

For the Honor of Her Lineage and Body: The Dowers and Dowries of Some Late Medieval Queens of Portugal

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Abstract

In this article, we analyse the royal matrimonial contracts of the 15th century in order to evaluate their contribution to the autonomy, influence, power, and affluence of the queens of Portugal. The huge amounts of money promised in them as dowries and dowers remained in the hands of the kings and were paid to their spouses only in case of widowhood. But the queens were also entrusted with regular revenue that allowed them to have a consistent household and to be patrons of the arts and of the Church. And they received a certain number of towns where they could collect taxes, recruit troops, judge by appeal and appoint the local officials and priests.

Keywords

queenship; dower; dowry; matrimonial contracts; royal marriages

Resumo

Neste artigo, analisamos os contratos matrimoniais régios do séc. XV com o fim de avaliar o seu contributo para a autonomia, influência, poder e riqueza das rainhas de Portugal. As enormes somas de dinheiro neles prometidas a título de dotes e arras permaneciam nas mãos dos reis e eram pagas às suas esposas apenas em caso de viuvez. Mas as rainhas também eram dotadas de rendimentos regulares que lhes permitiam manter uma Casa considerável e ser patronas das artes e da Igreja. E recebiam ainda um certo número de vilas onde podiam cobrar taxas, recrutar tropas, julgar em apelação e nomear os oficiais e clérigos locais.

Palavras-chave

dignidade de rainha; dote; arras; contratos matrimoniais; casamentos régios

It has already been stressed that, among noble, princely and royal families, marriage was essential to avoid biological extinction, ensure dynastic continuity, overtake or maintain power, increase patrimony and wealth, and make useful alliances (Debris, 2005, 23-37, 75-133). To

fulfill the first of these purposes, royal wives had to be able to bring forth healthy and preferentially male children, but as, in medieval times, there was no way to verify and assure the fertility of brides – except if they had had children from a previous marriage – youthfulness and vigor were used as a proxy. Physical beauty was also important as a means of winning and keeping the husband's affection, and of having distinguished offspring. Good lineage would contribute toward attaining this goal as well. Yet moral beauty was even more appreciated as it would guarantee – or so the Castilian king Alfonso X presumed – the legitimacy of the progeny and therefore the honor of the monarch and the continuity of the dynasty (Vann, 1993, 126-127).

The royal matchmakers only worried about the personal qualities and virtues of the future queens at a second stage, however. Before anything else, they chose a bride from within a princely or royal family because of the political and/or economic benefits that such an alliance would bring to the monarchy. Sometimes, brides would bring as a dowry huge domains, principalities or even kingdoms that would enlarge their husband's realms, improve their finances, extend their diplomatic influence and strengthen their military power. At the very foundation of the kingdom of Portugal, such a situation is to be found: when Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile married off his bastard daughter Teresa to Henri of Bourgogne he granted her as a dowry the *portucalensem terram*, whose autonomy they both reinforced and which became totally independent in the hands of their son, Afonso Henriques (king, 1143-1185) (Mattoso, 1992, 32-64)

Royal brides could also be transmitters of dynastic claims that had to be pleaded in the courts of justice or fought for on the battlefields, with unforeseeable results. Afonso V of Portugal (king, 1438-1481) took, as his second wife, his niece Juana in 1475 in order to defend her right to the Castilian throne and the honor of his sister, the former queen of Castile,¹ but, more than anything, in order to unite the two kingdoms under his rule. Yet he was defeated in an important battle at Toro and failed to muster the international support he needed to continue the war against Isabel I of Castile and Fernando II of Aragon. Eventually, he accepted a peace treaty that forced Juana to marry the heir to the Castilian throne – who was then aged one – or to enter a convent. This treaty further arranged the marriage of Afonso V's grandson – also named Afonso – to Isabel, the elder daughter of the Catholic king and queen (Gomes, 2006, 202-241).

Because of their dynastic, military, political and diplomatic consequences, it is not surprising that royal matrimonial projects and contracts have been edited and scrutinized by many scholars since an early date. However, the historians of genealogy, central power or international relations have not paid much attention to other important aspects of these documents. Indeed, matrimonial contracts also regulated the conditions under which the future queens, most of whom were foreigners, would live and perform their official role in their new country; therefore, they are central to the study of queenship. In this article, we will thus analyze the royal matrimonial contracts of the 15th century in order to evaluate their contribution to the autonomy, influence, power and affluence of the medieval queens of Portugal.

Royal marriages, like the marriages of common people, were submitted to both canon and civil matrimonial law. Canon law defined the different stages of the matrimonial engagement and

¹ Juana was the daughter of Enrique IV of Castile, who was said to be impotent. Therefore, her mother, Joana of Portugal, was accused of adultery with the king's favorite, Beltrán de la Cueva, and the princess was nicknamed "the *Beltraneja*". Under great pressure from his entourage, Enrique divorced his wife and made his half-brother Alfonso and his half-sister Isabel (the future Catholic queen) his heirs. Yet, he never declared Juana illegitimate, thus leaving the way clear for future claims from her side. For more information about this unfortunate princess, see Tarsicio de Azcona, *Juana de Castilla, mal llamada "La Beltraneja" 1462-1530*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1998.

the matrimonial impediments (Debris, 2005, 37-57). Additionally, Portuguese civil law regulated the gifts that the future spouses had to bring to a marriage and established who had the right to dispose of them, not only during the life of both members of the couple, but especially after the death of either one of them.

According to this law,² every bride had to bring a dowry to her marriage and every bridegroom had to endow his future wife with a dower. This was a kind of convergence between the Roman tradition of the *dos* (paid by the bride's father or family to the groom) and the Germanic traditions of the bride price (paid by the groom to the bride's father or family) and the morning gift (given by the groom to his wife after the consummation of their marriage as a reward for her virginity) (Lopez Diaz, 1982, 83-91). For this reason, it is not entirely surprising to find in certain documents, in Portugal and Galicia, the dower being referred to as the price the husband paid to the wife for the use of her body (Merêa, 1913, 50-52; Lopez Diaz, 1982, 91; Coelho and Ventura, 1986, 58). In 1428, the matrimonial arrangements between Duarte of Portugal (king, 1433-1438) and Leonor of Aragon (queen, 1433-1440) mentioned that a dower was settled "for the honor of her lineage and body".³ Yet the archaic reference to the bride's body was replaced in later contracts by the far less crude expressions of "for the honor of her lineage and person" or, more simply, "for the honor of her person".⁴

The law stated nothing about the value of the dowry, but the dower was meant to correspond to a portion of the husband's possessions at the time of the wedding, ranging, according to the region and the period, from a half to a tenth of his free holdings (Merêa, 1952, 63; Hughes, 1978, 269). The wife could take immediate possession of the dower and enjoy its usufruct during her lifetime; upon her death, it was to be inherited by the children of the couple or returned to the husband or his heirs. As to the dowry, this was kept by the husband throughout the duration of the marriage and had to be given back to the wife solely in the event of separation or widowhood (Merêa, 1952, 69-70; Lopez Diaz, 1982, 92 and 94-96; Coelho and Ventura, 1986, 57 and 59-60).

Since the matrimonial contracts of the queens of the 12th to the 14th centuries did not survive, we do not know what arrangements were made prior to their marriage in order to provide for their expenses during their husbands' lifetime and after their death, or if they conformed to the legal rules. Above all, we do not know what kind of dowry the queens received from their families, or if they received any at all. Isabel of Aragon (queen, 1282-1336) is traditionally considered to be

² We mean not only the medieval local legislation and the Portuguese and Castilian general laws (the latter having been enforced as subsidiary law in Portugal until the 14th century), but also the old Visigothic legal code. *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica, Leges e Consuetudines*. 2 vols., Lisbon: Academia Real das Ciências, 1856-1868; Tomás Muñoz y Romero, *Colección de Fueros Municipales y Cartas-Pueblas de los Reynos de Castilla, León, Corona de Aragón y Navarra*. Madrid: Imp. de D. José Maria Alonso, 1847; *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso El Sabio*. 3 vols., Madrid: Lope de Vega, 1972; José de Azevedo Ferreira (ed.), *Afonso X. Foro Real*, vol. I, Lisbon: INIC, 1986; Maria Teresa Campos Rodrigues (ed.), *Livro das Leis e Posturas*, Lisbon: Faculdade de Direito de Lisboa, 1971; Martim de Albuquerque and Eduardo Borges Nunes (eds.), *Ordenações del-Rei D. Duarte*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1988; *Ordenações do Senhor Rey D Afonso V*, new imprint, 5 vols., Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1983.

³ António Joaquim Dias Dinis (ed.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. III. Coimbra: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1961, No. 91, p. 183.

⁴ António Caetano de Sousa, *Provas de História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, t. II, I Parte. Coimbra: Atlântida, 1947, pp. 227, 484, 507, 526.

the first queen to have received a dowry because the document that records her marriage by proxy to Dinis (king, 1279-1325) mentions it, but nothing is said about its composition.⁵

When the bride brought no dowry, her future husband was not forced by law to entrust her with a dower. He could still do so out of love for her and a sense of generosity, however. At least three queens of this period are known to have been in this situation: Leonor Teles de Meneses, Philippa of Lancaster and Isabel of Lancaster. The situation of the latter will be analyzed in detail later on. As to Leonor Teles (queen, 1372-1383), she was already married to João Lourenço da Cunha when Fernando I (king, 1367-1383) fell in love with her and the annulment of this marriage was requested in haste for them to be able to sanctify their union. As a result, the king himself had to make a donation *propter nuptias* to his wife “as dowry and dower” on January 5, 1372,⁶ a few months after their secret wedding and four months before the public ceremony, because her family had not yet recovered financially from the loss of her first dowry and the law determined that the adulterous wife should lose the dowry to the husband she left behind (Hughes, 1978, 285; Lopez Diaz, 1982, 93).

Queen Philippa of Lancaster (queen, 1387-1415) married King João I (king, 1385-1433) of Portugal as a result of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance of 1386, and the treaty of Ponte do Mouro secured many territorial benefices for the Portuguese king, as well as military assistance from the English forces against Castile (Coelho, 2005, 98-99). Furthermore, after the wedding, John of Gaunt and his wife Constance, as pretenders to the Castilian throne, surrendered to their daughter and their son-in-law any right they might possess in the Portuguese realm.⁷ Neither of these had any practical consequences because John of Gaunt soon renounced his claim to become king of Castile. However, in wartime, it could have been considered a good arrangement.

While we do not know much about the dowry, we are a little better informed about the dower: we do know that the queens possessed urban centers and rural estates that belonged to the Crown because of this. These were given to them by their husbands or their fathers-in-law after their arrival in Portugal and the consummation of their marriages. Queen Beatriz of Guillén (queen, 1253-1303) seems to have been the first royal consort to receive from the king, apart from the rents of a few towns, the right to appoint the priests of the local churches and the governors of the castles. After her, all the queens received, either by simple donations, donations *propter nuptias* or dower settlements (*cartas de arras*), not only rents and rural estates but also royal towns with the corresponding royal rights (Lourenço, 1995, 1002-1003).

Though it is impossible to identify and assess the total royal patrimony in the Middle Ages, because of the lack of accounting ledgers, comprehensive inventories, and complete cadastres, historians agree that the monarch was one of the largest landowners in the realm, if he was not indeed the largest in individual terms (Marreiros, 1996, pp. 185-198; Marques, 1987, p. 81). Therefore, even if some of the donations and dower settlements might have been lost, it is obvious that they did not represent a tenth, let alone half, of the king's patrimony.

Yet the king was not a husband like any other husband. He had at his disposal both the Crown possessions to govern the kingdom and his personal estates to manage his household. This difference was almost imperceptible at the beginning of the monarchy, but became clearer in the course of time. The Crown possessions were indivisible and inalienable, as opposed to the king's personal estates (Marques, 1975, 331-332). We might therefore think that the queen's dower came from the latter, which were far less important than the former, and this would explain the

⁵ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, L. II, pp. 140-142.

⁶ J. M. Cordeiro de Sousa (ed.), *Fontes Medievais de História Torreana*. Torres Vedras, 1958, No. XXX, pp. 37-40.

⁷ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. I, L. III, 1947, pp. 20-22.

relative smallness of the queen's patrimony and rents in comparison with the total patrimony and revenue managed by the king. Still, we know that the towns conceded to the queens as part of their dower belonged to the Crown. The reason for this might be that the queen was similarly not a wife like any other wife. When marrying the king, she started a conjugal relationship with him but also began performing an official role as his partner – and representative, if necessary – in the government of the realm. Accordingly, she not only had to be entrusted with a dower as the wife of the physical body of the king, but also to receive Crown goods to fulfill her duties as the wife of the political body of the king.⁸

If, because of the scarcity of sources, we are unable to reconstruct many of the institutional and financial arrangements involved in the marriages of the monarchs of the first dynasty, when the surviving royal matrimonial contracts begin to appear in abundance, after the beginning of the 15th century, the gaps start to be filled. These documents let us know not only the composition of the dowry and the dower of the future queens (which had undergone a considerable change) but also many other details about their resources, their living conditions, and their entourage.

The contract that was signed on February 16, 1428,⁹ in the name of Prince Duarte of Portugal and Leonor of Aragon, stipulated that, apart from her jewels, pearls, precious stones and fabrics, the princess would bring a dowry of two hundred thousand Aragonese florins, half of which would be provided in a single payment to be made by her mother Leonor, the dowager queen of Aragon, and the other half paid by her brother, Alfonso V of Aragon, in ten yearly installments of ten thousand florins each, secured by the rents of the towns of Fraga, Berga and Liria. As a dower, Duarte was to grant her thirty thousand florins, secured by all the crown estates, but taken from the rents of Santarém.

The princess's *mantimento* (maintenance) should be as valuable as the maintenance that had been granted to all the Aragonese and Castilian princesses that had married Portuguese kings previously, secured by the rents of the city of Lisbon – a very vague formula indeed that had to be made specific later on. She would also immediately receive as *câmara* half of the towns previously held by Duarte's mother, Philippa of Lancaster; she would only be granted all of the towns after her husband had ascended the throne.

The word *câmara* is ambiguous and deserves a little attention. In a more restricted sense, it meant the room of the queen, her private, domestic space. In a wider sense, it meant the administrative unit that managed the patrimony and rents the queens had at their disposal in order to support their household and perform their official role (Córdoba Miralles, 2002, 52). Leonor of Aragon's is the first matrimonial contract to refer to this unit. This leads us to think that, just as he organized the household of his children in new terms (Gomes, 1995, 225-226), King João I must also have organized and institutionalized the *Casa da Rainha* (queen's household and estates). Until his reign, the rents, lands and towns donated to the queens were very diverse and changed from one queen to the other. Thenceforth, the queen's *câmara* would always be constituted by the towns of Óbidos, Sintra, Alenquer, Torres Vedras, Alvaiázere and Torres Novas – to which other towns could be added at the king's behest – and even when there was no queen there were still officials “of the queen's lands” managing those queenly estates (Silva, 1994, 90-91).

But let us return to Leonor of Aragon's matrimonial contract. Should the princess die first without legitimate progeny, she would be allowed to bequeath to the person or the institution of

⁸ On the relationship of the queens with the two bodies of the king, see Stafford, Emma: The Powers of the Queen. In A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997, p. 10.

⁹ A. J. Dias Dinis (ed.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. III, 1961, No. 180, pp. 180-198.

her choice all of the dower and the dowry given by her mother, but only a third of the dowry given by her brother; the rest was to be returned to the king of Aragon. If she had legitimate children from her husband, they would inherit all these funds, except for thirty thousand florins that she could use “for the sake of her soul”.

On the contrary, if she was to become a widow, she would have to choose, in the two years following her husband’s death, either to stay in Portugal and to keep her estates, rents and maintenance, in which case she could not remarry, or to ask for the dowry and be free to leave the country and marry whoever she pleased. In both cases, the dower would be given to her as well. Her movable property (jewels, clothes and so on) should never be deducted from either of these sums.

A few months later, on November 4, 1428,¹⁰ a new arrangement was established between the two spouses, clarifying some of the terms of the previous matrimonial contract. The sums granted as dowry, dower and maintenance were exactly the same, but some changes were introduced into the stipulated time periods and the means of payment, as well as into the usufruct of those amounts in the event of widowhood.

From this new agreement, we know that Leonor’s annual maintenance had been fixed at 7,500 Aragonese florins (which could be converted into Portuguese currency at eighty *reais brancos* for one florin) and that she had chosen, among her deceased mother-in-law’s estates, the towns of Alenquer, Sintra and Óbidos to constitute her *câmara*; she would receive the remainder (namely, the towns of Alvaiázere, Torres Novas and Torres Vedras), without the need for any further donation, on her husband’s ascent to the throne. In fact, a donation of those three towns was indeed made to her by the new king two years after his enthronement,¹¹ so we may presume that she felt the need to secure her position notwithstanding the terms of the matrimonial contract.

Should the princess die before Prince Duarte, she would now be able to dispose in her will of only a third of the dowry given by her mother and of the dower granted by her husband; the remaining two-thirds (and all of her brother’s dowry) being returned to the donators. But if she left any descendants from that union, the clauses of the first matrimonial contract would apply.

Should Duarte die first, she would then have two more years to decide whether to stay in Portugal and keep her estates, rents and maintenance, or to receive both the dower and the dowry and leave the country. In this case, the payment of both sums would be made in yearly installments secured by the rents of her *câmara* and to be completed within four years of her husband’s death.

As for the jewels and precious clothes that she had brought with her or had received as presents from her husband or her in-laws, she would be able to keep them or to bequeath them to anyone she liked; but she would have to give back all the moveable goods that had been entrusted to her for a fixed term, and her word would be sufficient to clear up any doubts that might exist about it.

Everything seemed to be securely settled. Yet, we do know that none of these stipulations were actually followed. When Duarte died in September 1438, he entrusted Leonor in his testament with the education of their son Afonso and the regency of the kingdom during his minority. Yet the queen had to face the animosity of her brothers-in-law, who had expected to receive that honor, and the mistrust of the Portuguese people, who were apprehensive about her

¹⁰ A. J. Dias Dinis (ed.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. III, 1961, No. 128, pp. 263-275.

¹¹ J. M. Cordeiro de Sousa (ed.), *Fontes Medievais*, No. LVI, pp. 62-63.

family connections with foreign sovereigns.¹² In the *Cortes* (Parliament) convened in Torres Novas in November, her authority was curtailed as she was forced to start to ask for the advice of the royal council and of her brother-in-law Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, in many matters. Very soon, she and Pedro were in open disagreement and a popular uprising in Lisbon led to the convening of new *Cortes*, which proclaimed the duke the sole regent. The queen tried to fight back with the help of some supporters, but she failed to obtain the expected intervention by her brothers and was forced to leave the country in December 1440 (Moreno, 1979, 3-173). She was never to return or to see her son again.

In Castile, she could only rely on her personal estates¹³ and the aid of her brothers and sister to maintain her status and dignity because she did not manage to receive from the new regent the sums that should have been paid to her according to the terms of the two contracts. But had her dowry been paid fully by her brother and mother? There are reasons to doubt this (Duarte, 2005, 121). As a consequence, she spent the last days of her life in growing poverty and destitution; even her ladies-in-waiting suffered from this situation, as Pedro allowed only some of them to return to Portugal after her death, the others being forced to make their living elsewhere (Gomes, 1995, 59).

The case of Leonor's daughter-in-law is slightly different. Queen Isabel of Lancaster (queen 1447-1455) had been promised in marriage to her cousin Afonso V since they were both nine years old, because her father was the tutor of the infant king and the regent of the realm. (Gomes, 2006, 61-62). No matrimonial contract was ever signed between the two parties, and only after the liturgical ceremony had been performed and the union consummated, on May 6, 1447, was a royal charter issued,¹⁴ stating the arrangements made. Although his beloved cousin and wife, as the king said, brought no dowry, he gave her a dower of 20,000 gold *escudos* that she could leave to her heirs after her death. He also allotted to her the sum of 1,165,000 *reais* that his mother Leonor, the previous queen, had enjoyed as her annual maintenance.

To constitute Isabel's *câmara*, Afonso also donated to her all the lands and urban centers that had belonged to his mother, including the corresponding royal rights and rents, the whole jurisdiction, the patronage of the local churches and the appointment of the appropriate officials. Curiously, two years earlier, on March 19, 1445,¹⁵ just one month after the death of the expatriate queen Leonor, the regent Pedro, acting in the name of the king, had already donated these same estates (together with another small town, Aldeia Galega) to his daughter, for her to hold "as queen Philippa had held them". It is quite significant that Pedro should prefer to refer to his mother Philippa instead of his recently deceased sister-in-law Leonor, who had given him such trouble during their co-regency and the ensuing period. But he did not dare to make any arrangements concerning her *câmara* while she was alive, even though she had no means of claiming her rights and exercising her powers locally. And both he and his daughter were wise enough to ask for the confirmation of this donation after Afonso had attained the age of legal majority.

¹² She was the sister of King Alfonso V of Aragon, King Juan II of Navarre and later of Aragon, and the other *Infantes de Aragón*, who led a political faction against the Castilian king Juan II, with whom the Portuguese wanted to be at peace.

¹³ Her mother had donated to her, in 1434, the town of San Felices de los Gallegos, near the Portuguese border. A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. I, L. III, pp. 275-280. She also seems to have owned Alcobea de Cinca – Saul Gomes, *D. Afonso V*, p. 55.

¹⁴ A. J. Dias Dinis, *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. IX, 1968, No. 159, pp. 243-247.

¹⁵ J. M. Cordeiro de Sousa (ed.), *Fontes Medievais*, No. LXIV, pp. 71-72.

Yet further confirmation, not only of the possession of these estates by the queen but of the whole matrimonial contract, became necessary after the rupture between the regent and the king, and the death of Pedro at the battle of Alfarrobeira, in 1449. In spite of the opposition of some of the nobility that had helped him to fight the regent, Afonso decided to keep his wife and on January 11, 1451,¹⁶ he confirmed the terms of the contract and granted her a dower, maintenance and *câmara*, not only for the duration of their marriage, but also if they were to be separated by death or by any other cause, and whether they had children in common or not.¹⁷

Probably because he was aware of the general animosity felt at court towards his queen and wanted to protect her from what his mother had endured, he was careful to secure her maintenance in the tax levied on fabrics in Lisbon. He further determined that, if he himself, his successor or the following queen wished to take away from her any of her estates, they would have to compensate her with twice the annual income of that estate, secured by the taxes levied in Lisbon on bread, landed property and the circulation of goods. Finally, he raised the amount that she could dispose of in her will for the sake of her soul from 20,000 to 28,000 gold *escudos*, which her heirs would not be able to claim as their inheritance.

Isabel died in 1455, at the age of twenty-three, leaving her husband a widower at the same age. It was only in 1471 that Prince João, the future King João II (king 1481-1495) married his cousin Queen Leonor of Lancaster (queen 1471-1525), daughter of his father's brother Fernando, the late Duke of Viseu. Again, a match within the royal family's closest circle was preferred to an external alliance, with important consequences for the reinforcement of a regional noble household that would later try to undermine royal authority.¹⁸ And again the marriage contract was only signed two years later, on September 16, 1473.¹⁹ This time, however, the bride brought with her a considerable dowry: the town and fortress of Lagos granted by her brother and valued at 10,000 gold *cruzados*, plus many jewels and a trousseau; these would be evaluated at their delivery by the bride's mother Beatriz and added to the value of the dowry.²⁰ Her dower was in turn fixed at 20,000 gold *escudos*, secured by the rents of Óbidos.

As maintenance, she would receive every year 1,165,000 *reais* secured by the rents of Lisbon; 1,015,000 *reais* that Queen Leonor of Aragon had received in her time, plus 150,000 *reais* specifically for her expenses in gold and silk fabrics. And as the king chose not to give her immediately as *câmara* Sintra, Torres Vedras and Óbidos, the three towns his mother had received when she married Duarte, he entrusted her with another *assentamento* of 335,000 *reais* to be paid yearly until she gained possession of those three urban centers.

If the marriage were to be ended by the death of the Prince or for any other reason, Leonor of Lancaster would have a year to choose between receiving the value of the dower, the dowry and 500,000 *reais* as *assentamento* or an *assentamento* of 1,300,000 and no dower. If she chose the dower and left as heirs children or grandchildren she had had with somebody other than Prince João, they would have to pay back to Duke Diogo the 10,000 *cruzados* that the dower was worth.

¹⁶ A. J. Dias Dinis, *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. X, 1969, No. 255, pp. 348-352.

¹⁷ This led Saul Gomes to say that the king considered the possibility of annulling his marriage – Gomes, *D. Afonso V*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁸ The considerations of Saul Gomes concerning the marriage of Afonso V to the daughter of the Duke of Coimbra could be applied to this case too – Saul Gomes, *D. Afonso V*, p. 62.

¹⁹ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 224-230.

²⁰ This happened on April 27, 1475, and they were estimated at twenty-four thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight *cruzados* – Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, *A Rainha D. Leonor*, pp. 146-147.

Apart from these financial arrangements, the contract also stipulated that Leonor's mother, Beatriz, would provide her with ladies-in-waiting, female servants and male officials to constitute her household. King Afonso V would fix their numbers (*conto*) and all of them would have to be approved by the Prince. This was common practice in Castile and the Portuguese princesses Isabel and Joana, who had become queens in that kingdom in 1447 and 1455 respectively, had both been allowed to take with them the Portuguese staff they needed to form their household (Muñoz Fernández, 2002, 77-78). It was the first time that such a clause appeared in the matrimonial contract of a future queen of Portugal, even though we know that some previous queens had brought friends and officials with them from their countries of origin²¹.

As Leonor of Lancaster was one of Portugal's longest lived and most active queens and has been studied by other scholars, we know how these arrangements materialized in some detail. It was not until 1480 that Afonso V finally entrusted her with Sintra, as established in the matrimonial contract. And she had to wait for her husband to be enthroned to receive two years later Óbidos, Torres Vedras, Alenquer, Torres Novas, Alvaiázere – the towns that all her predecessors since Philippa of Lancaster had received as *câmara* – plus Aldeia Galega and Aldeia Gavinha. In 1495, when her brother Manuel I (king, 1495-1521) was in turn enthroned, she added to these Silves and Faro, and, in 1499, Vila Franca de Xira, Castanheira do Ribatejo, Azambuja and Cascais (Sousa, 2002, 147-148).

Meanwhile, she had had to share her domain with her daughter-in-law, Queen Isabel of Castile (queen, 1497-1498). As has already been said, the marriage of João II and Leonor's only male child, Afonso, to Isabel, the daughter of the Catholic king and queen, had been settled during the peace negotiations between Portugal and Castile as a result of the Portuguese defeat at Toro in 1475, and the two princes were brought up together for more than two years in Moura under the surveillance of Leonor's mother, Beatriz (Costa, 2005, 67).

In 1490, the marriage was consummated and João II granted Isabel of Castile an *assentamento* of 2,025,000 *reais*.²² As to Queen Leonor, she agreed to surrender to Isabel the towns of Torres Vedras, Torres Novas and Alvaiázere.²³ But the unfortunate princess did not have the use of these towns for long: Afonso died in 1491 during a horse race and Isabel decided to go back to Castile,²⁴ taking with her the dowry and the dower.

However, she was to return six years later as the wife of Manuel I. João II had an illegitimate son, Jorge, whom he wanted to legitimize but queen Leonor devoted all her efforts to preventing him from doing so, thus helping to pave the way to the throne for her brother Manuel, the next in line of succession (Mendonça, 1991, 454-466; Fonseca, 2005, 172-178). Probably because the Crown treasury was quite diminished due to the existence of three royal widows – Leonor of Lancaster, Isabel of Castile and Juana of Castile, the second wife of Afonso V, whose marriage was never validated by the Pope but who nevertheless had a household supported by the

²¹ Queen Isabel of Aragon, for instance, brought with her a Greek princess named Vataça who undertook peace negotiations on her behalf and became a very important lady in the Portuguese court – Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho and Leontina Ventura, Vataça: uma dona na vida e na morte. *Revista da Faculdade de Letras – História*, 3ª série, III (1986), pp. 159-193 and Angela Muñoz Fernández, “Semper pacis amica”. *Mediación y práctica política, Arenal* 5 (1998) pp. 263-276. As for Philippa of Lancaster, she chose a very highly placed figure in the English diplomacy as her chancellor, apart from having the customary ladies-in-waiting at her side – William J. Entwistle and Peter E. Russell, A Rainha D. Felipa e a sua corte, *Memórias e Comunicações – Congresso do Mundo Português*. Lisbon: Comissão Executiva dos Centenários, 1940, vol. II, p. 336.

²² A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 257-258.

²³ J. M. Cordeiro de Sousa (ed.), *Fontes Medievais*, No. XCII, pp. 128-129.

²⁴ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 256-257.

Portuguese monarchy (Costa, 2005, 82-83) – Manuel decided to marry one of them before anyone else. The matrimonial contract, signed on November 30, 1496,²⁵ stipulated that Isabel would bring as dowry the same sum as before, augmented by the sum she had received as a dower when she became a widow: a total amount of 70,333⅓ *doblas* that would have to be paid in three-yearly installments. If the marriage were to be dissolved by death or for any other reason, the princess was to receive the dowry back – or what had been paid of it until then – within two years. The same would apply to the restitution of the dower, whose value was fixed at 17,000 *doblas*. Both payments were secured by Manuel I in the rents of Viseu and Montemor-o-Novo.

Isabel's parents were to provide her with clothes, jewels, tableware and all the appropriate items which would become the couple's possessions and would never need to be returned. For her daily expenses, Manuel I would have to guarantee her as much as she already had as an *assentamento* from the toll (*portagem*) of Lisbon – the exact amount was not stated – until she was able to take possession of Alenquer, Óbidos, Sintra, Aldeia Galega, and Aldeia Gavinha, the queenly towns that Leonor of Lancaster still held.

If Isabel were to become a widow again, she would be able to depart from Portugal together with her entourage, without having to ask the new king for permission and without forfeiting any of her rights, rents and estates. This time, though, it was Manuel I who became a widower when Isabel died in 1498, while giving birth to their son Miguel, the heir to the three Iberian kingdoms, who also died before reaching the age of two (Costa, 2005, 91-92).

In 1500, Manuel I wedded Maria of Castile (queen, 1500-1517) a younger sister of Isabel. This princess, who was not as valuable in matrimonial terms as the former queen,²⁶ brought with her a dowry of 200,000 *doblas* (including jewels and precious metal) and was entrusted with 66,666⅔ *doblas* as a dower, again secured by the king through the rents of Viseu and Montemor-o-Novo. She would only receive the queenly estates as *câmara* when her sister-in-law Leonor of Lancaster died – something that did not happen during her lifetime. Curiously, the king did not give her any *assentamento*. It was her parents who promised to provide her with the necessary resources to maintain her household, just as it was them who took the responsibility of asking and paying for the matrimonial dispensation to be obtained from the Pope.²⁷ However, the monarch donated Torres Vedras and Viseu to her when she arrived in Portugal, in December of that year (Costa, 2005, 116). Maria gave birth to the future king João III (king 1521-1557) and to nine more children in her almost seventeen years of happy marriage to Manuel I, before she died in 1517 (Costa, 2005, 220-224).

Manuel I was married a third time, to the niece of his first two wives, Leonor of Austria (queen 1518-1528?), who had been promised in marriage to his son. This bride presented as a dowry and received as a dower exactly the same amounts as Maria; both were to be paid to her within four years if the marriage was dissolved for any reason. Again, it was the bride's family who proposed to pay for the daily expenses of her household, although the king also committed himself to giving her the value of the rents of the queenly towns that were still in the hands of Leonor of Lancaster, later valued at 15,000 *doblas*. Manuel I also took it upon himself to obtain papal dispensation for the consanguinity and to pay for its costs. If the monarch were to die before the queen, she would be able to return to Castile with her children and her retinue without having to

²⁵ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 481-492.

²⁶ After Isabel's death, the heiress of Castile was Juana, married to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Fair, and known as "la Loca" (the insane) because of her mental instability.

²⁷ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 502-512.

ask for permission from the new king and without losing any of her rights. The matrimonial contract also regulated the maintenance and inheritance of the future children of the couple.²⁸

Leonor of Austria was the only one to survive not only the king (who died in 1521) but also the dowager queen Leonor (who passed away four years later). As a consequence, she finally received the towns of Silves, Alvor, Faro, Óbidos, Alenquer, Sintra, Aldeia Galega and Aldeia Gavinha, which had been promised to her two predecessors but never actually given to them because of the longevity of that lady. She did not keep them for long: in 1528, she conceded them to her sister Catarina (queen, 1525-1578), the wife of the new king João III, in exchange for a great amount of money which the latter had in Castile, where Leonor lived after the death of her husband.²⁹ And, in 1530, as a consequence of the treaty of Cambrai, the former queen of Portugal married François I, becoming queen of France (Javierre, 1975, 486).

What do these matrimonial contracts tell us? The dowers and dowries of the queens of the fifteenth century had become considerable sums of money that had to be paid in several yearly installments, instead of rural estates, towns and rents as before. These sums were kept and managed by the kings, their wives only being allowed to get hold of them if they survived their death. For the daily expenses of their household and the fulfillment of their official duties, the queens were provided with two important sources of regular revenue: *mantimento* and *câmara*. Maintenance consisted of huge amounts of money paid to the queens every year by the royal treasury in three installments (“às terças do ano”: at Christmas, Easter and on Saint John the Baptist’s Day). More rarely, the queens could be provided with funds to manage their households by their own families instead of by their husbands.

In the growing monetary economy of the fifteenth century, it was the money coming from *mantimento* and *câmara* that allowed the queens to dress and embellish themselves in the manner that was expected of ladies of their rank; to feed, dress and recompense the members of their household, from the ladies-in-waiting to the humblest servants; to order jewels, paintings and literary compositions from artists and writers; to give alms to the poor, ornament churches and give liturgical books to monasteries, and so on. In short, to participate in the ceremonies and daily life of the Court with the dignity appropriate to their status and to be the protectors and providers of their followers, the Church and the Arts.

Yet, *câmara* was much more than plain revenue. In their towns, the queens not only had the right to collect all the royal tributes and taxes, and to nominate the corresponding officials (tax collectors, accountants, etc.), but also to appoint judges to judge the appeals that came from the lower courts of justice; nominate other officials in the system of justice (porters, jailers, etc.) and notaries; present the priors of the local churches to the bishop, and the governors of the castle to the king. This meant that they could reward their secular and ecclesiastical protégés for their loyalty and good service by placing them in important positions, and at the same time control local affairs through them (Rodrigues, 1995, 469-485).

Because of the gifts exchanged and the privileges granted to them in their matrimonial contracts, from their wedding day until their death, the queens of Portugal held vast sums of money and enjoyed very extensive rights and revenues that allowed them to exercise a specific form of authority in their domains and to protect, place and provide for a large entourage. Most of the time, this was done in collaboration with the king and helped to reinforce the cohesion of the court society and the unity of the realm. However, when there were disagreements between the king and the queen – as happened during the civil war between Dinis and his son, the future king Afonso

²⁸ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, I Parte, pp. 523-525.

²⁹ A. C. Sousa, *Provas*, t. II, II Parte, pp. 1-3.

IV (king, 1325-1357) – the autonomy and power of the queen could make things difficult for the sovereign, who had to suspend her rights and confiscate her rents to prevent her from helping his enemies (Dias, 1996, 161-163).

Yet, while the queens could rely on their household and lands to recruit troops and finance an army, thus reinforcing one of the warring factions, they did not have enough men and resources to control the whole country if they were to face both a coalition of noblemen and a popular uprising, as happened to the dowager queens Leonor Teles and Leonor of Aragon during the minority of their children. In fact, the authority of the queens of Portugal as partners to the kings and as landladies was largely accepted, but their royal authority was contested with arguments relating to their gender – the “womanly feebleness” of which the chroniclers accused Leonor of Aragon (Freitas, 2004, 84), for instance – even when such authority had been legally transmitted by the kings in their will. In Portugal, the law allowed royal women to hold and transmit royal authority, but in practice the gender system prevented them from exercising supreme power on a stable and long-lasting basis.

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