



Actions and strategies of international cooperation for the creation of the National Archive of Guinea-Bissau

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Submitted on: 06/19/2023. **Approved on:** 01/23/2024. **Published on:** mm/dd/yyyy.

ABSTRACT

This article examines the collaborative efforts of the Guinea-Bissau government, Portuguese and Brazilian public institutions, and universities to establish a national archive for the country, ensuring both legal and ethical compliance. It presents preliminary findings from the Project for the Preservation and Conservation of the Documentary Historical Heritage of Guinea-Bissau, funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Peacebuilding Fund in Guinea-Bissau. A key component of this project was a training course for technicians and administrators involved in archival and document management within Guinea-Bissau's public sector, led by professors from Brazil and Portugal. The methodology employed combined

a narrative of experience, detailing the historical, geographical, and institutional context of public archives in Guinea-Bissau and the project's objectives, with a critical analysis based on bibliographic and documentary research, as well as on-site observation and action. The findings highlight a substantial amount of work remaining to address the challenges facing the creation of Guinea-Bissau's national archive, as well as the development and implementation of comprehensive archival policies and document management programs within the country.

Keywords: record management; archives; Guinea-Bissau; professional training; international cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of a public archive, whether at the national, regional, or local level anywhere in the world, is an endeavor demanding coordinated action across economic, political, technological, and social spheres. It requires substantial investment in physical, technical, and technological infrastructure to house collections, facilitate document management programs, and deliver archival services. Equally important is the training and development of qualified personnel, coupled with the political will to enact legislation and archival policies that guarantee a long-term commitment to the preservation of archives.

These challenges are particularly pronounced in regions such as Africa. With the rise of informational capitalism, or what Castells (2002) refers to as the emergence of informationalism¹, Africa has been largely excluded from the technological revolution and the expanding network society of the past four decades. Castells (2002, p. 107) poignantly describes the situation:

O surgimento do capitalismo informacional/global no último quarto do século XX coincidiu com o colapso das economias africanas, a desintegração de muitos dos seus Estados e a dissolução da maioria de suas sociedades. Como consequência, fome, epidemias, violência, guerras civis, massacres, êxodos em massa e caos social e político constituem, neste final de milênio, traços característicos da terra que assistiu ao nascimento do fóssil Lucy, talvez o ancestral comum da humanidade. [A combinação dos aspectos estruturais e das circunstâncias sociais promovem uma] complexa interação entre economia, tecnologia, sociedade e política no desenvolvimento de um processo que nega a condição de humanidade ao povo africano, bem como a todos nós, em nosso ser mais profundo. (Castells, 2002, p. 107)².

For instance, in the realm of telecommunications – a cornerstone of network formation, economic activity, and public services in the so-called information society – Guinea-Bissau significantly trails the global average. Internet access, introduced only in the 2000s, grew substantially from 2016 onwards. However, as of 2021, a mere 35% of the population had internet access. Furthermore, the expansion of broadband connections has been sluggish, with virtually no residents possessing high-speed internet connections (defined as speeds exceeding those of the outdated Integrated Services Digital Network, or over 256 kBit/s)³.

Given that access to information is an irreversible trend in applied social sciences, it is crucial to reframe it as a fundamental element in the dynamics of power. In her work, “Programme de désordre absolu: décoloniser le musée,” Françoise Vergès argues that

1 Castells defines informationalism as “[...] a development mechanism where the primary source of productivity is understood as the qualitative capacity to optimize the combination and utilization of production factors based on information and knowledge.” (Castells, 2002, p. 27).

2 Translation: “The emergence of informational/global capitalism in the last quarter of the 20th century coincided with the collapse of African economies, the disintegration of many of their states, and the dissolution of most of their societies. As a consequence, famine, epidemics, violence, civil wars, massacres, mass exoduses, and social and political chaos have characterized, at the end of the millennium, the land that witnessed the birth of the fossil Lucy, perhaps the common ancestor of humanity. [The combination of structural aspects and social circumstances promotes a] complex interaction between economy, technology, society, and politics in developing a process that denies the condition of humanity to the African people, as well as to all of us, in our deepest being” (Castells, 2002, p. 10, editorial translation).

3 For more details see: <https://www.dadosmundiais.com/africa/guine-bissau/telecomunicacoes.php>.

while the fully decolonizing museums and cultural institutions seems an impossibility, these spaces must nonetheless remain open to change and transformation to address demands for reparation, restitution, and historical social justice.

In the context of trilateral cooperation between Brazil, Portugal, and Guinea-Bissau for the establishment of a national archive, it is imperative to adopt a decolonial perspective. This approach recognizes the historical appropriation of narratives and the potential pitfalls of applying pre-established archival theories and practices to this unique context. It necessitates fostering Bissau-Guinean leadership in defining archival policies, valuing local voices and perspectives, and actively avoiding the reproduction of asymmetric power structures that could undermine the authenticity and preservation of Guinea-Bissau's memory. The construction of the national archive should be a collaborative and inclusive endeavor, one that recognizes and respects Guinea-Bissau's history and culture, avoids the imposition of foreign models, and ultimately contributes to the emancipation and appreciation of the nation's archival heritage.

This paper examines the case of Guinea-Bissau, a Sub-Saharan African nation, one of forty-eight countries situated south of the Sahara Desert whose borders were arbitrarily drawn by European colonial powers based on political and economic interests rather than geographical or ethnic considerations. The article briefly explores the country's historical-geographical context, its present political landscape, and their influence on the establishment and preservation of archives in Guinea-Bissau.

Additionally, the article highlights several initiatives undertaken since the country's independence. These include efforts by both national and international public administration bodies and universities to promote personnel training in archival practices, offering a brief analysis of initiatives conducted at the end of 2022 by a group of university professors and Luso-Brazilian researchers aimed at fostering action and broadening strategies for establishing the national archive. The article outlines potential responses to the significant challenges Guinea-Bissau faces in safeguarding its archival heritage, underscoring the urgency of these efforts.

METHODOLOGY

This paper presents a descriptive and explanatory account of an experience, detailing its historical, geographical, and institutional contexts, as well as the proposed objectives. This is followed by a critical analysis, grounded in bibliographic and documentary research, and in on-site observation and participation, highlighting the key aspects of the experience and the outcomes achieved.

Brief historical-geographical context of guinea-bissau

Guinea-Bissau, a small nation situated on the west coast of Africa, is bordered by Senegal to the north, Guinea Conakry to the south and east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Encompassing 36,125 square kilometers, this country is home to an estimated 2

million people. The history of Guinea-Bissau is rich and complex, marked by centuries of the slave trade, Portuguese colonization, and an lengthy struggle for independence. The official language is Portuguese (8.1%), with Creole (34%), Fula (16.6%), and Balanta (14.6%) being the most spoken native languages.)⁴.

Guinea-Bissau boasts a diverse population, comprising various ethnic groups, including the Fulas, Mandingas, Balantas, and Manjacos. The majority of the population practices Islam, with a substantial Christian minority. The economy predominantly relies on agriculture, with rice, cashew nuts, and palm oil as the primary exports. Fishing also plays a significant role in the country's economic landscape.

The region's earliest inhabitants were likely Bantu peoples, who were gradually displaced by migrations of other ethnic groups, notably the Fulas and Mandingas. Portuguese explorers first visited the coastal region of Guinea-Bissau in the 15th century, and in 1446, they established a colony in Cacheu, the former capital. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the region became a major hub of the transatlantic slave trade, with the Portuguese building numerous forts along the coast.

Guinea-Bissau was formally established as a Portuguese colony in 1879. In the subsequent decades, resistance movements began to emerge, laying the groundwork for independence efforts. These efforts were galvanized in 1965 under the leadership of Amílcar Cabral, founder of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), a Marxist-leaning revolutionary party.

The Colonial War, launched in 1961 through armed struggle led by the PAIGC, was a violent and devastating period for the country, with the southern and northern regions bearing the brunt of the military conflict. In 1973, as the war neared its conclusion, Amílcar Cabral was assassinated. Aristides Maria Pereira assumed the role of Secretary-General of the PAIGC, unilaterally declaring the country's independence that same year. While Portugal did not formally recognize this declaration, it was evident that they could no longer sustain the war effort, and many Portuguese settlers began to leave the country.

Guinea-Bissau formally declared its independence on September 24, 1973, with Luís Cabral as its first president. However, it was not until the Carnation Revolution, a military coup on April 25, 1974, that ended the fascist regime in Portugal, paving the way for official recognition. The war concluded, and the new Portuguese government initiated negotiations with the PAIGC, ultimately recognizing Guinea-Bissau's independence on September 10, 1974. To distinguish it from the other two Guineas colonized by European powers (Guinea Conakry by France and Equatorial Guinea by Spain), the capital city of Bissau was incorporated into the country's name.

The PAIGC assumed control of both Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, with the intention of integrating the two countries, both of which were reliant on external aid for consolidate

4 For a more information see: <https://www.dadosmundiais.com/africa/guine-bissau/index.php>.

their independent status. However, this aid was mismanaged, resulting in “glaring economic aberrations” that exacerbated social inequalities. This shift replaced a period of hope and optimism with one of uncertainty and hardship, as noted by Cardoso and Augel (1993):

Construiu-se um Estado a molde do Estado Colonial: centralizador, monopolista e repressivo. E por causa da ineficiência do Estado, as conquistas conseguidas com o impulso inicial foram sendo perdidas progressivamente. [...] O período de luta e dinamismo da ‘reconstrução nacional’ abriu espaço primeiro para a repressão e o autoritarismo, depois para a descrença, a apatia e o cinismo. (Cardoso; Augel, 1993, p. 14)⁵.

In 1980, a coup d’état severed the integrated management model between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, which had been accused of causing widespread poverty and assassinating political opponents. A constitutional revision followed with the establishment of a multiparty system. The first presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 1994, but four years later, a military coup plunged the country into a devastating two-year civil war. In the ensuing years, political instability triggered further coups and democratic setbacks, plunging Guinea-Bissau into a severe economic crisis, weakening its institutions, and exacerbating social conditions (Pinto, 2008).

All of these conflicts took a heavy toll on the country’s documentary heritage, as observed by Jago Djaló:

No caso da Guiné-Bissau, pode-se dizer que desde o início da colonização o património escrito foi vítima de uma série de tragédias: a ocupação colonial, a guerra de libertação nacional e o conflito político-militar de 1998. Estas três etapas marcam o triste balanço do património documental nacional. (Djaló, 2004, p. 98)⁶.

Meanwhile, the National People’s Assembly of Guinea-Bissau enacted the Constitution of the Republic in 1984 and revised and amended it on five occasions (1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, and 2001). Its preamble offers a heroic narrative of the PAIGC’s history. In its current form, it encompasses 133 articles, including provisions on education and culture, heritage and identity, intellectual, artistic, and scientific freedom, and the right to information.

5 Translation: “A nation built modeling the Colonial State: centralizing, monopolistic, and repressive. The inefficiency of this state led to a gradual erosion of the gains achieved during the initial momentum of independence. The period of struggle and dynamism that characterized “national reconstruction” gave way first to repression and authoritarianism, and then to disillusionment, apathy, and cynicism.” (Cardoso; Augel, 1993, p. 14, editorial translation).

6 Translation: “Regarding Guinea-Bissau’s case, one can say that since the onset of colonization, the written heritage has been subjected to a series of calamities: colonial occupation, the war for national liberation, and the political-military conflict of 1998. These three stages constitute the distressing record of the national documentary heritage” (Djaló, 2004, p. 98, editorial translation).

The Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (INEP) e the arquivos históricos nacionais (AHN)

In Guinea-Bissau, there is no formal national archive, but an archival collection that includes documents from both the colonial and post-colonial periods, known as the AHN (National Historical Archives), which are managed by the INEP (National Institute of Studies and Research).

The AHN originated from the creation of the Museu da Guiné Portuguesa, on November 29, 1947, which included a library and an archive to facilitate research and access to documents related to the territory. The archival collection primarily consists of copies of “milhares de documentos referentes à Guiné”, held by the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU) in Lisbon (Djalo, 2018, p. 38)⁷.

INEP, affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, emerged from the aspirations of a small group of Guinean intellectuals seeking to advance theoretical and applied studies in the political, social, and economic sciences (Augel, 2011). Established by Decree No. 31 on November 10, 1984, INEP’s mission is to develop, promote, and disseminate research in both the social and natural sciences, contributing to the nation’s development while nurturing and empowering individuals.

The institute boasts a team of permanent national researchers who collaborate with other professionals and institutions, both domestic and international, to conduct studies, execute projects, and organize events that disseminate their research findings. INEP’s facilities in the capital city house the Biblioteca Pública, which boasts a collection of around 70,000 volumes, and the AHN, which holds approximately 1,600 linear meters of permanent archives from both the colonial and post-colonial eras. As noted by the Portal Casa Comum, INEP “has become a national and international reference point for scientific reflection on West Africa in general and Guinea-Bissau in particular.”⁸

According to Alfa Djalo, Director of the AHN in 2018, in addition to executing scientific research policies and promoting research activities across all domains of social and natural sciences, INEP’s mission includes:

Organizar o Arquivo Histórico Nacional, com a exclusividade de recolher, tratar e conservar os documentos históricos, no quadro do artigo segundo, alínea b) do Decreto-lei n.º 31/84 publicado no suplemento do Boletim Oficial. O Arquivo Histórico Nacional, no quadro da sua atribuição, recebe os documentos de carácter histórico ou intermediário, produzidos ou recebidos pelas instituições públicas e garante a sua acessibilidade ao público em geral. No exercício das suas atribuições o Arquivo Histórico trabalhou em colaboração mútua com as instituições públicas, dando-lhes instruções para melhor aplicação da política de gestão de documentos administrativos nas respetivas instituições. [...] Ao longo da sua existência o Arquivo

7 Translation: “thousands of documents concerning Guinea” (Djalo, 2018, p. 38, editorial translation).

8 See: Casa Comum. Parcerias. Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas, Bissau. 2020. Available at: <http://casacomum.org/cc/parceiros?inst=10>.

Histórico percorreu todo o país para recolher toda a documentação colonial portuguesa arquivada em diferentes postos administrativos, nas oito regiões e trinta e dois sectores administrativos que compõem a Guiné-Bissau. (Djalo, 2018, p. 38-39)⁹.

From its establishment until 1998, INEP was a hive of activity, producing valuable research, publications, courses, and seminars, while also diligently organizing and expanding its collections and facilities. However, the military coup of that year, which plunged the country into a devastating civil war, resulted in the occupation of INEP's premises. Transformed into a military base, the institute's buildings and resources were subjected to bombings, looting, and widespread destruction. By the end of the two-year conflict, the damage inflicted upon the documentary heritage was immense, with an estimated loss of over 60% of the total collection, in addition to the complete disappearance of all equipment.¹⁰

According to Iaguba Djalo,

Com a guerra que eclodiu em 1998, os guineenses assistiram a uma agressão do seu património documental nacional. Uma parte importante deste património cultural que representava as fontes históricas mais preciosas que a história transmitiu foi destruída. Esta perda constitui o mais grave atentado contra a personalidade cultural da Guiné-Bissau desde a independência. (Djalo, 2004, p. 102)¹¹.

In a 2017 interview, Diógenes de Barros Lopes Cardoso, then director of the INEP Public Library, reflected on the 1998-1999 conflicts, stating:

[...] esse foi o período em que a Biblioteca registrou perdas qualitativas e quantitativas tanto em equipamento quanto no seu próprio fundo documental. O episódio tristemente marcante desse período [...] foi o dos danos e roubos perpetrados em alguns dos tesouros mais importantes da Biblioteca: atlas, enciclopédias, dicionários etc. Em termos de balanço dos prejuízos do conflito político-militar de 1998 e 1999, a Biblioteca registrou cerca de 30% de perda do acervo total que tinha antes do conflito. Essas perdas foram consideradas irreparáveis. (Cardoso; Carvalho, 2017, p. 4)¹².

Cardoso further noted that staff training, especially in the use of digital technologies, remained the institute's most pressing challenge. Regarding physical infrastructure, the director mentioned the pursuit of international assistance:

9 Translation: "Organizing the National Historical Archive, with the exclusive mandate to collect, process, and preserve historical documents, as outlined in Article 2, Clause (b) of Decree-Law No. 31/84 published in the Official Bulletin supplement. The National Historical Archive, within its mandate, receives historical or intermediate documents produced or received by public institutions and ensures their accessibility to the general public. In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Historical Archive has worked in mutual collaboration with public institutions, providing them with guidelines for better application of administrative document management policies within their respective institutions. [...] Throughout its existence, the Historical Archive has traversed the entire country to collect all Portuguese colonial documentation archived in various administrative posts, across the eight regions and thirty-two administrative sectors that make up Guinea-Bissau." (Djalo, 2018, p. 38-39, editorial translation).

10 Casa Comum. Arquivos. INEP, Bissau. Available at: http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_7284.

11 Translation: "With the war that erupted in 1998, Guineans witnessed an assault on their national documentary heritage. An important part of this cultural heritage, representing the most precious historical sources that history has transmitted, was destroyed. This loss constitutes the most severe attack on the cultural personality of Guinea-Bissau since independence". (Djalo, 2004, p. 102, editorial translation).

12 Translation: "[...] this was the period in which the Library registered qualitative and quantitative losses both in equipment and in its own documentary collection. The most tragically significant episode of this period [...] was the damage and theft of some of the Library's most important treasures: atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. In terms of assessing the damages from the 1998-1999 political-military conflict, the Library recorded a loss of about 30% of its total collection prior to the conflict. These losses were considered irreparable." (Cardoso; Carvalho, 2017, p. 4, editorial translation).

Depois do conflito político-militar de 1998 e 1999, a Biblioteca se beneficiou de uma atenção especial da comunidade internacional, entre elas a CPLP, na recuperação das suas infraestruturas (mobiliários e imobiliários). [...] Ultimamente, o INEP tem diligenciado ações importantes no âmbito da mobilização de recursos junto às organizações internacionais para a reabilitação do espaço físico da Biblioteca Pública e do Arquivo Histórico Nacional. Uma dessas organizações solicitadas foi a CPLP (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa). Neste momento, este assunto é considerado uma das prioridades do INEP. (Cardoso; Carvalho, 2017, p. 5-6)¹³.

Following 1999, INEP embarked on a period of rebuilding its infrastructure and cataloging the surviving documents. The AHN, serving as custodians of documentation produced during the colonial era, house records from the central government of the province and institutions that operated there, such as courts, hospitals, ports, post offices, and telegraphs. Additionally, the AHN holds records from administrative posts and civil jurisdictions across the entire territory of Guinea-Bissau, extending beyond the capital of Bissau.¹⁴

According to Iaguba Djalo (2021, n. p.)¹⁵, the AHN serve as “o epicentro do patrimônio documental arquivístico da Guiné-Bissau”, yet it is still grappling with the aftermath of the damage sustained during the civil war. Djalo, the current coordinator of the AHN, explains that the war also impacted other vital documentation services in the country. The salvaged documentary collections from key ministries remain boxed up, and hundreds of cassette tapes containing thousands of hours of testimonies from freedom fighters – living testaments to the liberation struggle collected by INEP’s Oral History Program of Guinea-Bissau’s Liberation Memory – were destroyed. Moreover, a significant portion of microfilms, photographs, and computers holding digital representations of historical documents was lost.

For Iaguba Djalo (2021), the process of recovering the nation’s memory can serve as a unifying, inclusive, and pluralistic force for the people of Guinea-Bissau, fostering reconciliation and coexistence. In this endeavor, Djalo identifies the primary objective as “the long-term preservation of documentary collections and their availability in electronic format for public access”. He explains that the most pressing challenges, beyond rehabilitating the physical spaces of the AHN, involve centralizing and digitizing all documents deemed essential for national development, including those that are currently dispersed or stored without proper identification.

The AHN coordinator also stressed the necessity of revising and updating the country’s archival legislation. They emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Brazilian Embassy in Bissau for technical training and professional development at INEP, in partnership with the

13 Translation: “After the political-military conflict of 1998 and 1999, the Library received special attention from the international community, including the CPLP, in recovering its infrastructure (furniture and real estate). [...] Recently, INEP has undertaken significant actions to mobilize resources from international organizations for rehabilitating the physical space of the Public Library and the National Historical Archive. One of the organizations solicited was the CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries). Currently, this issue is considered one of INEP’s priorities.” (Cardoso; Carvalho, 2017, p. 5-6, editorial translation).

14 Casa Comum. Arquivos. INEP, Bissau. Available at: http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_7284.

15 Translation: “the epicenter of Guinea-Bissau’s archival documentary heritage” (Djalo, 2021, n. p. , editorial translation)

Guinea-Bissau Association of Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists. Furthermore, they acknowledged the crucial financial and material support received from the United Nations (UN) for the reconstruction of the AHN.¹⁶

Partnerships with other entities and countries have also played a pivotal role in the recovery of Guinea-Bissau's documentary heritage. The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) financed equipment for the NHA and Public Library buildings, and some rehabilitation of the external structure was carried out, ensuring the safety of both collections and staff. Cooperation with France in 2000 provided financial resources for training technicians and acquiring a significant documentary collection in French, thereby bolstering research capabilities. German cooperation funded the acquisition of furniture, while the *Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development* supported the purchase of essential protective and cleaning materials for the collections. *The Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Theory* financed the cataloging and description of approximately ten thousand documents from the past century, as well as the acquisition of additional materials.

Alfa Djalo also enumerates other partnerships that were instrumental in the restructuring of the NHA: 1) support from the CPLP in reorganizing the archives after the civil war and acquiring equipment; 2) financial support and digitization of archival collections by the Fundação Mário Soares; 3) financial support from the British Library; and 4) support from the Universidade da Madeira in digitizing approximately 2,000 photographs depicting various aspects of Guinean society (Djalo, 2018, p. 40).

According to information provided by INEP to Brazilian archivist and researcher Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira (2022, pp. 318-319), the AHN currently houses a collection spanning 1,626.9 linear meters (comprising 14.3 meters of current documentation and 12.6 meters of intermediate archives). This collection encompasses textual, iconographic, audiovisual, sound, and cartographic documents in both analog and digital formats, as well as microfilms, ranging from 1726 to 1988. Notably, these documents have been transferred exclusively from other institutions, with no contributions from public administration due to material and financial constraints. The collection consists of 99% public documentation, with no quantified percentage of manuscripts.

The AHN possesses four storage facilities with an estimated capacity of 2,000 linear meters. However, there are no dedicated repositories for non-textual documents, nor is there equipment available to access these materials. Regarding specific preservation conditions within the storage spaces, the only measure mentioned is adequate lighting.

The institution employs five permanent staff members – three historians and two sociologists – along with one contractor. Four of these individuals are tasked with classifying documents, but without adhering to the principles of provenance and original order. Archival

16 Seminário Lusofonia Multicultural nos Arquivos Nacionais da CPLP: Rede (In)formativa da Memória Comum. 2021. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7C8dSrPuT5Y&t=7981s>.

description has been initiated using the X-arq database, with description elements adapted from the ISAD(G). Access is provided through printed research instruments, and depending on the specific document set, consultation may be restricted.

FIGURE 1 – INEP’s facade of “AHN”



Source: Photo by Cynthia Roncaglio (2023).

FIGURE 2 – Part of the archival collection to be processed



Source: Photo by Cynthia Roncaglio (2023).

FIGURE 3 – INEP’s “Biblioteca Nacional”



Source: Photo by Cynthia Roncaglio (2023).

FIGURE 4 – INEP’s “Biblioteca Nacional”



Source: Photo by Cynthia Roncaglio (2023).

Notably, there is no established digitization or preservation policy in place for the collection, and while an estimated 20% of the documents have been digitized, no dedicated repositories exist for this digital documentation. When questioned about the institution's role in shaping the country's archival policy, Djalo stated:

Centralizar Arquivos intermediários e permanentes da administração pública, de forma a assegurar condições de preservação, proteção e acesso ao patrimônio arquivístico do país, tendo em vista seus valores administrativo e histórico, os interesses da comunidade e seu valor como fonte para a pesquisa e a produção de conhecimentos. (Siqueira, 2022, p. 319)¹⁷.

Until 2022, INEP lacked affiliation with any international organization and relied on the database of the Casa Comum portal, hosted by the Fundação Mário Soares in Portugal, to disseminate a portion of the information from the NHA (Siqueira, 2022, pp. 349-350). Although INEP launched its own webpage in 2022, the limited information available on the site hinders remote user engagement with the institution and impedes the effective dissemination of its services and collections.

In 2021, INEP acknowledged the need to strengthen its ties with the CPLP and other national archives, aiming to expand exchange and cooperation agreements, which were virtually nonexistent until then. Despite this, the organization expressed a keen interest in these matters and demonstrated a willingness to:

criar um espaço de formação, um espaço de intercâmbio documental e um espaço de cooperação entre profissionais, arquivistas ou professores, solidários de uma lusofonia plural e unida, que partilham os seus conhecimentos, competências e saberes (Siqueira, 2022, p. 351-353)¹⁸.

When questioned about the establishment of a common archive, an idea proposed by the CPLP some years ago, Iaguba Djalo remarked:

A criação de um arquivo comum reunindo o património arquivístico comum, em formato digital, dos arquivos nacionais lusófonos, irá aumentar a diversidade de fontes documentais de língua portuguesa e sobretudo ajuda os países membros a conservar e restaurar seu património documental, em particular o património impresso. Para atingir estes objectivos, os arquivos nacionais dos países membros precisam de

17 Translation: "Centralize intermediate and permanent archives of public administration to ensure conditions for the preservation, protection, and access to the country's archival heritage, considering its administrative and historical values, the interests of the community, and its value as a source for research and knowledge production.." (Siqueira, 2022, p. 319, editorial translation).

18 Translation: "criar um espaço de formação, um espaço de intercâmbio documental e um espaço de cooperação entre profissionais, arquivistas ou professores, solidários de uma lusofonia plural e unida, que partilham os seus conhecimentos, competências e saberes" (Siqueira, 2022, pp. 351-353, editorial translation).

trabalhar em colaboração, para identificar, desenvolver e facilitar a implementação de soluções que permitam selecionar, recolher, digitalizar e preservar conteúdos em língua portuguesa a fim de garantir a acessibilidade. (Siqueira, 2022, p. 359-360)¹⁹.

At an international colloquium in 1993, reflecting on two decades of Guinea-Bissau's independence, Carlos Cardoso and Johannes Augel (1993, pp. 13, 15)²⁰, highlighted that “o maior obstáculo ao desenvolvimento do país é de ordem política, a ausência de uma boa governação”. They further emphasized that “a precária formação dos quadros é identificada como um dos principais estrangulamentos do desenvolvimento”. The scenario outlined by Cardoso and Augel persisted in subsequent decades, posing the primary barrier to the establishment of a national archival policy and the creation of a national archive for the country.

Strategies for international cooperation for staff training and the creation of the national archive of guinea-bissau

Promoting the preservation of archives in Africa has become an increasingly relevant international topic. Collaborative partnerships between researchers and professionals across borders have facilitated the exchange of expertise and effective methodologies. As detailed below, intercultural cooperation and dialogue play a pivotal role in establishing and enhancing national archives in regions where infrastructure and resources for preservation are scarce.

In 2000, Professor Armando Malheiro da Silva, a distinguished Portuguese researcher and professor, joined the Universidade de Brasília as a visiting professor. During his tenure, he initiated conversations with researcher Shirley Franco, then a master's student in the university's Graduate Program in Information Science. These early encounters marked the inception of a lasting academic and professional partnership.

By 2012, their collaboration had significantly deepened. Professor Malheiro, at the invitation of German researcher Birgit Embalo, led archive management courses at INEP in Guinea-Bissau. This two-week engagement provided the professor with a valuable platform to impart his knowledge and expertise to Bissau-Guinean staff and officials.

In 2014, while conducting postdoctoral research at the Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Professor Shirley Franco established a dialogue with Marcelo Siqueira, a public servant at the Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, further strengthening their existing collaborative network.

Five years later, during her participation in the “IX Seminário Internacional de Saberes Arquivísticos²¹”, in Coimbra, Professor Franco, en route to Guinea-Bissau from Portugal, reconnected with colleagues Siqueira and Malheiro. The seminar also provided an opportunity

19 Translation: “The creation of a common archive, uniting the shared archival heritage in digital format among Lusophone national archives, will enhance the diversity of Portuguese-language documentary sources and, crucially, assist member countries in conserving and restoring their documentary heritage, particularly printed materials. To achieve these goals, the national archives of member countries must collaborate to identify, develop, and facilitate the implementation of solutions that enable the selection, collection, digitization, and preservation of Portuguese-language content, ensuring its accessibility.” (Siqueira, 2022, p. 359-360, editorial translation).

20 Translation: “the biggest obstacle to the country's development is political in nature, the absence of good governance” “the precarious training of staff is identified as one of the main bottlenecks for development.”. (Cardoso; Augel, 1993, p. 13; 15, editorial translation).

21 Site: <https://sites.google.com/view/projetosesa/mem%C3%B3ria/ix-sesa-2019-coimbra>.

to meet Maria Beatriz Marques, a professor at the Universidade de Coimbra and president of the seminar, who was notably supervising Siqueira's doctoral research on the common archives of CPLP member states.

Professor Maria Beatriz Marques, renowned for her research on "the archives of Lusophony," collaborated with Siqueira to organize a roundtable discussion on the current state of the national archives of the CPLP. This event notably featured directors of the national archives of Portugal, Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, and the Historical Archive of the CPLP.

Following this 2019 reunion, Professor Franco visited the INEP archives in Bissau, where she connected with Iaguba Djalo, the individual responsible for the country's archives and library. During this visit, she proposed collaborative projects to enhance archive management in Guinea-Bissau. In the following year, Professor Franco facilitated a connection between Professor Marcelo and Professor Iaguba, enabling Marcelo to receive assistance with his doctoral research on the archives of Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOP).

In 2021, Professors Shirley and Iaguba contributed virtually to the event "Temática da Lusofonia Multicultural nos Arquivos Nacionais da CPLP: Rede (In)formativa da Memória Comum"²², convened by Professors Maria Beatriz and Marcelo Siqueira. During this event, Professor Iaguba presented the paper "Os Desafios da Preservação e Conservação do Património Histórico-Documental da Guiné-Bissau no INEP".

Following this, in September 2021, Professor Shirley Franco initiated on-site archive management training for Bissau-Guinean personnel at the INEP library. To enrich the training, she enlisted the expertise of several Brazilian professors, including Professor Cynthia Roncaglio from the Universidade de Brasília, who delivered virtual lectures. In conjunction with this training, Professor Shirley and Professor Iaguba developed a comprehensive training initiative in 2021 aimed at fostering collaboration between Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, and Portugal in the archival domain.

Consequently, in 2022, INEP, in collaboration with the Guinea-Bissau Association of Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists (AGDAB) launched a training and capacity-building course for technicians and agents responsible for managing public administration archives and documents in Guinea-Bissau. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through the Peacebuilding Fund in Guinea-Bissau, provided financial backing for this initiative as part of the Project for the Preservation and Conservation of Guinea-Bissau's Historical Documentary Heritage.

Between April and October 2022, preparatory virtual meetings were conducted with the Portuguese-Brazilian trainers and the INEP/AGDAB technical team, spearheaded by Professor Iaguba Djalo. During these meetings, the proposal's specifics (objectives, program content, methodology, team formation, planning of technical visits to national archives, etc.) were thoroughly discussed. It was determined that the training activities would be executed in two phases.

22 Site: https://www.gov.br/arquivonacional/pt-br/sites_eventos/eventos-1/an-participa-de-mesa-redonda-sobre-iniciativas-dos-arquivos-de-paises-lusofonos.

The first phase took place from July 23 to 30, 2022, consisting of three trainers: two Portuguese scholars, Professor Dr. Armando Malheiros da Silva (Universidade do Porto) and Professor Dr. Maria Beatriz Marques (Universidade de Coimbra), and one Brazilian scholar, Professor Dr. Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira (Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro and Arquivo Nacional do Brasil). The subsequent phase, conducted from November 26 to December 2, 2022, was led by two Brazilian professors, Professor Dr. Shirley Carvalhêdo Franco and Professor Dr. Cynthia Roncaglio, both affiliated with the Universidade de Brasília.

During the first phase, the Portuguese-Brazilian trainers conducted site visits to the civil registration archives of Bafatá and Gabú, two significant regional cities, to gain firsthand insights into the state of public administration archives outside the capital. In Bissau, they visited the INEP Library, the AHN, and archival units within the Ministry of Justice. These visits provided a comprehensive understanding of the existing archival structures, collections, staffing, equipment, technologies, and facilities. The course content delivered by the professors encompassed document and information management within the public administration of Guinea-Bissau, with a focus on the national archives of CPLP countries, using Guinea-Bissau as an illustrative case study.

During the second phase, the Brazilian trainers visited Cacheu, a city of historical significance in the region bearing the same name, known as the departure point of the first slave ship to the Americas in the early 16th century. While a technical visit to the Cacheu Archive was not feasible, the professors visited the Memorial of Slavery and the Slave Trade, accompanied by local officials. In Bissau, they also revisited the INEP Library and the AHN. The course content delivered by the professors centered on archival classification and description, as well as the development of technical instruments derived from these functions to organize public administration archives in Guinea-Bissau.

Alongside the training activities and technical visits, throughout both phases, the Portuguese-Brazilian trainers engaged in meetings with public administration officials and representatives from other local institutions. These included the Minister of Public Administration, Labor, Employment, and Social Security; the Minister of National Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research; the Minister of Justice; the Director of INEP; the Dean of the Universidade Lusófona de Bissau (ULB); Vice-dean of ULB; President of Universidade Colinas de Boé; and resident representatives of the UNDP.

FIGURE 5 – Visit to the Minister of Public Administration, Labor, Employment, and Social Security.



Source: Collection of Shirley Carvalhêdo Franco (2022).

FIGURE 6 – Opening of the training course on public administration archive management in Guinea-Bissau.



Source: Collection of Shirley Carvalhêdo Franco (2022).

FIGURE 7 – Opening session of the training course on public administration archive management in Guinea-Bissau.



Source: Collection of Shirley Carvalhêdo Franco (2022).

FIGURE 8 – Professors Armando Malheiro da Silva, Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira, and Maria Beatriz Marques.



Source: Collection of Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira (2022).

FIGURE 9 – Professors Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira, Maria Beatriz Marques, and Armando Malheiro da Silva being honored with the “*panu di pinti*.”



Source: Collection of Marcelo Nogueira de Siqueira (2022).

The prevailing socio-cultural landscape in Guinea-Bissau reveals significant gaps in the regulation and formulation of policies pertaining to archives and libraries. From institutional frameworks to personnel statuses and the modernization of archival systems, numerous obstacles must be addressed to ensure the nation’s permanent archives are adequately preserved to serve the diverse needs of administrators, citizens, researchers, and the general public.

Currently, the operative legal text concerning archives is Decree No. 17, dated July 24, 1989, which outlines the conditions for the organization and operation of INEP’s historical archives. While this decree represented a groundbreaking advancement in the archival field at the time of its enactment, it is now outdated in several respects.

Against this backdrop, AGDAB, under the leadership of Professor Iaguba Djalo, commissioned a study to draft and update the legal framework governing archives and libraries in Guinea-Bissau. The UNDP, through the Peacebuilding Fund in Guinea-Bissau, provided financial support for this endeavor. The study encompasses four legal regime proposals: National Directorate of Historical Archives, Books, Reading, and National Library (DNALB); Legal Deposit Regime; Legal Regime of the National Archive; and a Decree-Law on public and private administrative archives and documents.

Consequently, the new legislation aims to clarify and define the mandate of the archive, expanding its scope to encompass the implementation of a national archive policy,

the planning and promotion of its operations, the mobilization and collection of funds, and the promotion of national culture and memory. This comprehensive set of decrees will revoke and replace the provisions of the outdated Decree No. 17, dated July 24, 1989.

The archival decrees delineate the imprescriptible and inalienable nature of public archives, stipulate the disposition of archives belonging to public and private entities, and reinforce the supervisory authority of the Archive Department of DNALB over private archives deemed to be of public interest. Furthermore, the new legislation will establish the merger of the Historical Archive with the INEP Public Library, resulting in the formation of DNALB. This consolidation will address archival and legal prerogatives concerning the dissolution of entities or the transfer of custody for the management of public entity archives.

In conclusion, given the shortcomings of the previous decree and the evolution of public administration archives in conjunction with technological advancements, the establishment of a legal framework that aligns with current challenges is both necessary and pressing.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The establishment of a national archive in Guinea-Bissau, as detailed in this paper, confronts numerous challenges. These include a scarcity of financial and personnel management resources, insufficient infrastructure, a lack of modern technology and equipment, and limited awareness regarding the significance of preserving archives and historical documents.

In many African nations, perhaps due to the enduring impact of colonialism, national archives frequently receive inadequate funding, hindering their capacity to acquire modern equipment and employ qualified personnel for the management and preservation of archival materials. Moreover, political complexities in many African countries further complicate the allocation of resources dedicated to archive preservation.

Another substantial hurdle to establishing a national archive in Guinea-Bissau is the inadequate infrastructure. This encompasses unreliable power grid, limited internet access, and subpar facilities for archival preservation, making it challenging to safeguard and share archival materials with the public.

Additionally, Guinea-Bissau has a dearth of trained professionals in archive management and preservation, which can impede the creation and maintenance of a national archive. The lack of awareness surrounding the importance of preserving archives and historical documents further compounds this issue, as many citizens remain uninformed about the significance of these documents in understanding the nation's history and cultural heritage.

Despite these challenges, the project for establishing a national archive witnessed a remarkable engagement of approximately fifty Bissau-Guinean administrative staff from various government institutions who actively participated in the training courses led by the Portuguese and Brazilian professors. Each course spanned roughly a week, totaling 40 hours, during which participants demonstrated a genuine interest and commitment to the activities, overcoming numerous obstacles to attend daily.

The collaboration among Brazilian, Portuguese, and Bissau-Guinean professors underscores the pivotal role of social inclusion and responsibility in advancing archive management within Portuguese-speaking countries. Through meetings, dialogues, courses, and collaborative projects, these researchers have effectively raised awareness among local authorities, trained and qualified professionals, and developed joint initiatives to strengthen archives and safeguard memory in the participating nations. This international collaboration highlights the importance of knowledge and experience exchange for the global advancement of archives and archival science.

Consequently, this project and training initiative is poised to continue fostering knowledge of archival theory and methodology, facilitating the application of technical instruments, and broadening the understanding of authorities and public servants regarding the vital role of archives in solidifying the country's national identity and advancing a nation-building project.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the Ambassador of Guinea-Bissau to Brazil, M'bála Fernandes, for his support in strengthening relations between Guinea-Bissau and Brazil and for expediting the bureaucratic process that enabled the Brazilian trainers' trip to Guinea-Bissau.

To the Director of INEP, Samba Tenem Camara, and the Coordinator of the National Public Library of INEP in Guinea-Bissau, for their warm reception and support for all activities and fruitful working meetings.

To the Resident Representative of UNDP, Dr. Tjark Enghoff, and other local authorities from government institutions and public and private universities.