

**“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL “HISTORY. CIVILIZATION. CULTURE”**

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PhD supervisor:

Prof. PhD Sorin Mitu

PhD student:

Álvaro Albornoz Castro

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**Critical Biography of
Sister Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos
in the light of her correspondence
from 1921-1957**

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Prof. PhD Sorin Mitu

PhD student:

Álvaro Albornoz Castro

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SUMMARY

The life of Lúcia dos Santos is one of the extraordinary phenomena in the history of the Catholic Church. A critical study of the biography of Lúcia de Jesus is warranted, not only because Lúcia played a crucial role in the phenomenon known as the *Apparitions of Fátima*, but also because she contributed decisively to establishing the cult of the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* in the context of Catholic devotion. From a psychological point of view, Sister Lúcia's life from 1921 to 1957 constitutes a compelling case study that transcends the material sphere to stand out for its spiritual experiences. The object of our research is therefore limited to the protagonist's inner experiences, approaching them not from a mere psychological perspective, but focusing on the influence of her spirituality in the light of the available epistolary registers inserted in the context that makes them possible, namely, the Catholic world from the interwar period to the first half of the 20th century.

The extraordinary phenomena of the Catholic Church have been a constant which, on more than a few occasions, have come to mark the direction of both the theological and institutional policies of the Church's canonical apparatus. In this sphere of the extraordinary, among the phenomena that have embraced the supernatural experience of the Catholic Church, of great historical importance is that phenomenon whose protagonist is the Virgin Mary, an event also known as the *mariophany*. These phenomena are related to events considered *supernatural* in which individuals from various places and periods claim to have had visions and received messages from the Virgin Mary, taking on the role that we understand as *seers*. Such individuals, embedded in a religious landscape, exercise the social role of authentic mediators between the desires and missions of heaven and their transmission and fulfillment on earth; the messages, visions, and prophecies transmitted by seers at different times, sometimes accompanied by phenomena classified as *miracles*, have a profound impact and determine the faith of the witnesses, transforming the cultural architecture of the local space, and their influence extends to the entire Catholic landscape

through networks of piety that are generationally perpetuated in the form of an authorized cult and accompanied by devotional practices. However, although the historical trace of the apparitions of the Virgin in the Catholic theological context is quite old, it was not until the 19th century that these phenomena found a space of unprecedented importance and popularity in the Catholic world, spurred on by the phenomena of La Salette and Lourdes. Such phenomena would find an important sequel with the equivalent phenomenon of 1917, known as the *Apparitions of Fátima*. Although the counterpart events of the 19th century would lend legitimacy to the Fátima phenomenon, especially in terms of understanding the role of the seer, *the Fátima apparitions* would constitute its historical climax; Fátima would redefine the full understanding of *apparitions of the Virgin and the seers*, providing a new certification and even a justification of earlier phenomena: The phenomena concerning the apparitions of the Virgin in the 19th century allowed the identification of patterns that established a model of both the *apparition* and the *visionary*, according to the canons of the ascetic and mystical spirituality of the Catholic Church. However, through its political implications, the phenomenon known as the *Apparitions of Fátima*, due to the becoming of its sole survivor, Lúcia de Jesus, would distance itself from previous patterns, creating a new understanding of the visionary in the Catholic world and beyond.

Although the historical personality of Lúcia dos Santos has been the subject of continuing interest throughout the 20th century, she has not yet been the subject of serious academic study. Although, within the context of the phenomenon of the 1917 *Marian apparitions at Fátima*, Lúcia emerges as a central figure whose life and experiences have captured the attention of historians, theologians, and believers, the historical figure of the visionary has not so far been addressed scientifically through the method of critical history. The state of scholarship on the chosen theme, both nationally and internationally, i.e. the historical-biographical understanding of Lúcia de Jesus is unsatisfactory, despite the enormous impact that the figure in question has had not only on the contemporary Catholic landscape but also on the world.

In this sense, the historical study in a biographical framework of the visionary of Fátima subjected to a critical approach is important not only because she was the main witness of the phenomena of well-known *apparitions* in the entourage of the Catholic world in the 20th century, but also because, precisely in the historical period of our research, the visionary came to have an influence not only on the contemporary ecclesiastical landscape but also on the Catholic world in general until the present day. In fact, our protagonist in the period under review came to influence the policies of two pontificates - Pius XI and Pius XII

- determining the course of Catholic Mariological understanding throughout the 20th century and developing a new devotional paradigm of *Cordimarian* origin that came to place the phenomenon of the visionary and Marian apparitions in an unprecedented position in the history of the Catholic Church and the world at large. In this sense, the biographical study of Lúcia dos Santos responds to a concern that is not only historical and religious, but paradigmatic in the sphere of Catholic religiosity in the first half of the 20th century.

The topicality of our subject is therefore based on two clearly defined elements. First, our object of study represents an original incursion that opens up an unexplored field of research, namely the relationship between the biographical journey of a seer and the celestial sphere through the prism of the inner experience analyzed through the protagonist's correspondence. In this dynamic, the seer appears as an eschatological catalyst who plays a crucial role in the articulation of divine politics, where the future destiny of Europe and humanity as a whole seems to be intrinsically linked to the acceptance or rejection of messages emanating from the heavenly sphere and managed first by Lúcia and then by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This insight is of unprecedented importance, as it challenges traditional conceptions of the role of seers and their relation to the political and religious institutional sphere. In other words, Lúcia, rather than being merely a passive recipient within Catholic mystical theology of divine revelations, would prove to be an active actor in an ongoing celestial dialog with real implications for the future of humanity.

Therefore, the motivation for the chosen theme lies in the importance of studying the evolution of Lúcia dos Santos' spiritual biography in the light of her epistolary registers in the first half of the 20th century. The choice of the historical period covered by our work largely covers Lúcia's relationship as a student at the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea in the city of Porto (1921-1925), passing through the unfolding of her vocation within the same religious congregation in Spain, from her time as a postulant in Pontevedra (1925-1926), her novitiate and religious profession in Tuy (1928-1934), her return to Portugal (1946) to her transfer to Carmel (1948), ending our journey with her last public interview with Fr. Agustín Fuentes Anguiano (1957). The justification for our periodization, which covers the years 1921-1957, therefore corresponds to what we can identify as "Lúcia's prophetic period", a period that begins in 1925 with the revelation in Pontevedra and ends in 1957 with the last great interview with the Mexican Father Agustín Fuentes Anguiano. The importance of this chosen period in Lúcia's life can also be justified by drawing on several equally important aspects. Firstly, the role of the visionary not only as an eyewitness to the phenomenon known as the *Apparitions of Fátima* but also as an exponent of a series of

manifestations that make Lúcia's experiences subtly establish a new paradigm that defies theology and politics to subsume both in the preponderance of the eschatological question as an experience and political event of the interwar period; Lúcia's experiences would come to drive the political efforts of both the Catholic hierarchies in Spain and Portugal, even determining the actions of the Holy See. Therefore, the period of study in the life of our protagonist covers what can be understood as the "trajectory of Lúcia's prophetic role", which opens dynamically in 1930 with the premise of the first petition to Pope Pius XI - which our work presents as a historiographical novelty - and ends in 1957 with the last efforts of the visionary to warn of the threats and punishments that will befall humanity through the Roman Postulator Agustín Fuentes Anguiano. In this sense, our biographical work offers a fresh perspective on a phenomenon that intercepts the religious, political, and cultural spheres through the prism of threats and punishments which, through the messages of the visionary in question, is evoked in a new paradigm within the Catholicism of the interwar period.

In our research, we also intend to address crucial questions related to both the biographical events of Lúcia and the role played by the visionary in spreading the message of Fátima as well as in understanding Mariology in the 20th century Catholic context. Our aim, although original within the historiographical framework of the subject, invites us to keep a modest perspective in our aspirations. In this sense, one of the main questions we seek to elucidate is the historical role played by Lúcia dos Santos within the Catholic Church in the first half of the 20th century. This question inevitably leads us to a detailed analysis of her biography, as well as of her correspondence, which reveals a close contact with her confessors in order to influence pontifical policies aimed at consecrating Russia. Based on this analysis, we seek to understand in depth the content of the messages conveyed by the seer, which were naturally recorded in his correspondence.

In terms of critiquing the documentary legacy of the visionary, a historical exegesis is crucial for our research, proposing to critically examine whether Lúcia's epistolary registers are consistent with the context of the phenomenon of the *apparitions at Fátima* and with traditional Catholic mystical theology. To this end, we ask: Do the messages recorded in the visionary's correspondence align with the accounts and narratives associated with the Marian *apparitions of Fátima*? Do these messages reflect the fundamental tenets and doctrines of Catholic mystical theology, or do they exhibit elements that might be considered theological deviations or innovations? What exactly do these recordings reveal about the nature and content of the messages Lúcia received? How do these messages relate to devotional beliefs

and practices rooted in the Catholic tradition? Similarly, our research invites new questions: what was the actual impact of Lúcia dos Santos on the dissemination and interpretation of the message of Fátima in the Catholic sphere? How did her experiences and witness influence the shaping of a *cordimarian* devotion as well as the molding of an eminently Marian eschatology in the Catholic landscape of the second half of the 20th century? Furthermore, for a transparent appreciation of the moral profile of a biography that claims to be spiritual, it is not only relevant but also essential to explore the possible evolution or coherence of Lúcia's messages over time, as well as to identify whether there are significant discrepancies or variations in the content of the visionary's communications: *can we, therefore, observe a thematic or doctrinal progression in the messages as the revelations of Pontevedra and Tuy develop along with the subsequent messages received in the divine communications? Is there coherence in the exhortations transmitted by the seer at different stages of her life, or are there obvious changes or contradictions in her statements up to 1957?* These questions invite us to enter into a critical and exhaustive analysis of the life and work of Lúcia dos Santos through her epistolary registers, as well as their historical and theological relevance in the context of the *apparitions of Fátima* and beyond.

Our doctoral dissertation fulfills a dual function. First, it aims to fill the biographical deficit in biographical studies of Sister Lúcia's life. Second, to present a theoretical landscape grounded in the fact that, for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, the messages received by an individual identified with the qualities of a seer, put in check the entire institutional apparatus of the Catholic Church as well as the historical future of Europe, subject to the role of a new paradigm that we define as *political eschatology or eschatological politics of a Cordimarian essence*. In other words, our doctoral thesis, together with the detailed presentation of Sister Lúcia's life and epistolary registers from the point of view of critical history, aims to reflect how the destiny of Europe and the Catholic Church are subject to a revelation of the Virgin Mary, who, through her visionary, a character who assumes an unprecedented protagonist role in the bimillenary history of the Church, will inaugurate a new historical stage that many of the Catholic faithful will identify with the end of time itself. Thus, the international reception of Lúcia's messages will, at the turn of the 1960s, come to identify our historical epoch in certain Catholic circles with the fulfillment of the end times, with the so-called *end of the world*, or with the times preceding the *Second Coming of Jesus Christ*, identified with the *great apostasy at the beginning of the end times* prophesied in Scripture. In this sense, Lúcia's messages will find their corollary in the Holy Scriptures, the latter legitimizing the visionary's messages and giving an

apocalyptic vision not only to the role of Lúcia but to the whole content of the apparitions at Fátima.

The choice of topic for our doctoral dissertation stems from some fundamental motivations underlying our research. First of all, the dissatisfaction derived from the lack of exhaustive and complete scholarly works on this topic is a determining factor. Despite the importance and historical relevance of Lúcia de Jesús Rosa dos Santos, no serious studies on the subject have been carried out to date that comprehensively address the life and legacy of Sister Lúcia, and the only works that do exist on the subject follow a devotional popularization model, with no concern not only for historical criticism but also for a minimum of historical truth based on the available sources. In fact, both in Portuguese and international academic circles, the concretization of a serious study on the visionary protagonist of the *Fátima Apparitions* is non-existent. We have therefore observed a lack of scientific studies on the life of the visionary in question, with no published work to date with a critical approach to the biography of the last visionary of the phenomenon known as *Fátima Apparitions*, Lúcia de Jesus.

Consequently, the absence of a rigorous, exhaustive, and systematic analysis of Lúcia's life and work from a historical point of view constitutes not only a gap in the field of historiography related to the Fátima phenomenon, but even a gap in the field of Mariology and studies related to the phenomenon of *Marian apparitions*. This gap in the scholarly literature led us to recognize a disciplinary need and, consequently, prompted our decision to deepen our research and offer a rigorous and complete analysis of the figure of Lúcia de Jesus.

However, beyond this lack in the scholarly literature, another essential reason for choosing this topic was to fulfill the need to unify all available documentation - or at least most of it - about Lúcia de Jesús in a single critical history approach covering the period 1921-1957 and exposing a large part of her correspondence. In this regard, we have observed the dispersion of existing documentation about Lúcia's life in different works. There are numerous works published in variants of different literary genres becoming valuable because they contain documentation related to the historical figure of Lúcia, covering a chronological spectrum that can be placed from 1925 to 2013. This valuable information due to its fragmentation over almost a century in different dispersed works makes it difficult to comprehensively understand Lúcia's life and work, as well as to accurately assess her legacy. Therefore, one of our main motivations was precisely the methodological desire to unify and utilize in a single work the majority of this scattered information in order to provide a

panoramic and coherent vision of the historical trajectory not only of the biographical journey of Lúcia de Jesus in the first place but also of the entire repertoire of epistolary documents that marked both the evolution of her own life and of a *Mariological politics* in the Catholic world in the first half of the 20th century.

In correspondence with the material used, our working method was to use the classical method of historical scholarship, making use of document criticism and hermeneutics. Our methodology consists in the application of internal criticism on the primary sources, i.e. on the documentary material produced by the observers or direct participants in the events to understand and interpret the content of the documents correctly with the aim of realizing a clean observation of the extracted data in relation to their historical and biographical context in the life of Lúcia. We tried to verify the sincerity of the source's author, which is a fundamental aspect in the critical analysis of documents and, consequently, historical criticism. To determine the profile of the protagonist of our biography, we took care to confront different sources together with a careful examination of the contexts in which they were produced. By carefully examining the documentary material, we are attempting to record as accurate and faithful a reconstruction as possible of the events in the life of Lúcia dos Santos. The historical work to which we aspire depends precisely on the hermeneutic of the documents in question.

As for the organic structure of our work on the life of Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos, it comprises ten chapters, conclusions, bibliography, and appendices, which we present as follows.

Chapter I, “**Historical and Historiographical Report of the Sources for the Study of the Biography of Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos**” examines the current state of historiographical research related to the study of Lúcia de Jesus. The chapter stresses the need for a critical biography of Lúcia and proposes an original periodization of the sources on her life and work: 1) 1921-1935, *the first works on Fátima*; 2) 1935-1944, *the writing activity of Sister Lúcia*; 3) 1946-1957, *the inquisitorial and hermeneutic activity related to the Apparitions of Fátima*; 4) 1955-2013, *apologetic, critical and documentary sources*. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of the sources for each period, highlighting the importance of historical criticism and documentary analysis in understanding the religious phenomenon of Fátima.

Chapter II, “**Introduction to the Geographical and Cultural Context of Lúcia's childhood in Aljustrel**” aims to present and contextualize the geographical and cultural environment in which the childhood of the visionary of Fátima took place. Although not

central to the biography in question, the cultural and geographical context of Lúcia's early years is crucial to understanding her religious formation. The chapter emphasizes the influence of her mother, Maria Rosa, on Lúcia's religiosity, her relationships with her father and relatives, and the social and economic context of the village. These elements shaped Lúcia's personality, influencing her later work in the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea.

Chapter III, **“Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos. From the Asilo de Vilar in Porto to the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Pontevedra. 1919-1925”** examines in detail the post-Fátima period in Lúcia's life. It analyzes the circumstances of her departure from Fátima and entry into the van Zeller Institute, revealing the events, decisions, and influences that shaped her religious life. It explores Lúcia's interactions with ecclesiastical authorities, spiritual experiences, and vocational discernment. The transition from the Catholic educational environment of the Asilo in Vilar to consecrated life in the Institute of the Sisters of St. Dorothea is critically examined, including personal motivations and ecclesiastical context. The chapter challenges the prevailing historical narratives, highlighting discrepancies and possible historical misrepresentations of Lúcia's biography.

Chapter IV, **“The Spiritual Life of Lúcia in the Novitiate of the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Tuy. 1926-1930”** constitutes a detailed analysis of the first period of Lúcia's life in the Novitiate of the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Tuy, marked by crucial events and spiritual challenges. Lúcia faces internal doubts and tribulations, influenced by alleged private revelations concerning the founding of a new religious institute. Her confessors, Father José Aparício da Silva and José Bernardo Gonçalves, play a key role in Lúcia's spiritual orientation. The chapter examines the controversies generated by the commercialization of Lúcia's portrait and the possibility of changing the religious congregation, including efforts by Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva to discourage it. The critical analysis, based on correspondence and historical documents, reveals discrepancies in the official narrative and sheds light on unknown events, such as the first letter addressed to Pope Pius XI in 1930.

Chapter V, **“Lúcia and the Spread of the Reparatory Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. From the Revelation of Pontevedra - December 10, 1925 - to the Official Approval of Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva on September 13, 1939”** analyzes the period between the Revelation of Pontevedra (December 10, 1925) and the official approval of the *devotion* by Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva (September 13, 1939). The study explores in detail the historical record of the phenomenon known as the

Pontevedra Apparition, providing for the first time a detailed account of the phenomenon in the light of the documents. The chapter examines Lúcia's efforts to promote *the devotion*, the role of the priests Manuel Nunes Formigão and José Aparício da Silva, and their influence on the acceptance of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The complex relationship between Lúcia and Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva is analyzed, highlighting the bishop's resistance and eventual support. It also discusses the interventions of Father José Bernardo Gonçalves and missionary José Aparício in the global spread of the devotion. The chapter emphasizes the historical and spiritual importance of the *Reparatory Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, highlighting the challenges and controversies surrounding its publication and approval, as well as the historical errors in the official narrative of the Carmelite of Coimbra.

Chapter VI, “**From the Vision of Tuy to *Ingravescentibus Malis* and the Consecration of Portugal. The Historical Journey of the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Between 1929 and 1938**” investigates the pivotal period from the Vision of Tuy to the Consecration of Portugal and Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Ingravescentibus malis*. The work analyzes the transformation of Lúcia's role from spiritual to political and the theological, political, and eschatological context of Fátima's message. The revelations at Tuy and the connection with the Russian demand for consecration, and efforts to publicize these demands, are examined in detail. The chapter also discusses the role of Father José Bernardo Gonçalves in promoting the *consecration of Russia* and the reaction of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The threats of wars and reactions to the first requests for consecration are highlighted, including the political context of the Spanish Civil War. Also examined are the new revelations received by Lúcia at Rianjo and the request for the *consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, as well as the role of Alexandrina Maria da Costa in this process. The chapter concludes with Monsignor da Silva's request to Pius XI, which marks the rejection of Rome manifested in the encyclical *Ingravescentibus malis* on the Rosary devotion, which makes no mention of the *Apparitions at Fátima*.

Chapter VII, “**The Imminence of War and the Punishment of Nations. Heaven's Warnings and the Prophetic Period of Lúcia from 1939-1943**” deals with Lúcia's prophetic period between 1939-1943 highlighting the seer's messages and their eschatological-political implications. Lúcia receives warnings and prophecies of impending war, confirmed by the Aurora Borealis event of 1938, interpreted as a divine sign. They examine the relationship between Russia, world peace, and devotion to the Immaculate Heart

of Mary, as well as unsuccessful efforts to consecrate Russia. Portuguese bishops change their strategy, focusing on the *consecration of the world*. The secret of Fátima is partially revealed and Lúcia calls for moral reform of the Spanish clergy, supported by the Bishop of Leiria. The internationalization of Fátima and *Heaven's refusal of peace* until the *consecration of the world* is examined. The chapter emphasizes Lúcia's insistence on the fulfillment of God's requests and the positive response of Pope Pius XII in consecrating the world to the *Immaculate Heart of Mary*.

Chapter VIII, “**Secrets, Mysteries, and Saudades. From the Writing of the Third Part of the Secret to Lúcia's Return to Fátima. Last Period in Tuy, from 1943 to 1946**” explores Lúcia's final period at Tuy and focuses on the process of writing the Third Part of the Secret of Fátima emphasizing the key role of the Bishop of Leiria in this process. Details of the genesis of this document are revealed, highlighting the meeting in Valença do Minho between Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva, José Galamba de Oliveira, and Sister Lúcia. The chapter highlights the deterioration of the seer's health and the pressure on her to write the document. It analyzes Lúcia's internal struggle and the transmission of the secret to the Bishop of Leiria. The historiographical perspectives on the context of the writing of the Secret are analyzed, highlighting the inconsistencies and manipulations present in the official narratives. Lúcia's bonds of friendship with Mother Cunha Matos and her attempts to represent the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* hypostasis at Tuy are also explored. The chapter also focuses on the visit of the Dutch priest Hübert Jöngen to Tuy, in the context of the international criticism of Lúcia by the Belgian Jesuit Edouard Dhanis. Finally, Lúcia's return to Fátima in 1946 and her new directions are described, marking the end of her time at Tuy and the beginning of a new phase in her life at the Institute of Saint Dorothea.

Chapter IX, “**New Roads and Heavy Crosses. From the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Sardão to the Carmel of Saint Teresa of Coimbra. The Transition of the Religious Congregation of Lúcia from 1946 to 1957**” explores Lúcia's transition from the Institute of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Sardão to the Carmel of Saint Teresa in Coimbra. It describes her experience at the College of the Sisters of Saint Dorothea of Sardão, notable for its questioning of the apparitions of Fátima, illustrating her new hermeneutic role in addressing international questions about Fátima. The visit of the sculptor Thomas McGlynn, who acted on Lúcia's behalf to Pope Pius XII in view of her transfer of congregation, is analyzed along with Lúcia's decision to enter Carmel and the process of authorizing this transfer. Fr. Lombardi's important testimony about Lúcia's eschatological concerns is described, and Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani's visit to the Carmel in Coimbra

emphasizes Lúcia's importance in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It highlights the complexity of the visionary's spiritual life during this period, marked by her devotion to the mission of spreading the message of Fátima and her commitment to the conversion of Russia.

Chapter X, “*'Father, God Will Punish the World and Will Punish It in a Terrible Way. Heaven's Punishment Is Imminent...'* The Prophetic Testament of Lúcia and the Case of Father Agustín Fuentes” analyzes for the first time in the historiography of the subject the case of Father Agustín Fuentes Anguiano and its connection with Lúcia's prophetic message about the imminence of divine punishment on the world. Outlining Fuentes's biography, from his role as Roman Postulator for the cause of beatification of the children Francisco and Jacinta Marto to his commitment to spreading the message of Fátima, the chapter explores his interview with Sister Lúcia and its aftermath. The opposition of the diocesan Curia of Coimbra, which challenged the content of the interview and launched a smear campaign against him, is analyzed in detail, as is the attack by the Mexican press and the intervention of the American news agency Catholics News. This controversy prompted the support of the bishop of Veracruz and Cardinal José Garibi Rivera for Fuentes, highlighting the tensions and conflicts surrounding his case that persist around the interpretation of the events of Fátima. Finally, the chapter reflects on the impact on Agustín Fuentes' reputation and the relevance of his message in the context of the historiography of Fátima. Finally, the chapter briefly reviews the Fátima historiography on the subject, debunking the compromised theory developed by Joaquín María Alonso, which does not stand up to the sources of the Mexican priest involved. The chapter ends by concluding that Fuentes has unwittingly become a victim of a smear campaign, even though he merely repeated what Lúcia and other witnesses had previously said about the Fátima message.

In this sense, we can understand two directions of the theological history of the message of Fátima that gradually open up in the biographical evolution of the visionary in question. Firstly, during her time in the Asilo de Vilar in the city of Porto, Lúcia serves the interests of the Catholic Church, but in a voluntary and non-compulsory way. Monsignor José Alves Correia da Silva, in dealing with Lúcia, does not suggest manipulation, but rather prudential involvement. The idea of manipulation is refuted by documents that show that Lúcia's vocation arose spontaneously, without external pressure, during her religious studies.

The protection afforded to Lúcia dos Santos by the Catholic Church, in the light of the documentation, is a form of isolation rather than support. The purpose of this isolation was to protect and educate the visionary but also to ensure the integrity of the Fátima phenomenon. Its isolation was necessary in order to maintain its prestige and untainted

supernatural status. This protection was in harmony with the priorities of the Bishop of Leiria, ensuring the cohesion of the whole phenomenon.

Our research shows the evolution of the Fátima phenomenon towards the reductionism of the "Fátima visionary phenomenon", especially with the celebrity of Sister Lúcia. From 1940, the link between the two phenomena was obvious. The messages to the Holy See between 1930-1958 showed that the apparitions continued and contained political and eschatological requests. Cardinal Cerejeira and others sought to fulfill these requests, facing threats of divine punishment. This context shifts the historical paradigm, foregrounding the eschatological experience in which politics and history are influenced by divine demands and impending punishments. War has been seen as an instrument of the scourge, and our research opens a new paradigm: *political eschatology*.

Through the documentation analyzed and in the theoretical aspect, our work highlights the prophetic role of Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos in the interwar period and during the Cold War until 1957 when she had her last eschatological interview. The epistolary records attest to her celebrity in ecclesiastical circles due to her impact on her confessors, who transmitted to the Bishop of Leiria the messages and revelations she received. Her messages, in line with the *Apparitions of Fátima*, expanded and consolidated both the fundamental principles of *Cordimarian* Mariology and the devotion to the Virgin Mary represented by the hypostasis of her Immaculate Heart in the Catholic world of the 20th century, facilitating their acceptance and propagation, initially in ecclesiastical circles and then to the general public.

In the evolution of the message of Fátima, Lúcia's subsequent revelations, especially those of December 10, 1925, and June 13, 1929, reinforced and expanded the original meaning. They transformed the original message of penance and recitation of the rosary into one with global eschatological and political connotations. The revelations in Spain gained greater influence on Church politics than those in Portugal, pivoting Catholic ecclesiology around eschatology and consolidating ecclesiastical consciousness through a significant impact on pontifical politics. Our research emphasizes Lúcia's international influence and her power to shape Church policies, highlighting the theme of the consecration of Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Our research provides a broad perspective on the influence of the Fátima apparitions and their message on Lúcia's life as a nun. Through her progressive work in Spain, Lúcia became a catalyst for Fátima's messages, lending them credibility and authority internationally. The messages received by Lúcia in Spain expanded the significance of the

message of Fátima, and their relationship to existing devotional practices reinforced their theological importance. However, changes in the attitude of the Catholic Church towards certain doctrinal topics have led to a marginalization of the Pontevedra revelation, even though it was once considered significant.

Our research analyzes the essential role of Lúcia dos Santos, not only as the seer of Fátima but also in the context of her progressive activity in Spain within the Sisters of Saint Dorothea. Fátima gave Lúcia legitimacy to spread her messages, consolidating her authority in ecclesiastical circles. However, Fátima's influence in the inter-war period up to 1957 cannot be reduced to the events of 1917 alone but is closely linked to Lúcia's mission in Spain. The Pontevedra and Tuy revelations brought a new dimension to Fátima's message, but doctrinal changes in the Catholic Church led to a marginalization of the Pontevedra revelation, despite its impact on the faithful.

Our work makes significant contributions to the historiography of Fátima, clarifying biographical aspects of Lúcia dos Santos. By carefully analyzing the documents, we highlight for the first time the existence of a first letter addressed to Pope Pius XI by Lúcia in 1930, contradicting previous theories that suggested that the first letter was sent to Pius XII in 1940. This is an important contribution, emphasizing the consistency and moral integrity of the seer. Through critical exegesis and documentary study, we clarify various biographical aspects, following a rigorous approach based on verifiable facts and documents. This contribution represents an important step in opening new perspectives in Fátima's historiography.

Our research also brings to light a number of significant discoveries and clarifications in the field of the historiography of Fátima and the biography of Lúcia dos Santos. Among the most important issues addressed are the clarification of the question of the burnings of the original document on the *Reparatory Devotion of the First Saturdays to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* and the discussion of Lúcia's religious vocation. We also analyzed the secrecy of Lúcia's identity during her postulancy and novitiate period, as well as her desire to found a new religious institute, aspects not previously treated in the literature. Another important contribution was the approach to the development and trajectory of the *Reparatory Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* in the light of Lúcia's epistolary documents, highlighting her coherence in the propagation of this devotion. We have also critically investigated the development of the ecclesiological effects related to the Russian request for consecration, exposing Lúcia's spiritual response and the involvement of the Catholic hierarchy in fulfilling this request, drawing on sources and authentic documents. Thus, our work presents

for the first time a detailed picture of the relationship between political events and the prophetic interpretation given by the Catholic Church to the messages of the seers. Through a comprehensive analysis of the documents written by Lúcia in the interwar period, we have succeeded in painting a precise picture of the role played by the visionary and her messages in the context of the efforts to consecrate Russia to the *Immaculate Heart of Mary*. These contributions shed new light on our understanding of the complexity of the Fátima phenomenon and its impact on the religious and political life of the time.

Our research emphasizes the solid coherence of Lúcia dos Santos' messages, which remained intact from 1927 to 1957. From appeals to devotion to the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* to the consecration of Russia and warnings of impending punishment, Lúcia's writings form a uniform thematic whole. This coherence, both in public messages and in private correspondence, emphasizes Lúcia's prophetic role and helped to consolidate a strong Marian eschatology within the Catholic Church, even influencing the ecclesiological policies of the time. The *Cordimarian* devotion promoted by her influenced the ecclesiological policies of the 20th century, culminating in the consecrations to the *Immaculate Heart of Mary*, highlighting the profound impact of her visions on the Catholic Church and the faith.

Our investigation brings to the foreground a unique perspective on the controversial events surrounding the interview between Fr. Agustín Fuentes Anguiano and Sister Lúcia between 1957-1959, revealing a series of complex events and adverse repercussions. Our research is the first to deal in detail with these events, providing an exhaustive analysis and clarifications in an area that has so far remained insufficiently explored. Our conclusions shed light on the dubious role played by the Diocese of Coimbra and the serious consequences of the discrediting of Father Fuentes, undermining the integrity and coherence of Lúcia's messages. Furthermore, our research raises essential questions about Lúcia's involvement in these actions and suggests a possible change in the understanding of Fátima's message in the era of John XXIII's pontificate. This work represents an important starting point for future investigations, laying the foundations for a deeper understanding of these crucial historical events and their impact on the Catholic Church in the 20th century.

Our research also comes to the conclusion that the biographical text of the Carmel of Coimbra, as well as Lúcia's autobiographical diary entitled *O meu caminho*, present important historical truth difficulties in terms of documentary evidence related to Lúcia's biography. The Carmel of Coimbra biographical text raised insurmountable problems, contradicting Lúcia dos Santos' epistolary records, which we have analyzed in detail. We

have highlighted inconsistencies and contradictions in the biographical text of the Carmel of Coimbra in the light of other documentary sources, offering justifications and explanations in the footnotes of our work. We also pointed out the discrepancies and doubtful facts in the biography of the Carmel of Coimbra, as presented in the work *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria*, based on the epistolary documents analyzed in our research.

In light of the contradictions presented, our research has concluded that we are dealing with two fundamental problems divided into two well-defined blocks. a) First, there is a problem of historical criticism related to the literary narrative of the biography of Carmel of Coimbra, which presents a vision not only inconsistent but often fictional on the factual reality of Lúcia's life, giving a modified sense of certain historical facts, while preserving their chronology and respecting the key events that mark the life of the seer Lúcia dos Santos. b) Second, the narrative itself similarly creates certain parallel circumstances that do not correspond to historical reality, giving the reader an altered picture of Lúcia dos Santos' personality, spiritual and psychological preoccupations during certain periods of her life. c) Third, the biggest problem is the autobiographical diary entitled *O meu caminho* attributed to Lúcia which, according to the number of passages expounded from this diary contained in the work published by Carmel *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria*, some of which contradict and alter the historical content of the facts presented in other documents written by Lúcia herself during certain periods analyzed in our work.

Thanks to the historical critical method we have been able to corroborate factually not only the biographical but also the often historical errors in the narrative of Carmel of Coimbra, which distort the reality of the facts to constitute an inaccurate and often alternative narrative of Lúcia's life whose facts do not correspond to the historical truth of her biography. Our research sheds light on the fact that certain passages from Lúcia's autobiographical journal presented by the Carmel of Coimbra contradict the facts and events historically documented by Lúcia herself during her lifetime through her own epistolary records, as well as by the circle of intimates who maintained a close correspondence with the seer. Therefore, our research argues that not only the narrative from the Carmel of Coimbra entitled *Um caminho sob o olhar de Maria* needs to be re-examined in a critical light, but even the autobiographical journal attributed to Lúcia and entitled *O meu caminho* should be re-examined in the same critical process. These discrepancies emphasize the need for a critical and rigorous approach to historical sources in interpreting the events surrounding Lúcia dos Santos' biographical framework.

In conclusion, therefore, we aspired to realize the first doctoral PhD thesis in the discipline of history dedicated exclusively to the life of Sister Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos in the period 1921-1957 through the first critical study of the life and work of the seer of Fátima, to the greatest extent possible thanks to the complete collection of the available material published to date. The present research therefore attempts to fulfill the expectation of filling a historiographical gap, albeit of modest dimensions, in the study of the last seer of the apparitions of Fátima as an essential figure for the understanding of present-day Catholic devotion to *the Virgin of Fátima*. We hope, therefore, that our modest work offers for the first time a panoramic, though not exhaustive, view of the biographical journey of Lúcia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos from 1921 to 1957, through a methodological approach to the critical history of her epistolary legacy.

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