



**Public festivities in Portuguese medieval towns**  
**Fiestas públicas en las ciudades medievales portuguesas**  
**Festas públicas nas cidades medievais portuguesas**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyze the major Portuguese public festivities in late XIV and XV centuries, mainly in three Portuguese towns – Lisbon, Porto (Oporto) and Braga – in order to study their relationship with the urban space. We start by studying civic and religious festivities, namely royal baptisms, weddings and enthronements, as well as royal and lordly *entries* in towns, but also regular festivities such as the *Corpus Christi*. We proceed to study the urban areas where they occurred, their itinerary, the type of festivities (street theater, processions, bullfights, music and dance...) and the ornamentation of those urban areas. Finally we will analyze pleasure connected to these different types of festivities, as well as to various social groups. Our methodology is based upon different types of sources, namely written and iconographic documents, as well as remaining medieval historic buildings and urban plans.

**Resumo:** O objetivo geral deste trabalho consiste em analisar as principais festas públicas portuguesas dos séculos XIV a XV, com vista a estudar a sua representatividade no espaço urbano português. Começaremos por centrar a nossa abordagem no estudo das mais importantes festividades cívicas e religiosas, nomeadamente batizados, casamentos, entronizações e funerais régios, entradas régias e senhoriais nas cidades, mas também festas com periodicidade regular como o *Corpus Christi*, entre outros. Paralelamente, analisaremos as referidas expressões festivas em diferentes cidades portuguesas, nomeadamente Lisboa, Porto e Braga. Posteriormente, procederemos ao estudo dos espaços urbanos onde ocorrem, os percursos

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onde decorrem, o tipo de expressões festivas (teatro de rua, procissões, touradas, música e dança ...), o embelezamento do espaço urbano onde se realizam e finalmente passaremos a analisar o prazer associado aos diferentes grupos sociais e tipos de festividades. A concretização dos objetivos enunciados será realizada através da análise cruzada de diferentes fontes de informação, nomeadamente documentais, iconográficas e o tecido histórico sobrevivente.

**Keywords:** Public festivities – Medieval towns – Portugal – Urban space – Pleasure.

**Palavras-chave:** Festas públicas – Cidades medievais – Portugal – Espaço urbano – Prazer.

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyze the major Portuguese public festivities from late fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries, in order to study their relationship with the urban space. We start by studying civic and religious festivities, namely royal baptisms, weddings and enthronements, as well as royal and lordly *entries* in towns, but also regular festivities such as the *Corpus Christi*. We proceed to study the urban areas where they occurred, their itinerary, the type of festivities (street theater, processions, bullfights, music and dance) and the ornamentation of those urban areas, namely in the towns of Lisbon, Porto (Oporto) and Braga (Fig. 1). Simultaneously we will analyze pleasure connected to these different types of festivities, as well as to various social groups. Our methodology is based upon different types of sources, namely written and iconographic documents, as well as urban plans.

In general, public festivities had a religious and civic character, intended to present the organization and order of society, where the urban space was assumed as the privileged stage of its representation. Within the public festivities, parades and processions were a particular highlight. They presented expressions that ranged from the deepest religious symbolism, to more human needs such as pleasure, and were characterized by a strong element of entertainment and theatricality. The various annual public festivals, especially

those that included processions and parades, were very numerous in Portugal, taking place throughout the whole year, albeit showing some diversity between the various cities.



Figure 1 – Map of Portugal, with the cities of Braga, Oporto and Lisbon.

Of these, *Corpus Christi*, simultaneously a religious and civic festivity, constituted, throughout Europe, one of the larger collective events with greater impact and numerous dimensions, incorporating various powers into its organization, namely religious, municipal, royal and feudal ones. In particular, the *Corpus Christi* parade reflected the organizational ideal of urban society, hierarchically presented, involving broad sectors of the population, through collective manifestations, in which the amusement dimension, experienced in major urban areas, was also a celebration of entertainment and pleasure.

Simultaneously, exceptional festivities connected with royal or feudal powers, such as royal or feudal entries, weddings and baptisms, among others, presented an extremely broad urban and social dimension, involving all the powers and urban society. It should be stressed these types of festivities

gradually adopted some practices and expressions derived from the religious events, namely the *Corpus Christi*. As such, we will analyze some Portuguese royal and feudal public festivities – specifically royal and feudal entries, weddings and baptisms – focusing on the period between the end of the fourteenth century and early sixteenth century, in the cities of Lisbon, Porto and Braga.

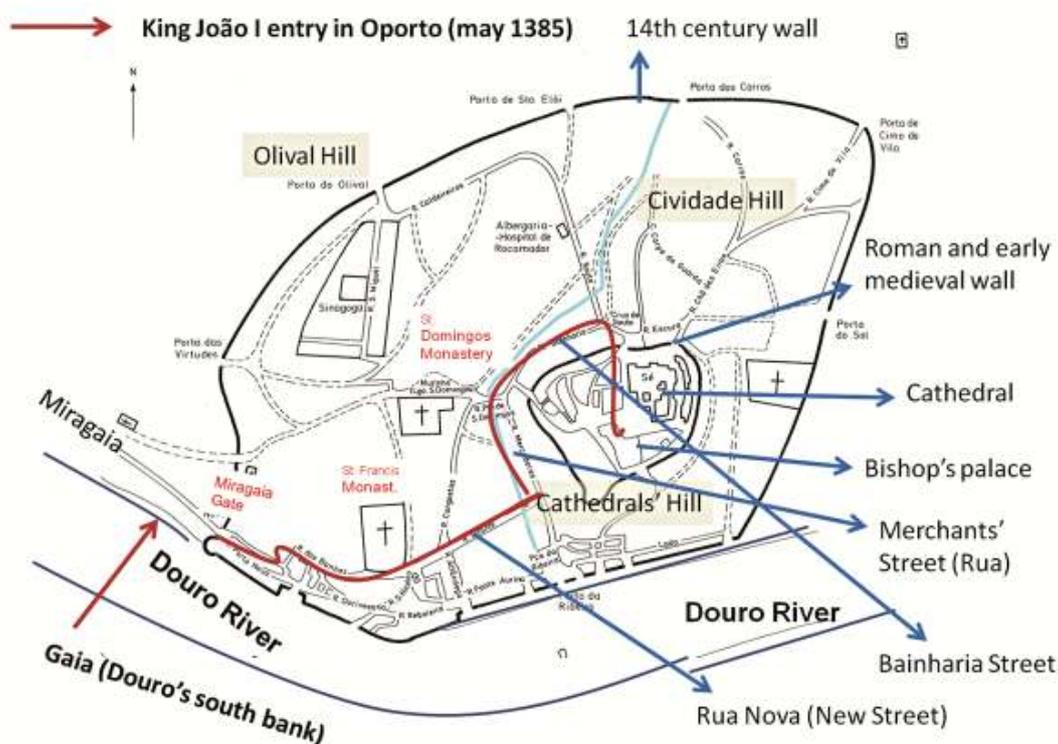


Figure 2 – King João I entry in Oporto in 1385.

### Royal entries (*entradas*)

The royal entries in towns constituted a moment of special significance for the king, as well as for the community that received him, the city was adorned and different types of festivities occurred throughout the urban space. The first visit of King John I to the city of Porto was held in May 1385. It is known that the monarch, coming from Coimbra, south of Porto, crossed the Douro River by boat to reach Porto, since before the nineteenth century a bridge had



never existed there. Thus, the first scene for the reception of the king was the river itself (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup>

The city prepared itself to receive the monarch, having been ordered that all vessels (*naus*) and small boats were to be suitably decorated with banners, branches, trumpets and pennants, and that the population be dressed properly. When the king arrived at the south bank, the ships that were in the river approached to take the king and his entourage to the other side, in a festive atmosphere. The king was transported on a bigger and fancier boat, which sailed ahead of the other ships.<sup>4</sup>

The king reached the city of Oporto, on the north bank, descended from the boat to the shores through a broad and spacious board, arriving in front of a wall gate, designated *Porta de Miragaia* (later called New or Noble Gate). In front of that city gate, the king was received by municipal and ecclesiastical authorities, as well as many people. Here, the royal hand kiss and royal salute ceremonial were done, delivering into the king's hands the city's flag and obedience to him was sworn by the commune.<sup>5</sup> This moment was quiet important because this king was a new monarch, the first one of a new dynasty, whose royal title was achieved less than a year ago, after a civil war that was still going on.<sup>6</sup>

Then the king got into the city and a variety of entertainment started, including dances, songs, games, theater, among others. The king followed a route from Miragaia's gate to the bishop's palace, near the cathedral, where

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<sup>3</sup> LOPES, Fernão, *Crónica de D. João I*. Vol. II. Barcelos: Livraria Civilização, 1990, Capítulo VIII, pp. 19-21; COELHO, M<sup>a</sup> Helena Cruz, 'A festa – a convivialidade', in *História da Vida Privada em Portugal. A Idade Média*, dir. de José Mattoso, coord. de Bernardo V. e Sousa. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores e Temas e Debates, 2010, pp. 165-66.

<sup>4</sup> LOPES, Fernão, *Crónica de D. João I*. .. *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>6</sup> SOUSA, Armindo de, 'Portugal', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume VII c. 1415 - c. 1500*, ed. by Christopher Allmand. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 627-36. In portuguese see MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira, *Portugal na Crise dos séculos XIV e XV*, vol. 4 da *Nova História de Portugal*, dir. de Joel Serrão e A. H. de Oliveira Marques. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1987, pp. 523-39; SOUSA, Armindo, '1325-1480', in *História de Portugal*, dir. de José Mattoso, vol. 2. Lisboa: Ed. Círculo de Leitores e Autores, 1993, pp. 494-500; COELHO, M<sup>a</sup> Helena Cruz, *D. João I, o que re-colheu Boa Memória*. Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores e Centro de Estudos do Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa, 2005, pp. 73-75.



the king was intending to stay, going through Rua Nova (New Street) and through the Merchant and Bainharia streets.<sup>7</sup> These routes had been properly prepared previously, that is, they were cleaned and adorned with branches, flowers, and sweet smelling herbs, the houses were decorated with textiles and plants, the doors and windows were opened and people were dressed accordingly. In some places, throughout this route, specific entertainment activities occurred to the passage of the king. Among other examples, there were theater performances – *mystery plays*, in Portuguese *jogos* (games) – commissioned by the city council to craftsmen, as well as groups of women, from middle and high condition, singing and dancing. The route to the palace was made slowly, because of the large number of people watching in the streets, in a pleasant environment of great pleasure, as the chronicles stated<sup>8</sup>. When the king and his entourage reached the palace, this public spectacle ended.

The process of dramatization and staging of public festivals was much enhanced with the King Manuel (1495-1521), when there was a strong development of the Portuguese lyric theater, which was born with Gil Vicente, one of the first and most important Portuguese playwrights, who worked for D. Manuel. It should also be stressed that the contact with new overseas territories, allowed the monarch to include in public festivals exotic elements, namely elephants and rhinos parade.

This monarch also created a *Regulation for the royal entries in Lisbon* (*Regimento das Entradas régias em Lisboa*) in 1502, which stipulated, among other things, who should accompany the king, who should organize and pay those festivities and also defined the path of the procession.<sup>9</sup> This regulation also specified the locations where the king was to be expected to come, as well as specific measures that had to be implemented, namely the construction of piers in the Tejo River, where the king wanted to land. Thus, the river itself was included as part of the scenic environment, similarly to the royal entry in Porto of King João I, in 1386, that we have already referred.

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<sup>7</sup> *Bainharia* means the place of scabbard production.

<sup>8</sup> LOPES, Fernão, *Crónica de D. João I ...*, *op. cit.*, Capítulo VIII, pp. 19-21.

<sup>9</sup> ALVES, Ana Maria, *Entradas Régias portuguesas*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, s.d., p. 30; ARAÚJO, Renata de, *Lisboa – A Cidade e o Espectáculo na Época dos Descobrimentos*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1990, pp. 21-27.

The joyous entry of King D. Manuel and D. Leonor, his third wife, into Lisbon in 1521, designed by Gil Vicente, is an example of this new dimension of royal public festivals, in which the organization of the procession was explicitly defined and programmed according to D. Manuel instructions, but funded by the commune. The king and his entourage started their route in the south bank of Tejo River, in the opposite side of Lisbon, coming from Almeirim and stayed for four days in Lavradio, where they attended the shows which arose in Lisbon, namely fireworks (Fig. 3). Later on, he moved by river to the opposite bank, in Xabregas, near Lisbon, together with a fleet of about 600 vessels.

**Entry of King Manuel and Leonor, his third wife, in Lisbon, in 1521**



Figure 3 – Entry of King Manuel and Leonor, his third wife, in Lisbon in 1521

Then, from Xabregas, still by boat, he arrived at the Ribeira quay in Lisbon, where the monarchs spent the night at the royal palace. On the morning of the next day the king with his entourage moved by horse from Ribeira to the *Porta da Oura* (Gate da Oura), where the Royal Entry ceremony officially started, with the usual reception by the municipal and ecclesiastical authorities. Along the route to the cathedral were several different stages, where various theatrical scenes took place. Some of the most important places of the route was in the *Arco dos Barretes*, (Hood's Arch), in the beginning of the *Rua da*

*Ourivesaria* (Goldsmith Street), in *Rua da Padaria* (Bakery Street), and, at last, near the cathedral. When this festivities finished, both monarchs returned by horse to the royal palace in Ribeira.<sup>10</sup>

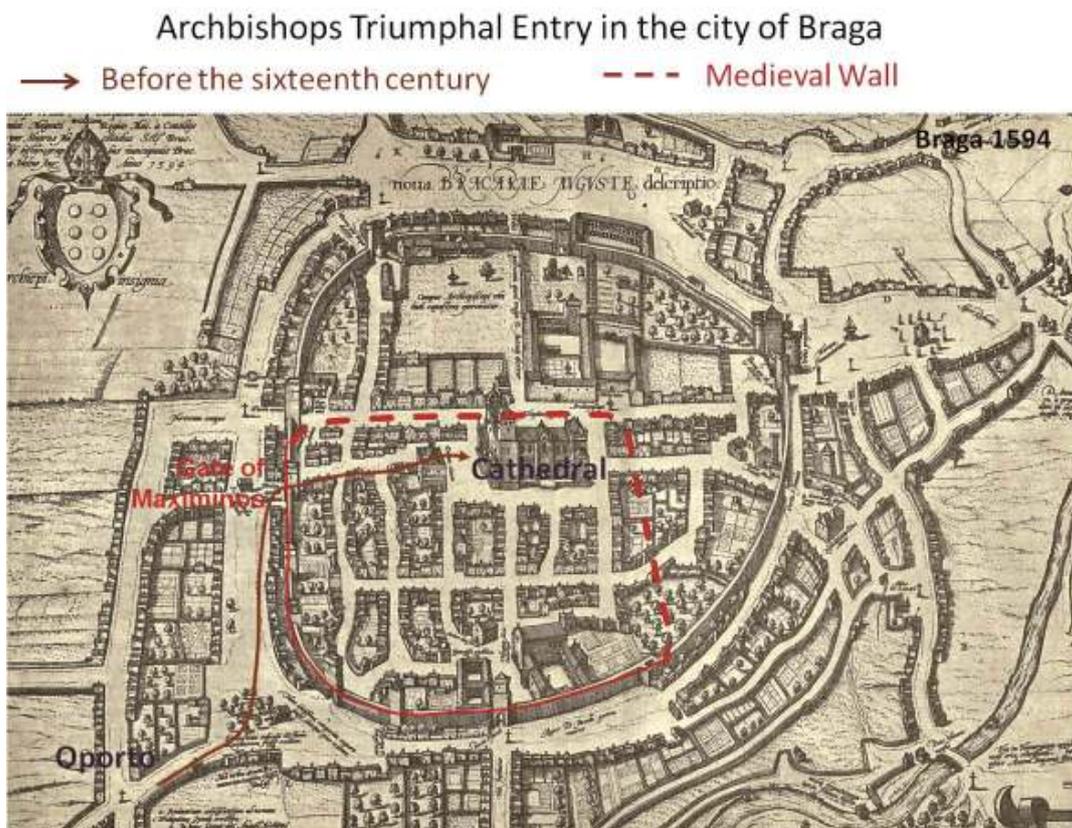


Figure 4- Archbishops entry in Braga, before the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### Feudal entries (*entradas*)

Feudal entries in towns also deserved a very careful preparation, especially in the cities of private lordship, as was the case of Braga, an archbishop domain. Until the early sixteenth century, the archbishop's triumphal entry into the city of Braga was made through the *Porta de Maximinos*, a gate of the medieval wall.<sup>11</sup> This gate was preceded, on the outer side of the wall, by an important

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53; BUESCU, Ana Isabel, 'Festas régias e comunicação política no Portugal moderno (1521-1572)', *Comunicação & Cultura*, n.º 10, 2010, pp. 39-43.

<sup>11</sup> RIBEIRO, Maria do Carmo, *Braga entre a época romana e a Idade Moderna. Uma A metodologia de análise para a leitura da evolução do espaço urbano*. 2 volumes. Tese de Doutoramento em Arqueologia, Área do conhecimento em Arqueologia da Paisagem e do Povoamento. Universidade do Minho, 2008, pp. 352-53; 473-78.

street, with the same name, that connected Braga with Porto, from where, generally, the prelates came. From the Gate of Maximinos the archbishops followed by the *Rua dos Burgueses* (Street of Bourgeois), to the cathedral (Fig. 4).

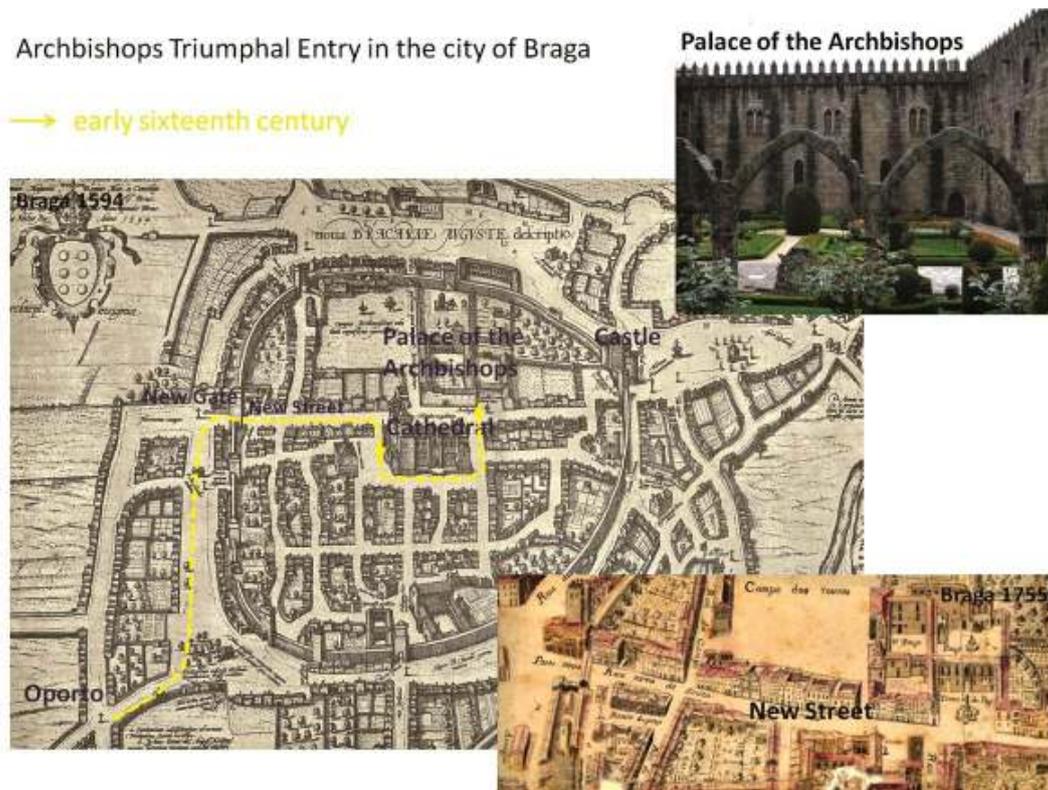


Figure 5 - Archbishops entry in Braga, in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In spite of the enlargement of the medieval wall in the late fourteenth century, which included in its perimeter the archbishop's new palace and the castle, it doesn't seem to have occurred changes in the path followed by the archbishop's entries. However, in the early sixteenth century, the Archbishop Diogo de Sousa, ordered a new door to be open in the medieval wall, the so called *Porta Nova* (New Gate), and decided to regularize a street, that allowed access to the cathedral and the archbishop's palace, from *Porta Nova*.<sup>12</sup> Since

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 504-05.

then, the triumphal entries of new archbishops into the city, always with great pomp and festivities, were done through this new street (Fig. 5).<sup>13</sup>

At the entrance of the New Gate, in the *Campo das Hortas* (Vegetable Garden Square), new archbishops were received in opulent and complex ceremonies. Then, they followed in magnificent processions through the streets of *Rua Nova* and *Rua dos Açougues Velhos*, until the cathedral yard. The town keys were then received by the archbishops in the town hall, next to the cathedral. Then the ceremonies followed inside the cathedral, after which the archbishops headed to their palace, by *Rua de Onsias*.<sup>14</sup>

Surely, the choice of spaces through which the episcopal entry passed tried to display the broad character of the archbishop's power in his city and diocese, as well as to make clear the superiority in status of its authority.



Figure 6 – Marriage of King João I and Philippa of Lancaster, in Oporto, in 14<sup>th</sup> February 1387 (Jean de Wavrin, *Chroniques d'Angleterre*, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 15<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>13</sup> MILHEIRO, Maria Manuela C., *Braga. A Cidade e a Festa no Século XVIII*. Guimarães: Núcleo de Estudos de População e Sociedade do Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade do Minho, 2003, pp. 139-47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

## Royal weddings

The wedding ceremony of King D. João I, with D. Philippa of Lancaster, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster, was celebrated in 1386 in the city of Porto with great involvement and rejoicing of municipal and ecclesiastical authorities, as well as the city's population in general (Fig. 6).

According to the orders of D. João I the authorities conducted multiple preparations for the event, among which we could highlight the construction of new recreational structures (called *praças*, which means squares) where theater scenes (*jogos*, which means games) were presented, together with dances and amusements.

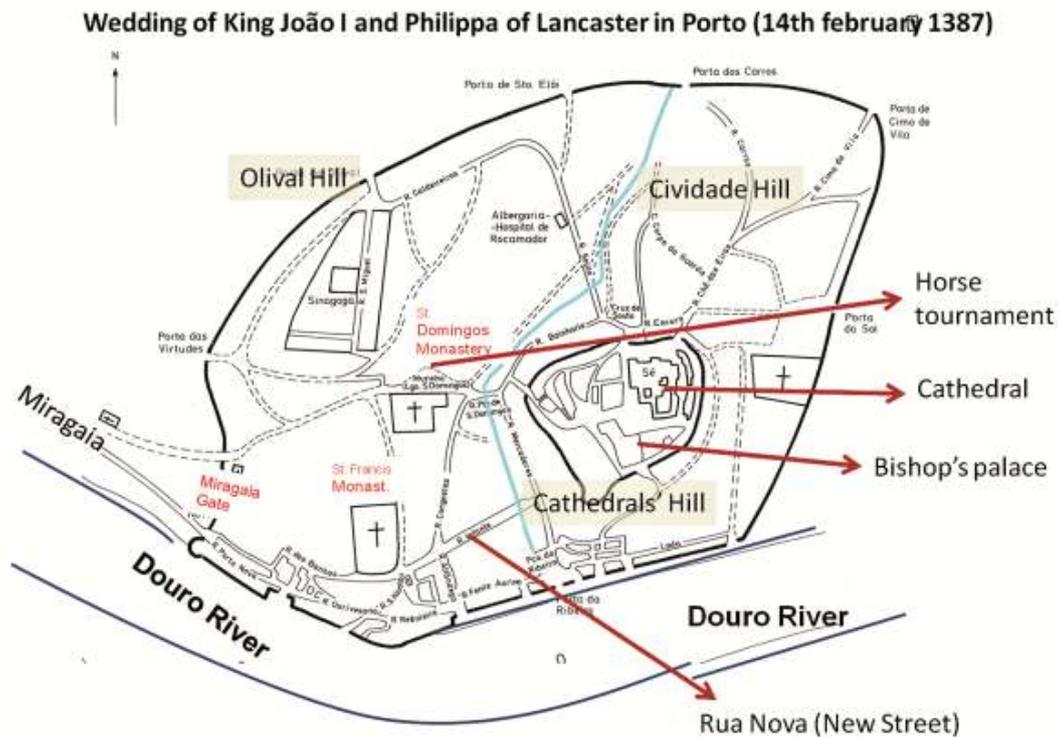


Figure 7 - Wedding of King João I and Fillipa of Lancaster, in Oporto, in 14<sup>th</sup> February 1387: the festivities in the city.

An outstanding example was the construction of a large square designed to receive tournaments on horseback, reserved for the nobility, located next to



the monastery of St. Domingos, a place full of vegetable gardens (Fig. 7).<sup>15</sup> Once the city was prepared, King João I went to Porto, in order to meet with D. Philippa of Lancaster, installed for several days in the Bishop of Porto's palace. The day after the King's arrival, the city's population engaged in numerous festivities in honor of the monarch's wedding. King João I and his bride, duly festooned, each on top of a white horse, went in a joyful procession from the bishop's palace to the cathedral, just nearby, where the town's bishop was waiting for them at the door.<sup>16</sup>

After the religious ceremony ended, they returned to the palace where a sumptuous banquet was held, accompanied by dances, songs and various performances, reserved only for the great lords of the kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

Another important wedding party was the one of Princess D. Leonor, sister of King Afonso V, with Frederick III Emperor of Germany that was held in 1451, in Lisbon, from 13<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October, and achieved fame beyond the kingdom of Portugal (fig. 8).<sup>18</sup> Among the multiple festivities and entertainments, we could stress the banquet in the royal palace, next to the castle, on October 13<sup>th</sup> 1451, which was followed by all-night dances and various amusements. During the festivities various theater performances were held, including numerous characters of kings, nobles, clergymen, including the pope and the Emperor of Germany, represented by actors.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> LOPES, Fernão, *Crónica de D. João I ...*, *op. cit.*, Capítulo XCV, pp. 223-24. About this wedding and its political meaning see COELHO, M<sup>a</sup> Helena Cruz, *D. João I, o que re-colheu Boa Memória*. Rio de Mouro: Círculo de Leitores e Centro de Estudos do Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa, 2005, pp. 112-19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> MARQUES, A. H. Oliveira, *A Sociedade Medieval Portuguesa. Aspectos de Vida Quotidiana*. 6<sup>a</sup> edição. Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2010, pp. 246-48; ARAÚJO, Renata de, *Lisboa – op. cit.*, pp. 33-40; COELHO, M<sup>a</sup> Helena Cruz, 'A festa – a convivialidade', in *História da Vida Privada em Portugal. A Idade Média*, dir. de José Mattoso, coord. de Bernardo V. e Sousa. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores e Temas e Debates, 2010, pp. 167-68.

<sup>19</sup> See the previous note.



Figure 8 – *The Bishop Aeneas Piccolomini introduces Leonor (Eleanor) of Portugal to Frederick III*, by Pinturicchio (c. 1502/1507).

In different locations throughout the city various scenic religious and secular representations took place. Next to the cathedral, was built a big bench for the town's people. In the town square, in the lower part of the city, was an artificial water source, with pink water and a garden with various wild animals. The Princess Leonor, accompanied by her entourage, came to all these places,

in a procession that lasted all day and involved more than 20 000 people.<sup>20</sup> The joys and the celebrations continued over the following days, until October 25<sup>th</sup> with numerous forms and demonstrations of exuberance.

### Royal baptisms

Within royal festivities, we would also highlight the baptism ceremonies of princes, as was the case of the baptism of future King D. João II, in Lisbon in 1455. Given the importance of this event, the city had been prepared for the numerous activities, previously. From the royal palace to the cathedral everything was clean and richly adorned and covered with awnings made of rich cloths. It should be noted also that the prince was brought under a canopy, preceded by trumpets, drums, clarions and more instruments. As a matter of fact, the public festivity of this baptism surpassed the previous ones, showing a process of successive incorporation of religious practices by laic powers, which, as already stated, will be a reality particularly developed with the King Manuel<sup>21</sup>.

Acclamation of King John II made in  
Lisbon in 1481

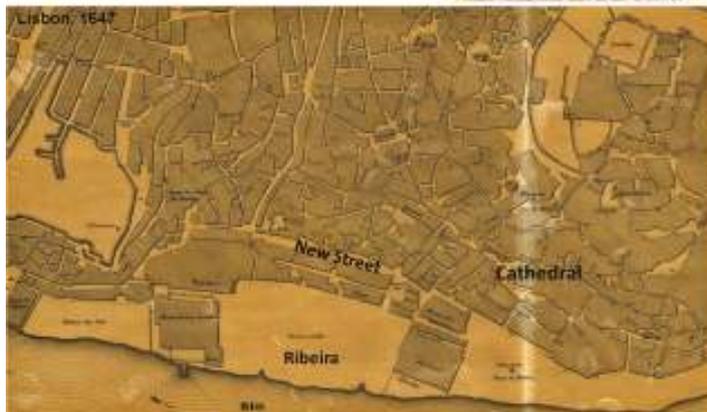


Figure 9 – Acclamation of King João II in Lisbon, in 1481.

<sup>20</sup> ARAÚJO, Renata de, *Lisboa – op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.



## Royal acclamations

Another type of royal festivity was the royal acclamations at the beginning of each reigns. Among several examples, we can refer the acclamation of King João II, made in Lisbon in 1481. It was a ceremony that, although not very spectacular, it did not pass without urban public space as a stage for the royal legitimacy. The acclamation was not made only in a square or in a place that allowed the gathering of witnesses, but throughout the entire city, in order to spread through the urban space the good news and to require the city's complicity, allegiance and loyalty to the new King.<sup>22</sup> Along the route several stops were made to make the kings' acclamation (Fig. 9). The stooping points, as well as the route of this acclamation throughout Lisbon, favored the main streets and places of the fifteenth century town, such as the cathedral, the churches of Madalena and Carmo, the square of Rossio, the Kings' New Street (*Rua Nova d'el Rei*) and the castle.<sup>23</sup>

Near the end of the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth, during the reign of King Manuel, one can find changes in this route, giving a particular focus to the new buildings in the Ribeira area, as well as to the east-west axis of the Merchants New Street (*Rua Nova dos Mercadores*), as a result of the urban transformations operated in Lisbon by King Manuel. In fact, this king has carried out a series of urban changes, including the clearing of roads, a trend towards a standardization of the façades in certain streets, as well as a certain scenic arrangement of public spaces, in a clear trend of a changing attitude with relation to the city and town-planning.<sup>24</sup>

## *Corpus Christi*

Together with the royal and feudal ceremonies, some periodic religious festivities were also very important, and they presented, alongside the religious features, very strong civic and recreational characteristics. Among such festivities, the *Corpus Christi* stood out.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62.

<sup>25</sup> COELHO, M<sup>a</sup> Helena Cruz, 'A festa – a convivialidade', in *História da Vida Privada em Portugal. A Idade Média*, dir. de José Mattoso, coord. de Bernardo V. e Sousa. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores e Temas e Debates, 2010, pp. 162-65.



There are some different known *Corpus Christi* regulations from late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century Portuguese towns, which allow us to know the formal aspects of its procession, particularly in Porto, Lisbon and Braga, although information about its complete route throughout the city are rare.<sup>26</sup> The *Corpus Christi* festivities are commonly assumed as the most important ones for the municipalities and that required a more demanding performance, the communes being responsible for its organization and financing.

The strong sociopolitical dimension of this festivity was very connected with its procession in which, in a hierarchical order very well defined, the city's socio-professional groups, including craft fraternities or guilds, marched, framed by the various urban powers. Its great recreational dimensions included several entertainments that arose in different urban spaces, namely theater performances (called *jogos* – games), allegoric scenes, dances, songs, and others. Most of those activities were done by different socio-professional fraternities or guilds, and/or by distinct administrative or spatial areas, such as parishes, streets or urban areas, which were responsible for those activities. The themes of those theater pieces were varied, including scenarios of a religious nature, particularly the lives of saints or biblical scenes, but also mythical and exotic ones, like the ones called *Mouriscas* (from the word *mouros*, which means Moorish), or the ones called *Selvagens* (wild men).<sup>27</sup>

In the city of Braga, where the complete *Corpus Christi* route is unidentified, it is known that in the early sixteenth century it included different geographical spaces inside and outside the city walls (Fig. 10). From some attested places in which the procession passed by, we propose that a part of the *Corpus Christi* route starting in the cathedral went to Maximinos Gate, then to S. Sebastian

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<sup>26</sup> GONÇALVES, Iria, 'As festas do "Corpus Christi" do Porto na segunda metade do século XV: a participação do Concelho', *Estudos Medievais*, n° 5/6. Porto: Centro de Estudos Humanísticos, 1984/1985, pp. 69-89; GONÇALVES, Iria, *As Finanças Municipais do Porto na Segunda Metade do Século XV*, Porto, 1987, pp. 94-100; SILVA, M<sup>a</sup> João V. Branco M., 'A Procissão na Cidade: Reflexões em torno da festa do Corpo de Deus na Idade Média Portuguesa', in *Cidade. Jornadas inter e pluridisciplinares*, coord. Maria José Ferro Tavares, vol. I, Lisboa, 1993, pp. 195-217; MELO, Arnaldo Sousa, *Trabalho e Produção em Portugal na Idade Média: O Porto, c. 1320 – c. 1415 / Travail et Production au Portugal au Moyen Âge: Porto, c. 1320- c. 1415*, 2 volumes. Braga e Paris, Universidade do Minho et École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2009 (Ph.D thesis); URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/1822/9896>, 1 vol., pp. 412-13.

<sup>27</sup> See previous note.

Chapel courtyard, and then to the New Gate. From this one, it would continue towards the *Praça do Peixe* (Fish Square), then would follow by the New Street, returning to the cathedral. The festivities would finally end with a lunch, which could lead to a commonly meal, or just food distribution.<sup>28</sup>

**Corpus Christi in Braga (late 15th century)**

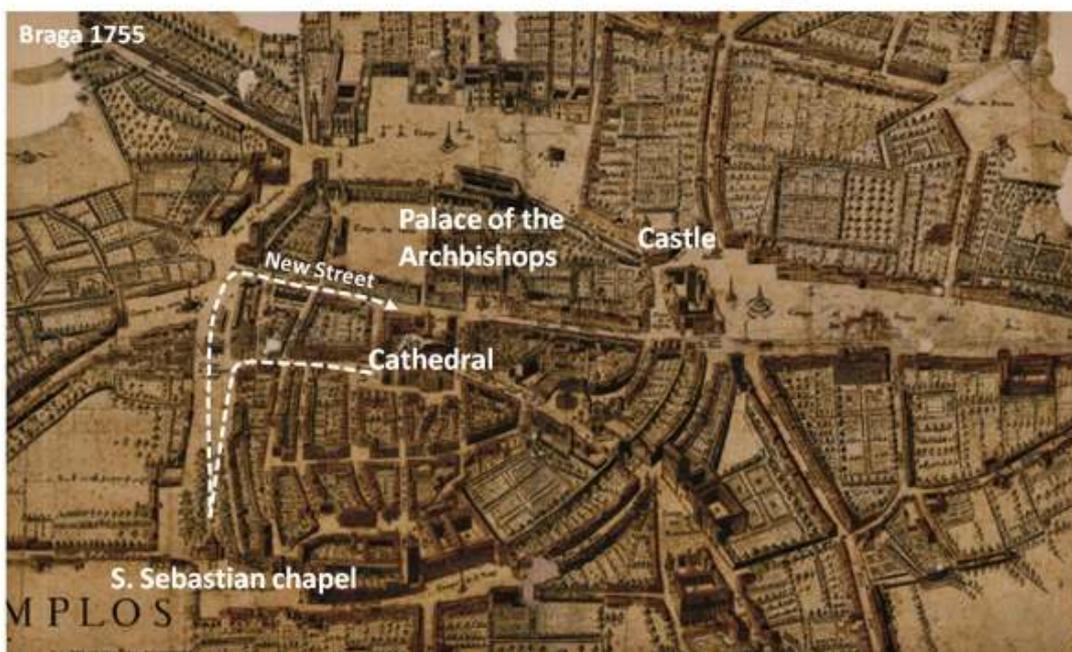


Figure 10 – *Corpus Christi* procession in Braga, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (proposed route).

As in Braga, the medieval *Corpus Christi* route in the town of Porto is not fully established. However, we can say that in the second half of the fifteenth century, theater performances in this festivity took place mainly in the *Rua Nova* (New Street), and, occasionally, in a yard near the Monastery of St. Domingos. Those plays were presented on stages constructed expressly for that purpose, which were dismantled at the end of the festivities. Frequently *Corpus Christi* also included bullfights, probably in the New Street or in the yard close to the Monastery of St. Domingos.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> COSTA, Paula Pinto, 'Das Festas religiosas ao luto por D. Sebastião no âmbito da vereação de Braga', in *Estudos em Homenagem ao Professor Doutor José Marques*. Porto, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2006, pp. 217-31.

<sup>29</sup> GONÇALVES, Iria, 'As festas do "Corpus Christi" do Porto ... *op. cit.*, pp. 69-89; GONÇALVES, Iria, *As Finanças Municipais do Porto ... op. cit.*, pp. 94-100; MELO, Arnaldo Sousa, *Trabalho e Produção em Portugal ...*, *op.cit.*, 1 vol., pp. 412-13; COUTO, P.e Luís de Sousa, *Origem das Procissões da Cidade do Porto, pelo P.e Luís de Sousa Couto, Cartorário do Arquivo*

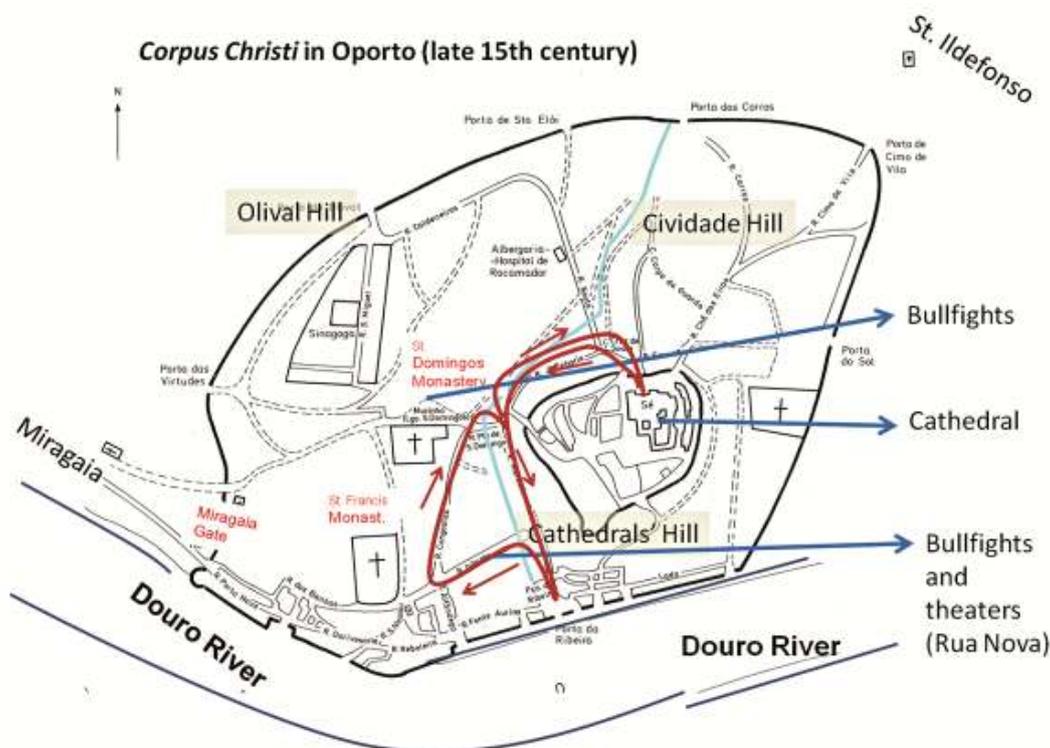


Figure 11 - *Corpus Christi* procession in Oporto, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (proposed route).

From the existing evidence, therefore, we can propose Porto's *Corpus Christi* medieval route as presented on the map (Fig. 11). The path would have begun in the yard of the cathedral, went down to the lower part of the town through Bainharia Street and Merchants Street, until the *Praça da Ribeira* (Ribeira Square), where it followed to the New Street. From there, it would climb up again to the cathedral, passing by the convents of St. Francis and St. Domingos, and again by the Street of Bainharia. The festivities would then end with a banquet in the town hall, but there could also have been light meals offered elsewhere. The repasts were opulent by the amount and

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*Municipal da mesma cidade, em 1820. Com Sub-notas, Prefácio e Apêndice de A. de Magalhães Basto, Porto, s/d [1936] (Documentos e Memórias para a História do Porto, 1); Corpus Christi routes in Porto for XVIIth/XVIIIth centuries, and the XIXth century one, are proposed in TEIXEIRA, Gabriella de Barbosa e LACERDA, Silvestre, (editors), Quem construiu Tebas? Os construtores da cidade. Who built Tebas? The builders of the city. Porto: CRAT – Centro Regional de Artes Tradicionais, 2001.*



diversity of food, including, apart from the usual bread and wine, minced mutton, seasoned with spices, and as dessert cakes and fruits.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusions

We can conclude that urban space was assumed as a privileged place for public festivities, religious or secular, periodic or exceptional ones. Urban space, in fact, becomes increasingly part of these entertainment scenarios. In general, the main urban spaces and buildings, as the cathedral, the royal or lordly palaces and the town halls, but also the main squares and streets were chosen as the types of places where the most important expressions of those public festivities occurred. The route chosen for the processions and marches was intentional, carefully set out by the authorities, aiming to highlight the spaces considered the most emblematic and scenographic, as the main gates of the walls, the New Streets and the most important squares, or even the rivers closed to towns, where they existed.

Similarly, the urban spaces recently promoted and transformed were particularly valued, as a way of enhancing the latest urban transformations, usually promoted by the same organizers or sponsors of the festivities, such as kings, lords, or town governments (municipalities). These processions passed in these particular places, thus allowing, simultaneously, to promote and further enhance those urban changes, and at the same time to create a greater theatricality and scenography to the festivity itself, as well as to reinforce the image and the power of its promoters. In such scenarios, the urban society, with its various groups, had a very important role, attending and participating in different activities that usually included a dimension of pleasure associated with ludic expressions, which always existed in the majority of public festivities.

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<sup>30</sup> GONÇALVES, Iria, 'As festas do "Corpus Christi" do Porto ... *op. cit.*, pp. 69-89; GONÇALVES, Iria, *As Finanças Municipais do Porto ... op. cit.*, pp. 94-100.