

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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TAUNAY, Affonso d' Escragnolle

(Nossa Senhora do Desterro, 1876 – São Paulo, 1958)

Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay was born in Nossa Senhora do Desterro (now Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil) on 11 July 1876, grew up, and did his studies in the capital of the then Empire of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, from where he moved only at the age of 23 to work in São Paulo. He was the son of Cristina Teixeira Leite Taunay (1854-1936) and Alfredo d'Escragnolle Taunay (1843-1899), better known as Viscount Taunay, a title bestowed upon him by Emperor Pedro II in 1889. The Taunay family came to Brazil as part of the French Artistic Mission of 1816, one of the illustrious initiatives of the monarch King João VI. On that occasion, Nicolau Antonio Taunay (a founding member of the Instituto de França [French Institute], as well as a landscape and history painter) and his brother Augusto Maria Taunay (a decorator of the Louvre Palace and sculptor at the Sèvres manufactory) accepted Joachim Lebreton's invitation to join a group that would establish the School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. This group included notable figures such as Jean Baptiste-Debret, Carlos Simão Pradier, Segismundo Neukomm, Grandjean de Montigny, and Marcos and Zeferino Ferrez. The journey to Brazil involved almost the entire family, and among Augusto Maria Taunay's children was Félix Emílio Taunay, who succeeded his father as the professor of painting at the School of Fine Arts, where he later became the director. With a strong inclination towards the humanities, he served as tutor to King Pedro II and established the Escragnolle-Taunay family through his marriage to the daughter of the Count d'Escragnolle (1785-1828), a member of a family that had arrived in Brazil in 1808. Félix Emílio played a prominent role in the cultural life of Rio de Janeiro, collaborating with Grandjean de Montigny on urbanisation and landscaping projects for the city, translating French educational works for Brazilian students, and in 1838, becoming one of the founding members of the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* [Brazilian Historic and Geographic Institute]. This legacy was passed on to his son Alfredo d'Escragnolle Taunay, born in 1843, a man of recognised prominence in political, military, and literary life. A graduate in military engineering, he participated in one of the key episodes of the Paraguayan War, *A Retirada da Laguna* [The Retreat from Laguna], which he wrote after reaching the "backlands" of Mato Grosso, drawing on his notes and, most importantly, his memory.

Alfredo d'Escragnolle Taunay guided his son, Affonso d'Escragnolle Taunay, towards a humanistic



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education at the D. Pedro II School and directed his professional training towards civil engineering at the Polytechnic School of Rio de Janeiro. Affonso Taunay graduated in 1900, and the previous year, after the death of his father, he went to work as an assistant professor of analytical chemistry and industrial chemistry in the industrial engineers course at the Polytechnic School of São Paulo. Two years later, he was promoted; in 1904, he became a substitute professor, and in 1911, he was appointed full professor. His new life in São Paulo also resulted in his marriage in 1907 to Sara de Souza Queiroz, a member of one of São Paulo's traditional families. Alongside university teaching, Taunay also devoted himself to secondary education teaching. In 1902, he came into contact with the plans of D. Miguel Kruse, director of the Monastery of São Bento, to build a gymnasium next to the monastery. The building was inaugurated the following year, and Taunay took over the Physics, Chemistry, Universal History and Brazilian History classes at the institution. Still linked to the Benedictines, in 1911, he inaugurated the Universal History course at the *Faculdade de Filosofia e Letras de São Paulo* [Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of São Paulo]. There, at the Monastery of São Bento in São Paulo, the young engineer officially began his career as a historian by vocation.

His career has been marked by the coexistence of his training and vocational areas. In 1909, at the age of 33, he published his first work at the Polytechnic School: *Léxico de termos técnicos e científicos* [Lexicon of technical and scientific terms]. The following year, under the pseudonym Sebastião Corte Real, he published his first history book, the historical novel *Crônica do tempo dos Filipes* [Chronicle of the Filipes' Era]. The story begins in Lisbon on 3 May 1631, the night before D. Antonio de Oquendo's squadron set sail for Brazil, and unfolds against the backdrop of colonial Bahia during the battle against the Dutch in the 17th century. This battle is permeated by the romance between Leonor de Ávila and Jorge de Lorena. She, the protagonist of the story, is a reference point for most men whose descriptions and narratives about her and her travels through Europe bring forth mismatched versions, intertwined with mysteries involving the coexistence of this woman of undefined maternal origin, orphaned as a child, with gypsies, Jews and Moors from Granada, as well as Lutheran and Calvinist heretics. Jorge de Lorena, a Brazilian born in Rio de Janeiro, was handed over by his father to a relative, the commander of a royal galleon, and sent to Portugal at the age of twelve. After fifteen years of sailing and fighting, he returns to his homeland as commander to fight the invaders and find his great love. In 1911, this work was assessed by the membership committees of both the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (IHGB) and the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo* [São Paulo Historic and Geographic Institute] (IHGSP), granting him admission to these significant historiographical institutions of the period.

His collaboration in the press was wide-ranging and long-lasting, especially the ones for the following publications *Jornal do Comércio* [Journal of Commerce] (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), *Revista do Brasil* [Brazil Magazine], *Digesto Econômico* [Economic Digest], *Revista do Arquivo Municipal* [Municipal Archive Magazine] (São Paulo), *Revista Numismática* [Numismatic Magazine], *Revista do Instituto do Café* [Coffee Institute Magazine], *Revista da Academia Paulista de Letras* [Journal of the São Paulo Academy of Letters], *Revista da Academia Brasileira de Letras* [Journal of the Brazilian Academy of Letters], *Revista do Instituto*



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Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [Journal of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute], *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo* [Journal of the Historical and Geographical Institute of São Paulo] and, above all, the *Revista do Museu Paulista* [Magazine of the São Paulo Museum] and in the platform he created for the publication of historical studies and documents, the *Anais do Museu Paulista* [Annals of the São Paulo Museum].

This periodical was created as part of the celebrations for the centenary of Brazilian independence in 1922. Appointed director of the *Museu Paulista* [São Paulo Museum] in 1917, Taunay assumed leadership of a museum that had already established itself as a national and international reference in various branches of the natural sciences and transformed it into a history museum dedicated to the Bandeirantes' [flag-carriers] epic. His mission was to prepare that space that featured a whale skeleton in the hall and a Pedro Américo painting "Independência ou Morte!" [Independence or Death!], painted between 1886 and 1888, in the Hall of Honour into a museum capable of telling the story of a territory colonised by the Portuguese that became an independent country in 1822. With a sharp museological vision, Taunay oversaw the complete remodelling of the *Museu Paulista*. By assembling visual documents, particularly colonial cartography, alongside textual records, and using this material to guide painters and sculptors with whom he corresponded daily, Taunay crafted scenes that narrated what he termed the "conquest of Brazil by Brazilians". He investigated the role of the "sertanistas" [specialists in the study of the physical and/or human geography of the hinterland] of the Captaincy of São Paulo in the exploration and occupation of Brazilian territory, focusing particularly on various aspects of daily life in São Paulo's history. In doing so, he found the *Museu Paulista* to be an ideal setting for locating and publishing documents that contributed to the creation of a São Paulo iconography in the colonial period. He remained in this position until 1945 and became one of the leading historians of his time, being elected to the São Paulo Academy of Letters and to the Brazilian Academy of Letters in 1929. In 1934, he inaugurated the Chair of the History of Brazilian Civilisation in the History and Geography course at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences, and Letters of the now-renowned University of São Paulo. Such prominence earned him the nomination and election as an honorary member, on 27 December 1944, of the prestigious *American Historical Association* alongside Johan Huizinga, Rafael Altamira y Crevea, Pierre Caronm, Albert Pollard, Georg Macauley Trevelyan, and Domingo Amnátégüi y Solar.

His main work, *História geral das bandeiras paulistas* [General history of the São Paulo flags] is the subtitle of his historiographical perspective: *written in the light of a great deal of unpublished documentation from Brazilian, Spanish and Portuguese archives*. This work is characterised by the search for modern truth by means of internal and external criticism of the sources, in accordance with the indications of Charles-Victor Langlois (1863-1929) and Charles Seignobos (1854-1942), by the confrontation with productions on the subject, and, above all, through the guidelines of João Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927). By interpreting documents refined through rigorous documentary criticism and engaging in dialogue with other productions of the period, he crafted an epic history of the São Paulo flags. His work significantly contributed to the creation of narratives that became fundamental to the formation of São Paulo's identity. This monumental work



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resulted in eleven volumes, published between 1924 and 1950, dedicated to proving his thesis that São Paulo was the radiating centre of the "brave" sertanistas who explored Brazil, transforming a small expanse of land, delimited by the Treaty of Tordesillas, into an almost continental nation. His historical perspective contrasted with the so-called "battle history" dedicated to military and administrative history and was linked to the historiographical break made by Capistrano de Abreu, turning to the study of economic, religious, literary, artistic, and scientific history.

The links with Portugal were strong and maintained for a long time, especially through the relationship established with João Lúcio d'Azevedo. The meeting with João Lúcio d'Azevedo took place in the 1920s when he was promoting the books *São Paulo nos primeiros anos* [São Paulo in the early years], *São Paulo no século XVI* [São Paulo in the 16th Century] and *Piratininga* published in 1920, 1921, and 1923, respectively. With this trilogy, he inaugurated the already announced narrative of the "conquest of Brazil by the Brazilians" with the characteristics that characterised his writing about Brazil's colonial past. The person responsible for presenting them was the writer and friend Alberto Rangel (1871-1945), who sent copies of Taunay's books to João Lúcio d'Azevedo. The Portuguese historian confessed in letters to Taunay that his work "captures the attention like a novel, and one feels oneself living in the heart of that rudimentary Brazil". João Lúcio's perception was shared by many scholars of the period who praised Taunay's ability to evoke scenes from 16th-century daily life in the reader's mind. With this theatrical sense, Taunay not only composed the exhibitions at the *Museu Paulista*, but also took part, alongside Edgar Roquette-Pinto (1884-1954), in the making of two films by Humberto Mauro (1897-1983): *O descobrimento do Brasil* [The Discovery of Brazil] (1937) and *Bandeirantes* [Flag-carriers] (1940). João Lúcio was interested in these developments in Brazilian historiography and asked his new Brazilian friend for the magazines of the *Institutos do Rio de Janeiro* [Institutes of Rio de Janeiro], of which he had been a corresponding member since 1895, and São Paulo, as well as the collection of documents used in the preparation of his books. On the other hand, the Portuguese historian represented Taunay's closest link to the Portuguese archives, and so he always used his friend's services to get copies of documents for the *Museu Paulista* and to fill in the gaps in his private research. In Taunay's work, which João Lúcio appreciated more for its style and method than for its subject matter, the progress of Brazil was already envisioned in the early years of São Paulo during the 16th century. On the other hand, in *Política de Pombal relativa ao Brasil* [Pombal's policy towards Brazil] presented by the Portuguese historian in 1922 at the First Congress of American History held by the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, when Brazil was celebrating its independence from Portugal, the Marquis of Pombal emerged as a figure credited with "laying the foundations of nationality". The exchanges between these scholars reveal a field of contention over historical truths concerning the shared past of Brazil and Portugal. If in the theoretical field they shared an appreciation for the "modern principles" of criticising sources with the aim of achieving the truth, the content of that truth could be and was different. Economic history is another important aspect of Taunay's work that links him to the author of *Épocas de Portugal Econômico* [Times of Economic Portugal]. At the end of the 20s, Taunay took part in the commemoration of the bicentenary of the



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introduction of coffee to Brazil, organised by the *Departamento Nacional do Café* [National Coffee Department], and was asked by the then director of the Department, Armando Vidal, to write the History of Coffee in Brazil. As the first result of this research, Taunay published a summary in 1934 entitled *A propagação da cultura cafeeira* [The Propagation of Coffee Culture], and, continuing this work, between 1939 and 1943 he published the fifteen volumes of the *História do Café no Brasil* [History of Coffee in Brazil], especially dedicated to the publication of important sources for the development of Economic History in Brazil.

Another dialogue that marked his works was with the Portuguese philologist Antonio Cândido de Figueiredo, author of *Novo dicionário da língua portuguesa* [New dictionary of the Portuguese language]. After the publication in 1909 of *Léxico de termos técnicos e científicos*, which dealt with the shortcomings of Portuguese language dictionaries, he published *Léxico de lacunas* [Shortcomings lexicon] in 1914, the aim of which he presented in the long subtitle: "a lexicon of common terms, common in Brazil, especially in the state of São Paulo, and of the meanings of numerous words, not yet mentioned in the great dictionaries of the Portuguese language". To address the shortcomings of the dictionaries, Taunay identified more than ten thousand omissions, aiming not only to supplement but also to correct the errors in the work of the lexicographer Cândido de Figueiredo. This controversy led to the publication of six other books: *Vocabulário de omissões* [Vocabulary of omissions] (1924), *Coletânea de falhas* [Collection of errors] (1926), *Reparos ao dicionário de Cândido de Figueiredo* [Corrections to Cândido de Figueiredo's dictionary] (1926), *A terminologia zoológica e científica em geral e a deficiência dos grandes dicionários portugueses* [Zoological and scientific terminology in general and the shortcomings of the great Portuguese dictionaries] (1927), *Insuficiência e deficiência dos grandes dicionários portugueses* [Insufficiency and shortcomings of the major Portuguese dictionaries] (1928) e *Inópia científica e vocabular dos grandes dicionários portugueses* [Scientific and vocabulary copies of the great Portuguese dictionaries] (1932). Taunay regarded language as the most inexhaustible of all existing sources, noting that new words were constantly being created to describe technological developments, emerging societal habits, and linguistic insights within historiography itself. Like any good controversy, Cândido de Figueiredo addressed Taunay's criticisms in his work *Combates sem sangue: em favor da língua portuguesa* [Bloodless fights: in favour of the Portuguese language] published in Lisbon in 1925, the year of his death. In response, Taunay, in the last chapter of *Insuficiência e deficiência* [Insufficiency and Deficiency] wrote what he called "Supreme humiliation, Confession of defeat, Act of contrition". Cândido de Figueiredo accused Taunay of lacking knowledge in the science of lexicography, asserting that his method of addressing gaps through literature, documents, and historiography was outdated. In response to such criticism, Taunay satirised a story his father had told him and crafted a scene in which the great masters cited by Figueiredo were gathered in a room to applaud the "new genius of the Portuguese language and comparative philology, Mr Cândido de Figueiredo" and suddenly realised the presence of "the unruly Taunay", who ironically quotes the most absurd mistakes made by Figueiredo as unshakeable truths. This controversy with Cândido de Figueiredo led to considerable dissatisfaction with



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Capistrano de Abreu, who regarded these lexicographical pursuits as a waste of time for someone devoted to constructing the narrative of the bandeirantes' epic.

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