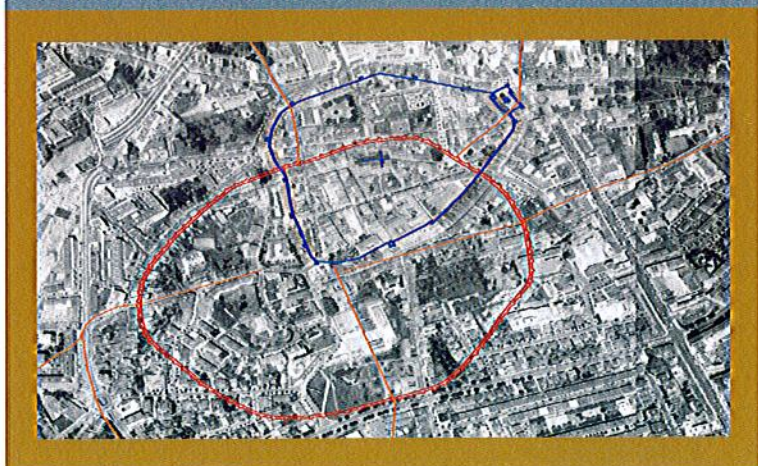
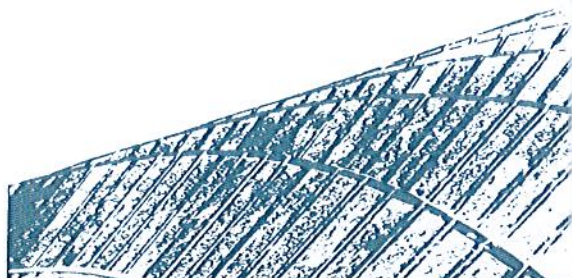


Braga and its territory between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries



Raquel Martínez Peñín (ed.)



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Raquel Martínez Peñín (ed.)

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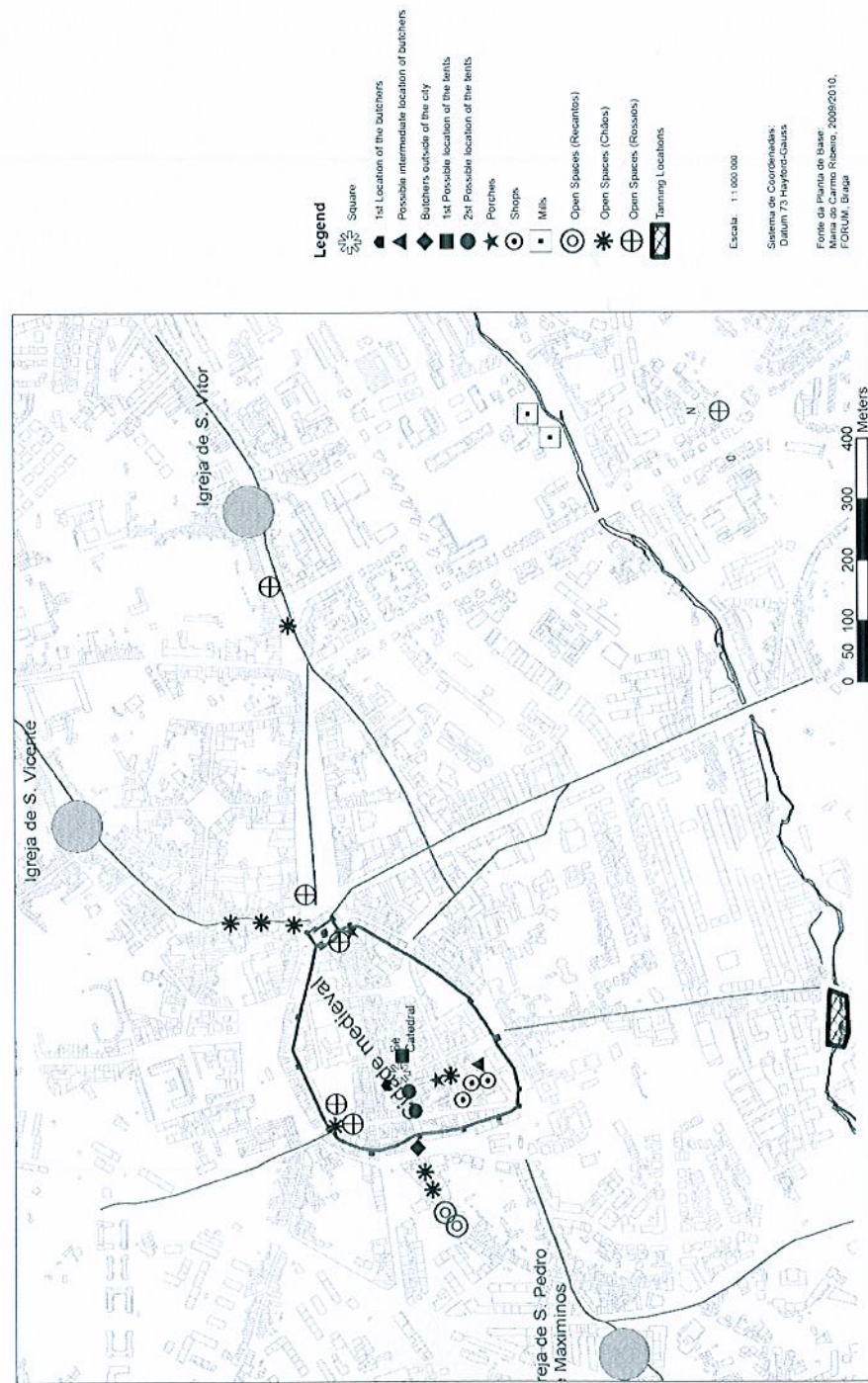


Figure 2. Approximate locations of the buildings and structures for productive activities in Braga and its suburbs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Power networks in Braga (Portugal) in late fifteenth century: Town council, archbishop and the cathedral chapter relationships

*Raquel de Oliveira Martins*¹

Keywords: Power networks, medieval Braga, town council, urban oligarchy, ruling elites.

Abstract

This article aims to characterize the existing power networks in the city of Braga (Portugal) in late fifteenth century. Although much has been advanced in the historiography of the municipalities and municipal elites there is still much to be done, particularly with regard to more regional and local type of works. In this paper we analyze the relationships and power networks between the town Council, the Archbishop and the Cathedral Chapter of Braga. Because the institutions were made of men, we are also going to make a briefly socioeconomic and political characterization of the ruling elite council, in the second half of the fifteenth century.

1. Introduction

In the Portuguese town of Braga, at the end of the fifteenth century, there was a clearly defined oligarchy whose influence reached the main structures of power in the city.

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Those structures were composed, above all, of *citizens* and *good men* who lived within the city wall. Frequently nicknamed in the documents as *discreet* and *honored*, those men fulfilled not only the governing posts of the town council, but also the management and administration posts in city's major institutions. Besides that, and frequently, they had connections with the Archbishop's house, as well as with the cathedral chapter, in which they often had major roles and even offices².

The strong and undeniable religious mark of the city (element that always defined and characterized it) rises some relevant questions about the relationships between the major ruling institutions of Braga and also about the resulting power and social networks. It's very important to understand how these governing structures (both secular and ecclesiastical) with different characteristics coexisted and to know who were the men in charge of those administrative offices and what type of relationships existed between them, in order to understand how the political and social power was being managed, by whom and upon who and through which concrete expressions, and according to a certain ideological basis.

The fifteenth century brought to the city of Braga two important changes that cannot be neglected. The period between 1402 and 1472 dictated an interruption in the feudal lordship of the city that had belonged to the Archbishop and Cathedral of Braga since 1112. From 1402 to 1472 the jurisdictions passed to the King, but returned to the Archbishops in this last year. The reasons why those great changes occurred will be analyzed in studies I aim to publish in a near future. In these seventy years some social and political transformations took place, allowing a very dynamic and transforming background. The dynastic change in the Portuguese royal family, and the centralized politics of the new king, João I, are connected with the change of Braga's lordship from the Church to the Crown, during a period of quite relevant time. Through a contract of exchange (*escambo*), celebrated between Bragas' Archbishop D. Martinho Afonso and King João I of Portugal, in January of 1402, the lordship of Braga changed hands from ecclesiastical to royal power. The king took the town lordship in exchange of a annual rent of four thousand pounds paid perpetually to the Archbishops. That money derived from royal rents from some houses in Lisbon and others in a royal town near Braga, Viana do Castelo (then called Viana da Foz do Lima)³.

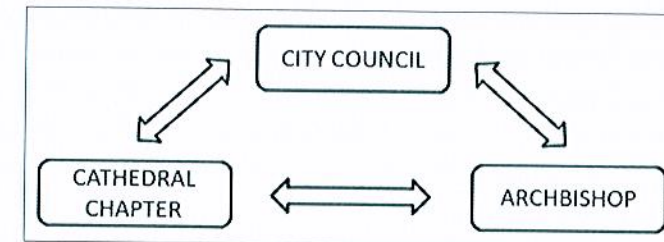
Therefore this study presents the dynamics and the relationships between some power institutions that coexisted in the city, during and after this period (1402-1472), in order to identify the networks that were connecting the men and the city's institutions at the

2. Raquel Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV: O Governo d'Os honrrados cidadaos e Regedores', (unpublished master thesis, University of Minho, 2013).

3. José Marques, *O senhorio de Braga, no século XV- principais documentos para o seu estudo*, Câmara Municipal de Braga, Braga, (1997), p. 8,

time. To achieve such, this analysis is based on a social and anthropological perspective, as well as a political one, putting the emphasis in the social actors and in its relationships.

This article is part of a more deep and thorough study that is focused in the social, political and economic relationships that existed between the different power structures in Braga along the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These structures were represented by the Archbishops (*Mitra*) and the Cathedral Chapter (*Cabido*), the King, the Duke of Bragança, the Town Council and other nearby communes and also the farmers and other inhabitants of the city limits. However, the conclusions presented in this paper only refer to the social and political relationships between the Archbishops and Cathedral Chapter with the municipal institutions.



I will start by analyzing the institutions and its men within its space of action —the city—, following by a presentation of the sociological profile of the Braga's oligarchy, and finally to show how their mutual influence was expressed.

2. The urban oligarchy of Braga: documental sources and problems

Although the historiography of power networks and urban elites has, in recent years, known a huge development⁴ it still exists plenty to make, especially those studies with a more local and regional character. If we look for the most recent works in this subject, in the Portuguese historiography, that is, the investigation surrounding the elites and his networks, we are going to see that in the last three decades many innovative studies and works had been produced⁵.

In the path of historiographical renewal, anchored in the winds of the third generation of the *Annales*, emerged in the 80s of the twentieth century very important works

4. Luís Miguel Duarte, 'Os melhores da terra (um questionário para o caso português)', F. Themudo Barata (ed.), *Elites e redes clientelares na Idade Média. Problemas metodológicos*, Évora, (2001), p. 91.

5. M^a Helena Coelho, 'Municipal Power', in J. Mattoso (dir.) *The Historiography of Medieval Portugal (c. 1950-2010)*, Instituto de Estudos Medievais, Lisboa, (2011), pp. 210-211.

related to those matters and whose importance was not lost to the present day, such as the work of Armindo Sousa about the men who made up the Oporto Town Council, and its relations with the Bishop in the fifteenth century⁶.

The 1990s were a fertile ground for the Portuguese historiography of municipalism and elites, with excellent contributions given by works of more local and regional character, as was the case of Adelaide Millán da Costa on the rulers of Oporto in the late fifteenth century⁷. As for the beginning of the XXI century, stands out, among others, the work of Mario Bran about the oligarchies of the Council of Lisbon⁸.

Little is known however about the dynamics of Braga's governing elites, given the historical production around the City of Archbishops, until this moment, have almost always centered emphasis on aspects related to Archbishop and the Cathedral Chapter of Braga.

Helped break this homogeneity is the study of Armindo de Sousa, who tried to explain some of the political transformations that the city of Braga experienced from 1402 to 1472⁹, as well the comparative analysis by Milan Adelaide Costa to the cities of Braga and Oporto¹⁰, which was based roughly on the precursor study of Armindo Sousa. In the first case, taking as *case study* the city of Oporto in the same period of time, Armindo Sousa tried to apply the Oporto's model to the City of Archbishops. Note that this thesis continues until now unanswered.

More recently the author of this article has brought some new light upon these subjects based in partially so far unstudied sources¹¹.

Make a story without documents would be strange, Benedetto Croce wrote, *because a story unrelated to the document would be an unverifiable story*¹². In fact, the almost total absence of one of the privileged sources to study the urban elites and their relations, as

6. Armindo Sousa, 'Conflitos entre o Bispo e a Câmara do Porto em meados do século XV', *Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal do Porto*, (1983), pp. 9-42; Armindo Sousa, 'Tempos Medievais', in L. A. de Oliveira Ramos (dir.), *História do Porto*, 2ª ed, Porto Editora, Porto, (1994), pp. 118-253.

7. Adelaide Millán Costa, '«Vereação» e «Vereadores» - O governo do Porto em finais do século XV', Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal do Porto, Porto, (1993); Adelaide Millán Costa, 'Projeção espacial de domínios - das relações de poder ao burgo portuense (1385-1502)', (unpublished master thesis, University Aberta, 1999).

8. Mário Farelo, *A Oligarquia camarária de Lisbon (1325-1433)*, (unpublished master thesis, University of Lisboa, 2008).

9. Armindo Sousa, 'A governação de Braga no século XV (1402-1472). História resumida de uma experiência fracassada', in Faculdade Teologia and Cabido de Braga (eds.) *Actas IX Centenário da Dedicção da Sé de Braga. Congresso Internacional*, vol. I, Faculdade Teologia/Cabido de Braga, Braga, (1989).

10. Adelaide Millán Costa, *Estudos em homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques*, called: *Comunidades urbanas de senhorio eclesiástico: a divergente experiência das cidades do Porto e de Braga*, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Porto, (2006).

11. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV'.

12. Benedetto Croce, 'História e Crónica', In P. Gardiner (coord.) *Teorias da História*, 6ª edição, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, (2008), pp. 277-278.

are the actae of city's council reunions —*Actas de Vereações*—, for the period in question in the city of Braga, seemed to condemn the investigation of municipality and local elites to the darkness. These kinds of documents are the result of the town council meetings, which recorded all the issues addressed in these sessions. The town council had a duty to write and maintain these records.

However, surprisingly enough, this documentary gap was partially filled with recourse to an unlikely source, as at first sight it might seem the *Livro dos Prazos da Câmara Secular 1445-1509*, deposited in the Braga's Municipal Archive. This book of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century contains records of notarial actions relative to rental properties belonging to the municipality or other institutions. The potential of the information contained within its pages was much more profitable than their eighteenth century abstracts foresaw, as this source was able to provide the name of social actors of Braga governing oligarchy in the late fifteenth century.

From this source data were collected and subsequently stored in a database (MS ACCESS). The main goal was to create biographical records of the men who ruled the city, with the purpose to establish the existence or absence of relationships between members of the municipal body and also with the other powers present in the city. Verifying the existence of these relationships and networks that engage in as a result of the first we continue to investigate in the attempt to identify and characterize them.

3. Men and their space

To understand what kind of relationships, or identify the networks of power and solidarity that linked the ruling institutions of the city, it is necessary to know who gave them life, the men behind them that ruled and worked them. This is quite relevant in the sense that institutions are made of people and it is people that give them substance. Referring to networks and relationships between ruling organisms without mentioning the protagonists of them is something to avoid.

The medieval city was a place where normally several powers converged, secular and ecclesiastical, regal and feudal ones, which varied in its manifestations and interconnections. The transformations of socio-economic nature that promoted urban growth and economic dynamism observed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contributed, among other things, to a city where rule became increasingly demanding and reserved only for a few men.

Braga was no different. Indeed, the elite of men who administered the city in the second half of the fifteenth century was restricted and endemic, and that may have more than one explanation. Let us not forget that urban core of Braga seems to have remained relatively small, in the demographic point of view, at least until the second half of the fifteenth century, when it began to verify a gradual growth that led the municipal authori-

ties to undertake some kind of urban policy's, with a view to extending the urban area outside the medieval wall¹³. The demographic scenario however results in the shortage of able men. This may have contributed to the Braga's oligarchy were reduced in number, and much more open to ecclesiastical influences.

Another reason that can be identified as enhancing the endemic nature of the "best of the land"¹⁴ and that was indicated by Armindo Sousa some years ago has to do with the lack of group consciousness by those operating in the margin of ecclesiastical power. In fact, Braga that since the beginning of the twelfth century was administered in the civil and the spiritual by the church has never attracted on *good men* the desire to take the municipal power in their own hands, as happened in same period in Oporto. This last point may explain why the rulers of the city continued closely linked to the ecclesiastical power during the regal lordship period, clearly demonstrating continuity with the previous period (before 1402).

If this really happened, which can only presumed, might mean suppose that conditions in Braga led to maintain the main positions of government and management available in the city: the council institution, confraternities, hospitals and in some cases even church bodies, as a patrimony of a few families, which were distributed among them. Through the analysis of the study of the composition of the Braga Municipality in the last quarter of the fifteenth century it was found that many of the local council magistrates remained connected to the municipal body and the assistance institutions tutored by it for decades, playing roles of judges, councilors and representatives (*procurador*).

Moreover, if we extend our analysis to the early sixteenth century, we can understand the origin of 'new blood' in the municipal magistrates, whose aim was to gradually replace the actors who dominated the political scene in the second half of the fifteenth century. Putting aside some exceptions, we can say with some certainty that the replacement of the older members of the ruling elite was assured by the immediate family, as sons, sons-in-law or nephews, who inherited the reputation enjoyed by their ancestors, becoming vehicles of transmission of personal and social power.

At this stage of the investigation it is too premature to talk about power lineages inside of Braga's urban oligarchy, especially within the ruling elite of the town council. However, according to the documentation so far analyzed, there seems to be a constant tendency of certain families linked to secular and ecclesiastical power, noticing the presence of three or more generations performing government functions. At a later stage of this study we will try to detect if there existed in Braga separate social and political groups, or parties (*bandos*) inside the urban oligarchy, although everything points out that if they have existed they didn't seem to have had great expressiveness. Excluded

13. Maria do Carmo Ribeiro, 'Braga entre a época romana e a Idade Moderna. Uma a metodologia de análise para a leitura da evolução do espaço urbano', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Minho, 2008), p. 489.

14. *Ibid.* 4, Duarte, 'Os melhores da terra'.

from this scenario are the farmers of the territory outside the city but within its jurisdictional limits, because they were a separate group demarcated from the urban oligarchy.

4. City power structures

It is obvious to us that the institutions were made of men and these men were bounded together by relationships of several types, and naturally these influences spread in to the city government structures although everything indicates that these influences were not exercised equally by the two institutions (Council and Archbishop). This is not surprising given the long experience of those who have been, from immemorial time, the rulers of Braga.

Unlike the city of Oporto, where in the same period (fifteenth century) there was a community of men able to ensure the town's governance regardless the city lord (the Bishop), given its economic vocation long cemented, the city of Braga proved fraught with challenges for those who claimed a bigger political involvement¹⁵. No wonder, then, that in Braga the local council officers would support in Archbishop to rule the city, probably even during the regal landlord.

From 1475, already in the period of archiepiscopal lordship is assured a more notorious intervention of the Archbishop in the city administration through the introduction, in the county meetings called *Vereações*, the figure of *Ouidor* of Archbishop.

There's not much information available at this time to make a thorough characterization of this title, including the range of its jurisdictional prerogatives. So far we do not know if the individual who occupied this post was elected or appointed for someone, because the supporting documentation to this study is silent on that matter. We also cannot say for sure if this Archbishop's *Ouidor* worked as an appeal judge or a second instance judge in the town council of Braga, and that's because was at least judge on an ecclesiastical court¹⁶.

But it is known that in the early sixteenth century this man had powers very similar to *Corregedor*, particularly in the electoral process of local council officers. What is certain is that the figure of the Archbishop's *Ouidor* doesn't appear in the documentation during the regal lordship until 1472, revealing that position would be introduced by ecclesiastical lords of Braga after reassumed the landlord. This was probably the most obvious change noted in the consulted documentation between the distinct lordship

15. Armindo Sousa, 'Tempos Medievais', in L. A. de Oliveira Ramos (dir.), *História do Porto*, 2ª ed, Porto Editora, Porto, (1994), pp. 201-203; Adelaide Millán Costa, 'Projeção espacial de domínios - das relações de poder ao burgo portuense (1385-1502)', (unpublished master thesis, University Aberta, 1999) p. 28.

16. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', pp. 53-54.

periods, before and after 1472. The authority of the Archbishop's *Ouidor* would most likely be an extension of the authority of the lord of the city, resulting in its notorious influence in city government.

The interference of archiepiscopal authority in local council affairs was found quite often, especially after 1472, which may indicate that the Archbishop's influence in the local council affairs became fiercer after this date. It should be pointed out that even during the seventy years of secular interregnum that archiepiscopal influence and interference still existed, therefore with the return of the archiepiscopal lordship that influence was much more reinforced.

In the early sixteenth century the influence of the Archbishop in city government is notorious, as was found by the analysis of the *Actas de Vereação* of town council in the years 1509-1511. Is worthy of reference the presence of the *Ouidor* in most municipal meetings in this period, whose participation would seem extremely active (chairs the elections of local council officers, chooses the provider for the hospitals, etc...), and presented obvious similarities with the role of *Corregedores* in the councils of regal landlord. It's not yet clear at this time if this scenario is reinforced from the beginning of the government of 'Archbishop Diogo de Sousa', in November 1505, or if the situation was already a feature of the last two decades of the fifteenth century.

If in one side was the spiritual power represented by Braga's Archbishop and the Cathedral Chapter, on the other side was the civil power represented by the city county, and whose function was to administer and govern the city and its surroundings. Some 'hybrid' counties like Braga, which resulted from attempts of reconciliation between the royal power and municipal autonomy, assimilated certain models inspired in feudalism, in the socio-political organization of its municipal oligarchies¹⁷.

Indeed the use of those models may have boosted certain behaviors on the part of the urban oligarchy of Braga, specifically in establishment of alliances and networks of solidarity and/or bondage with the center of local government (the Archbishop). The geographical position of the city regarding the capital of the Kingdom (Lisbon) whose distance is noteworthy may have favored the ties and relationships within the urban space, as opposed to external powers. There is no doubt whatsoever that the case of Braga is paradigmatic, regarding the existence of a strong interconnection between ecclesiastical and secular institutions. This "intimate" relationship was almost always, if not always, inherent of the city history itself.

This does not mean however that the conflicts between them were absent. They existed, and the documents give us the news about that. Yet the echoes of these disputes is more targeted to suits between Council and the Cathedral Chapter, than the county and Arch-

17. José Mattoso, *A Identificação de um País. Ensaio sobre as Origens de Portugal 1096-1325*, vol. I, Editorial Estampa, Lisboa, (1991), p. 99 and pp. 340-342.

bishop. The most recurrent cases of disputes between these two institutions had the bone of contention in the distribution control of essential supplies (*almotaçaria*) in the city.

The *almotaçaria* in Braga seems to have been a coin with obverse and reverse, at least in the period of Episcopal lordship, and in one side would be the officials that *almotacés* of city County and in the other the *almotacés* of the Cathedral Chapter (*almotacés* were the municipal officers in Portuguese towns in charge of verifying economic activities or urban practices, among other things). However, during the regal lordship of Braga (1402-1472) it seems to have existed only the municipal *almotacé*, and not the Chapters' ones. This change resulting from a barter agreement between the Crown and Braga's Archbishop, resulted in some disappointment and strife involving the sharing of the meat by the parties, as follows: one-third for the Archbishop, one-third for the Chapter and a third for the county.

There are still some amount of claims in the documentation that demonstrates this duality and conflict, such as a dispute between the two factions for the daily supply of meat, which occurred in the fifteenth century, that was found difficult to resolve, and was very close to physical confrontation¹⁸.

However those problems never have worsened to the point of being irreversible and there was no major contests such as those which occurred in the city of Oporto that even led to the expulsion of the ecclesiastical lord of the city, the Bishop, for a short time, in the 14th century, and that would eventually lead to change the lordship from the bishop to the crown in 1405 permanently, unlike Braga.

5. The positions and profiles of the local council holders

The men who led the town council of Braga in the late fifteenth century proved capable and shrewd, managing many of them to remain connected to the main power organisms in the city, whether in the city government, in care institutions, or even in the Archbishop and the Chapter houses. Some of these connections have lasted decades, an authentic endemic patrimony of some families or individuals of important positions in the city.

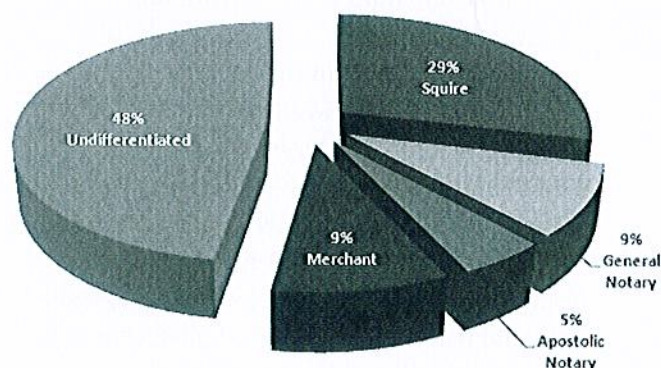
The political, social and economic profile of these men reveals that (contrary to what was thought for a long time) they were urban men and not rural, at least the majority of them¹⁹. Among their professions or status one can find squires, merchants, goldsmiths, tailors, and shoemakers which were men wealthy enough to integrate urban oligarchy as

18. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', p. 73.

19. *Ibid.* 9, Sousa, 'A governação de Braga no século XV (1402-1472)', p. 593.

well to negotiate in the towns' real estate market²⁰. Take as an example of what was just mentioned the socio economic composition of the town council main officers in the late fifteenth century, especially in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.

However, of the 21 men who performed the role of city county judge from 1469 to 1498, at least eleven of them exercised prestigious professions with close ties to the Archbishop and the Cathedral Chapter. From these 21, ten of them went directly to the office of judge without having any other office, such as of councilor, previously²¹. Indeed, the office of judge was the most important of the local council offices, and perhaps also the oldest, being imbued with a certain majestic symbolism²².



Graphic 1. Positions and professions of Braga city council judges (1469-1498).

By having the oversight of the administration of justice and to ensure the proper functioning of the municipal administration, such as *almotaçaria* (laws and practices regulating weights, prices, quality of goods and other economic and urban policy subjects) among others, the judge had to be serious and honorable in the sight of everyone else. We can even say that these men who fulfilled the highest town council posts occupied the prominent places within the urban oligarchy itself.

As a matter of fact, the men who occupied the office of council judge in Braga hold a prominent position within the city's society, both for his economic strength and for his relations to the ecclesiastical bodies of the city. So it was natural the establishment of

20. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', p. 48.

21. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', p. 56.

22. Maria Ângela Beirante, *Évora na Idade Média*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, (1995), p. 682.

power networks and solidarity between institutions of government in the city since its members were bound together by ties of diverse order.

Occupations and Professions (2 nd half of the fifteenth century)				
Squire	General Notary	Apostolic Notary	Merchant	Undifferentiated
6	2	1	2	10
TOTAL: 21				

Among many others, a good example of what has been exposed here, in order to show the profile of Braga's rulers in the fifteenth century is the *citizen and good man (homem-bom)* Luís Afonso, a judge in 1477, 1488 and 1492, and the Archbishop's *Ouidor* in 1480. This man, in addition to the position he played as a registrar in an ecclesiastical court, was also squire of Archbishop himself, and at the same time he had municipal magistracies²³. Cases like this are recurrent in the documentation showing the real socio-economic profile of the men belonging to the governing oligarchy of the city as well as its relationship with other bodies of power, especially the ecclesiastical ones.

The Braga governing oligarchy had in their ranks a few craftsmen's, including tailors and shoemakers. These men should hold some personal prestige within Braga's society of the fifteenth century, resulting from some economic power as well from the government positions they played²⁴. Their frequent presence in the organs of government and in the city administration was not something exceptional, but quite regular, which may indicate that these men enjoyed, individually, of a certain position within the urban oligarchy, and that allowed them to participate in municipal counseling. As stated before, it seems that the ruling elite was so small that it was needed to include in it some distinct and wealthy craftsmen. Yet another possible meaning of the importance played by craftsmen and their representatives would be to consider their presence as a counterweight to the municipal governing elite, as it is found in other Portuguese medieval towns. However this does not seem to be the case in Braga.

As a matter of fact, the presence of these craftsmen in medieval municipal counseling is documented for some Portuguese cities including Lisbon and Oporto, organized or individually, from the late thirteenth century in Lisbon's case and the fourteenth century in Oporto's (if not earlier)²⁵. However this attempt to penetrate the governing oligarchy

23. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', pp. 53-54.

24. Arnaldo Sousa Melo, 'Os mesterais e o poder concelhio nas cidades medievais portuguesas (séculos XIV e XV)', *Edad Media. Revista de História*, 14, (2013), pp. 149-170.

25. *Ibid.* 24, Melo, 'Os mesterais e o poder concelhio', p. 153.

was the result of both active and interventionist posture of this group in face to the municipal power²⁶.

In Braga's case, and for this period, it is in the year of 1466 that for the first time is documented in the *Livro dos Prazos*, the presence of the craftsmen's representatives, in the council meeting of November 8th²⁷. The presence of those men became regular for several years, at least until 1490, the year in which they appear in the last council meeting as craftsmen's representative. As individuals, the presence of these men is noticeable, particularly when they play the position of town council prosecutor.

In general, medieval council legal representatives (*procurador*) were legally responsible for representing the interests the institution. We might even assert that in the universe of many *procuradores* who performed their duties related to the municipal institution, like the ones who served as hospital's *procuradores* and others, the most important would be the town council *procuradores*, holder of one of the most significant positions of council administration.

The council *procuradores* was in charge of the health of municipal finance (receipts and payments), and that made him a person with a huge responsibility in the eyes of others. In many cases was the council *procurador* himself who was responsible to collect the rents and municipal taxes imposed by judges and councilors, concentrating in his person functions of municipal representative and treasurer²⁸.

Similar to what was observed for the judges and councilors of Braga, also in the office of the county *procurador* seems to have been a tendency to maintain the position, like a specialization of the post. The example of the tailor 'Vasco Gil' is paradigmatic, and it is believed, illustrative of what I said previously. This man first appears in *Livro dos Prazos*, on a council meeting of February of 1469, on behalf of the city's tailors, which may indicate that he was representing that particular craft²⁹. In 1477, more particularly in October 4th, 'Vasco Gil' appears as *procurador* of the city leprosarium (in Portuguese: *gafarias*). In the year of 1488 this man was elected council *procurador*, a position he held again in 1490 and 1491³⁰.

The urban character verified within the city walls of Braga was something that contrasted with the rural landscape of its surroundings. Braga urban oligarchy was mainly composed of city men who identified themselves scarcely or nothing at all with the farmers who lived in rural parishes. The walls dictated this difference as well as the closest vicinity with local, secular and ecclesiastical powers. Despite the royal laws ordered city

26. *Ibid.* 24, Melo, 'Os mesteirais e o poder concelhio', p. 150.

27. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', p. 76.

28. Iria Gonçalves, *As finanças municipais do Oporto na segunda metade do século XV*, Arquivo Histórico/Câmara Municipal do Porto, Porto, (1987), p. 12.

29. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', pp. 67-68.

30. *Ibid.* 2, Martins, 'O Concelho de Braga na segunda metade do século XV', p. 68.

administrators to act in behalf of the interests of all the inhabitants of the city and municipality—which include the town and also a surrounding territory, generally with rural characteristics—, there seems to be a distinction made by the council officers between towns' people and the rural inhabitants of its periphery who more than once expressed their displeasure for this differential treatment. For example, in a letter of sentence given by de King Afonso V, in response to a plea of the farmers against the abuses committed to them by the Archbishop Fernando da Guerra, is clearly the lack of support from Braga's urban oligarchy to those men. On the contrary, they took the Archbishop side, resulting in a strong dissatisfaction expressed by the farmers.

It should be noted that this dispute occurred during the royal lordship period, where theoretically secular powers should operate independently of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. One could think that if urban oligarchy was reduced in number as it is commonly supposed they could have used the strength of the protests of farmers against the Archbishop and its abuses in order to improve their own strength and enlarge its supporting base for its prestige and power in Braga's society. However this didn't happen and the pleas between the farmers and the Archbishop continued for several decades.

The fact that these claims are dragging several years in time during the period in which the civil jurisdiction was on the King's hands could be served as an impetus to break the old paradigms of ecclesiastical influences in the urban elite and their lives as is believed to happen before 1402, the year in which as we mentioned above the lordship of the city changed its status to royal instead of ecclesiastic. For a long time it was thought that this period of about seventy years had marked the beginning, though ephemeral, of a time of apparent independence of the city in relation to the Archbishop and Cathedral Chapter³¹. However, this doesn't seem to be the case, the situation didn't change during the period of royal lordship, proving clearly the influence of the Archbishop in the secular affairs of the city, exercising directly or indirectly his power upon the members of Braga's oligarchy.

6. Some actors

A large proportion of men who followed the municipal offices career in the second quarter of the fifteenth century was linked in some way to the Braga's Archbishop House or to the Cathedral Chapter. It's perhaps too strong to assert that the links to the Archbishop and the Cathedral Chapter served as a launching pad for some men into the inner circle of the Braga's municipal council oligarchy, although I believe that in some cases that was a reality. In fact, there are at least some examples of what seems to be a

31. *Ibid.* 9, Sousa, 'A governação de Braga no século XV (1402-1472)', pp. 591-593.

sort of *cursus honorum*, that is to say an ascending evolution in political and social life through exerting increasingly important offices. This trend also appears to be related with the relationship developed with the Archbishop. I believe that the examples shown below only provide a small glimpse of what actually would be the political and social reality of Braga in the fifteenth century.

The 'General Notary Martim de Guimarães', who was at the service of the Archbishop and the Chapter for many years, appears as part of the group of the municipal governing elite since 1479, as a *good man*. In 1490, this man still hold the office of Cathedral Chapters' Registrar, as can be denoted by the following words: *Liuro de Notas dos prazos e escaynbos do cabijdo de Bragaa que começou per Janeiro de mil quatrocentos e Noveenta de que Martim de Guimarães he escipuum e eu Marçal Vasquez notário apostolico per elle escrepuo*. 'Martim de Guimarães' was a constant presence in the council meetings, having important municipal offices, such as judge in 1494 and 1499. He stopped appearing in council meetings around the year 1500.

It is not known if 'Marçal Vasquez', General and Apostolic Notary attached to the Chapter at least since 1483³² was paladin of 'Martim de Guimarães' and if he entered by his hand in Braga's municipal oligarchy. 'Marçal Vasquez' is first noted in the *Livro de Prazos* to hold the office of *procurador*, in the year 1484. In 1490 he still writes at the service of Cathedral Chapter as an Apostolic Notary, and in the year of 1500 he still holds the office of council judge³³.

Also 'Diego Alvarez' lawyer who was a municipal officer (*vereador*) in 1477 had been promoted to *council procurador* in 1468.

Council judge in 1475, 'Lopo de Barros', Scholar in Canonic Law, appears as a *procurador* of 'Archbishop Fernando da Guerra', in 1461.

In addition to these specific cases exposed here, there are many more examples of local council officers who were linked by relations of solidarity to the Archbishop, as was the case of 'Diego Rodriguez Bocarro', squire of the Archbishop, and that was connected to the municipal power over thirty years! It should also be noted that 'Marçal Vasquez', cited above, was also the squire of the Archbishop and the same is true for 'Luis Alfonso' also mentioned above. 'Gil Afonso', who was the registrar of the town council for more than three decades, had a son named 'Fernão Gil', who served as registrar of the Chapter and also as an Apostolic Notary.

32. José Marques, *A Arquidiocese de Braga no século XV*, INCM, Lisboa, (1988), p. 377.

33. *Ibid.* 9, Sousa, 'A governação de Braga no século XV (1402-1472)', p. 84.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that this study aimed to shed light on some hitherto unknown aspects of the history of Braga, in particular those related to the function of the power structures of the city and their interrelations, in the second half of fifteenth century.

The intention here is to show that these institutions, namely the Council and the Archbishop and Cathedral Chapter of Braga were materialized in men who composed it, and these men were interconnected by innumerable bonds, as friendship, kinship, feudality or other, linking through networking persons and institutions. For that matter the municipal governing elite was characterized politically, sociological and economic, briefly presenting the types of municipal offices and how they were actually carried out in Braga. These civil and ecclesiastical institutions were connected together, largely because those who were part of them were connected to each other, during and after the period of regal lordship.

It can be concluded therefore that the Braga urban oligarchy, with the municipal elite at the top, was composed mostly by a small group of *good men* of the city who enjoyed an important and exceptional status among others. Many of these men remained connected to the municipal organisms for several decades, although it is not known all the strategies used by these individuals to remain in power so long, revealing the endemic nature of this group. As defended Luis Miguel Duarte, (...) *gentrification of local governances also served the interests of municipal oligarchies, which departed and divided among themselves the positions of councilor (vereação)*³⁴. The connections they had with the Archbishop and Chapter of Braga may have however served as a force to access the municipal government and keep it in the hands of a small group.

As already declared above, relations between the men who occupied the municipal magistrates and the Archbishop and Chapter of Braga, were continuous through the changes of lordship in 1402 as in 1472.

34. João Alberto Machado and Luís Miguel Duarte, '*Vereações Livro 1 (1431-1432)*, *Documentos e Memórias para a História do Porto*, vol. XLV, Arquivo Histórico/Câmara Municipal, Porto, (1985), p. 11.