PATRIMONIAL ARCHIVES AND MEDIEVAL HISTORY: THE NECESSARY DIALOGUE

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Abstract

This article expounds on the importance of patrimonial archives for the understanding of medieval history, specifically in Catalonia. The problems surrounding this particular type of archives will be presented in order to grasp their significance. The main issue is accessibility, which, in turn, poses several difficulties for researchers attempting to study these holdings. Possible solutions will also be suggested. The article focuses on a particular patrimonial archive, the Fontcuberta Archive, whose features and medieval holdings will be properly described. We will also deal with the actions currently in progress in order to provide access for the scientific community[1].

Key words

Catalan Patrimonial Archives, Medieval History, Archive Digitization, ARQUIBANC Project, Fontcuberta Archive.

Capitalia Verba

Archivia patrimonii Cataloniae, Medii Aevi historia, archivium digitale, institutum ARQUIBANC, Archivium Fontcuberta.

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Nowadays, historians have naturally assumed Lucien Febvre's idea that history needs every single available text. He added that, besides archive holdings, other kinds of sources were also necessary[2]. Many years have passed since he wrote those words, but it is to our understanding that they are still valid and must be taken into account. Otherwise, historical studies would be partial, fragmentary and, ultimately, incomplete. That is, at least, the theory, but the actual practise can be quite different. Moreover, we endorse Flocel Sabaté's statement that *en el cas de Catalunya, és ben clar que els nombrosos dipòsits de pergamins ens recorden sovint que tenim la gosadia d'escriure la història medieval del país quan sols controlem minúsculs percentatges del contingut de les petges documentals*[3]. That is, according to him, a considerable amount of documents remain outside the archive holdings accessible to researchers. Those documents make up the bulk of private archives. Among them we find family archives, personal archives, company archives, organizational archives and patrimonial archives. The situation has changed a lot since 1997 and Flocel Sabaté's comment, and the archival work on such documents has increased steadily on account of both the initiative of the Administration and academic research. It is also worth mentioning here the initiatives launched by several associations, such as the History Workshop of Maçanet de la Selva, cited by Santi Soler[4]. Such circumstances have promoted the use of patrimonial documents for research. This article will focus on the general situation of patrimonial archives in Catalonia and their value to medieval history. Patrimonial archives are the object of this article because they are the most suitable private archives for the study of several aspects of the medieval period.

1. Patrimonial Archives from the Perspective of Archival Science and History

In 2002, a renowned study on patrimonial archives brought to the fore several ideas related to such documentary holdings[5]. It established the concept of patrimonial archive, distinguishing it from other types of archives, and described the kind of documents preserved there, as well as the archival treatment they had received. However, the study by Pere Gifré, Josep Matas and Santi Soler was not only intended for archivists. It was also meant for historians and researchers who worked on such archives, since an in-depth study of a patrimonial archive is not

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1. Proyects HAR2008-01748; HAR2012-33755 and PGIR-08/09. Used abbreviations: DOGC, Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya.

2. Febvre, Lucien. *Combates por la Historia*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1970: 29-30.

3. "in the case of Catalonia, it is very clear that the numerous stores of parchments often remind us that we have the boldness to write the medieval history of the country when we only control minuscule percentages of the contents of the documentary traces" (Sabaté, Flocel. "Pròleg", *Pergamins de Privilegis de la ciutat de Balaguer*, Dolors Domingo. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida-Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs, 1997: 8).

4. Soler, Santiago. "Els arxius patrimonials". *Revista de Girona*, 197 (1999): 67-69.

5. Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santiago. *Els arxius patrimonials*. Girona: CCG Edicions, 2002.

possible without understanding its structure, the typologies of its documents, the history of its formation and the family that generated it, etc. Therefore, working with patrimonial archives requires a close relationship between archival science and history, although both disciplines have to bear in mind their own goals.

On the basis of these considerations, we would like to draw attention to the increasing interest in patrimonial archives, from the point of view of both archival science and history[6]. Thus, the Administration promotes the recovery of patrimonial archives and their inclusion in public archives by means of donations, deposits and other legal figures. Archival treatment involves not only the deposit but also the arrangement and description of documents. These tasks must be performed with the final goal in mind, that is, facilitating the access of researchers to those documents. Immediately after the inclusion of patrimonial archives in the public system, archivists carry out the necessary arrangement and description and, sometimes, disseminate the archive's contents through publications[7]. The purpose behind the publication of inventories or the announcement of the existence of a particular patrimonial archive is fostering research as well as encouraging the deposit of those archives in order to preserve them and facilitate their consultation. In this way, the archive network of the Generalitat of Catalonia preserves in its depositories a considerable number of patrimonial archives, most of which are at the disposal of researchers and other users. In 2002, considering only the region of Girona, 30% of the patrimonial holdings were preserved in public archives, while the rest was still in private hands[8]. However, those data have changed over time, since Catalan public archives periodically receive patrimonial archives, as well as other types of fonds. This growing trend is part of the preservation policy of the private documentary heritage promoted by the Catalan Administration. In 2010, therefore, 682 patrimonial archives were preserved in public archives, which meant 4,841 linear metres of documents[9]. 602 archives include finding aids, although that number is constantly changing because Catalan archives are currently carrying out a remarkable descriptive task[10]. The archival policy also involves the development of a census of Catalan archives. That census has already been completed in thirteen districts, while the work is currently in progress in seventeen other districts and,

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6. Gifre, Pere. *Els Arxius patrimonials. Possibilitats historiogràfiques*. Figueres: Arxiu Històric comarcal-Institut d'Estudis Empordanesos, 1992.

7. Roig, Marisa. "Inventari d'un arxiu patrimonial: els Delhom-Gibert de Castelló d'Empúries". *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Empordanesos*, 29 (1996): 343-352; Roig, Marisa. "L'Arxiu patrimonial Bosch Aymerich de Castelló d'Empúries". *Villa Castilionis Impuriarum: Revista cultural de Castelló d'Empúries*, 2 (1996): 61-65.

8. Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santiago. *Els arxius patrimonials...*: 99-103.

9. Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Cultura. "Estadística d'Arxius, Informe 2010". 19 December 2012. <http://www20.gencat.cat/docs/CulturaDepartament/SSCC/GT/Arxius%20GT/Informe_Arxius _2010_def2.pdf>.

10. Arxiu Comarcal de la Ribera. *Butlletí informatiu*, 6 (2012): 5. A recent exemple is the case of the patrimonial funds of the Domènech-Martí family, from Vinebre. The funds spans from the 17th to the 19th century and is deposited in the District Archive of Ribera d'Ebre.

by June 2012, it had not yet started in the remaining eleven[11]. The Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya ("National Archive of Catalonia") has led the implementation of that policy and those initiatives. For years now, it has been receiving company archives[12], as well as personal and patrimonial archives[13]. Patrimonial archives can also be found in other public institutions, such as district archives or the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón ("Archive of the Crown of Aragon"). The latter includes remarkable patrimonial archives, for instance, part of the documents from the Sentmenat Archive, whose descriptions are available at the archive's website.

However, such initiatives are not only the result of some political will, archival trend or historiographical interest. Laws also deal with private archives, and the law must be abided by. Law 9/1993 of 30 September on Catalan Cultural Heritage[14] specifies that private documents belong to the Catalan documentary heritage. Law 10/2001 of 13 July on Archives and Documents remarks that private archives are also included within its scope, and establishes several regulations for their owners. They must have an inventory of their archives and facilitate the access of researchers[15], which leads us to the next idea we would like to discuss.

There is a significant increase in the number of research projects based on patrimonial archives. Llorenç Ferrer, in his contribution to the 1st International Symposium *Patrimonial Archives: Current Situation and Future Challenges*, held in Barcelona on 1-2 June 2011, noted this fact. However, he also pointed out that the use of such archives is more frequent among historians devoted to modern or contemporary history than among medievalists. The research line promoted by the Rural History Research Centre at the Universitat de Girona is also focused on the Modern Era. However, our interest is not to so much to insist on the fact that, unlike other historians, medievalists barely use such archives, rather the opposite. Our purpose is to look at the situation from a positive angle that takes into account the long way yet to go.

Pierre Vilar already noted the relevance of patrimonial archives for historical research, and included that concern in his study on modern Catalonia[16]. Since then, many others have used patrimonial archives as a source of information. Nevertheless, they kept in mind Lucien Febvre's idea, namely, that a single kind of documentary source or archive is not enough. It is necessary to complete the number of sources, to contrast them and elaborate the information they provide.

11. Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Cultura. "Cens d'Arxius de Catalunya". 19 December 2012 <http://www20.gencat.cat/portal/site/CulturaDepartament>.

12. Fernández, Josep. "Los archivos empresariales en Cataluña. Balance de 15 años de actuación del Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya". *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 9 (1996): 183-198.

13. Fernández, Josep. "Aproximació al contingut dels arxius nobiliaris i el seu interès per a la investigació". *Butlletí de l'Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya*, 28 (2011): 2-8. For instance, the archive of the Sentmenat family, marquises of Castelldosrius, whose parchments were catalogued and indexed in May 2012.

14. DOGC, n. 1807, 11/10/1993, article 19.2/b.

15. DOGC, n. 3437, 24/07/2001.

16. Vilar, Pierre. *Catalunya dins l'Espanya Moderna*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1986: I, 30 and following.

Coral Cuadrada used private archives for her work on medieval Maresme, besides other types of archives. She distinguished between those related to a noble patrimony (patrimonial archive of the marquis of Barberà) and small non-noble archives (Can Palau, Can Català, Escolapis, Can Vallmajor, Cuadrada-Gallifa family, Teresa Gallifa (Mataró); Can Beatriu, Can Calopa, Can Pins (Argentona); Can Cabanyes (Barcelona); Can Maians (Vilassar de Dalt); Can Riera (Premià de Dalt); Can Senromà (Tiana); and Can Prats (Òrrius). According to Coral Cuadrada, one of the main features of these archives, is their variability, they can include from several documents to complete series[17].

Mercè Aventín also uses patrimonial archives in her work on the Vallès Oriental. In her introduction she describes the sources she uses, delving into parochial archives, seigniorial archives and peasant farmhouses alike *per conèixer millor la pagesia, les causes de la seva prosperitat o davallada, les limitacions imposades als seus moviments i a les seves iniciatives econòmiques i familiars*[18]. Throughout the book, we find countless references to documents preserved in patrimonial archives. The presence of these data is justified by the author herself *[...] sovint es tracta de documents patrimonials no accessibles als estudiosos*[19]. Several years later, the same author made known the archives of Can Llobera (87 documents, dated between 1284 and 1630) and Can Bruniquer (38 documents, 1336-1604) through the publication of their inventories[20].

Although well outside the medieval period, we'd like to recall that one of the first remarkable works based on patrimonial documents was that of Eva Serra on the Senmenats[21]. Carme Sanmartí used her own family archive to study the Sanmartí farmhouse, on the basis of modern documents but also taking into account the medieval period —the parchment fonds starts in 1182 and continues through to 1617—[22].

The aforementioned examples show that the scientific community has always used patrimonial fonds together with other archives. Pierre Vilar had pointed it out and the works we have cited so far proceeded accordingly. Patrimonial archives are used in order to complete the data of a study, whose documentary base is another, for example notarial documents, among others[23]. They have also been

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17. Cuadrada, Coral. *El Maresme Medieval: Hàbitat, Economia i Societat, segles X-XIV.* Mataró: Caixa Laietana, 1988: 23-27.

18. "in order to understand peasantry, the causes of its wealth or failure and the constraints imposed on their movements and their economic and familial initiatives" (Aventín, Mercè. *La societat rural a Catalunya en temps feudals*. Barcelona: Columna, 1996: 18).

19. "[...] These are often patrimonial documents not accessible to the scholars" (Aventín, Mercè. *La societat rural...*: 65).

20. Aventín, Mercè. *Documents per a la Història de Llinars del Vallès.* Llinars: Museu Municipal-Ajuntament de Llinars del Vallès, 1990.

21. Serra, Eva. *Pagesos i senyors a la Catalunya del segle XVI: baronia de Sentmenat 1590-1729.* Barcelona: Crítica, 1988; See also: Serra, Eva. "L'evolució d'un patrimoni nobiliari". *Recerques*, 5 (1975): 33-71.

22. Sanmartí, Carme. *La pagesia benestant al Bagès: el mas Sanmartí.* Manresa: Angle, 1995.

23. Codina, Jaume. *Contractes de matrimoni al Delta del Llobregat (segles XIV a XIX).* Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1997. The author uses the documents preserved in his private archive. Fernández, Josep.

the essential basis of remarkable studies on the medieval period, complemented by royal, notarial or ecclesiastical documents[24]. In some very specific cases, patrimonial archives, or certain documents preserved within them, have been included in documentary editions. In the *Diplomatari de Cardona* the author includes documents from the patrimonial archives of Mas Garriga de Bergús, Mas Palà de Coma, Mas Pinell, Franch and Mas Altamís[25]. Only nine parchments over the total 509 that compose the diplomatarium come from patrimonial archives but, in any case, taking into account all the archives physically located in Cardona, including patrimonial archives, was a wise choice.

Thus, the work with patrimonial archives is just taking its first steps and there is still much to do. Archival initiatives and historical research will bear fruit, but we need to improve our knowledge of these archives as well as their accessibility. That is what Flocel Sabaté suggested, paraphrasing Jacques Heers, when he emphasized the importance of new documents coming into play[26]. The existence of sufficient sources is always a concern when we face any historical study focused on the Middle Ages. In the case of medieval Catalonia, the exceptional archives and their first-class holdings ease that concern. The variety of available sources is remarkable. The extant documents include those issued by the royal power and mainly preserved in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, among which are to be noted the significant series of chancery records, as well as notarial documents certified by all sorts of rural notaries. However large the number of preserved documents, it surely does not encompass all the documents that each institution actually issued. Suffice it to look at the archives' finding aids to notice the gaps in the series of documents, which are larger for the medieval period than for the Modern Era. Therefore, any action that leads to the dissemination of new documents is both welcome and necessary, although a certain measure of caution is required in order to appraise the material in our hands[27]. Thus, as we previously mentioned, the data concerning archives change over time, especially due to the inclusion in the archival circuit of documents so far unaccounted for, as in the case of the archive of the marquis of Barberà, with 12,000 parchments, that Flocel Sabaté used as an example.

"Grans establiments moliners a la Vall Baixa del riu Llobregat: els casals de Martorell, Sant Vicenç dels Horts i Molins de Rei (segles XII-XV)". *Estudis Històrics de Documents i Arxius de Protocols*, 26 (2008): 7-60.

24. Fernández, Josep. *Una família catalana medieval. Els Bell-lloc de Girona, 1267-1533.* Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1995.

25. Galera, Andreu. *Diplomatari de la vila de Cardona (anys 966-1276).* Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1998.

26. See note 2.

27. *[...] hem de ser prou assenyats com per no creure que tot paperam que hom troba és històricament trascendent. Penso que no hem de creure-ho ni tan sols com a coartada per autojustificar-se el molt de temps esmerçat en realitzar una classificació i valoració del material documental* ("[...] we must be sensible enough to question the transcendence of every bit of extant historical paper. I do not think we have to take it for granted, not even as an excuse to justify to ourselves the huge amount of time invested in classifying and appraising the documentary material"). Sabaté, Flocel. *L'arxiu d'una masia: Can Prat.* Igualada: Centre d'Estudis Comarcals d'Igualada, 1991: 3.

2. The General Problems of Patrimonial Archives

When the Catalan archival sphere first addressed the issue of patrimonial archives, several problems were brought up: accessibility, preservation, lack of finding aids, etc. This suggests that there was already an interest in grasping and highlighting the reality of patrimonial archives and in intervening when necessary[28]. The first step was to draw up an inventory of the patrimonial archives of the districts of Girona[29]. Despite the initial impetus, however, there was no systematic follow-up, which led to our current lack of information on the existence of patrimonial archives, their preservation and contents.

One of the main problems any historian faces when trying to consult fonds preserved in private hands is the access to holdings that have not been deposited in public archives. Their owners do not always facilitate the consultation of their archives, on the contrary, they are wary of letting anybody, even accredited researchers, work with their papers. The application of the laws mentioned above, with the obligations they imply for the owners, is not easy. That is why, too often, peculiar strategies are needed in order to access the archives. Let us see some cases.

Pierre Vilar recounts how

> *en saber que m'interessava pels papers privats, alguns amics m'obtingueren l'accés als arxius de cases nobles: el de Dalmases, gràcies a l'amabilitat del marquès de Vilallonga; el de Guàrdia, gràcies a l'amabilitat del baró d'Esponellà*[30].

Carme Batlle remarks the importance of private documents for any global study, in her case, on medieval Maresme[31]. Just as Pierre Vilar did, she also alludes to the easy access she was granted by the owners, a family from Mataró. Andreu Galera, compiler of the aforementioned diplomatarium of Cardona, also stressed the importance of the family's attitude in order to access their fonds. These criteria are not related to archival science nor are they protected by the law, but are nonetheless real. In conclusion, in most cases the good will of the owners is essential[32], as stated by professor Llorenç Ferrer in his keynote address, "Private Archives and Historiography", at the 1st International Symposium *Patrimonial Archives: Current*

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28. Adroer, M. Àngels; Gifre, Pere. "Arxius privats i patrimonials a Catalunya". *Lligall. Revista Catalana d'Arxivística*, 1 (1988): 83-92; Fernández, Josep. "Els arxius familiars i patrimonials. Problemàtica, caracerització i metodologia". *Lligall. Revista Catalana d'Arxivística*, 4 (1991): 95-113.

29. Adroer, M. Àngels; Gifre, Pere. "Inventari dels arxius patrimonials de les comarques gironines", *Revista de Girona*, 119 (1986): 80-84. See also: Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santiago. *Els arxius patrimonials*...: 99-116.

30. "knowing that I was interested in private documents, several friends helped me access the archives of noble houses: the Dalmases Archive, thanks to the kindness of the marquis of Vilallonga; the Guàrdia Archive, thanks to the kindness of the baron of Esponellà" (Vilar, Pierre. *Catalunya dins l'Espanya Moderna*...: 30).

31. Batlle, Carme. "Presentació", *El Maresme Medieval*...: 15.

32. Gifre, Pere; Soler, Santi. *Patrimoni i Arxiu. Inventari del fons patrimonial Caramany de Corçà, segles XIII-XX.* La Bisbal d'Emporda: Ajuntament de La Bisbal d'Empordà, 1996: 46.

Situation and Future Challenges. However, the good will of the owners must not only be directed towards researchers. When archivists want to proceed with the archival processing of these fonds, they have to negotiate with the family. The most important thing is to clearly explain the parametres of their intervention[33]. It is our opinion that, if both the archivists, who need to intervene a specific patrimonial archive, and the researchers, who want to work with its holdings, explain their project in detail, there should be no problem. However, we are fully aware that the role of the owners must be taken into account throughout the project, not only as regards their good will but also concerning the trust they have to place on the experts; especially because, however protective and cautious about the preservation of their archives they may be, they are neither archivists nor researchers. Therefore, they ignore the possibilities that the bundles of documents in their possession open up for research as well as the most adequate archival techniques for the preservation, arrangement and dissemination of their archives. They may even be unaware of the regulations binding their holdings. That is what Mr Carlos de Fontcuberta, owner of the Fontcuberta Archive, said during the round table that closed the aforementioned international symposium. Mr Fontcuberta thanked the organizers for the opportunity to participate in the event together with archivists —Dr. Josep Fernández Trabal, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, and Dr. Raffaela Ponte, Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova—, and university professors —Dr. Rosa Lluch, Universitat de Barcelona, and Dr. Antonio Castillo, Universidad de Alcalá—. The round table was chaired and coordinated by Dr Rosa Congost, Universitat de Girona. The dialogue established between owners, archivists and researchers was highly appreciated.

Despite all these considerations, patrimonial archives may also pose another problem, that is, the destruction and other vicissitudes undergone by their holdings. In many cases, the documents have been preserved in special places within the houses, rooms set up with furniture suitable for safekeeping of the patrimonial titles that only served as archives[34]. In case of danger, the documents were even hidden underground or in the most unsuspected places in order to keep them safe[35]. But sometimes documents got lost due to causes unconnected to the family, as, for instance, the rebellions of the *remences*[36]. Several private archives in Tarragona, Montblanc and Reus also suffered the aftermath of military conflicts[37]. Nevertheless, the initiatives the Generalitat launched during the Spanish Civil War safeguarded

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33. Marugan, Carme Maria. "La recuperació dels fons patrimonials dels Pallars Sobirà. El cas de Casa Subirà, d'Altron, i el projecte de la recuperació de la memòria històrica de la Vall de Cardós". *Lligall. Revista Catalana d'Arxivística*, 29 (2002): 127-141.

34. Gifre, Pere; Soler, Santi. *Patrimoni i Arxiu*...: 41.

35. Adroer, M. Àngels; Gifre, Pere. "Arxius patrimonials...": 270.

36. Gifre, Pere. *Els Farners: vassalls de senyors i senyors de pagesos. Catàleg documental de l'Arxiu Farners*. Santa Coloma de Farners: Centre d'Estudis Selvatans, 1996: 15.

37. Grau, Josep; Güell, Manel. "La crònica negra de la destrucció d'arxius a la demarcació de Tarragona". *Lligall. Revista catalana d'Arxivística*, 18 (2001): 102.

many public and private archives, twenty-six patrimonial archives among them[38]. In our opinion, however, actual destruction was far from general and only happened in a few specific cases. Therefore, rather than destruction and plunder, we should point out abandonment and lack of action, or the dispersal of holdings caused by the distribution of the patrimony through inheritance, indiscriminate release or contempt[39]. Such things could happen when the old papers became a nuisance and the way to get rid of them was to sell them to antiquarians, but those were only extreme and rather anomalous cases. Fortunately enough, that is not the usual situation of archives. In the case of important estates that were divided by means of bequests, the documents related to each legacy also left the main estate, since they were needed for the management of the different properties.

Therefore, the initiatives fostered by the Administration, the research institutions and some individuals, aim to solve those two key problems of patrimonial archives. Important actions, such as the aforementioned deposit of private fonds in public archives, are performed in order to facilitate access to private documents. But the owners of patrimonial archives are not always willing to participate in the process. On the contrary, they are protective of "their" documents and want to control them themselves, somewhat unaware of the terms of the law and the possibilities it offers. Other alternatives are also possible without involving the Administration. One of them is, for instance, the edition of documents, which, in Catalonia, has its leading exponent in the task of the Fundació Noguera, mainly focused on notarial documents. The diplomatarium of Cardona, already mentioned, includes several parchments that come from patrimonial archives, and it is also necessary to mention the parchments of the Mercader-Belloc fonds[40]. The edition of unpublished sources allows us to learn not only about large collections of parchments, but also about exceptional documents. Such was the case of the book of the barony of Eramprunyà, owned by Mr. Ignacio de Puig Girona and recently published[41]. This book gathers together copies of the documents of the barony, which was owned by the Marc family, as well as several personal and familial writings. The book, therefore, is a diplomatarium but, at the same time, became a family book, although far from the quality of Tuscan late medieval *libri di ricordanze*.

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38. Zamora, Jaume Enric. "El salvament dels arxius catalans durant la Guerra Civil española (1936-1939)". *Lligall. Revista Catalana d'Axivística*, 16 (2000): 85-151.

39. *[...] aquests arxius han hagut de pasar moltes penúries: saquejos, guerres i, darrerament, la incultura dels nous propietaris urbans que menyspreen allò que no és modern* ("these archives have been through hard times: plunders, wars and, lately, the ignorance of their new urban owners who look down on anything less than modern"). Adroer, M. Àngels; Gifre, Pere. "Arxius patrimonials. Propostes de treball". *Annals de l'Institut d'Estudis Empordanesos*, 21 (1988): 269-270.

40. Fernández, Josep. *Inventari dels pergamins del Fons Mercader-Bell-lloc de l'Arxiu Històric Municipal de Cornellà de Llobregat (segles XI-XVIII)*. Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 1989.

41. Cantarell, Elena; Comas, Mireia; Muntaner, Carme. *El Llibre de la Baronia d'Eramprunyà*. Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2011. The analysis of the original book allows us to see how its author made use of the sheets of paper still blank to write down brief regesta of other documents of his archive. Those regesta are not included in this volume, since they demand a detailed diplomatic and archival study well beyond the scope of this edition.

Besides the edition of documents we find the publication of notes on patrimonial archives, as those mentioned in the first paragraph of the present article regarding two patrimonial fonds from Castelló d'Empúries, the article by Montserrat Sanmartí on the Martí d'Ardenya family[42], or the edition of inventories and catalogues, such as those of the Caramany de Corçà fonds and the Farners Archive, both of them previously mentioned. Thus, the goal is not so much a widespread dissemination but rather providing information about those archives, including classification tables, typologies of documents, history of each archive and the research possibilities it offers.

Another way of bringing archives closer to the scientific community is the use of technology —documentary databases, digitization and the Internet—. Technology can, no doubt, help us approach these problems from a different perspective with the aim of finding solutions that suit all the interested parties: owners, scholars and the Administration. However, an in-depth reflection is necessary in order to decide what to do and how to do it.

On the one hand, the inclusion of finding aids in documentary databases and, in turn, their inclusion in the global network has greatly furthered the dissemination of documents and the research based on them. At first, however, some voices raised against it arguing that the more the documents were disseminated the less people would go to the archives[43]. Certainly, that sets up a paradox, but we also have to take into account that although the number of on-site users may decrease, on the other hand, we are approaching the fonds of documents to a wider, global audience and, therefore, the number of potential off-site users increases geometrically. We cannot deny the evidence that information and documentation technologies offer infinite possibilities for research and the dissemination of scientific knowledge[44]. In that sense, the access to patrimonial archives could also benefit from them. The public access to the finding aids of these archives could, on the one hand, cope with the possible destruction and/or fragmentation derived from the problems mentioned above; on the other hand, that would grant an initial access to those fonds in order to appraise the possibilities each of them offers for research. At the same time, the owners would not lose the physical property of the archive, which constitutes their main concern. If these tools —online databases and finding aids in a PDF format— are to be of use to researchers, it is necessary that they facilitate as much information as possible about the documents. The records have to follow certain standards based on the international regulations for the description of archives (ISAD-G and NODAC) and all online archives have to match those same criteria, already met in the case of public archives.

So far we have dealt with universal accessibility through databases and the global network. We will now turn to digitization. From the moment that archive documents

42. Sanmartí, Montserrat. "L'Arxiu patrimonial Martí d'Ardenya". *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics*, 17 (2006): 85-109.

43. Boadas, Joan. "Taula rodona", *Medievalisme: noves perspectives*, Flocel Sabaté, ed. Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2003: 289-291.

44. Sabaté, Flocel. "Medievalisme: noves perspectives", *Medievalisme: noves perspectives*...: 9-16.

could be transferred to good quality image files, a lot of projects focused on the digitization of historical sources emerged around the world. The Administration, universities and archives plunged into it, from the first images generated by the Catalan Department at the University of Berkeley[45] of the collection of Catalan medieval parchments in their possession, up to the projects currently in progress around the world.

But digitization has both advantages and disadvantages, especially because it must be understood as a medium and not a goal in itself. Before starting the digitization process, our objectives, the scope, expected benefits and final cost of the project must be well defined. But, first and foremost, we must question the necessity of digitization itself. At first, digitization was motivated by preservation, but that is not so clear now[46]. Obviously, digitization preserves in the sense that it avoids handling the documents. Since they are consulted by means of an image on a screen, there is no actual contact wear. In the case of archives preserved by private individuals, digitization may also help preservation and prevent total loss if the actual documents disappear, are sold or given away by the owner. But the digital copy of a document can never provide an unfailing guarantee of preservation since, as we have already seen with other technologies such as the VCR or audio recordings, the durability of the current storage and reproduction systems is not at all ensured.

Another important issue that we have just brought up and needs to be taken into account is the cost of a digitization project. The volume of the documents that need to be digitized, the original support material, the final destination of the images and the available budget must be considered. When the volume of documents is large, the project can only be undertaken by the Administration as a long-term project, such as the PARES project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. As for the original support material, it stands to reason that digitizing registers written on folio pages is not the same as digitizing large format parchments, usually more than a metre wide, not to mention their length. In those cases, on-screen reading is only occasionally viable. Furthermore, the image resolution required for proper reading generates huge files —larger than 4 Mb—, which, in turn, pose a storage problem, since their size advises against uploading them to the Internet, and the disk space needs increase storage costs. Despite these and other difficulties, derived from the aforementioned issues, digitization is of the essence in the case of archives preserved in private hands. It is the best way to conduct an exhaustive research into these fonds without constantly dealing with the owners' reluctance to allow access. In theory, at least, the owner is "disturbed" just once, instead of every time that the researcher needs to consult the documents in order to make corrections or broaden the research. Therefore, the systematic digitization of the documents preserved in private hands is justified for both research and dissemination purposes. By way of

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45. This collection is currently hosted by the University of California. *Digital Scriptorium*. 12 December 2012 <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/digitalscriptorium/>.

46. Seton, Rosemary E. *The Preservation and Administration of Private Archives. A RAMP Study*. Paris: UNESCO, 1984.

example, we will discuss the procedure and criteria followed by the ARQUIBANC project in the case of the Fontcuberta Archive.

Before that though, let us consider a few examples related to patrimonial and/ or private archives within the framework of public initiatives that could, in so far as possible, serve as a model. At the Nobility Section of the National Historical Archive, nobility archives' databases can be accessed through the PARES portal, which is but a part of the Archives Digitization and Description Plan (PIDA). However, these ambitious ministerial projects do not work quite well. Probably because of the lack of budget, which entails an unproper maintenance of the search engines that usually yield false results. Therefore, the project is only partially useful to researchers, although, hopefully, those problems will be solved in the near future. Another example is the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya which, through its website, allows access to some of the documents of the patrimonial holdings therein preserved. This initiative is only a part of the general policy of the institution, which also uploads documents that belong to other types of archives. We would also like to remark the task carried out by the *Monasterium* network[47], which compiles digitized documents coming from more than fifty private European archives, many of them ecclesiastical. It is a very good example of digitization directed at the dissemination of documents and their availability to researchers.

Digitization is also fostered by the research community. A good example is the "Personal Memory" project promoted by the "Manuscripts" research group of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The project makes private Catalan documents available to researchers by means of a database and the digitized images of those documents[48]. Another research project already bearing encouraging fruits is the ARQUIBANC project, of the Universitat de Barcelona, which brings together several initiatives focused on patrimonial archives[49]. Some of the results of several papers delivered at conferences and discussion forums have already been internationally published[50]. The four initial objectives of the project in the field of private archives

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47. ICARUS (International Centre for Archival Research). *Monasterium (MOM)*. Associated with Archives Portal Europe. 19 December <http: // www.monasterium.net>.

48. The project is one of the activities of the research group "Manuscripts" of the Department of Modern and Contemporary History at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona: Antoni Simon. *Memòria Personal*. 19 December 2012 <http: //www.memoriapersonal.eu>.

49. Project led by Daniel Piñol and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitivity HAR2008-01748 and the Universitat de Barcelona PGIR-08/09. The research team is formed by Ignasi Baiges, Elena Cantarell, Mireia Comas, Giacomo Floris, Rosa Lluch, Carme Muntaner and Teresa Vinyoles.

50. Cantarell, Elena; Comas, Mireia. "The ARQUIBANC Project: location, recovery, arrangement, and dissemination of Catalan private archives and documents", *Digital Medievalist* ISSN: 1715-0736. <http:// www.digitalmedievalist.org/journal/7/cantarell>; Cantarell, Elena; Comas, Mireia. "Localización, recuperación, organización y difusión de archivos y documentos privados catalanes. El proyecto Arquibanc", *La escritura de la memoria: los registros*, Elena Cantarell, Mireia Comas, eds. Barcelona: PPU, 2012: 363-372; Cantarell, Elena. "ARQUIBANC. Les archives privées catalanes on-line. Récupération, préservation et diffusion digitale de documents conservés en mains privées". *Lire demain. Des manuscrits antiques à l'ère digitale. Reading tomorrow. From Ancient Manuscripts to the Digital Era*, Claire C. Clivaz, Jérôme Meizoz, François Vallotton, Joseph Verheyden, eds. Lausanne: PPUR, Édition Digitale et Papier, 2012: 579-590; Piñol, Daniel. "De la casa a la web. Archivos y documentos privados catalanes en Internet".

were: location, recovery, arrangement and dissemination. However, every research project redirects its purpose according to the difficulties it encounters. As a result, our first idea of digitizing documents and making them available online in order to facilitate the access of researchers, developed into digitizing in order to perform research. In other words, we understand digitization not only as a means of dissemination but also, first and foremost, as a tool for the members of the research teams working on patrimonial archives. That was one of the conclusions drawn by the participants of the conference *Digital Diplomatics 2011: An International Conference* held in Naples in September 2011, whose proceedings are currently in press[51]. Those conclusions were actually similar to the ones reached the year before at *The Digital Middle Ages: Teaching and Research. Thrid International Margot Conference* (New York, June 2010)[52]. Therefore, the digitized images are used by the members of the research team. That research team will in turn disseminate documents through the publication of monographs and documentary editions. On the other hand, other researchers may access the information related to the documents through databases accessible online. If any researcher is interested in some specific image, s/he can contact the ARQUIBANC research team, which will provide the image of the requested document. That researcher may be interested in diplomatic, palaeographic or codicological aspects, in which case the analysis of the original is of the essence. ARQUIBANC is an ongoing project that is currently refining its initial goals. The Spanish Ministry has renewed funding for the project, which is now focused on the edition of sources and the historical research based on private archives, specifically patrimonial archives[53].

3. What kind of documents can be found in patrimonial archives and what do they offer?

As we previously noted, patrimonial archives have been used mainly as a source for studies focused on the Modern Era. The classification tables of patrimonial archives show that both those preserved in public archives and those already published, basically contain documents from the modern period. The series of documents of many patrimonial archives begin in the 16th century or later. In many

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Télémaque. Archiver et interpréter les témoignages autobiographiques, Beatrice Barbalato, Albert Minglegrün, eds. Leuven: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2012: 79-89. Piñol, Daniel. "ARQUIBANC. Arxius catalans a la xarxa". *Humanitats a la xarxa: món medieval/Humanities on the web: the medieval world*, Lourdes Soriano, Helena Rovira, Marion Coderch, Glòria Sabaté, Xavier Espluga, eds. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014: 383-390.

51. Piñol, Daniel. "Proyecto ARQUIBANC. Digitalización de archivos privados catalanes: una herramienta para la investigación", *Digital Diplomatics. The computer as a tool for the diplomatist*, Antonella Ambrosio, Sébastien Barret, Georg Vogeler, eds. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2014: 99-107.

52. University of Waterloo. 19 November 2012 <http://margot.uwaterloo.ca/>.

53. *Los archivos privados: más documentos para la Historia. Edición de fuentes e investigaciones históricas* (HAR2012-33755).

other cases though, archival series begin in the 13th century or before that[54]. We can even find remarkable documents prior to that date, such as the Carolingian codex preserved in Can Viader and dated between 950 and 1050[55]. According to Pere Gifre, *[...] aquest fet hauria d'atreure medievalistes i modernistes interessats en l'estudi de la societat agrària catalana*[56].

Delving into patrimonial archives we find complete series whose origin dates back to the Middle Ages and are therefore useful for medieval studies; but we can also find small family archives that include singular documents capable of arousing the interest of researchers[57]. Nevertheless, our own interest lies with the first, since the medieval documents preserved in patrimonial archives allow us to discover the origin of patrimonies and families, as well as the conditions under which they settled in a particular territory; for instance, the Farners family, who were documented as the castellans of the Vilademany family in 1127[58]. We may also find references to the fall into serfdom or the recognition of peasant tenants of their status as *homo proprius vel solidus* during the first quarter of the 14th century[59].

Ledgers, the true cornerstone of any patrimonial archive, are among the most crucial documents that can be found in these holdings[60]. These books evince an archival intervention but they are also a reflection of the archive itself. They compile brief versions of the documents in the archive, including the date and also the name of the notary who certified the original contract. Most ledgers date from the 18th century, although some of them are more recent and the documents they include date back to the previous centuries. On their basis, we are able to locate documents related to the formation of the patrimony and its management, and also genealogical documents and other unconnected papers[61].

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54. Gifre, Pere. "Quins títols i on es guarden? Els arxius patrimonials, reflex de la dinàmica dels drets de propietat (segles XVI-XVIII)". *Dels capbreus al registre de la propietat*, Rosa Congost, ed. Girona: CCG Edicions, 2008: 183-191.

55. Adroer, M. Àngels; Gifre, Pere. "Arxius patrimonials...": 269.

56. "[...] that fact should atract both medievalists and modernists interested in the study of Catalan rural society" (Gifre, Pere. "Arxius patrimonials per a la historia agrària". *Revista de Girona*, 135 (1989): 62).

57. Muntaner, Carme. "Els Milà de Sitges (Barcelona, Cataluña): un ejemplo de pequeño archivo familiar en el seno de una comunidad rural", *Arquivos de família, séculos XIII-XX: que presente, que futuro*, M. Lurdes Rosa, ed. Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2012: 465-478. See also: Muntaner, Carme. "Registros notariales y registros de la corte del baile". *La escritura de la memoria. Los registros*, Elena Cantarell, Mireia Comas, eds. Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 2012: 247-262. In this work, the author locates notes on disappeared notarial documents through a private census notebook.

58. Gifre, Pere. *Els Farners*...: 17.

59. Gifre, Pere. *Els Farners*...: 45.

60. Bosch, Mònica; Gifre, Pere. "Els llibres mestres dels arxius patrimonials. Una font per a l'estudi de les estratègies patrimonials". *Estudis d'Història Agrària*, 12 (1998): 155-182; Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santi. *Els arxius patrimonials*...: 68-75. Gifre, Pere. "Quins títols i on es guarden?...": 195-198.

61. Here we refer to the classification suggested in: Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santiago. *Els arxius patrimonials*...

3.1. An example of a patrimonial archive: The Fontcuberta archive

The available finding aids provide many data and countless examples of the general content of patrimonial archives, but, in order to proceed systematically, we will now delve into the specific example of the Foncuberta Archive.

This important Catalan archive is composed of three fonds that correspond to three different patrimonies owned by Mr. Carlos de Fontcuberta: the Fontcuberta patrimony, the Perramon patrimony and the Sentmenat patrimony. These fonds are preserved together but each one keeps its original structure, according to the fundamental principle of Archival Science, that is, the principle of provenance. Each fonds presents the same typologies of documents.

The structure of the holdings of the Fontcuberta archive has been preserved since 1897, after the patrimony of the main branch received two important additions. Dolores de Perramon y de Comas de Brugar, married to José Eugenio de Fontcuberta, inherited all the possessions of the Perramons after being widowed. Therefore, the Fontcuberta and Perramon patrimonies ended up united only when Carlos de Fontcuberta received his maternal inheritance in 1870. The heir was married to Dolores de Sentmenat y Despujol, who, in turn, inherited the Sentmenat patrimony in Terrassa and Castellar del Vallès. The archive was perfectly organized and evinced the existence of the three aforementioned patrimonies[62]. New indexes were compiled, which included complete regesta, dates and the name of the notary, together with the call number of each document within each series. These indexes were based on 18th-century ledgers, which, in turn, compiled notes on the documents prior to that date preserved in each fonds.

In most cases, the series —testaments, nuptial agreements, *censuses*, etc.— are divided into two subseries: the original documents or their copies, and a bundle with notes on each of those legal contracts. The series physically match the archival units, tailor-made boxes labelled both with the call numbers that appear in the indexes and the title of each series. The Perramon fonds are the only one that has been preserved in bundles, but those are also labelled with the same call numbers and the documents are classified according to the call numbers registered in the indexes. The call number, composed by the name of the fonds, the box or bundle number and the number of the document, is written in ink on the back of each document. Sometimes, one or several original copies or translations accompany the original document. Those copies have the same call number as the original document plus a letter, A, B, C, etc. These letters are sometimes also added to certain documents that are not copies from any original but documents related to it, such as a sale contract attached to a payment letter or to a specific title deed and its copy. This particular fact demonstrates the relevance of the preservation of documents for the management of any given patrimony. That includes even the copies and the notes derived from the notarial composition of a legal contract.

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62. Garí, Blanca. *El señorío de Ventalló. Historia de las familias Requesens, Caramany y Perramón, que lo poseyeron*. Ventallo: Casa Perramón, 1989: 126-127.

The archive does not have a classification table according to the current guidelines of archival science, but it does have a sort of classification and also reliable finding aids that allow an efficient access to each document. Archival science tells us that we must respect the previous structure and archival interventions, and the structure of the Fontcuberta Archive indeed meets a management need. Hence the current structure and description designed for the efficient management of a complex patrimony, and not so much on the basis of historical and research criteria[63].

The series of documents of the three fonds are ordered according to the same structure. They start with testaments, then nuptial agreements, donations and bequests, payment letters and resignations, inventories, agreements and concords, rulings, properties (orchards, houses, farmhouses, etc.), rentals, *censuses*, benefices and pious causes, debt redemptions, lawsuit transfers, rent rolls, notebooks, family trees, nobility documents and plans. Notwithstanding individual peculiarities, that is, roughly, their classification system. It is also necessary to remark that, within each fonds, the documents related to farmhouses and properties added to the global patrimony remain together and are preserved separately, that is, they are not included in other boxes. Among them, for instance, we find emphyteutic leases and sale and barter contracts related to those specific properties. The most obvious case is that of boxes 10 to 19 of the Fontcuberta fonds, which contain the documents related to the properties of the family in Vic, Arenys de Munt and several other farmhouses and houses —Mas Fontcuberta, Sant Sixt, Mas Talaia, Mas Pujol, Mas Avenc, Mas Rajol, Mas Mayans, Mas Coromina and the Saladeures manor—, dated between 1240 and 2002.

The Sentmenat patrimony is similarly arranged. Boxes 9 to 15 and box 23 contain documents related to the castle of Castellar —which include documents dated between 1060 and 1953—. We can find title deeds but also documents for the management of the *censuses* and rents generated by those properties[64]. The properties in the city of Terrassa are another key part of the Sentmenat patrimony. Their corresponding documents are preserved in boxes 16 to 21, including sale contracts that date back to 949. That was actually an outstanding find since the tasks of recovery, arrangement and digitization have presented us with the opportunity of locating six 10th century documents, whose edition has already been included in remarkable research works[65]. These documents are well preserved and their description in the aforementioned indexes is adequate, but they were not found until we entered the archive and surveyed its holdings in order to start the process of digitization. The box concerning the properties located in Terrassa contains more than two hundred parchments dated between 960 and 1828, although most of

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63. Gifre, Pere; Matas, Josep; Soler, Santiago. *Els arxius patrimonials*...: 31-32.

64. Piquer, Esperança. "Castell de Castellar". *Catalunya Romànica*. Barcelona: Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana, 1991: XVIII, 96.

65. Baiges, Ignasi. "Documents del segle X al Fons Sentmenat de l'Arxiu Fontcoberta", *La Corona Catalano-Aragonesa, L'islam i el món mediterrani. Estudis d'Història Medieval en homenatge a la Doctora Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol*, Josefina Mutgé, Roser Salicrú, Carles Vela, eds. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2013: 13-21.

them belong to the medieval period. The Terrassa, Centelles, Mena and Sentmenat families generated them in a sort of historical sequence that records the different owners of the properties. Especially remarkable are the documents related to the Carthusian monastery of Vallparadís[66]. The documents preserved in those boxes have changed several key dates of the history of the city of Terrassa, in particular, the date of creation of the Carthusian monastery itself. In general, those documents improve our knowledge of the city, which proves the relevance of the work on patrimonial archives and their recovery[67].

As for the Perramon patrimony, boxes 8 to 24 contain documents from the properties in Sant Vicenç de Sarrià, Ventalló, Girona, Empúries, l'Escala, Figueres, Girona and La Bisbal, and from the farmhouses Pasqual de les Corts, Martí, Berart, Casa Gran de Piferrer, Vilamala, La Llacuna, Cortalet, Girona, La Bisbal, Cases, Comas and Romaguera. The timeline spans from the middle of the 14th century to the 20th, but most of the documents date from the 17th and 18th century.

Regarding the chronologies of the different boxes and bundles, their starting points do not necessarily match; the same applies to the three fonds. However, in light of the aforementioned examples we can assert that there is medieval documentation. As for the geographical scope, we have to take into account that most patrimonial archives, and this one is no exception, cover extensive areas around the actual location of the holdings. The Fontcuberta patrimony includes several villages in the district of Osona, mainly in Santa Eugènia de Berga and Vic, but also has properties in Arenys de Munt and Barcelona. The Sentmenat patrimony comprises properties in the Vallès Occidental and the Perramon patrimony includes properties in several areas of the Empordà. These documents can also complement the documents preserved in other patrimonial archives. Maybe the most obvious example is that of the Sentmenat fonds, since documents concerning other branches of the family are preserved in the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya and the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Eva Serra used the latter in her doctoral thesis, as we mentioned at the beginning of the present article. The documents in the Perramon fonds can also complement those in the Caramany fonds, since both lineages were related.

Finally, we'd like to insist on the importance of delving into such archives and surveying the boxes where the documents are kept in order to find documents that have not been previously described in the indexes. The Fontcuberta Archive has boxes labelled as "Odd Documents" or "Documents pending classification" or, even "Useless Documents". Probably of no use to the management of the family properties, they were therefore left out. However, after careful analysis, these documents, now in the Fontcuberta fonds, box 47, seem to belong to the Sentmenat fonds. The confusion probably arose from the moment when the three fonds were arranged and some box was misplaced. They decided to label it as useless or odd because it was of no use to them. In the eyes of the person in charge of the archival

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66. Piquer, Esperança. "Castell Cartoixa de Vallparadís". *Catalunya Romànica* Barcelona: Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana, 1991: XVIII, 268.

67. These documents will be jointly published with the Arxiu de la Ciutat de Terrassa.

processing, they had lost all their value as management tools. In case of a future archival intervention, these documents have to be included in one of the series of the classification table. Finally, another important element is that all the boxes of the three fonds share the same labels —testaments, inventories, *censuses*, rulings, and etc.— Therefore, the normalized description standard helps both the recovery of information and the research. Nevertheless, it needs to be taken into account that the box labelled as "nuptial agreements and bequests", will not systematically contain actual nuptial agreements until the middle of the 16th century. In the previous centuries we find bequests, dowry agreements or documents related to marriage law, but no actual nuptial agreement, although the description of 14th-century documents —in the case of the Fontcuberta Archive— classifies them as such. In fact, that kind of document did not consolidate until the 16th century. Before that, there were only loose contracts that could end up as a part of a nuptial agreement[68].

3.2. The Intervention of the ARQUIBANC Project Team

The objectives of the ARQUIBANC project were, as we have already mentioned, to locate, recover, arrange and disseminate patrimonial fonds as well as private fonds preserved in private hands. Leaving out the rest of the private archives we have located, we will now focus on the Fontcuberta Archive in order to briefly sum up our task there. As stated before, this archive is perfectly preserved and ordered, however, if its classification is useful for the owners in order to manage their patrimony, it is probably not the most suitable arrangement for historical research. Therefore, our intervention was aimed at making the fonds accessible to researchers. First, we designed the database that had to contain the finding aids. Its architecture has already been detailed in several papers published by our team throughout the duration of the project[69]. At the same time, we started the digitization of the holdings, with the purpose of being able to carry out research without having to handle documents more than twice. During the digitization phase we took into account several considerations in order to avoid some of the most frequent errors and to follow certain criteria that rationalized the process[70]. First we prepared the documents, that is, we selected one by one those that had to be digitized —all documents prior to the 16th century—. Next we appraised the finding aids already in use —old indexes— to assign call numbers to every document. Those call numbers match the identification code of the digital image.

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68. Gifre, Pere. "El procés d'implantació dels capítols matrimonials (final de segle XVI-començament de segle XVII)", *Els capítols matrimonials. Una font per a la Història Social*, Rosa Ros, ed. Girona: Associació d'Història Rural de les Comarques Gironines-Centre de Recerca d'Història Rural, 2010: 55-69.

69. See note 49.

70. Serra, Eugènia. "Digitalització? Parlem-ne". BID. *Textos universitaris de biblioteconomia i documentació*, 24 (2010). Accessible at: Universitat de Barcelona. "Digitalització? Parlem-ne". *Textos universitaris de biblioteconomia i documentació*. 1 June 2014 <http://bid.ub.edu/24/serra1.htm>.

Finally we put together a series of specific indications for the company in charge of the actual process[71]. This procedure also helped us check each and every document as well as its corresponding description in the finding aids already in use. We also measured all the parchments to include this basic information in their records. The documents contained in the boxes labelled as "useless and odd documents", which were not accounted for in the existing indexes, were also completely described.

The development of the database itself started once the documents were digitized and returned to their owner. The different fields for each document were filled in with the data resulting from an attentive reading. Even though we limited our research to documents prior to 1600, the work required for such an archive is immense. A classification table following the indications established by the regulations of archival description is also in progress. Our goal is that, once this process is considered finished, the documents are fully accessible to all interested researchers[72].

4. Conclusion

The relevance of patrimonial archives lies in the fact that they can help us further our knowledge of the medieval past. The aforementioned examples make that manifest. We have seen how the location of new documents allows us access to new information and even makes us change some chronologies. The work based on patrimonial archives, or at least on a part of them, also enables the location of documents thought to be lost, as happened with the book of the barony of Eramprunyà. But we need to stress the need to keep on working on the recovery of patrimonial archives. Such a work demands the participation and consensus of the owners in order to avoid conflicts and suspicion and to grant workteams free access to private archives.

The future of patrimonial archives also demands the search for new tools that approach these archival holdings to the scientific community. In some cases, the instruments provided by the Administration to the owners so that they deposit their archives in public institutions will do the trick. In some others, though, the tools may be provided by technology and the opportunities it furnishes. All the initiatives along those lines are welcome and, as we showed, yield good results that need to be followed up and consolidated. The knowledge of the history of Catalonia, especially for the medieval period, will benefit from that. Patrimonial archives are necessary in order to know more about our past, always through a dialogue with the sources that can be found in other archives.

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71. Day, Michael. *Preparing Collection for Digitization*. London: Facet Publishing, 2011.

72. Universitat de Barcelona. *Arquibanc*. 1 June 2014 <http://www.ub.edu/arquibanc/home.html>.

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