

SESQUICENTENNIAL OF JOURNALISM RESEARCH IN BRAZIL

Copyright © 2009
SBPJor / Sociedade
Brasileira de Pesquisa
em Jornalismo

JOSÉ MARQUES DE MELO
UMESP, Brazil

ABSTRACT Fernando Pinheiro's article on the mythical introduction of the printing press in Brazil by seventeenth century Dutch colonizers, published in 1859, constitutes a historical landmark in Brazilian journalism. This paper intends to rediscover the significance of this event, thus promoting debate on the periodization of journalism research.

Key-words: Journalism, History, Research, Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

While catalyzing the attention of Brazilian intellectuals since the nineteenth century, journalism only became a field of knowledge in the twentieth century (Marques de Melo, 2006: 15-36; Pena, 2008: 226; Machado da Silva, 2008: 91)¹. Therefore, Brazil is not an exception, following the dominant trend in the worldwide panorama of media research (Marques de Melo, 2003c).

In this institutionalization process, journalism is initially a problem which stimulates observation or controversy, then it is converted into a subject for reflection and debate, becoming recognized as an academic discipline for the training of producing agents, until a scientific community devoted to its cognizance is structured. In this way, it has as its permanent goal the stimulation of criticism of the routines in use in the production system, influencing the updating, dynamics or reinvention of the praxis.

However, there is still no definition regarding the moment in which the analysts interest in the phenomenon ceases to be informal, speculative and isolated, generating data, building memory or sustaining currents of thought. Imprecision also continues to exist concerning the occasion on which its study takes the form of a collective, objective, generalizing and non-valuating activity (Duverger, 1962: 36), producing knowledge of the praxis.

The challenge of filling in this historical gap makes the rediscovery of an event (Burke, 1997: 328) timely, whose 150th anniversary is celebrated in 2009, seeking to understand it as a "historical landmark" (Duverger, 1962: 43)

in journalism theory and research in Brazil (Marques de Melo, 2006).

Historical landmark

The reference point of Brazilian journalism research was the publication on November 20, 1859 in Rio de Janeiro of the article “*A imprensa no Brasil*” (The press in Brazil) by the historian Fernandes Pinheiro in *Revista Popular*, vol. 1, n. 4, p. 217-224.

Joaquim Caetano Fernandes Pinheiro² was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1825. He underwent ecclesiastic training in the São José Seminary in Rio de Janeiro, concluding his theological studies in Rome. He was awarded by examination the chair of Rhetoric in the Imperial Secondary School in Petrópolis. After being hired by the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute in 1854, he was immediately promoted to its board of directors, on which he performed “laborious and productive” work until his death in 1876.

He was also active in journalism, becoming one of the main exponents of “historical essay writing”. He published voluminous literary works, being one of the pioneers in the production of didactic works which were the basis for the intellectual preparation of several generations.

His controversial article represented the seed which would make possible the establishment of the academic field of journalism in Brazil.

This was an event which contained curiously a historical contradiction, since the delayed birth of the Brazilian press contrasts with the precocity of the reflection on the peculiar nature of journalism which it disseminated.

Instead of inhibiting the pioneering agents of our journalistic activity, the lack of printing firms in Brazil during three centuries (Marques de Melo, 2003) aroused their reflexive interest. Practicing criticism of the profession, agents on the level of Hipólito da Costa or Evaristo da Veiga demonstrated the voracious search for alternatives to offset that intellectual privation. (Marques de Melo, 2007:15-40).

Freedom of expression

As a matter of fact, the historical situation by itself alone justified the behavior of the “forerunners” of Brazilian journalistic thought. It was characterized by the consolidation of the doctrine of freedom of the press, an event brought about by the bourgeois revolutions at the close of the eighteenth century.

Research on journalistic phenomena in Brazil goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century, since the singular conditions of the historical period which went from D. João VI to D. Pedro I were marked by legal restrictions limiting freedom of the press. Inhibiting the development of our journalism, they acted as adverse factors for the systematic research of this phenomenon which would only encounter a fertile environment in the Second Empire period.

During the Second Empire the press lived through its best period of freedom, guaranteed by the wisdom of Emperor Pedro II. In the midst of this climate of conciliation of the Brazilian elite, the Historical Institutes began to rediscover precociously the path followed by our journalism. And they provoked controversies which would win over the hearts and minds of our intellectuals on “exalting the pioneering spirit of the Dutch in the introduction of the printing press into Brazil, contrasting with the backwardness of the Portuguese, who prohibited and repressed it.” (Marques de Melo, 2003b).

Thesis

Without disqualifying its historical significance, the episode in which Fernandes Pinheiro played the leading role constituted an advance chapter in Brazilian journalism research.

The “initial concern” of the Rio de Janeiro trail blazer and of his immediate continuers “was not concentrated on the news processes, but on their means of dissemination, more precisely on the technology involved in printing books, newspapers and magazines”. (Marques de Melo, 1999).

Fernandes Pinheiro’s thesis according to which the Dutch colonizers introduced the printing press into Brazil was based on the only existing documentary evidence: the pamphlet *Brasilche GeltSak*, dating from 1645 and supposedly published in Recife.

The author’s motivation was rooted in the growing movement, in the period following the abdication of the throne by Pedro I, of affirmation of the Brazilian identity by means of the cultural negation of our Portuguese heritage. “At this time, (...) the identification of the Portuguese with backwardness and the past”, giving rise to a “particular anti-Portuguese expression...” (Ferreira & Neves, 2000: 228).

Antithesis

The historians from the State of Pernambuco left aside speculations and went to seek empirical evidence capable of refuting its authenticity, denying that which their peers from Rio de Janeiro interpreted as a mere research “hypothesis”.

Their “research was concentrated on Brazilian and Dutch archives, producing results which would negate the dominant hypothesis”. The conclusion accepted consensually by the historiography community was the following: “The Nassau initiative had not been consummated, due to fortuitous reasons, and the material supposedly printed in Recife had been reproduced in European print shops.” (Marques de Melo, 2003b).

Synthesis

In any event, the controversy which arose in the second half of the nineteenth

century, whose spark was the controversial article of 1859, stimulated historians to reconstitute the history of our press, motivated by the national centennial celebrations of 1908, “beginning with the double centennial: the creation of the Royal Press and the launching of our first independent newspaper, Hipólito José da Costa’s *Correio Braziliense*”.

An associate of Alfredo de Carvalho in the inventory of the first century of the Brazilian press (1808-1908), Max Fleiuss produced in Rio de Janeiro one of the first state of the art historical research works on journalism, whose text appeared in 1922, during the commemorations of the centennial of Brazilian independence.

Strictly speaking, “these studies do not yet focus on journalism as a defined object”, dealing with “the press and with its products”, and only marginally focusing on “the socio-political processes which give a specific aspect to the communication of the news”. (Marques de Melo, 2006).

Frontiers

The dividing line was doubtlessly the paradigmatic study by Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, the journalist who occupied a memorable place in the vanguard of the Brazilian journalistic community throughout the twentieth century. He drew a profile of the development of journalism in the industrial society and of the impasses encountered in Brazil. He made use of his professional experience as a journalist and of the analytical methodology he learned in the legal field, without failing to have recourse to historical science as well.

Situated on the frontier between Journalism and Law, History and Economics, his work is apparently interdisciplinary. But a careful reading will demonstrate that the author sought to understand the “problem of the press” with the “tenacity of the journalist who succeeds in carrying out serial studies in the midst of a dispersive life” (Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, 1923: VII).

His example was only emulated a quarter-century later when Carlos Rizzini, whose intellectual profile was similar to that of Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, published his magnificent historical inventory of books, newspapers and printing in Brazil, produced with a reporter’s training and experimenting methodological strategies “based on professional practice” (Dias, 2004: 12).

Interfaces

In reality, Rizzini acted as the bridge connecting Fernandes Pinheiro’s trailblazing work and the founding studies of the academic field of journalism, whose initiative fell to Danton Jobim (1960) and Luiz Beltrão (1960), belonging to the generation of journalists-professors. Rizzini was fully integrated into this group, teaching in the journalism course of the former Universidade do Brasil and directing the Cásper Líbero Journalism Faculty in São Paulo.

Contesting the hypothesis of “submersion into bestiality” (Dias, 2004: 15) and criticizing other assertions by Fernandes Pinheiro, in a certain sense Rizzini legitimated the exploratory work of this Rio de Janeiro historian, whose activity in the communicational field, especially in journalism, was deserving of a stimulating incursion on the part of his biographer, Paulo da Rocha Dias (2004). His factual notations and critical perceptions invite other researchers to provide answers to questions which continue to challenge the expositors of media historiography.

Merit

In this way, on the eve of the bicentennial anniversary of his birth (2025), justice will be done in the case of this prolific intellectual who dared to explore unknown paths, even running the risk of negation of his research hypotheses, as happened in the case of the press.

If it weren't for his impetuosity, perhaps even today the mythical Dutch printing press would continue to fascinate the new generations, as in the case of so many other episodes which intrigue scholars in the area.

| NOTES

- 1 Paper presented at the IV International Journalism Encounter. Universidade Fernando Pessoa. Porto. April 4, 2009.
- 2 His biographical profile was published in the opening note of the dossier, “*Centenário de Fernandes Pinheiro*” (Fernandes Pinheiro's Centennial) published by the *Revista do IHGB* (Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute Magazine), vol. 240, 1958

| BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BARBOSA LIMA SOBRINHO, Alexandre José. 1923 – *O problema da imprensa*, Rio, José Álvaro Editor
- BELTRÃO, Luiz. 1960 – *Iniciação à Filosofia do Jornalismo*, Rio, Agir
- BURKE, Peter. 2003 – *Uma História Social do Conhecimento*, Rio, Jorge Zahar; 1992 – *A escrita da História – novas perspectivas*, São Paulo, Editora UNESP
- CANECA, Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino. 1875 – Tratado de eloquência, *Obras Políticas e Literárias*, tomo I, Recife, Typographia Mercantil, p. 61-161
- CARVALHO, Alfredo. 1899 – Da introdução da imprensa em Pernambuco pelos Holandeses, *Revista do IHGB*, n. 52, Rio, 71-716
- DIAS, Paulo da Rocha. 2004 – *O amigo do Rei – Carlos Rizzini, Chato e os Diários*

Associados, Florianópolis, Letras Contemporâneas

- DUARTE PEREIRA, José Higino; 1883 – Advertência, *Revista do IHGB*, n. 28, Rio, 121-126
- DUVERGER, Maurice. 1962 – *Métodos de las Ciencias Sociales*, Barcelona, Ariel
- FERREIRA, Tânia da Cruz & Neves, Lúcia Marinho. 2000 – As relações culturais ao longo do século XIX, In: Cervo & Magalhães – *Depois das Caravelas*, Brasília, UNB, p. 225-251
- FLEUISS, Max. 1922 – A imprensa no Brasil, *Dicionário Histórico, Geographico e Etnographico do Brasil*, Rio, Imprensa Nacional, p. 1550-1585
- FERNANDES PINHEIRO, Joaquim Caetano. 1859 – A imprensa no Brasil, *Revista do IHGB*, v. 1, n. 4: 217-224
- HOHLFELDT, Antonio & Strelow. 2008 – Métodos de Pesquisa em Jornalismo, In: Sousa, Jorge Pedro, org. – *Jornalismo, História, Teoria e Metodologia*, Porto, Edições UFP, p. 378-391
- MARQUES DE MELO, José. 2003^a – *História Social da Imprensa*, Porto Alegre, Edipucrs; 2003b – *História do Pensamento Comunicacional*, São Paulo, Paulus; 3003c – Midiologia Brasileira: o resgate das fontes paradigmáticas, In: Lopes, Maria Immacolata V. – *Epistemologia da Comunicação*, São Paulo, Loyola, p. 105-120; 2008a – *História política das ciências da comunicação*, Rio, Mauad; 2008b – *O campo da comunicação no Brasil*, Petrópolis, Vozes; 2008c – A teorização do Jornalismo no Brasil: das origens à atualidade, In: Sousa, Jorge Pedro, org. – *Jornalismo, História, Teoria e Metodologia*, Porto, Edições UFP, p. 295-314; 2007 – Pensamento Jornalístico, a moderna tradição brasileira, *Revista Brasileira de Ciências da Comunicação*, São Paulo, Intercom, 30-2: 15-40; 2006 – *Teoria do Jornalismo: identidades brasileiras*, São Paulo, Paulus; 1999 – A constituição da comunidade acadêmica brasileira no campo das ciências da comunicação, In: Lopes, Maria Immacolata, org. – *Vinte anos de Ciências da Comunicação no Brasil*, São Paulo, INTERCOM, p.49-74
- MOREL, Marco & BARROS, Mariana Monteiro. 2003 – *Palavra, Imagem e poder*, Rio, DP&A
- PENA, Felipe. 2008 – A teorização do jornalismo no Brasil – após 1950, In: Sousa, Jorge PEDRO, org. – *Jornalismo, História, Teoria e Metodologia*, Porto, Edições UFP, p. 226-294; 2005 – *Teoria do Jornalismo*, São Paulo, Contexto
- PEREIRA DA COSTA, A. F. 1891 – Estabelecimento e desenvolvimento da imprensa em Pernambuco, *Revista do IHGB*, n. 39, Recife, 21-50
- RIZZINI, Carlos. 1946 – *O livro, o jornal e tipografia no Brasil*, Rio Kosmos; 1957 – *Hipólito da Costa e o Correio Braziliense*, São Paulo, Nacional
- WERNECK SODRÉ, Nelson. 1964 – *História da Literatura*, 4^a. ed., Rio, Civilização Brasileira; 1966 – *História da Imprensa*, 1^a. ed., Rio, Civilização Brasileira

José Marques de Melo is Professor Emeritus at the University of São Paulo. Director of the UNESCO Chair of Communication at the Methodist University of São Paulo.