

# Interuniversity Centre for the History of Spirituality at the University of Porto

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The *Centro Interuniversitário de História da Espiritualidade da Universidade do Porto* (CIUHE) (Interuniversity Centre for the History of Spirituality at the University of Porto) is a research and development (R&D) unit created officially in 1993 within the *Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica* (National Institute for Scientific Research). Currently this centre is inscribed in the Portuguese national programmes of scientific support of the FCT (*Foundation for Science and Technology* - Portugal, [www.fct.mces.pt](http://www.fct.mces.pt)).

The initial group of researchers has been connected, since 1987, to the *Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa* (Institute for Portuguese Culture) of the *Faculdade de Letras* (Faculty of Arts) of the same university.

This centre is the only scientific institution in Portugal expressly dedicated to research within the History of Spirituality, a designation that by definition cannot be separated from the expression and display of religious feeling—from the “ars orandi” (art of praying) to guilds and devotions, addressing religious orders, literature, hagiography, readings and libraries. The centre’s focus stems, naturally, as much from the point of view of the “orthodoxies” as from the point of view of their “deviations.”

This centre resumed, and has been trying to develop, a research agenda that had in the 1950s made in Portugal significant achievements, such as the works of Maria de Lourdes Belchior Pontes and José da Silva Dias, not to mention foreign researchers as, for instance, Robert Ricard, Marcel Bataillon, Pedro Sainz Rodríguez, Miguel Avilez.

Presently the centre integrates 23 researchers (17 PhDs, 5 as collaborators and 6 doctoral students). The 23 researchers belong to the Universities of Porto, Lisbon and Salamanca. The centre has been directing its research activities, in a rather flexible way, towards the following “fields of action”:

- a) Literature and spirituality;
- b) Religious Orders in the Early Modern Age;
- c) Trends of spirituality and religious feeling;
- d) Franciscans and Franciscanism in Portugal - 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries;
- e) Readings on spirituality and libraries.

To disseminate the results of this research, the centre created a website ([www.ciuhe.org](http://www.ciuhe.org)) in order to provide information on its regular activities, monthly seminars, conferences, publications, contents of the magazine *Via Spiritus* (1995-2008, 15 numbers published) and of other publications of interest (<http://ler.lettras.up.pt/> and DOAJ).

During 2008, the centre has developed the following projects:

## 1. Spirituality and the court (16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries)

Through several lines of research and approaches, we shall focus on the dynamics of the court(s) during the “Ancien Régime”, and, in particular, that of the Portuguese court within the context of the Iberian Peninsula, considering not only the cultural but also the political and social dimensions from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. During this period, as a consequence of the various developments

of the Counter-Reformation, spirituality, for several reasons, involved and shaped—or attempted to shape—men and institutions.

*From the memory of books to the libraries of memory* (now in its last phase—an analysis the fourth inventories of two libraries of female religious orders). Following three inventories of libraries of male religious orders (OFM and OP), we will proceed with the analysis of two libraries of female religious orders (Conceptionist and Clarissas), dated from 1875 and 1891 respectively, corresponding to the dates of the death of the last nun of each house (Penha de França in Braga and Santa Clara in Caminha).

If the latter is a simple list comprising thirty titles, the house of Braga constitutes an extraordinary inventory, for in addition to the most significant bibliographical references, it assigns monetary value to each work by a group of “evaluators” (nominated for the purpose), which seems to be a fact of capital interest (the publications can be found at [www.ciuhe.org](http://www.ciuhe.org)).

## **2. Epistolography in seventeenth-century Portugal—a documentary source from a library and a manorial collection**

Full edition and unprecedented study of letters exchanged between D. Vicente de Nogueira (1586-1645), a compulsive bibliophile, and Luis Vasco da Gama (1612-1676), 1<sup>st</sup> Marquês de Niza, noted collector and connoisseur of texts, including prophetic works.

The letters of Vincent Nogueira and the Marquis de Niza offer a peculiar and noteworthy documentary value for the light they shed on the circles frequented by the authors or even for their particularly historical and cultural content. Their testimonies are very important for understanding the “spirit of the time,” “measured” by the bibliographical and cultural value of books and libraries, the politics and diplomacy of the season, and the Portuguese culture in the European context observed from two of its cultural poles: Paris and Rome.

## **3. Ideas and forms of spiritual life and female education (17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

Based on the concerns of Luis de Vives concerning how female education has centered on the role of mothers, we propose to discuss the representation of other figures who played a major role in female education in different specific cultural environments: the palace (royal or manorial) and the convent. This aim will be achieved through the analysis of specific bibliography and chronicles (civilian or monastic).

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The CIUHE, as a research unit of the FCT-Portugal, has been recently included as a Research Group under the name “Sociabilities, practices and forms of religious sensibility,” in the *Centro Transdisciplinar Cultura Espaço e Memória* (CITCEM) (Transdisciplinary Centre Space and Memory). However, it still exists as a Scientific Association with legal entity status.