

Jorge Dias 1907—1973

ON FEBRUARY 5TH, 1973, JORGE DIAS DIED IN LISBON at the age of 66. Five years after the passing away of Sigurd Erixon, we lost in Dias another of our most outstanding European ethnologists. For the *Ethnologia Europaea* the loss of this exhaustive investigator is especially grievous: for Jorge Dias had been decisive in establishing our Editorial Board in 1965 and had applied himself to it with noble unselfishness. In the summer of 1968 the Board of the *Ethnologia Europaea* was the guest of Dias and his associates. Then the conference was on "The Rural Local Community", and was combined with an exhibition of agricultural implements from Portugal and overseas regions, which is certainly still well remembered by all participants.

António Jorge Dias — his full name — was born on July 31st, 1907, at Oporto, where he spent his youth. On his parents' estate, situated near the town of Guimarães, in constant close contact with the servants he became well acquainted with the daily work and life and the festivities of the rural Portuguese people that were later to become the main subject of his investigations. At first the young man could not be brought to engulf himself in the basic studies, a prerequisite for the profession chosen for him by his parents. So his father placed him in a commercial enterprise where he was put to work as a travelling salesman. Thereby he came into further close contact with the various life-styles of rural Portugal, and, through his own experience, got to know and understand the actions and reactions of this section of the Portuguese people. At the age of 22 he decided to prepare himself for university entrance qualifications and attended grammar school, which he was able to pass through in shorter period of time than usual in order to begin his study of German philology at the University of Coimbra. In 1938 and 1939 he was a lecturer in Portuguese at the University of Rostock in Northern Germany (Mecklenburg), and from 1939 to 1942 he was teaching the same subject at the University of Munich. During the following years, from 1942 to 1944, he was in charge of the Portuguese-Brazilian Institute in Berlin. During his stay in Munich he got acquainted with Regional Ethnology (Volkskunde) which, at that time, was still unknown as a field of academic study in his native country. In 1944 he obtained his doctorate with Otto Höfler, with a thesis on the mountain village of Vilarinho da Furna in the North-east of Portugal. While in Berlin, he also attended the lectures by Richard Thurnwald, with whom he developed and maintained a friendship until the latter's death in 1954. From 1944 until 1947 he was a lecturer in Portuguese language and culture at Santiago de Compostela and in Madrid.

In 1945 the *Centro de Estudos de Etnologia Peninsular* had been founded at the University of Porto. After his return to Portugal in 1947, Jorge Dias was commissioned to set-up and develop the ethnographic section of this Center with the aim of investigating Portuguese folk culture. His original team of researchers — his wife Margot Dias, Fernando Galhano, Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira and Benjamin Pereira — stayed with him throughout his life-time and now intend to continue what had been started under his guidance. From those early days Jorge Dias regularly attended the sessions of the *International Com-*

mission on Folk Arts and Folklore (C.I.A.P.) and served as secretary of the organization from 1954 till 1956. In 1955, at the Arnhem International Congress, he demanded the integration of the various schools of European folklife research into the general ethnology under the designation of Regional Ethnology. His propositions on the unity of regional ethnology were accepted and were put down in the final draft of the proceedings of the Congress that figured under the name of Congrès International d'Ethnologie Régionale.

From 1952 until he was called to Lisbon in 1956, Jorge Dias was Professor of Ethnology at the University of Coimbra. At Lisbon, where he was Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the Institute of Overseas' Studies (Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Política Ultramarina), he got from his government the commission to investigate the indigenous civilizations in the Portuguese possessions in Africa. The result of his research expeditions — in which his wife Margot Dias took an active part — was a monumental study on the civilization of the Maconde in Mozambique (3 vols, 1964—1970).

In 1962 Jorge Dias was responsible for the establishment of the *Centro de Estudos de Antropologia Cultural*, which he subsequently directed. This Centre deals primarily with the investigations in the Portuguese overseas regions. From it, and with the integration of material brought home by Jorge Dias and his wife Margot Dias from their African expeditions, among others, the *Museu de Etnologia do Ultramar* was developed. Collections from Portugal and the Adjacent Islands as well as objects from South America and Asia were also incorporated. It was intended to be a Portuguese Musée de l'Homme, according to the founder and his fellow workers. Only a few days after Jorge Dias' death, the building of the museum was started, and the objects from overseas and Europe to be put on display had already been catalogued.

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF DIAS ARE MONOGRAPHS: community studies and studies on material culture. These reveal, by their subject matter and the terminology used, his wish to integrate the result of his investigations into the categories of general ethnology. This explains why, e.g., his monograph of the Portuguese-Spanish border village of Rio de Onor was so well received by the American-culture anthropologists Robert Lowie and George Foster from the University of California at Berkeley. They characterized it as "one of the most complete and exhaustive descriptions of any community that is known to anthropologists". With his integration of European into general ethnology (cultural anthropology) Jorge Dias followed the tradition of José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858—1941), the Grand Old Man of Portuguese ethnology (see J. Dias, Aspects I).

Jorge Dias never followed the practice of many national schools of folklore studies in excluding sociological questions from ethnological research. As in the monograph on Vilarinho da Furna, so in the one on Rio de Onor the given social structures, conceived on such strongly cooperative lines, are described in detail (see II). This is all the more astonishing since the official Portuguese policy of those days opposed the cooperative movement. It is still an open question how

— in spite of all recognition of the aesthetic aspects and those of religious belief — this soberly written doctor's thesis on Vilarinho da Furna, which refrains from any speculation, was accepted by Otto Höfler, the representative of the ritualistic school of the age classes, whose name is not mentioned anywhere in the thesis.

In all Dias's monographs the considerable regard for the natural environment factor is striking. Already in his itinerary "Minho, Trás-os-Montes, Haut-Douro", published for the International Geographers' Congress in Lisbon in 1949, the connection between given geological, climatic, and geographical conditions and the occupation and mode of life of the human beings is appalling. Dias' friendship with the leading Portuguese geographer Orlando Ribeiro, who wrote the preface to "Vilarinho da Furna", and whose classic division of the country into *Portugal Atlântico*, *Mediterrâneo* and *Trasmontano* was also confirmed by Jorge Dias in relation to his popular material culture, proved to be scientifically productive. His interest in those aspects of economic life which depend largely on the natural aspects of the country are engrained in the whole oeuvre of Jorge Dias, and also have a prominent place in his last big work on the Maconde in Mozambique. The geographical background is omnipresent, the description, however, is ethnographic and takes into consideration the historical factors. In connexion with the ecological point of view, there is the attempt at formulation a law of affinity with regard to the development of civilization after the migration of larger ethnic groups (III). With relation to the diffusionism and to independent invention respectively, Dias was free of any preconception. The cooperative movement typical of Northern Portugal — which was already given prominence in the first century B. C. by Diodor of Sicily with regard to the Vaccei in Douro Valley, — is not traced back to the Cabyls immigrating from the Atlas Mountains — as suggested elsewhere, — but considered "a spontaneous phenomenon independent of cultural contacts". The preservation of the collective economy to the present day Dias explains by the natural conditions of the surrounding world, as follows: "In the more fertile regions the ground went early into individual possession and did not belong, in most instances, to the ones who worked the ground. Thereby a complicated system of ownership and dependency developed. In the poorer and more remote regions, however, extended pastures with archaic community institutions remained. Only the most fertile grounds were divided among neighbours of the village. The bigger the pastoral economy in relation to the tilling of the ground, the stronger were the communal bands . . . Vilarinho da Furna is a village where the tillable soil is concentrated on the bottom of a narrow valley while on the other hand wide lands, only suitable for preeminent pastoral economy, extend over mountainous and rough country. The importance of the far predominating pastoral economy over ground tilling explains the continuing of a relatively intact collective organization" (see J. Dias, *Vilarinho da Furna*, Oporto 1948, pp. 4—5).

On the other hand, relative to a whole syndrome of cultural elements, which are relevant for the Northern Atlantic Portugal and parts of neighbouring Galicia,

Jorge Dias put up the hypothesis that they happened to be brought there from the Middle of Europe by the Suebi who immigrated in the 5th century (IV).

Many descriptions such as those of the festival of the Saint Patron of St. John of Rio de Onor (V), or of sports and games in Vilarinho da Furna (VI) indicate how much such phenomena of the life of the common people suited the inner inclinations of the great ethnologist and echoed what had been initiated in his early youth. In spite of all the scientific seriousness that distinguishes this scholar, it was his vitality, combined with his human sympathy, that bestowed upon his work a fascination that is unlikely to be repeated.