

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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



BRAGANÇA, José de Freitas (Porto, 1892 – Cascais, 1982)

Born on Rua da Fábrica in the Porto parish of Vitória on 17 April, José de Freitas Bragança was the third child of António Manuel Rodrigues and Albertina Mendes de Freitas. They were a humble family and subsisted off the father's work as a tailor. Presumably, the family's origins in the city of Bragança were the motivation behind the household's subsequent adoption of that as a new surname. In 1910, after completing primary and secondary school in Porto, José de Bragança went to Paris to continue his studies at the Sorbonne, where he performed various jobs to pay for his higher education. Graduating with a degree in Modern Philology, the outbreak of World War I did not spur his departure from the French capital, where he went on to teach at the prominent Collège Sainte-Barbe, with ancestral ties to the Portuguese humanists, and also took on the position of director of the Portuguese division at the Casa Editorial Hispano-Americana. His debut as writer, translator and art critic dates from this period, with his drafting of articles on painters and musicians, as well as a journalist with collaborations in periodicals such as *La Revue de France*, *L'Illustration*, *Les Gil Blas*, *Les Temps* and *Portugal na Guerra* from the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps.

Returning to Portugal in the beginning of 1922, he was hired as an assistant of Romance Philology at the First Faculty of Arts of Porto in June of the following year after an invitation from Hernâni Cidade, however his university career would be short-lived. In 1925 he accepted an offer for a role at the office of Ministry of Labour, but upon returning to the University in October he learned that his contract would not be renewed by the Faculty Education Committee, which earned him felt criticism for the little academic and personal consideration that would have been voted. As result, he decided to establish residence in Lisbon and embarked on a new career as a journalist and historian, particularly in the field of Art History, specializing in the critique and study of portraiture in Renaissance art. A defender of republican ideals and a personal friend of former minister and political leader Brito Camacho, the turn in political regime made José de Bragança the target of further political persecution for his known opposition to the new authoritarian regime, restricting his civic intervention and, consequently, the extent of his intellectual and cultural work. He not only encountered serious difficulties in publishing his manuscripts, but his participation in academic and cultural bodies was forbidden, fuelling a personal feeling of public ostracism that lasted until the end of his life.

In early 1935, at the age of 42, he published four articles in the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper under the title "History of History", which would constitute his first controversy on the historical scene for the ideas he defended. After study and analysis in Spain and France of the Castilian medieval chronicles, he proved that

the *Crónica Geral de Espanha de 1344* (General Chronicle of Spain of 1344) was undoubtedly Portuguese in origin, arguing that it was a partial recompilation of the chronicle of Peter the Constable, thus returning to the beginnings of Portuguese historiography. While the evidence he presented on his historical linguistic thesis merited validation with the international scientific community, as was the case with Spanish scholar Ramón Menéndez Pidal, in Portugal it was only in the late 1940s that the Institute for High Culture decided to order young scholar Lindley Cintra with the review and editing of this valuable historical chronicle, who corroborated it as the work of Count Pedro Afonso. Again in the field of historical philology, he was also among the first historians to challenge the full authorship of Fernão Lopes in the writing of the royal chronicles of the Burgundy Dynasty before Dom Pedro I, as he proceeded to study, review, and critically edit the chronicles of Duarte Galvão, Rui de Pina and Gomes Eanes de Azurara.

José de Bragança's name as art historian would be associated with the profound historical and artistic research over several years on the so-called "Saint Vincent Panels", earning a role among the protagonists in the famous "Controversy of the Panels". Around the 1940s, he claimed that the two triptychs constituted a polyptych of six paintings, and in his view, were the target of an equivocal and deceitful restoration by Luciano Freire, who he accused of misrepresenting some of the figures depicted, illustrating a devotion to the martyrdom of Holy Prince Ferdinand. Soon after, together with Almada de Negreiros, he defined the correct positioning of the panels, according to the geometrisation and perspective of the tiles in the painting, grounds for naming both as authors of the discovery. This sparked a public dispute in the press, culminating in a fight scene in Chiado square and public recognition of the discovery for Negreiros. Finally, in 1961, he returned to the matter in the pages of the *Diário Popular* newspaper, attributing its authorship to Grão Vasco or another national painter other than Nuno Gonçalves, also challenging the veracity of various historical documents about the work of art, according to his observations and handwritten notes. In other Art History studies he devoted his attention to the work and styles of the major Portuguese painters of the 16th century and wrote an unpublished monograph on the works of the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Lisbon, continuously encountering a lack of support for the publication of his work.

Until his death on 30 October 1982, at his home in Estoril, José de Bragança organized a significant estate of art historiography, with studies involving modern methods of identification and contextualisation of works of art and a rich photographic archive, currently in the possession of the Archive of Contemporary Portuguese Culture-BNP, allowing a partial rescue of his reflections on Portuguese culture and history, gravely forgotten during the Estado Novo.

Works by José de Freitas Bragança: AZURARA, Gomes Eanes, *Crónica do descobrimento e conquista da Guiné [edição crítica]*. Porto, Livraria Civilização, 1937; GALVÃO, Duarte, *Crónica de D. Afonso Henriques, segundo o manuscrito da Torre do Tombo [edição crítica]*. Lisboa, Portugalia, 1954; *Os Pergaminhos Históricos do Senhorio da Guiné*. Lisboa, Edição de autor, 1955; *Lisboa antiga nos desenhos de Zuzarte arquitecto e abridor de gravuras*. Lisboa, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, 1956; PINA, Rui de, *Crónicas de D. Sancho I e de D. Afonso II [edição crítica]*. Lisboa, Portugalia, 1964.



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Francisco Miguel Araújo



APOIOS:

