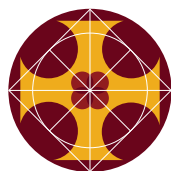




AFONSINA

II

2021



**Women in the
Middle Ages**

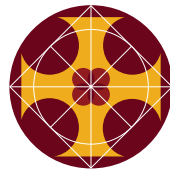


MUNICÍPIO DE
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II

2021



Women in the Middle Ages

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On Countess Theresa and the early stage of governance of the County of Portugal (1096-1112)

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Abstract

As part of the restructuring of the Leonese and Castilian monarchy promoted by Alfonso VI, the foundation of the County of Portugal in 1096 represented a considerable change in the balance of political, military and ecclesiastical forces in the Hispanic Northwest. The new counts, Henry of Burgundy and Theresa of León, readily took over the new territory entrusted to them and provided for its government by relying mainly on the regional powers of Entre-Douro-e-Minho and the Conimbric territory. Countess Theresa made her political apprenticeship until the demise of the Burgundian count in 1112, and she already shown in several cases to be able to intervene and make decisions. Her royal ascendancy soon made her a key figure in the kingdom's political evolution, particularly in the evolution of the Portucalese Land, which in the meantime had embarked on a process of autonomy that the future would prove to be irreversible. In this context, the present study seeks to outline the essentials of Theresa's path until 1112, focusing on some of the most important and revealing moments and facts.

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Keywords: Theresa, Henry of Burgundy, Alfonso VI, County of Portugal, Kingdom of León and Castile, twelfth century

“All nations are mysteries.
 Each one is the whole world on its own.
 Oh mother of kings and grandmother of empires
 Watch over us!”
 (Pessoa, 1997: 22)

In the celebrated collection of poetry significantly entitled *Mensagem* (Message) published by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) in 1934, the verses serving as the epigraph to this text are found at the very beginning of the evocation of “D. Tareja” (Countess Theresa). Rooted in deep Sebastianist mysticism, the entire poem extols the revered heroes of Portugal who, through successive ages and their exemplary deeds, seem to foresee the ever-renewed greatness of Motherland. In reality, by placing Theresa among the nation’s founding figures, Fernando Pessoa’s quasi-prayer in poetic form merely amplified literarily a historical perception of the Infanta’s figure and role, which had long been rooted in Portuguese culture, especially in Portuguese historiography.

The decisive contribution in this regard was made in the mid-19th century by Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877). Predicated on the modern scientific criticism of his time, he did not hesitate to formulate highly evaluative judgments on the character and actions of the Countess of Portugal. At the end of *Book I* of the first volume of his groundbreaking *History of Portugal* (1846-1853), dedicated precisely to the period of the County of Portugal, he made it clear how much the negligence of the past had disturbed the understanding of the Infanta’s decisive government: “In their efforts to save Theresa’s moral reputation as a woman, modern writers have forgotten to do her justice as Queen or Regent of Portugal (...) However, for fourteen years, the actions of Count Henry’s widow clearly show her perseverance and skill while seeking to develop and realize the idea of independence that he had bequeathed to her. (...) The punishment for a mistake – which was far from unpardonable, as measured by the customs of that era – seems to us too severe, and the Portuguese barons’ behavior toward her will deserve the imputation of ungratefulness on the part of the unaware. Theresa was the victim of a noble but sometimes excessive and blind feeling that she had cherished and allowed to take root and gain concreteness, and which served as a pretext for rebelling against Afonso Henriques’ ambition – or rather, against the ambition of those who, through the inexperienced prince, hoped better to satisfy it. This was the feeling of nationality” (Herculano, 1980: Volume I, 383-384).

Herculano did not limit himself to criticizing his predecessors. His analysis and interpretation reformulated the approach to the comital period, giving Theresa and her government a centrality responsible not only for the advent of the kingdom, but also for the unleashing of nationality itself. Perhaps it is not necessary to insist on the great impact that the problem of collective identity had on the 19th-century political agenda,



Image 1 - Countess Theresa, flanked on the left by D. Bermudo Peres de Trava, and on the right by her daughter D. Urraca Henriques (Illumination of the Tombo of Mosteiro Gallego de Toxosoutos. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Códices, n.º 1002, fl.6v.º. Photo: Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid).

thanks to the rich and fertile ideological debate in which the first generations of liberals to which Herculano belonged were involved and who were absolutely committed to both a generous re-founding of Portugal and the revitalization of its secular identity. Greatly indebted to the scenario established by the great 19th-century historian, the truth is that it took time for research to initiate a process of revision and of overcoming interpretations that, thanks to the extraordinary fortune and longevity of the Herculanian edifice, had become frameworks considered to be “definitive”. All of this despite well-known reservations and criticisms that, while Herculano was still alive, arose even among his most ardent admirers. In this regard, Oliveira Martins (1845-1894) deserves special mention, for he did point out to the frequent interpretative partiality and the assessment of facts so often based on subjective prejudices and judgments too heavily influenced by the author’s political ideology¹.

In any event, the ongoing research work and critical editing of narrative and diplomatic sources, especially over the last fifty years, as well as the growing interaction with Spanish and other European historiographical production in general, have made it possible to broaden horizons and support new perspectives and paths of investigation. The collection of information that has been gathered makes the universe in which Countess Theresa moved more intelligible and her actions more comprehensible. But we should never forget that the much reduced and fragmentary set of data from the 11th and 12th centuries that have been preserved to this day makes an exhaustive and continuous reconstitution of successive historical conjunctures impossible. In spite of this quantitative and qualitative scarcity, it is worthwhile to try to reconstruct the political, military and ecclesiastical scenario that preceded and shaped the coming to power of the young Infante Afonso Henriques (1109-1185)² on June 24, 1128, and in which his mother claimed an extremely relevant role. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the strict sequencing of the essential facts will allow us to develop a credible narrative, always supported by documentary testimonies.

Infanta Theresa was the daughter of King Alfonso VI of León and Castile (1047/1048-1109)³ and Ximena Moniz, and was probably born circa 1079(-1130)⁴. On her father’s side, son of Ferdinand I the Great and Queen Sancha, the royal blood of León flowed in her veins and she had inherited a symbolic heritage dating back to the beginning of the Asturian monarchy. On her mother’s side, daughter of Count Mónio Moniz and his wife Velasquita, Theresa’s lineage was rooted in the high nobility of the Bierzo region of León. Given that the relationship between Alfonso VI and Ximena Moniz lasted from mid-1078 to early 1080 – i.e., between the death of the monarch’s first wife, Ines of Aquitaine (6 June 1078), and his second marriage to Constance of Burgundy (late 1079, early 1080) –, it is likely that for his contemporaries, and especially in the following centuries, the relationship between the monarch and Ximena already seemed naturally illegitimate. This fact was not decisive in Theresa’s life or in her sister Elvira Afonso’s life, but it must be acknowledged that it did condition the action of the Countess of Portucale, upon whom the sinful stain of bastardy was soon stamped.

Considering the data provided by the first two documents from Henry’s government (c. 1069-1112) at the head of the County of Portugal – the charters granted to the inhabitants of Guimarães ([1095-1096])⁵ and of Constantim de Panoias (1096)⁶ –, it seems plausible that between late 1095 and early 1096 the Burgundian knight had already married the Infanta of León. In fact, these two documents must be interpreted as the first fruits of Theresa’s public life with her consort. From this moment on, Theresa was part of the small group of people who materialized the political, military, and ecclesiastical reorganization that the conqueror of Toledo implemented in different territories of the kingdom.

1 An excellent critical appreciation of Alexandre Herculano’s historiographical work, focused on the volumes of his *História de Portugal*, can be found in the preface and critical notes distributed throughout the four volumes, which José Mattoso wrote specifically for a new edition of *História de Portugal*, published between 1980 and 1981. See: Herculano, 1980: volume I, VII-LII.

2 On the whole of Afonso Henriques’ reign, and in particular on the years during which he lived with his mother, see Mattoso, 2006.

3 Since there is already a vast wealth of literature on the reign of Alfonso VI of León and Castile, knowledge of which is indispensable to understand the time and government of Countess Theresa, we will only mention four studies that we consider to be fundamental: Reilly, 1988; Gamba, 1997; Mínguez, 2000; and Martínez Díez, 2003.

4 In all that directly regards Counts Theresa and Henry, the present article has relied above all on: Amaral, Barroca, 2020. Among several other studies to consult: Soares, 1989; and Amaral, 2007.

5 Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 1, 1-3.

6 Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 3, 4-6.

Alfonso VI, strongly conditioned by recent developments, which seriously endangered the ongoing process of centralization, and under pressure from the growing Almoravid threat from the south, did try out different configurations of regional planning in northwestern Spain, which resulted in the creation, between 1090 and 1091, of the vast County of Galicia, which stretched from the Cantabrian Sea to the Tagus Valley and was immediately entrusted to Count Raymond of Burgundy (c. 1070-1107), who had meanwhile married Infanta Urraca (c. 1080-1126)⁷, the legitimate daughter of King Alfonso VI and Queen Constance. However, once it was demonstrated that this solution was not viable, almost immediately after, Alfonso VI did not hesitate to separate the lands south of Minho to build a new political and administrative entity, this time under the authority of Henry and Theresa. As mentioned before, from this moment on Theresa would be definitely associated with the fate of the monarchy, and in particular with the monarchy of the Portucale region, which would no longer reestablish the strong political, religious, social, economic and cultural ties it had cultivated for centuries with the communities of Gallaecia beyond Minho.

The aforementioned charter documents the speed with which the Counts of Portucale converted the authority and powers entrusted to them into effective action by giving priority to the strengthening of important communities strategically located within their domain. We should bear in mind that both Theresa and Henry, as well as Urraca and Count Raymond of Burgundy, daughters and sons-in-law of the monarch, received greater authority from the monarch than the other counts and ruled territories of a size and resources that far surpassed any other comital circumscription. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that they were royal delegates with special powers. Almost in parallel, Henry's and Theresa's attention was also directed to the influential aristocracy of Entre-Douro-e-Minho, which was militarily very experienced in the frontier war waged against the Muslims and no less involved in the government of the lands. In this regard, the important and profuse decree of November 23, 1097⁸ is especially significant, because through which the counts donated to the prominent magnate Soeiro Mendes da Maia⁹ a vast estate to be established as a "coutada", located south of the river Ave, very close to the Benedictine community of Santo Tirso de Riba de Ave (a monastery located in the modern city of Santo Tirso, which is the county seat of the homonymous municipality). This is most probably the oldest known evidence of the establishment of a "coutada" land in the interior of the Portucale region. In other words, it is the concession to a private entity of a set of powers of public nature over a given territory that thereafter was immune from the administration of the royal representatives. It is worth remembering that Soeiro Mendes – a member of the powerful Maiata lineage, whose origins date back to the second half of the 10th century – was probably the richest, most powerful and prestigious of Portucale's lords in those times; furthermore, thanks to his marriage to Gontrode Moniz, sister of Ximena Moniz, he was also Theresa's uncle. Finally, we learn from the 1097 document that Paio Soares da Maia, son of Soeiro Mendes, was already serving as majordomo of the Burgundian count.

This close relationship readily developed with the great regional lords was accompanied by an identical commitment to the reconstruction of the ecclesiastical mesh of the County of Portugal, particularly the diocesan institutions. Of the five bishoprics within Henry and Teresa's dominions – Braga, Porto, Coimbra, Lamego and Viseu –, only the first and the third had been definitively restored, and only Coimbra had a prelate at that time, D. Crescónio (1092-1098), since Braga had been vacant for several years due to the departure of bishop D. Pedro (1071-1091).

These circumstances were compounded by the fact that in December 1095 the Papacy authorized the transfer of the diocese from Iria to Santiago de Compostela,

⁷ On Queen Urraca and her first husband, Count Raymond, two unavoidable figures in Countess Theresa's life, it should be consulted: Reilly, 1982; Ruiz Albi, 2003; and Pallares, Portela, 2006.

⁸ Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 4, 6-8.

⁹ On Soeiro Mendes da Maia, a central figure in the early stage of the County of Portugal, see: Amaral, 2007: especially 379-381, and the bibliography mentioned in endnote 72.

¹⁰ On this decisive event for the future ecclesiastical and political order in the peninsular Northwest, see: López Alsina, 1999.

officially recognizing in the respective bull the true apostolic dimension of the new location of the episcopal see¹⁰.

Neither Henry nor Theresa could ignore these events and the foreseeable consequences that would result in terms of the order and balance of religious powers in the Hispanic Northwest, especially in view of the growing tension between the Churches of Braga and of Iria/Santiago de Compostela. It was certainly also for this same reason that both went on pilgrimage to Compostela in late 1097. Once they arrived there on December 9th, accompanied by a significant retinue of Portucale's lords, they confirmed the Compostelan Dioceses regarding several assets that it held in the Minho territory, including the rich villa Corneliana (now the parish of São Tomé da Correlhã, in the Municipality of Ponte de Lima)¹¹. As there is a substantial probability that at that time the monarch of León and Castile and his court were staying in the city of the Apostle, it is not difficult to conclude that matters of political-ecclesiastical nature were also on the table.

In support of the above, it should be noted that it is almost certain that in the last months of 1097 the former monk had already been selected to occupy the vacant see of Braga¹². Now, Geraldo's appointment to Braga (1097/1099-1108) could only have taken place because he had the support of both Alfonso VI and the influential archbishop of Toledo, Bernardo de Sauvetat (1086-1124), whose power over the ecclesiastical structures of the monarchy of León and Castile was absolutely effective¹³ at that time.

In fact, the reestablishment of episcopal authority in Braga corresponded to broader objectives aimed at a comprehensive renewal of the political, military and ecclesiastical organization of the kingdom's westernmost territories – an “agenda” that benefited from the full commitment of the monarch and the Toledo Primate. Therefore, everything leads us to believe that Gerard certainly represented the ideal candidate to carry out the tasks of religious and lordly administration of the diocese and to implement in the region the new “Gregorian” guidelines propagated from Rome.

It is worth remembering and underlining the significance of the growing influence of the Papacy and the Burgundian abbey of Cluny in Hispanic affairs at that time. This clout was mostly conveyed via liturgical and monastic reforming initiatives that from the outset displayed a strong authoritarian streak. It is in this precise context that we should frame the constitution of the second “couto” granted by Henry and Theresa in March 1100. They granted the “French” monastery of Santa Maria da Caridade (La Charité-sur-Loire), under Cluny's tutelage, the small Cenobium of São Pedro de Rates (located in the current homonymous parish of the Municipality of Póvoa de Varzim), together with the tithes of bread, wine and linen and all the royal rights they enjoyed in the lands situated between the Douro and the Mondego rivers¹⁴.

These examples allow us to understand how much the success that occurred in the Portucale Land owed not only to the articulation of regional powers, but also to the kingdom's general situation. And we also understand how early in 1103 D. Geraldo managed to close the already long and complex process of full restoration of the ancient metropolitan dignity of the Church of Braga. But meanwhile he had to face the hard blow resulting from the famous “pious larceny” (November 1102) committed by the no less famous bishop of Santiago, D. Diogo Gelmires (1101-1140)¹⁵, and his acolytes, which resulted in the plundering of a precious set of relics of St. Frutuoso, St. Silvester, St. Cucufate and the virgin and martyr St. Susanna, all belonging to Braga¹⁶.

Similarly to Braga, the Church of Coimbra also benefited from the attention of Portucale's Counts, who soon after the death of Bishop D. Crescónio provided its see with a new prelate. The person elected, Mauricio – called Burdino, another old monk from the Toledo See –, was already in Coimbra at the beginning of 1099, and remained there until 1109, when he was transferred to the chair of Braga following the death of

11 Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 5, 9. Regarding the visit of the Counts of Portucale to the city of the Apostle, see: Szászdi León-Borja, Lacerda, 2010.

12 On the election of Geraldo to the chair of Braga and the importance of this event in the process of organizing the nascent County of Portugal, see: Costa, 1991; Amaral, 2007: in particular 382-410; and Amaral, 2011.

13 On the powerful and influential Archbishop D. Bernardo de Toledo and on the relevance of his action, see the still much useful and detailed study: Rivera Recio, 1962.

14 Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 6, 10-11.

15 On the life and work of the very important prelate of Compostela, D. Diogo Gelmires, see the excellent book: Portela, 2016.

16 The journey undertaken by D. Diogo Gelmires to the County of Portugal and the theft of the relics were the object of a detailed description expressly prepared to integrate the voluminous chronicle entitled *Historia Compostellana*, commissioned by the said prelate from 1107. The author of this excerpt was the Compostelan archdeacon Hugo, who personally witnessed the narrated facts, and who was later elected bishop of Oporto (1112/1114-1136). The original Latin text is published in: Falque Rey, 1988: 31-36. A recent translation into Portuguese can be found in: Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 305-311.

17 On the Braga episcopate of D. Mauricio, see: Amaral, 2007: in particular 419-447, 500-519. D. Mauricio's dazzling Roman career, which culminated with his election as pope (antipope) at St. Peter's Basilica on March 8, 1118, taking the name of Gregory VIII, has recently merited the attention of Francesco Renzi, which has resulted in a rigorous and detailed study: Renzi, 2021.

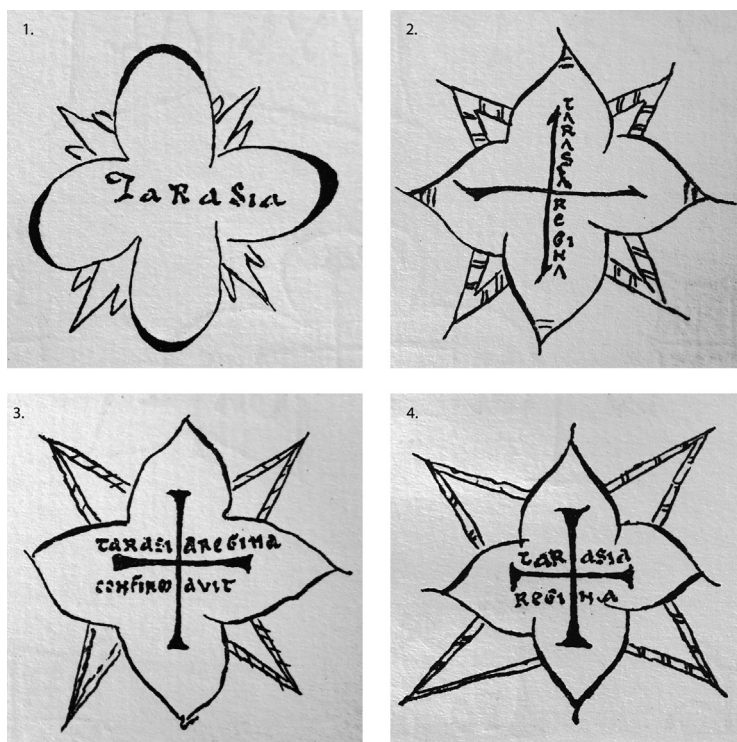


Image 2 - Some signs of sovereignty of Countess Theresa according to Rui Pinto de Azevedo (Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, tomo I, CXI. Photo: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal).

1. Doc. of March 5, 1119
2. Doc. of February 17th 1122
3. Doc. of December 2, 1125
4. Doc. of January 1st, 1126

D. Geraldo¹⁷. In all these events we easily recognize the great involvement that existed then between the Leonese and Castilian monarchy's main interests and political and ecclesiastical objectives and the governance parameters that Henry and Theresa wished to promote in the domains they had been granted. It is also possible to guess, from the perspective of the Burgundian count, the pleasure and profit that certainly resulted from having managed to place in the two main bishoprics of Portucale two of his "countrymen" and men who, in principle, would not deny him loyalty.

The facts and events that we have been pointing out and relating allow us to observe the contours of the government and the dynamics of the action that Portucale's new lords implemented in their domain. But this fundamentally descriptive analysis also sheds light on the universe in which Countess Theresa moved since she was married – i.e., the universe in which she did most of her political apprenticeship and began to take on the responsibilities that resulted from belonging to the royal family. In this context, it is very likely that her first tangible experience at the head of the county occurred in 1103, when her husband left with the firm intent of going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Jerusalem. Although today it is accepted that Count Henry did not manage to go beyond Rome, his voyage may have led the Infanta to assume full command of the lands south of Minho, even if only temporarily. In any event, after the death of Alfonso VI (July 1st, 1109), there remains no doubt that the almost permanent estrangement of the Burgundian count, increasingly active and involved in the disputed chess of the Leonese and Castilian crown's high politics, led his wife to be increasingly in charge of the government of Portucale's region.

Certainly nothing illustrates our interpretation more clearly than the long process

of establishing the “couto” of Braga’s See. This Church benefited more than any other religious institution, secular or regular, and the granting of the “couto” to the great diocese of Entre-Douro-e-Minho proved to be especially complex, largely due to the overlapping of interests and the close alliance that had been forged between the comital authority and the Braga prelates. On April 12, 1112, barely twelve days before Count Henry’s death in Astorga, the Counts of Portucale definitively established the “couto” of Braga, granting D. Maurício all the royal rights within the demarcated perimeter.¹⁸

With this document, a litigation that had been ongoing since at least 1109 was also closed. In fact, in this last year, the counts had already granted a “couto” to Braga¹⁹. However, in the following year, the donation was confirmed with a new diploma, which, curiously enough, did not transcribe the previously set limits of immunity, but rather established different ones, based on an potential primitive concession, of which no reliable account has survived.²⁰ Thus involved in multiple problems of diplomatic and paleographic nature, the truth is that the 1110 document has come down to us only through incomplete copies and bearing only the grant by Countess Theresa²¹. More relevant, however, is the fact that the text of the letter contains in its exordium brief but revealing news that unveil the reasons that led the Infanta to confirm the “couto” to Braga’s See:

“I, Theresa, the most humble servant of God’s servants, daughter of the Emperor of Toledo, to you, glorious Mother of God, Mary, perpetual ministry in Christ. Ancient and recent writings assert that the Church of Braga is the mother of the provincial sees and, therefore, should be honored the most. But the iniquitous enemy of the Holy Mother Church acted with jealousy, to the extent that my majordomos, with no respect for the sanctuary of God, having invaded the church and the cloister with weapons, almost ruined the estate of said Church of Braga. After Catholic men made me see how iniquitous and detestable the crime had been, I came to the happy conclusion that the lands and other properties that I enjoyed all around should be donated to said Church (...)” (Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 333).

By expressly stating that her majordomos had invaded Braga’s See buildings with weapons, causing great destruction and ruin, the 1110 diploma is thus a public confession and consequent assumption of responsibility by the Countess of Portucale, and also an attempt to compensate Braga for the serious damage caused to its estate. And it should be noted that the matter was not of minor importance, if we consider that, in the wake of modern research, the damage to the cathedral buildings was of such magnitude that not only interrupted for many years the works that were in progress, but also made it impossible to build the great temple planned at the time of Bishop D. Pedro²².

This imbroglio attests the first significant political intervention in which Countess Theresa acted autonomously at a time when Count Henry was absent from the County. Despite showing great determination, it nevertheless reveals what seems to be a certain lack of political tact with regard to the ever-delicate relations of power within the Portucale Land. The reasons for this whole problem should be sought in a wider context, i.e., in the gradual political and military antagonism within the Leonese and Castilian monarchy, greatly accelerated after the monarch’s demise and the rise of Urraca, already married to Alfonso I of Aragon (c. 1072/1073-1134)²³. The conflict in the Christian North of the peninsula led to numerous military confrontations and to a sort of intermittent “civil war” that lasted until the end of Urraca’s reign. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Counts of Portucale sought to restore as quickly as possible the sound understanding with Braga’s prelate, a fact duly evidenced by the 1112 diploma, especially since this proximity certainly seemed to be central to strengthen their political and territorial claims in the new situation that resulted from their sister’s rise to the throne.

Despite the gravity and violence of the aforementioned episode, we should

¹⁸ Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 30, 40-41.

¹⁹ Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 16, 21-22.

²⁰ Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 22, 28-29.

²¹ The complex issues and doubts raised by this diploma deserved an extensive and detailed critical note on the part of Rui Pinto de Azevedo: Azevedo,

²² This subject was widely studied by Manuel Luís Real in a rigorous and detailed study: Real, 1990.

²³ On Alfonso I of Aragon and his long reign, see: Lema Pueyo, 2008.

acknowledge that the Counts of Portucale sought from the outset a close relationship with local and regional powers, both aristocratic and religious. This deliberate conduct accelerated the consolidation of their authority and increased the wealth and influence of the great lineages of Entre-Douro-e-Minho, definitely contributing to the advancement of the manorial process, greatly favored also by the generous patrimonial legacies granted to the ecclesiastical institutions. But first for Count Henry and then for Countess Theresa, the good results achieved in governing the County also provided both with a solid base to nurture their political ambitions on the scale of the kingdom, especially after the demise of Alfonso VI: “In fact (...) the frequent interventions of the Count of Portucale in the affairs of the monarchy (...) owed much to the ‘secure rearguard’ upon which his power was predicated. It can therefore be said that, from a certain point of view, the County of Portugal was a kind of strategic – generally peaceful – “reserve” for Count Henry, to which he would return for brief periods to resolve some major conflicts and to reconstitute his forces” (Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 152).

The global interpretation of this environment also implies ascertaining the dynamism and the elements inherent in the development of feudal society within the kingdom of León and Castile – a process that was growing in the first half of the 12th century. And finally, it is necessary to consider the enormous consequences that resulted from military expansion, which is the main reason behind the frequent instability experienced in the border areas. If we combine these factors, both the political tension that worsened after the emperor’s death, the entrenchment of feudo-vassalic structures and the Reconquista war, we can better understand the succession of large-scale partitions of territories at the scale of the monarchy, and also clarify the reasons why they never effectively took place. This final topic of our analysis testifies fully both to the ambitions of Countess Theresa and her skills acquired in governing the County alongside her husband.

A document commonly known as the “Friendship Pact”, was signed between Queen Urraca and her sister Theresa,²⁴ critically dated between November 9 and December 23, 1110. Besides displaying different and very intricate problems of diplomatic and paleographic nature, since we only know of a copy devoid of the usual elements of this type of charters (invocation, intitulation, subscriptions, etc.), the strangest thing is that the diploma contains no reference to Count Henry. Indeed, it is difficult to interpret both the absence of the Count of Portucale in a matter of such importance and such increased authority from the Infanta, given that her husband was still alive. In any event, the most recent research tends to accept as true the matter that substantiates the pact²⁵. The importance of the document, a kind of “minute”, together with its unusual characteristics justify that we begin by transcribing its contents: “This is the oath and agreement that Queen Urraca establishes with her sister, Infanta Theresa: that she be friend to truth and without deceit, as from good sister to good sister, and that she cause not her death, nor imprisonment, nor advise anyone to do so and, should she have advised it, to take the decision to advise against it. And the Queen grants to her sister Zamora with its rights, Ejeme with its rights, Salamanca and the river of Tormes with their rights, Avila with its rights, Arévalo with its rights, Cuenca [de Campos?] with its rights, Olmedo with its rights, Portillo with its rights, Mamblas and Tudela [de Duero] and Medina de Zofraga with their rights, Toro with its rights and Torre with its rights, Medina [del Campo] and Posada with their rights, Sanábria and Ribera [?] and Valderas and Baroncello with their rights, Talavera and Coria with their rights, Simancas and Morales which are under the authority of Egas Gondesendes and Gueda Mendes and Count D. Mónio with Fernando Eanes and Ximeno Lopes, who, if they can appear, should appear and, if not, should cast lots, who should swear and those who swear should remain at their side. And so, that both this honor that the Queen grants to her sister and the other honor that she already

²⁴ Ruiz Albi, 2003: doc. 12, 374-376; see also the edition by: Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 31, 42. On the different problems presented by this document, namely the divergent dates given by different researchers, see the study cited by Irene Ruiz Albi (235, 263, 282, 295), as well as the bibliography mentioned in: Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 178, 179, 334.

²⁵ On this subject, see: Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 178-181, as well as the studies mentioned there.



Image 3 - Count Henry and Countess Theresa (17th century anonymous painting. Arquivo Distrital de Braga. Photo: Luís Machado and Arquivo Distrital de Braga).

26 See endnote 24.

27 A detailed analysis of this important document (Azevedo, 1958-1962: vol. I, volume I, doc. 2, 3-4) and its significant impact on historiographical debate demands more time and space than this article allows. On all that went into its making and its contents, see the classic work: Bishko, 1984. Also worth a close reading is the much more recent article: Estefânio, 2011. Finally, a Portuguese translation of the document can be found in: Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 331-332.

possesses help support and defend against the Moors and Christians by faith, without deceit, secure and populated as from good sister to good sister; and that she does not hinder her vassal with her honor or the perfidious who does not want to accept her direct authority. And if the Queen does not respect this oath, that from the day the Infanta asks her until forty days, if she does not want to deliver, that we be free and you be perjured, excepting what the Infanta should want to consider ahead” (Amaral, Barroca, 2020: 334-335)²⁶.

Using clearly feudal language, the diploma defines the terms of the concession of a vast territorial domain that includes notable lands and strongholds and respective rights to Countess Theresa. The great weight of the patrimony located in the southern region stands out, which seems to signal the will of the Queen of León and Castile to grant the Counts of Portucale an even greater role in the defense of the borderlands by providing them with the necessary resources. Was Queen Urraca trying with this expedient to partially free herself from the drain on human and material resources that the war against the Muslims had also become, in order to concentrate on the conflict that opposed her to her husband, the King of Aragon? It is very likely. But a positive answer to this question does not explain everything. As in the case of the well-known “Succession Pact” established a few years earlier (1105) between Count Raymond of Burgundy and Count Henry²⁷ – with which formal and even parallels of content are evident –, what seems to be really at stake is the possibility of a new repartition of the kingdom, made feasible in the wake of Alfonso VI’s demise and the inexistence of an unquestionable male heir. We therefore admit, with great probability, that the scenario that the “Pact of Friendship” tried to draft and materialize represents nothing but a conjecture imposed by the circumstances of a particularly critical moment, especially for Queen Urraca. The rapid and unpredictable evolution of events, due in large part to the somewhat erratic actions of several of the most

prominent political and ecclesiastical figures, soon foresaw the agreement's ephemeral nature, as well as the impossibility of its materialization on the ground. Once again, the similarities with what happened with the "Succession Pact" are obvious.

After considering and assessing all the document's technical problems and all the questions it raises, the idea still emerges that the Infanta of León and Countess of Portucale was determined, like her husband, to actively intervene in the political order of the monarchy. She seems to lack neither ambition, nor goals, nor the abilities we mentioned above. Therefore, the Infanta could not fail to take advantage of the opportunities that her father's death, and everything that soon followed, would certainly provide. The demise of the Conqueror of Toledo inevitably weakened his centralizing royal "project", and greatly displaced the resolution of the most important political and military problems and conflicts to the scope of regional powers mainly held by a warrior aristocracy subject to frequent recompositions. The effective reduction of the Crown's authority potentiated other scenarios and must have generalized among the powerful counts and other lords the idea that it was possible to reconfigure the political and territorial order of the great Leonese and Castilian monarchy. The Counts of Portucale could not but speak out and act in accordance with what they claimed to be their legitimate rights. Count Henry did so until his death on April 24, 1112, and Countess Theresa continued to do so after that date, and it did not take long to demonstrate that her apprenticeship was over and that a new phase, marked by her growing political protagonism, was beginning.

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