

# Joaquim Romero Magalhães and the Early Modern History of Portugal and its Empire: A Tribute

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Joaquim Romero Magalhães died unexpectedly on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018. News of this tragic event, received on the eve of the Christmas holiday, took the Portuguese academic world entirely by surprise. The shock was all the more significant as less than two weeks before, on December 12<sup>th</sup>, he had appeared in public at a ceremony held at the University of Algarve at which he was awarded an honorary degree. Recorded on video and posted online,<sup>4</sup> the event bears witness to the recognition, high regard, and affection afforded to Magalhães by Portuguese scholars and his fellow Algarvians. Although he appears fragile in the video, the evident delight with which he took part in the celebrations gave no clue as to the proximity of his sudden demise.

Besides the profound impact his work had on the formation of a generation of Portuguese and Brazilian early modernist historians, Magalhães's role in deepening our knowledge of the early modern history of Portugal and its empire deserves recognition beyond Portuguese academic circles. It is this conviction that inspired eJPH editors to organize this dossier, which consists of the testimony of several historians on the life and ideas of Joaquim Romero Magalhães. It comprises nine texts but more could have been included, such as the impact of his teaching, the innovative rigour of the approach he adopted in the interpretation of problems and key phenomena for the explanation of the historical development of Portugal and its overseas territories, and the benefit to society of his life and work. While no attempt is made here to deal exhaustively with the topics he covered or the historiographic contribution he made, we believe that this dossier provides an excellent means for stimulating interest in the author and his work, whose value, diversity, and literary charm deserve reading the works he wrote in the Portuguese language.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw1YIABjfQI&t=828s>

Without delving too deeply into the topics focused on by the nine authors who contributed pieces for this dossier, we emphasize the innovative character of Magalhães's approach to the examination of themes which had hitherto received little attention from Portuguese scholars. One of these is the exploration of the relations between history and territory in studies of the Algarve region and the interest aroused in the history of cartography as well as the stimulus he provided for students and researchers in the field. Also worthy of note is his sensibility and recognized rigour of his approach to the study of both social categories and processes of reproduction, and the complexity of social mobility strategies. Another influential aspect of the work of Magalhães concerns the history of municipal structures as institutional spaces of fundamental importance in defining the architecture of power in the early modern age. As indicated in these pieces, the spatial scope of such approaches is often extended to cover the territories colonized by Portugal, as is also the case with some of his analyses in the field of economic history. In this regard, his work on demographic dynamics, agrarian production structures, and the discussion of taxation as an instrument for the formation of the early modern state has stood the test of time and continues providing inspiration for the academic community to carry out further study and research on such themes and interpretations. An extension of his interest in power relations, his studies on the Inquisition focused on the various forms of socio-economic impact of the institution.

It is also important to highlight the role played by Romero Magalhães in the renewal of Brazilian historiography over the last three decades through both his role as a key figure on the *Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses* (National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries) (CNCDP 1998-2002) and his work in building and nurturing a network of contacts, putting to good use the erudition and charisma he displayed up until the end of his life.

From the 2000s, he consistently kept a high profile, working as a researcher at Brazilian universities, presenting papers at meetings, contributing articles to scientific journals in Brazil, and giving interviews in the social media, which had the effect of encouraging a critical rapprochement between Portuguese and Brazilian historiographers at the turn of the 21st century. His contribution was recognized by the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute) of which he was a member and which conferred on him the status of foreign correspondent in 2001. In this role, he was received by Admiral Max Justo Guedes and gave a lecture on the methods of government of Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, governor and captain-general of

Grão-Pará and Maranhão (1751-1759), later published in a collection of articles based on his studies of Brazilian history (*Labirintos Brasileiros*, São Paulo: 2011). It might be claimed that, perhaps out of a love for Brazil, he focused his attention too narrowly on the country to the detriment of the other parts of the Portuguese empire. As he stated in an interview with *Revista de História do Brasil da Biblioteca Nacional* in 2013: "One cannot study the history of Portugal without studying the history of Brazil." Sérgio Campos Matos, with whom he collaborated on the project *Dicionário dos Historiadores Portugueses* (Dictionary of Portuguese Historians),<sup>5</sup> rightly stressed that Magalhães' lifelong approach to academic work nevertheless provided both a useful counterbalance to the excesses of the short-term approach imposed by the requirement for academic production and encouragement for carrying out research framed in the long-term, a goal for which historians should aim.

This dossier also seeks to provide recognition for Romero Magalhães's role and influence in the formation of a generation of historians whose works on the history of Portugal and its empire in the early modern period are now classic texts. If students of history are prepared to read Magalhães in the original, they will perhaps recognize in many of today's standard works the undisputed influence of his ideas and research methodology.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/site>