

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Ferrão, António (Lisbon, 1884 - Lisbon, 1961)

António Ferrão was a learned Portuguese historian and academic from the first half of the 20th century. However, little is known about his childhood, youth and personality. In his later years, brief notes reveal that he identified as an agnostic — "to us, agnostics by spiritual complexion" — and that António Cabreira remarked of him, at the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, that "he is an old, intemperate and upright republican" (António Ferrão, *O Prof. Joaquim de Carvalho...*, 1960, pp. 13 and 29). Ferrão served as secretary of the Masonic Congress in 1924, suggesting he was likely a member of a Masonic lodge. That same year, Teófilo Braga, whom Ferrão referred to as his "late Master", passed away. Ferrão considered himself both a student and disciple of Braga and claimed he was entrusted with prefacing Braga's correspondence that held significant scientific, political, moral and social value (Idem, *Teófilo Braga e o Positivismo em Portugal...*, 1935, pp. 4 and 5).

As early as 1907, Ferrão published booklets on the parliamentary regime and trade unionism in various countries under the title *Pequena Biblioteca Democrática. Fundador Heliodoro Salgado, sob a direcção de António Ferrão (2ª série)* [Little Democratic Library. Founder Heliodoro Salgado, under the direction of António Ferrão (2nd series)]. He delivered numerous lectures and courses at the *Universidade Livre* [Free University] between 1912 and 1922, covering topics such as the history of religions, politics and diplomacy from 1815 to 1915 and the centenary of Brazil, among others. These lectures, published separately in the *Trabalhos da Academia das Ciências de Portugal* [Works of the Academy of Sciences of Portugal], demonstrate that some of his most extensive works originated from speeches given at these institutions (*Dicionário Bibliográfico Português...*, t. XXII, 1923, pp. 266-269 and 535-536).

António Ferrão produced a rich and varied bibliography, which he summarised in his Curriculum Vitae, printed in 1933 (when he was approaching fifty years old). His work focused on history, archival technology, bibliography, library technology, criticism of sources and historical facts, as well as the theory and genetic methodology of sources and documentary history. In addition to this, his administrative work, collaborations with magazines and newspapers such as *O Século* [The Century], *Diário de Notícias* [Daily News] and *Diário de Lisboa* [Lisbon Daily], as well as his scientific communications, conferences and public courses, are



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noteworthy.

His educational background was exemplary: he completed a full secondary school education, followed by a general and diplomatic course as a regular student on the *Curso Superior de Letras* [Higher Course of Arts and Humanities]. He also pursued a secondary teaching course, preparing him to teach in the Geography, History and Philosophy group, and earned a bachelor's degree in historical sciences. Additionally, he passed a public examination for the teaching of history at the *Faculdade de Letras* [School of Arts and Humanities] in Lisbon.

By 1933, Ferrão was a full member of the Lisbon Geographical Society, having served as vice-president of several sections (Art, Literature, History and Geography). He was successively appointed as a corresponding member (1921), full member (1925) and member of merit (1953) of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* [Lisbon Academy of Sciences], where he served as inspector of the library, founder of the historical museum and director of the documentary collection *Corpo Diplomático Português* [Portuguese Diplomatic Corps], originally published by Rebelo da Silva in 1862 in its second edition (the first edition was published in 1846). He was also a founding member of the *Academia das Ciências de Portugal* [Academy of Sciences of Portugal] and a foreign correspondent of both the Geographical Society of Madrid and the Academy of History in the same city (1924-1925).

In terms of his career in public administration, it seems António Ferrão entered and advanced quickly following the establishment of the Republic in 1910. He served as head of department and head of service at the Directorate-General for Secondary, Higher and Artistic Instruction and the Ministry of Public Instruction. During this time he contributed to the pedagogical reforms of the provisional government, facilitating Portugal's accession to the Berne Convention for the protection of literary, scientific and artistic property in 1911. He also held the positions of general secretary and director of the *Liga Nacional de Instrução* [National Instruction League], which operated out of the *Sociedade de Geografia* [Geographical Society]. Various governments commissioned him to select materials from the historical archives of the Ministry of Justice to be sent to the inspectorate of libraries and archives in 1920. Three years later, he was commissioned to research and promote the cataloguing of the inspectorate's collection, which had by then become the inspectorate of learned libraries and archives. In 1929, he was appointed sub-inspector of this inspectorate.

In intellectual terms, he was also active: in 1915, he was commissioned to publish a six-volume work on the life and governmental achievements of the Marquis of Pombal; however, only two volumes were published immediately due to budgetary constraints. He undertook service commissions abroad in 1914, 1919, 1926, and 1927 to study the organisation of fine arts services, archives, and libraries in various countries, including Spain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands.

During these trips, he took the opportunity to study, extract, and cite works of significance to Portuguese culture and history, following a tradition that dates back to the 18th century among diplomats and members of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*. From 1912 to 1922, he represented the *Liga Nacional de Instrução* at



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various national events and represented Portugal at international meetings, including those commemorating centenaries in Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and France between 1924 and 1927. It is therefore not surprising that in the 1930s, he was successively appointed deputy director, effective director, regent, and appointed to a chair on the *Curso Superior de Bibliotecário-Arquivista* [Higher Librarian-Archivist Course.]

Naturally, this constant engagement in administrative, research, and teaching activities yielded significant bibliographic contributions. António Ferrão engaged with various topics, including the works of Pombal (1915, 1917, 1923, and 1932), Gomes Freire de Andrade (1917; 2nd ed. 1918; 1920, in which he related it to the virtues of the Portuguese race), the reform of secondary education (1915), and the University of Coimbra (1926). He also examined 18th-century literary censorship (1927) and addressed a plethora of Portuguese thinkers and scholars, including Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho (1923), António Cândido (1924), and Teófilo Braga (1935). His studies encompassed the *Academia das Ciências* and celebrated figures such as Magalhães and Camões (1921 and 1930). Ferrão conducted various studies on archives, libraries, and the training of specialised personnel. He also expressed a keen interest in publishing diplomatic reports and popular culture, writing about these subjects in a coherent manner as a disseminator, pedagogue, and advocate for the advancement of mass education and national science. Little is known about his career from the 1940s to the 1960s, apart from the fact that he became a member of merit of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* in 1953. This apparent decline in activity may have been due to friction with the Estado Novo regime.

Towards the end of his life, in 1960, António Ferrão published a booklet entitled *O Prof. Joaquim de Carvalho e a sua Época* [Professor Joaquim de Carvalho and His Times], with an illuminating subtitle: *Desde as reformas de ensino universitário do governo provisório, em 1911* [Since the university education reforms of the provisional government in 1911.] The booklet reproduces the titles of a significant portion of the bibliography produced from 1933 onwards, including works on Gama Barros (1935) and various biographical or comparative studies, such as those on Teófilo Braga and Joaquim de Araújo (1934), Ribeiro Sanches and Soares de Barros (1936), and Camilo and Silva Pinto (1936). It notes a decline in new titles during the 1940s and after 1951.

Above all, Ferrão discusses what he perceives as the failures of the various pedagogical reforms of the last half-century. He cannot completely detach himself from his own political reflections on the transitional period of 1911-1912 and the role he played in the pedagogical reforms he advocated for at the time, which he believed were hindered by inadequate teaching materials and the lack of preparation among some university professors, whom he likened to phonographs. He also revisits his favourite meditations on philosophers and philosophical currents from *1905-1907, ao período dos nossos estudos de filosofia superior* [1905-1907, the period of our studies in higher philosophy.]

According to Ferrão, the reforms of the *Curso Superior de Letras* in 1901 and 1902 did not fulfil the aspirations of Teófilo Braga, Adolfo Coelho, and Silva Cordeiro. He noted that the demand for a medical course in Lisbon by teachers at the Polytechnic School, along with reforms in the teaching of law and medicine in



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Coimbra, were both quantitatively and qualitatively significant. Furthermore, he briefly mentions António José de Almeida's unpreparedness for governance — despite their collaboration during the monarchy on *Alma Nacional* [National Soul] — and observes that Sidónio's 1918 university reform, also supported by Almeida, differed little from that of 1911. He asserts that "Nothing that was done was the result of chance, improvisation, or amateurism" (António Ferrão, *O Prof. Joaquim de Carvalho e sua Época*, 1960, pp. 17 and n. 2 and 18, n. 1). Later, he discusses Minister Leonardo Coimbra and the notorious decrees 5491 and 5770 regarding the University of Coimbra (1919), as well as Joaquim de Carvalho's text *A minha resposta* [My response] (by then a graduate and doctor). Ferrão does not shy away from addressing both Leonardo Coimbra and the criticisms directed at Joaquim de Carvalho, including improprieties. As a summary and a sort of coda, Ferrão recalls how he knew Leonardo Coimbra, José Relvas, Mendes dos Remédios, and the "then young assistant Dr Gonçalves Cerejeira" (Idem, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 24-28). He also covers the dissolution of the Coimbra University Press in 1934, which Joaquim de Carvalho oversaw, as well as Carvalho's multifaceted career as a pedagogue and intellectual, concluding with his visit to Brazil in 1953. Ferrão ends the text with the unfulfilled promise of publishing a work that would include praise for the figure he analyses, titled *Recordando... Memórias* (*Subsídios para a história e cultura portuguesa. 1910-1960*). [Remembering... Memories (Subsidies for Portuguese History and Culture. 1910-1960)]

Unfortunately, this is a recurring feature in the majority of António Ferrão's works — texts rich in erudition but often meandering, where the central theme is frequently lost and then revisited. This is the case with his writing on Gama Barros and his work, which he presents as part of "our small gallery of illustrious Portuguese, which includes Camões, the 1st Marquis of Pombal, Maria Vaz de Carvalho, António Cândido, Gomes Freire de Andrade, and Lieutenant Colonel Almeida Gorgel, not systematically, but according to the chance of circumstances" (Idem, *Gama Barros*, 1935, p. 3). It is no coincidence that Ferrão's discussion of Gama Barros comes after nine pages on Hegel and, above all, Ranke. Only in the second part of the work does he focus on studying the biographical and intellectual career of Gama Barros, stating that "he is, after Herculano, (...) our first, and our greatest contemporary historian" (Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 23), mentioning his involvement with the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* and including a documentary appendix about his admission to the Academy. Despite these digressions, the text remains a valuable source of biographical and professional information about Gama Barros.

A similar approach can be found in *A Academia das Ciências de Lisboa e o Movimento Filosófico, Científico e Económico da Segunda Metade do Século XVIII* [The Lisbon Academy of Sciences and the Philosophical, Scientific, and Economic Movement of the Second Half of the 18th Century] (1923), where Ferrão first discusses this intellectual movement before moving on to the early days of the Academy. Ferrão first talks about this movement and then discusses the early days of the Academy, in a prose that is now outdated and unoriginal, typical of an academic speech given two years earlier. However, one of the most significant ideas is the Academy's role as a precursor to Vintism, "a revolution [that] was no more than the logical consequence



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of the slow evolution of 40 years of academic work" (Idem, *A Academia*, 1923, p. 44). In a 1935 volume, based on an academic speech delivered in 1924 on the occasion of Teófilo Braga's death, Ferrão includes over sixty letters from Júlio de Matos to Teófilo Braga, dating from 1878 to 1882. During this period, the two collaborated formally as co-directors of *O Positivismo* [Positivism], an annual publication with four issues, whose challenges Ferrão comments on and Júlio de Matos analyses (Idem, *Teófilo Braga e o Positivismo em Portugal...*, 1935, pp. 31-107).

Domingos Maurício suggests that, while Ferrão devoted himself to pedagogy and the theory of history, he did so "without much success" (VELBEC, vol. 8, 1969, p. 625). Regarding the first subject, this evaluation remains to be conducted, partly due to personal circumstances that prevented the individual in question from working as a professor at the *Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa*, despite being qualified through public examination and having reportedly been invited to teach at similar institutions in France and Switzerland (António Ferrão, *Curriculum Vitae*, 1935, p. 5, n. 2).

Indirectly, A. Ferrão considered the civic and moral role of academies, particularly after the First World War, to be decisive. He expressed this view in *As Causas «Ideais» da Conflagração e a Função Pedagógica das Academias Científicas após a Guerra* [The 'Ideal' Causes of the Conflagration and the Pedagogical Role of Scientific Academies after the War] (1918), where he invoked Teófilo Braga as president of the *Academia das Ciências de Portugal*. As a lecturer, an official in the Ministry of Public Instruction, and a theorist on the importance of universities, academies, cinema, and theatre for popular education, Ferrão seemed to make a constant effort to investigate the root causes of wars between nations and to channel the energies of both elites and the masses towards more peaceful and civilising ends (*Dicionário Bibliográfico Português...*, t. XXII, 1923, pp. 266-269 and 535-536).

In the field of archives, António Ferrão emphasised the significance of unpublished and diplomatic documents as historical sources, as well as Portuguese and Portugal-related documents that remained unexplored or unlisted in foreign archives and libraries. This work continued the legacy of earlier members of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*, such as Correia da Serra in Italy, Ferreira Gordo in Madrid (during the famous commission of 1788-1794), and the Viscount of Santarém in Rio de Janeiro, London, and Paris between 1809 and the mid-19th century. These efforts reflect a long-standing appreciation for and systematic pursuit of this type of source. In works from 1916, 1917, and 1922, Ferrão relates these themes to what he sees as the theory of history and the advancement of scientific historiography, always relying on printed catalogues of manuscripts from European institutions (those he visited) and documentary collections from various countries, including Portugal. He also provides an overview of "the current phase of historical methodology," although he admits that the ideas he discusses are not his own, which somewhat detracts from the originality and significance of this aspect (*Os Arquivos de História de Portugal no Estrangeiro*, 1916; *Da importância dos documentos diplomáticos em História*, 1917; *A Teoria da História e os Progressos da Historiografia Científica*, 1922, pp. 347 et seq.)



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These considerations earned António Ferrão the attention and praise of the renowned Lusitanian scholar Georges Le Gentil, who highlighted Ferrão's historiographical connections with Fueter and the *Revue de Synthèse Historique*. Ferrão's methodology focused primarily on synthesis before engaging in detailed historical analysis, and he advocated that synthesis should precede "the political, social, economic, scientific, religious, and moral interpretation of facts." In 1927, Le Gentil even described him as "one of the masters of Portuguese science" (Georges Le Gentil, "Bibliographie", *Bulletin Hispanique*, vol. XXIX, no. 2, April-June 1927, pp. 228-229).

Le Gentil's main focus on António Ferrão came in 1920, when, in the broader context of "The Intellectual Movement in Portugal," he devoted seven pages to the "new direction of historical studies introduced by Fidelino de Figueiredo" and six pages to "Ferrão and diplomatic history." In the latter, Le Gentil recalls a time when Portuguese historians lacked the assistance of professional archivists and points out how the absence of comprehensive manuscript catalogues (whether printed, published, or lacking indexes) hindered their work. He notes the exception of the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* and the *Arquivo Histórico* [Historical Archive], citing Anselmo Braancamp Freire and António Baião's efforts to combat these shortfalls. Interestingly, Le Gentil claims that Heinrich Schaefer, author of *Geschichte von Portugal*, was a disciple of Ranke, and that in 1914, Ferrão completed the work on the *Notícia dos manuscritos* [Notice of the Manuscripts] of the Viscount of Santarém (1827). In a Europe still deeply scarred by war, Georges Le Gentil valued Ferrão's advocacy for mass education as a means of preventing the resurgence of the disastrous nationalisms and imperialisms that had ravaged the continent (Idem, "Le mouvement intellectuel en Portugal", *Bulletin Hispanique*, vol. XXII, no. 1, January-March 1920, pp. 108-110).

The practical outcomes of these theories, whether Ferrão's own or those of others, can be found in works of purely historical analysis, some of which have already been mentioned. In the first and only volume of *Reinado de D. Miguel* [Reign of King Miguel], comprising over 700 pages and dedicated to the siege of Oporto, published in 1940 while Ferrão was a member of the Military History Commission, he provides a detailed and descriptive interpretation of events. Given his republican, liberal, and positivist stance, Ferrão continues a long-standing tradition of criticising the Viscount of Santarém, particularly over his handling of the Roussin affair, both naval and diplomatic. Ferrão directs harsh criticisms and insults at Santarém, suggesting that such attitudes were the result of stubbornness and folly, especially since, by 1831, the "winds of history" were so evident that only obstinacy could explain certain political convictions and actions (pp. 20 ff). However, the author does attempt to provide a general assessment of King Miguel's regime in cultural and academic terms, a task that remains incomplete to this day (pp. 157-159).

In conclusion, António Ferrão was a significant figure in literature and in the dissemination and theorization of history from the 1910s to the 1940s. He was a vocal disciple of Teófilo Braga—a republican, agnostic, and positivist—who viewed historical science, along with academic and popular pedagogy, as a means of addressing the moral and civilizational crisis exacerbated by the First World War and, domestically, by the

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First Republic. Ferrão served as a link between various groups of 19th-century scholars and historians and those of the second half of the 20th century, much like António Baião did.

Active bibliography: *Os Arquivos da História de Portugal no estrangeiro: da necessidade de estudar e inventariar nas bibliotecas e arquivos estrangeiros os documentos relativos à História de Portugal*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1916 (Separata dos *Trabalhos da Academia das Ciências de Portugal*, 1ª série, tomo I); *Da importância dos documentos diplomáticos em História: estudo sucinto de alguns arquivos diplomáticos estrangeiros e nacionais*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1917 (Separata dos *Trabalhos da Academia das Ciências de Portugal*, 1ª série, t. II); *As Causas «Ideais» da Conflagração e a Função Pedagógica das Academias Científicas após a Guerra* (Discurso, seguido de muitas notas justificativas), Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1918 (Separata dos *Trabalhos da Academia das Ciências de Portugal*, 1ª série, t. VI); *A Teoria da História e os Progressos da Historiografia Científica: a contribuição que para estes tem dado a publicação das colecções de inéditos*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1922; *A Academia das Ciências de Lisboa e o Movimento Filosófico, Científico e Económico da Segunda Metade do Século XVIII: a fundação desse instituto e a primeira fase da sua existência*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1923 (separata do *Boletim da Segunda Classe da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*); *Curriculum Vitae: vida literária e oficial e bibliografia*, Lisboa, Tipografia Carmona, 1933; *Teófilo Braga e o Positivismo em Portugal: com um núcleo de correspondência de Júlio de Matos para Teófilo Braga*, Lisboa, Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1935; *Gama Barros e a sua obra: Portugueses Ilustres*, Lisboa, Oficina Ottosgráfica, 1935; *Reinado de D. Miguel: cerco do Porto, 1832-1833*, Lisboa, Tipografia Gráfica Santelmo, 1940; *O Prof. Joaquim de Carvalho e a sua Época: desde as reformas de ensino universitário do governo provisório, em 1911*, Figueira da Foz, s.n., 1960.

Passive bibliography: Georges Le Gentil, “Le mouvement intellectuel en Portugal”, *Bulletin Hispanique (Annales de la Faculté des Lettres de Bourdeaux et des Universités du Midi)*, 4ª série, vol. XXII, nº 1, Bordéus, Feret & Fils, Éditeurs, Janeiro-Março de 1920, pp. 108-114; Idem, “Bibliographie”, *Bulletin Hispanique (Annales de la Faculté des Lettres de Bourdeaux et des Universités du Midi)*, 4ª série, vol. XXIX, nº 2, Bordéus, s. ed., Abril-Junho de 1927, pp. 228-232; Idem, *Revue Critique d’Histoire et Littérature*, Nouvelle Série, t. XCV, nº 1, Paris, Librairie Ernest Leroux, Janeiro de 1928, pp. 24-27; *Dicionário Bibliográfico Português. Estudos de Inocêncio Francisco da Silva aplicáveis a Portugal e Brasil continuados e ampliados por P. V. Brito Aranha. Revistos por Gomes de Brito e Álvares Brito*, t. XXII, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1923, pp. 266-269 e 535-536; *Grande Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira*, vol. XI, Editorial Enciclopédia, Lisboa/Rio de Janeiro, s.d., p. 144; Domingos Maurício, “Ferrão (António)”, *VELBEC (Verbo – Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de Cultura)*, 8º vol., Lisboa, Editorial Verbo, 1969, pp. 624-625.

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