

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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SERRÃO, Joaquim Veríssimo (Santarém, 1925 – Santarém, 2020)

Son of Joaquim Pereira Vicente Serrão and Adriana dos Santos Veríssimo Serrão, he was 11 years old when he lost his mother, which contributed to his father playing a major role in his education. With a commercial business in the city and a republican-liberal upbringing, his father was keen to provide his son with the best education that Santarém had to offer. After completing his secondary education in 1943, the young Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão went to Coimbra to enrol at the University on 23 September in the Faculdade de Direito [School of Law], which he only attended for a year. Legal studies did not captivate him, however, and the following year, on 7 September 1944, he opted to enrol in the Historical and Philosophical Sciences course, which at the time boasted a prestigious teaching staff. The School included Damião Peres, Manuel Lopes de Almeida and Mário Brandão in the field of Modern History, and Torquato de Sousa Soares and Pierre David in Medieval History. Philosophical thought was expounded by Joaquim de Carvalho, “a profound inquirer of ideas who could not understand history without linking it to the fascinating world of philosophy”; and Sílvio Lima, “who introduced students to the study of Renaissance anthropocentrism and theocentrism” (Primeiras jornadas de História Moderna, 1986, p. 5) with a depth that young students eagerly absorbed. He was also a disciple of Aristides de Amorim Girão, the renovator of geographical studies; in Art History, he briefly met Vergílio Correia; in complementary courses, he had the renowned teachers Maximiano Correia and José Correia de Oliveira. In a statement on the “Office of the Historian” given in 1989 to the journal *Ler História*, he summarised his education in Coimbra as follows: “While some teachers leaned towards documentary research, others leaned towards historical reflection as the basis of an authentic culture.” He also mentioned the easy access that students then had to the latest publications in the field of historiography, including foreign books and journals, particularly French ones, in the institutes attached to the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities], and his frequent visits to the rich Joanina Library, “a mandatory stop for anyone who felt the flame of historical research.” (JVS, *Meio século ao serviço da Universidade e da História* [Half a century in the service of the University and History], 2000, p. 11). However, his taste for research had already begun during his high school days, when he spent hours in the Braamcamp Freire Library. Upon completing his degree in 1948, confident in the consistency of his training, he decided to submit his dissertation in the same year. Manuel Lopes de Almeida tried to dissuade him from doing so,



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considering it reckless, but the student replied that he was doing it because he did not want to burden his father with another year in Coimbra. He gave his dissertation the title *Sentido da História. Breve Introdução a um Problema* (The Meaning of History: A Brief Introduction to a Problem). The jury awarded him a grade of 16. The course, which, as its name suggests, linked two scientific fields, sparked in the student an attraction to post-Hegelian German philosophy, especially the works of Wilhem Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert and Wilhem Windelband. As he himself wrote in the text he called his “intellectual testament”, “it was towards the philosophy of science that my mind was oriented at that time, convinced in terms of the future that I had found my true path in it!” (Idem, pp. 12-13). However, in his extra-curricular reading throughout his education, he became clearly aware that historical research needed to be renewed, influenced by the methodological and critical proposals of the then dominant Annales school, in order for history to be more scientific than ideological. This sensitivity is evident in his degree thesis, which he would develop when he finally devoted himself to the profession of historian. Although the thesis was not published, it was on its foundations that he based his teaching of the subject of Methodology of History, which he later taught at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities], and which came to light under the title *History and Historical Knowledge* (1968), expanded and presented in a didactic form.

Let us return to Santarém. The love he always felt for the city where he was born was expressed in various ways and in different contexts. He dedicated his first works as a historian to it, with very expressive titles: *Historical essay on the significance and value of the capture of Santarém from the Moors in 1147*, published in 1947; *Santarém in the History of Portugal* and *Santarém. History and Art*, both from 1950. These inaugural works of his long career also marked the taste he would cultivate for regional and local history, as we shall see below.

He was not granted a position as a university assistant, later explaining why: “because at the time I was too rebellious for the conservatism of Coimbra to like me” (Correspondence with Marcelo Caetano, p. 458). He returned to his homeland, summarising his early post-graduate years as follows: “From October 1948 to November 1950, I stayed in Santarém teaching history, literature and philosophy at private schools and spent my free time writing frequently for the weekly newspaper *Correio do Ribatejo* and the periodical *Vida Ribatejana*. This gave him the opportunity to make his debut in regional journalism, which he never abandoned, later writing for national newspapers: in the daily *O Dia*, with some regularity, and occasionally in *Diário de Notícias*. In this daily newspaper, in *O Jornal*, *Expresso* and *Público*, he engaged in several controversies, a characteristic trait of his personality, but also an expression of his commitment as a citizen.

He was not satisfied with the level of teaching to which he was then devoted. He dreamed of flying higher. He considered pursuing a diplomatic career, to which his degree gave him access at the time, although without much enthusiasm, and he did not have the personal fortune that was then considered indispensable, so he gave up on this idea, following his father's advice. However, the opportunity he had cherished as his life's project arose: a university teaching position. A vacancy for a lecturer in Portuguese culture had opened up at the University of Toulouse, and he was appointed to the post by the Institute of Higher Culture (1950-

1960).

In the Portuguese Studies department at the University of Toulouse, he met a group of renowned French historians, some of whom were very interested in Portuguese culture, while others were dedicated to fields of knowledge, from whom Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão began to take lessons: human geography with Daniel Faucher; southern legal history with Paul Ourliac; institutions before and after the French Revolution with Jacques Godechot; ethics as a philosophical discipline with Georges Bastide; Hispanic geography in its relationship with Portugal with Jean Sermet; and Atlantic history with Frédéric Mauro, with whom he formed a lasting friendship. But among all his great teachers, it was Léon Bourdon, director of the Department of Portuguese Studies during his first three years in Toulouse – who would later become professor of Portuguese Studies at the Sorbonne – who left the deepest mark on him with the rigour he instilled in him regarding documentary research and the methodology to be followed in scientific work.

Having acquired a taste for research, he moved away from the essay genre with which he had left Portugal, although he never abandoned his reflection on interpretative perspectives in the field of history. The regional archives of southern France became his main place of work in his spare time, where he found unpublished documentation and, under the guidance of León Bourdon, in 1953, obtained his doctorate from the University of Toulouse with a dissertation entitled *A Infanta D. Maria de Portugal (1521-1577) e a sua fortuna no sul de França* (The Infanta Maria of Portugal (1521-1577) and her fortune in southern France). With the abundant collection of sources in the archives he frequented, he embarked on the publication of other works such as *Portugueses no Estudo de Toulouse* (1954) - which would be published in French by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1970 - a work in which he compiled a list of all the Portuguese masters and scholars who had attended the University of Toulouse between the 13th and 17th centuries. Among them, he paid special attention to the remarkable figure of António de Gouveia (1510-1566), whose facets as a humanist, philosopher and master of law in various French schools he would develop in later studies and outline in the first exhaustive biography. However, he also studied other humanists and men of learning who participated in 16th-century European culture, such as Diogo de Teive and Francisco Sanchez, with the aim of deepening his understanding of the presence of the Portuguese in the world, one of the dominant themes among his interests. However, he did not neglect leading figures within Portugal who were part of the humanist movement, notably André de Resende and João de Barros. He also collected the names of Portuguese students who attended the Faculdade de Medicina [School of Medicine] in Montpellier in 1957, with an expanded publication in French by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1971, entitled *Les Portugais à l'Université de Montpellier. XIIe-XVIIe siècles*. He later focused on the Castilian universities of Alcalá de Henares and Salamanca, submitting his study on the latter to an academic competition, in a context that will be discussed below. These references clearly show that his interest in the university world was one of the focal points of his studies, with the aim of investigating intellectual and cultural trends, culminating in the publication of a History of Universities in 1983. At the same time as his work at the university that welcomed him, he carried out research in national and foreign archives (Paris, Simancas, London and Madrid), which



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led to his doctoral thesis *O reinado de D. António Prior do Crato, vol. I, (1580-1582)*, which he presented at the University of Coimbra in 1956 and was approved as a , with a grade of 18. Already holding two doctorates, he returned to Portugal in December 1960 and was admitted as a senior lecturer at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa [School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon].

At that time, he was influenced by the Annales School, which, in the wake of Lucien Febvre, insisted on constantly questioning whether history fulfilled its function as the “science of men in time,” specifying that historians should be interested in everything that had been marked by humans in the long adventure of generations. And “how to write history” was a concern that accompanied him throughout his career, on which he wrote several texts. The first was presented in 1963 at the Portuguese Academy of History, of which he had been a corresponding member since 1960. He gave it the title “On the possibility of a new ‘History of Portugal’, method and sources”, in which he discussed how to write a new history, raising a series of questions about the selection of sources and the epistemology to be followed in their use. He reviewed all the histories of Portugal published up to that point, distinguishing “those based on documentary evidence, those with a philosophical intent, those of a purely literary nature, those with a scientific perspective, those intended for dissemination and those with an apologetic basis”, proposing his own conception of history: [that it should be] “a work that is rigorous in its documentation, with bibliographical notes that substantiate its content, objective in meaning, scientifically supported, in a construction that corresponds to the intellectual demands of our time”. He reinforced this position: “It is in this fidelity to scientific history, backed by sources, rigorous in interpretation, embracing various branches of knowledge that serve to document and clarify the past, that my spirit was formed and, fortunately, still remains”. He further developed and deepened these assumptions in the aforementioned *História e Conhecimento Histórico* (1968) and in a paper presented at the Lisbon Academy of Sciences in 1977, when he was made a full member of this institution, with the title “Reflexão para uma ‘História de Portugal’ (Reflections on a ‘History of Portugal’), which he included in the introduction to the first volume of his *História de Portugal*, published in the same year. He never abandoned his penchant for understanding man in his historicity and interpreting the historical process, from the philosophers and historians he mentioned in his degree dissertation to those he read, among whom Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Benedetto Croce, Ortega y Gasset, Charles-Victor Langlois, Gabriel Monod, Charles Samaran, Henri-Irénée Marrou, Arnold J. Toynbee and Raymond Aron. He followed everything that was published in Portugal and abroad, especially in France, on the theory of history, which he considered an indispensable discipline for the formation of knowledge (Ler História, p. 139).

It was with this mental training and solid academic preparation that, upon being admitted to the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] in 1960, he was entrusted with teaching several subjects for six years. However, his absorbing work as a teacher did not prevent him from publishing books, more than 400 articles and hundreds of entries, notably in the *Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira*, *Verbo*; *Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de Cultura* and *Dicionário de História de Portugal*, dir. Joel Serrão, from giving lectures - in which he revealed his talent as a brilliant speaker - to organising or participating in various



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scientific meetings in Portugal and abroad. Meanwhile, he was also working to apply for a position as associate professor in October 1962, writing his dissertation *Portugueses no Estudo de Salamanca* (Portuguese Students at the University of Salamanca), following on from the works mentioned above. The first volume covered the period from 1250 to 1550. It was an inventory of Portuguese masters and scholastic who attended the University of Salamanca in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and the influence that the doctrines taught there had on Portuguese culture. An unforeseen incident altered the project: the academic crisis that erupted due to the official ban on Student Day. For defending hundreds of students who had gathered on the University grounds to celebrate it on 7 April 1962, against whom the Minister of Education had ordered the deployment of a large police contingent - which he considered disproportionate and damaging to the University's prestige - he accepted Lindley Cintra's invitation to try to calm things down. For several hours, they contained the explosive atmosphere, "susceptible to a physical confrontation with serious consequences" (Meio século... p. 17). Marcelo Caetano was then rector of the University. Following this stance, in open defiance of the dictatorial regime in power, the competition was cancelled by ministerial decision and only after three years was the vacancy reopened, finally granting him the title of professor. However, the next and natural step in his teaching career, which was to become a full professor, for which he applied in 1967, was denied him as retaliation for the position he had taken in the events of 1962. Without ever neglecting teaching and research, he embarked on writing *Itinerários de El-Rei D. Sebastião (1569-1572)*, completed with a second volume covering the years 1573-1578, which were published by the Portuguese Academy of History in 1987. He was interested in the subject because it provided a geo-historical perspective, particularly in the fields of regional history, anthroponymy and toponymy. Along the same lines are the *Itinerários de El-Rei D. João II (1481-1495)*, published by the same institution in 1993.

When his aspiration to a professorship was frustrated, he accepted the invitation of Azeredo Perdigão, President of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, to direct the Portuguese Cultural Centre in Paris, an institution he had created with the aim of promoting Portuguese culture in France. Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão was its first director, a position he held until 1972. It was a new return to France, now to develop an activity as if it were a "cultural embassy", "which sought to convey an image of Portuguese intellectual life" (Andreia da Silva Almeida, p. 375). During his five years in office, he brought a fruitful dynamism to the Centre by promoting conferences, colloquiums, concerts, book and art exhibitions, alongside an editorial programme that resulted in the publication of 60 books and catalogues. Among the publications, the creation of the Calouste Gulbenkian Cultural Centre Archives in 1969 was particularly significant. In the first volume, he presented its objectives as being "a doctrinal and informative body that aims to elevate the values of Portuguese culture". The collaboration was open to teachers, researchers, French and Portuguese scholars and Lusophiles from all over the world. It responded to the aspirations of a large number of enthusiasts of Portuguese culture and was an ideal tool for analysing the cultural issues of its time. It was the height of the "Marcelist spring", when the country was beginning to open up to international capitalism. The Centre's scope was broadened by the support its director provided to Portuguese scholarship holders and political exiles in



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Paris who were seeking specialisation in their scientific fields.

Once the mission was over and he returned to Portugal, several colleagues from the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] insisted that he return to the teaching staff. The postponed lecture for full professor was then given on 6 April 19, obtaining unanimous approval. He was awarded the chair of History of Portuguese Discoveries, which he combined with the regency of History of Portuguese Culture and his appointment as Director of the Infante D. Henrique Historical Institute, where he founded, in collaboration with Jorge Borges de Macedo, the *Revista Portugaliae Historica*. He devoted himself “heart and soul” to the ideals that had always formed the basis of his understanding as a teacher, historian, researcher and also as an educator. His awareness of his teaching was so strong that he included it in the pages of his “intellectual testament”: “research, as a support for teaching, has always been one of the passions of my life. Both form a whole for any teacher who is conscious of their mission”; “I did not wish to be a mere transmitter of knowledge. In order to be profound, teaching must be based on the constant research to which teachers subject their areas of teaching” (Meio século... p. 20). He continued to publish fundamental works in line with his interest in the theory and methodology of history, which resulted in a survey of authors and works: *História Breve da Historiografia Portuguesa* (1962) and *Historiografia Portuguesa...* 3 vols, (1972-1974), leaving unpublished a fourth volume devoted to Historiography in the 19th century. In a related field, chroniclers such as Fernão Lopes, Rui de Pina, Garcia de Resende, António de Castilho and Damião de Góis deserved special attention.

Believing he had found the stability he desired in his professorship, he was surprised in October 1973 by Marcelo Caetano's invitation to become Rector of the University of Lisbon. However, he sensed that the times were not favourable for the task to be an easy one. He accepted the position more out of personal loyalty than conviction, as he was fully aware of the tense political climate of opposition to the regime at the time. And, in fact, a few days later, the Revolution of 25 April broke out, abruptly interrupting his career. He submitted his resignation as rector on the 26th, which was accepted on the 29th. On the same date, he was dismissed from teaching at the University, in a purge carried out in the name of democracy.

Deeply shaken by his dismissal from the teaching profession, which he considered a revolting act of injustice, the Portuguese Academy of History provided him with a space to continue his work as a historian, researcher and man of action. He had been a Corresponding Member since July 1960 and was elected Full Member in 1968. In February 1975, his peers elected him President, considering that his experience could be useful in setting a more dynamic course and confronting the adversaries to its existence. Veríssimo Serrão took up the challenge and committed himself to giving it a vigorous and innovative scientific impetus. He broke with the traditional style of the Academy, imposing a new course of action in line with his personality, which he defined as follows: “I am a man of will who does not give up on the projects that inspire him” (Correspondence with Marcelo Caetano, p. 336). And in a short time, the signs of change became visible: “Life in the past was one of closed-door sessions attended by a handful of academics, with admission restricted to researchers without any work to their name and leaving out names of national prestige; I cannot



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and will not accept this situation” (Idem, pp. 106-107). He adds in another passage: “Now we are throwing open the doors of the Academy so that people can judge the value of the communications we present and the national objectives that the Academy can fulfil” (Idem, p. 75). Two years later, he presented the results: “we hold regular sessions attended by 25 to 30 academics – something never seen before at the Palácio da Rosa – and an audience that follows the debates with interest” (Idem, p. 77). This course of action silenced the voices that opposed its existence.

In view of the regime then in force, in which the Institution and the President, its most visible face, were targeted, Veríssimo Serrão clarified his political position, stating that he had never been a monarchist or a Salazarist, nor had he been attracted by the idea of restoring the monarchy, “as I was committed to liberal republicanism, which I held until the mid-1960s, when I became convinced that without strong executives there can be no governance in the world that emerged from the Second World War” (Idem, p. 84). In the second part of this statement, he clearly draws a chronological line in his political choice. He distances himself from the Salazar government, from which he suffered the consequences, which were referred to in competitions at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities], having already experienced persecution by the political police as a student in Coimbra for his membership of the Movimento de Unidade Democrática Juvenil (MUDJ) (Vitor Serrão, “Historiador incontornável”). In the aforementioned statement, he clearly refers to the government of Marcelo Caetano, in whose “spring” of regime renewal he believed, in addition to having established a personal friendship with him and devoted unlimited loyalty after 25 April. This stance, while on the one hand showing his staunch support for the former President of the Council, on the other hand, in his “intellectual testament”, written in 2000, presents his fundamental choices with other nuances: “due to my individualistic upbringing, I never joined any parties or factions, limiting myself to debating ideas that are most in line with my way of being. What has always inspired me has been to serve culture as a teacher and researcher” (Meio século... p. 18). And indeed, this is the facet that prevails when reading his historiographical work, which is rigorous in its sources and devoid of interpretations other than the vast documentation on which it is based. Despite his adherence to Marcelism, a dispassionate and objective reading of his vast work does not allow us to say that Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão used his writing of history and his teaching as a historian to defend the Estado Novo.

In his innovative work at the Academy, he invited prestigious historians to join, a course of action that would remain constant until 2006, when, after 30 years, he stepped down as president. At the same time, he launched scientific initiatives which, in the first year of his term (1975), resulted in a colloquium on the role of regional areas in the historical formation of Portugal, a favourite field of his research, as he considered their asymmetries to be “living cells of the Portuguese organism” (Ibidem. 31). He had discovered the importance of regional and local history in the research carried out in the archives of southern France. The theme would become a constant feature of his multifaceted studies, which he passed on in seminars at the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] when he was reinstated as a lecturer and later in the supervision of master’s and doctoral theses. The following year, he organised a colloquium to commemorate the centenary



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of the death of Alexandre Herculano, which was to take place in 1977, but which he brought forward to October 1976, choosing as its theme Alexandre Herculano à luz do nosso Tempo (Alexandre Herculano in the light of our times), in which he contributed with studies on different facets of the historian. In the same year, he published 'Herculano e a consciência do liberalismo português' (The Marquis of Pombal and the consciousness of Portuguese liberalism) (1977), going on to devote other studies to this figure of the renewal of historiography and 19th-century liberalism, for whom he had felt a genuine fascination since his youth. This is also an example of the special attention he paid to great personalities who embodied periods of change and political debate. Along these lines were the celebrations of the bicentenary of the Marquis of Pombal (1982), to whom he dedicated a colloquium and published the work *Marquês de Pombal. O Homem, o Diplomata e o Estadista* (Marquês de Pombal: The Man, the Diplomat and the Statesman), a politician representative of the end of the Old Regime, whose governmental measures, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment - more pragmatic than theoretical - were precursors of the Liberal Revolution. With the same purpose, he extolled the profile of the last sovereign of Portugal, writing his biography entitled *D. Manuel II (1889-1932). The King and the Man in the Light of History* (1990), in addition to dedicating other studies to him.

However, he found another outlet for his work as a professor at the Universidade Livre, created in 1977, the first private higher education institution established after the 25 April revolution. He was one of its founders, alongside other teachers who had been removed from public education, where he became head of the History Department and taught various subjects. It was during his years away from public education that he began to draw up plans for a History of Portugal. In 1977, the first volume was published with the subtitle *State, Homeland and Nation* – the values he had always believed in and defended.

Meanwhile, he resumed teaching in the 1979-1980 academic year, leading a seminar dedicated to "Portuguese Regional Areas". Upon learning that polytechnic education was being introduced in the country, he expressed his desire to collaborate in what would be created in Santarém and was invited by Vítor Crespo, Minister of Education, to chair the respective installation committee. He then nurtured the project of creating university education alongside the polytechnic, which would be the embryo of a University of Ribatejo. However, profound differences with Professor José Augusto Seabra, Minister of Education, led to his dismissal from the presidency of the Polytechnic Institute in 1984. He then returned to the teaching staff of the Faculdade de Letras [School of Arts and Humanities] on a full-time basis in October 1985, where he remained for ten years of uninterrupted activity. This was the last phase of his career as a professor, during which he devoted himself entirely to teaching, without ever ceasing to write and publish. In the undergraduate programme, he taught courses on the History of Portuguese Discoveries, History of Brazil, Numismatics, Modern History of Portugal and Introduction to History. At the same time, he was involved in postgraduate studies, supervising master's and doctoral projects.

In taking stock of his career, he acknowledged that his activity in the field of historiography was somewhat scattered, conditioned by his teaching, which was inspired by the concept of 'general culture', and by the



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supervision of master's and doctoral students, whose topics were very diverse. However, a review of his extensive and diverse bibliography shows that he not only interprets the construction of the Portuguese historical fabric, but also focuses on relations with other countries, such as France, different regions of the Iberian Peninsula, Brazil and Latin America.

His studies include *Historical Relations between Portugal and France (1430-1481)* (1975) covers a period of almost half a century, highlighting the political and commercial relations that Portugal maintained with France at the end of the Middle Ages, which in this country corresponds to the last phase of the Hundred Years' War and, on the Portuguese side, to the reign of Afonso V and the beginning of the reign of João II.

His interest in Spanish culture emerged while attending the Archivo General de Simancas under the guidance of his teacher Léon Bourdon. There he met young assistants who were preparing their doctorates and would go on to become leading figures in the historiography of the neighbouring country, befriending some of them, which he further developed within the Academies of History of Spain and Portugal. The relationship between these sister institutions became intense and took root with meetings in both countries. He regularly participated in summer courses organised by Spanish universities, namely El Escorial, La Rábida (Huelva), Valladolid, Guadalajara and La Granda (Oviedo), with the Portuguese Academy of History continuing the latter. In recognition of Veríssimo Serrão's efforts to deepen relations between the two countries, Spain awarded him the prestigious Prince of Asturias Prize for Social Sciences (1995). In his speech, the current monarch stated that "no one has done as much as Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão to bring Portuguese and Spanish historians closer together".

While overseas expansion and the Empire were another area of his research and teaching, Brazil occupied a privileged place. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Rio de Janeiro in 1965, he published *O Rio de Janeiro no século XVI* (Rio de Janeiro in the 16th century), vol. I. *Estudo Histórico* (Historical Study), vol. II, *Documentos dos Arquivos Portugueses* (Documents from the Portuguese Archives). However, the great impetus given to relations with Brazil resulted from contacts between the Historical and Geographical Institute of Rio de Janeiro and the Portuguese Academy of History, while he was its president. This success triggered a network of exchanges that gradually extended to Historical and Geographical Institutes in other states, thus consolidating the desired closer cultural ties and friendship with the immense Luso-Brazilian universe. Of particular note is his participation in the major anthology *Iberoamérica. Una comunidad* (1989), to which he contributed eight texts. In recognition of Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão's merit in this rapprochement, in 1978 the Brazilian Academy of Letters elected him as a member. The link with Brazil was the starting point for expansion into the vast Ibero-American world, based on institutional models. This expansion has resulted in the Academy of Spanish History and its counterparts in American countries now forming part of this cultural universe. Veríssimo Serrão was the great driving force behind the construction of this cultural universe and is therefore a natural member of each of these academies and co-founder of the Association of Academies of Ibero-America.

In the first volume of his *History of Portugal* (1977), he explained his purpose in writing it: "History was



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conceived with love for Portugal, showing the greatness of the nation we were – how and why we were – in order to extract from the work the lessons that the present imposes” [Correspondence with Marcelo Caetano, p.19]. He adds: “Research is not just a need to fill the spirit, but a moral obligation for those who believe in the teachings of the past” (Idem, p. 49). He notes the style chosen: “This is a history viewed in its global aspect, halfway between pedantic erudition and dissemination without notes, so that the reader is not bored. But also so as not to leave them without answers to the thousand problems that the origin of nationality raises for the people of our time” (Idem, p. 55). The initial plan for three volumes was gradually expanded, which he justified in the prefaces as they were published, eventually reaching 18, which he completed in 2011. It is a very extensive work, with a thematic scope that integrates, in a coherent discursive structure, the aspects to which he devoted his work as a historian. It articulates the political, diplomatic, overseas, economic, social, demographic, welfare, religious and cultural dimensions: “a great canvas of the Portuguese historical journey (...) an overview of the various manifestations of our collective life, conceived as multidimensional knowledge” (Ler História, p. 140). One of the merits of this History lies not only in its temporal scope – from the beginnings of nationality to the late 20th century – but also in the fact that it is the work of a single historian, a case without parallel in contemporary historiography and perhaps unrepeatable. It is indisputable that this work has projected the history of Portugal abroad, thanks to the global vision it presents, its documentary basis, the coherent articulation of its facets and the clarity of its exposition, in keeping with the conception of history that he always advocated and wrote about.

As a result of his vast work, he was invited to become a member of several Portuguese academies (Portuguese Academy of History, Lisbon Academy of Sciences, Navy Academy, Geographical Society and Historical Society of the Independence of Portugal) and foreign academies (Academie des Sciences, Inscriptions et Belles Lettres de Toulouse, Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (Rio de Janeiro), Brazilian Academy of Letters (Rio de Janeiro), Letters and Arts (São Paulo), Royal Historical Society, University College (London). The significance of his scientific work was also recognised through a number of honorary distinctions, including Commander of the National Order of the Southern Cross (Brazil, 1967), Gold Medal of the City of Santarém (1968), Commander of the Order of Public Instruction (Portugal, 1972), Honorary Medal of the University of Coimbra (2007) and the award of the national prizes Alexandre Herculano Prize (1955), National History Prize (1955); Aboim Sande de Lemos Prize, 1992) and Grand Cross of the Military Order of Santiago da Espada, for Scientific, Literary and Artistic Merit, 2006); and foreign awards (Grand Cross of the Order of Civil Merit of Alfonso X the Wise (Spain, 1995), Prince of Asturias Award for Social Sciences (Spain, 1995). He received honorary doctorates from Paul Valéry University, Montpellier (1974), Complutense University of Madrid (1995), University of Extremadura (2003) and Santarém Polytechnic Institute (2011).

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