

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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MAGALHÃES, Joaquim Antero Romero (Faro, 1942 – Coimbra, 2018)

Joaquim Romero Magalhães was an admirable historian whose work is extensive and widely recognised in Portugal, Brazil, Spain and academic circles in other countries. His love of modern history and his role in the growth and affirmation of economic and social history in Portuguese academia were outstanding contributions that he built up at the Faculdade de Economia da Universidade de Coimbra [School of Economics of the University of Coimbra] (FEUC), where he taught and pursued his academic career from 1973 to 2012. Born in Loulé, in the Algarve, he was the son of a high school teacher – the poet and writer Joaquim Magalhães – and a piano teacher at the Faro Conservatory. He attended high school in the Algarve and went on to the University of Coimbra in 1959. The following year, he rejected a place on the law course and opted for history, a path common to many Portuguese historians of that generation.

Romero Magalhães completed his university education at a time of great cultural stagnation, but he had the courage to get involved in student associations and various student movements committed to opposing the Salazar dictatorship. A member of a student republic, he was president of the University of Coimbra Student Theatre in 1963 and president of the Coimbra Academic Association in 1964.

In 1967, he defended his degree thesis at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra [School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra]. He presented a bold work on economic and social history, a kind of historical chorography of a peripheral region of 16th-century Portuguese maritime expansion, the Algarve. The book was published in 1970 by Edições Cosmos and stirred the waters of Portuguese historiography, which only then, and with a significant delay compared to other countries, was beginning to pay attention to economic and social history, its methods and conceptual references.

In 1973, after a very brief period as a secondary school teacher and methodologist, Romero Magalhães began his career at FEUC. In 1984, he completed his PhD there. The thesis he presented to FEUC, *O Algarve Económico, 1600-1773* (The Economic Algarve, 1600-1773), supervised by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, quickly became a landmark work in Portuguese historiography. It was published by Editorial Estampa in 1988 and has since been reprinted several times.

In 1993, Romero Magalhães took his aggregation exams at FEUC. To this end, he presented a high-quality and bold pedagogical report on a master's degree course in European History, an academic interest

he had begun to cultivate intensively when Portugal joined the European Economic Community in 1986. He became a full professor in 1994 and retired in 2012.

In Portugal, the institutionalisation of economic history was a slow and belated movement that benefited greatly from the work of historians such as Joaquim Romero Magalhães. Not only in research, but also in teaching. Due to the longevity of the Salazar regime and government restrictions on the social sciences, economic history emerged as a trickle and gradually established itself apart from other realities. Due to the ideological suffocation of the university and the stigma attached to the Marxist connotations of the terms 'economic' and 'social', research and teaching of history in general only progressed within a historiographical counterculture, which resisted and grew on the margins of academia (J. Romero de Magalhães, *Oração de Sapiência...*, 2009, pp. 1-16).

In 1972, decades behind several developed countries, the first course in economic history in Portugal was launched in Lisbon, as part of the Economics degree at the Instituto Superior de Economia (now ISEG), entrusted to the historian Joel Serrão. The following year, the newly created FEUC began teaching Economic History, entrusted to Joaquim Romero Magalhães. The same happened in 1972 at the new Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (Higher Institute of Labour and Business Sciences), where the teaching of Economic History was taken over by economist Alfredo de Sousa.

At FEUC, after the turbulence of the years of the Revolution, the teaching of Economic History was strengthened in the 1976-77 academic year with the inclusion of the subject of Portuguese Economic History in the curriculum of the Degree in Economics (Jaime Ferreira, *Nos 30 anos da FEUC...*, 2003, pp. 102-134). Its first lecturer was the medievalist A. H. de Oliveira Marques, one of Portugal's leading historians, who had long been convinced of the importance of economic and social history for the education of students. The initiative to create the course belonged to Joaquim Romero Magalhães, who, however, left to join the Constituent Assembly and took up the post of Secretary of State for Educational Guidance in two governments headed by Mário Soares (1976-1978).

Despite these developments, the decisive affirmation of economic history in Portugal came after the Revolution of 25 April 1974. The creation of the *Revista de História Económica e Social* in 1978 and the birth of the Associação Portuguesa de História Económica e Social [Portuguese Association of Economic and Social History] in 1980, both on the initiative of Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, supported by a group of young teachers including Romero Magalhães, were decisive advances that contributed greatly to the renewal of Portuguese historiography.

Even as a young man, and right from his aforementioned degree thesis, Romero Magalhães already combined historical erudition with an almost literary narrative style and a biting irony. He understood history as a craft of writing focused on the explanation and causal logic of phenomena, but without resorting to theoretical embellishments detached from time and space. He always understood that research into documents and other historical sources requires historians to develop an archival ethic and to use these traces of the past from a dual perspective: as a probative instrument and as an exercise in plausible narrative

imagination. First came the publication of sources, then study, analysis and written synthesis.

Trained under the influence of the great French historiography of the Annales School, attentive to the concepts and methodological resources of various social sciences, but averse to sociologisms, Romero Magalhães understood the archive and the archivist as agents of mediation between the historian and public institutions. This explains his love of libraries and archives and his concern for the Library of the Faculdade de Economia da Universidade de Coimbra [School of Economics of the University of Coimbra], where much of his bibliographic collection is housed, as well as for the Municipal Archive of Loulé, which was named after him in April 2021 in a posthumous tribute.

A bibliophile historian and humanist, he imagined historiographical problems and constructed research ideas based on his reading of ancient pamphlets, leaflets, travel narratives, speeches, memoirs and other printed sources. This daily practice, not only of research but also of teaching, formed the basis of his working method, a persistent and demanding craft. A research historian, he combined archival mastery with a tremendous intuition for analysing the contexts of human action and the contingency of historical processes in his time. Attentive to the nature of spaces and the interplay of powers, he easily combined Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* with other times and scales in order to explain the relationships between action and the environment. There are several Braudelian traits in Romero Magalhães' historiography, but one of them is particularly salient in several of his publications: time is also geographical, history includes multiple temporalities that intersect and require a search for dialectics of globality – explanatory sets and subsets. To bring these intricate pictures of human and institutional action to life, he used his narrative imagination and his fluent writing and literary style.

"The temptation of the world", or the intention to write a history of the spaces and powers of the empire, attentive to ties, encounters and commercial connections, is already evident in several of Romero Magalhães' works, even though the author never called them "Global History". Taking into account the interpretations opened up by works such as *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* (1963-1971) by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, and the essays of António Sérgio – not forgetting the historiography of Jaime Cortesão, whom he greatly admired and studied in detail – he was concerned with ascertaining how Portuguese society in the Modern Era became commercialised at an early stage, but was not for that reason a pioneer in the processes of modernisation. It is no coincidence that this major issue and the problem of administrative and fiscal links between the central administration and the territories and borders of the empire were salient topics in the volume he coordinated of José Mattoso's *History of Portugal*, significantly entitled "No Alvorecer da Modernidade (1480-1620)" (At the Dawn of Modernity (1480-1620)) (vol. III, 1993).

In this and other writings, Romero Magalhães' historical analysis never lost sight of the structures, conjunctures, historical-geographical complexes and other heuristic categories disseminated by the Annales School. Without losing his identity as a historian, he studied economics to understand society in its seemingly immutable structures and movements of change, without losing sight of the protagonists of power and the practice of institutions. When his scope was social history, he seemed not to forget Le Roy Ladurie's warning



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about the “imperialist character” of this discipline or speciality, which would tend to appropriate all aspects of history because it was closer to other social and human sciences (Duby et alia, *History and New History...*, 1994, p. 56). Very attentive to the new French social history and the advancement of historiography on classes and social movements in the Modern Era (Roland Mousnier and others), he paid particular attention to forms of social mobility.

Without forgetting the micro-scales and a certain determinism of geographical factors, Romero Magalhães was fundamentally concerned with the socio-economic transformation of spaces and people (Leonor Freire Costa, “Joaquim Romero Magalhães’s Thoughts about Early Modern Portugal”..., 2019, pp. 66-72). He focused on the topography of power without forgetting Marx’s premise that “an economy is always historically specific” (E. Hobsbawm, *On History...*, 1998, p. 124). Whether in the context of municipalities or other political-administrative districts, his explanatory descriptions of the social organisation of a given space-time focused above all on the way in which men produced and distributed the product of their labour. However, the theoretical and methodological influences of Romero Magalhães’ historiography never proved contradictory to his very personal style of thinking and writing, which gave an important role to narrative ingenuity and analytical intuition.

Many of his works were intended to encourage his students and open up new horizons. He was a professor who did research – an excellent and affectionate teacher, as his students recognised. He never wanted to see himself as a researcher who did not teach, or who considered teaching superfluous to writing history. The thousands of printed pages he left us – books, chapters of collective works, essays, texts for exhibition catalogues and more than a hundred articles – are testimony to his fine prose and reflect his historical erudition. Some of his published works on topics as relevant to modern history as municipalities, the Inquisition and taxation in the Brazilian empire are collected in the five volumes he called *Miunças*, published by the University of Coimbra Press, the last of which was posthumous.

Romero Magalhães was a remarkable historian of short sentences. He knew the rules of the art well, but challenged them intuitively, searching the sources for an explanatory logic capable of giving meaning to human action and for metaphors that anchored the text to the time and places in which the characters and institutions acted. He was a cultured historian who feared excessive specialisation, methodological confinement and the empire of theory. Perhaps for this reason, he never stopped devoting time to music, literature and, above all, his passionate reading of detective novels. In addition to the evidence of historiographical talent that stands out in his work, Romero Magalhães was an academic who believed in persistent reformism, the use of reason and democratic deliberation. He had an emotional, uninhibited personality and a variable mood, but was always committed to the public cause and had an integrated and cultured view of academic life. Between 1985 and 1989, he was President of the Governing Council of the School of Economics and Commercial Sciences (FEUC), a position he held again between 1991 and 1993. He was also President of the Scientific Council of the same school between 1989 and 1991.

Romero Magalhães also taught at prestigious foreign universities. He was a visiting professor at the École



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des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris (1989 and 1999), the University of São Paulo (1991 and 1997) and Yale University (2003). His familiarity with topics related to colonial Brazil and his extensive collaboration on works directed by internationally renowned historians clearly benefited from the role he played and the networks he built at the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries, where he served as Commissioner General between 1999 and 2002. He was responsible for directing the programme of celebrations for the Discovery of Brazil, seeking the joint involvement of both countries and other states, particularly the former Portuguese colonies. The task was difficult, but the historical commemoration projects he coordinated and implemented were a success and were recognised by national and foreign interlocutors. This is evidence of the diplomatic qualities and academic reputation he had built up, particularly in Brazilian university and intellectual circles. Romero Magalhães' historiographical work and notable public action were recognised by Brazilian public bodies and the Portuguese State through a significant number of honorary distinctions.

Throughout his life as a citizen and historian, Romero Magalhães often postponed writing a book, which finally saw the light of day at the most opportune moment. He discussed the Republic in *Vem aí a República, 1906-1910* (The Republic is Coming, 1906-1910), published in 2009 by Almedina. Although he was a historian of the Modern era, he paid close attention, especially as a reader, to topics in Contemporary History, particularly the periods of the Republic and the Estado Novo. The republican political culture and the emergence of republican forces spoke especially to Joaquim Romero Magalhães, given his family roots. His own model of citizenship and the republican values he espoused were indelible legacies of that intense period of national life, hence the attention he devoted to republicanism in the last years of his life. Romero Magalhães' historical knowledge and civic affinity with the First Republic and its antecedents, as well as his experience on the Commission for the Discoveries, were obvious reasons for his inclusion in the Commission for Projects to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Portuguese Republic in 2005 and in the Advisory Committee for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the Republic between 2009 and 2011. The qualities and recognition he achieved as a historian did not prevent him from embracing roles that required balanced decision-making, common sense and a degree of realism. He was a reformist who believed in institutions and never left them as he had found them. On a civic level, he was a man of action, committed to democratic socialism and republican ethics. He believed strongly in European integration and its institutions, including the gradual construction of a federal Europe.

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Álvaro Garrido

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