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The problem of billeting distribution in Renaissance Spain: absolutism, privilege, and local oligarchies

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ABSTRACT

The ever-increasing demands of war during the Renaissance caused rulers to continuously impose new taxes and exactions. One of the most unpopular exactions was billeting – the obligation to provide shelter to the king’s troops. The fact that billeting could be enforced despite widespread hardship and discontent has been traditionally interpreted as evidence of absolutism. In contrast, opposition to billeting tends to be regarded as a form of resistance to ‘despotism’. From this perspective, the ability of the monarchy to impose its demands in this matter and others is fundamentally reduced to a question of power dynamics between king and country. Some of the most popular sociological theories about the origin of the modern system of nation-states and their respective constitutional regimes base their conclusions on this type of assumption. Within this interpretative framework, an intrinsically anachronistic retrospective projection of the present paradigms of modernity can be found. This has led to the perpetuation of a stereotyped view of a complex topic. Billeting was not only dependent on strategic and material factors, but also on the inequality, hierarchy and legal compartmentalisation that characterised pre-modern societies. The objective of this study is to discuss the importance of legal culture and social values for a proper understanding of the problematic practice of billeting and, more generally, power relations in pre-modern times.

KEYWORDS Absolutism; local oligarchies; privilege; state-building; civil–military relations.

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The rise of absolutism has been associated with the establishment of standing armies. On the basis of this interpretation, dramatic changes in warfare since the Renaissance period have led to power being concentrated in the hands of rulers who could adapt to new military demands. The engine of this transformation was the so-called 'military revolution', which was caused by the rapid adoption of technological innovations that not everyone could afford. For some researchers, this explains the formation of the modern state and European colonial expansion. However, this perspective has been criticised for its simplicity. Although the impact of siege artillery, portable firearms and bastion fortifications is not in doubt, other types of factors must have also affected such complex historical phenomena. Researchers from different specialities have been discussing this topic for decades.[1]

In many fundamental aspects, the armies of the early modern period would have still been subject to the same constraints as in previous times: slow travel, high cost of transportation by land, limited availability of provisions and a limited number of truly serviceable barracks. Compared to military technology, logistics development was slow and inconsistent and,

[1] C.J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the military transformation of early modern Europe* (Boulder, 1995); C.M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400–1700* (London, 1965); G. Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1988).

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therefore, not revolutionary despite remarkable results.[2] The sovereigns of the time managed to sustain the mobilisation of ever larger military forces primarily by allocating significant resources for this purpose, either directly or through contractors.[3] Therefore, changes were more quantitative than qualitative. Compared to wars of previous eras, the greatest novelty was that soldiers during the early modern period no longer disbanded by default at the end of each campaign. Even after signing peace treaties, most soldiers remained at their posts to secure newly acquired territory, prepare for new conflicts, or defend against future attacks. Given the prevailing logistical limitations, the most effective way to secure affordable food and shelter was to stay in private homes. Therefore, the support of local communities was essential. As the standing armies grew so did the impact of billeting – the obligation to provide shelter to the king's troops.

The right to housing was a recognised royal prerogative. Since soldiers paid by the royal treasury were considered servants of the king, all those under the king's authority were obliged to offer hospitality. This duty was usually limited to providing free shelter, firewood, bedding,

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[2] M. Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge, 1977); and J.A. Lynn (ed.), *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western warfare from the middle ages to the present* (New York, 2018); F. Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495–1715* (London, 1992), 50–68.

[3] I.A.A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain, 1560–1620* (London, 1976); D. Parrott, *The Business of War: Military enterprise and military revolution in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2012); and J.D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign strategy, international finance, and domestic politics* (Cambridge, 2002). An investigation more directly related to our case study is described by J.M. Escribano Páez, *El coste de la defensa: Administración y financiación militar en Navarra durante la primera mitad del siglo XVI* (Pamplona, 2015).

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kitchen tools, salt and vinegar, although the specific requirements varied by location. In exchange, soldiers paid for food and other expenses. Few of these men had personal resources; for this reason, if their salary was delayed, as was often the case, the hosts had to offer credit, trusting in the future payment of the total accumulated debt (which did not always occur). The soldiers for whom credit was denied or unavailable were forced to seek alternative means of subsistence until they received payment. Some deserted their accommodation, others begged, and in more extreme cases, resorted to theft or extortion. The arrival of soldiers was therefore perceived as a burden and a source of tension, both because of the economic cost and the difficulties associated with the unexpected presence of an itinerant, external population.[4]

The problems caused by billeting have generally been seen by scholars as an unintended consequence of the war-like tendencies of pre-modern monarchs. Since the available resources were less abundant than their ambitions or the threats they had to face, it was always difficult for them to maintain their expensive military infrastructure. The chronic lack of funds, which always failed to cope with the demands of war, led rulers to impose numerous exactions. This resulted in more taxes, levies, and billeting, along with more abuses carried out by poorly paid soldiers. The

[4] This problem occurred as soon as standing armies were established, as in the case of the famous French *compagnies d'ordonnance*: P.D. Solon, 'Popular response to standing military forces in fifteenth-century France', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 19 (1972), 78–111. It is worth noting that, in 1611, Sebastián de Covarrubias considered the Spanish word *aloxamiento* (housing) a military term of French origin: S. Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1st edition, Madrid, 1611), 77. However, the problem was not only French: M.N. Covini, 'Alle spese di Zoan Villano: gli alloggiamenti militari nel dominio visconteo-sforzesco', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 1 (1992), 1–56.

fact that kings could continue with this policy despite widespread hardship and discontent has traditionally been interpreted as evidence of absolutism. In contrast, the local liberties and privileges that limited or provided exemption from military obligations tended to be regarded as obstacles to, or even bulwarks against, despotism. If the king was in a strong position, he would always obtain what he wanted regardless of the consequences, whereas if he found himself in a weak position, he would accede to conditions that he would otherwise not have accepted. The Crown demanded, while the local communities resisted or negotiated according to their relative power. Studies on billeting have been particularly affected by this reductive approach. For this reason, they have generally been focused on the suffering of civilians at the hands of dissatisfied soldiers or on the resistance of local institutions to military demands.[5] The tendency to

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[5] A.J. Rodríguez Hernández, ‘Los alojamientos militares como germen de motines y conflictos sociales a mediados del siglo XVII: el ejemplo de Palencia’, in E. García Hernán and D. Maffi (eds), *Estudios sobre guerra y sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica: guerra Marítima, estrategia, organización y cultura Militar (1500–1700)*, (Valencia, 2017), 803–30. M. de Pazzis, ‘Aspectos de una difícil convivencia: las Guardas y los vecinos de los aposentos’, in L. Ribot and E. Belenguer (eds), *Las sociedades ibéricas y el Mar a finales del siglo XVI. La monarquía: recursos, organización y estrategias* (Madrid, 1998), vol. 2, 513–30. A. Luis Cortés Peña, ‘Alojamientos de soldados y levas: dos factores de conflictividad en la Andalucía de los Austrias’, *Historia Social*, 52 (2005), 19–34. P. Sanz Camañes, ‘El peso de la milicia: Alojamiento foral y conflicto de jurisdicciones en la frontera catalono-aragonesa durante la Guerra de Cataluña (1640–1652)’, *Revista de Historia Moderna*, 22 (2004), 173–208. I. Merino Malillos, ‘No se trata agora de sus fueros, Sino de defenderlos en sus casas: el alojamiento del ejército de Cantabria en la frontera pirenaica occidental y los recursos de oposición locales (1638–1639)’, *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 87 (2017), 549–83. A recent example of this stereotypical approach for sixteenth-century Italy is I. Sherer, *Warriors for a Living: The experience of the Spanish infantry in the Italian Wars, 1494–1559* (Leiden, 2017), 78–92.

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emphasise these conflicting aspects has led to the perpetuation of a stereotyped view of a complex topic.[6] Many notable anecdotes are available, but there are few detailed and duly contextualised analyses.

From this perspective, the ability of the monarchy to impose its demands is fundamentally reduced to a question of power dynamics between king and country. Some of the most popular sociological theories on the origin of the modern system of nation-states and their respective constitutional regimes base their conclusions on this type of assumption.[7] We refer in

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[6] This distortion is also discussed by M. Rizzo, 'Sulle implicazioni economiche della politica di potenza nel XVI secolo: gli alloggiamenti militari in Lombardia', in J.M. Usunáriz (ed.), *Historia y humanismo: Estudios en honor del profesor Dr. D. Valentín Vázquez de Prada* (Pamplona, 2000), vol. 2, 265–76. The general tendency to highlight the most extreme and conflicting cases, instead of day-to-day administration, is acknowledged by Rodríguez Hernández, *op. cit.*, 804. The importance of social and economic factors is addressed by A. Jiménez Estrella, 'El problema de los alojamientos de la tropa en el reino de Granada', *Chronica Nova*, 26 (1999), 191–214; M. Rizzo, 'Militari e civili nello stato di Milano durante la seconda metà del Cinquecento in tema di alloggiamenti militari', *Clio*, XXIII, 4 (1987), 563–96.; V. Favaró, 'Sugli alloggiamenti militari in Sicilia tra Cinque e Seicento: alcune riflessioni', *Mediterranea: Ricerche Storiche*, VII (2010), 459–78, and C. Belloso, *La antemuralla de la Monarquía: Los Tercios españoles en el reino de Sicilia en el siglo XVI* (Madrid, 2010). For a later period, see A. Espino López, 'Ejército y sociedad en la Cataluña del Antiguo Régimen: el problema de los alojamientos (1653–1689)', *Historia Social*, 7 (1990), 19–38.

[7] C. Tilly, 'War making and State making as organized crime', in P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back* (Cambridge, 1985), 169–91, and C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, 1992). His theory is heavily based on O. Hintze, *Féodalité, Capitalisme et État Moderne*, ed. H. Bruhns (Paris, 1991). For a recent critique, see L.B. Kaspersen and J. Strandsbjerg (eds), *Does War Make States?: Investigations of Charles Tilly's historical sociology* (Cambridge, 2017).

particular to Tilly's influential thesis on the birth of the 'nation-state' as a multi-secular process of concentration of capital and coercive power driven by war. Depending on how these two elements combined, the resulting state was supposed to be more or less despotic/weak (richer/poorer in coercive power), or prosperous/underdeveloped (richer/poorer in capital). The most advanced states were those able to keep a healthy balance between capital and coercion – being rich but not weak, powerful but not despotic. Building on this model, Downing saw in the different effect that 'military revolution' had in each European state the origin of the divergence between a liberal, democratic England and a mostly absolutist, autocratic continent.[8] Owing to their insularity and maritime trade, the English were able to avoid the high cost of new fortifications and large standing armies, while allowing vast capital accumulation to finance their navy and build an empire without burdening or extorting their own population, as would be the case in the rest of Europe. However, this narrative was at odds with historical evidence. First, it had already been demonstrated that the British Empire was in its own way also highly bureaucratised and militarised.[9] Second, it is currently recognised that absolutist monarchies were not as despotic as previously thought.[10] Finally, many historians have relativised or even denied the 'revolutionary' impact of early modern military innovations.[11]

[8] B.M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of democracy and autocracy in early modern Europe* (Princeton, 1992).

[9] J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, money and the English state, 1688–1788* (London (1989).

[10] N. Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and continuity in early modern European monarchy* (London, 1992); R.G. Asch and H. Duchhardt (eds), *Der Absolutismus – ein Mythos?. Strukturwandel monarchischer*

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Although recent sociological research acknowledged the need for more nuanced explanatory models, it continued to be based on similar teleological assumptions, namely that the modern 'state' was the unavoidable outcome of the combination of long-term technological improvement, military competition and ever-increasing fiscal extraction. The difference between the warring kingdoms of the middle ages and today's nuclear superpowers is reduced to the amount of power that each type of state was able to deploy and the costs that entailed.[12] It seems obvious that, within this interpretative framework, an intrinsically anachronistic retrospective projection of the present materialist paradigms of modernity is found. The idea that military competition led to a gradual 'modernisation' of the state has already been debunked by numerous historical studies. Pre-modern polities are today viewed more like a cluster of overlapping networks of groups of interests competing in different jurisdictions for the ruler's favour than as a centralised bureaucracy ready to act at they command.[13] As a matter of fact, even the most

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Herrschaft in West- und Mitteleuropa (ca. 1550–1700) (Cologne, 1996); F. Cosandey and R. Descimon, *L'absolutisme en France: Histoire et historiographie* (Paris, 2002).

[11] Besides the bibliography cited in note 1, see F. Jacob and G. Visoni-Alonzo, *The Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe: A Revision* (London, 2016).

[12] M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1: A history of power from the beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge, 1986), 522. See also T. Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building states and regimes in medieval and early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997).

[13] S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1986); G. Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal service and private interest 1661–1701* (Cambridge, 2002); J.M. Imízcoz and A. Artola (eds), *Patronazgo y clientelismo en la monarquía hispánica (siglos XVI–XIX)* (Bilbao, 2016).

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powerful absolutist monarchies of the time depended on the support of 'brokers' and local agents to carry out their policies, including recruiting, paying, feeding and leading their troops. That means not only that patronage and negotiation were more effective than coercion in achieving goals but also that a larger bureaucracy and a more powerful standing army did not necessarily imply a more centralised or 'rational' state in a Weberian sense.[14]

Many researchers recognise that, to grasp the complex role of war in state-building it is necessary to take more factors into account than merely the size of the army and the bureaucracy or the progress of military technology and fiscal capacity.[15] However, it is not clear how adding

[14] Spanish historiography recognised the limits of the absolutist regime of the Habsburg kings at least since J. Vicens Vives, 'Estructura administrativa estatal en los siglos XVI y XVII', in *XIe Congrès des Sciences Historiques (Stockholm, 21–28 Août 1960). Rapports IV* (Stockholm, 1960), 1–24. Also H.G. Koenigsberger, 'Monarchies and parliaments in early modern Europe: Dominium Regale or Dominium Politicum et Regale', *Theory and Society*, 5, 1 (1978), 191–217; building on them, see J.H. Elliott, 'A Europe of composite monarchies', *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), 48–71; more recently, see P. Cardim, T. Herzog, J.J. Ruiz Ibáñez and G. Sabatini (eds), *Polycentric Monarchies: How did early modern Spain and Portugal achieve and maintain a global hegemony?* (Brighton, 2012). On consent and the search for consensus in pre-modern political culture, see C.D. Liddy, 'Political contract in late medieval English towns', in F. Foronda (ed.), *Avant le contrat social: Le contrat politique dans l'Occident médiéval, XIIIe–XVe siècle* (Paris, 2011), 397–416, and F. Titone (ed.), *Disciplined Dissent: Strategies of Non-Confrontational Protest in Europe from the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Rome, 2016), particularly the introduction by the editor and the concluding thoughts by John Watts.

[15] S. Gunn, D. Grummitt and H. Cools, 'War and the state in early modern Europe: widening the debate', *War in History*, 15, 4 (2008), 371–88; S. Gunn, 'War and the emergence of the state: western Europe, 1350–1600', in F. Tallett and D.J.B. Trim (eds), *European Warfare, 1350–1750* (Cambridge, 2010), 50–73; A. James, 'Warfare and

more nuances to an explanatory model that has already proved wrong could be of any help. It is not just that the correlation between war and state is not as evident as initially thought, but that the interpretation of the origin of the modern state as a mechanical process of concentration of capital and coercive power is at odds with historical reality – not because technical and material factors were not as important in pre-modern times but because power dynamics were embedded in a pre-existing 'cultural' framework founded upon completely different legal, social and moral principles and expectations.[16]

Billeting was not only dependent on material and strategic factors, but on the inequality, hierarchy and legal compartmentalisation that characterised pre-modern societies. The same political culture that recognised the legitimacy of royal prerogatives such as billeting allowed certain territories and communities to be partially or totally exempt from this obligation or to be able to decide how to apply it. Therefore, privileges granted to individuals, families, communities and institutions according to their status and the autonomy of different jurisdictional divisions must be considered when designating these burdens. Even if monarchs had the full power to mobilise troops, the distribution of the load had to be done according to established legal and social principles, by which they had to abide. As the presence of troops in a region depended on factors beyond the will of the population, the load not assumed by some groups had to be assumed by other less fortunate ones, leading to imbalances unrelated to military or economic concerns. The municipal oligarchies occupied a central but ambiguous

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the rise of the state', in M. Hughes and W.J. Philpott (eds), *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History* (Basingstoke and New York, 2006).

[16] B. Clavero, *Tantas personas como estados: Por una antropología política de la historia europea* (Madrid, 1986).

position, because they were the main interlocutors of the Crown in these matters but were only mildly interested in an equitable share of the responsibility.[17] Some researchers have addressed this question at the regional level, but have focused more on strategic and fiscal motivations than on the principles on which these were based.[18] However, the actions, attitudes and expectations of the different agents involved cannot be explained without taking into account this important aspect. The objective of this study is to discuss the importance of legal culture and social values for a proper understanding of billeting and, more generally, the relation between war, society and absolutism in pre-modern times.

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[17] On the collaboration between the Crown and municipal oligarchies in Castile, see I.A.A. Thompson, 'Patronato real e integración política en las ciudades castellanas bajo los Austrias', in J.I. Fortea Pérez (ed.), *Imágenes de la diversidad: el mundo urbano en la corona de Castilla (s. XVI–XVIII)* (Santander, 1997), 475–96; B. Yun Casalilla, 'Mal avenidos, pero juntos. Corona y oligarquías urbanas en Castilla en el siglo XVI', in A. Rodríguez Sánchez (ed.), *Vivir el Siglo de Oro: Poder, cultura e historia en la Época Moderna* (Salamanca, 2003), 61–73.

[18] The most relevant research on the subject has focused on Spanish Lombardy: M. Rizzo, *Alloggiamenti militari e riforme fiscali nella Lombardia spagnola tra Cinque e Seicento* (Milan, 2001). A. Buono, *Esercito, istituzioni, territorio: Alloggiamenti militari e 'case Herme' nello Stato di Milano (Secoli XVI e XVII)* (Florence, 2009). A. Buono, M. di Tullio and M. Rizzo, 'Per una storia economica e istituzionale degli alloggiamenti militari in Lombardia tra XV e XVII secolo', *Storia Economica* XIX, 1 (2016), 187–218; D. Maffi, 'Alloggiamenti militari e comunità locali: Pavia e il suo contado nel'600', *Annali Di Storia Pavese*, XXVII (1999), 325–38. The case of Extremadura (Spain) during the Portuguese War was discussed by F. Cortés Cortés, *Alojamientos de soldados en la Extremadura del siglo XVII* (Mérida, 1996).

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The problem of billeting distribution

British historian John R. Hale suggested that the structural difficulties faced by pre-modern societies in providing food and shelter to large groups in transit could explain the recurrent nature of the civilian population's suffering at the hands of the military.[19] The existing infrastructure and material resources did not adequately meet these increasing logistical demands. Nonetheless, those locations in which stable garrisons were established were generally better prepared to receive these contingents. These areas usually had a large supply network, privileges that compensated for the resulting problems, and a specific legislative framework to manage the conflicts that might arise from the presence of the military. Furthermore, some soldiers could stay within fortifications, although most of them still stayed in private homes. However, the previously mentioned advantages were usually not available when troops were based in places where their presence was unusual or temporary. It must be taken into account that soldiers had to travel long distances before reaching their destinations, which were not necessarily definitive. This situation was particularly evident with regard to the Spanish monarchy because the continuous displacement of military personnel was necessary for the defence of such a vast empire. In some cases, a large and regular flow of troops directed to a specific front justified developing a system of prepared 'stages' to meet their basic needs along the way.[20] Nonetheless,

[19] J.R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450–1620* (Baltimore, 1986), 182.

[20] G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567–1659: The logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' war* (Cambridge, 1972); M. Hudry, 'Conflans ville d'Étape aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles', in *L'armée et la société de 1610 à nos jours (103e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Nancy-Metz, 1978–Histoire Moderne)*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1979), 495–509.

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the limited and irregular volume of military traffic or changes in geostrategic priorities almost always made this solution infeasible.

Hale also observed that the same difficulties arose in large pilgrimages or any other situation involving the displacement of a substantial group of people.[21] However, this problem was worse in the military. The mismatch between ever larger standing armies and the chronic shortage of the royal resources in providing for them increased the burden on the general population. This precariousness made it such that kings had to continuously impose exactions. If they did not have sufficient funds to pay their troops, as was frequently the case, and were unable to come up with alternatives, there would often be an increase in defections and abuses, and even mutinies might result.[22] Therefore, historiography has interpreted the opposition to billeting and other military demands as a reaction against the predatory inertia of absolutism. This view is simplistic for several reasons.

First, it reduces the entire concern to a confrontation between two opposing blocs: (1) the military power, represented by the agents of monarchical despotism; and (2) civil society, represented by local leaders who are presumed to be concerned with the well-being of the

[21] Hale, *op. cit.*, 182.

[22] The most extreme case during this period was the plundering of Aalst (Alost) in 1576 by the Spanish troops of the Army of Flanders, because of general discontent of the troops due to lack of payment and mistreatment by officers, see G. Parker, 'Mutiny and discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1572–1607', *Past & Present*, 58, 1 (1973), 38–52. These problems were more common in France and the Holy Empire during the Thirty Years War and the reign of Louis XIV, see J.A. Lynn, 'How war fed war: the tax of violence and contributions during the grand siècle', *Journal of Modern History*, 65, 2 (1993), 286–310.

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population. However, this account ignored that the monarchs and, therefore, viceroys and governors as their direct representatives were responsible for ensuring justice and peace in the kingdom, in addition to its defence and aggrandisement. The soldiers, peasants, craftsmen and nobles recognised them as legitimate authorities in civil and military matters. Notably, no one called into question the royal prerogative of billeting. Instead, what was disputed was who should be in charge of organising it and under what conditions. In short, the Crown was primarily concerned with the volume of troops to be mobilised and the quantity of resources needed to maintain them, whereas the population was concerned with clarifying the distribution of this load.

Second, while kings had absolute power over troop mobilisation, they did not have power over the affairs of local governments, which maintained independent jurisdiction. Accordingly, the quartermasters – the army officers in charge of billeting – had to contact the authorities of the constituencies where they planned to stay in advance, to make the necessary arrangements.[23] In principle, they were to act by agreement, but, in reality, local authorities made all the practical decisions. This approach was not a problem for military authorities as long as their demands were quickly and cheaply met, but it left the process open to significant arbitrariness and corruption among army officers and local authorities.

Another aspect that historiography does not usually address is inequality in housing. The various territories of the monarchy, communities in each territory, and individuals in each

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[23] The procedure followed by every unit regarding lodging is discussed in the 'Ordenanzas de la gente de las Guardas' (1551): Archivo General de Simancas (subsequently AGS), Contaduría del Sueldo, 2ª serie, leg. 2 (1), s. n.: articles 19, 20 and 21.

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community were not equally affected. The most threatened or strategically important border territories needed to tolerate billeting more frequently because most troops tended to concentrate in these places. However, effective deployment on the ground depended on local resources, including adequate provisions at a reasonable price and in sufficient quantity. Achieving this goal was easier in more densely populated, fertile and well-connected places than in poorer and more isolated territories. Thus, armies tended to move along the main roads and concentrate around cities and shipping ports. In contrast, communities that suffered natural disasters (floods, drought or pests) were temporarily exempted from this obligation. Residents who were considered exceptionally poor, in that they lacked the basic resources to host visitors, were also exempted. Additionally, the specific needs of each type of military unit were to be considered. For example, the cavalry avoided rough terrain and needed fodder for their mounts. These factors explained why each military unit tended to be restricted to specific regions. However, this did not mean that all places and houses that met the appropriate logistical conditions were freely available to the army.

The distribution of military housing was strongly affected by a social organisation based on privilege hierarchies, which included the soldiers themselves. Some exceptions could not be overlooked. These were dealt with in a variety of ways, as privileges could be partial or total, permanent or temporary, individual or collective, and in all cases either by default or by gracious royal concessions. The nobility, clergy and some royal ministers were freed from billeting and similar obligations. In some cases, the king could extend an exemption to others as a reward for their services or because of their membership of certain reputable institutions. However, houses that were considered exempt, including those of nobles, could be used by the army, but this was

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done as a last resort and in such a way as to protect their honour.[24] Practically, the nobles limited themselves to offering the houses of their servants or vassals or, at most, welcoming the highest-ranking officers as guests. Legally, for the nobility, billeting was not an obligation but a special favour to the king, even if it was difficult to deny such requests in practice.

With the exception of these cases, commoners were obliged to billet by default, as they were in the case of normal taxation. Therefore, in addition to being a clear practical advantage, exemption was an important sign of distinction. Accordingly, billeting exemption was desired by those wealthy merchants, officers and freeholders who aspired to become part of the nobility, even if this burden did not accrue high costs for them. For these groups, the obligation of lodging soldiers was problematic because it forced them to reveal their legal status as commoners, from which they tried to distance themselves through their lifestyle. Locally, these rich and powerful families were usually part of oligarchies that controlled the municipal institutions and governing bodies.[25] Therefore, these families used their influence to distribute housing in a manner that was favourable to their interests. This situation affected all urban elites but was more problematic in small and medium-sized towns, where the status of these families was both more ambiguous and vulnerable.

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[24] V. Vázquez de Prada and J.M. Usunáriz (eds), *Las Cortes de Navarra desde su incorporación a la corona de Castilla* (Pamplona, 1993) (subsequently *Las Cortes de Navarra*), vol. 1, 233 (year 1569).

[25] On the social aspirations of the local oligarchies of the towns of Castile, see E. Soria Mesa, 'Los estudios sobre las oligarquías municipales en la Castilla moderna: Un balance en claroscuro', *Manuscrits*, 18 (2000), 185–97 (189–90), and E. Soria Mesa, *La realidad tras el espejo: ascenso social y limpieza de sangre en la España de Felipe II* (Valladolid, 2016).

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This legal inequality occurred not only between individuals and families within the same community, but also between provinces and neighbouring towns. In some cases, all inhabitants of the same place could be entirely or partially exempt from this duty – regardless of their social status – for various reasons, such as a collective privilege granted in recognition of a heroic feat or an interim concession in payment for a particularly burdensome service. Nevertheless, the wealthiest or most influential cities had more power to negotiate restrictions or claim compensation than secondary towns and villages. More importantly, the legal authority of each community decided how to distribute the burden among the inhabitants subject to it.[26] This autonomy gave significant power to local authorities because in the absence of specific privileges or ordinances governing billeting, they were free to decide how to proceed. From this advantageous position, local wealthy families that did not officially belong to the noble establishment or whose status was in question for having been recently conferred could easily rid themselves of these obligations. They could also directly fall back on the suburbs and peripheral communities under the town's jurisdiction. The rural population suffered more frequently and

[26] The importance of jurisdictional autonomy for local communities and their hierarchy is discussed by H. Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Habsburg sale of towns, 1516–1700* (Baltimore, 1990). There is no specific study for Navarre on this matter. On the situation in the neighbouring province of Guipúzcoa, see S. Truchuelo, *La representación de las corporaciones locales guipuzcoanas en el entramado político provincial (siglos XVI–XVII)* (San Sebastián, 1997).

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intensely not only because of the increased military burden in general, but also because they bore most of the load allocated to the towns on which they were dependent.[27]

The exemptions, privileges and liberties obtained by individuals, towns, provinces and kingdoms in this matter and others should not be understood, as they usually are, simply as obstacles or forms of resistance to the insensitive war-mongering of absolutist monarchs. Exemptions and 'liberties' restricted monarchical power, but the *raison d'être* was, in reality, the sanction of specific hierarchies of power and privilege. It is not by chance that the most privileged, rich and influential people and communities were usually the least affected by the obligation to accommodate soldiers, and those who escaped this burden were the most reluctant to contribute. However, the content, validity, or even existence of these privileges were frequently subject to interpretation. When these claims or their application were considered illegitimate, royal justice settled differences or corrected abuses, without questioning the general

[27] The conflicts between urban centres and rural communities in Lombardy are described by M. M. Rabà, 'Alloggiamenti militari e difesa territoriale autogestita: le comunità rurali del Ducato di Milano', *Rivista di Studi Militari*, 4 (2015), 59–104; M. di Tullio, *The Wealth of Communities: War, Resources and Cooperation in Renaissance Lombardy* (Farnham, 2014); Buono, di Tullio and Rizzo, *op. cit.* On Catalonia (Spain), see also Espino López, *op. cit*. Domínguez Ortiz pointed out long time ago that billeting combined with continuous migrations, bad harvests, high taxes and monetary devaluations led to 'the ruin of the Castilian village' during the seventeenth century: A. Domínguez Ortiz, 'La ruina de la aldea castellana', *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 24, VI (1948), 99–128. However, this does not mean that damage did not occur in cities, as the same author acknowledged: A. Domínguez Ortiz, *La sociedad española en el siglo XVII* (Madrid, 1963), vol. 1, 53–54 (note 3). In the kingdom of Granada, the rural population of *moriscos* supported this military burden until their expulsion from the territory after the revolt of the Alpujarras in 1571, Jiménez Estrella, *op. cit*.

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principles on which these hierarchies of privilege were based. For this reason, the personal or collective exemptions expressed by the local oligarchies of rich and powerful commoners were the most controversial. This problem is the foundation of many billeting-related institutional conflicts.

The logic on which privileged hierarchies were based encouraged an unequal sharing of military obligations between individuals and territories. The struggle for distinction between individuals and communities led to continuous tension between those who, asserting their position, influence or circumstances, could minimise or avoid their contribution, and those who were obliged to comply. As the presence of troops was usually unavoidable, the result was a zero-sum game in which the exemptions of the winners entailed higher costs for the losers who claimed that a more equitable distribution of the load or at least a compensation would make it more bearable (such as temporary exemptions from specific taxes, special grants or other privileges). This situation had an impact not only on the communities that could not avoid this burden but on military logistics as well.

The inequality between individuals and communities increased the imbalance, inevitably to some extent, between strategic needs and material availability. As exemptions became more extensive, the number of houses and communities available to the soldiers decreased. If military contingents were large and their stay was recurrent or prolonged, the burden could become too substantial for those who assumed it. The consequence was the worsening of living conditions for both guests and hosts, and mutual discontent. Extreme situations could lead to riots or even

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revolt.[28] Some limits could be established to prevent these situations, including rotating the units or dispersing them over a larger area to reduce their impact. However, these measures were not always feasible and demanded the active collaboration of more agents and authorities, which was not guaranteed.

This explains why the desire of the monarchy to obtain more resources with which to sustain the military apparatus was frequently accompanied by an interest in widening the pool of contributors in order to make it more sustainable.[29] However, the scope for direct intervention in these matters was limited because of jurisdictional fragmentation and the hierarchy of privileges on which the pre-modern social order and the very legitimacy of the monarchy were founded.

The case of Navarre (I): geographic constraints and collective privileges

The structural nature of this problem is best appreciated by distancing oneself from the most extreme and unpredictable scenarios, such as open wars in enemy territory. Ordinary social dynamics are best understood by analysing cases in which power relations are not determined by exceptional circumstances that prevent comparisons and extrapolations. An example is the case

[28] One of the best-known cases is described by J.H. Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain (1598–1640)* (Cambridge, 1963).

[29] M. Rizzo, 'Il processo di perequazione degli oneri militari nella Lombardia Cinquecentesca', in M. Rizzo, J.J. Ruiz Ibáñez and G. Sabatini (eds), *Le forze del principe: Recursos, instrumentos y límites en la práctica del poder soberano en los territorios de la Monarquía Hispánica* (Murcia, 2003), vol. 1, 469–538. On the famous *Unión de Armas* (Union of Arms) project, see J.H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The statesman in an age of decline* (New Haven, 1986), Chapter 7.

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of the kingdom of Navarre, in northern Spain, during the second half of the sixteenth century. The territory's border with France made the stationing of troops unavoidable even in a period in which imminent invasions were not expected. Although the studies related to this topic are limited, a comparison of the available evidence shows that the social, legal and logistical problems related to billeting were similar to those that occurred elsewhere, even in later periods.[30]

At the end of the sixteenth century, three types of military forces were stationed in Navarre: (1) the garrison of the citadel of Pamplona, the main stronghold of the kingdom, with 300 soldiers and artillery operators; (2) three regular infantry companies, each with approximately 300 soldiers; and (3) four to eight cavalry companies, each with a variable number of 'lances' according to the type of military unit (60 in heavy cavalry and 80 in light

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[30] F. Chavarría Múgica, 'Monarquía fronteriza: Guerra, linaje y comunidad en la España Moderna (Navarra, siglo XVI)', (D. Phil, European University Institute, 2006). The case in England during the seventeenth century was addressed by A. Oestmann, 'Billeting in England during the reign of Charles I, 1625–1649, the case of Tickhill/Yorkshire', *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 10, 1 (2006), 74–90; L. Boynton, 'Billeting: The example of the Isle of Wight', *The English Historical Review*, 74, 290 (1959), 23–40; and G. Spencer Stivers, 'A most grievous and insupportable vexation: billeting in early seventeenth century England', (D. Phil., University of California, Riverside, 2009). The situation in France during the same period is detailed by D. Parrott, *Richelieu's Army: War, government and society in France, 1624–1642* (Cambridge, 2004), 505–46. About billeting in the Republic of Venice's 'Terraferma', see G. Ongaro, *Peasants and Soldiers: The management of the Venetian military structure in the mainland dominion between the 16th and 17th centuries* (Abingdon, 2017).

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cavalry).[31] However, it is worth noting that, in general, the number of troops present at the same time was less than that officially stated. Usually, the total number of soldiers varied from 1000 to 1500 under normal conditions. Most of them had no fixed residence and, therefore, had to move on a regular basis. However, the housing at their disposal was limited. The few soldiers who composed the permanent garrison of Pamplona were an exception because they stayed in the fortification, and the kingdom paid their salary. Things were different for the other units.

The purpose of this military force was to provide protection against possible French invasions from the Pyrenees. However, the mountainous valleys of the north of the kingdom were not adequate for housing the military personnel because the terrain was sterile, rugged and scarcely populated. This increased the strategic importance of Pamplona, which was located at the foot of the mountains and blocked access to the southern plains. For this reason, the infantry was concentrated in this central area, with the sole exception of a small detachment intended to monitor the crossing of Roncesvalles. However, the Pamplona oligarchy obtained a privilege from the Spanish monarchy that limited accommodation in the city to a single company of soldiers (not counting the garrison in the fortress).[32] Billeting in the city was also strictly

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[31] These itinerant cavalry units belonged to a corps known as *guardas reales de Castill*a who were responsible for protecting the borders of the Spanish kingdoms, see R. Quatrefages, *La revolución militar moderna: El crisol español* (Madrid, 1996), and E. Martínez Ruiz and M. Pi Corrales, *Las guardas de Castilla: primer ejército permanente español* (Madrid, 2012).

[32] F. Chavarría Múgica, 'La capitulación de la "cabeza del reino" y la cuestión de los alojamientos: disputa y negociación de la condición privilegiada de Pamplona', in A. Floristán Imízcoz (ed.), *1512: Conquista e*

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regulated.[33] A special municipal fund was created to compensate for the hosts who volunteered to accommodate the soldiers. If there were not enough volunteers, the municipal authorities could, in agreement with the military authorities, force the inhabitants of the homes adjacent to the city's main square to house the remaining soldiers. Under these conditions, the obligation of housing the troops was not a threat to the interests of the Pamplona oligarchy.

Figure 1. The Kingdom of Navarre in the second half of the sixteenth century.

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incorporación de Navarra: Historiografía, derecho y otros procesos de incorporación en la Europa renacentista (Barcelona, 2012), 361–85.

[33] Archivo Municipal de Pamplona (subsequently AMP), Guerra-Milicia Nacional, leg. 135 [nº 3]: 'Asiento de camas para la tropa celebrado entre la ciudad y el Virrey don Gabriel de la Cueva' (Pamplona, 1561).

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The privilege of Pamplona entailed that the two remaining infantry companies had to be housed in nearby towns located to the east and southeast, on the road to Aragon, which were less rich, influential, and populated areas (Figure 1). To avoid imposing the burden continuously on the same places, the laws of the kingdom of Navarre and military ordinances established a maximum stay of three months in each town.[34] Subsequently, the companies had to move to another location and not return to the same position for nine months.[35] However, this law was not always observed.[36] In other cases, a shift system was adopted to ensure that all communities in a particular region complied with this obligation, but each one enjoyed at least a period of rest. The local authorities of Monreal, Aoiz, Urroz and Villava (all of them near Pamplona) requested that the troops stayed in two of these villages at a time and not throughout the four villages, as the viceroy had commanded.[37] Some small towns such as Lumbier tried to be exempted from providing shelter.[38]

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[34] Archivo General de Navarra (subsequently AGN), Reino, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 24 (1529).

[35] AGN, Reino, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 29 (1535).

[36] For instance, the people from the Valley of Elorz sent a petition to the Estates-general because Captain Cosgaya forced them to give shelter and food to his men after the established time: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 284 (year 1576). The three-month permanence of each military unit in the same location was confirmed by the Estates-general in 1604: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 453.

[37] *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 284 (year 1576).

[38] Lumbier's petition to the Estates-general in 1565: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. 1, 185.

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The situation of cavalry companies was more complicated because in addition to soldiers and officers, places needed to be provided for mounts and stable hands. The primary mission of these units was to protect access to Castile through the Ebro Valley. Accordingly, they were usually stationed in the immediate vicinity of the main road that linked Pamplona to the Castilian city of Logroño via the southwest. Any jurisdictional problems that might arise with the castilians were solved by the extraordinary powers granted to the Viceroy and Captain-General of Navarre because his jurisdiction in military affairs extended 12 leagues beyond the limits of the kingdom.[39] The fertile and densely populated plains of this region were suitable for sustaining cavalry units. However, as in other areas, the troops could not establish themselves in any location; their presence depended on hierarchies of privilege and other circumstances unrelated to strategic or logistical concerns.

In principle, the troops could stay on either side of the border between Castile and Navarre, but in reality, they tended to stay longer in Navarre. The affected localities continually protested to the viceroy, the highest representative of the monarchy in the territory, against this comparative injustice.[40] In addition, some of the main towns and cities in the area were exempt, which increased territorial inequalities. In 1571, the town of Viana had become exhausted from having to accommodate 14 cavalry companies that had passed through the region over the preceding years, in addition to the infantry moving to Pamplona and the transport of their supplies, because other important neighbouring towns, including Logroño, Navarrete, Estella and

[39] Chavarría Múgica, 'Monarquía fronteriza', 54–55.

[40] The Estates-general of Navarre protested for this reason in 1565, 1576 and 1607–08: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 195, 285 and 477.

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Los Arcos, were exempt. Given its honourable position as the head of a principality (*principado*), Viana asked to be treated in the same manner as the other towns.[41] Further south, Villafranca and Tudela enjoyed this privilege, and Tafalla would obtain it temporarily.[42]

This inequality not only generated competition for distinction between communities but also encouraged a lack of solidarity. Villages such as Arellano and Ayegui, on the one hand, and Desojo, Cabredo and Genevilla, on the other, took advantage of the jurisdictional fragmentation of their valleys (Solana and Aguilar, respectively) to relieve themselves of the burden that they had previously shared, which generated protests from neighbouring villages.[43] In other cases, local authorities tried to bribe the quartermasters so that the troops would pass by their towns. A protestation was presented to the Estates-general in 1586 because 'many times, the quartermasters were offered gifts and other things in order to exempt some towns and burden

[41] Viana requested to be exempted from the ordinary obligation of billeting, 'since it was not possible to avoid the extraordinary one' (i.e., in case of open war on the border): AGS, Cámara de Castilla, libros de Navarra, 252, ff. 142v–143r. (Madrid, 4-10-1571).

[42] The town of Tafalla won an exemption for three years: AGS, Cámara de Castilla, libros de Navarra, 247, ff. 185v–186r. (Burgos, 15-4-1524). The town of Villafranca requested a certified copy of this privilege because the original document was lost: AGS, Cámara de Castilla, libros de Navarra, 250, ff. 51v.–52r. (Monzón, 22-11-1533); response to the complaint of the city of Tudela for being forced to provide shelter to Don Sancho de Córdoba, military inspector (*veedor general*) of the *Guardias de Castilla*, and his escort of soldiers, and servants: AGS, Guerra Antigua, leg. 64, nº 312 (1550).

[43] *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 308 and 383 (years 1580 and 1589–90).

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others'.[44] The sudden arrival of casual groups of soldiers was also problematic. These small, isolated contingents were uncomfortable with the population because they were neither under the supervision of officers nor subject to the discipline of their unit. Although it was not always clear whether communities were obliged to offer them hospitality, local authorities provided these groups free food in exchange for staying the night elsewhere.[45]

If a certain military contingent bypassed one community, it was very likely that they would ultimately move into the next one. This made billeting a recurring source of conflicts between not only local and military authorities but also communities and neighbouring territories. The frequency with which some communities abused others would lead the Estates-general (*Cortes Generales*) of Navarre, in 1580, to ask the authorities of the valleys to stop accommodating soldiers in just one of the villages under their jurisdiction, with the rest providing supplies and money.[46] Instead, an equitable distribution for communities in each valley was proposed. To avoid new disputes, company captains were to notify the Estates-general in advance of the exact number of soldiers allocated to each village according to the number of

[44] *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 359. This problem was also reported by several authors, including M. de Isaba, *Cuerpo enfermo de la milicia española*, ed. E. Martínez Ruiz (Madrid, 1991), 123–24 (first edition: Madrid, 1594).

[45] In 1537, the Council of Acedo offered to give free dinners to a group of soldiers who were escorting some merchants, as long as the troops slept in another town. This would cause protests (and a lawsuit) from the royal customs officer against the villagers for having denied help that would have prevented the troops from leaving without declaring the number of horses or paying fees: AGN, Tribunales Reales, Procesos, nº 026973.

[46] AGS, Reino, Tribunales Reales, Proceso nº 069888: the village of Orbaiceta against the Valley of Aezcoa, on the payment of his contribution to the billeting of soldiers (1580); and protest to the Estates-general of 1580 for the same reason: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, p. 302.

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inhabitants.[47] However, once again the effectiveness of this approach depended on collaboration with local authorities.

The case of Navarre (II): power and privilege in the community

The tensions between those who were able to avoid billeting or at least minimise it and those who had no other option but to bear the burden were also present in the interior of the affected communities. The local oligarchies of wealthy commoners could exert their influence on municipal and regional institutions to escape this obligation. In 1580, the Estates-general requested that all mayors and local representatives of towns of the kingdom be exempted from billeting.[48] Although this proposal was never adopted, the authorities of the town of Puente la Reina applied it at their discretion, causing great distress to the population, which would appeal to royal justice. Their complaints led Viceroy Don Francisco Hurtado de Mendoza, Marquis of Almazán, to declare, in 1582, that the local authorities did not have the power to arbitrarily grant exemptions and harm the other houses in the town 'which for this reason are more often burdened'.[49] The indifference of the municipal authorities would lead the viceroy to act. As the maximum guarantor of justice in the kingdom, in 1585, he appointed a commission of judges with full power to repair these abuses.[50] The commission was composed of *licenciado* Rodecilla, a member of the highest court of Navarre, and Don Francisco de Lodosa, Lord of Sarría, the most prestigious nobleman in that region. It is clear that the latter was appointed to support the

[47] *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 302 and 359 (years 1580 and 1586).

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decisions made by Rodecilla. Otherwise, there was a risk of the rulings being disregarded as soon as the judge left the town.

The purpose of this type of commission was to investigate, punish and settle in a manner beyond appeal the offences that could not be resolved through standard channels because of their severity, potential repercussions and urgency. As a matter of fact the appointment of commissioner judges was an extraordinary measure that led to the presumption of guilt.[51] In this case, the judges were instructed to inspect every house in Puente la Reina, opening them by force, if necessary, to immediately accommodate the company of heavy cavalry of the Marquis of Aguilar. With this commission, the viceroy intended not only to solve this immediate problem but also to establish clear procedures to avoid future arbitrariness in the distribution of billeting, benefiting the general population and the troops. This approach was intended to end the abuses of the local oligarchy, so that 'certain individuals would not carry, nor have to carry, this burden, thereby leaving others free of it, particularly the rich, who could and should better carry it than those who are poor'.[52]

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[48] Despite what the Estates-general claimed, it was unclear whether such a rule had ever existed: *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 309 (year 1580).

[49] AGN, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 64: Marqués de Almazán to the town of Puente la Reina (Pamplona, 12-7-1582).

[50] AGN, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 64: 'Comisión dada por el virrey Marqués de Almazán al licenciado Rodecilla y a don Francisco de Lodosa [Señor de Sarría] para alojar las tropas en la villa de Puente la Reina' (Olite, 14-2-1585).

[51] J. de Hevia Bolaños, *Curia filipica, Primera y segunda parte* (Madrid, 1684), parte tercera, 134 (first edition: Lima, 1603).

[52] AGN, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 64: 'Comisión dada por el virrey Marqués de Almazán al licenciado Rodecilla y a don Francisco de Lodosa [Señor de Sarría] para alojar las tropas en la villa de Puente la Reina' (Olite, 14-2-1585).

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The commissioners were received coldly by Puente la Reina's mayor and officers, who used all means at their disposal to hinder the mission, including formally pleading against unlawful interference in matters that were within their jurisdiction and requesting permission to send a representative to the viceroy to explain their position. Upon denial of this request, they alleged that the inspection of the houses could not begin until the arrival of the quartermaster of the company they were expecting. When the quartermaster arrived a few hours later, they tried to delay the beginning of the commissioners' work by giving other excuses. Nevertheless, the judges continued the mission entrusted to them by the viceroy.

The commissioners found that poor widows were forced to house soldiers against the laws of the kingdom, rooms were kept in poor condition and rich neighbours refused to shoulder their part of the responsibility. The inspection identified only nine houses whose owners were given immunity, and these included the homes of qualified nobles and pre-eminent gentlemen, three lawyers of the royal courts of Navarre, and a senior local Inquisition official.[53] In their

[53] The list was topped by Don Francisco de Lodosa, Lord of Sarría and other members of his family, including his grandson Don Fausto de Lodosa; followed by Don Melchor de Novar, Lord of Novar; Francés Barragán, who received *acostamiento* (money graciously granted by the king); Don Hernando de Ozta, Lord of Olcoz, 'for being a person who is usually summoned to the Estates-general of this kingdom' (as a representative of the nobility); the houses of *licenciados* Ozcoidi, López and Artavi, for being lawyers of the royal courts of Navarre; and Pedro de Elordi, for being the most senior local official (*familiar*) of the Inquisition in Puente La Reina. About the exemptions enjoyed by the members of the Inquisition, see also R. López Vela, 'La Inquisición en Cataluña, inmunidades y alojamientos de soldados a finales del siglo XVII', in J. Dantí i Riu, X. Gil Pujol and I. Mauro (eds), *Catalunya, entre la guerra i la pau, 1713–1813. Actes del VII Congrés d'Història Moderna de Catalunya. Comunicacions* (Barcelona, 2013), 260–303.

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frustration, the local authorities denied the existence of these privileges to the commissioners, an absurd statement whose only purpose was to bother the Lord of Sarría, who was at the top of the list. Houses inhabited by priests (10) and ecclesiastical institutions were also exempted. Other houses were spared because of exceptional circumstances, including those of widows, the extremely poor, tenants, and innkeepers, who needed to continue to accommodate travellers who passed through the town (a total of 75 houses). After all exemptions for 'right or reason' were discounted, 98 houses (out of 248) and 18 stables were available. Therefore, only 40% of the houses in the village could be used at that time.[54]

Upon completion of this census, the commissioners established the billeting procedure. According to custom, Puente la Reina was obliged to offer 30 houses to arriving military personnel. If this quantity was not enough, the remaining soldiers would stay in nearby villages, including in Obanos and the Mañeru Valley. Rodecilla and Don Francisco de Lodosa ordered the distribution of available houses in three batches, according to a pre-established order that was to be followed carefully. In each, six houses from each of the five neighbourhoods were to be used until all houses were included. Moreover, it was understood that some of the 56 homes that had been exempted because of poor conditions might have joined this distribution over time. The exempt homes could be used to complete the corresponding batch only in extreme cases.

With the final resolution by the commissioners, the Marquis of Almazán fulfilled his double mandate as Viceroy and Captain-General of Navarre. On the one hand, he restored justice

[54] AGN, Guerra, leg. 2, carp. 64: 'Rolde y Memorial de las casas que están ocupadas e ynpedidas al presente, siendo aquellas buenas para aposentar y hazer alojamientos, por bibir en ellas clérigos, viudas, caseros y Mesoneros' (Puente la Reina, 1585).

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in the community by punishing abuses of power and, on the other hand, helped to ensure the sustainability of military logistics in the region. The monarch and his ministers did not want the local oligarchs to unjustifiably shirk an inconvenient burden that would be better accepted by the population if equally distributed. However, the capacity for intervention in these matters through standard means was limited. The only justification for interfering directly in the jurisdiction of local communities was through the role of supreme judges. The Viceroy of Navarre sent commission judges to those locations where councillors intended to enjoy exemptions that were by right only available to the clergy, nobility and high ministers of the monarchy. The case of Puente la Reina is significant but not unique. Corella, Cascante, Villafranca, Sangüesa, Tafalla and Lumbier protested to the Estates-general in 1589–90 because the viceroy had sent a commissioner to organise billeting against the legislation of the kingdom which established that the quartermaster, together with the mayor and local representatives of each locality, had to execute it 'with integrity and without injustice'.[55] These processes made it possible to introduce specific reforms at the local level, but the primary objective was to address inequalities according to established legal and social criteria.

Final remarks

As long as there were no scandals, and the communities reasonably fulfilled their duties, the king had no basis to involve himself in how local authorities organised billeting in their respective jurisdictions. However, as military pressure increased, the discrepancy between

[55] *Las Cortes de Navarra*, vol. I, 363 and 380.

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logistical needs and their unequal distribution did so too. This situation forced the Crown to propose fiscal reforms that compensated for imbalances. Since the logistical restraints remained the same, the only solution was to distribute the costs among more communities, even those that were not currently billeting troops or expected to do so. This policy generated continuous conflicts between the monarchy and the most privileged or least affected communities, which were also the most interested in maintaining the status quo. In this context, the assertion of exemptions and local liberties (proved or alleged) was intended to reinforce or preserve circumstantial advantages or established hierarchies rather than oppose the absolutist designs of monarchs.

Under normal circumstances, this kind of argument could be enough to avoid the actual billeting but was not sufficiently strong for all inhabitants to avoid their responsibility in sharing the costs when the king made a direct request, especially during wartime. In emergency situations, military authorities could use the argument of 'necessity' (*necessitas*) to unilaterally enforce exceptional measures; however, these measures were temporary and caused great discontent. The introduction of lasting innovations involved lengthy negotiations with local authorities either individually in each community or collectively at the Estates-general or other bodies that represented the territory. Even if more cities helped accommodate soldiers or cover the expenses they generated, the distribution of the burden continued to be determined by the hierarchies, inequalities and legal divisions on which the pre-modern social and political order was based. Therefore, although it was increasingly difficult for local communities to find excuses to avoid military obligations, municipal oligarchies would continue to enjoy the power to distribute them among the unprivileged population under their jurisdiction.

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Billeting distribution reinforced the distinction between privileged and unprivileged in the affected regions: as the pressures of war grew, so did legal, social and economic inequality. With time, this disparity would put a significant strain on unprivileged communities and families, and hence on military logistics, too. This precariousness would push rulers to essay different measures to make the war effort more sustainable, or at least more bearable. However, any attempt at reform was conditioned by the ‘culture of privilege’ that constituted the fabric of pre-modern polities and societies. Pushing reform beyond that limit could certainly help improve military capacity, but at the price of eroding that very fabric.

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