



Lost and Found

Between republicans and freemasons: A lost zoological collection found in a very particular school

João Lourenço Monteiro

CIUHCT – Interuniversity Center for the History of Science and Technology, Department of Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Science and Technology, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Portugal



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A LOST ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTION WAS FOUND IN AN OLD SCHOOL IN LISBON, PORTUGAL. TAXIDERMIED ANIMALS, FAUNA PRESERVED IN GLASS JARS, SKELETONS, AND FOSSILIZED SHELLS WERE ALL PART OF THIS COLLECTION. THE RESEARCH SHOWED THAT THOSE ANIMALS WERE USED BY LIBERTARIAN TEACHERS IN SCIENCE CLASSES IN A SCHOOL CREATED BY REPUBLICANS AND FREEMASONS IN THE TRANSITION FROM THE 19TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY.

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Escola-Oficina N°1 is an old school located in Graça, a neighborhood in Lisbon, Portugal (Figure 1). In the beginning of 2014, the school was visited in order to identify some sea shells found during the repair works of the building.¹ Having entered the school, one should go downstairs to the right and pass by two heavy green doors towards a room, where the memories of the school had been randomly packed and hidden from the public eyes for decades. Turning the light on, some school material was found beneath a long, dusty sheet. Among a miscellanea of instruments and other scientific paraphernalia, some taxidermied fauna were visible. Looking further, other animals preserved in glass jars were also found. After all, there was much more than sea shells; in fact, there was a lost zoological collection waiting to 'come out from the shadows'.²

My study of the collection started in the beginning of the following year, throughout which I endeavored to answer questions such as: what was the origin of these items? What had been taught in the period when the collection was formed? How were classes taught, and what was the usefulness of the specimens during classes? Was there any concern regarding the

protection of the collection over time? And, in the end, what should be done with the collection in the present day?

In this paper, the collection will be described, the history of the school will be revealed, and, finally, the origins of the collection and its uses will be examined. To accomplish this task, institutional publications were used as primary sources, and their study was complemented with recently published works on the history of education dedicated to *Escola-Oficina N°1*.³

Unveiling the zoological collection

Upon my first visit in 2014, the collection was divided into four groups: fourteen taxidermied animals (Figure 2) – from which six of which were birds, one was a fish, and seven were mammals – a wet collection (Figure 3), several animal skeletons (Figure 4), and sea shells and fossils. The wet collection comprised eighty seven jars of preserved animals in liquid: one annelid, one arachnid, one echinoderm, one gastropod, one tunicate, one worm, one insect, two crustaceans, three mollusks, four birds, nine mammals, eighteen reptiles and amphibians, and forty-nine fishes.⁴ There were seven whole skeletons, one of which was a reptile, one was a mammal, two were birds, and three were fishes. Finally, forty shells were counted, the majority of them fossilized shells. Most of the jars had entire animals in them, but others showed dissected animals allowing the visualization of their internal organs, while other jars showed several developmental stages of chicken embryos, or the different stages of metamorphosis of a diversity of animals.

E-mail address: jfl.monteiro@fct.unl.pt (J.L. Monteiro).

¹ Three years before, I worked in the Portuguese Institute of Malacology, identifying and cataloging sea shells from all over the world, mainly from the genus *Oliva* and *Conus*.

² The circumstances in which scientific specimens and objects were found in *Escola-Oficina N°1* is not unusual in teaching institutions in Portugal. See: Lourenço MC. O património invisível: História, organização e preservação do património científico em Portugal. *Museologia.pt*. 2010; 4: 106–125; Lourenço MC, Wilson L. Scientific heritage: Reflections on its nature and new approach to preservation, study and access. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*. 2013; 44: 744–753; Gomes I. The scientific heritage of Portuguese secondary schools: a historical approach. *Paedagogica Historica*. 2018; 54; 4: 468–484.

³ The institutional publications referred are: *A Educação* (1913), *Boletim Oficial da Escola Oficina N°1* (1918) and *Educação Social* (1924–1927).

⁴ Some jars had more than one animal inside.



Fig. 1. Escola-Oficina N.º 1.



Fig. 2. A specimen of a taxidermied animal.



Fig. 3. A specimen of the wet collection.

When I first came across the specimens, many were covered in dust. The skins of some of the taxidermied animals presented some holes, probably caused by moths, but the wet collection was, in general, well preserved.

Between Brethren: the history of *Escola-Oficina N.º 1*

The *Escola-Oficina* was a technical school whose origins go back to the transition of the 19th to the 20th Century. In 1876, through the initiative of José Gregório da Rosa Araújo (1840–1893), freemason and President of the Municipal Council of Lisbon (1878–1893), the charity *Sociedade Promotora de Creches* (Society for the Promotion of Nurseries/SPN) created the *Creche de Santa Eulália* (Saint Eulalia's Nursery).

In 1879, the facilities were moved to the Graça neighborhood, but the Nursery soon closed due to financial problems. However, the members of the *Sociedade* did not quit, and, in 1904, SPN changed its designation to *Sociedade Promotora de Asilos, Creches e Escolas* (Society for the Promotion of Asylums, Nurseries and Schools/SPANS). The following year, the *Escola-Oficina N.º 1* was created by the republican and freemason politician Luís Filipe da Mata (1853–1924), with the purpose of teaching children of the poor working-class neighborhood of Graça for free. In 1913, SPANS changed definitively its designation to *Sociedade Promotora de*

Escolas (Society for the Promotion of Schools/SPS).⁵ Freemasonry, as a philanthropic and charitable organization, would remain related to the history of this school until the present.⁶

In a time before the Welfare State, when public schools were not as easily accessible to anyone and everyone, it was mostly up to associative organizations, mainly linked to the republican ideology and the labor movement, to support the education of the most disadvantaged, and, among them, the children of proletarians.⁷ The purpose of *Escola-Oficina N.º 1* was not only to teach children to read, write and count, but also to endow them with a profession that would potentially enable them to break the cycle of poverty in which they lived. In the beginning, children were only taught woodworking, but as the curriculum was updated, new courses were added, such as upholstering, carving and decorating. Alternatively, children were given the option to continue their studies in secondary education.

What started as a vocational school in 1905, soon changed into a libertarian education model. When curriculum actualizations took

⁵ Oliveira-Marques AH. *Dicionário de Maçonaria Portuguesa* – Vol. II. Lisboa: Editorial Delta; 1986: 511–512, see letter E – Escola-Oficina N.º 1.

⁶ *Ibid*: 1370, see letter S – Sociedades, Sociedade Promotora de Creches. For more information, also see Grainha MB. *História da Franco-Maçonaria em Portugal (1733–1912)*. 5th ed. Lisboa: Nova Vega; 2011: 27.

⁷ See: Candeias A. As escolas operárias portuguesas do primeiro quarto do século XX. *Análise Psicológica*. 1987; 3 (V): 327–362; Candeias A. Inovação, Ruptura e Continuidade na 1ª República: um balanço crítico sobre a educação. *Revista da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas*. 18. Lisboa: Edições Colibri; 2006: 211–231.



Fig. 4. A specimen of an animal skeleton.

place, between 1907 and 1909, school programs were not only altered, but also the way in which they were taught.⁸ The new model of education was pupil-centered, with children's curiosity being stimulated through appealing practical examples of everyday life. There were no grandstands from which teachers could rule the classes: teachers and students were both literally and symbolically at the same level. Classes were small, and tutors fostered a pedagogical environment that promoted and valued children's opinions without attracting any type of embarrassment. Boys and girls coexisted in the same classes; children organized themselves into associations with effective management functions; their performance was evaluated by works done along the school year and not by written exams; and corporal punishment was abolished.⁹ This model was based on the Modern School of Francisco Ferrer (1859–1909), a Catalan anarchist, libertarian pedagogue, and also a freemason. Three teachers, influenced by the philosophy and ideals of other anarchists and libertarians such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), Piotr Kropotkin (1842–1921) or Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), stood out as promoters of this libertarian educational model and as authors of the school

curriculum: Adolfo Lima (1874–1943), his brother António Lima, and Luís da Mata.¹⁰

However, the school existed in a divided ideological environment; specifically between the direction of the board, and the views of the teachers. The former was constituted by republicans who intended to train good future workers, while the latter were mainly anarcho-syndicalists and libertarians who wanted to form “integral human beings” and avoid “the division between servants and lords; domesticators and domesticated”.¹¹ Although there persisted an ongoing tension between these two factions, they managed to work together, probably because all of them were brethren – female teachers included, some of whom were also important feminists, such as Aurora de Macedo and Deolinda Lopes Vieira (1888–1993).¹² This cooperation showed to be advantageous to the school in a period of political unrest. Since, following the regime of 1908, within two years the Republican regime was established.

As the teachers and the board shared the same ideology, the school was able to get political support from the republican government; at the same time, the government used this school, and others like it, as tools of propaganda in order to disseminate and popularise its educational plan. An illustrative example of this synergy can be found in school celebrations, which involved the presence of politicians and members of other associations linked to the republican ideology, such as *Liga contra o Analfabetismo* (Union against Illiteracy) or *Liga Nacional de Instrução* (Union for National Education). As a result of this situation, a significant change took place in *Escola-Oficina*: the number of students increased, many of them coming from rich families who could afford to pay for the classes.¹³

The golden age of the school lasted up until the 1920s; after that time it moved into a period of decline due to several factors. Adolfo Lima, and soon after Luís da Mata, left the school; financial problems emerged; and the increase in the number of students had led to too many children per room, making it difficult to continue to implement the libertarian model of teaching.¹⁴ Besides, the economic situation of Portugal in the years that followed the First World War was severe, and the First Republic ended with a military *coup d'état* that paved the way to the establishment of a totalitarian regime, the *Estado Novo*. At an international level, labor movements were persecuted, and anarchists were not prepared to act clandestinely for a long period, weakening the networks with Portuguese anarcho-syndicalist teachers. Collectively, these contextual circumstances were no longer favorable to the implementation of the libertarian model of learning in education from the 1930s onwards.¹⁵

The zoological collection in context

Designed to teach children from primary school to high-school, the curriculum of *Escola-Oficina N.º 1* varied over the years. For instance, from 1904 to 1907, in tune with the republican ideology, children attended classes in Portuguese language, sculpture and

⁸ Candeias A. A Escola Oficina N.º 1 de Lisboa 1905–1930: mudar a escola para mudar o mundo. *Análise Psicológica*. 1993; 4 (XI): 447–463.

⁹ The association *A Solidária* was created and managed by the children to raise money for the meals of poor colleagues, to support them when in need, and for the organization of cultural events such as plays, field trips or summer camps; all of this under the teachers' supervision but without their interference.

¹⁰ Adolfo Lima taught sociology, while António Lima taught sciences and was responsible both for the laboratorial classes and for the field trips. Luís da Mata was son of the founder of the School, Luís Filipe da Mata.

¹¹ Candeias A. *Educar de outra forma: a Escola-Oficina n.º 1 de Lisboa, 1905–1930*. Vols. 1 & 2. PhD Thesis in Sciences of Education: specialization in History of Education. Porto: Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, University of Porto. 1992: III–IV. Also see: Luís da Mata's speech in August 6th 1933, quoted by Candeias A 1992: 248.

¹² Portuguese freemasonic Order at that period, *Grande Oriente Lusitano Unido*, recognized and cooperated with female freemasonry.

¹³ Candeias A 1992: 139–141.

¹⁴ *Ibid*: 162–166 and 388–398.

¹⁵ *Ibid*: 477–482. The *Escola-Oficina*, however, was open until 1987.

modeling, drawing and carpentry. However, in 1907, the curriculum shifted towards the libertarian model, and as a result, was divided into General Education and Professional Education. In the former, there were classes like traditional gymnastics, Portuguese language, French language, rudimentary practical notions of arithmetic, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology and hygiene, and sociology. Professional Education classes, on the other hand, introduced pupils to drawing, the construction of furniture and hoist work. With the reform of 1912, further classes were added to the curriculum, such as Swedish gymnastics, handwork and music, and in the technical activities, classes in woodturning and sculptor-plastering.¹⁶

It was in the class of practical notions of natural sciences – which was mainly devoted to zoology – that the collection under investigation was used. Taught by António Lima, the school's science teacher, the class took place in the laboratory, and included lectures, work in the garden and field trips. Since one of the educational priorities of the school was to put students in contact with the materials of everyday life – with the view that this would enable students to better understand reality – field trips were an opportunity not only to visit new places, but also to acquire specimens for the school collection, such as shells, stones, and fossils. In addition, whatever was cultivated in the school garden was analyzed in the laboratory, and animals were routinely dissected, taxidermied and studied. Many of the items that became part of the collection were offered by teachers or supporters of the school, while others were acquired from abroad, as indicated by specimen labels.

Returning to the present day, upon the completion of my study of forgotten objects stored at *Escola-Oficina N° 1*, one final question arose: what should be done with the collection? The collection was

first assembled as a teaching resource but it had not been used as such for a long time nor were there any expectations that it would be again. Therefore, I decided to contact the *Museu Nacional de História Natural e da Ciência* (National Museum of Natural History and Science) so to confirm my hint about the historical significance of the collection, which actually happened. It was also decided that the *Museu* would become custodian to the collection since *Escola-Oficina N° 1* did not have the material and human resources that would guarantee its protection.

The interest of the *Museu* for the scientific heritage existing in Portuguese teaching institutions is not new; in fact, this institution has already done the same with other similar collections. Thus, by handling the collection to the *Museu*, it will not only be preserved but will also allow researchers to study it.¹⁷ Only then will the lost collection of *Escola-Oficina N° 1* be truly found.

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¹⁶ About the changes in the curricula, see: *Plano de estudos (1904–1907)*, quoted in Candeias A 1992: 178; *Plano de estudos (1907–1912)*, in Candeias A 1992: 180–191; *Plano de estudos (1912)*, in Candeias A 1992: 197–199. To know more about the curricula and their changes, see: Candeias A. *A Escola Oficina N° 1: esboço de análise de uma escola alternativa. Análise Psicológica*. 1987; 3 (V): 387–412; Barreira LC. *A educação escolar nas páginas do Boletim da Escola Oficina N° 1 de Lisboa: o ensino das ciências. Revista Tempo e Espaços em Educação*. 2010; 4: 73–84; Mogarro MJ. *O modelo pedagógico da Escola Oficina N° 1: corpo, regras e práticas no quotidiano de uma instituição alternativa. Caderno Cedex, Campinas*. 2018; 38 (104): 63–74.

¹⁷ In the last couple of years, historians of science and technology have developed a considerable number of studies that combine traditionally privileged documental sources with the study of scientific objects. See, for example: Anderson RGW, Bennett JA, Ryan WF (ed.). *Essays on Historical Scientific Instruments*. Aldershot, UK: Variorum; 1993; Daston L (ed.). *Biographies of Scientific Objects*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; 2000; Bertomeu Sanchez JR, Belmar AG (eds.). *Abriendo las Cajas Negras: Los Instrumentos Científicos de la Universidad de Valencia*. Valencia: PUV; 2002.