



IN MEMORIAM: JOSÉ MATTOSO (1933–2023)



The Portuguese medievalist historian José Mattoso (1933–2023) completed the Philosophy and Theology course of the seminaries at the Benedictine monastery of Singeverga (1951–1957), which he had entered at the age of 17. He graduated from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium, 1960) and earned a doctorate from the same institution (1966). He was a professor at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa (1971–1978) and a full professor at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, where he also held the position of Vice-Rector. Furthermore, he taught at several other institutes of higher learning in Portugal and abroad.

José Mattoso was coordinator of the Commission for the Reform and Restructuring of the National Archives of Torre do Tombo (1986–1988), president of the Portuguese Archives Institute (1988–1990), Director of the National Archives Institute / Torre do Tombo (1996–1998), and vice-president of the Superior Council of Archives (1999), founding member of the IEM / Instituto de Estudos Medievais, and director of the *Medievalista* magazine (2006–2007 and 2009–2014).

Throughout his life he received various cultural and scientific awards.

It was while writing an essay on the history of the nobility in 1982 that José Mattoso became interested in the military orders.¹ He engaged in this with very specific objectives, dictated by the need to understand the role of the orders in the internal organization of the nobility as a social group. He wanted to clarify the influence of the model of religious chivalry on the ideological representation of the nobility, and to ascertain how the orders' recruitment practices absorbed the demographic surpluses created by the adoption of lineage customs from the middle of the 12th century. The results of these enquiries were mixed. While he found no evidence of the contribution of the ideal of service to Christendom in the discourses that defined the place of the nobility in society, at least until the end of the 13th century, the prosopographical data allowed him to suggest a clear link between the spread of lineage systems and the military orders' recruitment practices.

Despite the importance of these observations – which placed the study of the military orders into the field of social history and representation – their impact was very limited, if not nil. Ignored by specialists of the military orders, they only gave rise to occasional works, usually by José Mattoso's former students, aimed at reconstructing the paths of noblemen with prominent positions within the orders.² It took almost twenty years for José Mattoso's proposals to become the starting point for a prosopographical study of the military orders.³ The conclusions of this work, however, did not confirm the importance of the exclusion of second sons in the orders' recruitment practices; on the contrary, they revealed a more complex reality, typical of the social fluidity of frontier societies, even in the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

¹ José Mattoso, *Ricos-Homens, Infanções e Cavaleiros: A nobreza medieval portuguesa nos séculos XI e XII* (Lisboa: Guimaráes Editores, 1982), 227–239.

² Luís Krus, *A concepção nobiliárquica do espaço ibérico (1280–1380)* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1994); Bernardo Vasconcelos e Sousa, "As Ordens Militares nos nobiliários medievais portugueses," in *As Ordens Militares e as Ordens de Cavalaria na Construção do Mundo Ocidental. Actas do IV Encontro sobre Ordens Militares (30 de Janeiro a 2 de Fevereiro de 2002)*, ed. Isabel Cristina Fernandes (Palmela–Lisboa: Edições Colibri e Câmara Municipal de Palmela, 2005), 623–630; José Augusto Pizarro, "A participação da nobreza na Reconquista e nas Ordens Militares," in *As Ordens Militares e as Ordens de Cavalaria entre o Ocidente e o Oriente, Actas do V Encontro sobre Ordens Militares (15 a 18 de Fevereiro de 2006)*, ed. Isabel Cristina Fernandes (Palmela: Município de Palmela, 2009), 143–155.

³ Luís Filipe Oliveira, *A Coroa, os Mestres e os Comendadores. As Ordens Militares de Avis* (Faro, Universidade do Algarve, 2009).

Nevertheless, José Mattoso's favorite field of research was always the history of religion. His academic career had begun, in fact, with a study of the Benedictine monasteries of northern Portugal,⁴ and it was through the analysis of their patrons that he was able to develop his interest in their families and in the history of the nobility.⁵ It was also through analyzing the nature of the public powers they wielded that he developed an interest in political history and even the phenomenon of nationality.⁶ The religious life of the military orders, less studied and poorly known in those days, was another one of the themes to which he paid attention, organizing an innovative course on this topic in Palmela in 2009.⁷

The military orders' ideals of life and the motivations of faith that guided them, the fact that they were under ecclesiastical authority, their liturgical celebrations, their vows of poverty, obedience and, in most cases, chastity, were for him fundamental aspects of these institutions that deserved to be properly clarified. Without an understanding of this religious and spiritual dimension, he believed, it would be difficult to carry out a political, social, economic and military analysis of the orders, or to clarify the phases and chronology of the secularization phenomena that affected them in later times. To neglect all these issues would be to omit an essential part of the brethren's life.

At the time, José Mattoso pointed out various research paths, through liturgical sources, devotional practices and spiritual texts, or sculptural productions, architectural choices and associated iconographic programs, which were important for the study of values and mentalities. He emphasized the scarcity of traces and preserved medieval documentation but stressed the need to further study the brethren's liturgical calendars (*santorales*), as well as formularies and rituals, some related to war. He also emphasized the need to explore the relationship between the military orders and the Holy Land, on whom they depended, and to revisit the problem of the relationship between the orders' service model and the cultural representations of the nobility, investigating the impact of the knightly ideal (particularly the Arthurian ideal) and the way in which it was articulated in the ideology of holy war. Finally, José Mattoso did not forget the influence of the mili-

⁴ José Mattoso, *Le monarchisme ibérique et Cluny: les monastères du diocèse de Porto de l'an mille à 1200* (Louvain: Imp. Orientaliste, 1968).

⁵ José Mattoso, *A Nobreza Medieval Portuguesa: a família e o poder* (Lisboa: Ed. Estampa, 1981).

⁶ José Mattoso, *Identificação de um país: ensaio sobre as origens de Portugal: 1096–1325*. 2 vols. (Lisboa: Estampa, 1985–1986).

⁷ José Mattoso, "A vida religiosa e espiritual nas Ordens Militares," in *Ordens Militares e Religiosidade. Homenagem ao Professor Mattoso*, ed. Isabel Cristina Fernandes (Palmela: GEOS – Município de Palmela, 2010), 11–21.

tary orders on the Church's reform movements, in particular the pre-Tridentine spiritual and disciplinary renewal of the 14th and 15th centuries.

The biography of Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques, gave him the opportunity to explore other dimensions of the military orders. Their association with Jerusalem and the Holy Land allowed him to recover various traces of Portuguese involvement in the movement for the renewal and expansion of Christianity that had been created by the First Crusade.⁸ In this regard, he emphasized the significance of one of the earliest donations to the Order of the Temple, in 1128, made by Teresa, Afonso Henriques' mother, as well as the rapid installation of the Hospitalers in Leça, around 1112. While both predated the papal approval of the respective communities, the donation to the Temple was even more significant, as it took place at a time when the idea of a warrior becoming a saint in the fight against the "infidel" was still in its infancy and not yet formally recognized. On the other hand, the formation of the Temple and the analysis of the role of Bernard of Clairvaux and his *De laude novae militiae* led to interesting reflections on the somewhat different way in which the papacy's calls for holy war were received in the Iberian Peninsula and France, but also on the power of Jerusalem's spiritual attraction, associated with the Holy Sepulchre and the beatitude of pilgrimage.

Despite the attention paid to international contexts, the focus of José Mattoso's biography of Afonso Henriques was mainly on the Portuguese aspects and the Peninsula's realities. It was there that the future of the young Portuguese monarchy was ultimately at stake. José Mattoso's analysis therefore focused on the many donations made by Afonso Henriques to the Knights Templar, the knights of Évora-Avis and Saint James, and their contributions to the royal program of defending the frontier and populating the kingdom. As the economic and political power of these militias grew, they became key players in the Iberian struggle against Islam and in the formation of the Portuguese kingdom.

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⁸ José Mattoso, *D. Afonso Henriques* (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2006), 58–66.

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