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Álvares, Manuel

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Life

Ribeira Brava (Archipelago of Madeira), 1526 – Évora, December 30, 1583. He was a Portuguese teacher, grammarian and humanist. In his hometown, he likely began studies for the priesthood, for at 12 years old he received minor orders. In 1546, at 20, he entered the Society of Jesus, at the College of Coimbra. He studied Humanities, Philosophy and Theology, but it was as a teacher of Latin, Greek and Hebrew that he distinguished himself, in Lisbon, where he began teaching in 1553-55, in Coimbra, where he took his last vows in 1560, and in Évora, where he passed away. He was Rector in Coimbra, in Lisbon and in Évora, and also Superior of the Professed House of St. Roque. St. Ignatius is said to have called him his Friar Juniper, alluding to his moral virtues.

At a highly-demanding time for the teachers of Humanities, whose knowledge had yet to overcome the mistrust of those who taught Arts and Theology, Manuel Álvares was one of those teachers who brought immense prestige to the Colleges of the Society in Portugal, at the first foundations of schools in Lisbon (C. of Santo Antão) and in Coimbra (C. of Arts). His name appears alongside with Cipriano Soares (1524–93), Pedro Perpinhão (1530–66) and Miguel Venegas (1529- post 1589), as the first generation of teachers in both Colleges, so much that it was him to whom the Superiors commissioned the *De Institutione Grammaticae Libri Tres* (1572).

Works

- *Oratio de laudibus Regis Ioannis Tertii in Collegio Regio habita Calendis Octobris anno 1556 a P. Emmanuele Alvares* or "Discourse on the praises of King John III, pronounced in the Royal College [of the Arts] on October 1, 1556". Ms 3308 da BNL, fól. 81-94; Ms 3180 da BNL, fól. 1-30 r°.

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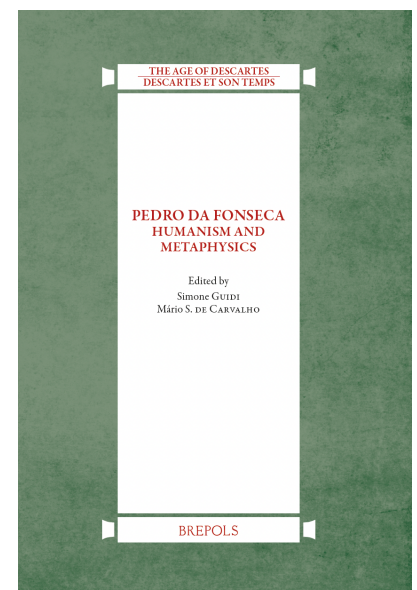
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NEW PUBLICATIONS

- 54 *Carmina*: two were printed in the beginning of his *De Institutione grammatica libri tres* (1st edition) and the rest remain 'manuscript' in codex 3308 of the BNL. They are small poetic compositions, derived from the academic world: funereal, laudatory and hagiographic poetry and also a few *aenigmata*. Among the dedicatory addressees of these poems are Infante Luís of Portugal (1506-55), King John III (1502-57), Queen Saint Elizabeth (1271-1336) and Dom António Pinheiro (c.1510-82).
- *Emmanuelis Alvari e Societate Iesu de Institutione Grammatica libri tres*. Olyssipone. Excudebat Ioannes Barrerius Typographus Regius. 1572.

His most celebrated work was considered by the linguist Amadeu Torres one of the best Latin grammars ever written in Portugal, like the most respected foreign humanistic grammars (Torres, 1988: 100). Running to more than 600 editions distributed in around 100 cities and more than 22 countries, it had been commissioned by the Father General Diego Lainez (1512–65) himself in 1564, and later by Francis Borgia (1510-72), after three earlier attempts had been rejected. Álvares had already begun writing up his notes when his work first came to the attention of the second Superior General of the Society of Jesus and it was Diego Lainez himself who wrote to M. A. in October 1564, requesting him to send his texts to Rome for use within the Society (*Lainii Monumenta* 8: 265). The project was delayed by a further two years of silence until the new Father General, Francis Borgia, entrusted him with the more specific task of writing a Latin grammar book. To prevent delays, he ordered that everything should be completed within six months since it was imperative to standardise teaching within the colleges (*Borgia Monumenta*. 4: 484). Even so, it took three more years before one section was sent to Rome in 1570, then forwarded to Venice where it was published by Tramezzino (1526–71). The complete edition, to which Manuel Álvares dedicated himself entirely in the years which followed, was only published in Lisbon in 1572, together with *Os Lusíadas*, by Luís de Camões (c.1524-1579 ou 1580), the most iconic of all works of literature written in the Portuguese language. The governors of the Society of Jesus could not leave to chance the choice of a textbook for a subject they considered essential to humanist studies. They had finally found the grammar book that would replace the more traditional grammars by Alexandre de Vila Dei (c. 1175-1240/1250), the *Doctrinale* by Despauterius (1460-1520), which was used in almost all the Jesuit colleges, and even the volume by António de Nebrija (1441- 1522).

Adopted by the *Ratio Studiorum*, the grammar book written by Manuel Álvares heralded a new age in the teaching of Latin. With its fine balance between *ratio* and *usus*, the humanist concept of grammar became a reality and spread to all the continents during almost 200 years, with translations into German, English, Croatian, Spanish, Flemish, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Chinese and Slavic. It was fundamental to the development of Portuguese grammar itself and also to the education of many Jesuit missionaries who were linguists *avant la lettre* and pioneers in the discovery of non-European languages. It became the matrix not only for the first *letramentos*, (i.e. transcriptions into the Latin alphabet), but also for the first grammars of indigenous languages, ranging from Brazil to India, China and Japan. In 1594 the text was published in a trilingual edition (Latin-Portuguese-Japanese) in Amakusa in Japan. In addition to verb conjugations presented in three columns, for example, the text presented phrases by Japanese authors and exercises comparing Japanese linguistics with Latin and Portuguese linguistics.

Two hundred years after its uninterrupted use, M. A.'s Grammar generated heated controversies, at the core of which were more likely to political, rather than linguistic or didactic, reasons. Be as it may, they cannot deny the extraordinary number of editions of this work, which allowed linguists to identify it not only as the heritage of Portuguese culture but also as the heritage of the *respublica litteraria* (Romeo, 2000).

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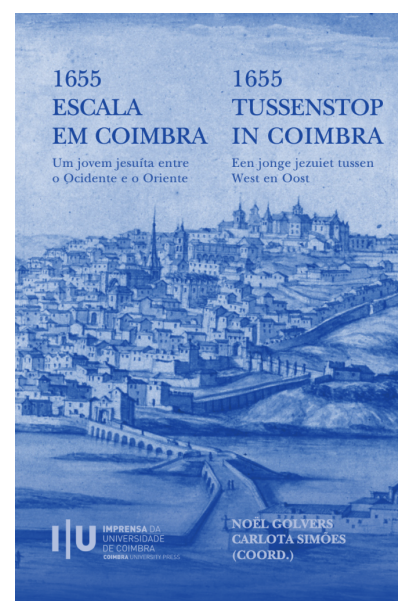
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