ELITES AND OLIGARCHIES IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL PORTUGUESE URBAN WORLD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to review the state of knowledge about elites and oligarchies in the Portuguese urban world, during the Medieval Era. To achieve this objective, the following outline will be used. 1- Review of the situation in urban history and studies of power in Portugal. 2- Recent research: a political reading of the Portuguese urban world. 3- Summary of the status of municipalities in the political system in medieval Portugal. 4- The methods and historiographical perspectives of research on urban elites. 5- Case study: the power elites in a Portuguese town in the Medieval Era.

KEY WORDS

Urbain history, Political elites, Methodology of research groupes, Case study.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Historia urbium, Optimatium dominatus, Ratio coniuncte indagandi, Carptim euoluere, Peculiariter condiscere.

In the 1980s, urban history in Portugal underwent a process of profound renewal. At that time, a research project was set up based on consistent conceptual and methodological foundations, aimed precisely at the medieval chronological period. Oliveira Marques designed a programme of comprehensive research[1] and created conditions for it to be materialised: he directed a Master's seminar on this subject and included it among the research activities of a Centre for Historical Studies.

The purpose of Oliveira Marques's *Plan* was to *understand the medieval Portuguese city*, going beyond a *mere compilation of erudite data*, and embarking on *interpretation, theorising and comparison*[2]. To this end, he drew up a table of questions to be applied to medieval documents from the different urban centres. He used this to attempt to understand aspects specific to each location and, at the same time, he collected information on the *common denominators* of *medieval Portuguese cities*.

Within a few years, many urban history monographs had been written according to this *Plan*. More recently, some Portuguese medievalists have extended the scope of the analysis of cities. These authors have examined the relationship between urban centres and the rural world, establishing hierarchies between various towns and cities in a region and studying the process of urbanisation of geographic zones as a strategy of territorial domination by royal power. And, in addition to research addressing the city as a whole, studies have also emerged from the field of Portuguese historiography that analyse certain specific realities, including landscape, forts, defensive structures, neighbourhoods, place names, urban interventions, property, public health, festivals, processions, solidarity, minority and marginal groups and elites[3].

Despite this boom in research, there are both geographic and chronological disparities in current knowledge of the medieval Portuguese urban world. In geographic terms, the urban monographs concentrate on centres situated on the north and central coast area of the kingdom; in chronological terms, there is a preponderance of studies of the Late Medieval Era rather than earlier eras. This chronological tendency is less the result of the choice of authors than an imposition of the existing sources, which, as is well known, are much more extensive for the final centuries of the Medieval Era.

In parallel to these studies of urban history, the influence of the historiographical movement to rehabilitate politics as a subject of analysis has begun to be felt in

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1. Programme presented in two articles of a methodological nature: Marques, António Henrique de Oliveira. "Introdução à história da cidade medieval portuguesa"; "As cidades medievais portuguesas (Algumas bases metodológicas gerais)", *Novos Ensaios de História Medieval Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1988: 13-67.

2. The publication of an atlas of the cities was the first achievement of the last aspect listed: that of comparison. Marques, António Henrique de Oliveira; Gonçalves, Iria; Andrade, Amélia Aguiar, eds. *História Atlas das Cidades Medievais Portuguesas (séculos XII-XV). Historia Medieval – 1*. Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos da Universidade Nova de Lisboa-Instituto Nacional de Investigaçao Científica, 1990.

3. A list of studies of urban history conducted in Portugal can be consulted in our work: Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *O Mundo Urbano em Portugal na Idade Média*. Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 2004.

Portugal[4]. The long Portuguese tradition of research on local power[5] was thus enriched with new issues and new methodologies. Areas studied included: the operation of municipal governance structures[6]; local finances[7]; royal and seigneurial strategies for domination of local power[8]; the values defended by the common people, analysed on the basis of complaints presented at *cortes*[9]. A significant new approach was the application of the prosopographical method to local political societies, permitting an analysis of their socio-professional composition and a discovery of any *cursos honorum* developed in the power structures of the communities[10].

More recently, the two paths of research have covered common ground. Like the famous *Plan* of Dr Oliveira Marques, this project is intended to find "common denominators" that can help us with a political reading of Portuguese medieval

4. These influences were initially visible in studies on central administration and its political staff. See Homem, Armando Luís de Carvalho. *O Desembargo Régio (1320-1433)*. Porto: Instituto Nacional Investigaçao Científica – Centro de História da Universidade do Porto, 1990, and MA and PhD theses following the line of research developed by this historian.

5. On this subject see Torgal, Luís Reis; Mendes, José M. Amado; Catroga, Fernando. *História da história em Portugal, séculos XIX-XX*. 1, *A História através da História*. Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 1998: 31-35.

6. This note and the following are not intended to provide a comprehensive list of the studies, but just some examples of work addressing these issues. Moreno, Humberto Baquero. "A evolução do município em Portugal nos séculos XIV e XV", *Actas das Jornadas sobre o município na Península Ibérica (sécs. XII a XIX), Santo Tirso, 22 a 24 de Fevereiro, 1985*. Santo Tirso: Câmara Municipal de Santo Tirso, 1988: 75-110; Moreno, Humberto Baquero. "As oligarquias urbanas e as primeiras burguesias em Portugal". *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História*, 11 (1994): 111-136.

7. Gonçalves, Iria. *As finanças municipais do Porto na segunda metade do século XV*. Porto: Arquivo Histórico - Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1987.

8. Andrade, Amélia Aguiar. "Estado, territórios e administração régia periférica", *A Génese do Estado Moderno no Portugal tardo-medievo*, Maria Helena Da Cruz Coelho, Armando Luís de Carvalho Homem, coords. Lisbon: Universidade Autónoma, 1999: 151-188; Homem, Armando Luís de Carvalho. "L'intervention de l'État portugais sur le pouvoir municipal aux XIVe et XVe siècles: rejets et conflits", *Genèse Médiévale de l'Espagne Moderne, Du refus à la révolte: les résistances*, Adeline Rucquoi, ed. Nice: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1991: 95-106; Moreno, Humberto Baquero. "O poder central e o poder local: modos de convergência e de conflito nos séculos XIV e XV". *Revista de História*, 6 (1988): 53-67; Ferreira, Maria da Conceição Falcão. "Relações entre o poder local e poder central - uma síntese", *Universo Urbanístico Português, 1415-1822: Actas do Colóquio Internacional Universo Urbanístico Português*, Walter Rossa, Renata Araújo, Helder Carita, eds. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2001: 17-34; Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz. "Relações de domínio no Portugal concelhio de meados de Quatrocentos". *Revista Portuguesa de História*, 25 (1990): 235-289; Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz. "O poder na Idade Média: um relacionamento de poderes", *Poder Central, Poder Regional, Poder Local. Uma perspectiva histórica*, Luís Nuno Espinha da Silveira, coord. Lisbon: Ediçoes Cosmo, 1997: 35-46.

9. Sousa, Armindo de. *As Cortes Medievais Portuguesas (1385-1490)*. Porto: Instituto Nacional de Investigaçao Científica - Centro de História da Universidade do Porto, 1990; Sousa, Armindo de. "O discurso político dos concelhos nas cortes de 1385". *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História*, 2 (1985): 9-44; Sousa, Armindo de. "A estratégia política dos municípios no reinado de D. João II". *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História*, 6 (1989): 137-174.

10. Even though the sources available were not always helpful for knowledge of local political societies, as they were for the human contingents that made up central administration. Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *'Vereação' e 'Vereadores'. O governo do Porto em finais do século XV*. Porto: Arquivo Histórico - Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1993; Andrade, Amélia Aguiar. "Composição social e gestão municipal: o exemplo de Ponte de Lima na Baixa Idade Média". *Ler História*, 10 (1987): 3-13.

cities. To this end, the following criteria of a jurisdictional, institutional and political nature have been used to catalogue urban centres[11]:

1. Symbolic political hierarchical system of cities and towns[12].
2. Jurisdictional definition/evolution of the centre.
3. Regulations —list of all the sources of law that regulate the municipality and their relationship with the crown.
4. Administrative, judicial, tax attributes of the urban centre in terms of the organisation of the kingdom.
5. Positioning of the urban centre in the geographic circuit favoured by the monarchs.
6. Royal policy towards each city or town.
7. Local political societies.

It has not yet been possible to complete this grid with all the information required. For a considerable number of urban centres, the exploration of these topics has yet to be completed. It is, however, important to emphasise that the subject addressed here is part of a wide-ranging research project[13].

We can start by creating a framework for the problem through a summary of political and institutional evolution in Portugal in the Middle Ages.

Historians have considered the Portuguese crown to be somewhat precocious in its establishment of measures aimed at centralising power. Indeed, from the late twelfth century and particularly during the thirteenth century, there was a political strategy —conceived by jurists— that aimed to structure the territory and the society under the king's rule. This resulted in some general laws (in 1211), records in royal chancellery (in 1217), surveys of the property titles of lords (after 1220). Over the years, the crown's programme was developed and intensified. The territory was divided into five districts of a judicial nature (*comarcas*) and twenty-five for tax purposes (*almoxarifados*). A central, regional and local administrative hierarchy was created, operated by agents of the King who acted in legal and tax matters. Naturally the lack of means to guarantee the effectiveness of the crown's directives meant that many measures were not actually put into practice.

In this ideological paradigm the crown interacted with other powers operating in the medieval political system: the lay and ecclesiastical lords and the organised territorial communities. These communities —called *concelhos*— corresponded to the

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11. These indicators should naturally be combined with the knowledge transmitted by urban monographs written in the last thirty years in Portugal, which help to characterise each urban centre in geographic, spatial, economic, corporate, cultural terms, etc.

12. Throughout the article, the formal distinction between cities and towns in force during the Middle Ages in Portugal has been adopted. Cites were exclusively the seats of bishoprics, in other words Braga, Coimbra, Évora, Guarda, Lamego, Lisbon, Oporto, Silves and Viseu. The other urban agglomerations were called towns (Marques, António Henrique de Oliveira. *Portugal na crise dos séculos XIV e XV [Nova História de Portugal, 4, Joel Serrão, António Henrique de Oliveira Marques, dirs.]*. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1987: 182). However, medievalists commonly use the general term 'city' to designate the urban world of the period.

13. It corresponds to item 7 of the research project.

smallest recognised civil district[14]. They enjoyed a level of autonomy that allowed them to pass laws within certain limits and to exercise justice at first instance. Little by little, the crown managed to interfere in and to standardise the running of these structures: by the fourteenth century, royal legislation regulated the mechanisms for individual access to municipal power[15], established the powers of magistracies and created external agents who supervised the town halls[16].

The relationship established between the crown and the municipalities in the late Middle Ages was quite intense. Municipal documents show that the king was informed of many of the decisions taken at a local level. These included deliberations on matters as varied as administration, the economy, urban interventions or public health. Much of the correspondence from the *concelhos* was related to complaints and requests. However, although no *concelho* was denied access to the monarch, the fact of the matter is that the political representation of the territorial communities was markedly urban. This means that all the *concelhos* called by the King to be present at the *cortes*[17] were cities and towns.

We have thus made a brief presentation of studies in urban history and of the history of power in Portugal. This also included a summary of the political and institutional framework of the kingdom within which the relationship between the crown and the *concelhos* was established. We will now move on to the main theme of this article: elites and oligarchies in the Portuguese urban world.

As we know, the first term applies to higher level groups within the community, regardless of the factors that permitted their social projection, such as family, economic activity, culture, or loyalty network[18]. The urban oligarchy corresponds exclusively to the group of individuals who held municipal offices.

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14. For systematisations on factors that explain the municipal and urban geography of Portugal in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Mattoso, José. *Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as origens de Portugal (1096-1325). 1. Oposição*. Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1995: 34, 307; Mattoso, José, dir. *A Monarquia Feudal (1096-1480)* (*História de Portugal, 2*, José Mattoso, dir.). Lisbon: Circulo de Leitores, 1993: 1-205; Coelho, Maria da Cruz Helena; Homem, Armando Luís de Carvalho, dirs. *Portugal em definição de fronteiras (1096-1325). Do Condado Portucalense à Crise do Século XIV* [*Nova História de Portugal, 3*, Joel Serrão, A. H. de Oliveira Marques, dirs.]. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1996: 1-554.

15. In particular the *Ordenação dos Pelouros*, stipulated by king João I, in 1391 (published in: '*Vereaçoens*', *Anos de 1390-1395. O mais antigo dos livros de vereaçoes do município do Porto existentes no seu arquivo*. Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto – Gabinete de História da Cidade, 1937: 235-236).

16. Legislation compiled in the fifteenth century in the *Ordenações Afonsinas* – whose *Book I* includes the regulations for crown offices and offices in the municipalities (see *Ordenaçoens do Senhor Rey Dom Afonso V*. Coimbra: Na Real Imprensa da Universidade, 1792 [facsimile: *Ordenaçoens do Senhor Rey Dom Afonso V*, eds. Mário Júlio de Almeida Costa, Eduardo Borges Nunes. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1984].

17. The *cortes* corresponded to a parliament in Portugal. In addition to the *fidalgos* and the higher clergy, representatives of the communities also had seats in the *cortes*. This body only met when called by the king, without any established interval, and was only attended by delegates from the *concelhos* that received official notifications.

18. Articles consulted on this subject include those published in *Les Élites Urbaines au Moyen Âge. XXVIIe Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public. Rome, mai 1996*. Paris-Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne – École française de Rome, 1997; Barata, Filipe Themudo, ed. *Elites e Redes Clientelares na Idade Média: Problemas metodológicos. Actas do Colóquio*. Lisbon: Edições Colibri - Centro de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Ciências Humanas da Universidade, 2001.

The two categories did not necessarily overlap, however they were related. In historical research, urban elites and oligarchies have not enjoyed the same level of attention from historians. These have focused their research on the analysis of oligarchies, using prosopography[19].

The use of this method is based on the use of an objective characteristic to circumscribe a group of people. This method began to be applied precisely to the members of organisms of political systems, as part of global research on these organisms. Thus the following have been studied: the organics of the central power, the "departments", the offices, and their incumbents[20]; the processes of organisation of justice, the offices and the men[21]; the duties and powers of public offices and their holders in a town[22]; the running of town halls and the oligarchies that dominated them[23].

However, prosopography, while enabling us to build up the collective biography of the group of people related to an organism, separates it from the community, isolating it. The group is characterised through quantitative approaches that systematise common political paths and enable us to discover the singularity of other paths. In other words, the group is always analysed in the light of the political organism in which it acts.

Due to its particularities, this method does not adapt well to the study of elites in an urban centre. And we can question whether its use will indeed let us understand the more restricted group of political elites. Indeed, we know that power relationships are not exclusively played out within institutions. At best, institutions act as visible stages on which other more subtle solidarities are capitalised[24].

This leads us to propose another methodological hypothesis to delimit the higher strata of the medieval urban societies. The process would involve building partial data bases, based on specific issues. Such as:
- cadastre of the families in the urban centre;
- ist of the people involved in business activities in that city or town;
- reconstitution of social occupancy and of the locations of properties in the urban landscape;
- list of the members of brotherhoods and other associations;
- indexing of forms of solidarity offered in the event of institutional conflict or private conflict;

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19. Only the elites of the city of Évora have been studied from a broad perspective: Projecto CIDEHUS/UE "Elites e Redes Clientelares na Idade Média. Uma observação centrada em Évora".

20. See Note 4.

21. Duarte, Luís Miguel. *Justiça e Criminalidade no Portugal Medievo (1459-1481)*. Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian-Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, 1999.

22. Ferreira, Maria da Conceição Falcão. *Gerir e Julgar em Guimarães no século XV. Subsídios para o estudo dos ofícios públicos*. Guimarães: Arquivo Municipal Alfredo Pimenta – Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, 1993.

23. Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *«Vereação» e «Vereadores». O governo do Porto...*

24. For a more detailed analysis of this question, see Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. "Prosopografia das elites concelhias e análise relacional: a intersecção de duas abordagens", *Elites e redes clientelares na Idade Média. Problemas Metodológicos...*: 63-70.

- names of the participants in a wide range of notary documents (as witnesses, executors or guarantors, for example);
- exploration of loyalties, both internal —within the community under considera-tion— and external —directed at lords and monarchs[25];
- catalogue of the individuals who received royal grants, whether in the form of property, privileges or jurisdictions;
- list of the municipal, royal and seigneurial officials.

All this information would be cross-referenced in a large scale database —the heart of the research— and attempts would be made to detect the overlap of bonds that motivated urban society.

In other words, the trajectory of the analysis will not be to accumulate news about the human figures of an organism but to list all the factors that permit the in-tegration of individuals into the community and, ultimately, the projection of some of these into the higher strata of that community. In this way, it is possible to obtain a general overview of the elites of an urban centre, regardless of the economic, po-litical or even religious field in which they acted.

Following the rationale developed in this article, only the elites associated with the exercise of political power will be addressed

The urban centres were favoured arenas for structurally or temporarily competing powers[26]. They were thus centres with their own administration —through their municipal organisation— and also with royal administration and, in some cases, with seigneurial administration.

A first question should be raised when intending to circumscribe and characterise urban political power elites. Are there structured and united groups of men delimited by the origin of the power that they wield? In other words, are there members of the oligarchy who do not overlap with royal officials or seigneurial officials operating in the same territorial area?

In principle, the opposition/contrast between the agents of the crown or of the lords with local and regional influence and municipal officials is quite obvious. However, it is important to take into account indicators that enable us to assess the level of integration or independence of the royal and seigneurial officials in relation

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25. Several studies have already explored this subject. See Duarte, Luís Miguel; Ferreira, Maria da Con-ceição Falcão. "Dependentes das elites vimaranenses face à justiça no reinado de D. Afonso V". *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História*, 6 (1989): 175-221; Ferreira, Maria da Conceição Falcão. "O Arcebispo de Braga, a sua Igreja e os privilegiados da Coroa", *Actas do IX Centenário da Dedicação da Sé de Braga. Congresso Internacional*. Braga: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1990: II/I, 503-556; Rodrigues, Ana Maria S. A. "As relações de clientelismo nos meios urbanos. O exemplo de uma vila portuguesa no século XV", *Espaços, Gente e Sociedade no Oeste. Estudos sobre Torres Vedras Medieval*. Cascais: Patrimonia Historica, 1996: 275-290; Rodrigues, Ana Maria S. A. "Sociedade urbana torriense e os privilegiados da Coroa", *Espaços, Gente e Sociedade...*: 291-315.

26. See Mattoso, José. "Introdução à história urbana: a cidade e o poder", *Cidade e História*. Lisbon: Fun-dação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1992: 9-20; Mattoso, José. "A cidade medieval na perspectiva da história das mentalidades", *Cidade e História...*: 21-33.

to the urban community, in other words, any bonds established between groups of effective players in the relationship between institutions[27].

The "king's men" and the "lords' men" should be studied with regard to the following points:

1. Neighbours/individuals from outside the community;
2. Connected or not by bonds of loyalty to the king or to lords;
3. Social extraction (*fidalgos*/members of the common people);
4. Property interests in the city or town/collection of rights in the urban centre or the region;
5. Family connections with holders of royal offices/members of the municipal government;
6. Careers:
    6.1. Duration of the terms of office;
    6.2. Type of duties performed that interfere or not in municipal organics:
        6.2.1. They regulate and supervise the running of local power;
        6.2.2. They act as land magistrates;
        6.2.3. They perform specific duties which can be (and sometimes are) performed by judges ordinary;
        6.2.4. They keep books;
        6.2.5. They perform duties of a judicial scope;
        6.2.6. They perform services in tax and financial fields and collect royal rights.
7. Whether or not their office implies itinerancy/the requirement or not to reside in the urban centres.

In order to characterise the oligarchies of cities and towns —the group of men who held offices in local administration by election— it will be important to understand their self-referential system[28]. The analysis of official texts that these individuals produce will be a means to approach the awareness they had of themselves and of the image that they projected of their community. Research, still recent, on the lines of argument presented in the municipal documents sent to the crown, suggests that there was a specific rhetoric used by each city or town[29].

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27. I use José María Imízcoz Beunza's terminological distinction between *symbolic power players* and *effective power players*, which I find particularly useful for the exploration of the relationship between the officials of the crown or of the lords and the official of the *concelhos*. See Imízcoz Beunza, José María. "Comunidad red social y élites. Un análisis de la vertebración social en el Antiguo Régimen", *Elites, poder y red social. Las élites del país vasco y Navarra en la Edad Moderna (Estado de la cuestión y perspectivas)*, José María Imízcoz Beunza, dir. Bilbao: Servicio Editorial Universidad Pais Vasco – Argitarapen Zerbitzua Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, 1996: 16.

28. Using the terminology of Hespanha, António Manuel; Araújo, Carla; Xavier, Ângela Maria Barreto. "Les juristes portugais de l'Ancien Régime. Une banque de données prosopographiques", *L'État Moderne et les Élites. XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles. Apports et limites de la méthode prosopographique. Actes du colloque international CNRS-Paris I, (16-19 octobre 1991)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, Günther Lottes, eds. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996: 47-50.

29. See Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. "O discurso político dos homens do concelho portuense na época medieval", *Discursos de Legitimação. Actas do Congresso*. Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 2003 (digital document) and Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. "O discurso político dos concelhos portugueses na

The application of these methods of understanding political elites must be combined with other variables that enable us to characterise urban centres.

Above all, it is essential to take into account structuring factors and the historical development that transformed each city or town into a unique fact: its geographic environment; its social structure and the type and territorial scope of its business activities; the position it held in a hierarchy of ecclesiastical centres; its jurisdictional development; the political status it acquired in the kingdom. All these factors condition the profile of the group (or groups) of men that led them.

We can summarise the different research routes listed with a view to understanding political urban elites in late medieval Portugal. As we have already seen, there are several different converging approaches:

- firstly, perform the comprehensive task of reconstituting, in each city or town, the more subtle bonds that united neighbours, whether structural or apparently informal;
- next, transfer these bonds to the agents of local political power, redrawing the fixed image of this body in the light of the dynamics of inter-personal relationships;
- thirdly, conduct an analysis of the cataloguing of the political status of cities and towns, according to specific indicators;
- fourthly, circumscribe and characterise the effective players of the various political powers present in the cities and towns;

finally, consider the discourses of men of local power in the institutional relationship with the outside world.

We will now move on from the methodological presentation to its application to an understanding of political elites in a Portuguese urban centre: the city of Oporto.

The city of Oporto is situated on the right bank of the river Douro, close to the Atlantic and the Roman road from Lisbon to Braga. Its geographic situation was a structuring feature in the development of long distance maritime trade and in the increasing economic influence of the city on a regional level, as a centre of reception and redistribution of merchandise. All this activity was in the hands of a group of people who, from early on, also controlled local power.

In terms of jurisdiction, Oporto was an ecclesiastical lordship from the twelfth century to the early fifteenth century, when it was integrated into the crown. It was a royal tax centre (seat of an *almoxarifado*) and a centre of ecclesiastical administration (seat of a bishopric). In the late Medieval era, Oporto was outside the favoured geographic circuit of the monarchs, mainly limited at that time to Lisbon, Évora and Santarém[30].

Detailed knowledge is available on the Oporto oligarchy in the fifteenth century due to the excellence of the sources preserved: minutes of the city council meetings what cover practically the whole of the fifteenth century, books of municipal ac-

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Baixa Idade Média: convergências e especificidades: o caso de Elvas", *Des(a)fiando discursos. Homenagem a Maria Emília Ricardo Marques*, Dulce Carvalho, Dionísio Vila Maior, Rui de Azevedo Teixeira, eds. Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 2005: 265-272.

30. See Gomes, Rita Costa. *A corte dos reis de Portugal no final da Idade Média*. Lisbon: Difel, 1995: 241-293.

counts, numerous testimonies of the relationship between the council and outside powers. With this abundance of source documents, it has been possible to undertake prosopographical studies of political players.

These made up a united group of men, this characteristic emerging both from the numerous bonds, in particular family bonds, that united the group and from the political positions taken as a body that controlled the destinies of Oporto. It is curious to note that the most influential members of this group do not appear to have held municipal offices; the duties of this restricted group of citizens included representing the community, providing advice on important issues for the city and choosing those who were to hold offices. As we have already commented, the Oporto oligarchy was strong and stubborn in its defence of the city's privileges, of its own interests and of the "legality" of the running of local structures, resisting the interference of the monarchs in the organics of the city council. The significant political maturity that they demonstrated impelled these men to communicate frequently with the monarchs, by letter and through emissaries, despite the cost of travelling to the court.

The requests and protests presented in *cortes* by the city of Oporto transmit fierce criticism of crown officials with local and regional powers; they were accused of being incompetent, corrupt and ineffective. Given these testimonies, it could be said that the relationship between the oligarchy and royal agents was tense and at times a source of conflict[31].

The group of the royal officers operating in the city during the same period is also well known. The holders of the most important judicial, fiscal and military offices were people from outside the city, some of noble extraction; besides these, other royal appointments were held by "people of the land" [32].

If we cross-reference the members of the two groups, in accordance with the method proposed above, using indicators such as family bonds and clientship, social occupancy[33] or business activities, they interconnect and overlap. However, there was clearly a tendency, accentuated throughout the fifteenth century, for the politi-

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31. This brief characterisation of the city of Oporto, and of its oligarchy, in the late Middle Ages was based on the following main bibliography: Sousa, Armindo de. "Tempos Medievais", *História do Porto*, Luís António de Oliveira Ramos, dir. Porto: Porto Editora, 1994: 119-253; Sousa, Armindo de. "Conflitos entre o bispo e a câmara do Porto nos meados do século XV. 1ª Parte: os grupos em confronto". *Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, 1 (1984): 9-103; Gonçalves, Iria. *As finanças municipais do Porto...*; Duarte, Luís Miguel. "Um burgo medieval que muda de senhor. Episódios da vida do Porto medievo". *Ler História*, 5 (1985): 3-16; Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *Vereação e Vereadores...*; Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *Projecção espacial de domínios. Das relações de poder ao burgo portuense (1385-1502)*. Lisbon: Universidade Aberta, 1999: 1-98; Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. "Comunidades urbanas de senhorio eclesiástico: a divergente experiência das cidades do Porto e de Braga", *Estudos em Homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques*. Porto: faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2006: I, 77- 86

32. Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *Projecção espacial de domínios...*: 223-265.

33. See Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. "O poder dos homens do poder: oficiais régios na cidade do Porto durante o reinado de D. Manuel I", *D. Manuel e a sua época: Actas do 3º Congresso Histórico de Guimarães. 1. Administração, justiça e direito*, Norberta Amorin, Isabel Pinho, Carla Passos, eds. Guimarães: Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, 2004: 233-251.

cal careers of the members of each group to develop separately: careers restricted to serving the crown or serving the *concelho* are a significant majority[34].

For the time being, it is impossible to obtain a similar picture of the political elites of any other city or town in Portugal. For this reason I will provide information that cannot be systematized but is sufficiently elucidative with regard to the different situations existing in the kingdom, both in terms of the link between the municipal elite and royal or seigneurial agents and in terms of the desire to hold governing offices in the communities.

Complaints against agents of the crown or of the lords submitted to the king by most of the *concelhos* reinforce the message of criticism transmitted by the Oporto documents. However, these protests, according to the data available, are not confirmed by the existence of autonomous groups within the political elites of urban centres. Although reduced, the signs available point to little differentiation between careers among officers of the *concelho* and those of the king. Examples can be found of agents of the crown performing duties which, using the Oporto paradigm, would be the responsibility of men elected by the community. In certain locations, the officers of the crown were sent on missions of representation of the city or town, as was the case in Braga[35], Guarda[36], Valença[37], Ponte de Lima[38], Guimarães[39]. In Óbidos[40] and in Guimarães[41], members of certain families appear to have "jumped" indistinctly from service to the crown to service to the council. In Ponte de Lima, the confusion between royal officers and officers of the town went even further, with holders of royal offices constantly performing duties in municipal structures, in clear disrespect of the *Ordenações* of the kingdom[42]. In Braga, members of the chapter added to their *ecclesiastical cursus honorum* the performance of municipal offices[43].

In the cities and towns where the court was commonly to be found, the problem was not just the existence of bipolar public careers in the service of the king and the community. It also involved the intersection between institutional areas of a local

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34. Costa, Adelaide Pereira Millán da. *Projecção espacial de domínios...*: 223-276.

35. Sousa, Armindo de. *As Cortes Medievais, 1...*: 215.

36. Moreno, Humberto Baquero. "Abusos e violências na região da Beira Interior durante o reinado de D. Afonso V", *Exilados, marginais e contestatários na sociedade portuguesa medieval. Estudos de História*. Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1989: 111; Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz. "«Entre poderes» - Análise de alguns casos na centúria de Quatrocentos". *Revista da Faculdade de Letras. História*, 6 (1989): 105-135.

37. Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz. *Relações de domínio no Portugal concelhio...*: 248.

38. Andrade, Amélia Aguiar. "Composição social e gestão municipal"...: 7.

39. Ferreira, Maria da Conceição Falcão. *Gerir e Julgar...*: 46, 53-54, 76 (although in these cases it is not known whether they were holding crown offices on those dates).

40. Silva, Manuela Santos. "Uma prestigiada linhagem obidense: a de Rui Nunes nos séculos XIV e XV"; "Contribuição para o estudo das oligarquias urbanas medievais: a instituição de capelas funerárias em Óbidos na Baixa Idade Média", *A região de Óbidos na época medieval*. Caldas da Rainha: Gráfica da Ponte, 1994: 123-169.

41. Ferreira, Maria da Conceição Falcão. "Relações entre poder local e poder central"...: 75.

42. Andrade, Amélia Aguiar. "Composição social e gestão municipal"...: 4.

43. Ribeiro, João Carlos. *A Instituição Capitular Bracarense no século XIV (1325-1374). Organização e Relações*. Braga: Universidade do Minho, 1998: 172, 174-176.

scope and those covering the whole kingdom. These cross-references can be found on a family level —with members who operate in these different spheres— but also occur on an individual level; thus, among the men of the Lisbon council were officers of the central administration[44]. In these towns and cities there was normally social mixing between local people and people from outside. The city or town itself could be a place to recruit men for central crown offices, and this has been documented in Lisbon, Santarém and Évora[45].

The examples given of the juxtaposition of municipal and royal service (on local or regional levels or on the level of the whole kingdom) are visible in centres of varying economic and political importance. This can be explained by both the small dimension of the market in which officers could be recruited and the excessive proximity between the structures of the two powers.

To finish, we will consider the political maturity of the municipal elites. Maturity can be analysed through their level of commitment to municipal business and the level of professionalism and dedication demonstrated. In some *concelhos* there was a defined political group with a strong desire to perform the duties of magistracies, but in other *concelhos* there appeared to be few neighbours suitable for and interested in fulfilling the requirements of government, and they clearly attempted to avoid this duty which would distract them from their professional activities[46]. Likewise, while in some cities and towns the members of the municipal authority rejected seigneurial or royal interferences, in others they peacefully accepted interference in the running of the council or appointments to offices normally appointed by the people[47].

To conclude, research in Portugal on medieval urban elites is still at an early stage, if we look at the progress of the various lines of research presented in this article. We are still far from establishing the "common denominators" of the higher strata that governed Portuguese cities and towns in the Middle Ages.

44. Rodrigues, Maria Teresa Campos. "Aspectos da administração municipal de Lisboa no século XV". *Revista Municipal*, 101-109 (1968): 159.

45. Gomes, Rita Costa. *A corte dos reis...*: 132.

46. A comparison can be made between the municipal elites in Loulé and Oporto, in the late fourteenth century, in terms of their composition and the desire shown for municipal government (apparent in the frequency of meetings and the reasons evoked for holidays) (Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz; Magalhães, Joaquim Romero de. *O poder concelhio das origens às cortes constituintes*. Coimbra: Centro de Estudos e Formação Autárquia, 1986: 22-23). Another example of this lack of commitment can be found among the men in power in Ponte de Lima, where they deemed twice-weekly meetings of the Council to be excessive (Andrade, Amélia Aguiar.*Um espaço urbano medieval: Ponte de Lima*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1990: 187).

47. See for Coimbra: Coelho, Maria Helena da Cruz. "O Infante D. Pedro, Duque de Coimbra". *Biblos*, 69 (1993): 48; and for Óbidos: Silva, Manuela Santos. "Óbidos. Terra que foi da Rainha D. Filipa"...: 97.

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