

Some features about the Orders of Avis and Santiago in the late Middle Ages: military interests

Alguns aspetos das Ordens de Avis e Santiago no final da Idade Média: interesses militares

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Abstract: The Orders of Avis and Santiago, well-known in Portugal since the end of the 12th century, have, in their initial formulation, an unmistakable military inclination. Participants in the *Reconquista* movement, along with close involvement with the monarchy to ensure the realm's autonomy *vis-à-vis* the kingdoms of Leon and Castile, it is interesting to observe the evolution of this relationship over time. In this case, we focus our attention on some aspects of its military component, with special emphasis on castles and their most directly responsible; the *Alcaides*, in the Low Middle Ages.

Keywords: Military Orders, Order of Avis, Order of Santiago, castles, Low Middle Ages

Resumo: As Ordens de Avis e de Santiago, identificadas em Portugal desde os finais do século XII, reúnem, na sua formulação inicial, um inequívoco pendor militar. Participantes do movimento da Reconquista, a par com um envolvimento próximo da monarquia para garantir a preservação do reino face aos reinos de Leão e Castela, é interessante observar a evolução deste relacionamento ao longo dos tempos. Neste caso, centramos a nossa atenção em alguns aspetos da sua componente militares, com especial relevo para os castelos e os seus responsáveis mais diretos; os Alcaides, na Baixa Idade Média.

Palavras-chave: Ordens Militares, Ordem de Avis, Ordem de Santiago, castelos, Baixa Idade Média

1 CEPESE.

1.

Not having developed works within the field of military history, I dare to address one specific dimension of theme in the way it is reflected by some of the sources that I have studied more closely, namely those regarding the Religious and Military Orders of Avis and Santiago in Portugal in the late Middle Ages.

Observing such institutions, as their name indicates, would obviously compel the historians to understand, in an enlarged meaning, both the religious and military aspects through a very accurate research. As for the aims of this work, part of an International Seminar based on *Motivations in Medieval War. A Comparative Approach Between Two Territorial Peripheries (Iberia and Baltic)*, I will focus on some aspects more closely linked to the proximity of these Orders with the Kings of Portugal, especially when such relation implies military commitments from both sides. Although the quantity and quality of elements known within Avis and Santiago in the late Middle Ages do not express sufficient information to build up a coherent theory or definitive conclusions related to the subject in debate, I thus consider these next words as an attempt to give notice of some examples which could help other colleagues to pursue their research on the Military Orders in Portugal².

However, in this particular case little information is available, it is obvious that the military profile of these Orders in late chronologies will have to be considered within the framework of their foundational tradition, where military aims were an undeniable characteristic of their nature (DEMURGER, 2012, p. 114-128). It is thus, worthwhile to share some brief comments on this aspect.

It is well known that, in their own core, mingled within the crusades in the Latin East, the Religious Military Orders (first of all, Templars and Hospitallers), although with assumed differences in what concerns warfare, ended to act as important providers of a strong military dimension (RILEY-SMITH, 2010, pp. 10-16). This is, most likely, one of the utmost familiar features of the theme, as many scholars have dedicated a thorough investment around it (v.g. NICHOLSON, H. (ed.), 1998, NICHOLSON, 2004; RILEY-SMITH, 2010). As far as their dissemination in different geographies, namely, the Iberian Peninsula or the Baltic, there are also many authors totally engaged with the theme and, within this group, Portugal in the western edge of the Atlantic Europe, does not contradict this tendency (AYALA MARTINEZ, 2007, pp. 21-53; COSTA, 1999/2000, COSTA, 2019; JENSEN, 2014, pp. 450-457, 462-469).

Here, it is true that already in the 12th century there are testimonies of the presence of Hospitallers, established at Leça do Balio, near Porto, around 1112 (COSTA, 2000, p. 97). Along the same century, those friars, as also happened in the East, already combined welfare with warfare, although the military dimension evolved gradually in this particular case. Complementary, the Order of the Temple, an order with very concrete military objectives since its foundation, as explicitly is laid out in its Rule (UPTON-WARD, 2006, pp. 136-137), receives, in 1128, an extensive territory³ in Portugal (COSTA, 2019, p. 275). Needless to say, that the aim of such settlement was to make the Order responsible for the safeguard of the land centered upon Soure, an important strategic point in the preservation of the *Condado Portucalense* territory, shortly after enlarged to the South, following the rhythm of the successes of the *Reconquest*.

Some years later, Portugal will welcome the Orders of Santiago and the *milícia* of Évora (in the future, known by order of Avis), between 1172 and 1175-1176, respectively. Both evolved from military brotherhoods to religious houses, of monastic inspiration; Santiago, as a Portuguese province of the main house in Uclés

2 Very interesting and useful works which provide us with the state of the art of the theme in an enlarged perspective may be seen in FERNANDES, 2014, pp. 17-39; AYALA MARTINEZ, 2018, pp. 179-188.

3 This historian identifies 43 locations where their presence is confirmed between 12-14th centuries.

and Avis, affiliated to the Order of Calatrava in neighboring lands. This double and almost simultaneous presence of these Orders was encouraged by the first Portuguese king, Afonso I, within an important phase of the process of the *Reconquest*. At the same time, and no less remarkable, Avis and Santiago will support the rising of the Portuguese monarchy consolidating its political independence in Iberia (CUNHA, 1989; CUNHA, 1991; BARBOSA, 1998, pp. 115-117).

Between 1112 and 1249, all these four religious and Military Orders followed the geo-strategic orientations of the Portuguese kings and dealt with diverse military campaigns in the territory. Under the existent possibilities, these Orders also acted as key role elements in the Portuguese border definition (COSTA, 2015, pp. 141-169), as, altogether, they owned extended miles of land, both where it was inevitable to develop a consciousness of alterity (between Christians and Muslims) and where the neighboring kingdoms of Leon and Castile need a constant and close surveillance. In other words, progressively molded by a set of interests manifested by the first monarch and his successors – who assumed an intense growing control over these institutions – the Military Orders earned an important role at different levels of support, but all aiming at the construction of a national identity.

Back in those dates, it is wise to underline the Orders' local organization⁴, and for our specific purposes in this text, stressing the role of the castles, more or less impressive (due to different kind of characteristics and location) (BOISSELIER, 2013, p. 487). As Monteiro wrote (1999, p. 22) «Portuguese castles were carefully disposed of, like chess pieces, set up to ensure the integrity of territories that were recovered at great cost». Of course, that within this scenario, the Military Orders had a worth mentioning importance.

Just to give some expressive examples, as many others could be pointed out, we call your attention to Soure, where a pre-existent castle was enhanced after the Templars received its governance in 1128⁵, with various improvements, *v.g.* two towers and the donjon. The location of the village was crucial to assure the defense of the region of Coimbra and this example may be followed by Pombal, Almourol or undoubtedly Tomar (BARROCA, 1996/1997, pp. 171-209). Also the Hospitallers, by the end of the 12th century, were already settled in the regions of Beira Baixa and Alto Alentejo, as the construction of one fortress in Belver⁶, demanded by the Portuguese king Sancho I, and their settlement in Crato region may attest (COSTA, 2006, p. 82).

Identical challenges were demanded to the Orders of Santiago and Avis (CUNHA, 1991; PIMENTA, 2001). Being Iberian Orders and having no international profile as the Hospitallers or the Templars, they will adopt a

concept that would mould both Orders during the first centuries of their existence, namely the notion of *continentality* (which clearly reflected the needs of a young kingdom to assert its territoriality within the Iberian Peninsula). This dimension was developed through Portugal's relationship with Islam, on the one hand (a relationship which was almost always violent) – and with the Iberian kingdoms on the other, which were reluctant to acknowledge the Portuguese king's autonomy (COSTA, FONSECA, JENSEN & PIMENTA, 2016, p. 144).

In charge of helping the defense in the Sado valley, Baixo Alentejo and Algarve, where most of Santiago and Avis' territories were settled, it was, indeed, their future performance and characteristics that occupied my research since some years now (PIMENTA, 1997, pp. 127-242; 2001).

4 It is possible to know several «cartas de foral» granted with the King's agreement (CUNHA, 1989, p. 186; COSTA, 2006, p. 84; SILVA, 2019, pp. 275-284).

5 *Documentos Medievais Portugueses*, Documentos Régios, doc. 79, doc. 96. On the Castles handed over to the Templars, see COSTA, 2019, pp. 208-216.

6 *Documentos de D. Sancho I*, pp. 112-113, dated 13th June 1194 (BARROCA & COSTA, 2009).

Along these mentioned locations, some examples of castles (regardless of its shape and the greater or lesser hardness of its structure) such as Almada, Arruda, Alcácer do Sal and Palmela⁷, Aljustrel⁸, Mértola⁹, Ourique and Sesimbra¹⁰ (Order of Santiago), or Alcanede¹¹, Juromenha¹², Coruche¹³ and Noudar¹⁴ (Order of Avis) made the difference¹⁵.

Disregarding the ups and downs of the *Reconquista*, and the different dates when these castles were handed over to the Orders (OLIVEIRA, 2019, pp. 294-296), some important structures were defined, and it was clear that a military presence of the Orders was a fact having in mind the collaboration with the monarchy in the territorial defense. Geographically located at the edge or *boarder line* of the successes of the *Reconquest* these religious-military institutions were in the right place at the right time to solidify their own positions¹⁶. Moreover, and at the same time, both the castles and their surrounding areas immensely contributed to a peculiar characterization of the landscape as well as to the territory organization in this epoch very much orientated by the King's will complemented with the Orders' collaboration.

At the end, all the four Military Orders performed, up to this point, a path, undoubtedly close to regal interests, reaching, with success, the emblematic date of 1249, when Afonso III led the conquest of Faro, in the Algarve. Beside other supports, the king could rely on the master of the Order of Avis, the Prior of the Hospitallers and the «comendador mor» of Santiago. There, in the far South of Portugal, a long and important period of the Portuguese history was closed: after experimenting different and progressively innovative tactics (BARROCA, 2003, pp. 148-158) the territory was gained; the Portuguese monarchy was far long recognized by its pairs in Aragón and Castile. And thus... the Algarve, the most distant horizon that the Portuguese could then dream of would expose ancient rivalries in the Iberia Peninsula: being Alfonso X king of Castile in 1252, this region (included in the Seville territory and thus in Castilian hands¹⁷), opened up other lengthy disputes played by different rulers and people in the years and centuries to come, especially in the domain of the Portuguese foreign policy (FONSECA, 2001, p. 79).

After the conquest of Faro, and although the history of the Military Orders would engage different paths, the challenge of accepting new feats would compromise times to come and would help us to understand a wide range of novelties addressed to these institutions. In this new framework, their military function is, indeed, one of the aspects to be taken into consideration. It would be, hence, compulsory to adapt their profile to new scenarios where military demands – although still prevailed, as stated, mostly with Castile, but also with the Muslims¹⁸ – will be intertwined with others related to the organization of the territory (clearly, this second dimension strongly supports the first).

7 TT, Ordem de Santiago, *Documentos Régios*, mç 1, doc. 4; TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fol. 176; TT, Ordem de Santiago, *Livro 172*, fl. 96-96v (Published *Livro dos Copos*, 2006, doc. 17, pp. 234-235).

8 TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 170v.

9 TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 172v and fl. 178.

10 TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 171.

11 TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 201.

12 CUNHA, 1989, p. 82, note 14. TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 201. Publicado *Documentos de D. Sancho I*, p. 29.

13 CUNHA, 1989, p. 82, note 11. Published AZEVEDO, 1958, p. 427. TT, *Ordem de Avis*, doc. 66, doc. 110; TT, Leitura Nova, *Mestrados*, fl. 202.

14 FONSECA, PIMENTA & LENCART, 2013; FONSECA & PIMENTA, 2017.

15 Some architectonical structures had, previous to be handed over to the Orders, a recognized influence of the Almoravid presence in Iberia (BARROCA, 2003, p. 115). See, also, FERNANDES, 2004, pp. 35-39.

16 The importance of receiving a castle is well explained by BARROCA, 2000, p. 346.

17 Cfr. the donation of Albufeira to the Order of Avis both by Kings Alfonso X and Afonso III (TT, *Ordem de Avis*, doc. 69, 70; TT, *Ordem de Avis*, doc. 111. CUNHA & PIMENTA, 1985, pp. 7-8). See also TT, *Chanc. Afonso III*, liv I, fl. 43v, published VENTURA & OLIVEIRA, 2006, doc.206, pp.233-235.

18 In 1340, a collaborative enterprise between Portuguese, Castilian and Aragonese kings took place in the Battle of Salado.

In this context, this last dimension by the end of the 13th century, although not new in the Military Orders daily life – it was present since the foundation of each Order – will appear in a much more visible way: castles, commanderies, communities, people and their revenues are, indeed, essential to define their action. It was thus expected that, the more the *Reconquista* was far away, the more the castles will have «an ephemeral military function»¹⁹ and will be quickly used as «poles of administrative organization (namely, fiscal)»²⁰ (BOISSELIER, 2013, p. 490).

But yet, some new options are to be considered, as time will compel the Portuguese realm to rethink the concept of the frontier (PIMENTA, 2015, p. 297; JASPERT, 2017, pp. 6-14) after all the expected consequence of a strong presence of the Military Orders in both western and southern Atlantic coasts and alongside the eastern territorial frontier with other Iberian kingdoms. Wide kilometers of land, castles and jurisdictional power over the population, placed these Military Orders in a very high level of competition with the royal power. It is true that recently, FERNANDES (2014, p. 17-39), wrote a remarkable state of the art about the development of studies on medieval military architecture, where many of the castles related to the Military Orders are highlighted. Luckily for us, especially by the hand of BARROCA (2001, 2002, and 2003) and MONTEIRO (1999, 1999a, 2002), it is now comfortable to understand the characteristics of their evolution, the resources in use, as well as the mechanisms undertaken within a military scope analysis.

It is now the time to analyze the actions taken by the crown to capitalize in its own benefit all these scenarios of *overlapping jurisdictions* (AYALA MARTINEZ, 2007, p. 562-ff).

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From our view, some thoughts on the military importance of these Orders in the late middle ages imply a very clear knowledge of some important features headed during King Dinis realm (PIZARRO, 2005, pp. 164-166). In fact, and although this monarch governed only up to the beginning of the 14th century (1325), some of his decisions will prevail essential to explain what was inherited by his successors in what concerns their relationship with the Military Orders.

It is rather impressive the way he insisted in having the Order of Santiago in Portugal independent from the Iberian province, changing the *status quo* assumed since its foundation at the end of the 12th century (BARBOSA, 1998, p. 116). Although this one was not an easy question to solve (PIMENTA, 2012b, pp. 389-406), «a new papal bull accelerated the separation process and, in 1290, an improvised college of Portuguese *Treze* elected, under the close supervision of the king, João Fernandes as first master» (AYALA MARTINEZ, 1997, p. 55).

There is no doubt for us to assume the king's awareness of the massive responsibility of this Order (and others) in the realm, mainly due to a very expressive and powerful territorial implantation. In 1297, using all the diplomatic mechanisms at his service, King Dinis signed a demarcation agreement with Castile, known as the Treaty of Alcanices. Significantly, the masters of the Temple and of Avis were present at the drafting of the Treaty, alongside the King (PIZARRO, 2005, p. 113). It meant, in fact, the end of one era, or, perhaps in better words, the beginning of a new one. The treaty successfully defined the eastern frontier between Portugal and Castile, and despite being long-desired, it will not prevent Iberian kings to find multiple reasons to disrespect it. This means that all the Military Orders, will have to be prepared to the challenges to come. This awareness explains why the king took different measures and attitudes which, as a whole, had the same objective of disciplining powers.

19 «une fonction militaire éphémère».

20 «pôles d'organisation administrative (notamment fiscale)».

If we go on observing King Dinis skills in this set of actions we may remind a successful request to the Pope to have a new Military Order in the territory: the Order of Christ, in 1319²¹. Although, at the first sight, it may seem an absolutely contradictory measure having in mind what we have just stated, this initiative, not only solved the succession of the majority of the Templars heritage in Portugal, as it allowed the establishment of a religious and military Order totally bonded to the Portuguese monarchy²². Also, in what Avis is concerned, this king clearly expresses his point towards the Order when he states that: «the order of Avis is mine as well as of the kings before me»²³.

At the same time, and in the context of a situation that was expected to be difficult for the western Christianity (the 14th century), it is understandable that in the first decades of this century, the masters of Santiago, Avis and the one of the newly Order of Christ had ordered new *Ordenações, Estabelecimentos* or *Definições*. Different names, one purpose: to know, if possible, with maximum detail, the structure, revenues and possessions of each one of the Orders²⁴. These actions, although instructed by the Masters, are not easy to be detached from a direct interference of the monarch. Just to add a recent example, LENCART (2016, p. 105) showed us that another normative script organized by the Order of Christ in 1326 «omits the text relating to one of the master's duties, namely, the obligation to ensure the defense of villages and castles», which is highly revealing of new relationships to come.

Other perspectives will point out the same intentionality as King Dinis political legacy was fully assumed by his successors.

If we now look to a specific set of documents from the Order of Avis, organized during the realm of Pedro I (1357-1367), it is known a very complete inventory of the assets of the order precisely organized between 1364 and 1366, after the death of the master D. Martim do Avelar. This charter²⁵ helps to understand the nature of the equipment kept at least in three localities administrated by the Order: Veiros, Alandroal and Juromenha and, at the same time – which is more important for our aims – contributes to observe how the monarchy insists in having accurate information of what exists in the core of the Military Orders, this time in a military dimension. MENDONÇA (2019, pp. 129-144), in his work on this military Order, mentions in detail the contents of this charter and his words advise us to consider, as knights of this Order of Avis, a number of c.40-60, an average which is accurate if compared with other author's proposals for identical institutions and epoch (SERRÃO & MARQUES, 1986, p. 223; OLIVEIRA, 2009, pp. 18-19; AYALA MARTINEZ, 2007, pp. 549-559). The data conveyed by this document is important also because it allows us to perceive all the existing military equipment, which we adapted in Table 1 with the items with more representativeness.

21 Bull of John XXII (19th March). TT, *Gaveta VII*, maço 8, nº 5, published, *Monumenta Henricina*, I, pp. 110-119.

22 The king even appointed to be Master of Christ, the former Master of Avis, a man of his utmost confidence (PIMENTA, 2016, p. 150).

23 «porque a ordin de Avis he cousa minha e dos reyes que forom ante de mim». TT, *Chanc. D. Dinis*, liv. 3, fl. 74. (CUNHA, 2009, p. 121).

24 Order of Christ, 1326, published *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, doc. 74, pp. 150-160; Order of Santiago, 1327, published BARBOSA, 1998, pp. 231-236 and Order of Avis, 1327, published OLIVEIRA, 2012, pp. 382-388. See LENCART, 2016, pp. 99-132 and MARTINS, 2018, p. 322-323.

25 TT, *Ordem de Avis*, n.º 595.

Table 1 — Veiros, Alandroal and Juromenha. Military assets

Name	Quantity
Crossbows	21
Iron shoes	3 pairs
Coifs	14
Horse saddles	16
Iron blades	50
Gorget	72
Big shields	136
Small shields	7
Shields	26
Spears	2
Bascinet	19
Helmets	5
Arrows	+2.200

Source: MENDONÇA, 2019, pp. 140-142.

Still during the 14th century, the same Pedro I proclaimed a law – to be applied to the whole kingdom – in which the importance and tasks of the *alcaide* were defined²⁶. It will be sufficient to mention that these men would be responsible for the safeguard of the castles and that they were allowed to carry fire weapons, to understand the king's interest. The attractiveness of the measure – it is good to remember that the realm was then in peace – corroborates the monarchy's intention to attract loyal collaborations. Also, it is not at all surprising that royal regulations aiming at the improvement of the castles were rather common. And again, the Military Orders, as guardians of many of them were no exemption: works on the castles of Albufeira; Mértola or Alcácer do Sal are good examples to illustrate the idea (MONTEIRO, 1999, pp. 125-132).

Soon, other decisions, never before imagined in previous times, will characterize, still during the 14th but mostly in the 15th century, as we will see, the relationship between the monarchy and the Orders. For now, it is sufficient to remind that king Pedro I (1357-1367) appointed the Master of Christ to be responsible for the upbringing of one illegitimate son, João, and that this same Master suggested to the monarch the election of the aforementioned child to the governance of Avis, what happens in 1364, disregarding any other options the friars might have (PIMENTA, 2012a, p. 164). This proximity between the head of the Military Orders and the royal family will be undeniable after 1418 and will last until 1551, when all the masterships will be incorporated into the Crown by the bull of Pope Julius II (PIMENTA, 2016, pp. 148-155).

26 The document is dated from 12th June 1359. *Chancelarias Portuguesas. D. Pedro I*, 1984, p. 6.

In fact, after a terrifying political and military crises in 1383-1385, when Portuguese and Castilians struggled in several battle fronts (*maximum*, Aljubarrota, 1385), it is expected that throughout the 15th century, with a regal decision to sail to Ceuta, with strong political internal dissidences and with an external war with Castile; hence the preservation of the defense of the kingdom was, as expected, impossible to be neglected. It is true that Aljubarrota was determinant to solve a successful accession to the throne of João I of Portugal, but the misunderstandings between the realms will go on in several manifestations, with some fragile truces defined in 1411 and with a slightly improved understanding signed in 1431.

This being said, we should not be surprised if in 1408²⁷, the castle of Noudar (of the Order of Avis) located on the South border with Castile, was at the core of the monarch preoccupations. In this example, the king's demand was addressed to other localities in order to have them contributing to the works needed both in that castle and in the stone wall. Later on, it was expected that all the fortresses were to be repaired in the border line of the rivers Tejo and Guadiana (1442-1443, MONTEIRO, 1999, p. 144). These few cases may allow us to apprehend an important characteristic of the liaison between the Portuguese Monarchs and the Military Orders underlining that it is, in fact, the *service* due to the monarch on different battlefields (real or expected), which should be truly valued and assumed as a key element in their relationship.

In the late middle ages, regardless the lack of sources with abundant information about the military capacity of the Orders, it is much more important to underline that their evolution as military institutions was being systematically shaped by the proximity to the king of Portugal. Unequivocal moments of this reality have already been detected in the central years of the 15th century (the famous battle of Alfarrobeira cycle) or, even, during the troubled period when King João II ruled Portugal (1481-1495). But, more and foremost, due to the military and expansionist features the realm gained after Ceuta, in 1415. All the Military Orders were attractive targets for an interested nobility, prepared to enrol «with royal policy and thereby being in a position to benefit from it». (VASCONCELOS & MENDONÇA, 2012, p. 391). In this formulation we find one of the best ways to understand what was really at stake in these relationships and, therefore, the most precious heritage that modernity has adopted.

Finally, another interesting feature that points out in this same direction may be found later on, during the master of D. Jorge (1491-1550), precisely a son of King João II, although an illegitimate one. And this other feature is directly given by the sources, namely the *Livros das Visitações*, organized under his patronage in the government of these two Military Orders. To order a *Visitação*, a periodic inspection to the Orders' heritage (foreseen by the rules and other normative texts) implies the surveillance of different levels, from the religious behaviors of the members of the Orders, the population around them and also the register of data of economic and fiscal nature as well as the preservation of the architectural legacy. If it is true that Avis registers 12 *Visitações* between 1515 and 1539 and Santiago more than 40 between 1510 and 1538, the availability of elements related to the military dimension is far much reduced. Facing these high numbers of charters, and although not all of them are yet published, much more was expected.

In most locations (for the Order of Avis: Alandroal, Alter Pedroso, Cabeço de Vide, Fronteira, Juromenha, Seda and Veiros, and for the Order of Santiago: Palmela, Sesimbra, Sines and Torrão), what is stated is the poor preservation of the castles and, in some cases, donjons and cisterns are also mentioned. In the set of references to armament, the lack of weapons and some old bombards complete the picture, as far as we have them in the sources during the governance of D. Jorge.

27 TT, *Ordem de Avis*, n.º 786. Published FONSECA, PIMENTA & LENCART, 2013, doc. 123, pp. 374-375.

Other level of interesting information is provided by the identification of the *alcaides*²⁸, those who, locally, represented the head of the order or the king. Although the realm legislation points out the king's privilege of their nomination, sometimes this could be undermined in favor of familiar dynasties traditionally related with the Orders. This is not at all unexpected, as in these late chronologies there is a clear identification within both the realm and the Military Orders.

Despite the importance of the military aspect that has always accompanied these Orders, the scarcity of data does not harm the interest of the theme itself, nor diminish the complementary collaboration they had with the monarchy. Indeed, if the death of D. Jorge in 1550 was followed, almost immediately, by the incorporation of the Military Orders in the crown, this signifies the importance that the king of Portugal bestowed to such institutions. Increasingly labeled with this proximity, the Military Orders will enter the early modern era, increasingly committed to royal policies and their members will not abdicate of such statute.

In the certainty of such collaboration, it is not surprising that, by the end of the 16th century, in 1578, King Sebastião, perpetual governor of the Military Orders, went to the Battle of the Three Kings, in Africa, with an army where all the nobility of the kingdom was present. At the time, a large part of that nobility held important positions in the Military Orders. For this consonance of interests to be possible, it was necessary to follow a complex path, as we have seen and for this reason, it is perhaps in the combination of various levels that an attempt may be made to understand the underlying forces around the Military Orders. As a result of all of them, it is better perceived that the Portuguese monarchy had no alternative but to express a growing interest in the control of these institutions.

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28 *Ordenações Afonsinas*, Livro 1, título LXII, pp. 350-360.

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