

Dossiê 5

As fontes de pesquisa para moda. Uma aproximação interdisciplinar e arquivista da história da moda: pesquisa e ensino.

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REFLECTIONS ON WILLS AND INVENTORIES FOR THE STUDY OF CLOTHING IN PORTUGUESE AMERICA

Reflexões acerca dos testamentos e inventários para o estudo do vestuário na América portuguesa

Reflexiones sobre testamentos e inventarios para el estudio de ropa en portuguese america

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the characteristics of inventories and wills, produced between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their potential for the study of appearances and related themes in Portuguese America. Furthermore, it is discussed the possibility of using this documentation for the analysis of material connections, especially present in clothing, between the various territories belonging to the Portuguese Crown. Evaluating these links allows us to access the specificities of the different localities of Portuguese America, considering their intercontinental connections. However, it appears that despite the numerous possibilities of working with these sources, there is still little work on the dynamics between clothing acquisition, appearances and social configurations and their connections in the Portuguese empire.

Keywords: Inventories and wills. Fashion. Portuguese America.

Resumo

O propósito deste artigo é refletir acerca das características dos inventários e testamentos, produzidos entre os séculos XVII e XVIII, e suas potencialidades para o estudo das aparências e temas correlatos na América portuguesa. Além disso, se discute a possibilidade dessa documentação para a análise das conexões materiais, em especial presentes no vestuário, entre os diversos territórios pertencentes à Coroa portuguesa. Avaliar essas vinculações permite acessar as especificidades das diferentes localidades da América portuguesa, tendo em vista suas conexões intercontinentais. Entretanto, constata-se que apesar das inúmeras possibilidades de trabalho com essas fontes, ainda são escassos os estudos sobre as dinâmicas entre aquisição do vestuário, as aparências e as configurações sociais e suas conexões no império português.

Palavras-Chave: Inventários e testamentos. Moda. América portuguesa

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es reflexionar sobre las características de los inventarios y testamentos, producidos entre los siglos XVII y XVIII, y su potencial para el estudio de las apariencias y temas relacionados en la América portuguesa. Además, se discute la posibilidad de esta documentación para el análisis de las conexiones materiales, especialmente presentes en la ropa, entre los diversos territorios que pertenecen a la Corona portuguesa. Evaluar estos enlaces nos permite acceder a las especificidades de las diferentes localidades de la América portuguesa, considerando sus conexiones intercontinentales. Sin embargo, parece que a pesar de las numerosas posibilidades de trabajar con estas fuentes, los estudios sobre la dinámica entre la adquisición de ropa, las apariencias y las configuraciones sociales y sus conexiones en el imperio portugués aún son escasos.

Palabras Clave: Inventarios y testamentos. Moda. América portuguesa.

Historiographic production on fashion has advanced considerably in recent decades, mainly due to the growth in the number of postgraduate studies in Brazil (BONADIO, 2010, p. 76; RAINHO, 2015, p. 2). However, this expansion is not only limited to the development of academic institutions, but is also related to the changes in the historiographic field. In this sense, the establishment of fashion as an object of research is part of a broader movement of transformation of the area of history itself.

The introduction of new objects, approaches and problems, as emphasized by the collection organized by Jaques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, originally published in 1974, evidenced the broadening of research possibilities among historians. Concern has arisen about subjects (youth and children), occasions (parties, processions, for example), mentalities and objects (kitchen, book, language, etc.), often overlooked in the area.

Among the new research objects related to material culture are those present in the daily lives of populations, such as food, utensils and items of the domestic universe, including clothing.

Therefore, paying attention to the complexity inherent in material culture is fundamental, because, as Daniel Roche points out, “the objects, the physical or human relations that they create cannot be reduced to a simple materiality, nor to a simple instrument of communication or social distinction” (ROCHE, 2000, p. 13).

However, the expansion of the objects of study of history meant, in parallel, the expansion of the concept of source, since this expansion led to changes in the epistemology of historiographic production itself. While nineteenth-century historians stressed the importance of the written document for historical analysis throughout the twentieth century, this notion expanded. Also, the recognition of archaeological, iconographic and oral materials as sources was accompanied by the introduction and validity of other textual productions for research. In this sense, a document previously considered “fanciful, mythical or little concerned with the empirical view of the world” (KARNAL, TATSCH, 2015, p. 16) became valid for historiographical analysis.

The introduction of new themes and the change in the concept of source favored the multiplication of documentary categories. Thus, for the study of clothing, for example, one can resort to clothes, fabrics, images and other sources characteristic of family, social and economic history, among others (ROCHE, 2007, p. 23).

In the list of sources relevant to the analysis of clothing and appearances in Western societies for the period traditionally called the Modern Age, inventories and, to a lesser extent, wills stand out. With unquestionable value for the analysis of wardrobes of populations and periods lacking in iconographic and material sources, inventories and wills provide valuable insights into past clothing and other accessories.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to reflect on the characteristics of inventories and wills, produced between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their potential for the study of appearances and related themes in Portuguese America. In addition, we discuss the possibilities of inventories and wills to signal material connections, especially of clothing, between the various territories of the Portuguese empire. Assessing these linkages allows us to access the specificities of America’s societies in view of their intercontinental connections.

Both inventories and wills are sources concerning the moment of death of an individual, but they constitute a rich source of information about his life. Material and spiritual

aspects are revealed from the data provided by this documentation. The inventory consisted of a list of assets belonging to the deceased. While the will indicated the wishes of its author and despite giving the testator the chance to dispose of his possessions, in Portuguese America it reveals mainly the concerns with the salvation of the soul. Therefore, even having death as their common denominator, these sources - inventories and wills - differ in their contents and intentionalities.

The will expresses the wants of its author, interfering with the sharing of property after his death. The preparation of this document should be written and performed in the presence of a notary and five witnesses, and should be waived only in exceptional cases. Concerns about the salvation of the soul greatly occupied the testators as they mainly dealt with the funeral rites, the shroud, and other acts designed to assist the soul.

Unlike the will, the inventory occurred after the death of the individual and its purpose was to list the material assets for further division among the heirs. It recorded the type, characteristics and monetary value of the assets, as well as the debits and credits of the deceased. The inventory consisted of one of the elements of wealth sharing and was regulated by legislation. Nevertheless, the making of the judicial inventory during the eighteenth century occurred only in exceptional cases, as heirs could share privately when amicably agreed. However, these private documents, besides being difficult to locate, were frequently not preserved making historical research unfeasible.

According to the legislation of the time, the obligation to make a judicial inventory was made when the deceased had heirs under the age of 25, when he had no heir, when unmarried and without presumed heirs, or in cases where an individual died far from his or her own residence. Because of this, many deceased people, despite possessing assets, did not generate judicial inventories.

Legal provisions indicated the format of the document, but other important elements of the inventories depended essentially on social and economic factors in the context. This is the case of the list composed by the evaluators. Responsible for pointing the assets and their respective values, they should be sworn by the town or city council (FLEXOR, 2005, p. 4) and their annotations defined the characteristics and respective value of each object of the deceased, resulting in the total amount of assets. Additionally, the items listed in the inventories had sometimes detailed description with indication of the state of conservation and use. This information results in an important resource for studying the heritage, material culture, consumption and other aspects of daily life of the populations of the period.

As mentioned, inventories were made after the individual's death and refer to a specific moment in the lives of the most fortunate people. For this reason, the age and sacramental state of the deceased must be considered, since goods, including clothing, varied beyond financial conditions and were transformed according to gender and marital status (married, single or widowed) (SILVA, 2018, p. 145).

However, as they do not cover all owners, since in the 17th and 18th centuries, their elaboration only occurred in cases of litigation, inventories have a controversial social representativeness, as they refer to a specific portion of the population (ROCHE, 2007, p. 82).

Another important feature of these sources is the possible arbitrariness of the notes or the concealment of goods motivated for various reasons. In this sense, all research

based on inventories must consider that there are sometimes lapses due to donations or concealment of heritage by heirs, relatively common cases in relation to clothing (ROCHE, 2007, p. 98).

In spite of the shortcomings and specificities, these documents are fundamental for the study of dress and appearances, especially in Portuguese America between the 17th and 18th centuries, as other sources are rare or inexistent (eg, images or textiles) that detail the clothing and adornments. Also, the inventories, although having a limited representation, still allow us to relate the wardrobes to the different social groups of the period.

Since the early twentieth century, there has been research that uses inventories to investigate the material culture of Portuguese America.

In his work on the daily life of Paulistas, for example, Alcântara Machado emphasized the need to study ordinary people, anonymous individuals and the most trivial aspects of their existence (MACHADO, 1980, p. 29). In order to oppose the historiography dedicated to the illustrious, the author used the inventories and wills elaborated between the 16th and 17th centuries to compose his work. Published in 1929, this groundbreaking study of both the theme and the use of sources reveals a society lacking material resources, in which utensils, housing, and clothing were modest or scarce. As for clothing, the author emphasizes the precariousness of dressing, highlighting, however, some variety in male and female pieces. Evening dresses and jewelery made up the women's wardrobes, revealing preoccupation with the consumption of status and prestige pieces. As Ronaldo Vainfas points out, Alcântara Machado "made the most of the inventories and wills sent to Washington Luís to publish in 1920 and gave a vast overview of the humble life of the bandeirantes" (VAINFAS, 2009, p. 222).

Nevertheless, the appreciation of studies on different aspects of daily life, including the clothing of the populations of other times, emerged in Brazilian historiography, especially from the 1990s (SCHWARTZ, 2009, p. 182), being driven by the new French history (PRIORE, 1997, p. 261-262). As mentioned, this movement promoted visibility to previously marginal subjects and objects in historiography, as well as ratified the use of inventories for the study of material culture of other times.

Among the elements of material culture, we highlight the acquisition of clothing, which was closely related to the networks of interrelations and interdependencies of individuals, because the preoccupation with appearance occurred due to the need to preserve or expand the social status. This promoted, especially among elite families, the acquisition of clothing deemed appropriate.

Nonetheless, analysis of wardrobes in a given context requires the use of a wide range of sources. Historiography even emphasizes the need to serialize inventories and wills, since it is seldom possible to answer any problem from one of these sources in isolation. At the same time, it is essential to verify the relationship between the amount of inventories available and the total population studied, in order to establish the representativeness of the sources. Therefore, the diachronic understanding of clothing and its relationship with different social groups in a given locality requires the analysis of a broad set of inventories.

As reported on the patrimony, credits and debts of the deceased, the inventories also disclose data on the circulation of objects, including clothing and other ornaments

(SILVA, 2015, p. 198). As a result, the study of wardrobes sometimes finds in this documentation data to gauge family reciprocities, business transactions, the groups involved, and the geographical scope of trade. However, if inventories shed light on circulation, they may also hide other phenomena characteristic of the time, including resale, lending, and the reuse of clothing (ROCHE, 2007, p. 85).

Although it presents some difficulties, the information contained in this documentation also allows us to verify the connections between different spaces. As they list the clothing of men and women, mentioning the characteristics of each piece of clothing, it is possible to observe the attributes and origin of materials, especially textiles. To determine the value of the clothes, the appraisers also pointed to their state of conservation, that is, whether it was new, worn, or even damaged. This feature makes it possible to evaluate the wearing time of the pieces, the possible preferences or clothing needs of the inventory.

According to Daniel Roche, the origin of the raw materials used to make clothes was usually local (ROCHE, 2000, p. 264). Yet, this premise minimizes the movement and exchanges provided by navigations. If Europe presented itself as the trading post of the globe, maintaining its production and consumption mostly regional, with few exceptions, “the flow of new goods has generally been in, not out of, Latin America” (BAUER, 2001, p. 8).

In this sense, the circulation of goods in the Portuguese empire occurred between different continents, thus consequently there were numerous products transported by vessels. Still, among the goods that came from Europe to America stood out: olive oil, flour, cod, wines, iron tools and objects, woolen fabrics and pieces such as wigs and silk socks (RUSSELL- WOOD, 2016, p. 182).

The development of trade circuits also included contacts between Africa and America without the link with Portugal, thus giving rise to a trade between continents without the link to the imperial center. Even the articulation in the territories of the Portuguese Crown demonstrates that the Atlantic Ocean has established commercial rhythms, connecting mainly America and Africa (RUSSELL-WOOD, 2009, p.23).

The extent and dimension of trade relations can be assessed through inventories, as historiography indicates, with the presence in America of textiles, clothing, and adornment from a variety of origins, including Africa, Macau, India, the Netherlands, Brittany, among others (RUSSELL-WOOD, 2016, p. 190).

However, if the connections between distant territories are explicit, the wills and inventories also signal the local specificities and rhythms regarding the materials used in the making, the acquisition and use of clothing, and other worshippers. At the same time, the study of this documentation provides for the analysis of appearances and their role among individuals in specific social configurations.

Moreover, inventories and wills are documents that allow historians to evaluate various aspects of daily life and material culture in some contexts. Despite its weaknesses, this documentation is especially relevant for the study of dress and appearance. However, the knowledge about the dynamics between clothing acquisition, appearances and social configurations in the different contexts of Portuguese America still remains precarious. Nevertheless, although they are limited, the theses and dissertations on the themes in question are notable for the quality and variety of documentation used (MORA-

ES, 2018, p. 7-14).

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