

Prisoners of War in Portugal, c. 1350-1450

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Abstract

This article deals with the subject of prisoners of war in the late Middle Ages in Portugal and in the Portuguese territories of North Africa, focusing on several aspects: from the context and places of capture of this type of prisoners to the transport and conditions in which they were detained (such as the places used for prison or the food and hygiene they had). Topics such as escape attempts and other ways to achieve freedom are also addressed, without forgetting the economic importance that these prisoners represented to their captors.

Keywords

Prisoners of war, medieval war, ransoms.

Resumo

Este artigo trata o tema dos prisioneiros de guerra nos finais da Idade Média em Portugal e nos territórios portugueses do Norte de Africa, focando diversos aspetos: desde o contexto e locais de captura deste tipo de prisioneiros até o transporte e condições em que se encontravam detidos (como os locais que serviam de prisão ou a alimentação e a higiene de que dispunham). São também

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abordados temas como as tentativas de fuga e as outras formas de obtenção da liberdade, sem esquecer a importância económica que estes prisioneiros então representavam para os seus captores.

Palavras-chave

Prisioneiros de guerra, guerra medieval, resgates.

The issue of prisoners of war arises frequently in Portuguese sources of the late Middle Ages. It is an assorted issue and that impresses due to the suffering associated with it. In his code *Las Siete Partidas*, Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon (1252-1284), distinguishes between “prisoners” (who should not receive injury, cannot be sold or used as servants, and from whom cannot be taken away women or children in order to sell them) and “captives” (those who, being under the domination of opponents with other faiths, shall be subject to cruel penalties and harsh treatment, are not owners of their belongings and may be sold or even killed)¹.

Prisoners of war in Portugal of the late Middle Ages (and in the Lusitanian territories of North Africa) could be obtained during a combat or among the non-combatant population. The detentions occurred in different contexts: in small operations (ambushes or skirmishes), in sieges of castles, in pitched battles or even in naval battles (frequent after the beginning of Portuguese operations in Morocco, in 1415). The captors could be members of armies in action or even non combatants that, in the aftermath of a battle, join their warriors at the moment of chasing enemies; so it happened in the night of 14 August 1385, after the defeat of D. Juan I in Aljubarrota: in a scope of 15 kilometres, thousands of fleeing Castilians were arrested at the hands of common people equipped with weapons of circumstance².

The places where the imprisonments occurred were very diverse; in Africa it was frequent the capture of prisoners on beaches, in rivers, in

1 *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 Andrea de Portonaris, Salamanca, 1555), vol. I, II.^a Partida, título XXIX, lei I, fls. 110-110v.^o.

2 João Gouveia MONTEIRO, “The Battle of Aljubarrota (1385): a Reassessment”, *Journal of Medieval Military History*, VII (2009), p. 99.

forests and in mountains. Many resisted to the arrest, trying to escape or fighting, with fear of torture or of separation from family; but many ended up surrendering themselves. The quantity of prisoners obtained was variable, as well as their social condition: they could be members of the Royal House, clerics (treatise writers as Honoré Bouvet or Christine de Pisan admitted imprisonment of Religious who participate in wars³), nobles (and is with those that the chronics are more concerned with) or people of lower social status.

The transport of prisoners was not simple: sometimes, the distance was great, and most of them should make it on foot; only distinguished prisoners travelled mounted, as happened with Infante D. Fernando (brother of the Portuguese King) following the Lusitanian disaster in Tangier, in 1437⁴. But one could also resort to sea and river waterways: the galleys were the type of boat most used, and the method (very common in Morocco) had the advantage of being faster and safer. In arid regions, the movement of prisoners (usually barefoot) became difficult. Very often, for safety reasons, the trip was made at night, and could take several days.

We know examples of prisoners held in castles and towers, in religious institutions or even at home of their captors. The castles were the safest places: the prisoners were held inside the fortress or one of the towers, or in houses attached to the walls. Many detainees of Luso-Castilian wars of the late fifteenth century were enclosed on keeps or cisterns. Also religious establishments (as the prison of the Monastery of Alcobaça) could be used. It was frequent the enclosure of prisoners at home of their own captors, or of guards posted to this effect: the “*alcaldes*” and the jailers of the villages had to extricate themselves as best they could to receive and keep under surveillance the prisoners delivered to them!

3 Honoré BOUVET, *The Tree of Battles*. An English Version with Introduction by G. W. Coopland. Liverpool University Press, 1949, chapter XCVII, p. 187; and Christine de PISAN, *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye*, translated and printed by William Caxton (1489) from the French original, edited by A. T. P. Byles, Oxford University Press, 1932, Part III, chapter XXII, p. 179.

4 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I: Tratado da Vida e Feitos do Muito Virtuoso S.^{or} Ifante D. Fernando*, critical edition with introduction and notes by Adelino de Almeida Calado, Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis, Coimbra, 1960, chapter XIX, p. 173. The chronicler, who accompanied the “Holy Infant” on the hard African captivity, explains that D. Fernando traveled mounted on a horse, while his about ten Portuguese companions marched ahead.

The prisons were narrow and without a minimum conditions. In his captivity in Fez, between 1438 and 1443, Infante D. Fernando was imprisoned in a house, but then asked to join his companions and was put in a “pit” without natural light and so tiny that barely had space to relieve nature; the Infante slept on the floor, and could take no more than 15 months until he died. Before, they had been imprisoned in the “house of the dungeon” of Fez, which had a thick iron door all plated, with a big padlock and a lock. They stayed there more than three months, getting food borrowed through a merchant, after bribing the “*alcaide*”⁵.

The instruments used to imprison detainees were belts of deer, irons or ropes. These could be of any type, and the same thread could tie up several prisoners. Whereas the irons were more difficult to manufacture and more expensive; sometimes they left perennial physical marks. Fernão Lopes (one of the best European chroniclers of Four Hundred) explains that when the Master of the Military Order of Avis (the future King João I of Portugal, winner in Aljubarrota) was arrested by Queen Leonor, in 1382, he and his companion were imprisoned with “*thick shackles for the feet and chains for the legs*” [“*grossas adovas e cadea pellas pernas*”] and were put in “*such a house from where they couldn’t run away*” [“*tall casa d’onde nom podessem fugir*”⁶]. In this case, the prisoners to get around had to lift the chains and balls of rock or metal that brought on feet. The Holy Infante even used throat chain and handcuff when circulating outside⁷. It’s striking the account of Fernão Lopes, telling how about 1000 Castilians held in Santarém after the defeat in Aljubarrota were taken, “*like dogs,*” to drink water in the river Tagus, bound with chains and ropes⁸. In Africa the ropes were widely used, because easy to manufacture and transport: they were made of vegetal matter, animal skin or tendon, and didn’t oxidize.

Prisoners of major significance should have a stronger guard, but when the prison was safe, some guards were sufficient to watch over them. Also the wives of the jailers and the residents of the places could

5 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapter XX, pp. 179-180, and chapter XXXII, pp. 223-224.

6 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica de Dom Fernando*, critical edition by Giuliano Macchi, Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, 1975, capter CXLII, p. 500.

7 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapter XXXIV, pp. 227-228.

8 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I da boa memória. Parte Segunda*, edition prepared by William J. Entwistle, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisboa, 1977, chapter LI, p.126.

be mobilized to accomplish such tasks. The time of imprisonment was variable: but we don't know cases of life imprisonment, beyond the captivity of Infante D. Fernando in Fez, where he died in 1443, because the city of Ceuta, of which he had been a hostage, was not delivered to the Muslims.

Not infrequently, the prisoners of war were subjected to torture to obtain information, or to serve as an example. More drastic was the decision to execute them during a battle: not being a common practice, it could happen, as seen in Agincourt in 1415⁹. According to the account of Froissart, in the middle of the battle of Aljubarrota the Portuguese king gave order to execute the prisoners already captured (about 300 French knights and squires) not to run the risk of being attacked by them later¹⁰.

It could be quite cruel the fate of a prisoner after he died. The body of D. Fernando was mutilated and hanged naked, upside down, on the battlements of Fez, being the corpse subject to throwing of stones by Muslims¹¹. The worst, however, took place before, when the captive was subjected to the anger of his holder. In Fez, D. Fernando and his companions were forced to work in vile crafts, to take care of a kitchen-garden and to clean the stables, from sun to sun. They were forced to displace large rocks (a very heavy work and that wounded their hands) and to do carpentry jobs. During this, they were getting punishment, and if they answer, they were retaliated with 500 lashes; if they attack a Moor, the hand was chopped off¹². In Portugal the prisoners could also be forced to row in galleys, supplying the traditional lack of “*galeotes*” [rowers of galleys]. Christine de Pisan argued that prisoners could be reduced to serfdom or slavery, but could not be killed and should be under the Christian piety¹³.

9 Anne CURRY, *Agincourt. A New History*, Tempus Publishing Limited, 2006, specially pp. 294-295.

10 Jean FROISSART, *Chroniques*, publié par la Société de l'Histoire de France par Léon Mirot, Tome Douzième, 1356-1388. Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, Paris, 1931, par. 40 e 41, pp. 160-163. Further, the chronicler of Valenciennes presents another version, saying that *before* the start of the battle, the Portuguese king ordered that no one should take prisoners, since this was a fight of “*ou tout morir ou tout vivre*”, where nobody could be unfocused and greed for redemptions (Jean FROISSART, *Chroniques*, par. 93, pp. 285-286).

11 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapters XXXIX-XL, pp. 247-249.

12 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapters XXIV (pp. 192 e 195) and XXXIV (pp. 227-228).

13 Christine de PISAN, *The Book of Fayttes...*, Part III, chapter XVII, p. 169.

The food of the prisoners was always poor. The sources rarely refer to it, but we know that, among the prisoners of common crime, was often family or friends that provided the meals. For the prisoners of war, the scenario would be different, as they were far from their homeland. The prisoners who were concentrated in Santarém after Aljubarrota had to ask the “vedor” [comptroller] of the Royal House to intercede with the King, because they were starving¹⁴. In the case of captives, the situation was even worse: the Holy Infante and his companions were given an octave of flour, for them to eat as they wished; sometimes were also given leftovers of “couscous”¹⁵. The situation worsened when, for religious reasons or in protest, the captives refused ingesting some foods or they fasted.

The hygiene was precarious: in those unhealthy spaces, prisoners were attacked by diseases and had no medical support. The physical suffering was associated with psychological torture: the doubt, the fear of death, the absence of news from family¹⁶. When the Master of Avis was incarcerated by the Queen, he trembled in fear every time he heard someone knocking at the castle door, distrusting that might be a messenger with a note ordering to kill him¹⁷; and the Holy Infante cried to the point of his face became so rash as if someone had set fire to it¹⁸! The suffering could be aggravated by derision dedicated to prisoners, who were transmitted false news in order to aggravate their desperation¹⁹. But we also know cases of prisoners well treated, according to the Bouvet’s precept that prisoners should have reasonable food, drink and bedding²⁰, mainly when there were expectations of redemptions, or political interests at stake...

14 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I...*, *Parte Segunda*, chapter LI, p. 126. The Portuguese monarch sent distribute them bread, and later on opted to release them.

15 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapters XXXIII to XXXVI, pp. 226-234.

16 Some of these aspects are analyzed in a reference work about the life of the medieval soldier: Clifford ROGERS, *Soldier’s Lives Through History – The Middle Ages*, Greenwood Press, 2007 (the pages 222 to 224 concern the condition of the soldier in prison).

17 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica de Dom Fernando...*, chapter CXLIV, p. 503.

18 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapter XXXV, p. 231.

19 Frei João ÁLVARES explains (*Obras. Volume I...*, chapter XXXVI, p. 233) that the women of the Alcazar of Fez came to the doors of the place where the Infante lay, and not being able to see him, sang many things to grieve him and told him many lies, such as Ceuta had been taken over by Muslims (Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapter. XXIV, p. 193).

20 Honoré BOUVET, *The Tree...*, chapter XLVII, p. 153.

The first instinct was to flee, attitude that both Bouvet and Christine de Pisan considered as an understandable “law of nature”, even because the prisoner had surrendered by coercion of arms. The right to escape was even more legitimate whenever a prisoner who had promised a good ransom was mistreated²¹. To get away, the prisoners could break the irons and the bars or pierce the walls; sometimes, they attacked the guards, taking the keys of the irons. The evasions from ships were tempting, since the fugitive swam well; in their campaigns in Africa, the Portuguese suffered many casualties among their captives in this way. The escape could be individual or in small groups and often performed under cover of night.

The reprisals for those who tried to escape (or who helped) were severe. In Fez, when a Biscayan belonging to the group of the Infante tried to escape, the cruel ‘king’ of Fez, Lazeraque, sent to flog his companions; later, the fugitive was recaptured: they opened his nerves of the feet by the hocks, dragged him through the camp with ropes placed in the opening of these nerves and, at night, he was hanged on a cross, upside down²²; reprisals could also focus on family or friends of fugitives. It could be serious to collaborate in the escape of a Saracen: the great Portuguese legal code of the mid-fifteenth century, *Ordenações Afonsinas* (inspired by the *Siete Partidas*), punishes all Christians, manumitted Moors or Jews who did so; and stated that those who ran away with the Saracens outward Portugal could be captured and used as servants of war²³.

There were several possible ways to return freedom to a prisoner: he could be redeemed for cash, upon delivery of goods or territories, for both systems or in exchange for other prisoners. The release in exchange for goods or assets was quite rare. The exits from jail upon delivery of territories were even rarer, as they were very costly. As for the exchange of prisoners it could be much circumscribed (one person by another) or involve a large number of prisoners. In the first case, it was necessary to pay attention to social status, age and even the mar-

21 Honoré BOUVET, *The Tree...*, chapter LV, p. 158; Christine de PISAN, *The Book of Fayttes...*, Part III, chapter XXIII, p. 180.

22 Frei João ÁLVARES, *Obras. Volume I...*, chapter XLI, pp. 252-253.

23 *Ordenações Afonsinas*, presentation note by Mário Júlio Almeida Costa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, 1984, 5 vols., Livro II, título CXIV, p. 555.

tial performance of each of those involved. About the ransoms, we will ask: where came from the money? According to Alfonso X, everyone should contribute, by love of neighbor and to do damage to opponents; but also feudal-vassal and lineage relations weighed at the time of releasing a lord, a vassal or a relative: the Portuguese *Regimento da Guerra* [“Rules of War”] inserted into the *Ordenações Afonsinas* says that one of the duties of the vassal is to take his lord from prison²⁴. Those who did not have their own property, or wealthy friends, were at a disadvantage. The only thing left to them was to rely on others fraternity, on charity and wills of noble or clergy which stipulated the donation of funds for the remission of captives. For pressing situations there was the Ark of Mercy, where were collected the products of convictions and pious applications. In the *“Regimento da Redenção dos Cativos Cristão”* [Rules on the Redemption of Christians Captives], of 1454, it is requested to the king that half of the income of the Ark would be used for the remission of captives²⁵. At this time the king was D. Afonso V and it was during his administration (1448-1481) that the English Trinitarians were willing to contribute an annual sum to the rescue of Portuguese captives in Africa²⁶.

The task of negotiating the release of the captives was not easy, hence there were experts: the *“alfaqueques”* [ransomers]. A good *“alfaqueque”* should be true, fearless, dynamic and has his own assets. He was chosen within people of good lineage by two influent citizens, and swore an oath to the King from who he received a sealed letter²⁷. The cities of North Africa were populated of *“alfaqueques”*, their action focused mainly on coastal areas and on the cheapest captives. The skill in the local language was important, and the chronicler Zurara explains that when Antão Gonçalves, one of the first Portuguese explorers in Africa, exchanged two captive for ten negroes, among Moors and Moorish, this mediation was made by an *“alfaqueque”* of Infante D.

24 *Ordenações ...*, Livro I, título LXIII, p. 375.

25 *Portugaliae Monumenta Misericordiarum*, coordinated by José Pedro Paiva, União das Misericórdias Portuguesas, Lisboa, 2003, Part IV, doc. n.º 53, p. 94.

26 Giulio CIPOLLONE, “Les Trinitaires, rédempteurs des captifs (1198)”, *La guerre, la violence et les gens au Moyen Âge*, Philippe Contamine e Olivier Guyotjeannin (dir.), Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, Paris, 1996, p. 316.

27 *Las Siete Partidas...*, vol. I, II.ª Partida, título XXX, leis I and II, fls. 113 v.º e 114; and *Ordenações...*, Livro V, título XLIX, p. 177.

Henrique, “the Navigator”, who could speak Arabic²⁸. The same chronicler (who traveled to Africa to compose his narratives) reproduces a dialogue between the Earl D. Pedro de Meneses (the first Portuguese captain of Ceuta) and a Muslim “*alfaqueque*”, showing D. Pedro preferring the exchange of captives (instead of money) and requesting the sending of the names of Christians who were imprisoned there²⁹.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, in Morocco, the presence of “*alfaqueques*” should be very popular. Zurara explains that, at the time of D. Pedro, some Christian arrived in Ceuta early in the morning and the Moors came right to talk to them at the Ribeira [riverside]; three of them approached the boats and accepted the invitation to talk; soon, they got on with each other on the ransoms³⁰. Of course the profession entailed risks: corporal punishment, imprisonment, death ... We know cases of “*alfaqueques*” who worked in Africa and that were eventually made prisoners, or escaped it for very little³¹.

The release of prisoners could also take place during a military operation: either in an ambush, or during a battle, as occurred in Trancoso, in 1385, when the noblemen of Beira intercepted the Castilian column that was returning home loaded with spoil and prisoners³². But a large-scale release only happened at the signing of peace agreements. The Luso-Castilian wars provide some examples; the best is the treaty of 1393, between João I and Enrique III, who undertook to deliver, within 6 months and without ransom, all the prisoners of war. To do it was appointed a committee of 24 friars: 16 Dominicans (half Portuguese and the other Castilians) would treat to locate the prisoners in Castile; and 8 Franciscans (half of each nationality) would do the same in Portugal³³.

28 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis que se passaram na conquista da Guiné por mandado do Infante D. Henrique*, critical study and notes by Torquato de Sousa Soares, Academia Portuguesa da História, Lisboa, 1978, volume I, chapter XVI, p. 79

29 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica do Conde D. Pedro de Meneses*, presentation note by José Adriano de Freitas Carvalho, Programa Nacional de Edições Comemorativas dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Porto, 1988, chapter LVI, p. 192.

30 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica do Conde D. Pedro...*, chapter XLIII, p. 146

31 See examples in the work of Vasco SILVA, *Prisioneiros de Guerra no Portugal da Idade Média*, Edições Ecopy, Porto, 2007, pp. 225-226.

32 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter XXI, p. 44.

33 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapters CL and CLI, pp. 313-315.

There was always the possibility of the captors themselves grant freedom to their prisoners. They could do it by own initiative or by request of someone, sometimes being sensitive to special occasions: the Portuguese Constable having known that his men had trapped in a Castilian village a couple of bride and groom and those invited to the wedding, felt pity for them and sent release them, at the same time giving order to ensure security of those that were already in the church³⁴!

Frequently, people were captured in order to make political pressure, or to safeguard certain interests. In 1383, D. Juan I of Castile imprisoned his mother in law (and regent) to strengthen his claim to the throne of Portugal³⁵. There were also characters who, due to their importance, could decide a local dispute, therefore became desirable prisoners: in 1384, the squire Gil Fernandes of Elvas was treacherously arrested by the “*alcaide*”, with the explanation that “*if I have you imprisoned, I have all Elvas*” [“*pois vos tenho eu preso, eu tenho todo Ellvas*”³⁶]... The political issue is articulate with the military problem, as prisoners were a prime source for information. Sometimes it was even used to torture them to withdraw statements. In Africa, many captives were used as guides, being usual the resource to scouts to capture “*línguas*”³⁷[tongues]. But everywhere, prisoners could be tortured to speak. When managed to escape, they became an important source of information, given the coexistence they had had with their captors. Also “*alfaqueques*” could be good informants.

Prisoners of war had also a huge economic importance: they could be used as servants, in forced labor in agriculture or in various crafts (many Moors prisoners of African origins were brought to Portugal as servants or as slaves); they could be sold; and they could give good ransoms. In the flat and border regions of Alentejo and Extremadura, the war had become a lifestyle, following up mounted raids in order to obtain wealth. A successful campaign could change the life of a community! In 1373, during the first war of king D. Fernando against Castile, a wealthy citizen of Porto, called Domingos Peres de Eiras, was arrested in a skirmish and

34 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter CXCIX, p. 447.

35 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Primeira*, chapter LXXXIV, p. 141.

36 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica de Dom Fernando...*, chapter CLVII, p. 609.

37 For instance, ZURARA reports that, once a Moorish promised the Earl D. Pedro de Meneses, in exchange for his freedom, to indicate a suitable place for making many prisoners (*Crónica do Conde D. Pedro...*, chapter XLIII, p. 350).

paid a ransom of 10 000 gold francs, which came from Flanders in one of the ships he owned³⁸! In 1385 during a mounted raid made with the council militia of Serpa in Castile, Antão Vasquez captured 7 000 live-stock units and brought 10 prisoners, one of them was a wealthy farmer of Aroche, who paid a ransom of 100 000 “*reais*” [Portuguese coin] of silver³⁹. The next year, on the high seas, the Castilian Martim Gonçalves, who was pursuing a Portuguese boat in the offing Porto, was caught and had to pay 10.000 “*dobras*” [another coin] to be released⁴⁰.

As Michael Prestwich suggested, the late Middle Ages was a time of inflation of ransoms, in connection with the economic system of the time⁴¹. Froissart regrets the execution of the French prisoners in Aljubarrota, explaining that were lost 400.000 francs in ransoms⁴². One of the prisoners was the Chancellor and Castilian chronicler López de Ayala: thrown into the prison of Santarém, he had to pay a ransom of 30,000 “*dobras cruzadas*”, 30 Castilians horses and some prisoners of war⁴³.

When the rescue of a prisoner was made from the land or any other part of his heritage – what, as noted by Matthew Strickland, was common in the fourteenth century - the individual ran the risk of becoming ruined⁴⁴. Whence it was widely discussed to whom a prisoner belonged: to his captor? to the chief of the captor? to the King? Bouvet and Christine were of the opinion that a prisoner should belong to those who had taken him⁴⁵. However, the “*Regimento da Guerra*” prescribes that the captor inform his chief and recommends that he does not threaten to kill the prisoner in case of non being guaranteed the delivery of a portion of benefit to him⁴⁶. It was also envisaged the possibility of an escaped prisoner being recaptured: if the man had spent less than a night and a day in the possession of his captor, he should go back to his

38 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica de Dom Fernando...*, chapter LXXVIII, p. 272.

39 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter LX, p. 149

40 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter XC, p. 200.

41 Michael PRESTWICH, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages. The English Experience*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1996, p. 104.

42 Jean FROISSART, *Chroniques...*, Tome Douzième, par. 40 and 41, pp. 160-163.

43 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter LXII, p. 152.

44 Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry. The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 193-194.

45 Honoré BOUVET, *The Tree...*, chapter XIV, p. 135; and Christine de PISAN, *The Book of Fayttes...*, Part III, chapter XVII, p. 169.

46 *Ordenações...*, Liv. I, título LI, pp. 301-303.

captor, otherwise would belong to those who caught him⁴⁷. However in the daily war it would be difficult to fulfill such regulations. In the Luso-Castilian War of 1383-1385, it was usual the sharing of the ransoms by the participants in the campaign. Many times, the chiefs, which in theory were entitled to one-fifth of the spoils, dispense with it in benefit of their 'brave'.

Take no prisoners during a military campaign could be regarded as shameful, Zurara writes that the Portuguese who went to the Canaries, or Guinea, had to bring out a considerable number of captives by way of 'hunting trophy' because "*shameful thing would be to return to Portugal without copious prey*" [*"vergonhosa coisa seria regressar a Portugal sem avantajada presa"*]⁴⁸! The point is that sometimes the size of the vessels conditioned the transport of captives; Zurara speaks about this when he describes the large load of salt (for salting the skins of sea wolves) that Gomes Pires was carrying on his return from Africa, which prevented him from bringing more prisoners⁴⁹.

It is also interesting to note the role of the churches. Catches inside churches were rarer, since the intrusion of the combatants in religious spaces was contrary to the religious conventions. In 1385, when invaded Beira, the Castilians assaulted the churches of Viseu, but did not capture the people who had taken refuge there⁵⁰.

The fact itself of recognizing someone as a prisoner of war entailed a certain ritual: according to the "*Ordenações Afonsinas*", the captor should take the faith and basinet of the prisoner, or his right glove as a pledge and sign of submission⁵¹; only afterwards would be safeguarded the custody of the prisoner and the negotiation of the ransom, proportional to the prisoner's social quotation (remember the famous example of Du Guesclin in Nájera, in 1367)⁵².

When the captivity lasted long, the cultural consequences were inevitable. Zurara reports that when João Álvares Pereira made a cam-

47 *Ordenações...*, título LII, p. 313.

48 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis...*, chapter XIX, p. 87.

49 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis...*, chapter XCII, p. 342

50 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter XIX, p. 39.

51 *Ordenações...*, Liv. I, título LI, p. 34.

52 Pero LÓPEZ DE AYALA, *Crónicas*, edition, prologue and notes by José Luis Martín, Editorial Planeta, Barcelona, 1991, "Crónica de Don Pedro Primero", Año Decimotavo, chapter XVIII, pp. 361-365.

paign in Morocco, he found a Moor who had been 10 years in the hands of the Portuguese and already knew well Camões' language⁵³. We have also examples of Christian captives who converted themselves to Islam: the fear of torture and death encouraged this shift, as well as the long coexistence with the captors and the prospect of a better future⁵⁴.

It remains to point out the role of non-combatants⁵⁵. We know the difficulties encountered by women, children and elderly when trying to flee, and both in Portugal and in Morocco women and children were captured. This was against the thought of some treatise writers, like Christine de Pisan, that considered children the most unfair victims⁵⁶; however, the tradition was different. When traveled to Guinea, Antão Gonçalves swore to arrest by force of arms "*the women and small boys*" he could⁵⁷. Some generals, for ethics formation or religious conviction, were contrary to that as seems to have happened with the Constable Nuno Álvares Pereira, but they were exceptions (or perhaps portraits gilded by the chroniclers...)⁵⁸.

Afterward women ran the risk of being raped by guards, and children not infrequently suffered maltreatment. So they could also interpret spectacular escapes, as one Moorish woman captured in Guinea who jumped into the water from one of the caravels that the Portuguese had sent to the area⁵⁹! Women could also suffer indirectly the hardships of war, when they served as hostages of their husbands who deserted, or as exchange currency for political dividends.

Seeing the issue from 'the other side', we shall remember that women could help to guard prisons, especially if they were married to a jailer; they could be used to insult and destabilize emotionally the detainees; and could even play the role of captors: it was what

53 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica do Conde D. Pedro...*, chapter LVI, p. 397.

54 On these transcultural and religious aspects, see Stephen MORILLO, "A General Typology of Transcultural Wars: The Early Middle Ages and Beyond", *Transcultural Wars from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century*, Hans-Henning Kortüm, ed., Akademie Verlag, 2006, pp. 29-42.

55 On these matters, we recommend the work of Clifford ROGERS, *Soldier's Lives ...*, *passim*; and he study of de Aldo SETTIA, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie: la guerra nel Medioevo*, GLF Editori Laterza, 2002, *passim*.

56 Christine de PISAN, *The Book of Fayttes...*, Part III, chapter XXI, pp. 176-177.

57 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis...*, chapter XCII, p. 167.

58 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter CLXII, p. 341.

59 Gomes Eanes de ZURARA, *Crónica dos feitos notáveis...*, chapter LXVII, p. 257.

happened at the night of Aljubarrota, when some of them have helped “to rob and imprison” the Castilians who were fleeing⁶⁰. Thus was born the legend of the Padeira [baker] of Aljubarrota, the most famous of the Portuguese History: a woman of colossal force, with six fingers on each hand and a past of brawls and duels won to men with doubtful *Curriculum*, she discovered in her bread oven seven Castilians and killed them one go⁶¹... There would be no better symbol of the feminine connection to the masculine world of medieval warfare to complete our essay!

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60 Fernão LOPES, *Crónica del Rei dom João I... Parte Segunda*, chapter L, p. 125.

61 About this legendary figure, who still inspires historical novels, see Cristina PIMENTA, *A Padeira de Aljubarrota. Entre ontem e hoje*, Fundação Batalha de Aljubarrota, 2007.