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TELES, Francisco Xavier da Silva (Pondá, 1860—Lisbon, 1930)

Francisco Xavier da Silva Teles, the "most illustrious representative of geographical science of his time in Portugal" (H. Lautensach), was responsible for incorporating geography into higher education.

A Goan by birth, Silva Teles was of Portuguese descent. He completed his elementary and high school education in his native Goa. In 1879, he travelled to the Metropolis to attend, initially, the *Escola Médico-Cirúrgica do Porto* [Porto Medical and Surgical School], later completing his studies in Lisbon before joining the Navy. As a naval doctor, Silva Teles visited some of Portugal's overseas provinces. He founded and led the Inhambane Hospital in Mozambique. Later, he would also help found the *Instituto Bacteriológico do Hospital da Marinha* [Bacteriological Institute of the Navy Hospital], as a result of the hygienists' concerns that prompted him to act and that he shared with Câmara Pestana, his colleague at the University.

The specialised training he received in Paris under Manouvrier accounts for his inclination towards climatology and hygiene studies, which—particularly in his roles as professor and director of the *Escola de Medicina Tropical* [School of Tropical Medicine]—he regarded as essential courses for the establishment of genuine "scientific colonisation", a concept he actively promoted at the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* [Lisbon Geographical Society]. It is from this conception that various works on the need for Higher Colonial Studies in Portugal were born and, in particular, the extensive report on *A transportação penal e a colonização* [Criminal transportation and colonisation], in which he demonstrates the judicial, demographic, and political ineffectiveness of the banishment sentences then in force in Portugal. In 1902, he began teaching at the School of Tropical Medicine, which he would also lead. He would go on to teach Geography at the *Curso Superior de Letras* [Higher Course of Letters], an institution that the Republic would later become the *Faculdade de Letras* [Faculty of Arts and Humanities] of the University of Lisbon. He also served as a professor of economic geography at the *Instituto Superior do Comércio* [Higher Institute of Commerce], established in 1911.

Silva Teles participated in national civic life, both within the University—where he would later serve as rector—and in political decision-making bodies. As a university student and young graduate, he was deeply influenced by the ideals of the 70s Generation, which were already asserting themselves in a persistent way. He enthusiastically supported the Camões Centenary tributes, and it is highly likely that the "ultimatum crisis"

not only left a profound mark on his "pro-ultramarine" spirit but also reinforced his resolve to devote a portion of his intellectual, pedagogical, and institutional efforts to Portugal's "civilising mission" in the tropics, particularly within the African colonies.

The various conceptions of "time" reflected in Silva Teles' Geography are undoubtedly a significant aspect to take into account, warranting its inclusion in a historians' dictionary. Given the diversity of his professional career and the tumultuous evolution of geography during the corresponding period, it is unsurprising that these conceptions changed over time. In *Concepção das Unidades Geográficas* [Conception of Geographical Units], a "Newtonian" conception of mechanical, cyclical, and repetitive time prevails. The perspective on social life is that of a dynamic, homeostatic system in which nature responds to the disruptions caused by social turbulence to re-establish the natural balance of the earth's surface. Medical metaphors (available to those who were trained as doctors) are present throughout this initial text and throughout his work.

In "*Conceito Científico da Geografia* [Scientific Concept of Geography]" a "more original and mature" work (O. Ribeiro), the "evolutionist" conception of time is already clearer. Imbued with the same spirit that defines geography as a science across Europe and supports its academic institutionalisation, this text—more so than the thesis he submitted to the Higher Course of Letters—demonstrates Silva Teles' definitive alignment with the canons of international geographical thought of his era, under the overarching and predominant influence of *Anthropogeographie* by Ratzel. It was with this in mind that he published *Rapport sur la climatologie inter-tropicale et les climats des colonies portugaises* [Report on inter-tropical climatology and the climates of the Portuguese colonies], in which he clearly delimited the areas of possible "European acclimatisation" in the African colonies.

However, it was in his fully "regional" work—the various formulations within the scope of the Geography of Portugal, his participation in the *Guia de Portugal* [Guide to Portugal] of the National Library, and the regional monographs, e.g. *Ribatejo* (important geographical contributions to the crucial theme of "national autonomy" that was meanwhile being developed in the context of Portuguese History)—that a conception close to "long time", deep, rich—and "historical"—became dominant. It is the "time of the landscape," marked by the centuries-old interplay between "land and people", where each region reflects a unique synthesis of environmental role and the symbols of civilisation. Without naming the authors who led this "paradigmatic" shift in international geography, one can discern the influence of the French school of geography. Inspired by figures such as Vidal de La Blache and his *Principes de Géographie Humaine* [Principles of Human Geography], this school found a prominent advocate in the historian Lucien Febvre, who applied its principles within the realm of history.

Silva Teles' legacy, in the institutional, professional, and even personal spheres, is varied and far-reaching. As head of the Geography department at the Higher Course and, after the Republic, at the Lisbon Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Silva Teles trained the first generation of teachers qualified to teach Geography in secondary schools and even published *Elementos de Corografia Portuguesa* [Elements of Portuguese Chorography] for elementary education, a book that was developed and updated but which, oddly, the



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authorities did not approve. Portuguese geography owes its university institutionalisation to Silva Teles, along with the clear definition of its object of study (Orlando Ribeiro, his student and successor at the University of Lisbon, did not hesitate to rank him alongside Bernardino de Barros Gomes and Amorim Girão as one of the "founders" of geographical science in Portugal), within a naturalist concept of German influence and US ramifications—freeing it from the non-scientific ballast with which the encyclopaedic, recreational, or exploratory tradition of previous centuries had dulled it.

The "republican idea", the valorisation of the "grei", and attention to popular education are ever-present in his professional and civic life. In 1906, he published the aforementioned *Elementos de Corografia* aimed especially at elementary school education. Later, as part of the activity of the National Action League, he took part in the first issue of the magazine *Pela Grei* led by António Sérgio, where he praised the strong "organic construction and remarkable plasticity" of the Portuguese people "who, in spite of everything, resist the disorganisation and incompetence that preside over our administration" (1, 1918, p. 1-10). After a brief and disappointing period in political decision-making—in 1929, he served as Minister of Education for only a few days in a government where Salazar was already asserting himself as the dominant figure—a more reserved Silva Teles emerged. He redirected much of his intellectual energy towards a closer and more detailed study of Portugal, focusing on interpreting the diverse physiognomy of its landscapes. This was the period during which he contributed to the Guide to Portugal and the publication, in 1929, of *Aspectos Geográficos e Climáticos* [Geographical and Weather Aspects] [of Portugal], prepared for the Portuguese Exhibition in Seville, both works would represent the most sophisticated synthesis of Portugal's geography until the publication in German of Hermann Lautensach's pioneering work.

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