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*Project DEGRUPE: Goals and Historiographical Contextualization**



Abstract This paper aims to present the main axes of the project DEGRUPE whose principal objective is to study the role of the clergy in the construction of the Iberian monarchies and mobility circuits designed by these protagonists. To fulfill this objective, the interuniversity project team of DEGRUPE opted for a comparative perspective between different kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. The second part of this paper consists of a brief analysis of the underlying historiographical framework of the project including mainly research on relationship between clergy and royalty in the middle ages.

Keywords power elites, culture and politics, compared history, historiography

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Project goals

Project DEGRUPE – *A Dimensão Europeia de um grupo de Poder: o clero na construção política das Monarquias Peninsulares (secs. XIII–XV) / The European Dimension of a Group of Power: Ecclesiastics and the Political State Building of the Iberian Monarchies (13th–15th centuries)*, funded by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, started in June 2013 and brings together a large ensemble of Portuguese and Spanish institutions and researchers, linked to the study of the clergy and the relationship between Royalty and Church throughout the Middle Ages,¹ as well as a group of consultants from several European countries.²

In its first stage this project seeks to ponder the role and importance of the clergy,

especially of secular clergy, in the creation of space for mobility, and circulation of cultural and political models which can be extended to the whole European *christianitas*. Its second stage goes deeper and compares, at the level of case studies, the clergy's contributions to the construction of the Iberian monarchies: Portugal, Castile and Aragon.

The choice of the comparative approach derived from the need to establish, in concrete terms, the similarities and differences existing in a process that took place more or less simultaneously in the Iberian kingdoms, but also from the notion that ecclesiastical groups on which this analysis is based cannot be understood in terms of national boundaries, since they shared a wider space which encompassed the circuits of mobility defined by their individual trajectories.

Thus, any specific, unilateral choice of one kingdom, or of clergymen centred around one crown, would restrict our analysis, especially when we intended to produce in the first place a picture of the careers and trajectories which made these men worthy of note.

Bearing in mind how wide this subject is, we have defined some primary levels of research and reflection, resulting from a questionnaire which we deemed essential for a deeper understanding of the role and importance of the clergy in the establishment of Iberian monarchies.

The first level of questioning rests on the need to know the constitution of clerical universes linked to royal chapels of the kingdoms involved in our analysis and to the exertion of administrative functions either in the monarchs' circles or as being their representatives to the papal powers. To this end, it is essential to reconstruct these universes in individual terms. This will be achieved by resorting to documental sources and the information already collected from published studies.

Given the dimension of some documental funds – particularly those from the Catalonian

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¹ Members of the research team: Ana Jorge (Catholic University of Portugal); Armando Carvalho Homem and Cristina Cunha (University of Porto); Maria Helena Coelho (University of Coimbra), Maria Amélia Campos and Anísio Saraiva (fellowships – University of Coimbra); Hermenegildo Fernandes (University of Lisbon), André Leitão and Hugo Crespo (fellowships – University of Lisbon), Herminia Vasconcelos Vilar (University of Évora), Maria João Branco (New University of Lisbon); José Luis Martín Martín (University of Salamanca), Oscar Villarreal Gonzalez (University Complutense of Madrid), Flocel Sabaté (University of Lleida) and Nestor Vigill Montes (fellowship CIDEHUS – University of Évora), Tiago Viula (fellowship IEM – FCSH / Nem University of Lisbon).

² Project consultants: Peter Linehan (St. John's College – Cambridge University), José Manuel Nieto Soria (University Complutense of Madrid) and Thierry Pécout (University of Aix–Marseille).

kingdom – this reconstruction will be based on investigations limited by pre-defined criteria, instead of an exhaustive survey of all available data.

The proposed articulation between the world of chaplains and confessors of kings and the royal family and the group of those who held administrative positions in the king's circle is based, firstly, on the evident need to study the role and importance of the royal chapel and its members in the context of the Iberian kingdoms, despite the examinations already carried out. It is also based on our understanding that the chapel worked as a privileged spot for recruiting clergymen for positions both in the diocesan structure and in the administrative and political apparatus.

The second level of our analysis involves defining and demarcating the circles of European and Peninsular mobility of Portuguese and Castilian episcopal clergy, by considering their records of University training, the benefits they enjoyed in different places throughout Christendom, and the positions they occupied in the ecclesiastical or political structure.

Detailed knowledge of these circuits and of their range will provide us with a concrete notion of the importance of mobility in the construction of careers, as well as a better understanding of the circulation of information, knowledge and models of organization and construction of royal power, in which many of these clergymen played important roles.

To this end, it will also be important to understand the social and cultural profile of the clergymen connected to the political structure, as well as to grasp the trajectory typologies and the articulation between ecclesiastical and political careers from the 13th to the 15th centuries, using a perspective that compares different Iberian spaces.

Lastly, we seek to improve our knowledge of the clergy's forms of influence and intervention in the context of the formation of Iberian monarchies, in the chosen time frame.

To pursue these goals, we start from the notion of the clergy's importance as a major factor in the constitution and definition of Iberian monarchies on multiple levels: from the influence exerted at the juridical level which helped to build political legitimation, to the performance of duties in administration, external representation and spiritual support. We also assume the need to see this influence not only in the light of the local or national importance of these clergymen, but also considering their insertion in the networks that went beyond the kingdoms' political frontiers and extended, to varying depths, to other territories in Christendom. In this context, we will seek to assess the weight of these networks in defining itineraries and career models.

Likewise, we want to grasp the mechanisms and criteria of identification, and self-identification of the members in this group, and the ways in which such mechanisms reinforced the amplitude of international networks.

Achieving the goals referred above implies the consultation of ample and diverse documental resources – royal documentation above all, but also diocesan and incontestably, papal documentation as well.

This heuristic approach will pursue clear objectives, aiming to identify actors and to reconstruct careers. Its targets will be royal service and presence in political spaces, and also mobility, rather than reconstruction of diocesan or capitular clergy.

Historiographical contextualization

The study of the clergy's role in the construction of medieval European monarchies is not, in itself, an objective endowed with originality in its formulation.

Since the 1980s, if not earlier, the role of the Church in the formation of the Early Modern State – to adopt here the conception assumed and heralded at the time – has been

a field of study of key importance, especially as far as French historiography is concerned.

The proceedings of the symposium “État et Église dans la genèse de l’État Moderne”, published in 1986,³ are among the earliest examples of a course of investigation which would see a key moment when the European Science Foundation approved the project “Les Origines de l’État Moderne en Europe, XIII^e–XVIII^e siècle” under the direction of Wim Blockmans and Jean Philippe Genêt.⁴ This project originated an output of seven volumes, published, for the most part throughout the 1990s, which propounded reflections around seven themes, previously defined and assigned to different work groups.

As Wim Blockmans said, back in 1993, such a wide-ranging project had made it necessary to surpass three kinds of frontiers: the linguistic and national boundaries of our “quotation circles”, the limits set by period definition, and the boundaries separating disciplines.⁵ These objectives were identified, in simpler terms, in the introduction to the volume dedicated to the elites of power, by mentioning the innovative features of this programme: “il serait interdisciplinaire, il regrouperait des médiévistes et des spécialistes du début de la période moderne, et, évidemment, il serait international”.⁶

Hence, the option for an extended chronology and a range of subjects that (applied in all their chronological and geographical extension) have provided us with analytical frameworks to which many of us are still indebted.

But the renewal in political history, and particularly in the historiography of the state, which Wim Blockmans identified in 1993, had its roots in the contributions of sociology and social scientists to the reformulation of questions on the emergence and evolution of state

forms in the European context.⁷

The role of the Church and clergy in the construction of the state, although it did not receive specific attention, was present in several of the published volumes, most notably in the article « Le clergé dans l’État » by Hélène Millet included in the volume dealing with the elites of power.⁸ In that article different levels of participation were considered, deepening the reflections already present in earlier works, but now a synthesis of the different forms of this contribution could be created.

Hélène Millet was later appointed to be in charge of the ongoing project *Fasti Ecclesiae Gallicanae*, and of the long work of identifying and reconstructing the diocesan clergy of the French kingdom throughout the Middle Ages.⁹

Thus, the goal was not only to describe the levels of collaboration or presence of clergymen, but also to identify the intervening actors at the diocesan level, with their individual itineraries.

The same concern lay behind the *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* collected from 1962 onwards, by Diana Greenway and covering the period from 1066 to 1300, following the work already done by John Le Neve and continued by T. Duffus Hardy.¹⁰

The identification of actors proposed by these authors sought to articulate the level of individual identification with that of the institutions’ social constitution, calling for methodological renewal and the integration of prosopographical methods in the study of large groups of individuals.¹¹

⁷ Among others see study by Charles Tilly: TILLY 1975.

⁸ MILLET 1996.

⁹ See <http://fasti.univ-paris1.fr/> with the references to the volumes published, and G. Kiss’ article about the *Fasti Ecclesiae Gallicanae* in the present volume. – NDR.

¹⁰ LE NEVE – HARDY 1854.

¹¹ On the debate about prosopography in the 1980s see: MILLET 1985. and AUTRAND 1986. and after, as an example of the importance of the prosopography in some historiographical contexts: *Medieval Prosopography*.

³ GENÊT – VINCENT 1986.

⁴ At this level see the analysis made by Jean Paul Genêt about this project: GENÊT 1997.

⁵ BLOCKMANS 1993.

⁶ BLOCKMANS – GENÊT 1996. IX.

This methodological and conceptual renewal received fundamental contributions from sociologists and anthropologists, focusing both on the genesis and evolution of state realities and on the forms of organization of societies and communities. Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, Marcel Mauss and Michel Foucault are some of the authors¹² whose concepts helped renew and revise the questionnaire underlying analyses directed at pre-Ancien Régime societies.

Anglo-Saxon historiography had already a long tradition of production in this field. Names such as Walter Ulmann, Christopher Cheney and Robert Swanson, among others, produced some of the most important studies on the relationship between the English monarchy and the Church.¹³ Roger Bartlett, in the 1990s, offered a fresh reading of the construction of Europe in the Middle Ages, providing important clues for a review of the role and contributions of religion in the process of shaping a European medieval space.¹⁴ The works of Michael Clanchy,¹⁵ although focused on specific chronologies of political history, are also essential contributions about the presence of the church in defining English royalty.

The Anglo-saxon historiography have preserved for a long time the individual, biographical approach. Biographies of key ecclesiastical figures in royal circles, such as Thomas Beckett or Stephen Langton¹⁶ gave us knowledge of their individual trajectories, and simultaneously established connections to the construction of royal power and to the importance of the posts they held.¹⁷

In France as well, Bernard Guenée took up afresh biographical itineraries in his account of the lives of four prelates.¹⁸ Recently, Christine Barralis, Thierry Pécout and Pascal Montaubin are some of the names who have continued investigating the relations between the Church and monarchy and attempting the reconstruction of ecclesiastical elites.¹⁹

In the Iberian Peninsula, the role of the Church and the clergy in the formation of Iberian monarchies has been studied from a more generic point of view which discussed the evolution of political power, written by historians such as Ladero Quesada, or more specifically in works by Nieto Soria (e. g. his doctoral dissertation),²⁰ by Carlos Ayala²¹ and by Oscar Villarroel²² in the case of Castile.

Some partial studies on dioceses have provided deeper knowledge of the functioning of diocesan institutions, as well as (in some cases) of their social makeup.²³ However, institutional analysis has been clearly favoured, at the expense of an analysis of the ecclesiastical elites' constitution in a more global sense.

In this context, we have currently at our disposal solid studies on the episcopate of Leon far back in time,²⁴ on the Castilian epis-

¹⁸ GUENÉE 1987.

¹⁹ Many of these young historians were part of the Groupe de recherche européen "At the Foundations of the Modern State: the Legacy of the Medieval Clergy", a cooperation between numerous universities of Europe. Some of the contributions of these authors can be found in studies like DE CEVINS – MATZ 2010. and BARRALIS – BOUDET – DELIVRÉ – GENÈT 2014.

²⁰ LADERO QUESADA (1989); NIETO SORIA 1988, 1994.

²¹ AYALA MARTINEZ 2008.

²² VILLARROEL GONZALEZ 2006.

²³ The studies about Spanish dioceses in the Middle Ages are so great in number that they are impossible to be mentioned in one note. As examples of some recent studies see DIAZ IBANEZ 2003; LOP OTIN 2002 and their bibliography. However, there are studies for many dioceses like Santiago de Compostela, Córdoba, amongst others.

²⁴ FLETCHER 1978. For the kingdom of Leon see FERNANDEZ CATÓN 1969–2004, specially the study of José Sanchez Herrero (SANCHEZ HERRERO 1978), even if this work is namely about diocesan organization.

¹² ELIAS 1989–1990; ELIAS 1995; BOURDIEU 2010, 2011; MAUSS 1988; FOUCAULT 2010; FOUCAULT 2011

¹³ ULMANN 1978; CHENEY 1941, 1956; SWANSON 1989; WRIGHT 1980.

¹⁴ BARTLETT 1993.

¹⁵ CLANCHY 1993, 1998.

¹⁶ CHENEY 1967 and CHENEY 1956. For more recent examinations see: HERNANDEZ – LINEHAN 2004.

¹⁷ Some new perspectives and analysis can be found in HARVEY 2014; BURGER 2012; GEMMILL 2013.

copate from the 13th to the 15th centuries and a considerable number of small studies about certain bishops.²⁵

In Portugal, the panorama is not much different. Recent syntheses on Portuguese historiography from 1950 on²⁶ demonstrate some of the deficiencies in these areas.

The project *Fasti Ecclesiae Portugaliae (1071–1325)*, developed from 2002 to 2006 at Universidade Católica Portuguesa, supported by a team from several universities, sought to attain in connection with the Portuguese dioceses some of the goals established by the *Fasti* projects mentioned before, however, taking into account the characteristics of production and the scarcity of published sources available at the time. This process yielded a database which will be hopefully made available to the public in the near future.²⁷

The presentation of this project had at its root the development of studies on dioceses and the clergy throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In conclusion, Portuguese historiography in the second half of the 20th century, on the Church's role in the structuring of Portuguese royalty and the organization of the national space, had forerunners such as Erdmann,²⁸ and was later continued by focusing primarily on the political component of that process – as is the case with the studies by José Mattoso²⁹ and Armando Carvalho Homem.³⁰

In parallel, the study of dioceses progressed from the 1970s onwards – with a debt to the doctoral theses presented by Avelino de Jesus da Costa and José Marques, on the archdiocese of Braga³¹ – with the publication

of studies on the dioceses of Évora, Lamego, Coimbra and Porto.³² There was also progress in individual studies focusing on bishops and canons – some of them were collected in the books which resulted from the reflection carried out in the context of the project mentioned above,³³ while others were scattered in journals and as book chapters.

In these last decades, some dissertation theses took up anew the construction of royalty in the 12th and 13th centuries; in the thesis by Maria João Branco,³⁴ or the relations between state and Church in the 15th century present in the study by Margarida Garcez,³⁵ as well as the relations between royalty and episcopate.³⁶

The development of studies on Portuguese clergy and its social background concurs with the reflection on its role in the construction of royalty, and this project is the outcome of that concurrence.

In the background lies a mature reflection on the processes of institutional organization, and the demand to know and rethink the space of political construction in a comparative, geographically expanded perspective – not only in terms of political boundaries, but also considering the mobility of its elites, in which clergy plays a crucial role when we seek to study the construction of royalty and the Iberian political spaces in the medieval context.

In conclusion, this text it is not a state of art, but only a way of presenting some of the contributions behind the project DEGRUPE. Many others stay unmentioned in the notes, but present in the reflections during construction of this project.

All the projects are, in some ways, sons of their times. And this one is no exception. It is another attempt to understand cultural, religious and social mobility in a time where political boundaries where yet in construction. *

²⁵ See the works of Nieto Soria already mentioned whose works are central contributions to the knowledge of social background and political influence of these men.

²⁶ VILAR – ROSA 2011. See bibliography mentioned in the paper namely other state of the art made in the previous years.

²⁷ JORGE – HENRIQUES – LOPES – RODRIGUES – VILAR 2004.

²⁸ ERDMANN 1935.

²⁹ MATTOSO 1985.

³⁰ HOMEM 1990.

³¹ COSTA 1959 and MARQUES 1988.

³² See note 26.

³³ IGREJA 2005 and CARREIRAS 2007.

³⁴ BRANCO 2000.

³⁵ VENTURA 1997.

³⁶ HOMEM 1998 and VILAR 2001.

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