

A. H. de Oliveira Marques (1933-2007): Historiography and Citizenship*

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When António Henrique Rodrigo de Oliveira Marques passed away on 24 January 2007, one of the key names in Portuguese historiography in the second half of the twentieth century disappeared, the author who had, above all, been jointly responsible for the emergence of what can best be described as the 'first modernity of the Middle Ages' and, at the same time, for his renowned studies of the First Republic.

Born in Cascais on 23 August 1933, he completed his secondary education in Lisbon and, after briefly studying at the Higher Institute of Economic and Financial Sciences (Lisbon Technical University), he took a first degree in Historical and Philosophical Sciences at the Lisbon University Faculty of Letters (FL/UL), completing his studies in 1956 with a dissertation entitled *A Sociedade em Portugal nos séculos XII a XV* (Portuguese Society from the 12th to the 15th Century), under the supervision of Virgínia Rau (1907-1973). After spending a year on a scholarship studying in the Federal Republic of Germany, where he worked with Hermann Kellenbenz (1913-1990)¹ at the University of Würzburg on the early stages of what was to be his Ph.D. thesis, he was hired as an assistant lecturer at the faculty where he had taken his first degree. He remained a lecturer there until 1964, responsible for teaching the subjects of *Paleography and Diplomatics*, *Medieval History* and (occasionally) *Theory of History*, and assisting Virgínia Rau in the teaching of *Portuguese History I*. In these first years of his university career, he also supervised the teaching, at his own faculty, of a seminar on "The Black Plague in Portugal" (which would result in a group paper, presented at the *First Historical Conference on Medieval Portugal* [Braga, 1959]. The co-authors of the paper were Iria Gonçalves, Luís A. de Oliveira Ramos and Humberto Baquero Moreno, with Virgínia Rau responsible for the brief introductory text.)²

Oliveira Marques was awarded a Ph.D. in 1960, presenting and defending as his thesis the study that he had begun years before in Germany.³ The jury at his thesis were Virgínia Rau and Manuel Lopes de Almeida (1900-1980; from Coimbra University) and the jury at the

* Adapted and updated version of HOMEM, Armando Luís de Carvalho – «A. H. de Oliveira Marques: percurso biográfico», in HOMEM; COELHO (Coord.), 2003: 11-17. This study, in its turn, was based on a speech (which had remained unpublished) delivered at the launching of a book by Oliveira Marques, in 1995.

¹ Oliveira Marques was to evoke the memory of this historian in the journal *Ler História*, 23 (1993): 117-124.

² RAU; MARQUES; GONÇALVES; RAMOS; MORENO, 1963.

³ MARQUES, 1959 and 1993.

complementary cross-examination sessions were once again Virgínia Rau and Manuel Heleno (1894-1970). On the awarding of his Ph.D., he was promoted to Senior Lecturer.

At the beginning of 1962, he completed the study that he was to present as his dissertation in the public competition for the position of Professor Extraordinary.⁴ But the “academic crisis” of that year was to make it impossible for quite some time to hold the public examinations involved in this process (for which Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão also presented himself as a candidate). Having taken a “position on the side of the students against the government” during the events of March/May (just like Serrão, as it happens), Oliveira Marques saw his public competition suspended twice, namely in May 1962 and November 1964. This second suspension coincided with an internal “intrigue” at his place of teaching, revealing some of the worst things that happened at that time in the Faculty of Letters of Lisbon University. As a form of protest, Oliveira Marques resigned from his position as Assistant Lecturer and, consequently, from the Civil Service.

Months later, he set off for the United States, where he joined the University of Alabama (Auburn) as an Associate Professor. He remained in the United States until 1969, later teaching at the University of Florida (Gainesville), as a Full Professor (1966 ff.). Dating from this period were his first works on 20th century Portugal (1967 ff., published in the reviews *O Tempo e o Modo* and *Ocidente*),⁵ as well as his project for a *History of Portugal*, to be published by Columbia University Press. He was to return to the United States in 1970 (March-June, as a Visiting Professor at the University of Minnesota [Minneapolis])⁶, and again in 1973 (September-November).⁷

Meanwhile, after Marcello Caetano (1906-1980) had risen to become head of government (1968), he decided to return to Portugal (1969, July), although he did not succeed in returning to the Civil Service; nonetheless, the Minister of National Education Veiga Simão awarded him a scholarship to study in Portugal and appointed him to a committee set up to study the reform of the degree courses offered by the country’s Faculties of Letters. It was during this phase that he was to be initiated as a freemason.

After the Revolution of 25 April 1974, and having abandoned his attempts to return to his former faculty (given the “revolutionary” turmoil that was being experienced there at the time), he accepted the position of Director of the National Library, where he remained from November of that year to December of the following year.

In July 1976, he was appointed Full Professor at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (UNL), initially on secondment, but later being given full tenure in February 1980; from November 1977 to October 1980, he chaired the Foundation Committee of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH) of the same university. As a member of the History Department at FCSH, he implemented the beginning of the Licentiate (introduced under the framework of the curricular reform of the minister Mário Sottomayor Cardia, Decree 53/78, prepared by a National Inter-University Committee, of which he himself was in fact a member⁸) and of the

⁴ MARQUES, 1968.

⁵ It is particularly interesting to consider, almost 40 years later, the series of articles MARQUES, 1967-1968-1969, in which the political personnel of the Monarchy and Republic are viewed from a clearly *prosopographic* viewpoint (generations/ages, places of birth, families, education/academic degrees, professions; the quantitative data are considerable), which makes these texts pioneering studies in Portuguese historiography.

⁶ At that time, he gave lectures at the Universities of Wisconsin (Madison) and Indiana (Bloomington).

⁷ He gave lectures at the Universities of Chicago, Illinois (Urbana) and Northern Illinois.

⁸ This Committee was chaired by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho and its members also included Luís de Albuquerque (1916-1992), Luís de Matos (1911-1995), José Sebastião da Silva Dias (1916-1994), José António Ferreira de Almeida (1913-1981) and José-Augusto França.

Master's Degree courses, particularly those in *Medieval History* and *19th and 20th-Century History* (which were created at the beginning of the 1980s).

In May 1982, his university paid homage to him and marked the 25 years of his academic career by publishing two volumes of *Estudos de História de Portugal* in his honor.

In 1993, he moved to the Department of German Studies, where he was responsible for coordinating the area relating to the *History of Culture*. Later, he also took part in setting up the Department of Political Science and International Relations.

In 2001/02, he officially retired.

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If there are any constant features to be found in Oliveira Marques' vast oeuvre, these can be identified as his capacity for synthesis, his facility for leading group projects and his propensity for "creating a School", for leaving a historiographic legacy. Let us look at some instances of these:

- a) His *Introdução à História da Agricultura* (Introduction to the History of Agriculture), which became a classic, was one of the decisive factors behind the emergence of a solid ruralism in the medievalist historiography of Portugal. And it is still used today as a textbook for introducing any young scholar to the theme. Without this pioneering work, it would not be easy to understand the appearance in the historiographic output of the 1970s and 1980s of monographs such as those by Robert Durand, Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho or Iria Gonçalves, with the result that there is now much discussion of the landed estates of monastic houses (such as Alcobaça), agrarian regions, spaces or landscapes (such as the lower Mondego basin or the regions situated between the Douro and Tagus rivers).
- b) The program that he sketched out at the end of the 1970s for research into the urban centers of medieval Portugal resulted in numerous monographs by his pupils (dealing with centers ranging from Aveiro to Guarda, Ponte de Lima to Silves, Chaves to Abrantes...) and in a first *Atlas das Cidades Medievais Portuguesas* (Atlas of Portuguese Medieval Cities).⁹ Curiously, these studies were very poorly received by some of the "yuppies" to be found amongst our geographical scholars.¹⁰
- c) More recently, he established a whole new avenue of research into 15th-century Portuguese manor houses, whose greatest developments are yet to come.¹¹
- d) His studies on 20th-century Portugal, and particularly on the First Republic, taking us back to the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, lie at the basis of the more rigorous study of this phase of Portugal's (relatively) recent past. Although he assumed from the outset a *militant* stance (studying the Republic as a way of attacking the regime that came afterwards), the fact nonetheless remains that such a stance did not, strictly speaking, turn

⁹ MARQUES; GONÇALVES; ANDRADE (ed.), 1990.

¹⁰ See, for example, the unfortunate review of João Carlos GARCIA published in *Ler História*, 21 (1991): 195-199.

¹¹ Although his disciple João Silva de Sousa (Universidade Nova de Lisboa / Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas) has already been responsible for the production of various master's degree dissertations in this area, especially for the Beira region.

these works into a biased form of historiography, of the kind that sometimes seeks to produce a certain kind of essay-writing particularly favored by the press, especially the weekly newspapers.

e) The collective works that he had been editing, with Joel Serrão, since the 1980s (the “Nova História de Portugal” [New History of Portugal] and the “Nova História da Expansão Portuguesa” [New History of the Portuguese Expansion]) have endowed Portuguese historiography at the turn of the century with some of the most erudite – I would even say, most scholarly – syntheses that it has ever seen, and they fully incorporate the results of the renewed interest in historical studies that Portugal has experienced, broadly speaking, over the last three decades; and contributing to these works were many of those who, in their capacity as students, either directly receiving academic guidance or purely and simply just through their reading, had learnt with Oliveira Marques, at least in part, the *historian’s trade*. It was therefore not in vain that Oliveira Marques had produced study guides, both for the Middle Ages and for the First Republic.

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In August 2003, Oliveira Marques reached the age-limit for civil servants, so that he necessarily became a *Jubilee Professor* at UNL. Although his relations with the Institution had cooled somewhat – for reasons that have nothing to do with us here – he nonetheless ended up, in the autumn, giving a lecture at his FCSH. Yet the great celebrations organized to mark his retirement (“cum laude”) ended up being held elsewhere, since, having enjoyed an assiduous and fruitful relationship with the History Departments of the Faculties of Letters of Coimbra and Porto Universities¹² since the 1970s, he expressed the pleasure that he would have in giving lectures at both faculties; which they naturally accepted with delight and honor:

- In Porto, the date chosen for his lecture (20 May) was the one that marks the “History Department Day” each year¹³: Oliveira Marques gave a lecture there entitled “The genealogical history of the common man: micro-history or macro-history?”¹⁴;
- In Coimbra, everything took place on 13 November, the day when Oliveira Marques gave his lecture entitled “Directions in Portuguese Historiography”¹⁵, together with the launch of the book *Na jubilação universitária de A. H. de Oliveira Marques* (on the university retirement of A. H. de Oliveira Marques)¹⁶; at the end of the session, and to the complete surprise of all those in the room, the man being honored and João Alves Dias showed the audience the first copies of the *Atlas Histórico de Portugal e do Ultramar Português* (Historical Atlas of Portugal and the Portuguese Overseas Territories, which had arrived

¹² At the second faculty, he was, from 2000 onwards, a member of the Editorial Board of the faculty magazine, the *Revista da Faculdade de Letras* [UP]. *História*, 3rd series.

¹³ Since 2006, this department has been known as the *Department of History and Political and International Studies*.

¹⁴ MARQUES, 2003; the photograph that opens the book referred to in note 16 relates to this very occasion.

¹⁵ MARQUES, 2004b; on the same date, Coimbra University marked the centenary of the death of the scholar of *Medicine* and the University Rector, António Augusto da Costa Simões (1819-1903).

¹⁶ HOMEM; COELHO (Coord.), 2003.

fresh from the printers)¹⁷, a working instrument whose importance for the near future does not need to be stressed here.

At the end of this jubilee (retirement) year, two general assessments could be made:

- a) Above all else, many fundamental contributions were still expected of Oliveira Marques: the completion of the collective works that he was editing or co-editing (and, of these, the *Nova História de Portugal* (New History of Portugal) had finally (c. 1996) entered into “cruising speed”)¹⁸; the publication of his long-awaited *Lisboa Medieval* (Medieval Lisbon); and the continuation of the training of new cohorts of students.
- b) At the same time, a path of sustained intellectual development had been embarked on, which maintained that History, as the oldest Human Science, had its own discourse, vocabulary and methods; this was a necessarily mistrustful posture that was consequently suspicious of certain interdisciplinary practices that tended to place the historian in the position of a genuine “vassal” in relation to concepts and methods that were in no way consolidated (some might see in this a *neopositivist* stance; would this necessarily be a crime...?¹⁹); on the other hand, he had shown himself to be somewhat indifferent to “fashions”, “crazes” or “post-modernisms”, being the author who in 1964 – in the first edition of *A Sociedade Medieval Portuguesa* (Portuguese Medieval Society) – had considered such questions as food, clothing, the body, hygiene, love, sex or death in the Middle Ages, and who in 1979

¹⁷ MARQUES; DIAS, 2003.

¹⁸ At the time of my writing this paper (April, 2007), only 2 volumes remain to be published, one of which is in print, the other nearing completion.

¹⁹ This statement was originally written in 1995. Attention should also be paid to the subsequent words of José Mattoso – an author who is exactly contemporary with Oliveira Marques (b. 1933) uttered in 2001 in an interview that he gave to Hilário Franco Júnior (FRANCO JÚNIOR, 2001: 215), and which include a markedly critical assertion of *neopositivism*. But the question does not end here. While the label of “positivist” is open to argument for a certain 19th-century historiography, and particularly for what is nowadays currently known as the French “methodical school” (see for all these cases CARBONELL, 1976; on positive Philosophy and “positivism”, see NOIRIEL, 1996: 55-59), it will be equally or even more questionable to talk of “neo-positivism” for currents of thought that, at the end of the 20th century, have remained completely unaffected by post-modernity, or else are already post-post-modern... That young authors avid to gain projection in the media should carelessly do so is perfectly understandable (even though it is nonetheless difficult to swallow...); but that authors of other generations with other responsibilities should do so...: see the case of Fernando Catroga, a few years ago, when assessing the teaching of Luís Ferrand de Almeida (1922-2006) in the field of the “Theory of History” (CATROGA, 2002-2003: 126-128); cf. the criticism that I made of him (HOMEM, 2006); cf. also the fundamental book by NUNES, 1995. Oliveira Marques was still being described as “the last of the positivist historians” at the time of his death: this was the title that the newspaper *Público* gave to the two pages devoted to his passing on 2007/01/25 (text by Isabel SALEMA, pp. 10-11), based on the testimonies of several young historians; one of them in particular justified this label by the close attention that Oliveira Marques gave to the “document”, to the primary sources, which he published in great abundance both for the Middle Ages and for later periods. Yet, if this were the case, it would also be possible to include amongst the last “great positivist historians” a certain Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão!... And, while we are on this subject, what can we say about the *obsession* with the “concrete” that was to be noted at certain phases in the work of Jorge Borges de Macedo (1921-1996)? Is it also possible to consider him as a “positivist”?... And so I must ask: is it logical to apply such a common description to authors who are so different and contrasting? Conclusion: there is still a great deal to be said about Portuguese historiography in the 20th century... Meanwhile, Oliveira Marques’ own position on the question of positivism may be seen in FERRO [Ed.], 1994: 140-141.

– in the second edition of *Guia do Estudante de História Medieval Portuguesa* (Student's Guide to Portuguese Medieval History) – had outlined *Biography* or the *History of Institutions*, for example, as possible areas for future research by medievalists. This called to mind a passage from *Memoirs of Hadrian*, in which Marguerite Yourcenar caused the character to say something like this: “*To be right too soon is to be in the wrong*”.

Oliveira Marques would therefore have been in the wrong for several decades; and the wish that would certainly have been formed by his faithful, diehard readers was that he would long continue to provide them with the results of his being in the wrong...

But the years after 2003 were not easy. Already in a frail state (he had undergone heart surgery in 1997), beset with constant health problems (particularly in 2004 and 2005) and very little motivated by a university environment in which a number of *parvenus* were impudently beginning (and yet others were continuing...) to call him “out-of-date”, Oliveira Marques had moments when he seemed to be completely alienated from his intellectual interests. Even so, he never stopped working at all, and the problematics that lay behind his Porto lecture in May 2003²⁰ bore fruit in the form of more than one book, dealing with his ancestors; these volumes appeared in an edition produced by the author, and were not issued for commercial sale. These were:

- a) In 2002, the *Memoirs* of his father, Henrique António de Oliveira Marques (1902-1992)²¹, an engineer by training, and also the author of a *Dicionário de Termos Musicais* (Dictionary of Musical Terms)²², were published.
- b) In 2004, it was the turn of the *Memoirs* of his paternal grandfather, Jaime Artur Marques (1867-1945) to be published, covering the period from 1883-1907.²³
- c) Finally, in 2005, it was the turn of *Teatro* (Theatre), by Anacleto Rodrigues de Oliveira (1855-1932), his great-grandfather²⁴, a dramatist and stage director, who had become a surgeon – trained at the Lisbon School of Medicine – and had practiced as such in order to survive and dedicate himself to his great passion for writing plays and for the stage.

It is also interesting to note the historiographical parallels, at this stage of his life, with Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, who in 2005 published a political biography of his father, Colonel Vitorino Henriques Godinho (1885-1962).²⁵

At the beginning of December 2006, Oliveira Marques took part in three meetings held in Lisbon dedicated to reviewing and celebrating his work at the FNAC / Chiado bookshop and at the Library-Museum of the *Republic and Resistance*. At the latter venue, on December 11, 2006, he undoubtedly had a fragile appearance, but he did not look as weak as he had at various times in

²⁰ See *supra*, footnote ¹⁴.

²¹ MARQUES (Ed.), 2002.

²² MARQUES, H., 1996.

²³ MARQUES (Ed.), 2004; pp. VII-XLV, previous studies and chronology, by A. H. de Oliveira Marques; the volume presents a total of 24 photographic illustrations.

²⁴ MARQUES (Ed.), 2005; pp. VII-XLV, previous studies and chronology, by A. H. de Oliveira Marques; a total of 46 illustrations.

²⁵ GODINHO, 2005.

previous years; and he brightened up enough to enter into dialogue with the others present, particularly in response to questions asked by Fernando Catroga.

Perhaps for that reason, when Isabel gave me the news of his passing, as the day of 24 January 2007 was dawning, my immediate reaction was quite rightly one of *incredulity*: at a time when life expectancy has risen and the advances of medical science have multiplied the numbers of octogenarians and nonagenarians, why should Oliveira Marques leave us now, at the age of only 73?! I still had so many things to ask him...

Porto, 11 April, 2007

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