

Nepotism, illegitimacy and papal protection in the construction of a career: Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira, Bishop of Lamego (1311–1330†)*

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Abstract

Dom Rodrigo de Oliveira was one of many fourteenth-century Portuguese clergymen who reached the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a result of the widespread practice of nepotism. The social fabric that catapulted this cleric into the religious hierarchy and the subsequent development of his *cursus honorum* reflect an era in which kinship and protectionism were essential for a career in the clergy.

As the illegitimate son of the influential Archbishop of Braga, Dom Martinho Pires de Oliveira (1296–1313), Dom Rodrigo benefited from the support of the archbishop (who favored his relations and dependants as part of a far-reaching strategy), and from the indispensable protection of Popes Boniface VIII and Clement V, thanks to the archbishop's prominence and influence at the Papal Court.

Dom Rodrigo de Oliveira's career began in the chapter of Évora (a city where his paternal family were influential) before he had attained the regulation age of fourteen. From there, he moved on to become prior of the important collegiate church of Santa Maria de Guimarães, then Dean of Évora, and soon afterwards, Bishop of Lamego, a position he received by pontifical appointment after having failed to be elected to the office of Bishop of Évora.

Thus, it was in this context that the profile of Dom Rodrigo was constructed, supported mainly by a strategy of favor dictated by family interests, and benefiting widely from papal protection through the successive concession of prerogatives of privilege and exception.

Keywords

Portugal, Medieval History, Church History, Cathedrals, Bishops, Chapters, Papacy, Nepotism

Resumo

*D. Rodrigo de Oliveira foi uma das muitas personagens do episcopologio português trecentista que alcançou o topo da hierarquia eclesiástica, graças à projeção conquistada pela prática recorrente do nepotismo. O tecido social que catapultou este clérigo para a hierarquia religiosa e a forma como este aí desenvolveu o seu *cursus honorum* são o reflexo de um tempo onde o parentesco e o proteccionismo, mormente dentro da própria Igreja, eram elementos determinantes para nela se ter lugar e, principalmente, poder construir uma carreira.*

Filho ilegítimo do influente arcebispo de Braga, D. Martinho Pires de Oliveira (1296–1313), D. Rodrigo resultou de um processo ascensional apoiado e enquadrado na estratégia abrangente deste arcebispo (de favorecimento da sua parentela e dos seus dependentes), e na indispensável protecção dos papas Bonifácio VIII e Clemente V, conseguida pela grande influência de D. Martinho na Cúria Apostólica.

D. Rodrigo de Oliveira protagonizou assim uma carreira iniciada no cabido de Évora (cidade de inserção da sua família paterna), quando ainda não possuía a idade regulamentar de catorze anos, para de seguida ascender ao priorado da colegiada de Santa Maria de Guimarães, daí ao deado de Évora e pouco depois ao episcopado de Lamego, cargo que recebeu por mercê pontifícia, após ter falhado a sua eleição para bispo de Évora.

Foi neste contexto que se construiu o perfil de D. Rodrigo, apoiado sobretudo numa estratégia de favorecimento ditada pelos interesses familiares e amplamente beneficiada pela protecção papal, através da concessão de sucessivas prerrogativas de privilégio e de excepção.

Palavras-chave

Portugal, História Medieval, História da Igreja, Catedrais, Bispos, Cabidos, Papado, Nepotismo

After a period of fifteen years (1296–1311), during which the Cathedral of Lamego had three different bishops (two of whom were Spanish ecclesiastics), it fell to the papacy to supply the new bishop in the person of Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira, who took up office in May 1311.¹ Thus, a new phase in the government of this diocese began, one that involved great commitment and lasted almost twenty years.

A study of this Portuguese cleric and his career prior to his accepting the miter of Lamego soon reveals that he is one of the many fourteenth-century Portuguese clergymen who reached the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy thanks to the practice of nepotism.² Indeed, it is clear that the social fabric that catapulted Rodrigo Pires into the religious hierarchy, and the way it marked his career, unequivocally reflect an era in which kinship and protectionism were essential factors in determining who could gain access to the profession and who could rise to prominence within it.³ It was this context that molded the profile of this new bishop, a figure who was in many ways similar to so many other clerics of his time, yet who nevertheless had characteristics that made him exceptional.

1.

When Rodrigo Pires was indicated by Pope Clement V for the pontifical chair of Lamego, he was presented as “Rodericum tunc decanum ecclesiae Elborensis,”⁴ thus emphasizing a phase in his career that included not only his becoming the head of the chapter of the Cathedral of Évora, but also directing the priorate of the prestigious collegiate church of Santa Maria de Guimarães, in the Diocese of Braga. These were two important positions in a career that was clearly dependent upon the most important prelate in the time of Dom Dinis, the Archbishop of Braga, Martinho Pires de Oliveira (1296–1313†).⁵

Following the normal procedures for entry into the bishopric, the Pope conferred upon the new Bishop of Lamego, among other favors, the right to nominate anyone he wished for the canonship and its associated prebend in Évora,⁶ as well as for two canonships with their respective prebends in his new cathedral.⁷ These apostolic favors bestowed upon the new prelate not only constituted the first moment of one more bishopric but also revealed the degree of favoritism that this cleric enjoyed from early on in his career at the papal court of Avignon.

From the beginning of 1311, before he was nominated for Lamego, and while still Dean of Évora, Rodrigo Pires became involved in the dispute over the government of that southern diocese after the death of Bishop Fernando Martins.⁸ As was usual in this type of situation, the pope intervened and indicated a third person for the job. If Rodrigo’s hopes of gaining control of the Diocese of Évora were frustrated, he nonetheless did not cease to be favored by Pope Clement V, who immediately promoted him to the rank of Bishop of Lamego. This was a different treatment to that afforded to his opponent in the dispute over the bishopric of Évora, the canon Gomes Pires, who only received a similar appointment two years later, when he was awarded the bishopric of the Spanish Cathedral of Palencia.⁹

These episodes, which demonstrate the notorious papal protectionism exercised in relation to Rodrigo, took place (according to pontifical documentation) at the precise time when he was present in the influential circle of Avignon, along with other Portuguese dignitaries, including the Archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira, the Bishop of Oporto (Frei Estêvão), and the future Bishop of Évora (Geraldo Domingues), who had been summoned to the famous Council of Vienna (1312), which ratified the extinction of the Templars.¹⁰

However, Rodrigo’s prominence on these occasions and his integration into the entourage of the high dignitaries of the Portuguese clergy would not at first sight have been particularly noteworthy had it not been for the fact that his own ascension had been carefully supported and strategically prepared. This is proved by the precocity with which he initiated his religious career and attained the status of canon in

the chapter of Évora around 1297, when the Pope of Agnani, Boniface VIII, dispensed him from the requirement of being fourteen years old before receiving ecclesiastical benefits.¹¹ Certainly, someone must have enabled him to join the clergy of Évora and also interceded on his behalf at a later date for him to have achieved entry into the chapter at such a young age, a stage which for many was not the beginning but the culmination of their careers.

There are four years of silence between this papal missive and another sent in November 1301, also from Boniface VIII, to “Roderico Petri, canonico Elborensi.” Its content is revealing: it contained dispensation from the stain of illegitimacy, enabling him to gain access to all ecclesiastical orders and benefits, which in turn authorized him to achieve the position of Prior of the collegiate church of Guimarães, supported by the canonship and prebendship of that church. Clearly the Pope had granted this favor to Rodrigo as an attention to the person who had interceded on his behalf.¹²

Thus, while still less than eighteen years old, Rodrigo Pires took charge of the most important collegiate church in Portugal, which enjoyed royal patronage and was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Braga. Here he held the office of prior for more than ten years, during which time he was mostly absent.¹³ He administered the institution indirectly through proxies, who were drawn from among his peers in Guimarães, particularly from the clergy of Braga. The first of these mandates, drawn up in Paris on 20 May 1301, was addressed to the archbishop himself, Martinho de Oliveira, enabling him to appoint canons for the vacant positions in Guimarães.¹⁴

This document may not only indicate that Rodrigo was attending the prestigious Parisian university at the time (he was staying at the home of Master Randulfo),¹⁵ but it also reveals the strange procedure of a prior delegating powers directly to his archbishop. This leads us to believe that Rodrigo had been the perfect solution found by Martinho for the control of the Guimarães collegiate church. In fact, everything indicates this. In subsequent years, in addition to the archbishop himself, his closest clergy also intervened in Guimarães on behalf of Rodrigo, through the mandate sent to them from Montpellier (19 July 1302), where our cleric was accompanied by João Afonso de Brito, Canon of Braga and nephew of Archbishop Martinho.¹⁶ Rodrigo’s absence, which continued for some years, was justified by his presence at the papal court.¹⁷

Given Rodrigo’s distance and the way the church of Guimarães was governed at the mercy of the designs of Braga, we might wonder about the true reasons for handing Santa Maria de Guimarães over to him. As is hinted in the text of the bull that nominated him, the concession was made as a favor to the figure who had interceded on his behalf,¹⁸ who had an important position and influence at the papal court, and who was also directly involved in Rodrigo’s stigma of illegitimacy, a mark that seems to have accompanied the whole of Rodrigo’s personal career.

For all these reasons, we can conclude that the motivations behind the granting of this high office to such an inexperienced cleric¹⁹ perhaps reside in the ambition of a career that resorted to this promotional strategy as a platform for the affirmation of an illegitimate son of Martinho Pires de Oliveira, while at the same time satisfying the political and religious interests of that archbishop, whose main centers of influence were the sees of Braga and Évora. Braga was important because of the seigniorial and ecclesiastical suzerainty that Martinho Pires de Oliveira enjoyed there, through the powers inherent in his archbishop’s rank, and Évora as the city where his family (the “Oliveiras”) were based and had prominence within the regional oligarchy.²⁰ But it was less through its local functions than through its control of the chapter and episcopal clergy that this family made its presence felt. This strategy was sustained by a growing estate, by protection dispensed by royal prerogative, and by recourse to nepotism, which had the effect of sentencing various generations of this family to the “aristocracy” of the secular clergy (cf. Genealogy, Appendix). The main exponent of this process was in fact Martinho Pires de Oliveira himself, who had become prominent in the ecclesiastical policy of Dom Dinis and who had close contacts within the mechanisms of the administration and powers of the Roman Court, where he was the pope’s chaplain.²¹ Thus, he managed to acquire a great deal of influence that had repercussions on the structuring of his family group, particularly as regards the promotion of matrimonial alliances with noble families and the placement of the descendants of those unions in strategic positions within the Church hierarchy as clerics or chapter dignitaries or even as bishops. The brothers João Afonso de Brito, Bishop of Lisbon (1326–1342), and Martim Afonso de Brito, bishop of Évora (1341–1347), both nephews of Martinho Pires, are an example of this phenomenon.²²

2.

The complicity and protection afforded by the archbishop of Braga to the future bishop of Lamego, Rodrigo Pires, were both an obvious way of disguising an illegitimate descendant²³ and simultaneously part of the archbishop's far-reaching strategy to acquire ecclesiastical positions not only for his direct relations but also for another group of figures who were dependent upon him. These included some of his domestic clerics and those who were believed to be his sons, Rodrigo himself and also Rui Soares, dean of Évora and Braga (1296–1309†).²⁴

The career of Rui Soares ran parallel to that of Rodrigo, and the similarities between them, evident in their names and proximity to Martinho Pires, could lead to their being confused. Rui Soares began his career in Braga in 1296 as Canon and Archdeacon of Barroso (with clear connections to the archbishop, who was identified in the Papal Court as his 'uncle'), and he also accumulated a canonship in Évora in 1299.²⁵ By means of the necessary papal consents and dispensations, Rui Soares also rose to head the chapter of Évora very quickly (in 1300) and, soon afterwards, passed to the prestigious chapter of Braga (in 1301),²⁶ while exercising in court the function of cleric and "auditor" of the king.²⁷ With his death in 1309,²⁸ the archbishop of Braga acted again, ensuring that the deanship of Évora passed to Rodrigo. In 1310, on the only occasion that the presence of Rodrigo was recorded in Guimarães, he was awarded the title of "domno Roderico Petri decano Elborensis ac priore Vimaranensis."²⁹

Thus Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira's deanship of Évora is proved; and, indeed, he held this post for at least two years between 1310–1311, at a time when, as we have seen, the bishopric of Évora was being disputed, leading to his nomination for Lamego. In addition, there was an increase in the number of family members of the archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira in the leadership of the Évora canonical corporation, in accordance with the policy of favoring one's own kin, a policy that was put into practice as vacancies became available at Braga and Évora, the two dioceses where Martinho Pires de Oliveira had particular social and ecclesiastical influence.

Rodrigo's continued connection to Évora did not distance him from the rest of Martinho's kin; on the contrary, this was encouraged by the archbishop, who made him the main executor of his will, undertaken in 1306, in which the "morgado" of Oliveira was instituted.³⁰ In this way, the archbishop not only introduced Rodrigo surreptitiously into the family network but also made him a key figure for the fulfillment of the plans in his will, which would make it possible to continue his strategy of social ascent and ensure the future of the family line, for which the clergy was the most important mechanism of affirmation.³¹

3.

Canon of Évora in 1297, prior of Guimarães from 1301, and dean of Évora from 1309 to 1310, Rodrigo concentrated his efforts on the Évora chapter, preparing for his bishopric. In order to achieve this objective, he had to fulfill the basic requirements of eligibility established by the Third Lateran Council (1179), namely to be no less than thirty years of age, a legitimate son, and of proven moral dignity and intellectual worth.³²

We know that he did not fulfill at least the first two of these conditions, but nevertheless, his aspirations were sanctioned by Pope Clement V in 1309 (on 20 March, Avignon), in the bull "Quia virtutum studiis." According to this indulgence, which enabled him to gain access to any episcopal position, the Pope allowed him dispensation from the requirements of birth and age, underlining the circumstance of "cum nondum tricesimum aetatis suae annum attigerit."³³

Having overcome these obstacles by means of the necessary apostolic intervention (a providence that was seemingly always available for this cleric), the doors then opened for him to take the last step of his career as early as possible. As we know, this happened quickly as soon as the chair of Évora became vacant. Rodrigo de Oliveira did not refuse the opportunity and managed to be elected by the Évora canons, although not with a majority, which meant that he had to confront the chapter and dispute the miter with another candidate.³⁴ This event, certainly unexpected, not only revealed some weakness in the Oliveira family's control over the Évora canonship,³⁵ but also conditioned his objectives, putting the papacy in the position of having to resolve the situation through recourse to a third name, while nominating Rodrigo for Lamego, at the precise moment that he was in Avignon.³⁶

Having consummated this new stage of his career, and accomplished his purpose at the papal court, Rodrigo's position at the collegiate church of Guimarães was maintained by deference of Clement V. Using the justification that the income from the diocese of Lamego was small in relation to the expenses involved, the bishop was able to accumulate the profits due to him as prior of Santa Maria de

Guimarães for five years.³⁷ It seems that the objective of this measure was to compensate Rodrigo for having been passed over in the case of the Évora church (for which he had been strategically positioned) in favor of the diocese of Lamego, a more modest position, where he enjoyed no kind of social or ecclesiastical connection.

Once again, exceptional circumstances enabled this figure to become the bishop of a diocese, while at the same time permitting him to accumulate incomes and remain the head of a collegiate church situated in another diocese. The scanty evidence that remains of his exercise of this prerogative enables us to prove that he remained as a prior until 1314, the year in which he traveled to Guimarães to exercise his tutelary rights to the collegiate church.³⁸ After that date, Rodrigo's connection with this institution was only remembered again fifteen years later, a few months before he died, when he made a donation to the canons of Guimarães for prayers to be said for his soul.³⁹

Apart from the obligations arising from the posts previously held, Rodrigo de Oliveira completely assumed the tasks of the diocese that were entrusted to him in Avignon in 1311 by Pope Clement V. This was despite the fact that the twenty years of his bishopric were spent on the move, traveling around the country, and at the court of Dom Dinis (and later his son, Dom Afonso IV), a court where he never performed any relevant political duties—a fact in all likelihood related to the death in 1313 of Archbishop Dom Martinho, two years after Rodrigo's promotion to the cathedral of Lamego⁴⁰.

Nevertheless, the high profile he maintained outside his diocese gave him more authority and permitted him to demonstrate his intentions of controlling the clergy and the chapter hierarchy of the cathedral of Lamego, by promoting members of his own entourage, indicating them for important positions such as for the head of the canonship.⁴¹ This was clear in 1317 when he tried to manipulate the selection of the new dean of the see, imposing the name of Gil Martins upon his canons. However, such a move was unsuccessful, as the canons resisted, defending their own rights, and accusing the bishop of interfering in chapter matters, practicing nepotism, and having blood ties with Gil Martins⁴².

From this moment on, nepotism became an increasingly common feature of Rodrigo's government;⁴³ indeed, he himself was the finished product of tutelary protectionism, and the proof of how interpersonal connections determined the exercise and structure of ecclesiastical power.

Let us then examine the person that the prelate so desired to occupy second place in the hierarchy of Lamego Cathedral. Inevitably, the axis of influence was once again defined between Braga and Évora, seeing that the principal vector was Archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira. Gil Martins was canon of Braga from 1303, the archbishop's vicar and later treasurer of Braga, accumulating successive canonships in Évora, Guarda and Lisbon.⁴⁴ His proximity to the archbishop, the benefits he accumulated and the active role he also played in 1321 in the diocese of Évora in supporting João Afonso de Brito (nephew of Martinho and cousin of Rodrigo) against Gonçalo Pereira in the dispute for the miter of Évora are indications of his complicity with this family of clerics and its area of influence.⁴⁵ This was reinforced later when Rodrigo himself chose Gil Martins and João Afonso de Brito to be the executors of his will. Consequently, the accusation of “afeicionem consa[n]guinitatis,” made by the canons of Lamego about the prelate and the canon Gil Martins may have some foundation, being supported by evidence of how their paths frequently crossed and how they operated within the same social context.⁴⁶

4.

Indeed, upon the death of the bishop of Lamego, the whole network of relationships, personified in these individuals and their connections to Évora and the Oliveiras, was reconfigured.

At the end of 1329, Rodrigo, foreseeing the end of his life (he was around forty-six years of age at that time), began to prepare for his death, and he was concerned with ensuring that his estate should pass to the canons of Guimarães and Lamego for the celebration of prayers for his soul. Both donations revealed particular devotion to the worship of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, with the institution of religious services in honor of the Virgin on 8 December of each year.⁴⁷

The care he took to institute prayers in these two churches, to nominate executors of his will, to be entombed in the cathedral of Évora⁴⁸ (the city which had launched his career and where he had his family roots, though disguised by his illegitimacy) and to institute an anniversary for the soul of Archbishop Martinho,⁴⁹ who had meanwhile died, is irrefutable proof of how Rodrigo had made his will, which unfortunately has not come down to us today.⁵⁰

We can, however, have an idea of the dimension and importance of this document through the duration of the agitated *post mortem*, which dragged on for more than twelve years. The main controversy lay in claims issuing from the court of Avignon and the executors' and beneficiaries' resistance to them.

After the death of Rodrigo in April 1330,⁵¹ the apostolic collector in Portugal William de Bos⁵² was entrusted by Pope John XXII with the task of executing the pontifical claims to his assets by collecting the spoils demanded by the apostolic chamber.⁵³ Thus, an inventory of Rodrigo's assets was drawn up by his executors, none other than João Afonso de Brito, cousin of Rodrigo, who had in the meantime been promoted to bishop of Lisbon, and the treasurer of Braga, Gil Martins. Amongst the items on the inventory of moveable estate, which consisted of domestic utensils, clothes, vestments, ornaments, jewelry and precious stones,⁵⁴ there was a library of twenty-two volumes, mostly on theology and law.⁵⁵

Thanks to the scrupulous work undertaken by the apostolic collector, we have detailed knowledge of the processes involved in drawing up the inventory and reclaiming the estate, particularly the journeys that were made to Abrantes, Évora, Lisbon, Coimbra, Oporto and Lamego, in addition to the process set in motion by his executors, who were averse to handing over the assets that they had received from the bishop.⁵⁶ This question was only resolved in Avignon in 1332, in the presence of the litigants who had gone there specifically to defend their interests.⁵⁷ However, it needs to be stressed that the claimants did not include only the heirs; various beneficiaries of Rodrigo's will also registered their claim at the papal court. Amongst them were Martim and Mem Pires de Oliveira, also from Évora, and members of the Oliveira family, who, despite their apparently discreet and distant behavior towards Rodrigo while he was alive, reasserted their interpersonal and family connections after his death.⁵⁸

Conclusion

This case study of Bishop Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira, based upon a reconstruction of his personal career and connections and perceived essentially through his involvement with the clergy and with the Archbishop of Braga in particular, is a paradigmatic example of how illegitimacy, nepotism, and papal protection were fundamental for the construction of a clerical career in the fourteenth century.

The case is singular among this period's Lamego bishops, but in many ways similar to so many others, if viewed in its true context of medieval Portuguese episcopacy. This conclusion is easily reached by comparing the results of this analysis of Dom Rodrigo's path with data retrieved from identical studies on the careers of some of his contemporary prelates, among whom we can find the archbishops of Braga, Dom Martinho Pires de Oliveira (1292–1313), Dom João de Soalhães (1313–1325), and Dom Gonçalo Pereira (1326–1348); the bishops of Coimbra, Aymeric d'Ébrard (1297–1295), Raymond d'Ébrard I (1319–1324) and Raymond d'Ébrard II (1325–1333); the bishops of Évora, Dom Geraldo Domingues (1313–1321) and Dom Martim Afonso de Brito (1341–1347); and the bishops of Lisbon such as Dom João Afonso de Brito (1324–1342) and Dom Vasco Martins (1342–1444).⁵⁹

Each of these examples effectively shared the same model of favoring particular people throughout the construction of their careers and their rise to the episcopacy. In this model, besides the protection ensured by the social affirmation desired by their lineages, some of the most determinant factors were their university education and the clergy's closeness to royal and pontifical power through the performance of political and administrative duties at court or in the Roman curia's bureaucratic network. In truth, the connections to these centers of power were, during most of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the leading mechanisms of promotion within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, through the direct intervention either of the monarchs, the pope, or members of the cardinals' college, who solicited and granted benefits and privileges to their protégés and to those who, in some way or other, were also found under their dependence.

As for the strategy underlying Rodrigo de Oliveira's ecclesiastical path and his promotion to the episcopal elite, despite his having benefited from the outset, from successive and exceptional prerogatives of privilege, his case is different from those of contemporary prelates because he was neither supported by his superior education or his intellectual prestige, nor by his performance of notable duties for the king or the pope. The ecclesiastical and social ascension of Bishop Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira was mainly due to the family influences he enjoyed and its close liaisons with the national ecclesiastical hierarchy and pontifical power, with Archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira, the lineage's leading agent and cunning element.

Source material

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* This article corresponds to an updated reflection on the rise of Bishop Dom Rodrigo de Oliveira as part of a larger work on the episcopate and chapter of Lamego, developed during the course of my Master's degree thesis and published in 2003 as *A Sé de Lamego na segunda metade do século XIV: 1296–1349*. Leiria: Magno Edições.

1. With the 1311 bull *Inter sollicitudines alias* (10 May, Avignon), *Regestum Clementis Papae V*: 149, n. 6846; and EUBEL 1960: 291.
2. Other examples have been provided and studied in recent years by MORUJÃO 2005: 75–91; VILAR, CASTELO BRANCO 2005: 93–116; COELHO, SARAIVA 2005: 117–136; FARELO 2005: 154–156; VILAR 2001: 594–597; VILAR 1999: 50–52, 74–89; COELHO 1990: 389–462; and MARQUES 1987: 229–230. A few of these papers were written under the scope of *Fasti Ecclesiae Portugaliae: Prosopography of the Portuguese Cathedral Clergy (1071–1325)*, a research project that allowed for the creation of a database to support the study of the careers of our cathedral clergy and its social, economic and cultural make-up. The main purposes of this project, which took place between 2002 and 2006, financed by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), have been briefly synthesized by JORGE 2001–2002: 665–666.
3. Cf. COSTA 2005: 117–140 and FARELO 2005: 147–182.
4. Cf. note 1.
5. For more information about this archbishop and the Portuguese bishopric in the time of Dom Dinis, cf. HOMEM 1998: 1469–1477; VILAR 2001: 581–603; VILAR 2007: 221–241; FARELO, ROLDÃO, MARQUES 2007: 271–313.
6. 1311 (11 May, Avignon), *Regestum Clementis Papae V*: 354, n. 7367.
7. 1311 (27 May, Avignon), *idem*: 354, n. 7368.
8. This is recounted in the 1312 bull *Officii nostri debitum*, (10 June, *Prioratu de Gransello*), addressed to the prior of the collegiate church of Alcáçova de Santarém, *idem*: 107, n. 8054.
9. The vacancy had arisen as a result of the transfer of the Portuguese Geraldo Domingues to Évora, 1313 (30 April, Avignon), *idem*: 189, n. 9334, 9337. The bull concerning Geraldo's transfer reiterates the circumstances that motivated this apostolic choice: “Defuncto Fernando episcopo Elboren. Duae in eadem ecclesia per viam scrutinii fuerunt electiones celebrate, una de Roderico episcopo Lamecen. tunc in Romana curia commorante decano, altera de Gometio Pelagii canonico eiusdem ecclesiae Elboren.”
10. ALMEIDA 1967: 250; BRANDÃO 1980: 191–195; and GUILLEMAIN, 1990: 628–634.
11. “Dilecto filio Roderico canonico Elborensi (...) Ut possit recipere et retinere beneficium ecclesiasticum, cum cura vel sine cura, non obstante defectu quem patitur in etate, cum decimum quartum annum tantummodo exegerit,” according to the 1297 bull *Laudanda probitatis* (5 December, Rome – St. Peter), cf. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, T. I, n. 2204. The name of Rodrigo Pires does not appear on the list of canons of the chapter of Évora drawn up by VILAR 1999: 317–403.
12. “(...) cum pro amplioris dispensationis gratia obtinenda, non personaliter sed per alium, apud Sedem Apostolicam instituisse (...),” 1301 (29 November, Ladrão), cf. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, T. II, n. 4213.
13. Overly hasty readings have meant that the presence of Rodrigo in Guimarães has been interpreted erroneously from eighteenth-century historiography onwards. For example, CRAESBECK 1725 considers that there were two priors in this period: Rodrigo Pais and Rodrigo Oliveira. This multiplication of priors (in fact there was only one prior, Rodrigo Pires) was corrected by GUIMARÃES 1896: 52–53, and reiterated by OLIVEIRA 1975–1977: 164–165. Although other authors (such as BRANDÃO 1980: 229; JESUS 1985: 231; and AZEVEDO 1877: 48) attribute the priorate of the collegiate church of Santa Maria to the Bishop of Lamego, COSTA 1977: 159 limits himself to the interpretation given by AZEVEDO and to the context of the disputes at the Évora chapter that led to Rodrigo's appointment to the diocese of Lamego, and rejects, without foundation, the thesis of that author, considering that the prelate had occupied only the seat of the dean of Évora.
14. Mandate presented by Martim Anes Barrosas, canon of Braga, and copied in Guimarães on 19 December of that year (IT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Ecclesiastic Documents, m. 2, n. 29). This document, in turn, corrects the date given for the start of the priorate from 1302 to 1301 (GUIMARÃES 1896: 52).
15. The universities of Paris (for Theology) and Montpellier (for Medicine) were the most highly respected and the most widely attended by members of the Portuguese Church, cf. OLIVEIRA 1996: 647–651; and MARQUES 1987: 408–417.
16. In 1305 (2 January, Guimarães), Martim Anes Barrosas, canon and vicar of the Archbishop of Braga, invested a new Canon of Guimarães, and another in 1306 (31 March, Guimarães) (IT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Ecclesiastic Documents, m. 2, n. 33 and 35). This last mandate of Rodrigo, written in Montpellier and copied on those two occasions, again shows that João Afonso [de Brito] and Francisco Eanes [do Rio], canons of Braga, were in his company. According to RODRIGUES 2005: 202–203, 214–215, Francisco Eanes was promoted and protected by the archbishop, while João Afonso appears twice as witness to the acts of that prelate, whose direct nephew he was (one of these occasions was in 1308, when Rodrigo was still prior of Guimarães). João Afonso was still dean of Évora and bishop of Lisbon and was a recurrent figure in the career of the bishop of Lamego. He was, for example, the executor of the bishop's will.
17. This absenteeism continued, confirmed whenever the presence of the prior was required at the collegiate church of Guimarães on special occasions, such as in 1302 (23 August), when the inventory of the vestments and other church treasures was being revised, presided over by the precentor Martim Garcia, who was representing Rodrigo (AMAP, Parchments, n. 61). In the following year, that same precentor again intervened with the authority

conferred by the prior, who was now absent at the Apostolic See; this circumstance was remembered, a short time later, when this same responsibility fell to the canon of the collegiate church, Domingos Peres, upon the delegation of the prior, and consequently of the archbishop Martinho: 1303 (1 April; 21 July) (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Ecclesiastic Documents, m. 2, n. 30 and 31). The church of Guimarães continued to be managed by his canons and by the archbishop himself, as is proved, for example, by the documents of 1305 (7 May), 1306 (4 March) and 1309 (6 March) (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Ecclesiastic Documents, m. 2, n. 15, 34 and 36).

¹⁸. Cf. note 12.

¹⁹. It should be remembered that at that time Rodrigo was not yet eighteen years old and so had managed to overtake other clerics who were better positioned in the hierarchy for occupying these posts.

²⁰. At least since 1254, when a certain Martim Mendes de Oliveira is identified as judge in the county of the city, cf. BEIRANTE 1995: 535 and 550.

²¹. Martinho Pires, the first-born son of Pedro Pires de Oliveira, brother of the bishop of Évora began his ecclesiastical career in the chapter of Évora, as canon and precentor (1287–1295). He was also rector of Santa Maria in Almada, Santa Maria in Torres Vedras and portionist of the collegiate church of Santa Maria da Alcáçova in Santarém (all in the Diocese of Lisbon). At the same time he became a protagonist at court as the cleric and counselor of Dom Dinis (TT, Chancellery of Dom Dinis, L. I, fls. 205, 207, 256v–258; L. II, fls. 57v–58; BEIRANTE 1995: 547, 609–610; VILAR 1999: 329–330 and VILAR 2001: 594–596). He was an active collaborator of the king, so much so, in fact, that as the king's ambassador and representative, he traveled to Rome in 1288 to the Curia of Honorio IV (for whom he was chaplain), with full powers to effect the Concordat of pacification with the Portuguese clergy, which was undertaken in February 1289 (*Les Registres de Nicolas IV* 1905, T. I–II: 87, 317, 685–686, 833, n. 457, 1683, 4802, 6183). Elected archbishop of Braga in 1295, his bishopric, which continued for around twenty years, was marked by collaboration with the royal power. Chosen to be executor of the will, counselor of the queen and tutor of the Infante Afonso, in Dom Dinis' will of 1299 (ADB, 2nd Drawer of Churches, n. 92), he appears as a central figure in various governmental episodes, particularly in concordats with the clergy and negotiations leading to the creation of the Military Order of Christ, precipitated by the decisions of the Council of Vienna (1312), where he also had a seat. He died in Avignon on 25 March 1313 (cf. FERREIRA 1930: 110).

²². For the origins of the “Oliveiras,” and the development of this family's close links to the clergy, as well as the influences of Archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira, cf. VILAR 1999: 44 onwards; 81–86, 108–109.

²³. From the analysis of the Oliveira family genealogy (see Genealogy – Appendix), nothing indicates that Rodrigo could be the son of anyone other than Archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira himself. Indeed, various authors have expressed this opinion, such as BRANDÃO 1980: 71; FERREIRA 1930: 104–105; and GAYO 1989: 168. COSTA 1977: 158, claims that the Bishop of Lamego was the grandson of Archbishop Martinho, which seems unlikely.

²⁴. Concerning the network of dependants and domestic clerics of the archbishop Martinho de Oliveira, prominent places were occupied by the canon Francisco Eanes do Rio, the Canon and Dean of Oporto, Sancho Peres (future Bishop of Oporto), canons Abril Vicente, João Afonso de Brito (his nephew, future Dean of Évora and Bishop of Lisbon), and the dean Rui Soares, cf. LIMA 2003: 43–45 and RODRIGUES 2005: 60–61.

²⁵. The 1299 bull *Nobilitatem generis* (3 August, Anagni), cf. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, T. I, n. 3174, reserved for Rui Soares the right to appoint any dignitary, episcopal or chapter, to positions that became vacant in the Cathedral of Évora, for which he received dispensation for multiple benefices, then limited to the archdeaconship of Barroso, canonship of Évora and the church of Santa Maria do Vimieiro (Diocese of Évora). In the following year, the Pope addressed another bull to him — *Dudum volentes tibi*, 1300 (23 July, Anagni), cf. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, T. II, n. 3697 — *in consideratione archiepiscopi Bracharensis, cujus nepos existit*, according to which, in addition to the previous dispensation for the accumulation of benefices and for the reservation of a dignity in the chapter of Évora, it is reiterated that this reservation should be extended to any other dignitary who would receive it, provided that he renounced the archdeaconship of Barroso. As regards the position in Braga, the appointment of Rui Soares followed the papal privilege addressed to Martinho de Oliveira, allowing him to confer six benefices upon clerics of his House, as he himself mentioned in 1296 (27 May, Leiria) (ADB, Chronological Collection, file 4, n. 158). The start of Rui Soares' period of office as archdeacon, and the proximity of the archbishop is described before that, on 3 March 1296, in the subscription of an archiepiscopal constitution, and reiterated in 1300 (26 November, São Pedro de Goste), in an exchange undertaken by the archbishop with the monastery of Pombeiro (ADB, *Livro 2º dos Testamentos*, n. 9; *Livro das Cadeias*, n. 4).

²⁶. VILAR 1999: 334–335; and RODRIGUES 2005: 60–61.

²⁷. Throughout 1304, and on occasions in 1305, 1308 and 1309, Rui Soares was to be found at the courts of Santarém, Lisbon, Guarda, Coimbra and Leiria, as Dean of Braga and Évora, and as confirmation of diverse royal charters (TT, Chancellery of Dom Dinis, L. III, fls. 29v–30v, 31v–32, 33–33v, 34v, 36–37, 42v–43, 45–46). During this period, Dom Dinis appointed Rui Soares to preside over some trials and the execution of the sentences passed (TT, Chancellery of Dom Dinis, L. III, fls. 35–36; TT, Coimbra Cathedral, 2ª incorp., m. 14, n. 649, m. 87, n. 4105; MARTINS 1997–1998: 60). It was during one of his stays at the royal court, in July 1309, that the path of Rui Soares, dean of Braga and Évora, intersected, documentally, with that of Rodrigo Pires, prior of Guimarães, on the

occasion of the ratification of the agreement between the King and the Bishop of Lisbon, cf. *Livro das Leis e Posturas* 1971: 372–379, 155–162; and ALMEIDA 1971: 76–80.

²⁸. In 1309 (25 October, Lisbon), Archbishop Martinho addressed a letter to the chapter of Braga in which he informed them about the vacancy of the deanship, owing to the death of Rui Soares, giving the canons authority to elect a new dean (ADB, Drawer of dignitaries and canons, n. 29–2a), as effectively happened in the person of the treasurer, Gonçalo Eanes, cf. LIMA 2003: 28–29. The existence of Rui Soares' will is unknown (it would certainly be enlightening as to the social and religious status of this figure), although we know he was buried at the high chapel of Évora Cathedral, according to sources from that church, published by LOURO 1965–1967: 65–92.

²⁹. 1310 (6 March, Guimarães) (AMAP, Parchments, n. 63). On this occasion, the Canon of Guimarães, Martinho Dias, ordered a letter from the archbishop to be read before Rodrigo, in which the presentation of the rector of the church of Santa Maria de Silveiras by the chapter of Guimarães was confirmed.

³⁰. 1306 (3 August, Lisbon) (TT, Drawer XII, m. 2, n. 4). Other executors were: Gonçalo Eanes, treasurer of Braga, Francisco Domingues, prior of Santa Maria da Alcáçova at Santarém (canon of Lisbon), João Martins, precentor of Évora, and Master Pedro, canon of Braga, Lisbon, and doctor to Dom Dinis. The formation of this “morgado” followed the donation from the archbishop to the king of the town of Vidigueira, giving the monarch in exchange all the patronages and rights of Santa Maria of Guimarães, in the district of Panóias, São Pedro de Elvas, and the inheritance of Valeira, in the district of Évora (BRANDÃO 1980: 72, 557).

³¹. With the institution of the “morgado” of Oliveira, the archbishop established the possession of family patrimony by the male line of his brothers, and, only when there were no successors, through the line of descent of his sisters. On the institution of the “morgado”, as well as all issues relating to these binding institutions, cf. ROSA 1995: 103.

³². As GAUDEMET 1979: 63 states, although these prescriptions would have been renewed at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), they were frequently overshadowed by the papacy, which freely conceded the respective dispensations. On matters involved in the process of episcopal election, particularly the qualities demanded of those elected, cf. BARRACLOUGH 1933: 275–319; and CARON 1968: 573–585.

³³. *Regestum Clementis Papae V*: 421, n. 4995. Taking into account the fact that in 1297 (5 December, Rome–St Peter's), cf. *Les registres de Boniface VIII*, T. I, n. 2204, Pope Boniface VIII had already granted him dispensation for not yet being 14 years of age (at the start of his career), Rodrigo reached the episcopate while he was still under 26 years of age, in other words at least four years earlier than canonically required.

³⁴. Cf. notes 7 and 8.

³⁵. It should be noted that later, in 1321, also in Évora, and concerning the succession of the bishop Geraldo Domingues, the chapter of this cathedral was divided between its dean João Afonso de Brito (nephew of the archbishop Martinho Pires de Oliveira) and the then dean of Oporto, Gonçalo Pereira. This gave rise to a fierce dispute, in which the faction opposing Dean João Afonso were not ashamed to make use of arguments denouncing diverse acts of insubordination and immoral behavior on the part of some members of the Oliveira family, which of course included the Évora dean. VILAR 1999: 79–84, examines this matter, concluding that it resulted from a confrontation of regional and national family interests. These, we understand now, must also have been important issues ten years later, with Rodrigo de Oliveira's claims.

³⁶. Which occurred in May 1311, cf. Note 1.

³⁷. Bull “Tue merita devotionis”, of 1311 (8 May, Vienne), *Regestum Clementis Papae V*: 354, n. 7369.

³⁸. 1314 (18 May, Guimarães) (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Ecclesiastical Documents, m. 2, n. 39; Private Documents, m. 21, n. 6). In the following year, in 1315, another prior of Guimarães is known, the Dean of Lisbon Egas Lourenço (OLIVEIRA 1975–1977: 165).

³⁹. 1329 (22 October, Lamego) (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Private Documents, m. 24, n. 33).

⁴⁰. Cf. SARAIVA 2003: 74–76.

⁴¹. Clemente V, in 1311, had already given him the power to allocate two canonships of the cathedral to two clerics of his preference, cf. note 6.

⁴². 1317 (8, 9 and 17 January) (TT, Lamego Cathedral, Civil Deeds, m. 1, n. 16–1, 16).

⁴³. Also pertinent was the appointment to the rectorship of Santa Maria de Penela of Martim Afonso de Brito, future Bishop of Évora (cousin of Rodrigo, brother of João Afonso de Brito, nephew of Archbishop Martinho de Oliveira). Martim Afonso held that church in the Diocese of Lamego, in 1325, when Pope John XXII conferred upon him the right to be a dignitary at the Cathedral of Braga, cf. *Jean XXII (1316–1334): Lettres communes*: 316, n. 21647.

⁴⁴. Concerning his performance in Braga, cf. RODRIGUES 2005: 139–140. These authors identify Gil Martins in different situations, among them as vicar of the archbishops João Martins de Soalhães and Gonçalo Pereira; however, he also exercised the functions of vicar of Martinho de Oliveira for the year 1311 (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Private Documents, m. 20, n. 19). The canonship of Évora is registered from 1321 (VILAR, 1999: 354), being provided in that condition at the Cathedral of Guarda, in the expectation of a prebend (also holding there the rectorship of Monte Santo), in 1323 (*Jean XXII: 1316–1334; Lettres communes*: 15, n. 18339). He was also canon of Lisbon, from at least 1326 onwards (FARELO 2003, II: 210–211). The date of his death, unknown till now, would seem to be between 1333 and 1337, given that in 1332 he was still alive and between 1333 and 1337 the

apostolic collector Master Geraldo Regafredo undertook the collection of the proceeds of prebends made vacant through his death at the chapters of Braga, Évora and Lisbon, in total around 1237 Portuguese pounds (ASV, *Cam. Ap.*, *Collect.* 112, fls. 105–105v).

⁴⁵. It was Gil Martins himself who led the contestation against Gonçalo Pereira, on the basis of complaints that the Bishop of Oporto, Fernando Ramires, had gathered support against Gonçalo Pereira, who at the time held the post of dean of that city, cf. VILAR 1999: 79–80.

⁴⁶. It should be stressed that Gil Martins was also, in 1325 (7 July, Avignon), confirmed by the Pope as conservator judge of the Military Order of Christ, as also were Rodrigo and the Bishop of Viseu, cf. *Jean XXII: 1316–1334, Lettres communes*: 415, n. 22765.

⁴⁷. (TT, Collegiate Church of Guimarães, Private Documents, m. 24, n. 33; Lamego Cathedral, *Martirologio-Obituário...*, L. 1, fl. 146, n. 470). On the cult of the Virgin Mary in Portugal, see COSTA 1988 and GOMES 2000: 378–380.

⁴⁸. According to LOURO 1965–1967: 84, the Bishop of Lamego was buried in the chapel where the audience was held, near the chapterhouse.

⁴⁹. This anniversary was celebrated on 14 April, cf. VILAR 1999: 74, note 184.

⁵⁰. On the death of the Portuguese medieval clergy and the importance of their wills, cf. CARVALHO 1999; COELHO SARAIVA 2005: 117–136, COELHO, MORUJÃO 2007: 121–138; SARAIVA 2007: 139–149.

⁵¹. Although the memory of the bishop remains in the obituary records of Lamego, the precise moment of his death is unknown. However, we believe it to have occurred between 30 March and 24 April 1330 (TT, Lamego Cathedral, *Prazos*, m. 1, n. 33; Mosteiro de Arouca, *Drawer*. 1, m. 5, n. 14; BNP, *Parchments*, n. 54P).

⁵². About this apostolic collector and his presence in Portugal, cf. SARAIVA 2003: 79, note 176.

⁵³. These papal reserves, known as the “right of spoil”, involving estate and chattels acquired as the fruit of the post, such as the patrimonial and ecclesiastical rents that the bishops and other beneficiaries left vacant upon death, were incremented and inspected in the fourteenth century according to the policy of revenue collection for the treasury of the Avignon Curia (GAUDEMET 1979: 147–148; FAVIER 1994: 326–331, 560, 683–687; GUYOTJEANNIN 1994: 410; KYER 1978: 473–477; FIGUEIRA 1986: 527–574). This prerogative accentuated papal interventionism and, at the same time, led to diverse litigation between the collectors and executors and administrators of episcopal assets, who resisted the transfer of revenue from that dignity. These situations took on more serious proportions when the separation between inherited and acquired property was difficult to determine, or was simply disrespected, and could result in litigation such as that involving Rodrigo de Oliveira himself; a similar case is described by ZUNZUNEGUI ARAMBURU 1965: 361–390.

⁵⁴. (ASV, *Cam. Ap.*, *Collect.* 112, fls. 88–91v). We are hoping to undertake the specific analysis of this inventory soon, within the context of the activity of apostolic collectors in Portugal. Other examples similar to Rodrigo’s case can be indicated, such as those relating to the estates of the bishops of Lisbon (Vasco Martins, Teobaldo de Castillon and Lourenço Rodrigues) and Oporto (Afonso Pires), already studied, respectively, by COELHO, SARAIVA 2005: 117–136; RENOUCARD 1949: 29–51; SARAIVA: 2005: 419–438 and SARAIVA 2001–2002: 197–228.

⁵⁵. Listed by WILLIMAN 1980: 116–117.

⁵⁶. (ASV, *Cam. Ap.*, *Collect.* 112, fls. 88–91v).

⁵⁷. 1332 (3 February, Avignon). The *terminus* of the question follows a bull issued on 1 February of the same year, in which full powers were given to the legate William de Bos to terminate the process of patrimonial claim. These two acts were copied in 1332 (26 August, Lisbon) (ASV, *Instr. Misc.* 1210), at the request of a representative of the Bishop of Lisbon, executor of Rodrigo’s will.

⁵⁸. Martim Pires was the nephew of the Archbishop of Braga, Martinho, through his brother, João Pires de Oliveira, Judge of Évora (see Genealogy – Appendix). As for Mem Pires, this could be the future Canon, Precentor and Dean of Évora (1376–1407), according to VILAR, 1999: 330–331, son of Catarina Oliveira and probably a descendant of Ausenda Pires, sister of that archbishop, in the line that includes João Afonso and Martim Afonso de Brito.

⁵⁹. Cf. note 2.

Genealogy

Bishop Rodrigo Pires de Oliveira (1311-1330†)