Fuentes geohistóricas, nuevas tecnologías, nuevos retos

Concepción Camarero Bullón
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(Eds.)

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FROM THE TEXT SOURCES TO THE MAP: THE *PARISH MEMORIES*, A PARA CADASTRE OF PORTUGAL (1758-1761)

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Compared with other political formations in Ancien Régime Europe, Portugal had remarkable institutional and administrative uniformity (Monteiro, 1995, 79, p. 113), which could mean it is easier to map. Testing this idea is one of the goals of this text.

In Portugal, since the end of the Middle Ages, the provinces (Entre Douro e Minho, Trás-os-Montes, Beiras, Estremadura, Entre Tejo e Guadiana or Alentejo), along with the Kingdom of Algarve, as macro divisions of the territory, gradually gained a sense of identity. However, they did not have their own political and administrative organs, except for the governor of Algarve; after 1640, the others also began to have military governors.

At that time, the administrative-territorial units encompassed distinct levels, which could or could not overlap and could or could not be continuous. The religious network comprised bishoprics or archbishoprics, with parishes as their most minor subdivision. The Crown's peripheral administration had two types of districts: one known as *comar-*

cas, which were regional units for political and judicial purposes. The others, called *provedorias*, were established for economic and financial functions. At the same time, the territories under the manorial system were organised in *ouvidorias*, whose functions were similar to those of the *comarcas*. In both the domains of the landlords and the crown, the municipal level was the most minor "civil" administrative unit. António Manuel Hespanha has highlighted this multilayered territorial complexity and first tried to cartograph these territorial provinces, districts, and municipalities for early modern Portugal (Hespanha, 1994).

This paper seeks to gather the same cartographic representation of parishes and municipalities and the jurisdictional complexities between them.

These municipalities were forms of local administration, generally comprising a town or population concentration area (*vila*) and a surrounding rural area referred to as a *termo*. Notably, in Portugal, regional authorities with substantial power were absent, and there were no regional parliaments. Municipalities were predominantly anti-regional in nature (Magalhães, 1994, p. 39). This implies, as emphasised, the absence of effective intermediate authorities. The transition is made from the core of the political centre to the municipal realm.

Portugal has very good chorographic sources for the Ancien Régime. One of them is the Parish Memories *(Memórias Paroquiais)*. They represent a noteworthy descriptive registry of Portugal. Until the late 19th century and the early 20th century, they were referred to as the *Geographical Dictionary of Portugal* (Olival et al., 2022, p. 83). It was rooted in the smallest organisational unit of the kingdom in 1758: the parish. During the mid-18th century, parishes served as units of religious administration but were typically part of municipalities, known as *concelhos*. Generally, a municipality consists of multiple parishes.

This paper aims to showcase the potential of this 18th-century Portuguese cadastre for the territorial and jurisdictional reconstitution of the past. Our specific goal is to cartographically reconstruct the territory of the Vila Viçosa municipality in southern Portugal, in the Alentejo region.

The Parish Memories have been well studied and transcribed by several authors in Portugal (Olival et al., 2022). In 1991, a project called *Atlas Cartografia Histórica*, led by Luís Espinha da Silveira, aimed to cartograph all the 1758 parishes of the Portuguese mainland territory. The map is still available online. However, the polygons or line chains have never been publicly available[1]. On the other hand, the map contains holes and some mistakes. In the particular case of Vila Viçosa, there is a parish missing.

[1] http://atlas.fcsh.unl.pt/cartoweb35/atlas.php?lang=pt.

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An essential work of parishes' reconstitution has been made by a team at the University of Minho led by José Viriato Capela. However, until now, the only southern mapped territories were the parishes part of the contemporary district of Portalegre (Capela, 2003-2021). Notwithstanding, the jurisdictional complexity of the territory's most minor civil and religious units has never been combined on the same map. In this paper, we seek to reconstitute not only the polygons of the parishes but also the *termo* of a given municipality.

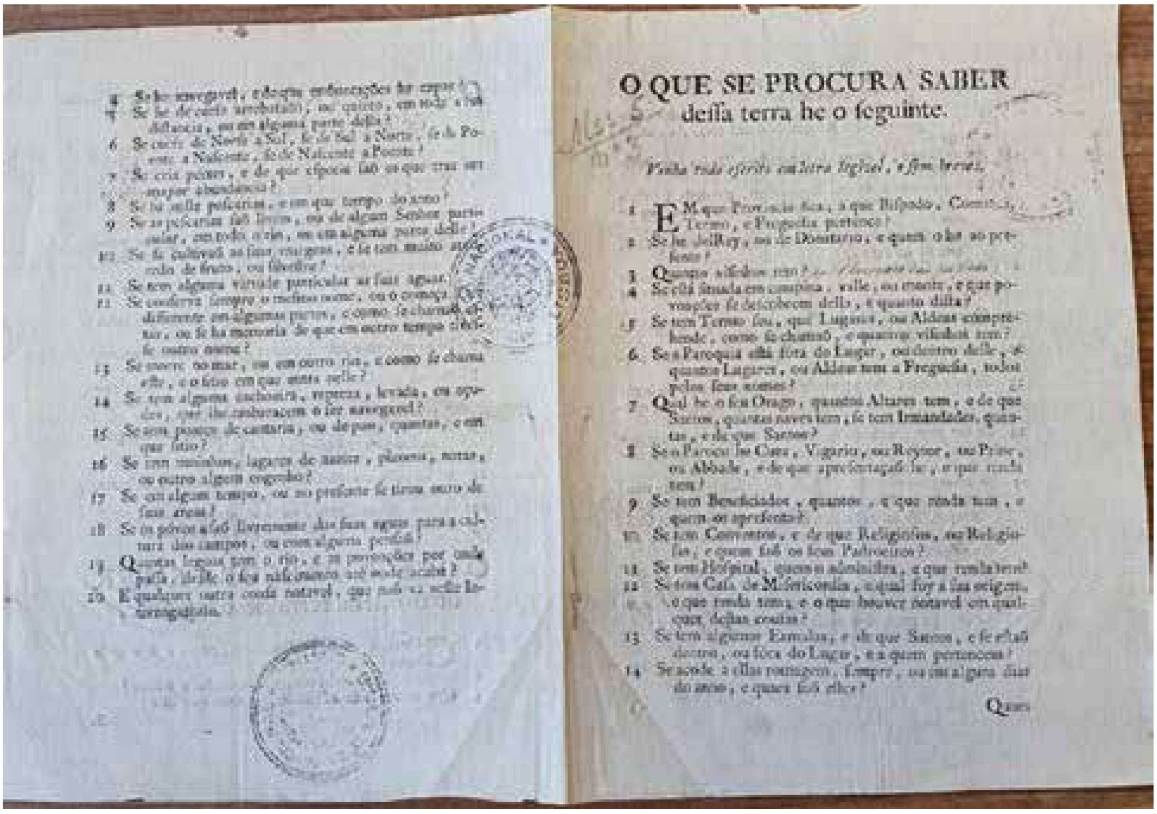
We chose the parishes which were part of the municipality of Vila Viçosa as a case study. The findings were exported and used to create a cartographic visualisation in QGIS representing the municipality as it existed in the mid-18th century. During this period, Vila Viçosa functioned as a municipality under the authority of the *Bragança* House, the principal aristocratic family in the kingdom, a status that was retained even after 1640. Situated near the Castilian border, Vila Viçosa had a complex *termo*. Despite the relatively modest size of the municipality, which comprised only five parishes in 1758 and one more at the end of the 18th century, reconstructing the spatial dynamics of Vila Viçosa presented intriguing cartographic challenges. These challenges included parishes nested within other parishes, parishes simultaneously included in the *termo* of different municipalities, and parishes that no longer exist, having been absorbed into other ones.

The paper is organised in three main sections. The first describes the process of digital treatment of the Parish Memories of southern Portugal, explaining how data regarding locations has been classified and extracted from original texts. In the second section, we explain the nature of this 18th-century cadastre and what information has been privileged to reconstruct the 1758 parishes in QGIS. In the third section, we reconstitute the process of recreating historical administrative and religious units in Portugal using geographical information systems, as well as the challenges presented by the local complexity and articulation between parishes and the municipal space of Vila Viçosa.

1. FROM THE SOURCES TO THE NAMED ENTITIES ANNOTATION

The Portuguese Parish Memories (1758-1761) resulted from a printed inquiry sent to all parish priests at the beginning of 1758 through the bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities in the sequence of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (fig. 1). In three months, the local priests should answer an inquiry of 60 questions organised into three main topics: community, mountains, and rivers. Most of them used extra time, responding between 1758 and 1761. The majority of them knew the territory of their parish very well; others, in addition to their direct knowledge, consulted different authors and

people about the answers to be written. These Memories are purely textual sources. Contrary to the Catastro de Ensenada in Castile, the memories do not have any coeval maps associated with them (Camarero Bullón, 1998), excluding very rare and specific visual representations, such as in the case of the parish of Sé de Elvas, where a sketch was made depicting the fountains and some arches of the Amoreira Aqueduct, completed in 1622[2].



O QUE SE PROCURA SABER
delta terra he o feguinte.

Figure 1. Printed survey sent to parish priests - BNP, Ms. 5, nº 3

Nowadays, this collection of manuscripts is kept in the Portuguese National Archive of *Torre do Tombo*, and the images of microfilms are digitised and available online. A team of the Interdisciplinary Center of History, Cultures and Society of the University of Évora (CIDEHUS) has transcribed all the memories of the south of the Tagus River, including the Algarve. Part of the results are freely available online at CIDEHUSDigital, in 18th-century spelling patterns[3].

For this paper, we implemented a structured process within a pipeline. Initially, we reviewed the transcriptions derived from the manuscripts of Memórias Paroquiais,

[2] ANTT, *Memórias Paroquiais*, vol. 13, nº (E) 14, p.88.

[3] www.cidehusdigital.uevora.pt.

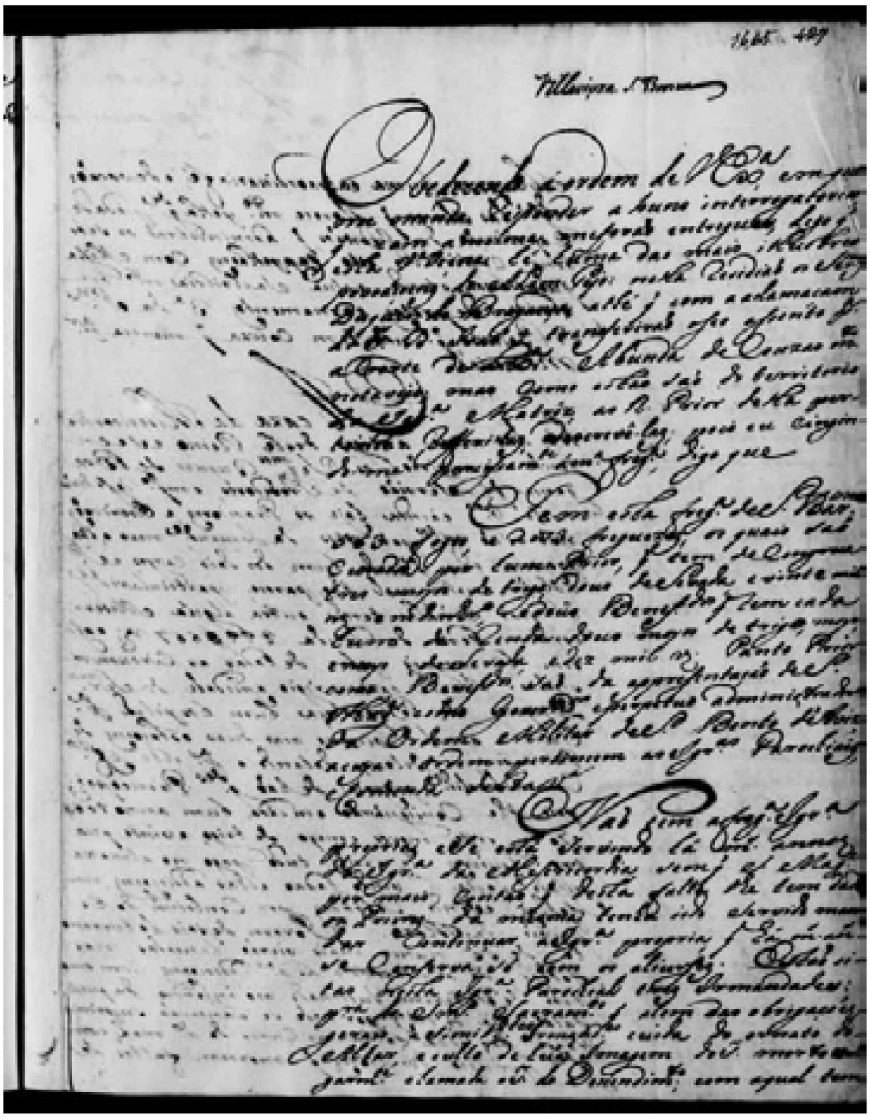


Figure 2. Response from the parish priest of S. Bartolomeu of Vila Viçosa, dated April 20, 1758 - first page. (ANTT, Memórias Paroquiais, vol. 40, nº 271a - A).

which are accessible online at CIDEHUSDigital. Subsequently, we manually standardised these texts to contemporary spelling conventions. Following that, we performed manual annotations using a semantic platform, creating a set of labels explicitly tailored to the historical approaches.

As said, to better process the texts computationally, using Natural Language Processing techniques, the team manually normalised spelling for the contemporary pattern in a conservative way, updating only merely graphic changes and preserving all linguistic variation. We maintain old words that are still in use, like “mui”, “El-Rei”, “cousa”. The names of geographic places were updated in the spelling when different from the related contemporary written form. However, we preserve the 18th-century designation if the point changes the name.

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We have annotated the normalised texts in INCEpTION, a semantic annotation platform offering intelligent assistance and knowledge management developed by UKP Lab - TU Darmstadt. We customised the platform to annotate the texts respecting the complexity of this historical source. For that, we established seven main categories: Person, Place, Organisation, Author_work, Fauna, Flora, and Time. Those categories aim to answer the historical basic questions of Who, Where, What, and When. Then, they were divided into subcategories to better annotate this past reality with a holistic approach.

In this work, we only considered data from the Place label. We divided the PLACE category into several subcategories, like:

- PLC_LOC - for localities. Used for provinces (except the Kingdom of Algarve), "termo", farms and other agricultural units (like "herdades" and "montes"), villages.
- PLC_GPE - for geopolitical entities, crossing LOC and ORG. For instance, for countries, cities, towns, and municipalities.
- PLC_AQU - for aquifers of all types, such as rivers, lakes, springs, and fountains.
- PLC_MOUNT - for mountains.
- PLC_FAC - for constructions - Examples: Mill of Valada; Bridge of Saint Peter.

The annotation results were exported from the platform into a CSV file, constituting an essential input to cartographic operations.

The Parish Memories are a privileged historical source. Within the inquiry, there was a specific question regarding the parish's location, and it is possible to glean additional geographical information scattered throughout the texts through other responses.

2. THE SOURCES AND THE CARTOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

When answering the Parish Memory inquiries, it was typical for the priest of the main parish, usually from the central church, to mention all the parishes within the municipality. This is what occurred in Vila Viçosa, where the priest of the main church declared: "Within its territory are the parishes of Nossa Senhora das Ciladas, São Romão, Santa Catarina de Pardais, and part of the village of Bencatel, whose parish, Santa Ana, belongs to the town of Estremoz" (Olival et al., 2023, p. 105). He provided information about the number and names of other parishes, although details about the specific polygon of each parish were typically lacking. Furthermore, the responses from the priests in 1758 offer valuable data on the territory: observable locations on the horizon and information on demographics, institutions, and the local economy. However, the level of detail in the answers varied among priests.

To first reconstitute the geographic polygon of each parish, we had to focus mainly on the following questions from the Parish Memories inquiry:

1. To which province, bishopric, judicial district, *termo*, and parish does this parish belong?
2. Is it royal land or from a private landlord, and who is he?
4. Is it located in a meadow, valley, or mountain, and which villages are within the parish, and how far are they?
5. Does it have its own *termo*, places, and villages? What are their names? How many inhabitants do they have?

Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 aid in understanding the administrative units to which the parishes belonged and the microunits, or small villages, associated with these parishes. In the case of Vila Viçosa and other municipalities in southern Portugal, it is important to note that, instead of villages, we often deal with agrarian land units known as *herdades*, many of which have disappeared over time. Some have undergone name changes, while others have vanished and become absorbed by neighbouring areas. Consequently, determining which microspaces were or were not part of a parish is challenging. Occasionally, we rely on responses to other questions that identify specific buildings, aiding in locating particular points in space. Many of these structures, such as convents, hospitals, Misericórdia houses, hermitages, chapels, fountains, lakes, rivers, or mountains, continue to exist, often retaining their original functions or undergoing transformations. In a rural area like Alentejo, natural elements like the last three mentioned have undergone fewer transformations.

At the end of the 18th century, Vila Viçosa was composed of two urban parishes (São Bartolomeu and Nossa Senhora da Conceição) and its rural area, *o termo*, was composed of four other parishes (Pardais, Ciladas, São Romão and Bencatel). To reconstitute the parishes of this municipality, we have departed from the 2022 administrative map of Portugal with the municipalities and present civil parishes or *freguesias*. They are small civil administrative units established by the liberal regime in 1835, based on the old parish network. A similar methodology has been applied in reconstituting the 1758 parishes comprising the city of Porto's *termo* (Ribeiro, 2011) (fig. 3)

We can see that in present times, the *freguesias* of Vila Viçosa are only four since 2013. There is only one urban parish, Nossa Senhora da Conceição, and only three rural ones: Bencatel, Pardais and Ciladas. Only two of them have kept the cartographic polygon: Nossa Senhora da Conceição and Pardais, but not necessarily the same area, as we will see later.

We have confirmed they kept the same limits by crossing the information in the Memories with other contemporary documental sources, with previous and later descrip-

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Figure. 3. Vila Viçosa municipality in 2022. Source: Direção Geral do Ordenamento do Território, Sistema Nacional de Informação Geográfica, Carta Administrativa Oficial de Portugal - CAOP 2022 (https://snig.dgterritorio.gov.pt/rndg/srv/por/catalog.search#/metadata/198497815bf647ecaa990c34c42e932e)

tions of the municipality, and with fiscal sources. To delineate the polygons, the data from the Parish Memories is helpful but insufficient. Additional sources are required. We have analysed the fiscal register of the *décima*, a direct tax imposed on real estate value and annual income, including credit interests (Veira, 2014). The *décima* collectors meticulously documented each village, and also, in this case, each *herdade* (agricultural estate) and street. To ensure consistency, we compared data from three different years of *décima* (1762, 1765, and 1773[4]), verifying that the same properties, villages, and streets were repeatedly mentioned in each parish. We also consulted the 17th-century account of Vila Viçosa's urban parishes (Cadornega, 1982) and the late 19th-century accounts of the priest Joaquim José da Rocha Espanca, which contain significant geographic descriptions of the parishes in the countryside (Espanca, 2016; Espanca, 2019).

3. PROPOSED RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial challenge involved reconstructing the urban parish of São Bartolomeu. The municipality of Vila Viçosa has recently undertaken the task of marking the historical names of streets in the city centre, which proved valuable for our project. Also, some lo-

[4] Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Vila Viçosa (AHMVV), *Contribuições e impostos, Maneios*, books 181, 183 e 189.

cal historical studies by the historian Túlio Espanca in the 20th century tried to keep the memory of old toponyms (Espanca, 1974). By comparing the descriptions in the Parish Memories, the fiscal sources, and the streets associated with this former parish, we successfully reconstructed the polygon of the parish. It is a very small parish nestled within that of Our Lady of Conception and erected in the 16th century, perhaps by the initiative of Duke D. Teodódio I (1505-1563), who planned to transfer the collegiate church of Ourém (from the central region of Portugal) there (Espanca, 2016, p. 158). This late creation may help explain its size and position.

With all the available data, it was easier and more fruitful to start with the urban parishes. (fig. 4).

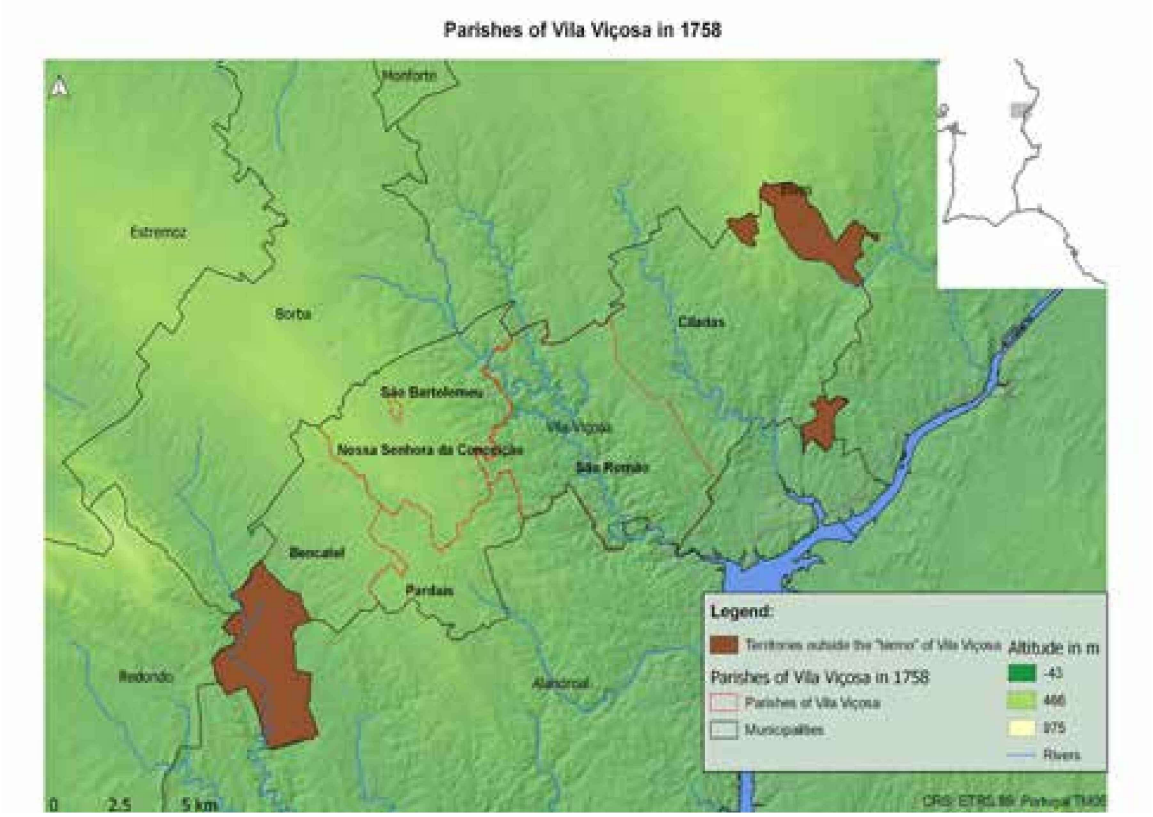

Figure 4. Parishes of Vila Viçosa in 1758. Sources: Olival et al., 2023. Espanca, 2016. Espanca, 2019. Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Vila Viçosa (AHMVV), Contribuições e impostos, Maneios, books 181, 183 e 189. Arquivo Distrital de Évora (ADEv), Repartição Geral de Finanças de Évora, Repartição de Finanças de Vila Viçosa, Mapa de Repartição de Contribuição Predial, PT/ADEVR/ACD/RFEVR/O/001/0001, 1854.

The same exercise with the same methodology for rural areas involves more uncertainty. Indeed, the second challenge was comprehending and visually representing the ambivalence of the parish of Bencatel. In response to the 1758 inquiry, the priest noted that this parish, which still maintains the same boundaries, was partially within the jurisdiction of Vila Viçosa, and the other part was within the jurisdiction of the Alandroal

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municipality; only the village named *Bencatel*, with 75 households out of the 172 in the parish, was part of the municipality of Vila Viçosa (Olival et al., 2023, p. 112). Although the parish was one, its territory was split into two different municipalities. Luckily, in the Memories, the priest described some features that were part of Vila Viçosa, such as chapels, *herdades,* and some natural features, such as a lagoon near the village of *Bencatel* and specific small creeks. Since the Alentejo municipalities usually have a concentration of the population in small communities, a vast part of the territory is almost inhabited. Tracing old rural properties in a small number of place names is not so easy. Confronting the data from the Parish Memories with the *herdades* described in the *décimas* list, it was possible to determine the part of the parish that was not under the jurisdiction of Vila Viçosa municipality. The cartographic solution for such representation was to keep the polygon of the parish of *Bencatel*, highlighting the polygon of the territory that was not under the municipality's jurisdiction.

The same solution was found regarding the parish of Ciladas in the eastern part of the municipality. In this case, the Memory states that the parish was part of the rural hinterland of four municipalities, that is, the same parish was under the jurisdiction of four municipalities: Vila Viçosa, Vila Boim, Elvas and Juromenha. However, most of the population was concentrated in Vila Viçosa and Elvas domains. Identifying the polygons that represent the territories not under the Vila Viçosa's jurisdiction was the most challenging task to address in reconstituting the polygons of such administrative, religious units.

There were multiple reasons: first, in 1758, the parish was already losing population. It had a total of 65 households (*fogos)*. The priest described that

> the parish is located in a desert, without further neighbourhood than the priest, the sacristan and another neighbour; in these three *fogos* [households] we only count ten persons, including men, women, and children (Olival et al., 2023, p. 115).

In 1828, it had the same number of households (Espanca, 2016, p. 79). At the end of the 19th century (1892), the Priest Espanca described it with the following words:

> It is the eastern parish of all the municipality, and the least populated since it only consists of some properties with a few *hortas* [gardens], and there are no valuable outskirts. There, the *herdades* are whole in the hands of the richest, which is the reason for its unpopulated situation, although it is the widest of all parishes (Espanca, 2016, p. 76).

It means that being depopulated; the existence of population clusters was nonexistent.

That relates with a second order of difficulties in cartographing this parish. The parish does not have, like the others, a small village where most of the population was settled. In the Memory, the description of Vila Viçosa in 1892 and in the fiscal lists, we can observe that the parish was composed of large units of agricultural production - the *herdades*, and of smaller units called *hortas*. Well, not only have most of them disappeared, but their toponyms have been lost in time. Indeed, some of the *herdades* existing in the 1760s had changed their name in the 19th century. Using descriptions to identify their locations and determine the ones that belonged to the municipality of Vila Viçosa was insufficient. In such a process, we have decided to confront the information with a fiscal map elaborated by the regional departments of the Portuguese Ministry of Finances in the middle of the 19th century[5]. That enabled us to identify the location of those *herdades* more accurately and determine the territory under the jurisdiction of Vila Viçosa.

A third level of difficulties was related to the identification of municipalities that no longer exist and divided this parish with Vila Viçosa, namely Vila Boim, nowadays part of a *freguesia* of Elvas municipality and Juromenha, nowadays also a part of a *freguesia* of Alandroal municipality. We were able to identify which part of the territory of Ciladas was part of both *termos* by identifying the ruins of the residential units that belonged to their jurisdiction: one household to Vila Boim up in the North of Ciladas and nine to Juromenha in the south of the parish.

The last cartographic challenge was determining the polygon of the parish of São Romão. Ciladas and São Romão have been under the same parish since 1966, by a religious decision of the Archbishop of Évora (Louro, 1967). From then on, the parish and civil *freguesia* have been named as São Romão de Ciladas. Nevertheless, the old parish had (as of today) two villages - São Romão, where the main church was settled, and Aldeia do Forte. Those still exist and are easily traceable. From then on, by locating the *herdades* and the Ribeira da Asseca, a small river as a primary natural division between Ciladas and São Romão, we could find the limits and draw the polygon. Although apparently simple, the parish structure of Vila Viçosa has proven to raise significant challenges from a spatial perspective.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper reconstitutes the polygons of the 1758 parishes of a southern Portuguese municipality. The municipality of Vila Viçosa was small, but its parishes' and *termo* reconstitution have presented challenges in mapping early modern Portugal's adminis-

[5] Arquivo Distrital de Évora (ADEv), *Repartição Geral de Finanças de Évora, Repartição de Finanças de Vila Viçosa, Mapa de Repartição de Contribuição Predial*, PT/ADEVR/ACD/RFEVR/O/001/0001, 1854.

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trative-territorial complexity. At this micro level, greater uniformity does not necessarily mean greater ease in cartography. Although this is the first paper of a project for mapping 1758 southern Portuguese territory and municipal jurisdiction, it demonstrates how crossing micro-«civil» and religious jurisdiction is complex to map and to visually represent the territorial jurisdictional complexity, and the narrative discourse that describes a given location. We chose to represent it through negative polygons, that is, representing the unity of a parish (religious smallest geographical units) and highlighting in colour the territories outside the «civil» jurisdiction of Vila Viçosa's municipality, but that were part of the same parish.

Another point to emphasise is that, contrary to what appears, the parish is not as homogeneous as it seems in these regions of large properties. Would it be different in the North of the country, where small properties and smaller parishes dominate?

As a para cadastral source of Portugal, the Parish Memories have not proven sufficient to cartograph the reality they are describing. On the contrary, the jurisdictional space reconstitution forces us to intersect and cross documental sources from different origins. Not only other narrative descriptions of the territory - that in this particular case were abundant - but also contemporary fiscal sources and studies regarding coeval urban and rural toponyms. Also important were the fiscal maps regarding the first applications of predial taxation in the Portuguese kingdom (only in the 19th century). Still, having this territorial basis enables the historians to easily project on a map other data extracted from the Parish Memories, such as demographic data, main agricultural productions, and relevant local institutions. Further, it is to be implemented, by finding graphic solutions to cartograph municipalities' territorial discontinuities and private and crown's parish administration for other municipalities of southern Portugal. We intend to allow other people to reproduce such polygons by making the maps (at *CidehusDigital*) and the metadata for the polygons available.

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