Portuguese Archival Collections Related to India

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A large number of documents and manuscripts related to India can be found in Portuguese archives as a result of five centuries permanence in India.

Generally speaking, in many libraries and archives there are manuscripts concerning India. In the National Library of Lisbon, for instance, the Pombalina collections and the Fundo Geral have some documents regarding India; in the Academy of Sciences, as well, it is possible to extract some information from the Red and the Blue series. In Goa, in Porvorim, the Xavier Centre has also several documents related to India and an important collection of documents regarding the Mhamai family.

It is nevertheless our intention in this paper to present only the more important archival collections and not the scattered however important documents.

Therefore, in Lisbon, we will concern ourselves with the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (The Overseas Historical Archive), the Filmoteca Ultramarina Portuguesa (the Portuguese Overseas Film Library), the Biblioteca da Ajuda (the Ajuda Library) and the National Archive / Torre do Tombo. Regarding the foreign archives we will only mention the Historical Archives of Goa, the Patriarchal Curia of Goa, the Archivum Romanorum Societatis Iesu and the National Library, in Rio de Janeiro.

Portuguese Archives

Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Overseas Historical Archive)

Located in the palace of the count of Ega, this archive is the most important one for the Portuguese overseas history. There one can find the 499 “caixas da India”

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1 Tropical Research Institute - Lisbon
2 Tropical Research Institute - Lisbon
as well as the manuscript books pertaining to India. The *caixas da India* enclose mostly sundry documents not only varied but also referred to a large chronological period from the 16th to the 19th centuries: official letters, petitions from individuals or from the religious orders; aspects regarding missionary work; matters concerning ecclesiastic jurisdiction; political reports; lists with soldiers’ names; lists of merchandises; voyages of the *Carreira da India* and so on.

The codices are assembled in the former collection of the *Conselho Ultramarino*. The study of the working files is usually afforded to the researchers. Regarding this collection one should see the inventory published by M.A. Hedwig Fitzler, *A Secção Ultramarina da Biblioteca Nacional. Inventários 1 – Códices do Extinto Conselho Ultramarino. Estudo e notas por (...)*, Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional, 1928.

Besides this documentation, a collection of 36 manuscript books were brought to the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino from Historical Archive of Goa in 2003 as follows:

1. 16 codices of the *Monções do Reino*.
2. 8 codices with letters from Damão
3. 3 codices with treaties of peace
4. 2 codices with provisions
5. 2 codices regarding Kings and local Potentates
6. 2 codices with the municipal proceedings
3 Various documents

There is also a large and important documentary collection concerning the *Arquivo da Fazenda* from 1711 to 1930 that will be subjected to a restoration treatment. The *Arquivo da Fazenda* was brought to the Overseas Historical Archive in 1950.

This archive has also an important collection of pictures and historical maps of India, most of them already digitalized.

*Filmoteca Ultramarina Portuguesa* (Portuguese Overseas Film-Library)

At the end of the 1950-60 decade, through the initiative of the *Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos* (the Centre for Overseas Historical Studies) and also thanks to the work and vision of its director Prof. António da Silva Rego, more or less two hundred and fifty books from 1560 to 1850, pertaining to the *Monções do Reino*’s collection were microfilmed in Goa. The inventory of these books can be found in the “Roteiro e descrição sumária dos documentos que existem na Filmoteca do ex-Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga” which was published by Maria Augusta da Veiga e Sousa in *Boletim da Filmoteca Ultramarina Portuguesa*, nº47, Lisboa, IICT, 1986, pp. 27-36.

![Portuguese Overseas Film-Library](image)

In this archive, one can also find microfilms of other collections of the Archive of the Patriarchal Curia of Goa. Many of these documents were summarized in the

Ajuda Library

This library is located in the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda. Around one million and half interesting register books can be found in its reading section.

There we can also find a large number of documents concerning the administration of the Estado da India and the Carreira da India as well, in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The catalogue O Indico na Biblioteca da Ajuda, which was organised by its director, Francisco G. Cunha Leão, was published in 1998.

National Archives / Torre do Tombo

This archive encloses the largest number documents of the 16th century. Those related to India are as follows:

- Monções do Reino
- Junta da Real Fazenda do Estado da India

Monções do Reino

The collection of the Monções do Reino includes 62 codices that were brought from India in the 18th century: it has documents from 1605 to 1697. Concerning this collection, ten volumes, the Documentos Remetidos da India ou Livros das Monções
(...) Lisboa, 1880-1982, that enclose documents ranging from 1605 to 1620, were published by the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon.

The project of publishing this important documentation was, in a way, followed by the Centro de Estudos Damião de Góis which published two volumes (1625-1626 and 1625-1736). In this case they have chosen to publish a large summary of each document, setting off the toponyms and the anthroponomics rather than its entire transcription.

**Junta da Real Fazenda do Estado da India**

This collection includes not only the documents of this institution, the Royal Treasury of India but also of the Junta do Estanco do Tabaco and the institutions that have preceded it.

It encloses more or less a hundred codices related to India, from the 16th to the 19th centuries. It also includes a large variety of documents: letters of indults, warrants of security, letters of surety, letters of leasing grants, warrants to administrative appointments, register of appointments, and so on. That is why this collection is thought to be a true chancellery.

Three volumes containing abstracts of this collection were published by the Centro de Estudos Damião de Góis, in 2000 and in 2001 as it was formerly done for the books of the Monções do Reino.

There is also an important collection, the “Institutos Religiosos da India” (Religious Institutes of India) with documents from the 16th to the 18th century. This collection encloses 5 boxes of documents with 13 bundles which are, at this moment,
being catalogued within the project “Descrição dos fundos eclesiásticos da Torre do Tombo”.

**Foreign Archives**

**India**

In regards to the archives in India, the work of E.R. Hambye, S.J. “Some Portuguese Archives and Archival Material in India” in the Proceedings of the *II Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa*, edited by Luís de Albuquerque and Inácio Guerreiro, Lisbon, Tropical Research Institute, Centre for Historical Studies and Ancient Cartography, pp. 923-930, is indeed a very thorough analysis.

**Historical Archives of Goa**

This archive includes the largest and more important collection of documents related to the Orient. The collection of the *Monções do Reino* which gathers many hundreds of codices ranging from 1560 to 1914, are particularly important. However, to this collection should be added the volumes that can be found in the *Torre do Tombo* and in the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, in Lisbon.

It is difficult to select the more important collections as all of them enclose a large number of documents concerning the Orient; see, for instance, the *Roteiro dos Arquivos da India Portuguesa*, introduction and notes by Panduronga S.S. Pissurlencar, Bastorá, 1955. We must, nevertheless, mention the collections found in the many *conventos de Goa* (convents of Goa), *cartas patentes e alvarás* (1557 – 1875) (letters patent and charters), *Comunidades das Velhas e Novas Conquistas* (Communities of the Old and New Conquests), Regulations and Instructions, the Senate of Goa, etc. Besides these, we will also mention the collections one can find there related to Daman, Dio and Bassein.

Besides the already mentioned *Roteiro*, this archive has also an inventory of all the documents that were included in this archive after the publication of this work.

**Archive of the Patriarchal Curia of Goa**

Located in the patriarchal court, at the Altinho, this archive has the most important documents for the religious history of Goa. It’s the official archive of the archdiocese and therefore it encloses documents of a diverse provenance. A provisional inventory of this archive was made by Maria Luísa Abrantes of the
Overseas Historical Archive, in Lisbon. This inventory was made within a project sponsored by Fundação do Oriente. The documents were brought from Goa and can be examined in its Documentation Centre, in Olaias.

The Visitas Pastorais, from 1747 to 1927, which includes all the parishes of the Old Conquests, and some of the New Conquests, is undoubtedly the main collection of this archive.

From the historical and documentary point of view, a substantial part of its register includes the depositions of witnesses on the interrogation of their visit that are a very important source for the study of the many aspects of the Goan society and its religious practices.

The Róis da Cristandade (lists with the number of souls, of confessants and of communicants …) enclose the years from 1773 to 1941.

The ancient collection of this archive includes other collections such as the ofícios do reino (official letters from the kingdom), ofícios e portarias (official letters and decrees), ofícios às autoridades eclesiásticas e civis (official letters to ecclesiastic and civil authorities), ofícios às autoridades civis e militares (official letters to civil and military authorities), and others as one can see through the already mentioned inventory.
**Italy**

*Archivum Romanorum Societatis Iesu*

This archive in Rome is especially important as it encloses the correspondence exchanged between the Jesuits scattered all over the Orient and the Principal of the Society of Jesus. It is organised into three collections: *Goana, Malabarica,* and *Japónica.* The correspondence concern India and the years from 1540 to 1597 and it was published in eleven volumes in the *Documenta Indica,* edited by Joseph Wichy, Rome, 1948 – 1988. There also is a copied inventory of the documents that can be found in the Archive of the Jesuits.

**Brazil**

In regards to the documents that can be found in Brazil regarding the Orient as well as other regions of the former Portuguese overseas, the study of the *Roteiro de Fontes da História Portuguesa Contemporânea. Arquivos do Brasil* by Joel Serrão and Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1989, is of the utmost importance.

**National Library**

In the reserved section of the National Library, in Rio de Janeiro, a very important collection of documents concerning the Inquisition in Goa, can be found. Today, the researchers have at their disposal a catalogue with abstracts of these manuscripts in *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional,* vol, 120.000, Rio de Janeiro, 2006.

As we mentioned before it is not possible to make an accurate analysis of the former Portuguese India without examining the manuscripts of the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. We have only referred the main collections and the archives where they are kept. However, it is possible to gather a large number of isolated documents scattered in archives and libraries such as the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico Militar, Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, Biblioteca Municipal do Porto, and so on.

Abroad, we should mention, in Brazil, the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, the Arquivo Nacional, the Arquivo Histórico do Itamarati and the Arquivo Público da Baía, in S. Salvador da Bafá.
In Italy, in Rome, the Arquivo da Propaganda Fide, the Arquivo Secreto do Vaticano where one can find the collections of the *Nunciatura Portuguesa* and the *Visitas ad Limina* of the archbishops of Goa.

There is also a number of isolated documents that can be found in the private archives of the religious orders. In England, the Indian Office has several important documents regarding India. In France, one can find important information regarding India in the “Fond Portugais”, in the National Library, in Paris.

Almost all these archives have good catalogues and inventories that permit to guide the researcher in its work.