

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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ALMEIDA, Manuel Lopes de (Benavente, 1900 – Coimbra, 1980)

Son of Joaquim Cândido de Almeida, a merchant, and Maria Justina Lopes de Almeida, Manuel Lopes de Almeida completed his secondary education at the Santarém Secondary School in order to enrol at the Medical School of the University of Coimbra. He then transferred to the School of Arts and Humanities, given his interest in History, graduating in Historical and Geographical Sciences in 1929 and obtaining a PhD in Historical Sciences in 1940 from the same University, with a highly commended dissertation entitled *Estudos de história da Restauração. I - Notícias da Aclamação e de Outros Sucessos* [Studies in the history of the Restoration. I - News of the Acclamation and Other Successes]. Between 1927 and 1929, he was a lecturer in Portuguese at the University of Hamburg. In 1930, he joined the teaching staff of the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra, being promoted to Full Professor in 1942 and retiring in 1970. His teaching activity encompassed various subjects, including Medieval History, Modern and Contemporary History, History of Portuguese Discoveries and Colonisation, General History of Civilisation, Archival Science, and the seminar on Modern Portuguese History.

Director of the General Library of the University of Coimbra between 1945 and 1970, he was responsible for the opening of the new building, the renewal of its staff and the incorporation of the libraries of the Viscount of Trindade, Pedro de Moura e Sá, Belisário Pimenta, and Octaviano de Sá. During his leadership, he carried out significant editorial work, whose structure still shapes the current publication plan.

Having António de Vasconcelos, Gonçalves Cerejeira, and Paulo Merêa as his teachers, as well as Joaquim de Carvalho, Mendes dos Remédios, Carolina Michaelis and Eugénio de Castro, who provided him with the historical methods of heuristics and hermeneutics, as well as philological and literary knowledge, his solid training was fundamental in historical research. He was the secretary and collaborator of *Biblos*, journal of the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra; with the collaboration of Jorge Peixoto, he founded *Arquivo de Bibliografia Portuguesa* [Portuguese Bibliography Archive], essential for the history of arts and crafts, and participated in *Monumenta Henricina*, with Father António Joaquim Dias Dinis and Idalino Ferreira da Costa Brochado. For the publisher Livraria Lello, he wrote several introductions to the works of some of the national classics in the collection *Tesouros da Literatura e da História*, and his contribution to the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] directed by Damião Peres is noteworthy.



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A renowned figure in 20th-century Portuguese university and cultural life, as a lecturer and speaker, he left several studies on printers, booksellers, musicians and painters linked to the University of Coimbra during the modern era, which show his analytical and critical skills. His role in the history of the University of Coimbra was remarkable with the publication of many studies, including the one he published in 1937 in collaboration with Mário Brandão, *A Universidade de Coimbra: esboço da sua história* [The University of Coimbra: an outline of its history]. His numerous works show his effort to publish sources, many of which were preceded by helpful introductions. In *Biblos*, Aníbal Pinto de Castro noted his admiration for the “eloquence of his words”, his “refined literary approach”, “generous availability” and “sure synthesis”, identifying the main areas of research: History of the Restoration, History of the Portuguese University, especially the University of Coimbra, Overseas History, especially Brazil, History of the city of Coimbra. As part of his historiographical work on the Restoration, in the context of the centenary commemorations of the Foundation and Restoration of Portugal, he essentially contributed with the publication of documents in an apparent erudite understanding of the historical labour that permeates his historiographical production.

An illustrious example of Portuguese culture, in 1948, he represented the University of Coimbra in the jubilee celebrations of the V Centenary of the University of Bordeaux and on the Executive Committee of the IV Centenary of Father Francisco Suárez, presenting a paper in Madrid at the opening of the Bibliographical Exhibition dedicated to him, entitled “Novos Escritos Inéditos do Padre Francisco Suárez” [New Unpublished Writings by Father Francisco Suárez]. In 1950, he took part in the 1st International Conference on Luso-Brazilian Studies, held in Washington; he represented Portugal at the Convegno Internazionale di Studi Colombiani in Genoa in 1951, at the Portuguese Commission of the Comité International de Sciences Historiques in 1953, and at the commemorations of the tricentenary of the Restoration of Pernambuco in 1954; he was a member of the National Committee for the 5th Centenary of the Death of Prince Henry, the Navigator in 1960 and for the 4th Centenary of the publication of *Os Lusíadas* in 1973.

He was a member of the following scientific institutions: a full member of the Instituto de Coimbra, where he was Director of the Humanities Class, Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses [Association of Portuguese Archaeologists], Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo [Historical and Geographical Institute of São Paulo], Accademia di Belle Arti e Lettere in Rome [Academy of Fine Arts and Letters in Rome], Academia Portuguesa da História [Portuguese Academy of History], and Academia das Ciências de Lisboa [Lisbon Academy of Sciences], where he was a corresponding member of the Humanities Class. He was admitted to the Academia Portuguesa da História on 18 June 1938, became academician of number on 19 March 1945, occupying chair no. 1, which had belonged to António de Vasconcelos, was raised to academician of merit on 21 November 1975 and was Chairman of the Academy between 1966 and 1972.

Politically active during the Estado Novo, he was appointed Chief of Staff to the Minister of Public Education in 1934, elected to the National Assembly in 1937, and in July 1940, he was appointed Director-General of Higher Education and Fine Arts, then Undersecretary of State for National Education in August of that year, a position he held until February 1945. He was Minister of National Education from 4 May 1961 to 4



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December 1962.

In recognition of his achievements, the town of Benavente honoured its illustrious son by naming an avenue after him. To commemorate the 1st centenary of his birth and the 20th anniversary of his death, the Benavente Town Council and the Academia Portuguesa da História organised a tribute in Benavente on 15 December 2000, by placing a plaque, a gift from the Academy, on Lopes de Almeida's grave in the town's cemetery and unveiling a memorial stone at the house where he was born, in Rua Dr. Manuel Velho Cabral Calheiros, followed by a solemn session in the Municipal Library and the opening of a bibliographical exhibition, at which the Mayor, the President of the Academia Portuguesa da História and his nephew Justino Mendes de Almeida spoke, the latter on behalf of the family. The text on the memorial stone, proposed to the town council and the nephews by the Chairman of the Academy, Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, reveals the reputation of the honoured man: "Dr Manuel Lopes de Almeida, who was a Professor at the University of Coimbra, a notable historian and a devoted man of Benavente, was born in this house on 16 August 1900". On 7 June 2000, the Academy commemorated the illustrious scholar, with Justino Mendes de Almeida delivering a speech entitled "Manuel Lopes de Almeida: Evocação do Mestre, Saudades do Homem".

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