

Institutionalization of entomology in Brazil: from the 1920s to the foundation of Brazilian Society of Entomology

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Agricultural entomology played a relevant role within a context characterized by ideological change relative to science and transformations in the social and economic structure of Brazil once agriculture began to provide support to industry. The development of agricultural entomology led to the establishment of significant scientific institutions, among them Biological Institute of São Paulo (IB) in 1927, Brazilian Zoological Club (CZB) in 1932, which might be considered as the first zoological society in the country, and Brazilian Society of Entomology (SBE) in 1937.

The foundation of SBE is one of the milestones of the process of institutionalization of Brazilian entomology. The decision to create it was made by IB scientists who had actively participated in the Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) Commission of 1924. The goal of the Commission was to combat infestation based on extensive research on agricultural entomology aiming to define the morphology, biology and environmental interactions of insects. Those studies resulted in two main control actions: use of insecticides to decontaminate coffee and a communication campaign targeting society at large.

The aim of the present study was to analyze how the work performed by the CBB Commission and the development of applied entomology led to changes in the institutions relating to this science from 1924 to 1939, including the foundation of SBE. I expect that this analysis will contribute to stimulate reflections on the factors that inhibited or promoted the development of science in Brazil.

Official records, including Agriculture Secretary reports and journal *Boletim da Agricultura*, available at Public Archives of the State of São Paulo, were the sources used to identify several patterns of structural and administrative transformations. Such developments exerted relevant impact on the teaching of and research on agricultural entomology in São Paulo, as records corresponding to IB, Agriculture Institute of Campinas (IAC) and Luiz de Queiroz Superior School of Agriculture (ESALQ) show. Scientific articles published in *Boletim Biológico* (Zoological Museum of São Paulo) jointly edited by SBE and CZB in 1938-39 reveal some aspects of the conservationist ethos that inspired the contemporary zoologists and entomologists. The analyzed documents allowed identifying an institutional chain that led to the foundation of SBE, its

successive links being the work performed by the CBB Commission, creation of *Boletim Biológico*, and foundation of IB and CZB, which institutions were aligned to the international nature protection movement. No documents relating to CZB for the period after 1939 could be located, while archival work allows inferring that SBE remained without any official divulgation means until the creation of *Revista Brasileira de Entomologia* in 1954.

Directly related with coffee monoculture, the earliest research on agriculture entomology in São Paulo was based on the notion of natural balance. The work performed by the 1924 Commission precisely sought to integrate that notion with the latest scientific methods. The Commission's pioneer initiative to divulgate prophylactic actions engaged society at large in order to satisfy socioeconomic demands and raise science to the level of a fundamental value among the overall population. Precisely by demonstrating its effectiveness to satisfy social and economic needs that entomology did not only contribute to solve particular problems, but also serve to legitimate one further demand: the need to protect nature for scientific interests.

Starting with the CBB Commission, the ideological representation of the human-nature relationship contributed to determine the choice of definite scientific practices and their divulgation. By divulgating original research on entomology and promoting the integration of various social and scientific actors, SBE played a relevant role in the shaping of the aforementioned ideology. Therefore, one might conclude that the development of agricultural entomology in Brazil was associated with the project to reunite science, economic development and nature conservation.

Keywords

History of Science; Entomology; Institutionalization; Coffee Berry Borer; Nature protection; Brazilian Society of Entomology