

Marques, André Evangelista. *Da Representação Documental à Materialidade do Espaço. Território da Diocese de Braga (séculos IX-XI)*, Colecção Teses Universitárias, nº 6, Santa Maria da Feira: Edições Afrontamento/CITCEM, 2014, 448 pp. ISBN: 978-972- 36-1389-6

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This is an innovative and original book, especially if we consider that it addresses questions that are seldom dealt with by Portuguese Historiography and moreover in ways that are also unlikely to be a subject of study for PhD theses, which is what the present work originally was. As the author himself explains in the introduction, the thesis, which won the CITCEM prize for the best PhD thesis of 2012, began with his intention to study the evolution of the occupation of the territory of Braga and its social profile during the defining period from the ninth to the eleventh century.

But soon the object of his study became the documentation itself, as the author realized that the mere work of systematizing the different categories of documents and the information that they offered, classifying the several different types of property and proprietors that he found, and combining this with a truly interdisciplinary approach to the human, physical, social, and symbolic landscape and the power structure of the region he wished to study was in itself a thesis.

This book is therefore much more of a theoretical and methodological proposal for a new form of approaching the question of the construction, colonization, and social shaping of a landscape (any landscape, and in the most complex sense of the term) than it is a regular monographic work about a region, which the title might lead us to believe at first sight.

The work by André Marques is consequently and, above all, a bright, rigorous, and erudite essay on the methodological possibilities for studying the social appropriation of the territory, when observed from the perspective of an in-depth critical study of the written documentation concerning the territory of the Diocese of Braga from the ninth to the eleventh century, and perceived through the eyes of the discourse reflected in the evidence from those centuries that has been preserved until today.

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The book's structure reflects the author's critical preoccupations, and it may also be read as a journey along his own personal research path, looking at the way in which his methodological approach eventually developed into his personal model.

The introduction to the book, as well as its lengthy first part (“Uma proposta de análise do espaço altimedieval a partir de fontes escritas”) are both very clearly designed to introduce the reader to the careful critical steps taken by the author in handling, organizing, and systematizing the evidence, and to the production of the database which derived from this. Very conscious of the legacy of which he is an avowed disciple (the field of studies traditionally addressed as “construção social do espaço” or the social construction of the territory), this first part provides the reader with the author's own critical assessment of the work of his predecessors, in order to then explain his awareness of the difficulties lying along the path that he wished to follow. In this respect, André Marques' work also serves as a model for all those interested in researching in this field. The first part offers a very complete analysis of the state of the art for this field of studies, but further adds to this an awareness of how abstract our reconstitution of these objects of study can be, and therefore accepts the uncertainty and risk which always come with it.

Marques' path through the representation of the territory that the documentary evidence displays seeks to provide a “bottom-up” approach, as it has, at both its starting and end point, the terminology used in the actual documents from the period. The exhaustive dissection of the possibilities deriving from his critical approach to the documentation afforded him a fuller understanding of the concepts and conceptions of the forms of organization of the space that are reflected in the terminology used by the scribes and mirrored in the descriptors of the surrounding reality, at the same time as he was involved in the process of constructing another reality of his own by elaborating a written record for the sake of the eternal preservation of the memory of the place a particular kind of memory.

The construction of the database derives directly and obviously from this extensive preparatory work. The two main categories that he defines—*Documents* and *Elements*—explain precisely how he conceived the perception of the documentary construction of the social construction of the space he was analyzing. The construction of the framework for the development of the database and the ensuing results enabled him to then proceed to what is the second part of the book. The last part of his book, consists in the attempt to exemplify, for the region of Braga, how the theoretically sound, but practical model he has been designing can work when applied to the practical field of attempting to understand

the evolution of what historians of his nature like to call the social appropriation of the space, combining such results with the social evolution of the region and the relationship between emerging “central” powers and traditional “local” ones.

The second part (“A representação documental do espaço bracarense altimedieval”) therefore consists in an analysis of the materials relating to the *territorium* of Braga, in their typological and semantic function, and it does so in two chapters, with major subdivisions. In the first chapter, “Os três filtros,” André Marques dissects the three layers which he identifies as fundamental for understanding the conditions and characteristics of the production of the documents on which he bases all of his study and his conclusions: a) the documentary *corpus*, and the study of its transmission traditions; b) the construction of an intelligible discourse in the writing of documents, whether one is studying the formulaic parts or the descriptive ones; and, finally, c) the study of the terminology itself as a reflection of, and as a mediator between, the material “reality” and its representation.

The second chapter provides us with a description of the results derived from the previous work and enables us to envisage the several different types of unit of settlement, defined and divided by the author into: 1) Units for the articulation of the space; 2) Units for the organization of the space; 3) Ecclesiastical units; 4) Landscape units; and, finally, 5) Forms of property. This second chapter is important for understanding what the author explained in the first part of the book. Through a careful reading of his observation of the occurrences, recurrences, and context of every “unit” which the author analyzes, the reader can infer the relative importance of each of them and starts to envisage much more clearly why André Marques chose the expression “Prosopography of Space” to characterize the model he developed from the evidence he had available to him. In fact, what we are faced with is precisely the breakdown into types, categories, and classes of the “units” for the social articulation and organization of the space, and, when we combine these with the forms of property, we start to enjoy a much fuller understanding not only of the social landscape of the region under scrutiny, but also of the ways in which this is linked to the other important coordinate for this study: time. And consequently we can start to visualize the evolution of the landscape and its social, physical and symbolic “shape”.

After the conclusion, which is not too extensive or conclusive, as one would expect from such a book, the author provides the reader with two annexes, one of a toponymic nature, and a second more extensive one with the cartography derived from his treatment of the data inserted in the database.

The extraordinarily detailed and accurate cartography presented in this last annex illustrates the possibilities deriving from the results of the author's work, and is, in itself, a major contribution to our understanding of the whole territory and its design.

If any criticism may be made of what is otherwise an exemplary work for anyone wishing to follow in his footsteps and a work that will become a classic of its type, it is that we end our reading of this book wishing to know a little more about the "wider framework" in which this landscape is inserted and in which it evolves, and curious to go just one step further into the world that the spatial lexicon of his spatial prosopography leads us into. Just like any traditional prosopography, it is designed to help us understand the logic of the development of certain groups and social strata in the territories and of the men involved in them. But this must also be included among the perspectives that André Marques has in store for us in the future.