

**OF REBELLIONS AND SEDITIONS:
POPULAR PROTEST, CITIZENSHIP AND STATE BUILDING
IN 19TH CENTURY BRAZIL**

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And, so as before, after so many other ill succeeded uprisings, the last one gathered all the elements of an outburst. And, without a doubt, it succumbed, as every soul understood how meaningless was all that turbulence; passions then restrained their ardor, silenced their demands, dissipated their threatens; so, naturally, aversion and divorce were over, and under the promise of a conservative progress surfaced the time of transaction.

(Justiniano José da Rocha, «Ação, reação, transação»)

With those words, Justiniano José da Rocha, an imminent journalist and politician, recorded in his famous pamphlet, «Ação, reação, transação», originally published in 1855, the idea that the defeat of the Praieira Rebellion (in the province of Pernambuco) meant, for the Brazilian Empire, the end of the uprisings and political turbulences that rattled the country in the past decades¹.

¹ A recent analysis of the above mentioned pamphlet is provided by Tâmis Parron, in which he takes into account not only Rocha's inspirations, but also the social-political context and contemporary political parties disputes. (PARRON, 2012).

1849 AS A TURNING POINT: THE MYTH OF AN AGE OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY

More than three decades after, another important public figure publicized a somewhat similar opinion about the meaning of the defeat of the Praieira rebels. According to the Baron of Rio Branco, as he wrote in his biography of Emperor Pedro II (published in 1889), «since 1849 we have been able to see how the young Emperor, so skilled and brave, has maintained order all around the country». The Baron's words, back then Consul at Liverpool, comparing the situation before the above-mentioned rebellion to the one that followed its defeat, speak for themselves:

What an admirable transformation! One could say that a magic spell fell upon the country, dissipating the ignorance of the masses, the confusion, disorder, ruin; the consequences of anarchy and shameful slavery, replaced then by a higher and more accessible education, by the love of order, respect to the law, to Justice; by the taming of passions and political hate; by a more truthful comprehension of real freedom and of a representative government, of a more enlightened patriotism, of public wealth; of all progresses enabled by modern civilization; by the thrust and credit of Europe, in sum, by the redemption of the slaves, by the victory of the great principle of equality and human dignity².

The supposed tranquility and peacefulness of Brazil in the second half of the 19th century was accentuated then –and, actually, until not very long ago– by its comparison to Brazil's Regency period (1831-1840) and to the first decade of the Second Reign, years marked by a great number of rebellions³. Although that image

² Rio Branco published his *Vida de Dom Pedro II* under the pseudonym Benjamin Mosse, but the opinions he stated there are also present in other works he actually penned, such as the chapters he wrote for Émile Levasseur's *Grande Encyclopédie* and others published in *Le Brésil en 1889*, a catalogue of the universal exhibition of Paris, organized by the Baron of Santana Nery. (B. MOSSE s/d, 62, 80-81; É. LEVASSEUR, 1889; Santana NERY, 1889).

³ Brazil became independent in 1822, marking the commencement of the First Reign, and in October Pedro I was crowned Emperor of the country. In 1823, a Constitutional Assembly gathered to draft the country's Charta, but a few months after the Emperor dissolved it. In 1824 the Monarch gave Brazil its first Constitution, which was largely based on the project that was being discussed by the Assembly representatives, but it had some important alterations, such as a fourth Power (besides the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary branches), the Moderate Power, loosely based on Benjamin Constant's theories. It did not take long for the political opposition against Pedro I to grow stronger, until he was forced to abdicate the Throne, in 1831. As his son, the Heir, was only 5, a Regency of three members was appointed, being rapidly substituted by an elected permanent Regency, of also three members (as determined by the Constitution). In 1834 the Charta was amended, substituting the three members Regency, chosen by the representatives, for a one Regent government, a Regent chosen by all those citizens who were apt to vote for senators and House representatives. The first Regent stepped down in 1837, and a new one was elected. In 1840, a number of representatives and senators started to

of the country's history was not completely dissipated in the 20th century, it gained a new interpretation that tended to emphasize the end of the Praieira Rebellion as a defeat not only of the rebels themselves, but as a greater defeat of the population in general:

One can perceive, as the history of the Empire goes on, how democratic and popular unrests tend to lose intensity. As all other uprisings that followed the first Emperor's abdication to the Crown, the Praieira Rebellion was also tributary to an impulse that rose with the country's Independence. But, by then, a contrary movement was already in play. That impulse was vanishing and the reaction against it had become dominant. The revolutionary impetus of the masses tended to get crushed by the new forces of reaction, unable, as they were, to vanquish the solid blockade that has dawned on the country. The uprising caused by the Praieira movement, unable to fulfill its complete cycle, unable to foster its revolutionary sparkle among all rebellious segments of society, staying only on the surface, can be viewed precisely as the last breath of an intense popular movement that followed the Independence of the country [...]

And as it went, Brazil entered in the second half of the 19th century. The popular masses, kept in total control by laws and institutions, were forced into a support role, a situation that replaced its previous intense political action by a condition of passivity⁴.

Historian Caio Prado Jr. interpreted, as one may clearly see, the second half of the 19th century as a time of passivity, as far, at least, as the population was concerned. A time without demands of any kind, either social or political, when the elites were victorious on its attempts to subdue the population in general.

A few decades after Prado's work, historians' interpretations regarding the above-mentioned period were practically the same. Amaro Quintas, writing about the country's northeastern provinces from 1825 to 1850 (which included Pernambuco, Alagoas, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba and Ceará), in a book first published in 1964, also shared Prado's interpretation of the Praieira Rebellion as the last upheaval of the Second Reign. Although he pointed out the popular character of the rebellion, he also stated that after its defeat there followed a time of peace and prosperity⁵.

Quintas' interpretation of the Northeast was published in the same book of Wanderley Pinho's essay on the province of Bahia. Although writing about a differ-

advocate the crowning of Pedro II, who was by then only 14, and not 18 years old as the Constitution stipulated. They were victorious, and in October 1840 Pedro II was enthroned as Brazil's second Emperor. His reign lasted until 1889, when a Republican Coup forced him out of the government, putting an end to Brazil's Second Reign.

⁴ C. PRADO Jr., 1986, 86-88.

⁵ A. QUINTAS, 1985, 241.

ent region, Pinho had a somewhat similar interpretation. For him, after the Sabinada Rebellion (a movement that took place in the capital of the Province, the city of Salvador, in 1837) only a few riots did occur, but nothing comparable to the disorders that marked the preceding decades. Once more the historians' interpretation tended to stress the peace and tranquility of the last forty years of the Empire.

With its complete and cruel defeat ended the times of day-to-day riots and upheavals. Freed those who governed and the elites in general of a continuous and absorbent preoccupation with the public order, there came a time when social and political development could progress in an ambience of relative tranquility. One or another riot will disturb and reach the streets, as the 1858 riot called the «Carne sem osso»; but the permanent disorder, doppelganger of anarchy, had faded and stopped⁶.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENTS ON THE STUDY OF SLAVERY AND THE FREE POOR

From the 1980s on, the renovation of the studies on slavery and the development of new researches about Everyday History provided a basis not only to question the idea of the absolute power of slave masters, but also, as its natural counterpart, the preconceptions about paternalism as a necessary characteristic of Brazilian History. Following that line of inquiry came new studies that brought into questioning interpretations about the supposed «anomy» of the free and poor population, who were considered, until then, to be totally dependent of the landlords, a situation that rendered them incapable of reacting to domination in any organized manner. New researches brought to the limelight how slaves, freed people and the poor free population experienced life themselves: their own experiences regarding social and political movements, the development of bonds between them, and how they organized themselves to resist the will and power of their masters or the elite in general.

In the midst of this renovation, came to light some works that were devoted to the study of popular participation in social and political movements. In 1980, Hamilton de Mattos Monteiro published *Crise agrária e luta de classes: o nordeste brasileiro entre 1850 e 1890*, in which he devoted one chapter to the 1851-1852 movement called «Ronco da Abelha» and another to the 1874-1875 «Quebra-Quilos»⁷. Despite his obvious merits, especially his attempt to shed some light into those nearly forgotten episodes, the author eventually agreed with another

⁶ W. PINHO, 1985, 284.

⁷ H. MONTEIRO, 1980.

er crystallized interpretation of Brazilian History: the manipulation of the people by the elites, stripping them of their role as historical beings, thus incapable of fighting for their rights and expectations⁸.

From that period on, both Brazilian and foreign historians focused on studies that privileged the actions and interests of the disgruntled populations throughout the 19th century. Examples of this new approach are the PhD dissertations of Marcus Carvalho, Matthias Assunção and Hendrik Kraay, and the articles by Sandra Lauderdale Graham, Guillermo Palacios and both João José Reis and Marcia Gabriela Aguiar. Those studies, nonetheless, were quite inaccessible even to the Brazilian scholar community⁹.

In 2001, José Murilo de Carvalho published his book *Cidadania no Brasil: o longo caminho*¹⁰; a work that, although written to a more general public, relied heavily on the most recent scholarly production, also when it dealt with 19th century history. In Carvalho's book the Second Reign was no longer a time of undisturbed peace.

The popular movements during the Second Reign had a different nature. In both the First Reign and the Regency period they benefited from conflicts among the ruling class. After 1848, both liberal and conservative politicians and their acolytes put down their weapons and reached an agreement possible only by the alternation of parties in the government, a politic promoted by the Moderate Power. The State was then consolidated. Popular movements became, from then on, the typical reaction of the population against reforms imposed by the government¹¹.

In all popular movements that occurred from the beginning of the Second Reign on, one can see how, despite not participating in official politics, despite not voting, or even in spite of not understanding fully the meaning of the ballots, the populations had some notion of what were the rights of a citizen and the duties of the State. Those citizens accepted the State as long as it didn't violate a silent pact of non-interference in their private lives, of respect toward their values, especially religious ones [...]. They were, in fact, movements of reaction against something or someone, they weren't movements marked by new propositions. The people reacted against governmental laws and regulations that aimed to rationalize and secularize the State. But in those rebels one could see a kind of blueprint of citizenship, even if only in reverse¹².

⁸ Gonçalves de Magalhães, in his account of the Balaiada Rebellion, published in 1848, already stated that the elites were exploiting and beguiling the common people. (G. MAGALHÃES, 1989).

⁹ M. CARVALHO, 1989; M. ASSUNÇÃO, 1993; H. KRAAY, 1995; S. L. GRAHAM, 1980; G. PALACIOS, 1989; J. J. REIS and M. G. AGUIAR, 1996; M. D. DANTAS, 2006.

¹⁰ In that book Carvalho addressed some questions he had already discussed in previous works, for example J. M. CARVALHO, 1996.

¹¹ J. M. CARVALHO, 2003, 70.

¹² Idem, 75.

Although the author, by one side, stressed the existence of popular movements along the Second Reign, on the other, he sustained that those were merely reactive ones, situations in which the population rose and bore arms to protest against the government's modernizing acts. Thus, by being only expressions of reaction, without effective propositions –movements aimed to stalemate progress, harvested, as they were, by the defense of timeless or even old-fashioned practices–, they couldn't actually characterize an effective political participation, only possible to those who experience real citizenship. An experience, as far as the poor free and freed people were concerned, that only came to life in 1887 with the Abolitionist Movement¹³.

It isn't difficult to perceive that beneath his interpretation lays a somewhat dichotomic view opposing the movements that arose until 1848 and those that appeared after the defeat of the Praieira Rebellion. An approach that may be tributary simply to the book's aimed public¹⁴, or derived from a certain interpretation of Brazilian Imperial history. Nonetheless, the fact is that according to Carvalho's oeuvre, the above mentioned popular movements can be placed in a fairly conventional chronology, as if institutional or utterly political histories could account for and solely explain the peoples' drive to take part in this or that protest, were they against central or provincial governments, or contrary to specific laws and regulations.

That said, what I intend in this paper is to discuss, even if briefly, the validity of rather official chronologies –timelines that are based on events directly connected to the Empire's official politics– to explain popular participation in the several movements that shook Brazilian society along the 19th century and that were crucial to their participants understanding of themselves as beholders of rights and political agents along the process of the Brazilian State building. In order to do so, I will rely heavily on the chapters published in the book *Revolutas, motins, revoluções: homens livres pobres e libertos no Brasil do século XIX*, and especially on the remarks I made in the Epilogue. To embrace such an approach

¹³ As examples of popular movements in which one may see that kind of blueprint citizenship, the author quotes the already mentioned «Ronco da Abelha» and «Quebra-quilos», and also the 1880 «Motim do Vintém». On his list of rebellions that rattled the country in the first half of the 19th century, Carvalho also includes the 1835 Malês Insurrection, whose participants were essentially slaves and freed Africans; J. M. CARVALHO 2003, 68-70. Considering, though, the specificities of a slave's juridical condition, I do not deem possible or fruitful to analyze together slave insurrections and movements that relied heavily on free and freed people. Furthermore, there are a great number of deeply insightful studies about slavery and slave insurrections; a fundamental oeuvre is João José Reis' *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil*; (J. J. REIS, 2003).

¹⁴ Clearly not a work written to the scholar community, a feature that deserves ones applause, considering the distance that seems to divide repeatedly such readers nowadays, alienating constantly the general public from the researches conducted in the universities.

means that one must necessarily leave in the foreground what the Imperial elites considered to be citizenship, or else, what they perceived as legitimate participation in a constitutional representative monarchical government¹⁵.

POPULAR PROTESTS AGAINST GOVERNMENTAL RULINGS AND ACTIONS

On 1851-1852, a movement that became known as «Ronco da Abelha», or «Guerra dos Marimbondos», took by surprise the elites of five different provinces, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Alagoas, Sergipe and Ceará. Those who took part in it were protesting against two decrees, one that stipulated a state controlled (or lay) registry of births and deaths, and another that provisioned for the country's first census. In order to make sure that those decrees would not be upheld, men and women tore official documents bearing the new laws, they occupied towns (preventing the decrees to be read out loud), and even wrote to the authorities, following, according to historian Maria Luiza de Oliveira, «the official instances of the State's beurocracy»¹⁶.

When they stormed into different towns, they used to free those who were held in jails, but only those who had not yet been sentenced. Besides that, they could take with them some of the authorities belongings, usually the official records of the Justice of the Peace and the boxes that contained ropes and paddles («so they wouldn't be registered as slaves, or treated as such»). As Oliveira points out, they only intended to prevent those decrees to be upheld. So, it is not surprising that one of the participants, answering to a Justice of the Peace, said, «we shall obey you, but we will not accept the law of enslavement». To the protesters the aim of the decrees was to «enslave those who lived in poverty». The new laws, according to them, blurred the differences between freedom and slavery; either by the threat of army enlistment or, more directly, by real enslavement

In 1874, legal determinations were, once more, the starting point of the people's discontent. This time, the upheaval was tributary to a combination of factors. The population of more than 78 towns, what amounted to thousands of people, protested against the new metric system, the «ground tax», and, laterally, the new recruitment law¹⁷.

Along the two months that lasted the movement, commonly referred as the «Quebra-quilos», the population stormed into towns and cities, protesting against the above-mentioned tax and shouting, «the ground belonged to the people, and

¹⁵ M. D. DANTAS, 2011a, 511-563.

¹⁶ M. L. OLIVEIRA, 2011, 391-427.

¹⁷ L. M. LIMA, 2011, 449-483.

thus they shouldn't be forced to pay for it». In one of these episodes, a protester declared that the «tribute official papers» should be destroyed. Thus, for them, to destroy the tribute papers, the debtors' lists or even the weight and measurements' kits were effective ways to prevent those decrees to be enforced; laws and regulations that were menacing their day-to-day life. After breaking into counties' archives in order to get hold of official documents, they usually burnt them in front of the public. Once they were over, they returned to their everyday activities, what meant, besides other things, «selling and buying according to old measurement and weighing practices».

Although, according to the authorities, those were situations of the «utmost anarchy», bore out of the «people's spirit of insubordination towards the authorities and the law», to the protesters their actions were only forms of resistance in face of illegitimate regulations. All they wanted was to resist and prevent the government's intent to enforce some specific rules. They weren't aiming at the authorities in general; they were only defending themselves against regulations that threatened their livelihood and rights.

Even if the Quebra-quilos' protesters were mainly concerned with the non-enforcement of both the new measurement and weighing law, and the «ground tax», they weren't at all at ease with new regulations concerning military enlistment. As historian Luciano Mendonça de Lima clearly shows, the new recruitment law contributed heavily to the populations' discontent regarding the government's latest rulings. To protesters, scattered along five different provinces, the law makers real intent was to «enslave the children of the people», regardless of the explanations then presented by the nation's representatives.

Considering that brief account of those two protests, one may inadvertently think that José Murilo de Carvalho's interpretation is actually accurate: that the population only protested against something or someone, reacting to laws and regulations in order to prevent the enforcement of governmental modernizing rulings.

In order to contradict that common impression, one has to analyze the history of another movement, a riot that happened six years after the end of the «Ronco da Abelha», and sixteen years before the outburst of the «Quebra-quilos». In 1858 the population of Salvador gathered in a protest against the provincial president. By doing so, they were siding with municipal counselors in defense of a regulation, recently approved by township authorities, regarding the control of the manioc flour's price that was sold within the city limits¹⁸.

In spite of the singular events that marked the movement's first protests, it rapidly turned into a general cry against the rising prices of staples in the city, as the populace shouted the movement's motto, «meat without bones, flour without lumps» (or, «carne sem osso, farinha sem caroço»).

¹⁸ J. J. REIS, 2001, 429-448.

The protesters not only hailed the «town's representatives and people, demanding the provincial presidents' resignation», but they also asked for the «enforcement of their citizens' rights that were not being upheld». The letters of one township representative echoed, then, the population's demands. As the documents show, he not only cared to explain to his constituents why he would not obey the orders of the provincial president –who demanded the township representatives to reject their latest regulation–, but he also claimed for more «assurance and enforcement of individual rights, as warranted by the political Constitution of the Empire». As pointed out by historian João Reis, «the rebelled people could then count on the township's protection, but, at the same time, they thought it was their duty to protect their representatives»¹⁹.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND STATE BUILDING: A CONCERN OF ALL CITIZENS

Bearing those examples in mind, one can easily perceive that if, on one side, the populace could rise against government laws and regulations, on the other, depending on the situation, they could also rebel in order to guaranty that some rule passed by their representatives would actually see the light of day. In that sense, one must remember the free and freed poor population response to the 1850 «Land Law»; a governmental ruling that was contested primarily by those with better financial meanings and obeyed by the lower strata of society.

Just for clarification, the law passed by the House and Senate²⁰ aimed at the distinction between private owned lands on those that belonged to the State. As praised by the Secretary of the Empire (who then occupied a similar position as that granted today to north-American Secretary of State), that law was a «powerful element in the path to civilization and wealth»²¹.

According to historian Marcia Motta, «many landlords were not used to following State's determinations regarding the limits and boundaries of their prop-

¹⁹ Idem.

²⁰ When referring to the «Câmara dos Deputados» and the «Senado» in Imperial Brazil, I chose to translate the later as «Senate» and the first as «House of Representatives». But one must bear in mind that the Imperial Senate was essentially different from its north-American 19th century counterpart, as the number of seats in the Higher Chamber was proportional to the population of each province. Besides that, although House and Senate are almost literal translations, the government in Imperial Brazil was a parliamentary one, as explained in another footnote; bearing, in that sense, some resemblance to the English system, even if only in what pertained to the relation between the cabinets and both Houses.

²¹ *Relatório apresentado á Assembleia Geral Legislativa [...] pelo Ministro e Secretario d'Estado dos Negócios do Império*, Visconde de Monte Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, Typographia Nacional, 1851, 26.

erties». And the new law would not change that, as they proceeded «as they had always done before, by disobeying any regulation that could eventually threaten their power». On the other side, free and freed people interpreted the law as a promise of a future legal access to grants of land²².

Motta came to that conclusion by analyzing the data concerning a region of provincial Rio de Janeiro. But a similar outcome was also found in a research about a sugar cane production area in the province of Bahia. If large landowners and sugar cane factory proprietors chose to either not register their lands, or to do so by providing the least amount of details possible, a large percentage of the locals, either poor free men and women or freed people, opted for the exact opposite action. They not only registered their lands, sometimes very tiny plots they had themselves occupied or inherited from their parents, but they also used to provide the vicar (the responsible authority, according to the law, for the land registry) with an array of details of their small grants. Their willingness to comply with the law meant only one thing, that the government's politic could eventually provide them with an official recognition of their land grants²³.

Thus, resistance to law enforcement was not an action restricted to poor men and women. Economical and political elites also had similar reactions during the Empire. Sometimes one could peacefully deter a law from being enforced just by pretending that it had never been approved; as occurred with the «Land Law» (as far as the elite was concerned), but also, one must recall, with the 1831 law that abolished the African slave trade. But dissatisfaction with legal diplomas were also at the core of some elite rebellions, as the 1824 Equator Confederacy and the Liberal Revolt that startled the peoples from São Paulo and Minas Gerais in 1842 –movements whose leaders were of provincial if not national importance²⁴. In the first case, as widely known to Brazilian scholars, the population from Pernambuco and nearby provinces took up arms against the enforcement of the 1824 Constitution given by the Emperor. Sixteen years after, the rebels from São Paulo and Minas Gerais targeted the «oppressive laws» passed in 1841 (the Reform of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the new law that regulated the State Council).

Considering that, the reactive or pro-active character of different movements does not seem really that important to the understanding of day-to-day experiences of citizenship. Ordinarily, it might seem strange to discuss the poor free and freed people struggle for Rights; especially if one considers that Brazil was, back then, a country with an astounding rate of illiteracy, where the right to vote was based on annual income, where social inequality was the rule, and, last but not least, where slavery was deeply routed and widely accepted. In order to consider that

²² M. M. MOTTA, 1998, 168-169, 175.

²³ M. D. DANTAS, 2007.

²⁴ D. BERNARDES, 2011b; E. HÖRNER, 2011.

possibility, if not of wide citizenship itself, but at least of the expectation of Rights, it is necessary to reappraise the validity of official political and institutional chronology to the understanding of the majority of the population's lives.

ONE MOVEMENT AFTER ANOTHER: THE RECURRENT EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL PROTEST

First of all, one must bear in mind that, space wise, many of the 19th century movements overlapped one another. Some provinces and even municipalities had to deal with a rebellion or upheaval almost every decade, others not so much. Protests, armed or not, started to pop up a couple of years after the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family, in 1808, becoming more intense after the Porto Revolution and during the war for Independence.

The 1817 Revolution, the 1820 Rebellion of the «Pedra do Rodeador», the 1824 Equator Confederacy, the 1832-1835 Cabano's War and the 1848-1849 Praieira Rebellion all took place in the same region, even if some affected wider areas than others²⁵. Besides that, when talking about movements in general it is necessary to bear in mind that they affected not only the place where the upheaval itself took place, but also adjacent areas where government forces gathered in order to organize their attacks. A good example is the area around the border of Pernambuco and Alagoas. There, royalists stationed the troops that would later attack the 1817 rebels and the 1824 confederates. In the 1830s, that same area was occupied by the resilient Cabanos who fought the Regency's army for more than three years. After the Imperial forces stormed into Recife (Pernambuco's capital), in 1849, Pedro Ivo, one of the leaders of the Praieira Rebellion, sought refuge exactly in that area, and from there fought bravely against Pedro II's government. One royalist general, when in pursuit of Pedro Ivo, wrote a letter to his superiors complaining that one of Ivo's soldiers, a former Cabano rebel, «had his head filled with new ideas forced upon him by the revolutionary landlords».

But the importance of Pernambuco and adjacent provinces, regarding movements that questioned the government's authority, was not restricted to the first half of the 19th century. On the contrary, afterwards those areas were still affected by protests and upheavals, for there the authorities were forced to face the 1851-1852 Ronco da Abelha and 1874-1875 Quebra-quilos seditions.

That kind of territorial overlapping was not restricted, though, to the above mentioned area. The same can be said regarding the province of Bahia, especially

²⁵ D. BERNARDES, 2011a; G. PALACIOS, 2011; D. BERNARDES, 2011b; M. CARVALHO, 2011; M. CARVALHO and B. CÂMARA, 2011.

its capital, the city of Salvador. The population of the former colonial capital endured a year of siege and battles during the war of Independence. Fifteen years later many of its inhabitants took up arms to join a rebellion that became known as the Sabinada. In 1857 and 1858 the government was forced to deal with the Ganhadores Strike and the Carne sem Osso, Farinha sem Caroço Riot²⁶. Just to mention some more widely known movements, because a significant number of other riots and protests affected not only the city itself but also its surroundings.

One can state then, that territorial overlap meant also overlapping experiences, a kind of father to son, or grandson, heritage. A trans-generational experience that was common to inhabitants of other parts of the Empire. That was the case of the Cabanagem Rebellion, that took place in the Pará province in the mid 1830s and the Balaiada Rebellion, a movement that forced the government to send troops to Maranhão in order to defeat, after more than two years, their so called enemies²⁷.

Considering the history of the province of Pará, one must not forget that it took the Navy's engagement to guarantee their elites' support to the new independent state. Not only that, but the 1824 Equator Confederacy also had its supporters up north. The confederates' defeat didn't mean, though, that the province was pacified, its elites kept fighting for years for the provincial political control. No wonder historian Matthias Assunção, in his study of Maranhão's Balaiada Rebellion, but whose remarks can also apply to its neighboring province Pará, states that the rebellions that took place in the 1830s must be understood «as a result of the 1820-1840 political experiences»²⁸.

The concept of political experience is thus essential to the understanding of popular participation in the multitude of movements that broke out along 19th century Brazil. Marcus Carvalho, in an article published in 2005, already stressed the importance of one particular aspect when dealing with Brazil's state building: the impact of elite factional warfare on the general population, were they free poor man and women, freed people or even slaves. To them, «being a part of such hostile and tense situations, arms in hand, could amount to life changing experience». Thus, according to the historian, by «bearing arms, whether to defend their landlords, masters or political chiefs, or under the orders of army or militia officials, in civil wars or battles against a foreign enemy, the men that came out of the 'populace' could learn a lot, especially considering the peculiar situation they were in». First of all, they learnt to bear arms, to attack or defend themselves with them, but not only that. The service they were rendering also taught them politics; something fundamental in a moment when everyone was speaking about «freedom, independence, the Rights of 'people', the Constitution. It is clear enough

²⁶ F. W. O. MORTON, 1974; H. KRAAY, 2011; J. J. REIS, 2011.

²⁷ L. PINHEIRO, 2011; M. ASSUNÇÃO, 2011.

²⁸ M. ASSUNÇÃO, 2011, 295-327.

that those terms were interpreted according to how each group involved envisioned the world»²⁹.

The author describes, e.g., the experience of freedman Agostinho José Pereira. When the 1817 Rebellion broke out he was living in Recife, in the same block of the Henrique's Battalion Headquarters. A battalion formed only of free and freed blacks that had a very important role in the rebellion. A couple of years passed and Agostinho joined the confederates, in 1824. After the movement's defeat, he enrolled in the army, being sent to different parts of the country. In 1839, when he was incarcerated in Rio de Janeiro, where he was then serving, he actually met Francisco Sabino Álvares da Rocha Vieira (one of the Sabinada's leader and whose name inspired how the rebellion became known). Less than a decade after, in 1846, he was back to Recife, where he was arrested by the police due to charges of leading a sectarian religious group contrary to the commandments of the Catholic Church.

But that is only part of the story. After serving all over the country, he came back to his native city and opened a school to teach blacks to read and write. «He was called 'Divine Master' by his followers, more than three hundred according to the authorities», to whom he preached about the freedom of the dark skinned people. His attorney was the famous liberal Borges da Fonseca, who, in 1848, not only took part in the Praieira Rebellion, but also became one of its leaders, especially among the people of Recife. As written by Carvalho, «after travelling the country and getting to know the leader of the Sabinada, he came back to teach the alphabet to the black people [of Recife], talking about freedom and Haiti»³⁰.

According to Carvalho, power struggles between the Brazilian elites, who aimed to control or influence provincial or even State's politics, fostered singular experiences to those who were then armed in order to fight for or against the different groups or factions seeking political control. And that happened all over the country. As they learned to fight, as they listened to proclamations endorsing the legitimacy of what they were supposed to be fighting for (mottos repeated over and over again by those who were in command), they not only learned to behave in battle but also to lead. But that was not all, that kind of experience was crucial to their ability of reinterpreting their social and political insertion, what meant, besides other things, considering rebellion a viable path to achieve their own goals.

Although we should not try to explain one movement as simply the cause or consequence of another, we must not, also, dismiss the experience of battle as something secondary to the understanding of the population's demands and their efforts to fight for their rights and to enforce them (even when that happened in

²⁹ M. CARVALHO, 2005, 882, 886, 897.

³⁰ M. CARVALHO, 2005, 900-904, 912.

a peaceful manner). The process of State building is actually at the core of the population's expertise and ability to protest; a process that was marked by loud and poignant remarks by the Brazilian elites (sometimes pro-government, sometimes against it) regarding their rights and the legitimacy of their demands. When speeches, as we have seen, were not enough, then came battle; and with battle came the necessity of rallying forces, what meant gathering and arming the poor free population, freed people and even slaves.

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS ON THEIR OWN TERMS: POPULAR DEMANDS AND EXPECTATIONS

When we shift our focus from the demands of the elite to the rebellious experience of the above-mentioned population, the usual political chronology, or the traditional historical milestones, is of little or no use. The fact that some movement occurred during the Regency period does not amount to much (interpretation wise), especially in terms of historical understanding. But to search for the population's reasons within political issues specifically related to the absence of the first Emperor and the elite disputes that arose from 1831 to 1840 actually tends to diminish our ability to understand a variety of problems and events connected to the protests and upheavals that marked the aftermath of Independence and the decades that followed it.

Even when considering the poorer part of the population, forced either to fight under somebody else's orders, or going into battle to defend their own interests, it is paramount to stress the fact that taking part in those movements meant experiencing, over and over again, the possibility and the reality of bearing arms and protesting for the enforcement of some right or some social or political change. As we've seen, it was not unlikely that a person took part in more than one of those episodes, but even when they only had the chance to protest or fight in one rebellion, we should not dismiss the importance of the knowledge they got out of it. Knowledge that could be passed on to family members, friends, acquaintances and even their progeny.

This different approach enables us to more properly recover the population's accumulated experience in protests and rebellions and, by doing so, to overcome some hindrances that marked several sociological or historical researches. Researches in which the authors attempted to place different movements in an evolution based timeline that started in the *Ancien Regime* and progressed towards the full implementation of a bourgeois society. Such studies tend to explain the above-mentioned movements and protests as historical rehearsals bound to anticipate a future bigger process that should necessarily achieve society's revolutionary transformation. And, as their participants were unable to achieve that goal, or

properly prepare the path for that final revolution, those movements were usually labeled as incomplete or inconsistent actions³¹.

A change of focus, possible only by bringing the popular participation to the front roll and eventually by placing it under a historical microscope, allows us to understand some of the so called contradictions (inside and amongst different movements), a necessary step in order to grasp more thoroughly the poor free and the freed peoples own experiences, expectations and decisions. That means understanding their protests, armed or not, as something other than actions motivated by the longing for a lost past or the undoing of new laws and social changes. As part of society and of the State building process, those men and women organized themselves and acted based on their own values but, at the same time, they did so by mobilizing new ideas, rights and forms of expression that had been surfacing since Independence, since the government was organized as a representative constitutional Monarchy.

Even if the so-called radicals that constituted the leadership of the Sabinada Rebellion advocated, amongst other things, «more autonomy for Bahia, within the Brazilian Empire», condemning the ruling of «aristocracy over society», and demanding «liberal reforms in the legal system» (what meant primarily legal equality for all free people); another group, that also played an important part during the outset of the protests, fought to revoke some recently passed laws that were meant to forward Brazilian society into the same perfect liberal order the lawmakers thought prevailed in the United States and Europe. In the 1830s, as historian Hendrik Kraay shows, army officials not only resented the lack of raises and promotions in the last decade, but also abominated the creation of the new National Guard. It was a hard blow from the Regency government, because together with the new Guard, were passed bills that diminished dramatically the number of army soldiers and officials and eradicated the long existing militias (official troops, from colonial era, that helped maintain order and fight foreign enemies)³².

As the militia ceased to exist, many of its officials were incorporated into the National Guard, but without holding their patents (and the pay that came with it), becoming then just another private. Thus, amongst those who rebelled in 1837 and fought against aristocratic government and for legal equality for all people (free and freed), there was a large group of old militia officials (from no longer existing troops divided according to race, or better, skin color) that, besides the above mentioned demands, also rallied for the reinstatement of the Militias as they were a few years back, during the First Reign. Although at first glance the whole set of demands may seem contradictory, they actually arose from the rebels own interests, being nothing more, nothing less, than a fight for their rights as citizens.

³¹ L. B. PINHEIRO, 2011.

³² H. KRAAY, 2011, 263-294.

One particular rebellion stands out when we consider seemingly contradictory popular motives and demands, the so-called Guerra dos Cabanos or Cabanada. The only movement, during the Empire, that really congregated the poor free, the freed, the natives and even slaves, all fighting for the return of former Emperor Pedro I to the Throne. The rebels' main goal might be the reason why a more traditional historiography never paid the movement half the attention devoted to other so called Regency rebellions.

Vicente Ferreira de Paula, the Cabanada's greatest leader, condemned the Regency –the government of the «jacubinos» that waged war against him and his followers– and proclaimed that the rebels had taken up arms to safeguard the Holy Catholic Church, former Emperor Pedro I and his Dynasty. In his proclamations, or whenever he wrote to his allies or his foes, he signed «General Commander of the Army of His Imperial Majesty Pedro I» or «Commander of All Backwoods».

Vicente Ferreira de Paula's followers, the «Brazilian hicks» as he called them, were, thus, fighting for the return of Pedro I. As historian Marcus J. M. de Carvalho brilliantly shows, that goal must not be taken for empty words devised only to hide some obscure intention. «His speech in favor of Pedro I exemplify the backwoodsmen and women interpretation of the provincial government's recent acts, and the war the Regency was waging against them». Defending the first emperor meant safeguarding their lands, their way of life, and eventually their own existence.

According to Carvalho, when, in 1835, Vicente de Paula tried to negotiate an amnesty for him and his followers, he was actually trying to ensure the government's compliance with the fact that the rebels had rights. A deal that, for him, presupposed both the license for those Brazilian hicks to keep their arms and the assurance that rebelled slaves would be granted their freedom. His demands clearly show that the Cabanos aimed to be part of society, but only «as free men, with land to farm, with communal access to the surrounding forests and legally able to bear arms»³³.

By the end of the 1830s, in the northern province of Maranhão, the leader of the Balaiada Rebellion, a supposedly illiterate cattle herder, made it even clearer that the population desired to have their rights recognized and upheld by the State. At the center of the protests was a new provincial law that established the nomination of prefects³⁴ for each town, a new authority that was to be chosen by the provincial

³³ M. CARVALHO, 2011, 167-200.

³⁴ Usually the word «prefeito» is translated into English as Mayor. But in this case, as the new authority was not elected and had different assignments as nowadays Brazilian mayors or 19th century north-American mayors, I gathered best to use prefect, the word North-Americans used, back then, to refer to French *préfets*, authorities whose duties and responsibilities resemble the best the Brazilian «prefeitos».

president and not by the local electorate as the Justices of the Peace or the municipal counselors. Historiography attributes the beginning of the conflict to an action of the above mentioned cattle herder, Raimundo Gomes. Gomes stormed the jail of the town of Manga to release his men who, while herding his cattle, had been imprisoned by the newly appointed prefect. Once in jail they were supposed to be sent away to serve the army (against their will, of course). No wonder, then, Gomes started rallying for the suspension of the law and the dismissal of all new prefects. These new authorities were a real symbol of oppression as they were actually enforcing upon all poor men the tribute of blood, as they then called forced army enlistment. Besides that, one must not forget how badly prisoners were treated in the local jails, and afterwards in the barracks. According to Gomes, by doing that the prefects were scandalously acting against the country's Constitution³⁵.

In his proclamations Raimundo Gomes made it clear that «all we wanted was a strong Constitution», a statement that implied they were fighting for their «rights as citizens». Brazilians should only obey imperial or provincial laws that were in accordance to the Constitution, what meant repealing the law that established the prefects, their deputies and commissioners. For historian Matthias Assunção, Gomes and his followers took up arms to assure that the old Justices of the Peace (who were chosen by ballot) were reinstated and to force the government to treat all citizens equally, what implied following the letter of the 1824 Constitution.

Seventeen authors, in their contributions to *Revoltas, motins, revoluções*, although focusing on different political and social movements, ably demonstrate that rebels, rioters and dissenters in general, whether bearing arms or peacefully protesting against some new law, all held their own minds regarding their existing or expected rights, for instance their right to legal equality. Sometimes those rights were at stake due to new governmental laws and decrees, others by its opposite, by the disrespect to local, provincial or even imperial bills.

THE ALLURE OF ORDER

In order to take that debate a step further, historian Ivan de Andrade Vellasco's research proves to be of great help. In his books, *As Seduções da Ordem* (or freely translating «The Allure of Order»), the author states that «although as limited as it might have been, the possibility of equality under the law», or else the upholding of ones rights, was neither absent, nor insignificant in 19th century Brazil. By studying criminal actions and access to justice in one of the country's

³⁵ M. ASSUNÇÃO, 2011, 295-327.

provinces (Minas Gerais), Vellasco was able to put into question some old perspectives regarding the Judiciary power. One of the State's branches, the Judiciary was not a foreign arena to the majority of the population, including the lower strata of society. In opposition to some consolidated interpretations regarding the subject, the author shows that one should not consider judicial bureaucracy, actions and personnel as just a legal façade built to oppress the population and serve the interests of local overlords³⁶.

According to Vellasco's studies about judicial criminal actions, the creation of the Justices of the Peace, in 1827, fostered an amazing increase on the number of actions in the courts, especially those that started from a complaint brought by the population itself, or better, the Brazilian poor free and freed men and women. To acknowledge that does not mean that one should disregard how some of those recently created authorities used to behave towards the population in their jurisdictions. As historiography has duly recorded, many of them were typical local overlords, as many complaints filed back in the late 1820s and 1830s clearly show. Although that might be true, it is paramount to also recognize that in many distant parishes and districts all over the country those locally elected lay magistrates were the first governmental authorities ever to exist, and that was not necessarily bad.

Thus, if there was a significant rise in criminal procedure since they were instated, that means that the population willingly chose to take their grievances to the courts, and no longer solve them privately. That choice must be necessarily understood as a positive recognition of the State's interference or action. But one must dig a little deeper and try to comprehend the variety of meanings embedded in that quest for the courts. As Vellasco demonstrates, by taking their grievances to the local judge they were not necessarily expecting the culprit to be penanced or to receive some kind of compensation for the other's wrongdoings; going into court meant publicizing an otherwise private conflict, meant sending a message to their opponents that they were willing to face them in front of the authorities and, thus, legitimizing publicly their own situation.

This process of recognizing and adhering to, at least, one of the State's branches was only possible due to the Imperial government's own necessity to be accepted and obeyed by its citizens. In order to achieve that, the State had to be perceived by the population as a «legitimate arena with reasonably neutral and universally accepted procedures», an undertaking only viable through an impersonal normative discourse that intended to be universal³⁷.

³⁶ I. VELLASCO, 2004, 21, 25.

³⁷ Vellasco compares the number of complaints the population brought to justice to the quantity of actions derived from the authorities' initiative, showing the clear predominance of the first. Usually those complaints referred to everyday conflicts and are a testimony to the people's greater access to the judicial system. (I. VELLASCO, 2004, 112, 169, 180).

The quest for the courts, and thus for the State, was anything but constant, it meant overcoming all kinds of obstacles. But by doing so, by choosing to face adversities that came from engaging in a new order that was «secretive due to the imperviousness of its rules and language», besides, no doubt, the burdens of socio-economical pressures they were liable to, the Brazilian free poor men and women demonstrated that they were clearly aware of how the new powers worked and could work for their own benefit. They were interpreting, on their own way, what was Justice and what they could or should expect from the ones responsible for its enforcement³⁸.

The «allure of order», or better, the population's understanding that the State's judiciary could be sometimes shaped into a mediation sphere in which they could take part (to their own advantage), impels us to go further, to consider the possibility that such an experience was not limited to that State branch. The process of Independence had jumpstarted, as far as the literate elite was concerned, a changing in attitudes and expectations regarding what should be a public administration, but the «allure of order» tends to demonstrate that those changes might have also affected, to some degree, society's bottom strata³⁹.

One must bear in mind that experiences and expectations raised along the process of State building were radically different according to ones place in society, being, no doubt, much more inclusive to those who were qualified to occupy positions in the Imperial State's new bureaucracy or were eligible to be voted for the different levels of the Legislative power. But when considering the new State's Constitution and laws it is also necessary to remember that many of those new positions and seats could be occupied by people who, until then, had been left out. The Justices of the Peace, for instance, had a much smaller jurisdiction than former colonial Captains and even former township counselors, a distinction that allowed the local gentry to be elected to the courts. But the establishment of those new authorities had an even larger impact in society, because according to the law all parish voters were able to participate in the ballots, what meant that each one who was legally apt to vote (and they were not few) had a saying in the process.

POLITICAL CITIZENSHIP IN 19TH CENTURY BRAZIL

To fully grasp the meaning of the Justice's of the Peace election, it is paramount to recall two features of 19th century Imperial society. First, one must understand the scope of political citizenship according to the 1824 Constitution. The Charta determined that elections for the House and Senate were to be held in two

³⁸ I. VELLASCO, 2004, 164-165.

³⁹ *Idem*, 22.

rounds, in the first one all «voters» could participate, but the second one was restricted to those who were «electors». Voters chose the electors, who would then ballot the Imperial representatives and senators.

All male citizens, free of freed, older than 25 (or 21 if married or with a bachelor degree), with an annual income of a hundred thousand «réis» were eligible to be voters. To be an elector one had not only to have a higher income, two hundred thousand «réis», but also had to have been born free (freedmen were then excluded from the second round).

Although that was valid for the election of senators, House representatives and, later on, for representatives to the Provincial Assemblies, that was not the case when the population had to vote for Justices of the Peace and municipal counselors. As determined by an 1828 law, all voters had the right to choose directly those they wanted to occupy a seat in the municipal council or the parish magistracy.

Even if there was a minimum income required for one to vote, historiography has shown that the amount established in the Constitution was low enough to allow a significant number of man, free and freed, to take part in the ballots (at least in the first round, when electors were chosen, and in the elections of municipal counselors and Justices of the Peace). Even when a law passed, in 1846, doubling the minimum income required for one to be a voter, the amount was still very low due to the inflation that struck the country the past two decades, remaining practically unaltered the large participation of free and freedman in the ballots⁴⁰.

But, when considering political citizenship in the Empire, another factor must be also taken into account. Voters, as stated above, had also to choose the electors who would then cast their votes for the House, Senate and provincial Assemblies. Recent studies have shown that the population was constantly called on to participate in one of the many elections that took place every year. Municipal counselors had to be elected every four year, Justices of the Peace had a mandate of one year (although the elections were held every four years, with four names being chosen, each to hold the seat for one year), and provincial assemblies' representatives had a two-year mandate. House representatives were supposed to hold a seat for four years, but, as a parliamentary State, whenever the Cabinet lost the thrust of the House, the Emperor was allowed to either fire the ministers or dismiss the representatives and call for new elections. A seat in the Senate was for life, what meant that there were no regular elections for the higher chamber, but whenever a senator died or retired his constituents were called to choose his successor.

⁴⁰ M. O. DIAS, 1998, 68. José Murilo de Carvalho made an interesting comparison between Brazilian voters and electors and the percentage of citizens, from the United States and Europe, who were qualified to participate in the ballots. Brazil was not far bellow, rather the opposite. (J. M. CARVALHO, 2003).

Scholar Neila Nunes, in her research about elections in a region of the Rio de Janeiro province (the town of Campos de Goytacazes), duly demonstrates that in a period of 29 years (from 1870 to 1889) citizens had been called to vote almost every year. Actually, there weren't any elections only in three of those 29 years. But not only that, sometimes there was more than one election per year. For instance, in 1872 voters casted their ballots three different times, one for town counselors, another for Justices of the Peace and a third one to choose the electors. Those electors, that same year, not only voted for House and provincial Assembly representatives, but were also called twice to choose two new senators for the Rio de Janeiro province⁴¹.

Although astounding, that does not sum up the electoral experience of voters in the Empire. Every time an election should occur, regardless of what was at stake (either a seat in the Municipal Council or in the Senate), all voters were called to appear before an electoral commission to prove they had the necessary requirements to participate in the ballots (a process called the «voters qualification»). Thus, according to Neila Nunes, considering it all, one must acknowledge «electoral events were a constant experience for Brazilian citizens along the Empire»⁴².

No doubt, elections in Imperial Brazil suffered from the same problems that other countries with representative governments had. There were frequent accusations regarding tampering, frauds and all kinds of illegal interferences. Even though, one must not disregard the importance that choosing their representatives or magistrates had for the population allowed voting.

One specific riot illustrates perfectly that point, the already mentioned 1858 «Motim da carne sem osso, farinha sem caroço». It all started when Salvador's municipal counselors passed a bill to ensure the population's right to buy staples for a fair price, something that was not in accordance with the provincial president's ideas, whom, in turn, not only illegally suspended the bill but also had some of the counselors arrested. Their constituents then felt they had to stand for the counselors they had elected, defending them from the wrongdoings of the provincial president, what ultimately led them to start the riot.

⁴¹ The number of elections can be explained by a number of circumstances. Many municipalities or electoral districts had more than one election a year. Besides all that was mentioned above, there is another feature that also deserves some attention. Whenever citizens had to choose representatives for the House, the Provincial Assemblies or the Municipal Councils they only voted for those who would actually occupy a seat. So, whenever one of them was incapable to take the seat, was appointed to a higher position, got seriously ill, died or was forced to resign his post, a special ballot took place just for the election of the one man who would replace him. (N. NUNES, 2003, 314-316).

⁴² N. NUNES, 2003, 316.

As historian João José Reis ably demonstrates, not only representatives felt they had a duty toward their constituents, but also the other way around. That riot is even more interesting if one considers who were the Municipal Counselor's voters. Salvador, in 1858, had a population of 90 thousand inhabitants at most, including women, children and slaves, and almost 30% of the total population had voted in the last election for the Municipal Council. That amounts then to almost all free or freed male inhabitants over 25 (or 21 if married)⁴³.

Based on original sources from the 19th century, recent studies show that menial jobs, as coachmen, house servants, cooks, gardeners and small croppers⁴⁴, granted annual incomes of 200 to 400 thousand *réis*. An amount that not only qualified them as voters, but also electors⁴⁵. In her study of the Rio de Janeiro province, specifically the rural area of Campos de Goytacazes, Neila Nunes was able to uncover that small croppers, small ranchers and even some unskilled laborers accounted for 75% of all voters, many of them illiterate, as literacy was not a constitutional requirement for one to participate in the ballots⁴⁶.

Nunes studies cover the period of 1870 to 1889, but that reality was not new to Brazilian citizens. In mid 1840s, in a rural area of the province of Bahia, cattle herders, small croppers and all kinds of craftsmen (free and freed) were qualified to be voters and effectively took part in the ballots⁴⁷.

VOTERS, ELECTORS AND 19TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS

Considering all new studies about political participation in 19th century Brazil, it seems necessary to once more reconsider some characteristics regarding popular participation in all rebellions, riots and upheavals mentioned above.

Prison records, concerning the arrests made during and after the Cabanagem Rebellion in Pará, show that most of the rebels were not vagrant unemployed people, but rather men and women with an established residence and regular occupations. They were small croppers, soldiers, sailors, fishermen, carpenters, tailors and even shoemakers. That, as Luiz Balkar Pinheiro duly notices, forces historians to reappraise the traditional interpretation of the rebels as hordes of a miserable and disqualified rabble.

⁴³ J. J. REIS, 2001.

⁴⁴ To lack of a better word, I chose to translate «lavradores» as small croppers and not farmers in order to make it clearer that I am talking about people in the lower strata of society, and not owners of huge tracts of land.

⁴⁵ M. DOLHNIKOFF, 2009, 44.

⁴⁶ N. NUNES, 327-328, 330-331.

⁴⁷ M. D. DANTAS, 2007, 61-64.

No doubt annual incomes varied from one region of the Empire to another, but considering the numbers amassed by Dolhnikoff, Nunes, Dantas and Reis it does not seem absurd to contemplate the possibility that a large number of the Cabanagem rebels were at least qualified voters. A hypothesis that one may also discuss when talking about the Farroupilha footmen (*peões*) and horsemen (*cavalarianos*)⁴⁸.

In the Sabinada Rebellion, the initial proclamation registered in the City Counsel's records show that not only army and ex-militia officials were engaged in the movement, but also public employees, artisans and craftsmen, as they all signed the above-mentioned document. Other sources also reveal their presence in the rebellion, as, for instance, prison records drafted after their imprisonment by the government, which include a significant number of carpenters and other craftsmen. Newspapers and pamphlets written by those opposed to the Rebellion clearly recommended that all those «masons, shipwrights and carpenters» should be imprisoned and forced «to clean the rubble left behind after the battles»⁴⁹.

The army and former militia officials' leadership and participation in the movement also deserve a closer look. As demonstrated by historian Hendrik Kraay, those ex-officials, massively non-white, once the militias were dismantled were incorporated into the new National Guard (though loosing their former patents and posts). In more important and larger provincial capitals –Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife e São Luís– only those who fulfilled the requirements necessary to be an elector could join the newly created Guard. In the rest of the country, were they provincial capitals, cities or small towns, all voters could render service as guardsmen. Thus, a great part of the Sabinada rebels was composed not only by voters, but also electors with the right to cast their ballots for seats on the Senate, House and Provincial Assemblies.

In the Praieira Rebellion urban popular participation was even greater, as one of the movements main goals directly appealed to the inhabitants of Recife: the nationalization of retail shops and sales. As the provincial capital was the larger electoral college of Pernambuco, there voted craftsmen, clerks, militaries, public employees and everyone who earned 400 thousand réis or more a year, being thus qualified to cast their ballots not only as voters, but also as electors. They were the «proletários da praia» (the proletarians of the Praia party), as their enemy's newspapers, the conservative party, used to call them⁵⁰.

Taking into account that provincial capitals housed the largest electoral colleges, one could infer that participation in the ballots was an experience available to only few of those who lived in Brazil. But that was not actually the case, at

⁴⁸ C. GUAZZELLI, 2011, 229-261.

⁴⁹ H. KRAAY, 2011, 263-294.

⁵⁰ M. CARVALHO and B. CÂMARA, 2011, 355-389.

least in the interior of the northern province of Maranhão. As historian Matthias Assunção demonstrates, the «bem-te-vis» (kiskabees, as the rebels from the Balaiada used to call themselves) not only recognized governmental representative institutions as the proper arenas for negotiation, but also considered taking part in elections a vital move to legitimize their demands. In the town of São Bernardo, the «general counsel», responsible for drafting a statement to be sent to the provincial president with the rebels demands, had been formed in accordance with the tradition of the Independence period town councils, gathering officials, armed rebels and citizens in general. As signed by «citizens» (what meant people who were constitutionally apt to vote), the rebels' statement was a legitimate form of demanding the authorities attention or response, «unfortunately ignored by those it was sent to»⁵¹.

In that statement, and others alike written by kiskabees rebels from other towns, the signatories pledged their allegiance to the Empire and the Constitution, and demanded the suspension of the prefects' law and other bills they considered were in disagreement to the State's Charta. The experience of citizenship meant recognizing the validity of representative institutions, but, at the same time, opposing some laws they considered illegitimate or illegal; bills that were passed only to favor private interests and not to benefit the general population, or as the rebels' leader wrote, «the forces of Brazil».

Thus, accepting the interpretation of contemporary authorities, for whom the popular protests against, e. g., the census and civil registry decrees were horrific demonstrations bore out of the incapacity or misunderstanding of an «ignorant people», means losing sight of the existing liaison between those protests and the population's expectations regarding the process of State building, one fundamental dimension of popular movements. To label, pure and simply, popular resistance against some new governmental law or ruling as a fight for the perpetuation of old practices and habits, or, even worse, as a result of their incapacity to understand inevitable innovations brought by the modernization of society, tends to overshadow an essential feature of such movements, the fact that to protest, peacefully or not, meant trying to take part and negotiate the State's future, and ones role within it. As historian Maria Luiza Oliveira ably demonstrates, that meant having an active role as a regular citizen.

SLAVERY, ILLEGAL ENSLAVEMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

In a country where slavery prevailed and the majority of the population was of African descent, citizenship was restricted to those who were publicly recog-

⁵¹ M. ASSUNÇÃO, 2011, 295-327.

nized as free or freedmen. No wonder, records from some of the above-mentioned movements show the people's fear of illegal enslavement.

Although, in the Quebra-quilos Sedition men and women were mostly protesting against the decrees that enforced the new metrical system and imposed the «ground tax», they were also deeply concerned with the new military enlistment law. Regardless of what the authorities had conceived and stated as the real goals to be achieved with that new law, to the population of four different provinces the bill «intended to enslave the people's children»⁵².

As absurd as that sounded for governmental authorities, as many historical records show —«the disclosure of the decree and its regulation have been causing great sensation amongst the ignorant people of this Parish, to whom the law ultimately aims to enslave poverty»—, the fear caused by the law was echoing a real terror of the free and freed man and women⁵³. A fear that, despite particular circumstances specific to each movement, kept on haunting the Brazilian population until 1888, when slavery was officially abolished⁵⁴.

Enslavement was a concern even to Brazilian jurists and lawyers, as they had to deal, for instance, with cases regarding revoking one's manumission. As they properly remarked, returning someone back to the condition of a slave had a wider consequence than the loss of freedom, it meant also loosing all rights guaranteed by the Constitution to the country's citizens. «Thus, a revoked manumission meant not only re-enslaving someone, but also striping that person of all of his or hers rights as a citizen»⁵⁵.

No wonder, then, many protesters publicized their fear of (re)enslavement, something that was worth fighting against no matter what. And as historian Maria Luiza Oliveira states, they had real grounds to fear for their freedom. If the menace of illegal enslavement was already present during the Balaiada Rebellion, via forced enlistment or other illegal acts by the newly appointed prefects, after 1850, when the African slave trade was definitely abolished, the menace became even greater. Without the labor force that flowed from Africa and due to the growing coffee plantation economy in the southern provinces of Rio de Janeiro, Minas

⁵² L. M. LIMA, 2011, 449-483.

⁵³ Even during the Liberal Revolt the idea of one's liberty being at stake was not absent from the general concern. As historian Erik Hörner explains, the government was convinced the rebels had abused the simple minded folks' fears, as they were told that the new law of the State Council and the reform of the Code of Criminal Procedure were meant to put an end to «public liberties». In the words of the Secretary of Justice, «many men (from the interior of the province, colored and ignorant) were told that they would be enslaved. And to those who had children, it was said that their progeny would be enlisted due to the reform of the Code». (E. HÖRNER, 2011, 329-354).

⁵⁴ M. L. OLIVEIRA, 2001, 391-427.

⁵⁵ K. GRINBERG, 2006, 118.

Gerais and São Paulo, thousands of slaves were sold by their northeastern owners to southern masters. Free and freed persons, due to their color or ancestry, were then at a greater risk of being mistaken for slaves.

Besides the perils caused by the internal slave trade, by the 1870s the population also became subject to several new laws and decrees that aimed to tame them, or better to make them more docile to the wills and pressures of landowners, former slave masters who were loosing their human properties either because they were selling them to the South, or because they were financially unable to buy somebody else's slaves (since prices had more than doubled after the African slave trade was abolished).

Rising against those perils, or better protesting in order to guarantee one's rights as a citizen was a common action in 19th century Brazil. Sometimes those protests meant championing the return of the former Emperor, or, as it happened more frequently, upholding liberal laws, practices and even ideas; liberal postulates and creeds that, since the beginning of the century, had been professed over and over by several members of the elite.

ELITE LIBERAL PROCLAMATIONS AND POPULAR PROTEST IN IMPERIAL BRAZIL

It is paramount, as said before, to acknowledge how the population in general interpreted the protests of those in disagreement with current situations, were they against the new laws approved by the conservative party in Maranhão, in the late 1830s, or contrary to the new provincial president appointed to Pernambuco by the Saquarema Cabinet, in 1848. Disputes and disagreements that always ended in the papers.

As historian Matthias Assunção shows, Raimundo Gomes' demands echoed those published in *O Bem Te Vi*, a newspaper owned by the liberal party in Maranhão's capital. In its pages, the liberal elite broadcasted their discontent with the new provincial president and the conservatives then in power, whom they blamed for the wrongdoings of the prefects (authorities created by the conservatives who held the majority of the seats in the Provincial Assembly). Even if *O Bem Te Vi* had a very reduced number of prints, nonetheless its influence and reach far surmounted the total of distributed copies, as, even in the interior of the province, they were «read out loud for a larger illiterate audience», as was the habit back then. As people read or listened to its contents, they grew more familiar with fundamental postulates of the liberal creed, such as the upholding of the Constitution and the importance of a representative monarchical form of government. Besides that, it also fostered old grievances –against, e. g., Portuguese man and woman whom they thought or were in fact in favor of an Absolute Regime– and enabled

reinterpretations, especially a more modern understanding of Christianity, which paralleled catholic practices and habits common amongst the lower strata of society. The liberal paper, then, served as an alert or an inspiration to Gomes and his followers, who proclaimed themselves custodians of the Catholic Church, Emperor Pedro II, the country's Constitution and, therefore, the citizens' Rights⁵⁶.

In the late 1830s, Bahian radicals also used the press to broadcast their demands and discontents. The editor of the *Novo Diário da Bahia* was no other than Francisco Sabino Álvares da Rocha Vieira himself, the great leader of the Sabinada (a rebellion named after him). In the province of Pernambuco, newspapers were equally important both in 1824 and 1848. As historian Bernardes states, one «cannot dismiss the existence of an overtly political press, whose influence should not be minimized». In Pernambuco alone, nine papers appeared in 1821-1822, and other 13 the next two years, among which Frei Caneca's *Typhis Pernambucano*. During the Praieira Rebellion, not only the *Novo Diário* played a crucial role –which location at the Rua da Praia gave name to the movement–, but also several other gazettes that had been circulating for years, especially some more radical ones edited by Borges da Fonseca⁵⁷.

Even if one could state that the press was more influential in urban areas, where distribution was easier, one must not forget its role in the late 1830s rebellion in Maranhão. The case of the *O Bem te vi* indicates that newspapers reached far beyond the literate population. The circulation of printed material enabled several strata of society to (re)interpret its contents; information, ideas and demands that seemed, a priori, very distant to the general population's reality. But that does not seem altogether true if one looks closely at one of the 19th century seditions. Protesters who were against the new census and civil registry decrees stated that those bills «aimed to enslave their children, because the British forbade the entrance of African people», and that the «South wanted to enslave the children of the North». Thus, not only were they aware that the African Slave Trade had been recently abolished, but also that southern masters were in fact buying slaves from northern provinces, establishing a new route of commerce that ended up in the forced migration of thousands of slaves to the coffee plantations.

POPULAR DEMANDS AND GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSES

Almost three decades after the protests against the census and civil registry decrees, the Emperor himself wrote a letter astounded with how the population

⁵⁶ M. ASSUNÇÃO, 2011, 295-327.

⁵⁷ H. KRAAY, 2001; M. CARVALHO and B. CÂMARA, 2011; D. BERNARDES, 2011b, 131-166.

was rising against a new tax on trolley rides (the *Motim do Vintem*, or «penny riot»). According to him, «for almost forty years we did not need to use force against the people»⁵⁸. He seemed to be echoing Justiniano José da Rocha's 1850s pamphlet, whose words, or interpretation, had since been repeated by many. One must question if the Emperor's words referred only to the city of Rio de Janeiro or to the entire country, and if so what he meant by use of force and what he conceived as a protest. After all, protests against laws were not new, they had been happening for the past decades.

May be his astonishment was more related to where the Penny Riot took place, than to the fact that the population could rise against governmental rulings and that force was indeed used to control and disband them. Although the amount of force varied from one movement to another, one must look more closely at some similarities between the protests that happened in the second half of the 19th century. They all had as their starting points the population's discontent with some law or decree, even if other demands did appear along its course. Besides that, all these movements ended somewhat similarly, with their main goals being achieved, or else with the suspension of governmental rulings that affected people's lives and drove them to rise against them.

The «*Ronco da Abelha*» (or «*Guerra dos Marimbondos*») upheaval led to the suspension of the census and civil registry decrees. After the «*Motim da Carne sem Osso, Farinha sem Caroço*» city counselors were reinstated and the municipal ruling on staples was upheld. The «*Quebra-quilos*» protesters met their goals, as the «ground tax» was suspended and people kept on buying and selling using the old measures (as the government gave up on the metric system). Finally, the new tax on trolley rides was also dismissed.

By studying the 19th century movements in a sequence, two aspects call for one's attention. First, the fact that all movements up until the middle of the century were defeated, what means that the protesters did not reach their goals; a closure completely different from those that happened afterwards, when people's demands were successfully met. By acknowledging that we are not dismissing the fact that force and violence were used against protesters, what actually aggrandizes the victory achieved by those who engaged in the movements. Secondly, this linear overview presents another essential difference between protests that happened in the first or the second half of the century, and that relates to how district attorneys and judges perceived each movement, at least from a legal point of view.

⁵⁸ S. L. GRAHAM, 2011, 485-509.

FROM REBELLIONS TO SEDITIONS

Portuguese Ordinances and sparse rulings were still the law of the land when the 1817 Rebellion, the military attack to the community of the Serra do Rodeador and the 1824 Equator Confederacy happened. All the other mentioned movements, on the other hand, started after the Parliament approved the Criminal Code of the Brazilian Empire, in 1830 (a Code that kept valid until 1890).

According to judicial records, the Guerra dos Cabanos, the Cabanagem, the Farroupilha, the Balaiada, the Liberal Revolt, and the Praieira were all Rebellions, as defined by the 1830 Criminal Code⁵⁹:

Art. 110. If one or more townships, each comprehending more than twenty thousand inhabitants, gather to perpetrate one or more crimes mentioned in articles sixty eight, sixty nine, eighty five, eighty six, eighty seven, eighty eight, eighty nine, ninety one, and ninety two are guilty of Rebellion.
Punishment –To the principals– Highest punishment: confinement for life at hard labor; medium punishment: confinement at hard labor for twenty years; lowest punishment: confinement at hard labor for ten years⁶⁰.

On the other hand, movements that took place in second half of the 19th century were generally ruled as crimes of Sedition:

Art. 111. If more than twenty people, some or all carrying arms, gather to prevent a public employee, duly appointed and bearing a legitimate title, to take his seat; or to deprave him of his legal duties; or to prevent the enforcement

⁵⁹ In order to properly translate Brazilian Imperial legislation into English, I chose not to use present day vocabulary, but rather the language of 19th century North-American sources. Another clarification must be made; the preference for the phrasings and words of North-American laws and other criminal documents and not from Britain's has a very distinctive motive. As I have written about in other papers and books, the Brazilian Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure were deeply influenced by Edward Livingston's writings on Criminal law, a much deeper influence than any that could have come from original British sources.

⁶⁰ «Art. 68 - To act directly, or by facts, to destroy the Independence or the integrity of the Empire [...]. Art. 69 - To incite directly, or by facts, any foreign nation to wage war against the Empire [...]. Art. 85 - To act directly, or by facts, to destroy the Political Constitution of the Empire, or its form of government [...]. Art. 86 - To act directly, or by facts, to destroy one or some of the articles of the Constitution [...]. Art. 87 - To act directly, or by facts, to dethrone the Emperor; depriving him partially or totally of his constitutional authority; altering the order of succession [...]. Art. 88 - To act directly, or by facts, to concoct a false justification regarding the Emperor's physical or moral unfitness [...]. Art. 89 - To act directly, or by facts, against the Regency or the Regent, in order to deprive him partially or totally of his constitutional authority[...] Art. 91 - To oppose directly, or by facts, the duly execution of decrees calling the General Assembly to convey [...]. Art. 92 - To oppose directly, or by facts, the reunion of the General Assembly.» («Código» 1876: 151-159).

and abidance of any act or legal order by a legitimate authority, they are guilty of the crime of Sedition.

Punishment –To the principals– confinement at hard labor from three to twelve years.

Art 112. It is not a crime of sedition if an unarmed party gathers in order to protest against injustice, aggravations and wrongdoings by public employees⁶¹.

Sedition referred then to the gathering of a minimum of twenty people (without apparently a maximum) that aimed only to prevent a public authority to exercise his powers (whether to prevent him from taking his seat or to enforce legal actions)⁶². Sometimes local authorities did not seem to agree with the letter of the Code or tended to exaggerate the scope of the movement. As the deputy sheriff of the town of Buique, in the province of Pernambuco, wrote about the 1851-1852 protests against the census and civil registry decrees: «this sedition is becoming very serious [...], it is starting to look like a rebellion»⁶³.

Thus, taking into account the scope of some movements one might speculate that either judges and other judicial personnel really decided, or were forced, to follow the law, or that after 1850 it was no longer interesting for Imperial authorities to publicly acknowledge that the country was still experiencing rebellions, especially if one considers the traditional accounts of the Second Reign as a period of peace and tranquility, as contemporaries back then already used to affirm.

But let us evoke once more the words of the deputy sheriff from Buique, as they might shed a light on the historical process of 19th century social-political movements. If 1830s and 1840s upheavals were officially considered rebellions, and their participants labeled as rebels, the ones that happened afterwards were usually classified as seditions. Even if government repression varied from one to another, that transformation is consistent not only with political changes related to the country's own process of State building, but also to innovations regarding how the free and freed population used to behave, concerning the government and its acts, and foremost their expectations towards Brazilian politics.

To further that discussion, or better that hypothesis, it seems valuable to categorize each movement in terms of its participants. In four of them, the general population fought under the guidance and orders of elite members, who had been at the center of the movement's deflagration; that was the case of the 1817 Rebellion, the Equator Confederacy, the Farroupilha and the Liberal Revolt. Other five uprisings started as squabbles between local or provincial elites, who initially had

⁶¹ «CÓDIGO» 1876, 158.

⁶² A more detailed discussion on the Criminal Code's articles on each different crime is provided in the Introduction to the book *Revoltas, Motins, Revoluções*. M. D. DANTAS, 2011b.

⁶³ M. L. OLIVEIRA, 2011.

some control over those who were fighting for them, but that lost that upper hand and eventually all control, what turned those movements into popular ones, with the general populations making their own demands; as happened in the Cabano's War, the Cabanagem, the Sabinada, the Balaiada, and the Praieira. Finally, there were upheavals and protests in which the free and freed people were from the beginning its main actors and leaders, such as the Ronco da Abelha, the Motim da Carane sem Osso, Farinha sem Caroço, the Quebra-quilos and the Penny Riot.

Even if this transition –from movements organized and led by the elites (with the population acting in accordance to the upper classes' orders and leadership) to overtly popular seditions– may not be interpreted as a linear transformation that happened in the whole country at the same time, one can not doubt that there is a common ground that enables us to better understand that transition, although always bearing in mind that the movement from elite rebellions to popular seditions had different chronologies in each part of the country.

By acknowledging that common ground I do not intend to foster any kind of interpretation that creates a direct link between those movements, as if one was the necessary cause or consequence of the other. My aim is to demonstrate the importance of the population's experience of political maneuvering and protest, something they had been learning as the time passed, as they were part of the State building process. By doing so, it is possible to hypothesize that disputes amongst the elites (be they of regional or provincial impact) –whom, of course, had to rely on the population to literally fight their battles– were responsible for spreading the liberal creed all over the country and opening a path for new experiences (experiences of protests and demands), in such a way that the poor free and the freed people were able to form their own ideas of rights, «of citizens rights» (as stated by Raimundo Gomes, the leader of the Balaiada rebellion).

Even if that citizenship was not the same the elites were fighting for and even if the people's experience of rights are many times elusive and difficult for the historian to acknowledge, their protests, demands and expectations should never be misconstrued as demands or longings for a time's past, for the old world that laid behind. A world, in fact, in which it would make no sense to talk about citizen's rights.

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