

Collections of the Novitiate of *Cotovia*

The origins of the National Museum of Natural History and Science (MUHNAC) can be traced back to the Novitiate of *Cotovia*, a Jesuit college, located here in the early seventeenth century. Sponsored by Fernão Teles de Meneses (1530-1605), Governor of India, and his wife Maria de Noronha (1545-1623), the construction of the Novitiate building and church began in 1603.

This month, we commemorate 400 years since the inauguration of the Novitiate church. After a project by Baltazar Álvares (1560-1613), a renowned Portuguese architect, the church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption. It was inaugurated on November 1, 1616, with its first mass and the translocation of Fernão Teles de Meneses' remains to their final tomb. Despite several architectural transformations over time, the cruciform plan of the church is still visible in the Museum's monumental entrance. The church was destroyed by a fire in 1843.

Since 1619, when courses started, the Novitiate of *Cotovia* played a seminal role in the preparation of Jesuits for the evangelization and the mapping of new Portuguese overseas territories. The Society of Jesus, with its network of colleges in Lisbon, Coimbra and Évora, was decisive in the development of scientific education and the dissemination and construction of scientific instruments in Portugal.

This month two Jesuit objects from MUHNAC's collections were selected from the Novitiate of *Cotovia* treasures: two examples of liturgical vestments – a corporal burse and a chalice cover – both of Portuguese manufacture.

