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## “Costalizing” in Earlier Portuguese Times

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to determine the territorial population distribution in Portugal at the dawn of nationality. The country has a vast seafront rich in natural resources (navigation, salt, fish, sand, algae...) with strong touristic attractiveness. However, some indications suggest that a large part of the population lived far from the coast then. Although the exploitation of resources on sheltered coasts (estuaries, lagoons) started during the most remote times, which contrasts with the large Portuguese littoral exposed to very energetic ocean waves subject to strong modifications and damage during big storms (Dias, 2005). Besides that, those “exposed” coastal stretches were, during those ancient times, dangerous places due to piracy. It seems that such factors forced most of the population to live far from the coast in the first years of Portuguese nationality.

However, there are no consolidated studies that confirm the statements set above, especially since indicators are scarce and involve the analysis and interpretation of historical sources handwritten in Latin or Old Portuguese. In the Present, it is commonplace to say that there is an overpopulation of the coast in opposition to the interior desertification, with the resulting demographic, socioeconomic, and environmental asymmetries. However, this is opposite to what happened in Portugal at the dawn of nationality, in a conjuncture marked by the War of the Reconquista. As Marques (Oliveira) indicates, it was a settlement of “coastal-inland” (1987) that guaranteed a safe distance from the “open sea”. As Oliveira Marques (1987) indicates, it was a settlement of “coastal-inland” that guaranteed a safe distance from the “open sea”. So, when how and why did the population stop being “internalized” and start to be “coastalized”?

The main objective of this work is to try to understand the rhythm and intensity of the county’s settlement in the medieval Portuguese Kingdom, and the distance related to the littoral of the time (which is not always the same as today). The chronological approach is comprised of the first written document that proves the existence of a county and the end of D. Dinis reign when the battle against the Muslims ended and the territory assumed its present configuration. Some Portuguese historians claimed that D. Dinis closes a period and opens a new one in the Portuguese Middle Ages (Coelho, 1996).

### 2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Given the evident impossibility of making a global survey of the occupation of the Portuguese territory for remote periods, the territorial distribution of municipalities was selected as the *main proxy*. Historical sources that run through the entire chronological beam under observation, namely the *Forais Velhos* (TT online – *Livros dos Forais Velhos*) were selected to such purpose. *Forais* were documents granted by kings (mostly) or individuals who founded a county. They were a kind of birth certificate of a locality. *Forais* can be complemented with other data that allow the exact quantitative determination of the demographics in those times: *Portuguese Inquiries* (Marques, 1987) and the bearing of the *Besteiros do Conto* (*Ibidem*). These are the two main historical sources, but many other secondary sources (as non-direct sources) have been used to complement gaps and enlighten the contemporary administrative and territorial organization. From the data crossing, it becomes possible to: 1 – Perceive the municipalities number, location, estimate population, and distance from the coast. 2 – Statistically analyze the data. 3 – Graphically and cartographically represent the data. 4 – Critically interpret

and arrive to conclusions about the “coastalizing” movement for this Portuguese nationality beginning period.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before 1143, i.e., before the independence of Portugal, in the territory that would become the Portuguese kingdom *forais* were granted by Fernando Magno and the Portuguese Counts D. Henrique and D. Teresa (parents of D. Afonso Henriques, first king of Portugal). These *forais* mostly refer to inland areas. The exceptions were Azurara - Vila do Conde (Barros, 1886) and the mouth of the river Douro (Franklin, 1825; Reis, 2007): which means protected coastlines.

With the first king of Portugal, the *forais* for the coast were maintained in sheltered areas, namely, a) in Lourinhã (Amaral, 1821): 2 km from the coast of the high coast (coast of cliffs) and which certainly benefited from the small estuary of the river Grande or Ribeira dos Palheiros, which flows into Praia da Areia Branca; b) in Atouguia da Baleia (TT online – *Livro dos Forais Velhos*), whose configuration at the time was quite different from the current one.

The occupation of the Portuguese littoral increased by *forais* remained modest and always focused on sheltered coasts until D. Sancho II. The first coastal *foral* given to a locality on an open coast date on this reign: Ericeira, in 1223 (Barros, 1886; Franklin, 1825) located on the high coast (coast of cliffs) and, consequently, protected from attacks from the sea and storms. It is located in a small bay that facilitates embarkation and dis-embarkation - the mouth of the river Lizandro. Immediately to the North, it may also have boosted the use of the sea – the main motivation: the capture of marine mammals that are mentioned in the historical document (*Ibidem*).

With D. Afonso III, littoral settlements were maintained on sheltered coastlines, a situation that continued with his son D. Dinis, the last of the first Portuguese monarchs dealt with in this work. The exception is the granting of the *foral* of Póvoa de Varzim (1308) which, similarly to what happened with Ericeira, also had a small bay (Porto de Veracim located in the land of the king called Veracim de Jusão) and here with the reference in the *foral* for fishing for large mammals under the monarch’s right (Franklin, 1825; Reis, 2007).

With the progression of the Christian Reconquista to the South, there was an expected progression of the granting of *forais* in that direction.

The dangers that came from the sea, whether natural or man-made, should have meant that the coastal zone, mainly exposer littoral, had not been subject to intense human occupation. Moreover, in this kingdom consolidation phase, both in geographical, political, and administrative terms, the dangers of losing territory came from the East (with the kingdoms that would later form Spain) and from the South (with Islamic attacks to recover lost ground for Christians). Hence, it is not surprising the importance of settlement and defense of the most continental lands.

### 4. CONCLUSION

In the first reigns of Portugal kingdom, the implementation of coastal municipalities was mostly done on sheltered coastlines. A relative exception occurred with Ericeira and Póvoa de Varzim and everything indicates that the capture of large and profitable marine mammals would have justified the respective granting of *forais*. However, it can be said that there was a clear tendency towards the interior, with special emphasis on the North of the country. With the advance of the Reconquista to the South and the establishment of the Kingdom borders, there is no evolution of the gravitational focus of the granting of charters that accompanies this movement. In other words, at the dawn of Portugal, the littoral still seems to be unattractive for the permanent settlement of the population and the open coasts were still “empty territories”, using the French historian Alain Corbin’s expression in the book with that name.

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