

# Grand Encampment Magazine

## Grand Commander of Portugal in a Templar Country

***Is Portugal a Templar Project? Today this question is on the agenda.***

To understand the fundamental role of the Knights Templar in the formation of the Portuguese kingdom, it is necessary to understand the profound significance of the intertwining of the two aspects, exoteric and esoteric, military and monastic, of the Knights Templar in the history of Portugal.

The territory that is now Portugal was divided in two parts: to the North, belonging to the Kingdom of León, the "Condado Portucalense", and to the South, in the possession of the Muslim kingdoms.



In the year 1087, French crusaders come to help Alfonso VI of León to fight the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula. One of them was Don Henrique, nephew of the Count of Toulouse. Due to the success and courage shown by these knights demonstrated, King Alfonso VI of León, in recognition, gave his daughter Teresa in marriage and delegated his conquered territory, the Portucalense Region, to Don Henrique. (see map).

On a crusade to the Holy Land, Count Henrique met his cousin Hugo de Payens, also a Burgundian nobleman, and won the recognition of the kings Godfrey of Bullion and Baldwin II. From this friendship and family connections to Bernard of Clairvaux, he brought to Iberia some Knights, not yet stated Templars, who arrived around 1126. In 1128, shortly before the Council of Troyes, Countess Teresa, now a widow, donates the first castle to these Knights, the Castle of Soure. Not yet the Order was formed, they already owned property in this region.

When our First King declared the independence of Portugal, his first act was to confirm his mother's donation of Castle of Souro, an important base for the defense of the territory, declaring himself Brother of the Order:



... "this donation I make, not by command, or persuasion of anyone, but for the love of God, and for the remedy of my soul, and of my Parents, and for the cordial love I have for you, and because in your Brotherhood and in all your works I am a Brother (...). Sign: D. Afonso, with my own hand, reinforce this letter.

Castle of Soure, one of the first castles owned in Europe, became the first headquarters of the Order of the Temple in Portugal for more than three decades, until the construction of Tomar Castle. And for the first time, the Templars put their weapons at the service of Christianity outside the geographical space of the Holy Land. The importance of this donation is further attested by the fact that it was confirmed by the King of León and Castile, giving it an important geostrategic political meaning.

D. Afonso Henriques had the soul of a founder, possessing the war spirit of the Celtic and Lusitanian warriors. He had a powerful partner in St. Bernard and a deep alliance with the Knights Templar, considered St. Michael his Archangel protector and was a great friend of St. Teotónio, a great mystic and first Portuguese saint.

POR TUO GRAL

The Mysterious Seal of King D. Afonso Henriques



As far as the isoteric aspects are concerned, it is recognized that the Templars found in this territory a nation of deep spirituality and profound worship of the Holy Spirit; they found a country made up of "people who love peace but become great in war"; and they were deeply committed to the crusade to recover the peninsular territories for Christianity.

Portugal was born at the same time of the Order of the Temple, and with them! Our first king, Henry, had the Templars at his side in every battle throughout his life.

All the conditions were thus created for the development of the Knights Templar in Portugal.

The first Knight Templar crusade was started, and it was in Portugal.

Always accompanying the Portuguese kings on their crusades in the territory of Portugal, it was assumed by the kings that all the castles they conquered would be under their government, both in defense and in development and administration.

The Templars remained in Portugal all their lives, being military, administrators, authorities, merchants, navigators, owning a huge part of Portuguese territory.

They created Tomar as the headquarters of the 5th region, which included Portuguese territory and a large part of what is now Spain. There they built what is taken the first castle in Europe based on the architecture of the Orient. Even today, Tomar is considered one of the most genuine sites of Templar culture.

When the Templars were arrested on October 13, 1307, the Portuguese king D. Dinis did not accept the guilt of the Knights of Solomon. This is an extraordinary story of courage, intelligence, and vision that we'll explain another time.

What's important is that, although he didn't want to close the Order at first, the King ended up negotiating with the Pope to create another Order and transferred all the Knights and all the property to it.

Thus was born the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ.

It was a genuine continuation of the Knights Templar, unique in the world. The continuity of all their actions was guaranteed, and a new era began in Portugal with profound technological development, innovations, creativity and navigations.



*(to be continued)*

## Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Portugal

In March 2022 was elected, and reelected in March 2023, the present Grand Commander, R E S K José Almeida Gomes.



Sir Knight José Almeida Gomes, Grand Master of Honor of the Grand Lodge of Portugal, was born in 1957-02-15.

He has a long history of Masonic activities, having been the founder of several Masonic Lodges as well as taking on a wide range of responsibilities, such as Grand Officer of the Grand Lodge in different roles, masonic ambassador, sovereign grand inspector of the Supreme Council for Portugal of the Scottish Rite, among other Masonic Bodies, having distinguished himself mainly in the York Rite where he took the lead as Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of the Royal Arch of Portugal, and was one of the founders of the Grand Commandery of the Knights Templar of Portugal and of the Commandery No. 3 "Christopher Columbus", of which he was Commander.

His activity in secular life was very rich.

With a degree in Engineering, he dedicated his life to national humanist institutions, not only as an engineer, but also as a leader. He held positions in Social Security; at the Polytechnic Institute of Guarda; as General Director of Roads for the District of Guarda and Coimbra; and in politics as a councilor on the Guarda City Council, among others.

However, we can highlight the creation of the "ADM Estrela" institution in Guarda 32 years ago.

ADM is an IPSS - Private Institution of Social Solidarity, recognized as a legal person of public utility and NGOPD, a Non-Governmental Organization for People with Disabilities.

*"Its principles are social solidarity; promotion and development of charitable social activities; social and community inclusion; equal opportunities for men and women; health, education, training and professional development; and aims to assume a social role of recognized value in terms of supporting populations with greater social vulnerability, having been increasing its offer in terms of social support and intervention with the population" \*(from the ADM Estrela site)".*

It is clear that Sir knight José Gomes plays an important role in the Portuguese Society of, as a doer, where it is essential to "think" with a practical sense, in order to improve institutions and promote their development.

The work of Sir Knight José Gomes, Grand Commander of Knight Templars, represents the highest values of the Knight Templars, as a man who joins faith and conviction with study and, above all, with actions on behalf of the society aimed at the most vulnerable people, making the world more precious by his personal humanity.