

Alda Mourão Filipe
Coordinator

THE REGION of

LEIRIA

IDENTITY and DEVELOPMENT

908/LEI/70 ✓

Alda Mourão Filipe

Coordenadora

THE REGION of

LEIRIA

IDENTITY and DEVELOPMENT

A historical and geographical
journey



Title:
REGION OF LEIRIA
IDENTITY and DEVELOPMENT

Coordinator:
Alda Mourão Filipe

Text:
Alda Mourão Filipe
Dina Duarte Alves
Graça Poças Santos

Photographs:
Joana Soares

Maps:
Vitor Torres

Cover photo:
Instituto Geográfico Português
www.igeo.pt
Landsat, 1998; Composition 543, Resolution: 25 metres.

Artwork:
Works, Comunicação Global
www.works.com.pt

Publisher:
Polytechnic Institute of Leiria
www.ipleiria.pt
Rua General Norton de Matos
Apartado 4133
2411-901 Leiria
Portugal
Tel.: 244 830 010
Fax: 244 813 013

Printers:
Publicenso
www.publicenso.pt

Print run:
2000 copies

Acknowledgements:
Barros III, Castanheira de Pêra
Câmara Municipal de Leiria
Câmara Municipal da Marinha Grande
Canividro,
Cerâmica Vala,
Escola Amarela, Leiria
Fábrica - Museu Bordalo Pinheiro, Caldas da Raíña
Icomatro, Pombal
Instituto Geográfico Português
Direcção Mosteiro de Alcobaça
Direcção Mosteiro da Batalha
Museu Escolar, Marrazes - Leiria

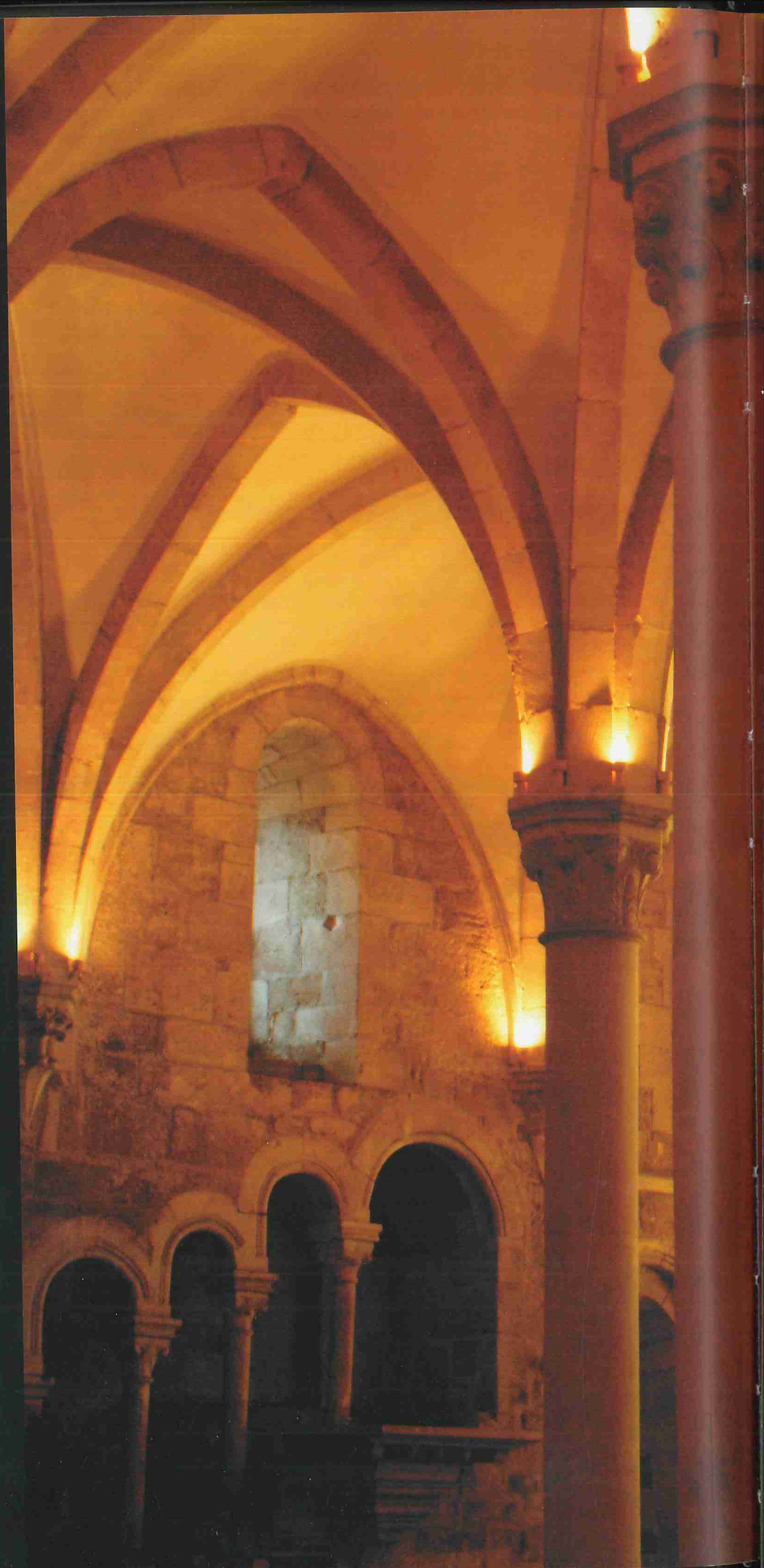
ISBN:
975-8793-16-2

Legal Deposit:
253416/07

First edition: October 2005
English version: December 2006

Translator:
Jean Burrows

Cover photograph:
A view of Leiria from the Castle



LEIRIA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE PORTUGUESE NATION

Leiria and the Christian Reconquest

Human presence in the area which nowadays constitutes modern Portugal dates back to prehistoric times and evidence of this can be found in the cave paintings, megalithic monuments and various treasures frequently discovered throughout the country. Occupied successively by different peoples including the Turduli, Celts, Lusitanians, Romans and Visigoths, it was invaded in the 13th century by the Muslims who, in a few short years, succeeded in occupying almost the entire Iberian Peninsula. But two small mountainous areas in the north of the Peninsula steadfastly resisted their incursions: the Asturias in the north, and the Pyrenees in the north-east. Their natural features provided a protective barrier for the Christians who sought refuge there. They became established as the nuclei of the Christian resistance and it was from there that the Christian Reconquest was launched, with the aim of reclaiming the Peninsular Christian territory lost to the Muslim invaders.

The Christian advance on the south led to the formation of the Christian kingdoms of Leon, Castile, Navarre, Aragon and the small *Condado* of Catalonia, which spearheaded the Reconquest in the centuries which followed. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Muslim kingdoms due to internal conflicts, the Christians advanced on the south and in 1064, Fernando Magno, the King of Leon, finally conquered the city of Coimbra, which, over a period of almost a century, became the southern frontier of what would eventually be the future Portucalense *Condado*.

A revival of Muslim power halted the Christian advance and inflicted heavy defeats on its armies. Faced with the impossibility of containing the enemy attacks on their own, the Peninsular Christian kings looked for outside help, requesting support from other kingdoms in the *Respublica Christiana*, on the grounds that they were fighting a common enemy. The *Respublica Christiana* responded to the appeal of their brothers by sending aid in the form of the Crusaders, diverted from their journey to the Holy Land in yet another attempt to liberate Jerusalem from the yoke of the Muslim infidels, since in the end the enemy proved closer to home and constituted a genuine threat to European Christianity.

Amongst those who responded to the appeal from the Peninsula was Henry of Burgundy a French Crusader who, in 1096, as a reward for his services to Afonso VI, King of Leon, was given land extending from the River Minho in the north to the River Côa in the east and from the River Mondego in the south to the Serra da Estrela, with the Atlantic Ocean forming the western boundary. This territory constituted the *Condado* of Portucale, the cradle of the future kingdom of Portugal.



Thus the political corps from which the Portuguese state would be formed began to assemble in the area around the small north-eastern city of Portucale, near the right-hand bank of the mouth of the River Douro. This city, Portucale, was the first seat of the government of the *Condado* and an important source of support in the defence of the Christian borders. Its territory was gradually enlarged following the conquest of the cities of Braga, Lamego, Viseu and, later, Coimbra¹.

By the end of the 11th century, Afonso VI of Leon had moved the front line of the Reconquest from the Mondego to the Tejo but the powerful Almoravid reaction thwarted his efforts and he was forced to abandon the newly-conquered territories.

On the death of Count Henrique his widow, D. Teresa, assumed power as governor of the *Condado*, due to the fact that her son and the legitimate heir, Afonso Henriques, was still a minor. The new governor entered into a dangerous game of political alliances with the nobles of Galicia, which greatly displeased the Portucale nobility who were zealous in guarding their autonomy from the neighbouring kingdom. Fearing the increasingly close relationship established between D. Teresa and the Galician nobility, the Portucale nobles saw the youthful Infante Afonso Henriques as his father's true heir and defender of their autonomy and supported him, and their own interests, in his fight against the woman who ruled over the destiny of the *Condado* and its dubious supporters. Afonso Henriques and the Portucale nobles emerged victorious from this struggle, inflicting a heavy defeat on the supporters of D. Teresa at the Battle of São Mamede in 1128 which, in the words of the historian José Mattoso, marked the first day in the history of the Portuguese nation.

Afonso Henriques became governor of the *Condado* and was soon involved in a war on two fronts in an attempt to strengthen the autonomy of the *Condado* that he had inherited against the threats of Leon and Castile, whilst also extending the boundaries of his territory by advancing the Reconquest further to the south. To achieve his first objective he began to invade Galicia but Muslim offensives in the south forced him to retrench and focus his efforts on containing these attacks².

At the time, the Mondego-Serra da Estrela mountain range formed a natural and civilisational boundary representing a long pause in the progress of the Reconquest. In addition to acting as a line of defence, the southern frontiers inherited by Afonso Henriques also provided important support for the front line of the campaign which, under his aegis, advanced further south.

Having finally been conquered in 1064, Coimbra formed the southern border of the Christian lands for a long time. Despite sporadic conquests on the banks of the Tejo, which were quickly lost again, the Muslims continued to ravage the Mondego region, constantly threatening Coimbra, driving out the population and even succeeding in besieging the city in 1117 when, despite heroic resistance, there were many losses in the surrounding area.

Faced with the insecurity caused by the Muslim attacks, it became imperative to safeguard stability north of the Mondego. The immediate consequence of this was the adoption of a defensive strategy that involved occupying the region between the Mondego and the Tejo. The southern border of the *Condado* of Portucale was therefore extended, increasing the territory whilst also ensuring the stability and safety of Coimbra, which Afonso Henriques took as the seat of his government, where he established his court and took up residence³.

In fact, prior to 1135, the date of the conquest and the founding of the castle of Leiria, apart from sporadic and unsuccessful incursions into Muslim territory, no significant attempt was made by Afonso Henriques to increase the southern territories, as he was occupied with campaigns in the north, in Galicia. Here he aimed to extend his domain and consolidate its autonomy, in an attempt to achieve the longed-for independence of the *Condado*. Further inland, as previously stated, the Central Range constituted a natural barrier that was practically impenetrable and required little in the way of artificial defence.

However, the constant Muslim threats to Coimbra forced Afonso Henriques to focus his attention on the southern border, since it was beginning to create more serious problems. Defending the Mondego lands was vital to the security of the *Condado*.

Meanwhile, south of the Mondego, the Reconquest was progressing in a different manner. The Muslim presence was stronger and more permanent in the south and its influence lasted until the end of his reign. In the lands south of the Mondego, devastated by 150 years of fighting, the rural areas were less densely populated than those north of the Vouga. The central and southern territories had not experienced the long periods of peace that had occurred north of the Mondego between the main military campaigns and had favoured a stable rural life⁴. In addition to the advance and retreat of the Christian armies, the populations in the south of the Mondego had also suffered as a result of the armed conflicts between the Muslim lords which, during the two periods of Taifa rule, were sparked by the slightest provocation. The Almoravid and Almohad invasions, heralding fanaticism, intolerance and a lack of respect for local faiths and customs, caused great hardship to the Christians. Devastated by war and "squeezed" between two aggressive armies, the local inhabitants abandoned their homes, creating vast areas of "no man's land" which, without owners or governors, became the arena for fierce battles. After they were reconquered, these lands were given to the Church or the nobles or, in order to ensure they were populated, they were formed into municipalities which, if this was by royal decree, ensured that they were better protected from abuse by landowners.

¹ Orlando Ribeiro, "A formação de Portugal", in *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, vol. V, direcção de Joel Serrão, Livraria Figueirinhas, Porto, 1992.

² *Idem*.

³ José Mattoso (dir.), *História de Portugal*, vol. II, Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa, 1993.

⁴ Orlando Ribeiro, *Op. cit.*



The main centres of Muslim government were established in central Estremadura, in Santarém, Óbidos, Torres Vedras, Alenquer, Lisbon and Sintra and it now became imperative to conquer these cities in order to subdue the threat they represented to the Christian lands that had been conquered.

South of the Mondego, the defence of the *Condado* was maintained through isolated castles such as Penacova, Soure, Arouca, Miranda do Corvo, Penela and Ladeia, with the area between Leiria and Ceres forming a flexible border from which attempts were made to extend the territory⁵.

Afonso Henriques' first offensive against the Muslims was the conquest of Leiria and the founding of a castle there in 1135. Its function was to serve as an outpost to support the strategically positioned castle of Soure which the Infante had given to the Knights Templar some years earlier. Until the conquest of Leiria, this castle had been the most important defence for the city of Coimbra against Saracen incursions from the south, particularly Santarém, which headed towards Coimbra through the Ladeia region between Penela and Soure to the east of the Serra da Lousã⁶.

Afonso Henriques ordered the area to be occupied, thus protecting the communities in the region. As part of this strategy, which was both defensive and offensive, he ordered the castle of Germanelo to be built in 1142, near Rabaçal, together with the castles of Alvorze and Ansião, probably at the same time. These strategically linked operations ensured the defence of Coimbra and enabled the local inhabitants to cultivate the lands within its boundaries and work in greater safety, thus guaranteeing that the city was supplied with goods. At the same time the region's dependence on the north, in particular the Entre Douro e Minho region, was reduced in terms of agricultural produce and surplus population.

However, as mentioned earlier, the campaigns led by Afonso Henriques and his knights were not only defensive. The aim of building the castle of Leiria, according to contemporary sources, namely the *Crónica de Afonso Imperador*, was also to establish a front line from which the south could be attacked via the Muslim cities of Santarém, Lisbon and Sintra. A succession of Christian incursions into enemy territory led to a Muslim reaction in 1140 when the castle of Leiria was apparently razed to the ground⁷.

⁵ José Mattoso, *Ob. cit.*

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ *Idem.*



At the time of the arrival of Afonso Henriques' army, the Leiria region was, according to contemporary sources (the 12th century Santa Cruz annals), a *locus vastæ solitudinis* (uninhabited and ungoverned land) or, in other words, a deserted wilderness consisting of thick woodland and fertile soils, the result of centuries of abandonment. This "no man's land" was a favoured site for the endless conflicts of the time between the two rival armies⁸.

The conquest and founding of Leiria represented an incursion into a neutral area, and was represented in Christian sources as essential to the defence of the Coimbra region. It was legitimate for Christian lords to occupy deserted and ungoverned land, when their interests matched those of the powerful and influential Canons Regular of St. Augustine at Santa Cruz in Coimbra and the joint project was also designed to provide a solution to the growing population. Thus the occupation of land in Leiria, which subsequently changed from being a borderland to a territory, served these combined interests perfectly. A further pretext was the conquest of "pagan land", following the taking of Muslim cities such as Santarém and Lisbon in 1147⁹.

The mission of the castle of Soure, an outpost for the city of Coimbra, was to defend the Mondego lands to the west. However, it was unable, at the time, to undertake any offensive missions, due to the fact that the troops stationed there were clearly insufficient to wear down the Muslim forces and the fact that Santarém, seen as the base for raids on Coimbra, was too far away for effective attack by the small numbers of Christian cavalry. It was necessary to find another outpost that was more central and closer to Santarém in order to launch an effective attack on this city and Leiria, for the reasons previously described, served this strategic purpose perfectly.

The Coimbra area, despite the outlying fortress of Soure, located at the apex of a triangle formed in conjunction with the castles of Miranda do Corvo and Montemor, remained the direct target of the Saracen onslaughts and had proved powerless, in military terms, to drive off the enemy forces which were weakening the *Condado*.

The castle of Leiria served Afonso Henriques' strategy perfectly since it acted as a shield against these incursions. It also served as a powerful outpost and a vigilant sentinel in the operations to take, or rather, conquer a base in the Tejo area. The dual aim behind the building of Leiria castle seems clear: on the one hand, it was to act as a defence, and on the other hand it was to be a centre for the attack on the Muslims. The process of occupying the surrounding conquered territory consisted of building fortresses, castles and smaller defensive complexes to ensure that it was effectively secured.

⁸ Saül António Gomes, "Sobre a fundação undecentista de Leiria", in Actas do Colóquio sobre a História de Leiria e da sua região, Câmara Municipal de Leiria, Leiria, 1991.

⁹ *Idem*.

If we observe the profile of the Leiria, Ourém, Porto de Mós and Pombal defences, fortresses that formed part of the north/south Coimbra line of defence, it may be seen that they form a hierarchy in which Leiria emerges as the most important centre in military and population terms. Leiria was closer to the river, which was essential in supplying water for the fortress, and also played an important defensive role, making it difficult for attacks to be mounted from the north due to its high walls. The other complexes could not provide this level of security, as they were located 1,500 to 500 km away from the fortresses¹⁰.

The castle of Leiria contrasted with the land around the River Lis, which consisted mainly of plains. It also dominated the 7 hills in the surrounding landscape, all of which were lower than the hilltop on which the fortress was built. It therefore possessed a strategic advantage which the Christian forces could not and would not ignore and the 12th century military construction combined the interests of strategic defence with the local orographic resources and raw materials used in creating and maintaining the fortress.

Leiria, Ourém, Pombal and Porto de Mós were centres for active defence rather than attack (although Leiria was engaged in both). The fortresses of Leiria, Ourém and Porto de Mós formed a tripartite unit, representing a very significant investment by the crown and also requiring strict government. In addition, the castles represented the physical base of the authority of the crown or its representatives, whilst also serving as protection in the event of outside threats. The castles of Porto de Mós and Ourém to the south-east and Leiria to the east would initially have been simple watch towers or outposts, built to provide better protection for the settlements and agricultural activities in the Leiria area. Some of them later became the preferred residences of the nobles, following the evolution of a small power base from which the military society gradually turned itself into a governing and administrative body¹¹.

After conquering the land and building the castle, Afonso Henriques appointed Paio Guterres, a famous Portuguese lord as its Governor, an indication of the military importance attributed to the fortress. It became the base from which numerous incursions into enemy territory were launched, gradually wearing down resistance in Santarém.



¹⁰ Saúl António Gomes, *Ob. cit.*

¹¹ *Idem.*



In 1137, two years after it had been conquered, Leiria was attacked. This event, coming after a heavy Christian defeat near Tomar, caused serious damage in the region. However, the castle, defended by Governor Paio Guterres and his men, resisted the attack. Unfortunately this was not the case in a second onslaught in 1140: the walled area was seriously damaged and the valiant Governor was captured and executed, together with around 250 knights who were defending the castle. In 1144, the castle was targeted in a new enemy attack which left a trail of destruction in its wake. The castle was taken, and aid was promptly delivered by Afonso Henriques, since the enemy had by then reached Soure and was threatening Coimbra. It was now becoming increasingly urgent to conquer Santarém in order to suppress further attacks.

Santarém was conquered in 1147, followed by Lisbon and Sintra. After this, Leiria began to lose its strategic importance and although during the course of the century the area between the Mondego and the Tejo suffered further Muslim attacks, Leiria managed to achieve the necessary stability to enable it to develop.

Taking advantage of the situation, the conquests rapidly proceeded beyond the Tejo: Alcácer do Sal fell at the fourth attempt (1159) and in the following year two important cities in the Alentejo, Évora and Beja, were taken. The Almohads, Muslims who had arrived to help their brothers in the Iberian Peninsula, heralded a revival of Muslim power in the Peninsula and the Christian Reconquest subsequently suffered a reversal in its fortunes: all the recently conquered land to the south of the Tejo (with the exception of Évora, which remained isolated) was lost. During the Muslim counter-attack, Santarém was besieged, Torres Novas was taken and the enemy threat reached the castle of the Knights Templar in Tomar, whilst the Saracens gained ground in Almada, overlooking Lisbon (1190).

At the start of the 13th century, following the decline of the Almohad Empire, the main territories in the Alentejo fell in succession to the Portuguese and, in 1238, the conquest of the eastern Algarve was launched from the banks of the Guadiana. In 1249, the Reconquest was complete, following the taking of the last Muslim fortress in the Algarve by the king, D. Afonso III.

The Reconquest, which had suffered an impasse for several centuries, developed rapidly between the time of the first military campaigns of Afonso Henriques and the occupation of the last of the Algarve settlements in the reign of D. Afonso III. During this time there was little cooperation between Portugal and the other Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula. In fact the lands beyond the Guadiana and in the Algarve were almost always the subject of disagreements between states which were only resolved by armed conflict.

The main phases in the Christian Reconquest may therefore be summarised as follows: one and a half centuries for the consolidation of the Douro area, two centuries to expand from the Douro to the Mondego, eighty years to advance from the Mondego to the Tejo and one century to advance from the Tejo to the Alentejo and Algarve. Within 114 years of independence and during the first five reigns, almost two thirds of the total land had been incorporated into national territory¹².



¹² Orlando Ribeiro, *Ob. cit.*



LEIRIA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE PORTUGUESE NATION

Settlement

Leiria was created during the Christian Reconquest of the 12th century, after which it was consolidated over the following centuries, although human presence in the region dates back to prehistoric times when man inhabited the River Lis hydrographic basin. There are also Roman remains from the classical period, clear in descriptions of *Collippo*. The Roman presence seems to have been structured around an arrangement of *villæ*, based on agricultural activities, which would not have survived the Barbarian invasions in the 5th century. It therefore seems clear that there was no urban centre with sufficient power to consolidate and ensure the continuity of the settlement and rural land use model that could have survived the new invasions and this idea is reinforced by the absence of any Muslim or Christian sources to confirm its existence. Hardly any traces remain of the Muslim presence in Leiria, which may lead us to suppose that during their time in the Peninsula they built no settlement there, an indication of their inability in human and demographic terms, to establish themselves throughout the entire Peninsular territory. It is therefore not surprising that during the 12th century the region was described as a “no man’s land”¹³.

A structured population only developed in Leiria after it was conquered, following the building of the castle, as previously described. The *Chronica Gothorum*, a historiographic text from Santa Cruz in Coimbra written around 1185, states that both the building of the castle and the settlement in Leiria were the King’s personal decisions. The new settlement was given the name *Leirena*, a name which frequently appears in medieval documents, although its origins are still uncertain.

As the region became safer, areas within it developed rapidly, first within the walls and later as populations became established in non-walled areas, seeking out the common lands. Leiria was granted its first Charter in 1142 by Afonso Henriques, in recognition of the development of the settlement and its increased population. Afonso Henriques granted spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Santa Maria da Pena church (the first church to be built in Leiria) to the Santa Cruz Monastery in Coimbra, as well as that of all others that were built within its boundaries.

With stability ensured after the conquest of Santarém, the population, now ruled by the king D. Sancho I, abandoned the area between the walls and expanded westwards in the direction of the river, showing a preference for settling next to churches, a sign of the strong religious spirit of the times. The urban agglomeration grew, concentrating on areas next to religious buildings, to form five important



¹³ Saúl António Gomes, “Sobre a fundação undecentista de Leiria”, in *Actas do Colóquio sobre a História de Leiria e da sua região*, Câmara Municipal de Leiria, Leiria, 1991

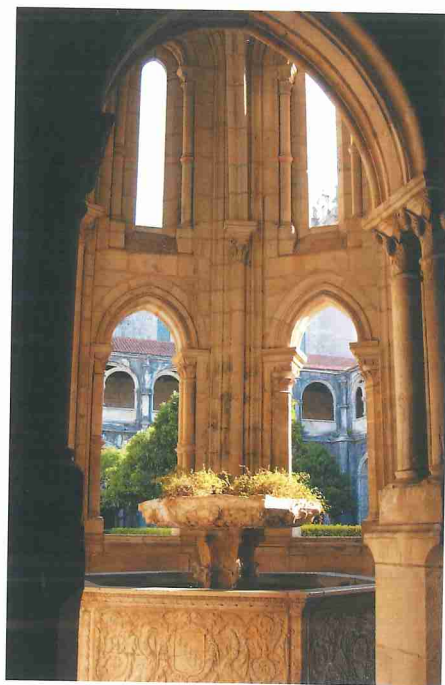
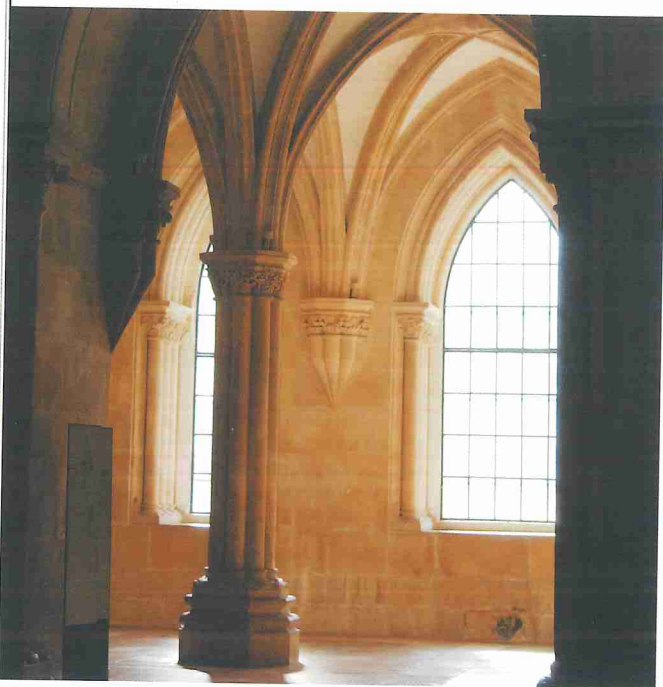
population centres: those next to the churches and parishes of Santa Maria da Pena and São Pedro in the area between the walls and those of São Martinho, Santo Estevão and Santiago outside the walled area¹⁴. In 1195, Sancho I granted Leiria a new Charter, acknowledging the rapid demographic growth of the town which, until the 18th century, was confined to the left-hand bank of the River Lis, affected by the flooding of the river bed. The urban fabric became denser to the south of the castle near the so-called "Lis elbow". Commerce would develop in this area, particularly near the São Martinho church, as is evident from the prestigious position it occupied in the urban map in an age in which trading was the main reason for the existence of urban agglomerations.

The medieval town grew around the hillside on which the castle stood and a maze of streets opened up to the south, mainly influenced by the local people's preference for sunlight.

As a result of the town's growth, at the beginning of the 16th century D. João III granted Leiria the status of a city (13 June 1545). At almost the same time, Leiria also became a bishopric, which led to some changes in the urban fabric of the new city, namely the opening of new roads leading to the newly-built Cathedral, which was completed in around 1574. The new city was organised predominantly around the Praça de São Martinho which, following an agreement between the Council and the Bishop of Leiria, had been built in the area formerly occupied by the São Martinho Church. In addition to commercial activities, the Praça also operated as the seat of the local government, where the pillory, the Council Chambers and the jail were located¹⁵.

It is also worth noting that Leiria had, according to some authors, also been a pioneer in introducing the art of printing to Portugal. This theory is supported by the fact that paper mills were already in existence in the town, introduced in 1411 after a warrant had been granted to a local resident by the king D. João I. However, whether Leiria had in fact been a pioneer in the introduction of this art, together with the paper mills, or not, it is generally accepted that it was one of the first, if not the first, city in the kingdom to introduce this revolutionary invention¹⁶.

Populating the surrounding region of Leiria also became a reality after the conquest of Santarém. As the Reconquest advanced towards the south, the kings granted Charters establishing new municipalities with the aim of encouraging settlements in areas which had thus far, been under Muslim rule. Settlements granted Charters in the early years of the Portuguese monarchy included Pombal, Castanheira de Pêra, Penela, Alvaiázere, Alcobaça, Redinha, Ourém and Figueiró dos Vinhos.



¹⁴ Ana Paula Margarido, *Leiria, História e morfologia urbana*, Câmara Municipal de Leiria, Leiria, 1988.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁶ João Cabral, *Anais do Município de Leiria*, vol. 1, 2^a ed., Câmara Municipal de Leiria, Leiria, 1993.



Having relinquished its military role, the region then came under the authority of the religious orders, which gradually increased their sphere of influence. They played a vitally important role in promoting economic activities and settlement in the region, particularly the Cistercian Order in Alcobaça, with its vast estates.

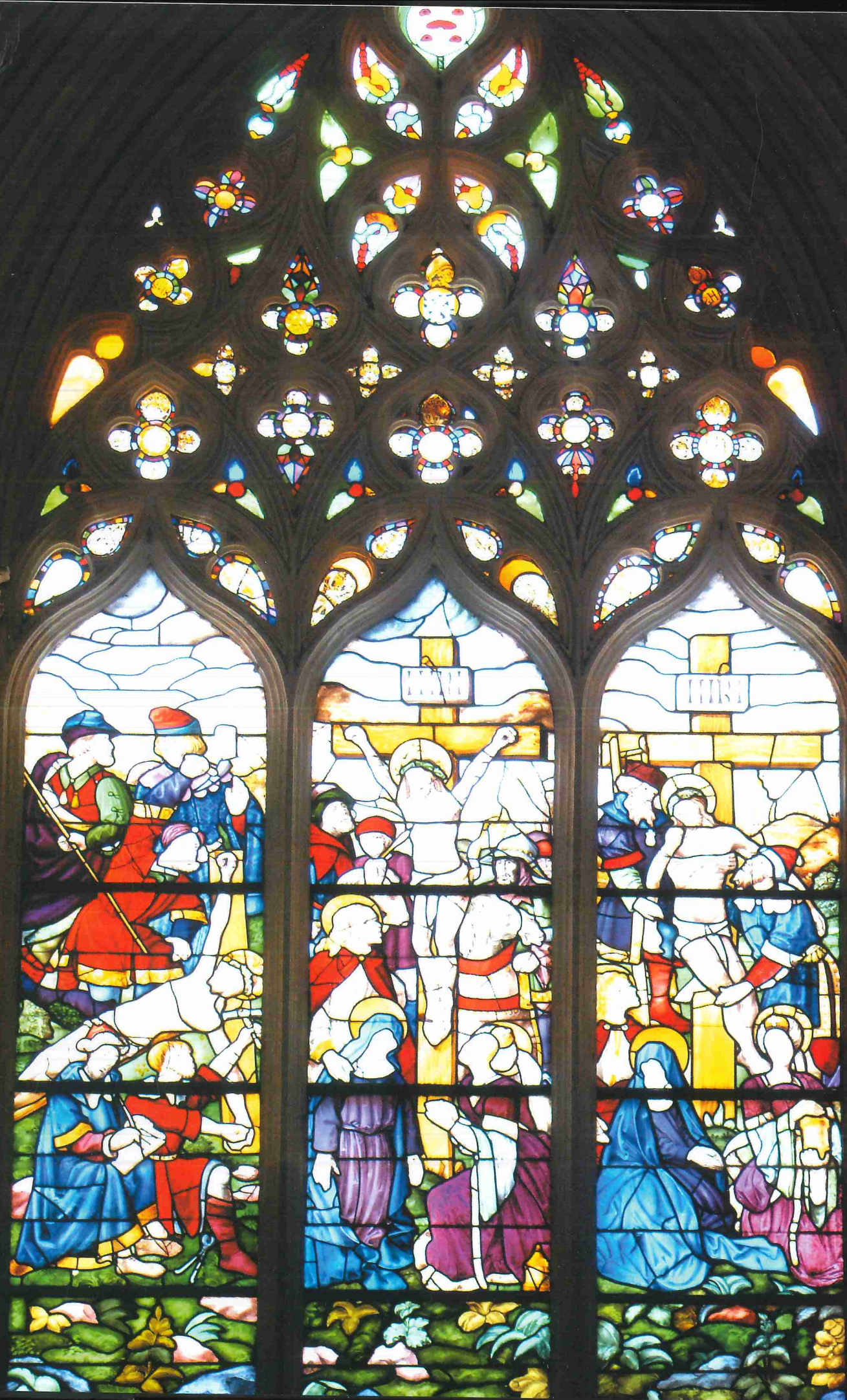
Alcobaça came about as the result of a vow made by Afonso Henriques at the time of the Santarém campaign – namely that if he won the battle he would build a great monastery that would encompass all the lands between the Serra de Albardos and the sea. Afonso Henriques won and kept his promise. Alcobaça was created in 1153, by a charter of endowment and enclosure in favour of the monks of St. Bernard, thus giving rise to a new political and economic reality in Portugal; the Alcobaça Monastery was to become the “capital of the Cistercian empire” in the country.

The new Monastery continued to receive large donations until the end of the 12th century, in addition to certain privileges, such as exemption from paying taxes on the sale and purchase of goods throughout the kingdom (1157) and, amongst other favours, the royal property extending between the Leiria and Óbidos castles. In his will, D. Sancho II donated the towns of Porto de Mós and Cornaga, together with the port of Salir. The Monastery assets extended throughout the kingdom, as a result of these continual donations. Its domains eventually covered the entire region between São Pedro de Moel and Lourinhã and the area between the Serra dos Candeeiros and the Rio Maior.

Extending to over 60,000 hectares, the Alcobaça estates included 14 towns (including Porto de Mós, Aljubarrota, Maiorga and Vestiaria) and four sea ports (Salir, Pederneira, Cós and Alfeizerão) over which the monks were able to exercise their authority, levy taxes and hold a monopoly over economic activities. The Alcobaça estate was the largest *latifundium* in the Leiria region and its lands were the most productive in the kingdom. In the famous Alcobaça granges cereals, fruit, cotton, flax and olives were cultivated and it became a kind of school for agriculture and other related industries. Farmers, shepherds, potters, smiths and many others worked there in addition to the monks. Salt was also produced on the estates (Salir), and, as it was served by the four abovementioned ports, the fishing industry was also established¹⁷.

The Monastery granted settlement charters or privileges to those intending to establish themselves in the estates. Alcobaça was possibly the largest workshop in the kingdom, because it made the most of its land and increased its population. Although they devoted much of their time to administering their properties, the monks did not neglect their religious duties or their role as men of letters. The Monastery was famous for its library, which contained several hundred manuscripts, and for its *Scriptorium*, where the hard-working copyists fulfilled their duties as guardians of the memories and wisdom of the past and as recorders of the present.

¹⁷ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. I, 4^a ed., Editorial Verbo, s.l., 1990.



LEIRIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FORMATION OF PORTUGAL

The role of the region in the formation of the Portuguese state: important events in its history

D. Sancho II was engaged in many conflicts, both with the prelates and with his own brother, the Count of Boulogne and the future Afonso III, the latter leading to a civil war over the succession. The various municipalities in the region adopted different positions during this conflict. The municipality of Leiria came out against Sancho II and in favour of the Count of Boulogne, whilst the municipality of Óbidos remained loyal to the legitimate king, Sancho II, inaugurating a “tradition” that lasted throughout its history, with the town only surrendering after the death of the man they considered their king, even though Afonso III had already, in practical terms, begun to rule the kingdom. Contrary to expectations, Afonso III did not retaliate or threaten the people of Óbidos but in fact rewarded them for their loyalty to their legitimate king, bestowing on the town the title of “*Sempre Leal*” which, added to the title “*Nobre*” which it already possessed, enabled the town of Óbidos to boast the title “*Nobre e Sempre Leal*” (“Noble and Ever Loyal”).

In 1254, Afonso III, “The Bolognese”, called for a meeting of the Cortes to be held in Leiria – later known as the 1254 Cortes of Leiria – which included representatives from the municipalities for the first time since, prior to this, only the nobility and the clergy were allowed to sit as the King’s advisors on matters of government.

The Cortes of Leiria were convened within a new spirit, with the kingdom already established and ruled by a king who supported municipalism and intended to surround himself with traders. Afonso III proposed to deal with the “state of the realm”, bringing the three social orders together for the first time in order to determine what was appropriate for the kingdom. Various measures were adopted including the granting of a Charter for Beja and the confirmation of a second Charter for Guarda, the settling of appeals from Sé do Porto, Santarém and the Alcobaça Monastery, certain diplomas for the municipalities of Lisbon and Guimarães and the Bouro Monastery and the establishment of a new monetary tax to avoid the consequences of any possible devaluation¹⁸.



¹⁸ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. I, 4ª ed., Editorial Verbo, s.l., 1990.



The importance of the Cortes of Leiria lies in the active participation of the municipalities, which became increasingly aware of their municipal autonomy in relation to the nobles and the clergy. The crown took advantage of the political strength of the people to increase its authority in a tacit alliance that would remain in force until the 15th century. The 1254 Cortes of Leiria represented the first attempt at a balance of power that included the voice of the municipalities. From then onwards, regional bodies were always represented at the Cortes and therefore in the government of the realm.

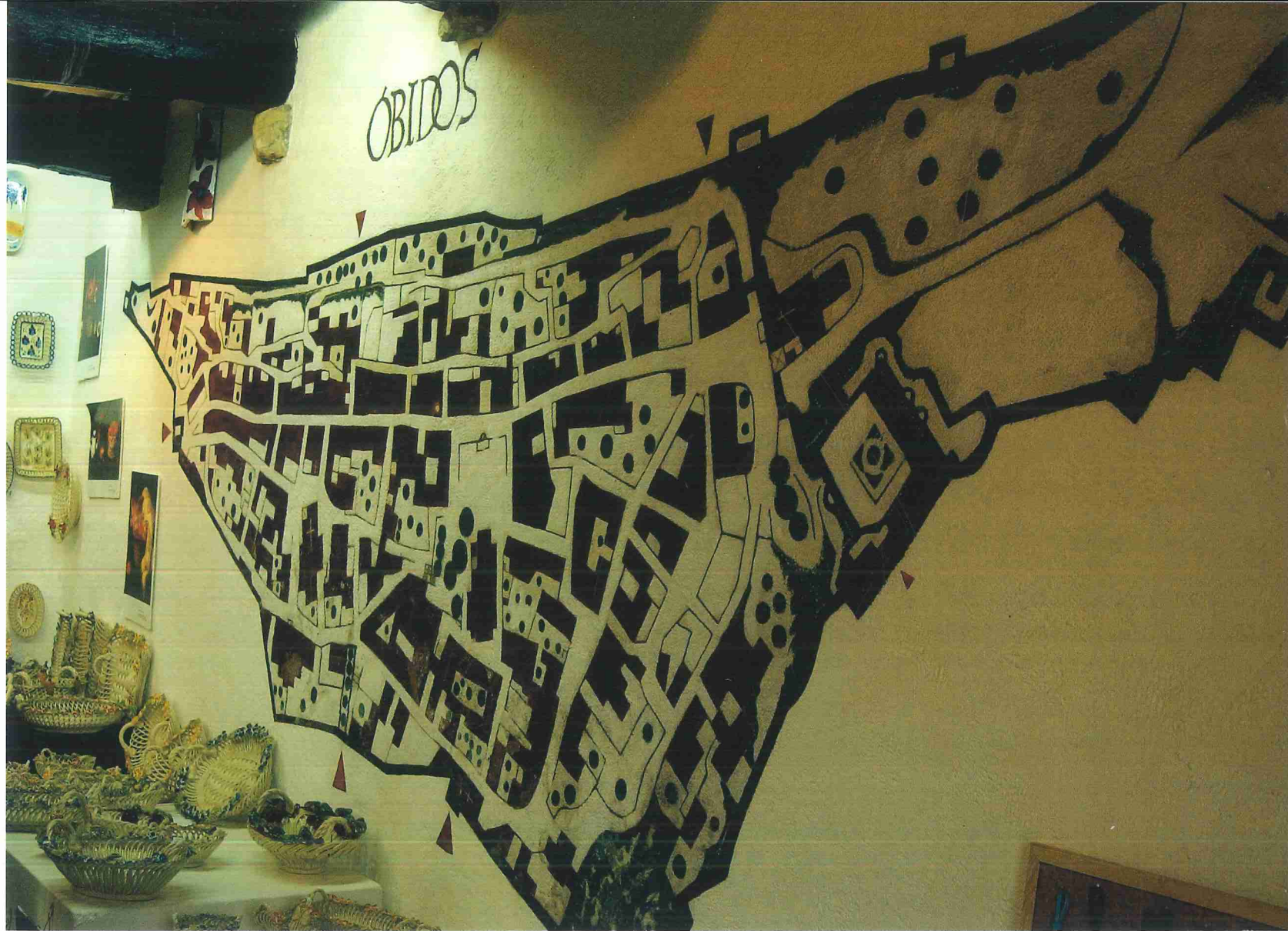
Around one century later, in 1372, the king D. Fernando convened the Cortes in Leiria to discuss devaluation due to the fact that he needed money to cover the costs of his war with Castile. In November 1376, the same king convened the Cortes in the same town in order to deal with the issue of the succession in favour of his daughter Lady Beatriz.

In 1438 during the reign of Duarte the Cortes also met initially in Leiria but ended in Santarém. The aim had been to study the possibility of negotiating for the freedom of Fernando, the Holy Prince and brother of the king, who was a prisoner in Fez. In 1580, at the start of the reign of Filipe I the Cortes were convened for Leiria but as the city was not considered safe enough, the Spanish king transferred the meeting to Santarém¹⁹.

It should also be noted that king D. Dinis and his wife frequently visited the region and stayed several times at the castles of Leiria and Óbidos, thus making their mark on these areas, particularly Leiria, where they ordered work on the castle (namely the Keep, which D. Dinis commissioned), the draining of marshland, the reorganisation of the Leiria pine groves. They also feature in numerous legends which flourished in the popular imagination in some parts of the region.

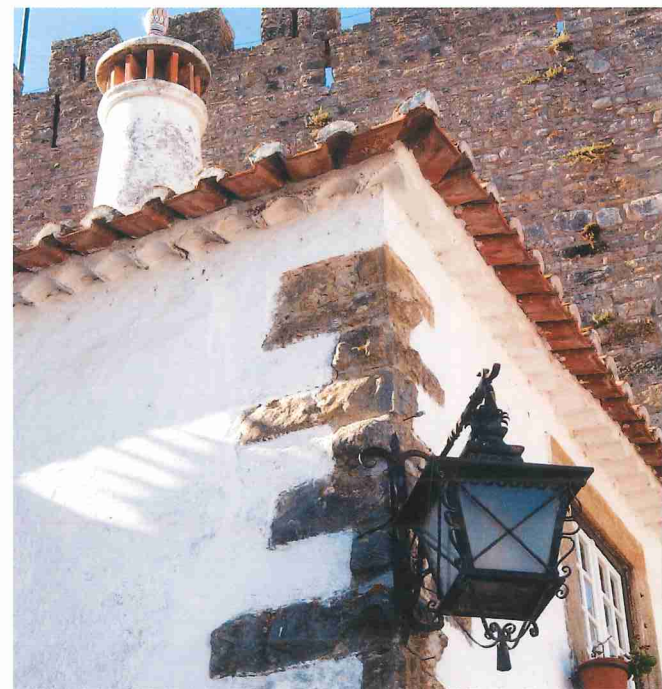


¹⁹ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Ob. cit.*



Leiria's loyalties were once again at stake in the war which broke out between king Dinis and his son and heir Afonso, the future King Afonso IV. The main cause of this conflict was the favoured relationship between the king and his illegitimate son, also named Afonso, whom the legitimate heir saw as a threat. In 1321, the heir therefore left Coimbra for Leiria, where his troops and local partisans caused various riots. D. Dinis took the castle and punished the Leiria nobles who had supported his son by condemning them to death and seizing their property. Queen Isabel played an impartial role in appeasing the two rivals and restoring peace between them shortly before the king died.

However, this was not the last time that the faithfulness and loyalty of Leiria was put to the test. During the 1383-85 crisis, Portugal was divided over the rival claimants to the throne, João I, the king of Castile who was married to D. Beatriz, the daughter of the deceased king, and João, Master of Avis and illegitimate son of king Pedro I. The kingdom was split and society was divided. Leiria supported the Castilian monarch when he arrived in Portugal, accompanied by a powerful army to defend his rights. In a first offensive he encircled Lisbon but the outbreak of an epidemic forced him back to Castile. In a new attack in 1385, João of Castile entered the country via Ribacoa, conquered Almeida and began to march towards Lisbon in the direction of Foz do Tejo. During the journey the Castilian army inflicted countless atrocities on local populations. At the town of Soure they were confronted by an army led by Constable Nuno Álvares Pereira,



seeking negotiations between the two sides to prevent the kingdom from being destroyed. Since these negotiations came to rest on recognition of the Castilian king as the ruler of Portugal, the talks failed.

On 10th August the Castilians reached Pombal and entered Leiria the following day. In order to defend the Tejo border and subsequently Lisbon, the Portuguese had positioned themselves in the Abrantes and Tomar region. It was essential to block the advance of the Castilians so that they could not conquer Lisbon and take control of Portugal. The Castilians clearly outnumbered the Portuguese, although the various sources and authors



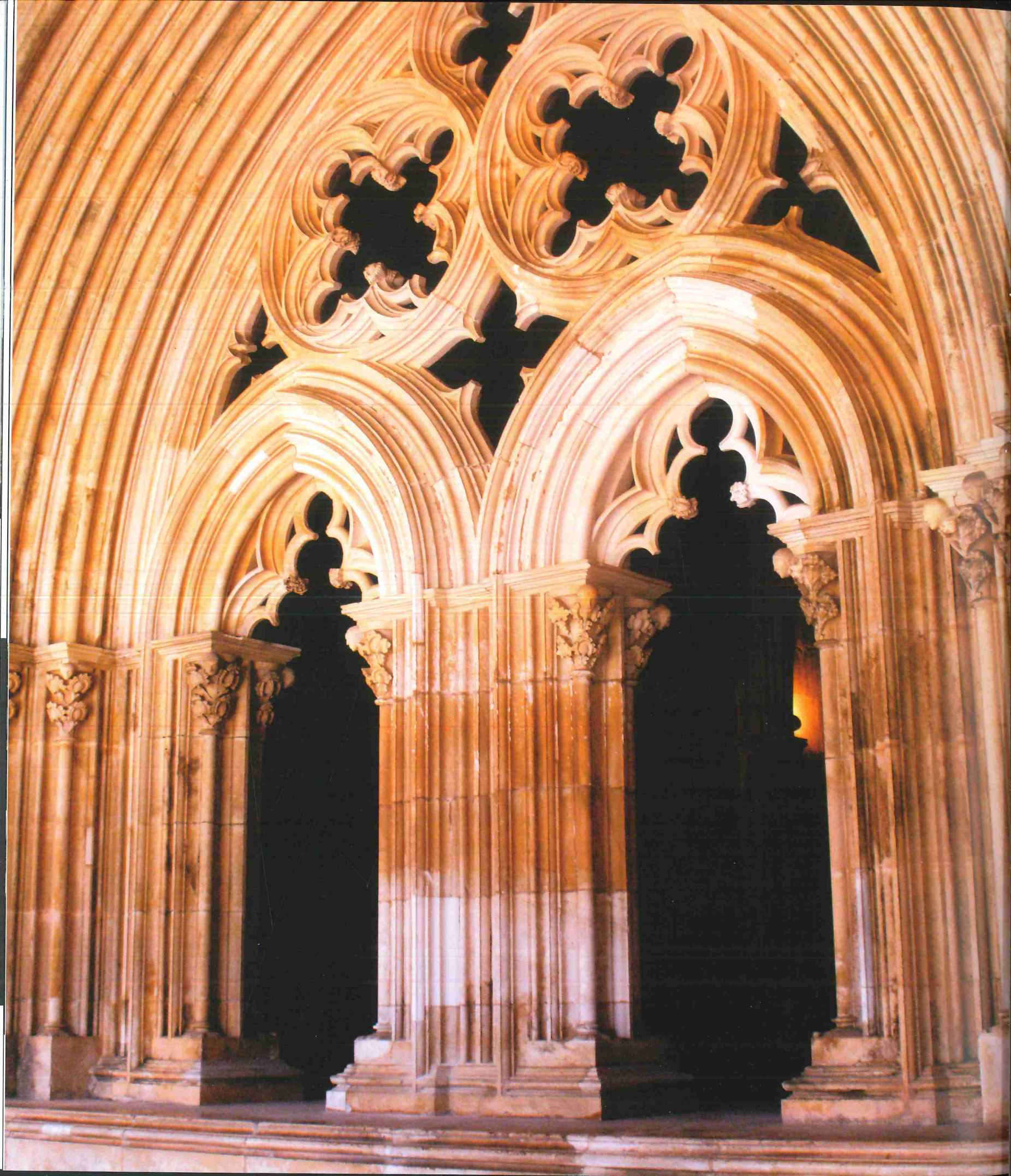


disagree on the figures for each side. From Tomar, the Portuguese headed towards Ourém and reached Porto de Mós the following day. On 14th, in order to block the enemy advance, the Portuguese troops stationed themselves on a hill between two streams flowing from the River Lena, using an innovative defensive strategy designed by the Constable – the square formation – which exploited the defensive role of the infantry. This new strategy achieved its aims and led to an overwhelming victory for the Portuguese²⁰. National independence was secured on that day and it is hardly surprising that the name Aljubarrota has endured down the centuries. As a decisive moment in Portuguese history, both in the collective imagination and in the mind of a people not always accustomed to winning.

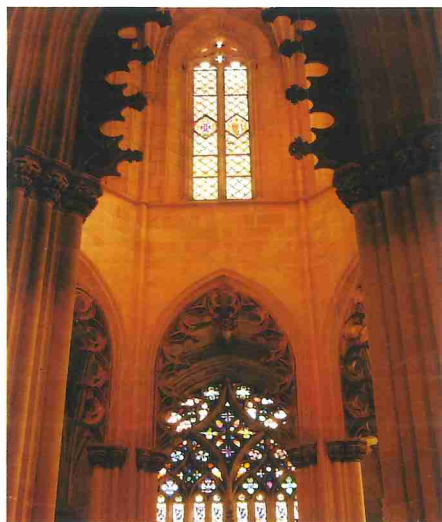
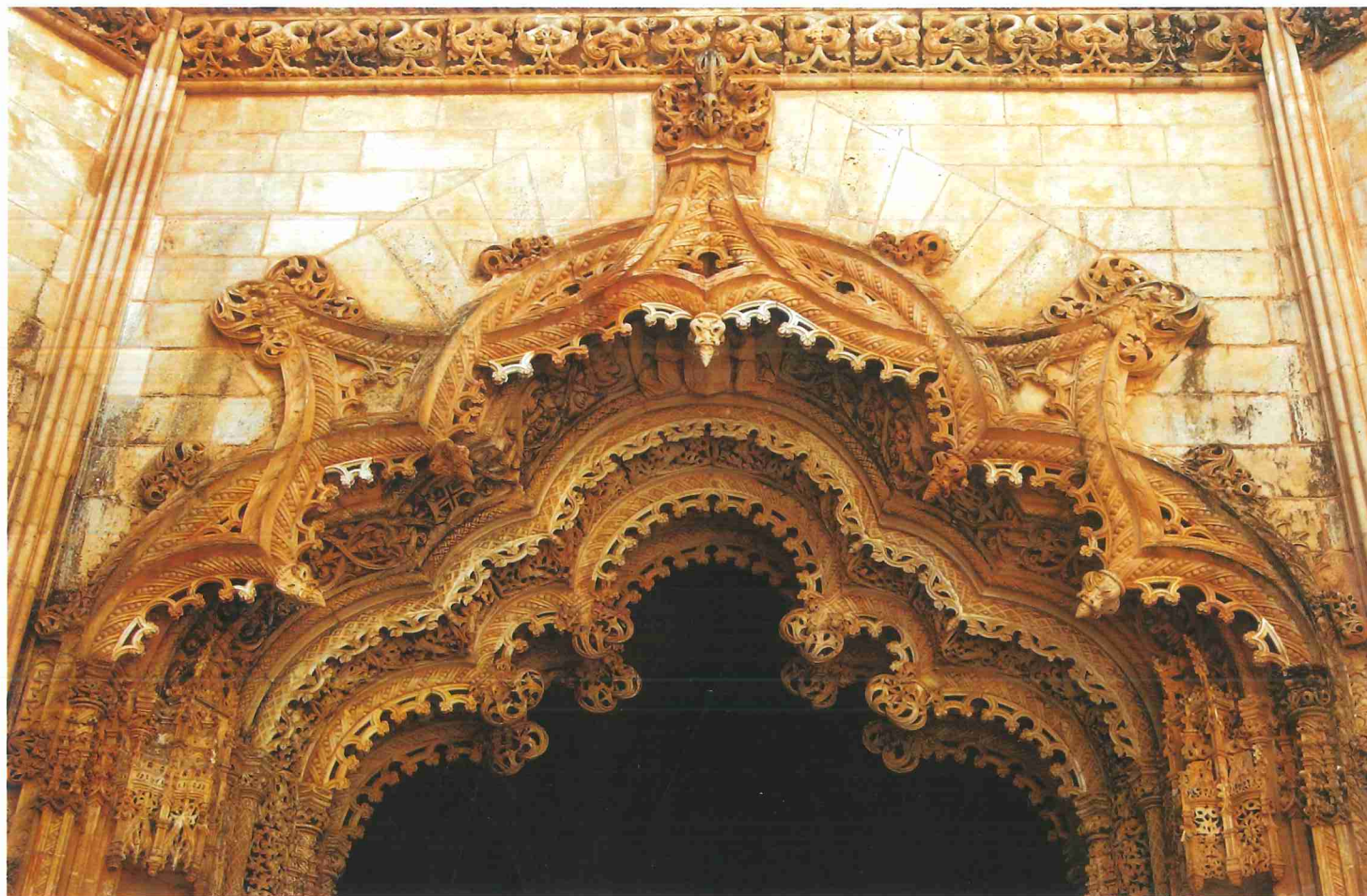
The victorious Battle of Aljubarrota will always be remembered for the Monastery that was built in commemoration of the event. It was the result of a vow made by João I at the time of the battle. The king fulfilled his promise and the result was the Santa Maria da Vitória Monastery, one of the most beautiful examples of the Gothic style in Portugal, later embellished with Manueline features. Work began in 1388, carried out by Portuguese and English master builders, and the influence of the latter can clearly be seen in the main facade of the church.

In addition to the architectural beauty of the building, the Santa Maria da Vitória Monastery is also important as a historical symbol, a celebration not only of the decisive battle in the struggle for the independence of the kingdom but also the first pantheon to the

²⁰ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Ob. cit.*



Avis dynasty, a role that was similarly taken up by the Santa Maria de Belém Monastery during the reign of Manuel I. The sheer volume of the architecture represents the historic expression of a people who had just opened a new chapter in their history and of a king who wanted to display the grandeur and legitimacy of his kingdom and the dynasty he had founded.





A
CUILHERME
STEPHENS
O
PESSOAL
DA
NACIONAL
FABRICA
DE VIDROS
1941

LEIRIA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE PORTUGUESE NATION

The process of industrialisation in the 18th century

If the first half of the 18th century was dominated by gold, the second half was undoubtedly linked to the figure of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal, and his policy of nurturing trade and industry.

Opinions have always been divided on the subject of the Marquis of Pombal, but whether loved or hated his importance in Portuguese history is undeniable. A well-travelled man who understood the European situation, he attempted to lift the country out of the severe economic crisis into which it had fallen. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and the measures he introduced to reconstruct the city and cope with this difficult situation are proof of his pragmatism. Nevertheless, he also adopted some harsh measures in order to control society, particularly the nobility and the Jesuits, who were involved in what is considered by some to be a merely hypothetical attempt at regicide. He terrorised the former by accusing them and ordering the execution of some of the most important families in the country whom he considered were implicated in the conspiracy and, in 1759, he exiled the latter, whom he deemed responsible for the lack of progress in the country. In this way he managed to keep society under control.

However, with dwindling supplies of gold from Brazil and a crisis affecting the production and export of colonial goods, Portugal, whose economy was based essentially on national products such as wine, salt, fruit and olive oil and colonial products such as tobacco, sugar, wood, cocoa and slaves, entered into a critical period. The balance of trade was unfavourable, since it involved the importation of wheat and other cereals, manufactured goods and foodstuffs, amongst other items, which were exchanged for national produce, with the deficit being paid in gold. Obviously when the supplies of gold began to dry up, the fragile trading balance was lost, whilst at the same time, exports were also falling due to competition from other countries and other factors. Faced with this situation, the Marquis had only two alternatives: either dependency, or the increase of national production in order to supply the country's needs. From 1762 onwards, Pombal's policies were closely associated with these economic problems²¹.

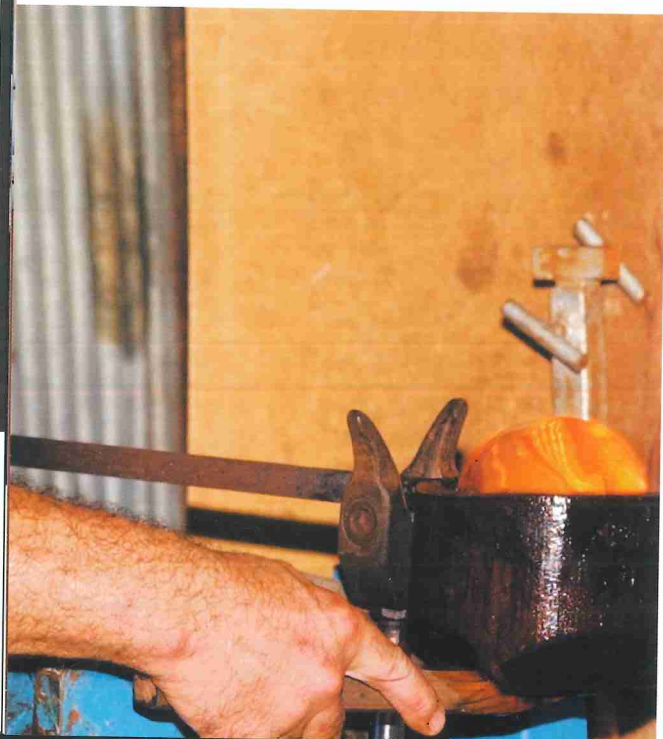
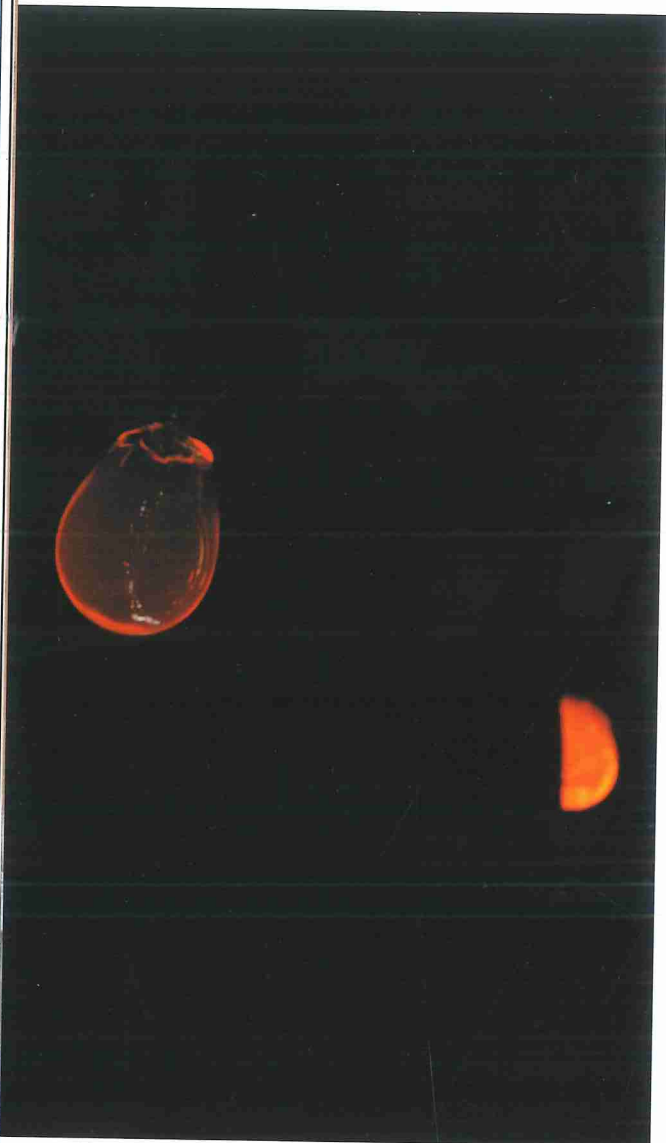
The reign of José was defined by mercantilism, a policy designed to boost manufacturing industries under the control or protection of the state. It aimed to establish conditions under which trade and industry could be nurtured, with a view to reducing dependence on foreign markets that were bleeding the Treasury dry.

In order to boost the wealth of the country, technical progress was needed, based both on possession of raw materials and on a specialist Portuguese labour force. This would free the Portuguese economy from its dependence on England and France by strengthening the national currency and opening up the labour market to the non-working population.

The expansion of industry depended on an efficient trading system allowing for the flow of goods and preventing any obstacles caused by excess production or the poor flow of products. Pombal's economic thinking focused more attention and support on trade and industry than on agriculture, where it did not meet expectations. The greatest weakness of the Pombaline economic system lay in this



²¹ Jorge Borges de Macedo, *A Situação Económica no Tempo de Pombal*, 2^a ed., Ed. Moraes, Lisboa, 1982.



area, whereas in the rest of Europe physiocratic trends, taking agriculture as the main source of wealth and sustenance, were being implemented and developed. In Portugal, although there were some supporters of physiocracy, they found no ally in the powerful Prime Minister, who decided unequivocally in favour of mercantilism and, whilst not totally ignoring agricultural issues, considered them to be of secondary importance.

His concept of the state was constructed within a European and overseas framework involving the economic integration of the overseas dominions with the Metropolis. The country's agriculture, with the exception of olive oil and wine, was of little importance in this cycle in which gold, diamonds and raw materials were directed towards the production and improved distribution of consumer goods.

The Pombaline government recognised the advantages of investing in new factories in order to develop the textile industry within the kingdom, an area in which Portugal had serious needs, since it resorted regularly to imports, particularly from England. The Marquis of Pombal took advantage of the already existing industries, which were widely dispersed and small in scale, and encouraged the founding and improvement of factories, granting privileges, subsidies and tax exemptions on both the import of raw materials and the export of fabrics²².

Other factories, in addition to the one at Covilhã, were founded since it was a profitable industry and, although the main centres of production were in the Beiras region, it began to spread throughout the country. The Central region was also subject to this Pombaline policy of encouraging industry. The textile industry became established in Tomar and Alcobaça, although it never matched the manufacturing achievements of the interior. The Tomar factory, in addition to silk, also produced linen and the Alcobaça factory produced cotton and linen.

However, due to its historical significance and national importance, the establishment of the glass industry also deserves special mention, with the transfer of the Glass Factory from Coima to Marinha Grande in around 1748. In order to set up and develop the glass industry, the local area required certain conditions which Marinha Grande was able to fully satisfy: it had an abundant supply of wood which came from the nearby *Pinhal d'El-Rei* pine woods, raw materials were available locally and it was located close to communications networks which made it easy to transport the glass and the raw materials.

The area chosen was a small civil parish within the boundaries of Leiria, the future Marinha Grande, which according to the Parish Memoirs of 1758, had less than 1,000 inhabitants. Forty years later, in 1798, after the industry had been established and developed and national and foreign workers and their families had settled there, it had 402 households and had almost doubled its population²³.

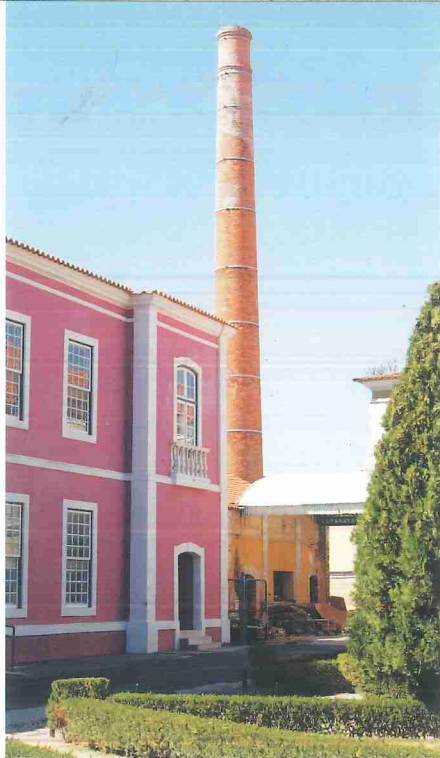
Under a licence issued on 7th July 1769, the Marquis of Pombal placed William Stephens, an English trader who had been based in Lisbon since 1750, in charge of the factory. Stephens had already applied for permission to set up a lime factory in 1756, having undoubtedly realised that, after the 1755 earthquake and the subsequent rebuilding of Lisbon, the city would be in need of large amounts of lime. However, despite the fact that it was essential to the building work in hand, he was not a successful manager and became bankrupt in 1761.

Despite this setback, Stephens found a friend and ally in Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo who, in 1769, responded favourably to his solicitations by entrusting him with the Royal Glass Factory in Marinha Grande. This industry was essential as there was a severe shortage of glass and panes for windows for the buildings that were being constructed in Lisbon.

The Royal Factory was the most successful of the industries launched by the Marquis of Pombal. During the time it was managed by the Stephens, firstly by William Stephens

²² Jorge Borges de Macedo, *Ob. cit.*

²³ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *História de Portugal*, vol. VI, 2^a ed., Editorial Verbo, s.l., 1990.



then, after his death by his brother John James Stephens, the factory prospered and provided Portugal with crystal glass. It also served as a major training school for Portuguese glass workers, inaugurating a tradition that survives to this day. Whenever glass or crystal is mentioned, *Marinha Grande* and its glass industry immediately springs to mind. In 1773, the factory employed over 300 people. Stephens sought to ensure that his employees had good working conditions and the factory and surrounding area were well-supplied with butcher's shops, taverns and inns, and other facilities.

By the end of the 18th century under the management of the Stephens, the factory was entering a golden age. The production of glass and glass panes had increased and was exported all over the kingdom. However, its success was guaranteed by the protection offered by the government, and this continued during the reign of the next monarch *María I*, in recognition of its value and importance to the national economy.

Another industry which is of particular importance to this region, the hat manufacturing industry based in the town of *Pombal*, was also the result of *Pombaline* policies. Fashion demanded that hats should be worn and large sums of money were spent on importing them. Mercantilism demanded that imports should be avoided by encouraging national industries. Therefore the Royal Hat Factory, located in the town of *Pombal*, aimed to provide a solution to this unnecessary expenditure.

The factory was annexed to the Silk Factory in the same town and enjoyed its many privileges, namely exemption from paying duty on the import and export of manufactured goods. This led to massive complaints by other hat manufacturers and the prerogative was eventually extended to all hat manufacturers in the kingdom²⁴.

To prevent the industry from falling into ruin, since imports of the better quality foreign hats were still increasing whilst Portuguese hats were not being bought, the Marquis of *Pombal* launched a pragmatic solution in the form of the radical measure of banning all imports of hats as long as Portuguese hats could supply the market. It is also worth noting the existence in 1770 of some soap factories in *Alcobaça* and *Pombal*, which belonged to the Crown. The establishment of a glue factory, managed by businessman *António Henriques de Gouveia*, is further evidence of *Pombaline* economic policies in *Leiria*.

When *Queen María I* came to the throne in 1777, the Marquis of *Pombal* was removed from office and sent into exile, spending the rest of his life in *Pombal* at his *Quinta da Gramela* estate. Portugal however would certainly not have been the same without him. He left his mark forever imprinted on our collective memory, regardless of what has been written about him by his critics or admirers. In the region of *Leiria*, the cities of *Pombal* and *Marinha Grande* will always be associated with his name.

In 1788, during the reign of *María I*, according to a map of the factories in the kingdom produced by *Pina Manique*, several factories were operating in the area. The Royal Hat Factory in the town of *Pombal* was still functioning, as were the cotton and linen mills in *Tomar* and *Alcobaça* and the cotton mills in *Leiria* and *Alcobaça*, the latter also possessing a linen mill.

In the early years of *María I*'s reign there are also records of other manufacturing industries in the region, namely a glass-cutting factory and the Royal Glass Factory in *Marinha Grande*, still managed by the Stephens, and a silk factory in the town of *Pombal*.

Mining also existed in the area. There was an abundance of marble of varying quality: "excellent" in *Leiria*, black, containing pure arsenic which gave it a polished finish in *Porto de Mós* and inferior quality in *Monte Redondo*, in the municipality de *Leiria* and also in *Ansião*. Iron was also still being extracted from mines in *Porto de Mós*, *Tomar* and *Figueiró dos Vinhos*.

²⁴ Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Ob. cit.*