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**ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ
МЕЖДУ КИТАЕМ И БРАЗИЛИЕЙ:
ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ГУМАНИТАРНЫХ НАУК
И ИСКУССТВ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ
В БРАЗИЛЬСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ.**

В 2024 году Бразилия и Китай отпраздновали 50-летие дипломатических отношений. Обе страны являются членами БРИКС и имеют значительные связи, не только экономические, но и образовательные, которые расширяются в течение последних 20 лет. Цель этой статьи — подчеркнуть важность образовательных обменов между Бразилией и Китаем, особенно в области гуманитарных наук и искусств, подчеркивая важность взаимных исторических и культурных знаний.

Ключевые слова: отношения Бразилия-Китай, БРИКС, образовательные обмены Бразилия-Китай.

CHINA-BRAZIL EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS: THE PERSPECTIVES OF HUMANITIES AND ARTS IN RESEARCH AT BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITIES

In 2024, Brazil and China celebrated the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. As members of BRICS, the two countries enjoy significant ties that extend beyond economics to include educational collaborations, which have been expanding over the last 20 years. This article aims to highlight the importance of educational exchanges between Brazil and China, particularly in the fields of humanities and the arts. It emphasizes the need for mutual understanding of each country's historical and cultural context.

Keywords: Brazil-China relations, BRICS, educational exchanges between Brazil and China.

Introduction

In 2024, Brazil and China celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations, an event marked by various Sino-Brazilian institutions. These relations began in 1974 and became significantly closer in 1984 during President João Figueiredo's visit to the People's Republic of China. Currently, both countries are members of BRICS, and since 2009, China has been Brazil's largest trading partner.

Numerous bilateral agreements focus on business, particularly in technology, infrastructure, medicine, and industrial sectors. However, it is essential to highlight the increasing interest in educational and cultural exchanges between Brazil and China.

Historically, these ties date back even further, beginning in the 1810s when the Brazilian Empire, under Prince Regent D. João VI, requested Chinese workers from Macau to cultivate tea in Rio de Janeiro's Botanical Garden. This tea plantation effort was unsuccessful, and the migration flow ceased until it resumed in the 1950s, coinciding with significant political transformations in China following the civil war that ended in 1949 with the communist victory and the establishment of the People's Republic under Mao Zedong.

In the 1980s and 1990s, economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping led to a new wave of Chinese immigration to Brazil, with many arriving to invest in businesses. In the early 2000s, migration to Brazil became closely linked to employment in Chinese companies established in the country and exchange programs for students attending Brazilian universities. Current data from Ibrachina (Brazil-China Socio-Cultural Institute) indicates that approximately 300,000 Chinese immigrants live in Brazil, with most residing in São Paulo.

The commercial aspects are not the only markers of the Chinese presence in Brazil. The rich culture of this fascinating Asian country has captured the interest of Brazilians in various fields, from cuisine and martial arts to the Chinese language and films, as well as academic studies. As Sino-Brazilian relations deepen, they have become subjects of scholarly inquiry in Brazilian universities across diverse academic disciplines.

This article aims to provide an overview of research conducted in Brazilian universities within the humanities and arts, focusing on issues related to China. My academic background, which includes a bachelor's degree in history, a master's degree in cinema, and current doctoral research in art history, informs this choice.

From the outset of my academic journey, I have dedicated myself to studying the Chinese language and researching topics such as Chinese immigration to Brazil, portrayals of female characters in Maoist-era films, and the historical connections between Soviet and Chinese cinema.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part presents a brief overview of the study of the Chinese language in Brazil, which is a fundamental element in the countries' educational interactions. The second part provides a historical overview of Sino-Brazilian educational exchanges. Finally, the third part outlines the research activities at Brazilian universities that focus on China within the humanities and arts.

Educational exchange through the promotion of Chinese language and culture

Many young people consider Chinese "the language of the future," and this sentiment is echoed in Brazil. Interest in learning the language has surged in the largest country in Latin America, driven by numerous economic and educational partnerships with China. Moreover, studying Chinese is essential for understanding this rich and ancient culture, facilitating communication in businesses, traveling to China, and engaging in academic research.

The University of São Paulo offers Brazil's only Chinese language course at the higher education level, taught in the Department of Oriental Letters. Founded in 1968 by Professor Sun Chia Chin, this course includes classes in the Chinese language, classical and modern literature, culture, art, and the history of Chinese thought.

Additionally, the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Humanities at the University of São Paulo has established partnerships with nine Chinese universities, including Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Hubei University, Nankai University, Shanghai International Studies University, Sichuan International Studies University, Sun Yat-Sen University, Macau University, Xi'an International Studies University, and Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages.

The Department of Oriental Languages also has master's and PhD programs focused on translation that began in 2019. It is also important to mention the establishment and expansion of the Confucius Institute, which is associated with several major public universities in Brazil. The Confucius Institute is a non-profit educational institution in China dedicated to promoting the teaching of the Chinese language and culture. The institute was established in China in 2004 through the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (Hanban), of the Chinese Ministry of Education. The first unit was founded in Brazil in 2008, as a result of the association between the University of Hubei and the São Paulo State University (Unesp). Currently, it has 13 units in the state of São Paulo, along with units in the city of São Luís (associated with the Federal University of Maranhão) and Manaus (associated with the Federal University of Amazonas).

The Confucius Institute has expanded in Brazil due to the high quality of teaching and the strong interest among Brazilians in learning the Chinese language. It has established a presence in Campinas, a large city in São Paulo state, in association with the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). Additionally, the institute has partnered with universities in seven other Brazilian states, including:

- Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)
- University of Brasília (UnB)
- Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG)
- Pontifical Catholic University (PUC-Rio)
- State University of Pará (UEPA)
- University of Pernambuco
- Federal University of Ceará (UFC)

Beyond language instruction, the Confucius Institute's branches in Brazil also promote Chinese culture through various events. They offer specialized courses on topics such as the business environment in China and publish books, magazines, blogs, podcasts, and other online materials to stimulate and enhance student interest.

Educational agreements between China and Brazil: a brief history

The diplomatic visit to China by João Figueiredo, president of the Federative Republic of Brazil, in 1984 marked a significant moment in the strengthening of Sino-Brazilian relations. This landmark visit was the first by a Brazilian president to China and was initiated at the invitation of Chinese president Li Xiannian. During this visit, bilateral agreements were signed, focusing on enhancing cooperation in the economy and scientific production between the two nations, which laid the groundwork for further collaboration in these fields.

The official document detailing the visit of the Brazilian government delegation, titled "Visit of President João Figueiredo to the People's Republic of China," includes the "Protocol between the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development and the State Commission for Science and Technology regarding Scientific and Technological Cooperation." This protocol complements the "Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government of the People's Republic of China," which was signed in 1982 in Beijing.

In the realm of trade and economic agreements, both countries have committed to "promote scientific and technological cooperation based on the principles of equality, reciprocity, and mutual benefit." [5, p. 29]. The initial scientific agreement covers various areas of knowledge, including agriculture, livestock and fish farming, forestry, health, electrical energy, microelectronics, informatics, space, and standardization.

The first scientific exchange agreement between Brazil and the People's Republic of China focused on both pure and applied sciences. It proposed a range of activities, including conferences, courses, seminars, and symposia. Additionally, it aimed to facilitate the exchange of specialists, researchers, and professors, as well as the execution of joint research projects and other forms of cooperation. [5, p. 30].

In 1985, the two countries signed their first educational cooperation agreement. According to F. Zhang and R. Pang (2023) in their article "China-Brazil Educational Cooperation: Current Situation, Challenges, and Perspectives," this agreement evolved over the following decades, showcasing varied forms and new

characteristics. Among these developments, the authors noted a broadening of content in educational cooperation, including an expansion into the area of humanities and the emergence of online educational collaborations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Zhang and Pang highlight a notable change in the participants involved in educational collaborations between Brazil and China. Initially, these exchanges were facilitated by government agencies and educational institutions from both countries. However, starting in the 2000s, private initiatives began to play a significant role, particularly through large Brazilian and Chinese companies. Notable examples include partnerships involving Huawei, Intel, and Vale from 2009 to 2017.

The authors further emphasize a new aspect of Brazil-China educational collaborations: the multilateral and subnational approach. They cite initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-CELAC Forum, the Forum for Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (Macau), and COSBAN. [6, p. 145]. These initiatives involve the participation of provincial, state, and municipal governments, aiming to enhance resources in education and, consequently, promote more bilateral agreements between Brazilian and Chinese educational institutions.

China as an object of academic study in Brazilian universities

The study of China in Brazilian universities has gained momentum over the years. The increase in Sino-Brazilian educational agreements during the 1980s, paired with a diversification of approaches since 2000, has influenced research interests at major Brazilian universities. Humanities departments have focused on the interactions between Brazil and China from various perspectives, including historical, sociological, and cultural viewpoints, as well as in the fields of law, international relations, and the arts.

In the final section of this article, I will highlight the main laboratories and research groups in China associated with the most prestigious Brazilian universities in the fields of humanities and arts, specifically focusing on research related to Chinese cinema. My choice to emphasize cinema stems from my academic background and the significant scholarly contributions made at the University of São Paulo. This is where I conducted my research titled "Chinese Revolutionary Cinema and Ballet: The Representation of Female Characters in The Red Detachment of Women." I defended my dissertation in March 2022, under the guidance of Professor Cecília Antakly de Mello, a prominent and pioneering researcher of Chinese cinema in Brazil.

Research laboratories and working groups are typically interdisciplinary, fostering both individual and collaborative thematic research. They not only publish papers for their members but also invite contributions from the broader scientific community through journals. Additionally, these laboratories organize conferences, national and international symposia, courses, and lectures.

In the fields of humanities and arts, notable research laboratories focused on China at the University of São Paulo (USP) include the Laboratory for Interlocution with Asia (LIA) in the Department of Oriental Letters, the Laboratory for Asian Studies (LEA) in the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Humanities, and the Study Group on BRICS (Gebrics) at the Law School.

LIA brings together researchers from various fields, including linguistics, literature, history, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. It collaborates with scholars from other Chinese and Brazilian universities and includes two research groups focused on the literature and philosophy of Ancient China, as well as the Chinese immigration to Brazil. The LEA serves as a prominent laboratory for Asian studies, hosting several groups dedicated to the individual countries within BRICS. The laboratory also organizes significant national and international academic events and publishes various works.

At the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), two prominent entities are the Center for China Studies (CASS) and the Brazil-China Study Group. CASS was established in 2019 within the Sociology Department of Unicamp and involves significant contributions from prominent Brazilian and Chinese scholars. It has produced numerous publications in Chinese, Portuguese, and English, along with translations and various national and international events.

The Brazil-China Study Group, created in 2011, is associated with the Center for Advanced Studies (CEAv) at Unicamp. Its objectives include promoting the understanding of China's role in the contemporary world and fostering the expansion of Brazil-China relations, as well as strengthening ties between Unicamp and Chinese universities.

The Center for East Asian Studies (CEAO) at the Federal University of Minas Gerais was established in 2013 as a study group focused on China. In 2015, it expanded to include four additional thematic study centers dedicated to India, Latin America, Africa, and Europe. CEAO is part of the university's International Relations department, promotes interdisciplinary studies, and organizes events to share the research conducted by its members.

The Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) established the Institute of Asian Studies (IEASIA) in 2015. In 2021, it integrated this institute into the Center for Advanced Studies (CEA/UFPE), creating the Coordination of Asian Studies (CEASIA). This group is the largest center for the study of Asian countries, particularly China, in the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil. The group's activities encompass various topics, including:

- Japanese affairs
- Sino-African relations
- Technology and innovation
- Industrial policy and institutions
- Energy grids
- Food security and land acquisition
- East Timor and other Southeast Asian countries
- Chinese history
- Asian literature
- Korean studies

Additionally, CEASIA organizes academic events and publishes research on these subjects.

The Study Group on China (GECHINA) at the University of Brasília (UnB) and the Institute for China Studies (ICHIN) at the Federal University of Santa Catarina are significant research organizations located in the southern and central-eastern regions of Brazil. In the first two decades of the 2000s, major Brazilian universities began focusing on studies and research related to China, emphasizing the humanities and the arts. Research laboratories and study groups dedicated to this field can be found throughout all regions of Brazil, prioritizing interdisciplinary approaches and fostering collaboration among researchers from Brazil, other BRICS countries, and additional international partners.

Academic research focused on Chinese cinema

In the final section of this article, I want to emphasize the significance of Chinese cinema in fostering innovation in research at Brazilian universities within the humanities and arts. Chinese cinema originated in 1896, just a year after its debut in the West, and rapidly advanced both its industry and aesthetics during the first half of the twentieth century.

During the Maoist regime (1949-1976), Chinese cinema played a crucial political role in supporting the Chinese revolution. In the post-Mao era, the cinema of the People's Republic of China underwent a significant aesthetic transformation and introduced renowned directors such as Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou.

In the 1980s, Chinese cinema became a focus of academic study both in China and the West. The 1990s and 2000s saw the emergence of a new generation of directors, including Jia Zhangke, Zhang Yuan, Wang Xiaoshuai, and Lou Ye, who further revitalized the country's cinematic style. Their work highlighted a new and grand vision of China, characterized by rapid urbanization and economic growth.

In the context of Sino-Brazilian relations and the significant growth of the Chinese economy since the 1990s, Chinese cinema has increasingly attracted the interest of Brazilian researchers who explore various aspects of it. First, films — like other forms of art — reflect the historical, political, and cultural moments in which they are created. The historical richness of Chinese cinema has also caught the attention of Brazilian researchers, particularly as there has been a stronger focus on the history of cinema in Western countries.

In the academic landscape of Brazil, I would like to highlight the work of Cecilia Antakly de Mello, a professor at the School of Communication and Arts at the University of São Paulo. With an impressive international academic background, she has initiated a significant research movement within Brazilian academia.

Mello holds a Bachelor's degree in Law from the University of São Paulo, a Master's degree in Film and Television Production from the University of Bristol, and a Ph.D. in Film Studies from the University of London. Additionally, she has earned five postdoctoral degrees from universities in Brazil, China, England, and Taiwan.

She served as a FAPESP Young Researcher in the Art History department at the School of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences at the Federal University of São Paulo. There, she worked on the project "Intermediality, Aesthetics, and Politics in Chinese Cinema," focusing on the director Jia Zhangke, about whom she has conducted extensive academic research.

Cecilia Mello currently serves as the president of the International Relations Committee of ECA-USP (2023-2025) and is also the co-editor of the *Significação Audiovisual Culture Magazine*.

The professor conducts research on Chinese cinema, exploring various aspects such as its connections with literature, opera, and other artistic forms, highlighting its intermedial nature. In addition to this research, she teaches courses in Brazil and at international universities. Mello is also actively involved in discussions at Chinese film festivals held in Brazil and other countries. She has received both Brazilian and international academic awards, directs undergraduate and graduate research projects, and leads the Project Looking China film teams. This project takes place annually in China and includes film students primarily from the BRICS countries.

The initiatives outlined in this article, which involve both the Chinese and Brazilian governments as well as their universities, position Brazil as an intellectual and innovative leader. They promote educational interactions between Brazil and China across a wide range of knowledge areas. Expanding research in the humanities and arts is essential, as a deeper understanding of the history and cultural dynamics of both countries enhances opportunities for interaction and mutual collaboration.

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