

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

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Portuguese Academy of History II (1936 - 1974) Historiography

The Portuguese Academy of History was created by government initiative on 19 May 1936, and inaugurated on 1 December of the same year. In the Rules of Procedure of the National Board of Education, the Academy was described as follows: "Under the auspices of the Head of State, the Portuguese Academy of History is founded, alongside the National Archive of the Torre do Tombo, as a specialised association of scholars dedicated to research and the critical reconstitution of the past, whose main goals are to stimulate and coordinate revisionist efforts to reintegrate historical truth and enrich the documentation of Portugal's inalienable rights." (Rules of Procedure of the National Board of Education, Art. 39). In July 1937, the Setting-up Committee of the Academy, appointed and headed by Carneiro Pacheco, Minister of National Education, would meet for the first time to approve the Academy's statutes, drafted by Carneiro Pacheco himself, although based on the previous work of Afonso Dornelas and Manuel Múrias. Article 2 of the Academy's Statutes (Decree No. 27 913, 31 July, 1937) established the institution's purposes: "1 — To stimulate and coordinate efforts towards the research, revision, and rectification of national history, in the higher sense of the Portuguese contribution to the progress of civilisation, as well as to enrich the documentation of Portugal's inalienable rights; 2 — To systematically publish documents held in both public and private Portuguese and foreign archives relating to and capable of elucidating Portuguese history; 3 — To organise and publish, on its own initiative or by government indication, proceedings concerning historical problems on which there are differences of interpretation, seeking to establish the truth in the national interest; 4 — To publish, in Portuguese and foreign languages, works of reference that facilitate a solid understanding of everything related to Portugal's civilizing expansion in the world; 5 — To cooperate with the National Board of Education in all aspects related to the inventorying and defence of the Nation's documentary heritage, and whenever its opinion is requested."

The first meeting of the Council of the Portuguese Academy of History (APH), the organisation's executive body, was held on 2 December 1937, chaired by António de Vasconcelos (see Part I of this entry). Included among its twenty-five founding members were names such as Captain Abel Fontoura da Costa, a political figure during the First Republic, Alfredo Pimenta, a historian, poet, and polemicist, an anti-liberal intellectual



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and personal correspondent of Salazar, Damião Peres, coordinator of the História de Portugal [History of Portugal] of Barcelos, Júlio Dantas, a recognised man of letters and President of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, Manuel Paulo Merêa, one of the most admired Portuguese Law historians in the 20th century, Marcelo Caetano, a legal historian and future successor of Salazar as President of the Council of Ministers, and, of course, the members of the Academic Council. Other academics also featured João Ameal, author of the História de Portugal [History of Portugal] published by the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN) and often dubbed the "historian of the Regime" (Torgal, "tempo de 'ditadura'", História da história em Portugal, 277 ["time of 'dictatorship'", History of History in Portugal, 277]), Admiral Gago Coutinho, a historian and one of the first two men to cross the South Atlantic by plane, Charles Ralph Boxer, a British historian of Portuguese and Dutch expansion, Georg Otto Schurhammer, a German expert on the life of St. Francis Xavier, and Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian historian and sociologist, father of the Luso-Tropicalism theory.

The stage was thus set for a new organisation within the professional field of history. With regular fortnightly meetings throughout the academic year (between October and July), these members would present and discuss their work and effectively join efforts in a more collectively organised academic environment than ever before. The Academic Council, in turn, would guide the work of the historians in observance of the goals of the State, gearing them towards addressing questions on the location of the particular historical events to be commemorated, to managing academic publications, most notably in relation to the commemoration of the Double Centennial of 1939-1940, which culminated in the Portuguese World Exhibition (1940), and by awarding the title of "Academic of Merit" to those academics who had distinguished themselves.

The Portuguese Academy of History (APH) and its members were primarily concerned with knowledge and its related virtues. This, indeed, begs the question: what kind of knowledge was sought? In fact, the commitment to knowledge may be divided into two fundamental commitments: science and documents. These commitments were so hegemonic that they were omnipresent in all the APH's discussions while, at the same time, almost entirely unquestioned as elements of the historian's daily life. In practical terms, a scientific matrix permeated almost all the historical discussions. This was primarily evident in the highly frequent use of metonymic reasoning and the focus on causal problems. The discussions between Alfredo Pimenta and Rui de Azevedo are an example of this, where the former criticised the latter, saying: "First, he objected that I was not familiar with all the documents from all the medieval Chanceries, and that some might reveal the use of the patronymic in the name of the King. 'Might?' Science is not made with the unknown; it is made with knowledge. It is not with what might be that science is made, but with what is. With what might be one makes romance and banter. [...] All that we conclude is provisional. Nor does science claim definitiveness, precisely as it knows that tomorrow is the correction of yesterday." (Alfredo Pimenta, [untitled] 1939, 1-2, italics of the author of this entry). But science pervaded more than discourse alone. Its importance was seen in the weight given to the auxiliary sciences of history such as numismatics, chronology, palaeography, and in the



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organisation of bibliographies. The main pursuit in all these activities was the systematisation and categorisation of knowledge, especially of the blocks with which narratives would later be constructed.

Nevertheless, beyond the oft-repeated expression that historians were men of science, theoretical debate in the Portuguese Academy of History (APH) was not extensive. During the Estado Novo, the Academy published only one text that explicitly addressed the theoretical implications of the philosophy of science in history. The text was titled "Probabilidade Histórica" ["Historical Probability"] and was written in 1944 by Gastão de Melo e Matos, who would become part of the Academic Council some years later. His perspective was largely framed by the habitual context of Western debates on the subject. He began by stipulating that every human action was part Science, part Art, while clearly focusing on the former. He added further that scientific truth is "essentially provisional," which was a question that also occupied other authors of the philosophy of history and science in the 1940s. This was a clear innovation (Silva Rêgo, *History in times of Fascism*, 27) in theoretical terms, albeit in a logic of continuity with nineteenth-century positivism. However, the most interesting aspect of Melo e Matos' text was his comparison between history and the exact sciences: "The historical method is perfectly similar to that of the exact sciences, since it is the hypothesis, induced from facts, the number of which deemed sufficient, that must guide the pursuit of new knowledge. This pursuit does not have, nor can it have, the character of experience, since it lacks voluntariness; however, in the circumstance of being directed, it cannot be catalogued as observation either. / Only the much greater complexity of phenomena and the impossibility of eliminating disturbing factors make the degree of historical probability lower than that of other sciences. / Thus, History, regarded as science, is constituted by a set of hypotheses with all the characteristics of scientific truth and value measured by their degree of probability; although smaller than in other sciences, the very notion of probability implies the admissibility of error and constitutes a permanent characteristic of scientific truth." (APH, *Bulletin* 1944, 94)

This presentation sheds further light on the meaning of history-science for these men. It was a highly mechanical, causal, metonymic history, in pursuit of laws. Moreover, while these laws are frequently viewed as being immutable in nature, they are also provisional in the sense that they are not definitively knowable. Thus, this perspective is perfectly coherent with the idea of historical revisionism underlying the statutes of the Portuguese Academy of History (APH).

The Academy's focus on documents was another important strand of its concern with knowledge, and such importance was immediately visible in the institution's publication lists. Throughout the Estado Novo period, the Academy published more collections of documents than any other type of historiographical work. These compilations were usually lengthy, bearing only short prefaces. On the other hand, the Academy also published Annals, which contained original works by scholars. However, even these works partly consisted of documents. Instead of simply citing documents, they were usually used for the bibliography and the documents were routinely published along with the work, in annexes. Indeed, the Academy was far more focused on the publication of collections and works that included documents than on the publication of long narratives,



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although occasionally a less document-orientated work was published. The importance of documents was also visible in the funds invested in their publication. In the first ten years of the Academy, when the budget still allowed for a reasonably extensive publication plan, the APH spent around 2.5 million escudos, most of which on the publication of sources. At Academy meetings, several of the works presented were focused on specific documents or archives, for example, the "Revelação do Verdadeiro Significado dos Sinais Ocultos nas Moedas Portuguesas" ["Revelation of the True Meaning of the Hidden Signs on Portuguese Coins,"] an oral presentation delivered by Pedro Batalha Reis, and those of Sampaio Ribeiro on the royal music library of King John IV (APH, Bulletin 1945, 100-101; APH, Bulletin 1946, 118-119).

The virtues of patience and diligence also went hand in hand with the concern for documents. The size of the document collections mattered, as seen in the Annual Report of 1945: "To assess the extent of the work undertaken, suffice to say that around six thousand medieval documents were inventoried, a report was prepared that would fill a volume of the 'Annals,' and in response to a request for clarification from an academic regarding former measures of distance, another academic had to reply with a study of seventy pages or so" (APH, Bulletin 1945, 121). Both patience and diligence were closely linked to the concern with documents insofar as they were essential virtues for a scrupulous analysis of their content.

On the other hand, the activity of the Academy was not exclusively tied to epistemic virtues. A nationalist political aspect was also at play. When considering the Academy's main interests in its publications, one encounters the "Foundation of Nationality," the restoration of independence, and Portuguese maritime history, particularly as regards exploration, discovery, and colonisation. Not only did all the works address national history, but patriotism was also deemed an important scholarly virtue. This involved an active nurturing of the Nation, through research and the dissemination of periods in Portugal's history that would evoke greater pride in the national body, as well as through the preservation and continuity of its traditions. This effort is clearly visible in various presentations in the Academy's plenary session, such as in Eduardo Lupi's presentation, "Campaign against Gungunhana – First fifty years," which was welcomed precisely as "his work addresses a brilliant period of our contemporary history, from a warrior's point of view," (APH, Bulletin 1945, 129-130). A patriotic perspective of this period acquired greater importance as the 19th century was generally seen in the context of the anti-liberal current as a period of decadence, of "anarchy established by the victory of liberalism" (Maurício, *Invenção [Invention]*, 2005, 210).

Another important factor closely linked to patriotism in nation-building was the commemoration of the national past. The Academy routinely celebrated anniversaries with commemorative sessions, which included the birth of the 2nd Viscount of Santarém, the figure of the recently deceased António de Vasconcelos, Cardinal Francisco Saraiva, Oliveira Martins, and even the newly elevated Academic of Merit, Paulo Merêa. In almost all sessions of this nature, some kind of patriotic justification was given, for example, in the case of the 2nd Viscount of Santarém, "a great figure who rendered such relevant services to Science in general, and to Portuguese glory in particular" and "So great was his action that it is still projected and stands out in the annals



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of Portuguese patriotic erudition" (APH, Bulletin 1941, 113). Essentially, praising patriotic historians was not only praising the Nation that sustained them but also the past narrated by them. This was evident in "the science and patriotism with which Mr. [Joaquim] Bensaúde confronted German erudition, defending Portuguese nautical science, in whose history the period from 1430 to 1530 was one of remarkable progress, exclusively due to the Portuguese." (APH, Bulletin 1943, 78-79).

The Academy also participated in commemorations in a broader and cooperative manner with other institutions, mainly the State. It contributed with iconographic elements for series of stamps commemorating Portuguese kings and warriors, investigating, for example, the location of the Battle of Valdevez. Even foreign historians participated in this type of activity, such as the German, Georg Otto Schurhammer, in the case of the latter, by publishing a work in commemoration of the discovery of Japan (Schurhammer, "Descobrimiento" ["Discovery,"] *Annals*, Vol. 1, Series II, 17-172). The APH also participated in the celebrations of the 4th centennial of Ponta Delgada, the 5th centennial of the discovery of Guinea (at the request of the academic Marcelo Caetano, Minister of the Colonies at the time), and of course, in the celebrations of the double centennial of 1939-1940, dedicating to it the publication of the first series of *Annals*. In fact, even the Academy members' view of these works was elucidative of the importance that patriotism, memory, and history had as a relational entity. Afonso Dornelas, the first secretary-general of the Academy, said in 1940 that academics should be invited "to present works, in order to form volumes, which, in the future, will allow us to appreciate the degree of culture and patriotism with which the past was understood in 1940" (APH, Bulletin 1940, 71-72).

Closely tied to the virtue of patriotism was historical justice. In the opening speech of the Academy sessions in 1938, António de Vasconcelos chose the figure of King John V, founder of the Royal Academy of Portuguese History, working to defend this virtue. "The birth of this Portuguese Academy of History will carry on the glorious traditions of its predecessor, the Royal Academy of Portuguese History, which emerged in the 18th century at a very interesting and vibrant time, protected by the dedicated and effective action of great King John V, who worked so hard for the greatness of Portugal, who supported and propelled Arts and Letters and the whole life of the Nation with maximum effort. It took a whole century of criminal demolition, of History's appalling falsification, to dim the intense brightness of his reign. Today, fortunately, through the persistent and laborious pursuit of sources, History is being purified, and justice is being done to the magnanimous leader of the Nation, the very King John V himself" (APH, Bulletin 1937-1938, 172-173). Historical justice often primarily seeks to restore the greatness or virtue of an event or actor. If the purpose of an institution is to understand the Nation, most of the time the Nation will be restored to its greatness. Historical justice was thus nationalised, not least because the Nation was the object of study. Hence, the meaning of "defining historical truth in the national interest" may be understood.

Having already examined the ethos of the institution and taking it as a starting point, the contrasts and conflicts within the Academy may now be explored. The most defining conflict of the subsequent decades within the institution occurred in the late 1940s between Alfredo Pimenta and the Academic Council. Pimenta



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had always been a particularly independent member of the Academy, in addition to having a contentious and confrontational personality. Unlike most of his fellow members, Alfredo Pimenta was a public figure who frequently fuelled controversy in the press, and was also Salazar's personal correspondent (Braga da Cruz, Salazar and Alfredo Pimenta, 246-331). This afforded him a reserve of social capital, in addition to the cultural capital derived from his written work, which gave him independence and power.

In 1938, Pimenta resisted an invitation (Silva Rêgo, *History in times of Fascism*, 55) that would implicitly place him at the service of the Academic Council, in other words outlining a clear hierarchy that was not statutorily defined. Pimenta declined since "The Council does not have the statutory authority to make decisions of this nature, and the Academy did not entrust it with such. Some of the Academy's statutes have not been respected at all. The Academy is not made up of children or servants to whom the Council can give orders without further appeal, or specify services to be provided [sic]" (Pimenta, [letter sent to Tovar]). Without other voices to back him on this issue, Pimenta ultimately lacked causal efficacy beyond rejecting from the commission proposed to him. The Council continued to operate vertically. However, this episode marked the beginning of a conflict within the Academy itself that would define the institution in the subsequent decades: to what extent could an academic be independent of the institution?

Initially, the Academic Council had partly consisted of individuals with high social capital within the Regime. Luís Teixeira de Sampaio and the Count of Tovar were diplomats. Manuel Múrias was a publicist. The other members of the initial Council however had limited social capital and high cultural capital. António de Vasconcelos had been the director of the Faculty of Arts in Coimbra; António Baião was the director of the Torre do Tombo, where Laranjo Coelho also worked; Dornelas was a writer. In the early years of the Academy, the first three members eventually left the Academic Council (or were absent from it, in the case of the Count of Tovar). Vasconcelos and Dornelas passed away. Thus, the Academic Council was mainly entrusted to the new 1st Vice-President, Caeiro da Mata who, due to his position as a minister, was not present for much of the day-to-day activities of the Academy. In other words, the Academy remained predominantly in the hands of the two figures who relied the most on institutional positions to wield power: António Baião and Laranjo Coelho.

In fact, it was with these two individuals that Alfredo Pimenta would reignite hostilities between 1943 and 1948. When Pimenta began to write publicly and openly against the Academy, António Baião and Possidónio Mateus Laranjo Coelho tried to use the Academy's rules to remove him for non-compliance with various statutes, including the 13th, which prohibited "public and manifest immoral and civil misconduct" ("Estatutos" art. 13º [Statutes", Art. 13]). Following a sudden change of Minister of Education, where Caeiro da Mata was replaced by Fernando Pires de Lima and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the new Minister of National Education stood by Alfredo Pimenta. Both Baião and Coelho left the Academic Council. Pimenta, on the other hand, emerged extremely weakened from this conflict. He was never able to participate significantly in the Academy again. He would pass away in 1950. Another aspect of this episode should also be noted: Caetano



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Beirão, also a founder of the Academy, resigned at one point since he believed that the Academy was acting illegitimately and maliciously against Pimenta. He took a principled stand, but had much less social capital than the renowned polemicist. Whether or not this was his actual desire is unknown, but he was never made an Academic again.

This episode reveals how a confrontational stance was endorsed by the Minister of Education, while the institution routinely backed a concurring stance at the local and day-to-day level. However, with Pimenta's removal from the Academy, and the future return of Laranjo Coelho and António Baião, it was anticipated that in the clash of personae between the more independent and confrontational "man of letters", and the "Academic", more prone to agreement and more dependent on the institution, the APH would increasingly resemble an institution promoting the latter. This case should not be interpreted as anecdotal. While it is relatively extreme on the one hand, the trends it reveals are more nuanced in other episodes on the other. Therefore, it can be interpreted as relatively illustrative of the procedures of the Academy.

Following the election of the Academic Council in 1948, the APH underwent a relative shift in the direction of its work, with Queiroz Veloso, Damião Peres, and Marcelo Caetano, the latter the most dynamic and reformist of the three, joining the Academic Council. Indeed, a series of organisational efforts were immediately noted with the entry of Marcelo Caetano into the Academic Council, that fall into two categories: the production of a more critical and cooperative history, and the commemoration of history in a more visible and effective manner. Even in 1946, before becoming a member of the Council, when he was Minister of the Colonies, Marcelo had invited the Academy to participate in the celebrations of the 5th centennial of the discovery of Guinea, "submitting a record of the works that require new editions and unpublished manuscripts, documents, and geographical charts that should be published. His Excellency wishes that both the new editions and the publication of the unpublished works be undertaken critically, comparing the various copies and annotating them from various perspectives, such as linguistic, historical, geographical, ethnographic, and natural history" (APH, Bulletin 1946, 68).

It should be noted how, in this example, Marcelo combines the documentary tradition always present in the Academy with a desire for cooperative work geared towards commemoration. The Academy also continued to publish sources, but this time in critical editions, as was the case with the *Crónica Geral de Espanha* [General Chronicle of Spain], prepared by Lindley Cintra and approved by the Council in 1950. Also, Marcelo brought about some changes, albeit relatively ephemeral, to the commemorations. In an extraordinary session of the APH, the ratification of the Treaty of Madrid (1750) was celebrated, for which the ambassadors of Brazil and Spain were invited, resulting in a considerably greater impact beyond the academy. In the early 1950s, source criticism gained particular importance in the institution and became a relatively hegemonic practice within the virtue of documentary tradition, which continued to be one of the guiding virtues in the Academy. It was during these years that Virginia Rau, Veríssimo Serrão, and Silva Rêgo joined the Academy.



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In its works and publications, the Academy began to define a corpus of works and themes that can be interpreted as of exceptional interest. As already seen, the Academy gave particular priority to primary sources, in terms of its volume of publications, especially to medieval sources, such as chronicles, and sources on the early history of Portuguese expansion, with the publication of titles such as the manuscript of Valentim Fernandes and Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, as well as letters related to the history of Portuguese diplomacy, especially during the Restoration. This is mainly visible in the Annals and presentations to the Academy, where the works of the academics mostly focused on diplomatic and political history, medieval history, the history of the discoveries and Portuguese expansion, military and religious history. These themes formed the core of the Academy's works, but in the 1950s more innovative themes/interests began to emerge in the institution. Sometimes, a history less focused on personalities and more focused on institutions emerged, such as the history of local government and welfare institutions.

This was clearly a priority trend to historians of the APH such as Merêa and Caetano. Also, economic history began to appear in the Academy, through the writings of Virgínia Rau and João Albino Ferreira. However, these divergent trends should not be seen as the rule in the Academy. Most of the works continued to be more conservative in historiographical terms. Even recurring themes that were not so hegemonic, such as historiography and historians' memory – especially visible in the works of António Baião on Alexandre Herculano – were focused on great men, without innovative methodologies and reasonably detached from the theoretical developments of the decades between 1940 and 1970 (*histoire sérielle*, *begriffsgeschichte*, etc.). For the purpose of constructing a nationalist historiography, Portugal was not technically lagging behind. However, for the purpose of an erudite historiography, the opposite was observed, as the Academy was losing contact with the international university milieu.

The works presented at the Academy continued to be of an individual nature, and collective undertakings ultimately failed to thrive. At the same time, in 1954, António Baião returned to the vice-presidency of the Academy, with Marcelo as 2nd vice-president. In the subsequent election, three years later, Laranjo Coelho would replace Marcelo. A conflict was beginning to emerge between those who viewed the APH as an institution for erudite and modern research, and those who believed that the Academy was well-established and could continue its work as usual.

Attempts were made to counter this trend, such as the election of Silva Rêgo and Manuel Heleno as vice-presidents of the Council in 1963 and, more importantly, a presentation in the same year by Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão on the possibility of a New History of Portugal, where he advocated once again for a history developed collectively and scientifically, not only in the processing of documents but also in the use of all the possible auxiliary sciences. However, the Academy would not substantially change course until 1974. With decreasing funds, as its budget had not been significantly increased for decades, the Academy lost its more innovative features (collaborative and critical work) and solidified its more traditional aspects – documentary tradition, commemoration, and patriotism, continuing to produce a historiography that theoretically fell within the scope



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of the methodic school, on the one hand, and a focus on historical events on the other, albeit with significant exceptions. Even in a final effort to publish an academic and erudite history of Portugal, the APH did not raise sufficient funding and commissioned Veríssimo Serrão to write a monographic history, which went against the desideratum of collaborative work, not to mention the opinion expressed by the author himself (Serrão, "Nova 'História de Portugal'", *Anais II* vol. 13, 111-137 ["New 'History of Portugal'", *Annals II* vol. 13, 111-137]). The Portuguese Academy of History had become a place that merely reflected national efforts, instead of leading them. The University in Portugal went on to take that place. The epitome of this fact would be the promotion of João Ameal and Costa Brochado to full members in the late 1960s.

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António da Silva Rêgo



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