

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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AMEAL, João [João Francisco de Barbosa Azevedo de Sande Aires de Campos]
(Mecejana, state of Ceará, 1853 - Rio de Janeiro, 1927)

Historian, writer, politician, journalist and lecturer with a strong lifelong connection to the monarchist and traditionalist field and to the Estado Novo, João Francisco de Barbosa Azevedo de Sande Aires de Campos, 2nd Viscount and 3rd Count of Ameal, was born in Coimbra in February 1902. The same city his parents were from: João de Sande Magalhães Mexia Ayres de Campos, 2nd Count of Ameal – a career diplomat who had been stationed in the Netherlands and a politician with links first to the Partido Regenerador [Regenerative Party] and then to the Dissidência Progressista [Progressive Dissent]– and Maria Benedita Falcão Barbosa de Azevedo e Bourbon. From an early age, he lived in Lisbon, where his father was part of Hintze Ribeiro's 1903 government as Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Venceslau Lima – and from where, in 1908, following his participation in the 'Intentona do Elevador da Biblioteca' [Library Lift Attempt] (an abortive attempt at a revolutionary coup to overthrow João Franco), he was forced to leave for exile in Galicia.

In keeping with family tradition, he graduated in Law from the University of Lisbon in 1921. It was during his academic years that João Ameal (the family's noble title, which he adopted as his surname) came into contact with Integralismo Lusitano (IL) [Lusitanian Integralism], which was essential from the point of view of shaping his political – and also historiographical – ideals, but with which he maintained a polarised relationship: in 1923, he left the movement and founded the Acção Realista Portuguesa [Portuguese Royalist Action] with Alfredo Pimenta, taking over the running of its journal, *Ação Realista* [Royalist Action]. However, he maintained his connection to António Sardinha, whose thinking would continue to influence him throughout his life, and to whom he wrote in 1924, greeting him as 'my illustrious Comrade, Master and the most prolific Animator of our Crusade' (Letter dated 26-10-1924, A. Sardinha's estate, UCP Library). He returned to IL after the latter's death at the end of the 1920s, collaborating in the magazine *Integralismo Lusitano – Estudos Portugueses* [Lusitanian Integralism- Portuguese Studies] for two years (between 1931 and 1933) and then accompanying Francisco Rolão Preto in the National-Syndicalist experiment. His time there was also brief, as he joined Manuel Múrias in the dissent that led to the creation of Acção Escolar Vanguarda [Vanguard School Action]. He became one of the new regime's main ideologists: he was the author, for example, of the 1934 poster *Decálogo do Estado Novo* [Decalogue of the New State] and, that same year, he was appointed by



António Ferro to the Portuguese section of the short-lived Committees for Action at the University of Rome. In the following years, he was also deputy Secretary-General of the Liga de Acção Universal Corporativa [Corporate Universal Action League] (1935), member of the National Assembly (1942-1953) and attorney to the Câmara Corporativa [Corporate Chamber] (1957-1961).

From the 1960s onwards, already disillusioned with the course of the Estado Novo, which he considered had failed to fulfil its aim of re-establishing the monarchy in Portugal, he gradually moved away from politics to devote himself to writing, teaching (at the Higher Institute of Social Sciences and Overseas Politics), and research. A member of the Academia Portuguesa de História [Portuguese Academy of History], the Academia de Ciências [Academy of Sciences] and the Associação Portuguesa de Escritores Católicos [Portuguese Association of Catholic Writers], he was also a member of the Duke of Bragança's privy council towards the end of his life. A prolific author, his most notable works include *No Limiar da Idade-Nova* [On the Threshold of the New Age] (1934, Ramalho Ortigão prize), *São Tomás de Aquino* [St Thomas Aquinas] (1938); various biographical booklets (especially a legitimist book dedicated to D. Miguel), and more apologetic works, such as *A Contra-revolução* [The counter-revolution] (1928), *Panorama do Nacionalismo Português* [Panorama of Portuguese Nationalism] (1932) or *Construção do Novo Estado* [Building the New State] (1938); and, especially, *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] (awarded the Alexandre Herculano prize in 1941, with successive reissues until the 1980s – seven printings, with 22,000 copies, between 1940 and 1974 (Gonçalo Sampaio e Mello, *Espólio de João Ameal* [Estate of João Ameal], BN, p.15) and *História da Europa* [History of Europe](started in 1967, but its edition was completed after his death).

He also directed or collaborated throughout his life with a series of periodicals, most notably *Acção Realista* [Royalist Action], *O Dia* [The Day], *Diário da Manhã* [Morning Daily], *Diário de Notícias* [Daily News], *Época* [Epoch], *Ilustração Portuguesa* [Portuguese Illustration], *Integralismo Lusitano – Estudos Portugueses* [Lusitanian Integralism- Portuguese Studies], *Nação Portuguesa* [Portuguese Nation], *Rumos* [Routes], among others.

Underlying his early historical works, in line with traditionalist thinking, was a general idea of revising values that he considered necessary to replace those that the 19th century, 'false, illusory, perfectly unfit to guide and lead us', had bequeathed. Following the line of integralist positivism, which sees History as a source of experience, historical values, in his view, would be the most suitable for the task of 'enlightening and guiding the men of this time' (*Porque escrevi a 'História de Portugal'* [Why I wrote the 'History of Portugal'] 1941, pp. 7; 9): values passed on by the example of figures and events that he considered to be 'dynamic' and not 'static' (*Rumo da Juventude* [The direction of Youth], 1942, p. 84). This is why, for example, he wrote, with Rodrigues Cavalheiro, in *Erratas à História de Portugal*, that the best way to serve the country would be to 'love and defend it in the integrity of its History [...]' and 'help the public to clearly discern the truth, which for so long has been hidden from them by the ill-faith or denationalisation of so many false historians' (*Erratas à História de Portugal*, [Errata to the History of Portugal] 1939, no page number). This position helps us to understand why João Ameal supports, for example, the censorship of the press and

historiographical control carried out in Fascist Italy, which he briefly looked at in the 1930s, emphasising 'the particular interest with which historical texts are monitored, so that certain unscrupulous men cannot be allowed to indulge in disfiguring and slandering the great figures and the great journeys of national tradition' (*A Revolução da Ordem* [The Revolution of Order], 1932, pp. 70-73).

It is also noticeable, especially in the texts he wrote for *Nação Portuguesa* [Portuguese Nation] and for the journal *Integralismo Lusitano – Estudos Portugueses* [Lusitanian Integralism- Portuguese Studies], that he had a certain teleological perspective on History – a bit like other intellectuals linked to the IL: indeed, for Ameal, one of the functions of national historiographical work would be to reintegrate 'Portuguese man [...]' into the legitimate concept of his universal value [...], seen in the fullness of his mission throughout the ages – a link in the chain that the trajectory of the homeland has been forming since the 12th century' (*No Limiar da Idade-Nova* [On the Threshold of the New Age], 1934, p. 13).

This idea of the need to refocus the historical vision on certain values will be constant and is symptomatic of the considerations he will make in the early 1940s in relation to the Portuguese historiography that preceded him: Ameal praises Fernão Lopes and Alexandre Herculano in particular – something common to other historians from different walks of life, such as António José Saraiva, for example. And he does so because, in his opinion, they managed to transmit to posterity 'the life of their times and not, as others have done, just a skeleton of political successes and famous names'. To these names, he adds a series of others from the 16th to the 18th centuries, such as João de Barros, Jerónimo de Osório, Francisco de Andrade or Friar Manuel do Cenáculo. As for the 19th century, he sees it, along traditionalist lines, as a bivalent period, segmented between those he classifies as 'objective' historians (the Viscount of Santarém, the aforementioned Herculano – although not as the author of *História da Origem e Estabelecimento da Inquisição* [History of the Origin and Establishment of the Inquisition], Rebelo da Silva, Gama Barros, Alberto Sampaio; and the 'pamphleteers' from different quarters – such as Agostinho de Macedo or Pinheiro Chagas and Latino Coelho). Very critical of Oliveira Martins, he described him as a 'poet or visionary of History' (*Porque escrevi...[Why I wrote...]*, p. 25). It was in a certain historiography from the beginning of the 20th century that he finally found a 'reaction' to the polarity of the 19th century: 'A new examination of the sources is being carried out. In the light of a concept of man that cannot stand the narrow limits of rationalism divorced from reality, a scientism divorced from the human, a positivism divorced from metaphysics (...)' (*Perspectivas da História* [Historical Perspectives], 1960, p. 27).

Again, João Ameal's analysis is not without the influence of traditionalist thought and the IL – especially António Sardinha's, whose unrealised project of a revisionist History of Portugal was, in fact, tentatively recovered by him and Rodrigues Cavalheiro in the aforementioned *Erratas à História de Portugal* [Errata to the History of Portugal] – and which is echoed, moreover, in his own *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal]. However, other methodological references, such as Bainville, Jacques Maritain, Robert Aron, and André Beaunier, are also traceable in this respect.

João Ameal's *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] is, as characteristic of other works linked to

traditionalism, somewhat oscillating. He emphasises certain moments, especially the formative phase of the Middle Ages – already highlighted in other works as ‘[...] the great period, the culminating period of human philosophy’ (*Panorama do Nacionalismo Português* [Panorama of Portuguese Nationalism], 1932, p. 36) – the Expansion and the Restoration, to the detriment of others. For Ameal, however, these were not mere moments of apogee in the face of others of decline or decadence; rather, they signified what would be the normal course of the History of Portugal, during which there were occasional interruptions, such as what happened in the mid-18th century with the Marquis of Pombal or, in particular, during the ‘dismal century’ of liberalism (*História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], IV, 1958, p. 360), reversed by 28 May 1926. Suggestive of his philosophy of History, João Ameal also calls them ‘relapses’: ‘It is a fact: relapses are always possible in History. And they can occur as much in the history of a life as in that of a country, a continent, or an entire civilisation’ (*Rumo da Juventude* [The Direction of Youth], 1942, p. 81).

One line of argument cuts across the interpretation of these interruptions – or ‘static’ moments, to use João Ameal’s conceptual field – as gaps in what would otherwise be the normal course of national history: for the historian, they arose whenever the Nation moved away from its values (Catholicism, the mission spirit, a certain providentialism) through the influence of ‘bad ideas’ from abroad (such as the Enlightenment or Liberalism), often personified in specific historical agents. In this respect, see the example of Gomes Freire de Andrade, a figure particularly targeted by traditionalist historiography (*História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], IV, 1958, pp. 561-562).

In these respects, João Ameal’s *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] is, to a large extent, a revisionist project in line, once again, with the integralist traditionalism of his formative period – something which, incidentally, he embraces. In 1945, referring to Sardinha’s historical revision project, he wrote: ‘Numerous are the figures who have been cleansed of a thousand shadows or slanders in order to have their true and pure splendour restored. Numerous, too, are the false idols, raised in the public square, who were stripped of their fake adornments and tied to the pillory, where they have remained ever since – throwing them (as in the tribune’s famous apostrophe) “into the galleys of History”. Simultaneously, or in the wake of Sardinha, many deserving researchers have committed themselves to the splendid task of restoring historical truth’ (*Europa e os seus fantasmas* [Europe and its ghosts], 1945, p. 242). In this respect, Luís Reis Torgal even writes that in Ameal’s *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], there is a real ‘revisionist zeal’ and that he, more than a historian, was ‘a disseminator, [...] in the sense that communication methods far outweigh accurate knowledge [he was] the disseminator of the time when History was (also) at the service of the regime [...] João Ameal was the authentic “historian of the regime”’. Something that was pointed out to him by his contemporaries even during the Estado Novo – such as Victor de Sá, who, in 1961 (*História e Actualidade* [History and Current Events], compared him to the chroniclers of the royal court.

More broadly, João Ameal replicated some of these ideas in his reflections on ‘European civilisation’ from 1945 onwards – in the book *Europa e os seus fantasmas* [Europe and its ghosts] (1945), in various conferences, in the ‘Idea of Europe’ course he taught at ISCSP in the 1960s and, in particular, in his *História*

da Europa [History of Europe] (1960). In the latter, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Liberalism and Communism are also 'static moments' in a long civilisational journey based on the 'Hellenistic-Latin-German-Christian experience' ('O Ocidente e Portugal' ['The West and Portugal'], pp. 188 et seq.) spread throughout the world from the 16th century onwards. And, in this particular sense, his History of Europe is seen from the point of view that we might describe as 'Portuguese', in the sense that Portugal is seen as one of the main agents of this dissemination of European civilisational values, a pioneer in 'teaching the West to every man and people' (*idem*, p. 193).

As with the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal], the challenges came from the external dangers that Ameal saw threatening Europe (in this case, the 'American plutocracy' and the 'Slavic technocracy' – *Europa e os seus fantasmas* [Europe and its ghosts], 1945, p. 274). It was, therefore, necessary to recover the values of the West, which remained underlying despite the post-war dialectic: 'Today's man is the same man whose defence, protection, and liberation have become even more pressing.' ('O Ocidente e Portugal' ['The West and Portugal'], p. 193). And, bridging the gap with the Estado Novo [New State]'s argument regarding its colonial territories, the capacity for entertaining a dialogue with the other that he saw in Portugal from the Expansion to the present day would prefigure a kind of model to follow in the defence of Western values: 'Thus we can generate, throughout the Earth, other Portugals – fraternal communities between different races. [...] There is no exaggeration in saying that new centres of gravity of the West are also being created in our provinces of Africa, so full of promise – and in the enormous Brazil, linked to us in the fraternal community established by the two governments' (*idem*, p. 188).

Notwithstanding his views on the need to reposition the historical vision, the reflections he made over the course of his life on the historian's craft show a constant theoretical concern with issues of hermeneutics and the validity of sources. Ameal also mentions, at different times, the difficulty of detachment and total impartiality: 'Historical work suffers, and cannot fail to suffer, from the formation of thought, even from the character of the historian [...]. History is not a pure science, since its central character is man – an autonomous being, endowed with free will – History is as unpredictable as the acts, decisions, and reactions of man himself' (*Porque escrevi*, [Why I wrote...] p. 34). But he also highlights the importance of erudition (so dear to traditionalist intellectual thought) when he argues that the historian is different from the researcher: for Ameal, the connection of facts ('historical truth, first and foremost – that which makes it, in the strictest sense of the word, History') requires the historian's 'subjective reasoning to extract new analogies from the inert loose ends in the documents' (*idem*, pp. 34.37).

João Ameal also viewed History in an axiomatic way: as Science at the base (collection and selection of materials); Art in the arrangement of these materials; and Ethics ('guiding, educating, a sum of experiences') (*idem*, pp. 38-39). However, he integrated these ideas into a somewhat narrower and more functionalist perspective: for the historian, there can only be one truth, and as long as facts are approximated, probabilities are weighed up, and the reasoning is fair and methodical, one can legitimately reach a conclusion: 'If total and absolute impartiality seems unattainable, total and absolute honesty in the consultation of sources, in the

accuracy of deductions and in the interpretation of documents cannot be dispensed with. All this is a sufficient guarantee of the historian's suitability and credibility' (*idem*, p. 41).

For Ameal, historiographical subjectivity would be overcome by confronting the sources in order to arrive at the aforementioned 'historical truth'. This truth, in his case, would be underpinned by the concern to learn the trajectory of the History of Portugal as a moral sequence: the retrospective idea of the nation as a great family, always with solidarity and renewed from generation to generation, with the 'service of God and [the] will of an empire' as the guiding thread (*No Limiar...* [On the threshold...], pp. 38-39). Basically, the concerns he had expressed in his early works, even if nuanced, remained: as Chateaubriand (who Ameal quotes in more than one of his texts) said, 'Modern man is a traveller who lost his ways on the road; he has to return to the starting point if he wants to remember where he came from if he wants to know where he is going'.

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