

FOREWORD

The image of Clio, the Hellenic muse of history, fruit of passionate nights of Mnemosyne and Zeus, is always a recurrent symbol among historians. However, there is another female image — perpetuated by other cultural traditions — also capable of triggering a series of laborious propositions on the practice of history.

We refer to Scheherazade, the beautiful young woman who quenched Sultan Shahryar's murderous anger. The powerful sultan had sworn that he would never lie with the same woman more than once. Every night he went to bed with a virgin, who was executed at dawn. Terror took over all homes. The slaying of so many young women would end up bringing about an increasingly male and sterile world. One day Scheherazade, one of two daughters of the vizier, who until then had kept her determination to end the sultan's barbarity a secret, begged to marry Shahryar. Starting in her nuptials, the young woman seduced her would-be executioner by telling diverse enthralling stories that were never finished at dawn, which saved her life for one thousand and one nights. In the end, Scheherazade's narrations prevented not only her own death, as the Sultan fell in love with her, but also the threat of the society's extinction.

For Scheherazade and the historian, the challenge of death arises as a common intention, as a chore to be continuously resumed. Writing history deals with vanished societies, speaks of absent women and men, glimpses possibilities considered of yore and now forgotten. As Michel de Certeau puts it, the discourses on the past bear the mark of the dead and are conjured up via an exchange between the living. A duel against death, the practice of history knows no rest. Experiencing incompleteness not as a lack, but as a statement of the complexity of life, the historian is always willing to restart its writing, since the knowledge produced is neither continuous nor necessarily cumulative.

In the conclusion of the works of this Editorial Board of the *Revista Brasileira de História*, 2007-2009, we hope that we may have contributed to restating the importance of writing history in the contemporaneous society, a victim of so many nightmares and pervasive threats of extinction. We sought

to continue the work of so many days and nights (in fact, nearly a thousand) of all editors, editor board members and consultants, as well as the innumerable *ad hoc* referees active since the publication of the first issue in September, 1981. The collective project of Anpuh, an institution that gathers distinguished historians, our journal reaches for the future with expectations of continuing to serve as a vehicle for reflections, research, and debate, as a relentlessly restarted task.

In this issue, the dossier “O Brasil visto de fora” (Brazil seen from the outside) brings articles by foreign authors about foreigners’ views of the country and the foreign actions of which it is the target. Seth Garfield unravels the diplomatic, environmental, and cultural debate on the Brazilian Amazon during World War II. Based on well-founded extensive research, he investigates the material and ideological forces that shaped the North American understanding of the tropical forest. James Green and Abigail Jones dwell on the views of Ambassador Gordon on the North American actions related to Brazil’s 1964 coup. This article covers diverse themes, such as international relations, political memory, and practices of historical research. Neil Safier looks at the narrative strategies of La Condamine in the presentation of the Amazon River to the Europeans in the 18th century in a work written in the first person without dividing chapters, that glides as a boat through the river, intermingling natural observations with mythical stories of palaces and warrior women.

Maria Helena Capelato opens the Assorted Articles section with a study on the Francoist indoctrination of children through schoolbooks. Her analysis favors the political, cultural, and pedagogical aspects and emphasizes the messages and images that fed the Spanish collective imaginary and the “peddling” of purifying illusions that spurred intolerance. Aldair Carlos Rodrigues contributed to the study of the Inquisition in the Minas Gerais Captaincy during the Colonial period, focusing on the Portuguese inquisitorial commissioners and discussing their education, action, profile, recruiting, and roles. Henrique Estrada Rodrigues analyzes the writings by Fernand Braudel on Lévi-Strauss and debates questions of historical time and the political action as a source of social differentiation, an inaugurating moment of all movement and all history, a matrix of multiplicity. Felipe Pereira Loureiro assesses the political gridlock of Jânio Quadros’ administration by discussing the attacks to the political legitimacy of the Congress and the congressional reaction to rebuild its image.

Six reviews follow, signed by Durval Muniz Albuquerque Junior, Douglas

Cole Libby, Dulce O. Amarante dos Santos, Lise Sedrez, María Elida Blasco, and Luis Fernando Cerri, fulfilling the important task of bringing the readers critical analysis of new outstanding publications on assorted themes and in equally varied approaches.

In its Scheherazadian task, the journal invites the readers to turn the next pages. We believe that the writings published here are stimuli to life and thought. After all, it is always a joy to remember that history, past, present, and future, is always left to be written, and that resuming it each day is a guarantee of our survival.

The Editorial Board

(Translated into English by Laerte J. Silva and Lynnea Hansen Nascimento)