

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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AZEVEDO, Pedro Augusto de São Bartolomeu de (Santarém, 1869 - Lisbon, 1928)

Pedro Augusto de São Bartolomeu de Azevedo or, more simply, Pedro de Azevedo, as he became known in historiographical and academic circles, was born in Santarém on 24 August 1869 and died in Lisbon on 3 February 1928 at the age of 58.

Pedro de Azevedo, the son of a discreet secondary school teacher by the name of Ventura Faria de Azevedo, probably got from his father his interest in literature, which would shape his entire life. As a result of this precocious vocation, and after completing his secondary education in 1887, he enrolled in the Higher Degree for Librarians and Archivists, recently created by the General Inspection of Public Libraries and Archives and affiliated with the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, from which he was the first official graduate. In the course of his studies, he had the opportunity to make contact with the subjects of national history, comparative philology, Latin and Greek literature, modern European literature, diplomacy, numismatics and bibliology, all of which became deeply rooted in him and which, together with palaeography, formed the main body of his numerous works and studies. His continuous output dates back to at least 1897, when he published *Alguns selos antigos do concelho de Santarém* [Some old stamps from the municipality of Santarém] with the Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda.

From a historiographical point of view, Pedro de Azevedo can be defined as a direct descendant of the Romantic and erudite tradition of the 19th century, embodied in Portugal by Alexandre Herculano. This legacy also includes the Basto brothers, in particular the palaeographer and diplomat João Basto. The impact of the nineteenth-century Romantic historiographical current on the work produced by Pedro de Azevedo is apparent at various levels: from the protagonism he gave to the medieval period in his studies, most of which focused on the period from the 13th to the 16th century; to the emphasis given to the quality of reflection in the treatment of historical subjects; and the eclectic approach he took to history. Above all, however, it shines through in the critical and systematic work he did on documentary sources, in what is undoubtedly his most valuable contribution to the field of erudite history, a branch of historiography that developed especially from the end of the 19th century onwards and which combined the primacy of documentary research with the refinement of critical methods. In this regard, the names of Gabriel Pereira, Sousa Viterbo, and Braancamp Freire, among others, illustrate Pedro de Azevedo's intellectual universe.



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Pedro de Azevedo's persistent activity of publishing documents earned him the heartfelt and always confessed admiration of his fellow scholars, both in Portugal and abroad, as well as the respect of successive generations of historians because it was a very reliable body of publications, with the added advantage of serving as a basis for very different types of studies, as such unsuspecting personalities as Gama Barros, Leite de Vasconcelos, António Baião, or Lindley Cintra have rightly pointed out.

It was, therefore, as a historian, diplomatist and palaeographer that Pedro de Azevedo most distinguished himself. However, the research he carried out in the fields of philology, ethnography, heraldry, onomastics, iconography, numismatics and even geography should not be overlooked, although they almost always proved to be subsidiary topics for what was the main body of his work: historical research.

In fact, the articulation of historical studies with these disciplines was not unique to Pedro de Azevedo. It was a common practice among the main authors of the time, linked to erudite historiography. However, in his specific case, the meticulous, systematic and highly scrupulous work to which he subjected the documentation proved to be extremely fruitful and useful: he made numerous unpublished documents known, carried out rigorous transcriptions of sources, was the basis for important critical editions of documentary collections, and enabled the reorganisation of important bibliographic and archival funds. A set of actions that go back to his academic training, but which are, above all, the effect of two factors, in happy and close correlation: continuous palaeographic training, exercised over many scripts and different scribes' hands from the most varied periods; coupled with a deep knowledge of archives and documentary collections, resulting from the experience accumulated in positions and functions linked to archivology and librarianship, carried out in the two public reference institutions of the national archives and libraries network: the Archives of Torre do Tombo and the National Library of Lisbon.

In 1900, Pedro de Azevedo was already working at the Royal Archive of the Torre do Tombo, appointed to the position of amanuensis palaeographer, a position he was naturally qualified for due to his education as a librarian and archivist. Shortly afterwards, in 1902, he was confirmed as the institution's first curator and placed in charge of the first section of the archive, where the most precious manuscripts were deposited. He was also responsible for running the department's office, with the obligation of drawing up regular reports, which reveal a large part of his clerical work, divided between palaeography classes, organising competitions, settling internal disputes and managing documentary collections. In this context, for example, he was in charge of managing the Special Collection – made up of bulls, briefs and other ecclesiastical documents – supervising the cataloguing of the important and extensive registry of the Coimbra Cathedral and organising the service at the Registo das Mercês, a task that would have been only temporary had it not been for the death of the curator Almeida Caldeira.

He had just started working at the Archive of the Torre do Tombo when he was invited to lecture and teach diplomacy at the Higher Degree in Libraries and Archives, taking over from João Basto, the previous head of the subject. From there, in 1902, he was transferred to the chair of palaeography in view of his special knowledge, which qualified him, more than anyone else, to teach this subject. During the years he combined



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teaching with working in public archives, he always attached great importance to pedagogical content, as evidenced by the detailed plans he prepared for the Latin and Portuguese palaeography classes, which are proof of his deeply systematic and Cartesian spirit.

In 1918, after several years as a teacher and as the first curator of the Archive of Torre do Tombo, he was called to the National Library in Lisbon to head the important section of Reserved Books. He was appointed interim director of the institution in 1927, a position he held until his death.

As a sign of his scientific vitality and the recognition he received from his peers, the eminent palaeographer and diplomatist was nominated for various historical and cultural guilds in Portugal and abroad. In Portugal, he was a member of the most active and prominent cultural organisations of the time: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa [Lisbon Academy of Sciences], Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa [Lisbon Geography Society], Sociedade Portuguesa de Estudos Históricos [Portuguese Society of Historical Studies], Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses [Association of Portuguese Archaeologists] and Mutualidade das Bibliotecas e Arquivos de Lisboa [Mutuality of Lisbon Libraries and Archives]. Abroad, he was a corresponding member of the Instituto do Ceará [Ceará Institute] from 1924, at the suggestion of Thomaz Pompeo de Sousa Brasil, Álvaro de Alencar, and Barão de Studart.

Out of all the associations he was involved with, he particularly favoured the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. He held various positions within it, attending the periodic sessions of the Class of Humanities with almost unblemished regularity. There, he frequently presented papers on various topics, almost always related to History. The opinion that approved Pedro de Azevedo's admittance as a corresponding member of the History and Archaeology Section was drawn up at the end of 1910, signed by Henrique da Gama Barros, José Leite de Vasconcelos, Lopes de Mendonça, and José-Ramos Coelho. They formed the jury in charge of assessing a selected set of his publications, which already numbered over a hundred at the time, according to the rapporteur of the case himself. After evaluating the works at hand – *Alguns selos antigos do concelho de Santarém* [Some old stamps from the municipality of Santarém] (1897), *O território de Anegia* [The territory of Anegia] (1898), *Nomes de pessoas e nomes de lugares* [Names of people and names of places] (1900), *Um inventário do século XIV* [An inventory of the 14th century] (1902), *Os escravos* [The slaves] (1903), *Os 'De Vasconcellos'* [The 'De Vasconcellos'] (1904), *Os antepassados do Marquês de Pombal* (1905) [The ancestors of the Marquis de Pombal], *Dois fragmentos de uma vida de S. Nicolau* [Two fragments of a life of St. Nicholas] (1905), *As cartas do Pe. António Vieira* [The letters of Father António Vieira] (1906), and *Documentos da Secretaria de Guerra* [Documents of the Secretary of War] (1906) – and once their quality had been recognised, he was admitted as a corresponding member in January 1911.

In 1919, Pedro de Azevedo submitted another application to the Academy of Sciences, this time for full membership. To this end, he submitted four more publications for evaluation, which he considered to be the most relevant of his entire output: *Documentos das chancelarias reais anteriores a 1531 relativas a Marrocos* [Documents from the royal chancelleries before 1531 concerning Morocco] (1915), *Capítulos do concelho de Elvas apresentados em Cortes* [Chapters from the municipality of Elvas presented in Cortes] (1914), *D.*



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Afonso V e a ordem de Torre e Espada [D.Afonso V and the order of the Tower and Sword] (1919), and *As cartas de criação da cidade concedidas à povoação portuguesa* [The city charters granted to the portuguese people] (1914).

The work on this application was submitted in February 1920 and finalised the following month. In the favourable opinion that led to his admission, the signatures of Gama Barros and Leite de Vasconcelos, who had already appeared in the opinion for corresponding member, were reiterated and were joined by Júlio de Vilhena and Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira. All unanimously pointed out Pedro de Azevedo's 'solid palaeographic knowledge' and his 'no less solid historical knowledge'.

Within the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa [Lisbon Academy of Sciences], Pedro de Azevedo held various positions: he was appointed a member of the administrative council in 1921, elected vice-president of the Class of Humanities in 1922, and, in the meantime, chosen as Secretary for that same class – a post he still held in 1928, when he died. Before that, on the recommendation of Lopes de Mendonça and Leite de Vasconcelos, he had occupied the position left open by Gonçalves Viana on the Committee in charge of the *Dicionário da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* [Dictionary of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences] and had been a member of the Board of the *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica* since 1915, with direct responsibility for editing the last two volumes of the collection.

In the chapter on reference works in which Pedro de Azevedo took part, we must add to his two previous important contributions the edition of the first four books of Fernão Lopes de Castanheda's *História do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia* [History of the Discovery and conquest of India], as well as the direction of the engravings and maps section of the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], due to Herculano. However, most of the writings left by Pedro de Azevedo consisted of monographic studies, which generally fall short in quantity and value of the heuristic work he did. However, most of his output is fragmentary and, therefore, difficult to measure, greatly hindering a comprehensive and accurate apprehension of the quality of his intellectual work, which has yet to be brought together and systematised. The bulk of these scattered texts are to be found in periodicals, particularly *Arquivo Historico Portuguez* [Portuguese Historical Archive], *Boletim da Segunda Classe da Academia das Ciências* [Bulletin of the second class of the Academy of Sciences], *Archeologo Portuguez* [The Portuguese Archaeologist], the *Anais das Bibliotecas* [Annals of the libraries] e *Arquivos Nacionais* [National Archives], *Revista de História* [History Journal] and the *Instituto* [Institute], as a result of commissions or regular collaborations with people in his inner circle, such as the aforementioned Anselmo Braancamp Freire and José Leite de Vasconcelos.

Despite his profile as a reserved man, Pedro de Azevedo played a significant role in the intellectual life of his time, and he did not shy away from certain polemics, as was the case, for example, when he wrote a protest challenging the campaign by the newspaper *O Século* [The Century] against David Lopes, his fellow member of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. However, his importance to Portuguese history and historiography must be seen above all in his role as a pedagogue, archivist, historian, diplomatist-palaeographer, and not so much in the field of political or social intervention. His historiographical



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presuppositions are easy to enumerate: the idea of teaching as an essential vehicle for historical training, accuracy as a requirement for the task of reconstructing the past, valuing archival work as the historian's primary duty, the role of editing and textual criticism as essential elements in the promotion of knowledge.

To all this must be added his deep appreciation of erudition, which is reflected in his private library collection, made up of more than 2,800 bibliographical items. Given its size and plurality, the collection assembled by Pedro de Azevedo is almost metaphorical: it serves as a portrait of a man and, through him, of a certain generation of intellectuals. It was a library made up of rare and odd books. Old and modern. Of history, of course. But also literature, fine arts, science, travel, and poetry. A library, yes, but not only that: an exuberant testimony to a certain cultural *Zeitgeist*.

Fontes

Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Arquivo Histórico Académico, Processo Pedro Augusto de São Bartolomeu de Azevedo; Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Relatórios, Arquivos do Arquivo, nº 14, cx. 6; Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Coleções em organização, cx. 40-42.

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