

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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MATTOSO, José João da Conceição Gonçalves (Leiria, 1933)

The son of the historian António Gonçalves Mattoso, he pursued his secondary education at the Rodrigues Lobo Secondary School in Leiria and the Gil Vicente Secondary School in Lisbon. He subsequently undertook studies in Philosophy and Theology at the Benedictine monastery of Singeverga (1951–1957), which he entered at the age of 17. He then obtained a degree in Historical Sciences from the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts at the Catholic University of Leuven (1957–1960), graduating with the thesis *L'Abbaye de Pendorada des origines à 1160*, which earned the highest distinction. At the same institution, he later completed his doctorate in 1966 with a dissertation entitled *Le monachisme ibérique et Cluny. Les monastères du diocèse de Porto de l'an mille à 1200*, supervised by Léopold Genicot and first published in Leuven in 1968. He taught Church History at the Singeverga Monastery (1960–1967), at the Higher Institute of Ecclesiastical Studies in Porto (1968–1969), at the Higher Institute of Ecclesiastical Studies in Lisbon (1969–1970), and at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University, also in Lisbon in the same academic year. In 1971, he joined the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon as an Assistant Professor, where he remained until 1978, teaching various courses including History of the Ancient Near East, Historical Methodology, and several subjects and seminars in Medieval History. In 1978, he transferred to the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the Nova University of Lisbon, where he taught Methodology and Theory of History as well as a range of medieval-themed subjects and seminars. He achieved habilitation and full professorship at this institution in 1979. He also lectured on Institutional and Political Medieval History at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra (1980–1981) and coordinated a course on History of Land Use and Spatial Planning in the Civil Engineering programme at the *Instituto Superior Técnico* (1993–1995). Following the independence of East Timor, he resided there between 1999 and 2006, teaching various subjects at the Major Seminary in Dili and courses in Portuguese Literature at the local university. Internationally, he delivered lectures or participated in conferences at universities in Paris (Sorbonne), Bordeaux, Poitiers, Santander, Santiago de Compostela, Seville, Oviedo, and Rome, particularly throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to holding numerous scientific and administrative responsibilities within the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences and the Nova University of Lisbon, including serving as Vice-Rector (1991–1995), he also chaired the Committee for the Reform and Restructuring of the Torre do Tombo National Archive (1986–1988), presided over the



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Portuguese Archives Institute (1988–1990), directed the Institute of National Archives/Torre do Tombo (1996–1998), and served as Vice-President of the Higher Archives Council (1999). He was a full member of the Portuguese Academy of History and the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. Among his many scientific and cultural accolades are the Augusto Botelho da Costa Veiga Prize from the Portuguese Academy of History (1982), the Alfredo Pimenta Prize (1985), the Pen Club Essay Prize (1986), the Pessoa Prize (1987), the Prix Böhus-Szögyény from the *Confédération Internationale de Généalogie et d'Héraldique* (1991), and the Latin Union Prize (2007).

As a historian and man of culture, José Mattoso produced an extensive body of work published both in Portugal and abroad, comprising over five hundred titles, including books, pamphlets, articles, conference papers, and contributions to collective works. His *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] (1993), initially published by Círculo de Leitores in eight volumes and later as an "academic edition" by Editorial Estampa, includes substantial sections authored by Mattoso in the first and second volumes. This monumental work remains a pivotal reference in Portuguese historiography at the close of the 20th century. Indeed, the new vision of Portuguese history proposed by José Mattoso, particularly regarding the medieval period, combines rigorous methodology—solidly rooted in historical sources and the latest analytical techniques—with a critical perspective on the factors and processes that shaped the formation and autonomy of the Portuguese kingdom. Beyond social, political and cultural history in its broadest sense, Mattoso's work delves into the gradual construction of national identity. In particular, in his books *Ricos-Homens, Infanções e Cavaleiros* [Rich Men, Infançons, and Knights] (1st ed., Guimarães Editores, 1982) and *Identificação de um País* [Identification of a Country] (1st ed., Editorial Estampa, 1985), he examines the factors distinguishing Portugal within the context of the medieval Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the forces that enabled the "creation" of a country marked by strong regional, historical, and cultural contrasts—features still evident today, even if sometimes obscured. In the preface to the 2001 edition, included in his *Obras Completas* [Complete Works], Mattoso summarised the "fundamental theories" underpinning his interpretation of the origins of the Portuguese kingdom. These included "the cultural and institutional diversity of Portuguese territory," "the role of feudalism in shaping the North and municipalism in structuring the Centre and South," and "the formation of a political entity marked initially by tensions between the monarchy and local feudal powers, which ultimately culminated in the triumph of one of Christendom's most centralised monarchies."

The innovation and originality of José Mattoso's work largely stem from his interdisciplinary approach and his ability to incorporate insights from other fields, such as Human Geography, Anthropology, Linguistics, and Sociology. The influences of a geographer such as Orlando Ribeiro, anthropologists such as Jorge Dias, Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, Fernando Galhano, and Benjamim Pereira, a linguist like Luís Filipe Lindley Cintra, and a literary historian such as António José Saraiva, among other scholars from these and other scientific fields, are evident and acknowledged. Their contributions, duly connected and contextualised, served as the foundation for Mattoso's original theories. In strictly historiographical terms, the influence of the French



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Annales "school" is evident, both in its emphasis on interdisciplinarity and in its pursuit of a global perspective—a "total history" that begins with a clearly formulated problem and progresses through the ability to generate answers solidly grounded in documentation and its critical interpretation. At this level, the most notable influences were those of the Belgian medievalist Léopold Genicot (who supervised Mattoso's doctoral thesis at the Catholic University of Leuven) and the French historian Georges Duby. This direct influence is visible in Mattoso's adopted perspective of social history and, particularly, in his studies on the history of the nobility. Duby's theories regarding the transformation in the kinship system of the nobility in northern France between the 10th century and the mid-11th century directly influenced José Mattoso. According to Duby, there was a shift from a "cognatic family," characterised by an essentially horizontal structure without a fundamental hierarchical distinction between its members, including collateral relatives, to an "agnatic family," characterised by a vertical, lineage-based structure. In this system, male firstborns held supremacy over younger sons and women, leading to a succession regime that privileged the head of the lineage and excluded younger sons and female family members from inheritance. Applying this hypothesis to the case of Portugal, Mattoso argued that the widespread transition from the cognatic system to the agnatic system occurred in the second half of the 12th century, thus exhibiting a degree of chronological lag compared to the French phenomenon, but with similar implications to those observed by Duby. Additionally, the methodologies adopted, incorporating the most advanced developments from abroad and even experimenting with original processes in Portugal (for example, through prosopography), would lend José Mattoso's studies a pioneering character in the fields of Social History, Religious History, and the History of Medieval Culture and Mentalities. This feature is all the more significant given that many of the fields he explored were entirely unprecedented in Portugal. This is particularly evident in his studies of the history of mentalities, where he reveals the influence of Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, especially in his research inspired by Anthropology, focusing on death and the dead, representations of power, and the sacrament of confession. While Portugal had a strong tradition of studies on daily life (Oliveira Marques, Iria Gonçalves, among others), the area of medieval mentalities had for a long time remained almost completely neglected. Similarly, before Mattoso's decisive contributions, studies on the origins and antecedents of Portugal generally failed to distinguish ideological construction from reality. In this regard, much of what the author established has been so thoroughly assimilated that it is now considered not only consensual but also self-evident, even though it was entirely absent from earlier Portuguese historiography. For instance, this includes the role of the *infanções*, the middle layer of the nobility, who in the Portucalense region assumed increased military, administrative, judicial, and political importance following the disappearance of the Counts of Portucale in 1071. This strengthened tendencies towards autonomy and supported Prince Afonso Henriques in his struggle for independence from Galicia and the Kingdom of León. Another example is the decisive political consequences of transferring the seat of Portucalense power from Guimarães to Coimbra in 1131.

José Mattoso's evocative interpretations do not stem from a merely essayistic approach to Portuguese history. Behind his syntheses, which have always been well-received by the general public, lies meticulous



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and patient work of refined erudition, exemplified, for instance, by the critical edition of historical sources as rich and significant as the Portuguese medieval lineage books (*Nova Série dos Portugaliae Monumenta Histórica*, Lisbon Academy of Sciences, 1980; two volumes, the second of which consists of two parts, with the first volume produced in collaboration with Professor Joseph Piel). Mattoso also devoted considerable attention to the discipline of history, its practice, and its narrative form, as demonstrated in a collection of texts, most of which are compiled in the anthology *A Escrita da História* [The Writing of History] (1st ed., Editorial Estampa, 1988). In this field, José Mattoso consistently rejected adherence to any single school of thought, preferring instead to “find in antagonistic interpretative systems, or in those considered irreconcilable by theorists, reflections that are equally valid and not as mutually exclusive as they claim” (Preface to the book *A Escrita da História* [The Writing of History], 2002 edition, p. 7). His admitted “personal aversion to theoretical questions and abstract notions” (*A Escrita da História*, p. 11) did not prevent him from seeking to systematise his conclusions or diminish the scientific rigour required of the discipline. Hence, his explicit rejection of alignment with postmodern conceptions, characterised by a tendency towards the fragmentation of knowledge, indifference to historical fact, and “their voluntary arbitrariness” (*ibidem*, p. 22). Mattoso’s efforts to reflect on history, its issues, and its outcomes took on more concrete forms in his various assessments of medieval historiographical production in Portugal. On numerous occasions, he published reviews highlighting the progress made, unresolved themes, and prospects for research and synthesis concerning Portuguese medieval history, while also revisiting his own positions on the structure of the noble family in Portugal in light of subsequent studies and the critiques of some of his disciples. The most recent expression of this reflective and evaluative approach is the collective volume *The Historiography of Medieval Portugal (c. 1950–2010)*, directed by Mattoso, in which he provides, in the introduction, a comprehensive overview of medieval studies related to Portugal from the mid-20th century to the first decade of the 21st century.

The quantity, quality, rigour, and originality of José Mattoso’s scientific work are thus evidenced by the profound and enduring contribution he has made, since the 1960s, to the renewal of Portuguese historiography and to the understanding of the roots, construction, and identity of a country that is, above all, a product of its history.

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