

Joaquim Romero Magalhães and the History of Luso-Brazilian Cartography

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Abstract

The History of Portuguese Cartography underwent strong development during the Estado Novo, within a framework of nationalist historiography, supporting colonial postulates. The old charts were presented as evidence of the leading role of Portuguese science during the Renaissance, and as proof of the primacy of the Portuguese geographic discoveries and the rights of colonial occupation and exploration of different territories. With the democratic regime, in the early 1990s, the future of this field of knowledge in Portugal was not quite auspicious. Only two small study groups interested in the History of Cartography coexisted at the University of Lisbon and at the Institute for Tropical Scientific Research.

The studies and the diffusion of the History of Luso-Brazilian cartography gathered momentum in Portugal from the mid-1990s, with the presence of Joaquim Romero Magalhães (1942-2018) at the Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, as Commissioner (1999-2002). His mission was to carry out the challenging task of “commemorating” the official arrival of the Portuguese navigators to South America. The “discovery of Brazil” and the relation between Portugal and Brazil, not only in the colonial period but also since the independence of that territory in 1822 to the present, were the major subjects for the organisation of great exhibitions, for publishing historical research works and primary sources, for granting scholarships, for the development of research projects, for organizing scientific meetings, for providing assistance to research centres. Under his supervision old maps and charts were always present in these events and works.

Keywords

Cartography, map, chart, plan, Portugal, Brazil

Resumo

A História da Cartografia Portuguesa conheceu um período de franco desenvolvimento durante o Estado Novo, no quadro de uma historiografia nacionalista e defensora dos princípios coloniais. Os mapas antigos foram analisados como provas do papel de vanguarda da ciência portuguesa nos séculos XV e XVI, como testemunhos da prioridade dos descobrimentos portugueses e dos direitos de ocupação e exploração colonial de territórios africanos, americanos e asiáticos. Na sequência da implantação do regime democrático, no início da década de 1990, a situação da História da Cartografia em Portugal, não era a mais auspiciosa. Apenas dois pequenos grupos de investigadores se interessavam pelo

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tema, na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa e no Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical.

Os estudos e a divulgação da História da Cartografia Luso-Brasileira ganharam um novo impulso, com a presença de Joaquim Romero Magalhães na Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses (1996-2002). A principal missão era “comemorar” a chegada oficial dos navegadores portugueses à América do Sul. O “achamento do Brasil” e a relação entre Portugal e o Brasil, não só no período colonial mas também desde a independência do território, foram os grandes temas para a organização de exposições, edições de fontes e estudos históricos, concessão de bolsas de estudo, estabelecimento de projetos de investigação, organização de reuniões científicas, apoio a centros de investigação e a instituições académicas e culturais. Sob a coordenação de Romero Magalhães, em muitas destas realizações estiveram presentes os mapas antigos, com um destacado papel.

Palavras-chave

Cartografia, mapas, plantas, Portugal, Brasil.

The history of Portuguese cartography enjoyed a notable development during the period of the *Estado Novo* within a framework of nationalist historiography, offering its support for colonial postulates. Events organized in celebration of the historical anniversaries of overseas expansion, both in Portugal and abroad, always paid special attention to early maps as unique and privileged documents. They were presented as evidence of the leading role played by Portuguese science during the Renaissance and as proof of the primacy of the Portuguese geographic discoveries as well as the nation's right to the colonial occupation and exploration of African, American, or Asian territories.

One remarkable publication in particular stands out in the extensive and diversified program on the history of Portuguese cartography from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century: the *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica*, by Armando Cortesão (1891-1977) and Avelino Teixeira da Mota (1920-1982), published in five large-format volumes as part of the commemorations of the fifth centenary of the death of Henry the Navigator in 1960 (Cortesão and Mota 1960-1962).

In the early 1990s, after the death of Luís de Albuquerque (1917-1992), the most widely recognized Portuguese researcher in the History of Science, Nautical Science, and Cartography, the future of this field of knowledge in Portugal did not appear to be particularly auspicious. Apart from a few scattered contributions, only two small study groups interested in the history of cartography coexisted with one another. One was at the *Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga* (Center for the Study of History and Antique Cartography) at the *Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical* (Tropical Research Institute) (CEHCA-IICT), consisted mainly of historians and was coordinated by Maria Emília Madeira Santos (1941-), carrying on the work of A. Teixeira da Mota. Another one was at the *Centro de Estudos Geográficos* (Geographical Research Center) at the University of Lisbon (CEG-UL) and gathered together geographers under the guidance of Suzanne Daveau (1925-), with important links to the French Thematic Cartography and Semiology of Graphics of the 1970s and 1980s and to the *Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya* and its seminars on the History of Cartography since 1991 (Alegria 2011).

The studies and dissemination of the history of Luso-Brazilian cartography gained momentum in Portugal from the mid-1990s onwards, with the presence of Joaquim Romero Magalhães (1942-2018) at the *Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses* (CNCDP—National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries): “Cartography has been a stimulus and a challenge for Portuguese

history—finding out what is shown to us and unravelling what lies hidden behind that representation.” (Magalhães 2012: 9).

Romero Magalhães was appointed Chairman of the Scientific Council of the CNCDP in January 1996 and was immediately entrusted with the task of organizing, in Lisbon in the following year, the 17th International Conference on the History of Cartography (ICHC)—the most internationally important scientific meeting on the subject—under the coordination of Imago Mundi, Ltd. As chairman of the organizing committee, Magalhães contacted the research teams of CEHCA-IICT and of CEG-UL and established a detailed work program, comprising thematic sessions, exhibitions, a field trip, and a number of cultural activities.

The worldwide conference of specialists in the History of Cartography, held at the National Archive—*Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*—was a success, with 162 participants of 29 different nationalities and 42 papers submitted and discussed in 15 sessions: Sixteenth-Century Military Cartography, Cartography of India, Cartography of the Indian Ocean, Cartography and Diplomacy (I, II and III), Art and Cartographic Representation (I, II and III), Official Mapping of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, The Cartography of Deserts, Mountains and Roads, The Cartography of Water Features, Cartography: The Moral and Social Dimensions, The Medieval World and Paradise, and Map-Making (Edson 1998).

Those who attended the conference will especially remember the six exhibitions of antique maps which were held in conjunction with the meeting: *Cartografia e Diplomacia no Brasil do século XVIII / Cartography and Diplomacy in 18th-Century Brazil*, curated by Inácio Guerreiro (1937-); *As Fronteiras de África / The Frontiers of Africa*, curated by Maria Emília Madeira Santos at the Cordoaria Nacional; *Cartografia de Lisboa: séculos XVII a XX / Cartography of Lisbon: 17th to 20th Centuries*, curated by Ana Cristina Leite (1959-) at the Museu da Cidade; *Macau: a cidade e o porto / Macao: the City and the Port*, curated by J.M. Malhão Pereira at the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos; *Tesouros da Cartografia Portuguesa / Treasures of Portuguese Cartography*, curated by José Manuel Garcia (1956-) at the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo; and *Lugares e Regiões em Mapas Antigos / Places and Regions in Old Maps*, curated by Isabel Cid and Suzanne Daveau at the Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Évora. The six corresponding catalogues were then published. These are reference works relating to the cartographic material contained at the main archives and libraries in Portugal (Magalhães, Garcia and Flores 1997, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1997e).

In the “Presentations” of these catalogues, Romero Magalhães wrote about the history of cartography, saying: “A fascinating field of study, one in which Portugal has produced excellent scholars, and which needs to be renewed today with fresh young blood. People capable of learning by example. People who do not stop to carp over difficulties or dwell on past glories” (Magalhães, Garcia and Flores 1997: 10). About the exhibitions, he stated: “Seen as a whole, the collections of fine pieces shown at these six exhibitions tell us a great deal about what we were and what we are. Our successes and our failures. Our negligence and our not inconsiderable lack of historical perspective. But also about how much we Portuguese contributed to the image of the world” (Magalhães, Garcia and Flores 1997: 11).

The 17th International Conference on the History of Cartography was a significant moment for the study of this subject in Portugal, bringing together disparate researchers from different fields of knowledge and making known, both to the international academic community and to the Portuguese themselves, the cartographic treasures stored at Portuguese and Brazilian institutions, dating not only from the “Golden Age” of Renaissance but also, and above all, from the least studied period, ranging from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

In February 1999, Romero Magalhães was appointed Commissioner-General of the CNCDP, succeeding António Manuel Hespanha (1945-), a historian who had been in charge of the commemorations of Vasco da Gama’s voyage and the establishment of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean in the early sixteenth century. The primary mission of the new Commissioner was to carry out the challenging task of commemorating the official arrival of the Portuguese navigators in South America. The “Discovery of Brazil” and the relationship between Portugal and Brazil, not only in the colonial period but also from the time of the independence of that territory in 1822 until the present day, were the major themes for the organization of large exhibitions, the publication of historical research works and primary sources, the award of scholarships, the development of research projects, the organization of scientific meetings and the provision of assistance to research centers, and academic and cultural institutions, as well as for the organization of theatrical performances, music, dance, cinema, and cultural entertainment. (Magalhães and Salvado 2002).

In some of the most important activities programmed by the CNCDP between 1999 and 2001 under the direction of Romero Magalhães, we find early maps being used as historical sources within the framework of political and diplomatic history, a scientific

testimony in the field of the history of science and technology, and museum objects closely linked to the history of art. The Commissioner-General would later declare that: “The National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries (1987-2002) has always paid special attention to cartography, and, as far as exhibitions are concerned, several innovative studies and investigations have been produced as a result of these” (Magalhães 2012: 11).

Among the great exhibitions organized by the CNCDP, two of them paid particular attention to cartographic documents: *A Construção do Brasil, 1500-1825 / The Construction of Brazil, 1500-1825*, curated by J. Romero Magalhães and Tiago C. P. dos Reis Miranda, held at the Palácio da Ajuda, Lisbon, in 2000; and *Outro Mundo Novo Vimos / We Saw Another New World*, curated by J. Romero Magalhães and José Luís Porfírio, held at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, in 2001. These were unique opportunities to see close-up and at first-hand the cartographic treasures that had previously been known only from high or low quality reproductions and which have always been present in the international bibliography.

At the first exhibition, the following items were displayed, among others: the chart depicting Brazil and the South Atlantic from the *Miller Atlas* (c. 1519) by Lopo Homem / Reinéis, housed at the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*; the *Atlas* by Lázaro Luís (1563), housed at the *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*; the *Atlas* by Fernão Vaz Dourado (c. 1576), housed at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal*; the *Roteiro de todos os sinaes que há na costa do Brasil* by Luís Teixeira (c. 1590), housed at the *Biblioteca do Palácio da Ajuda*; the *Descriçãam do Continente da America Meridional* (1746), from Guita and José Mindlin’s Collection in São Paulo; and many others from the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, the *Biblioteca Pública de Évora*, the *Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra*, the *Casa da Ínsua*, the *Direção dos Serviços de Engenharia* and the *Mapoteca* (map library) of the *Ministério das Relações Exteriores* (Itamaraty) in Rio de Janeiro (Magalhães and Miranda 2000).

Displayed at the second exhibition were: the *World Map* by Lopo Homem, from the already mentioned *Miller Atlas* (c.1519); the *World Map* by Henricus Martellus (c. 1470), housed at the British Library; the *Atlantic Chart* by Pedro Reinel (1485), housed at the *Archives Départementales de la Gironde* (Bordeaux); the *Códice Valentim Fernandes* (c. 1507), housed at the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*; and also a number of nautical charts belonging to Portuguese institutions, such as the *Roteiro do Mar Roxo* by D. João de Castro (c. 1540), housed at the *Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra* (Magalhães 2001a).

But the main attraction at the *Outro Mundo Novo Vimos* exhibition was the map known as the *Cantino Planisphere* (c. 1502), probably the most famous image in the history of cartography, which returned to Lisbon five hundred years after being drawn by an anonymous Portuguese cartographer. The negotiations required for the return of the map, its insurance, its transportation overland from Italy, and its arrival in Lisbon under the protection of a complex police operation rightfully made it the star of the exhibition. The cartography of the Portuguese geographical discoveries had never played such a leading role since the Portuguese World Exhibition (1940), the commemorations of the fifth centenary of the death of Henry the Navigator (1960), and the 17th European Exhibition of Art, Science, and Culture (1983).

The dissemination of the images of old Portuguese maps was also achieved through itinerant exhibitions of posters, such as *Fronteiras de África / The Frontiers of Africa*, curated by Maria Emília Madeira Santos, based on the above-mentioned exhibition and organized for the 17th International Conference on the History of Cartography, and *A Construção Territorial do Brasil / The Territorial Construction of Brazil*, curated by Renata Malcher de Araujo (1963-), with 3500 collections of posters spread among several institutions in Portugal and around the world.

There were many historical sources and studies published by the CNCDP. On cartography, we may mention the essays by André Ferrand de Almeida (1968-) and Mário Clemente Ferreira (1968-) included in the Coleção *Outras Margens: A Formação do Espaço Brasileiro e o projecto do Novo Atlas da América Portuguesa (1713-1748)* and *O Tratado de Madrid e o Brasil Meridional. Os trabalhos demarcadores das Partidas do Sul e a sua produção cartográfica (1749-1761)*. These are two important books by young postgraduate researchers at the Lisbon Nova University, supported by the historian Luís Filipe Thomaz (1942-) and Admiral Max Justo Guedes (1927-2011).

Also, a privileged channel within the CNCDP itself was opened for the dissemination of cartographic images in the form of *Oceanos*, a scientific journal edited by Romero Magalhães, which published 11 thematic issues between 1999 and 2002. The journal's scientific and graphic quality can be seen in its reproduction of the antique maps extant in the archives and libraries of Portugal and other countries, which complement and illustrate the articles, many of which are hard to find and known only in the form of low-resolution copies. Among the issues devoted to Brazil were: *O Achamento do Brasil / The Discovery of Brazil* (39); *A Formação Territorial do Brasil / The Territorial Construction of Brazil* (40); *A Construção do Brasil Urbano / The Construction of Urban Brazil* (41); and *Ilhas Fantásticas / Imagined Islands* (46).

Between 1998 and 2001, two inventories of cartographic material were undertaken almost simultaneously under the tutelage or with the support of the CNCDP and Romero Magalhães: *A Cartografia setecentista do Brasil nas coleções da Biblioteca Nacional / Cartography of Brazil in the collections of the National Library (18th century)* (1998-2000); and the *Inventário da coleção cartográfica da Casa da Ínsua / Inventory of the Cartographic Collection of the Casa da Ínsua* (1999-2001), a private collection of maps, charts, and plans in which eighteenth-century Brazil was depicted on different scales. Assuming that the oldest Portuguese manuscript cartography relating to Brazil was fully described and studied in the *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica* (1960-1962), the projects sought to evaluate the image of Brazil in Portuguese and foreign manuscript and printed maps from the eighteenth century, based on two of the best-known cartographic collections existing in Portugal.

In a partnership between the CNCDP and the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, the first project resulted in various projects, including: an exhibition of original maps and charts, *A Nova Lusitânia: a Cartografia setecentista do Brasil nas coleções da Biblioteca Nacional / The New Lusitania: The Cartography of Eighteenth-Century Brazil in the Collections of the National Library*, held at the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon from November 2000 to February 2001; a seminar, *A Cartografia do Brasil: conhecer as coleções / The Cartography of Brazil: Getting to Know the Collections*, held at the same institution in February 2001; a printed catalogue entitled *A Nova Lusitânia: imagens cartográficas do Brasil nas coleções da Biblioteca Nacional (1700-1822) / The New Lusitania: Cartographic Images of Brazil in the Collections of the National Library (1700-1822)* (Garcia 2001); and an online catalogue, *A Cartografia do Brasil nas Coleções da Biblioteca Nacional, 1700-1822 / The Cartography of Brazil in the Collections of the National Library, 1700-1822* (<http://purl.pt/103/1/index.html>), which is still an important reference both for the detailed description it provides of the documents and for the scanned images that it displays.

As Romero Magalhães said in the “Presentation” of the first catalogue: “Due to several accidents, the studies of the History of Cartography have been somewhat marginalized in Portugal. Few scholars, and few good results in terms of the advance of knowledge. And, obviously, that is why so little progress has been made in an area where the Portuguese stood out over the centuries. Not only as cartographers, improving our forms of representation and knowledge about the Earth, but also as researchers into the History of Cartography. [...] Trying to reverse this lack of commitment has been a constant concern within the CNCDP. And because many working tools have been delayed or paralyzed, it was considered necessary to promote the process of inventorying and

cataloguing the universe of maps and charts existing in Portugal. Because even this has been lacking, which is such an elementary and primary precondition” (Magalhães 2001: 11).

The second project followed the Olazabal Albuquerque (Casa da Ínsua) family’s loan of dozens of manuscript maps from the original collection of the fourth Governor of Cuiabá and Mato Grosso (Brazil), Luís de Albuquerque de Melo Pereira e Cáceres (1739-1797), for the *Cartografia e Diplomacia no Brasil do século XVIII* exhibition. The process of inventorying and describing this collection, undertaken at the Arquivo Distrital do Porto, resulted in a book: *A mais dilatada vista do Mundo. Inventário da coleção cartográfica da Casa da Ínsua / The Widest View of the World: Inventory of the Cartographic Collection of Casa da Ínsua* (Garcia 2002). In the “Presentation” of the volume, Romero Magalhães stated: “The valuable set of maps of the Casa da Ínsua—whose existence was revealed by the summary inventory of Teixeira da Mota, and of which some specimens were already known—merit close attention. An evident effort was made in these maps to know more about the Southwest of Brazil and to depict it in a better way. [...] Therefore, a complete and reliable catalogue is now available to scholars, which really does deserve to be considered a reference work for cartographic studies” (Magalhães 2002: 10).

After completing his mission at the CNCDP, the historian maintained his interest in and support for the history of Luso-Brazilian cartography. In March 2004, Magalhães took part in the workshop *A Cartografia da Capitania de São Paulo: espaços, imagens e caminhos*, organized by the Museu Paulista and the Jaime Cortesão Chair of the University of São Paulo. In 2006, he attended the international seminar *Portugal en la Región Platina: Colônia de Sacramento. Homenaje al Prof. Doutor Luís Ferrand de Almeida y su obra*, organized by the Portuguese Embassy in Montevideo, which had an important exhibition of Portuguese military cartography from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Almeida and Garcia 2006). In 2011, the historian participated in the *Seminário Internacional Formas e Representações do Império: ciência, tecnologia e política, séculos XVI ao XIX*, at the Museu de Astronomia e Ciências Afins in Rio de Janeiro, with a paper on astronomy, cartography, and political history.

In 2009, the Imprensa Nacional—Casa da Moeda in Lisbon published *História do Brasil nos Velhos Mapas / The History of Brazil in Old Maps*, by Jaime Cortesão (1884-1960), in its collection of the author’s complete works. It was an old and longstanding project that Romero Magalhães was finally able to accomplish: a new edition of a work by one of its most influential authors. Cortesão had left the book partly prepared in Brazil in 1957 but the first edition only appeared in Rio de Janeiro in 1965-1971. The volumes were out of print for a long time and therefore hard to find. For Magalhães, it is not a book about the

History of Cartography: “it is a matter of giving privilege to a documentary specimen, the maps, and through them (and other sources) reconstituting Brazilian history [...] it is a historical construction, in which the lesson that he seeks to discover in the maps is used to support the author’s more general theses on the spatial formation of Brazil.” Magalhães further adds: “Jaime Cortesão assumed that, above all, the maps expressed the political wills of the rulers. Although they transmitted a codified view of reality, they mainly reflected the purposes of those who were in charge” (Magalhães 2009: 15).

Despite his interest in early maps, Romero Magalhães’s extensive bibliography contains only a few texts on the history of Luso-Brazilian cartography published in thematic issues of scientific journals or resulting from his participation in scientific conferences in Brazil, such as the case of “Mundos em miniatura: aproximação a alguns aspectos da cartografia portuguesa do Brasil (séculos XVI a XVIII),” published in *Anais do Museu Paulista* (Magalhães 2009a) and later in the collection known as *Labirintos Brasileiros* (Magalhães 2011: 35-49), or “Saberes e política: os astrónomos em Mato Grosso, 1782-1789,” published in *Formas do Império* (Magalhães 2014) and later in *Avulsos de História Moderna* (Magalhães 2017: 431-444). He tried to give the first and last word to those who had been more attentive to the subject. Mapping “is no more than reducing the real spaces to apprehend them through tiny drawings. One attempts to see the amplitude of the real world through a dimension that the human eye can encompass. A way of seeing that tells us where we are and which path we want to walk. [...] For those who are not experts, the task is very complicated, since you must have in your eyes the key, the convention or the code that enables the interpretation of the drawing. And this is neither intuitive nor immediate. It has a story” (Magalhães 2011: 35).

In the Luso-Brazilian academic community, among the few specialists in the History of Cartography was Admiral Max Justo Guedes, one of the last disciples of Jaime Cortesão. For the organization of exhibitions and seminars, the publication of sources and studies, or the scientific, diplomatic, academic, or political contacts to be established Guedes was always a friend and advisor to Romero Magalhães on cartographic matters (Magalhães, 2011a).

Professor Romero consulted maps: “Measure, calculate, depict. Miniaturize the world in order to understand it. Humankind’s quest to gain dominion over space, estimating and conquering distances with the ingenious device of cartography. [...] The final form of a map is in itself a history lesson of enormous profundity, one which

demands the subtle application of different analyses, using innumerable data and multiple disciplines in an effort to comprehend a complex phenomenon embodied within a manageable framework. Concrete. Material. Often opaque in its present appearance because the key to its decipherment is missing or obscure” (Magalhães 1997: 10).

The last news we have of his interest in old maps was the gift he made to the *Arquivo Municipal de Loulé* shortly before he died—the *Carta Corográfica do Reino do Algarve* (1842) by J. B. da Silva Lopes, drawn on the scale of 1:200,000 (Lopes 1842). This is the map that would later accompany every copy of the *Corografia ou Memória Económica, Estatística e Topográfica do Reino do Algarve* (Lopes 1841) by the same author, which rarely happens. Romero Magalhães had bought it from a well-known Lisbon second-hand bookdealer and considered it one of the treasures of his library. It is now where it should be, available to all, just as the presenter of this gift had wished.

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