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In the name of the father? The diplomacy of Prince João of Portugal (1474-1481)

Em nome do pai? A diplomacia do príncipe João de Portugal (1474-1481)

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ABSTRACT

Prince João assumed some protagonism in the life of the kingdom of Portugal from 1471 onwards, when he was part of the army that conquered Arzila (North Africa), and successively increased his preponderance in governance until the end of the life of his father, King Afonso V. This article describes, analyses and seeks to interpret João's "escalation" in the political leadership of the kingdom with a focus on his participation in diplomatic activities. The preponderance he achieved during the war with Castile (1475-1479) and the establishment of peace (1479-1480) stands out. This was a period in which he often acted autonomously and led political lines different from those defended by his father.

Keywords: diplomacy, war, peace, negotiations, Portugal, Castile

RESUMO

O príncipe João assumiu algum protagonismo na vida do reino de Portugal a partir de 1471, quando integrou o exército que conquistou Arzila (Norte de África), e aumentou sucessivamente a sua preponderância na governação até ao final da vida do seu pai, o rei Afonso V. Este artigo descreve, analisa e procura interpretar essa "escalada" de João na condução política do reino com foco na sua participação em atividades diplomáticas. Destaca-se a preponderância que alcançou durante a guerra com Castela (1475-1479) e o estabelecimento da paz (1479-1480), um período em que muitas vezes atuou autonomamente e protagonizando linhas políticas diferentes das que eram defendidas pelo seu pai.

Palavras-chave: diplomacia, guerra, paz, negociações, Portugal, Castela



In August 1479, Queen Isabel of Castile replied to a coded letter from Fernando de Talavera, her ambassador who was in Portugal negotiating the end of the war that had started in 1475. She gave a clear instruction: “El dotor mire que no negocie sy no con el principe en persona”¹. That is, the diplomat was only authorized to negotiate with the prince. We are talking about João (b. 1455, r. 1481-1495), the son of King Afonso V (r. 1438-1481), who at that time was not absent from the kingdom, neither sick nor disabled. And at stake was a business of the utmost importance: after four years of war, the establishment of a peace that would involve a set of matrimonial alliances that could lead to the reconfiguration of the political scenario of the Iberian Peninsula. The purpose of this text is to understand how and why we got here. Why, in 1479, was the prince and not the king of Portugal in charge of such an important business? What diplomatic activities has Prince João developed up to this point? And which ones did he continue to play during the following years, until his father's death? Did he act on his own initiative? Or did he trade on behalf of his father? Did he act accordingly to his own particular interests?

To answer these questions, we will start by looking at the historiography and images that have been disseminated about Afonso V and João II for several centuries. We will then briefly present an overview of the sources that allow us to examine these questions and indicate some of the challenges they pose to historians. Finally, following a chronological order, we will analyse the diplomatic activities in which Prince João was involved since childhood, through the questioning of a set of narrative and diplomatic sources produced, above all, in the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile.

¹ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal durante el reinado de los Reyes Católicos*. Vol. I. Ed. Antonio de la Torre e Luis Suárez Fernández. Valladolid: CSIC, 1958, Doc. 144, p. 217.

Historiography

Reflecting on the diplomacy of a crown prince² necessarily implies scrutinizing a period in which, in principle, two leading figures of a given political entity were acting simultaneously in international relations: the said crown prince and the incumbent king. It is not always easy to distinguish, in certain sets of events, what is due to the action of one or the other. This would be possible if the documentary records that are preserved fully testified to individual performances, but this is not often the case. For example, in the 1479 peace between Portugal and Castile³, on the Portuguese side, it is in the name of the king and the prince that the various agreements signed with the *Catholic Kings* are assumed, but nothing in these texts allows us to distinguish the role that each one had until the conclusion of the process. Did they act together? Were they aligned? Did one of the parties take care of everything or almost everything and the other just came together to formalize it? Or were there elements that resulted from the political vision and efforts of one of them and others arising out of the interests of the other? It is true that there are other sources, such as the chronicles, which allow us to advance some hypotheses to answer these questions, but it is also evident that even these chronicles transmit visions that can be contradictory. This is, of course, the historian's challenge: to gather sources, cross-reference them, interpret them, and try to draw conclusions that are at least credible.

In this information analysis process, when a crown prince and his father's king are at stake, there is one element that can be preponderant: the image that the researcher has of each of the figures. There are at least three aspects to point out

² On the figure of crown princes in the Middle Ages, including the evolution of their roles in different areas of Christianity, and on the succession in the monarchies of this period, cf.: *El acceso al trono: concepción y ritualización*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2017; BARTLETT, Robert - *Blood royal. Dynastic politics in medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021; FRANCISCO OLMOS, José María - *El príncipe heredero en las Coronas de Castilla y Aragón durante la Baja Edad Media*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995. PhD Thesis; GIESEY, Ralph E. - *Le rôle méconnu de la loi salique. La succession royale, XIV^e-XVI^e siècles*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007; LACHAUD, Frédérique Lachaud; PENMAN, Michael A. (éds.) - *Making and breaking the rules. Succession in medieval Europe, c. 1000- c. 1600*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

³ Edited in: *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 165, pp. 245-284.

about the general traits with which historiography has characterized Afonso and João⁴:

1. Both Afonso V and João II have well-defined – maybe we can say stereotyped – images, which include very contrasting fundamental characteristics.
2. These images are not recent constructions. On the contrary, they have been developed at least since the decades following the death of these men.
3. Even if they may correspond to simplifications of complex phenomena and even if certain contrasts may not be so accentuated, these images are, in general, well founded.

What, then, is the image that most historiography retains of Afonso V and João II? On the one hand, we have a king who protects the nobility, focused on the war in Africa, oblivious to maritime exploration, somehow politically inept. On the other hand, a centralizing sovereign concerned with the aggrandizement of the crown, a skilful and pragmatic administrator, a visionary in relation to the ocean⁵. Deep down, a backward king compared to his own time, succeeded by another who was ahead of the time in which he lived. Armindo de Sousa was clear about Afonso V: “He must have died without realizing that between the world he imagined and the one in which he actually existed there was an abyss of centuries”⁶. And Oliveira Marques, a few years earlier, had drawn the contrast between the two: João II “was a typical

⁴ The most important works on the lives of these two kings are the following: FONSECA, Luís Adão da - *D. João II*. Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2007; GOMES, Saul António - *D. Afonso V. O Africano*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2006; MENDONÇA, Manuela - *D. João II*. 2nd edition. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1995.

⁵ Naturally, not all historians share the same view. João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, for example, regarding the exploration of the Atlantic, noted several years ago that “the prince's entrance onto the scene did not provoke any fundamental alteration”. SEE: COSTA, João Paulo Oliveira e - “D. Afonso V e o Atlântico”. In COSTA, João Paulo Oliveira e - *Mare Nostrum. Em busca de honra e riqueza*. Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2013, pp. 25-62 *maxime* pp. 55-59.

⁶ SOUSA, Armindo de - “1325-1481”. In MATTOSO, José (Dir.) - *História de Portugal*. Vol. II - *A monarquia feudal*. Coord. José Mattoso. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1997, pp. 261-466, *maxime* pp. 423-424 (our translation, as the following from Portuguese historiography).

Renaissance sovereign. Unlike his father, he belonged well to the times in which he lived and showed himself to be a completely “modern” man”⁷.

These fundamental differences between the profiles of one and the other have very remote origins. Rui de Pina, the first chief chronicler of the kingdom to write about each of them in texts commissioned by the crown, traced them in the final chapters of the respective chronicles in which he provided an account of the lives of those biographed. Afonso V, perhaps even because of his “great humanity”, before the many who had the “dare to ask him for it”, reacted with “shame on not granting it”. As a result, the “things of the crown and of the kingdom” were “stripped and reduced to a small extent”. In addition, he never stopped promoting “difficult things” and pursuing them “by arms as a knight”, having more of a profile for that than for acting “as a king in the civil and political regiment of the kingdoms”⁸. On the contrary, João II “was the prince of his time with fewer privates”, and “being a lord of lords, he never wanted to be or seem to be a servant of servants”. Regarding the things of the crown, “to keep them, he gave very little”. And those he gave were “rents without jurisdictions or landlords”, so that even “they seemed more like loans than donations”⁹. About half a century later, the political project associated with the writing of the chronicle of Prince João by Damião de Góis involved praise of the same characteristics: João II, in contrast to his predecessor and his successor, was a “skilled, ruthless [and] efficient politician”¹⁰.

The fixation of these images cannot be dissociated from political objectives and specific contexts – in the case of Damião de Góis’ work, the defence of the primacy of the monarchy was at stake at a time when large manor houses were once again gaining strength¹¹ –, but this notion should not lead us to think that they are

⁷ MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira - *História de Portugal*. Vol. I. 14th edition. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 2010, pp. 336-342.

⁸ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”. In PINA, Rui de - *Crónicas*. Ed. M. Lopes de Almeida. Oporto: Lello & Irmão Editores, 1977, pp. 577-881, *maxime* pp. 880-881.

⁹ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica d’el rei D. João II”. In PINA, Rui de - *Crónicas*. Ed. M. Lopes de Almeida. Oporto: Lello & Irmão Editores, 1977, pp. 883-1033, *maxime* pp. 1029-1031.

¹⁰ GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do Príncipe D. João*. Ed. Graça Almeida Rodrigues. Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1977, p. LXXXIV.

¹¹ As Graça Almeida Rodrigues pointed out in: GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do Príncipe D. João*, pp. LXXXI-LXXXV.

completely meaningless narratives. The idea of Afonso V as a monarch promoting the highest nobility in contrast to a João II who fought it has broad factual support: while the father created 14 new nobility titles, the son not only stopped this movement but made it extinguish one of the most important houses of the kingdom – that of Bragança¹². With regard to maritime expansion, it is also indisputable that João II had a stronger direct intervention than his father in Atlantic affairs, to the detriment of a commitment to military conquests in North Africa. There are other ideas that can and should be nuanced. For example, as Miguel Aguiar has already demonstrated, the chivalric ideology that shaped a large part of the actions of Afonso V is not as anachronistic as it often appears¹³. Furthermore, the monarch who became known as *the African* was not an inept ruler devoid of qualities. His reign corresponded to a period of stabilization and strengthening of the process of bureaucratization of the administration of the kingdom¹⁴.

Sources

There are two fundamental sets of sources that make it possible to analyse the diplomacy of Prince João: a relatively large set of Portuguese and Castilian chronicles and some documents that resulted directly from diplomatic activity, such as treaties and missive letters.

¹² OLIVEIRA, Luís Filipe; RODRIGUES, Miguel Jasmins - “Um processo de reestruturação do domínio social da nobreza: a titulação na 2.^a dinastia”. *Revista de História Económica e Social* 22 (1988), pp. 77-114.

¹³ AGUIAR, Miguel - *Cavaleiros e cavalaria. Ideologia, práticas e rituais aristocráticos em Portugal nos séculos XIV e XV*. Oporto: Teodolito, 2018.

¹⁴ This is demonstrated, for example, by the various studies dedicated by Judite Gonçalves de Freitas to the bureaucracy of Afonso V. The main one is: FREITAS, Judite A. Gonçalves de - “*Teemos por bem e mandamos*”. *A burocracia régia e os seus oficiais em meados de Quatrocentos (1439-1460)*. Cascais: Patrimonia, 2001.

There are four narrative texts of Portuguese origin that focus on this period¹⁵: the chronicles of Afonso V and João II written by Rui de Pina¹⁶; the chronicle of João II by Garcia de Resende¹⁷; and the chronicle of Prince João by Damião de Góis¹⁸.

Rui de Pina's works have the particularity of having been written at the service of the Crown and of being part of the general chronicle project promoted by the Portuguese monarchs since the first half of the 15th century. There are three aspects that are important to highlight: firstly, the discourse conveyed by these texts corresponds to the official view of power over the narrated events; secondly, the fact that Rui de Pina held the positions of chief chronicler of the kingdom and chief keeper of the *Torre do Tombo* archive allowed him access to the documents in which the memory of the kingdom was preserved; finally, the fact that Rui de Pina had served in embassies during the reigns of Afonso V and João II made him a privileged witness to some of the events he described¹⁹.

The works of Garcia de Resende and Damião de Góis have a different character. The one by Garcia de Resende, completed in 1533, was a private initiative partially based on the work of Rui de Pina, to which the author added several episodes that he had witnessed or learned about as a member of the house and a regular at the court of João II. Instead of archival documents, what Garcia de Resende adds to the already completed portrait of this king is precisely one more testimony of someone who knew the person he is writing about.

The work of Damião de Góis has the particularity of only focusing on the period before the accession to the throne of the heir of Afonso V, which was unprecedented in a Portuguese chronicle. This humanist complemented the information of previous chroniclers with data he collected in foreign chronicles, which he cited to reinforce

¹⁵ A general overview about these texts, their authors and their relation with diplomacy is available in: FARIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal no final da Idade Média (1433-1495)*. Vol. I. Oporto: Universidade do Porto, 2021. PhD Thesis, pp. 65-71.

¹⁶ PINA, Rui de - "Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V"; PINA, Rui de - "Crónica de el rei D. João II".

¹⁷ RESENDE, Garcia de - *Crónica de D. João II e Miscelânea*. Ed. Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1991.

¹⁸ GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do príncipe D. João*.

¹⁹ About the diplomatic activity of Rui de Pina, cf.: FARIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. II, p. 47.

his positions. Published in 1567, at a time when a crisis of succession to the Portuguese throne was foreseen, this chronicle had a clear purpose of political intervention, which involved enhancing Portuguese legitimacy in the Castile succession war of 1475-1479 and the importance of centralization of powers in the Crown in the face of competition from the aristocracy, of which João II, even as a prince, would be a symbol.

Also containing information about the diplomatic activity of this prince are the Castilian chronicles by Diego Enríquez del Castillo²⁰, Fernando del Pulgar²¹ and Lucio Marineo Siculo²². Also in these cases, naturally, it is necessary to consider the political interests of the authors: the first was a chronicler of Enrique IV and defended the legitimacy of Joana as his daughter; Fernando del Pulgar and Lucio Marineo Siculo, on the contrary, were servants of the *Catholic Kings* and sought to legitimize their positions in the war against Afonso V²³.

Whether Portuguese, Castilian or of any other origin, chronicles must always be read with an attitude of constructive distrust, which implies knowledge of the contexts in which they were produced and an attempt to identify their purposes²⁴. The best way to take advantage of its contents involves comparing, whenever possible, with sources of other typologies.

²⁰ CASTILLO, Diego Enríquez del - *Crónica de Enrique IV*. Ed. Aureliano Sánchez Martín. Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Valladolid, 1994.

²¹ PULGAR, Fernando del - *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*. 2 vols. Ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2008.

²² SÍCULO, Lucio Marineo - *Vida y hechos de los Reyes Católicos*. Madrid: Atlas, 1943.

²³ A general overview of Castilian chronicles from the 15th century is presented in: GARCIA, Michel - "La crónica castellana en el siglo XV". In LUCÍA MEGÍAS, José Manuel; GRACIA ALONSO, Paloma; MARTÍN DAZA, Carmen (eds.) - *Actas. II Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*. Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 1992, pp. 53-70.

²⁴ On precautions to be taken when reading and using the content of the chronicles, see: DUARTE, Luís Miguel - *Ceuta. 1415*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2015, pp. 33-44; GODINHO, Vitorino Magalhães - "Introdução". In *Documentos sobre a expansão quatrocentista portuguesa*. Ed. Vitorino Magalhães Godinho. Vol. I. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 2011, pp. 11-30, *maxime* pp. 16-21; SOUSA, Armindo de - "Os cronistas e o imaginário do século XV (breve reflexão sobre a crónica enquanto discurso)". In SOUSA, Armindo de - *O parlamento medieval português e outros estudos*. Oporto: Fio da Palavra, 2014, pp. 509-513; SPIEGEL, Gabrielle M. - "Theory into practice: reading medieval chronicles". In KOOPER, Erik (ed.) - *Medieval Chronicle*. Leiden: Brill, 1996, pp. 1-12.

In this case, documents that result directly from diplomatic activity are highlighted. Unfortunately, both in relation to Portugal and Castile – the political entity with which the Portuguese royal family had the most relations – they are not abundant. But there are some and they are far from irrelevant. For the period and characters in question, the agreements signed in Alcáçovas and in Toledo in 1479 and 1480, which put an end to four years of war between Portugal and Castile, stand out²⁵. Specific examples of diplomas such as procurations to ambassadors²⁶, papal bulls²⁷ and missive letters²⁸ will also be used to at least try to raise hypotheses about the diplomatic activities in which João was involved as prince.

The early years

Before becoming an actor of diplomacy himself, Prince João, born in 1455 and heir to the throne since then, was an object of diplomatic negotiations.

In the mid-1460s, relations were strengthened between Afonso V of Portugal and Enrique IV of Castile²⁹. João was, at that time, a child of about ten years old, and therefore did not have an active participation in the politics of the kingdom. As the future King of Portugal, however, his marriage was already a matter of the utmost importance. The first references to the prince in international contacts date back to those years.

In 1464, the kings of Portugal and Castile met in Gibraltar and, according to the chroniclers, designed two matrimonial alliances: between Afonso V and Princess Isabel of Castile, the future *Catholic Queen*; and between Prince João and Princess Juana of Castile. In addition to these new family ties would be Afonso V's support for

²⁵ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 165, pp. 245-284.

²⁶ Évora, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, *Manizola*, cod. 177, fls. 50v-51v.

²⁷ *Descobrimientos portugueses. Documentos para a sua história*. Vol. III. Ed. João Martins da Silva Marques. 2nd edition. Lisbon: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1988, doc. 149, pp. 216-218; SANTARÉM, Visconde de - *Quadro elementar das relações políticas e diplomáticas de Portugal com as diversas potências do mundo...*, vol. X. Paris, Lisbon: J. P. Aillaud, Academia Real das Ciências, 1854, pp. 91-92.

²⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Manuscrit portugais 20*, fls. 94v-97.

²⁹ This is attested by the embassies exchanged between the two kingdoms at this time and by the meetings between their monarchs: FARIA - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. I, pp. 180-185, 337-349.

Enrique IV in the conflicts in which he faced important sectors of the Castilian aristocracy at that time³⁰.

A few months later, in Puente del Arzobispo, a new meeting between the two monarchs would have served to address the same subject and would have had similar conclusions. The chroniclers are sparse in information and highlight what was perhaps more relevant for those who wrote a few years later and were fully aware of how the story ended: the marriages never came to fruition³¹.

However, that hypothesis was not ruled out at that point, on the contrary. Between 1464 and 1465 the scenario of internal conflict in Castile worsened, and Enrique IV was symbolically deposed in the “farce of Ávila”³². In this context, the Queen of Castile and sister of the King of Portugal travelled to Guarda to meet with Afonso V and “request help for her husband”³³. This meeting resulted in an agreement for the marriage of Afonso V to Isabel, but there is no evidence that the marriage of the Portuguese prince was discussed again³⁴.

³⁰ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CLIV, p. 809; *Hechos del condestable Don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo (crónica del siglo XV)*. Ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2009, chap. XVII, pp. 187-189; GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do Príncipe D. João*, chap. XVII, p. 51; LEÃO, Duarte Nunes de - “Crónica e vida del rey D. Afonso o V”. In LEÃO, Duarte Nunes de - *Crónicas dos reis de Portugal*. Ed. M. Lopes de Almeida. Oporto: Lello & Irmão, 1975, pp. 781-1010, *maxime* chap. XXXIII, pp. 882-883; CASTILLO, Diego Enríquez del - *Crónica de Enrique IV*, chap. 55, pp. 208-209; PALENCIA, Alonso de - *Crónica de Enrique IV*, Década I, Book VI, chap. IX, p. 143; ZURITA, Jerónimo - *Anales de Aragón*. vol. VII. Ed. Ángel Canellas Lopez. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2003, Book XVII, chap. LVI; CHAVES, Álvaro Lopes de - *Livro de apontamentos (1438-1489)*. Ed. Anastásia Mestrinho Salgado and Abílio José Salgado. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 1983, p. 318. The political panorama of the Crown of Castile is described in detail in: SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ, Luis - *Nobleza y Monarquía. Endimientio y rivalidad*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2005.

³¹ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CLVII, p. 814; LEÃO, Duarte Nunes de - “Crónica e vida del rey D. Afonso o V”, chap. XXXV, p. 886; GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do Príncipe D. João*, chap. XVII, p. 52; CASTILLO, Diego Enríquez del - *Crónica de Enrique IV*, chap. 57, pp. 210-211; PALENCIA, Alonso de - *Crónica de Enrique IV*, Década I, Book VI, chap. X, p. 146; CHAVES, Álvaro Lopes de - *Livro de apontamentos*, p. 318.

³² See: AZCONA, Tarsicio de - “Capitulaciones matrimoniales entre Alfonso V de Portugal e Isabel de Castilla en 1465”. *Edad Media. Revista de Historia* 5 (2002), pp. 135-159, *maxime* pp. 135-138; SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ, Luis - *Enrique IV de Castilla. La difamación como arma política*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2001, pp. 275-342.

³³ CHAVES, Álvaro Lopes de - *Livro de apontamentos*, p. 317.

³⁴ *Memorias de Don Enrique IV de Castilla*. Vol. II. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1913, doc. CXXVIII, pp. 503-514; CHAVES, Álvaro Lopes de - *Livro de apontamentos*, p. 317.

According to Garcia de Resende, there were many times when Enrique IV proposed marrying his daughter to the Portuguese prince³⁵, and there is an undated letter, probably written in 1468 or 1469, that testifies to these efforts. In the instructions given to an officer of arms, the master of the Order of Santiago of Castile addresses the possibility of promoting a new meeting between the Queen of Castile and the King of Portugal, whose main objective would be to negotiate the marriage of Prince João to Juana³⁶. As far as we know, that encounter never took place.

In fact, the Portuguese prince would marry a cousin, Leonor, who was the daughter of Fernando, brother of Afonso V. Garcia de Resende presents a simple explanation for this marriage: the king wanted to favour his brother, who was one of the most powerful nobles of the kingdom and who had asked him a lot for this matrimonial alliance³⁷. In this way, João was destined to become the second consecutive king of Portugal to have a *national* wedding, since the marriage of Afonso V was also negotiated within the Portuguese royal family. Concluded in 1471, this marriage did not therefore correspond to an alliance with a royal house from another space and did not give rise to the embassies, trips and sumptuous celebrations that were associated with these occasions. It was, in a way, an *undiplomatic* marriage, even though it involved obtaining a dispensation from the pope to legitimize the marriage, which was achieved in 1470³⁸.

As it was said, until this time Prince João was mainly an object of his father's diplomacy, not an agent of diplomacy, but that was about to change. In 1471, when he married, João was already 15 years old. That same year, he participated in the conquest of Arzila, in Morocco, and was knighted. This is considered by most historiography to be the first relevant act of his life. The following year, in 1472, he became master of the Order of Santiago (and he had been, since 1468, master of the Order of Avis). In 1474, Afonso V granted him the monopoly of navigation and trade in the Guinea Sea – which, in practice, meant that he started directing the Portuguese

³⁵ RESENDE, Garcia de - *Crónica de D. João II e Miscelânea*, chap. IV, p. 4.

³⁶ Évora, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, *Manizola*, cod. 177, fls. 57v-59. Edited in: FARIA - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. II, doc. 33, pp. 133-135.

³⁷ RESENDE, Garcia de - *Crónica de D. João II e Miscelânea*, chap. IV, p. 4.

³⁸ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CLIX, pp. 815-816.

maritime expansion. Meanwhile, his household became more complex, with more specialized officers in the domestic, administrative, financial, political, and military domains³⁹. At the end of that year Enrique IV died and the dispute for the throne of Castile began. It was in this scenario that João, still a prince, asserted himself as one of the great political protagonists of the Iberian Peninsula and developed a significant diplomatic activity.

The war

Enrique IV died on December 12, 1474 and it is supposed that he determined in his will that he left the crown of Castile to his daughter Juana and the government of the kingdom to Afonso V of Portugal, who should marry her⁴⁰. As it is well known, there was another candidate for the throne, Isabel, sister of the deceased monarch, and married to the heir to the Crown of Aragon. The Castilian aristocracy was divided between supporting the two presumed heiresses, reason why Enrique IV's will could never be executed without giving rise to a confrontation.

At this point, Prince João was almost 20 years old, married, with a pregnant wife, was an administrator of two military orders, was a war veteran in Africa and promoted business and explorations in the Atlantic. He already had intense political activity. He had no idea how long he would have to wait to ascend to the throne, but he knew that it could take a long time, since his father was only 42 years old at the time. It was not up to him to decide whether or not to claim Enrique IV's inheritance, but it was no longer credible that he had no direct intervention in what happened from that moment on.

Rui de Pina reports in his chronicle that Afonso V decided to assemble the Royal Council as soon as he learned of the death of the King of Castile and the provisions of his will. Following it, the first position that the chronicler highlights is that of the

³⁹ GOMES, Saul António – *D. Afonso V*, pp. 103-107.

⁴⁰ About the death and final wills of Enrique IV, see: LADERO QUESADA, Miguel Ángel - *La España de los Reyes Católicos*. 4th edition. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2014, pp. 52-61; SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ - *Enrique IV de Castilla*, pp. 499-528; SUÁREZ FERNÁNDEZ, Luis - *Isabel I. Reina*. Barcelona: Ariel, 2015, pp. 75-96. The question of the existence or not of a will of Enrique IV, which is not consensual among historians, is presented and discussed in: ENCARNAÇÃO, Marcelo Augusto da – *A batalha de Toro*. Oporto: Fronteira do Caos, 2014, pp. 82-88.

crown prince: “with the hope of seeing his kingdoms in Portugal grow”, João desired that his father would agree to marry Juana and fight for the throne of Castile. More than that, he sought to influence the remaining counsellors to encourage the king in the same direction. Rui de Pina – who was a contemporary of these events and dealt closely with several of the characters involved – even reveals that João II, already king, regretted several times that his father had been ill advised on many occasions, namely when he did not accept the matrimonial proposals that Enrique IV presented to him in 1464/1465. If that had happened – says the chronicler –, Afonso V and João II of Portugal would have been “peaceful kings and lords of Spain”⁴¹.

What would be João's motivation for assuming such position? There is a first aspect that seems evident: the ambition to become king of a domain much larger than the one that fell to him when he was born. There is another point that could also be on the prince's mind: the possibility of assuming, in the immediate or short term, a more relevant political role, considering his father's involvement in Castile's affairs. It is well known how the political protagonism of some crown princes of the Middle Ages grew in contexts of war, as happened with Edward the *Black Prince* before Edward III and with the Dauphin Louis (future Louis XI) before Charles VII⁴².

The option of accepting the inheritance of Enrique IV and fighting for the throne of Castile was not consensual among the members of the Portuguese Royal Council. After having sounded out the support he could have in the neighbouring kingdom, Afonso V decided to advance in January 1475. Four months later, while preparing to cross the border, the king handed over the government of the kingdom to his son⁴³.

But, Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon tried to avoid conflict. In the beginning of February 1475, they sent an embassy to Portugal consisting of Doctor André de Vilhalón and André de Viveiro. Two letters of credence are preserved⁴⁴, addressed

⁴¹ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CLXXIII, pp. 829-830

⁴² See: BARBER, Richard - *Edward, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine: a biography of the Black Prince*. Martlesham: Boydell, 2003; BLANCHARD, Joël - *Louis XI*. Paris: Perrin, 2015; FAVIER, Jean - *Louis XI*. Paris: Fayard, 2001.

⁴³ FONSECA, Luís Adão da - *D. João II*, pp. 46-48.

⁴⁴ Évora, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, *Manizola*, cod. 177, fls. 64-64v, 64v-65. Edited in: FARIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. II, doc. 42, p. 144; doc. 143, pp. 144-145.

by each of the future *Catholic Kings* to Prince João, which confirms his political relevance, even at the international level, at a time when the war had not really broken out. Although we have no information about the contacts that were established with the prince, we can see that abroad he was already seen as a relevant interlocutor.

Beginning in May of this year, João ruled the kingdom for nearly two and a half years, with short interruptions in between. One of them happened in 1476, when he left his wife Leonor as regent to go to Castile and join in the war⁴⁵. The outcome of the Battle of Toro, which was inconclusive on a military level but constituted a defeat for Portugal on a political level, marked what would happen in the following years. Still in Castile, Afonso V realized that only with effective external support could he succeed in this war, and decided to travel to France to guarantee the aid of Louis XI⁴⁶. There are no direct testimonies of João's position regarding this decision, but there is no sign of opposition to his father's policy. However, he would continue to rule the kingdom.

What diplomatic activities did Prince João develop while regent of the kingdom? Naturally, the chronicles that focus on this period give great prominence to a diplomatic event that was not carried out by the prince: the trip of Afonso V to France and the set of meetings and contacts that it gave rise to. But the foreign relations of the Portuguese crown did not end with the king's actions, and there are some testimonies of initiatives in which the prince was involved from Portugal.

In April 1476, even before the Battle of Toro, the prince gave a procuration to four ambassadors so that, in his name, they could negotiate support for the cause of

⁴⁵ *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*. vol. 8. Ed. António da Silva Rego. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1960-1972, doc. 4422, pp. 488-489. Several works from Portuguese and Spanish historiographies address the details of this conflict. A summary of the essentials can be found, for example, in: DIAS, José João Alves; BRAGA, Isabel M. R. Mendes Drumond; BRAGA, Paulo Drumond – “A conjuntura”. In SERRÃO, Joel; MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira (Dir.) – *Nova História de Portugal*. Vol. V *Portugal do Renascimento à Crise Dinástica*. Coord. José João Alves Dias. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1998, pp. 689-760, *maxime* pp. 689-698.

⁴⁶ About this trip, see: FARIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. I, pp. 188-194, 372-379; SERRÃO, Joaquim Veríssimo - *Relações históricas entre Portugal e a França (1430-1481)*. Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Centro Cultural Português, 1975.

Afonso V in Castile. He did so, explicitly, as a “*regedor* and governor for the king”⁴⁷. It was not unusual for princes in the Middle Ages to send embassies in their own name, but – differently from this case – this often happened in parallel with diplomatic missions sent by their fathers. This was what happened, for example, when Charles VII of France and Dauphin Louis sent embassies to Rome following the election of Pope Nicholas V in 1447⁴⁸.

In September or October 1477, before Afonso V's return to Portugal, the prince signed a truce whose wording is unknown. According to Jerónimo Zurita, it would be valid for two years and had been negotiated following clashes on the border⁴⁹. In the Archivo General de Simancas, are preserved the powers passed by Isabel to the Count of Feria, which determined that he could establish a truce in the terms that he considered most convenient, covering the region between the town of Albuquerque and Andalusia⁵⁰. This truce has been practically ignored by Portuguese historiography, but it seems of the utmost relevance in the context of this text: after more than two years of conflict and at a time when the failure of Afonso V's trip to France was already evident, it was the prince who led an initiative that indicated a change in policy. For the first time since early 1475, there was a strong sign that peace could be the way.

Before analysing the peace that was actually signed in 1479 and trying to identify the prince's role in these negotiations, seems interesting to refer to a banal and apparently unimportant letter, but whose significance can be highlighted. In May 1478, already after Afonso V's return to Portugal – that is, after the prince's term as governor of the kingdom ended –, the Duchess Mary of Burgundy wrote to João to ask that the Portuguese Fernão Valente, who had been a servant of the Duchess Isabel of Portugal and Duke Charles *the Bold*, was hired for the administration of the Portuguese king⁵¹. Although it is not unprecedented and unusual for a prince to

⁴⁷ Évora, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, *Manizola*, cod. 177, fls. 50v-51v. Edited in: FÁRIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. II, doc. 46, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁸ FAVIER, Jean - *Louis XI*, p. 98.

⁴⁹ ZURITA, Jerónimo - *Anales de Aragón*, vol. 8, Book XX, chap. XII.

⁵⁰ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 63, pp. 134-135.

⁵¹ Évora, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, *Manizola*, cod. 177, fl. 46v-47v. Edited in: FÁRIA, Diogo - *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. II, doc. 48, pp. 150-151.

receive contacts from foreign powers⁵², this seems to mean two things: on the one hand, the prince was perfectly integrated into the network of international contacts that the marriages of the Portuguese royal family in previous generations had allowed to develop; on the other hand, in 1478, at least from Burgundy, it was already the prince who was seen as the proper interlocutor for matters – even if minor – related to the governance of the kingdom.

The peace

Peace was signed in September 1479, in Alcáçovas, and confirmed at the beginning of the following year in Toledo. Two women were at the heart of these agreements: Queen Isabel of Castile and Duchess Beatriz of Portugal. According to various sources, narrative and diplomatic, the meeting between this aunt and niece in Alcantara, which lasted a few days, resulted in the basis of the negotiations that would be developed and concluded in the following months⁵³. But what do the sources tell us about the prince's participation in this process?

Let's start with the Portuguese narrative sources. Rui de Pina does not present a very detailed account, but he is clear about the distribution of responsibilities among the members of the Portuguese royal family. After a discreet approach, Duchess Beatriz met Isabel in Castile. The king and prince were aware of these contacts and supported them. The conclusion of the deal took place in Portugal, at Alcáçovas, with the prince being entrusted by the king with “the business and charge of the dealings and settlements of said peace”. The texts were agreed between two ambassadors from each of the parties –Rodrigo Maldonado, for Castile, and João

⁵² Consider what happened, for example, in the weeks preceding the conquest of the North African city of Ceuta by João I of Portugal (1415), when envoys from the kingdoms of Aragon and Granada established personal contacts with various members of the Portuguese royal family, including the crown prince Duarte. See: FARIA, Diogo – “O papel da diplomacia na preparação da conquista de Ceuta”. *Fragmenta Historica* 7 (2019), pp. 37-53, *maxime* pp. 46-50.

⁵³ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 127, pp. 179-183; *Documentos sobre relaciones internacionales de los Reyes Católicos*. Vol. I. Ed. Antonio de la Torre. Barcelona: CSIC, 1949, doc. 9, pp. 9-10; PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CCVI, pp. 867-870; LEÃO, Duarte Nunes de - “Crónica e vida del rey D. Afonso o V”, chap. LXV, p. 994; PULGAR, Fernando del - *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, vol. I, chap. CIV, pp. 366-368; chap. CIX, pp. 379-380; SÍCULO, Lucio Marineo - *Vida y hechos de los Reyes Católicos*, pp. 82-84; ZURITA, Jerónimo - *Anales de Aragón*, vol. 8, Book XX, chap. XXX, XXXII and XXXIV; TOLEDO, Doctor de - *Cronicón de Valladolid (1333-1539)*. Valladolid: Grupo Princiario, Caja de Ahorros de Valladolid, 1984, p. 142.

Fernandes da Silveira, for Portugal –, but we know that the prince was present in this small village of Alentejo⁵⁴.

Garcia de Resende does not present details about the negotiations and refers that the peace was “made by King Afonso and the King of Castile”⁵⁵. Damião de Góis did not write a very developed version of this event, but he added important information: the prince was the author of the clause that determined that Juana abdicated of her “royal status” and would become a nun⁵⁶.

In Castile, Fernando del Pulgar and Lucio Marineo Siculo recorded various details about the course of these negotiations and both underlined the role of João, who had to convince his father to accept peace. Pulgar noted that the prince always supported the initiatives of Duchess Beatriz with a view to ending the war and was at her side in the fight for the king's support for what had been agreed in Alcantara. The monarch hesitated until the end, but João and Beatriz managed to persuade him to accept peace⁵⁷. Lucio Marineo Siculo highlighted that the prince was the first person to whom Beatriz showed the chapters of peace. According to this chronicler, at a time when the negotiations could be about to fail due to the senseless demands of Afonso V, it was the prince who convinced him that peace was the right choice for the kingdom. One of the arguments he would have used was that the war was unjust, especially because Enrique IV was sterile⁵⁸.

If we compare these accounts and critically analyse them, there seems to be little doubt about the prince's role in the peace negotiations⁵⁹. Apparently, two alternative views on the conflict were at stake: on the one hand, Duchess Beatriz and the crown prince wanted peace; on the other, Afonso V continued to cherish the

⁵⁴ PINA, Rui de - “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CCVI, pp. 867-870.

⁵⁵ RESENDE, Garcia de - *Crónica de D. João II e Miscelânea*, chap. XXI, p. 25.

⁵⁶ GÓIS, Damião de - *Crónica do Príncipe D. João*, chap. CIII, pp. 213-214.

⁵⁷ PULGAR, Fernando del - *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, vol. I, chap. CX, pp. 381-401.

⁵⁸ SÍCULO, Lucio Marineo - *Vida y hechos de los Reyes Católicos*, pp. 82-87.

⁵⁹ And historiography has already pointed out this aspect, as demonstrated by these two examples: Afonso V's biographer, Saul António Gomes, wrote that in the peace process the king was “a mere spectator”; João Alves Dias, Isabel Drumond Braga, and Paulo Drumond Braga noted that “Prince João played a significant role in the negotiations”. Cf.: DIAS, João José Alves; BRAGA, Isabel M. R. Mendes Drumond; BRAGA, Paulo Drumond – “A conjuntura”, p. 699; GOMES, Saul António – *D. Afonso V*, p.232.

dream of becoming King of Castile. It would have been thanks to João and his persuasion efforts that the king ended up agreeing to peace. Despite their differences, there are no fundamental contradictions between the various testimonies, which seem to complement each other. The fact – pointed out by Rui de Pina – that Afonso V entrusted João with dealing with peace can be understood as a natural consequence of the fact that it was the prince himself who convinced the king of the importance of that peace. The decision to assign Juana to monastic life – which would have been conceived by the prince, according to Garcia de Resende – is compatible with João's conviction that the war could not continue. It is more debatable whether the arguments that Lucio Marineo Sículo attributes to the prince to convince his father are true. As we have already seen, João defended an intervention in Castile after the death of Enrique IV. Sículo's reference that the prince, in 1479, was against the war because he considered it illegitimate, considering the sterility of Enrique IV, must be understood in light of the political character of legitimizing the royalty of the *Catholic Kings* of this author's work.

In short: according to the chronicles, it was not the prince who launched the peace process, but he, on the Portuguese side, was mainly responsible for its success.

Let us now see how the documents of diplomatic practice contribute to confirm or not this idea.

We can begin with an answer by Afonso V to an embassy of Louis XI of France⁶⁰. The document is undated, but was prepared after the king's return to Portugal, probably in late 1477 or early 1478. Although the voyage was a failure and no guarantee of military support was obtained, apparently the king was still deluded. The news he sent to France showed the great incentives he received to continue fighting for the throne of Castile and the hope he had in the success of this feat. It is certain that the peace was only signed almost two years later, and we cannot guarantee with certainty that this continued to be the position of Afonso V in 1479, but it is likely that it was. This, at least, is what we can deduct from the crossing of narrative

⁶⁰ *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, vol. I, doc. 594, pp. 925-928.

sources with this memorandum: effectively, Afonso V seems to have been the one who took the longest to realize the impracticability of war and the inevitability of peace negotiations.

The most evident testimonies about the prince's role in the Alcáçovas-Toledo treaties are the texts of these agreements. The various documents that resulted from these negotiations were signed, on the Castilian side, by Kings Fernando and Isabel. On the Portuguese side, they were granted by the king and the crown prince. In the peace treaty itself, a joint procuration from Afonso V and João to the ambassadors to deal with that matter is included⁶¹. In other agreements, there is a procuration from the king and another from the prince, in similar terms, but separate⁶². As is known, diplomatic relations in this period were eminently personal. More than peace between Portugal and Castile, what was at stake was the peace between the king of Portugal and the kings of Castile. But the Portuguese prince already had such a preponderance in the political conduct of the kingdom and in the crown's dealings with foreigners that he ended up also being formally – and not just in the shadow of negotiations – one of the individual protagonists of these treaties⁶³. To get an idea of the importance and exceptionality of this situation, just compare it with the peace signed with Castile in 1431. At that time, Prince Duarte had already played a very relevant role in the governance of the kingdom for over a decade, but who linked the kingdom of Portugal in the text of the treaty was only King João I⁶⁴.

There is another way of trying to assess the role of the prince in these negotiations: trying to identify, in the texts of the agreements, contents that indicate his

⁶¹ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 165, pp. 250-252,

⁶² *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 166, pp. 290-293; doc. 167, pp. 332-335.

⁶³ This situation is different, for example, from that of Alphonso, heir of Jaime II of Aragon, who took a leading role in diplomacy from 1320 onwards. In that case, according to Stéphane Péquignot, were at stake the purposes of educating the infant in the art of diplomacy, reinforce the legitimacy of his association to the throne and defend the unity of the House of Aragon. Prince João's involvement in this treaty, on the contrary, would simply be a consequence of the effective role he had played in its preparation and of the preponderance he already assumed in the political conduct of the kingdom of Portugal. See: PÉQUIGNOT, Stéphane - *Au nom du roi. Pratique diplomatique et pouvoir durant le règne de Jacques II d'Aragon (1291-1327)*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2009, pp. 486-491.

⁶⁴ *Monumenta Henricina*. Vol. IV. Ed. António Joaquim Dias Dinis. Coimbra: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do Quinto Centenário da Morte do Infante Dom Henrique, 1962, doc. 9, pp. 18-53.

intervention. In this case, there is one aspect in which this is very evident: the importance attributed in these agreements to overseas matters. After decades of exploring the Atlantic for a prince and a private merchant, Afonso V granted João the monopoly of navigation and commerce in Guinea in 1474. When peace was negotiated, the prince already had five years of dominance in the affairs of the Atlantic, and this was very evidently reflected in what was agreed in Alcáçovas⁶⁵. For the first time, ocean exploration was formally divided between the kingdoms of Portugal and Castile. The prince abdicated of the Canary archipelago, which had been claimed by the Portuguese monarchs since the 14th century, and ensured the exclusivity of the territories further south. As authors such as Luís Adão da Fonseca have already pointed out, there was a clear contrast between the geopolitical orientation of Afonso V – facing the Mediterranean and North Africa – and that of João II – facing the Atlantic and Guinea⁶⁶. This turn in the orientation of the Portuguese crown did not happen when João succeeded Afonso as king, but when João, as prince, negotiated the end of the war in which his father disputed the Castilian throne. The preponderance of maritime affairs in the peace of 1479 – which theoretically could be just that, a political peace agreement eventually reinforced by matrimonial alliances – is a more than evident sign that it was the prince, much more than the king, who led this important diplomatic operation.

The post-war-and-peace

After peace was reached, signed in Portugal in 1479 and ratified in Castile in 1480, Afonso V still reigned for almost two years. These were years in which the diplomacy of the Portuguese crown was marked, precisely, by the execution of the various texts agreed upon in Alcáçovas and in Toledo, which included the preparation of future marriages, the exchange of hostages, the return of fortresses, etc. Prince João continued to assume a preponderant role in the political conduction of the kingdom and, naturally, of this process, as it was pointed out by Rui de Pina: “And in the execution of these matters, because the necessity of many others required it, the

⁶⁵ *Documentos referentes a las relaciones con Portugal*, vol. I, doc. 165, pp. 276-280.

⁶⁶ FONSECA, Luís Adão - *D. João II*, pp. 193-221. This subject is deepened in other works from the same author: FONSECA, Luís Adão - *O Tratado de Tordesilhas e a diplomacia luso-castelhana no século XV*. Lisbon: Edições Inapa, 1991; FONSECA, Luís Adão - *Os descobrimentos e a formação do Oceano Atlântico*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 1999.

only and principal minister was the prince, because King Afonso, his father, greatly annoyed and ashamed of them, entirely excused himself from them and left them entirely to the disposition and ordinance of his son”⁶⁷. There are several documents and references in the chronicles that attest to this:

1. In September 1479, the prince sent a letter to the municipality of Lisbon ordering the release of two Castilian prisoners who had been imprisoned since the beginning of the war⁶⁸.
2. In March 1480, surely following the action of the prince's representatives, the *Catholic Kings* ordered the collection of taxes – the fifth – due for the trip of a group of caravels to the regions of Guinea and Mina, in present-day Ghana, as determined the peace agreement⁶⁹.
3. In the same year, the prince sent an ambassador to discuss with the Queen of Castile the restitution of the town and fortress of Noudar⁷⁰.
4. In 1480 and 1481, João obtained from the pope several bulls related to ocean exploration, namely the absolution of the sins of all those who worked in defence of the faith⁷¹. Contacts were also established with Rome as administrator of the orders of Avis and Santiago⁷².

And it was up to the prince, of course, to monitor the execution of the agreement that became known as *Terçarias de Moura*, which implied the delivery of his son Afonso and his future wife Isabel, still children, to be raised together by Duchess Beatriz. In this regard, Rui de Pina recounts an episode in which, faced with the dilatory manoeuvres of the Castilian ambassadors to postpone the delivery of Infant Isabel, the prince reacted by sending them two papers written by his hand: on one

⁶⁷ PINA, Rui de – “Crónica do senhor rei D. Afonso V”, chap. CCVII, p. 871.

⁶⁸ Lisbon, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, *Chancelaria régia*, Livro dos Pregos, doc. 431, fl. 293v.

⁶⁹ Simancas, Archivo General de Simancas, *Cancillería, Registro del Sello de Corte*, LEG, 148003, 302.

⁷⁰ CHAVES, Álvaro Lopes de - *Livro de apontamentos*, p. 271

⁷¹ *Descobrimientos portugueses*, vol. III, doc. 149, pp. 216-218.

⁷² SANTARÉM, Visconde de - *Quadro elementar*, vol. X, pp. 91-92.

was the word *peace*, on the other the word *war*. Urged to choose immediately, the ambassadors followed the path of peace and the matter was unblocked⁷³.

But there was so much more. The execution of Alcáçovas agreements was very complex, time-consuming, involved several incidents and led to the exchange of many embassies⁷⁴. After having been a protagonist in the negotiation of peace, the prince was a protagonist in the execution of the peace. It would have been in the father's name, in part, but mainly since it was in his own interest, as he also had signed the agreements individually and many of the matters that were at stake directly concerned him, namely the future marriage of the infant who would be his heir and the ocean exploration matters.

The prince's diplomatic action, however, did not end with his active participation in peace and war affairs with Castile. One of the most relevant dimensions of international relations at the end of the Middle Ages was the gathering and exchange of information about what was happening in other spaces. Information was power, and powerful people understood that⁷⁵. There is at least one testimony about how Prince João kept up to date with the reality of his time. In 1480, he received from the Portuguese Cardinal Jorge da Costa, who was in Rome, a letter with a very detailed description of the political situation in the Italian Peninsula, which was then facing the threat of Ottoman enemies. This was not a one-off missive, as it includes references to previous letters with the same purpose. It should be noted that Jorge da Costa was a man close to Afonso V, whose confessor he had been, but it was with the prince, not the king, that he corresponded on international political matters⁷⁶.

⁷³ Pina, Rui de – “Crónica do Senhor Rei D. Afonso V, chap. CCIX, pp. 875-877.

⁷⁴ See: FÁRIA, Diogo – *A diplomacia dos reis de Portugal*, vol. I, pp. 383-393.

⁷⁵ This is very clearly demonstrated by Isabella Lazzarini in: LAZZARINI, Isabella - *Communication and conflict. Italian Diplomacy in Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁷⁶ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Manuscrit portugais* 20, fls. 94v-97. Edited and analysed in: FÁRIA, Diogo; MARIANI, Andrea - “Todos hão de ficar cegos”: l'Italia di fine XV secolo osservata da un cardinale portoghese”. *Mediterranea: ricerche storiche* 41 (2017), pp. 695-706.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this text it was highlighted that historiography, at least since the 16th century, draws very contrasting images of Kings Afonso V and João II. And it was pointed out that these images can generate prejudices that influence the way historians look at each one's action. I tried to bear this in mind while analysing the period of about seven years in which the two were protagonists in the diplomacy of the Portuguese crown, between the beginning of the war for the throne of Castile and the death of Afonso V. I am not sure if I succeeded, objectively, that my conclusions resulted exclusively from the interpretation of the information that was crossed in several coeval sources, but actually it seems that it makes sense to establish a clear distinction between the performance and the positions of one and the other. And that distance got worse over the period studied. As it was seen, the first major international problem that the Portuguese crown faced during Prince João's political majority was the Castilian succession crisis caused by the death of Enrique IV. In this phase, which started at the end of 1474, everything indicates that there was a total alignment between the prince and the king. The start of the war resulted in the assumption of more political responsibilities by the prince, and it is as a result of this that there begins to be a distancing of positions in relation to his father. It should be noted that there was never, apparently, any question of disloyalty at issue. In 1477, on the final stretch of his journey to France, Afonso V abdicated to the throne, as he intended to spend the rest of his life in a monastery in the Holy Land. The prince was then king for some days, but when his father withdrew, a few days later, it was without any sign of discomfort that João returned to his previous status. Meanwhile, Afonso continued to dream of Castile, while João already understood that peace was the way. In 1479, more than the king, it was the prince who determined, on the Portuguese side, the terms under which peace was signed. And it was, alongside the king, the prince who signed it. Until the end of the reign of Afonso V, the Portuguese crown's diplomacy was conducted, above all, by the prince. He didn't do it against his father, but he didn't do it in his father's name either. He did it in parallel, with crossed interests, but in his own name. And abroad there was this perception. João II began to reign as a prince and diplomacy is one of the areas in which this is most evident.

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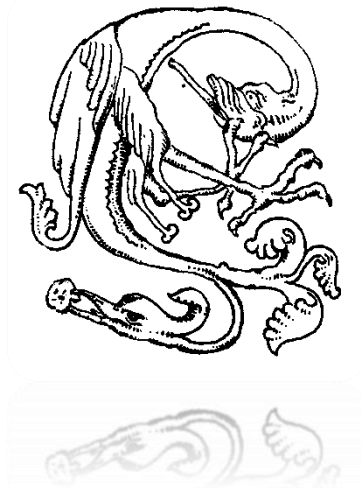
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