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The Portuguese Cortes during the reign of Ferdinand I (1367–83): the context of the Hundred Years War (1337–1453)

MARIA HELENA DA CRUZ COELHO

SUMMARY

This article focuses on the study of the Cortes that convened during the reign of King Ferdinand I (1367–83), which took place in the context of the wars experienced in Europe, in the Iberian peninsula and in Portugal. First, it is shown how the Hundred Years War impacted on the Iberian peninsula from the moment when Henry of Trastámara, with the support of France, opposed the rule of his half-brother, Peter of Castile. At the same time, the Portuguese King Ferdinand I presented himself as a candidate to the Castilian throne, with the support of England. The three Fernandine Wars that took place in 1369–71, 1372–73 and 1381–82 are then briefly described. Next, this article examines the eight Cortes that met during the reign of Ferdinand I, showing how they were all summoned because of the war. Finally, this article analyses the appeals made by the municipalities in the Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, the Cortes of Oporto of 1372 and the Cortes of Leiria of 1372, with special attention given to the many military, economic, social, administrative and fiscal appeals and requests arising from the ills of war. Hence, it is concluded that the Cortes were unable to solve many of these problems, even though they contributed to restraining certain abuses. They were mostly an opportunity for dialogue between the king and the commoners, as well as a mitigating factor of greater tension and social conflict in this internal and external state of war. Within the context of war, the strength of the Cortes as a representative institution was reinforced, as well as the power and representativeness of the procurators of the commoners within the Cortes.

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THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR AND THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

The Hundred Years War between France and England, with alternating periods of war and truces and peace, eventually extended itself to the Iberian peninsula, including both Castile and Portugal. This article will address the importance of this conflict in the Iberian peninsula, more specifically in Portugal, in order to gather the testimonies of the effect of the conflict, as noted by the Cortes during the government of Ferdinand I, King of Portugal. The immediate pretext for this war was a succession quarrel within a feudal framework, since the King of England was a vassal to the King of France owing to the duchies the former possessed in Aquitaine and Gascony, but the complex reality involved large-scale economic and political disputes.¹ Both powers needed good ports to promote commerce and the export of their products. Hence, this conflict was the first Atlantic war within the context of a Europe expanded up to the North Sea.² Between 1366 and 1369, Peter I of Castile had to face his bastard brother, Henry of Trastámara. Henry had the support of France and, to counter this alliance, Peter I made a pact with the Black Prince. From then, the war stage of the Hundred Years War extended to the Iberian space and, within it, to Portugal.³

In the spring of 1366, Henry of Trastámara, supported by Bertrand Du Guesclin, ‘The Eagle of Brittany’ or ‘The Black Dog of Brocéliande’, entered Castile, occupied several towns and proclaimed himself king, which resulted in Peter I fleeing the kingdom. However, in the spring of the following year, Peter I and the Black Prince struck back, defeating Henry at the Battle of Nájera in Navarre, and arresting Du Guesclin, while Henry took refuge in France. Nevertheless, by the end of 1367, the rupture of the alliance between Peter I and the Black Prince once again favoured Henry, who in 1368 established a new alliance with France, once more with Du Guesclin at his side. In turn, thanks to Castile, France now had another backup force, one especially valuable at sea. In March 1369, Henry would eventually assassinate his half-brother, inaugurating the Trastámara dynasty. The supporters of legitimism immediately opposed the new dynasty, giving rise to a deep internal crisis in Castile. It was in this context that Ferdinand,⁴ the King of Portugal, presented himself as a candidate to the throne. Hence, the conditions were in place for Portugal, committed to the Iberian conflict,

¹There is an extensive bibliography on the Hundred Years War, but the following titles are highlighted as reference works: C. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War. England and France at War, c.1300–c.1450* (Cambridge, 1989); C. Allmand (ed.), *Society and War. The Experience of England and France during the Hundred Years War* (Suffolk, 1998); P. Contamine, *La Guerre des Cent Ans*, 4th edn (Paris, 1984).

²J.B. Macedo, *História Diplomática Portuguesa, Constantes e Linhas de Força. Estudo de Geopolítica* (Lisbon, 1987), pp. 26–30.

³Cfr. P.E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain & Portugal in the Time of Edward III & Richard II* (Oxford, 1955), translated into Portuguese by J.G. Monteiro with the title *A intervenção inglesa na Península Ibérica durante a Guerra dos Cem Anos* (Lisbon, 2000). On the political and socio-economic impact of the Hundred Years War in Portugal, see the doctoral thesis of A. Muhaj, ‘Quando todos os caminhos levavam a Portugal. Impacto da guerra dos Cem Anos na vida económica e política de Portugal (Séculos XIV–XV)’, University of Lisbon, PhD thesis, 2013.

⁴Recent biographies of this king are outlined by R.C. Gomes, *Fernando* (Lisbon, 2005) and A.A. Martins, *D. Fernando. O Formoso (1367–1383)* (Lisbon, 2009).

to get involved in the European war, ending the neutrality policy that had until then been followed by the Portuguese kings.⁵

THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR AND PORTUGAL

The main towns in Galicia, supporters of Peter I, and others in León and Extremadura, with the help of great lords, proclaimed the rights of Ferdinand I to the throne of Castile as a legitimate great-grandson of Sancho IV, opposing the alliance between Castile and France. The Portuguese king accepted the offer and joined the first war against Castile (Figure 1). In 1369 he entered lands in the Iberian peninsula that supported him, invaded others that surrendered to him and even blocked Seville by sea, with the Portuguese fleet joining forces with its Castilian counterpart. With the support of the French armies commanded by Du Guesclin, Henry II promptly invaded Galicia and, in 1369, entered Portugal through Valença, advanced and conquered Braga, destroying and burning its outskirts, and laid siege to Guimarães. In order to deal with internal affairs, however, Henry II abandoned the siege and retreated through Trás-os-Montes, conquering many lands on his way. In turn, in the Alentejo, the Portuguese sacked the region of Badajoz and even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to occupy the fortress.

Outside of Portugal, the war went on for another two years, with Henry II attempting to face the enemy kingdoms of Navarre and Aragon, allies with Portugal. Finally, thanks to diplomatic negotiations with the intervention of the papacy and the French, the Treaty of Alcoutim was signed in March 1371. The treaty established that Ferdinand would give up his alliance with Aragon, renounce his claim to the throne of Castile and acknowledge Henry as king. It also arranged Ferdinand's marriage to Leonor, daughter of the King of Castile, securing Ferdinand's ownership of some Castilian lands.

Peace was short-lived, however. In fact, the Atlantic war between France and England had inevitable repercussions in the state of affairs of the Iberian peninsula. Castile had joined France. Hence, Portugal had to join England for geostrategic reasons. This way Portugal would be able to face its enemies on land and gain some possible action at sea, defending and valuing the potential of its long Atlantic coastline.⁶ Thus, Ferdinand was forced to take a stance and his decision was not taken lightly, as it may seem at first sight.

In 1371 Ferdinand secretly married Leonor Teles, niece of the powerful Count of Barcelos and Ourém. A public marriage ceremony took place in Leça do Balio in May 1372, breaching the Treaty of Alcoutim. Later, in July 1372 Ferdinand I signed the Treaty of Tagilde (Braga) with England, uniting both countries against Castile and Aragon. A new conflict was taking shape. In December of the same year, Henry II entered Portugal through the Beira region and advanced through Coimbra to Lisbon. Between February and March 1373, he besieged and destroyed Lisbon,

⁵The Fernandine Wars are addressed in M.J.P.F. Tavares, 'A nobreza no reinado de D. Fernando e a sua actuação em 1383.1385', *Revista de História Económica e Social* 12, (1983), pp. 46–52; and A. Martins, *Guerras Fernandinas. 1369–1371, 1372–1373, 1381–1382* (Matosinhos, 2006).

⁶L.A. da Fonseca, 'Le Portugal entre la Méditerranée et l'Atlantique au XV^e siècle', *Arquivo do Centro Cultural Português*, XXVI (Lisbon/Paris, 1989), pp. 149–50.

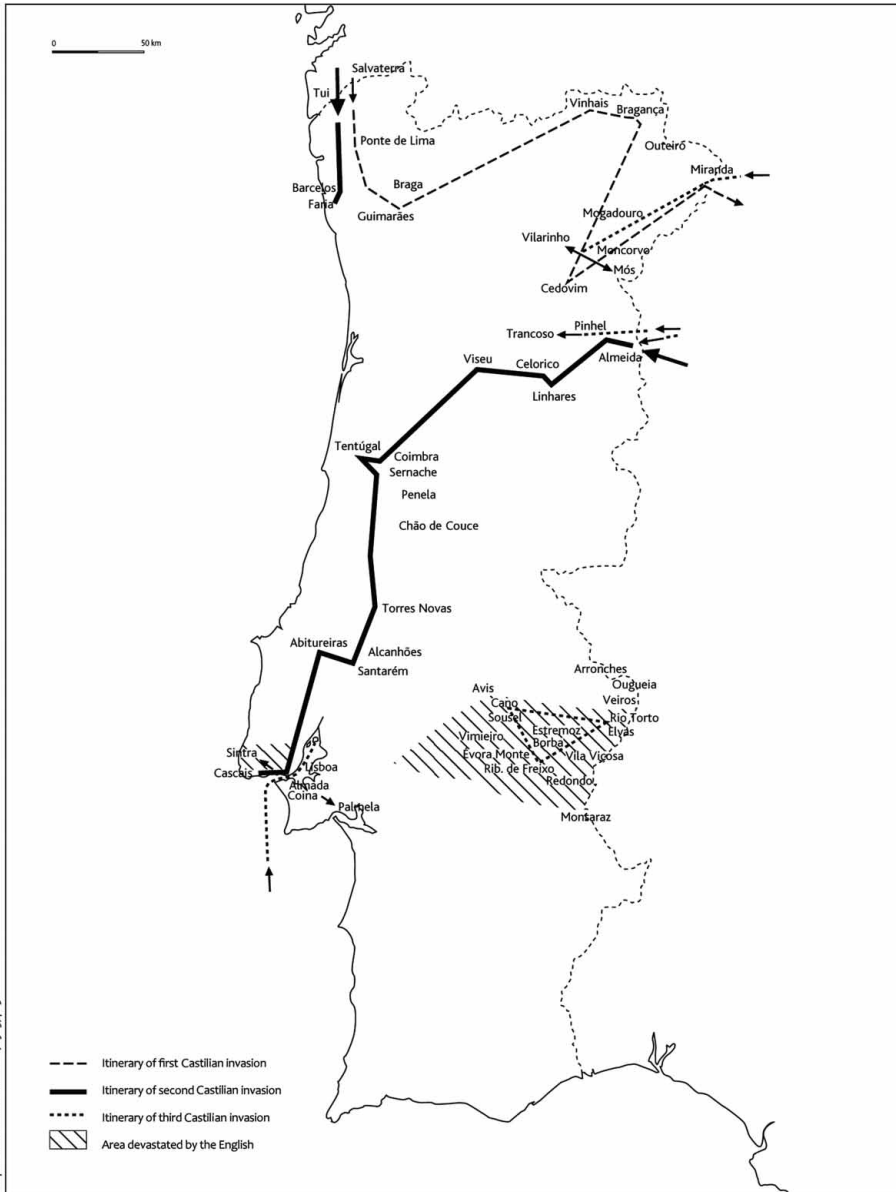


Figure 1 The Fernandine Wars

facing no considerable opposition. Meanwhile, at the Tagus, the Castilian and Portuguese fleets battled each other, with Cascais eventually being captured by Castile. The Castilian forces were also pillaging and devastating lands in the Minho region.

A new peace treaty was hastily negotiated and signed in Santarém on 24 March 1373, and the King of Castile lifted the siege of Lisbon and abandoned Portugal

by sea. Ferdinand I was forced to renounce his English ally and to join forces with Castile and France. Meanwhile, within the Portuguese kingdom, tension and conflict arose owing to war and the social crisis. The king attempted to address these difficulties by reinforcing the walls of towns and cities, passing laws favouring agriculture – the Sesmarias Law of 1375 – or aiming to promote foreign trade and the navy – the *Companhia das Naus* (Company of the Carracks). However, the people still suffered the effects of the military conflict in the recruitment of troops and the collection of taxes, as well as in abuses perpetrated by the nobility.⁷

During the last years of Ferdinand's kingdom, the weight of the Great Western Schism was also felt. Castile and France sided with the pope from Avignon, Clement VII, whilst England remained loyal to Rome's pope, Urban VI. Portugal changed sides from Rome to Avignon in 1378, restated its loyalty to Urban VI in 1381 and, once again, expressed its support for Clement VII, in 1382.⁸

With the death of Henry II in 1379 and the coronation of his son, John I of Castile, the disputes over the Castilian throne were reignited.⁹ Ferdinand I, through his supporter, the Galician count João Fernandes Andeiro, signed a new alliance with England in July 1380 at Estremoz.¹⁰ Ferdinand I acknowledged the Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, the son of Edward III of England, married to Constance, daughter of Peter I of Castile, as the legitimate heir to the throne of Castile. He also committed himself to take arms against the neighbouring kingdom as soon as an English contingent of 2000 troops landed in Portugal. Lastly, Ferdinand I promised his daughter Beatriz – first promised to Fradique Henriques, Duke of Benavente, bastard son of Henry II of Castile, and later to the heir to the throne of Castile, the future King Henry III – to Edward of Langley, son of the Count of Cambridge and nephew of the Duke of Lancaster.

Hence, the third Fernandine War began in May 1381. The Castilians invaded the Alentejo, but they also devastated Trás-os-Montes and the Beira. Meanwhile, a Portuguese fleet heading south was completely crushed, destroyed and taken prisoner at the naval battle of Saltes, on 17 June. In July 1381, the English expedition made a late landing in Lisbon. It remained inactive for several months and it was highly detrimental to the people. In the first half of 1382, the Portuguese–English forces occasionally entered Castile, to no significant effect. On the other hand, a Castilian fleet arrived at Lisbon in March 1382, and its men sacked the region. Failing to achieve victory, Ferdinand I negotiated peace, which was accepted by the King of Castile, who had always feared an English invasion. This led to the signing of the Treaty of Elvas, in August 1382. It stated that Beatriz would be promised to the Infante Ferdinand, second son of the King of Castile.

⁷Ferdinand I's policy of rewarding the nobility is studied by Tavares, 'A nobreza no reinado de D. Fernando', pp. 58–71.

⁸Cfr. J.C. Baptista, 'Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente', *Lusitânia Sacra* I, (1956), pp. 70–164.

⁹On John I of Castile's policy up to the death of Ferdinand I, see L.S. Fernandez, *Historia del reinado de Juan I de Castilla*, vol. 1 (Madrid, 1977), pp. 65–159.

¹⁰Russell, *A intervenção inglesa*, pp. 315–78.

Nevertheless, in May 1383, Beatriz would marry John I, the King of Castile, resulting in new problems for the Portuguese kingdom.

In summary, King Ferdinand's participation in the Hundred Years War was inevitable from the moment when the war extended itself to the Iberian peninsula. Since Castile had joined France, Portugal had to join England. It is true that both Portugal and England had previously tried to enter into an alliance with Aragon. However, since Aragon favoured its ties with Castile, the coming together of both kingdoms was bound to happen. Hence, the Fernandine Wars against Castile, strengthened by the military defence structures, were a strategy to defend Portugal's independence, openly opposing the French–Castilian hegemony in the Iberian peninsula. At the same time, King Ferdinand was well aware of Portugal's strategic importance in international trade, as demonstrated by his policy of maritime support. Hence, the Anglo-Portuguese alliance was also crucial for Portugal to retain its Atlantic trade and even to strengthen the dimension of the Portuguese ports as ports of call and trading posts in the connections between the south and the north of Europe.

FERDINAND I AND THE SUMMONING OF THE CORTES, 1367–83

It was within this situation of external and internal war and of social crises that Ferdinand I summoned eight Cortes¹¹ in his 16-year reign (1367–83).

It would appear that the first Cortes took place in Coimbra, at the beginning of Ferdinand's reign. According to the royal itineraries, they could have convened in 1367 or 1369. The only record of the meetings of the Coimbra Cortes of 1367 and 1369 is contained in the proceedings of other Cortes.¹² Cortes were thereafter summoned in Lisbon in 1371, whilst in 1372 two Cortes were summoned, one in Oporto and another in Leiria. Cortes were also summoned in Évora, in 1374 (Figure 2). The single reference that exists for these Cortes leads to the conclusion that they were called to decide on the issue of tax collection. Cortes were later held in Leiria (1376), in Torres Novas (1380) and in Santarém (1383).

The Cortes of Leiria of 1376 were summoned to pay homage to Beatriz, promised in marriage to Fradique, Duke of Benavente and son of the King of Castile.¹³ The procurations of five municipalities, with mention of their procurators, are known to us.¹⁴ Likewise, the Cortes of Torres Novas of 1380, summoned in

¹¹One might think of nine Cortes with the reunion of the 'homens bons' of Santarém in Atouguia, in September 1375, but the law on the jurisdiction of the noblemen indicates that this meeting does not appear to be a Parliament. See *Ordenações Afonsinas*, 5 vols (Lisbon, 1984), vol. II, tit. LXIII, art. 16. The Fernandine Cortes were published in A.H. de O. Marques (ed.), *Cortes Portuguesas. Reinado de D. Fernando (1367–1383)*, vol. I (1367–1380) (Lisbon, 1990), and A.H. de O. Marques (ed.), *Cortes Portuguesas. Reinado de D. Fernando (1367–1383)*, vol. II (1383) (Lisbon, 1993). All references to the chapters of Cortes made in this study are found in this work, especially in volume I.

¹²In the special chapters of the municipality of Santarém, art. 6, presented to the Cortes of Lisbon in 1371, reference is made to Cortes previously summoned in Coimbra by the king.

¹³F. Lopes, *Crónica de D. Fernando*, 2nd revised edition of the critical edition, introduction and tables of contents by G. Macchi (Lisbon, 2004), chapter XCVI.

¹⁴These were the municipalities of Arronches, Elvas, Evoramonte, Leiria and Sortelha.

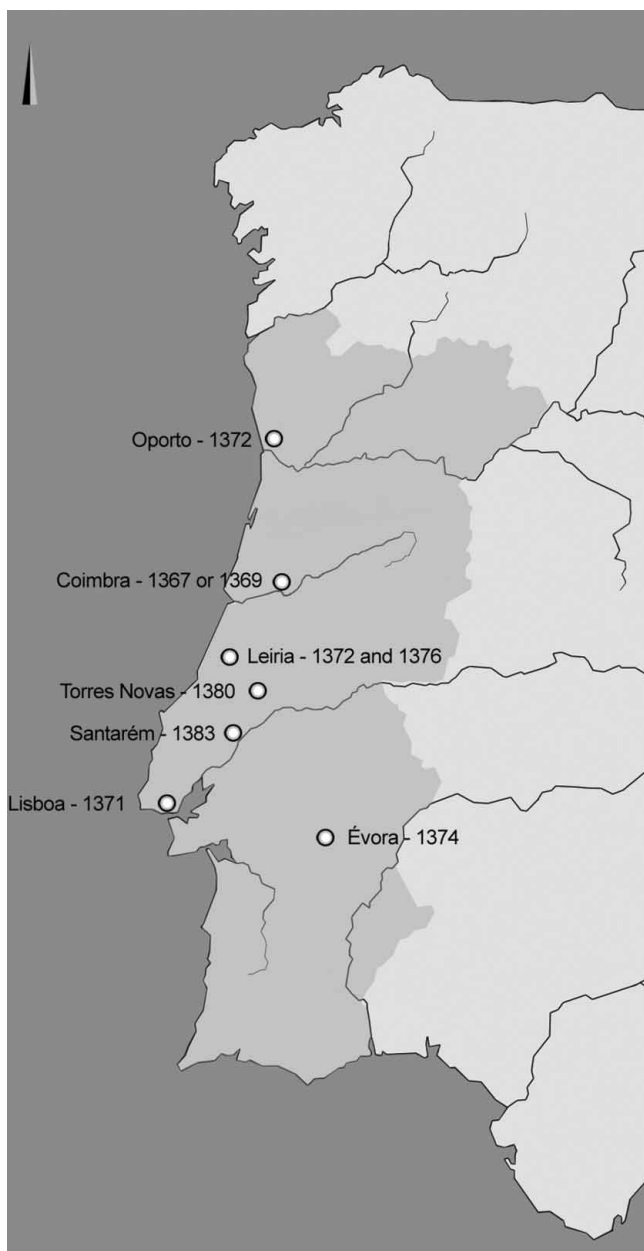


Figure 2 The Cortes during the reign of Ferdinand I (1367–83)

August, aimed to ratify the agreement between the kings of Portugal and Castile, strengthened by the marriage of Beatriz to the heir of the Castilian throne, the Infante Henrique (the future King Henry III). The procurations of the prior of the Order of the Hospital and of eight municipalities, with mention of their

representatives, are also known to us.¹⁵ Equally, the Cortes of Santarém, summoned at the end of August 1383, were dedicated to the swearing of the heirs to the Portuguese throne: Beatriz and her husband, the King of Castile, John I. The procurations of 64 municipalities and two manors, written between 5 July and 21 August 1383, are also known to us.

The facts having been laid out, it is easy to conclude that almost all Cortes during the troubled decade of the 1370s were summoned either in times of war or when they were social crises as a result of warfare. In the latter case, Cortes were summoned to ratify peace treaties and marriage agreements between the Infanta, heir to the throne of Portugal, and her several promised Infantes; and later between her and the King of Castile, whom she eventually married.¹⁶

With regard to the Cortes of Lisbon (1371), Oporto (1372) and Leiria (1372), we have the general chapters¹⁷ of the commoners, that is, appeals or petitions from all municipalities, as well as special chapters from some municipalities.¹⁸ These Cortes will now be discussed in detail.

There were 101 general chapters in the Cortes of Lisbon of 1371. The 1371 Lisbon Cortes constituted the fourteenth-century Cortes¹⁹ with the highest number of presented requests or appeals, and 23 special chapters.²⁰ In comparative terms, there were only 19 general chapters and 20 special chapters in the 1372 Cortes of Oporto,²¹ and only 25 general chapters and 1 special chapter in the 1372 Cortes of Leiria are known to us (Figure 3).²² The combination of the number of assembled Cortes with the high number of presented chapters indicates that the war context led to the strengthening of both the parliamentary institution in Portugal and the commoners' representation in the fourteenth century. The Portuguese Cortes therefore assumed a pioneering and very significant role in that period of European history.²³

To put the Cortes of Lisbon, Oporto and Leiria into context, it should be remembered that the Treaty of Alcoutim had been signed in March 1371, ending the first war with Castile. It stated that Ferdinand I was to marry the

¹⁵Procurations of the municipalities of Elvas, Guarda, Guimarães, Monsanto, Montemor-o-Velho, Numão, Ponte de Lima and Torres Novas, dated between 21 July and 10 August.

¹⁶For an analysis of the rules for the summoning of the Cortes in various European kingdoms, see M. Hébert, *Parlamentar. Assemblées représentatives et échange politique en Europe occidentale à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2014), pp. 81–132.

¹⁷A chapter contains at the same time the request or appeal and the king's answer.

¹⁸For a more detailed study regarding Portuguese Cortes after 1385, see A. de Sousa, *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas (1385–1490)*, 2 vols, vol. I (Oporto, 1990).

¹⁹During the fifteenth century, only three Cortes had higher numbers of chapters – the Cortes of Leiria-Santarém of 1433, during Edward I's reign, totalled 155 general chapters of the commoners, the Cortes of Coimbra-Évora of 1472–73, summoned in the reign of Afonso V, totalled 203 general chapters and John II's Cortes of Évora-Viana of 1481–82 totalled 172. Cfr. de Sousa, *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas*, vol. II.

²⁰The town of Almada, near Lisbon, had 10 chapters and Santarém had 13.

²¹These were divided between three municipalities – Beja with six special chapters, Lisbon with two and Montemor-o-Velho with one, in addition to the Algarve region with one and the clergy with ten.

²²This refers to the Algarve's municipality of Silves.

²³Hébert, *Parlamentar*, pp. 175–98.

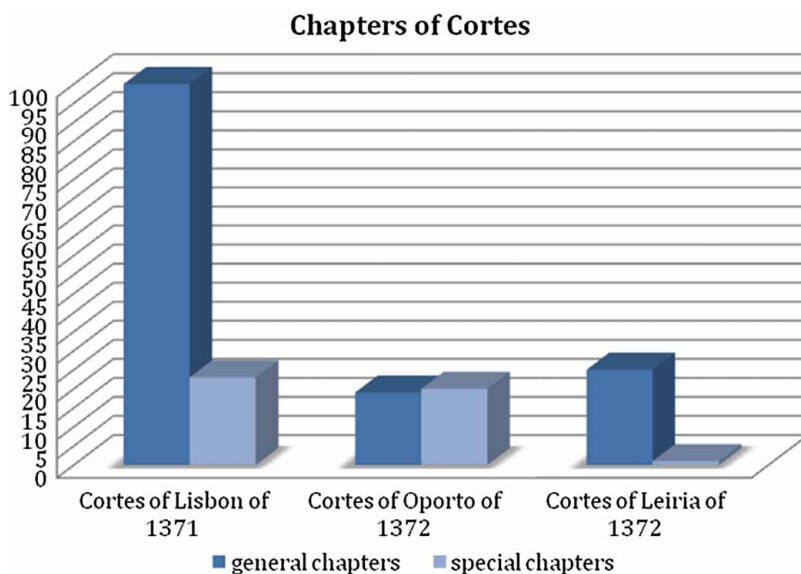


Figure 3 The chapters of the Cortes

daughter of the King of Castile. However, Ferdinand had married Leonor Teles, which forced the writing of an addendum to the aforementioned treaty. The Cortes were summoned between late July and early August, when all these threats to peace were taking shape. In 1372 war was so imminent that two Cortes were summoned. The first was in Oporto, in July, when the king's public marriage ceremony had already taken place and when Ferdinand I had signed the Treaty of Tagilde with England on 10 July, thereby clearly harassing Castile. The second one was the Cortes of Leiria, summoned for early November, which took war as a certainty, and in fact, Henry II invaded Portugal in December. Thus, it is no surprise that the same appeals or requests can be found in all these Cortes. The 1372 Cortes of Leiria repeated almost all the chapters of the Cortes of Oporto. The chapters of both Cortes had already been presented at the 1371 Cortes, reporting the ills of war.²⁴

Requests were made at all gatherings for the king not to decide on war affairs or the minting of currency without consulting the Cortes.²⁵ It was then demanded

²⁴The enumeration of all the ills of war is carried out in detail in the Cortes – Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 5, 7. A global overview of these ills in the Portuguese kingdom, using the Cortes as a source, is outlined by M.H. da C. Coelho, 'Les Cortes en temps de guerre – une médiation interactive entre le roi et les corps sociaux du royaume de Portugal aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles', *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 21, (2001), pp. 51–6. On the Portuguese border lands, see the work of J.G.M. and M.G. Martins, *As cicatrizes da guerra no espaço fronteiriço português (1250–1450)* (Coimbra, 2010).

²⁵Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 1, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, arts 1 and 2, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 4, 8 (it was also demanded that, if war were to be declared, the kingdom should be defended, especially at the border regions), 9 (this article called for peace with Castile, instead of war).

Cortes of Lisbon of 1371 (Matters of the general chapters)

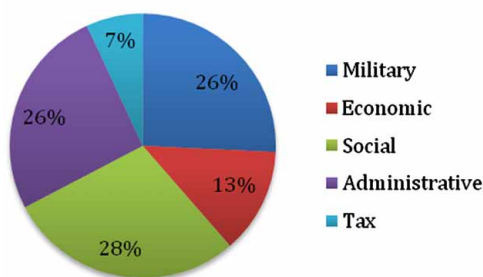


Figure 4 The 1371 Cortes of Lisbon (matters of the general chapters)

that everything decided at the Cortes should be observed.²⁶ One of the most harmful effects of war expressed itself in the devaluation of the currency. Between 1360 and 1373, the currency was devalued several times and the king officially accepted a devaluation of 300 per cent.²⁷ Therefore, the commoners asked the king during the 1371 Cortes to give up the monopoly of the purchase of gold and silver, but he refused to do so (Figure 4). The king nevertheless agreed to the request the following year in 1372.²⁸

Currency devaluation led to price inflation. In an attempt to stop the inflation, the king decreed the price listing of products, to the detriment of the producers.²⁹ In addition, the food supply needs of the armadas and armies made royal officers seize the goods of farmers and livestock farmers without paying for them, or they bought them at a very low cost.³⁰ The king and the Infantes did the same when buying goods for their houses, as did noblemen, clergy and royal officers when buying goods for themselves.³¹ These parties would often acquire many more goods than needed and would then later resell the surplus at high prices, speculating like traders. This was strongly condemned by the commoners.³²

On the other hand, the recruitment of men for the war also took its toll. Men who worked the fields in the inland areas, and who lacked training and were fearful of the sea, were forcibly recruited for the galleys. This situation was

²⁶Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 101, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 11.

²⁷A.H. de O. Marques, *Ensaio de História Medieval Portuguesa*, 2nd edn (Lisbon, 1980), p. 212.

²⁸Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 36, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 13.

²⁹Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 41, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 3.

³⁰Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 43, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 6.

³¹Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 2, 4, 10, 21, 39, 70.

³²Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 7, 13, 44, 55, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 3, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 6, 13. This practice of resale made the less wealthy unable to buy bread and other supplies (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 65). However, this small retail trade paid off because the Cortes of Lisbon, art. 51, mention that farmers and keepers of livestock sold their goods and became traders and muleteers.

turning into a nightmare that was denounced at all the Cortes.³³ Moreover, the need for men for the armies led everyone to take arms, forcing those with a small amount of wealth to own a horse and arms,³⁴ or removing men from working the fields.³⁵ The wealthiest traders, who had their vessels taken by force for the armada and saw the ports being closed, were losing their profits.³⁶

This was a time of abuses and excesses. The royal officers who worked in the military,³⁷ in the exercise of law,³⁸ on the collection of taxes³⁹ and as notaries⁴⁰ abused and exploited the working population who provided services and paid tributes to the king and to the Crown. Those in power, the nobles, the clergy and even from within the royal family, did not hesitate to overload the commoners, seizing their goods and staying at their houses, causing various material and moral damages.⁴¹ The king was asked to cut down on his retinue and to reduce his expenses with the royal household in order to balance the kingdom's finances.⁴² He was required to stop favouring the privileged.⁴³ He was asked to respect the

³³Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 14, 15, 16, 80, 84, 94, 98, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 17, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 19. The forced service of men and animals in the construction of the royal armada's ships was also denounced (Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 10).

³⁴The devaluation of currency meant that the wealth of those who should own a horse and arms was being evaluated at a very low value by the officers who recruited these villein-knights ('cavaleiros-vilãos') for the army, a fact denounced at all Cortes (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 27, 28, 45, 77, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 16, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 20, 23). At the Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 23, it was also demanded that the municipalities' expenses with the military service should only be supported by the municipalities for six weeks. Henceforth, the expenses should be supported by the Crown.

³⁵Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 22, Cortes of Oporto, art. 8. On the effects of the Hundred Years War in the rural world of France, see N. Wright, *Knights and Peasants. The Hundred Years War in the French Countryside* (Woodbridge, 1998).

³⁶Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 7, 12.

³⁷In addition to what was previously mentioned concerning the evaluation of the goods of the villein-knights and their forced recruitment, the 'fronteiros', who defended the border lands, and the 'alcaides', who commanded the castles, committed the greatest abuses in times of war (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 37, 42, 72 – fronteiros: arts 38, 67, 82, 83, 99, 100; alcaides: Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 9, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 15).

³⁸Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 3, 5, 31, 32, 49, 56, 63, 81, 86, 97, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, arts 18, 19, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 25.

³⁹Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 26, 33, 35, 50, 75, 91, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 12, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 5.

⁴⁰Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 92, 93, 96. For this reason, it was demanded that the number of notaries should not increase. On the contrary, it should even be reduced (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 88, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 17). Some notaries were also almost certainly responsible for forging the royal charters that, according to the commoners, often circulated during these troubled times (Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 10).

⁴¹Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 17, 19, 40, 46, 47, 50, 60, 66, 68, 70, 73, 87, 90, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 6. The clergy seized the opportunity to break the laws that prevented them from buying and inheriting real estate (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 24, 25).

⁴²Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 9, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 5, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 2, 3.

⁴³They complained about the large number of royal donations of lands, hunting grounds and jurisdictions to the privileged (from inside or even from outside the kingdom), as well as of the royal support given to their abuses (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 12, 18, 74, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, arts 4, 15). They even opposed the King's vassals who were forcing widows - presumably rich - to marry them against their will (Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 14, Cortes of Leiria of 1372, art. 14).

privileges of the municipalities.⁴⁴ It was also demanded that he implement rapid and effective justice for the commoners.⁴⁵

Within this environment of social and economic crisis, it is understandable that popular disturbances broke out at the end of 1371 and during the following years in Lisbon and in various other cities and towns, such as Santarém, Leiria, Abrantes and Tomar.⁴⁶ These disturbances were part of a wider European trend of social uprising in response to the global crisis experienced since the mid-fourteenth century. This crisis united farmers, artisans and outlaws in collective movements of protest and destruction.

The Cortes were a royal mechanism specifically aimed to counterbalance these popular uprisings. The king called the 'homens bons' of the municipalities to the Cortes. These were the representatives of the ruling elites and they were called to the Cortes to discuss 'the good governance of the kingdom' with the king. The king intended to attract the popular aristocracy to his cause by means of an institutionalized parliamentary dialogue. These urban aristocracies answered his call because the Cortes gave them the opportunity to express their opinions on the war that they sensed was drawing near. They also answered the call in order to be able to ask for relief for the major damages inflicted by the previous conflict. It is therefore significant to find that all the requests or appeals they presented were very well founded and supported by a very dense, elaborate and developed argument with which they attempted to show the fairness and relevance of their protests and pleas. Ferdinand I often gave evasive answers in difficult times and he attempted to justify some negative decisions concerning abuses, as well as referring to the good habits and customs of the reigns and administration of the previous kings.⁴⁷

In fact, in times of war, the Cortes became much more necessary than in times of peace, for both the royalty and the several social groups.⁴⁸ The king needed to convince and mobilize society in order to support war by the provision of men and money. The Cortes were the perfect forum for this argumentative rhetoric.⁴⁹ It is certain that social opinion was normally inclined towards peace, but the king, who was responsible for deciding on this matter, opted for the warfare option. Nevertheless, at least his subjects knew in advance what his intentions were and they could take the best measures to prepare for those adverse circumstances. In addition, the summoning of Cortes always gave the various social groups an opportunity to

⁴⁴Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, arts 29, 30, 62, 69, 78, 89, Cortes of Oporto of 1372, art. 7.

⁴⁵Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 64 (this alludes to the fact that the king went hunting and did not attend to matters of justice), Cortes of Leiria of 1372, arts 1, 16, 24. Hence, he was asked to reform the Studium Generale, so that there would be many wisemen and scholars among the kingdom who, so they thought, would be able to help with the kingdom's administration and matters of justice (Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 71).

⁴⁶M.J.P. Ferro, 'A revolta dos mesteirais de 1383', in *Actas das III Jornadas Arqueológicas 1977* (Lisbon, 1978), pp. 360–364, tables 1 and 2; M.J.P.F. Tavares, 'Conflitos sociais em Portugal no fim do século XIV', in *Actas das Jornadas de História Medieval. 1383–1385 e a Crise Geral dos Séculos XIV–XV* (Lisbon, 1985), pp. 311–21.

⁴⁷Compare with Hébert, *Parlamentar*, pp. 377–453.

⁴⁸The subject of the king's relations with the social classes in the Cortes, in times of war, was analysed in da C. Coelho's study, 'Les Cortes en temps de guerre', pp. 37–56.

⁴⁹See Hébert, *Parlamentar*, pp. 343–76.

present their specific problems to the king, hoping to find a solution for them. Even if it was mostly the commoners, represented by the urban and ruling elites of the municipalities, who took the chance to present requests and appeals, others also took action, such as the clergy of the regions of Entre Douro e Minho and Beira, at the Oporto Cortes of 1372.

It is therefore understandable that, at the Lisbon Cortes of 1371, the commoners, claiming that the best way for kings to solve the problems of the kingdom was the summoning of Cortes, asked for them to take place every three years.⁵⁰ Indeed, during the 16 years of his reign, Ferdinand I summoned at least eight Cortes, shortening their average periods of meeting to two years. This is clear evidence of the imperious and bilateral will for the summoning of Cortes, in order to make the rule of the royal power viable and to ensure the internal cohesion of the kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The Cortes that convened during the reign of King Ferdinand, within the context of the Hundred Years War, indicate that the Fernandine Wars, which were fundamentally defensive wars, brought a heavy fiscal and economic burden on the commoners. This is clearly attested to by the appeals they presented in the Cortes, asking the king for solutions to their problems, and by their requests, demanding compensation for their efforts or the avoidance of further damage. Moreover, the convening of several Cortes in this period also gave rise to a very strong participation of the commoners in the Cortes, which is quite clear in the 1371 Cortes of Lisbon. The Cortes were reinforced as a representative political institution. The power and representativeness of the procurators of the commoners in the Cortes were also reinforced. Within this opportunity for dialogue and debate, the commoners gained a deeper knowledge of the political, social and economic geography of the kingdom in the damage inflicted by war. More relevant is the fact that the commoners strengthened the consciousness of their identity and of their importance in the process of construction and integration of the kingdom. Hence, during the crisis that followed the death of King Ferdinand in 1384, the commoners were ready to demand that John, master of the order of Avis, governor and defender of the kingdom, convene the Cortes. Due to this unprecedented request, the Cortes were summoned by the kingdom's social groups, which took place in Coimbra in 1385, and, for the first time, elected a king. This was a king who once again reclaimed Portugal's independence from Castile and who strengthened the Anglo-Portuguese alliance both in his marriage and in various agreements.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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⁵⁰Cortes of Lisbon of 1371, art. 95.