



Although it is difficult to trace precisely the boundaries of the Roman *civitas* of Aeminium (Coimbra), or of the territory of Coimbra in the Middle Ages, geographical, historical and demographic factors have been taken into account to define an area from Figueira da Foz to Penacova and from Mealhada to Cernache.

Starting from the Iron Age, with its scattered hill-forts, the changes that took place in Roman, Suevo-Visigothic and Islamic times are here analysed. In these last two periods there seems to have been relatively little settlement by Germanic and Muslim peoples, despite the importance of Coimbra and Montemor-o-Velho in the Islamic period. After the first Christian reconquest of Coimbra in the time of Afonso III of Leon, however, numerous villages were founded, most of them surviving to the present day. The present study notes the development and multiplication of villages, particularly from the time of Count Sesnando, of Count Henrique and Countess Teresa, and of King Afonso Henriques up to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Documentary evidence has been collected from all settlements in the area, and their status has been defined. Some were villages of small free landowners, while others were conceded to or acquired by nobles, or by ecclesiastical institutions such as the Cathedral or the monasteries of Lorvão, Vacariça and Santa Cruz.

Apart from the villages, the various Roman *villae* in the area are identified, as well as the large medieval estates, whose boundaries and owners are considered.

Although the focus of the study is essentially on features of the region, aiming in particular to identify places and to determine when they were founded, the people who were the major landowners have not been neglected. Amongst these, can be mentioned Lucídio Vimarães, lord of Formoselha, Diogo Fernandes, owner of Vila Cova (which later passed to the monastery of Lorvão), Rosendo, lord of Botão, and the French Rabalde family, who received gifts from Count Henrique.

In its depth of documentation, this study forms an essential introduction to the little-known field of the region's medieval archaeology.