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## Blending Myth and Reality: Maritime Portugal and Renaissance Portraits of the Royal Court

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

I only provide references, a very fine bibliography of sources.

# **Blending Myth and Reality: Maritime Portugal and Renaissance Portraits of the Royal Court**

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## **Abstract**

An incalculable loss of art was suffered by Portugal on November 1, 1755, when Lisbon was essentially leveled by a 9.0 earthquake that lasted six minutes and was followed by an immense tsunami. All the churches in Lisbon were destroyed either by the massive tremor or subsequent fires. All the courtly castles of the city were obliterated too, including the lofty medieval fortress-citadel of St. George, the late-Gothic princely Palace of St. Martin, the Renaissance Bragança Palace, the Manueline Riverbank Palace, and the Estaus Palace on the north side of the Rossio municipal square, which had been frequented by visiting diplomats and dignitaries since the mid-15th century (Smith, 1968; Fonseca, 2004; Kendrick, 1957; Paice, 2008). The 1755 devastation of Lisbon's cultural monuments has resulted in an incomplete picture of the country's art history—imagine a catastrophic loss of art from a comparable cataclysm in Paris, Rome, or London. So then, this essay concentrates upon select examples of Portuguese Renaissance art which either survived the Lisbon earthquake or remained protected in other courtly centers of Europe. Unless otherwise noted, the concepts are original observations presented by the author. Recommended readings are provided in text citations, and select books about the history of Portugal are included in the references. These scholarly publications contain excellent bibliographies for further study.

## **Afonso Henriques I, a Nation's First King, and the Persistence of Memory: The Crimson Cross and Manueline Caravels**

The mariners of Portugal charted unfamiliar waters and their voyages are the essence of myth—Vasco da Gama, who traveled to India in 1497; Pedro Álvares Cabral who steered the same course to South Asia in 1500, but deviated on his return to set anchor in Brazil; Fernão Magalhães, who sailed around the globe

between 1519 and 1521 (Livermore, 1966; Boxer, 1969, 1991; Castanheda, 1979; Diffie, 1960; Diffie & Winius 1977; Dos Passos, 2011; Lach & Van Kley, 1965; Newitt, 2004; Russell-Wood, 1992; Studnicki-Gizbert, 2007; Disney, 2009). Portugal's cultural heritage equally is the substance of legend and lore. In the case of courtly portraiture, the chemistry of art and history is quite distinctive. The veristic royal likeness often blends with epic saga to produce a highly refined allegorical compound. This essay will address the Lusitanian portrait amalgamation, beginning with the origin of the kingdom of Portugal in the 12th century and concluding with the extraordinary Renaissance age of global encounters.

The kingdom of Portugal was founded in 1139 by Afonso Henriques I (1109: r. 1139-1185). The son of a Burgundian Count who fought in the First Crusade, he achieved a unification of regions from his family stronghold in Guimarães in the north to the vast area south of the Tagus River known as the Alentejo (Mattoso, 2014; Anderson, 2000; Mattoso & Sousa, 1997, Oliveira Marques, 1971). Afonso Henrique's life and deeds were celebrated by later royals, most notably in a manuscript of the *Genealogy of the Portuguese Kings* (Figure 1: a) begun in 1530 for the son of Manuel I (1469: r. 1495-1521), the monarch most associated with Portugal's Age of Discoveries. Simon Bening of Bruges and Antonio de Holanda of Lisbon collaborated to provide colorful illuminations. While only 13 detached pages survive, most contain a royal ancestral tree populated by diverse historical figures (Aguiar, 1962; Albuquerque & Abreu e Lima, 1984; McKendrick, 2003). The portraits belonging to the genealogy of King Afonso Henriques I are generic, but the border encasing the grouped figures provides a fairly accurate topographical view of the seacoast from the town of Sintra to Lisbon. More than mere picturesque landscape, however, two upper marginal vignettes extol Afonso Henriques's achievement of the Christian Reconquest against the Almoravids of Morocco (Figure 1: b).

The historiated narrations illustrate the decisive battle fought at Ourique in the Alentejo, on July 25, 1139, against King Ali ibn Yusef. The Portuguese victory was indelibly linked with a vision of the Holy Cross which Afonso Henriques purportedly experienced on the eve of his conflict—the legendary event was quite analogous to Constantine's apparition of a *labrum*. The pious legend of Ourique was in fact shaped by Augustinian monks at the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Coimbra, an ancient Roman commercial center Afonso Henriques had selected as his capital in 1131.

After his death in 1185, Afonso Henriques was buried in a simple sarcophagus in the Coimbra church of Santa Cruz. In 1520, Nicolau Chanterene installed a more lavish wall tomb by order of King Manuel I, whose brother had commissioned the *Portuguese Genealogy* (Dias, 1987; Grilo, 2000). Portrayed in full armor with hands joined in perpetual prayer, the king's realist gisant rests beneath carvings of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Evangelists, and other sacred personalities. This sculpted disposition of figures visually recollects a Tree of Jesse. In the Franciscan Church at Porto, the interior of which was entirely gilded with gold from Brazil, Jesse of Bethlehem, the father of the biblical King

David, reclines to form the base of Christ's genealogical tree. Only a portion of a Jesse carving has survived from a Tree of Jesse sculpted about 1387-93 by João Garcia de Toledo, and the image actually is housed in Afonso Henrique's natal town of Guimarães. Subsequent generations revived the "mythical" portrait of Afonso Henrique as a Portuguese Jesse, always with the armor of Ourique updated as if to insinuate the continued transcendent presence of the nation's founder.

**Figure 1 (a)**



**Figure 1 (b)**



**Figure 1:** (a) Antonio de Holanda (Lisbon) and Simon Bening (Bruges), *Battle of Ourique*, middle side vignette from the (b) *Dynastic Tree of King Afonso Henriques I, Portuguese Genealogy of the Royal Houses 1530-1534*, London, British Library, Add MS. 12531, f. 7.

Afonso Henriques's unification of Portugal and concurrent attainment of the Christian Reconquest was accomplished in large measure by the buttressing force of the Templar Knights, fearless commanders who defended around 30 major fortress-castles taken from the Almoravids of Morocco (Gandra, 2000). From these rural outposts, they reported directly to Tomar, the Templar headquarters established between 1157 and 1162 (Rosa, 1960; Rosa, 1965/1988; Santos Graça, 1991), Silva, 2011). Tomar's walled site still retains its spectacular rotunda known as the *Charola*, built in 1160 to evoke Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre (Figure 2: a). Its interior is Renaissance. The 14th century witnessed the demise of the Knights

Templar in Europe as they were suppressed in 1312 by Pope Clement V and their extensive preserves and treasures were seized by the French King Philippe IV. Insofar as the Templars in Portugal, King Dinis (1261-1325) established a new chivalric institution in 1319, the Order of Christ, which assumed direct control of all former Templar holdings including Tomar (Guimarães, 1936; Pero-Sanz, 2011). Known by his sobriquet, *Rei Lavrador* or Farmer king, King Dinis was one of the first conservationists (Ackerlind, 1990; Gomes, 2003; Sotto Mayor Pizarro, 2008). Although the huge forest near Leiria was planted to prevent soil erosion, abundant pinewood from the preserve later was used to construct Portugal's impressive fleets of commercial ships (Castro, Fonseca, Vacas, & Ciciliot, 2008).

The insignia chosen for the new Order of Christ was a red cross, and this emblem adorned the sails of the Portuguese caravels during the Renaissance age of navigation (Figure 2). Duarte Galvão's manuscript *Crónica de Dom Afonso Henriques* contains a folio that shows the Lisbon *Ribeira* (riverbank) with the *Terreiro do Paço*. This "Palace Square" received its name from the adjacent royal residence on the Tagus estuary built by King Manuel I in the early 1500s and furnished with European tapestries and paintings, as well as luxury goods from Africa, East Asia, and Brazil (Jordan, 1985, 1994). The 1755 earthquake of Lisbon decimated not only the Manueline *Paço da Ribeira* with its enclosed *jardim de laranjal* (garden of orange trees), but also the entire area of the *Ribeira* that encompassed ship building and the center which regulated trade known as the *Casa da Índia* (Moita, 1994; Moita, Baptista Pereira, Pereira, & Leite, 1983). The *View of Manueline Lisbon* from Duarte Galvão's *Chronicle* creates the illusion of movement as numerous caravels and smaller vessels populate the waters of the Tagus in front of the Paço da Ribeira and its commercial yard. Many masted ships as well as smaller open boats with oarsmen, proudly display banners with the distinctive red cross of the Order of Christ and Jerusalem. Afonso Henriques I's reconquest of Lisbon from Moorish occupation (July 1-October 25, 1147) was largely achieved by warrior-knights en route to the Holy Land on the Second Crusade. The folio of Lisbon from Galvão's historical account *Crónica de El-Rei D. Afonso Henriques* (Galvão, 1995) shows medieval battle tents occupying both sides of the open terrain with groups of men engaged in conflict (Bragança, 1950). If indeed intended by the manuscript's illuminator, the notion of a time sequence in the landscape is most original. The Manueline artist insinuates that commercial caravels dispatched from Portugal must have been perceived by the royal court as divinely propelled "ships of faith."

### Afonso V - "O Africano": Extolling the Heroic Epic of Morocco

Portugal's first forays of nautical exploration beyond Europe began soon after the rise to power in 1385 of King João I (1357-1433), founder of the Aviz dynasty. In 1415 the monarch, his able commander, the *Santo Condestável* Nuno Álvares Pereira (1360-1431), and his natural son Afonso, Count of Barcelos, led a naval expedition to vanquish the Moroccan port-citadel of Ceuta. In the aftermath of the victory, three royal princes - Duarte, Pedro, and Henrique "the Navigator"—were

knighted within the church of São Francisco that had been hastily constructed over a mosque (Oliveira Martins, 1891; Russell, 2000). In 1428 Northern Renaissance's most celebrated artist, Jan van Eyck traveled by sea from Bruges to Lisbon (Von Barghahn, 2013-2014). He was a member of a diplomatic delegation sent by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, to negotiate a royal marriage with Isabella of Portugal, the only daughter of João I and Philippa of Lancaster. Upon his return to Belgium, Van Eyck in 1432 painted his famous *Ghent Altarpiece* (Sint-Baafskathedraal, Ghent), a polyptych which contains credible portraits of João I's family, and moreover, acknowledges the triumph at Ceuta in the lateral panel of *Holy Knights*.



**Figure 2:** Portuguese School, *View of Manueline Lisbon* from Duarte Galvão, *Crónica de El Rey Dom Afonso Henriques* (Ships display the Templar red cross adopted as the insignia of the Order of Christ in 1319), 1500-1510, Cascais, Museu-Biblioteca Conde Castro Guimarães.

After several unsuccessful Portuguese attempts to conquer Morocco, the Marinid kingdom ultimately was conquered in 1471 by Afonso V, the grandson of João I. His taking of the jewel cities of Asilah and Tangier was commemorated in two monumental commissions given by the monarch to the painter Nuno Gonçalves. Appointed court artist in Lisbon on July 20, 1450, Gonçalves likely was trained in the Brussels workshop of Rogier van der Weyden, a Flemish

specialist in sacred art, and a portraitist of extraordinary talent second only to his predecessor Jan van Eyck (Everaert & Stols, 1991).

The *St. Vincent Altarpiece* (Figure 3: Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga) by Nuno Gonçalves today comprises six paintings on wood, but originally they formed part of a much larger retable that had a statue of the famed martyr of Saragossa placed above a centerpiece silver reliquary casket upheld by angels (Azevedo & Brummel, 1985; Carvalho et al., 1994; Francis, 1979). St. Vincent's relics purportedly had been discovered at the Capo São Vicente during the reign of the Afonso Henriques I and transported mystically to Lisbon in a ship guarded by ravens. Gonçalves installed his huge altarpiece in a chapel honoring St. Vincent which architecturally was encapsulated by the old Romanesque bell tower of the Cathedral of Lisbon. The extant panels provide an impressive array of historical figures, 60 in total, including men who had fought valorously in North African campaigns from the 1415 conquest of Ceuta to the 1471 taking of Tangier. The *St. Vincent Altarpiece* commemorates a maritime realm's continued defense of Christianity, and the deliberate genealogical alignment of royals, aristocrats, and clergy combined to magnify Lusitania's celebrated past, present, and future. Despite an undeniable veneer of Flemish realism to the figures and faces, the tableau vivant of society presents an extraordinary Pentecostal "Holy Grail procession" in the tradition of fables enshrouding Camelot. Romances about King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table were ever popular and constantly recalled during the reign of João I and his English queen, Philippa of Lancaster (Hook, 2015; Campos Brunetti, 1974; Souza Zierer, 2007, 2010). Yet even earlier, medieval Portugal had celebrated Arthurian chivalry, as Isabel of Aragon (1282-1325), sainted wife of King Dinis, presided over Pentecostal processions held at Sintra, a rural estate traditionally frequented by the royal court during the summer (Pero-Sanz, 2011).

Far eclipsing the *St. Vincent Altarpiece* in quantity of figures, however, is a set of six large tapestries that pertain to the final stages of the Moroccan campaign and are housed in Pastrana, Spain. Unquestionably designed by Nuno Gonçalves, the cycle was woven in Tournai (Belgium), by the Pasquier Granier workshop. Four panels have been recently restored and exhibited internationally (Figure 4). The quartet of subjects aptly has been described by the National Gallery of Art as marking "The Invention of Glory" (Bunes Ibarra, Angel, La Rocca, Rodrigues, De Wit, 2012; Santos, 1925, 1953); Von Barghahn, 2012). The huge tapestries are without parallel because they illustrate a contemporary epic rather than a biblical or mythological theme. They are an historical chronicle of events, having the aspect of a woven journal. Numerous "portraits" of chivalric knights define the detailed compositions making the story difficult to read.

The *Landing of Asilah* shows Afonso V's flagship *Santo António*, with the ruler's emblematic water wheel banner, a herald that surfaces as a leitmotif, and occasionally with the motto "jamais" (French: never). Realistic portraits of Afonso V and his teenage son, João [II], appear twice in this panel. They are portrayed in the foreground among the knights seated in transport skiffs (*naus*) that move on choppy waters along the rocky shoreline—a perilous endeavor - as



both father and son are portrayed wearing heavy steel armor. About 200 men drowned in the landing at Asilah, weighted down by their arms, chain mail, and heraldic tunics laden over *cuir boulli*, or hardened leather. Afonso V and his son again appear in the distance with their army situated before the looming walls of the Merinid citadel.



**Figure 3:** Nuno Gonçalves/João Eanes, *St. Vincent Altarpiece with Effigy Saints Thekla and Vincent*, 1470-1472, Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga; DETAIL: *Panel of St. Vincent, King Afonso V and his son João II (when Prince)*



**Figure 4:** Nuno Gonçalves (designer), *Landing at Asilah* (August 20, 1471), woven under Pasquier Grenier (Tournai), 1470s, wool and silk (144-7/8 x 436-1/4"), Pastrana, Diocese of Sigüenza-Guadalajara/Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Fundación Carlos de Amberes (Photo: Paul M.R. Maeyaert)

The *Siege of Asilah* shows João II and Afonso V within a wooden palisade constructed by the Portuguese to cut off the town by land as their masted ships prevent any escape from sea. Afonso V, seated on a richly caparisoned horse and readily identifiable by his water wheel pennon, tenders his baton of command in the direction of his son. Prince João, who rides in equal splendor, extends his hand to receive the rod for directing the military. Heraldry appears on the palisade: the

Portuguese royal arms; the red cross of the Order of Christ; the ubiquitous water wheel. The panel of the *Assault on Asilah* truly captures the chaos of hand-to-hand combat. Equestrian portraits of the monarch and his son again appear in the mêlée of fighting men and battle standards. Prince João now wields the command baton while King Afonso brandishes his sword as if he were the legendary Arthur hefting the mighty Excalibur. Due to the resounding victory at Asilah, the taking of Tangier was a relatively tame affair. In the last tapestry of the *Fall of Tangier*, the royals are absent, having relinquished the final routing to their commanders. The Tangerines flee their city. By contrast to the implied cacophony of the other panels, the sounds of silence are apparent in this final episode.

### **João II (1455: r. 1481-1495) The Chivalric “Perfect Prince”: On the Threshold of a Global Empire**

When King Afonso died in 1481, his son João succeeded him to the throne of Portugal, a monarch known to posterity as *o Príncipe Perfeito* - the “Perfect Prince” (Sanceau, 1959). Although his reign was characterized by political unrest, João II’s rule witnessed the Portuguese penetration of West Africa and the establishment in Ghana of the important coastal citadel of São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) in 1482 and the subsequent exploration of the Congo River by Diogo Cão in 1484. The navigator Bartolomeu Dias in 1488 rounded the Cape of Good Hope, establishing a critical sea route to India.

In 1473, soon after he was knighted for his valor at Tangiers, João II wed his first cousin - Leonor of Viseu—the beautiful daughter of Afonso V’s brother Fernando, who had fought in campaigns to North Africa. This marriage occurred on January 22, 1470 - the feast day of St. Vincent. Prince João then was 18 and his bride Leonor was only 15. The well-known “*Virgin of the Catholic Monarchs*” in Madrid’s Prado Museum should be retitled the “*Virgin of the Portuguese Monarchs*” because, based upon a careful study of extant portraits, the sovereigns portrayed before the seated Madonna and Child actually are João II and Queen Leonor, not Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon (Figure 5).

Leonor was the first cousin of Isabel of Castile—their mothers were sisters—and so, the women shared an undeniable physical resemblance. The ruler in the Prado painting has a rather pointed nose, closer to that of João II than Ferdinand of Aragon. There too is the knotty issue of the painter’s identity. The Prado work has remained anonymous, because stylistically it cannot be related to the hand of any Spanish master. However, the work accords in sensuousity with figures painted by Jorge Afonso (1470-1540) as well as his disciple and son-in-law, Gregório Lopes (1490-1550) (Carvalho, 1999; Seruya, Alves, & Serrão, 1999). Jorge Afonso, a documented court artist of Manuel I in 1508, lived in Lisbon and maintained a workshop near the Church of São Domingos (Luz Afonso, de Brito, & Amado, 1992; Pereira, 1995; Porfírio, 1991). The Prado *Virgin of the Monarchs* includes the figures of four major mendicant saints of the Dominican Order: St. Thomas Aquinas with a Church Maquette with St. Raymond of Pennaforte; and opposite, Sts. Dominic de Guzmán with a Lily and St. Peter Martyr of Verona).

Especially relevant for the Prado *Virgin of the Monarchs*, is the fact that Jorge Afonso received robust patronage from Queen Leonor of Viseu, Manuel I's sister. Among projects she commissioned were main altarpieces for the Lisbon Madre de Deus Convent she founded (1515: Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga) and the Monastery of Jesus in Setúbal. Jorge Afonso and Gregório Lopes collaborated to decorate the interior of Tomar's *Charola* (ca. 1536-40).

In 1490, when the Prado *Virgin of the Monarchs* was painted, a wedding was celebrated between the dynastic houses of Portugal and Spain (Cordeiro de Sousa, 1954; Sanceau, 1959, pp. 323-332; Oliviera Marques, 1971, pp. 31-35). The only son of João II and Leonor—a 15-year-old Prince Afonso—married the 20-year-old eldest daughter of the Spanish sovereigns Isabel and Ferdinand. Princess Isabella of Asturias, is seen *de dos*, that is, from the back, and her face is in profile.



**Figure 5:** Attributed to Jorge Afonso (School of Lisbon), *Virgin of the Portuguese Monarchs*, mixed media on panel (123 x 112 cm), ca. 1490, Madrid, Museo del Prado

This abbreviated manner of representation suggests the artist did not yet have personal contact with the Spanish *Infanta*. According to Garcia de Resende's *Chronicle of João II* (Ch. XIV), after approval of the marriage in March of 1490, a Portuguese delegation traveled to Seville. Fernão Silveira, Juan Teixeira, and Ruy de Sande were received at the Alcázar by the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand. At that time, the ambassadors presented their daughter with several gifts, including a "handsome likeness" of *Prince Afonso* (Resende, 1545/1973, Ch. CXII). The Prado panel plausibly was the betrothal gift which greatly pleased his intended bride. The painting has a provenance in the Dominican Real Monasterio de Santo Tomás in Ávila, the burial place of Juan of Asturias, the younger brother of Princess Isabella and only son of the Catholic Monarchs. X-rays of the Prado panel reveal the original frontal portrait of the prince was later overpainted, perhaps to accord with the features of Juan of Asturias, who died prematurely in 1497 soon after his marriage to Maximilian I's daughter, Margaret of Austria.

Prince Afonso's marriage ceremony had occurred in the Cathedral of Seville on the first Sunday after Easter, April 18, 1490, with the diplomat Fernão Silveira served as proxy for his bride. However, the wedding festivities were not celebrated in Portugal until late November of that year when *Infanta* Isabella arrived to Évora, the favorite seat of King João II. The monarch spent months planning and organizing the nuptial events, and they were celebrated with great protocol, pomp, and ceremony (Resende, 1545, Ch. CXIV). Queen Leonor's brother - Manuel I, who then was Duke of Beja, had served as escort to the Spanish princess from the frontier border of Spain. On November 25, 1490, the feast day of St. Catherine of Alexandria, *Infanta* Isabella and Manuel rode on horseback to Évora's main town gate, where they were met by the groom, Prince Afonso. Mounted on a spirited steed and attired in fine silk velvet and wool, he rode beside his father. João II was outfitted entirely in the French fashion, with a slashed brocaded doublet lined with marten fur and embroidered with pearls and rare gems. The king wore the English Order of the Garter and his trailing cloak was lined with ermine and complimented by a white plumed hat (Resende, 1545/1973, Ch. CXXIII).

A contingent of 60 knights accompanied the monarch who was hailed by the Sicilian humanist Cataldo Siculo (1455-1517) as another Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar (Caetano de Sousa, 1735-1749). The joyful cavalcade rode through Évora's narrow streets, all bedecked for the occasion with banners and laurel branches and perfumed with the scent of orange blossoms. *Infanta* Isabella and Prince Afonso were formally united in marriage at the old Cathedral before the wedding party moved to João II's residence in the southern sector of Évora, the *Paço Real de San Francisco* (Baptista Pereira, 1998; Espanca, 1993). Located in the *hortas*, or gardens, of the town's Franciscan Monastery of Espiñeiro, the royal palace was destroyed in 1619 and replaced with a municipal market place. A satellite view shows the parking lot and cavity area where the palace once stood. Only the Romanesque church of São Francisco (1226) remains, rebuilt as the palace chapel by João II in 1475, and completed under his cousin and successor, Manuel I. The emblems of both monarchs—João's pelican and Manuel's

armillary sphere—mark the entrance. So then, it was this area of Évora which witnessed the lavish marriage entertainments of 1490.

The São Francisco Palace of was a huge residence with many salas for audience and conversation, as well as a library with a *studiolo*, and generous apartments. Only a wing of the royal residence survives today. However, it is much altered, having been ravaged by fire in 1916 and summarily restored in 1943. The Manueline *Galeria de Damas* is a double-storied structure comprising two equal-sized galleries that are separated by a center vestibule. Built about 1504-1510, this “Gallery for Women,” about 190 feet in length, was a stone replacement for a huge *Sala de Madeira*, or Wooden Hall, that João II raised in the gardens of São Francisco Palace for his son’s wedding. The roof of the king’s grand gallery, which resembled an inverted ship’s hull, actually has been reconstructed in California. By contrast with San Diego’s famed Hotel del Coronado, João II’s banqueting hall was supported by tall ship masts transported from the Atlantic coast. Furthermore, the wooden nailed planks of its side walls were tarred and caulked like the decks of a *caravela* to prevent water leakage (Resende, 1545/1973, CXVIII). The wooden gallery measured about 220 feet in length by 60 feet in width and 52 feet in height (67 x 18 x 16 meters). Rafael Moreira, an architectural historian from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, made the relevant observation in our correspondence of 2012 that this size was equivalent in proportion and scale to Noah’s Ark. He cited the measurements given by the 14th-century Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra in his *Commentaries (Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam: 1471)*. Moreira believes the biblical analogy of the wooden hall to Noah’s Ark was deliberate in view of the international social aura of Évora during the reign of João II. The town functioned as a magnet for peoples of many cultures within the parameters of the known world. An oblique comparison of Évora with the biblical ship would have been understood by the wealthy Jews of the Aviz court who generously covered the costs of the 1490 wedding entertainments and decorations (Soyer, 2007).

The chronicle of Garcia de Resende informs that João II’s wooden hall had two arched galleries for musicians, and was illuminated by 30 very large gilded cross-shaped candlesticks so that “during night it looked as if it was daytime.” Moreover, the gallery was covered from “above to the ground by rich and beautiful tissues.” Resende used the term *lambeis*, a *lambel* being a Moroccan cloth in boldly colored strips. And he adds that this was a “new thing, that looked very well by the difference it had to the brocades and tapestry.” João II clearly wanted to accent his singular role in the Moroccan campaign of 1471 and he was the only European monarch who could claim this distinction. His hall contained *dressoirs* laden with gold and silver objects. At one end was the royal dais beneath a canopy of honor and along each side of the chamber were seven huge tables that were raised on carpeted platforms—14 tables in all. The middle space was left vacant for serving food and evening performances.

Among the roster of events in 1490 was an evening banquet held on December 5 to coincide with the feast day of St. Barbara, patron of the military and mariners (Resende, 1545/1973, Chap. CXXV). The wooden gallery was

decorated with 30 tents, each about three feet tall, adorned with gold streamers and fashioned with striped damask fabrics of purple and white, the colors of the Spanish *Infanta*. Upon the tables rested 14 large castles made of chestnut wood and golden taffeta, which were later given as favors to the guests. The concluding banquet on December 7, the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, was even more spectacular because its entertainments were evocative of João II's successful naval expedition in 1471 to Asilah and Tangier (Resende, 1545, Ch. CXXVII; Pena, 1504, Ch. XLVII). Nine Portuguese ships and a huge triple-masted carrack on wheels glided down the center of the hall to the fanfare of trumpets, drums, and artillery. The quarterdecks of the *caravelas* were fashioned of brocade, the sails of white and purple taffeta, and the riggings were of gold and silk. The masts bore the arms of Portugal, Castile, and Aragon. The colorful ships rested upon fabric bolts of rigid canvas painted to simulate the stormy waves of the ocean, and they were lighted by torches and manned by pilots and seamen dressed in brocades and silks. The lead ship in the flotilla was decorated as a white swan with gold and silver wings, and it was commanded by King João II "fully armed" who stood at the prow as the "Swan Knight." The monarch issued a challenge to all who would join him and his eight companions in a four-day joust to defend a castle. João II then inaugurated a dance with Princess Isabella and a masque followed.

Without question, the guests were supposed to associate João II and his eight knights with the "Nine Worthies" of Fame. These Worthies have been identified as: the pagan Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar - the biblical David, Joshua and Judas Maccabeus - and the Christian Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon, the leader of the first Crusade in Jerusalem, with whom monarchs most often were compared. Illuminated in the famed scriptorium of Évora by João do Cró, a set of "Nine Worthies" was included in a manuscript on heraldry João II commissioned after 1490 (Figure 6: a-b). Because the *Great Book* was completed in 1509, the face of *Godfrey de Bouillon* presents a viable portrait of the king's cousin and successor, Manuel I. Cró's *Hector* most resembles proposed portraits of João II, and the selection was appropriate as in Homer's *Iliad*, the Prince of Troy is upheld as an ideal warrior.

The chief knights of the royal court partook in the outdoor festivities that were held the next day and wooden stands assigned to the Portuguese and Spanish onlookers were shaded by awnings. Draped in Avis green and cloths of gold, João II's platform for the tourneys was festooned with his kingdom's arms and heraldic pelican (Resende, 1545, Ch. CXXVIII; Pina, 1504, Ch. XLVII). The open air winter entertainments were staged in the gardens not far from the Manueline *Galeria de Damas*. At one end of the *teia*, or flat competition space, a square wooden castle had been built, replete with fanciful turrets and projecting pennons. Nuno Gonçalves's tapestries of the 1471 Moroccan campaign likely were selected from the Palace of São Francisco to decorate and insulate the interior opulent apartments created for King João II and his eight companions. The main sportive event appears to have been a reenactment of the taking of Asilah and Tangier, with two equestrian groups of men competing in the battle, one contingent led by



João II and his “Worthies.” The challengers - *aventureiros* - were directed by the ruler’s cousin, Manuel I. The men fought with *canas*, or pointed reeds, in the Moroccan tradition. Dueling tilts and jousts followed the mock siege of a fortress, prizes for the contests being golden chains with white enamel medallions. The highest award was a diamond ring, which João II won but relinquished to an outstanding participant.

Mere months after these joyful celebrations, on July 13, 1491, Prince Afonso died at the Aviz summer palace in Santarém (Resende, 1545, Ch. CXXXII). Racing at a great speed on the shores of the Tagus River while his father was swimming, Afonso and a mounted companion executed the *parelho*, holding hands while riding, but the Prince’s horse fell, dragging him beneath (Prestage, 1928, p. 162). Afonso’s crushed body was wrapped in fishing nets and he was taken to a nearby shed to await the arrival of his mother Queen Leonor and young Spanish wife, Isabella of Asturias. After Afonso’s death, the grieving *Infanta* returned to Spain. Lacking an heir, João II attempted to have Jorge, his illegitimate ten-year-old son by Dona Ana de Mendoça, ascend to the throne. Leonor opposed this stratagem, perhaps out of loyalty to her brother Manuel I. Succeeding João II on October 25, 1495, Manuel appointed Jorge “Duke of Coimbra” and included him in his household (Sanceau, 1959: pp. 289-291).

**Figure 6 (a)**



**Figure 6 (b)**



**Figure 6:** (a) João do Cró (Frenchman: Jeanne de Jeu de Cartes), *João II as Hector of the Trojan War* and Manuel I as *Godefroy de Bouillon of the First Crusade* (b), from the *Nine Worthies of Fame* (Pagan; Hebrew; Christian) illustrated in *O Livro Grande do Armeiro-Mor* (*The Great Book of the Master Armorer*), commissioned by João II and completed in 1509 under Manuel I, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

Until her death in 1525, the widowed Queen Leonor lived in Lisbon, first at the coastal Xabregas Palace and then at the Madre de Deus Convent of Poor Clares that she founded in 1509. A Franciscan tertiary, she supported charitable institutions and hospitals. Like St. Helen, for whom she was named, Leonor acquired sacred art and relics which glorified the Holy Cross and an evangelical Church (Lowe, 2000).

A set of five narrative paintings in Lisbon's Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga once belonged to a *Reliquary Altarpiece of St. Auta* (Figure 7). The panels have remained anonymous, although the sumptuous portrait-like figures recollect personae in the Prado *Madonna of the Monarchs* and paintings by Jorge Afonso and Gregório Lopes. Commissioned about 1517-1522 by Dowager Queen Leonor of Viseu, the paintings focus upon the legend of St. Ursula, daughter of Deonutus, a Christian ruler of Britanny, the promised bride of Prince Etherius, son of a pagan king of Anglia, their three-year pilgrimage from England to Rome in eleven ships with 11,000 virgins, and their eventual martyrdom in Cologne on their return journey. Purportedly St. Auta, Ursula's Sicilian first cousin, was among the holy women in her retinue killed by the arrows of Huns (Alemparte, 1991; Osswald, 2005).



**Figure 7:** Attributed to Jorge Afonso and Gregório Lopes (School of Lisbon): *The Boarding of St. Ursula, Prince Etherius and St. Auta at Basilea and The Martyrdom in Cologne of St. Ursula and her Companions by Julius, King of the Huns* (93 x 192.5)

The *St. Auta Altarpiece* was ordered soon after the arrival to Portugal in 1517 of relics gifted by Maximilian I (r. 1493-1519). The Holy Roman Emperor must have been aware of the historical fact that Afonso Henrique I's Reconquest of Lisbon in 1147 had occurred on the October 21 feast day of St. Ursula. Maximilian I's mother, Leonora (1452-1467), the wife of Frederick III (1415-1493), was a Portuguese *Infanta* and the sister of King Afonso V. The primary panels of the dismantled *Reliquary Altarpiece of St. Auta* illustrate: *The Departure*



of *St. Auta's Relics from Cologne* and *The Arrival of St. Auta's Relics to the Franciscan Poor Clare Convent of Madre de Deus*. The former is backed by the subject of *The Meeting of St. Ursula and Prince Etherius* and the latter's reverse illustrates *The Blessing of Pope Cyriacus*. The uppermost section of the altarpiece was a lunette containing two historical subjects: *The Boarding of St. Ursula, Prince Etherius and St. Auta at Basilea* (Basel), and *The Martyrdom in Cologne of St. Ursula and her Virginalis Militzia of 11,000 Companions by Julius, King of the Huns*.

Three panels of the *Reliquary Altarpiece of St. Auta* have a landscape component with seafaring vessels: the paintings that concern the journey of St. Auta's relics, and the lunette narratives which equally underscore the notion of travel with its variety of Portuguese carracks and smaller skiffs. These ships display João II's heraldic arms and pelican motif, a Messianic symbol of self-sacrifice. They additionally show the "shrimp net" device adopted by Leonor of Viseu following the death of Prince Afonso. Consider that the female saints in panels of the *Reliquary Altarpiece of St. Auta* wear rich 16th-century attire—mantles with ermine collars, robes of brocade or velvet lined with vibrant silk, and with open sleeves variously gathered (Figure 8). The ensemble of holy martyrs wear crowns and pendants of gold inset with cabochon stones and pearls, all costly items of adornment and status that obviously are based directly upon jewels of the Portuguese Crown. To Dowager Queen Leonor, *The Meeting of St. Ursula and Prince Etherius* must have summoned poignant memories of the wedding festivities of Évora, where Africans from the Gold Coast played music in the balconied areas of Joao II's huge *Sala de Madeira* with its spectacular inverted hull ceiling supported by the masts of Lisbon's ships.

### **Manuel I—"The Fortunate King" as *Dominus Mundi* Changing the Medieval World Picture**

Queen Leonor of Viseu was the ever constant support of her brother, Manuel I, who on October 25, 1495, ascended to the throne of Portugal as the closest in the dynastic line to rule following the death of Prince Afonso (Atanázio, 1984; Góis, 1619/1970; Levenson, 1991; Lopes & Dias, 2002; Sanceau, 1969). On September 30, 1497, Manuel I wed Afonso's widowed Spanish bride, Isabella of Asturias, though unfortunately she died in childbirth a year later (Anonymous, 1497, MS. 1751). To continue and solidify his peaceful alliance with the bordering country of Spain, he then married Isabella's younger sister Maria at Alcácer do Sal on October 30, 1500. Despite their outward consolidation, both countries occupying the Iberian Peninsula continued to vie for power in the quest for new dominions during the age of navigation. Manuel's selection of the armillary sphere as his unique device to underscore his territorial expansion was a manifestation of the *Dominus Mundi* complexion of his rule. He was fortunate to have followed in the wake of João II, whose reign had marked a beginning to a new era of epical exploration with the erection of the Ghana fortress of São Jorge to safeguard trade from the Gold Coast of West Africa.



**Figure 8:** Attributed to Jorge Afonso and Gregório Lopes (School of Lisbon), (a): *The Meeting of St. Ursula and Prince Etherius* - reverse side of *The Departure of St. Auta's Relics from Cologne*

Under Manuel I, the technological skills of the Portuguese explorers quite simply changed the medieval world picture. A decade after a trajectory by sea to East Asia was achieved by Bartholomeu Dias's voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, Vasco da Gama achieved a route to India, arriving in 1498 at Calicut on the southern Malabar Coast. Then in 1500 Pedro Álvares Cabral on his way to India, encountered the magnificent land of Brazil, vastly abundant in natural resources. Portugal continued to excel in the building of ships, improving designs for strong winds and ever changing currents. The first large cargo ships of the early 1400s were the double and triple-masted caravels. With their lateen triangular sails, they accommodated as much as 200 tons of goods and were extremely agile in the waters. By the 16th century, however, the caravel was superseded by the even larger carracks, which had two decks, three to four masts, overlapping square sails and a storage capacity of 2000 tons. Manueline Lisbon, therefore, was a bustling city for trade, with carracks returning from many African, Indian, and Brazilian ports

laden with spices, gold, ivory, rare woods, sugar cane, and fine silk (Barbara, 2013; Dos Guimarães Sá, 2009; Fonseca, 2003; Schwarz, 2008).

Between 1502 and 1506 Vasco Fernandes (“Grão Vasco”) painted a panel of the *Adoration of the Magi* as part of an altarpiece for the chancel of the Cathedral of Viseu, Manuel I’s natal town (Figure 9: a; Faria Paulino, Dias, & Rodrigues, 1992; Fernández Garcia, Lopez, & José, 2004; Rodrigues, 2002). The sacred subject inherently concerns the achievement of successful travel. After all, the three Wise Men described in the Gospel of St. Matthew (2:1-12) were guided by a most vibrant star over a sea of desert sand in Persia to a modest stable in Bethlehem. The painting additionally commemorates Portugal’s sighting of Brazil in 1500 because the navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral is portrayed as the eldest Magus Caspar (Greenlee, 1967). Caspar’s offering of myrrh, a common resin in Mali and the Horn of Africa, has been received by the Virgin Mary. She passes the hammered gold container to St. Joseph, Christ’s earthly father and a descendant of the House of David. The youngest Magus Baltasar, a Tupinamba Indian of Brazil, extends a container of indigenous aromatic Frankincense.

Manuel I strides into the composition as the Magus Melchior. He alone lifts his hat, an act that traditionally surfaces in Renaissance paintings of the “Wise Kings” who journey from afar to venerate the prognosticated “King of Israel.” Their removal of a crown or cap was interpreted as a patent sign of their humility in the presence of a higher authority, the Messianic Christ. The gesture specifically derives from an angelic vision purportedly experienced by Elizabeth of Schönau (1129-1164), a German Benedictine nun. In one of her 15 letters to St. Hildegard, the mystic describes the three kings removing their crowns and offering them to Christ, who promptly relinquished back to them the gilded insignia of earthly power. Pious legend relates Constantine’s mother, Empress St. Helen, had transported the skulls of the Magi first to Constantinople and then to Milan. The transfer of the Magi’s relics to Cologne in 1164 must have inspired Portugal’s first ruler Afonso Henques I to recover the remains of St. Vincent in 1173 from a cape at Sagres Point in the Algarve. In Book III of his *Geographica*, the Greek scholar Strabo (64 BC-24 AD) identified the coastal landmark of the *Cabo de São Vicente (Promotorium Sacrum in ora Lusitaniae)* as the westernmost edge of the known world under the Roman Emperor Augustus.

Vasco Fernandes shows Manuel I offering the infant Christ gold, a precious metal associated with kingship. The object in fact is a Eucharistic *ciborium*, which in context of the “Epiphany” theme, alludes to the spread of the faith in newly discovered lands. The monarch’s portrait was so appropriate as a gift giver because he delighted in sending exotic presents to European royal courts as tokens of his world imperial power. Such gifts would have comprised carved ivory objects from West Africa which were carved with Portuguese soldiers, heraldry, and Manueline armillary spheres (Figure 9: b; Bassani, Buller, Fagg, & Vogel, 1988; Martinez, 2007). Created by the ancestors of the Mende in the kingdom of Sierra Leone, the Sapi-Portuguese oliphants were not employed as hunting horns by European courts. As related again by Rafael

Moreira in correspondence (2012), the Manueline ivory trumpets were called *roncas* in court inventories and he informs they actually were modeled after the fog-horns of ships. Displayed at ceremonial events such as feast day processions and municipal parades, the *roncas* were a visible sign of Portugal's wealth, power, and maritime supremacy. Other ivory objects, such as the salt cellar - termed *saleiro* in court inventories - and the pyxide, a cylindrical container with a lid, were not intended for actual use as tableware. Rather, the sculpted objects were typically exhibited as prestigious curiosities on shelves of cabinets set up at lavish banquets or formal occasions like royal baptisms.

Manuel's emblems are observed on many works of art he commissioned. But they especially emerge in the distinctively organic, and frequently nautical genre of decoration that characterizes the architecture of his reign, such as the landmark *Tower of Bethlehem* near the beach of the Restelo facing the Atlantic. Built by Francisco de Arruda with its impressive Italianate arched loggia that served as royal apartments for Manuel I, the defense tower is near the magnificent São Jerónimos Monastery which was founded on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1501/2 (Carvalho, 1990; Moreira, 1987; Pereira, 2002). Its church was dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem, the traditional guardian of seafarers. The medieval Latin hymn *Ave Stella Maris* (Hail Star of the Sea) was a hymn to the Virgin Mary chanted at Vespers, the sunset evening prayer service within the canonical hours of the day. Portuguese mariners were guided by the lodestar Polaris and other constellations when they ventured in uncharted waters.

São Jerónimos Church has an impressive ceremonial entrance on the south side, and navigators would enter this portal to attend Mass before departing Lisbon on the evening tide. Within the sanctuary's *capela-mor* (main chapel) is the burial place of Manuel I. Although his tomb rests on the backs of elephants, the design is quite unostentatious compared with the sarcophagus of Vasco da Gama installed in a private chapel near the church's entrance. Nicolau Chanterene, who carved the tomb monument at Coimbra of Afonso Henrique I, was the master sculptor responsible for the western primary entrance to the São Jerónimos church. Above his Manueline portal are carved vignettes of the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity* and the *Adoration of the Kings*. Realistic effigies of Manuel I and his second Spanish queen, Maria of Aragon (1482-1517), flank the ogival arched door. Their portraits are believed to have been done from life. While the *Epiphany* theme would have had exceptional meaning for King Manuel I, the blond-haired Queen Maria, like her mother Isabel of Castile, sought to emulate the Virgin Mary.

Another veristic likeness of the ruler makes an appearance in São Jerónimos's Cloister, one of the most beautiful in Europe because of its opulent sculptural ornamentation that seems to reflect influences from the organic decoration of East Indian temples (Figure 10). Stonework carving that defines the "Manueline" aesthetic comprises diverse repetitive elements linked with the age of navigation: armillary spheres, seashells, twisted nautical ropes, intricate filigree designs over pillars, portals and arches abundant in botanical motifs and often

illustrating the cross of the Order of Christ. Within a courtyard open to the constellations of the night sky which guided sailors, Manuel I's image is well placed next to the Prophet Isaiah on the east side where daylight first appears. He is elevated as a Prophet-King analogous to the Biblical David. The metaphorical play upon the king's name "Emmanuel" was not coincidental. The Gospel of Matthew (1:22-23) provides the genealogy of Jesus Christ from the House of David to St. Joseph, referencing the prophet Isaiah (7:12-14) to whom the sign of "Emmanuel" was given: Behold a virgin . . . shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel . . . "God with us."

**Figure 9 (a)**



**Figure 9 (b)**



**Figure 9:** (a): Vasco Fernandes (1475-1542), *Adoration of the Kings with Manuel I as the Magus Melchior*, Cathedral of Viseu, oil on wood (51.6 x 31.9": 131 x 81"); (b): Sapi-Portuguese Oliphant, ivory and metal (64.2 x 16.4 x 9 cm), early 16th Century, Washington, D.C., National Museum of African Art





**Figure 10:** Cloister, São Jerónimos Monastery, Belém: Architect: João de Castilho, 1517-1518 and King Manuel I as the Biblical David, Prophet-King, on the East Side of the Cloister

Manuel I and his second wife, Maria of Aragon, had several children, as shown in *The Fountain of Life*, a painting in the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Porto (Figure 11: a). Commissioned by the Misericórdia Brotherhood of Charity for their chapel in the Romanesque *Sé* (Cathedral) of Porto, the work illustrates the royal family and members of their court surrounding a basin filled not with water, but with the mystical blood of the crucified Christ, who is flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist. The genesis for this rare imagery is the *Well of Moses* carved by Claus Sluter and polychromed by Jean Malouel about 1395-1405 for the cloister garden of the Chartreuse de Champmol in Dijon (Nash, 2005, 2006, 2008). All that survives of the Burgundian monument is its impressive base formed by six Hebrew prophets who stand beneath mourning angels. Pertinently, Dijon's *Well of Moses* once was surmounted by a carved grouping of Calvary. Porto's *Fons Vitae* presents an even more arcane theme as the Dijon ensemble, because the setting includes royal and secular portraits. As such, the painting appears to have been influenced by Jan van Eyck's lost *Fountain of Life*, an altarpiece likely commissioned by João I in 1429 for the Lisbon Castle of São Jorge, lost in the 1755 earthquake, yet known through replicas in the Prado Museum and the Oberlin Allen Memorial Museum (Von Barghahn, 2013-2014). Quite possibly too, Van Orley's painting reflects the inspiration of the *Vita Christi* by Ludolf of Saxony. The medieval Carthusian monk had stressed the need to employ the five Senses while contemplating

Christ's Passion (Bodenstedt, 1944; Conway, Jr., 1976). The sense experience enabled the devout to imagine themselves as participants in sacred events of the past. Ludolf of Saxony's *Vita Christi* was a prototype to the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises*, a compilation of meditative practices developed by the order's founder, St. Ignatius Loyola, and performed over a month to strengthen ties with God. During the 16th century, Portuguese ships transported missionaries and concepts of Ignatian spirituality to distant lands (Alden, 1996). Tintured crimson, the distinctive crosses on the sails of Lusitanian carracks perhaps were considered an oblique tribute to Christ's blood spilt at Jerusalem's Golgotha (Figure 11: b).

*The Fountain of Life* has been attributed to the Flemish master Bernard van Orley, a court painter in Brussels to Archduchess Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), the only daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy. She probably sent Van Orley's painting as a gift to King Manuel I about 1515 (Pearson, 2001). When Queen Maria died in 1517, Manuel I wed a third time (July 16, 1518). His bride and niece by marriage was Eleanor of Austria (1498-1558), who had been raised in Belgium under the erudite tutelage of her aunt, Margaret of Austria and initially been promised to the king's son, João III (1502-1557) (Domingues, 1962). When João III succeeded to the throne on December 19, 1521, the widowed Eleanor moved to the Hapsburg center of Vienna. Her youngest sister, Catherine of Austria (1507-1578), who had been reared in Spain, became queen of Portugal on February 10, 1525. On March 10, 1526 at the Alcázar of Seville, a second marriage was celebrated by the Portuguese dynastic house of Aviz. João III's sister Isabel (1503-1539) wed Catherine's brother and her first cousin, Charles V (1500-1558), Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, and King of Spain.

### **João III—The Terrestrial Sphere and Portugal's Mastery of the Seas**

Under João III and Queen Catherine, Portugal reached an apogee of power and prestige, continuing to enjoy a panoply of African, East Asian and Brazilian wares. In terms of courtly portraiture, the sovereign continued to be represented both realistically and allegorically. In 1552, Catherine invited the Flemish master Antonis Mor to Lisbon (Jordan, 1994a; Warnel, 2009, 2011; Woodall, 2008), where he enjoyed significant status at the royal court. Mor's pendant panels of the Portuguese monarchs are patently naturalistic (Figure 12: a and b). While João III's figure in black silk seems to suggest an understated elegance, Catherine in an East Asian brocaded tunic over a shimmering damask silk robe - articulated by a ruby, diamond, and pearl belt - proves all that glitters is gold. She wears five rings, and clasps a matching black fan in her left hand. Catherine stands near a table covered with a velvet cloth, the same "Aviz green" as the single emerald ring her husband displays, his only adornment save for a type of sheathed roundel dagger that seemingly is of African origin. The object replaces the more traditional long sword in a state portrait, and therefore, it plausibly was intended to invoke the memory of the legendary Nestorian Christian patriarch of India, Prester John (Sanceau, 1944, 1947). The Portuguese believed this legendary and

elusive ruler lived in Ethiopia and carried an emerald scepter, possibly symbolic of the hidden alchemic “philosopher’s stone.” Prester John was not unlike the “Fisher King: sought by Percival in his Grail quest.

**Figure 11 (a)**



**Figure 11 (b)**



**Figure 11:** (a): Bernard van Orley, *The Fountain of Life*: King Manuel I with his Sons (three eldest are João III, Luís, Fernando) and Queen Maria with her Daughters (Isabel and Beatrix), oil on oak panel (267 x 210 cm), ca. 1515, Casa de Misericórdia, Porto (b): Portuguese School, *Carracks of the Vasco da Gama’s India Armada of 1502*, from the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu*, 1565 compendium, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 525

Several paintings of the “Epiphany” theme by Gregório Lopes (1490-1550) were commissioned during the reign of João III and these works evidence subtle variations upon Vasco Fernandes’s earlier rendition of the subject for Manuel I (Carvalho, 1999; Seruya et al., 1999). Dated about 1539-1541, an *Adoration of the Magi* today is housed in Lisbon’s Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, along with five other panels belonging to the same dismantled altarpiece: the *Annunciation*, the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, the *Agony in the Garden*, the *Entombment*, and the *Resurrection*. The retable originally was installed in the “Chapel of Our Lord of the Passion and of the Incarnation” at Santos-os-Novo, a Hieronymite monastery in the Santo Antonio valley near Lisbon (Figure 13: a).

The Santos-o-Novo *Epiphany* presents an imposing royal portrait of King João III as the Magus Melchior. Dressed in a black and silver surcoat over



crimson silk, the ruler bows and gazes directly towards the Christ child. He places his right hand against his chest, and this image educes that of a chivalric knight pledging his oath to a sovereign lord. Almost as resplendent is the prostrated figure of the elderly Magus Caspar, whose face is shown in profile, but may provide a posthumous portrait of Manuel I. Attired in a cloth of gold and black tunic worn over an inner garment of lemon yellow, Caspar exhibits a heavy and intricately tooled collar which contrasts with the less ostentatious triple strands of gold preferred by Melchior. Resting on the stone pavement is Caspar's imposing gold vessel ornamented with atlantes. Beside the object is his gold-tasseled, wide-brimmed and plumed hat that is tintured the exact vermilion color as his voluminous mantle. From the reign of João I, sumptuary laws in Renaissance Portugal had approved the color primarily for royalty. According to the last testament of Manuel I, following his death in 1521, all the monarch's lavish garments were given to the poor of Lisbon as a final magnanimous act of charity (Sequeira, 2012, 2014).

With regard to the Magus Baltasar, in lieu of Vasco Fernandes's Brazilian Tupinamba Indian, Gregório Lopes elected to depict him as an African with pearl earrings, an elegant light azure silk turban with plumes, a silver tunic, and a citron colored mantle (Kaplan, 1985). His brown leather belt holds a dramatic scimitar (*talwar*), a long curved Muslim steel sword with a hilt and scabbard. The exotic king is not a native of the Gold Coast of Guinea or the Congo region. Rather, he appears to be from the kingdom of Ethiopia. This representation is relevant because it confirms Renaissance Portugal's sustained belief that Prester John was in fact a descendant of Bethlehem's Magi.

Attributed to Gregório Lopes, another *Epiphany* subject in the French Romanesque Church of Bourg-Saint Andéol in Ardèche has an unknown provenance (Reis-Santos, 1967), but the work must have been dispatched from Lisbon by Queen Catherine of Austria as a present to her eldest sibling, Eleanor of Austria. Having left Lisbon with her newborn daughter Maria following the death of her husband Manuel I, Eleanor was compelled to remarry according to stipulations of a peace treaty negotiated in 1529 between Emperor Charles V and King Francis I. When the Valois monarch died in 1547, the widowed Eleanor saw no reason to remain with the French court. She departed for Brussels to reside with favorite sister, Mary of Hungary (1505-1558), then the appointed Archduchess of the Spanish Netherlands.

The Ardèche *Epiphany* boasts an even more theatrical *mise-en-scène* than its counterpart in the *Santos-o-Novo* altarpiece, and for this reason, it may date slightly later, circa 1545 (Policarpo, 1999). Both works reveal the dual impact of Flemish and Italian Mannerism upon 16th-century Portuguese art. The figures in each work accord unequivocally with realistic Northern types. Otherwise, the architectural setting of classical ruins in the Ardèche *Epiphany* betrays greater familiarity with the "Romanists" in Antwerp, *inter alia*: wall reliefs of ancient *spolia* above the Virgin Mary; an arcade of round arches with an Aviz escutcheon in the spandrel; a distant vista showing the turbaned Magi mounted on spirited steeds with their retinue arriving to Bethlehem from the Levant.

**Figure 12 (a)****Figure 12 (b)**

**Figure 12:** (a): Antonis Mor, *King João III of Portugal*, oil on wood (101 x 81 cm/107 x 84 cm), 1552, Madrid, Fundación Lázaro Galdiano; (b): Antonis Mor, *Queen Catherine of Austria* (1507-1578), oil on wood (107 x 84 cm), Museo del Prado

As in the case of the Santos-o-Novo *Adoration of the Magi*, an inventive Mannerist color palette characterizes the apparel of the Magi. Depicted in the foreground on the right side of the composition, they approach the infant Christ wearing rich apparel in colors of forest green, citron yellow, salmon pink, and aquamarine. Their costumes contrast with the deeper, yet slightly bleached out hues of the Virgin Mary's azure mantle and dark beryl dress. The Ardèche Melchior is portrayed with a splendid sword, of which only the hilt is visible. With his left arm slightly akimbo, the ruler does not offer the Christ Child a Eucharistic ciborium, but rather, an intricately tooled receptacle containing a costly chain necklace. Held securely in his mother's arms, Jesus has reached out to clasp the hanging pendant with both hands. The curiosity expressed is very naturalistic. In actuality, however, the behavior is quite advanced for the age of the tiny infant shown in the composition. The inclusion of jewelry may relate to Elizabeth of Schönau's 12th-century account about the kings visit to Bethlehem. One Magus purportedly gave Jesus a large gold coin with a royal image. The centerpiece stone of the Ardèche pendant resembles porphyry agate, a stone which often was carved in antiquity as a cameo with an emperor's portrait.

Pictured as an Ethiopian and similarly recollective of the elusive Prester John, the standing Magus Baltasar is given even more prominence in the Ardèche painting. Another figure sharing kindred iconographical importance in the work is

St. Joseph. The elderly protector wears a bright coquelicot robe and plays the role of an onlooker in both versions of the “Epiphany” theme. The Ardèche St. Joseph is notably more contemplative. He sits cross-legged with his traveling staff in front of the lower drum of a fluted column that is entwined with ivy. His left hand is raised to his chin as he ponders the scene of gift-giving by “Wise Men.”

Founded in 1540, the Society of Jesus from its inception had promulgated popular devotion to St. Joseph, who watched over his family on the flight to Egypt, a journey that occurred soon after the Magi’s visit (Gospel of Matthew 2:13-23). The carpenter from Nazareth was selected as the primary patron of Jesuit humanist schools. João III was a staunch supporter of the order’s first missionaries who sailed to distant shores in Portuguese galleons. The elevated status of St. Joseph in post-Manueline “Epiphany” paintings must be interpreted in context of the special privileges the Jesuits enjoyed at the Aviz court and their accruing global influence.

By contrast to such credible portraits in “Epiphany” paintings commissioned by João III, a set of three 16th-century tapestries delves into the realm of pagan allegory (Figure 13: b). Woven by George Wezeler after cartoons by the Flemish master Bernard van Orley, the content of the *Spheres* may have been dictated by Queen Catherine, who placed the commission in Brussels about 1520 via her aunt, Archduchess Margaret of Austria (Ainsworth, 1982; Hewitt, 2010, Von Barghahn, 1986). The panel of the *Terrestrial Sphere* merits attention because Bernard van Orley provides a clever symbolical paragone: João III and Catherine were identified as the divine rulers of Olympus, Jupiter, and Juno. Pertinently too, the earth is turned so the continent of Africa is most visible, as well as South Asia—the king’s scepter is directed to the Iberian Peninsula and the Atlantic coast of Portugal.

When King João III died in 1557, his throne was left to a three-year-old grandson, Prince Sebastian, who was raised to rule by Queen Catherine until his majority in 1668 (Baños-Garcia, 2001; Loureiro, 1989; Saraiva, 1994). Perhaps inspired by the tales about Portugal’s earlier triumphs in North African campaigns, Sebastian sought to reclaim control of Morocco by securing strongholds that had been lost. Further, he wished to prevent the Ottoman Turks from increasing their power in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Commanding an army of 17,000 men, mostly mercenaries, the monarch was joined by 6,000 allies in Asilah. Even so, the Portuguese were decimated at Alcácer Quibir on August 4, 1578, by 60,000 warriors from Fez. The body of the nation’s last chivalric knight Sebastian was never recovered, and he left no direct heirs. Portugal’s vacant throne had dire repercussions, as the nation fell under the yoke of the Spanish Hapsburgs from 1580 until 1668.

This essay began with Antonio de Holanda’s manuscript illuminations for a *Portuguese Genealogy* and it will conclude with a few words about his talented son. Francisco de Holanda left Lisbon in 1538 to spend eight years in Italy studying classical monuments and enjoying discourse with humanists like Michelangelo, whose miniature he painted (Alves, 1986; Segurado, 1970; Vilela, 1982). In 1549 at the town of Santarém, Francisco de Holanda wrote the only

known Renaissance book on the art of portraiture. Entitled *On Extracting the Natural Image (Do Tirar Pelo Natural)*, the short treatise of 11 chapters reveals his preference for the Italian painterly portrait style over the rigorously precise and detailed type of likeness produced in the North (Holanda, 1549).

**Figure 13 (a)**



**Figure 13 (b)**



**Figure 13:** (a) Gregório Lopes (1490-1550), *Adoration of the Magi*, ca. 1539-41, oil on panel (135.5 x 122 cm), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, formerly at Santos-o-Novo, (b):Bernard van Orley (designer), *Earth Under the Protection of Jupiter and Juno*, woven under direction of Georg Wezeler, from a tapestry set of *The Spheres*, ca. 1520-30, gold, silver, silk, wool (11' 3" x 10' 3"), Madrid, Palacio Real

Another manuscript by Francisco de Holanda - *On the Ages of the World (De Aetatibus Mundi Imagines)* - is an extraordinary work with many complex levels of conceptual interpretation (Figure 14) (Deswarte, 1983, 1987; Von Barghahn, 1986). The opening folios of the *Seven Days of Creation* seem to provide a “spiritual” portrait of a small nation that used knowledge of maps, astrolabes, stars, winds, and ocean currents to better understand the earth, and in doing so, achieved epic goals. Gil Vicente (c. 1465-1536), famed poet and dramatist attached to the courts of both Manuel I and João III, described in a *canção* (song) Lusitanian ships as steered by a divine captain and propelled by heaven’s angels. Roy Campbell’s (1960) translation is an apposite verse to close a discussion about the blending of myth and reality in Portuguese art during the Renaissance age of navigation:



Rowing go the rowers  
 In a ship of great delight  
 The captain at the helm  
 The Sun of God is Light  
 Angels at the oars  
 Rowed with all their might  
 The flag of hope was flying  
 Lovely to the sight.

The mast was of endurance  
 Like crystal shining bright.  
 The sails were stitched with faith  
 and filled the world with light.  
 The seashore was serene  
 With not a wind in flight.  
 (Costa, 1989, p. 124;).



**Figure 14:** (a): Francisco de Holanda, The Fourth Day of Creation: The Creation of Light, from *Genesis of De Aetatibus Mundi Imagines*, 1543-1573, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, f. 6r

The triple-masted caravel surfaces serve as one of the most important visual leitmotifs of Portuguese Renaissance Art as evidenced by the examples in this essay including: the coastal views in Antonio de Holanda's illumination of the *Dynastic Tree of King Afonso Henriques I*; the *View of Manueline Lisbon* in Duarte Galvão's historical chronicle about the kingdom's first monarch; the *Landing at Asilah* from the Pastrana tapestries designed by Nuno Gonçalves, which captures the appearance of Afonso V's famed flagship São Antonio; João II's wooden banqueting hall at Évora constructed with a hull-shaped ceiling supported by actual ship masts and venue for ephemeral festivities featuring a flotilla with the principal caravel captained by the "Nine Worthies"; the *Reliquary Altarpiece of St. Auta* that displays the fleet of St. Ursula and Prince Etherius at Basilea and Cologne as veritable "ships of faith"; Vasco da Gama's celebrated *India Armada* (1502) illustrated in the Pierpont Morgan Library codex of Lisuarte de Abreu, a voyager who sailed in 1558 for Goa in the company of Dom Constantino de Bragança, the appointed viceroy of Portuguese India—their ship, the *Queen*, was named for Catherine of Austria, the consort of King João III (Sanceau, 1967).

An equally persistent trope in Renaissance Portuguese art is the accent upon messianic expectation, by which the ruler is elevated as Christ imitator, prophet, *Magus* and *Dominus Mundi*. Accordingly, the seafaring nation of Portugal with its vast knowledge of science, cartography, and astronomy, assumes the complexion of a "chosen" kingdom divinely guided by the stars to far destinations. In such a symbolical context, the ship metaphors of Gil Vicente's poetic verse converges eloquently with art commissioned by Manuel I and his immediate heir. The *caravelões* and larger carracks of João III accelerated trade with India and Brazil and they also established the first European contact with China and Japan. Jesuit missionaries traveled from Lisbon to all major stations within the network of the Portuguese empire.

While the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 has resulted in a fragmented view of Portugal's many cultural contributions, even vestiges of Renaissance art reveal a most inventive manner of melding truth and fable. Although a small country in Europe, the nation that faced the Atlantic along its entire western coast had a far-reaching global impact in art history. Resolute Portuguese mariners unquestionably changed the medieval world picture with their forays to remote lands, but this is another chapter of Lusitanian legend and lore.

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