

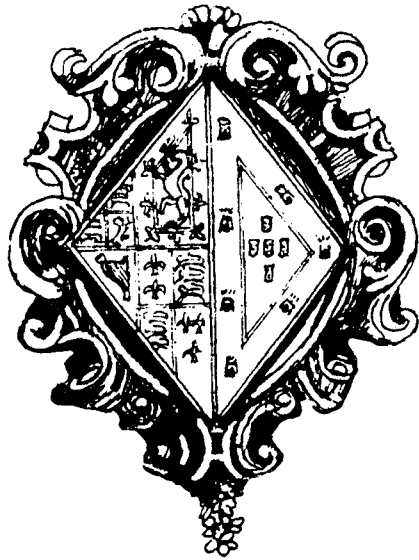
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## THE PORTUGUESE TITLES OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

by J. B. Dominick



Wellington for his exploits received several foreign titles. He was made Prince of Waterloo by the Netherlands in 1815 (Waterloo was then part of Holland, Belgium only became an independent country in 1830). In Spain he was granted the titles of Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo (1812) and made a Grandee of the 1st Class. One of this secondary British titles is Marquess Douro, the courtesy title of the eldest son. Although the place is, of course, in Portugal the title is of the United Kingdom and reflects the name the Portuguese troops called him.

But Portugal or, more precisely, the Prince Regent, the future D. João VI gave Wellington three titles. He was made Conde do Vimeiro by a Decree issued on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1811 (reflecting the battle he won against the French on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1808 during the 1<sup>st</sup> French invasion of Portugal); Marquês de Torres Vedras (commemorating the famous lines) by a Decree dated December 17<sup>th</sup> 1811 and, finally Duque da Victória (Decree of December 12<sup>th</sup> 1812). This last title is often thought to be Spanish as Wellington fought and won a decisive battle against the French near Victória in Spain. But the Portuguese title merely expressed "Victory" in an abstract sense.

For the record and out of curiosity we transcribe the wording of the Decrees (original spelling) in Annex I.

A curious problem however arose this century due to another war in the succession of these titles. The 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington, Henry Valeria was killed in action in Italy in 1942. He was unmarried. He was succeeded in his titles by his uncle Gerald, who became the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke (the present 8<sup>th</sup> Duke is a son of the 7<sup>th</sup>).

This 7<sup>th</sup> Duke was a younger brother of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke (father therefore of the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke killed in Italy) but between these two brothers there had been another brother Lord Richard Wellesley who himself was killed in action in 1914. But Lord Richard was married and had had only daughters. According to English peerage law daughters don't usually succeed to titles but this is not the case in Portugal. Therefore should not the Portuguese titles of the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington have been succeeded by the daughters of his uncle Lord Richard separating therefore the English titles from the Portuguese ones?

After all this is what exactly happened when King William died regarding the crown of Hanover. William IV's next brother, the Duke of Kent, was dead and his daughter Victoria succeeded to the crown of England but she couldn't succeed to Hanover because (like most English peerages) the salic law applied in Germany so therefore the next brother, the Duke of Cumberland, duly became king of Hanover and therefore different persons were vested in their respective crowns. Should not the same have happened to the U.K. Dukedom of Wellington and the Portuguese Dukedom of Victória? The same thing after all happened to Nelson. The great admiral was made Earl Nelson in the U.K. peerage and was created Duke of Bronté by the King of the Two Sicilies. When Nelson died he had no legitimate children so by special remainder his brothers were allowed to succeed. The next Earl Nelson only had a daughter so the U.K. Earldom was eventually passed to a third brother whereas the Dukedom of Bronté passed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl's daughter. Yet the present Duke of Wellington (the 8<sup>th</sup>) uses the Portuguese titles. How did this happen?

The curious answer is that when the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke died in 1942 and, as stated above, was succeeded in his U.K. Dukedom by his Uncle a special request was made to the Portuguese Pretender, D. Duarte Nuno, Duke of Braganza (father of the present Duke) requesting that as the titles had been conferred on the glorious first Duke they should not become separated from the Dukedom of Wellington. The Duke of Braganza (then living in Switzerland the Royal family was only allowed to return to Portugal at the end of

40's) as in the matter of honours the King freely decides, agreed. We transcribe the letter, a copy of which sits in the archives of the Conselho de Nobreza (a private body under the authority of the Duke of Braganza which regulates all matters of titles in Portugal) as Annex II.

#### ANNEX 1

“Tendo consideração ás illustres e Sublimes qualidades que concorrem na Pessoa de Lord Wellington, Marechal General dos Meus Exércitos e Comandante em Chefe dos Exércitos Combinados e de que ao seu valor talentos grandes luzes de conhecimento na Arte Militar e da Guerra como tambem a boa ordem com que tem disposto, e dirigido os diferentes ataques contra o Inimigo com mais na importantissima conquista da defesa dos Meus Reinos e deixem os gloriosos Triunfos que alcançou sobre os Franceses nas brilhantes batalhas de Roliça, e Vimeiro e as assinaladas Victórias que Os Valerosos Soldados Portugueses, Meus fieis Vassallos auxiliados com as bravas tropas Britânicas, a quem procurarão anular, obtiverão Gloriosamente no Douro, e no memorável dia vinte e sete de Setembro do ano passado no Combate junto á Terra do Buçaco, em que valorosamente rechaçarão o Exército comandado pelo General Massena com considerável perda entre mortos e feridos frustrando-se totalmente a tentativa do Inimigo de se apoderar da vantajoza posição que os Exércitos combinados ocupavão nas alturas da mesma Serra resultando dos acertados movimentados e disposição do mesmo Lord Wellington cobriram-se de Glórias as tropas fazendo-se por todos eles relevantes serviços e plausiveis acções credor a que Eu lhe dê um sinal do Meu Agradecimento e do quanto considero e contemplo a Sua Pessoa. Hei por bem e me Praz fazer-lhe Mercê do Titulo de Conde de Vimeiro e de promovê-lo a Dignidade de Grã-Cruz Honorário da Ordem da Torre e Espada com uma comenda da mesma Ordem e de uma Pensão anual de vinte mil cruzados em duas vidas pelo Cofre do Corregedor das vagas, izentando-o de pagamento dos Novos e Velhos Direitos e de qualquer outro Emolumento que por estas Mercês se costuma pagar. Palácio do Rio de Janeiro em 13 de Março 1811 com a Rubrica do Principe Regente e Nosso Senhor.

Confere Archeiro Público Nacional, 11 de Fevereiro 1811

--ooOoo--

Havendo o Conde de Vimeiro, Marechal General e Comandante em Chefe dos Exércitos Aliados, continuando com valor e glória a defesa de Portugal, sustentando a bem merecida reputação dos Exércitos do seu Comando a independência dos Meus Reinos e os Sagrados Direitos do Meu Trono pelo sucessivos triunfos, sábias manobras e bem concentrados Planos com que tem malgrado os porfiosas e repetidos esforços do inimigo que ainda se arroja e procura invadir os Meus Estados. E querendo dar-lhe um novo e assinalado Testemunho da Minha Real satisfação e reconhecimento por tão distintos e relevantes Serviços. Hei por bem e me Praz Fazer-lhe Mercê do Título de Marquêz de Torres Vedras: Isentando o do pagamento dos Novos e Velhos Direitos e de qualquer outro Emolumento que por esta Mercê se costuma pagar.

Palácio do Rio de Janero, dezassete de Dezembro de mil oitocentos e onze.

Com a rubrica do Principe Regente.

--ooOoo--

Querendo dar ao Marquêz de Torres Vedras, Marechal General e Comandante em Chefe dos Exércitos Aliados, Um novo Reconhecimento de que tanto se faz credit pela continuação das brilhantes Victórias com que tem com imortal Glória abatido o Orgulho do Inimigo comum e malgrado os seus projectos na Peninsula fazendo-se merecedor de que Eu acrescente em Grandeza com um titulo que recorde tão memoráveis triunfar. Hei por bem e me Praz Fazer-lhe Mercê do Título de Duque da Victória. Isentando dos pagamentos dos Novos e Velhos Direitos e de quaisquer outros Emolumentos que por esta Mercê se continua a pagar – Palácio do Rio de Janeiro dezassete de Dezembro de 1812. Com rubrica do Principe Regente.

ANNEX 11

Gunten, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1945

To His Grace  
The Duke of Wellington etc. etc. etc.

My dear Duke

It was a great pleasure for me to receive your letter, which reached me on Oct, 2<sup>nd</sup>. I regret that I could not answer it sooner, but as my wife and I frequently enjoy the opportunity of travelling in this beautiful country, it happened that in one of the hotels in which we stayed I misplaced some letters, amongst which was yours. They turned up again only a few days ago, and I sincerely hope that the delay in answering will not have caused you any inconvenience.

There is no question but that my Great-grandfather's intention in bestowing Portuguese titles on the first Duke of Wellington, was that they should remain linked to the memories of our War of Independence, that is, to the glorious title of the Duke of Wellington.

I, therefore, do not hesitate to decree that these Portuguese honours should devolve always on whoever succeeds to the British Dukedom of Wellington and that, on the extinction of that title, owing to the failure of issue of the First Duke in the male line, should they return to the Royal House of Bragança from whence they issued. The then Duke of Bragança will be free to bestow them (preferably in agreement with the last Duke) on that female member of the Wellesley Family whom he considers most worthy and apt to bear them and the historical tradition they represent, taking into consideration the educational and social position, through marriage, of the lady in question.

I sincerely hope, my dear Duke, that this decision is to your liking. Should you want to make any special objection or proposition I will be glad to hear it.

I add the following for your personal information:

In Portugal only very few titles exist which can devolve automatically, from father to son even, without a special consent from the King; the more so when it is a question of devolving onto the female line. That there are many misuses of this tradition nowadays in Portugal is an unhappy fact which I am the last to deny, but am determined to alter as soon as I shall have the possibility to do so.

Before finishing this letter I should like to mention to you that there exists another link (besides the memories of the Iberian Peninsular's War of Independence) between my Family and yours, which is on our part the feeling of – may I call it – grateful friendship. Your Great-grandfather showed his appreciation of the very honest and loyal character of my Grandfather the King Dom Miguel I, (he reigned from 1828 to 1834, died in exile 1866), and it was the Duke of Wellington's upright, courageous attitude as British Prime Minister, defending his rights, the throne and the honour of Dom Miguel, the independence of Portugal and the old English-Portuguese Alliance, which in 1830 forced him to capitulate to the internationally organised enemies of the legitimate Monarchy in Portugal. His successor was the Earl of Grey, whose Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lord Palmerston, was unhappily the greatest possible contrast to the Duke of Wellington in every sense of the word.

You understand now why it was a real pleasure for me to receive your letter.

I remain, my dear Duke

Your sincerely,

Dom Duarte, Duke Bragança (signed)