

The Treaty of Tagilde

10 July 2022 will mark the 650th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Tagilde, one of the principal treaties leading to the formation of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance – the oldest alliance in the world still in force. The article examines the context and consequences of the treaty, which provided the legal foundation for the subsequent alliance.

By Jenny Benham

Background

The Treaty of Tagilde was forged in the context of the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), which, although a conflict between England and France, in fact involved most of Europe with lots of different rulers and political entities supporting either the English or the French side. The expansion of the war into Iberia was facilitated by the conflicts over the kingdom of Castile between King Peter and his half-brother Henry Trastámara. Henry killed Peter in 1369 and became king in his own right but his claim to the throne of Castile was challenged by both Ferdinand I of Portugal, who had a claim as the legitimate great-grandson of Sancho IV of Castile, and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and third son of King Edward III of England, who married Peter's daughter, Constance of Castile, in 1371. War between the various claimants seemed inevitable, and it was in this context that an embassy from John of Gaunt arrived in Portugal to negotiate and conclude the Treaty of Tagilde.

The Treaty

The treaty was concluded in the Church of São Salvador in Tagilde and set out that the King of Portugal and the Duke of Lancaster were true friends and military allies. It was an attempt by John of Gaunt to not only have his own claim to the Castilian throne recognised by a foreign power but also to entice the Portuguese king to join the fight against Henry Trastámara. For the Portuguese king, Ferdinand, the treaty provided an opportunity to assert the independence of his own kingdom against interference from Castile. The importance of this mutual recognition is evident in the text of the Treaty of Tagilde, which records that it applied to Ferdinand I and John of Gaunt and the people and territories they respectively ruled over as kings of Portugal and Castile, but, in the case of John of Gaunt, also included that which he ruled over as Duke of Lancaster.



Detail from the monument to the Treaty of Tagilde in Tagilde (Braga)

John of Gaunt had received from his father, the English king, permission in early 1372 to incorporate the royal arms of Castile and Leon into his own. By doing so, he portrayed himself as both a king in his own right as well as Duke of Lancaster – one of the most powerful lords of the English kingdom. The Treaty of Tagilde did not amount to a full alliance between an English and a Portuguese king, but it nonetheless was a contract with one of the English king's most powerful subjects in a geographical area where the English king would have been keen to extend his influence to put pressure on his French rival and win the Hundred Years' War. The Treaty of Tagilde, written in the original Castilian language to reflect John's claim as king, was of great significance, and it is hardly surprising that it is still preserved among the records of the Duchy of Lancaster – a large portfolio of property now belonging to Her Majesty the Queen.

The practical aim of the Treaty of Tagilde was a military campaign against John of Gaunt's rival for the Castilian throne, Henry Trastámara, with the English attacking Castile and Aragon from the north and Ferdinand's Portuguese troops from the west. The plan never came into fruition. In the wake of the Treaty of Tagilde, Henry Trastámara invaded Portugal, advancing through Coimbra to Lisbon, and between February and March 1373, he besieged and plundered the city. A peace treaty between Castile and Portugal was hastily concluded in Santarém on 24 March 1373, after which the king of Castile lifted the siege of Lisbon and abandoned Portugal. Ferdinand I was forced to renounce his English ally – John of Gaunt – and to join forces with Castile and France.

The Treaty of London

However, within three months, Ferdinand celebrated the conclusion of an alliance with Edward III of England, negotiated by the same ambassador, João Fernandes Andeiro, who had been involved in negotiating the Treaty of Tagilde and who had seemingly been expelled from Portugal in accordance with the Treaty of Santarém. Some historians have referred to the duplicity of the Portuguese king in concluding the Treaty of Santarém, abandoning his English ally John of Gaunt, but negotiating a new alliance with Edward III almost immediately. Yet, Ferdinand was able to do this without ever breaching the obligations in Santarém because that treaty specifically named John of Gaunt as the main enemy and contracting party of Tagilde rather than the king of England.

The Treaty of Tagilde had seemingly been intended as a way to test the waters politically and militarily. In particular, it allowed both the Portuguese and the English to understand better what Henry Trastámara might do if provoked, and to act once this was clear. The Treaty of Tagilde was effectively a constitutional extension of the power of the English king, Edward III, through his son John of Gaunt as claimant to the throne of Castile and as Duke of Lancaster. Such limited treaties tended to imply a ruler's consent or involvement in some way, and rulers usually reserved the right to extend, limit or exclude such treaties from any treaty they themselves concluded. Once the Castilian king's response was clear – a swift and brutal campaign against his Portuguese neighbour – Edward III certainly exercised this right by concluding the first full alliance between an English and a Portuguese king.

This new treaty was ratified in London in 1373 and explicitly presented itself as an expansion of the alliance that had been 'mutually agreed upon, contracted and written down' between Ferdinand I, his wife Leonor, and John of Gaunt. The first clause of the Treaty of London states that the respective kings and their successors, their realms, and subjects should 'faithfully obey, true, faithful, constant, mutual, and perpetual friendships (*Amicitiae*), unions (*Adunationes*), alliances (*Alligantiae*), and leagues of sincere affection (*purae Dilectionis foedera*'); and that 'they shall henceforth reciprocally be friends to friends and enemies to enemies, and shall assist, maintain, and uphold each other mutually, by sea and by land, against all men that may live or die.' The wording of the alliance as formalised in this treaty is the one that has subsequently been confirmed on several occasions. The Treaty of Tagilde then, as its precedent, was, quite simply, the legal foundation of the alliance between England and Portugal.

Connection of the Tagilde treaty to the marriage of King Ferdinand

A slightly different, more personal but also intriguing, context to the treaties of Tagilde and London can be found with the marriage diplomacy of the Portuguese king, Ferdinand. Following the death of King Peter of Castile in 1369, Ferdinand had tried to press his own claim to the Castilian throne and embarked on two unsuccessful campaigns against Henry Trastámara. The campaigns resulted in the Treaty of Alcoutim of March 1371, in which Ferdinand renounced his claim to the throne of Castile and promised to marry the infanta Leonor of Castile, Henry's daughter. Ferdinand, despite his promises, had in fact already developed an affection for Leonor Teles, the wife of one of his own courtiers. Swiftly procuring the dissolution of Leonor's marriage, Ferdinand reneged on his promises to Henry and his daughter and married Leonor Teles in May 1372, thereby setting the scene for his alliance with John of Gaunt in the Treaty of Tagilde.

The Portuguese chronicler Fernão Lopes, writing around half a century after these events, presents Leonor as a treacherous figure who, aside from abandoning her children from her first marriage to become queen of Portugal, also later engages in an affair with João Fernandes Andeiro – Ferdinand's ambassador to England in 1371, and subsequently a trusted man of John of Gaunt and the negotiator of the treaties of Tagilde and London. The exact relationship between the Portuguese queen and João Fernandes Andeiro is not fully known, but it is certain that he – a Galician in origin – had assisted Ferdinand on one of his military campaigns against Henry Trastámara and he was expelled from the kingdom of Castile as a result. He was subsequently also expelled from Portugal as one of the conditions of peace with the Castilian king in the Treaty of Santarém in 1373. It has further been suggested that it was João who pressured Ferdinand into concluding the alliance with Edward III of England, just three months after Santarém.

Whatever the truth of this matter, the chronicler certainly gave both João and Leonor starring roles in the last years of Ferdinand's reign and in the civil war that followed. João negotiated the marriage between Beatrice, daughter of Ferdinand and Leonor, and the new Castilian king, John I, before being assassinated by a party opposed to the marriage and its implications for Portugal's independence from Castile. Leonor assumed the regency of Portugal on her daughter's behalf upon her husband's death in 1383, before initially resigning her powers in favour of her son-in-law and subsequently opposing him and being banished to a convent in Castile. In sum, the intrigues of Queen Leonor and the ambassador João Fernandes Andeiro resulted in a short civil war, which was settled at the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385. Here, John I of Portugal – King Ferdinand's half-brother – emerged victorious, securing the Portuguese throne as well as the independence of the kingdom against the Castilian king, John I.

The Treaty of Windsor

This victory was followed up with external recognition for the new king through the renewal of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance in the Treaty of Windsor of 1386, and similar events of specific political need would set a pattern for the renewals of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance for the next century. The importance of the Treaty of Tagilde hence lay not only in the legal foundation of the alliance to provide reciprocal military aid and friendship, but also in giving a formal means of reciprocal international recognition of legitimacy and authority to those who entered into it. Tagilde was an important affirmation of Portugal as an independent entity from Castile (and later Spain), and each time the Anglo-Portuguese alliance was renewed, this was confirmed. This explains well one reason why the alliance has lasted across centuries of many conflicts.

The Treaty of Windsor included one additional aspect of the Anglo-Portuguese relationship, which, although not expressed in the treaties of Tagilde and London, must have been part of their rationale: namely, the economic aspect. A commercial treaty had been concluded in 1353 between the English king, Edward III, and 'the good men (*les bones Gentz*)', merchants, mariners, towns twelfth century, when King John of England referred to the king of Portugal as his 'dearest brother and friend' and

granted letters to Portuguese merchants entitling them to free and safe passage, access to local markets, and redress in case of loss or damage to their goods or person. King John's son, Henry III, in 1226 and 1227 granted similar rights to up to 100 merchants and to towns such as Oporto and Coimbra, and over the course of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries such grants grew steadily. The rights to such free and safe movement of people and goods, and to redress for loss or damage to property or person, were essential ingredients for the alliance, and these customary practices built incremental advantages that would prove long-lasting in the future.

Conclusions

The Anglo-Portuguese alliance can be said to have originated with four different treaties: a commercial treaty between the English king, Edward III, and Portuguese merchants dating to 1353, which formalised long-standing customary practices; the Treaty of Tagilde of 1372, concluded between King Ferdinand I of Portugal and John of Gaunt, a claimant to the kingdom of Castile but also a son of the English king; the Treaty of London of 1373 between Edward III of England and Ferdinand I of Portugal, which formalised the Treaty of Tagilde, essentially setting out the political aim of being allies in perpetuity; and, finally, the Treaty of Windsor of 1386, which combined fully both the commercial and political aspects of the alliance into a single treaty concluded between Richard II of England and John I of Portugal. Subsequent renewals of the alliance were then made on the basis of the text as formalised in the treaties of 1373 and 1386. The Treaty of Tagilde, hence stands at the heart of the creation of the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. During more than six centuries it has survived many challenging historical events and emergencies, including two world wars, the rise and fall of empires, revolution and decolonisation, and European integration as well as globalisation. The 650th anniversary of Tagilde provides an opportunity to promote the continued meeting of people as well as the cultural, economic and political interests of the UK and Portugal in the post-Brexit world.

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