

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**BRAZÃO, Eduardo** (Lisboa, 1907 – Cascais, 1987)

Eduardo Brazão was born in Lisbon on 1 February 1907, the son of Eduardo Joaquim Brazão (1851-1925) and Maria José da Silva Reis Brazão. His father, whose *Memoirs* he compiled and published (1925), enjoyed significant social prestige: he was first married to the famous actress Rosa Damasceno (1849-1904) and was considered the greatest actor of his time. Eduardo's childhood home was frequented by the best known playwrights and artists of the time. In an attempt to keep him out of the theatre world, his mother sent him to study at the Colégio de La Guardia, where the Jesuits had fled after being expelled once again from Portugal following the establishment of the Republic. He returned to Lisbon to take the exam for the seventh (and final) year of grammar school and, on the advice of Lino Neto, ultimately chose to go to law school. In his first year, he was fascinated by the lessons given by Paulo Merêa. He considered himself Merêa's disciple, feeling increasingly drawn to history. Fearing that the distractions of Lisbon would divert his attention from his studies, his mother sent him during his second year to the University of Coimbra, where he lived in a student house for young Catholic men. In Lisbon, he frequented the bohemian literary scene, wrote for newspapers and composed a book of poems – *Maria do Mar* (1928) – with illustrations by Arlindo Vicente. He lived together with intellectuals and artists of various political leanings, from João Ameal and Alfredo Pimenta to Almada Negreiros and Álvaro Cunhal. A monarchist, he was an enthusiastic supporter of *Integralismo Lusitano* (Lusitanian Integralism), a follower of Maurras, an admirer of Sardinha's nationalist propaganda, and he was thrilled by Sidónio and enthusiastic about D. Duarte (*Memorial...*, 1976, pg. 178 and 308, 309).

After completing his studies, he married, had three children and opened a law office on Rua Nova da Trindade in Lisbon. While preparing for the competitive entrance exam at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which took eight years to open, he wrote dissertations on the subjects specified in the programme. He took an avid interest in his work, publishing *História Diplomática de Portugal* (Diplomatic History of Portugal) (1932, 1933), which consisted merely of the first two volumes of his notes. He later acknowledged mistakes in what was his first work of a historical nature, which had met with sharp criticism from Alfredo Pimenta. The remaining notes were released in magazine and newspaper articles: *Portugal no Congresso de Utrecht* (Portugal in the Congress of Utrecht, 1934), *A questão colonial portuguesa na segunda metade do século XIX* (The Portuguese Colonial Question in the Second Half of the 19th Century, 1935), *O Conde de Tarouca em Londres* (The Count of Tarouca in London, 1936), *D. João V e a Santa Sé* (King João V and the Holy



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See, 1937), *Recepção de uma Rainha* (Reception of a Queen, 1937), *O Casamento de D. João V* (The Marriage of King João V, 1937). He concluded by editing a summary entitled *Relance da História Diplomática de Portugal* (A Glance at Portugal's Diplomatic History, 1940).

Convinced that it was impossible to study political history outside its international framework, he proposed the creation of a practical course in diplomatic history, but it was frowned upon by the professors of the Faculty of Arts, who rendered it down to a series of lectures, beginning on 26 April 1934. At that time, he requested a PhD in History, at both the Universities of Lisbon and Coimbra, which was refused (*Memorial*, p. 185). Also dating from that time was an open letter (27 February 1934) to the Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Instruction (Salazar, Caeiro da Matta and Sousa Pinto) on the urgent need for organising a diplomatic archive to bring together the vast documentary heritage spread across several depositories. He also suggested the creation of a library of international studies and the publication of a newsletter or diplomatic magazine. He was later pleased to note Virginia Rau's initiative in developing a line of research in Diplomatic History, at the History Centre of the University of Lisbon.

His entry into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not easy. The competitive entrance exam finally opened in 1939, but he was deemed to have "a controversial character, unfit for diplomacy" (*Memorial*, p. 192). He failed that year, and again failed to be admitted in 1941. He then won a grant from the Institute for High Culture to work in the Vatican Secret Archives. Soon after, he put together a compilation – the *Colecção de concordatas estabelecidas entre a Santa Sé e Portugal de 1238 a 1940* (Collection of concordats made between the Holy See and Portugal from 1238 to 1940).

Preceded by a brief introduction, analysing the evolution of the concept of concordats in light of international law, the author brought together the Portuguese versions of the texts, positioning them in their temporal contexts through short analyses and explanatory notes. This set the tone for the path he would follow throughout his life, combining diplomacy with the development of historical research, such that both became an integral part of himself. "I was, after all, a diplomat and a historian. Or perhaps I should say, a historian and a diplomat", he would later say in *Memorial de Don Quixote*, written shortly after he ended his career (p. 165).

It took three attempts before he finally started his diplomatic career (11 October 1941). Teixeira de Sampaio, who previously disliked him greatly, eventually accepted him. Brazão even collaborated with him on the revision of the letters of Father António Vieira, from the *Arquivo Cadaval*, managing to convince the *Ocidente* journal to publish them. It was during these three years at the Ministry that he was personally acquainted with Salazar. He had a deep admiration for him though, as time went on, he would ultimately grieve, 'seeing him continue on, past the moment he should have left with glory' (*Memorial*, p. 309). Shortly before the end of the war, he was posted as Second Secretary to the Embassy of Portugal at the Holy See under express orders from the Secretary-General not to handle historical documents. He needed to be otherwise engaged in the preparation of his diplomatic career (*Memorial*, p. 217). In Europe in 1945, almost everything was in ruins. In Italy there was little to buy, except books, true bibliographic treasures that enriched the valuable library he gathered throughout his lifetime. He then went to Madrid, followed by Hong



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Kong. There he encountered a large community of about 5,000 descendants of the first Portuguese to settle in China, who had gone through the difficult times of war without any support from the Portuguese government. His primary concern was to retrieve lost ties with the Portuguese community, starting with the unifying factors of national sentiment - language and culture - while deepening collaboration with the British and the Chinese. On the eve of his departure, the local press and the Governor of Hong Kong gave him highest praise. He was greatly disappointed upon returning to Lisbon, after five years of struggle under a terrible climate, to not receive any expression of gratitude for his "Portuguese patriotism that did not wane with distance" (*Memorial*, p. 243).

After being Chargé d'Affaires in Dublin (1951-55) and having passed the exam for Counsellor, he was invited by Paulo Cunha to be Head of the State Protocol (28 September 1955). He did not warm to this post. In his memoirs he says that in the barely one year he held the role, he was "truly surprised at the spectacle of human vanity. It was even more worthless than I thought!" (*Memorial*, p. 271). The state visit to Guinea and Cape Verde by Craveiro Lopes, whom he escorted due to his protocol responsibilities, seemed never ending. On the other hand he kept a beautiful memory of the President's official visit to London (25-28 October 1955). This visit gave him the opportunity to publish another work, entitled *Uma velha Aliança* (An Old Alliance), where he retraced the structure of the Portuguese-British friendship through official texts that had united the two countries, from the 1353 trade treaty to the agreement on the use of facilities in the Azores, from 17 August 1943. Marcello Caetano, then Minister of the Presidency, wished to see him as National Secretary of Information, Popular Culture and Tourism, a position he held for a brief period (6 February 1956 to 9 January 1958) and which he did not enjoy. Despite his attempts to freshen up Palácio Foz by releasing banned plays, active politics did not seduce him. "I deeply desired to leave that hornet's nest, where I had inadvertently entered, without mask and gloves" (*Memorial*, p. 90).

He escaped from the position as quickly as possible and was appointed First Class Minister, with ambassador credentials, to fill the vacancy in Rome left after the death of António Ferro. This leap in his career did not sit well among his peers. He languished there ten years before receiving a promotion to full ambassador and felt his appointment to Canada (20 December 1962) was a punishment. He eventually came to appreciate Canada, where there was blatant ignorance of Portugal. At a very difficult time internationally, with the onset of the Colonial Wars, he conceived an ambitious series of lectures at universities in Toronto, Quebec City, Montreal, Saint John's, (Newfoundland) and Vancouver, to publicize the work of the Portuguese expansion. His efforts were crowned with the unveiling of a statue of Gaspar Corte Real (1965) and his being awarded the degree of Doctor *Honoris Causa* in Law. His thesis on the Portuguese precedence in the discovery of Newfoundland contradicted the official Canadian version, which attributed the feat to Venetian Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), in the service of Henry VII of England. Published in French by the University of Montreal, with the title *La découverte de Terre Neuve*, it earned glowing reviews from the newspaper *Le Droit* (Ottawa, 18 August 1964). Memorial University in Newfoundland and the University of Montreal launched courses in Portuguese maritime history, without any requests for financial backing from Portugal. With *Os Descobrimentos portugueses nas Histórias do Canadá*



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(Portuguese Discoveries in the Histories of Canada, 1969) he tried to show errors and probable reasons for the omissions or misrepresentations of Canadian historians (nine French-speaking and 14 English-speaking). Strangely, the work did not arouse interest in his home country. He was then appointed to Brussels and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, on 25 January 1967. Portugal was not well regarded in Belgium, which had been forced into the decolonisation of the Congo. He then wrote a work clarifying the profound connection over the centuries between Portugal and Flanders: *Présence du Portugal en Belgique*.

After less than two years, he was reappointed to Rome, this time to the Holy See, as full Ambassador. Relations between Portugal and the Roman Curia at that time almost reached their breaking point. On 1 July 1970 Paul VI granted audience to the heads of the Nationalist Movements of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea, which was not seen favourably by the Portuguese government. Eduardo Brazão was given orders to protest immediately. He considered this to be the most painful act of his entire career. His writing on the relations between Portugal and the Holy See, published in seven volumes by the International Academy of Portuguese Culture, which brought together numerous documents from the archives of the Portuguese diplomatic mission to the Vatican date from this period. The work, which was released out of chronological order, covers the pontificates of Pius VI, Pius VII, Gregory XVI and Pius IX: from the French Revolution to Napoleon (1790-1803 and 1803-1805), the recognition of D. Miguel (1831), the dramatic year of 1848 and the fall of Rome (1870).

Over the years, the political leanings of his youth tempered. He remained a monarchist but "now saw in Great Britain the ideal example of a monarchy of our times." He even accepted a form of democracy, "that could bring a moderate right wing to power". The fundamental evil, for the historian-diplomat, "was losing the true notion of a Christian society" (*Memorial*, p. 311 and 313). As a colleague and friend of Marcello Caetano since their university days, he held great hopes for his government. He was greatly disappointed. The revolution of 25 April 1974 took him by surprise, in the middle of his preparations to leave Rome. He eventually retired "in the interests of service" the following year. In 1983, once things had quieted down, recognition for his work was demonstrated in his appointment to join the Diplomatic Library Steering Committee, the body responsible for preparing its own publishing program, chaired by Calvet de Magalhães.

"I have never sought honours for myself, only benefits for Portugal," said Eduardo Brazão, for whom diplomacy was not 'luxury tourism', and who instead understood diplomatic work as "one of the most important roles to be performed, given the increasing need for understanding and living with others". In his application for reactivation to active duty, he claimed he had always sought to conduct policymaking with a "developed and serious sense of historical and cultural enlightenment", with full awareness that it was impossible to understand contemporary Portugal "without delving deeper into and disseminating its past, its work, its immutable characteristics, the products of a long, well-defined life". For small countries, cultural activities promoted within embassies are the "sole means of not just valuing them, when they have a history rich in experiences, but above all of making them understandable in the troubling times in which we live."

The list of his works stands witness to his historiographical mission undertaken, with a sense of service, as part of his diplomatic duties and is consistent with the circumstances of a career that took him to almost



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every continent. In each one of these places he found the presence of the Portuguese Diaspora linked to the Portuguese national destiny. The memory of a common past for the continuation and strengthening of these ties in the future could not be extinguished. Eduardo Brazão imbued his numerous works with this same sense, seeking to overcome the "desolating amnesia on the real values being forgotten" ("Preface", *Historical Studies*, 1984). A never-ending collection of sources in foreign archives led to numerous publications on Portuguese Diplomatic History, while his reports—*A França em Abril de 1944* (France in April 1944), *A Internacionalização da Santa Sé* (The Internationalisation of the Holy See) or *Os portugueses em Hong Kong* (The Portuguese in Hong Kong)—displayed a keen observation of contemporary realities, which would later give him some trouble, particularly in the case of his monograph *Portugal e a Inglaterra na China* (Portugal and England in China, 1947), submitted for the entry exam for Counsellor and Consul general. His request for publication was turned down, not so much for his political views on the government's recognition of Mao Tse Tung, but primarily because the censors felt his text had the underlying idea "that we didn't know how to carry out the colonisation work in Macau that we had started" (AHMNE, *Processo individual No. 94*, Report, 1 July 1952).

Eduardo Brazão missed no opportunity to publicise the History of Portugal, taking advantage of the pretext provided by celebrations of historical dates. Even before entering his career, the double centenary of the Portuguese nationality led him to write on the diplomatic work of Portugal during the Restoration. It was a way to draw attention to another kind of hero, the diplomat, and another type of war, that of intelligence, "more brilliant, undoubtedly, than those fought between armies" and also an opportunity to highlight the works of Edgar Prestage, "to whom Portugal owes a great debt, still outstanding" (*A Restauração*, 1939, p. 11). He wrote *Em demanda do Cataio* (In Demand of Cathay, 1954) so that in the year of the seventh centenary of the birth of Marco Polo the voice of Portugal would also be heard, remembering the journey of Bento de Góis to China. In the centenary year of the marriage of D. Luís and D. Maria Pia of Savoy (6 October 1862) he published *L'unificazione Italiana vista dai diplomatici Portoghesi*, containing the reports of Portuguese diplomats, 1848-1870. The book, published by the *Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano*, was considered "un'opera di rilevantissima importanza, senza la qual la storia di quel fondamentale período della nostra formazione nazionale non sarebbe stata completa" (*Il Tempo*, 21 de Novembro de 1962).

Eduardo Brazão explored foreign archives, read thousands of documents, filled in information that others had left incomplete, corrected judgments based on unfounded assumptions, and after many years of rigorous analysis, in accordance with the principles of the French school of methodology, he had a clear notion that "it is not enough to simply compile documented facts, it is also necessary to interpret them in light of life" (*A diplomacia portuguesa...*, Vol.I, p. 12). He was interested in finding the testimony, the document, the irrefutable evidence, to ultimately come to the conclusion that the task of the historian was also to realize what was not left on paper. He did not want apologetic history, though he was unable to prevent his immense sense of patriotism from guiding him in his reading on his country's past. His most gratifying work was, undoubtedly, *As Relações Externas de Portugal. Reinado de D. João V* (Two volumes, 1938), which he even came to nickname his "first book." There he gathered several published articles, taking the first steps





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towards a future "great Diplomatic History of Portugal, rich in documentation." It was a fixed idea that clashed with an inexhaustible wellspring of unpublished sources that had to be read, selected "and have history extracted from them, or to present them in full when, by their importance, they constituted indispensable elements for knowledge of the facts" (*Reinado de D. João V*, 1938, p. 10). The historian's mission consisted of collecting elements that would enable thinking about "the action of our men in command at such times" and drawing "a lesson from it all". It was a pragmatic conception that was widely criticized by the *Annales* historiographical movement, which opposed the integration of history into the social sciences.

His work in diplomatic roles earned him several awards in national and foreign honorary orders. His historiographical works earned him admission as a corresponding member of the Portuguese Academy of History (1938). Twenty years later, he rose to full member and, in 1975, he was elected Second Vice President, becoming part of the first board of directors chaired by Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão. He was also a scholar of the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, administrator of the *Istituto Portoghese di Sant'Antonio*, in Rome, and a member of many other institutions and committees. In his memoirs he was very critical of the academies, lamenting that they had become "upper chambers in which full-scale mutual praise is practiced... only for its members to peck at one another on the outside" (*Memorial*, p. 335).

When he returned to Portugal, very little remained of the invaluable library he had been gathering his entire life. A massive robbery in Rome and the terrible floods of 1967, which filled his home in Loures with two metres of mud, had taken or irreparably damaged books, furniture, paintings and various valuables collected over his lifetime. However, the auction of what was left still accounts very well for his cultural interests. Among the rare books, true treasures for a bibliophile and more recent publications loom the titles of Diplomatic History and the classics of diplomacy, biographies, chronicles and memoirs, letters, and travel accounts, readings directed at research, with no major theoretical concerns, but seeking all possible information about the Portuguese Diaspora. Everywhere he went on his diplomatic duties he was a tireless devourer of archives, collecting everything he could find on the history of Portugal, always endeavouring not to miss opportunities to praise the memory of patriotic heroes. His romantic nationalism, much to the liking of the authorities of the New State, drew attention to the history of foreign policy and diplomacy, subjects that, until then, were much less studied than the issues of military history. He planned to write a great Diplomatic History of Portugal, but with the disappearance of a major part of his books, records and photocopies of documents, years of work, his courage failed him. Even so, he brought together the elements that he had released in instalments over time, and published a work entitled *A diplomacia portuguesa nos séculos XVII e XVIII* (Portuguese Diplomacy in the 17th and 18th Centuries, 1979), as a new edition of scattered and out-of-print works, pairing them with information he collected on his missions abroad. He left behind his memoirs *Memorial D. Quixote* (1976), written with tranquillity, elegance and a good dose of humour. He died in Cascais, on the 7th of December 1987.

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