

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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



**CORREIA, António Augusto Esteves Mendes** (Porto, 1888 – Lisboa, 1960)

Mendes Corrêa, as he was known, was born on Rua do Alameda in downtown Porto, on 4 April 1888, to physician Antonio Maria Esteves Correia Mendes and his wife, Etelvina Marques Mendes Correia. The family was middle class, supported by his father's clinical work. In fact, his father reached a certain social prominence in the city, through his friendship with Oliveira Martins and Luciano de Castro, holding the positions of city councillor, board member of the House of Mercy and secretary of the Commercial Geography Society of Porto. After completing primary and secondary school in his hometown, Mendes Corrêa followed in his father's footsteps and enrolled in the pre-Medicine programme at the Polytechnic Academy of Porto (1904-1906), and then the Medical-Surgical School of Porto. There he stood out as a student of merit with a few publications and conferences, and he completed the programme with excellent marks in 1911. The scientific and technical-oriented curriculum and methodological practices at both schools, with a strong emphasis on applied science, were not unrelated to the impact of positivism on his thinking. In his final dissertation, *The Genius and Talent of Pathology*, he presented a scientific and clinical study of the nature of the insane under the emerging anthropological point of view.

Mendes Corrêa was not drawn to a clinical practice, given with the possibility of scientific research in Psychiatry and Criminal Anthropology, an interest that was reinforced during his time as a medical anthropologist at the Porto *Tutoria Central da Infância* (an agency of the Ministry of Justice that dealt with criminal and civil cases involving minors). He accepted an invitation to begin a career as an academic at the newly created Faculty of Science of the University of Porto, a professional relationship that would last for many years, in the following positions: Second Interim Assistant Professor (1911), First Interim Assistant Professor (1912) Second Permanent Assistant Professor (1913), Full Professor and Secretary (1921) and its director (1929 and 1932). During the short-lived existence of First Faculty of Arts of Porto he began also lecturing as a contract professor in the Geographical Sciences department (1919), and later as full professor (1921). Additionally, he served as chair of Archaeology, Ethnology, Anthropology and Geography and Ethnography. The institution granted him the highest degree of Doctor of Historical and Natural Sciences in (1922) and Geographical Sciences (1925). The underlying theme of the first phase of his university teaching career was his notorious dedication to the teaching, research and dissemination of anthropology, a field of knowledge introduced by him into the University of Porto curriculum. He always sought to enhance and



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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

empower the field, establishing new perspectives for teaching and research, which, up to the 1920s, was mostly focused on Criminal Anthropology and a general social agenda. Within the Faculty of Sciences of Porto, he founded and fostered the Anthropology Scientific Research Institute (1923) and the Anthropological Laboratory and Museum (1927), securing the field's programme of studies and the formation of a new scientific elite in search of its scientific guidance.

Mendes Corrêa built international acclaim as an anthropologist since the 1920s. His view of anthropology was based on the importance of the natural history of man, with man's biological and psychological individuality involved in the collective construction of races, cultures and human societies. He was committed to the essential search for an interdisciplinary approach with other sciences such as ethnology, criminology, psychology, archaeology and prehistory, also outlined in his research and studies with significant input. Along this scientific line of developing the social sciences, he continued to earn cultural and scientific awards from organisations such as the Carlos Ribeiro Society, the Martins Sarmento Society and the magazine *Portugalia*, becoming one of the most active builders of the Portuguese Society of Anthropology and Ethnology (1918), an organisation that still exists today, which promotes collaboration across different branches of science, in a globalising perspective of human knowledge. At the age of 33, Mendes Corrêa set himself apart from his peers in the historical community with the publication of *Homo: os modernos estudos sobre a origem do homem* (*Homo: Modern Studies on the Origin of Man*), an anthropological research study based on archaeological and pre-historical hypotheses. Due to the revolutionary theory it proposed, it was translated into several languages. In examining the origins of man and the migration of the first human communities, in a clearly reaffirmed view of evolutionism and monogenesis, he defended the predominance of *Homo sapiens* in the evolutionary process and pointed to a Cradle of Humankind in the Indian Ocean basin, even proposing the hypothesis of a possible South American settlement through Oceania due to the ethnic, linguistic and ethnological similarities between their indigenous tribes.

In the mid 1930s, his career as a professor and scientist lost some of its momentum to politics. As a supporter of the Estado Novo, he was invited to serve as president of the Administrative Commission of the Municipality of Porto and agent in the Corporative Chamber (1936-1942), and deputy in the National Assembly for three terms (1945-1956). During his time on the Porto city council he encouraged cultural activities with the creation of the City Historian's Office (1936), the Portuguese Studies short course (1938) and the restoration of the National Museum of Soares dos Reis (1940). In 1942, at the invitation of the Ministry of the Colonies, he began working on the colonial reform project, focusing his attention on the fields of education and scientific research. For the interest and concern shown by his development, Mendes Corrêa was appointed to the presidency of the Geographical Missions and Colonial Research Committee (1946) and the Overseas Board of Governors (1958). The question of the colonies became one of the leading and most original themes of his anthropological work, resulting from the research missions that took him to the Portugal's African territories, where he collected empirical knowledge that led him to resume, also in 1946, his university career. He assumed the direction of the Escola Superior Colonial (later the Instituto



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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

Superior de Estudos Ultramarinos) until his retirement from public office in 1958. His strong nationalist leanings toward "Portuguese imperialism" featured prominently in his new role, firmly rooting the school's educational mission to train workers with knowledge of local contexts. The ultimate goal of these highly educated civil servants would be to respond to the governmental concerns of the Salazar regime, strengthening Portuguese nationalism in the colonies and cooperating with Portuguese scientists for scientific research.

Mendes Corrêa's extensive research in various areas of the Natural and Social Sciences ensured his name circulated among international intellectuals, with over three hundred publications and citations in the works of Raymond Furon, Afrânio Peixoto and Henri Breuil. This was equally proof of his constant contact with and updating on developments of the scientific world. Specifically in the field of history, he demonstrated himself to be one of the main drivers of prehistoric archaeology, reviewing previously published research and exploring new archaeological sites, suggesting a specificity and originality of the Iberian megalithic culture in the European context, and even suggesting a native species through the example of "Concheiros de Muge", which he named *Homo afer taganus*. His major international development in this area, though, was awarded at the International Congress of Anthropology in Amsterdam in 1927, and established a parallel between the archaic alphabetic inscriptions found in Alvão (Trás-os-Montes) with similarly controversial inscriptions in Glazel (France), contesting the exclusive origins of the Phoenician alphabet in Europe preceding other numeric primitive writing systems, even exhorting the existence of a dynamic lithic Western civilization.

In his historiographical work, where the primacy of anthropological research led him to apply positivist and deterministic guidelines, history was conceptualised as a non-cyclical science resulting from the multiple factors that influenced human reality, and thus historical facts should be analysed by historians in a highly critical way, drawing on input from other sciences to complement their authenticity. The importance of national history in the civic and political training of Portuguese people was also overemphasised, their teachings either a "precious archive of lessons and, above all, stimuli" or the nationalist and patriotic dimension being "the strongest guarantee of our independence (*Antropologia e História*, 1954). On the overriding path of the search for the anthropological roots of the Portuguese people he entered into an intellectual controversy on the origins of nationality with Damião Peres (with whom he collaborated on *História de Portugal* during his time at the 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty of Arts of Porto), by conceding the Lusitanians as a primordial ethnogenic element in the formation of the Portuguese people, challenging the theory of nationalism as a firstly political construction in favour of the deterministic geographic and ethnic framework, which reinforced the idea of antiquity and Portuguese specificity in comparison with other European peoples.

In addition to the extremely long list of conferences, lectures, awards, commendations and honorary titles, both Portuguese and foreign, from Europe, South America and Africa, Mendes Corrêa was also a full, corresponding and/or honorary member of more than thirty cultural and scientific associations, including chairmanship of the Geographical Society of Lisbon, academic member of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon and the Portuguese Academy of History, honorary member of the Spanish Society of Anthropology,



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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

Ethnology and Prehistory and full member of the Pontificia Academia Scientiarum. Out of his numerous collaborations he published studies in journals such as *A Águia*, *O Archeólogo Português*, *Trabalhos da Sociedade Portuguesa de Antropologia e Etnologia*, *Estudos Ultramarinos*, *Revue Anthropologique*, *Scientia*, *Atti della Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze Nuovi Lincei*, and the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, among many others.

Dr. Mendes Corrêa, awarded the Grand Cross of Public Instruction, died on 7 January 1960 in Lisbon, and his body was transported to the family plot in Porto as his last wish. Due to his versatility and scientific originality, demonstrated during his university teaching career and in his management of multiple projects and research missions, he is considered the founder of a Portuguese school of anthropology who made undeniable advances in Portuguese domestic and colonial knowledge, though staunchly bound in his selection of subjects of study by conservative nationalism and the exclusionary imperatives of the Estado Novo.

**Works by António Augusto Esteves Mendes Corrêa:** *Raça e Nacionalidade*. Porto, Edição da Renascença Porto, 1921; *Homo: os modernos estudos sobre a origem do homem*. Lisboa, Lumen, 1921; *Os povos primitivos da Lusitânia*. Porto, A. Figueirinhas, 1924; "O significado genealógico do "Australopithecus" e do crâneo de Tabgha e o arco antropológico índico". *Trabalhos da Sociedade Portuguesa de Antropologia e Etnologia*. Porto, vol. 2 , fasc. 3, 1925; *A geografia da prehistória*. Porto, Imprensa Portuguesa, 1929; *Origens da cidade do Porto*, 1.<sup>a</sup> ed. Vila Nova de Gaia, 1932; *Les inscriptions de Parada, Alvão et Lerilla [Congrès International d'Anthropologie et Archéologie Préhistorique - 1931]*. Paris, E. Nourry, 1933; *Raízes de Portugal: Portugal "ex-nihilo"!... Terra e independência, a raça*, 1.<sup>a</sup> ed. Lisboa, Ocidente, 1938; *Contribuição portuguesa para o estudo da pré-história geral*. Lisboa, Bertrand, 1940; *Antropologia e História*. Porto, Instituto de Antropologia da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto, 1954.

**Works with reference to António Augusto Esteves Mendes Corrêa:** CALAZANS, João, *O moderno pensamento lusitano: Ferreira de Castro e Mendes Corrêa*. Victoria, Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 1936; SERPA PINTO, Ruy e MAGALHÃES, Hugo, *Bibliografia do Prof. Mendes Corrêa*. Porto, Instituto de Antropologia da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto, 1942; GONÇALVES, Júlio, "Professor Mendes Correia". *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*. Lisboa, n.º 4-6, 1957, pp. 119-124; MONTEIRO, Hernâni, "Professor A. A. Mendes Correia". *Trabalhos da Sociedade Portuguesa de Antropologia e Etnologia*. Porto, vol. XVII , fasc. 1-4, 1959; RIBEIRO, Leonel "O saudoso arqueólogo Prof. Doutor A. A. Mendes Corrêa e as suas teses duma grande civilização ocidental e duma provável origem ocidental do alfabeto". *Lucerna: actas do II colóquio portuense de arqueologia*, vol. III, 1963, pp. 184-194; CASTRO, José de, *Elogio do Professor Doutor António Mendes Correia*. Lisboa, Academia Portuguesa da História, 1964; TEIXEIRA, Carlos, *Elogio histórico de A. A. Mendes Correia*. Lisboa, Memórias da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Classe das Ciências, tomo IX, 1964; CARDOSO, João Luís, "O Professor Mendes Corrêa e a Arqueologia Portuguesa". *Al-Madan*, Almada, II série, n.º 8, 1999, pp. 138-150; ARAÚJO, Francisco Miguel "António Augusto Esteves



# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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

Mendes Corrêa”. *Docentes e Estudantes da Primeira Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, 2008. [Consult. 27 de Fevereiro de 2012]. Disponível em WWW: <URL: [http://sigarra.up.pt/up/web\\_base.gera\\_pagina?P\\_pagina=1004189](http://sigarra.up.pt/up/web_base.gera_pagina?P_pagina=1004189)>; FABIÃO, Carlos, *Uma História da Arqueologia Portuguesa: das origens à descoberta do Côa*. Lisboa, CTT - Correios de Portugal, 2011.

Francisco Miguel Araújo



APOIOS:

