

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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MACEDO, Joaquim José da Costa de (Lisbon, 1777 – Golegã, 1867)

Joaquim José da Costa de Macedo was the son of Agostinho José da Costa de Macedo (1745-1822), a professor régio (royally appointed professor) of Rational and Moral Philosophy from at least 1782. Agostinho was also a full member (1789) and later veteran member (1814) of the *Academia das Ciências* [Academy of Sciences], and served as assistant librarian at the *Biblioteca Pública de Lisboa* [Lisbon Public Library], where he was appointed to assist António Ribeiro dos Santos, who led the institution until 1816.

Like his father, Joaquim José da Costa de Macedo served the Portuguese Crown and State for over sixty years (1794-1857). He began his career in the Accountant-General's Office of the Provinces, appointed on 27 November 1794 at the age of 17, and retired from public service as the Chief Guard of the Torre do Tombo on 8 August 1857, at the age of 80. He held the position of Counsellor of State, served as Vice-President of the *Junta dos Juros* [Debt Management Office], and was a commander of several orders. Additionally, he was a member of over forty international academies and intellectual societies. Despite lacking formal education, he was a full member of the Academy for more than forty years (1814-1856) and served as its perpetual secretary (1834-1856), stepping down from the role after a disagreement with Alexandre Herculano.

Except for seven years in Paris (1800-1807), where he served as assistant secretary to the Portuguese legation, Macedo spent his entire life in Portugal. In 1805, he wrote an article in French that was published across three issues of the Parisian magazine *Revue Philosophique, Littéraire et Politique*. Entitled "Sur les éléments de l'Histoire du Portugal par Mr. Seyries [Serieys]", which denounced the errors and plagiarisms accumulated by Antoine Serieys regarding Portuguese history (J.M. Quérard, *La France Littéraire*, vol. IX, 1838, pp. 70-71). Unfortunately, no copies of this booklet have been found to date.

As a full member of the Literature class from 1814 onwards (serving as treasurer, dean, and secretary), Macedo interacted with some of the leading figures in historical studies in Portugal at the time, including Ribeiro dos Santos, Caetano do Amaral, João Pedro Ribeiro, Ferreira Gordo, José Liberato Freire de Carvalho, and Alexandre Herculano. He was part of academic and literary commissions that played a crucial role in the fate of Portuguese documentary research, particularly concerning traditional courts. He significantly contributed to the complex process of reorganising the collections of the dissolved convents after Évora-Monte in 1834. Notably, he was involved in the transfer and reception of manuscripts incorporated into the "red series" of the Academy itself and the collection known as the Manuscripts of the Torre do Tombo Library.



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A significant portion of this author's life was closely tied to the *Junta dos Juros dos Reais Empréstimos* [Debt Management Office for New Loans], which was established in 1796 during Portugal's involvement in the War of the Pyrenees. Macedo was likely one of the key figures who built a career within the public boards and commissions established during the various wartime conflicts that Portugal experienced in the first third of the 19th century. His success was not only attributed to the technical precision and accuracy of the records, calculations, and collections he managed but also to his ability to organise his ideas into a coherent written and spoken discourse on a range of political and cultural topics, including public finances, traditional and Vintist courts, geography, and Arab navigation.

After joining the treasury of the *Junta dos Juros* in 1800, Macedo advanced to the position of chief officer of a second department under the Royal Treasury — specifically, the tax section of the *Tesouraria Geral das Tropas* (General Treasury of the Troops) — before the age of forty. He achieved this role in 1816, just two years after the end of the Peninsular War. Twelve years later, during the final stages of the first Chartist experiment, he served as vice-president, as evidenced by a survey conducted on 10 March 1828 with the members of the *Junta dos Juros* (*Diário das Cortes*, 1828, pp. 799-800). Following the restoration of liberalism, Macedo returned in 1833 as vice-president of the *Junta*, now renamed the *Junta dos Juros dos Novos Empréstimos* [Debt Management Office for New Loans]. His technical expertise, combined with his love for literature and the *belles-lettres*, erudition, and historical knowledge, enabled him to join the *Academia das Ciências* [Academy of Sciences], where he became a full member of the Literature class in 1814. This was somewhat surprising, considering that no written works from that period have survived to justify his admission.

It is possible that Macedo was recruited to assist the more experienced members in gathering new documents dispersed throughout the kingdom. So much so that in the fourth volume of the *Colecção de Inéditos Portugueses* [Collection of Portuguese Unpublished Works] (1816), Costa de Macedo, along with Francisco Nunes Franklin, a student of palaeography and future *oficial-mor* [chief officer] of the Torre do Tombo—assisted the permanent academic commission on the History of Portugal. This commission included veteran scholars such as Caetano do Amaral, João Pedro Ribeiro, Francisco Ribeiro dos Guimarães, and Aragão Morato. The purpose of this commission was to "publish the previously unpublished documents that are scattered throughout the Kingdom's main registry offices," thereby continuing the Academy's efforts that began even before 1790 (*Colecção de Livros Inéditos...*, t. IV, 1816, pp. VII e XXXVI). Costa de Macedo's cultural profile and professional career exemplify the role of history in the institutional culture of the State, particularly in its political and legal applications. His work underscores how history was utilised in fields such as diplomacy and within institutions like the Academy of Sciences and the Royal Treasury.

Years later, in 1819, Macedo published a text on the geography and history of the Portuguese discoveries, which he had originally presented at the Academy on 24 June 1816. This period coincided with the final years of the pioneering António Ribeiro dos Santos and occurred shortly before the death of Mendo Trigo, the first *director* of the *Colecção de Notícias para a História e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas* [Collection of News for the History and Geography of the Overseas Nations] (initial volumes, hb1812 and



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1821). This was a study entitled: *Memória sobre as verdadeiras épocas em que principiaram as nossas navegações* [Memoir on the True Eras When Our Navigations Began], which should be the first of many *Memórias para a história das navegações e descobrimentos portugueses* [Memoirs for the History of Portuguese Navigations and Discoveries]. In this work, Macedo sought to downplay the significance of the early Henrican discoveries along the African coast by highlighting scattered medieval documents that suggested a Portuguese expedition had already discovered the Canary Islands in 1336. In this way, he would anticipate the *true period* of the beginning of the Portuguese discoveries (as he highlighted in the title). To a certain extent, Macedo sought to innovate and create a distinctive position for himself in national studies on the geography and history of the discoveries, in contrast to the well-established figures of Ribeiro dos Santos and Mendes Trigoso, that in *Memórias de Literatura* [Memoirs of Literature] (1806) and *História e Memórias* [History and Memoirs]... (1817) had revitalised the theses of the primacy of Portuguese discoveries over other European nations. In one of these texts, António Ribeiro dos Santos placed special emphasis on the figure and achievements of Prince Henry the Navigator (*Memórias de Literatura...*, tome VIII, part I, 1812, pp. 153-160). Garção Stockler did the same in a work published in Paris in 1819, the *Ensaio histórico sobre a origem e progressos das matemáticas em Portugal* [Historical Essay on the Origin and Progress of Mathematics in Portugal] (pp. 14-17 and 22). It is possible that Macedo intended to specialise in medieval and Renaissance geography, as suggested by his promise of new *Memórias para a história e navegações dos descobrimentos portugueses*. However, this did not materialise in the short term, possibly due to personal reasons, criticism of his theses, and perhaps the political and social changes that occurred in August 1820, which led him to redirect his focus of study and reflection.

It is true that the controversial theses presented by Macedo in 1819 were criticised by other academics, including Acúrsio das Neves in 1830 and Joaquim José Lopes de Lima in 1844. In his *Considerações políticas e económicas sobre os descobrimentos...* [Political and economic considerations on the discoveries...], Acúrsio praises Macedo as "one of our erudite scholars" regarding the alleged voyages to the Canary Islands during the reign of King Afonso IV, citing his memoir. He makes several comments on this subject but ultimately disagrees with Macedo's thesis that "it will be necessary to hand over the palm (...) that supported those of Prince Henry the Navigator" (pp. 22 and 26). This is supported by Lopes de Lima in *Estatística das possessões...* [Possession Statistics], 1844, p. IX, no. 1, where he highlights the significance of the geographical location of the Canary Islands for ancient peoples, Christians, and Muslims during the Middle Ages, contrasting this with the repeated crossings of Cape Bojador during the time of Prince Henry the Navigator. In 1835, Macedo revisited the topic of the discoveries, this time concentrating on the European arrival on the coast of Guinea.

Macedo's identification with the new order that emerged from the Vintist movement (1820-1823) is clearly evident. As part of the Academic Commission, "appointed to give an opinion to the Preparatory Board of the Corts on the best method for convening them" (with sessions on 21/10/1820 and 29/3/1821), Macedo submitted a copy of his *Projecto de regimento das Cortes Portuguesas* (Draft Rules of Procedure for the Portuguese Courts) (*História e Memórias...*, tome VIII, 1820). In the brief introduction to this text, likely written

during the famous Martinhada in November, Macedo frequently references Jeremy Bentham and the Spanish Constitution of 1812. The key issue at hand was which constitutional text Portugal should adopt and the nature of the regime to be established in the metropolis.

In 1821, Macedo was also appointed to the academic commission that met at the Torre do Tombo to compile documentation on the traditional courts, working alongside figures such as *abbot* Correia da Serra; the lecturers and judges João Pedro Ribeiro and Francisco R. dos Guimarães; França Galvão, future abbot of Lustosa; Monsignor of the Patriarch Ferreira Gordo, and the 2nd Viscount of Santarém. This consultation by the Sovereign Congress aimed to identify which documentary elements could be utilised to construct a historical narrative that would legitimise Vintist parliamentary traditionalism. This was part of a politico-legal effort to establish a form of constitutionalism grounded in traditional elements.

Despite being an active figure during the first half of King Miguel's reign, Macedo was imprisoned during the latter years of that period, specifically from 1831 to 1833. It is therefore fitting that he stated in a speech from 1838 that in 1831, "the Academy, orphaned of some of its members, imprisoned in dungeons, banished, and dispersed, was slowly moving towards gradual starvation and eventual dissolution." («Discurso recitado na sessão pública de 15 de Maio de 1838» [Speech presented at the public session of 15 May 1838], in *História e Memórias...*, t. XII, 1839, p. XI). Costa de Macedo only became truly prominent in the affairs of the Academy in 1834 when he was appointed its perpetual secretary. From 1819 to 1834, no published texts by Macedo are known to exist. However, during the 1830s to 1850s, around 15 works were published, which can be described as follows:

1) The *Aditamentos à primeira parte da Memória, sobre as verdadeiras épocas em que principiaram as nossas navegações e descobrimentos no oceano Atlântico* [Additions to the first part of the Memoir, on the true period when our navigations and discoveries in the Atlantic Ocean began], presented at the academic session of 8 April 1835 (following the writings from 1819); the *Memória em que se pretende provar, que os árabes não conheceram as Canárias antes dos portugueses* [A memoir that aims to prove that the Arabs did not discover the Canary islands before the Portuguese], presented at the academic sessions of 13 July 1842 and after that date; and the work entitled "Sobre o estado da navegação dos árabes nos tempos próximos ao Islamismo, e sobre a invasão dos mesmos árabes na Espanha" [On the state of navigation of the Arabs in the days close to Islam, and on the invasion of those Arabs in Spain].

2) The circumstantial speeches delivered from 1834 to 1854 are valuable for documenting the internationalisation of the Academy, the initial efforts to attract members from foreign academic communities, the movement to exchange collective bibliographies of foreign societies and authors for national volumes, and the shifts in historiographical perspectives.

3) Other texts, of erudite nature, such as the one he dedicated to murrine vases (*História e Memórias...*, tome XII, 2nd part, 1839, pp. 1-151); to Greek language and literature in Portugal during the reign of King Duarte, 1853 (*Memórias da Academia das Ciências...*, new series, 1854, tome I, 1st part, pp. 1-168); as well as the answer to the questions on the Academy's library and communications regarding "the religious doctrines of Persia" (*Actas da Academia Real das Ciências*, tome I, 1849, pp. 124-138, 239-249 and 300-

321).

In 1835, Macedo revisited the topic he had addressed in 1819 in his *Aditamentos à primeira parte da Memória...* [Additions to the First Part of the Memoir], focusing once again on the so-called beginning of the Portuguese discoveries in medieval times. To this end, he uses the manuscript of Boccaccio published in 1827 by Sebastiani Ciampi in Florence, which he believes confirms, *a posteriori*, what he himself had surmised sixteen years earlier (*História e Memórias...*, tome XI, 2nd part, pp. 178-179 and no. 1). As Sérgio Campos Matos noted, Costa de Macedo historically struggled to substantiate the claim of Portuguese primacy in reaching the Canary Islands.

Macedo thus played a secondary role in one of the most significant Luso-French scientific and historiographical controversies of the 1830s and 1840s: the debate over which European nations were the first to achieve nautical feats, advance the science of seamanship, and complete the cartographic documentation of the African coast, including the adjacent archipelagos. Other key figures in this debate included the Viscount of Santarém, Marie-Armand-Pascal d'Avezac, Alexander von Humboldt, and Edme-François Jomard. It was at this precise moment in history, at the crossroads of science, myth, and nationalism, that related subject areas such as geography, cartography, and the history of discoveries experienced new developments—though not all of them were positive. In fact, even today, the true value of the theses proposed during this time is still debated, particularly those concerning the *discovery* of the Canary Islands and Guinea. Macedo's speech, which complements those of Cardinal Saraiva and the Viscount of Santarém, challenges a widely held image of Portugal that gained traction in France after 1830. This perception was particularly influenced by the translated works of José Liberato and figures such as Talleyrand, Hyde de Neuville, and Roussin, who depicted Portugal, both historically and in contemporary times, as a tyrannical, barbaric, and backward nation. Macedo sought to refute this negative portrayal.

In a way, Macedo intertwines several chorographic traditions that blend history and geography, influenced both by the former *Academia Real da História* [Royal Academy of History] and by the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres, as well as the Geographical Society of Paris. Macedo's role within the Academy of Sciences was to sustain the legacy of this ancient tradition of Portuguese chorographic studies (maintaining connections with similar work being produced in France). This tradition would later be revived in Brazil by Varnhagen, within the framework of the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* [Brazilian Historic and Geographical Institute].

In 1842, when he presented his text, Macedo had effectively transformed into an Arabist, even going so far as to transcribe Arabic texts. He had little to no direct involvement in the specific issue of the Henrican discoveries, a topic that was revived with the publication in Paris of Zurara's *Crónica do descobrimento e conquista da Guiné* [The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea], featuring an introduction and notes by the Viscount of Santarém (1841).

One must not overlook Macedo's true intellectual nature: that of a dilettante, a bibliophile, and a "literary scholar," as Acúrsio described him, while also being regarded as a specialist in medieval geography by Adrien Balbi. In his works on Murrine ceramics and the spread of the Greek language in Portugal, Macedo



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followed in the footsteps of other highly knowledgeable individuals with distinguished careers at the Academy of Sciences, such as Ribeiro dos Santos, Garção Stockler, and Francisco Alexandre Lobo. He delved into classical and Arabic sources, making significant contributions to the fields of geography, archaeology, and art history. Unfortunately, despite a long life spanning nearly ninety years, during which Macedo immersed himself in the world of books and academic circles, very little remains that is productive, concrete, or systematic. His texts on the geography of the discoveries are merely tentative efforts, lacking the pioneering contributions of Ribeiro dos Santos and Mendo Trigoso (who passed away at the age of 48). They fall significantly short of the systematic and comprehensive works produced by figures such as Cardinal Saraiva, the Viscount of Santarém, Navarrete, and Walckenaer. This eclecticism of topics is characteristic of the nineteenth century, when an encyclopaedic and non-disciplinary notion of culture prevailed. In Macedo's case, however, this broad approach often led to historical subjects being infused with an erudition that, at times, proved counterproductive.

Due to his longevity, Joaquim José da Costa de Macedo witnessed many key events spanning the reigns of Queen Maria I to King Luís I; however, he left behind no correspondence or published memoirs. As an author and perpetual secretary of the *Academia das Ciências*, Macedo significantly influenced the cultural and historiographical movement within the institution during the reforms of its internal statutes in 1834, 1840, and 1852. He collaborated with several generations of Portuguese historians, including Caetano do Amaral, Herculano, João Pedro Ribeiro, and the Viscount of Santarém. He played an important, albeit secondary, role in the historiography of the Portuguese discoveries and in maintaining a particular scholarly tradition within the organisation. It could even be argued that the Academy owed its continued existence to him from 1834 onwards, as an institution that still thrives today, a notion reflected in his 1838 observations regarding the decline and stagnation of its activities since 1831. He internationalised and elevated the prestige of the institution by associating it with notable figures such as the Duke of Bragança, Queen Maria II, King Ferdinand II, and King Pedro V, who served as its protectors. He sought to ease the ideological divisions in Portuguese society between 1807 and 1851 by bringing together individuals from various political factions within the Academy. In his efforts to pacify ideological differences and reform the Academy in line with the vision of a new generation, he encountered conflicts with the Viscount of Santarém, José Liberato, and Herculano. Regarding Herculano, the conflict between him and Macedo, which would come to define Portuguese historiography in the second half of the 19th century, has yet to be fully examined. By the age of 47, the author of *História de Portugal* no longer engaged with the same dynamism in the affairs and projects of the Academy. As for Macedo, he spent his final days in relative obscurity and silence, perhaps undeservedly, living in a form of self-imposed exile in Golegã. He is, therefore, a historical figure deserving of his own monographic study, which could potentially offer significant insights into Portuguese intellectual and academic life during the first two-thirds of the 19th century.

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