

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>



PEREIRA, Francisco Maria Esteves (Miranda do Douro, 1854 – Lisbon, 1924)

Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira was born in Miranda do Douro on 9 August 1854. His exceptional intellect became evident during his student years. He completed his Preparatory Studies at the Polytechnic School, later enrolling at the *Escola do Exército* [Army School], where he completed a degree in engineering. At the former, he received awards in four subjects, and at the latter, he was also distinguished during all three years of the programme. He pursued a military career in the Engineering branch, achieving the rank of colonel. His professional activities as an army officer were extensive, and he oversaw numerous projects in his field of expertise.

Esteves Pereira also distinguished himself in the field of history, a discipline he pursued during his leisure time, showing a particular interest in Orientalism, a subject that began to captivate him in 1888 when he was 34 years of age. He was proficient in numerous languages, both classical and modern, but his preference naturally leaned toward Oriental languages. He studied Sanskrit with Monsignor Dalgado, a professor at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon, and frequently corresponded with his peers abroad in Latin or Greek. Among modern languages, he was fluent in French, English, and German and had an understanding of Scandinavian and Russian languages. Among Oriental languages, he was well-versed in Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, and Cyrillic. However, the language in which he truly specialised was Ge'ez, or Ethiopic, which he likely taught himself, as there is no record of him having a teacher. According to a great-nephew of Esteves Pereira, his interest in this last language originated in a tavern near the *Escola Prática de Engenharia* [Practical School of Engineering] in Tancos, where there were dishes inscribed with Ge'ez characters.

He delivered the eulogy for Jaime Moniz, whom he succeeded as a member of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, in the History Class. There, he presented various papers, many of which formed the basis of his published works. Within the Academy, he also oversaw the publication of several works of dramatic literature, as well as historical sources, such as the *Livro de Montaria* [Book of Hunting] by King João I (1918) and the *Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta* [Chronicle of the Capture of Ceuta] by Zurara, the latter published on the fourth centenary of the conquest of that city in North Africa. As a testament to his respect for the Academy, he donated his bibliographic collection to the institution.

However, it was in the field of Oriental literature, especially Ethiopian studies, that he stood out most



DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

prominently. He translated and published biographical texts about several Ethiopian monarchs, such as the *História de Minás* [History of Minas], *Crónica de Susenyos* [Chronicle of Susenyos], and the *Canção de Galavdevos* [Song of Galavdevos]. He also translated and published various Ethiopian religious texts, including *Duas Homílias sobre S. Tomé, Atribuídas a S. João Crisóstomo* [Two Homilies on St. Thomas, Attributed to St. John Chrysostom], *Vida de S. Paulo de Tebas* [Life of St. Paul of Thebes], and, in some cases, translated texts into French, such as the *Livro de Ester* [Book of Esther]. Around twenty texts by Esteves Pereira based on Ethiopian originals are known. His work achieved international recognition, and he corresponded with several renowned foreign scholars.

The history of science also garnered Esteves Pereira's attention. Between 1911 and 1913, he reprinted in the *Revista de Engenharia Militar* [Journal of Military Engineering], the two treatises Pedro Nunes dedicated to the mariner's chart, included in the first book he published in 1537, *Tratado da Esfera* [Treatise on the Sphere]. This initiative marked the first contemporary reprints of these treatises and was accompanied by introductory studies authored by Esteves Pereira, which reflected his advanced training in mathematics. In a study dedicated to Esteves Pereira's contributions as an Orientalist, David Lopes highlighted this characteristic of the man, noting that his writings always employed a mathematical style, even when addressing literary studies: "The writer was naturally this way as well. His phrasing was devoid of colour; it was a transplantation of the mathematical process of demonstration into the literary field: precise and clear, as he was. [...] He was not, therefore, a man of letters in the true sense of the term, but rather a scientist who dealt with literary subjects. This is not to say that science is incompatible with literature; on the contrary, in every country, there are scientists who have been great writers. [...] But Esteves Pereira did not aspire to be one of those: he did not seek to create art, but science, even though many of his studies were subtitled as literary. The subject matter was literary, not the form." (David Lopes, *Um orientalista português* (F. M. Esteves Pereira), pp. 5–6). David Lopes, who personally knew and interacted with Esteves Pereira due to their shared academic interests, described him as a discreet individual, which, in Lopes's view, sometimes worked to his disadvantage among those who judge others by appearances. Lopes also mentioned the illness that began to weaken Esteves Pereira from 1922 onwards and ultimately led to his death in Lisbon on 9 December 1924.

In addition to being a member of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, Esteves Pereira was also a member of the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* [Geographical Society of Lisbon], for which he published several texts in its *Boletim* [Bulletin].

Esteves Pereira's interest in the Orient emerged at a time when many European scholars were paying particular attention to those regions. His studies, however, were conducted in an amateur capacity, as he maintained an intense professional career as an army officer. However, here, the term "amateur" is used in its original sense, referring to someone who dedicates themselves to their studies out of love for the subjects they pursue. Having developed expertise in various Oriental languages, he spent his free time studying unpublished or lesser-known texts, with the aim of bringing them to the attention of the academic community of his time. He primarily did so within the framework of the two scientific societies to which he belonged, the



DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

Academy of Sciences and the Geographical Society, and he approached these studies in much the same way as he solved mathematical problems in his role as an engineer, as noted by David Lopes. However, this amateurism and “mathematical” approach to literary works did not diminish the value of his contributions. On the contrary, it was thanks to this method that many texts from the Orient were brought to light. The anecdote shared by his great-nephew—that Esteves Pereira’s interest in the Ethiopian language began when he saw plates with Ge’ez characters—reinforces the idea that he approached the questions he encountered with scientific curiosity. Seeing letters he did not recognise piqued his curiosity, and he did everything he could to understand them.

Primary references: *Canção de Galavdevos: rei da Etiópia*, [s. l.] [s. n.], [s. d.]; *História de Minás Además Sagad, rei da Etiópia*, (texto etiópico, publicado, traduzido e anotado por...), Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1888; *Crónica de Susenyos, rei da Etiópia*, (texto etiópico e tradução portuguesa por...), Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1900; *Duas homílias sobre S. Tomé, atribuídas a S. João Crisóstomo*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1914; *Livro da Montaria, feito por D. João I, rei de Portugal*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1918; *O livro do profeta Amós e a sua versão etiópica: estudo literário*, (texto etiópico e tradução portuguesa por...), Lisboa: Academia das Ciências, 1917; “Tratado em defensam da carta de marear pelo Doutor Pedro Nunes cosmógrafo-mor”, *Revista de Engenharia Militar*, Lisboa, vol. 16 (1911), pp. 182-192, pp. 240-248, pp. 280-287, pp. 351-366, pp. 424-433, pp. 482-493, vol. 17 (1912), pp. 34-41, pp. 54-65; “Tratado sobre certas dúvidas de navegação pelo Doutor Pedro Nunes”, *Revista de engenharia militar*, Lisboa, Tipografia do Comércio, vol. 18 (1913), pp. 266-275, pp. 364-371, pp. 424-433; *Vida de S. Paulo de Tebas: primeiro eremita: segundo a versão etiópica*, (texto etiópico e tradução portuguesa por...), Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1904.

Secondary references: Almeida, Catarina, “O conto do naufrago dos antigos Egípcios: nota de leitura sobre um estudo português do início do século XX”, *CADMO. Revista de História Antiga*, n.º 22, Lisboa, Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa, 2011, pp. 247-255. LOPES, David, *Um orientalista português (F. M. Esteves Pereira)*, separata da *Revista da Faculdade de Letras*, 7, 1940-1941. Mateus, M.H.M., *Caminhos do português: exposição comemorativa do Ano Europeu das Línguas: catálogo*, [Em linha]. Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional, 2001[Consult. 27 de novembro de 2016]. Disponível em: Google Livros. “Esteves Pereira (Francisco Maria)”, PEREIRA, João Manuel Esteves e Rodrigues, Guilherme. *Portugal; diccionario historico, chorographico, heraldico, biographico, bibliographico, numismatico e artistico*, Volume 3, Lisboa, J. Romano Torres, 1907, p. 217. Sidarus, Adel Yussef, “Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira”, *Dicionário de Orientalistas de Língua Portuguesa*, [Em linha]. Consult. 27 de dezembro de 2016]. Disponível em: Dicionário de Orientalistas de Língua Portuguesa.

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

<http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/>

This work is financed by national funds through FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P, in the scope of the projects UIDB/04311/2020 and UIDP/04311/2020.

U LISBOA

UNIVERSIDADE
DE LISBOA

FLUL

FACULDADE
DE LETRAS

CH

CENTRO
HISTÓRIA
UNIVERSIDADE
DE LISBOA

fct

Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA

SUPPORTED BY:

BNP

BIBLIOTECA
NACIONAL
DE PORTUGAL

|

FUNDAÇÃO
LUSO-AMERICANA