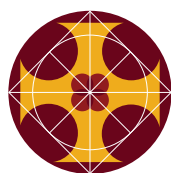


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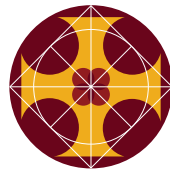


MUNICÍPIO DE
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EGAS MONIZ THE TUTOR

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Healers in Medieval Guimarães

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Abstract

The main purpose of this brief article is to present the various types of healing practices documented in Guimarães at the end of the Middle Ages, their practitioners and social reality. The revitalization of urban life, the significant regional role of Guimarães and its trade relations that went far beyond the borders of the kingdom of Portugal, make the late-medieval borough of Guimarães a central case study. The abundant documentation, mainly coming from the former archive of the Collegiate of Nossa Senhora da Oliveira, but also from the royal archives, among other sources, reveals the names, life paths and interactions of these men, but also deepens many silences that end up multiplying potential questions to be asked.

Keywords: medieval medicine; Guimarães; physicians; surgeons.

Introduction

In the last centuries of the Middle Ages, a series of factors such as demographic expansion (until the mid-14th century), the recovery, translation, and dissemination of ancient scholarship authorities, and the creation of the first universities, but also urban recovery, economic diversification, and the consolidation of political units, paved the way for the emergence of new trades and the recovery of many others that had been forgotten or almost lost after Antiquity. Among these trades were the healing practices, now renewed and multiplied. This revival also spread to Portugal and these healing practices have been present in Guimarães since early times, for the old walled town was probably the most important economic center of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region after Oporto, and always in close relationship with this city.

The study of medieval healers was, for a long time, a matter of little interest in Portuguese historiography. Almost a century ago, a remarkable group of medical historians laid the foundations of what would become the history of medicine in Portugal, but little else was achieved over the following decades (Silva, 2016: 31–34). Based in Oporto and having Maximiano Lemos as its tutelary figure, the group included two prominent natives of Guimarães from different generations: João de Meira (Araújo, 2013a) and Luís de Pina (Araújo 2013b). If the subject was virtually forgotten for a long time, the fact is that since I took my first steps in these fields, half a dozen years ago, the production has grown and diversified, benefiting from several contributions from other researchers from different Portuguese academic milieus (Silva, 2016; Moisés 2018; Pinto, 2016; Farelo, 2019). Thus, using the occasion, and evoking the 90th anniversary of Luís de Pina's doctoral thesis, entitled *Vimaranes: materiais para a História da Medicina Portuguesa: Arqueologia, Antropologia, História* [Vimaranes: materials for the History of Portuguese Medicine: Archaeology, Anthropology, History], defended at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Oporto in 1929 (Guimarães, 1929), I will address a local, urban medical milieu marked by a considerable diversity of testimonies and a very interesting evolution.

What is this Guimarães we are talking about, and how and why do these men emerge here? Where does the knowledge they use come from? How do they practice their craft? As stated above, Guimarães was one of the most remarkable urban centers of medieval Entre-Douro-e-Minho, as confirmed by the numerous studies dedicated to this subject, namely by Conceição Falcão, among which I highlight her monumental doctoral thesis (Ferreira, 2010). Until the beginning of the 15th century, Guimarães was the largest urban center under royal lordship north of the Douro — Oporto and Braga were under lordship of their respective bishop and archbishop —, occupied an important role in international trade, in close relationship with Oporto, which it used as a port, and numerous were the relationships between the merchants of the two cities, at least since the early 1300s.¹ This situation of being under royal lordship changed only in 1464, when Fernando, the 3rd Duke of Bragança, became Count of Guimarães, and Duke of the same town in 1475. Guimarães would again be under the authority of the Crown when the House of Bragança itself became the reigning dynasty in 1640.

The first physicians in Guimarães

In a dynamic urban environment marked by continuous exchanges with the overseas, Guimarães hosted some of the first practitioners of the revived healing practices that we have identified in Portugal. This is not to say that during the centuries before the Late Middle Ages there was no one providing health care. But these would be manifestations of mere skill and empiricism, performed by men and women from different trades and to whom some talent was recognized. However, no evidence has survived to allow us to identify and study them. Only after the introduction of new designations and the

¹ ANTT, Convento de Santa Clara de Guimarães, maço 1, rolo não numerado.

formalization of the healing trades did we begin to learn of the presence and social integration of these tradesfolk.

The Latin expression *medicus*, which transited from Antiquity and is today the word most commonly used in Portuguese to designate a health professional who practices medicine [*médico*], was not the most common term in the Portuguese Early Medieval Period. It was replaced by a word that emerged by erudite means, a word that would be hegemonic in Galician-Portuguese until the advent of Modernity: physician (Silva, 2016; 43–50). And physicians were the first men dedicated to healing and health practices identified in Guimarães. In this period, the oldest known practitioner was Master Estêvão Guilherme, who was witness to an exchange at the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães on August 6, 1297,² documented a century after the first physician documented in Portugal, from 1192³ — Master Mendo, *medicus regis* of King Sancho I of Portugal.

However, before Master Estêvão Guilherme there were some names connected to Guimarães that the Portuguese and other chronistic traditions associated with medical practice. Among them, I would highlight Pedro Amarelo (c. 1110–1184) and Pedro Julião (c. 1210–1277). The former, a royal notary, became prior of the Collegiate Church in 1170, probably by royal appointment (Barroca, 1999). Although the 17th-century chronicles identify him as the physician of Count Henrique and Afonso Henriques, in 1911 João de Meira proved — in an article of remarkable methodological quality regarding source criticism and the findings — that not only did the chronology prevent him from being the Count's physician, but no documentary evidence of any kind supported the idea that he had provided any kind of medical service to whomsoever (Meyra, 1911). Pedro Julião was appointed as prior of the Collegiate Church of Guimarães by King Afonso III in 1253, although clashes with the archbishop of Braga and, later on, the king's disfavor, led to a long legal battle for the tenure of the priory (Rodrigues, 2005: 54–55, 116–123). Better known as Pedro Hispano, he ascended to the throne of Peter in 1276, choosing as his name John XXI. Research has proven that, in fact, there were several Pedros Hispanos, scholars, writers or composers of scientific works in several fields, and that, once again, this was an extrapolation of late chroniclers, because there exists not a single coeval reference to the medical practice of Pedro Julião, either in Portugal or abroad, not having been archiater, that is, pontifical physician of Gregory X, one of his predecessors. Moreover, the medical works that are attributed to him would have been authored by a different Pedro Hispano, as has been shown by José Meirinhos in the last two decades (Meirinhos, 2007; Meirinhos 2011: XV–XVIII).

However, this relationship made by modern chroniclers between royal physicians and the priory of Guimarães is not accidental. In fact, several royal physicians, especially in the 14th century, were presented to the priory of Guimarães by their lord: for example, Master Pedro, physician under King Diniz of Portugal and prior between 1315 and 1324 (Farelo, 2013: 208–210; Norte, 2013: 252–253), and Mestre Vicente, physician under King Fernando of Portugal, prior from 1368 and until 1373,⁴ at the latest. But these men, who were not residing in Guimarães, unless when on visitation, would never have exercised any healing assistance in Guimarães, for their activity was restricted to that of cleric-physicians of the monarch they served. The Collegiate Church of Santa Maria da Oliveira, the most important and richest church under royal patronage, was thus entrusted to clerics of the king's strictest confidence, which over time included several of those who looked after the physical health of their lords.

² ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães, Documentos particulares, maço 16, n.º 14.

³ Documentos de D. Sancho I (1174-1211). Ed. Rui de Azevedo, Avelino de Jesus da Costa e Marcelino Rodrigues Pereira. Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1979, pp. 95-95, n. 61; pp. 96-98, n. 62.

⁴ ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães, Documentos régios, maço 2, n.º 3; ANTT, Chancelaria de D. Fernando, Livro 1, fl. 31v.

The growth of the autochthonous group and the surgeons

The few physicians previously documented were mostly clergymen who would not provide healthcare to the population. This situation changed throughout the 13th century, as happened in other Portuguese urban centers, via the multiplication of physicians — probably laymen who lived and worked in the town —, and the emergence and equal growth in the number of surgeons, who had a somewhat different range of action, but acted in the same environments and without great social distinction, in the Portuguese case (Silva, 2016: 27–28; Moisés, 2018: 125–126). Returning to the subject of physicians, take the example of Master Gil, a physician documented between 1324 and 1336, who, besides being a resident in Guimarães, even served the archbishop of Braga, Gonçalo Pereira,⁵ and the example of Master Martinho, another physician residing in Guimarães in 1333,⁶ documented when he served as witness in a will, accompanied by the said Master Gil.

As the end of the 14th century drew to a close, Jewish physicians became the majority. The earliest we know of is Master David, documented between 1369 and 1371.⁷ The Jews prospered in the 15th century, and their community's vigorous growth was probably driven by the increasingly numerous and harsh persecutions beyond the Pyrenees and in other Iberian kingdoms. Protected by their lords, including the kingdom's ecclesiastics of the highest rank, the Jews of Guimarães were no exception. This reality changed only with the edict of forced conversion of 1496, forcing the Jews of Guimarães to submit to baptism and conversion, or else to a dangerous exile for life. However, many continued as New Christians, regardless of the sincerity of their forced conversion, exercising their trade as before, but now with a Christian name and holding a confirmed licensing letter.

Compared with the reality of Portugal, the surgeons from Guimarães are documented from early times. The first ones we know of are the brothers João and Martim Lourenço, documented from 1333 and 1351, respectively, with João Lourenço being one of the first surgeons nationwide, according to the current state of research: those who preceded him were Silvestre, surgeon in Braga at the end of the 13th century, and a group of surgeons in the area of Oporto, all documented between 1326 and 1334 (Silva, 2016: 142–143). There is however a differentiating factor between the national reality and the specific case of Guimarães: the surgeons never become more numerous than physicians in the medieval period, which is a particularity of Guimarães. To date, I have only identified a 15th-century surgeon from Guimarães — Master Isaac, a surgeon documented in 1482, the same year when he received his licensing letter of surgeon.⁸

A family of surgeons from Guimarães

Despite the scarcity of documentation sources on surgeons, Guimarães offers us a rare opportunity to get to know a little better the two surgeon brothers, João and Martim Lourenço, with various family connections, assets and relationships of friendship and clientele in 14th-century Guimarães. João Lourenço is documented between 1333 and 1365, the year of his death, and Martim Lourenço between 1351 and 1376, although there is mention of a possible will dating from 1393, which I have not yet been able to locate, and which would indicate a remarkable lifespan. We know about João Lourenço's wife, Maria Pires, who survived him by half a dozen years, having passed away in their home in 1371. The executor of João Lourenço's will was his brother Martim; this not only allows us to follow his path for a few more years, but also reveals their assets to us. We know that João Lourenço and his wife Maria Pires owned houses in Rua de Santa Maria; they lived in one of them, and rented the others to Pedro Afonso, canon of the Collegiate chapter, possessing also some houses in Rochela, in the parish of São Paio, also in Guimarães. We know that Martim Lourenço had a grandson, to whom he left

5 ADB, Coleção Cronológica, Caixa 9, doc. 390; Caixa 13, docs. 503, 528, 529, 533; Caixa 16, doc. 637; Caixa 17, doc. 665; ADB, Gavetas do Cabido, Gaveta das Capelas, Sucessões e Vínculos, doc. 12; ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães, Documentos particulares, maço 26, n.º 39.

6 ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães, Documentos particulares, maço 26, n.º 39.

7 AMAP, Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, Coleção de Pergaminhos da Câmara Municipal, doc. 8-1-2-6, nº 28 e 34; AMAP, Colegiada de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira de Guimarães, Nota Antiga, Livro II, doc. 349.

8 ANTT, Chancelaria de D. João II, liv. 27, fl. 32.

his "surgery books" in the aforementioned will (Guimarães, 1929: 151). We also know of personal relationships that allow us to better situate these surgeons in the Guimarães society: both João and Martinho Lourenço were witnesses to deeds, were executors and/or contemplated in wills.⁹ They both allow us to get a glimpse of the social relationships of these practitioners, so often known to us only via a random reference to their name and practice.

Serving the notables

A distinct group of physicians and surgeons connected to Guimarães served the counts, later dukes, of Guimarães. This group comprised two different subsets: on the one hand, those who permanently served the count/dukes of Guimarães, traveling with them or settling where they stayed most of the time, such as Master Abas, a Jew residing in Lisbon who was the duke and duchess' physician, documented between 1466 and 1478 (Tavares, 1984: 692; Guimarães, 1929: 153–154); on the other hand, those who resided in Guimarães, serving the dukes when they lodged at their Guimarães palace, such as Master Judas, who divided his residence between Oporto and Guimarães, serving the duke of Guimarães at least between 1475 and 1482 (Tavares, 1984: 656; Guimarães, 1929: 153–154). The group of ducal physicians we know of is completed with Master Moisés Eli, physician of the count of Guimarães, of whom we know of only by a letter of privilege of 1464, which does not detail his birthplace or place of residence (Tavares, 1984: 793; Guimarães, 1929: 153–154). The predecessor of the count-dukes of Guimarães was Afonso, natural son of King John I of Portugal, count of Barcelos and first Duke of Braganza. The count of Barcelos and first Duke of Braganza, Afonso, natural son of King John I and grandfather of the 1st Count and Duke of Guimarães, Fernando, was also served by two physicians based in Guimarães: Master Bernardo (1435)¹⁰ and the Jew Master Marcos, documented between 1435 and 1457 (Tavares, 1984: 396). Also in service to the aristocracy, the Jews, as we have seen, were the majority. Their reputation as great physicians, their knowledge and professional preparation seem to have been almost always stronger than the anti-semitic sentiment that sporadically arose.

The Apothecaries

One of the most relevant healing trades was that of apothecaries. Their social prestige was similar to the physicians' and surgeons', and there were indications of a certain public recognition (Beirante, 1995: 503). Although theirs was not a practice of providing assistance or healthcare and largely engaged themselves in trading various simple or processed products, they were important players regarding health activities, adding to what we might today call medicines, despite the anachronism, several products of their own manufacture, such as ointments, unguents and household remedies, some other products of the same type but for aesthetic and cosmetic purposes, as well as spices and exotic products, although in this specific case their trade intersected with that of the *especieiro*, the spice trader. The apothecaries were generally less numerous — or less documented — than physicians and surgeons, and, unlike physicians and surgeons, Jews were never the majority in this trade, with only two Hebrew apothecaries out of hundreds of same-faith physicians and surgeons (Tavares, 1984: 624).

In Guimarães, the collection undertaken by Luís de Pina informs us of the oldest apothecary discovered so far: Miguel Afonso, in 1432 (Guimarães, 1929: 152). However, we should soon be able to go further back in the chronology of this trade in Guimarães once the ongoing documentary survey becomes completed.

⁹ ANTT, Colegiada de Santa Maria da Oliveira de Guimarães, Documentos particulares, maço 26, n.º 39; maço 31, n.º 22 e 26, maço 32, n.º 2; maço 34, n.º 27; maço 35, n.º 33; AMAP, Colegiada de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira de Guimarães, Nota Antiga, Livro I, doc. 117 e 191, Livro III, doc. 438; AMAP, Colegiada de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira de Guimarães, Pergaminhos, 8-2-4-22.

¹⁰ Chancelarias Portuguesas: D. Duarte. Org. João José Alves Dias. Lisboa: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Históricos, 1998-2002: liv. 1, tomo II, doc. 922, p. 204.

Other practitioners

I opted not to include barbers in this analysis. Contrary to what happened in other parts of Europe, the practice of healing arts was not the main activity of medieval Portuguese barbers. Very rarely would a Portuguese barber be simultaneously a surgeon, and the two activities were perfectly differentiated (Silva, 2016: 27-28; Moisés, 2018: 58–60). Among the hundreds of documented surgeons in the Portuguese Middle Ages, Cristina Moisés found only four who were simultaneously barbers (Moisés, 2018: 87).

However, we know of health practices performed by less obvious crafts. In a letter by King Diniz dated from 1308 and addressed to the praetor of the castle of Guimarães, the king orders the correction of a series of practices and customs at the castle fair that were deemed harmful by the Guimarães council.¹¹ Among other interdictions, the *alfagemes* [a craft related to bladesmithing] were forbidden to bleed and pare on fair days in the castle, which indicates that, at least until that date, they did so. In fact, bloodletting was one of the most widespread practices in all strata of the population (Silva, 2016: 55–57), and the *alfagemes*, with their blades as their main instrument, were in a good position to practice it, especially before surgeons became widespread.

There are sporadic references to bleeders, probably related to this restriction and to a growing formalization of the healing trades, to which the emergence of the surgeons from Guimarães a few decades later is not unrelated. They were empirical practitioners, but enjoyed some kind of social recognition, which translated into the use of their designation. The first of these bleeders was Domingos Martins, who was witness to a lease of the Collegiate Church in the summer of 1349, right after the ravaging of the infamous Black Death.¹² At the beginning of the following century, there were at least two bleeders, operating almost simultaneously, and whom Luís de Pina had already identified: Afonso Eanes, in 1407, and Álvaro Rodrigues, in 1409 (Guimarães, 1929: 152). And many more undocumented ones would later on increase the numbers, recorded in testimonies that have been lost or are still waiting to be found by a historian. Indeed, a great diversity of practices, trades and individuals who, between competition and complementarity, between hierarchization and pragmatism, served as they could an equally diverse population as that of Guimarães at the end of the Middle Ages.

The absent ones

Having presented these trades and these practitioners, the absence of many others may be noted. First of all, absent are those who practiced the art of giving birth. Indeed, references to midwives in medieval Portuguese documentation are extremely scarce. The case of Guimarães is no exception. Assistance with child delivery, a female activity, was mainly performed by experienced women when the need arose. There are several possible reasons for this absence: first of all, it was not common to have women witnessing notarial acts, which are the source of a substantial part of the references to physicians, surgeons and other trades; secondly, this activity would be carried out alongside another, or even others, which were regular and daily, for which they would have been designated; however, it is rare for the women identified by documentary testimonies to bear a designation of trade, for it was more usual to refer to a family connection or their birthplace. Therefore, many of the women mentioned in the documents could exercise or had exercised such activity. However, those who identified them did not consider such designation of trade as relevant, as their most characteristic trait, or as indispensable. Besides midwives, other activities could be mentioned. I will choose only one, for conciseness sake: the activity of animal healers. Animal healing, the art of caring and treating domestic animals, underwent a major development in the 14th century, as is noticeable in the so-called *Livro de Alveitaria*, translated and composed by Master Geraldo, canon of Oporto and physician of King

¹¹ AMAP, Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, Coleção de Pergaminhos da Câmara Municipal, doc. 8-1-1-9.

¹² AMAP, Colegiada de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira de Guimarães, Nota Antiga, Livro I, doc. 73.

Diniz, from two thirteenth-century Latin treaties (Pérez Barcala, 2016). As relatively rare testimonies, it has not yet been possible to identify an active *alveitar* in Guimarães in the Middle Ages.

Training, licensing, and practice

But how did these men learn their trade? Research has revealed that the vast majority of physicians, surgeons, and practitioners of other less considered healing trades learned directly from a master. In many cases, there existed a family relationship between master and disciple (Silva, 2016: 98–101). However, even though there is no record of such licensing letters in the Middle Ages, we know that in the 16th century there were contracts drawn up by notaries between masters and disciples, establishing the modalities of learning and monitoring, which would culminate in the presentation of the disciple before a public authority that would confer him/her a licensing letter after a theoretical and practical oral examination.

In the Portuguese case, the first examination was established by King Afonso IV, in 1338, obliging all the would-be practitioners of the arts of physics, surgery and apothecary to appear before two of the king's physicians especially appointed for this purpose. However, few letters have come down to us from this first phase, not going beyond 1340 (Silva, 2016: 122–124). Recovered by King John I of Portugal in 1390, the compulsory examination was extended to Christians, Muslims and Jews, both men and women, and not even the holders of university degrees were exempt from them. We can say with some degree of certainty that the distinction between practitioners with or without university degrees was practically non-existent. In the case of Guimarães, we have several licensing letters, which contain the majority of the testimonies we know of. Unfortunately, these letters do not elucidate us about the masters responsible for their apprenticeship. We also have no evidence that any of the Christian physicians and surgeons had a university education. For Jews, this would have been almost an impossible achievement, due to the ecclesiastical nature of most medieval universities.

In the Portuguese Late Middle Ages, these healing trades were not exerted in an environment that today we would call a hospital. In fact, there existed several institutions of social assistance designated as hospitals or shelters in Guimarães in this period. However, most of them operated as an asylum, sheltering poor people or wayfarers, being pious works where the presence of a healer would neither be habitual nor expected. Thus, these were mainly practitioners who would go visit their patients in their homes. They would circulate through the town to wherever they were needed. Physicians and surgeons enjoyed undeniable prestige, closely followed by the apothecaries, which meant thus it would not be a service accessible to everyone. If several Portuguese towns and cities even had a physician and/or surgeon on an allowance from the municipality, the fact is that we do not find a similar practice in Guimarães. It is difficult to clarify whether it was due to a higher purchasing power than usual among a larger number of inhabitants, the incapacity of the town council to pay for such an allowance, or for other reasons.

Conclusion

Wrapping up this brief tour of the healing trades practiced in Guimarães in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, it is now time to highlight a few ideas. The bicephalous borough of Guimarães, between the castle town and the lower town, underwent a remarkable development, welcoming from early on a number of practitioners of the various healing trades. The more abundant data details that these men tended to belong to the Guimarães elite, featuring consolidated solidarities and revealing personal and family connections. Not all physicians and surgeons served the population, for there

were those who divided their practice with the service to a great lord, or had already changed their career in the healing of the physical body for the healing of souls when they arrived in Guimarães.

This introductory exploration does not include a complete list of all the physicians and surgeons ever collected from documental sources and should be greatly added to in the near term. Still, I hope it has shed some light on the men who, yesterday as today, would be a reassurance or a hope in times of frailty or distress. And yesterday, as today, we continue to look for those who will help us when the need arises. Also in this, as in almost everything else, little more than time itself separates us from the men and women who walked the same streets more than half a millennium ago.

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