

ÁLVARO DE LUNA AS TYRANT. PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN 15TH CENTURY CASTILE

JOSÉ MANUEL NIETO
UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
SPAIN

Date of receipt: 15th of February, 2016
Final date of acceptance: 25th of May, 2016

ABSTRACT

The continued portrayal of Juan II of Castile's *privado* and royal favourite, Álvaro de Luna, as a tyrant, the record of the social expansion of this portrayal throughout his time in office and the fact that the main reason for his execution refers precisely to this argument are historic circumstances that offer the chance to explore the shaping of public opinion, its chronological development, social scope and political usefulness, within the possibilities and limitations of the resources available.¹

KEYWORDS

Castile, Juan II, Álvaro de Luna, Tyranny, Political Conflict.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Castella, Iohannes II, Alvarus de Luna, Tyrannis, Conflictus politicus.

1. Introduction

Interest in the various communication practices related to contexts of political conflict has become more and more evident, particularly in the last decade and a half.² This has resulted in the growing historiographic prominence of a field of analysis that has been receiving an increasing amount of attention from historians, without neglecting the conceptual problems involved in any attempt to address the different issues associated with this line of work.³ The outcome of this has been the notable expansion of the scope for analysing communication phenomena,⁴ with a particular emphasis on the above in terms of symbolic communication,⁵ as well as the consideration of an increasingly broader range of sources related to the analysis of its various manifestations.⁶

The consequence of such a historiographic approach has been to highlight, within the study of the medieval era, how historic frameworks were shaped in 14th and 15th century societies in which an appreciation of the processes of information and misinformation are topics that must be studied in any attempt to clarify the processes of political conflict.⁷

1. This study is part of the project *Prácticas de comunicación y negociación en las relaciones de consenso y pacto de la cultura política castellana, ca. 1230-1504* (HAR2013-42211-P), supported by the Secretary of State of Research, Development and Innovation of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain. It is a Research and Development (R&D) Project, part of the State Program of Development of Scientific and Technical Research Excellence, Knowledge Generation subprogram, for the period 2014-2016.

2. For an extensive bibliography on this subject see: Mostart, Marco. *A Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2012.

3. For two clarifying summaries of these conceptual problems see: Oliva, Hipólito Rafael. "Sociabilidad y comunicación política a fines de la Edad Media. Algunas reflexiones previas", *Convivir en la Edad Media*, Juan Carlos Martín, ed. Burgos: Dosssoles, 2010: 213-231; Dumolyn, Jan. "Political Communication and Political Power in the Middle Ages: A Conceptual Journey". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 13 (2012): 33-55.

4. Dutour, Thierry. "L'élaboration, la publication et la diffusion de l'information à la fin du Moyen Âge (Bourgogne ducal et France royale)", *Haro! Noël! Oyé! Pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge*, Nicolas Offenstadt, Didier Lett, dirs. Paris: Publications de La Sorbonne, 2003: 141-155; Lemonde, Anne; Taddei, Ilaria, eds. *Circulation des idées et des pratiques politiques. France et Italie (XIII-XVI siècle)*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2013; Gamberini, Andrea; Genet, Jean-Philippe; Zorzi, Andrea, eds. *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries*. Rome: Viella, 2011; Hattori, Yoshihisa. *Political Order and Forms of Communication in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Rome: Viella, 2014.

5. On the conceptual aspects of symbolic communication see the monographic: Reinhardt, Nicole; Monnet, Pierre; Klesmann, Bernd; Bruhns, Hinnerk, dirs. "Culture politique et communication symbolique". *Trivium*, 2 (2008). Online version: Reinhardt, Nicole; Monnet, Pierre; Klesmann, Bernd; Bruhns, Hinnerk, dirs. "Culture politique et communication symbolique". *Trivium*. October 2008. 13 February 2016 <<https://trivium.revues.org/793>>.

6. Genet, Jean-Philippe. "Image, représentation et communication politique", *Power and Persuasion. Essays on the Art of State Building in Honour of W.P. Blockmans*, Peter Hoppenbrouwers, Antheun Janse, Robert Stein, eds. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010: 275-290.

7. Verdon, Jean. *Information et désinformation au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Perrin, 2010; Billoré, Maïté; Soria, Myriam. *La Rumeur au Moyen Âge. Du mépris à la manipulation, V-XV siècle*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011.



Within this growing interest in the various expressions related to communication activities, including even before this line of research started to show the first signs of expansion in the early 21st century, everything connected with the concept of public opinion took on an important role as the subject of analysis.⁸ Although this concept of public opinion was the subject of controversy for its supposed unsuitability for the medieval era or, to the contrary, for its crucial importance in the analysis of particular conflicts,⁹ it has certainly not been absent from recent historiography in connection with late medieval contexts.¹⁰ Likewise, discussion of the political role of public opinion has demanded particular consideration of rumour as a useful fighting tool in conflictive situations.¹¹

The reference to the idea of the tyrant and tyranny is present in intellectual debate during the entire medieval era as a consequence of the interest shown by many medieval political writers in the reception of and comments made on this issue in the work of Aristotle, Cicero and Saint Gregory, amongst others.¹² There are some important accounts dating back to the Visigoth era,¹³ in which the thoughts of Saint Isidore had a significant influence on medieval development in relation to this topic. There is strong evidence of this interest in Castile during the early middle

8. Guenée, Bernard. *L'opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Âge d'après la "Chronique de Charles VI" du Religieux de Saint-Denis*. Paris: Perrin, 2002; Gauvard, Claude. "Le roi de France et l'opinion publique à l'époque de Charles VI", *Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l'état moderne. Actes de la table ronde de Rome (15-17 octobre 1984)*. Rome: École française de Rome, 1985: 353-366; Nadrigny, Xavier. *Information et opinion publique à Toulouse à la fin du Moyen Âge*. Paris: École des chartes, 2013. About Castile: Val Valdivieso, María Isabel del. "La opinión pública en los núcleos urbanos de la Castilla de fines de la Edad Media: posibilidades de estudio", *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona, eds. Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 173-191.

9. Laborie, Pierre. "Opinion publique", *Historiographies, II: Concepts et débats*, Christian Delacroix, François Dosse, Patrick Garcia, Nicolas Offenstadt, dirs. Paris: Gallimard, 2010: 802-813.

10. Gauvard, Claude. "Qu'est-ce que l'opinion publique avant l'invention de l'imprimerie?", *L'Opinion. Information, rumeur, propagande. Le Rendez-vous de l'histoire*, Claude Gauvard, Alain Corbin, Christian Delporte, Jean-François Sirinelli, eds. Nantes: Éditions Pleins, 2008: 21-59.

11. De Craecker-Dussart, Christiane. "La rumeur: une source d'informations que l'histoire ne peut négliger. À propos d'un recueil récent". *Le Moyen Âge*, 118 (2012): 169-176; Billoré, Maité; Soria, Myriam. *La rumeur au Moyen Âge...*; About Castile: Carrasco, Ana Isabel. "El rumor político. Apuntes sobre la opinión pública en la Castilla del siglo XV". *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 80 (2006): 65-90. With particular reference to the chronicles in the Castilian case, see: Carrasco, Ana Isabel. "'Vana' o 'divina' vox populi. La recreación de la opinión pública en Fernando del Pulgar", *Gobernar en tiempos de crisis. Las quiebras dinásticas en el ámbito hispano (1250-1808)*, José Manuel Nieto, María Victoria López-Cordón, eds. Madrid: Sílex: 287-305; Carmona, María Antonia. "La documentación cronística castellana y la opinión pública en Castilla: posibilidades y límites", *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona, eds. Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 211-227.

12. Peters, Edward. *The Shadow King. Rex inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1970; Turchetti, Mario. *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001; Bjaï, Denis. *Figures du tyran antique au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance: Caligula, Néron et les autres*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2009; Boulégue, Laurence, ed. *Le tyran et sa postérité dans la littérature latine de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013.

13. Guance, Ariel. "'Rex perditionis': la caracterización de la tiranía en la España visigoda". *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 77 (2001-2002): 29-39.



ages.¹⁴ However, apart from the debate between intellectuals, what may be more interesting about the reference to tyranny in the context of certain political conflicts is that between the late 14th and late 15th centuries, allusion to this context had reached beyond the sphere of intellectual debate, meaning that, outside this space, and in the space reserved for particular politicians from various standpoints, it was assumed that there could be a no more categorical and emphatic form of discrediting a government action than to call it tyranny. Similarly, in terms of debates in the Late Middle Ages, nothing justifies better the resistance to a power than to term it tyrannical,¹⁵ thereby affirming the basis for the right to resistance.¹⁶

In the specific Castilian case, the triumph of the House of Trastámara over Pedro I, even greater following the initial setback of the battle of Nájera,¹⁷ undoubtedly owed much to the early identification it prompted of the monarch with the figure of the tyrant, solemnised in the courts of Burgos in 1367¹⁸ and establishing from then onwards an extremely powerful mobilising referent in the immediate outbreak of the civil war.¹⁹ This fact takes us beyond the merely academic and intellectual debate of the concepts of tyrant and tyranny, enabling them to be present in contexts of specific political confrontation in which the reference to tyranny was the consequence of their connection with precise government decisions and actions.

14. Nieto, José Manuel. "Rex Inutilis y tiranía en el debate político de la Castilla bajomedieval", *Coups d'État à la fin du Moyen Age? Aux fondements du pouvoir politique en Europe Occidentale. Colloque international (25-27 novembre 2002)*, François Foronda, Jean-Philippe Genêt, José Manuel Nieto, dirs. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2005: 73-92, Nieto, José Manuel. "La gestación bajomedieval del derecho de resistencia en Castilla. Modelos interpretativos". *Cahiers d'Etudes Hispaniques Médiévales*, 34 (2011): 13-29; Nieto, José Manuel. "La comunidad política amenazada: debates en torno a la tiranía en el Occidente medieval (siglos XII al XV)", *L'Espai del mal. Reunió científica. IX Curs d'estiu Comtat d'Urgell (Balaguer, 7, 8 i 9 de juliol de 2004)*, Flocel Sabaté, ed. Lleida: Pagès, 2005: 187-204; Foronda, François. "Le prince, le palais et la ville: Ségovie ou le visage du tyran dans la Castille du XVe siècle". *Revue Historique*, 305/3 (2003): 521-541.

15. For a recent example of the central value that the discussion on tyranny was steadily acquiring in late medieval debate, see: Boucheron, Patrick. *Conjurer la peur: Sienne 1338. Essai sur la force politique des images*. Paris: Seuil, 2013.

16. Carvajal, Patricio. "Derecho de resistencia, derecho a la revolución, desobediencia civil. Una perspectiva histórica de interpretación. La formación del derecho público y de la ciencia política en la temprana Edad Moderna". *Revista de Estudios Políticos (nueva época)*, 76 (1992): 63-101.

17. Castillo, Fernando. "Análisis de una batalla: Nájera (1367)". *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 73 (1991): 105-146; Lerena, Tomás. "La batalla de Nájera (1367)", *La guerra en la Edad Media. XVII Semana de Estudios Medievales de Nájera*, Blas Casado, José Ignacio de la Iglesia, eds. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2007: 345-378.

18. *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y Castilla*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1863: II, 145, 147 (petition 1 and 4 respectively).

19. Valdeón, Julio. "La propaganda política, arma de combate de Enrique de Trastámara". *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 19 (1992): 459-467; Rábade, María del Pilar. "Simbología y propaganda política en los formularios cancillerescos de Enrique II de Castilla". *En la España Medieval*, 18 (1995): 223-239; Estepa, Carlos. "Rebelión y rey legítimo en las luchas entre Pedro I y Enrique II", *Lucha política. Condena y legitimación en la España Medieval*, María Isabel Alfonso, Julio Escalona, Georges Martin, eds. Lyon: Éditions de l'École normale supérieure de Lyon, 2004: 43-61 (*Annexes des Cahiers de Linguistique et de Civilisation Hispaniques Médiévales*, 16); Valdalisio, Covadonga. *Historiografía y legitimación dinástica. Análisis de la Crónica de Pedro I de Castilla*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2010.



This offers historians the chance to tackle these issues from the perspective of the processes of opinion formation and the application of a communication strategy.

Based on the above, the continued and increasingly tangible portrayal of Juan II of Castile's *privado* or privy councillor, Álvaro de Luna, as a tyrant —beginning at a specific point in time that this paper will attempt to pinpoint—, the record of the social expansion of this portrayal throughout his time in office and the fact that the main reason for his execution was precisely linked to this argument are historic circumstances offering the chance to explore the shaping of public opinion, its chronological development, social repercussions and political usefulness, as will be addressed in the following pages, within the boundaries and possibilities of the resources available.

2. Historic normality of the royal favourite and the exceptional nature of one royal favourite

Álvaro de Luna's status as the king's *privado* and favourite, unlike what has sometimes been said,²⁰ did not necessarily have a negative meaning.²¹ On the contrary, the presence of this figure had started to seem quite natural as a consequence of the establishment, based on long experience, of a political position in the king's shadow held by one or more prominent members of the court who had the king's support

20. *Le 'privado' ne serait alors qu'un avatar du conseiller, rendu possible par la béance du pouvoir royal mais aussi la comblant, se substituant en quelque sorte à ce pouvoir, clef de voûte de l'équilibre politique, afin d'en assurer la pérennité. Mais il s'agit d'une figure qui, en cette première moitié du XV^e siècle, ne s'inscrit pas (ou pas encore) dans les pratiques de pouvoir ; elle n'en est qu'une forme monstrueuse car elle est vécue et donc combattue comme contraire aux normes du bon gouvernement et à la raison* ("The 'favourite' would then be no more than an avatar of the councillor, made possible by the breach in royal power, covering it up, in some way replacing this power, the keystone of political harmony, in order to ensure perpetuity. But this is a figure who, in this first half of the 15th century, is not yet part of the practices of power; such a figure is nothing more than a monstrous form, as it is perceived and, therefore, combated as contrary to the norms of good government and to reason"). Fournès, Ghislaine. "Du concept de 'privanza' à la notion de conseil dans la 'Crónica de Álvaro de Luna' (XV^e siècle)". Diciembre 2005. *e-Spania*, 12. 16 Enero 2016. <<http://e-spania.revues.org/20620>>. Although, in fact, the practice of royal favouritism was the subject of frequent criticism in low medieval literature, it was motivated by the excesses that could be caused by the use of favouritism rather than by the existence of an attitude whose usefulness was backed by the continued use of the practice from the late 13th century.

21. Foronda, François. "La 'privanza' dans la Castille du bas Moyen Âge. Cadres conceptuels et stratégies de légitimation d'un lien de proximité", María Isabel Alfonso, Julio Escalona, Georges Martin, eds. Lyon: Éditions de l'École normale supérieure de Lyon, 2004: 153-197, in particular, 176-197 (*Annexes des Cahiers de Linguistique et de Civilisation Hispaniques Médiévales*, 16); Foronda, François. *La 'privanza' ou le régime de la faveur. Autorité monarchique et puissance aristocratique en Castille (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*. Paris: Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2003; Foronda, François. "La privanza, entre monarquía y nobleza", *La monarquía como conflicto en la Corona castellano-leonesa (c. 1230-1504)*, José Manuel Nieto, ed. Madrid: Sílex, 2006: 73-132; Foronda, François. "S'emparer du roi. Un rituel d'intégration politique dans la Castille trastamare", *Coups d'État à la fin du Moyen Âge? Aux fondaments du pouvoir politique en Europe Occidentale. Colloque international (25-27 novembre 2002)*, François Foronda, Jean-Philippe Genêt, José Manuel Nieto, dirs. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2005: 213-329.



and stood out for their special access to the monarch. The documentary accounts of the position, as has been highlighted by François Foronda,²² go much further back and over a long period of time. This development, according to the abovementioned author, and as stated by other sources, can be traced back to the reign of Sancho IV, to the early years when the abbot of Valladolid, Gómez García, was appointed to the role. He later fell from grace and ended up exiled from the court. In fact, the chronicle of the reign makes reference to the monarch's reaction on receiving news of his death on 29 July 1286, stating that *plugole mucho*.²³ This was an early sign of what was to happen repeatedly in the history of royal favourites, namely the frequent compatibility between the scope of influence and power wielded in the king's shadow and the cruel demise of many of these characters once they fell out of royal favour. This meant that the political promotion, to the extent of becoming a sort of monarch's alter ego, and the consequent falls from grace of these figures, are recorded as historical events time and time again. These events were seen particularly in 15th century Castile.²⁴

If we can talk about political normality up to this point, given the reiteration and long history of this type of event, the case of king's councillor Álvaro de Luna undoubtedly offers certain exceptional features within this prolonged form of governing practice, arising as a result of the contrast between the scope of his power and his subsequent fall from grace. This contrast acquires the greatest significance when it takes the form of a public square execution as the outcome of the king's very direct involvement in taking the decision, personally insisting on trying to give legal standing to what is clearly a royal determination to definitively punish the *privado*, as will be described below. This exceptional circumstance is even more apparent in the case of Álvaro de Luna, who held power fairly continuously for about three decades, an unusually long period, making him, as highlighted by Nicholas Round,²⁵ and using the chronicler's expression,²⁶ the greatest uncrowned man of his time to inhabit Castile, until we see him in the image of a head on a pike in the company of a praying Franciscan friar in the main square of Valladolid.

Nothing better justified the execution that ended the life of the *privado* than the proclamation with which the king's justice was announced while he was being taken to the block. The content of the proclamation had been discussed at length by the Royal Council so it expressed exactly and precisely in few words the most decisive reason for the sentence. The accusation proclaimed was summed up in that

22. Foronda, François. *La 'privanza' ou le régime...*

23. "It pleased him greatly". Nieto, José Antonio. *Sancho IV (1284-1295)*. Gijón: Trea, 2015: 75-78.

24. Carceller, Pilar. "Álvaro de Luna, Juan Pacheco y Beltrán de la Cueva: un estudio comparativo del privado regio a fines de la Edad Media". *En la España Medieval*, 32 (2009): 85-112.

25. Round, Nicholas. *The Greatest Man Uncrowned. A Study of the Fall of Don Alvaro de Luna*. London: Tamesis Book, 1986

26. *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna, Condestable de Castilla y Maestro de Santiago*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940: 428



the *privado* had behaved like a tyrant and he had taken control over the person of the king, whose freedom must be urgently secured.²⁷

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, in his chronicle of the reign, and Fernán Gómez de Cibdarreal, in one of his epistles, both offer a similar version to the proclamation of execution that read: *esta es la justicia que manda hacer el Rey nuestro Señor á este cruel tirano e usurpador de la corona real: en pena de sus maldades, mándale degollar por ello*.²⁸ As a result of an inquiry held years after these events, the various witnesses interrogated and who were present on the day of the execution, coincided in confirming the accusation of tyranny as being the one mainly set out in the royal proclamation, which was shouted repeatedly as the gentleman was led to his execution.²⁹

In this way, the essential summary of Álvaro de Luna's political significance was enshrined in the idea of the transformation of the *privado*, the advisor who throughout the entire history of royal favourites in Castile during the lower middle ages had accumulated the greatest power, influence and riches under the protection of his rank, into a tyrant, maybe also the greatest uncrowned tyrant ever to grow in the shadow of the Castilian monarchy. In addition to this, the emergence of this image of tyranny did have its share of originality, as it was projected onto people who did not possess the maximum expression of political power, which in itself gave the *privado* an extraordinarily unique profile in accordance with the image that would be artistically captured three decades later on his cenotaph in the chapel of Santiago de Toledo,³⁰ which sought to rehabilitate his memory under the description of *buen gobernante, hombre de armas y hombre de letras haciendo olvidar su muerte sin honor*.³¹

But that image of the tyrant advisor did have its history, its milestones and its specific meanings, and was susceptible to being inserted into practices of symbolic communication. We will be focusing all our attention on its process of construction and development, considering the possibility that such a matter had a lot to do with what could perhaps be regarded as an especially characteristic expression of the political role that the shaping of public opinion could have in the late medieval period against a backdrop of a varied set of political tensions.

27. *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 431.

28. "This is the justice ordered by the King our lord for this cruel tyrant and usurper of the royal crown: as punishment for his wickedness he orders his throat to be cut". Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. "Crónica de Juan II", *Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla*, ed. Cayetano Rosell. Madrid: Atlas, 1953: II, 683; Gómez de Cibdarreal, Fernán. *Centón epistolario*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1945: XIII, 34; *Epistolario español: colección de cartas de españoles ilustres, antiguos y modernos*, ed. Eugenio Ochoa. Madrid: Atlas, 1945: 34.

29. Corral, León del. *Don Álvaro de Luna según testimonios inéditos de la época*. Valladolid: Editorial Viuda de Montero, 1915.

30. Pérez Monzón, Olga. "La imagen del poder nobiliario en Castilla". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 37/2 (2007): 926-935.

31. "good governor, man of arms and man of letters forgetting his death without honour". Pérez Monzón, Olga. "La imagen del poder nobiliario...": 935.



3. From royal favourite to tyrant: the intervention of Alfonso V of Aragon (1425)

As has been highlighted,³² the beginning of the identification of Álvaro de Luna with tyranny can be pinpointed to June of 1425, in the letter that Alfonso V of Aragon wrote to Pedro Núñez de Herrera, lord of Pedraza,³³ remarking that the king of Castile had fallen completely under the control of his advisor and expressing his wish to go to Castile with troops to rescue the monarch from this situation, encouraging the nobleman to join his forces once they had entered Castile.³⁴ The consideration of tyrant was expressed both in terms of the advisor's personal attitude and in the overall way he was described as dealing with the king's matters, proving that there was a conscious will and full awareness of acting under typically tyrannical procedures. However, the letter does not hint at a discrediting of the royal favourite as an instrument of government, with its complaint confined to the specific use that Álvaro de Luna was making of his rank and office, with special consideration of the damage being done to the political position of the Aragonese monarch's siblings, the *Infantes* of Aragon.³⁵

The portrayal of the tyrannical condition, as described in the king of Aragon's letter, presents its main feature as the tyrant's complete control over the court space, involving a process of selective emptying of the court, with the departure of grandees and knights, enabling the favourite to absorb the royal environment completely. At the same time, acting as both motive and consequence of this circumstance, an atmosphere of fear and dread would be imposed, as well as the absence of freedom and the impossibility of providing the monarch with advice within the court space, which would generate a feeling of insecurity in those who remained and prompt many of the natural occupants of the court to flee. This would lead to the inhabitants of the court being reduced to the tyrant's supporters.

32. Foronda, François. "La privanza, entre monarquía y nobleza...": 116-117.

33. *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla*. Madrid: Establecimiento tipográfico de Fortanet, 1835-1913: II, 1-5.

34. *É por tal manera ejerció su tiranía, que los grandes, notables varones é ricos-homes é hijos-dalgo, é otras gentes notables, daquesos regnos, se apartaban é apartaron de continuar en la corte del dicho Rey, nuestro primo, no pudiendo sufrir ser subyugados de tal tirano: é encara los que eran presentes huian con grand terror del, mayormente como en caso que á la corte quesiesen ir, ó estar en ella, non les era, nin es dada libertad de hablar, aconsejar ó servir el dicho Rey nuestro primo, á cada uno segund pertenesce á su grado, antes entendió por maneras esquisitas, en desechar é apartar á los grandes é nobles hijos-dalgo, é otras gentes industriosas, é sabias de la casa, é corte, é crianza del dicho Rey, nuestro primo, non dejando continuar en ella, salvo aquellos que fuesen á él pacientes: é puso cerca de la persona del Rey personas los demas de baja mano é condicion, los quales fuesen é sean con toda vigilancia favorecientes á él en su tiranía* ("And he exercised his tyranny in such a way that grandees, peers, barons, wealthy men and noblemen and other people in those kingdoms left the court of this king, our cousin, as they could not tolerate being subjugated by such a tyrant. And those who stayed at court fled in great terror. Moreover, those who wanted to go to the court or remain there were not given freedom to talk or to advise or serve the aforementioned king, as befitted the status of each one of them. On the contrary, like a soothsayer he sought to expel and remove the grandees, peers, noblemen and other hard-working and wise people in the court and in the circle of the king our cousin, not allowing anyone to remain except for his allies, and he placed people close to the king who were incompetent and of lowly rank in order to foster the interests of his tyranny"). *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla*...: II, 2.

35. Foronda, François. *La 'privanza' ou le régime de la faveur*...: 296.



Alfonso V's text is an extremely detailed portrayal of the specific tyrannical behaviour attributed to Álvaro de Luna, whose tyranny is described based on twelve main features:

1. Álvaro governs the king and his kingdoms, occupying, as he states, *la gobernanza de la persona del dicho rey e de sus reynos*.³⁶ With this, he is defining the most characteristic feature of what was traditionally said to be the tyrant *propter defectum tituli*, which, as we shall see, responds to a tyrannical type that had specific implications in the sense of facilitating the reaction in the face of this type of tyrant.
2. He restricts and limits the king's closeness to his people.
3. He promotes hatred between the king and his intimate circle.
4. He uses deceit and infamy.
5. He incites violation of the insurances granted by the king.
6. He makes prisoners of good men, referring in particular to Infante Enrique of Aragon.
7. He does not fulfil his services to the king or to the public good of the kingdom.
8. His actions cause grandees and noble people to flee from the court, leaving the monarch unprotected.
9. He incites the imposition of a regime of terror amongst those who remain at court.
10. He infringes freedoms.
11. He imposes manifestly unfair levies.
12. He appropriates the royal heritage for himself.

Although there was no lack of interest in Aragon society for political reflection on the tyrant, an important example of which is put forward by Frances Eiximenis,³⁷ it is interesting to observe how the letter states that the Aragonese king began to be concerned about Álvaro's initiatives while he was still in his Italian domains. This seems to favour the hypothesis that the portrayal of this tyrannical image of Álvaro de Luna is due to the major theoretical creativity that this issue had sparked in Italian society, being a topic that was very much in vogue at the time.³⁸

In fact, Alfonso V stayed on the Italian peninsula until 1423. By that time, the debate on tyranny had become a high-profile and important topic on which the Aragonese monarch was no doubt well informed, enabling him to engage in a

36. "control over the very person of the aforementioned king and of his kingdoms". *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 2.

37. Cortés, Carmen. "El tirano y la tiranía en el pensamiento político pactista de Francesc Eiximenis", *El pensamiento político en la Edad Media*, Pedro Roche, ed. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Ramón Areces, 2010: 379-390.

38. A sign of this interest in Italian cities can be found in the expression *séduction de la tyrannie* in: Boucheron, Patrick. *Conjurer la peur...*: 119-136. On in this same issue of the development of the reflection on tyranny amongst Italian intellectuals and in connection with specific political events between the 14th and 15th centuries, see also: Turchetti, Mario. *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité...*: 291-332.



critical appraisal of his political rival by applying what he knew from the debate. Although Salutati's contribution to the discussion on the portrayal of the tyrant was very recent,³⁹ the arguments put forward by Bártolo de Sassoferrato were more widespread.⁴⁰

From the perspective of criticism for Álvaro de Luna's government interpreted as a form of *regimen malorum*, that is, of tyranny in the most complete sense of the word, the work *De Tyranno* by the abovementioned Bártolo de Sassoferrato offered extraordinary possibilities for justification.

Compared to the traditional approach that referred the tyrannical condition to those who wielded sovereign power, kings or emperors, Bartolo also discussed the exercise of tyranny within inferior or delegated political offices, making specific allusion to the tyranny of certain magnates, asking himself what kind of attitude should be adopted by the higher power from which they had received their rank: *si aliquis dux, marchio, comes vel baro, qui habet iustum titulum probatur tyrannus exercitio, quid debet facere superior? Respondeo: debet eum deponere.*⁴¹ In light of this reflection, although it was true that with his complaint Alfonso V had provided solid ground for the portrayal of Álvaro de Luna as a tyrant, freeing the king from blame,⁴² the latter would have to take a certain amount of responsibility in the event that the decision was taken not to remove him from office. The defining features of the exercise of tyranny, in the form of Decalogue, as they appear described in his work, are mostly compatible with the dozen bad practices of the *privado* listed earlier, according to the text of the letter from the Aragonese king, all of which are summed up, according to Bartolo's work, by the idea that *opera eius non tendunt ad bonum commune, sed proprium ipsius tyranni,*⁴³ which ties in with the principal argument put forward by Alfonso V when he underlines the advisor's obsession with his own interests in detriment to the common good of the kingdom.

One of Bartolo's main concerns is the identification of the tyrant as *ex defectu tituli* who exercises the functions of the king without being the king.⁴⁴ It was this type of tyranny that, compared to the kind described in terms of *ex parte exercitii*, presented more objective features, giving grounds for a strong and fully justified reaction against tyranny. Bartolo's reflections could not find a better fit with the Castilian case when he described how one of the most feared expressions of tyranny, within the aforementioned type, was that which referred to the person who in their office acquired so much power that they controlled the entire government, doing what

39. Salutati, Coluccio. *Il trattato "De tyranno" e lettere suelte*, ed. Francesco Ercole. Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli Editore: 1942.

40. Quagliani, Diego. *Politica e Diritto nel Trecento italiano. Il "De Tyranno" di Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1314-1357)*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1983.

41. "If any duke, marquis, count or baron holding such a title by right is shown to exercise tyranny, what should their superior do? I reply: they should depose them". Quagliani, Diego. *Politica e Diritto nel Trecento...*: 202.

42. Foronda, *La privanza ou le régime de la faveur...*: 297.

43. Quagliani, Diego. *Politica e Diritto nel Trecento...*: 196.

44. Quagliani, Diego. *Politica e Diritto nel Trecento...*: 21, 41-43.



they liked with no hindrance or limit whatsoever.⁴⁵This approach fitted the Castilian case perfectly. With this confirmation of Álvaro's occupation of the regimen and governance of the person of the king and of his kingdoms, which was symbolised by the appropriation of the court space and the subsequent expulsion from it of those close to the monarch plus the imposition there of a regime of terror, there was no possible way in which the tyrant *ex defectu tituli* could not be present. With this, there was more than enough justification for the strongest and most radical action leading to the tyrant being expelled. In this way, the armed action announced by the Aragonese monarch found full grounds in Bartolian argumentative logic.

As a result, with his letter, perfectly inserted in the innovations provided by Italian thinking in relation to the problem of tyranny, Alfonso V provided a solid basis for shaping an opinion on the figure of the *privado* as a tyrant, an opinion that would pursue him to the gallows, and provided very convenient arguments to his detractors.

4. The shaping of a noble opinion

On December 7, 1438 king Juan II issued a document in which he rejected accusations that *algunas personas maliçiosamente movidos con grand invidia e mal querença* had launched against Álvaro de Luna, accusing him of not serving the king well and acting only in his own interests. On the contrary, the monarch vindicated his favourite, telling him that *con toda lealtad e animosidad sienpre me avedes servido e servides muy bien, sufriendo de cada dia por mi serviçio e onor e ensalçamiento de la corona rreal de mis rregnos muchos trabajos poniendo vos por ello a muchos peligros*.⁴⁶ This royal view was contradicted by other witness accounts.

Although a precise date cannot be established, but certainly later than 1433 and seemingly closely connected with the anti-Luna movements that spread through the Castilian court from 1439 onwards, there is one work that is hardly used by historians interested in this era,⁴⁷ known as *Libro de Gracián, Tratado y semblanza de Gracián* or *Novela moral de Gracián*,⁴⁸ which sets out extensive arguments for the construction of Álvaro de Luna's image of tyranny, in relation to the aspects that were linked to the abusive hoarding of wealth that would later turn into a real form of plunder, both of the king's personal assets and those of the kingdom. The work,

45. Quagliani, Diego. *Política e Diritto nel Trecento...*: 54.

46. "some people with bad intentions act with envy and hatred"; "you with all loyalty and good nature have always served me and you still serve me well, enduring much work for my service, my honour and the prestige of the royal crown of my kingdoms, leading you to face many dangers". Calderón, José Manuel. *Alvaro de Luna (1419-1453). Colección diplomática*. Madrid: Universidad Rey Juan Carlos-Dykinson, 1999: 179.

47. Ladero, Miguel Ángel. "Los efectos del mal gobierno en la Andalucía de Juan II según la 'Novela Moral de Gracián'". *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 213 (2016): 109-149.

48. Study and edition in: Satorre, José J. "La novela moral de Gracián. Un texto inédito del siglo XV". *Estudios Lulianos*, 24 (1980): 165-210; 25 (1981-1983): 83-165; 26 (1986): 165-251.



by an unknown author, has been linked with Diego Anaya y Maldonado (died in 1437), who was bishop of Salamanca and Cuenca and archbishop of Seville, both for codicological reasons, being included in a volume held in the library belonging to him at the University of Salamanca, and because of the biographical history of this figure.⁴⁹ His confrontation with Álvaro de Luna dated back to the beginning of the latter's position of *privado*, when Anaya y Maldonado was bishop of Salamanca and stood out in support for the *Infantes* of Aragon.⁵⁰ The animosity between *privado* and prelate would end up by taking its toll on the latter when Álvaro succeeded in obtaining a papal order to remove him from office as archbishop of Seville, accused of conspiracy. This resulted in the loss of his position as archbishop of Seville by his own decision; in fear of his life from the *privado's* persecution he took refuge in the Hieronymites Monastery of San Bartolomé de Lupiana. This conflictive relationship would be inherited by his son Juan Gómez de Anaya, archdeacon of Salamanca, who would go on to play a leading role in anti-Luna movements.⁵¹

The work narrates the adventures of the young Gracián, partly resembling a travel book as well as a doctrinal work and a moral and political reflection. The fate of its main character, who, disillusioned with the immoralities of the world, finds solace in the contemplative life, makes it easy to connect it with the prelate's life. Organised into twelve chapters, it is especially interesting in terms of our topic because of the content of chapter four, devoted to how princes should behave. In the chapter, along with the kind of advice that would be expected from a discussion on how princes should behave as they go about their duties, there is also a great deal of attention given to the portrayal of those who are repeatedly referred to as false or bad favourites. Seemingly avoiding express criticism, as though from fear of giving specific names, it gives the impression, as Fernando Gómez Redondo observes, that the image of this reprehensible favourite is inspired by the deeds of Álvaro de Luna.⁵²

These false favourites, as the book describes, would corrupt all virtues, keeping the income of princes who they advised poorly, introducing new and cruel taxes; they would include their relatives and friends on the books of their princes, granting them huge incomes; they would unreservedly grab what was not theirs, they would lease out tax collecting on a whim and manipulate the bidding, they would be involved in an abundance of bribery and slander against everyone, and especially the poorest; in the prince's shadow they would keep many villages for themselves, without any right to do so whatsoever; they would behave like greedy flatterers, disproportionately deceiving and robbing their princes, obtaining large sums of

49. Monsalvo, José María. "Diego de Anaya y su tiempo: aristócrata, obispo, diplomático y humanista", *La universidad de Salamanca y el pontificado en la Edad Media*, Miguel Anxo Pena, Luis Enrique Rodríguez, eds. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 2014: 217-254.

50. González García, Manuel. *Salamanca en la Baja Edad Media*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1982: 34-35.

51. Carrillo de Huete, Pedro. *Crónica del Halconero de Juan II*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1946: 310.

52. Gómez Redondo, Fernando. *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana. Tomo III: Los orígenes del humanismo. El marco cultural de Enrique III y Juan II*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002: 377-401.



money and *dizen que la voluntad del príncipe se cunpla aunque el pueblo se pierda*.⁵³ They would fill the prince with false fears, fostering enmity with his knights, as well as with other princes, against those who urge him to war.

Without any mention at all of the word tyrant, the argument could not find a better fit with the document containing accusation of tyranny sent to the king by some *grandees* in 1440, to which reference will be made below.⁵⁴ In fact, Fernando Gómez Redondo noted the presence of some common references with the letter attributed to Diego de Valera denouncing Álvaro's tyranny, leading him to state, and I believe with good reason, that

esta es la sección del tratado que mejor conecta con las circunstancias que llevan de la concordia de Castronuño (1439) al golpe de Rámaga (1443). Es más, parece que aprovecha –si no es que los proporciona– los argumentos de la oposición a don Álvaro, pues este mismo tejido de razones asoma en la carta⁵⁵ con la que se daba expresión a la posición del bando del rey de Navarra, del infante don Enrique y de los grandes que los apoyaban que envía a Juan II para que recupere la libertad frente a su privado.⁵⁶

The letter contains striking textual coincidences with the book mentioned earlier, *Libro de Gracián*, favouring the hypothesis of the contextualisation of this work in the debates taking place at the time, but it can also be regarded as a simplified forewarning of what would be the dispatch of grievances that the group would present to the monarch that same year, as described in the *Crónica del Halconero*.⁵⁷

The extensive accusations made against the *privado* in the chapters of this dispatch could not hide the effort made to show their perfect fit with the second of the *Siete Partidas* describing the typical behaviour of tyrannical government, although the legislative text referred to the actions of emperors and kings, based on the following eight criteria, which provided the foundation for the image of this behaviour:⁵⁸

53. "they say the prince's will must be done even though the people are prejudiced". Satorre, José J. "La novela moral de Gracián...": 115.

54. An interpretation that connects the work with the *Rimado de Palacio* del Pero López de Ayala in: Vázquez Janeiro, Isaac. "Los estudios franciscanos medievales en España", *VI Semana de Estudios Medievales de Nájera (Nájera, 31 de julio al 4 de agosto de 1999)*, José Ignacio de la Iglesia, Javier García Turza, José Angel García de Cortázar, eds. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1996: 43-64, en especial, 60-64; Vázquez Janeiro, Isaac. "'Gracián', un 'Félix' castigliano del seculo XV. Una ricerca sull'innominato autore". *Annali dell'istituto Universitario Orientale, Sezione Romanza*, 34/1 (1992): 295-337.

55. Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. "Crónica de Juan II...": II, 560-562.

56. "this is the section of the treaty that best connects with the circumstances that led from the concord of Castronuño (1439) to the coup of Rámaga (1443). Moreover, it seems to take advantage of—even provide—the arguments of the opposition to Álvaro de Luna, as this same fabric of arguments appears in the letter expressing the position of the side of the king of Navarre, of the Infante Enrique and of the *grandees* who supported them and sent to Juan II so that he can "regain his freedom" from his constable". Gómez Redondo, Fernando. *Historia de la prosa medieval...*: 389.

57. Carrillo de Huate, Pedro. *Crónica del Halconero...*: 320-334.

58. *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso El Sabio. Cotejadas con varios códices antiguos por la Real Academia de la Historia. Tomo II: Partida Segunda y Tercera*. Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807: 11 (título I, ley X: "Qué quiere decir tirano, et cómo usa de su poder en el regno después que es apoderado él").



1. Morally demean the subjects.
2. Encourage internal division.
3. Lead the kingdom into poverty.
4. Weaken the powerful.
5. Annihilate the wise.
6. Prevent forms of association and brotherhood.
7. Monitor and control opinions.
8. Trust foreigners at the expense of natives.

So, in the case of Álvaro de Luna, there was an extraordinarily lengthy and detailed list of what were described as typical tyrannical practices, all intended to seek out personal benefit, and including particularly serious ones such as drawing up unfair laws, hoarding unlimited wealth, to the extent that the treasures accumulated in the kingdom were not enough for him, prompting him to hide some of the riches outside its borders, such as in Genoa or in Venice; the imposition of abusive taxes for his own gain, spreading general suspicion; the persecution and destruction of *grandees*, plus employing spies and informants.

But perhaps the most important contribution of this long list of complaints was not in its length and extremely detailed description, but in that it presented the *privado* as someone who was acting fully like a king, with barely any restrictions on his scope of action, using the words *fazerse monarca en vuestros reynos*.⁵⁹ If there was any reason left to think that the accusation of tyranny could be seen more as rhetoric rather than a full political reality, the *privado* now reached the peak of his tyrannical behaviour by taking on the entire set of functions assigned to the monarch and executing them under the form of tyrannical exercise, showing himself to have all the traits of the tyrant as *propter defectum tituli*, by unlawfully appropriating the royal function which was also used *ex defectu exercitii*, thereby displaying the maximum expression of the tyrannical condition.

This absorption of the royal ministry, as described in the document, would cover the entirety of its contents, which was expressed in the reference to how the *privado* used *entera e largamente de todo vuestro rreal poder, así avsoluto como ordinario*.⁶⁰ With this it was possibly pointing out how the *privado* could be seen as the author of the expansion process of an *absolute royal power*, increasingly obvious as a documentary clause in royal orders and also as an exceptional governing practice, but administered by the *privado* as he saw fit, as denounced in the memo. The affirmation of this political principal in the courts of Olmedo in 1445,⁶¹ developed under the auspices

59. "turn himself into the monarch of your kingdoms". Carrillo de Huete, Pedro. *Crónica del Halconero...*: 320.

60. "the 'privado' used all kinds of manifestations of your regal power, both absolute and normal". Carrillo de Huete, Pedro. *Crónica del Halconero...*: 320.

61. González Alonso, Benjamín. "De Briviesca a Olmedo (algunas reflexiones sobre el ejercicio de la poestad legislativa en la Castilla bajomedieval)", *El Dret Comú i Catalunya. Actes del IV Simposi Internacional. Homenatge al professor Josep M. Gay Escoda. Barcelona, 27-28 de maig de 1994*, Aquilino Iglesia, ed. Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1995: 43-74.



of Álvaro de Luna and with his full backing of absolute practices, confirmed the link between the favourite's personal interests and the expansion of the absolutist content of royal power administered by him.⁶² At the same time, it was also evidence of the drift towards absolutism of the concept of monarchy in Castile.⁶³

As a result, it was fully justified that the document should be structured, following the accusatory preamble, with a descriptive list of the functions expected of the ideal prince, going on to describe those that corresponded to the tyrannical prince and ending with all those attributable to the *privado*, which provided a complete example of these tyrannical practices. This meant that, from then onwards, the peak of Álvaro de Luna's tyrannical behaviour had a solid testimony providing a very strong basis for what his detractors pointed to as the core of the opinion with which they aimed to undermine the *privado* and which they sought to spread as far across the kingdom as they could.

5. Towards the popularization of an opinion

It has been said, completely correctly, that from the coup of Záfraga, which occurred on 11 May 1448, the use of the term 'tyranny' was in widespread use throughout the kingdom to refer to the government of Álvaro de Luna.⁶⁴ This circumstance enabled this portrayal of the *privado* as a tyrant to be identified as a certain kind of public opinion that appeared to prevail in terms of his image. Probably, the best demonstration of this phenomenon of generalisation can be seen from the time when his presence became apparent in urban movements, thereby going beyond the inner circles of the kingdom's grandees.

The best proof of this process of spreading out from the space of the nobility and the court can be found in the 'memorial' from the graduate Marcos García de Mora, published at the time of the anti-*converso* riots that broke out across the city of Toledo in 1449,⁶⁵ headed by Juan II's lord high butler, who saw in the document a justifying argument for his demands that *conversos* be removed from public office, to which they had acceded, in his view, as a result of Álvaro de Luna's tyrannical strategy and would prove to be the main cause of the political crisis that the kingdom was currently undergoing.⁶⁶

62. Nieto, José Manuel. "El 'poderío real absoluto' de Olmedo (1445) a Ocaña (1469): la monarquía como conflicto". *En la España Medieval*, 21 (1998): 159-228.

63. Dios, Salustiano de. "Sobre la génesis y los caracteres del Estado absolutista en Castilla". *Studia Historica. Historia Moderna*, 5 (1985): 36-37.

64. Olivera, César. *Las Cortes de Castilla y León y la crisis del reino (1445-1474)*. *El registro de Cortes*. Burgos: Cortes de Castilla y León, 1986: 39.

65. López Gómez, Oscar. "El impacto de las revueltas urbanas en el siglo XV. A propósito de la rebelión de 1449 en Toledo". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 15 (2014): 175-191.

66. The text in: Benito, Eloy. *Los orígenes del problema converso*. Barcelona: El Albir, 1976: 104-132.



The reference to the expression of tyrant or tyranny to describe Álvaro de Luna occurs up to a total of 39 times. The main cause of the reasons for the discontent expressed in the ‘memorial’ centres on the initiative of a certain Alvaro de Luna, who is repeatedly identified as *malo tirano* (“bad tyrant”). The origins of this behaviour are identified as being four years previous to the document, which places it in the year of the battle of Olmedo, after which the author noticed that the *privado* took over full and total control of the monarch’s power. This establishes a chronology that is different to previously considered texts tracing the origin and development of the *privado*’s tyrannical attitudes. As a particularly serious accusation, he is said to act *so color del nombre del dicho señor rey*,⁶⁷ which would coincide with the idea of the *privado* stealing the king’s identity. With this portrayal as an example of the tyrant who acts systematically against the interests of the kingdom, the document makes a perfectly articulated call to mobilisation against the decisions taken by the king under his *privado*’s control with the following consequences:⁶⁸

- The rules set by the monarch, or by whoever acts in his name, that are considered to be contrary to the common good and to law, cease to be valid.
- When the king is unjust by action or omission there is what is called *defecto de jurisdicción* (“absence of jurisdictional power”), a situation that justifies the right to resistance and defence against the king.
- When the king lapses into tyranny, either by his own initiative or as a result of a process of theft of his functions, there must be a demand for power to be handed to his successor or to the towns of the kingdom so they can act as guarantors of the common good in the monarch’s absence.
- Natives of the kingdom would not only have the right but also the duty to resist and oppose the decisions arising from tyrannical acts.

Consequently, with this line of argument, a justification is established for portraying the *privado* as a tyrant and a reason is provided for taking specific action against the monarch himself. In other words, the consolidation and generalisation of a public opinion that saw the exemplification of tyranny in the *privado* was no longer limiting the field of action against him, as had been the case in previous years, while the matter had been discussed on the battlefield of the court. Now, his presence outside court was starting to be regarded as sufficient reason for promoting change in ownership of the throne.

It can be said that the line of argument developed in the Toledo ‘memorial’ was a precursor of what was to follow in the accusation justifying the *privado*’s execution four years later. The latter, however, would reconsider the position of the monarch, exonerating him from any kind of responsibility and interpreting Álvaro de Luna’s execution as an instrument at the service of the liberation of royal power from the tyrannical power that prevented it from exercising its functions.

67. “using the name of this lord King”. Benito, Eloy. *Los orígenes...*: 105.

68. Gutiérrez Nieto, Juan Ignacio. “Semántica del término ‘comunidad’ antes de 1520. Las asociaciones juramentadas de defensa”. *Hispania*, 136 (1977): 346.



6. The tyrant brought to justice

In the same way, as mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, the presence of favourites alongside the king was neither exceptional nor an anomaly during most of the Castilian low middle ages, the end of that favourite by public execution ordered by the king apparently as a result of a judicial process is exceptional enough to befit the scale of favouritism secured by the person in question.

From the events that led to Álvaro de Luna's definitive fall, including the decisive importance of the murder on his initiative of chief bookkeeper Alonso Pérez de Vivero, Juan II would become particularly keen on promoting a thorough procedure to give a legal appearance to what was a political decision:⁶⁹ putting an end to the *privado's* power, which inevitably involved putting an end to his life, given how far things had gone and his ability to somehow recover from setbacks.

In fact, reviewing the documentation on the matter, it is impossible to ignore the account of the subterfuge the monarch tried to use to give some semblance of legality to what was essentially a personal political decision. Thus, the scenario is devised in which the monarch wanted to give the impression of a tough duty of justice that was impersonal, objective and, to a certain extent, consensual within the framework of court legal proceedings, rather than being a merely vindictive royal rage.

In order to achieve this impression, the beginning of the action against the *privado* is carried out as an institutional initiative that is designed to seem removed from the monarch *por quel mi procurador fiscal é promotor de la mi justicia me denunció é fiso cierta denunciacion contra el dicho Maestre don Alvaro de Luna (...) é me fue suplicado no solamente por el dicho procurador fiscal.*⁷⁰ This complaint referred to the death of the aforementioned Alonso Pérez de Vivero. If a document from after the reign of Juan II⁷¹ is to be believed, the monarch met with learned men from the Royal Council in order to establish a position on what should be done with Álvaro de Luna, with the first to speak up being court *Relator* Fernando Díaz de Toledo, the monarch's direct and loyal servant. The royal *Relator* answered *que le parecia segund derecho que era dino de muerte por justicia e de perder los bienes para la cámara e fisco de su alteza.*⁷²

In any case, the document hints that the learned men acted under some pressure from the monarch's wishes, as the king showed his satisfaction at the *Relator's* opinion, *é desde los otros letrados vieron la voluntad del Rey, siguieron todos el consejo del dicho Relator.* This was giving the format of technical advice to a decision that in reality was the unequivocal expression of 'the King's wish'.

69. The irregularities of the process were already remarked on: Pastor, Isabel. *Grandeza y tragedia de un valido. La muerte de Don Álvaro de Luna*. Madrid: Caja de Madrid, 1992: I, 251-254.

70. "the prosecutor of royal justice presented me with a complaint against the aforementioned gentleman Álvaro de Luna (...) and it was not only requested by the aforementioned prosecutor". *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 43.

71. *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 74-77.

72. "that he thought, according to law, that he deserved to be sentenced to death and forfeit his assets to the king's chamber and treasury". *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 75-76.



In an attempt to give legal form to the instrument of publication of the decision on the sentence to be applied, the king ordered a meeting of the learned men on the Council: *e así juntados ovo grande altercación entre ellos: é finalmente fue acordado que la dicha ejecución se fiesse por mandamiento, é no por sentencia é así se fiso*.⁷³ This meant that the resistance of some of the learned men would prevent what might have been the monarch's will in terms of seeking a formula like the sentence, which gave a greater impression of a legal proceedings than a simple order, which revealed the monarch's personal involvement and his own political interests in the matter.

This tension between political and legal procedure would be prolonged up to the very moment of the favourite's execution, if we take a while to analyse the way it was published, which, according to the procedures of the period, was a function that corresponded to the practice of proclamation.⁷⁴

In fact, the proclamation given for the execution of Álvaro de Luna, in Valladolid in 1453, has a particular complexity in that the contemporaries who refer to him do not coincide in terms of its specific content. Plus, there are some opinions on events that were put about by people at the time in terms of valuing the importance given to the proclamation to give greater legitimacy to an execution that raised certain suspicions even in people close to the king. In this sense, we cannot ignore the presence of a diverse set of positions amongst individuals close to the king at court on whether it was advisable to have the *privado* executed.⁷⁵

The chronicle that attempts to defend the *privado's* memory, mention is made of the *mentiroso pregón* ("lying herald") as a way of undermining the royal decision to send the *privado* to the gallows. The content of the proclamation would have been considered at length by the Royal Council to ensure it clearly expressed the main reason for the sentence. The accusation in the proclamation can be summed up as *que estaba apoderado de la persona del Rey*.⁷⁶

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, in his chronicle of the reign, and Fernán Gómez de Cibdarreal, in one of his epistles, both offer a similar version to the proclamation of execution that read: *esta es la justicia que manda hacer el Rey nuestro Señor á este cruel tirano e usurpador de la corona real: en pena de sus maldades, mándale degollar por ello*.⁷⁷

Alonso de Cartagena, in his brief addition to the chronicle of Juan II by Pérez de Guzmán includes a remarkable comment on the proclamation when he says that

73. "and when the other learned men saw what the King's will was, they all heeded the royal secretary's advice"; "and thus gathered together there was much debate between them: finally it was agreed that the aforementioned execution would be carried out by mandate and not by sentence, and it was done". *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 76.

74. Nieto, José Manuel. "El pregón real en la vida política de la Castilla trastámara". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 13 (2012): 77-102.

75. Clues to the concern among royal councillors on the proper formality and adherence to the procedure of the sentence against the constable can be found in: *Memorias de don Enrique IV de Castilla...*: II, 43, 74-77.

76. "that he had taken complete control over the king". *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 431.

77. "This is the justice ordered by the King our lord for this cruel tyrant and usurper of the royal crown: as punishment for his wickedness he orders his throat to be cut". Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. "Crónica de Juan II...": II, 683; Gómez de Cibdarreal, Fernán. *Centón epistolario...*: XIII, 34; *Epistolario español...*: 34.



it was *guardada forma de justicia, con voz de pregonero*. With this he seems to be saying that the proclamation of the execution contributed to give an appearance of legal normality within the normal procedure of royal justice to a sentence that aroused a number of reservations regarding procedure.⁷⁸

We also have the very direct testimony of someone who was a prisoner at the same time as the *privado* and who was forced to act along with nine others as a herald. The proclamation he states he was forced to deliver said the following: *esta es la justicia que manda hazer nuestro señor el rrey a este cruel tirano, soberano sobre la corona rreal, mándanle degollar por ello, quien tal haze que tal pague*.⁷⁹

From the account of another eye witness at the execution, our knowledge is significantly enriched on how the execution was justified through the use of proclamations. Francisco Rodríguez de Santamaría was the scribe of Burgos when the execution took place, and he wrote a book of memoirs in which he copied the full proclamation that was used to communicate the reason for the sentence. According to this testimony, there seems to have been an *in extenso* main proclamation at the beginning of the prisoner's transfer to the gallows, as well as other proclamations that, in the form of brief messages, were shouted out in various places and at various times during the journey. To do this they must have used other prisoners, at least in some cases, as in the case mentioned above. According to this testimony, the full text of the long proclamation was as follows:

Esta es la justicia que manda hacer nuestro señor el rrei a este cruel tirano por quanto él con gran orgullo y soberbia e loca osadía e injuria de la rreal magestad, la qual tiene lugar de Dios en la tierra, se apoderó de la casa e palacio e corte de el rrei nuestro señor, usurpando e ocupando el lugar que no hera suyo ni le pertenecía, e hizo e cometió en deservicio de Dios e del dicho señor rrei y en menguamiento e a baxamiento de su persona e dignidad y estado de la su corona Real e de sus rreinos, y en gran daño e deservicio del patrimonio rreal e perturbación e menguamiento de la justicia, muchos e diversos crimines y escesos e delictos y maleficios y tiranías e coechos, en pena de lo qual le mandan degollar porque la justicia de Dios e del Rei sea en él executada y a otros sea exemplo, porque no se atrevan a hacer e cometer tales e semejantes cosas, y quien tal hizo que tal padezca.⁸⁰

78. "applying the judicial procedure and via announcement by the herald". *Rubrica additio ex summa Episcopi Burgensis*. Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. "Crónica de Juan II...": II, 693.

79. "this is the justice ordered by the King our lord for this cruel tyrant, who has taken power over the royal crown, his throat is to be cut, he must pay for having done this". Corral, León del. *Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 92.

80. "This is the justice ordered by our lord the king on this cruel tyrant because he, with great pride and arrogance and mad audacity and with insult of the royal majesty, who stands in God's place on the earth, took control of the household and the palace and the court of our lord the king, usurping and occupying the place that was neither his nor belonged to him. And he did and committed damage to God and to our lord the king and to the person and dignity and state of the royal crown and of its kingdoms and with great harm and damage to royal assets and to justice, provoking many and diverse crimes, abuses, offences, misfortunes, tyrannies and briberies. For all this, he is to have his throat cut, because God's and the king's justice must be executed in him and should serve as example to others so they do not dare to do and commit suchlike deeds, and the person who did this will be punished for it". Corral, León del. *Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 93-94.



According to the testimony of another eye witness, the *privado* rejected the accusation of tyrant, as described in the proclamation, stating: *tirano mientes, que como cavallero lo hazía, como otros cavalleros lo hazen*.⁸¹

In this way, the public square in its new function of place for executing the king's justice⁸² takes on, with this execution, its full meaning as a privileged space for the transmission of news and for the dissemination and shaping of a public opinion that in this case points to the complete absorption of the career and the memory of the favourite executed for being a tyrant, in the fullest sense of the term, that of usurping the king's place and misusing his functions against the common good. This image of the tyrant becomes the maximum expression of evil situated at the centre of political life.

In a context of the doubtful legitimacy of a suspicious legal procedure with an inevitably political reading,⁸³ there are more than sufficient reasons for considering that the proclamation of the execution was not a secondary event. On the contrary, it could provide a significant contribution towards producing an effect of justifying the sentence and legitimising the procedure followed. This forced a clear and explicit description to be made of wrongdoings that place the *privado* under the most severe political accusation that could be made, that of tyrant. At the same time, the reason for the *privado's* guilt being proclaimed had to connect with a public opinion that from the royal court must have been perceived as widespread in relation to the favourite's portrayal as a consummate example of tyranny. As a result, the fact that the core of the accusation proclaimed to the crowd described the crime of tyranny hints at the presence of an evident consensus with respect to the popular identification of the *privado* with this image. The proclamation became the expression of a certain form of consensus between king and kingdom upon which a change of political regime could be based that demanded the disappearance of the royal alter ego, producing a liberating effect that had to be applicable to both king and kingdom.

Once the execution had been carried out on 3 June, on 16 June the king issued an official notification, again placing the core of guilt on the *privado's* tyrannical practices, alluding to *grandes e enormes e detestables tiranías e malos fechos tocantes al dicho Álvaro de Luna*, and *a la opresión della como al apoderamiento tirano con que el qual*

81. "tyrant you lie, I did as a knight what other knights are doing". Corral, León del. *Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 95.

82. Martín, Juan Carlos. "Las funciones sociales de la 'plaza pública' en la Castilla del siglo XV", *Sociedades urbanas y culturas políticas en la Baja Edad Media castellana*, José María Monsalvo, ed. Salamanca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Salamanca, 2013:155-157.

83. Attention has been drawn recently to the effect on the process leading to the fall of the great favourite of a certain form of bureaucratic and administrative conspiracy against Don Álvaro within the court: Cañas, Francisco de Paula. "Una conspiración en la Corte de Castilla: la trama burocrático-administrativa en la caída del condestable Álvaro de Luna (1453)", *La part de l'ombre. Artisans du pouvoir et arbitres des rapports sociaux (VIIIe-XVe siècles)*, Jacques Pericard, dir. Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2014: 266-287.



*usurpó e tobo usurpado gran tiempo mi palacio e casa e corte e el regimiento e gobernación de mis regnos.*⁸⁴

In view of the circumstances described above in relation to the *privado*'s execution and the decisive role they played in the accusation of tyranny, it is possible that prior to 1449 the image of tyranny that had been constructed around the favourite protected the king's position, acting as a kind of fire-break that meant the monarch was seen more as a victim than as a something that was necessary. This changed from the expansion of the discussions that took place during the Toledo revolt, which began to demand royal action that would formally get rid of the *privado* under the accusation of tyranny. Having overcome the image of tyranny, the circle of nobility and courtiers for whom the accusation against the *privado* might be useful for exonerating the king, the emergence of that same image in a broader sense became a direct accusation against the monarch who, had he not acted, could have found his fate joined with that of his favourite.

Once he had been executed, Álvaro de Luna's tyrannical memory would be the object of repeated reflections by well-meaning authors, who tended to extract an exemplary message whose usefulness seemed to be destined for future *privados* and the reigning monarch alike.⁸⁵

Lope de Barrientos offered an image of a *privado* who would eventually completely absorb the king's will and authority, leading to a regime of terror that would not allow anything to escape Álvaro's control: *tenía sojuzgado el rregno, e tan gran temor le auían grandes e pequeños que ninguno osaua bolleçer, que luego era castigado.*⁸⁶ That same image was noted by Alonso de Palencia when he portrayed Álvaro as *tirannico pronus suspicioni*, that is, a tyrant prone to suspicion.⁸⁷ Likewise, for Diego de Valera it was a recurring interpretation of the *privado*'s trajectory to frame most of his actions in the behaviour of someone who sets out to impose a regime of tyranny.⁸⁸ There was also a reference to tyranny, although alluding to an interposed character, in the *Doctrinal de Privados*, destined by the Marquis of Santillana to leave a negative memory of

84. "great and enormous and detestable tyrannies and evil events referring to this Álvaro de Luna, and oppression and tyrannical power with which he usurped and kept usurped for a long time my palace and my house and court and the regiment and governing of my kingdoms". Corral, León del. *Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 32-33.

85. For some literary expressions on the memory of the constable, see: López, César G. "La caída y muerte del Gran Condestable de Castilla en el contexto de la literatura de su época". *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana*, 17 (1992): 243-267.

86. "he had the kingdom subjugated, and both old and young were so afraid of him that nobody dared stand up to him as they would then be punished". Barrientos, Lope de. *Refundición de la crónica del Halconero*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1946: 166.

87. Palencia, Alonso de. *Gesta Hispaniensia ex annalibus suorum dierum collecta*, ed. Robert B. Tate, Jeremy Lawrance. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1998: I, 65.

88. Moya, Cristina. "Un ejemplo de heterodoxia política en el siglo XV castellano: el gobierno de Álvaro de Luna visto por Diego de Valera". *eHumanista/IVTTRA*, 18 (2011): 156-179 (<<http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/volumes/18>>), especially, 157.



the *privado's* life when he alludes to the *tiranidad* of Haman, *el mal priuado*⁸⁹ as an instrument to criticise the by then dead *privado*.

In view of such opinions, there seems little point in contradicting what the *privado's* apologist, Chacón, says in the chronicle devoted to him when he puts forward as irreproachable justifications for all the his actions the honour of the royal crown, the pre-eminence of his king and the common good of his kingdoms.⁹⁰

7. Conclusions

From the above discussion we can observe the process of expansion of a growing public opinion taking shape over nearly three decades in which Álvaro de Luna was identified as an uncrowned tyrant, a quintessential symbol of a bad politician, which enabled the exoneration, although not freeing him from all guilt, of the main responsibility of a monarch who had allowed himself to be subjected to his *privado's* wishes, as Fernán Pérez de Guzmán noted, describing the monarch as 'remiss and negligent'. By taking this attitude he would certainly have facilitated the *privado's* excesses, but in any case, the accusations against Juan II are very minor when compared to those levelled at Álvaro, insisting on his role as the guilty party and limiting the monarch's role as merely one of letting things take their course.⁹¹

With all this, the most obvious outcome was the exercise of a form of tyranny by someone who did not hold sovereign power. But the explanation really lies in the interaction of a series of circumstances that favoured the success of this opinion until it became a very distinctive feature of the person himself and a legal basis for justifying his fall and execution.

Along with political relations in which the need to pact was almost an everyday demand, both in the horizontal and in the vertical sense,⁹² the increasing expansion of a series of expressions referred to the exercise of a *poderío real absoluto* ("absolute royal power") which, while to some extent subject to these pacts, could also lead at any time to their disturbance or rupture.⁹³ The possibilities for true guardianship of this attribute by the royal favourite opened up an enormously important space

89. Santillana, Íñigo López de Mendoza. *Poesías completas*. Madrid: Castalia, 1980: II, 186.

90. *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna...*: 451.

91. Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, ed. Jesús Domínguez Bordona. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1979: 146.

92. Nieto, José Manuel; Villarroel, Óscar, eds. *Pacto y consenso en la cultura política península*. Madrid: Sílex, 2013.

93. Nieto, José Manuel. "La nobleza y el 'poderío real absoluto' en la Castilla del siglo XV". *Cahiers de linguistique et de civilisation hispaniques medievales*, 25 (2002): 237-254; Nieto, José Manuel. "De la ira regia al poderío real absoluto: monarquía y miedo político en la corona castellano-leonesa", *Por política, terror social*, Flocel Sabaté, ed. Lleida: Pagès, 2013: 245-264.



for the people who, as members of the inner royal circle, stood to gain the most from it.

The experience of a dynastic origin rooted in a seizure of the throne, in which the effort of creating opinion and mobilising propaganda that proved to be effective, turned these practices into a front of action whose influence would only become greater and more established as the 15th century progressed. In this sense, if the image of tyranny had turned out to be hugely successful in the mobilisation against a monarch, a similar effect could be expected in relation to a *privado* of the king, fostering the expansion of this descriptive feature into a new sphere of application.

The set of factors was affected by the individual profile of a royal favourite who showed exceptional skill in putting all the resources of political influence acquired over the monarch to the service of his own practically unlimited personal ambition. Aware of the importance of securing widespread patronage, he managed to obtain incredibly powerful means of mobilisation, information and the ability to induce fear and support for himself.⁹⁴ Establishing an extensive network of patrons became a decisive factor for political survival in the most adverse circumstances, while also provoking reactions against his interests that spread and gained in importance, including the highly significant construction of the image of tyranny.

Together with patronage, Álvaro de Luna's accumulation of material wealth was no less important for maintaining his high profile role.⁹⁵ But this accumulation of wealth would also contribute to the view that there was a need for an effective reaction against this increasingly unlimited favouritism. Faced with this, the *privado* showed an unprecedented creativity, as recent research with enormously far-reaching effects for historiography has shown. He promoted what was known as the *arrendamiento en masa*⁹⁶ of royal taxes, as had first been done in 1429, which involved placing the majority of the taxes collected by the monarchy in the hands of a few hired tax collectors working directly under the *privado's* supervision. He was thus able to take direct and full control of the royal tax collecting system during the 1430s and 1440s,⁹⁷ to the extent that leasing operations were sometimes carried out in the presence of the *privado* himself.⁹⁸

All this occurred against a backdrop of intellectual context and political reflection, but also of a widely accepted public opinion, in which the highest exponent of the bad politician had found a concept and an expression, tyranny, which identified

94. Foronda, François. "Patronazgo, relación de clientela y estructura clientelar. El testimonio del epílogo de la 'Historia de don Álvaro de Luna'". *Hispania*, 235 (2010): 431-460.

95. Calderón, José Manuel. *Álvaro de Luna: riqueza y poder en la Castilla del siglo XV*. Madrid: Dykinson, 1998: 141-322.

96. *Arrendamiento en masa* is a form of tax collecting for the entirety of a kingdom that uses private tax collectors who bid for the right to do the collecting job on behalf of the king. See: Calderón, José Manuel. *Álvaro de Luna: riqueza y poder...*

97. Ortego, Pablo. *Poder financiero y gestión tributaria en Castilla: los agentes fiscales en Toledo y su reino (1429-1504)*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 2015: 46-56, 579.

98. Ortego, Pablo. *Poder financiero y gestión tributaria...*: 57.



him clearly and unreservedly. It was a concept that became increasingly better identified and whose content was continually enriched, gathering a number of intellectual influences in the 15th century, as has been discussed. Its application, in this case, to the attitude and political career of a royal *privado* turned what had up to then been an instrument of government with wide-ranging historical experience into something that took on new characteristics of concern and threat for the king's immediate political circle, as well as for the whole of political society.

In 15th century Castile, as was the case in other western kingdoms, there was an increasingly marked evidence of a certain two-way nature of political communication⁹⁹ which, although it maintained a powerful top to bottom flow, making use of the numerous resources available, including institutional, informal, textual, oral and symbolic, was also starting to show signs of another flow, from bottom to top, especially apparent in institutions and representative practices, such as the outbreaks of conflict in which there was a precise statement of the objectives demanded and the reasons justifying them. In this sense, it is possible that the portrayal of the royal favourite as a tyrant can be considered an example of this two-way process, according to the chronology described. Based on the image induced by the Aragonese court, it entered court circles, reaching the lower levels of the nobility, until it became explicit against the backdrop of the Toledo conflict in 1449. From then onwards, we might ask, although not based on solid evidence, if this last event could have been a decisive push for an opinion that had been in decline to start an upward turn, contributing to the monarch having to make apparent his conviction that he shared this view of the *privado*, and then acting in consequence.

From now on, the exercise of royal favouritism would have to be seen as the possibility for new tyrannies,¹⁰⁰ which certainly, following Álvaro de Luna's death, led to the role being seen as an instrument of government with limitations and the tendency for its absence to be seen as a positive move.¹⁰¹ It is also important not

99. Oliva, Hipólito Rafael; Challet, Vincent; Dumolyn, Jan; Carmona, María Antonia, "La comunidad medieval como esfera pública: algunas reflexiones", *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona, eds. Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 12-13.

100. Having personally lived through the favouritism of Álvaro de Luna, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, referring to the regency of Catherine of Lancaster, remarks how the existence of favourites is something that in most cases leads to vices in governmental practice: *Fue muy onesta e guardada en su persona e fama, liberal e manífica, pero muy sometida a priuados, e muy regida dellos, lo qual, por la mayor parte, es biçio comun de los reyes* ("She was very honest, taking great care of her person and her reputation, being generous and kind, but very subjected to councillors, letting herself be ruled by them, which is, commonly, a bad habit often found in kings and Queens"). Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán. *Generaciones y Semblanzas*...: 19.

101. This is the reflection in relation to the view expressed by Fernando del Pulgar on the Catholic King and Queen of Spain, praising them for not having favourites, with the king acting as the queen's favourite and the queen acting as the king's favourite: *Damos gracias a Dios que tenemos un rey y una reina que no queráis saber dellos sino que ambos ni cada uno por sí no tiene priuado, que es la cosa y aun la causa de la desobediencia y escándalos en los reinos. El priuado del rey sabed que es la reina, y el priuado de la reina sabed que es el rey* ("Let us give thanks to God because neither our king nor our queen has a favourite, which is usually the cause of disobedience and scandals in the kingdoms. Know that the king's favourite is the



to forget, as has been observed,¹⁰² the growing influence of the royal bureaucratic and administrative environment as a factor that also favoured the restriction of the powers available to future *privados*.

The portrayal of Álvaro de Luna as a tyrant provided a practical example of the theory put forward by Bartolo de Sassoferrato when he argued the invalidity of acts resulting from the excess of power, of the re-routing of attributions and of functional incompetence, criteria which would go on to form an essential basis for modern administrative law.¹⁰³

queen and the queen's favourite is the King"). Pulgar, Fernando. *Letras. Glosa a las coplas de Mingo Revulgo*, ed. Jesús Domínguez Bordona. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958: 57.

102. Cañas, Francisco de Paula. "Una conspiración en la Corte de Castilla...": 283.

103. For Bartolo de Sassoferrato's assessment of work related to this legal principle, see: Calasso, Francesco. *Gli ordinamenti giuridici del Rinascimento medievale*. Milan: Giuffré, 1965: 263; Quaglioni, Diego. *Politica e Diritto nel Trecento...*: 55.

