

# Press and translation as Changing Factors in the 15<sup>th</sup> century portuguese language and culture

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## 1. Introduction

The press in Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is scarce, unlike what happens in other countries of Europe, like Spain, France and Italy. Only seven books and three pamphlets, which were printed between 1488 and 1500, are known to be specifically of Portuguese language. All the books, except one (the *Constituições de D. Diogo de Sousa*, Porto, 1497) are translations of works from other languages (Castilian and Latin). Some of the works in Castilian that gave origin to the Portuguese ones had, in fact, been previously translated from French, as it is the case of the *História do mui Nobre Vespasiano*.

Before the introduction of the press in Portugal, a large part of the didactic, philosophical, scientific and mostly religious works, depended on the translation of originals written in the rest of Europe, since the local production was quite reduced. On the other hand, its influence hardly came outside the religious institutions, as the number of copies was little and the access to them was quite restricted. With the introduction of the press and the multiplication of the number of copies at more reduced prices, its scope of influence was enlarged. The books stopped being restricted to the clergy, thus becoming a somewhat common object in the hands of any well educated layman.

Consequently, the foreign works translated and printed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal had an important role in the culture and in the development of the Portuguese writing. The lexical loan, the development of syntax and speculative thought, the spreading of philosophical, religious and scientific ideas are some of their most significant contributions.

The translated works from the Castilian are the following: *Sacramental* by Clemente Sánchez de Vercial (with two incunabular editions: Chaves, 1488; Braga (?), 1494-1500), *História do mui Nobre Vespasiano Imperador de Roma* (Lisbon, 1496) and *Evangelhos e Epístolas com suas exposições em Romance* (Oporto, 1497). Although no manuscript or copy printed in Castilian has been found so far, the *Tratado de Confissom* (Chaves, 1489), was undoubtedly a translation or an adaptation from this language, because of the endless number of Castilianisms that appear in the text. The two translated works from Latin are *Vita Christi* (Lisbon, 1495) by Lindolfo de Saxónia and the *Regimento Proveitoso contra a Pestenença* (Lisbon, 1493-1495).

## 2. The *Sacramental* by Clemente Sánchez de Vercial

The *Sacramental* by Clemente Sánchez de Vercial, a pastoral work written between 1420 and 1423 in Castilian language, not including the books destined to the religious labour, was the most printed book in the Iberian Peninsula, since the introduction of the press, till the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There are thirteen editions in Castilian, one in Catalan and four in Portuguese. Two of the Portuguese editions were printed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the other two in the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Till quite recently, there were reports of the existence of only three editions of the *Sacramental* in Portuguese: one printed in Chaves in 1488, another in Lisbon in 1502 by João Pedro de Cremona, and another printed in Braga in 1539 by Pedro de la Rocha. Maria Valentina Sul Mendes has recently discovered that the copy with the quota *RES. 154 A.* kept in the Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon, which since the 19<sup>th</sup> century was thought to belong to the edition of 1539 printed in Braga, was in fact different from the other known copies of the same edition and located in other libraries. It is impossible to know the name of the printer and the place of printing, since the last pages where the colophon would be, were missing. This researcher, based mostly on the analysis of the paper's water print and on the graphic characteristics, concludes that the *RES. 154 A.* of the Biblioteca Nacional is an incunabular edition, the second one in Portuguese language of the *Sacramental*, which may have been printed between 1494 and 1500 in a typography of the North of the country (cfr. 2005: 197).

There is a copy in the Library of Rio de Janeiro that is supposed to belong to the edition of 1488 printed in Chaves, mentioned in the *Primeiro Ensaio sobre a História Literária de Portugal* by Francisco Freire de Carvalho (1845: 87 and 320-321) and in the second volume of the *Dicionário Bibliográfico Português* by Inocêncio Francisco da Silva (1876, II: 82-84). Throughout the text of this edition, the Castilianisms, whether in terms of vocabulary or syntactic nature, are quite recurrent. This may mean that, either the translator was inattentive, or the printer, probably Castilian, with an inaccurate knowledge of the Portuguese language, made a very personal interpretation of the Portuguese manuscript he had been assigned to pass into printing. Otherwise, occurrences as the following would be inexplicable: *benes, cardinales, çebro, color, confisonees, difyniçiones, conjuraçonees, coneçimento, Dios, diuisonees, estuue, êtençonees, fasta* (as *até*), *fingiendo, hyrmanas, oraçonees, su madre, tuue, veinte*, etc. In some syntactical structures, the presence of Castilian is clear. We give three examples. In the first we have the following context: «foy estabeliçido por medeaneyro antre Deus e *elle homẽ* por que ho leuase a elle.» The expression *elle homẽ* is a wrong transcription of *el hombre*, which is in the Castilian original. The same happens in another context: «E o titulo *della madre* he este», that in Castilian is transcribed as: «E el titulo dela madre es este». We point a last example, which shows the influence of the neighbour's language structures: «ho saçerdote çerra os olhos e *esta huũ pouço de espaço*», a literal translation of «el sacerdote cierra los ojos e *esta vn poco de espacio*». Most of these Castilianisms were corrected in the subsequent editions.

Due to the recurrence of a great part of the gaps present in the edition of 1488, in the subsequent Portuguese ones, we can advance the premise that the last printers had used the first edition.

### **3. The *Tratado de Confissom***

The single known copy of the *Tratado de Confissom* printed in Chaves, in 1489 was made public by José V. de Pina Martins in 1965. Later, in 1973, a facsimile edition and a diplomatic edition were done and recently, in 2003, a semi-diplomatic edition was written by us. The work passed unnoticed to the bibliographers previous to 1965, and there wasn't any reference to it, neither in Portugal, or abroad. The colophon says the following: «Este tratado de confisom se acabou na uila de Chaves aos oytos dias do mes de Agosto. Ano de mill e quatroçêtos e oytenta e noue anos». We therefore have the title, the printing place and the date.

Pina Martins, in his introductory study to the edition of 1973, is the first to put some hypotheses to complete the lack of information of the colophon. Referring to the «Portuguese character of this book», he suggests that the author «may have been a Franciscan» (1973: 106). He bases himself on two references that the author does to St. Francis of Assisi. For José Marques, «it's not certain to conclude that the author of this book was a Franciscan» (1986: 11-12). He defends that the initiative and the responsibility of publishing the *Tratado de Confissom* belonged to the archbishop of Braga D. Jorge da Costa (1488-1501) and that the work, instead of an author, would be the result of the outcome of adapters, once «its content belongs to the doctrinal heritage of the Church» (Ibidem: 13-15). Artur Anselmo considers that «it is with no doubt that we are in the presence of a text written by a clergyman» (1981: 267). However, he believes that «the initiative of its edition did not belong to the Archbishop. In view of the internal characteristics of the text, it seems most likely that the idea came from the Franciscans' religious Order, whose implantation in the North of the country was guaranteed by the convents of the Oporto, Guimarães and Chaves» (Ibidem). He suggests that the edition of the work may have been promoted «as initiative of observant Franciscan friars, perhaps a confessor with responsibilities in the head of the Order (as it was the case of Frei João da Póvoa, the future confessor of the king John II) and at the time living in the North of the country» (Ibidem: 273).

From our point of view, we think that the *Tratado de Confissom* is the translation or the adaptation of one or several Castilian works and it may have been written between the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, and so its production is not contemporary to its printing. The syntactical, morphologic and lexical characteristics of the text point to that period. The suspicion that the *Tratado de Confissom* is not entirely Portuguese comes from the fact that the number of Castilianisms evident in that the text is quite significant. Pina Martins seems not to have identified them. Indeed, in his introductory study to the edition of 1973, he says: «But isn't the Portuguese language itself already evidence that the work must have been printed by national typographers, because, if they were Spaniard, wouldn't there be in the text Spanish forms easy to identify?» (Martins 1973: 20). These are the most relevant Castilian forms we detected: *alguna, algunas, barnil, blanco, color, famiêtos, medeaneras, consentimiento, eiglesia, maano, maanos, manera, mercores* (day of the week), *moros, naturaleza, ragos (rajós, from rajar) res (reis), sãgre, sortera, suzias* (the same as *sucias*), *testigos, testigus, tenerẽ* (form of the verb to have), *uernes* (day of the week), *uyente* (present *veinte*), etc. We call the attention to the two days of the week: *mercores* and *uernes*, that seem to be a clear testimony of the Castilian language importance in the *Tratado de Confissom*.

#### **4. The *Vita Christi* by Lindolfo de Saxónia**

The *Vita Christi* by Lindolfo de Saxónia, also known as Ludolfo Cartusiano, was printed in Lisbon by Nicolau de Saxónia and Valentim Fernandes, in 1495. The author, who lived between 1295 and 1377, was a monk of the Carthusian order of Strasbourg, thus the origin of the last name. He wrote several works, but it was *Vita Christi*, that fast spread all over Europe in several manuscript copies, which gave him a larger fame. There are about one hundred and fifty manuscript editions and eighty-eight printed editions, in Latin and in several other languages, as French, Flemish, Italian, Castilian, Catalan and Portuguese. The Portuguese translation which was the base to the edition of 1495 was under the responsibility of Frei Bernardo and Frei Nicolau Vieira,

monks at the Alcobaça Monastery who completed it in December of 1446. As Augusto Magne tells us in the introduction to his commented edition, the translation was made by request of the infante Isabel, duchess of Coimbra and wife of the regent D. Pedro, king Eduard's brother. (cfr. 1957: XI).

Printed in four parts, it was considered, before the *Tratado de Confissom* and the *Sacramental* were discovered, the first work printed in Portuguese language. Despite appearing later than the other two, it still is the most important work of the presses to be studied in Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, both because of its extension and for the precise typographic work. From this edition, eighteen copies are known, which in terms of old books is, undoubtedly, something quite exceptional. In fact, most of the times these books hardly reached the present days or only a single copy is found and not always complete.

The printed text was revised by Frei André, from the St. Francis Order, as the printer himself Valentim Fernandes tells us in the proem. The reviewer maintained, in general, the version of 1446, inclusively the vocabulary that already seemed archaic, in 1495. The printing of the work was ordered by the Queen Leonor and Valentim Fernandes, in the proem, dedicates it to king John II.

In this work, Christ's life is told in a tale form, a little like the style of the Knight's adventure tales. Its success was certainly due to the easy and gentle reading offered. The author joined the narratives of the four Gospels, giving them a space/time continuity that eased the comprehension and stimulated the reader.

## **5. The *História do mui Nobre Vespasiano Imperador de Roma***

The *História do mui Nobre Vespasiano Imperador de Roma* was printed in Lisbon by Valentim Fernandes on April 20, 1496. The edition project of the *História de Vespasiano* was probably already in course in 1495, because it is, to some extent, the continuation of *Vita Christi*. It is not a coincidence the fact that the *História de Vespasiano* appears attached, in the end of the same work, in a French version printed in Ruen in 1488.

The narrative is inspired by *Euangelium Nicomedi* and the oldest form known can be found in an apocryphal of which there are two writings: one with the title *Vindicta Saluatoris*, and another with the title *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii Caesaris Augusti*, both not related, in what concerns their production, further to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (cfr. Pereira, 1905: 13-14). The second writing spread during the Middle Age all over Europe with Emperor Vespasian's name instead of Tiberius's, therefore more precise with the historical facts. Artur Anselmo refers that, from these writings, «a French poem was born (*La vengeance de Nostre Seigneur*), that, because of successive interpolations and additions, would be inserted in the Graal trilogy and printed several times in France, still in 15<sup>th</sup> century, from a text in prose with the title *La destruction de Jerusalem*» (1981: n. p.). In fact, some of the accomplishments narrated in the *História de Vespasiano* are more widely referred in the *Livro de José de Arimateia*, the first of the Graal trilogy. David Hook and Penny Newman refer that the *História de Vespasiano* and the *Livro de José de Arimateia* aren't directly linked to each other, unlike what several researchers have been defending. They believe that the apparent points of contact between them are due to the integration of the material from the legendary tradition of Jerusalem's destruction in the legends of Graal by Robert of Boron (cfr. 1983: XI-XII).

In the Iberian Peninsula, there were several manuscripts with the titles of *Estoria de Vespesiano* and *Destruição de Jerusalem*, which gave origin to, at least, three editions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century: one printed by Juan Vázquez in Toledo around 1492, another printed in Lisbon, in 1496 by Valentim Fernandes, and the third printed in Seville by Pedro Brun, in 1499. Some researchers have confirmed that the edition printed in Lisbon, in 1496 differs significantly from the edition of Toledo, but it is identical to the edition of Seville, both in the text and in the pictures, suggesting the Portuguese edition to be in the origin of the Seville one. The Portuguese version is a translation from a Castilian version, as suggested by Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, and this is easy to prove because of the several Castilianisms that come up in the text. However, the conjectures done by the same researcher of the Castilian printed text of 1499, pointing to a *retranslation* of the Portuguese writings (cfr. 1905: 25) seem to us rather doubtful. As there were manuscript versions in Castilian and in Catalan, and also the edition of Toledo, in other printed editions, namely in French, it is unrealistic to think that Pedro Brun might have used the Portuguese version, even as inspiration for the making of the pictures.

The edition of Seville doesn't have chapter numbering, and if it had been based on the Portuguese edition, there would be no justification for the so many variants, gaps and additions which have no correspondence in the Portuguese edition, leading us to conclude that there is no direct connection between them. The same can be concluded concerning the edition of Toledo. David Hook and Penny Newman defend that the three peninsular editions derive from a common archetype: «the two fifteenth-century Spanish versions derive independently from a lost archetype (*x*), and that T [Toledo] was copied not from this but from a lost intermediate version (*y*), which was also the ultimate source of L [Lisboa]. L, however, seems to derive from this lost Spanish hyparchetype *y* by way of an earlier Portuguese exemplar, *z*, now lost.» (1983: XIV).

## **6. The *Regimento Proveitoso contra a Pestenença***

The *Regimento Proveitoso contra a Pestenença* is a small incunabulum in Portuguese printed in Lisbon by Valentim Fernandes in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Its author, trusting in the introductory note, was D. Raminto, *Arusiensis* bishop, from the kingdom of Dacia, the present Romania. Frei Luís de Rás, master in Theology, translated it from Latin. In the end of the third chapter, the author refers to the city of Montpellier, where he probably practised medicine: «Em Mõpilher nõ me pude escusar de cõpanhia de gẽte, porque andaua de casa em casa curãdo ãfermos por causa da minha pobreza». These data, however, need a critical analysis, because they are imprecise or rather incomplete and even contradictory.

There are various editions between 1480 and 1500 with the *Regimen Pestilentiae*'s title or with a translated corresponding title, which came out of the presses of Paris, Antwerp, Leipzig, Cologne, Friburg, Nuremberg, London, etc. In these editions, the author's name, when it appears, comes as Canutus, Kamiutus, Kamitus or Ramintus. This last variant, surely due to the confusion between the letters K and R, gave origin in the Portuguese edition to Raminto. From the historical point of view, as far as we know, there was never a bishop with that name in any city of Dacia. Besides, *Arusiensis* is related to the Latin name of Vesteras, a place in Sweden. These data may induce us to think that the editors of the work attributed its authorship to a bishop so that it had more impact near the public.

The author's true name was Johannes Jacobi, or Jean James, the doctor of Pope Urban V and King Charles V from France. He probably died in 1384 and practised medicine in Montpellier, as referred in the work itself. There are numerous other manuscripts signed with this name. According to Klebs and Droz, *Regimen Pestilentiae* was almost certainly written in 1357, in a time where the Black Death caused thousands of victims all over Europe.

As for the translator of the work, Frei Luís de Rás, the introductory note is quite vague. It says that he translated it from «latim em linguagẽ». According to testimony of Diogo Barbosa Machado, Frei Luís de Rás was «Ministro Provincial da Seráfica Ordem dos Claustrais em o ano de 1501 e Mestre jubilado na Sagrada Teologia e Catedrático desta ciência em a Universidade de Lisboa» (B. L., III, 1-129, 1st ed.). Mário da Costa Roque, in his long and complete study on the *Regimento* (1979), states that the Portuguese translator «shows, quite frequently, large panoramas of its medical ignorance, thus very far from the French translators who had taken into hands the same task» (1979: 310). Unable to distinguish between the author of the translation and the author of the printing, he adds that «the text printed by Frei Luís de Rás, suffers (...) from various vices, namely: rough and very confusing forms of translation, changes and omission of words, great abundance of misprints and still complete typographical misses of lines that, very often, they make the clear and concise periods of the five or six Latin incunabula, such a completely different version» (Ibidem: 311). However, it doesn't seem wise to attribute the translator the total or partial responsibility for the change and omission of words, the typographic misprint (we counted only five, which proves they aren't many – unless the author of the study has considered as misprints the graphic variations) and the missing of lines. It is very likely that they are the printer's responsibility. As for the «rough and very confusing forms of translation», Mário Roque shouldn't have forgotten that, probably, the translator did his best, taking into account the characteristics of the Portuguese language of the time.

The Portuguese version of the *Regimento*, surely printed in the context of the plague of 1480-1496 that devastated the kingdom of Portugal, had as aim to serve as prophylactic and healing guide against the terrible disease. The author divides the booklet in five parts. In the first he presents «os signaes pronosticos da pestilêçia»; in the second he talks about «das causas della»; in the third «dos remedios della»; in the fourth «das cõformidades do coração e dos prinçipaes membros»; and in the fifth «da sangria» as a supposedly effective treatment.

## **7. The *Evangelhos e Epístolas com suas exposições em Romance***

The *Evangelhos e Epístolas com suas Exposições em Romance* were printed by Rodrigo Álvares in Oporto, in 1497. The authorship of this work hasn't been clarified yet. In many catalogues, the name of Guilherme Parisiense is associated to this work, but there are arguments in favour of the German Dominican Johannes Herold. With the title in Latin of *Postilla super Epistolas et Evangelia*, this work had in Europe, before the Portuguese edition of 1497, almost sixty printed editions, some of them in Castilian. The translation from Latin to Castilian was made by Gonçalo García de Santa María, Aragonese jurist, between 1479 and 1484. The Portuguese edition, according to Manuel Cadafaz de Matos (1997: 25), might have been based on one of the editions of Saragossa (1485 or 1491-1492), or, most likely, in the edition of Salamanca of 1493. The translation into Portuguese was made by Rodrigo Álvares, himself the printer of the work, just as the colophon informs: «E foy a suso dicta obra emprimida e trelladada em

lingoajen portugues, ã ha muy noble e sempre leal çidade do Porto per Rodrigalvarez.» The work was printed again in Lisbon between 1510 and 1511 by Valentim Fernandes with the title of *Evangelhos e Epistolas que se Contam no Decurso do Ano*, and no complete copy of this edition<sup>1</sup> survived.

We recently asked for a duplicate of the copy of the Salamanca edition of 1493 available in the Library of the University of Uppsala in Sweden, and so we could compare it with the Portuguese edition. We concluded that the Portuguese text matches with the Castilian and, as Cadafaz de Matos suggests, probably being the one which was in the base of the Portuguese edition.

The translation of the work was necessary due to the difficulty in the reading and understanding of Latin. In the paragraph where the colophon is inserted, it is stated: «A qual obra se fez a fym que os que a lingoã latina nõ emtẽdẽ nõ sejã priuados de tam exçellente e marauilhosa doutrina, a qual foy a de Christo nosso redemptor escripta nos euangelhos.»

The work didn't have a liturgical purpose. It was to be read at home and it served as complement to the reading or audition of the mass sacred texts which were in Latin. «E por que cada huum estando em sua casa despenda ho tempo antes em leer tam altos misterios: que em outros liuros de pouco fruyto», written in the paragraph that contains the colophon. The work paraphrases the evangelical texts and the texts of the epistles representative of each Eucharistic celebration, organizing them according to the liturgical time, and it adds a gloss, or explanation, more or less long to each one of them. Organized in this way, it was certainly a useful work, not only to the literate Christians, but also, and mainly, to the clergymen who had there an informative source in common language that could help them in the preparation of the mass.

## 8. Conclusion

The Portuguese language, established since the 9<sup>th</sup> century as a distinct language from the rest of the neo-Latin languages and, more precisely, Iberian, received important contributions from the foreign works translated and printed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and even more in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The influence that these works had at the lexical and syntactical level led to the development of the Portuguese writing, giving it a larger flexibility and capacity of expression.

Latin, which during all the Middle Age had been the most important, if not the single, means of written communication in Western Europe, almost stopped being understood by the great majority of the clergy, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The translation of works in Romance language had become a need since the bishops' concern was that all the clergymen in their dioceses had books they could read and understand. The printing of works in Romance language had become a strategy to fight the ignorance that spread in the clergy.

The printing of books in Romance language, besides the linguistic influence, also had a cultural one, since it allowed the emergence of a wider reading audience, no longer confined to the walls of the religious institutions. Books like *Vita Christi*, the *História do mui Nobre Vespasiano*, the *Evangelhos e Epistolas* or the *Regimento Proveitoso contra a Pestenença* began to be carried by the hands of the laymen, both for their instruction and also for their delight.

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<sup>1</sup> There is an incomplete copy in the Library of Harvard University (USA). At the date of the writing of this article, we couldn't analyse it, so that we could compare it with the edition of Rodrigo Álvares, and thus conclude if the translation is the same.

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