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THE «LIFE AND TIMES» OF MARTINHO PERES DE OLIVEIRA:
FROM ÉVORA TO BRAGA²

On 10 May 1292, at the cloister of Coimbra's cathedral, two representatives of the chapter of Braga met with the dean and chapter of the Mondego city³ to inform them of the decision made by the Braga chapter on the succession of archbishop Telo, possibly dead in the first months of 1292⁴.

According to archdeacons Pedro Egas de Neiva and Master Domingos de Vermoim, the chapter had postulated João Martins, canon of Coimbra, as their choice for archbishop. João Martins, who was present at the meeting, thanked them for their choice but asked to postpone his decision, invoking the burden of responsibility inherent in the episcopal position that would fall upon his shoulders.

1. I did not choose this topic for a tribute by chance. As often happens with many of us who have History as the centre of our reflection, some characters keep us company for a long time; we find them in-between the lines of documents, we are faced with their presence in unrelated matters, and we think that, sooner or later, we will end up devoting our attention to their life and pathway, hoping to draw up more than the traditional biography. Martinho Peres de Oliveira is undoubtedly my Gonzalo Perez Gudiel, although lacking the informative richness, the profuse life, and especially the art and mastery of the two authors who brought the archbishop of Toledo to life. The text below should therefore be seen as a simple tribute to someone who greatly influenced me.

2. Research work carried out within the scope of UID/HIS/00057/2013 (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-007702), FCT/Portugal, COMPETE, FEDER, Portugal2020.

3. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Gavetas dos Arcebispos, nº 16. Maria Justiniana Maciel Lima also mentions this document in her study on the chapter of Braga at the time of king Dinis: *O Cabido de Braga*, 89-93.

4. Eubel does not mention his date of death, but Rodrigo da Cunha and José Augusto Ferreira indicate 23 March 1292. We shall see that this date is consistent with the hypothesis of a first meeting of the chapter to prepare the elections in April. Cunha, *História Eclesiástica*, 167, and Ferreira, *Fastos*, tomo II, 91.

Such a request might simply reflect the need to weigh the consequences of the possible acceptance of the position, but in this case, as in many similar ones, it almost always constituted a sign of refusal.

This could have been the case of João Martins. According to José Augusto Ferreira, the canon of Coimbra refused the postulation because of his illegitimate birth⁵. This argument however, appears not to have prevented others from taking episcopal positions. In fact dispensation from illegitimate birth was not difficult to obtain in the late thirteenth century, despite limitations imposed by Lateran Councils.

Furthermore João Martins had previously obtained such dispensation from Pope Nicholas IV in April 1289, this enabled him to be granted any curate position including the episcopal dignity⁶. For that matter it was this dispensation that would allow him to accept his election by the chapter of Lisbon about a year and a half later⁷, at the beginning of 1294. He would remain bishop of this diocese until 1313, when he was transferred to Braga.

This was perhaps the reason why Rodrigo da Cunha first hypothesized that his election to Braga had not been effective due to lack of age of the elected or the fault or nullity of the voters⁸.

Whichever the reason, the archbishop's position was not taken and the see of Braga remained vacant from May 1292 until July 1295 – if we consider the papal bull appointing archbishop Martinho Peres⁹, or at least until shortly before May 1295 – if we credit the letter written by the archbishop-elect appointing the representatives in charge of collecting the rents and proceeds of the archdiocese of Braga¹⁰.

5. Ferreira, *Fastos*, tomo II, 95.

6. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, nº 134, 160-161. There is also a copy at the Arquivo Distrital de Braga included in the minutes of his election as bishop of Lisbon. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Gaveta dos Privilégios e Honras, nº 5. This dispensation dates from 3 April 1289. By a later bull, dated 1 December 1289, made at the request of Giacomo de Colonna, cardinal of Santa Maria in Via Lata, he was authorized to accumulate benefices. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, nº 247, 271-272. Mário Fareló has already mentioned this discrepancy between the argument invoked by José Augusto Ferreira and the existence of a former dispensation, underlining the need to rethink the issue. Fareló, «A quem são teúdos os barões», 155, notes 53, 54 and 56. In fact the existence of this bull proves that the problem behind the refusal of João Martins was not his illegitimate origin.

7. Eubel dates the nomination from 18 January 1294. The request made by the chapter of Lisbon to the archbishop of Compostela to confirm the election of João Martins is clear about the dispensation held by João Martins. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii*, 506. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Gaveta dos Arcebispos, nº 15 and nº 18.

8. Cunha, *História Eclesiástica*, vol. II, 168.

9. Boniface VIII, *Les registres*, nº 344, 121.

10. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 151. Letter from 17 May. Martinho Peres's election has to be pushed even further back due to a document extant in Livro das

Between May 1292 and February 1294 João Martins remained a canon of Coimbra. He held this position when he wrote his will in February 1293¹¹, choosing to be buried at Coimbra's cathedral, distributing his assets, benefitting his relatives, clients and servants and appointing the people responsible for executing the will's provisions. He appointed five executors, all of them ecclesiastics and members of different chapters. One of them was Martinho Peres, precentor of Évora¹², who took the position of archbishop of Braga after his refusal and a troubled election process.

The relationship, however, between João Martins and Martinho Peres did not begin at this time – it could hardly have; appointing a person as executor of one's will meant that there was mutual trust, or a relationship of dependency that was partially tested by this choice. In this case the nomination was merely a link in a long chain of contacts and connections, of which the 1292-to-1295 elections are possibly a significant instance. Even so, many questions about the whole process remain unanswered.

In fact the choice of Martinho Peres de Oliveira as archbishop of Braga can hardly be understood in full. Extant evidence points to turbulent meetings, heated choices, and a final nomination that can hardly be explained – especially in light of the available information, as shown below. Likewise the apparent refusal by João Martins de Soalhães to accept his election as archbishop of Braga and his wholehearted acceptance of the appointment to Lisbon tell us more when we read between the lines of the nomination documents than by interpreting the direct data on which they are based.

In any case this «exchange» of positions clearly happened at a time of strengthened royal interference with episcopal nominations, as already demonstrated by other studies¹³, but also of a redefinition of the relationship between the royal power of king Dinis and the church. This

Cadeias. When a royal charter of King Dinis referring to his agreements with the bishops of Porto, Guarda, Lamego and Viseu (written in 1292 but read and published in Braga on 17 September 1294) was made public, two vicars were mentioned on behalf of Dom Martinho, archbishop-elect. Braga, Arquivo Distrital Livro das Cadeias, nº 95. This document was also mentioned by Maciel, *O Cabido de Braga*, 92.

11. Morujão ed., *Testamenti*, 342-348.

12. The men appointed as executors of his will by João Martins were Martinho Peres, precentor of Évora, João António, archdeacon of Coimbra, Pedro Remígio, canon of Lisbon, Geraldo Domingues, canon of Coimbra and Martim Afonso, canon of Silves.

13. The number of references regarding the episcopal nominations in the central centuries of the Middle-Ages, in particular the king's role in such choices, is overwhelming. Examples of the most recent works mentioning many of the existing titles are Harvey, *Episcopal Appointments* (2014), and Peltzer, *Canon law, carers* (2008), and Tabbagh, *Les évêques* (2015) 45-60.

redefinition, not always successful, entailed much more than the reinforcement of the king's role in episcopal nominations¹⁴ and would take a much longer time than the decades coinciding with his long reign¹⁵.

Still, the nominations of Martinho Peres as archbishop of Braga in 1295 and of João Martins de Soalhães as bishop of Lisbon at the beginning of 1294 signal a turning point regarding the key aspect of king's clerics' rise to top positions in the Portuguese diocesan structure.

Shadows of an election

After the death of Telo, appointed archbishop by Pope Nicholas III after the nomination of Ordonho Álvares as cardinal bishop of Tusculum¹⁶, the chapter of Braga held its usual meeting to choose a successor. A document dated 8 May informs us of a previous meeting¹⁷, possibly held in April, during which the election date was set. The first part of the 8 May meeting¹⁸ consisted of establishing the voters' list, and addressing issues associated with the fact that three of the canons had appointed proxies chosen amongst the members of the chapter to represent them. But the key issue was also to determine whether Martinho Peres de Oliveira could be considered a canon of Braga and, in that capacity, a member of the electoral college.

The notary-public himself echoed such doubt by placing the name of Martinho Peres at the bottom of the list of chapter attendants, adding to his name an explicit reference: «Martinho Peres, precentor of Évora, who called himself canon of Braga»¹⁹. The doubt stemmed from a double nomination to the same position made by the chapter and by archbishop

14. Regarding episcopal nominations in Portugal in the time bracket of the late 13th century, first half of the 14th century, see Vilar, *Episcopal appointments*.

15. King Afonso IV and King Pedro I, the successors of Dinis, had to readdress the balance between king and church. On this matter, see Linehan, «Towards a Portuguese reformation», and Vilar, «No tempo de Avinhão».

16. D. Telo was nominated 6 April 1278. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii*, 144 and Ferreira, *Fastos*, tomo II, 77. *Documentos de Nicolás III*, nº 35, 214-215.

17. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 143. It should be stressed that this election is one of the few documented with minutes in the Portuguese archives. In most cases the diocesan archives did not preserve the minutes of chapter meetings convened to elect the bishop.

18. This paper is based on the document drawn up as minutes of the 8 May meeting. We also used the document presented at Coimbra and attached to the presentation act of the postulation of João Martins by the chapter of Braga. On this matter, see Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 143 and Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Gaveta dos Arcebispos, nº 16.

19. «se dicebat canonico bracarensis».

Telo; some time over the previous months the chapter appeared to have appointed Martinho Peres, while archbishop Telo named Abril Peres. Now that Telo had died, a minority of the chapter supported the archbishop's decision, but the dean, two archdeacons and seven canons upheld the appointment of the Évora precentor. Other members were not involved in this conflict, choosing not to take sides or simply abstaining from intervening.

Ultimately dean Gomes Fernandes and most of the canons imposed their will and, as a result, included Martinho Peres in the voters' list. Indeed Martinho Peres had never called himself a canon of Braga until that moment, possibly due to the conflict around the possession of the canonship, but also because he had only recently risen to such dignity, as evidenced by a document of Pope Nicholas IV²⁰. The chapter's decision however undoubtedly enabled him to better know the meanders of episcopal elections.

This knowledge would be crucial to the future career of Martinho Peres.

Once the composition of the electoral roster was established, the minutes inform us that the adopted model was election by compromise²¹. To this effect, three canons were nominated: Master Domingos de Vermoim, Martinho Rodrigues de Barroso and Rodrigo Fernandes. The second had backed up the integration of Martinho Peres in the chapter and the other two had remained equidistant.

The compromise model was selected possibly to overcome the internal divisions which had emerged, without any previous trace of them, as to the choice of the successor of Frei Telo. But the choice of the voters was undoubtedly a key basis for the compromise achieved in the process that subsequently unfolded. The power to choose having been granted to only a few members, decision-making lay in their hands and was affected only by the pressure put upon them.

The three canons chose João Martins de Soalhães, at the time referred to as canon of Coimbra – although this canonship was only one of his many benefices²².

20. In a document dated 27 September 1291, Nicholas IV gives Martinho Peres permission to accumulate one more benefice, referring to the recent possession of the canonship and prebend of Braga. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, n° 665, 583-584.

21. *Ecumenical Councils*, I, 246.

22. In a letter from Nicholas IV from 1291, the Pope mentions the possession of the churches of S. Clemente de Loulé, S. Miguel de Avô and S. Julião de Lisboa in addition to the canonships of Coimbra and Lamego, and an expected canonship in Lisbon. Apparently, he already had this

João Martins was no stranger to many of the Braga canons and most certainly not to Martinho Peres in particular. The latter's nomination as executor of the former's will reveals considerable closeness, as mentioned above. This closeness, if not initiated at the Roman Curia, was at least cemented at the time of the negotiation of the general agreements between King Dinis and the Portuguese bishops in 1289²³, in which Martinho Peres and João Martins were the king's representatives. Over the following years they received significant donations and were the object of clear recognition, both by the king and the papacy.

The almost consecutive choice of João Martins to Braga and then immediately to Lisbon appears to hint at the key importance of this connection, or at least of the network of family relations or influence that supported this ecclesiastic. Favour and recognition marked his career from 1289, the year in which the first agreements were signed. Throughout the lengthy and slow negotiation process developed at the Roman Curia by the two king's representatives, he does not appear as someone who feared the challenges of the episcopal function – his arguments to refuse the postulation for Braga. Indeed, shortly afterwards, little over a year later, he accepted, apparently without fear, the Lisbon challenge – and this diocese was not easier nor more peaceful than Braga.

Any glimpse from the recent history of the diocese of Lisbon prior to the nomination of João Martins de Soalhães, shows how difficult it was to run it and clearly evidences the instability and divisions that frequently disturbed the city's chapter. João Martins however no longer seemed to worry about the burden of this position, or its challenges, contrary to what had happened one year before, and he remained bishop of Lisbon until 1313. That year, upon the death of Martinho Peres, archbishop of Braga, he moved to the diocese he had refused twenty years before, serving as archbishop until 1325.

On 30 July 1295 Pope Boniface VIII confirmed the election of Martinho Peres, seizing the opportunity to describe the process retrospectively²⁴. According to the Pope's narration, after João Martins refused the postulation, the chapter of Braga held a new election at an unmentioned date and once again chose the compromise model. To that effect, three canons – i.e. Master João Martins, Gonçalo Gonçalves and Fernando Mar-

canonship in 1293 when he wrote his last will, in which he calls himself canon of Coimbra and Lisbon. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, nº 588, 509-510.

23. Sousa Costa, «Frei Telo», 298.

24. Boniface VIII, *Les registres*, nº 344, 121.

tins – were assigned the task of choosing the successor of Frei Telo. Their choice was unanimous and fell upon Martinho Peres, the cleric whose appointment as member of the chapter had raised so many doubts roughly three years before. Apparently, a long road had been travelled.

Even though being a member of the chapter was no longer a mandatory requirement, nor favourable to a person's choice as bishop, contrary to what had happened in the previous decades in some dioceses²⁵, Martinho Peres seems to have travelled a long way from being undesirable, or at least questioned by a significant part of the members of the chapter of Braga, to becoming the chosen one. Still, his election apparently did not take place without opposition.

The pope's bull echoed complaints about the process addressed to the Roman Curia by Fernando Mateus, archdeacon of Couto, Master Pedro Garcia, Fernando Teles, Miguel Sales and Diogo Dias, canons of Braga, though it abstained from mentioning the grounds for their appeal. Complaints were however enough to force the Pope to nominate investigators to conduct an inquiry and delay the appointment of Martinho Peres, which only occurred in July 1295.

Quite possibly taking advantage of the deadlock resulting from the disputed election, but sure of his success, in May 1295 – thus even before the Pope's confirmation – Martinho Peres appointed the representatives responsible for collecting the archbishopric's rents. They were: Nicolau Domingues, canon of Évora, João Domingues, a man of the king's household and his client, and João Martins, nicknamed Gago, a merchant of Lisbon²⁶. Recruited in Évora and in the royal entourage, that is in the whereabouts of choice for Martinho Peres, these men would be present in the coming years in the archbishop's closest circle. From early on, the newly-appointed archbishop sought to build or rebuild bonds and networks around him, recovering loyalties, creating new ones and distributing benefices.

He then titled himself precentor of Évora and archbishop-elect of Braga. From February 1295, onwards the king's chancery also identified him as elect of Braga²⁷, which makes us think about a possible election shortly before this date²⁸.

25. Vilar, *As Dimensões de um poder*, 28-56.

26. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 151.

27. Marreiros, *Chancelaria de D. Dinis*, Livro 2 nº 369, 387-389.

28. Oddly enough in documents issued by the King's Chancery referring to 1294 we find no explicit references to the two prelates; hence we cannot gauge the issue raised by the document included in the Livro das Cadeias, moving the date of the choice to before September 1294.

Oddly enough, it was also the king's chancery that continued to call João Martins de Soalhães archbishop-elect of Braga until at least 25 March 1293²⁹, at a time he only called himself canon of Coimbra.

Between the early months of 1293 and the late 1294, the diocese of Braga possibly remained vacant, preparing for the next election. Not much was left to chance in the months between the two elections. As Martinho Peres evolved from questioned canon to archbishop, new alliances were surely made and many protagonists intervened.

Rodrigo da Cunha himself echoed the surprise caused by such a sequence of consecutive elections. On one hand he ventilates the possible existence of legal impediments to João Martins' acceptance of his postulation by the chapter of Braga. On the other hand he also states that the choice of Martinho Peres was based on canons' knowledge of the «sufficiency and qualities of his person» who «was well fitted for the dignity to which he was elected»³⁰. This was knowledge that, it seems, the canons of Braga only had acquired some months after the first election.

As with João Martins de Soalhães, Martinho Peres had also made a career marked by favour and recognition, particularly since 1289.

A king's cleric since the 1280s, Martinho Peres was later identified as chaplain of the pope³¹ by Nicholas IV, counsellor of the king and holder of several benefices for which he obtained consecutive dispensations³² since the beginning of the 1290s and after the establishment of the concordats.

When discussing his possession of a canonship at the chapter of Braga in May 1292, he did so from the comfortable position of someone responsible for appeasing the conflict that had opposed the Portuguese kings and bishops since the 1260s and during the reign of King Afonso III.

Unlike João Martins, chosen only after the death of Estevão Lourenço, one of the king's initial representatives, Martinho Peres had held a relevant position in the Roman Curia since day one, thus undertaking to effect the difficult division between what was Caesar's and God's.

In the months after João Martins refused his postulate, or was removed from it, Martinho Peres or those who may have backed up his choice were probably very active, interested as they were in the Braga archbishopric.

29. Marreiros, *Chancelaria de D. Dinis*, Livro 2, n° 218, 243-244.

30. Cunha, *História Eclesiástica*, 16. Rodrigo da Cunha mention the possible existence of a bishop called Estevão between the election of João Martins and Martinho Peres. However, facing a lack of proof Rodrigo da Cunha is very dubious about his existence.

31. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, n° 665, 583-584.

32. *Documentos de Nicolás IV*, n° 245, 270-271, n° 499, 443 and n° 665, 583-584.

As on previous occasions, he stayed, at the king's court. In 1291 and 1293 Martinho Peres is identified by the chancery registers as *Ouvidor dos feitos em logo de corte*³³, acting as the king's representative in an agreement with the municipality of Alter do Chão³⁴. In 1293 the bishop of Lisbon appointed him to solve a dispute on the election of Maria Lourenço as prioress of the Chelas' monastery³⁵. Also in 1293, calling himself precentor of Évora, vicar of Santa Maria da Alcáçova de Santarém and king's cleric, he ordered the issue of a letter of acquittal to his *mordomo* and cleric Álvaro Pires³⁶.

Nonetheless, he was not in Portugal during the entire time that elapsed between the two elections. In May 1295, before the pope's confirmation at the time of the nomination of his representatives, he was possibly in France, where he ordered the drafting of a power of attorney, and he likely stayed abroad during the following months. This is evidenced by a permission granted by Pope Boniface VIII in August 1295 enabling him to borrow up to 1500 silver marks with the purpose of funding his presence at the Curia, which was necessary to defend the interests of the diocese that had chosen him³⁷.

Eventually, in July 1295, Martinho Peres' possession of the diocese of Braga was confirmed.

The cathedral's long interregnum was thus overcome, after at least two troubled elections and approximately three years of vacancy. As a final result, the two representatives of King Dinis at the Roman Curia ended up holding the two most important dioceses of the kingdom: Braga, still the only archdiocese of the kingdom, and Lisbon, a politically-decisive wealthy city that gained weight in the kingdom's political balance.

In this context the cathedral's long vacancy forces us to ask questions. The situation was not unusual, but we must stress that the absence of an appointed bishop occurred at a time of internal political appeasement. The long reign of Dinis already assured a significant continuity, particularly at a time of sharp dynastic change in the neighbouring kingdom of Castile.

This continuity contrasts with the vacancy that also affected the papal power after the death of Nicholas IV in April 1292 and the nomination

33. Marreiros, *Chancelaria de D. Dinis*, Livro 2, nº 52, 101-103 and nº 224, 259-260.

34. Marreiros, *Chancelaria de D. Dinis*, Livro 2, nº 223, 257-258.

35. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Gaveta das Religiões, nº 33.

36. Braga, Gaveta das Propriedades Particulares, nº 984.

37. Boniface VIII, *Les registres*, nº 303, 108. According to Paravicini Bagliani, he visited Rome on several occasions between 1295 and 1298. Paravicini Bagliani, *La cour des papes*, p. 204.

of Celestine V in July 1294, some months after he was substituted by Boniface VIII³⁸. Such extended vacancy and controversy about the successor of Peter, created favourable conditions for the episcopal nominations to drag on, particularly when challenged, and made it easier for kings to interfere with the appointments.

The consecutive appointments of these two clerics and counsellors of the king to top positions in the diocesan hierarchy of the Portuguese kingdom can hardly be interpreted as coincidence. Reward and recognition of these two ecclesiastics after 1289 were not merely a means to reciprocate loyalty, or the success of negotiations with the Portuguese bishops. In fact the general agreements of 1289, complemented with those of 1292 and the acceptance by king Dinis of the eleven articles that remained unsolved in the late 1280s, recognized in many aspects the claims submitted by the bishops, but also unquestionably reinforced the king's position in the management of ecclesiastic matters. The king thus became a privileged interlocutor with the episcopal group in conducting ecclesiastical policy inside the kingdom.

On one hand Dinis endeavoured to change the episcopal picture that, a few decades before, had raised many problems for his father and uncle – removed from the throne in 1245³⁹. On the other hand reward to and recognition of Martinho Peres and João Martins de Soalhães, with their appointment as bishops of Braga and Lisbon, also meant to show that service and loyalty to the king were decisive to successful careers.

This objective was even more important when ecclesiastics did not only represent themselves and their own personal interests and did not make progress by themselves along their career pathway.

Bishops do not walk alone through life

In September of 1295, approximately two months after his confirmation, Pope Boniface VIII himself gave Martinho Peres permission to assign benefices to six of his domestic clerics in the cathedrals or collegiate churches of his province⁴⁰. This permission first and foremost aimed to provide Martinho with an instrument of compensation and

38. Paravicini Bagliani, *Boniface VIII*, 46-72.

39. Fernandes, *D. Sancho II*, 257-261.

40. Linehan, *Portugalia Pontificia*, vol. I, n° 880, 550. Boniface VIII, *Les registres*, n° 463, p. 164.

reward, which he soon used. In May 1296 he appointed as members of his household Sancho Peres, dean of Porto, Rodrigo Soares, archdeacon of Barroso, and two canons of Évora: Nicolau Domingues, his former legal representative as collector of the archbishopric's revenue, and Abril Vicente⁴¹. On 3 June he granted Gonçalo Pereira, vicar of the church of São Nicolau da Feira, the canonship and the prebend of Tui, left vacant by the consecration of Sancho Peres as bishop of Porto, also recognizing Gonçalo Pereira as member of his household⁴².

Combined analysis of these five names defines, to some extent, the geographic frontiers of Martinho Peres' influence, as they each represent different stages of the archbishop's career. To the city of Évora, where the origins of his family were rooted, and its elites, he added connections made during his service to the king – namely with families, or family branches, of a nobility which was either rising or had consolidated its position through royal service and ecclesiastical careers. Examples of the latter are João Martins de Soalhães, Sancho Peres de Froião and also Gonçalo Pereira. Such examples also enable us to examine the political society of the late thirteenth century, in particular that group of ecclesiastics who, from the late thirteenth century to the early fourteenth, consolidated their power by holding offices in different dioceses, benefices in the kingdom's most prestigious churches, and controlling positions near the king, especially at the Chancery⁴³.

Predictably Martinho Peres' rising trajectory, that led him to become the king's representative at the Curia, executor of King Dinis' will and possible regent of the kingdom (as determined by the King's first will)⁴⁴, and archbishop of Braga did not start from scratch. Unlike other ecclesiastics, Martinho was not actually born into the prelature, nor was he an influential man since his beginnings⁴⁵. His ancestors did not rank among the noble families hailed in the *Livros de Linhagens* as bastions of Portuguese nobility's antiquity and legitimacy. They rather mixed with small-to-medium sized regional nobility, or even recently ennobled local oligarchies of unknown descent with roots traced to the meanders of elites formed in Southern Portugal, who had benefitted from the proceeds of the period after the Christian conquest⁴⁶.

41. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 158.

42. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 159.

43. Homem, *O Desembargo Régio*, 176-181 and Vilar, «Between service and loyalty».

44. *Monarquia Lusitana*, Parte V, 329-331.

45. Guenée, *Entre l'Église et l'État*, 21.

46. Beirante, *Évora na Idade Média*, 522-563.

Son of Pedro de Oliveira and Elvira Anes Pestana, Martinho Peres was also the nephew of Martinho Peres, Bishop of Évora between 1246 and 1266⁴⁷. We find members of the Oliveira and Pestana families in the city council of Évora at least since the second half of the 13th century. They are both examples of longevity in the exercise of municipal functions⁴⁸, often combined with other roles in the managing boards of the city's main brotherhoods⁴⁹, offices of the crown's peripheral administration, and a standing (at least recurring, if not continuous) presence in the chapter of Évora.

Their presence and influence, possibly hailing from their settlement at the city in the early days following the Christian conquest, were possibly at the root of the problems surrounding the confirmation of Martinho Peres, elected bishop of Évora around 1237.

Dean of the chapter of Évora upon his election as bishop, Martinho Peres seemed to follow a trend shared with other predecessors, rising from the main position of the chapter to bishop. Not all the canons however welcomed his nomination.

Master Soeiro, canon of Évora and papal chaplain, embodied a fierce opposition to Martinho Peres, based on charges of simony and accumulation of benefices without prior dispensation from the Pope. He accused him and his family of misappropriation of diocesan assets⁵⁰, thus highlighting the family's continuous presence in the city and particularly in the ecclesiastical organisation. These charges were possibly filed after the election, circa 1237, during the pontificate of Gregory IX, as stated by Innocent IV in his bull dated the 2 March 1244, and also by Gregory IX's documents, and apparently managed to postpone his appointment to 1246. The political crisis which cropped up around king Sancho II – in particular after the late 1230s, leading to his deposition in 1245, along with the factions formed around Sancho, may have contributed to maintaining a situation of apparent vacancy, while the election was being discussed due to the charges of Master Soeiro⁵¹.

47. Vilar, *As Dimensões de um poder*, 44-52.

48. Serra, *Governar a cidade e servir o rei*, especially 403-418. Vilar, «Da vilania à nobreza», 145-161.

49. Serra, *Governar a cidade e servir o rei*, 264-276.

50. Vilar, *As Dimensões de um poder*, 46-50. Sousa Costa, *Mestre Silvestre e Mestre Vicente*, note 572, 456-457 with the bull of Gregory IX. The role and the connections with the relatives mentioned by the pope were also stressed by Hernández and Linehan, *The Mozarabic cardinal*, note 16, 409.

51. About Master Soeiro and this conflict see also Marques, *O Papado e Portugal*, 253-255.

But this was not the only challenged episcopal election in Portugal. In Lisbon the choice of Aires Vasques, former archdeacon of the archbishop of Compostela João Aires, his uncle, who had forced his election, had triggered a long and troublesome conflict, which Innocent IV also tried to end in 1244⁵². He thus confirmed the appointment made by archbishop João Aires in Lisbon and simultaneously ordered the bishops of Idanha, Lisbon and Coimbra to investigate the Évora situation⁵³. Roughly two years later, in May 1246, he confirmed the election of Martinho⁵⁴.

Meanwhile the deposition bull of king Sancho II had been issued and king Afonso III was appointed to rule the kingdom.

Master Soeiro, although denied the office of bishop, received other benefices from the Pope. Referred to as archdeacon of Santarém, Innocent IV also gave him permission, on 9 January 1245⁵⁵, to hold his position along with that of dean of Lisbon, an office to which he had been chosen by bishop Aires Vasques. This clearly hints at his connection to the diocese of Lisbon, now governed by a new bishop imposed by the pope's authority, to favour the wishes of the archbishop of Compostela, but against the interests and claims of the chapter and the «secular» powers that stood for Ricardo Guilherme⁵⁶.

The presence of Master Soeiro, as well as that of Aires Vasques, appears to have met local resistance. We can glean this from a letter of the pope, who, even before confirming Martinho as bishop of Évora, in January 1245 asked the abbot of Alcobaça and Ricardo, precentor of Lisboa, to back up Master Soeiro in claiming his rights and rents in the diocese of Lisbon, where he had been slighted on several instances⁵⁷.

Actually, though Innocent IV sought to make peace by confirming the appointment of Aires Vasques to Lisbon, not all issues were addressed at that time nor were all papal nominations welcomed. Lisbon and the city's forces usually played a key role in defining the kingdom's political geography – a situation that also affected the ecclesiastical party, which in turn was divided as to whom it supported.

Once Master Soeiro was appeased, either by the possession of additional benefices, or by changes in the political scene following the

52. Branco, «Bispos, reis e cabidos», 89-94.

53. Innocent IV, *La documentación*, I, n° 40, 60-61 and n° 43, 63-66.

54. Innocent IV, *La documentación*, I, n° 274, 297.

55. Innocent IV, *La documentación*, I, n° 89, 100-101.

56. Branco, «Reis, bispos e cabidos», 89-94 and Vilar, «Em torno de uma diocese», 129-134.

57. Innocent IV, *La documentación*, Livro I, n° 93, 103-104.

removal of king Sancho II, the confirmation of Martinho as bishop of Évora marked the beginning of a regime that lasted until 1266.

We do not know whether the diocese was vacant during the years preceding the confirmation of Martinho. Nevertheless the charges filed by Master Soeiro against Martinho's family, accusing them of retaining control over ecclesiastic benefices, clearly shows that the lineage of the future archbishop of Braga already held an important, even if negative, position in the balance of regional forces in the mid-thirteenth century.

Martinho, as bishop of a diocese in which the king's influence was particularly strong, apparently followed a trend common to some of his predecessors. At a very early stage he was close to King Afonso III's interests, as we can see from his gift of two-thirds of Beja's church revenues to repair the city walls in 1253⁵⁸. This closeness explains why, in 1255, King Afonso III swore in the bishop's hands that he would not devalue the currency, as stated in a letter issued by the king to the pope and the masters of the military orders⁵⁹.

When he died in 1266, he was no longer directly involved in the conflict that had confronted King Afonso III to the Portuguese bishops after 1266, leading most bishops to the Roman Curia. Invoking perhaps his old age Martinho remained in the kingdom, and the diocese of Évora was represented by the bishop's proctor⁶⁰. Such permanence might have influenced the subsequent choice of his nephew as king's representative.

His recorded association with people known outside the kingdom may also have had an impact on his nephew's career. In fact, in the last years of his life, namely around 1260-1261, part of Martinho's activity consisted in addressing the recurring conflict between the bishops of Coimbra and the city's Monastery of Santa Cruz. Together with Master João de Deus, he tried to solve this dispute, apparently developing connections with Pedro Julião, dean of Lisbon, at whose residence the definitive sentence was read⁶¹. In 1260 it was Pope Alexander IV himself who chose him to enforce an order aimed at forbidding the construction of houses around the house of Lisbon Dominicans⁶².

58. *Chancelaria de D. Afonso III*, livro 1, doc 17, 29.

59. *Chancelaria de D. Afonso III*, livro 1, vol. 2, doc. 705.

60. Marques, *O Papado e Portugal*, 390. The Bull of Gregory X where are mentioned the bishops and procurators sent to the Roman Curia is from 4 September 1275. *Registres de Gregoire X*, n° 628, 265-269.

61. Costa, *Um Mestre português*, 167-184.

62. Linehan, *Portugalia Pontificia*, vol. I, n° 607, 400.

Actually the chronological gap between the last document references to Martinho Peres as bishop of Évora and the first to his nephew Martinho Peres as king's cleric and his representative at Rome since the 1280s does not allow us to immediately connect the two characters, nor even state clear nepotism intentions.

Even though we cannot clearly prove such intentions, establishing continuous or simultaneous presence of both ecclesiastics at the king's service, or in the diocesan hierarchy of Évora, Martinho Peres himself suggested such a connection by imposing in his last will the annual anniversary celebrations for his uncle's soul, in recognition of his protection⁶³.

Whether it is due to his uncle, or to the influence exerted by his family in Évora, that had led Master Soeiro to raise so many objections, Martinho Peres is identified as precentor of Évora since the mid-1280s, at a time when the see of Évora was in the hands of bishop Durando Pais. He began to be identified as king's cleric in the 1280s, more specifically from July 1287⁶⁴.

Those two positions linked him to Évora, where he held one of the three existing chapter dignities, and to the king, with whom he had been associated in the previous years.

In fact King Dinis had appointed him representative to the Roman Curia, together with Estevão Lourenço, at least since 1284, with the purpose of defending the king's interests in the conflict against the Portuguese bishops. This appointment, confirmed in 1288 to Martinho Peres and João Martins de Soalhães, occurred after the 1282 suit, initiated by the archbishop of Braga, Frei Telo, and the bishops of Coimbra, Porto, Guarda and Évora, aimed at addressing the issues that had been dragging on from the previous reign.

The parties' claims were settled at the Roman Curia and the conflict came to a provisional end, as mentioned above, through the so-called «concordats» of 1289 and 1292. There is no doubt however that the king did not choose Martinho Peres by chance and that his participation was not a minor step in his career.

Martinho Peres close relationship with the Roman Curia, clearly evidenced by the Pope's donations since 1289, continued during the follow-

63. Morujão ed., *Testamenti*, 196.

64. Lisboa, Arquivo Nacional, Chancelaria de D. Dinis, Livro 1, fls 204v-205v.

ing decades. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani identifies him as recipient of the translation of the treaty «Taysir Sapientis», made by Giovanni di Capua. According to Paravicini, at the court of Pope Boniface VIII he was also member of a group of Iberian ecclesiastics, together with Gonzalo Gudiel, Pedro Galego and Pedro Hispano, who frequently attended the Roman Curia during the thirteenth century, although not always at the same time⁶⁵. Actually, Martinho Peres died at Avignon in 1313.

Contrary to what the royal documents indicate by mentioning him as witness in the 1290s, before he was elected archbishop, Martinho presence in Évora is scarcely documented. This probably suggests a distance imposed by his obligations at the service of the King and Pope.

When we consider his family as a whole, however, the last years of the thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth apparently did more than add benefits to Martinho Peres. Even though we cannot, once again, trace or identify the actions of the future archbishop, his brothers and sisters, and especially his nephews, married into families with origins in regional nobility, such as the Froião, but also into families of mid-rank courtly nobility, such as the Vasconcelos and the Dade⁶⁶. In other cases, marriages seemingly strengthened alliances traceable to the ecclesiastic sphere. One of Martinho Peres sisters (Maria or Teresa), married Lourenço Martins de Soalhães, brother of João Martins de Soalhães, who accompanied Martinho Peres to the Roman Curia⁶⁷.

His appointment to Braga constituted a consecration and took place at the same time as many collateral members of his family rose from their previous regional status by way of marriage.

The connections of Martinho to Évora were not restricted to his blood family. During his rule as archbishop, several clerics accumulated positions and benefices in both dioceses. Nicolau Domingues and Abril Vicente, mentioned in the document of 1296, are just two cases of Évora clerics identified also as clerics of the archbishop, therefore entitled to receive benefices in the archbishop's area of influence. Gil Martins, canon of Évora and Braga, and treasurer of Braga, as well as João Vicente, archdeacon of Barroso and also member of the chapter of Évora, are two other examples of the network patiently weaved between the two dioceses over the final years of the 13th century and the first decades of the 14th.

65. Paravicini Bagliani, *Medicina e scienze*, 200-201.

66. Pizarro, *Linbagens Medievais Portuguesas*, 543-564.

67. *Livro de Linbagens*, vol. III/1, 347.

Subsequent generations of the Oliveira family did not disappear from the chapter of Évora and benefice accumulation impacted on connections between different dioceses, but the traceable articulation of these decades seems to be particularly important and hard to explain without the backstage action of Martinho Peres.

In fact Martinho Peres was quite clear in his will about his connections to Évora. Not only was most of his patrimony apparently located in the south of Portugal, it was also in Évora where he instituted the yearly anniversary celebrations for his soul.

If the clerics from Évora ensured the new archbishop's ability to preserve his influence in the diocese where he had begun his career and in the territory where he had a substantial part of his assets, as well as in the city in which many of his relatives based their power, the choices of Sancho Peres, Dean of Porto, and this city's future bishop, and especially Gonçalo Pereira to become members of his household served different purposes.

Let us go back to the letter we mentioned at the beginning and talk about the group that Martinho Peres sought to distinguish as early as 1296.

Sancho Peres was the son of Pero Peres Homem and Teresa Anes Redondo, and member of a large lineage, which he himself recalled in his will of 1298 and to whom he bestowed books and properties⁶⁸.

His links to Porto's Cathedral are documented at least from February 1285, when bishop Vicente appointed him precentor, thus replacing Gonçalo Gonçalves, of whom Sancho Peres claims to be executor in 1285, and identifies as his uncle in his own will, dated 1298. Sancho is referred to as dean of Porto at least since November 1285⁶⁹.

Actually after this date Sancho Peres is only mentioned as dean of Porto, although we know the name of the next precentor only in 1287.

Thus the existence of accumulated dignities cannot be easily established, although Sancho had undoubtedly accumulated other benefices with the deanery of Porto, where he stayed between 1285 and 1296, when he was appointed bishop of Porto. The same happened to his prebend of canon of Braga, which he assumed on the occasion of the 1292 election process.

68. Morujão ed., *Testamenti*, 557-566.

69. Since Maria João Oliveira e Silva mentions December 1284 as the date of the first reference of him as dean, this means there was an accumulation of dignities somewhere between February and November 1285. Maria João Silva, *A escrita na catedral*, 324-325.

His connection to Martinho Peres, or his recognition by the archbishop, dates from at least 1296, when he mentioned him as member of his household and gave him the power to bestow benefices belonging to the archbishop in the diocese of Porto, calling him «venerabili viro et amico carissimo domno Sancio Petri decano portugalense ac canonico nostro»⁷⁰. This is a canon of Braga that D. Martinho wished to thank – for his friendship, and maybe for his support during the vicissitudes that had marked the years preceding his appointment.

A month afterwards, Martinho Peres was referred to as Sancho's debtor in his list of assets, a complete inventory of his estate ordered by Sancho himself during the first months of his rule as bishop of Porto⁷¹. He owed him 2,000 *libras*, given as payment for the usufruct of Vermoim's assets to Sancho Peres until the amount was collected, thus extending the web of a relationship that seemed to have many facets.

Upon the death of Vicente Mendes in April 1296, dean Sancho Peres seemed the right candidate to occupy his position. On June 4, he was appointed bishop of Porto by the Pope. But on June 3, Martinho Peres gave Gonçalo Pereira the canonship of Tui, left vacant by the consecration of Sancho Peres as bishop of Porto⁷².

This act marks a new phase in Gonçalo Pereira's relationship with the dioceses of Porto and Braga.

In fact the rise of Sancho Peres vacated not only the canonship of Tui, but also the position of dean of Porto, to which Gonçalo Pereira was named at least since October 1296.

Identified as vicar of the church of São Nicolau da Feira until then, Gonçalo Pereira thus begins a pathway of increasing importance, where the possession of the deanery of Porto seems to have been the starting point. He kept this dignity until his appointment to Lisbon in 1322, despite all the doubts and criticism about his conduct, and later rose to the position of Archbishop of Braga. Nothing seems to evidence that, at the time of his choice, Gonçalo Pereira was a member of the chapter of the city where he would become dean. His family roots share the same geography as those of bishop Sancho, who was his cousin, since he was son of count Gonçalo Pereira, brother of Pero Peres Homem, father of Sancho Peres and Urraca Vasques Pimentel⁷³.

70. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 157.

71. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 161.

72. Braga, Arquivo Distrital, Coleção Cronológica, nº 159.

73. Coelho, «O arcebispo D. Gonçalo Pereira: um querer, um agir», 397-402.

Through this appointment however, the Pereira/Froião lineage seemed to perpetuate the possession of the deanery of Porto, if we consider the family connections between Gonçalo Gonçalves, Sancho Peres and Gonçalo Pereira; even if in the case of the latter the dignity seems to have been merely a transition to other functions.

The connection between Gonçalo Pereira and Sancho Peres was not limited to the usufruct of this dignity. Gonçalo Pereira, also a witness to the drafting of the inventory mentioned above, was one of the executors appointed by the bishop of Porto in 1298, and in May of the same year Gonçalo Pereira donated to Sancho assets he owned at Moure, Pereira and Torre, saying that he had to recognize all the favours granted to him by the prelate.

Sancho Peres and Gonçalo Pereira also shared their dependency vis-à-vis Martinho Peres.

Gonçalo Pereira was then a rising ecclesiastic. Ambitious, of noble descent, belonging to influence networks that surpassed the diocese where, possibly in a vague and distant way he would become dean, Gonçalo Pereira was already a notorious character, whose misconduct during his student years in Salamanca was forgiven by the Pope. He would become the head of the opposition regarding the politics of King Afonso IV a few decades later.

Although the choices of Martinho Peres could not foresee the future of these characters, they portray the extent of a web that crossed generations and confront us with the existence of a rationale in the formation of groups, comprising families and clients, centred on ecclesiastical figures and reinforced by the logics surrounding marriages and relationships of protection.

Hardly representing anything new, the case of Martinho Peres, here glimpsed only in some of its aspects, does not just confront us with a protagonist of the ecclesiastical structures of the 13th century or the political society of the time. His pathway is also the pathway of his family and his protégés, as well as that of his protectors, and evidences once more the key role played by ecclesiastic figures in the power groups of the late Middle Ages – bishops never walk alone during their lifetime.

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ABSTRACT

The «Life and Times» of Martinho Peres de Oliveira: From Évora to Braga

On 30 July 1295 Boniface VIII confirmed the election of Martinho Peres as archbishop of Braga, putting an end to a long vacancy in medieval Portugal's most important see, in fact the only archbishopric in Portuguese territory. At the time, Martinho was a well-known advisor to King Denis, but his career in the churches of Evora and Braga goes beyond offering a paradigm of advancement within the ecclesiastic and political structures of the 13th century. His pathway is also that of his family, his protégés, and his protectors, and points once again to the key role played by ecclesiastics inside the power groups of the late Middle Ages, when it could certainly be said of bishops that they «never walked alone».

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