

RURAL RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF TORRES VEDRAS

Inês Pires Fernandes, PhD Student

Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

The residential architectural heritage in rural areas – erudite or just for agricultural purposes – corresponds to a significant portion of the Portuguese built heritage. Region's economic centers, in the past, due to its agricultural potential, agricultural farms and suburban *villas* (known as Quinta de Recreio), given their eccentricity to the cultural and touristic city centers, are nowadays abandoned and ignored, with regard to dissemination and tourism exploitation. The aim of this paper is to present the architectural values and the potential of these buildings. The amount of these types of properties along the Southeast zone of Torres Vedras proves their economic and cultural importance for the region. These properties structure even nowadays, the villages and the rural area of Torres Vedras, marking and segmenting the agricultural fields. Their agricultural, hydraulic and recreational structures spread throughout the country and become the characteristic landscape of this special region. Despite its importance for the economy, the employability and for rural development, its current abandonment, the lack of information and safeguard programs, undertake the knowledge of this important part of history. Therefore, it is proposed their rehabilitation and the creation of a tourist and recognition route.

Keywords: Rural residential architectural heritage, manor estates, suburban *villas*, quinta de recreio, Torres Vedras

Introduction

The history of certain municipalities – in Portugal, specifically – is not all about their main city. In inland zones of the national territory or adjacent to large metropolitan areas prevail, or prevailed until the last century, activities linked to agriculture, livestock and natural resources exploitation. In such situations, the region's history is related to the history of rural context and its infrastructures that enable the resources exploitation. These are the cases of large rural estates, once economic centers and settlements in rural areas. In Torres Vedras, the life and rural activities of

these properties were structural for the economy and sustainability of the region and its people. This fact is proved by the amount and density of remaining agricultural properties. However, not all of these maintain their original functions and many of them are completely abandoned. It is the purpose of this paper to put in evidence the importance of these buildings and structures in economic, social and architectural history of the region and reveal their cultural and touristic potential.

The region's framework

The municipality of Torres Vedras delimits to North the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML). It contacts with the Atlantic Ocean in the West. The region is marked by mild and sunny slopes, which rarely exceed 200 meters of height. Despite not having major watercourses, the Sizandro river and Pedrulhos stream in the South; and the Alcabrichel river in the North; efficiently serve the water network to supply and irrigate the farm fields through hydraulic systems. Their irregular flow can cause floods in *varzeas*³³, maximizing their agricultural potential.

Besides the river basins, there is plenty of water in subsoil reserves, ensuring the fertility of the land. These geomorphological conditions justify a remote human occupation of the area, along with the nearby ocean.

Originally, the land would be occupied by spontaneous vegetation. With the territory humanization, the properties construction and the farming exploration, a part of this mass was enclosed on farms as forests for hunting and recreation.

The main urban centers are connected by a rod system, along the valley, near which develop and scatter rural architectural structures.

The manor estates and their distribution

There are, in this territory, several evidences of human occupation from the *castros* to Roman *villas*, which later would be taken for the construction of large agricultural estates³⁴. Along the national territory conquest, the Royal House accumulated land (*Reguengos*), or distributed them by the Church³⁵ (Coutos) and Nobility³⁶ (Honras), to be exploited and for communities to be established.

³³ floodplains

³⁴ Varanda, Fernando. *Terra e Casas no Oeste*, Lisboa: Argumentum, 2009, p.12.

³⁵ often associated with monasteries and convent properties

³⁶ Rodrigues, Cecília Travanca. *Torres Vedras – Passado e Presente*, vol. I, Torres Vedras: Câmara Municipal de Torres Vedras, 1996, p.69. ⁵ Baptista, João Maria. *Chorographia Moderna do Reino de Portugal*, vol. IV, Lisboa: Typographia da Academia Real das Sciencias, 1876. ⁶ Rodrigues, Cecília Travanca. *op.cit.*.

These properties identification was based on the surveys carried in the works “*Chorographia Moderna do Reino de Portugal*”⁵, 1876, “*Torres Vedras – Passado e Presente*”⁶, as well as in the inventories of *Direcção-Geral do Património Cultural (DGPC)*³⁷, *Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico (SIPA)*³⁸ and in Military Maps. Through these resources, it is possible to identify a significant density of these properties in the Southeast area of Torres Vedras municipality, particularly in five of the current parishes, which we take as our study territory:

Parish ³⁹	“ <i>Chorographia Moderna do Reino de Portugal</i> ”, 1846 ⁹		“ <i>Torres Vedras – Passado e Presente</i> ”, 1996 ⁴⁰	
Torres Vedras	Prior, Rozeiras, Marinha, Monteiro, Paul, Colégio do Barro, Costa, Desembargador, Calvel, São Gião, Alfaiata, Gaga and other 5 with any specific name	17	Alfaiata, Calvel, Fontainhas, Gaga, São Gião, Bella Vista, Certã, Colégio do Barro, Covas, Fonte Grada, Fontes, Hilarião, José Accursio, Maria José, Marinha, Matta, Prior, Rigueiras, Sampaio de Cima, Sant’ Anna, Valle de Lino, Vigario	22
Matacães	Juncal, Portucheira, Boavista, Nova, Lapas ⁴¹	5	Juncal, Macheia, Nova, Portucheira, Lapas	5
Carvoeira	Luz, Glória, Filha Boa, Rainunes, Zibreira, Panasqueira, Pendencias, da Rainha	8	Charneca, da Rainha, Glória, Luz, Paço, Penasqueira	6
Carmões	Barreiros, Serra and other 2 with any specific name	4	Barreiro, Belo Jardim, Carmões, Ribeira Formosa	4

³⁷ Portuguese General Directorate of Cultural Heritage

³⁸ Portuguese Architectural Heritage Information System

³⁹ Baptista, João Maria. op.cit.

⁴⁰ Segundo o inventário - Rodrigues, Cecília Travanca. op.cit..

⁴¹ Quinta das Lapas, despite belonging to the parish of Maxial e Monte Redondo, is located on the surroundings of the properties in parish of Torres Vedras e Matacães, sharing the same geographical and landscape context, and therefore is considered as belonging to this group.

Dois Portos	Conceição, Hespagnol, Pinhal, Codorno, Calhorda, Torre, Carrasca, Almoinha, Rocio, Pedrarias, Galharda, Romeiro, Serra	13	A de Guerra, Além, Almoinha , Arrotea, Barreiro, Calhorda, Carrasca , Charneca, Cidadoura, Codorno, Conceição , Curvanceira, Feliteira, Ferraria, Galharda , Nova do Hespagnol, Pisão, Portella, S. Pedro, Serra, Torre, Velha do Hespagnol	22
Runa	Gandra, Ponte, Retiro , Princeza, Penedo	5	Alcobaça, Granja, Pederneiras, Pinheiro, Ponte, Retiro	6
Turfical	Almeirinhas, Chapuceira, Estrella, Fez, Infesto, Farropeira, Majapão, Pombal, Póvoa, Ribeira , Portelinha	11	Alfaiate, Arco, Arieiro, Arneiros, Chapuceira, Estrella, Farropeira, Fez, Infesto, Maias, Manjapão, Pombal, Póvoa, Ribeira , Sala, Valle d'Ouro, Valle de Corvo, Viscondessa	18
total		63		83

tab.1 – Properties distribution by the four parishes in study

Given that, there are 28 properties in the other parishes (in the survey “Torres Vedras – passado e presente), making a total of 110 across Torres Vedras; the Southeast area of the municipality encompasses about 75% of manor agricultural properties.

In fact, the density of manor agricultural properties in the Southeast of Torres Vedras, also spread to the neighbouring municipalities of Alenquer and Mafra, along the main access routes through the valleys.

Noble estates framework

The large rural properties that arise in this particular area emerge from the need of agricultural production as a mean of livelihood of populations and enrichment of their owners. They begin to rise up from the Middle Age, on the ruins of Roman *villas*⁴² (Quinta de São Gião⁴³),

⁴² Varanda, Fernando. op.cit., p.12.

⁴³ Rodrigues, Cecília Travanca. op.cit., p.50. ¹⁴ Varanda, Fernando. op.cit., p.50.

justifying the classical traces of some buildings. Others, however, appear as mere agricultural complexes that gain notoriety over the generations and grow in its size, wealth and erudition of successive enlargements.

The manor estates differ from the so-called *casal* – minimal and family unit farm – by its greatest extend and the agricultural product variety. Despite the difference between these properties and the *villas* around Lisbon, by the permanently residence of its owner, rather than the sporadic recreational purposes; they have in common the project erudition of its main house and some recreational outdoor structures.

The main purpose of these properties would be the economic return of their lands through farming, vineyards and livestock. Thus, they grew in proportion to their production and economic power, expanding their status and their owners in relation to their surroundings. Besides its scale and extension suggest the economic power from the profitability of the land exploitation, the erudition of their buildings and surrounding structures demonstrate the wealth and cultural and social level of its owner. The properties and vineyard extension allied the monumentality of the buildings, their contemporary decoration and their leisure structures.

Thus, these manor estates would be “islands” in relation to its surroundings, concentrating in itself the wealth, the economic power, the employability and the livelihood of the region and of the population.

The manor estate evolves until the nineteenth century, through the soil profitability. However, in the twentieth century, because of the territory and farming discrediting, the production, the buildings and the structures came into decay.¹⁴ Many of them were even destructed to give rise to new urban lots with the same name.

Structure and Composition

The manor estate project has its focal point at the implantation time. This is structuring for property organization, taking full advantage from natural resources (soil, water, landscape, etc.). The area orography, however, suggests an overlooking position implantation (Quinta da Charneca, Runa), on the hillside (Quinta da Luz, Carvoeira); or a more functional one, related to the valley, the water line and the road access (Quinta das Pedrarias, Dois Portos).

“The choice of rocky outcrops, on the top or on the side of the hills to an establishment implantation may correspond to grounding reasons, flood prevention, taking advantage of whatever is fertile land for agriculture, or simply the placing in visually dominant position. The location in valleys, in turn, is explained primarily by being close to water courses and to

alluvial terrain cultures, as well as communication pathways, required for the support and production flow”.⁴⁴

The manor estate includes different specificities, in order to provide the economic support and, at the same time, the well-being, comfort and pleasure of their owners. It is composed, therefore, by vast agricultural fields, dedicated to various types of crops, a segmented structure built according to the functions and an outdoor recreational area (tab.3.).

feature	Built structures	Outdoor structures
Farming	Wine cellars, wine and olive press, barns, furnaces, stables, engine sheds, warehouses, other farming facilities, worker housing, etc.	Vegetable gardens, vineyards, olive crop lands, orchards, threshing floor, etc.
Residential	Manor house, chapel	Entrance patio, service courtyards, churchyard, etc.
Recreational	Pergolas, bowers, caves, <i>casas de fresco</i> , pavilions, etc.	Formal gardens, orchards, bush, pathways, etc.

tab.2. agricultural property features, buildings and outdoor structures

The main house

The main house, which includes the residence of the noble family function, is the building that has a more erudite character, with architectural elements and decorative contemporary style. These elements modernity conveyed the cultural and artistic elite of their owners, as well as social, political and economic power of the family. Its implantation, although functional variations, always represents the building character and importance, either by their prominence in the site (Quinta da Barreira, Carvoeira), by its scale in relation to the contiguous path (Quinta da Rainha, Carvoeira) or the precedent patio (Quinta das Lapas, Monte Redondo). The house access is usually done by an entrance patio, with regular forms in the most erudite cases; accessed by a gate that vertically marks the beginning of the property.

The house may occupy a frontal position to the patio, with its main façade in axle with the entrance gate (Quinta das Lapas, Monte Redondo); or a lateral position, with a lateral façade adjacent to the access road (Quinta de Além, Dois Portos). When the house occupies a central position on the property and away from the road axis, the access is made through a promenade that connects the entrance gate to the main building (Quinta da Granja, Runa). There are few cases in which the main façade is directly oriented to the street access (Quinta Nova, Matacães).

⁴⁴ Idem, p.48.

The entrance patio is bounded by a wall adjacent to the access via. This wall can present openings with *conversadeiras*⁴⁵, allowing the visual contact with the outside, despite the assurance of privacy (Quinta de D. Teresa, Turcifal). Sometimes the wall encloses not all the entrance patio but a wider and private area surrounding the main house.

The main house has, as a rule, two floors. The ground floor is dedicated to service areas, kitchen, tanks, olive oil mills and agricultural implements storage. It is accessed, generally, by a service courtyard or by a lateral façade. The top floor, whose spans are larger and feature a stone and metalwork with a more erudite design; is dedicated to the noble area. There are salons, living rooms and bedrooms. The stairs to the house entrance, on the top floor, marks the main façade. This can present several configurations, however, it is common the two symmetrical flights, adjacent to the main façade (Quinta do Hespagnol, Dois Portos); or only one flight and a column porch. The roof, usually multiple for structural reasons (Quinta da Porticheira, Matacães), is built according to the traditional techniques, with beams and ceramic tiles. In the most erudite cases, the roof is finished with a talon (Quinta de N. Sra. Do Carmo, Dois Portos) or balaustrade (Quinta de S. João Baptista, Turcifal). The spans rhythm is regular, suggesting the internal compartmentalization. This one is simple, with continuous compartments, without corridors until the nineteenth century, and with a hierarchy concerning the privacy. It is notorious the difference in quantity and scale between the noble floor spans and the ground floor ones (Quinta de Santo António, Dois Portos). The upper floor spans, in greater quantity and often complemented by decorative elements, are strategically oriented to the landscape, to the production area or to the gardens. The surrounding landscape was taken as the house extension, promoting the contact with the outside. In some cases the *loggias* are used, oriented to the patios or the gardens (Quinta do Hespagnol, Dois Portos). This situation, with origins in the Italian Renaissance *Villas*, was adapted to the national and local context, creating harmonious architectural objects, despite its rustic location.

Adjacent (Quinta do Juncal, Matacães) or close to the main house (Quinta da Rainha, Carvoeira), is, in the most cases, the chapel. This building was used by its owners, farmworkers and nearby population. However, the owners' area is segmented from the one that is used by the others. The main house and the chapel, close to the access way, would create a village development pole around them.

⁴⁵ built-in benches in the wall

Garden area

The area outside the main house also works as a living space, associated with the use and contact with nature. Thus, there are vegetable elements nearby the house, oriented to a private enjoyment, as the formal gardens. These are usually associated to a lateral (Quinta do Juncal, Matacães) or back façade (Quinta de D. Teresa, Turcifal). These may be delimited by tiled walls with *conversadeiras* or bowers. The formal gardens are composed by *buxo* structures, aromatic species and may include fruit trees or small orchards. The hydraulic system of the manor agricultural property is visible through fountains and tanks, usually related with the façade or other remarkable element. Around the tanks there are, sometimes, erudite structures, including tile panels with niches and even artificial caves and *casas de fresco* (Quinta das Lapas, Monte Redondo).

In some situations, there are also observable walking paths through the property, from an area near the house. These paths are covered by pergolas or *latadas* and are sometimes accompanied by the distribution gutters, promoting freshness and the resonance of the water flow (Quinta do Hespagnol, Dois Portos). The courses may be more or less extensive according the size of the property and they can even extend to the orchards and the production areas.

In more remote areas and, in general, in higher places, where agricultural production is more arduous, still remains the original forest. These areas allow the contact with nature in pure and spontaneous environment and allow a horseback riding and even hunting.

Farming area

In less noble and further away zones from the main house, there are the workers dwellings (employees or tenants⁴⁶), as well as agricultural dependencies (mills, furnaces, barns, cellars, warehouses, etc.), associated to the different types of production. These structures are usually aggregated to the road to the production flow. Inherent to the property there could be wind and water mills, threshing floors or other specific structures.

The production areas are concentrated in the valleys or on gentle slopes. Commonly, the slopes are modeled in terraces to the better use of agricultural land.

Hydraulic System

All the agricultural extension was effectively irrigated by a hydraulic system by gravity. The first moment – capture – is preferably carried out at a higher point, so that, the water is conducted by the slope or the terraces

⁴⁶ Varanda, Fernando. op.cit., p.50.

through the gutters and aqueducts – distribution – to reach the lower levels, where it is stored.

capture	Strems, springs, water mines, wells, whaterwheels.
distribution	Aqueducts, intramural ou ground-level gutters.
storage	Tanks, artificial lakes, dams.
recreational structures	Fontains, swimming pools, water mirrors <i>casas de fresco</i> , caves, lakes.

Tab.3. Hydraulic system stages

The water, besides the agricultural fields supply purpose, was also serving the leisure of the property owner and his guests. It was molded in artificial lakes, tanks, swimming pools, *casas de fresco*, fountains, etc., promoting the freshness of outer spaces, including the formal gardens and orchards, the living areas closest to the main house.

The manor estate typology, particularly in Torres Vedras area, is a complex and functional organism that, since the implantation moment pretends to answer to multiple strands.

With the original purpose of natural resources exploitation, for their owners benefit, soon these manor estates gained other valences, both for them and for the communities. To meet the emancipation and social representation wishes of its owner, the main house and the entrance structures – gate, entrance patio, and walls – got a classical and monumental character, to answer his architectural tastes and prove its social power. Besides the monumentality of the building and its decorative elements – spans stonework, corners, grounding, pediments, balustrade, stairs, etc. -; the outside spaces complexity also reflect the property luxury and magnificence. Formal gardens, bushes and orchard became also living and socializing spaces with direct contact with nature that the site provides. Thus, there are recreational structures associated with the exterior – shading elements as pergolas, gazebos and pavilions, staying ones as *alegretes*, *conversadeiras*, banks and walls; and riding footpaths or *latadas*. Taking advantage of the potential of the hydraulic system, vital to the agricultural areas irrigation, there are tanks, swimming pools, water mirrors, *casas de fresco* and even artificial lakes and caves. The manor estate of Torres Vedras region combines, therefore, the practical component of the agricultural profitability and the recreational and leisure for their owners.

However, despite the owner apparent selfishness, these properties have become a key for urban and economic development of Torres Vedras and its rural surroundings. They constituted employability poles, adding to the place other economic activities and fix the populations around them, giving rise to villages. These properties are the basis of the history of the municipality economics and rural environment. **Conclusion**

The manor agricultural farm in Southwest of Torres Vedras, the study object of this paper, is a vital unit for the rural and economic development of the region. It concentrated the agricultural development, the livelihoods, the population employability, and the great families' prosperity. They also testify the agricultural systems evolution, as well as the main buildings and exterior structures erudition.

However, their potential, once vital for the region, is nowadays undervalued. It is possible to denote a lack of literature about it, as well as tourist and cultural information. Therefore, it is unenforceable the exact location and object visit.

In addition, as it is possible to see by tab.1., the properties number and names vary in 1876 and 1996 surveys and even in military maps, hindering the apprehension of the whole universe under study. The fact that the 1876 survey contains fewer properties, it might be due to a later construction of those listed in the 1996 inventory. The opposite fact may be due to the buildings destruction before to the 1996 survey. The discrepancy may also derive from casas of multiple denominations or changing the names through the ages. Nevertheless, these assumptions do not justify all odds – there are some buildings (or traces) which do not appear in the latest survey or even in the military cards.

Currently, most of the buildings in the surveys and in the military cards were destroyed (or their land severely amputated) for the city enlargement or for new building allotments. Due to the real estate speculation, there are many manor agricultural properties at risk.

The document *Programa Territorial de Desenvolvimento do Oeste (Estratégia 2020 – Plano de Acção 2008-2013)*⁴⁷, drawn up in 2008, whose guidelines aimed at achieving the previous objectives of FEADER⁴⁸ and PRODER⁴⁹ aimed to strengthen and “revitalize economic and socially the rural areas”. It also safeguarded the “creation of (...) touristic routes”⁵⁰ for rural areas, in particular with the “acquisition, adaptation and recovery of any heritage buildings to support infrastructure” such as agricultural farms and other structures such as wind or watermills.

It is proposed the development of “touristic products built with complexity, articulating several aspects such as the historical and

⁴⁷ West Region Development Program Document (2020 Strategy - Action plan 2008-2013)

⁴⁸ European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

⁴⁹ Strategic and Financial Tool to Rural Development Support, co-financed by FEADER

⁵⁰ Programa Territorial de Desenvolvimento do Oeste (Estratégia 2020 – Plano de Acção 2008-2013), Oeste: 2008, p.82. ²² Idem, p.27.

architectural heritage, the buildings quality, (...) the landscape, the «green», the mountains and the caves, the farms and the rural experience (...)»²².

Thus, this program aims to make this zone a global space, where rural areas could renew and highlight themselves; gaining distinction at touristic, cultural and heritage levels. Therefore, they may reveal an important feature of this area history in an innovative and sustainable way.

Indeed, the rural residential heritage have potential for touristic use, in particular for the creation of a thematic route as it is, moreover, held in Portugal with other touristic typologies – the wine route -; or artistic styles – the gothic route -; or, in Italy, the *villas* trail. Some of these buildings are in operation as rural tourism or accommodation establishments; others as events promoters. There are other ones, harbouring different features, compatible with the tourist and cultural enhancement.

The creation of a roadmap to this typology would reveal the historical, cultural and economic importance of these buildings, their symbiosis with the territory and its exceptional architectural structure, projecting the municipality of Torres Vedras and its rich rural surroundings and landscape.

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