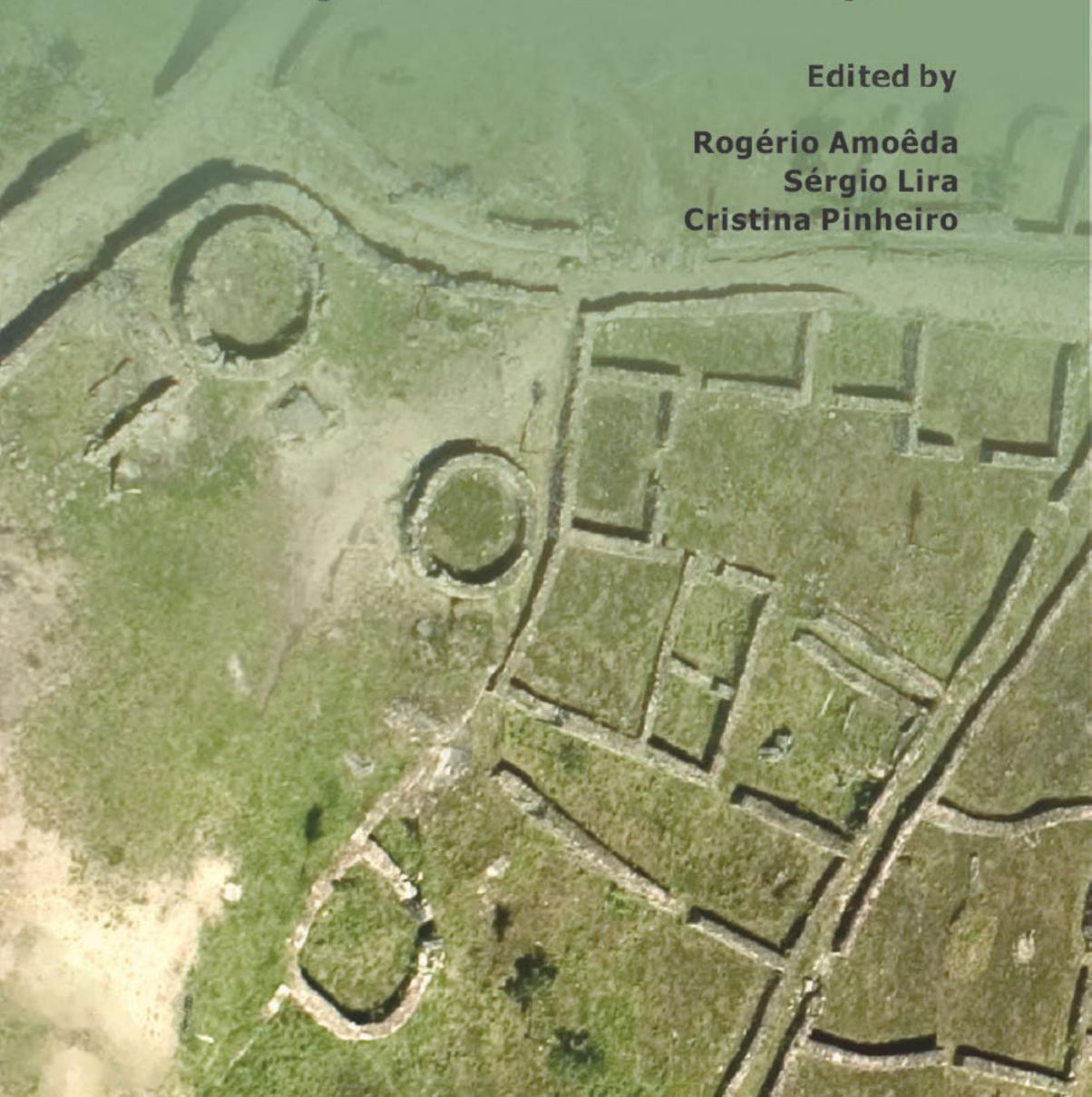


HERITAGE 2014

Proceedings of the 4th International Conference
on Heritage and Sustainable Development

Edited by

Rogério Amoêda
Sérgio Lira
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The Portuguese sigillographic heritage – SIGILLVM, a new research project on a remarkable and mostly neglected heritage

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at presenting the first stages of a new research project that is being developed in Portugal on medieval and modern seals. One of the major goals of the project is to gather in a coherent and organised corpus all Portuguese seals - a task that was never undertaken. It intends to start working with the medieval secular clergy seals and embrace other groups at a later stage. For such a goal it was achieved the agreement and institutional cooperation of archives, museums and libraries in possession of the specimens and collections. Seals have been used since ancient times with the triple and important function of identifying, validating and keeping something inviolable, a function still at play nowadays. Nevertheless care for their inventorying, preservation and study have not corresponded to what is desirable and a significant number of specimens is at risk. In Portugal a recent analysis of the seals prior to 1319 from the archives of the Cathedral Chapter of Coimbra stored at the National Archive of Torre do Tombo (ANTT) points to almost 50% of missing seals and only 25% of the remaining considered to be in good condition. Given that this is one of the largest Portuguese seal collections, such numbers are an alarming indicator of the urgent need to safeguard the sigillographic heritage still existing in our country. Having in mind the rebirth and renewal of the sigillographic science that occurred a few decades ago by the hand of Michel Pastoureaux who gave a new boost to the study of these “small monuments” we believe the project justifies itself.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sigillographic heritage has been neglected for centuries, reason why seals are commonly unknown or even despised. This a tremendous paradox if one has in mind the importance of seals as guarantees of authenticity (usually of a document) or proof of property or as means to ensure that an envelope is unbroken.

History of seals starts in the old Mesopotamia, where this kind of certificate was first used in that triple assertion we still employ today despite the new forms and new ways of usage (Pastoureaux, 1981). Since then an exceptional number of seals types were produced, but most of them were poorly preserved mainly due to negligence, to the fragile materials they are made of and to the deliberate action of collectors and forgers, who removed them from their original collections for “preservation” or even used them to fake new documents.

For the sake of this study seals that were used as means of documental validation are our first concern. They were the main process of validation in Europe during the Middle Ages and their importance only declined from the 15th century onwards with the raise of signatures. However, still today seals are used in formal or solemn documents, examples of which are university di-

plomas or international treaties. Validation seals are the object of our research project, that aims at gathering, studying and preserving the Portuguese sigillographic heritage.

In fact, in Portugal, unlike what happened in other European countries - France being one of the most significant examples with the work of Douët d'Arcq (Douët d'Arcq, 1863-1868) -, no systematic casts or draws of seals have been carried out, nor any sigillographic catalogues have been made. The only large cataloguing attempt in existence is the known work of Luís Gonzaga de Lancastre e Távora (Távora, 1983). This study concerns only a part of the existing medieval seals of the National Archive of Torre do Tombo and a restricted number of seal impressions and matrices from other sources and presents a large number of errors and inaccuracies. Besides it does not comply with the international inventorying and cataloguing criteria defined since 1990 (Bautier (dir.), 1990).

As such in Portugal no systematic survey is available that can provide an account of the number of seals or information on their conservation conditions, or a survey that allows counting the losses incurred. However, some partial attempts were made to study this particular heritage, namely in one of the most significant documentary collections containing seals, the archives of the Cathedral Chapter of Coimbra stored at the National Archive of Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

2 THE COIMBRA SEE CHAPTER ARCHIVAL FUND AND THE PRESERVATION OF SEALS

Among the Portuguese archival funds that have bequeathed us the greatest number of seals, one of the leaders is undoubtedly that of the Coimbra See Chapter. Its sigillographic wealth is directly related to the documentary wealth it harbours: at its core are several thousands of documents, essentially written in parchment but some also in paper, including regal and pontifical originals as well as highly valuable fragments, dated from the High Middle Ages to the latter centuries of the Portuguese Modern Age.

However, a rich documentary fund doesn't necessarily have to own a large number of sigillary specimens. The maintenance of the seals depends, essentially, from the care involved in its preservation throughout the centuries – and that was undoubtedly the case of the Coimbra Cathedral. The conservation of its chapter archive received special attention, as it becomes evident from the excellent condition of the large majority of its documentation, or the safekeeping of diplomas considered worthless (and labelled as such in modern inscription on its reverse side), the most eloquent example being the multiple parchment rolls from the 12th to the 14th centuries, relative to the disputes with the Santa Cruz monastery in Coimbra – its usefulness grew non-existent with time, but they are still kept in the cathedral's archive monuments, allowing us access to written testimony that otherwise would have been irretrievably lost.

That kind of preservation reveals that the seals must have been carefully handled in the past and nowadays. Current preservation conditions are, obviously, essential for the specimens' future survival. But in most of our archives (the National Archive of Torre do Tombo included) the seals are kept, alas, in conditions still inadequate to their specific material characteristics. A significant number of seals are unprotected, for example those belonging to factitious books, that is, books made out of loose parchments sown together so as not to be lost. This process guaranteed the documents' conservation but left the seals, often hanging from the lower part of the book, at the mercy of blows, knocks or shelf attrition.

Impressed by such examples it's no wonder that in order to guarantee the survival of sigillographic impressions some have defended they should be separated from the documents they were appended to (Távora, 1983). We cannot in any way agree with such approach that means mutilation of a written act whose seal was the guarantee of its authenticity. What has to be done – what must be done, urgently – is protect the seals, package them in the best possible way, and restore them.

But let us return to the seals from the Coimbra maintained at the Torre do Tombo, as in the unfavourable panorama we have drawn, they are the lucky ones – since they are seldom unprotected, whether by the antiquated (and now, as we know, inadequate) practice of placing them inside small paper bags wrapped up in raw cotton, or by the more contemporary bubble-wrap plastic sheets that minimize any shocks they may be subjected to without preventing them from “breathing”. Maybe the recognition of this fund's sigillographic importance dictated the intro-

duction of such means of preservation, still missing in many other documental cores at the Torre do Tombo. Nevertheless, such attention does not prevent progressive degradation of the specimens, especially the ones time has made frailer; from personal experience, we know that, in the years since we first began our investigations, some seals have degraded in a notable fashion, losing small pieces of wax or having fragments come loose from their suspensions.

One of the authors of this paper, Maria do Rosário Morujão, began a systematic survey of the seals in this rich trove in order to present a paper to an international event on seals preservation in 2010, limited to the part of the fund she used for her doctoral thesis about the Coimbra Cathedral as an institution and chancery, from its restoration as a diocese after the city's definitive conquest by the Christians around 1080 until 1318 (Morujão, 2010). All in all, we are talking about 383 documents, totalling 647 seals, whose condition can be seen in the Figure 1.

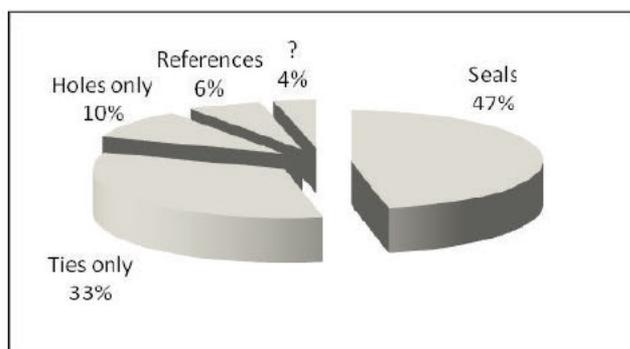


Figure 1. Documents seals.

Approximately half of these seals are no longer there: 6% are merely referenced in copies that mention or describe them; 44% are lost for good – only the ties remain in 34% of the cases, and not even the ties in the remaining 10%, where at most only the holes through which the suspensions were threaded survived. We have no information at present about a small group of 4%; these will thus be ignored from now on.

We are therefore left with 47% of documents where the seals remain, in waxes of different colours (mostly several shades of brown and red), and in very different conditions, ranging from a mere fragment to a specimen in very good condition. A rigorous grid of evaluation wasn't defined at the time of this survey, and so we applied a rather subjective classification to 304 of the remaining 314 seals — those we have information about (Fig. 2).

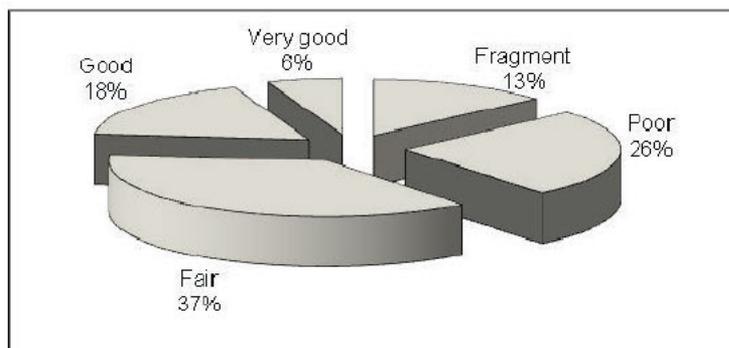


Figure 2. The seals conditions.

The seals in good or very good condition are only 24% of the total, and the number of those in very good condition is a mere 6% of the analysed seals. The largest set, 37% of the impressions, includes those we considered in fair condition – fractured, loose or somewhat ruined around the edges, but maintaining its embossing and a good deal of the inscription visible, allowing for a reasonably exact appreciation of its original aspect. 39% are in poor condition. Of these, a third are merely fragments, sometimes not much more than little chips of wax that show only their colour and in most cases do not allow for proper identification. The remaining two thirds, in bad condition, survive with various fractures, more or less chipped or ruined, some extremely dried.

The difficulty to preserve the specimens' integrity was already felt in previous times; we see it in the thick rims of wax that protect the embossing, contemporary to the seals or in the little tow or parchment bags or silk purses woven to protect them in later years. The first process was effective, allowing the impression to survive the centuries with little harm done, but the same cannot be said from the later procedure: cocooned in the little bags, deprived from air and moisture, they eventually broke up in pieces or became dust.

Given that this is one of the richest and best-protected Portuguese sigillographic funds, such numbers are an alarming indicator of the urgent need to safeguard the sigillographic heritage still existing in our country. It becomes ever more necessary that, on one hand, such a survey as the one we essayed should be made, systematically and rigorously, for the whole of the Portuguese archives; and, on the other hand, that photographic or cast reproductions of what's left of the Portuguese seals must be carried out. So that we can know the national sigillographic reality, so that we can make its inventory and study it, so that we can draw the attention of the proper authorities to the need to preserve these “small monuments”, as they have been called by Michel Pastoureau (Pastoureau, 1981), monuments full of historical significance and value, a cultural heritage that becomes ever more ruined by the day despite its interest in so many different levels, from the diplomatic to the artistic and the symbolic.

3 THE SIGILLVM PROJECT

The rebirth and renewal of the sigillographic science occurred a few decades ago by the hand of Michel Pastoureau and gave a new boost to the study of seals. In recent years and in various countries, they have been the theme of major exhibitions, of multidisciplinary scientific meetings and research projects (Pastoureau, 1981; Gil & Chassel, 2011; Baudin, 2012). In Portugal, the interest in the subject has been growing over the past two decades (Morujão, 2012). But one cannot study or disseminate, however, what one does not know exists or where to be found. Contact with seals has led researchers to verifying the urgency that needs to be put on preserving the national sigillographic heritage, its inventorying, cataloguing and dissemination.

It is within this framework that the project “SIGILLVM: Corpus of Portuguese Seals” appears and that this first wide stage emerges, dedicated to inventorying, cataloguing and digitalizing the Portuguese medieval secular ecclesiastical sigillography that exist in various institutions holding archives, collections of separate seals, and seal matrices, presenting it on a database available online with open access containing the descriptions and images of these seals (<http://indexrerum.com:8080/selo>). Figures 3 and 4 represent two of the main views of *Index Rerum*: Figure 3 is an example of the result of a query, showing thumbnails of the seals images and allowing a quick visual recognition of the seals; Figure 4 represents the input form for record files, showing all sections of the file – in each section the correspondent record fields are available.

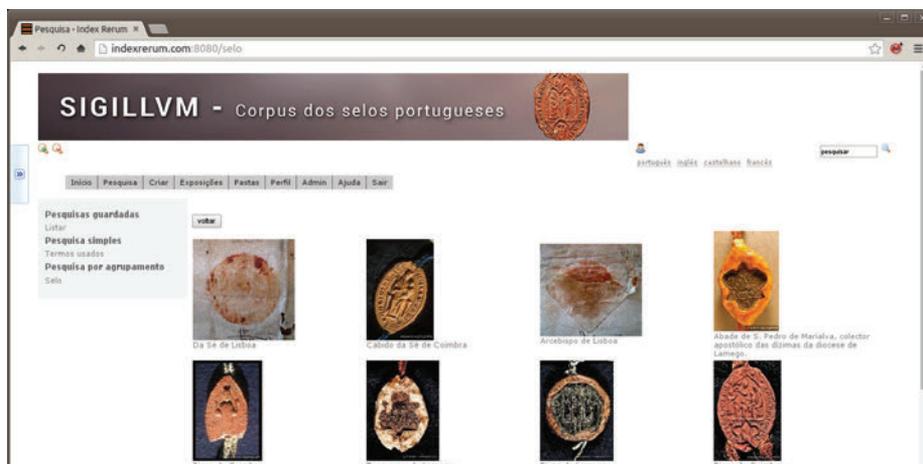


Figure 3. SIGILLVM PORTVGALIAE ® search result in Index Rerum.

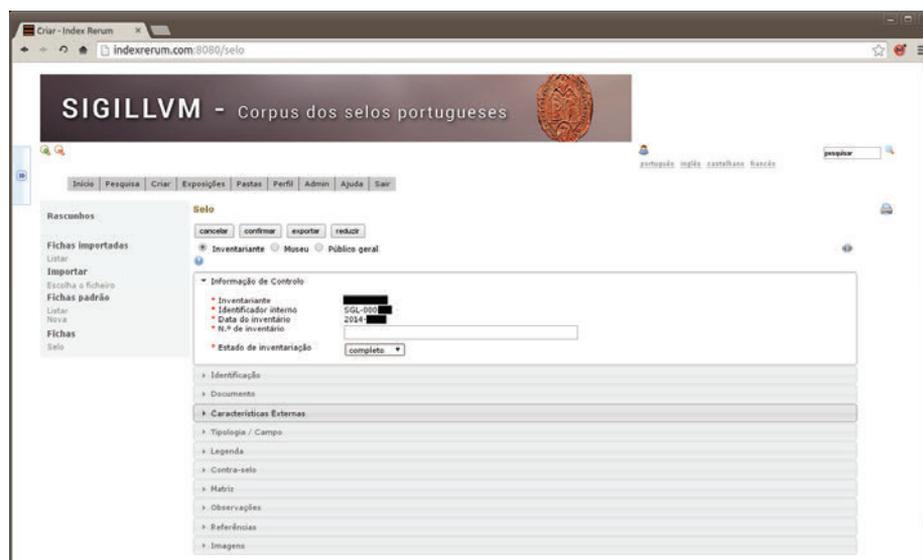


Figure 4. SIGILLVM PORTVGALIAE ® record file in Index Rerum.

The project also aims at the repackaging and assessment of seal condition through the preparation of reports that recommend conservation and restoration measures. Another of its objectives is the promotion and dissemination of the project to a specialised public and to civil society, in particular the school community (with the provision of educational tools and content applicable in the context of the classroom), promoting knowledge about a valuable heritage of undeniable interest, and historical, documental and cultural importance, to this day almost ignored.

This is the first stage of a larger work plan – SIGILLVM PORTVGALIAE ® – which aims, in the medium term, to broaden the inventoried sigillographic world to the entire Portuguese

seals up to the end of the Ancien Régime. The website of the project can be reached at [<http://portugal-sigillvm.net>].

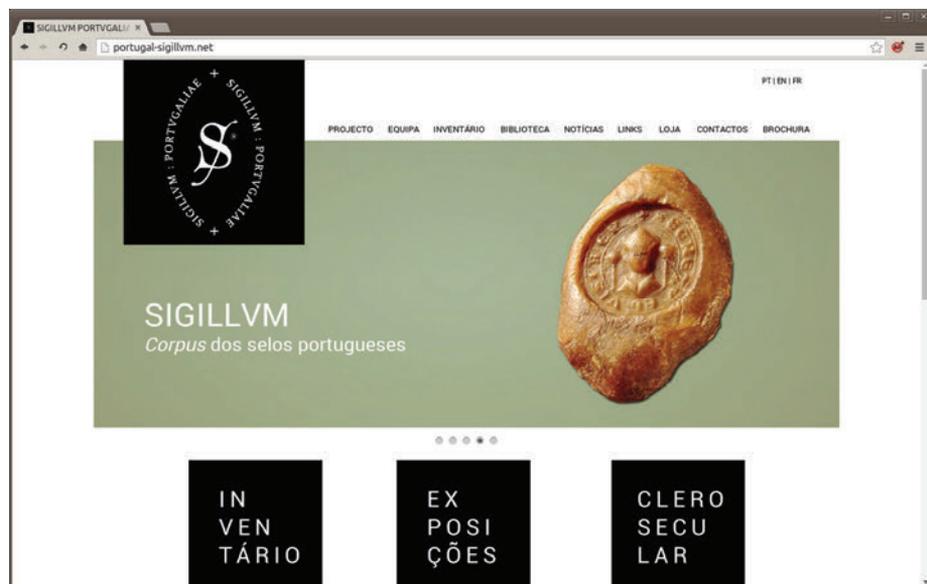


Figure 5. Homepage of the SIGILLVM PORTVGALIAE ®.

4 THE PROJECT TEAM AND THE INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED

The project team gathers a short and selected number of researchers (the authors of this paper): two of them are experts in seals, one is an expert in heritage inventory and the fourth has a deep knowledge of the Portuguese archives. Jean-Luc Chassel, author and editor of various works on sigillography and unanimously acknowledged as one of the main world specialists in this area, is the scientific adviser of the project.

The project is hosted by CEHR – Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa [Centre for Religious History Studies], a research unit of the Portuguese Catholic University, recognised and evaluated since 2002 by the Foundation for Science and Technology. The CEHR hosts a research line on “Memory, Mediations and Materialisations of Religion”, with an interdisciplinary character combining historiographic research with distinct but complementary areas, such as art, iconography, heritage and archive systems. Our current project is developed under this research line.

“SIGILLVM: Corpus of Portuguese Seals” is funded by the Programme of Support to the Recovery, Treatment and Organisation of Archive Collections of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This is one of the most prestigious Portuguese private institutions of public utility, created by Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, whose statutory aims are in the fields of Arts, Charity, Education and Science. SIGILLVM received also the patronage of FCo. – Fullservice company in multimedia (<http://www.fco.pt/>) with the free use of the collections’ inventory and management system *Index Rerum*. This inventory system was developed expressly for the project by experts in heritage inventory. Another support was provided by Redinteg (<http://www.redinteg.com/>), a company that offers complete scanning and microfilm solutions and that offered its cooperation, technical support and advanced training in documents and seals scanning.

Partner institutions where the project members are working are the following:

- **Direção-Geral do Património Cultural** [General Directorate of Cultural Heritage] (most of the inventoring and cataloguing of medieval seal collections and matrices, preserved in museums, palaces, and Portuguese monuments, is still to be made; a part-

nership has therefore been established with this Directorate to carry out the research in the collections and reserves under its tutelage).

- **Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal** [National Library of Portugal] (it has an important collection of separate documents that includes remarkable medieval sigillographic examples yet to inventory; under its tutelage lies the Évora Public Library, where there are practically unknown medieval documents from the Évora Cathedral).
- **Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra** [Archive of the University of Coimbra] (apart from holding the custody of the University's documentation, it also operates as a district archive and has medieval collections of great importance, for which the collections originally from the Coimbra Cathedral and from secular and monastic institutions located in the districts of Coimbra and Aveiro are of particular relevance to the current project).
- **Arquivo Distrital de Braga** [Braga District Archive] (subordinate to the University of Minho, it preserves almost intact archival collections from the Braga Cathedral, as well as funds of medieval documentation produced in other secular and regular institutions of the northern region of Portugal).
- **Arquivo Municipal Alfredo Pimenta** [Alfredo Pimenta Municipal Archive] (besides being the repository of the municipality's documentation, it operates as a district archive for the municipality of Guimarães and preserves the collection from the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria da Oliveira of Guimarães, one of the most important Portuguese collegiate churches of the Middle Ages).
- **Arquivo Histórico Municipal do Porto** [Municipal Historical Archive of Oporto] (abundant in medieval documentation, includes the rich collection of the municipality of Oporto, a city of episcopal domain, which makes this archive especially important for the current project).
- **Arquivo da Sé de Évora** [Évora Cathedral Archive] (incorporated in the only Portuguese cathedral that retained custody of its medieval documentation, its collections are almost unheard of when it comes to seals).
- **Arquivo Histórico do Patriarcado de Lisboa** [Historical Archive of the Lisbon Patriarchate] (recently organised, this archive is receiving the incorporation of collections coming from parishes and churches of the city of Lisbon thus far unknown that will allow filling many of the gaps caused by the disappearance of the Lisbon Cathedral archive following the 1755 earthquake).

Finally, we have to mention the **Direcção-Geral do Livro, dos Arquivos e das Bibliotecas** [General Directorate of the Book, Archives and Libraries], that oversees the Portuguese Network of Archives in which most archives with collections for intervention under this project are included. Among them, and because of its importance, is the National Archive of Torre do Tombo, where most of the Portuguese medieval documentation was incorporated in the 19th century and following the establishment of the Republic in 1910. Until now, and despite all efforts and contacts as the research team always considered DGLAB as a fundamental partner in this project, we couldn't yet reach an agreement. However, work and research undertaken for many years at the ANTT and other archives under this General Directorate is being integrated in the project.

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HERITAGE 2014

4th International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development

Heritage 2014 - 4th International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development followed the path established by previous editions of this event and definitely establishing a state of the art event regarding the relationships between forms and kinds of heritage and the framework of sustainable development concepts.

As nowadays sustainable development was brought much forward than the concept expressed in the book "Our Common Future", commonly known as "The Brundtland Report", Heritage 2014 followed that path and aimed at a broader vision on heritage and Sustainable development. The role of culture and social aspects enlarged the initial statement where environment and economics took the main role, guiding the earliest research on sustainable development.

The environmentalist vision of the world as a whole ecological system, and the world economical trades and product and service flows, enhanced the idea of a globalized world, where different geographic dimensions of actions, both local and global, emerged as the main relationships between producers, consumers, and cultural specificities of peoples, philosophies and religions. In such a global context, heritage becomes one of the key aspects for the enlargement of sustainable development concepts. Heritage is often seen through its cultural definition. However, sustainable development brings heritage concepts to another dimension, as it establishes profound relationships with economics, environment, and social aspects. Nowadays, heritage preservation and safeguarding is facing new and complex problems. Degradation of heritage sites is not any more just a result of materials ageing or environmental actions. Factors such as global and local pollution, climate change, poverty, religion, tourism, commerce, ideologies, war, are now in the cutting edge for the emerging of new approaches, concerns and visions about heritage.

Heritage 2014 - 4th International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development was proposed to be a global view on how heritage is being contextualized in relation with the four dimensions of sustainable development (environment, economics, society and culture) that were the core topics of the Conference. These topics brought to discussion the definition of a singular approach on how to deal with and go beyond the traditional aspects of heritage preservation and safeguarding. As presently heritage is no longer just a memory or a cultural reference, or even a place or an object, further analysis and other perspectives are in order: heritage is moving towards broader and wider scenarios, where it becomes often the driving forces for commerce, business, leisure and politics. A new chapter was included in this edition of Heritage conferences on Heritage and Cultural Tourism. This chapter dealt with the specific issues of cultural tourism in its relation with heritage.

The Editors