

**Exploring Empire: Science, travel, Trade and Culture (1768-1820), Sir Joseph Banks, India and the 'Great Pacific Ocean', London, June 2011**

Title: Enlightened networks: Joseph Banks, Correia da Serra and the development of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon.

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Abstract:

In the Museum of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon a few objects stand out among the others, less for their absolute value than for the fact that they came from Hawaii and the Pacific Northwest (Tlingit and Nootka groups). Those places were never among the Portuguese colonial and merchant routes which provided the majority of ethnological art pieces and artifacts that can be found in its museums and collections. Instead, the objects made their way from the Pacific into Lisbon via the networks of intellectual exchange, friendship and institutional relations that connected some leading figures in different places of the world: Captain Cook (1728-1779), who collected them but did not survive the trip; Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), who hosted them; and the Portuguese abbot Correia da Serra (1850-1823), who headed the Royal Academy of Sciences and received the pieces in the context of the exchanges of ideas and objects he maintained with Banks. In this paper we will use those circulating objects as a reference to expand the discussion about the networks of ideas, people and objects gravitating around Sir Joseph Banks, which provide a window to better understand the complexities of the era known as European enlightenment.

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Key Words: Joseph Banks; Correia da Serra; Royal Academy of Science; enlightenment.

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There is no shortage of colonial art and artifacts in the city of Lisbon. There are famous collections, less famous ones; there are museums, old style and new-vogue. A remarkable number of the city's landmarks are themselves the epitome of a deeply engrained coloniality. A whole section of the city, Belem, was renovated in the 1930s for the purpose of building a colonial exhibit, the name of which was "Exposição do Mundo Português". It opened in 1940 with fanfare and was continuously filled with enthusiastic crowds of visitors. There were displays about virtually every corner of what was then the Portuguese empire. There were even entire villages with "live natives", like the Aldeia da Guiné, transplanted from west Africa, its quasi naked inhabitants pretending to go on about their lives as if nothing happened -- except for the brutal difference in temperature that brought caught their unprepared bodies the sneezes, the colds and the flues that ended up killing some of them. Among the massive display of imperial pride there was a monument to the discoveries that became so popular that its original make in disposable materials as "ephemeral art" was replaced by a durable construction in real stone.

## IMAGES

This is Belém, the colonial alley, where the visitor can find no less that one of the highest expression of the so called "Manueline art", the high baroque with symbols

related to maritime navigation (ropes, sea weeds, mermaids, etc.). There are a few old palaces, old mansions and modern buildings that host colonial or formerly colonial institutions: the Overseas Archives, the Tropical Institute and related hospital, the Cordoaria, , the Colonial School, the cultural Center of Macao, and, not far from there, the resplendent National Museum of Ethnology and the Orient Museum. All of them have interesting exotic objects in one way or another.

All of that seems too new and young, however, when compared to the two institutions we are after in our project: the Academia das Ciencias de Lisboa, formerly the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, founded in 1779, and the Geographic Society of Lisbon, founded in 1875.

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We will live the Geographical Society for today, and will concentrate on the Academy of Sciences. Its headquarters moved a few times since its foundation, from one palace or honorable building into the next one, most of them located in the area of Bairro Alto – Calhariz. When the liberal government confiscated the convents from the catholic church (1834), the Academy got to itself the magnificent building that hosts it to our days .

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It is within that building, well kept as far as we can judge, but away from the eyes and cameras of unauthorized visitors, that lay the objects which brought us here today. What objects are those, and what is it so special about them which has the power to lead us all the way to Joseph Banks and its era?

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One thing we can say for sure: colonial as they may resonate, exotic as they look, they are not from the former Portuguese colonies, as are most of the ethnographic pieces and collections in Lisbon and around the country. They were, however, classified as such for a long time. And, according to our colleague Manuela Cantinho (personal communication), some of them appeared in some carnival parades labeled as African. They were the generic exotic pieces that no one really cared much about. Recently, however, and partly due to the effort of that scholar, those pieces were appropriately identified as coming from the Pacific areas of Hawaii and the NW American Coast. They are identified as Hawaiian, Tinglit, Nootka. That seems very credible to us, after having seen similar pieces from international collections and their catalogues.

How did those pieces make their way from the Pacific to the Academy of Sciences? That is where our interest on Joseph Banks starts. There are several hypotheses explored by Antunes and Cantinho in a yet unpublished work; they may have come all the way to Portugal through trade in the 18th century, either by land or by sea. But they may have made it here, one of the authors believes, through a far more complex and exciting way. According to a speech by Mr. Teles Antunes in a open –day visit to the collection, those pieces were part of Captain Cook's expedition. Captain Cook did not make it beyond Hawaii; his body got through some unexpected reversal of fate. But his ship and expedition did leave Hawaii, made it beyond the Pacific, got to London – and, through the friendship of Joseph Banks and Correia da Serra, one of the founders of the Academy, they made it from London to Lisbon.

Whether this hypothesis holds or not is not up to us to resolve today. It is an extremely interesting one, however, and a good pretext to add one more character to the already plenty assembly of Joseph banks friends, acquaintances and scientific interlocutors.

Let us then focus on the character: Correia da Serra, the Catholic clergy who was also a father of a child and temporarily the husband of a woman, an intimate friend of the notorious Portuguese aristocrats, and also free-mason, a liberal, a scholar, a botanist, a politician, a diplomat, a sort of runaway, a quasi-everything. He is a puzzle of sorts, a man of his era, but one that did not live long enough to see the actual advent of the new era that started in the aftermath of Brazilian independence and is known in Portuguese history as the Liberal Revolution. He died in 1823, on its way to the sulphurous and therapeutic water of the famous old spa of Caldas da Rainha.