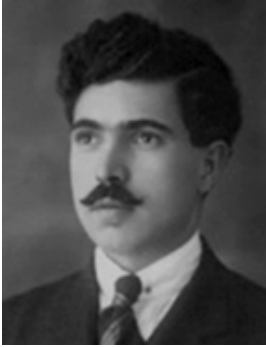


DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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LOURO, Manuel Francisco do Estanco (São Brás de Alportel, 1890 – Lisbon, 1953)

Professor, ethnographer, and linguist, Estanco Louro was born into a large and humble agricultural family in the foothills of the Algarve, at São Brás de Alportel, at the time a rural parish in the Faro area. In 1904 he concluded his primary studies with distinction. On account of his lively intelligence, and on the advice of his teacher, the family decided that he, alone of all their children, should continue his education at Faro Seminary (1905–10). However, in view of his manifest lack of any ecclesiastical vocation, he moved to the Liceu Nacional de Faro, where he completed his secondary education in the school year 1910–11.

In both Faro and São Brás de Alportel the young Estanco Louro engaged actively in the Republican ideals that were to mark indelibly his ethical and civic attitudes throughout his life. In 1912 he was admitted to the Faculty of Letters, in Lisbon, to the course in Romance Philology. Teaching in the Faculty at that time were José Leite de Vasconcelos and José Maria Rodrigues, whose classes he attended, as well as the philologist José Joaquim Nunes and the Arabist, David Lopes, who had published in the fields of linguistics, onomastics, toponymy and ethnography in Portugal. These professors influenced his decision to follow research in the linguistic history and ethnography of the Algarve. By the beginning of the century both disciplines were developing rapidly, creating wide debate and the formation of schools of thought. In that same year, at the start of his university education, he wrote an article, *Pronúnciação dos ditongos no sub-dialecto do sotavento montanhoso algarvio* [Pronunciation of diphthongs in the leeward mountainous Algarve] (1913), which was published by the newspaper *Ecos do Sul*, in São Brás do Alportel, following the methods then being applied to linguistic studies, particularly by Leite de Vasconcelos. At the same time he started collecting data for a study he intended to write on speech in Alportel. In the meantime he was admitted to the Faculty of Social and Legal Studies (1914). In addition to his two courses, he also attended lectures in a wide variety of subjects, such as Aesthetics and History of Art, Spanish and Italian Literature, Modern and Contemporary History, History of Medieval Philosophy, Geography of Portugal and the Colonies, thus displaying the wide variety of interests in the humanities that he always cultivated. He also started writing for *Seara Nova*. He broke off his studies and researches in 1917, when he was recruited to participate as militia officer in the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps which was sent to Flanders, where he braved the fateful battle at La Lys. But surviving the war, and needing to look for steady employment,



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Estanco Louro entered the Escola Normal Superior to train as a teacher. In August 1919 he was appointed as an associate teacher in the Liceu Pedro Nunes (Lisbon). For the State Examination he presented a dissertation called *Do ensino da língua francesa em Portugal, especialmente na instrução secundária* [On the teaching of the French language in Portugal, with special reference to secondary education], in which he defended the application of the “direct method” in teaching languages, which he located within the thinking of “positive humanism”.

Estanco Louro belonged to a generation of teachers who, in the first decades of the twentieth century, were trying to reshape teaching methods in Portugal, promoting a scientifically based pedagogy and a didactic approach that could apply it with success. He published various books on grammar, including a comparative study of the first Portuguese grammars from the sixteenth century, and also a comparative study of literature from the same period. The researches that he made for these publications on the historical evolution of the Portuguese language, dealing with different aspects of phonetics, syntax and the formation of vocabulary, along with his comparative studies of Latin cultures and languages, would be fundamental to the paradigm shift in his later work, by which he distanced himself from some of the canonical norms of the world of letters. Against the historical and evolutionary approach to linguistics, with its rigorous inventory of phonetics, he would counterpose an ethnic and geographic approach, which he considered more dynamic, along with an application of linguistic geography. To the ethnographic vision of collecting legends and other aspects of folklore, which still dominated ethnographic studies, he would apply an analysis of the norms of social and economic organization, conditioned by geography, natural environment, and local history.

In this same period of intense activity in research and publication, between 1919 and 1929, he also gained his academic degrees: a degree in law, in 1922 (he would briefly practise law in Beja, between 1922 and 1923), and a diploma in Canonian Studies, in 1927. The latter was distinguished by his dissertation and public lecture on the theme of *Os Lusíadas e o povo português: no vocabulário*, in which he presented a first lexicographic classification, and emphasized the importance of popular speech in this work by Camões. He shared and debated his researches and ideas with other intellectuals, in particular with Leite de Vasconcelos, since the passionate interest they shared on dialect and ethnography brought a closer relationship between the one-time teacher and pupil, and also with Dr José Maria Rodrigues, whom he respected as a professor, and with Fidelino de Figueiredo, amongst others.

Finally, in 1929, he saw the publication of the work he had set his heart on in his youth, and for which he had spent twelve years collecting and arranging his research data — *O livro do Alportel*. The initial aim of studying the local dialect had broadened into a study of its ethnography and local history, as a result of the historical, social and economic contextualization that he added to it. He submitted it for a Concurso de Monografias [Monograph Competition] and was awarded the prize for the best monograph on a region of Portugal. *O livro de Alportel* was reviewed by Prista Monteiro, who considered it “an exceptional text within



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the whole bibliography of the Algarve” (p. 259). He stressed particularly that in Estanco Louro’s work “the method of observation and analysis, in ethnography, shows a rigour in its precision and sincerity, where personal and scientific values coincide, simultaneously revealing ethnography as an instrument of field work and ethnography as something more than a simple investigation into a place” (p. 265). *O livro do Alportel* is composed of various thematic books collected in a single volume, elaborating in each book the geography, history, economy, demography, speech, knowledge and traditions of the foothills of the leeward Algarve. According to Prista Monteiro, “*O livro do Alportel* attempts to tackle, across the whole timeframe, all relevant local knowledge which can assist the political decision-making for the region’s future” (p. 267). Also in 1929, he applied for a doctoral degree on the strength of *O livro do Alportel*. However, after he had presented his book and defended it before the jury, his examination was suspended, and he was left in an academic “limbo”, making it impossible for him to apply for the Chair of Camonian Studies.

From that time on he abandoned the academic world and dedicated the next twenty years to his life’s work on the ethnography and linguistics of the Algarve, with the following titles: *Subsídios para o estudo da fala popular algarvia*; *Toponímia algarvia*; *Linguística I: geografia linguística e dialectologia comparada*; *Linguística II: os factos linguísticos*; and *Etnografia Algarvia*. In the prefaces to *O livro de Alportel* and *Os Lusíadas e o povo português: no vocabulário* were to be found his motives for a “new look” at the existing classification of dialects, and for a differentiation between regionalisms and archaisms, which he explains as follows: “When we started to read *Os Lusíadas*, around 1910, every now and then, here and there, we found a word written just as it was pronounced by the rough and impoverished people of the volcanic mountains of the leeward Algarve, just as it was pronounced in my childhood. The fact impressed me greatly” (p. 3). In *O livro de Alportel* he adds: “There lives there the greater part of the dead language of the sixteenth and pre-sixteenth centuries. We do not wish to advocate here the literary adoption of a dialectical speech. We merely wish to note that we should do away at once with the general designation of ‘archaisms’ for the many words and ways of speaking which still have, for many people, a vigorous life” (p. 211).

In his manuscript, *Subsídios para o estudo da fala popular algarvia* (1936), he states that the study of dialect in Portugal had started off badly and was very backward. The classification of dialects devised by Leite de Vasconcelos had served as a point of reference, since the publication of his *Esquisse d’une dialectologie portugaise*, in 1901, and was based on the existence of a certain number of different phenomena, phonetic, morphological and lexical. Estanco Louro argued that this principle of classification was the same as that of Jeronymo Contador de Argote, and went back to 1725 and his *Regras da língua portuguesa*. He posed the question: “I ask now, if Argote, and Dr Leite de Vasconcelos himself had known, when they wrote their books, what is now published in books, journals, newspapers etc. about the speech of the Algarve, for example, would they have adopted the same classification?” (fl. 1).



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However, Estanco Louro did not aim to establish a new classification of dialects, but to contribute, by way of his findings and reflections, to a more objective knowledge of dialect, and for a future organization of a linguistic atlas. He defended his thesis basing himself of the *Atlas Gilliéron*, and by defending the presupposition that the phenomenon of speech cannot be limited to the correspondence between words and their roots, with exceptions apparent by analogy. One had to take into account “the broad influence in linguistic matters exercised by the spirit and the environment, or social life”, without though falling “into dilettantism, descending at times into ingenuous and primitive oddities, as to some extent has happened in philology, onomatology, ethnography, etc.” (fl. 3). Imbued by his positivist training, Estanco Louro longed, by the correct application of linguistic geography, “to achieve the domination of linguistic phenomenon by determining all the laws which govern them [...] by following the scientific process of induction. [...] Without the most intimate and most perfect possible knowledge of our popular speech, in the fields of phonetics, syntax, semantics, lexis, etc., any dialectical classification of dialects, with their sub-dialects and variations, is vain, arbitrary and therefore hypothetical or provisional” (idem).

Estanco Louro considered toponymy a major element of linguistic geography. He claimed that his work researching the toponymy of the Algarve had revealed that “the pre-Roman linguistic heritage is much larger than previously thought, and contrary to what was previously thought, that it is much less than the heritage by blood and spirit that the Arabs have left to us in place names” (p. 11). And he concluded that “The two facts are however sufficient to establish the principle that toponymic language, that is, the language of the book of the earth, is always the last to die. And furthermore, it is the most perennial of the vestiges of a people” (p. 14). According to the introduction to the published version of *Toponímia algarvia*, he collected over the space of eight years around 8000 place names, which he systematized in thirteen thematic sections, and added a toponymic index that he believed would become a valuable contribution to the rich lexical treasury of the Portuguese language, since “the apparatus of vocabulary formation presents here, alongside the abundance of suffixation, curious semantic modalities unknown to grammarians” (p. 11).

In his *Etnografia algarvia*, dated 1949, he calls attention to the need to regard this work as a complement and continuation of *O livro de Alportel* and of the works he says he has ready to go to press, *Toponímia algarvia* and *Geografia linguística*. The manuscript was transcribed by the Biblioteca Municipal de São Brás de Alportel, and its 377 pages reveal an extremely detailed study of the organization of economic and social life, based on statistical data and contextualized by an introduction to the physical geography of the Algarve region. The fact that, unlike *O livro de Alportel*, the book does not offer a chapter on cultural traditions and oral literature leads some ethnographers to underestimate its contribution in the ethnographic field.

The systematic and detailed research and collection of place names and expressions in popular Algarve speech, of the resources and modes of organization of the population's economic and social life, along with discussion of the methods he applied and the chosen criteria, became inaccessible to the following



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generation. Critical and innovative towards his teacher and friend, Leite de Vasconcelos, it would however be Paiva Boléo who would publish a study of dialects based on the method of linguistic geography that he had fought for. The same would happen with his ethnographic studies. Heir to the knowledge gathered by Estácio Veiga and Atháide de Oliveira, the innovative and daring method he applied to *O livro do Alportel* and the comparative information he records in *Etnografia algarvia* would not be mentioned or discussed by the generation of Manuel Viegas Guerreiro or Aliete Galhoz, to mention only researchers from the Algarve.

In the face of the impossibility of himself publishing such massive volumes, and with the books published between 1919 and 1929 being out of print, the situation faced by Estanco Louro was well summed up by Prista Monteiro in these words: “his career [was] blocked, his book forgotten...” (p. 269). But the work of Estanco Louro is fundamental and indispensable for studies of the Algarve in the fields of history, ethnography, geography, archaeology, sociology and linguistics. *O livro de Alportel* is a repertory of sources and bibliographical references for the history of the Algarve. But despite the individual value of each one of his works, it is the whole that constitutes a source, precious and unexplored, for a regional history. The long researches were conducted at his own expense, tramping the Algarve during the school holidays, gathering depositions, completing enquiries, annotating observations and reports. To separate his work of a linguistic character from his ethnographic work is to distort the reality that he attempted to capture, and to fragment the hermeneutic value of those sources for the research in progress.

O espólio literário do Dr. Estanco Louro, which the family keeps together, is vast, and as well as the studies already mentioned takes in various scattered studies of Portuguese literature and culture. The values that guided his investigations and his life are expressed very clearly in his work, right from the writings of his youth. They show a spirit of great intellectual independence, along with an extraordinary capacity for long working hours, in the field and in the office, and a firm belief in the progress of the country through rigorous scientific work. “I never asked anyone to preface any book of mine. Everything I write for the public should shrink from a tutelary mentality. No writer should be obliged to anyone, be obedient to anyone”, he declared, in 1927, in his dissertation submitted for the diploma in Camonian Studies.

Today the work of Estanco Louro remains unknown in academic circles, because it remains either unpublished or out of print. The contribution that he could provide to scientific discussion will only become clear with the publication and study of his work as a whole. However, the rich repository that he has left us as his legacy is a valuable documentary and historical heritage for the Algarve.

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APOIOS:

