



Roda da Fortuna

Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiguidade e Medieval
Electronic Journal about Antiquity and Middle Ages

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The Memory of Prince Henry the Navigator: Genesis, Formation and Classification of a Monumental Collection of Documents - the *Monumenta Henricina*²

A Memória do Infante D. Henrique, o Navegador: Génese, Formação e
Classificação de uma Coleção Monumental de Documentos - os *Monumenta
Henricina*

Abstract:

The subject of this paper is to make an approach to the context of construction of the memory of the Prince Henri, known as the Navigator, by the publication of the most important anthology of medieval documents to celebrate the centenary of his death in the sixties of the twentieth century. Under the strong influence of the traditional historiography as it developed during the ninetieth century – the *Monumenta Henricina*, with fourteen volumes –, originally included official documents produced by government, kings and Pope as well as merchants and traders, such as royal charters but also correspondence. The first part, reflect the context of preparing the collection of documents and unveiling the ideological intentions of the project. In the second part, classify the types of acts diplomatically highlighting the importance of each in the documentary *corpus*.

Keywords:

Prince Henry; the Navigator; *Monumenta Henricina*; Medieval documentary sources; Portuguese Medieval History; Portuguese Historiography; twentieth century.

Resumo:

O objetivo deste trabalho é o de proceder a uma abordagem do contexto de construção da memória do Infante D. Henrique, o Navegador, com a publicação de um grandiosa antologia de documentos medievais para celebrar

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² This text was presented at the International Congress of Leeds, held on 6 to 8 July 2010.

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o centenário da sua morte, nos anos sessenta do século XX. Sob a forte influência da historiografia positivista e tradicional, tal como se desenvolveu no século XIX - os *Monumenta Henricina*, constituídos por catorze volumes -, incluem documentos oficiais produzidos pela administração central, os reis de Portugal e o Papa, assim como mercadores e comerciantes, contando entre os tipos diplomáticos com cartas régias e correspondência. Na primeira parte, analisamos o contexto de organização do conjunto de documentos e desvendamos as intenções ideológicas do projeto. Na segunda parte, procedemos à classificação dos tipos de atos destacando diplomaticamente a importância de cada um no *corpus* documental.

Palavras-chave:

Infante D. Henrique, o Navegador; *Monumenta Henricina*; Fontes Medievais; História Medieval Portuguesa; Historiografia Portuguesa; Século XX.

Introduction

The Portuguese dictatorial government during the post-war era (1945) promoted and extolled the colonial values in order to respond to the international pressure advocate of the decolonization³. The hesitations of the political and social forces opposed to the regime, led by the communists, contributed to the hegemony of the current in favour of the consolidation of the relations between the colonial power and the Empire. The Portuguese politicians and the researchers of the regime promoted the development of conventional history based on publication of anthologies of medieval documents provided the scientific support for the dominant view of those who were fighting for the maintenance of the Empire⁴. In this context, it is not surprising that Portugal kept its empire intact during the two great periods of the European post-war overseas decolonization (1945-60 and 1961-73) (Miège, 1986). During the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century the valuation of the Portuguese colonial past, and the enhancement of their civilizing mission, reach a grater dimension, when we witnessed the development of the program of celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the

³ Portugal experienced an authoritarian political regime between 1926 and 1974 called *Estado Novo*, under the leadership of António Oliveira Salazar.

⁴ The idea of the existence of a profound unity of the Portuguese space was supported by political regime as a quality and a uniqueness of the Portuguese culture (Léonard, 1998: 31-50).

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death of Prince Henry, known as the Navigator⁵. In that context, the government sponsored the publication of great anthologies of medieval documents associated with the Portuguese Overseas Expansion, including the settlement of territory, evangelization of the native peoples and the various aspects of overseas administration. This activity of collection and publication of documentary sources, within the scope of the history of the politics of the Portuguese discoveries, aimed at rehabilitating the national heroes so as to unite the Nation around them. Likewise, in the opinion of the researchers who were followers of the regime, it was necessary to correct scientific and historical distortions made by foreign authors. They, therefore, launched an offensive against what they considered “apropriação dos méritos científicos dos nossos navegadores” (Brochado, 1960: 11). The so-called scientific distortions, according to the editors of the collections of documents, would have emerged in the context of the European colonial race to the African continent, especially after the Conference of Berlin (1884–85), which affirmed the basis of effective occupation against the historical rights favorable to Portugal. This European movement tended to discredit the role of the Portuguese in relation to the extra-European discoveries and, in its early stages; it seems to have been led by the well-known German geographer Alexander Van Humbolt⁶ (1769-1859).

It is in this historical context, where politico–ideological reasons and historical resentments come together, that we must understand the task of the collecting and publishing of medieval documents intimately associated with the program of the centennial commemorations and other festivities. In 1960, for the celebration in memory of Prince Henry, as a result of a decision taken in a meeting of the Cabinet, a National Commission⁷ was set up –The National Commission - , for the Commemoration of the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Prince Henry, presided over by José Caeiro da

⁵ The program of the celebrations steps back to the forties with the *Exposição Histórica do Mundo português*, announced by Oliveira Salazar, on the March of 1938, as a great celebration of both the portuguese independence (1140) and the restoration (1640).

⁶ Alexander Van Humboldt, German geographer, ethnographer and Explorer went through a critical view of the history and geography of the new continent (South Africa), the conquest accomplished by the Spanish undervaluing the Portuguese discoveries of the fifteenth century.

⁷ It was made up of a president and nineteen members who represented various institutions. About the composition and objectives referred to in the texts during the entrance into Office of the Commissions, see Coelho, 1994: 135-49.

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Matta (1887-1963), then president of the Portuguese Academy of History (Academia Portuguesa da História)⁸.

According to the commissioners' opinion, it was imperative to pay due homage to “o brilhante inspirador das descobertas”(V *Centenário da Morte*: 14) given that, “o Príncipe [era] um homem singular e extraordinário”⁹, because we owe to him “the perceptive and impelling action of the enterprise of the overseas expansion, that would be considered a unique phenomenon in the history of the world”¹⁰. The commissioners considered that it was urgent to rehabilitate the image of Prince Henry both at the national and, above all, international levels. To accomplish that, they considered it to be fundamental to produce anthologies and monographs well based and documented to providing a new view of the history of the Portuguese discoveries.

The ceremonies in his honor started in 1954, the date commemorating his birth, and lasted until the end of 1960. It comprised a series of festivities which aimed at exalting “o passado glorioso [que] devia servir de paradigma para a superação da decadência contemporânea [...] esta estratégia passava pela restauração da grandeza imperial perdida” (Catroga, 1999: 267-84 e 1998: 221-361). Among the various commemorations included in the programme there were exhibitions (Exposição Henriquina – 1960), lectures, courses, parades, the restoration of monuments, specialized publications, the publication of historical sources about the various aspects of the Portuguese expansion, including the life and work of Prince Henry. In the field of the specialized publications, the *Colecção Henriquina*, in twelve volumes¹¹, deserves

⁸ He was Foreign office Minister (1933-35) and Minister of National Education (1944 –47) during the “Estado Novo”. He was a Member of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences and President of the Portuguese History Academy (1945– 63). Caeiro da Matta, as President of the executive Commission of the five hundredth anniversary of the death of Prince Henry, refused to publish in the “Colecção Henriquina” the book written by V. M. Godinho - *A economia dos descobrimentos henriquinos* – justifying his attitude by saying that “the ideas presented in this book were very different in spirit from those of the «comemorações henriquinas»”. See specially Godinho, 2008:16, where the letter published by Caeiro da Matta. can be found in the above mentioned “Colecção Henriquina”, cfr. *infra*, n. 17.

⁹ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, VIII.

¹⁰ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, IX.

¹¹ Comprising twelve volumes, this collection aims at propagating the golden age of the Portuguese discoveries, patronized by Prince Henry, which in the view of the commissioners deserved a wider awareness among those who were less specialized in this field of studies. Each volume focuses on a theme (*I História dos Descobrimientos Portugueses; II – Vida e Obra do Infante D. Henrique; III – Descobrimiento do Atlântico; IV – A Ciência Náutica dos Portugueses na*

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special attention. It is a popularizing work, easy to understand by the less specialized readers, presenting syntheses of several themes related to the epic of the Portuguese overseas discoveries and colonization. In the area of the publication of sources, a great compilation of documents was also brought together in the *Monumenta Henricina*, which is the focus of our attention. *Monumenta Henricina* is part of a wider movement of gathering and publicizing sources related to the epic of the Portuguese overseas discoveries, their colonization and the missionary and civilizing action of the Portuguese (Dias, 1997: 139-166). Some of these projects date back to the forties, a period that corresponds to the beginning of the celebration of the historical movements of affirmation of the national identity and of its ideological and symbolic elements.

Table 1 – Publications of medieval and modern documentary sources (1944-1971)

Title of the publications	Editors	Year edition	Number of volumes
<i>Descobrimentos Portugueses</i> ¹²	Silva Marques	1944-1971	4
<i>Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado português do Oriente</i>	António da Silva Rego ¹³	1947-1958	12
<i>Monumenta Missionária</i>	Padre António	1952-1970	14 + 1

Época dos Descobrimentos; V – Os Navios do infante D. Henrique; VI – Prioridade dos Descobrimentos Portugueses; VII – A Política de Sigilo nos Descobrimentos; VIII – A Cartografia Portuguesa; IX – A acção Missionária no Período Henriquino; X – Panorama Económico dos Descobrimentos Henriquinos; XI – O Infante e Universidade e XII – Historiográficos dos Descobrimentos). All these publications aim at destroying “*todas as insinuações e injustiças feitas à obra do Infante (...) e reivindicar e consagrar na história universal toda a grandeza, toda a realidade da epopeia portuguesa*” (Brochado, 1960: 29 and 34, respectively).

¹² It comprises about two thousand documents from the national archives of Torre do Tombo, many of them unpublished.

¹³ A bio-biography and analysis of the work of this author can be seen Freitas, “Pedro de Azevedo et David Lopes”, 63-74. Available in: <https://bdigital.ufp.pt/dspace/bitstream/10284/592/.../79-88FCHS2006-9.pdf>.

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<i>Africana</i> (<i>África Ocidental</i>)	Brásio		(suplement)
<i>Documentação para a história das missões do padroado português do Oriente : Insulíndia</i>	Artur Basílio de Sá	1954-1988	6
<i>Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica</i> ¹⁴	Armando Cortesão and Avelino A. Teixeira da Mota	1960	6

Publications of medieval and modern documentary sources (1944-1971)

All the collections mentioned so far on table 1, make a special reference to the priority of the Portuguese expansionist and missionary action, and play an important role in the creation of a national historiographic tradition of the following decades, thus maintaining the myth of the utmost importance of the national colonizing and «civilizing» actions. They constitute collections of national and foreign documents from both national and international archives, with an erudite critical concern, these being a fundamental source of information for the study of the various aspects of both expansion and Portuguese colonization.

If, from a cultural point of view, the *Monumenta Henricina* belong to a wider ideological movement backed up by a cultural policy which was in favor of the nationalistic and integrating values; symmetrically, from a historiographical point of view, as a collection of medieval documents, the *Monumenta Henricina*, belongs to a certain trend of European origin and of positivist inspiration and characterized by heuristic concerns, because the methods of documental criticism are similar to those developed by the scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Bourdé, 2003). In reality, one of the most important reasons behind the publication of documentary collections, at least from the beginning of the first half of the

¹⁴An icon of Prince Henry's celebrations developed according to the method of modern European cartography.

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nineteenth century onwards, is of heuristic origin, under the belief that the development and the justification of History as a scientific discipline are capable of being rigorously researched through formal and documentary methods just as much as in the experimental disciplines, that is, the mechanism of nature and Natural History, is in a sense transposed to Human History. During the nineteenth century the promotion of the work of historical research permitted the transcription and reproduction of documents that give priority to the “Henrician” discoveries on the West African coast. Members of this movement were the Viscont of Santarém (1791-1855), Gabriel Pereira (1847-1911) and Pedro de Azevedo (1869-1928) among other scholars and intellectuals who undertook the publication of catalogues of medieval Portuguese documents. These learned people published medieval sources in the framework of the development of the romantic and the positivist school¹⁵. This movement which valued the historical document as an irrefutable fount of knowledge was to be taken up again by those responsible for the compilation of documents in the fifties and sixties, of the twentieth century. But it is appropriate to recall that this preoccupation with the systematic collection of diverse official documents is not exclusive to Portuguese historians, as all the “great” nations of Europe have their respective cultivators of their national heritage¹⁶. Between 1870 and 1945, the exacerbation of rivalries among European nations was particularly favorable to the development of nationalism as an ideology, and History served the political and ideological interests of the Nation- State (Geary, 2004).

1. The *Monumenta Henricina* and the History of Prince Henry the Navigator

¹⁵ In this table it is worth mentioning the most relevant collection of medieval documents of the second half of the nineteenth century, published under the patronage of the Academia Real das Ciências and under the supervision of the historian Alexandre Herculano, the *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica* (1856-1897). Alexandre Herculano published a total of ten volumes including royal and private documents, laws and customs, and general inquiries of Afonso II (1211-1223) and Afonso III (1248-1279) (*Diplomata et Chartae, Leges et Consuetudines, Inquisitiones*).

¹⁶ Let us see, for example, the German case relative to the publication of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, first published in 1826 under the supervision of Georg Heinrich Pertz having as its motto “Sanctus amor patriae dat animum”. This was a romantic nationalism which valued culture, language and the historical and cultural idiosyncrasy of the people, values that inspire Georg Pertz and Georg Waitz similarly to the case of *Alexandre Herculano*.

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The institutional programme of the commemorations of the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator was organized by the “Estado Novo” (1926-1974).

The program was based on a set of sufficiently coherent and homogeneous principles and ideas related to the leading role played by Prince Henry, the Governor of the Military Order of Christ, within the Portuguese expansionist process. In fact, the publication of the historical sources associated with the programme of commemorations was intended to provide the collection of documents, which would enable the authorities to exalt the deeds of the national heroes, and extol the virtues of the Portuguese expansionist and colonialist past. The outlining of the stubborn profile of the great leading figures of the discoveries was linked to the idea of greatness of spirit and to the courage of our ancestors. Henry, the Navigator personified this ideal and was an element of communitarian integration as a result of the unanimity he brought about both inside and outside the historiographic community, thus serving the political interests of the government in leading Portuguese society. All these ideas were reiterated institutionally in the festivities of the commemorations, in the writings of the majority of scholars working on the history of expansion during the nineteen fifties and sixties, and in the teaching of history at primary and secondary levels¹⁷, these being the instruments of power which promoted the idea that the historical feats of expansion should unquestionably be attributed to Prince Henry who, inspired by the spirit of crusade, took upon himself the role of the legitimate representative of the interests of the noble faction that was eager to drive the Muslim danger from the Peninsula. The supremacy and leadership of Prince Henry was at first questioned by the historian of the discoveries V. M. Godinho, who in 1962, published *A economia dos descobrimentos henriquinos*¹⁸. In his work the author supports the idea that the building up of the myth of Prince Henry is essentially due to the panegyric written, at the order of King Afonso V (1439-1481) given to the chronicler Gomes de Zurara (1410-1474), in order to annul the role of Prince Pedro, who was Regent of Portugal between 1439 and 1449, in response to the initiative of sailing beyond Cape

¹⁷ In reality, the teaching of history imposed by the Estado Novo determined the gallery of national heroes who should be identified by all Portuguese, just as they were also expected to memorize the overseas provinces.

¹⁸ Reed under the title *A Expansão Quatrocentista Portuguesa*, 152. Similarly, it is also worth mentioning the global and well-founded studies of Cortesão, *Os Descobrimentos Portugueses*, and Duarte Leite, *História dos Descobrimentos*.

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Bojador¹⁹. About this matter, V. M. Godinho, says that during the Portuguese Middle Ages, a mythical complex grew up after the Battle of Ourique (1139) to which was progressively joined the spirit of crusade that is one of the justifications of the expansion. He also added that “*Não é certo que Zurara se lbe refira na Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta; mas liga a expedição [a Ceuta] à sacralização dos feitos de Afonso Henrique*” (Godinho, 2004: 52-53), the revival of the founding myth (Buescu, 1991: 49-69).

Besides the controversy that the expansionist side of the work of Prince Henry and his collaborators has aroused to this day, we tend to believe that there was a deliberate intention on the part of the Estado Novo to intervene in the process of constituting a “new” “Henrician” identity for the Prince, based on updated and well-documented knowledge. In the remote History of the Middle Ages, the government would not only redeem and justify the imperialist profile of the Portuguese State, but also instill the idea of the collective memory that the greatness of our past history should not be undervalued.

In this context, we are not surprised that the chronology of Portuguese History, for the directors of the work ²⁰ was based on three distinct periods:

1st) from the building of the Portuguese nationality until the conquest of the Algarve by Afonso III (1249);

2nd) from the beginning of the Portuguese Empire with the conquest of Ceuta (1415) to the Castilian occupation and

3rd) from the Castilian occupation in 1580 and subsequent decay of the empire and the decline of Portuguese prominence in the world.

This division rests on criteria of analysis of the evolution of Portuguese History which favored the event to the detriment of analysis based on a

¹⁹ At this time it is not appropriate here to develop in detail the arguments that support one or other point of view. About this subject, see for all references Godinho, 2008.

²⁰ Manuel Lopes de Almeida (1990-1980), Director of the Biblioteca Geral da Universidade of Coimbra (1945-1970); Idalino Ferreira da Costa Brochado (1904-1989), historian of the discoveries, and António Joaquim Dias Dinis wrote several studies of Portuguese overseas territories in the fifteenth century.

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connection of the various social, political and economic factors behind it. The definition of the first and second phases derived from that. The first, corresponds to a period of construction of the national political autonomy, setting, *a posteriori*, as a landmark of that definition the conquest of the Algarve from the Moors (1249/50). This thesis is today strongly rejected by modern Portuguese historiography²¹. A second period corresponds to what is considered to be the *golden period* of Portuguese history, due to its representative features affirming Portugal's place in the world. This second period starts at the conquest of Ceuta in 1415 and lasts until 1580, the date of the loss of our independence, which corresponds to the beginning of a long-lasting decline. This second phase for the organizers of the anthology of Henrician documents corresponds to a period of national achievements materialized by the activities of expansion and colonization of the overseas territories, as well as by the missionary activity developed in the North of Africa and in the South Atlantic (Brazil). Today, these chronological boundaries are completely rejected. In this context it is worth stressing the pioneering position of V. M. Godinho who considers that these divisions must follow rigorous criteria, not based on dates but on "*franjas de separação, mais ou menos largas temporalmente*" (Godinho, 1978: 62).

The systematic publication of official diplomas was justified in this intellectual context leading from the remote past of the Portuguese discoveries, the 13th century, until the death of Henry the Navigator (1460). Those in charge of the work aspire to legitimize heuristically Prince Henry's cherished multi-dimensional plan, comprising the conquest of Ceuta and Granada, the discovery of the western African coast and the finding and settlement of the Atlantic islands (Madeira and the Azores). Thus, they try to support the idea that the Portuguese were the first in Europe to pursue the work of discovery in a state-supported and «scientific» way. As stated by the experts in charge of the organization of the anthology, the search for "*the genesis of the overseas Portuguese expansion has taken us to a level (...), that exceeds, by far the span of the Navigator's life*"²². In consequence, the fact that we understand that the expansionist activity was an action that followed the Christian reconquest, (as it includes the crusade against Islam) established moral and political evaluation criteria which prevailed in the historiography of the discoveries of the fifties and sixties, as we have already said.

²¹ Godinho was pioneer in the development of a modern vision of "periodization" (the division into periods of Portuguese history). See for all references Godinho, 1978, 59-62. (1st edition 1968).

²² Almeida, Brochado and Diniz (1944-71), "Prefácio". In *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, IX.

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Nowadays, Portuguese historiography praises the idea that the division into periods cannot be based on precise dates and that the evolution of the overseas expansion of the Portuguese was not ruled by a straight line, ascendant and progressive development, only interrupted by the Dynastic Union of 1580 (Duarte Leite, 1958-60).

But it is equally fair to advance the view that the project of publishing the anthology of documents about Prince Henry - the *Monumenta Henricina* - underlies the idea that, it is essential to clarify some of the most important problems of our national History, namely the part played by the Military Order of Christ under the supervision of Prince Henry and his servants, the re-evaluation of the role of the spirit of crusade in the enterprise of the territory from Islam, not to mention the reconnaissance voyages down the Western African coast as far as Guinea.

It was with this in mind that the gathering of documents was done in national and international archives in order to provide a corpus of scientific evidence relating to multiple aspects of research, among which the following stand out: origins, development and action of the Military Order of Christ under Prince Henry's administration between 1420 and 1460, the publication of documents which would make possible the study of the life and work of Prince Henry, the missions of the foreigners who lived in Portugal, the role of the foreign merchants and navigators at the service of Portuguese kings, biographies of the Prince's servants and of all those who lived in his House and were under his orders, relations with other Peninsular and European States, and relations with the Holy See and the facilities and incentives granted by the Pope in the development of the expansionist activity and of the conquest of the territory from Islam.

A team of researchers, paleographers and enthusiastic archivists were in charge of the development of the project. Their objective was to present, compare and critically explain documentation proceeding from "*segura, sólida e irrefutável*" (Brochado, 1960: 41) source relative to the wide range of the above mentioned subjects. Advancing the intentions of this great collection of documents, the historians finish by saying that "*colectânea constitui uma espécie de análise para futuras sínteses [...] trata-se de uma colectânea histórica e não diplomática*"²³.

²³ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. I, doc. 181, 369-70.

2. The documental *corpus* of the *Monumenta Henricina*

From this set of fourteen volumes which comprise the anthology, we proceeded with the diplomatic classification of all the documents compiled from volume II to volume XIII, that is, from the 25th of May, 1420, the time when the Pope, Martinho V, appointed Prince Henry as general administrator (master) of the Military Order of Christ²⁴ in the Kingdoms of Portugal and the Algarve²⁵, until the death of the Prince, in 1460. The total number of documents gathered during this time interval was 2199.

This publication shows the great care involved in the gathering, selection and transcription of the documents related to the concerted action of the Portuguese Crown, of the Master of the Order of Christ and his servants and of the supervising elite of those days who, for 40 years, outlined and executed the plan for controlling the Strait of Gibraltar, accomplished voyages of reconnaissance along the Western African coast and promoted actions of discovery and settlement of the Atlantic archipelagoes (Madeira and the Azores). The projection and representation of this multi-dimensional plan is justified in a wide range of documents from various sources, accompanied by bibliographic references, quotations from coeval sources and critical observations, in order to establish the “state of the art” until the present (1960) in response to the different questions raised by the published documents. Reference is also made to the research carried out, to the various assertions related to a certain event or alerts the reader to the incoherencies, errors in dates and other careless mistakes found after comparing, for instance, the primary documents and the chronicles of Gomes Eanes de Zurara. Thus, the intrinsic content of the documents is given its due value, in accordance with the rules of heuristic history.

Let us now move on to the analysis of the documental *corpus* of the *Monumenta Henricina*.

Among the more than 2000 documents studied, two main different kinds of text are distinguished: diplomatic texts and narrative ones.

²⁴ It is not our intention to study the role of the Military Order of Christ in the politics of the discoveries. For more information about this subject see, specifically, Silva, 2002.

²⁵ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. II (1411-1421), 366 and 369.

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In the first group we surveyed and classified diplomatically fifty-three types of documents under the charge of the different entities that produced the archives.

The main bodies that contributed to the archive are the Secret Archive of the Vatican (Rome), and several archives of Spain: General Archive of Simancas, Archive of the Crown of Aragon (Barcelona), National Archive of Madrid. Among the Portuguese national archives stand out the Archive of Torre do Tombo, the Archive of the University of Coimbra, the District Archive of Braga and the Historical Archive of the City Hall of Lisbon.

The variety of the entities studied that were involved in the gathering of documents for the publication of the archives, justifies the great diversity of documental types. The objective of the compilers was to provide an integrating and global view of the Portuguese overseas activities, reflecting the internal conditions, but, at the same time, conferring on them an international frame of reference, viz. the number of bulls, apostolic letters granted by the Popes, or letters exchanged among the Portuguese authorities and the neighboring realms of Castile, Aragon and Navarre, and above all about the ownership of the archipelago of the Canaries.

As for the narrative sources, the emphasis falls on extracts from medieval chronicles. In the *Monumenta Henricina* there appear a significant number of extracts from mediaeval chronicles, which justify the activities of conquest and overseas expansion, praising the memory of past feats. Undoubtedly, the chronicles are historical narratives of a hagiographical character with specific features. The excerpts from the chronicles of the Kings of Portugal and Spain compiled in the *Monumenta Henricina* refer to different subjects in order to facilitate their subdivision into:

- reports of voyages, discoveries or conquests;
- reports of trading with other states;
- reports from embassies, and
- reports of other subjects

In the following table we include the percentile values in a decreasing order of the main types of diplomas collected in the *Monumenta Henricina*, from 1420 to 1460 (Vols. II-XIII).

Table 2 – Main types of diplomas in *Monumenta Henricina*

Types of diplomas	Total	%
Ex-officio provisions	322	16,64
General privileges	277	14,31
Letters and missives	242	12,50
Donation of goods and rights	214	11,05
Pardons	140	7,23
Apostolic letters	137	7,08
Narratives of voyages, discovery or conquest	87	4,49
Suplications	66	3,41
Public instruments	47	2,42
Licenses	46	2,37
Papal Bulls	40	2,06
Acts of Parliament	32	1,65
Debt repayments	29	1,49
Chronical reports	27	1,39
Safe conducts	24	1,24
Loans	23	1,18
Powers of attorney	23	1,18
Memoranda	22	1,13
Laws or ordinances	19	0,98
Marriage contracts	18	0,93
Legitimations	17	0,87
Public revenues	17	0,87
Regulation of military obligations	16	0,82
Opinions/Advice	14	0,72
Testimonial letter	13	0,67
Sentences	12	0,62
Pensions	11	0,56

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Total	1935 ²⁶	99,86
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The classified diplomas of *Monumenta Henricina* prove with documental support the different phases of the expansionist movement and the diversity of objectives of the Portuguese expansion in the course of the forty years of Prince Henry's life²⁷ at the head of the Order of Christ, during the reigns of King João I (r.1385-1433), King Duarte (r.1433-1438), the regency of Prince Pedro (r.1439-1449) and the direct government of Afonso V (r.1450-1460)²⁸. That is, the documentation pursued reflects the various problems our expansionist activity had to go through, from the conquest of Ceuta until the death of Prince Henry. These phases do not exactly correspond to either changes of political orientation or reign.

Thus, according to present day historical analysis of the documentation of Prince Henry's time, the first phase which comprises the reign of King John I (1385-1433) and of his son, King Duarte (1433-1438, though associated with the government from 1411 onwards), the Portuguese expansionist project, was oriented in the direction of the control of the Strait of Gibraltar although it oscillated between the conquest of the port cities in the North of Africa and the conquest of the kingdom of Granada (Costa, 2009: 154), these being the two main directions of the Holy War. At the same time, he fought for the Pope's recognition of Portugal's ownership of the archipelago of the Canary Islands, which led to a dispute with Castile that started in 1424 and only finished in 1434²⁹ To this basic political orientation we must add the determination to carry out a policy of discovery and settlement of the archipelagoes of Madeira and the Azores, a process that provided Portuguese mariners with a practical school of navigation on the open ocean (Chaunu, 1989: 90-91). The promoters of this plan were essentially King João I and

²⁶ Other types of documents can be found in the category "Diverse", such as insurance letters, compositions, trade, statutes, and licenses of use and transport of weapons, instructions, notifications among others with scarce quantitative weight (less than ten diplomas). This is the reason that we don't put them on this table.

²⁷ Peter Russell wrote an excellent biography of Prince Henry. Russell shows that Prince Henry was great crusader and a great discoverer of secrets. See, Russell, 2001.

²⁸ The reign of Afonso V surnamed «The African» started in 1439 and lasted until 1481.

²⁹ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. III, docs. 50, 91 and vol. IV, doc. 16, 89-90, doc. 17, 91-92 and doc. 18, 93-95.

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Prince Henry. The collective interests represented in the crown and the personal interests of the Infant and his people, seem to have converged in the course of this phase of the expansion movement. However, current historians consider that this plan involving several simultaneous areas of intervention was not shared by the controlling elite as a whole (Costa, 2009: 153 ss.). All the contemporary historians of the discoveries agree that there have been pressure groups within the political society, who refused to accept the idea of carrying out the joint plan of the conquest of fortresses in the North of Africa as well as the conquest of the kingdom of Granada. The leadership of this political side was defended by Prince Pedro, Regent of the Portuguese crown between 1439- 49 and by Prince João, Constable of the kingdom (1431-42), to whom Ceuta represented a “grave sumidoiro de gente, armas e dinbeiro” (Zurara, 1989, chap. 79: 210-213). They were backed by the counts of Ourém and Barcelos who were concerned, specifically in the “gestão de seu património e a fruição de suas famílias ou de outros prazeres da vida [...] o bloqueio social da nobreza não apreço que os preocupasse” (Costa, 2009: 154).

In spite of this, it seems that the political faction led by King João I, and his son Prince Henry came out on top, especially as the documents prove the international support for the development of the Holy war. The Portuguese Crown tried to convince the Holy See that the conquest of territories in Africa “situava-se no prolongamento de uma espécie de Reconquista programada” (Chaunu, 1989: 98). First, came the papal bulls that stimulated and legitimized the conquests in the Maghreb issued by Martinho V³⁰, then those in recognition of the great feats grant the monopoly of African evangelization to the Portuguese, namely by Pope Eugénio IV, in 1442³¹, while safeguarding the possible rights of the Castilian Crown (in a new bull, *Rex Regum*). As we confirm, the apostolic letters and the bulls constitute two of the most evident documental sources in the documentation proceeding from the Papal Court.

On another matter, that of the activity of discovery, both Portuguese and foreign historiography consider that the most extraordinary feat of Prince Henry must have been “to persuade Gil Eanes and his crew to pass beyond Cape Bojador” (Costa, 2009: 133), because “this step being taken, everything went fast” (Chaunu, 1989: 105) towards the South. The accounts of the

³⁰ Bull of the crusade *Rex Regum* given by Martinho V, dated back to 1417-1418. 04.04. Through this bull Portugal receives the rents of the Order of Santiago, *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. II, doc. 143, 282-286.

³¹ *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. VII, doc. 232, 344-350.

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voyages extracted from the chronicles, mark the main stages of the discovery of the West African coast and of the work of conquest, as far as the region of Sierra Leone.

In truth we must stress that the *Monumenta Henricina*. supplies us with the most varied documentation about the activities and official positions occupied by the Prince's staff, who managed the economy of the discoveries, administering the lands of the Order of Christ, taking part in the campaigns in the North of Africa, participating in the meetings of the Royal Council or going as delegates of the King of Portugal to the Papal Court and to the neighboring kingdoms (Castile, Aragon and Navarre), and negotiating agreements and peace treaties (1411 and 1431-32³²). By examining the documents, we can have an idea of how far Prince Henry was involved in the internal management of his estates and of the leading roles of a significant number of the officers of his House in the enterprise of the discoveries and in the internal management of the Military Order of Christ.

The innumerable provisions of office, privileges, donations and pardons granted to the servants of the Prince, on the one hand demonstrate the protection and defense granted to all those who deserved his trust and who exercised the most diverse functions in their lord's household, and on the other hand, the degree of political influence of the Prince and his partisans in the Court. The benefits attained by the officers and servants of Prince Henry amounted to 953 documents (including ex-officio provisions, general privileges, donations of goods and rights, and pardons), that is 49, 25% of all documents available. In reality, the Prince always managed to gain from the Crown a huge number of privileges and honours, this being the reason for the enrichment of his House and Household and domains (Sousa, 1991).

Conclusion

As is obvious, the intrinsic content of medieval documents compiled in the anthology refers to a different ideological meaning from the one that gave rise to the publication of *Monumenta Henricina* during the 1960s.

Nevertheless the extraordinary diversity of documents brought together in this collection highlight the joint action of the Crown and of the Military

³² *Monumenta Henricina*, IV, doc. 9, 18-19 and doc. 15, 60-89.

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Order of Christ, under the supervision of Prince Henry the Navigator, in relation to his activities of conquest and overseas expansion, setting out in great detail his political, religious and economic aims.

In its turn, the gathering and publication of medieval documents in the 50`s and 60`s necessarily had propagandistic, pedagogical and ideological intentions, if we consider that there was a glorious and unequalled time in our history that urgently needed to be rescued for national pride and international assertion. The restoration of the collective memory of the Prince, seen as a national hero, constituted a decisive step in the affirmation of that national identity. Even so, although there has been a university reform since the 50`s, (in which historians have fought for a deeper professionalization of historic knowledge, establishing the relation between two distinct actions-teaching and research), methods of collecting and interpreting the documents compiled in the *Monumenta Henricina*, are closer to the methods developed by the historians of the romantic and positivistic school of the eighteenth century to those of the current European historiographic mainstream, especially in the School of the *Annales* (of which the historian Magalhães Godinho was one of the most renowned representatives). We cannot deny that, from those in charge of the organization, there was a concern with the development of a certain critical awareness in the footnotes and comments, in the analytical indices and in the cited bibliography. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the edition of medieval documents in the 50`s and 60`s of the twentieth century promoted the development of a nationalist history underlain by the idea of encouraging a specific political and cultural conception in relation to the teaching of national history and research into it, very often distant from the sifting effect of the scientific approach to the study of the past. Despite this criticism of the compilers' motives, the *Monumenta Henricina* is indeed a monumental creation, valued above all for the amount of published and systematized documentation it contains, being regarded even today as an indispensable reference work by all those interested in Medieval History.

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www.revistarodadafortuna.com

Recebido: 10 de julho de 2013
Aprovado: 23 de novembro de 2013