

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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



**Lopes, David de Melo** (Moita Fundeira, Sertã 1867 – Lisbon, 1942)

David Lopes was born on 17 April 1867 in the village of Moita Fundeira, in the parish of Nesperal, in the municipality of Sertã. He was the son of José Amaral Lopes and Inês de Melo. With his older sister living in Lisbon, David Lopes left his native village to attend the Liceu Central de Lisboa (later renamed Passos Manuel), graduating in 1888. With a family that supported him throughout his career, the young student dedicated *Chronica dos Reis de Bisnaga* (1897) to his uncle Simão José da Silva Lopes, “in testimony of gratitude”.

It was after leaving high school that his vocation as a historian and Arabist was defined. In the Second Class Bulletin of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, in *The Arabs* in the works of Alexandre Herculano (1910), he wrote: “The following pages are a tribute to Alexandre Herculano (...). The author believes that this is the best way to repay the great historian for his debt of gratitude: because it was reading *Eurico, Lendas e Narrativas* and, above all, *História de Portugal* that led him abroad to study Arabic.” Thus, from 1889 to 1892, David Lopes attended the *École Nationale de Langues Orientales Vivantes* in Paris, considered the best school for Oriental studies and research into the languages and civilisations of Asia and Africa, where some famous professors taught and which housed a rich specialised library. He also attended the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris, known as a centre of excellence in historical and philological research. In fact, David Lopes’ stay in France allowed him to study classical and dialectal Arabic and to come into contact with the sources and methods of knowledge and innovation that were developing throughout Europe at the time. It was during this period that he established links with leading figures in the sciences, with whom he came into regular contact, and many of whom remained close friends until the end of his long life as a scholar.

Returning to Portugal, he enrolled in the Higher Course in Letters in 1892, which he completed three years later. In 1896, he began teaching French at the Liceu Central de Lisboa and, in 1901, he joined the Higher Course in Letters, where he taught French Language and Literature. With the creation of the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] in 1911, he was appointed professor of the same subject, where he had been teaching intensively until then, while continuing his work as a historian, philologist and Arabist. In 1914, David Lopes took on the chair of Arabic Language on a part-time basis, while continuing as a professor of French Language and Literature until the academic year 1929-30.

His teaching career as a university professor was followed by a large number of students who remained loyal to him. However, this group of distinguished disciples was not accompanied by the foundation of a true school of Orientalists, as was the case in Spain, France and other European countries. David Lopes had a distinguished student and researcher of merit, Abílio Manuel Roseira (1898-1935), who was to succeed him as professor of Arabic at the Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [School of Arts and Humanities of Lisbon]. With this intention, he went to study in Madrid, where he died suddenly (Machado, Letters addressed to David Lopes, pp. 25 and 469-475). Despite this, there were many Orientalists in Portugal, such as Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira – David Lopes wrote an article about this researcher entitled “Um orientalista português” (A Portuguese Orientalist) in the *Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, no. 7, 1940 – and Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado.

As a result of his competence, work and knowledge, he was the author of a numerous bibliography in which his originality and historical and philological rigour are highlighted. He published numerous unpublished sources (many of them in Arabic), where he demonstrated his critical ability and sound argumentation, which remain valid today. Some of his works were published by the Lisbon Academy of Sciences between 1910 and 1911, such as the aforementioned *Os árabes na obra de Alexandre Herculano*, which included several translated and annotated texts. In addition to history and sources for the study of the Arab presence in Portugal, the author also investigated the origin of various place names of Arabic origin, gaining the approval of other specialists of his time. This research was resumed in 1968, when most of the scattered articles were published by José Pedro Machado under the title *Nomes árabes de terras portuguesas* (Arabic names of Portuguese lands). David Lopes' work in the field of Oriental studies resulted in the publication of several works, the edition of Arabic texts and their translation. He collected sources for Portuguese history and also identified many words of Portuguese origin that were adopted into Oriental languages.

In his first research work, while still studying in Paris, he referred to the voyages in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, in particular those of the famous Ibn Mâjid (Excerpts from the History of the Conquest of Yemen by the Ottomans. Contributions to the History of the Establishment of the Portuguese in India, 1892). This publication was intended for the tenth meeting of the International Congress of Orientalists, organised that year by the Lisbon Geographical Society. The work was prepared by the author while he was still studying Arabic at the *École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes* in the year he completed his course (1892). David Lopes stated: “Most of the Arabic text was revised by our teacher, Mr Hartwig Derenbourg” (Ibid., p. 7). Despite this help, he did not hesitate to disagree with his teacher on certain identifications (Ibid., p. 80). The work was composed at the National Press – an institution capable of publishing it in Arabic – following in the footsteps of Fr. João de Sousa and Fr. José de Santo António Moura. The extensive notes show the great erudition and critical rigour of the then young Arabist. The chronicle was written by Kutb ad-Dîn al-Nahrawâlî (c. 1571-1577), in which the author stated that Ibn Mâjid had been the pilot who took Vasco da Gama from Melinde to India. David Lopes compared this statement with that of the Portuguese chroniclers and demonstrated the difference between the descriptions (ibid., p. 60), and therefore did not accept this identification.

David Lopes' care in interpreting al-Nahrawâlî was not followed by a French author, Gabriel Ferrand, who published the book *Instructions nautiques et routiers arabes et portugais des XVe et XVIe siècles*, in three volumes (1921-1923, 1925 and 1928), the first two being an anastatic reproduction of some of Ibn Mâjid's texts. In the preface to the first volume, the author revealed his intention: "to identify the Ibn Mâjid of our texts with the Arab pilot who led Vasco da Gama's Portuguese fleet from Malindi to Calicut in 1498. The Arab mu'allim is thus closely associated with one of the most important events in the history of recent centuries" (Ferrand, *Instructions nautiques...*, 1921-23, p. II). The French author's enthusiasm for this supposed identification prevented him from noticing that on the following page he had written something that would force him to reflect on the itineraries of Ibn Mâjid, which were almost all prior to Vasco da Gama's voyage. Ferrand states: "These Arabic nautical instructions thus make an infinitely valuable contribution to the history of navigation and trade in the South Seas prior to the arrival of Vasco da Gama" (*Ibid.*, p. III).

Ibn Mâjid was born around 1421 and died in 1500. Known as "the lion of the seas", he was from Julfar, a port in the Persian Gulf, in the emirate of Ra's al-Khayma, and his scripts were written in the 15th century. Gabriel Ferrand's identification had a huge impact on historical research and led to a careful study that proved the value of the Arab pilot's itineraries and the influence they had on navigation in the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. However, it seems certain that it was not Ibn Mâjid who took the Portuguese sailors to India, but rather a pilot accustomed to sailing to the west coast of India and a native of that region, as Fernão Lopes de Castanheda and João de Barros mention.

David Lopes was very interested in the history of the Portuguese in the lands and seas of the East and therefore prepared the edition of *Chronica dos Reis de Bisnaga* (1897) – a publication produced by the Geographical Society as a contribution to the 400th anniversary of the discovery of India. While researching the subject, David Lopes was able to consult a large number of books in English, given that India then belonged to the British Empire. He thus wrote a long introduction in which he recounted the history of the great territory of Vijayanagar (Bisnaga) and the struggles with the Muslims who had invaded India, as well as the relations between the Portuguese and the populations of the great inland kingdom, which also had some ports on the Malabar coast and a large territory on the Coromandel coast. The work includes two texts: the first, , is by Fernão Nunes, written around 1535, and the second is by Domingos Paes, dating from around 1525. David Lopes also read contemporary chroniclers and carried out lengthy research in the archives. He refers to the National Library of Lisbon, the Torre do Tombo (where he consulted the Corpo Chronologico, the Chancelleries of D. Manuel, D. João III and D. Sebastião) and the Gavetas and Documents sent from India. He visited the Municipal Library of Porto and the Public Library of Évora, with frustrating results. His heuristic care was accompanied by very rigorous transcriptions of the documents, using criteria that are still valid today. He states that he made "a few minor changes to the original: the first was to punctuate the text; the second was to undo the abbreviations; the third was to standardise the use of upper and lower case letters within the sentence, reserving the former for proper names (...) to separate words that are written together (...) we omitted, as unnecessary, the cedillas outside the normal conditions of current language, as well as replacing

the u with v under the same conditions, we preserved the spelling of the time”.

The publication of the chronicle aroused great interest, particularly in British India and Europe. Robert Sewell translated and published the work under the title *Forgotten Empire* (Vijayanagar). A contribution to the history of India (London, 1900). Another historian, Donald William Ferguson, a regular correspondent of David Lopes, was able to assist Sewell in translating some Portuguese words (Machado, *Cartas...*, 1973, pp. 181-404). David Lopes did not shy away from confronting authors whose opinions or interpretations he disagreed with, nor did he hesitate to criticise inaccurate translations. He did so in *História dos portugueses no Malabar por Zinadin*. A 16th-century Arabic manuscript published and translated by David Lopes (1898). Here, David Lopes justifies his purpose, emphasising the almost complete abandonment of historical studies in Portugal: “I mean history and not stories (...) but it is necessary to do so, not simply narratively, but truly critically” (*História dos portugueses no Malabar...*, 1898). In his extensive introduction of over one hundred pages, he studies trade in India until the 8th century (and from that century until the 16th), the history of Malabar, the Christians of São Tomé, the Jews of Cochin and the Portuguese domination of Eastern writers. He then informs us that the work of Zinadin, whose name means “the ornament of the faith” (*zīn ad-dīn*), had already been translated into English by Rowlandson in 1833 from two manuscripts of the time. David Lopes was able to compare four manuscripts and produce a new translation, omitting the abundant notes of the English translator, which he considered uninteresting or erroneous. The work was printed at the expense of the IV Centenary of the Discovery of India, Contributions of the Lisbon Geographical Society.

David Lopes had been a great admirer of Alexandre Herculano's work since his school days, seeking to study the different Arabic texts in order to clarify lesser-known aspects and topics that aroused his interest. The results of his work include the definitive editions of *História de Portugal* (the 7th) and *Eurico, o Presbítero*, as well as numerous additions to these works. In addition to this work, he studied the Arab influence on the Portuguese language and the extensive list of place names whose origin he helped to clarify. In his work *Os árabes nas obras de Alexandre Herculano* (1910, vol. III, p. 50), he states: “There are six chapters that rectify some historical facts, complete others, and in any case clarify more than one success that the documents of the time, or ignorance of the Arabic language, did not allow to be elucidated: his memory is not diminished in this study, but rather it shows that knew how to draw from the sources known to him at the time what an honest and perceptive historian could find in them; and it is not surprising that more than fifty years later something more can be said.”

When studying vocabulary of Arabic origin, it was necessary to acquire solid historical knowledge of the permanence of the various peoples who inhabited the different regions. But, in addition to the Arabic language, it was important to know other languages and dialects of populations that inhabited the peninsula for longer or shorter periods (such as the Berbers). It was imperative to understand the phonetic phenomena that governed the acquisition of new vocabulary or its evolution into another language. David Lopes' contribution was significant in Portugal and widely recognised by the scientific community at the time, remaining valid for almost all of the etymologies studied. In 1902, in the article *Toponymia arabe de Portugal*,

David Lopes wrote: "In the Arabic toponymy of the Peninsula, we must consider two categories of words: a) words of various origins, peninsular, which, having passed through Arabic, can be explained by it; b) words that are purely Arabic or introduced by the Arabs". The phonetic laws defined by the author helped to explain the origin of words such as Faro, derived from the name of the family of local governors, Ibn Harune. The great originality and importance of toponymy was recognised by several later authors, such as Pedro Cunha Serra, professor of Arabic at the Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [School of Arts and Humanities of Lisbon] and author of the doctoral thesis *Contribuição topo-antroponímica para o estudo do povoamento do noroeste peninsular* [Topo-anthroponymic contribution to the study of the settlement of the north-western peninsula], presented to the Faculdade de Filosofia e Letras de Madrid [School of Philosophy and Arts and Humanities of Madrid] and published by the Centre for Philological Studies in Lisbon in 1967.

A significant part of David Lopes' scientific activity concerns historical and philological studies on North Africa and the Portuguese presence in Morocco, especially in the 15th to 17th centuries. His first work is entitled *Textos em Aljamia portuguesa, Documentos para a Historia do domínio português em Safim extrahidos dos originais da Torre do Tombo* (1897). The publication was included in the contributions of the Lisbon Geographical Society to the 400th anniversary of the discovery of India, copying the texts written in Arabic characters into Portuguese. This is of historical and philological interest as it allows the study of a local community linked to Portuguese activity and the phonetics of its oral and written expression. A few years later, when the Section historique du Maroc de Paris wanted to photograph these manuscripts, it was found that humidity had destroyed the lower part of the folios. David Lopes also prepared a new edition, with more extensive research, under the title *Textos em Aljamia Portuguesa. Estudo filológico e histórico* (1940).

Professor David Lopes' personal relationship with Robert Ricard and Marcel Bataillon – two former French lecturers at the Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [School of Arts and Humanities of Lisbon] at a time when France was the protectorate of Morocco (1912) and sought to learn about the country's historical past – contributed to David Lopes' dedication to this work until the end of his life. His main publications were *Anais de Arzila*, *História de Arzila*, his contribution to *Les sources inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc* and the series of articles *Os Portugueses em Marrocos*, included in *História de Portugal*, edited by Damião Peres, in volumes III and IV (1928). He had previously written the chapter "O domínio árabe" (The Arab rule) in the first volume of the same *História de Portugal*.

During his years in France, David Lopes was able to participate in the cultural and scientific research environment in history and topics of Eastern interest that dominated that country. His works *Extracts from the Conquest of Yemen* (1892), the *Chronicle of Zinadim* and the *History of the Portuguese in Malabar* (1898) date from this period. In order to contextualise them, it was necessary to carry out a careful study of Portuguese chronicles and archival documents in Portugal and other European countries. The research resulted in the collection of numerous examples of the expansion of the Portuguese language in territories where the peoples corresponded and dialogued with other foreigners, such as the Dutch and English. The publication of *Chronica dos reis Bisnaga*, its translation by Robert Sewell and extensive correspondence with



Ronald Ferguson led to the publication of *Cartas de Rajá Singa II, rei de Cândia, aos holandeses* (1636-1660) (Letters from Rajá Singa II, King of Candia, to the Dutch), *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* (1907), in which the Sinhalese monarch corresponded in Portuguese with the Dutch. At the same time, David Lopes continued his research in this area, collecting numerous sources on trips to Paris, London and the Netherlands. It was only in 1936 that he published *A expansão da Língua Portuguesa no Oriente nos séculos XVI, XVII e XVIII* (The Expansion of the Portuguese Language in the East in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries).

Upon reaching retirement age in 1937, David Lopes was replaced by Joaquim de Abreu Figanier (1898-1962), who taught at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] until 1945. That year, a university reform moved the teaching of Arabic and Sanskrit to the Colonial Higher School (later renamed the Higher Institute of Overseas Studies and then the Higher Institute of Social and Political Sciences). With the reduction in his salary, Joaquim Figanier had to apply for a position as a French teacher in secondary education, but he agreed to continue collaborating with the Institute. He maintained the same research topics and methodology as David Lopes. He was the author of an extensive bibliography and, among many works, published the *History of Santa Cruz de Cabo de Gué (Agadir) 1505-1541* (1945).

The lack of continuity in the teaching of Arabic was felt in the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] and was the subject of several attempts at restoration. Professor Virgínia Rau, as director of the School, contacted the eminent philologist and Arabist Arnald Steiger, author of the monumental *Contribución a la fonética del Hispano-Árabe y de los arabismos en el Ibero-Románico y el Siciliano* (1932), to invite him to teach at the school, but it was not possible to secure his appointment. Professor Pedro Cunha Serra took over until his retirement. Professor Virgínia Rau obtained a large grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to acquire specific bibliography and, with this funding, Professor Cunha Serra organised an excellent library, which is currently housed in the David Lopes Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa [School of Arts and Humanities of Lisbon].

When reviewing David Lopes' scientific career, it is important to highlight his vast collection of publications, his attention to historical, philological and Arabist doctrine, the variety of topics, the predominance of printed and manuscript sources and the critical rigour of his analyses and conclusions, as well as the modesty and seriousness of his writings (cf. above, how he dealt with the non-identification of Ibn Mâjid with Vasco da Gama's Arab pilot, contrary to the assertion of al-Nahrawâlî and the uncritical assumption of Gabriel Ferrand). If Ibn Mâjid did not lead Vasco da Gama to India but, due to his great work of maritime value, became known as the "lion of the seas", David Lopes also deserved an equivalent lion-like epithet for the merit of his work and the scientific rigour he sought to imprint on all his work.

David Lopes distinguished himself as a master at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities], and his numerous disciples made a point of praising his teaching. Following the custom of Arab and Islamic schools, such as the "Banu Codera" in Spain – who refer to their master Francisco Codera y Zaidín (1836-1917), considered the founder of the modern school of Spanish Arabists – countless scholars followed David



Lopes in Portugal. To name a few, Orlando Ribeiro, Fernando Castelo Branco, José Pedro Machado, Garcia Domingues, Juvenal Esteves, Lindley Cintra, Hernâni Cidade, Alberto Iria and Francisco José Velozo. But there are also some foreigners who feature in his extensive correspondence, namely Miguel Asín Palacios and Louis Massignon. Asín Palacios (1871-1944) was a Catholic priest who revealed the value of Islamic doctrine in various fields of medieval European mysticism in books such as *La espiritualidad de Algazel y su sentido cristiano* (4 vols., 1934-1941). He also revealed the Islamic influence in Dante's work in *La escatología muçulmana en la Divina Comedia* (1919; the 4th edition, from 1984, includes "Historia y crítica de una polémica"). Louis Massignon (1883-1962) dedicated his life to the study of spiritual relations between Christians and Muslims, and was the author of an extensive bibliography, including the famous book *La Passion d'al-Hallâj, mártir místico do Islão* (2 vols., 1922).

David Lopes was also a member of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, the Portuguese Academy of History, the Royal Academy of History of Madrid and the Arab Academy of Damascus. His statue stands in the main hall of the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities]. Finally, we should remember his daughter, Marcela Teresa Lopes Gagean, who was the careful curator of his writings, books and correspondence, making this collection available to José Pedro Machado, who published it under the title *Cartas dirigidas a David Lopes* (Letters addressed to David Lopes).

**Bibliografia activa:** Extractos da historia da conquista de Yaman pelos Othomanos. Contribuições para a historia do estabelecimento dos portugueses na India, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1892; Textos em aljamía portuguesa. Documentos para a historia do dominio português em Safim extrahidos dos originaes da Torre do Tombo, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1897 [2ª ed. 1940]; Chronica dos reis de Bisnaga. Manuscrito inedito do século XVI, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1897. Tradução inglesa por Robert Sewell, *A forgotten empire* (Vijayanagar). A contribution to the history of India, Londres, S. Sonnenschein & Company, Ltd., 1900; Historia dos portugueses no Malabar por Zinadim. Manuscrito arabe do seculo XVI, publ. e trad. por David Lopes, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1898; Os árabes nas obras de Alexandre Herculano, in *Boletim da Segunda Classe*, vols. III e IV, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências, 1910-11; Anais de Arzila. Crónica inédita do século XVI por Bernardo Rodrigues publicada por ordem da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa e sob a direcção de David Lopes, 2 vols., Lisboa, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1915-19; História de Arzila durante o domínio português (1471-1550 e 1577-1589), Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1924-25; "Os Portugueses em Marrocos", em Peres, Damião, e Eleutério Cerdeira, *História de Portugal*, vols. III e IV, Barcelos, Portucalense Editora, 1931-32; A expansão da Língua Portuguesa no Oriente nos séculos XVI, XVII e XVIII, Barcelos, Portucalense Editora, 1936 [reedição actualizada com notas e prefácio de Luís de Matos, Porto, Portucalense Editora, s.d. (1969)]; Les Sources inédites de l'Histoire du Maroc, série Portugal, vols. II e III, Paris, Paul

Geuthner, 1939-48.

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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

**Bibliografia passiva:** CASTELO-BRANCO, Fernando (introd. e notas), em David Lopes, Páginas Olisiponenses, Lisboa, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1968; CINTRA, Luís F. Lindley, “A obra filológica do Prof. David Lopes”, em Revista da Faculdade de Letras, III série, n.º 11, Lisboa, Imprensa da Universidade, 1967, pp. 75-82; FIGANIER, Joaquim, em Mélanges d’ études luso-marocaines dédiés à la mémoire de David Lopes et Pierre de Cenival, Lisboa-Paris, s.n.?, 1945, pp. 75-138; MACHADO, José Pedro (coord. e notas), Cartas dirigidas a David Lopes, Lisboa, ed. da Revista de Portugal, 1973; RIBEIRO, Orlando, “David Lopes”, em Revista da Faculdade de Letras, III série, n.º 11, Lisboa, Imprensa da Universidade, 1967, pp. 69-73; ROSEIRA, Abílio Manuel, “Cartas”, em José Pedro Machado, Cartas dirigidas a David Lopes, Lisboa, ed. da Revista de Portugal, 1973, pp. 471-475; SERRA, Pedro Cunha, “David Lopes (1867 – 1942) (Ensaio bio-bibliográfico)”, em Revista da Faculdade de Letras, III série, n.º 11, Lisboa, Imprensa da Universidade, 1967, pp. 83-117; VELOSO, Queirós, “Elogio de David Lopes”, em Boletim da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, volume XV, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1943, pp. 222-234; VELOZO, Francisco José, em David Lopes, Nomes árabes de terras portuguesas (org. José Pedro Machado), Lisboa, Sociedade de Língua Portuguesa, 1968.

António Dias Farinha

This work is financed by national funds through FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P, in the scope of the projects UIDB/04311/2020 and UIDP/04311/2020.



SUPPORTED BY:



FUNDAÇÃO  
LUSO-AMERICANA