

Medieval Urban Identity

Medieval Urban Identity:

Health, Economy and Regulation

Edited by

Flocel Sabaté

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Medieval Urban Identity: Health, Economy and Regulation

Edited by Flocel Sabaté

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2015 by Flocel Sabaté and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7785-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7785-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Medieval Urban Identity: Health, Economy and Regulation.....	1	
Flocel Sabaté		
“The smell of rotting corpses infected the air”: Notes on Sanitation, Pollution and Urban Ecology in Al-Andalus.....	13	
Ieva Reklaityte		
Inventory of Arab Objects Documented in Catalan Medieval Houses (Late 13 th Century—Late 15 th Century).....	24	
Lluïsa Amenós		
Ecclesiastical Freedom to Crenellate: Urban Disputes and Rivalries in 13 th and 14 th Century England	68	
Audrey Thorstad		
Tuscan Merchants in Catalonia and Catalan Merchants in Tuscany: A New Double-Perspective Approach to Mercantile Relations in the Medieval Mediterranean.....	89	
Maria Elisa Soldani		
Surgeons in Late Medieval Sicily: Education, Activities, Regulation.....	110	
Daniela Santoro		
Defining “Apothecary” in the Mediaeval Crown of Aragon	127	
Carles Vela		
Barbers in the Process of Medicalization in the Crown of Aragon during the Late Middle Ages	143	
Carmel Ferragud		
<i>Hec sunt consuetudines, privilegia ac ordinationes civitatis Balagarii:</i> The Legal Background of Lleida as a Base for the Local Law of the City of Balaguer (13 th -15 th centuries). A Linguistic Approach.....		166
Robert Cuellas Campodarbe		

A Frontier Cartulary: The Lorca Council Cartulary in the Years 1463 and 1464 as a Source for Studying the Frontier Relationships between Murcia and Granada's Kingdoms	189
Diego Antonio Reinaldos	
Urban Political Identity in the Late Middle Ages: A Reflection on Communal Polities in Urban Castile in the 15 th Century.....	202
José Antonio Jara	
The Control of the Council Offices in the Late Middle Ages: The Notaries in Burgos. A Conflict of Authority	223
Alicia Inés Montero	
Between the Council and the King: The Negotiation of the <i>Encabezamiento</i> of the Alcabalas of Talavera de la Reina at the End of the Middle Ages	241
Alicia Lozano	

MEDIEVAL URBAN IDENTITY: HEALTH, ECONOMY AND REGULATION

FLOCEL SABATÉ
UNIVERSITAT DE LLEIDA

This book aims to provide new analyses of life in European Medieval towns and cities by exploring three apparently little related paths which are, in reality, connected thanks to sharing the common line of urban development.

1. Identity in the renovation of historical science

The crises of history as a discipline of research accompanied changes in late twentieth century society¹ and led to claims for both the scientific character of the historical –“a spirited defence of the search for historical truth”²– and the search for new vectors with which to grasp the past properly.³ Thus, it has become very important to realize that history, properly, is *la construcció del passat*⁴ and, consequently, its traces remain

¹ Gérard Noiriel, *Sobre la crisis de la historia* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1997).

² Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

³ José Andrés Gallego, *New History, Nouvelle histoire: hacia una nueva historia* (Madrid: Actas, 1993); Massimo Montanari, Emiliano Fernández, Michel Dumolin and others, *Problemas actuales de la historia* (Salamanca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Salamanca, 1993); François Dosse, *Història. Entre la ciència i el relat* (València: Universitat de València, 2001); Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), among others.

⁴ “The building of the past” (Josep Fontana, *La construcció de la identitat. Reflexions sobre el passat i sobre el present* [Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2005]).

as *documentos de identidad*.⁵ This perspective has provided bridges towards a global vision, because all the elements from the same background - literature, art, documentation, material remains, etc - must be taken into account, as well as historical research being required to assimilate the methodologies used by other social and human sciences. Indeed, specific attention to what could be explicitly known as Identity Theory is imposed on research into human beings.⁶

In fact, since at least the 12th century, history has been at the forefront of helping to create identities.⁷ Changes in the 19th century sought explanations of global history more attentive to one's own society, also searched for identity discourses,⁸ which, in the different scenarios,⁹ always used a historical base that became an axial reference among the other items considered inherent to identity.¹⁰ It has been warned that these discourses do not seem very rigorous, which could have dangerous effects on society.¹¹ Even when, due to the uncertainties of the late 20th Century, someone returned to references to past identity,¹² caution was advised with regard to the danger of manipulating the historical discourse to serve

⁵ "Identity documents" (Mario Carretero, *Documentos de identidad. La construcción de la memoria histórica en un mundo global* [Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 2007]).

⁶ Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ *Fueron los historiadores quienes crearon las naciones. No hay nación sin historia nacional* ("the historians were who created the nations. There are not nation without national history"). Bernard Guenée, *Occidente durante los siglos XIV y XV. Los Estados* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1973), p. 65.

⁸ Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La creation des identités nationales. Europe XVIIIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), pp. 23-235.

⁹ Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 15-51; José Carlos Chiaramonte, Carlos Marichal and Aimer Granados, eds., *Crear la nación. Los nombres de los países de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2008).

¹⁰ Stefan Berger, "The Power of National Pasts: Writing National History in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Europe", *Writing the nation. A global perspective*, ed. by Stefan Berger (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 30-46.

¹¹ Régis Meyran, *Le mythe de l'identité nationale* (Paris: Berg International Éditeurs, 2009).

¹² Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France perd la mémoire. Comment un pays démissionne de son histoire* (Paris: Perrin, 2006); Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer, *The True Patriot. A Pamphlet* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2007); Miguel Real, *A vocação histórica de Portugal* (Lisbon: Esfera do Caos Editores, 2012).

certain identities.¹³ In this sense, one can even denounce the use of the same concept of identity that the anthropologist Remotti warned about: *contro l'identità*.¹⁴ Alternatively, in 1969 John Plumb called for history to serve the identity of people rather than national causes, which, in essence, continues to be framed in the view of history as creator of identities.¹⁵

In order to be recognized as a science with a genuine interpretative function of society, history must overcome this devotion to serving identities. The commitment seems difficult. However, it must simply adopt the appropriate side. Given that identity is an unavoidable axis for building and consolidating each individual, society and social group,¹⁶ the challenge consists of adopting the same axis as the subject of research. So, historical science does not add to the building of identities but rather makes identities into a vector with which to penetrate the society under study.

From this perspective it can be stated that identity is the basic axis in the social structure, which is then combined with the other two axes: memory, with which identity is justified, and ideology, which provides the appropriate interpretation.¹⁷ Given that society is structured through these vectors, adopting them as the core of interpretation becomes a challenge for renewal, which helps to overcome the old disagreement between both, the interpretative toll used by historians and the framework of values and ideas within which famous or anonymous protagonists of the society studied lived and interpreted their surroundings and, therefore, their rules and actions for organizing human communities.

¹³ Gérard Noiriel, *À quoi sert l'identité 'nationale'* (Marseille: Agone, 2007).

¹⁴ "Against identity" (Francesco Remotti, *Contro l'identità* [Rome: Editori Laterza & Figli, 1996]).

¹⁵ "May history step into its shoes, help to sustain man's confidence in his destiny, and create for us a new past as true, as exact, as we can make it, that will help us achieve our identity, not as Americans or Russians, Chinese or Britons, black or white, rich or poor, but as men" (John H. Plumb, *The death of the Past* (Boston: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 145 [first edition, 1969]).

¹⁶ Flocel Sabaté, "Conditioned identities. Wished-for and unwished-for identities", *Conditioned identities. Wished-for and unwished-for identities*, ed. by Flocel Sabaté (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), p. 9.

¹⁷ Flocel Sabaté, "Identities on the move", *Identities on the move*, ed. by Flocel Sabaté (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 22-29.

2. The urban identity

In this research framework, medieval historiography has still incorporated the invocation of identity into its lines of work. It is easy to perceive this by taking a look at such recent titles as *Construir la identidad en la Edad Media*,¹⁸ *Identidades e fronteiras no Medioevo Ibérico*.¹⁹ Consideration of recent books that we could draw on bearing the word “identity” in the title would highlight precisely the references to urban identity: *Espacios de identidad política urbana en la Península Ibérica, siglos XIII-XIV*,²⁰ *Ante su identidad. La Ciudad hispánica en la Baja Edad Media*,²¹ to cite just recent examples. Is this a game of words according to current fashion or are we moving into new research perspectives? In short, what do we grasp when we talk about medieval urban identity?

Identity is based on a sum of elements properly fitted. The first is external perception. Borrowing the concept of perception from human geography,²² the external witness captures the existence of a specific social body as a singular unit. A closer look from the same viewpoint also captures internal segmentations,²³ but this does not alter the cohesion of the joint vision.

¹⁸ “To build identity in the Middle Ages” (Juan Antonio Jara, Georges Martin and Isabel Alfonso Antón, *Construir la identidad en la Edad Media. Poder y memoria en la Castilla de los siglos VII a XV* [Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2010]).

¹⁹ “Identities and Frontiers in the Iberian Middle Ages” (Fátima Regina Fernandes, ed., *Identidades e Fronteiras no Medioevo Ibérico* [Curitiba: Juruá Editora, 2013]).

²⁰ “Spaces of urban political identity in the Iberian Peninsula 13th -14th centuries” (Juan Antonio Barrio, ed., “Dossier Espacios de identidad política urbana en la Península Ibérica, siglos XIII-XIV”, *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 [2009-2010], pp. 14-274).

²¹ “In front its identity. The Hispanic town in the Late Middle Ages” (José Antonio Jara, *Ante su identidad. La ciudad hispánica en la Baja Edad Media* [Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2013]).

²² Thomas F. Saarien, *Environmental Planning. Perception and behavior* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969); Kevin Lynch, *La imagen de la ciudad* (Buenos Aires: Infinito, 1980); Paul Y. Villeneuve, “Géographie de la perception et méthode dialectique”, *Cahiers de géographie de Québec*, 29/77 (1985), pp. 241-260; Yi Fu Tuan, “Environment, behaviour and thought”, *The Behavioural Environment. Essays in Reflection, Applications and Re-evaluation*, ed. by Frederick W. Boal and David N. Livingstone (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 77-78.

²³ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia, A Study of Environmental Perception. Attitudes and Values* (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1974).

Medieval human being was never alone: he was always perceived as a member of a group and, correspondingly, requests and responses were always collective.²⁴ This facilitated an internal assumption of identity. The members of a specific collective were perceived as a unit from the outside while they had coherent internal behaviour. The medieval urban profile, subject to a specific jurisdiction and enclosed behind the walls, facilitated the collective treatment, accepted by the inhabitants and reflected in their shared attitude in defence of the rights and property of the residents.²⁵ Thus, the external perception matched an internal assumption.

This joint treatment facilitated the role of the representatives. Far from the idyllic vision of the 19th century that imagined the municipal collective fighting united against the nobles to create *îlots de liberté et de démocratie dans un océan de servitude*, it is necessary to grasp the role of elites as so-called representatives of the united collective in this beginning of the municipal movement²⁶. As Susan Reynolds stated in 1982,

The richest and most established burgesses or citizens of a town, like the bishops and nobles of a kingdom, were those who were qualified to speak and judge on behalf of the community of which they were perceived as the most solid, respectable, and responsible members. Representation was not a matter of representing individuals (hence the frequent vagueness about who attended or had the right to attend meetings), but of representing communities.²⁷

While traditional historiography already interpreted a social evolution based on economic change and culminating in the recognition of municipalities,²⁸ the weight of institutional and legal interpretations has facilitated that the momentum of legal recognition of the representatives has been identified such as the establishment of municipal governments. In fact, the documentation is absolutely clear showing that long before

²⁴ Flocel Sabaté, *Vivir y sentir en la Edad Media. El mundo visto con ojos medievales* (Madrid: Anaya, 2011), pp. 55-73.

²⁵ Flocel Sabaté, *El sometent a la Catalunya medieval* (Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2007).

²⁶ “Islands of freedom and democracy in an ocean of serfdom” (Denis Menjot, “Les mouvements des libertés dans les villes de l’Occident médiéval”, *Belfort. 1307 : L’éveil à la Liberté. 700^e anniversaire de la Charte de Franchise. Actes du Colloque de Belfort (19-21 octobre 2006)* [Belfort: Ville de Belfort, 2007], p. 9).

²⁷ Susan Reynolds, “Medieval urban history and the history of political thought”, *Urban History Yearbook 1982* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), p. 15.

²⁸ Henri Pirenne, *Las ciudades de la edad media* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1992), pp. 111-138.

receiving legal recognition, local elites consolidated their position and took decisions that affected all the town or city²⁹ and, notably, acted on behalf of the group and individuals before the respective lord.³⁰ Thus, the representativeness with which elites wrapped their prominent position and from where they mixed their own and collective interests with this representation, became a factor that imposed a specific cohesive identity.

A proven discourse is needed to maintain this position. The towns and cities were very tense internally because of the intersection of various lines of fragmentation between the estates, of social division and ethno-cultural diversity. Emerging sectors sought access to local power that the top social sector denied them.³¹ Certainly, an adequate discourse was required to maintain not only the power but also the representation in these circumstances. In the mid-20th century, Jaume Vicens Vives understood that in the case of the cities in medieval Catalonia, *el govern dels patricis, com tot bon govern, fou el d'una oligarquia els interesso de la qual coincidien exactament amb els del país. Llurs afers personals marxaven d'acord amb els de Catalunya, sense promoure animadversions ni gelosies, perquè, en definitiva, procuraven el bé comú.*³² It is easy to grasp, half a century after these lines were written, that the author reflected, in reality, the official discourse by the municipal authorities, because the actuality was much more tense. In any case, this was the goal: to seize and justify the representativeness through some acts and a specific discourse.

The justificatory discourse had to surround everything that led to the urban collective. This is the reason why it was necessary to generate and establish a suitable common memory. The origins and history of the respective towns and cities highlighted a way that leads to the present; so, it is necessary to vindicate and justify very prominent, sometimes mythical

²⁹ Flocel Sabaté, “Ejes vertebradores de la oligarquía urbana en Cataluña”, *Revista d'història Medieval*, 9 (1998), pp. 130-136.

³⁰ Flocel Sabaté, *Història de Lleida. Alta edat mitjana* (Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2003), pp. 355-366.

³¹ Flocel Sabaté, “Oligarchies and Social Fractures in the Cities of Late Medieval Catalonia”, *Oligarchy and Patronage in Late Medieval Spanish Urban society*, ed. by María Asenjo-González (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 9-16.

³² “The government of the patricians, like all good government was that of an oligarchy whose interests coincided exactly with those of the country. Their personal affairs in accordance with the marching of Catalonia, without promoting animadversions or envies, because ultimately tried the common good” (Jaume Vicens Vives, *Els Trastàmara (segle XV)* [Barcelona: Editorial Vicens Vives, 1980], p. 32).

origins.³³ On this basis, a historical route will be woven around the privileges obtained, according to the medieval legal context. Thus, the selection of concessions received from the lord in order to make the books of privileges, as well as the compilations of own rulers, took on a practical value and carried a symbolic message.

With this background and position, urban identity had to be respected, before the corresponding lord, among the ensemble of towns and cities and in the context of the crown where it is included. Cities and towns took care of their image. It was necessary, as local authorities in Valencia stated, that *sia cosa política embellir la ciutat de lochs públics e decorar aquella, majorment en aquesta ciutat axí insigne e notable*.³⁴ At the same time, it was necessary to provide the towns and cities with a specific and respective symbolic image, as demonstrated through the seals and shields that each city applied to itself.³⁵ Among many other indicators, the gallows erected on the edges of jurisdiction, the candles and canvas used for mourning or to glorify the lord and his relatives, or the flags in front of popular militia in cases of jurisdictional conflict, were carefully depicted as patent signs of local identity. The different municipal policies combined ostentation of their own identity and the demand for the high position that was considered appropriate. This is why attempts to attract new inhabitants were encouraged, the region of socio-economic influence was linked to institutional measures and, in any case, force and vigour were shown in the context of the game of power.³⁶

³³ Danielle Regnier-Bohler, “Rémus et Romulus: mythe des origines et nouvelle alliance”, *Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople. L’image et le mythe de la ville*, ed. by Daniel Poirion (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1986), pp.125-136; Arnold Esch, “L’uso dell’antico nell’ideologia papale, imperial e comunale”, *Roma antica nel Medioevo. Mito, rappresentazioni, sopravvivenze nella ‘respublica Christiana’ del secoli IX-XIII. Atti della quattordicesima Settimana internazionale di studio. Mendola 24-28 agosto 1990* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2001), pp. 3-25.

³⁴ “It is policy to beautify the city though the public places and to decorate it, mostly in this city, which is famous and prominent” (Maria-Milagros Cárcel, “Vida y urbanismo en la Valencia del siglo XV. Regesta documental”, *Miscel·lània de Textos Medievals*, 6 [1992], p. 255).

³⁵ Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, “Du modele à l’image urbaine au Moyen Age”, *Le verbe, l’image et les représentations de la société urbaine du Moyen Age*, ed. by Marc Boone, Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Jean-Pierre Sossons (Antwerp and Apeldoorn: Garant, 2002), pp. 189-205.

³⁶ Flocel Sabaté, “Ciudad e identidad en la Cataluña bajomedieval”, *Ante su identidad. La ciudad hispánica en la baja Edad Media*, pp. 188-201.

In short, we can assess a group of items as being the constituents of urban identity, these being especially external perception, internal assumption, representativeness, processing of discourse of cohesion which had to ensure the consolidation of a common memory, and strategies for ostentation.

3. Economy, health and regulation as explanatory vectors

Having defined the conceptual framework of urban identity, we could find several transverse axes in this. In this sense, and in order not to be repetitive of previous proposals, we choose a seemingly surprising selection of economy, health and regulation.

The economy has traditionally been understood as the starting point for defining medieval urban history. Henri Pirenne imagined a break between feudalism and urban society with a sharp caesura in the model of production:

*Une société dans laquelle la population vit du sol qu'elle exploite et en consomme sur place les produits, ne peut donner naissance à des agglomération d'hommes de quelque importance, chacun y étant lié, par la nécessité de vivre, à la terre qu'il travaille. Au contraire, le commerce entraîne nécessairement la formation de centres auxquels il s'approvisionne et d'où il rayonne au dehors.*³⁷

However, Joseph Calmette soon drew attention to the bourgeois seigneurialisation as the following step in medieval urban history: *l'idée communale a cessé d'être subversive et se borne à compliquer d'un rouage nouveau le complexe mécanisme du régime féodal.*³⁸ Decades later, Yves Barel balanced both impulses in the rise of the medieval urban

³⁷ "A society in which people live off the same soil they work and only consume goods locally cannot give rise to medium or large agglomerations of people, because everyone is bound to the same land they work by the need to live. On the contrary, trade necessarily leads to the formation of urban centres to supply the people who gradually projected their influence" (Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de l'Europe des invasions au XVIe siècle* [Paris and Brussels: Felix Alcan and Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1936], p. 156).

³⁸ "The communal idea ceased to be subversive and merely received a new complex mechanism of feudalism" (Joseph Calmette, *Le monde féodal* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946], p. 186).

society: *por todas partes, más o menos, surge la ciudad como el resultado de un doble impulso: el del feudalismo y el del comercio.*³⁹

Accordingly, when we underlined the importance of the economy in the medieval urban definition, we refer to the towns and cities as foci for generating economic growth,⁴⁰ but, more than this, we stress that the economic impulse involved formal and axiological changes. Formal changes because new forms appeared in the shape of corporative associations and the articulation of work.⁴¹ However, at the same time, there were axiological changes, because the values for articulate society had been adapted to the new framework. ‘*Lucrum*’ had to be accepted while society was moving to accept that belief that *les marchéanz deseur toute gent honorer* as stated *le dit des marchéans* of Paris in the 13th century.⁴² Thus, a specific morality was generated,⁴³ one that enables us to speak about a Christian market economy,⁴⁴ and that helps to configure both the civic aspect of urban life⁴⁵ and early well-developed economic theory.⁴⁶ This, according to medieval values, was based on fair price, good currency, credit and circulation of money.⁴⁷

³⁹ “everywhere, more or less, the city arises as the result of a double impulse: feudalism and trade” (Yves Barel, *La ciudad medieval. Sistema social-Sistema urbano* [Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1981], p. 38).

⁴⁰ Roberto S. López, *La révolution commerciale dans l’Europe médiévale* (Paris: Éditions Aubier Montaigne, 1974), pp. 121-204.

⁴¹ Thierry Dutour, *La ville médiévale* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2003), pp. 214-231.

⁴² “The merchants are honourable people” (Anatole de Montaiglon and Gaston Raynaud, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles* [Paris: Librairie des Bibliophile, 1877], p. 123).

⁴³ James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality. Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Giacomo Todeschini, *Richesse Franciscane. De la pauvreté volontaire à la société de marché* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2008).

⁴⁵ Daniela Romagnoli, “La courtoisie dans la ville: un modèle complexe”, *La Ville et la Cour. Des bonnes et des mauvaises manières* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1991), pp. 25-87.

⁴⁶ Odd Langholm, “The Economic Ethics of the Mendicant Orders: a Paradigm and a Legacy”, *Etica e politica: le teorie dei frati mendicanti nel due e trecento. Atti del XXVI Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 15-17 ottobre 1998)* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo, 1999), pp. 153-172.

⁴⁷ Flocel Sabaté, “El temps de Francesc Eiximenis. Les estructures econòmiques, socials i polítiques de la Corona d’Aragó a la segona meitat del segle XIV”, *Francesc Eiximenis. El context i l’obra d’un gran pensador català medieval*, dir. by Antoni Riera (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans, 2015, pp. 119-131).

Thanks to Romanist *ius gentium*, the local communities were recognized as having their own government.⁴⁸ The respective lords granted powers to local administrations,⁴⁹ which was then increased according to permanent, and centuries-long, political negotiation. Thereafter, over these bases, local governments developed their own rules. The ordinances issued by local authorities became the main indicator of a legislative power, in aspects that affected everyday life, such as urbanism, market, local production and exchange.⁵⁰

An approach to any medieval town or city lets us find ordinances concerned with dealing with *sutzures e fems* or with *bèsties mortes*, preventing pollution of the air or flies spreading diseases from the *sanch a la porta de son alberch*⁵¹ that the barbers had from their job, and from the stink caused by animals living in the town⁵² or rubbish from the market or other human activities, especially sewage from the houses.⁵³ At the same time, new economic activities, such as processing of leather, dying, oil or lime could be very dirty. Their location in specific places on the outskirts of the city had to be regulated, protecting the river water that the population needed.⁵⁴ Concern for safety and health became a crucial and

⁴⁸ Walter Ullmann, “The Medieval Theory of Legal and Illegal Organisations”, *Law Quarterly Review*, 60 (1944), pp. 288-289.

⁴⁹ The Spanish example: Ana Maria Barrero and María Luz Alonso, *Textos de derecho local español en la Edad Media. Catálogo de fueros y costums municipales* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Invetigaciones Científicas, 1989).

⁵⁰ We can see some examples from the old Crown of Aragon: Joaquim Icart, *Ordinacions i crides de la ciutat de Tarragona (segles XIV-XVII)* (Tarragona: Publicacions de l’Excm. Ajuntament de Tarragona, 1982); Josep Torné and E. Miquel Vallejo, *Llibre de les ordinacions de Torroja* (Tarragona: Excma. Diputació de Tarragona, 1989); Montserrat Bajet, *El mostassaf de Barcelona i les seves funcions en el segle XVI. Edició del ‘Llibre de les Ordinations’* (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1994); Antoni Furió and Ferran Garcia-Oliver, *Llibre d’establiments i ordenacions de la ciutat de València. I 1296-1345* (València: Universitat de València, 2007).

⁵¹ “Dirt and dung”, “dead animals”, “blood at the door of the house”. Expressions used in Vic: Segismon Cunill, “Ordinacions sobre bans y penes a Vich en el segle XIV”, *Butlletí del Centre Excursionista de Vich*, 5 (1925-1928), pp. 62-63 and 117.

⁵² Arxiu Comarcal de la Segarra, Llibres del Consell, 1400, fol. 58r.

⁵³ Teresa Vinyoles, *La vida quotidiana a Barcelona vers 1400* (Barcelona: Fundació Salvador Vives Casajuana, 1985), pp. 37-40.

⁵⁴ Jaume Codina and Sabí Peris, “Ordinacions de Girona de l’any 1358”, *Annals de l’Institut d’Estudis Gironins*, 28 (1985-1986), pp. 202-203.

basic scope in Late Medieval urban agglomerations,⁵⁵ and the responsibility of the governments of the town in these items derives from a specific sense of “serving the Common Good”.⁵⁶ Indeed, the regulation of professions that affected human health developed alongside growing social needs, the codes of values that articulated contemporary society and the regulation of knowledge.⁵⁷

Consequently, the ability of the towns and cities to manage themselves and show a specific identity was achieved through their legislative power. The creation of local rules that reflected the values assumed by the society allowed municipal government to regulate items apparently as different as economic activity or community health, which were, in reality, both at the heart of everyday urban life.

4. Our choice

The International Medieval Meeting at Lleida has served, among others things, to link researchers working in closed fields such as the present case. From an initial screening of papers around the present theme submitted between 2011 and 2013, a peer-review process highlighted the 12 articles gathered here. Following the chronological sense, each of them goes into a specific aspect of the chosen vector around the urban identity: domestic interiors (Amenós), consolidation of an elite that took up the local representation (Jara), creating a specific memory throughout the management of municipal documentation (Cuellas) or fitting the estates among each other (Thorstad), the relationship with the region, paying particular attention to such singular places as the frontier (Reinaldos) or long-distance trade (Soldani), the relationship between economic activity and local authorities (Montero), fiscal organization (Lozano) and internal regulation, underlining the health (Reklaitye) and the regulation of professions such as apothecaries (Vela), barbers (Ferragud) and surgeons (Santoro).

The ensemble is a sum that, in its diversity, achieves the proposed target: to approach real late medieval towns and cities from the aspects that were really vital for daily life during medieval times, facilitating a

⁵⁵ Vinyoles, *La vida quotidiana a Barcelona vers 1400*; Ricardo Córdoba, “Las calles de Córdoba en el siglo XV. Condiciones de circulación e higiene”, *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 10 (1994-1995), pp. 142-157.

⁵⁶ Dolly Jørgensen, “Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400-1400”, *Journal of Urban History*, 36/3 (2010), pp. 300-315.

⁵⁷ Lluís García, *La medicina a la València medieval* (València: Ediciones Alfons el Magnànim, 1988), pp. 53-118.

renewal in the searching for new vectors in order to analyse the past. This allows us, finally, to link economy, health and regulation in a significant contribution to the medieval urban identity.

“THE SMELL OF ROTTING CORPSES
INFECTED THE AIR”:
NOTES ON SANITATION, POLLUTION
AND URBAN ECOLOGY IN AL-ANDALUS

IEVA REKLAITYTE
UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA

Introductory notes

It is important to begin our paper by pointing out that conditions of hygiene in urban areas in the medieval era were extremely fragile, and that within this context, any event capable of destabilising the urban ecosystem was liable to have lethal consequences. It was, of course, the inhabitants of congested urban environments who suffered the consequences of this more acutely than other citizens.

When discussing survival in the medieval era, in this case in the specific context of the towns of Al-Andalus (the Muslim state in the Iberian Peninsula), it is impossible to avoid referring to the natural disasters that caused human fatalities and eventually came to provoke the collapse of the social, political and economic life of the state.

Among the various cataclysms that plagued Al-Andalus, there were droughts, floods and even plagues of locusts, which not only caused deaths directly through famine, but also promoted the emergence of epidemics that often had a devastating effect on large sectors of the population. At the same time, it is important to mention the role played by other phenomena, such as earthquakes, snow and hailstorms, periods of extreme heat or cold, landslides and subsidence, among the many natural disasters that seriously jeopardised survival in Al-Andalus. These events are, however, difficult to detect either in written sources or in archaeological evidence. Among other destabilising factors, there were also human actions harmful to the urban ecosystem, such as environmental pollution, a factor promoting the emergence of epidemics. The precarious state of water drainage and garbage disposal, very close coexistence with animals, pollution from

workshops, fires and military activity were among the other causes of urban pollution.

In this paper, we shall refer very briefly to military activity, which caused imbalances in urban ecology through prolonged sieges, occupation by troops, and interruption of cities' food supplies because of devastation of crops, in addition to massacres of inhabitants during the assaults themselves. A wide range of military activity took place in Al-Andalus, not only important battles but also frequent raids and other actions that led to riots and destabilised urban life. We shall also look at deaths and anomalous burials that took place in urban areas, according to archaeological evidence, as although these doubtless did not produce significant environmental pollution, they are, however, interesting, revealing as they do a part of Andalusian urban history where bodies were introduced into the domestic sphere. Finally, we observe that even cemeteries exerted a disruptive influence on the urban life of Al-Andalus when they outgrew their boundaries or when negligent citizens failed to excavate graves properly.

1. Battles and bloodshed

A vision of a battlefield strewn with rotting corpses being eaten by scavenging animals and birds was described by the Andalusian poet Abū Tammām al-Ḥajjām:

*Vemos a los buitres, mientras que [los cadáveres de] los muertos son tan numerosos como los guijarros, a los que esas aves han despedazado las entrañas y el pecho*¹

Battlefield archaeology remains a relatively new area of research, though studies such as those at Alarcos or Aljubarrota² show that this kind

¹ “We see the vultures, while [the bodies of] the dead are as numerous as pebbles, to which these birds have torn the entrails and chest” (Henri Pérès, *Esplendor de al-Ándalus. La poesía andaluza en árabe clásico en el siglo XI. Sus aspectos generales, sus principales temas y su valor documental* (Madrid: Hiperión, 1990), p. 359).

² The Battle of Aljubarrota (located between the towns of Leiria and Alcobaça in Portugal) took place in 1385, and set the Portuguese army, under the command of King John I, against the army led by King John I of Castile. The archaeological survey of the battlefield led to the documentation of abundant remains of the battle. João Gouveia, ed., *Aljubarrota revisitada* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2001).

of investigation may supply valuable support for historical data and provide a more complete view of historical events.

At Alarcos, the site of a battle between the Almohads and the Christian army on the 19th of July 1195, the archaeological survey carried out inside the walls of the town led to the finding of a large pile of human bones and weapons, with residents taking advantage of the foundation trench of the wall, which was still under construction at the time, to get rid of dead enemies. The skeletons were not found in anatomical positions, as they were thrown into a common grave along with weapons and even the remains of animals that perished in the battle. The bodies were then covered with layers of lime and stone as a measure to protect the health of the population of Alarcos.³

Apart from the fear of disease that could be caused by the bodies of those killed in battle, it is important to mention the possible occurrence of epidemics among the attackers. The first documentation in Europe of a possible epidemic of typhus is to be found in the description of the disease that spread among the soldiers besieging the city of Granada in 1489. This epidemic caused 17,000 deaths in the Christian army, and its distinctive symptoms were fever, delirium, red spots on the skin of the arms and trunk, gangrenous wounds, and an unpleasant smell of rotting flesh.⁴ It should be noted that typhus is transmitted by lice, and that therefore the disease is more easily spread in conditions of overcrowding among the hosts.

Military action, sieges and revolts led not only to direct deaths and deaths by slow starvation, caused by disruption to food supplies because of the chaos and burnt crops, but were also the cause of environmental pollution. Environmental contamination was extremely dangerous in urban areas, not only because it infected the air with odours and led to the influx of scavengers, but also because it polluted drinking water. A period of very high mortality is recorded, for example, in Cordoba between 1009 and 1013, and this was no doubt caused by the turbulence of power struggles, with sieges and bloodshed, and made worse by the emergence of epidemics and the flooding of the river.⁵ Chroniclers refer to the killings

³ Antonio de Juan and Macarena Fernández, *Alarcos. Guía del parque arqueológico* (Ciudad Real: Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007), pp. 67-79.

⁴ José Antonio Maradona, *Historia de las enfermedades infecciosas* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 2010), p. 95.

⁵ María Luisa Ávila, *La sociedad hispanomusulmana al final del califato (aproximación a un estudio demográfico)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1985), pp. 38-39.

and the diseases that caused such high mortality among the inhabitants of Cordoba:

*Los combates cada día [eran] constantes y las matanzas, terribles; más [aún], con la disminución de medios y de personas, y, añadiéndose a eso, pestes y enfermedades; ellos [ciudadanos de Córdoba] seguían empeñados en combatir a los beréberes, pese a su incapacidad y su insuficiencia.*⁶

A major factor behind the contamination of the urban environment was that corpses were left unburied, rotting in the streets. During the 1146 siege of the city of Marrakech, which lasted for nearly a year, the besieged Almoravids died in mass due to food shortages, and the chronicler Ibn al-Athīr noted that *plus de cent mille individus du commun avaient déjà succombé à la faim, et les cadavres infectaient l'atmosphère.*⁷

In the Almohad city of Béjaïa (Algeria), a military revolt was accompanied by famine and plague, with the result, according to a chronicler, that *la gente de la ciudad fue incapaz de amortajar a los muertos y de asistir a los vivos y amanecían en las ruinas y en las calles de la ciudad muertos a montones, hombres y mujeres.*⁸

The same situation of confusion, with the resulting inability of the survivors to clean up the bodies, was observed in Cairo during the epidemic of 1296. The number of deaths was so great that the living were quite unable to deal with the recently deceased, and on the highways there were corpses dumped in piles, and foul odours arose from the neighbourhood streets and markets.⁹

⁶ “Every day the fighting [was] constant and massacres were terrible; More [even] with the reduction of resources and people, and, adding to that, pests and diseases; they [citizens of Cordoba] were determined to fight the Berbers, despite their inability and insufficiency” (Ibn ‘Idhārī, *La caída del Califato de Córdoba y los Reyes de Taifas (al-Bayān al-Mugrib)*, trans. by Felipe Maíllo [Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1993], p. 94).

⁷ “More than one hundred inhabitants had died because of the starvation, and the rotting cadavers infected the atmosphere” (Ibn al-Athīr, *Annales du Maghreb et de l’Espagne*, trans. by Edmond Fagnan [Algiers: Typographie Adolphe Jourdan, 1898], p. 544).

⁸ “The people of the city were unable to enshroud the dead and to attend the alive; and there were within the ruins and in the streets of the city droves of corpses of men and women” (Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-Mugrib. Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista*, trans. by Ambrosio Huici [Tetouan: Editora Marroquí, 1953], II/1, pp. 111-112).

⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Le traité des famines*, trans. by Gaston Wiet (Leiden: Brill, 1962), p. 37.

Returning to Al-Andalus, as in other medieval Islamic territories, urban pollution was often caused by bodies being dumped in the streets of cities where survivors were unable to bury them properly. For instance, in Lleida in 883, a large number of bodies of dead Christians remained unburied, according to Ibn al-Athīr, because of fighting provoked by a rebel army revolting against the Umayyad ruler Muḥammad I, accompanied by a Christian army from Barcelona.¹⁰

Hundreds of years later, the secretary of the Catholic Monarchs, Fernando del Pulgar (d. 1493), in his description of the war for Granada noted the putrefaction of corpses in the urban environment, left lying as they were on the streets and inside houses. The citizens did decide to remove the corpses from the city, but left them in the fields without burial, with the result that the city's dogs devoured them.¹¹ The same author also mentions that the Catholic Monarchs did not want to enter the newly-conquered city of Malaga, which was taken after a prolonged siege, until the unburied bodies lying in the streets had been removed.¹²

There is archaeological data that must inevitably be related with hostilities and military conflict in a number of the cities of Al-Andalus. An unburied man, who had clearly fallen headlong after being struck by the bolt from a crossbow, was found, for instance, in the courtyard of the main palace of the citadel of Silves (Faro, Portugal), most probably as a consequence of the Christian conquest of the city in 1248¹³ and similarly, the isolated Muslim burial of a young man among abandoned ruins in the city of Mérida must be considered the consequence of ninth-century urban

¹⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *Annales du Maghreb*, p. 260.

¹¹ *Pasados quatro días después de aquella çibdad se tomó, porque los cristianos padecían gran pena del mal olor de los cuerpos de los moros muertos, que estauan por las calles e por las casas, acordaron de echarlos fuera de la çibdat, en el campo; e allí al campo salían los perros de la çibdat a los comer* (“Four days after the taking of that city, the Christians suffered greatly from the bad smell of the bodies of the dead Moors, that were in the streets and in the houses and so they agreed to throw them out of the city, in the country; and there in the country, the dogs of the city went out to eat them”). Juan de Mata Carriazo, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos por su secretario Fernando del Pulgar. Guerra de Granada* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1943), II, p. 10.

¹² Carriazo, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, p. 333.

¹³ Rosa Varela, *Palácio Almoada da Alcáçova de Silves* (Lisboa: Museo Nacional de Arqueologia, 2001), pp. 140-142.

uprisings.¹⁴ Palaeo-pathological data from various Andalusian graveyards also provide further evidence of violent activity in Al-Andalus.¹⁵

2. Urban riots and criminal deaths

Throughout medieval historical works, there are constant reminders of the violence and cruelty of everyday life, with death a constant presence. Stories about murders, executions, crucifixions, or severed and impaled heads are quite commonplace, though historians did not always consider excessive cruelty on the part of the sovereign, the army or the seething masses as a meritorious act, but rather as a detestable one. From this perspective, one might mention some of the descriptions of mass executions that took place in several locations of the Kingdom of Granada, such as the assault on the citadel of Martos in 1325, as described by Ibn al-Khaṭīb:

*Se desataron las manos de los soldados contra todos sus habitantes, ya fueran varón o mujer, viejo o pequeño: fue cruel la matanza y detestable el suceso. A la mañana siguiente se elevaban montones de cadáveres, a cuyas cumbres se subieron los almuédanos [para llamar a la oración].*¹⁶

It was, however, not only military action that led to the horrible deaths and executions that soaked the cities of Al-Andalus with blood. The same Ibn al-Khaṭīb also describes another act of undeniable brutality, this time conducted by the angry masses against those who had attempted to murder the sultan: *Las sospechas alcanzaron a gentes inocentes, que fueron*

¹⁴ José Ángel Salgado, “Arquitectura doméstica andalusí en la zona suroccidental de Mérida. Intervención arqueológica realizada en el solar nº 10 de la calle Oviedo (Mérida)”, *Mérida. Excavaciones arqueológicas 2004*, 10 (2007), pp. 289- 311.

¹⁵ There is more data on the archaeological and **palaeopathological** evidence of violent deaths in: **Juan Carlos Castillo, María de la Paz de Miguel, Sonia Pérez, Beatriz Sanz and Juan Manuel Guijo**, “**Algunos casos de muerte violenta en al-Ándalus: aproximación desde las investigaciones arqueológicas y paleopatológicas**”, *De muerte violenta: política, religión y violencia en al-Ándalus*, ed. by Maribel Fierro (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004), pp. 523-552.

¹⁶ “The hands of the soldiers loosened against its inhabitants, whether male or female, old or young: the slaughter was cruel and the event detestable. The next morning piles of corpses arose, to whose peaks climbed muezzins [to call to prayer]” (Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Historia de los Reyes de la Alhambra*, trans. by José María Casciaro and Emilio Molina [Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2010], p. 191).

*obligadas a jurar; la plebe asaltó sus casas y sus cadáveres fueron colgados en las paredes.*¹⁷

It has already been noted that the presence of unburied human bodies in the streets was not exclusively attributable to military action. Some of the deaths of the most hated individuals, for example, were cruel and degrading, with garbage and excrement serving to accentuate the indecency of their deaths. The historian Ibn 'Idhārī (d. 1320) thus described the death of Ibn 'Abd al Jabbār on the 23rd of July 1010:

*Los esclavos amiríes lo degollaron, le cortaron la cabeza y tiraron su cuerpo al Arrecife; cayó en el lugar en el que estaba el madero de Ibn 'Asqalāya, desde el día que lo mató Ibn 'Abd al Ýabbār. Wāḍih envió su cabeza a los beréberes y su cuerpo permaneció expuesto durante unos días, luego se le enterró en un albañal, al pie del madero de los crucificados.*¹⁸

The undignified death of the vizier known as Ḥakam b. Sa'īd the Weaver, meanwhile, is described by Ibn 'Idhārī as follows:

*Así pues asecharon a Ḥakam, el visir tejedor, en su camino, lo asaltaron, lo mataron y arrojaron al lodo y a la inmundicia, y así tuvo lugar el fin de la calamidad. Pasaron su cabeza y la emplazaron al pie de la [alcazaba] 'Illiya (la Alta) [...]. El pueblo mientras tanto tomó sus despojos y lo dejaron abandonado, desnudo, tirado boca abajo.*¹⁹

Even a hundred years later, Leo Africanus (d. 1554?) mentioned persistent acts of humiliation suffered after death by disgraced authority figures, in this case in the context of Marinid military action in 1337: “Entered the citie, and having conquered it, carried home the king thereof

¹⁷ “The suspicions reached innocent people, who were forced to swear; the mob stormed their homes and their bodies were hung on the walls” (Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Historia de los Reyes*, p. 192).

¹⁸ “The Amiri slaves beheaded him, cut off his head and threw his body to the Arrecife; it fell in the place where there was the wooden post of Ibn 'Asqalāya, from the day he was killed by Ibn' Abd al Jabbār. Wāḍih sent his head to the Berbers and his body remained exposed for a few days, after that, he was buried in a sewer at the foot of the stake of the crucified” (Ibn 'Idhārī, *La caída del Califato de Córdoba*, p. 93).

¹⁹ “So they stalked Ḥakam, the vizier weaver in his path, assaulted him, killed and threw him into the mud and filth, and thus the end of the calamity occurred. His head was paraded and emplaced it at the foot of the [citadel] 'Illiya (the High) [...]. The people meanwhile took his spoils and left him abandoned, naked, lying face down” (Ibn 'Idhārī, *La caída del Califato de Córdoba*, p. 130).

captive unto Fez, where he was the king of Fez beheaded, and his carcass was wast fourth among the filth of the citie”²⁰.

Historical accounts aside, archaeological data also reveal the burial of human bodies outside areas designated for that purpose. Archaeological excavations in Algeciras, in Patriarch Ramón Pérez Rodríguez Street, have, for instance, revealed an unusual Islamic burial ascribable to the Almohad period. Between the 10th and 13th centuries, this area was depopulated and used for garbage disposal, and it is interesting to find four bodies dumped directly onto the dungheap, overlapping each other, rather than being buried according to Islamic precepts. According to the archaeologists who conducted the survey, the bodies were not buried but simply left on the pile of garbage until the refuse, including a large number of animal bones, covered them.²¹ The absence of bones from the limbs among the human remains could certainly indicate that these were eaten by animals.

This abandoning of human corpses on a dungheap is by no means unique: another Islamic human burial in a place used for garbage disposal has also been documented in Tavira (Faro, Portugal).²² The pottery found in this dump, which also contained household waste, such as animal bones, and ichthyologic and malacological remains, indicates an origin in the 12th or 13th centuries, a period of increasing political instability that culminated in the Christian conquest of 1243. A man aged between thirty and forty was deposited on the dump in a supine position, oriented in a south-west/north-east direction, with his legs and arms stretched out. The conservation of all the bones in an anatomical position proves that the man was not carelessly thrown into the garbage, but was placed there carefully and covered in order to discourage scavengers, although the precepts of Muslim burial were not followed. It is impossible to know, of course,

²⁰ Leo Africanus, *The history and description of Africa and of the notable things therein contained*, trans. by John Pory and Robert Brown (New York: B. Franklin, 1963), p. 668.

²¹ Cibeles Fernández, José María Tomassetti, Salvador Bravo, Sonia Ayala, Alfonso Palomo, José Suárez and María Antonia Martín, “Excavación arqueológica preventiva en c/Patriarca Obispo Ramón Pérez Rodríguez nº 1 de Algeciras (Cádiz)”, *Anuario Arqueológico de Andalucía*, 4/2 (2010), pp. 66-79, especially, p. 71 and 77.

²² Maria João Neves, Maria Teresa Ferreira, Lília Basílio and Miguel Almeida, “Pensão Castelo (Santa Maria, Tavira, Faro): un caso de inumação individual no seio de una lixeira islâmica”, *A Ocupação Islâmica da Península Ibérica, Actas do IV Congresso de Arqueologia Peninsular (Faro, 14 a 19 de Setembro de 2004)*, ed. by Nuno Bicho (Faro: Universidade do Algarve, 2008), pp. 107-115.

exactly why someone might have been buried among waste, but the mere existence of such burials is of great interest.

While on the topic of unusual burials, whether because of their location or the miscarriage of funeral rites, an unusual find in one of the western suburbs of Cordoba (Fontanar de Cabano Street) is also worthy of mention.²³ At some point during the period of the Caliphate, an individual was seemingly buried in a supine position, with a north-west/south-east orientation, in a location far from suitable for a proper burial: one of the city's streets. Unfortunately, it has so far proved impossible to provide an explanation for the reasons that led the inhabitants of the suburb to bury someone in so unusual a place, and one can only speculate on the probability of a criminal act that required the quick disposal of the corpse.

It should, finally, be mentioned that there are other cases that demonstrate the presence of human bodies in residential areas. An example is the Almohad settlement on the island of Saltes (Huelva), where besides the usual domestic waste such as pottery, a huge garbage pit in the street contained the incomplete skeletons of two children.²⁴

3. Cemeteries

In the context of the discussion of urban pollution caused by unburied corpses, it is important to point out the existence of cemeteries close to inhabited areas in Al-Andalus. In Christian cities, the problem of urban cemeteries was naturally much more significant, owing to their concentration in the central areas of the town. Historical records may indeed lead us to argue that it was the Christian medieval city that introduced the dead among the living, with shallow graves emanating foul odours and polluting the environment.²⁵

The archaeologist P. Jiménez Castillo points out, however, that the image of Islamic cemeteries being necessarily located outside the city is not always correct: the practice of intramural burials had been initiated in

²³ Encarnación Cano, "Actividad arqueológica preventiva c/ Fontanar de Cábanos, s/n, Córdoba", *Anuario Arqueológico de Andalucía*, 5 (2010), pp. 858-877, especially, p. 870.

²⁴ André Bazzana and Juana Bedia, *Excavaciones en la isla de Saltés (Huelva), 1988-2001* (Seville: Junta de Andalucía, 2005), p. 197.

²⁵ Jean-Pierre Leguay, *L'eau dans la ville au Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2002), p. 124.

Islamic Murcia, for example, back in the 11th century, due to population growth and the scarcity of available land.²⁶

Most cemeteries were located in the southern part of the city, either on or near main roads. The presence of graveyards or proximity to them is also reflected in legal documents: 15th-century documents from Granada show that some plots located outside the city were attached to cemeteries, and even that some of the houses in the suburb of the Albaicín were bounded to the north by the cemetery (*rawḍa*).²⁷

Although there was no excessive proximity in most *medinas* between residential areas and cemeteries, it is worth remembering the recommendations of the 13th-century Malaga chronicler, al-Saqaṭī, the author of the *ḥisbah* treatise on burials, who describes a rather macabre spectacle:

*Ordenará a los sepultureros que hagan las tumbas bien hondas de modo que no salgan sus hedores, imposibilitando así mismo a las fieras y canes a desenterrar los cadáveres. Ocularán cuantos huesos de difuntos asomen en la tierra, no dejándolos a la vista.*²⁸

As regards the necropolises of other larger Andalusian cities, there must also have been problems due to a lack of available land. According to Ibn 'Abdūn, a famine in 11th-century Seville led to so many deaths that even the city cemetery became insufficient.²⁹ The author also describes how overcrowding caused congestion in cemeteries, with lack of space causing the overlapping of burials: *Se entierran los cadáveres unos encima de otros, por lo estrecho que se ha quedado*.³⁰

Despite all this, it must be stated that the most significant pollution that could be caused by the proximity of a necropolis took place in times of

²⁶ Pedro Jiménez, “Algunas reflexiones en torno al urbanismo islámico de la región de Murcia”, *Urbanismo islámico en el Sur peninsular y Norte de África*, ed. by Ángel Iniesta (Murcia: Servicio de Patrimonio Histórico, 2002), pp. 84-106.

²⁷ Luis Seco, *Documentos árabe-granadinos* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Islámicos, 1961), pp. 76b and 77b.

²⁸ Muḥtasib] will order the gravediggers to make well-deep graves in order not to let the stench out, and making it impossible for wild beasts and dogs to dig up the corpses. [They will] hide the bones of the dead that stick out the ground, not leaving them visible (Pedro Chalmeta, “El ‘Kitāb fī ādād al-ḥisba’ de al-Saqaṭī”, *Al-Ándalus*, 33 (1968), pp. 143-197 and pp. 367-435, especially, p. 413).

²⁹ Emilio García and Évariste Lévy-Provençal, *Sevilla a comienzos del siglo XII. El tratado de Ibn 'Abdūn* (Seville: Servicio Municipal de Ediciones, 1992), p. 95.

³⁰ “the dead bodies on top of each other are buried, so narrow has it become” (García and Lévy-Provençal, *Sevilla a comienzos del siglo XII*, p. 95).

floods, when cemeteries were flooded and, consequently, drinking water was infected.

Final Notes

It is, of course, clear that everyday life in Al-Andalus was not always marked by violence and urban upheaval. There is no doubt that the inhabitants also enjoyed periods of relative peace and quiet, in cities that contained gardens and even fields of crops.

Nevertheless, historical and archaeological data do show us that much of the history of Al-Andalus was marked by wars, periodic raids, urban rioting and even massacres. The frequency of military activity caused not only direct deaths, but also environmental pollution. Protracted sieges, the interruption of supplies to the city, the destruction of crops and troop invasions all led to famines and epidemics. The destabilisation of urban hygiene may be attributable to the presence of unburied bodies, the increased rate of transmission of disease due to overcrowding, and even the existence of precariously-maintained cemeteries near inhabited areas. In spite of their frequent partiality, chroniclers' testimonies provide evidence of the urban rioting, violent deaths and mass executions that took place in Al-Andalus, while archaeological data from battlefields affords us glimpses of the military history of Al-Andalus, as in the case of Alarcos.

However, the fact that archaeological research data remains sparse and fragmented reflects an urban reality that remains insufficiently studied, though the abandoning of corpses in dumps, or being hidden elsewhere outside cemeteries, allows us a glimpse of criminal acts and/or violent deaths.

To conclude, it should be noted that the brevity of this paper did not allow us to carry out a more detailed study of this interesting aspect of urban life in medieval Muslim Spain. We have limited ourselves here to making some notes on possible links between military activity and violent deaths, and the effects of these on the urban environment and ecology.

INVENTORY OF ARAB OBJECTS DOCUMENTED IN CATALAN MEDIEVAL HOUSES (LATE 13TH CENTURY—LATE 15TH CENTURY)¹

LLUÏSA AMENÓS
UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

1. Creation of the Inventory: criteria and methodology used

Goods inventories kept in our notarial archives give us a lot of information about the household furnishings of medieval Catalan houses. The registered objects are often accompanied by descriptive terms and/or more or less precise descriptions that inform us of their location within the space, form and function and/or their origin or place of manufacture. Some of the descriptions make explicit reference to the Arab affiliation of documented objects, or define one or several physical characteristics that relate directly to an Arab cultural context.

Despite being present in our written sources and being part of the heritage preserved in our museums, Arab objects remain largely forgotten within the medieval domestic sphere, especially in Catalonia.² For this reason, this paper attempts to approach this issue through an inventory that orders and systemizes data taken from written sources, with the final aim of providing a useful tool for studying and cataloguing Arab, and especially Andalusian, material culture.

Unfortunately, financial limits and time constraints have limited our inquiry to a restricted sphere, based on published inventories and a small number of unpublished manuscripts from the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona. This is a tiny collection when compared to the enormous possibilities offered by the Catalan Notarial Archives. As an aid

¹ Abbreviation used: AHCB, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona.

² For an initial approach to the Arab material culture in Catalonia, see: Manuel Acien, *El Islam y Cataluña* (Barcelona: Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, Museu d'Història de Catalunya and Lunewerg Editores, 1998).