

# Memory, historiography and politics: The independence of Brazil, 200 years later

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“[...] Does it not seem incredible, for example, that after all that academic historiography has produced about the Independence of Brazil, so many people still treat it as a Manichean conflict of national interests between the Brazilians and the Portuguese, or as a process of simple re-accommodation of elitist interests in favor of maintaining order, or finally, as a myriad of individual wills that move history? These are not “truths” just for non-history specialists; also many professionals in the field still seem willing to support them...”

(Pimenta et al., 2014, p.35)

“The ambiguity of the historical process of Independence and the resulting contradictions in historiographical approaches, gave the subject such dubiousness to the point that the term ‘Independence’ is often used with great reserve [...] it is up to scholars on the subject the continuous task of recovering angles, aspects, issues not yet addressed or unsatisfactorily analyzed, discussing the new way of thinking about the history of Independence...”

(Lyra, 1992, p.124)

**I**NDEPENDENCE is one of the most controversial themes in the history of Brazil.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is not only the enormous quantity and variety of works dedicated to it, since the 19th century, but, above all, the direct links it maintains with the formation of nationality and with representations that, over time, have been built and updated about the Brazilian nation, its historical path and Brazilians in general, which enormously expands the debate in which it is inserted. The overlaps between the theme and the image of the nation are intrinsic to the field of politics and acquire unique contours at a time when, by different and antagonistic historical agents, their possible meanings are reinvigorated by the celebrations of the Bicentennial.

As Régine Robin (2016) shows us, “the past is a fundamental issue of the present” and “it is not free”, since at each time it can be remembered, rewritten, reinvented, omitted or celebrated, serving various uses and too many abuses. In the case of independence, as relevant as these observations are the problems raised by the above mentioned epigraphs. While Maria de Lourdes Viana Lyra focuses on historiographical ambiguities and contradictions, inviting scholars

of the period to undertake other and different ways of thinking about that moment and its later political and imaginary repercussions, João Paulo Pimenta and his group of students emphasize the strength and stability of “consensus” and “truths” around a theme despite the numerous and consistent revisions it has received in the last thirty years. Most Brazilians seem to believe that independence was just a nationalist struggle between the Brazilians and the Portuguese, an agreement between elites that guaranteed a peaceful political transition, or even a set of events based on individual profiles and wills. And whether as a memorable, glorious and edifying event, or as a great comedy to be ridiculed, independence preserves these characteristics, almost never endorsed by the best historiographical reassessments on the subject.

The point is: why do these reassessments and, in many cases, innovative interpretations, supported by an immense spectrum of sources and creative methodological proposals, fail to open effective fissures in premises that make up a culture of history that since the 19th century was being engendered around the theme? Why do these supposed “truths” persist and are adopted as references for understanding the Brazilian historical process, despite being guided by arguments and prejudices that shaped the memory with which the protagonists of independence and the foundation of the Empire gave sense to their own actions?

Firstly, it must be considered that a historical theme is never confined to the domain of professional or even amateur historians. In any society, knowledge, representations and memories about the past are distributed in different corners, taking root in school systems, publishing and media markets, civic festivities and political disputes that interact reciprocally. The result is stable and powerful intellectual conventions, capable of resisting the critical posture typical of the historians’ work.

Secondly, it can be seen that the historians’ work itself is not free from influences and convergences with conventions around the past established by society in general. It is true that their work has relative autonomy, being guided by their own criteria, paradigms and experiences; however, this autonomy never converts into full independence, and from early on their work is influenced and partially conditioned by the social environment in which they work.

Finally, one can never ignore the fact that a society not only uses the past according to the interests of the present, but also that historical memory, however deviant in relation to certain historiographical knowledge, plays a cohesive role in it. And in remembering, selecting, narrating and reinventing the past, memory is always challenging the work of the historian.

It can be said, therefore, that the history of independence has been constituting itself in the last two hundred years as a game between past and present, involving not only historians, but also many other social agents, in a dynamics in which innovations are permanently challenged by inheritances and persistence.

Addressing questions such as these requires much more than the obvious recognition of the difficulties that surround facing a broad set of simplified and often derogatory statements about the history of independence, but deeply introjected socially and culturally. An enriching path that could be followed in this direction is, in our view, in the resumption of the observations made by Carlos Alberto Vesentini (1997, p.18) in the 1980s:

[...] understanding history as a memory and perceiving the integration that occurs continuously between the inheritance received and projected to us, and the reflection focused on this past, constituted itself as an issue and seemed relevant to me for the approach of what is taken as historiography only. The latter could leave in the less aware reader the perception that the very object it focuses on – themes, facts, agents placed there – has an objective existence regardless of its engendering in the struggle process...

These considerations lead us, in the first place, to the understanding that the testimonies of the past that have reached us are not neutral, since, produced as resources and records of political struggle, they became vigorous agents of memory projected for posterity, built often deliberately, as is the case, for example, of government decrees and decisions, diplomatic treaties, monuments and portraits, as well as the historical painting. It is, therefore, a matter of thinking about the status given to documents, recalling, with Lucien Febvre (1965, p.114), the criticism of the assumption that “facts”, “characters” and “narratives” would be “given to history as substantial realities”, blurring the mediations between the historical processes, the ways in which they were told and fixed by contemporaries and the work of the historian who, through the present in which he lives, selects, cuts out and illuminates what he proposes to study and communicate. Claude Lefort (1979, p.256-7) also underlined the importance of questioning what he called “realist conviction”:

[...] we believe that history takes place before the historian makes it his object. We believe that we can say, as a consequence, that facts take place at a specific date and place and are what they are while they wait to be known; and also, that they are transformed from “real” facts into facts of knowledge when they are referred to by an observer who has become capable of apprehending them without projecting anything on their surface of the passions that inhabit him...

In this sense, and secondly, both Vesentini and Lefort underline the historian’s necessary procedure of attending to his own involvements in relation – in the case of Brazil’s independence – to national identity and the process of delineation of the nation through its origins in the past and its unfolding in the present, as the investigations by Pimenta and his students demonstrated. The most apparent objectives of historiography, as Maria de Lourdes Janotti (1998, p.119) observed, are “to explain, to understand the life of societies and record present and past events [...] These actions are driven by the search, always re-

newed, for the constitutive elements of a collective identity that is dialectically articulated with the broad field of political-social relations...”.

This means that the links between memory, politics and the writing of history are as delicate and indissoluble as the overlaps between the movement of history and the ways in which contemporaries recorded it and perpetuated its memory. The independence of Brazil, as a nodal and polemic theme in the history of Brazil in the last two hundred years, is inserted in an exemplary way in these overlaps.

A diligent work in relation to the historiographical works that became an obligatory reference for those who wish to approach that period shows that incongruous interpretations were superimposed, with rare exceptions, on a historical plot that was accepted and continually updated, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. To the detriment of the comprehensive and multifaceted political debate and the armed conflicts that took place in different regions of Portuguese America, notably after the Portuguese revolution of 1820, the plot that has prevailed until today is that independence was a process triggered by the Portuguese Court's transfer to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, which unfolded in a colonial confrontation between the Constituent Courts in Lisbon and the government of Prince D. Pedro. The then Regent, through ministers and advisers such as José Bonifácio, for example, would have managed to centralize around himself the necessary legitimacy to declare the separation of Brazil from the European Kingdom and organize a constitutional monarchy that ended up receiving the adhesion of the different provincial political forces, proving to be the only viable alternative for preserving the social order and configuring a new nationality (in some variations of this narrative, it must be repeated, this nationality already existed).

These events and this narrative have received very different qualifications in historiography: Armitage described them as “a liberal revolution”; Varnhagen defined them as a “peaceful transition” from the colony to the nation stage; Oliveira Lima, on the other hand, preferred the expression “friendly divorce” to assess the separation between the two Kingdoms. And if José Honório Rodrigues understood independence as a “nationalist and popular revolution”, Maria Odila da Silva Dias underlined its character of “conservative reaction of the elites” to the constitutional premises of the Courts. How can we understand these antagonisms despite the reproducing background?

They are, without a doubt, instigating readings engendered in particular historical moments and formulated through analytical procedures and interrogations marked by the historicity of their production. But the arguments and antagonistic proposals that often resulted from consulting the same sources are not limited to these peculiarities. They refer to another issue: the enormous complexity that surrounded the political and social conflicts in which independence was inscribed, of which many aspects, details and protagonists still remain

to be known and problematized, opening the range for other readings of the time to be possible, recovering not only accumulated knowledge but also investigative suggestions that the circumstances of the present make possible. However, it is worth asking, with today's instruments, how was the narrative of independence that was consecrated forged, and on which possible pillars would its resistance reside?<sup>2</sup>

The first versions about the independence of Brazil were published in decrees and manifestos produced during the Regency of D. Pedro, in periodicals and pamphlets, published in Rio de Janeiro and in other provinces, in the correspondence of European and American diplomats, settled in the Court of Rio de Janeiro, and also in religious discourses and texts (Bittencourt, 2007). However, in the construction of the narrative and in the projection of the characters that were consolidated and reverberated especially throughout the 19th century, perhaps no record compares to the speech given by the newly acclaimed emperor at the opening of the legislative works, on May 3, 1823.

On that solemn occasion, D. Pedro addressed the provincial deputies, saluting them, but at the same time pondering that the Constitution should be worthy of imperial acceptance. This message, which in the days that followed was harshly contested by some of the deputies, was at the end of the narrative in which D. Pedro presented the reasons, conditions and chronology of the independence movement, associating it directly with the separation from Portugal.<sup>3</sup> Inscribing it in the dynamics of a political struggle that opposed colony and metropolis, the Brazilians and the Portuguese, D. Pedro reported the beginning of the movement to the arrival, in 1808, of the Bragança royal family to Rio de Janeiro, indicating the date of the elevation of Brazil to the status of Kingdom, decreed on December 16, 1815, as the mark of overcoming the colonial period. Always dealing with the images that, at that moment, Brazil was a homogeneous and unified entity, subject to the authority of the Rio de Janeiro Court, and that the Empire was a tangible reality, D. Pedro held the Courts in Lisbon responsible for the separation that the “Brazilians did not want”, but for which they decided because they saw themselves as victims of laws and troops that aimed to bring the provinces back to colonial oppression. Assuming the full leading role of the government and the separatist movement, in response to appeals made by the “people”, he stressed that the decisive steps towards independence were: the “*Fico*”, on January 9, 1822, when, at the request of the “people” and in defense of the Empire, he remained in Rio de Janeiro, disobeying the Courts in Lisbon; the expulsion of Portuguese troops from Rio de Janeiro, in February of that year; the performance of an autonomous government committed to organizing economic and military resources to face the Courts, led by him; the trip to the province of Minas Gerais, in April 1822, to defeat the “arbitrariness” of the then governor; the trip to the province of São Paulo, in August of the same year, to break up a “party of Portuguese and Brazilian degenerates who were

accustomed to the Courts”; the proclamation of independence on September 7 at the “always memorable *sítio do Piranga*; and the coronation as emperor, in December 1822 (Diário da Assembleia Geral e Constituinte, 2003, p.15-18).

In this way, he fixed the date of the proclamation of independence, on the banks of the Ipiranga stream, in the province of São Paulo. It was this statement by the emperor that sealed the memory of his own figure as a liberator, as well as the association between independence, separation from Portugal and the 7th of September.

This account recovered arguments already used in at least two other widely circulated documents produced by the government of D. Pedro: the Manifestos dated August 1 and 6, 1822. The August 1 Manifesto was addressed to the “peoples of Brazil” and sought to justify the conduct of the then regent in conducting a “war” against the Courts gathered in Lisbon, claiming the legitimacy of actions that affronted decisions adopted in Portugal. The August 6 Manifesto was addressed to “friendly nations”, especially Great Britain, France and Austria, and its objective was to affirm that, in the face of the “recolonizing” threats filed by the Lisbon Courts to the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Brazil, D. Pedro, heir to the Portuguese Crown, would have been forced to adopt measures to guarantee “political independence” and the existence of a common center of power that would articulate the provinces as well as preserve trade and friendship relations with all nations (Coleção das Leis e Decisões do Brasil, 1822, parte II, p.125-41).

Explained in this way, the justifications exposed for independence not only naturalized the separation from Portugal and the constitutional monarchical government that the emperor and the groups that supported him wanted to see implemented, but also demonstrated the consensual “accession” of the “peoples” and provinces of Brazil to the measures adopted in Rio de Janeiro, which was supposedly proven by the meeting of provincial representatives elected in the Constituent Assembly. In addition to the fact that dissent was reduced to isolated and tiny foci of supporters of the Courts, the heir to the Portuguese Crown, placing himself as the main protagonist, sought to remove, at a time when treaties recognizing independence by foreign powers were under discussion, the image of a revolutionary rupture, as it had been the authority appointed by the King of Portugal to command the government in Brazil that led the process of rupture between parts of the Portuguese Empire, safeguarding dynastic legitimacy.

Two years after this record, D. Pedro I appointed one of his closest advisers to prepare what can be considered the first and seminal detailed interpretation of independence. In January 1825, José da Silva Lisboa was tasked with gathering authentic documents, “extracted from all the archives of the nation” to perpetuate the “memory” of the events that would have resulted in the foundation of the Empire (Coleção das Decisões do Governo do Brasil, 1825, p.5-6).<sup>4</sup> Organ-

ized in four volumes or sections, the work was edited at the Imperial Typography, between 1827 and 1830, but despite being conceived in ten parts, only the first was produced, dedicated to the discovery of Brazil, and the tenth, referring to the events that took place between February 1821 and March 1823, with the clear objective of valuing the government of D. Pedro and the gradual adhesion of provincial leaders to the authority exercised by the Court of Rio de Janeiro after the separation from Portugal (Araújo, 2011; Oliveira, 2009; Diniz, 2009).

The *História dos principais sucessos políticos do Império do Brasil* [History of the main political successes of the Empire of Brazil] (Lisbon, 1827-1830) was published at a time marked by the significant loss of the emperor's popularity, particularly due to the repercussions caused by the violent closing of the Constituent and Legislative Assembly, in November 1823; by the imposition of the Constitution in 1824; by the repression of protest movements against the Emperor and by the involvement of D. Pedro in the succession to the Portuguese Crown, among other issues (Monteiro, 1982). When the Chamber of Deputies, elected in 1824, began legislative work in 1826, criticism of the imperial government was further aggravated, and the opposition forces in parliament and the press were recomposed.

To build his narrative, Silva Lisboa made use of numerous documents produced in London, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and the provinces of Brazil, gathered and edited at the end of each volume. To this aspect, he combined his own reputation as a writer and politician, which made the work a source of consultation for several of the historians who wrote on the subject throughout the 19th century, such as João Manuel Pereira da Silva and Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen.

When confronted with the immense and controversial range of versions published in periodicals, pamphlets and countless other records of the time (Carvalho; Bastos; Basile, 2014), the chronicle composed by Silva Lisboa presents itself as a deliberate reconstitution of scenes and characters intended to support the memory that D. Pedro had traced of himself and his father, affirmed in the *Fala do Trono* of May 1823. Coherent and “reliable”, since anchored in documents approved by public authorities, the narrative consolidates the links between independence and separation from Portugal, imprisons the political process in the bloodless image of a continuous transition and sustains the conviction that society was a passive spectator in the face of the brilliance of certain figures, especially D. Pedro. He did not fail to recognize the role of other interlocutors in the political struggles, such as the “anti-Brazilian cabal” in the Courts in Lisbon, who intended to “recolonize” Brazil, and “anarchists” and “republicans”, who defended the provincial autonomy, questioning the political-administrative centrality of the Court, as well as defending the sovereignty of the legislative power over the Crown and its capacity to propose and veto laws.<sup>5</sup> But he removed from them the initiative and relevance of the actions, placing them, initially, in the restricted scope of the person of D. João and later

in that of the prince regent. By subtracting the space for action by society, political groups and their spokespersons, he suggests that the chronology of events is dictated by the linear succession of measures taken by the authorities, as if, in Brazil, the “independence revolution”, as he himself called it, was the work and grace of the monarchical state, rooted since 1808, but whose traditions and legitimacy date back to the beginnings of the Portuguese monarchy.

The “revolution”, inaugurated in Rio de Janeiro with the oath of D. João to the constitutional principles exposed by the Courts, in February 1821, would have resulted in the separation from Portugal, due to the arbitrary attitudes of Portuguese deputies, and resulted in the foundation of an Empire in America, legitimate because supported by dynastic law and by the defense of the sovereignty of Brazil, victimized by the Courts. Furthermore, the “revolutionary” action of the Prince would have undone the plot of another “revolution”, this one dangerous indeed, as it was inspired by the French experiences of the end of the 18th century and the Spanish one of 1812 that, like a “whirlwind”, would have destroyed monarchical authority.

Silva Lisboa tried to convince the reader that both the Empire and the authority that the monarch and the government established in Rio de Janeiro could exercise were consolidated at the early 19th century. In this sense, the aggrandizement of the figure of the heir to the Portuguese monarchy and the continuous and legalist character of the “Independence revolution” gave rise to the simplification of political struggles and their reduction to two axes: an external confrontation of a colonial nature, opposing the “recolonizing” Courts and D. Pedro, supported by the “Brazilians” and the “Portuguese” living in Brazil; and an internal antagonism between monarchists and republicans, which ended with the acclamation of the Empire and the Emperor, the only political alternative, according to Silva Lisboa, for the continuity of the social order and the configuration of the nation bequeathed by the Johannine government.

The fact that this interpretation became a political and historiographical reference in the 19th century does not mean that the debate around the topic has died down over the period. On the contrary, other politicians and chroniclers highlighted aspects and situations that nuanced and even seriously contradicted Silva Lisboa’s arguments. This was especially the case with the work of John Armitage.

An English businessman based in Rio de Janeiro during the 1820s, Armitage published a *History of Brazil*, in 1836, in England.<sup>6</sup> Although he underlined the commercial objectives that moved him, he considered himself an impartial observer of the “progress of the Brazilian nation”. In his view, the purpose of history was to record experiences and events that demonstrated the advantages of representative governments, as well as the benefits of the free flow of ideas, people and goods. Thus, at the same time, he sought to apprehend the peculiarities of the society that was constituted in Portuguese America and to describe

the facts that generated the independence movement. His narrative intended to reveal the gradual overcoming of colonial institutions by “Brazilians” as well as the organization of civil society and constitutional monarchical government. He reiterated the chronology established by Silva Lisboa, reinforcing the dates of 1808, 1815 and 1822, adding, however, to this chain the Abdication of the Emperor, in 1831, an episode that, in his view, would have completed the “independence revolution”. He qualified it as a positive and adequate liberal revolution for the moment, guided by the destruction of backward and absolutist political practices that the “Portuguese” had left as a legacy. In this sense, in his narrative the expression “independence” was not only associated with the separation from Portugal, but pointed, above all, to the rupture that the construction of a liberal government symbolized from the point of view of breaking traditions bequeathed by colonization and the promise of a future of “civilization”, represented by Brazil’s entry into the world of free trade together with other Western nations (Varella, 2011; Marson, 2009).

In this way, his *História* was based on the critique of colonial legacies, emphasizing discontinuities. From this perspective, he interpreted the reorganization of the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro as well as the 1820 Revolution in Portugal and its repercussions, especially in terms of the aggravation of rivalries between the “Portuguese” and the “Brazilians” within the scope of commercial relations and the extent of foreign presence. It was the ambiguous decisions of the Courts in Lisbon and, notably, the attempt at “recolonization” that provoked the separatist movement. But the main focus of the narrative was on the description of how “Brazilians” got involved with politics, became citizens and demonstrated conditions to face the attitudes of the Courts and the provinces’ difficulties gathering around a center of power.

If the proclamation of independence was a necessary step on the road to “civilization”, it did not, however, represent the appeasement of political struggles. Armitage sought to follow, through the opposition between “liberal patriots” and “realists”, between “colony” and “metropolis”, the clashes of a nation that was forming and contesting a still absolutist state that sought to repress it by persecuting its opponents and by the aggrandizement of the “Portuguese”. This conflict that guided the First Reign was won, according to Armitage (1981, p.227), by the representatives of the nation, especially the “moderate liberals” who, in the Chamber of Deputies and in the press, imposed on D. Pedro – a monarch who did not know how to “prove himself truly and entirely Brazilian” – the defeat of his absolutist pretensions and the Abdication. The date of 1831 symbolized the victory of the new nationality and the consolidation of the break with the colonial past, expressed in the organization of the Empire of Brazil on liberal bases.

It is important to highlight that the expression “moderate liberals” was widely used by the periodicals that circulated in Brazil, especially in Rio de Ja-

neiro, during the first reign (1825/1831) to designate in a generic way political groups that, in the Chamber of Deputies and in the press, openly opposed the government of Pedro I. Armitage identified with the claims against the power of the Crown as well as with the movement for abdication of which these political groupings were protagonists, considering that Evaristo da Veiga, for example, was one of its most important representatives. The denomination “moderate liberals” affected politicians with multiple and contradictory liberal nuances who, after 1831, dismantled previous alliances and promoted a fragmentation of the political field in the Court. But it is important to underline that, during the Regency period (1831/1840), many of them collaborated in the organization of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, so that, from the point of view of the historical narrative, the differences and political oppositions between them were dampened by a shared memory, guided by the continuity between the colonial past and the monarchic present, valuing the role of the monarchy in the construction of nationality (Ribeiro; Pereira, 2009; Basile, 2009; Guimarães, 2001).

The interpretations and criticisms launched by Armitage were recovered on several occasions during the 19th century, mainly by liberal politicians. This was the case of the booklet *Libelo do Povo*, written in 1849 by Francisco Sales Torres Homem, under the pseudonym of Timandro, and of the booklet *A Estátua Equestre*, prepared by Teófilo Ottoni, in 1862<sup>7</sup>. Despite the specific objectives for which they were created and being published at very different moments of the political process in the Empire, both valued the “independence revolution”, giving the movement a liberal and libertarian character of the colonial past.

Two points deserve to be highlighted in these versions of the History of the Empire. The first one concerns the denial that the nation was a legacy of Portuguese colonization, emphasizing, on the contrary, the actions of society and liberal political forces that, throughout the first half of the 19th century, would have faced the remnants of absolutism to build a constitutional government suited to the historical time. The second point, relevant for later repercussions, is that the “independence revolution” would not have been fully completed for Timandro in the 1840s, and for Ottoni in the early 1860s. Both documents bear the marks of the political struggles for which they were written, but to the extent that these agents made use of historical reconstitutions, they produced arguments that may lead to the misunderstanding that both were talking about the same liberal project that had supposedly been developing since 1822, and that had not materialized yet, whether by the action of the State inherited from colonization or by the backwardness and shortcomings that marked society, aspects that, despite the deep historiographical questionings they suffered in recent years, still support many of the evaluations about the country and its historical trajectory (Bresciani, 2007).

Between the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, two interpretations that achieved wide repercussion contributed strongly to consolidate the conservative version of independence based on the narrative that D. Pedro outlined and that received documentary and literary finishing by Silva Lisboa. Despite their differences, Pereira da Silva and Varnhagen reinforced three historical and political assumptions: the first concerns the supposed continuity between the colonial period and the emergence of the nation guaranteed by the Bragança dynasty's role in the government; the second establishes a solid link between the monarchy, the authority figure of the emperor and the political process of sublimation of the social inorganicity inherited from the colony, which would have allowed the maintenance of order and the political-legal structuring of the nation through the Constitution of 1824; and, finally, the disqualification of both the opposition to the victorious monarchical project, in 1822, and the other political and social forces that, after the separation from Portugal, fought to revolutionize the regime or to modify its structure, like the protagonists of the Confederation of Ecuador and the actions of Torres Homem and Teófilo Ottoni.

The *História da Fundação do Império Brasileiro* [History of the Founding of the Brazilian Empire], authored by João Manuel Pereira da Silva, a writer and politician of the conservative party from Rio de Janeiro, was published in seven volumes, between 1864 and 1868. It was praised by its peers and became so popular that it was republished in a second edition in the following years, a rare event at that time. Quite ambitious, the book sought to fill in the “absence” of a detailed history of the period of independence and the political trajectory of Brazil and Portugal, between 1808 and 1825.

This chronology marked, according to the author, the “Brazilian revolution”, motivated by the transfer of the Bragança dynasty to Rio de Janeiro, an episode that brought about a “political inversion” and transformed the colony into a metropolis, opening the way for the dismemberment “of the Portuguese family and monarchy”. Looking for the “truth”, Pereira da Silva relied on textual documents and also on oral tradition. Defending the historian's “impartiality” and his ability to “judge” history, he approached in detail the period between the arrival of the Court and the treaties of recognition of independence by Portugal, trying to write a national history away from the chronicle of the colonial past, which brought him closer to the more general designs of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute, where the conception of the master history of life and heroic examples was allied to the invention of a singular nationality.

If, on the one hand, the author considered that D. Pedro was an agent of the separation between the two kingdoms and of the prevalence of the “unity” of Brazil under the monarchy inherited from D. João VI, on the other hand, he used the word “revolution” in the sense of “evolution”, considering that the colony statute was a stage that would necessarily be overcome with time and

the “moral and material progress” of society, which was configured with the Portuguese Court in Rio de Janeiro. The transformations brought about by this unpredictable event, apart from the administrative and commercial effects, gave rise to the gathering of captaincies around a common political center. For these reasons, Pereira da Silva consolidated, within the scope of historiography, the words “independence” and “emancipation” as synonyms<sup>8</sup>. This semantic construction is articulated primarily to the understanding that the “dismemberment of the Portuguese nation”, in the face of the confrontations generated by the “recolonization” attempts imposed by the Courts in Lisbon, did not represent a definitive rupture. For the author, once the crucial moment of negotiations was overcome, in 1825, both could “profit” by recomposing mercantile and political links. Also quite original is the way he described the agents of independence, politicians who surrounded the prince, the main protagonist, and who were divided between liberal monarchists, led by José Bonifácio, and the more “democratic” groups, with “republican” tendencies enmeshed in Freemasonry, in the Chamber of Rio de Janeiro and in the troops. In this way, he highlighted internal contradictions and political competitions around the foundation of the Empire, which he explored more intensely in later works, when he turned to the controversies that surrounded the government of Pedro I, the Abdication and the regency period (Silva, 1871; 1878).

In the work that chronicled the government of D. Pedro I, Pereira da Silva criticized the emperor and the way he conducted his relations with the parliament, which generated incompatibilities within the Institute and especially with the Imperial Palace. In addition, he was accused of making mistakes in relation to people and episodes, being criticized for the lack of criteria and impartiality in the use of documents and testimonies that he allegedly collected (Enders, 2010). These disputes were further reinforced by Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen, which contributed to the fact that the *História* formulated by Pereira da Silva was practically forgotten.

Soon in the preface to the *História da Independência do Brasil* [History of the Independence of Brazil], Varnhagen clarified that he did not intend to write a special work on the period, but that he was obliged to do so not only to complement the *História Geral do Brasil* [General History of Brazil] (1854/1857) but, especially, to correct “errors” made by other writers in direct and nominal reference to Pereira da Silva’s work<sup>9</sup>. Varnhagen took as a guiding thread the chained, evolutionary and uninterrupted unfolding of the events that took place at the Court of Rio de Janeiro, between 1808 and 1825, and which resulted in the “foundation of the Empire”, replicating the periodization and expression used by Pereira da Silva, but with the clear intention of denying his interpretation and arguments.

The initial focus of his interpretation is on the colonial past, on the valorization of Portuguese colonial institutions and on the “civilization process”

they gave rise to, where the national origins that would have as a corollary the presence of the Bragantine Court in America would be rooted. In this version, impregnated by the political proposals of the enlightened Luso-Brazilians of the late 18th century, the construction of the Portuguese Empire that the Court in Brazil made possible would have promoted a peaceful and gradual development towards independence, gradually establishing a system of constitutional government, commanded by D. João VI. However, the Courts in Lisbon adopted a “disaggregating” approach, destroying any possibility of preserving the United Kingdom.

For Varnhagen, the Johannine government should have anticipated the circumstances, implementing political reforms to minimize the impact of the 1820 Revolution and the demands of the “revolutionaries” in Portugal and Brazil. He regretted the Crown’s lack of action, as the worsening of tensions, due to the “arbitrary and intolerant” attitudes of Portuguese deputies, made the rupture between the two kingdoms “inevitable”. However, he did not understand that independence was a confrontation between the “Brazilians” and the “Portuguese” or an opposition between colony and metropolis, as the Portuguese government itself took the initiative to grant “emancipation” to Brazil, transforming it into a kingdom. In this sense, the question of “union” or “separation” between Brazil and Portugal was related, for him, to the fact that the “Brazilians” and the “Portuguese” residing in the American portion did not submit to the referrals that the Courts intended to give to Luso-Brazilian relations. And it was because of the threat of “recolonization” that the provinces of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and São Paulo articulated themselves, in 1822, around the royal prince, to organize a “perpetually free” government.

Despite describing internal dissidences to the “partisans” of independence, exploring, in particular, the confrontation between José Bonifácio and the “liberal party”, Varnhagen’s attention was on the figure of D. Pedro. Like Silva Lisboa, he sought to follow the path of the prince who paved the way to become emperor, which can be interpreted as a mirror of the paths that the nation took from the beginnings of colonization to the moment of separation from Portugal. At first with fragile and contested powers, D. Pedro acquires, throughout the narrative, leadership and charisma, becoming the symbol of the supreme and unifying authority of the nation, which for the author made possible the “transition” towards the consolidation of independence.

The historiographical legacy of the 19th century was revisited and re-composed since the early years of the proclamation of the Republic and, notably, on the occasion of the centenary in 1922. In the early 20th century, as noted by Ângela de Castro Gomes (2004; 2014), new parameters for the ways of narrating the history of the nation were established, affirming the Republic without ruptures with the monarchic past, which led to a conciliatory reading of the Empire. What Maria de Lourdes Janotti (1998) defined as a “conver-

gent dialogue” between monarchists and republicans linked to coffee elites was outlined, those disillusioned with the new regime and members of the regional oligarchies, which paved the way for a consensus between intellectuals and politicians gathered at the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro and the Academia Brasileira de Letras around a positive interpretation of the monarchy and its role in construction of nationality that was articulated to the understanding of a necessary evolution of the country towards the republic and its mission of national reconstruction. This “dialogue” is emblematically mirrored in the work of Manuel de Oliveira Lima, of enormous influence to this day, which gave original contours to the plot of independence already consolidated since the 19th century.

Particularly in the work *O Movimento de Independência* [The Independence Movement], published in 1922, Oliveira Lima, following paths opened by Silva Lisboa, Armitage and Varnhagen, formulated an argument on the subject based on three hypotheses. The first was that independence and “national unity” resulted from the establishment of the Portuguese Court in Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, as he ascribed to this event the rupture of the colonial regime and the organization of a sovereign government, which would have transformed Brazil into an autonomous and emancipated kingdom. In this sense, the proclamation of September 7 would be the reaffirmation of a situation already configured, adopting the separation from the “recolonizing” Courts in Lisbon. The second hypothesis was that colonial society could be equated with other American colonial societies, as well as with European societies, since Portuguese colonization had promoted the formation of a “racial and social democracy”, preserved in the transition to the national period. For Lima, the old regime had not been fixed in the “tropics”, the landowners and slaves did not form an aristocracy, and the boundaries between social categories were imprecise, since the differences were anchored much more in the wealth than in birth privileges. The arrival of the Portuguese court only deepened these characteristics, configuring a “hybrid” monarchy, a mixture between absolutism and democracy that, according to the historian, could be called “crowned democracy”. Always concerned with inserting Brazilian circumstances within the scope of the American continent, Oliveira Lima credited the Courts in Lisbon with the responsibility for the separation, which made a dual monarchy unfeasible, but, at the same time, demonstrated the ordering and constructive capacity of the D. Pedro’s government. On account of these understandings, Oliveira Lima launched a third hypothesis: that the Empire was a “disguised republic”. Externally, it projected the royal apparatus, but internally it condensed liberal and constitutional contents appropriate to the American and republican principles of the time.

The interpretive traditions that surrounded the independence and the configuration of nationality in the 19th century were also revisited by several Brazilian interpreters in the following decades, who appropriated them to ex-

plain the singularities and mismatches of Brazilian society in relation to the standards considered models of capitalist development, which in part helps to understand the resilience of the historically consecrated plot and the repeated versions given to it (Marson; Oliveira, 2013; Bresciani, 2007). All these historiographical interpretations shaped academic and non-academic knowledge about independence, interacting with other supports of conception, production and dissemination, also situated in the field of memory.

Only more recently, from the 1960s onwards, did the traditions resulting from this interaction begin to be questioned in depth and other interpretations of independence could be presented and debated due, especially, to a conjunction between the academic production generated by the various postgraduate programs in History, spread across Brazilian public universities, and issues of a contemporary historical and political nature, such as neoliberalism, globalization and the crisis of world power centers, forcing, as Anderson (2008) had suggested, an in-depth investigation of liberalism and the processes of engendering nations and nationalisms in the post-war period.

In the current stage of knowledge, the independence of Brazil detached itself from the “National memory-history” that articulated it to clipped episodes – such as the proclamation of September 7, 1822 –, to characters and fragmented situations and, particularly, to a restrictive understanding of the processes underway in the early 19th century, as it was associated with the chronological and symbolic framework of an “emancipation”, elapsed between 1808 and 1822, which seemed to represent little or nothing for society and politics at the time.

In this sense, the separation of the *Independence* from a singular event made it possible to recover its dimension as a *political theme*, treated exhaustively within the scope of the different constituent parts of the then Portuguese Empire, especially from the second half of the 18th century onwards (Lyra, 1994). Furthermore, the understanding of the impossibility of investigating independence outside the horizons of the liberal revolutions that took place in the late 18th and 19th centuries both in Europe and America gained strength (Pimenta, 2009). That is to say, the separatist movement integrates the political, social and cultural processes that resulted in the formation of nations and national states in the western world, which not only brings the events that occurred in Portuguese America closer to other contemporary experiences, but also brings about the resizing of aspects and problems that made them unique.

Currently, largely due to the questioning and contributions of vigorous research, developed by a plethora of persistent and creative historians, not only have new and enriching horizons of knowledge been opened on the subject of independence, but the intertwining between writing of history, politics and memory remains lively debated.

## Notes

- 1 I would like to thank João Paulo Pimenta for his valuable suggestions during the preparation of this article. Always attentive to a topic that he has been investigating for years, João Paulo's contributions allowed to clarify certain passages of the text, incorporate authors and, especially, articulate to historiographical interpretations questions related to the culture of history, widely shared by countless sectors of Brazilian society, and which he and his group of students revealed with relevance (Pimenta et al., 2014).
- 2 The considerations presented here were dealt with in more depth in two recent articles: *Historiografía y memoria de la Independencia* (Oliveira, 2021a); and *O peso de imagens sacramentadas e os desafios científicos e educativos do Museu Paulista* (Oliveira, 2021b).
- 3 During the ongoing political struggles in Brazil and Portugal, between 1821 and 1822, not all protagonists used the association between independence and separation from the European kingdom. On the contrary, the expression "independence", especially in the press of Rio de Janeiro and the other provinces of Portuguese America, represented the organization of a representative and constitutional government, being used both by those who supported the objectives of the 1820 Revolution and by those who distrusted the purposes of the Courts in Lisbon. It was historiographical interpretations of the 19th century, based on the statements of D. Pedro I, that sealed this association, as in the work of Silva Lisboa (Oliveira, 2020, chap.3).
- 4 On the life and work of José da Silva Lisboa, see: Kirschner (2009).
- 5 On the emergence of different projects regarding both the reorganization of the Portuguese Empire after 1808 and the range of political alternatives under debate in the 1820s, see: Jancsó (2003; 2005).
- 6 Published in 1836, in English, by the Smith, Elder and Cia house, in London, in two volumes, the book covers the period from the arrival of D. João VI to Brazil in 1808 until the abdication of D. Pedro I and his departure for Portugal, in 1831. And, says the author, it is a History of Brazil "compiled from public documents and other original sources, forming a continuation of the History of Brazil, written by the poet Robert Southey, work published in London, between 1810 and 1819, composed in three volumes". For a long time, Armitage's work was the subject of speculation about its authorship, since it was believed that it was a Brazilian who wrote it under a pseudonym. However, British periodicals from the early 19th century helped to confirm Armitage's identity. Born in Failsworth, in 1807, at the age of 21 he took a job at Philips, Wood & Cia, which sent him to Brazil. He returned to England in the same year as his book was published and died in Manchester in 1856. The first Portuguese edition was published in 1837. See Armitage (1981).
- 7 On the trajectory of Francisco Sales Torres Homem (1812/1875) and the booklet *Libelo do Povo*, see: Magalhães Júnior (2009). On Teófilo Ottoni (1807/1869), see Ferreira Neto, (2013). The booklet on the sculptural ensemble in honor of D. Pedro, inaugurated in 1862, is part of the collection of the National Library (see references).
- 8 It is important to remember that, in the press of the first decades of the 19th century, the two expressions were widely used and, depending on the political interlocutor, were understood as equivalent. On the expression "emancipation" and its implications, see Pimenta (2010).
- 9 Varnhagen's (n.d.) work on independence was written in the 1870s, but was only published posthumously by the *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* with notes by Barão do Rio Branco.

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*ABSTRACT* – This article discusses the origins of certain types of academic and non-academic knowledge about the Independence of Brazil, examining them as an interplay of permanent tension between memory, politics and the writing of history. For 200 years, this tension has accompanied the country's Independence, ensuring it as a central condition in the history of Brazil and reinforcing its relevance today.

*KEYWORDS*: Independence, Historiography, Memory.

*RESUMO* – Este artigo discute as origens de certos saberes acadêmicos e não acadêmicos em torno da independência do Brasil, inserindo-os em um jogo de permanente tensão entre memória, política e escrita da história. Ao longo de 200 anos, essa tensão tem

acompanhado a temática da Independência, garantindo-lhe uma condição central na história do Brasil e renovando sua atualidade.

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE:* Independência, Historiografia, Memória.

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