



Ecclesiastical Support to the Master of Avis: An Analysis from the Acclamation Act of 1385¹

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Abstract. The death of king Fernando of Portugal in October 1383 without male heirs opened a succession crisis. Despite the studies that have been made concerning the composition of the factions that supported the various pretenders to the throne, in special about the participation of town elites and nobility, there are still few contributions on the participation of the clergy in the conflict. This is a matter of great importance, given the religious character of the royal power in the legitimization of kings and dynasties, in particular in a period marked by the Schism of the Catholic Church. Therefore, starting from the list of signatories and witnesses of the acclamation act of João I, made in the *cortes* of Coimbra in 1385, our aim is to analyse the participation of the clergy in the fight for the throne, identifying the main protagonists of each party and the reasons for their positions, as well as the consequences for their later ecclesiastic and political careers.

Keywords: Western Schism; Dynastic Crisis; Royal Legitimacy; Medieval Clergy.

[en] Apoyo eclesiástico al Maestre de Avis: una análisis desde el Auto de Aclamación de 1385

Resumen. La muerte del rey D. Fernando de Portugal en octubre 1383 sin herederos varones abrió una crisis de sucesión. A pesar de los estudios sobre la composición de las facciones que se formaron en torno a los diferentes pretendientes al trono, en particular sobre la participación de los municipios y de la nobleza, hay pocas contribuciones sobre la participación del clero en el conflicto. Una cuestión importante, ya que el carácter religioso del poder real seguía siendo uno de los temas centrales en la legitimidad de reyes y dinastías, sobre todo en un período marcado por el Cisma de la Iglesia Católica. Por lo tanto, a partir de la lista de firmantes del auto de aclamación de João I en las cortes de Coimbra de 1385, nuestra intención es analizar la participación del clero portugués en la lucha por el trono, identificar a los miembros de la jerarquía de la iglesia que han apoyado cada una de las facciones, las razones de estos posicionamientos y posteriores consecuencias en sus carreras políticas y eclesiásticas.

Palabras clave: Cisma del Occidente; crisis dinástica; legitimidad real; clero medieval.

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1. Introduction

Much has been written about the events that followed the death of king Fernando of Portugal, in October 1383, and the consequent dynastic crisis, especially in what regards the parties that emerged around two of the pretenders to the throne – on one hand, the group that supported princess Beatriz, the late king’s daughter, and her husband, king Juan I of Castile, and, on the other hand, the supporters of João, Fernando’s half-brother and master of the military order of Avis³.

For a long time, a traditionalist view of the social composition of these groups prevailed; to a certain extent, it still prevails in the collective imagination, bipolarizing the fight for the throne and reducing it to a conflict between oppressors and oppressed, in which the bourgeoisie would be aligned with the Master of Avis, while the high nobility and the clergy stood by the princess and the king of Castile⁴. This simplistic and excessively linear view is not well-suited to the actual historical complexity, as proven by several studies published over the last few decades, which reveal divisions that were common to different groups, communities and noble lineages⁵.

Following this line of thought, the aim of this paper is to assess the role played by the clergy in the dynastic crisis of 1383-1385, a subject which haven’t received the full attention it deserves, as well as the possible motivations behind its involvement; it also aims at understanding which of the pretenders were backed by these clergymen and why, as well as the impact that the influence exerted during those years had in the political and ecclesiastical careers of a series of personalities. So, our goal is to contribute to broader on these matters.

Despite the difficulties imposed by the sources, a number of studies made since the 1980’s⁶ on the matters of the Church’s hierarchies; the royal high bureaucracy;

³ For a general view on the matter, see Joel Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *Nova História de Portugal*, IV and Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, *D. João I. O que recolheu Boa Memória*. For the reign of king Fernando, see Rita Costa Gomes, *D. Fernando*. Although this paper is centred on the supporters of the Master of Avis, in an early stage there were also other pretenders against the claim of the castilian royal couple, namely the princes João and Dinis, bastard sons of king Pedro I of Portugal and half brothers of the late king Fernando and of João of Avis, who were swiftly removed from the dispute by the king of Castile. For that reason, João of Avis became the main antagonist of the kings of Castile in the fight for the throne of Portugal.

⁴ Such was the case in the works of Joel Serrão, *O carácter social da revolução de 1383* and António Borges Coelho, *A revolução de 1383*. These works are both products of the contexts in which they were written and show the political views of their authors and their opposition to the dictatorial regime during the Estado Novo (1932-1974). In fact, the dynastic crisis of 1383-1385 was one of the main historiographical topics used in this period, projecting in the past the anguishes of the present, as can also be seen in Álvaro Cunhal, *A luta de classes em Portugal no final da Idade Média*, written by the leader of the Portuguese Communist Party while he was in captivity.

⁵ For example, see Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, “A nobreza no reinado de D. Fernando e a sua actuação em 1383-1385” e José Mattoso, “A nobreza e a revolução de 1383”. Both authors stressed how the division between the groups who supported each of the pretenders must be made vertically and not horizontally, pointing out how members and branches of the same noble lineages could be seen among both parties.

⁶ For a complete and general overview of the evolution of the medieval studies in Portugal in the last decades, see the collective work José Mattoso (dir), *The Historiography of Medieval Portugal*.

the diplomatic relations of the kingdom; the administration and social composition of the military-religious orders; and, in some cases, on the individual careers of some characters; allow us to rehearse a general view about the role played by the ecclesiastic group during the process of dynastic change. Such synthesis efforts are of the utmost importance for placing this subject on a broader level, creating the necessary base from which to build comparative analysis, a method especially appropriate for a group that, actually, moved beyond the borders of kingdoms and communities.

2. The Starting-Point: the Acclamation Act of João of Avis

Our starting point will be the list of signatories and witnesses included in the document produced in the *cortes* of Coimbra held in 1385, which proclaimed João –the master of the military order of Avis– as king of Portugal, as well as the arguments used to justify that choice⁷.

For some time, the choice of the Master of Avis was not evident; those who defended the rights of princes João and Dinis –the half-brothers of king Fernando and João of Avis– to the throne had been meeting in Castile, and the Master of Avis himself showed his support to the princes for some time. However, early on, the Master had been uniting an important group of supporters around him. This support was very clear at the end of 1383, during the popular uprising occurred in Lisbon against the regency of the queen dowager Leonor Teles, who was the target of the hate of the people, being considered responsible for the problems during the reign of Fernando and who they believed was working to deliver the throne to the king of Castile. After the uprising, the people of Lisbon, already the largest and most important city in Portugal, appointed João of Avis as *regedor* and protector of the kingdom, making him ruler and, indeed, one of the strongest pretenders to the throne of Portugal.

In the following year, war came upon the kingdom. In May, Juan I of Castile laid siege to Lisbon, which would last until September; in the south, Nuno Álvares Pereira, responsible for the defense of the border of Alentejo, defeated the Castilian army at the battle of Atoleiros in April; in October, it was the Master of Avis who laid siege to Torres Vedras, which only ended in January 1385; and during that time, a number of castles and towns were taken by both the supporters of the Master of Avis or by the king of Castile.

At the time of the reunion of the *cortes* in the city of Coimbra in April 1385 the conflict hadn't been over yet, which would only happen later that year, especially after the decisive victory of João of Avis in the battle fought in the field of Aljubarrota in August, making the war one of the main concerns discussed in the gathering. The appointment of a king by the assembly of the *cortes*, whose legitimacy had to be stressed, gains a significant importance given this context, representing an important step in the conflict that was being fought at that same moment, both military as politically. We must point out that a copy of the acclamation act was made in latin to be sent to pope Urban VI, revealing the importance of this document for the le-

⁷ For this paper we used the portuguese version of the document that can be found in the National Archive of Torre do Tombo (forward ANTT), *Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, gav. 13, mc. 10, doc. 12. However, we should point out that the document has already been published in Marcello Caetano, *A Crise Nacional de 1383-1385*, pp. 91-101, in which study the author also analyzes the legal arguments used in the document.

gitimation of the new king who was born a bastard, not only inside the kingdom of Portugal but also at an international level and, most importantly, near that one power who could suppress his illegitimate origin, being the plain support given to Urban VI a crucial political statement.

So, the representatives of the clergy and the nobility, together with the proxies of a number of towns and cities, assembled at a meeting to make decisions regarding the war against Castile elected João of Avis as king of Portugal. In fact, this choice is not surprising, because those who supported Juan of Castile were not included in the debate, and the list of participants was largely composed by people who supported the Master of Avis, despite the fact that some of the noblemen mentioned were supporting the prince João, half-brother of king Fernando and João of Avis, and needed to be persuaded, as were the case of Vasco Martins da Cunha and his son, Martim Vasques da Cunha. The rhetoric present in the document does not differ greatly from the one ascribed by Fernão Lopes to Dr. João das Regras being both grounded on two guidelines⁸ – the argument of the illegitimacy of the pretenders, making them equals to João of Avis, but also at the same time highlighting their unfitness to sit on the throne, compared to the Master of Avis.

Both in the case of Beatriz, daughter of the late king Fernando and Leonor Teles, as in the cases of the princes João and Dinis, sons of king Pedro and Inês de Castro, their illegitimacy is demonstrated by pointing out the impediments to the union of the two couples – for Pedro and Inês, it's mentioned that her father was a direct cousin of king Pedro and that she was later godmother to one of the king's sons, never having the lovers obtained a favorable answer from the pope with the required dispensation for their alleged marriage; as for Fernando and Leonor, it is said that at the time of their marriage, Leonor was in fact legitimately married with João Lourenço da Cunha, making Beatriz illegitimate and being also herself illegitimately married, because Juan of Castile was also a direct cousin to Fernando, and they didn't had a papal dispensation. It is even argued that Fernando himself wasn't a legitimate son of king Pedro, because when Pedro married Constança Manuel, he was in fact still legally married with Branca of Castile. It is a dense argumentation, but with a great juridical efficacy – all in all, they were all illegitimates, being it João of Avis, or the princes João and Dinis, or the then queen of Castile, Beatriz. So, what made the Master of Avis different and more fit to be king than his half-brothers and niece?

As for the sons of king Pedro and Inês de Castro, the acclamation act doesn't give any more information; only the chronicler Fernão Lopes, in his description of the speech by Dr. João das Regras, mentions that the princes had taken up arms against Portugal, losing their right to be seen as naturals from the kingdom. It is against Beatriz and Juan of Castile that the rethoric of the acclamation act is

⁸ For the alleged speech of João das Regras in the *cortes*, see Fernão Lopes, *Crónica del rei Dom João I*, I, pp. 345-361. It's one of the most notorious episodes of the dynastic crisis that still endures in the collective memory, although the only record that we now know of this is given by the chronicler Fernão Lopes. Despite that, the acclamation act clearly shows that the content of João das Regras' argumentation reflected the political strategy used by João of Avis' supporters to legitimize his rights to the throne of Portugal. In his study, Marcello Caetano suggested the hypothesis that João das Regras was in fact the author of the acclamation act issued by the *cortes* – see Marcello Caetano, *A Crise Nacional de 1383-1385*, p. 21 and p. 35. For that, the academic background of João das Regras, as well that of some of the other main supporters of the Master of Avis, some of whom were the most prominent clergymen in the kingdom and had studied in the most prestigious universities of medieval Europe and therefore would be well familiar with the theories and uses of the law, gains a singular importance.

constructed, stressing their character as schismatics and heretics, followers of the anti-pope Clement VII of Avignon, while João of Avis and the kingdom remained loyal to pope Urban VI of Rome. For this, it was lawful to wage war against the kings of Castile, for they had become enemies of the faith, and if they would sit on the throne of Portugal it would bring great damage and dishonor to the kingdom.

The religious argument works here as a way to point out the qualities of João of Avis that made him worthy to receive the royal dignity, despite his illegitimacy, which, according to the legal discourse formulated throughout the document, in fact didn't affected only him. It also shows that the schism of the Church influenced the strategy and options adopted during the dynastic crisis – many of the high hierarchies of the Portuguese church are mentioned as signatories of the acclamation act, but not all. That's the reason why it's of the utmost importance to start an analysis of the participation of the clergy during the dynastic crisis of 1383-1385 with the list of signatories of the acclamation act; of those who were present at the acclamation of João of Avis as king of Portugal and, equally important, of those who were absent. In the fight for the throne, politics and religion went hand in hand.

2. The Big Picture: between the Western Schism and the Hundred Years War

In fact, as it also happened to some extent across the entire western Christendom, the schism of the Church, i.e., the existence of two popes since 1378, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, had consequences in Portugal; this Schism was closely connected to the political chessboard of the Hundred Years War between England and France, so the overt obedience to Clement VII of Avignon or to Urban VI of Rome cannot be separated from the fluctuations of alliances with the two kingdoms. Therefore, we should also look at the framework of the Schism and the Hundred Years War for an understanding of the Portuguese war-related circumstances in the last decades of the 14th century, namely the conflicts with Castile during the Fernandine Wars and the dynastic crisis, and the repercussions that the alliances forged during this period had in the religious observances of the kingdom of Portugal⁹.

The proceedings for the acclamation of João of Avis are very instructive in this regard. The *cortes* stated the obedience of the new king and of the kingdom to pope Urban VI, describing the kings of Castile as schismatic and heretics, followers of the anti-pope Clement VII, excluding them from the possibility of becoming heirs to the throne of Portugal. Therefore, it is not surprising to find among the document's signatories some of the main defenders of Urban VI during the reign of Fernando, such as Lourenço, the archbishop of Braga¹⁰, represented in the *cortes*

⁹ For the impact of the anglo-french conflict in the iberian political chessboard of the second half of the 14th century, see the classic study by Peter Russell, *The English intervention in Spain and Portugal*. As for an overview of the influence of the Western Schism on the politics of the kingdom of Portugal in the last decades of the 14th century, see António de Sousa Costa, *Monumenta Portugaliae Vaticana*, III-1; Júlio César Baptista, "Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente"; and António Brásio, "Influência do cisma castelhano na solução da crise nacional". The age of this studies shows how the influence of the Avignon Papacy and the Western Schism on medieval portuguese affairs still deserves a more close analysis, despite some return to this line of research in the last years.

¹⁰ Lourenço Vicente was archbishop of Braga since 1374. Before that he had studied Law and was a canon in the

by Domingos Pires das Eiras, or the bishops of Porto and Lamego, respectively João and Lourenço¹¹.

Among the followers of the Master of Avis we also find João, the bishop of Évora since 1384, who, according to the acclamation act, was responsible for verifying the accuracy of the accusations regarding the illegitimacy of princess Beatriz and princes João and Dinis and one of the names proposed in the *cortes* to become a member of the royal council, later approved by the king. The protagonism of the prelate from Évora had emerged since the beginning of the crisis because, despite the lack of knowledge we now have about his past¹², he had been immediately appointed as one of the proxies of the Master of Avis for the *comarca* of Entre Tejo e Odiana in 1384, being in charge of receiving the homage paid by the towns and cities from that region of the kingdom on the Master's behalf¹³.

However, the problems caused by the schism had begun earlier. The division within the Christendom had occurred in 1378 and marked the final stage of the reign of Fernando. Despite the initial neutrality, the rapprochements with France or England, caused by the wars against Castile, led to changes in the recognition of either Clement VII or Urban VI during the last years of the Fernandine reign, an issue that divided the portuguese prelates.

One of the main supporters of the pope of Avignon was Martinho, a clergyman of Castilian origin and a favourite of Fernando who occupied several episcopal seats – first he went to Silves, then he was elected to Braga but was not confirmed and, finally, he went to Lisbon. The chronicler makes frequent references to the close relationship between Fernando and Martinho whose advice he sought on decisive occasions, and who would influence the king in showing his observance to Clement VII in 1381¹⁴. According to the *Crónica del rei D. João I*, Martinho was murdered at the end of 1383 by the people

cathedral of Lisbon and an official in Fernando's royal bureaucracy, were he held the office of *vedor da fazenda*, i. e., someone with responsibilities over the management of the king's patrimony – see Armando de Carvalho Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*, II, pp. 161-162 –, meaning that Lourenço Vicente allied the royal service with his ecclesiastical career. Júlio César Baptista considered him as the greatest supporter of Urban VI of Rome in Portugal – Júlio César Baptista, “Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente”, p. 86. See also António de Sousa Costa, *Monumenta Portugaliae Vaticana*, III-1, pp. 170-222 for the complications that arised after his nomination for the archbishopric of Braga, contested by Martinho, bishop of Silves at the time and already a supporter of Clement VII of Avignon, and the cathedral chapter of Braga. The dispute ended with the confirmation of Lourenço as archbishop by Urban VI, showing how the defense of Rome or Avignon already divided the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Portugal.

¹¹ As mentioned in Júlio César Baptista, “Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente”, p. 87.

¹² For a brief biography of the prelate and his action as bishop of Évora, see Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, “Na sombra da crise de 1383-85”, pp. 103-116. The same author highlighted the role played by the royal service in the promotion of the prelates of this diocesis through the Middle Ages, as was the case, for example, of Domingos Anes Jardo, a figure close to kings Afonso III and Dinis in the late 13th century, who also held the office of royal chancellor – see Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, *As Dimensões de um Poder*, pp. 101-109.

¹³ See the appendix in Maria Ângela Beirante, “O Alentejo na segunda metade do século XIV”, pp. 287-291.

¹⁴ If, for Júlio César Baptista, the archbishop of Braga was the greatest supporter of Urban VI of Rome in Portugal, Martinho, bishop of Silves and after that of Lisbon, was the champion of Clement VII of Avignon – see Júlio César Baptista, “Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente”, p. 87. The proximity between Martinho and king Fernando was mentioned by the chronicler Fernão Lopes – Fernão Lopes, *Crónica de D. Fernando*, p. 410, for example –, being nominated by Fernando in his will as one of his executors and tutors of his daughter Beatriz – Salvador Dias Arnaut, *A Crise Nacional dos Fins do Século XIV*, I, p. 293. Martinho also acted as an ambassador in the name of Fernando to the courts of Avignon and France, where he gave a famous speech in defense of Clement VII. See also António de Sousa Costa, *Monumenta Portugaliae Vaticana*, III-1, pp. 223-285. Martinho even contested the appointment of Lourenço Vicente for the archbishopric of Braga, a matter that was decided in favour of Lourenço.

of Lisbon who suspected he had Castilian sympathies¹⁵; oppositely, his successor, bishop João, was one of the supporters of the Master of Avis who signed the acclamation act.

Martinho was not alone in his support to the legitimacy of Clement VII, since there were other Portuguese prelates who favoured the same decision and who, after Fernando's death, remained close to princess Beatriz and to Juan of Castile. Such was the case of Afonso, the bishop of Guarda¹⁶, and João, the bishop of Coimbra. Afonso actually managed to become Beatriz's chancellor and, after she became queen, bishop of Segovia; the chronicler stated that the bishop had promised to hand over the city of Guarda to the king of Castile so he would have a stronghold through which he could enter Portugal¹⁷; as for the latter, we know, for example, that in 1385 he was in Avignon representing the Castilian king¹⁸, revealing a collaboration in both cases that would remain over time.

His permanence in the opposite party explains the fact that, when the *cortes* met in Coimbra, Guarda already had a new bishop –Friar Vasco–, who in that very month of April 1385, days after the document had been written, received from king João I the city's castle¹⁹ and the confirmation of the donations made by Fernando for the reconstruction of the cathedral²⁰. It is rather curious that for the very city in which the *cortes* elected the Master of Avis there was still no choice regarding the new prelate. In his absence, the chapter's dignities probably played a central role; the cathedral's dean was one of the signatories, while the choirmaster, the treasurer and a number of clergymen served as witnesses, providing a support that was recognized by João I, who confirmed several privileges upon the chapter's request during those years²¹. Among these men, Rui Lourenço, the dean of Coimbra, was particularly important.

An active figure during the Fernandine period –when he participated in several diplomatic missions and was a member of the royal council–, Rui Lourenço remained present in the johannine bureaucracy, remaining close to the new dynasty²². According to Fernão Lopes, when heard by Fernando about the issue of the Schism, Rui Lourenço advocated the obedience to Rome²³, so his mention in the acclamation act, together with that of other ecclesiastics from Coimbra, clearly reveals the differ-

¹⁵ Fernão Lopes, *Crónica del rei D. João I*, I, p. 24.

¹⁶ For the political and ecclesiastical career of the bishop of Guarda, both in Portugal and Castile, see Mário Farelo, "O percurso eclesiástico e político de Afonso Domingues de Linhares". Before he became bishop of Guarda, Afonso had studied in Paris and received ecclesiastic benefices in the Lisbon cathedral. Like Martinho, he was close to king Fernando, being appointed by him as tutor of princess Beatriz in the case of the death of the queen Leonor Teles–, and had a crucial role in the negotiations with the crown of Castile in the context of the Fernandine Wars. After the dynastic crisis, Afonso remained close to Beatriz until her death. And, as Martinho, was nominated by king Fernando as one of the executors of his will – Salvador Dias Arnaut, *A Crise Nacional dos Fins do Século XIV*, I, p. 293.

¹⁷ Fernão Lopes, *Crónica del rei D. João I*, I, pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ As registered by José Marques, "Clérigos portugueses exilados e beneficiados", p. 192.

¹⁹ Donation made at 15th April 1385 – *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 2, doc. 861, p. 182.

²⁰ Confirmation given at 15th April 1385 – *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 2, doc. 864, pp. 184-185.

²¹ Again, confirmation given at 15th April 1385 – *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 2, doc. 884, pp. 199-200.

²² For his activity in the royal bureaucracy see Armando de Carvalho Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*, II, pp. 190-192. Rui Lourenço was often present in the royal council of king Fernando and was frequently appointed for diplomatic missions during his reign. In the *cortes* of Coimbra he was one of the names suggested to become a counselor of João I, proposal which the king refused. For the composition and functions of the royal council during the reigns of Fernando and João I, see Armando Carvalho Homem, "Conselho real ou conselheiros do rei?", pp. 9-68.

²³ Fernão Lopes, *Crónica de D. Fernando*, p. 543 and Júlio César Baptista, "Portugal e o Cisma do Ocidente", pp. 90-91. For the matter of the return of king Fernando to the obedience of Rome after following Clement VII, see also António de Sousa Costa, *Monumenta Portugaliae Vaticana*, vol. III-1, pp. 287-420.

ences of opinion that divided the diocesan clergy itself: while the bishop sided with Clement VII, at least part of the chapter supported Urban VI.

Besides, the clergymen from the Coimbra cathedral were not the only ones who represented the city's ecclesiastical powers in the election of João of Avis. Among the signatories we also find Vasco Martins de Baião, prior in the monastery of Santa Cruz of Coimbra²⁴, an old institution founded by the first Portuguese king that was strongly involved in the future and the political programmes of the first dynasty, meaning that the presence of the prior from Santa Cruz had also a symbolic importance.

The divisions among the clergy from the Coimbra cathedral contrasts, for example, with what happened in Évora in 1384, at a time when the citizens paid homage to the master of Avis in the person of his proxies; one of them, as we have mentioned, was the bishop himself. In the document that recorded the act, we can find a list of those who were present, which includes several dignities and canons from the Évora cathedral²⁵, a possible sign that in Évora there was a relative consensus among the clergy from the cathedral in what regarded the support to João of Avis, in line with the prevailing opinion among the city's elite.

So, on a first level of analysis, to observe and understand the divisions that existed among the prelates and abbots from the most important diocesis and monastic houses in the kingdom in terms of the support given to the pretenders to the throne we must also examine their position regarding the schism of the Church, since these two issues are interconnected. The plain obedience to Urban VI by João of Avis and his supporters meant the strengthening of the bonds between Portugal and England, manifested in the sending of English troops to fight alongside João I's forces and the celebration of the Treaty of Windsor in 1386 with Richard II, later renewed by Henry IV. This alliance resulted in the marriage of João I with Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry IV and daughter of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III, who had his own interests in the peninsula through the claim of his wife to the throne of Castile.

3. The Military Orders

With regard to the ecclesiastical universe represented in the document, there is one other group that is worth mentioning, not only for its importance in terms of the balance of the kingdom's military forces and influences, but also due to the proximity between the new king and its institutions, to which he actually belonged. We refer ourselves to the military-religious orders, whose participation in the dynastic crisis is difficult to track. In general, the closeness between the masters and their orders and the monarchy was reflected during the reign of Fernando through a direct involvement in the wars against Castile, and through the choice of individuals who were

²⁴ Although he is not mentioned by name in the document, we can identify the prior of Santa Cruz de Coimbra in Armando Alberto Martins, *O mosteiro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra na Idade Média*, pp. 526-536. According to the author, with the priory of Vasco Martins de Baião the monastery began a period of reorganization which corresponded with the period of crisis in the Christendom and the kingdom.

²⁵ Namely Gonçalo Gonçalves, dean, Mem Pires, choirmaster, Fernão Fernandes, archdeacon, João de Chameiraço, treasurer, and D. Pedro, João Esteves, Afonso Esteves, Martim Domingues e Martim Afonso, canons. See the appendix in Maria Ângela Beirante, "O Alentejo na segunda metade do século XIV", pp. 287-291.

close to the royal family to occupy leading positions, a symptom of the centrality they had in terms of royal policies.

First of all, João was the master of the order of Avis, something that earned him the name for which he came to be known. However, even within this group of warriors, finding support may have been a complex issue; his own position was called into question because, while fighting for the throne of Portugal, the king of Castile appointed a new master of Avis – Martim Anes de Barbudo, *comendador* of Pedroso²⁶. As expected, the choice was not respected and Martim Anes left for the neighbouring kingdom, where he became the master of the order of Alcantara. During his stay in Castile, Martim Anes met with a series of portuguese clergymen, revealing religious dissidences related to the Schism that resulted in the exile of several ecclesiastics, an issue that still requires further studies.

Still within the order of Avis, we know the career path of a man who is not included in the list written in 1385. We are talking about its *comendador-mor*, Vasco Porcalho, and his relevance has to do with the fact that, in the hierarchy of the military orders, the *comendador-mor* ranked just below the master²⁷. The *Crónica del rei D. João I* shows the rapprochement between this man and the queen dowager, Leonor Teles, as well as the approval of the pretensions of princess Beatriz and of the king of Castile²⁸. Again, the complexity of the composition of the opposing parties stands out, and the Master of Avis' own brothers in arms were divided between the two.

In turn, the order of Christ was represented in the election of the new king by its *comendador-mor*, Martim Gil, and by the *comendador* of Almourol, Martim Gonçalves. At that time, the *comendador-mor* was performing the master's duties because the order's leader, Lopo Dias de Sousa, was a prisoner of the Castilian forces, captured after the siege of Torres Novas²⁹. At the beginning of the dynastic crisis, Lopo Dias chose to stay with the queen dowager, his aunt, but he quickly decided he should follow the Master of Avis. Over the following years, the master of the order of Christ was a constant presence at the new king's side, who chose him to serve as chief steward for his wife, the queen Philippa of Lancaster, revealing the bonds of trust that united Lopo Dias to João I.

In the case of the order of Santiago, the participation in favour of the Master of Avis was also notorious at the top of the hierarchy. During the years of the dynastic crisis, the order's master was Fernando Afonso de Albuquerque³⁰, who was likely al-

²⁶ About Martim Anes de Barbudo, see Luís Filipe Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores*, pp. 367-370.

²⁷ See Luís Filipe Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores*, pp. 389-392. The compilation of documents made by the author shows the fluctuations in the path of Vasco Porcalho, a figure already benefited in the reign of king Fernando. Despite the donations made by João I and the apparent initial support given to him by Vasco Porcalho, since the later months of 1384 that he seems to be acting against the Master of Avis as a supporting of princess Beatriz and the king of Castile. He would leave the kingdom definitely after the battle of Aljubarrota in August 1385.

²⁸ The chronicler gives notice of some tribulations in the relationship between João of Avis and Vasco Porcalho. Allegedly, Vasco Porcalho had told king Fernando that, during the Fernandine Wars, João of Avis had intended to leave for Castile to reunite with his half-brother, prince João – see Fernão Lopes, *Crónica del rei D. João I*, I, pp. 33-34. Later, João of Avis was suspicious about the allegiance of Vasco Porcalho, who would end supporting openly the king of Castile, giving the castle of Vila Viçosa to him – see Fernão Lopes, *Crónica del rei D. João I*, I, pp. 164-169.

²⁹ For a brief biography of Lopo Dias de Sousa, see Isabel Sousa e Silva, “A ordem de Cristo durante o mestrado de D. Lopo Dias de Sousa”, pp. 69-77. His election at the age of 12 as master of the order of Christ seems to have happened by the intervention of king Fernando, against the rules of the order itself. Again, the reasons for the alignment with João of Avis aren't clear, receiving donations from the Master of Avis since, at least, April 1384.

³⁰ For the role played by the master of the order of Santiago during the dynastic crisis, see Maria Cristina Fernandes,

lowed to stand by queen Leonor's side during the early days of her regency because he was her relative. But, like what happened to the master of the order of Christ, after Juan of Castile's wish to take the throne of Portugal became known, Fernando Afonso began supporting João of Avis. During the meeting held at the *cortes* of Coimbra, the master of the order of Santiago was in England, together with chancellor Lourenço Anes Fogaça, with the purpose of renovating the alliance between England and Portugal in favour of the master of Avis, and that is why he did not take part in the election³¹.

However, despite the fact that there were still no references to any connections to the order of Santiago at the time, among the nobility representatives mentioned in the acclamation act we find Mem Rodrigues de Vasconcelos³², who received several donations made by João I during these years, which are recorded in his chancellery³³, and, years later, became the master of the order of Santiago thanks to a direct intervention of the first king of Avis against the master chosen by the knights, Rui Freire.

Finally, the case of the order of the Knights Hospitaller shows, once again, that there were internal divisions. Still during the reign of Fernando, the king took action in order to guarantee the choice of Pedro Álvares Pereira –the former prior's son– to succeed his father in that dignity, leaving aside another candidate, Friar Álvaro Gonçalves Camelo. As soon as Pedro Álvares left to join the king of Castile, Friar Álvaro paid tribute to the Master of Avis and received the dignity of prior, being registered as present in several documents issued during the dynastic crisis by the johannine chancellery. After the war, the new prior participated in the peace negotiations with Castile and, despite a few disagreements with the king, he remained connected to João I throughout his reign³⁴.

In general, and despite a few moments of tension, the leaderships of the military orders supported João of Avis' pretension to the throne of Portugal. Faced with the prospect of a union between the Portuguese and the Castilian crowns, the possible loss of autonomy of the Portuguese branches in the face of the Castilian orders was not a desirable scenario; for example, the split between the Portuguese and the Castilian branches of the order of Santiago had not yet been recognized by the pope. So, supporting the Master of Avis was seen as the guarantee that the status of the military orders would remain secure.

A ordem militar de Santiago no século XIV, pp. 170-172; and Luís Filipe Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores*, pp. 267-270. As was the case of Lopo Dias de Sousa, Fernando Afonso became master of the order of Santiago by the intervention of king Fernando and queen Leonor.

³¹ For the diplomatic relations between Portugal and England during this period see, among other, Maria Alice Santos, *A sociologia da representação diplomática portuguesa*.

³² See Luís Filipe Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores*, pp. 270-276.

³³ For example, the donation of the town of Monsaraz made by João I in September 1384 for his good service. Monsaraz, being a walled town built in the top of a rocky hill near the southern border, had a crucial importance in the strategy of the war fought in that region – see *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 1, doc. 294, pp. 154-155. This kind of donation could only be made to someone in whom the king had great trust.

³⁴ See Paula Pinto Costa, "A ordem militar do Hospital em Portugal", pp. 196-203. Pedro Álvares Pereira was one of the brothers of Nuno Álvares Pereira, perhaps the most known supporter of João of Avis, who lead his armies in the defense of the southern border of the kingdom against the castilian forces and later as commander in the battle of Aljubarrota. The lineage of the Pereiras is a good example of the fractures within the same groups relatively to whose claim to the throne should be supported. In the specific case of Pedro Álvares, his change of side reveals once more the evolution in the opinion of this individuals, because in the later months of 1383 he had even been at the side of the Master of Avis during the uprising in Lisbon.

4. Ecclesiastics in the Royal Service: Continuities and Ruptures

A third issue we should explore has to do with the continuities and ruptures among the ecclesiastics related to the royal service named in the acclamation act, in terms of both the high bureaucracy and the participation in the kingdom's politics and administration, and the king's domesticity and intimacy. This aspect functions as an indicator of the work developed by these clergymen during the years of the dynastic crisis because, while searching for foundations on which to ground his rule, it was expected that the new king rewarded those who followed and helped him in his fight for the throne, with consequences in the composition of the group of clergymen who surrounded the crown³⁵. However, we should keep in mind that this stage fits into a broader process, characterized by the secularization of the monarchy and its bodies.

We have already mentioned the fact that, during the reign of Fernando, the king was still rubbing shoulders with a series of prelates, who were asked for advice in moments of need and sent in diplomatic missions on his behalf, as in the case of the negotiations with Castille during the Fernandine Wars. In this scenario, Martinho –the bishop of Silves and, later, of Lisbon–, Afonso –the bishop of Guarda–, and João –the bishop of Coimbra–, were constant presences in the Fernandine court and politics – we see them, for example, in Salvaterra de Magos during the conclusion of the treaty that settled the marriage between princess Beatriz and Juan of Castile³⁶. We should also remember that they supported Clement VII, so it should not come as a surprise that, after the victory of the Master of Avis and of the supporters of Rome, the bishops of Guarda and Coimbra remained close to the princess, thus receiving ecclesiastical benefices from the Castilian church.

After the ascension of João of Avis to the throne, the new king progressively surrounded himself with new prelates. Broadly speaking, these were figures who came to the main stage by supporting the claim of João of Avis during the dynastic crisis and Urban VI in the context of the Western Schism. This ambivalent position had its effects in their promotion within the Church, capitalizing the royal patronage and recognition for the obtainment of ecclesiastic benefices and dignities; an ascension within the Church's hierarchies that were more evident for the clergymen in the royal bureaucracy than for those in the royal chapel³⁷.

As we have seen, among the signatories of the acclamation act we find the bishop of Évora, João, responsible for the diplomatic contact with Urban VI after the *cortes*; but we also see other supporters of the Master of Avis who held important positions within the Church's hierarchy. In the same document, there is a reference to João Afonso da Azambuja³⁸, the then proxy of the municipality of Elvas who,

³⁵ For an overview of the evolution of ecclesiastics in the service of the portuguese crown between the 14th and the 15th centuries, both in the sphere of the bureaucracy and the royal chapel, see, among others, Armando Carvalho Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*; and Rita Costa Gomes, *A corte dos reis de Portugal*, pp. 110-129. For their role as ambassadors during the reign of João I, see Maria Alice Santos, *A sociologia da representação político diplomática*.

³⁶ ANTT, *Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, gav. 17, mç. 6, doc. 10.

³⁷ As pointed out in Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, "The royal chapel during the reign of king João I", p. 87.

³⁸ For a biography of the future archbishop of Lisbon, see Carlos Eduardo Graf, *D. João Esteves da Azambuja*. This is a good example of the way that the promotion of some of these individuals was the result of a combination of power obtained through the circulation over several spheres of action along his career. The proximity to the king was allied with the ascension within the church's hierarchy, occupying several bishoprics and, finally, becoming

from the 1380's onwards, began rising in his career and holding positions in various Portuguese dioceses; he started in Silves, then he went to Porto and Coimbra, later becoming the archbishop of Lisbon at the moment of the elevation of the bishopric to an archbishopric and, finally, a cardinal. Similarly, and despite the fact that he is not named in the proceedings, we should also mention Martim Afonso Charneca³⁹; he supported the Master from the start and was the bishop of Coimbra between 1386 and 1398, the year in which he became archbishop of Braga.

These three prelates, who supported the Master of Avis from the start, were nominated members of the royal council in 1385 and participated in embassies sent to Rome seeking to guarantee the pontiff's recognition of João I's legitimacy, i.e., they were crucial elements for the implementation and consolidation of the new dynasty's power. And, also in the three cases, these are new political actors with, as much as we now know, no previous experience in royal service, owing their promotion to the favour of the new king. We should also bear in mind that, especially in what concerns João Afonso da Azambuja and Martim Afonso Charneca, they both had academic degrees, making them particularly fit to deal with the royal affairs in a time of creation of legitimating discourses.

At this point, we should mention Dr. João das Regras⁴⁰, who was responsible for the legal arguments presented to defend the rights of the Master of Avis to the throne, and later became João I's chancellor and member of the royal council in 1385, and also rector of the University of Lisbon. Despite the fact that he gave up his clerical status to get married, the influence that his connection to the Church had in his education, which he later used in favour of the cause of the master of Avis, cannot be omitted within the scope of the ecclesiastical participation in the dynastic crisis.

In terms of royal bureaucracy, the change of dynasty also had its impact. As we have said, Rui Lourenço, the dean of the Coimbra cathedral, is the most obvious case of clerical continuity in the royal service; however, there were other individuals, members of a new generation that emerged with the victory of the master of Avis, who played prominent roles within the monarchy's administrative structure, combining the knowledge they had obtained through their academic education with the trust placed in them by the king as a result of their cooperation during the years of crisis and of their activity in favour of the victory of the Master of Avis. Such was the case of the above-mentioned Afonso da Azambuja and Martim Afonso Charneca, identified several times by João I's chancellery for their intervention in terms of document production; this shows us how these clergymen had a broad field of action in what concerned the policy of the kingdom.

a cardinal. He was not only a clerk in the royal bureaucracy, but also a member of João I's council and a frequent ambassador to the Roman curia, to which appointments his academic education wouldn't be a secondary asset.

³⁹ See Armando Carvalho Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*, vol. II, p. 164. Like João Esteves da Azambuja, Martim Afonso moved between the royal service and the church's hierarchy.

⁴⁰ See Armando Carvalho Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*, p. 138. João das Regras was one of the most important supporters of the Master of Avis during the dynastic crisis, being the responsible for the argumentation in favour of the new king during the *cortes* of Coimbra in 1385, as we have seen before. He studied in Bologna and was one of the scholars consulted by king Fernando regarding the matter of the obedience to Rome or Avignon, defending at that time the legitimacy of pope Urban VI. He was a stepson of Álvaro Pais, chief chancellor of king Fernando and one of the architects of the uprisings in Lisbon in 1383. João das Regras began as prior of the canon chapter of the church of Santa Maria de Guimarães.

But the acclamation act of João I lists also a series of ecclesiastics who seem to occupy less central positions within the Church's structures but who, after a closer examination, come across as being very close to the new king as members of his royal chapel, such as the abbot of S. João de Alpendorada and the Dominican Friar Lourenço Lampreia, respectively a chaplain and a confessor of the master of Avis.

Similarly, within the king's circle of religious intimacy we find Friar Fernando of Astorga⁴¹, a provincial minister of the order of St. Francis who had already been king Fernando's confessor and favourite, serving even as a witness at his will in 1378⁴². During the schism, Friar Francisco seems to have kept his allegiance to pope Urban VI of Rome; through this, he was able to autonomize the Portuguese Franciscans from the custody of the Peninsular authority⁴³.

Another example of continuity in the royal chapel, and despite the fact that he is not mentioned in the acclamation act, can be found in João de Ornelas, the abbot of the monastery of Alcobaça, one of the most important monastic institutions in the kingdom, and chief almoner since the reign of Fernando. In addition to his diplomatic intervention, the abbot had also a military participation in favour of João I, sending troops to fight in Aljubarrota, a fact that led to the restitution of a series of privileges that had been taken away from Alcobaça during previous reigns⁴⁴. This example shows that the involvement of some of these religious men went beyond politics and diplomacy to encompass war.

This relationship based on domesticity was very significant, because being allowed to contact with the king in person and also having access to his consciousness quite likely had a remarkable impact and influence on the king's actions and governance acts, like the choice to turn the monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória – a pantheon and an instrument of propaganda of the new dynasty – into an institution managed by the Dominican order, as suggested by Friar Lourenço Lampreia⁴⁵, who was even appointed as its prior, or in the privileges granted to the abbots of S. João de Alpendorada by João I⁴⁶.

Briefly, in what regards the royal service, despite a few examples of continuity within the new king's sphere – mainly associated with a few ecclesiastics who had been connected to Fernando and remained in their positions because they were recognized for their support to the Master of Avis –, the main characteristic we should highlight is the arrival of a series of new personalities on the scene who, by favouring João of Avis during the dynastic crisis, got their support rewarded with the king's trust.

5. Final Remarks

In short, reviewing what we have said so far, it is proven that the divisions that had already been identified in other social groups in terms of the party chosen during

⁴¹ Rita Costa Gomes, *A corte dos reis de Portugal*, pp. 119-120.

⁴² Salvador Dias Arnaut, *A Crise Nacional dos Fins do Século XIV*, I, p. 295.

⁴³ Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, "The royal chapel during the reign of king João I", p. 91, especially note 30.

⁴⁴ Rita Costa Gomes, *A corte dos reis de Portugal*, p. 123.

⁴⁵ As mentioned in João I's will – see ANTT, *Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, gav. 16, mc. 1, doc. 8.

⁴⁶ At 10th April 1385 – *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 2, doc. 931, p. 236 – and at 10th October 1385 – *Chancelarias Portuguesas*, vol. I, t. 2, doc. 556, p. 16.

the dynastic crisis of 1383-1385 are also applicable to the clergy. The task of understanding and justifying them is a rather difficult one, due to the lack of knowledge about the life led by some of these individuals until the late 14th century and by the need for a closer examination of other issues, like the presence of clergymen who obeyed to Avignon and were exiled in Castile, which may cast a new light on this subject. However, the fractures are clear.

For the clergy, the dynastic crisis wasn't simply a political issue; it fit perfectly within the broader panorama of the Church's schism and of the recognition of the legitimacy of either Urban VI or Clement VII with the consequent illegitimacy of their supporters. The centrality of this problem is proven by the renovation of prelates in a few dioceses, like Guarda and Coimbra; however, in order to understand the consequences brought about by the period's instability, we should not limit ourselves to the bishops, but broaden our research work to encompass other cathedral clergymen and also, as far as possible, the regular clergy.

If, on the one hand, the Schism and the crisis gave rise to ruptures in terms of both the service provided by some ecclesiastics to the king and the closeness between them, making them shift from Fernando's sphere to that of the kings of Castile, the clear support of the pope of Rome may also have allowed some clergymen to remain close to the crown while promoting the attraction of new individuals who got involved in the government and defense of the kingdom and in the fight for the international recognition of the legitimacy of the new dynasty. João of Avis knew how to recognize and reward this support, regardless the clashes he later came to have with the Church.

The interests of religious groups and institutions were not excluded from the choices that were made, as can particularly be seen regarding the choices made by the masters of the military orders. If the problem of the recognition of the legitimate pontiff became part of this scenario, as shown by the intervention of the prelates in the kingdom, the fears about the loss of autonomy must have also had an impact, particularly in what regards the military orders that were, and continued to be, a crucial element of the strategies aimed at strengthening the monarchy's political authority.

To conclude, the dynastic crisis in Portugal between 1383 and 1385 cannot be dissociated from the larger picture of the crisis of the 14th century. However, each case, each social group or community, has its own singularities that must be systematically sought. If we are to deepen and reassess our understanding of the 14th century and its misfortunes, we have to retake the case studies about conjunctures and local realities, about the intervention of certain groups and individuals to have the necessary base from which to make comparative studies and analysis in a broader scope. Only by this we can rethink the general overviews that, in some cases, may be taken as certain.

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