



***Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português***  
**[Archives of the Portuguese Cultural Centre],**  
 Paris, France (1969-2005)

In accordance with Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian's will, which emphasised promoting cultural activities in Portugal and beyond, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation established the Paris Cultural Centre in 1965. The Centre aimed to promote Portuguese culture in France, with a focus on cooperation with various universities across the country. Its first director, Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, described the Centre's activities as a "cultural embassy in France" (*Arquivos...*, 1969, p. 9), serving as a cradle for projecting an image of Portuguese intellectual life. Within this Centre, a need arose to create a doctrinal body to unite French, Portuguese, and Lusophile teachers, researchers, and scholars worldwide. This idea, conceived by Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, materialised in 1969, the centenary of the Foundation's patron, Calouste Gulbenkian, with the launch of the publication's first issue.

In its opening volume, the publication introduced itself as a "doctrinal and informative organ that aims to elevate the values of Portuguese Culture" (*Arquivos...*, 1969, pp. 9-10). One of its main goals was to fulfil the aspirations of numerous enthusiasts of Portuguese culture, creating an ideal platform for engaging with the cultural issues of its time. Since its founding, in alignment with the objectives of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Paris Cultural Centre, this magazine has sought to complement the Centre's activities by establishing a presence in universities, academies, libraries, and other literary or scientific institutions. The publication was intended as a vehicle for dissemination, aspiring "to serve, as best as possible, the policy of Luso-French rapprochement in the field of art, science, and education" (*Arquivos...*, 1969, p. 9). This dissemination focused on a culturally inscribed message, "developing the environment of Lusophilia, stimulating its most expressive currents" (*Arquivos...*, 1969, p. 9), to make Portuguese culture more widely appreciated and better known worldwide.

As an "erudite collection," in the words of the magazine's director and founder, Joaquim Veríssimo, the introductory pages outline the audience it sought to reach: "an ever-increasing number of Lusophiles" (*Arquivos...*, 1969, p. 9). Therefore, it was a publication aimed at researchers in higher education with a particular interest in the humanities. This journal emerged at a time when Portugal saw a proliferation of history journals, mainly published by universities and research centres. Supported by researchers, these publications underscored a shift toward restricting culture and academic discourse to a specialised elite. As a focused, interdisciplinary cultural publication, the journal operated within a relatively closed circuit.

During its first 24 years, it was led by the four directors of the *Centro Cultural Português* [Portuguese Cultural Centre] who were in office over the same period. The journal's founder and first director, Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão,



held the position from 1969 to 1972, representing the 1st series of the publication. José de Pina Martins succeeded Serrão and remained at the helm for a decade, from 1973 to 1983, overseeing the 2nd and 3rd series. From 1983 to 1988, José Augusto França directed the periodical, covering the 4th series of volumes. Finally, from 1989 to 1993, Maria de Lourdes Belchior took charge, directing the 6th and 7th series. The need for a doctrinal and scholarly platform to facilitate Luso-French cultural exchange had, however, been recognised long before the publication of the *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* [Archives of the Portuguese Cultural Centre]. A precursor in this field was the *Bulletin des Etudes Portugaises*, first published in 1931 through a partnership between the University of Coimbra, which coordinated it, and the *Institut Français en Portugal*, which contributed content. In its early years, this journal was published triannually—in January, May, and November—featuring original and previously unpublished articles in French, translations of Portuguese works less accessible to foreign researchers, and critical reviews of significant recent works related to Portuguese culture.

Topics included Portuguese philology and literature, anthropology and archaeology, history, art history, and geography, with careful consideration given to the balance of these subjects. Additionally, attention was given to the authors' nationalities, ensuring an equal representation of Portuguese and French contributors. It is noteworthy that a substantial portion of the journal was devoted to critical reviews of Portuguese works, with contributions mainly by French and Portuguese authors; however, over time, French authors have come to predominate.

This publication has also evolved over the years. By the late 1960s, when both the *Bulletin des Etudes Portugaises* and the *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* were being published, each aimed to foster closer Portuguese-French cultural ties, although the Bulletin had shifted to an annual publication cycle. At that time, the president of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation joined the president of the *Diréccion Général des Affaires Culturelles et Techniques* and the rector of the University of Toulouse on the *Comité de Patronage* for the *Bulletin des Etudes Portugaises*. Clear parallels can be drawn between these two publications. This alignment is evident not only in the predominance of French authors contributing to both journals but also in their organisational structures. By the late 1960s, the *Bulletin* was organised into three main sections, also found in the *Arquivos: Etudes, Chronique des Livres* (dedicated to critical reviews), and *Collóques et Congrès*. However, in the 1970s, additional sections were introduced, as seen in *Arquivos*, including one dedicated to honours, titled *Hommages et Mélanges*.

Throughout its various issues, the magazine features illustrations, often in colour, and photographs. Over time, however, the prominence of images in its design has decreased. Although it is an annual journal, in certain years two issues were published, either as commemorative editions or indexes. The publication ultimately comprised 32 volumes, divided into six series. The first series included volumes I to V (1969-1972), the second volumes VII to XI (1973-1977), the third volumes XIII to XVII (1978-1982), the fourth volumes XIX to XXIII (1983-1987), the sixth volumes XXV to XXIX (1988-1991), and the seventh series volumes XXXI and XXXII (1992-1993). Strangely, there is no fifth series, as it skips directly from the fourth to the sixth. Regarding the print run, it is known that during the first series, between 800 and 850 copies were printed. The publication initially comprised an average of 600 to 800 pages, expanding in subsequent years to over 1,000 pages by 1982 and more than 1,100 pages in 1987.

*Arquivos* was originally organised into three distinct sections. The first section, titled *Parte Doutrinal* [Doctrinal



Part], consisted of doctrinal content with in-depth articles authored by university professors. The second section, *Vária* [Various], was informative, gathering notes and documents of historical interest. The final section was a bibliographical segment devoted to critical reviews of works published in Portugal and abroad, relevant to the history of Portuguese culture. Another significant section, consistently included at the end of each volume, was titled *Actividades do Centro Cultural Português* [Activities of the Portuguese Cultural Centre]. This part summarised the Centre's annual activities—concerts, exhibitions, conferences, publications, and even library movement.

Until 1971, the *Parte Doutrinal* held greater prominence but gradually lost this preeminence until 1984. During this time, under José de Pina Martins' direction, the *Vária* section gained more prominence, particularly in the number of articles published. In 1983, a turning point occurred when the *Vária* section contained twice as many articles as the *Parte Doutrinal*, indicating a shift towards more informative content rather than research, which had been the original focus of the publication. However, from 1984 onwards, doctrinal studies gained renewed emphasis, surpassing the *Vária* section and returning to the original format of 1969, which remained in place until 1993. In 1985, Volume XXI introduced a new section titled *Homenagens e Comemorações* [Honours and Commemorations], which became the opening section of the publication. This section featured laudatory texts dedicated to individuals, events, and facts integral to Portuguese culture. It was not included in every subsequent issue but appeared occasionally, depending on the occasion. Regarding the critical reviews section, its consistency varied over time. The first two years saw a high volume of reviews, a number that was never again matched. From the third volume onwards, this section began to decline, disappearing entirely in certain years, such as 1975, 1980, and 1981, and was discontinued after 1990. Considered by several directors to be the weakest section, the reasons for its disappearance seem to be tied to limited contributions from authors, who were reluctant to face criticism from their peers, as well as a lack of space due to the expanding length of the other sections.

It is important to remember that the initial aim of this publication was to feature studies on history, literature, and art, both in their autonomous and comparative forms, with a focus on the human sciences as its exclusive domain. However, it was the art section that ultimately fell short. As for the doctrinal part of the journal, we can observe that until 1977, there was a significant diversification of topics covered. Although literature was always a core area of the journal, during this period, articles were also published on subjects such as the history of the book, overseas history, religious history, the history of ideas, music history, and the history of art. However, from 1978 onwards, with a few exceptions, literary themes increasingly dominated the publication. In some volumes, literary content made up more than 50% of the work, leading to a decrease in the diversity of historical themes explored.

Around 44% of the journal's contributors were Portuguese, followed by 35% from France. This diversification was evident as early as 1979, when the then editor, José de Pina Martins, explained the preference for a larger number of Portuguese contributors, followed by a significant number of French researchers. This decision reflected the journal's Portuguese origin, despite being based in France. While the majority of contributors were from Portugal and France, there were also contributions from scholars of Portuguese culture from a variety of other countries, including Brazil, Spain, the UK, Italy, and others. Occasional contributions came from authors of diverse nationalities, such as Algerian, Armenian, Turkish, Polish, Belgian, Chinese, Israeli, English, Dutch, Romanian, and German.



This shift in contributions had a noticeable impact on the language used in the *Arquivos*. While the journal accepted articles in several languages— Portuguese, French, English, and Italian— the most represented were Portuguese and French. Many of the contributors to this publication were Portuguese speakers, predominantly French-based but also including researchers from around the world. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the majority of topics in this publication focus on the history and analysis of literature, a privileged area for these scholars of Portuguese culture. This emphasis reflects the influence of various lectureships in foreign universities centred on literary studies.

At a glance, the *Arquivos* reveal a clear convergence between history and literature, becoming more consistent from the mid-1970s onward. This overlap appears in multiple areas: an interest in the biographies of major chroniclers, the history of theatre, the history of Luso-French literature, the discovery and analysis of lesser-known literary texts, and bibliographical studies on notable authors. Within this publication, literary works are frequently regarded as historical sources, with literature perceived as an expression of national culture.

In this magazine, history appears less as a social science and more as a literary discipline, often blending with it. There is a transition from a traditional, scholarly approach to history— heavily influenced by structuralism and reliant on documentary and literary sources— to a form of history that fosters a strong critical sense. However, during the period studied, despite a significant number of foreign contributors, particularly French, the major historiographical trends of the time did not penetrate the publication. This could largely be attributed to the fact that most contributors were more closely aligned with literature than with historical studies.

In 1994, the *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* was renamed the *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian* [Archives of the Calouste Gulbenkian Cultural Centre] to reflect the research centre's name change, though it retained the same character. Maria de Lourdes Belchior continued as editor until shortly before her death in 1997. In 1999, Francisco Bethencourt took over as director, introducing significant organisational changes and restructuring the publication around thematic volumes, mostly written in French. As before, the topics explored extended beyond historical themes to include political, sociological, cultural, anthropological, literary, and artistic perspectives. Portuguese contributors lost their predominant position as the publication increasingly featured contributors from France and other nationalities. The magazine ceased publication in 2005.

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