Canons and Cities: Cathedral Chapters and Their Social Composition in Medieval Portugal

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Abstract

There has been recently a notable growth in the number of studies written on the nature of cities in the medieval period and, at the same time, a rise in the number of analyses of cathedral clergy, both of which have unquestionably contributed to an advance in our knowledge of these areas. In this context, conclusions centering on the existence of spaces of intersection and influence between urban and ecclesiastic elites are relatively common.

One of the main objectives of this study is to identify, in the Portuguese case, the spaces of intersection, influence or differentiation between these elites and to establish trends and chronologies in the social composition of these institutions. For this purpose, use will be made of the data collected in four case studies carried out for the dioceses of Braga, Lamego, Lisbon and Évora between the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century.

This attempt to establish a global and comparative vision will still allow for the identification of several main questions that remain open, namely those relating to the presence of certain social groups inside these cathedral chapters and the importance of ecclesiastic careers for the strategies adopted by some families.

Keywords

Religious History, Social History, cathedral clergy, ecclesiastic and urban elites.

Resumo

O crescimento dos estudos sobre cidades no período medievo e, em paralelo, a multiplicação das análises sobre clero cardinalício, nomeadamente capitular, ocorrido em múltiplas historiografias no decurso das últimas décadas do século XX, contribuiu para o avanço indiscutível de conhecimentos nestas áreas. Neste contexto, a constatação da existência de espaços de intersecção e de influência entre elites urbanas laicas e elites eclesiásticas constitui hoje uma afirmação relativamente comum, baseada nas análises das composições sociais de alguns dos universos capitulares do final da Idade Média.

Um dos objectivos desta comunicação é o de aferir e identificar estes espaços de intersecção, de influência ou de diferenciação entre estas elites para o caso português, de forma a estabelecer tendências e cronologias ao nível da composição social destas instituições e a definir os níveis de relações e de mútua interdependência ou resistência. Análise feita, em particular, a partir dos dados recolhidos em quatro estudos de caso elaborados para as dioceses de Braga, Lamego, Lisboa e Évora e para uma cronologia compreendida entre a segunda metade do século XIII e os meados da centúria de Trezentos.

Desta forma, a partir de uma análise comparativa entre as quatro dioceses procura-se ainda identificar espaços de interrogação em aberto, nomeadamente em torno da presença dos vários grupos

sociais no interior dos universos capitulares e da importância jogada pelas carreiras eclesiásticas no interior das estratégias de algumas famílias com incidência local.

Palavras-chave

História Religiosa, História Social, clero cardinalício, elites urbanas e elites eclesiásticas.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a large number of studies were published in different national historiographies about bishops and the dominant groups of cathedral chapters in a range of dioceses in the late Middle Ages.[1] Following a relatively long period during which research was concentrated on the regular clergy and on the analysis of monastic institutions, there has been a recent move towards the examination of secular ecclesiastic bodies, namely collegiate and chapter groups. Portuguese researchers have also followed this trend.[2]

The novelty of this more recent research lies not only in the selection of dioceses as the object of study, including its bishops and chapters and the way in which they were organized, but also in the kind of research objectives set and the methodologies used in the identification and in particular in the characterization of the chapter populations examined.

Many studies have involved the adoption of practices and methodologies developed in particular historiographic contexts, especially in the French sphere, and have followed patterns developed during the course of analyses focusing on the study of institutions linked to the crown. As was the case with works analyzing groups associated with the crown administration, researchers examining secular ecclesiastic bodies were attracted at an early stage towards the study of the populations that formed them: bishops and chapter members,[3] seeking to reconstitute the social composition of these groups by producing collections of biographical accounts and drawing up "catalogues of prosopographic populations".[4]

Using a wider range of sources providing more comprehensive information than those available for other types of clergy, namely its regular members, these studies examined the social composition of various chapters and thus brought the lives of bishops, canons and other portionists from the 12th to the 15th century into sharper focus, whilst also looking into networks of personal relationships and dependence, strategies for the acquisition of wealth and social ascent, and the various

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[1] Among others, attention is drawn to those written by Lop Otin (2003: 371-404) and Cárcel Orti (2005: 971-1047).

[2] Coelho (2006: 205-223).

[3] See the classical studies of Hélène Millet, and in particular her PhD dissertation of 1982 entitled *Les Chanoines du Chapitre Cathédral de Laon (1272-1412)*.

[4] The discussion that has been held about the definition and use of prosopography can be found in a large number of studies. See, among others, the analysis made under the scope of the projects *Gènese de l' État Moderne* and *The Origins of the Modern State*, especially *Informatique et Prosopographie*, Hélène Millet (ed.), 1985; *Prosopographie et genèse de l'État Moderne*, Françoise Autrand (ed.), 1986; *L`État Moderne et les Élites. Apports et limites de la méthode prosopographique,* Jean-Philippe Genet and Gunther Lottes (eds.), 1996 ; *Medieval Lives and the Historian. Studies on Medieval Prosopography*, Neithard Bulst and Jean Philippe Genet (eds.), 1986. More recently, Katherine Keats Rohan is one of the authors responsible for new studies about the use of prosopography.

social ties and careers which made these men of God undeniably stand out as leading figures in their time.

While the publication of a large number of these studies in different historiographies has undoubtedly contributed towards an increase in our knowledge about many members of the secular clergy, the institutions which they served and their relations with other contemporary power-centers, it nevertheless remains the case that many questions are still unanswered. One area in which this is particularly true is that of the links which were established or may have existed between these groups and the urban elites with whom bishops and canons were associated. In fact, the focus on the secular clergy in numerous studies has raised new questions about the relationship of the Church and its members with the cities in which these groups operated and lived, and, in many cases, also where they came from.

In 1977, Hélène Millet stressed the contribution of the project entitled *Fasti Ecclesiae Gallicanae* towards the study of urban elites in a now classic paper presented at a meeting on *Urban Elites in the Middle Ages*, in which, pointing to the example of Amiens, she showed how on some occasions the history of the medieval city has been constructed without due attention being paid to the Church and the ecclesiastic institutions operating in cities (Millet, 1997: 319-334).

In their efforts to gain an understanding of the process of the definition and identification of local elites as the product of the attempts made by a group or groups to impose themselves within urban contexts marked by social and economic diversity, some researchers, taking into consideration the process of the formation of urban elites and oligarchies and the strategies they employed for consolidating and perpetuating their predominant role, have tended to construct their discourse on the basis of a vision that focuses on the interior of the specific groups examined and have regarded other groups as either constituting centers of opposition or being of secondary importance. To some extent, this trend has also negatively influenced studies on the secular clergy.

Seen as elements of a transnational hierarchy, privileged actors at the seats of papal and royal power or protagonists of the groups and corridors of the central power, the bishops and canons of the late Middle Ages are now attractive objects of study, especially in relation to the reconstitution of ecclesiastic career paths and strategies for the formalization of central governance.

Thus, the actions of these figures at the local level can to some extent be seen as being subordinated to their more relevant role as actors in wider-ranging networks of power.

Obviously, a lack of source material and the incomplete nature of existing sources have contributed towards this process. The predominance of archival documentation concentrating on the management of wealth by bishops and canons and on the appointments to benefices has meant, for some time now, that research into the relationships between bishops and canons and the cities in which they operated has assumed a role of secondary importance.

Nevertheless, the monographic studies which have been produced on bishops and canons have brought the importance of these links into sharper focus. This is due, in the first place, to the central economic importance of the institutions they served. And secondly to the fact that they derived advantages from stipends and a range of other valuable benefices, as well as from the leisure, wealth and social standing that the status of canon normally brought with it, which meant that the holders of these offices were key figures in the life of the city and undoubtedly qualified them as members of urban elites, with whom they shared habits, a notably high standard of living and the different forms of privileged access to disposable income (Rodrigues, 2000: 237-254).

However, as far as the role that chapter clerics played in urban elite groups and their relationship with them is concerned, this is only one side of the coin. A second aspect has, inevitably, to do with their social background and their belonging to kinship networks whose influence was felt far beyond their mere membership of the chapter group. What is more, questions dealing with this

relationship should not be couched solely in terms of chapter members belonging to urban elite groups, but should also take into account the interests that economically or politically dominant urban families might have in ensuring that their members pursued an ecclesiastic career, especially in the local chapter. Furthermore, an awareness is needed, wherever possible, of chronological variations in the social desirability of this option.

In fact, when one examines a chapter population and its relationship with both the urban space within which it operated and the elite urban groups relevant to the context, one invariably encounters ecclesiastic populations, the majority of whose members were associated with these cities and well-defined kinship groups, although they did not always belong to dominant families in the cities where they held their stipend.

This is due to the frequent moves from one place to another which were a feature of ecclesiastic careers in the Middle Ages. Thus, it is possible that only a small number of chapter members had access to a stipend in their home diocese, the city in which their kinship group was dominant.

In those cases where this was true, it is inevitable that one should question how far lay members of the kinship group and those who had chosen an ecclesiastic career influenced each other, and to what extent their interests and strategies were commonly shared. In the final analysis, the question hinges on the notion of self-identification and the development by ecclesiastics of ties that bound them to their family and those that bound them to the institutions they served. However, an examination of the relationship between ecclesiastics whose principal stipend was not received in their home diocese and lay elites should be couched in very different terms.

In view of all this, the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that there is a need for examining the social and family background of medieval chapter members. There has been an increasing focus on this in all studies seeking to reconstitute chapter populations, and a knowledge of this background has come to be regarded as an essential requirement for understanding the relationship between the members of secular bodies and the dominant elite groups in the city in which they operated. This involves not only the overall characterization of kinship and social recruitment by chapter institutions,[5] but also an identification of the characteristics determining the composition of each chapter at the local level.

Nevertheless, such investigation is made yet more difficult by the limitations deriving from the lack of systematic studies of the social composition of urban elites, especially those to be found in most Portuguese cities, and the incomplete nature of the information that is available on the parents and social backgrounds of many chapter members.

Despite these limitations, in this paper we put forward a case study examining four different chapters of dioceses in Portugal that have been the object of monographic studies, with a view to constructing a global comparative picture of the social composition of these chapters covering a period which coincides roughly with the late 13th century and most of the 14th century. The aim is to examine the links between chapter members and urban elites, providing an answer to some of the questions raised, and defining the limits of this type of reconstitution, while we shall also attempt to identify the possible common ground shared by both groups and gauge how far they influenced each other.

1. The composition of cathedral chapters: the limits of an analysis

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[5] This was one of the main aims of the project entitled *Fasti Ecclesiae Portugaliae*, funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology between 2002 and 2005.

We shall take as our target population the cathedral chapters of the four Portuguese dioceses of Braga, Lamego, Lisbon and Évora. As we have already said, this paper is based on monographic studies carried out in the course of the last few years. While their chronologies are not completely coincident, we can nevertheless establish a common frame of reference within which comparisons can be made between different dioceses, covering the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century.

Just as a different period of time was examined in each of these studies, so the range and aims of each one varied, and we shall highlight some significant differences between them. While some studies have focused on individual cathedral chapters, their frame of reference being extended to cover the relationship with other sources of power, as is the case with Mário Farelo's study of Lisbon (Farelo, 2003, 2005), others have sought either to construct a global vision of the diocese over a short time span, as is the case with Anísio Saraiva's study of Lamego (Saraiva, 2003) or to trace the development of diocesan institutions over a period of several centuries, as is the case with a study of Évora (Vilar, 1999). Meanwhile, a different approach was adopted for the diocese of Braga: basing her work on a number of Master's degree dissertations studying chapter organization during different periods (Rodrigues, 2005), Ana Maria Rodrigues published a compilation of Braga cathedral chapter members identified for the period from 1245 to 1374 and produced a short biographical account for each member (Rodrigues, 2001: 141-170).

In fact, most of these studies adopted the individual biographical account (Homem and Freitas, 2001: 171-210) as the means for presenting the facts relating to each canon, some of them being longer than others. The most obvious difference between the various studies lies in the organization of the information. While some used annotated accounts of the trajectory of each canon in greater or lesser detail, as is the case with the study of Braga, others organized the same information on the basis of a questionnaire divided into sections covering the life and career of the ecclesiastic in question. An individual or comparative reading of completed questionnaires provides a clear and rapid means of access to the general characteristics of the social micro-population analyzed.[6]

While, in terms of the range of their object of analysis or their chronology, the studies carried out may sometimes differ in one way or another, all of them seek to systematize existing knowledge about the social composition of the respective chapters and, on this basis, to characterize the chapter body and the relationships that it developed with other power sources and groups.

Some of them, besides examining cathedral chapters, contain a characterization of the episcopal group, tracing the career paths of bishops, their family links and their strategies for the consolidation of trajectories. In this paper, however, the group of dominant bishops in each diocese will not be examined individually as a separate object of study. This is not because they were less important within the urban context than were chapter members, but rather because the evolution of the way in which they were appointed and their dominant profile in some of the dioceses under consideration means that they were much less markedly influenced by local pressures than were chapter members.

In fact, the studies which have examined Portuguese dioceses from the 13th to the 15th century have increasingly drawn attention to the idea that the appointment of bishops, especially from the 14th century onward, was increasingly independent of network intrigue at the local level, and increasingly subject to the dictates of the crown and papal intervention. In fact, solid evidence for this has been provided on a growing scale. Indeed, as we move away from the period when chapter members were largely responsible for conducting episcopal elections and papal intervention was limited to a few dioceses closely aligned with pontifical power and influence, it can be seen that the

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[6] Some of the problems of these studies can be seen in the papers published by K. Keats-Rohan (2002).

degree of influence exercised at the local level over the appointment of bishops of dioceses diminished significantly.

So, we have here a number of bishops whose method of appointment had become distanced from the dominant pattern to be found in the appointment of chapter members, even if these appointments were also dependent on many different influences and protagonists. The careers and trajectories of bishops also distanced them in many cases from the contradictions inherent in those cities which were the sees of dioceses. Thus, for most Portuguese dioceses already analyzed, the 14th century marks the beginning of a reduced influence of the cathedral chapter in appointing the bishop and therefore the end of the system of promoting ecclesiastics, especially deans, from among chapter members to the office of bishop. The trend in Portugal (Homem, 1998; Vilar, 2001: 581-694) was thus similar to that found in other countries, with a substantial shift in policy by the crown and the papacy in the appointment of bishops.[7]

This is therefore a set of dioceses which were relatively dissimilar in their importance for the organization of medieval Portuguese society, its wealth and economic power. We can nevertheless paint a comparative picture which is particularly relevant.

Up until the end of the 14th century, the post of archbishop in the northern diocese of Braga, the only archdiocese in Portugal, was coveted by many ecclesiastics as the pinnacle of their career, and the diocese was characterized by its economic importance and the social value of its benefices (Marques, 1987: 365-366). Meanwhile, the diocese of Lamego provides a stark contrast to Braga: its status as a restored diocese meant that its social standing was lower (Saraiva, 2003: 23-26; Costa, 1977: 83-90). Furthermore, it was situated in the interior of the country far from the corridors of crown power, offered clergymen lower incomes than dioceses such as Lisbon and Évora, and thus was obviously less attractive.[8]

The two northern dioceses of Braga and Lamego were thus very different. Let us now turn our attention to the two others: Lisbon and Évora. These cities are situated in the territory which was conquered from the Moors and integrated within the kingdom during the central decades of the 12th century. Here we find dioceses and diocesan institutions, especially in Lisbon, whose importance and centrality were consolidated as the 13th century progressed, such a trend being accompanied by an increase in the city's propensity for attracting ecclesiastics. These structural differences between the two cities produced chapter institutions with different characteristics in terms of their social composition, the number of canons and the importance of the wealth and benefits accruing to them.

While the cathedral chapter in Braga was made up of 36 canons (Lima, 2003: 19-20; Marques, 1988: 327-328), there were around 31 canons in the Lisbon chapter (Farelo, 2003: 66-67; Farelo, 2005: 779-781). Évora meanwhile had no more than 18 canons and 3 dignitaries (Vilar, 1999: 113-114), and Lamego only nine canons and three dignitaries (Saraiva, 2003: 107-108). These chapters therefore differed greatly, not only in their numerical importance, but also in their incomes[9]

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[7] Nieto Soria (1988: 197- 205), Díaz Ibáñez (2003: 37-40). Nieto Soria gives us curious numbers about the episcopal elections in Castile between 1250 and 1350. As this author stresses, around 50% of the elections studied were made by the chapter, only 34% were influenced by the pope's intervention, while the royal influence is clear in 37% or 38 % of elections. However, in many of the elections studied, there was more than one influence at work.

[8] The values included in the list of 1320 provide a clear picture of the differences in incomes between dioceses. Almeida (1971), vol. IV: 91-144.

[9] For example, the taxes in the list of 1320-21 for the different chapters are: Braga – 7550 pounds, Lamego – 1500 pounds, Lisbon – 12742 pounds and Évora – 7500 pounds. These values show the huge differences between the incomes of the chapters analyzed.

and the range of available benefices, and these factors affected the social composition of each institution. The evidence shows that there were considerable differences between them in terms of their social composition, which is hardly surprising and indeed ties in with the conclusions reached in other similar studies.

In fact, all the monographic studies carried out have discussed to what extent different social groups were represented in medieval cathedral chapters, although in some cases no conclusive evidence has been unearthed or no clear conclusions have been reached, especially with documentation for the 12th and 13th centuries (Dias Ibañez, 2003: 150-156).[10] The lack of reliable source information on the social origins of canons has meant that no final conclusions have been reached as to the relative importance of social groups in the majority of these bodies. Authors have therefore opted for accounts indicating the causes and importance of their presence, as is the case with the recent paper on Castile dealing with the incorporation of the nobility into the high clergy (Diaz Ibañez, 2005: 557-603).

This paper provides us with a picture of the spread of nobles originating from different strata of the nobility throughout distinct Castilian dioceses. But, at the same time, the author stresses the need to develop new monographic studies on the integration of the nobility into the ecclesiastic hierarchy (Diaz Ibañez, 2005: 598-599).

Due to the lack of data, with few details being available on the family background of many ecclesiastics originating from the nobility, there is an even greater degree of difficulty when the aim is to identify and trace the presence of urban families, especially when they are not part of an identified nobility, in terms of their trajectories in the medieval chapters: it is difficult to trace even the names of individuals.

However, despite these limitations, comparative analysis allows for distinguishing features to be identified within chapters. Let us briefly examine the presence of the nobility within the cathedral chapters under consideration as the basis for an assessment of the relative importance of different groups within the chapters. Contrary to the prevailing scenario in more easterly areas of Europe, especially within the Empire (Pycke, 1986: 90-91), where the presence of nobles in medieval chapters seems to have been a predominant feature during the Middle Ages, in Portugal as in other documented cases, the nobles, especially the high nobility close to the king's court, do not appear to have been concerned with ensuring that their sons were systematically established in ecclesiastic careers (Millet, 1982: 77-86; Laszlo, 2007: 15-30). In fact, during the 13th century, and even into the 14th century, the dominant noble lineages appear to be absent from the chapters;[11] this observation could be extended to include the episcopacy itself, although some representatives of the court nobility who were close to the first kings can be identified among the bishops of the 13th century.[12]

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[10] As far as the 14th and 15th centuries are concerned, it is normally easier to establish the origin of a greater number of ecclesiastics for these periods than it is for the previous centuries, as has been proved by studies made, for example, by Iluminado Sanz Sancho (1989: 694-716, published in 2006: 245-265, Miguel Santamaria Lancho (1990: 47-78) and Lop Otin (2005: 635-669).

[11] For the identification of lineages belonging to the court's nobility for the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century, we have used the classifications provided by Pizarro (1999: 537-541). In this book, the author defines the differences between various groups of the nobility, especially the differences between the court nobility and the local nobility. As we will see, this latter group presents us with more problems in the identification of its members than does the former, even if its presence in the cathedral chapters is more important.

[12] Estevão Soares da Silva and Egas Fafes de Lanhoso are two possible examples of bishops, belonging to the high-ranking nobility of the 13th century, whose careers led the former to the post of archbishop of Braga and the latter to the government of the diocese of Coimbra and the archbishopric of Santiago de Compostela, during the first half of the 13th century. See Ventura (1992 (II): 750-755).

In fact, the presence of the nobility in Portuguese cathedral chapters seems to have been restricted to a group of middle and low-ranking noble families who saw it as a means of social ascent, especially throughout the second half of the 13th century. In many such cases, the choice of an ecclesiastic career by members of these families often seems to have played a key role in the strategies adopted for the consolidation and affirmation of the family, thereby increasing access to benefits and alliances for kinsmen. Lineages such as the Portocarreiros, the Zotes, the Molnes, the Homens and the Vasconcelos are the best examples of families whose members are recurrently identified as taking part in the cathedral chapters of Braga and Lisbon.

In the case of the Portocarreiros, their presence in Braga seems to have been particularly important, beginning with the government of João Viegas de Portocarreiro as archbishop (Ventura, 1992, vol. 2: 757-758). Their presence included: Fernão Anes de Portocarreiro, dean from 1247 to 1273 and the holder of various other benefices (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 331-332), and also the cousin of João Viegas (Rodrigues, 2005: 52-58); Gonçalo Gonçalves de Portocarreiro, archdeacon of Couto from 1288 to 1289 and nephew of the archbishop (Rodrigues, 2005: 98-100; Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 324-325); and Martim Peres de Portocarreiro, canon of the same chapter (Rodrigues, 2005: 166-169), nephew of Fernão Eanes and one of the main beneficiaries of his will (Pizarro, 1999, vol. II: 341-342; Rodrigues, 2005: 166-169).

Identified as a lineage that belonged to the middle-ranking court nobility, the presence of this family in the Braga chapter is mentioned until the end of the 13th century, a period that marked the pinnacle of the family's splendor, when they were close to court circles. Later, during the course of the 14th century, members of this family were no longer referred to in the documentation about the Braga chapter, and during this period the family lost their political influence (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 319-322).

The presence of the Zotes in the Braga chapter seems to have occurred a little later, from the early 14th century onward. Martim Martins Zote (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 1: 378; Rodrigues, 2005: 67-68), canon of Lisbon (Farelo, 2003, vol. 2: 81-82) and Palencia, was also dean of Braga and the most visible member of this lineage identified in both the Braga and Lisbon chapters.

Other families from the middle-ranking court nobility were also identified as belonging to the Braga chapter, such as the Vasconcelos (Estevão Anes de Vasconcelos and Diogo Gomes de Azevedo, linked to Estevão Anes on his mother's side), Cogominhos (Afonso Fernandes Cogominho), Cunhas (Gonçalo Gomes da Cunha, Vasco Rodrigues da Cunha), Pimenteis (Gonçalo Eanes Pimentel, Martim Vasques Pimentel) and Pereiras (Rui Vasques Pereira).

Few members of the Molnes and Homem families can be identified as chapter members. Estevão Pires Homem, canon and dean of Braga from the 1340s onward, and Vasco Peres Homem, canon and dean of Braga in around 1309-1318 (Rodrigues, 2005: 70-71 and 221-222; Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 317) and probably the brother of Estevão Homem (Rodrigues, 2005: 70), consolidated the presence of this family in the Braga chapter during these years. Meanwhile, Abril Esteves de Molnes (Rodrigues, 2005: 193; Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 408) and Gonçalo Esteves de Molnes, canon and dean (Rodrigues, 2005: 69), and nephew of Dom Gonçalo Pereira, are identified as the representatives of this family of middle-ranking nobles with deep roots locally, where most of their assets were concentrated, despite their only enjoying average political standing (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 403-404).

Besides these individuals, members of other families with a local implantation have been identified in the Braga chapter, such as the Camelos (Nuno Gonçalves Camelo).
In any case, in spite of their differences, none of these families were part of the high-ranking court nobility, but they were nonetheless part of a group characterized by an accentuated social ascent during the course of the 13th century and, in some cases, with deep local roots (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 540). But, as we will see, this is a feature that is common to other cathedral chapters.

Despite all these references, the truth is that the canons identified as noblemen are not a predominant feature of the list of 234 canons and dignitaries of the Braga chapter recorded for the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century, even if the low numbers recorded can be explained by the difficulties in identifying many of the holders of canonries . However, their role was of considerable importance when compared with other dioceses.

In fact, in Lisbon, just as in Lamego and Évora, the presence of high-ranking noble lineages is much less evident and quantitatively less significant than in Braga. Lisbon provides a good example here: while the nobility are present within the cathedral chapter group, albeit in lower numbers than in the diocese of Braga, this presence seems to be limited, except for rare exceptions, to members of the Vasconcelos, Cogominho, Zote, Magro and Dade lineages that José Augusto Pizarro identifies as members of the nobility with only average importance at court (Pizarro, 1999, vol. 2: 540, table VII; Farelo, 2003: 103).

In some cases, these families were also present in the Braga chapter, which might be said to reveal a strategy of investing in an ecclesiastic career that was common to different members of the same lineage , but their influence was usually restricted to one or two individuals who served within the chapter, either in succession or simultaneously; accumulating wealth either on the basis of a single main benefice or a series of benefices. This was the case, for example, with the following figures: Afonso Fernandes Cogominho and Gonçalo Fernandes Cogominho, who were brothers as well as canons of the Lisbon chapter, while the former also held the office of treasurer (Farelo, 2003, vol.2: 14-17); Egas Lourenço Magro, Estevão Eanes Bochardo and Martim Dade, this last one being associated with the Dade family; and Estevão Rodrigues de Vasconcelos (Farelo, 2003, vol. 2: 187-189). They were all members of the Lisbon chapter.

The presence of the nobility appears to have been much more limited in Lamego during the short period covered by Anísio Saraiva's study, with the Alvarengas and the Távoras, two of the few noble families identified, being families with landed estates in the region of the diocese (Saraiva, 2003: 154-155). In Évora, the presence of the court nobility was bolstered by representatives of members of the regional nobility or local elites. For example, the Oliveiras and lineages that would become more visible during the course of the 14th century (Vilar, 1999: 165-166), such as the Britos (Gomes, 1995: p. 97 in particular). In fact, in this southern diocese, most of the above-mentioned lineages seem to be absent in favor of locally established families whose process of ennoblement (were this to happen) tended in some cases to take place somewhat later than that of the families referred to previously .

Thus, despite the differences which existed between the dioceses examined, it is possible to paint an overall picture in which the main feature is a lack of members of the high court nobility in the ecclesiastic hierarchy. In fact, an ecclesiastic career appears to have attracted only the members of socially ascendant families from the middle-ranking court nobility and middle-ranking local lineages, who used a range of strategies to place their members in the chapter and thus benefit from the advantages of holding a high position in the ecclesiastic hierarchy.

Meanwhile, there was a relatively more sizeable noble presence in Braga as compared with other dioceses, with only Lisbon approaching the northern city as a rival in this regard, due to its growing economic and political importance. In fact, the geographic situation of the diocese of Braga covered the quintessential manorial region of 13th-century Portugal, where many of the estates of the most important Portuguese nobles of that period were rooted, as well as those of the lineages that had resulted from their segmentation, and this is an important consideration to be borne in mind when seeking to explain the larger numbers of nobles to be found amongst the bishops and canons of this diocese. On the other hand, the fact that Braga remained as the see of the only Portuguese archdiocese until the end of the 14th century meant that many ecclesiastics aspired to the post of archbishop or canon of Braga as the crowning moment of their career.

The behavior of the Portuguese nobility is not very different from that of its counterparts in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula or beyond the Pyrenees. Studies carried out into cathedral chapter populations in Castile, France and England point to similar trends: the reduced presence of the nobility, limited to families of average courtly standing and usually including many regionally-based families,[13] especially in the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century. These families often had links with different chapters, and the pursuit of ecclesiastic careers by their family members formed part of their strategies for achieving and consolidating power, drawing advantage from their holding of benefices and canonries in different chapters and churches and ensuring that family members were placed within the ecclesiastic hierarchy as part of a successful career within the Church.[14] In fact, they pursued not only the wealth afforded by these positions in the church hierarchy, but also the influence that they provided, sometimes even reaching close to the king's circles, as well as the capacity to appoint their parents and servants to other benefices and the opportunity to strengthen their ties with other lineages.

However, the statements made earlier about the apparent absence of the high court nobility from most of the cathedral chapters, and the apparent predominance within these bodies of a middle-ranking nobility and regionally-based lineages, also raise a remarkably large number of questions about the concept of nobility that is used and about the underlying model used for the classification of nobles.

In fact, for our classification, we have recurrently used the criterion of proximity to the king and participation in the royal circles of a court nobility defined for Portugal from the second half of the 13th century onward (Ventura, 1992), together with the possession of landed estates as recorded in the contemporary sources (Pizarro, 1999). In accordance with this definition, we have considered different levels within the court nobility, although we also draw a distinction in relation to a regionally-based (although not necessarily exclusively rural) nobility. In fact, many of the lineages mentioned had quite sizeable rural estates, from which, in some cases, they drew part of their onomastic identification as a lineage. However, such identification tends to play down the differences and divisions which characterized the nobility, even within a time span that extends no further than the mid-14th century and skirts around some of the problems underlying the identification of the nobility in urban centers, as we shall see later on (Duarte, 2001: 91-108; Val Valdivieso, 2001: 71-90). It does, however, show itself to be operational as a means of establishing some of the specificies of an analysis designed to investigate the links between the social composition of some chapters and the dominant elites of those urban centers.

2. Urban elites and ecclesiastic elites: two sides of the same coin?

Studies of dioceses have long focused on the presence and even the predominance of ecclesiastics with urban family backgrounds, sometimes also associated with important positions in the city's government, in many diocesan chapters (Millet, 1982: 77-86; Lop Otin, 2005: 638-639; Diaz Ibañez, 2003: 150-156). For many families involved in the business or government affairs of the city who were also very often interested in the control of knowledge (Nebbiai – dalla Guarda, 1997: 385-442; Crouzet-Pavan, 1997: 9-28), the fact that some family members carved out a successful ecclesiastic

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[13] Besides the studies already mentioned for Castile and France, we may also consider the analysis made by Jacques Pycke (1986: 85-93) and David Lepine (1995: 48-54), in which the presence of the nobility in the chapters is reaffirmed, but without there being any evidence of a predominance of the high nobility in these groups of canons.

[14] The Portocarreiro family is a good example of a strategy followed by different members of the lineage at various levels of the ecclesiastic hierarchy. Pizarro (1999, vol. 2: 319-346).

career, which could result in their holding a range of valuable benefices or obtaining a place high up in the ecclesiastic hierarchy, often conferred a degree of benefit on the kinship group as a whole by contributing towards the career consolidation and ascent of various close kinsmen.

The restructuring of family links which bound ecclesiastics to chapters or other bodies of the Church hierarchy demonstrates the importance of kinship and friendship networks in the structuring of individual careers. These are networks which are in general easier to identify and reconstitute than those which theoretically link these ecclesiastics to city affairs. Thus the difficulty lies in the identification of the background of the members of these internal networks rather than in the identification or reconstitution of networks at different levels.

Let us consider again the data provided by studies that have focused on the dioceses in question. In this paper, we have sought to establish a number of questions raised by them as a whole, despite differences between the studies deriving from variations in their chronological or thematic range.

The first question which arises is inevitably concerned with the geographic origins and social background of the members of the chapters considered. All the studies carried out have stressed the incomplete nature of source material with regard to these two kinds of information. The lack of references to the life of ecclesiastics before they joined the chapter and the predominance of documentation dealing mainly with the management of their wealth and chapter life means that very few references are available which allow us to place members of the clergy within the context of their background.

But let us examine the geographic origins of the canons of the dioceses of Braga, Lamego, Lisbon and Évora: all present at least a few canons with well-defined geographic origins, and an analysis of the sparse data which exists enables some comments to be made. Looking at the diocese of Braga, if we take as our starting point the period from 1278 to 1325, which coincides with the reign of Dom Dinis and which was studied by Justiniana Lima, one can conclude that about 25.5% of chapter members came from the home diocese while the geographic origins of 65.5% of them are unknown (Lima, 2003: 37-40). Similar figures exist for the period from 1245 to 1374: the number of dignitaries and canons whose geographic origins are known is approximately 18.5%, while fewer than 10% came from the home diocese.[15] The geographic origins of the other chapter members cover a wide area, extending into the north and centre of the country, and as far inland as Coimbra and Lamego, while there are also some chapter members from Évora, whose presence in Braga is associated directly with the presence and influence of the archbishop Martinho de Oliveira.

In the case of Lamego, an inland diocese, the number of canons whose geographic origins can be traced is about 23%, but only 10% can be identified as coming from the home diocese (Saraiva, 2003: 159-160). Despite the differences between the two dioceses, the figures are roughly similar. The geographic origins of chapter members extend over an area reaching as far as Guimarães and Braga, although it is difficult to say exactly how far inland they extended; the majority of the chapter members identified came from or had kinship ties with Lamego and the surrounding parishes or from the two northern cities already mentioned.

As for the southern dioceses of Lisbon and Évora, the overall picture is slightly different. With regard to the diocese of Lisbon during the period from 1277 to 1377, the number of chapter members whose geographic origins can be traced to the home diocese is around 4.9%, while the number of foreign ecclesiastics is 29% of the total, reaching 37% if we consider only the dignitaries; other chapter members come from the north and from the diocese of Évora (Farelo, 2003: 68-69), but the small

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[15] These numbers were obtained from the biographies published in the already mentioned study by Ana Maria Rodrigues.

number of those whose geographic origins can be identified does not provide conclusive evidence as to the question of their local or regional recruitment.

The difference between the figures obtained for the various dioceses is itself sufficiently demonstrative of the differences between these dioceses. Let us now examine the case of the southernmost diocese, Évora. Direct references to the geographic origins of many chapter members in the Évora diocese are very rare and even indirect references are few and far between, while links with the members' places of origin can only be established with any degree of certainty for around 10% of those identified. Among these, the predominance of ecclesiastics from the Évora region seems quite significant, while family references point to the presence of many canons from the home diocese who belonged to kinship groups linked to Évora (Vilar, 1999: 160-170). This scenario is even more significant if we take into consideration the absence of members of the high and even middle-ranking court nobility among chapter members and the small number of foreign clerics found to be present in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Thus, there is no doubt, in view of the differences in the figures, that at an early stage Lisbon stands out from among the dioceses analyzed, providing evidence of a growing degree of centrality and importance for the city in the context of the system of distribution of stipends controlled by papal power and the crown, making the city a platform for the establishment of ecclesiastics who came either from different domestic dioceses or from abroad. The presence of a relatively large number of foreign clerics reflects this centrality, and the presence of ecclesiastics who came from the noble families noted above also points to the same trend: the increasing importance of Lisbon.

Meanwhile, looking at the other dioceses, the figures show the importance of local recruitment in the composition of chapters, despite the low numbers obtained, even in Braga, the only archdiocese in the country. The same importance is also visible in the recruitment of the dignitaries of some of these chapters. In the case of Braga, for example, among the deans of this period we find members of the middle nobility, in some cases with local roots, and members of local and ecclesiastic families. In Évora, local recruitment is also quite important among the twelve deans and the eleven precentors identified for this period.[16] In the cases of Lisbon and Lamego, the existence of such a situation is more difficult to conclude. For the latter diocese and for the short period studied by Anísio Saraiva in a total of five deans and three precentors, the canons coming from the region of Guimarães were very important, but this predominance can be explained by the presence of Gonçalo Esteves, the dean and brother of Antoninho Esteves, who was himself also dean of the same chapter in subsequent years. Gonçalo Migueis, Vasco Eanes and Lourenço Fernandes, dignitaries of this diocese during the first fifty years of the 14th century (Saraiva, 2003: 213-249) were probably also from Guimarães. For Lisbon, the lack of information does not permit us to draw any clear conclusions. However, the important presence of foreign ecclesiastics and the small number of nobles identified inside the group of dignitaries are two pieces of evidence that should be stressed.

In conclusion, and if we take the chapter dignitaries as providing one of the best clues to the composition of the chapters, it is clear that although the predominance of local recruitment cannot be proved by the available documentation, it is clear that this form of recruitment was probably quite significant in most of the chapters considered. And although the place in which a stipend was held by an ecclesiastic did not necessarily coincide with his place of family origin, but was more likely to be bound up with questions of his availability under particular circumstances or the value of the benefice in question, it is also true that the seeking of a local position was far from being a minor concern for many families.

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[16] Canons belonging to the Oliveira and Brito families or others only related with the city or the region can be identified for almost half of the dignitaries.

However, a more accurate picture of the importance of these local links can only be provided by cross-referencing data on geographic origins with information on the family and social background of some of these clerics. As was mentioned above, we are interested here in gauging in particular the degree of influence enjoyed by the families predominating at the local level in the social composition of chapters, so we must first assess to what extent urban oligarchies within diocesan circuits were represented in chapter populations.

Firstly, it is obvious that an approach of this type comes up against a basic source of difficulty that has already been referred to, namely the lack of studies on local oligarchies and their composition in medieval Portugal. This makes it difficult or even impossible to cross-reference information on the composition of ecclesiastic groups and the urban elites of many of the dioceses considered in this paper. The exceptions are Lisbon and Évora, for which we have some data, which nevertheless needs organizing.

Let us look first at Lisbon. As Mário Farelo stressed in his Master's degree dissertation, the studies made about Portuguese chapters have shown the importance in these chapters of families "who at the regional level managed to exercise a considerable measure of influence over economic, social and even political affairs" (Farelo, 2003: 97) . However, it is difficult, for Lisbon, to define the scope of this influence due to the lack of information available. Nevertheless, the cases studied for this diocese demonstrate firstly the presence of canons from families with backgrounds in crown service. The growing presence of the crown administration and the king in Lisbon is necessarily reflected in the structure of the urban elite of the city, in which crown service takes on a central role at an early stage, in contrast with other places. Families such as the Escolas, the Valentes, the Rebolos and the Nogueiras provide examples of this, although, as the author stresses, analysis carried out on the basis of case studies allows us to surmise that it would require one or two generations for one or more members of these families to accede to a place in the chapter. In other words, it would take this long for the lineage to become established as part of the elite of the city (Farelo, 2003:101-102).[17]

The families of members of the Lisbon chapter are linked not only to crown office but also to trade. The most notable example is that of the Palhavãs, but other trading families may also be identified when systematic studies are carried out into the elites associated with the city.[18]

The chapter of Évora presents a somewhat different picture. Located deep inland, Évora did not enjoy such a degree of centrality and importance as Lisbon, although there had always been a certain degree of crown influence in the selection of bishops from an early stage. The same kind of influence is not easily detectable for chapter appointments; local families and bishops who were appointed to the diocese seem to have constituted two essential elements in influencing the composition of the Évora chapter.

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[17] Miguel Martins is one of the authors to have dedicated some time to studying the personalities and families of Lisbon during the Middle Ages, and these studies have contributed to the general knowledge about the political and economic groups in this city. Among others, we can mention Martins (1997 (3): 10-60; 1997 (5): 10-47; and 1997 (6):10-43).

[18] We hope that the future work of Mario Farelo about Lisbon and its elites will permit us to learn something more about these families, their composition and their trajectories. In the same way, further and more detailed studies into the families present in Lisbon will make it possible to increase our knowledge about the links between these groups and the University which, alternating with Coimbra throughout the 14th century, was to be installed for some time in Lisbon. In such a context, it would also make sense to study the links between the university world and the cathedral chapter, since the presence in the city of the university would tend to favour an increasing number of higher educational backgrounds amongst the holders of canonries. (Mattoso, 2000: 395-420; Rodrigues/ Vilar 2004: 611-629).

As far as the influence of the bishops is concerned, it should be noted that many canons or candidates for the office came from the families of those appointed to the diocese as bishops, or from among their dependents. In fact, a change of bishop or, in particular, a long period of episcopal incumbency would see an influx of new canons linked to circles close to the bishop and therefore led to significant changes in the composition of chapter populations (Vilar, 1999: 170-175).

Belonging to families with some standing in the region also seems to have been a determining factor in terms of accession to the office of canon. Canons can be identified as being linked to families such as the Oliveiras, the Britos, the Ciciosos and the Pestanas; thus links can be established between families associated with council government and the chapter over a period of several generations (Vilar, 1999; Beirante 1985).

For many of these families, ensuring that their members were established in an ecclesiastic career, especially in the Évora chapter, seems to have become a common practice and was facilitated by the presence of kinsmen already present in the ecclesiastic structure, whose influence provided a privileged means of access for new recruits. There is some doubt, however, as to the importance that the holding of these stipends had among the strategies developed for the assertion and consolidation of these families. In other words, to what extent did the holding of benefices, and the influence conferred thereby, affect the careers of other family members?

Let us examine a relatively well-known case study: that of the Oliveiras of Évora. It is clear that the election of Martinho Pires de Oliveira I as bishop of Évora in the mid-13th century greatly contributed to the ascent of the lineage and led to a nephew of his obtaining the office of archbishop: this was Martinho Pires de Oliveira II, a cleric and representative of the king in Rome and later archbishop of Braga. It also led to the marriage of some of his nieces to members of the middle-ranking nobility close to the court, and there is a long list of canons linked to the family who held office in the Évora chapter throughout the 14th and 15th centuries (Vilar, 1999: 52-56). At the same time, members of the family can be identified as being associated with the administration of the district and with the holding of crown offices at the local level, particularly in the second half of the 14th century and throughout the whole of the 15th century (Beirante, 1995: 535).

Thus, members of this family seem to have held office not only in local administration, but also in the cathedral chapter throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, and a degree of mutual influence would have been a constant factor, with its evident impact on urban life. Indeed, the influence of this family at the local level caused a measure of unrest within the city and the Oliveiras were at times accused of favoritism, as well as of instigating violence against other groups and families in the city. This occurred at the end of the first half of the 13th century, around 1237, at the time of the election of Martinho Pires (Vilar, 1999, 51) and also about a hundred years later at the time of the attempted election of João Afonso de Brito (Vilar, 1999: 79).

The Britos provide an example of a different model of ascent, involving a family holding both chapter and episcopal office and some of their members following an ecclesiastic career. However, the presence of the Britos in local government administration is not easily detectable: from an early stage, the lineage is associated with the holding of ecclesiastic benefices but not offices in the council administration (Beirante, 1995: 556). It is possible that, like other families such as the Touregãos (Beirante, 1995: 569-570), the Britos' influence derived from their control of economic power, but not necessarily from the holding of such offices. This may explain the importance conferred on ecclesiastic careers, which provided some members of the family with access to the court (Gomes, 1995:97).

Other families such as the Pestanas seem to have acceded to office in the chapter long after beginning to serve in city administration or local crown appointments. Evidence for this is provided by local documentation from the second half of the 13th century of the holding of administrative offices,

as well as during the course of the 14th and 15th centuries (Beirante, 1995: 610-634), while the evidence of the presence of members of this family in the Évora chapter shows that this came relatively late in the day, perhaps only in the 15th century (Vilar, 1999: 342) despite family links between the Oliveiras and the Pestanas.[19] The placing of members of the family in the Évora chapter or in an ecclesiastic career seems rather like the icing on the cake in terms of a set of strategies for the implantation and consolidation of the influence of the Pestanas, for there is no evidence for such a strategy either before this process began or during its initial stages.

We are therefore faced with a differentiated group of families, with remarkably different strategies and with networks of influence and interconnections of similarly unequal coverage. Families that, in some cases, would become part of a locally established nobility of great importance, as was the case with the Oliveiras in Évora or some lineages linked to Lisbon, in a process that it does not, however, seem possible to extend to all the families identified .

And this gives rise to one of the key problems to be found in this analysis, rooted in the difficulties that are inherent in differentiating between members of a small local nobility (or one that enjoyed links with families of greater importance, under whose protection they would benefit from and flaunt their positions of local power) and groups of knights and citizens of popular origin (Duarte, 2001: 91-109; Claúdio, 2003), whose influence in the city's local government and economic life was exerted in close conjunction with this small nobility, sometimes only recently ennobled.

But the different patterns which emerge for Évora are probably similar to those which existed in other dioceses, principally in Lisbon. In fact, the diverse range of scenarios and the place occupied by the family or the urban group in the local hierarchy should be taken into account rather than a dominant model of relations between urban elites and oligarchies, on the one hand, and chapter groups on the other.

In general, for many urban families with some economic or political power in the city, influence based on the holding of benefices deriving from offices held in the local chapter was a factor of prime importance. However, the centrality and importance of an ecclesiastic career or the holding of benefices in the local chapter varied according to the support base of the families in question. Thus, it is evident that while many families sought to stake a claim in the chapter and pursue ecclesiastic careers by placing various members of the same generation or subsequent generations in the chapter or in a career in the ecclesiastic hierarchy, for others this option seems to have been less important.

In fact, the holding of benefices and the choice of an ecclesiastic career seems, in the case of Évora, to have taken on a greater degree of importance for families undergoing a process of consolidation and assertion, such as the Oliveiras in the early 14th century, although their members continued to be present in the chapter during subsequent generations, regardless of changes in family fortunes, while, for other lineages which had sometimes played a role from an earlier stage in local power circuits, the presence of members in the chapter could be of secondary importance.

Thus, the Évora chapter displays a greater degree of social permeability than, for example, that of Lisbon; according to the data provided by Mário Farelo, some families acceded to chapter office only after consolidating their position in the local administration.
But, as Maria José Lop Otin stressed in the case of the Toledo chapter (Lop Otin, 2005: 638) when stating that this chapter followed the rule in incorporating members of all the groups and social sectors living in the city, it may also be true that this was a rule in most of the cathedral chapters in the Middle Ages and, in one way or another, most medieval chapters were, more or less, real images of the city.

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[19]The brother of Martinho Pires de Oliveira I, bishop of Évora, Pedro de Oliveira married Elvira Anes Pestana. (Vilar, 1999: 48-49).

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