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I. Thematic Work Groups

- I. Public Power in Europe: Studies in Historical Transformations
- II. Power and Culture: Hegemony, Interaction and Dissent
- III. Religion, Ritual and Mythology. Aspects of Identity Formation in Europe
- IV. Professions and Social Identity. New European Historical Research on Work, Gender and Society
- V. Frontiers and Identities: Exploring the Research Area
- VI. Europe and the World in European Historiography

II. Transversal Theme

- I. Citizenship in Historical Perspective

III. Doctoral Dissertations

- I. F. Peyrou, La Comunidad de Ciudadanos. El Discurso Democrático-Republicano en España, 1840-1868

Cover: António Simões Ribeiro and Vicente Nunes, *Allegories of Honour and Virtue* (detail), University of Coimbra, Biblioteca Joanina, ceiling of the central room. Photo © José Maria Pimentel



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Jewish Communities in Portuguese Late Medieval Cities: Space and Identity

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A cidade portuguesa foi, até 1496, um espaço multi-confessional partilhado por cristãos, muçulmanos e judeus. Essa coexistência assumiu, contudo, expressões diferentes no decorrer da Idade Média: lentamente, o sentimento de tolerância por parte da maioria cristã deu lugar a múltiplas formas de rejeição que tiveram no édito de expulsão o seu corolário.

O presente texto tem por objectivo a análise dos reflexos desse processo no espaço urbano, concretamente na forma como o espaço judaico evoluiu e interagiu com o todo da cidade cristã.

Avaliando o interesse que a questão específica do espaço tem suscitado na historiografia dedicada à presença judaica em Portugal, com relevo para os avanços registados a partir da década de oitenta do século XX, interessa-nos particularmente aferir dois aspectos fundamentais:

1. Apurar a forma como o relacionamento da maioria cristã com a minoria judaica se expressou no plano material, determinando transformações no espaço urbano de que os processos de ampliação, encerramento e deslocalização dos bairros judaicos são os mais visíveis. Alterações que, particularmente na segunda metade do século XV, se repercutiram para além dos limites e do funcionamento interno da comunidade, com implicações no tecido envolvente, criando impasses e alterando percursos cujos efeitos estão ainda por avaliar, determinando, com o rigor possível, graus de bloqueio ou permeabilidade. Num cenário de crescente tensão, ainda que sem o radicalismo assumido noutros reinos, importa também compreender a distância entre a lei e a prática quotidiana, distinguindo, por outras palavras, o espaço regulamentado do espaço vivido.

2. Avaliar, por confronto com a cidade cristã, o grau de expressão material da diferença, clarificando as linhas de continuidade ou o que possa ter sido, no domínio da cultura material, exclusivo à minoria. Domínio e marcação simbólica do espaço, implantação, propriedade do solo e caracterização do edificado adquirem neste âmbito um interesse fundamental para o entendimento do equilíbrio entre o que a comunidade assumia ser a sua identidade e as pressões externas a que se encontrava sujeita.

Until 1496, the Portuguese city was a multi-faith space, shared by Christians, Muslims and Jews alike. However, this coexistence changed as the Middle Ages progressed. In a gradual, but not necessarily violent manner, the Christian majority's feeling of toler-

ance was replaced by multiple forms of rejection that culminated in the edict which ordered the expulsion of the minorities. This article aims to analyse the repercussions that this process had on the city, specifically in terms of the way that the Jewish quarters evolved and interacted with the Christian city as a whole.

Medieval Portuguese society's tolerance of Judaism allowed for ways of life which, albeit subject to certain restrictions, helped to strengthen the ethnic and religious identity of the Jewish community, consolidating its position as a foreign body separate from the medieval city. Thus, the Jews had rights that were the direct result of their different creed and ethnic group, such as freedom of worship, the right to a different upbringing and the use of Hebrew. Moreover, in return for hefty taxation, Portugal's kings granted them a set of prerogatives that were of equal significance in establishing the differences. Under the local leadership of the rabbi, and national guidance of the chief rabbi, the Jewish communities enjoyed a broad degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the local authorities. This found political expression in their right to set up their own councils, and legal expression through their observation of Talmudic law, even though they were still ultimately subject to the general law of the land.

The ethnic and religious model of identity, reinforced in political and legal terms, was further entrenched in the middle of the 14th century by the imposition of a spatial "identity". The Jewish residential area, previously the result of the spontaneous permeable association that coexisted alongside non-congregated occupations throughout the urban network, was transformed by a royal decree from 1361 into a compulsory, restricted and exclusive space.

It is this Jewish residential area in comparison with the Christian part of the city which will be analysed below, examining and assessing signs of continuity between the two, as well as looking for evidence of material differences which might be exclusive to the minority. Matters such as control over and symbolic marking out of the space, location, land ownership and building characteristics are of fundamental interest in understanding the balance between what the community saw as its own identity and the external pressures to which it was subjected.

This analysis is underpinned by the evolution of the relationship between the Christian majority and the Jewish minority, expressed in material terms by concrete actions, the most significant being the expansion, closure and relocation of Jewish neighbourhoods. Such alterations, particularly in the final phase, had repercussions that extended beyond the limits and the internal functioning of the community, and impacted on the surrounding urban fabric, creating impasses and altering routes whose effects have yet to be assessed in terms of an accurate definition of the degree of blockage or permeability.

Although the background of growing tension never scaled the radical heights found in other kingdoms, it is equally important to understand the distance between the law and daily practice. In other words, a distinction must be made between the governed space and the lived-in space.

A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

This interest in the Jewish space within the Portuguese medieval city is nothing new. Relevant material can be found in practically every book on the Jewish presence in Portugal. The main contributions deserve mention according to the nature and volume of the available data, the methodological decision taken and the focal point of the respective approaches.

Despite the clear signs of interest in the 19th century, this theme was only truly established as a research area in the 20th century. The previously published works had come out slowly and sporadically, and their main point of interest was the dissemination and criticism of document sources. Therefore, they are still essential reading as the documentary *corpus*. The reports paradigmatically gathered by Sousa Viterbo¹ and Gama Barros² present a cross-section of the Jewish presence in medieval Portuguese society, without ever touching on specific themes.

Around 1900, the Lisbon historian Vieira da Silva adopted the same methodological basis, but applied it specifically to the urban space. In his two articles on the Lisbon communities³, especially the one on the old Jewish quarter, Vieira da Silva produced a seminal work on the physical structure of what was the most important Jewish quarter in Portugal. Despite his failure to contextualise, the use of a predominantly descriptive tone and the close adherence to the written documents, Vieira da Silva nonetheless wrote an in-depth analysis of place-names which, in conjunction with a range of historical maps, enabled him to locate streets and buildings in both space and time, thereby defining the borders of the Jewish community in the midst of the surrounding Christian parishes.

Lisbon's old Jewish quarter was the only one whose size and demographic density made it truly complex. Its relevance for any study of the mediaeval Portuguese Jewish communities further highlights the importance of Vieira da Silva's pioneering analysis. In addition to correcting errors, his text is a rich source of clues for other issues only picked up on and developed much later. Studies on other Jewish quarters followed Vieira da Silva's example such as the one on the quarter in Oporto by Barros Bastos⁴, and on the quarter in Tomar by Santos Simões⁵, which focuses mainly on the synagogue.

Due to specialisation and the development of an interest in material culture and life, the theme advanced, particularly in terms of ethnography, a field in which Leite de Vasconcelos' work was the cornerstone. Using archival documents and observation, as well as records of traditions and rituals in the Jewish communities that had returned to Portugal in the 19th century, Leite de Vasconcelos left a vast set of data that he had collected over several decades⁶. The theme was included in Volume IV of *Etnografia Portuguesa* [Portuguese Ethnography], published posthumously in 1958, appearing alongside work on the Moors, Mozarabs and Gypsies, and formed the basis for study regarding ethnic and historical hereditary factors in defining the Portuguese people. Leite de Vasconcelos detailed all aspects of the theme in some two-hundred pages that covered a broad time-span, embracing the communities and Jewish quarters, characterising customs and rituals, and recording examples of anti-Semitism in literature.

At that time, the theme was emerging as a research area in Portuguese universities. The first work, from 1948⁷, was followed between 1959 and 1963 by three first-degree dissertations that focused on different areas from the 15th century⁸. Subsequently, Maria José Ferro Tavares published the first of her many works on this theme. Her dissertation *Os judeus em Portugal no século XIV* [The Jews in Portugal during the 14th Century], submitted to the University of Lisbon in 1969 and published in 1970 by the *Centro de Estudos Históricos do Instituto de Alta Cultura*, was a milestone in historiography on the theme, not only due to her in-depth approach, but above all to the methodology adopted.

The *Dicionário de História de Portugal* [Dictionary of the History of Portugal], a collective work directed by Joel Serrão and a fundamental tool in disseminating “New History”, came out at around the same time (1963-1971). The impact on Portuguese historiography was similar to that of the *Annales* in France thirty years before. The section on the Jews, by Manuel Guerreiro, draws a simultaneously retrospective and forward-looking synthesis⁹.

During the 1980s, the theme developed enormously. Once again, the fundamental work was by Maria José Ferro Tavares, who in this case focused on the 15th century¹⁰. Based on documentary sources and a vast international bibliography, she produced an in-depth and contextualised analysis of the theme. Alongside a general revision influenced “by the captivating methodological proposals from the new school of French historiography”, her approach covered aspects that had hitherto been neglected, such as family structure, crime, education and how Jews and Christians saw themselves and others. The Jewish space formed a vital chapter for a topographic and toponymic survey of the main communities in Portugal, creating a comparative study that paid particular attention to public buildings.

Almost simultaneously, specialist articles started coming off the press, going further into specific themes or defining the case in question¹¹. The most important works on the specific themes included Baquero Moreno’s series of articles on anti-Jewish movements, highlighting the moments of greatest tension during the 15th century and establishing their causes, the scale of the movements and the reactions¹², all of which were fundamental for an understanding of the transformations imposed on the area. Meanwhile, the construction of this *corpus* of knowledge brought about the consolidation of works of synthesis included in general works, most notably those by Santos Silva, Ferro Tavares and Saul Gomes¹³.

With the approach of 1996, the year that remembered the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the minorities, historiography again focused on the Jews and Muslims. Portuguese and international meetings, seminars and exhibitions not only stimulated interest in the central topic of the expulsion, but also updated and expanded the debate to new horizons. Cultural questions, the comparative study of the two ethnic groups and the role of the Jews in Portuguese expansion, which was being commemorated at the same time, were of particular interest¹⁴.

In the same decade, archaeology specialising in Jewish residential areas made significant advances in Portugal that had a direct impact on the field of the history of urbanism. Despite the limited number of excavations, the results achieved by Carmen Ballesteros in Castelo de Vide, Évora and Trancoso merit mention. In the first two cases, the work was carried out where the synagogues were located, while in Trancoso, it involved an exhaustive survey of Jewish religious symbols engraved on doorposts inside the town walls¹⁵. Following decades of surveys of the main archive sources, this study of the scarce Jewish material remains that had escaped destruction created new approaches for carrying out research into questions of urbanism.

To complete this brief survey of the development of historiography regarding the Jewish urban presence in mediaeval Portugal, the 1994 publication of the general work *A herança judaica em Portugal* [The Jewish Legacy in Portugal] combined a text of high academic quality with a particularly well-presented and attractive graphic appearance¹⁶.

JEWISH QUARTERS IN PORTUGUESE LATE MEDIEVAL CITIES: SPACE AND IDENTITY

In contrast to the normal evolution of any consolidated urban centre, the Jewish urban space in the final centuries of the Middle Ages was clearly undergoing a transformation.

Within this context, 1361 was a fundamental milestone. By ordering the creation of separate neighbourhoods for groups numbering more than ten Jews¹⁷, King Pedro I not only complied with the Church's orders that his predecessors had ignored, but also established the rules that, until the expulsion, dictated the evolution and characterisation of the Jewish urban space. However, this measure did not bring an immediate or radical alteration to the overall situation. Rather, all evidence suggests that it was applied through a slow and not always general process. The diverse forms that the Jewish presence took in Portuguese cities – dispersion, spontaneous association, special neighbourhoods and physically closed-off neighbourhoods, often concomitant – continued throughout the following century¹⁸. The weakness of the law, which has been overwhelmingly proven by documents, is the first of the three facts that underlie this study.

The significant change after 1361 was the added pressure that the then legitimised representatives of the people could exert on the monarch. This fact introduces the second critical factor: the restrictions imposed on the Jews were less a reflection of royal plans than of growing resentment among the Christian population, who mixed religious reasons with other more specific and petty issues, such as professional competition, as can clearly be seen from the content of the physical alterations that were insistently requested.

While never reaching the radical levels observable in other kingdoms, the demands increased in stridency during times of crisis (war, hunger and plague) and were essentially the result of the Jewish community's demographic growth. This peaked in Portugal

during two specific periods, both of which were directly related to the instability and persecutions seen in the neighbouring kingdoms. The times in question were the late 14th and 15th centuries, and culminated in 1492 with the edict expelling the minority from Castile. The Jewish community in Portugal almost tripled¹⁹ during the last decades of the 15th century, a fact that constitutes the third significant factor in this study.

The relationship between demographic growth and the increasing spatial definition of the Jewish quarters brought a range of consequences. Three are of specific relevance here, albeit with varying nuances in each case: the boom in the demographic density of Jewish quarters and the resulting pressure to expand them; the effects that this brought to the city's overall dynamic; the consolidation of demographically fragile structures, which is particularly clear in the perpetually under-populated towns in the border regions.

Documentary sources have confirmed the overpopulation of the pre-existing Jewish quarters. Besides enclosing the Jews, who had previously been dispersed throughout the urban structure, in a single space, they also received the many people who had crossed the frontier. The example of Évora at the end of the 14th century is among the most significant, and contemporary documents record the non-existence of any vacant housing and the consequent increase in prices²⁰.

In every case, after maximising the use of the attributed space by occupying unused land²¹, extending the size of buildings or reducing the size of the streets, the expansion of the Jewish quarters through the incorporation of neighbouring roads emerged as a possible solution. In Lagos and Castelo Branco, it was enough to annex an alley or lane, but in other places such as Guarda and Évora, this expansion had to be on another scale. In the former case, the quarter expanded north and east towards *Praça de S. Vicente* [St. Vincent Square], while in the latter, six streets and alleys were added on. In other cases, the solution meant building a new Jewish quarter, as happened in Lamego and Lisbon. Indeed, this ultimately led to the coexistence of three such quarters in the capital.

Local councils often used the argument that there was a lack of space when proposing the transfer of the Jewish quarter to places that were normally described as “more appropriate”²². While additional motives such as forcible contact, disrespect for Christian rites and dirtiness were presented as arguments to the king, the accusations invariably had the underlying desire to move the Jews away from the centre of the town, thereby minimising the risks of competition. In fact, in Viana do Castelo, Montemor-o-Novo, Santarém, Lagos, Oporto, Lisbon, Setúbal and Guarda alike, whether dispersed or inside a community, the Jews were found along the main arterial roads – Rua Direita (Main Street) and Rua dos Mercadores (Merchant Street) – and in the squares and the churchyards, which were defined by the Christian majority as “honourable and frequented places”²³.

The number of requests to move the Jews was far higher than the number of actual relocations. Coimbra²⁴ and Braga²⁵ are examples where Jews were moved to less central areas which were, nonetheless, not totally on the periphery. The most revealing documen-

tation concerns Lisbon, where the request approached head-on what was considered, from the Christian perspective, a subversion of the natural order between the superior, dominant majority and the subject, inferior minority. The council representatives complained to the king that “in some places of Your kingdoms, there are Jewish quarters in the best locations, and the Christians live in the worst”. As Margarida Garcez Ventura emphasised, “the urban space cannot contradict the social hierarchy”²⁶.

It is more difficult to analyse the repercussions of closing off the Jewish quarters inside a city’s overall network. Throughout the documents, there are references to gates to the Jewish quarters, some of which predate 1361 but most of which are from the 15th century. At the same time as the location of those that opened onto the busiest places was being challenged (as in Guarda, where the gateway opened directly onto the churchyard of S. Vicente), it was decided to reduce their number. A good example is in Covilhã, where five of the ten gateways to the quarter were closed²⁷.

In addition, the perimeter was also closed off, totally or partially covering the bays of the buildings “against Christianity”. The process in Viseu is described in great detail: “...and as for the windows, we wish them to be closed in the following manner, with stone and lime, and like arrow-slits, with metal all along them in the middle, and these shall be high above the ground and so that there is no place to see through, and only to receive light, and not in any other way”²⁸. The construction of fences, as recorded in several Jewish quarters in neighbouring kingdoms in Iberia²⁹, seems not to have been used in Portugal, although some doubts remain concerning Évora due to such expressions as the “wall of the Jewish quarter”, “fencing of the Jewish quarter” and “fence around the Jewish quarter”³⁰.

With gateways sealed, the doors covered over and windows barred, the first impression of the Jewish space, which was kept under royal guard, is that of an inescapable ghetto.

However, even analysing the situation in terms of the rigorous application of the law, the evidence suggests that there never was an effective blockade. The Jewish quarters were only closed at night, just as the entire town or city closed its gates when the sun set. Until dawn, there was indeed a curfew, yet this practice had some exceptions in the form of safe-conducts and royal charters that granted privileges, namely for those involved in maritime activities or agriculture, mule-drivers and travelling salesmen and, above all, surgeons and doctors.

During the day, the Jews moved about freely. Their stalls and workshops were scattered across the city, but tended to be concentrated in the more central locations, where they were never banned. Equally, the male Christian majority had free access to the Jewish quarters. The only restriction, established by King Pedro and successively repeated, was for Christian women over 10 years old. Even so, they were allowed in, provided they were accompanied by a Christian adult³¹.

Although conversation between the two creeds was only permitted in public spaces, the 15th century *Ordenações Afonsinas* (code of laws) clearly assume the disobedience

of the law as a common practice: “seeing that conversation between Christians and Jews is prohibited... yet they never stopped speaking with the Christians...”³². Many typically Jewish professions, such as doctors, tailors, clothes-sellers, weavers, masons and carpenters, were not subject to the strict application of this measure.

In fact, the Jews’ central role in the urban economy was a decisive factor in establishing a permanent loophole in any blockade. In 1460, the council representative of Viseu demanded that the Jews should attend the city market, and in 1462, when the king banned Sintra’s Jewish community from using the gates that led to the Christian city, the issue in question was one of restricting physical contact rather than trade. He therefore authorised opening some “hatchways [in the doors] that reach up to a man’s waist so that they can pass through the foodstuffs and other goods for sale”³³.

In sum, even when the law was fully complied with, the effects of the blockade were restricted, as the Jews could move freely in Christian territory and vice-versa. Moreover, the legal decisions were only observed at a late date, and even then neither generally nor strictly. The insistent demands made by the majority to the king that the laws be scrupulously observed date essentially from the second half of the 15th century, and led to the strict imposition of the law for a little over thirty years. Although the king established a deadline of two months to close the Jewish quarters in Lamego in 1456, the canons of the cathedral were still living alongside the Jews in the 1470s³⁴. In 1466, Gonçalo Vasques, a clergyman at Braga Cathedral, was living in a house next to the synagogue³⁵, thereby confirming an ongoing situation that D. Diogo de Azambuja had fiercely criticised at the start of the century: “some Christian men and women live and wish to live in the Jewish quarters... and this causes much scandal among the other Christians, and those that do so put their souls in great peril”³⁶.

In any case, even assuming the law was rigorously followed, the impact that the physical limitation of the Jewish quarters had on the overall urban dynamic depended on the conjunction of two basic factors: the size of the quarter and its insertion into the urban network. The latter was particularly significant depending on how central it was, both in terms of intersecting or coinciding with the structural axial streets, and in relation to the gates and centres of trade and manufacture. Evidently, size was a decisive factor: the Old Jewish quarter in Lisbon, and those in Évora and Campo do Olival in Oporto each covered around one and a half hectares, occupying a significant area of the city as a whole. In contrast, those in other cities barely occupied more than a single street.

When considerable size was combined with a central location, the repercussions were naturally far higher, leading to the interruption of vital routes for a large number of users.

A comparison can be made between the Jewish quarters of Lisbon and those of Oporto. Both the Old and the New Jewish quarters occupied the very heart of Lisbon. They ran at a tangent to *Rua Nova* [New Street], the financial, trading and social centre, which monarchs and chroniclers alike considered to be the finest main street in the capital. The quarters stretched over three parishes (S. Julião, S. Nicolau

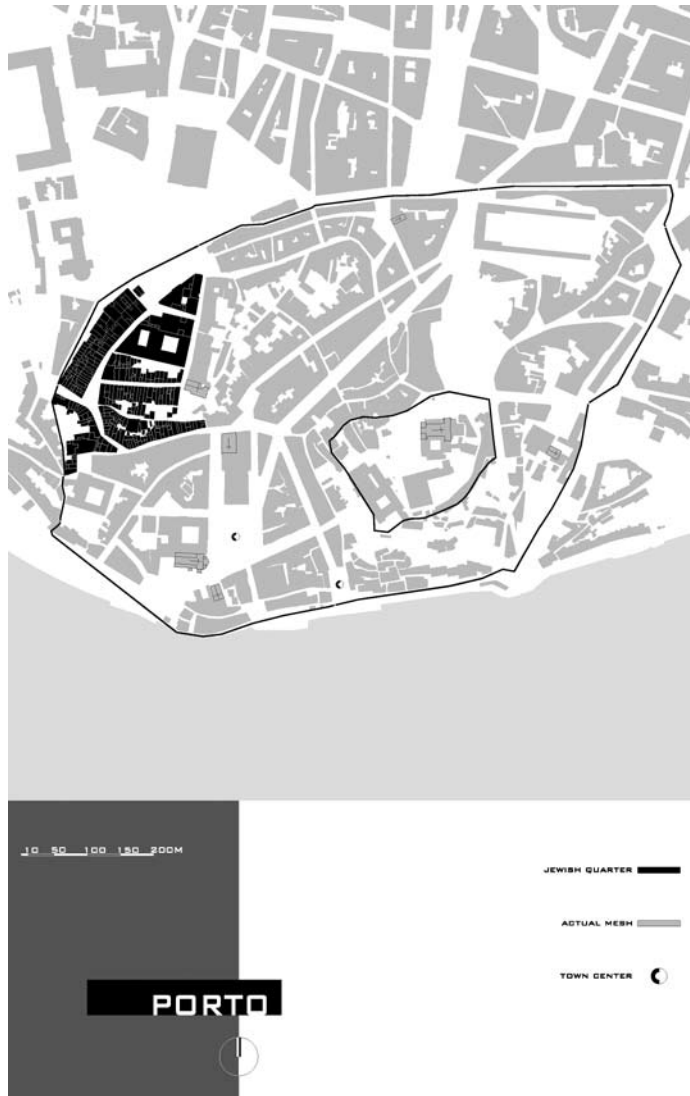
and Madalena) and comprised a vast maze of main streets, cross streets and alleys. The main thoroughfares were *Rua do Picoto* (or *Mercadores*) and *Rua da Gibitaria*. In strict compliance with the law, the closure of the Jewish quarter cut off several important urban routes and forced travellers to skirt around the neighbourhood (Map 1).

In contrast, although the Jewish quarter in Oporto was of almost identical size, it occupied the northeast corner of the walled city and was bordered by two main urban

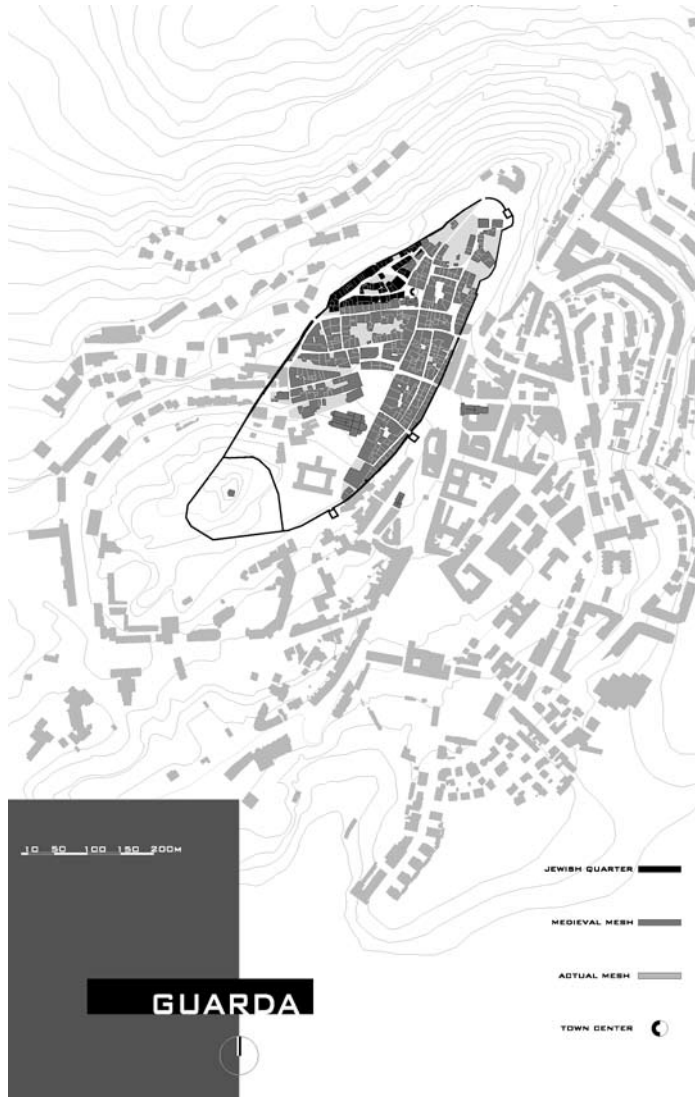


Map 1. Lisbon.

streets (*Rua de S. Miguel de Cima* and the route from *S. Domingos* to *Miragaia*) that guaranteed the basic necessity of movement from north to south and east to west. Each of these streets ended at one of the gates to the so-called Fernandine wall (Map 2). This system was fairly similar to the one in Guarda, where the location of the Jewish quarter did not interrupt the city's structural streets of *Rua de S. Vicente* (east to west) and *Rua Direita* (north to south), which intersected at the church and churchyard of S. Vicente (Map 3).



Map 2. Oporto.



Map 3. Guarda

Although the southern border (which had the main gate) of the old Jewish quarter in Coimbra opened directly onto *Rua da Calçada* – the axial trading street that crossed the entire lower part of the city – its location higher up and parallel to the walls left it on the borders of the main routes. Therefore, the Christian majority did not necessarily need to cross through the quarter. Bordered to the north and north-east by the land owned by the *Santa Cruz* Monastery, the structural axial street of the Jewish quarter led to an uninhabited slope that housed only the Jewish cemetery.

The location of the Jewish quarter in Évora raises other questions related to urban design. Despite its size and central position, the neighbourhood was located within a geometrical network bordered by *Rua de Alconchel* and *Rua do Raimundo*, straight axial streets that connected the gates to the main square and acted as the main routes for circulation. With a minimal detour, these streets could substitute the closed ones that ran parallel inside the Jewish quarter. In this case, the only problems concerned the transversal streets (Map 4).



Map 4. Évora.

However, in other cases, it was impossible to avoid crossing the Jewish space. The complaints made by the representatives of Santarém at the 1416 parliament explicitly refer to this. The Jewish quarter was located on the central street that linked *Rua da Sapataria* to the *Alcáçova* gate and Christians had no possible way of getting around it³⁷.

Finally, the consolidation of the urban fabric in demographically depressed towns was felt particularly strongly in the frontier area, a region that had undergone a sharp demographic decline since the 14th century. The first group of Castilian Jews reached Portugal in the aftermath of the Fernandine wars, when the crown felt an acute need to restore the peripheral areas, and in particular those that had felt the devastating effects of war after the previous damage inflicted by the plague. By settling the Jews there (a process that is particularly well-documented for the jurisdictional areas of Beira and Entre Tejo e Odiana³⁸), the crown reinforced its complementary policy of encouraging repopulation of these areas by creating royal presidaries³⁹.

The relative impact of this can be gauged by the example of Guarda. The two hundred convicts that King Fernando pardoned in 1371 in exchange for their settling in the city were still fewer in number than the Castilian Jewish immigrants who, according to different authors, totalled between 150 and 400 during the second half of the 15th century⁴⁰.

This growth became still more evident around 1492 with the arrival of the second large wave of refugees. In fact, most of the land-ports that the Portuguese crown defined as the places where Castilian Jews could enter the country had been granted the status of presidaries during previous decades, demonstrating the fragility of the existing population, and exemplified by Melgaço, Bragança, Miranda, Arronches and Elvas. Even though most of the Castilian Jews only passed through, many others settled in the various frontier towns. Another contributing factor were the royal orders that tended to restrict the number of Jews that could leave the country, by encouraging them to convert, limiting the number of ports where they were authorised to sail from, or by the forced baptism of children and adolescents. In a country that had only very recently reversed the downwards demographic trend begun in 1348, every single man counted.

The same levels of growth can be observed in such places as Castelo Branco and Gouveia. In the former, the number of Jews doubled, while it tripled in the latter, justifying the construction of a new synagogue in 1496, just a few months prior to the expulsion. In similar fashion, the Jewish communities in Almeida, Belmonte, Sabugal and Celorico, whose incomes had been too low to appear on the list of donations, started to appear in documents from the late 15th century, confirming and establishing the demographic growth in those urban centres⁴¹.

Many of the above facts provide an answer to the second question raised: assessing the extent of difference or continuity in the forms of the plots of land and buildings. The available evidence shows that the Jewish quarters did not differ from the surrounding Christian city in terms of the plots of land or the system of streets. This is confirmed by analysis of a small number of Jewish quarters, specifically those whose density and

size are sufficient for such an analysis. This excludes all cases where a Jewish quarter was merely a single street or, at most, a street with an adjoining cross street, as exemplified by Guimarães, Barcelos, Vila Real, Tomar, Lagos and Miranda do Douro, amongst others.

A variety of factors contributed to this continuity in the urban fabric. First, there were issues of property. Without denying the abundantly proven existence of individual and community properties we can state, the Jews mainly rented. Among the bodies or authorities that traditionally owned urban land, the leading landlords in the Jewish quarters were the crown, chapterhouses and local councils.

Some examples are particularly enlightening. In the old Jewish quarter in Braga (and later in the new one), the houses belonged to the cathedral chapterhouse. In Lamego, the *Pedra* Jewish quarter was mainly established in the late 14th century on land owned by the cathedral. The same applied to the new Jewish quarter in Évora, where most of the land belonged to the bishop and the chapterhouse, while some other buildings were owned by the crown and the local council. Meanwhile, the Jewish communities in Guarda and Coimbra all rented their property from the crown. However, when the old Jewish quarter in Coimbra was closed down around 1360, the new location, near the Santa Cruz Monastery, was basically owned by that institution, while many other lands there belonged to the chapterhouse⁴². The three Jewish quarters in Lisbon were also mostly on crown property⁴³. In Santarém, *Rua Nova* in the Jewish quarter (also called *Rua Direita de Alpram*), built in the late 14th century to extend the old Jewish quarter that was originally restricted to *Rua de S. João*, was mostly the property of the king, who had fifteen houses built there⁴⁴. Likewise, the creation of the new Jewish quarter in Oporto saw the coffers of the council swell as, by order of the king, it leased Campo do Olival to the Jews in exchange for an annual payment of 200 old *maravedis*⁴⁵.

These examples make it clear that renting properties to Jewish communities was a significant part of the investment policy adopted by the leading owners of urban land. Above all, they reveal how the growth of the Jewish quarters from the end of the 14th century and/or the changes of location imposed on the minority were an opportunity to create lucrative real estate operations, make recent areas of expansion profitable, and allow the development of concerted strategies to acquire and upgrade urban properties.

From the perspective that is most relevant here, this demonstrates that the location of these quarters was largely conditioned by powers that were external to the community. The cases of Évora and Oporto are the best examples of this, both in terms of the scale of the undertaking and the coherence of the programme that was established. In both cases, the process was closely controlled and expressed in rational models, defining the principal axial streets, the cross streets and the marking out of the plots of land. In Évora, the location of the Jewish quarter was part of the global strategy to fill in a vast area of expansion that the *Cerca Nova* [New Walls] would soon integrate into the city.

The place-names reflect urban practices and models that were then common, such as the creation of a structure according to the system of *rua/travessa* [street/cross street]⁴⁶, where one of the structural axial streets was often called *Rua Direita* [Main Street] or

the new network was called *Vila Nova* [New Town], as exemplified by Évora. A terminology which is commonly found in areas of Christian urban expansion in established cities and towns. In Oporto, the authorities' control of the process to urbanise Campo do Olival⁴⁷ is clear from the organisation of the plots of land in *Rua de S. Miguel*. In this case, the Jews received thirty plots of land that evidently corresponded to those that are still visible on today's land division.

The concept of urban continuity is confirmed by moving from the land partition to the buildings themselves. The scarcity of documentary sources that describe the Jewish residential space, the far-reaching transformations and destruction suffered by the Jewish quarters over the centuries and the limited number of archaeological excavations are all inescapable restrictions. However, based on other documents, parallels may be drawn with the results of recent research produced in Spain, namely the non-existence of any architecture that may be considered specific to the Jews during the Middle Ages⁴⁸.

As shown, not only were some of the buildings owned by Christian institutions, but in practice, they were used indiscriminately by Christians and Jews, regardless of whether the latter were living within "Christendom" or residing in the space defined as the Jewish quarter. The process of expanding Jewish quarters suggests the same absence of structural specificities. The adjacent arterial streets were incorporated in a process called "putting the street in the Jewish quarter", whereby the houses that the Christians left were immediately occupied by the excess Jewish population. Évora is the most striking of the many examples, as the quarter's expansion was approved by King João I in 1408: "and they asked us as a favour to extend the said Jewish quarter and we gave them for it some neighbouring streets, for they said that it would please the Christians or most of those whose houses were to be included in the Jewish quarter (...)"⁴⁹.

Despite having no impact in overall urban terms, there were some differences in detail. Recent studies⁵⁰ have demonstrated that the buildings inhabited by Jews were given a distinctive exterior mark – the *mezuzah* – that, according to the sacred texts, was a public statement that the inhabitants were Jewish. Set in the right side doorpost (or *mezuzah* in Hebrew) this is a longitudinal hollow measuring some 10 cm in length by 2 cm in width and depth that held the prayer of *Shema*, one of the most important prayers in Jewish worship, inside a case. This discreet, yet easily recognisable, mark was associated with the ritual of kissing or touching the prayer with the right hand when crossing the threshold, while simultaneously invoking divine protection.

The same formal and apparent continuity seems to have characterised the public buildings that were an essential part of the community's daily life.

Obviously, the place where religious rules played a decisive role was the synagogue, which Jewish law required in any community comprising more than ten families. In functional terms, the synagogue was a complex structure, also acting as the community's meeting place and the space for communal justice. In smaller communities, it could also have acted as a study centre and house welfare institutions such as a brotherhood and hospital⁵¹.

Although there was a set of norms that governed building a synagogue, observance was severely conditioned by the Christians, as construction depended on their authorisation. Working together, the kings and bishops imposed a series of restrictions that had the clear purpose of annulling any impact on the city. These restrictions included a ban on buildings rising above the height of the surrounding structures, especially any neighbouring church, and the imposition of strict controls on decorations. However, the minority managed to avoid such limitations by constructing the flooring inside the building at a lower level than the ground outside – as can be seen in the synagogue in Tomar – and only decorating the interiors.

The synagogues in Tomar and Évora⁵², the only two that have been definitively identified so far, have the same almost anonymous exterior even if the internal structure differ. In both cases, the synagogues were built from scratch and use characteristics that can be integrated into the Sephardic model of sub-divided square ground-plan, with four columns dividing the space and defining the central area for the *Tevah*, the platform from which the Torah and other sacred texts were read a feature that was rather imperceptible from the outside. But similarity can also be found at ornamental level. The way in which the interior decoration of the synagogue in Tomar matches the general trends of the age proves it: the evident parallels with the crypt of Count Afonso of Ourém show that Mudejar motifs satisfied both the demands of the Jewish community and those of a Christian nobleman.

A third building, traditionally accepted as the synagogue of Castelo de Vide, a claim that is neither confirmed nor rejected by recent studies⁵³, only stands out from the surrounding structures by its somehow unusual size or the lack of original chimney. In fact it has no features that could attract attention or insult the Christian majority⁵⁴.

Furthermore not every community had the capacity to build a synagogue from scratch, adapting instead normal residences for the purpose. This is known to have been the case in Monchique, Tojal, Gouveia, Oporto and Guarda. In this case, by all accounts, their existence had no urban impact. Quite simply, once minimal requirements had been met, such as the prayer wall facing east, the existence of windows and the proximity of water, which was vital for ritual bathing, the Jewish faith did not demand a specific space to set up the synagogue. Any building that enabled the faithful to come together could be used⁵⁵.

Therefore, when abandoned or after being closed down, a sizeable number of the synagogues were converted into housing. In 1466, Diogo de Viana, from the chapterhouse of Braga, rented the building that had housed the synagogue in the old Jewish quarter after the religious institution was transferred to an existing house belonging to the cathedral inside the perimeter of the new Jewish quarter. The same fate befell the synagogues in Évora and Montemor-o-Novo, which the king respectively granted to the Bishop of Tangier and to Álvaro de Matos, a gentleman of the royal household⁵⁶.

Other structures from the Jewish quarters included baths, butchers' (or slaughterhouses), ovens and taverns. Although some religious rituals were associated with these buildings, they did not stand out from others used by the Christian majority, and in smaller communities would even be used by both.

The almost anonymous nature of these buildings meant that after the expulsion, traces of the Jewish presence in Portuguese cities soon faded. As had also happened some years earlier in Castile, the Jews' communally owned goods were confiscated and incorporated into crown property, and suffered a wide variety of fates. The synagogues were given to individuals, converted into chapels and in some cases churches, or converted into jails⁵⁷. The cemeteries were often granted to the local authorities, as happened in Lisbon, where the king ordered that it be turned into a *rossio* [public open area], while the headstones were used to build the *Todos os Santos hospital*⁵⁸.

In a similar manner, the former Jewish quarters were integrated into "the Christian world". The neighbourhood gateways were knocked down, the doors that led onto neighbouring Christian streets were reopened, and the streets themselves were made accessible to all and given new names, the most common being "Rua Nova" and "Vila Nova". Many houses were never actually left vacant, as the inhabitants changed their faith rather than leave, and they were henceforth called converts or New Christians. Meanwhile, the houses that were abandoned due to the exodus were soon taken over by Christians.

CONCLUSION

Given the above, it can be concluded that the Jewish quarters had little impact on the urban structure of medieval Portuguese towns and cities, and practically none on the buildings themselves.

The permeable nature of the Jewish quarters was the result of a law that was not in itself very restrictive, was open to numerous exceptions and was only put into practice slowly and with difficulty. An atmosphere of acceptance and stability dominated until the 1480s⁵⁹ and was only sporadically interrupted by moments of tension that the crown promptly put a stop to. This undoubtedly contributed to the maintenance of a close coexistence between people of different creeds, one that was largely dictated by the effective participation of the Jewish communities in the kingdom's socio-economic life. In fact, rather than merely sharing in the material culture of the majority, the Jews acted as active agents in producing and developing that culture.

As has been shown for the other kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula⁶⁰, the basis for Jewish specificity in Portugal was also spiritual culture⁶¹. The minority preserved its identity within the strict context of religious practice, in the objects for worship that were essentially used discreetly in the home, and to a lesser extent in the internal structure and decoration of some buildings. However, these were not necessarily exempt from external influences, and in general, the specificity of the buildings came from their ritual purpose rather than from individual architectural approaches.

Thus, the difference lay essentially in the religious division. The Jewish quarter was recognised and identified by all as a "different space" because it was inhabited by those who believed in Judaism, and not necessarily because it was a different physical space.

NOTES

- ¹ F. Viterbo, *Occorrencias da vida judaica*, in *Arquivo Histórico Portuguez*, Lisbon 1904, II, pp. 176-200.
- ² H. Barros, *Comunas de Judeus e comunas de Mouros*, “Revista Lusitana”, 34, 1936, pp. 168-265, 35, 1937, pp. 161-238.
- ³ A. Silva, *As muralhas da Ribeira de Lisboa*, 2 vols., Lisbon 1900.
- ⁴ A. Bastos, *Os judeus no velho Porto*, Lisbon 1926.
- ⁵ J. Simões, *Tomar e a sua judiaria*, Tomar 1943.
- ⁶ J. Vasconcelos, *Etnografia Portuguesa*, IV, 1958.
- ⁷ J. Queirós, *Os Judeus em Portugal no século XV: subsídios para uma monografia*, Coimbra 1948.
- ⁸ M. Mendes, *Elementos para o estudo dos judeus em Portugal até aos fins de séc. XV*, Coimbra 1959; M. Martins, *Subsídios para o estudo dos judeus e dos mouros nos reinados de D. João I e de D. Duarte*, Lisbon 1961; A. Faria, *Análise sócio-económica das comunas judaicas em Portugal (1439-1496)*, Lisbon 1963.
- ⁹ M. Guerreiro, *Judeus, Dicionário de História de Portugal*, Lisbon 1963-1971.
- ¹⁰ M. Tavares, *Os Judeus em Portugal no século XV*, Lisbon 1982.
- ¹¹ A. Andrade, *Judeus em Montemor-o-Novo*, Lisbon 1977; S. Gomes, *Os judeus de Leiria medieval como agentes dinamizadores da economia urbana*, “Revista Portuguesa de História”, Coimbra 1993; S. Gomes, *A comunidade judaica de Coimbra medieval*, Coimbra 2003. In addition, the monographic studies on around twenty medieval cities, produced as part of the MA programme (directed by Oliveira Marques from 1980 to 1987) at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of Lisbon New University, was also decisive for knowledge of Portuguese Jewish communities.
- ¹² The set of articles published in “Marginalidade e conflitos sociais em Portugal nos séculos XIV e XV: estudos de história”, Lisbon 1985 is of particular relevance: *O assalto à Judiaria Grande de Lisboa em Dezembro de 1449*, pp. 89-131, *Movimentos sociais antijudaicos em Portugal no século XV*, pp. 79-87 e *Reflexos na cidade do Porto da entrada dos conversos em Portugal nos fins do século XV*, pp. 133-171.
- ¹³ M. Silva, *Judiarias, História de Portugal dos tempos Pré-históricos aos nossos dias*, Lisbon, 1993, III, pp. 337-340; M. Tavares, *Judeus e Mouros (séculos XII a XIV)*, in *História de Portugal dos tempos Pré-históricos aos nossos dias*, Lisbon 1993, III, pp. 341-349; S. Gomes, *Grupos étnico-religiosos e estrangeiros*, in *Nova História de Portugal*, Lisbon 1996, III, pp. 347-371.
- ¹⁴ *Judeus e Árabes da Península Ibérica: encontro de religiões, diálogo de culturas*, Lisbon 1994; *Os Judeus Portugueses entre os Descobrimentos e a Diáspora*, Lisbon 1994; 1º *Colóquio Internacional da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Judaicos*, 1995; *Os judeus portugueses em 500 anos de diáspora, (1496-1996): herança de uma nação, esperança de um povo: exposição documental*, Coimbra, 1996; *Os judeus portugueses e a expulsão: catálogo da exposição evocativa dos 500 anos da expulsão dos judeus de Portugal*, Lisbon 1996; *Os judeus sefarditas entre Portugal, Espanha e Marrocos* (Évora 1998), Lisbon 2004.
- ¹⁵ C. Ballesteros - J. Oliveira, *A judiaria e a sinagoga de Castelo de Vide*, “Ibn Maruán”, 3, 1993, pp. 113-120; C. Ballesteros, *A judiaria e a sinagoga medieval de Évora*, in *Os judeus sefarditas entre Portugal, Espanha e Marrocos*, Lisbon 2004, pp. 191-218; C. Ballesteros - C. Santos, *Aspectos da Arqueologia Judaica em Trancoso*, in *Beira Interior, história e património*, Guarda 2000, pp. 331-342.
- ¹⁶ M. Tavares, *A herança judaica em Portugal*, Lisbon 1994.
- ¹⁷ *Cortes Portuguesas. Reinado de D. Pedro I (1357-1367)*, Lisbon 1986, p. 52.
- ¹⁸ Barros, *Comunas de Judeus* cit., pp. 256-265.
- ¹⁹ Tavares, *A herança* cit., p. 155.
- ²⁰ G. Pereira, *Documentos Históricos da Cidade de Évora, 2ª parte*, Évora, 1887, pp. 10-11.
- ²¹ R. Gomes, *Um microcosmos citadino: a judiaria medieval da Guarda*, in *Guarda, história e cultura judaica*, Guarda, 1999, p. 112.

- ²² Andrade, *Judeus* cit., pp. 18-19.
- ²³ Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 73.
- ²⁴ Gomes, *A comunidade* cit., pp. 16-22.
- ²⁵ A. Losa, *Subsídios para o estudo dos judeus de Braga no século XV*, “Congresso Histórico de Guimarães e sua colegiada”, 5, 1982, pp. 97-126.
- ²⁶ M. Ventura, *Contributo para uma leitura social do espaço na Lisboa quatrocentista: o debate sobre a localização das judiarias*, “Revista Portuguesa de História”, 36, I, 2002/2003, pp. 229-240.
- ²⁷ Barros, *Comunas de Judeus* cit., p. 260.
- ²⁸ Barros, *Comunas de Judeus* cit., pp. 259-260.
- ²⁹ We can find examples of Jewish quarters surrounded by fences at Maiorca, Zaragoza, Teruel or Pamplona. J. Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas*, Madrid 1992, p. 85, 100, 137 e 153.
- ³⁰ Ballesteros, *A judiaria e a sinagoga* cit., p. 202.
- ³¹ *Chancelarias portuguesas. D. Pedro I*, Lisbon 1984, pp. 535-536.
- ³² *Ordenações Afonsinas*, liv. II, tit. 66, pp. 421-423. About restrictions see Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., pp. 400-403.
- ³³ Barros, *Comunas de Judeus* cit., pp. 264.
- ³⁴ A. Saraiva, *A inserção urbana das catedrais medievais portuguesas: o caso da catedral de Lamego*, “Revista Portuguesa de História”, 36, 2002/2003, p. 261.
- ³⁵ Losa, *Subsídios* cit., p. 100; J. Marques, *As judiarias de Braga e Guimarães no século XV*, in *Xudeus e conversos na Historia*, Santiago de Compostela 1994, p. 353.
- ³⁶ Vasconcelos, *Etnografia* cit. p. 99.
- ³⁷ Tavares *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 53.
- ³⁸ Tavares *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 74.
- ³⁹ H. Moreno, *Elementos para o estudo dos coutos de homiziados instituídos pela coroa*, in *Os Municípios portugueses nos séculos XIII a XVI*, Lisbon 1986, pp. 93-138.
- ⁴⁰ Gomes, *Um microcosmos cidadão* cit., p. 112 and M. Tavares, *Os Judeus na Beira Interior*, in *Guarda, história e cultura judaica*, Guarda, 1999, p. 117.
- ⁴¹ Tavares, *Os Judeus na Beira* cit., pp. 117-123.
- ⁴² Examples analysed respectively by Losa, *Subsídios* cit., p. 98; Saraiva, *A inserção urbana* cit., p. 260; A. Beirante, *Évora na Idade Média*, Lisbon 1995, pp. 71-72; Gomes, *Um microcosmos* cit., p. 111; Gomes, *A comunidade judaica* cit., p. 25.
- ⁴³ I. Gonçalves, *Aspectos económico-sociais da Lisboa do século XV estudados a partir da propriedade régia*, in *Um olhar sobre a cidade medieval*, Cascais 1996, p. 45.
- ⁴⁴ A. Beirante, *Santarém Medieval*, Lisbon 1980, p. 70.
- ⁴⁵ Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 65.
- ⁴⁶ The use of both terms street/transversal can be found in king João I document, dated from 1408, where the Jewish quarter new limits are described. Pereira, *Documentos Históricos* cit., pp. 222-223.
- ⁴⁷ Documentary sources record that “the said council representatives and judges assigned a certain place at the said Campo do Olival in order to built the said Jewish quarter, which had already begun using the divisions and marks established by the judges and councillors...”; Basto, *Os judeus* cit., p. 52. Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 65.
- ⁴⁸ R. Izquierdo Benito, *Arqueología de una minoría: la cultura material hispanojudía*, in *El legado material Hispanojudío*, Cuenca 1998, p. 289; R. Izquierdo Benito, *Espacio y sociedad en la Sefarad medieval*, in *Juderías y sinagogas de la Sefarad medieval*, Cuenca 2003, p. 38.

- ⁴⁹ Pereira, *Documentos Históricos* cit., pp. 10-11.
- ⁵⁰ C. Ballesteros, *Marcas de simbologia religiosa judaica e cristã – para um levantamento prévio em povoações da raia portuguesa e espanhola*, “Ibn Maruán”, 6, 1996, pp. 139-151.
- ⁵¹ C. Ballesteros, *Das Sinagogas da Antiguidade às sinagogas medievais peninsulares. Origens e percursos de uma instituição*, in *Guarda, história e cultura judaica*, Guarda 1999, pp. 139-146; Cantera Montenegro, *Aspectos de la vida cotidiana de los judíos en la España medieval*, Madrid 1998, pp. 151-157.
- ⁵² Ballesteros, *Das Sinagogas da Antiguidade* cit. pp. 143-144; Id., *A judiaria e a sinagoga medieval de Évora* cit., pp. 205-216.
- ⁵³ Ballesteros; Oliveira, *A judiaria e a sinagoga de Castelo de Vide* cit., pp. 113-120.
- ⁵⁴ In 1472, at the parliament session held in Coimbra, the council representatives complained about the way “some Jews, in their villages and communities, decorate and enrich their synagogues in an excessive manner, and it is prohibited by canon and religious law for them to build them either bigger or richer than they used to be”. Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit. p. 365.
- ⁵⁵ Ballesteros, *Das sinagogas da Antiguidade* cit., p. 141.
- ⁵⁶ Losa, *Subsídios* cit., p.103; Andrade, *Judeus* cit., p. 27; Ballesteros, *A judiaria e a sinagoga medieval de Évora* cit., p. 204.
- ⁵⁷ The three Lisbon synagogues had different destinies: while the bigger one was sacred as Nossa Senhora da Conceição church, the other two were rented, the one in S. Julião street to Duarte Borges a converted tailor the other, in Alfama Jewish quarter, to Gonçalo Fernandes. Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., pp. 385-386. The synagogue in Tomar was adapted to jail. Simões, *Tomar* cit., p. 52.
- ⁵⁸ Barros, *Judeus* cit., p. 180.
- ⁵⁹ Tavares, *Os judeus em Portugal no século XV* cit., p. 423.
- ⁶⁰ Izquierdo Benito, *Espacio y sociedad* cit., pp. 38-39; Id., *Arqueologia* cit., p. 273. Cantera Montenegro, *Aspectos de la vida* cit., p. 174.
- ⁶¹ M. Tavares, *Judeus e Mouros: que cultura?*, in *Judeus e Árabes da Península Ibérica: encontro de religiões, diálogo de culturas*, Lisbon 1994, pp. 98.

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- Id., *Judeus e Mouros (séculos XII a XIV)*, in *História de Portugal dos tempos Pré-históricos aos nossos dias*, Lisbon 1993, III, pp. 341-349.
- Id., *Judeus e Mouros: que cultura?*, in *Judeus e Árabes da Península Ibérica: encontro de religiões, diálogo de culturas*, Lisbon 1994, pp. 90-92.
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