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FAMILY ARCHIVES AND
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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FAMILY ARCHIVES: AN ANALYSIS ON THE REGIONAL ARCHIVE OF THE AZORES'S INTERVENTION

ABSTRACT: The Azores archipelago, an autonomous Portuguese region, is composed of nine islands. Three regional archives, based in three different islands, carry out the Azorean archive policy, supported by a legal framework in constant development. This paper aims to characterize the work of these public archives, especially as family archives are concerned, describing their acquisition policies, including dates and dimensions, but also to think about the way the Azorean archival administration policy is building, or not, a consciousness about archives in general, and family archives in particular, as patrimony.

Keywords: family archives; Azores; patrimony; legislation

RESUMO: O Arquipélago dos Açores, região autónoma portuguesa composta por nove ilhas, executa uma política arquivística regional através de três arquivos regionais, sedeados em três das suas ilhas, com coordenação geográfica sobre as restantes no que diz respeito à gestão pública dos arquivos da Região. Essa política arquivística está, atualmente, baseada num corpo legislativo de cariz nacional, mas também regional, sempre em constante atualização e articulação com os normativos técnicos e legais portugueses e europeus. Este artigo propõe-se, dentro dessa realidade arquipelágica, abordar o trabalho dos arquivos regionais açorianos no que diz respeito aos arquivos de família, através da caracterização de políticas de aquisição, datas extremas e dimensão dos arquivos de família à sua guarda, mas igualmente problematizar a política arquivística açoriana no que se refere à construção, ou não, de uma consciência patrimonial inclusiva, que abranja os arquivos na generalidade e os arquivos de família em particular.

Palavras-chave: arquivos de família; Açores; património; legislação

Introduction

This paper is the result of a presentation made in Lisbon in November 2017, during the meeting “Arquivos de Família & Investigação em História”,

organized by Maria de Lurdes Rosa (“Arquivos de Família” project¹). My purpose was to introduce the three Azorean regional archives and their work as far as family archives are regarded and to bring forward a brief consideration about the Azorean archival legal corpus and patrimonial consciousness in the particular case of family archives.

Therefore, this paper begins by presenting the Azorean regional archives reality, its structure and legal framework. It will, then, characterize family archives held by the three regional archives and summarize their work in this particular field, focusing on the acquisition, dimension, inclusive dates and archival description available for each one. The paper finishes with a brief reflection on patrimonial awareness in the Azores as far as family archives are concerned.

The Azorean regional archives and the archival legal framework

The Azores archipelago (Portugal) has three regional archives, based in the islands of São Miguel, Terceira and Faial. They were all created between the 1930s and the 1970s and gained their current legal existence after the political process of autonomization of the Azores after 1976².

The regional archive based in Ponta Delgada, São Miguel island (BPARPD³), is the legal holder of the judicial, notary and civil archival records of the islands of São Miguel and Santa Maria, as well as holder of numerous other personal, business, associative and family archives that are legally deposited, donated or purchased by the BPARPD⁴. The regional archive based in Angra

¹ <http://fcs.h.unl.pt/arqfam/> . Accessed on 2018, June 20th.

² For a brief history of these institutions, mainly Ponta Delgada, consult MEDEIROS, 2001: 743-758.

³ Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional de Ponta Delgada (<http://bibliopdl.viaoceanica.net/>)

⁴ To have further knowledge of all the archives held by the Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional de Ponta Delgada you can consult the Archives Guide, published in 2015 and available in: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/axtbyrdtsbfq11d/Guia%20de%20fundos%20-%20pdf%20normal.pdf?dl=0>.

do Heroísmo, Terceira island (BPARLSR⁵), is the legal holder of the same type of documentation regarding the islands of Terceira, Graciosa and São Jorge⁶. Finally, the regional archive based in Horta, Faial island (BPARJJG⁷), has the same public documental characteristics but concerning the records of Faial, Pico, Flores and Corvo islands. All these public document transfers are legally framed by national decree⁸, which continues to prevail and contributes to the tremendous space problems in these archives in present times.

Although all three regional archives are independent from each other institutionally, they all depend on governmental budgets and authorizations, existing as institutions related to the governmental cultural department (DRC⁹). This is why they all share one online database (<http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/>), aggregating all the archival description work and public research in one place and access.

As for the existing legal framework, even though the Azores obey national laws regarding patrimonial definition and safeguard¹⁰ the regional government has the power to enact regional laws within the Azorean autonomic status. Therefore, there are regional laws that define the Azorean archival policies, a process that has evolved quite a lot since 2007, when the general regime for archives and archival heritage in the Azores was legally established¹¹. This decree is an important legal instrument for the management of documentation produced by the regional public administration and establishes the rules for

⁵ Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional Luís da Silva Ribeiro (<http://www.bparah.azores.gov.pt/html/bparlsr-historia+quem+somos.html>).

⁶ The Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional Luís da Silva Ribeiro has also an Archives Guide, edited on 2005, available online in: <http://www.bparah.azores.gov.pt/fundos+arquivo/bparah-guia+de+fundos2005.pdf>.

⁷ Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Regional João José da Graça (<http://bibliotecajoaojose-graca.pai.pt/>)

⁸ Decree n° 47/2004, published on March 3rd.

⁹ Direção Regional da Cultura (<http://www.azores.gov.pt/Portal/pt/entidades/srec-drcultura/>). The Decree that legally frames their activities is the DRL n° 13/2001/A, published on November 7th.

¹⁰ Cultural Patrimony Law (Lei do Património Cultural): Law n° 107/2001, published on September 8th.

¹¹ Decree n° 10/2007/A, published on April 20th.

the management of Azorean archival assets/heritage¹², contemplating the private archives and outlining institutional relations between their owners/holders and the Government. It also created a coordinating archives committee (CCARAA¹³) with powers to define and supervise the regional archival policies.

Family archives in the Azorean regional archives: an analysis

In 2009, during a meeting in Lisbon dedicated to family archives, I presented a first analysis of the private (both family and personal) archives held by public institutions in the Azores, including the municipal archives¹⁴. In 2009, twenty one family archives held by regional archives were accounted for: nine in Angra do Heroísmo, twelve in Ponta Delgada and none in Horta¹⁵. Of these twenty one, only six were totally described according to archival description rules, eleven were not described at all and four were partially described. The inclusive dates analyzed in 2009 pointed out to a majority of archives dated between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the predominant forms of acquisition being legacy (five) and deposit (three)¹⁶.

At present, there is a total of twenty five family archives in the Azores regional archives: eleven in the Ponta Delgada archive (BPARPD), nine in the Angra do Heroísmo archive (BPARLSR) and five in the Horta archive (BPARJJG). Why do the numbers differ from 2009, mainly for Ponta Delgada and Horta? Besides being a consequence of new acquisitions, I believe it to be the result of better accuracy in the definition of these archives (some were regarded as “family archives” while others ceased to be), derived from the effective archival description work.

The following Table (Table 1) will help the reader follow this analysis.

¹² The Decree is currently regulated by another legal document, Decree n°10/2014/A, published on July 15th.

¹³ Comissão Coordenadora para os Arquivos da Região Autónoma dos Açores (<http://www.azores.gov.pt/Portal/pt/entidades/pgra-ccaraa/>)

¹⁴ VIVEIROS, 2012a: 761-772.

¹⁵ VIVEIROS, 2012a: 766.

¹⁶ VIVEIROS, 2012a: 767. The numbers referring to the acquisition forms differ so much due to the lack of information available, at the time, for Angra's Regional Archive.

Table 1

Regional Archive	Family archive	Date span (in centuries)	Acquisition	Size	Public Access
BPARPD	Costa Chaves e Melo	16-19	Legacy (1902/03)	18 arquival units	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1094987&ht=arquivo costa chaves e melo
BPARPD	Dias do Canto e Medeiros	—	Deposit	—	—
BPARPD	Gago da Câmara de Sousa	19-20 (?)	Purchase (2000)	2,6 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1149486&ht=gago da c%C3%A2mara de sousa
BPARPD	Leite Botelho de Teive	16-19	Legacy (1902/03); Deposit (2006)	2,3 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1095458&ht=leite botelho de teive
BPARPD	Vaz Pacheco de Castro	17-19	Donation (?)	49 documents	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1085336&ht=vaz pacheco de castro
BPARPD	Mello Manoel da Câmara	16-19	Deposit (2006)	6,2 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1149485&ht=mello manoel da c%C3%A2mara
BPARPD	Marquises of Praia e Monforte	16-19	Deposit (1980s; 2012)	1,8 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1014753&ht=marquises da praia e monforte
BPARPD	Canto e Castro	15-19	Legacy (1902/03)	51 arquival units	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1354472&ht=canto e castro
BPARPD	Borges Bicudo	16-19	Legacy (1902/03)	7 books	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1354473&ht=borges bicudo
BPARPD	Tavares Carreiro	19-20	Purchase (2014)	14,507 documents, 923 photographs, 49 engravings, 11 drawings	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1347496&ht=tavares carreiro
BPARPD	Counts of Ribeira Grande	15-19	Purchase (2016)	21 boxes	—
BPARLSR	Casa Anahory	20	Donation	0,06 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810790&ht=Casa Anahory

Regional Archive	Family archive	Date span (in centuries)	Acquisition	Size	Public Access
BPARLSR	<i>Casa do morgado</i> Barcelos Coelho Borges	16-20	Donation	2,6 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810747&ht=Casa do Morgado Barcelos Coelho Borges
BPARLSR	Counts of Praia da Vitória	17(?)–19(?)	Donation	—	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=811375&ht=condes da praia vit%C3%B3ria
BPARLSR	Counts Sieuve de Meneses	16-20	Donation	0,04 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810780&ht=condes sieuve de meneses
BPARLSR	<i>Casa da Madre de Deus</i> (Bettencourt de Vasconcelos)	16-20	Donation	1,43 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810749&ht=Madre de Deus
BPARLSR	<i>Morgado</i> Borges Teixeira	16-20	Donation	0,76 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810755&ht=morgado borges teixeira
BPARLSR	Count Rego Botelho	-----	Donation	1,40 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=810795&ht=conde rego botelho
BPARLSR	<i>Casa Merens de Távora</i> (Visconde de Meireles)	16-19	Donation (1954)	3 packs	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1553519&ht=Casa Merens de T%C3%A1vora
BPARLSR	Viscount of Aigualva	-----	Donation	15 meters	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1553518&ht=visconde da agualva
BPARJJG	Leite Perry	19-20	Purchase	1 album, 15 documents	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1217166&ht=leite perry
BPARJJG	Dabney	19-20	Donation	7 albums	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1203947&ht=dabney
BPARJJG	Campos de Medeiros	19-20	Deposit	20 boxes, 4,640 documents	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1347047&ht=campos de medeiros
BPARJJG	Moniz Barreto	17-19	Donation	4 documents	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1218324&ht=moniz barreto
BPARJJG	Furtado	-----	Donation	1 album, 1 sketchbook	http://www.arquivos.azores.gov.pt/details?id=1218164&ht=quaresma furtado

From Table 1 we can verify that seventeen of these 25 family archives were donations or legacies to the three regional archives (five in Ponta Delgada, nine in Angra do Heroísmo and three in Horta), giving the Azorean government total ownership over them. Only four were bought (three in Ponta Delgada and one in Horta), which also gives the local government total ownership in most cases, and four were deposited. In deposit cases, the Azorean government establishes an agreement with the owners to physically maintain and to make these archives available to public access.

We can also verify that, like in 2009, the vast majority of its inclusive dates continues to vary between the sixteenth century and the late nineteenth century, which can be explained by the chronology of the settlement of the Azores¹⁷ (from the mid-fifteenth century onwards) and historical events during the Portuguese 19th century regarding nobility and land concentration¹⁸ or even the implementation of the republican regime in 1910. There is also another important remark to make when analyzing the dates: even though we speak of “family archives” mainly when addressing the *ancien régime* archives, the fact is that archives regarded as “family archives” are increasingly overcoming this timescale and escaping the traditional chronology and characteristics of *ancien régime* family archives. We see this very clearly when analyzing Ponta Delgada and Horta’s archives. Furthermore, these “new family archives” gain priority in archival description and access to public research within the regional archives as we can easily see in Table 1 (column Public Access), varying in document type or content when compared with the traditional *ancien régime* family archives.

In 2009 we had already verified the relationship between the later inclusive dates and the archival description work¹⁹, concluding that nineteenth and twentieth-century archives are a priority. We consider this for four major reasons:

¹⁷ GREGÓRIO, 2006.

¹⁸ VIVEIROS, 2012b; RILEY, 2006; DEUS, 2015

¹⁹ VIVEIROS, 2012a: 768.

- Difficulty of technical treatment of archives with early inclusive dates because of their documental characteristics;
- Legal transfers of public documents (judicial, notary, etc.) restrain technical work, conditioning the work priorities chosen by public archives which are requested on a daily basis by citizens in need of access to such documentation;
- Historiographic tendencies: at present, contemporary history is a privileged area in Portuguese historiography;
- Lack of knowledge and the paleographic skills necessary for the archival description work of sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century documents. We believe that younger archivists are not being prepared to work with documentation that requires paleographic reading, especially if we remember that the relationship between archivists/Archival Science and historians/History is no longer a mandatory requirement.

Finally, the dimension of these archives varies quite a lot but we have to keep in mind that most of them are still in working process, so the final dimensions are yet to be determined.

Family archives: rising public and private conscience in the Azores

In May 2017, the BPARPD organized in partnership with Maria de Lurdes Rosa's project²⁰, a meeting entitled "Arquivos de Família: desafios atuais". The initiative intended to discuss Azorean family archives, either held by public or private institutions. With this purpose in mind, several private family archive holders were invited to be present and share with archivists, historians, students and other archive holders their point of view, their difficulties and resistances (or not) in interacting with public entities, their objectives as to how to preserve and maintain the archives under their ownership. The goal was partially accomplished, but a lot of work remains undone concerning these

²⁰ <http://iem.fcsh.unl.pt/section.aspx?kind=noticia&id=1225> . Accessed on 2018, June 20th.

owners, for the process of trust between private family archives holders and public institutions, such as regional archives, goes beyond the legal premises.

It is our belief that this awareness towards family archives in particular, but all archives in general, must start with education, treading the path that libraries have for several years. Portuguese archive institutions are somewhat reluctant, for various reasons from lack of technicians to management guidelines, to develop work in patrimonial education based on archival themes. I believe that this patrimonial education, with an emphasis on archives, is essential to make a difference in future, just as the work done by libraries has created a conscious and participatory public, aware of the importance of books, of reading and of the role of libraries. This work is yet to be done in Archival Science and in archival institutions, even though small steps are being taken with the attempt of approaching the public through a clearer, cleaner, simpler, and humbler speech.

There is, therefore, work to be done in what Maria de Lurdes Rosa has called “patrimonialização dos arquivos”, transforming archives in a common and widely recognized heritage; an inheritance with which all citizens identify themselves, that reflects cultural, historical and national traces and identities. This path will bring archives to mainstream cultural language, opening contents to new audiences through exhibitions, workshops, conferences, school activities, etc. This path will shape in owners and citizens the patrimonial importance and cultural potential of archives²¹, for it is certain that the existence of laws or public institutions does not guarantee the safeguard or respect for the patrimonial value of these archives.

This opening to mainstream cultural language, without losing the scientific and technical credibility, is what the Azorean regional archives are trying to do within their annual activity plans, attempting to reach a greater number of citizens, investing in new technologies and social media publicity and promotion.

²¹ A process, incidentally, already referenced in several books published by Maria de Lurdes Rosa, within the family archive’s project. ROSA, 2012a: 17.

Conclusion

Family archives, as all archives, are evidence of activity and existence, but because of their specificities several and particular difficulties presented themselves to archivists and to public archive institutions.

The Azorean regional archives hold several family archives, evidence of our history (social, cultural, economic) that, therefore, must be considered a part of our heritage. However, building patrimonial awareness towards archives, and family archives in particular, is a path that must be shared between owners, public entities and citizens with mutual trust and recognition. If the Azores have made a difference in developing and enacting specific laws that promote regional archival policies, more detailed work is still required as far as family archives are concerned.