

Nuno Álvares Pereira and the Military Ethos of the 15th Century in the *Crónica do Condestabre* (c. 1431-1443)¹

João Nisa

(Centro de História da Sociedade e da Cultura - Universidade de Coimbra)

1. Introduction

Nuno Álvares Pereira (d. 1431) is, without a doubt, one of the best-known figures in all of Portugal's history. A shrewd and generous warrior, he forged a reputation as a brilliant military strategist that lasted well after his death and continues to this day. The Portuguese poet Luís de Camões called him "fero Nuno," that is, the fierce Nuno. He is, unquestionably one of the most studied characters in all Portuguese historiography. There are works stretching from the chronicle we bring here, written in the 15th century, to the countless biographical studies that have been dedicated to him since the 19th century. The interest in his life is not depleted and his magnetic personality continues to attract researchers. João Gouveia Monteiro, a medievalist with a vast work in the field of medieval warfare, including his studies on Nuno Álvares' greatest victory, Aljubarrota (August 14, 1385), dedicated to him what is, so far, the most complete work on his life, entitled *Nuno Álvares Pereira - Guerreiro, senhor feudal, santo: os Três Rostos do Condestável* (2017).

Like other characters of the Late Middle Ages, he was also immortalized in a work that recorded his deeds and virtues, the so-called *Crónica do Condestabre*², written after his death. In this article we do not intend to dissect this work from a formal, literary, or philological point of view, although it is important to highlight the context in which it was written. In this sense, the main objective is to use it as a source to analyze the behavior of Nuno Álvares Pereira regarding the various facets of medieval warfare. Whenever appropriate, we will draw parallels and comparisons with similar works, produced in identical contexts. Notable among these are the biography of Jean II Le Meingre, called Boucicaut (d. 1421), depicted in the pages of the *Livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes; El Victorial*, dedicated to Pero Niño, Count of Buelna (d. 1453), and the *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna*, a chronicle on the life of the Castilian constable Álvaro de Luna (d. 1453). At first glance, there are certain similarities that we cannot fail to highlight. All the figures mentioned here played important roles and military functions in their respective kingdoms: Nuno Álvares Pereira and Álvaro de Luna were constables of Portugal and Castile, respectively; Boucicaut was marshal of France and Pero Niño performed military missions of high responsibility at the behest of Enrique III of Castile. This common denominator that links them, war, is also associated with the DNA of the social class to which they belong, the nobility. For this reason, it becomes interesting to verify if their biographies, described in the chronicles that were dedicated to them, present similar attitudes and values or if, on the other hand, they display very different behaviors.

2. The *Crónica do Condestabre*

The *Crónica do Condestabre*, by an anonymous author, was written after the death of Nuno Álvares Pereira, most likely between 1431 and 1443, although some

¹ This article was written as part of the research conducted for my PhD project, funded by FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), ref. SFRH/BD/136145/2018.

² In this paper we will use as reference the critical edition prepared by Calado 1991.

authors admit the hypothesis of placing 1437 as the limit year of composition of the work (Monteiro 2017, 39) or even 1435 (Russell, 30). Divided into 80 chapters and written in vernacular prose, it covers all the moments of the constable's life, from the origin of his lineage, through his exploits as a military commander and feudal lord of high status, ending with his entry into religious life, dying as a simple clergyman in 1431. Even so, there are some time lapses in the chronicle, namely between 1401, the date of the marriage of his daughter Beatriz to Afonso, natural son of King João I, and her death in 1414. Its writing is part of a series of works written all over medieval Europe, of a seigneurial and chivalric nature, a genre that flourished during the 14th century. Some of them stand out, like Jean Cuvelier's biography of Bertrand du Guesclin (1381) and the life of the Black Prince told in the Chandos Herald (1385) (Taylor & Taylor, 7). As far as it is known, the work was first published in Lisbon in the year 1526, in Germão Galharde's workshop. It is unlikely that there had been an earlier edition, and this is the version we have today, while there is no record referring the existence of a manuscript (Calado, VII-IX).

The author of the work doesn't identify himself, as is the case with Boucicaut's biographer, who only indicates that the work "was set in train by a number of knights and gallant gentlemen [...] who knew the good and valiant marshal" (Taylor & Taylor, 24). That is, it mentions the promoters, but hides the identity of the author or authors. The same is true of the also anonymous *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna*, whose authorship is still shrouded in some discussion. Juan de Mata Carriazo (XXI-XL), in the preliminary study of one of the editions of the chronicle, attributed the writing to Gonzalo Chacón, although the possibility of dual authorship is not ruled out (González Delgado, 839-851).

Although it is an anonymous work, its authorship has been the subject of speculation by researchers. One of the most frequently mentioned names was that of Fernão Lopes, the most recognized Portuguese medieval chronicler, keeper of the royal archive, the Torre do Tombo since 1418 and the king's chronicler since 1434. He was the author of several chronicles about the first kings of Portugal, and he is known for the writing of the chronicles of D. Pedro, D. Fernando and, above all, D. João I, his *magnum opus*. He may also have been the material author of the so-called *Crónica de 1419*, with Filipe Alves Moreira (95-96) presenting arguments to that effect. However, it is admitted that this is still an open question. There seems to be some consensus that Fernão Lopes was not the author of the *Crónica do Condestabre*. Nevertheless, he used it as one of the main sources for the writing of his chronicles, along with the Castilian chronicles of Pero Lopez de Ayala, a Latin chronicle by a Dr. Christophorus and another lost chronicle of the reign of D. Fernando attributed to Martim Afonso de Melo (Monteiro 1988, 87)³.

Recently, João Gouveia Monteiro raised the possibility that the authorship of the chronicle is the responsibility of Gil Airas, private secretary (*escrivão da puridade*) of Nuno Álvares Pereira, because of the direct knowledge he had of the character and his affairs (Monteiro 2017, 48-51; 2018, 118). It is not a hypothesis to be rejected, because there are several Iberian chronicles in which the authors are close to the person they write about, belonging to their private circles. Perhaps the most evident case is that of Gutierre Díaz de Games, "criado de la casa del conde don Pero Niño, conde de Buelna," (62) and his *alferes*, author of *El Victorial*. But there are others, such as the account of

³ Many doubts always arise when one identifies Martim Afonso de Melo, because of the frequent homonymy in the Portuguese Middle Ages. This Martim Afonso de Melo is the same one who played important roles at the court of King Fernando, and not his nephew with the same name, a leading figure during the reign of King João I.

the life of the master of Alcántara, Alonso de Monroy, composed by Alonso de Maldonado at the end of the 15th century. In some passages of the work the chronicler lets us see his close relationship with the master, and there is some evidence that he served as his personal secretary in several campaigns (Rodríguez Casillas, 39-40).

As for the motivations behind the writing of the chronicle about the life of Nuno Álvares Pereira, we can deduce them from the author's words, in the introduction:

Antigamente foy costume fazerem memoria das cousas que se faziam, assy erradas como dos valentes e nobres feitos; dos erros por que se delles soubessem guardar, e dos vallentes e nobres feytos por que aos bõos fezessem cobiça aver pera as semelhantes cousas fazerem. E por nom fazer longo prologo farey aqui começo em este virtuoso senhor do qual veeo o vallente e muy virtuoso senhor Nuno Alvrez Pereyra, e assy de hy em diante siguiremos nossa estória. (Calado, 1)

This statement clearly declares that one of the objectives of the work is to describe the chivalrous deeds of the constable, starting this journey through his lineage. This was not just any lineage: his grandfather, Gonçalo Pereira, had been archbishop of Braga, the most important religious dignity in medieval Portugal, only surpassed at the Iberian level by the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela. His father, on the other hand, had been the leader of the Portuguese Hospitallers for over 30 years and a central figure in the narrative surrounding the battle of Salado (1340), as presented to us in the *Livro de Linhagens do Conde D. Pedro* (Pizarro, 307-308). For this same reason, some authors have raised the possibility that the writer of the work was simultaneously a knight and cleric, most likely a member of a Military Order (Amado, 49). However, since the chronicle was written after the death of the constable, he was not the work's main beneficiary. Therefore, one of the hypotheses is that it was written to benefit one of his descendants. Nuno Álvares Pereira had a daughter, Beatriz, born of his union with Leonor de Alvim, who would marry Afonso, natural son of King João I (r. 1385-1433). This connection was the embryo of the future House of Bragança, with Afonso, by then Count of Barcelos, being its first Duke. For this very reason it is possible that Afonso's children, grandchildren of the constable, commissioned a chronicle to perpetuate their grandfather's memory (Branco, 59). Supporting this theory is the inclusion of some later additions that mention titles of nobility that Nuno Álvares' grandsons only received later. These additions date from the period between 1461 and 1481 and are thought to have been the only ones made to the manuscript, published in 1526, as mentioned above. This edition was sponsored by the heirs of the constable, possibly by Duke Jaime, his great-great-grandson (Monteiro 2017, 41-43).

Although it was not the first vernacular chronicle written in Portugal, what is certain is that its writing influenced later works, namely the production of chronicles of a seigneurial nature. We can present as examples the biographies of Count Pedro de Meneses (1463) and his son, D. Duarte de Meneses (1468), authored by Gomes Eanes de Zurara and the *Crónica dos Feitos da Guiné* (c. 1452-63), by the same author and dedicated to underline the achievements of *infante* Henrique, the Navigator. And finally, although in a somewhat different category, the *Trautado da Vida e Feitos do Muito Virtuoso S.^{or} Ifante D. Fernando*, written by Friar João Álvares in the 1450s (Monteiro 2017, 39).

3. Warrior ethos: conduct and normative

The term chivalry has no easy explanation, but it is generally applied to define a set of values, practices, rituals, symbols, and attitudes, rooted in 11th and 12th century

France which became the matrix of medieval knights in the 14th and 15th centuries (Aguiar, 15). We can include in this definition the feats of arms and participation in jousts and tournaments, a very popular activity among Christian knights in the Middle Ages. As far as feats of arms are concerned, these could be challenges for single or team combats, usually aimed at solving disputes related to political issues, honor, or simply to gain fame and reputation (Monteiro 1998, 432). One of the modalities could be combat *à outrance*, that is, to the death, with real weapons. There is a very telling example of this in the *Crónica do Condestabre*.

During King Fernando's last war with Castile, Fernando de Osorez undertook a daring *chevauchée* across Portuguese soil, leaving a trail of destruction and returning to Castile with considerable booty. To make matters worse, the Portuguese force in charge of intercepting the Castilian column arrived too late, and the Master of Santiago managed to retreat and take refuge in Badajoz. Nuno Álvares was part of the contingent sent to fight him, but news that *infante* João de Castro, rebellious half-brother of the Portuguese king, was coming to the aid of Fernando Osorez, led to a decision not to continue the enterprise. If we are to trust the account in the *Crónica do Condestabre*, the young Portuguese nobleman was not happy with the decision made by his companions. Ultimately, the honor of the Portuguese king was at stake, reparation for the damage caused by the Castilian attack was needed, but also "seer conhecido e aver nome de boom" (Calado, 19). In other words, defending his king's reputation while enhancing his own. The method he chose was to challenge the son of the Castilian master, named Juan de Osorez, to a ten vs ten fight to the death.

He would accomplish two goals by facing him: on the one hand, he would repair the harm Fernando de Osorez had done on Portuguese soil, causing him suffering with the loss of his son; on the other, regardless of the outcome of the combat, he would always emerge victorious, since this demonstration of courage and loyalty could only increase the royal favor he intended to continue enjoying. Despite this, the duel didn't take place. His biographer tells us that this was due to objections raised by the king who, although recognizing and thanking the loyalty shown by the young warrior at the time, said that "poderia seguir priigo e nom muy grande honrra" (Calado, 24). Curiously, Fernão Lopes in the *Crónica de Dom Fernando*, in the chapter (438) describing this episode, omits the following facts of this story because it seems Nuno Álvares still asked Edmund of Cambridge, who by then was under Portuguese employ, to intercede with the king, but without success (Calado, 24-25).

It is strange that the chronicle does not mention Nuno Álvares' qualities as a great joustier, an activity closely related to the chivalric ideal and to the demonstration of skill in the handling of weapons. So much so that we know of several events of this kind during his lifetime, usually associated with events of celebration or commemoration: this happened during the festivities of the wedding of Dona Beatriz with King Juan of Castile, in 1383; in the celebration of the marriage of King João I with Filipa of Lancaster, in February 1387; and, more directly related to him, we have the wedding feast of his daughter Dona Beatriz with Afonso, son of the king, in 1401 (Monteiro 1998, 422). Only for this last event do we have some information about the direct participation of the constable in "justas e torneos e muyto prazer de matinadas e outros jogos," without further details (Lopes 1977b, 458). This situation contrasts with other knights of the time. Let us see the case of Boucicaut.

The French knight was one of the most famous joustiers of his generation. Perhaps his best-known feat was the one that occurred in 1390 near Saint-Ingelvert. With permission from the King of France, Boucicaut sent messages to every corner of Christendom, from the Iberian Peninsula to Germany, across Italy and England. For 30

days, he and two companions, Renaud de Roye and the lord of Sempy, would fight against anyone who appeared to challenge them, with the spear being the weapon of choice. It could be blunt or not, depending on whether the opponent was friend or foe (Taylor & Taylor, 49). Jean Froissart mentions the names of the 39 individuals who fought against the three Frenchmen, which included Henry Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt and future King of England (Taylor, 18). In the end, victory smiled upon Boucicaut.

We can therefore state that although Nuno Álvares was undoubtedly a capable warrior, his chronicler chose not to portray him as a good jousting, concealing his prowess in the lists. As we will see later, the choice of the author of the *Crónica do Condestabre* was to present the object of his work from another perspective, no less martial. In this aspect, we can say that his perspective is based on some ideas conveyed by the French knight Geoffroi de Charny (d. 1356), in his work *Livre de Chevalerie*. Without being able to affirm that the biographer of the Portuguese constable had knowledge of this work, it is interesting that, regarding the value of jousts and tournaments, his vision is similar, assuming that participation in war is more demanding and, consequently, more honorable for the knight (Charny, 49-50). If we analyze *El Victorial*, for example, we soon find that Gutierre Díaz de Games devotes an entire chapter to Pero Niño's qualities as a jousting. The author defines his character as a symbol of chivalry, even stating that he knocked down more knights in his lifetime than all the knights who had jousting in Castile for 50 years (Díaz de Games, 117-118). Álvaro de Luna is also portrayed as a great specialist of this type of martial game, a student of the "fechos de armas e de caballeria", as shown by his participation in the jousts organized in 1419 and where he almost lost his life (Mata Carriazo, 28-30).

The great highlight of the *Crónica do Condestabre* is the representation of Nuno Álvares as a military commander. He began his career very early, at the age of 13, during King Fernando's second conflict with Castile (1373), ending it only in 1415, during the Portuguese expedition to Ceuta, in North Africa. He fought in three pitched battles in little more than a year: Atoleiros in 1384, Aljubarrota and Valverde, both in 1385. In this aspect, we can draw a parallel with Boucicaut who participated in the most important battles fought by the French nobility in the late 14th century and the first decades of the next century: Roosebeke (1382), Nicopolis (1396) and Agincourt (1415)⁴.

One of the characteristics that seems most remarkable to us is that of a disciplinarian military chief, sometimes taken to the extreme. His chronicler says that in 1386, while campaigning near Fonte Guinaldo, Nuno Álvares learned that a squire named Gonçalo Gil de Veiros had stolen a chalice from a church. He quickly had a bonfire prepared to burn the offender, who was saved at the last moment by the intervention of some captains and knights of his host who appealed to the constable's good heart (Calado, 138). A similar episode happened during a Portuguese offensive in Castile, when a great racket arose in the camp, much to the fault of one Afonso Peres Sarrazinho and the good wines that were found in Zafra. The constable had no doubts, and after an enquiry was made, he intended to harshly punish the wrongdoer, but was dissuaded by some captains, choosing to remove the offender from the camp for a while (Calado, 173).

In these two examples it is clear what guided his conduct. Churches were sacred places, places of prayer and connection with the divine and, consequently, should be respected. When he arrived in Assumar, he ordered that the Church of Santa Maria,

⁴ Unfortunately, Boucicaut's anonymous biography does not cover the period when the battle of Agincourt was fought, ending his account in 1409.

used by the Castilians as a stable, to be cleaned, being the first to remove the dung from its interior (Calado, 70). This attitude contrasts somewhat with what was happening in other geographies during the Hundred Years' War. Like what occurred in 1346 when an English force led by Henry of Lancaster burst through Poitou and Saintonge. On the way, the important Benedictine abbey of Saint-Jean-d'Angély was sacked by English troops, which prompted papal intervention (Gribit, 145). This indiscipline and apparent indiscriminate violence practiced by the medieval armies is explained, to some extent, by their heterogeneity, with a higher proportion of individuals of low social status. However, this story narrated by the chronicler of Nuno Álvares regarding the chalice, has parallels with others by Froissart, inserted in his chronicles to serve as a warning to those who would plunder churches (Kaeuper, 184). Thus, we may be in the presence of an exaggeration by the chronicler of the constable, intended to serve the same purpose. It should be duly noted that the *Ordenações Afonsinas*, a 15th century Portuguese legislative code, contains in its *Regimento da Guerra* (298-299) a heavy punishment for anyone who robbed churches or imprisoned a member of the Church: death. Similarly, the *Livre des fais* also condemns the destruction and looting of churches and violence towards clerics, indicating that Boucicaut punished those who did not obey this directive with hanging (Taylor & Taylor, 191). Some of the measures taken by the Portuguese constable were extremely unpopular, namely the prohibition of women in the camp and alcohol consumption (Monteiro 2017, 155).

There has been much debate among medievalists as to whether medieval military commanders avoided pitched battles, in what is commonly referred to as the “Gillingham Paradigm⁵.” According to this point of view and following the teachings of the work of the Latin author Vegetius, entitled *De re militari*, the leaders of medieval armies had a propensity to avoid the risk of the field battle, preferring other less risky solutions, such as sieges and *chevauchées* (Villalon, 134-135). The wide dissemination that Vegetius' work had during the Middle Ages has already been studied⁶ and it is more than likely that Nuno Álvares was aware of it, similarly to what happens with Álvaro de Luna (Castillo Cáceres, 155). Nuno Álvares perhaps represents a middle ground in this matter. His propensity for ambushes and ruses is recognized, but, unlike other military commanders, instead of avoiding battles, he seeks them, an idea that is not new (Monteiro 2017, 147), but has been little explored. It is also important to know to what extent this issue is not amplified by the chroniclers to build an image of an intrepid and ambitious warrior. One way is to analyze the context of some of his campaigns. In Aljubarrota, for instance, there were several circumstances that pushed the Portuguese to battle, but Nuno Álvares always took a favorable stance when it came to giving battle:

Estando el rey em Abrantes seëdo ja hy o conde estabre com elle, teve seu conselho em feito da batalha que queria poer a el rey de Castella, no qual conselho eram muy divisos huns dos outros em esta guisa: el rey desejava muyto a aver a batalha e conde estabre estava com elle, o qual desejava muyto seer a batalha mais que nenhũa outra cousa, e entendendo esto por serviço del rey. (Calado, 112-113)

⁵ The name given to the paradigm has its roots in John Gillingham's ideas, although he thinks that it should be called Smail Paradigm in honor of Raymond Charles Smail, one of the first historians to defend this point of view.

⁶ The reception and transmission of Vegetius' work in Medieval Europe is thoroughly discussed by Allmand 2013.

The constable's iron resolve was important, but not decisive. Other factors also played a role, such as the impossibility of adopting a strategy of indirect approach, due to the lack of political and military conditions, as well as the choice and preparation of the terrain, where they could adopt a defensible position, were favorable to the Portuguese (Monteiro 2010, 165-166). There are passages in the *Crónica do Condestabre* where Nuno Álvares' displeasure towards the enemy, who evades combat, is observed. In 1398 he receives information that the Castilian master of Santiago was preparing to enter the Alentejo region. He quickly gathered his men, close to 7000 combatants, and entered Castile, determined to meet the enemy, and give battle. What is certain is that the Castilian force soon showed that it was not interested in fighting the Portuguese host. According to the chronicle, there was a challenge made to do so, but the Castilians preferred to retreat further inland and take refuge in strategic locations near their strongholds. Confronted with the opponent's refusal to fight and its privileged position, Nuno Álvares decided to continue his campaign (Calado, 167-175). But we must ask: would the chronicler be exaggerating his conduct, belittling the enemy's bravery and accentuating their cowardice? It may be so, but it is certain that this willingness to give battle was not at all unconscious. In this situation, he had the superiority of numbers in his favor, but the Castilians' knowledge of the terrain proved to be advantageous to them. Operating in enemy territory, with logistical difficulties and a hostile local population was no easy task. In fact, it would be important to have another type of source about this event to compare different perspectives. And in this case, we're lucky enough to have a letter sent by Enrique III of Castile to the masters of Alcántara and Santiago, where the king confirms the attitude of the Portuguese constable, his numerical superiority and applauds the prudence of the Castilians (Palacios Martín, 519-521). In a study on strategy and military tactics in 15th century Castile, Ekaitz Etxeberria Gallastegi analyzed the behavior of Álvaro de Luna, seeking to answer whether or not the Castilian constable was a battle-seeking military commander who sought confrontation in the open field. After surveying all the military operations in which the favorite of Juan II of Castile participated, he concluded that his conduct could fit the so-called "Gillingham Paradigm". This attitude of Álvaro de Luna, an "eagerness" as the author calls it, combines several factors, among which we highlight the need to assert himself in the Castilian political scene through the force of arms (2019a, 115-119). We can find some similarities with the Portuguese constable's posture: young, eager to prove himself up to his responsibilities and, above all, capable of standing out in a complicated political scenario. The easiest way to achieve his goals was to gain reputation through military deeds, recognizable not only in Portugal, but also in Castile. This was his time to shine and all the eyes were fixed upon him.

Not all military operations were to Nuno Álvares Pereira's liking. Although he participated in numerous sieges during his career, it does not seem that this type of action pleased him in any way. The truth is that in some cases he used tricks and ruses to take castles, preferring brains over brawn. If in Monsaraz he used cows to lure the hungry defenders out of the castle, in Portel he managed to enter with the collaboration of some residents who gave him access to one of the gates of the town (Calado, 75-77; 89-92). We rarely see his biographer highlighting his intervention in a siege, or his personal bravery, although we know he was there, as often as not at the king's side. Again, there are differences with similar works. *El Victorial* thus relates Pero Niño's participation in the siege of Miranda in 1399:

Llegáronse algunos a pelear con los de la villa, estando la gente de la villa por el adarve; e el adarve era baxo. E Pero Niño en aquella ora estaba armado de una

cota, e un barrete, e adarga; e él era muy bracero, tanto quanto podía ser hombre del mundo, e lançava pedras a los que estaban en la cerca. E tiró una piedra puñal, comunal de grande, e dio a un hombre que estaba entre las almenas, en el bacinete; e fue visto, a juizio de muchos, cómo aquel hombre cayó atrás. Durante aquella cerca fizo allí Pero Niño muchas cosas, en que se puso a grandes denuedos, peleando segund que lo llevaba de costumbre. (Díaz de Games, 132)

And, in fact, the chronicler may have had reasons to do so. When we compare the description of the siege of Cória (1386) in the anonymous biography of the constable with the narrative by Fernão Lopes, we find a major omission. The latter reveals a dialogue between the king and some nobles, including Nuno Álvares, about the conduct of the siege. In a long speech, he speaks out against the king's position, saying that prolonged sieges involved a great deal of expense and logistics, both human and material, and that there was a strong possibility of an outbreak of plague among the besiegers. All in all, it would contribute to the demoralization of the men and would not add any honor because anyone could be hit “por huum villaão com huuma beesta ou pedra que deita do muro” (Lopes 1977b, 177-178).

Being hit by a projectile could lead to a serious, crippling injury, or even death. Capture by the enemy was also a real risk and, not infrequently, a reality. At Poitiers in 1356, the English managed to capture close to 2000 prisoners, including the King of France, John II (Given-Wilson & Bériac, 804). Boucicaut, for example, was captured twice, in Nicopolis and in Agincourt, with different fortunes: while in the first time he managed to successfully negotiate the ransom for himself and his companions, in the second time he was unsuccessful and died in captivity. There were between 700 and 2000 prisoners captured in this last battle, according to estimates by Rémy Ambühl (756) based on available sources.

Nuno Álvares was never captured by his enemies, although he sometimes narrowly escaped. If in this area the *Crónica do Condestabre* presents few points of reflection, it could indicate us the opposite, that is, the way the Portuguese constable treated prisoners of war. However, it is practically silent on this point. It does not mention an episode that can be considered controversial, mentioned by Froissart, and which concerns the execution of prisoners during the battle of Aljubarrota. The French chronicler reports (269-270) that the Portuguese “ne prenoit homme nul à raençon, tant feust hault ne noble [...] car ilz ne se vouloient point chargier de nul prisonnier”. We cannot affirm that the order came from Nuno Álvares, not least because king João I was also in the field. Still, this situation is far from being a novelty in the Europe of the Hundred Years' War. At Agincourt, Henry V chose the same strategy, fearing that the more numerous prisoners would turn against their captors, a situation identical to what happened at Aljubarrota (Given-Wilson & Françoise Bériac, 806-807). Another similar episode occurred at Verneuil (1424), but for different reasons. In that instance, the Duke of Bedford considered that he was fighting rebels, since the commander of the Scottish contingent, the Earl of Douglas, had violated the vow of obedience to the English king, and it was therefore understood that the normal laws of war did not apply (Jones, 406-407). In the eyes of contemporaries, the actions that took place at Aljubarrota and Agincourt were justified. At least according to the view of Honoré Bonet (152), who considered the execution of prisoners who escaped or in any way posed a risk to their captors justifiable.

The chronicler of Nuno Álvares presents yet another situation in which the protagonist intervenes, regarding the issue of prisoners. During a failed attempt to take Vila Viçosa, Álvaro Coitado, one of the captains of the future constable, was wounded

and captured by the defenders. Knowing that the captors' intention was to take the prisoner to the Castilian king, the Portuguese quickly devised a plan to free their companion. One night, when the prisoner was being transported to Olivença, the Portuguese sent by Nuno Álvares ambushed the Castilian column and managed to free him (Calado, 96). The details of Álvaro Coitado's capture differ greatly from the narrative of Fernão Lopes, who is more precise in describing the events. According to this chronicler, Álvaro Coitado was not arrested during an attack on Vila Viçosa, but by a trap set by Vasco Porcalho in the same place. He pretended to be a friend of Álvaro Coitado's and during the night he made the 250 Castilians who were hiding there leave the castle and imprison the Portuguese captain (Lopes 1977a, 168). At no point in the account is the payment of a ransom suggested, and it is likely that the Castilian intention was to present Álvaro Coitado to Juan I as a rebel, punishing him exemplarily, which would lower the morale of the Portuguese and weaken confidence in the leadership abilities of the master of Avis and future King João I and his most faithful commander, Nuno Álvares. In fact, the *Crónica de D. João I* suggests that the latter's intention to release Álvaro Coitado was due more to the context in which the capture took place than to anything else. Therefore, he understood that Vasco Porcalho's procedure had not been correct, capturing his companion through a disloyal stratagem, betraying the trust of those who had him for a friend.

The set of values by which Nuno Álvares was guided was very much related to his sense of spirituality and religious devotion. In fact, the *Crónica do Condestabre* devotes a whole chapter to describing the virtues of its hero. The author reveals that the constable spent many years without sharing a bed with his wife, leading an almost ascetic life of sexual abstinence, attended mass twice every day and three on Saturdays and Sundays, went to confession frequently, and was concerned with giving alms to the poor and helping charitable institutions (Calado, 198-203). We also know that he had a portable altar that accompanied him on his campaigns, along with clerics and chaplains, celebrating holy days and feasts anywhere they went, with processions and other manifestations of religious nature (Monteiro 2017, 291). Sometimes his devotion left him in complicated situations, as happened in the battle of Valverde, where we find him praying apart from his troops during the most complicated phase of the combat (Calado, 132). His connection with the divine, clearly evident in the pages of the chronicle dedicated to him, ultimately led him to take the religious vows, and entering the Convent of Carmo in 1422. Although the *Livre des fais* also devotes special space to Boucicaut's virtues as a charitable and pious Christian, evoking a long list of qualities and precepts he observed in his service to God (Taylor & Taylor, 187-194), nowhere is there a propensity for religious life. This attitude of Nuno Álvares, withdrawing from worldly life to embrace an existence of contemplation and seclusion is far from being a novelty for the society of the time, although it is surprising for the high profile of the character in question. In essence, it was a matter of balancing the spirit. But this decision did not meet with unanimity in chivalrous circles. Geoffroi de Charny, in the work we mentioned earlier, when comparing religious orders with the chivalric order, considers the latter much more demanding, stating that:

The hardships, pains, discomforts, fears, perils, broken bones, and wounds which the good knights who uphold the order of knighthood as they should endure and have to suffer frequently, there is no religious order in which as much is suffered as has to be endured by these good knights who go in search of deeds of arms in the right way as has been set forth above. (95)

However, we must ask ourselves the question: could Nuno Álvares Pereira represent the embodiment of the *miles Christi*? This concept, as it had been transmitted since the 11th century, would already be a somewhat outdated idea for a Portuguese knight of the late 14th century. Still, this idea of belonging to an army willing to fight (and die) against the enemies of the Church is not without some echo in the actions of the constable. Throughout his career he constantly fought the same enemy, the Castilians, and only in Ceuta (1415), at a more advanced age, would he fight the Muslims. This apparent contradiction of the Christian warrior fighting other Christians wasn't new in the Peninsular reality of the time, since in the late Middle Ages it was seen as normal and acceptable, being more important how the knight behaved in battle, that is, if his actions were guided by the principles of honor and courage (Claussen, 150-152). But we cannot fail to highlight the polarization caused by the beginning of the Schism in 1378, with Portugal and Castile taking different sides, with the former following the Pope of Rome and the latter following the Pope of Avignon. In this way, Nuno Álvares would be taking up arms against schismatics, enemies of the Christian faith, validating his sinless conduct because it benefited the interests of the Church.

His religious convictions that are transposed to his military activity are, above all, the product of a construction of a very own religiosity, fruit of the spirituality of the time, including the *fuga mundi* that, together with his contact with the world of military orders, created a unique religious thought (Monteiro 2017, 296-297). His personal flag reflects this connection between war and religion, displaying among other images that of St. George, one of the most venerated military saints of the Middle Ages, whose cult was increasing in Portugal by English influence. No wonder that soon after his death, he was considered an example to all, but above all to knights. In the sermon that was written to commemorate one of the anniversaries of his death, under the guidance of the future King Duarte (r. 1433-1438), included in the *Livro dos Conselhos* (226-227) his qualities bestowed to him by God were praised, including obedience to his lord, the fact that he was feared by his enemies, and the observance of Church principles.

4. Conclusion. A Portuguese Galahad?

The *Crónica do Condestabre* provides an approximation to the figure of Nuno Álvares Pereira as a military commander, although it presents us with a warrior who is, to a certain extent, unique. On the one hand, he reveals traces of humility, transporting himself on a mule, as in the moments before the battle of Atoleiros in 1384 (Calado, 67), abandoning the image of the haughty *miles*, mounted on an imposing beast, looking down on his inferiors, both socially and militarily. On the other hand, he shows himself to be the bravest of warriors, always in the vanguard of combat, side by side with his men in a demonstration of courage that inspires those close to him. He is, for his chronicler, the purest and most virtuous of knights, and it seems that he even tries to imitate the archetype of the perfect knight that was so familiar to him, since we know that he was fond of the by then quite popular stories of the Knights of the Round Table. Chastity, self-denial, generosity to the poorest, bravery, and loyalty to his king bring him closer to this ideal. His chronicler also presents him as predestined to great exploits, introducing premonitory events into the narrative, such as the famous episode of the swordsmith of Santarém, who refused payment for a sword, claiming that he would receive it when Nuno Álvares became Count of Ourém, an event which indeed was to come to pass (Calado, 41-43; 121-123). Both *El Victorial* and *Livre des fais* feature similar scenes. In the former we have an Italian predicting that Pero Niño would be the most honorable man of his lineage when he was still a child (Díaz de Games, 116),

while Boucicaut's biographer declares that he had been spared at Nicopolis because God had future plans for him (Taylor & Taylor, 70).

Through the reflection we made, bringing to discussion some aspects of his military conduct, it was possible to draw some parallels with characters with similar paths. He comes close to them in certain situations, moving away from them in others, in a mixture of reality and fiction that intends to create a well-defined and conscious pattern of behavior, whose reliability is not always complete, as happens with other works of this genre. We should also consider that one should be very careful when using this kind of sources, since the account is made with the aim of glorifying the figure one intends to biograph, exaggerating some facts and omitting others. Kelly DeVries (4-5) has already addressed the methodological issues regarding the use of chronicles in the study of medieval warfare. On the one hand, he warns that chroniclers prefer story to fact, passing some of their background to the narrative and embellishing it. Nevertheless, he also points out that without chronicles we would have no opportunity to vividly observe battles, sieges, and other events, often omitted from other types of sources, such as administrative ones. In the specific case of the *Crónica do Condestabre*, as we have had the opportunity to mention, the proximity of its writing to the date of death of the biographee plays in its favor, as well as the detailed knowledge, almost familiar, that the author has of the various episodes of Nuno Álvares' life. Whenever possible we crosschecked with other sources, bypassing the stylistic references that are typical of this genre, aiming to get a clear and solid perspective on the constable's military career.

About his leadership style, we find ourselves facing a warrior who is the product of a series of factors, ranging from his theoretical training to practical experience, benefiting from his family background and the political circumstances of his time, similar to what happens in Castile, for example (Etxeberria Gallastegi 2019b, 661). The chronicle that recounts his deeds intends, in the right measure, to demonstrate how a knight can be simultaneously fierce and serene, always in accordance with Christian values. And always ready to help his king and his faith. Perhaps the pinnacle of this idea appears in the final part of the *Crónica do Condestabre*. After he had already entered monastic life, he received news that the sultan of Tunis was preparing to attack the Portuguese controlled city of Ceuta, in North Africa. He quickly prepared himself to go on the expedition, having to get new weapons because he no longer owned any. Although it would prove to be unnecessary because the attack didn't take place, the determination was still there, because serving the king and God were his only purposes and ultimate desires.

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