

Because of the limitations of time and space, I focus on 5 specific events that mark different stages of Europe. A great Gothic church was built on a hill outside of Lisbon as a reminder of the great miracle of 1385 and the good works of a Portuguese Count by the name of Nuno Alvares Pereira. This church is called Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel. Let me tell you the story of this man who was called Blessed Nuno until April 26, 2009, when he was canonized.



First a brief preface going back to the days of the Moorish conquest of Europe. (Asturias Mountain Valley above)

Under an old general who ruled North Africa, named Musa bin Nusayr—he was not only a great general but, the builder of an Islamic navy that conquered the islands of Ibiza, Majorca and Nimorca—Muslim and Christian sources cite that while Musa was eager to cross the strait and cross the seas into Europe, this is a part of history that was somewhat secretive. He was in reality encouraged to lead his Islamic expedition in Iberia after a nobleman, Julian of Ceuta, had come to Musa and encouraged him to invade, telling him of the people's sufferings under an unjust king, Roderic. Musa was also told of the riches that would be found, and the many palaces, gardens and beauties of Hispania. **In his seventies, he pushed into Spain and Portugal. On or about April 29, AD 711,** Musa first sent a large invasion force of 7000 Berbers and Arabs, led by a general named Tariq. They consolidated their troops at a large hill now known as Gibraltar. The name "Gibraltar" is the Spanish derivation of the Arabic name *Jabal Tariq* meaning "mountain of Tariq", named after him. He was aided by an additional 5000 reinforcements. Oops, let us not forget Julian and Roderick. At first it seemed that Roderick was a good guy. He was a fighter and in

actually won some battles against the Moors and became king of the Visigoths before Musa sent in the expedition of 711. Technically, he was the last king of the goths. But, he was not a nice guy. When he first came to power, as was the custom, Julian sent his daughter, Florinda, to the court of the king to receive an education. It is said that Roderick raped her, and that Julian was so incensed he worked out a plan to have the Arabs bring down the Visigothic kingdom. So getting back to 711, Roderick was no push over and he assembled an army of 100,000. Between July 19 and 23, we find a series of scrimmages but near the river Lakka, Roderick's army was soundly defeated by the Muslims and he met his demise. [187,000 for the Muslims so states the *Ad Sebastianum*.] From the beginning of the Muslim invasion of Iberia, not only did refugees from the south of the peninsula headed north to avoid Islamic authority, there was all sorts of alliances with the Moorish princes and governors. Tariq remained the governor of Hispania until the arrival of Musa about a year later. Tensions incidentally between the two grew. There is a division of opinion regarding the relationship between the two. One story states that after Musa arrived in Spain and met Tariq, Tariq dismounted from his horse as a sign of respect, but Musa struck him on the head with his horsewhip. Another story is more juicier. It concerns a fabulous piece of furniture, reputed to have belonged to the Biblical Solomon. Said to have been made of gold, and encrusted with precious gems, this important relic was noted even in pre-Islamic times to be in the possession of the Spanish Visigoths.

So Tariq took possession of the table after the surrender of one of Roderic's nephews. Most stories say that, fearing duplicity on the part of Musa, he removed one leg of the table and (in most accounts) replaced it with an obviously inferior one. The table was then added to Musa's collection of booty to be taken back to Damascus.

When both men appeared before the caliph, Musa gave out that he was the one who had obtained the table. Tariq drew the caliph's attention to the inferior (or missing) leg, for which Musa's only explanation was that he had found it like that. Tariq then produced the real leg, leading to Musa's disgrace. Both Tariq and Musa were simultaneously ordered back to Damascus by the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid I in 714. Within a decade all of the peninsula including Portugal **fell to the Moors or Muslims and for the next 400 years or so Portugal was a region of Moor or Christian principalities**. The exception was the tiny Kingdom of Asturias and the mountain-dwelling Basques.

According to one story it is from those mountains of Asturias in the northwest that

there developed a revolt.

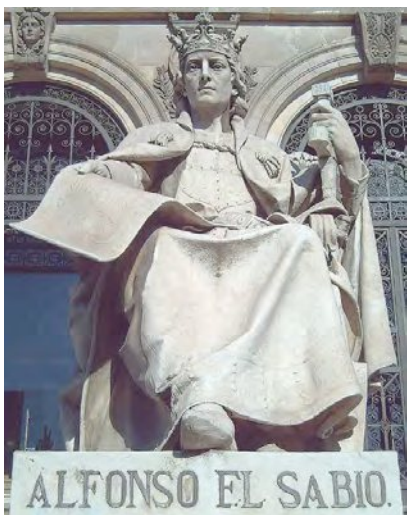
According to texts written by Mozarabs during the ninth century, noble Visigoths in the yr 718 elected a nobleman named Pelagius (681-737) as their leader. It so happened the Berber governor of Leon or Dijon became attracted to Pelagius' beautiful sister and sent word to Tariq, who ordered him to capture Pelagius. Pelagius refused to pay the Jizya (tax on non-Muslims) to his Muslim Lords, and more war resulted.



So now we go to the 1300s. In the late 1200s and early 1300s Spain, Portugal and France were lands of mixed fiefdoms and lordships. There was lots of unrest and civil strife and good marriages and marriages involving mistresses that provided trouble for the realms. Two names that should pop out are the Christian rulers of Aragon and Castile. As far back as 1224, the heirs of Castile were duking it out with those from Aragon, not to mention the fighting against the Moorish princes. Spain really was ruled by rich magnates and knights who

liked to live by robbing those below and oppressing them with no mercy. The ability to consolidate lands and power was led by Alfonso XI, who not only whipped into order his Christian populace but won victories against the Muslim invaders. Did

I mention mistresses and imperial claims and problems associated with all that? Well, the father of Alfonso XI was Alfonso X (left) was a good scholar and author and loved astrology. He fostered the development of a cosmopolitan court that encouraged learning. Jews, Muslims, and Christians had prominent roles in his court. A pretty good guy who in his early days after first invading Portugal and battling another Alfonso, King Alfonso II of Portugal, the 2 Alfonsos got into an agreement in which there would be no more war if the Alfonso of Portugal consented to marry Beatrice, the daughter of the Alfonso of Castile. Under the agreement, the king of Castile promised that he would cede all the rights he captured in the Algarve to the first male offspring of Alfonso



II and Beatrice when the child was seven years old. Sounded nice except that the Portuguese monarch was still married to Matilda II, Countess of Boulogne who, in 1255, accused her husband before Pope Alexander IV of bigamy. In 1258, the Pope condemned him for adultery, demanded that he return Matilda's dowry and placed him under interdict. Matilda, however, died that year and the Pope's threats were left up in the air. Beatrice died in 1303. Oh, did I tell you when she married she was about 11 years old and the groom was 42?

Alfonso XI sometimes was tricky. He lured a perennial trouble maker and knight Don Juan Manuel into a get together by promising to marry his daughter Constance and thus unite the realms. Don Juan had been a trouble maker for twenty long years.

Alfonso on the church holiday of All Saints 1326 murdered the so-called Don Juan the one eyed-toro, claiming el toro was conspiring with rulers of Portugal and yes, of course those from Aragon against him. After the murder, he took over all the castle possessions of the one-eyed toro—about 80 castles and all. Four years later a combined French-Spaniard force was whipped by a force from 50 English ships of King Edward III, in the company of the Prince of Wales, the earls of Lancaster, Northampton, Salisbury, Warwick, Arundel Huntington, and Gloucester that resulted in a 20 years treaty.

The apex of Alfonso fighting career came in 1340, on October 30. Things had again looked bleak when before the knights fought on land, a fleet of Muslim ships had defeated the Castilian fleet in the Straits of Gibraltar. Moreover, the Muslim armies of the king of Granada reinforced with North African Marinades (a North African dynasty) were marching on Sevilla. At the battle of the Salado River, the Christian forces of Alfonso and the Portuguese king gained an important victory along with much treasures. Alfonso even sent some of the banners captured from the Muslims to the pope. The Christian forces were in reality able to be prepared for battle because of forewarning intelligence. Part of the Castilian fleet was now so widespread it sailed off the ports of North Africa, and the increase activity in the Moroccan ports was spotted—a great amass of some 80 ships—and a great tip off was dispatched to the King and his troops back home. Part of Alfonso's fleet were from Genoa, Italy.

Historically, Alfonso is recognized as being ambitious with new taxes, loans from the pope and fees for the realm. The rise of towns as centers of trade and industry began to supplement, augment in size and scope the castles, and more and more became a source of wealth for those in power. Their expansion gave rise to a crisis in the old manorial

The Castle of Juan de Castilla, Lord of Valencia de Campos. Son of Alfonso X was appointed guardian of Alfonso XI, officially mayordomo mayor (high steward) of the future King but he died in 1319 before the future king became king.



organization which was literally replaced. The campaigns and war further weakened the fiefdoms and the expanse of populations made the concept of a nation inevitable. The nobility and gentry did not die out so easily and there was room for much turmoil in the growing ascendancy of the states.

Unfortunately, Alfonso XI died in 1350 on Good Friday due to the plague and so he floats out of history. The passing of his funeral convoy along routes held by Moorish princes, out of reverence to this great Christian King, saw all engagements cease on orders of the Muslim leaders, whom said death had snatched away a most valiant king; a fountain of honor to themselves they claimed. The mistress of old Alfonso XI was (Eleanor) Leonora de Guzman, a real beauty of whom captivated Alfonso. She was mother to several other children including Don Tello, Lord of Aguilar, and the twins Fadrique and Henry (Count of Trastamara.) She was executed in 1351 by Maria the real queen, who was also daughter of *Afonso IV*, King of Portugal. **So now we come to the 1300s and the time of Nuno.** In Spain and Portugal, knights and powerful lords were still oppressing society. The king in realms of the present day Spain was Peter, or Pedro; August 30, 1334 – March 23, 1369 (



photo of his statue by Luis Garcia), sometimes called the Cruel (el Cruel) or the Lawful (el Justiciero), was the king of Castile from 1350 to 1369. Tall, blond, muscular, was the son of Alfonso XI and the above mentioned Maria of Portugal, daughter of *Afonso IV*. He was the last ruler of the main branch of the House of Burgundy; incidentally *Afonso IV* also had a son called Peter the Cruel, or Pedro O Cruel in Portuguese.

Popular memory generally views Peter as a terrible monster. Most of this reputation comes from the works of the chronicler Lopez de Ayala who served Peter's usurper. With the passing of time, it became a fashion to speak of him as *El Justiciero*. Apologists were found to say that he had only killed

people who refused to submit to the law or respect the rights of others. We shall see how true that is. Peter did have his supporters. Oddly enough, Ayalla confessed that merchants and traders, who enjoyed security under his rule, regretted losing their security when the king fell. The English, who backed Peter, also remembered the king positively.

Peter was to be married to Joan Plantagenet, the daughter of Edward III of England, but on the way to Castile, she travelled through towns infested with plague, ignored the townspeople who had warned her not to enter the towns, and she contracted the disease and died.

King Peter met a lovely girl by the name of Maria de Padilla, in the summer of 1352 during an expedition to Asturias to battle his rebellious half-brother Henry. It was probably her maternal uncle, Juan Fernández de Henestrosa, who introduced them, as mentioned in the chronicle of King Peter's reign written by Pedro Lopez de Ayala. At that time, Maria was being raised at the house of Isabel de Meneses, wife of Juan Alfonso de Albuquerque, a powerful nobleman. He was no small fish. He was first cousin of King John II and had performed services to his King Alfonso XI as his prime minister. The Padillas were raised to various offices and dignities. The maniac Peter the Cruel had yet to ascend to his infamous notoriety.

Peter and Maria de Padilla became lovers and their relationship lasted until her death despite the King's other marriages and affairs. They were married in secret in 1353. Maria, a Castilian noblewoman, turned him against Albuquerque. In the summer of 1353 the young king, however, was virtually coerced by his mother and the nobles into marrying Blanca of Bourbon. The vicious Peter the Cruel had yet to earn his name and in his youth twice pardoned his brother Henry Count of Trastamara. On the way to the wedding with Blanca, Peter the Cruel meets the most valiant knights his brothers Henry of Trastamara and Don Tello. They assured him they did not want war but were under the fear of Lord of Albuquerque. They came to pay Peter obedience. The King answered, "I am glad to see you both, and you are friends, and I will recompense you all to your content." Peter robed in cloth of gold, faced with ermine --then marries Blanca at Valladolid --, where his brothers were both in attendance. Blanca was a indeed a beautiful lady of only fourteen years of age. Then comes a scandal on the nation. He deserts her, despite his crying mother not

Real signature of King Alfonso XI

to do it, and returns to Maria de Padilla. The lawful Queen Blanca retired to Otordefillas in the prime of her youth lamenting the cruel treatment of the rat Peter. The friends of Albuquerque were dismissed everywhere. Then according to the medieval manuscript "The History of the Reign of Peter The Cruel, King of Castile and Leon" he becomes violently enamored of Lady Jane de Castro whom he marries, but then dumps her 2 days later. He went through the form of marriage, who bore him a son, and then deserted her. No wonder he experiences more and more the disloyalty of his subjects. Re-mates with Maria de Padilla. But, to draw attention away from his moral decay, he orders his troops to march on and besiege several towns belonging to Don Juan Alfonso, Lord of Albuquerque.

It was claimed Peter abandoned Blanca within three days when he learned that she had an affair with Fadrique, the twin of Henry, en route to Spain, and that the dowry was not coming. This marriage necessitated Peter's denying that he had married Maria, but his relationship with her continued and she bore him four children. (Maria and Peter had three daughters.) He was unfaithful to two wives. His father was unfaithful to one. But Alfonso XI did not imprison his wife, or cause her to be murdered, which Peter did. He was passionately in love with his mistress, Maria de Padilla; for a time it was asserted that he was married to her, when he was undoubtedly married to Blanca of Bourbon. Maria de Padilla was the only lady that he never became quite tired.

Peter is opposed by the queen mother; in the end she is confined to the castle of Alcazar. Hostilities are renewed with his subjects and also the kingdom of Aragon while his mother dies—suspicion is that she died of poison. He creates fresh enemies after seducing the Lady Alsonza. And creates animosity with the Pope for his transgressions. In a battle at Medina del Campo, the Lord of Albuquerque met his demise. Peter continues war with Aragon and attains assistance from the Muslim lord of Granada. Peter then lost his fleet during a nasty gale of wind off the coast of Valencia.

Henry of Trastamara has a bout of success and conquers the city of Toledo, but in anger plunders the Jewish markets and murders some twelve hundred Jews, sparing neither women or children. So for a while, the Jews beseeched aid of Peter whom he gladly courted an alliance. A period of turmoil followed in which the king was for a time overpowered and in effect imprisoned. The dissension within the party striving to coerce him enabled him to escape from Toro to Segovia.

From 1356 to 1366, King Peter engaged in constant wars with Aragon in the "War of the Two Peters", in which he showed neither ability nor daring. In the end, however, Henry quitted battling and escaped to France. It principally became a war between the

two monarchs of Aragon and Castile. It was during this period that he perpetrated the series of murders which made him notorious. Two hideous transgressions recorded: murders his aunt, the queen-dowager of Aragon and also Lady Jane, the wife of Don Tello, his natural brother. Unproven, but suspected of the poisoning of Lady Isabella, widow of Don Juan of Aragon before returning to the arms of Maria de Padilla. He continues war with Aragon and continues to resist the authority of the Pope. He puts to death his brothers Peter and Juan, who were 19 and 14 years of age. That act of cruelty alienated more of his subjects. Peter conquers Miranda del Ebro and then he himself orders to plunder the Jewish inhabitants. He also puts to death two knaves of Miranda del Ebro; one he boils in oil and the other he roasts alive in his presence. Then, if that is not enough, he orders a priest to be burned to death also before his presence. The priest had a vision of the death of the king and approached the king to warn him to beware. But, the bloody tyrant rewarded the priest with death. Next to fall was Blanca, the unhappy queen, the unfortunate lady who was only 25-years of age, who was poisoned by one

of the servants of the physician Perola. The kingdom of Castile was a very unhappy kingdom. The king lost his only son Don Alfonso after his favorite Maria de Padilla dies in 1361. Forms an alliance with the court of England and King Edward III. A treaty was signed in the cathedral of St. Paul on June 22,



1362. King Peter struck further into Spain and in one town, to show terror to this enemies, in the town of Carinena, the entire garrison was put to the sword. Once more he accused Henry Count of Trastamara of treason and painted more death and cruelties. He continued oppressing the church and pillaged many of their treasures including jewels from the Cathedral of Seville which housed King Alonso X.

In 1366 began the calamitous Castilian Civil War which would soon see him dethroned. He made suckers of the King of Portugal telling him Blanca was “disinherited” because it was found she was discovered in a consensual relationship with a lover Don Frederic at Valladolid. He actually was never there, but Peter fabricated it as truth and so



the court of Portugal fixed him with 600 knights. At the head of an army of English, Portuguese and troops of Castile, Peter was to meet the forces of Aragon including the Count of Trastamara near Murviedro. He was assailed by his bastard brother Henry of Trastamara at the head of a host of soldiers of fortune, including Bertrand du Guesclin and Hugh Calveley, and abandoned the kingdom without daring to give battle, after retreating several times in the face of the oncoming armies. (First from Burgos, then from Toledo, and lastly from Seville. The entire war of the Two Peters ended c. 1375 due to the Black Death and several natural disasters.)

Now let's take a peak at France. The early years of Charles V reign were filled with baronial politics. Charles the Bad once again revolted unsuccessfully, and his dynastic claim to Burgundy ran afoul of the King's. Charles V (reigned 1364–1380), an intellectual and religious man, surrounded himself with luxury and men of educated tastes. Besides reorganizing the army, creating a new navy, instituting tax changes, and bringing Flanders, Spain, and Portugal into French alliances, he was also responsible for redecorating the Louvre to house a magnificent library, and with finishing the castle of Vincennes.

Charles VI (reigned 1380–1422) was a minor when he succeeded his father. His uncles, each possessed the ambition and resources to pursue independent policies, assumed control of the government. There was an uprising by the workers of Ghent, Belgium which spread to other towns, and was met by royal force that won a crushing victory at Roosebeke in 1382. The young king returned in triumph to deal forcefully with the populations at Paris and Rouen and in Languedoc. The provostship of the merchants was suppressed at Paris which brought that municipality under direct royal control.

Western Schism, also called **Great Schism** or **Great Western Schism**, in the history of the Roman Catholic Church is the period from 1378 to 1417, when there were two, and later three, rival popes. Each one had his own following, his own Sacred College of Cardinals, and his own administrative offices. Abridged from: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Western-Schism>:

Shortly after the return of the papal residence to Rome following almost 70 years in Avignon, the archbishop of Bari was elected Pope as Urban VI amid demands by the Roman populace for “a Roman or at least an Italian.” Urban VI proved to be so hostile to the cardinals, who had assumed great powers during the years at Avignon, that a group of cardinals retired to Anagni and elected one of themselves, Robert of Geneva, as Clement VII, claiming the election of Urban VI had been invalid because it was made under fear. Clement VII then took up residence at Avignon. Although Roman Catholic church historians generally agree that Urban VI and his successors were the legitimate popes, there has never been an official pronouncement to this effect. The double election had disastrous effects upon the church.

The followers of the two popes were divided chiefly along national lines, and thus the dual papacy fostered political antagonisms. The spectacle of rival popes denouncing each other produced great confusion and resulted in a tremendous loss of prestige for the papacy. Popes refused to submit. In 1409, there was elected a third Pope, Alexander V, who was succeeded shortly thereafter by Baldassare Cossa, who took the name John XXIII. Under pressure from the Emperor Sigismund, John convoked, in 1414, the Council of Constance, which deposed him, received the resignation of the Roman pope, Gregory XII, and dismissed the claims of the Avignon pope, Benedict XIII. That series of events opened the way to the election of Martin V in November 1417, whereby the schism was ended.

Let us retrace back to Portugal and Spain. At home, Peter was confronted by a row of illegitimate half brothers, led by Henry of Trastamara (later Henry II), who proclaimed himself defender of the “magnates” privileges against the growing power of Peter the Cruel. After leading several revolts which Peter crushed with energy, Henry, who failed to win any popular sympathy, escaped to France (1356) and offered to serve the French crown against his brother.

From 1356 to 1366 Peter was engaged in the bitter war with Aragon, whose king, Peter IV, supported Henry’s cause. During the war, Peter won many successes against Aragon while Trastamaran propaganda failed to undermine Castilian loyalty toward him. But in 1365, the French king Charles V, Pope Urban V, and Peter IV connived together to oust Peter. And to save Aragon, they initiated a plan to pay veteran French mercenaries, led by Bertrand du Guesclin, to go to Spain and overthrow Peter, replacing him by Henry.

Peter fled to Gascony and requested English help under the Anglo-Castilian alliance

concluded on June 22, 1362. The Trastamarans and their French allies were routed at Najera (April 3, 1367) by Edward the Black Prince, and Peter came back to resume his reign. Charles V sent Henry back to Spain with more French troops, and the civil war was extended. Eventually, Peter was defeated at Montiel and assassinated there by his brother's own hand. Now we reach for the story of Count Nuno. At the Battle of Aljubarrota, fought on a plain 9 miles (14 km) southwest of the town, John I of Portugal defeated John I of Castile in 1385 and secured the independence of his kingdom. The Founder's Chapel contains the tomb of the victor, John I, and Philippa of Lancaster, his English queen, as well as the tomb of Henry the Navigator, their son. Other monarchs are buried in the royal mausoleum. Only the royal cloister, church, and Founder's Chapel were included in the original design by Afonso Domingues, a native architect. *The Capelas Imperfeitas* (Unfinished Chapels) are among the best examples of *Manueline* architecture, a style of architecture, which was named for the monarch Manuel (reigned 1495–1521) and which flourished in the 16th century, that employed decorative stonework featuring nautical, angelic, and military motifs.

On April 26, 2009, the Portuguese Count Nuno Alvares Pereira (right) was canonized. Saint Nuno built the Gothic church of Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel on a hill outside of Lisbon. He gave the church to the Carmelite order, and then joined them as a simple lay brother.

Saint Nuno was born on June 24, 1360, in Flor da Rosa, the illegitimate son of Dom Alvaro and Iria Goncalves do Cavalha and grew up outside Ourem near Fatima where Our Lady appeared in 1917. He had an ardent devotion to Her, the Rosary and to the Brown Scapular. When Castilian troops invaded Portugal and surrounded Lisbon in 1373, Nuno distinguished himself that year at age 13, fighting against the Castilians in their invasion. On Aug. 15, 1376, aged 16, he consented to take Lady Eleonora de Alvim as his wife. He was fortunate to receive a knightly education when as a baby was legitimized by royal decree.

In the beginning of 1383, we had a rivalry between kings that sort of started in 1339, when a beautiful 14-year old aristocratic girl Ines de Castro first came to Portugal. The young prince and apparent heir to the throne of Portugal was smitten by her beauty—where



have we heard that one before?—to top it off, the jerk was just married to Constance. She was neglected for 5 years before she kicked the bucket in 1345, probably of a broken heart. The king's legitimate child by Constance was puny and frail but, not Ines's illegitimate children who were quite healthy. Afonso banished Ines from the realm, yet Prince Peter refused to be kept apart and stayed with her. Afonso ordered the lover of his son to be killed. In a monastery in Coimbra, Ines was detained and then murdered in 1355. She was decapitated in front of one of her children. The murderers were later captured and had their own hearts ripped out of their bodies. Under a secret agreement which he declared publicly in 1357, Peter when becoming the king disclosed he had been married to Inez, and their son John, Duke of Valencia de Campos was next in line by rightful heir, according to him. The frail son of Constance, later became Ferdinand I, by now was 12 and was contesting the heirship, too. According to a royal chronicler Lopes, Peter also had another son to a noblewoman named Teresa Lourenco. As the dukes were duking it out, a bizarre event was said to have occurred, namely Peter had Ines exhumed, placed on the throne in royal robes and forced the nobility to kiss the hem of her garment (above). Both are buried in marble coffins in the Monastery of Alcobacam where,



Not forgetting the mistress at 18 who stole the heart OF KING ALFONSO XI, revenge was attained in 1351 with the ordering of the execution of Eleanor (Leonora); here in a painting by Antonio Amoros y Botella, the now 41 year-old former mistress bids farewell to her son before execution, on order of Maria.



according to the legend, the tombs are facing each other so Peter I and Ines can look at each other as they rise from their graves on Judgment Day. The love affair and father-son conflict inspired more than 20 operas. Ferdinand was not so frail and became king in 1367 lasting for almost 20 years. Under an agreement with Castile and her father before he died, his sister Beatrice (Beatriz in Port.), not quite age 11, married Henry II of Castile. Castile still suffered from the unrest of civil war and even though Peter the Cruel was killed, Castile was still in a state of war as Henry increased the war adventures of his navy in support of the French and their war against the English. By now, Edward the Black Prince had gone back to England—not being paid and suffering by dysentery. How did Peter the

Cruel die anyway?

Outside the castle at Montiel, Bertrand du Guesclin (above) outsmarted Peter telling him he could help him go past the tents of Henry to escape. Peter offered a reward. Du Guesclin acted like a traitor instead relayed everything to Henry, who actually offered a larger sum if he could lead him inside the camp of Henry. And, from the castle, du Guesclin led his prey, when near the tent of the king, Henry II suddenly appeared.



Heated exchanges and accusations ensued before they both got into a fight to the death using only daggers. The muscular Peter got the best of Henry and was about to strike the final blow when du Guesclin nabbed Peter by the ankles enough so Henry wrestled to the top and make his kill. And, so ended the life of Peter the Cruel.

Henry II lasted as king until 1379 when he passed away. An assembly of nobility, clergy and bourgeoisie known as the Cortes in Medieval Portugal consented to announce in 1383 that upon the death of Ferdinand I, the crown would pass to his young daughter Beatrice. Beatrice had two brothers, but they had died in 1380 and 1382. Queen mother Leonor Telles de Meneses would assume protectress-regent of the child and would remain regent of the government of Portugal until Beatrice had a son, and upon him reaching his 14th birthday would assume title and office of the King.

On the death of Ferdinand I (October 1383), who died leaving no sons to succeed him, Henry II's son John I sought to claim the alliance he had with Portugal by virtue

of being married to Beatrice, the only heir. John I used to be married but his wife had died in 1382 and was very happy to wed Beatrice in 1383.

The marriage posed a threat to the entire kingdom of Portugal. Many people did not trust the Castilian mother queen and also feared the loss of independence.

It became a conflict between the step-brother of the dead king John I of Portugal, (aka John of Aviz and another John), against the claims of Ferdinand's daughter Beatrice the 10-yr old and the queen mother Leonor and John I himself. Although technically not eligible for the throne, John of Aviz was a natural leader and an ardent patriot. Beatrice had no children, in spite of an affirmation of there being a Miguel, however, that seems to be all web baloney.



A



In late November and early December, soon after the death of Ferdinand, there was an uprising in Lisbon by the people and nobles who were against the formation of a Spanish monopoly of commerce and trade in addition to the idea of takeover.



B



C

Coat of Arms on page are: A) of Saint Nuno. B) of Castilla C) of John I son of Henry II D) of Peter IV Aragon



D



On December 6, 1383, John of Aviz sneaked in to the royal palace and killed Count Jaoa Andeiro, the lover of Leonor.

Seeing the opportunity, Alvaro Pais instigated the people to riot against the government. The Bishop of Lisbon was thrown out the window from the north tower of his cathedral. It were not even the Portuguese who did this but a bunch of Castilians who thought he was with Pais.

Soon after that, Pais did indeed approach the queen mother and proposed a marriage with her to hold the realm together, but she refused the old buzzard. The uprising in the capital spread to the provinces, taking the lives of the abbess of the Benedictine nuns in Evora and the Prior of the Collegiate Church of Guimaraes and the admiral of Portugal. Soon after, John I of Castile decided not to wait for anybody and marched on Portugal.



Above, Death of Conde (Count) Andeiro at the hands of John of Aviz, from the National Museum of Soares dos Reis in Porto, Portugal; here painted by Jose de Sousa Azevedo.

In January 1384, John I of Castile decided to invade Portugal. When John's army of 5,000 strong invaded, Count Nuno had at his disposal only 300 horsemen and 1000 infantrymen. So, he devised novel tactics and at the battle of Atoleiros on April 6, he won using his new tactics. He formed his cavalry into a square and surrounded the outer edges with infantry holding their lances. Behind each lancer, there was another man ready

to pick up the lance if the first lancers were wounded or killed.

Count Nuno rode in the middle of the square giving orders and encouraging everyone. Immediately before the battle, he spoke to his soldiers exhorting them to trust in God, and then jumped off his horse and knelt before his banner that had Our Lady at the foot of the Cross on one side and the Nativity on the other. The entire Portuguese army followed suit, and knelt and prayed before the standard. When they heard the roar of the advancing Castilian army, Count Nuno leapt onto his horse.

The Castilians thought the poorly armed Portuguese cavalry would not withstand the cavalry charge. They were so sure of this that they dared to advance without a plan.

The Portuguese responded to the Castilian charge with a war cry of their own, "Portugal! St. George!" On the first impact, the Castilian horses were hideously impaled upon the row of lances. Then the Portuguese rained arrows on the Castilian troops that were behind the stalled cavalry. Confusion, and then terror, spread through the Castilian ranks. The Castilian troops saw many of their leaders dead and began to flee. Count Nuno ordered his cavalry to give chase. The Portuguese suffered no casualties, and the Castilians withdrew from this battle called **The Battle of Atoleiros**.



A day after the victory, Count Nuno made a six-mile pilgrimage barefoot, over cobblestones and rough terrain, to a nearby shrine of Our Lady in thanksgiving for her help. Upon arriving at the shrine, it was found dirty and profaned. The Castilians had quartered their horses in the church and everything smelled. With his own hands, he cleaned out the church and vowed to build a better shrine in her honor.

Despite the fact that most of his family favored Castile, Nuno was not for Castile. Although the Castilians had withdrawn in 1384, they invaded again the following year and moved on Lisbon.

Count Nuno again was undermanned.

The Nuno had about 6,500 troops which were composed of the following:

4,000 foot soldiers,

1,700 lances,

800 crossbowmen and

100 English longbowmen

Pitted against them were 15,000 foot soldiers, 6,000 lances, 8,000 crossbowmen, 15 mortars (artillery) and over 2,000 French knights. It was August 13, 1385, and the foe was

headed for Aljubarrota and they meant business scorching the land as they went.

The commander-in-chief of the army asked God for a sign that his army would be victorious through the intercession of Our Lady Queen of Portugal. When they crossed the mount of St. Michael overlooking the Cova da Iria, all his horses began to kneel, and Nuno was led to the exact spot where 532 years later Our Lady of Fatima appeared. Waving a flag with the image of the Blessed Mother, the 25-year old knight fought hard against the Castilian calvary which almost broke through.



However, Nuno ordered his Portuguese cavalry he held in reserve on the flanks to attack. This saved the Portuguese square, but the situation was desperate. When the



Castilian captains ordered their reserves to attack, they hesitated. In vain, the Castilian nobles tried to push them to the attack, but the troops in the rear began to flee. The Castilian king's last option was to order another cavalry force to charge the Portuguese from the rear. Count Nuno, however, saw this coming and had a wall of lances ready to face that charge. After more brutal hand-to-

hand fighting, the Castilian force also fled. Just then the main body of the Castilian infantry arrived at the battlefield. The knights with their banner of the Crucifixion, Our Lady, and the two patrons of knighthood, St. James and St. George chased the enemy troops who retreated in disorder. In the Battle of Aljubarrota, Nuno's troops lost about 1000 but those of Castile lost over 5000; keeping a promise if he won, he help built a monastery and several churches in her honor. The great Gothic cathedral outside Lisbon was also built to honor the Blessed Lady's help.

Although his forces were greatly outnumbered, he blocked the Castilians at Aljubarrota, and won the decisive victory, and continued to fight against them until the final peace of October 30, 1411. The Portuguese army after Aljubarrota split in two. King John took half the army to northern Portugal to expel the Spaniards and the Holy Count headed



The remains of the Gothic church, Igreja do Carmo, hit by the 9.0 quake of Lisbon in 1755; originally built in 1423 in the time of St. Nuno Pereira.

southward.

From the Spanish border, Count Nuno sent a message to the king of Castile that if he did not immediately recognize Portugal as an independent king-

dom, he then would take the battle to Spanish soil. The king of Castile said the hell with you. Once again, Count Nuno waged battle in the name of Christ and in his belief under the protection of the Blessed Mother. His way of waging war was different, above all to be respectful and merciful to their enemies and the civilian population. He drew his strength for the fight from his great devotion to Our Lady. Nuno was not hesitant to urge his soldiers to pray and receive the sacraments. He nourished special devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Virgin Mary. The future saint even pushed prostitutes and gamblers out of his camps. Nuno assisted at two Masses every day.

Count Nuno entered Spain and took control of several cities. He again divided his army, taking only about 300 knights to the Castilian camp. He hoped to lure the Castilians into a battle and then have the rest of his army launch a surprise attack. The Spaniards were in a strong strategic position on a hill across the river from Nuno and his men. The Spaniards sent half of their army to circle behind the Portuguese to attack from the rear. The prospects were grimmer than Atoleiros and Aljubarotta, and Count Nuno prayed as never before. His men were in their square formation and advanced toward the hill held by the Castilians. He hoped to take that hill, and then turn to face the other half of the Castilian army. As soon as the Portuguese crossed the river, the Castilians attacked with ferocity. Once again, Count Nuno was everywhere, shouting orders and words of encouragement to his troops. A dart wounded Count Nuno, but he ignored the pain and continued fighting. As the Castilian army pressed the attack on the vanguard, Count Nuno's men called out for him. He was nowhere to be found. A wave of panic swept

through the Portuguese. Where was Nuno Alvarez? Had he been killed?

An officer found Count Nuno, kneeling and praying between two huge rocks. He was holding a reliquary containing a thorn from Our Lord's Crown of Thorns. The officer cried out in despair, "We are lost!" Count Nuno responded, "My friend, it is not yet time. Wait a bit." And, Nuno continued to pray. Then after a few moments, Count Nuno picked up his helmet and rose to his feet. "We must go up there with my standard!" Once again, the brave knight mounted his horse, and collected his standard banner. Leading the way and shouting "Forward! Forward!" to his men, Count Nuno advanced. To the Portuguese, it seemed almost a



resurrection; most thought him killed. The Portuguese troops surged forward with Count Nuno and the foe began to give way. The Castilian army was so badly beaten there was no counterattack. With this victory of the battle of Valverde, Castile gave up subduing Portugal. Out of gratitude for this victory at Valverde, Count Nuno began construction of the shrine and monastery of Our Lady of the Scapular of Mount Carmel in Lisbon. With his friend Henry the Navigator, Nuno began the "Age of Exploration" and took the Gospel to Africa. Portugal's first African possession was Ceuta (in northern Morocco) in 1415.



So Castile's plan to annex Portugal by force failed, but in the year 1412 a Castilian prince, Ferdinand I, was successfully placed on the Aragonese throne, partly as a result of Castilian financial support and military force. [This move foreshadowed the personal union of the two crowns under Ferdinand and Isabella (1479). Isabella's daughter (his great-granddaughter) was Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, and her daughter (his great-great-granddaughter) was Queen Mary Tudor. When Catherine wife of King Henry VIII had miscarriages and no male offspring,

Henry screamed for divorce and after Pope Clement VII refused, he broke from the Catholic Church and formed the Anglican Church.]

The Spanish part of the Kingdom of Navarre was annexed by Castile in 1512, and that actually completed the formation of Portugal's neighbor into a modern Spain.

John I of Portugal rewarded Nuno Pereira, the knight who engraved the name of Mary on his sword, with titles and extensive lands and properties. He spent much of his wealth building churches and monasteries to honor Mary, who had never abandoned him in hard times. His daughter Beatrice married John I's legitimated son Alfonso and thus became ancestor of the House of Bragan, which in 1640 became the ruling house of Portugal. One of his descendants was Catherine of Bragan who became Queen Consort of England by her marriage to Charles II and in whose honor the Borough of Queens, New York was named.

Nuno set aside a third of his property for his grandchildren, a third for the poor and a third for his retirement. Nuno who had had a Carmelite house built in Lisbon in fulfillment of a vow, asked the prior for permission to join the order as a type of lay brother called a donato, after his wife's death as Friar Nuno de Santa Maria in 1423. The prior was shocked but accepted Nuno. As a donato, he would be the lowest one at the monastery, and he would only take simple vows as opposed to solemn perpetual vows. This afforded him a chance to leave the monastery and lead an army if Portugal were attacked.

The Castilians were also in disbelief, however at that time a peace treaty was signed. When a Castilian ambassador visited Nuno in the monastery, he could not believe Portugal's great hero had become a simple monk. After eight years in the monastery, Nuno Alvares Pereira died on Easter Sunday of 1431, the same year as Joan of Arc. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XV on January 23, 1918, and canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on April 26, 2009. Nuno had built at his own expense the churches of Vila Viosa, Souzel, Portel, Monsaraz, Mourao, Fivora, Camarate, and of course the magnificent cathedral of Carmel in Lisbon, which was later destroyed in the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755, along with much of the city. If you are lucky to visit Lisbon, you can still visit the site, where the bare, roofless arches have been preserved.

He also built a chapel to the Virgin Mary and to St. George exactly where his banner had stood during the battle of Aljubarrota. At Estremoz, he completed the construction of a church of Our Lady of the Martyrs, begun by King Ferdinand.

Associated with the name of Nuno are the monastery and church of St. Mary of Victory, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture in Portugal and which is better known by the name of Batalha, ordered built by John I to commemorate the victory of Aljubarrota and to fulfill a vow made on the field of battle. Batalha is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

A list of his prodigies was later compiled and became known in Portuguese literature as *The Book of the Miracles of the Holy Constable*. The most ancient document that is known in regard to the canonization of Nuno is a letter preserved in the Mediceo-Laurenziana library of Florence (*fondo Ashburnham, cod. 1792 / 1716/, vol. I, f. 20*). It was written on July 21, 1437, by King Edward to the Portuguese Benedictine John Gomes, abbot of the monastery of St. Mary at Florence and the intermediary between the Portuguese court and Pope Eugene IV. In that letter the king asks the abbot to obtain from the pope a duplicate of the decree for the process of canonization of the Holy Constable, since the one already sent to Lisbon had not arrived. At the bottom of the letter is added a prayer composed by Don Peter, brother of the king, in honor of the servant of God. The sentence of the delegated judge, signed on March 7, 1914, was confirmed by the S. Congregation of Rites on Jan. 15, 1918, and approved by Pope Benedict XV on Jan. 23, 1918.

On May 28, 1941, the decree for the resumption of the cause of canonization was published. In 1961, a huge pilgrimage was organized with his relics deposited in a silver reliquary, but it was later robbed and the reliquary remains unfound to this date. The discovery of the site of the original tomb in 1996, together with some other authenticated bone fragments, awakened the desire to hasten the proclamation of Blessed Nuno as a saint in the church. He was canonized on April 26, 2009, and his feast day is November 8.