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# AMID THE “BED DRESSINGS” (17TH-18TH CENTURIES)



## Preamble

For its size, quality of materials and rarity in the context of Portuguese heritage – alongside the fact that it represents one of the more unusual types of Portuguese beds from the mid-17th to early 18th century – the "Cadaval Bed", as it is known, stands out as an exceptional example of furniture designed for rest and relaxation.<sup>1</sup>

During this period, beds were the most complex pieces of household furniture. They involved an impressive array of parts and in particular a set of textile furnishings which literally appropriated the wooden structure and best represented the ensemble which we all still know today as a "bed". In fact, the word "bed" comprises not only the wooden frame or bedstead but also a whole paraphernalia of bed linens, mattresses, hangings and decorations.<sup>2</sup>

As part of a broad and interdisciplinary study such as this one, it befalls us here to analyse this textile element. However, unlike the bedstead that still exists and shares similarities with other surviving examples, with which comparison can be made, the same does not apply to the respective furnishings, which have long since disappeared like most other contemporary examples in Portugal. This fact severely complicates any thorough attempt to recreate these complex ensembles, as far as the quantity and size of the dressings is concerned and the manner in which they combined, as other researchers have noted.<sup>3</sup> For that reason, rather than focusing on this case in particular, this chapter will examine the "*cama[s] de roupa*"<sup>4</sup> (bed dressings) that characterised the period associated with the

production and consumption of this type of bed by members of the Portuguese social elite, a theme which has received little attention to date. Therefore, contemporary documentary sources will be used even though they are difficult to work with given the complex information they contain (both abundant and simultaneously lacking or contradictory) and the way it is organised. However, they are essential when trying to understand the prominence and function of household furnishings in the early modern period.

## Introduction

Furnishings were the most impressive sumptuous possessions in private domestic environments during the early modern period<sup>5</sup> and a very central feature of Roman Baroque interiors,<sup>6</sup> where they covered practically every surface. This seems to have applied in all European settings, Portugal included, and extended to more modest homes whose investment in this area was physical evidence of both the practical and symbolic importance of beds in the improving living conditions of the poorer classes.<sup>7</sup>

Textiles defined the nature and status of domestic interiors according to social rank.<sup>8</sup> As a whole, they were complex and sophisticated systems of communication and representation (of mores, norms and social and cultural rituals),<sup>9</sup> alongside structuring elements of the living space,<sup>10</sup> whose role far exceeded their more visible functional and ornamental purpose. The display of textile furnishings was equivalent, in effect, to a metaphorical gesture,<sup>11</sup> one that both expressed hierarchies and directed eyes to a certain ambience, enhancing the identity and prominence of all those involved. This was corroborated by the ceremonies of the Portuguese court, which, albeit "very modest and even austere" (*muito modesto e, até, austero*)<sup>12</sup> until the second half of the 1700s, were copied by the main noble houses.

In the context of what was "*um dos espaços âncora da residência*" (one of the most prominent rooms in a palatial house),<sup>13</sup> the bedchamber was decorated with different types of fabrics to enrich the environment. These included textile wall coverings, window curtains and portières (door curtains plus their respective valances), tablecloths, upholstery and covers on the chairs and other types of seat, floor carpets

and, naturally, bed furnishings. An insight into this world is provided by Tristão da Cunha (1655-1722), 1st Count of Povolide, with regard to the contents of his residence at the time of his wedding in 1697: "*Camara toda alcatifada com duas alcatifas, e armada de panos de Raz, cama de tella riqua, e franjões de oiro e assim as sanefas das portas e ginellas, e tamboretas e cortinas de damasco, e dois espelhos, e dois bofetes doirados*" (A fully carpeted chamber with two carpets, Arras cloth hangings, a richly dressed bed, with gold fringing, as well as valances on the doors and windows, damask stools and curtains, two mirrors, and two gilt tables)<sup>14</sup>. The textile decorations are not only abundant but highlighted, in the same way that the bed, a crucial element in characterising the decor and arrangement of the bedroom,<sup>15</sup> is described in terms of its furnishings and not strictly as a piece of furniture. This fact is hardly surprising given that people spent almost a third of their lives in bed and it was where some of the most important events took place, such as births and deaths, illness and convalescence, and marital relations. It was no accident, therefore, that the highest positions in the organisational structures of the royal household and other noble houses were those most closely linked to the intimate lives of their masters, such as the lord chamberlain.<sup>16</sup>

Following a certain colour and thematic scheme, the various components of a bed's furnishings comprised a set and therefore tended to adopt the same coordinated fabrics. In turn, an identical fabric to that of the bed, or one of a similar colour or decorative motif, was used to upholster the chairs, cover the tables and chairs, and decorate the walls.<sup>17</sup> Hence the use of the expressions "*do mesmo*" or "*irmãs(ãos)*" (matched, en-suite) in inventory descriptions and assessments of these systems, based on the use of a common set of fabrics.<sup>18</sup>

Greater awareness of the effects and consistent use of a colour scheme or fabric led to the concept of unified environments, so admired in domestic interiors in the 17th and especially 18th centuries, particularly in France.<sup>19</sup> For this *en suite* look, which translated into a harmonious and unified whole, the textile furnishings were crucial visual links when used in a comprehensive, coordinated and repeated way. This was first applied to one and then an enfilade of rooms, as Baroque ceremonial logic dictated – something only within the reach of the wealthiest. In this context, it should be noted that the royal palaces of Alcântara and Ribeira, which were in

need of major investment following the restoration of Portuguese independence in 1640 and the decades of war that marked the early decades of Bragança rule, were given new specially designed decorative programmes for the wedding of King Afonso VI (1643-1683) to Marie-Françoise of Savoie (1646-1683) in 1666.<sup>20</sup>

## The bed dressings from the second half of the 17th to early 18th century

It is difficult to establish a template as far as the decorative textile scheme underpinning the respective beds are concerned. Many variables emerge from reading the inventories and other contemporary sources, resulting from the status and tastes of the owners, the hierarchy of the users, the types of beds in question and even the season. A good example are the "*tres quartos diferentes*" (three different chambers) which, in 1645, were prepared in the Marquis of Castelo Rodrigo's palace for the French ambassador to the Portuguese court, the Marquis of Rouillac, the ambassador's secretary and his *vedor*. The former was provided with an "*Alcoba recolhida cuberta com huns panos de Raz pequenos, com cercaduras, e franjas de retros obra particular. Leito de pao negro, com muitos bronzes dourados; e a cama de borcado de tres altos, hũa, e outra couza feita para esta occasião*" (Alcove bed covered with some small pieces of Arras cloth, with borders and silk thread fringing, of private manufacture. A blackwood bed with lots of gilt bronze; and the brocade bed of three heights, plus one or other object made for the occasion).<sup>21</sup> The brocade mentioned was also used for the upholstery for two and a half dozen chairs, the covers of the tables and a canopy arranged in two of the other rooms, clearly revealing the concern for the overall unity, as mentioned above. Intended for the secretary was an "*alcoba armada de panos de Raz bem finos, leito de pao negro com muitos bronzes dourados, Cama noua de setim Carmezim, com flores de couro*" (alcove bed dressed in very fine Arras cloth, a blackwood bed with lots of gilt bronze, and a new crimson satin bed with leather flowers), with "*terçio pello carmezim*" (crimson velvet) on the chairs and tables.<sup>22</sup> The same material was used on the chairs and tables in the rooms assigned to the inspector, who was expected to sleep on a "*leito de pao vestido de setim azul bordado com carochéo de ouro*" (wooden bed dressed in blue satin and

embroidered with gold *carocheo*).<sup>23</sup> It is clear to see that while the three bedrooms were furnished with tapestries and the type of bed provided for the ambassador and the secretary were identical – but different from that of the inspector (which was merely "wooden") – the same does not apply to the bed furnishings, whose quality of fabrics and colours differed from those used on the inspector's bed.

Both the surviving material evidence and representations of the "bed dressings" in 17th-century Portuguese paintings are rare, which differs from the preceding century, especially in the context of the theme of the *Annunciation*. This complicates the perception of what these ensembles would actually have looked like and how they really differed. Even so, it is possible to verify that the main components remained surprisingly constant over time, with only detail variations.<sup>24</sup> These related to the quality of the materials, finish and expense, as well as the quantity of drapery, which was fundamental to the hierarchical and social distinction of the owners and the level of comfort the beds provided.<sup>25</sup>

In this context, the Portuguese bed from the second half of the 17th and early 18th century, in its turned spindle form or decorated with gilt brass (described as "bronze") (in addition to those which were lacquered or decorated with mother of pearl from the Portuguese empire), essentially combined with the mattresses, the real basis of these ensembles, and a complex range of bed linens and other furnishings. These would have included, for example, sheets, bolsters and cushions, blankets, curtains, counterpanes and bedspreads, which are not always easy to distinguish between.<sup>26</sup>

As the reference to large, medium and small mattresses in inventories reveals,<sup>27</sup> they could vary in size, as well as in height, to suit the bed. In fact, Bernardo Ferrão points out that it was the very characteristic mattresses "*nos leitos seiscentistas que permitem definir-lhes as dimensões devidas a alteração posterior, ... quando a mecanização da tecelagem reduziu as larguras dos lençóis fabricados nos teares manuais*" (on beds from the 1600s that identified the latter, due to a later change ... when the mechanisation of weaving reduced the width of the sheets previously made on manual looms).<sup>28</sup>

A contemporary idea of a good trousseau for a member of the Portuguese aristocracy is provided by the inventory of assets conducted in 1659 at the time of the death of Mariana de Lancastre Vasconcelos e Câmara (ca. 1615-1698), Queen Maria Francisca's First Lady of the Bedchamber and wife of João Rodrigues de Vasconcelos e Sousa, 2nd Count of Castelo Melhor. Listed under "*roupa branca*" (white bed linen) are sixteen "*colchoens de pano de linho cheios de lam*" (linen mattresses filled with wool), some with seven seams and others with ten, i.e. "*a parte do colchão, que se levanta mais entre os cordeis*" (the highest part of the mattress between the cords),<sup>29</sup> valued, respectively, at two or three thousand réis each;<sup>30</sup> twenty-one "*lancoes de Olanda em folha de três ramos cada hum*" (new holland bed sheets of three cloths each) and sixty-one linen sheets, some "*em folha*" (unused) and others "*do uzo*" (used), of one and three cloths, in addition to those of fine linen, of a different number of ells (7 and 9) and, consequently, valuation. There was an immense diversity in the quality and size of the sheets (according to the dimensions of the mattresses), the best of which, of fine holland, were assigned to the beds of the lord and lady of the house. The number of sheets owned by a family was a firm indicator of its wealth.<sup>31</sup>

According to the same logic of variety, this list also includes eighteen holland bolsters with lace and fifty-eight holland half-bolsters with lace, in addition to wool fillings for eight half-bolsters and forty-two associated small pillows. Curiously, the bedspreads, made of fabric or enriched with embroidery and passementerie, are listed both under this item and that of "bed", i.e. the furnishings which complement these sets. Therefore, four "*toalha[s] de cobrir cama de tafeta*" (taffeta bed cover[s]) are listed under "*vestidos do Conde defunto e outras cousas e vestidos da Condeça*" (the dead Count's clothes and other objects and clothes belonging to the Countess).<sup>32</sup>

With regard to the bed hangings, they were above all mounted around and on the bedstead via more or less visible structures. These comprised a canopy, a varying number of curtains – between two to six – depending on the splendour of the bed, and a counterpane (though separate items could exist), which therefore combined with the respective decorative programme, as perfectly underlined by the anonymous painter of *Birth of St. Joana, Princess of Portugal* [fig. 1]. As regards the curtains, the most important element of the bed,<sup>33</sup> the headcloth stands out.





[fig. 1]

**Birth of Princess Saint Joana of Portugal**

Portugal, 17th-18th century

Museu de Aveiro

Inv. 392/A

© DGPC | Photo: Carlos Monteiro, 1994

This was intended for the headboard and, unlike the other curtains, was fixed. Headcloths were often made of more lavish materials or were more profusely decorated, at times bearing the coat of arms of those who slept or received in them.<sup>34</sup> Ensembles with curtains like these could be found in royal palaces and some of the main noble houses. Two examples of this are King Afonso VI's bed, which had "a fringed headcloth" (*huma cortina de cabeceira de cama franjada*), and that of the 1st Marquis and Marquise of Fronteira. The latter's 1673 inventory, on the death of Madalena de Castro (ca. 1635-1673), lists "*huma cama de veludo cramezim sobre seo e seus cortinas rodapé e todas têm dois veludo excepto a cortina da cabeceira e hum doselinho do mesmo tudo novo gornecido de franjois e franjas de*



[fig. 2]

**Birth of St. Dominic**

António André, 17th century (first half)

Museu de Aveiro

Inv. 83/A

© DGPC | Photo: José Pessoa, 2003

*oiro por ambas as partes*" (furnishings of crimson velvet, a canopy with curtains and lower valances, all of two velvets, except for the headcloth and a small canopy all garnished with long and short gold fringes). The other curtains were attached by rings or hooks to rods fixed to the cornice and tops of the frame or hung from the ceiling or wall. These could be pulled up into pouches or pushed to the ends and tied to the respective posts, as seen in a painting of the birth of St. Dominic from around 1620 [fig. 2]. The bed would also have linen consisting of white sheets and, usually, a large number of bolsters.

In the 17th century, curtains continued to ensure the privacy and comfort of a bed's occupants, creating a more restricted space away from prying eyes and indiscretion, despite the trend towards setting aside specific rooms for rest, often along gender lines.<sup>35</sup> This led Francisco Manuel de Melo to make the following criticism in his *Guia de Casados* (Guide for Married Couples) published in 1651: "*Tem-se hoje por grandeza lavrar quartos e aposentos à parte, conservarem-se por toda a vida assim entre casados ... Vivam todos em todas as casas, maridos e mulheres; que o contrário certo, é abuso cheio de perigos*" (Today, for reasons of noble propriety, couples have separate chambers and apartments and do so throughout their married lives ... Let husbands and wives use every room; for otherwise risks will certainly ensue).<sup>36</sup>

Returning to the inventory of assets of the Count of Castelo Melhor, it can be seen that he had "*hum paramento de cama de escarlata com rodapé e tem dous cobertores hum maior que outro rendado de prata e ouro de duas rendas juntas de dous dedos e o sobreceú tem renda maior*" (scarlet bed furnishings with lower valances and two counterpanes, one larger than the other, decorated with adjoining silver and gold lace, two fingers in width, and a canopy with bigger lace); "*hum paramento de cama de volante emcarnado e branco e cortina de cobrir*" (a bed dressed with a red and white tulle and a covering curtain); "*huma cama pequena de quatro cortinas de damasco verde com franja e alamares de retros da mesma cor*" (a small bed with four green damask curtains with silk thread fringing and aiguillettes of the same colour); and also a cot, probably for one of his younger children, with similar decoration, "*de damasco cramezim com alamares e franjão de ouro*" (of crimson damask with gold aiguillettes and fringing).<sup>37</sup>

Due to the way the assets were listed, it is difficult to comprehend the quantity and types of bed draperies of which a bed could comprise. However, thanks to the inventory of the "*móveis que estavao no quarto dos menores*" (furniture in the children's room), it is possible to get an approximate idea of its layout, albeit an incomplete one. For example, the "*leito de pao-santo de huma so pessoa com algum bronze*" (wooden single bed with some bronze) was matched with four mattresses, two shaggy counterpanes and a bedspread, in addition to "*hum paramento da mesma cama de damasco cramezim com sobreção e quedas do mesmo cobertor e*



*rodapé guarnecido tudo de franja e alamares de ouro*" (crimson damask furnishings with a canopy and drapes like the counterpane and lower valances all garnished with gold fringing and aiguillettes).<sup>38</sup> The set also included a series of bolsters and small cushions.

A bed was also frequently covered by a canopy, supported by four posts that extended upwards from the bed's legs, whose top could be flat, domed (pavilion-like) or pyramidal, like that on the so-called Burnay bed<sup>39</sup> [fig. 3], as well as upper valances (pelmetts or lambrequins) and lower valances from the frame to the floor (bases). The valances were intended to cloak the bed's upper structure to disguise the overlapping areas between the curtains and canopy, if included, and the lower valances, as their name suggests, to adorn the lower part of the bed at the mattress level to conceal the bed's legs and protect it from friction and dirt.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the whole set could be topped with feathers, finials and other ornaments.

Although to date no evidence has been found to support it, it was common (in other countries) to protect the most sophisticated and expensive beds – possibly mounted but not used every day, as with the state beds – with additional curtains all around. In any event, in an addendum to the inventory of furnishings on Afonso VI's bed at the Royal Palace of Ribeira in 1667, immediately following his wedding to Maria Francisca, it is known to have included a "*cobertor com borlas e seus guarda pos de tafeta com franginha de ouro*" (counterpane with edging and taffeta **case curtains** (dust covers) with gold fringing)<sup>41</sup> (my bold).

In 1680, José de Menezes, the Bishop of Algarve, owned "*hum paramento do dito leito de damasco verde guarnecido de franjas de retros verde, e ouro que consta de cobertor, rodapee seis cortinas sobre ceo, e hum doselzinho irmão*" (a set of green damask bed hangings garnished with green silk and gold thread fringing, a counterpane, lower valance, six curtains and a small matching canopy).<sup>42</sup> At the time of his death in 1704, Luís de Lencastre, 4th Count of Vila Nova de Portimão, owned among his belongings "*Hum paramento de Cama de damasco carmesim sobre ceo e trez cortinas com cobretor do mesmo forrado tudo de tafetâ da mesma cor com franjas de ouro em bom uzo*" (A set of bed furnishings consisting of a crimson



[fig. 3]

**Canopy bed**

Portugal, 17th century (second half)

Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon

Inv. 1376 Mov

© DGPC/ADF | Photo: José Pessoa

damask canopy and three curtains with a counterpane in the same fabric all lined in the same-coloured taffeta with gold fringing, well used) and "*outro paramento de Cama de Velludo carmesim sobre ceo e três cortinas rodapé e docel de cabeceira com franjas de ouro*" (another set of bed hangings with a crimson velvet canopy and three curtains, a lower valance and headcloth with gold fringing). Both were valued at 300,000 and 400,000 réis, in contrast to the 50,000 réis of his "*evano retorcido*" (twisted ebony) bed.<sup>43</sup>

This is just one of the many examples that attests to the substantial cost and value of bed hangings in relation to the wooden frame, be it fixed or dismountable.<sup>44</sup>

Take, for example, the sum bid for the bed belonging to Francisco de Assis de Távora, 3rd Count of Alvor and 3rd Marquis of Távora, in 1759 – deemed one of the closest in type to the so-called Cadaval Bed – compared to that offered for its respective hangings, described as "*imperial*" due to its pavilion canopy. The frame "*de pao de Evano torneado com sua grade de treze balaústres ... com guarnição em parte de latão dourado com duas laminas de prata lavradas pertencentes à cabeceira do mesmo leito*" (in turned wood with a railing of thirteen balusters ... partly garnished with gilt bronze with two sheets of embossed silver belonging to the headboard of the same bed) was sold, minus its silver garnishing, for 226,000 réis. The hangings, "in crimson velvet with gold garnishing and fringing with some edging in the same gold, comprising four taffeta curtains with seven valances with the same garnishing and edging, and a canopy and backrest and matching counterpane with twenty-four pieces of the same kind, and the same small garnishing of various sizes and four cloths of crimson taffeta lined with Rouen with gold braid"<sup>45</sup> were valued at 680,000 réis.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the fact that the sum for the furnishings was three times higher than that for the bedstead, the effort taken to list all of its components, rather than merely grouping them, is notable.<sup>47</sup> This could also be regarded as a way of underlining the scope and breadth of the legacy and suggest the pride felt in this bequeathal.<sup>48</sup>

As the examples cited attest, in the period between the mid-17th and early-18th century, the favoured colours seem to have been green and red in multiple hues, as they were outside Portugal.<sup>49</sup> These colours could be used in isolation or jointly, but the combinations were only valued if each of the colours was regarded as just as bright and brilliant as when used individually.<sup>50</sup>

As far as the materials used to make the beds are concerned, monochrome fabrics were the mainstay in the 1600s.<sup>51</sup> Mostly, their decoration was dominated by vegetal motifs, especially from the 1650s onwards, with a more nature-oriented approach only seen in the decorative textiles from the late-17th and early-18th century, where flowers were reproduced in a more naturalistic manner in bright colours and pastel tones.<sup>52</sup> During these two centuries, there was an impressive growth in the availability of fabrics, whose materials, production technologies, motifs and provenance became increasingly diverse, reflecting their increasing popularity.

In this respect, it is worth noting the variety, quantity and substantial cost of the fabrics used to make a bed for the *infante* Pedro (1648-1706) at the Corte-Real Palace in 1668 during his residence there.<sup>53</sup> According to the respective budget, it was a bed of "14 larguras que tẽen de alto tres couodos e meio" (14 widths three and a half cubits high); "o sobreseo 3 larguras de tres covodos e hua sesma monta covodos noue e meio" (a canopy of 3 widths of three cubits and another amounting to nine and a half cubits); "o cobretor cinco larguras de quarto couodos e hua quarta cada largura monta couodos vinta hu e huma quarta" (a counterpane of five widths of four and a quarter cubits each amounting to twenty-one and a quarter cubits); "as gornisois das cortinas vinta hũ covodo e meio" (twenty-one and a half cubits of curtain garnish); "gornisão do sobreseo" (canopy garnish), "o rodape per 3 partes" (a 3-piece lower valance); "os alparauales (sic)" (valances); "o acrescamento do dosel verde nas gornisois delle e os alparauales de fora" (the attachment of the green canopy to the garnishes and outer valances); and "3. folhas de almofadas" (3 pillow cases).<sup>54</sup> The respective invoice for the above is shown below:

# eighty cubits of **green cloth with gold thread with white hues** forming the body of the chamber at 2,500 a cubit [?]: two hundred thousand reis \_\_\_\_\_ 200,000

# ninety-two cubits of **white cloth with gold thread** for the skirt garnish, garnishes affixed to a green canopy and 3 pillow cases at 3,000 a cubit: three hundred and thirty-one thousand and three hundred reis \_\_\_\_\_ 331,300

# two cubits of green cloth with gold thread to affix to said canopy at 3,300 a cubit: seven thousand reis \_\_\_\_\_ 7,000

# nine cubits of **green cloth** to upholster the valances on the canopy at 1,200 a cubit: ten thousand eight hundred reis \_\_\_\_\_ 10,800

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549,000

# one hundred and twenty-seven and a half cubits of **green Granada taffeta** to upholster the bed at 240 a cubit: thirty-three thousand one hundred and fifty reis \_\_\_\_\_ 33,150

# eighty cubits of **Dutch linen** for the mattress protector and canopy at 100 a cubit: eight thousand reis \_\_\_\_\_ 8,000

# sixteen and a half cubits of **green camlet** for the mattress protector at 600 a cubit: nine thousand nine hundred reis \_\_\_\_\_ 9,900<sup>55</sup> (my bold)

Although most of the fabrics could have been used in the bed dressings, in practice the more rigid and heavier ones would not have been, especially for the more regularly handled curtains.<sup>56</sup> The factors that weighed most heavily on the choice of fabrics were the degree of their exposure (according to the owners' wealth) and the weather, which dictated the change in the bed sets during the year. As Rafaella Sarti observes, in some cases, the distinction between private and ceremonial bedchambers would overlap the difference between summer and winter beds.<sup>57</sup>

Strong and warm fabrics such as brocades, velvets, shaggy wool yarns, burel and rough wool fabric were suited to colder weather. These alternated with lighter and cooler fabrics such as satins, silk gauzes (tulle and fine silk fabric) and dyed and printed cotton at hotter times of the year. According to the assets of Rodrigo da Câmara (1594-1672), 3rd Count of Vila Franca, inventoried at the time of his incarceration by the Tribunal do Santo Ofício (1651), the latter had two bed sets for his bronzed blackwood bed: one "*de raxa verde e amarela*" (in rough green and yellow wool) and another "*pera Verão de damasco carmisim goarnecido de oiro*" (for summer in crimson damask garnished with gold), both much used.<sup>58</sup>



Although in the 17th century tapestries remained valued and essential furnishings in the households of the most illustrious members of Portuguese (and foreign) society, in the middle of the century their use as bed hangings fell into disuse in favour of purely fabric sets. In addition to being very expensive, they were highly impractical. They were far less malleable and, therefore, tended to be limited to the fixed elements or counterpane. This would explain their absence from the inventories analysed, as well as the change in the decorative style informing the bed mounted for the baptism of the new members of the recently risen to power brigantine dynasty. In 1643, the bed prepared for the baptism of Afonso VI in the chapel of the Palace of Ribeira matched the decor of the church itself: "*toda armada de panos de raz & ouro, em q se continha a historia & vida de Alexandre Magno, & à parte direita estaua hũa cama també de raz, & ouro bordada da historia delRey David cõ suas cortinas ligeiras da parte de dentro de tela carmezi & suas almofadas do mesmo tapiz*" (all dressed with Arras cloth & gold, displaying the history & life of Alexander the Great, & on the right was a bed also with Arras cloth & gold embroidered with the history of King David with light curtains lined on the inside with crimson cloth & with matching cushions).<sup>59</sup> A quarter of a century later (1669), the bed mounted in the same place for the baptism of the *infanta* Isabel Josefa (1669-1690), daughter of King Pedro II and Marie-Françoise of Savoie, was described as follows:

... embroidered with green velvet, embossed, looking more like subtly raised parts of gold branches ... The valances were similarly embroidered, with the much more prominently embossed Arms of Portugal in the middle, standing out more than half a palm's width, surmounted by the Imperial Crowns; instead of gold thread fringing, there was stitching of gold *de aquarta* of the most precious that could possibly be made ... The bed's curtains were of crimson cloth, also with gold thread ... the counterpane was in the same cloth: the sheets of very fine chambray with bands of the same material; and the cushions of even finer chambray; such that the base of the pillowcases was a striking iridescence that made the combination even shinier.<sup>60</sup>

This is the model which then endured, as the baptismal celebrations for her half-brother, the prince and future King João V (1689-1750) – son of the then King Pedro II and his second wife Marie Sophie of Neuburg (1666-1699) – clearly attests, although in another colour.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to Portuguese manufacture – notably linen in Guimarães and Caldas da Rainha and silk in the Bragança region – and products from the traditional European textile centres, Portugal benefitted during this period from the cloth supplied through its extensive imperial overseas trading networks. Growing imports of textiles from Asia's acclaimed production centres contributed to important changes in the materials and artistic production that began to characterise the daily life and domestic interiors of the realm's economic and social elite (and the rising social classes<sup>62</sup>). Distinct in style from their European counterparts, these objects were also important material testimonies to the colonial venture and therefore had special relevance in the systems of representation of the realm's main nobility.<sup>63</sup> These textiles were not only highly valued but gave "*um certo cunho exótico [emprestado] ao interior das habitações seiscentistas, onde a profusão garrida e luxuosa dos tecidos contrastava naturalmente com o estilo pesado e a imponência do mobiliário*" (the homes of the 1600s a certain [loaned] exotic hallmark in which the profusion of bold and lavish fabrics contrasted naturally with the heavy style and imposing furniture).<sup>64</sup>

Though no complete bed furnishings survive in Portugal (that are known of), examples of bedspreads, cushions and valances exist in sufficient numbers for some authors to conclude that the taste for these objects was considerable.<sup>65</sup> In fact, a cross-check of contemporary records shows some of the sets and individual objects, embroidered Indian and Chinese coverlets in particular, among the belongings in the inventories I have examined and most highly representative of the types owned by Portuguese nobility and royalty. As an example, and strictly based on objects whose provenance has been identified (while not all necessarily correct as far as the so-called Indian textiles are concerned), I would refer to three white coverlets from India belonging to the 2nd Count of Castelo Melhor: one already old, part of the bed furnishings in the children's room, another of medium size with orange silk stitching with a yellow fringe ("*pespontada de retros leonado com franja amarela*") and yet another used one with small red silk stitching with hunting scenes ("*pequena pespontada de retros encarnado com alguma montaria uzada*").<sup>66</sup> And among the assets inventoried on the death of the 1st Marquise of Fronteira (in 1673) are the hangings on a cot of double crimson Indian taffeta with

silver passementerie, a satin Indian counterpane in red hues, and a canopy and a counterpane garnished with silver passementerie and lined with red taffeta.<sup>67</sup>

In 1692, Aires Teles de Menezes, the illegitimate son of the 1st Count of Vila Pouca de Aguiar, owned the following furnishings on his farm in Vale Formoso on the outskirts of Lisbon: "*hum godrim da China de seda forrado de crua [?] amarela com sua franja e borlas e de varias cores com alguns buracos*" (a stuffed Chinese silk coverlet lined with yellow crua [?] with fringing and edging of various colours with some holes), "*huma colchinha pequenina de berço de seda da China lavrada de varias cores e ouro*" (a small cot coverlet in Chinese silk in various colours and gold), "*hum cobertor de damasco da India de varias cores com alguns buracos e uzado*" (an Indian damask counterpane in various colours with some holes and already used) and "*Huma colcha branca da India fina pespontada de retros branco com franja de retros amarelo e suas borlas nova*" (a fine white Indian coverlet with white silk stitching with yellow silk fringing and new tassels).<sup>68</sup> Moreover, of the ten coverlets listed in the inventory of the 4th Count of Vila Nova de Portimão (1704), at least two were from China and one from India.<sup>69</sup> And when Beatriz Mascarenhas Castelo-Branco da Costa – 3rd Countess of Palma and 4th Countess of Sabugal married to Fernando Mascarenhas, 2nd Count of Óbidos – died in 1709, she left two Chinese pavilion beds, one "*de ló azul com seu capelo ... bordado de ouro de palhinha com seu cobertor azul de damasco com as cenefas bordadas, forrado de tafetá amarelo, tudo com sua franja de ouro, e ceda*" (of fine blue silk fabric with a canopy ... embroidered with gold thread with a damask blue counterpane and embroidered valances lined with yellow taffeta, all fringed with gold and silk), and another "*de tafeta branco, bordado de ouro, e ceda de palhinha, com seu capelo bordado e cobertor de damasco branco grande, com cenefas bordadas de ouro, e três travesseiros, e quatro almofadinhas, tudo bordado da mesma ordem*" (in white taffeta, embroidered with gold and silk thread, with an embroidered canopy and a large white damask counterpane with gold embroidered valances, plus three bolsters and four small cushions, all similarly embroidered).<sup>70</sup>

These fabrics of Asian origin were highly cherished and even featured on royal beds, such as those of Afonso VI and his wife in the "*Casa de Sima do estrado de*

*dormir*" (upper bedchamber) and the "*Camara de dormir*" (bedchamber) of the Royal Palace of Ribeira. Both were adorned with Indian coverlets displaying fine hunting scenes ("*de montaria fina*"), the king's lined with crimson taffeta.<sup>71</sup>

Although of distant origin, from these examples it is possible to recognise not only the same types of pieces but an identical concern for harmony, in terms of matching ensembles. No less importantly, they are also similar in terms of the deteriorated condition of some of the objects, possibly due to continuous use or their already long inclusion in the respective heritage collections. Most of the descriptions cited do not, however, explain the iconography adorning the respective ornamental repertoires. However, by comparing the documentary sources with the material testimonies, we can begin to identify some of the trends, such as Indian coverlets from Bengal. Still valued and recognised today for their monochrome colour schemes and quality of execution, these objects were embroidered with silk and represented mythological and Biblical scenes, heraldic emblems, and horseback hunting of wild animals, such as wild boar, deer and stags,<sup>72</sup> and other motifs. The pieces from China, however, were above all decorated with vegetal and floral motifs embroidered with polychrome and gold silk thread.<sup>73</sup>

## **A few final thoughts**

While sketching the panorama that characterised the fabrics which furnished Portuguese beds from the mid-17th to early-18th century, it is impossible to give anything other than an approximate idea of the furnishing scheme used on the so-called "Cadaval Bed".<sup>74</sup> This is because, as we have sought to show, many possible variants existed in terms of the materials, colour schemes and quality of manufacture of the chosen fabrics, plus the types involved and the respective quantity. Nevertheless, based on the descriptions we have of two other beds that are closest in type to this one – that of the 4th Marquis of Távora and the bed at the Basilica of Santa María de Elche (Spain) – it can be inferred, despite their differences, that in addition to mattresses and bed linen, this bed had matching

hangings, possibly of crimson velvet, comprising at least a counterpane of the same fabric, headcloth and a canopy. These seem to have been the indispensable elements, but the set could also include curtains, a more or less imposing canopy, valances and bases. Today, it is hard to imagine a bed of this scale and characteristics completely dressed, but in the period in question that would very much have been the case...



[fig. 4]

**View of the bed in the National Palace of Sintra**

Portugal, 17th century (second half)

Palácio Nacional de Sintra

Inv. PNS6207

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## NOTES

- 1 Távora, 1972: 15.
- 2 Távora, 1972: 21; Madureira, 1992: 211.
- 3 Távora, 1972: 23; Claburn, 1988: 99; Ágredda Pino, 2017: 21.
- 4 An expression still used in an inventory from 1750 "*dos bens frutas e gados*" (of the fruit and livestock assets) of Quinta de Benavente owned by the dukes of Cadaval. See Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), *Feitos Findos*, Inventários, Letra D, maço 73, nº 10, fl. 5.
- 5 Richardson and Hamling, 2016: 6; Beard, 1997: 26; Thornton, 1978: 97.
- 6 Feigenbaum, 2014: 12.
- 7 Richardson and Hamling, 2017; SARTI, 2001: 205.
- 8 Richardson and Hamling, 2016: 5.
- 9 Feigenbaum, 2014; Volpi, 2014: 17–29.
- 10 Carita and Cardoso, 1983: 80.
- 11 Feigenbaum, 2014: 15.
- 12 Cardim, 2011: 166. See the text by Bastos, 2007: 151-160.
- 13 Franco, 2015: 220.
- 14 ANTT, *Arquivo da Casa dos Condes de Povolide*, supplement 1, *Memórias do 1º conde de Povolide*, vol. I, nº 13, fls. 112-112v, citado por Bastos, 2007: 159.
- 15 Franco, 2015: 222.
- 16 Cardim: 2011: 168. Although earlier than the period in focus, it is worth noting the duties of the lord chamberlain of the 5th Duke of Braganza (ca. 1510-1563): "*quando chegava de sua casa, se o Duque não avia ainda chamado, esperava na Guardaroupa, que era sempre na Antecamara, ate que chamava, e nesta primeira entrada, entravaõ com elleo moço da Guardaroupa, e o das chaves abria a janela, e se a cama estava descomposta, ou a colcha caída, lha concertavaõ ...*" (After arriving from home, if the duke has not yet called him, he shall wait in the wardrobe room, which is always in the antechamber, until called, whereupon he shall enter with the wardrobe officer, and the person with the keys shall open the window, and shall make the bed if it has not already been made, or if the bedspread is not in place ...); *Regimento dos officiaes da Casa do Duque D. Theodosio I. Tírey-o do archivo da Casa de Bragança, onde se conserva*, published by Sousa, tomo IV, parte I, 1950: 235.
- 17 Although very heavy, these "household hangings" (*armações de casa*), with sturdy materials, such as damask, but also tapestries and leathers, were the most common decorative option in Portuguese aristocratic homes until the final decades of the 18th century, representing a real sign of prestige and social distinction. Mesquita, 1992: I, 75; Ferreira, 2014: 542-544.
- 18 See Ferreira, 2014: 545.
- 19 On this matter, see the third chapter in Bohanan, 2012: 56-73 (Regularité: Color Schemes and Matched Sets); Ferreira, 2018: 202; Beard, 1997: XV.
- 20 See Bastos, 2018: 89-109.
- 21 *Relação da Chegada do Marquez de Roillac Embaxador de ElRey Christianissimo, 25 de Abril de 1645*, published by Coelho, 1940: 230.
- 22 Coelho, 1940: 231.
- 23 Coelho, 1940: 231.
- 24 Edwards, 2007: 15; Sarti, 2001: 206.
- 25 De Vries, 2008: 57, 148; Roche, 1998: 207.
- 26 Appearance noted in Ferreira, 2018: 199-200.
- 27 Such as the inventory of Francisco Pereira de Linde (de 1696), a Flemish businessman living in Rua de Valverde, which refers to four large mattresses, two *meãos* (medium-sized) mattresses and five small mattresses. See ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra F, maço 120 (A), nº 5, fl. 20v.
- 28 Távora, 1972: 14.

- 29 Bluteau, 1712: II, 61.
- 30 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra J, maço 347, nº 9, fl. 19v. Though this is the option most commonly used in the inventories of assets examined, I draw attention to the fact that not all of the mattresses were solely made of linen cloth. For example, the three mattresses on each of the beds of Afonso VI and Maria Francisca at the Palace of Ribeira were of crimson damask, the same material used to make the respective bolsters and small pillows as well as the pavilion, counterpane and curtains. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), códice 4173, *Do Governo de Portugal. Das Casas dos Reys e das Rainhas, Memoria do que esta nas Casas da rainha neste paço ...* fls. 67 and 68v. Mention of the crimson damask bed that animated the "silver lined bed" (*leyto chapado de prata*) mounted in the current King Sebastian Room for the death of Afonso VI in the Palace of Sintra in 1683 leads us to ponder the theory that it is the same ensemble. See ARQUIVO NACIONAL TORRE DO TOMBO (Lisbon), *Colecção de São Vicente*, liv. 22, *Rellação do q[ue] se fez em Cintra na morte de S[ua] Mag[estad]e que D[eu]s tem*, fl. 40v. My thanks to Bruno Martinho for sharing this document.
- 31 Sarti, 2001: 206.
- 32 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra J, maço 347, nº 9, fl. 51-52v.
- 33 Claburn, 1988: 104.
- 34 BNP, códice 4173, *Do Governo de Portugal. Das Casas dos Reys e das Rainhas, Memoria do que esta nas Casas da rainha neste paço ...*, fl. 68v. and Arquivo da Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna (AFCFA), doc. 3, *Inventário de Partilhas que se fizerão por morte e falecimento da senhora Donna Madaglena de Castro Marqueza de Fronteira e se fizerão e contenuou com o senhor Dom João Mascarenhas Marquês de Fronteira viuvo que da dita senhora ficou, lisboa 2 de Novembro de 1673*, published by Mesquita, 1992: II, 26.
- 35 On the distinction between the public and private sphere, and the personal and social obligations of the nobility and court, see Cunha e Monteiro, 2011: 202-243, and Cardim, 2011: 160-201.
- 36 Melo, 1992 [1651]: 32.
- 37 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra J, maço 347, nº 9, fl. 32-34v.
- 38 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra J, maço 347, nº 9, fls. 55-56.
- 39 Bastos, 2003: 204-207.
- 40 *Alparavaz* (a base, or lower valance) "*he a aba da Esteira, que cobre a extremidade do estrado, ou pano que dos colchoens para baixo cobre o vão do leito*" (is the flap of the mat that covers the side of the dais or cloth that hangs from the mattress down to the floor). Bluteau, vol. I, 1712: 278-279; Ágreda Pinto, 2017: 34.
- 41 BNP, códice 4173, *Do Governo de Portugal. Das Casas dos Reys e das Rainhas, Memoria do que esta nas Casas da rainha neste paço ...*, fl. 68v, left margin.
- 42 BIBLIOTECA DA AJUDA (BA), Ms. 54-XIII-17, nº 52, *Inventario dos Bens patrimoniais do Illustrissimo Senhor D. Ioseph de Menezes Bispo do Algarve*, Lisboa, 17 de Setembro 1680, fl.10v.
- 43 Sousa, 1956: 41, 44.
- 44 Bastos, 2012: 79-80; Ferreira, 2014: 549; Ferreira, 2018: 204.
- 45 Original quotation: "*de veludo carmezim com guarniçõis e franjas de ouro com algumas bordaduras do mesmo ouro, que se compoem de quatro cortinas forradas de tafetá com sete sanefas com a mesma guarnição e bordadura e seu ducel e espaldar e seu cobertor Irmão com vinte e quatro pessos da mesma fazenda com a mesma guarnição meudas de varios tamanhos e quatro panos de tafetá carmezim forrados de Ruão com seu galão de ouro.*"
- 46 Guerra, 1954: 16, 68.
- 47 Guerra, 1954: 68, also published by Távora, 1972: 25-27. Original quotation: "*Cama quarto cortinas com quarto panos forrados todos de nobreza da mesma cor cada pano com sinco covados; e hua pessa frajados e agualvados = sobre ceo da imperial franjado e bordado todo muito rico = espaldar da mesma forma com quarto panos do tamanho das cortinas = guarda colçoens; e rodapé tãobem franjado e galões = seis sanefas grandes ricamente bordadas e franjadas = quatorze pessos das goarniçoens da mesma cama franjadas e agualvadas; mayors e minors = duas goarniçoens com galoens e franjas e duas mais piquenas todas bordadas com galoens e franja = dous travesseiros com galoens pelo meyo = quarto bolças de nobreza forradas de olandilha com galoens de ouro; e o remate do teto da cama bordado e franjado sendo tudo de veludo carmezim e galoens; e franjas e ouro fino ...*".
- 48 Richardson e Hamling, 2017: 243.
- 49 Bohanan, 2012: 59.
- 50 Bohanan, 2012: 60.
- 51 Kraatz, 2005: 128.
- 52 Kraatz, 2005: 130-132.



- 53 The hangings mentioned would have been intended for an existing bed, as inferred by the sum of 13,000 réis paid to the cabinetmaker Manuel Carvalho for its cleaning and repair. The furnishings were made by the garment maker Manuel Alvares and silk weaver Manuel Lopes Delgado, to whom was paid, "*dos feitos da obra de seu officio*" (for the fruits of his trade), 49,827 and 15,900 réis, respectively. See BA, códice 51-VI-15, *Despesa que Antonio Cavide ... casas do Principe nosso Senhor de Corte Real por seu mandado, Abril de 668*, fl. 240v.
- 54 BA, códice 51-VI-15, *Orsamento da Cama que se ha de fazer para o Senhor Emfante para ho pallasio da Corte Real, 21 de abril de 668*, fl. 241.
- 55 BA, códice 51-VI-15, *Despesa que Antonio Cavide ...*; fl. 240-240v. Original quotation: "#oitenta couados de tella verde repassada de ouro cõ matizes brancos de que se formou o corpo da Camara a 2500 o couado [?] duzentos mil reis\_200U000 / # nouenta e dous couados de tella branca repassada de ouro para as guarnições roda, pes, acrescentamentos de guarnições de hum duçel verde e 3. folhas de almofadas á 3U000 o couado tresentos e trinta e hu mil e trezentos reis\_331U200 / # dous couados de tella verde repassada de ouro para acrescentamento do ditto docel á 3U300 o couado sette mil reis\_7U000 / #noue couados de telilha verde para forro das goteiras do ditto duçel á 1200 o couado des mil e oitocentos reis\_10U800 / ----- 549U000 / # sentto vinte e sette couados e meio de taffeta verde de Granada para forro da ditta cama a 240 rs o couado trinta e tres mil sento e sincoenta\_33U150 / #oitenta couados de olandilha de linho para a ditta cama guarda colchões e doçel á 100 o couado oito mil reis\_8U000 / #desaeis couados e mejo de chamalote verde para o guarda colchões á 600 o covado noue mil e noue senttos reis\_9U900" (my bold).
- 56 See Thronton, 1991: 158.
- 57 Sarti, 2001: 220. Original quotation: "em alguns casos a distinção entre quartos de cama privados e de ostentação sobrepor-se-à à diferença entre camas de Verão e camas de Inverno".
- 58 ANTT, *Tribunal do Santo Ofício*, Inquisição de Lisboa, Proc. nº 3529, fl. 66v.
- 59 *Relação do Baptismo*, 1643, unpaginated.
- 60 Villegas, 1670: 114-116. Original quotation: "... bordada sobre terciopelo verde, con relieve tan alto, que màs pareciã troços de ramos de oro sutilmente sacado ... Eran las goteras del mismo bordado, en medio las Armas de Portugal bordadas con relieve, mucho más alto, que sobresalia màs de medio palmo, coronadas con las Coronas Imperiales; en lugar de franjones de hilo de oro hilado, eran puntas de oro de aquarta, con que era lo màs precioso, que pudo ingeniar el cuidado .... Estavan las Cortinas de la Cama, aforradas en tela carmesi, tambien de oro tirado por la hilera, ... el Cobertor de la misma tela: las savanas de finissimo cambray con randas de a sesma; y las almohadas excedian en lo fino, del cambray; tanto que el razo de las fundas un vistoso tarnassolado hazia, con que el aliño luzia más."
- 61 BA, 51-VI-42, *Relação e forma de como se Bautizou o Serenissimo Principe D. João Nosso Senhor que Deos guarde, filho delRey D. Pedro 2º*, 1689, fl. 44v: "hũa rica cama de tela repassada de oiro, e azul com sabastos em roda e sanefas de outra tela mais levantada, com penhascos de oiro, e grandes franjões de oiro forrada toda de hũa primavera de cores e muito oiro ... e dentro da cama estavam tres almofadas irmans da mesma cama que fazia forma de cortina serrada."
- 62 Ferreira, 2016: 22-39.
- 63 Cunha e Monteiro, 2011: 235.
- 64 Castelo-Branco, 1990: 54.
- 65 Nascimento, 1950: 42.
- 66 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra J, maço 347, nº 9, fls. 56, 33 and 23v.
- 67 AFCFA, doc. 3, *Inventário de Partilhas que se fizerão por morte e falecimento da senhora Donna Madaglena de Castro Marqueza de Fronteira e se fizerão e contenuou com o senhor Dom João Mascarenhas Marquês de Fronteira viuvo que da dita senhora ficou, lisboa 2 de Novembro de 1673*, published by Mesquita, 1992: II, 25. Original quotation: "paramento de hum berço de tafeta dobre cramezim da India com passamane de prata con cobertor da India de setim encarnado de matizes sobre seo e cobertor gornecido de passamane de prata novo tudo forrado a cobertor de tafeta encarnado".
- 68 ANTT, *Orfanológicos*, Letra A, maço 306, nº 4, fls. 7-8v.
- 69 Sousa, 1950: 44.
- 70 ANTT, *Arquivos Particulares*, Casa de Santa Iria, caixa 10, doc. 117, fl. 1, cl. 2.
- 71 BNP, códice 4173, *Do Governo de Portugal. Das Casas dos Reys e das Rainhas, Memoria do que esta nas Casas da rainha neste paço ...*, fl. 67-68v. For more details, see BASTOS, 2018: 89-109.
- 72 Bluteau, 1716: V, 565. On this matter, see Karl, 2016; Cristóvão, 2017.
- 73 Ferreira, 2014a.
- 74 Very probably, and in line with its counterparts, the same fabric used on the bed was a reference point for the rest of the ornamentation in the bed chamber where it stood. Whereas in the former this look is confirmed by the record of the fabrics used to cover the walls of the bedroom and more than thirty chairs, in the case of the Elche bed, the donation, in addition to the bed, of six stools dressed in the same crimson velvet was crucial.



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