

**Alves, Jorge Santos. *Fernão Mendes Pinto and the “Peregrinação”*.  
4 vols. (Studies, restored Portuguese text, notes and indexes).  
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I should like to begin by stressing that in writing these lines we are paying homage to the greatest philological monument ever erected in honor of the *Peregrinação*. Now that such an “epistemological leap” has been made, I can say that this valuable and wise work promises to breathe a new lease of life into an area that—because of Portuguese traditions—is subject to regular commemoration.

And to begin with a subjective observation I should like to question the organization of the four volumes of *Fernão Mendes and the “Peregrinação”*. I believe that it would have been preferable if the second volume (the restored Portuguese text) had preceded the first one (Studies), which would then have been followed by the last two (Notes and Indexes), since in the new critical edition—although it does not claim *ipsis verbis* to be considered as such—these latter three volumes form an undeniable trilogy.

In the first volume (Studies), the first and third essays (even in their respective titles) evoke social networking as a novel way of structuring all that we thought we already knew about the positioning of Fernão Mendes Pinto within the social contexts that both preceded and followed his travels abroad, as well as in the context that marked his presence outside Portugal. This systematic mapping of interpersonal relations—as suggested, above all, by Giovanni Levi in *Les usages de la biographie*<sup>2</sup>—allows us to make more than just a few general observations about the origin and social status of our author. Through *network analysis*, all the “factual” biographies or linear coordinates presented in the traditional way are rendered outmoded. Instead, this network approach allows us to afford a different dimension to our protagonist’s status: through the writings of Jorge Santos Alves and Luís Filipe Barreto, we learn about F. Mendes Pinto as a trader and as someone linked to the Jesuit Order, someone bound by social ties and connections much sturdier than those that have already been gleaned from scattered documents and have enabled authors ranging from Father Schurhammer to Rebecca Catz to engage in a certain “deliteralization” of the author of the *Peregrinação*. When the work is considered as a whole, it can

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<sup>2</sup> *Annales, ESC*, 1989, 6, 1325–36.

be seen that it is treated as a source of knowledge by Marília dos Santos Lopes, who, like Francisco Roque de Oliveira, when talking about the use made of the manuscript of the *Peregrinação* before the date of its posthumous publication, manages to place this work in the context of its reception, considerably broadening our knowledge, which until now has tended to be directed towards the author of the message (in the acceptance that is afforded to these concepts by Umberto Eco, from the aesthetic point of view). There is no doubt that this mission is accomplished—despite its being considered impossible by Rui Loureiro—in relation to many of the sources of the *Peregrinação*, which, just like the whole section of the volume’s intertextualities, not only introduces philological novelties, but also a series of innovations in the way in which it approaches its subject-matter. The section “Visions of Asia in the *Peregrinação*” also displays a paradigm shift, by placing side by side the State of India—dealt with by George Bryan Souza, in his vision of individual wealth and economic policy—and the *Shadow Empire*, to use the fortunate expression of Sanjay Subrahmanyam. Various experts were consulted expressly for the areas of half-shadow—the coast of Cochinchina, or East Java (Charles Wheeler and Claude Guillot), as well as several longstanding and highly regarded specialists, such as Roderich Ptak, or the editor of this initiative. They all tirelessly make use of new documents and points of view that open up broader horizons, going far beyond the mere regurgitation of individual research.

The essay by Jacques P. Leider, about the Buddhist monks of the *Peregrinação* by Fernão Mendes Pinto, might also have been incorporated into the section that deals with skills and practices, whose “exoticism” would then be highlighted in different ways for historians and for literary specialists. The fact remains, however, that the four excellent published texts, whose aim is to strip bare both the *parole* and the *langue* that are used, heard and/or transcribed by Fernão Mendes Pinto, and free them of their literary clothing, convince us of the many languages which the real, myth-free and lie-free (“*não-mi(n)to*”) Pinto dealt with. If and when we add the great deal known by those who enlighten us in this respect (Ludvik Kalus, Jin Guoping, Ana Fernandes Pinto & Hino Hiroshi, as well as Luís Filipe Reis Thomaz—who chose to collaborate in this volume with a “technical” contribution, but who, through his disciples, is undoubtedly more present here than he is in the lines that he himself writes), we are surprised by the multiplicity of meanings (to use a phrase coined by Alfredo Margarido) about the paths taken by Pinto in his intellectual self-construction, and now followed and pursued by philology. Without the commitment of these authors specializing in the “archaeology of languages”, following the etymological paths of influences, borrowings, mutations, equivalences and analogies, respectively, in such a varied range of oriental languages (Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Japanese and

Malay in particular), the rigorous work of the annotators would also not have been possible. The fact that some “linguistic” collaborators have limited themselves to publishing nothing more than “glossaries” glorifies their collective spirit even more, because of the way in which they consider the branch of science that they use to be part of a long hierarchical heritage, whose acceptance is in itself an example of great humility. The same can be said of the prestigious annotators, who have been able (because they wished to do so) to submit to the rules that such a contribution imposes—although they aspire to much greater scientific heights.

The second volume of this great initiative corresponds to the “restored” text of the *Peregrinação*, whose philological criteria are summarized in just one modest page of explanation and are inversely correlated with the magnitude of the work that is to be undertaken. Through this painstaking and laborious work, Elisa Lopes da Costa joins the ranks of those engaged in laying the foundations of a Work. By refining and perfecting a text, by limiting herself to simply “arranging” solutions that have tended to be either postponed or circumvented in earlier editions, she is to be included amongst the “servants” that we most yearn for and should most extol. She is later joined by a long list of collaborators on the third volume, who by annotating the text of the *Peregrinação* are the heirs and continuers of one of the criteria that were always to be found in previous editions: to provide extratextual knowledge and information that will supplement the work, whose reading, even in its own time, was to become an effort that it was believed could usefully benefit from some outside help.

It proved possible to assemble this great “architecture” by bringing together the cream (in the best sense of the word) of those who had undertaken to collaborate with their own specific “understanding” and “know-how”. All of this was placed at the service, not only of ensuring a better understanding of the text, but also of improving its interpretation. Thus, with this work, both the general public and the specialists are not only brought “up to date” with regard to a whole host of matters relating to the text and author of the *Peregrinação*, but they are also presented with a tool whose usefulness will prove to be essential for future research. I am referring to the volume of indexes—onomastic, geographic, and based on themes and subjects—which encourage readers to make cross references. These indexes are classified under fourteen headings, all of them corresponding to important and pertinent aspects, including segments that have never before been touched upon (such as “gender” or “food & drinks”, for example), but whose “singularity” and “synopticity” suggest many new avenues of exploration. It seems to me to be symbolic that we owe this precious volume to the author of one of the most remarkable introductions ever to open a volume of essays: Zoltán Biedermann, who, in this tremendous

effort, strives to bring together all of the vast range of his good schools: French, Portuguese and Central European, respectively.

A review must be critical; otherwise it will lose its reason for being. What are the most obvious failings of this work? First of all, the fact that it does not transpose its new findings and information to the visual world, in the form of new maps. Since 1947, when the map “A *Peregrinação* de Fernão Mendes Pinto (Tentativa de reconstituição geográfica)”<sup>3</sup> was published by the Viscount of Lagoa, successive editions have (ab)used the contribution of the same Viscount of Lagoa, although they may have outlined different itineraries and physical places for the quest of Fernão Mendes Pinto, which have now been made known to us by the extra information and knowledge that have been provided. Consequently, we are still left with the task of renewing the geographic part of our knowledge in terms of its structurally didactic dimension. Although the intention of this work was to conduct fresh research only from the historical point of view, there still remains a strong need for us to make use of the point of view of the historians of literature. But I recognize that this would only complicate even further the already enormous effort that has been made by the organizer and soul of this present initiative, Jorge Santos Alves, who deserves the most fulsome praise.

To end this review, I should like to make a proposal. As this excellent masterpiece, with its 750 copies sponsored by the Fundação Oriente, is intended more for a select international audience rather than a broader Portuguese public, I propose that we take advantage of all the know-how that has now been brought together in a *Dicionário da Peregrinação e Cartas de Fernão Mendes Pinto* (just like the *Dicionário dos Descobrimentos Portugueses*, *Dicionário de Eça de Queirós*, *Dicionário da Literatura Medieval Portuguesa*, etc...) to place all the sources and information together in just one reference work, making it available for anyone who wants to make use of it, in Portugal, to plunge deeper into the fascinating adventure of Fernão Mendes Pinto. And whoever wishes to set about the same task abroad already has an extraordinary instrument for disseminating the Portuguese culture, besides a very valuable impetus and stimulus. Beginning with us Hungarians, whose edition of the *Bolyongások* by Fernão Mendes Pinto (and I hate to have to rectify this) was in fact published by the Cédrus Publishing House in Budapest, in 1992, with the translation and selection of texts being the work of Ervin Székely (and not mine). Alas, poor me, I can only claim to have revised his translation and to write the notes, a task that took me more than a year of my life. Never was time better spent...but, even so, with this new *Fernão Mendes Pinto and the Peregrinação* at our disposal, we are also challenged to publish, now more than

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<sup>3</sup> LAGOA, Visconde de, “A Peregrinação de Fernão Mendes Pinto (tentativa de reconstituição geográfica),” *Anais da Junta de Investigações Coloniais*, vol. 2, tomo I (Estudos de História e Geografia da Expansão Portuguesa), Lisbon, 1947, 11–156.

ever, a complete edition of the *Peregrinação* for the twenty-first-century Hungarian reader. For our own part, we are ready and willing to press ahead with this idea and to go beyond our own shadow. However long it may be.