

## FOREWORD

What is the importance of the periodical in the production and dissemination of knowledge? What are the specific conditions of the editorial process in journals with a consultative council? What type of differentiated role befits them, if there is one? The answer to these questions involves the discussion of the meaning of a periodical like the Brazilian Journal of History, founded in 1981 and, ever since, a decisive vehicle for promoting much new thinking in Brazilian historiography.

E.P. Thompson, in a classical text on historical logic, demonstrated the specific conditions for the production of knowledge by historians and the validation of the results. Historical practice consists of a dialogue between concepts/hypotheses and evidence, in a sort of dynamic “court of appeal” in which the various researchers, under historical perspectives and conditions, and in the context of the struggles and impasses of their own time, go over their successes and failures together. In this unending, incomplete, imperfect debate, historiography outlines the diverse meanings that the past can come to assume for us, positioning itself face to face with the world and the men of our own time.

The activities that the publication of a periodical presupposes involve rich intellectual learning processes. The judgment of texts presented to peers without the identification of the authors makes it possible to abandon the facile respect for reputation and authority, to breakdown hierarchies, and blaze a trail for originality and competence. The authors exercise intellectual detachment and maturity, with a readiness to listen. Such dialogues yield auspicious results for the renovation of historical knowledge and should be impartial to the point of guaranteeing space to challenge what seems established or unquestioned.

This is the role that this journal wishes to reaffirm. The articles that comprise this issue resulted from the work of the members of the Editorial Council, of the opinion writers and of a wide range of authors that sent in their texts, whether or not they were accepted for publication, as limits on space impose choices that are not always easy. The improvement of our editorial

practices, therefore, becomes increasingly important, to guarantee both professional respect and the exercise of criticism.

The dossier **History and Gender** carries a separate presentation. The Articles' section starts with "Immigration and family in Minas Gerais at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century", a rigorous and enlightening demographic study on the profile of those immigrants. "Searching for the magic box: the Estado Novo and the television" adopts a very original approach for reflection on political practices and the means of communication. Originality and research also characterize "Propaganda and social criticism in the chronologies of the astrological almanacs during the English Civil War in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century". From a perspective using the interfaces between economic history and politics, "Tramway modernization and concentration in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (1849-1930)" explores the links between companies and society. Society, history, science and agriculture, studied using new sources and new objects are the theme of "Scientific debates and the production of the São Paulo wine, 1890-1930". The reader will also encounter a careful treatment of primary sources and an original interpretation of the aspects of material culture in "The wheel, the squeezer, the oven and the 'tacho': the cassava flour material culture in Paraná, Brazil".

The **State-of-the-Art** section, inaugurated in the present volume, contains a panorama and an inestimable mapping of an important historiographical field. "The emergence of the research on Women's History and Gender Relations" will certainly become a reference for those wedded to the theme. The summaries follow.

Still quoting Thompson, it is important to remember that "history does not know what regular verbs are". In accepting the fragmentary and irregular nature of history writing as a positive aspect – and not as a defect-, we want the texts here presented to act on readers in the important sense of increasing the dialogues between the histories that we write and the dreams that we dare to espouse.

*Editorial Committee*