



## **‘PARA EXAMINAR UMA PLANTA, NÃO BASTA TER PRESENTE UM RAMO’: UMA ‘FLORA MEDICINAL’ INÉDITA DO SÉCULO XIX**

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### **Abstract**

Medicinal plants circulation – through specimens, manuscripts and illustrations – has played an important role in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalist expeditions, collecting, trade, and government policies.

In Portugal, journeys of scientific exploration encouraged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Crown and developed under the supervision of the Royal Museum of Ajuda in Lisbon, have considerably contributed to knowledge about medicinal properties of species native to the Portuguese empire through regular collecting and expedition of specimens to Lisbon, accompanied with detailed reports and illustrations. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1756-1815), among others, gives particular attention to the pharmacological and economic potential of the Brazilian flora, especially from the state of Pará.

The National Museum of Natural History and Science (University of Lisbon) preserves in its collections a rare *Flora Medicinal* from the papers of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. Recently 'rediscovered', it is a small and unfinished manuscript offered in July 1815 to the Royal Museum of Ajuda by his widow. After the transfer of the Ajuda collections to the Academy of Sciences in 1838, it integrated the botanical collections of the Lisbon Polytechnic School between 1858 and 1862.

The *Flora*, made between 1814 and 1815, includes 122 water colored illustrations. It describes and classifies the same number of European, African and Brazilian plant species with therapeutic properties. It largely draws on the first volumes of *Flore Médicale* (1814) by François P. Chaumeton (1775-1819), adding common Portuguese epithets.

In this paper, in addition to a detailed presentation of this unpublished manuscript, we will analyze it from historical, scientific and aesthetic perspectives, discussing its purpose and significance, both in the context of the Royal Museum of Ajuda scientific programme and in Rodrigues Ferreira’s work.