

Death at Court

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Lineage and Territory: Royal Burial Sites in the Early Portuguese Kingdom

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Introduction

On 31 December 1324, King Denis of Portugal made his third and final testament. This came near the end of his life, which ended shortly thereafter on 7 January 1325, making his 46-year reign one of the longest hitherto on the Iberian Peninsula.¹ It followed the difficult period from 1319 to 1324 marked by civil war with his son and heir, Prince Alphonse, whom he nevertheless entrusted with the execution of his will; Denis also appointed Alphonse as his successor and bequeathed him a large part of his moveable estate.² Indeed, in previous years the king had discussed with the *infante* the question of who was entitled to rule the kingdom, the right of succession (which his son thought he may be losing), and Denis's own legitimacy of exercising power right up to his death. Nobles and ecclesiasts positioned themselves in either camp, leading to a series of battles and attacks which marked this period of civil strife.

During these years of struggle, the king drew up a manifesto blaming Alphonse for various outrages and attacks against his supporters.³ However, when he composed his final testament on the last day of 1324, the succession of Alphonse seemed assured, in apparent contrast with the perception of the *infante* in previous years. To some extent, at the hour of death, Denis tried to solve the problems that caused the civil war by correcting "things associated with many people and many places for destroying my castles when there was discord between me and the *infante*, my son, Dom Alphonse".⁴ The image constructed in the document is that of a Christian ruler preparing for meeting his maker, making arrangements for the disposal of his worldly goods and seeking to resolve unfinished businesses. Hence the large number of donations to be given to the cathedrals and many religious houses of the kingdom, as well as the numerous pious acts, including donations to lepers, the construction of bridges, and money for the release of prisoners mentioned in the testament;

1 The testaments of this king can be found in Francisco Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, vol. 5 (Lisbon 1976), 329–31; *ibidem*, vol. 6 (repr. Lisbon 1980), 582–9; and D. António Caetano de Sousa, *Provas de História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa* (Coimbra 1946), 125–32. Several works have been published on the monarch and his reign; for the most recent outline see the biography by José Augusto Pizarro, *D. Dinis* (Lisbon 2005).

2 On the civil war see José Mattoso, 'A Guerra civil de 1319–1324', in *Obras Completas*, 12 vols. (Lisbon 2001), viii 217–27.

3 Fernando Félix Lopes, 'O primeiro manifesto de D. Dinis contra o infante D. Afonso seu filho e herdeiro', *Itinerarium: Colectânea de Estudos* 13 (1967), 17–45.

4 Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, vi 582–9.

these measures, enacted in a spirit of mercy, began to be regarded as being increasingly out of line with the predominant image of piety at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

At the beginning of this long and detailed document, King Denis specified the place designated for his burial, the Cistercian convent of St Denis of Odivelas, on the outskirts of Lisbon. It was a royal foundation, donated to the Cistercians by the king in the late thirteenth century, as indicated by the letter of recognition written in 1295 by the bishop of Lisbon, João Martins de Soalhães.⁵ The king expressed the wish that his mortal remains should be interred in a tomb located between choir and chancel, which may already have been built at this time. After he had designated this convent as his burial place, he endowed it with a large sum of money and an array of religious artifacts, as well as a number of buildings, most of which to be handed over to the chapel founded in honor of St Louis. In principle, there was little or nothing new in these arrangements. The designation of a burial site, a large donation to the respective institution, the foundation of a chapel in exchange for prayers to be said for the soul of the deceased king and members of his family—all these features were common provisions in royal wills, and even those of non-royals contained similar provisions.

However, there are several differences between this will and those of previous monarchs. First, Denis was the first Portuguese king to specify the exact place of his tomb within a church, stipulating that it should be situated between the choir and chancel so that it was visible to all the nuns and the faithful using the building. Hitherto, all his royal ancestors had sought locations outside of the main church for their burial sites, or at the entrances to religious buildings as in the case of the monastery of Alcobaça, chosen by Alphonse II and Alphonse III.⁶ Denis himself, in a will written some years earlier, in 1299, had designated the monastery of Alcobaça as his burial place, specifying the exact location as the “place of the high altar of St. Mary”.⁷ Additionally, the location of Denis’s tomb, in St Denis, in a place used by many people rather than in a side chapel or a less prominent place in the convent led to it being fully decorated on all four sides in an unprecedented way and crowned with the effigy of the recumbent king.⁸ After the tomb of Urraca of Castile, wife of Alphonse II, at Alcobaça monastery, this is thus one of the first tombs of the Portuguese royal family to bear such decoration.⁹ This reflects the king’s desire for personal affirmation, which can also be found in other aspects of the ceremonial with which Denis wanted to mark and display his death. In this context, the choice of St Denis as his place of burial appears highly significant. The designation of a convent on the outskirts of Lisbon also broke with the practice of his predecessors, his father and grandfather, who had chosen the Cistercian monastery of Alcobaça as their final resting place, which also housed the remains of other members of the royal family, including their wives and some *infantes*.¹⁰ It also indicates a change of mind, as Denis’s intentions had been different at the beginning of his reign.

5 Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, vi anex 145–9.

6 Carla Varela Fernandes, *Poder e Representação. Iconologia da Família real portuguesa. Primeira Dinastia. Séculos XII a XV*, 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Lisbon 2004), i 292–3, 296–7.

7 Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, v 329.

8 For this tomb see Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, ii 866–73.

9 For the discussion about this tomb see also Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, ii 850–66.

10 José Custódio Vieira da Silva, *O Panteão Régio do Mosteiro de Alcobaça* (Lisbon 2003).

It may be argued that the basis of the first document, twenty years after its question being reiterated at the beginning of his reign, rather than his father and grandfather, was Alcobaça.

The reasons for this may be the fact that the choice was dictated by the apparent desire of the monarch himself. Denis had been bishop of France, but the cult of a French connection as bishop of Toulouse was not strong.

In fact, Denis’s choice was the result of numerous factors, including the standing of the convent and its royal burial place.

From Alphonse Henri to Alphonse III

Both Alphonse Henri and Alphonse III were in the famous monastery of Alcobaça, the first Portuguese king to be buried there.

Presented to the king as a relic of the Holy Cross was to be a symbol of ideology and legitimization, a way of honoring and protecting the monarchy and the patronage of Alphonse II and his privileges, the Holy Spirit of Coimbra, the royal family, to serve as the political symbol. Sancho I recruited the king, the choice of the monarchy, two Portuguese kings, and Constança Sancho.

- 11 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, also Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar, *de S. Dinis de Odivelas e Portugal*, 2 vols. (Lisbon 2004).
- 12 Armando Alberto de Oliveira, 141–3.
- 13 Martins, *O Mosteiro de Alcobaça*, 141–3.
- 14 José Mattoso, *D. Afonso III*, 141–3.
- 15 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, ii 866–73.

It may be argued that he decided for St Denis as his burial site as early as 1318,¹¹ on the basis of the first document referring to the foundation of a chapel in the convent, more than twenty years after it had been founded. But only in the will of 1322, with the passage in question being reiterated in the will of 1324, became his choice explicit. Initially, at the beginning of his reign in 1299, he had, on the other hand, followed the example of his father and grandfather by expressing his intention to be buried in the famous monastery of Alcobaça.

The reasons for this change of opinion are unclear to this day. The political significance of the fact that the convent chosen was a foundation of the king himself is further accentuated by the apparent novelty of the patron saint of this convent bearing the same name as the monarch himself, which is unique in the context of the early Portuguese monarchy. St Denis had been bishop of Paris and had been regarded as the patron saint of the kingdom of France, but the cult of St Denis was hitherto little known in Portugal. A further indication of a French connection is apparent in the foundation of a chapel in honor of St Louis, the bishop of Toulouse who had recently died.

In fact, Denis's choice of St Denis of Odivelas appears to be the result of a combination of numerous factors. These we shall examine in detail in order to provide for an understanding of the correlation between the political development of the first Portuguese dynasty and its royal burial sites.

From Alphonse Henriques to Alphonse III: Coimbra and its surroundings

Both Alphonse Henriques (1128–1185) and his son Sancho (1185–1211) chose to be buried in the famous monastery of the Holy Cross of Coimbra, founded under the protection of the first Portuguese king in the early twelfth century.

Presented to the regular canons in the first years of its foundation,¹² the monastery of the Holy Cross was to become, under the first monarchs, the intellectual centre behind the ideology and legitimacy of the emerging Portuguese royal dynasty in return for royal patronage and protection. Founded by St Telo, St Theotoni, and João Peculiar¹³ under the patronage of Alphonse Henriques, who, right from its foundation, endowed it with goods and privileges, the Holy Cross monastery took advantage from the key political importance of Coimbra, the royal city since Alphonse Henriques moved there in 1131.¹⁴ Coimbra was to serve as the political centre of the emerging kingdom and both Alphonse Henriques and Sancho I recruited diplomats and found supporters from among its elites. In this context, the choice of the monastery of the Holy Cross as the first royal mausoleum, where the first two Portuguese kings, queens like Mafalda and Dulce, as well as some infants like Branca and Constança Sanches were buried,¹⁵ is hardly surprising. This monastery was the first

11 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *S. Dinis de Odivelas*, L^o 3, 165r–171r and L^o 30, 9v–13r. See also Hermínia Vasconcelos Vilar and Maria João Branco Marques da Silva, 'A Fundação do mosteiro de S. Dinis de Odivelas', in *Actas Congresso Internacional sobre san Bernardo e o Cister en Galicia e Portugal*, 2 vols. (Ourense 1992), 589–601.

12 Armando Alberto Martins, *O Mosteiro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra na Idade Média* (Lisbon 2003), 141–3.

13 Martins, *O Mosteiro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra*, 190–8.

14 José Mattoso, *D. Afonso Henriques* (Lisbon 2006), 75–9.

15 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, i 292–3.

place to be identified with the royal dynasty, which strengthened the widely-recognized influence and reputation of the monastery and the city of Coimbra in the royal circles of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. But this situation changed during the following reign, that of Alphonse II (1211–1223). In early April of 1211, at the beginning of his reign, Alphonse issued one of the first known official documents, sent to the abbot of Alcobaça, confirming the donation of the Alcobaça estate made by Alphonse Henriques to the abbot of Clairvaux.¹⁶ In July of the same year, he confirmed all the privileges granted by his predecessors to the monastery of the Holy Cross, with explicit reference to the fact that the monastery was the burial place of his father, mother, grandfather, and brother.¹⁷ But no mention is made there to the extent that this monastery would also serve as the final resting place of his remains. In fact, the first reference to the designation of his burial place can be found in the will of his wife Urraca of June 1214, which states that the monastery of Alcobaça was to house the remains of the royal couple. Only a few days later, the king, for his part, wrote in his first will that he wanted to be buried in the monastery of Alcobaça; the monastery of the Holy Cross, on the other hand, was to be commemorated as a special place, to receive special favour by royal donations. The difference in Alphonse's attitude towards these two religious houses therefore seems to lie only in his choice of a new burial site, evident from 1214 both in Urraca's and Alphonse's wills of this year,¹⁸ but no explanation is given for this change of traditional practice.

According to Armando Martins, the first seventy years of the monastery of the Holy Cross can be described as golden decades, but it fell into a crisis during the incumbency of Prior João César (1205–1212 and 1219–1228). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Alphonse's rather distant attitude towards the Holy Cross monastery may have been related to these circumstances, which coincided with the turbulent final years of the reign of Sancho I, in which the monarch failed to support the convent,¹⁹ and a considerable period of the reign of Alphonse II.

However, there may have been other reasons for this change in allegiance. Although this question has been extensively studied and discussed, it should be remembered that the quarrel between Alphonse and his sisters, the *infantas*, in the early years of his reign (1211–1214) proved to be a real test for the king and his kingship, as he stood on the verge of military defeat and with this was in danger of losing the kingdom altogether. The beginning of this conflict was marked by the donations given by Sancho I to his daughters; these were disputed by Alphonse II, arguing that his father was not sane at the moment of death, i.e. the time when the donations were made. Militarily weakened by the struggle against Alphonse IX of Leon and his own brother Peter, and relatively isolated, as many nobles either wavered or declared their support for the princesses, Alphonse was left with no choice but

to appeal to some external forces, paid by Urraca, was responsible for the victory of Navas of 1213.²⁰

The pope's support in the view of Alphonse II had approved the inclusion of the donation of the monastery of the Holy Cross, unconsciously, coming at this time, must have been in the struggle against the king, who was preparing for a new peace established by the pope. On the other hand, it must not be called into question the Alphonse IX of Leon and his sister Sancha a conflict; at the same time, he was disposed to her to Alphonse II in the institution of these appointments of Sancho's will was due to his rejection of the appointments, replacing, as two Cistercians: the in office Innocent III, the appointment of just as the regular canonical policy in other century). However, the putable changes to his sisters at that time, only as late as early

When on 15 April 1214, to find Cistercians, bias in favor of Alphonse came the royal ma-

16 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *Mosteiro de Alcobaça, Documentos Régios*, mc 1, n° 10.

17 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *Núcleo Antigo-Registo de Afonso II*, fl. 67r.

18 For the will of D. Urraca see Caetano de Sousa, *Provas da História Genealógica*, vol. 1 (repr. Coimbra 2002), 47–9. For the first will of Alphonse II see Avelino de Jesus da Costa, 'Os mais antigos documentos escritos em português. Revisão de um problema histórico-linguístico', in idem, *Estudos de cronologia, diplomática, paleografia e histórico-linguísticos* (Porto 1992), 221–35; Maria Teresa Veloso, *D. Afonso II. Relações de Portugal com a Santa Sé durante o seu reinado* (Coimbra 2000), 277–9; and Hermínia Vilar, *D. Afonso II* (Lisbon 2005), 57–64.

19 Martins, *O mosteiro de Santa Cruz*, 318–30.

20 Vilar, *D. Afonso II*, 121–2. The detention of the king by the specially Martin of Astorga were caused by the relation with the king (1999), i 357–41.

to appeal to some of the people who had supported him at the time of his succession and to external forces, particularly those of Castile. Alphonse VIII of Castile, the father of Queen Urraca, was responsible for one of the agreements which, in November 1212, following the victory of Navas de Tolosa, brought some internal peace and Peter went to Morocco in 1213.²⁰

The pope's support arrived late and when it did it was somewhat contradictory in the view of Alphonse of Portugal's supporters and representatives. In May 1211 Pope Innocent III had approved the provisions of the will of Sancho I shortly after the latter's death, including the donations to the *infantas*; by then siding with Alphonse, he, consciously or unconsciously, confused a situation which was already complicated. It is true that the pope, at this time, must have been more concerned with ensuring the unity of the Peninsula kings in the struggle against the Muslims under the leadership of Alphonse VIII of Castile (who was preparing for such a war), than with the jurisdictional disputes that unsettled the fragile peace established between the successors of the Portuguese king in December 1210. On the other hand, it must have been a routine procedure for him to accept a will that the law had not called into question. Thus, the *infanta* Teresa, who had recently separated from Alphonse IX of Leon, found no difficulty in obtaining a bull providing protection for herself, her sister Sancha and their property in October 1211, just before the start of the armed conflict; at the same time, she arranged the appointment of a group of apostolic judges well disposed to her to execute the will of Sancho.²¹ It is no wonder that the representatives of Alphonse II in Rome intervened, even before the bull of 1211. They pleaded for the substitution of these apostolic judges, especially since a formal papal approval of the provisions of Sancho's will would inevitably lead to the excommunication of the Portuguese monarch due to his rejection of the donations. Indeed, Innocent III proved sensitive to these arguments, replacing, around August 1212, the questionable members of the secular clergy with two Cistercians: the abbots of the monasteries of Oseira and Espina. In fact, during his time in office Innocent turned to Cistercian monasteries in Portugal, Castile, and Leon for the appointment of judges in particular cases, as they proved to be much less interventionist than the regular canons as papal representatives (this is, it will be noted, in contrast with papal policy in other Christian countries, as in England up to the middle of the thirteenth century). However, the intervention of these two Cistercians would bring broad and indisputable changes to the balance of power which had been established between Alphonse and his sisters at that time, although the excommunication of the king was formally annulled only as late as early 1214, when the worst of the civil war was already over.²²

When on 15 and 27 June 1214 Urraca and Alphonse, respectively, drew up their wills, to find Cistercians (a prior, a priest, and a monk) in the company of the queen, and the clear bias in favor of Alcobaça in these wills, come as no surprise. From then on, Alcobaça became the royal mausoleum and Alphonse no longer considered the possibility of his body

20 Vilar, *D. Afonso II*, 97–113 and Maria Teresa Veloso, 'A questão entre Afonso II e suas irmãs sobre a detenção dos direitos senhoriais', *Revista Portuguesa de História* 18 (1980), 197–220.

21 Specially Martinho, bishop of Zamora, but also Pedro Munhoz of Compostela and Pedro Andrés of Astorga were considered as supporters of King Alphonse IX of Leon.

22 Maria João Branco, *Poder real e eclesiásticos. A evolução do conceito de soberania régia e a sua relação com a praxis política de Sancho I e Afonso II*, 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Lisbon 1999), i 357–417.

being buried elsewhere, even if he were to die abroad. The choice of Alcobaça was not a matter of minor importance. In fact, although the source evidence is not explicit on this point, it is reasonable to assume that the principal religious institutions contested the housing of the remains of the king and his family.²³ Claiming the royal tombs implied not only that the religious house in question would receive a broad array of movable and immovable goods in return for memorial services, but also an increase in its more general importance and possibly also an extension of its area of influence.

It is in this context that Alphonse II decided to bequeath to Alcobaça monastery one of the largest amounts of money mentioned in his will and he also provided for annual donations, just as in the case of the monasteries of St George and St Vincent of Lisbon (the latter also being a convent of regular canons), Rocamador, Santiago de Compostela, and the cathedral of Idanha. This pattern of donations was repeated in his will of 1218 and in that of 1221, with the convent of Santo Tirso and Tarouca being added as places of memorial service.²⁴ Still, by 1214, Alcobaça had unquestionably become the royal burial site and remained so until the reign of Denis. Those who were buried there included Alphonse II and his wife Urraca (the daughter of Alphonse VIII of Castile), Alphonse III and Queen Beatrice, and many *infantes* and *infantas* such as Denis's sister Sancha and his grandson Denis. Meanwhile, the monastery of the Holy Cross was honored because of it being the burial site of the first two Portuguese kings.

For a king whose legitimacy was based on inheritance and his capability of organizing and ruling the kingdom rather than military success, as had been recognized in the papal bull *Manifestis Probatum Est* of 1218,²⁵ the change of burial site may constitute another important aspect in the process of legitimizing his rule, for which he now tried to establish a new basis.

Of course, the success of the Cistercian order is closely related to all this change. Like Alphonse II, his sisters chose Cistercian monasteries as their burial places: Teresa and Sancha opted for the monastery of Lorvão while Mafalda chose Arouca, where she had spent the final years of her life.²⁶ But the strategically close relationship between the Portuguese royalty and the Cistercians in a crucial period during the reign of Alphonse II is also important. At the same time, it is also significant that the choice of Alcobaça represents, in terms of geography, a move to the south, as Coimbra and the power base of Alphonse's sisters, the *infantas*, which centered on Montemor-o-Velho, were gradually abandoned. In fact, when some years later, in 1220, Alphonse II mentioned, in a document which has not yet been examined in detail, that he would welcome it, if the monastery of the Holy Cross monastery would adopt the Cistercian order, this suggests that he was not only keen to

establish a new burial site generally.²⁷

It was also Alphonse II and his wife's burial site, not only represented by the throne by some royal act (1245), an act supposedly of his legitimate burial for Alphonse to witness the same time. The king's wish to accomplish by design, whose succession his burial the same context in his will, ancestors and of his sons to be buried several of their children of cloisters.³⁰

Several years later, at Alcobaça. Exile, setting out his last wish on whether or not to be buried and makes donations for the succession of his mother at Alcobaça. The king remained to be buried at Alcobaça, his successor by resting in memory of his brother; this he wished.

Notwithstanding, his body returned to the monastery, been brought back to the place he had been exiled.³³

23 Michael Evans, *The death of kings. Royal death in Medieval England* (London 2007), 25–6.

24 Teresa Veloso, *Afonso II. Relações de Portugal com a Santa Sé durante o seu reinado* (Coimbra 2000), 280–4.

25 Maria João Branco, *Poder real e eclesiásticos*, i 458–62.

26 Maria Alegria Marques, 'Evolução do monaquismo feminino até ao século XIII na região do Entre Douro e Tejo: notas para uma investigação', in eadem, *Estudos sobre a Ordem de Cister em Portugal* (Lisbon 1998), 9–28.

27 Arquivo Nacional, *Domingues de Gusmão*.

28 Hermenegildo, *II e suas irmãs*.

29 Caetano de Sousa, *Os Reis de Portugal*.

30 Ibidem.

31 Ibidem, 61–4.

32 Fernandes, *Portugal*.

33 Fernandes, *D. João I*.

establish a new burial site but also to promote the Cistercians, his loyal supporters, more generally.²⁷

It was also Alcobaça which Alphonse III (1245–1279), Alphonse II's son, chose for his and his wife's burial. In fact, for Alphonse III, continuity in the choice of burial site not only represented acceptance of the policies and practices of his father's reign, but it was also a statement of legitimacy necessary for his succession. Alphonse was placed on the throne by some nobles and ecclesiastics in a coup against his brother Sancho II (1223–1245), an act supported by a papal bull in which Innocent IV had authorized the deposition of his legitimate brother on the grounds that he was a *rex inutilis*,²⁸ which made it possible for Alphonse to wage war in his kingdom and to fulfill his duty of protecting his people at the same time. Thus, Alphonse III was in need of legitimization, and this he hoped to accomplish by designating for his burial the same place as his ancestors and predecessors in whose succession he wanted to be perceived and whose title he claimed. By choosing for his burial the same convent as his father and mother, who are explicitly mentioned in this context in his will of 1271, Alphonse III tried to establish a sense of continuity with his ancestors and of legitimacy to be Portuguese king.²⁹ These are the reasons for his provisions to be buried at the monastery of Alcobaça, along with his wife Queen Beatrice and several of their children and siblings, and to donate money to the institution for the foundation of cloisters.³⁰

Several years earlier, in 1248, Alphonse's deposed brother Sancho wanted to be buried at Alcobaça. Exiled in Toledo following the civil war of 1245–1247, he drew up two wills setting out his last wishes. In one of these, he argues that the fate of the kingdom depended on whether or not he produces legitimate heirs, he chooses Alcobaça as his place of burial and makes donations. In the other testament, possibly composed later and without any provision for the succession, he explicitly states his desire to be buried beside his father and mother at Alcobaça.³¹ However, this was not to happen; when he died, the body of the former king remained in exile, and with this his memory.³² By taking provisions for his body to be buried at Alcobaça, Alphonse III wanted not only to present himself as the legitimate successor by resting among other members of the royal lineage, but also to cross out the memory of his brother's reign and with this to construct a continuity between himself and his father; this he achieved in a number of different ways.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the will of Sancho II expressing his desire to have his body returned to Portugal after death to be buried in Alcobaça, Sancho's corpse has never been brought back to Portugal and remained buried at the cathedral of Toledo where he had been exiled.³³

27 Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *Forais Antigos*, mç 12, nº 3, 42v, published by António Domingues de Sousa Costa, *Mestre Silvestre e Mestre Vicente, juristas da contenda entre D. Afonso II e suas irmãs* (Braga 1963), 90–1.

28 Hermenegildo Fernandes, *D. Sancho II. Tragédia* (Lisbon 2006), 260–2.

29 Caetano de Sousa, *Provas Genealógicas*, 69–73.

30 Ibidem.

31 Ibidem, 61–4.

32 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, i 298–9.

33 Fernandes, *D. Sancho II*, 22.

The remains of Alphonse III, on the other hand, were not immediately accepted for burial in Alcobaça; like his father before him, whose body was buried there only about ten years after his death due to disputes with the church, the remains of Alphonse III were also only transferred later to this Cistercian monastery after a period of first burial in St Dominic of Lisbon.³⁴ Eventually, however, they were exhumed and brought to Alcobaça, ensuring a degree of continuity in burial practices for three reigns.

Roughly a century after Alphonse II had chosen Alcobaça as the new burial place for Portuguese kings, Denis once again introduced changes. In January 1325 the body of Denis was transferred to Odivelas, near Lisbon, with this abandoning Alcobaça as the royal mausoleum. This was the third time that the Portuguese kings had chosen a new burial site, but unlike on previous occasions, this time Denis's example was not followed by a significant number of his relatives, not even by his wife. St Denis would become his individual pantheon but not that of his family, let alone his lineage.

St Denis of Odivelas, the royal convent

In April 1299, King Denis, who had acceded to the throne twenty years earlier, expressed the wish to be buried at Alcobaça beside the main altar; there, he had built a tomb for himself and Queen Elisabeth, which obviously coincided with a generous donation of property and of a large sum of money to the monastery. Four years earlier, he had founded the convent of St Denis of Odivelas following a miracle, described in the *Monarquia Lusitana*, according to which he had been saved from the clutches of a bear.³⁵ Still, in 1299 he had not yet chosen this institution as his burial place. He only assigned money to that convent for buying property, with this circumventing the very laws of *desamortização*, which he himself had enacted some years earlier.

The reasons that led Denis to found a Cistercian convent near Lisbon at the end of the thirteenth century are outlined by the bishop of Lisbon, João Martins de Soalhães, a cleric close to the king.³⁶ He argues, in a rather lengthy document of recognition of the foundation of the monastery, that the king, because he was a most virtuous and faithful Christian, decided to found this new monastery whose female community was placed under the jurisdiction of the abbot of Alcobaça. In some ways, this was neither surprising nor original, as other kings of the Iberian peninsula had founded monasteries under their patronage before him. The only surprising aspect in this case is the choice of the Cistercian as the order of this new convent; the family members closest to Denis, especially his wife Elisabeth and his brother Alphonse, were increasingly connected to mendicant religious houses such as St Clare of Coimbra and St Dominic of Lisbon.³⁷

But in this specific feature Denis appears to have followed the traditional policies of his father and grandfather, who established close links between the main branch of Portuguese royal family and the Cistercian mother-house of Cîteaux, or, more particularly, the Cistercian foundation of Alcobaça. This provides the context for Denis choice of Alcobaça as his

burial place and the convent near Lisbon took an increasingly different aspect, a rather than male tradition between king of this ambiva

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34 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, i 296.

35 Vilar and Silva, 'A Fundação do mosteiro de S. Dinis de Odivelas', 589–94.

36 On this bishop see Hermínia Vilar, 'O episcopado do tempo de D. Dinis—trajectos pessoais e carreiras eclesiásticas (1279–1325)', *Arquipélago, História*, 2. Ser. 5 (2001), 581–604.

37 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, i 317–22 and Pizarro, *D. Dinis*, 221.

38 *Crónica Geral* 259.

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burial place and that of his family right up to 1322. At the same time, the foundation of a convent near Lisbon demonstrates the growing importance of this city, in which the king took an increasing interest, as he resided there regularly. Even more striking, however, is a different aspect, as Denis broke with previous practice by supporting a convent of female rather than male members. Thus, Denis's decisions appear ambivalent, as a apparent contradiction between continuity and change. Only the wider context allows for an understanding of this ambivalence.

D. Pedro, count of Barcelos, in his *General Chronicle of Spain* of 1344,³⁸ states that Denis, in accordance with his will, was buried at the convent of Odivelas; the fact that this convent was founded by him seems to provide an explanation for this choice. The same reason is present in the *Monarquia Lusitana* written by Francisco Brandão. Indeed, in 1318 the terms of a donation to the convent of St Denis included the foundation of a chapel for the king in this monastery and in the will of 1322 the king noted explicitly that he wanted to be buried in the monastery of St Denis of Odivelas founded and built by him, "in a tomb made for me".³⁹ The change of burial site was now official. But what had happen between 1299 and 1322?

It is true that the choice of the Cistercian order remains a constant factor, but Denis still abandons the burial place of his grandparents, his parents and some of his brothers and breaks with tradition by creating his own. In fact, in the later testaments, unlike his first will, only his own tomb is mentioned; and we do not possess, for these years, any information about the will of Queen Elisabeth as regards the question of whether she was to follow her husband to this new burial site or not.

Indeed, St Denis of Odivelas emerges, more or less, as King Denis's personal convent as is revealed by the patron saint chosen. St Denis was neither commonly found as a patron saint in Portugal at the time nor was he to become such in the following decades: no other Portuguese religious houses was dedicated to this saint.

Traditionally, the fact that the French saint served as his patron is justified by the king's birth falling on St Denis's day, 9 October, and his being named after him. However, this cannot be the only explanation. As has already been stressed by José Augusto Pizarro, it was unusual for an *infante* to be named after the saint on whose day he was born⁴⁰. In fact, according to the tradition of the Portuguese royal dynasty, Denis should have been named Sancho; but this was the name of his uncle, the king driven into exile by Alphonse, who tried hard to erase Sancho's memory. Thus, Sancho was out of the question as a name for Alphonse's son, while receiving the same name as his father was unlikely. Accordingly, adopting the name of the saint on whose day he was born may have been an option and a natural alternative when a break with the traditional alternation between Alphonse and Sancho was inevitable. Still, this choice also reveals the influence of the French court and of the French circles close to Alphonse III. He was, together with Alphonse de Poitiers,⁴¹ educated at the French court under the protection of Queen Branca, sister to his mother

38 *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344*, ed. by Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra, 4 vols. (Lisbon 1951–1990), iv 259.

39 Caetano de Sousa, *Provas de História Genealógica*, 125.

40 José Augusto Pizarro, *D. Dinis* (Lisbon 1996) 215–6.

41 Leontina Ventura, *D. Afonso III* (Lisbon 2005), 52–5.

Urraca of Castile.⁴² Thus, Alphonse spent most of his youth close to the circles of Louis IX, his cousin, and of queen Branca. There he witnessed the French royalty as constructed by Philip II and Louis IX and its ideological focus on the abbey of St Denis. In fact, Louis IX reaffirmed St Denis as the French patron saint while he also transformed the abbey of St Denis into a royal necropolis by translating the remains and rearranging the tombs of the kings and queens of France.⁴³ For Alphonse III, the time he spent within these French circles proved to be crucial. Some of his most faithful and closest friends in Portugal date from this period, like Estevão Eanes, his chancellor.⁴⁴ Seen from this perspective, the choice of Denis as the name for his firstborn son may be taken as a combination of French influence and the necessity to break with the memory of his brother.

Besides choosing St Denis as patron of the convent, King Denis also made provision in his third and last testament of 1324 for the foundation of a chapel at Odivelas devoted to St Louis, bishop of Toulouse, who had died in 1297 and who was subsequently canonized in 1317;⁴⁵ this was, again, an unusual and unprecedented act in the Portuguese religious context.⁴⁶ At the beginning of the fourteenth century, St Louis, a recent saint, was little known; though closely linked to French royalty, his popularity was confined to France. Denis, however, chose him as patron saint for his own chapel, which he richly endowed with moveable and immoveable property from his personal assets.

These facts inevitably raise some questions. True, Denis was born in Portugal and grew up there when his father seized the throne following the removal of the latter's brother Sancho II by Pope Innocent IV. He moved to Portugal from France where he belonged to royal circles close to King Louis. Governmental duties during the following decades did not allow him to resume this connection nor do we know whether he tried to do so, but it is obvious that Denis, the Portuguese king's son, seems to have kept the memory of and connection to the French royalty. Such a connection is not apparent in earlier documentary evidence. Indeed, the policy pursued by Louis IX, Philip III, and Philip IV was in accordance with that of King Denis, as they were restricted to similar political options and choices. To some extent, the kingdom of France of this time was comparable to Castile in its vigorous exertion of royal power as well as its constant internal strife. At the same time,

42 Alphonse left Portugal around 1229, probably with his sister Leonora, who had been promised to the king of Denmark. The prince was between 12 and 17 years of age, and he was to stay in France or close to the French political circles until 1245.

43 Fernandes, *Poder e Representação*, i 305–6. Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *Le roi est mort. Étude sur les funérailles, les sépultures et les tombeaux des rois de France jusqu'à la fin du XIII^e siècle* (Geneva 1975), 81–3.

44 Leontina Ventura, *A Nobreza de Corte de Afonso III*, 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Coimbra 1992), ii 585–94.

45 It is not quite clear if this St Louis represents the mentioned bishop of Toulouse or King Louis IX, who had also been canonized in 1297. In fact, the *Monarquia Lusitana* mentions the foundation of a chapel in Beja also dedicated to St Louis, but in this instance the dedication appears to refer to St Louis the king rather than the bishop. See David Farmer, *Oxford dictionary of saints* (Oxford 2004), 326–7.

46 Brandão, *Monarquia Lusitana*, v 218.

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contacts between Portugal and France were numerous and frequent. Many priests at Denis's court had served in France, in particular after the papacy had moved to Avignon.⁴⁷

Thus, one wonders whether Denis's choice of the convent of St Denis of Odivelas as his burial site was influenced by the abbey of St Denis, the necropolis of the French kings. Did Denis, to some extent, consider this newly-founded convent not only for his own burial, based on his individual religiosity, but also as the burial site for his family and successors, as a future mausoleum, in this imitating the decision of his grandfather who had abandoned the monastery of the Holy Cross for Alcobaça? Or did Dennis seek the affirmation of the individual like the French kings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have done by the separate burial of their hearts?⁴⁸

It has been already pointed out that the abbey of St Denis was designed as the burial place of king Denis only; none of the close relatives of this monarch was supposed to be buried there also. In fact, his wife Elisabeth, in her first will of 1314, explicitly chose Alcobaça as her burial place. However, some years later, in 1327, after Denis's death, she changed her decision to the mendicant convent of Saint Claire of Coimbra, in which her granddaughter Elisabeth, who had died at the age of only one year, was buried.⁴⁹ Both King Denis's and Queen Elisabeth's decisions may reflect an awareness for the free choice of an individual, but it is also possible that the political context of the years leading up to 1318 have contributed to this difference in the burial place chosen by king and queen. The impact of the civil war and of the conflict within the royal family was, perhaps, too strong.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Denis wanted to stress his individuality by choosing a monastery bearing the name of his patron saint. In some aspects he followed his grandfather Alphonse II. Both kings wanted to set their power on new foundations and a new legitimacy. For Alphonse II, the choice of Alcobaça can be justified, as outlined above, by the specific circumstances of his short but troubled reign; the decision was determined by the political alliances created in his reign. The choice of a Cistercian convent is thus simply a recognition of the support previously granted.

His son Alphonse III acceded to the throne in the midst of a dynastic crisis, after the violent removal of his brother, who was forced into exile in Castile and eventually died there without ever returning to Portugal in life or to Alcobaça in death, where he wanted to be buried. As mentioned above, Alphonse III had little choice but to decide for the same burial place as his father and mother in order to erase the memory of his brother and to give his reign the legitimacy of the kings buried there. Continuity, not change was his message.

47 Examples are Martinho Pires de Oliveira and, of course, the French bishops appointed by the pope during this period; cf. Vilar, 'O episcopado do tempo de D. Dinis'.

48 For the separate burial of body and heart in Capetian France see Alexandre Bande, *Le coeur du roi. Les Capétiens et les sépultures multiples XIII^e–XV^e siècles* (Paris 2009) and Elizabeth A.R. Brown, 'Death and the human body in the later middle ages: The legislation of Boniface VIII on the division of the corpse', *Viator* 12 (1981), 221–70, repr. in eadem, *The monarchy of Capetian France and royal ceremonial* (Aldershot 1991), VI.

49 The texts of these wills can be found in *Provas da História Genealógica*, 144–53.

50 Evans, *The death of kings*, 212, argues that, in the "later middle ages, when the burial of kings and queens together had become more common, separate burial might reflect an estrangement in life".

Such considerations may also lie behind Denis's first testament of 1299: Continuity is maintained and secured for another generation. His court was only created later when Denis had established himself as ruler of Portugal. He was to become one of the longest reigning kings in the Iberian Peninsula. Accordingly, when he had consolidated his power, he reconsidered the decision concerning his burial place. Now, he intended to found (unsuccessfully, in the end) a new royal necropolis under his own name, which was connected to French royalty at the same time. Still, the break with tradition was only partial as the convent chosen also belonged to the Cistercians, like the ones housing his predecessors as well as many members of the French royal family (especially Queen Branca and Louis IX), whose connection to the Cistercians was very strong during the thirteenth century.⁵¹

But no other member of the royal Portuguese family was to be buried in St Denis. For the first time a queen decided not to be interred with her husband; she chose her own burial place in a different church, just like her husband had done. In the event, Elisabeth opted for the convent of St Clare of Coimbra. Similarly, her son, the *infante* Alphonse, with whom King Denis fought incessantly and violently in the final years of his life, decided against burial with his father and chose Lisbon cathedral,⁵² which was an unprecedented choice for a Portuguese king.

Attempts to found a royal necropolis thus proved unsuccessful, as did Denis's attempts of reconciliation with his son as outlined in his final will, which granted the *infante* the right of succession and a considerable inheritance. The violence and bitterness of the civil war made reconciliation impossible and when Denis died early in 1325 the destiny of his body was the female monastery of Odivelas.

51 Bande, *Le coeur du roi*, 135–7.

52 Caetano de Sousa, *Provas da História Genealógica*, 336–41.

Clandestine

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