

# **GOSUINI DE EXPUGNATIONE SALACIAE CARMEN: ANALYSING A SOURCE THROUGH A STRATEGY THEORETICAL CORPUS**

## *GOSUINI DE EXPUGNATIONE SALACIAE CARMEN: ANÁLISE DE UMA FONTE ATRAVÉS DE UM QUADRO TEÓRICO DA ESTRATÉGIA*

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines a medieval source on the conquest of Alcácer do Sal in 1217 using a present-day analysis model that divides war into vertical levels. While this sort of approach is somewhat anachronistic, the model is a valid tool to transfer information in a coherent and organized manner and to understand the dynamics of war in Portugal in the context of the Reconquista at the onset of the thirteenth century.

**Keywords:** Reconquista, Alcácer do Sal, Gosuíno.

### **Resumo**

*Efetou-se um estudo de uma fonte medieval relacionada com a conquista de Alcácer do Sal, em 1217, recorrendo a um modelo de análise contemporâneo, que estratifica verticalmente a guerra em níveis. Na consciência de que se trata de uma abordagem envolta num certo nível de anacronismo, o modelo constitui, no entanto, um meio de análise válido, já que permite a transferência de informação, de um modo coerente e organizado, facilitando a perceção de dinâmicas inerentes à conflitualidade em Portugal no quadro da Reconquista no início do século XIII.*

**Palavras-chave:** Reconquista, Alcácer do Sal, Gosuíno.

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## Introduction

Over the last two decades, the study of the military aspects of Medieval History has received more attention from researchers than in previous periods, although currently there are still countless research avenues to be followed<sup>1</sup>.

The sources used in Medieval Military History are the same as in other fields that study the Middle Ages: medieval written sources, both published and unpublished, later chroniclelike texts, archaeological documents, and built heritage. The investigation also relies on studies carried out by national and international researchers, including those in the still underdeveloped field of experimental history<sup>2</sup> (a field that must be approached with care).

There has also been an increasing tendency to increase interdisciplinarity in historical research by encouraging collaboration with other areas of knowledge. Therefore, Strategy, as a military science, cannot be separated from the study of Military History.

This paper aims to present a method to analyse a medieval source – the *Gosuini de expugnatione Salaciae carmen*, which we will refer to as Gosuino's *carmen* or simply *carmen*. This literary work – a poem – deals with the conquest of Alcacer in 1217. In history, as in most other fields of knowledge, it is common practice to use a model of analysis. We selected a model that is well established in contemporary western theories of strategy, that of the levels of war, which have been organized vertically since at least Beaufre<sup>3</sup>.

First and foremost, we will search Gosuino's *carmen* for data on the strategic and operational levels of war. However, we hope to find data on many other areas of interest to the military, which should also be taken into account. Only by examining all that the source has to offer to the study of war can we establish action/consequence relationships in our analysis. The object of research of this work is not the source, but the method of approaching the source. To that end, the paper is divided into three parts.

The first part introduces and describes the source, including how it relates to other sources on the event and how it has been used in Portuguese historiography.

Part two addresses the method of analysis and presents the conceptual model and the rationale for choosing it, after which the procedure of questioning the source using the selected method is demonstrated.

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete overview of Medieval Military historiography in Portugal up to 2010 see Monteiro & Martins, 2011, pp. 459-461.

<sup>2</sup> An activity that uses the scientific method to analyse subjects such as medieval fencing or the construction of assault machinery and equipment, to which countless "historical societies" contribute, especially in the United Kingdom and France. We have, however, left out "historical recreations" and other related activities, which are vastly popular today, because they are closer to games than to science. A good example of the utility of these methods of study is the experimental construction of a castle in Treigny, in France, which has been underway since 2002 (Martin, 2002). Reconstructing assault devices and demonstrating how they were operated provides a valuable contribution to our understanding of their range and effects. In this regard see, for example, Norris, 2007 and Purton, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of the vertical hierarchization of strategy in regards to the relationship between, for example, military strategy, the operational level, and the battlefield, see Beaufre, 1963, pp. 78-79. For an articulation of the levels of strategy see Couto, 1987 and Coutau-Bégarie, 2010, pp. 107-115. See also Barrento, 2010, p. 21 et seq. and Ribeiro, 2009, pp. 111-117. The theoretical model adopted in this study will be described in detail below.

Part three contains the data of interest to the military and analyses those data in more detail to determine which are relevant to elaborate a strategic and operational framework of the Alcácer campaign.

The conclusions consolidate the strategic and operational framework that we were able to draw from the source.

### 1. The source, its contextualization, and its use in research

The earliest copy of the *Gosuini de expugnatione Salaciae carmen* can be found in a codex from the late thirteenth century, in the National Library of Portugal in Lisbon, CCVII/415. There are two known published versions of the work. The first, by Friar António Brandão, a Cistercian monk, in 1632, is included in Part IV of the *Monarquia Lusitana*, with later corrections by Friar Fortunato de São Boaventura in his *Commentariorum*. We consulted this version in the *Monarquia Lusitana*, Part Four, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional–Casa da Moeda, 1974, reprint, pp. 133-136, translation by Santos Alves. The second version by Alexandre Herculano was published in *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Scriptores*, vol. I, Lisbon, Academia Real das Ciências, 1856, pp. 101-104<sup>4</sup>. It is to the latter author that we owe the Latin title of the work.

The *carmen* is an “epic poem in classically-inspired elegiac verse, structured according to the rules of proportion, invocation, dedication, and narration”<sup>5</sup>. The characteristics of a literary piece of this type free it from being bound by relative precision and chronistic factuality. In fact, the whole text is full of symbolic language, especially Christian and supernatural providentialism, which obscure some aspects that would likely be of interest to a military analysis<sup>6</sup>.

Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar argues that the author of the poem, Gosuíno, or Soeiro Gosuíno is usually thought to have been a crusader who participated in the capture of Alcácer, and was most likely an ecclesiastic given that the poem reveals a profound knowledge of Christian symbolism<sup>7</sup>.

As for other sources, the conquest of Alcácer in 1217 is featured in almost all the medieval narratives, from Coimbra’s Santa Cruz monastery production to the books of lineages, the chronicles by Rui de Pina, and the chronicles of 1344 and 1419 (Vilar, 2008, p. 176). There are also two letters addressed to Pope Honorius III dating to October 1217. One of the letters is signed by the bishops of Lisbon (D. Soeiro Viegas) and Évora (D. Soeiro II), the abbot of Alcobaça, the

<sup>4</sup> For some considerations on the publication of the source see *Memória Cruzadística do Feito da Tomada de Alcácer* (1996, pp. 321-323) and *Alcácer do Sal na Idade Média* (2000, p. 46) by Maria Teresa Lopes Pereira, and *D. Afonso II* (2008, p. 170) by Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar.

<sup>5</sup> Maria Teresa Lopes Pereira demonstrated that the poem is most likely dedicated to the bishop of Lisbon, D. Soeiro Viegas, who was responsible for the Alcácer operation (Pereira, 1996, pp. 327-328).

<sup>6</sup> For example, where the text reads: “A heavenly host comes to our aid, for God / Sends the sign of the Cross as he had done before. / Their garments are radiant like the Sun and bright like fresh snow (...)” it is not clear if what is being described, albeit metaphorically, is an actual contingent that participated in the battle or if it is merely an allusion to the fact that the conquest was divinely ordained.

<sup>7</sup> Mário Jorge Barroca unequivocally attributes the authorship to a crusader (Barroca, 2003, p. 58). Other authors agree that this is a strong possibility (cf. Pereira, 1996, p. 327). The entire poem contains elements that point to the author being a member of the clergy, but the fact that the first strophe is entirely dedicated to God is the strongest indication. In this respect see Vilar, 2008, p. 169 and Pereira, 2003, p. 114.

master of the Templars (D. Pedro Alvites), the prior of the Order of Hospitallers (D. Gonçalo) and the commendatory abbot of the Order of Santiago in Palmela (D. Martim Pais Barregão), who request that the Crusaders who participated in the battle for Alcácer be allowed to remain in Hispania. The other letter, dated the same month, is signed by William of Holland and contains a brief description of the outcome of Alcácer, as well as a request by the crusader commander for instructions from the Pope on whether to remain in the Peninsula or to proceed to the Holy Land. Both letters are collected in the *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, doc. N. 25 and N. 26.

Two other documents should also be considered. The first is a papal bull issued by Honorius III, dated 12 January 1218, which grants the combatants of Alcácer a remission of sins similar to the one granted to the crusaders who fought in the Holy Land. The second is a letter replying to the bishops, the master, the prior, and the commendatory abbot of the three military orders, dated 26 January of the same year, exempting from the vow of travelling to the Holy Land the wounded, the poor, and those who had lost their ships when some units of the crusader fleet were dismantled to obtain wood for siege engines (MH, 1960, pp. 45-52).

The campaign occupies a mere half a page in the section on the reign of King Afonso II of Portugal in the critical edition by Lindley Cintra of the Portuguese text of the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*. The *Crónica de Portugal de 1419* includes a more detailed account of the conquest of Alcácer, which, although largely based on Gosuino, has additional aspects that are not mentioned in the poem. In the *Coronica Delrey D. Affonso II* by Rui de Pina, the feat is described in chapters IV to VIII<sup>8</sup>. The Muslim chronicles also mention the event: “despite his laconic nature”, Abd Alhalim compares the defeat of Alcácer to the defeat of Navas de Tolosa in 1212 (Martins, 2011, p. 145). The campaign is also mentioned in chapters X to XII, pp. 88-93, of Book XIII of the *Monarchia Lusitana*, a seventeenth-century composition by Friar António Brandão.

Gosuino's *carmen* has become an incontrovertible source for studies on the capture of Alcácer in 1217 and the Portuguese political context of the time. Alexandre Herculano referred to it in his detailed narration of the operation in the *História de Portugal*, Volume II, Book III, pp. 92-102. It was extensively studied by Maria Teresa Lopes Pereira in *Memória Cruzadística do Feito da Tomada de Alcácer* (1996, pp. 319-358), and again by the same author in *Alcácer do Sal na Idade Média* (2000, pp. 25 and 47-52). Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar also drew from it for her biography of King Afonso II. Mário Jorge Barroca refers to Gosuino's *carmen*, pointing out similarities with the accounts of the conquest of Lisbon (1147) and Silves (1189), which were also written by crusaders who participated in those military actions, but regrets that, due to artistic concerns, the author omitted details that would be invaluable to understand the operation (Barroca, 2003, p. 58). Miguel Gomes Martins describes the poem as “our main source on the conquest of Alcácer” (2011, p. 130) and relies on it, as well as on other sources such as the Chronicle of 1419, to infer details on the military operation.

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<sup>8</sup> The edition used in this study was the *Chronicles* by Rui de Pina with introduction and revision by M. Lopes de Almeida. Porto, Lello & Irmão: 1977.

## 2. Method of analysis

Our goal is to scour the *Carmen* for military-related data, especially regarding the strategic and operational levels of war, but also for data on the political (highest), tactical, and technical levels (lowest)<sup>9</sup>.

We used the translation by Santos Alves featured in the 1974 edition of the *Monarquia Lusitana*, but also consulted the Latin transcription in the *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica*. The procedure consisted in cross-referencing the text of the Alves translation with the Latin text where the translation of military aspects raised doubts, appraising their differences and ascertaining the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Conflict is a constant for societies and, over time, war theorists have sought to address something that, due to its chaotic and changeable nature, seems impossible to achieve in full: a complete systematisation of concepts. However, we believe that it is possible to establish (or choose) a body of interoperable concepts that can be used in the study of Medieval Military History.

If we look at the theories produced over the last twenty-five centuries, it is clear from the outset that their proponents have relied on two methods to systematise war: (i) by branches or components; (ii) by levels or vertical planes. It is also common to find third ways that integrate both methods (Pinto, n.d., p. 2). Because their object of study is the same, albeit used for different purposes, researchers in Medieval Military History naturally find similar ways of addressing their topics. However, the first method is widely preferred over the second, that is, it is much more common to find approaches to medieval warfare organized by aspects (such as campaigns, logistics, weaponry, architecture, etc.) than ones that clearly separate the levels of war. Furthermore, this is confirmed by the fact that differentiating between levels of war is a recent practice (that dates to the eighteenth century)<sup>10</sup>. The comprehensive studies on warfare in the Middle Ages that have been carried out over the last decades make it clear that authors in search of an overview prefer the third way, approaching war in terms of aspects, branches, or topics as the “backbone” of the study, only addressing the different levels of war within each topic, more often than not implicitly rather than explicitly<sup>11</sup>.

If, on the one hand, the approach to war by aspects or topics is useful for obtaining a broader, more detailed overview, on the other, an approach by vertical planes or levels of war makes it easy to establish causeandeffect relationships in the realization of political objectives

<sup>9</sup> We will explain the meaning of each of these levels below.

<sup>10</sup> José Carlos Pinto provides an excellent overview of the history of these approaches and of the organization of war into vertical levels, attributing to Joly de Maizeroy, Marshal of Broglie (1719-1780), the first theories that stated that, in addition to “tactics”, which were mechanical and local, there was also “strategy”, which should address the conduct of military operations as a whole. Other authors point to different origins for the theoretical differentiation between tactics and strategy – the Count of Guibert and his work *Défense du Système de la Guerre Moderne* (1799) are often mentioned –, but they almost always assign it to this period. See also Barrento, 2010, p. 13; Charnay, 1973, pp. 51-62 and Coutau-Bégarie, 2010, p. 51).

<sup>11</sup> The indexes of the works of Philippe Contamine in *La Guerre au Moyen Âge*, García Fitz in *Castilla y León frente al Islam: Estrategias de Expansión y Tácticas Militares, siglos XI a XIII*, João Gouveia Monteiro in *A Guerra em Portugal nos Finais da Idade Média*, and Miguel Gomes Martins in his doctoral thesis *Para Bellum: Organização e Prática da Guerra em Portugal durante a Idade Média (1245-1367)* confirm that, in their search for a holistic approach, the above authors focus on aspects, branches, or topics rather than levels.

through the application of force, in the implementation of strategic measures, in the conduct of campaigns and operations, in whether a battle is successful or not, and in the role played by techniques and equipment.

Coutau-Bégarie (2010, pp. 107115) provides a clear explanation for how the different levels articulate, which is included in any modern doctrinal manual of operations within the military school of thought that we identify as “western”. There are several strands of strategic thinking, which generally advocate three great levels: (i) the political level, which sets the objectives of the war; (ii) the strategic level, which defines the means and procedures for winning the war; (iii) the tactical level, which employs those means in combat to win the battle<sup>12</sup>. Although Operational Art has always been a part of war, it has only recently been addressed as a separate concept that serves as an axis between Strategy and Tactics<sup>13</sup>. At the base of the conceptual structure, there is also a point when the application of force is no longer a collective problem and begins to reside in the skill, art, equipment, and technology available to individual combatants, which takes us to the technical level.

The above provides us with a conceptual structuring of war that, in addition to being a model in line with what has also been called “Total War”, is organized vertically rather than horizontally. Current theories include five interdependent levels, which, although they had not yet been theorized in the past, seem to be useful as a tool of analysis<sup>14</sup>: (i) the political level; (ii) the strategic level; (iii) the operational level; (iv) the tactical level; (v) the technical level.

Let us now look at the general characteristics of the levels and attempt to illustrate each level through examples from the conquest of Alcácer in 1217.

The political level is where the decisions pertaining to the management of a political body are made. This level defines political objectives and expects strategy, its subordinate level, to achieve them. Transposing this to the Middle Ages, the political level largely corresponds to the level of the Crown and the Holy See, as well as all other bodies that are in competition with the former, even if only circumstantially<sup>15</sup>. The state of war and peace against the surrounding peninsular powers in 1217 falls within the scope of politics.

The strategic level is where the political intent or objectives are realized through the instruments of power: diplomacy, economy, military force, etc. That is to say, strategy implements policy. Thus, a union by marriage between royal houses gives shape to political objectives through a diplomatic strategy; a royal document establishing and regulating the administration of a council (Portuguese *foral* or Castilian *fuero*) is, simultaneously, an economic, military, and social strategy action; a period of incursions (*fossados*) is a military

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<sup>12</sup> These are the designations used by Coutau-Bégarie (2010, pp. 90-93).

<sup>13</sup> The first hints of a different theory originate in the Soviet Union in the wake of the First World War and of the Civil War, when thinkers needed to separate the problems that occur in a Theatre of Operations from those of a War Theatre (which would be at a higher level) and the Battlefield (at the level below) (Pinto, n.d., p. 6).

<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the stratification into levels of war is frequently used, often intuitively, in approaches to Medieval History. For example, Mário Jorge Barroca's *História das Campanhas* is precisely one such approach to medieval warfare which focuses on the strategic and operational levels.

<sup>15</sup> Civil and ecclesiastic lords, municipal powers, urban elites, etc. While entities, per se, do not belong to the political level, they are capable of acting at that level.

strategy that relies on attrition or pressure<sup>16</sup>. In the context of the conquest of Alcácer, the presence of D. Soeiro Viegas, bishop of Lisbon, at the Lateran council of 1215 and his request to the pope that “the crusaders who travelled by the Iberian coasts may assist in the war against the Moors” (Pereira 1996, p. 324) is an act of diplomatic strategy.

The operational level refers to the application of military force and its goal is to achieve the strategic objectives by setting operational objectives for itself. This is the level at which campaigns and major operations occur. In the context of Alcácer, the preparation for the campaign from the integration of the crusader contingent until the end state – the delivery of the fortress into Christian hands – belongs to the operational level. Until the strategic objective (Alcácer) was accomplished, the Christian military power successively set and met a number of decisive conditions that were essential for success. Some of those decisions were: (i) the force that would lay siege to Alcácer was formed; (ii) the force deployed and assumed siege positions; (iii) a relief force was defeated; (iv) the will to fight of the besieged was broken<sup>17</sup>.

The tactical level refers to the local use of force, that is, to the disposition and use of resources (material, human, psychological, etc.) on the battleground. It deals essentially with manoeuvre, that is, with the actions that must be taken to gain a clear advantage over an opponent. In the case of Alcácer, the use of a *tormento* (probably a trebuchet) to knock down a section of the wall is a tactical option, as is the disposition of forces into order of battle at the stream of Sítimos.

The technical level is the basic component of combat. The combatants’ physical dexterity and the skills with which they wield a particular weapon fall within the scope of technique. It is closely linked to equipment and to how it is used. In the topic under study, while the use of the *tormento* is a tactical option, its construction, positioning, and operation fall within the scope of technique.

This vertical hierarchy is essentially taxonomic. In fact, the transition between levels is not linear; nor does the relationship between them make the relationships of interdependence between contiguous levels stronger than between more distant levels<sup>18</sup>.

This type of approach has an intrinsic problem: what is the validity of an instrument to analyse the past that is based on concepts that, for the most part, are not coeval? This is not a new issue, but one that is common to almost all areas of history and that becomes more important the more distant we are from the realities under study. Moreover, in addition to the

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<sup>16</sup> Military force can be used as a factor of pressure at the strategic level, that is, it may not be required to act, but simply to exist.

<sup>17</sup> An aspect of the operational level is the obligation to achieve decisive conditions, that is, results without which a strategic objective cannot be achieved. These conditions are also sequential. For example, we know intuitively that it would not be possible – at least in this operation – to meet condition iv without first meeting condition i. Although medieval commanders did not use the body of concepts that we propose here, they must have used a similar rationale when planning a campaign.

<sup>18</sup> One of the most solid demonstrations of the influence of technique at all levels of war in human history is John Keegan’s *A History of Warfare*, 1993. Loureiro dos Santos, in his description of the fields of Military Art largely inspired by authors such as Eric Muraise, uses a model of analysis in Military History with two poles, politics and technique. The first defines the objectives and means, but always within the possibilities and limitations that are provided by the second. For Loureiro dos Santos, the starting point is technique. The advances in technique influence doctrine (that is, the three intermediate levels), resulting in a range of possible options available to the political level. Cf. Santos, 2010, pp. 2132.

risk of framing or classifying medieval realities in the light of current concepts, which can only be superficially related, we also run the opposite risk, that current concepts are not capable of encompassing realities that were relevant in the Middle Ages. For example, how can we explain, in view of current strategy concepts, the importance and degree of involvement of religious ideas in medieval military activity?

However, even the most recent Portuguese medieval military historiography abounds with well-established concepts that are operative, but are not coeval. See, for example, the terms “civil war”<sup>19</sup> and “enlistment”<sup>20</sup>. The terms are often placed between quotation marks to indicate that they are not coeval, but they are still useful and, more importantly, they do not contradict the information in the sources. Paradoxically, in order to identify different realities, we sometimes find terminological solutions that, on the one hand, are not coeval and, on the other, do not match the terminology used in strategy as a field of science and in current military milieus<sup>21</sup>.

Thus, researchers have a duty to control the analytical tools they use. The concepts should be simply a lens. We should leave to the medieval protagonists the role of evolving freely, and be permanently available to review the conceptual framework if we find ourselves using concepts that contradict the information in the sources.

### 3. Military analysis with special emphasis on the strategic and operational levels

#### 3.1. Political Level

Gosuino's *carmen* describes an event where military force was applied locally to achieve a strategic objective. Therefore, the source does not provide explicit data on the broad policy orientations. The lack of mention of the crown and the monarch, King Afonso II, places the bishop of Lisbon, Soeiro Viegas, in the leading role.

The commander appears and offers gifts to all the pilgrims

At this point, in order to verify the translation's consistency, we must look for other possible interpretations in the Latin text. The term used by the translator to describe Soeiro Viegas, “commander”, has strictly military rather than political connotations. Being a “commander” is not exactly the same as being a director, a manager, or a leader.

*presul adest patrie, peregrinos munerat*

It seems that the Latin text does not refer strictly to the military sense of the term, since *presul* may be more related to the general sense of “leader”, “protector”, and even “bishop”. As for the role of the prelate in the conquest of Alcácer, the Chronicle of 1419 mentions the actions

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<sup>19</sup> As in Martins, 2011, pp. 147-167; Barroca, 2003, p. 59, and most medievalists, when they refer to the conflict within the borders of the kingdom and between Portuguese factions.

<sup>20</sup> In Barroca, 2003, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Such as the case of the term “concentric attack” to designate what military terminology calls “double envelopment” (Cf. Monteiro, 2003, p. 27) or the term “formation”, which in military terminology directly relates to the tactical level and is used to designate a belligerent as a political-level entity (Cf. Barbosa, 2004, p. 10).

taken by the bishop of Lisbon (CP, 1998, p. 106) and the *Crónica de D. Afonso II* refers to him as “Dom Matheus”. None of the sources mention the role of the king in the operation. Soeiro Viegas heads the list of bishops and masters of military orders who petitioned the Pope for the crusading armies to remain in the Peninsula (MH 1960, p. 46).

As for the political level, unlike the Chronicle of 1419 (CP, 1998, p. 106) and the *Crónica de D. Afonso II* (CAII, 1977, p. 90) Gosuino does not address the context of the Fifth Crusade proclaimed in Lateran in 1215. The poet does not deem it necessary to justify the war against Muslims as a general movement of Christendom, which suggests that the context was already well-established. However, he did feel the need to explain the circumstances surrounding the strategic option of conquering Alcácer, as we will see below.

### 3.2. Strategic Level

At this level of war, the source begins to provide concrete data. In a document of this nature, the levels are not clearly distinguished, so a criterion for identifying what is related (or more closely related) to the strategic level and what belongs to the operational level is to distinguish whether the information refers to the War Theatre in general or only to the Theatre of Operations<sup>22</sup>. At the strategic level, we will look for data in the source that, while not directly related to the conduct of the Alcácer campaign, are included as additions to the conjunctural framework.

According to the sequence of events as described by Gosuino, even though the Alcácer operation had not yet been planned, the crusader fleets travelling from Northern Europe to the Holy Land for the Fifth Crusade conducted limited offensive actions against Muslim coastal positions. The city of Faro is mentioned as one of the targets of those actions, resulting in spoils that had to be distributed:

They scoured the seas with countless ships; many came to Faro and carried out destruction.  
Let us stop here. The ships are gathered, a unanimous oath is taken,  
A chief is chosen to set the rights of his own.

This action on Faro is described in some detail in the *Crónica de D. Afonso II* (CAII, 1977, p. 91) and, to less detail, in the Chronicle of 1419 (CP, 1998, p. 106). First, Gosuino addresses the destruction of Faro, and further on describes the storm that forced the crusaders to take refuge in the port (also of Faro?) for repairs:

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<sup>22</sup> A War Theatre is the sphere of influence of the belligerent entities. A Theatre of Operations is the area of land that can be influenced by an operational commander. The War Theatre includes all activities directly or indirectly related to the ongoing conflict. This includes, for example, the Ribacoa region or the Zamora area, which were distant from the border with Islam in 1217 but were still a part of the War Theatre because belligerent entities were in control of those territories (and they could direct their resources towards the war effort). Thus, during the Reconquest, at least until 1249, the entire Peninsula can be considered a War Theatre, and, bearing in mind the Almohad power, so could North Africa. The Theatre of Operations is a more restricted space in which a campaign takes place. It is limited to the area that operational level commanders can influence with the forces at their disposal.

The rest enter the port, but with great difficulty;  
In fact, all the ships withstood the storm.  
[...] Already the armada recovers its strength and heals all its wounds

This description is not consistent with a port controlled by the Almohad power, which Faro or any other port in the region would be. At this point, we must turn other sources for solutions. The Chronicle of 1419 states that:

And, when they were in that port [Faro], the weather turned against them. Seeing that they were not safe there, and in order to repair the damage to the ships, they unfurled their sails and set for Lisbon

CP (1998, p. 106)

This seems to be a more plausible explanation: a crusader force on its way to the Holy Land launched an action against the Faro region and, to that end, landed and set up a beachhead. Moreover, all the sources mention a storm that could have damaged some of the ships, even though it was summer (it would have been June or July). The sources also blame the storm for forcing the crusaders to head for Lisbon, the last Christian port nearest to them with the conditions to repair the damage. There is no way of knowing if the storm is a symbolic element meant to demonstrate that the conquest of Alcácer was divinely ordained, but, in the case of Faro, there would be no need to mention it had it not actually happened, that is, even without Faro, a storm could have led the fleet to the mouth of “*Gold-rich Tagus*”<sup>23</sup>.

In his narration of the events that took place in Lisbon, Gosuino describes the strategic objective announced by Soeiro Viegas, who goes from political actor to strategic commander:

A castle rises near us, and among all the castles it is the most threatening to the Christians

This line also contains another clue: by describing the castle as “threatening”, Gosuino is alluding, on the one hand, to the strategic position of the placeofarms, which allowed it to serve as a bridgehead for Muslim offensive actions, probably targeting Lisbon and the maritime traffic off the coast of the Setúbal Peninsula. On the other hand, Gosuino is helping to legitimize the military action taken against Alcácer<sup>24</sup>.

Gosuino also asserts that the use of military strategy as an instrument of power was absolutely necessary. Towards the end of the poem, after the conquest of Alcácer, he regrets that the fortress that had been the reason for a “muscular” intervention remained intact:

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<sup>23</sup> In any case, further on, during Soeiro Viegas’ sermon to the crusaders, the poet himself confirms that the storm was providential.

<sup>24</sup> In a chapter titled “Reconquista y Guerra Justa” (García Fitz, 2010, pp. 79-96), Francisco García Fitz outlines the three basic ideas in the peninsular Christian discourse: (i) the land occupied by the Muslims previously belonged to a Christian power [Visigothic ancestors were directly invoked in most of the Spanish kingdoms, but Portugal did not wish to use this as a justification for autonomy (García Fitz, 2010, p. 74); (ii) the armed conflict against the Muslims was motivated by the damage they themselves had caused; (iii) the process would only be completed when all Muslim powers had been ousted, which meant that waging war on Islam was in fact a duty. Alcácer fits in with these three fundamental motivations, which belong to the political level but to which Gosuino adds a strategic pretext: Alcácer is a threat due to the offensive power that it represents.

Only the Alcácer [the fortress], and this is a great injustice, remained intact and suffered no damage afterwards.

All sources explicitly state that, after the request by the bishop of Lisbon, part of the crusader force chose to remain in Portugal and another part of the contingent decided to continue:

The fleet is divided into parties. One party rushes to Marseille,  
While the other prepares to enter Alcácer

### 3.3. Operational Level

The operational level contains the data related to campaign planning and execution. As we have pointed out before, there is no fixed boundary between the strategic level and the operational level. The *carmen* proved to be a bountiful source with regards to this level.

The first question that occurs to us refers to the campaign's command. The poem greatly emphasises the role of Soeiro Viegas as the leader and proponent of the campaign, but does not mention him during the narrative and, in the end, regrets that he has not received the spoils he was owed. Did Soeiro Viegas perform the role of a true operational commander? Or was he only a strategic advisor who sponsored the expedition by providing resources? Or was it something in between, an action initiated by the bishop but one that he lost control of as events progressed? Let us look to Gosuínio:

As you see, the Lord caused you to dock at our shores,  
So that our yoke can be shaken off by your weapons.

Below this, the text reads:

Therefore, bearers of the cross, be thou enemies of the enemies of the cross.  
May your hand, here render service to God.  
We shall join you in conquering Alcácer;

Gosuínio implicitly (and almost explicitly) states that the crusaders are the highest ranking force and that it is they who will conduct the campaign, with help from the Portuguese. When the doors of Alcácer open:

They deliver to the crusaders all the enemies and their things

These "things" were not given to "our own", to use a recurring term in Gosuínio. In fact, throughout the poem, the author makes a point of distinguishing between the "crusaders" and "our own", suggesting that the crusaders had operational primacy<sup>25</sup>. Gosuínio also writes a lengthy lamentation:

<sup>25</sup> Although the term "our own" does not exclusively refer to the Portuguese, but to all Christians, the term "crusaders" leaves little room for doubt regarding the foreign pilgrims.

In fact, it was he who first persuaded the crusaders to go to Alcácer.  
It was he who provided resources and men.  
In the siege of that Castle, he spent forces, his own resources and men.  
He gave his goods to our commanders.  
To whom, ungrateful as they are, they wish to pay nothing.  
Moreover, the moment the Castle was taken, thanks to his aid and advice,  
They deny him what is rightfully his.  
He decreed that ten captives should be reserved for him out of the whole army  
And these they kept for themselves.  
This is the commander of Lisbon, who granted such goods to our own  
And in return for good, receives evil.

We did not find anything in the poem that contradicts the possibility that Soeiro Viegas did not have operational control of the force that headed to Alcácer. Furthermore, the source is not explicit about the presence of the bishop in the Theatre of Operations<sup>26</sup>.

As for the role played by Soeiro Viegas or by other operational commanders, we will now consult the other coeval sources available to us.

- (i) The letter that the bishops of Lisbon and Évora, the master of the Order of the Temple in Hispania, and the prior of the Order of St. John in Portugal wrote to Pope Honorius III, requesting that the Crusaders remain in the territory for another year, that they should be granted the same indulgences as the crusaders who fought in the Holy Land, and that those wounded in the Alcácer campaign would be allowed to return to their homes with their sins redeemed (MH, 1960, p. 47);
- (ii) The letter that the constable of the foreign crusaders, William of Holland, sent to the Pope with a similar request as the one mentioned above, claiming that a large part of Hispania was still under Muslim rule but stating that he would submit entirely to the will of His Holiness. The capture of Alcácer is also ascribed to the action of a hundred crusader ships, without any mention of other forces. However, the archbishops and bishops of all of Hispania, along with the kings of Navarre and Leon, were all referred to in the letter (MH, 1960, pp. 48-49).

Therefore, we have two letters that we are certain, even more so than with Gosuino's poem, were written soon after the action (less than a month). The first portrays bishop Soeiro Viegas as part of a college of influential clergymen and not as an individual actor. The second portrays a Flemish count with true military power requesting the Pope for further instructions after a successful action on Alcácer<sup>27</sup>.

There is no doubt about the participation of the Portuguese contingent and the contingents of the military orders. The point of contention is who had operational command at Alcácer. The Chronicle of 1419 mentions:

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<sup>26</sup> As for the bishop's presence in the action against Alcácer, it is only alluded to (although not explicitly) in the final part of the poem, where Gosuino states that "[...] the castle was taken, thanks to his aid and advice [...]"

<sup>27</sup> There is another fact that contributes to the political and strategic discussion on the role of the Portuguese monarch. The king is not mentioned in any of the letters, although William mentions the kings of Navarre and Leon and Galicia.

[...] captains *dom* Pedro, master of cavalry of the Templars, and *dom* master Gonçalo, prior of the Hospitallers, and Martim Baregom, commander of Palmella, and *dom* Martim Pirez. They took with them by land, from Lisbon and Évora, and from these towns' areas, twenty thousand men on foot and some on horseback [...]

CP (1998, p. 107)

This document indicates that Soeiro Viegas was in Alcácer. In the battle of the stream of Sítimos, when the Christians hesitated, the bishop made a rallying speech to the troops, after which:

[...] the bishop prayed with great devotion, speaking thus: *Lord, Father of mercies, helper in tribulation, here are the nations of the infidels come to destroy us, for how can we resist their deeds if thou, God, will not help?*

CP (1998, p. 110)

However, near the end of the description of the Alcácer episode, the Chronicle could not be clearer about the role of William of Holland:

And then they divided equally among all the spoils that were found, and did not give more to one than to the others, except for reserving for the lord commander of the fleet, because by his counsel and wisdom they had prevailed in the siege, ten prisoners that he had taken.[...]

CP (1998, p. 112)

The *Crónica de D. Afonso II* explicitly mentions the presence of the bishop when, after the words of comfort spoken by the Flemish commander because the latter did not receive his share of the spoils, the chronicler states:

[...] and with this the Foreigners withdrew their fleets, and departed to wherever they wished, and the bishop and the Portuguese lords who came to the siege, after leaving the city fortified, and provisioned, as they felt it their duty, also departed for their lands [...]

C5R (1945, p. 99)

All the sources confirm that Gosuíno's carmen does not attribute to Soeiro Viegas deeds that were not his own, however, he seems to have skilfully obscured the operational importance of the crusaders, omitting their role and thus emphasising that of the bishop. The bishop would have been responsible for the campaign, would have taken part in the planning and preparation, and would have accompanied the force. However, it seems that, on the ground, he was only one of several captains. The war council, if one existed, would have consisted of the captains, prelates, masters, and priors mentioned above, but William of Holland was the operational commander, not Soeiro Viegas. At most, if we wish to reject this theory altogether, we must at least admit that with a hundred ships the Flemish commander would have had the largest of the Christian contingents in attendance, as well as unquestionable naval superiority, which was essential for the Alcácer operation.

Another crucial aspect from the operational point of view is the human and material resources, that is, the forces in attendance, in this case both personnel and ships. Gosuno specifies some numbers but omits others. Moreover, there is the usual tendency to exaggerate the number of men, especially on the enemy's side. Beginning with the ships, regarding which the numbers provided by Gosuno seem to correspond to those in later chronicles, there is mention of crusader reinforcements in the form of ships that arrived when the assault operations were already underway:

Shaken by fear, our comfort comes from the One who rules all things,  
Gifting us with thirty-two ships

The Chronicle of 1419 mentions thirty-six reinforcement ships (CP, 1998, p. 109) and the *Crnica de D. Afonso II* mentions the same number (CAIL, 1977, p. 161).

After the battle of Stimos was resolved, Gosuno states:

But, behold, fame ignites new fears in us.  
To confuse us, it confirms the presence of thirty galleys  
We search and find them.  
He who had manifested through signs in the sky and on land,  
Now agitates the waves and the enemy ships sank

This excerpt, which the poet adds after the description of the battle, raises some doubts regarding consistency. Why should the Muslims attempt an approach from the river when they had been defeated in a large-scale land battle?<sup>28</sup>

The other sources provide a more plausible answer regarding not the number of combatants but the type of operation. The Chronicle of 1419 mentions that the Muslim relief force consisted of:

XV thousand on horseback and LXXX thousand on foot and twelve galleys by  
sea

Rui de Pina cites exactly the same numbers. It appears that the Muslim relief operation was planned as a joint force – naval and land – to force the Christians either to fight on two fronts or to abandon one, giving Muslims freedom of action in the most unprotected sector. The sources are contradictory as to the fate of the Muslim relief fleet. For Gosuno, it was divine intervention that solved the problem through another summer storm (the third). In the two chronicles, it was the crusader reinforcement of thirty-six ships that dictated the naval victory.

As for the land force, Gosuno writes:

Forty-thousand infantrymen and fifteen-thousand horsemen advance,  
To annihilate us

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<sup>28</sup> Even without today's command and control systems, it is not plausible that the Muslim naval commander would enter the confined space of the Sado unless he were certain that the much larger fleet was not in the condition to put up a fight.

Referring to the Muslim relief force;

But we have only three-hundred horses.  
Suddenly, by divine provision, five-hundred horsemen and horses  
Join us at dawn

Referring to the Christian cavalry contingent near the stream of Sítimos.

We must once again turn to the other sources to confirm the numbers and to understand the origin of the forces described above.

We have seen that the chronicles and Gosuino cite different numbers of Muslim foot soldiers at the stream of Sítimos, but the same number of mounted troops. Still, the numbers are not consistent. The tendency of medieval chroniclers to exaggerate numbers is widely known, as Ferdinand Lot demonstrated in 1946 (García Fitz, 2005, p. 354). Miguel Gomes Martins states that the Muslim force, even accounting for a land force from the twelve galleys, would probably not have exceeded fifteen-thousand men (2011, p. 141).

The problem with the numbers is a recurrent one, and, in the case of Alcácer, it cannot be solved using the available sources, so one viable option is to rely on comparative history and research the contingents that could conceivably be mobilised by the cities described in the chronicles of Jaen, Córdoba, Seville, and Badajoz. Jean-Pierre Molénat encountered the same problem when describing the military organization of the Almohads, without, however, advancing any numbers (Molénat, 2005, pp. 549-550). Because the aim of this paper is to explain a method of analysis using a source, specifically the *carmen* by Gosuino, advancing an approximate number for the force believed to have been at Alcácer would require extensive efforts, and the benefit thereof would not be relevant to our purposes. For the moment, it is important to know that the numbers advanced by Gosuino and by the Chronicles are “inflated”.

The origin of the Muslim contingents of the relief force also raises operational level issues. Knowing the numbers and origin of the Muslim “kings” (that is, the lords of the Almohad administrative divisions) would be a considerable help in gathering data on how the Muslims planned their relief operation. Three is the number advanced by Gosuino:

Spain conspires against us and, as the news reaches us, sends three Kings.

William of Holland’s letters do not mention the number of Muslim kings in attendance. The *Crónica de Portugal de 1419* mentions four (CP, 1998, p. 108), as does the *Crónica de D. Afonso II* by Rui de Pina (CAII, 1977, p. 94). These numbers should be questioned. Why did Gosuino, who was supposedly there, mention three? Despite the presence of contingents from four Muslim cities, were only three of them personally commanded by their masters? Is the number three a matter of symbolism? Indeed, when Maria Teresa Lopes Pereira identifies the numbers that appear in the poem, she notes the recurrence of the numbers two, three, five, seven, ten, seventeen and seventy-two, all of which are loaded with symbolism. The number four is not among those chosen by Gosuino. But, on the other hand, why would Gosuino have chosen a number that seemingly diminishes the feat of the battle of the stream

of Sítimos? Defeating three kings is not the same as defeating four. We should consider the possibility that Gosúino could be right and that later sources advanced a number that seemed plausible to them, bearing in mind the size and role of the cities of Jaén, Seville, Badajoz, and Cordoba. Or that one of the contingents was not led by the governor of its city but by a captain under his command.

The outcome of the campaign, or end state, also belongs to the operational level. After the Christians built two bastides higher than the walls of Alcácer and opened accurate fires on the defenders, enemy morale fell to such a degree that:

[...] these torments, as well as the towers  
Fill enemies with fear.  
The enemy requests a parley, hesitates, fears;  
Therefore, Alcácer surrenders and all doors open to our own.

The Chronicle of 1419 states that:

[...] those in the Bastides struck them with such force that, after the Moors lost any hope of doing anything else, they signalled that they wished to surrender and asked to be allowed leave with their farms and the Christians would not consent, unless they left with nothing.

CP (1998, p. 112)

And Rui de Pina:

[...] on the advice of captain of the fleet, they made two bastides higher than the castle towers, so that those who rode them did not fear the ones inside the walls, and they mounted two devices and many crossbows, and elsewhere they began to fight in such a way that no Moors dared to appear on the wall in the spots targeted by the devices and the beteliers, and, likewise, those in the bastides attacked them with such force that, once the Moors lost all hope that anything could be done, they signalled that they wished to surrender [...]

CAII (1977, p. 165)

This could mean that the mechanism of defeat that led Alcácer to surrender involved the psychological breakdown of the defenders, caused by the capacity to maintain accurate fires on the inside of the fortress.

### 3.4. Tactical Level

The source's military descriptions mainly pertain to this level. We will now outline the aspects in the *carmen* that relate to the tactical level, dwelling more on the details that directly relate to operational-level decision making.

Gosúino's description enters the tactical level the moment the Christians disembark in Alcácer:

The wind picks up, we scour the sea with the ships and approach Alcácer.  
Then we take the streets. The enemy comes.  
They come on horses to save the street, but are pierced by the spears

They cannot save themselves by fleeing.  
Thus, the dying man abandons his horse, his companions, and his life.

Both chronicles mention this first confrontation, stating that it resulted in one Muslim death and that the remaining contingent took refuge inside the walls (CP, 1998, p. 107 and CAII, 1977, p. 159).

The assembly of the camp and the physical description of the castle also belong to the tactical level:

The companions go to the camp and mourn the first ruins.  
The place is surrounded by a palisade, the moats are deep,  
With double walls and numerous towers.  
This city, fortified with weapons of many kinds and men, renders brave  
Those who love their flags.  
However, after we arrived there, they could no longer leave the walls in safety.  
In truth, we set up tents near the Castle, defended by weapons and men.

Further on, after describing some technical aspects, Gosuínio goes on to say:

We defend the castle with armed soldiers; there is blood spilled and both  
Sides drink the bitterness of death.

The term “defend” used by Santos Alves raises some questions. In the Latin text we find the expression “vallamus”, which can mean “surround/besiege”, completely reversing the meaning of the phrase, which now makes sense.

Further on, the text provides a description of the battle of the stream of Sítimos, about one league northeast of Alcácer. The verses that describe this battle mainly portray situations that pertain to the tactical level.

In this lengthy description, concrete and plausible elements are linked together by a web of symbolic expressions. Because our focus is on the strategic and operational levels, we will only highlight excerpts of this description that have a direct impact on those two levels. The implications of the battle of the stream of Sítimos for the operational level reside, essentially: (i) in the fact that it occurred<sup>29</sup>; (ii) in the entry into the Theatre of Operations of another Christian military contingent, a cavalry force.

Regarding the first implication, the Christians needed to address a contingency – a branching of the plan that, once resolved, allowed them to resume what they were doing: to surround the placeofarms and attempt to take it through the combination of multiple techniques.

The operational relevance of the first implication is related to the second: the arrival of the cavalry contingent, a reinforcement that appears to have joined the fray when the

<sup>29</sup> With the exception of the William of Holland’s letters, all the sources that describe the campaign mention this battle. Alexandre Herculano justifies the Flemish writer’s omission with the possibility that the Portuguese troops were only present at the stream of Sítimos, when the Crusaders were laying siege to the castle. Herculano also points to other sources that may prove crucial for exploring the tactical aspects of the battle, such as the *História Damiatana* and the *Annales Toledanos*, among others (Herculano, 1875, p. 98).

battle was already underway. The relief force was something the Christians would have predicted. They would have left for Alcácer knowing that their contingent was suitable for assault operations, but might not be sufficient to face an open battle should the enemy react as expected. The arrival of Pedro Alvites was not a coincidence; there are indications that the Templar contingent was part of the plan from the start. The force that intervened in the Alcácer campaign was “designed” at the operational level to respond to the expected threat. The intervention of this corps does not appear to be a mere tactical contingency, but rather the result of operational planning.

### 3.5. Technical Level

From the perspective of the assault techniques used, the first strikes against the fortress would have been attempts to bridge the moat with wood gathered locally, but the defenders ignited the materials deposited by the Christians:

The fleet is not safe.  
As we approach the walls, the olive tree and the fig tree fall  
To fill the moats and make a way for us.  
The moat smells of firewood; Vulcan [the fire] seems to have been conjured  
against us;  
Everything is consumed by fire.

The chronicles agree with Gosuíno regarding these actions. Afterwards, there was an attempt to knock down a section of the wall, using a *tormento*<sup>30</sup>:

We build a *tormento* [a war machine to launch projectiles], we roll stones  
Taken from walls, but the blows have little or no effect on the castle walls.

Once again, the other two sources mention the device, which would have been built on site rather than transported from Lisbon.

After the battle of the stream of Sítimos, the Christians were free to return to the assault. The whole description addresses aspects which fall essentially into the scope of technique. The defenders use stones and fire – with which they are able to keep attackers at a safe distance from the walls:

He who had manifested through signs in the sky and on land,  
Now agitates the waves and the enemy ships sank.  
We go back to the besieged,  
But they throw stones, beams, and fire against us.  
Injured, we move away from the wall and attack with the bow from afar;  
The darts are moist with blood.  
The earth becomes infused with blood from both sides.  
In turn, we drink the terrible cups of death.

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<sup>30</sup> This would have been a mangonel or a trebuchet. The allusion to the limited effect this device had on the walls leads us to conclude that either it could not be used as intended, or the device was not strong enough to overthrow the obstacle. Miguel Gomes Martins suggests that this could be one (or several) counterweight trebuchets, a recent innovation, more effective than the *trabucos* driven by human traction (Martins, 2011, p. 135).

When attrition tactics using fire techniques did not succeed, the attackers attempted a breach tactic using the mining technique. A Muslim countermine was able to annul the Christian attack, and Gosuino even mentions an underground skirmish:

We are unable to make headway in this manner; ingenuity allies with force.  
Therefore we dig under the earth to bring down the walls.  
We dig while hiding and the enemy digs the other way  
And strives to bring our work to nothing.  
We fight inside the tunnel with iron, smoke, and fire.  
Here too the spilled blood flows from both sides.

Because the techniques used up to that point had been unsuccessful, two towers were erected, which allowed the attackers to fire across the wall<sup>31</sup>. We do not know whether they were movable (assault) or fixed towers, but Gosuino's description, which the chronicles confirm, points out that the defeat was achieved because the Christians had acquired the capacity to open accurate fires on the besieged, a situation that became unbearable for the defenders<sup>32</sup>.

Then, not far from the walls, actually quite near them,  
We raise two towers higher than the castle's.  
Wooden constructions that overshadow the camp;  
And they watch the enemy to ambush them constantly,  
To direct the arrows with the bow into the middle of the camp  
And thus sudden death struck the inhabitants of the Castle.  
Then we erect two walls; these *tormentos*, along with the towers,  
Strike fear upon the enemies.

In general, the other sources agree with Gosuino's description, who did not add any aspects that seemed to us either daring or different.

## Conclusions

This paper is not exempt from criticism, first, regarding the usefulness of applying a model of analysis that is not contemporary to the source. However, since one of the uses of History lies in the search for answers to the concerns of our time, the questions we pose are invariably questions for the present, relying on modern frames of thought. Although we can draw nothing more from the text that we can use, we believe we have established a bridge between modern military knowledge and a medieval source, thus contributing to the dissemination of History.

Gosuino's *carmen* is a valuable source to study the levels of war that we wish to address. Although it mainly deals with tactical aspects, it contains solid strategic and operational information that, combined with what we can glean from other sources, allows us to draw

<sup>31</sup> We know, not through Gosuino but through the letter written by Pope Honorius III on 26 January 1218, that wood for the construction of towers was obtained by dismantling the crusader ships.

<sup>32</sup> Similar to what we know today as sniper fire.

a coherent outline of the campaign, including its objectives, actions, participants, and consequences. We should remember that the approach to the source largely focused on what it can provide us, rather than on what it cannot. We sought confirmation and information in other sources for what we believed the source could provide, focusing especially on the relationship between the data obtained and the strategic and operational levels of war.

At the strategic level, the source allowed us to identify (and analyse, by cross-referencing it with other sources):

- The strategic context for the presence of a crusader force in Portuguese territory;
- The agents. In this case, the protagonist is not the monarch, but a prelate who became a strategic commander: Soeiro Viegas;
- The total strategy model of action, which was based on direct threat;
- The general strategies, which were essentially diplomatic (the requests to the Holy See and the crusaders who docked in Lisbon) and military (the decision to carry out a campaign);
- The strategic objective, Alcácer, “the most threatening of all castles”;
- The strategic manoeuvre, which consisted of a direct approach from parallel directions (land and sea) for a single concentrated target (Alcácer).

The main data obtained at the operational level were:

- Strong evidence regarding the operational commander, presumably Count William of Holland;
- The presence of the bishop among the captains who took part in the operation;
- The composition of the naval forces, with some degree of accuracy;
- Somewhat exaggerated numbers regarding the ground forces, especially the infantry;
- Data on the Almohad operational planning, especially regarding the issues raised by the fact that the source refers to three kings instead of the four cited by other sources;
- The final state of the operation and the mechanism of defeat that led to it: the placeofarms likely fell due to psychological pressure;
- The battle at the stream of Sítimos and the fact that it may have been planned beforehand, as demonstrated by the intervention of a cavalry contingent gathered by Pedro Alvites in Hispania;
- The operational planning included the technical possibility of building siege engines on site, which eventually happened.

More than to conduct an in-depth exercise of analysis, this paper aimed to demonstrate a method by applying it to a source. The intent was not to develop and solve all the problems presented by the document. We sought ways of solving the problems presented by the source in the aspects related to the two levels of war under study (strategic and operational) and those that, while not directly related to these levels, seemed to have direct implications for them.

## List of Abbreviations

- C5R: *Crónica de Cinco Reis de Portugal*  
 C7R: *Crónica dos Sete Primeiros Reis de Portugal*  
 CAII: *Crónica de Afonso II*  
 CP: *Crónica de Portugal de 1419*  
 MH: *Monumenta Henricina*  
 PMH: *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica*

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