

Prisoners of War in Portugal (Twelfth to Mid Fourteenth Century)

*Miguel Gomes Martins**

Instituto de Estudos Medievais – Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Abstract

Substantially attractive, largely due to the high earnings which could enable, the capture of prisoners of war was a common practice in Portugal during the Middle Ages, particularly in periods of intense military activity. However, this reality is not an exclusive of war periods, but also of peace times. In addition, captivity was something that not only the warriors were subjected to, but also the non-combatants.

Keywords

Prisoners of war, war, Middle Ages, Portugal, ransoms.

Resumo

Consideravelmente atractiva, em larga medida pelos proventos, muitas vezes elevados, que daí podiam resultar, a captura de prisioneiros de guerra era uma prática corrente em Portugal durante a Idade Média, designadamente nos períodos de maior conflitualidade militar. Porém, esta não era uma realidade exclusiva dos contextos de guerra, verificando-se também em períodos de paz. Para além disso, o cativo era algo a que não só os guerreiros estavam sujeitos, como também os não-combatentes.

Palavras-chave

Prisioneiros de guerra, guerra, Idade Média, Portugal, resgates.

* Doutor em História. Investigador integrado en el Instituto de Estudos Medievais - Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova, Avenida de Berna, 26-C | 1069-061 Lisboa PORTUGAL. Correo electrónico: miguel.martins-283@clix.pt

Widespread and probably as old as warfare itself, the capture of prisoners of war was something that people in the kingdom of Portugal was forced to deal and to live with, throughout the Middle Ages. Indeed, both the possibility of being captured by the enemy, and of imprisoning enemy combatants – or even gaining some benefits out of it – were prospects placed on a daily basis to all those directly and indirectly involved in military activities.

Although the immediate goal of an army was almost always to inflict injury or even death on its opponent – and thus reduce its military capability –, there is no doubt that the possibility of capturing and imprisoning enemy combatants was also often seen as a priority and deliberately sought not only by warriors, but also by their generals. We may recall, on the one hand, the report of the Battle of Salado, held near the stronghold of Tarifa, in 1340, which explicitly states that the Grenadian cavalry, while advancing against the Portuguese forces, shouted excitedly: “*Captives, captives!*”¹; and on the other the instructions given in 1336 by king Afonso IV (1325-1357) to the commanders of the strongholds placed along the border, ordering them to launch raids against Castilian territory in order to kill, steal, burn and “*make captives*”².

And as this example shows, the term “captive” did not apply only – as proposed by the *Siete Partidas* of King Afonso X of Castile and Leon³ – to individuals of different religions. By 1223-1224, the princesses Teresa and Sancha, referred to the men captured, years before, by their brother Afonso II (1211-1223) during the siege of Montemor-o-Velho – one of the episodes of the 1211-1212 civil war – precisely as captives, instead of designating them as “prisoners”⁴.

1 *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica: Livro de Linhagens do Conde D. Pedro*, José Mattoso (ed.), Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1980, vol. I, p. 248.

2 Rui de PINA, *Chronica de El-Rey Dom Afonso O Quarto*, Bíblion, Lisboa, 1936, chapter XXXIV, p. 94.

3 *Las Siete Partidas del Sabio Rey Don Alonso el nono, nuevamente Glosadas por el Licenciado Gregorio Lopez del Consejo Real de Indias de su Majestad*, Boletín Oficial del Estado, Madrid, 1985, 3 vols. (reprint of the edition of 1555), Segunda Partida, título XXIX, lei I, vol. I, fls. 110-110v.º. See also Josep TORRÓ, “De bona guerra. El Ambiguo estatuto del cautivo musulmán en los países de la Corona de Aragón (siglos XII-XIII)”, *El Cuerpo Derrotado: Cómo Trataban Musulmanes y Cristianos a Los Enemigos Vencidos (Península Ibérica, ss. VIII-XIII)*, Maribel Fierro and Francisco García Fitz (eds.), CSIC, Madrid, 2008, p. 436.

4 Frei António BRANDÃO, *Monarquia Lusitana, Quarta Parte*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, 1974, fls. 262v-263v; and Miguel Gomes MARTINS, “A guerra em Portugal

It is from the late 1130's onwards that the written sources makes a much greater echo of this reality, providing us with a wide range of examples that illustrate not only the frequency, but also the diversity of circumstances in which, usually, the capture of prisoners of war took place: during depredatory raids launched against enemy territory, such as the one led, in 1139, by the first king of Portugal, Afonso Henriques (1139-1185), against the outskirts of Seville⁵; at the end of a pitched battle, as in 1178, when the army of Prince Sancho, inflicted a heavy defeat over the Almohads near the suburb of Triana in Seville⁶; in the surrounding area of a besieged castle or town, as the case of the 200 Muslims captured by the Anglo-norman crusaders in the village of Almada, in the summer of 1147, during the siege of Lisbon⁷; in the aftermath of the conquest of a stronghold, as happened in Alcácer, in 1217⁸; during the hasty retreat from a battlefield, or from a failed siege operation, as the captives imprisoned following the stampede of the Almohad army at the end of the unsuccessful attack on Santarém in 1184⁹; or in the context of naval operations, such as the one launched by the Portuguese fleet in 1179, against the Andalusian harbor of Saltes¹⁰. So, as these examples show, whenever possible, the armies did not hesitate to take prisoners.

This kind of behavior is not exclusive of the armed conflicts opposing Christians and Muslims, since the same can be seen in wars between Muslims and also between Christians, be it Castilians or even Portuguese, as shown, for example, during the 1211-1212 civil war between Alfonso II and his sisters¹¹. One can also recall the large number of Portuguese men and women captured near the castle of Arronches, in the Alentejo

no reinado de Afonso II, no contexto de Las Navas de Tolosa”, *La Peninsula Iberica en Tiempos de Las Navas de Tolosa*, Carlos Estepa Díez and María Antonia Carmona Ruiz (ed.), Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, Madrid, 2014, pp. 443-458.

- 5 “Vida de S. Teotónio”, *Fontes Medievais da História de Portugal*, ed. Alfredo Pimenta, Sá da Costa, Lisboa, 1982, vol. I, pp. 90-91.
- 6 Rui de PINA, *Chronica do Muito Alto, e Muito Esclarecido Príncipe Dom Sancho I Segundo Rey de Portugal*, Lisboa, 1727, chapter II, p. 7.
- 7 *A Conquista de Lisboa aos Mouros. Relato de um Cruzado*, ed. Aires Augusto do Nascimento, Vega, Lisboa, 2001, chapter 16, p. 113.
- 8 *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*, ed. Adelino de Almeida Calado, Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro, 1998, chapter 62, p. 112; and Frei António BRANDÃO, *Monarquia ...*, fl. 267v.
- 9 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 43, p. 82; and Rui de PINA, *Chronica do Muito Alto, e Muito Esclarecido Príncipe Dom Sancho I ...*, chapter IV, p. 11.
- 10 José MATTOSO, *Afonso Henriques*, Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa, 2006, p. 265.
- 11 Frei António BRANDÃO, *Monarquia ...*, fl. 262v-263v.

region, by Alfonso Perez de Guzman´s army in 1296¹²; or the Portuguese combatants, including some important noble knights, taken by the Castilians in the aftermath of the pitched battle that took place in July 1336 near Villanueva de Barcarrota¹³.

But however significant these cases may be, it is in the context of the struggle against Muslims that the capture of Portuguese prisoners assumed greater proportions. Not even the definitive conquest of the Algarve (1249-1250) could put an end to this kind of situations. In fact, it continued to be a common practice far beyond the mid-thirteenth century, especially in the coastal areas of the Algarve, as suggested by a desperate request sent to king Afonso IV in 1352 stressing both the frequency of these attacks, and the need to redeem, on a regular basis, the men, women and children captured during such raids¹⁴.

The Muslim naval threat had always been a major problem. In 1140 – seven years before the conquest of Lisbon – an Almoravid fleet entered the mouth of the Douro river and reached the city of Oporto, taking as captives, among many others, some of the canons of the local Cathedral¹⁵. The operational base for most of these raids was the town of Silves, in the Algarve, to where those ships usually took a large number of Christian captives¹⁶, as confirmed by one of the Crusaders that took part in the conquest of this city, in 1189, who mentions the presence of about 450 prisoners in the prisons of this stronghold¹⁷.

12 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 97, p. 172; Miguel Gomes MARTINS, *De Ourique a Aljubarrota. A Guerra na Idade Média*, Esfera dos Livros, Lisboa, 2011, p. 207; and Miguel Gomes MARTINS, “Dividir para reinar: a campanha portuguesa em Castela em 1296”, *VI Jornadas Luso-Espanholas de Estudos Medievais – A Guerra e a Sociedade na Idade Média*, Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Medievais, Coimbra, 2009, vol. 1, p. 233.

13 Fernán SANCHEZ DE VALLADOLID, *Gran Cronica de Alfonso XI*, ed. Diego Catalán, Madrid, Gredos, 1977, vol. 2, chapter 192, pp. 154-155; Miguel Gomes MARTINS, *De Ourique ...*, pp. 221-223; e Miguel Gomes MARTINS, “A Guerra esquiva. O Conflito luso-castelhano de 1336-1338”, *Promontoria*, n° 3 (2005), pp. 39-41.

14 *Cortes Portuguesas: Reinado de D. Afonso IV (1325-1357)*, ed. A. H. de Oliveira Marques, Maria Teresa Campos Rodrigues and Nuno José Pizarro Pinto Dias, INIC, Lisboa, 1982, p. 132.

15 *A Conquista de Lisboa ...*, chapter 3, p. 67.

16 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 47, p. 90.

17 *Relação da Derrota Naval, Façanhas e Sucessos dos Cruzados que Partirão do Escalda para a Terra Santa no Anno de 1189*, ed. João Baptista da Silva Lopes, Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1844, p. 36.

However, it wasn't only the Muslims who attacked the Portuguese coastline, but also the Portuguese who ransacked the Muslim coastal territories, as shown by the attacks on the harbor of Saltes in 1179 and on the city of Ceuta in 1180¹⁸; or by the raid on Alvor, undertaken in 1189 by a combined Portuguese and Crusader fleet¹⁹.

And as some of the above examples clearly show it was not only the combatants, but also the civilians, who were subject to the possibility of being captured by enemy forces. The role they played in the war effort – either as potential fighters, or as tax-payers, and also as suppliers of armies and castles, for example – meant that the opposing armies saw them not as accidental victims or collateral damages, but as a specific military target. Moreover, one target easy to reach and which, in various forms, could become an important asset. That's probably why successful military operations – such as chevauchées, sieges, or even pitched battles – whose booty do not include a large amount of men, women and even children and elderly people, are so uncommon.

In some situations the number of captives could reach a total of hundreds and even thousands of individuals, as in the cases of those captured by Afonso Henriques in 1139 in the outskirts of Seville²⁰; the 400 women and 120 men dragged from Coruche, in 1180 or 1181, by the forces of Ibn Wanudin²¹; or the people imprisoned in 1191 during the reconquest of Alcácer by Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Mansur, and that the chronicler Ibn Abi Zar rises – clearly an exaggerated figure – to 80 000 souls²².

The capture, inevitably marked by great physical and psychological violence, was usually followed by a long, sorrow and strenuous journey to their destination. Take the example of Martinho, captured

18 José MATTOSO, *Afonso Henriques*, p. 265; Saturnino MONTEIRO, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, Sá da Costa, Lisboa, 1989, vol. 1, pp. 15-16.

19 *Relação da Derrota ...*, pp. 10-12.

20 “Vida de S. Teotónio”..., pp. 90-91.

21 “Annales D. Alfonsi Portugallensium Regis”, *Alfons I von Portugal. Studien zu Geschichte und Sage des Begründers der Portugiesischen Unabhängigkeiten*, ed. M. Blöcker-Walter, Fretz und Wasmuth Verlag, Zurich, 1966, p. 159; Maria João Violante BRANCO, *D. Sancho I*, Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa, 2005, p. 90; Mário BARROCA, “Da Reconquista a D. Dinis”, *Nova História Militar de Portugal*, Manuel Themudo Barata e Nuno Severiano Teixeira (dirs.), José Mattoso (coord.), Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa, 2003, vol. 1, p. 48; José MATTOSO, *Afonso Henriques*, p. 266.

22 António Borges COELHO, *Portugal na Espanha Árabe*, Caminho, Lisboa, 1989, vol. 2, p. 322.

by the Almoravids in Soure in 1144, who after being initially held in Santarém, was taken to Évora, then to Seville and later to Córdoba, where he eventually died after a hard voyage of over 850 kilometers²³. Even shorter routes, were generally done in truly humiliating conditions, as in the case of the Portuguese captured in the naval battle of Farrovilhas, in 1337, forced by the Castilians to march through the streets of Seville with yokes around their necks²⁴.

But contrary to what some of the above mentioned examples may suggest, the majority of the documented situations don't tell us about the destination of these, sometimes several kilometers long, columns of prisoners. We know, however, that in some cases they were initially taken to the stronghold from which the forces responsible for the capture came from, and later, to a fortress or castle of greater strategic importance, with bigger and stronger prisons and away from the border, perhaps to reduce the risk of escapes. Such was the fate of the Muslims caught in a pitched battle held in the vicinity of the castle of Porto de Mós in 1180, incarcerated, not in that stronghold, but 100 kilometers further north, in the city of Coimbra²⁵.

In fact only a few prisons had room to hold a large number of individuals. So, whenever necessary, the commanders had to seek for other solutions, such as incarcerating them in monasteries – that in some cases had their own prisons²⁶ –, keeping them in the castle or in the house of the captor²⁷; or even putting them under the guard of certain individuals and communities, a common resource in early thirteenth century villages and farms of northern Portugal²⁸.

Although prisoners of higher rank were usually treated and housed like authentic “guests” – as Afonso Henriques, to whom the king of León, in 1169, assured medical treatment to his broken leg, as well as all the honors due to a king –, it seems clear that only very few received

23 *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica: Scriptores*, Academia das Ciências, 1856, Lisboa, p. 62.

24 Fernán SANCHEZ DE VALLADOLID, *Gran Cronica ...*, vol. II, chapter CCVII, p. 186.

25 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 41, p. 77; and Maria João BRANCO, *Sancho I...*, p. 89.

26 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 127, p. 210.

27 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 52, p. 98; and Rui de PINA, *Chronica do Muito Alto, e Muito Esclarecido Príncipe Dom Sancho I ...*, chapter XII, p. 30.

28 *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica: Inquisitiones*, Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1888, vol. I, pp. 104 e 167.

this kind of treatment²⁹. In fact, the conditions under which most of the captives were kept were at least regrettable. Starting, of course, by the physical space where they were imprisoned, often cramped, dark, poorly ventilated and without any conditions of hygiene, such as the cell where Martinho of Soure was incarcerated in Santarém after having been captured by the Almoravids in 1144³⁰.

To this dark scenario one must add the physical and psychological violence to which prisoners were constantly submitted to, the chains and stumps that hurt their limbs and hindered their movements, but also the hunger and thirst that they often had to endure, as happened with the Christians held in Silves in the summer of 1189, deprived of water for several long days, to a point that more than half of them did not survive that ordeal³¹. And as if this was not enough, they were often physically punished and tortured, which in certain situations assumed proportions of extreme violence and eventually lead to death, as happened with the five Franciscan monks taken prisoners in North Africa in 1219. After being repeatedly flogged, they were dragged through the streets, flogged again and finally – in front of an eager audience – had their throats cut off³². Sometimes prisoners were used by enemy crossbowmen for target practice. Such was the fate of some of the Portuguese men and women captured by the Castilians in 1296³³.

Of course these are extreme situations that almost disguises the fact that prisoners of war were valuable assets who's capture could even bring important military and political profits, particularly when it came to a leader or a military enemy commander. One should recall that it was the capture of the Countess Teresa, by his son Afonso Henriques, in 1128, in the Battle of São Mamede, that allowed him to achieve the government of the Portucalense County, the embryo of the kingdom of Portugal³⁴.

29 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 34, p. 61; *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*, ed. Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, 1990, vol. IV, chapter DCCXIV, p. 236; and *Primera Cronica General de España*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Gredos, Madrid, 1977, vol. II, chapter 996, p. 675.

30 *Portugalix Monumenta Histórica: Scriptores...*, p. 62.

31 *Relação da Derrota ...*, p. 38.

32 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapters 63-64, pp. 113-116; and Rui de PINA, *Chronica de El-Rei D. Afonso II*, s.n., Lisboa, 1906, chapters XI-XIII, pp. 47-53.

33 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 97, p. 172.

34 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 6, p. 11; and *Crónica Geral ...*, chapter DCCV, pp. 217-218.

But it was mostly the economic rewards provided by the prisoners of war that made their capture so appealing. Portuguese municipal charters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries give account of the marketing of captives³⁵, an activity that, even after the definitive conquest of the Algarve, continued to provide an important hand labor, mostly for agricultural works, but also for industry, crafts – such as blacksmiths, shoemakers, armorers, bakers³⁶, or goldsmiths and tailors, as the two slaves that the first king of Portugal willed to his daughter Urraca Afonso³⁷ –; and also for civil, religious and military building works, as the case of the Templar castles of Soure, Ega, Redinha, Pombal and Tomar, built between 1128 and 1170³⁸.

The available sources refers essentially to Muslim slaves. Nevertheless, it seems that these weren't the only ones to be purchased in Portuguese slave markets, as shown, for example, by a reference to a “white servant” bought in 1319 by a woman called Maria Martins³⁹. This practice can also be traced in Castile as demonstrated by the 900 Portuguese caught in 1296 by Alfonso Perez de Guzmán's forces and later sold in Seville and in Toledo for 12 *maravedis* each⁴⁰.

For their obvious usefulness, as well as for the profits that could be obtained with their work, it is not surprising that captives were considered valuable goods. In fact, it seems that between the mid-twelfth century and the first decades of the fourteenth century the average price of a slave was approximately 100 pounds each, as much as a reasonable warhorse⁴¹. Therefore, like any other important possession,

35 *Documentos Medievais Portugueses. Documentos Régios. Documentos dos Condes Portugalenses e de D. Afonso Henriques, 1095-1185*, ed. Rui Pinto de Azevedo, Academia Portuguesa da História, Lisboa, 1958-1961, vol. 1, tomo I, doc. 284, pp. 363-366; doc. 335, pp. 437-44; and doc. 289, pp. 371-373, among many others.

36 António Matos REIS, *Origens dos Municípios Portugueses*, Livros Horizonte, Lisboa, 1991, p. 211.

37 *Documentos Medievais ...*, doc. 330, pp. 430-431.

38 Saul António GOMES, “Grupos étnico-religiosos e estrangeiros”, *Nova História de Portugal*, Joel Serrão e A. H. de Oliveira Marques (dirs.), Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho e Armando Luís de Carvalho Homem (coords.), Presença, Lisboa, 1996, vol. III, pp. 309-311.

39 José MATTOSO, “Comércio de escravos em Portugal no século XIV”, *Naquele Tempo. Ensaio de História Medieval*, Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa, 2000, pp. 393-394.

40 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 97, p. 172.

41 *Documentos Medievais ...*, doc. 284, pp. 363-366; doc. 335, pp. 437-441; doc. 289, pp. 371-373; Mário VIANA, “O Almirantado e a jurisdição sobre os homens do mar em Portugal na Idade Média”, *Gentes de Mar en la Ciudad Atlántica Medieval-Actas*, Jesús A. Solorzano Telechea, Michel Bochaca and Amélia Aguiar Andrade (eds.), Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2012, p. 322; and Miguel Gomes MARTINS, *A Arte da Guerra em Portugal. 1245-*

captives were often delivered as a pledge for a loan⁴², or left in bequest, as did Sancha Peres de Gosende, who in 1287 left a Moor to her daughter Berengária Aires⁴³.

Testamentary provisions established by their owners could also give Muslim slaves the chance to convert themselves to Christianity and thus to achieve better life conditions or even manumission⁴⁴. And even when baptism didn't immediately assured them the desired freedom, at least it gave them the possibility of achieving it in a near future if they decide to take the risk of escaping to a village such as Freixo de Espada-à-Cinta – in northeast Portugal –, where converted Moors could become free men⁴⁵. However, since converting to another religion was not always an option, just as escaping was not always a possibility, the majority of these men and women – like those Christians captivated by the Muslims – remained waiting for freedom to come in another way; for example, through an exchange of prisoners, such as those that are mentioned in the twelfth-thirteenth century municipal laws of the Riba-Côa region, in the eastern Portuguese border, which explicitly states that the captured “Moors” should preferably be exchanged for Christians held by the enemy⁴⁶.

Besides this “direct exchange”, i.e. captive by captive, liberation could also be achieved by other ways, as shown, for example, by the testament of João Peres, written in November 1185 and in which he demands that the amount obtained with the sale of “*his Moors*” (slaves), should be used to release a fellow Christian held in captivity by the Muslims⁴⁷.

But even with these regular exchanges of prisoners, the most common way of obtaining their liberation was undoubtedly through a ransom. It was usually paid by the captive's family, or by the lord of whom they were vassals, as like the case of Mem Sarrazines that by the end of the

1367, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2014, pp. 277-279.

42 Susana Tavares PEDRO, *As “Notícias” Medievais Portuguesas (Análise, Classificação e Edição de Documentos dos Séculos X a XIII)*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian / Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Lisboa, 2013, doc. 65, p. 334.

43 Arquivo Nacional/Torre do Tombo, Mosteiro de Almoester, M 2, doc. 55.

44 Luís Miguel RÊPAS, *Quando a Nobreza Traja de Branco. A Comunidade Cisterciense de Arouca durante o Abadessado de D. Luca Rodrigues (1286-1299)*, Magno, Leiria, 2003, doc. 4, pp. 249-252.

45 *Documentos Medievais ...*, doc. 252, pp. 309-313.

46 *Portugaliae Monumenta Histórica: Leges et Consuetudines*, Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1856-1868, vol. I, pp. 759, 804, 889 and p. 932.

47 Susana Tavares PEDRO, *As “Notícias” ...*, doc. 81, p. 380.

twelfth century instructed the executors of his will in order to make the necessary efforts to liberate Mem Viegas and Egas Afonso from captivity⁴⁸.

Documented in previous periods – one might recall, for instance, the redemption of Amarelo Mestaliz's daughters, captured by the Vikings on the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula, c.1015-1016⁴⁹ –, ransoming, as a condition for the release of a given captive, became more common in Portugal from the twelfth century onwards⁵⁰. This is, most likely, one of the outcomes of the advance of the *Reconquista* towards South, but above all is a result of the propagation of the idea that ransoming could be a valid alternative to death and slavery, i.e. as a pious “offer” from the vanquisher to the vanquished⁵¹.

In this change of mentality, one must also underline the leading role played by the Church, which began, since the late twelfth century, to advocate capturing the opponent instead of killing him, a solution proclaimed, among others, by the Bishop of Silves, Álvaro Pais, in his *De Statu et Planctu Ecclesiae*⁵². By the same time intellectuals like the Portuguese Franciscan Saint Anthony began recommending ransoming as a way to achieve forgiveness for sins⁵³. The Holy See itself began using ransoming also as a penance, as in the case of Prince Fernando – brother of King Sancho II (1223-1248) –, to whom pope Gregory IX imposed the obligation, within three years, to ransom 20 prisoners held by the Muslims, precisely as a way of achieving forgiveness for the sins he had previously committed⁵⁴.

The wide dissemination of ransoming captives is not only the result

48 Susana Tavares PEDRO, *As “Notícias” ... doc. 63*, p. 329.

49 Rui Pinto de AZEVEDO, “A expedição de Almançor a Santiago de Compostela em 997 e a de piratas normandos à Galiza em 1015-1016”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, nº 14 (1973), pp. 85-88 e 91-93.

50 James W. BRODMAN, “Municipal ransoming law on the Medieval Spanish Frontier”, *Speculum*, nº 60 (1985), p. 318.

51 Jean FLORI, *Chevaliers et Chevalerie au Moyen Age*, Hachette, Paris, 1998, p. 166.

52 Philippe CONTAMINE, *War in the Middle Ages*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996, pp. 275-276.

53 *Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum*, José Pedro Paiva, Maria de Lurdes Rosa and Saul António Gomes (coord.), União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, Lisboa, 2003, vol. 2, p. 477, doc. 230.

54 António Domingues de Sousa COSTA, *Mestre Silvestre e Mestre Vicente, Juristas da Contenda entre D. Afonso II e suas Irmãs*, Editorial Franciscana, Braga, 1963, pp. 263-264; Miguel Gomes MARTINS, *Guerreiros Medievais Portugueses*, Esfera do Livros, Lisboa, 2013, p. 73; Armando de Sousa PEREIRA, “O infante D. Fernando de Portugal, senhor de Serpa (1218-1246): história da vida e da morte de um cavaleiro andante”, *Lusitânia Sacra*, nº 10 (1998), p. 108.

of the influence of the Church and of its most notable theologians, and much less of the chivalrous spirit – as underlined by Richard Barber⁵⁵ –, but above all a consequence of the perception of the huge economic benefits that it could bring to the captors. But that meant that on the other side of the barricade was someone – a relative, a lord or a friend – willing to pay the demanded amount, which didn't always happened.

So, aware of the difficulties or even of the impossibility of gathering the funds required by the captors, many non-noble knights began organizing themselves locally in brotherhoods or fraternities, like the one that, by the end of the thirteenth century, was created in the city of Beja, and in whose regulations was very well stressed the requirement that its members should gather the money needed to free their “confreres” who had been imprisoned by the enemy⁵⁶. This is, indeed, a rule that can be found in the statutes of many other similar fraternities⁵⁷, some of which not only provided assistance to members who were taken captive by the Moors, but also to those imprisoned by, as they are called, “*bad Christians*”⁵⁸.

And so, with more or less difficulty, many prisoners of war achieved their freedom sometimes after a several years' imprisonment, as in the case of Mem Alvo, who was captive for “*longo tempore*” and to whom the archbishop of Braga, in 1228, left many properties⁵⁹.

However, many were also those who could not reach that goal, either because their family or lords lacked the means to pay the demanded ransom, or simply refused to do it; or because it was not possible to locate them. No wonder that for all these reasons many ended up dying in foreign lands – in prison or as slaves – as happened with Martim Vasques de Soverosa, king Sancho I's “*alferes*” (second in command), captured and imprisoned in 1197 in Palença, and about whom no one ever knew a single thing⁶⁰.

55 Richard BARBER, *The Knight and Chivalry*, Boydell, Woodbridge, 2000, p. 241.

56 Maria José Pimenta Ferro TAVARES, “Para o estudo das confrarias medievais portuguesas: Os compromissos de três confrarias de homens-bons alentejanos”, *Estudos Medievais*, nº 8 (1987), pp. 22-23.

57 Ângela BEIRANTE, *Confrarias Medievais Portuguesas*, s.n, sl., 1990, pp. 22-23.

58 *Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum...*, doc. 156, p. 270.

59 *Testamenti Ecclesiae Portugaliae (1071-1325)*, Maria do Rosário Barbosa Morujão (coord.), Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisboa, 2010, doc. 1.10, p. 60.

60 *Portugaliae Monumenta Histórica: Livros Velhos de Linhagens*, ed. Joseph Piel and José Mattoso, Academia das Ciências, Lisboa, 1980, p. 28; and José Augusto de Sotto-Mayor PIZARRO, *Linhagens Medievais Portuguesas. Genealogias e estratégias (1279-1325)*,

Because of its complexity and risks, the redemption of captives had, almost always, the intervention of an expert, the “*alfaquete*”, who was responsible, as intermediary or mediator, to negotiate – and sometimes to haggle – the cost of each ransom. First, with the family, friends, “*confreres*” or lord of the prisoner and, secondly, with the captors or proprietors⁶¹. Although it is impossible to find out how many of these experts operated in Portuguese territory during the period previous to 1250, it seems clear that from that time onwards their numbers must have decreased. And it declined so substantially that became necessary to request the services of the Castilians “*alfaquetes*”, about whom, in 1352, people complained that had the vice of using the amounts that were delivered to them for the redemption of others captives than those who they were supposed to be released⁶², a problem felt, at least, since the beginning of the century⁶³.

A prominent role in the redemption of captives was also the one that was played by the Order of the Trinity, established in Portugal a few years after its foundation in France, in the late twelfth century and which in 1216, was responsible for the release of 458 imprisoned Christian captives in places - at the time still dominated by Muslims – such as Moura, Beja, Alcácer, Seville, Granada and Badajoz⁶⁴.

And even if the ransom was, as everything indicates, the most common form for prisoners to regain their freedom, the liberation of captives could also occur in other ways, especially after the conquest of a stronghold or a castle, as happened with about 200 Christians freed from the prisons of Silves in 1189, at the end of the siege imposed by king Sancho I (1185-1211) with the aid of a fleet of Crusaders⁶⁵.

But from all the solutions available for a captive to reach freedom, the most spectacular and risky of all was undoubtedly the escape. Although

Centro de Estudos de Genealogia, Heráldica e História da Família da Universidade Moderna, Porto, 1999, vol. 2, p. 209.

61 Francisco GARCÍA FITZ, “De exterminandis sarrecenis?. El trato dado al enemigo musulmán en el reino de Castilla-León durante da Plena Edad Media”, *El Cuerpo Derrotado: Cómo Trataban Musulmanes y Cristianos a Los Enemigos Vencidos (Península Ibérica, ss. VIII-XIII)*, Maribel Fierro and Francisco García Fitz (eds.), CSIC, Madrid, 2008, p. 135.

62 *Cortes Portuguesas ...*, p. 132.

63 Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Códice 139, fl. 183-194v.

64 Fortunato de ALMEIDA, *História da Igreja em Portugal*, Damião Peres (ed.), Portucalense, Porto, 1967, vol. I, p. 142.

65 *Crónica de Portugal ...*, chapter 47, p. 90; and *Relação da Derrota ...*, pp. 22 and 36.

sparsely documented in Portuguese sources, it must have been quite common on both sides of the border, as suggested, for example, by the commitment of the Lisbon boaters, signed in 1284, not to carry Moors without permission of their owners⁶⁶; or by cases like the one of Fatima, a Moorish slave owned by João Viegas whom he threatened to cut off one of her feet if she ever tried to run away⁶⁷; or even by the existence in border areas of hospitals prepared to accommodate and protect Christians who had escaped from captivity in Muslim lands⁶⁸. These are situations and examples which leads us to believe that this would have been a much more common practice than the pale image transmitted by the written sources of the XIIth, XIIIth and XIVth centuries.

Talking about prisoners of war, means talking about warriors, but also about civilians or non-combatants, artisans, merchants, clerks, farmers, men, women and children, anonymous people; it involves looking at both sides of the border; and it also means looking at the theatres of operations, where they were caught, and at what was happening in the rearguard, in the cities, villages, fields, monasteries, fairs and markets, where they were sold and used as hand-labor. As the study of this fascinating subject underlines, War in the Middle Ages didn't end in the battlefield or in siege operations. In fact, War was a matter which affected the entire medieval society, even when peace had settled.

Fecha de presentación: 16 de marzo de 2017

Fecha de aceptación: 30 de mayo de 2017

66 Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, Livro I de Místicos, Doc. 1.

67 Maria Ângela V. da Rocha BEIRANTE, *Santarém Medieval*, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, 1980, p. 218.

68 *Ordens Religiosas em Portugal. Das Origens a Trento. Guia Histórico*, Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa (dir.), Livros Horizonte, Lisboa, 2005, p. 438; and *Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum ...*, doc. 5, pp. 32-33.

