



The price of the throne. Public finances in Portugal and Castile and the War of the Castilian Succession (1475–9)

Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez & José Manuel Triano-Milán

To cite this article: Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez & José Manuel Triano-Milán (2023) The price of the throne. Public finances in Portugal and Castile and the War of the Castilian Succession (1475–9), *Journal of Medieval History*, 49:1, 93-110, DOI: [10.1080/03044181.2022.2155988](https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2022.2155988)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2022.2155988>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 26 Dec 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 123



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE



The price of the throne. Public finances in Portugal and Castile and the War of the Castilian Succession (1475–9)

Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez ^a and José Manuel Triano-Milán ^b

^aCentro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal; ^bDepartamento de Ciencias Históricas, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Málaga, Málaga, Spain

ABSTRACT

The reign of Henry IV of Castile ended without a clear heir to the throne, triggering a military conflict between the candidates, Isabella and Ferdinand – the future Catholic Monarchs – and Joanna and Afonso V of Portugal. Ultimately, what was at stake was the balance of power not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but in Western Europe more broadly. The conflict transcended the military field and tested the strength and adaptability of two precocious and dynamic state financial structures. The aim of this article is to compare the way both public finance systems coped with this conflict and responded to a challenge that was to shape their future evolution.

ARTICLE HISTORY



Received 30 July 2021
Accepted 16 October 2021

KEYWORDS

Kingdom of Portugal; Crown of Castile; public finances; fiscal system; war

Introduction

Henry IV of Castile died on 11 December 1474. This was the end of a conflict-ridden reign and the beginning of a period of transition that threatened to be even more convulsive.¹ The king's inability to appoint a clear successor had left the throne open to two candidates: his daughter Joanna and his half-sister Isabella.² Both of them had their followers within the kingdom and also enjoyed the support of other powers in the Iberian Peninsula. A few years earlier, Isabella had married Ferdinand, king of Sicily

CONTACT Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez  rcdominguez@ics.uminho.pt  Centro Interdisciplinar de Ciências Sociais (CICS), Instituto de Ciências Sociais (ICS) – Gabinete 1.16, Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, Braga 4710-057, Portugal

¹The following abbreviations are used in this paper: Act. Cap.: Actas Capitulares (Chapter acts); AGS: Simancas, Archivo General de Simancas; AMS: Seville, Archivo Municipal de Sevilla; ANTT: Lisbon, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo; CMC: Contaduría Mayor de Cuentas; EMR: Escribanía Mayor de Rentas; RGS: Registro General del Sello; *Tumbo*: R. Carande and others, eds., *El tumbo de los reyes católicos del Concejo de Sevilla*. 5 vols. (Seville: Editorial Católica Española, 1929–68). For the equivalence between Castilian *maravedís* and Portuguese *reis* we have followed that between Castilian *maravedís* and Portuguese *cruzados* (1 *cruzado*=175 *reis*) established in the Ordinance enacted by the Catholic Monarchs in 1480. AGS, RGS, 28 January 1480, f. 34; *Tumbo*, 3: 29–31. Data published in José María de Francisco Olmos, 'La evolución de los cambios monetarios en el reinado de Isabel la Católica según las cuentas del tesorero Gonzalo de Baeza (1477–1504)', *En la España Medieval* 21 (1998): 127. We have also used the equivalence between *cruzados* and *reis* in 1472 (1 *cruzado*=324 *reis*) following the calculations of the project PWR – Prices, Wages and Rents in Portugal, 1300–1910: http://pwr-portugal.ics.ul.pt/?page_id=48.

²See Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado, *Isabel I de Castilla y la sombra de la ilegitimidad* (Madrid: Sílex, 2006); Óscar Villarreal González, *Juana la Beltraneja: la construcción de una ilegitimidad* (Madrid: Sílex, 2014).

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

and son of John II of Navarre and Aragón, while Joanna could count on the help of her uncle Afonso V of Portugal, ‘the African’.³ Aware that the race to the throne had begun, the former made a head start by proclaiming herself queen immediately after Henry’s death.⁴ This audacious move, which even took her husband by surprise, seemed to clear the complex political scenario. Some of the principal Castilian nobles, among whom the marquis of Villena stands out, refused to accept this *démarche*, and tried to bring in the Portuguese to intervene. Despite reticence for, and warnings against, this course of action by various political factions, the political leverage of the marquis, the archbishop of Toledo and a few powerful aristocrats of distinguished lineage, like the Stuñiga, along with the political ambitions of Prince John of Portugal, forced the Portuguese king to enter the fray.⁵ After he made this decision, he married Joanna and rekindled her pretensions to the Castilian throne.⁶ This decision led to an open conflict in which the prospects for Isabella’s faction did not look particularly hopeful. Afonso the African’s military prestige, based on his successful campaigns in north Africa, were recognised even by the Holy See.⁷ Apart from this military experience, his army was undergoing a process of rapid modernisation and had the initial support of France, which was interested in breaking up the incipient alliance between Castile and Aragón. The young Ferdinand and Isabella had little to oppose to this, other than some political and military experience, and could not expect help from John II of Aragón, who, after a long and bloody civil war, saw the survival of his own kingdom threatened by the French.⁸ But the truth is that this imbalance was more apparent than real. Portuguese resources were limited, and the greater military experience of their king was soon offset by the lack of support in Castile and the growing doubts about the viability of his campaign. The forces of the contenders became more even, beginning a conflict that was to determine the balance of power not only in the Iberian Peninsula but in most of Western Europe.⁹

The profile of a conflict: the Castilian War of Succession

The Castilian War of Succession is not well known.¹⁰ Despite the obvious historical relevance of these events and the abundance of written records, studies of this conflict are few and tend to look at it from a narrow perspective. The reasons for this are several, especially the limited attention paid by traditional historiography to some aspects of medieval warfare, as well as the difficulties associated with writing the history of a conflict that spanned many different theatres and the evolution of which was closely

³ Tarsicio de Azcona, *Isabel la Católica. Vida y reinado* (Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 1993), 153–85 and 264–5.

⁴ Carrasco, *Isabel I*, 27 and ff. Manuela Mendonça, *O sonho da união Ibérica: guerra Luso-Castelhana 1475–1479* (Lisbon: Quidnovi-Academia Portuguesa da História, 2007), 37.

⁵ The debates that emerged around this issue are reported by the chronicler Rui de Pina, *Chronica de El-Rei D. Affonso*, vol. 2 (Lisbon: Escripatorio, 1902), 72–3 (chapter 173).

⁶ Saul António Gomes, *D. Afonso V, o ‘Africano’* (Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores, 2006), 198–9; Villarroel, *Juana la Beltraneja*, 199–230.

⁷ Gomes, *D. Afonso V*, 196–7.

⁸ Jaime Vicens Vives, *a XV*, eds. Paul Freedman and Joseph María Muñoz i Lloret (Pamplona: Urgoiti editores, 2003); Laura Miquel Milian, *La guerra civil catalana i la crisi financera de Barcelona durant el regnat de Joan II (1458–1479)* (Ph.D. diss, University of Girona, 2020). We want to thank the author for making the original manuscript of her thesis available to us.

⁹ Luis Suárez Fernández, *Los Reyes Católicos. La conquista del trono* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, 1989), 101–5; Mendonça, *O sonho*, 13–18.

¹⁰ As pointed out in Azcona, *Isabel la Católica*, 264–5.

related to other local and regional conflicts. A strong nationalist bias has coloured historiographical perspectives, in both Spain and Portugal.¹¹ Recent years, however, have witnessed the emergence of a new trend, especially through the reinvigoration of military history. This has resulted in a series of novel approaches to this conflict and in new light shed upon important tactical and strategic developments, as well as the impact of the war on the civilian population in some regions, a move away from preconceptions and arguments derived from questions of identity.¹²

The central role in the war played by finances is evident from its inception. According to the Castilian chronicler, Fernando del Pulgar, one of the main reasons that drove Afonso V to intervene in Castile was the limited financial means of the future Catholic Monarchs,¹³ and this was also behind the strategic choices made by both sides from the start. This is attested from the invasion of Castile by the Portuguese army, in the spring of 1475. When they failed in their attempt to establish their headquarters in Arévalo and thus support the coup in favour of Joanna in the castle of Burgos, Afonso V's troops entered the city of Toro.¹⁴ Lack of support inside the kingdom and the threats that loomed over a campaign – about which few were sure in Portugal – prevented the Portuguese king from adopting a riskier strategy. For his part, Ferdinand was aware that he had not the means to sustain a long campaign, so, emboldened by the large number of men that he had managed to muster, he sought a direct confrontation.¹⁵ His failure in this, after the city of Zamora deserted him, caused considerable tension in his ranks.¹⁶ Military strategy had to be reoriented with a long conflict in mind, in which none of the contestants had an unassailable position.¹⁷

Once Afonso V's position in the Douro valley was safe, with the threat that this posed to the heart of Castile, and with the boost given by the defeat of Isabella's faction before the walls of Toro, the war seemed to be going well. However, his inability to exploit this advantage with a direct strike allowed Isabella and Ferdinand to put together a defensive strategy based on the reinforcement of the strategic strongholds of Tordesillas, Madrigal, Sieteiglesias, Alaejos and Cantalapiedra;¹⁸ and for them to put increased military pressure on the regions that supported Joanna with troops. Andalusia, the most exposed region at the beginning of the conflict,¹⁹ soon became one of the Catholic Monarchs' main bases of operations. From here, they could attack Afonso's army and even Portugal,²⁰ and launch

¹¹ For Portugal, see Maria Isabel João, 'Comemorações e identidade nacional: o caso português', in *Procesos de nacionalización e identidades en la Península Ibérica*, ed. César Rina Simón (Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 2017), 95–112. For Spain, see especially Roberto López Vela, 'Isabel la Católica, símbolo liberal', *Bulletin d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Espagne* 43 (2005): 21–51.

¹² Flores Reis da Encarnação, *A Batalha de Toro* (Oporto: Fronteira do Caos, 2014); Carlos Jesús Rodríguez Casillas, *A fuego e sangre. La guerra entre Isabel la Católica y doña Juana en Extremadura* (Badajoz: Junta de Extremadura, 2013); Ekaitz Etxeberria Gallastegi, "'I Intend to Give Him Battle': Battle-Seeking in a Civil War context: Toro (1476)", *Journal of Medieval Military History* 20 (2022): 185–202. We want to thank the last author for letting us read his work before publication.

¹³ Fernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2008), 84.

¹⁴ Azcona, *Isabel la Católica*, 274–5.

¹⁵ A description of his forces is given in Antonio Paz y Meliá, *El cronista don Alonso de Palencia* (Madrid: Elibron Classics, 2001), 187–8.

¹⁶ *Tumbo*, 1: 48–51.

¹⁷ Etxeberria, 'I Intend to Give Him Battle'.

¹⁸ Suárez, *Los Reyes Católicos*, 133.

¹⁹ It is important to emphasise the wide-ranging powers granted by the Catholic Monarchs to the duke of Medina Sidonia, who controlled Seville and was their main ally in the region. *Tumbo*, 1: 44–8.

²⁰ *Tumbo*, 1: 40–2.

piratical raids – a fleet was constructed to bring the conflict to the sea.²¹ In practice, Ferdinand and Isabella's grip on Castile was tightening, and their financial and military position was increasingly secure. In contrast, the opportunities for the Portuguese army were constricted, and it was under constant harassment: the lack of sufficient troops and supplies undermined their position further, and it is not surprising that the campaign was seen with increasing scepticism in Portugal. Meanwhile, Joanna's supporters kept up the cause in their own regions, but in increasing isolation, as they were unable to make contact with the main Portuguese expeditionary force.

Joanna's supporters suffered reprisals – the loss of official positions, privileges and property – along with permanent military harassment; a shrewd policy of pardons for those who deserted her ranks multiplied the number of deserters going over to Isabella's side.²² The castle of Burgos, which had declared in favour of Joanna, was besieged, and it fell in a comparatively short period. The arrival of an experienced military leader, Alfonso of Aragon, Ferdinand's half-brother, frustrated the last hopes of the defenders.²³ This forced Afonso the African's hand; he decided to advance to relieve his allies and to take control of a city that was considered the *cabeza de Castilla* (the chief city of Castile). His troops encountered some resistance along the way, but this did not stop their progress. Indeed, his victory in the Battle of Baltanas (17–18 September 1475) seemed to pave the way to his final objective but, unsure about his military chances, the Portuguese king decided to halt his march and return to his original position. This sealed the fate of the castle at Burgos and severely undermined Afonso's credibility among some of his most important Castilian supporters: it was a turning point in the war.²⁴

Afonso's strategy to restore his advantage was to secure his base in the Douro valley while he waited for the arrival of his French allies and reinforcements from Portugal; but the stern resistance posed by enemy garrisons and the inaction of Louis XI of France, who was much more concerned with his own ambitions in Burgundy, undid his plans.²⁵ For their part, Ferdinand and Isabella redoubled their attacks on the castle of Burgos, and renewed their pressure upon Joanna's supporters. Castilian forces advanced through the possessions of the marquis of Villena and his brother, Pedro Girón, two of Joanna's main supporters. Zamora was recaptured by Isabella's army (5 December 1475), and soon after, the castle of Burgos fell (28 January 1476): most of the major Castilian nobles on Joanna's side abandoned the fray, with the exception of Alonso Carrillo, archbishop of Toledo. Without allies, and having lost his main bases in Castilian territory, Afonso V adopted a defensive stance: he was in need of strong reinforcements from Portugal.²⁶ These came in the form of a relieving army, led by Prince John of Portugal. Despite Ferdinand's attempts to stop it, this army entered the city of Toro and

²¹ AMS, Act. Cap., Caja 22, ff. 9v–10r. The intention of taking over Portuguese trade is made clear by the grant of one fifth of the rents drawn from commercial transactions with Guinea. *Tumbo*, 1: 62.

²² *Tumbo*, 1: 65–9.

²³ Jaime Vicens Vives, *Historia crítica de la vida y el reinado de Fernando de Aragón*, ed. Miguel A. Marín Gelabert (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2007), 431–3.

²⁴ Luís Miguel Duarte, 'A marinha de guerra. A pólvora. O norte de África', in *História militar de Portugal*, vol. 1, eds. Manuel Themudo Barata and Nuno Severiano Teixeira (Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores, 2003), 377–8.

²⁵ Afonso V even travelled to France to reinforce the alliance, but this costly visit – estimated at 4,560,000 *reais* – was a complete failure. João José Alves Dias, Isabel Drumond Braga and Paulo Drumond Braga, 'A conjuntura', in *Nova história de Portugal. Do renascimento à crise dinástica*, vol. 5, ed. António Henrique de Oliveira Marques (Lisbon: Presença, 1999), 691–6.

²⁶ Suárez, *Los Reyes Católicos*, 137–46.

joined Afonso V's troops (9 February 1476). Keen to restore his prestige and control the epicentre of the war, the Portuguese king tried to retake Zamora, but the city's defences had been reinforced and Ferdinand had deployed a powerful garrison there. This, and adverse weather, thwarted the assault. The arrival of a Castilian relieving army and the sally of the garrison forced the Portuguese to strike camp and leave. They were driven to the vicinity of Toro and forced to fight the pitched battle which the Castilians had been seeking from the start of the conflict.²⁷ Although from a strictly military perspective the Battle of Toro (1 March 1476) was not a total victory for the Castilians, in practice it brought the conflict to an end: Afonso V could not win the war and most of Joanna's supporters had long abandoned her cause. The withdrawal of the Portuguese army cleared the field for Ferdinand and Isabella to pacify their kingdom.²⁸ In the years following, from the Battle of Toro to the Treaty of Alcaçovas-Toledo, their military efforts focused on the Portuguese-Castilian border and Extremadura, as well as on crushing the last attempts to contest their authority with that mixture of punishment and clemency which they had exercised for some time. The Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo of 1479–80 brought an official end to a war that had effectively ended several years earlier.

Victory in this war, which had been expected to be swift, but which became a war of attrition, depended on the ability of both sides to fund their efforts at a time when neither had particularly large resources. The victory of Isabella's side was the result of the erosion of the economic and military base of the Portuguese, and the unexpected resilience of the Castilian forces. The financial and fiscal policies adopted were as important, if not more so, than decisions made on the field of battle.

Financial difficulties and resilience of the Castilian public finances

The financial position of Castile is considerably better known than the military aspects of the war. Recent works have demonstrated the dynamic nature of fiscal policies during this period,²⁹ but the Castilian War of Succession has attracted much less interest than later events in the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, and the archival record is relatively sparse and dispersed; as a result the bibliography is limited.³⁰

At the start of the war, Ferdinand and Isabella lacked sufficient funds to sustain a prolonged military effort. Their authority did not extend to the whole territory of the Crown. Although the royal chancellery and other sources insist that what was happening was a war against a foreign invader, the truth is that loyalties in Castile were divided.³¹ Some important nobles and members of the Church opposed Ferdinand and Isabella openly, and several cities declared for Joanna. Other regions, such as Galicia and Andalusia,

²⁷ See for instance Reis da Encarnação, *A Batalha de Toro*; Etxeberria Gallastegi, 'I Intend to Give Him Battle'. Also interesting in this regard are contributions in Francisco García Fitz and João Gouveia Monteiro, eds., *War in the Iberian Peninsula, 700–1600* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

²⁸ Rodríguez Casillas, *A fuego e sangre*; Óscar López Gómez, 'Claves del sistema de pacificación ciudadana desarrollada por los Reyes Católicos en Toledo (1475–1485)', *En la España Medieval* 27 (2004): 165–93; Paulina Rufo Isern, 'Los Reyes Católicos y la pacificación de Andalucía, 1475–1480', *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos* 15 (1988): 217–20.

²⁹ For a general overview, see Pablo Ortego Rico, *Poder financiero y gestión tributaria en Castilla. Los agentes fiscales en Toledo y su reino (1429–1504)* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 2015), 261 and ff. More specific works are in the present article below.

³⁰ Carrasco, *Isabel I*, 16–17.

³¹ Carrasco, *Isabel I*, 312.

which were theoretically under the control of Ferdinand and Isabella, in practice remained divided.³²

Lack of control and absence of external support came on top of limited resources. The treasury of Henry IV of Castile (1454–74) had been drained by the civil war against his half-brother Alfonso (1465–9) and the period of strife that followed,³³ and the tax apparatus was in a weakened state; the progressive erosion of royal authority had led to a diminution of receipts. If in 1429 ordinary revenues had amounted to 7,601,500 silver *reales*, by 1458 the return had dropped to 5,363,375 *reales* and by 1474 to a paltry 2,441,666 *reales*.³⁴ The deterioration of collection systems came on top of the lack of control over some of the main physical areas (*partidos*) in the kingdom and it is likely that the main financiers were divided into two groups. The numerous financiers who supported the Crown tax system sided with Isabella or Joanna, a division similar to that suffered by the royal finances during the Civil War.³⁵ The insufficient revenue was committed to the payment of benefits and salaries, which were essential to maintain the throne's political support.³⁶ The only way to meet these demands was to create extraordinary resources, which was not easy. The relationship between the Crown and cities, the main source of this type of revenue through *servicios* (grants) voted by the *Cortes*, had deteriorated during the reign of Henry IV. As a result, the Castilian parliament had not been summoned since 1473. In addition, the tax-collection systems associated with the *servicios* had also been eroded.³⁷ These limitations had to be overcome if there was any chance of winning the war. Paying for the war was to require a constant stream of extraordinary subsidies, rather than taxes, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The Catholic Monarchs' final victory should not allow us to forget how precarious their position was at one time, especially at the beginning of a conflict that could have gone either way. Similarly, we must not neglect the numerous failed projects and the intense debate around the new financial means tried during these years.³⁸

Initially, Ferdinand and Isabella tried to find military support that did not involve any expense. Among the most significant measures in this regard was the grant of a royal pardon to those who came to fight on their side.³⁹ Another useful measure to bring volunteers, one which Henry IV had already used, was to grant the privileges of *hidalguía*, that is, of the lower nobility.⁴⁰ Finally, the monarchs stimulated military action by

³² Although the map is complex and shifting, see Suárez, *Los Reyes Católicos*, 98–9, for an attempt to outline the geographical dimension of the conflict.

³³ We know that the queen took significant amounts out of the *Tesoro Real* to strike coin with which to fund her needs at the beginning of the campaign. Approximately 9 million *maravedís* were withdrawn between May and June 1475, and 2 million more before the end of the year. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada and Margarita Cantera Montenegro, 'El tesoro de Enrique IV en el alcázar de Segovia, 1465–1475', *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos* 31 (2004): 315.

³⁴ Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *La Hacienda Real de Castilla, 1369–1504. Estudios y documentos* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2009), 38–9. This paper uses *reales* and not *maravedís* because the latter were devalued sharply towards the end of the century. Therefore, in nominal terms, revenue in this denomination increased over time, although its value was depreciating rapidly.

³⁵ Pablo Ortego Rico, 'Dos Haciendas, un reino: pacto y negociación financiera en el conflicto civil castellano', in *Fisco, legitimidad y conflicto en los reinos hispánicos, siglos XIII–XVII*, eds. Carlos Laliena Corbera, Mario Lafuente Gómez and Ángel Galán Sánchez (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 2019), 275–301.

³⁶ Ladero, *La Hacienda Real*, 39 and 42–4.

³⁷ José Manuel Triano Milán, *La llamada del rey y el auxilio del reino. Del pedido regio a las contribuciones de la Santa Hermandad (1406–1498)* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2018), 89–98.

³⁸ José Manuel Triano Milán, 'De la restauración de la justicia a la lucha contra el infiel. La legitimación de los ingresos de la Santa Hermandad (1476–1498)', *En la España Medieval* 41 (2018): 110–14.

³⁹ AGS, RGS, April 1475, f. 401.

guaranteeing booty taken in piratical expeditions against the Portuguese and land from conquests made in Portuguese territory, to those who had taken them.⁴¹

Fiscal measures were also adopted with the aim of attracting new support, again at minimal cost. The grant of posts, property and rents confiscated from Joanna's supporters became common; large-scale surveys were begun at the local level to find the necessary resources in the first year of war.⁴² Some of these grants were reversed when the victims of confiscations returned under the authority of the Crown of Castile and this led to considerable tension.⁴³ Another frequent measure was the granting of tax exemptions, generally from those taxes that least affected the ability of the royal treasury to raise revenue and sometimes even from taxes that were no longer collected.⁴⁴

These measures, however, fell short of the demands posed by a military campaign. Money was needed with some urgency and problems concerning tax collection and advance payments had to be solved. The first major decision to be adopted in this regard was the systematic use of loans, for funds that the tax system could not provide at short notice. We do not know the details of all the loans subscribed to during this period, which have left a much fainter, and more dispersed, documentary trail than those from later conflicts. Indirect references, for example, to privileges in relation to future taxation, suggest that some of the main aristocratic houses contributed with substantial amounts.⁴⁵ This is the case with Cardinal Mendoza, head of the powerful lineage of Mendoza, and a main supporter of the young monarchs. In 1477, he was paid back a loan of 500,000 *maravedís* – the queen left a gold and jewelled bracelet as collateral – through a grant over the *alcabalas* and *tercias* of Toledo.⁴⁶ These loans were not always repaid in cash but often in the form of privileges, such as the commercial permits granted to Rodrigo Ponce de León in 1478.⁴⁷

Loans were not only granted by the nobility, but also by major financial groups in some of the kingdom's cities, for instance the Genoese merchant community in Seville⁴⁸ and the city's bankers, who were systematically pressurised to help the throne, as were the local council and members of the region's nobility.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ AGS, RGS, 1476, f. 38.

⁴¹ Letters of marque are common in this period, for instance one granted to two residents in Jerez de la Frontera to capture any ship entering or leaving Portugal, as long as one fifth of the plunder was put aside for the Crown. AGS, RGS, 11 April de 1478, f. 67. For the arrangements concerning territory captured in Portugal, see AGS, RGS, 16 June 1475, f. 510 and 20 June 1475, f. 496.

⁴² For instance, in Salamanca. AGS, RGS, 13 November 1475, f. 759.

⁴³ For instance, with the restitution of the estate of Rodrigo Téllez Girón, *maestre* of Calatrava. AGS, RGS, 22 May 1476, f. 352.

⁴⁴ For instance, the frequent exemptions from the *servicios* of the *Cortes*, which ceased being collected in 1478. When they were restored in 1500 most of the exemptions were ignored. Triano, *La llamada del rey*, 117–18.

⁴⁵ For further references, Del Pulgar, *Crónica*, 1: 194.

⁴⁶ AGS, EMR, Leg. 23, f. 155. The *alcabala* was an indirect tax on sales and consumption. *Tercias* were an indirect tax that accounted for two-ninths of the ecclesiastical tithe on agricultural production. Both these royal taxes were leased and collected together.

⁴⁷ It seems that he granted substantial loans to the Catholic Monarchs after he went over to Isabella's side. In compensation, in 1478 he was authorised to take 3345 *cahíces* of wheat out of Andalusia, something that was forbidden by royal injunctions on the export trade. AGS, RGS, 6 May 1478, f. 83.

⁴⁸ Suárez, *Los Reyes Católicos*, 110. As this author points out, this makes sense of the Catholic Monarchs' confirmation of this community's privileges and their partial exemption of the *almojarifazgo*. Tumbo, 1: 22–34.

⁴⁹ This is indicated by a petition to the monarchs, in which they seek exemption from further loans. AGS, RGS, 10 January 1478, f. 104.

Despite the substantial amounts raised with these personal loans, much more was needed to sustain a long and demanding military campaign. For this reason, the monarchs requested *empréstitos* (obligatory loans) from the kingdom's cities. The million *maravedís* asked of Ávila in 1475 not only gives an idea of the scale of the demands with which the monarchs burdened some of the cities under their control, but also suggests that their initial plan was to make this a universal policy, applicable to all cities in the Crown.⁵⁰ The cities' reluctance to comply, on the other hand, flagged up the traditional doubts at the legitimacy of this sort of imposition, and the difficulties faced by the monarchs in enforcing them even in those cities that they controlled. In fact, these loans were granted by few cities and towns. We have only found one detailed record of the accounts based on the repayment records pertaining to the Castilian *merindades* (an area of Castile to the north of the Douro characterised by its division into administrative subareas called *merindades*; in the twelfth century, these had an administrative-judicial character, but in the fifteenth century they were maintained as administrative-fiscal entities) (Table 1).

These measures were unpopular: most of the *empréstitos* sought probably were never realised and they were even not solicited across large swathes of the kingdom – no mention of them has been found in the local records of major Andalusian cities.⁵¹ This may have led to the systematic triggering of other financial mechanisms, among which *socorros* (advances) – granted by the main financiers in the Crown's service and guaranteed by future tax revenue – were especially common. These financiers did not expect prompt repayment of the money they advanced and trusted that their commitment would provide them with other, long-term benefits.⁵² No doubt, this was a risky option, but it was one on which the fortune of important businessmen would depend in the following decades.

Another major financial expedient was to impose obligatory loans on the Church. This was not new. The so-called *empréstito de la plata de las iglesias* (loan of church plate) had been requested by John II of Castile in 1429, when royal authority was threatened by the political machinations of the *infantes* of Aragon.⁵³ Despite John II's difficulties in making repayment and the tensions that this had generated, Ferdinand and Isabella decided to use this resource again to meet their military needs, following the recommendation of some of their closest advisers.⁵⁴ Despite the Crown's strenuous efforts to make this measure look legitimate, the Castilian Church responded unevenly, and the measure faced considerable resistance in some regions.⁵⁵ Despite this, Table 2 suggests that the amounts raised in this way were significant.

These loans were the seeds of a future problem: repayment would be needed at some point. It is true that the obligatory loans requested by the Crown were simply turned into

⁵⁰ Blas Casado Quintanilla, ed., *Documentación real del archivo del concejo abulense* (Ávila: Diputación de Ávila, 1994), 31.

⁵¹ For resistance at the local level, see Federico Gálvez Gambero, 'La deuda pública en la Corona de Castilla en época Trastámara (ca. 1369–1504)', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 13 (2021): 99–102.

⁵² Federico Gálvez Gambero, personal communication. For the scale of these *socorros*, see Gálvez Gambero, 'La deuda pública', 107; Ortego, *Poder financiero*, 280.

⁵³ Pedro Carrillo de Hueté, *Crónica del Halconero de Juan II*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo and critical analysis by Rafael Beltrán (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006), 33.

⁵⁴ Del Pulgar, *Crónica*, 1: 143–6.

⁵⁵ Pablo Ortego Rico, 'Las riquezas de la Iglesia al servicio del poder monárquico: los empréstitos eclesiásticos en la Castilla del siglo XV', *En la España Medieval* 35 (2012): 163.

Table 1. *Empréstitos* (loans) against the Castilian *merindades* in 1476. The reference is to the repayment of one third of the principal amount, so the figures used in the table are an estimate based on this proportion.

District	Amount in Castilian <i>maravedís</i>	Amount in Portuguese <i>reis</i>
Merindad of Cerrato	450,000	388,800
Merindad of Castrojeriz	1,500,000	1,296,000
Merindad of Santo Domingo de Silos	600,000	518,400
Merindad of Candemuño	600,000	518,400
Merindad of Villadiego	300,000	259,200
Merindad of Campos	1,440,000	1,244,160
Merindad of Saldaña	300,000	259,200
Merindad of Carrión	750,000	648,000
Merindad of Monzon	300,000	259,200
Infantazgo of Valladolid	300,000	259,200
Merindad of Campoo	300,000	259,200
Merindad of Burueba	450,000	388,800
Merindad of Burgos	300,000	259,200
Bishopric of Leon	600,000	518,400
Total	8,190,000	7,076,160

Source: AGS, EMR, Leg. 23, ff. 48r–49r.

Table 2. *Empréstito de la plata de las iglesias* (loan of church plate) in Castile.

District	Amount in Castilian <i>maravedís</i>	Estimated amount in Portuguese <i>reis</i>
Chapter of Burgos	500,000.00	432,000.00
Bishopric of Ávila	–	–
Bishopric of Zamora	1,006,196.50	869,354.00
Bishopric of Jaén	500,000.00	432,000.00
Bishopric of Córdoba	7414,002.00	7357,698.00
Archbishopric of Seville and bishopric of Cádiz	2,200,000.00	1,900,800.00
Bishopric of Calahorra	–	–
Bishopric of Palencia	–	–
Bishopric of Plasencia	–	–
Province of Guipúzcoa	–	–
Monastery of San Bartolomé de Lupiana	742,000.00	736,288.00
Bishopric of Sigüenza	1,006,196.50	869,353.78
Bishopric of Zamora	1,306,166.00	1,128,527.42

Source: Pablo Ortego Rico, 'Las riquezas de la Iglesia al servicio del poder monárquico: los empréstitos eclesiásticos en la Castilla del siglo XV', *En la España Medieval* 35 (2012): 163; Iluminado Sanz Sancho, 'El empréstito de 1476 en las iglesias de los obispados de Jaén y Córdoba', *En la España Medieval* 9 (1986): 1175–96. Data from the archdiocese of Seville and the diocese of Cádiz have been complemented with new material from AGS, EMR, Leg. 23, ff. 88–9.

new taxes and never returned, but the monarchs contracted major obligations with agents on whom the throne depended in one way or another, which enabled them to put the Crown under great pressure for repayment. This circumstance and the need to increase the Crown's resources led to the adoption of measures to control and restructure ordinary revenue. Although the *Cortes* had long demanded profound changes in the financial system, the measures it had previously adopted had been insufficient. At this point, however, the monarchs undertook a thorough audit of the accounts to try to establish the revenue that had, or had not, been received in earlier years.⁵⁶ The adoption of a new system of receipt during the war reveals the Crown's wish to exercise a greater degree of control over the exaction and collection of royal revenues. At the same time, the decision of the authorities of the *Tesoro Real* to renounce the mechanism for leasing

⁵⁶ AGS, RGS, 22 December 1477, f. 540.

rents en masse – that is, together for subsequent sub-leasing – was clearly intended to increase the competition among financiers and to force them to present more advantageous bids for the Crown's rents. This also meant stripping some of these groups of the virtual monopoly that they had enjoyed over the collection and management of some royal rents and of the political leverage that this entailed.⁵⁷ The need to balance the books was probably also behind some decisions to restrict expenditure, in the run up to its thorough reorganisation in the *Declaratorias* enacted by the *Cortes* of Toledo in 1480.⁵⁸

Although in terms of ordinary revenue the Crown advocated for a policy of continuity, trying to refresh and promote existing mechanisms, the reforms of extraordinary taxation were much more far reaching. At first, as with the ordinary revenues, traditional collection methods were tried: in 1475 a last attempt was made to collect the *servicio* that the *Cortes* had granted Henry IV in Santa María de Nieva in 1473. Although the record suggests that this raised money in some districts, the initiative does not seem to have met the Crown's expectations.⁵⁹ In order to normalise the relationship between the Crown and the kingdom, which had been severely eroded in the final years of Henry IV's reign, and to ensure the amortisation of the loans requested, the monarchs summoned the *Cortes* to Madrigal in 1476. There, important decisions were taken to address the kingdom's impending economic and military needs. The first was to demand a new *servicio*. Some of the monarchs' closest councillors had advised against this measure, warning Ferdinand and Isabella that this would sow social discontent, especially in the regions that had borne the brunt of the Crown's fiscal demands in the previous years, for instance Andalusia.⁶⁰ Despite this, the monarchs decided to go ahead and were awarded a vast grant of 162 million *maravedís* (approximately 140 million *reals*).⁶¹ This was the largest sum ever sought, and it probably took into account the likely losses arising from the deficiencies of the system of collection of extraordinary revenue. In seeking a grant of this size, the monarchs took advantage of low attendance at the *Cortes* and their ability to put pressure on the procurators that were there.⁶² Similarly, important concessions were made to the representatives of cities, such as the right to appoint the receivers of the amounts raised.⁶³ This notwithstanding, the case for such an extensive grant had to be made carefully: it was argued that the Crown needed to defend the kingdom from the 'Portuguese enemy', while the idea of using church plate was again put forward. The cities, for their part, expressed their traditional concern at the chaos endemic in the kingdom and the shaky nature of the royal authority.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Ortego, *Poder financiero*.

⁵⁸ *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y Castilla* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1882), vol. 4: 11–12 (*Cortes* of Madrigal, 1476, provision 3). For the review of expenditure in the following years see Stephen Haliczzer, 'The Castilian Aristocracy and the Mercedes Reform of 1478–1482', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 55 (1975): 449–67.

⁵⁹ AGS, EMR, Leg. 28–II, ff. 144r–179r.

⁶⁰ Diego de Valera, 'Epístolas', in *Prosistas castellanos del siglo XV*, ed. Mario Penna (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1959), 11–12.

⁶¹ Juan Manuel Carretero Zamora, *Cortes, monarquía, ciudades. Las Cortes de Castilla a comienzos de la época moderna* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1988), 134–8.

⁶² Carretero, *Cortes, monarquía, ciudades*, 134–8.

⁶³ AGS, EMR, Leg. 19, ff. 37r–v.

⁶⁴ AMS, Act. Cap., Año 1476, ff. 1r–3r.

The greatest overhaul of extraordinary taxation, however, was not so much related to this measure but to another initiative that was to have considerable impact in the future: the foundation of the *Santa Hermandad*.⁶⁵ The *hermandades* were a type of urban association present in Castilian cities from the thirteenth century for the defence of their members' interests. Castilian monarchs had long tried to make use of these associations to reaffirm their authority, and Isabella and Ferdinand finally achieved this by creating the core of a standing army and providing it with independent administrative and financial structures.⁶⁶ This was all to be paid for by the cities through a system of contributions that successfully resolved many of the traditional lacunae in the apparatus of extraordinary taxation. In this way, the monarchs created a first-rate instrument to support their authority while equipping themselves with an army to face their external enemies.

Portuguese royal finances during the conflict

Like their Castilian neighbours, since the thirteenth century Portugal had employed a financial system to maintain the royal court and the government. A point had been reached, however, in which sustaining the political balance of power inside the kingdom could no longer be achieved through ordinary revenue: the largest part of the income of the king went on payments to the nobility.⁶⁷ In 1441, for example, Prince John, Afonso V's uncle, received 279,883 *reais* of the 14,000,000 due from the *almoxarife* (the local fiscal unit) of Beja.⁶⁸ If we take into account that other nobles – like Henry 'the Navigator' – received even more, this sum should be increased by four at the very least, that is, 56,000,000 *reais*, to which the court expenses and other items of expenditure must be added. This greatly exceeded the little more than 48,000,000 *reais* that the Crown's rents were worth in 1473, the first year for which we have a precise account of the kingdom's ordinary revenue, which was compiled in the *Sumário das rendas do Rey*.⁶⁹

Portuguese foreign policy also posed considerable financial demands, especially for Afonso V, during whose reign the military campaigns undertaken in north Africa became a veritable drain on the kingdom's resources. Taking and maintaining a number of positions there involved a logistical and financial effort that led the Crown to seek resources abroad.⁷⁰ In 1458, Diogo Dias de Abreu, a knight of the royal household, travelled to Barcelona to negotiate a loan with which to buy cannon, gunpowder and other supplies for the king.⁷¹

⁶⁵ *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y Castilla* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1882), 4: 2–11 (*Cortes of Madrigal*, 1476, provision 1).

⁶⁶ Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *La Hermandad de Castilla. Cuentas y memoriales, 1480–1498* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2005); Pablo Ortego Rico, 'La contribución de la Hermandad en Castilla la Nueva. Modelos tributarios y poderes concejiles (1476–1498)', *Chronica Nova* 41 (2015): 275–323.

⁶⁷ António Maria Braga de Macedo de Castro Henriques, 'State Finance, War, and Redistribution in Portugal, 1249–1527' (Ph.D. diss, University of York, UK, 2008).

⁶⁸ ANTT, Chanc. D. Afonso V, liv. 27, ff. 65v–66 v. The document reads 'xiii contos que recebeo o dito ano', but it is unclear what denomination is being referred to. We think it is *reais brancos*, since the remaining values in the document are expressed in *reais*.

⁶⁹ Jorge Faro, *Receitas e despesas da fazendas da Fazenda Real de 1384 a 1481: subsídios documentais* (Lisbon: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1965), 55–117.

⁷⁰ Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez, *Fiscal Policy in Early Modern Europe. Portugal in Comparative Context* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 172.

⁷¹ ANTT, Chanc. D. Afonso V, liv. 36, f. 223.

Faced by increased expenditure and rising debt, the Portuguese kings devised a system for building their military strength at limited cost. The measures implemented were similar to those adopted in Castile, such as the grant of the privilege of *fidalgua* (lesser nobility) to those who fought on behalf of the king. This was especially useful for the war in Africa and garrisoning the Portuguese strongholds there. It was also an attractive proposal for the sons of rich families eager for social promotion.⁷² Also common was the grant of pardons – *cartas de perdão* – which freed those fighting for the king from responsibility for crimes they had committed; this was for example the case with Álvaro Anes, a servant of a noble from Guimarães who took part in the expedition into Castile.⁷³ Finally, grants of the spoils of war were attractive to military followers in Portugal, both on land and at sea.⁷⁴

Along with these measures, Afonso V also had frequently to request extraordinary taxes from the Portuguese *Cortes*. Despite his authoritarian nature, the monarch was forced to summon the *Cortes* 24 times in his 43-year reign.⁷⁵ From 1450 onwards, the meeting of the *Cortes* almost became a regular occurrence. The recurrent use of extraordinary taxation and the scale of royal demands make it unsurprising that on the eve of the war against Castile there was considerable tension in the country and a growing mistrust of foreign policy adventures. Unfortunately, the scarcity of the record, a consequence of the destruction of part of the royal archives in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, makes it hard to assess to what extent these measures overstretched the Portuguese fiscal system. Despite strong opposition to the campaign against Castile, Afonso V primed and maintained his war machine with the support granted by the cities. Once the resistance posed by the *Cortes* was overcome, it awarded the first *pedido* (subsidy) when it met at Évora in 1475.⁷⁶ After initial military setbacks and the swift exhaustion of the sums granted, new subsidies were awarded in the *Cortes* of Montemor-o-Novo and Santarém-Lisbon, both of which were held in 1477.⁷⁷ A third subsidy was awarded in the *Cortes* of Lisbon in 1478. This grant is known as the ‘*pedido* of 60 million’, for this was the amount in *reais* requested by the king.⁷⁸ The campaign, however, was increasingly unpopular and the support of the cities was not free from political cost, as reflected in the harsh opinions on the financial administration of the kingdom voiced by urban representatives during the *Cortes*.⁷⁹

The breakdown of the information demanded by the *Cortes*, along with some of the accounting documents from the chancelleries of Afonso V and John II – some of which were studied and published by Anselmo Braamcamp Freire⁸⁰ – allow us to make an analysis of the burden posed by the 1475–9 war upon Portuguese finances

⁷² João Cordeiro Pereira, ‘A estrutura social e o seu eevir’, in *Nova história de Portugal*, vol. 5, ed. Oliveira Marques, 299–300.

⁷³ Luís Miguel Duarte and Maria da Conceição Falcão Ferreira, ‘Dependentes das elites vimaranenses face à justiça no reinado de D. Afonso V’, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História série 2*, 8 (1991): 175–7.

⁷⁴ João Gouveia Monteiro, *A guerra em Portugal nos ginais da Idade Média* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1998), 223 and 311–13; Miguel Gomes Martins, ‘A guerra esquiua. O conflito luso-castelhano de 1336–1338’, *Promontoria* 3 (2005): 49–50; António Carlos Martins Costa, ‘As Ordens Militares em combate nos finais da Idade Média: o caso da Guerra da Sucessão de Castela (1475–1479)’, *Medievalista* 19 (2016): 13–14.

⁷⁵ Dominguez, *Fiscal Policy*, 82–3.

⁷⁶ Armindo de Sousa, *As Cortes medievais Portuguesas (1385–1490)*, vol. 1 (Lisbon: INIC, 1990), 403–8.

⁷⁷ Sousa, *As Cortes medievais*, 1: 408–10 and 410–16.

⁷⁸ Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho and Luís Miguel Duarte, ‘A fiscalidade em exercício: o pedido dos 60 milhões no almoxarifado de Loulé’, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras: História série 2*, 13 (1996): 205–30.

⁷⁹ Dominguez, *Fiscal Policy*, 83.

Table 3. Comparison of the ordinary and extraordinary revenue of Portugal, 1473 and 1478.

Taxation district (<i>almojarifado</i>)	Ordinary revenue for 1473 in Portuguese <i>reais</i>	Estimated ordinary revenue for 1473 in Castilian <i>maravedís</i>	<i>Pedido</i> of the 60 million in 1478 in Portuguese <i>reais</i>	Estimated <i>pedido</i> of the 60 million in 1478 in Castilian <i>maravedís</i>
Lisbon	–	–	988,296.00	1,143,861.11
Santarém	2,240,000.00	2,592,592.59	310,300.00	359,143.52
Estremoz	2,099,000.00	2,429,398.15	127,798.00	147,914.35
Setúbal	2,057,000.00	2,380,787.04	391,000.00	452,546.30
Beja	2,000,000.00	2,314,814.81	468,930.00	542,743.06
Évora	1,799,000.00	2,082,175.93	3,598,801.00*	4,165,278.94
Porto	1,795,000.00	2,077,546.30	518,935.00	600,619.21
Guarda	1,545,000.00	1,788,194.44	30,000.00	34,722.22
Guimarães	1,500,000.00	1,736,111.11	150,000.00	173,611.11
Coimbra	1,489,500.00	1,723,958.33	844,700.00	977,662.04
Portalegre	1,123,000.00	1,299,768.52	913,044.00*	1,056,763.89
Silves	821,000.00	950,231.48	–	–
Aveiro	777,000.00	899,305.56	241,550.00	279,571.76
Ponte de Lima	766,000.00	886,574.07	85,000.00	98,379.63
Leiria	740,000.00	856,481.48	85,000.00	98,379.63
Torre de Moncorvo	664,000.00	768,518.52	35,000.00	40,509.26
Óbidos	650,000.00	752,314.81	120,000.00	138,888.89
Faro	475,000.00	549,768.52	29,609.00	34,269.68
Vila Real	463,000.00	535,879.63	150,000.00	173,611.11
Viseu	460,000.00	532,407.41	507,780.00	587,708.33
Abrantes	457,500.00	529,513.89	193,000.00	223,379.63
Lamego	410,000.00	474,537.04	468,984.00	542,805.56
Sintra	380,500.00	440,393.52	159,100.00	184,143.52
Lagos	359,000.00	415,509.26	238,832.00	276,425.93
Alenquer	355,000.00	410,879.63	140,000.00	162,037.04
Loulé	160,000.00	185,185.19	100,000.00	115,740.74
Tavira	–	–	68,949.00	79,802.08

The asterisks mark sums where there is disagreement among historians over the amount. Here we have used those that seem to be more consistent with the usual levels of distribution of this subsidy. The taxation districts (*almojarifado*) are ordered by scale of their contribution (in descending order) to the ordinary revenue for 1473.

Sources: ANTT, Chanc. D. Afonso V, liv. 26, f. 1; ANTT, Chanc. D. João II, liv. 19, ff. 22r–v. Faro, *Receitas e despesas*, 82–8; Freire, 'Os sessenta milhões', 425–38; Coelho and Duarte, 'A fiscalidade em exercício', 205–30.

before the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo (Table 3). Although extraordinary revenues were smaller than ordinary revenue, they imply a substantial increase in royal income. As a result, this became an element of dynamism for both the royal coffers and the municipalities whose job it was to collect it. On the other hand, the mechanism for the collection of *pedidos* (extraordinary subsidies awarded by the *Cortes*) and *empréstimos* (obligatory loans) was different to that for ordinary revenues and the sums collected were also very different. In some cases, the figures make little sense to us, for instance in Évora. Although the sums requested were not open to negotiation, they were not entirely arbitrary either and depended on the political weight of each city. Évora was not only an important city for the government of the kingdom but was also a frequent abode of the itinerant Portuguese court.⁸¹ Other apparent oddities were also politically motivated or the result of the peculiar relationship between some cities and the Crown.

⁸⁰ Anselmo Braamcamp Freire, 'Os sessenta milhões outorgados em 1478', *Arquivo Historico Portuguez* 4 (1906): 425–38.

⁸¹ Rita Costa Gomes, *A corte dos reis de Portugal no final da Idade Média* (Lisbon: Difel, 1995); Humberto Baquero Moreno and Isabel Vaz de Freitas, *A corte de Afonso V: o tempo e os momens* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2006).

The scarcity of resources during the most critical phase of the conflict with Castile led Prince John to seek loans of ‘the silver of the cathedrals and churches’.⁸² This loan was not limited to the kingdom’s cathedrals and collegiate churches, but also extended to monasteries, abbeys and parish churches. Even the synagogues were included. In this way, ‘all institutions that had silver available, with the exception of those which, by their nature or obvious need, must remain untouched’,⁸³ were made to participate. Once the necessary amount of silver was earmarked, collection points were set up to gather and send the silver to the royal mints, where it was to be coined in Castilian denominations. This was the case with all the metal seized in the regions of Minho, Tras-os-Montes and north of the River Mondego, which was sent to Oporto.⁸⁴ The details of the collection and management of this silver are imperfectly known and little has been published on it.⁸⁵ We only know details about a few northern districts, but they at least provide a sense of the scale of the churches’ contribution to the war (Table 4). Some studies have emphasised the reluctance with which this measure was obeyed and some churches were sternly opposed to it, forcing the prince to authorise the use of force when necessary; there was violence at the cathedrals of Braga and Coimbra, and their silver was seized.⁸⁶ Despite this, our data and other indirect evidence suggest that this loan eventually amounted to a substantial sum. The crown took a long time to repay the loan, and could only do so with the enormous profits derived from overseas expansion during the reign of Manuel I (1495–1521). The Portuguese crown was therefore still repaying some of the cost of Afonso V’s expensive Castilian adventure as late as the early sixteenth century.⁸⁷

Conclusions: two royal financial systems compared, two divergent fiscal models

The war between Joanna and Isabella for the Castilian throne was to affect the whole political chessboard in Western Europe. However, against the theses of a historiographical tradition marked by nationalistic overtones and a tendency to seek pre-conceived conclusions, neither of the kingdoms at war was in the best place to face a drawn out conflict. Castile was still scarred by the deterioration of royal power during the reign of Henry IV, and in Portugal, which had dedicated many of its resources to north Africa, many political players were against the Castilian adventure. In this context, the failure of the contenders to end the war quickly led to a long war of attrition, which brought fiscal matters to the forefront. Both fiscal systems showed their ability to

⁸² ‘que mandassem emprestar as pratas das sés e das igrejas’: José Marques, ‘O príncipe D. João e a recolha das pratas das igrejas para custear a guerra com Castela’, in *Actas Congresso Internacional Bartolomeu Dias e a sua época*, vol. 1 (Oporto: Universidade do Porto, 1989), 206.

⁸³ ‘todas as instituições onde se encontrassem peças de prata disponíveis, com exceção daquelas que pela sua natureza ou imprescindível necessidade aí deveriam ficar’: Marques, ‘O príncipe’, 206–7.

⁸⁴ Marques, ‘O príncipe’, 201–19 (207).

⁸⁵ Marques, ‘O príncipe’; Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, ‘O que se vem investigando em história da Igreja em Portugal em tempos medievais’, *Medievalismo* 16 (2006): 205–23.

⁸⁶ Marques, ‘O príncipe’, 208–9.

⁸⁷ As attested by two payments to Álvaro Pacheco, knight of the royal household and official in charge of the repayment to the cathedrals and churches of the loans of church silver, dated to 1502 and 1512. ANTT, Chanc. D. Manuel I, liv. 6, f. 39; liv. 7, f. 32.

Table 4. Loans of silver plate by Portuguese churches, 1476–8.

District	Amount collected (in kilograms)
Cathedral of Coimbra	46,780
Cathedral of Braga	35,867
Collegiate church of Guimarães	16,685
Brotherhood of de S. João do Souto	2,177
TOTAL	99,509

Source: José Marques, 'O Príncipe D. João e a recolha das pratas das igrejas para custear a guerra com Castela', in *Actas Congresso Internacional Bartolomeu Dias e a sua época*, vol. 1 (Oporto: Universidade do Porto, 1989), 210.

adapt to the difficult situation and respond effectively to the growing demands for resources in a difficult economic environment.

The figures presented here, albeit they are incomplete, suggest that the fiscal prowess of both kingdoms was relatively even, at least at the beginning. Over time, however, the future Catholic Monarchs managed to set the fiscal process in Castile on a new foundation, making for a more dynamic system for exacting extraordinary revenues (*Cortes*, *Santa Hermandad*), which in the end gave them the upper hand. We cannot limit, however, the analysis of the measures adopted to a comparison of the sums collected, because, even if raising resources and undermining the enemy's economic base – such as Castilian attacks on the Portuguese routes to Mina, on the coast of Guinea⁸⁸ – were the pillars of fiscal policies during the war, they were not the only ones. The struggle also had an impact on the economic measures adopted by both crowns.⁸⁹ The adaptation of the measures implemented to the understanding of the principles that underpinned the legitimacy of taxation was a permanent concern for both royal chancelleries. These tried to present the war as a legitimate struggle and the demands for financial help as an inescapable necessity, even when the methods of collection were not always the most orthodox. In parallel, this element was also turned into an instrument to delegitimise the enemy.⁹⁰

Along with its impact on the evolution of the conflict, the study of the fiscal angles of the war offers a parallel perspective of the operation of two of the more precocious fiscal systems in Western Europe. The first thing that catches the eye is the similarity in the collection procedures used by both systems. Ordinary revenue largely relied upon indirect taxation – *sisas* in Portugal and *alcabala* in Castile – something uncommon in Europe.⁹¹ The large sums raised in this way and the fact that the collection of these taxes was an exclusive royal prerogative gave Castilian and Portuguese monarchs considerable room for fiscal and political manoeuvre.⁹² Over time, however, most of these sums became entangled in the systems that redistributed royal income – the kings of Castile and Portugal spent most of this income on payments to the nobility – the system on which the political architecture of these kingdoms rested, so both crowns

⁸⁸ Del Pulgar, *Crónica*, 1: 377–8.

⁸⁹ The most clear example is found in Alonso Ramírez de Villaescusa's *Directorio de príncipes*, ed. Robert Brian Tate (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1977), 85–6.

⁹⁰ De Pina, *Chronica*, 130–1 (chapter 206); Del Pulgar, *Crónica*, 1: 341; Ramírez de Villaescusa, *Directorio*, 86.

⁹¹ *Sisas* in Portugal were similar to the *alcabala* in Castile, an indirect royal tax on sales and consumption. Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, 'Estructuras y políticas fiscales en la baja Edad Media', *Edad Media. Revista de Historia* 2 (1999): 128–30.

⁹² W. Mark Ormrod, 'The West European Monarchies in the Later Middle Ages', in *Economic Systems and State Finance*, ed. Richard Bonney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 133–6.

became increasingly dependent on extraordinary revenues to undertake any endeavour that was even slightly ambitious. This was also encouraged by the growing control that the Castilian and Portuguese *Cortes* had over royal power, although this did not lead to the absolute decline of the power of the towns and cities propounded by some historiographical schools.⁹³ The ability of both systems to raise resources – and that of the municipalities, encouraged by royal taxes – delayed the emergence of mechanisms to consolidate public debt until a much later date, in sharp contrast with neighbouring powers;⁹⁴ for example, in the Crown of Aragon mechanisms to consolidate public debt appeared in the first half of the fourteenth century. Instead, the tendency was to seek loans from individuals or financial companies and, especially, *empréstitos* from cities and other institutions, which were used to meet immediate needs. Only the growing demands and the need to devise new ways to raise revenue led to the creation of a system of consolidated public debt, but this did not occur until Castile embarked on the costly campaign to conquer the Nasrid kingdom of Granada and Portugal undertook the conquest of the Indies (which meant maintaining a large fleet). These similarities were not only the result of a parallel historical trajectory. Evidence such as the use of the same nomenclature to refer to institutional positions and fiscal concepts clearly points to an exchange of ideas after the Battle of Aljubarrota (1385). This matter remains under-studied.

Although the war highlights the similarities between Portugal and Castile, it also outlines the differences of two fiscal systems that had by then parted ways for good. In Castile, the succession of military conflicts and the need to leave behind the crisis of authority of the previous reign led to the strengthening of the fiscal system. There were no external sources of revenue – the conquest of America still lay in the future, and it was not until the 1530s that this yielded a regular and abundant income – so Ferdinand and Isabella had to find ways to increase revenue while rationalising expenditure. Reform policies began to be implemented during the war; along with the overhaul of the system of ordinary revenue, extraordinary revenue was thoroughly transformed by the consensus embodied by the creation of the *Hermidadad*. The cession of tax collection and management to the cities was the cornerstone of the whole process, which would be further developed and updated to face the new challenges posed by the war against Granada (1482–92).⁹⁵ The result of these policies went beyond the increase of revenue for the *Real Hacienda* (the fiscal administration of the Crown in Castile) also involving a new balance between the political agents of the kingdom. Church, nobility and municipal elites all contributed to the operation of a new fiscal system while profiting from the economic and political possibilities offered by the burgeoning royal finances. The system generated strong tensions, but its success is amply proved by its ability to meet the challenges posed by an increasingly ambitious foreign policy in the following decades.⁹⁶

⁹³ For another view, see Carretero, *Cortes, monarquía, ciudades*; De Sousa, *As Cortes*.

⁹⁴ Castile began issuing bonds for consolidated debt in 1489 – *juros al quitar* – while Portugal did not do so until 1500, after a few tentative experiments (e.g. in 1497). Gálvez Gambero, 'La deuda pública', 104; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, 'A formação do estado e as finanças públicas', in idem, *Ensaio e estudos: uma maneira de pensar*, vol. 1 (Lisbon: Sá da Costa Editora, 2009), 156–7; Joaquim Romero Magalhães, 'Padrões de juro, património e vínculos no século XVI', in idem, *No Portugal moderno: espaços, pratos e dinheiros* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2012), 90–1.

⁹⁵ A synthesis is given in Gálvez Gambero, 'La deuda pública'; Triano Milán, *La llamada del rey*, 587–99.

⁹⁶ Juan Manuel Carretero Zamora, *Gobernar es gastar. Carlos V, el servicio de las Cortes de Castilla y la deuda de la monarquía hispánica, 1516–1556* (Madrid: Sílex, 2016).

Portugal took an entirely different path. Overseas expansion, much more precocious than Castile's, began yielding enormous profits after the consolidation of the Portuguese position in Mina in the 1480s. As a result, its fiscal structures became progressively outdated. Commercial returns generated greater revenues at a smaller political cost than extorting money from taxpayers, and the Portuguese crown encouraged this field of activity, transforming power relations inside the kingdom along the way.⁹⁷ Some of the sectors that had been central to the historical evolution of Portugal now entered a period of decline. The local nobility, for instance, was now replaced in the administration of the state by *fidalgos* and the new educated class that gave shape to the bureaucracy devised to respond to growing social complexity and new administrative demands in a context of increasing economic activity.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the smaller role played by cities in the fiscal system resulted in less jurisdictional freedom and political weight for them than in Castile.⁹⁹ António Manuel Hespanha has shown the growing importance of the Portuguese court institutions created in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – such as the Council of State and the Council of Finances – the new sources of revenue and the fact that two of the three estates (nobility and clergy) already wielded their political leverage through other channels (court institutions), undermined the role played by the *Cortes* as a collective institution from which to control financial policies.¹⁰⁰ Only Oporto and Lisbon remained truly significant, especially the latter, which in 1473 raised nearly 34% of royal revenue;¹⁰¹ by the mid sixteenth century, this proportion had grown to 60%. This was sufficient proof that this city was the centre of a new state that, by then, was fully formed.¹⁰²

Funding

The work for this project was supported by the following: FEDER Research project 'Circuitos financieros, crecimiento económico y guerra (siglos XV–XVI)', Junta de Andalucía [grant number UMA18-FEDERJA-098]; the research project 'De la lucha de Bandos a la hidalguía universal: transformaciones sociales, políticas e ideológicas en el País Vasco (siglos XIV–XVI)', Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of Spain [grant number HAR2017-83980-P]; the research project 'La construcción de una cultura fiscal en Castilla: poderes, negociación y articulación social (ca. 1250–1550)', Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of Spain [grant number PGC2018-097738-B-100]; and the research project, 'O Marco dos Navios e o seu impacto no comércio e no sistema fiscal Português durante o Erário Régio (1761–1833)', Foundation for Science and Technology of Portugal [grant number SFRH/BPD/110798/2015].

Notes on contributors

Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez has an MA in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (2006) and Ph.D. in History (2013) both from the Faculty of Arts of the Universidade do Porto. He was Visiting

⁹⁷ Dominguez, *Fiscal Policy*, 154–5.

⁹⁸ Paulo Merêa, 'Organização social e administração pública', in idem, *Estudos de história de Portugal* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2006), 139–40.

⁹⁹ Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *Los imperios ibéricos y la globalización de Europa, siglos XV al XVII* (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2019), 41.

¹⁰⁰ António Manuel Hespanha, *História das instituições: épocas medieval e moderna* (Coimbra: Almedina, 1982), 380–2. See also Dominguez, *Fiscal Policy*, 58 and 175–7.

¹⁰¹ Faro, *Receitas e despesas*, 82–3.

¹⁰² Susana Münch Miranda and Roberta Stumpf, 'O governo da Fazenda no império português', in *Monarquias Ibéricas em perspectiva comparada (sécs. XVI–XVIII): dinâmicas imperiais e circulação de modelos administrativos*, eds. Ângela Barreto Xavier, Federico Palomo and Roberta Stumpf (Lisbon: ICS, 2018), 328.

Scholar at Appalachian State University, North Carolina, USA (2016). He is currently a junior researcher and Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS) at the University of Minho, in Braga, Portugal. His main areas of research are the economic and fiscal history of Portugal over the long term (fourteenth to nineteenth centuries), as well as the building and consolidation of economic and fiscal institutions in Portugal.

José Manuel Triano-Milán (MA, Seville 2015; International Ph.D. Málaga, 2017;) specialises in the fiscal policies in the Crown of Castile, and the social, political and economic history of Castile in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He has published one monograph – *La llamada del rey y el auxilio del reino. Del pedido regio a las contribuciones de la Santa Hermandad, 1406–1498* (Seville: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2018) – and several articles, one of which was awarded the Medievalismo Prize by the Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales (2017). He is currently Profesor Ayudante Doctor in the Universidad de Málaga.

ORCID

Rodrigo da Costa Dominguez  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3083-6680>

José Manuel Triano-Milán  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9162-5991>