

**Rethinking the Archive in Pre-Modern Europe:
Family Archives and their Inventories from
the 15th to the 19th Century**

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Organizing to manage: Francisco Trigoso de Aragão Morato and the organization of family archive(s)

Filipa Lopes

Introduction

The archives of the family Saldanha e Castro e Falcão Trigoso were deposited in the Torre do Tombo National Archive in 2007. This documentation, which ranges from the 14th to the late 19th century, contains rich material related to these important families and their ancestors, including the Saldanha Albuquerque Castro Ribafria, counts of Penamacor; the Trigoso Homem de Magalhães; and the Lima Falcão Gamboa Vanzeller Baena Henriques. Members of these families played prominent roles in the social, political and administrative history of Portugal, both in the continental and overseas territories (VILLAS BOAS & CHORÃO, 2012).

Among this documentation we find three inventories that were prepared and written by a member of the family, Francisco Manuel Trigoso de Aragão Morato, between 1825 and 1826. Currently bound together in a single volume, they contain a summary of essential documents related to properties of the Houses, which came from different family branches (FSACR, Liv. 1, Ind. 1, 2, 3).

The inventories' author was the second son of Francisco Mendo Trigoso Pereira Homem de Magalhães and Antónia Joaquina Teresa de Sousa Morato. He was born in Quinta do Roma, Lisbon, on 17 September 1777, and graduated in canon law from the University of Coimbra, where he later became a teacher. He was a member of the Portuguese Royal Academy of Sciences, and he worked extensively in offices and tasks of high administrative, legal and political importance in Portugal. Among other responsibilities, he was a member of the commission responsible for the reform and standardization of weights and measures; after the liberal revolution of 1820, he was elected deputy of the Parliament (*Cortes Constituintes*), service which was interrupted during the *Vilafrancada* (an absolutist insurrection in 1823) that temporarily kept him away from the political scene; and finally, he was invited to collaborate with the committee responsible for drawing up a constitutional charter that had been promised by King João VI. These important facts help us to situate the man and his profile just before he assumed the administration of the House,

and allow us to better understand his work on his inventories.

Why did he prepare these inventories himself? What happened just before 1825 that led him to undertake this task? What influence did his experience as a man with legal preparation have during this job? Why did he choose a particular structure and order for the inventories? What can his choices reveal about the family's practices of documentary management, organization and preservation? What can they reveal about the family's House management?

The memoir or "Memories" written by Francisco Trigoso between January 1824 and 1835¹ sheds some useful light on questions about the inventories' context of production and about the arrangement of the family archive(s) (MORATO 1933). In this article, I will begin by briefly narrating some events that led him to this enterprise, and then will analyze his archival actions, based on his own testimony in the "Memories" and on the inventories themselves.

The author and his memories

Francisco Trigoso lived in an agitated political context, and carried out important public functions during the last decades of his life. He explained that his goal in writing the "Memories" was to let his descendants know the man behind the public figure. He began writing after some disappointments and political disagreements took him temporarily away from public life (MORATO 1933, 4-5, 196). He never finished the work: the narrative stops in 1826, the same year he was chosen by the regent Isabel Maria to be the Minister and

Secretary of the Kingdom's Affairs (*Ministro e Secretário de Estado dos Negócios do Reino*), and afterwards appointed to be Councillor of State. After the definitive establishment of liberalism, he was elevated to peer of the Kingdom in 1834, and later to vice-president of the House of Peers (PORTUGAL 1933).

It is clear that his book comprises "constructed" memories written many years after the facts, and that it was meant to express his point of view about political matters and even more about family domestic affairs, in order to justify his choices. Nevertheless, his recollections provide vivid testimony on how he came to be administrator of his House, and why he needed to organize the family archive(s), as well as how he viewed and understood those archives.

Because he was a second son, his father, to preserve the unity of the House, had convinced him to renounce his due portion of the heritage on the behalf of his older brother, who in exchange offered him an annual pension. No one could predict that his brother Sebastião Francisco Mendo Trigoso Pereira Homem de Magalhães would die so soon, in 1821, without a will and leaving three very young daughters. The widow, Maria Josefa Vicência de Oliveira Caupers de Sande e Vasconcelos, asked Francisco Trigoso to prepare an inventory of the family estates and goods in order to organize the division of the family heritage. And so he did, requesting the help of an expert paleographer to read and summarize the documents that had been piling into chests in Lisbon since the French invasions of 1807, 1809 and 1810. He soon realized that great confusion reigned among the papers: some were missing because entailed properties

had been improperly sold as free lands, and there were also serious doubts about the legality of some entailed estates. The summaries that the expert prepared were inadequate, and Francisco Trigozo lacked the time to verify and correct everything before making his inventory of the family estates and goods (MORATO 1933, 31, 199-200).

Later on, his sister-in-law decided to marry again, with a cousin who was coming from Brazil (VASCONCELOS 1962, 276-277; MORATO 1933, 201). She therefore urged Francisco Trigozo not only to finish the inventory of estates and goods, but also to marry her eldest daughter, Mariana José Trigozo, to become the administrator of his late brother's House, and to be the guardian of her underaged daughters. He resisted her intentions at first, but worried about the future of his nieces and the poorly managed and indebted House his brother had left, he eventually gave in and married Mariana Trigozo in 1824 (MORATO 1933, 200-202).

The planned inventory of the estates and goods was still underway when his sister-in-law, on the basis of what he considered a poorly drafted wedding contract, claimed the right to half of the properties of the House that were not bound in entail. Francisco Trigozo rejected this claim, which went against the interests of the House, but had to wait for the finalization of the partition of his brother's estate, which took place in 1825. This partition of the family estates and goods was based on the first inventory discussed above, which was full of errors. Therefore, as soon as he began the work in the archive, Francisco Trigozo prepared and sent to the judge, in 1826, a petition describing all the needed corrections, and asked for

a revision of the partition in an attempt to be fair to his nieces and to restore the unity of his House (MORATO 1933, 203-204).

Organize the archive(s) to know and to manage the estate of the family House

In 1824 Francisco Trigozo became the manager of a House he barely knew, spread over multiple locations and heavily indebted. His first step was to ask for a loan to make improvements in the properties, which could then produce more income. Next, he and his wife prepared a will and ensured that emphyteutic contracts for the nomination of tenants (*prazos*) would be united in the hands of whoever would succeed him in the administration of the entailed estates of the House — one that had already lost many properties (MORATO 1933, 221-222). Finally, knowing the confusion that reigned in the archive(s), he undertook the time-consuming enterprise of sorting, "by a method clear and bright, all documents of the House, and forming copious inventories of them", a task that took all of 1825 and part of 1826 (MORATO 1933, 225). He noted and tried to correct all the mistakes that had been made when preparing the first inventory of the family estates and goods, focusing in particular on which properties were legally entailed and which were not. His academic background drew his attention to such questions and helped him in some cases, but because of the great confusion about these matters, he was not able to resolve all doubts.²

The first inventory he organized in 1825 catalogues documents

related to properties located in Lisbon's surroundings, and their dependencies. The inventory is divided in two parts: the first part describes documents related to property's acquisition, ownership and management, as well as to the associated leases; the second part primarily lists nuptial contracts and dowries, wills and other documents related to estates' partitions. This last part also included references to the portions of the heritage for his nieces, Emilia Augusta and Maria Luísa Trigoso, and to the portion of Mariana Trigoso (FSACR, Liv. 1, Ind. 1). He made very detailed notes about all the partition shares and incomes, as he did in his "Memories". In fact, after the death of his brother, once the estates' partition document had been published, he prepared a report providing extensive information about the management of the inheritance from 1st May 1824 to 5th July 1825 (MORATO 1933, 223-225). Most likely, his purpose was to demonstrate his probity during the ongoing conflicts, and to provide full documentation about partitions and incomes to future family members.

The second inventory he prepared in 1825 describes documents and books related to Quinta Nova and to Quinta de Carmões, located in the surroundings of Torres Vedras. It is divided into seven parts that correspond to each of the properties and their annexes (FSACR, Liv. 1, Ind. 2). While the first inventory concentrated on properties that belonged to the estate of Francisco's mother, Antónia Joaquina Morato, this second inventory incorporated the ones that had belonged to the estate of his father's grandparents, Francisco Mendo Trigoso and Antónia Teresa de Aragão (MORATO 1933, 4-5).

The third index, produced in 1826, inventories documents concerning the house of Ponte da Pedra in the surroundings of Atalaia, and its dependencies (FSACR, Liv. 1, Ind. 3). This inventory included properties that had belonged to the estate of his father's grandparents, António Homem de Magalhães and Gerarda Caetana de Castro e Mendanha (MORATO 1933, 4-5).

Francisco Trigoso wrote in his "Memories" that his archival work was not finished, "but what is done gives great help for those who want to enter into intimate knowledge of the state of the various branches of this house; if it had been made by those who preceded me, it would have saved me much work, and fewer errors would have been made" (MORATO 1933, 225). Each one of these inventories is therefore not only a finding aid to recover documents, but also a source of profound knowledge about the history and the estates of various family branches that lay at the origin of the House. Documents and their inventories were important both in order to retrieve information to manage the estate, but also to solve problems about the transmission of the property through the centuries.

As Randolph Head has written, "creating inventories required archivists to make choices and weigh priorities, which gives us insight into their mental horizons and material resources" (HEAD 2007, 320). The contents and structures of the inventories examined here responded to the needs of the moment and to the priorities of Francisco Trigoso. Moreover, if we should be tempted to see inventories as mirrors of the archives, we should look carefully at the distorted images that they create, which more often than not show

only a partial truth. Inventories like these are, at the same time, near and far from the real archive: they reinterpret it, by which means they can turn pieces of paper into instruments of defense and memory (GUYOTJEANNIN 2010, 42).

Conclusion

According to recent historiography, to inventory family archives in the *Ancien Régime* was not a technical act, nor a task intended to serve historians. Instead, it usually resulted from a family's internal need to retrieve information for the benefit of its own proprietors (v.g. ROSA 2012, 574). The (re)organization of this family's archive(s) and the preparation of the inventories of 1825-26 provide a clear example of this. Francisco Trigoso urgently needed to resolve his conflict with his sister-in-law – who then became his mother-in-law – to recover the lost portions of the heritage, and to reestablish the unity of his House, as well as to get to know the House and its estate for better management. ■

Notes

¹ They were in the private archive of the Marquis of Lavradio, probably because the 2nd Count of Lavradio, Francisco de Almeida Portugal, who wrote Francisco Trigoso's eulogy in 1839 (PORTUGAL 1933), was his friend.

² He said that he could have requested confirmation from a judicial authority or confirmation by a royal decree, but for fear of getting an unfavorable verdict, he decided to do nothing.

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