

## LAPA

by Dr. Paulo Lowndes Marques

Lapa is an area of Lisbon usually associated with embassies and is generally considered the "best" area of city linked to the addresses of noble names. Perhaps a sort of Belgravia. Curiously it has historically many links with Britons. Several merchants lived here in the late XVIII and early XIX century. It was not far from Estrela with its Protestant cemetery and indeed many houses in the area (several for example in the west side of Rua São Domingos a Lapa) are built very much in a London style — quite high and narrow. Also in the early part of last century it was an area where the best hotels existed (although much complained about as we shall see), usually kept by English or Irish ladies. So it was in this part of the city where travellers usually stayed.

Lapa means "a stone" and up and down Portugal there are many allusions to this name. Indeed one of the islands of Macau is called "Ilha da Lapa". There was a Conde da Lapa (another place) and so on. The name is attached to this part of Lisbon from certainly the XVIth century onwards and reflects the several quarries and potteries which existed. The Fabrica Constância is I think the last to survive. In the XIX century there was a famous Faiança Battistini of Italian origin who worked in the area (1836).

Of course Lapa is a comparatively modern area, all post-earthquake and tends to be rather despised by the classical historians of Lisbon. In the last century it was very much associated with "the new rich" and business fortunes in general and the really old families did not live there. They lived in the Alfama, Graça, perhaps the Bairro Alto but certainly not in Lapa. Even in the early part of this century to be a "menina da Lapa" which now strikes an aristocratic note was considered a pejorative

expression denoting "new money" as later was the description "menina das Avenidas Novas" or even more recently "menina do Restelo".

At the time of the great earthquake of 1755 it was really a country area and a small house situated in front of the residence of the British Ambassador in Rua São Francisco de Borja demonstrates the rustic type of the few houses there. Also certain street names evoke this countryside period — Rua dos Moinhos de Vento (above on the crest of the hill), Rua do Chafariz da Terra, etc.

Its general limits I think should be: to the North, the Rua de Buenos Ayres; to the South, Rua Garcia da Orta (known before as rua da Santíssima Trindade); to the East, the Rua das Trinas and the Rua dos Navegantes (where the curious Erminda de Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes is situated with its two azulejo stations of the cross on the façade of the church); and to the west, the Rua Ribeiro Sanches (known before as Rua Nova de São Francisco de Paula). It was a Parish between 1764 and 1886 when it was merged with the parish of Estrela.

Within this area one remarks the straight roads and obvious pre-planning of this development and one is reminded of the Pombaline Baixa. For of course this development did take place post-earthquake and was therefore strongly influenced by all the new theories on urbanization which had been carried out in the rebuilding of old Lisbon. But curiously it almost entirely covered the grounds of one convent, the Convento das Trinas in the street of the same name. Originally this convent was founded by Flemish merchants in 1657. By a Cornelius Wandaly and his wife Marte de Boz. His uncle was Bishop of Gandaro, D. Cornelio Jansénio. It was dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Soledad and the Trinitarian religious occupied the convent coming from their original home in the Calvário area. It suffered greatly in the earthquake and the nuns took shelter for some years at Portela. They returned in 1757. With the expulsion of the religious orders in 1834 it became a rest-house for destitutes ("um recolhimento") and is now the Hydrographical Institute of the Portuguese Navy. This Convent placed at the extreme east of what is now Lapa

was, when it was built, on the west edge of a curious and rough area of Lisbon known as o Mocambo or Madragoa where sailors and blacks lived in the XVII century and today is associated with the "varinas", the fishwives of Lisbon with their fast-disappearing cries. Indeed originally, the convent was known as the "Trinas do Mocambo". In 1723 a nun died here aged 111 years!

It was in this area of the Madragoa where another convent existed, the "Inglezinhas". They were Brigittine nuns, originally from Syon House near London. With the Reformation they first went to Holland and then to Lisbon where they stayed until the second half of the XIX century. There is still a small street in the Madragoa called Rua das Inglezinhas. Their convent is what is today the Faculdade de Economia in the Rua do Quelhas. Catherine of Braganza remembered them in her will.

When the rounds of the convent were developed many of the new streets were called after names of saints associated with the order of the Holy Trinity. Hence Rua de São Felix, Rua de São João da Mata, Rua de São Domingos, Rua do Sacramento and Rua da Santíssima Trindade (now Rua Garcia de Orta). There were also connections with the Cadaval family. Thus some of the land, such as the land where the present school of the "Escravas" is situated in Rua Garcia da Orta, paid a "foro" to the Dukes of Cadaval which consists of the upkeep of two nuns at the Convento das Trinas. The Rua da Bela Vista contains one of the Cadaval houses. The "palacete" where now the "Escravas" teach was originally the Palácio Anderson Costa. This was the family of Alfredo da Costa who gave his name to the great maternity hospital of Lisbon and the forbear of the contemporary politician Nobre da Costa. During the 1st Republic in 1910 the Rua das Trinas (where Mousinho de Albuquerque who captured the vátua chief Gungunhana in Moçambique lived) changed its name to Rua Sara de Matos. In those disturbed days Sara de Matos was said by anti-clerical propaganda to have been murdered by the nuns while in their care when the Convent became a rest house. A large monument was built to this "martyr" at the Prazeres Cemetery (where it still stands) and older inhabitants of Lisbon will remember the elaborate processions made in her memory with stern men in bowler hats and moustaches in attendance!

The Lapa area as has been remarked had several British links. They named the road on the top of the hill "Buenos Ayres" where General Donald Campbell lived and an auction of his effects took place in 1803. It was along the crest of the hill where this road now stands that Pombal hanged looters in the aftermath on the great earthquake. The British also installed several hotels. Indeed Rua do Sacramento was known during a period of the XIX century as "Rua da Casa de Pasto Inglesa". There was a Reeds Hotel in what is now N° 25 of Rua do Sacramento, presently belonging to the Horgan/Mayer family. During the last century a group of ladies acquired it and the Salesian order was first installed there (now they are at the Oficinas de São José at the Prazeres) and several well-known people were married in its chapel. The Lapa area also had a hotel managed by a Mrs. Williams in Rua Buenos Ayres described by William Hickey. Byron stayed at the Reeds but not Beckford who considered himself too grand.

Many Englishmen with consumption took a sea trip in those days, thinking it would benefit them. Alas, the British Cemetery in Lisbon holds many of these hopeful visitors to Lisbon. One of them was of course the famous novelist Henry Fielding, author of "Tom Jones". On the subject of the Lapa hotels he is very frank and describes himself as being "in the most expensive city and in the most expensive hotel in the city". He moved on to the house of a Mr. Stubbs in the Junqueira. But we hear of many English visitors and others at these hotels. The writer Hickey, the Earl of Winchelsea, a rich Devon landlord named Mr. Richardson who died in the hotel, a french Duke of Chatelet and so on. Tennyson stayed at the Hotel Braganza in the Cais do Sodré from which he visited Sintra and, incredibly, described it as "rather cockney" and as being "Lisbon's Richmond". He was however suffering from 'flu!

As stated, most of the development and larger houses were built with "new money". For example, the Porto Corvo palace, now the British Chancellery in the Rua de São Domingos. Jacinto Fernandes Bandeira (1745-1806) came from Viana do Castelo where he was born in the Rua da Bandeira; hence his name. He came to Lisbon and made a fortune, especially out of tobacco.

It is a typical example of a family which enriched itself during the Pombaline Consulate. They built the palace where they employed the painter Cyrillo and also Volkmar Machajo who also worked at Ajuda Palace. The chapel is dedicated to St. Anthony. He was made Barão de Porto Corvo and visitors to this fishing village near Sines will remark on its ordered urbanization in the manner of the late XVIII century. During the French occupation of Lisbon Gen. Loison stayed at the Palace, Junot preferring to stay at the Palácio de Quintela in Rua do Alecrim after having refused to stay in Catherine of Braganza's palace at Bemposta. They were subsequently made Condes de Porto Corvo and during the reign of D. Maria II often lent money to the State. Their Bank went bankrupt at the beginning of this century and several houses in the Rua de São Domingos and Rua do Sacramento (the one occupied by the Lumbrales family for example, therefore it became the Belgian legation), still belong to the Bank of Portugal in consequence of that bankruptcy. Not long ago the Bandeira family sold the Grandela store in the Chiado which still belonged to them.

Another rich family which left its architectural mark of Lapa was the Pinto Leite family. Theirs was a fortune made in Brazil and among other large houses they built in 1860 what is now the Instituto Industrial in the Rua de Buenos Ayres, n° 16; the American Ambassador's residence in the Rua do Sacramento; and also the old Maag building in the same road further along, which until the end of the last war was the German Embassy (invaded by the allies before the actual end of the war). There was a curious story about a German Minister Von Baligans who was murdered by another German in the '20s, it is not known why. Several titles are associated with this family — the Condes da Penha Longa, Condes dos Olivais, Visconde dos Olivais, Visconde da Gandarinha (a well known area of Cascais recently developed which belonged to the family). Other inhabitants of Lapa remember a huge masked ball given by the Olivais family in the Maag building in 1922 where everyone dressed in Second Empire clothes. In the garden a tree reputed to be from Vasco da Gama's time still survives.

One of the most curious streets is the Rua do Sacramento.

We have referred to it several times already but we should mention the extraordinary house built by the Visconde de Sacravém in 1909 which all the Caldas pottery encrusted as decoration (n° 24). The house presently belong to António Champalimaud (n° 36) the inside which is like the Petit Trianon with original XVIII century "boiseries" imported from France, formerly belonged to the Wiese, a Norwegian family linked with shipping whose descendents still live in Portugal. The house first belonged to a couple whose wife was, I fear, unfaithful. She signalled to her lover that the coast was clear by hanging a blanket outside her window. Her husband discovered her inclination and to make public her shame carved in stone a blanket hanging from her window. It has since been removed. At number 21 and 23 was the Liceu da Lapa which eventually moved to what is today the Liceu Pedro Nunes in the Av. Pedro Alvares Cabral. The house now occupied by the EEC offices belonged originally to Ricardo Espirito Santo (n° 35). Also there was the house of the Marquesa de Tancos. This was bought by the Castro Caldas and today belongs to the Finos (n° ). The present Dutch ambassador's residence belonged to Dr. Jorge de Mello. N° 50 belonged to Tereza Maria Plantier. The family also had a house built in the Rua Ribeiro Sanches where everything, including the workmen, came from France. (Now it is the Portuguese who build in France!) It cost him rather more than was originally estimated.

In 1803 there are reports of an auction at Nos. 56 and 58 belonging to a widow called Noble. In this road in 1802 lived a Marshal Goltz.

In Rua do Sacramento also lived a family with a Papal title called Marquês de Faria. They were linked to an Argentinian who used the title of Duquesa de Armstrong. The family was called Portugal de Faria and a lady lived on who called herself Princess Helena of Portugal.

Where the Bulgarian Embassy is now, with its horrible modern buildings, lived the Salema family.

Opposite the Swedish Embassy on the corner with Rua Pau da Bandeira lived Tomaz Borba who was a composer and kept

singing canaries.

Nobody knows how Rua Pau da Bandeira acquired its name but this road is mainly linked to the Conde de Valenças family which bought the house in 1892 from the Porto Corvos. The Jardim family had married into the Anjos de Arenoso as his second wife. He was a great friend and Secretary of D. Carlos, and their daughters married into several notable Portuguese families.

During the difficult period of the 1st Republic a posse of revolutionaries once entered the gardens of the Valença house looking for a fugitive sailor and in the confusion promised to shoot the servants (the family was away). The poor Swiss nurse produced a flag of her country and placed it over her heart. The revolutionaries mistook it for the Red Cross sign and stated it would do her no good! A Hintze Ribeiro (a relation) who lived the other side of the road bravely intervened and all was safe, though, alas, the poor sailor was found hidden at the bottom of the garden and led away. In this garden the present South African Embassy was built by Max Abecassis since the war. At the bottom (that is the west) of the Valenças garden there were grounds known as the "ciganos". In this area Manuel Paço d'Arcos built his house which one enters by the Rua do Prior. In the Rua do Prior also live the Castro Pereiras, descendents of D. Pedro IV. Also in Rua do Prior the Nova Goa family occupy two houses: n° 20 which was built by Ventura Terra and the next-door house (on the corner with Rua Pau da Bandeira) with its towers. It was reputedly the house of the Alvissareiro-Mor do Reino whose job it was to see the ships sailing into the Tagus; hence the towers. The Condes de Nova Goa came from Goa in the XIX century.

Further down we find the residence of the British Ambassador in the Rua São Francisco Borja. Very little is known about this house. It is thought to have been originally built in the XVII century and was then bought by the Rio Maior family (the first Conde de Rio Maior married Pombal's daughter) who added considerably to it in the XVIII century. It was rented to the French Minister in the 1830's when a Baron Gros painted a picture of the house and it became the British legation between 1835 and 1840. The ballroom was only built when the future King Edward

VII, then Prince of Wales, came to Lisbon in 1876. He returned as king in 1903. The chancellery remained in the house until the last war and during it the preliminary documents relating the surrender of Italy were initialled in the house. There is a curious tradition whereby all British Ambassadors leave their arms pictured in azulejos in the garden, all of them I think made by the Fabrica Constância of Lapa fame. After the terrible earthquake of 1755 a sort of public contest was held to decide which saint would become the protector against earthquakes. We are told that, after much manoeuvring by the Jesuits of Coimbra University Saint Francis of Borgia (the only saintly Borgia) was chosen and duly "empowered" at a ceremony attended by the King.

Along the side of the British Ambassador's residence we find the Rua da Arriaga called after D. Maria Joana Aniceta Francisca de Arriaga which only began to be developed just before the first war. But on the corner with Rua São Francisco Borja there was at n° 5 in 1829 an "Hospederia Inglesa". Here is situated the Presbyterian Church which originally (1872) was in the Convento dos Remédios further towards Santos and sold by the Rev. Robert Stewart in 1898 for 30 contos. In this street also lived the Condes de Taboeiro and Condes de Seisal.

In the Rua São Domingos where the trams pass we find the house most people love to hate. At the top on the corner with Rua de Buenos Ayres stands the Monte Real Palace. Built in 1917 (before, it was a school) it has a large chapel, a bridge of signs, a traditional "tanque", azulejos, etc. Its style started a school named "casa portuguesa" by the architect Raul Lino and is, as stated, today much criticized. It is now the headquarters of the PSD political party. At the other end of this street we find the Conde de Arenoso's house which has already been mentioned. N° 18 has a ceiling by Columbano. For many years it was rented by the Vaultier family (an important commercial fortune of the '20s) and is now the home of João Rocha. A little further up the street on the west side on the corner with Rua do Prior stands a house which belonged to Ricardo Espírito Santo.

I would just like to mention the present Romanian Embassy

which belonged to a rich landowning Évora family of Italian origin linked to the Vilalvas called Marjochi and the Chinese Embassy which belonged to the Gomes Cardozo family who supplied Lisbon with flour. They owned the tidal mills one sees near Seixal.

Finally I should refer to the old parish church of Lapa, the "Igreja da Lapa", in the road of the same name (the Jesuit house in this street is recent). It was originally built on land belonging to the Casa do Infantado (land entailed to the younger sons of the King) and was first a "recolhimento" with an Ermida. D. Pedro III, the builder of Queluz, contributed to the building of the first church in 1764. It was the headquarters of the Booksellers' religious fraternity ("Irmandade dos Livreiros") with their statue of St. Catherine. The statue of Nossa Senhora da Lapa came from the Convento de São João de Deus now the "Bombeiros da Pampulha".