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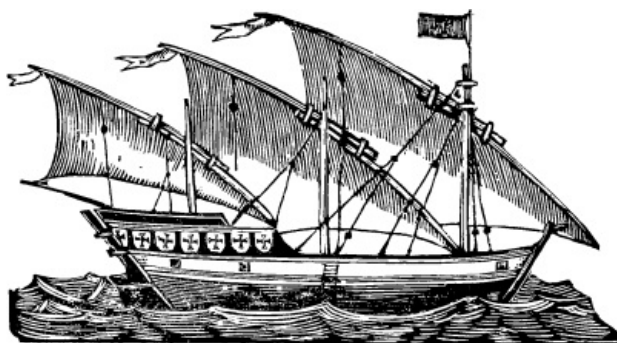
Visconde de Soveral



Memoria

ácerca dos

Portuguezes na Abyssinia



Porto

Typographia do «Comercio do Porto»

1894

Visconde de Soveral

# Memoria

ácerca dos

## Portuguezes na Abyssinia

Porto

Typographia do «Comercio do Porto»

1894

# Memoria ácerca dos Portuguezes na Abyssinia

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A conquista de Ceuta por El-Rei Dom João I em 24 de agosto de 1415 , foi, como refere um historiador allemão, o primeiro élo da grande cadeia que os marinheiros portuguezes estenderam á roda da Africa até encontrar o paraizo da India.

De facto aquelle ousado empreendimento não tardou em produzir outros de maior alcance.

No anno de 1480, reinando El-Rei Dom Affonso v, Pero da Covilhã é o primeiro portuguez que chega á Abyssinia por terra, seguindo depois pelo mar Roxo, á costa oriental da Africa até Sofala.

Affonso de Albuquerque lança em 1507 os alicerces á fortaleza de Ormuz (no mar Persico), cuja fortaleza Portugal conservára até o anno de 1622, quando Xá Abas, rei da Persia, a retomára com auxilio dos inglezes. Existiam alli a esse tempo, cinco egrejas e um convento de Padres Agostinhos.

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A prodigiosa actividade de El-Rei Dom Manoel levou os portuguezes ao descobrimento desde o Indo ao Ganges, de toda a Ethiopia e Persia, com todos os mares, portos, enseadas e ilhas, a toda a China e á de Malaca.

Foi aquelle Soberano quem mandou á Abyssinia, na qualidade de seu Embaixador, Dom Francisco Alvares, o qual passados alguns annos em 1558 publicou a «Historia descriptiva da Ethiopia».

Damião de Goes e Faria e Souza, julgam a obra defeituosa; todavia parece fóra de duvida ser o primeiro escripto detalhado ácerca da Abyssinia.

Miguel de Castanhoso publicou em 1541 a sua interessante historia ácerca da expedição dos portuguezes sob o mando do valoroso Affonso de Albuquerque. Esta historia, apesar de contar 343 annos depois da sua publicação, o governo italiano julgou acertado (no interesse da sua recente expedição á Abyssinia) mandar traduzil-a sob o titulo: «Storia della spedizione

Portuguese in Abyssinia nel seculo XVI, narrata da Michelo de Castanhoso».

Os primitivos exploradores portugueses eram invariavelmente seguidos de fervorosos missionarios das ordens religiosas que n'essas epochas remotas de preferencia se empregavam na propagação da fé as de Santo Agostinho, S. Francisco e S. Domingos. Foram os missionarios d'essas ordens os primeiros que levaram a religião christã á Africa, Asia e America.

Apenas organizada a Companhia de Jesus em 1540 , os padres d'aquella ordem, especialmente os portugueses, prestaram importantes servicos á fé, á civilisação, á agricultura e ao commercio, em toda a vastidão do territorio aonde o pendão das quinas tinha alcançado. A elles é igualmente devida a descoberta da origem do Nilo. Os padres portugueses Pedro Paes e Francisco Lobo levaram a effeito essa arrojada empreza. {7}

Segue-se a narrativa, publicada em 1665, do Patriarcha Dom João Bermudez, o qual viera a Portugal na qualidade de Embaixador do Rei da Abyssinia junto de El-Rei Dom Sebastião. O Patriarcha descreve com especialidade os combates e as victorias de Dom Christovão da Gama na Abyssinia.

Os padres da Companhia, Patriarcha Affonso Mendes, Melchior da Silva, Francisco Lobo e Nicolau Godinho, escreveram igualmente sobre a Abyssinia. Este padre publicou em Roma, (em latim), tres obras importantes; uma refutando o que sobre a Abyssinia escrevera o padre Dom Luis Urreta, hespanhol, e frade Dominicano. A segunda ácerca da vida do padre Gonçalves da Silveira, martyrisado na Africa oriental, em 15 de março de 1561; e a terceira: «De Abassiorum Rebus de que Aithiopiæ Patriarchus Joanne Nonio Barreto & Andrea. Oviedo, 1615».

Que os escriptos dos missionarios portugueses eram tidos em grande apreço nos seculos XVI e XVII, temos muitas provas; entre outras uma carta geographica (da qual possuímos um exemplar), publicada em Veneza no tempo da Republica, intitulada: «Abyssinia, dove sono le Fonti del Nilo, discrita secondo le relationi de P. P. Mendes, Almeida, Paes, Lobo e Lodulfo». {8}

A historia da Abyssinia do Padre Balthazar Telles, publicada em 1660, merece particular attenção: «Historia general da Ethiopia a alta ou Preste João, e do que n'ella observaram os padres da Companhia de Jesus, composta na mesma Ethiopia pelo padre Manoel d'Almeida, natural de Vizeu, Provincial e Visitador que foi na India, abreviada com novas relações e methodo pelo padre Balthazar Telles, natural de Lisboa, Provincial da Provincia Lusitana».

Entre varias curiosidades, menciona o padre Manoel d'Almeida, as ruinas de Acçuma ou Axuma como amostras da belleza original d'aquelles edificios; e outrosim confirma a tradicção dos artistas empregados em essas construcções, terem sido mandados vir do Egypto, por ser desconhecida na Abyssinia a arte de lavar a pedra.

O notavel historiador João de Barros, corrobora a magnificencia das ruinas de Acçuma, côrte que diz fôra da Rainha de Sabá e de varios Imperadores da Ethiopia.

Descreve aquellas ruinas, e faz menção do que sobre ellas affirma o douto Cardeal Baronio, nos seus annaes ecclesiasticos. Diz figurarem alli varias ruinas, obeliscos, etc., especialmente de uma igreja que mostra ter sido de cinco naves, medindo duzentos e vinte palmos de comprimento e cem de largura. Distam estas ruinas tres leguas de Eremonia, e de Maçuá trinta e cinco, em altura de 14 graus e meio.

João de Barros descreve outras ruinas similares, denominadas «Zimbabe», situadas a 170 leguas de Sofala, na Africa oriental.

O padre Balthazar apoia a sua narrativa em cartas pertencentes á missão da Ethiopia, então archivadas no cartorio do Collegio, em Coimbra, algumas de 1556. {9}

Não é fóra de proposito mencionar os escriptos do padre jesuita Damião Vieira, o qual missionára na India quarenta annos. Entre seus trabalhos citam-se excellentes memorias relativas á historia da India, como tambem um volumoso manuscripto sobre a descoberta da India, que pertencera ao marquez de Fontes, antigo Embaixador em Roma. Affirma-se que esse manuscripto contém detalhes e particularidades relativas á descoberta da India que não existem na obra de João de Barros.

É tambem digna de attenção a carta publicada na Collecção de Ramusio, sob o titulo: «Lettere del padre maestro Francisco Xavier de Cangoxina, Cittá del Giapan, inderezzata a un Collegio de Scholari di detta Compagnia en Coimbra, Portogallo»; datada de 5 de outubro de 1549.

Merecem tambem estudo os escriptos do padre Procurador em Roma, Dom Alvaro Semedo, da provincia do Japão e da China, publicados em 1642.

Sóbe de interesse o itinerario do padre Jeronymo Lobo, cujo manuscripto original pertencera á Bibliotheca dos Condes da Ericeira, e fôra traduzido em francez por mr. Le Grand, e publicado em Amsterdam em 1728.

As bibliothecas dos marquezes de Castel Melhor e dos Condes da Ericeira eram afamadas pelos valiosos documentos que continham relativos ás descobertas dos portugueses. Muitos d'esses padrões de gloria nacional ficaram sepultados nas ruinas do terramoto de 1755; alguns foram

felizmente parar a varias bibliothecas estrangeiras. Em Roma, Florença, Bologna e Veneza, tive eu a fortuna de compulsar algumas reliquias do outr'ora levantado Portugal.

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Revertendo ao itinerario do padre Jeronymo Lobo, é mister confessar que contém informação de alto interesse, inclusivè uma carta geographica da Abyssinia, na qual estão designadas as egrejas dos padres Jesuitas e suas residencias. Este notavel membro da Companhia foi perseguido, e até encarcerado em Maçua, de onde conseguiu evadir-se para Lisboa, de cujo ponto passou a Roma em servico da missão da Abyssinia. Não fôra, porém, bem acolhido pela Curia. Regressou a Goa, e alli occupou o cargo de Reitor d'aquella Provincia; e passados varios annos regressou a Lisboa, fallecendo de idade avançada na Casa Professa de S. Roque, a 29 de Janeiro de 1678.

O padre Lobo não perdeu o tempo na Abyssinia, nem mesmo escapou á agudeza de seu espirito investigador apontar Maçua como ponto estrategico e chave da Abyssinia. Os italianos assim o reconheceram ha poucos annos, quando occuparam aquella cidade.

Os abexins favoreceram e trataram bem os portuguezes emquanto careceram do seu auxilio, nas dissensões internas; passado o perigo, a sua conducta tornou-se insupportavel. O proprio Patriarcha Dom João Bermudez foi preso, e se conseguira a liberdade, elle mesmo declara devel-a ao auxilio de tres portuguezes, cujos nomes menciona: Manoel de Soveral, Peropalha e Denis de Lima. O Patriarcha conseguiu por fim abandonar o paiz em 1565.

É innegavel que os padres da Companhia praticaram importantes servicos á religião e á civilisação; não é, porém, menos exacto que o seu empenho de avassallar e de amontoar riquezas, foram causas de seu desprestigio no seculo passado.

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Na Abyssinia, a impopularidade contra a Companhia chegou aos frades indigenas, os quaes se sentiram desconsiderados e humilhados por estranhos.

Quanto fica relatado ácerca da extraordinaria influencia e poderio dos portuguezes nos mares Roxo e Persico, está comprovado em documentos irrefragaveis, sobretudo os relativos aos annos de 1512 e 1514 1606 e 1690, os quaes encerram materia de subido interesse com referencia á Abyssinia e á Persia.

Figuram entre aquelles documentos, as capitulações negociadas pelo general do exercito de Ormuz e mar Roxo, Antonio Machado de Brito com Calil Baxa de Bassora; como tambem os da missão do Dr. Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo, na qualidade de Embaixador de El-Rei Dom Pedro II junto do Rei da Persia, para felicital-o pela sua elevação ao throno, e para ratificar a Liga effectuada por Francisco Pereira da Silva, capitão-mór da armada de alto bordo do Estreito de Ormuz e mar Roxo.

O espirito esclarecido e eminentemente práctico do insigne Affonso de Albuquerque manifestam-se em toda a sua magnificencia n'aquellas paragens.

Damos por terminada a nossa investigação, a qual tivera por objecto reunir dados historicos ácerca dos primeiros portuguezes que penetraram na Abyssinia.

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