

## Évora Trails

### Introduction

Many geographers and historians would agree that the Alentejo region is the Portuguese Mediterranean, and is separated from what is conventionally known as the Mediterranean only by frontiers; this atlas adopts this perspective. The Alentejo is an interior region, and although linked with the Mediterranean by rivers and roads, what is more important is the sharing of a common memory with many other regions: it formed part of the Roman Empire, was occupied for five centuries by the Arabs, it played a role in the commercial adventure of the Middle Ages, cities were built here, as were trade and cultural centres, it faced the same problems of lack of water, was characterised by large landholdings and systems of domination by large landholders, and a recognized landscape was constructed here - in short, it is a typical region of the south.

Two key places were selected in making this atlas. Évora is a natural choice: the largest city in southern Portugal and the Alentejo, it is the single great urban centre, whose domination of the region is due to its economic prowess, its university and obviously its heritage. The village of Luz - which means light - is rather an unexpected choice: a small place in the eastern Alentejo, it is nevertheless highly charged with symbolism. To a large extent, the village stands for the constant struggle by the small communities of the south to survive. Paradoxically, in the face of the ancestral struggle for water resources, the new Alqueva reservoir submerged the village, which was rebuilt nearby; its museum portrays the resilience of the communities of the Mediterranean in the struggle to survive.

Connected with these two places, four itineraries were developed:

The first, **Travellers' memoirs of the Alentejo**, seeks to show how from time immemorial the region has been visited by travellers and the places they visited are on the whole centres which still attract tourists.

The second, **Évora and the towns of the Alentejo: trade centres**, describes the towns and cities of the Alentejo - places the traveller should not miss, and important political, cultural and economic centres.

The third, **From the Romans to the present-day - the exploration of natural resources**, deals with remains indicating the riches that different peoples attempted to exploit in the region.

The fourth, **Landscapes and heritage - vineyards and the *montado***, examines the construction of the landscape of the Alentejo region and the countless items of heritage that still exist.

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### Évora

The city of Évora is located at the watershed of the basins of the Sado, Tagus and Guadiana Rivers, on an excellent site for the control of the local territory - good reason for its role of special importance throughout the history of Portugal.

It developed notably in Roman times, with the construction of grandiose monuments like the baths and the temple, known nowadays as the Temple of Diana, which dates from the 1st century A.D. and was probably dedicated to the cult of the empire. In medieval times, walls enveloped the temple to form the castle vault, and it was later converted into an abattoir. In the 19th century, the walls were removed and the remains of the original construction were preserved as far as possible. The original city walls also date from the Roman era: the 3rd century - the city was fortified during this period and remains of the fortifications can still be seen in places.

At the top of the hill on which Évora is built, the Cathedral stands imposing against the backdrop of whitewashed houses. It was probably built on the site of the ancient city mosque, and represents a period of transition in terms of architectural styles, from the Romanic to the Gothic, witness to the long period during which it was constructed, beginning in the 13th century. Later, the city expanded outside the old city walls, and new centres developed in the surrounding streets and squares: the original marketplace eventually became the most famous of the city's squares: Praça do Giraldo.

As the city grew so did its power to attract. In time, it became one of the favourites of the Portuguese Court, which spent long periods here. Nobles and traders followed the court, and by the 15th century,

Évora had the second largest Jewish quarter in the country after Lisbon. The names of the streets which lead off Giraldo Square date from the final centuries of the medieval era and in modern times are still in use: Rua da Moeda – Coin Street; Rua dos Mercadores – Merchants Street; and Beco do Tinhoso – Devil's Alley; some of which also reflect how dynamic the economy of Évora was.

With the growth of the city, there was a need to strengthen the defensive structure by means of the construction of a new ring of city walls, built in the 14th century by Alphonse IV and Ferdinand I; it had eleven gates and several turrets and it extended the perimeter of the city by a considerable margin, taking in spaces like the Jewish quarter, the Moorish quarter and the religious houses of the Order of St Frances and St Dominic.

The University of Évora, situated in the centre of the city, was founded in 1559 by Cardinal King Henry. Its magnificent building boasts cloisters in Renaissance style and a Baroque façade to the imposing Chamber and the several classrooms surrounding it; the walls are covered with *azulejo* ceramic tiles telling stories with scientific, biblical and mythological themes, and there are ornate carved wooden professors' chairs.

Another outstanding monument is the aqueduct. Begun in 1532, probably on the site of a similar Roman construction, it supplied the city with water carrying it 18 kilometres from source. As it approaches the city walls it is at its most impressive, as its elegant arches penetrate the city to feed the fountains, troughs, religious houses and noble mansions inside. It originally ended at the fountain in the great square located just outside the 'new' city walls - Rossio de S. Brás – a marketplace still in use; the chapel of St Brás on the other side of the square was founded in 1483, a unique example of Gothic-Mudéjar architecture, which influenced the style of many Alentejo-Gothic buildings.

#### Bibliography

Túlio Espanca, *Inventário Artístico do Concelho de Évora*, Lisboa, 1966

#### **Aldeia da Luz**

The village of Luz is located in the parish of Luz in the district of Mourão, county of Évora. With a population of about 350, it was from an early stage (at least from the 1950s) associated with plans to build a huge reservoir. The Alqueva Reservoir now covers an area of around 250 km<sup>2</sup> of territory in the Alentejo and Spain and is the largest man-made lake in Europe. One of the biggest impacts of the project was the submersion of the old village of Luz.

The village possessed features characteristic of the social and cultural identity of the interior Alentejo, and was marked by the proximity of the River Guadiana one kilometre away.

One of the identity references of the village associated with the river is an emblematic Roman monument now submerged by the reservoir - Lousa Castle. Dating from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., it was built strategically overlooking the river and, probably in conjunction with other strongholds, watched over a territory in which mines abounded.

Over the centuries the Guadiana has played an important role in the history of the village of Luz, and water was a unifying element in the everyday life of its inhabitants – both as a source of sustenance and on the imaginary and symbolic plane, in rites of passage, in proverbs and oral traditions, in leisure practices, in economic activities and in architecture: witness the water-mills built on the river and used to grind cereals – the basis of the diet in this southern region.

As the submersion of the village loomed large, the process of re-housing the community and the removal and installation of heritage features went ahead, with the building of a new village designed in imitation of the doomed village.

The entire process of relocation was fully debated by the local community which turned out to be a unique experience with impacts felt both at the regional and national level.

The new village of Luz, inaugurated in 2002, is located near the Alqueva Reservoir, great new feature shaping the landscape which, at the same time, endows the new territory with identity and unity.

A museum has been created in the new village whose mission is to portray and interpret the whole process of dislocation and rebirth, while providing a service to the public which at the same time takes advantage of the new opportunities brought by the reservoir to the rural space.

#### Bibliography:

Clara Saraiva, *Luz e água: etnografia de um processo de mudança*, no. 02 'Colecção Museu da Luz', Beja: EDIA/Museu da Luz, 2005

#### **ITINERARY 1 – Travellers' memoirs of the Alentejo**

The idea of the journey has always appealed to the imagination for a variety of reasons (military, mere curiosity, adventure-seeking) and in a range of circumstances, even though the journey may simply take place in the imagination. Contact with other people and places, and other ways of life, at different times in history is a constant in the history of peoples, and at one stage literature would endow travel with overwhelming importance in accordance with the times: accounts of travels became best-sellers in the late 18th century: at that time travel played a crucial role in education.

Besides simple descriptions of the conditions they encountered, 18th-century travellers gave accounts of the wealth of regions (mines and industries), agriculture and trade, political affairs (central and local government) and intellectual life (universities, the arts and letters, and palaces), they noted peculiarities, visited libraries and specialists, and spoke with local people: they sought out and visited places of interest, asked questions, formed opinions, and above all, they debated, negotiated and dialogued with the people they came into contact with.

These accounts form the basis of our proposal that the places of the south should be *revisited*, that the Alentejo region should be *rediscovered* using the itineraries followed by travellers throughout history, thus providing an understanding of how change and permanence has impacted on the heritage and trade, in short, on the material and abstract features of a culture closely aligned with Mediterranean values, which, for this very reason, has fascinated adventurers throughout history. Selected accounts of travels are presented in chronological order.

### **The travels of Antonino Pio, 2nd century A.D.**

**Itinerary:** Lisbon, Coima, (Santiago do Cacém), (Évora), Helve, Badajoz, Mérida.

The author describes the 151 miles of the route from Lisbon to Mérida, and also gives information about other routes: Equabona (Coima) was located three leagues from Lisbon and from it one could reach Cetóbriga (Setúbal) and its salt flats; from there, the road led to Salácia (Alcácer do Sal) and one could travel onward to Évora, 44 miles away.

The route the author took led to a settlement on the banks of the river Gévora or Guadiana and thence to Dipone, 12 miles distant, where it led to Mérida, via Evandrina or Evandria.

### **The travels of Al-Idrisi [Abu-abd-Allah-Mohammed-ben-Edris-al-Hamudi], 1099–1164**

**Itinerary:** Lisbon, Santarém, Alcácer do Sal, Évora, Mértola, Elvas, Badajoz.

There are numerous reports of the Alentejo dating from medieval times; this traveller was an Arab - an 11th-century geographer; the fascination of his discourse is that it is full of opinions regarding the places he visits besides providing details of a more technical nature, like distances between urban centres.

Here is an example: *"Al-Caçr (Alcácer do Sal) is a beautiful city of medium size built on the banks of the Chetoubar, a great river navigated by many vessels and trading ships. Pine forests surround the city on all sides; many ships are built there. (...) From Al-Caçr to the sea it is 20 miles; it is two days' journey from Al-Caçr to Yeborah (Évora). This city is big and populous. It is surrounded by city walls and has a formidable castle and a principal mosque. The fields that surround it are exceedingly fertile, producing wheat and all kinds of fruit and vegetables, and providing pasture for animals. It is an excellent region where trade thrives - both exports and imports."*

### **The travels of King Philip III (Philip II of Portugal), 1622**

**Itinerary:** Elvas, Estremoz, Montemor-o-Novo, Lisbon.

This journey made by King Philip III of Spain is described by João Batista Lavanha, the royal chronicler.

Philip entered and exited Portugal via the Alentejo: he travelled from Madrid via Trujillo, Mérida, and Badajoz to the frontier at Caia, and thence to the capital and its environs: Almada, Lisbon, Sintra, Setúbal, Palmela, Salvaterra, Almeirim, Santarém, Tomar and Tancos. His return journey took in Ponte de Sôr, Alter do Chão, Arronches and Campo Maior, and from there he travelled to Badajoz.

In his account of the travels of the monarch, the writer is concerned to describe the pomp and ceremony with which the royal party was received in each town, a sign of tribute and the acceptance of a new foreign king as ruler of Portugal. Philip's arrival in Évora provides material for the most detailed account and is a good example of the magnificent receptions laid on for the king and his entourage.

### **The Travels of Cosme de Médicis, Duke of Tuscany, 1669**

**Itinerary:** Campo Maior, Elvas, Borba, Vila Viçosa, Estremoz, Évoramonte, Évora, Montemor-o-Novo and Setúbal.

This visit took place shortly after the War of the Restoration and consequently castles and forts are described in some detail. There are accounts of the destruction wrought by the conflict with Spain, a reflection of the writer's interest in military affairs. Here is a typical extract:

*"By way of Badajoz to Yelues [Elvas], one crosses the River Caya, which acts as the frontier between Spain and Portugal until it flows into the Guadiana, which then takes on this role. The terrain is uneven with low hills and valleys, and the fields are either full of weeds or wheat, for the war destroyed the vineyards and olive groves. (...) In Campo Maior, S. A. lunched in the porch of a chapel off the square and then went for a walk round the fortifications."*

### **The Travels of Don Juan Álvarez de Colmenar, 1740s**

**Itinerary:** Évora, Estremoz, Elvas, Portalegre, Olivença, Vila Viçosa, Serpa e Beja.

In his work *Délices d'Espagne et du Portugal*, the writer draws a general map of the kingdom, adopting a criterion for the description of cities based on the provinces in which they are located.

In his account of the city of Évora, he praises its antiquity and, as was then the custom, begins with a description of its foundation by the Phoenicians, who called it *Ebora*, meaning fertile and productive. The city was located in heart of the province, with good adjacent farmland surrounded by hills and there were silver mines. There is a description of how Julius Caesar bestowed the status of Roman city on the town, naming it *Liberalitas Jvliæ*, a designation that the writer found in an inscription on his visit to the city; Álvarez writes that Sertório furnished Évora with a good ring of city walls as well as a magnificent aqueduct, while in Gothic times King Sesibuto granted the city the right to mint coins.

His account of the contemporary city adopts an essentially military perspective: around 5,000 citizens can be called on to take up arms, and the city is fortified with thirteen bastions and defended by a citadel (St Anthony's Fort).

### **The Travels of William Beckford, 1787**

**Itinerary:** Lisbon, Aldeia Galega, Pegões, Montemor-o-Novo, Arraiolos, Estremoz, Elvas.

This English aristocrat was a son of the Lord Mayor of London, a Member of Parliament and an extremely wealthy man, the source of his riches in England and Jamaica; he obviously possessed literary talent, and visited Portugal on three occasions, in 1787, 1793-96 and 1798.

On his way south, he describes the desert-like aspect of the region, the monotony of the journey broken only by a few withered olive trees and holm oaks, over a distance of five leagues from Aldeia Galega to Pegões. He stayed the night here at an inn housed in a palace built by King John V in 1728, and expressed his surprise at its elegance; on rising, he gives a description of the landscape at dawn.

On his way through Montemor, he portrays the town as being *"built on the side of a hill and surrounded on all sides by small olive groves"*. Then, on towards Arraiolos, *"an unattractive old town", which provided "(...) carpets for my travels, all grotesquely designed in resounding colours – the product of a factory in the town that employs 300 workers"*.

Beckford journeyed on towards the Spanish border. In Estremoz he stayed at an inn, and then travelled on horseback to Elvas, where he admired Lippe's fort, leaving us a picture of the landscape of the region, as he travelled thence to Spain:

*"I passed through interminable plains covered with trees, whose gloomy green colour dampened the spirits. One or two miles from Elvas, the aspect of the country changes as the traveller enters a vast forest of olive trees with springs at the sides of the road, and avenues of poplars, which [in December] had not yet shed their leaves. Dominating the city, the arches of the aqueduct put in perspective, from some aspects, the view of the Gothic cathedral which is falling into ruins. The city walls are surrounded by English-type gardens, offering lovely walks. (...)"*

### **The travels of Arthur William Costigan, published in 1787**

**Itinerary:** Cádiz, Vila Real de Santo António, Mértola, Beja, Évora, Vila Viçosa, Juromenha, Estremoz, Elvas

The author was an Irish officer, an infantry captain in the service of Portugal and a trained engineer. He describes his arrival in Mértola from the Algarve, via the Guadiana, which he claims was imposing in Roman times, but 'is now poor at first sight'. Travelling along a recently-constructed road, he proceeded to Beja, where he describes its strategic location, set in desert-like surroundings, nevertheless recognized as being potentially fertile: the problem was the lack of people and the agriculture which was not well-organised.

He also describes how, at that time, the purity of the air between Mértola and Beja was recommended by Lisbon physicians as being beneficial for the health, and comments that the Englishmen thought the same regarding Lisbon. In Évora, walking round Geraldo Square, he describes the long and ample arcades with shops; from the old castle he contemplates the plain and describes how poorly it is exploited for farming and recommends the cultivation of vines and wheat; he thinks the city has potential for the development of the local area. He tours the well-known monuments of the city and praises its wide-ranging gastronomy, being served "*very nice tea, fresh butter and excellent cream, things that we encountered for the first time in this country*". He journeyed on to Elvas, giving an appreciative account of the military garrison, where he was received by a French officer, and then on towards the Spanish border.

Many published accounts of travels are available and many others could be published: among those of interest the following deserve special mention - the accounts of the **ambassador of King George of Bohemia** sent to **King Aphonse V** in 1466; that of **Princess Mary of Portugal**, in 1543; the account sent to **King Sebastian**, in 1571 by the **ambassador of Pope Pius V**; and the account of the first visit by the **Japanese ambassador to Europe** in 1590. Highlights from the 17th century are the reports of **François de Tours** (1699-1700) and **Frederic de Merveilleux**, and from the 18th century, the accounts of the visits of **Giuseppe Baretti** (1761-1765), **Pérez Bayer** (1782), **James Murphy** (1789-1790), **Robert Southey** (1795-1796), and **Heinrich Friedrich Link** and **Haffmansegg-Bemerkungen** (1797-1800).

#### Bibliography:

Fernando Castelo-Branco Chaves, *Os livros de viagens em Portugal nos séculos XVIII e sua projecção europeia*, Lisboa, 1977, Vol. 1.

### **ITINERARY II - Trade centres**

#### **Alto Alentejo**

##### **Alcácer do Sal**

Alcácer do Sal is located on the right bank of the River Sado. From the castle which crowns the hill overlooking the town, there is a marvellous view of the unique landscape: beyond the meandering river lie the Maceira Hills in the distance, while along the course of the river towards the sea salt flats and paddy fields can be seen.

The town was first settled in pre-historic times, and evidence of the first human presence in the area has been discovered in the Mesolithic sediments of the Sado, such as remains from the Phoenician factory of Abul downstream from the town, which demonstrates that there were links with the Mediterranean in ancient times. Meanwhile, remains found on the site of the castle have provided the best leads for an understanding of the human settlement of the territory: there are Neolithic remains, and the site was later occupied in the late Bronze Age, succeeded by an Iron-Age settlement, probably called *Keition* by the indigenous peoples.

At nearby Olival do Senhor dos Mártires, there is an Iron-Age necropolis where Egyptian beetles and Greek pots were found in the graves.

During Roman times the city was called *Salacia Urbs Imperatoria*, and was known for minting its own coins and turning the River Sado, *Callipus*, into a main Mediterranean commercial route. The *forum* of the Roman city was located in the vicinity of the castle and surrounded by *tabernae*, the partial remains of which were found in front of the church of St Mary of the Castle, as well as a sanctuary, also dating from the Roman period (second half of the 1st century A.D.), on the site of the Convent of Our Lady of Aracoelli, now used as a *pousada* - a luxury inn.

During the period of Visigoth domination, Alcácer was an episcopal city and in Islamic times it was known as Qasr Abu-Danis and was an important commercial port and shipbuilding centre. During this period it was one of the principal strongholds of the Iberian Peninsula, occupying a strategic position in the west just like Marvão in the east, in the interior of the territory.

Conquered by King Alphonse Henry in 1158, it fell to Moors and was re-conquered only in 1217 by Alphonse II with the help of crusaders, whereupon it became the seat of the Order of Santiago.

Throughout the Middle Ages the economy was extremely dynamic, but in the 16th century, with deforestation and the silting-up of the river, the city dwindled in importance, only partly recovering with the production of salt and rice.

In sum, Alcácer do Sal was a port city *par excellence* and a centre for trade between the interior (producing minerals, farm produce and products derived from cattle) and ports in distant countries, especially the Mediterranean.

## Bibliography

João Carlos Lázaro Faria, *Alcácer do Sal ao Tempo dos Romanos*, Colibri, 2002.

### **Arraiolos**

The town of Arraiolos is crowned by an imposing castle of circular design, unique in Portugal. From the hill, known as St Peter's Mount, which was first settled in prehistoric times, there is a panoramic view of the vast Alentejo plain. The present castle was built by King Dennis in 1306 but the original settlement situated inside the castle wall has long been abandoned. As a historian who studied the town has explained, "... the townspeople ... tended to spread out into the suburbs, that is, down the hill and over the plain and into the squares ... leaving the area inside the Castle depopulated ..." (Cunha Rivara). One can still see the ruins of the Palace of the Magistrates within the castle walls.

In time, the centre of the town was established on the side of the hill. In the main square, Praça Lima e Brito, there is the old jailhouse dating from 1547, the pillory, erected in 1634, and Misericórdia Church, founded in 1580.

Outside the town, there is the Lóios Monastery, founded in 1527 and donated to the friars of St John the Baptist; its interior is notable for the church vault and the cloisters, on two levels, with a central marble fountain.

Arraiolos is famous for its rugs, with the secrets of their intricate patterns passed down from over the generations; they are woven by hand in coloured wools on a jute base. They were first produced in the 16th century; the oldest references to Arraiolos rugs are contained in an inventory, dating from 1598, referring to the existence of "a new town rug worth two thousand *reis*". However, recent archaeological digs have revealed 95 pits in the rocky subsoil of the main square which may have been associated with the dying process; the woollen remains found were dyed with *Rubia tintorum*, a natural colouring agent, so rugs may have been made in ancient times.

According to experts, two main stages can be distinguished in terms of style in the production of rugs, the first Persian-influenced, and the second characterised by floral arabesques. In the 19th century there was a fall in production, and the industry contracted to handicraft proportions, although the secrets of rug-making were preserved, enabling a revival of the industry in the 20th century; first regular production was based on small workshops, and later factories produced rugs for the export market.

## Bibliography

J. H. Cunha Rivara, *Memórias da Vila de Arrayolos*, Câmara Municipal de Arraiolos, 1991.

### **Elvas**

The city of Elvas constitutes one of the most singular strongholds in the Alentejo, all the more so due to the range of fortifications dating from different periods. The medieval castle dominates the city; it was conquered by King Sancho II and rebuilt in 1228 on the site of a fortification dating from the Islamic period.

Over the next few hundred years, the basic structure was strengthened, John II and Manuel I creating a system of ramparts. The 17th-century Wars of the Restoration saw large-scale improvements made to the city's defences, giving them their current aspect.

Obviously it was Elvas' position on the frontier that was behind the carrying out of repeated fortification work; a construction programme of great technical complexity was carried out in the 17th and 18th centuries, essentially designed by the military engineer Joannes Cieremans. A complex system of walls, ravelins, trenches and two additional forts, St Lucy's Fort, formerly linked to the city, and, at some distance from the city, the imposing Grace Fort.

Besides the system of fortifications, throughout the city a rich heritage of buildings bears witness to the key role Elvas played in the construction of the Alentejo: the spectacular 15th-century Amoreira Aqueduct, which feeds the Misericórdia Fountain, the main church, dating from the 16th century but subject to successive alterations, the pillory, a beautiful carved 16th-century column, and the 15th-century House of the Train.

Elvas has always been the first line of defence for the Alentejo and its main stronghold. In fact, it is just one of a line of ancient fortifications in the region, although perhaps the most symbolic, as it is the most exposed to attack. These centres were also the venues for popular fairs and markets.

In the town of Avis, for example, there is another imposing fortification, constructed on the site of a fortress dating from the Islamic period, and donated by the first king of Portugal, Alphonse Henry, to the Order of Friars of Évora in 1211, which was later renamed the Order of Avis.

Other imposing fortifications for the defence of the north Alentejo can be seen in Estremoz: the 13th-century castle and the surrounding countryside are dominated by the imposing main tower. The city has always played an important role in the history of this territory since it is located on the Roman road linking Lisbon and Mérida, in modern Spain, and the rich marble deposits located nearby have probably been worked since time immemorial. The charter of 1258 regulated the settlement of the city, conferring privileges on new settlers. The ancient fortress was rebuilt, and later, in 1280, King Dennis had it remodelled, enlarging the castle and building the royal palace.

Another castle of note is that of Montemor-o-Novo conquered from the Moors by the first king of Portugal. The medieval town built inside the castle was protected from attack; one can still visit the Palace of the Alcaldes and the Churches of Santiago, St John and St Mary of the Bishop, as well as the old Saudação Convent.

#### Bibliography

Luís Keil, *Inventário Artístico de Portugal*, Academia Nacional de Belas Artes, 1943.

### **Lower Alentejo**

#### **Monsaraz**

The town of Monsaraz perches high on a ridge overlooking the River Guadiana. The local area was settled from an early date, and in the town's surroundings remains have been found providing evidence of occupation: prehistoric villages, dolmens and menhirs. Like many other points on the line of defence of the Alentejo, the important stronghold of Monsaraz occupied a strategic position due to its proximity to the frontier with Spain and the Guadiana.

The town was occupied for a long period during the Islamic era: although it had been conquered by the Christian armies in 1157, it fell in 1173 to the Almóadas and only in 1232 did King Sancho II finally reconquer it from the Moors with the help of the Knights Templar.

The 13th-century castle built at the top of the hill was subject to alterations on various occasions, the most significant of which was the addition of Vauban-type ramparts built in 1644, designed by the French engineers Nicolau de Langres and Jean Gillot; they also carried out alterations to other fortifications along the frontier which were executed during the Wars of the Restoration of the 17th century. The well near the city walls and the interesting cistern also form part of the fortified structure.

The old Jewish quarter which progressively lost its original character preserves the memory of the time when Monsaraz was a dynamic trading centre, and near the town gate one can see the yardstick used for determining what duty should be paid on cloth entering the town. In between the houses built inside the town walls there are several buildings of note: the main church of Our Lady of Lagoa, the Council Palace (the old council chamber and courthouse) with a 15th-century interior mural entitled "The Good Judge and the Bad Judge", and the main tower.

Its character of defensive stronghold prevented Monsaraz from developing fully when war was no longer a priority. Consequently, it was decided that the seat of district (*concelho*) should be moved to the more central location of Reguengos in 1840; this town is mentioned in the title documents to royal land divided up the 14th century in response to the contemporary demographic crisis in order to stimulate the development of the region. The new town of Reguengos was therefore developed by new landholding bourgeoisie which emerged from the Liberal period as the motor for economic development, acquiring land and implementing strategies for the production of woollens, traditional wines, now among the best-known in the country.

#### Bibliography

João de Almeida, *Roteiro dos Monumentos Militares Portugueses*, Vol. 3, 1948.

#### **Portel/Vera Cruz**

Portel has some of the most attractive fortifications in the Alentejo. Set on a ridge is an imposing castle built in 1261 by the nobleman Dom João Peres de Aboim, who is recorded in history as Dom João de Portel. The district of Portel was created when King Alphonse III gave the land to one of his principal servants, who thus became one of the most important landowners south of the Tagus in this period. The castle is heptagonal in shape with turrets at the apexes, an architectural system presenting innovative solutions that only a century later would become generalized.

The original settlement, known as the Old Town, grew up during the 13th century inside the town walls; during subsequent centuries the developing town expanded outside the walls. Following the conflict of 1383-85, ownership of Portel passed once more to the Crown, and it was given by King John I to Nuno Álvares Pereira, remaining in the hands of the House of Braganza up until the Liberal period.

Besides the houses in the town, there are several religious buildings of note, like the 17th-century baroque Misericórdia Church, situated near the town wall that leads to the Old Town (built on the site of the Chapel of St Roman or the Chapel of St Brás of Portel). It is now a highlight of the Fresco Itinerary, whose aim is to raise awareness about Alentejo churches with mural paintings.

Not far from Portel, Vera Cruz deserves a special mention: a small settlement enveloped in an atmosphere of mysticism and faith, it guards a relic, a fragment of the Holy Log – the wooden cross used to crucify Christ – giving rise to one of the most notable occurrences of devotional practice in the Alentejo.

At St Peter of Marmelar, a Mozarab church, built during the Islamic era, was converted into a monastery by the Hospital Order in 1240. This is an eminently Gothic construction, with the features of a church-fortress: robustly built, crowned with merlons and a narthex defended by two imposing towers; in the interior, there are several stone features with decorated with geometrical and floral patterns.

According to legend, the relic of the Holy Log was brought from Palestine during the 7th Crusade. It was destined for Évora Cathedral but since this was under construction it was kept at the monastery, in the place henceforth known as Vera Cruz: the True Cross. Over the centuries, many have made the pilgrimage to Vera Cruz to see it.

#### Bibliography

Ana Pagará, *O Castelo e a Vila Velha de Portel*, Câmara Municipal de Portel, 2001.

#### **Vila Viçosa**

The name of Vila Viçosa alludes the verdant banks of nearby streams; the 16th-century Évora scholar, André de Resende, Latinized the name, baptizing the city *Callipole*.

Following the conquest of the territory by the Christians, responsibility for the settlement's administration passed to the knights of the Order of Avis. Later, royal decrees established a town which thrived and attracted new settlers. It first received a charter as part of the district (concelho) of Estremoz, and later a new district was created with its own privileges.

Among measures implemented to develop the town were the foundation of Agostinhos Monastery and, later, during the reign of King Dennis, the construction of a robust castle that housed the medieval town up until the 14th century, when population growth was such that the town expanded outside the castle walls.

Centuries later, the castle was altered, being strengthened by the construction of a star-shaped polygonal system of fortifications designed by Joannes Cieremans - the Dutch military engineer who was appointed Engineer of the Alentejo Province with the mission of reinforcing the strongholds of the region during the Wars of the Restoration.

In 1461, the town passed into the hands of the powerful House of Bragança and was turned into a seat of the Royal Court; the presence of the Dukes of Bragança attracted a large number of noble families and officials to the town and their wealth is evident in the luxury displayed in the fine houses and the architectural richness.

From the 16th to the 17th centuries, some of the most splendid houses of the House of Bragança were built here. In 1502 the construction of the Duchy Palace began; it was initially designed in Manueline style, but later a classicist style was adopted: the marble façade is 110 metres long, looking out on a square with a statue in the centre of John IV, the eighth Duke of Bragança and king of Portugal, mounted on a horse. The construction of the palace brought changes to the town and streets were laid out to accommodate the noble palaces that were built. With the accession of John IV to the throne, Vila Viçosa became the leisure resort of the royal family.

Among buildings of note in the modern-day city are Agostinhos Church with the Pantheon of the Dukes, Chagas Church with the Pantheon of the Duchesses, and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Conception of Vila Viçosa, the patron saint of Portugal.

#### Bibliografia

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### **ITINERARY III – From the Romans to the present-day - the exploration of natural resources**

#### **Mining and mineral extraction**

##### **Aljustrel**

The first evidence of the extraction of ores in the Alentejo dates from pre-history. In the Iberian pyrites belt, what are called "tops of iron" occur on the surface and deposits of ores like copper, iron and gold can



easily be worked by open-cast mining. It therefore comes as no surprise that there were numerous such sites like this and that the Romans intensified production with the introduction of technical advances.

In Aljustrel, in the Roman era, it is estimated that the *Vicus Vipascensis* designated mining area produced around 450,000 tons of slag between the 1st and 4th centuries A.D.; metal-founding was also carried out here.

Archaeological excavations carried out at the mines of Algares and St John of the Desert in Aljustrel have enabled the identification of wells and galleries with the remains of exploration in the Roman period, systems of support, extraction and piping, and one of the most significant finds in terms of Roman mining artefacts in the whole empire: the "Plates of Aljustrel" - plates of bronze that display the laws governing mining activity in the designated area.

Information about the history of the mining area is now on display at the permanent exhibition at the Aljustrel Municipal Museum and at the industrial archaeology centre of Algares mine which portrays mining in the 20th century.

To the north, in the Monfurado Hills, between the cities of Évora and Montemor-o-Novo, numerous remains of mining activity are also in evidence; the name of the hills - Monfurado - means 'perforated'.

Archaeological digs have unearthed Roman remains attesting to mining exploration here, but the activity later dwindled, only reviving at the end of the 19th century with the "mining fever" that swept the country. Licences were granted for countless mining operations and the railways were built to carry the product of exploration, leading to the development of the local economy.

In the GeoPark Naturtejo near the River Tagus, in the district of Nisa, there is a unique mining exploration in the Alentejo: the gold mine of Conhal do Arneiro.

Here the alluvial silt of the River Tagus was exploited in Roman times, and although studies continue, it is now known that extraction was carried out by mounting barriers to the flow of water which were then removed for the purpose of sifting the silt and separating the ore; this was done by force of gravity as the water was channelled away by levees. This process resulted in the deposit of great mounds of pebbles on the banks of the river near the rocky ravine of Portas de Ródão, which can still be seen.

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### **Lousal**

In the Iberian pyrites belt, between the valley of the River Sado and the Guadalquivir in Spain, there are a vast range of mining structures. The mines were exploited during different periods, and there was a boom in mining at the end of the 19th century.

In the hills of Grândola and Cercal, for example, there are numerous vestiges of ancient mines, like the copper mines of Caveira. Accounts such as those of Plinius refer to the extraction of metals and trade along the River Sado.

More recent is the exploration of the mine of Lousal, with the first mine opening in 1882. The concession was first acquired by a local labourer and then passed into the hands of a succession of different owners, until it was bought in 1910 by the mining concerns of Société Anonyme Belge des Mine d'Aljustrel and Sociedade Belga Mines et Industries S.A.

In the 1930s production began to increase with the search for copper pyrites for the production of sulphuric acid. The industry expanded and new mines were sunk and concessions granted.

By the end of the 1950s, the mechanization of the extractive process had begun, increasing profitability: mechanical diggers, chains and motorized vehicles were introduced. However, Lousal mine closed in 1988.

Ten years later, a museum project was launched, turning the former mine into a tourist attraction operated by the newly-created Frederic Verge Foundation.

This is a pioneer project in Portugal and the museum has several aims. First, to raise public awareness about the rich industrial heritage which played a part in the lives of many communities; secondly, to save and preserve the material heritage associated with mining which was in danger of being lost; thirdly, to establish social and economic ties with the local community, which depended on mining over a period of decades, with a view to helping it survive by encouraging people to stay.

Spaces in which the community lived and worked have been adapted to form part of the display, thus preserving the memory of Lousal mine. The old administrative offices have been turned into a handicrafts centre, the old steam-generator house is now a restaurant, and the electric power station forms part of

the display with a range of equipment, like motors and compressors. It is hoped that the project will develop in the future, with centres for documentation, archives, a geology service, a museography centre and a learning centre.

There are guided visits of the old mines for visitors, and the presentation of details about the extractive process and the experience of the local community involved in this innovative project is adapted for different publics.

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### **Marble**

Among the types of stone used in the creation of architectural works and sculptures, marble was a symbol of luxury and wealth in the classical period, used for creating statues and majestic constructions such as temples and palaces.

The exploration of marble deposits in ancient times made places like Paros and Carrara famous, and in Hispania notable deposits with a comparable degree of beauty and purity were also exploited.

Several different deposits of marble were worked in the Alentejo and the use of "Roman cut" techniques employing wedges and levers persisted up until the 19th century, when explosives were introduced.

At the Roman quarry on the Vigária estate in Bencatel/Vila Viçosa, a block of marble was found with an unfinished bas-relief representing a divinity with an aquatic aspect, but it was destroyed by extractive works during the 1970s. There are accounts of exploration during Roman times in documentary sources like 'Natural History' by Plinius, describing how *Emerita Augusta*, now Mérida in the Spanish province of Extremadura, gleamed with marble extracted from the *agri* of Estremoz/Vila Viçosa.

Although ornamental rocks were imported and exported in ancient times, deposits were exploited mainly to meet domestic demand. The fact that the Alentejo was situated in a peripheral region of the Roman Empire meant that marble actually had to be imported. The cost of transporting such a heavy and bulky commodity limited the capacity for exporting products from the region, but some marble was exported - archaeological remains provide evidence about the distant origins of stone features, especially statues, located abroad.

A number of different deposits are known to have been exploited during ancient times and along the centuries. Besides the above-mentioned Estremoz-Borba-Vila Viçosa belt in the Northern/North-western area, there are St Brissos, Viana do Alentejo and Trigaches in the central area, which are equally renowned for their quality marble with characteristic hues bearing curious names such as "Estremoz Whites, Creams and Pinks", "Borba Pink", "Trigaches Grey" and "Viana Green".

Today, a healthy extractive industry still works the same veins and Portuguese marble is exported all over the world. At many locations, tourists can take part in guided tours, for example on the "Marble Itineraries" of the district of Vila Viçosa.

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### **Places**

#### **Ammaia**

The ruins of the city of Ammaia are situated at the foot of the rocky outcrop on which the town of Marvão is perched, in St Saviour of Aramenha, near the Apartadura Reservoir in the Natural Park of St Mamede.

The remains of the Roman city are spread over about thirty hectares adjacent to the Madalena Brook and to River Sever. One can still see the bases of towers, the foundations of houses, the south gate, the *forum* area, the baths and the stone slabs of the city walls. In the area that has been studied, inscriptions and other remains have been found, especially pottery and glassware, comprising a collection of great importance.

This urban centre was probably founded between the reigns of the emperors Augustus and Claudius, though one inscription seems to point to the city having existed prior to this (*Genio oppidi constituti*). We know that in around 44 or 45 A.D. it held the status of *civitas* and later, according to an inscription dedicated to the Emperor Lucius Verus (161-169), we know that the town achieved *municipium* status.

The city was walled and in it, or in part of it, there lived the "muladi" Ibn Maruan who in the 9th century was lord of "*Ammaia, that of the ruins*". In the 16th century, parts of the city walls and towers could still be seen, but over time the city was plundered of a large number of the more ornate stones and much of the remains were scattered. There are even accounts of statues being taken abroad; for example, an arch belonging to the city gate was taken away in 1710, erected in Castelo de Vide and finally destroyed in 1891.

The current archaeological site is divided in two by national route 359 which runs from Portalegre to Marvão, and there is a museum set in the beautiful landscape dedicated to the site, where some of the ruins and collections of important remains are on display.

The parish of São Salvador da Aramanha, in the Natural Park of the São Mamede Hills, boasts a rich cultural and natural heritage. For example, opposite Ammaia, there is a celebrated spring called Olhos da Água, which lent its name to a farm and which from ancient times supplied the city of Ammaia. It still supplies the city of Portalegre with water, and the farm facility deserves to be visited for its great beauty and variety of structures.

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### **Tourega and Valverde**

As with many other regions, the Tourega / Valverde area was gradually settled over the centuries. Certain places prove extremely attractive for settlers, either because they are transit zones, or because they offer good conditions for agriculture, or have water or mineral resources in abundance, or are set in areas with a varied landscape and geographical features, or because they offer attractive sites for defence or the building of religious monuments, and in many cases these sites possess a heritage which demonstrates that they have been occupied for millennia. This is true of Tourega, located about 15 kilometres south-west of Évora on the road to Alcáçovas.

No local, encontra-se a *villa* romana de N.<sup>a</sup> Sr.<sup>a</sup> da Assunção da Tourega, que se encontra junto à margem da barragem com o mesmo nome e é, verdadeiramente, a memória antiga dos latifúndios, bastante extensos, dedicados à agricultura e que ainda serviam, como neste caso, para apoiarem e beneficiarem da exploração mineira de materiais ferrosos que se fazia até há pouco tempo na serra dos Monges.

Here we find the Roman *villa* of Our Lady of the Assumption of Tourega near the reservoir with the same name. It preserves the ancient memory of large farming estates; in this case, the estate supported and drew benefit from the iron mine which was in operation until recently in the Monges Hills.

The small parish church of Tourega, facing west, with a rectangular plan and a single nave, is thought to have been in existence by 1429, when the cathedral chapter leased it out. In the 19th century, a wooden porch attached to the church stood on thirteen marble columns with carved capitals and bases, materials that according to local tradition had been taken from ruined buildings. In front of the church are the ruins of what is popularly known as the Palace of the Cardinal, now a poor state of repair, dating from before the 16th century, with counterforts and Gothic features. Nearby are the ruins of the Chapel of St Comba and Inominata - a small brick building dating from the second half of the 16th century, facing west with a triple-arched porch, and the Holy Fountain, with an inscription dating from the 13th century.

Places in this area with remains dating from prehistoric times which are worth a visit are: the village of Coroa do Frade and the great Zambujeiro Dolmen, near Valverde, the dolmen-chapel near St Brissos and Almendres Cromlech. From medieval times, notable features are the Castle of Geraldo, associated with the legend of the conquest of Évora. In this area there are many beautiful manorial estates, a large number dating from the medieval era or later; for example, there is Quinta da Provença and Quinta do Barrocal, but above all there is the Convent of Good Jesus of Valverde, which now belongs to the University of Évora: it was begun in the 16th century and its walls and water-associated structures have been well preserved and are well worth a visit.

We find abundant remains, big and small, of long occupation everywhere in the landscape, including mills and watermills, and also a varied natural heritage which is singular in the natural landscape of the Alentejo.

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### **Santiago do Cacém**

The Roman city of *Miróbriga* is located in what is now Santiago do Cacém. Here one can find some of the most important remains from the time of the Roman occupation in south-west Portugal. Covering an area of over 2 square kilometres, the site seems to have been occupied in the Bronze and Iron Ages, and then settled by the Romans the 1st century A.D. There were trading links with numerous Iberian cities, demonstrated by various archaeological finds: Iberian-Punic amphorae and painted pottery. The volume of trade with the Italic peninsula was also significant, evidenced by the presence of fine ceramics, and bronze and silver coins, as well as examples of buckles (*fibulas*).

Many ruins can still be seen today: houses (some with mural paintings), paved streets, taverns, a hippodrome, the baths, a single-arched bridge and the *forum*. Along the sidewalks, which feature a drainage system, whole blocks were built with areas for housing and shops, and some were fed piped water. The *forum*, which may date from the 1st century A.D., is located in the zone known as the "Old Castle" and a temple was located in a prominent position: the Temple of Esculápio was dedicated to the cult of the empire, and the entrance was built in monumental style with columns, facing the public square.

The baths were built in the 2nd century A.D. and are the best-preserved example of such a feature in the country. The layout is impressive: there is an entrance area, then massage-rooms, the cloakroom, the hot baths (*caldarium*) and cold baths (*frigidarium*).

The hippodrome, the only example of such a feature in Portugal, would have had wooden terracing and races were held and plays performed here. Other features which have been excavated are the foundations of the low wall at the centre running lengthways down the course (*spina*) and several *Cárceres* (stables), housing the racing chariots, usually drawn by two horses (*bigas*) or four (*quadrigae*).

*Miróbriga* was granted the status of *civitas* and would have had its own magistrates. Early 19th-century archaeological works show that *Miróbriga* was an important social-economic, religious, cultural and sports centre.

The castle, with seven towers, which once dominated Santiago do Cacém, dates from the Muslim occupation. In 1158, King Alphonse Henry gave it to Christ's militia, but it was captured by the caliph Al-Mansur in 1190. In 1217 King Afonso II finally gave it to the knights of the Order of Santiago, as is recorded on the cross that still stands near the church.

#### Bibliography:

Maria Filomena Barata (Ed.), *Miróbriga. Laboratório da Paisagem*, CD-ROM, Lisboa, 2004.

### **ITINERARY IV - Landscapes and heritage – vineyards and the Montado**

#### **The surroundings of Évora**

The Évora region enjoys a temperate climate and moderate rainfall. Certain zones present a rural landscape that retains many of the original characteristics of the Mediterranean forest associated with large granite outcrops. This association of features allowed for settlement by various peoples throughout history. Some of these features in the vicinity of Évora have been selected in order to provide an understanding of the structure of the landscape.

The Zambujeiro Dolmen, situated near the village of Valverde, is a megalithic burial monument built by the first agro-pastoral communities to settle in the region. They chose this place for its water resources and narrow valleys as a burial site and a sanctuary from the beginning of the 4th millennium to the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. The stone structure of the monument comprises a polygonal chamber of 7 prop-stones 7 metres high and a rectangular entrance corridor facing east with a length of about 12 metres. Originally it was covered by a top-stone, which now lies to the west of the dolmen. At the entrance there is a "menhir-stela" decorated with "dimples" and among the remains found at the site there are idol-shaped schist plates, staffs, necklaces, and copper and ceramic items. This is one of the largest megalithic monuments in the Iberian Peninsula.

The Castle of Geraldo, located on the east side of the Montemuro Hills, is a fortified site strategically located on the crest of a steep rocky scarp. The oval-shaped walled enclosure runs from east to west and occupies an area of around 200 square metres. There is evidence of settlement of the site from the late Neolithic and Chalcolithic eras, and ceramics found here date from the late Bronze Age. It was an important medieval settlement, sheltering and protecting scattered groups and communities south of the Tagus. Hence there the myth was created of it having been the refuge of Giraldo Giraldes "the Fearless",

who captured the city of Évora from the Moors in the middle of the 12th century. The magnificent view from the site, taking in Évora to the east and Tourega to the south, demonstrates why this type of fortified structure was so important in the region.

Valverde Palace Estate is located east of the village of Valverde, near the river of the same name. Cardinal Henry established a monastery here for Capuchin monks in the 16th century on land belonging to an estate owned by the bishop of Évora. Conventinho Chapel, designed by Miguel de Arruda, with its cruciform shape, is a rare example of a structure with five octagons and multiple domes. The estate's complex and large-scale system for the collection, storage and distribution of water is of special note, comprising an aqueduct, tanks and a cistern which fed the kitchen-garden, the garden and the orchard; there is also the beautiful Casa de Água, an ancient cistern-well, the Cardinals Lake, and the 17th-century kitchen-garden aqueduct of the Convent of Good Jesus of Mitra.

#### Bibliography:

Filipe Themudo Barata & J. Manuel Mascarenhas, *Preservando a memória do território, O Parque Cultural de Tourega / Valverde*, Évora, 2002.

### **Portalegre**

Portalegre is an imposing sight located on the side of the hills after which it was named; the situation of the fortress to the east indicates the site of the medieval city. All that remains of the castle built by King Dennis in the 14th century is the quadrangular main tower, forming part of the city walls which protected the main gate, and the northern tower. The system of walls followed the lie of the land, with twelve towers, remains of some of which are still visible shaping the round castle perimeter. There were originally eight gates including Peephole Gate, Alegrete Gate, Elvas Gate, Devesa Gate, Holy Ghost Gate, Bishop's Gate and St Francis' Gate, of which only three remain.

Devesa Gate seems to have been the most important one. There is evidence from the 16th century of works to strengthen the city walls and the main tower, with a ribbed arched structure replacing the old Gothic roof. There are some remains of the bustling medieval city, especially in the north-western area, such as Gothic gates. Atalião Tower, a square military construction, was probably built at the same time as the castle and the city walls.

About 10 kilometres away, Alegrete Castle is one of the most important fortresses along the Upper Alentejo frontier; along with Portalegre, it played a leading role in the defensive regional system from the Middle Ages. The first references to the town date from 1267, during the reign of Alphonse III, following the Convention of Badajoz, when the area was recognised as being Portuguese sovereign territory, and in 1319, when King Dennis granted it a charter and the castle was built. Despite the damage inflicted during the Peninsular War in the 19th century, the castle and the fortified village of Alegrete still retain a markedly medieval character.

The many religious houses of the city bear witness to Portalegre's historic past. The Cistercian Monastery of St Bernard, founded in 1518, was built in Romanic and Gothic style conjugated with the Manueline, visible in the cloisters with their round arches and capitals decorated with geometrical and floral patterns. Robinson's cork factory was installed in the St Francis' Monastery by the English trader G. W. Robinson, reflecting the wave of industrial expansion in the 19th century; on the site of the library and refectory two new buildings were constructed, and others were built for the production of cork; these are now part of the valuable industrial heritage and there are plans to turn them into a museological centre.

In contrast with many other urban centres in the Alentejo, the economy of Portalegre was based on a combination of industry and traditional agriculture that included the *Montado*.

#### Bibliography:

João Sampaio, "A propósito do centro histórico de Portalegre", *Ibn Maruã*, 8, Dec. 1998, pp. 269-295.

### **Redondo**

Wine and ceramics have long been produced in the Redondo area. The association of these two features is logical and one can read it in the landscape and the way of life of the local people.

Evidence of the Roman occupation of Redondo was found at the site of the *villa* of Monte Colmeal and the *villa* of Monte Real, where remains, scattered over a wide area, demonstrate the existence of farming.

St Paul's Monastery, about 3 kilometres from Aldeia da Serra, halfway up the side of the Ossa Hills at a remote location in the dense forest of indigenous and other species, was built by the monks of the order of St Paul the Hermit in an area with abundant water. Its layout and structure, which included a characteristic wall, are perfectly adapted to the morphology of the site. There is an abundance of springs, enabling water to be channelled by means of fountains, tanks, channels and a system of bore-holes in the

forest for the collection of water, and several chapels are located here; the system as a whole, besides its ecological significance, carries an important degree of mystical and symbolic meaning. Mãe d'Água Fountain adorns the south terrace of the monastery. The predominant forest cover comprises cork-oaks and eucalyptuses, and orange and olive trees are planted on the terraces in front of the building. The land surrounding the monastery is occupied by farmland. The cloister, laid out in a square design, is paved with tiles, adorned with box trees and boasts a fountain in the centre.

Redondo has a Regional Wine Museum with a fine collection of instruments associated with vine-growing. The different stages in the process of wine-producing are portrayed, from the tilling of the land to final consumption, reflecting the existence of centuries of traditional know-how passed down from father to son, and there is also a wine-tasting facility. Thanks to the expert knowledge of the local wine producers, the Redondo area is an outstanding vine-growing and wine-producing region.

The text and images show how distinctive the structure of the Alentejo landscape is and how similar it is to that of the Spanish border regions: this type of landscape is termed *Montado*: a balanced mixed system of arable farming (as a rule, the extensive dry-field cultivation of cereals), forestry (with cork-oak or holm-oak plantations) and pastoral farming (cattle- and pig-grazing on fallow land); the system also covers olive plantations and irrigated crops near urban centres.

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Túlio Espanca, *Inventário Artístico – Concelho de Évora*, Lisboa, 1966.

#### **Torre de Palma, St Cucufate, Pisões**

This is a temperate and moderately hilly region blessed with good water supplies and abundant productive soil: the ideal conditions for the large estates of the *Pax Romana*. Torre de Palma was the *villa Basilli* and was probably occupied from the 2nd century to the 4th century A.D. To the north, the view takes in the hills where Ammaia is located, to the northwest the outcrop of Vaiamonte, an ancient fort, to the west the plain, and to the south the hills near St Victoria of Ameixial and Vila Viçosa are visible.

Situated halfway up a hill, between a wooded ridge and a brook in an area with stony soils, and built on a site which had been occupied by the Celts, the *villa Basilli*, played the role of sentry watching over the vast area in which it was situated, keeping away undesirables and welcoming friends and travellers.

The *Basilli* loved nature and having moved out of the city, they found self-sufficiency on their *fundus*, where they enjoyed marvellous a panoramic view (*feliz speculatio*), recorded in frescoes and mosaics such as the Chorus of Muses and the Triumph of Bacchus. The existence of a grape-press and a wine cellar west of the site on which the *villa* was built, shows that vines were grown. Recent studies have shown that the vines of Torre de Palma covered an area of some 30 to 40 hectares in the time of Constantine.

The *villa* of St Cucufate in Vidigueira was built in the 1st century A.D. on a low site as the hub of a farm that was still operating in the 4th century, although the site was occupied up until the 18th century by a monastery. It is the only *villa* with two floors in the Iberian Peninsula, and the temple and monastery ruins remain. It was located in the territory of *Pax Iulia* (Beja), and recent studies indicate that the surrounding land was ordered to be divided up into plots to settlers. Evidence based on the study of amphorae and a *dolium* found at the site show that the latter was sealed with pitch and used as a vessel for wine, reflecting the modern practice of storing wine in large barrels.

Finally the *villa* of Pisões, built on the fertile plain about 10 kilometres southwest of Beja, on the Almagrassa Estate, was in operation between the 1st and 4th centuries A.D. Several monochromatic and polychromatic mosaics can be seen, along with tanks, a bathing pool, baths and a hypocaust serving more than 40 rooms; located near the Pisões Reservoir, it is one of the most important examples of private Roman baths in Portugal.

#### Bibliography:

[www.ippar.pt](http://www.ippar.pt)

#### **Nossa Senhora d'Aires**

The Sanctuary Nossa Senhora d'Aires is situated in the centre of a beautiful plain, set in pretty, fertile farmland; in ancient times it was known as *Aer* for its salubrious environment. It is located on the outskirts of Viana do Alentejo in a pleasant location with vegetable gardens, orchards, olive groves, vineyards and fountains. There are quarries in the area producing fine green marble, of which the interior columns of the church are constructed.

The ruins of the *vicus* are spread over an area of 10 hectares. It may have been walled, and there would have been an aqueduct that may have run past the present-day Cruzeiro chapel. Jorge Alarcão, an archaeologist attached to the University of Coimbra, identified a wall 1.68 metres wide and 150 metres

long along with many remains: foundations, capitals, pipes, pottery for construction and domestic use and ceramic ovens; also uncovered was an honorific inscription on a statue pedestal, several capitals and tombstones, all belonging to the *Vicus* necropolis, which is situated near the sanctuary of Our Lady of Aires.

This evidence, along with that provided by coins from the time of Trajan and Magnus Maximus, also found behind the sanctuary of Nossa Senhora d'Aires, and a milestone indicating the distance to Évora, show that this place was visited from time immemorial; it is now one of the most popular Portuguese sanctuaries.

On the site of the present-day sanctuary there was an old chapel dating from the 16th century which was demolished in the 18th century. The current chapel was built in the 19th century. The revered image, carved in Ançã stone and dating from the 15th century, is the object of devotion of the pilgrims who flock to the chapel on the fourth Sunday in September thus maintaining the old tradition of "cavalgadas", on foot and on horseback.

There is a large beautiful fountain (Nossa Senhora d'Aires) nearby, with a tank in carved stone, which leads to a drinking trough for beasts. The water flows on to another triangular tank which once irrigated an attractive row of poplars called the Pilgrims Avenue.

#### Bibliography:

Túlio Espanca, *Inventário Artístico de Portugal*, Distrito de Évora, Lisboa, 1978.