

# DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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**PAYNE, Stanley G.** (Denton, Texas, 1934)

Stanley George Payne (Denton, Texas, 1934) is an important and controversial historian specialising in Spanish studies. His areas of expertise focus on the contemporary history of Spain and the history of Fascism. In addition to these, his research includes the modern history of Spain and Portugal and the history of Fascism in Central and Eastern Europe. He has written more than 20 books, having begun his career in 1961. He has also published hundreds of articles in dozens of academic journals and newspapers.

Payne was born in Denton, Texas, into a Protestant family. His father provided a modest but reasonable living for his family during the Great Depression, working as a carpenter, while his mother studied nursing and worked briefly as a nurse before her marriage. The family moved to California in 1944. It was there that he began his academic training at Pacific Union College, where he obtained his bachelor's degree, before moving on to Claremont University, where he completed his master's degree. From there, he travelled to the East Coast, where he completed his doctorate at Columbia University in New York. His interest in Spanish history began at Claremont University and deepened at Columbia University ("Oral History...", 2018).

In 1968, he began his career as a professor of history, teaching at five American universities. Of particular note was his long stay at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he taught until 2005. At this university, his contact with the German historian George L. Mosse, who was based in the United States, proved fundamental to the development of his perspective and approach to the history of fascism, having been influenced by comparative and culturalist approaches. In 1999, he joined the editorial board of the important *Journal of Contemporary History*, founded by Mosse and Walter Laqueur decades earlier. There, he promoted their legacy and reoriented the journal towards its original focus: the history of fascism (*The Journal of Contemporary History*, 2015, pp. 731-732). He is currently retired, having been awarded the title of Professor Emeritus by his university (Francisco J. R. Jiménez, 'Stanley Payne ¿Una trayectoria...?', 2015, pp. 28-29).

Payne innovated in two important ways. On the one hand, he chose to investigate the history of a country that, according to him, had hardly been studied at the universities where he had taught. On the other hand, his research on fascism stood out for its innovative combination of a comparative perspective with the

culturalist approach developed by Mosse. This approach characterised by its emphasis on ideology in the analysis of fascism, defining it through the method of methodological empathy. This method, developed by Mosse, allowed for a better understanding of fascist thinking and contributed fundamentally to a subsequent renewal of fascism studies in the 1990s (Roger Griffin, *Fascism*, 2018, p. 40). Until then, few historians had appreciated it or been influenced by it. Payne was one of them, having investigated fascism from an 'inside out' perspective centred on primary sources ('Oral History...', 2018).

In 1960, the historian completed his doctoral thesis entitled *José Antonio and the Beginning of Falange Española*, which led to the publication of his first book entitled *Falange: A History of Spanish Fascism*. This work stood out for its pioneering and detached analysis of the main Spanish fascist movement. Payne included methodological empathy in his analysis by focusing on primary sources, particularly the works of Spanish fascist leaders. Through this approach, he was able to lay the early foundations for his future generic definition of fascism (Michael Seidman, *Stanley G. Payne: An Intellectual Biography*, 2008, p. xii). Furthermore, in this work he presented a critical position that would become consolidated throughout his career and controversial, according to which it was the left that initiated the cycle of violence in which the fascists entered, and therefore destabilised the republic in the first place (*Idem*, p. xi).

In the following decades, the author produced several other notable works on the contemporary history of Spain and fascism. In 1967, he published *Franco's Spain*, a work characterised by a critical view of the construction of the Franco dictatorship, albeit from a perspective that sought to be detached and balanced (*Idem*, pp. xi-xii). In his subsequent works, he consolidated his position as a conservative historian, critical of the Republican left in the civil war and promoting a perspective increasingly closer to right-wing narratives. His profound criticism of the Spanish fascist right was counterbalanced by his accusation that it was the left that initiated the violence, which he defended above all after the publication of his third work, *The Spanish Revolution*, published in 1970. In his book *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*, published in 2004, the author argued that the Spanish Civil War was not part of the struggle between demoliberalism and fascism, but rather a confrontation between left-wing revolutionism and right-wing counter-revolution (*Idem*, p. xiv).

In 1973, Payne published a work focusing not only on Spain but also on Portugal. *A History of Spain and Portugal* was published in two volumes, in which the author took an objective and comparative approach to the modern and contemporary history of these two countries. In the second volume of this work, the author presented what would become his perspective on contemporary Portuguese authoritarianism. According to him, the coup of 28 May 1926 had produced a dictatorship that turned not into a fascist regime, but rather into a conservative, traditionalist and corporatist authoritarianism, a view shared by most other foreign experts on the *Estado Novo* (*A History of Portugal and Spain*, vol. II, 1973, pp. 663-684).

During this period, the author gradually became closer to Spanish right-wing intellectual circles (Francisco J. R. Jiménez, "Stanley Payne ¿Una trayectoria...?", 2015, pp. 25-26), while consolidating his position as a renowned Hispanist and deepening his studies on fascism ( ). In 1980, already anticipating the phase of



renewal in the study of fascism that would culminate in the following decade, he published *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, in which he presented his proposal for a generic definition based on his conservative, comparative and culturalist perspective. This was presented not as a succinct formula, but rather as an elaborate yet objective typological description that included several elements: 'fascist negations' – anti-liberalism, anti-Marxism, anti-Enlightenment, etc.; the ideological and cultural aspects – nationalism, the cult of virility, ascetic mysticism, fin de siècle decadence, etc.; and finally the socio-economic aspects – the structures and dynamics of fascist movements and parties (*El fascismo*, 2022, p. 16). Among other publications, Payne released *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* in 1995, a work in which he consolidated his previous arguments and presented a broader and more in-depth view of the history of the various European fascisms. In 2000, he produced another major work, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977*, in which he presented a more consolidated analysis of the same theme as his first book – the Spanish fascist movement FE de las JONS – based on primary sources and an 'inside out' approach.

During and after the wave of renewal in fascism studies, the author became closer to the Spanish right-wing intelligentsia, which led him to produce more controversial works and increased criticism in Spain of his research methods. One of his most recent works, *Franco: a Personal and Political Biography*, published in 2014 in collaboration with the far-right essayist Jesús Palacios Tapias, was strongly criticised by most Spanish historians, many of whom considered it a hagiography that added no new facts or insights to the academic debate on the figure of Franco. As a result, Payne's historiographical output ceased to be so consensual and came to be considered by most Spanish historians specialising in fascism as biased, representing the views of the Spanish right, in the context of an intellectual battle that continues to this day (Francisco J. R. Jiménez, 'Stanley Payne ¿Una trayectoria...?', 2015, pp. 24-54).

Despite this, outside Spain Payne continues to be widely regarded as a renowned Hispanist, one of the most important in the United States, where he taught until 2005. The author retired that year and, as mentioned above, was awarded the title of professor emeritus in 2008. His works on fascism continue to be considered fundamental references in the study of this subject. At the age of 89, this distinguished historian remains a member of the History Department of the same university, writing articles and producing historical works of great importance. His contribution to the history of Spain and fascism has made him a leading authority on the subject.

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