



PIMENTA, Alfredo Augusto Lopes (São Mamede de Aldão, 1882 – Lisbon, 1950)

Journalist, teacher, politician, writer and historian, Alfredo Pimenta was one of the most irreverent figures of the first half of the 20th century in Portugal, due to his tendency to confront ideas in an abrasive manner and, in particular, his doctrinal non-linearity, which led him to become involved on numerous occasions in heated controversies with figures from a wide range of political and cultural fields – from republicans to monarchists and from liberals to traditionalists. Born in Penouços, in the parish of São Mamede de Aldão, municipality of Guimarães, on 3 December 1882, into a family of modest means, he soon moved to Braga with his parents (Manuel José Lopes Pimenta, a small landowner, and Maria Rosa), where he studied at the Colégio do Espírito Santo. Two years later, he returned to Guimarães to continue his studies, under the tutelage of his aunt and uncle, Silvestre Pimenta and Maria Emília de Meira, after the death of his parents. In his hometown, he was a regular visitor to the library of the Sociedade Martins Sarmento, which he would later describe as essential to his intellectual development. In 1899, he left for Coimbra, where he graduated in law in 1908, despite having tried unsuccessfully to abandon his degree and enrol in the Higher Course in Literature in Lisbon.

During the first quarter of the 20th century, he drifted politically from the republican to the monarchist camp and supported the solution that emerged on 28 May 1926. However, he did not hold any significant positions in the new regime. He was briefly appointed member of the Central Commission of the Superior Council of Public Instruction between 1933 and 1936, and for several years he was curator of the Torre do Tombo, which he briefly headed in 1949, shortly before his death. He was also the first director of the Municipal Archive of Guimarães (now bearing his name) between 1931 and 1950, and creator of the *Boletim de Trabalhos Históricos*, which is still published today. A founding member of the Portuguese Academy of History (where he often collaborated in a controversial manner, falling out with several academics and even being expelled between 1946 and 1947), he also participated in several other national and foreign cultural associations and institutions, such as the Association of Portuguese Archaeologists and the Portuguese Institute of Archaeology, History and Ethnography. A tireless publicist since his student days in Coimbra, throughout his life he edited or contributed to numerous publications, such as A Ideia Nova, A Nação, A Província, A Voz da India, A Voz Nacional, A Voz, Acção Realista, Acção Tradicionalista Portuguesa, Ala

Moderna, Alma Nova, América Brasileira, Arquivo Literário, Arte & Dida, Bandarra, Brasília, Brotéria, Comércio de Guimarães, Contemporânea, Correio da Manhã, Correio do Minho, Correio do Sul, Época, Era Nova, Esfera, Gil Vicente, Ideia Nacional, Jornal do Comércio, Luz & Dida, Mocidade, Nação Portuguesa, O Dia, O Marcoense, O Minhoto, O Norte, Portugal Restaurado, Republica, Restauração, Revolução, Seara Nova, Serviço d'El-Rei, Tribuna Literária or Voz Publica.

Alfredo Pimenta's historical and political thinking is inseparable from a polarised intellectual and political career, ranging from individualist anarchism to republicanism (he was editor of the Evolutionist Party programme and right-hand man to António José de Almeida until 1914); from constitutional monarchism to integralism (aligned with Integralismo Lusitano and, later, in his own name, with Ação Realista Portuguesa) and, in a nuanced way, to Salazarism, even showing, towards the end of his life, sympathy for fascism, corresponding with Mircea Eliade and prefaced an edition of Mussolini's political testament. Still in the 1920s, during one of the many controversies in which he was involved, he justified the dispersion of his career in a letter to Seara Nova, citing a supposed common thread that sustained him – anti-democracy – and which ran through all these divergent political affinities: "What was inside my anarchism is inside my republicanism and remains inside my monarchism [...]. Anti-democratic in anarchism, anti-democratic in the republic, anti-democratic in the monarchy. A supporter of aristocracies, of elites, in anarchism, in the republic, in the monarchy. Cultivating supermen in anarchism, in the republic, in the monarchy. In anarchism, my philosopher was [Max] Steiner. In the republic, my philosopher was Comte. Auguste Comte is my philosopher in the monarchy." ("Letter to Mr David Ferreira", Seara Nova, 1-4-1922).

His brief connection with anarchism emerged while he was still studying for his degree in Coimbra, influenced by his reading of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and, in particular, Steiner. However, he soon drifted towards positivism, first, and then republicanism – reading Comte and Teófilo (who became his friend and to whom he dedicated O fim da monarquia [The End of the Monarchy], published in 1906). The French philosopher, like several other intellectuals of his time in Coimbra (such as Carlos Amaro, Henrique Trindade Coelho and António Sardinha), had a decisive influence on his formative years: "Having passed the age of 21, intoxicated by philosophy – by all the philosophy I encountered along the way, from German to Eastern, and th, I came across Comte's positive philosophy – a philosophy that everyone talks about but only half a hundred people have read and know directly." (O fim da monarquia, 1906, p. 46.).

After 5 October, he moved closer to the moderate wing of António José de Almeida, drafting the manifesto of the Evolutionist Party and collaborating in the creation of its programme in 1912. At the time, his interventions often focused on what was one of the focal points of evolutionary criticism: the debate on strengthening the role of the president of the republic and the powers to dissolve Congress, as a counterbalance to excessive parliamentarism (Política portuguesa. Elementos para a solução da crise nacional [Portuguese politics. Elements for the solution of the national crisis], 1913). This was an interesting position when compared to his assessment, a few years later and now from a monarchist perspective, of the Sidonist regime: "Republicans cannot truly be presidentialists [...]. Presidentialists are not pure republicans,

they are monarchist republicans." (A situação política, 1918, p. 31).

From 1913 onwards, the year in which he unsuccessfully attempted to compete for a position at the Faculdade de Direito [School of Law] in Lisbon, he began to rapidly distance himself from republicanism. In 1914, he contributed to in Nação Portuguesa, the main organ of Lusitanian Integralism, prompting a curious clarification from the journal's editorial staff, justifying the publication of an author who, despite "the curious paradox of still declaring himself a republican" ("O problema religioso" [The religious problem], *Nação Portuguesa*, no. 4, p. 105), was already considered doctrinally close. Already completely disenchanted with the regime and, in particular, with the Democratic Party, he wrote a harsh article in the newspaper República ("O partido dos escândalos" [The party of scandals], 12-6-1914 – which would open a deep crisis in relations between António José de Almeida and Afonso Costa and even lead the latter to challenge the Evolutionist leader to a duel), marking the beginning of his last major political shift. On the eve of the revolt of 14 May 1915, he fully embraced the monarchy (an option explained in the pamphlet A solução monárquica [The monarchical solution]), although he still collaborated briefly with the National League, a civic convergence project which, between 1915 and 1918, brought together figures from Catholic and monarchist circles, as well as evolutionary republicans and unionists.

During the First World War, Alfredo Pimenta's position was markedly pro-German, although Portugal's participation in the war from 1917 onwards prevented him from openly expressing his desire to see the Allies defeated. In any case, he continued to view the war as a clash of civilisations: on one side stood liberalism and the universalist principles of 1789, and on the other, the forces of counter-revolution (Significação filosófica da querra europeia [The philosophical significance of the European war], 1915, p. 11), of which he was a part. Symptomatically, it was around this time that he intensified his contacts with Integralismo Lusitano, although he never fully joined the movement. Despite espousing the traditionalist matrix of Integralism, Pimenta viewed it in a more dynamic way, from the point of view of political action, not identifying with the essentially doctrinal and aesthetic perspective of the movement led by António Sardinha and Luís Almeida Braga. With Sardinha, he was elected deputy during the Sidonismo period, but the failure of the presidentialist experiment, on the one hand, and his disagreement with the legitimist line supported by Integralismo Lusitano, were among the reasons that led to his gradual departure from 1921 onwards, accompanied by names such as Caetano Beirão, Fernando Campos and João Ameal, all members of the Portuguese Royalist Action (, ARP), and the creation, in December 1923, of the Ação Realista Portuguesa and the daily newspaper Ação Realista. The movement, although of little practical importance, was greatly influenced by the ideas of Action Française and Charles Maurras - perhaps even more so than the IL itself. It was while he was leader of the ARP that he was appointed to the Political Council of the Monarchist Cause, resigning, however, in 1926. He supported the coup by Gomes da Costa – whom he advised to act in a letter at the beginning of the year ("My mission is not to put pen to paper, but to take up the sword. If I were a soldier, I would not lay down my sword to take up the pen. [...] When I saw, when I felt that my country had to react, so that it would not be assassinated, I would unsheathe my sword and say to my soldiers: follow me!" -

Nas vésperas do Estado Novo, 1937, p. 29).

In the early 1930s, he became close to the Estado Novo, attracted by the figure of Salazar, with whom he corresponded frequently until the end of his life; However, Salazar's failure to resolve the "problem of the regime" (i.e., the return to a monarchical regime) led him to adopt a somewhat disenchanted political stance and, coincidentally, it was from this point, already in his fifties, that he began to publish his first significant historiographical works, mainly focused on medieval history. Of particular note are Estudos filosóficos e críticos (1930), Vínculos portugueses (1932), Elementos de História de Portugal (1934, a proposed textbook for secondary school education with several editions in subsequent years), and the first series of Estudos históricos – historical review library (a total of 25, published between 1936 and 1949), but also Subsídios para a História de Portugal – textos e juízos críticos (1937) and, later, Idade Média (1946) and Fontes medievais da História de Portugal (1948).

Although these works are distinct in type and scope, it is possible to discern common methodological lines in all of them – a concern with a certain scientific rigour in historiographical analysis and with the validation of sources – as well as an apologetic dimension that can be framed within traditionalist historiography. A supporter of the objective historical process, as opposed to what he considered the subjectivity of liberal and republican historians (and essayists such as António Sérgio), Alfredo Pimenta reaffirms this on several occasions: "History is only scientific when it enumerates facts in the manner of medieval chronicles [...]; whenever it moves into the realm of synthesis, whether of reconstruction or explanation, History moves into the realm of the subjective, of the self, and therefore of the unscientific." (Novos estudos filosóficos e críticos [New philosophical and critical studies], 1935, p. 74); "History is nothing more than the arid, bare document, in its absolute impassivity" (Idem, p. 471). The work of the historian must be a "cold work of laboratory dissection [...]" (Idem, p. 108).

This argument of the impartiality of history and the past as the basis for a certain revisionism does not differ from the stance of other historians, whether from the nationalist or liberal camp. However, the methodological perspective it takes sometimes places it in a different position from traditional historiography. Take, for example, the assessment made of António Sardinha as a historian, considering absurd his intention to write a history of Portugal in the light of integralist doctrine and censuring him for writing history as if it were pure fiction (not in terms of style, but in terms of substance – A propósito de António Sardinha, 1944, pp. 33-34). Sardinha's historiographical ideas, which sought to make history accessible to the general public by summarising certain topics and making general interpretations of certain sources without the support of auxiliary sciences such as palaeography or diplomatics, led Pimenta to accuse him of not mastering the techniques of the historian's craft ("Objective history teaches precisely the opposite of what António Sardinha seeks to convince his readers" – Idem, p. 63.). In any case, it is clear that, more than the traditionalist revisionism of the liberal narrative followed by Sardinha – and which Pimenta followed in his own way – it was rather the way in which he carried it out, as an "impressionist thinker" (Idem, p. 44), that did not fit in with the objective method followed by the Vimaranense author in his works: "I started from the principle that

everything was to be done. I did not copy a single line from anyone. All sources were reviewed and cross-checked" (Elementos da História de Portugal, 1934, p. viii).

Alfredo Pimenta often defends this pursuit of historical objectivity, in line with Fustel Coulanges (whom he often quotes, although he does not follow his ideas of history as a science in a linear fashion) and the systematic analysis of sources as a guarantee of historical truth ("[...] the best historians are those who stay closest to the texts, interpret them with confidence and only write and think like them" – Idade Média, problemas e soluções [The Middle Ages, problems and solutions], 1946, p. xiv). However, his works ultimately reveal a certain tension between this apology for objective history and an ambition to rewrite national history through the prism of traditionalist nationalism, apologetic towards the Estado Novo, and focused on an idea of the mission that Portugal was supposed to fulfil: "in the History of Portugal, everything that glorifies the Portuguese nation is true; everything that depresses, diminishes, weakens or disparages it is false" (Novos estudos filosóficos e críticos, 1935, p. 107).

This position was in line with the historiographical paradigm of the time. It is a fact that, since the second half of the 19th century, the uses of history had been diametrically opposed (from the monarchist to the republican and traditionalist camps) in the sense of constructing narratives that supported each group's different views of the nation; but they were also intended to fulfil a need for the "renationalisation" of the country. However, even within the same group, narratives are not always entirely consistent. Pimenta does not offer a perspective of regressive utopia such as that glimpsed by Paulo Archer de Carvalho in Integralismo Lusitano, although he does value historical figures considered to be role models; nor is there agreement with authors from other traditionalist currents regarding the legitimacy of King Manuel II or the descendants of King Miguel; and, already in the 1930s, the research of the historian from Guimarães would focus mainly on the Middle Ages, moving away from the Restoration, the other paradigmatic traditionalist period.

In any case, there is a certain pedagogical intention and relativism of scientific knowledge underlying Alfredo Pimenta's work: "[...] studying and teaching what Portuguese social institutions were, without biased comments or personal subjectivity, enables us to understand the past and therefore leads us to a notion of the direction we should take in the present" (Novos Estudos Filosóficos e Críticos [New Philosophical and Critical Studies], 1935, p. 125 — emphasis added). In line with nationalist historicism, the historian from Guimarães sought to occupy the space of liberal narrative, replacing it with the "truth that serves [...] the homeland and not that which can harm or diminish it" (Idem, p. 107). Moreover, in the 1940s, he would say that he did not become a historian to serve politics, but that it was history that had strengthened his political convictions (Idade Média: problemas e soluções, 1946, p. viii).

And the truth is that, in order to sustain this orientation, Alfredo Pimenta deliberately abandoned objectivity on certain occasions – or, at least, attempted to justify "his" specific objectivity, which involved, for example, the validation of providentialist traditions denied by historical science, such as Ourique. It is, in any case, interesting that he openly acknowledges this, unlike other historians of the same ideological spectrum. For

example, when writing in Elementos da História de Portugal (Elements of the History of Portugal) that "had it not been for the period of anti-Catholic and anti-Portuguese liberalism that the country was going through, he would have written an exclusively scientific history that would have been a presentation of the facts and their sources without any kind of philosophical fog to inform them. However, they contain a strong dose of philosophy of history, my truth, my doctrine. It is its weak point because it is its debatable point [...]. I had to elaborate it to oppose my non-truths, which I consider harmful to my country" (Elementos de História de Portugal, 1934, p. 42).

This view of the past, subordinating it to the problems of contemporary times, combined with his natural tendency towards controversy, would often bring him into conflict with other members of the Republic of Letters. Some were from different quarters – such as Raúl Proença, Agostinho da Silva and António Sérgio – while others were closer to him personally - such as Joaquim de Carvalho. In the latter two cases, in particular, it was fundamentally the instrumentalisation of the historical view that motivated the main disagreements. Carvalho, who was his editor at the University of Coimbra Press and whom he asked to read the originals of Elementos, saw Pimenta's work as methodologically innovative (in terms of research and use of sources) but "scientifically debatable", noting the excessive attention to political history and the secondary importance given to the study of society, the economy and institutions (Joaquim de Carvalho, "Letter of 16-11-1934", Letters from Joaquim de Carvalho to Alfredo Pimenta, pp. 257-258). Pimenta himself refuted this position several times, arguing that "The history of peoples is, after all, the history of their great men" (Novos estudos filosóficos e críticos, 1935, p. 160) and that, from a positivist perspective, it was from the study of these great men that important lessons for the present could be drawn. This position is guite different, for example, from that taken by António Sérgio. In the proposal presented by the essayist in his Introdução geográfico-sociológica à História de Portugal (Geographical-sociological introduction to the history of Portugal), which sparked a controversy with Alfredo Pimenta, the fundamental thing was not the facts, but the relationship that reason allowed to be established between them (the Middle Ages and the Expansion not as distinct phenomena, but as one - the transition from a local agrarian economy to a bourgeois, commercial and maritime economy, for example). For the historian from Guimarães, the opposite was true: there were 'pure', indisputable facts: 'The conquest of Ceuta is one thing, a pure fact, and the explanation that Mr António Sérgio gives to that fact is another' (A História de Portugal do Sr. António Sérgio [The History of Portugal by Mr António Sérgio], 1941, p. 25).

Sérgio, concerned about the future and the problematisation of the past in relation to the future, sees in the works of Pimenta and other nationalist historians "historical expositions and historical spectacles that would characterise a certain way of writing history [...] and that would lead [the people] towards a useless nostalgia for the past". Pimenta responds with the argument that "the future, like the present, [is] contained in the past, and the present can only be its continuation, which should not be broken or distorted, lest it collapse (idem, p. 11). And to Sérgio's interpretative analysis, Pimenta retorts, once again, with an apology for his method of objective history: "A victim of his obsession with thinking, Mr António Sérgio starts from the principle that

knowledge is inferior to thinking, and that one cannot think without knowing. [...] the balance lies in thinking about what one knows – ordering, classifying, juxtaposing, comparing the materials collected" (Idem, p. 8).

The method itself, moreover, is not the most problematic aspect. Take, for example, the opinion of Virgínia Rau, who later considered most of Alfredo Pimenta's studies to be "fully valid for their substance and the tenacity of the research, for the culture and critical vigour that illuminate them, and for the methodological concepts that enrich them." — Virgínia Rau, "O historiador e o escritor Alfredo Pimenta" [The historian and writer Alfredo Pimenta], 1982, p. 385.). However, there is always an evident instrumentalisation of historiography in his works in the sense of what we might call "subjective objectivity". He lacked a work of synthesis — he had planned to write a History of Portugal — although he would certainly have ended up following the same line of historical thought that characterised him: "I have my truth, I have my conclusion [...]. Whether it is my truth or that of others that suits the national interest and serves it, only the distant future will tell" (Elementos de História de Portugal, 1934, p. ix).

Bibliografia ativa: Mentira monárquica, Coimbra, Centro Republicano, 1906; O fim da monarquia, Coimbra, Tip. Democrática, 1906; Política portuguesa. Elementos para a solução da crise nacional, Coimbra, Moura Marques, 1913; A Significação filosófica da guerra europeia, Lisboa, Parceria António Maria Pereira, 1915; A solução monárquica, Coimbra, Tip. Moderna, 1915; A situação política, Lisboa, Livraria Ferreira, 1918; A questão monárquica, Lisboa, Juventudes Monárquicas Conservadoras, 1920; Estudos filosóficos e críticos, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1930; Vínculos portugueses, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1932; Elementos de História de Portugal – elaborados para uso do Ensino Secundário, absolutamente de acordo com o respectivo Programa, Lisboa, Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1934; Novos estudos filosóficos e críticos, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1935; A evolução de um pensamento autobiografia filosófica, Coimbra, Biblioteca da Universidade, 1935; Estudos históricos – biblioteca de revisão histórica, I a XXV, 1936-1949; Subsídios para a História de Portugal – textos e juízos críticos, Lisboa, Edições Europa, 1937; Nas vésperas do Estado Novo, Porto, Tavares Martins, 1937; Idade Média: problemas e soluções, Lisboa, Edições Ultramar, 1946; "A História de Portugal do Sr. António Sérgio", Estudos históricos, XVII, Lisboa, Portugália, 1941; A propósito de António Sardinha, Lisboa, Imprensa Portuguesa, 1944; Fontes medievais da História de Portugal, Lisboa, Sá da Costa, 1948; Testamento político de Mussolini (pref.), Lisboa, Ressurgimento, 1949.

**Bibliografia passiva:** AZENHA, Maria R. e FERREIRA, Olga C., "Cartas de Alfredo Pimenta para Joaquim de Carvalho". *Revista de História das Ideias*, n.º 9, 1987, pp. 937-1016; BRAGA, Paulo Drummond, "Alfredo Pimenta e 1383-1385", *Boletim de trabalhos históricos*, vol. XXXVIII, 1987, pp. 48-60; CARVALHO, Paulo Archer de, "Ao princípio era o verbo: o eterno retorno e os mitos da historiografia integralista", *Revista de História das Ideias*, vol. 18, 1996, pp. 231-244; IDEM, *Cartas de Joaquim de Carvalho a Alfredo Pimenta (seguidas de quatro cartas a António Sardinha)*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra,



2016;CRUZ, Manuel Braga da, *Monárquicos e republicanos no Estado Novo*, Lisboa. D. Quixote, 1986; LEAL, Ernesto Castro, "O tempo de Alfredo Pimenta. Mitologia política e nacionalismo entre a primeira República e o Estado Novo", *Revista de Guimarães*, vol. III; 2001, pp. 103-143; IDEM, "Alfredo Pimenta", *Turres Veteras*, vol. VII, 2005, pp. 231-240; MARCHI, Riccardo, *As raízes profundas não gelam? Ideias e percursos das direitas portuguesas*, Lisboa, Texto, 2012; MATOS, Sérgio Campos, "Continuidades e rupturas historiográficas: o caso português num contexto peninsular (c. 1834 – c. 1940), *Historiografia e Res Publica nos últimos dois séculos*, Lisboa, CH-ULisboa, 2017, pp. 131-158; PIMENTA, Maria Teresa, "Cronologia da vida e da obra de Alfredo Pimenta (1882-1950)", *Boletim de trabalhos históricos*, vol. XXXIV, 1982, pp. 44-64; IDEM, "Cartas inéditas de Mircea Eliade a Alfredo Pimenta", *Brotéria*, vol. 138, n.º 3, 1994, pp. 365-392; RAU, Virgínia, "O historiador e o escritor Alfredo Pimenta, *Boletim de trabalhos históricos*, vol. XXXIII, 1982, pp. 385-386; TORGAL, L. R., CATROGA, F. e AMADO MENDES, J. M., *História da História em Portugal*, *séculos XIX-XX*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1996.

João Branco

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.















SUPPORTED BY:



