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FAMILY ARCHIVES AND
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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**STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL ASCENSION
AND MEMORY PERPETUATION: THE ARCHIVE
OF CASA DAS MOURAS**

ABSTRACT: With a growing interest demonstrated in the last years, family archives are a wealth of information not only to History, but also to other scientific areas such as Anthropology, Sociology and Geography, becoming as well an object of countless works in Archival Science. The contribution that a documentary collection of one or more families can give goes beyond the questions of its organization as well as the reconstitution of the genealogical ties, in that it deepens questions about the sociabilities and roles that these individuals represented in their own time. The present work comes in the continuity of the study of these archives through organic research on the archive of Casa das Mouras, deposited in the Arquivo Municipal de Penafiel since 2004. Constituted from a marriage, this archive covers the documentation of the paternal family of Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira, brought into the dwelling home of his wife, Efigénia Amália Moura Torres de Castro, whose maternal family had already produced documentation and demonstrated reading practices. The reconstitution of the genealogy of Columbano and Efigénia was followed by the organization of the respective archive, based on the systemic model as a form of preservation of the organics of the family.

Keywords: archives; history; genealogy; family; Penafiel

RESUMO: Com o crescente interesse que tem sido demonstrado ao longo dos últimos anos, os Arquivos de Família constituem um manancial de informação que se liga não só à História como também a outras áreas disciplinares, tais como a Antropologia, a Sociologia e a Geografia, tornando-se ainda alvo de inúmeros trabalhos de Arquivística. A riqueza polissémica que um acervo documental de uma ou mais famílias pode dar ultrapassa não só as questões da sua organização como a reconstituição dos laços genealógicos, aprofundando questões acerca das sociabilidades e papéis que estes indivíduos representaram no seu tempo. O presente trabalho resulta da continuidade do estudo destes acervos, através do estudo orgânico do Arquivo da Casa das Mouras, depositado no Arquivo Municipal de Penafiel desde 2004. A partir de um casamento, este arquivo alberga documentação da família paterna de Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira, trazida para a casa

de morada de sua esposa, D. Efigénia Amália Moura Torres de Castro, cuja família materna já demonstrava alguma produção de documentação e práticas de leitura. A reconstrução da genealogia de Columbano e Efigénia seguiu-se a organização do respetivo arquivo, baseado no modelo sistémico como forma de preservar a orgânica da família.

Palavras-chave: arquivos; história; genealogia; família; Penafiel

Introduction

The work presented here was developed within the scope of the Master's dissertation in History and Heritage – Major in Historical Archives at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in the University of Porto. In order to study the process of “memorializing” a family, translated into the production of information, the family archive of Casa das Mouras, deposited in the Municipal Archive of Penafiel, was chosen and the historical and genealogical study made of the family that produced this quite peculiar archive.

With the reconstruction of the genealogical lines that united these individuals from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, it was possible to identify the main producers of information, organizing this archive through the construction of the organic-functional structure through the systemic model, following the description of the documents for the preparation of the catalog.

The respective study and organization allowed us to answer questions about what a family archive contains: Who were these families? Which roles did they play over the centuries and what influence did they have over the local panorama at the social, economic and political levels of society? What is the importance of the documentation they saved and organized over more than 250 years?

Historical context

As in other archives already studied, the case presented here is an example of a family that knew how to use the strategies necessary for the social ascension they aspired to at the time. Marriage unions with the intention of becoming part of the nobility, the acquisition of assets and their protection

through the institution of *morgadios*, and the notion of the importance of the family identity linked to a “house”, were practices that have existed since the sixteenth century.

Since early, for many times the term “house” was given more importance than the individuals that belonged to it, being a term closely linked to titles of nobility and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked by competition between noble houses in search of status, heritage and power¹. In this specific case, the Casa das Mouras never reached a title of nobility through the members of the original family for the actual house’s name owes to an oral tradition that nicknamed it with the surname of the women of the family. It was the marital unions with members of the nobility and especially the connection to a *morgadio* that led the house to the wealth of documentation that came to us.

As a model of family organization, the *morgadio* intended with its first objective to combat the dispersion of land by keeping it in the family, with the main source of wealth associated with the ownership of land and buildings that allowed for other sources of income through lease contracts². In addition to their economic role, *morgadios* were linked to the funerary perpetuation of their founders through legacies and masses. One of the main intentions of the founders of *morgadios* was to preserve and enhance the name and memory of their houses, often imposing on the descendants codes of conduct that would transmit models of behavior, rules of social conduct, and forms of relationship onto them³. The family branch involved in the creation of the archive of Casa das Mouras was also related to the previous social ascension strategies, with Belchior Ribeiro, a merchant from Porto, establishing an entail of his assets that was subsequently increased through purchases and foreclosures. Later, his great-grandson, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro, consecrated the same *morgadio* to Nossa Senhora da Vela, taking a coat of arms charter and then ascending to the nobility.

¹ MONTEIRO, 1998: 35.

² ROSA, 2012a: 185.

³ ROSA, 1995: 20.

The involvement of the family, the individual who exercised power over all members of the family, the importance of the "House" as aggregator of the latter, and the role that the *morgadios* had in maintaining wealth and strengthening incomes, all contributed to the creation of private archives. Just like several families at the time, the group presented here was also confronted with the need to create a private archive. The necessity to document and prove the ownership of land led to the creation of spaces where the documentation that the noble houses or the upper bourgeoisie produced could be kept, although it is impossible to say that all noble houses in Portugal had organized accounts⁴. Apart from the houses that the author Nuno Monteiro names as the *Grandeza*, there would not be a corps of administrative officials or organized accounts which would have given rise to a well-constructed archive. Additionally, in the large rural houses there would not exist specific places or certain kinds of furniture for storing books and other documentation⁵.

The archive of Casa das Mouras presented itself in the convergence of these examples, with an organization at the level of the documents about the *morgadio*, previous to the moving of Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira to this house, but coming to us only as an archive accommodated in a multipurpose room in a rural house. But not only documentation related to the economic life of these houses exists in these archives. They also offer us the testimony of past experiences, personal documents of those who produced them, memories that not only allow us to reconstruct family lines often lost in time, but also give us a picture of a past society. It is such testimonies and examples related to the archive of the house studied here that what follows will focus on.

Historical-Administrative Space

Administratively, the house currently known as Casa das Mouras is located in the civil parish of Rio de Moinhos, in the municipality of Penafiel. Being

⁴ MONTEIRO, 1998: 409.

⁵ MAGALHÃES, 1994: 156.

part of the district of Porto, in the north of Portugal, Penafiel was already mentioned in medieval documents, ascending to a village named Arrifana de Sousa in 1741⁶. In 1770, Penafiel became a city and its administrative background reveals us a municipality with multiple jurisdictions and landlords throughout History, which justifies the considerable number of *solares* (manor houses) in the entire territory. In the limits of the parish it is possible to point out the manor of Quinta da Aveleda, while in the rest of the municipality more manors can be found: the Honra de Barbosa, the Casa de Mesão Frio, the Quinta do Bovieiro, the Casa da Companhia, the Casa de Cabanelas, among others.

Located in the municipality of Penafiel, on the right bank of the river Tâmega, stands the parish of Rio de Moinhos, where the Casa das Mouras is situated. Casa das Mouras is a country house which has an internal oratory and although there was never a coat of arms, the house preserved its archive until 2004⁷.

The majority of the documentation in the archive of Casa das Mouras pertains to Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro da Silveira, nobleman and the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela. After completing my master's thesis I searched for the family's manor house, as Columbano, even though he resided in the Casa das Mouras, never made this house – which belonged to his wife's family – the noble house of the *morgadio*. Based on the documentation studied, I ended up identifying the Quinta de Leiria, located in the civil parish of Alpendurada e Matos, in the municipality of Marco de Canaveses, as the noble home of Columbano's father family. Today it is a complete ruin, although it still keeps the coat of arms of Pinto Ribeiro de Castro.

⁶ The first reference to the expression “land of Penafiel” and not to the ancient term “Anégia” dates from 1064, the expression “term of Penafiel” appearing in 1220 (FUNDO, 2010: 18).

⁷ Populated since 4th millennium B.C., the first document related to Rio de Moinhos dates from the year 1056, being throughout the Middle Ages a pioneer in milling and fishing — a fact mentioned in the Inquiries of 1258 (CARDOSO, 2013: 20).

The family/families of the Casa das Mouras

As the most discussed issue in the “3.º Ciclo de Conferências de História Contemporânea: Arquivos de Família & Investigação em História”, the organic study of the Casa das Mouras archive allowed us to identify the family ties and relationships established, responding to some issues raised at the beginning of this project. Based on the documents, two families were identified: the Pinto Ribeiro de Castro family (larger volume and older documentation), and the Moura e Castro family (owners of Casa das Mouras). The date 2nd February 1835 marks the union of these two families with the marriage of Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira to Efigénia Amália de Moura Torres, in the parish of Rio de Moinhos. The archive as we know it takes shape here, with the incorporation of Columbano’s family documentation, making him the main figure of this archive.

Born on 26th November 1804 in the city of Porto, little is known about Columbano’s childhood. Son of Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro and Genoveva Rita Portugal da Silveira, he would inherit from his father — dead at the time of his birth — the administration of the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela, traveling to Brazil with his mother and his stepfather, Isidoro de Almada e Castro — who would become guardian of his property during his nonage — at the time of the French invasions. A *fidalg*o da Casa Real⁸, he was not limited to the role of property owner, following a career just like his father and grandfather. He graduated in Humanities, having also a military career as a lieutenant colonel of the artillery in the Brazilian army, for which he was decorated with a gold star by heroic acts.

Married to Efigénia Amália de Moura Torres in 1835, when he was 30 years old, Columbano started to live in Casa das Mouras and had with his wife nine children between 1836 and 1849. From here Columbano was actively involved with the politics of the municipality of Penafiel, as councillor of the city council of Penafiel twice in 1840 and 1849. Between 1846 and 1847 he became a member of the same city council and between 1868 and 1873 he held the

⁸ A title of nobility.

chair of administrator of the Municipality of Penafiel. Shortly before his death he was still the president of the civil board of the parish of Rio de Moinhos.

However, the main source of wealth of his family came from the income of the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela, of which Columbano was the fifth and last administrator. This entail was established in 1673 by his fourth paternal grandfather, Belchior Ribeiro⁹, who was a merchant and owner of several houses in the city of Porto, and married to Ana da Silva, mother of his only son, Manuel Ribeiro da Silva. By will, he instituted an entail with the obligation of masses, declaring his son as administrator and heir of his assets. Manuel Ribeiro da Silva, known as a merchant and resident in Rua das Flores, was the first administrator of the entail. Having reunited many assets through purchases and leases, he was succeeded by his son, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro Libório, a businessman like his father. However, it would be his firstborn son, named Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro, paternal grandfather of Columbano, to give this *morgadio* a new lease of life and greater importance.

Born in 1714 in the city of Porto, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro became the third administrator of the entail established by his great-grandfather, also inheriting the terms belonging to his mother in her inheritance, like the assets of his brother Francisco, a novice in Funchal. He married in 1746 to Ana Perpétua Saldanha, who also inherited the entire fortune of her parents as their only daughter, and the couple had a large offspring of seven children. In 1775, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro was able to reduce the quantity of masses of the legate and, wanting to attach the inheritance of his brothers and another amount, obtained royal provision for a second institution. His heir was then obliged to pay for fifteen annual masses for the souls of the founder and the administrators, in honor and praise of Nossa Senhora da Vela, and this *morgadio* came to be known by this name from 1780. Gathering considerable wealth linked to the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro took a coat of arms charter in 1741, which was granted to him after his noble lineage was proved, acquiring the title of *fidalgo da Casa Real*. He

⁹ Belchior Ribeiro is the oldest producer of the Casa das Mouras archive, his production being considered a transaction between houses with Francisco Pereira, in the year 1672 (CARDOSO, 2013: 177).

claimed that his lineage originated from D. Pedro I and D. Inês de Castro, descending from their son, D. João Infante de Portugal, duke of Valencia de Campos (1349-1397).

Not only the entry into nobility and the second institution of the *morgadio* marked the administration of Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro. If, until this point, we witnessed the experiences and legacies of a typical bourgeois family of Porto merchants, from here on we see the importance of political and academic careers as a factor of social ascension, which extended far beyond the role of property owner played by the firstborn, and of clergymen played by the younger brothers. A member of the Holy Office since 1750, Manuel Pinto Ribeiro de Castro held the positions of judge in Vila da Feira and *ouvidor* in Vila Real. A graduate in Law, he was also *corregedor* of the district of Porto¹⁰.

His firstborn son, Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro, held several political positions. As the 4th administrator of the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela, Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro reveals himself as the best known individual in this family. Born in 1749, he obtained a bachelor's degree in law from the University of Coimbra, holding positions of judge and *provedor* in many villages in the north of Portugal. In 1793, he was designated *juiz demarcante* in the province of Trás-os-Montes, where he developed the work he became known for: the *Mappa da Provincia de Trás-os-Montes*, completed in 1796. He would still serve as a *corregedor* in the district of Feira, describing the location in 1801. In 1802, Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro was *desembargador* of the *relação* court in Porto. For his career he would receive the *beca honorária* in 1793 and entered the Order of Christ in 1799.

However, his action as fourth administrator of the *morgado* of Nossa Senhora da Vela was fleeting. Since the death of his father, he continued to purchase assets, enriching the entail. However, he died in 1804, less than two years after his marriage with Genoveva Rita Portugal da Silveira. He left her pregnant with his only son, Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira, who would inherit a *morgadio* which, in 1813, extended from the

¹⁰ *Ouvidor* was the designation given to the magistrates who supervised the justice of the noble lands in Portugal. *Corregedor* was the designation given to the administrative and judicial magistrate who represented the Crown in each one of the districts of Portugal.

possession of houses in the city of Porto to properties and leases in several municipalities¹¹.

We cannot, nevertheless, disregard the family that originally owned Casa das Mouras. Unlike Columbano's family, there were no noble assignments to the family of Efigenia Amália de Moura Torres, although her father's family held important judicial positions. Born on 21st September 1810 in the parish of Rio de Moinhos, Efigenia was the second child of the marriage between Rodrigo Bravo Cardoso Torres and Maria Máxima de Moura Torres. Her maternal grandfather, João José de Moura e Castro, can be surely identified as the owner of the house, proving through lease contracts that he was resident in the said place of the Cans, being also the oldest information producer in Efigénia's family. He married Leonor Maria Joaquina Vieira Borges in 1770, and the couple had eight children. He died in 1809 and in the inventory he left behind the house passed to his eldest son, Francisco de Moura e Castro, the most "prominent" figure among Efigénia's uncles at the municipal level. He was knight of the Order of Christ and brother of the Misericórdia de Penafiel in the year of 1801, performing functions of *mesário* and substitute of the *provedor*. In 1839 he died single and childless, bequeathing all his property, including the house, to his sister Maria Máxima, the only of eight siblings to marry, and through it acquired a connection to the nobility.

We can see here the development of the oral tradition for the name Casa das Mouras. In fact, it was a house that always had a large number of women. Maria Máxima also lived in Casa das Mouras, together with her daughters, until her death in 1863. Two of the daughters got married and left the house, one died young and Efigénia would remain in the house even after being married, also living with her sister, Henriqueta Augusta. We can not dwell on the individual analysis of each member of the family nor can we speak specifically about each child by Efigénia and Columbano. Their eldest son, also named Columbano, born in 1836, had a career in law, marrying Ana Adelaide Monteiro Guedes Nobre Mourão from the Casa de Abragão. From

¹¹ The *morgado* de Nossa Senhora da Vela extended across the municipalities of Barcelos, Castelo de Paiva, Espinho, Gondomar, Maia, Marco de Canaveses, Penafiel, Póvoa de Varzim, Santa Maria da Feira, Vila do Conde, and Vila Nova de Gaia (CARDOSO, 2013: 27).

this union only one son is known, born in 1869 and also called Columbano. It is known that he did not reside in the Casa das Mouras and that when he married his father gave him the Quinta de Leiria, so that he could administer it independently.

As for the Casa das Mouras itself, it did not belong to Columbano, but to his sister-in-law, Henriqueta Augusta de Moura Torres, who had inherited it from their mother. When, on 24th November 1877, Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira died, his inheritance was distributed between his nine children and his wife, Efigénia becoming responsible for the archive and library deposited in the Casa das Mouras. She died on 26th May 1885, and in 1890 her sister Henriqueta also died, leaving the Casa das Mouras for her niece and goddaughter, Maria Henriqueta Torres de Castro, countess of Bovieiro. In 1917, only the countess of Bovieiro and two single sisters were alive. That same year, the countess passed away, determining in her will the desire that her sisters continue to live in Casa das Mouras, but leaving it to her “faithful” administrator of Quinta de Bovieiro, Fr. José Joaquim Pereira, along with other assets. With his death in the mid 1960s, the house passed on to José Pereira da Rocha, whose family has kept the archive until today.

The archive today

Columbano not only sought to maintain the land heritage, but also contributed to a strategy of perpetuating the family’s memory. During his life he was concerned to preserve not only the documentation that attested the possession of his assets, the institution of *morgadio* and nobilitation, but also the memory of the genealogical events of his ancestors and descendants. The best example is the book entitled *Livro de notas necessarias e emdespençaves à Casa*. In it, Columbano wrote down data about his ancestors and, above all, information about his marriage and the birth of his nine children. He also detailed the career paths of his children and the marriages of his daughters, as well as the birth of his grandchildren. Such documentation not only enabled me to reconstruct the genealogy of this family, but also to extract information that was subsequently compared with other sources and parish registers.

The archive that came down to us was preserved in this house even after the death of Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira and his last children, in the 1920s, kept by the new owners. In 2001, the archive and library were placed together in a room on the right side of the main entrance of the house, a room that was not created for depositing the documentation but was used by the family for this purpose. For reasons of restoration of the building, in 2004 the collection was transferred to the Municipal Archive of Penafiel, where it was deposited under a protocol and where the documentation was subjected to disinfestation.

As a result of my Master's dissertation, this archive is currently studied and organized according to the systemic model, which defends an organic structure based on the generations and members/persons united by kinship ties, as a form of organization. It is available for consultation in the catalog and also on the GEAD-OPAC digital platform, used by the Municipal Archive of Penafiel.

Conclusion

Through the study of this family archive we could take a look at and understand the strategies of social ascension that the families used, from matrimonial ties to property acquisition and establishment of *morgadios*, and to nobilitation and political and juridical careers. The genealogical and historical study of this family led us to an archive in which a previous genealogical study already existed, made to prove the family noble lineage in 1741. This study was also tied to Columbano Pinto Ribeiro de Castro Portugal da Silveira's concern to perpetuate the family memory, writing down not only all the details about his descendants but also about his ascendants, and bringing together important documents like family wills.

The archival treatment of this archive, both in its organization through a systemic model and in the description of its documents, has proved that even though it was a house outside of what Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro called the *Grandeza*, it included families who cared about the organization of the documents by bringing together the history of the Morgado de Nossa Senhora

da Vela in *tombos*, making indexes, summaries and transcripts of the older documents. This concern was extended by Columbano to receipts and correspondence. The presence of a large library reveals a culture of specialized reading and writing, concerning both the juridical and ecclesiastical careers and a literary affection.

We should consider that studying a family archive means studying places of memories, personal and social paths, which constitutes an important contribute to History and to the understanding of the organic nature of the families and of the social roles played by their members throughout their lives. A parallel contribution that allows us to observe these experiences through the analysis of the family documents, which often serve as a complement to the information found in other institucional archives, making it accessible to researchers.