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Archival practices in Early Modern Spain: transformation, destruction and (re)construction of family archives in the Canary Islands

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ABSTRACT

The Canary Islands were conquered from the aboriginal population and colonised in the fifteenth century. This process subjected its inhabitants to the Castilian legal framework, in which evidence of ownership was demanded through documentary proof. Archives, therefore, proliferated in the new territory as a necessity to demonstrate, prove and preserve privileges and patrimony. At the same time, the 'value' of archives made them targets for destruction, theft or seizure in situations of social, political, military and family conflict. Moreover, Canary Island archives were affected by natural causes and natural disasters. Within this context, the present paper focuses on the transformations caused by these factors in family archives. The paper aims to explain how, in cases of damage or destruction, families struggled to reconstruct their archives in order to manage and defend their patrimony and family memory. Drawing on different examples, this paper offers empirical evidence on the multi-contextualism of these archives. The results demonstrate that several family archives in the Canary Islands are (re)constructions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, the archival practices can be framed within a progressive inclusion in the islands of the 'New Archive Culture' from mainland Spain.

Introduction

In recent decades, distinct currents of research, such as the archival turn, the documentary turn, historical archivistics and the social history of archives, have led to a paradigm change in investigations in humanities and social sciences. As RC Head points out, for historians, analysing documentary repositories as historical subjects and not just as places of investigation implies distancing from the traditional view of archives as repositories of information naturally formed over the passage of time. This new paradigm involves questioning the naturalisation of terms like *archive* or *document*, with the objective of analysing and understanding them as historical constructions.[1] While a variety of definitions of the term *family archive* have been suggested, this paper will use the one proposed by ML Rosa, who defines a family archive as the documentary production generated by

an institution whose organisational base is a family.[2] The conceptual problem of family archives is related to the term *family*.

Despite the broad use of the term *family*, family archives are most often associated with elite families. This does not mean that families from other social groups (peasants, traders and so on) did not hold archives or develop archival practices. However, the current presence of these types of family archives is negligible in comparison with those of elite families.

ML Mandigorra also provides an explanation of the formation of family archives. According to her research, the preservation of written testimonies was based on the 'consciousness' of their producers, so that 'the formation of an archive is the consequence of a real determination to elaborate a memory of which the documents were guarantors'.[3] This explains why archives of subaltern social groups are rare and many archives of elite families are conserved, reflecting such families' will to create and preserve their memory and their identity.[4] This factor also explains why it is difficult to find economic records in the family archives of the Middle Ages.[5]

In this paper, the term 'family', as a producer of archives, will be used in a restrictive sense to refer to the 'families of power'[6] of the Early Modern Age; such families moved to develop a family memory through the accumulation, custody and transmission of their archives. Identity and duration are their main characteristics in comparison with other earlier and later models of family organisation in Early Modern Europe. According to Rosa, the institutional expressions of the family (house, lineage, entailed estates...) also form part of the archive produced. Therefore, in these archives the producer is not just a family, but a family-based institution, which is mediated by its institutional expressions, both materially and symbolically.[7]

In addition, researching documentary repositories involves understanding their *archivality*, that is, the way in which documents were archived according to their format, configuration, architecture, organisation, and to the politics and sociocultural context. In Early Modern Europe, this archivality was characterised by the influence of Roman law on the development of the bureaucratic state and by the importance of public faith (*publica fides*) that endowed documents with public authority and demonstrated the need to preserve them as evidence in any process.[8]

This relationship of European archives with legality and legal conflict is also manifest in the development of archival practices that embodied structures of dominance. Precisely this approach to archives as instruments for the legitimisation of dominance explains how they can become places of conflict. Indeed, as argued here, they became tools of social and political dominance and weapons against rivals.[9]

In this context, an interesting focus for the analysis of archives as places of conflict in multiple spheres (social, family, symbolic) is offered by family archives formed and preserved independently from the church or the state. Such archives have been the focus of historical archivistics, which is the approach on which this research is based. Recently, Professor ML Rosa, a leading researcher in historical archivistics, has proposed a methodology for investigating the production, documentation and conservation of organisational information in the pre-modern ages. Rosa conceives the archive and its organisation over time, understanding it in each historical context by considering the

nature of the organisation that created it (in this case, the family and its institutional expressions, such as the *house* or the *entailed estate*) and subsequent non-organisational reconfigurations and production processes, documentation, conservation and use of organisational information.[10] Specifically, Rosa and Head concentrate on understanding the evolution of each archive based on its inventories. Their approach highlights documentary aggregations, appraisal actions, as well as ways in which records were represented and used during different phases of the archive.[11]

In parallel, JR Núñez Pestano and RJ González Zalacain have built a quantitative methodology for analysing the evolution of family archives. Their *genealogy of documents method* analyses the records one by one, differentiating the date of production of the originals from the date of production of the copies (which coincides with the date of accumulation in the archive).[12] The main advantage of such quantitative analysis is that it avoids problems of absence of inventories or additional references to the archive in the past. However, this method can only be applied to records currently held, which implies the omission of records that may have existed in the archive in the past but have not been retained. Despite these limitations, the genealogy of documents method is one of the most practical ways of deconstructing the evolution of the archive over time.

The employment of this methodology for the study of family archives implies deconstructing archival practices in order to understand families' documentary needs and the ways in which those needs are related to the archive over a period that spans several centuries.

Focusing on the relationship between families and documentary repositories, this paper begins by analysing the transformations of family archival practices as they developed in parallel with the evolution of the family itself. Next, it focuses on other transformations of a destructive nature caused by agents external to the family. Finally, different empirical examples of processes of (re)construction of archives are discussed, considering the archival practices used by the family and proposing a transversal analysis that allows us to weigh the influence of practices developed in related archival contexts, such as councils or notaries.

In this work, the relationship between families, archival practices and documentary repositories are analysed throughout the pre-modern era. To do this, we take the Canary Islands (Spain) as a geographical framework. This area offers an interesting perspective because a new society was founded there that reproduced the Castilian value system in an insular and non-European geographical context.[13] Furthermore, unlike the other Atlantic archipelagos colonised by Europeans, the Canary Islands were populated by aboriginal societies of Berber origin. These aborigines practised an agricultural economy without the use of metals. Regarding their use of writing, only some epigraphic inscriptions have been preserved. These non-European societies experienced profound changes as a result of contact and confrontation with Europeans in a process that began almost a century before the conquest of America.[14]

This paper aims to advance the understanding of archival practises in pre-modern colonial areas. Due to practical constraints, it does not provide a comprehensive comparison between archival processes in the Canary Islands and other territories. However, this could be an important subject for future research.

The Canary Islands between the old and the new world

The rediscovery, conquest and colonisation of the Canary Islands spanned the entire fifteenth century.[15] The historical context marked by the defeat of the Muslim kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula and the European expansion into the South Atlantic meant that the Canary Islands changed from being considered the world's westernmost border to being a nerve centre for transatlantic navigation. The Canary Islands operated as a platform for maritime routes, both in relation to the supply of provisions and merchandise, as well as a port of contact with the large mercantile centres of Northern Europe, the Mid- and South Atlantic, and America. The Canary Islands were thus places of reception, transformation and export of intercultural models and practices.

After the European conquest, the territories were legally and territorially incorporated into Castile under two different legal systems. On the one hand, four islands (Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, El Hierro and La Gomera) were subject to seigneurial authority. On the other hand, the three main islands (Gran Canaria, La Palma and Tenerife) depended directly on the Crown.[16] The monarchy promoted the settlement of the area with strategies corresponding to *frontier societies*,[17] granting privileges to settlers (such as tax exemptions) to attract residents who could defend a fragile territory against external attacks (from other European powers and North African pirates) and internal ones (violent resistance of aboriginal groups).

The Crown promoted the development of an administration in the Castilian image, which required the creation of systems for the organisation and preservation of documents to support administrative processing: a need that led to the creation of archives.[18]

This *new archive culture*[19] developed in Early Modern Spain experienced an unprecedented boost during the reign of the Catholic monarchs in Castile (1474–1504) and Aragon (1479–1516). According to the Castilian Crown, even though the royal court had been concerned since the thirteenth century with the proper production and conservation of documents emanating from the chancellery, 'until the second half of the fifteenth century, the archival culture of Castile had been characterized by a series of unfulfilled projects'.[20] However, during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, administrative reforms led to an increase in documentary production and regularity, as well as considerable improvements in its conservation. New institutions were also developed and the role of cities versus the nobility was strengthened. In 1500 and 1501 for instance, the Catholic monarchs established the obligation for municipalities to have a chest with at least three keys to hold privileges and council deeds, a paper book in which to write letters and ordinances, and a parchment book of all privileges and judgements made. The following year, Queen Isabella I issued a *pragmática* (royal edict) to guarantee the integrity of the chain of custody of notarial documentation after the death or cessation of a notary, which included instructions for the collection, sealing and custody of the documents until their delivery to the successor in the notary's office. Although compliance with these procedures in the Canary Islands was limited, they were fundamental for the implementation of new archival practices, for the increase in the number of professionals involved in documentary production, and for the development of new documentary typologies.

In addition, the impulse that the Crown gave to archival practices was quickly transferred to the immediately inferior social levels. Thus, Castilian nobles soon developed

archival practices that reproduced the techniques, the means of communication and the symbolic purposes of the archives of the monarchy.[21]

In this way, the development of a bureaucratised Castilian State and the probative value of documents turned archives into important possessions of political, economic and social value. Precisely, this value of the archives also made them targets to be destroyed, stolen or falsified in situations of social, political or family conflict. For the same reason, their owners cared for their conservation and, if necessary, for their (re)construction.

Transformations of family archives

Archival practices of conquerors and settlers

When talking about family archives in a context of conquest and colonisation, as occurred in the Canary Islands, we must consider some additional premises. First, the archival practices described above were those imposed by the European conquering elite in the image and likeness of their culture and society of origin. Second, there were no medieval archives in the Islands that could evolve by adopting practices related to the *new archival culture* that was being promoted by the Crown. Instead, on the Canary Islands, archives were developed *ex novo*. Third, most of the family archives in the Canary Islands belonged to small and medium nobility, to wealthy farmers or to families of wealthy merchants who acquired the status of nobility. Thus, they are smaller in volume than the large noble archives of Spain. This makes comparisons difficult.

Chronologically, the oldest family archival practices were developed by the Islands' conquerors; several archives are known that can trace their origins to that period, although access to them is restricted by their current owners.[22] Nevertheless, it is possible to investigate early archival practices indirectly through *post-mortem* inventories. Two cases were analysed. The first one is an inventory ordered by Captain Hernando del Hoyo[23] in Medina del Campo in 1518. The second is the inventory of records of the *IV Adelantado* (Governor) of the Canary Islands, carried out on his depository in 1559.

In the first inventory of 1518, documents played an important role, since they were the first objects bequeathed. They were always listed from major to minor social relevance. First came privileges awarded by the monarchy, followed by judicial records and, finally, management records, such as powers of attorney, *requerimentos*, accounts and letters. The fact that these documents were with Hernando del Hoyo in Medina del Campo (in mainland Castile), and not in Tenerife, is explained by the archival practices of the time. It was common that 'in pre-modern situations … discrete assemblages of documents circulated with people, rather than resting in fixed archival spaces'.[24]

This itinerant character of documents at the time is also manifested by their dispersion and their being held by *depositaries* in charge of their custody. In some cases, the medieval tradition of depositing documents in ecclesiastical institutions, considered safer places, was maintained. For instance, this strategy was chosen by Luis Velázquez, depositary of the documents of the *IV Adelantado de Canarias* (governor), who, in his will, handed them over to Fray Luis de Lugo, a Dominican and natural son of the *III Adelantado*.[25]

These documents allow us to study the archival practices of the period, since the depositary, Luis Velázquez, was a notary, although he also devoted himself to economic management for third parties. These activities also included archival organisation. In fact, in his will, signed in 1559, he declared to have in his possession the records of the *I Adelantado* of the Canary Islands that he had organised into bundles, each of them complemented by an inventory.

The shared archive model

Indeed, to protocolise the originals held by public notaries was one of the most widespread and transformative practices of family archives on the Canary Islands. The proliferation of family branches meant that *cadet branches* also needed to access the records that proved and constructed the memory of their lineage. These identity documents were extraordinarily expensive and difficult to obtain for generations who were thousands of kilometres away from their societies of origin,[26] since they were in the hands of the main family branch. However, due to the interest that various relatives had in them, they quickly became *lineage documents*, so that families adopted measures to guarantee their access by all their members. One of the oldest references in the Canary Islands to the model that we have defined as *shared archives* is the foundation of an entailed estate (*mayorazgo*) in 1598 by Don García del Hoyo and Doña Beatriz Calderón, in which they included family records. They gave specific instructions to their family successors, asking them to preserve these documents because it is a 'business that matters and that must not lack the history of our lineage'.[27] In addition, in the same clause the founders explicitly guaranteed the right of relatives to access and obtain copies of these records in order for them all to be considered nobility. This example shows the existence of interest in the conservation of the family documentary legacy. It should be remembered that social status in the Early Modern Age was not individual but corporate, so that it affected all the members of a lineage.

In order to obtain a copy that was valid in any court, the record had to be transcribed and validated before a notary public. This process was slow and expensive, so that by the seventeenth century, it became usual to resort to the *protocolisation* of documents in public records. This meant that an individual who had an original document took it to a notary's office, where the notary attested to its authenticity, delivered the copy(ies) and archived the original in the notarial protocol of the current year. This practice became common because the archives of the notary public were safer and because it made the copying process cheaper. However, the records registered were older (sometimes by centuries) than the rest of the records with which they were archived. This is a clear example of recontextualisation of documents due to new uses and needs that had nothing to do with the original production context.

In any case, such protocolisation, although widespread, did not mean the end of original conservation practices in family archives, nor of their shared use. An example appears in the letter that Agustín de Santiesteban sent to Hernando del Castillo Sopranis in 1623, preserved today in the Conde de Siete Fuentes' archive. In the letter, the author referred to a certification issued in 1586 by the Duke and Governors of Genoa that attested that a man called Juan Antonio de Sopranis was registered in the *Libro de Oro* (Gold Book) of the Republic. Although the genealogical relationship

between Juan Antonio de Sopranis and his counterparts in the Canary Islands was not clear, the certification became a *lineage record* copied by all Sopranis branches in the Canary Islands. In the letter, Agustín de Santiesteban informed Don Hernando del Castillo Sopranis that 'although I have been told that this nobility affects Doña Leonor de Sopranis more, nevertheless, I intend to give it to your mercy as this is of lineage and thus affects us all'. In addition, he promised to deliver the original. His actions show that the possession of documents and the place an individual occupied in the hierarchy of the lineage did not always correspond to birthright and could obey other criteria, in this case, a pre-eminence of the male (Don Hernando del Castillo Sopranis) above the female (Doña Leonor de Sopranis).[28]

By contrast, among families or houses that did not branch out, it was common for the original documents to be in the family archives, and not in the notary's offices. This is the case of the Van Emden family from Flanders who settled in the Canary Islands in the 1570s. To support the family's social ascent, they proved their nobility using documentation from Flanders, Portugal, Tenerife and Madrid, making it possible for Rodrigo Van Emden to pursue a brilliant ecclesiastical career. All the family documents passed to Rodrigo's sister Maria Van Emden, who, thanks to the wealth and social prestige of her family, married Don Diego de Castilla in 1624, descendant by bastard line of King Pedro I of Castile. Their descendants were considered members of the House Castilla, so that they did not need to resort to the Van Emden lineage documents, although they did retain them. This is probably why they did not make copies, but simply kept the five originals in the family archive.[29]

Destruction of family archives

In addition to the transformations that followed from records management carried out by families, some archives were destroyed by external factors. In some cases, this destruction was accomplished by subaltern actors or by pirates; in others, it was caused by non-human external factors such as natural disasters or adverse weather conditions. Indeed, external causes produced some of the most significant transformative impacts on archives since they were not changes derived from the needs of the producer and they often resulted in a need to reconstruct the archive.

The archive: a target of destruction or seizure

Archives, as tools of power through which dominance was exercised, contained documents that, due to their probative value, gave control over the population. Consequently, they were valuable artefacts to be preserved by their owners, and it also made them potential targets for destruction during wars or social riots. The burning of archives of the nobility that followed the French Revolution is a well-known event. This kind of riot was a protest against the long tradition of seigneurial dominance in Europe from the end of the Middle Ages. In the Canary Islands, there are not many examples of this type of destruction, mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the interior of the island was not a battlefield, either during the War of Independence (1808–14) or the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the two wars that resulted in the greatest destruction of archives in Spain. Secondly, popular riots met with limited success.

One of the few successful popular riots took place in Agüimes (Gran Canaria). A peasant uprising took place between 1718 and 1719 against the Crown's decision to sell Don Francisco Amoreto some lands that were used by the neighbours of Agüimes for grazing and subsistence farming. When they were stripped of their land, the peasants rebelled, beating the mayor and leaving him dying. When 22 people were arrested, the neighbours marched to the capital, where they confronted the army and requested the release of the prisoners. Thanks to the mediation of the Church, it was possible to stop the escalation of violence and reach an agreement. The mutineers demanded that the relevant documentation of land transfer be handed over for burning in the public square.[30] This case demonstrates the existence of awareness even among the peasantry that certain documents represented and legitimised the dominance exercised over them.

The main human factors involved in archive destruction in the Canary Islands were piracy attacks. Most important was the attack of Cornelis Corneliszoon Jol, alias Peg Leg (*Houtebeen* in Dutch), against La Palma in 1556, which destroyed the city's archives. There was also the looting of Teguise (Lanzarote) in 1618 by Berber pirates who burned the village including the council and the manorial archives. Another attack on Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1599 was carried out by Pieter Van der Does, who ransacked the city and took the city's archives as booty. La Laguna, capital of Tenerife, was never looted because it was an inland city, difficult for pirates to access.

Incidental damage and destruction

In other cases, the destruction of the archives resulted from a lack of interest on the part of the archives' owners or administrators. For instance, the archive of Francisco Baptista Lugo de Castillo disintegrated because of dampness and humidity and because of the negligence of its guardian. Neglect by its owner meant that much of the archive of the Marquises of the Villa de San Andrés was also lost. Their son, the Viscount of Buen Paso, in his last will and testament in 1731, describes the state of the accounts and records. He mentions that 'when I came here from La Palma, I did not find papers with other papers, and no clarities do I leave you'.[31]

Indeed, the environmental conditions of the Islands were always a problem for documentary conservation. The subtropical climate, characterised by high humidity and high temperatures, led to the appearance of microorganisms that caused irreparable damage to records. Likewise, torrential rains and tropical storms caused floods and landslides, several of them documented in the Early Modern Age, with great destructive impact on human lives and material resources. Finally, the heat and the seasonal droughts in summer increased the risk of accidental fires. One such fire destroyed the house and the archive of the Marquises of Celada in Tenerife, in 1716.[32] Another case was the burning of the archive of the Sotomayor family in 1961, during a fire in their house in Argual (La Palma).[33]

The volcanic nature of the islands has also been the cause of the destruction of some archives such as the loss of the house and archive of the Counts of Siete Fuentes when the Arenas Negras volcano erupted and devastated the town and port of Garachico (Tenerife) in 1706. We know of the disastrous consequences of the eruption from a declaration made by the Third Count of Siete Fuentes in 1784 before the commissioner of the Chamber of Castile. He declared that 'in the year of 1706, the sudden eruption

that took place in Garachico burned and ruined the houses of nobility, burning all their jewellery and papers'.[34]

The destruction of archives, partial or complete, had consequences for the archival practices developed by families, both regarding the adoption of procedures of preventative conservation, as well as the reconstruction of their archives.

Reconstruction of family archives

The need to rebuild a family archive can result from multiple situations and needs of its producers. In the pre-modern European context, the family archive was configured as an instrument with a multifaceted social function related to its role in ensuring the integrity and transmission of property, as well as having a strong component of social distinction and legitimisation of power within society and one's family.

Rebuilding the family archive to recover patrimony: the Lugo del Castillo Interián

The oldest known reference to a process of reconstruction of a family archive in the Canary Islands is the archive of the Lugo del Castillo Interián, known and classified as the *Benítez de Lugo archive*,[35] since this is the surname that has predominated among the descendants. Six manuscripts are currently preserved: two cartularies, a treasury book, a book of achievements, a judicial proceeding and a land title. Altogether there are about 300 documents.

Its reconstruction was promoted by Francisco Baptista Lugo de Castillo at the end of the seventeenth century. He explained in the *entailed book* (*libro de mayorazgo*) that he was orphaned as a child, so his guardianship and family archive were transferred to a guardian. When he reached adulthood, he described the archive in the following way: 'I found it without form and most of it wasted and rotten having been partly humid and under dripping water.'[36] He also expressed how his 'elders' had obtained these records ('they were taken out of the offices of notaries') and how they had organised them ('and applied the *protocol*'). This indicates the existence of family archives at least in the first third of the seventeenth century. This period coincided with the development of archival practices aimed at organising council archives. Thus, it is not surprising that these tasks, discussed and carried out by the aldermen (members of the main families in power on the island), took place in parallel with the development of practices clearly oriented towards the creation of family archives. We also find similarities in the way both types of archives were organised: in the council's, properties and incomes were controlled through the *treasury books* (*libros de hacienda*), a typology that was extrapolated to the family archives in the form of the *entailed books* (*libros de mayorazgo*), associated with *cartularies* that proved patrimonial rights.

In any case, in the middle of the seventeenth century, Francisco Bautista de Lugo did not find a family archive to which he could turn to know and recover his property, which is why he had to undertake reconstruction work. For this purpose, he resorted to other archives, mainly to notaries (who kept the originals of the legal acts performed by ancestors) and the council archive (which held the originals of assets or positions acquired by ancestors). As a result, he produced an *entailed estate book* (*libro de mayorazgo*) and a *free property book* (*libro de bienes libres*). Despite some research on the monarchy's *treasury books* (*libros de hacienda*),[37] and on *entailment books* (*livros de morgadio*) in Portugal,[38] there have been

few empirical investigations about these document genres in family archives. These books describe the history of properties and their evolution since colonisation. They usually begin with a genealogical description of the merits of the men of the house. Similarly, in the Lugo archive, two cartularies were made with copies of the documents that demonstrated the history of the property described in the books. This pattern of reconstruction of the family archives was repeated in the Canary Islands over the following century and a half.

Reconstruction of archives was a long and difficult process – which according to Lugo, began 'more than twenty years ago' for several reasons. First, the notaries' archives did not always have inventories. Second, it is difficult to search for scripts 'because [the records] are so old and one has to go looking for them blindly'. Finally, the high economic cost must also be taken into account ('I assure you that a four-page deed cost a hundred *reales*, I do not know how to value that').[39]

Family archives were reconstructed mainly for the defence of patrimonial interests. However, this was not their only function, since archives also had a symbolic character. This appears, for example, in the work of Don Juan Núñez de la Peña, genealogist, chronicler and *King of Arms*.[40] His archival work was fundamental both for the relevance of his figure in the conformation of the nobility of the Canary Islands, as well as for the durability of the family archive model that he created, which would be adopted by other families of the elite. As an *archivist*, he made complete genealogical accounts. First, he included the facts and services performed by the men of the lineage. Second, he identified Don Alonso Fernández de Lugo and the conquistador Bartolomé Benítez as founders of the house Benítez de Lugo. Third, he provided a *genealogical relationship* of the offspring of these protagonists, with numerous genealogical trees. Finally, 'to fill the rest of the book', he copied all the coats of arms relating to their ancestors. Thus, Don Juan Núñez de la Peña created an archival model that retrospectively built memory and family identity in an authentic translation of contexts.

Precisely this symbolic function of the family archive is reinforced by the action of archiving itself as an act to create memory. Don Francisco Bautista de Lugo asked his children and successors to keep the archive. His wife, Marina Interián del Hoyo, also instructed them to 'take care to continue it', to keep it 'like a priceless jewel'.[41] In these recommendations, the multigenerational function of the family archive, the *genealogical gaze* in the words of Ketelaar,[42] which conceives the archive as a patrimonial asset that had to be conserved and transmitted to subsequent generations, is apparent.

Rebuilding the family archive after treason: the Counts of the Valle de Salazar

These formal elements in the creation and organisation of an archive were reproduced by other families. Thus, an archive organised in cartularies and *libros de mayorazgo* was the preferred model at least until the middle of the eighteenth century. For instance, in a *post-mortem* inventory produced for the Counts of the Valle de Salazar in 1761, 48 items were summarily related (some of them referred to a single document; some of them to small documentary bundles). In the inventory a reference to a book covered in parchment describing the *mayorazgo* and House of the Count of the Valle de Salazar, made in 1741, stands out. The book was associated with two cartularies: one that gathered the documents referring to the second *mayorazgo* founded by his grandfather, and another with the documents relating to the *mayorazgo* founded by the first Counts.[43]

In this case, Cristóbal Valentín Salazar de Frías, II Count of the Valle de Salazar, reconstructed the family archive to deal with a dramatic situation caused by his predecessor. His uncle, Don Cristobal Lázaro Salazar de Frías, first Count of Valle de Salazar, was declared a traitor for taking the side of Archduke Charles of Austria during the War of Spanish Succession against the future King Philip V. As a traitor, the entailed estate and all his properties were confiscated in 1708. His nephew acquired them at public auction 10 years later. In addition, in 1725, King Philip V ordered the return of property as part of the Peace Accords with the Emperor Charles. Count Don Cristóbal Valentín received the properties in a deplorable condition. In order to be able to claim financial compensation, he had to reconstruct the family archive. To do this, he followed the aforementioned model created by Don Juan Núñez de la Peña, and resorted to notaries public, the parish archives and the council archive.

Rebuilding the family archive to grow socially: the Lercaros

In other cases, effective documentary management served as a tool to advance socially. This is the case for the Lercaros, a Genoese family that arrived in the Canary Islands in the mid-sixteenth century. More than half a century later, the possibility arose of gaining control of the headquarters of the Lercaro *albergo* (a corporation of noble families) in Genoa, following the extinction of the main family branch. As the Canary Island Lercaros did not have the necessary documents to do so, they carried out a retrospective reconstruction of their archive.[44]

To do this, they had to demonstrate their genealogy in the Canary Islands and relate it to the family of Genoa. Thus, they hired an agent in Genoa who tracked the archives of the Republic, asking for copies of the documents that served this purpose. Meanwhile, others performed the tasks of searching, locating and copying documents in the Canary Islands. The archive has been analysed by Núñez Pestano and González Zalacain through the application of the genealogy of documents method. The authors reviewed the 566 records in the 13 cartularies that are currently preserved. Of these, 90% were copies, of which 25% were incorporated into the archive between 1700 and 1740 and 45% between 1760 and 1790. Therefore, 70% of the records were copied in the eighteenth century. However, the analysis of production dates reveals that only 33.4% of the records were originally produced in the eighteenth century. Therefore, the Lercaro archive was reconstructed in the eighteenth century mainly with copies of records originally produced in previous centuries.[45]

Rebuilding the family archive to preserve power: the Counts of Siete Fuentes

In the context of European *archivality* that links exercise of ownership, probative value and document management, an archive was a necessity for families to ensure social reproduction and to maintain their status over time. This may lead one to believe that, faced with the disappearance of the archive, the family would focus its efforts on reconstructing it. However, this dependence on the archive had to be relativised depending on the context, because although documents are crucial in cases of legal conflict, they are less important in moments of social or family peace or in non-bureaucratic contexts. The case of the archive of the Counts of Siete Fuentes is an eloquent example of this. The archive disappeared during the eruption of the Arenas Negras volcano in 1706. However,

only 12 records were copied up to the death of the Count in 1726. These records related to lawsuits, in another example of the relationship between archives, conflicts and dominance. The situation did not change materially until the 1760s. The reason why the Counts of Siete Fuentes did not reconstruct their archive immediately after its disappearance rests in the social context. In the geographic and demographic dimensions of the island of Tenerife, the Counts of Siete Fuentes did not need to prove who they were nor what their social status was, especially since they were the military superiors of their tenants.

In contrast, a new legal context did require the reconstruction of the archive of the Counts of Siete Fuentes almost 70 years after its disappearance. In Spain, as elsewhere, legislation had a great influence on the existence and evolution of family archives; in particular, the administrative reforms promoted during the reign of Charles III (1759–88) had a transformative impact on archival practices. For the Canary Island councils, royal interventionism forced the capitulars to accredit the old privileges that explained the autonomy and political power of the council, because, in turn, this maintained the capacity of the aldermen to exert their dominance through the council.[46] In this context, the reform of the municipal administration of the Canary Islands, promoted in 1773–74, led to a profound reorganisation of council archives in accordance with the new administrative system: books were created (of records, registers of procedural acts, of estates) and cartularies were formed out of old deeds that were loose.[47]

For powerful families, the creation of Mortgage Offices in 1768 had the greatest impact on archival practices. From this point, families were required to register all mortgage charges imposed on any property, and from 1774, to also register all records produced before 1768 that contained mortgages. Otherwise, they would lose the right to receive these incomes. Usually, the families did not have the required records (which could have been produced centuries earlier), forcing them to deal with a process of searching, localisation, copying and recording all such documents. The analysis of the Count of Siete Fuentes' archive, through the document genealogy method, shows that only 6.64% of the 4681 records were produced before 1760. Moreover, the analysis of the archive according to the dates of the copies reveals that 67% of the copies were accumulated in the period 1760–1810. Thus, a positive correlation was found between the creation of the Mortgage Offices in 1768 and the archiving of copies of records in the family archive. Thenceforth, production, copying and records management declined progressively throughout the nineteenth century.

The usual method of reconstructing archives was repeated: notaries were contacted and a copy of all the documents related to a family was requested. This process could be more or less expensive, depending on whether the services of notaries were used or if it was done by the family itself. An example of the first case is the reconstruction of the archive of the Count of Siete Fuentes. The *cartularies* (or *protocols*) of the house were created by notaries, forming a documentary set in the image of the notarial protocols. In order to produce the cartularies, documents were copied, sewn and bound, an initial index was added, cover pages with the family heraldic emblem and a diligence of the notary was given, attesting that the content of that protocol coincided with its originals.[48]

On the other hand, an example of an archive reconstructed by the family itself is that of the Counts of the Valle de Salazar.[49] The reconstruction of the archive was carried out by

Don Martín Salazar de Frías at the end of the eighteenth century. For the purpose of unravelling the method of reconstructing the archives, an historical qualitative analysis of the records has been applied. Don Martín Salazar de Frías left many notes regarding the process of searching and reconstructing the archive. The main activity consisted of searching for and copying records in notaries' offices: 'I have registered the aforementioned notary's alphabet and find the following quotations in it'; 'Until this year [1677] there is no register of more documents, it will be necessary to follow the alphabet for the rest of the years.' The use of shared archives was maintained, generating solidarity networks of lineage in which documents were shared and costs were reduced. In addition, the archives of the council and the parish registers were also used.

As a consequence of the need to locate documents, the family archives included *Appointment Books* (in which references to the documents of the family ancestors were collected), *Payrolls of the Notaries* (listed with the names of the notaries, the office they held and the dates), lists of documents, inventories of other archives and so on.

In addition to investigating how each family archive was reconstructed, it is interesting to quantitatively estimate the impact of this process. For this purpose, the genealogical method, described above, has been applied. The Salazar de Frías family archive currently contains 20,092 records. Statistical analysis based on the production dates of the records reveals that only 499 records could have been part of the family archive before 1768. Obviously, this does not mean that the archive did not have more documents at this time, but this amount gives an approximate idea of the volume of records they handled. Analysis of inventories reveals similar results. A 1761 *post-mortem* inventory lists 48 items (some referring to a single document; most of them to small documentary bundles).[50] This combination of findings shows that the family archive was not very voluminous at that time.

In 1806, the year of the death of Don Martín Salazar de Frías, the archive had at least 2977 documents. However, from the *post-mortem* inventory carried out in 1807, we know that the archive had been larger, since the inventory list bundles that were not currently kept in the archive. Two discrete reasons may explain this. First, his marriage to Doña Juana Porlier, who inherited eight entailed estates and the archive of her family; and second, there was a significant positive correlation between the creation of the Mortgage Offices in 1768 and the increase in the volume of documentation over the next few decades. The reconstruction of the archive led to an increase in the volume of records.

Rebuilding the family archive to exercise dominance within the family: the Counts of Valle de Salazar

Although a family archive could be configured as an element of family solidarity and a shared resource, in situations of family conflict it was common to conceal documents. The archives of the Counts of Valle de Salazar are one such case of this practice.

Of all its members, Don Martín Salazar de Frías (1743–1807) was the one who represents a perfect example of the use of the family archive as a tool of power in a family characterised by conflict. Don Martín was the fifth son of the Counts of Valle de Salazar and, as a younger son, he was in charge of the organisation of the family archive and its records management. This activity provided him a deep knowledge of the archive. He used this knowledge to gain the family estate and the title of Count of

Valle de Salazar through the courts. This judicial decision broke family cohesion, beginning a period of lawsuits with his brother and his uncles. However, because of his excellent knowledge and his control of the family archive, he always won.

For example, in one of the conflicts, his uncle Don Lorenzo de Salazar judicially requested that Count Don Martín present his grandfather's *libro de mayorazgo* because he needed it, but he refused to give him access. Don Martín managed to get a *Royal Audiencia* to prevent the book from being taken out of his house and, instead, his uncle could arrange for a clerk to travel to it to make the necessary copies.[51] By using the courts to limit his rival's access to the family archive, Don Martín succeeded in seizing the noble title.

The importance of the archive as a tool of intrafamilial dominance can be seen beyond the Count's life. Upon his death, the conflicts continued with his eldest son, Don Ventura Salazar y Porlier. He had been excluded by his father from the succession to the title and the entailed estate after entering a marriage of which his parents did not approve. In fact, after the Count's death, the first thing included in the *post-mortem* inventory was the archive. As this was in the hands of Don Ventura's mother and brothers, who prevented him from accessing it, Don Ventura created his own archive, repeating the described methods. He resorted to notaries public and to all the archives he had access to, he created appointment books, lists of archives consulted, payrolls of notaries and so on, and kept a register of the whole process: 'Record in the notebooks that I am registering, to which I make a mark so as not to read them again.'[52]

Rebuilding the family archive to establish a family narrative

Genealogical practices also had a transformative impact on the family archives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Two causes have been identified. The first was litigiousness that resulted from the significant number of *mayorazgos* that were vacant due to the extinction of the families. In a context of high infant mortality, inbreeding, infertility, crisis and marriage restriction, many estates were left without a clear successor. In these cases, applicants had to demonstrate a preferential genealogical relationship to have use of these assets. For this, they resorted to the parochial archives (to copy the baptism, marriage and death certificates) and to the notarial documentation. The second cause was the expansion of the nobility due to the massive sale of honours and titles by the Crown, which created a demand for new elements of social lineage distinction. In this context, genealogy was fundamental. Families no longer only sought to demonstrate their nobility, but also sought ancestral nobility, with almost impossible blood ties to saints, kings and ducal houses, and even mythological figures, who became relatives or ancestors of the family. During these times, genealogical representations appeared profusely in family archives, in the form of ancestor lists, genealogical trees, stories, genealogy books and sacramental registers.

Finally, another element that affected the transformation of archival practices was the emergence of the *composite archives*. In the eighteenth century, the Canary Islands experienced a period of economic crisis for the nobility, because its economic base (the possession of land and the export of wines) entered into a deep decline. Numerous marriages between elite people were celebrated with the aim of adding estates, as it was

the only way to avoid bankruptcy for many families.[53] There is a consensus among historians that these alliances also led to the union of family archives.

These three processes, namely the implementation of the Mortgage Offices, the promotion of genealogy and the formation of *composite archives*, led to an unprecedented accumulation of documents in family archives. In order to manage this huge documentary mass, it was necessary to apply documentary organisation procedures. We can see in the family archives of the Canary Islands the application of methods of reorganisation similar to those of other archives. For instance, a series of books were created (not only of treasury, but also of genealogy, of chaplaincies, of letters, of accounting, of appointments) following the council archives organisation. Moreover, records were reorganised into cartularies (protocols) following the pattern of notaries. As for current documentation, this was managed in accounting books and bundles of different topics and composition.

There is also a coincidence in the dates of production of the inventories in council archives and in family archives. It must be borne in mind that ordering an archive was a historical process, determined by an evolving political and intellectual context.[54] By itself, the presence (or absence) of inventories gives some insights into the evolution of the archival practices, since the production of inventories, which are instruments for the location of documents, implies a need for organisation. In the case at hand, the creation of *ex professo* inventories to order family archives (that is, they are not *post-mortem* inventories) was quite scarce until the second half of the eighteenth century, when the large volume of the archives made it necessary to resort to descriptive instruments. In this period, inventories also proliferated in council archives. Although attempts to create an inventory of the Tenerife Council archive in the seventeenth century failed, the reorganisation of the archive was accomplished in the eighteenth century. At the beginning of that century, an inventory of the archive was made and developed for more than a century.[55] In the case of La Palma Council, the oldest inventories date from the nineteenth century.[56] On the other hand, the oldest family archive inventories located during the current research date from the nineteenth century. The only inventory of the archive of the Count of Valle de Salazar was made in 1840; likewise, the three inventories of the Lercaro archive were produced in the nineteenth century. The inventories of the Count of Siete Fuentes and Benítez de Lugo archives have not been preserved.

Conclusions

The implementation of a new archival culture in the Canary Islands was a slow process that began gradually after the Conquest and was developed during the entire Early Modern Age, as a response to the political, social, cultural and, above all, legal context of the time.

However, the need to produce documents was different from the need to preserve them. Documentary production and short-term conservation are related to management needs (patrimonial, symbolic, economic), while long-term conservation is due to a desire to create a memory based on records that transcends the generations themselves, encompassing also the ancestors and descendants. This explains why at present only the family records of the elites have been preserved.

This perception of the family archive as an instrument of power and value in a European legal and social context (although in a non-European territory) made it an object to be destroyed in situations of conflict, as in the case of pirates. Subaltern groups like the peasantry also sought archive destruction, aware of the dominance exercised over them through these documents. For the owners, by contrast, the family archives were a valuable jewel that the whole family had to protect, preserve, increase and transmit to the next generation: objectives that, in many cases, involved a reconstruction of the archive.

The analysis of several processes of family archive reconstruction shows that, regardless of the motive that served as the spearhead for documentary collection, in all cases, a context marked by conflict can be observed, whether an interfamily conflict in which a family member sought to recover some properties (case of the Lugo del Castillo Interián), a conflict with the Crown in which the family sought to recover properties and honour (Counts of the Valle de Salazar) or a conflict with other branches of the family lineage because of the pre-eminence within the family (Lercaro). Likewise, the absence of internal conflicts within the family and external threats produced a lower need for archiving (Counts of Siete Fuentes).

The massive reconstruction of archives in the last third of the eighteenth century after the implementation of Mortgage Offices – a phenomenon that affected all the large family landowners on the Canary Islands – also had a conflictual background, as these rents and incomes were one of the main reasons for judicial confrontation for non-payment or dispute about the collection of said rents. Likewise, the symbolic needs that justified a greater concern for the family archive and genealogy towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries coincided with an 'aristocratic offensive' in France (Regency of Orleans), Spain, Portugal and northern Italy. But, apart from this period of variable chronology, concern for archiving and genealogy continued and intensified throughout the eighteenth and even in the nineteenth centuries. These periods, in addition to being characterised by the expansion of the nobility and the need to create new elements of social distinction, were also marked by the increase in intrafamilial competition, as new models of romantic love and the reinforcement of the private sphere questioned the rigid discipline of the house, giving rise to unequal marriages or ones without parental consent, elopement and so on, which implied a questioning of family discipline (counts of Valle de Salazar). In these situations of family conflict, controlling the archive was fundamental.

Finally, analysing all these cultural phenomena with a cross-sectional perspective that not only focuses on family archives, but also covers council and notarial archives, allows us to appreciate how different archival practices were deeply connected to each other. If we focus on the documentary producers taking into account that the pre-modern societies were corporatist, we understand that it was powerful families that dominated society through the councils and were the main users (and owners) of public notaries. In other words, the archival practices that developed in the councils, the notaries and the family houses were all deeply connected because they were carried out by the archive producers themselves, which is why they coincided in chronologies, methods, forms of organisation and reconstruction of archives, and even in terminology.

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