

Foreword

The present issue of the periodical *Varia Historia* features a collection of articles organized by the research group of Science and Culture in History of the post-graduate department of History at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – UFMG: "History and Nature." The collection consists of six articles that establish a dialogue between history and the natural world. If this debate has been present for several decades in historiography, certainly since the beginnings of the *Annales*, it has currently found new vigor with the studies in the area of a burgeoning Environmental History.

The first three articles focus on theoretical-methodological questions of great pertinence to the historians who wished to dedicate themselves to this kind of approach. In "Why Study the Environmental History of Brazil — a Thematic Study," José Augusto Drummond, a researcher connected with the Center of Sustainable Development (UnB), discusses the reasons why Brazil has become an enviable object of study in the field of Environmental History, pointing out research perspectives and making valuable comments on contemporary works already written with Brazil as their theme. Guilherme Castro, of the Universidad de Panama, author of *Environmental History (made) in Latin America*, discusses the relevance and urgency of establishing a Latin-American discussion on its own environmental history, which has been done primarily with the support of economic and financial institutions of North Atlantic countries. In the face of a number of consequences and limitations resulting from this situation, the author analyzes the difference between environmental history about Latin America and a Latin-American environmental history.

The article of Bernardo García Martínez of the Colegio de México, "Pre-Hispanic Borders and Land Occupation: a Basic Sketch for the Analysis of the Environmental History of Mexico in the Colonial and Contemporary Periods," privileges the issues and problems in the construction of an environmental historiographical gaze on the colonial history of Mexico, showing the need for special caution in the acceptance of generalizations or paradigms, recommending that the historian pause over the variety and complexity of the phenomena studied, which will surely result in more pertinent and sophisticated analyses of the relations between society and nature.

Christian Brannstorm, professor at Texas A & M University, has produced an intriguing discussion of the Atlantic Forest, introducing a questioning of this concept based on careful research in the inventories and processes of land division and measurement in the west of São Paulo. Confirming the existence of a true mosaic of vegetation, he introduces an epistemological discussion of the biophysical basis of historico-environmental studies.

The article of José Luiz de Andrade Franco, of the União Pioneira de Integração Social (UPIS), "The First Brazilian Conference on the Protection of Nature and the Question of National Identity," analyzes the social thought and proposals formulated at that event, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, in 1934, showing the connections between the question of the protection of nature and a broader notion of the construction of nationality.

Finally, in the last article of the collection, Regina Horta Duarte, of the UFMG, discusses the relations between men and animals, focusing on two different historical periods, starting from circus practices in Brazil and the use of animals in shows, in the article "Horses, Lions, and Other Creatures: Animals and the Circus." The author emphasizes the historical transformation of moral values and the emergence of new sensibilities, as well as an understanding of their conditions.

This issue of *Vara Historia* also contains two more articles. In "The Headmen and the Heads: Quilombos, Leadership and Decapitation in Eighteenth Century Minas," Carlos Magno Magalhães studies the hierarchies of power in the interior of the *quilombos* [slave sanctuaries] in Minas Gerais and the mutilation practices of colonial society, expressed in the decapitation and exhibition of heads in public squares for the purpose of discouraging the flight of slaves and the formation of *quilombos*. Giselle Martins Venâncio investigates the relation between the one-time publisher Monteiro Lobato and the author Oliveira Vianna, in "From the Brazil Review to Brazil in Review: a Brief Analysis of the Publishing Experience of Oliveira Vianna." The correspondence exchanged between the two men serves as a guiding line to understand the consolidation of the Vianna's position in the Brazilian publishing market and among Brazilian intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century.

The current issue has the financial support of Fundep and the Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas of the UFMG, to whom we are grateful.

REGINA HORTA DUARTE
(organizadora)