Transcription of Characters

Another major challenge involved in reading old Portuguese writing is correctly transcribing the letters and numbers in the original text to a more familiar style.

Since every scribe developed his own style of handwriting, you will have to acquaint yourself with the style of the scribe each time you study a new document. This becomes easier with experience.

The following three practice texts will give you some experience with this skill. After each text and before the transcription is a blank section that you should use for your transcription of the text. As you work through this section, follow these steps:

1. Read through the entire document.
2. Transcribe those letters and words that are easy for you, leaving blanks where you have difficulty.
3. Compare the letters or words that are easy for you with the rest of the text to find other letters or words that are the same.
4. Read the analysis included after the transcription.
5. After reading the analysis, try one more time to complete the transcription on your own.
6. Finally, compare your transcription to the transcription that is provided and make certain that you understand any differences between the two.

Practice Text 7

Practice text 7 was taken from the last page (unnumbered) of the first book of the parish register of baptisms of the Se Parish, Macao (the Portuguese possession on the coast of China). This book is on microfilm at the Genealogical Department Library, film number 1,110,191, item 1.

1. [Handwritten text]
2. [Handwritten text]
3. [Handwritten text]
4. [Handwritten text]
5. [Handwritten text]
6. [Handwritten text]
7. [Handwritten text]
8. [Handwritten text]
9. [Handwritten text]
10. [Handwritten text]
11. [Handwritten text]
12. [Handwritten text]
WRITE YOUR TRANSCRIPTION HERE:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 

11. 

12. 

TRANSCRIPTION OF PRACTICE TEXT 7

1. Aos dezanove dias do mez de dezem-
2. bro de mil oito centos noventa e seis annos
3. em Macau, em cumprimento da V. Ordem
4. do Exmo. e Rmo: Sr. Vigario Geral,
   Encarregado
5. do governo da Diocese, numerei e rubrique es-
6. te livro para nelle se lançarem os termos de
7. baptism da freguezia da Se, o qual contem
8. quarenta folhas, todas rubricadas com o meu
9. nome = Pº Guilherme: em fé do que fiz
10. este termo e me assinei
11. Pº Guilherme F. da Silva
12. Secr:
ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE TEXT 7

The Letters

The biggest problem in transcribing text 7, as with most older documents, is becoming familiar with the scribe’s style of writing. The letters are generally well formed, but there are several that could cause problems, especially for the beginner. For instance, the letter d appears often in the text and could cause difficulty if not properly identified. Line 1 from text 7 contains five d’s:

All but the last d are made in the same manner. The last is similar to the capital D as it appears in line 5:

Months of the year are not capitalized in Portuguese, so dezembro should be spelled with a small d. However, capital letters were used randomly in most old Portuguese documents, and you will encounter this problem often.

The letters z, g, and q are all similar enough to cause problems; nevertheless, there is enough difference in the scribe’s style of writing to tell them apart if you study them closely. Study the following words: (1) vez from line 1, (2) Encorregado from line 4, and (3) qual from line 7. Note the difference between the letters z, g, and q:

The scribe’s manner of making the letter c, as seen in the word cumprimento, line 3, is interesting and might cause you difficulty. But once you become familiar with it, it offers no problems.

The double s as seen in the word assignei, line 10, is very common to older records. Study the method used in writing this combination:

The scribe’s f as in the word fé, line 9, might also cause problems, but is very simple once you become familiar with it.
One of the most difficult aspects of this scribe's style is that his u's, o's, e's, and i's are so close and small that it is often difficult to tell them apart. This is also true of the m's, n's, u's and v's. Familiarity with the words is often the only way to solve this type of problem.

Terms

There are two terms in this text that might be difficult. The word termo in lines 8 and 10 means "text" or "entry." The verb rubricar, which is used in lines 5 and 6, means "to mark with one's initials, signature, or seal."

Spelling

Several words found in the sample text are spelled differently today. In line 1, the word dezanove is spelled with an ã after the z instead of an e, and mez is spelled with a z (this is common). The word annos, line 2, is spelled with a double nn. The word nelle, line 6, is spelled with a double ll. In line 7, freguezia is spelled with a z instead of an s; and baptismo is spelled with a p, which would be correct even today in Portugal, but not in Brazil. The word assignei, line 10, is spelled with a g after the first i.

Joining Words

The scribe generally separated and joined words in the proper places. In the following instances, however, the words are close enough to cause problems:

1. governo da, line 5

2. baptismo da, line 7

3. o qual, line 7

Abbreviations

The few abbreviations in this text are simple ones. They are as follows:

1. V. in line 3 could be an abbreviation for either Vossa or Veneravel. In this case Veneravel seems to fit better.

2. Exmo. in line 4 is an abbreviation for Excelentíssimo.

3. Rmo. in line 4 is an abbreviation for Reverendíssimo.

4. Sr., also in line 4, is an abbreviation for senhor.

5. Pn, used in the scribe's signature in line 11, is an abbreviation for padre.

6. F., also in the scribe's signature in line 11, might be an abbreviation for almost any personal name beginning with F.

7. Secr., line 12, is an abbreviation for secretário.
Practice Text 8

Practice text 8 was taken from page 39, item 3, film number 524,801. This film contains the parish records from the Immaculada Conceição parish, New Bedford, Massachusetts, U.S.A. The film is available at the Genealogical Department Library.

1. 1 de novembro de 1897 baptizou Albina...
2. vier, menina de 18 de novembro de 1897, filha de...
3. Salvador Paes e de Maria Filomena, de Santa Cristina...
4. Quebec, Canadá. Fornece dados de nome, data...
5. e mãe de Maria da Conceição Ferreira...
6. 0. Ferreira
7. 8. 1 de novembro de 1897 baptizou Helena, menina...
8. menina de 2 de novembro de 1897, filha de...
9. Jose Miguel, natural de 1 de Miguel, e de Francisca Miguel, natural de esta cidade...
10. de New Bedford, Mass. Fornece dados de nome...
11. e mãe de Maria Ferreira...
12. A. O. Ferreira

WRITE YOUR TRANSCRIPTION HERE:

1. ___________________________ 8. ___________________________
2. ___________________________ 9. ___________________________
3. ___________________________ 10. ___________________________
4. ___________________________ 11. ___________________________
5. ___________________________ 12. ___________________________
6. ___________________________ 13. ___________________________
7. ___________________________ 14. ___________________________
1. A 27 de Novembro de 1897 baptizei Albertina
2. que nasceu a 15 de Novembro de 1897, filha de
3. Manuel Jacintho Carvalho, natural de S. Vicente
4. S. Miguel, e de Maria Williams, de Santa Christine,
5. Petite Quebec, Canada. Foi padrinho Manuel Mu-
6. niz Nazareth e madrinh Maria Muniz dos Anjos
7. A.C. Vieira
8. A 27 de Novembro de 1897 baptizei Helena,
9. que nasceu a 2 de Novembro de 1897, filha de
10. Jose Miguel, natural de S. Miguel, e de Fran-
11. cisca Miguel Jackson, natural d'esta cidade
12. de New Bedford, Mass. Foi padrinho Antonio Tim-
13. on e madrinha Helena Parker.
14. A.C. Vieira

ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE TEXT 8

The Letters

As with text 7, the biggest difficulty in understanding text 8 is becoming familiar with the scribe's style of writing.

In each of these examples the letter z is formed basically the same way, but it could be confused with an r or even an s.

The small a is also difficult where it is used alone in lines 2 and 9:

The capital A could also cause some problems, as seen in the following examples from lines 1, 6, 7, and 12:

The capital T in line 12 can be difficult until you compare it with the capital F in the words Foi, lines 5 and 12, and Francisco, lines 10 and 11. Study these examples and note the similarity of the two letters. They are identical except that the F is crossed and the T is not.

Terms

All of the terms used in this entry are very basic and should offer no problems. The place-names are also quite simple even though they identify cities in two different countries.
Spelling

Baptizei, lines 1 and 8, is spelled with a p, and the letter z is used instead of s. Neither of these changes makes the word difficult to identify. The h in Jacinthe, line 3, does not occur in the word today.

[Handwritten names]

The names Williams, line 4, and Jackson, line 11, are foreign and use the letters W and k, which are not part of the Portuguese alphabet.

Separating Words

The scribe generally separated and joined his words properly.

Abbreviations

The only abbreviations in text 8 are: S., line 10, an abbreviation for São; Mass., line 12, an abbreviation for Massachusetts; and A.C., line 14, an abbreviation of the scribe's name.
1. Acordão os Inquisidores, Ordinario, e Deputados da

2. Santa Inquisição, que vistos estes autos, Culpas,

3. e Confissões de Izabel de Mesquita, chrís-

4. tan nova, Cazada Com Joseph Ramires, que

5. tem parte em hum engenho, natural, e mo-

6. radora no Rio de Janeiro, Re preza que

7. prezente está. Porque se mostra, que Sen-

8. do christan baptizada, obrigada a ter, e

9. Crer tudo o que tem, Cre, e ensina a San-

10. ta Madre Igreja de Roma, ella o fez

11. pello Contrario, e de Certo tempo a esta

12. parte persuadida Com o ensino, e falsa dou-

13. trina de Certa pessoa de sua nascão Se apartou

14. de nossa Santa Fe Catholica, e passou á Crença da

15. Lei de Moyzes, tendo a ainda agora por boa,

16. e verdadeira, esperando Salvarce nella.

17. E não Cria no Misterio da San-

18. tissima Trindade, nem em Christo Senhor nosso.

ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE TEXT 9

The Letters

Many of the letters in practice text 9 would be difficult for even an experienced researcher. Following is a list of some of those letters or combinations of letters, an example of a word they appear in, and the line that the example is taken from. Check your transcription to see if you were able to correctly decipher these letters.

d  persuadida line 12 q  que line 4
f  falsa line 12 R  Rio line 6
h  hum line 5 s  sua line 13
h  engenho line 5 s  Inquisidores line 1
i  Igreja line 10 ss  Confissões line 3
o  obrigada line 8 st  estes line 2
p  preza line 6 t  parte line 5
Terms

Since this text is a court record and an inquisition record, it contains some words that are unique to these two types of records. These terms and their definitions follow:

- Acordão, line 1: sentence or judgment
- Inquisidores, line 1: inquisitor—the judge
- Christan nova, lines 3 and 4: a name given to all non-Catholics, particularly Jews, who were baptized into the Catholic church
- Lei de Moyses, line 15: Law of Moses—a reference to the religion of the Jews
- Ordinario, line 1: a high church official
- Engenho, line 5: mill, as in sawmill or sugarmill
- Re, line 6: female defendant or criminal

Spelling

Many of the words in text 9 that are spelled differently than they are today are similar to words that have already been discussed. The following are examples of differences not yet discussed: (1) Confissões in line 3 is spelled with an n after the e. This is common in the plural forms of words ending with -ão. Today such words are spelled without the n. (2) Christan nova in lines 3 and 4 is also spelled with a final n, which is dropped in current Portuguese. (3) Salvare in line 16 is spelled with a final ce. In current Portuguese it would be spelled with an se following a hyphen: salvar-se.
Separating and Joining Words

Several words in text 9 are incorrectly separated or joined. Each of these is shown below with the number of the line it appears in and the correct transcription.

- Cremadura
  lines 5 and 6 e moradora

- a ter
  line 8 a ter

- o que
  line 9 o que

- ensina a Santa
  lines 9 and 10 ensino a Santa

- a esta
  line 11 a esta

- o ensino
  line 12 o ensino

- Certa pessoa
  line 13 Certa pessoa

- de sua
  line 13 de sua

- Se apartou
  line 13 Se apartou

- e passou à Grena
  line 14 e passou à Grena

- tendo a ainda agora por boa
  line 15 tendo a ainda agora por boa

Abbreviations

There are no abbreviations in text 9.