Luana Giurgevich and Henrique Leitão

Clavis bibliothecarum: Catálogos e inventários de livrarias de instituições religiosas em Portugal até 1834. Lisbon: Secretariado Nacional para os Bens Culturais da Igreja, 2016. Pp. 863. Pb, 35 euros.

Luana Giurgevich and Henrique Leitão have produced a massive book referencing inventories and relevant documents concerning Portuguese ecclesiastical libraries from the Middle Ages to 1834. Their research was initially aimed at the history of the scientific book in Portugal. It ended up making a major contribution to the study of book history, libraries, and reading in Portugal in general. The *Clavis bibliothecarum* constitutes a valuable “key” for anyone interested in religious, cultural, and scientific currents in Portugal of the modern era. As the authors point out, ecclesiastical libraries were, as a whole, the largest repository of books in this country for most of the period predating the suppression of male religious orders in 1834. Because several catastrophic and traumatic events, e.g. the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1759, and the suppression of male religious orders and the confiscation of their possessions in 1834, resulted in one of the most serious dispersions and loss of books in European history, inventories such as this are extremely valuable as a way of reconstructing and understanding what has been lost. This publication, in fact, signifies an important shift in focus from institutional history—the subject of most studies of old Portuguese libraries—to a focus on the content and works inside these libraries. The sources inspected by Giurgevich and Leitão reveal that many ecclesiastical libraries were encyclopedic in scope and their engagement with the wider reading public was much greater than previously thought.

The volume is divided in two main parts. The first is essentially an inventory of 901 inventories, catalogues, and book lists from circa four hundred religious libraries. The second part comprises a list of 348 normative, descriptive, and administrative documents related to such libraries. All data is arranged by congregation, listing institutions alphabetically (convents, monasteries, houses, and colleges). The main thematic unit of analysis is the religious institution, the “cultural micro world” of possible places for the accumulation of books: the choir, apothecary, individual libraries in the cubicles, the public or communitarian library (xlix).

Inventories of Jesuit libraries cover only twenty-two pages, and relevant documents, the same. In a provisional list of the fourteen largest ecclesiastical libraries (xxi) two Jesuit institutions are included: the College of Santo António and the Professed House of São Roque, both in Lisbon. The first was confiscated and sent by the count of Oeiras—later Marquis of Pombal (in office

1750–77)—to the newly founded Colégio dos Nobres, building up its holdings for a new pedagogical program (733). The Colégio dos Nobres would emphasize authors of the glorious past of Portuguese expansion such as Luís de Camões (1524/25–1580), André de Resende (1498–1573), or João de Barros (1496–1570), as well as experimental philosophy works. It is interesting to note how the new “progressive” Colégio so promptly appropriated teaching collections from the College of Santo Antão while the subsequent Pombaline propaganda stigmatised Jesuit “backwardness.” Ironically, comprehensive documentation about many Jesuit libraries, including Santo Antão and São Roque, was produced after the expulsion of 1759, especially in 1759–60 and 1765–66 as the government documented confiscated possessions. The authors analyze the different phases of a growing interest in ecclesiastical libraries, eventual confiscation, and subsequent production of descriptive files from 1759 to 1834, an “inventory wave.”

Unfortunately, since no justification is provided for the adopted definition of “Portugal” the implicit geographical boundaries of the survey seem somewhat anachronistic. The scope of listed materials corresponds to contemporary Portugal: a rectangle in southwest Iberia (with no significant changes since the late Middle Ages) and the archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores. Historically, however, the Portuguese empire reached distant territories spread over regions of Africa, South America, and Asia; according to A.J. Russell-Wood, “a web made up of territories including forts, trading posts, isolated islands, and landmasses such as Brazil and Angola” (*The Portuguese Empire, 1415–1808: A World on the Move* [Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press], xv). Perhaps, we can conjecture, the overwhelmingly large number of documents demanded such a geographical restriction. Nevertheless, with some religious orders, especially with the Society of Jesus, missionary overseas activities produced libraries in such distant places as Salvador da Bahia (colonial Brazil) or Beijing (China). Noël Golvers (*Portuguese Books and Their Readers in the Jesuit Mission of China (17th–18th centuries)* [Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2011]), Serafim Leite, S.J. (*História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil* [Lisboa/Rio de Janeiro: Portugália/Inst. Nacional do Livro, 1938/1950]), and Mark L. Grover (“The Book and the Conquest: Jesuit Libraries in Colonial Brazil,” *Libraries and Culture* 28, no. 3:266–83) among others, have not only studied those libraries but demonstrated their relevance. Comparable treatment of these libraries would be a wonderful, indispensable sequel.

Luís Tirapicos

CIUHCT – University of Lisbon

ltirapicos@gmail.com

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