

The Stories Paper Tells

Paper in the Life of the Alorna Family, Portuguese State Prisoners (1759–1777)

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How can one not succumb to the fascination of paper? How can one escape the seduction of what seems to be the infinite possibilities of its uses? How can one grasp the multitude of symbolic and emotional meanings invested in paper through time and space? How can one dissociate the possibilities of expression and communication it facilitates from the identity it helps construct, the networks it helps build, the communities of practice it makes possible to generate?

In this paper, I would like to examine these issues by briefly focusing on two dimensions of paper mobility: a larger dimension related to international paper trade, documenting the circulation of imported paper in Portugal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and a smaller-scale one, focusing on the vital importance of paper circulation in a relatively small group of people formed of family members, relatives, clients, and protectors.

Papermaking, paper trade and paper consumption

Although papermaking in Portugal can be traced back to 1411,¹ and printing presses have been operating there since 1487,² during most of the early modern period, Portugal was, to a great extent, an importer of fine paper. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the main suppliers seem to have been the papermakers of France

¹ JOÃO RUAS, 'Notícia sobre a História do papel em Portugal', *Cultura. Revista de História e Teoria das Ideias* 33 (2014): 31–37, <https://journals.openedition.org/cultura/2344>; 'Em Portugal são conhecidos os primórdios do fabrico do papel a partir de dois documentos que testemunham essa prática na região de Leiria: uma autorização, datada de 1411, para Gonçalo Lourenço Gomide instalar um engenho de papel junto ao rio Lis; e outro documento, de 1441, que se refere ao transporte do trapo para os moinhos de Leiria. [In Portugal, the beginnings of paper manufacturing are known from two documents that testify to this practice in the Leiria region: an authorisation, dated 1411, for Gonçalo Lourenço Gomide to install a paper mill next to the River Lis; and another document, from 1441, which refers to the transport of rags to the mills of Leiria.]'

² The first books printed in Portuguese territory were the product of the skills of both Jewish and Catholic printers. In 1487, the Jewish printer Samuel Gacon, published a version of the *Pentateuch* in Faro. This incunable was followed a year later in 1488 by the work of Sanchez de Vercial who published, in Chaves, a book on the Christian sacraments with the title *Sacramental*. In 1489, Eliezar Toledano (also a Jewish printer) published in Lisbon the *Comments on the Pentateuch* by Mose ben Nachmann, and in the same year, a work in Portuguese on the sacrament of penance, the *Tratado de Confissom*, was published in Chaves. See JOSÉ VITORINO DE PINA MARTINS, 'O Tratado de Confissom e os problemas do livro impresso em Portugal no século XV', in *Tratado de Confissom* (Lisbon: INCM, 1973), 9–114, and VALENTINA SUL MENDES, *Os Incunábulo das Bibliotecas Portuguesas* (Lisbon: Secretaria de Estado da Cultura-Instituto da Biblioteca Nacional e do Livro, 1995).

and Italy,³ but in the seventeenth century, during the sixty years when Portugal was part of the Spanish Habsburg Empire as the junior partner in the ‘Dual Monarchy’ (1580–1640),⁴ the dynamics of availability and prestige of European paper had changed. In the early 1600s, despite competition from Genoa,⁵ France was the greatest European exporter of paper, but around 1630, the first paper windmills were established in the Netherlands, and by the 1670s, Dutch manufacturers had perfected a new technological device, known as the ‘Hollander beater’, which not only improved the quality of the product but also increased production. According to historian Mark Kurlansky, ‘within a year of installing the beaters, Holland became a white paper exporter and a major international competitor’.⁶

The reputation of Dutch paper continued to grow over time. In 1751, in the article ‘Papier’ included in the *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, which was edited by Diderot and D’Alembert, the Chevalier de Jaucourt stated that although ‘France, Holland, Genoa and England’ were the countries that ‘made paper best’, Dutch paper was the whitest of all,⁷ and concluded that ‘Holland makes the most beautiful paper in the world, and in the largest quantity’.⁸ By that time, Dutch fine paper was outselling the production of any other country. Joseph Jérôme de Lalande, a French scientist who wrote *Art de faire le papier* (*The Art of Papermaking*) in 1761, was puzzled by this state of affairs. Several chapters of his book were dedicated to examining the differences between the production of paper in France and in the Netherlands (including the construction of the mills, the sorting of rags, and the whitening processes). He acknowledged Dutch technological innovations, underlined the fact that Dutch papermakers were dependent on imports of rags to be able to work, but admitted, albeit reluctantly, that Dutch paper was ‘gentler, finer, smoother,

³ ARNALDO FARIA DE ATAÍDE E MELO, *O Papel como Elemento de Identificação* (Lisbon: Oficinas Gráficas da Biblioteca Nacional, 1926), 23. See also VANDA ANASTÁCIO, ‘Introdução’, in *Visões de Glória (Uma Introdução à Poesia de Pêro de Andade Caminha)*, 2 vols (Lisbon: JNICT-Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1994), vol. 2, xi–xxvi, and VANDA ANASTÁCIO, *Leituras Potencialmente Perigosas e outros Estudos sobre Camões e a sua Época* (Lisbon: Caleidoscópio, 2020), 162–69.

⁴ JEAN FRÉDÉRIC SCHAUB, ‘The union between Portugal and the Spanish Monarchy’, in *The Iberian World 1450-1820*, eds FERNANDO BOUZA, PEDRO CARDIM, and ANTONIO FEROS (London: Routledge, 2019), 126–41.

⁵ See LOTHAR MÜLLER, *White Magic: The Age of Paper* (Cambridge-Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 37–46.

⁶ According to MARK KURLANSKY, *Paper. Paging through History* (New York-London: Norton & Company, 2016), 170: ‘Because the Hollander beater was faster, it produced cheaper paper. The French, British and other papermakers found it very difficult to compete with Dutch paper until they acquired Hollander beaters too’.

⁷ CHEVALIER DE JAUCOURT, ‘Papier’, in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des arts et des métiers*, eds Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (Neufchâtel: Samuel Faulche et compagnie, 1765), vol. 11, 846 (<https://artflsrv04.uchicago.edu/philologic4.7/encyclopedia0922/navigate/11/4228>): ‘Les manufactures de papier se sont multipliées dans presque toute l’Europe; cependant la France, la Hollande, Gênes & Angleterre sont les pays où on le fait le mieux. En general il depend beaucoup de la qualité du linge dont on se sert dans les lieux où on fabrique le papier [...]. C’est pour cela que les papiers de Hollande & de Flandres sont plus blancs que ceux d’Italie & de France, & beaucoup plus que celui d’Allemagne’.

⁸ JAUCOURT, ‘Papier’: ‘La Hollande qui fait le plus beau papier du monde, & en plus grande quantité’.

softer and more transparent’ than French paper.⁹ Competition between the two countries for the international market included industrial espionage on the part of French mill owners and government officials,¹⁰ and even led to the creation of misleading watermarks by French papermakers such as “armes d’Amsterdam” to imply they were Dutch.¹¹

In Portugal, in the same period, efforts were being made to develop paper production. Several manufactories were established in Lisbon (1623), Tomar (1633) and Vila Viçosa (1637), but their production of fine paper was scarce, and they were short-lived.¹² The demand for paper increased exponentially after the restoration of independence in 1640. During the twenty-eight years of war that followed, paper was crucial to support the printed propaganda machine put in place by the newly acclaimed King João IV. In 1641, the first Portuguese periodical—*Gazeta da Restauração*—was created,¹³ and Portuguese agents and ambassadors flooded European courts and printshops with pamphlets and memoirs in several languages, defending the king’s right to the Portuguese throne.¹⁴ Surviving as an independent country also implied restructuring public administration and creating a paper-based bureaucratic system capable of managing an empire with territories in India, Africa, and Brazil. Hierarchies of command and networks of correspondents operated at a distance through orders and dispositions set down on paper.¹⁵ In 1655, fifteen years after the political separation from Spain, the Portuguese historian Manuel Severim de Faria, in his *Notícias de Portugal* (*News from Portugal*), stated that although paper was ‘a thing of much use’ in Portugal, ‘all of it comes to us from abroad’.¹⁶

⁹ JOSEPH JERÔME DE LA LANDE, *Art de faire le papier* (Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1761), 81 and 82: ‘Le papier de Hollande a un oeil plus doux, plus fin, plus uni, plus transparent [...]. Le papier de Hollande est plus épais, mieux fourni que le nôtre’ and ‘Il ya aussi dans les beaux papiers de Hollande un certain velouté agréable à la vue’.

¹⁰ KURLANSKY, *Paper. Paging through History*, 232: ‘French mill owners sent industrial spies to Holland to steal Dutch papermaking ideas. More openly, in 1768, the French government sent its manufacturing inspector for papermaking, Nicolas Desmarest, at his own request, to observe papermaking in Zaanland. On his way back, he stopped in Flanders to see water-driven Hollander beaters’.

¹¹ KURLANSKY, *Paper. Paging through History*, 231: ‘The Dutch reputation was so favorable that some French mills used watermarks such as “armes d’Amsterdam” to imply they were Dutch’.

¹² RUAS, ‘Notícia sobre a História do papel em Portugal’, 2–3; FRANCISCO SOUSA VITERBO, *Artes industriaes e indústrias portuguesas. O vidro e o papel* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1903), 70; FARIA DE ATAÍDE E MELO, *O Papel como Elemento de Identificação*, 23–26.

¹³ EURICO GOMES DIAS, *Gazetas da Restauração (1641-1648): uma revisão das estratégias diplomático-militares portuguesa* (Lisbon: Instituto Diplomático-Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2006).

¹⁴ JOÃO FRANCISCO MARQUES, *A Parenética Portuguesa da Restauração 1640-1668: a Revolta e a Mentalidade*, 2 vols (Porto: INIC, 1989); FERNANDO BOUZA ALVAREZ, *Imagen y propaganda: Capítulos de historia cultural del reinado de Felipe II* (Madrid: Akal, 1998); VANDA ANASTÁCIO, ‘Fragmenting Iberia: Images of Castile in Seventeenth Century Portuguese Pamphlets’, *Portuguese Studies* 25, no. 2 (2009): 199–214; VANDA ANASTÁCIO, “‘Heróicas virtudes e escritos que as publiquem”. D. Quixote nos papéis da Restauração’, *Revue der iberischen Halbinseln* 28 (2007): 117–36.

¹⁵ For a reflection on the importance of paper in administration see JOSÉ MARÍA PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, ‘Paper in Motion: Communication, Knowledge and Power: Case Studies for an Interdisciplinary Approach’, *Cromohs. Cyber Review of Modern Historiography* 23 (2020): 81–112 and also MÜLLER, *White Magic. The Age of paper*, 31–37.

¹⁶ MANUEL SEVERIM DE FARIA, *Notícias de Portugal* (Lisbon: Officina Craesbeeckiana, 1655), 19: ‘O papel também he cousa de muito uso, e que todo nos vem de fora’.

Portuguese rulers became increasingly aware of this growing demand. They were concerned with the country's dependence on paper imports from the major papermakers in France, Genoa, and Holland, and tried to provide incentives to those interested in developing domestic paper production. In 1706, a Genoese investor named Giuseppe Maria Ottoni (or José Maria Ottone in Portuguese) obtained a license from King Pedro II granting him the monopoly on papermaking in the north of Portugal. In association with Marcos Bacelar Dantas, an army official stationed in Minho, he established a manufactory in Braga.¹⁷ In 1708, another factory was created in Santa Maria da Feira,¹⁸ and ten years later, King João V supported the partnership of the same Giuseppe Maria Ottoni with two government officials (the Count of Ericeira and João Neto Arnaud) to build a larger paper factory in Lousã.¹⁹ By the time King João V died in 1750, at least four new paper factories had been created (in Paranhos, Lousã, São José de Braga and Abelheira), mostly by private investors who received legal support from the state.²⁰ The production, however, was mainly of brown, wrapping and packaging papers, and was too scarce to meet the country's needs. Furthermore, the increase in paper production brought with it a demand for rags, and a parallel export trade expanded in the shadow of the industry. This led to shortages of rags and occasionally forced manufacturing to stop. According to a bill issued in April 1749, which forbade the export of rags,²¹ the largest paper manufactory in Lousã was at risk of closure due to a shortage of rags caused by 'men that buy them and send them out of these Kingdoms'.²²

¹⁷ AURÉLIO OLIVEIRA, 'Fábrica de papel em Braga no século XVI', *História: Revista da Faculdade de Letras* 3, no. 8 (2007): 25–28 (25). MARIA JOSÉ FERREIRA DOS SANTOS, 'José Maria Ottone e a Indústria do Papel em Portugal no século XVIII', in *O Papel Ontem e Hoje. Catálogo da Exposição* (Coimbra: Renova-Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, 2008), 41–48 (41).

¹⁸ MARIA JOSÉ FERREIRA DOS SANTOS, *A Indústria do papel em Paços de Brandão e Terras de Santa Maria (sec. XVIII e XIX)* (Santa Maria da Feira: Câmara Municipal de Santa Maria da Feira, 1997); ANDREIA FILIPA JORGE GASPAS, *Pelos caminhos da indústria do papel: uma abordagem histórico-geográfica. O caso da SOPORCEL*, Relatório de Estágio (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 2014), 43–52.

¹⁹ MARIA DO ROSÁRIO CASTIÇO DE CAMPOS, 'A Fábrica de Papel da Lousã e o processo de industrialização em Portugal', *História: Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, s. 3, 10 (2009): 145–50.

²⁰ AVELINO POOLE DA COSTA, 'A Indústria do Papel em Portugal', *Boletim da Direção Geral da Indústria* 2, nos 22–25 (1946); ARMANDO DE CASTRO, 'Papel, Indústria do', in *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, ed. JOEL SERRÃO, 6 vols (Porto: Figueirinhas, 1985), vol. 4, 540–42; JORGE BORGES DE MACEDO, *Problemas de História da Indústria Portuguesa no século XVIII* (Lisbon: Estudos de Economia Aplicada, 1963). ALEX FAVERZANI DA LUZ, 'O fomento manufatureiro em Portugal e os efeitos da política económica pombalina (século XVIII)', *Revista Trilhas da História* 8, no. 15 (2018): 90–104; GUSTAVO DE MATOS SEQUEIRA, *A Abelheira e o fabrico do papel em Portugal* (Lisbon: Tipografia Portugal, 1935). See also LEONOR FREIRE COSTA, PEDRO LAINS, and SUSANA MÜNCH MIRANDA, *História Económica de Portugal (1143-2010)*, 3rd ed. (Lisbon: Esfera dos Livros, 2014).

²¹ ARNALDO FARIA DE ATAÍDE E MELO, 'Fábrica de papel da Lousã. Alvará proibindo a exportação de trapo em benefício desta fábrica', in *O Papel como Elemento de Identificação*, 86–88 (86): 'Hey por bem, e mando que nenhuma pessoa de qualquer qualidade ou condição que seja, natural ou estrangeira, possa por qualquer modo mandar para fora destes Reynos trapos brancos e negros [...]'

²² FARIA DE ATAÍDE E MELO, 'Fábrica de papel da Lousã', 86: 'A Fábrica de papel [...] se achava em termos de não poder subsistir por falta de trapos com que nella trabalhasse, por se haverem levantado nos mesmos Reynos homens, que os comprão, e envião para fora deles, não só por via de negócio, mas com o fim de que a falta dos referidos trapos faça inútil a dita Fabrica'. On international rag trade, see MÜLLER, *White Magic. The Age of Paper*, 46–51.

Although governments changed, paper production continued to be at the heart of the concerns of Portuguese rulers. After the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755,²³ King José I and his Prime Minister, the Marquis of Pombal, paid special attention to the paper industry within the framework of the reconstruction of economic and financial infrastructures. Their policy of reducing imports of consumer goods and stimulating exports could only be achieved by improving existing industries and creating new ones. To foster manufacturing, the government acquired paper factories that were experiencing financial difficulties and took over their administration.²⁴ Measures to attract private investment were implemented through the concession of loans, legal privileges, and tax exemptions. As a result, at least six new papermills were established in São Payo-Moreira dos Cónegos (1787), Santa Maria da Feira (1789), Queluz, Rio de Mouro and Alenquer (1790–1791) and Paços de Brandão (1795).²⁵

Jacome Ratton (1736–1821) was part of a group of businessmen supported by the Marquis of Pombal who were encouraged to invest in paper production. In his memoirs, published in 1813, Ratton states that in the 1760s and 1770s, most fine papers circulating in Portugal were imported, mainly from Genoa, France, and Holland, and attests to both the diversion of raw materials and the scarcity and poor quality of the paper produced locally:

When the Project for the manufacture of cotton fabrics died out, it occurred to me to establish another one, of fine paper, which appeared to me to be equally beneficial, and of even greater utility; for this is a commodity of first necessity and of enormous consumption in Portugal and its colonies, and was all imported from abroad, mainly from Italy, France and Holland, where the few rags that could be of use were transported.²⁶

²³ JORGE PEDREIRA, ‘Os negociantes de Lisboa na segunda metade do século XVIII: padrões de recrutamento e percursos sociais’, *Análise Social*, s. 4, 27, nos 116–17 (1992): 407–40; JORGE PEDREIRA, ‘Tratos e contratos: actividades, interesses e orientações dos investimentos dos negociantes da praça de Lisboa (1755-1822)’, *Análise Social*, s. 4, 31, nos 136–137 (1996): 355–79.

²⁴ This happened in Lousã and Alenquer, for instance. See PEDREIRA, ‘Tratos e contratos’, 374. MARIA DO ROSÁRIO CASTIÇO CAMPOS, ‘Redes de Sociabilidade e Poder: Lousã no Século XVIII’, PhD diss. (University of Coimbra, 2003) and JOSÉ HENRIQUE LEITÃO LOURENÇO, *A Indústria na Vila de Alenquer (1565-1931)* (Alenquer: Alenculta, 2017). See also JOSÉ HENRIQUE LEITÃO LOURENÇO and ANTÓNIO MOREIRA, ‘Desenvolvimento industrial e atraso tecnológico em Portugal na segunda metade do século XVIII’, in *Pombal Revisitado*, ed. MARIA HELENA CARVALHO DOS SANTOS, 2 vols, vol. 2 (Lisbon: Estampa, 1984).

²⁵ JOSÉ HENRIQUE LEITÃO LOURENÇO, *A Indústria na Vila de Alenquer (1565-1931)*, 64; MARIA DE SÃO LUIZ DA CARREIRA, ‘Marcas de água, Arquivo Histórico Parlamentar – Monarquia Constitucional 1821-1910’, MA diss. (University of Lisbon, 2012), 47–48.

²⁶ In the original: ‘Desvanecido o projecto da fábrica de chitas, lembrei-me estabelecer uma de papel fino, parecendo-me ser igualmente proveitosa, senão de maior utilidade; por ser hum genero de primeira necessidade, e de grandissimo consumo em Portugal, e suas colonias, vindo-lhe todo de fora, principalmente de Itália, França e Hollanda, para cujos países se transportavam os poucos trapos, que se aproveitavão’. JÁCOME RATTON, *Recordações de Jacome Ratton ... Sobre occorrencias do seu tempo, em Portugal, durante o lapso de sessenta e tres annos e meio, aliás de maio de 1747 a setembro de 1810, que rezidio em Lisboa: acompanhadas de algumas subsequentes reflexoens suas, para informaçoens de seus proprios filhos* (London: H. Bryer, Bridge Street, Blackfriars, 1813), 38.

Judging by the arguments presented by Estevão Cabral in a *Memória sobre o Papel* (*Report about Paper*), which he presented to the Lisbon Academy of Sciences in 1791, the situation had not changed much by the end of the century. Not only did shortages of rags continue to occur, but the massive imports of fine paper were, in his opinion, a cause of impoverishment and drainage of national resources:

I'll reduce my subject to just one thing, the reason why treasure leaves our hands, which according to the printed note from customs is said to be more than two hundred thousand cruzados, which we contribute every year to Genoa and the Netherlands. Paper, I mean.²⁷

By then, Dutch paper production had achieved such a level of proficiency and prestige that it was almost impossible for any fledgling industry to compete with it.

Private stories

How did innovations in papermaking and changes in the balance of forces in the circuits of trade impact the lives of ordinary people? I would like to argue that the quality, provenance, availability, and scarcity of paper have implications for social practice, individual perceptions, the shaping of self-expression, and the emotional investments of meaning.

On 3 September 1758, in Lisbon, there was an assassination attempt on King José I. Responsibility for the crime was imputed to the Duke of Aveiro and to the Marquis and Marchioness of Távora, who were tortured and executed in public on 13 January 1759 after a summary trial. The same fate befell the Count of Atouguia, who was their son-in-law, two of their sons, and several servants.²⁸ On the morning of the same day, another son-in-law of the presumed culprits, the Marquis of Alorna, Dom João de Almeida Portugal, was arrested at home and imprisoned—without formal accusation or trial—in the tower of Belém. According to the prisoner's record, made public by Alberto Telles in 1887, Dom João was transferred to the fort of Junqueira on 2 January 1761.²⁹ Six months later, his wife and children were sent to the Convent of São Félix in Chelas.³⁰ His son Dom Pedro, heir of the Alorna title, was placed under the tutelage of the Marquis of Pombal. The family remained separated for eighteen years, until King José I died, Queen D. Maria I ascended the throne, and the Marquis of Pombal was removed from power.

²⁷ ESTEVÃO CABRAL, 'Memória sobre o papel', in *Memórias económicas da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa para o Adiantamento da Agricultura, das Artes e da Indústria em Portugal e suas Conquistas (1789-1815)*, ed. JOSÉ LUIZ CARDOSO, 5 vols (Lisbon: Banco de Portugal, 1991), vol. 4, 153–157 (154): 'Reduzo o meu assunto a falar de uma só cousa, por motivo da qual nos sai das mãos um tesouro, que pela nota impressa das alfandegas, consta serem mais de duzentos mil cruzados, que todos os anos contribuimos a Génova e à Holanda. O papel digo'.

²⁸ JOSÉ CASSIANO NEVES, 'Lisboa e a Tragédia dos Távoras', in *Miscelânea Curiosa* (Lisbon: s.n., 1983), 103–20.

²⁹ ALBERTO TELLES, 'A Bastilha Portuguesa', *A Ilustração Portuguesa* 3, no. 42 (1887): 5–7.

³⁰ JOSÉ DE SOUSA AMADO, 'Introdução', in *As prisões da Junqueira durante o Ministério do Marquez de Pombal, escriptas allí mesmo pelo Marquez de Alorna, uma das suas victimas, publicados conforme o original*, ed. JOSÉ DE SOUSA AMADO (Lisbon: Typographia de Silva, 1857), iv.

The Marquis of Alorna described his living conditions in the Fort of Junqueira in a book written around 1775, when he was still imprisoned there. The book titled *As Prisões da Junqueira durante o Ministério do Marquês de Pombal* (*The Prisons of Junqueira during the Ministry of the Marquis of Pombal*) was circulated widely in manuscript form until its first publication in 1857.³¹ He mentioned the poor conditions in the cells, the penury in which the prisoners lived, and the humiliations to which they were subjected. When he was moved to the Fort of Junqueira—located on the bank of the Tagus, close to the water—the building had just been modified to serve as a prison. There were nineteen cells on a floor located between a basement, where there were two torture chambers and a cemetery, and an upper floor, where the prison director, a clerk, the chaplain, and the guards had their quarters. The cells were small and poorly lit. There was nowhere to lie down, but after much insistence, Dom João was granted permission to build a cot from old doors and beams. Prisoners were kept in isolation and prevented from contacting each other or the world outside.

Dom João knew he was innocent and felt his situation as an outrage against his lineage, his person, and his honour. The deprivation of his privileges, the separation from his family, and the isolation and confinement felt like threats to his individuality and sanity. He knew he risked worsening his living conditions, torture, and even death if he tried to contact his family, but he was ready to risk everything to reach out for support. According to his account, whenever there were no guards present, the prisoners found ways to communicate with each other by means of knocks and whispers ‘through the windows and sometimes through doors’.³² The only way to send messages to family, friends, and supporters involved bribing guards, servants, and porters, but depended mainly on the availability of writing tools and materials. The most versatile and easiest to conceal was, of course, paper. This was not easily found in a prison where detainees were supposed to remain incommunicado. In these circumstances, which we may consider extreme, paper is invested with otherwise unexpected meanings.

Paper and emotions

According to the Marquis’ account, at the start of his time in the Junqueira Fort, he could count on the ‘compassionate soul’, ‘natural kindness’, and ‘charity’ of a guard, named Domingos,³³ to communicate with other prisoners and to smuggle messages to

³¹ MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *As prisões da Junqueira durante o Ministério do Marquês de Pombal, escriptas alli mesmo pelo Marquês de Alorna, uma das suas victimas, publicados conforme o original*, ed. JOSÉ DE SOUSA AMADO (Lisbon: Typographia de Silva, 1857).

³² MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *As prisões da Junqueira*, 27. In the original: ‘Os presos neste estado de tristeza não podiam deixar de recorrer a outro modo de desafogar o animo, que a forma destas prisões lhe apresentava; começaram a falar pelas janelas e algumas vezes pelas portas. Para condução das vozes dava bastante facilidade o muro do corredor’.

³³ In Portuguese: ‘O génio compassivo’, ‘bondade natural’ e ‘caridade’ in MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *As prisões da Junqueira*, 25–26: ‘No princípio houve aqui um moço, chamado Domingos [...] que era de génio compassivo, e de uma bondade natural admirável. Continuamente estava empenhado em animar, e consolar estes afflictos [...]’ (Initially there was a young man here, named Domingos [...] with a compassionate soul, and remarkable natural kindness. He was concerned all the time to cheer and to console these distressed prisoners.)

his family. Along with some servants, Domingos had created a veritable network for the distribution of letters and essential goods in and out of the Fort.³⁴ Unfortunately, after a year and a half, these irregularities were discovered. The guard and his accomplices were arrested, and isolation was reinforced. However, by then, the prisoners were already in touch with their families and supporters and had found multiple ways to elude surveillance.

Albeit with interruptions and very much constrained by the difficulty in obtaining writing materials, the Marquis of Alorna managed to maintain a secret exchange of letters with his wife and children. For someone like Dom João, for whom written messages were the only way to connect with the world outside a prison cell, paper offered the possibility of emotional unburdening, a means of evading isolation, and a chance to keep the hope of freedom alive.³⁵ Since the correspondence of the Alorna family lasted for eighteen years, it also became a substitute for the expression of affection between husband and wife, and father and children. Paper enabled the Marquis to maintain a loving relationship with his wife and to follow the growth of his children, whose education he monitored at a distance by suggesting readings and giving advice on their behaviours and on the resistance to the State.³⁶

The conditions of this exchange of letters varied depending on the opportunities, the goodwill of porters, and even changes in the prison's rules. The surviving correspondence is rich in details about the various ways surveillance was eluded: messages were delivered to the prisoner at night, passed to carriers through cracks in the roofs or holes made in the prison walls. Sometimes, they were hidden inside fabric bags hung outside at night, concealed among leftover food, or rolled up with the dirty laundry collected periodically by servants. The documents are especially eloquent when describing the difficulties the Marquis faced in obtaining writing

³⁴ MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *As Prisões da Junqueira*, 26: 'Chegou a tanto a sua caridade que aos mais angustiados procurou logo notícias dos seus parentes. O bom sucesso das primeiras empresas o afoitou para outras maiores: todos os que tinham casa receberam deste modo toda a casta de alívios, e assim dinheiro, como coisas de comer, remédios, trastes, etc., de tudo tiveram nesse tempo abundancia'. (His charity reached such heights that he immediately sought news of the relatives of the most distressed. The success of the first endeavours helped him to try bigger ones: all those who had a house thus received all kinds of relief, like money, food, medicines, useful objects, etc., they all got plenty of everything at the time.)'

³⁵ On writing in situations of confinement see ANTÓNIO CASTILLO GOMEZ, 'Escrito en prisión. Las escrituras carcelarias', *Península*, no. 0 (2003): 147–70; ANTÓNIO CASTILLO GOMEZ, *Entre la pluma y la pared. Una historia social de la escritura en los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: Akal Ediciones, 2006); ANTÓNIO CASTILLO GOMEZ and VERONICA SIERRA BLAS, *Letras bajo sospecha* (Gijón: Ediciones TREA, 2005); VERONICA SIERRA BLAS, 'Escrituras y lecturas em reclusión', *Vegueta. Anuario de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia* 19 (2019): 23–29; JAVIER SANCHEZ ZAPATERO, 'La literatura concentracionária: universalidad, representación y memoria', *Vegueta. Anuario de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia* 19 (2019): 431–55; MARIE-FRANCE SILVER, 'Résister: la correspondance des prisonnières protestantes de la tour de Constance', in *Femmes en toutes lettres. Les épistolaires du XVII^e siècle*, eds MARIE-FRANCE SILVER and MARIE LAURE GIRON SWEDSKI (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 97–108.

³⁶ VANDA ANASTÁCIO, 'La educación de los sentimientos y de las costumbres: el punto de vista del segundo marqués de Alorna (1726-1802)', in *Educación los sentimientos y las costumbres: una mirada desde la História*, eds MONICA BOLUFER and JUAN GOMIS (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2014), 109–30. See also MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, ed. VANDA ANASTÁCIO (Lisbon: Caleidoscópio, 2022).

supplies: in his letters to his wife and daughters Dom João constantly asked them to send him paper and quills.³⁷

Confinement, isolation, deprivation, and uncertainty about the future were difficult to endure, but from the point of view of the Marquis of Alorna, the lack of paper seemed more important than any other constraint. The shortage of paper led him to invent a process of recycling the bits and pieces he could get hold of. As he explained in one letter to his son, he found a way to wash ink away from used paper:

In order for you to see the constraints and the poverty in which I find myself you will learn that this paper, which contains what I have said so far, has been written on before. Necessity, that is the mother of all crafts, led me to conceive, with good results, that it would be possible, by moistening, to fade the letters, by a process it would be too lengthy to explain to you here, and I was lucky to have something on which to make such an experiment.³⁸

The letters still exhibit the marks of this endeavour. In some of them, one can still see the shadows of squares, black edgings, and traces of the original documents, which make Dom João's letters look like medieval palimpsests (Fig. 1).

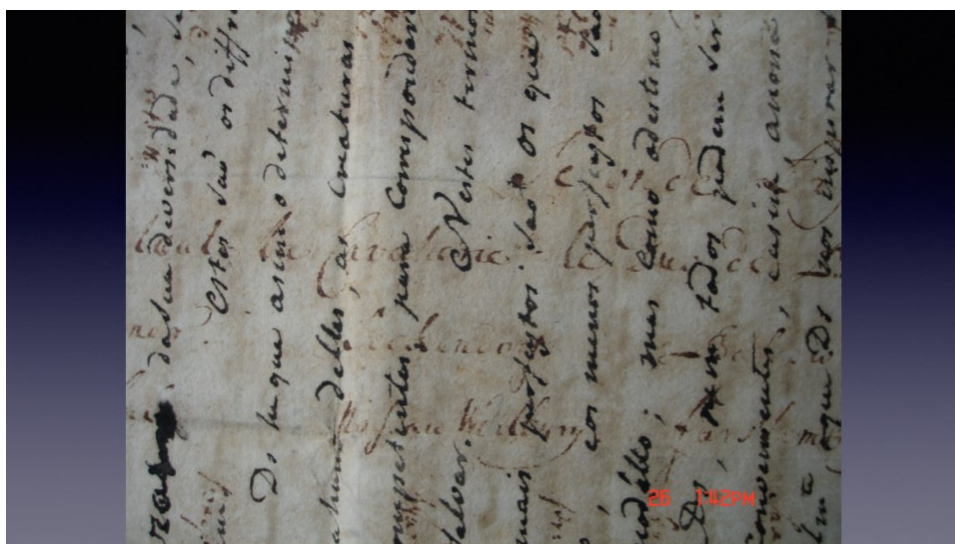


Figure 1. Private Archives of the Fronteira Palace (Lisbon). Letter from the Marquis of Alorna to his wife, evidence of recycling of previous writings. Credits: Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna.

³⁷ For instance, in a letter published by JOSÉ CASSIANO NEVES, *Miscelânea Curiosa*, 39, Dom João writes to his younger daughter Maria: 'Manda-me algumas penas boas, porque estas já não prestam para nada' (Send me some good quills, because these are no good anymore) and in another letter to her he says: 'Continua a mandar-me papel' (keep sending me paper). Private collection, Fronteira Palace, ref: PAIALC100.

³⁸ In the original: '[...] para que tu vejas o aperto, e a pobreza em que me acho: sabe, que este papel que contem o que até agora tenho dito, já foi escrito de outras coisas, e a necessidade que é a mãe das artes, me fez imaginar com bom sucesso, que seria possível molhando-o, desvanecer-lhe as letras, de um certo modo, que seria dilatado explicar-te, e a felecidade foi, ter em que fazer semelhante experiencia'. MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 81.

One should note that paper not only conditioned the possibilities of communication but also interfered with written expression. If we pay attention to the complaints the Marquis of Alorna makes about the permanent lack of paper, we will conclude that he attributes some characteristics of his texts to this fact. He writes to his son, for instance: 'I have finished this letter which I tried to measure by the amount of paper I could find and wash',³⁹ and on one occasion he explains to his wife that the instructions he was sending her 'cannot be too long because for that, greater care would be necessary, and I intend to do it better when I have more paper'.⁴⁰ The Marquis also blames the paper shortage for having to write collective messages to his daughters instead of individual letters addressed to each of them,⁴¹ for not going into detail on certain subjects,⁴² and for staying silent about matters that needed to be dealt with at length.⁴³ In a letter sent to his wife, he even blames the scarcity of paper as one of the drawbacks affecting his mood and his style, saying:

I can't write any better, because I get tired and bored, and besides, no matter how many mistakes I make, they can't be corrected, nor is there any way to go back with so little paper, and so I'm like Pilate, who said that what he had written he had written.⁴⁴

The paper shortage was also reflected in the way Dom João organised his writings. The differences are noticeable when one compares the letters he wrote in prison with those he wrote after his release. While in prison, the Marquis tried to squeeze as much text as possible into each page—he left no margins, wrote in smaller handwriting, minimised the space between lines, and replaced paragraph breaks with brief gaps placed immediately after full stops (Fig. 2).

³⁹ In the original: 'Tenho concluído esta carta, que procurei medir pelo papel que pude conseguir e que pude lavar'. MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 99.

⁴⁰ In the original: 'Não pode ser coisa muito extensa porque para isso seria preciso ter cuidado com mais vagar, que é o que faço tenção de fazer quando tiver mais papel'. MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 46.

⁴¹ In the original: 'Minhas filhas do meu coração a falta de papel que experimento e que me impede escrever a cada uma de vocês separadamente'. (Daughters of my heart, the lack of paper that I experience and that prevents me from writing separately to each of you.) MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 85.

⁴² In the original: 'Já acabei de escrever a Leonor e, por mais breve que quis fazer a tal parlenga das Ciências, sempre me levou quatro folhas de papel. [...] Lá lhe recomendo que mande mais papel em maços e tem tu cuidado nisso porque, desse modo, me posso eu divertir bastantemente, fazendo-lhe algum benefício'. MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 41.

⁴³ In the original: 'Mas, como não tenho papel, nem fiz ainda considerações bastantes a respeito do que tu me dizes da nossa correspondência, ficará isso para outra vez'. (Since I don't have more paper and since I did not comment enough on what you told me, it will have to wait for some other time.) MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 58. On the way the Marquis adapted his writing practices in prison, see also VANDA ANASTÁCIO, 'Written in Prison', in *Private Do (not) Enter. Personal Writings and Textual Scholarship*, ed. JOÃO DIONÍSIO, special issue, *Variants*, no. 8 (2012): 43–56.

⁴⁴ In the original: 'Não me posso apurar, porque me cansa e me enfastia, e além disso por mais erros que faça não se podem emendar, nem há modo de tornar atrás com tão pouco papel e, assim, estou como Pilatos, que o que escreveu, escreveu'. MARQUIS OF ALORNA, *Escritos do Cárcere*, 38–39.

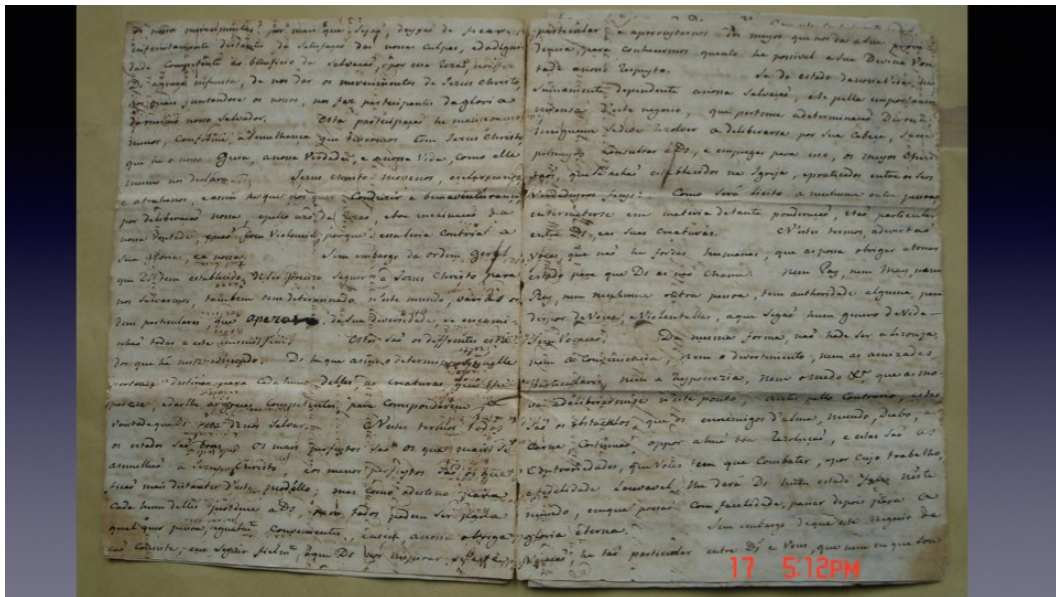


Figure 2. Private Archives of the Fronteira Palace (Lisbon). Letter from the Marquis of Alorna to his wife, evidence of recycling of previous writings and of compact writing due to paper scarcity. Credits: Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna

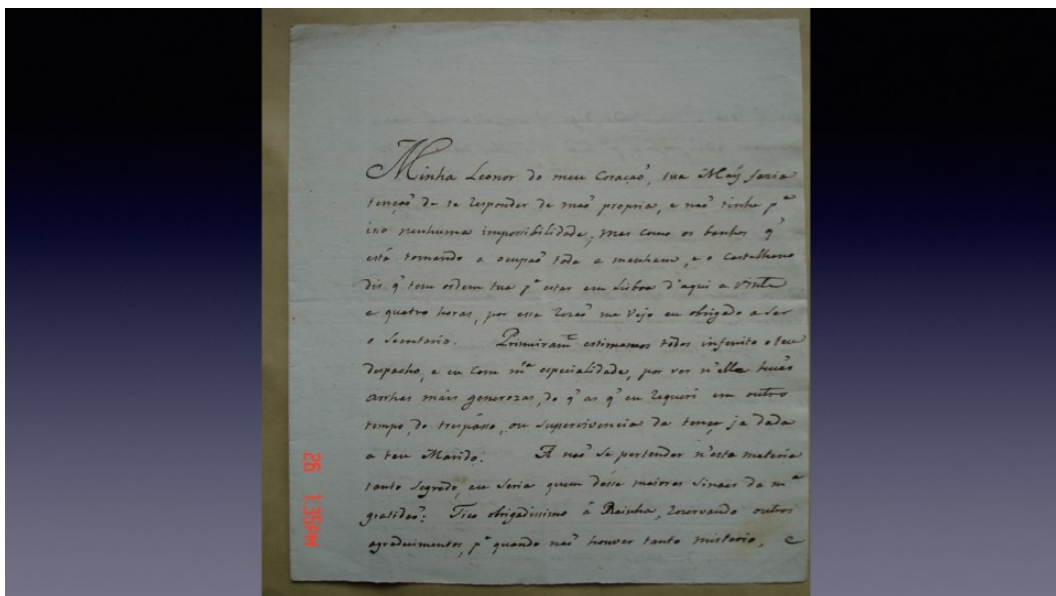


Figure 3. Private Archives of the Fronteira Palace (Lisbon). Letter from the Marquis of Alorna to his daughter Leonor written after being released from prison, evidence of the use of the available space in the paper. Credits: Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna.

In contrast, when he had enough paper at his disposal, he followed the layout conventions recommended in the letter-writing manuals of the time—what we might call a ‘spatial rhetoric’ for letters, where blank spaces were charged with meaning. He left blank spaces in the headers (reflecting the respect for the addressee) and on the left margin (to allow the recipient to hold the document without covering the message).⁴⁵ He also showed courtesy by designing the first capital letter in the text carefully and starting a new paragraph each time he introduced a new subject (Fig. 3).

Paper... and paper

As state prisoners, the members of this family faced constant deprivation. However, as far as paper was concerned, they preferred to use good-quality Dutch paper in their letters and written messages. In their opinion, the *papel de Holanda* was best suited for writing, as it allowed the pen to glide smoothly through the page. Dom João depended on the regular supply of paper his family managed to smuggle through the prison walls in order to write, and he expressed his ideas about the type of paper he liked the most. One should recall that he was familiar with French paper, for when he was in his teens and his father was appointed viceroy of India, he was sent to France to finish his education. Dom João lived in Paris between 1742 and 1746, in the home of the Portuguese ambassador D. Luís da Cunha.⁴⁶ While there is no direct evidence that he was aware of the tensions between French and Dutch papermakers competing for dominance in the paper trade, in one of his letters he compares their products by stating:

I forgot to tell you that I have received three blocks of this paper, which I know very well because it is French, and all papers of this sort have an excellent appearance but in practice they are a lot inferior to the ones from Holland. It is grainy in some parts, the ink does not flow so well, and since I am reduced to using China ink, which is not good for writing, all these flaws are very obvious.⁴⁷

One can say that the Marquis of Alorna speaks about French and Dutch papers ‘from the point of view of the user’. His comments remind us that paper quality, texture, and smoothness were especially relevant at the time, as they had an impact on the complex skills needed for writing with ink using quills made by hand from feathers. To produce a clean legible text without smearing, using those tools, was a challenge. As far as paper was concerned, judging by the surviving evidence, Dom João’s family complied with his preferences. The watermarks of their letters reveal a variety of papers produced in Holland—mainly by the firm Dirk & Cornelis Blauw, which is clearly the most

⁴⁵ ANA CRISTINA ARAÚJO, ‘A correspondência: regras epistolares e práticas de escrita’, in *As comunicações na Época Moderna*, ed. MARGARIDA SOBRAL NETO (Lisbon: Fundação Portuguesa das Comunicações, 2005), 105–24.

⁴⁶ NUNO GONÇALO MONTEIRO, *Meu querido pai e meu Senhor do meu coração* (Lisbon: Quetzal, 2000).

⁴⁷ Letter preserved in the Library of the University of Coimbra (ref.: BGUC N° 234*). In the original: ‘Também me esquecia dizer-te que recebi três cadernos deste papel, que eu conheço muito bem porque é francês, e todos os desta casta tem excelente aparência, mas na experiência é muito inferior ao de Holanda. É pascento em algumas partes, não corre nele tão bem a tinta, e como esta que uso é da china, que não é tão boa para escrever, ainda se fazem mais sensíveis todos estes defeitos’.

represented in this collection—as well as the papers manufactured by Sebelle Ketel & Wassenbergh, D. Sebelle & Wend, and Adriaan Rogge (Fig. 4).

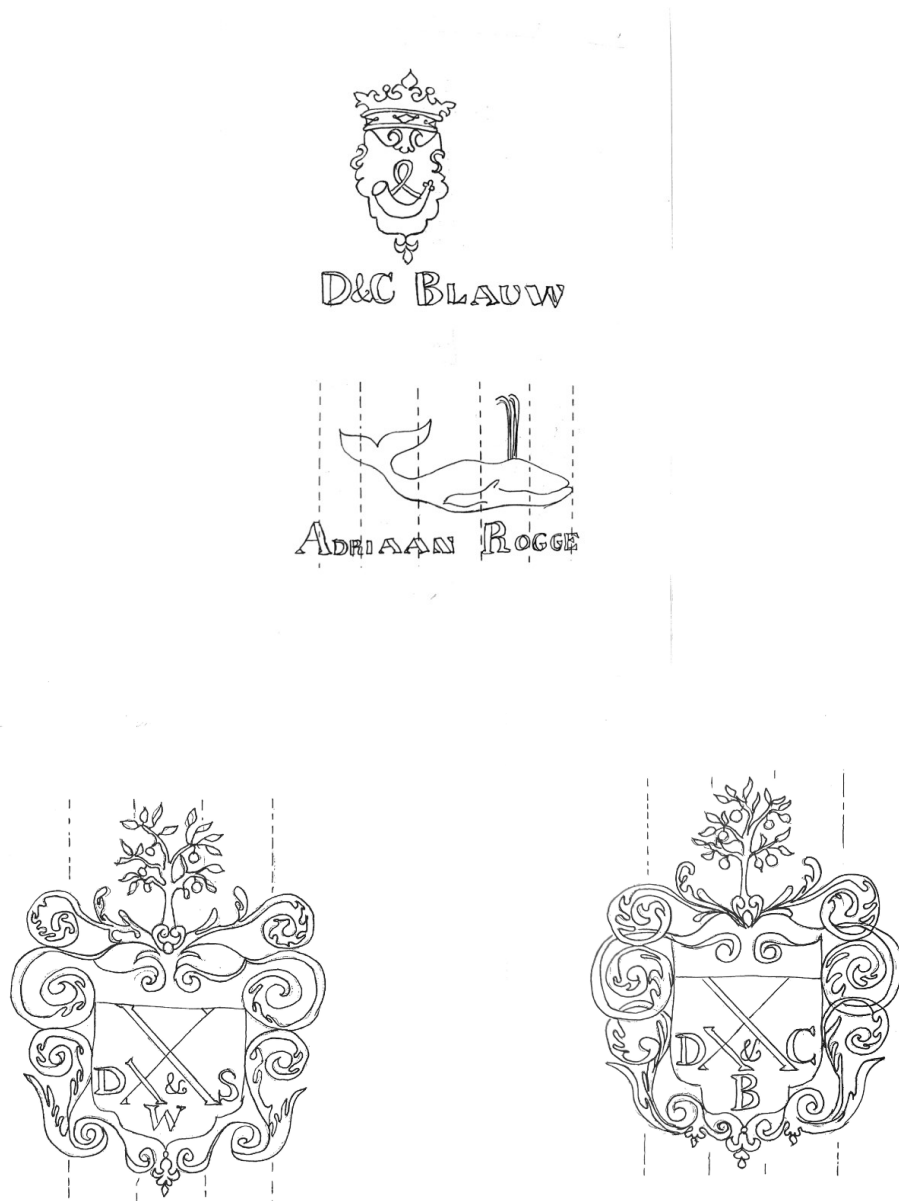


Figure 4. Private Archives of the Fronteira Palace (Lisbon). Watermarks in papers used by the Alorna family. Credits: Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna. Drawings by Vanda Anastácio.

These were well-known Dutch producers from the Zaand region, who dominated the international paper trade in the second half of the eighteenth century. Given the prestige and the perceived quality associated with imported Dutch paper, it is possible that its use was also seen as a sign of distinction. For a learned aristocrat of the 1700s,

the selection of the type of paper for writing might be seen as yet another distinctive marker of his social status. By insisting on the type of paper he wanted to have, the Marquis maintained a connection to his former habits, thus enabling him to preserve his individuality.

Forbidden and secret, these letters display further interesting characteristics which also justify the attention to paper quality. In their messages, the Alorna family used three different kinds of ink: regular iron-gallic ink, black China ink, and a red ink fabricated by Dom João by boiling in water scraps of red Brazil wood taken from a cell bench. Lemon juice was also used as invisible ink when the correspondents wished to make comments or convey information on political or intimate matters. These texts were written between the lines of seemingly formal, innocuous messages in regular dark ink. In order to read these texts, the paper had to be held near a source of heat, like a candle, and the paper would need to be thick enough not to catch fire easily in the process. Some of the documents exhibit all three types of ink. In certain cases, after revealing the secret text written in lemon juice with the help of a candle, Dom João considered some parts of it too dangerous for anyone else to read and crossed them out immediately with the red brazilwood ink he fabricated in prison.

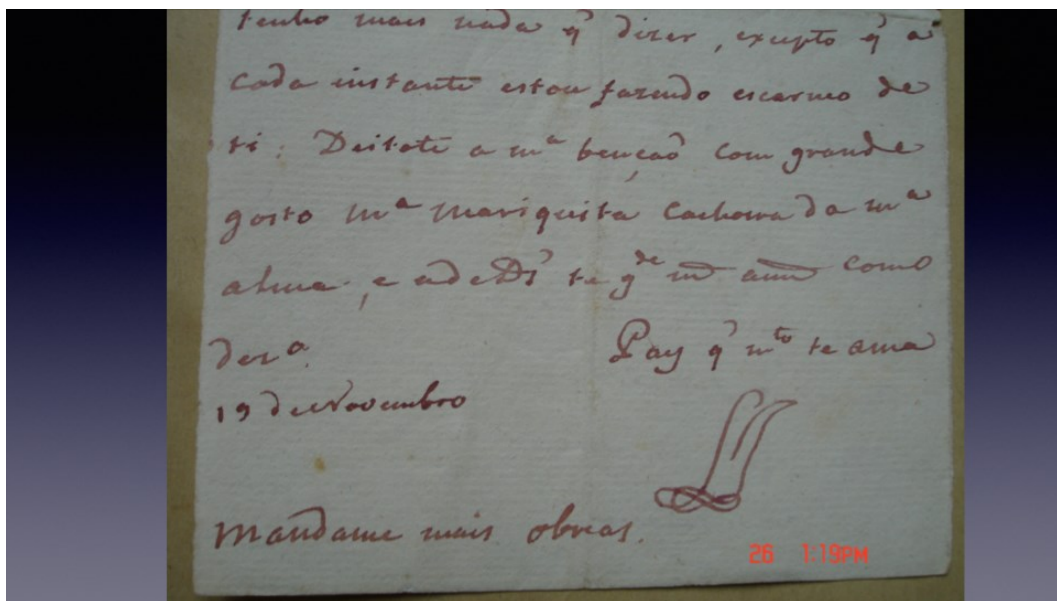


Figure 5. Private Archives of the Fronteira Palace (Lisbon). Letter from the Marquis of Alorna to his daughter Maria, evidence of red ink he fabricated in prison. Credits: Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna.

Given the risk of incurring a variety of punishments if these letters were found, one might wonder why the Marquis did not simply burn them. It could be argued that once their content—both visible and hidden—had been deciphered, these messages became something more than disposable pieces of paper. Their materiality was imbued with

deep emotional meaning. Being able to touch and feel these documents seemed to be, for the prisoner, an important part of the spiritual experience of receiving something sent by his loved ones. Writing transforms a piece of paper into a message, but the paper embodying the message becomes an intrinsic part of it, making it lasting, tangible, and capable of being revisited through re-reading.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the contrasting ways in which ‘paper in motion’ can be understood. Observing technological progress and the evolving dynamics of societal needs and expectations projected in the international paper trade allows the historian to better understand the centrality paper acquired over time and space. Yet, paper has been part of human life for so long that its multilayered symbolic uses often go unnoticed. In a world captivated by the possibilities of dematerialisation through the production of digital artifacts, it is worth recalling some of the ways emotional meanings can be projected onto paper which—because it is light, portable, foldable, concealable, and easy to manipulate—can embody the intimate longings and affections of those who use it.