

# The war in History and the History of war: historiographic profiles in the syntheses of Portugal

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**Abstract:** The historiographic studies of the First World War in the most important syntheses of Portugal history follows *pari passu* the main historiographic changes during the twentieth century and the Portuguese self-concept as a nation. The historiographic discourse on war reflects the political paths and the impact of the dominant historiographical perspectives. The Estado Novo (1926-74) dictatorship promoted the development of historical studies, especially certain fields and specialties, with emphasis on diplomatic and military history and the history of overseas Portuguese expansion. Both served the interests of the political regime. Our study will start from the History of Portugal called “de Barcelos”, produced in the context of dictatorship (1928-1935), and partly influenced by historic traditional currents, continuing with the analysis of João Ameal synthesis (1940); go forward to the modern syntheses produced in democracy time (António Henrique de Oliveira Marques [1972-74, and José Mattoso [1992-94]), that reflect important changes in the scope of our historiography in general, in the concept of Portugal, and mainly in the visions of Portuguese participation in the Great War.

**Keywords:** Historiography; historiographic trends; history of war; concept / idea of Portugal, World War.

**Resumo:** Os modelos de análise historiográficos da I Guerra Mundial nas sínteses da História de Portugal acompanham *pari passu* as principais mudanças da nossa historiografia ao longo do século XX e do autoconceito de Portugal. Ao longo do século XX, o discurso historiográfico sobre a guerra, sofreu as vicissitudes da política e a influência da alteração das perspetivas historiográficas dominantes. Durante a ditadura do Estado Novo (1926-74) foram, especialmente, desenvolvidos os estudos de determinadas temáticas e especialidades, com destaque para a história diplomática e militar e a história da expansão portuguesa. Uma e outra serviam os interesses que mais aproveitavam ao regime. A nossa análise arrancará da História de Portugal dita “de Barcelos”, inicialmente produzida em contexto de ditadura (1928-1935), e em parte influenciada pelas tradicionais correntes da história, prosseguindo com a análise da síntese de João Ameal (1940); trilhando caminho até às mais recentes sínteses concebidas em tempo de democracia (António Henrique de Oliveira Marques [1972-74], e José Mattoso [1992-94]), que refletem importantes alterações no âmbito da nossa historiografia em geral, no conceito de Portugal, e das visões da participação portuguesa na Grande Guerra em particular.

**Palavras-chave:** Historiografia, tendências historiográficas, história da guerra, ideia de Portugal, I Guerra Mundial.

Historiography is a discipline of history that proceeds to the critical study of historical production, effecting the evaluation and classification of historical, schooling or academic knowledge, allowing to assess, in particular, the delays or historiography advances respecting to others. The study of historiographical currents, the professionalization working levels (degrees of scholarship, specialization, knowledge and distinction), as well as the greater or lesser political and ideological tendencies of historical constructions. Historiographic studies, within the branches of History, demonstrated the specific canons of interpretation, distinctive conventions of writing, the historiographical currents and perspectives of approach, relating them with personal projects, but also, and above all, with political and cultural projects connected with an academic and statehood function disseminated in different historical contexts. In this sense, it can be deduced that all historical production depends on different ways of conceiving history, and can, from a critical analysis, define intellectual (cultural) profiles, nowadays known as paradigms (models).

What we want to emphasize is the distinctive ideas, currents and ideology uttered in the authors' discourse, relating it to the way in which they construct the historical plot on the First World War. In this sense, this article, therefore, contains an attempt to underlying our main subject emphasizing the main tendencies in the Portuguese syntheses regarding the historic context analysis of First World War and reviewing the Portuguese historian's contributions that writes about it. So, the scope of the article includes a look at the main synthesis and a state of art of the twentieth century in Portugal considering the raise of trends in historiography that began when it became a new discipline in universities in the nineteenth century. That means it's important to address this issue to the historiography of war and historiographical interpretations of the phenomenon, by confronting the *different* perspectives in changed times. The heritage historiographical approach in the late nineteenth century and that came, in Portugal, until the 50's of the twentieth century is the called *positivism* that privileged the chronological time as a linear sequence of facts. So, the Republican pedagogical ideal marked by *positivism* defended a scientific, rational and secular education (Proença, 2009). On the other hand, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the *historicism* that preferred the individualist facts, flourished in various disciplinary areas, namely in the field of political and military history and in the Discoveries like a product of Portuguese nationalism (Polanah, 2011 e Freitas, 2013). Finally, the rise of the national imaginary, in the nineteenth century, prove the great importance of the sentiment of nationality. In Portugal, the intellectual historians that are marked by different national colors, promoted the rise of the Portuguese Discoveries and colonial policy as national identity factors. (Polanah, 2011)

Beginning by analyzing the first history of Portugal published after the war - the history known as "de Barcelos", that was published the first volume in 1928.

The structure of this compilation, conforming to a monumental model, was produced to celebrate the eighth centenary of the nationality foundation, composed by ten volumes, abundantly illustrated, and the first seven were published between 1928 and 1935. The seven volumes follow a chronological narrative, by kingdoms and dynasties, maintaining a uniform structure, dividing in five epochs, and within these in thematic units of: "Political life", "Economic life" or "Economic organization", "Cultural life" and "Portuguese overseas expansion". The seventh volume, which corresponds to the fifth period (1816-1918),

was published in 1935, contains 799 pages, of which only 85 are dedicated to the Republic period, and of these only 45 pages relate to First World War under the title “Portugal na Primeira Guerra, 1914-1918”.

The four authors of this section (Damião Peres, Joaquim de Carvalho, Carlos Passos and Ângelo Ribeiro) have an academic education in History, Philosophy or Literature, highlighting the first two that developed their teaching and research activity at the University of Coimbra as historians. They are educated in the republican cultural spirit, which privileged freedom of speech and schooling as a central factor of social transformation and the “regeneration of homeland”. None of them adhered to anti-republican or monarchist movements, or even to *Integralismo Lusitano* (Lusitanian Integralism), an anti-parliamentary, nationalist and traditionalist current that was in vogue between 1914 and 1932. It seems that this synthesis is not contaminated with past (conservative) ideology.

The work is a demand of the “Estado Novo” (1926-1974), an authoritarian and corporatist political regime which ended the liberal period in Portugal. The ideological and propagandistic goals of Estado Novo are evident in the self-designation, which marks the beginning of a new era. The sponsorship of this synthesis, commissioned by the rising Estado Novo, and produced in its context, can induce the most unsuspecting reader to think that it would be a historiographical product with credited ideological content.

However, the work is not marked by only the performing time. The authors studied and began teaching and writing in times of Republic (liberal period). Their formation is republican, and this fact is not insignificant in the “free mode” as they produce the historian’s work. The reading of war remains free of anti-Republican bias, evoking the main internal and external facts that determined Portugal’s entrance into the war.

Nevertheless, from the historiographic point of view, this synthesis is guided by the division of the History of Portugal into dynasties and reigns. It privileges political, diplomatic and military analysis, in a methodical and historicist (event) perspective (Torgal, . Portugal appears like a great colonialist nation – one of the most important symbols of national unity throughout our history –, it could not remain unrelated to the conflict. In addition to the ethical and historical reasons invoked, especially the solidarity of small peoples against then German militarist and imperialist arrogance – the most practical reasons for our agreement with England and the defense of a long-threatened colonial heritage were imposed (Damião Peres *et al.*, vol. VII, p. 494). The alliance with England is justified by historical treaties (since Windsor), which imposed weighty obligations. In this context, the imperative idea of protecting our colonies in Africa (one of the most important signs of our nationality promoted by the war party support the decision to partaken in the world’s conflict.

The second compilation analyzed is a synthesis that has a different character from the previous one, from the responsibility of João Ameal, a fervent Catholic monarchist, who joined the *Integralismo Lusitano*, Ameal developed a conception of doctrinal and retrograde history regardless of having college education in literature, and research in the fields of philosophy and history – areas of expertise that he bequeathed a remarkable work (Pinto, 1995). The *História de Portugal. Das origens a 1940* (History of Portugal from its origins to 1940) is a synthesis that highlights the singularity of the facts, in a chronological chain, and qualifying them, without proceeding to any critical distance. It had the first edition in 1940 and gained the Alexandre Herculano award three years later (Torgal, 1996, pp. 244-

246). The main author's objective is to present an ideal history, great figures, glorification of the martyrs, soldiers and heroes of war, glorious times and past events, undervaluing social, economic and cultural dimensions, at a time when strong winds were blowing of *École des Annales* in Western Europe<sup>55</sup>. In his point of view, history should fulfill a pedagogical function, a mixture of art, passion, ethics and science. His way of making history seems like a catechism, putting forward the idea of a glorious colonial past and a great Portuguese empire that was in danger during the First Portuguese Republic (1910–1926).

It blames the republican (parliamentary) regime for the constant popular uprising and for all politico-military misdeeds that, in its view, have called into question national honor and glory.

Consequently, and in accordance with the line taken in other parts of his book, he emphasized: “Portugal é uma nação que aceita os seus imperativos históricos, é visto como um motivo de orgulho, um modelo de atuação: a sua história espelha o seu trabalho ao serviço de Deus e a vontade de construir e manter um império<sup>56</sup>.”

Therefore, João Ameal's History of Portugal appeals to traditional Catholic values and the courage of the Portuguese against liberal, Masonic and anti-clerical Republican ideals that he classifies as intemperate, without respecting leadership, order and hierarchy.

The following compilation was written 32 years later, it is the History of Portugal authored by A. H. Oliveira Marques: published in first time in 2 volumes (in the USA); country where the historian exiled and where it exerted teaching functions in several American universities between 1965 and 1970 (Freitas, 2009, p. 191). The compilation was reissued in 1972–1974 in Portugal, in 3 volumes, corresponding to a new perspective of approach to the evolution of Portuguese society from the first peoples who inhabited the Iberian Peninsula until the end of the Estado Novo.

Oliveira Marques is representative of a historical approach that values the critical analysis of events, basing it on an exceptional knowledge of historical sources. The two periods of election of the studies that published are, respectively, the Middle Ages and the First Portuguese Republic (1910–1926). Oliveira Marques represents with Joel Serrão, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho *et al.* a generation of historians who renewed the vision of the History of Portugal with new perspectives of approach, incorporating harmoniously and fluently the European historiographical currents of that time (*Annales* and *Nouvelle Histoire*, in particular). In the same way, it connects history with the social sciences, and has therefore renewed and expanded the framework of historical research by opening the field of history to the study of all dimensions of daily human activity, hitherto little or nothing (table, death, hunting, clothing ...) and, in this field, was a forerunner of today's micro-history (history of everyday life). He has the author of several books and articles on daily life.

On the motivations that induced him to produce the compilation in 1972, he states: “Que nada havia de recomendável que um professor de história de Portugal pudesse aconselhar aos seus alunos como obra de conjunto.”<sup>57</sup> (*cit. in* Mendes, 1996, p. 321).

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<sup>55</sup> This historiographical current fight against the hegemony of political history, criticize the notion of historical fact and focusing on economic and social history (Bourdé & Martin, 2003: 119–135).

<sup>56</sup> “Portugal is a nation that accepts its historical imperatives, is seen as a source of pride, a model of action: its history mirrors its work in the service of God and willingness to build and maintain an empire” (our translation).

<sup>57</sup> “That nothing was advisable that a professor of history of Portugal could advise his students as a joint work.” (Our translation).

The text was planned to achieve a wide audience, therefore was chosen the objectivity and synthesis, removing the ideological sense in the historical discourse. But what is more important to emphasize is that political and military history ceased to be the central core of the work, being referenced in articulation with the different fields of historical reality including economy, society and culture veins. (Mendes, 1996, pp. 322-323).

As for the intervention of Portugal in First World War, Oliveira Marques advances with the three main reasons that, in his point of view, led Portugal's entry into the war under the British pressure:

- 1) The importance of protecting the Portuguese colonies, mainly in Africa, in face of the 1898 and 1913 agreements between England and Germany to share the Portuguese overseas domains,
- 2) The recognition of the new republican state, in the Western European context of most monarchical regimes, and
- 3) The demarcation vis-a-vis of Germanophilism and the neutrality of Spain regarding the conflict, looking for prestige and independence in Western Europe context.

It does not give special emphasis to the Battle of La Lys, preferring to explore the social and economic consequences of the unsuccessful military moment.

In summary, Oliveira Marques's History of Portugal represents a new way of making history, following the international trends of similar compilations. A pattern that will reproduce, in a more detailed way, in the eleventh volume of the "Nova História de Portugal" printed in 1991-1992 (thirteen volumes), that he coordinated with Joel Serrão, entitled: "Da Monarquia à República", which he wrote himself.

Last of all, a reference to the History of Portugal, coordinated by José Mattoso and published between 1992 and 1993. The sixth volume, entitled "A Segunda Fundação (1890-1926)", is signed by Rui Ramos, professor of Contemporary History at the New University of Lisbon, representing a new generation of historians. Rui Ramos supports its analysis of the reasons for Portugal's entry into First World War, namely in diplomatic *correspondence* (his main historical source).

At first, it emphasizes the troubled and difficult relationship between the Republican Portuguese government and the British crown, which conditioned the international option to reduce Portuguese participation. The Great Britain delaying to recognize the Portuguese republican regime. From your point of view, it highlights the weaknesses and the failings of the republican regime in the diplomatic management services, especially with Great Britain, before and during the war. In external point of view, Portuguese military intervention in war alongside England it's a way of strengthening ties with a great 'friendly' power of those who feared the alignment with Spain of Alfonso XIII and the German threat in the colonies. From the internal point of view, the entry into the war conditioned the parties to a "sacred backward economic union" that guarantees political supremacy to the Portuguese Republic Party (PRP). A kind of republican opportunism!

Following, it highlights the enormous war effort for a "limited" Portugal (scarifying of manpower), with a weak and backward economy (lower level of socio-economic development): in Africa (30,000 men) and in Flanders (50,000,000 men). The idea of a small

Portugal compared to the great imperialist powers (England, France *et al.*). This effort was seen as unbridled and unpopular, one of the reasons for the *coup d'état* of Sidónio Pais<sup>58</sup> (December 5, 1917). This overthrow of republic regime that imposing the dictatorship of Sidónio Pais was against the war and the demagoguery of the Republican Party. The republican regime was interrupted by a dictatorship led by a pro-German, and this, to him, is a sign of the weakness of the republican dream.

#### Conclusion

The four syntheses of Portugal examined, only one contains an accentuated ideological and traditionalist tendency - that of João Ameal, historian of the regime. The Portuguese History "de Barcelos", although it places special place on political and military issues, unrevealed the ideological political factors of the regime that sponsored it. Despite this, however, the idea of Portugal as a great colonial country persists as an inheritance of late nineteenth-century Portuguese nationalism. The 30's and 40's of the twentieth century, corresponding to the heyday of the **promotion of the glorious colonial Portugal** (Discoveries put in the national identity profile). Only in the 70's a first synthesis arises, made under the influence of the most recent historiographical European currents (*Annales* and *Nouvelle Histoire*), devaluing political and military factors in the traditional sense, and relating them with the economic and social one. **The idea of Portugal is not based on regime ideology.** Finally, in the most recent synthesis, wrote by Rui Ramos, makes an analysis of the Republican War policy stressing the weakness of Portugal's position (a small and weak country) in the peninsular and Western European context and the failure of the opportunism of the Portuguese Republican Party in attempting of uniting the country around the Portuguese participation in the conflict. Nowadays in the Portugal synthesis, Portugal is seen as a poor nation with limited role-playing of *affirmation* in *international* politics, during the First Republic (1910-1926) and the Estado Novo (1926-1974).

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<sup>58</sup> He was a military and politician, Ambassador of Portugal in Berlin, Minister of War, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was the fourth President of the Portuguese Republic (28 of April of 1918 to 14 of December of 1918) which imposed a dictatorship.

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