

Bishops and Politics: The Portuguese Episcopacy During the Dynastic Crisis of 1580*

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Abstract

Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field", this essay assumes that there was no single "Church position" during Portugal's dynastic crisis of 1578-81: Portugal's Church was an institution encompassing a large number of different agencies, each containing a huge number of very different agents (from a social, cultural, economic and even religious perspective) struggling for power and influence and disputing control over material, spiritual and symbolic goods. Therefore, my purpose is to explain the various and changing ways that the different prelates of Portugal's thirteen mainland dioceses responded to the acute political problem of the royal succession between 1578 and 1581, and how the crown candidates tried to obtain their support.

Keywords

Church History, Bishops, Portuguese dynastic crisis of 1580, Political history, Religious 'field'

Resumo

Partindo do conceito de "campo" tal como formulado por Pierre Bourdieu, este estudo assume que não existiu uma posição unitária da Igreja no agitado processo político que marcou a vida portuguesa nos anos da crise dinástica (1578-1581). A Igreja portuguesa era uma instituição constituída por várias instâncias e organismos, englobando diferentes agentes, tanto do ponto de vista social, como económico, cultural e até religioso, os quais lutavam por poder e influência e disputavam a posse de bens materiais, espirituais e simbólicos.

Em face desta perspectiva, a intenção central da análise aqui apresentada é explicar como é que cada um dos bispos que ocuparam as 13 dioceses do reino de Portugal se posicionaram e actuaram no contexto da vida política portuguesa, entre 1578 e 1581, e como é que os candidatos à sucessão da Coroa portuguesa em 1580 tentaram obter o seu apoio

Palavras-chave

História da Igreja; Bispos; União Ibérica; História político-religiosa; Campo religioso

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Introduction

Although recent Portuguese historiography on the early modern period has rarely emphasized the importance of the political activities undertaken by bishops, it is commonly acknowledged that they were deeply engaged in politics throughout the sixteenth century. Some prelates even played leading roles in the political decision-making process, through their presence at the king's court (which was gradually becoming the center of Portugal's political arena), through the seats they occupied in such central councils and tribunals of the monarchy as the Royal Council, Council of State, *Mesa da Consciência e Ordens*,¹ and *Desembargo do Paço*,² and through their writings or sermons.

The high cultural level and academic training that some of them possessed, the religious prestige and symbolical importance of their episcopal functions, the effectiveness of their episcopal bureaucratic apparatus and the territorialisation of their power, the deep interpenetration between politics and theology (some authors even use the expression 'political theology' to describe it) – all these things made them a very important elite. Consequently, monarchs were perfectly aware of the importance of the Church, and particularly the bishops who occupied the leading positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in reinforcing royal authority within their realm. The concept of confessionalization, proposed by Heinz Schilling (Schilling 2001), and the notion of social disciplining applied by Wolfgang Reinhard and Paolo Prodi (Reinhard 1994 and Prodi 1994) are generally very useful for understanding the key role played by the Church in early modern politics and state-building processes.

In the light of these considerations, it seems useful to analyze episcopal behavior during the Portuguese political crisis of 1580. Yet this topic has seldom received extensive attention from historians studying the Portuguese dynastic crisis which followed the death of King Sebastião on 4 August 1578. Excluding Queiroz Velloso, who briefly mentioned it in a book published exactly sixty years ago (Velloso 1946: 172-173), and more recently Fernando Bouza Alvarez (Bouza Alvarez 1987), most historians dealing with this question have restricted their remarks to brief considerations about the role of the Church in general, ignoring the individual position of each specific bishop. Conversely, a few studies have been concerned only with the particular attitudes of individual bishops; for example, Bartolomeu dos Mártires, the famous archbishop of Braga, or Jerónimo Osório, bishop of Algarve (Rolo 1964, Serrão 1964 and Pinho 1993).

The classical and dominant thesis argues that the Portuguese Church was split in 1580. What is usually called the upper clergy (bishops and prelates governing major religious orders - with the exception of the Jesuits) tended from the beginning to support Philip II, the king of Castile, based on the notion that for both economic and religious purposes, he offered the best solution for the kingdom. However, the majority of the clergy, socially recruited from amongst non-nobles, strongly opposed the solution of a foreign king wearing the crown of Portugal and tended to adhere to D. António, the Prior of Crato, an illegitimate son of the *infant* D. Luís (see, for example, Godinho 1978: 383-384; Marques 1986: 42-43 and Polónia 2005: 224-225).

João Marques made some effort to justify and explain the attitudes of the upper clergy. According to him, the support they gave to Philip II arose from several causes: their family ties to the nobility (a social group that largely preferred Philip II); their fear of social and religious transformations; their general conservatism; pressure on them from agents of the king of Spain;

¹ Council created in 1532 to advise the king on religious matters.

² Appellate tribunal with jurisdiction over criminal and civil justice.

and especially due to the advantages they hoped to gain by supporting the most powerful candidate to the crown, simultaneously perceived as the 'Catholic king' and the greatest defender of the Catholic religion, threatened at that time by both Protestant heretics and the Turks (Marques 1986: 43).

More recently, Fernando Bouza has argued that if it is beyond any doubt that the lower clergy in general opposed the idea of a foreign king, and issued propaganda all over the country, especially from the pulpits, against the Habsburg monarch, with widespread acceptance of a popular state (a topic very well studied by João Marques in 1986), it is no longer sustainable that bishops were strongly engaged as a group in defense of Philip II's candidacy. Bouza demonstrated that during the dynastic crisis, although the Portuguese bishops never strongly opposed Philip II's candidacy (excluding the unique case of the bishop of Guarda, who always supported the Prior of Crato), they were not open and enthusiastic supporters of it. They only changed their positions after a difficult set of negotiations, undertaken by Cristóvão de Moura and Pedro Girón, Duke of Ossuna, assured them that the Castilian monarch would preserve all the privileges that the Portuguese Church had enjoyed before 1580. Bouza thus implies that an historical process occurred, during which the episcopal position underwent a transformation (Bouza Alvarez 1987, II, 558-569 and 579-590; Bouza Alvarez 2005: 118-120).

All the above-mentioned studies, even if some of them tried to distinguish positions assumed by particular bishops, take for granted that it is possible to define a general position sustained by the Portuguese church hierarchy during this complex political process, corresponding to the attitudes expressed by the majority of its bishops. A good example of this methodological approach is an essay by Jacinto Monteiro entitled *The attitude of the Church and the loss of Portugal's independence in 1580 (A atitude da Igreja e a perda da independência de Portugal em 1580)* (Monteiro 1965).

I suggest, however, that it is impossible to understand this process correctly by assuming that there was any single "Church position", and that it resulted from some common point of view shared by all bishops, acting as a group representing its corporate interests. Firstly, it is worth remembering that the Portuguese Church had no institution or agency where its general position could be debated and afterwards presented as a collectively-agreed, institutional policy. The political assemblies of Portugal's three different social estates (including the clergy) known as the *Cortes* did not function in that way. Secondly, they lacked consensual positions on almost every major issue; the concept of "field" (Bourdieu 1971; Bethencourt 1984) applies here, because the Portuguese Church was an institution encompassing a large number of different agencies, each containing a huge number of very different agents (from a social, cultural, economic and even religious viewpoint) which fought for power and influence, disputing control over innumerable material, spiritual and symbolic goods. One implication of this approach is that, within what is usually called "the Church" (in the singular), there co-existed very different strategies and interests among the various institutions, agents and groups that comprised it.

Periods of deep rupture, during which tensions emerge more obviously, provide good moments for testing this assumption. The Portuguese political crisis of 1580 is one such privileged conjuncture. Accordingly, this essay will try to detect and explain the ways in which the different individuals who were prelates of Portuguese dioceses in the years from 1578-1581 faced the acute political problem of the royal succession, and how the crown candidates, particularly the one who ultimately won the prize - Philip II, tried to obtain their support.

1. The problem

On 4 August 1578, the young and unmarried king of Portugal, D. Sebastião, died on the battlefield of Alcácer-Quibir in North Africa. With him perished a large number of Portuguese, including some distinguished members of the nobility and clergy, in particular the bishops of Coimbra (Manuel de Meneses) and Oporto (Aires da Silva). The monarch's journey to Africa was disastrous from every perspective, and it aggravated the already very difficult economic and budgetary situation of his kingdom. Worse still, it opened up the prospect of a dynastic crisis.

D. Sebastião had neither sons nor brothers; therefore, the crown was assumed by his only great-uncle who was still alive: D. Henrique, the son of D. Manuel I and brother of the former king D. João III, was already 66 years old and a cleric, cardinal, and papal legate; for much of his life, he had also been Portugal's Inquisitor-General (*Inquisidor geral*). The danger of the extinction of the ruling dynasty after his imminent death was obvious to everyone.

From the beginning of his reign, all the efforts of D. Henrique as king were directed towards three main targets: the punishment of those Portuguese who had encouraged D. Sebastião's highly dangerous intention of fighting in Africa; ransoming the vast number (c. 10.000) of Portuguese still captive in Africa; and preparing for his succession (Polónia 2005: 194-213). Although he was a very old and devout churchman, a cardinal and the former archbishop of Braga, Évora and Lisbon (Portugal's three most prestigious cathedrals), his first step towards resolving the dynastic crisis was an attempt to get married. This intention was already evident in a letter he wrote to Philip II on 24 September 1578 (Brandão 1943: 21-22). But this plan was foiled by Castilian diplomacy in Rome, preventing the Pope from sending the necessary brief of dispensation (Velloso 1946: 98-129).

After September 1578, the succession debate and the consequent political dispute intensified at the center of Portuguese politics. Among six leading candidates for the throne after the cardinal-king's death, the great majority boasted blood ties to D. Manuel I, king of Portugal in its golden age between 1495 and 1521. These claimants were D. Catarina, duchess of Bragança, Portugal's most distinguished noble house, who was the daughter of D. Duarte, one of the youngest sons of D. Manuel I; D. António, the Prior of Crato, a bastard of D. Luís, another son of D. Manuel I; Philip II, king of Spain, son of Charles V and Isabel, the elder daughter of D. Manuel I; Emanuele Filiberto, duke of Savoy, son of a younger daughter of D. Manuel I; Ranuccio Farnese, duke of Parma, a nephew of the already-mentioned son of D. Manuel I, D. Duarte; and finally, the widowed queen of France, Catherine de' Medici, who claimed very remote links to a thirteenth-century Portuguese king, Afonso III.

The strongest claimants were D. Catarina of Bragança, the Prior of Crato, and Philip II. From a juridical point of view, as has been very well demonstrated (Cunha 1993), the situation was indeed complex. This is not the place to discuss further the advantages and handicaps of each one, but there is no doubt that all three could invoke legitimate succession rights after the death of D. Henrique.

The difficulties went far beyond juridical and genealogical disputes; the general framework was extremely complex. Apart from a general sense of decadence that can be easily perceived in the literature of the period, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho emphasized the difficulties of Portuguese international trade and the ensuing economic and financial consequences which had provoked a crisis since the middle of the century (Godinho 1978: 25-26, 381-382). The external support sought by D. Catarina and D. António from Spain's great rivals, France and England, provoked distrust among large sectors of the population, particularly from some ecclesiastics who feared that Protestant heresies could be disseminated in Portugal through such future allies. On the other

hand, a majority of people strongly opposed the introduction of a foreign king such as Philip II. Their opposition was not a matter of nationalism, such as the concept came to be developed during the nineteenth century, but there was evidently an atavistic reaction to the idea of a non-native king. There was also the specter of armed conflict among groups supporting the three strongest parties, a conflict that some sectors defended as the only way to prevent the kingdom from falling under the control of a foreigner.

Moreover, all the candidates used the best means at their disposal to defend their cause: political propaganda; support from the best jurists and theologians; the search for external alliances (including the papacy); the preparation of military campaigns; and the activity of foreign agents attempting to acquire influence and supporters and to obtain information about decisions affecting the succession. One consequence was the emergence of political factions supporting each of the candidates. As a final solution was postponed, it became more difficult to reach a consensus among all the parties involved in the dispute. As Francisco Bethencourt has argued, the indecision of D. Henrique, who, after the marriage solution had failed, initially seemed to prefer D. Catarina, but Henrique changed his mind after October 1579 and sought a negotiated agreement with Philip II, causing him to lose control of the political and social conflict (Bethencourt 1993: 549).

Such waffling made it clear how difficult the task facing D. Henrique was and why, from the beginning, he sought some legally-based solution to avoid a war between Christians that would destroy his realm. However, because the situation was so complex, he took no final decision before he died on 31 January 1580.

2. In search of a peaceful solution

In his search for a juridically sustainable agreement that could prevent a war, one of the most important steps taken by D. Henrique was to summon the *Cortes*. Previously, on 11 February 1579, he had addressed a letter to all the candidates, demanding from them a demonstration of their claim to the crown. The solemn opening of the assembly took place soon afterwards, on 1 April 1579.

According to Queiroz Velloso, this meeting had three main purposes: to obtain support for sending a special ambassador to the Pope, demanding his approval for the marriage of D. Henrique (a wish still being blocked in Rome); to create a council of five governors, chosen by D. Henrique from a group of 15 nobleman elected by the *Cortes*, who would govern the kingdom if the monarch died before a consensus was reached concerning the succession; and to elect a tribunal of 11 judges to decide, on a strictly juridical basis, who was the most legitimate candidate to become king. Finally, all three estates represented in the *Cortes* should swear to recognize and respect the decision taken by the governors in case D. Henrique died before any final solution was reached (Velloso 1946: 205-209).

On 1 June, representatives of all three estates swore to respect any future decisions taken by the governors and judges and also to fight, with weapons if necessary, in the event of any of the candidates trying to obtain the crown through illicit means.

At this key moment in the political process surrounding the succession, let us try to perceive what position the bishops adopted during the *Cortes*.

The first thing to be noted is that half of the bishops were not in Lisbon attending the *Cortes*, preferring instead to remain in their dioceses. In April 1579, only eleven of the thirteen Portuguese continental bishoprics even had a prelate: Bartolomeu dos Mártires (Braga); António Pinheiro (Miranda, transferred to Leiria in November 1579); Simão de Sá Pereira (Lamego,

transferred to Oporto in November 1579); Miguel de Castro (Viseu); João de Portugal (Guarda); Gaspar do Casal (Leiria, transferred to Coimbra in November 1579); Jorge de Almeida (Lisbon); André de Noronha (Portalegre); Teotónio de Bragança (Évora); António Mendes de Carvalho (Elvas); and Jerónimo Osório (Algarve). The Oporto and Coimbra bishoprics remained vacant. According to José de Castro, five of these eleven prelates (Mártires, Pinheiro, Portugal, Noronha and Osório) did not attend the assembly (Castro 1942: 140).

A Latin memoir, addressed to the Pope from the people of Lisbon in November 1579,³ suggested that the missing bishops were avoiding the *Cortes* because they opposed the position of the Jesuits, who were apparently inclined towards D. Catarina of Bragança (as was also, in this phase, the king, D. Henrique). But it is also plausible to argue that at least some of them did not attend because they were uncertain about whom to support and preferred not to become deeply involved in the dispute. This could be the case with Bartolomeu dos Mártires, who adopted a distant and very legalistic position throughout the crisis, and also with Osório.

The other three seemed to have preferred a different solution. Pinheiro and Noronha favored Philip II. In June 1579, Philip II already knew about the inclination of the bishop of Miranda and wrote him a letter to be delivered by his ambassadors in Portugal, Cristóvão de Moura and the Duke of Ossuna, recommending that his two agents tell the bishop that he would never regret helping the Castilian side (Velloso 1946: 172). This opinion was subsequently confirmed when Moura wrote to Madrid in December 1579: "About António Pinheiro, we can have confidence (...) he was at my house today and told me that he will punish a friar who preached against Castile last Sunday at Santarém" (Velloso 1946: 348-349).

The bishop of Portalegre was a cousin of Manuel de Noronha, fifth Marquis of Vila Real, who was already engaged on Philip II's side in February 1579. Naturally, the bishop followed his prominent kinsman (Velloso 1946: 149).

João de Portugal, the bishop of Guarda, was one of the leading supporters of D. António, the Prior of Crato. Moura confirmed it in a letter dated 14 April 1579 (Velloso 1946: 52). Although Moura often tried to convince him of the advantages of supporting Philip II, he never changed his position (Velloso 1946: 173). João de Portugal's position must be placed within the context of a dispute with D. Henrique dating from 1573. The case has been well reconstructed by Carlos Margaça Veiga: as papal legate, D. Henrique had denounced his bad behavior as bishop and caused a trial to be held against him at Rome. In order to ensure his best possible defense, João de Portugal went to Rome. En route to the Vatican, he passed through Madrid, hoping to obtain Philip II's help. But, warned by D. Henrique, the king of Spain refused him (Veiga 1995). So, João de Portugal had personal reasons for opposing Philip II, and of course, chose the candidate whom D. Henrique hated most - his nephew, the Prior of Crato. In December 1578, the king had even determined to banish D. António from Lisbon after learning about the steps the Prior was taking to legitimize his origins and prove he was not a bastard.

By April 1579, D. Henrique presumably desired to arrange matters so that he could promote the candidacy of Catarina of Bragança (although large sectors of the third estate opposed her) and used the *Cortes* to gauge the mood of his realm. He expected to have support from a majority of the bishops. And there is no doubt that some of them were his creatures, men who owed their mitres to him. This is confirmed by a letter from the papal legate, Alessandro Frumentini, dated 19 May 1579, informing the cardinal of Como that most of the prelates tended

³ Archivio Segreto Vaticano [hereafter ASV], Segretaria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fol. 230.

to support D. Catarina.⁴ He offered no names, but different sources make it plausible to presume that he meant Teotónio de Bragança, Simão de Sá Pereira, Gaspar do Casal, Jorge de Almeida and António Mendes de Carvalho.

The bishop of Evora, Teotónio de Bragança, was an uncle of D. Catarina and also maintained close relations with the Jesuits (Marques 1995: 263-268). Philip II was aware of the Congregation's initial support for D. Catarina, and tried to prevent it at Rome. This he did with some success: on 10 January 1579, the Jesuit general Everardo Mercuriano wrote to Portugal from Rome, prohibiting any direct involvement by Society members in Portugal's political disputes.

Simão de Sá Pereira, a former member of the general council of the Holy Office, had very close links with D. Henrique, as his promotion to the Oporto diocese in November 1579 illustrates. Moreover, numerous references attest to his presence at key moments of the Lisbon *Cortes*, for example at the ceremony where the city of Lisbon swore to obey the decisions of the *Cortes*,⁵ which presume his importance as a faithful royal agent.

Jorge de Almeida was also a man high in the confidence of D. Henrique. The cardinal-king had chosen Almeida to replace him as Inquisitor-general; he had appointed him to the five-man governing commission created from the Lisbon *Cortes*; Almeida was also a member of the special tribunal, created by papal authority and chaired by D. Henrique to assess the legitimacy of the birth of the Prior of Crato, which declared D. António a bastard on 22 August 1579. Gaspar do Casal was another member of this court,⁶ whose decision denied the Prior of Crato any legal chance of contending for the Portuguese crown. In June 1579, Moura tried to buy Almeida's support, suggesting he could become a cardinal by supporting Philip II. But Almeida coolly told Moura that Portugal's future king should be decided by the tribunal created in the *Cortes* (Velloso 1946: 247)

Finally, António Mendes de Carvalho also had close ties with the Jesuits. One of his biographers claims he was made bishop by a very influential Jesuit, Martim Gonçalves da Câmara, during the reign of king D. Sebastião.⁷

So, the only bishop at the Lisbon *Cortes* supporting Philip II was Miguel de Castro; so did the former bishop of Viseu and head court chaplain (*capelão mor*), Jorge de Ataíde, though at this time Ataíde kept his decision relatively secret (Velloso 1946: 145, 206). Miguel de Castro was a noble from one of the richest and most prestigious families in Évora. His elder brother was Fernando de Castro, an early supporter of Philip II, who rewarded him after becoming king of Portugal by naming him Count of Basto. In fact, this entire clan supported Philip II as early as 7 February 1579, as Moura informed the king of Spain in a letter (Velloso 1946: 147-149).

The preceding details make it impossible to argue that the majority of Portuguese bishops held a clearly defined public position by April/June 1579, and even more difficult to claim that they already supported Philip II. Even among those bishops closest to D. Henrique, who was himself little disposed to António, Prior of Crato, ambiguous positions seem to have been held. On 12 August 1579, two months after the Lisbon *Cortes*, the Prior of Crato sent a letter to Pope Gregory XIII, begging him not to give D. Henrique the decision about the legitimization of his birth. Documentary evidence indicates that D. António then believed in the impartiality of several

⁴ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fl. 32.

⁵ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 4, fl. 59.

⁶ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fols. 179-180.

⁷ BACELAR, Manuel da Cunha de Andrade e Sousa - *Epítome historica e panegirica da vida, acçoens e morte do Excellentissimo e reverendissimo Senhor Dom Antonio Mendes de Carvalho, primeiro bispo de Elvas*. Lisbon: Pedro Ferreira, 1753, p. 57-59.

prelates, including D. Gaspar do Casal, Simão de Sá Pereira, and of course João de Portugal, together with the former bishop of Angra (Azores), Manuel de Almada, and Bartolomeu dos Mártires, who had once briefly been his master.⁸

Much evidence from this period suggests the continuous evolution and transformation of Portugal's political process. By the beginning of September 1579, some signals had begun to appear, suggesting a shift in position by D. Henrique (Veiga 1999: vol. 1, 344-346). He recognized the impossibility of getting married, the antipathy of large sectors of the third estate towards D. Catarina of Bragança, and, of course, he became increasingly persuaded of Philip II's interest in becoming king of Portugal and realized how difficult it would be to stop his power-play. By this time, he was aware that large sectors of the nobility and even people within the restricted membership of the royal councils were already compromised with Philip II. At the same time, he wanted to prevent the Prior of Crato, who enjoyed great support from the popular estate, from becoming the next king of Portugal. Under these circumstances, he began to think the best solution would be to strike a deal with Philip II, if only to avoid a war that could destroy the kingdom. All this became evident in the letters that Moura wrote to Madrid. On 18 September, Moura reported that he had been told in a private meeting with the Cardinal King that D. Henrique would soon take a final resolution favoring Philip II. Six days later, Moura sent Madrid a letter from the cardinal with proposals for an agreement, though D. Henrique insisted that any final decision had to be confirmed by the *Cortes*. In November, D. Henrique wrote to his niece D. Catarina, confirming that he was negotiating with Philip II. Finally, at a meeting between D. Henrique and Cristóvão de Moura on 10 November, the main points of an agreement were reached. The deal had been negotiated mainly by Philip II's ambassador and Miguel de Moura, a member of D. Henrique's privy council, who supported Philip II (Velloso 1946: 315-339).

With these basic ideas in mind, a very old and sick D. Henrique summoned another *Cortes* with the hopeful expectation that all three estates would accept his proposals (Bouza 2005: 78-79). One thing seems certain: confronted with so many conflicting interests, he did not want to make an official decision by himself.

This *Cortes* opened at the small town of Almeirim on 11 January 1580. Once again, only five bishops definitely attended: Teotónio de Bragança (Évora); Jorge de Almeida (Lisbon); António Pinheiro (Leiria); Jerónimo de Meneses (Miranda) and Jerónimo Osório (Algarve). We have no information about three others: André de Noronha (Portalegre); Gaspar do Casal (the new bishop of Coimbra); and António Mendes de Carvalho (Elvas). Bartolomeu dos Mártires acted as he had done at the time of the Lisbon *Cortes* and once again avoided the center of the political arena. It is evident that he did not want to get involved. His silence meant that he would accept any solution that was legally announced, but would not show any preference.

It is plausible that two of the missing bishops could justify their absence by the fact that they had only been very recently nominated, and so should remain in their dioceses. Such was the case with António Teles de Meneses (Lamego) and Simão de Sá Pereira (Oporto), both confirmed as bishops in late November 1579 and both very close to D. Henrique. We have no evidence of either man's presence at Almeirim.

As for two others, Miguel de Castro and João de Portugal, both enthusiastic supporters of D. António, Prior of Crato (who was at Santarém, a town very close to Almeirim), it is more difficult to understand why they did not appear to defend their candidate. However, the position of the bishop of Guarda looks reasonable. His candidate had been declared a bastard by D.

⁸ ASV - Segretaria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fols. 462-463.

Henrique in November 1579; hostile towards the Cardinal King, he must have concluded that his presence among his episcopal colleagues would not be welcome. Prudently, he remained nearby, keeping well-informed and helping those who defended D. António's cause at Almeirim, while assisting D. António's numerous supporters in Santarém, the town where the third estate assembled during the *Cortes*.

As to the five prelates in attendance at Almeirim, we are better informed.

Jerónimo de Meneses had decided in favor of Philip II even before becoming a bishop, although his brother João Telo de Meneses, one of the five governors, supported D. Catarina – an unusual family strategy. But the name of the bishop of Miranda appears on a list of people receiving money from Cristóvão de Moura in 1579 (Velloso 1946: 171).

Teotónio de Bragança seemed still attached to his niece, D. Catarina. The papal nuncio informed the Cardinal of Como on 21 January 1580 that D. Henrique was doing everything possible to be replaced by Philip II and therefore he had forbidden D. Teotónio from speaking at the clerical meetings during the Almeirim *Cortes*, because of his family links with the house of Bragança.⁹ A few days later, when D. Catarina of Bragança decided to visit the dying Cardinal King at Almeirim, Teotónio de Bragança was the only bishop to give her and her entourage a public welcome (Velloso 1946: 393).

Like his beloved patron D. Henrique, Jorge de Almeida was making every effort to find some solution that would prevent a war. But rumors circulated at Almeirim that he had sold his support to Castile.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Almeida's future position, especially after becoming a governor, reveals that he was very hesitant.

The two most important actors among the bishops at Almeirim were undoubtedly Jerónimo Osório and António Pinheiro.

Upon receiving the letter from D. Henrique summoning him to the new *Cortes* at Almeirim, Osório replied in November 1579. Among other things, he begged D. Henrique to do everything possible to avoid a disastrous war among Christians and advised the king not to listen to anyone who argued that war was the best way.¹¹ His letter was used by Castilian propaganda to claim that the prestigious bishop of Algarve supported Philip II (Velloso 1946: 365).

After reaching Almeirim on 4 January 1580, Osório wrote another letter to D. Henrique, containing a very clear, pragmatic and well-argued position. With a large number of candidates who all considered themselves legitimate, the best solution for the kingdom's dangerous situation was to form a union with Castile. Seeing no way to defend the realm if Philip II decided to attack, he argued that it was preferable to accept him peacefully than after the shame and oppression of a military defeat. Finally, he argued that the best method involved negotiating the union of the two crowns with Philip II "under some honest conditions" and concluded his letter with the pithy phrase, "subjugated never, united yes".¹²

According to Sebastião Tavares de Pinho, this letter from Osório finally persuaded the Cardinal King to accept Philip II. Pinho used another open letter of the bishop of Algarve, written some months later (July 1580) and known as *Defensio sui nominis*, to argue that (in Osório's words), "when the bishops were meeting with the clerical estate at Almeirim, the cardinal confessed to him that he [Osório] will appreciate and defend the formula he will soon receive for resolving

⁹ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fl. 280.

¹⁰ *Idem*.

¹¹ The letter was first published by Baião 1951: 201-202. Pinho (1993: 311-313) uses another version, which he claims is closer to Osório's usual style from a formal point of view.

¹² The entire letter was published by Velloso 1946: 366-367.

the dynastic crisis,” implying that this formula was a preliminary agreement with Philip II to be presented at the *Cortes* (Pinho 1993: 318-319). Though the position sustained by the bishop of Algarve was undoubtedly very pragmatic and impressed some of his episcopal colleagues, Pinho neglected the data used by Queiroz Velloso, demonstrating that D. Henrique had been moving in this direction since September 1579.

António Pinheiro also seems to have played a very important role during this period. He had the advantage of being a very experienced politician; since the reign of João III, he had been a respected courtier who had often preached at the most important monarchical ceremonies. Perhaps because of his previous experience, D. Henrique assigned him the role of broker between the king and the popular estate in these crucial January days. We must also remember that D. Henrique was then very ill and near death; under such circumstances, he entrusted António Pinheiro with delivering some of his most important decisions to the *Cortes*.

In view of some hesitation on the part of D. Henrique during the last days of December that worried the Spanish ambassadors Moura and Ossuna, the cardinal probably intended to obtain some general consensus at the *Cortes* that would allow him to make an acceptable compromise declaring Philip II as his successor. According to Bouza, this was the strategy used by Philip II throughout 1579: to negotiate some solution that defended his interests, relying on the skill of his representatives in Portugal, and avoiding the necessity of using military force (Bouza 2005: 78).

And Pinheiro played a key role in defending Philip II's interests during the *Cortes*. Three times the cardinal sent him to talk to the popular estate. Particularly on his second visit, on 18 January 1580, he read a memorial, purporting to express D. Henrique's ideas, which asserted that Philip II's claims were more consistent than those of D. Catarina and, accordingly, that D. Henrique expected that it was possible for the realm to reach an agreement with the King of Castile (Velloso 1946: 375-380). This statement was badly received by the third estate, provoking excited and hostile reactions. Four days later, the popular assembly decided that they preferred to die rather than deliver the crown to a foreign king.

We must pay attention to two letters in order to understand António Pinheiro's feelings and actions. Firstly, in a letter from Philip II to Moura, sent from Madrid on 26 January, the king recognized his key role and asked Moura to aid him: "Bishop Piñero behaves in ways that show well his favorable inclination for our affairs; therefore it is fitting that you show him my satisfaction with his conduct and assure him that he will receive suitable rewards in gratitude for what I owe him" (original in Velloso 1946: 382). A second letter, from the papal nuncio to Rome, dated 29 January, reported that António Pinheiro had told the popular estate that D. Henrique was about to reach an agreement with Philip II; however, the nuncio commented that this was untrue and had not been explicitly ordered by the cardinal.¹³ Together, these letters suggest that rumors circulated that António Pinheiro had privileged information from the Cardinal King but had twisted it a little in order to favor, as much as possible, the interests of Philip II.

The third estate's vigorous rejection of any suggestion of a foreign king, combined with the division among the estate of nobility, where Philip II received only one more vote than either D. Catarina or the Prior of Crato, effectively prevented D. Henrique from taking any final decision before he died on 31 January 1580. His inability to proclaim any satisfactory solution contributed to the creation of the historiographical myth that his hesitation delivered Portugal to the Spanish.

¹³ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fl. 293.

3. From negotiation to war

Immediately after D. Henrique's death, power was transferred to the five governors elected at the Lisbon *Cortes*. They were divided about the best solution to be taken, although they tended to agree about choosing a king with the best dynastic claim from a juridical point of view. Basically, the archbishop of Lisbon hesitated about supporting anyone. João Telo de Meneses opposed Philip II, while the other three (João de Mascarenhas, Francisco de Sá de Meneses and Diogo Lopes de Sousa) supported the King of Spain (Veloso 1953: 4). Initially, given the obvious social and political divisions in the realm - including among themselves - they merely tried to prevent Philip II from launching a military invasion of Portugal. Accordingly, they sent a special embassy to the Spanish court, formed by the Bishop of Coimbra, Gaspar do Casal, and Manuel de Melo (Veiga 1999: 360-361). Simultaneously, in a letter dated 19 February 1580, they asked Pope Gregory XIII to urge Philip II not to use military force to conquer the Portuguese throne.¹⁴

The coming months were very confused and full of political activity, with different centers of power emerging.

The governors, still split among themselves, preserved a general atmosphere of indecision while trying to create conditions for respecting a juridical solution that would be confirmed through the *Cortes*. On 30 April 1580, they convoked them, although they were never formally summoned. During this period, they apparently trusted the role bishops could play in preserving peace in their dioceses and respecting the decisions taken by the governors. They even sent a circular letter to all prelates, ordering them to encourage their flocks to be ready to defend Portugal against anyone who tried to conquer its crown against their decisions, also asking them to be alert and not to allow their clergy, especially during sermons, to take public positions in favor of any of the candidates (Rolo 1964: 23).

Philip II tried to profit from the circumstance that Portugal's three estates were still assembled at Almeirim (the *Cortes* were not closed immediately after D. Henrique died, and were only suspended on 15 March) by offering them a solution based on the agreement he had negotiated with the late king, including the various privileges among the different estates and also offering a certain amount of autonomy to the kingdom. His position was made explicit in a document of 25 chapters, presented by Ossuna at Almeirim on 20 March 1580, entitled *Memorial de las gracias y mercedes que el Rey nuestro señor concederá a estos reynos quando fuere jurado rey y señor dellos* (...) (Bouza 2005: 69, 80-82).

At the same time, Philip II made it very clear that he considered himself the legitimate king of Portugal. This was clearly demonstrated in the first days of April, when he received the representatives sent by the governors not as ambassadors, but as vassals - a significant difference, as some of the governors noticed (Veloso 1953: 41). But together with his one hand wearing a velvet glove of peaceful and "generous" strategy, Philip II showed an iron fist in the other by preparing troops for an invasion. On 20 May, for example, the governors convoked a Council of State to discuss a letter from the Spanish ambassador, in which Philip II declared that if he was not declared monarch of Portugal by 8 June, he would invade the kingdom (Veloso 1953: 112). In Portugal, Cristóvão de Moura kept trying to convince some notable Portuguese figures to declare for Philip II and rewarded others by offering them privileges and even bribes. D. Jorge de Ataíde, the former bishop of Viseu, for example, was offered an amount of one thousand *cruzados* yearly, according to a letter dated 25 January 1580 that he kept among his papers.¹⁵

¹⁴ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 4, fols. 90-91.

¹⁵ Biblioteca Nacional (Lisbon) – Pombalina 641, fl. 559.

Meanwhile, D. António, Prior of Crato, had mustered considerable support, especially among ordinary people. He simultaneously sought international help and tried to reopen the legal process of legitimizing his birth. If he could only be declared legitimate, he would undoubtedly overtake all rival candidates and be declared heir to the Portuguese crown. On 19 June 1580, stimulated by the bishop of Guarda, João de Portugal, a group of his supporters at Santarém publicly acclaimed him as the new king of Portugal. Four days later, he and his forces entered Lisbon, where he was also received as king and began acting as Portugal's new monarch (Veloso 1953: 151-153 and Serrão 1956).

At this moment, the governors and the various supporters of Philip II around them (including the bishop of Leiria, António Pinheiro, and the former bishop of Viseu, Jorge de Ataíde) escaped to Setúbal, fifty kilometers south of Lisbon. A few days later, on 17 July, the three governors who had clearly supported Philip II from the beginning, and now, pursued by the forces of D. António, had fled from Setúbal, decided to declare Philip II King of Portugal.¹⁶

In this whirlwind of political confusion, only D. Catarina de Bragança, aware of her military weakness but confident of her dynastic rights, still insisted on a juridical solution. On 20 June, her husband insisted that the governors proclaim her as queen, because, by using force, both Philip II and D. António had broken the agreement reached during the Lisbon *Cortes* (Veloso 1953: 158).

Throughout these six dramatic months, what was the attitude of the bishops? Once more, we can find no homogeneous scenario. In February and March, some of them remained at Almeirim, still one of the main centers of power, where Moura and Osuna kept trying to convince not only the bishops but also other members of the nobility of the advantages of declaring Philip II king, despite risking accusations of treason. As the nuncio informed Rome, a riot had occurred shortly before 22 March, when they were assembled with the bishops.¹⁷

At this point, it became particularly evident that Philip II was seeking support from the Portuguese episcopacy. This was one point in his strategy for conquering the Portuguese crown by preventing preachers in particular, and the lower clergy in general, from using Portugal's pulpits against him.

According to Bouza (Bouza 2005: 112-113), his negotiations with the bishops were difficult because, especially after a 1578 agreement between the clergy and the king D. Sebastião, the privileges of the Church, and particularly its jurisdictional privileges, were enormous, far beyond those existing in Spain.¹⁸ Philip's official *Memorial de las gracias y mercedes* referred to Church privileges in chapters 9, 10, 15 and 18.¹⁹ Basically, it said that all bishops, heads of religious orders, holders of church benefices subject to royal appointment, and the Inquisitor General were positions that had to be given to Portuguese natives; that the king would not impose new taxes on the Church and clergy, like the "*terças, subsidios e escusados*" levied in Castile; that whenever the king was away from Portugal, he had to be accompanied by one clergyman and another Portuguese who would form a council (*Conselho de Portugal*) to be consulted about all Portuguese matters; finally, that, like previous kings of Portugal, the king would maintain a royal

¹⁶ This document, known as the *Proclamação de Castro Marim*, was published by Veloso 1953: 175-179.

¹⁷ ASV - Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fl. 373-375.

¹⁸ The agreement of 18 March 1578 between D. Sebastião and the clergy was printed by CASTRO, Gabriel Pereira de - *Monomachia sobre as concórdias que fizeram os reis com os prelados de Portugal nas duvidas da jurisdição eclesiástica e temporal*. Lisbon: José Francisco Mendes, 1738, pp. 228-256.

¹⁹ I have used the copy in ASV, Segreteria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fols. 367-368. See also (Bouza Alvarez 1987: vol. 2, 956-957).

chapel in Lisbon. Following Bouza's interpretation, supported also by Federico Palomo, it was only after these concessions that the Portuguese bishops accepted the union of the crowns of Portugal and Spain (Bouza 1987: vol. 2, 580-581; Palomo 2004: 69-70).

I am, however, less sure about the decisive importance of these negotiations in persuading the bishops. According to a letter from Almeirim dated 28 March, only António Pinheiro, bishop of Leiria, Jerónimo de Meneses, bishop of Miranda, Teotónio de Bragança, archbishop of Évora, and Jorge de Ataíde, the former bishop of Viseu were present at Almeirim when these arrangements were discussed, and they confirmed their support of Philip II by acknowledging the "sacred zeal" he had always shown when confronting the problem of Portugal's dynastic succession.²⁰ As shown above, three of them (Pinheiro, Meneses, and Ataíde) had already decided to support Philip II a long time before, at least since March/April 1579, and were not particularly worried about these negotiations. Moreover, other bishops who were probably not at Almeirim in March 1580, for example Miguel de Castro (Viseu), Jerónimo Osório (Algarve) and André de Noronha (Elvas), did not wait for these concessions to the clergy before declaring their support for the king of Spain. As we have seen, Osório's letter of 4 January 1580 invoked reasons other than the privileges conceded to the Church for giving his support to Philip II. On 11 June, Osório wrote to Philip II, boasting that he had done his best to defend him at Almeirim and was still continuously doing so in his diocese. He again acknowledged his prudent support for the king of Castile, recognizing that Philip II could easily conquer Portugal by force, but praising him for preferring to act more as a father than as an "imperial lord".²¹

So, I accept that negotiation remained an important strategic element in Philip II's policy, but it was not decisive for convincing most bishops, except Teotónio de Bragança and perhaps Gaspar do Casal. According to our available information, the Archbishop of Evora changed his position between late January and March 1580; until then he had remained loyal to his relative, D. Catarina, but by the end of March he was on Philip II's side. Yet he had apparently decided to support the king of Castile even before Moura and Ossuna produced the so-called *Mercês de Almeirim*. He started a letter dated 3 March 1580 complimenting Philip II on the birth of a new daughter, by declaring that he was 'always ready to serve' Philip II.²²

We have little information about the attitude of Gaspar do Casal before March 1580, although he was generally in sympathy with D. Henrique. So it seems plausible that he was inclined to support Philip II by January 1580, if still slightly hesitant. In any event, there is no doubt that by April he was supporting the king of Castile.²³

Other bishops maintained an ambiguous or non-explicit position between February and July. One was the archbishop of Lisbon and also one of the governors, Jorge de Almeida. Apparently his conduct resembled that of D. Henrique, the former king. Some of his actions reveal support for Philip II. The best example is his opposition to reopening the procedure legitimizing D. António. As one of the judges at the first inquest into legitimizing D. António, carried out while D. Henrique was alive, he was pressed by the papal nuncio between March and June 1580 to reopen it. But Almeida blocked all attempts to do so, and no new legitimization procedure was ever begun by a new tribunal (Castro 1942: 104-106). Throughout these months, Almeida often met with Cristóvão de Moura. At one of them, in early May, he promised Moura that, as

²⁰ Archivo General de Simancas [hereafter AGS], Estado, legajo 419, letter 136.

²¹ AGS - Estado, legajo 419, letter 152.

²² AGS - Estado, legajo 419, letter 170.

²³ AGS - Estado, legajo 418, letter 57 (Reasons given by the bishop of Coimbra in support of Philip II's claim to the Portuguese crown).

Inquisitor General, he would punish a friar who had preached a sermon claiming that any Portuguese who died fighting against Philip II's troops would enter Paradise (Veloso 1953: 76). In any event, like the Cardinal King, he was afraid of a war; in June, exactly one day before D. António was acclaimed at Santarém, Almeida was still begging Moura to give him more time to summon the *Cortes* and have a final and consensual solution approved there (Veloso 1953:142-143).

Another prelate who never revealed an explicit position was the Archbishop of Braga, Bartolomeu dos Mártires. It appears that he too was primarily concerned with shaping some juridical solution that would prevent a war between partisans of D. António and Philip II, and therefore remained officially neutral. That is how I prefer to interpret his absence from all the *Cortes*, his public silence about the succession issue after August 1578, and also the position he took in a pastoral letter promulgated on 11 May 1580, after receiving the order sent by the governors to all Portuguese prelates. His pastoral letter makes it very clear that his main intention was to maintain peace (he even ordered all good Christians to make prayers and processions for its promotion), together with a neutral position and respect for all decisions made by duly constituted public officials, i.e. the five governors.²⁴ The heated controversies of forty years earlier, debating whether this famous archbishop's attitudes reveal him as a patriot trying to prevent the realm from being handed to Philip II (Rolo 1964), or blaming him as someone whose silence and hesitation made him indirectly responsible for Philip II's triumph (Serrão 1964), make no sense at all.

Finally, we must recognize that the two bishops who were most active politically throughout the succession crisis (excluding Jorge de Almeida, who was a governor) were António Pinheiro and João de Portugal. The first consistently promoted Philip II's candidacy; the second masterminded D. António's strategy.

Pinheiro defended Castilian interests in the Council of State, for example in late March, when he opposed the decision that the governors were about to take concerning the necessity of summoning a new *Cortes* to declare who should be king. He seems to have always been well informed about the measures Philip II was planning. For example, on May 2, Moura told him that Philip II had obtained declarations from Spanish theologians, clarifying his right to make war in order to defend his legitimate rights (Veloso 1953: 60). And Pinheiro frequently displayed agreement with policies followed by Castile. Fernando Bouza found two very important letters from him that confirm this interpretation. In the first, the bishop of Leiria argued that the Portuguese were so individualistic that it was better to persuade them to support Philip II by offering individual rewards rather than general privileges. In the second, dated March 1580, when the necessity of using military force became increasingly evident, Pinheiro said that those (he called them "evil men") who refused the rewards and privileges offered by Philip II must be convinced by the "hammer of fear" (Bouza 2005: 75, 78). His explicit and public engagement explain why, after D. António entered Lisbon in July, he had to flee, together with Jorge de Ataíde the former bishop of Viseu. And, as the papal nuncio informed Rome, both men's lives and honor were at risk on that occasion.²⁵

On the opposite side emerged the equally prominent role of João de Portugal. His position was very well known to the alert Cristóvão de Moura; in a letter to Philip II in April, Moura reported that the bishop, his brother Manuel de Portugal, the governor João Telo de Meneses, the Jesuit Martim Gonçalves da Câmara and Febo Moniz were the king of Spain's worst

²⁴ It was published by Rolo 1964: 23-24.

²⁵ ASV - Segretaria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fl. 465v.

enemies (Veloso 1953: 74). By the end of May, Moura knew about the meetings held at Santarém, at which the bishop and his friends had hatched their conspiracies (Veloso 1953: 148).

Finally, it was João de Portugal, who on Sunday 18 June, after mass, proclaimed in a very enthusiastic speech to a large audience that D. António was the only Portuguese capable of preventing Portugal, with God's mercy, from falling into Spanish hands. So, he concluded, our only hope was to proclaim the Prior of Crato as defender of the realm, and assist him in a spirit of resistance and sacrifice (Serrão 1956: 16-17). After D. António's uprising, during the few weeks when he managed to act like a king in Lisbon, the papal nuncio considered the bishop of Guarda one of the most powerful people in the "new state".²⁶

He paid heavily for it. Philip II showed him no pity. In April 1585, a court presided over by Pedro de Castilho, the former bishop of Angra (Azores) and loyal to Philip II, deprived him of his bishopric, his priestly rank, and every ecclesiastical benefice he possessed. He was also denaturalized and sentenced to prison for life in a monastery in Spain, where he died (Castro 1942: 359-362).

4. The final assault

After D. António's uprising on 18 June at Santarém, followed by his entry into Lisbon, where Manuel de Almada, another former bishop of Angra, also supported him (Serrão 1956: 45), Philip II had no other choice than to invade Portugal with his army. On 18 June (the same day as the uprising at Santarém), the border towns of Campo Maior and Elvas surrendered to Philip II without fighting. At Elvas, an agreement was made with the approval of the local bishop, António Mendes de Carvalho (Veloso 1953: 159-160). On 28 June, commanded by the renowned Duke of Alba, Philip II's infantry crossed the Portuguese border and headed in the direction of Lisbon. En route, on 25 August, at a place called Alcântara, Philip II's troops routed the outnumbered and under-prepared forces of D. António, who managed to escape towards northern Portugal during the battle. This result explains why Philip II, after this lengthy process, considered that he had simultaneously inherited, purchased, and conquered the kingdom of Portugal (Serrão 2001: 80).

Only after the battle of Alcântara was the question of the Portuguese succession definitively decided. However, from a legal viewpoint, the proclamation of Castro Marim, made on 17 July by three of the five governors, officially transformed the monarch of Castile into the King of Portugal. The king's formal acclamation occurred several months later, at a session of the *Cortes* held at the town of Tomar in April 1581.

After the battle of Alcântara, all the bishops (except of course João de Portugal), including those who until then had remained hesitant or neutral, like D. Jorge de Almeida, Bartolomeu dos Mártires or Simão de Sá Pereira, rapidly showed their support for the new king. And all of them attended the *Cortes* of Tomar in April 1581, except Jerónimo Osório, the bishop of Algarve, who had died on 20 August 1580. At the *Cortes*, António Pinheiro, of course, gave the opening speech (Bouza Alvarez 1987: vol. 1 218-220, and Serrão 1956: 215-216).

We have abundant proof of the open and rapid support given by the bishops to Philip II. Chronologically, the first is a letter from the Bishop of Portalegre, André de Noronha, dated 29 August, in which he vividly congratulates the new king on the "reduction of Lisbon to His

²⁶ ASV - Segretaria di Stato, Portogallo, vol. 7, fols. 469-470.

Majesty's service".²⁷ One month before this, he had opposed the acclamation of D. António at Portalegre.²⁸ But from a rhetorical point of view, the most interesting letter was the one written by the Bishop of Miranda, Jerónimo de Meneses, in December 1580. No one else expressed such flattery towards the new king.²⁹ At Viseu, as expected, Bishop Miguel de Castro also played an important role in proclaiming Philip II as the new king in the first days of September, despite some local resistance.³⁰

Even those bishops who had not openly declared themselves before August now supported Philip II.

On 9 September, Jorge de Almeida, Archbishop of Lisbon, finally ended his indecision and wrote to Gabriel Zaías, a secretary of Philip II, expressing his desire to visit the new king personally and kiss his hand.³¹ His visit was postponed at Philip's orders, despite the continuous insistence of the archbishop to do so.³²

Another archbishop, Bartolomeu dos Mártires, who had refused to proclaim D. António in August, despite pressure from some inhabitants of Braga which had forced him to abandon his seat briefly, decided to proclaim Philip II as king, at the town where he was archbishop and lord, on the first of September. Two days earlier, he had written to Garcia Sarmiento de Sotomayor, a Castilian general, saying that because he opposed D. António some people from Braga had tried to kill him and that his intention had always been to preserve justice (Serrão 1964: 268-269). And, on 11 November, answering a letter from Philip II, he reassured the new ruler that he would persecute and punish any cleric who had been loyal to D. António during the crisis.³³

At Oporto, Simão de Sá Pereira - who always kept in close touch with his neighbor Bartolomeu dos Mártires, including when both had been forced to flee from their towns under pressure from D. António's forces - showed his subordination to the new king's orders in letters written in December.³⁴

During the coming years, recognizing the help he had received and purporting to show his gratitude, Philip II promoted some of the bishops who had supported him during these two dramatic years. As one would expect, António Pinheiro received important and lucrative offices in the new Portuguese administration (Veiga 1999: vol. 1 392), as did D. Jorge de Ataíde who remained as head court chaplain and in December 1580 was made President of the Mesa da Consciência.³⁵ Miguel de Castro, the Bishop of Viseu, was made archbishop of Lisbon and later became one of the kingdom's governors. André de Noronha, Bishop of Portalegre, was promoted to the Spanish bishopric of Plasencia, while Jerónimo de Meneses was transferred from the impoverished diocese of Miranda to wealthier Oporto. Other prelates from the Portuguese overseas empire who supported Philip II were also promoted. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, it was during his government that we find the highest number of bishops already serving the previous king being promoted (Paiva 2006).

²⁷ AGS - Estado, legajo 418, letter 152.

²⁸ AGS - Estado, legajo 421, letter from Jerónimo de Mendonça, dated 25 June 1580.

²⁹ AGS - Estado, legajo 418, legajo 424, letter 127 and 128.

³⁰ AGS - Estado, legajo 421, letter dated 11 September 1580.

³¹ AGS - Estado, legajo 419, letter 111.

³² AGS - Estado, legajo 419, letter 120.

³³ AGS - Estado, legajo 419, letter 150.

³⁴ AGS - Estado, legajo 426, letter dated 13 December 1580.

³⁵ Biblioteca Nacional (Lisbon) - Pombalina 641, fols. 543 and 545.

Such developments led Federico Palomo to conclude that during the first years of Philip II's government as king of Portugal, and relying on the agreements preserving the privileges of the Portuguese Church (presented at Almeirim and confirmed at the *Cortes* held in Tomar), Portugal's episcopate offered no opposition to the new king and indeed acted as very important allies who contributed to the consolidation and legitimization of the new monarch's rule (Palomo 2004: 78-80). But this period is part of another story.

Conclusions

For purposes of clarity and objectivity, I offer my conclusions in the form of six summary statements.

1 – It is no longer possible to assert that there was some uniform position taken by “the Portuguese Church” during Portugal's dynastic crisis of 1578-1581. Even assuming that its bishops represented the Portuguese Church, this study makes it clear that the Portuguese episcopate had no single consensual position. Thirteen different mainland bishops played different roles at different times. The ‘field’ of Portuguese clergy, including its bishops, remained deeply divided over this vital issue.

2 – Episcopal attitudes evolved continuously throughout this crisis. The general tendency reveals that, over time, an increasing number of prelates supported Philip II, although a majority of them preferred Catarina de Bragança until May/June 1579. In any event, the time at which each chose to declare or act as a supporter of Philip II differed from bishop to bishop.

3 – In general, bishops kept a very low strategic profile about intervening at the center of this political dispute. Although a few of them (António Pinheiro, bishop of Miranda and Leiria; Jorge de Ataíde, former bishop of Viseu, João de Bragança, bishop of Guarda; and Jorge de Almeida, archbishop of Lisbon) played particularly active and decisive roles, most preferred to remain prudent in their support of the various candidates.

4 – We still have no overview of the real impact and importance of Portugal's episcopate at a diocesan level; but their collective proceedings at the *Cortes* or individual dealings with agents of Portugal's political center make it clear that every important candidate for the throne sought their support, implying that the candidates were aware and convinced of their importance.

5 – Insofar as we can find any governing logic behind the positions assumed by the Portuguese episcopacy, it seems that a majority acted in defense of their personal, family and clientage interests, revealing an acute sense of opportunism. However, within this individualistic framework, four main reasons emerge to help explain their attitudes and motivations: a) preserving Catholicism in Portugal; b) preserving the privileges of the Portuguese Church and clergy; c) awareness that it was impossible to resist the power of Philip II; and d), the necessity of avoiding war if possible.

6 – If Philip II became king of Portugal, a majority of Portuguese bishops ultimately contributed to his success. And the new ruler crushed the only one who had vehemently opposed him.

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