

A building expert without building training: The city of Lisbon vedor of works (14th–19th centuries)

S.M.G. Pinto

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

ABSTRACT: The role of the building expert has historically been filled by a person with building training, such as a builder (master-mason or carpenter), an architect or an engineer. However, in the historical Portuguese building world, there were some agents acting as building experts who had no formal construction skills or building practice as was the case of the *vedor* of works in the city of Lisbon. His expertise was the administration of building contracts for the city's public works. The aim of this study is, therefore, to bring to light the now extinct office of the city of Lisbon vedor of works, focusing both on the duties and on the men.

1 INTRODUCTION

On 13 November 1364, among the other people witnessing the act of property donation action in Lisbon was Lourenço Martins, identified as *vedor das obras do concelho* [-of works of the city] (Nacional Archive Torre do Tombo [hereinafter ANTT], *Mosteiro de São Domingos de Lisboa*, MS. 51, fl. 135–136v, Fareló 2008: 252). This reference to the office of *vedor* is probably the oldest known as no others have thus far been discovered in 14th century sources contrary to the case for the subsequent centuries. However, there is a strong likelihood that this municipal officer was instituted in the first half of the 14th century moreover in keeping with the appointment of many other office holders with the same designation.

Indeed, according to the legal historian Marcello Caetano (1985: 308), “the designation of vedor begins to be used at this time in the sense of a minister in charge of a government sector (*the one who sees the issues around certain matters*), perhaps in opposition to the *ouvidor* (*the one who hears the parties in the judicial courts*), thus outlining the distinction between administration and justice”. Thus, several vedores were appointed within the royal court (Gomes 2003: 51–53). Some were entrusted with functions related to the general administration of the kingdom, such as the *vedor da chancelaria* [-of the chancellery], responsible for checking royal deeds and placing the royal seal, which appears in 1323 (Homem 1990: 100–110), and the *vedor da fazenda* [-of finances], responsible for the financial administration of the kingdom, already appointed and active in 1341 (Henriques 2008: 138).

Other royal vedores had, in turn, more circumscribed duties, such as managing properties or construction works. For Lisbon, documentary sources testify to the presence of a *vedor das obras do rei*

[-of the king's works] in 1299, and a *vedor das casas e tendas do rei* [-of the houses and store premises of the king] in 1332 (Fareló 2008: 297, 752, 748).

In the 15th century, there was a multiplication in the vedores of the king's works. Appointed to act in a certain city, town or region, or even for a specific construction project, such as for walls, castles, fortresses, palaces or bridges, these officers were responsible for the administration and supervision of the construction works promoted by the king (see, among other sources, ANTT, *Índice da Chancelaria de D. Afonso V Comuns*, MS. 37, fl. 402v–404v). This movement was then followed by the institution of other related officers, such as the *vedor-mor* of the king's works and the *provedor* of the royal works, and a centralized structure for the management of royal works: the *Provedoria das Obras Reais* (Soromenho 1998, Senos & Silva in print).

It is, therefore, not surprising that some municipalities, particularly the larger ones or those with the greatest urban development, appointed similar officers to manage their own construction works. So it was in Lisbon; but was also in Oporto, where a *vedor das obras da cidade*, named Gonçalo Anes do Estão do Anjo, held the position in 1417 (Melo & Ribeiro 2011: 109). However, in smaller towns, that assignment could be carried out by existing municipal officials, especially the *vereadores* [councillors].

It should be noted, furthermore, that the medieval sources account for these two different officers (royal and municipal) with almost the same designation. For instance, in Lisbon, the municipal officer was the *vedor das obras do concelho*, while the royal officer could be called *vedor régio das obras* or just *vedor das nossas* [the king's] *obras da cidade*. This subtle difference is often perceived only in the context of documents, leading to some confusion and, perhaps for this reason, this topic has not been addressed by

historians. Indeed, the only attempts to shed some light on the subject were made by Melo & Ribeiro (2011: 109–113), although within a broader study of medieval builders of Oporto and Braga, and more recently by Senos & Silva (in print) focusing on royal officers.

Nevertheless, nothing substantial has been written about this municipal officer of Lisbon, although the vedor of works is mentioned in the list of the municipal officers of many studies (for instance see Ferro 1996; Rodrigues 1968; Santos & Viegas (ed.) 1996). And yet, as detailed below, the vedor of works of the city of Lisbon was one of the first municipal officers to have their duties regulated in writing. Plus, as a building expert responsible for the contractual administration of the city's public works, it is surprising that those who held the office across the years never held any formal building training. This characteristic distinguishes them not only from other building administrators but also from other building experts usually identified in historic studies, such as builders (master-masons or carpenters), architects or engineers.

Thus, this study represents a first approach to the city of Lisbon's vedor of works, which falls within the scope of broader analysis about the officers related to construction works prior to the Liberal reforms instituted in the 19th century. Two aspects are particularly focused on: the duties assigned and the men who performed them. Therefore, in order to understand the office, the study covers a long timeframe, from the Middle-Ages until its abolition at the beginning of the 19th century. Due to the lack of previous studies, this makes recourse mainly to published and unpublished documentary sources above all from the Municipal Historical Archive of Lisbon [hereinafter AML-AH].

2 THE DUTIES

The scarcity of documentary references to the vedor of works of the city of Lisbon for the 14th century contrasts with that contained for the following century.

On 28 July 1421 and again on 23 March 1428, João de Évora, the city of Lisbon vedor of works, was one of the witnesses certifying two building contracts (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de Místicos*, doc. 12 and doc. 15, published in *Documentos*: 47–50, 55–56). The first contract, made between the municipality and two masons (Afonso Esteves and Lourenço Pires), covered work on the urban wall in the Cata-que-Farás area in order to settle a previous contract between the same parties that, according to the city council, had remained unfulfilled. The second contract, signed between the same municipality and one mason (Lopo Eanes), related to building a wall in the Santo Antoninho chapel.

In both documents, the clauses and obligations of the building contracts are described in detail. In the first contract, the masons had to supply a series of carved stones, set them in masonry according to the instructions given by the city's master-builder, make the plasterwork and foundations, hire the workers, as

well as other necessary tasks. The municipality had to supply the lime for the mortar, the wood and the ropes for scaffolding at the construction site, and pay 650 *reais* for each built *braça* [fathom] in three parts, at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the work. The work had to be completed by the following September on penalty of costs and expenses of 100 *reais* per day. The real estates of both parties served as guarantee.

In the second contract, the mason had to build a wall two fathoms high, with small windows nine palms high, in well-hewn lioz stone. He also had to extract the stone from the quarry and transport it to the construction site, to supply the lime and water, to engage workers and other necessary aspects. The municipality had to provide access to the quarry and pay 10 thousand *reais* for the work of extracting and transporting the stone, plus another 15 thousand *reais* for the other materials and works, also in three instalments. The deadline for completion was the following Christmas day on penalty of costs and expenses of 100 *reais* per day. The real estate holdings of the mason again served as guarantee.

The presence of the city's vedor of works certifying the conditions of these building contracts is not the result of chance as confirmed by several later documents that always connect this officer with this kind of duty.

In 1438, the Lisbon city council asked for royal permission so that, henceforth, the construction works undertaken by the municipality could only advance through the contract system [*empreitada*] by public auction, and not by daily fee [*jorna*] (on the difference between these two types of hiring a builder, see Pinto 2018a, 51–53). King Duarte granted this on the condition that the adjudication of the works was made in the city hall, in the presence of the councillors, the *corregedor* [a royal magistrate in charge of correcting acts in local justice and administration], the city registrar and the vedor of works of the city (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 327, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016; 468–471).

As happened on several occasions, a precept applied in the City of Lisbon became a rule throughout the kingdom (Caetano 1981: 79). Thus, in 1465, King Afonso V ordained by general law that construction works promoted by municipalities should always be carried out by *empreitada* in the presence of “the vedor of the said works of each place” (doc. published by Serra 1793: 394).

In the regulation establishing the remuneration for Lisbon municipality officers in 1471, the same king defined the following: at the beginning of each year, the members of the city council with the vedor of works and the *escrivão* [registrar] of the same works should tour the city to see what construction works were needed, such as walls, street pavements, spouts, drains or others, accompanied by builders to submit their prices for the building contracts, which should be written down by the registrar. It was the responsibility of the vedor and the registrar to check and supervise the works and the performance of the builders

in order to verify the works were appropriately completed in accordance with the contract conditions and within the stipulated deadline (doc. published by Serra 1793: 422–426, AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 482, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 591–593).

Ten years later, a new royal charter made it mandatory for masons and carpenters working on municipal works to obey the orders issued by the vedor of works, at that time Pero Vaz, who thereby held the same authority as the royal officer *almoxarife da terçena* [tax-collector of the shipyard] (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 445, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 562).

On 6 October 1484, all the duties of the vedor and the registrar of works were established in written form by the city council. Both officers had to witness the concession of the building contracts, and the registrar had to write them down in a log book. They had to continuously visit the construction site to check on the progress of work and to order whatever needed doing, with the registrar recording all the requirements and penalties imposed by the vedor. The vedor was in charge of the contractual obligations that belonged to the municipality, such as supplying materials and tools or transporting materials, having to buy or award them. All expenses had to be recorded in the book, from which a copy signed by both officers was taken and handed over to the municipal council. These same precepts also had to be followed whenever the vedor hired builders for daily fees. With the work completed, the vedor then had to place unused building materials and tools in the city's warehouse, paying for their transportation. The registrar had to record all income and expenses in the book, detailing the money given to the vedor and where it was spent so that councillors could ascertain the partial and the total costs of each work. The log book was to be verified each year to confirm the accounts. The vedor had to make all payments on a table installed in the city's warehouse, in which there was also the safe-box with two locks, with one key held by the vedor and the other with the registrar so that the safe-box could only be opened when both officers were present (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 471, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 580–582; and a partial copy in another city book, *Livro das Posturas Antigas* published by Rodrigues 1974: 163–164).

Through this regulation, the vedor of works clearly acted closely with the registrar, and both ran teams to coordinate, manage and supervise the development of the public works promoted by the city. While the registrar was responsible for recording all the relevant facts and payments, the vedor was the officer who acted on behalf of the city council to oversee matters of details during the execution of the works and to ensure that the technical, time and cost specifications were met in accordance with the agreed contract. In short, the vedor's expertise lay in the administration of building contracts.

On 30 August 1502, King Manuel I instituted the first legal document to regulate all the municipal officers of Lisbon. In this, the duties of the vedor and

the registrar of works are dealt with in two sections: *Cap. das Obras* [Chapter of the Works] and *Veedor Escripuam das obras* [Vedor, Registrar of Works]. However, there were no substantial changes in the description of their duties, only fine-tuning, as is the case with the list of public works that these officers should take care of (now including walls and barriers, pits and gates, bridges, spouts, fountains, street pavements, drains and roads), and the monthly periodicity of the visit to the construction sites. In addition, clauses were added with a view to improving the performance of these officers, such as the requirement to schedule the works at the beginning of the year in view of the budget available, or the obligation to answer for failings resulting from their misconduct or negligence (AML-AH, *Livro Carmesim*, fl. 8v–28v, published by Santos & Viegas (ed.) 1996: 147–170).

In 1509, the same king arranged the three councillors of the city [*vereadores*] into three administration areas: meats [*carnes*]; sanctions and deeds to be dispatched at the Council Table [*“penas E feitos que se despacham na messa”*]; and city works and cleaning [*obras e limpeza da cidade*], “for each [councillor] to stay with the duties of their part, and each one deciding what he has to do, and not be in charge of all three” (AML-AH, *Livro Carmesim*, fl. 29v, published by Santos & Viegas (ed.) 1996: 171). This change gave rise to something that may be considered as the beginnings of the municipal works department. Due to the city's growth and the complexity of its administration, on 22 June 1591, King Philip II of Spain, I of Portugal, increased the number of councillors to six, which led to the subdivision of the works and cleaning area into two. This regulation (published by Sousa 1785: 124–136) clearly identifies how the councillor of works worked directly with the vedor of works, the registrar of works and the master-builder and also responsible for ensuring each fulfilled their duties. The following regulation of 5 September 1671 and the amendments made by the decree of 27 November of the same year, handed down by the regent of the kingdom, the future King Pedro II, complemented the earlier regulation but did not introduce any changes in this regard (published by Sousa 1785: 140–154, 320–321).

However, in the early-modern period, other related tasks were added to the duties of the vedor of works, although the main and most important duty remained administering building contracts.

One task deriving from the aforementioned subdivision of cleaning and works into two distinct administrative areas raised doubts about who was responsible for cleaning the city's fountains: whether the cleaning *almotacés*, who by regulation had to clean public spaces; or the vedor of works who, by regulation, had to repair the fountains. Thus, on 12 October 1596, the city council agreed this action should be carried out by the vedor of works because, when the fountains were not cleaned in due time, they would get damaged and then their repair would be more extensive and expensive. Hence, once a month, the vedor of works had to have the fountains cleaned, the cost for which would

come out of the budget of the councillor of works (AHM-AH, *Livro 2º de Assentos do Senado*, fl. 65).

Other tasks were related to protecting the streets. Since 1504, the Lisbon city council demanded private individuals, before embarking on construction work facing the street, should make a request to the councillors to carry out a prior visual inspection, without which the building permit, mandatory since that date, would not be granted. However, it was only in 1592 and by royal provision, that this act was regulated: the inspection should be carried out by a commission made up of five municipal officers, who perform measurements and alignments in order to ensure that no public area was usurped, plus, the entire act should be recorded in writing. Although the vedor of works was not included in that commission, he started taking part in these inspections whenever the works to be built led to changes in the shape of the streets or in its pavements – since, by regulation, he was responsible for these kinds of works –, or whenever the works for construction were so important they required the presence of all municipal council members, a total of 23 people (Pinto 2016).

Moreover, since the city council agreement of 6 October 1690, the vedor of works was to confirm if the private ongoing works had the proper building permit and if the boundaries determined by the measurement and alignment actions were being observed, otherwise, he had the authority to impose an embargo stopping any further work and then to proceed against the offenders according to city bylaws (AML-AH, *Livro 5º de Assentos do Senado Oriental*, fl. 62v, published by Oliveira 1882–1911: IX 222).

Nine years later, on 13 February, the city council agreed that these building inspections also had to evaluate whether other neighbouring street-facing houses or walls in disrepair constituted a danger for the public good. In this case, the master-builders of the city should conduct an inquiry, then registered in writing (AML-AH, *Livro 5º de Assentos do Senado Oriental*, fl. 103, published by Oliveira 1882–1911: IX 522–523). Following notification by the inquiry certificate, the city council would act promptly and inform the owners of the derelict buildings to repair or demolish them. However, some owners appealed such orders in court, delaying the repair work and increasing the danger of collapse. For this reason, at the beginning of the 18th century, the councillors requested royal authorization to be able to demolish all buildings in imminent danger, even those propped up, whenever the owners did not comply with the demolition order within twenty-four hours. It was up to the vedor of works to carry out the demolition action against the will of their owners (AML-AH, *Livro 6º de Consultas e Decretos de D. João V do Senado Oriental*, fl. 57–57v, published by Oliveira 1882–1911: XI 23–24, see also Pinto 2018b).

The vedor of works also had responsibility for maintaining the fire extinguishing tools. This is known because in 1670 the city council asked King Afonso VI to order the royal officer in charge of the new fortification to deliver a set of tools for firefighting to the

vedor of works. This request stemmed from the city no longer having such tools as less scrupulous people did not return them after fires had been put out. The king did not authorise this immediately and the council had to explain that the fortification works were stopped, those tools had been purchased through taxes imposed on the Lisbon's population, and the tools in question (namely, mattocks, pick-axes, hammers) were both used for building and putting out fires because they also served to dismantle walls and demolish buildings. Even so, the king only granted the loan of those tools for six months as the city council would have to buy new tools in the meantime (AML-AH, *Livro 4º de consultas e decretos de D. Afonso VI*, fl. 463–465v, published by Oliveira 1882–1911: VII 193–194, 197). In order to avoid the new, recently acquired, tools going missing, the city council made a specific regulation on this matter, assigning and listing which of the municipal officers, masons, carpenters, sawyers, hewers and other masters kept certain tools, such as axes, picks, hoes, buckets and lanterns. However, the city also had new equipment, such as nozzles, ladders, ropes and others, which were stored in two specific houses. These tools should only be delivered to specific people when a fire broke out. After the fire was extinguished, the vedor of works was to check whether those tools had been returned, acting against anyone who had not done so (doc. published by Oliveira 1882–1911: VII 54–57).

Finally, between 1719 and 1755, the vedor of works was assigned yet another task. He had to manage the making of new awnings, colonnades and other removable structures for the Corpus Christi procession, and store all those things in the city's warehouses. As this task was not his direct obligation, it was remunerated for separately, also accumulating the title of *almoxarife da colunata* (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de Consultas e Decretos de D. João V do Senado Ocidental*, fl. 228–230 and *Livro 2º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 95–104v, about these ephemeral structures, see Raggi 2014).

However, in the wake of the 1755 earthquake, the vedor's duties became residual where not even irrelevant as the king had removed the jurisdiction for the reconstruction plan of the destroyed area and the urban management of the surviving remainder from the city council (Monteiro 2010: 189–206). Only with the administrative and judicial reforms of the Liberal era (particularly the decrees of 16 May 1832) did the Municipality of Lisbon recover part of the city's urban management, despite the fact that it was still shared with the central government's Public Works Department (Silva 1997: 276–280).

3 THE MEN

While the regulation of 1484 is very detailed about the duties committed to the vedor of works, it says nothing about who should hold the office or for how long. The oldest information in this regard dates back to 1433. The city council complained to the king that many municipal officials – giving as an example precisely

the vedor of works – started to occupy the office permanently through requests, pleas and favours, contrary to the ordinance that established the service time of just three years. The king ordered the old system be kept, adding that only for the benefit of the city could someone stay in office longer, which should be elected and chosen with royal approval (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 320, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 444–451).

The lack of data does not allow us to truly assess this point as from the middle of the 14th century only five names of vedores of works are found in the known documentary sources: i) Lourenço Martins in 1364 – aforementioned; ii) João de Évora in 1421 and 1428 – aforementioned; iii) João Aires in 1433 – witnessing a certified copy of documents (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de D. João I*, doc. 16); iv) Estevão Vasquez in 1437 – referred to in a royal charter (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de D. Duarte e D. Afonso V*, doc. 16); and v) João Gonçalves in 1452 – witnessing a rental contract (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de Emprazamentos*, doc. 12).

However, from 1481, and perhaps even before that, and for another 22 years, the office was held by Pero Vaz –aforementioned–, although it is not known whether he remained in office for such a long time due to appointment renewal or by donation (on ways to access public offices, see Hespanha 1982: 384–403). Contrary to what one might suppose, Pero Vaz was not a builder nor did he have any construction training. He was, in fact, a knight of the royal house and so had some social prestige and authority. Furthermore, he also had some wealth as in 1485 the city council tried to make a deal with him (by leasing tax collection) to obtain the money necessary for drainage works in the Ribeira area and, in November 1486, he offered to lend the city 100 thousand *reais* to repair the wall that had collapsed next to the royal ovens – a work that had been ordained by the king three months earlier (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de D. João II*, doc. 34, 52, *Livro 1º de Proviemento de Ofícios*, doc. 37). Plus, as a member of the royal house, he also communicated directly with the king, having been summoned by King João II, in 1487, to commission the works on the fountain *del-Rei* [of the king] (AML-AH, *Cópia do Livro 1º do Proviemento da Água*, fl. 10v–11, *Livro 2º de D. João II*, doc. 83). In 1492, the same king issued instructions on how to manage the money for the city's works, sending the city's *corregedor* to speak to Pero Vaz, who was to adjudge which works were most needed (AML-AH, *Livro 3º de D. João II*, doc. 44). In 1493, Pero Vaz wrote to the king alerting him that the halt in the paving work on Rua Nova was due to a royal order that prevented the caravels of Cascais from transporting the stone, after which the king ordered the municipality to buy two boats for that same purpose. Two years later, the king ordered that a fine paid by an apothecary (a total of 100 *cruzados*, circa 38 thousand *reais*) be entirely applied to that paving work and thus handed over to Pero Vaz (AML-AH, *Livro 3º de D. João II*, doc. 53, 56, 87; about this paving work, see Gonçalves 1995). In 1497, Pero Vaz complained to King Manuel I

that the administrator of the All-Saints Royal Hospital (which was under construction) obliged the city works builders to work on the hospital. In 1500, by royal order, Pero Vaz was in charge of the construction of the city's new wharf. And, in 1501, he became involved in a dispute with a schoolmaster over the transportation of stones for paving the streets. Additionally, in 1502, he participated in settling the compensation for the houses the king had ordered demolished (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de D. Manuel I*, doc. 17, 47, 60, 66B). Within the city council, Pero Vaz replaced the city procurator at a document certification in 1486 and for several rental contracts in 1502 (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 453, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 569–570, AML-AH, *Livro 5º de Escrituras de Aforamentos*, fl. 48v–51v, 56v–57). He also participated in drafting two bylaws, one concerning the transportation of olive-wood in 27 November 1495, and the other on the running of bulls in the city streets in 15 May 1503 (*Livro das Posturas Antigas* published by Rodrigues 1974: 213–214, 264–265).

Marcos Mendes took the place of Pero Vaz, having witnessed many rental contracts between October 1503 and March 1504 but of whom nothing else is known (AML-AH, *Livro 5º de Escrituras de Aforamentos*, fl. 175–208).

However, shortly afterwards, the office of vedor of works was held by a particular person: Diogo Brandão. The city council gave him the office after the death of his father, Pedro Brandão, in 1510, while holding the office. However, Diogo Brandão was a minor and his mother requested the king's permission for the office to be temporarily held by his uncle, Álvaro Fernandes, until Diogo attained adulthood. The city council must not have been pleased with the proposed name, having instead chosen Estevão Gonçalves as, in April 1511 he already appears as vedor of works (AML-AH, *Livro dos Pregos*, doc. 500, published by Viegas & Gomes 2016: 609–610). Such a choice forced the king to intervene again, instructing the council to let the heirs appoint the substitute (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de Proviemento de Ofícios*, doc. 126, 129). The outcome of this question is unknown but what the sources show is that Diogo Brandão was in charge of the office from March 1521 (AML-AH, *Livro de Festas*, fl. 56–78v). However, there is no building work associated with his name with the available documents only mentioning that he was a witness to legal acts in 1522, 1527 and 1532, or that he had leased buildings belonging to the city in 1539 and 1540 (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de D. João III* doc. 8; *Livro das Posturas Antigas* published by Rodrigues 1974: 316–318, *Livro 4º da Vereação*, fl. 142–142v, *Livro 1º de Tombos Antigos*, fl. 36, 55). Nevertheless, we may accept he was responsible for maintaining the new walls built along the river in the Ribeira area according to the royal decision of 22 February 1521 (AML-AH, *Livro 4º de D. Manuel I*, fl. 151).

Francisco da Silva was the next officeholder at least since 1544. This is known because in 1556 he requested a salary increase stating that he had held the

office for twelve years and that the growth of the city had increased his work and expenses, forcing him to have two horses and servers to do the job (AML-AH, *Livro 2º da Vereação*, fl. 95v–96). In the same year, he checked the cleaning work in Rossio and made a contract with carpenter António Paulo for work on Paço do Alqueidão (AML-AH, *Livro 3º da Vereação*, fl. 90, 95). He additionally received good news in 1560, when notified of royal confirmation that his office, which had been donated to him by the city council, was lifelong and heritable, thus able to appoint a son or daughter as his successor (ANTT, *Chancelaria de D. Sebastião e D. Henrique*, MS 5, fl. 8v). Henceforth, the office of city of Lisbon vedor of works became the property of his family, always passing from father to son, although occasionally the office might be, as did happen, rented by other people (on the ownership of offices, see Stumpf 2014).

The first heir of the office was Lucas da Silva (Francisco's son), who also held the title of noble-knight of the royal house. In 1579, he was already identified as the vedor of works but nothing is known about his actions only that the city council, in 1594, ordered him to encounter the city's weights and measures that had gone missing (AML-AH, *Livro 13º de Escrituras de Aforamentos*, fl. 42–44, *Livro 2.º de Assentos do Senado*, fl. 47v).

On the next vedor, Francisco Tavares da Silva (Lucas' son), the information is even scarcer. From later documents, it is known he held the office but it must have only been for a short time because in he was beheaded in 1615 for having killed his wife, Brites de Gouveia (Secco 1880: 256). The couple left a minor son, Miguel Nuno da Silva, who was at risk of losing ownership of the office were it not for the intervention of his maternal grandfather, Miguel Nuno de Gouveia, who enjoyed a good reputation in the city for having served as a literate judge in various municipal courts. The trouble arose from a legal action brought by João de Sousa Pereira who claimed the office for himself. In the end, it was agreed that João de Sousa Pereira would serve as vedor of works until Miguel Nuno da Silva was old enough to do it but also until another municipal office was provided for him (AML-AH, *Livro de Quitação e Desistências*, fl. 136–137, *Livro 3º de Assentos do Senado*, fl. 80v–81v).

In the 1625 list of the municipal officers needed for the municipal service and public works, and for such reason discharged from military service, Miguel Nuno da Silva already appears as the city's vedor of works (AML-AH, *Livro 1º de Filipe III*, fl. 72–72v). With King João IV in the throne – which ended the period of Spanish rule (1580–1640) – in 1641, Miguel Nuno da Silva was awarded the habit of the Order of Christ with a pension for his services in the fortification works (but also for services done by his father during the siege of Mazagão in 1562 and by two uncles in India). Six years later, he received another pension for having given the city flag to General Álvaro de Abranches da Camara and city keys to the king, on the day of the king's acclamation (ANTT, *Registo Geral de Mercês, Portarias do*

Reino, Ms. 1, fl. 73v and Ms. 2, fl. 93v–94). In 1658, he applied to the Inquisition Court in Lisbon to be an associate member [*familiar*] (ANTT, *Tribunal do Santo Ofício, Conselho Geral, Habilitações, Miguel*, mc. 20, doc. 315); and still held the office of vedor of works in 1664 (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de Consultas e Decretos de D. Afonso VI*, fl. 357, published by Oliveira 1882–1911: VI 498–499).

His son, Lucas Tavares da Silva, also received the habit of the Order of Christ in 1647 for having joined the Armada of 1646 and having proffered to go to Brazil with Count António Teles de Menezes to repel the Dutch attack on Bahia (ANTT, *Registo Geral de Mercês, Portarias do Reino*, Ms. 2, fl. 94). He stayed several years in Brazil, where his son, Francisco Tavares (Coutinho) da Silva, was born.

For this reason, in the last years of the 17th century, the office of vedor of works was not performed by its rightful owner but by other people who rented it. Since 1674, the vedor was Pedro da Cunha de Almada, who worked on three wharves (S. Apolónia, Fundação, and Belém), on the demolition of the city gate of Mouraria, and on the widening of Rua dos Ourives de Prata (AML-AH, *Livro 6º de Consultas e Decretos de D. Pedro II*, fl. 282–287v). In 1685, although the office was already owned by Francisco Tavares da Silva, it was served by Cosmo Saraiva de Andrada who, due to illness, delegated it for six months to António Salter de Macedo (AML-AH, *Livro 9º de Consultas e Decretos de D. Pedro II*, fl. 78–83v). And, in 1696, another office server, Vicente Pereira de Castro, placed an embargo on a private work (AML-AH, *Livro de Cordeamentos 1637–1715*, fl. 297–300v). In the early 1700s, the office owner, Francisco Tavares da Silva, also imposed several embargos but, due to illness, he passed on the office to his son, Lucas Nicolau Tavares da Silva, having requested this of the city council in July 1705 (AML-AH, *Livro de Cordeamentos 1637–1715*, fl. 89–90v, 146–147v, 236–237v, 234–235v, *Livro de Cordeamentos 1669–1704*, fl. 355–356v, *Livro 19º de Consultas e Decretos de D. Pedro II*, fl. 216–217v).

Lucas Nicolau Tavares da Silva became the city's vedor of works in office for the longest time: 31 years. Indeed, between 1707 and 1738, he received several orders from the city council to fix river walls and other public buildings, to clean fountains, to check buildings in danger of ruin, to work on the Corpus Christi procession, but above all to make and fix the pavements of several streets and roads (AML-AH, *Livro 4º de Registo de Cartas do Senado Oriental*, fl. 1, 4v–5v, 7v, 13, 21, 29v, 56v, 58–58v, 60–62v, 70–71v, 73v–74, 78v, 92v, 95v, 97, 100–102, 143, 148–150v, 170, 177–178v). In 1737, he asked the city council to authorize his eldest son and rightful successor in office, Miguel Nuno da Silva Azeredo Coutinho, about eighteen years of age, to accompany him in the exercise of his office. Two reasons were invoked: so that his son could begin to learn the office that would eventually be his and so his son could replace him when he was unable due to the ailments that he was suffering. Furthermore, this

appeared a common practice as he gave many concrete examples where such authorization was granted, including the case of his own father (AML-AH, *Livro 12º de Consultas e Decretos de D. João V do Senado Ocidental*, fl. 60–63v). Both the city council and the king gave the requested authorization, however, in the last years of his life (between 1740 and 1751), Manuel Clemente served in the office in his place (AML-AH, *Livro 16 Consultas e Decretos D. João V*, fl. 85–90v, *Livro de Folhas de Ordenados a Cargo do Recebedor da Fazenda da Cidade 1751*, fl. 94).

Miguel Nuno da Silva Azeredo Coutinho started in office in 1751 but was on the verge of losing it due to a deal made by his father years earlier. Indeed, Lucas Nicolau Tavares da Silva contracted a debt to Arcângela de Mendonça, giving ownership of the office as a mortgage and, due to the lack of payment, the lender sought to recover the amount owed by selling the office at auction. However, Miguel Nuno da Silva Azeredo Coutinho appealed to the king, who authorized him to use his salary as *vedor* of works to pay off the debt over the next nine years (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 95–104v, *Livro 3º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 10–13v, 266–267v, 280–283v, *Livro 4º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 12–13v, 24–25v). In 1753, he received another royal mercy: the authorization for his uncle, Carlos Manuel Tavares da Silva, to replace him in office, without salary, since he suffered from a disabling disease (AML-AH, *Livro 4º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 192–195v). All these events must have made the city council's members uncomfortable in such a way they changed his seat on the council table to place him further back. Miguel Nuno da Silva Azeredo Coutinho then complained to the king about that but was not as successful as on other occasions as, according to the city council, the change made was not intended to disregard the office or the officeholder but rather to end with a privilege. They explained that the place he used to occupy (at the top of the table to the right of the mayor, on the registrar's seat – see the table schema in Ferro 1996, 79) had been an inadvertently tolerated abuse as he was not a true member of the city council but an inferior and subordinate officer (AML-AH, *Livro 7º de Consultas, Decretos e Avisos de D. José I*, fl. 217–238v). In 1786, he asked to be replaced by his son, Lucas da Silva de Azeredo Coutinho, for health reasons (AML-AH, *Livro de Decretos de D. Maria I*, fl. 4–7v).

Lucas da Silva de Azeredo Coutinho became the last owner of the office of *vedor* of works in 1789, after his father's death (AML-AH, *Livro 2º de Avisos de D. Maria I*, fl. 36). However, it seems that he never practiced it. Having graduated in law from the University of Coimbra in 1782, and a knight of the Order of Christ since 1793, he held other important positions throughout his life: *Bairro do Mocambo* criminal judge (1786–97), *provedor* of orphans and chapels (1797–1803), high judge of the Court of Appeal of Porto (1800–05), high judge of the Court of Appeal of Lisbon (1805–14), crown procurator assistant

(1810–21), tax procurator for the Tobacco Administrative Board (1814), appeal high judge of the Court of Appeal of Lisbon (1814–21), crown procurator (1821–23), high judge of the Royal Supreme Court (1823), counsellor (1824), chancellor of the Three Military Orders (1832) (Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, *Índice de alunos da Universidade de Coimbra, Letra C, Lucas da Silva de Azeredo Coutinho*, ANTT, *Mesa da Consciência e Ordens, Habilitações para a Ordem de Cristo, Letra L*, mc. 12, n. 22, Subtil 2010: 394). Nevertheless, it is not known who rented the office during this period only that Manuel Cipriano da Costa was serving in this role in 1831 (AML-AH, *Coleção de Editais da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1828–1835*, doc. 93).

The almost nonexistence of mentions to the city's *vedor* of works in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries resulted from the aforementioned change in Lisbon's urban management after the great earthquake. However, it is also true that since the mid-18th century, there were concrete measures to end the ownership of public offices (Subtil 2012: 71–72, Estorninho 2014: 152–155), something that ended up openly declared in the first Portuguese Constitution of 1822: “public offices are not owned by anyone” (*Constituição*: 9). The combination of a new notion of public servants with the Liberal reforms of 1832, which profoundly altered the organization of public administration and the structure of the municipal councils, led to the only possible outcome: the abolition of the secular office of *vedor* of works of the city of Lisbon.

4 CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the fragmentation of data for many years, the examined documents provide an overview of the office of *vedor* of works of the city of Lisbon; a municipal office that emerged in the first half of the 14th century and lasted until the beginning of the 19th century.

From the start, by representing the city council, his core duty was to coordinate, manage and supervise the financial aspects and the development of the public works promoted by the city, having received other related tasks throughout the early-modern period. Working closely with the registrar of works, and, from 16th century under the direct control of the councillor of works, his expertise encapsulated the administration of building contracts.

The importance of this office can also be gauged by the values earned: the annual remuneration was the fourth-highest paid, only overshadowed by the mayor, councillors and city treasurer; and of the emoluments for building inspections, it was the second-highest paid, below the councillor of the works and at the same level as the city procurator (Ferro 1996: 58–59, Pinto 2016: 276).

However, the city council never picked a builder, an architect or an engineer to carry out such a vital role in

the public works. Instead, from the biographies of the vedores, we may grasp how these men must have had other qualifications. They had to be able to read and write in order to check the clauses and obligations in the building contracts and sign off the works reports, despite being assisted by the registrar who, of course, had also to be literate. They should also have some economic means not only to avoid being tempted to get rich at the expense of the office and damage the public accounts but also, if necessary, to lend their own money to pay for building services or materials. They should also occupy a high social position, courtiers or preferably members of the nobility, not only because they needed to exercise authority over the builders or owners of ruined buildings and to act on legal nonconformities, but also because they met with the highest magistrates in the city (the councillors) and with the king himself. Likewise, the men who rented the office to occupy it for some time should have the same qualifications as the officeholder, and/or should already have held other positions in the municipal council.

In this sense, the absence of technical building training – as also happened to most vedores for the king's works and *provedores* of royal works (Senos & Silva in print) – would be supplanted by the personal and moral qualities, in addition to the fact that the practice of the office would give them the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise it. Furthermore, with the ownership of the city of Lisbon's office of vedor of works in the same family, the expertise to perform it would easily be transmitted from father to son since the latter usually began in the office by accompanying the former in his later years. On the other hand, the vedor of works had the assistance of skilled builders (as technical building experts) to estimate the prices for the building contracts or to assess the lack of stability of rundown buildings.

Only in 1852, following the founding and organization of the Ministry of Public Works, Commerce and Industry and its district departments, responsible for managing public works and for assisting municipal councils in this matter, did technical building training become mandatory to perform these kinds of duties. Indeed, from then on, the administration of public works building contracts, with specific regulations enacted 1856, deepened in 1861, and improved in 1887, was only to be carried out by the most reputed and skilled construction professionals in the country at that time: the director-engineers of Public Works (*Collecção: ano de 1852: 383–384, 513–516; ano de 1856: 128–135, ano de 1861: 93–98; ano de 1887: 200–205*).

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