

# **Sharing the City: The Establishment of Mendicant Houses in Portuguese Medieval Towns**

Catarina Almeida Marado

Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal

## **Abstract:**

In Portugal, as in the rest of Europe, the mendicants settled in almost all cities and towns from the beginning of the 13th century. Their buildings marked the urban landscape and contributed to the development of the urban centres. This article explores the process by means of which the friars settled in the cities and the factors that determined their choice of site, with attention to the spatial, economic, political and social characteristics of the mendicant establishments in the largest Portuguese cities between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It aims to demonstrate that competition between the different mendicant communities for preaching space was a crucial factor in the definition of the site where each religious building was to be built. Although the article focuses essentially on the Portuguese case, it also draws comparisons with other European contexts, thereby affirming the transnational character of the religious orders, particularly evident in the way these communities marked medieval European cities in different contexts.

**Keywords:** mendicants, medieval city, Portugal, religious houses, conflicts

## Introduction

Although the mendicants are usually associated with the urban world, they were hermetic in origin. The first phase of these communities' existence (principally the Franciscans) has been called the *nomadic or hermetic phase*.<sup>1</sup> In this initial period, the friars settled in small modest buildings in isolated spots. However, the need to provide religious services prompted them to move closer to the towns and transform their precarious early constructions into large monastic complexes built in stone. This transformation was caused by the 'clericalization' of the new orders, which began in the 1220s.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this period, the friars established new criteria with regard to the choice of location for their houses and also a new construction model for their buildings.<sup>3</sup>

Common characteristics have been identified in the location of mendicant houses in cities throughout Europe. Since Jacques Le Goff, who first associated them to the urban peripheries, many other authors have confirmed that this was the preferential position, pointing out that the mendicants usually settled near the city walls and next to one of its gates.<sup>4</sup> Other trends that have been identified included a preference for the lower town, sometimes near a river, and the use of pre-existing buildings, such as chapels, inns and other donated buildings.<sup>5</sup> The reasons why they established themselves outside the walls have been discussed at length by various authors. The most consensual justification would seem to be that they wanted to be close to the newly arrived communities that had settled outside the walls for apostolic reasons. This thesis was initially defended by Le Goff and confirmed by many authors. However, as Paul Trio notes, this theory has not been unanimously accepted.<sup>6</sup> Walter Simons, for

---

<sup>1</sup> The first term was used by Pellegrini, *Gli insediamenti degli ordini mendicanti a al loro tipologia. Considerazioni metodologiche e piste di ricerca*, p. 566 and also by Cuadrado, *Un Nuevo marco socioespacial: emplazamiento de los conventos mendicantes en el plano urbano*, p. 102. The second was used in Mattoso, *O enquadramento social e económico das primeiras fundações franciscanas*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Bruzelius, *The Dead come to Town: Preaching, Burying and Building in the Mendicant Orders*, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Bruzelius refers to this phenomenon as 'conventualization', that is 'the adoption of the norms of monastic planning'. Bruzelius, *The architecture of the mendicant orders in the Middle Ages: an overview of recent literature*, pp. 373-374.

<sup>4</sup> Le Goff, *Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale*, pp. 927-928.

<sup>5</sup> On the first subject, see for example Röhrkasten, *The Convents of the Franciscan Province of Anglia and their Role in the Development of English and Welsh Towns in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, p. 5 and on the second see for example Bruzelius, *The architecture of the mendicant orders in the Middle Ages: an overview of recent literature*, p. 369.

<sup>6</sup> Trio, *What factor contributed to the establishment of mendicant orders in thirteen-century Ypres*, p. 98.

example, claims that external factors, like the opposition of the secular clergy or the availability of free lands inside the walls, may also have been determining factors, while Enrido Guidoni associates the establishment of the mendicant monasteries to the spatial development of cities.<sup>7</sup> More recent approaches have tended to reconcile these two theories, arguing that their extramural location was conditioned by a cluster of factors, both internal and external. At the same time, the study of particular cases, such as that of Ypres, analysed by Trio, highlights the importance of local factors by drawing attention to those that are specific to that city.<sup>8</sup>

We should also consider that the choice of location on the outskirts of the city may not have been due to pragmatic reasons and/or concrete obstacles alone, but that there may also have been a symbolic dimension to the matter. Anne Lester's recent article, though focusing upon female communities, shows how both men and women in the 13th century settled in peripheral suburban areas, rebuilding and reusing old churches, which they used as a symbolic expression of their religious life.<sup>9</sup> This author also points out how areas on the edges of urban centres acquired a new significance from their presence. In any case, she claims, the mendicant phenomenon should be understood within the broad context of economic, social and spatial change that marked the cities of this period, and which largely took place in the suburban space.

In Portugal, studies dealing both with individual religious houses and with mendicant establishments in general also refer to their location outside the city walls.<sup>10</sup> However, the matter has not been the subject of a specific study.<sup>11</sup> This article, which is part of a broader research project, broaches this question, attempting not only to characterise the location of the buildings but also to understand the factors conditioning their establishment in medieval Portuguese cities.<sup>12</sup> In particular, it looks at the way the

---

<sup>7</sup> Simons, *Stad en apostolaat: De vestiging van de bedelorden in het graafschap Vlaanderen* and Guidoni, *La città: dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*.

<sup>8</sup> Trio, *What factor contributed to the establishment of mendicant orders in thirteen-century Ypres*.

<sup>9</sup> Lester, *Making the Margins in the Thirteenth Century*.

<sup>10</sup> In the various studies about the religious orders and/or their architecture, it is common to find general references to the location of the mendicant houses outside the walls, near a gate and connected to an access route.

<sup>11</sup> There are only two studies on this subject in Portugal (Maiello, *Do território monástico à cidade conventual* and Monteiro, *Sistema Conventual e Desenvolvimento Urbano de Évora na Idade Média*), though they focus essentially on the relationship between the monasteries and the process of urban expansion. The first analyses the cities of Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, while the second focuses on Évora.

<sup>12</sup> This article presents some of the results of research carried out in the first part of the postdoctorate research project entitled "Portuguese urbanistic systems of a monastic nature", carried out at the Centre of

process was influenced by the rivalry between the two first mendicant orders, a subject that most studies cover from an architectural perspective (see, for example, the recent text by Thomas Coomans, concerning the mendicant friaries in Leuven).<sup>13</sup> This article describes how this competition is also reflected in the urban space, conditioning the location of the mendicant monasteries.

The study has been carried out using textual and cartographic sources. The former provided information about the foundation of the religious houses, and a document concerning a conflict between Franciscans and Dominicans in the city of Santarém was analysed, proving crucial for our understanding of this matter. As regards cartography, although there are no maps available from the period, the interpretation of cartographic representations from later historical periods, aided by literature about the medieval urban space in Portugal, shed important light on the area surrounding the monasteries and its subsequent development.<sup>14</sup> Material evidence (both the buildings themselves and their urban contexts) was also an essential source for this analysis. In Portugal, this is quite significant, despite the transformations that these monasteries have undergone since the Early Modern period, and the conservation and restoration works carried out on them in the mid 20th century. In cases where the buildings have disappeared altogether, it was possible to reproduce their initial form using cartographic and textual sources. Finally, the comparison of all these sources was aided by mapping out all the information collected (indeed this proved to be an essential tool for the interpretation of these data).

## **The mendicant phenomenon in Portugal**

The first mendicants entered Portugal at the beginning of the 13th century and rapidly spread throughout the whole country. As the Kingdom of Portugal was still defining its territorial limits at this time, the mendicant friars found it convenient to settle mainly in the central area between the Mondego and the Tagus (the north was

---

Social Studies, University of Coimbra, with funding from the Foundation of Science and Technology (Portugal).

<sup>13</sup> Coomans, *Architectural Competition in a University Town: The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Louvain*.

<sup>14</sup> As well as the literature about each of the cities analysed, studies about Portuguese medieval cities also proved essential to this study (see for example ANDRADE, *Horizontes urbanos medievais*; TRINDADE, *Urbanismo na composição de Portugal*).

dominated by the monastic orders and the south was still under Muslim control).<sup>15</sup> The Franciscans and Dominicans both arrived between 1216 and 1217. The former first installed themselves in the outskirts of Guimarães (in the north of the country) and Alenquer (between Lisbon and Santarém), before going on to Lisbon. The latter also settled in the vicinity of Alenquer (more precisely on the upland area known as the Serra de Montejunto to the north of the town) from where they transferred to Santarém. At around the same time, both orders also settled in Coimbra, going on later to other towns and cities of the kingdom.<sup>16</sup> In the middle of the same century, two other mendicant orders also arrived: the Carmelites founded their first monastery in 1251 in Moura (in the south of Portugal) while the Hermits of St Augustine settled in Lisbon in 1256.<sup>17</sup>

In Portugal, as in the other European countries, mendicant geography was characterized by different foundational dynamics, in both chronological and geographic/territorial terms. And although the different mendicant orders generally had convergent movements, they were also characterized by different rhythms of growth and different territorial preferences. It is difficult to summarize all this here, and in any case, that is not the objective of this text. However, it is important to mention the broad rhythms that marked the distribution of the mendicants over Portuguese territory in the medieval period.

The initial explosive growth, which peaked in the second and third quarters of the 13th century, was followed by a marked decrease in the number of new foundations. It remained static during the first three quarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> century before rising again substantially at the end of that century and throughout the next one. This variation corresponds to a similar oscillation in the preference for proximity and distance in relation to urban centres, giving rise to different types of territorial localization. In general, we might say that, in the great first surge, the friars headed towards the largest cities in the kingdom, but then, with the slowing of the pace of new foundations, began

---

<sup>15</sup> The Christian reconquest of Portuguese territory only ended in 1249 when the Kingdom of the Algarve was integrated.

<sup>16</sup> On the Franciscan and Dominican presence in Portugal, see FRANCO, *Dicionário histórico das ordens, institutos religiosos e outras formas de vida consagrada católica em Portugal*, pp. 158-173 and 138-152.

<sup>17</sup> The origin of these two communities is not yet fully clarified. According to some authors, both originated in the earlier hermetic communities. On the presence of these two orders in Portugal, see FRANCO, *Dicionário histórico das ordens, institutos religiosos e outras formas de vida consagrada católica em Portugal*, pp. 39-49 and 79-82.

to distance themselves from the cities, settling in isolated spots near small villages. After the end of the 14th century, there was a gradual return to the urban context as the orders acquired a new dynamism and the friars sought the cities once more. These three moments are closely connected to the political, social, economic and territorial contexts of the country and also to the transformations that took place within the mendicant orders over the course of this period. In addition to the specificities of some of the local conditions and characteristics, they also occurred in other geographical spaces.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the different growth dynamics, the number of foundations continued to increase over these three centuries, and by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there were around a hundred mendicant houses. Most of these were of male communities, with the Franciscans having the most monasteries.<sup>19</sup> All were connected to an urban centre (Fig.1). In Portugal, as in the rest of Europe, there was a mendicant house in almost every town. However, only six cities had more than one male institution.<sup>20</sup> These were obviously the main cities of the kingdom: Lisbon had six friaries; Santarém had four; and Coimbra, Porto, Évora and Guimarães had only two each.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, MARTIN, *Les ordres mendiants en Bretagne, 1230-1530* and GUERREAU, *Observations statistiques sur les créations de couvents franciscains en France*.

<sup>19</sup> In Portugal in that period there were 96 mendicant religious houses in existence (72 of friars and 24 of nuns). The Order of St Francis had 65 religious houses, St Dominic's had 20, the Hermits of St Augustine 7 and the Carmelite Order only 4. Throughout Europe, the mendicant orders had similar characteristics. See, for example, the case of France (Guerreau, *Observations statistiques sur les créations de couvents franciscains en France*) and Hungary (Fugedi, *La formation des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie*).

<sup>20</sup> In this text we will focus on the male institutions. There were different criteria and conditions governing the establishment of the female ones, and therefore they should therefore be analysed separately.

<sup>21</sup> In Lisbon, the following houses existed: Convento de São Francisco da Cidade, Convento de São Domingos, Convento de Nossa Senhora da Graça, Convento de Santa Maria do Carmo, Convento de São Domingos de Benfica, Convento de São Francisco de Xabregas (the last two were at sites away from the city). In Santarém: Convento de São Domingos, Convento de São Francisco, Convento da Graça e Convento de Santa Catarina do Vale de Mourol (the latter located outside the city). In Évora: Convento de São Francisco and Convento de São Domingos. In Porto: Convento de São Francisco and Convento de São Domingos. In Coimbra: Convento de São Francisco and Convento de São Domingos. In Guimarães: Convento de São Francisco and Convento de São Domingos. Of this cluster of 18 monasteries, 5 have been demolished (the Franciscan and Dominican friaries in Coimbra, and the Dominican friary in Santarém, Porto and Évora); the rest still exist but some have undergone considerable alterations. In Braga, another important city, the mendicants did not manage to found any convent due to strong opposition from the bishop. On this matter, see Mattoso, *O enquadramento social e económico das primeiras fundações franciscanas*, pp. 244-245.

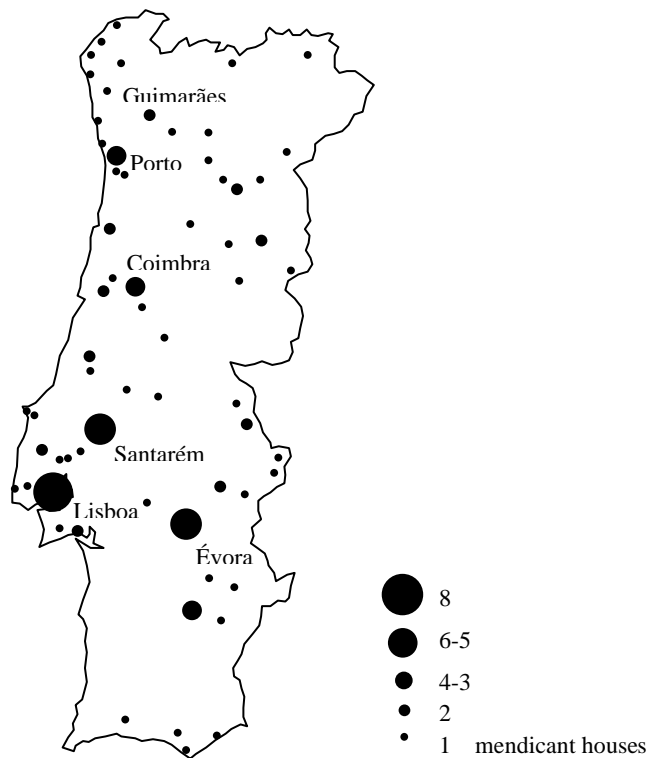


Figure 1 – Geographical distribution of mendicant houses (friaries and nunneries) in Portugal (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries)

A brief chronological analysis of the foundation dates of these friaries clarifies some of the most important aspects of the establishment of mendicant houses in Portugal (Table 1). Firstly, it shows that almost all these religious houses were founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (three in Lisbon and two in the other cities). This means that the monastic systems in the main medieval cities of Portugal sprang up in a short space of time (they were defined early on in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely between the second and third quarters of that century). Secondly, it reveals that the alterations that these underwent in the two following centuries were almost insignificant. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, only one more monastery was built in Lisbon and Santarém, and the three founded in the following century (second houses of Franciscans and Dominicans) were located at a considerable distance from the limits of the urban space (over two kilometres away), and cannot therefore be considered ‘urban’. What is more, it also becomes clear that the settlement phases in these cities were generally framed by the dynamics that characterize the growth process of these orders and their territorial distribution in Portugal over three centuries. This analysis of characteristics of the establishment of the mendicant houses in the cities will respect these dynamics and their different historical

contexts. Thus, we will first consider the foundations that took place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and then those that took place the following centuries.

	Franciscans	Dominicans	Carmelites	Hermits of St Augustine	foundation dates		
					13th	14th	15th
Lisboa	• (•)	• (•)	•	•	3	1	(2)
Santarém	• (•)	•		•	2	1	(1)
Porto	•	•			2		
Coimbra	•	•			2		
Évora	•	•			2		
Guimarães	•	•			2		

Table 1 – Mendicant houses (friaries) in the main Portuguese cities

## Settling in the city (13<sup>th</sup> century)

The mendicant houses founded in Portugal in the 13th century are generally located on sites that are typical of these kinds of construction in various European cities: on the edge of the city, next to the walls and near the gates. However, in the main cities – Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto, Santarém, Évora and Guimarães – a clear pattern emerges. In each of these urban centres, a pair of mendicant convents was founded, one Franciscan and one Dominican,<sup>22</sup> in most cases, built simultaneously. All, without exception, were located outside the walls, next to the main access gate to the city. And with the exception of Porto, they were positioned on either side of that gate.<sup>23</sup> Most of them were established in the low part of the cities, generally near a river, accompanying the first expansions of the city beyond the walls (the only exception is Santarém, where the topography of the place did not allow for it to be placed on the banks of the Tagus).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In Lisbon, the Convento da Graça of the Hermits of St Augustine was also founded in the 13th century.

<sup>23</sup> In Porto, the two mendicant monasteries remained together due to a last-minute alteration in the location of the Franciscan friary. This will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>24</sup> In Lisbon, the Monastery of St Francis was also located at a higher level, though very close to the River Tagus. Proximity to rivers often became problematic because of the constant flooding. The most significant case was in Coimbra where both the Franciscan and Dominican friaries, like the convents of St Clare and St Anne, constantly suffered with the rising waters of the River Mondego, until they finally moved to higher ground in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Finally, most of these communities initially made use of pre-existing chapels that were later transformed into monastic buildings.

As mentioned above, the Franciscans and Dominicans entered Portugal around the same year and initially settled in the area of the Serra de Montejunto between Lisbon and Santarém. From there, the Friars Minor headed to Lisbon and the Preachers to Santarém, after which they spread to all the main cities of the kingdom.<sup>25</sup> The friars enjoyed the broad support of the royal power in their settlement efforts. Various kings, and also other members of royalty, founded and sponsored the construction of almost all the religious houses that were founded in the main cities. Though it is difficult to specify the exact date upon which each community arrived in a particular town, we know that between 1245 and 1266, most of the monastic buildings were put up at the same time.<sup>26</sup> In the cities of Lisbon, Coimbra, Santarém and Porto, both mendicant buildings were effectively under construction in this period. In Évora and Guimarães, where the friars settled near the urban space later, the construction of their houses took place at the end of the century (with the exception of the Franciscan Friary in Évora, built in the previous period). In all cases, the construction tended to stretch over various decades, as the buildings and grounds continued to be extended, with a constant redefinition of their limits. This phenomenon was common in Portugal and the rest of Europe. As some authors have pointed out, the construction of the mendicant houses was in reality a ‘long-term process’.<sup>27</sup>

In Lisbon, the Friars Minor settled in 1217 on the west side of the city near the Chapel of Our Lady of the Martyrs.<sup>28</sup> This chapel was on the top of a hill on the bank of the river Tagus, near the area of western expansion that had developed from the main city gate (the Iron Gate). On that date, Lisbon already had the Monastery of St Vincent of Fora (Canons Regular of St Augustine), founded in 1147 on the eastern side of the walls, and the Trinitarian Monastery, founded the following year, also on the western

---

<sup>25</sup> With the exception of Braga, as mentioned above (see note 21).

<sup>26</sup> José Mattoso, referring to the Franciscans, has called this moment the ‘Franciscan offensive’. See Mattoso, *O enquadramento social e económico das primeiras fundações franciscanas*, p. 250.

<sup>27</sup> On this matter, see Meersseman, *L’architecture Dominicaine au XIIIe siècle. Législation et pratique*, p. 136 and Bruzelius, *The Dead come to Town: Preaching, Burying and Building in the Mendicant Orders*, p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> This church (Our Lady of the Martyrs or St Mary of the Martyrs) was built as a commemorative church to honour the dead Anglo-Normans crusaders after the capture of the city. See Cassidy-Welch, *The Monastery of São Vicente de Fora in Lisbon as a Site of Crusading Memory*, p. 5. On the foundation of the Franciscan monastery see Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, pp. 185-189.

side. In 1244 the Franciscans reconstructed their first building and built a new church with the support of D. Urraca, wife of King Sancho II. Some years before, in 1241, the Dominicans had begun work on their monastery to the north of the extramural, in the lowland valley on land donated by King Sancho II in the proximity of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Steps. The construction of these two monasteries occurred practically simultaneously and both enjoyed royal patronage. The buildings were located at the extremities of the western expansion area, which had developed in front of the Iron Gate.<sup>29</sup> The Monastery of St Dominic (Convento de São Domingos) was on the northern side and that of St Francis (Convento de São Francisco) on the southern side (Fig. 2). Some years later, in 1271, the Hermits of St Augustine arrived and founded the Monastery of Grace (Convento da Graça) to the north of the walled compound, between the Monastery of St Dominic and the Monastery of St Vincent of Fora.



Fig. 2 – **Lisbon**. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13th-15th centuries): **1**. Franciscan friary (1217); **2**. Dominican Friary (1241); **3**. Augustinian Hermits Friary (1271); **4**. Carmelite Friary (1386); **5**. Canons Regular of St Augustine Monastery (1147); **6**. Trinitarian Friary (1218); **7**. Secular Canons of St John the Evangelist Monastery (1442); **8**. Poor Clares Convent (1288); **9**. Dominican Convent (1392); **A**. First city wall; **B**. Porta do Ferro (Iron Gate); **C**. Castle; **D**. Second city wall (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

<sup>29</sup> This area of medieval expansion was completely destroyed by the earthquake of 1755 and replaced with the Pombaline reconstruction of the lower town (*Baixa Pombalina*).

Although the Franciscans had been installed in the hermitage of St António dos Olivais in the outskirts of Coimbra since 1217, the Dominicans were the first mendicants to settle in that city. In this they had the support of the daughters of King Sancho I. By 1226 the friars were established in Coimbra and by 1242 had been given land in which to found their monastery.<sup>30</sup> The building was located in the west of the city at a site called Figueira Velha, very close to the River Mondego (which was wider then than it is today). The Franciscans moved nearer the urban centre in 1247.<sup>31</sup> Their building was also located in the west of the city but on the other bank of the Mondego. The construction of the Monastery of St Francis of the Bridge (Convento de São Francisco da Ponte), as it was known, was also supported by the daughters of King Sancho I (more precisely by D. Constança Sanches) and in 1269 the construction works were still under way.<sup>32</sup> Also in Coimbra, the two mendicant complexes, despite being on opposite banks of the river, framed the area of riverside expansion outside the city walls in front of the main gate to the city (the Almedina Gate). This area was defined by the Monastery of the Holy Cross (Mosteiro de Santa Cruz) of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, founded in Coimbra in 1131, and by the churches of St Bartolomeu and St Justa, located further to the south (Fig. 3).<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Cácegas, *Primeira parte da Historia de S. Dominic particular do reino, e conquistas de Portugal*, p. 281.

<sup>31</sup> On the foundation of the Franciscan monastery in Coimbra see Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, pp.260-265.

<sup>32</sup> On the presence of these two communities in Coimbra, see Gomes, *As Ordens Mendicantes na Coimbra Medieval: Tópicos e Documentos*.

<sup>33</sup> Rossa, *DiverCidade: urbanografia do espaço de Coimbra até ao estabelecimento definitivo da Universidade*, pp. 463-483

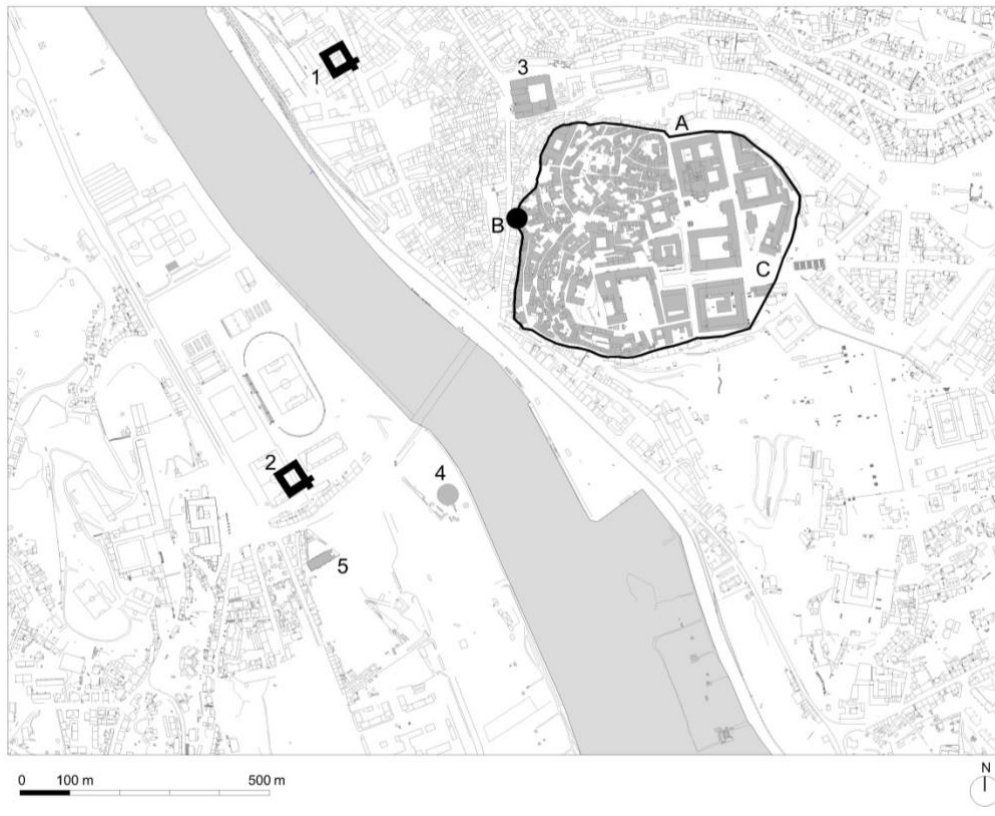


Figure 3 – **Coimbra**. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries): **1**. Dominican Friary (1226); **2**. Franciscan friary (1247); **3**. Canons Regular of St Augustine Monastery (1131); **4**. Augustinian Convent (1174); **5**. Poor Clares Convent (1286); **A**. First city wall; **B**. Porta de Almedina (Almedina Gate); **C**. Castle (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

In Porto, the mendicant houses were initially located in a very similar position to in Coimbra, with the Dominican monastery to the west of the walled centre and the Franciscan one on the other side of the river (Fig. 4). However, after numerous problems with the Bishop of Porto, D. Pedro Salvadores, the Friars Minor finally settled definitively on the northern bank of the Douro, practically next to the Monastery of St. Dominic (Convento de São Domingos). In Porto, the Franciscans were the first to arrive. In 1233 they were already in the city. On that same date, they were granted a plot of land for the construction of their house on a site of Reboleira, west of the walls near the river bank and the riverside centre (Ribeira). However, Bishop D. Pedro Salvadores, who was the lord of the city, opposed the settlement of the friars and placed an embargo on the construction of the building. This led to an important quarrel which included the violent expulsion of the friars by the cathedral chapter and successive papal interventions, appealing to the Archbishop of Braga and the bishops of the neighbouring cities of Viseu and Lamego to defend the friars. However, the various bulls sent by Gregory IX in 1237 produced no effects and the Franciscans were obliged to accept the

bishop's proposal to settle in Gaia on the other bank of the river.<sup>34</sup> They remained there until 1244. However, during his dispute with the Friars Minors, Bishop D. Pedro Salvadores sent a letter to the provincial of the Order of St Dominic in 1237 asking them to found a monastery in his city.<sup>35</sup> To this end he gave them a church that was already consecrated, houses and a piece of land in front of the Sant'Ana gate, one of the main entrances to the city.

This offer may have been related to the ongoing dispute between the bishop and the Franciscan friars. The invitation to the Dominicans to settle right next to the Franciscan compound may have been a strategy to get rid of the Friars Minor; indeed the bishop disputed the limits of their grounds, which had been granted by D. Teresa (mother of D. Afonso Henriques) to the Bishop D. Hugo. However, there is no concrete evidence to prove this. In any case, the bishop soon took against the Dominicans too, forbidding them to preach, confess and celebrate mass in his city. As occurred with the Friars Minor, Pope Gregory IX was also called to intervene in defence of these friars in 1238. And in the following year, with the same intention, King Sancho II declared himself the founder and patron of the monastery. The building was ultimately put up between 1239 and 1245 against the will of the bishop. Some metres lower down, near the bank of the Douro, the Franciscans, who had moved there from the other side of the river, began building the Monastery of St Francis (Convento de São Francisco) in 1244, returning, on the order of Pope Innocent IV, to the site from where they had been expelled. The northern limit of their land was adjacent to that of the Preachers. The two monasteries thus formed a unit, though their churches were located on opposite sides (Fig. 4). Such great proximity between two mendicant houses was uncommon.<sup>36</sup> In this case, it resulted from a dispute over the same site (near the Sant'Ana Gate) involving the bishop, king and Pope.

---

<sup>34</sup> On this matter see Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, pp. 397-405.

<sup>35</sup> On the role of the Dominican monastery in Porto, see Afonso, *O convento de S. Domingos e o plano urbano do Porto entre os séculos XIII e XVI*.

<sup>36</sup> The same unusual proximity between the two friaries occurred in Louvain (Belgium), where the Franciscan and the Dominican houses 'were separated only by a narrow arm of the river' (Coomans, *Architectural Competition in a University Town: The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Louvain*, p. 210) and also in Lugo (Spain), see Manso Porto, *Arte Gotico En Galicia: Los Dominicos*, pp. 51-58.

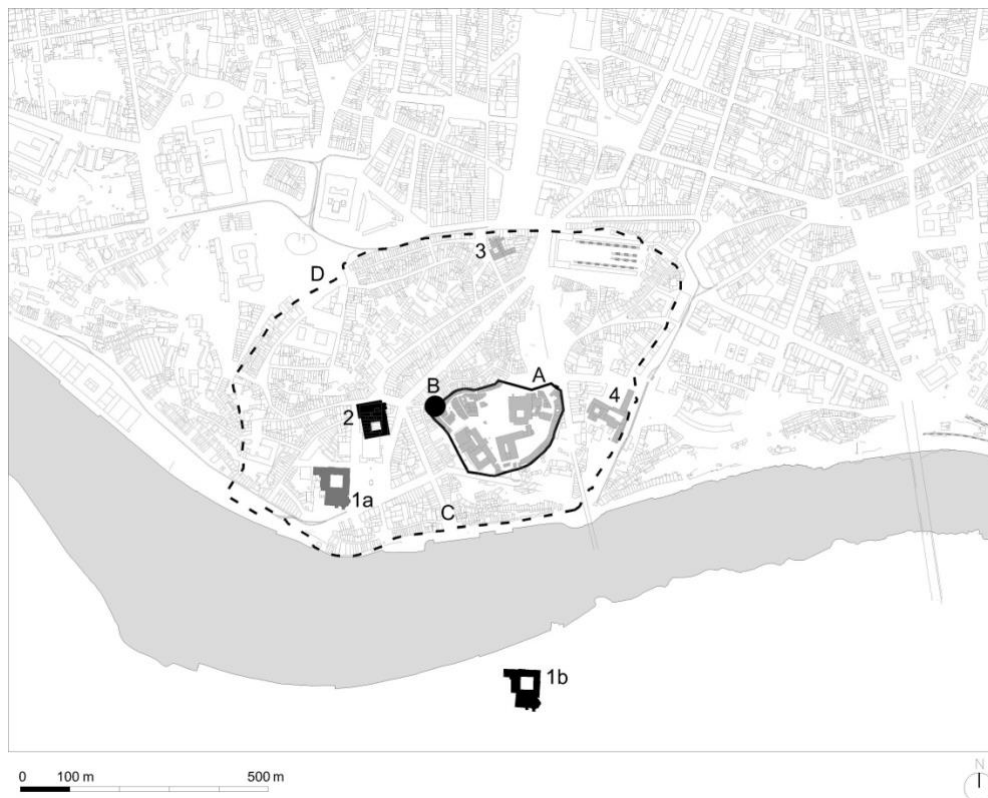


Figure 4 – **Porto**. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries): **1a**. Franciscan friary, first location (1233-1237) and final location (1244-1834); **1b**. Franciscan friary, second location (1237-1244); **2**. Dominican Friary (1237); **3**. Secular Canons of St John the Evangelist Monastery (1490); **4**. Poor Clares Convent (1405); **A**. First city wall; **B**. Porta de Sant'Ana (Sant'Ana Gate); **C**. Ribeira (riverside neighbourhood); **D**. Second city wall (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

As mentioned above, the city of Santarém has very particular topographic features. Located on the left bank of the River Tagus, the walled part was on a plateau adjacent to the river bank. The Dominican friars, who had come there from the Serra de Montejunto in 1221, initially settled at the top of a rugged hill northeast of the walls near the residential neighbourhood (Ribeira) on the river bank. Shortly afterwards, in 1225, alleging that they were too far from the city, they moved to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Olive Tree located further to the north, near the Leiria Gate. There they built the first monastery of the Order of St Dominic in Portugal. The building works went on until 1257 at least.<sup>37</sup> In 1242, the Friars Minor settled on the other side of the Leiria Gate, with the support of King Sancho II (Fig. 5).

Unlike the previous examples, the mendicant houses in Santarém were located on the opposite side to the area of development (which, as in other cities, took place in the direction of the river banks). This fact was due to the topography of the site; it was

<sup>37</sup> Custódio, *O convento de São Domingos de Santarém: memória, espaço e arquitectura*, p. 121.

impossible to establish large monastic compounds on the steep slopes of the plateau. The difference in level between the plateau and the river bank also prevented the city from growing in that direction so it was redirected northwards after the end of the 13th century; two riverside towns (Ribeira and Alfange) have remained isolated since.<sup>38</sup> The two mendicant monasteries, located on the opposite side of the early extramural expansion zone, framed the northern entrance to Santarém. Later a new suburb developed here, of which they became an integral part.

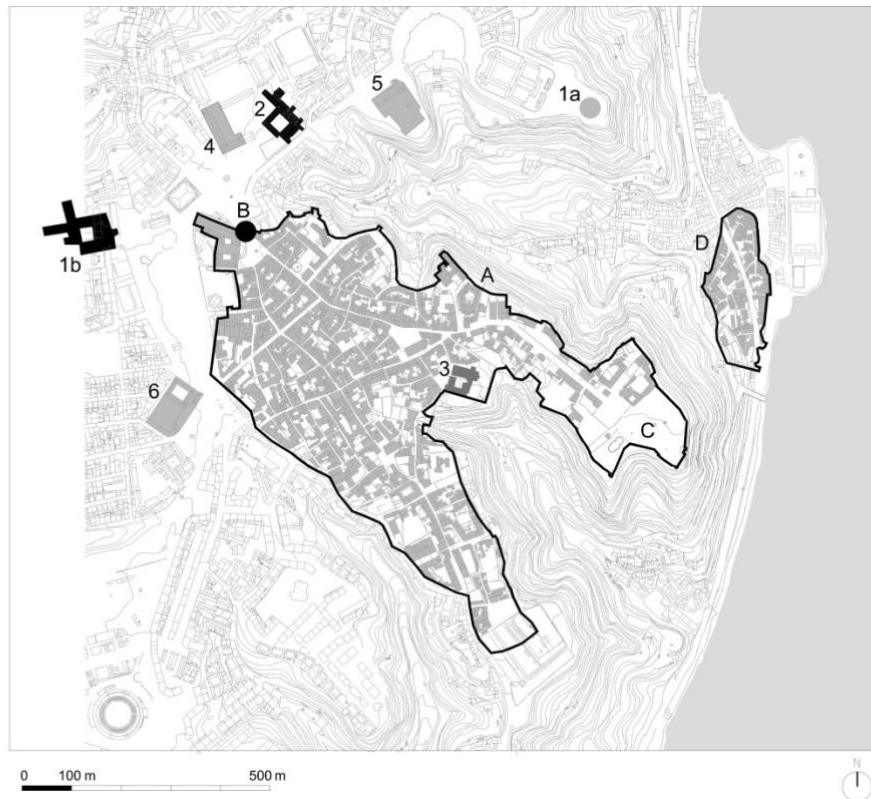


Figure 5 – **Santarém**. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13th-15th centuries): **1a**. Dominican friary, first location (1221-1225); **1b**. Dominican friary, second location (1225-1834); **2**. Franciscan Friary (1242); **3**. Augustinian Hermits Friary (1376); **4**. Trinitarian Friary (1207); **5**. Poor Clares Convent (1258); **6**. Dominican Convent (1287); **A**. First city wall; **B**. Porta de Leiria (Leiria Gate); **C**. Castle; **D**. Ribeira (riverside neighbourhood) (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

In Évora too, the mendicants marked the main entrance into the city (Fig. 6), though these monasteries were not built at quite the same time. The chronicles of St Francis attest to the presence of his friars in Évora in 1224.<sup>39</sup> However, the oldest documental evidence dates from 1245, a document referring to the donation of a piece

<sup>38</sup> Viana, *Espaço e povoamento numa vila portuguesa*.

<sup>39</sup> Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, p. 311 and Belém, *Chronica Serafica da Santa Provincia dos Algarves*, pp. 26-28.

of land to the friars in order to extend their monastery.<sup>40</sup> The building was located to the south of the walled enclosure near the Alconchel Gate, the main entrance into the town. The Dominicans arrived some decades later, in 1286, and lodged in the Chapel of Santa Victoria Martyr located to the northwest of that gate. Twelve years later, they extended their property into lands donated by the county, and starting building the Monastery of St Dominic (Convento de São Domingos).<sup>41</sup>

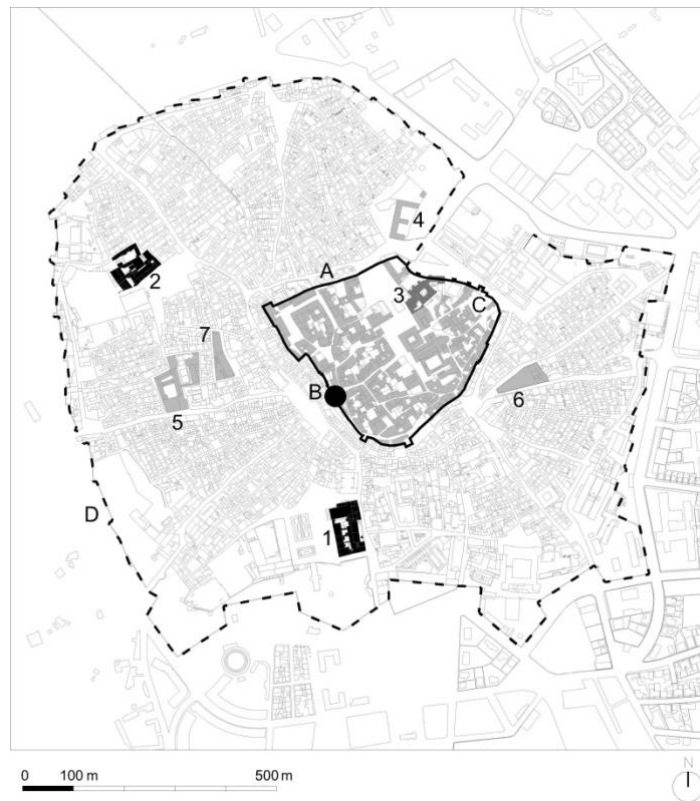


Figure 6 – Évora. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries): **1.** Franciscan Friary (1224); **2.** Dominican friary (1286); **3.** Secular Canons of St John the Evangelist Monastery (1485); **4.** Augustinian Hermits Convent (1421); **5.** Poor Clares Convent (1458); **6.** Dominican Convent (1471); **7.** Dominican Convent (1490); **A.** First city wall; **B.** Porta de Alconchel (Alconchel Gate); **C.** Castle; **D.** Second city wall (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

The monastic houses of Guimarães were also founded later. The Dominicans arrived in 1270 at the request of the county. João Pirez Arrudo, a town dignitary, offered them some houses on the southwest edge of the lower town, and at the start of the following year they began building their church. The Friars Minor, who, as in Coimbra had been established in the vicinity of Guimarães since the start of the century,

<sup>40</sup> On the matter of its foundation date, see Branco. *Evolução do sítio do século XIII ao século XIX*, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Cácegas, *Primeira parte da Historia de S. Domingos particular do reino, e conquistas de Portugal*, p. 480.



moved nearer the town in that same year.<sup>42</sup> They settled in an inn called the *Hospital do Concelho* ('County Hospital') whose grounds extended to the River Coutos in the south. As happened in Porto, the Franciscans here encountered opposition to their settlement in the town. The chapter of the College of Our Lady of Oliveira prohibited their works several times and the friars were even violently expelled. They managed to resist and in 1282, as in Porto, resumed construction of their monastery on the same site.<sup>43</sup>

In Guimarães, then, two mendicant houses were built almost simultaneously near the limit of the extramural neighbourhood to the south of the upper town ('vila Alta'). Some years after the start of the construction work, that area was surrounded by walls (built between the reigns of King Afonso III and D. Dinis) leaving the two mendicant houses on the outside.<sup>44</sup> The war between D. Dinis and his son D. Afonso IV, which took place between 1320 and 1324, led to the siege of the town, and the two monastic buildings, which were close to the walls, served as a support for the attack on the city. For this reason, after the conflict was over, the king ordered them to be relocated. Mem Rodriguez, head bailiff of Entre Douro and Minho, was charged with marking the distances between the new buildings and the walls and demolishing the old ones. The new Convento de São Francisco was thus built at the lower end of its grounds, while for the Convento de São Domingos new lands were bought and new routes agreed with neighbours and the Council.<sup>45</sup> The New Gate (or St Paio's Gate) located between the two mendicant houses became the main entrance to the town, and a new area of extramural expansion developed in front of it, framed by the two mendicant convents (Fig. 7). After the Guimarães experience, all the other new enclosures built in this group of six cities in the second half of the 14th century (i.e. in Porto, Évora and Lisbon) included the mendicant convents within their area.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> The same thing happened in Coimbra. The Franciscans that were installed in the outskirts moved nearer the cities when the Dominicans arrived.

<sup>43</sup> On the problems faced by these friars in settling in Guimarães, see Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos frades menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, p.141-149. Although this author mentions the wall and gate as references for the location of the monastery, the fortified structure of Guimarães involved only the upper town at this time (Vila Alta).

<sup>44</sup> Fernandes, *Urbanismo e morfologia urbana no Norte de Portugal: Viana do Castelo, Póvoa de Varzim, Guimarães, Vila Real, Chaves e Bragança*, p. 155.

<sup>45</sup> On the relocation of these monasteries, see Cácegas, *Primeira parte da Historia de S. Domingos particular do reino, e conquistas de Portugal*, pp. 427-428 and Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, pp. 147-149.

<sup>46</sup> The second set of walls built around these cities, known as the 'new walls' or 'Fernandine walls', were built in the reigns of King Afonso IV and King Fernando I. In Coimbra and Santarém, no second walls were built and the mendicant convents remained outside the walls.

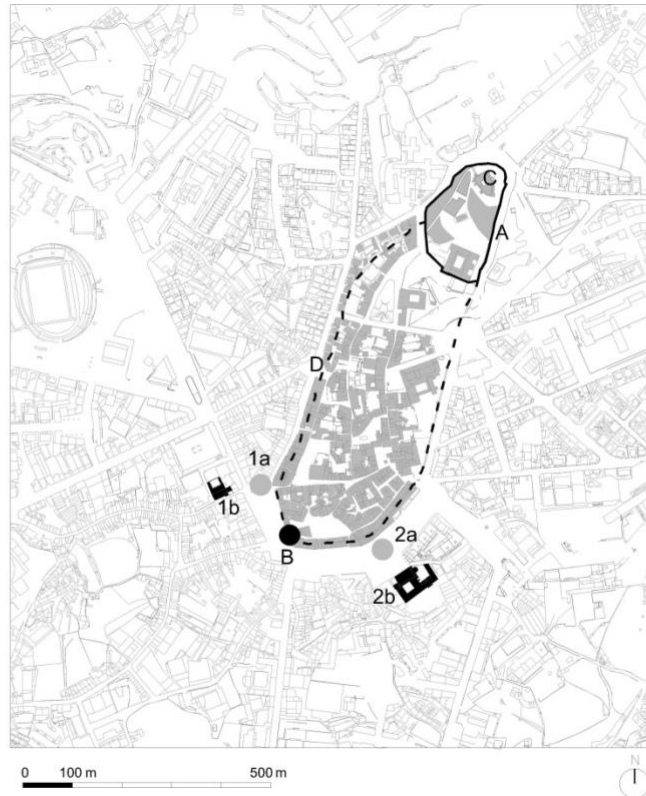


Figure 7 – **Guimarães**. Plan of the city with the religious houses (13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries): **1a**. Dominican friary, first location (1270-1325); **1b**. Dominican friary, second location (1325-1834); **2a**. Franciscan Friary, first location (1271-1325); **2b**. Franciscan Friary, second location (1325-1834); **A**. First city wall; **B**. Porta Nova or Porta de São Paio (New Gate or St Paio's Gate); **C**. Castle; **D**. Second city wall (drawing: Catarina Almeida Marado)

Despite evidence of the pattern of location that we have just described (Figs. 2-7), there are no references in the documental sources to any theoretical model that might establish a geometric composition for the establishment of the mendicant houses in urban space.<sup>47</sup> On the contrary, their distribution in the city seems to have resulted naturally from two important needs: firstly, the need to be integrated into the religious and social structure of the city; and second, the need for apostolic activities to be divided up between the different communities. For this, the friars had to be as close as possible to the city and to keep the other mendicants at a distance.

From the early years of their existence, it is clear that the friars moved gradually closer to the urban centres. Initially installed in isolated spots, they began to look for

<sup>47</sup> From a systematic analysis of the cities in the Italian regions of Umbria and Tuscany, Guidoni argues that there was a geometric coordination scheme between the mendicant convents of the three main mendicant orders existing in that geographic area (the Franciscans, Dominicans and Hermits of St Augustine). Each house was located at the point of a triangle, whose centre of gravity was the central point of the urban nucleus, which might be the square, town hall or cathedral. See Guidoni, *La città: dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*.

sites closer to the cities. The case of the first Dominican monastery in Portugal clearly illustrates this dynamic. These friars first set up in a rural area (the Serra de Montejunto), then moved into the vicinity of Santarém, before transferring again to a site closer to town. The same need was present in the Order of St Francis. They began by situating their first houses in isolated sites on the outskirts of towns (such as Alenquer, Guimarães and Coimbra), moving closer to them some years later. In the two last cases, as we have already seen, this transfer occurred at roughly the same time as the Dominicans established themselves in these cities.

The settlement on the periphery, in what we might call the *definitive settlement* phase, is considered to be an identity-marking characteristic of the mendicant orders (although in this period, in some European cities, some were also found within the city walls). The desire to be close to the poor, sick, outcasts and excluded seems to have been one of the main reasons for their establishment outside the walls of the city, for both apostolic and symbolic reasons. However, there are certainly many other reasons, depending on the various political, economic, social and urbanistic contexts of each region and town. In Portugal, urbanistic questions were particularly fundamental for the definition of this invariant. Although the *extra villam* location may initially have been the mendicants' own choice as they gradually drew closer to the cities, it seems clear that from the middle of the 13th century, the target-public of these friars were not the displaced people on the periphery but rather the population within the city walls. However, the lack of space inside the walls would have made it impossible to set up large monastic complexes there. The size of the monasteries, with their church, building and grounds, was certainly one of the aspects that prevented them from being located inside the cities. Outside the walls, not only was there space available, the value of the land was considerably lower, which meant that the monasteries could be continuously expanded (to respond to both the rapid growth of the community and the need for an increasing number of burials) and external preaching grounds could be demarcated in front of their churches.<sup>48</sup> The cities were themselves in the process of expanding beyond their walls and so it was there that the friars found available space to set up.

---

<sup>48</sup> On this matter see the case of the Convento de São Francisco in Santarém (Esperança, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal*, p. 452) and Convento de São Domingos in Porto (Afonso, *O convento de S. Domingos e o plano urbano do Porto entre os séculos XIII e XVI*, p. 39). On the importance of burials for the development of mendicant architecture, see Schwartz, *Il bel cimitero: Santa Maria Novella in Florenz*. On the 'outside church' see Bruzelius, *The Dead come to Town: Preaching, Burying and Building in the Mendicant Orders*, p. 212.

The outskirts of the main cities and towns were punctuated by chapels. All the functions that were not desirable inside the city walls – such as the polluting industries, animal pens and slaughterhouses, quarries, cemeteries of Jews and Muslims, the execution ground (gallows) and many of the institutions that provided social and charitable support (inns, hospitals and leper colonies) – were also located outside the city walls.<sup>49</sup> These facilities were located outside, both because of the nature of their functions (sheltering the poor and treating the sick) and because of their dimensions, which were considerable (they were designed to house whole communities). They took in new arrivals to the city and unauthorised people. The mendicant friars of the 13<sup>th</sup> century fitted into this category, and as such had no place in the *corpo da vila* but rather in the *extra villam*. They thus set up in the peripheries, though near to the main gateway to the city.

The fact that the two communities arrived simultaneously generated rivalry between them. They competed for followers, patrons and financial support with which to construct their buildings. In Santarém, this competition (like the need to be as close as possible to the city) was very clear. In this case, the interpretation made of cartographic and bibliographic data<sup>50</sup> is proved by a 13<sup>th</sup> century document. This document, entitled *Sentença-arbitragem entre Dominicanos e Franciscanos com intervenção do Mestre Geral da Ordem dos Pregadores e arbitrada por Frades Menores* ('Arbitration sentence between Dominicans and Franciscans with the intervention of the General Master of the Order of Preachers and arbitrated by the Friars Minor') was signed on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1261 in Santarém.<sup>51</sup> The text defines the terms of the agreement established between the two communities of mendicant friars of Santarém (Franciscans and Dominicans) with the aim of putting an end to the conflicts that had marked the first period of their presence in the city.

---

<sup>49</sup> See Andrade, *Horizontes urbanos medievais*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>50</sup> Current topographic survey; the 'plan of Santarém after 1759' ('planta de Santarém posterior a 1759'), Lisbon, Direcção Geral do Território, cota: CA 394; Viana, *Espaço e povoamento numa vila portuguesa (Santarém 1147 – 1350)* and Beirante, *Santarém Medieval*.

<sup>51</sup> *Sentença-arbitragem entre Dominicanos e Franciscanos com intervenção do Mestre Geral da Ordem dos Preachers e arbitrada por Friars Minor. 1261. 17 de Novembro. Santarém*. Published in Mattoso, *Estratégias da pregação no século XIII*, p. 109-118. On this subject, see also Marques, *A pregação medieval portuguesa* e Marques, *A pregação em Portugal na Idade Média: alguns aspectos*.

## The Santarém conflict

Santarém is a city located on the northern bank of the River Tagus, around 80 km from Lisbon. It was an important Muslim city, reconquered by the Christians in 1147. The walls of Christian Santarém were built between 1184 and 1190, and surrounded an area of 35 hectares. In the 13th century, the city rivalled Lisbon in terms of population. After the territory was pacified, two areas of expansion began to appear outside its walls: the *bairros baixos* ('low-lying neighbourhoods') of Alfange and Ribeira on the southern side near the river, and the *arrabalde planáltico* ('upland suburb') on the northern plateau, formed essentially of monastic buildings.<sup>52</sup> As mentioned above, this was the only Portuguese city where the mendicant friars did not settle in the lower town, accompanying the first expansions beyond the walls. On the contrary, in Santarém the mendicants provided the impulse for a new area of expansion on the opposite side. This was due to the particular geographical characteristics of this city. There was a preliminary attempt by the Dominicans to settle near the *bairros baixos*, but from there, access into the town was quite difficult due to the topography, and the friars moved to a place from where they could more easily get into the city to carry out their apostolic activities. However, it is not this particularity that interests us here; rather it is the way in which the two religious houses established themselves on the northern edge of this city, which, together with the Trinitarian Monastery, and two other female convents built later on, constituted the northern suburb of Santarém (Fig. 5).<sup>53</sup>

The first religious order that established itself in this city was that of the Most Holy Trinity.<sup>54</sup> In 1207, King Sancho I founded their monastery in front of the Leiria Gate, in the north, at the start of the road that connected Santarém to Leiria. As we have mentioned above, in around 1221, the Dominican friars arrived, initially settling in the *bairros baixos*, before moving northwards four years later and settling in the western part of the area in front of the Leiria Gate. At the beginning of the 1240s, the

---

<sup>52</sup> Viana, *Espaço e povoamento numa vila portuguesa (Santarém 1147 – 1350)*, pp. 127-151.

<sup>53</sup> Of the five 13<sup>th</sup>-century religious houses in Santarém, only three have survived. They are: the Monastery of St Francis; the Convent of St Clare; and the St Dominic Ladies' Convent, which is considerably altered. The Monastery of St Dominic was completely demolished after the extinction of the religious orders (which in Portugal happened in 1834) and the Monastery of Trinity was also considerably altered after this date. In any case, the two Franciscan houses (male and female) and the Monastery of Grace, founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, form one of the most important sets of examples of mendicant architecture in Portugal. On this subject, see Pereira, ed., *História da arte portuguesa*, pp. 43-52.

<sup>54</sup> In addition to the military orders. On this matter see Beirante, *Santarém Medieval*, pp. 38-41. The Monastery of the Trinitarians of Santarém was the first house of this order in Portugal. See Sousa, *Ordens Religiosas em Portugal das origens a Trento - Guia histórico*, p. 444.

Franciscans founded their monastery on the opposite side, next to the Trinitarian monastery. The construction of the two mendicant buildings occurred in a climate of conflict. The problems seem to have started with the arrival of the Friars Minor, and only in 1261, with the intervention of the general ministers of the orders and of the king himself, did the two communities come to an understanding. The agreement sought to resolve the ‘various questions’ that were at the root of their conflicts.<sup>55</sup> The Dominicans complained about the Franciscans ‘because they have built their house near their lands and in the space between them and the Castle’ and accused them of ‘trying to enlarge their territory even more in their direction’. They also claimed they had given protection to a community of cloistered women that had settled nearby in order ‘to prevent them from extending their territory even more in their direction by acquiring those lands’.<sup>56</sup>

The *Sentença* began by stipulating the transfer of the ‘women that lived with the habit of the Sisters of the Order of those same [Preachers], from the habitations where they presently live, near those Friars Minor, to live in another place’. It also mentions that ‘if some of those aforementioned women want to remain in the said habitations until the end of their days, they may do so, but without the habit of the Sister of the Order of Preachers’ and ensuring that, in the future, ‘no college nor congregation of religious women or men’ would be installed in those buildings ‘to live in them’.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, ‘wishing to pluck out by the root and from the bottom the origin and root of all the conflicts which, since then and till now have been presented to us, and to prevent any pretext or motive for conflict arising in the future’, it proceeded to divide up the ‘time and place’ for preaching between the two mendicant communities of Santarém.<sup>58</sup> This solution sought to respond to the complaints brought by the Dominicans who claimed that they were prevented from preaching by a ‘dual reason’: the ‘reason of place’ (the place where the Friar Minors preached was closer to the town than that of the Preachers); and the ‘reason of time and place’ (both preached at the same hour and were near the preaching ground). The document not only established an alternation in the preaching at their sites (in front of their respective houses) and in different churches in the town, it also set out rules concerning assistance at burials,

---

<sup>55</sup> *Sentença-arbitragem entre Dominicanos e Franciscanos com intervenção do Mestre Geral da Ordem dos Preachers e arbitrada por Friars Minor. 1261. 17 de Novembro. Santarém.* Published in MATTOSO, *Estratégias da pregação no século XIII*, p. 109-118.

<sup>56</sup> Mattoso, *Estratégias da pregação no século XIII*, p. 112.

<sup>57</sup> Mattoso, *Estratégias da pregação no século XIII*, p. 113.

<sup>58</sup> Mattoso, *Estratégias da pregação no século XIII*, p. 115

participation in processions and even in the use of particular words when preaching that were liable to offend the other community.

This document leaves it clear that there were two fundamental questions at the root of the conflicts: first, the alleged difference in the distances of the two houses from the town; and then the proximity between them.<sup>59</sup> The site where the monasteries were located was, according to the orders themselves, very important. They should be located at an equal distance from the city and with a considerable distance between them so as to compete on an equal footing to attract the faithful, donors and consequently funding for their buildings.<sup>60</sup>

These types of conflict occurred all over Europe to some extent, and their frequency and intensity ultimately led to the definition of rules designed to ensure the even distribution of the mendicant convents in the towns. These rules, established by the Holy See, consisted of defining a minimal distance between the mendicant convents (that is, they established areas of ‘spiritual jurisdiction’ for each house by prohibiting the construction of any religious building within a minimum distance around it).<sup>61</sup> In response to conflicts such as that of Santarém, the popes began by attributing this type of privilege on a case-by-case basis, but ended up extending them to all mendicant orders.<sup>62</sup> On 20th November 1265, Pope Clement IV extended this rule to all Dominican monasteries, prohibiting the construction of churches or religious houses in their vicinity within a distance of at least 300 *cannes*.<sup>63</sup> Two days later he attributed the same

---

<sup>59</sup> This fact has been pointed out by Marques, *A pregação em Portugal na Idade Média: alguns aspectos*, p. 330.

<sup>60</sup> Several wills shows the parity in the donations to the two mendicant communities. For the city of Coimbra see Gomes, *As Ordens Mendicantes na Coimbra Medieval*, pp. 163-68.

<sup>61</sup> *Infra spatium trecentarum cannarum non aedificandis*.

<sup>62</sup> In 1257, for example, Alexander IV prohibited the construction of other religious houses within a distance of 200 *passos* from the Dominican monastery of Bologna (Potthast, *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, p. 1393).

<sup>63</sup> The great diversity existing in the linear measuring system in the Middle Ages makes it difficult to precisely determine what value corresponded to this measure. The medieval linear measurement unit that was known as a *canne architectonica* of Rome corresponded to 2.234 m. Thus, 300 *cannes* would have been 670 m. In Portugal, the measuring rod (*vara de craveira*) of 5 palms corresponded to 1.10 m, though there were later references to smaller rods of 8, 10 (2.2 m) and 12 palms (Viana, *Algumas medidas lineares medievais portuguesas: o astil e as varas*). However, given these diversities, Clement IV fixed the *canne* (or *vara*) as 8 palms in 1265 (*Bula Ad consequendam*, ANTT, Coleção especial, cx. 3, n. ° 79). 300 *cannes* represents 528 m.

benefit to the Friars Minor. And finally, in 1268, he unified the previous provisions and extended the privilege to all the mendicants, reducing the distance to 140 *cannes*.<sup>64</sup>

## **Into the city center (14th – 15th century)**

At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the mendicant orders in Portugal got a new lease of life as far as the construction of new houses was concerned, and spread around the whole country with a pace of growth rivalling that which they had had in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, as mentioned above, in the main Portuguese cities, only two new houses were founded, both near the end of that century: the Convento da Graça in Santarém (Hermits of St Augustine), founded in 1376; and the Convento do Carmo in Lisbon (Carmelite friars), founded 1386.

Although the ‘minimum distance rule’ remained the same, and was confirmed by other popes<sup>65</sup>, these two monasteries were very different from the previous ones with regard to their location. This was due to two main factors. Firstly, the cities at the end of the 14th century were quite different from those of the previous century; and secondly, the new generation of mendicants was also quite different from the earlier friars. They were completely integrated in the urban society of the period and enjoyed financial support from various social groups. The Convento da Graça at Santarém was founded inside the city walls in a consolidated urban area and not on the periphery, like the mendicant convents of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 5). Unlike those, which initially enjoyed royal patronage and support, the new monastery was built on a building donated by a member of the nobility, D. João Afonso Telo de Menezes, Count of Ourém. However, its location also complied with the minimal distance rule in relation to the other mendicant houses (it was situated at equal distance from the two nearest houses) and was also at an approximately equal distance from the centre of the city, which by this time had moved outside the walls (to the front of the Leiria Gate).

The same thing happened in other Portuguese medieval cities. In Lisbon, for example, the Convento do Carmo, founded at the end of the 14th century, was also set up in a consolidated urban space within the Fernandine walls (ordered in 1373). The site was precisely half way between the monasteries of St Francis and St. Dominic, thereby

---

<sup>64</sup> Bula Quia plerumque in. Potthast, *Regesta pontificum romanorum*. 140 *cannes* corresponds to 246.40 m.

<sup>65</sup> In 1296 and in 1301 by Boniface VIII (Potthast, *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, p. 1999).



complying with the minimal distance of 140 *cannes* (Fig. 2). Also in Évora and Porto, the monasteries of the Secular Canons of St John the Evangelist, which were founded in these cities in 1485 and 1490, respectively, also fitted this type, despite not belonging to a mendicant order. In Évora, the Convento dos Lóios was located inside the walls, in houses donated by a nobleman, D. Rodrigo de Melo (head guard of D. Afonso V, captain and first governor of Tangiers and 1<sup>st</sup> Count of Olivença) with the support of the bishop of Évora, D. Garcia de Menezes. It was also located equidistant from the two male religious houses (within the established limits) and from the new city centre created outside the first line of walls near the Alconchel Gate (Fig. 6). In Porto, the Convento de Santo Elói was founded in an oratory and on lands given by D. Violante Afonso at the request of the Bishop of Porto, D. João de Azevedo, within the Fernandine walls. It was located in the north, equal distance from the Convento de São Domingos (to the west of the early walls) and of the Convento de Santa Clara (to the east) (Fig. 4).

By the end of the 15th century, the mendicant orders had founded three more mendicant convents in the cities of Lisbon and Santarém. However, as mentioned above, these were second houses of the orders of St Francis and St Dominic and belong to the observants.<sup>66</sup> For these reasons these new Franciscan and Dominican friaries of Lisbon and Santarém were located a considerable distance away from the limits of those cities.<sup>67</sup> Once more, the intention was to establish equilibrium in the presence of different mendicant orders in the cities.

## Conclusions

The establishment of the first mendicants in the city was not always an easy process. In some cases, the friars attracted great hostility, particularly from the secular clergy. In Portugal, the most well-known cases of opposition to them occurred in cities located north of the Mondego, such as Guimarães, Porto and Braga. In the latter case, no mendicant convent was actually founded in the end. The older orders, such as the

---

<sup>66</sup> In Lisbon: the Convento de São Domingos de Benfica (1399) and the Convento de São Francisco de Xabregas (1455). In Santarém: the Convento de Santa Catarina Vale de Mourol or the Convento da Saúde (1470).

<sup>67</sup> As they were buildings of the same order implanted in the same town, the minimum distances were different. In 1427, for example, a ruling concerning the city of Metz stipulated a distance of five leagues between monasteries of the same order, maintaining the 140 *cannes* for the houses of different orders within the urban space. Le Goff, *Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale*, p. 931

Canons Regular of St Augustine or the Military Order of Avis, also raised obstacles to the establishment of the mendicants in some cities, particularly Leiria and Estremoz, towns under their jurisdiction. However, the rivalry between the mendicant orders, particularly between Franciscans and Dominicans, also marked these early times, and, as we have attempted to show here, this will have had a fundamental role in defining the location of the monasteries in those cities.

The rivalry for ‘preaching grounds’ gave rise to important conflicts between these two communities. The problem arose in the early decades of the 13th century, although it was only in the second half of the century that rules started to be made in order to reconcile the establishment of the friars in the urban environment. Although the Santarém conflict was resolved within the orders, most of the quarrels that took place around Europe required papal intervention. The pope attempted to divide up the urban space between the different mendicant communities by implementing rules concerning the location of the religious houses. Various papal bulls defined the need to keep minimal distances between each monastic house, first in an individual manner, in response to the problems that arose, and then in a more general way that included all the mendicant houses. The aim was to distribute the mendicant convents in a balanced fashion around the various sectors of the city.

However, these determinations arose only in second half of the 13th century, when most of the mendicants were already established in the larger cities, where this type of problem tended to arise with greatest intensity. In Portugal, most of the mendicant houses that we have analysed here were founded prior to the bull of 1265.<sup>68</sup> However, the distances that they kept between themselves already complied with the minimum distance of 300 *cannes* established in that papal legislation.<sup>69</sup> This clearly shows that the rule merely sealed a procedure that had already been applied informally. As with the various legislative measures concerning mendicant architecture, the regulation of the location was inserted into a context of standardization of the mendicant orders.

---

<sup>68</sup> With the exception of the Convento de Sao Domingos of Évora, founded in 1286, and the monasteries of Guimarães (founded in 1271 and 1272), which complied with the distance of 140 *cannes* established in 1268.

<sup>69</sup> With the exception of Porto where, as we have seen, the two monasteries were located exceptionally close to one another. On the distances between the monasteries in these cities, see Marado, *Descodificar as regras de implantação dos conventos mendicantes nas cidades medievais portuguesas*.

The document that we have analysed concerning the Santarém conflict shows that, in addition to the need to maintain distances between the different mendicant houses, they also had to be situated at an equal distance in relation to the city. The Preachers complained about this latter situation, claiming to be offended by the fact that the Minors had established themselves closer to the town. The mendicant convents that were founded in the 13th century on the periphery of the main Portuguese cities were located at equal distance from the main gate in the walls.<sup>70</sup> And in the case of Guimarães when the monasteries had to be displaced at the beginning of the 14th century, the distances defined for the separation of the two houses away from the walls were identical. At the end of the 14th century, in another social, economic and urbanistic context, the location of mendicant buildings also seemed to respect this ‘agreement’. The mendicant convents of the period, placed in a consolidated urban environment, respected the rule of the minimum distance between them and also ensured that they were at equal distance from the ‘new centre’ of the city, which was now outside the gates, in front of the main access.<sup>71</sup>

As we have sought to stress here, the trajectories followed by the mendicants throughout Europe – from the hermitage to the periphery and from this to the interior of the urban space – have important affinities. In most European cities, we can identify similar strategies, procedures and conditioning factors as regards choice of site and construction, in the relations with the political and religious powers, and in the difficulties which marked the mendicant orders’ insertion into the medieval urban world at any historical moment. However, this process was also marked by political, social, economic, territorial and urban specificities of each place. For example, the phenomenon of *relocalization* of the mendicant convents situated on the periphery to new more central locations within the walls, identified in various European countries, did not take place in Portugal. None of the monasteries founded in the 13th century near the cities were relocated during the following two centuries. There are certainly various reasons for that, but the process of displacement of the city centres from inside the walls to outside the gates (which occurred generally in all Portuguese cities and in which the mendicant convents had some participation) would certainly have been the main factor

---

<sup>70</sup> The fact that they are both situated further from the gates in Lisbon and Coimbra is due to the greater extramural expansion that occurred in these cities.

<sup>71</sup> The phenomenon of constituting a ‘new urban centre’ before the main gate was common in Portugal. On this matter, see Trindade, *Urbanismo na composição de Portugal*, pp. 687-741.

responsible. In Portugal, the mendicants did not need to move their early monasteries from the periphery to the centre. It was the centre that moved to them.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Belém, Jerónimo de, *Chronica Serafica da Santa Provincia dos Algarves da regular observancia do nosso serafico padre S. Francisco, em que se trata da sua origem, progressos, e fundações de seus conventos* (Lisboa: Na Officina de Ignacio Rodrigues, 1750–1758)

Cácegas, Luís de, *Primeira parte da Historia de S. Domingos particular do reino e conquistas de Portugal*, 4 vols (Lisboa: Off. de António Rodrigues Galhardo, 1767)

Esperança, Manuel da, *Historia Serafica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal. Primeira parte, que contem seu principio, & augmentos no estado primeiro de Custodia* (Lisboa: officina Craesbeeckiana, 1656–1721)

Potthast, August, *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, 2 vols (Berlin: Rudolf de Decker, 1874–75), i

### Secondary Sources

Afonso, José F., ‘O convento de S. Domingos e o plano urbano do Porto entre os séculos xiii e xvi’, in *Monastic Architecture and the City*, ed. by Catarina Almeida Marado (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2014), pp. 35–50

Andrade, Amélia Aguiar, *Horizontes urbanos medievais* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2003)

Beirante, Maria Ângela R., *Santarém Medieval* (Lisboa: Universidade Nova de Lisboa - Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, 1980)

Branco, Manuel J. C., ‘Evolução do sítio do século xiii ao século xix’, in *Monumentos*, 17 – Igreja e Convento de São Francisco de Évora (Lisboa: DGMN, 2002)

Bruzelius, Caroline, ‘The Architecture of the Mendicant Orders in the Middle Ages: Na Overview of Recent Literature’, *Perspective, la revue de l’INHA*, 2 (2012), 365–86

- , ‘The Dead Come to Town: Preaching, Burying and Building in the Mendicant Orders’, in *The Year 1300 and the Creation of a New European Architecture*, ed. by zoe Opačić and Alexandra Gajewski (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 203–334
- , ‘Friars in the Medieval City: Preaching, Building and Burying’, in *Monastic Architecture and the City*, ed. by Catarina Almeida Marado (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2014), pp. 11–22
- Cassidy-Welch, Megan, ‘The Monastery of São Vicente de Fora in Lisbon as a Site of Crusading Memory’, *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 3 (2014), 1–20
- Coomans, Thomas, ‘Architectural Competition in a University Town: The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Louvain’, in *Architecture, Liturgy and Identity: Liber Amicorum Paul Crossley*, ed. by zoe Opacic and Achim Timmermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011) pp. 207–20
- Cuadrado Sanchez, Marta, ‘Un Nuevo marco socioespacial: emplazamiento de los conventos mendicantes en el plano urbano’, in *Espiritualidad, franciscanismo: vi Semana de Estudios Medievales* (Nájera: Logroño Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1996), pp. 100–09
- Custódio, Jorge, ‘O convento de S. Domingos de Santarém: memória, espaço e arquitectura’, in *S. Frei Gil de Santarém e a sua época: Exposição. Catálogo* (Santarém: Câmara Municipal de Santarém, 1997), pp. 117–37
- Dicionário histórico das ordens, institutos religiosos e outras formas de vida consagrada católica em Portugal*, ed. by José Eduardo Franco and others (Lisboa: Gradiva, 2010)
- Fernandes, Mário, *Urbanismo e morfologia urbana no Norte de Portugal: Viana do Castelo, Póvoa de Varzim, Guimarães, Vila Real, Chaves e Bragança: 1852/1926* (Porto: FLUP, 2002)
- Fugedi, Eric, ‘La formation des villes et les ordres mendiants en Hongrie’, in *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 25e année, N. 4 (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1970), pp. 966–987
- Gomes, Saul António, ‘As Ordens Mendicantes na Coimbra Medieval: Tópicos e Documentos’, in *Lusitania Sacra, Nova Série* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 1998)
- Guerreau, Alain, ‘Observations statistiques sur les créations de couvents franciscains en France, xiii–xve siècle’, *Revue d’histoire de l’Église de France*, 70.184 (1984), 27–60
- Guidoni, Enrico, *La città: dal Medioevo al Rinascimento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1981)

- História da arte portuguesa*, ed. by Paulo Pereira (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 1995), iii, 43–52
- Le Goff, Jacques, ‘Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: l’implantation des ordres mendiants. Programme-questionnaire pour une enquête’, *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 23e année, N. 2 (1968), 335–52
- , ‘Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale: état de l’enquête’, *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 25e année, N. 4 (1970), 924–46
- Lester, Anne E., ‘Making the Margins in the Thirteenth Century: Suburban Space and Religious Reform Between the Low Countries and the County of Champagne’, *Parergon*, 27.2 (2010), 59–87
- Maiello, Vincenzo, *Do território monástico à cidade conventual: as ordens mendicantes e o espaço urbano no século xiii: uma aproximação ao caso português* (Dissertação de Mestrado em Desenho Urbano, Lisboa, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, 2005)
- Manso Porto, Carmen, *Arte Gótico en Galicia. Los Dominicos*, 2 vols (La Coruña: Fundación Pedro Barrie de La Maza Conde de Fenosa, 1993), i
- Marado, Catarina Almeida, ‘Descodificar as regras de implantação dos conventos mendicantes nas cidades medievais portuguesas’, in *PNUM2013. Proceedings of the Conference of Portuguese Network of Urban Morphology*, ed. by Nuno Norte Pinto (Coimbra: Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Coimbra, 2013), pp. 827–35
- Marques, João Francisco, ‘A pregação medieval portuguesa’, in *Os Reinos ibéricos na Idade Média*, ed. by Luis Adão Fonseca and others, 3 vols (Porto: Civilização, 2003), ii, 599–621
- Marques, José, ‘A pregação em Portugal na Idade Média: alguns aspectos’, *Via Spiritus*, 9 (2002), 317–47
- Martin, Hervé, *Les ordres mendiants en Bretagne, vers 1230–vers 1530* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975)
- Mattoso, José, ‘Estratégias da pregação no século XIII’, *Ler história*, 5 (1985), 105–18
- , ‘O enquadramento social e económico das primeiras fundações franciscanas’, in *Obras Completas* (Lisboa: Círculo dos Leitores, 2002), viii: Portugal Medieval: novas interpretações (2002), pp. 243–54
- Meersseman, Giles, ‘L’architecture Dominicaine au xiiiie siècle. Législation et pratique’, *Achivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 16 (1946), 136–90

- Monastic Architecture and the City*, ed. by Catarina Almeida Marado (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2014)
- Monteiro, Maria Filomena, *Sistema Conventual e Desenvolvimento Urbano de Évora na Idade Média* (Provas de Doutoramento em Arquitectura, Universidade de Évora, 2011)
- Ordens Religiosas em Portugal das origens a Trento — Guia histórico*, ed. by Bernardo Vasconcelos Sousa (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2005)
- Pellegrini, Luigi, ‘Gli insediamenti degli ordini mendicanti e al loro tipologia. Considerazioni metodologiche e piste di ricerca’, *Les Ordres Mendicants et la ville en Italie centrale (v. 1220–1350) Mélanges de l’Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Âge, Temps modernes*, 89.2 (1977), 563–73
- Röhrkasten, Jens, ‘The Convents of the Franciscan Province of Anglia and their Role in the Development of English and Welsh Towns in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Moyen Âge* (online), 124.1 (2012), 207–20
- Rossa, Walter, *DiverCidade: urbanografia do espaço de Coimbra até ao estabelecimento definitivo da Universidade* (Tese de Doutoramento em Arquitectura, Universidade de Coimbra, 2001)
- Schwartz, Frithjof, *Il bel cimitero: Santa Maria Novella in Florenz 1279–1348* (Berlin: Grabmäler, Architektur und Gesellschaft, 2009)
- Simons, Walter, *Stad en apostolaat: De vestiging van de bedelorden in het graafschap Vlaanderen, c. 1225–c. 1350* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1987)
- Trindade, Luísa, *Urbanismo na composição de Portugal* (Tese de Doutoramento em Arquitectura, Faculdade de Arquitectura, Universidade de Coimbra, 2009)
- Trio, Paul, ‘What Factors Contributed to the Establishment of Mendicant Orders in Thirteenth-Century Ypres?’, in *Franciscan Organisation in the Mendicant Context: Formal and Informal Structures of the Friars’ Lives and Ministry in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Michael Robson and Jens Röhrkasten (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), pp. 97–111
- Viana, Mário, ‘Algumas medidas lineares medievais portuguesas: o astil e as varas’, in *Arquipélago. História*, 2nd ser., 3 (Ponta Delgada: Universidade dos Açores, 1999), pp. 487–93
- , *Espaço e povoamento numa vila portuguesa: Santarém, 1147–1350* (Casal de Cambra: Caleidoscópio, 2007)