The Equine Imprint in Iberian History, Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries

Sometime between 1550 and 1564, the images in Figure 1.1 were made in the region of Tlaxcala, just east of current-day Mexico City.

Recounting the events of the conquest, local artists highlighted the perspective of the Tlaxcalans who, after an initial confrontation with Hernan Cortés, became crucial allies in the campaign against the Aztec Triple Alliance.[1] These images, which also hung on the walls of the city hall in Tlaxcala, closely depict Spaniards on horseback, including details down to the brands on the horses' haunches and the varying styles of seat and tack used by the riders. They also capture clearly the iconography of the man on horseback, reminiscent of contemporaneous equestrian portraits of European royalty (Figure 1.2). Conquistadors poised on horseback with armor and lance closely resemble the portrait of Charles V on horseback, emanating the glory of the Spanish crown.

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[1] The exact origins of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, an indigenous pictorial manuscript comprised of images with captions in Nahautl and Spanish depicting the time of contact between Hernando Cortez and various groups in the Tlaxcala region of Mexico, are unknown. The various sets of surviving images are thought to be related to ones originally painted in the Tlaxcalan City Hall, and are also documented in a 1585 manuscript written by Diego Muñoz Camargo reproduced in facsimile in *Descripción de la Ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala de las Indias y del Mar Océano para el buen gobierno y ennoblecimiento dellas*, ed. René Acuña (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981). For the history of the *Lienzo*'s copies and reproductions, see Gordon Brotherston and Ana Gallegos, "El Lienzo de Tlaxcala y el Manuscrito de Glasgow (Hunter 242)," *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* 20 (1990): 117–140; Travis Barton Kranz, "Visual Persuasion: Sixteenth-Century Tlaxcalan Pictorials in Response to the Conquest of Mexico," in *The Conquest All over Again: Nahuas and Zapotecs, Thinking, Writing, and Painting Spanish Colonialism*, ed. Susan Schroeder (Eastbourne/Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 41–73.

FIGURE 1.1 (a) *Tzapotítlan* and (b) *Ayotochcuitlatlan*,
images from *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* (c.1552) reprint in Bourne Book Collection *Homenaje á Cristóbal Colón* (1892) in the New Mexico Digital Collections © 2012, courtesy of the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, New Mexico History Museum

The horse was an impressive animal in itself, and its presence also communicated information apparent to Spanish conquistadors about status and power, but such visual semiotics would have had to be deciphered by diverse Indigenous cultures. These Tlaxcalan artists not only accurately represented the physical shape of the horse and its harness but also rendered a clear understanding of the social and political function horses had for the Spanish.[2] These images underscore Iberian horse culture as one way Spanish

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[2] See Walter A. Liedtke, *The Royal Horse and Rider: Painting, Sculpture, and Horsemanship, 1500–1800* ([New York]: Abaris Books for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989). In Spain, the establishment of a permanent court in Madrid by Philip II led to the rise of a specific court culture surrounding access to the king, as described in John H. Elliott, "The Court of the Spanish Habsburgs: A Peculiar Institution?" in *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of H.G. Koenigsberger*, ed. Phyllis
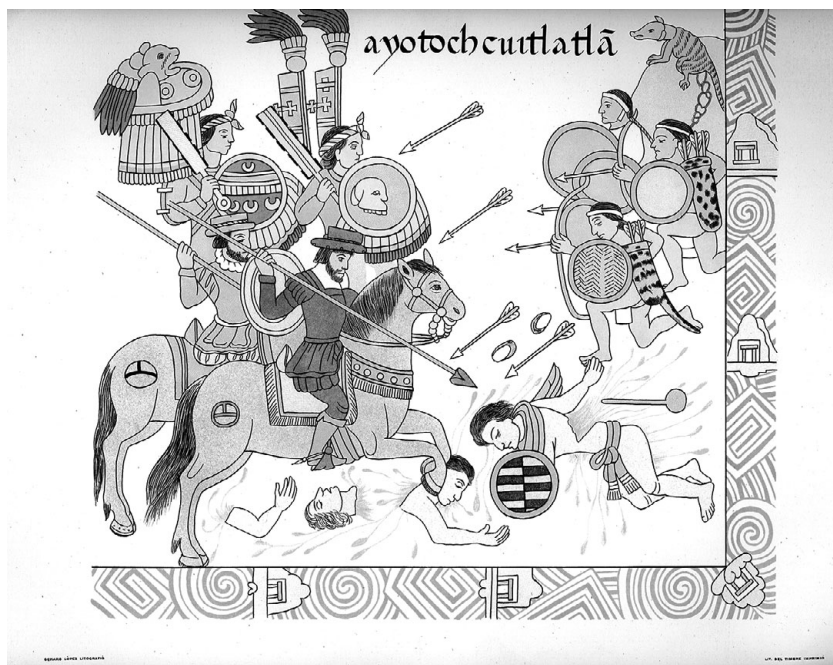
FIGURE 1.1 (*cont.*)

imperial power was represented in colonial territories, at both the highest level of imperial iconography and the level of local government.

The image of the conquistador on horseback has been emblazoned in the popular Western imagination, beginning with the first chronicles celebrating Spain's success in colonizing new lands. This heroic image harkens back to the knight in the medieval Christian conquest of Iberia, a figure similarly built around the horse and military conquest. The military innovation of armored knights, made mobile on horseback, shaped the political and social organization of feudalism in the early Middle Ages.[3] In the late Middle Ages, the cultural values of chivalry encoded the horse's

Mack and Margaret C. Jacob (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and in *La monarquía de Felipe II: la casa del rey*, ed. José Martínez Millán and Santiago Fernández Conti (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre Tavera, 2005).

[3] In its classic definition, like that of François-Louis Ganshof (1944), feudalism describes legal and military obligations among the warrior nobility, defined in terms of lords, vassals, and fiefs. Textbooks describe feudal society as three functional "orders" (a peasant estate made up of serfs and other laborers, a religious estate made up of clergy belonging to the church and religious orders, and a military estate made up of knights and nobles, also rendered as

FIGURE 1.2 Titian, *Emperor Charles V in Mühlberg*, Oil on Canvas, 1548, Prado Museum.
Courtesy of the Prado Museum

"those who work," "those who pray," and "those who fight"). Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1887), characterized feudalism as a socio-economic structure for supporting cavalry armed forces, a "cavalry revolution" that began in the military organization of Charlemagne, and Lynn White argued that adopting mounted cavalry technology (armor, stirrups) drove the political and financial demands behind feudal relations as early as the eighth century: "an aristocracy of warriors endowed with land so that they might fight in a new and highly specialized way" in *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 13, 38.

importance, as horses and equestrian arts became a shorthand for the values, behaviors, and attributes associated with the noble estate.[4] The image of the conquistador on his mount in Figure 1.3 evokes this medieval symbolism and the underlying history of military service on horseback in the construction of political and social hierarchies.

Many histories of the conquest and colonization of Latin America have considered Spain's territorial claims and missionary zeal an extension of practices and ideologies developed in medieval conflicts between Christian and Muslim polities in the Iberian Peninsula, the so-called Reconquest.[5] More broadly, the treatment of Spain as "exceptional" within European history, influenced by its unique institutional and cultural influences as a southern Mediterranean crossroads, has led to a historiography that – until relatively recently – also emphasized Spain's continuing medievalism in relation to other early modern European colonial powers.[6] The image of the conquistador on horseback, thus, connotes a medieval outlook in Spain's early expansion overseas and an obsession with horse-derived noble status. Obsession with status in Iberian history has been treated as a sign of a larger cultural rejection of new capital economies essential to

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[4] Maurice Hugh Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale Nota Bene, 2005).

[5] Many historians have considered this outward expansion to the American continents and North Africa a continuation of territorial gains within the Iberian Peninsula and a bid for a universal Christian empire, including James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532–1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); James Lockhart, *Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History and Philology* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); and Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: 1523–1572* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966). On the medieval roots of the *Requerimiento*, read to opponents in the conquest to justify invasion, see Paja Faudree, "Reading the *Requerimiento* Performatively: Speech Acts and the Conquest of the New World," *Colonial Latin American Review* 24, no. 4 (2015): 456–478. For an overview of these connections, see Thomas Glick, Antonio Malpica Cuello, Retamero Fèlix, and Torró Abad Josep, eds., *From Al-Andalus to the Americas (13th–17th Centuries): Destruction and Construction of Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[6] See Barbara Fuchs on orientalist interpretations of Spain within European history in *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), and Walter Mignolo, Maureen Quilligan, Margaret Rich Greer, eds., *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Historians who emphasize the multicultural heritage of Spain ("*convivencia*" per medievalist Americo Castro) also end up creating an alternative narrative of Spain's "exceptionalism" within Europe. Spain is generally presented in contrast to rather than as exemplary of grand narratives of state and economy in European history.

FIGURE 1.3 Three soldiers, or Spanish conquistadors, on horseback, identified as Pedro de Valdivia, Francisco de Villagra, and Gerónimo de Alderete, in Alonso de Ovalle, *Historica relación del Reyno de Chile* (Rome: Francisco Cauallo, 1646), plate following p. 322.
Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

modern state-building, a cause of Spain's decline in the seventeenth century and its circuitous path towards modernity.[7]

Newer histories of the early modern Iberian world have worked to reclaim innovative influences in its imperial ambitions, alongside the dark underbelly of racism and coloniality that also characterize modernity.[8] Scholars of the history of science have traced elements of commerce and scientific knowledge emerging from Iberian expeditions and colonial bureaucracy that contributed to areas of cartography, ethnobotany, geology, and medicine.[9] The advent of globalization commencing with Iberian exploration and conquest has been used to note the relevance of the Spanish empire, and also aspects of commerce and economic practices of Spanish colonization that contradict the charge of medievalism.[10]

At the same time, medieval historians have noted ways in which medieval Iberia's historical institutions diverged in important ways from the classic European model of feudalism.[11] While nationalist histories of

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[7] The crisis in Spain included demographic, agricultural, and economic factors, in addition to political revolt. See I. A. A. Thompson and Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *The Castilian Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Crisis y decadencia de la España de los Austrias* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1973). For a revisionist perspective, see Christopher Storrs, *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy 1665–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[8] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Charlotte, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[9] Scholars such as Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Juan Pimentel, José Pardo-Tomás, Linda De Vos, Maria Portuondo, and Daniela Bleichmar have contributed work in this vein. For an overview of Iberian and Atlantic history of science, see Antonio Sánchez, "The 'Empirical Turn' in the Historiography of the Iberian and Atlantic Science in the Early Modern World: From Cosmography and Navigation to Ethnography, Natural History, and Medicine," *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* 2, no. 1 (2019): 317–334. For a more in-depth discussion of revisionist studies of Iberian history of science, see "Iberian Science: Reflections and Studies," ed. Maria Portuondo, special issue, *History of Science* 55, no. 2 (2017).

[10] Newer histories, such as Rachel Sarah O'Toole, Anna More, and Ivonne del Valle, *Iberian Empires and the Roots of Globalization* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2020), emphasize the advent and impact of globalization due to Iberian expansion. In economic terms, conquest *entradas* can be viewed as entrepreneurial innovations rather than the arm of a centralized imperial power. The new economic formation of the *hacienda* was studied by Lesley B. Simpson, *Exploitation of Land in Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952); Robert G. Keith, *Conquest and Agrarian Change: The Emergence of the Hacienda System on the Peruvian Coast* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), among others.

[11] Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn Denise Dodds, *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: G. Braziller in association with the Jewish Museum, 1992); Janna Bianchini, "Re-defining Medieval Spain," *The English Historical Review* 126, no. 522 (2011): 1167–1179.

Spain have characterized the Middle Ages in terms of a *Reconquista*, a crusade to take land from Muslim invaders, revisionist scholarship looks more closely at the forces inevitably crossing such a divide, casting doubt on Spain's characteristic medievalism. In this vein, the concept of an Iberian frontier defines a site in which continual change – conflict, upheaval, realignment of loyalties, and assimilation or cooperation across factions – fostered social and institutional innovations.[12]

This line of thought also invites a new look at the historical image of the man on horseback in interpretations of Spanish expansion beyond the Iberian Peninsula. Even if the conquistador on horseback represented the expansionist zeal of colonial conquest in a way reminiscent of a medieval crusading religiosity, the same pairing also brokered some of the innovative and modern realities of a globally connected world. Returning to the archives to peel back layers from this iconic image brings to light the complex and sometimes surprising association of horses with war, nobility, and conquest, making room for a new interpretation of human–equine relationships in Iberian peninsular and global histories.

A closer look at documented experiences with horses, foregrounding both the historical animal and embodied, interspecies interactions in everyday practices, reveals rich historical and material imprints in surrounding social structures in Iberia. Typically, historians have considered the horse a cultural symbol of medieval ideals and a practical tool for military conquest and empire-building. Yet, both the horse's symbolism and physical utility were frequently challenged in practice. These realities reveal a wide range of possible motivations and choices for Iberian human–horse configurations, beyond strictly symbolic or utilitarian profiles, and the uniquely embodied ways in which horses shaped governance in Iberia.

1.1 DECONSTRUCTING THE EQUINE IDEAL: KNIGHTS ON THE MEDIEVAL IBERIAN FRONTIER

The famous *Siete Partidas* (produced 1252–1284), a statutory code that summarized standards of law and jurisprudence throughout Castile under

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[12] Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea, "The Frontier and Royal Power in Medieval Spain: A Developmental Hypothesis," *The Medieval History Journal* 8, no. 2 (October 2005): 273–301; Simon Barton, *Conquerors, Brides, and Concubines: Interfaith Relations and Social Power in Medieval Iberia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Claire Gilbert, *In Good Faith: Arabic Translation and Translators in Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

Alfonso X, emphasized a close association between the horse and nobility, admonishing that "among all things that knights have to know, this is the most noble: to know the horse."[13] By the thirteenth century, interactions with and knowledge of horses were considered central to personal qualities of nobility, and values of chivalry further reinforced this link between horses and the military estate, memorialized in the famous equine partners of knights seeking their fortunes in the literature of courtly romances.[14] The horse symbolized nobility, in a fashion similar to other European courts. But the horse's role also emerged from a specific military context in Iberia: military engagements against Muslim rulers and the jockeying among Christian kingdoms, both of which had legal and political benefits for social rank. Accounts drawn from archival records indicate that horses not only represented social status, but they were also a means for social mobility, and practical relations with horses in this frontier context often diverged from the ideal representation of nobles, knights, and their horses. While the socioeconomic structures of feudalism consider the horse essential to the knight's role and the nobleman's identity, decrees and petitions in medieval Iberia also document knights vigorously protesting requirements that they own and ride horses. Likewise, many nobles asserted their controversial preference to ride mules, against the wishes of their king, even though the horse was supposed to symbolize ideals of chivalry and the natural nobility of the military estate. Finally, actual uses of horses on the battlefield fluctuated in reaction to strategic and tactical trends over the centuries, despite the narrative that heavy cavalry would have dominated the field of war until it was replaced by modern firearms and state-supported armies. These tensions indicate that the horse was a contested symbol and its physical presence a tool for negotiation, both signs of its imprint in Iberian culture concerning social advancement and governance of frontier communities.

[13] *Las Siete Partidas*, ed. R. I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), Partida 2 Título 21 Ley 3. See also Jorge Sáiz Serrano, *Caballeros del rey: Nobleza y guerra en el reinado del Alfonso El Magnánimo* (Valencia: University of Valencia, 2003).

[14] For an interpretation of chivalric values, see Ramón Llull's *Libro de la orden de caballería* (1274–1276) (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1992). Romances include *Amadís de Gaula* (written in the fourteenth or fifteenth century) and *Tirant lo Blanch* (1490). See also Jesús D. Rodríguez Velasco, *El debate sobre la caballería en el siglo XV: La tratadística caballeresca castellana en su marco europeo* (Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1996); Susan Crane, "Chivalry and the Pre/Post Modern," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 2 (2011): 69–87.

1.1.1 Knights and Horses: Negotiating Status in Frontier Municipalities

Despite the wide application of feudalism as a model of social and political organization, medieval historians have questioned whether it applies to the Iberian Peninsula, particularly when examining the long-standing internal conflicts between Christian and Muslim kingdoms and the formation of several distinctive polities.[15] The traditional notion of a single retributive "reconquest" that pitted Christian knights against Muslim invaders does not accurately represent the nearly seven centuries of conflicts, and histories of *la frontera* (frontier) demonstrate that it did not take the form of a clear territorial or ideological boundary, but rather a zone of porous and tense interrelations that were in flux and in motion over time.[16] Reviewing several distinct periods of military conflict helps to more accurately define the frontier space in which economic, legal, and political structures surrounding the horse were both established and contested.

The expansion and consolidation of kingdoms between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries gave rise to what has been called "a society organized for war."[17] Following early attempts to settle lands in the Duero and Ebro valleys in the ninth century, and the shocking tenth-

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[15] Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *The American Historical Review* 79, no. 4, (October 1974): 1063–1088, and Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), mount strong critiques of the usefulness of feudalism. In Spanish historiography, this criticism came from Claudio Sanchez Albornoz, who admitted only a "proto-feudalism," and later from Luis García de Valdeavellano, *El feudalismo hispánico y otros estudios de historia medieval* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2000). For an overview, see Sverre Bagge, Michael Gelting, and Thomas Lindkvist, *Feudalism: New Landscapes of Debate* (Belgium: Brepols, 2010). These arguments highlight the variety of monarchical structures in "the Spains," which included the kingdoms of Castile and León, Aragon, Valencia, and Portugal.

[16] The concept of *la frontera* (the frontier) can be traced to the eleventh century in the Crown of Aragón and the thirteenth century in Castile, describing first a geographical and later an ideological division between Christian and Muslim realms. Lucien Febvre, "Frontière: Le mot et la notion," in *Pour une histoire à part entière* (Paris: Sevpen, 1962), 11–24; Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay, eds., *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Pascal Buresi, "The Appearance of the Frontier Concept in the Iberian Peninsula: At the Crossroads of Local, National and Pontifical Strategies (Eleventh–Thirteenth Centuries)," *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae*, *Instytut historyczny* 16 (2011): 81–99.

[17] James F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000–1284* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); José Luis Bermejo Cabrero, *Estudios sobre fueros locales y organización municipal en España (Siglos XII–XVIII)* (Madrid: Universidad de Complutense Facultad de Derecho, 2001);

century incursions of Almanzor with his supply of thousands of North African mercenary soldiers on horseback, opportunities to serve in military campaigns for competing kingdoms supported a transactional economy that enabled nonnoble men-at-arms to gain the privileges of knights, regardless of their social origin of birth. To increase their mounted units in Castile and León, kings granted special privileges to men who were willing to keep a horse, and similar practices emerged in Pamplona and Barcelona.[18] In the eleventh century, the dissolution of the caliphate in Córdoba created shifting alliances and posturing among competing Iberian polities, and ultimately extended these frontier cities from Burgos to Toledo.[19]

The granting of *fueros* (privileges in a municipal charter) formalized and replicated these patterns in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The weakening of the Almoravid dynasty and its control over the former Caliphate of Córdoba in the eleventh century created new opportunities for territorial gains, and spurred some of the early unions that would shape the kingdoms of Castile, Aragón, and Portugal in the twelfth century. In conquered or newly allied municipalities, *fueros* – legal privileges that distributed land and power to new residents – recognized men-at-arms as knights and rewarded service with permission to ride a horse. In particular, the influential model of the Cuenca–Teruel *fueros* granted status to a foot soldier for unhorsing a Muslim rider, improving his options in future combat; allowing a share in the division of booty; and granting rights to use municipal lands. The concept of the knight (*caballero*) in Castile derived from this tradition: During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a knight could, in essence, be any man on horseback.[20]

Hussein Fancy, *Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[18] The Fuero de Castrojeriz in 974. See discussion in Faustino Menéndez Pidal de Navascués, *La nobleza en España: Ideas, estructuras, historia* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2015), 125–126.

[19] After Almanzor's death in 929, the Caliphate of Córdoba was fractured by civil war stemming from succession issues and internal splits within Islam. The fall of the Caliphate of Córdoba in 1031 resulted in the payments of tributes (*paria*) by fragmented successor principalities. In 1085, Castile conquered one of these Muslim polities in Toledo to secure payments, even though it had previously been aligned as an ally.

[20] Thomas Bisson, *Tormented Voices: Power, Crisis, and Humanity in Rural Catalonia, 1140–1200* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 63. The term *caballero* or *miles* referred to men dedicated to fighting on horseback, distinct from the *infanzone* or *hidalgo*, which referred to a class of nobles by lineage. See also Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Las clases privilegiadas en la España del antiguo régimen* (Madrid: Ediciones ISTMO, 1973).

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, after a coordinated allied victory at Navas de Tolosa in 1212 stopped the advance of the militant Almohad invasion from North Africa, territorial advances all the way south to Seville took advantage of a period of disunited Muslim states (*taifas*) and civil disturbances. The competing advances of Castile, Aragón, and Portugal also prompted more formal strategies for dividing and administering lands. The social and legal apparatus around this phenomenon – variously called the *caballero villano*, *caballero de premia*, or *caballero de cuantía* (nonnoble knights or a nonnoble cavalry) in Castile and Andalusia – became a channel of upward mobility for nonnoble knights.[21] Due to the monarchy's relative weakness at the time, the king of Castile and León fortified frontier institutions like that of the nonnoble knights by offering them additional privileges in order to temper the military strength of feudal and seigniorial lords. In 1348, the Cortés of Alcalá stipulated two essential requirements to become a *caballero*: to have a fortune of at least 12,000 maravedis, and to maintain a horse and arms in readiness.[22] In exchange, one would be eligible for the legal privileges of certain tax exemptions and participation in municipal government. The horse originally defined the status of the knight by distributing land according to military service, but in this institution, the horse was also the key to being eligible for both government posts and tax exemptions in frontier municipalities.

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[21] María del Carmen Pescador del Hoyo, "La caballería popular en León y Castilla," *Cuadernos de Historia de España* (Buenos Aires) XXXIII–XXXIV (1961): 101–238; XXXV–XXXVI (1962): 56–201; XXXVII–XXXVIII (1963): 88–198; XXXIX–XL (1964): 169–260. Rafael Sánchez Saus and Juan Torres Fontes, among others, have expanded on her observations. Rafael Sánchez Saus, *La nobleza andaluza en la Edad Media* (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2005).

The term *villano* referred to "villein" status in feudal terminology, meaning a peasant or taxpayer, as opposed to an *hidalgo* or nobleman (known as *infanzones*). A *caballero de premia* indicated a knight that maintained his own horse and arms, and *caballero de cuantía* a knight categorized by the value of his estate.

[22] "Los RR. CC.: ordenando a los que estuviesen obligados a mantener caballos," May 2, 1493 in *Colección de documentos para la historia del Reino de Murcia*, Vol. XX. *Documentos de Los Reyes Católicos (1492–1504)*, ed. A. Gomariz Marín (Murcia: Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 2000), 147–151. Accessed from Legislación Histórica de España (LHE), Online Database of the Archivo Historico Nacional, 4th ed. July 2010, www.mcu.es/archivos/lhe/. The requirement about having to own a horse before riding a mule applied universally. Article 77 established the *cuantía* for "frontier" regions of Murcia, Aragón, as well as the border of Portugal and Navarra. The amount itself varied by region. In Seville, 5,000 maravedis required one horse; 10,000 required two horses; 50,000 required three horses. In Murcia, 8,000 maravedis required one horse; 20,000 maravedis required two horses; and 70,000 maravedis required three horses.

In fact, the most notable feature of the cavalry of nonnoble knights was their direct tie to a central monarchy, in contrast to vassal–lord fealties that were supposed to supply mounted men-at-arms for the king's hosts.[23] The king's support of these nonnoble knights meant that the municipal militia supplemented military campaigns, but also their associated confraternities recognized by the king supplemented the ruling elite of a city. By the fourteenth century, the formation of secular and municipal confraternities of knights further refined these legal privileges. Claims to having provided a horse in a past military conflict were a constant refrain in books commemorating individual members of these urban orders of knights, despite the relative lull in expansion and frontier conflict during this same period.[24] Urban confraternities of nonnoble knights adopted chivalric ideals and documented their members in the interests of social advancement. This arrangement also fostered a close, and even exclusive, association of nonnoble knights with urban municipal government positions. Long-term control over these offices afforded them legal leeway to pass them on to family members. Confraternities generated a new channel for protecting the social gains made by providing a horse, including direct access to municipal government posts that could be passed on as a hereditary marker of status, among other benefits for nonnoble knights.

Enforcing the corresponding obligation to provide horses also generated a body of legal precedents used in negotiations over status and privilege between municipal knights and the king's representatives. Militia privileges fostered an urban patriciate and enabled nonnoble knights to identify with elements of noble status. However, enforcing

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[23] Theresa M. Vann, "Reconstructing a Society Organized for War," in *Crusaders, Condottieri, and Cannon: Medieval Warfare in Societies around the Mediterranean*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and Andrew Villalon (Germany: Brill, 2003). In a more extreme example of such dependence, see Ana Echevarría, *Knights on the Frontier: The Moorish Guard of the Kings of Castile (1410–1467)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[24] One example is the Cofradia of Santiago in Burgos. See Hilario Casado Alonso, ed., *Regla de la Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de Gamonal de Burgos y libro en que se pintan los caballeros cofrades* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional Ministerio de Cultura, 1995). For the porous nature of social status in medieval and early modern Spain, see Teofilo Ruiz, "The Transformation of the Castilian Municipalities: The Case of Burgos 1248–1350," *Past & Present* 77 (November 1977): 3–32 and Teofilo Ruiz, *Spanish Society, 1348–1700*, 2nd ed. (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017). On the rise of urban elites in the late Middle Ages, see also James Amelang, *Honored Citizens of Barcelona: Patrician Culture and Class Relations, 1490–1714* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); Hilario Casado Alonso, *Señores, mercaderes y campesinos: La comarca de Burgos a fines de la edad media* (Castilla y León: Junta de Castilla y Leon, 1987).

their obligatory use and maintenance of horses also meant requiring nonnoble knights to carry permits that certified they owned the horse in question; these permits had to be notarized, recorded in municipal registers, and reviewed regularly.[25] In turn, nonnoble knights occupying positions in municipal government frequently affirmed their own exemptions from horse ownership. Not being forcibly compelled to provide a horse for military service exemplified the coveted nature of noble liberties and privileges. Counter to the reigning image of the horse as central to nobility, knights who gained status from the frontier provision of horses and urban confraternities supported by the king often preferred to claim the privilege of *not* having to provide a horse. Knights' resistance to procuring horses illustrates their power to gain exemptions in this frontier context, and legal exemptions from horse ownership evidence of the substantial leverage that the *caballero de cuantía* wielded once gaining access to municipal political office for themselves and their peers.

As they enforced, protested, and made concessions about legal privileges related to horses, the monarchy and urban elites were brought into a sustained negotiation of power with one another. Horse-centered negotiations of privilege between the monarchy and nobility during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries took place after the most active gains in frontier territory had abated. Despite a brief phase of coordination among Christian kingdoms during the thirteenth century, this rhetorical mode of "reconquest" would not reemerge until the consolidation of the Castilian and Aragonese crowns in the late fifteenth century, and a final ten-year campaign of conquest for the remaining Muslim polity in the peninsula under the Nasrid dynasty.[26] The Catholic Monarchs issued new decrees in 1492, 1493, and 1499 that recalled their predecessors' ordinances and refined the elements necessary to enforce the requirement that knights own horses. In 1499, they raised the stakes against the "rebellious and disobedient" justices who were insufficiently attentive to these regulations. Most notably, they reprimanded the leaders of municipal governments, primarily royal *corregidores* (royal magistrates) and local *alcaldes*

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[25] Initially set in 1348, this was reiterated in 1493 and 1528. The role of the formal registry was emphasized by a triannual review conducted by the village *alcalde*.

[26] After the early thirteenth century, military engagements slowed, interrupted by civil unrest and wars over succession within Castile, and between Castile and Aragón and the vassalage of remaining independent polities. Isolated battles and skirmishes persisted (for example, the Batalla de Higueras, 1431), but only in the 1480s did the Catholic Monarchs launch a campaign and take the kingdom of Granada, benefiting from a moment of internal conflict.

(city justices), for being lax in enforcement after the conquest of Granada.[27] Such regulations responded to complaints about men who were supposed to maintain horses but did not, who falsely claimed ownership of horses, or who used favoritism, extortion, and bribery to get around militia inspections (*alardes*).[28]

To enforce the requirement that a knight own a horse, the kings emphasized the horse's critical importance to defining personal qualities of nobility. However, accusations of fraud demonstrate that knights with estate values who qualified for the privileges of the *cuantía* did not always hold themselves to the obligations of horse ownership and did not restrict themselves from the liberal use of the mule. Concessions made in two decrees indicate how kings and elites negotiated this conflict. The first, in 1539, reduced the restrictions on riding mules for the interests of men of high status: If their horse met a new standard of being a certain size (*cierta marca*), then they could use mules on the road for travel between cities, with as many servants on mules as required; similarly, men could be sent by mule on behalf of their master, if they carried testimony of their lord's possession of such quality horses. The king also made concessions to practicality: Servants were explicitly permitted to ride mules to water, provided they were not under saddle.[29] Ultimately, however, the king had to cede ground for image as well. The second decree, in 1548, conceded that the requirement that everyone ride a horse, or at least a mule of the size of a warhorse, was impractical. In fact, "men of letters" should not be forced to ride on horses, for they were said to destroy the horses they did ride and to be poor horsemen ("desigual y muy feo").[30] Thus, despite the crown's wish for every man to be mounted at all times on horseback in

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[27] "Pragmática ordenando que no se cavalgue en mulas sin tener caballos," September 30, 1499 in *Colección de documentos para la historia del Reino de Murcia*, 575–577. Accessed from LHE.

[28] At the *Cortés*, or representative assemblies of the medieval Iberian kingdoms convened by the king, some of these complaints were registered by local representatives (*procuradores*). One complaint in 1528 referred to noncompliance, while another in 1534 cited perjury and general disservice to the realm. "Pragmática sobre caballos y mulas en que manda que todos los que quisieren andar cabalgando anden a la brida o a la jineta en caballo," 9 March 1534 in *Quadernos de las Cortes* (Salamanca: Juan de Junta, 1543), fols. 31v–33v. Accessed from LHE.

[29] Cortes de Toledo, "La pragmática de las mulas y quartagos," 1539, fol. 7r–8r, Biblioteca del Archivo Histórico Nacional, R/22901. Accessed from LHE.

[30] Cortes de Valladolid, "Modera la pragmática sobre las mulas permitiendo que cualquiera pueda andar de camino sobre ellas u otra bestia cualquiera y que por los pueblos se pueda andar en bestias caballares aunque no sean de marca," 11 August 1548, Art. 6 in *Actas de las Cortes de Castilla* (Imprenta Nacional, 1863). Accessed from LHE.

order to best represent the honor of the nobility, many elements were in fact subject to negotiation.

The monarchy had a long-standing interest in the ways that horse ownership affected municipal governance and regulated the lower boundary of noble or elite status. From the point of view of knights and nobles, appeals to exemption spoke of social mobility and forms of leverage within municipalities against the king. Conversely, the king emphasized the symbolic importance of the horse for the noble estate and its role in the king's militias, access to land, and political office. The horse's association with nobility had specific military origins, but more significantly, it was established as an underlying criteria and language of negotiation in the relationship between municipality and monarchy in the context of territorial expansion.

1.1.2 Nobles Riding Mules

Not all knights rode horses, nor were all knights riding horses considered noble. The ideal of the man on horseback was a social construct that these actors contested and challenged in turn. In a parallel development, nobles likewise skirted expectations that they exclusively ride horses. Noblemen used mules with frequency, both for their practical advantages and to symbolically assert their privilege in the noble estates against the monarchy. Despite contemporary rhetoric around the horse as the particular bearer of nobility, mules played a prominent role in Andalusian and Castilian culture. Tension between the king and nobles over riding mules undercut the ideal of the horse and made evident competing political interests.

As a beast of burden, rather than a heroic steed, mules raised fears about the effeminizing effects of peaceful husbandry in contrast to martial exercises. Moreover, as a humble laborer of mixed parentage (horse and donkey), mules readily crossed the demands of "caste" and lineage, and thus threatened purity and nobility. This mixing "kinds" or "species" also resulted in hybrid sterility, contradicting the divine directive to "go forth and multiply." Iconographically, the horse was associated with the noble role of masculine military virtue, while the mule represented emasculated labor. This fear was not only a matter of symbolism but also a construction of legal discourse. When, in 1330, Alfonso XI established the first secular order of knights, the *Orden de la Banda*, it forbade the riding of mules by men of a certain social status. Clergy, women, and ethnic and religious minorities were in turn expected to ride mules. Similarly, as an indication of their subjugated status, former Muslim

subjects who came under Spanish rule were explicitly prohibited from riding horses.

Yet, mule riding was common and popular among men in Spain. For travel within the chains of mountains interspersed in Spain's unforgiving geography, the mule combined advantages of speed and strength from its horse parent with a sturdy constitution and hard hooves from its donkey parent; these features enabled it to contend admirably with roads that were not suitable for wheeled transport. In fact, Spanish mules were considered of especially good quality, and Juan Valverde Arrieta pinpointed the introduction of the mule to 1252, at the height of Castilian expansion into Muslim territory.[31] Influenced by Berber traditions, Catalonia and Andalusia bred donkeys of larger size than average, which put Spain at the forefront of the mule-breeding industry.

Legal petitions presented from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century confirm this preference for mules. Against the backdrop of crises in the fourteenth century in Europe – including the Black Death's reorganization of agricultural labor and production, and an ongoing civil war between heirs of the Trastámara dynasty in the Crown of Castile and León – the number of protests in favor of riding mules led to a reversal of the king's prohibition on mule riding in 1351. It was reinstituted shortly thereafter, in 1385, and the debate would continue to repeat itself over the next two centuries.[32] In the fifteenth century, Antoine de Lalaing, who accompanied Felipe el Hermoso on his tour in Spain before marrying Juana of Castile, thought this preference for mules was a point worthy of ridicule: "Esta reina, viendo que sus caballeros montaban la mayor parte mulas, y cuando les convenía armar y montar caballo iban adiestrados lo peor del mundo" (In this kingdom, I saw that their caballeros ride for the most part mules, and then when they have to wear arms and ride horses, they are the worst mounted in the world).[33] The fifteenth-century union of Castile and Aragón also led to new decrees and institutions from the

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[31] Juan Valverde Arrieta published a work in 1568 entitled *Despertador que trata de la gran fertilidad, riquesas, baratos, armas y caballos que España solía tener y la causa de los daños y faltas en el remedio suficiente*, denouncing the influence of the mule. For a discussion of mules and the *arbitristas* writing about them in Spain, see David Vassberg, *Land and Society in Golden Age Castile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 158–163.

[32] Related decrees were issued in 1348, 1385, 1396, 1492, 1499, 1528, 1534, 1539, 1548, and 1562.

[33] Antoine de Lalaing, "Primer viaje de Felipe el Hermoso a España en 1501," in *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal*, ed. J. García Mercadal (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1999), vol. I: 452–453.

Catholic Monarchs who were attempting to rule both domains. In 1499, the Catholic Monarchs bemoaned how many subjects were content with mules. Even their incoming Habsburg heir, Charles V, made a stringent law in the early sixteenth century, that "no one nor any persons in our realms of any estate or condition can ride on a mule, pony or hackney (mula, haca, troton, hacanea) with saddle and bridle."[34] Protests against the law brought concessions in 1534 and an outright repeal in 1539.[35]

In reality, these decrees prevented very few noblemen from riding mules. Perversely, in fact, the prohibition against mule riding, which also required ownership of at least one horse in order to also own a mule, converted the mule into a symbol for an alternative formulation of elite status. The monarchy's attempt to enforce horse ownership by prohibiting the use of mules prompted nobles to claim themselves exempt from the law as a privilege of their noble status. Mule riding itself became a form of noble privilege. In order to enforce the Crown's regulation, the king or his municipal representatives would have to determine who either possessed the required amount of horses or had been granted exemptions based on their status in order to ride mules freely.

On a rhetorical stage, the horse symbolized the wealth and power of the noble estate – the rigorous discipline necessary to control the spirited and proud horse was viewed as generating soldierly virtue, while the leisure and luxury of the courtier traveling easily on the sure-footed mule was seen as indulging the senses. Yet, confraternities of nonnoble knights that exempted themselves from horse ownership and nobles who rode mules to defy the decrees of the king demonstrate that practical relations with horses on the ground often resulted in practices that fall outside of the dominant iconography of the noble knight on horseback.

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[34] Cortes de Madrid, "Que nadie salvo los clérigos ordenados, frailes, religiosos, dueñas y doncellas, embajadores o correos, puedan ir en mulas, jacas, trotones con silla, o freno, por ninguna población o camino sino tuviere caballo suyo propio que sea tal que pueda pelear sobre él un hombre armado en guerra, debiendo ser tal caballo propio y no del señor," 21 April 1528, Article 72 in *Quaderno de las leyes y prematicas reales fechas en la cortes que su Magestad del Emperador y rey nuestro señor mando celebrar en la noble villa de Madrid* (Alcalá de Henares: en casa de Joan de Brocar, 1546). Accessed from LHE.

[35] "Pragmática sobre caballos y mulas en que manda que todos los que quisieren andar cabalgando anden a la brida o a la jineta en caballo," 9 March 1534 in *Quadernos de las Cortes*, fols. 31v–33v; Cortes de Toledo, "La pragmática de las mulas y quartagos," 1539, fol. 7r–8r; Cortes de Valladolid, "Modera la pragmática sobre las mulas permitiendo que cualquiera pueda andar de camino sobre ellas u otra bestia cualquiera y que por los pueblos se pueda andar en bestias caballares aunque no sean de marca," 11 August 1548 in *Actas de las Cortes de Castilla*, Art. 6.

In considering the arena of actual practices with horses, these examples suggest that the imagery of the horse frequently cast an outsized shadow compared to its physical reality.

1.1.3 Changing Fortunes of Horses in War

The preceding two sections offer examples where the horse's role in negotiating social status differs from its expected symbolism. What about the horse's central military importance to the noble estate? Dominant historical understanding of the structural demands of feudal relationships between lord and vassal hinges on the material expenses of obtaining and maintaining horses for war. The horse's declining importance is a familiar coda closing out the medieval period, as more efficient standing armies of infantry and firepower replaced the horse (and the noble knight) in a modernizing, territorial state.[36] However, histories of warfare throughout the Middle Ages have undermined this technological interpretation of feudalism, decoupling both the stirrup from the early adoption of cavalries and the use of cavalries from feudalism.[37] Even if the horse is viewed as a military technology that held political importance, amplified by modifications to tack (bits, saddles, or stirrups) and armor in the early Middle Ages, the military use of horses by mounted troops and cavalry units from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries repeatedly rose and fell. Far from a singular decline in use tracking the relevance of the noble estate, modulations in the use of horses responded to developments in other military technologies such as armor, firearms, fortifications, and battlefield formations. These prosaic realities of fighting with horses suggest that the horse's symbolic role for Spanish nobility was not so closely tied to practical military uses of horses.

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[36] Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship*, trans. Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp (Penguin Books: London, 2018). For the horse's continuing relevance, see Kristen Guest and Monica Mattfeld, *Equestrian Cultures: Horses, Human Society, and the Discourse of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[37] Bernard S. Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization: 481–751* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972) pointed out that the Goths had been successfully using cavalry for centuries prior to the introduction of stirrups and the arrival of stirrups was not a reason for the Franks to become cavalrymen; moreover, armored cavalry with stirrups outside of France continued in use without the concomitant development of "feudalism." In other words, development of feudal relations was not driven by expense of new technologically enabled heavy knight warfare. See also Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Michael Jones (Basil Blackwell: New York, 1984).

First, obtaining horses for war was a difficult endeavor. The availability of horses varied significantly by region across medieval Europe, and moving horses over long distances was challenging.[38] The Iberian Peninsula maintained a reputation for having a robust population of horses from the times of Roman Hispania to the medieval Muslim caliphates (200 BC to 1000 AD), although the type and quantity of these horses depended on proximity to the peninsula's centers of breeding, concentrated for the most part in southern Andalusia. Supplying horses on one's home turf was simpler than for foreign campaigns; moving horses over longer distances impacted the condition and health of the animal for battle, depending on the amount of weight it had to carry and its own physiology. For this reason, a knight would not ride his warhorse to the site of battle, wasting its muscle tone, but "pony" it alongside a lighter and more economical mount to travel long distances.[39] Shipping horses over water was faster than overland travel, although confinement in the hold of a ship also endangered equine health because of their sensitive digestive tracts and, depending on the length of the journey, could affect their fitness. Supplying the grain and forage necessary to feed a large number of horses added substantially to the cost of a campaign, and frequently required requisitioning supplies in the lands the armies passed through.

On the battlefield, a horse's primary role was to transport warriors, and in a late medieval or early modern army, there were far more warriors mounted on horses than warriors trained to fight from horseback. Mounted men-at-arms were often trained to fight on foot, and infantry or archers used horses for transport on their own or as units attached to heavy cavalry. For the cavalry itself, the expense and difficulty of transporting horses to battle sites in good health was not the end of their logistic challenges; infantry were usually required to protect the knights while they mounted their warhorses, or while they changed between exhausted horses and reserve mounts that were held behind the active line of combat.[40] Training for battle on horseback required specific skills

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[38] Charles Gladitz, *Horse Breeding in the Medieval World* (Dublin/Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1997).

[39] Often a horse for transport and a horse for fighting would be required by a knight in service. There are also examples of mounted infantry and archers who rode to battle locations and then dismounted to engage in combat.

[40] Gavin Robinson, "The Military Value of Horses and the Social Value of the Horse in Early Modern England," in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic*

for riding and managing horses, yet acquiring and employing these skills differed substantially from the refined expertise implied by the symbol of the horseman endowed with innate nobility and rights to govern. Riding better than the average man would be to your advantage, but in a cavalry charge, such finely tuned adjustments would be lost to the furor and unpredictable conditions of combat.[41]

Cavalry units intended for mounted battle tactics also had distinct requirements and uses. "Light" and "heavy" cavalry differ in significant ways. Light cavalry were typically mounted on smaller and faster horses, wore less plated armor, and carried javelins. Heavy cavalry carried more armor, and thus moved at a slower pace on more powerful mounts.[42] The relative advantages and weaknesses of each type of cavalry unit were exploited for different reasons. On one level, these were tactical choices based on the number of men and horses, terrain, or needs. Light cavalry were often deployed on reconnaissance missions, for example, while heavy cavalry would be more suitable for a battlefield selected to meet the opponent with flat and level footing, in order to elevate the impact of a charge of several abreast on set, opposing lines. On the other hand, mounts carrying heavy cavalry could only exert their power over much

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Horse in the Early Modern World, ed. Peter Edwards, K. A. E Enenkel, and Elspeth Graham (Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 352.

[41] Robinson, "The Military Value of Horses and the Social Value of the Horse in Early Modern England," 371. Skills for mounted hand-to-hand combat were used in real battlefield conditions, primarily the ability to control the horse's direction using body-weight. More elaborate "airs above ground," such as the *courbette* or *capriole*, required a degree of preparation, timing, and physical intensity unlikely to be useful in combat. Studies of military academies differ in their assessment of horsemanship for performance or cavalry training. See J. R. Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983); Kate Van Orden, *Music, Discipline, and Arms in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Noel Fallows, *Jousting in Medieval and Renaissance Iberia* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2010).

[42] From the zooarchaeological record, we know that horses in the Middle Ages mostly stood at 13–14 hands (52–56 inches) high at the withers or base of the horse's neck. Common misconceptions about the medieval warhorse or *destrier* compare it to a modern-day draft horse or warmblood, standing at 16 hands high on average. Height, in fact, could be a disadvantage for mobility of mounting or navigating. A chainmail suit weighed around thirty pounds, while a full suit of plate armor weighed 45–55 lbs, less than a modern infantryman would carry in field equipment. Carly Ameen et al., "In Search of the 'Great Horse': A Zooarchaeological Assessment of Horses from England (AD 300–1650)," *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 31, no. 6 (November/December 2021): 1247–1257.

shorter distances. In order to have devastating impacts at strategically important points, they required substantial support.[43]

Historical accounts about the dominance of the knight on the battlefield presume that heavy cavalry, supported by the stirrup and steel-plated armor, was a sufficiently superior form of power. Heavy cavalry formations had revolving fortunes, however, in response to evolving weaponry. As early as the eleventh century, the advent of the longbow among the English famously presented a formidable challenge to heavy cavalry because arrows reached the ranks before mounted lances could.[44] This medieval "revolution" in archery coincided with the mounting of archers on horseback, who sometimes joined light cavalry units alongside the standard heavy lancers. Two centuries later, during the Hundred Years' War, an "infantry revolution" indicated a rise in the tactical importance of using units on foot, armed with crossbows.[45] Firearms, first used on the battlefield in Europe during the Hundred Years' War, also had a devastating effect on the French heavy cavalry, which was famously decimated by English archers and cannons in the Battle of Crécy.[46] Gunpowder and firearms would become the knight's most famous nemesis, as it enabled killing at a cold and impersonal distance and thus entirely bypassed the code of chivalry for engagement with the enemy. In fact, the peak in the *symbolic* importance of the ideal of a knight in full armor in the fourteenth century coincided with a decline in the *tactical* importance of heavy cavalry in actual battlefield conditions.

Nevertheless, the development of stronger armored plate technology in the late fifteenth century enabled a resurgence of cavalry, and cavalry strategy and tactics continued to evolve.[47] Forged by specialized craftsmen in blast furnaces made of tempered steel, this customized plated

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[43] For a description of mixed retinues of men at arms and archers, see Andrew Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (Woodbridge, Suffolk/Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1994), 10.

[44] Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, 10–15; Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Oxford: TJ Press Limited, 1984).

[45] An "infantry revolution" was proposed by J. L. Price and Andrew Ayton, *The Medieval Military Revolution State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London/New York: Tauris, 1995). See also Kelly DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the Early Fourteenth Century: Discipline, Tactics, and Technology* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1996).

[46] Robinson, "The Military Value of Horses and the Social Value of the Horse in Early Modern England," 351–376.

[47] Improvements in use of iron and its increasing purity (smelting) improved plating quality; new furnaces for production allowed for experimenting with alloys with carbon for steel, including tempering for lighter and more durable plates like techniques for making

armor increased the importance of heavy cavalry in the ongoing wars between France and Spain over Italian territories in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The stronger yet lighter plated armor, which deflected direct blows from puncture weapons like the halberd, did not go unchallenged. The continued use of artillery led architects to modify how they constructed fortifications to face cannon sieges (the "*trace italienne*"), which sidelined the use of heavy cavalry in some conflicts.[48] As had occurred centuries earlier, France's heavy cavalry suffered disastrous losses in the Italian Wars. During the Battle of Pavia (1525), the king of France, Francis I, was taken captive and held for ransom by Charles V, a victory often attributed to the development of Spanish *tercios*, units of pikemen and muskets that used square formations to break heavy cavalry charges. *Tercio* successes were also noted against the German heavy cavalry at the Battle of Rocroi in the seventeenth century.[49] Rather than removing cavalry from the field entirely, however, European armies reverted to tactics of the flanking moves with lighter cavalry in response. A light cavalry that harassed opponents with hit-and-run tactics, especially when armed with pistols, could be effective against long pikes in a sweeping movement known as the *caracole*. Cavalry were still effective, given the inaccuracy of personal firearms in this period, but their tactical uses changed. Instead of shock combat using heavy cavalry charges, combined infantry and cavalry units developed to support the strengths of a fully armored knight, and ultimately the cavalry also began to carry firearms along with their other weapons.[50]

Just as a "cavalry revolution" was thought to characterize feudal warfare, a "military revolution" of infantry and artillery over horses has been used to characterize the emergence of the modern state. Coined in a 1967 essay by Michael Roberts, the "military revolution" identified a shift away from mounted warfare towards professional standing armies, as a tipping point from medieval to modern warfare in the

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Damascus steel replicated in Europe. Kelly DeVries and Robert Douglas Smith, *Medieval Military Technology* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1992).

[48] Mahinder S. Kingra, "The Trace Italienne and the Military Revolution during the Eighty Years War, 1567–1648," *The Journal of Military History* 57, no. 3 (July, 1993): 431.

[49] Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567–1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[50] J. Albi, L. Stampa, and J. Silvela y Miláns del Bosch, *La caballería español: Un eco de clarines* (Madrid: Tabapress, 1992), 17–21. Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba armed light cavalry with firearms in the Italian campaigns in the sixteenth century, and maneuvers like the *caracole* were created to let riders reload their pistols.

mid-sixteenth century.[51] The reorganization of the military into group formations with artillery in infantry tactics diminished the role of the nobility and permitted the rise of the modern fiscal-military state. Pointing to the extended attrition experienced in the brutal Thirty Years' War in Europe, European historians argued that standing armies and salaried soldiers funded from centralized forms of tax collection had already replaced the older configuration of mounted knights, and this functional shift explained a schematic "crisis of nobility" in the seventeenth century once losing its presumed military function. However, Robert's version of the military revolution was focused on a specific infantry variation, the "linear" formation of deep assault columns used by Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1660s). While these assault columns required the coordination and training of greater numbers of professional infantry supported by the state, it was also the case that, in breaking enemy lines, they produced *new* opportunities for heavy cavalry charges to follow to devastating effect, and thus actually reemphasizing the value of "shock cavalry."[52]

In these various archery, infantry, cavalry, and artillery "revolutions," changes in tactics, armament, and economic context affected specific uses of the horse, but the horse was not replaced by any one of these as much as its use was adapted to them. Indeed, horses did not truly decline in military importance until they were replaced by motorized transport vehicles that could handle difficult terrain, a revolution that did not emerge until the twentieth century.[53] If the functional military importance of the horse waxed and waned over the centuries, depending on innovative battlefield stratagems and technological developments, it also suggests that the symbolism of the horse, as a signifier of nobility and chivalry, operated *independently* of the horse's actual military uses. Horses were invaluable in the social perception of elite status, and the kings promoted the symbolic association of nobility with riding horses.

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[51] Michael Robert, "The Military Revolution, 1560–1660," in *Essays in Swedish History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967). David Eltis critiques Robert's evidence in *The Military Revolution in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

[52] Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495–1715* (London: Routledge, 1992), 29–30.

[53] Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America*, 1 ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse*. Horses were used by the US Army in Iraq in the early 2000s, indicating that there are still situations in which the horse (or other equids) can still take a soldier places mechanized horsepower cannot.

But practical legal, political, and military relationships with the horse at times diverged from this symbolism. The real historical impact of the horse is found in these more peculiar and specific relationships, ones shaped by the material and embodied imprint of the horse.

1.2 HORSES FOR THE KINGDOM: SCARCITY AND BREEDING REGULATIONS

In 1492, the Castilian Crown complained of a serious shortage of horses, and the ruinous effect that such a lack of horses would have on "the nobility of the cavalry Spain has always had."[54] Even following their successful incorporation of Granada, the Catholic Monarchs proclaimed:

Se amenguaban los caballos que en nuestros reinos solía haber y porque si ha esto se diera lugar muy prestamente se perdiera en nuestros reinos la nobleza de la caballería y se olvidara el oficio militar...

The horses that used to exist in our kingdoms are diminishing, and if this happens, the nobility of chivalry in our kingdoms would be lost and the military profession, for which the nation of Spain achieved great fame, would be forgotten and do great harm...[55]

The Catholic Monarchs again railed against the loss of horses among the warrior class of Castile, describing how, after the fall of Granada, many subjects had sold their horses and others had stopped breeding them. In response, they ordered every man in Castile – "be he even Duke or Marquis or Count or of other major or minor estate" – to own a horse that could serve as the mount for a man-at-arms. Similar complaints and orders were repeated every few years from Charles II and later Philip II.

The financial and logistic challenges of maintaining a supply of horses, alongside noblemen's objections to riding them, highlight key moments in which the horse itself was absent. In an ironic parallel, the horse is also often absent from the historical archives; records for keeping stables provide some counts and costs of feed, and account rolls indicate numbers of cavalry units, but these are rarely richly detailed. It is difficult to quantify the scarcity of horses within Spain, and, in fact, most sources discuss the abundance and quality of horses in the Iberian Peninsula, despite possible environmental constraints, especially in comparison to

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[54] "Los RR. CC.: ordenando a los que estuviesen obligados a mantener caballos," May 2, 1493 in *Colección de documentos para la historia del Reino de Murcia*, 147–151.
[55] "Pragmática ordenando que no se cavalgue en mulas sin tener caballos," September 30, 1499 in *Colección de documentos para la historia del Reino de Murcia*, 575–577.

availability of horses in other European countries. Possible sources include military campaigns and accounts and tax figures. However, counts of troops and supplies are notoriously inaccurate, the tithe on new livestock in the frontier kingdoms rarely refers to the number of animals, and the required registers of the knights were not kept with regularity to provide a sufficient set of data.

Yet, these absences do not undermine the horse's significance. Key forms of governance developed on the evolving frontiers of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and sixteenth centuries – legal terms of social status, units of measurement for acquiring property, and requirements for participation in municipal bodies – that were materially indebted to the horse. Horses provided a gateway to social mobility, access to municipal government, and particular ties of obligation between kings and social elites; they also served as a physical means of measuring and administering territory in much more concrete ways than the general symbolism of the horse. If the perceived scarcity of horses threatened the social and cultural quality of nobility, this rhetorical weight both justified greater military expenditures, and served to rein in claims for noble liberties and privileges. It is also certain that the Castilian monarchs elevated this rhetoric of scarcity for their own end, as reproducing these social and political structures of governance in new territories also required reproducing horse populations.

In new conquest municipalities, the horse had served as a unit of measurement in the distribution of land (a *caballería* was roughly the amount of land allocated for grazing a horse, or *caballo*) and for the collection of taxes (the *diezmos* collected 1/10th, or a tithe, of the increase in livestock, such as horses). Newly conquered territory was classified as the *realengo*: The king was able to claim, for his own personal jurisdiction, land gained in conquest to be granted to towns, military orders, or individuals. This claim included livestock and its natural multiplication in newly acquired territory, taken in the form of a tithe known as the *diezmos*.[56] In addition to establishing the *diezmos* in 1351, the crown restricted all other sales of horses from their kingdoms and imposed requirements for licenses to move horses beyond their jurisdiction. In Castile, these requisite *licencias de saca* were reserved for the king or

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[56] Juan Carlos Galende Díaz, *El control del ganado equino en España durante la Edad Moderna: El Libro Registro de Caballos de Toledo del Año 1535* (Toledo: Ayuntamiento de Toledo, 2008).

his representative as early as 1385.[57] Equine export restrictions were applied stringently in the kingdoms of Jaen and Murcia, as actively contested frontier territories subject to military campaigns, diplomatic treaties, and civil war during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[58] Given the political importance of horses under the king's dominion, these regulations controlled the movement of horses and assured local horse breeding populations. Practically, royal measures focused on legally requiring horse ownership and limiting the movement of horses, even within provinces in Spain, to maintain strong local populations.[59]

The responsibilities of the conquest municipalities to the king were measured in terms of horses, and, consequently, "good" municipal government practices also included horse breeding.[60] Horse breeding overseen by conquest municipalities used municipally held "commons." The herd in any given town would not be very large; estimates range from three to seventy horses.[61] Using the method of short-distance transhumance, horses seasonally moved between sites: in the *agostadero*, or summer pasture, they were taken to the mountains or hills of an adjacent region, and in the *invernadero*, or winter pasture, they were taken to reserved pastures close to town. This method of keeping horses in free-ranging conditions meant that only a few were trained or handled regularly. Local mares were gathered for insemination by selected stallions every year, typically in June, in exchange for a stud fee known as the

[57] Ignacio Ezquerra Revilla, *El Consejo Real de Castilla en el espacio cortesano (siglos XVI–XVIII)* (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2017); Ignacio Ezquerra Revilla, 'Espacio cortesano, dominio eminente del rey y administración en la Castilla moderna: Las licencias de saca', in *Las caballerizas reales y el mundo del caballo*, ed. Aranda Doncel and José Martínez Millán (Córdoba: Litopress, 2016). The foundational *ordenanzas* of the Council of Castile in 1385 reserved for the king permissions for "licencias de saca."

[58] María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, "El caballo andaluz y la frontera del reino de Granada', *Cuadernos de Historia de España*," 80 (December 2006): 55–63.

[59] Galende Díaz, *El control del ganado equino*. The first decree from Alfonso X at the Cortes de Valladolid prohibited extraction of horses from Castile, and tithes or *diezmos* were established in 1351 to pay for taking horses beyond these boundaries.

[60] This has early precedents. Charlemagne established royal horse breeding farms in the Alpine region and issued the capitularies requiring free men in every district to supply an armed horseman, and charging the remainder with working his land to enable him to train intensively. The Roman Empire also had government sponsored stud farms in Turkey and other regions. Weronika Klecel and Elżbieta Martyniuk, "From the Eurasian Steppes to the Roman Circuses: A Review of Early Development of Horse Breeding and Management," *Animals* 11, no. 7 (2021): 1859.

[61] Carmona Ruiz estimates these communal herds oscillated between 60 and 80 head. See Chapter 6 in this book for the municipal reports made to the court as *Relaciones de la cría caballar* in the sixteenth century.

caballaje. The king took an interest in these municipal horse breeding ventures. For example, in 1271, Alfonso X permitted residents of Ubeda who maintained a stallion to also keep three mares free of taxes.[62] Outside of this season, mares otherwise would be kept in the common pastures and used for tasks related to transport or field labor, such as the fall harvest, under the watch of a *yeguero* (keeper of broodmares). In the late winter, members of the town council would appoint *veedores* (overseers) to select stallions for their physical health and anticipated breeding potential. The town's *alcalde* and *regidores* oversaw the entire process, with assistance from local *herradores* (farriers).

To support the provisioning of horses, the monarchy shifted its approach from simply prohibiting knights and nobles from riding mules to actively requiring them to own and register their own horses. Horse registries in the fourteenth century originated from the need to certify knights' and nobles' ownership of horses so that they could then be issued permits for riding mules.[63] The crown's scrutiny of horse registries increased over time, so that by 1493 all horses needed to be registered in an annual municipal inspection. Towns in seigniorial and royal lands required owners – though they rarely complied – to send their registration (which included the horse's color and age, and the owner's name) to the central court every six months. These instructions also prohibited the use of mares to breed mules (punishable by temporary or permanent exile), in addition to requiring the local *caballero de cuantía* to register all of their horses and appointing overseers to select stallions for breeding.[64] The same town officials who registered the knight's *cuantía* and their horses were also required to maintain the registry's information about the breeding and foaling of their mares.

From this administrative perspective, horse breeding was considered part of the "common good," and it was largely a collective rather than an

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[62] Carmona Ruiz cites an order from August 27, 1271 in Murcia in González Jiménez, ed., *Diplomatario andaluz de Alfonso X* (Sevilla: El Monte, Caja de Huelva y Sevilla, 1991), doc. 384.

[63] Following the 1348 Cortes de Alcalá, a number of laws were issued, including maintaining horses according to the *cuantía* and the requirement to own a horse in order to ride a mule. See "Ordenamiento de peticiones de las Cortes celebradas en Alcalá de Henares," Articles 60–77 in *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y de Castilla*, vol. I, ed. Manuel Colmeiro (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1861), 615–616. Accessed from LHE.

[64] "Los RR. CC.: ordenando a los que estuviesen obligados a mantener caballos que los mantuviesen, disponiendo que para tener mula o macho de silla sería imprescindible poseer un caballo," February 5, 1493 in *Colección de documentos para la historia del Reino de Murcia*, 147–151.

individual practice. Regulation dealt broadly with the social order that produced horses. Horse breeding, with its ties to municipal governance, formed an integral part of Spanish expansion. The horse's body served as a form of measurement for the administration of territory, both in a discursive sense in the objections, legal injunctions, and rhetorical emphasis on scarcity, which influenced, for example, requirements of nobility – and in a physical sense – in the embodied measurements used to distribute land and to manage ownership, riding, and breeding. The horse's presence or absence was, therefore, an important point of tension in the historical development of political institutions in a frontier context.

1.3 FRAMING AN IBERIAN HORSE CULTURE

This chapter has highlighted military and legal uses of the historical horse – negotiation of status on the frontier, evolving military tactics, and horse breeding in conquered territories – that are obscured by the heroic image of the knight on horseback. The horse's many functions – as an iconic symbol, a military tool, a facilitator of social mobility, a proxy for nobility, a bodily form of measurement, a gatekeeper to political office, and a body that was itself being bred – are entangled materially with social systems and power structures, highlighting its imprint in Iberian history. Considering the context for the horse's place on the battlefield, in social hierarchies, and in cultural ideals makes visible a wider range of motivations, choices, and possible outcomes in these relations. Significantly, Iberian horse culture had two fundamental elements illustrated in the examples in this chapter: defining the terms for social negotiation and social mobility and structuring frontier and municipal governance.

First, the horse facilitated, and in turn became the legal language of, negotiation over noble status by the king, nobles, and nonnoble knights. The king mobilized the symbolic, noble ideal of the horse to motivate and regulate membership in military orders of knights and nobles, evident in legal requirements for horse ownership by knights and nobles. The monarchy also used its alliance with municipalities and urban confraternities of knights to advance royal imperatives for horse breeding in conquered territory in the name of the common good. For knights and nobles, the horse served as a medium for negotiating social status. The horse provided knights with social mobility, the ability to participate in municipal government, and access to confraternities of military orders. Knights also used the language of exemption to horse ownership to claim status in the

municipal elite. Nobles similarly protested against the monarch's power in riding mules instead of horses. The emphasis on scarcity in late medieval decrees should be read as the monarchy's attempt to enforce its authority through the presence and use of the horse, suggesting that knights and nobles needed to ride horses and conquest municipalities needed to breed horses to avoid the social and political disorder that would follow if horses did not underpin this system of governance.

Second, forms of governance instituted in frontier territory illustrate the deep, embodied imprint of the horse. Military uses of horses varied over the centuries, but perhaps more importantly, in the historical context of the frontier, horses served as a foundation for administering new territories. Land was distributed according to requirements of horse ownership. The municipal regulation of breeding became integral to governing in conquest jurisdictions. The measure of the horse shaped land grants, access to political office, and municipal standards for governing for the common good.

Riding and breeding horses, as well as using horses to control other populations, suggests a biopolitical influence that defines the horse within a hierarchy of human-centered concerns, such as when humans used horses as agents of conquest or as proxies for social status – that is, to assert authority or the power to govern formal relationships. At the same time, dynamic tensions within the symbolic, utilitarian, and political nature of these interspecies relations repeatedly emerge to challenge norms of control. Did the horse support or subvert authority? Historical access to the lived experience of an individual animal is necessarily indirect, and although individual interspecies interactions were common – knights, nobles, and breeders recognizing and responding to individual horses – archival documentation of these relationships is relatively scarce.[65] Limitations notwithstanding, archives offer insights into several arenas in which historical horses engaged with human individuals and impacted the social, cultural, and political structures conditioning those interactions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Embodied entanglements of horses and humans generated contradictory and contested outcomes. The horse was not merely a body being

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[65] For an overview of texts comprising a medieval manuscript tradition of veterinary knowledge, primarily based on classical Greek or Roman instructions and interspersed with commentaries, and a newer early modern genre of horsemanship manuals, see Ellen B. Wells, *Horsemanship: A Bibliography of Printed Materials from the Sixteenth Century through 1974* (New York: Garland, 1985).

regulated or a tool for regulating society; rather, it left an active and indelible imprint in political and social structures. This interpretation of an embodied imprint means that horses, collectively, had a discernible degree of historical co-agency – one that could potentially destabilize the forms of authority that had created it. As the Iberian frontier expanded in the fifteenth century through expeditions to Latin America and North Africa and the Wars of Granada, the horse was far from an obsolete remnant of a former mode of politics. The horse continued to leave its imprint in language, social negotiations, and embodied realities or legal consequences of interspecies relationships. Tracing how this unfolded in the earliest New World expeditions is the subject of Chapter 2.