

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>



**FORTES, Agostinho José** (Mourão, 1869 – Lisboa, 1940)

Agostinho Fortes was the first Professor of History at the University of Lisbon's Faculty of Humanities (Faculdade de Letras, FLUL) to have himself taken Humanities at university level. He entered the Humanities Course (*Curso Superior de Letras*, CSL) in 1888/89, studying under Teófilo Braga and Zófimo Consiglieri Pedroso, who were to strongly influence the way in which his thinking was constructed. At the same time he worked as a journalist – a profession he was to pursue for the rest of his life.

In 1904, A.F. applied for a teaching post on his former course, but the appointment went to Manuel de Oliveira Ramos, with whom he was to work later on. When Consiglieri Pedroso died and Ramos moved across to the History of Portugal, A.F. was invited to take up the vacant place in General History – a controversial decision that led others who applied for the post in the same year to ask for the appointment process to be repeated. In 1911, he became a full member of the FLUL staff, as Extraordinary Professor. His teaching output over the course of a career that lasted roughly thirty years was exceptional, covering more than twenty subjects from four different groups (the only ones he never taught were Germanic Philology and Geography). He was also reappointed Faculty Secretary – a post he had already held during the time of the CSL – for successive terms (1911-1929), before finally becoming Director of the Faculty of Humanities (1931-1933).

A.F.'s political activities were always characterised by his support for the struggle for republicanism, and he was a town councillor during the 'first republican local authority government' of Lisbon Municipal Authority (CML, 1908). He also became a Mason. Under the Republic itself he was a Senator (1915-1919), and Mayor of Oeiras. In 1919, he joined the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP). Despite his former ties to Portuguese republicanism and socialism, he retained his faculty job and even his position on the FLUL governing board after the New State regime came to power. He founded the Paiã Agricultural School (EAP), the Estefânia School (EE) and the National Education Library (BEN) collection, all with a view to promoting knowledge about Portuguese history and mankind's civilizational evolution among the less well educated segments of the population. His public work was guided by the desire to spread knowledge more widely and educate. He founded the newspaper *A Reforma Social* (1910), the Alentejan League (LA) and the Alentejan Club (Grémio Alentejano). He translated countless books, such as those by Vicente Blasco Ibañez and a variety of contemporary thinkers (Le Bon, Nordau, Novicow). The publications to which he contributed particularly



included *Anais da Academia de Estudos Livres (Universidade Popular)* – behind which he was one of the driving forces – *Revista de Assistência*, *Revista Pedagógica* and *A Tutoria*. From 1912 onwards he dedicated himself to the Free University in Lisbon (ULL), where he was to give various conferences.

The work he submitted in 1904 as part of his application for a post on the Humanities Course was *O Helenismo ou a persistência da cultura helénica através da civilização* (Hellenism or the persistence of the Hellenic culture over the course of civilisation). In it, he displays his love of themes from classical history and for the history and evolution of not only European civilisation, but that of the whole of the Mediterranean basin, including Arab culture. As time passed, A.F. focused on more recent topics, in which he was concerned to justify the new political reality that had arisen out of the creation of the Portuguese Republic. He argued that humanity was in an evolutionary process, gradually moving towards the implementation of a fairer society, as represented by the establishment of republican democracy. He thus narrated the history of Portugal in a way that was interventionist and sometimes pessimistic. He developed his historiographical views under the influence of Teófilo Braga's republican perspective and teachings, adopting both liberal historiography's critical discourse on the country's decadence and the republican propensity to study contemporary history. Following the traditional liberal and republican historiography, he argued that since the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal had been experiencing a deep crisis that was reflected in all the various sectors of society and had caused the process of decadence the country was living through in his own day. He outlined the causes that sparked the crisis Portugal underwent when the Expansion began. This pessimistic vision of history is clearly influenced by the work of Oliveira Martins. In addition, in the back of A.F.'s mind there was always present the slowdown in the process of evolution towards a better society that occurred from the sixteenth century onwards, in a period in which royal power was strengthened as the crown subjected the nobility and gained control of municipal powers. As a result, A.F. took up the criticism of Absolutism in general and the Bragança family in particular, saying that the period in which the Marquis of Pombal led the government was an interlude in the country's decadence. In A.F.'s writing, the people were the key element in the greatest events in Portuguese history, but he also saw them as the receptacle for the Nation's "primary qualities", imbued with liberal and democratic ideas and patriotism.

His historiographical thinking was characterised by a diffuse ideological eclecticism, in which we can see influences of republican ideology, positivism, evolutionism and the ideas of Karl Marx, which serve as a structure for a criticism of Portugal's past and a teleological perspective on the country's history.

**Works by Agostinho Fortes:** *O Helenismo ou a persistência da cultura helénica através da civilização*, dissertation submitted as part of A.F.'s application to become Professor of Ancient, Medieval and Modern History on the Humanities Course (CSL), Lisbon, Tipografia Casa Portuguesa, 1904; *Alexandre Herculano, breve esboço da sua vida e obras*, Lisbon, Imprensa da Biblioteca de Educação Nacional, 1910; *História das Nações Europeias. Os últimos cem anos. Antecedentes da grande conflagração actual*, Lisbon, Tipografia Francisco Luís Gonçalves, [undated]; "A vida do povo português, de 1500 a 1820", chapter II, *História do*

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

*Regime Republicano em Portugal* (dir. Luís de Montalvor), vol. I, Lisbon, Tipografia da empresa do Anuário Comercial, 1930, pp. 99-160; *A Revolução de 1820 e a Constituição de 1822*, Lisbon, Tipografia Silvas, 1932; *Hierologia. Ciência das Religiões*, Lisbon, Tipografia Silvas Lda, 1932; *Portugal, factor principal da civilização moderna*, Lisbon, Tipografia Silvas Lda., 1933.

**Works with references to Agostinho Fortes:** AGUILAR, Manuel Busquets de, *O Curso Superior de Letras (1858-1911)*, Lisbon, 1939; ALMEIDA, José Ferreira de, “Doutor Agostinho Fortes”, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, series I, tome VII, nos. 1-2, Lisbon, 1940, pp. 397-400; DORES, Hugo Gonçalves, *A História na Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa (1911-1930)*, dissertation for a Master’s Degree in Contemporary History presented to the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Lisbon (FLUL), 2009; MARQUES, A. H. Oliveira, “Notícia Histórica da Faculdade de Letras (1911-1961)”, *Ensaios de Historiografia Portuguesa*, Lisbon, Palas Editora, 1988, pp.123-198; SERRÃO, Joel, “Historiografia. Na Idade Contemporânea”, *Dicionário da História de Portugal*, vol. IV, Lisbon, Iniciativas Editoriais, 1971, pp. 438-446.

Hugo Dores



APOIOS:

