: pp. 210-214).

## Conclusion

In Portugal, the term *miles* only began to gain definitive acceptance as a category of the nobility from the thirteenth century onwards. By attaching great importance to the functional dimension of knighthood, the society of the period of the Christian Reconquest ensured that the aristocracy was not the only class to enjoy the privilege of fighting wars on horseback. In the final analysis, this sharing of functions may have removed the need for adopting an image that might eventually unite nobles and villeins.

The rise of chivalry as a form of *honor*, endowed with its own ideology and symbols, took place gradually from the thirteenth century onwards, accompanied, among other things, by the reception of Arthurian literature, and contributing to the elitization of the figure of the knight, which had now become attractive even to royalty itself. These processes were consolidated throughout the fourteenth century. Contributing to this state of affairs were, on the one hand, the structural changes taking place in Portuguese society, and, on the other hand, exogenous influences, transmitted through the presence on Iberian battlefields of the most illustrious bearers of chivalric values (such as the sons of Edward III), as well as the marriage of João I to Philippa of Lancaster. In the fifteenth century, this spirit was simultaneously a cultural manifestation of the royal court, the ideological expression of a segment of the aristocratic group—knights as a “class”—and a distinctive mark of values that united royalty, aristocracy and some municipal elites, especially those from the townships in the center and south of the kingdom. Throughout this century, the

war in North Africa was a scenario that permanently fuelled the adventurous inspirations that defined the knight's way of life.

As both a way of life and a literary construction, chivalric ideals remained in vigorous health until the sixteenth century. They accompanied the Portuguese diaspora in the construction of the State of India and the adventures in Morocco, which ended in what was, both for the king and for the Portuguese elites, the ill-fated episode of Alcácer-Quibir. However, for the time being, the history of this long survival will have to wait for other *chevauchées* operations.

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