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The Households of Portuguese *infantes* in the Avis Dynasty: Formation and Autonomy of Alternative Centres of Power in the 16th Century

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Introduction

The objective of this essay is to discuss the political role of the seigniorial households of the Portuguese *infantes* (princes) during the sixteenth century, taking into account the degree of autonomy progressively acquired by these individuals and by their respective entourages. In particular, I will explore how these institutions are related to the Crown and other nobility. This dimension is characterized by periods when the existence of inter-institutional cooperation is verified, intermixed with episodes of conflict between them. It is assumed, therefore, that there are situations in which the households of the *infantes* declare their will to collaborate with the diverse political projects of the monarchy. On other occasions, it is clear that these households carried out projects of their own, which often resulted in the Crown attempting to control them.

I will argue in this paper that the households of the *infantes* were relevant in the territorial and political control of the kingdom during the first half of sixteenth century, namely in the balance of power between nobility and the Crown. Factors such as the existence of a web of interpersonal relationships between the titled nobility or a policy of resource redistribution between the central government and the latter helped the monarchy to control the destination and reproduction of its members, and thus avoided an even greater degree of political division. The use of a wide range of resources granted by the Crown gradually gave the households of the *infantes* significant potential to attract clientele and, thus, a considerable degree of competitiveness with the other

noble households. Then, I will address several issues associated with the formation and composition of the households of the *infantes* while integrating them into the historiography of the evolution of the royal households and courts. I will then turn to the emergence of the entourages of the Manueline *infantes* within the royal household to clarify the origin of the households of the respective individuals that coincides with a period of progressive emancipation from the Crown. Finally, I will evaluate certain variables displayed by these households – resources, patronage, composition of respective entourages – and assess their importance to the balance of the political forces regarding the Portuguese monarchy in this period.

Historiography and the Problem

The formation and development of the households of the *infantes* pose an issue that I will tackle in two ways: first, as part of the development of the court as a political institution during the medieval and modern period, and second, in the context of the emergence of the proto-state forms of government in precontemporary Europe.² The subject has been discussed regularly by historians since Elias's classic thesis. His model, based on royal centralization amid the gradual loss of autonomy of the aristocratic power, has generated strong criticism in recent decades.³ Many of these commentaries discuss the relationship between the monarchy and nobility. One matter of importance is the existence of a reciprocity between both parties. This reciprocity was of fundamental importance for the rule of the respective pre-modern political units, which challenges the premise of the royal court being a center of domestication of the nobility. This perspective was centered on the existence of a model with a plurality of courts, where princely and noble households replicated the royal domestic model of governance on the periphery, as well as in the participation of the nobility at the political center.⁴

On the other hand, the existence of intense debate about the role of the royal court and household in the government of the European kingdoms during the early modern period must be pointed out. The crux of the problem is in the evolution of the institutions in the political sphere of the monarchy, and in the way these allow a greater or lesser degree of political centralization. In the Portuguese context and time period considered here, the opinions are mainly divided into two main theoretical plans that are not totally divergent. The first perspective argues that the reforms carried out in the late

fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, combined with the vicissitudes resulting from overseas expansion, led to an appreciable degree of political centralization. Implications of this symbolic affirmation that strengthened the monarchy were visible in the political patronage of the different social strata, especially towards the nobility.⁵ Some authors argued that, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the members of the Avis dynasty generally decided to integrate the elites from the kingdom into the royal household, not just to coordinate the government between the center and periphery, but also to strengthen and legitimize its own power.⁶ The second perspective, strongly influenced by the legal history, emphasizes the existence of a polysinodal monarchy, where power spreading throughout the Portuguese territory was a reality until the liberal period. Based on this premise, the persistence of the seigniorial jurisdictions configured a privileged area of activity for the nobility and ecclesiastic lords where the king was unable to interfere. Thus, the degree of political centralization until the end of the *Ancien Régime* tended to be low.⁷

Although they disagree in many features, these views reveal some points of convergence. For example, both recognize that, due to the insufficiency of resources of the central power, commitment between the king and nobility is essential for governing the most peripheral areas of the territory. This point is perhaps the most interesting for discussing the importance of the households of the *infantes* as alternative centers of power to the royal court. The Avis dynasty was known for donating large portions of land to members of royalty normally associated with a title that established their primacy in the stratification of the kingdom's nobility.⁸ In fact, throughout this period, many of these jurisdictional areas were controlled by *infantes* and their descendants. In addition, the household became a means that allowed control to be exerted over these areas through a series of seigniorial practices at the local and regional level. Also, it should be noted that the concept of a "household" based on the coeval context studied here not only refers to the domestic space, but also to the rest of the seigniorial spaces, both public and private.⁹

The power bestowed to these *infantes* was considerable. As such, the Crown tried whenever possible to delegate political projects to them, whether within the metropolis or in the scope of overseas territories. The model of governance in force during the modern period would facilitate the *infantes'* cooperation with the monarchy, given the patriarchal prominence that the *pater familias* had in the domestic economy. In effect, there were ideological bases to exploit effectively these members of the royal

household.¹⁰ However, this type of cooperation did not always occur. From the point of view of the Crown, the concession of a household to an *infante* (as well as the material and jurisdictional bases to sustain it) involved a variable degree of risk. As a result, the political rebellions that occurred during the fifteenth century, which occasionally resulted in civil wars, originated in the power that some of these individuals were able to reunite.¹¹

In light of this, the refinement of royal mechanisms certainly helped control the ambitions of these households and the individuals who possessed them. These mechanisms included policy concerning the granting of titles; the *foros*, a system of social hierarchy applied to the *moradores* of the royal household; and the Mental Law, a legal mechanism, based on the principles of indivisibility, inalienability, primogeniture and masculinity, which regulated the transmission of the crown's patrimonial assets.¹² On the other hand, the actual reproduction of the households and estates of the *infantes* was conditioned by the marriage policy of the Crown. Some members of the royal house, such as *infantes* Luís (1506-55) and Maria (1521-77), could not marry mostly due to royal imposition; other, such as *infantes* Afonso (1509-40) and Henrique (1512-80), were pushed to ecclesiastic careers early on.

Nevertheless, it is important to reflect on the political loyalty of the elites belonging to these princely courts. As noted for the progeny of Joao I (r.1385-1433), the growing complexity of the households of the *infantes* Duarte, Pedro, and Henrique was manifested in the political participation of the members with whom they were associated. At that time, it was well understood that the *infantes* actively participated in the king's decision-making process, with help from his closest advisors.¹³ Regarding this trend, the government of Joao III (r. 1521-1557) presents some similarities. The political participation of Luis, Afonso, and Henrique is recognized at different times and in different contexts during the rule of their brother Joao III. Less clear is the role of the closest advisors to these princes, largely due to the absence of in-depth prosopographic studies that could establish clear and elucidated profiles about this group. Therefore, it is important to understand the attraction that the households of the *infantes* have over both small and lesser nobility compared to the same practices carried out by the Crown and high nobility.

The Entourages of the *Infantes*: Formation and Development

The first large wave of donations to the Portuguese *infantes* to form the respective households, done in a premeditated manner, was carried out during the kingdom of Joao I (r. 1385-1433). The process seems to have been similar to a certain degree throughout the West during the medieval period, where the division of the territorial ownership by the princes belonging to the same ruling household favored a certain degree of competition and distribution of power.¹⁴ Some authors pointed out that this model for these structures was inspired by the English context, where members related to the royal household owned extensive land and were representatives of the royal power itself.¹⁵ This seems to be true, especially in light of the policy regarding the donation of titles which existed between both kingdoms, which was quite similar to the degree that, for example, promotions to the rank of duke were solely reserved for relatives of the king.

These entourages, integrated into the royal household and intended to satisfy several needs of these *infantes*, already existed since at least the middle of the previous dynasty. The shift during the Avis dynasty was towards increasing the autonomy of these groups. By granting a set of territorial jurisdictions in addition to transferring administrative, fiscal and military rights, these individuals could construct platforms of subsistence that guaranteed the maintenance of the respective clientele.

The formation of these entourages in the case of the Manueline court did not differ greatly from the process carried out at the start of the dynasty. At a young age, the *infantes* were assigned a primary group of servants who were physically close and had functions connected to the well-being and personal protection. Given the nature of these compositions, the first chief officer to be named was the lord chamberlain (*camareiro-mor*), who often doubled as provost (*guarda-mor*). This is the case of *infantes* Luis (Rui Teles de Meneses), Fernando (Jorge de Silveira), Afonso (Garcia de Meneses), and Henrique (Simão de Miranda).¹⁶ These small entourages functioned from the outset as an extension of the departments of the progenitors' household. In a way, the close relationship between the officers named for these posts and the king was proportional to the physical proximity between the monarch, the heir, and the other *infantes*. Physical space and service to the royal court were combined according to a restricted ceremony, where the closest servants were those that accumulated administrative positions.¹⁷ During this period, which frequently carried on into the adulthood of the *infante*, the

entourages were completely dependent on the Crown, both economically and politically. For example, the entourage of *infante* Maria, worked as an extension of the household of Queen Catarina (1507-1578) until she had her own household (1537).¹⁸ Gradually, the other chief officers and respective subordinate posts were assigned according to the vicissitudes of the career of the *infante* in question, and his designated place reserved for him in the monarchy.

Table 1. *Nomination of chief officer of the infantes Luís, Afonso, Henrique and Fernando, 1514-1521 (#individuals/year)*

Table 1 reveals that the nomination of several chief officers for *infante* Afonso, particularly from 1514-17, and also those of *infante* Luis, after 1518, were clearly politically motivated. For Afonso, this is related to the precocity of the ecclesiastical career in question, given that his status and that hierarchy required an appropriate princely court.¹⁹ Regarding Luis, the documented increase around 1518 can be interpreted as a sign of the royal intention to encourage the autonomy of his entourage in the short term. This process would culminate in the concession of a title, jurisdictional rights, and the material goods that would allow him to sustain the household.²⁰

Many of the officers were members of families who had a tradition of effective service in the court, each one with a *foro* of nobleman (*fidalgo*) from the royal household. The majority also belonged to the royal council. In a considerable number of cases, several members of the same family joined an entourage at the same time, benefiting from the political importance acquired in the past. It is well established that informal relationships based on emotions contributed to these entourages to a great extent. Good examples of this dynamic can be found in the Teles de Meneses (Silvas) who were in the households of the queens and *infante* Luis, as well as with the Miranda family in the entourage of *infante* Henrique. Rui Teles de Meneses, 4th Lord of Unhão (d.1528), in the service of the queen and the *infantes*, appointed his wife Guiomar de Vilhena as the nanny of *infante* Isabel (1503-1539), and several of his servants and his descendants in prominent positions in the household of *infante* Luís: Andre (high steward, or *mordomo-mor*), Bras (lord chamberlain), and Antonio (head chaplain, or *capelão-mor*).²¹ As for Simão de Miranda, a nobleman of the royal household and a member of the royal council, it is said that after being named lord chamberlain and

provost to *infante* Henrique, he was in a privileged position to include his family members in this same entourage.²² That also happened with his second son, Diogo de Miranda, who inherited the roles his father had held and even transferred the position of lord chamberlain to his son Martim Afonso de Miranda, who exercised it while this *infante* was cardinal.²³ Service provided by other members of the family, such as Simão de Miranda II, the son of Fernão de Miranda and grandson of the aforementioned Simão de Miranda, and respectively the page and master cupbearer (*copeiro mor*) of this *infante*, prove the dynamic.²⁴

As for female descendants, the transfer of officers belonging not only to the royal household (*per se*), but also those originating from the entourages of the queen, are particularly important. For example, the well-documented case of *infante* Isabel (1503-1539) indicates that after the death of Queen Maria of Castile and Aragon (1482-1517), many of her servants worked for the said *infante*.²⁵ It is significant that these individuals had already served Queen Isabel of Castile (1470-1498), which in and of itself is an example of how these individuals near the Crown moved from household to household, entourage to entourage.

The division and circulation of servants throughout the different households related to the Crown is also visible between the entourages of the other *infantes*. In a later period, given the early death of many of these royal family members, a significant number of former servants of *infantes* Fernando (1507-1534), Beatriz (1504-1538), Isabel, and Duarte (1515-1540), entered the household of Luís, even though the majority required a direct affiliation (*filhamento*) in the royal household.²⁶ This phenomenon proves the investment was made not only in the households of the *infantes*, but also on behalf of several families of small and medium nobility. It also asserts the existence of interpersonal networks which extended beyond the environment of these princely courts in search of royal patronage, giving political support and loyalty in exchange.²⁷

The monarch did not regard the entourages of the *infantes* in an innocent manner. On the one hand, it was up to him to choose the high officers wisely. In turn, that resulted in choosing men close to him and/or men who held some influence in the royal council. Alternatively, the integration of these entourages occasionally served as a form of redistribution for exceptional services provided to the monarchy. For example, Manuel Fernandes, for his role defending the outpost of Sofala (Mozambique) during the siege carried out by Muslim troops, was granted by King Manuel I (r. 1495-1521) in

1512 the coat of arms and nomination to wardrobe officer (*guarda-roupa*) of *infante* Luis.²⁸

This incident raises doubts about the control that may have been exercised by the Crown over the high-ranking members within these entourages with respect to their political loyalty. As these *infantes* gained a greater degree of political autonomy, these individuals could exploit this and obtain their own households and estates. It must also be pointed out that the said control could be reduced from this point, given that the recruitment of officers became (in theory) controlled only by the *infante* in question. Seen from this perspective, the patrimonialization of the positions emerges as a phenomenon that may have interested the monarch. The power accumulated by the upper hierarchies, inserted into the households of the *infantes* and connected to the Crown, would create conditions which would perpetuate the access to the *infante*, and thus affect the recruitment of new officers. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that up to a point, this phenomenon contributed to the Crown manipulating a series of informal control mechanisms over the power networks at court. In other words, if the monarch could take advantage, informally, of the individuals close to him, he could control his direct relatives and the evolution of their princely households.

Factors that promoted the growth of these entourages included the age of the *infante* and her or his position within the hierarchy of access to the throne. Hence, in theory, the first-born son would have more servants compared to his younger brothers. Although there are no absolute numbers, the number of servants exclusively destined for the service of each of these *infantes* could range from one to several dozen, depending on the complexity of their entourages. Some evidence proves this fluctuation. The entourage of *infante* Maria had only fourteen paid servants at her service in 1530, although one can assume that her entire entourage was larger.²⁹ In 1531, the Crown paid twenty servants of *infante* Duarte and forty-three servants of *infante* Henrique for services provided.³⁰

The progressive nomination of high officers to several departments – chapel, chamber, kitchen (*cozinha*), pantry (*ucharia*), stable, among others – called for a gradual increase in the recruitment of servants to meet the needs. Recruitment, as a rule, was already influenced by the high officers, who took advantage of the opportunity to insert their own clients and family members into positions. As such, it is valid to assert that in fact these structures constituted the embryo of what would be the composition of the princely court of the future household, both from either the domestic apparatus point

of view, and the perspective of servants who performed duties both within seigniorial spaces, as well as outside them.

Autonomy and Political Power

The necessary step to personalize the entourages of Manueline descendants relative to the Crown comes generally from the title given to them, and the inherent resources to reflect the increase in their status. The autonomization of the household in its own right did not provide the *infantes* with new powers. On the contrary, it was the donation of the title and estate that led to the transfer of part of the royal regalia to the new title holders. These entitlements included civil and criminal jurisdiction, the right to levy tax, military recruitment, the rights of ecclesiastical presentation (*padroado*), granting nobility to plebeian individuals, and, no less importantly, the nomination of officers within the entire seigniorial domains. The importance of these powers in connection with the princely dimension of the household relied on operating a distribution network of bounties and privileges by the respective clientele and on exploiting the advantages that may come regarding the seigniorial recruitment.

In the majority of cases, and in a relatively short period of time, this step allowed for the formation of households and seigniorial courts with an organic apparatus similar to that of the royal household, except for slight variations due to the size of the jurisdictions granted. The sophistication and refinement that the court gradually experienced during the Manueline kingdom (from the sixteenth century onward) resulted in an increased imitation of etiquette and royal ceremonies by the households of the *infantes*. This transition is evident in the existence of complex organic structures in the different departments of the domestic apparatus, including the hall (*aula regis*), chamber and chapel. This process culminated in a more autonomous household relative to the power that initiated its formation. The implications of this with regard to the royal clienteles and their transition to official positions in *infantes*' curia will be discussed later.

The process of emancipation could have been accelerated by the monarch's dynastic policy and the fate determined to suit each one of the children. Matrimonial policy (both internally and externally) and royal interference in ecclesiastical institutions were great catalysts of the political autonomization of these households. My analysis will not consider first-born João (later João III), but rather will focus primarily

on *infantes* Luis, Fernando, Duarte, and Maria, with some attention given to Isabel and Beatriz (both married outside the realm in an early period), and Afonso and Henrique (who would both pursue ecclesiastical careers).³¹

Manuel I's matrimonial policy, continued after his death by his son João III, paid particular attention to the management of the *infantes*, most of whom had already died by around 1540. It is no surprise that the matrimonial projects of the *infantes* were closely scrutinized by the Crown and negotiations dragged on (sometimes deliberately) for several years due to external reasons. The cases of Luis and Maria – evident in the numerous times they were proposed as candidates for marriages abroad – served this purpose. However, the limited solutions open to the House of Avis transformed these *infantes* into some kind of “natural reserve” for the Crown, making a possible marriage increasingly difficult as time passed, especially after 1540.

Table 2. Marriages of the descendants of King Manuel I

Excluding the heir Joao and the princesses Isabel and Beatriz, none of the other *infantes* married someone of similar status. Managing Manuel I's progeny not only did not obey the logistics of external politics, but also it was essential for the Crown to control its territory effectively. From this perspective, in the case of Luis, the main problem stemmed from the control of the peripheral powers. However, the marriage of *infante* Fernando with Guiomar Coutinho (d. 1534) would have contributed to this problem by affecting both control of the high nobility and the return of important jurisdictions to the royal sphere. Furthermore, the marriage of *infante* Duarte and Isabel of Braganza (1537) forced the House of Braganza to cede a group of jurisdictions that would constitute the Guimarães dukedom.³² By impeding the reproduction of these households and estates, the Crown would end up recovering the donations it had made decades earlier.

At the same time, the investment of *infantes* Afonso and Henrique in their ecclesiastical careers allowed the Crown to maximize the degree to which they used their progeny. According to some authors, this dynamic must have contributed to a greater informal inter-institutional connection between the Crown and the church. A narrower view of the relationship between the church and “state” has been discussed based on the existence of a mutual dependence between them, allowing the ecclesiastical sphere to interfere in civil affairs and vice versa.³³ With this option, the Crown not only held greater control over important ecclesiastical seigniorial lands (for

example, the archbishops of Braga and Évora and the monastery of Alcobaça), but it also immediately eliminated the problem of succession or reproduction from the respective household, an issue that had to be solved if the Crown favored the marriage business instead.

The timing of the entitlement of *infantes*, and the establishment of their households and courts which were separate from the Crown, did not always coincide. Both were dependent on the political situation and the physical accidents – death, disease, injury – that could affect the royal family. Hence, the household of Isabel split apart very early on, compared to those of her brothers, due exclusively to the death of her mother, Queen Maria of Castile and Aragon. Isabel then inherited the seigniorial lands from the household of her deceased mother at Torres Vedras and Viseu, lands that she later would give up when married to Carlos V (1500-1558). A few decades later, her younger half sister, *infante* Maria (1521-77), became the duchess of those jurisdictions when they became vacant after Isabel moved to Castile. Thus, the late medieval tradition of conceding a “household” to the princes once they reached a certain age – that is, between fourteen and sixteen years – had undergone a set of substantial changes.³⁴ In general, these *infantes* became autonomous based on the title that was bestowed upon them and/or in accordance with the dynastic projects that the monarch reserved for them.

Table 3. Title and autonomy of the households of the Manueline *infantes* (early 16th century)

Only Beatriz, Fernando and Duarte had a household at the time of receiving a title, and only because their marriages justified such promotion. Luís and Fernando only completely autonomized their respective households in 1530. Luís benefited from the title acquired three years earlier to accelerate this process, because he was twenty-four years old at the time of emancipation. But *infante* Fernando’s marriage to the consort Guiomar Coutinho was arranged by King Manuel I, providing emancipation for the entourage and establishing the household. The case of Maria is singular in this context, given the political conditions inherent to the marriage of her progenitors Manuel I and Leonor of Austria (1498-1558), and especially her dowry. For a long period she was prohibited from establishing a household separate to the Crown, and only a feud over

her fortune in southern France and her pleas to her brother João III resulted in the king's concession of her household in 1537.³⁵

Table 4. Estimated annual income of the Manueline *infantes* in the mid-16th century (millions of *reais* per year)

The estimated annual income of these *infantes* (Table 4) is not easily calculated, given that the sources do not refer to specific numbers. The information available will only serve to establish estimates and orders of magnitude that allow us to draw comparisons with the Portuguese high nobility. The temporary nature of these houses – contrary to those of the magnates, with an already reasonably established economic and political power – is mirrored in the fluctuation of the respective incomes.³⁶ These depended on the growth of the household, either by royal incorporation or by inheritance, in addition to the capacity of its title holder to reproduce. The importance of the hierarchy is evident in this redistribution of resources given that the descendants closest to the throne are generally those who have a higher income. This pattern is only broken by physical accidents befalling some of these individuals. In fact, Manuel I's descendants who survived the high mortality faced by this generation up to 1540 managed to amass more resources and privileges. *Infante* Henrique (d. 1580) outlived his brother Afonso (d.1540), and this allowed him to “inherit” his brother's position and accumulate much of the revenue from the posts he had held (including the archbishops of Braga, Évora and Lisbon, and revenues from the monasteries of Alcobaça and the Priory of Santa Cruz de Coimbra).³⁷ *Infante* Luis survived the majority of his brothers, which allowed him gradually to engross some bounties, either by donation from the Crown or by individual inheritance. Thus he was able gradually to get closer to the annual income of Teodósio, Duke of Braganza (d. 1563), the head of the wealthiest household at the time.

Even those *infantes* who died early, without progeny, could gather significant economic resources. *Infante* Fernando (d. 1534) typifies this reality. His marriage to the heiress of the household of the counts of Marialva allowed him to reach an annual income close to that of Jorge, Duke of Coimbra (1481-1550).³⁸ Such an equal income level indicates that competition among the *infantes* and high nobility was a reality. The first recipients were, in general, able to obtain more resources to strengthen their households and extend the respective capacity of patronage.

Table 5. Total payments to servants by the *infantes* Fernando, Duarte, and Henrique (reais/year)

The estimates presented in Table 5 show the expenses with the servants of the *infantes* Fernando, Duarte, and Henrique in the middle of the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The hierarchal differences between the position and access to the throne reflects the differing sums in these costs. This premise is reinforced by remembering that the *infante* Luís (older than his brothers) spent 3,218,399 *reais* on his servants in 1536; this would increase to nearly four million *reais* in 1555.³⁹ From an economic point of view, the equality among wages paid for service to the royal family members reveals an important trend that resulted from the tendential absence of competition between the monarch and his brothers. The process of becoming part of the royal household, fostered by the development of the *foros* of *fidalgos* (laws of the nobles) of the royal household and encouraged by the development of the powerful social hierarchy, resulted in cash payments or wages like *moradia*, *cevada*, and *acostamentos*. In addition, the amount paid depended on the social status of the individual and the family. For example, in 1553 Nuno Pereira, *moço-fidalgo* (noble boy) of *infante* Luís was promoted to *escudeiro-fidalgo* (noble squire), and was awarded an above average *moradia* of 1,800 *reais* per month because his father (Reimão Pereira) was paid the same amount for service to the monarch as a member of the royal household.⁴⁰

This phenomenon was a mechanism for social ascension that could also propitiate the adoption of different strategies by the families interested in working in service of the *infantes*' households. The affiliation (*filhamento*) of a descendant for each household related to the Crown would be a way of guaranteeing their social ascent, without them having to follow alternative routes such as leaving for overseas territories or ecclesiastical service. Perhaps the most paradigmatic case is that of Pedro, Fernando, and Antonio, sons of Martinho de Noronha, lord of Cadaval, who would serve in the households of Queen Catherine, and *infantes* Luís and Fernando respectively.⁴¹

Table 6. Size of the households of the Manueline *infantes*

Much attention has already been given to a specific indicator: the growth of staff in the royal and princely courts. A significant part of the historiography linked the

increasing numbers of the servants with the power and the capacity of political patronage of the household in question. First, the order of magnitude of these households was in many hundreds. Except for the abnormal numbers in the households of *infante* Luís, the number of residents of the others could be estimated to be between 200 and 300 individuals. Such figures makes these structures comparable, in terms of size, to the largest households of the most important English counts and dukes in the late fifteenth century, where the majority of the respective entourages would have been between 100 and 200 residents; this trend was maintained at the start of the following century.⁴² However, these orders of magnitude do not reflect the total dependents of a household. The progressive increase of territorial jurisdictions and other bounties of varying character led to the increase of the number of servants for these title holders. In addition, it is possible to understand how *infante* Luís held, between the decades of the 1540s and 1550s, an average of approximately 600 residents.⁴³ This same phenomenon could have happened with *infante* Henrique, especially after he was named a cardinal, though the lack of in depth studies does not allow us to make a definitive conclusion. It is certain, therefore, that the numbers tend to reflect an evident hierarchy in the high nobility of the kingdom. Only in this way can it be explained, for example, that *infante* Luis – possessing fewer resources – had more residents than the greatest title holder of the kingdom, Teodósio, Duke of Braganza (d. 1563), whose princely court included 339 individuals.⁴⁴

Despite the efforts of scholars, the composition of the royal court in the households of the Manueline descendants has not been covered in great detail. Little is known about the political loyalties of the most influential officials of these entourages, or the provenance of the low and middle strata of clientele. Surely the most salient aspect is the evident hybridism between these groups. It is known that by forming part of the entourages, noblemen necessarily became connected to the royal household, and initially, the majority of these royal courts were controlled by individuals who were affiliated (in the strict sense of *filhamento*) to the house of the king. An example lies in the composition of the elites of the seigniorial house of *infante* Luís. The data available indicates that in the uppermost social strata (here, the *foro*, corresponding to *fidalgocavaleiro*⁴⁵), around 71 percent of these individuals already held offices in the royal household and/or central administration of the kingdom during 1536.⁴⁶ In other cases, such as that of *infante* Duarte (also 71 percent in 1540) and *infante* Fernando (100 percent in 1534) confirm this trend.⁴⁷

On the other hand, some indicators point to a decline in this hybridism over time. With regard to the household of *infante* Luis, only 41 percent of this group of elite clientele had already served under the same conditions in 1555.⁴⁸ Obviously this variation dependent greatly on the political success of the household, the possibilities for political patronage, and the bounties that the title holder could distribute. The decrease in this percentage is due especially to the fact that many of the new members of this elite – largely the descendants of nobility who accompanied the *infante* from the formation of the entourage in the royal court – now benefited from this seigniorial patronage. It bears repeating that the Crown did not possess the monopoly on granting bounties and privileges, among them military commands and even granting titles of nobility. This privilege was also an appanage from the large households of the kingdom, including those from the royal *infantes*, Braganza, Aveiro and Vila Real.⁴⁹

As a result, the greater autonomy and the title attribution policy extended the range of families who saw some of their members and/or other dependents affiliated in the households of the *infantes*. A closer look at the family backgrounds of these new servants – regardless of their eventual nobility – reveals a trend that lies in establishing multiple connections with other spheres of power, especially small and medium nobility. In addition to the aforementioned Teles de Meneses, Botelho and Beja families, the household of the *infante* Luís was frequented by members from the following families: Almeida, Silveiras, Figueira, Sousa, and Noronha. Identical practice can be found in the household of *infante* Fernando (populated by members of the Tavora, Silveira, Moura and Silva families) or in the household of *infante* Duarte (Melo, Meneses, Lima, Figueira, among others).⁵⁰ This trend is considered to be another indicator of the power of attraction of these households, and their capacity of redistributing resources and positions.

Royal practices for attracting clienteles were generally copied by the *infantes*, particularly the prerogative of appointing people to the administrative and military posts, which allowed them to obtain the political loyalty of the main families present in these royal courts. Frequently, among these servants of the households of the *infantes*, there were governors (*alcaide-mor*) of the castles located in the jurisdictional areas contained within the respective seigniorial lands.⁵¹ The Crown had already experimented with this form of political patronage that helped to guarantee the loyalty of these family groups. Even the fact that the appointment could only occur in a vacancy after the death of the respective office title holder did not prevent the prince, in some

cases, from breaking with the lineage in possession of such positions. In doing so, it legitimized the nobility that depended on it at the expense of former officials and descendants who, in theory, would then succeed them in the post.⁵² This dynamic in exercising jurisdictional rights made the *infantes* potentially more competitive in the political field than queens, for example, who rarely provided officials from their own household in these positions. On the contrary, the nominations frequently benefited the officials connected to the monarch.⁵³

On the other hand, favoring these servants also created problems. The appointment of these administrative and military posts suggests a clear intention to control not only the territory, but also the men under the jurisdiction of the prince. At stake was a compromise between the central government and peripheral representatives. Providing individuals outside these regions could cause divisions in the local oligarchies. It was not uncommon that the individuals appointed to these posts did not serve them in person, and instead selected an inferior hierarchical delegate to be resident physically and do the work.⁵⁴ Again, the lack of in-depth studies does not allow a conclusive explanation for this phenomenon. However, it is probable they would look for a balance between the risks and the benefits.

Another dimension that should be highlighted is the integration of these individuals into other spheres of power under the rule of the *infantes*, such as military orders and ecclesiastical structures. Given the lack of well-defined borders between the public and private spheres during this period, it was common for these servants to participate in the political projects of their lords. With a few exceptions, this phenomenon had the monarch's approval and thus cannot serve as a direct indicator for the study of political allegiances. Instead, it constitutes evidence of seigniorial domain over the clientele and the political use that the absence of institutional boundaries provided. The most characteristic examples possibly reside in the recruitment done by Luís and Henrique, although for different purposes. The appointment of several servants from the seigniorial household of *infante* Henrique to hold positions in the Inquisition was a manner of responding to the lack of resources plaguing this institution, which, in the decades of 1530s and 1540s, was in an early stage of organic definition.⁵⁵ More than the mobility of human resources inherent here, it is important to highlight the capitalization of close ties established with their servants. A strong indication of this dynamic is evident in the case of *infante* Luís who used a considerable number of servants of his household in the war against Islam and/or in the works for the Order of

Malta (through the Priory of Crato). The fact that he had prepared and used a military contingent, of which his servants formed part, in the expedition to Tunis in 1535 is perhaps the most celebrated example of his household pursuing political projects.⁵⁶

Conclusions

An analysis of the formation of the seigniorial households of the Manueline *infantes* and their political use within the context of the sixteenth-century Portuguese monarchy clearly reveals that the donation of large households and estates to the *infantes* had remarkable consequences from the point of view of the reorganization of the various strata of the nobility, at both the bottom and top of the pyramid. The first consequences are notable from the point of view of the first nobility of the kingdom. Some high nobility of great prominence, such as the Duke of Braganza or the Marquis of Vila Real, were relegated to the second tier with the provision of the Manueline bloodline. There is a large difference between how *infantes* were granted households during the periods of João I/Duarte I and Manuel I/ João III. In the early days of the Avis dynasty, there were no seigniorial households of great power in terms of territorial jurisdictions and number of servants (with the exception of the House of Braganza), but the picture changes significantly during the reign of Manuel I and João III. The need to reconfigure the upper strata of the nobility was, therefore, obvious.

As a result of this transformation, there was a notable increase in competition among the various levels of nobility. Despite the said increase, it is proven by the disputes between the large households that the role of small and medium nobility must be highlighted in this context. Individuals at these levels would, in principle, have the most to gain from the service to these households of the *infantes*. Obtaining posts close to the descendants of the king served to catapult these groups from minor nobility to eventually achieving a title. In order to foment this competitive potential, the monarchy decided to transfer a series of privileges, rights and jurisdictions that, at their limit, were almost as attractive as the royal sphere. It was the best way of guaranteeing that these households, as a general rule, were able to satisfy the local and regional elites in the distribution of a series of bounties and offices. Through this dynamic, it would be easier to establish clientele relations in these peripheral spaces and obtain the political loyalty of these social strata.

While detailed studies about patronage of these households from Manueline *infantes* are still taking form, little evidence suggests that high palatine officers had a prominent role in patron-client relationships. Intimacy with the prince could lead to future profits for a servant and, eventually, for some members of his respective family as well. Examples within this volume, regarding other European geographies, show similarities in this. Alexander Brondarbit notes that in fifteenth-century England, for example, servants of the royal household would benefit from the monarch's patronage and thus were also able to sustain vast networks at the local and regional level.

From the point of view of the Crown, the advantages of making the entourages of the *infantes* autonomous surpassed the risks. The legal mechanisms of control and interpersonal relationships between the royal family members and nobility during this period would benefit from the political uses that the monarchy granted to these households. These structures would not lack material and human resources to compete with the main noble households of the kingdom based on the coeval hierarchy. Incidentally, the monarch frequently exploited his brothers and their households to prevent the growth of the high nobility, such as Braganza and Aveiro. Factors such as political marriage and the careful provision of some of the *infantes* in the ecclesiastical sphere were important in controlling the interrelationships of the power spheres and institutions present in sixteenth-century society.

On the other hand, it was important to enhance the role of the royal household members within the entourages of the Manueline *infantes*. Politically committed courtiers would favor the way these constellations of courts were used by the monarchy. The tendency for the king to control other related households, by office nomination, was apparent since early days. Other case studies in this volume present resemblances. For example, Germán Igea argues that the reign of the Spanish Catholic Kings was rich in attempts to control the Castilian-Aragonese court according to the relative positioning of respective households. Hence, the household's autonomy only could be achieved by having direct control over office nomination.

It is not possible, in my opinion, to speak of an increased rate of political centralization during this period, given the distribution of powers experienced in the kingdom until the end of the *Ancien Régime*. Further, it must be stressed that the households of the *infantes* would contribute to this phenomenon by not being more extensive. Even paradoxically, the redistribution of resources and privileges through these households would result, in the mid- to the long term, in an increase of territorial

control by the Crown. In short, throughout the sixteenth century, these households would become alternative centers of power, with a strong connection to the peripheral powers and a considerable clientele network, thus constituting true competitors in the political field of the Portuguese monarchy.

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⁹ Cunha, "Nobreza, rivalidade," pp. 35-36. There is no term Portuguese equivalent to "household" to designate the domestic organic court. The definition of casa ("house") encompasses both the household and aristocratic domains. For the end of the Ancien Régime, see Nuno G. Monteiro, "Casa e Linhagem: o Vocabulário Aristocrático em Portugal nos séculos XVII e XVIII," *Penélope* 12 (1003): 43-60, esp. p. 50.

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¹⁷ Non-exclusive situation of the Portuguese case. See David Starkey, "Court, Council, and Nobility in Tudor England," in eds. Asch and Birke, *Princes, Patronage*, p. 200; and Mia J. Rodríguez-Salgado, "Honour and Profit in the Court of Phillip II of Spain," in eds. Maurice Aymard and Marzio Romani, *La Cour comme institution économique* (Paris, 1998), p. 77.

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¹⁹ José Pedro Paiva, "Um príncipe na diocese de Évora: o governo episcopal do cardeal infante D. Afonso (1523-1540)," *Revista de História da Sociedade e da Cultura* 7 (2007): 127-74, esp. p. 128.

²⁰ ANTT, CR, Chancelaria de D. João III [CDJ], liv. 30, fl. 120. The donation by João III to the Duke of Beja in 1527 was intended to fulfil an old will of King Manuel.

- ²¹ Hélder Carvalho, "Lineage, Marriage, and Social Mobility: the Teles de Meneses Family in the Iberian Courts (Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries)," *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 14(1): 1-19.
- ²² ANTT, CR, CDM, liv. 25, fl. 14. Appointed on December 7, 1515.
- ²³ *Livro de Linhagens do século XVI* [hereafter, LL], ed. António Machado de Faria (Lisbon, 1956), pp. 330-31; Damião de Góis, *Livro de Linhagens de Portugal* [hereafter, LLP], ed. António Falcão Pestana de Vasconcelos (Lisbon, 2014), p. 107.
- ²⁴ Biblioteca Pública de Évora [BPE], Cód. CVII/1-29, fls. 43, 49.
- ²⁵ Félix Labrador Arroyo, *La Casa de la Emperatriz Isabel de Portugal (1526-1539)* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 30-36.
- ²⁶ Hélder Carvalho, "A casa senhorial do infante D. Luís (1506-1555): dinâmicas de construção e consolidação de um senhorio quinhentista," *7 Mares* 4 (2014): 33-48, esp. p. 44.
- ²⁷ Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 12-39; and Antoni Maczak, "From Aristocratic Household to Princely Court: Restructuring Patronage in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in eds. Asch and Birke, *Princes, Patronage*, pp. 315-27.
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- ³¹ Andreia Martins de Carvalho is working on a doctoral dissertation (King's College, London) on the development of the high-ranking officers of King João III, entitled "The High Officials of the Court of King John III (1521-1557): A prosopographical Approach."
- ³² Mafalda Soares da Cunha, "Estratégias matrimoniais da Casa de Bragança e o casamento do Duque D. João II," *Hispania* 64:1 (216) (2004): 49-50; and Hélder Carvalho, "Património, Casa e Patrocínio: Uma Aproximação ao Senhorio do Infante D. Fernando (1530-1534)," *Fragmenta Historica* 2 (2014): 39-67.
- ³³ José Pedro Paiva, "O Estado na Igreja e a Igreja no Estado: Contaminações, dependências e dissidência entre o Estado e a Igreja em Portugal (1495-1640)," *Revista Portuguesa de História* 40 (2008/9): 383-97.
- ³⁴ Gomes, *Making of a Court Society*, p. 275.
- ³⁵ Pinto, *A Infanta Dona Maria*, pp. 61-78.
- ³⁶ According to the estimate of the annuities (1529), there were three Portuguese title holders who received the highest rents: the Duke of Braganza with 16 *contos* (1 *conto* = 1 million *reais*), the Duke of Coimbra (approximately 11 *contos*), and the Marquis of Vila Real (6 *contos*). See João Cordeiro Pereira, "A renda de uma grande casa senhorial de Quinhentos," in *Portugal na Era de Quinhentos* (Cascais, 2033), pp. 248-49.
- ³⁷ Polónia, *O Cardeal*, p. 30.
- ³⁸ Carvalho, "Património," p. 63. It should be remembered that in the 1529 assessment (previously cited), Francisco Coutinho was one of the wealthiest men in the realm, with annual revenues of approximately 5 *contos*.
- ³⁹ ANTT, CR, NA, livs. 177, 186. Figures based on the sum of the remunerations contained within the respective accounts of the household.
- ⁴⁰ ANTT, CR, NA, liv. 184, fl. 39.
- ⁴¹ LL, pp. 223-24; PHGCRP, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 494.
- ⁴² Kate Mertens, *The English Noble Household, 1250-1600* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 194-215, 218; C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 1999), pp. 12-13.
- ⁴³ Carvalho, "A casa senhorial," p. 41.
- ⁴⁴ Cunha, *A Casa*, p. 94.
- ⁴⁵ Despite the continuous reorganization of the foros of the royal household up to the rule of King Sebastião (r. 1568-78), changes in the upper strata were already visible in the middle of that century, judging by the systemization within the households of the infantes. See João Cordeiro Pereira, "A estrutura social e o seu devir," in *Portugal na Era de Quinhentos. Estudos Vários* (Cascais, 2003), pp. 299-369, esp. p. 317.
- ⁴⁶ ANTT, CR, NA, liv. 177, fls. 12-20.
- ⁴⁷ Figures based on the prosopography analysis of the respective clientele, whose composition in the aforementioned years is available in PHGCRP, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 183-4.
- ⁴⁸ ANTT, CR, NA, liv. 186, fls. 15-21v.
- ⁴⁹ Mafalda Soares da Cunha e Nuno G. Monteiro, "Aristocracia, família e poder em Portugal, séculos XV-XVIII," in eds. Mafalda Soares da Cunha e Juan Hernández Franco, *Sociedade, Família e Poder na Península Ibérica* (Évora, 2010), pp. 47-75, esp. pp. 64-69.
- ⁵⁰ PHGCRP, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 183, 237; and Carvalho, "A casa senhorial," pp. 41-44.

⁵¹ Vasco da Silveira, Governor (alcaide-mor) of Castelo Rodrigo, in the case of *infante* Fernando; Brás Teles, Governor of Moura, and André Teles de Meneses, Governor of Covilhã and Seia, in the case of the *infante* Luís.

⁵² For nominations of governorships (alcaidaria-mor) in the castles as a practice of political patronage during the reigns of João II and Manuel I, see Susannah Humble Ferreira, "Os Castelos e o Conselho Real: Patrocínio Político em Portugal (1479-1521)," *Revista de História da Sociedade e da Cultura* 10 (1) (2010): 121-39.

⁵³ Ana Maria Rodrigues and Manuela Santos Silva, "Private Properties, Seigniorial Tributes, and Jurisdictional Rents: The Income of the Queens of Portugal in the Late Middle Ages," in ed. Theresa Earenfight, *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe* (New York, 2010), pp. 209-80.

⁵⁴ A slight resemblance occurs in the domestic offices. For a similar case in the German princely courts of the same period, see Dieter Stievermann, "Southern German Courts around 1500," in eds. Asch and Birke, *Princes, Patronage*, pp. 157-72.

⁵⁵ José Pedro Paiva and Giuseppe Marcocci, *História da Inquisição Portuguesa, 1536-1821* (Lisbon, 2013), p. 39.

⁵⁶ Sylvie Deswarte-Rosa, "L'Expédition de Túnis (1535): Images, Interprétations, Répercussions Culturelles," in eds. Bartolomé Benassar and Robert Sauzet, *Chrétiens et Musulmans à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1998), pp. 75-132.