

# The Study of Ancien Régime Family Archives in Portugal: Research Pathways and Themes

*O estudo dos arquivos de família de Antigo Regime em Portugal: percursos e temas de investigação*

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## RESUMO

Na última década, o estudo dos arquivos de família de Antigo Regime atravessou em Portugal avanços significativos nas mais diversas vertentes de investigação historiográfica e arquivística. Este artigo pretende apresentar os principais percursos e temas de investigação que recentemente têm vindo a ser explorados sobre acervos familiares portugueses, entendidos na sua plenitude como objectos de estudo em si mesmos. Na soma desses percursos e temas de investigação elencamos algumas das conclusões até agora alcançadas e reflectimos sobre caminhos futuros possíveis para a protecção e conhecimento deste património arquivístico.

Palavras-chave: arquivos de família; Antigo Regime; Portugal.

## ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, the study of Ancien Régime family archives in Portugal witnessed significant advances in many different fields of historiographic and archival research. This article intends to present the main research pathways and themes on Portuguese family archives, taken as full objects of study in their own right, which have recently been explored. After considering all these research pathways and themes, we list some of the conclusions reached so far and reflect on possible future routes toward the protection and study of this archival heritage.

Keywords: Family archives; Ancien Régime; Portugal.

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Over the last decade, the study of Ancien Régime family archives in Portugal has witnessed significant advances in many fields of historiographic and archival research. The foremost motivators of these changes were the so-called “archival turn” and “documentary turn”, which in essence came to demonstrate the importance of considering archives as objects of study in and of themselves rather than unproblematic materials merely waiting to provide answers to a given historiographical inquiry or to receive technical treatment (Blouin Jr., 2004). This change of paradigm stemmed from a renovated and non-auxiliary view of Archival Science, closely associated with the epistemological reflection effort that forced the re-equation of historians’ relationship with their work materials (Gattinara; Anheim, 2007; Morsel, 2004; 2010; Kuchenbuch, 2004). The doors were thus opened for new avenues of problematization and questions that forever shattered the positivist illusions of a “source”-archive, one that allowed direct access to the past and whose fossilized purity did not require of the archivist anything other than the custody of these records (Morsel, 2004). After all, as Terry Cook states, archives are not the natural remains of human activity but complex, conscious, and mediated social, political, and cultural constructs (Cook, 2001, p. 4).

When applied to family archives, these principles revealed not only the great complexity of these collections but also a general lack of knowledge about the history of their production, conservation, and transmission. They also showed that this complexity did not fit into preconceived archival classification schemes that are necessarily indifferent to the organic relationship established between archives and their producers. Some pioneering works had already drawn attention to a number of these aspects (Silva, 1997), but the presence of family archives in the documentary *corpora* of Portuguese historians tended to be uncommon, in a similar fashion to what happened in archival research studies. This was largely due to difficulties in accessing this documentation, since the number of family archives deposited in public institutions<sup>2</sup> is still small; most of them remain in the hands of private owners, often the descendants of the family groups that originally created them.

The effort to communicate and establish partnerships with these private owners represented the second motivator for the advances in the study of Portuguese family archives. On one hand, this endeavor allowed the identification of several archives hitherto unknown to historians and archivists and to ensure their accessibility to researchers. In addition, it fostered awareness of the existing risks in the preservation of these archives, mostly rooted in the

lack of appreciation for their value or the dispersion of documents with multiple heirs, resulting in a consequent archival disintegration and loss of organic unity. Finally, the voice of private owners was included in the research process, revealing not only the affective relationships they maintain with their archives as “places of memory” (Nora, 1989) – very different from the links that researchers establish with records as work materials – but also a profound knowledge, often perpetuated through oral transmission, of the history of the families and of the archival collections themselves. Two successful examples of the result of this dialogue between scholarly research and private owners can be found in *Arquivos de família, séculos XIII-XX: que presente, que futuro?* (“Family Archives, 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries: what present, what future?”), which includes several articles written by private owners about their own archives (Rosa, 2012a, pp. 59-152), and the guide *Arquivos de família: memórias habitadas. Guia para a salvaguarda e estudo de um património em risco* (“Family Archives: Inhabited Memories. Guide for safeguarding and studying a heritage at risk”), which seeks to give private owners the tools to better understand, treat, preserve, protect, and value their archives (Rosa; Nóvoa, 2014).

Supported by these foundations of scientific renewal, interdisciplinarity, and dialogue with private owners, a considerable number of works exclusively dedicated to the study of family archives has appeared in Portugal. Under the influence of domains such as History, Archival Science, and Information Science, we can identify two major research pathways. The first, promoted by the Department of Communication and Information Sciences of the Faculdade de Letras of the Universidade do Porto, is based on the core notions of archives as information systems, and of Archival Science as a social information science. According to Armando Malheiro da Silva, Fernanda Ribeiro, Júlio Ramos, and Manuel Luís Real, an archive is a “(semi)closed social information system materialized in a given medium” that is constructed around three central factors: an organic nature, associated with structure; a functional nature, related to service and use; and memory. From this point of view, Archival Science is understood as a “social information science” that studies archives from their “internal modes of structure and own dynamics”, as well as their “interaction with other correlative systems that coexist in the surrounding context” (Silva et al., 2009, p. 124).

The second research pathway has developed around the specialization in Historical Archival Science of the PhD course in History at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH) of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Its

aim is to study the informational production of institutions and its conversion into archives, emphasizing the context in which the production and “documentalization” of social information took place and the various transformations undergone by archives throughout their conservation history. Consequently, this research pathway emphasizes the importance of providing the historical characterization of institutions as producers of social information and of constructing organic models for the archival treatment of records, analyzing how the information was archived, used, and socially valued, and understanding the practices behind the creation, use, and management of archives (Rosa, 2017, pp. 550-551).

It is at the confluence of these pathways that we intend to highlight some of the main research themes that have been developed in recent studies dedicated to Ancien Régime family archives in Portugal, underlining the challenges and potentialities of these archives to historiographic and archival reflection. The immense universe of study objects that can be examined through family archives – the social history of the nobility, the economic and commercial history of the Portuguese kingdom, the history of Portuguese overseas expansion, etc. – is excluded from this presentation, although mention must be made of the unique and unpublished richness, on these and other topics, that the research on family archives has been steadily unveiling. Instead, we will focus, with no claim to being exhaustive, on the family archives research themes that we consider most relevant and illustrative of the advances that have occurred in the area over the last 10 years: the theoretical problematization raised by family archives; the archival reclassification conducted through organic classification models; reflections on the legal and institutional configuration of entities that produced archives and on any related contributions from a social history of archives perspective; the study of the documentary production of families and of their uses of archives; the analysis of archive inventories and the respective inventorying processes; and, finally, the attempts to reconstruct archives that no longer exist. To conclude, we offer a brief closing note that combines the results of these reflections with some proposals for possible future research in the area of Ancien Régime family archives, hopefully outlining pathways that encourage the continuation of an interdisciplinary dialogue that is open to civil society and projects its scope across borders.

## RESEARCH THEMES ON ANCIEN RÉGIME FAMILY ARCHIVES

The research themes on Ancien Régime family archives that we have selected to illustrate the current panorama in Portugal follow a working methodology that considers these collections as sets of documents produced, received, and preserved by family groups, and then transformed into archives that have been transmitted down the generations, and thus maintained an organic relationship with their producing institutions over the centuries. Considering that the vast majority of studies on Portuguese family archives deals with documentation produced by noble family groups, the themes presented below mostly deal with Ancien Régime nobility. Although there are still few studies on family archives from other social groups, both inside and outside social elites, the research themes we have listed can, in general, be used for the examination of any family archive, subject only to any adaptations that may be required by the specific characteristics of individual archives.

### *Theoretical Problematization*

In line with the theoretical questions raised by family archives, one of the most interesting ideas provided by a historical perspective is based on the unpublished status of many of these archives and the consequent potential to (re)discover little known – or even completely unknown – historical figures and episodes. In turn, this (re)discovery offers the possibility of confronting “versions of the historical process that were constructed, mostly or exclusively, from the archives of social bodies that were more ‘administralized’ and / or more represented in the nation state archives” (Rosa, 2009, pp. 36-37). By invoking collections that were absent from the list of sources used by historians, the use of family archives therefore requires a discussion of the authority of those versions of the historical process. An example of this can be found in the history of the nobility of the Ancien Régime, to the extent that it has been written, mostly, from documentation produced and preserved by institutions other than the families themselves (Nóvoa, 2016, pp. 19-20).

In the field of Archival Science, some authors have used the study of family archives to question traditional archival principles, namely the principles of original order and provenance (Beattie, 2009, Meehan, 2010; Yeo, 2009; Nóvoa, 2016, pp. 87-90). These authors, confronted by the great complexity of these archives – which are in fact composed of archives within archives, united

through marriage alliances between families and, consequently, in constant mutation –, noticed the existence of multiple original orders and of multiple provenances. As such, selecting a single original order or provenance for the instruments of archival representation would necessarily imply distorting the collections by archivally editing and fossilizing one version over several possible. The alternative is the respect for organicity.

### *Archival Reclassification*

Several works have focused on the reclassification of these archives through models that respect and convey the organic relationship that exists between the archives and their producing institutions. This respect for organicity inevitably clashes with traditional archival approaches that, as a rule of thumb, prefer the thematic-functional classifications created by archivists, which are detached from the context in which the archives were first created. Armando Malheiro da Silva writes that the complexity and heterogeneity of family archives resist descriptive and normative archival representations, since the paradigmatic nature of these archives and the relationship they share with their producing entities do not fit into “artificial” classification schemes, that is, schemes that were “conceived and applied without considering the original context of production” (Silva, 1997, p. 51).

The application of organic classification models implies, first of all, the study of the history of the archives and the history of their producing institutions, in order to fully assimilate the link that has been established between the two. Next, it requires understanding how these producing institutions function and are organized, as well as taking into consideration the role played by archives in these processes. Finally, the application of organic models should lead to the construction of classification schemes that are capable of returning the records to their producers and accumulators and of clarifying the contexts in which the production and documentary accumulation took place.

Portuguese noble families function and organize themselves around the generational succession and the lineage shared by their members, who maintain a common biological, socioeconomic, symbolic, and identity project (Silva, 1997, pp. 89-90). Thus, the organic classification of a family archive must follow the same scheme of generational succession and lineage adopted by the family itself, which, in practice, implies the construction of a classification scheme organized by generations.

Following these principles, the classification of several Portuguese family archives was revisited and revised, and alternative proposals of organic reclassification were made. The Arquivo de Paço de Calheiros (Ventura, 2011), the Arquivo da Casa do Porto (Moreira, 2012), the Arquivo Castro/Nova Goa (Marques, 2013), the Arquivo da Casa das Mouras (Cardoso, 2013), the Arquivo Gama Lobo Salema (Nóvoa, 2016),<sup>3</sup> and the Arquivo da Casa de Belmonte (Sousa, 2017)<sup>4</sup> are all notable examples.

These case studies show that the organic specificity of family archives is not, in fact, a good match for prefabricated archival representation schemes built for administrative or state archives. These schemes, despite being more easily applicable and user-friendly in terms of research and access to information, inevitably conceal important traits about the creation and preservation of the archives, replacing them with categories created by archivists. In that sense, they offer users a highly mediated product that tells them more about the archivists themselves than about the archives or their producing institutions. By continuing to value organicity over ease of access, further works on organic classification models will allow improving and simplifying their application, as well as testing the relevance of the “generation” element as the organic organization basis of other, non-noble, family groups.

### *Configurations of Producing Institutions*

In order to fully understand the organic structure of families we need to examine, on one hand, their legal and institutional configurations and, on the other, their social history in articulation with the history of archives as “socio-genetic” instruments that contribute to the formation and consolidation of social groups (Morsel, 2010, p. 17). While Portugal has a strong tradition of work on the social history of the nobility – the pioneering studies of José Mattoso on medieval nobility stand out (Mattoso, 1994) – some gaps can still be found with regard to the legal and institutional configurations of families and the social history of archives.

From a juridical-institutional point of view, it should be noted that the aspects that defined families as formal institutions, with their own norms and jurisdictions recognized by both members and other institutions, throughout the Ancien Régime, are still unclear. Although remarkable recent work has been produced on several case studies, clarifying some of these doubts (Carvalho, 2014; Conceição, 2011; Dávila, 2017; Martins, 2011; Mata, 2013;

Moura, 2016; Salvado, 2009; Silva, 2015), at least two fundamental problems remain. The first concerns the precise definition of the jurisdictional and legal boundaries within which families regulated their organization and mode of functioning, often in direct confrontation with the jurisdictional and legal boundaries of other institutions of power. The most representative example of this is found in the *morgadio*, a juridical and legal instrument that permanently bound a given patrimonial estate to the family, forbidding its sale and establishing specific rules for its administration, use, and transmission. These rules constituted an “internal law,” that could at times even supersede the law of the kingdom, by imposing on it the irreducibility of the will of the *morgadio* founders (Rosa, 1995, pp. 221-222).

The second problem is related to the concepts employed to describe these realities. As Élie Haddad stated, many concepts used nowadays to write about the history of noble groups – “family”, “kinship”, “lineage”, “House” – were transported from Anthropology to History at the height of the historical anthropology movement in the 70s and 80s (Haddad, 2014). Almost five decades later, historians continue to quote the work of authors such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie, or Franz Boas, basing their conceptual frameworks on anthropological observations adapted to History rather than on dense and contextualized studies about the Ancien Régime families themselves.

A social history of archives can contribute to the solution of these problems. This brings us back to the matter of the authority of a social history that is disconnected from the documents that were produced, received, and transformed into archives by the groups it investigates. In fact, recent works have shown the need to determine the point in the social journey of families at which it became necessary to create archives and to understand how the latter’s existence promoted processes of upward social mobility. In the context of untitled regional nobility, one research lead associates the creation of archives with a stage of social and institutional consolidation where a minimum set of defining traits is guaranteed, namely the possession of some land, generally inherited from forebears, and the exercise of functions or the attainment of rank in the royal courts or in the courts of high nobility, usually through military service.

It was at this stage that the first *morgadios*, which, as we have seen, place the family in a specific legal and institutional framework, were founded. In turn, the creation of these *morgadios* and the associated type of family



management favored the archives' expansion, as well as the new uses and functions assigned to them by the families. This metamorphosis reflects, or is reflected in, the increasing complexity of the families' organization and modes of functioning, and a greater perception of identity and of a common project shared by their members begins to surface. This awareness – which is often based on the prestige of the roles attributed by the monarchy under the royal service or in the military orders, on an already considerable patrimonial estate on the regional level, and on economic power supported by overseas trade – resulted, among other things, in the adoption of stricter systems of family names, in heraldic devices affixed to family houses and funeral chapels, in acts of charitable patronage, and in the production of sometimes fictional narratives about the origins and foundation of lineages. It is perhaps at this point that occurs the foundation of “Houses”, supported by archives whose density would soon begin to demand new mechanisms of control of the archived information, as we will see in the next section on inventories and inventorying processes.

This interpretative hypothesis was explored, for example, in the case of the Salema family, whose social ascension process, represented in the documentary production and conservation of the family group, was studied from the end of the fifteenth century until the beginning of the seventeenth century (Nóvoa, 2016, pp. 110-164). The same thing happened with the Figueiredo lineage, whose evolution, running parallel to the social history of the Casa de Belmonte archive, was analyzed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Sousa, 2017, pp. 278-285). Similar studies, reinforced by careful examination of the juridical-institutional configurations of family bodies and with the help of history of law, are already underway and will allow for a greater understanding of these findings, which will necessarily have to contemplate the analysis of the uses of archives and the archival practices of the families.

### *Uses of the Archives and Archival Practices*

The idea that family archives were essentially instruments of administration and patrimonial management is still prevalent, especially since most of the documents that have survived to the present day are related to land assets accumulated by the families. However, the archives' uses and functions extended beyond patrimonial estates, and included the defense or claim of rights (patrimonial, but also jurisdictional, social, and commercial); the requisition of posts, graces, or privileges that required documentary evidence; the exercise

of professional functions – which justifies the presence of records produced or received in the context of family members’ professional duties; the transmission of instructions or codes of conduct to successors, as seen in wills or in the foundations of *morgadios* – which, for the sake of continuity, should be kept in the family archives in perpetuity.

It followed that archival practices responded to the demands imposed on families by any particular circumstances produced along their respective social routes. To consider these fully, it became useful to examine the individual actions of the various members who were producing, receiving, using, managing, and archiving records, rather than examining the family as a whole (Nóvoa, 2016, pp. 110-247). Thus, it became clear that multifaceted archival practices were developed to fulfill different objectives. We present three of these, for illustrative purposes:

- a) Production of copies/*traslados/públicas-formas*. A significant part of family archives as we know them today is composed of copies, *traslados*, and *públicas-formas* that have been produced for various reasons over the centuries. In some circumstances, families requested copies of existing documents in their archives that were degraded or in danger of disappearing, to ensure that the information they contained would remain available. The same happens with documentation of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, which later generations were unable to read due to difficult handwriting and paleographic specificities. Finally, it was also common to request copies of documents that were not in the family archives but rather in the archives of other institutions, such as the royal chancellery, and which certain family members considered useful or necessary to include in their own archives.
- b) Annotations. On the back of documents we often find annotations inscribed by many generations of users and managers of the family archives. The purpose of these annotations was sometimes to control the information contained in the documents, in which case brief summaries were appended, highlighting aspects that were considered most relevant. Likewise, some notes intended to add information acquired after the production of the document or to update the status of a particular subject mentioned in the record. This could happen, for example, when a property was sold and the sale was registered in the documents related to that property. Annotations that combine existing information in multiple

documents, prompting readers to query multiple correlated records, are equally interesting as archival practices.

- c) Aggregation/organization of documentary sets. Some of these notes reveal that at some point in an early archival stage certain documents were physically aggregated and organized into a single documentary set. These sets could be related to the same property, to a territorial or jurisdictional unit, to a *morgadio*, or to an inheritance, for example. As archives increased in size and complexity, the documents were reorganized to adapt to new challenges, and some of these modalities of organization were preserved in inventories and other finding aids.

### *Inventories and Inventorying Processes*

Another rich demonstration of the uses of family archives and archival practices of family groups can be found in inventories. Those existing in Ancien Régime family archives took on many forms (inventories, *tombos de escrituras*, catalogues, *tabuadas*, *relações*, alphabets, and indexes, among others) and were produced with the intent to list, often partially, documentation kept in the archives at the time of the inventorying process. These inventories were used by researchers, for a long time, merely as finding-aids or as substitutes for documents which had since disappeared, assuming that these were faithful and complete reflections of their respective archives. However, recent studies have showed that inventories actually “construct the archive more than they describe it”, not only because they may be partial or generic, but also because they necessarily reflect certain assumptions and respond to the contextualized needs of use and objectives that arose at the time of their production (Rosa, 2012b, p. 580).

In this sense, inventories are also themselves objects of study and, as such, their production and internal structure must be carefully analyzed and contextualized within the historical routes of the producing institutions. Why and for what purpose were the inventories produced? What uses have families found for them? How was the inventorying process developed? Did it entail a reorganization of the archive? What were the archival assumptions that guided the producers and what was their technical expertise?

These and other issues were successfully explored in the INVENT.ARQ project, which compiled, analyzed, and described about forty inventories of Ancien Régime family archives (Rosa; Head, 2015).<sup>5</sup> From the study of these

inventories it was concluded that the families produced them for different reasons and objectives, such as legal disputes, generational successions, or lineage extinctions. In some cases, the inventories were used to identify existing documentation in a given archive, partially describing it, and then to distribute these documents among new owners who had won legal disputes over documented rights or estates or who were named successors of extinct lineages. In other situations, the death of the representative of a family created the need to consult the deceased person's archive, so that any successors could perform their duties more effectively. Extraordinary political events also required efforts of inventorying, as was the case of the Figueiredo Cabral da Câmara family, who produced an inventory in 1807, on the eve of the Portuguese court's flight to Brazil (Sousa, 2017, p. 61).

Depending on needs, the inventorying processes were more or less thorough and meticulous, and the internal structures of the resulting inventories therefore featured different degrees of complexity. However, inventorying almost always entailed a reorganization of the archive and a reassessment of the documents that were deemed useful or pertinent for preservation; the rest were destroyed. Under the guidance of family representatives, these tasks of inventorying, reorganization, and destruction of documents were often performed by experts trained in universities and with specific technical knowledge (Nóvoa; Leme, 2015). Consequently, the type of inventories varied according to the ancillary training and technical abilities; this can be seen, for example, in the *Index Geral do cartório da Casa da Lapa*, produced between 1804 and 1805 by José de Almeida e Vasconcelos (Rosa, Henriques; Macedo, 2015) or in the *Inventário geral dos papéis que se acharam por falecimento do Principal D. António Xavier de Miranda Henriques*, created in 1815 by João Filipe da Cruz (Nóvoa, 2015), both of which are paradigmatic for the thoroughness and technical quality displayed by their producers.

If examined attentively and in close proximity with the history of the producing institutions, inventories enable us to obtain relevant information on the evolution of archives and on the role they played in the functioning and consolidation of family groups, as well as on archival practices and models of information recovery. As a whole, they also remind us of a central aspect emphasized by Maria de Lurdes Rosa and Randolph Head, that is, the importance of social control over archives (Rosa; Head, 2015, p. 12). In this sense, inventories assert themselves as instruments of control and power over information.

*Reconstructed Archives*

The study of inventories, combined with the analysis of other records produced and preserved by institutions other than the families, also allows for the particular task of reconstructing archives that no longer exist, as demonstrated by Margarida Leme in her study on the documentary production of three branches of the family of D. Álvaro da Costa, an important figure in the court of D. Manuel I and whose second son was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Governor General of Brazil. Confronted with the lack of a cohesive archive, that is known to have existed but which, for various reasons, was not preserved, the author decided to reconstruct the missing archive from documents produced and / or kept by institutions with which several family members came in contact with. She thus created “virtual archives” that enabled the study of the family group’s social history and the history of its documentary production (Leme, 2012).

A similar effort was carried out by Rita Sampaio da Nóvoa on the documentary production of two generations of the Queimado de Vilalobos family, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, namely focusing on Vasco Queimado de Vilalobos and his homonymous son. By also analyzing inventories and records produced and kept by other institutions, it was possible to conclude that Vasco Queimado de Vilalobos’s archive would have contained at least fifty documents, of which only five – that is, 8% of the archive’s entirety – are known to have survived. In the case of his son’s archive, it would have contained at least sixty-two documents, of which only seven are known to have survived, that is, 11% of the total (Nóvoa, 2016, pp. 186-248).

In addition to these two examples, several clues have already been identified that allow us to proceed to reconstruct other archives. Such is the case of the Arquivo da Casa da Lapa (Henriques: Rosa, 2016), the Arquivo da Casa de Belmonte (Sousa, 2017, pp. 218-277), the Arquivo da Casa de Ficalho (Lopes, 2015; Silva; Assis, 2012), the Arquivo dos Condes de Castelo Melhor,<sup>6</sup> and the Arquivo Castro-Nova Goa (Marques, 2015), all of which can be reconstructed from a set of inventories and indexes produced throughout the nineteenth century. The Brito-Nogueira archive is in a similar situation, and can be reconstructed from four inventories produced between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Rosa, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d).

These reconstructed archives draw attention to the importance of the study of absences, considering archives not only in terms of what they contain today but of what they once might have held. As such, they stress the

importance of including the analysis of documentary production and archival practices in the research, beginning with what was probably produced and not with what has survived to this day. Likewise, they also prompt us to reflect on the problems of the representativeness of documentation currently contained in family archives, given that it might be very fractional when compared to previous historical contexts. Our image of family archives is therefore partial, and any conclusions that draw solely from existing records, solely from the presences without any consideration of the absences, will also be inevitably partial.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

By combining all these research pathways and themes on Ancien Régime family archives in Portugal, we arrive at three central ideas that characterize the advances achieved so far and outline clues for later research, which will ideally continue an interdisciplinary dialogue capable of bringing together historians, archivists, information scientists, public archives, and private owners:

1. Family archives reveal a remarkable potential for History and Archival Science if they are considered objects of study in and of themselves. That potential far surpasses the unpublished contents of those archives, as it also suggests new modes of thinking and understanding the history of the families and its models of archival representation;
2. However, the complexity and problematic nature of these archives as social, political, and cultural constructions should not be underestimated, both in the relationship that historians develop with them and in the technical treatment they receive from archivists;
3. Despite the progress made so far, family archives continue to constitute a type of documentary patrimony at risk, and to safeguard and promote it, as well as to sensitize civil society to its importance as a cultural heritage, is of the highest priority.

There are several possible future research pathways for family archives that can be explored and a number of gaps that can be filled. A census of all family archives in Portugal, in both public archives and the custody of private owners, is yet to be completed. As other examples – such as the ongoing survey

of Canary Islands personal and family archives (Núñez Pestano, 2017) – have shown, a census would allow not only to know exactly the number of currently existing archives but also to cultivate awareness about their protection and promotion, preventing degradation and possible destruction. To this end, it is necessary to continue a dialogue with private owners, strengthening ties already in place and reinforcing the active role they play in the study and protection of this documentary heritage.

The management and growth of international research networks also play a crucial role. International projects such as ARCHIFAM<sup>7</sup> or the previously mentioned INVENT.ARQ<sup>8</sup> (Rosa; Head, 2015) have clearly shown that the construction of networked knowledge enables comparative analyses of considerable richness and strengthens a theoretical reflection that is both common to the various case studies and independent of national specificities.

In closing, we would like to propose a hopefully interesting research pathway that might enhance this dossier on the history of archives and Archival Science: what history of Brazil can be (re)written from Portuguese family archives? What history can be (re) written from archives populated with characters that actively participated in the colonization process of the Brazilian territory and who, throughout the centuries, transmitted the rights in that territory to their successors within the family, together with the documents that supported them? Finally, what history can be (re)written from archives that, in the context of microcosms of power, also served to ensure the management, administration, and control of overseas family possessions?

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Over the last years, several public Portuguese archives have taken on the important and ongoing task of identifying, digitizing, conserving, and restoring family archives, as exemplified by the work carried out at the Arquivo Municipal de Penafiel.

<sup>3</sup> Arquivo Gama Lobo Salema: <http://www.arquivisticahistorica.fcsh.unl.pt/index.php/arquivo-gama-lobo-salema>.

<sup>4</sup> Arquivo da Casa de Belmonte: <http://www.arquivisticahistorica.fcsh.unl.pt/index.php/arquivo-da-casa-de-belmonte>.

<sup>5</sup> INVENT.ARQ: <http://www.inventarq.fcsh.unl.pt/>.

<sup>6</sup> A research project is underway with a group of undergraduate History students of the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa dedicated to the study and description of a set of inventories belonging to the Counts of Castelo Melhor archive, which was digitized by their private owner for the purposes of the project. The results will soon be available at <http://www.inventarq.fcsh.unl.pt/>.

<sup>7</sup> ARCHIFAM: <https://www.casadelazquez.org/pt/investigacao/programas-cientificos-ehehi/anciens-programmes/archifam/archifam/apresentacao-geral/>.

<sup>8</sup> INVENT.ARQ: <http://www.inventarq.fcsh.unl.pt/>.

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