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AN EMPIRE IN THE TROPICS: HISTORIOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

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Brazil has a peculiar history in comparison with the Spanish colonies, and is two years ahead in the commemorations of the bicentenary of American independence. Likewise, 2008 is key for the Portuguese and Brazilians, since 1808 was the year in which the unfolding of events began that culminated with Brazilian independence in 1822. In 1808 the regent prince Juan arrived in Rio de Janeiro with his family and court, escaping the French troops that had invaded the Iberian Peninsula. The Portuguese royal committee abandoned Lisbon under protection of the British navy on November 29th 1807, a year before the entrance in the city of the French troops. Then, the royals put into the port of Salvador de Bahia on January 24th and Rio de Janeiro on March 8th 1808. As is known, when the Braganza monarchy settled on American territory, a new experience in the evolution of modern empires began, and particularly, in that of the Portuguese colony that evolved as an “empire” under the title of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves from December 1815 onwards.

The bicentenary of the arrival of don Juan VI and the royal family has led to the production of numerous works that show the antecedents of his settlement in America; the facts and events that are part of the process of independence of Brazil as a monarchy; the repercussions it had in the historic evolution of Brazil; as well as a large variety of other subjects related to the organization of the State, configuration of the nation and its later development, in 1889, towards the republic of a monarchy with a very damaged image in public opinion.

Many works show these mentioned phenomena and many others that, regarding the commemoration, have expanded the historic knowledge towards perspectives and fields that have not been much cultivated by historiography, and not only in relation with Brazil. The aim of this essay is precisely to show some of them through the news and the analysis of some texts that deal with the origin, content, development and consequences of the empire established in the tropics in 1808, with special attention to those that deal with the representation of Brazil and the actors that made it possible; all this inside an indispensable international context. From my point of view, these are very

original works that combine various perspectives and methodologies and also convincing and new interpretations of facts and processes that have already been amply analyzed with the traditional views and methods of political and institutional history¹.

In the collected studies titled *Brasil y las independencias de Hispanoamérica* (Universitat Jaume I, 2007), João Paulo G. Pimenta presents the separatist Brazilian process not as an exception, but mentioning the issues that were common with revolutionary events of the Hispanic world, in answer to the question that guides his work; how did Spanish America influence the creation of independent Brazil? Based on modern political history, this author explains American independence as a consequence of the “general crisis of the Old Regime”. He shows through numerous common issues that the Hispanic and Portuguese American revolutionary movements are two vertices of one same process. He has a novel vision in his essential approach when he unites phenomena that historiography has commonly seen as absolutely separated; he founds his theories on varied and solid historic evidence, set out with clarity and forcefulness, and using an ample and up to date bibliography unknown in our circle.

In the first paragraphs Pimenta already offers an eloquent sample of the foundations that sustain his approach when he points out that a few days after the Portuguese court was installed in Rio de Janeiro, the minister of War and Foreign Business recommended the regent prince don Juan to immediately adopt a foreign stance aimed especially at Latin America, explained as a “sine qua non condition for the success of the tasks of preservation of the integrity of the Braganza monarchy and the unity of his domains”. This policy meant, among other things, that the process of political independence of Latin America was amply and in great detail accompanied by Brazil. In this manner, the author concludes, “in the middle of a nebulous outlook regarding the future alternatives for the shaken Portuguese Empire”, the pro-independence movements of Spain’s colonies “would prove to be deciding in the configuration of the project of political independence between Brazil and Portugal concluded in 1822”.

Pimenta not only shows the materialization of Brazilian independence but also the influence it received from Hispanic American revolutions. He does this through the analysis of the configuration of identity expressions of profound political content, among them American and Brazilian, that will culminate with the notion of a “Brazil that could be free because all of America was already free”; through the study of the political vocabulary used by the Brazilian press regarding the Latin American situation, in which words like revolution, uprising, insurrection and civil war took on a negative

¹ We are omitting the production outside of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. There is a convincing historiographic production of monographic characteristics outside of these areas triggered by the commemorations of the bicentenary. There are, for example, the investigation and editorial production in states like Rio Grande do Sul, specifically in Porto Alegre; Minas Gerais, in Belo Horizonte; in Bahia, especially in Salvador; also in Brasilia, by the publishing house of the national University of Brasilia. In these and other states there is a large number of published books, especially by the publishing houses of the federal universities and also by some private entities, in the first place, the catholic universities. This production can be called regional, but considering the size and singularities the regions have in Brazil, it is especially relevant there.

connotation from the historic-semantic point of view. This negative connotation was aimed at leading the actors in Brazil to watch over the integrity of the Portuguese monarchy, dynasty and nation; value was given to Portuguese American foreign politics – one of its elements was the approach towards the dismembering of the Spanish empire and the situation of the so-called Oriental or Cisplatina Province that, after offering one of the great stimulus for the political transformation of Brazil in an independent entity, would finally cease to be Brazilian so that Brazil could be fully independent. It was a known fact that the press of Montevideo played a role in the gestation of public opinion in Brazil and, perhaps more importantly, in the appearance of the political alternative of the separation between Brazil and Portugal that would have fundamental effects on the national Brazilian State constituted in the 19th century.

Finally, Pimenta mentions the study of historiography production after the Portuguese American independence, which was one of the most effective tools of political action and a result of the enlargement of public spheres. This historiography would validate the separatist project of Brazil, following the examples of using of the past offered by Hispanic America.

This reality was valued even at the time, as the words of the prince don Pedro – stamped in a proclamation aimed at the peoples a little before his proclamation as emperor of Brazil – show eloquently. He notices that Hispanic America “will give the example” and Brazil will attain the condition of the privileged group of “free” countries, because “citizens! Freedom has identified with the American territory”.

This general process has an original component, the concrete, material event of the move of the Portuguese court to Brazil, that thanks to recent publications is approached from testimonies of direct witnesses, like the chronicles *A vinda da família real portuguesa para o Brasil* (Editora José Olympio, 2007), written by Thomas O’Neil and originally published in London in 1810; and also thanks to the new historiographic works that deal with the subject.

In his chronicles O’Neil offers a very lively recount of the journey of don Juan and his family, and alternatives of the transformations of the Portuguese American court in Rio de Janeiro between 1808 and 1821; all this preceded by an introduction that informs about facts and the personalities of its integrants and main characters written by the historian turned anthropologist Lília Moritz Schwarcz. Her contribution helps to make this document a valuable source to know the way in which the event was seen at the time. O’Neil himself did not participate in the crossing and his recount is composed by references of its main characters.

If there was some knowledge of the royal Portuguese family in Brazil, little was known about the circumstances of their transoceanic journey until the work by Kenneth Light, *A viagem marítima da família real: a transferência da corte portuguesa para o Brasil* (Jorge Zahar Ed., 2008). This work reconstructs this episode for the first time, using unpublished material of British archives. The British navy watched over the ships of the royal family; so it is possible to have a very lively and meticulous description of the ships of the squadron, of its crews, of the route to Brazil and the climate and maritime

conditions during the crossing. This is also presented by an introduction by Lília Moritz Schwarcz.

While the passing of the Portuguese court to America might seem to be a secondary event in the scheme of the processes, truth is that Light's work shows for instance that the exodus of the royal family wasn't a desperate action to escape the French troops but planned well in advance, though decided on only three days before it was carried out. This interesting point has already been raised by Patrick Wilcken in an article titled "A Colony of a Colony": The Portuguese Royal Court in Brazil" (*Common Knowledge*, 11, 2, Spring 2005, pp. 249-263).

The main character of this journey, regent prince don Juan, has also been the object of particular studies, and a good example is the text of the Portuguese Fernando Dores Costa and Jorge Pedreira, *D. João VI: um príncipe entre dois continentes* (Companhia das Letras, 2008). More than a biography of the monarch and thanks to an explanation of his trajectory in the international political and economical context, the work examines the diplomatic reality he lived, and relates it with his family life, the political situation, the public agreements and the private intrigues he had to face. Through consecutive chapters that explain his rise to power in a Europe transformed by the French Revolution, the position of the Portuguese monarchy between France and England, the internal divisions of social groups and political factions in Portugal and the personal and political problems caused by his wife Carlota Joaquina, the work shows the tense itinerary of a prince who changed the destiny of an empire, and explains many of his fundamental determinations in the circumstances of his time.

The figure of Carlota Joaquina de Borbón has also given rise to publications that are especially valued as, like in the case we will mention, they are documents that make it possible to know this controversial figure of modern Portuguese American history more accurately, and correct some of the stereotypes that exist about her. The book *Carlota Joaquina. Cartas inéditas* (Casa da Palavra, 2007), organized and with a study by Francisca L. Nogueira de Azevedo, autora del trabajo *Carlota Joaquina na Corte do Brasil* (Editora Civilização Brasileira, 2003), compounds 145 unpublished letters sent or received by the princess of Spanish origin that got married to Juan in 1785, was by his side in his ascent to regent prince in 1792, in his journey to Brazil in 1807, in his proclamation to king in 1818 after the death of the incapacitated queen María I in 1816, and his return to Portugal in 1821. The correspondence shows a political and influential figure, very different from the image of the ambitious, whimsical, even depraved woman that has been spread. The letters reveal a brilliant speaker, educated and emancipated for the cannons of her time, who dialogues on equal terms with kings, princes and important politicians and intellectuals. But it also shows her personal life, her concerns, dreams, projects, affections and dislikes, as well as her preoccupation for the wellbeing of her family, including her husband Juan, with whom she had a serious marital crisis as a result of a political dispute with her advisers.

Besides offering a valuable documentation until now scattered in Spanish, Argentinean and Brazilian archives that take us closer to a figure in a period of great transformations in the world, the text reinforces a tendency in historiography that aims to revalue the

historical role of women, in this case, in the process of access to modernity in the Portuguese empire. In a larger context, the work of Patrick Wilcken, *Império à deviva: a corte portuguesa no Rio de Janeiro* (Editora Objetiva, 2005), deals with the existence of the royal family in Brazil, where he arrived with a court of close to 3000 people, among them clergy, ministers, military, family and servants. Founded with Portuguese, Brazilian and English heritage, history shows different aspects of the process, among them the initial surprise of the Europeans with the natural exuberance of Brazil, the characteristic functioning of official bureaucracy, the alternative founding of new institutions, like the Botanical Garden, carioca life at the beginning of the 19th century with its cruel treatment of slaves. But also courtesan life with its intrigues and precarious balances in the middle of a turbulent international situation in which, occasionally, the indecisive prince Juan didn't act with the timing and firmness the events required. Attending to the circumstances in the metropolis the court left behind, Lúcia Maria Bastos Pereira das Neves analyses in her work *Napoleão Bonaparte: imaginário e política em Portugal (c.1808-1810)* (Alameda Casa Editorial, 2008) from a novel angle abandoned Portugal at mercy of the French and shaken by popular discontent, but in which nobility maintained relations with the invaders, and thus enabling Napoleon's liberal principles to undermine the foundations of the old regime. This text gives fundamental importance to the Portuguese political context that, however, is presented in relationship with that of Europe and Brazil, showing at the same time a methodological strategy in which the study of the population's behavior is fundamental. The establishment of the Portuguese court in Brazil will give rise to a new political configuration for the Portuguese empire, the same that is studied in the context of the relationships between the metropolis and its colony in the work of Ronald Raminelli, *Viagens ultramarinas: monarcas, vassallos e governo a distancia* (Alameda Casa Editorial, 2008). In this manner, the way in which the Portuguese vassals contributed to maintain the vast empire through loyalty to the monarchy that made a government abroad possible, is shown in all its variety. Thanks to a meticulous investigation the text explores the formal administration formed by imperial authorities, and especially the role of the elite, educated in the Illustration, that traveled to remote places in representation of the king and wrote to Lisbon, contributing to the inventory of the empire, its peoples, riches and frontiers. Reconstructing the close relations between monarchs and the Portuguese American elite, it also explains the birth of a conservative elite that will defend the union with Portugal, and will seek to consolidate the political autonomy headed by prince Pedro later on.

Among the measures taken by the new government in Brazil, commercial liberalization is one of the most transcendental. The collective work organized by Rubens Ricupero and Luis Valente de Oliveira, *A abertura dos portos* (Editora Senac, 2008), deals with this subject from a point of view conditioned by the current situation of the South American nation.

In this work, it is shown how the establishment of the court in Brazil led to an intense contact with travelers, merchants and dealers from different nationalities that, favored by the liberalization of their ports to the ships of befriended nations, had multiple consequences both for the metropolis and the colonies. This measure, together with the move of the court to Brazil, was stimulated or suggested by the British, who hoped – as

in fact they did – to gain advantage of the new situation. Nevertheless, the commercial initiative and its effects are seen as the first act of economic globalization of Brazil, just at a moment similar to the current one, when the country needs to augment its insertion in foreign markets.

But the commemoration of the bicentenary of the royal family's arrival in Rio de Janeiro has not only made the publishing of investigations related with the facts and main characters of those events possible. There has also been a recompilation of works that deal with aspects of social existence that have not been part of traditional historiographic preoccupation. One example is the work *A saúde pública no Rio de Dom João* (Editora Senac, 2008) that includes two brief medical treatises written at the moment of the arrival and departure of the court of Brazil. In these, the influence of climate on health is tackled, as well as the most common diseases in Rio at the time. There are also proposals for the cleaning up of the city. The thoughts of Manoel Viera da Silva and the work of the surgeon of the king's chamber Domingos Ribeiro dos Guimaraes Peixoto deal with topics like the unhealthy influence of heat and humidity on the population, the consequences of the lack of hygiene in slaughter houses and the techniques for food preservation. Among the negative factors for health, the city's topography is seen as disastrous, just like the marshes it contains. Sanitary measures like the encouragement of maternal nursing, in the battle against the wet nurses that were so characteristic of colonial Brazil; quarantine for almost twenty thousand Africans that arrived every year in the country as slaves; and the improvement of storage places for food, seem to be the most simple and effective ones. With beautiful illustrations like those of the artist Jean-Baptiste Debret from the National Library of Rio de Janeiro, the publishing of these sources is preceded by a text by a member of the Brazilian Academy of Language, the physician Moacyr Scliar. In this text he informs about the most frequent diseases and pests, for example, yellow fever, malaria and bubonic plague; and about some common treatments, like bleeding. The sources are considered, among other reasons, because they reflect the medical thinking of the time. For Scliar the main conclusion of the treatises is synthesized in one single phrase: "Brazil is one enormous hospital".

Also centered on a particular aspect of reality, though as an analytical work, Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva studies the first periodical printed in Brazil in her work *A gazeta do Rio de Janeiro (1808-1822): cultura e sociedade* (Eduerj, 2007) as a valuable source of information for the years that preceded independence. This is especially so, considering that until the arrival of the court there was no press in Brazil. The author points out that in its pages, there is a heterogeneous load of information that illustrate daily and material life, cultural happenings, social existence and commercial goings on of a city in a time of transformations, political effervescence and mercantile dynamism. In this manner, the book revives and ponders a source forgotten by historians, among other reasons for its characteristic of official publication - supposedly only in service of the government - and presents it also as a sphere of collective communication and social participation.

The effects of the move of the Portuguese American court were also manifest in cultural and artistic life in Brazil, with titles that explain how prince Juan contributed to

stimulate artistic activity through, for instance, the encouragement and stimulus of music, revealing himself to be a great lover of music. In the work *A música no Rio de Janeiro no tempo de D. Joao VI* (Casa da Palavra, 2008),

Vasco Mariz offers the antecedents of musical sensibility that were present in the Portuguese court, like the forming of one of the main musical libraries in Europe. He also explains how music was developed through different initiatives that transformed Rio de Janeiro in the center of the cultural life of the empire, with music one of the principal activities of the court.

This, thanks among other things to the arrival of excellent musicians like Marcos Portugal and his brother Simão de Fonseca Portugal, and the promoting of local artists like José Maurício Nunes Garcia, who was named master of chapel of his royal highnesses and later on considered to be the “father” of the national music of Brazil. A different work that, from a little traveled angle, also illustrates about the existence of this empire in the tropics.

But in matters of art, there is no doubt that the production by artists who arrived in Brazil after the move of the Portuguese court to America is one of the most attractive and stimulating. Numerous publications, from catalogues to historiography studies, show a topic that is central today about the independence processes in America, like the representations of local, “national”, republican, liberal, or like in the case of Brazil “imperial”, but independent. From the reading of the aforementioned works, the first ascertainment is that in Brazil there was also an arrival of French citizens that accompanied Napoleon in his European initiatives and once the emperor was defeated and they fell in disgrace faced with the new monarchical authorities, they were forced to emigrate.

While many military arrived to freedom fighting Hispanic America – in the case of Chile studied in detail by Patrick Puigmal – in Brazil, where independence came in relative peace, there was no arrival of imperial armies, but there were French artists who, after serving and contributing to Napoleon’s greatness, now put their talents at the service of the empire that was installed in the tropics. In this manner, this fulfilled the need of the reigning house in Brazil at the beginning of the 19th century to create an image that reinforce the new situation, with numerous artists “in exile” from Europe who needed a new field to unleash their creativity and, at the same time, sustain themselves until past loyalties were forgotten. Two French artists welcomed by the court in Rio de Janeiro stand out, Nicolas-Antoine Taunay and Jean Baptiste Debret. Some of the most recent publications about Brazil post 1816 are dedicated to their trajectory and work, valuing the attractiveness their production has in current society as well as the potential analytical value study of their work presents. These publications have benefited from magnificent recompilations of their works, stupendous exhibitions and conscientious theses of their passing through America. Among the editions with documents with the production of both artists it is worth to mention the catalogues *Nicolas-Antoine Taunay no Brasil. Uma leitura dos trópicos* (Editora Sextante Ltda., 2008) *Taunay e o Brasil. Obra completa. 1816-1821* (Capivara Editora Ltda., 2008), the monumental *Debret e o Brasil. Obra completa* (Capivara Editora Ltda., 2008), and the

valuable *Caderno de Viagem de Jean-Baptiste Debret* (Editora Sextante Artes, 2006). *Taunay no Brasil* corresponds to the exhibition catalogue of the same name inaugurated in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro in May 2008 as part of the commemorative activities of the bicentenary of Juan and his court's arrival to Brazil. Beautifully illustrated with reproductions of the works of the painter, both of his European and Brazilian period, it also offers a series of brief texts recompiled by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Elaine Dias in which aspects of Taunay's biography are mentioned; the circumstances of his arrival in Brazil, the analysis of his landscape, historic, urban and social works, but also some of the characteristics of his painting, in which the tropical landscape has special importance and is presented as a real sight, while the phenomenon of slavery is dissimulated inside a minimalist representation of the topic. Besides gathering canvases and other pictorial works of Taunay scattered in different museums and collections of the world, this exhibition – and thus its catalogue – has the merit of proposing an interpretative reading of the paintings. It also deals with the problem of artistic production in 19th century Brazil. As stated in the texts that conform the book, with the arrival of what was later on called the French Artistic Commission – some of its integrants Taunay, Debret and Joaquin Lebreton – there is also the arrival of the academic style and valuing of the neoclassical model that would materialize in a landscapes with moral and idealist content, that was very useful for the historical circumstances Brazil was going through in the first decades of the 19th century. From then on, the “Brazilian” court had the artists that would give her the luxury and sumptuousness that the rites and prestige of the court required.

The immortalizing of official and real facts, like funerals, weddings, and especially the consecration and acclamation of don Juan, will be some of the first opportunities the French painters will have to exalt the virtues of the rulers and idealize the natural environment the court had settled down in. In this context, Taunay is considered to be a landscape painter characterized by combining the grandiosity of the French Revolution with the force of natural American reality he found in Brazil. He is seen as a true artist of two worlds; with works in which nature replaces revolution in the national imagery.

The catalogue of Pedro Correa do Lago unites for the first time the complete works of Taunay in Brazil, considered to be the most renowned European artist that painted the landscape of this country. Following the methodology of the art historian, this work is the result of a long investigation and complements the catalogue in French of Claudine Lebrun Jouve, *Nicolas-Antoine Taunay 1755-1830* (Arthena, 2003) that classifies more than a thousand works of the painter. The work facilitates appreciation of his painting and originality, as well as the qualities that make it unique among the painters of Brazil, essentially because of its discovery of light and tropical nature. The text also ponders one of the biggest consequences of the stay of Taunay in Brazil, his permanence in the work of his three artist children, part of which is also reproduced.

Divided in sections, the text presents landscapes and portraits; lost or disappeared paintings; the aquarelle conserved of his work on paper about Brazil; the paintings of non Brazilian subjects painted in Brazil; and other questionable works that are erroneously attributed to Taunay, each one of them accompanied by a text that explains the origin of painting, its essential characteristics, the aims of its author behind

execution and technique, among other elements that enable a complete knowledge of the painting of this artist.

From the collection the option of Taunay for small size paintings is clearly revealed; the transcendence of the landscape as motive of its compositions; the beauty and quality in the execution of his paintings; and the importance of some of his portraits, like that of queen Carlota Joaquina, one of the most famous monarchs in Europe for the lack of her physical attractiveness, that, by the way, is presented here for the first time as work of Taunay. There is also homesickness, openly confessed by the artist, for European vegetation that he doesn't manage to omit from his Brazilian landscapes.

The titles with the work of his colleague and sometimes rival, the painter Jean-Baptiste Debret, correspond to an edition of facsimiles of his traveling notebooks and the complete catalogue of his production in Brazil. His notebook with aquarelles and sketches is, according to its editor Julio Bandeira, the missing link to his *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil*, a work that is considered to be the most complete representation of Brazil in the time of Prince Juan and the first years of the empire. In the notebook of only 64 pages, preceded by a brief introduction from the editor, are the first impressions of the artist; the instant he discovers and starts to register this exotic land of Brazil, with its new peoples and customs. There is a recount of the intensity of his contact with the city of Rio, its mainly African population, and the strength of the tropical light, capable of altering the artistic fundamentals he brought from France and also his view on the world.

Considered as the most famous painters that represented Brazil in the 19th century, Debret is retrieved in the middle of the commemoration of the 200 years since the arrival of the royal family in Brazil as a way to value the iconography from the end of the colonial period in the middle of the celebrations, as shown in the works we commented on, a reasoned and profound appreciation of the importance of Portuguese administration for Brazil and its evolution towards the republic.

Valued as a true documentalist of the court, which is described on canvases and engravings that show its integrants, rituals and daily life; also a chronicler of peoples and draftsman of vegetal species and animals of tropical nature, Debret and his work have been the object of study of Julio Bandeira y Pedro Correa do Lago, who have reunited his works in the catalogue *Debret e o Brasil. Obra completa*. It contains more than 1300 images, among them more than 200 unknown works, which are believed to be the totality of the works produced by the artist in America.

The authors of this complete register of Debret's Brazilian's work especially appreciate the "finished aquarelle" by the painter, his main contribution, among other reasons, because they gave rise to the engravings that made him famous. But above all, because unlike other traveling artists of his time, like for instance Juan Mauricio Rugendas, Debret worked conscientiously on his 250 aquarelle, that completely finished, and not just like sketches, illustrate in great detail the daily existence of Brazil of the time. A true "embroidery of Brazilian day to day", that, though it is anachronistic, also illustrates the centuries of colonial life before his arrival to America. Experts sustain

that the quality and fidelity to reality of his work is what turned him into an essential artist in the process of creation and disclosure of Brazil's image. The book we're commenting is also composed by introductory texts about the life and work of Debret before the paintings, divided in four sections: paintings and oils, aquarelle, sketches and engravings. A total of 1070 works described in the catalogue itself. There is also a section about questioned and rejected attributions, with more than 80 works.

If we consider that Taunay and Debret, as well as Mauricio Rugendas who also resided in Brazil some years (and whose work was recompiled by Pablo Diener and Maria de Fátima Costa under the epigraph *Rugendas e o Brasil* (Editora Capivara, 2002)) are considered as the greatest visual interpreters of the first half of the 19th century in Brazil, it is not surprising that there are detailed catalogues of their artistic work, like the ones we have mentioned before². It is undoubtedly a loable initiative, the result of years of investigation, that thanks to private enterprises and state organisms are put to disposition of the general public and the investigators that in this manner have first hand sources for their work.

The surge of historiographic thesis appears as natural; texts that from different angles among them cultural history and iconological analysis, explain the value of the works of artists in the context of phenomena and processes like the settlement of the Portuguese court in America, the formation of the nation in Brazil or the representation of the tropics in the art of the 19th century. Among these titles, the work of the aforementioned Lilia Moritz Schwarcz is undoubtedly relevant. This historian has concentrated for more than a decade on the study of Brazil during the transit from colony to empire and that develops as such from 1822 onwards. A sample of this is a solid and original production that has materialized in books like *As barbas do imperador* (Companhia das Letras, 1987) and the most recent *O sol do Brasil. Nicolas-Antoine Taunay e as desventuras dos artistas franceses na corte de d. Joao* (Companhia das Letras, 2008).

With wit, this work about Taunay opens with an autographic document by the artist that serves Schwarcz to revise one of the most common statements of historiography: that it was the emperor Juan who hired a French artistic mission as part of his plan for the exaltation of his American empire. In the letter it is the now 60 year old Frenchman who not only offers his services to the king, but who practically asks shelter after "especially scared by the last invasion of Paris, all my hopes are on the asylum that your majesty...".

The issue, according to experts apparently not without importance, isn't completely settled, because in his catalogue, Pedro de Correa do Lago also enters the polemic

² It is also worth to mention a great catalogue edited some years ago. It is the work of Robert Wagner, *Viagem ao Brasil, nas aquarelas de Thomas Ender de 1817-1818* (Capa Editora, 2000). Ender is a quite fleeting presence in Brazil. He arrived as the illustrator of the Austrian Bavarian scientific expedition that accompanied princess Leopoldina, the wife of Pedro I. Johann Baptist Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius were in that team of scientists, the expedition of Spix & Martius took place in Brazil between 1817 and 1820.

already unleashed in the 19th century about the official or unofficial character of the so-called French Artistic Mission. He concludes that a middle ground has to be taken between both points of view based on his documents; especially Taunay's correspondence (used to distort the official character of the enterprise) is subsequent to his arrival in Brazil and thus can not serve to prove he invited himself to Rio de Janeiro.

Nevertheless, the starting point of Lilia Moritz Schwarcz's investigation is significant because it clearly shows the orientation of the work. It is no longer about analyzing the presence of European artists in Brazil only as instruments for the independence processes, conformation of the nation or organization of an autonomous state of the metropolis, in which any initiative related to them responds to conscious actions, evaluated as praiseworthy by the state; but it looks to study the facts, processes and figures for their own value, independent of the fact that their work can also be appreciated as functional to the national state that is conformed in the 19th century.

From this point of view Taunay serves as an axis to embark on subjects that are original for our latitudes like the European idea about America and Brazil, especially of the French, that conditions the painter long after his confrontation with the real Brazil; the weight of the neoclassical artistic training of Taunay that even leads him to paint the tropics with species of mild temperatures and European landscapes; the uses in service of the nation and the state of art; the contents of the artistic discourse about Brazil, in which the landscape takes a special place; the tension natural reality awakes in the artist when it clashes with his European academic training, or the influence of the tropics in his work after his stay in Rio, in which palm trees and other elements of American reality make their presence in an unconscious manner.

Several aspects of the work *O sol do Brasil* draw our attention, for instance, the role and determining influence of Alexander von Humboldt in the European notion about Brazil, a valued territory, imagined, dreamed of and thought about long before it was known by the French artists.

Another antecedent of the transcendence of the Prussian wise man, even about places he never visited, but that thanks to his investigations and knowledge and also his conception of geographic reality as integrated spaces that belong to a whole, the cosmos, allowed travelers like Taunay to have a positive image of America, appreciate the importance of other cultures and inflame his imagination to look for exotic regions. This would also happen later on with Juan Mauricio Rugendas.

The pages that Schwarcz dedicates to show the role of art after the French revolution – now in service of the state, very much linked to politics and in a period in which politics gained social importance thanks to art. Painting in that time started to produce works with significance that sometimes reproduced the image of the state, in others created new images or made up representations. As we can see, many renowned painters took part in this production, among them Taunay who not only established ties with the empire, but also helped to glorify its most representative figure: Napoleon. It is exactly this scheme that the artist will repeat in Brazil, now in service of the Portuguese kingdom lead by Prince Juan. Conditioned by his neoclassical training, which includes a

return to the classical past, that was copied and reinterpreted, the style would be functional to the execution of historical paintings that, in turn, were used for the exaltation of events of current occurrence, like those related to the settlement of the Portuguese court in Brazil. It was all done with a tone of clear educational intent, even occasionally moralizing, virtuous, forming of society, citizens and free men.

In a context with no great battles and epic actions, the French artists in Brazil produced paintings that excited the imagination, stimulated feelings of belonging and contributed to the prestige of the court, precisely before the declaration of independence in 1822. In this context, the relationship between art and politics is very original; specifically the explanation of how after a period of so many perturbations caused by the Napoleonic wars the genre of landscapes is reinforced. A coincidence or not and as Schwarcz points out, just when art transforms the landscape in an instrument of the national discourse to picture the fatherland, European artists (among them Taunay), are arriving in Brazil. From the point of view of the interests of Nicolas-Antoine Taunay, the works show that Brazil represented the realization of a series of dreams after the end of the imperial adventure it had participated in: a chance to recoup economically; a political option; an isolated region, far away from the war; a chance to forget his past; a great stimulus to practice the genre of the landscape and make himself a new clientele; and finally, a corner where nature was inspiring. All these factors are tackled with documentation by Schwarcz; showing an indispensable perspective to understand the work of foreigners who went to America in times of independence that, in the case that concerns us, is fundamental as well, since Taunay always had the intention of returning to Paris. Undoubtedly, the circumstance of a court in the American “exile” will be determinant to understand the reception of the French in Brazil, and that is what our author shows too. This point is essential because it allows valuing the “local” conditions that made the insertion of artists, naturalists, merchants, businessmen, intellectuals and military possible in the first decades of the 19th century. It is not – as is sometimes presented – the consequence of an act of personal will, alien to the context they arrive in, it is also the result of the needs, lacks, circumstances, urgencies of American societies. In this specific case, a court that needs instruments like art that contribute to its enhancement and legitimating. This magnificent investigation deals with many other topics: the circumstances, components and characteristics of the “French Mission”; the destiny of its members (mainly Taunay); and the analysis of their pictorial work and trajectory after their return to France. All fundamental subjects to understand the imperial trajectory of Brazil, and therefore of Brazil of the 19th century, treated from the perspective of social history of art and culture that expands knowledge and comprehension of processes, periods and personalities that historiography normally only tackles from a political angle. It is the process of independence and forming of nations in America explained and understood from the point of view of art. An original point of view that complements another attractive work by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *A longa viagem da biblioteca dos reis. Do terremoto de Lisboa à Independência do Brasil* (Companhia das Letras, 2002). In this work the process is explained through the avatars of the Royal Library, when books were symbols of power and prestige. Though foreign to the commemorations of the bicentenary of the arrival of the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro, we can not cease to mention in this brief recount the forceful and stimulating production, essential to understand the handling of independent Brazil, by one of the

main Brazilian historians, José Murilo de Carvalho, whose most recent investigation is dedicated to explain the transition from empire to republic. A sample of this are his works *Nação e cidadania no Império. Novos horizontes* (Civilização Brasileira, 2007) and *Pedro II – Ser ou não ser* (Companhia das Letras 2007), besides the recent reediting of an already classical work of 1990, *A formação das almas. O imaginário da república no Brasil* (Companhia das Letras, 2007).

Closely related with the already mentioned works, *A formação das almas...* offers the efforts and instruments of republican legitimating faced with the small mobilized population since, as Carvalho proves, and just like happened with the independence, the development to the republic in Brazil and Latin America did not include popular participation. The problem of rationally justifying the new organization of power in a society of very low formal education, lead the author to investigate the use the new regime made of universal signs, of easy reading, like images, allegories, symbols and myths, thus giving rise to a work of great esthetical sensibility in which the mythology and symbology of the Brazilian political system is identified and deciphered. One of the first conclusions of this issue is that the need for symbols for the construction of the new social and political republican values - and the proximity of the centenary of the French Revolution - explain the use Brazilian republicans made of the French model, which offered a rich source of inspiration. The battle for the construction of an official version of facts, the fight for the establishment of a myth of origin; the finally frustrated attempts to use a female figure as symbol of the republic; the heroes that had to be invented to serve as models for the community; the history, with its polemics, surrounding the adoption of a national flag and anthem, constitute some of the analytic instruments that Carvalho uses masterly to explore the values and ideological content of the political regime that was founded in 1889 in Brazil.

Regarding the images and representations of the republic, the work also allows seeing the influence of French artists of the so called French Mission that arrived in 1816 in the new republican imagery. Among other things, because the bigger part of the painters that made works for the republic were formed in the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, a true bastion of academic neoclassical painting that became more and more important along the 19th century. There were coincidences among both groups, for instance in their scarce attention to the representation to popular life, but also differences, because the artists of the republic did not execute historical paintings with the constancy of their predecessors. It is not a minor subject, because, according to Carvalho's interpretation, it shows the scarce popular entrenchment of the republican regime, also to be seen regarding symbols like the national anthem. Unlike the French model, but similar to almost all Latin America, the Brazilian republic did not have popular support at the time of its instauration. It had little roots, entrenched only in reduced areas of the population, the educated and urban groups. An essential ascertainment to explain the comings and goings of its trajectory until today that, in the case of the larger majority of Latin American countries, has not been noticed and studied in detail, prevented by a national historiography born under the wings and in service of the republican state. This historiography's main characteristic has been to chronicle the republican trajectory that, for the sole fact of existing, is presumed to be successful. Faced with this lack of popular entrenchment, the Brazilian republicans had to turn to the most profound

cultural traditions, even those alien to their values and principles, like those inherited from the empire, to popularize the new situation. Only this explains that republican Brazil maintained the imperial flag, with the changes promoted by the republican positivists; also the music of the anthem composed for the funeral rites of Pedro I in 1834 with lyrics that had not been sung during the monarchy. Carvalho proves that in both cases the permanence of these two imperial heritages was a triumph of tradition, a popular victory, perhaps the only one of the public in the process of the installment of the republic. The popular entrenchment of the hymn, that with its new lyrics was known as *Virundum* – in Brazil erroneous and mostly funny versions of song lyrics are called *Virunduns* – allowed it to become a symbol of the Brazilian nation, before being a symbol of the new political regime. Posterior history of the republic confirmed the popular roots of the hymn. For example, our author sustains this happened in moments of opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorships, when the hymn served as a channel to express the civil emotion of multitudes in public places³.

From the point of view of American history and historiography, the works about Brazil we have presented allow for some final thoughts.

Firstly, the quantity, quality and variety of editorial production the events of 1808 have brought about, which amply surpassed this little sample. Theses, sources, studies, art texts and documents compose an enviable collection of beautifully illustrated and elegantly edited books, many of them financed by private enterprises or public organisms, that show the Brazilian's people interest for history and art.

Secondly, the valuing of the period when Brazil was the center of the Portuguese empire and the role of the court in the evolution of Brazil as an independent country. In this aspect, there is certainly a great difference with postcolonial and republican reality in Spanish speaking America.

Thirdly, attend the impact tropical nature and society caused in the Europeans when they arrived in Brazil, especially slavery. This complex relationship between two worlds, in which actors from one and another side try to impose their terms, is a great problem or topic of investigation that, in the case of Spanish America, has not been studied in all its magnitude. This prevents, for example, understanding the failure of many initiatives and institutions that tried to impose themselves against the grain of existing social reality.

Fourth, the preoccupation of at least a part of Brazilian historiography to understand the history of Brazil in the American context. Therefore in relation with the processes of independence, as is proven by the work of João Paulo G. Pimenta. This is undoubtedly a laudable intention, that is not reciprocal in the Hispanic investigators, and that should

³ This happened likewise in other Latin American countries submitted to military regimens (in Chile too) where singing the hymn emphasizing certain phrases, for example the one that mentions “the asylum against oppression” in the chorus of the Chilean hymn. This was a way of voicing a republican, civil opinion, even an emotion of members of the national community

stimulate and open uncomparative points of view for Latin American historiography.

Fifth, the importance of valuing sources and documents, both for making known and spread authors and fundamental works in Brazilian trajectory, as well as offer instruments to those who study the past, no matter what perspective they adopt. In the production of historiography, the principal basis of all historical knowledge that aspires to be more than a passing heterodox opinion is undoubtedly in documentation.

Sixth, the variety of analytical perspectives in Brazilian academia, so little known and appreciated among us, and of which the mentioned titles are but a small sample. In this regard, the history of art and culture we have been able to know have special relevance. They offer valuable angles to appreciate, for example, the work by Joan Mauricio Rugendas about America, but also the work of

Claudio Gay and his monumental *Historia física y política de Chile* in 30 volumes.

How Chilean, in the sense of nationality, are they? How European? What styles, conventions and models do they both follow? These are open questions that have to be taken into account when studying their works about Chile.

Seventh, the influence of French culture and art in the creation of national symbols. Brazil is a good example of this. But let us also remember that the first history of Chile, composed by express commission of the state to contribute to the forming of the sense of community, is the work of a French naturalist, Claudio Gay⁴.

Eight, it is surprising that there isn't a great production about the Brazilian creoles in the period between 1808 and 1822, and that they and their interests don't appear in the reviewed works. It is known that the arrival of the court produced resentment in Rio. In a first moment the members of the court even went to live in houses that were seized from the inhabitants of the city and marked with the initials P.R., that stood for Prince Regent, and that in a tone of humor were read as Predio Robado (Stolen Property) or Ponha-se na Rua, Put them on the Street. In this point, there is undoubtedly a great difference with the historiography production about Spanish America and its independence process, in which creoles with their interests, initiatives and fights have a central role. Though of course Brazilian independence can not be characterized as a fight between "Brazilians" against "Portuguese".

Lastly, the originality of problems and topics to tackle historical phases that, like independence in our society and on the verge of the bicentenary, is reduced to the "heroes" of always; to the recount of military chronicles so many times repeated; the celebration of institutions with no social entrenchment and an especially solemn approach to history, so careful and valuing of the role of the state, so preoccupied with eulogizing the nation, that it prevents to take care and get close to the subjects that, like

⁴ We have developed this statement in the thesis "De la historia natural a la historia nacional. La *Historia física y política de Chile* de Claudio Gay y la nación chilena", prepared in the context of project FONDECYT N° 1051016, of which this bibliographical essay is also a result.

art, health, press, commerce, women and artist (to name only a few), reflect historical processes in all their magnitude.

Translated by Cristina Labarca Cortés

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