

BETWEEN HUSBAND AND FATHER: QUEEN ISABEL OF LANCASTER'S CROSSED LOYALTIES

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ABSTRACT

Isabel of Lancaster became engaged to Afonso V of Portugal when they were both seven years old. Her father was Pedro, the uncle of the infant king and regent of the realm after the forcing out of the queen mother Leonor of Aragon. The regency allowed Pedro to favour his own lineage. However, when Afonso V took over the government, other branches of the royal family and the high nobility who felt endangered by Pedro's policy started to turn the king against him. We will show how Isabel negotiated her loyalty both to her husband and to her father during the conflict that arose between them, and how she managed to keep her status and power while honouring her father's memory and protecting the other women of her lineage after the ignominious death of Pedro in a battle against the king.

KEY WORDS

Endogamy, Princely marriage, Queenship, Regency, Royal family.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Endogamia, Nuptiae principum, Manus reginae, Regentis dignitas, Regia domus.

It has been argued that a crucial point in medieval noble women's understanding of themselves was that a man's place in the medieval world was defined primarily by his membership of a single patrilineal family while a woman's place was defined by double and potentially contradictory family allegiances.¹ Royal women who married abroad in order to consolidate peace treaties or to establish new alliances among two monarchies, and who had to cross cultural, geographical, and linguistic boundaries in addition to familial ones, experienced this duality in an exaggerated form; this might give them a strong sense of self and enhance their personal power.² Yet it was not without danger: foreign queens could be criticized, physically abused or even murdered for favouring their kin and countrymen or introducing new and "depraved" customs in the realm.³

János Bak has nevertheless alerted to the fact that royal marriages made within the boundaries of one kingdom could also meet strong criticism as they would get a magnate's family too close to the throne.⁴ "Native" queens were also suspected of benefiting their relatives and protégés, thus disturbing the existing balance among the aristocracy and giving rise to antagonisms and conflicts. What, then, if the marriage was made within the royal family itself, defying the canonical impediments? Would it strengthen or enfeeble the king's role as arbitrator of the nobility and sovereign of the realm's subjects? Would it reinforce love and solidarity or sow discord among the family's different branches? And the status of the queen, would it be enhanced or curtailed by her previous position as a member of the royals? We will try to answer these and other related questions by analysing the case of Queen Isabel of Lancaster.⁵

The idea of marrying Isabel to her first cousin Afonso of Portugal first arose in dramatic conditions: on September 9, 1438, King Duarte died suddenly from plague, leaving as heir a boy aged 6. In his will, Duarte entrusted his wife Leonor of Aragon with the guardianship of their children and the regency of the realm. However, the deceased king had four brothers who saw in this situation an opportunity to increase their influence and riches, and possibly even exercise supreme power: Pedro, duke

1. Wood, Charles T. "The First Two Queens Elizabeth, 1464-1503", *Women and Sovereignty*, Louise Olga Fradenburg, ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992: 127.

2. Parsons, John Carmi. "Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500", *Medieval Queenship*, John Carmi Parsons, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993: 77-78.

3. Bak, János M. "Roles and Functions of Queens in Árpáadian and Angevin Hungary (1000-1386 A.D.)", *Medieval Queenship*, John Carmi Parsons, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993: 14-16; Bak, János M. "Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary", *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, Anne Duggan, ed. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997: 223-233. Though concerning the later period, it will also be illuminating to read: Crawford, Catherine. "Constructing Evil Foreign Queens". *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37/2 (2007): 393-418.

4. Bak, János M. "Queens as scapegoats in Medieval Hungary"....: 228.

5. Isabel was the grand-daughter of Philippa of Lancaster, queen of Portugal by her marriage to King João I (1385-1433). Philippa was very fond of her Plantagenet origins and transmitted this pride—and her family name, "Lencastre" in Portuguese—to her progeny. Silva, Manuela Santos. "Filipa de Lencastre e o ambiente cultural na corte de seu pai (1360-1387)". *Clio. Nova série*, 16/17 (2007): 253-254.



of Coimbra;⁶ Henrique, duke of Viseu and master of the military order of Christ;⁷ João, master of the military order of Santiago,⁸ and Afonso, count of Barcelos,⁹ an elder but illegitimate half-brother.¹⁰

The queen's counsellors warned her especially against Pedro, who was "a powerful Prince, beloved by the People, who ha[d] children and in whom might enter the desire of reigning, which overpowers all the others".¹¹ But Leonor had other reasons not to trust him completely: her father, Fernando of Antequera, had gained the throne of Aragon in competition with other applicants, among which stood Jaume of Urgell, Pedro's father-in-law.¹² As a result of Jaume's refusal to accept this outcome, his estates were confiscated and he died in captivity; his wife and daughters thus became dependent on the new king for their living.¹³ Chroniclers such as Gomes Eanes de Zurara assert that there was always ill will among Leonor and Pedro because of this old familiar antagonism¹⁴ though some modern historians do not think that was the main reason for their disagreement.¹⁵

Apparently, Leonor started to govern alone without any open opposition shortly after the proclamation of her son as King Afonso V and the reading of the will of the deceased.¹⁶ Nevertheless, to secure Pedro's loyalty to the infant king, she proposed

6. There is no recent biography of Pedro but an entire scholarly journal has been dedicated to several aspects of his life and works on his 500th birthday: *Biblos*, LXIX, 1993. On the period of his life that made him famous both in his homeland and abroad, see Rogers, Francis M. *The Travels of the Infante Dom Pedro of Portugal*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1961; Correia, Margarida Sérvulo. *As Viagens do Infante D. Pedro*. Lisbon: Gradiva, 2000.

7. On Henrique, see Russel, Peter E. *Prince Henry «The Navigator»: A Life*. New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2000; Sousa, João Silva de. *A Casa Senhorial do Infante D. Henrique*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1991.

8. On João, see Medeiros, Maria Dulcina Vieira Coelho de. *O Infante D. João (1400-1442). Subsídios para uma biografia*. Lisbon: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa (Master thesis), 1999.

9. On him there is only an old biography: Machado, José Timóteo Montalvão. *Dom Afonso Primeiro Duque de Bragança. Sua vida e sua obra*. Lisbon: Livraria Portugal, 1964.

10. There existed a fifth legitimate brother, Fernando but he was imprisoned in Morocco since the defeat of Tangier in 1438. He was never to be liberated until his death in 1443 and therefore could play no role in the political scene in his homeland. On his life and the construction of his memory, see Fontes, João Luis Inglês. *Percursos e Memória: do Infante D. Fernando ao Infante Santo*. Cascais: Patrimónia, 2000.

11. These are the words that the chronicler of the realm assume they have used. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V. Crónicas de Rui de Pina*, M. Lopes de Almeida, ed. Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1977: 591.

12. Pedro married Jaume's oldest daughter, Isabel. On the circumstances of the elevation of Fernando of Antequera to the throne of Aragon, see Vicens Vives, Jaime. "Los Trastámaras y Cataluña", *Historia de España*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, dir. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1982: XV, 669-681; Sabaté, Flocel. "El Compromís de Casp", *Història de la Corona d'Aragó*, Ernest Belenguier, dir. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 2007: 287-304.

13. Vendrell, Francesca; Massià, Angels. *Jaume el Dissortat, darrer comte d'Urgell*. Barcelona: Aedos, 1956: 113-120.

14. Zurara, Gomes Eanes de. *Crónica do Conde D. Duarte de Meneses*, Larry King, ed. Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1978: 110.

15. Fonseca, Luis Adão da. *O Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal*. Porto: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica - Centro de História da Universidade do Porto, 1982: 22-23.

16. The first charters issued by her in the name of her son date from September 29 and October 6, 1438. Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira. Antecedentes e significado histórico*. Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1979: 1, 8.



the marriage of Afonso V to the duke's daughter Isabel, stating that it had been King Duarte's last will as declared by his confessor. This suggestion was gladly accepted and the queen issued a charter declaring the arrangements made.¹⁷

Though the reference to King Duarte's intention was to be used again later on by Pedro to justify his insistence on this matrimonial project, we have reasons to believe that it was Leonor's idea, not Duarte's. It is true that the deceased king was very fond of his brother and liked to please him. But when choosing a bride for his first-born child he would probably look beyond the borders of the kingdom, as his predecessors had done, to establish new alliances or strengthen old ones while avoiding at the same time to disarrange the existing balance among the aristocracy by distinguishing a member of one of its lineages.¹⁸

Leonor did not have much of a choice. She faced urgent problems: she knew that the Portuguese people mistrusted her for being the sister of the "*infantes de Aragón*" who were persistently trying to gain control of all the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁹ To secure the independence of the realm, her subjects wanted one of the Portuguese "*príncipes de Avis*" to be Regent instead of her.²⁰ So, to be sure that she would be able to keep royal authority and to hand it over to her son when he would have the proper age, she needed to be on good terms with her in-laws, and especially with Pedro. Promising that his daughter would be queen and his future grand-son would be king was a way of securing that he would never attempt to drive Afonso V from the throne, nor allow others to do so. In the immediate present, however, Leonor also made an approach to Pedro, agreeing to share the government with him: she would keep the tutorship of her children and the management of the royal finances while he would be in charge of the administration of justice and the defence of the realm.²¹

These two settlements were nevertheless strongly opposed by the queen's counsellors, and above all by the count of Barcelos, who had also wished to play a role in the government and to have the king married to his grand-daughter Isabel.²² He and the archbishop of Lisbon Pedro de Noronha, whom the queen trusted more

17. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 594-596.

18. There were other possible options, especially in England or Burgundy as suggested by Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V*. Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores, 2006: 62.

19. On this family, see Benito Ruano, Eloy. *Los Infantes de Aragón*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2002.

20. Just like their Aragonese counterparts, the Portuguese princes were actively promoted by the political propaganda of their time and mythicized by later poets and historians. See Fonseca, Luis Adão da. "Íncita geração. Altos Infantes: Lusiadas, IV-50. Algumas considerações sobre a importância das circunstâncias históricas na formação de um tema literário", *IV Reunião Internacional de Camonistas – Actas*. Ponta Delgada: Universidade dos Açores, 1984: 295-302; Fonseca, Luis Adão da. "Una elegía inédita sobre la familia de Avis. Un aspecto de la propaganda política en la Península Ibérica a mediados del siglo XV". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 16 (1986): 449-463.

21. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 599.

22. This lady was later to marry Juan II of Castile and to give birth to Isabel, the future Catholic Queen. On her, see Carsotti, Marsilio. "Dona Isabel (1428-1496)", *Infantas de Portugal Rainhas em Espanha*. Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros, 2007: 149-179.



than anyone else, managed to make her step back in both decisions, raising the anger of her brother-in-law, who tore with his own hands the matrimonial agreement she had asked him to return to her.²³

Though Leonor and Pedro eventually signed another agreement at the *Cortes* of Torres Novas, in November 1438, and actually began sharing the government, there was no way to restore trust among them and no further mention was made about the marriage of their children. As difficulties accumulated, the urban population started to show signs of unrest and to accuse the queen of being the cause of all wrongs. A year later, new *Cortes* gathered in Lisbon and the representatives of the *concelhos* (mainly the largest urban centres), led by the capital, elected Pedro sole Regent of the realm; the other two states agreed, except for a few supporters of the queen who left the assembly or refused to sign the record of the proceedings. Leonor was also deprived of the guardianship of two of her children: King Afonso V and Fernando, the second in the line of succession.²⁴

The queen tried to overcome this situation with the military support of the order of the Hospitallers whose prior was faithful to her. But she received no immediate help either from the count of Barcelos or from her cousin the king of Castile and her brothers, the kings of Aragon and Navarre. She was consequently forced to leave the country with her retinue and try to gather more support in Castile.²⁵

After besieging the fortress of Crato with the help of his brother João, Pedro went to Viseu to join forces with his other brother Henrique in order to have a strong army to subdue the queen's supporters who had gathered in the north of the country, and especially the count of Barcelos. Before starting the fight, though, Pedro sent him messengers offering him peace and forgiveness in exchange for his leaving the queen's faction. It took some time but eventually Count Afonso accepted the terms of the pact. The reconciliation between the two estranged brothers allowed the progression of the matrimonial project between Afonso V and Isabel of Lancaster: the count of Barcelos who had been one of its strongest opponents, agreed to its immediate conclusion in return for Pedro's restitution of the Archbishop of Lisbon, who was in exile in Castile, to his dignity and belongings.²⁶

At this point, no more impediments stood in the way: both children were of age to commit themselves for the future²⁷ and the papal dispensation for consanguinity had arrived two months earlier. Alas, it had been given secretly to the Portuguese ambassadors "*vivae voces oraculo*", in order not to displease the kings of Castile, Aragon and Navarre who had intervened against the marriage at the request of

23. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 595-596, 600, 604.

24. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 624-645; The same events are reported, with recourse to other sources, by Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 9-65.

25. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 664-677; Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 69-92.

26. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 674-679.

27. The king had turned nine and Isabel was only a few months younger. Canon law established that children could be engaged to marry after turning seven. Debris, Cyrille. 'Tu, felix Austria, nube'. *La dynastie de Habsbourg et sa politique matrimoniale à la fin du Moyen Âge (XIII-XVI siècles)*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2005: 39.



Queen Leonor.²⁸ But it was considered satisfactory to carry on with the plan. Pedro summoned the *Cortes* to gather in Torres Vedras in May 1441 and obtained their consent to the ceremony together with a substantial donation (presented as a “rich present”) to constitute Isabel’s household. The betrothal finally took place later that month, in Ascension Day in the town of Óbidos.²⁹ A proper bull came a year later to ratify the oral dispensation and the vows made by the children, and to remember that these vows had to be confirmed when they would reach the legal majority.³⁰

Having made his nine-year-old daughter the future queen, Pedro continued to elevate his family by making his first-born son Pedro Constable in 1443 and master of the military order of Avis in 1444.³¹ This infuriated the count of Ourém,³² who believed that the position of Constable belonged hereditarily to his family.³³ The Regent also rewarded those who had stood by him, giving them the personal belongings and estates seized from the defeated.³⁴ But he did not forget to please as well those who had joined his party at a later stage: indeed, the count of Barcelos was made duke of Braganza in 1442 and Sancho de Noronha count of Odemira in 1446.³⁵

Exiled in Castile, Leonor kept asking her cousin and her brothers to demand from Pedro her return to her dignity and to the tutorship of her children. Several embassies were sent by them to Portugal with this purpose but obtained no favourable answer from the Regent. Eventually she left the Castilian court and its intrigues to seek refuge in a convent. Deprived of the dower and the dowry she was entitled to receive to support her through her widowhood³⁶ and having spent all her jewels and silver to help her brothers recover their supremacy in Castile,³⁷ she lived in poverty and died under suspicious conditions in February 1445.³⁸

28. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 673-674.

29. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 680.

30. *Monumenta Henricina*, ed. António Joaquim Dias Dinis. Coimbra: Comissão executiva das comemorações do V centenário da morte do infante D. Henrique, 1962: VII, 319-321 (doc. n° 217).

31. Fonseca, Luis Adão da. *O Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal...*: 31.

32. The first-born of the two sons of the count of Barcelos; the other one was the count of Arraiolos.

33. It had belonged to his grandfather Nuno Álvares Pereira, his brother-in-law João and his nephew Diogo, who had died without progeny; the count of Ourém claimed that he was next in the line of succession, although he later failed to prove that there was any clause concerning heredity in the original concession. Cunha, Mafalda Soares da. *Linhagem, Parentesco e Poder. A Casa de Bragança (1384-1483)*. Lisbon: Fundação da Casa de Bragança, 1990: 75-76.

34. Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 97-133.

35. Cunha, Mafalda Soares da. *Linhagem, Parentesco e Poder...*: 154.

36. Her matrimonial contract stipulated that, after the death of her husband, she would have two years to choose either to stay in Portugal and keep her estates, rents and maintenance, or to leave the country and receive both the dower and the dowry. The special conditions under which she left explain why she was unable to receive any of these sums. Rodrigues, Ana Maria S. A. “For the honor of her lineage and body. The Dowers and Dowries of Some Late Medieval Queens of Portugal”. *e-Journal of Portuguese History*, 5-1 (2007): 5-7.

37. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 681.

38. The chronicler Rui de Pina states that she and her sister Maria, queen of Castile, were poisoned by a woman sent by their common enemy Álvaro de Luna. However, the symptoms of their illness may



No more that a month later, Queen Isabel received from her father (in the name of the King) the towns of Alenquer, Sintra, Óbidos, Torres Vedras, Torres Novas, Alvaizere, and Aldeia Galega for her to hold "as Queen Philippa had held them".³⁹ It is quite meaningful that in this charter Pedro should prefer to mention his mother Philippa of Lancaster rather than his sister-in-law Leonor, who was the previous holder of these estates but had been deprived of them by the *Cortes* of Évora of 1442.⁴⁰ In fact, during three years, the queenly holdings had been vacant; however, the Regent had not dared to donate them to his daughter while the expatriated queen-mother was still alive.

But was Isabel of Lancaster really a queen in 1445? Was she truly entitled to receive the queen's endowment?⁴¹ Not quite so because the two teenagers were not properly married yet. Isabel had already passed the age of twelve which, for girls, was considered the minimum for making the vows and consummating the matrimony; but her supposed husband was only to reach the legal majority for boys, the age of fourteen,⁴² on January 15, 1446. Only then new *Cortes* gathered in Lisbon to witness the solemn passing of the government from the hands of Regent Pedro into the king's hands. The three states also once more gave their consent to the marriage of Afonso V and Isabel.⁴³

Royal matrimonial agreements had to be approved at *Cortes* because they were very serious matters that engaged not only the royal family but the entire nation. They were usually embedded in political, military and commercial alliances with other kingdoms and generated expenses not only at short notice with the arrival of the bride, the liturgical ceremony, and the corresponding feasts, but also at long term with the maintenance of the queen during her lifetime and the payment of the dower if she was to become a widow. The consent of the three states of the realm was therefore necessary for the signing of the international treaties and the imposing of the taxes that would meet the costs.⁴⁴

indicate meningitis. Álvarez Palenzuela, Vicente Ángel. "María, infanta de Aragón y reina de Castilla", *Estudos de Homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques*. Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2006: IV, 370.

39. *Fontes Medievais da História Torreana*, ed. José Maria Cordeiro de Sousa. Torres Vedras: Câmara Municipal, 1958: 71-72 (doc. n° 64).

40. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 682.

41. The queen's endowment and supplementary grants made by the king were the two categories of revenue that supported the queens of Portugal and their household; in England, there was also the queen-gold (Johnstone, Hilda. "The Queen's Household", *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336*. Vol. 1 – *Central and Prerogative Administration*, James F. Willard, William A. Morris, eds. Cambridge (Mass.): Medieval Academy of America Publications, 1940: 250-299). Only the queen-gold did not exist in Portugal as well.

42. Debris, Cyrille. "Tu, felix Austria, mube'...": 39.

43. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 696-697.

44. We know that the kingdom contributed two and a half *pedidos* (taxes) to the marriage of Afonso V and Isabel; one and a half was collected in 1447 and the remaining one in 1448. Gonçalves, Iria. *Pedidos e empréstimos públicos em Portugal durante a Idade Média*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Fiscais da Direcção-Geral das Contribuições e Impostos, 1964: 162.



In the case of this particular marriage, there were no external implications but a delicate internal situation remained where an ambitious father was profiting from his transitory position of power to force his daughter into the king's bed in spite of other magnate's opposition. This is probably the reason why Pedro cared to obtain the approval of the *Cortes* at each step of the process: he needed the decision to be irrevocable, no matter what his final destiny might be. The future proved him right to be so cautious.

Though having attained legal majority, Afonso V decided to let his uncle rule for some more time, until he himself would feel prepared to do it on his own. It was only in 1447 that he asked Pedro to hand over the government to him and the Regent agreed, provided the king actually took Isabel as his wife at church as well.⁴⁵ The liturgical ceremony took place in May in Santarém and, as no matrimonial contract had been signed before, a royal charter was issued stating the arrangements made concerning the wellbeing of the queen.

This charter reveals that Isabel's father did not endow her with a dowry.⁴⁶ This might have left her in a very unpleasant financial situation if it weren't for the good disposition of her husband on her behalf.⁴⁷ Though his beloved wife, as he said, brought no dowry, Afonso V granted her a dower of twenty thousand golden *escudos* that she was allowed to leave to her heirs after her death. He also appointed as her annual maintenance the same sum of 1.165.000 *reais* that his mother had enjoyed. In addition, to constitute Isabel's *câmara* (the administrative unit that managed the queen's endowment⁴⁸) the king donated to her all the lands and urban centres that had belonged to the previous queens of Portugal—in fact, those that had already been transferred to her possession three years earlier—including the corresponding royal rights and rents, the whole jurisdiction, the patronage of the local churches and the appointment of the appropriate officials.⁴⁹

45. This is how the chronicler puts it. In fact, the last document signed by Pedro as Regent dates from July 8, but the wedding had already taken place two months earlier. Pina, Rui de. "Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Afonso V"...: 698-699; Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 259.

46. An uncommon situation among the queens of Portugal but not totally unknown: Leonor Teles and Philippa of Lancaster in the 14th century did not bring dowries either. Rodrigues, Ana Maria Seabra de Almeida. "For the honor of her lineage and body"...: 4.

47. If the wife brought no dowry, the husband was not forced by law to entrust her with a dower; she would therefore have no financial independence and need to rely on him for all her expenses. For instance, when Juan of Castile married Margaret of Austria and his sister Juana married Philip of Burgundy, the two girls sacrificed their dowries in exchange for a rent of 20.000 *escudos* paid by their husbands. But while Margaret got her share Juana did not receive hers and never managed to control her own finances. This prevented her from granting the fidelity of the members of her household by showing the generosity that was expected from a queen, Aram, Bethany. *La Reina Juana. Gobierno, piedad y dinastía*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2001: 86-93.

48. As defined by Córdoba Miralles, Álvaro Fernández de. *La Corte de Isabel I. Ritos e ceremonias de una reina (1474-1504)*. Madrid: Dykinson, 2002: 52.

49. *Monumenta Henricina...*, 1968: IX, 243-247 (doc. n° 159).



During the course of her life, the King made other concessions to his wife:⁵⁰ in 1450, he donated to her the tenth of the commodities dealt with in the customs of Lisbon, Oporto, Viana, Aveiro, Buarcos, Setúbal, Faro and Tavira, and the fifth of the goods belonging to burgled ships; in 1452, he transferred to her possession an estate that had belonged to her brother Pedro, and in 1453 he conceded to her the administration of a majorat and a few houses in Lisbon.⁵¹ With all this cash, estates, and rents, she had no difficulty in maintaining her status and a sizable household.⁵²

Thus Isabel of Lancaster truly became a Queen when her father's fortune initiated a decline. Soon she would have to start negotiating her loyalty both to her progenitor and her husband. It was not an easy matter for a girl aged sixteen, but she had been educated to be the queen of Portugal and she knew exactly what was expected from her.

Though Isabel and Afonso V had been brought up together since the age of eight, as the Regent was also the tutor of the King,⁵³ they only began to cohabit as husband and wife after their wedding in 1447. Unfortunately for Isabel, she bore no child until January 1451, when she gave birth to a first prince, João, who died shortly afterwards.⁵⁴ Not having provided the throne with an heir in the first three years of her marriage, the Queen's position was fragile in the face of the ill will that grew in the court against her father.

As the chronicler Rui de Pina puts it, it were the Regent's enemies—the count of Barcelos, now also duke of Braganza; his son the count of Ourém; the archbishop of Lisbon and his brother Count Sancho de Noronha, and a few others who were all former partisans of Queen Leonor—that convinced the King to govern alone because they reckoned they would be able to manipulate him on their behalf. They were not content with driving Pedro out of government, though, and not only did they accuse the Regent of treason and made him leave the court, but they also tried to bring his brother Henrique into discredit in the King's eyes, so that he would not be able to help him.⁵⁵ Afonso V is thus presented by the chronicler as an inexperienced young man, susceptible of being influenced by vicious counsellors.

Yet we do not believe the King to be immature and naïve. He actually acted against Pedro and his friends as their enemies suggested because it was his true will

50. Supplementary grants were often made by the Portuguese kings to their daughters-in-law or their wives in order to allow them to maintain their status and to fulfil their duties; see, for instance, Sousa, Ivo Carneiro de. *A Rainha D. Leonor (1458-1525). Poder, misericórdia, religiosidade e espiritualidade no Portugal do Renascimento*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, 2002: 147-148.

51. Moreno, Humberto Baquero; Freitas, Isabel Vaz de. *A Corte de Afonso V o Tempo e os Homens*. Gijón: Trea, 2006: 307-308.

52. On the composition of her household, see Moreno, Humberto Baquero; Freitas, Isabel Vaz de. *A Corte de Afonso V...*: 303-307.

53. It has been demonstrated that the King had his own household, different from the Regent's, Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V...*: 52. But they were often together and it may be presumed that Pedro's wife and children also stayed with them.

54. There are doubts about the exact date of birth of this prince and the date of his death is unknown. Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V...*: 90.

55. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Afonso V...*: 698-703.



as well. Thus he removed from office all of his uncle's faithful servants who had been nominated at court and all around the kingdom, including his cousin Pedro, whom he discharged as Constable; he returned to Queen Leonor's friends and servants the positions and estates that had been confiscated and given to Pedro's partisans; he forbade his uncle to ever come back to court and asked him to return to the Royal Army the weapons he had in his possession.⁵⁶ In fact, he held Pedro responsible for the misery and death of his mother in Castile and wanted him to pay for it. But he did not want his wife to be dragged into that revenge as well and did not pay attention to the advice of the counsellors who wanted him to part with her. When these courtiers sent his chamberlain Álvaro de Castro to prison, accusing him of making love to the Queen, the King did not listen to their calumnies and freed him; later he made him count of Monsanto.⁵⁷ Young as he was, Afonso V had his own opinions and was not blindly driven by some magnate's deceits and flatteries.

Isabel had by then become a target for Pedro's enemies because she had assumed the role of mediator between her husband and her father.⁵⁸ At first, she was very discreet and only tried to keep the former Regent informed of the things that were said and done in court against him, in order for him to counteract.⁵⁹ When she understood that all was set for a final confrontation, she resorted to the traditional gesture of the beggar, falling on her knees in tears and imploring her husband to have mercy for her progenitor. Afonso V could not refuse this request and promised that he would forgive Pedro if only he assumed his guilt and asked for his forgiveness. The queen sent a letter to her father explaining how this could be done and he wrote to the king in the agreed form. But Pedro did not feel guilty of anything at all and said so in another letter that he sent to his daughter at the same time. The king read this one as well and proclaimed that since his uncle had no true regrets, no concord could be established among them.⁶⁰ Shortly afterwards, Pedro's army was crushed by the Royal Army at Alfarrobeira and the duke of Coimbra died along with many of his companions.⁶¹

His dead body lay a whole day on the battlefield and three more days in a nearby house where it had been thrown along with other corpses with neither honour nor prayers.⁶² It was then taken to the nearest church, in Alverca, where it was buried without any ceremonial.⁶³ The queen was notified of her father's death at short

56. Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 327-344.

57. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 736.

58. Intercession was an important queenly function. Strohm, Paul. "Queens as intercessors", *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992: 99-105; Parsons, John Carmi. "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England", *Power of the Weak: studies on Medieval Women*, Jennifer Carpenter, Sally-Beth Maclean, eds. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995: 147-177.

59. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 728-729.

60. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 734-736.

61. These events were analysed in detail by Moreno, Humberto Baquero. *A Batalha de Alfarrobeira...*: 401-428.

62. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 749.

63. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 752.



notice and showed “public signs of mortal pain”, but did not act and waited for a sign from her husband as she was well aware of the fragility of her situation.⁶⁴ In fact, those who had intrigued against her father were trying once again to convince Afonso V that he should leave her and take another wife. Instead of doing so, the king sent messengers to comfort Isabel and asked her to join him at court. The queen “dressed herself on an honest temperance of sorrow” and was welcomed by the sovereign as if nothing had happened.⁶⁵

Throughout the whole duration of the crisis, the chronicler praises Isabel’s prudence and discretion, considering them rare virtues in such a young woman. He also insists in the love the King felt for her because of her kindness and beauty. It appears that Afonso V felt great affection for his wife because he was strongly pressured to repudiate her, yet he did not comply with it, though we have a reason to believe that he considered the possibility. On January 11, 1451 the king confirmed the matrimonial contract that had been signed four years earlier and granted Isabel her dower, maintenance and chamber not only for the duration of their marriage, but also if they were to be separated by death or by any other cause, and whether they had children in common or not. Probably because he was aware of the general animosity felt in court against his wife and because he wanted to protect her from what his mother had endured, he was careful to secure her maintenance in the tax levied in Lisbon on fabric (*sisas dos panos*), and also determined that, if he himself or his successor or the next Queen would want to take from her any of her estates, they would have to compensate her with the double of the annual income of that estate, secured by the taxes levied in Lisbon upon bread, landed property and circulation of goods. Finally, he raised the amount she could dispose of in her will for the sake of her soul from twenty thousand to twenty-eight thousand golden *escudos*, which her heirs would not be able to claim as their heritage.⁶⁶

It is true that with her serene attitude Isabel made it easier for Afonso V to keep her by his side. She did not wander from monastery to monastery and from manor to manor mourning like her mother, who feared for her life and the lives of her other children.⁶⁷ Nor did she flee to Castile, as her older brother Pedro had done.⁶⁸ She stayed in her post and waited for the right time to obtain from her husband the redressing of her father’s memory and the restitution of her lineage’s property.

The fact that Pedro’s dead body did not have a proper funeral was a main concern for her as well as for the rest of the family. The first person to demand the duke of Coimbra to be buried in the royal pantheon that had been built by their father—the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, also known as the Monastery of Batalha⁶⁹—was the duchess Isabel of Burgundy, Pedro’s sister, who had been notified of his

64. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 754-755.

65. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 756-757.

66. *Monumenta Henricina...* 1969: X, 348-352 (doc. n° 255).

67. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 755.

68. Fonseca, Luis Adão da. *O Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal...*: 62-63.

69. The name (Batalha = battle) refers to the battle of Aljubarrota that took place nearby in July 14, 1385. King João I of Portugal’s victory over Juan I of Castile secured the independence of the realm and



death by a letter sent by Afonso V to the Pope and the other Christian monarchs to justify his attitude. As the king refused, she beseeched him to give her her brother's bones in order to provide him with an honourable resting place in Burgundy.⁷⁰ Afonso V refused again and, fearing that the coffin could be stolen from the church where it lay unguarded, had it moved to the castle of Abrantes.⁷¹

The duchess also worried about Pedro's wife and children, who had been deprived of their offices and possessions. By her action, Jaime, who had been captured during the battle of Alfarrobeira, was liberated and sent to Burgundy; from there he was later sent to Rome where he was eventually made cardinal of Saint Eustachio. João and Beatriz were also received at the Burgundian court and their marriages were arranged to two important princes, respectively to Charlotte of Lusignan, heiress to the throne of Cyprus and Adolph of Clèves, lord of Ravenstein, a close relative of the duke himself.⁷²

Queen Isabel already had her sister Filipa with her at court and took charge of both her immediate and more distant future. In her first will, dated 5 February, 1452 —the day before the birth of Princess Joana⁷³—, she proclaimed her sister to be her heiress to what she had inherited from her father, mentioning specifically the money that the former Regent had deposited at the Exchange of Florence.⁷⁴ In the same document, Isabel beseeched her husband "to remember [her] mother in such abandonment and need, so that he would protect her and help her to support her state, and the same for her sister Catherine". Moreover, she asked Afonso V to allow her father's bones to be buried in the monastery of Saint Elói, to which she was leaving a considerable amount of money or in any other place of the king's preference "where he could be placed secretly, and that would be honest and suitable for him".⁷⁵ Indeed the queen did not forget her duties as a daughter both to her dead father and to her living and suffering mother; she was wise enough to do so in such a way that her husband's authority would not be challenged and he would never have to disown her.

Isabel's second will, unfinished but which we can date to the late spring of 1455,⁷⁶ shows that the matter of her father's burial had seen some development in the three

was celebrated with the construction of a monastery in whose church the new dynasty had a chapel built with the purpose of burying its members.

70. She made this through her agent Dean Jean Jouffroy of Vergy, who addressed the king in four formal speeches in her name between December 1449 and January 1450. On these, see Ramos, Manuel Francisco. *Orationes de Jean Jouffroy em favor do Infante D. Pedro (1449-1450) – retórica e humanismo cívico*. Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto (PhD thesis), 2007.

71. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 757-758.

72. Sommé, Monique. *Isabelle de Portugal, duchesse de Bourgogne. Une femme au pouvoir au XV^e siècle*. Ville-neuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998: 78-88.

73. The pregnancy had been very difficult and the queen probably feared for her life. Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V...*: 90.

74. It was one of the few possessions of Peter the king had not been able to confiscate.

75. Sousa, António Caetano de. *Provas da História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa*. eds. M. Lopes de Almeida, Cesar Pegado. Coimbra: Atlântida, 1947: III, 62-63.

76. See note 74.



years that had since passed. Pedro's bones rested in the monastery of Saint Elói and the queen had obtained from the king a charter authorizing their transfer to Batalha. She therefore charges the executors of her testament with the ceremony, stating that the deceased's burial retinue should be appointed by the king.⁷⁷

In fact, Isabel lived long enough to attend to her father's burial in the royal pantheon. It was after she gave birth to another Prince João —the one that was to reach adulthood and become King João II— in May 3, 1455, that Afonso V finally acquiesced to her request. A solemn ceremony was organized to take the bones first to Lisbon, to the Monasteries of the Holy Trinity and Saint Elói, where they were exposed to be honoured by his lineage and friends.⁷⁸ They were later taken with great splendour by Pedro's only surviving brother, Henrique, to the Monastery of Batalha,⁷⁹ where the king and the queen received them together with the most important clerics and noblemen of the kingdom.⁸⁰

Thus the women of the family were the ones to take it upon themselves to ensure that Pedro would have a proper burial and to protect his widow and children. The men were either hostile —as the duke of Braganza, the count of Ourém, the king's brother Fernando— or apparently indifferent, as Henrique, whom Rui de Pina accuses of not having helped his brother when there was still time to prevent the king's anger from falling upon him,⁸¹ and who only cared about his bones' last resting place when Afonso V had already agreed to holding a ceremony.

Isabel died shortly afterwards, on December 2, 1455, of bleeding that was probably still a consequence of the delivery of Prince João.⁸² She was buried at Batalha as well. Her brother Pedro then returned to the realm; he was restored as master of Avis and received back most of the estates that had belonged to his father.⁸³ He celebrated her death in a work dedicated to their brother James, the cardinal.⁸⁴ In the first days of January of the following year, the royal pantheon received further eminent bones: those of Queen Leonor, which were brought from the Monastery of

77. Sousa, António Caetano de. *Provas da História Genealógica...*: 65.

78. Hence we date the queen's second will, written while her father's bones were resting at Saint Elói, from the late spring of 1455.

79. This happened between November 7 and 28 according to Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V...*: 94.

80. We know nevertheless that the duke of Braganza, his son the count of Ourém and the king's brother Fernando were opposed to this rehabilitation of Pedro's memory and obtained from the king that his eldest son, who was still in Castile, would not be allowed to come to the funeral. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 770-771.

81. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 703.

82. But some people attributed the death to poisoning by the enemies of her father. Pina, Rui de. *Chronica do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V...*: 771.

83. He did not stay in Portugal for long, though. In October 1463, he was invited by the Catalans to become their leader as grandson of Jaume of Urgell, and he died in Catalonia three years later, still fighting the king of Aragon. Juan II. Fonseca, Luis Adão da. *O Condestável D. Pedro de Portugal...*: 125-319.

84. Portugal, Condestável D. Pedro de. "Tragedia de la Insigne Reina Doña Isabel". *Obras Completas do condestável Dom Pedro de Portugal*, ed. Luis Adão da Fonseca. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1975: 305-348.



Santo Domingo el Real of Toledo.⁸⁵ The old enemies lay on the same resting place,⁸⁶ reforming after death the harmonious family they were not able to compose during their lifetime.

Endogamy thus caused a momentous conflict among the royal family that eventually led to the violent elimination of the branch that had been exalted by the pressure of those who had been passed over. The Queen was devastated and only escaped the fate that fell upon her kin because of the affection her husband felt for her and her own mastery in honouring her father's memory and protecting her mother and her sisters without challenging the King's decisions.

Yet, this terrible experience did not prevent Afonso V from marrying his only son João to his brother's daughter Leonor.⁸⁷ Again, a marriage among cousins was preferred to an alliance with a foreign royal family. Its consequences were to become even more dramatic than in the previous generation: after being enthroned, King João II had one of his brothers-in-law, the third duke of Braganza, arrested and sentenced to death because he was leading a conspiracy against him; later, he himself stabbed to death his other brother-in-law, the duke of Viseu, because he had planned to kill him. Apparently, the Queen was not involved in these plots, but the royal couple never recovered from this ordeal.

So the Braganza and the Viseu lineages, closely related to each other through a carefully planned matrimonial policy that also included the Castilian and the Portuguese royal families, had become so close to the throne of Portugal that they dared to conspire with the Castilians to get hold of it.⁸⁸ There was no need for it, though. When João II and Leonor's only son died prematurely from a nasty fall, the nearest in line of succession was the king's last surviving brother-in-law. João II still tried to legitimize a bastard son to make him his heir, but the queen fought against it with all her forces.⁸⁹ Therefore, her younger brother became King Manuel I at the death of her husband in 1495. Eventually, by pressing the kings into marrying their first cousins, the bastard and younger branches of the royal family had managed to take the place of which they had been deprived by the order of their birth.

85. Gomes, Saul António. *D. Afonso V...*: 95.

86. Leonor is buried with her husband at the so-called "Imperfect Chapels"; Pedro and his wife Isabel of Urgell, as well as Isabel and Afonso V are buried at the Founder's Chapel.

87. The betrothal took place in 1470 and the wedding in 1471. Fonseca, Luís Adão da. *D. João II*. Rio de Mouro: Temas e Debates, 2007: 257-258.

88. Fonseca, Luís Adão da. *D. João II...*: 86-107.

89. Mendonça, Manuela. *D. João II. Um Percorso Humano e Político nas Origens da Modernidade*. Lisbon: Estampa, 1991: 454-466.

