

# WOLF HUNTING IN PORTUGAL IN THE MIDDLE AGES (12<sup>TH</sup>-15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)

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## ABSTRACT

The Human-Wolf relationship is almost as old as Mankind itself. The presence of the wolf in what corresponds to the Portuguese territory is attested since at least the Upper Palaeolithic. In the Middle Ages, considering that wolves attacks on livestock were a serious threat, and the loss of animals could cause huge damages to the families and local economies whose livelihood depended on them, the Portuguese population developed a series of different practices and methods to deal with this issue. In this paper, we reflect upon the practice of wolf hunting, the methods used and the circumstances in which it took place, without forgetting problems related with legislation and with the prizes awarded to those who hunted wolves.

**KEYWORDS:** human-wolf relationship, *Canis lupus* Linnaeus, 1758, *Canis lupus signatus* Cabrera, 1907, Middle Ages, Portugal, hunting.

## LA CAZA DEL LOBO EN PORTUGAL EN LA EDAD MEDIA (SIGLOS XII-XV)

## RESUMEN

La relación humano-lobo es casi tan antigua como la propia humanidad. La presencia del lobo en lo que corresponde al territorio portugués está atestiguada al menos desde el Paleolítico Superior. En la Edad Media, considerando que los ataques del lobo al ganado constituían una grave amenaza, y que la pérdida de animales podía causar enormes daños a las familias y a las economías locales cuyo sustento dependía de ellos, la población portuguesa desarrolló una serie de prácticas y métodos diferentes para hacer frente a esta cuestión. En este trabajo, reflexionamos sobre la práctica de la caza del lobo, los métodos utilizados y las circunstancias en las que se llevó a cabo, sin olvidar los problemas relacionados con la legislación y con los premios concedidos a quienes cazaban lobos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** relación humano-lobo, *Canis lupus* Linnaeus, 1758, *Canis lupus signatus* Cabrera, 1907, Edad Media, Portugal, caza.



# 1. INTRODUCTORY AND CONTEXTUAL NOTES

## 1.1. PRESENTATION OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY AND RESEARCH GOALS

The paper we are now presenting intends to contribute to a better understanding of one of the most characteristic interactions between men and wolves in Portugal during the medieval period (from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century): the hunting of the latter by the former.

Wolf<sup>1</sup> hunting is an activity that has been going on for centuries. In Portugal, it was legal until 1988 –the year of the first law passed by the Portuguese Government to protect the Iberian wolf<sup>2</sup>–, and it is still possible today in several countries.

This research aims to achieve four main goals. First of all, we will try to identify some of the different practices and methods used to hunt wolves during the mentioned medieval centuries, as well as the circumstances in which hunting took place. Secondly, we will question some issues around the Kingdom's legislation regarding wolf hunting and a few arguments legitimising this activity. Furthermore, we will analyse some examples of prizes awarded to those who hunted wolves. Finally, considering that there were four types of hunting<sup>3</sup> –sportive, defensive, profitable and for self-consumption– we will also try to understand which ones targeted the wolf and the reasons behind the persecution of this animal.

## 1.2. STATE OF THE ART

Considering that our work only analyses the Portuguese case, the state of the art that we will now develop also focuses essentially on the works on this theme that have been developed by Portuguese historiography.

We could say that this research is within the context of the History of Hunting, a historiographical field still shyly developed in Portugal, not counting at the moment with substantial or wide-ranging works dedicated to this subject.

From what we can gather from our searches, we can say that the discussion around this topic was inaugurated by Gabriel Pereira who wrote, in 1892 and 1893, the work *As Caçadas (até 1893)*<sup>4</sup>, divided in two parts, in which he started by

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<sup>1</sup> *Canis lupus* Linnaeus, 1758.

<sup>2</sup> *Canis lupus signatus* Cabrera, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> These concepts are developed in the work made by Riley, Carlos Guilherme, and Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval.” *Estudos Medievais*, n.º 9 (1988), pp. 221-267, originated in the first author's report: Riley, Carlos Guilherme, *A Caça na Sociedade e na Cultura Medieval*, Ponta Delgada, report for a theoretical and practical lesson on Cultural History and Mentalities presented to the University of Azores for evaluating teaching ability and scientific capacity, photocopied text, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Pereira, Gabriel, *As Caçadas (até 1893)*, Lisboa, Apenas Livros, 2007 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1892 and 1893).



making a general approach of hunting issues in Portugal, followed by a reflection exclusively dedicated to wolf hunting.

From that moment until 1965, we did not find any relevant work for the study of this theme. However, in that year, Carlos Manuel Leitão Baeta Neves published two relevant articles<sup>5</sup>, and in the 1980's, besides the fact that this renowned engineer and forester continued his scientific production, he also started to publish a documental compilation entitled *História Florestal, Aquícola e Cinegética*, that is divided into six volumes<sup>6</sup>.

There is also a report for a theoretical and practical class by Carlos Guilherme Riley, presented for an evaluation of pedagogical aptitude and scientific ability, about hunting in Portugal in the Middle Ages, that was presented by points<sup>7</sup>. Later, this report was published in a more developed version in the journal *Estudos Medievais*, with some very significant comments by Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho<sup>8</sup>.

There are also two other works –by Carlos Eurico da Costa<sup>9</sup> and Alfredo Saramago<sup>10</sup>– that attempted to fly over the History of Hunting in Portugal. Even though the authors often make statements without mentioning any sources or bibliography, which calls their credibility into question, some of the data presented has earned our reflection and further research in order to better understand them, due to the interest they raised.

Besides these, there are several other studies that have allowed us to examine hunting activities from a historical perspective at a local scale, obtaining very interesting results, due to the fact that they underline the captured species and their destinations, the practitioners, the methods used and some of the transformations that occurred over time within this activity. Works such as those by José Mattoso<sup>11</sup>, and Iria Gonçalves<sup>12</sup> are examples of this, allowing us to trace a general overview of how hunting practices were in the centuries we propose to study.

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<sup>5</sup> Neves, Carlos M.L. Baeta, “Alguns Documentos do Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo sobre Monteiros-mores, Caçadores-mores e Caçadores e Couteiros de Perdizes.” *Anais do Instituto Superior de Agronomia*, n.º 28 (1965), pp. 5-138; *Idem*, “Dos Monteiros-Mores aos Engenheiros Silvicultores.” *Anais do Instituto Superior de Agronomia*, n.º 28 (separata) (1965), pp. 19-172.

<sup>6</sup> *História Florestal, Aquícola e Cinegética: Colectânea de Documentos Existentes no Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo-Chancelarias Reais*, 6. vols., Carlos M.L. Baeta Neves (dir.), Lisboa, Direcção-Geral do Ordenamento e Gestão, 1980-1993.

<sup>7</sup> Riley, *A Caça na Sociedade e na Cultura Medieval*.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem* & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval.”

<sup>9</sup> Costa, Carlos Eurico da, *A Caça em Portugal*, 2 vols., Lisboa, Estampa, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1980 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1963-1965).

<sup>10</sup> Saramago, Alfredo, *A Caça: Perspectiva Histórica e Receitas Tradicionais*, Sintra, Colares Editora, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Mattoso, José, “A Caça no Soajo,” in *Fragmentos de Uma Composição Medieval*, Lisboa, Estampa, 1987, pp. 206-211.

<sup>12</sup> Gonçalves, Iria, “Espaços Silvestres para Animais Selvagens no Noroeste de Portugal, com as Inquirições de 1258,” in Departamento de Ciências e Técnicas do Património e Departamento de História da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto (org.), *Estudos em Homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques*, vol. II, Porto, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2006, pp. 193-219.



At last, we shall highlight the *Nova História de Portugal* collection<sup>13</sup>, which contains many paragraphs on the subject in its various volumes, and a chapter by Paulo Drumond Braga<sup>14</sup>. Both works concern various historical periods.

## 2. WOLF HUNTING IN PORTUGAL IN THE MIDDLE AGES (12<sup>TH</sup>-15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)

### 2.1. THE METHODS OF CAPTURE AND KILLING OF WOLVES

For centuries, the wolf enjoyed very favourable survival conditions throughout the whole Iberian space. These conditions were related to the low human density and the abundance of food –in other words, prey from other animal species–, together with the orography and vegetation cover, which offered it good shelter. As a result, the persecution of the wolf had very little impact on its population. There are several sources, mainly written, that prove that, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wolf was still a regular presence in the national territory, and it was only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the first signs of change became evident<sup>15</sup>.

In addition to the reduction of the populations themselves, the wolf has also begun to disappear from various regions of the country. Although this disappearance is not linear nor continuous, it is possible to clearly observe progressive reduction axes from south to north and from the coast to the interior, with this mammal becoming a very sporadic presence, or even becoming extinct<sup>16</sup>.

According to Francisco Petrucci-Fonseca, in the early 1990's, the wolf occupied only 20% of its original distribution area. The term of comparison for this biologist's statement is 1907<sup>17</sup>, the year in which the Iberian wolf was first identified and described by the Spanish zoologist Ángel Cabrera. However, the presence of the wolf in Portugal, as we shall see, is much prior than 1907 and corresponded to the entire Portuguese territory.

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<sup>13</sup> *Nova História de Portugal*, 10 vols., A.H. de Oliveira Marques and Joel Serrão (dir.), Lisboa, Presença, 1987-2004.

<sup>14</sup> Braga, Paulo Drumond, "Divertimento, Utilitarismo e Barbárie: a Caça," in Isabel Drumond Braga and Paulo Drumond Braga (coord.), *Animais e Companhia na História de Portugal*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2015, pp. 185-215.

<sup>15</sup> Álvares, Francisco *et al.*, *Plano de Ação para a Conservação do Lobo-ibérico em Portugal. Situação de Referência*, Lisboa e Porto, Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, Centro de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Recursos Genéticos da Universidade do Porto e Centro de Ecologia, Evolução e Alterações Ambientais da Universidade de Lisboa, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Álvares *et al.*, *Plano de Ação...*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Petrucci-Fonseca, Francisco, *O Lobo (Canis lupus signatus Cabrera, 1907) em Portugal. Problemática da sua Conservação*, doctoral thesis in Ecology and Systematics presented to the University of Lisbon, polycopied text, 1990, p. 5.



### 2.1.1. *Wolf pits (fojos de lobo)*

One of the medieval mechanisms to catch wolves were the so-called wolf pits. Wolf pits were traps or pits constructed to capture and kill wolves, as a means of controlling wolf populations and reducing predation on livestock. Mostly built of stone, they were constructed on paths frequently used by wolves, usually near villages or grazing areas, whose intention was to capture the animal by leading it to the pit. These wolf traps are one of the most important symbols of cultural manifestations of the Human-Wolf relationship in the Iberian Peninsula. Besides being structures whose construction would involve a great number of people, they are still considered authentic monuments of high scientific, cultural, and ethnographic value. The North of the Iberian Peninsula is the region, worldwide, where they exist in larger number and typological variety<sup>18</sup>.

An article dated of 2000, whose goals were the inventory, characterisation, and conservation of wolf pits in the Iberian Peninsula, conducted a study *in loco* of remaining vestiges, confirming the existence of 37 wolf pits, and identifying 21 as probably having been wolf pits, in the regions of Galicia, Castilla and León (in Spain) and Minho and Trás-os-Montes (in Portugal)<sup>19</sup>. Some of the types of these wolf traps that can be recognized in the Iberian Peninsula according to their functioning and structural features are the “simple wolf trap,” the “goat wolf trap” and the “convergent-walls wolf trap”<sup>20</sup>. The bibliographical research of the authors also revealed that, in the past, not only two other typologies existed –the “trapdoor wolf trap” and the “corral wolf trap”<sup>21</sup>–, but also that maybe there were wolf pits in Asturias, Cantabria, Basque Country (in Spain) and Douro Litoral (in Portugal) too<sup>22</sup>.

When the letter of the *couto* of Tuy, located in Galicia (Spain), was granted by Raimundo (b. 1070-d. 1107) and Urraca (b. 1080-d. 1126), on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1095, it already mentioned a *fogium lupalem*<sup>23</sup>.

The letter of the *couto* of Moimenta de Azurara –in the current parish of Moimenta de Maceira Dão e Lobelhe do Mato (municipality of Mangualde, Viseu)–, which was granted by Afonso Henriques (b. 1106/1111?-k. 1143-d. 1185) to the abbot

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<sup>18</sup> Álvares, Francisco, Alonso, Pedro, Sierra Pablo, and Petrucci-Fonseca, Francisco, “Os Fojos dos Lobos na Península Ibérica. Sua Inventariação, Caracterização e Conservação.” *Galemys: Spanish Journal of Mammalogy*, n.º 12 (2000), pp. 57-78 (p. 58); Álvares, Francisco, Domingues, José, Sierra, Pablo, and Primavera, Pedro, “Cultural Dimension of Wolves in the Iberian Peninsula: Implications of Ethnozoology in Conservation Biology.” *Innovation-The European Journal of Social Science Research*, vol. 24, n.º 3 (Sep. 2011), pp. 313-331 (pp. 317-321).

<sup>19</sup> Álvares, Alonso, Sierra & Petrucci-Fonseca, “Os Fojos dos Lobos na Península Ibérica,” p. 61, table 2.

<sup>20</sup> To know more about these typologies, see *ibidem*, pp. 61-69.

<sup>21</sup> To know more about these typologies, see *ibidem*, pp. 61-69.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60, table 1.

<sup>23</sup> Galindo Romeo, Pascual, *Tuy en la Baja Edad Media: Siglos XII-XV*, Madrid, Instituto Enrique Florez, 1923, doc. 1.



D. Soeiro Teodoniz, in 1161, stated that one of the limits of that territory, in the part where limits were defined, followed “Lobelhe do Mato by *Fogium de lupo*”<sup>24</sup>.

José Mattoso, Luís Krus and Amélia Aguiar de Andrade, in their research about Santa Maria da Feira in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, also found evidence of the existence of several wolf pits around the Ovil lagoon, precisely marking the limits of some settlements located in that area<sup>25</sup>.

### 2.1.2. *The batida hunting method*

The use of wolf pits was usually associated with the *batida* hunting method. In the town of Loulé, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the fact that the municipality ordered the manufacture of iron pikes (called *canas* in the sources) and distributed them “around the border of the town for the wolves”<sup>26</sup> seems to be indicative, according to Iria Gonçalves, that *batidas* were organised here, possibly conjugated with the use of wolf pits<sup>27</sup>.

The *batida* hunting method was destined to capture large game, that is, wild animals of large size, like fallow deer, roe deer, wild boars, or wolves, for example. The *batidas*, usually accompanied by dogs, consisted fundamentally in surveying the game from a certain area and forcing it to escape in a certain direction, direction in which the animals were intended to be cornered and/or where hunters were located waiting to kill them<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore, if Gonçalves’ theory about Loulé is right, the aim would be to pursue the wolves and harassing them with the iron pikes to lead them along specific tracks, which would then end in a ditch where the wolves would be trapped and then killed.

We believe that this was the type of hunting practised when, in the written documental sources, the expression *correr os lobos*<sup>29</sup> is used, although it is not explicit if wolf pits were always used or if, on the contrary, *batidas* took place without them.

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<sup>24</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “com Lobelhe do Mato per Fogium de lupo.” Viterbo, Frei Joaquim de Santa Rosa de, *Elucidário das Palavras, Termos e Frases que em Portugal Antigamente se Usaram e que Hoje Regularmente se Ignoram: Obra Indispensável para Entender sem Erro os Documentos Mais Raros e Preciosos que entre Nós se Conservam*, 2 vols. Lisboa, A.J. Fernandes Lopes, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1865 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1798), vol. I, p. 338.

<sup>25</sup> Mattoso, José, Krus, Luís, and Andrade, Amélia Aguiar de, *O Castelo e a Feira. A Terra de Santa Maria nos Séculos XI a XIII*, Lisboa, Editorial Estampa, 1989, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “pello termo pera os lobos.” Gonçalves, Iria, “Despesas da Câmara Municipal de Loulé em Meados do Século xv,” in *Um Olhar Sobre a Cidade Medieval*, Cascais, Patrimonia-Associação de Projectos Culturais e Formação Turística, 1996, pp. 221-245 (p. 205).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> Costa, *A Caça em Portugal*, vol. II, pp. 62-65.

<sup>29</sup> This means something very similar to “chasing the wolves.”



In the *Inquirições* (which were Royal Portuguese commissions) of 1258, ordered by Afonso III (b. 1210-k. 1248-d. 1279), the obligation of *correr os lobos* is mentioned to the inhabitants of Santa Cristina de Longos<sup>30</sup>, Santa Maria de Pousada<sup>31</sup>, São Clemente de Sande<sup>32</sup>, São Lourenço de Sande<sup>33</sup> and Santa Maria de Vila Nova de Sande<sup>34</sup> –all of them places that nowadays belong to the municipality of Guimarães (despite some of them having other names).

In the case of São Clemente de Sande, the description of this duty went a little further, for the *Inquirições* stated that all those who failed it should pay a fine of two *soldos* (an ancient currency) to the king's *mordomo* (an ancient financial position)<sup>35</sup>. At that time, the area around Guimarães was probably one of the most populated areas in the whole region, something that can explain why this aspect was so well regulated<sup>36</sup>.

But the fulfilment of this duty probably wasn't linear. In other documents that refer the *correr os lobos* obligation we find, on the contrary, exemption from it. A letter of privilege granted by João I (b. 1357-k. 1385-d. 1433) to the inhabitants of São João da Foz, in Oporto, dated from 8<sup>th</sup> March 1406, stated that the king

wanting to do grace and mercy to the inhabitants of São João da Foz, because they were undertaking the *vintena do mar* [other ancient obligation] and at the request of the abbot of Santo Tirso, who asked us to grant them this favour, it pleases us to order that they would be excused from the *correr os lobos* duty from now on, since that there are other people in the region that already do that<sup>37</sup>.

Concluded during the reign of Afonso V (b. 1432-k. 1438-d. 1481), in 1446, the *Ordenações Afonsinas*<sup>38</sup> (in the First Book, Title 69) also legislated that

In some places of the coast of the sea and rivers, the galleys' rowers are forced by the municipalities to *correr os lobos* each Saturday, without taking into consideration that they are exempted of this municipality duty. We now order that they are

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<sup>30</sup> *Vimaranis Monumenta Historica: a Sæculo Nono Post Christum usque ad Vicesimum*, Sociedade Martins Sarmiento (coord.) e João Gomes de Oliveira Guimarães (compil.), Guimarães, Vimarrensis Senatus, 1931, p. 269.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 285.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 291.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 290.

<sup>36</sup> Gonçalves, "Espaços Silvestres para Animais Selvagens..." p. 209.

<sup>37</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: "querendo fazer graça e mercee aos moradores de Sanhoane da Foz porquanto andaua na vintena do mar e a rrogo do dom abade de Sancto Tiso que nos por elles pedio por mercee teemos por bem e mandamos que elles seiam scusados daqui en diante de hirem correr os lobos segundo os correm os outros da comarca." *História Florestal, Aquícola e Cinegética...*, vol. 1, p. 192, doc. 279.

<sup>38</sup> *Ordenações Afonsinas* was the first compilation of laws in the Early Modern Age in Portugal, and were ordered by Afonso V.



excused from this. But the King adds that they should not be excused from *correr os lobos* if they possess livestock. In that case, they should do it with the others<sup>39</sup>.

We believe that there are many issues to be highlighted in these two passages. Concerning the first one, we would like to resume some of the questions raised by Iria Gonçalves, about which we ourselves have also inquired. According to this historian, who researched the subject in depth, it does not seem to exist in the whole region more information about the practice of *correr os lobos*. Rhetorically, Gonçalves asks if this activity would be so generalized that only occasionally was remembered; and if it was undertaken by the populations themselves, that could explain its absence from the royal memory; or if it was only after the *Inquirições* of 1258 that it was turned mandatory.

The second passage alludes to the duty of “*correr os lobos* each Saturday,” which makes us ask if the wolf populations were so numerous that justified the organization of weekly communitarian *batidas* for their killing. Could this measure be somehow related to a measure enacted by the synod held in Santiago de Compostela, in 1114, in which it was decided that, each Saturday, except on Easter’s eve and on Pentecost, all nobles, ecclesiastics and peasants who did not work should go wolf hunting<sup>40</sup>?

We shall also note that both passages refer galleys’ rowers: the first one mentions the *vintena do mar*, and the second uses this same expression. In the Portuguese Middle Ages, galleys’ rowers were sailors, mostly slaves or convicts, who rowed in galleys or galleons, being obligated to the military service in the Crown’s navy<sup>41</sup>. Between the reigns of Pedro I (b. 1320-k. 1357-d. 1367) and João I, the municipalities ordered the presentation of a certain number of men for rowing services<sup>42</sup>. From then on, the *vintenas do mar* system started to become uniform<sup>43</sup>. The *vintenas* were sets of inhabitants which served as a basis for maritime military conscription where galley’s rowers would be more or less forcibly recruited<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “Em alguñs lugares da costa do mar, e dos rios, guallotes som constrangidos pelos Concelhos pera correrem os lobos cada sabado, nom embarcando, que som escusados dos encarreguos do Concelho. Mandade se serom dello escusados. Diz ElRey, que sejam escusados de correr os lobos, salvo se tiverem guaados, que entam os vaaõ correr com os outros.” *Ordenações Afonsinas*, 5 vols., Mário Almeida Costa (apresent.) e Eduardo Borges Nunes (coment.), Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1998 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1984), vol. I, p. 423.

<sup>40</sup> Bord, Lucien-Jean, and Mugg, Jean-Pierre, *La Chasse au Moyen Âge: Occident Latin, VI<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Chartres, Gerfaut, 2008, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Braga, Paulo Drummond, “Os Forçados das Galés: Percursos de Um Grupo Marginalizado,” in Mário Barroca (ed.), *Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida, In Memoriam*, vol. I, Porto, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 1999, pp. 187-200 (p. 187).

<sup>42</sup> Ribeiro, António Silva, “Galeote.” *Revista da Armada*, n.º 470, Ano XLII (Jan. 2013), p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> *Nova História de Portugal. Portugal na Crise dos Séculos XIV e XV*, vol. IV, A.H. de Oliveira Marques (coord.), 1987, p. 344.





In the second passage it is also stated that galleys' rowers "should not be excused from *correr os lobos* if they possess livestock. In that case, they should do it with the others." We believe that this could mean that an economic factor was being considered, a factor that probably can be extended to the first excerpt too, even though there isn't such a clear caveat on it. Since most of galleys' rowers would not own livestock, because their livelihood would come from their work at sea, this activity would have no impact on their domestic economy and, therefore, they had no need to protect the cattle of others from wolf attacks. It's only a hypothesis.

Wolves attacks on livestock were a serious threat, especially for communities whose livelihood depended on them. For medieval people, the meat, the by-products (mainly dairy products and eggs), the skin and even the traction power of domestic animals were indispensable in daily life, so the loss of these animals could cause huge damages to the families and local economies. Hence the concern with wolf hunting, since the effects of its visits remained clear in several sources.

In the *Inquirições* of 1220, ordered by Afonso II (b. 1185-k. 1211-d. 1223), it is noted that the Monastery of Freixo, in the parish of Alvarenga (nowadays corresponding to Lousada, in Oporto), had men to guard the livestock and also servers that sometimes carried out the duty of hunting, a fact full of meaning, since it points to the very likely existence of wild predators that would attack the flocks, such as wolves, for example<sup>45</sup>.

Later, the *Inquirições* of 1258 mention the "cows [...] killed by wolves"<sup>46</sup> in the parish of São Tiago de Chamoim (now called Terras de Bouro, in Braga).

The *Ordenações Afonsinas* also contain a law of King Dinis (b. 1261-k. 1279-d. 1325) about the return of lambs and other "things" –that is "animals"– to their owners, in case they were taken away from a wolf or a bird of prey that attacked them<sup>47</sup>.

In the *Livro das Posturas Antigas da Cidade de Évora* there's a mention of the payment of five *soldos de libra* (and ancient currency) as *sisá* (an ancient tax) by the inhabitants who were not butchers or similar but wanted to sell "meat from the cows or yearlings that died or were killed by wolves"<sup>48</sup>.

As these four cases show, the capture of domestic animals by wolves would be a recurrent occurrence.

Before concluding this part, let us highlight one of Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho's comments on the report of Carlos Guilherme Riley. Thinking of the works of Robert Fossier, this historian mentions that, in the French case, it was frequent that the peasants took the initiative to ask the lords to organise *batidas* against wild

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<sup>45</sup> Nunes, Manuel, "A Paisagem Agrária do Concelho de Lousada no Século XIII: Notas Arqueológicas, Toponímicas e Documentais." *Oppidium*, Ano 4, n.º 3 (2008/2009), pp. 47-74 (p. 63).

<sup>46</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: "vacas [...] que matar lobo." Gonçalves, "Espaços Silvestres para Animais Selvagens...", p. 209.

<sup>47</sup> *Ordenações Afonsinas*, vol. v, p. 200.

<sup>48</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: "carnes de vaquas ou anojos que lhes morem ou matarem os lobos." *O Livro das Posturas Antigas da Cidade de Évora*, Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros (dir.), Évora, Publicações do Cidehus, Coleção Fontes & Inventários, n.º 5, 2018, p. 114.



boars, wolves or deer, since only they had the economic resources to form dogs' packs and supply the necessary weapons for the success of the expedition<sup>49</sup>.

For the Portuguese context, considering some of the data we have been analysing and others yet to be mentioned, we have reason to believe that *batidas* would normally be organised by the municipalities. However, for the time being, we shall not exclude this possibility of the population taking the initiative to carry out a *batida* on its own; or, as in France, they would ask the nobility for help.

### 2.1.3. *The prizes*

Considering all we have mentioned until now, it is not surprising that there were so many measures around wolf hunting in the legislation. Besides providing some of the data we have presented, it also brings to light another historical information of great interest, which contributes to the understanding of these hunting dynamics.

Those who effectively killed wolves usually got a generous monetary reward: the prizes. We have found no information on this subject before the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of this century, we know that the currency equivalence decreed by João I brought difficulties concerning the adjustment of payments set in old currency<sup>50</sup>. This can be seen, for example, in one of the council books of Loulé municipality, from 9<sup>th</sup> April 1403, in which a posture was approved for updating the prizes paid to anyone who killed wolves:

in the past they would give to anyone that killed a male wolf fifteen *soldos* of the old currency, and twenty *soldos* for a female wolf of that same currency, but since its value was doubtful, they now order that it should be given to anyone that kills a male wolf ten *reais* [other ancient currency] and a female wolf fifteen *reais* of ten pounds and a half<sup>51</sup>.

In the Courts of Lisbon of 1410, a petition was presented by the representatives of the municipalities so that they were not obligated to pay wolf hunters more than 100 *reais* for each adult animal and another 100 *reais* for a litter, regardless of its number of pups, but it was rejected<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), "Sobre a Caça Medieval," p. 257.

<sup>50</sup> Domingues, José, "Caça ao Lobo. Legislação Arcaica." *Agália*, n.º 83/84 (2005), pp. 265-269 (p. 266).

<sup>51</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: "como antigamente davam a qualquer pessoa que matase lobo do macho quinze soldos da moeda antiga e da femea vinte soldos da dicta moeda e porque era duveda por preço da dicta moeda mandaram que dem a qualquer pessoa que matar lobo dez reaiis e da femea quinze reaiis de dez libras mea." *Actas de Vereação de Loulé, Séculos XIV-XV*, Manuel Pedro Serra (ed.), Loulé, Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Loulé (separata da *Revista Al-Ulyá*, n.º 7, 1999/2000), 2000, p. 121.

<sup>52</sup> Sousa, Armindo de, *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas: 1385-1490*, 2. Vols., Porto, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1990, p. 266.



A letter from 14<sup>th</sup> March of that same year, addressed to Gonçalo Mendes, *corregedor*<sup>53</sup> of the region Entre-Tejo-e-Guadiana, tells us that King João I, while being in Santarém, and advised by members of his court, promulgated a legal document to try to reduce the number of wolves. Although this text specifically targets the mentioned region, the legal expert José Domingues supposes that the *corregedores* of Algarve, Beira, Entre-Douro-e-Minho, Estremadura and Trás-os-Montes also received similar letters, something that seems likely to us too. Therefore, it is possible that this was a general law, applicable to the whole kingdom. It determined that all cities, towns and villages with more than thirty men were obliged to deliver a dead wolf every year, whether it was big or small. The authorities of these places could not argue that there were no wolves within their territorial limits, and had to hunt them wherever there were any, having to present at least the right paw of the dead wolf as a proof that they had complied this legal prescription. The places which did not do so would be fined. The paws were to be delivered in a place defined by the regional *corregedor*, who would then burn them, in order to avoid frauds through the new submission of those same paws. Besides that, the municipalities were to pay anyone who killed a wolf 100 *reais* of three pounds<sup>54</sup>.

Although the damages caused by wolves were indeed harmful, once again, this measure leads us to wonder if the existing packs were as numerous as the documents seem to imply, to the point of questioning if it was really possible that all Portuguese cities, towns and villages with more than 30 men would be able to catch a wolf each year.

In the Courts of Lisbon of 1413, we see that the people felt that this burden was too heavy<sup>55</sup>. Was it because they couldn't find enough wolves to kill? Was the amount of the prizes too high for the councils to pay? The people asked the monarch to revoke this decree, and it was accepted. As for the obligation to pay prizes to wolf hunters, we do not know what the outcome was. José Domingues states that it was maintained<sup>56</sup>, but Armindo de Sousa indicates that it was revoked<sup>57</sup>, a discrepancy that we find strange since both authors are basing their writings in the exact same source. We haven't had the opportunity yet to consult this document ourselves, but we will do it as soon as possible, so that we can draw our own conclusions about it<sup>58</sup>.

It was again the people of the kingdom who asked, at the Courts of Santarém of 1430, that the procurators of the municipalities would be obliged by the judges to pay wolf hunters the prizes established by law within eight days. If the procurators did not comply this, then the judges would pay out of their own pockets, without this expense being registered in the municipal accounts. This request was accepted, but in another, which took place in those same Courts, regarding the

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<sup>53</sup> A *corregedor* was a local administrative or judicial official of the Crown.

<sup>54</sup> Domingues, "Caça ao Lobo...", pp. 266-267.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 267.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>57</sup> Sousa, *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas...*, p. 267.

<sup>58</sup> Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto, *Livro 3.º de Pergaminhos*, fl. 75.



granting of authority to the council officials to oblige the inhabitants to do *bati-das* to the wolves when the latter felt that the interest of the lands required it, the monarch preferred not to interfere<sup>59</sup>.

In 1450-1451, the council of Loulé went even further. Not only did it rewarded all those who presented a dead wolf, but it also rewarded all those who could prove, even if only by oath, that they had killed a wolf within the territorial limits of the municipality. One would receive 50 *reais* for each adult animal and 10 *reais* for each calf. In that year, 10 adult wolves and 12 calves were killed<sup>60</sup>.

In 1498, the people of Torre de Moncorvo presented several complaints against their procurators, justifying themselves by saying that “the said town has an income of fifty thousand *reais*, which they [the procurators] spend on things that are not good for the common good, only among them”<sup>61</sup>. Amongst their complaints, they suggested that the procurators did not help to protect the livestock from wolves, stating that “everything that is good for the people, they hinder it and say that as long as there is livestock it will be killed by wolves”<sup>62</sup>. Perhaps the people of Torre de Moncorvo believed that the fifty thousand *reais* of income of the village could generate prizes for wolf hunters and therefore encourage the slaughter of these predators in that region.

#### 2.1.4. Other methods

In addition to wolf pits, *batidas* and the promotion of prizes for wolf hunters, we have also other methods that aimed wolf hunting.

Let us take the case of the Monastery of Santo Tirso as a first example. In a specific type of medieval Portuguese leasing contracts, there’s mention of some alternative *foros* (an ancient kind of rent, that could take shape in many distinct ways) different from the more well-known ones, such as the “wolves” *foro*<sup>63</sup>.

Friar Joaquim de Santa Rosa de Viterbo (1744-1822), in his work *Elucidário das Palavras, Termos e Frases (...)* (1798), compares this *foro* to the first passage we cited of the *Ordenações Afonsinas*, which gives us the idea that by “wolves” we

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<sup>59</sup> Sousa, *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas...*, p. 287; Domingues, “Caça ao Lobo...,” pp. 267-268.

<sup>60</sup> Gonçalves, “Despesas da Câmara Municipal de Loulé...,” p. 205.

<sup>61</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “tendo a dita villa renda de çjncoenta mjjl rreaes hos quoões [os procuradores] gastam Em cousas que nom he bem do prol comum somente antrre sy.” *Cortes Portuguesas: Reinado de D. Manuel I. Cortes de 1498*, vol. III, João Alves Dias (ed.), Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Históricos da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2001, p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “todo ho que he bem do pouo elles o esto-ruam E djzem que emquanto ouuer gado que a d aver llobos que o leuam.” *Cortes Portuguesas: Reinado de D. Manuel I. Cortes de 1498*, vol. III, p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> Correia, Padre Francisco Carvalho, *O Mosteiro de Santo Tirso, de 978 a 1588. A Silhueta de Uma Entidade Projectada no Chão de Uma História Milenária*, doctoral thesis in History presented to the University of Santiago de Compostela, 2 vols., polycopied texto, 2008, vol. I, p. 234.

should perceive the organisation of *batidas* destined to slaughter these animals<sup>64</sup>, a fact that shows how the lordly law could contaminate the ecclesiastical law<sup>65</sup>.

In his doctoral thesis, the historian and priest Francisco Carvalho Correia refers two documents that illustrate this aspect: one of 1385 –in which the *miunças* (an ancient tax) consisted in “agricultural works each week in our vineyards of Vestiaria, and pole and tile, and straw, and prayers and wolves and service to the abbot, and two *soldos* at request”<sup>66</sup>– and another from 1430 –which refers “agricultural works and prayers and wolves and 15 men working in the vineyards of Seara”<sup>67</sup>.

According to António Costa Lobo, another method of exterminating wolves, especially aiming the destruction of their dens and shelters, was fire. This historian argues that, during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, sometimes forests were set on fire with the purpose of reducing wolf populations, but also to renew pastures, produce charcoal and even capture rabbits, which would burn to death<sup>68</sup>. However, so far, we have not found any example of this for the period studied in this paper. The only case we have found dates from 6<sup>th</sup> October 1563, in which the council of Benavente decided “to burn the Garrocheira woods, since they serve for breeding of many wolves that cause great damage to the livestock”<sup>69</sup>.

Finally, one last method for capturing wolves is related to the *coutadas*. The issue of *coutadas*, as well as all the problems related to them, is extremely complex, both in terms of evolution of their areas, as well as in terms of their management and legislation, so we won't intend to dwell on this topic.

But it is worth mentioning that in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the uncultivated area –which was called *saltus*– had great economic importance. In the medieval forests, natural habitats of a varied wild fauna, hunting was relatively free and open to everyone. However, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the kings and great lords began to appropriate a part of the *saltus*, creating closed spaces protected by specific legislation –the *coutadas*–, whose main purpose was the enjoyment, through hunting, of the members of these higher social groups, who forbade the remaining population from capturing animals in these spaces<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Viterbo, *Elucidário das Palavras, Termos e Frases...*, vol. II, p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Correia, *O Mosteiro de Santo Tirso...*, vol. I, p. 234.

<sup>66</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “geira cada domaa [isto é, semana] nas nossas vinhas da Vestiaria, e vara e telha, e palha, e rogos e lobos e serviço do dom abbade, e dois soldos de pedido.” Correia, *O Mosteiro de Santo Tirso...*, vol. I, p. 248.

<sup>67</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “e por geira e engeira e rogos e lobos 15 homens deigada na vinha da Seara.” *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> Lobo, António de S.S. Costa, *História da Sociedade em Portugal no Século XV*, Lisboa, Rolim, 1984 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.: 1903), pp. 82-83.

<sup>69</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “queimar os matos da Garrocheira, uma vez que nela se criam muitos lobos que grande prejuízo causam aos gados.” Correia, Francisco, *Subsídios para a História Benaventina do Século XVI: Sumários de Um Livro de Actas da Câmara de 1559 a 1564*, Benavente, Câmara Municipal de Benavente, 1995, p. 120.

<sup>70</sup> Braga, “Divertimento, Utilitarismo e Barbárie: a Caça,” p. 185.



This process coincided with the great European crisis of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which, as we know, led to a drastic population decrease. With no manpower to work the lands, the creation of *coutadas* led, on one hand, to a reduction in the cultivation of fields and, on the other, to the expansion of forests, which led to the multiplication of several species of wild animals<sup>71</sup>.

Each *coutada* was headed by a *couteiro-mor* or *monteiro-mor*, who was assisted by other officials<sup>72</sup>, all subordinate to the *monteiro-mor* of the kingdom, directly dependent on the king, and whose regulations were promulgated in 1435 by King Duarte (b. 1391-k. 1433-d. 1438)<sup>73</sup>.

The forests of Óbidos, Lourinhã and Atouguia, for instance, had been turned into a *coutada* by João I, in 1407 –forming until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century one of the largest in the kingdom–, so that the king and his guests could hunt there, especially deer, a very common species in that area. For this reason, popular groups were forbidden to hunt in these woods, not only because it would lead to the reduction of the number of animals available for the royal hunts, but also because they often used traps to capture fauna, something that horrified the aristocratic groups, who could not conceive that “noble” animals would be captured in such a “vile” way<sup>74</sup> (we will return to this dichotomous topic later on). Added to these fears there was a concern about the potential damage caused by domestic dogs, so the inhabitants of Óbidos were not allowed to own them<sup>75</sup>.

In the Courts of Lisbon of 1498, these same inhabitants claimed that these woods were near several villages, complaining that many animals, mainly wild boars and deer, were causing irreversible damage to vineyards, farms, orchards, and harvest fields, which were the livelihood of the population. Therefore, they asked the king for permission to kill any animals found on these lands, and to have guard dogs too, to help them protect their cattle from wolves, foxes and other animals<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> *Livro de Montaria Feito por El-Rei D. João I de Portugal*, Manuela Mendonça (introd., notas e leitura), Ericeira, Mar de Letras, 2003, p. xxv.

<sup>72</sup> To know more about the hierarchy and the functions of each one of these officials, see Neves, “Alguns Documentos do Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo...;” and *idem*, “Dos Monteiros-Mores aos Engenheiros Silvicultores.”

<sup>73</sup> Braga, “Divertimento, Utilitarismo e Barbárie: a Caça,” p. 186.

<sup>74</sup> Silva, Manuela Santos, *O Concelho de Óbidos na Idade Média*, Lisboa, Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa, 2008, pp. 86-87.

<sup>75</sup> *Cortes Portuguesas: Reinado de D. Manuel I. Cortes de 1498*, vol. III, p. 470.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*. Let us highlight that this topic raises two problems. Firstly, it is difficult to accurately ascertain to what extent the capture of animals by the population was only understood as a defensive hunting practice, as they could, in fact, represent an additional source of resources for the domestic economy. So, these kinds of requests could actually cover up other interests, which transcended the mere protection of the communities’ agrarian resources. Secondly, many of the species that were sought for extermination were coveted by the nobility (wild boars, deer, and partridges), making the sporting interests of the king and the aristocrats collide with the defensive interests of the people. The interests of the former harmed the subsistence of the latter, hence the councils systematically protested in the Courts against the proliferation of *coutadas*, while the populations clai-



Finally, we must mention traps. Although we do not know, for the moment, of any source regarding the capture of wolves with traps, we know that there were some traps for large animals, such as stocks, snares, and nets<sup>77</sup>.

## 2.2. THE TYPES OF HUNTING ACTIVITIES

The practice of hunting by privileged groups is another very complex subject. The reason why kings and lords created *coutadas* for their hunting practices is related to the fact that these members of the highest strata of society practiced hunting as a form of *desenfadamento* (amusement), in which kings and nobles could spend weeks and even months<sup>78</sup>. Hunting was unequivocally part of the sociocultural context of the *homo ludens*, that is to say the one whose existence was not dominated by material subsistence concerns<sup>79</sup>. However, given the circumstances of the hunts, this activity became a symbol of prestige and social superiority, inseparable from the role played by the nobility in medieval society, in accordance with the obligations of the three estates of the realm, which was at the heart of aristocratic culture: the exercise of the function of *bellatores*, related to the conduction of war<sup>80</sup>.

Indeed, both in Christianity and in other civilisations and societies, spread over time and space (such as Islam, Eastern Antiquity or Ancient Greece and Rome<sup>81</sup>), every secular aristocrat tended to be a war professional. For this reason, medieval hunting cannot be considered as a mere aristocratic entertainment. Practised in times of peace, it was also a preparatory activity for war, so that men could keep their bodies and manoeuvres constantly ready for potential war conflicts<sup>82</sup>. Chasing and capturing large game, above all, strongly evidenced the paramilitary nature of hunting activities.

The *Livro de Montaria*, written by King João I between 1415 and 1433<sup>83</sup>, perfectly corroborates this idea that hunting was the non-bellucose activity most similar

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med their right to hunt for purely defensive purposes. Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” pp. 232-233

<sup>77</sup> *Nova História de Portugal. Portugal em Definição de Fronteiras (1096-1325): do Condado Portucalense à Crise do Século XIV*, vol. III, Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho and Armando Luís de Carvalho Homem (coord.), 1996, p. 443. See also the footnote n.º 89.

<sup>78</sup> Braga, “Divertimento, Utilitarismo e Barbárie: a Caça,” p. 188.

<sup>79</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 241.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 242-241.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 246.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>83</sup> João I's treatise was not an isolated creation, but it appears in the scope of a wide range of identical coeval productions, to the set of which is given the name of Hunting Literature. Gomes, Maria Manuela, *O Homem, o Animal e a Floresta: Uma Abordagem ao Livro da Montaria de D. João I de Portugal*, master's dissertation in Medieval History and Culture presented to the University of Minho, polycopied text, 1997, p. 5.





to war<sup>84</sup>. The first four chapters are dedicated precisely to explaining how, firstly, a great part of the so-called aristocratic amusements and games were directly related to war; and, secondly, how hunting was a synthesis of all the games that provided warriors with the necessary qualities for good military performance: good breathing capacity, speed, agility, strength, riding, handling various weapons, among others<sup>85</sup>. In the words of the king himself: “what each one of these games does separately, the hunting game does all together”<sup>86</sup>. Carlos Guilherme Riley called this type of hunting “sportive hunting”<sup>87</sup>.

However, it happens that the wolf is absent from Portuguese hunting literature and, so far, we do not know of any document that gives us reason to believe that this animal would be the target of noblemen’s sporting hunts, so much so that it does not appear in some medieval chronicles we have analysed. We tend to believe that this might be a Portuguese specificity, perhaps Iberian, since in the *Livre de Chasse*, by Gaston Phébus, 3<sup>rd</sup> Count of Foix, written between 1387 and 1389<sup>88</sup>, there are written and visual references to wolf hunting, namely by nobles<sup>89</sup>.

In the same way that society was hierarchical—as in fact, all spheres of the medieval people’s lives were hierarchical—there was also a hierarchy of animals. Before beginning an exposition on this topic, let us start by pointing out that Plato, in his *Laws*, explained quite clearly the difference between “noble” and “vile” hunting, a dichotomy which, although it was not invented by Greek civilisation, was then inherited by the medieval West<sup>90</sup>. “Noble” hunting was the sportive hunting, practised by aristocrats, who made it a symbol of prestige and social superiority, using it to prepare for war, as we have said. It was done on horseback and its purpose was to chase large animals (such as roe deer, wild boars, bears, among others). These hunters didn’t use any traps or other artifices, favouring instead the direct and physical confrontation between hunter and prey, the latter being killed by the first with a spear, sword, or dagger<sup>91</sup>. On the contrary, “vile” hunting was the “eco-

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<sup>84</sup> Let us not forget that the reign of King João I was decisively marked by war, a possible explanation for why the monarch was such a fervent fan of *montaria*. Following the battle of Aljubarrota, in 1385, there was a great deal of instability between Portugal and Castile. *Livro de Montaria*, p. XXI.

<sup>85</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 247.

<sup>86</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “o que cada hum dos jogos faz apartadamente por si, o jogo da montaria o faz juntamente.” *Livro de Montaria...*, p. 16.

<sup>87</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” pp. 241-242.

<sup>88</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France, “Découvrir le Livre de Chasse,” in *Le Livre de Chasse de Gaston Phébus*, [online] <http://classes.bnf.fr/phebus/livre/index.htm> [last consulted on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022].

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, the following illuminations: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Français 616, fls. 31v (about the wolf’s nature), 96v (*montaria* to the wolf), 103 (traps: nets), 107 (traps: snare), 110 (wolf pit), 110v (traps: stock) e 111 (traps: nets). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, “Iconographie,” in *Le Livre de Chasse de Gaston Phébus*, [online] <http://classes.bnf.fr/phebus/livre/index.htm> [last consulted on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022].

<sup>90</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 225.

<sup>91</sup> Costa, *A Caça em Portugal*, vol. 1, p. 44.



conomic hunting” – a designation that Carlos Guilherme Riley recognises as generic, but with which he means hunting practices whose purpose was to meet material needs, such as defensive hunting, profitable hunting or hunting for self-consumption (typologies to which we will return later)– practised by *laboratores*, which included professional hunters. Considering its pragmatism, in these types of hunting, a wide range of traps and shooting tools were used to seize small animals (mainly rabbits, but also hares, birds and others), and only facing more dangerous animals for defence purposes<sup>92</sup>.

Following this logic, the nobility of an animal was defined, first of all, by its size and then by characteristics inherent to the species themselves, such as aggressiveness, shrewdness, courage, strength or endurance, characteristics that put the aristocratic hunter’s cunning, sagacity and bravery to test. According to Gaston Phébus and Alfonso XI of León and Castile, author of the *Libro de la Montería* (from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), the noblest of all animals existing in western forests was the deer, due to the intelligence with which it managed to escape from hunters. João I of Portugal, for his part, in the work we mentioned above, makes it clear that noble hunting should have the wild boar as its target, since it was considered the most brave and aggressive animal, qualities much appreciated and valued in the virile and bellicose context of medieval aristocratic ideology<sup>93</sup>.

There are many gaps in our knowledge concerning the perception of the wolf in the Middle Ages. However, since the wolf was absent in Portuguese hunting literature, we have reason to believe that it was considered a “vile” animal, something that contrasts with the negative image that has been demystified in recent decades, with many people, including ourselves, seeing the wolf as a strong, graceful, intelligent, and powerful animal<sup>94</sup>.

Just as it was not targeted by sportive hunting, the wolf was not targeted by profitable hunting –the hunting practised by professional hunters, who lived from and for the hunting activity, and then sold the meat, skins or other by-products of the captured animals<sup>95</sup>– nor by self-consumption hunting –the hunting practised by people in general, who used the resources available in the ecosystems of the places where they lived for their subsistence<sup>96</sup>. This is due to the fact that humans do not generally consume wolf meat, as it is coriaceous and nauseating<sup>97</sup>. As for its skin, thick and coarse, it would rarely be used (only by hunters<sup>98</sup>), since in general there were others more beautiful and accessible<sup>99</sup>. Corroborating this is the fact that wolf

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<sup>92</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” pp. 228-229.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>94</sup> Figari, Helene, and Skogen, Ketil, “Social Representations of the Wolf.” *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 54, n.º 54 (2011), pp. 1-16.

<sup>95</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” pp. 237-240.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 233-237.

<sup>97</sup> Delort, Robert, *Les Animaux Ont Une Histoire*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1984, p. 250.

<sup>98</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 231.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem*.



skin is not included in the fixed price tables of leathers and skins listed by the *Law of Almotacaria* of 1253<sup>100</sup>.

Therefore, the wolf was only targeted by defensive hunting –the hunting practice whose main purpose was to chase and kill animals considered harmful, which could damage local economies, either by damaging crops or by the losses resulting from the attacks on livestock<sup>101</sup>.

Regarding the natural flora, the medieval agro-pastoral system, as well as the ecosystems of this period, presented a greater density of woods, forests, and bushes –the *saltus*–, when compared to the fauna of our days, with various species of wild animals living in these places, namely wolves. Most of the time, wolves had their subsistence ensured by this wild environment. However, in other cases, they ended up entering the *ager*, which means the areas cultivated by people, or attacked the cattle grazing in the intermediate spaces between their natural territory and that of the rural communities<sup>102</sup>. In the year of 1450-1451, in Loulé, for example, a hunter was rewarded for having killed “two large females wolves nearby the town”<sup>103</sup>. It was due to the devastating effects produced by these animals that peasants and shepherds practiced defensive hunting, an activity closely linked to the emergence of the first forms of cultivation of the land and the farming of domestic animals, albeit rudimentary<sup>104</sup>.

*Batidas* were then organised, wolf pits were built and used, *foros* were established, forests were set on fire, traps were set in places where it was known wolves would pass and the king was asked to give up several lands so that the population could enter them and kill animals harmful to crops and livestock –all this with the aim of pursuing, capturing, and killing wolves.

### 3. CLOSING REMARKS

Since its very beginning, Humanity has coexisted with several species of non-human animals, with which it has formed relationships of the most varied types. The Human-Wolf relationship is, therefore, almost as old as humans themselves. In what corresponds to the Portuguese territory, the existence of the wolf is attested

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<sup>100</sup> Viana, Mário, “A Lei de Almotacaria e a Política Económica de Afonso III,” in Rute Dias Gregório (coord.), *Abordagens à História Rural Continental e Insular Portuguesa, Séculos XIII-XVIII*, Ponta Delgada, Centro de História de Além-Mar da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa e da Universidade dos Açores, 2013, pp. 45-71 (pp. 66-67, Anexo 4).

<sup>101</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” pp. 230-233.

<sup>102</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 230.

<sup>103</sup> Translation of the author. Original quote: “duas lobas grandes [...] junto com a ujlã.” Gonçalves, “Despesas da Câmara Municipal de Loulé...,” p. 205.

<sup>104</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 230.

since the Upper Palaeolithic, which means the period between 50 000 and 10 000 years BC<sup>105</sup>.

The frequent presence of the wolf has always been a source of conflict between this non-human and humans, a conflict that has been lasting for centuries, perpetuated by the fact that the wolf is perceived as one of the main threats to people's livestock, the economic sustenance of many communities. Although men and wolves have always pursued the same prey, when the former became sedentary, they began to domesticate and raise the so-called domestic animals. Wolves then began to feed on these animals when their needs dictated it, something that increased the hostility of humans towards these mammals<sup>106</sup>. This situation worsened with the spread of Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula, since the wolf started to be seen as an allegory of evil and of human imperfections<sup>107</sup>.

As we hope to have demonstrated with this brief investigation, throughout the Middle Ages, in Portugal, the pursuit, capture and killing of wolves –by means of wolf pits, *batidas*, *foros*, fire, traps or entering the *coutadas*–, as well as the consequent prizes attributed to those who killed them, were practiced from north to south of the Kingdom, because the wolf was present in the whole the Kingdom's territory.

In terms of the types of hunting, following the categories defined by Carlos Guilherme Riley in 1988, the wolf was only targeted by defensive hunting, an activity that aimed, above all, the safeguarding of livestock. Defensive hunting is undoubtedly part of the long-term domain, continuing far beyond the medieval period<sup>108</sup>.

As far as the conservation of the species is concerned, the hunting activities practised in the Middle Ages were far from putting the wolf on the verge of extinction<sup>109</sup>, something that only began to occur in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as we have forementioned.

Just before finishing and going back to the topic of the spread of Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula, in this context, the wolf was considered to be a devilish, ferocious and evil animal, an image that contrasts a lot with the divine, protective and totemic character of the wolf of Celtic influence evident in the mythology of the peoples who inhabited this territory before the Roman invasions<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> Cardoso, João Luís, *Contribuição para o Conhecimento dos Grandes Mamíferos do Plistocénio Superior de Portugal*, Oeiras, Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, 1993, pp. 293-311.

<sup>106</sup> Correia, Clara Pinto, *Portugal Animal*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores and Dom Quixote, 1991, p. 168.

<sup>107</sup> Álvares *et al.*, *Plano de Ação...*, p. 55.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, the description of a communitarian *batida* by Raquel Soeiro de Brito, from 1953, full of very significant details from an anthropological point of view, which also demonstrates the mutation of this activity, which went from being one of the bases of the rural economy to being a festival, scheduled in advance and announced by several villages in the region. Brito, Raquel Soeiro de, *Uma Aldeia da Montanha do Minho: o Soajo. Estudo de Geografia Humana*, Lisboa, Tipografia Minerva, 1953.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem*.



From the point of view of popular culture, namely in literature and folklore, the centuries-old quarrel between wolf and humans originated several peculiar tales, customs, beliefs, cults, legends, myths, and traditions around this animal, largely related to its negative image<sup>111</sup>. Omnipresent in these domains, the wolf was a devourer of men, women, and children, as well as other animals, and the ultimate symbol of the great fears that the forest and the unknown inspired to the communities<sup>112</sup>, a hyperbolic representation that nowadays still affects deeply the perception of this animal by the Portuguese society<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Riley & Coelho (coment.), “Sobre a Caça Medieval,” p. 230.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 231.

<sup>113</sup> Álvares *et al.*, *Plano de Ação...*, p. 55.

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