

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**ALMEIDA, Luís Manuel Rocha Ferrand de** (Coimbra, 1922 – Coimbra, 2006)

He studied in Coimbra, where his father, Dr Ferrand Pimentel de Almeida, was a full professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra. He graduated in Law (1946) and in Historical-Philosophical Sciences, a degree he completed in 1949, defending his dissertation in 1957.

From an early age, he focused on studying the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. And as early as 1955, to the south of Brazil: in his first writings on the subject, he analysed the testimonies of Vespucci's possible passage down the River Plate and Francisco Ribeiro's information on the Colony of Sacramento (c. 1704). This would become the centrepiece of his research, although not exclusively. The book *América la bien llamada* (1947-1948), by the Argentinian Roberto Levillier, was combed through in order to dismantle the denial of Portuguese precedence in the discovery of the southern coast of Brazil, as the author had intended. In 45 pages of tightly wound arguments, with finesse and elegance, the author is shown to be at odds with all Portuguese authors, trying to prove that Vespucci was responsible for the discovery of the Brazilian coast in the expedition of 1501-1502, up to 52 or 53° South, well off the coast of Patagonia! When he probably had not travelled any further than 26°. And did not even reach the River Plate... LFA had no desire (or would not have felt inclined) to be a polemicist. He criticised serenely but always delicately, avoiding harsh words or expressions. The other seminal article from 1955, spanning 63 pages, tries to give an overview of the foundation and early years (until 1704) of the Colony of Sacramento on the River Plate. This would be the main topic to which LFA's meticulous research would be devoted for nearly 50 years. He returned to this subject time and again, always perfecting his knowledge of the land, its occupation, and the surrounding adversities. These only ended with the Portuguese withdrawal in 1777.

Settling in Lisbon and taking advantage of his free time from a not very demanding bureaucratic job running a social security fund, LFA focused on research in the capital's archives (1950-1955). After being awarded a grant to prepare his undergraduate thesis between 1948 and 1957, he gathered a wealth of information from the Torre do Tombo, the Biblioteca Nacional [Portuguese National Library] and, above all, the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive]. Having been the best student in the Brazilian Studies programme at the School of Arts and Humanities in Lisbon, he received a scholarship that allowed him to spend three months in Rio de Janeiro in the summer of 1953. There, in particular, he worked at the



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Biblioteca Nacional and the Itamaraty library, recalling with gratitude his time in the map section of the Itamaraty library, where he met Jaime Cortesão, then still in exile.

He only returned to Brazil briefly once more, in 1959, for the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Luso-Brazilian Studies held in Salvador da Bahia. During the 1950s, he also did research in Spain at the Archivo General de Simancas and the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, as well as in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères and the Archives Nationales, collections he returned to when preparing his doctoral thesis. From the collection and processing of the vast number of documents and comprehensive bibliography consulted, he produced the exemplary work that served as his undergraduate thesis – *A diplomacia portuguesa e os limites meridionais do Brasil 1493-1700* [Portuguese diplomacy and the southern limits of Brazil 1493-1700]. As people soon noticed, this was not the first work of a beginner but of a historian of great maturity, and it deserved to be published immediately by the School of Arts and Humanities as a supplement to volume VI of *Revista Portuguesa de História* (1954). In this thesis, the author endeavours to connect the knowledge about the negotiations that led to the Treaty of Tordesillas (with the definition of the meridian) and to frame the Brazilian territory within this diplomatic restriction, whose limits to the south could not be scientifically defined, which is why incursions of knowledge from São Paulo in particular (the *bandeiras*) fit into this purpose. The Portuguese royalty sought to extend the Brazilian territory as far as the River Plate, while the Castilian royalty endeavoured to prevent this expansion. The establishment of the Colony of Sacramento in 1680 was precisely in this vein of progress towards the River Plate. This triggered an issue that would last for a long time. The path was open for smuggling not only Peruvian silver but also leather and cloths that were illegally passed on from Brazil to the people of Buenos Aires. It was an imposition of geography, history and the will of the inhabitants. A lesson in LFA's erudition, but not small, complicated erudition. He clarifies what seems indispensable, presents his solution – if necessary – and moves on without repeating or trying to convince the reader with arguments confirming the sound reasoning he has already presented.

He joined the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra as Second Assistant Lecturer (1957-1963 and 1969-1972). During these years, he taught various subjects: History of Portugal I and II, General History of Civilisation, History of the Portuguese Discoveries and Colonisation, and History of Geography. In the last few years, in particular, he devoted himself to the History of Brazil while ensuring the practical teaching of the Theory of History. This teaching overload must have delayed the preparation of his doctorate.

Despite this sort of dispersion, diplomatic history would be the axis around which LFA's interests as a researcher centred, especially regarding the 18<sup>th</sup> century, his favourite period. But endowed with a very strict academic discipline – demanding of himself an exhaustive review of the available materials whenever he wanted to deal with a subject – his output fell short of projects and promises. Although it cannot be considered small (five dozen books and articles), above all, in addition to clear, unadorned writing, none of these publications are without valuable scholarly notes and often have relevant documentation. These are not



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notes that expand on what was written in the main text but indications of sources and bibliographies presented with extreme care and thoroughness. As his students were well aware, his indications were never wrong and always referred to the best edition. And there were very few cases of books or publications he was not familiar with. He was extremely generous in providing help to colleagues and students in need of support or simply in need of a bibliographical reference to unblock deadlocks. Salvador Dias Arnaut, full of humour, would joke that he had a book that Ferrand had never heard of...

Another topic that attracted him to diplomatic history had to do with Poland. Given that he was a staunch (albeit discreet) Catholic, the resistance of Roman Catholic Poland to communist domination sparked his curiosity about the past of this distant country, which over time – although intermittently – had maintained some relations with Portugal. That is why, it can be surmised, he wrote six articles on the subject. On diplomatic aspects, of course. Four other articles are dedicated to Luís da Cunha (whose work he knew in depth and had been studying since 1948), and he announced to his friends that he intended to publish a selection of the diplomat's *Memórias da Paz de Utrecht*. He also wanted to prepare an edition of the *Testamento Político*, whose editions he considered to be lacking, having written about it more than once.

Owing to this desire to see everything, to check all the works and to verify what he had already written in every case, his doctorate thesis – just as he had done with his undergraduate degree – was continually postponed. From 1957 to 1973, LFA struggled with the follow-up to *A diplomacia portuguesa e os limites meridionais do Brasil 1493-1700*. In the end, he was forced to give up this promised – and longed-for – endeavour in order to focus solely on *A Colônia do Sacramento na época da Sucessão de Espanha* [The Colony of Sacramento at the time of the Spanish Succession]. He even left aside the negotiations and diplomatic relations to focus on the economic and social aspects. As a result, he gave us excellent work with a broad perspective, as he said he wanted – which explains a lot about the past of Southern Brazil, but also of Uruguay and Argentina because although he favoured diplomatic history, LFA sought to understand and explain the subjects he studied without restricting himself to one aspect or another. He never abandoned his interest in economic and cultural aspects.

He begins this thesis with a very careful review of the succession of Spain and the questions it posed when Carlos II tested his kingdoms and lordships in favour of his relative, the Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV. A geopolitical issue of unforeseeable consequences arose with the close ties between Spain and France – against which the Netherlands, England, and the German Empire were allied. Alliances were formed, and the military conflict began. In the last years of the century, the Colony of Sacramento experienced remarkable growth, thanks to the settlement policy and the smuggling of Peruvian silver. The leather trade was reaching very high volumes, and all this threatened the Spanish domination of the Plata estuary from Buenos Aires. As soon as war was declared, the Colony was occupied and destroyed, and the garrison withdrew. This was the second destruction of the New Colony. A period of prosperity was over.

The major issues of international politics related to the New Colony he reserved for the second volume of *A diplomacia portuguesa e os limites meridionais do Brasil*. However, his sense of reality and his



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knowledge of himself and his work led him to warn, “if we ever get round to writing it”... Nevertheless, he left several texts prepared to be published, including an important document by Sebastião da Veiga Cabral on the Colony of Sacramento, the original of which is in the Biblioteca da Ajuda [Ajuda Library] and which LFA prepared for publication. It is the *Representação estudiosa e útil para as Majestades, grandeza, e vassalos de Portugal* [Scholarly and useful representation for the Majesties, grandees and vassals of Portugal] (1702), which had already been published in Uruguay from a very defective copy in the Biblioteca Nacional in Portugal, and which was highly criticised.

A Full Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra (1981-1992), he belonged to the Academia Portuguesa da História [Portuguese Academy of History] and was a member of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute], the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Rio Grande do Sul [Historical and Geographical Institute of Rio Grande do Sul], and the Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay [Historical and Geographical Institute of Uruguay]. He was a member of the Academia de Marinha [Navy Academy] and The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America. His modesty, if not his shyness, prevented him from accepting any form of recognition of superiority from his peers. So even when it came to publications, it was difficult to get hold of them – there was always something to be confirmed.

Only belatedly and after much urging did he agree to put some of his work together in a volume. The choice was his, which meant that he naturally selected those that he found most satisfying. Thus, it appears as a kind of self-portrait of his interests as a historian. It is the history of techniques and aspects of the history of agriculture, the political testament of D. Luís da Cunha, the acclimatisation of plants from the East in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Brazil, the Colony of Sacramento and the formation of Southern Brazil, D. João V and absolutism and the king’s library that are offered in *Páginas dispersas* [Scattered pages], to which he added the subtitle *Estudos de História Moderna de Portugal* [Studies in Modern Portuguese History]. This took place in 1995, to celebrate his retirement in 1992. The author’s concerns, themes, historiographical construction and ever-discreet erudition can be seen in this volume. Luís Ferrand de Almeida was a very scrupulous researcher, mastering sources and bibliography in an unusual way. He wrote his texts by hand, in a beautiful script that he asked someone to type because he used neither a typewriter nor a computer.

The history of techniques with “Inovações técnicas no tempo de D. João V: o engenho do Pinhal do Rei” [Technical innovations in the time of King João V: the Pinhal do Rei mill]. This article was published in 1962, signalling the time of “invention and progress” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Given that he was a lecturer, he had to take into account “the cultural environment of the century, with Cartesian mechanism, the prestige of Newton’s physics, the rehabilitation of the mechanical arts, the growing importance of the utilitarian and practical ideal” (p. 2). In this environment and under the protection of D. João V, a windmill for sawing wood was set up in the Pinhal de Leiria. In 1723, Dutch architects or engineers and craftsmen came to set it up. Its administration was prepared – along with its staff – to get the mill up and running with good results. This entailed other issues, such as the transport of timber, particularly for shipbuilding. Accompanying this article is a set of



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developed scholarly notes that clarify many of the questions raised by this pioneering article.

Another article in the same collection on the history of techniques is based on the presence of a French shipbuilder in Portugal between 1710 and 1715. Because the navy needed to equip and renovate its warships, a man called Chabert had to be sent from France to Lisbon to build ships. He was relatively successful professionally but unlucky personally.

To get a good idea of LFA's precise working methods, one must read the article he dedicates to the authenticity of the "Political Testament" of D. Luís de Cunha. It shows the thoroughness with which he analyses the ambassador's writings, comparing them with other texts written by him, which allowed him to make a positive assessment from the outset, especially because of the references in the text that could not be attributed to others. Even the appointment of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo as Secretary of State is the result of favourable assessments of him and the diplomatic action that Luís da Cunha had taken elsewhere. Although it concludes that it is authentic, it has been poorly published, and the text was left unfinished.

The article on the acclimatisation of plants from the East in Brazil during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is very interesting and informative, although it is less forward-looking in terms of methodological novelties. This is, in fact, a subject to which he would return, always looking at the "usefulness" of botanical transfers between the East and the Americas, their economic usefulness and possibly how they affected trade flows by displacing the demand for exotic products.

More unexpected is the attention given to the popular riots in the time of D. João V. Since this king was one of LFA's favourite characters, he shows how popular emotions were not lacking in the circumscribed Portuguese environment either. According to mechanisms of unrest known elsewhere, namely studied by French historiography, using the scarce economic elements available for the period, the author nevertheless manages to show how the urban and rural riots of 1709, 1710, 1721, and 1723 were triggered and then quelled. Not many, as you might expect, during a period when the economic situation was not particularly troubled.

The article "Sobre a introdução e a difusão do milho mais em Portugal" [On the introduction and spread of maize in Portugal] is particularly noteworthy among his research. This subject caught the attention of many historians (e.g., Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Frédéric Mauro, and António de Oliveira), geographers (Orlando Ribeiro), botanists, and other experts, and LFA did not fail to make an excellent contribution on the subject. The "maize revolution" is a passionate topic, which received yet another contribution with this article that better dates the spread of maize according to the regions of the country and avoids a generalisation of an expansion that would have been slower than many have claimed. And later too, with its generalisation dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in the North.

LFA also delves with great finesse into his political and administrative interpretation of royal absolutism, especially with regard to how it was lived and practised by D. João V. A paternalistic conception and practice, far more pragmatic than subordinated to a theoretical paradigm or to any legal law and doctrine that one





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might want to read over time. He did not even grant any worth to the polysynodism of some since the councils were mainly advisory. However, what happened with the Overseas Council needs to be somewhat nuanced. These were times when the courts did not even meet, nor were any public bodies consulted on the measures to be taken by the authorities. Although the exercise of central power in the final years of the kingdom was difficult to understand, with the King, Cardinal da Mota, Father Carbone and Alexandre de Gusmão present and acting at a time when the Secretaries of State (created in 1736) had yet to establish their powers.

An article on the Colony of Sacramento could not be absent from these loose pages: in this case, the author took advantage of his collaboration in *Portugal no Mundo* [Portugal in the World], directed by Luís de Albuquerque. These pages are meant to be representative of an academic life that was not only about research. LFA was also exemplary when it came to preparing lessons and indicating elements for students to work on. He always endeavoured to provide as much data as possible for consultation and work. And the studies on the New Colony naturally stand out. With the usual quality, although they were gradually perfected as the research progressed and the documentary and bibliographical knowledge developed. And the admiration of Argentinians and Uruguayans took root. In 2006, the tribute paid to him in Montevideo took place in the very building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was the acknowledgement that not only did Brazil consider him a remarkable researcher but also a teacher who gave them good historical foundations for a regional policy in the Plata region.

He continued to produce until 2003, and it is worth noting that his interest in diplomatic history never waned. In 2001, he presented an article, as always well-documented, on the official Portuguese representation in Vienna at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the War of the Spanish Succession could already be predicted. Or at least when it should have been considered a close threat. LFA was a remarkable and exemplary researcher whose activity extended from 1947 to 2003 without ever conceding to any facilities; he disappeared discreetly, as he had lived. His excellent working library and papers were bequeathed to the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra, where they remain.

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