

# Structural Changes within the 16th-century Portuguese Military Orders<sup>1</sup>

*Fernanda Olival*

(University of Évora - History Department; CIDEHUS)

mfo@uevora.pt

## Abstract

How and why the Portuguese Military Orders changed in the 16th century is the central topic of this paper. Three great 16th-century structural changes are analyzed: the process of the perpetual transfer of tutelage of the Orders to the Portuguese Crown; the introduction of individual service as a means of servants gaining access to the Military Orders; and the adoption of statutes dealing with purity of blood and occupation.

## Keywords

Portuguese Military Orders; Castilian Military Orders; purity of blood; papacy; Portuguese nobility; ennoblement; Jews; crusade; North Africa; Portuguese Early Modern State.

The 16th century was a period of notable and far-reaching change within the Military Orders, which decisively marked their evolution over the following two centuries: between the reign of Manuel, at the same time sovereign and the administrator of the Order of Christ, and the period of Castilian Habsburg rule in Portugal, the face of these institutions was radically transformed.

The aim of this paper is to survey this process of transformation and analyze the importance of each of the changes as well as their overall effect. A synthetic approach will be adopted and the paper presented in essay form.

In view of the current state of research, this obviously involves a considerable degree of difficulty; firstly, because the research which has been carried out into each of these changes is incomplete and insufficient, due, among other reasons, to a lack of sources in Portuguese and

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this essay: ANTT - Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais / Torre do Tombo; BN - Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon.

Spanish archives, especially with regard to the Order of Christ (one can only hope that one day the study of the vast wealth of material held in the Secret Vatican Archive will shed new light on these issues); secondly, an analysis of how and why the Portuguese Military Orders changed in the 16th century cannot be carried out solely on the basis of knowledge about such institutions. Unfortunately, with the exception of topics associated with the Portuguese Discoveries and the resulting trade flows, little is known about Portugal itself (as opposed to the Empire) during the period before Alcácer-Quibir (1578) and a knowledge of domestic political structures and the impact that they had on society is essential for an understanding of the Military Orders.

For these reasons, the scope of this paper is limited to three structural changes which took place during the 16th century: the transfer of the perpetual tutelage of the Masterships to the Crown; the introduction of individual service as the usual means for obtaining habits and commanderies; and the adoption of statutes dealing with purity of blood.

### **1. From the administrators approved by the Pope to the perpetual tutelage of the three Orders by the Crown**

In 1418, when the *Infante* John (the son of John I) was appointed Master and Governor of the Order of Santiago by the Papal Bull, *In Apostolice dignitatis*, a new stage in the governance of the Military Orders was initiated. In the 15th century, the sons and direct descendants of the sovereign had served as administrators of the Orders of Santiago, Christ (the *Infante* Henry from 1420) and Avis (Dom Fernando from 1434).

This policy had been largely established by John I, as early as 1417 when the Master of the Order of Christ, Lopo Dias de Sousa, died. The king suspended preparations for the following election (SILVA 1997: 76). From then on, Rome was presented with the Crown's candidate, whom the Pope was expected to merely approve.

However, Dom John (the future John II) was the first king to exercise direct control over the Masterships of Avis (1468-1490?) and Santiago (1472?-1490?). Historians, nevertheless, have little knowledge about this period. In 1482, due to pressure of affairs of the Crown (PIMENTA 2002: 61), John II delegated the administration of the Order of Avis to three figures (Lopo Vasques de Azevedo, a steward; Dom Pedro da Silva, Commander of Seda; and Lopo da Cunha, Commander of Albufeira). Meanwhile, at the Évora-Viana do Alentejo *Cortes* of 1481-1482, the commoners' delegation (*braço do povo*) indirectly voiced its concern about the importance of these two institutions remaining under the direct control of the sovereign (ALMEIDA 1967-1971: I, 347-348).

In turn, Manuel, Duke of Beja and the Administrator of the Order of Christ, kept his Mastership when he became king on the death of John II, and, from then on, the institution was never free of Crown control. Although John II made a will making provision for his bastard son Dom Jorge to inherit the Order, when Dom Manuel became king, he did not comply with John's wishes: in Manuel's will, he stated that the Masterships should remain in the hands of the sovereign, his sons or brothers, "as it is of great financial benefit and necessity to the Kingdom, for many reasons". With regard to the Order of Christ, he was more exacting: "It will never leave the control of the Crown, or the King, for this would be most harmful, and most inconvenient, both for the Kingdom and for the King" (SOUSA 1946-1954: II-1, 416).

When Dom Jorge died on 22nd July 1550, the news of his death took almost a month to reach Rome. Instructions were sent with the news that a request should be made to Pope Julius III for approval of the transfer of control of the Military Orders to John III, who was already the administrator of the Order of Christ. It is highly likely that, following the Castilian example, the king had already planned this move before the death of the bastard son of John II.

On 2nd September of that year, the Portuguese representative in Rome, Baltazar de Faria, sent John III an account of the success of negotiations with the papal authorities following the Portuguese request for the Orders to be placed under Crown control. In order to persuade the Pope to accede to the request, the following arguments had been employed: 1) “changes which were made in the past, both in Portugal and in Castile, as these Masterships had been beyond the control of the Crown”; 2) the fact that such a request had been made in the *Cortes*: “on a matter which is so important for the good governance of the kingdom and keeping the peace within it”; 3) John III had already gained control of the Order of Christ, for the same reasons; 4) the great expenditure borne by the Portuguese Crown “with continuing wars both in Africa and in India as well as other parts” (*Corpo Diplomatico...1862-1959*: VI, 413-414). In practice, the several points can be summed up in two main arguments: the pacification of the Kingdom and the maintenance of the Empire in the face of the threat from the infidel. Meanwhile, the pullout from the North African fortresses, which occurred in the 1540s, rendered this matter opportune. In the discussions involving Pope Julius III, Cardinal Crescencio and Baltazar de Faria, the subject of the withdrawal from Arzila, which had taken place shortly before, was broached. Baltazar de Faria defended the decision as a strategic option taken by the Portuguese Crown rather than a sign of weakness: “I shall seek to satisfy the Pope by informing him of the reasons why we have abandoned our fortress, it being more expedient to have other important places fortified at great cost, which can then be supplied all year round, unlike Arzila” (*Corpo Diplomatico...1862-1959*: VI, 414).

The Pope inquired as to the income of the three Masterships, and as the Portuguese king had such a great commitment to spreading the faith, according to Baltazar de Faria, “the pontiff declared that he would not refuse him any favor I might request, and that he would freely grant such favors without asking for anything in return, such as ecclesiastical posts or revenues” (*Corpo Diplomatico...1862-1959*: VI, 414).

Indeed, thanks to his record of colonial exploits in North Africa and in the East, John III was highly regarded by the Papacy, in what was an era of dissension and profound religious conflict in Europe and great tension between Henry II of France and Charles V of Spain and the Pope, who was therefore very favorably disposed towards Portugal.

The final issue as far as negotiations were concerned was what form the document granting papal approval was to take; there were two possibilities: the issue of a brief or a bull. The latter solution would endow the process with much more dignity than the former, but it would incur considerable expense: “a bull must be issued with a lead seal and there is a requirement for mention of the income of the Masterships at the Chancellery, and a half *anata* must be paid; if a bull is issued by the Secretariat and not by Chancellery, there is a requirement for the payment of a composition” (*Corpo Diplomatico...1862-1959*: VI, 415). Both the “composition” (contract) and the “half *anata*” (half of the income received in the first year) would involve the payment of a large sum of money, due to the fact that the revenues of the Masterships were so great; some years before,

Charles V had paid 30,000 ducats, or about 12,000 *contos* (1 *conto* = 1,000 *réis*) for the issue of a similar papal bull.

However, Baltazar de Faria managed to persuade the Pope to accede to the king's entreaty without incurring any expenses, arguing that the money would be better spent on "the pressing financial needs of Africa and other very urgent financial needs" (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VI, 415), and, using the same argument, he set out to obtain the order granting this request. On 26th August, the day Julius III granted the king's request, Baltazar de Faria asked him to promulgate a bull but to waive the 'composition' payment.

These two favors sought from the Pope led to a great deal of controversy at the papal court<sup>2</sup>. Many argued that an opportunity had been lost to serve the needs of clientele of the curia by exacting from the Portuguese king the payment of sums deriving from churches and religious houses. Even the Emperor had not been exempted from payment in a similar case. However, the entreaty of John III was quickly acceded to, at zero cost to the Portuguese Crown.

Having achieved great success in his negotiations with the Papacy, Baltazar de Faria ended his message to the king in Portugal by recommending that he should soon request that the Crown be allowed to assume perpetual control of the three Masterships. In his opinion, "there will be no difficulty, as they are already under Crown control, and as this is an extremely important matter, and the time is opportune; I would make a request (...) because a council may be held soon and other impediments may arise which stand in the way of strategy. Although it seems that the present position is satisfactory (...) bringing them perpetually under the tutelage of the Crown will render them more secure" (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VI, 416). It was feared that the reforms in progress in the Church would produce significant and unforeseen changes.

We can deduce from a letter written by the Duke of Bragança that must date from the end of 1550 (30th December) that Baltazar de Faria's suggestion unsettled the king. In the duke's opinion, "Your Highness is duty bound by the authority of your Realms to seek to assume control of the Masterships for the Crown and perpetually so. In this matter I have no doubt, as it seems that I have already heard in the presence of Your Highness something to this effect: if Your Highness had not already made such a request it was because it had little chance of being granted or because there was a fearful financial cost involved" (ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, Part I, Mç. 89, doc. 43).

At this juncture, John III decided to offer a present of a ring, set with a diamond valued at 100,000 *cruzados*, to the Pope for benefices received. The Duke of Bragança noted in the letter referred to above that the ambassadors should try to "make the request following the gift of the ring Your Highness has sent"; he thought that the circumstances were favorable and that consequently the affair should not be put off. Thus an effort should be made to try to reach an agreement without any cost being borne by Portugal: "In my view, this is so fitting for both parties that it seems to me that Your Highness and the Pope can say to each other that they have nothing of value to offer each other but both will give up what they possess. I say this because, for our sins, perchance His Holiness

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<sup>2</sup>On 1st September 1550, Cardinal Gaddi congratulated John III and also stressed in his letter the fact that the favor had been granted without expecting anything in return – ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, Part II, Mç. 242, doc. 25. This was not, however, the only document in which such surprise was expressed.

will have more power to grant the transfer of the ownership of masterships than to cure the sick, as he has always done and said" (ANTT, *Corpo Cronológico*, Part I, Mç. 89, doc. 43).

In mid-1551, John III followed Bragança's advice, having previously advised the Nuncio in Lisbon (DE WITTE 1980-1986: I, 497-498) of his intentions. In John's instructions to the Ambassador in Rome, he advised him to first give the Pope the ring and then, with Julius III well-disposed as a result of receiving the present, to make a request regarding commanderies (this issue is dealt with *supra*, chap. 2) and finally the request regarding the granting of the tutelage of the Orders to the Portuguese Crown (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 50-52). Once again, Julius III acceded without delay, and the news was sent to Portugal in September (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 58-60).

As was common under such circumstances, from this moment on other battles were to begin. Firstly, there were those close to the Pope who sought to gain advantage from the importance of the concession and obtain a share of the benefits. Secondly, the Portuguese emissary acted with a view to ensure that the details of the document were worked out favorably for the Crown before the final version was dispatched. The Ambassador had promised John III that he would examine the document before it was signed by the Pope in order to ensure that nothing had been altered or omitted. As was often the case, a draft document was sent to the king to reassure him that arrangements were going according to plan (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 80, 82, 86).

One point on which there was some doubt, around the beginning of December 1551, was how the Masterships should be governed should they fall into the hands of a woman. Dom Afonso de Lencastre answered the Pope's queries on this that "this would not be necessary to look into, that His Holiness should conduct the matter just as he had done with the Castilian bull" (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 86). The bull of 1523 dealing with the transfer of control of the Castilian masterships was well-known in Portugal and at the papal court, and on several occasions was pointed to as an example during the drawing up of the Portuguese bull; Lencastre even wrote to the king to tell him he had had a clause omitted: "with Your Highness's blessing I withdrew a point saying that the Portuguese Crown would pay the Holy See for rights, if payment was owed" (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 86). In the event this question did not appear in the Portuguese bull.

However, the text of the Portuguese bull does not consist of a mere collage of parts of the text contained in the bull issued to Charles V, but was written with the Portuguese context in mind<sup>3</sup>. While in the bull of 1523 the role of the Emperor had been extolled in the struggle against Protestantism and the Turks, here the Portuguese Crown was cited as waging war "on land and at sea" and spreading the faith "in different parts in the Indies, in Africa, Ethiopia and Brazil". The transfer to the Crown of tutelage of the Masterships *in perpetuum* was designed to lend support to this effort. The victory in the two sieges of Diu (1538 and 1546) was verbosely referred to in the text in a tone of encomiastic proselytizing.

In a provision also contained in the Castilian bull, the Master of the Orders was not allowed to sell off their patrimony. While the bull issued to Charles V stipulated that all matters pertaining

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<sup>3</sup>A Castilian translation of the bull of union given to Charles V appears in POSTIGO CASTELLANOS 1988: 267-272. That of 1551 can be consulted in Portuguese in *Definicoens e Estatutos... 1671*: XXV-XLIII.

to the spiritual life of the Orders should be conducted by “religious persons of the said orders who must be appointed by the said kings”, the same safeguard was not included in the text of the bull issued in connection with the Portuguese Crown; John III and his successors were obliged to administer “spiritual and temporal matters in the manner described in our briefs, which were drawn up for the purpose.”

The transfer was also couched in terms of a concession made by Julius III on his “own initiative and without a request being made by the same King, John III, nor petition from another, which might be presented by him, but out of mere liberality, and *certa ciência*.” As has been shown, this was not exactly the case. John III had requested the granting of the favor, although not in writing. The request was not granted in return for anything (except for the ring referred to above), although the Nuncio in Lisbon (DE WITTE 1980-1986: I, 498), when he was informed of it, expressed the view that there was a need for retribution; besides this, some sections of the Roman curia expected *a posteriori* to receive something in return, and this was still the case in 1553, although such expectations were in vain (DE WITTE 1980-1986: I, 339, II, 717-718, 738).

Another peculiarity of the Portuguese bull is that it alludes not only to the inheriting of the Masterships by women acceding to the throne, but also minors, including girls: “even should a female accede to the throne of the same Kingdoms, or a minor of seven years, and though the said minor be a female, thus, the King, or by default the Queen, of the said Kingdoms who in times to come might be the perpetual administrator of each of the said Orders, and of their Masterships.” Thus, no risks were taken, allowance being made for all eventualities.

It should be noted, meanwhile, that, as with the Castilian bull, only the office of Master or Administrator was transferred to the possession of the Crown and not the Military Orders themselves. Their existing privileges and practices continued in place, and sovereigns had to swear to honor them before being allowed to govern the institutions, according to the bull of 1551, although in that of 1523 there had been no such provision. With regard to these arrangements, Masters continued to be dependent on Rome and the autonomy of the Orders was maintained; thus they did not truly become Crown property. For these reasons, Portuguese kings, when addressing the Military Orders, had to sign orders as ‘governors and perpetual administrators’, otherwise they would not be obeyed. This duality of status of the king and master, and the subordinate rank of the latter, being dependent on Rome, was a state of affairs that later arrangements would reinforce. It constituted a means of limiting the control sovereigns had over these institutions.

The move to transfer the tutelage of Orders to the Crown encountered opposition neither within the Military Orders themselves nor within the Upper Nobility. A degree of disaffection would have been expected from the Duke of Aveiro; however, there is no evidence demonstrating such a reaction on his part; following the transfer of the tutelage of the Masterships of Alcântara, Calatrava and Santiago to the Castilian Crown by Charles V (AYALA MARTÍNEZ 1997), one might have expected that a similar development was likely in Portugal.

The advantage that the sovereign gained in 1551 was the power to control these institutions, which possessed considerable material and symbolic resources. In about 1607 to 1611, their revenues were roughly equivalent to about 9% of the gross income of the Kingdom and the Empire put together (FALCÃO 1859: 5, 210). Besides this, the transfer of tutelage took place at a time

when the Crown, having asserted its role as the chief beneficiary of the profits of the maritime Expansion, was shaken by its first periods of serious economic crisis<sup>4</sup>.

The three Masterships possessed great resources. Masters approved by the Holy See had used the Military Orders to construct and satisfy their clientele; from 1551, this capital passed into the hands of the Crown. The way in which they were brought under the sovereign's control acted as an extremely important means for the disciplining of the aristocracy and furthering the process of the social construction of the early modern Portuguese state. Besides providing a source of finance for the process of colonial expansion, it contributed towards transforming Portugal into one of the most centralized states in Western Europe (OLIVAL 2001).

## 2. From corporate service to individual service in exchange for reward

From the mid-15th century onwards, there were insistent appeals by some, including the Holy See itself, for the return of the Military Orders to the battlefield. Following a request by Alphonse V in 1463, the Papacy sought to oblige Portuguese knights to defend North Africa: Pius II ordered monasteries attached to the Orders to be founded in Ceuta, where a third of all knights were to reside for a year in rotation. However, this order was revoked in 1467, at a time when the Orders of Christ and Santiago were governed by Dom Fernando, the king's brother. In the sentence of the revocation, it was stressed that the knights of the Orders of Avis, Christ and Santiago were not bound to engage in combat abroad because these Orders had been established merely to defend the Iberian territory (ALMEIDA 1967: I, 348-349; BN, Cód. 13216: 48-48v).

At the *Cortes* of Coimbra-Évora of 1472-1473, the third estate demonstrated an interest in the knights of the Orders serving in Africa (SOUSA 1990: 433). At the *Cortes* of 1481-1482, it insisted on funding for expenses incurred in "*lugares dallem*" (North Africa) being derived from the revenues of the Orders of Christ and Santiago, together with the Order of Christ, on the death of the Duke of Viseu; it proposed that commanderies should be awarded in exchange for services rendered in places abroad to be stipulated by the Crown. In one of the chapters of the *Cortes*, the example was given of the knights of Rhodes, who won their commanderies in combat (ALMEIDA 1967-1971: I, 347-348).

As soon as Manuel became king and Master of the Order of Christ, he made efforts to ensure that there was a return to warfare, which was in the Crown's interest. At the General Chapter of the Order in 1503, he managed to establish a small number of commanderies for exclusive award to those performing four years' service in North Africa. He argued in favor of such requirements on the basis of the principle that the Order of Christ had been established to serve Our Lord in combat against the Moors and the enemies of the Catholic faith (*A regra e diffinições...*, 1506?, chap. LI). Thus, an identity topic is brought to the fore, on the basis of which the king sought to establish a

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<sup>4</sup>At the beginning of 1552, when the bull of union reached Portugal, poverty was widespread. In July of the same year, the Nuncio gave an account of the great changes caused by the entry into the port of Lisbon by several Flemish vessels: "hanno dato la vita a tutti questi regni et in particolare a questo re, il quale sendo stato un anno senza un carolino d'entrata dal alfandega et senza vender nulla di speciarie (...) era una pietà a vedere et sentire li modi com li quali si procurravano danari per li vitto quasi quotidiano della casa, oltre li pianti de questi mercanti et bottegai di questa città" (DE WITTE 1980-1986: II, 717-718).

pattern of behavior in keeping with former times by those holding the habit of Christ, which might later influence the action of others. An attempt was made to put into practice the above-mentioned suggestion of the *Cortes*. In the same General Chapter, mention was also made of the creation of 30 commanderies in North Africa, each worth 10,000 *reals*, exclusively earmarked for “the residents of the fortresses of North Africa, who live in them and have their houses and wives there.” (*A regra e definições...*, 1506?, chap. LXIV).

Thus began a process that was extended in 1514 with the establishment of the “new commanderies” of this Order. By means of the Bull *Redemptor Noster Dominus Iesus Christus* (*As gavetas...*, 1960-1977: II, 472-478) of 29th April, King Manuel provided for 20,000 *cruzados* to be levied from monasteries, priories and parish churches for the establishment of commanderies reserved for those fighting for the Crown in North Africa or in other parts of the globe, on land and at sea, as the papal document states. Following the grandiose embassy of obedience to Leo X, and throughout his term as pontiff, good relations between the Portuguese Crown and the papacy enabled the king to obtain great favors, including this one (SALVATORE DE CUTIIS, 1899: 62-74). On 19th January 1516, the Pope authorized the creation of more new commanderies deriving from the revenues of 50 churches from royal patronage, and a deadline of one year was set for their establishment (*As gavetas...*, 1960-1977: II, 422-432).

Such papal concessions were part of a process of the allocation of resources deriving from the clergy for the financing of the war in Africa (SILVA 2002: 115-116, 286) that caused a degree of disquiet among ecclesiastics and made the creation of such rewards more difficult. The process of the establishment of new commanderies in Portugal was difficult: it was only achieved after a considerable time and after several rounds of negotiations, both in Portugal and in Rome, with those who considered their interests to have been harmed.

Meanwhile, six months after the promulgation of the bull of 29th April 1514, Manuel set out in a royal letter the conditions and criteria on the basis of which he would grant new commanderies: “although to some degree it might seem that the words of the bull are more open to interpretation.” (ANTT, *Gavetas*, VII, Mç.14, doc. 13). The aim was to interpret the papal document in the best interests of the Crown. Basically, it was established that new commanderies would be awarded to those who served for two years in Africa, as long as they had been issued with a royal letter of authorization indicating the place in which service was to be performed. The costs of rendering service were to borne by each individual but there was no requirement that one should have previously been awarded a habit in order to be able to request from the king the document authorizing “going and serving for a commandery in North Africa”, as this kind of behavior was later described. Thus, an effort was made to encourage as many as possible to apply for rewards. It was now patently possible to obtain a habit or a new commandery of the Order of Christ, the king’s blessing having been received, merely by performing military service. There was now no requirement either for religious formalities to be observed before embarking on such a course of action. The Order of Christ was set to become the prize for taking part in a series of battles with the Moors in the Maghreb, under the king’s orders.

The royal letter of 29th October 1514 also set out a series of advantages for residents at the Royal Court (*moradores da Casa Real*), in order to impel such individuals to go to war: firstly, they would continue to receive dwellings (*moradias*) and barley, as they did at Court; and secondly, as soon as they started to render service they could receive the said commanderies, without having to



have previously fulfilled the requirement for two years' service (meanwhile, those who were deemed to have qualified under such circumstances would have to continue to render service in order to complete the specified period, and they could not leave beforehand).

Those who finished the two-year period without receiving a commandery would have to present the sovereign with a certificate signed by the captain (*capitão*), bookkeeper (*contador*) and military chief (*adail*) of the place in which service had been rendered, stating the period of service, the number of horses and the number of auxiliary staff whom the individual in question had engaged at his own cost, as well as the relevant deeds performed, wounds suffered, periods of captivity experienced, and the loss of horses or other possessions that had been suffered during the rendering of service. The reason for these details was that: "with more reason and justice, they should be provided with the said commanderies sooner and also possibly with improved terms and increased income." At the end of the royal letter, it was stressed that "the power to grant the said commanderies will always be reserved for us, the king, and the kings who follow us, in accordance with the worthiness of each one".

Thus, both before and after 1551, the sovereign made a continuous effort to steer the Military Orders back to war – not an easy task.

As early as 1550, when the Crown managed to gain control of the three Military Orders, it immediately sought to reinforce the logic of exchange implied in the rule of service and the granting of commanderies. Towards the end of the letter of 2nd September 1550 in which he gave an account of the successful granting to John III of control of the Masterships of Avis and Santiago for life, Baltazar de Faria mentioned an episode which served to shed light on the subtle type of resistance that might be encountered. Carrying out orders he had received from Lisbon, he visited the different issuing offices of the Holy See in order to make sure that orders in connection with rewards which might go against the interests of the new administrator would not be issued in the future. He discovered a request, which had already been approved, in connection with the commandery of Mora of the Order of Avis, whose revenues were assessed at 1,500 *cruzados*, regarding the following: Luís de Mendonça had requested the approval of the renunciation of the commandery with respect to a six-year-old son of his, with the consent, prior to his death, of Dom Jorge, who had given his permission for the transfer of the commandery during the father's lifetime. Baltazar de Faria managed to block the process by citing the minority of the renounced child (who should have been aged 15 according to the statutes of the era in order to become a member of the Order) stating that "it would be such a harmful thing to make this exception, thereby ignoring the safeguard that the award of commanderies should only be made in return for services rendered; this would destroy the Orders." (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VI, 417-418).

In the letter of 1551 containing instructions to the ambassador, Dom Afonso de Lencastre, regarding the request to be made to the Pope with a view to achieving the transfer of the tutelage of the three Masterships to the Crown, John III delegated another task to him: it concerned commanderies, a matter which he considered "a question of my conscience, which neither can nor should be clear if His Holiness does not accede to my request on this matter." (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 50). The ambassador was instructed to present the question of the commanderies to the Pope before broaching the issue of the transfer *in perpetuum* of the Masterships to Crown possession. Two papal briefs were granted on 7th October of that year: in *Exponi nobis*, Julius III made provision for the king-master to oblige commanders of any of the three Orders to

fight the Moors, in person and accompanied by a certain number of horses and foot-soldiers dependent on the revenue of the commandery; if they did not go to war, they had to pay for it. In the other brief, it was stated that wherever the revenues of new commanderies of the Order of Christ were not sufficient for commanders to go to war, they should be exempted from requirements involving the presentation of documentary proof, and their revenues should be used by the king for financing the war (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: VII, 67-71).

In fact, in 1551, John III sought not only to transfer the Orders to the perpetual tutelage of the Crown but also to introduce the rendering of service in exchange for the granting of commanderies. However, in practice, he only rapidly achieved the latter aim with regard to the new commanderies of the Order of Christ. Despite the efforts of successive kings, only in the reign of Sebastian did the king manage to impose a similar obligation on those seeking commanderies of the Orders of Santiago and Avis, in addition to candidates for the “old commanderies” of the Order of Christ.

In the 1560s and 1570s, King Sebastian personified the values of the Christian knight, brought up to believe in the ideals of the crusades; and, indeed, he regarded the struggle in North Africa as a crusade.

Apparently, one of the reasons why the General Chapter of the Order of Christ was called in 1573 was the need to build a monastery for the Order at Cape St Vincent in the Algarve, “in which the Order of Christ should be based, in order to defend the whole of the Algarve against the Moors and the Turks, who every year pillage and enslave Christians” (SERRÃO 1960: 228). Such an undertaking would make it possible for commanderies to be obtained, such as those of the Order of Malta, by rendering service as a combat soldier of the Order. However, it did not produce any practical results.

Meanwhile, in connection with the concessions that Sebastian sought from Rome throughout his reign, he did not always request that all the knights of the Military Orders should be required to take part in combat, as though they all belonged to a unitary body.

In fact, it was during this era that the idea of individual service to the Crown was truly established as a means for individuals to obtain a habit or commandery of any of the three Military Orders. In papal orders issued from 1568 to 1569, there is also evidence of an attempt to make the granting of the commanderies of the Orders of Avis and Santiago dependent on the performance of service in the war in North Africa, as had been established in connection with the new commanderies of the Order of Christ<sup>5</sup>. Such requirements were established mainly in the 1570s. On 18th January 1570, the papal Brief *praeclara tua* artfully introduced a minimum age requirement of 18 years for the granting of a commandery (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: X, 360-363). Seven months later, the bull of 18th August (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: XI, 630-640). revoked the exemptions from combat and associated exemption rights which could be invoked, as had often been the case in the past. In order to obtain an ordinary habit of any of the Military Orders, it was essential that an individual should have performed three years' service in

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<sup>5</sup>See the briefs: *Circumspecta Romani*, of 5th June 1568; *Quamvis Majestas*, of 28th June 1569 (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: X, 311-313, 326-327). On this matter, the following briefs are also relevant: *Praeclara tua*, of 18th January 1570; *Cogit nos*, of 8th July 1570 (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: X, ).

North Africa. For commanderies, the requirement was greater (seven years) and a royal license was required granting authorization for the performance of service, or alternatively an individual could serve for a greater length of time (nine years) without previously having obtained authorization. The king, as Master of the Orders, now clearly exercised control over which services could be rewarded by the granting of such distinctions. An individual could only qualify for a fifth-ranking commandery (*quinta comenda*) without the requirement for having performed service in Africa. Besides the above-mentioned bull, various other papal orders issued during the era attempted to regulate the length of time of combat service required and establish where service could be rendered.

In 1572, the *Regimento e estatutos sobre a reformação das tres orde[n]s militares* (Regulations and Statutes Regarding the Reform of the Three Military Orders) was printed and approved the same year by Gregory XIII at the request of King Sebastian (*Corpo Diplomático...1862-1959*: X, 454-464; ANTT, *Gaveta 24*, Mç.1, no. 23). The aim was basically to attenuate the excesses of the previous bull. In the provisions of the new statutes (this was one of the few occasions on which a king was responsible for the issue of new statutes without recourse to the General Chapter), dealing with the three Military Orders as one, it was made clear that a habit granted would become the personal possession of the grantee (and thus would not involve remuneration or pension rights) until such time as he might be granted a commandery. Acceptable spaces for the performance of services included not only North Africa but also, for the first time, India (where, however, exceptional deeds of service were required) as well as the galleys of the Algarve coast. While the number of years' service required for the granting of a habit was not changed, the same is not true with regard to commanderies: for those worth less than 800,000 *réis*, five years' service was required; above this value, a further year's service was required. At the same time, only commanderies with a net value of up to 100,000 *réis* could be obtained without a royal letter authorizing the performance of service, in contrast to the other aforementioned cases, where this was essential.

A new papal order, issued by Gregory XIII on 25th August 1575, introduced some important alterations: the length of service in Africa required for the granting of habits was reduced to two years, or three years in the case of India<sup>6</sup>, for which exceptional deeds continued to be required; in order to receive a commandery of any rank or value, one would have to have performed 3 or 4 years' service in Africa and to have obtained a royal letter of approval; performance of service in the galleys was also acceptable (a year's service was equivalent to three summers of four months) (BN, Cód. 13216: 50-51).

In another brief issued on 11th June 1577 by Gregory XIII, *Exponi nobis (Bullarium Patronatus... 1868-1879*: I, 246-247), further changes were introduced: services performed in the service of the armadas on the high seas involving combat with "Turks, pirates, heretics and the

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<sup>6</sup>This requirement for "services in Africa" to be performed for the reward of an ordinary habit to be granted was only abolished by royal order on 11th January 1592 (CARVALHO 1693-1699: I, *Enucl.* III, *comp.* VI, § 382), which gave Philip II the power to alter the statutes of the Orders (GUERRA 1772: I, 293).

infidel” were deemed equivalent to those performed in North Africa or in the service of the Algarve galleys<sup>7</sup>.

During the 1570s, the Crown managed to persuade Rome to demarcate North Africa, India, the galleys of the Algarve coast and the armadas of the high seas as spaces for possible combat service in connection with the granting of the distinctions of the Military Orders, and relative stability in this connection was achieved following the bull of 11th June 1577. Thus the interests of the Crown were largely safeguarded in an era during which it was forced to come to terms with the pullout from Morocco, increasing competition on the high seas and dependence on the Cape route, which was already experiencing a crisis. Besides this, the enemy encountered on the high seas and in the other above-mentioned spaces was not generally Roman Catholic, which meant that popes were well disposed to considering Portuguese interests.

Papal orders issued from 1570 onwards provided for a minimum age of 18 for becoming a member of any of the three Orders. Aimed at reinforcing the concept of service, this measure caused some disquiet and was in clear contrast with the minimum age of 16 for an individual to become a confirmed member of any religion, a professed person. Many of those who left for India as soldiers were aged only 15 or 16<sup>8</sup> and the aim was to ensure that those who sought habits could comply with the stipulated length of service to the Crown: one obtained reward because one had qualified for such through the performance of personal service. In general, this was in stark contrast with previous arrangements, based on the principle that a knight should fight for the king because he held a habit.

However, the rules of service were not strictly enforced, even in the time of King Sebastian. Meanwhile, the advantage of the system was that service was theoretically required to be performed by the individual rather than being based on statutory or other requirements imposed on the Military Orders as a unitary body. The performance of personal service now constituted the main condition for becoming a member of the Military Orders; it was not, in the final analysis, an obligation in the feudal manner. While up until the 1570s, the aim was that knights should serve because they held habits, the opposite was now the case: whoever was the beneficiary of services which could be rewarded by the Crown had the opportunity to obtain a habit of the Military Orders and eventually even obtaining further distinctions if he continued to serve. Whoever performed services acquired rights which he could use for his own benefit, even if he were to seek reward outside the Masterships.

Throughout the 16th century in Portugal, the status of service as patrimony, which could be dealt with just like any other good, was consolidated: it could be tested, divided up and, if necessary, disposed of in any way even if the protagonist was a knight who belonged to a Military Order. The Crown had to reward service in order to retain vassals at its bidding who were prepared to carry out the various tasks involved in the *res publica*. As in general it had vast resources at its

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<sup>7</sup>In the *definitórios* of 1619, first published in 1628, the period of service for the armadas and galleys was fixed at 5 years. The duration of each year was equivalent to the period from when a vessel left port to when it returned to port (*Definicoens e Estatutos...* 1671 [1628]: II Parte - tít. I, § I).

<sup>8</sup>In the Committee of the Order of Christ, which finished meeting in 1589, there was a protest against such a high age limit; 15 years was indicated as sufficient (BN, Cód.13216: 25).

disposal, and granted them only in life or for life, the returns were guaranteed and the system was thus viable. One of the main advantages of the perpetual transfer of the tutelage of the Orders to the Crown was to engage them in this system of exchange with the sovereign. Thus, habits and commanderies were granted to individuals, along with almost all their revenues. In practice, in Portugal, whoever served did so in the expectancy to obtain reward and the king, who was willing to grant benefits, aimed to foster the continuation of the performance of services and encourage the performance of further services: this was the economy of reward, which was increasingly the basis of the relationship between the Crown and its vassals.

Unlike in Castile, no literature was produced in the 16th and 17th centuries either within or outside the Military Orders portraying the service performed by knights as being in the manner of a crusade (POSTIGO CASTELLANOS 1995). The obligation to perform combat service derived only from the tradition of the Orders. If members did not do so, this would merely lower the prestige of the Orders. Individual service to the Crown, however, was accepted as natural. It meant that a habit was merited, even if the space in which service had been performed was not mentioned in the bulls promulgated by Pius V and Gregory XIII. In fact, these orders were never completely put into practice; following the events of 1580-1581, they were quickly forgotten. Philip II of Spain made great use of the three Orders as a means of attracting individuals to his camp, and many of the services he rewarded were merely equivalent to the purchasing of political support. A good example of this was the awards made to the procurators of the *Cortes* of Tomar of 1581, many of whom received habits of the Military Orders (OLIVAL 1988: I, 71-75).

If military service becoming the norm was more generally acceptable, the process of establishing the system generated some opposition. At the General Chapter of 1573, a request was made to the Master to slow down the rate at which changes were being made. The fact that commanderies could only be granted on the basis of combat service against the infidel, except for fifth-ranking rewards (*quinta comenda*), was regarded negatively. According to a later account, “this would result in great harm being done to the King’s exchequer, by virtue of his obligation to pay candidates for services rendered, and to his authority and jurisdiction, which should be taken into account when granting a favor with regard to the said commanderies, with the liberty previously enjoyed by his ancestors” (BN, Cód. 13216: 52-52v). Thus it was stressed that the sovereign’s power would be reduced in two ways: firstly, by allowing the obligation to pay for these services to become the norm; and secondly, by losing the faculty thus far enjoyed to grant commanderies as and when he wished.

In December 1589, an Order of Christ reform committee (*junta*) completed its work (OLIVAL 2004: 97-104). The reforms not only reflected the above-mentioned step taken by the General Chapter of 1573, but also made reference to the fact that Gregory XIII had invested the Master with the power to alter the statutes and encouraged Philip II to do this. In order to stress the dependence and inoperability of the normative texts of Pius V and Gregory XIII that were cited, the committee advised that a request should be made, “in order to safeguard his conscience, and likewise that of those to whom he granted the said rewards,” to the Pope for “exemption for rewards, which he has done for habits and commanderies for many in these Kingdoms, and abroad, who do not present the qualifications or have not performed services that the holy apostolic statutes require”; this he should do for those which had been awarded from 23rd December 1581, because permission had been granted for those granted up until that time (BN, Cód. 13216: 53v). Thus, the power of

the king was greatly dependent on Rome. An appeal was made for the reform of the arrangements established by popes in the early 1570s “because it is not against the institution of this Order, and its aims, to receive people into the Order if they are granted only a habit, without having performed services, although after becoming a member of the Order they are obliged to comply with service requirements, when His Majesty and his successors might order them to do this. And thus it seems, that, from now on, His Majesty and his successors may freely award the ordinary habit of this Order of Christ to whoever they please, for any services, of any rank, and for whatever length of time, even if these are not granted in return for combat service against the infidel, providing they are people from whom the order receives honor and advantage” (BN, Cód. 13216: 53v-54). With regard to habits, this request summed up the situation which applied at the end of the 16th century. In fact, few of the provisions established from 1570 to 1575 were complied with. The Alcácer-Quibir defeat and the dispute regarding the throne threw the question of normative precepts into confusion. These circumstances also affected commanderies, many of which fell vacant in 1578 and ended up being given to sons who were minors (BN, Cód. 498: 1v), or even as a means of helping relatives in financial difficulties, or as a solution in other similar situations, for example, obtaining the release of relatives who had been captured in North Africa.

In social terms, the obligation to fight the infidel was a costly enterprise that few were prepared to undertake. In 1570 and 1580, the tension could be felt between, on the one hand, the statutory requirements acquired by king-masters, harking back to the bull which established the Order of Christ and provided for the transfer of the tutelage of the three Orders to the Crown and the combat tradition of the Orders, and, on the other hand, the social interest in obtaining these distinctions with ease. Following the events of 1580, the latter set of circumstances prevailed. In 1582, 205 new insignia of the Order of Christ alone were awarded, an extremely large number (OLIVAL 1988: I, 71), in fact the largest number in the history of the Order until the reforms made by Queen Mary I in 1789. In 1592, following the papal brief of 1591 which endowed Philip II with the power to alter the statutes of the Orders, a royal license issued on 11th January 1592 (CARVALHO 1693-1699: I, *Enucl.* III, *comp.* VI, § 382) abolished the obligation regarding the performance of “services in Africa”<sup>9</sup> for the granting of habits. Henceforth, in practice, the principle was established that a habit could be awarded for any kind of service, whether personal or not (habits could also be granted to those who held the respective rights).

The requirement for “services in Africa” to be performed for the granting of a commandery was retained until 1834; though by the end of the 16th century it was not enforced in the majority of cases. The normal procedure was that a request would be made to Rome for dispensation, even in the case of a new commandery. In fact, from this time on, commanderies were awarded in exchange for the performance of all kinds of services, or occasionally even without such a requirement.

At the above-mentioned committee of 1589, a proposal was also put forward for the awarding of new or old commanderies to those who had served with royal authorization; this was aimed at avoiding applications for commanderies in exchange for services of any kind, and it was argued that for deserving cases there were other rewards (BN, Cód. 13216: 57-59V). None of this had any effect. At the end of the 16th century, the idea prevailed that the Orders constituted above

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<sup>9</sup>A synecdoche which covered services in North Africa, India and the armadas as a whole or any one of these stages.

all a source of reward for good servants of the Crown, whether they were political supporters, efficient administrators or soldiers providing military service either at home or in the Empire. Those who held rights over services rendered increasingly felt that theoretically they enjoyed rights to privileges which could be sought from the king. Thus, service represented a source of power rather than a form of obligation. This certainly facilitated the spread of a pattern of behavior that ultimately benefited the Crown, which was thus able to increase the number of good servants.

### 3. From the relative opening up of access to the Orders to the statutes defining purity of blood and occupation

In the time of Dom Jorge de Lencastre, a candidate was subject to certain tests in order to become a member of the Military Orders of Avis and Santiago. While this is clearly documented from 1523 onwards, it would also have been common practice before that. Above all, candidates' means were tested in terms of patrimony or income (just as in the case of qualifications *de genere*, which applied to the secular clergy), as well as their capacity to serve, and proof was required that they were not involved in any judicial proceedings (PIMENTA 2002: 230-231). An inquiry was held and witnesses called by the candidate.

The statutes of the Order of Santiago of 1542 introduced stricter rules. For the first time, people were excluded if they themselves, their parents, and their four grandparents were practicing Jews or Moslems, although converts were not covered by the exclusion: "but if by the grace of God any enlightened soul should convert to our holy faith, and if that person should be served or honored by the Order, in such a case the Master may receive him" (*Regra et statutos...* 1542: chap. IV). Also excluded from the Order were 'mechanics' (manual workers) and laborers, and the means for qualification was set at 400,000 *reals* in kind or 20,000 *reals* in income (*Regra et statutos...* 1542: chap. IV). There is evidence that the same rules were applied to the Order of Avis during the rest of the 1540s (See for example ANTT, *Habilitações da Ordem de Avis*, Letter A, Mç.3, no. 20).

Such rules, however, were not rigorously applied. Only when the bull, *Ad Regie Maiestatis*, was promulgated by Pius V on 18th August 1570 were statutes truly regulating purity of blood and occupation introduced for the Portuguese Military Orders. These were some of the first institutions in Portugal to adopt statutes of purity of blood, although such rules had long been in force in Castile. Against a background of efforts by kings to encourage their servants to fight, it was no surprise that three aspects which decisively contributed towards shaping the Orders in the period of the *Ancien Régime* came to the fore at this time: services, purity of blood and noble credentials.

Regarding the last of these, it should be noted that noble blood (*fidalgúia*) was not required of those who applied for a habit; all that was required was 'purity of occupation' since the generation of the candidate's grandparents. This was very different from belonging to noble lineage. The situation was different for the Castilian Orders: status of blood nobility was required. Purity of occupation was much easier to prove.

However, in the last three decades of the 16th century, candidates for habits were not subjected to rigorous examination. It is highly probable that the consequences of Alcácer-Quibir and the accession to the throne of the Castilian Habsburgs were largely the cause of this.

In 1589, when the Reform Committee of the Order of Christ finished its work, the deliberations recorded regarding the provisions to be complied with by new applicants were still

very flexible. Here is an extract: “those of the Moorish race or of the Jewish race, or the sons or grandsons of mechanics, and in all these cases even if someone proves that he has noble blood or noble ancestors, or be a knight, or an esquire known as a good man, and who has more qualities which the statutes of the Order require, they are not received into the Order. However, if the son of a mechanic who has performed significant service, and the bastard son of a noble, even if he has performed no service, if they are written in His Majesty’s Books as nobles, in such cases they may be awarded a habit without dispensation; this may also be done in the case of the grandson of a mechanic who has performed significant service, and His Majesty or his successors may regard him as being extremely worthy of a habit, even though he does not appear as a noble in his books.” (BN, Cód. 13216: 23). Thus a series of exceptions could be made regarding social status. Firstly, mechanic parentage was exempted by virtue of noble privilege (*foro da Casa Real*) obtained by services: such a candidate enjoyed the same status as that of a bastard of a noble attached to the Royal Household; having mechanic grandparents posed fewer difficulties: as long as one had rendered considerable service, noble privilege was not required in order to qualify for the award of a habit. It should be noted that these exceptions were much more important when they were made in connection with the award of habits without dispensation. In practice, they were regarded as being of noble status just like the others.

The committee of 1589 went further: it allowed the “residents of the Places of Africa” (Ceuta, Tangier and Mazagão) who had accumulated service rights to be awarded the habit of the Order of Christ, the most sought-after in Portugal, even though they were the descendents of Moors or even Moors themselves, provided that they had converted to Roman Catholicism. Similarly, mechanic ancestry was exempted from the rules, even in the case of the sons of mechanics. However, such individuals attached to North Africa were required to apply for a dispensation containing details of their occupation and blood status: “And the residents of the places of Africa, who live there, and have their houses and wives there, and who are granted by the King, Dom Manuel, thirty habits and commanderies worth ten thousand *réis* each, even though they are of the Moorish race, or any of them has been a Moor, and who has been newly converted and has become a Christian, if by their services in the said parts they show that they are worthy of the habit and commanderies intended for them, then they should be granted a habit by means of dispensation. This should make mention of their defect and the reason why dispensation is being made. This should be done even if they are the sons of mechanics.” (BN, Cód. 13216: 23-23v). Not even the commanderies of North Africa were denied them.

Thus those who sat on the committee, dominated by people close to interests at the political center, clearly identified with the tendency to associate habits with service. In North Africa, not even Moorish blood in the case of the candidate himself need pose an obstacle. Only the Jews were totally excluded. Apparently, low status could be comparatively easily exempted if important service had been performed in parts of the Empire to which it was difficult to attract servants, like North Africa.

Only in 1592, did Philip II reserve for Rome the dispensation for the defects of Jewish and Moorish blood (CARVALHO 1693-1699: I, *Enucl.* III, *comp.* VI, § 382). Before this, despite the bull of Pius V of 1570, sovereigns had continued to exempt defects. For this purpose, they used a clause “of my certain science and absolute power”, which was included in the provisions of the awarding of habits.



In 1592, only this kind of situation was covered by the jurisdiction of the Holy See. In matters of pagans or heathens (natives of Africa, America and Asia), kings continued to grant dispensation, although sometimes reluctantly. This is an important point, with regard to a monarchy with a huge colonial empire, whose defense was always difficult and sometimes involved the important contribution of native human resources, as in the case of the expulsion of the Dutch from Brazil in the 17th century<sup>10</sup>.

The rules governing access to the distinctions of the Orders were applied more strictly when in 1597 the requirement was introduced for inquiry to be undertaken in the place of birth of a candidate, his parents and grandparents<sup>11</sup>; a knight of the respective habit was specially sent out to serve on the inquiry and had to produce a report on the candidate; a legal official, the *corregedor da comarca*, was responsible for conducting the inquiry; if he or his wife did not qualify because of purity of blood impediments, the onus was on the head of the *provedor* or on the head of the *juiz de fora*<sup>12</sup>.

The effort made during the last thirty years of the 16th century to produce statutes governing purity of blood and occupation led to an increase in the value of habits and raised standards as far as the strict application of the background investigations was concerned. All this changed the social status of habits. Here is a clear example: Cristóvão Esteves, one of the compilers of the latest version of the *Ordenações Manuelinas*, who was of Jewish ancestry, had been a Knight of the Order of Christ since 1515, but rarely used the title. In many letters issued by the Royal Chancellery dating from the late 1540s, he is referred to merely as Doctor Cristóvão Esteves da Espargosa, “*fidalgo* of the Royal Household and chaplain to the Royal Household, from the Council of State and *Desembargador do Paço*” (ANTT, *Perdões e Legitimações de D. João III*, L<sup>o</sup> 1: 13v-14, 20, 20v, *passim*; L<sup>o</sup> IV: 24, 25v, 94v, 95, *passim*). A century later, in the same circumstances, reference to a habit of the Order of Christ would never have been omitted. In the intervening period, the distinction had taken on a new significance and a new symbolic meaning.

Such a transformation was largely due to the Crown’s intervention in the affairs of the Orders with a view to bringing them under its control. If it had not done this, how could it have rewarded services rendered and drawn advantage from such circumstances? The Crown transformed the habit into a distinct means of rewarding service and granting privilege to its servants. Receiving a

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<sup>10</sup>This does not mean that many blacks were awarded habits (DUTRA 1977-1979: 25-35; DUTRA 1999: 91-113).

<sup>11</sup>Inquiries were even held in Lisbon, at the house of the General Judge (*Juiz Geral*) of the Military Orders, who called 2 to 4 witnesses - see ANTT, *Mesa da Consciência - Ordens Militares - Papéis Diversos*, Mç. 22, doc. 126.

<sup>12</sup>ANTT, *Mesa da Consciência*, L<sup>o</sup> 310: 62-64. Only after the *definitórios* left the General Chapter of 1619 were commissars created, which reflected the practice that was current in Castile.

habit was not the same as acquiring pension rights. Likewise, for the Crown, rewarding services rendered with a pension or with a habit was not the same thing. From a strictly financial standpoint it would have been cheaper to take the latter course, even though a habit was rarely granted without a pension. The so-called 'habit pension' did not involve a large amount of money: 20,000 *réis* in the last quarter of the 16th century and 12,000 *réis* from the 1660s onwards.

In short, by the end of the 16th century, membership in one of the Military Orders was a very different prospect from similar circumstances at the beginning of the century. In connection with the past, they only tended to exploit the traditional ideals bound up with performing military service. By the end of the century, the Military Orders remained a feature of society, but were endowed with a completely new social and political connotation. They became essential instruments used by the Crown for ensuring the maintenance of discipline and for awarding social distinction.

For all these reasons, the perpetual transfer of tutelage of the Masterships to the Crown represented a crucial step towards consolidating the economy of reward. It was also a significant feature of the process of the construction of the Early Modern State. In order for this to be accepted without serious conflict between the Crown and elite groups, they had to be rewarded with distinctions they regarded as relevant, such as habits and commanderies.

These dynamic processes were closely linked. In the 16th century, the Crown managed to bring the Masterships under its perpetual control, gradually ensure that individual service constituted the means of access to these institutions and also increase the value of habits, endowing them with the status of purity of blood and occupation. However, in practice, the Crown admitted many exceptions to the established rules, showing a degree of flexibility which acted in its interest. Without pitting the Crown against its subjects, how was all this managed? The introduction of services, although it had its supporters, did encounter some resistance, which has not been dealt with in this paper. It was no accident that the new system was only gradually put in place. No great obstacles were placed in the way of the other two great changes, especially the introduction of the statutes. This appears to be explained by the fact that, firstly, during the era, Portuguese noble houses were not very wealthy or powerful and, secondly, the fact that, on various occasions, the *Cortes* called for the introduction of service as a means of achieving noble distinctions, following the example of the Order of Malta. The Crown appears to have enjoyed a strong bargaining position both in relation to Rome and on the domestic front; such power produced a capacity on the part of the Crown to often make exceptions (which took on the status of privileges) without undermining the overall system.

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