

LA VILLE MÉDIÉVALE EN DÉBAT

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Ce livre traduit un dessein: celui d'encourager le débat sur la *ville médiévale*. Il est le résultat d'un défi lancé à plusieurs auteurs, soit des historiens confirmés, soit des jeunes chercheurs, pour écrire sur l'étude des agglomérations urbaines, selon un plan défini. En effet, les textes sont organisés comme s'il s'agissait d'un parcours, en tenant compte des variables qui influencent le développement d'un projet de recherche: les sources et les méthodologies, les perspectives d'approche et les grandes problématiques qui orientent l'analyse. En suivant ces paramètres, le fil conducteur du livre est le partage des connaissances, des interprétations, des interrogations, voire des doutes. Plus qu'un recueil de textes refermé sur lui-même, cet ouvrage a l'ambition de servir d'instrument de stimulation à de multiples débats.

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Property study contributions towards the understanding of the medieval town: the parish of Santa Justa, Coimbra

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Abstract

This work offers some reflections on the relevance of the study of urban property, based on a discussion of its potentialities and disadvantages, in view of a more complete knowledge of the medieval town.

Based on an examination of the parish of Santa Justa in Coimbra (which is the subject of the author's doctoral thesis), this article puts forward the information available on the parish's property, in order to demonstrate the importance of such aspects for the reconstruction of the urban landscape, recognising its evolution throughout the centuries and its urban and socio-economic transformation.

Furthermore, rare detailed descriptions from contemporary sources (predominantly documents of a contractual and economic nature) will make us aware of how an analysis of this kind is highly important for the study of an urban area which would undergo radical transformation — scarcely detailed in older cartography and practically unexplored by archaeology.

Keywords

Medieval towns, urban property, urban landscape, parish of Santa Justa (Coimbra).

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The same as with rural areas, urban areas in the medieval west were not far from being territories split up between various lords who divided the ownership of land and of town buildings between themselves. With the exception of very few individual owners, who were able to retain state property of more or less significance within the urban area, to live in the town during the Middle Ages, meant essentially to enter into a relationship of dependence from a landlord, were he clergy or layman².

Indeed, with respect to ownership of land and state property, the town was divided — not without frequent opposition and dispute — between different owners who made those properties lucrative through indirect development, relying on the principle of emphyteusis. Thus, a majority of town inhabitants were merely the beneficiaries of the use of domain of the buildings and properties they resided in and where they would also carry out their professions, owing certain obligations to the owner, entered into in contracts, in addition to paying rent.

As far as descriptions of urban landed property are concerned, many studies on Portuguese towns have demonstrated how, from north to south³, property comprised estates of many guises and functions. In fact, when speaking of urban property we must refer not only the house itself, endowed with both a residential and an economic significance⁴, but also to the parcels of land with an agricultural capability — be they annexed to the residential units or standing independently from them — and to the equipment used for the treatment of food, storage and water supply, among others⁵. In fact, the urban grounds were strewn with property comprising multiple buildings, infrastructures and mechanical devices, themselves

² Cf. P. BOUCHERON, D. MENJOT, M. BOONE, «Habiter la ville: les espaces de sociabilité urbaine» dans J.-L. PINOL (dir.), *Histoire de l'Europe Urbaine*, 1, Paris, Seuil, 2003, p. 462-466.

³ Besides other studies, see M. BEIRANTE, *Santarém Medieval*, Lisbon, Universidade Nova, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, 1980. Id., *Évora na Idade Média*, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, JNICT, 1995. A. ANDRADE, *Um Espaço Urbano Medieval: Ponte de Lima*, Lisbon, Livros Horizonte, 1990. A. RODRIGUES, *Torres Vedras: a vila e o termo nos finais da Idade Média*, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, JNICT, 1995. M. BOTÃO, *A construção de uma identidade urbana no Algarve Medieval: o caso de Loulé*, Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio, 2009. M. FERREIRA, *Guimarães: "duas vilas, um só povo": estudo de história urbana (1250-1389)*, Braga, s.n., 2010.

⁴ On the vernacular dwelling house in medieval Portugal, see L. TRINDADE, *A Casa Corrente em Coimbra. Dos Finais da Idade Média aos Inícios da Época Moderna*, Coimbra, Câmara Municipal, 2002. Id., *Urbanismo na composição de Portugal*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 2009 (PhD thesis), p. 177-195 and M. FERREIRA, «Urban vernacular housing in medieval northern Portugal and the usefulness of typologies», in C. BEATTIE, A. MASLAKOVIC, S. JONES (eds.), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850-c.1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and Body*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003.

⁵ These different types of property necessarily gave origin to a varied landscape. See A. MARQUES, I. GONÇALVES, A. ANDRADE (coord.), *Atlas de Cidades Medievais Portuguesas: séculos XII-XV*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Históricos da Universidade Nova, INIC, 1990. A. ANDRADE, «A Paisagem urbana medieval portuguesa: uma aproximação» e «Um percurso através da paisagem urbana medieval», in *Horizontes Urbanos Medievais*, Lisbon, Livros Horizonte, 2003.

a reflection of the complex needs from a social fabric that was equally diverse regarding its own range of occupations and behaviours⁶.

My doctoral project, examines the collegiate church of *Santa Justa de Coimbra* from the period of its foundation (towards the end of the eleventh century)⁷ until 1451⁸. This collegiate and parish church are studied not only as a chapter with ecclesiastical responsibilities and liturgical and parish obligations, but also as the headquarters of a parish, considered in its condition as a territorial jurisdiction within the urban network of Coimbra and as a district with its own social identity, the profile of which this work goes on to outline. Supported by a basis of documents, composed mostly of records of an economic nature, produced in connection with the development of the institution's urban and rural landed property, this investigation also covers the study of property. This article will concern property located within the town alone.

Although at present quantitative data still cannot be supplied, the urban property of Santa Justa was mostly located within parish boundaries — hence the holdings of this property coincide with the existing description of the parochial jurisdiction. However, within the city of Coimbra⁹, the parish of Santa Justa — absorbed by that of Santa Cruz before our day — stood outside the walls, on land which, during the medieval period, stretched along the river bank, at the northern city exit, which corresponds to one of the roads which followed the old Roman road connecting *Olisippo* (Lisbon) and *Bracara Augusta* (Braga). Its place of establishing, by the sandy margins of the River Mondego and far away from the *almedina* (citadel), bring it more closely to the rusticity of Coimbra's environs, than to the commercial and craftsmanship activity downtown — this is a fact that property classification clearly reflects.

⁶ On the way in which this interaction adjusted the human landscaping, cf. H. NOIZET, «La fabrique urbaine de Tours: une analyse dialectique entre sociétés et espaces urbains (IX^e XIII^e siècles)», in C. DELIGNE and C. BILLEN, (dir.), *Voisinages, coexistences, appropriations. Groupes sociaux et territoires urbains (Moyen Âge-XVI^e siècle*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007.

⁷ The oldest reference to this church dates from 1098 (*Portugaliae Monumenta Historica. A saeculo octavo post Christum usque ad Quintumdecimum*, v. 1, *Diplomatae et Chartae*, Academia Scientiarum Olisiponensis, 1873, doc. 981 and *Livro Preto. Cartulário da Sé de Coimbra*, Coimbra, Arquivo da Universidade, 1999, doc. 427) and we know of the existence of an ecclesiastical college since 1175 (TT, Col. S. Justa, liv. 2, fls. 160v-163).

⁸ The year in which the last parish before the first half of the fifteenth century was extinguished.

⁹ On medieval Coimbra, see amongst others M. COELHO, «Coimbra Trecentista: a Cidade e o Estudo», *Biblos*, 68, 1992. Id., «A Cidade de Coimbra sob ameaça de interdito», *Revista de História da Ideias*, 22, p. 51-69. W. ROSSA, *Diversidade. Urbanografia do espaço de Coimbra até ao estabelecimento definitivo da Universidade*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, 2001 (PhD thesis). L. VENTURA, «Coimbra Medieval: Uma cidade em formação», in A. ALARCÃO (dir.), *Inventário do Museu Nacional Machado Castro. Coleção de Ourivesaria Medieval. Séculos XII-XIV*, Lisbon, Instituto Português de Museus, 2003. M. COELHO, «Coimbra Medieval: uma cidade em maturação», in *ibid.*. S. GOMES, «Coimbra: Aspectos da sua paisagem urbana em tempos medievos», *Biblos*, 4, 2006. J. ALARCÃO, *A Montagem do Cenário Urbano*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 2008.

At least until the end of the first half of the thirteenth century, we find buildings identified by the generic name of *herdades* or *quintas*¹⁰, which we tend to associate with the rural countryside. However, from the end of that century, we cease to find references to this type of parcels of land on a broader scale, although other buildings were also marked by a strong rustic character. In fact, as part of the urban property of this institution, were also various types of houses, which could be *térreas* (single-storey houses)¹¹, *sobradadas* (houses having two floors)¹² and *sobradadas com sótão* (of two stories and a cellar)¹³, but also small plots of land suitable for agriculture, normally surrounded by walls, such as courtyards and the enclosures annexed to houses¹⁴ or independent from them¹⁵, and where occasionally there were fruit trees¹⁶, one or more olive trees and even a grapevine¹⁷. Furthermore, these lands would still be farmed for grapes and olives during the fifteenth century¹⁸. Within the more or less continuous precinct made up of rows of houses and the parcels of land of rural characteristics just described, this church also owned wine presses¹⁹, ovens²⁰, furnaces²¹ and wells²².

The thesis also seeks to describe this property and evaluate its disposition along the area, through the analysis of written documents of an economic nature, such as tenancy contracts²³ and the barter of property. In the same way, the registers of properties bequeathed to the church, which was responsible for the constitution of most of its ownership, are important, as well as are the (rare) contracts of purchase and sale. Finally, juridical procedures, above all those regarding the good keeping of emphyteusis contracts or the cases of destruction or usurpation of this church's

¹⁰ See for instance Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Cabido da Sé de Coimbra (Cab. Sé), 1ª incorporação (inc.), m. 4, n. 2 (1126.11) and ANTT, Cab. Sé, 1ª inc., m. 13, n. 4 (1240.02).

¹¹ See for instance ANTT, Cab. Sé, 2ª incorporação, m. 81, n. 3709 (1331.03.02) and ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Justa de Coimbra (Col. S. Justa), m. 26, n. 532; m. 27, n. 592 and m. 27, n. 629 (1359.05.16; 1367.11.11 and 1420.02.20).

¹² See for instance ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 27, n. 635 and m. 35, n. 810 (1377.04.01 and 1416.04.03).

¹³ See for instance ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 30, n. 696 and m. 21, n. 421 (1352.09.09 and 1369.03.15).

¹⁴ See for instance ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 12, n. 234 and m. 27, n. 614 (1364.10.06 and 1442.02.03).

¹⁵ See for instance ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 5, n. 117 and m. 27, n. 583 (1367.02.28 and 1434.05.20).

¹⁶ Such as fig trees [ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 1, n. 7 (1310.08.23)] or orange trees [ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 33, n. 737 (1373.08.28)].

¹⁷ In the north of this parish a house with a courtyard was found, surrounded by vineyards, olive trees and other trees (1379.05.08). See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 5, n. 118.

¹⁸ In the year 1406, a vineyard with olives trees was identified near Santa Justa. See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 34, n. 775.

¹⁹ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 19, n. 400 and m. 27, n. 611 (1365.08.05 and 1419.07.08).

²⁰ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 15, n. 288 and m. 5, n. 137 (1387.06.08 and 1439.07.01).

²¹ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 24, n. 464 (1425.06.19)

²² See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 5, n. 119 and m. 33, n. 726 (1380.11.08 and 1395.03.04).

²³ These emphyteusis contracts of transfer of usufruct of the property can take on three forms: *emprazamentos* (temporary concessions for life spans, normally for the span of two or three lives), *aforamentos* (perpetual and hereditary concession contracts) and *arrendamentos* (lease contracts for only a few years). In this study, the first are clearly in the majority.

landed property also provide us with relevant information. Since we do not possess any cadastral registers nor inventories for the Santa Justa properties for this period, this investigation shall aim at bringing to the surface sundry documentation as much as possible²⁴.

Recent works on the landscape of the medieval town have demonstrated the frailty of an analysis based exclusively on the sources of the time by underlining the necessity to link this information with more recent documentation and literature, with pictorial evidence and cartography from various periods and with archaeological results²⁵. Unfortunately, the oldest literary accounts²⁶ and the cartography of Coimbra²⁷ contain little detail about this area of the town, while the excavations carried out in there have proved fruitless²⁸ — both for natural reasons, due to the high phreatic level, and for human ones, since during the preceding century this region suffered radical interventions and transformations which eliminated the last remaining vestiges of the ancient structures, which now makes it impossible to carry out more extensive excavations.

In this context, the study of this collegiate church's property — based on a discerning and methodical investigation of the characteristics and the very history of the landed property itself — can make a significant contribution not only to sketching out this now irreversibly destroyed landscape, but also towards the perception of how this urban area was organised and occupied. Some of the information supplied by this analysis will now be reviewed.

With regard to buildings, we are able to understand how the row of houses, arranged contiguously in Braun's representation²⁹, materialised with walls made of stone, wood and lime³⁰, with slits for doors in the façade³¹ and covered with roof tiles³². However, this documentation is not so helpful in tracing a more detailed

²⁴ As an example of a description of medieval urban landed property based on this type of sources, see A. ABEL VILELA, *La ciudad de Lugo en los siglos XII al XV: Urbanismo y sociedad*, A Coruña, Fundación Pedro Barrié de la Maza, 2009, p. 121-153: cap. III, La vivienda y los servicios.

²⁵ See B. ARÍZAGA BOLUMBURU, «El paisaje urbano en la Europa Medieval», in J. IGLESIA DUARTE, (dir.), *III Semana de Estudios Medievales: Nájera 3 al 7 de Agosto de 1992*, Nájera, Instituto de Estudios Riojianos, 1993, p. 11-26. Id., *La imagen de la ciudad medieval. La recuperación del paisaje urbano*, Santander, Universidad de Cantabria, 2002, p. 20-86.

²⁶ See for instance A. FIGUEIREDO, *Coimbra Antiga e Moderna*, Lisbon, Livraria Ferreira, 1886, p. 344.

²⁷ On the development of the cartography of Coimbra and on developments in its urbanisation over the last centuries, see S. FARIA and J. REBELO (éds.), *Evolução do espaço físico de Coimbra: exposição*, Coimbra, Câmara Municipal, 2006.

²⁸ See A. GERVÁSIO and S. SANTOS, *Relatório final: Sondagens arqueológicas no Terreiro da Erva*, Coimbra, Gabinete de Arqueologia, Arte e História da Câmara Municipal, 2005.

²⁹ See Image 1.

³⁰ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 27, n. 627 (1420.11.14).

³¹ Which should close well: see ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 11, n. 228 (1409.06).

³² See, for instance, ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 27, n. 632; m. 11, n. 228 and m. 33, n. 753 (1390.04.17; 1409.06.00 and 1434.01.02).

description. For example, houses are identified therein according to the number of floors and only rarely is mention made of their size, the number of rooms, or even the materials used for their construction. As to the size of buildings, the information provided by these contracts fails to go beyond a subjective 'large' or 'small'³³. Documents of a contractual nature such as these will only provide us with indications that remain at a general and subjective level also as far as the location of properties is concerned (such as the identification of streets and the description of buildings, relying on indicative elements found in the surrounding area), or yet the names of landlords or agents in neighbouring buildings. These references will only allow today's historian to come at more precise locations when carefully set against a number of cross references. Nevertheless, it is often through these references to property boundaries that we are able to know where communal structures — such as sanitary equipment³⁴ and residual waterways³⁵ — would have stood.

A more encompassing analysis makes it possible to discern human occupation levels and demographic dynamics from contracts of purchase and tenancy of landed property in a given district over a wide time span³⁶. A climate of expansion is reflected in the laying down of new streets and in the breaking down of barriers and closes standing in the way of the main roads, along with modifications made to the inside of the buildings themselves and the gradual addition of new stories, all of which can be identified from the documentation. On the other hand, the existence of *pardieiros* (hovels) and demolished houses, which the documentation acknowledges, gives us an idea of the state of dereliction of lodgings as a consequence of demographic contraction. In the parish of Santa Justa, this is very prominent throughout the second half of the thirteenth century into the first of the fourteenth, at the end of which period the opposite becomes apparent — as indeed is the case also with the majority of urban nuclei in the country³⁷. Furthermore, the population density in a specific region is also reflected in the frequency of emphyteusis contracts, as well as in the characteristics and conditions which they contain. However, this kind of analysis falls beyond the objectives of this essay.

³³ See for instance, ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 33, n. 746 (1409.11.17).

³⁴ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 11, n. 211 (1362.02.13).

³⁵ See for instance, ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 27, n. 622 (1369.03.23).

³⁶ Detailed knowledge of this subject is only possible through the study of other sources, like those used by D. MENJOT, *Murcia: ciudad fronteriza en la Castilla Bajomedieval*, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2002, p. 380-386.

³⁷ In the region of Coimbra, population rose in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, only to fall steeply after 1340: see M. COELHO, *O Baixo Mondego nos Finais da Idade Média*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1989, p. 12-23 and 26-38. In our parish in the suburb of Coimbra, for example on the street where the Collegiate of Santa Justa owned a large number of buildings since the twelfth century, three-story houses existed in 1359 (ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 26, n. 542) whereas *pardieiros* became widely spread between 1387 and 1401 (ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 32, n. 715 and m. 26, n. 561).

The observation of property location has enabled us to further understand, in broad terms, the social texture of the parish, through the identification of the tenants of the neighbouring buildings and the use of toponymy; both reveal the place of residence of certain artisans and other professionals³⁸, and from the fourteenth century also the Jewish³⁹ and the prostitution quarters⁴⁰ — two examples of well-defined areas which the town's population, through enacting royal and municipal regulations, pushed the urban centre outside, for moral and religious reasons.

Deeper research on the urban landed property of an institution of this kind allows us to catch a glimpse of the outline of both the natural and built up landscape of the urban parish, making out the rows of houses, but also emphasising the complementary presence of horticultural land and of distinct equipment for the production of edible goods, as well as for the conveyance and supply of water. In dealing with a wide chronological span such as this, in all likelihood it would be possible to illustrate the whole process of development and to detect varying degrees for the region's urban transformation. Based on the assumption that the church with its forecourt functioned as a dominant complex within the urban structure of the parish, governing the layout of the main streets around it, the analysis of urban landed property strikes us as fundamental to any attempt at defining the medieval road network, the outline of urban areas and their population distribution — even when such places have withstood such profound transformations over the ages, as is the case of *Santa Justa de Coimbra*.

³⁸ Among others identified in this parish, there is the *Rua dos Oleiros* (Potters' Street) (ANTT, Cab. Sé, 1ª inc., m. 10, n. 19; 1217.12) and *Rua dos Caldeireiros* (Boilermakers' Street) (ANTT, Cab. Sé, 1ª inc., m. 13, n. 25; 1242.10). The establishment of these professions in the suburbs resulted not only from the close proximity with raw materials and the riverbank, but also from the distance which needed keeping from the centre of town, because of noise and pollution. See I. GONÇALVES, «Posturas Municipais e vida urbana na Baixa Idade Média: o exemplo de Lisboa», in *Um Olhar sobre a cidade Medieval*, Cascais, Patrimonia Historica, 1996.

³⁹ See ANTT, m. 27, n. 621 (1384.10.27). This is the second establishment of a Jewish quarter in Coimbra, which until then had been by the outer wall, near the streets with greater economic activity. See S. GOMES, *A Comunidade Judaica de Coimbra Medieval*, Coimbra, INATEL, 2003 and L. TRINDADE, «Jewish Communities in Portuguese Late Medieval Cities: Space and Identity», in J. CARVALHO (ed.), *Religion, Ritual and Mythology: Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe*, Pisa, University Press, 2006.

⁴⁰ See ANTT, Col. S. Justa, m. 11, n. 207 (1374.11.11). On prostitution areas in Portugal, see M. BEIRANTE, «As Mancebias nas cidades medievais Portuguesas» in *O Ar da Cidade. Ensaios de História Medieval e Moderna*, Lisboa, Colibri, 2008, p. 7-24.

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EN DÉBAT

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ADELAIDE MILLÁN DA COSTA
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