In August 1471, on the feast of the Assumption, King Afonso V, his son and heir Prince João, and many others processed solemnly ‘e com muito maravilhoso e grande triumpho’ to embark on their voyage from Lisbon (Restelo) to the Algarve and from there to the Moroccan coast on their campaign to capture Asilah and Tangier. Once in Lagos they attended Mass, during which their imminent departure was announced, and then took part in a procession through the streets to board the ships, accompanied by a loud band of trumpets and several other types of musical instrument: ‘having heard Mass, and a devout sermon for the occasion, and having announced their departure to Asilah, he and the Prince [went] in a devout procession accompanied by a clamorous sound of trumpets and loud and soft instruments, placed in the ships...’. The royal fleet of four hundred and seventy-seven ships with about thirty thousand men, including musicians, arrived at Asilah on 20 August, which the king took with ease, and on 25 August the Bishop of Lisbon, Jorge da Costa, celebrated solemn Mass in the mosque—from then on dedicated to St Bartholomew (honouring the day of the victory). The mesquita in Tangier was similarly transformed into the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption (GomesS 2009: 250–52). The royal party returned to Portugal triumphant, carrying booty of considerable value (Serrão 1996: 88).

This momentous victory was not only commemorated in Portugal but also simultaneously elsewhere in Europe, particularly at the courts of Burgundy and France where pageants and magnificent displays of splendidly costumed cavalry were organized. It was to become one of the most celebrated and iconic feats of Portuguese history (Serrão 1975: 47–48). A series of tapestries depicting...
the battle and victory was swiftly commissioned, remaining as one of the most tangible visual records of that time. These tapestries are notable for their rich iconography that depicts the king’s musicians playing a wide variety of musical instruments, including his famous trombetas de guerra, many displaying the royal standard. The triumph was also to inspire a number of historical accounts and poetic commemorations, notably by the humanist Cataldo Parisio Siculo whose Latin poem Arcitinge (c. 1490) is said to have given rise to further epics recounting Portuguese history such as the later chronicles of Damião de Gois and João de Barros (Burke 2011). Moreover, thanksgiving for the Moroccan victory resulted in a specially written set of liturgical Offices with music: Vesperae, Matutinum, & Laudes cum Antiphonis, & figuris musicis de inclyta, etc miraculosa Victoria... The only surviving evidence for this work is the description by Barbosa Machado in his Bibliotheca Lusitana (published in Lisbon in 1759). According to this description, the dedicatory matter in the manuscript indicated that the Offices had been written or composed by a certain ‘Alvarus’. It is generally believed (though not proven) that this was Álvaro Afonso, Afonso V’s chapel master from at least 1452, and one of the longest serving singers at the Portuguese court and chapel. Unfortunately, none of his compositions is known to survive save a fragment of poetry dating from his time as a singer in the royal chapel (1438–46), which is included in a cancioneiros preserved in the Vatican (Ferreira 2008, i: 53). The 1471 Officium de Victoria Christianum was dedicated to Afonso V and ordered to be celebrated throughout Portugal. It was in fact not the only set of liturgical Offices specially written to mark a military success in Portuguese history, others of which may

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2 The origin of these tapestries commemorating the occupation of Asilah and Tangier is disputed (see Serrão 1988: 351–52 and GomesS 2009: 253–54). They are now preserved in the Collegiate Church of Pastrana in Spain.

3 Players on this occasion may well have included the then ‘rei dos trombetas’, Martim d’Alemquer, who appears in documentation dating from between 1451 and 1475. (Unless otherwise indicated, information concerning musicians and dates of their activity in this essay is derived from documents reproduced in Viterbo 1932, which should be consulted for transcripts of original documentation and archival references.)

4 The humanist scholar and writer Cataldo Parisio Siculo was invited to Portugal from Bologna University in 1485, first as tutor to Prince Jorge, illegitimate son of King João II, and later as tutor at the royal court.

5 Vesperae, Matutinum, & Laudes cum Antiphonis, & figuris musicis de inclyta, etc miraculosa Victoria in Africa parta ad Arzillam era (1471); see Barbosa Machado 1759, i: 10, and Viterbo 1932: 5–7.

6 Álvaro Afonso, who was also a priest, had previously been a singer in the chapel of the Infante Pedro (Ferreira 2008, i: 56).