



The political repositioning of the Baron of Abiahy in the educational debates of the end of the Empire and beginning of the Republic¹

O reposicionamento político do Barão de Abiahy nos debates educacionais do fim do Império e início da República

El reposicionamiento político del Barão de Abiahy en los debates educativos del final del Imperio y comienzo de la República

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Abstract

This article demonstrates how Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha - the baron of Abiahy, an active figure of the political elite in Paraíba and representative of the conservative party, remained a monarchist until the eve of the republican proclamation and had to adhere to the new established regime, adjusting his speech involving educational reforms to remain in conditions of political control. With the Republic, some subjects from the late 19th century repositioned their ideas on central elements of instruction. These discussions, as part of the political competitions, were mainly found in newspapers and presidential reports. It is perceived an adherent and liberal conception in several moments as: defense of the instruction for the naive, ideal of Free Education and creation of night classes for the working adult public. Thus, the adherent character in the performance of the baron of Abiahy is verified, which represented the redefinition of the political game in a period characterized by the coexistence of positions in relation to the educational, political and social order.

Keywords: Educational debates. Adherence. Political culture.

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Resumo

Este artigo demonstra como Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha – o barão do Abiahy, figura atuante da elite política na Paraíba e representante do partido conservador, permaneceu monarquista até as vésperas da proclamação republicana, aderindo ao novo regime estabelecido e ajustando seu discurso envolvendo as reformas educacionais para continuar em condições de controle político. Com a República, alguns sujeitos do final do século XIX reposicionaram suas ideias sobre elementos centrais da instrução. Estas discussões, como parte das concorrências políticas, encontravam-se, sobretudo, nos jornais e nos relatórios presidenciais. Percebe-se uma concepção adesista e liberal em vários momentos como: defesa da instrução para os ingênuos, ideário do Ensino Livre e criação de aulas noturnas para o público adulto trabalhador. Assim, constata-se o caráter adesista na atuação do barão de Abiahy, que representava a redefinição do jogo político em período caracterizado pela coexistência de posicionamentos diante do ordenamento educacional, político e social.

Palavras-chave: Debates educacionais. Adesismo. Cultura política.

Resumen

Este artículo demuestra cómo Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha, el barão de Abiahy, una figura activa de la élite política en Paraíba y representante del partido conservador, siguió siendo monárquico hasta la víspera de la proclamación republicana y tuvo que adherirse al nuevo régimen establecido, ajustando su discurso e ideas que implican reformas educativas para permanecer en condiciones de control político. Con la República, algunos sujetos de finales del siglo XIX reubicaron sus ideas sobre elementos centrales de la instrucción. Estas discusiones, como parte de las competencias políticas, se encontraron principalmente en periódicos e informes presidenciales. Se percibe una concepción adherente y liberal en varios momentos como: defensa de la instrucción para el ingenuo, ideal de educación gratuita y creación de clases nocturnas para el público adulto trabajador. De este modo, se verifica el carácter adherente en la actuación del barão de Abiahy, que representó la redefinición del juego político en un período caracterizado por la coexistencia de posiciones en relación con el orden educativo, político y social.

Palabras clave: Debates educativos. Adherencia. Cultura política.

Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, vast scenarios of social, cultural, economic and political changes were spread throughout the entire Brazilian territory. The country adapted to a demand for “new ideas”, in terms of Sílvio Romero, which had already been reverberated in Europe and in the United States, and spread to the rest of the West, reaching Empire Brazil.

Among these changes stood out the expansion of liberalism and capitalism which, according to political and intellectual elites, brought with them modernizing aspects to the country, such as the exchange of slave labor for free labor, republicanism, urbanization, coffee expansion, educational reforms, the expansion of railways, etc. A set of social, cultural, economic and political changes that spread throughout the national territory, whose process of regime change was marked by a gradual erosion of the monarchy.

At the end of the Empire and the beginning of the Republic, two groups of thought about the new form of government and the ideas derived from these transformations were possible to identify in the late 1800s. The first group identifies the so-called historical republicans, who longed for the monarchic regime fall and, by introducing the new political model, these subjects would have a voice and space in the new government. The other group, which interests us and that will be highlighted in this work, refers to the adherents, a group that remained monarchist until the eve of the republic proclamation and that, in order to join the new regime, had to adjust their speech and ideas to remain in power. In this way, they envisioned greater political options and strategies to effectively participate in the new government that was being installed.

Faced the new system of government established on November 15th, 1889, the political actors in the late 19th century who faced the new constituted regime had a repositioning of their ideas around the central elements of that period, and education was on the agenda of these discussions as part of political competitions, mainly on the pages of periodicals, in parliamentary statements and reports by provincial presidents.

Thus, with the theoretical methodological support of intellectual history intertwined with the History of Education field, this article intends to highlight the performance of Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha - Baron of Abiahy² - a member of the Conservative party and an influential figure in the province of Paraíba during the second half of the 19th century and early years of the republic. When analyzing, therefore, his ideas about public instruction which are based on adherent and liberal conceptions, his discourse and ideas involving educational reforms continue under conditions of political command and control.

Among these adherent and liberal characteristics that were brought up in the debates by Carneiro da Cunha, several moments can be highlighted, such as in defense of the educational spreading to the people; instruction for the naive after the Free Womb Law; instruction intended for the ones who were freed after the end of slavery; the ideals of Free Education; and creation of evening classes for the working adult public. At the time, these and other arrangements advocated by Carneiro da Cunha were considered essential for the

² Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha received the noble title of Baron of Abiahy in 1888, for this reason we will refer to him in some moments as Carneiro da Cunha, when he does not yet have the title of Baron, and other moments as Baron of Abiahy.

insertion of Brazil into modernity, in the liberal molds and with a view to the new government system that was being designed.

The Baron of Abiahy's brief trajectory and performance

In recent decades, many academic productions have emphasized the relationship between the field of History of Education and some of the subjects participating in the tense transition from the Empire to the Republic. Historiography has undergone significant changes in the constant movement, which is the subject's place in history.

Thus, the field of Intellectual History and New Political History are part of these changes. The analyzes of these historiographic currents focus on the elements that involve the positioning of ideas and political cultures of certain subjects, placing them in their (intellectual and historical) context of production. For a long time, these ideas and political cultures were target of criticism that helped in renovation, and thus, in changes so that their approach could contribute to a new way of seeing certain subjects within historiography.

Since this context of historiography changes, we could find support to situate Baron of Abiahy, also known as Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha, by understanding his context, trajectory and the ideas permeated in his political performance as a subject who provided circulation, mediation and the debate around ideas that go beyond the 19th century and enter the 20th century. Thus,

the investigation of the elementary structures in sociability of these subjects, that is, what they produced, in which places they worked and published their writings, with whom they dialogued, what they read, in short, trying to understand how certain types of insertion (microclimates) enable the rise and fall of ideas produced by certain social groups and, on the other hand, how these individuals, participants of a cultural elite, produced and mediated culture in their respective contexts. (COSTA, 2015, p. 89 – own translation)

Helenice Rodrigues da Silva (2002) points out a possibility of intellectual biographies in which it is necessary that “the narration of a life is circumscribed within a precise social space and/or a specific historical context”. (SILVA, 2002, p. 23 – own translation). For the author, this way of narrating a subject, “shows the trajectory of an individual, the relationships he establishes with his peers, the worldviews, the thought schemes (or the habitus) of a certain intellectual environment, responsible for configuration of a trajectory [...]”. (SILVA, 2002, p. 23 – own translation).

Therefore, we see the need to place these subjects in more specific contexts, which make us understand their projects, their social practices, their networks of belonging and their places of enunciation.

Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha was born on August 31st, 1831 and died on April 8th, 1892. He was a member of the Historical and Geographical Institute of Pernambuco. In 1868, he assumed the position of director of Public Instruction at Lyceu Parahybano - a secondary education institution that played a fundamental role in the formation of intellectuals in the province of Paraíba (Brazil). (FERRONATO, 2012).

By the Conservative party, founded by his family, he was elected provincial deputy for the 1856-1857 and 1862 legislatures. He was president of the provinces of Parahyba do Norte (1874-1875), Rio Grande do Norte (1870-1871), of Alagoas (1873) and Maranhão (1873). He worked as a lawyer and was also a customs inspector in the provinces of Paraíba, Amazonas and Maranhão. In addition, he was a Police Chief and Public Prosecutor.

Carneiro da Cunha graduated in 1853 at the Law Faculty of Olinda and in that period the law faculties were thought of as relevant spaces of sociability. Higher education in legal areas contributed to the intellectual elite of the period, maintaining a homogeneous ideological character and professional training which served, therefore, for the maintenance of the Empire. (CARVALHO, 2010).

Among the Carneiro da Cunha's family members who came from the Law Faculty of Olinda, which was later transferred to Recife (Brazil) in 1854, we identified about twelve names of bachelors. Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha, whose family worked in several sectors in the province of Parahyba do Norte due to its political influence, is included in the role of local politics dominated by family groups.

Thus, the strategies of union and formation of family networks that developed from the 18th century onwards were confirmed, and became more common during the 19th century, reaching their apex in the late 1800s. In this sense, family networks were formed and solidified their ties in the local political organization. (MARIANO, 2011).

The Carneiro da Cunha family dominated politics on the sugar coast from the end of the 18th century through the entire 19th century, always with some member occupying prominent positions in politics and administration, whether on the local or national scene. (MARIANO, 2011). They were one of the leading families that stood out in the Conservative Party. In accordance with Mariano (2011, 2015), these kinship groups are structurally incorporated into politics, and it is in the performance of these elites in public office that we better understand political parties in the Empire and especially in the provinces. In addition to being possible to understand, in a special way, the reason for certain positions and speeches regarding issues that involved the political debates of the period.

Thus, the Carneiro da Cunha family acted during the empire, especially regarding to public instruction in an attempt to meet an educational demand of certain oligarchic groups in the Paraíba province, as well as subsidize their own training and maintenance of privileges with their places. And it was trying to gain space in the republic as well, as will be discussed later.

Carneiro da Cunha was one of the four barons of Paraíba. He was part of a restricted group of the Paraíba elite formed by five men who received noble titles during the Second Reign (1840-1889).³ According to (SEAGAL, 2014), in the short period between 1888 and 1889, 173 Baron titles were granted. The titles of baron were "traditionally reserved for large landowners, especially for those who distinguished themselves for their power and wealth, but not for their projection in political life, that is, for belonging to the political elite." (CARVALHO, 2010, p. 258 – own translation).

The high number of titles granted in a short period of time is explained by the intention to support the monarchy that was shaken due to a foreseeable change of regime. The granting of titles, especially of baron, was the way found by the Crown to co-opt landowners, valuing a relationship of interests between them, and also to compensate after the abolitionist laws (Free Womb Law - 1871, Sexagenarian Law - 1885 and the Golden Law - 1888), in an attempt to "return as a symbol of status what was withdrawn in material interest". (CARVALHO, 2010, p. 258 – own translation).

Other narratives on the issue of nobility titles in Brazil can be found in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1982) and Raymundo Faoro (2001), in classic works dedicated to politics and imperial society. For Holanda (1982) the granting of titles was used to constitute a group of people who supported the emperor, in addition to bringing the Brazilian monarchy closer to

³ The five who received the titles were: Flávio Clementino da Silva Freire (Baron of Mamanguape – in 1860), José Teixeira de Vasconcelos (Baron of Maraú – 1860), Estevam José da Rocha (Baron of Araruna – in 1871), Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha (Baron de Abiahy – in 1888) and Diogo Velho Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (Viscount of Cavalcanti – in 1888). All of them belong to the Conservative Party with titles granted when the General Legislative Assembly was composed, in its majority, of Conservatives. (SEGAL, 2014; CARVALHO, 2010).

the European monarchies. On the other hand, Faoro (2001) defended the idea that the noble title established a link between the titled person and the monarch, even though it did not guarantee the formation of a bureaucratic stratum. Thus, configuring a political character, since the granting of these titles ensured by the Emperor a certain control over the title holders. (COSTA, 2017).

Segal (2014, p.45) identifies some criteria that support the differentiated distribution of titles in the provinces. According to the author, they were considered “economic strength and political representation”. The province of Parahyba do Norte occupied a position in front of other provinces in the same region, such as Rio Grande do Norte, Maranhão and Ceará. (SEGAL, 2014). In this way, regional political elites contributed to the national political project in the construction of the State. This relationship between center and periphery was essential for an institutional organization guaranteeing the articulation of the entire national territory. Miriam Dolhnikoff claims that

Both conservatives and liberals defended models whose differences did not prevent the existence of common points, including the defense that center should be equipped to promote articulations of the whole and, at the same time, it should coexist with the autonomy of the parts, so that it integrates the dominant groups in them to the State. Thus, they considered it to be essential for the viability of State itself. (DOLHNIKOFF, 2003, p. 433 – own translation).

In this regard, despite being a monarchist, Baron de Abiahy assumed the State Government as vice president, adhering to the new regime, the Republic. Thus, given what has been exposed so far, after situating the reader on the subject in question, the positions are understood based on the description of the biography and trajectory. Making use of party affiliations and this biographical trajectory to analyze characters from the imperial political elite and understand the positions of these subjects from the political parties they defended helps to elucidate issues in relation to adherent positions and central themes of state formation such as education and progress. These themes found in the political debate involving Carneiro da Cunha will be better addressed in the next sessions of this text.

Ideas, clashes and adhesion in Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha

In the trajectory of our character, his relationship with spaces of political socialization came from, such as his experiences in groups and institutions, his academic training at the Law Faculty of Recife, his contact with politics in Paraíba (Brazil), and journalistic participation, among other spaces. In order to consider the importance of these contacts, it is necessary to mention what Serge Berstein (2009) found about the works of historians who focused on political culture:

Through their empirical studies, they verify the existence, at a given moment in history, of several systems of coherent and rivalry representations, which determine the society vision of those who participate in them, its organization, the place where they exist, the problems of power transmission, systems that motivate and explain their political behavior (BERSTEIN, 2009, p.32 – own translation).

Political activity constituted the provincial elites into political elites, both at the provincial level and central government, as pointed out by Dolhnikoff (2003) regarding the

elites in São Paulo (Brazil). According to the author, the decisive role in the construction of the new State fell to the provincial elites, and despite personal differences, these subjects managed to maintain a coherence in political thought, which was based on liberalism. One of the central theses of *The Imperial Pact* is that the consolidation of the Brazilian monarchy did not give up the power and autonomy of the provincial elites, but it was in the negotiation of the imperial political elite with the provincial elites that the monarchy was able to establish itself as a model of government in the independent nation.

In the second half of the 19th century, especially in the last three decades of the Empire, the increase in the republican ranks led party and parliamentary leaders to consider the need for reforms. At the beginning of the third and last Zacharias' cabinet, in 1867, that the problem of slavery was first posed in Speeches from the Throne⁴, which caused quite a stir. (SALLES, 2014).

At this moment, Brazil felt all the effects brought about by the ongoing Paraguayan War. The moral and political upheaval caused by the decisive role played by free blacks and mestizos in the victory over Paraguay opened a front of social dispute and negotiation between the popular sectors of society, especially the slaves, and the imperial state and the dominant seigneurial class. In addition to international relations issues regarding the impact of the abolition of slavery in the United States and the pressure of British interests.

Slavery as a support of the imperial order was questioned, educational reforms in the liberal molds were demanded, political-partisan redefinitions took place all the time, among other issues that were in evidence at the period. Finally, it constituted a delicate situation for the imperial order.

The fact was that Saquarema hegemony was in decline. There was a break in the leadership framework that the conservatives themselves consolidated within the monarchy. This is explained by Angela Alonso:

The debate over the reform of the colonial sociopolitical order, based on slavery and monarchy, split the imperial political elite. The line in favor of modernization in economy and political system wanted slow and gradual changes, towards the abolition of slavery, the State secularization and the democratization of political institutions, in order to guarantee the representation of minorities. On that side were moderate members of the Conservative Party and most of the Liberal Party. Others, especially "stuck" conservatives, feared that any reforms would undermine political institutions and the social hierarchy. (ALONSO, 2014, p.89 – own translation).

Such disputes and negotiations were rooted in the parliamentary sphere and in the Empire's own political system and the reformist demands of the 1870s and 1880s followed in the direction of a change in the work regime. Parliamentarians from several provinces presented projects to the Chamber of Deputies defending the abolitionist cause, the liberation of unborn children, and the prohibition of separating slave spouses, among countless other projects which were not successful in the votes of the Chamber sections. (SALLES, 2014).

Visconde do Rio Branco, Minister of Empire in the conservative cabinet, recognized that despite the international situation having made slavery unsustainable, abolition would affect the structure of the economy and all institutions in the country. Such proposals, even coming from a conservative government, weakened the liberals, as well as affected the conservatives, causing division among them.

⁴ It was an annual statement in which the emperor opened the work and his expectations for the current year.

The *Ventre Livre* law of 1871, of a reformist action linked to conservative agrarian elites, led to the progressive loss of political legitimacy, contributing increasingly to the fissure of the parties, which began in the 1860s. For some, the referred law was a reflection of the abolitionist character in the reign of Dom Pedro II. For others, it was a way found by the Empire to please the abolitionists and guarantee security to slave owners for at least a generation. (COSTA, 2017).

At that time, conservatives disagreed, resisting the reformist practices that assumed certain cabinets. Liberals were also weakened, as their struggle banners were eventually deflated when debated and approved in the rival party's cabinet. As Joaquim Nabuco summarized regarding the rivalry and the climate formed between (and in) the parties with the metaphor that the conservatives had the role “of incubating the eggs in power, which are the reforms, deposited in their nest by the Liberal Party”. (NABUCO, 1884, p. 39 – own translation).

The rapprochement between republicans and monarchists, which took place in several other provinces, had “[...] a strategic role in the implantation of the republican order” (FERREIRA, 1989, p. 52). At the end of the Empire and the early years of the Republic, it marked a period of fierce dispute between competing groups to seek hegemony in the conduct of the Brazilian political process. In this context, Marta Lúcia Lopes Fittipaldi (2017) shows “the wide use of “adherents” and “historic” terms in the pages of periodicals and in parliamentary statements as part of the political occurrences around different republican projects.” (FITTIPALDI, 2017, p. 41 – own translation).

The early days of the Republic were marked by intense political disputes. “Such dispute, contrary to what might be expected, did not result from a confrontation between supporters of conflicting projects or political rivalries dating from the deposed regime” (FERREIRA, 1989, p. 43). The author also points out to the parliamentary speeches, including the senator of the Republic in 1897, Rui Barbosa, who “refuted the criticism he received for his position against repression of Canudos, appropriating the “adherents” and “historical” terms that started to be used years before”. (FITTIPALDI, 2017, p. 44. Original quotation marks – own translation).

Regarding Rio de Janeiro, Marieta Ferreira (1989) demonstrates that even with a certain growth of republicans, they did not have a party structure to establish the new order: “In order to gain political control of the state, disputes and alliances would ensue between former monarchists, historic republicans, and adherents of May 13th and November 15th.” (FERREIRA, 1989, p. 46 – own translation).

In the province of Paraíba, we see actions in this sense proposed by the aforementioned authors in relation to our character, Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha – Baron of Abiahy, since on several occasions, he apprehended the interactions with different groups that manifest practices and representations divergent or non-divergent, and they could provide elements for the understanding of its political performance. When considering, therefore, the acquisition of a political culture through a choice, and “putting it into practice with a given fact implies analysis or, at least, adherence to a proposed analysis and, if the commitment is an act of a deep being, it is neither impulsive nor thoughtless” (BERSTEIN, 1998, p. 360-361 – own translation).

Based on what has been exposed, after this brief explanation of what would be considered political adhesion in the late 19th and early 20th century by historiography, it is possible to understand the attempts Baron of Abiahy mobilized to adjust his actions face to the situation that culminated the end of the Monarchy and the beginning of a new order.

We will start then with the relationship made by our subject, then president of the province of Alagoas, about public instruction through night classes for the naive after the enactment of the Free Womb Law in the province of Alagoas. It is possible to perceive the adherent character in his educational thought, as he adapted to the discourse of liberal

groups in favor of the emancipation of slaves, defending schooling for the children of the enslaved. For him,

In everywhere night classes have produced such beneficial results that I do not need to give you such an important improvement. They have even been inaugurated with enthusiasm. Indeed, this generous idea will fill a large gap in primary education, especially after the reform of the servile state. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p. 23 – own translation).

In the quote above, night education was not seen as a right, but as a favor or an act of charity from its creators. At that time there would be a demand for uneducated freedmen and night classes would come as an alternative for this portion of the population associated with their civilization process. Carneiro da Cunha stated the press to publish this news in order to publicize its actions under the Free Womb Law:

I am pleased to inform that the province of Alagôas, supported by the general feeling of the country about the civilizing law of emancipation from the servile state, has manifested itself by the press in some of its first corporations, and by several public servants in a way superior to all praise. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.7 – own translation).

A shallow reading of the quote could lead us to consider that Carneiro da Cunha's stance was for the end of slavery and what the future of this population's children would be like and, therefore, he thought of a proposal for instruction based on night classes and construction of a literacy school for the naive, who were enslaver's children benefited from the Free Womb Law.

However, considering this quote as a reflection of ideas about slavery and its end, among the conservative elite or among people who were part of abolitionist movement groups, we could imagine that part of the elite in Paraíba had an emancipationist ideal. After all, many masters freed their slaves and the newspapers started reporting the names of both masters and enslaved ones. (SILVA, 2016).

In fact, what can be noted is Carneiro da Cunha's stance, which corroborated the paradox of the slave society of the 19th century, in which it ran into the relationship between the end of slavery and moral, religious and humanitarian reasons, as we can see in the following quote:

Law Nr. 2.040 of September 28th of last year, satisfying one of the most lively and ardent aspirations in the country, already in relation to the high and generous feelings of Brazilians, and in relation to the spirit of the century that does not tolerate the perpetuity of slavery alongside Christianity, it contributes to the prudence and wisdom of the government, selflessness and patriotism of the country. The prudence and wisdom of government; because it is necessary not to awaken in slaves other feelings that are not of much love and obedience to their masters. The selflessness and patriotism of the country; the very glorious work of social regeneration must not be disturbed, and its beneficial effects hindered. As the main idea of this law is to emancipate the womb, the gaze of the government and the country must turn to the

rising generation, preparing educational establishments for them. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.5 – own translation).

As we can see in the above quote, the religious appeal in the critique of slavery is clear and in fact there were collective and individual liberations, especially in the 1880s, and these acts were always reported in journals, both liberal and conservative. (SILVA, 2016).

In the province of Parahyba do Norte, we could see in the newspapers some congratulations to the masters who granted manumission letters to their enslaved. In February 1885, the president of the province, Antônio Sabino do Monte, visited Vila de Independência, the current city of Guarabira, and the newspapers reported many masters who granted manumission letters on that president's visit. Among them, Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha committed himself to free a slave:

Our distinguished abolitionist co-religionist and esteemed friend Dr. Amaro Beltrão, to celebrate the visit of the Hon. Mr. Dr. Monte, granted a letter of freedom to three of his best slaves without any charge, passing the notes of the public notary incontinent to that humanitarian act. The worthy judge of the region, Manoel da Fonseca, inspired by the philanthropic sentiments of his handsome abolitionist character, freed ten of his slaves with exemption from conditions, whose letters the notary public took in notes. Mr. Lieutenant Colonel José Maria da Cruz Marques also freed on that occasion two slaves without any condition, guided only by the soulful nobility he possess. Mr. Captain Manoel Laurentino Pereira de Lyra, in an ongoing act, manumitted under the same conditions two slaves João and Marcolino. The Hon. Commander Silvino Elvidio Carneiro da Cunha, imitating those gentlemen, solemnly pledged to release his slave Januária as soon as he arrived in the capital (DIÁRIO DA PARAHYBA, 1885 – own translation).

In this excerpt of the periodical, we observe that political and military leaders granted manumissions to their enslaved ones, and this certainly occurred in the middle of a political ceremony to welcome then-president Antônio Monte. Among the people who granted the freedom letters was Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha, who had also committed himself to free a slave. Thus, we can infer that the political interests behind the behind the acts considered to be philanthropic and humanitarian acts recurrent in that period, have already been mentioned above.

An important fact to highlight is that, according to the 1872 census, there were 61 enslaved people who knew how to read. This number is small in relation to the total enslaved population of the province, but the number of free people who could read was very small. These data on education help us to imagine the role of enslaved and literate people in an illiterate and slave-owning society. (SILVA, 2016).

Therefore, we can understand these data as an indication that enslaved people built strategies for their literacy, despite laws that prohibited the schooling of them. At least, regarding to the education of the slavers' children, we can infer that places such as those thought by Carneiro da Cunha for education of freed slaves in the Free Womb Law would be one of the strategies used to educate this population.

Aware of this important thought, and faithfully interpreting the magnanimous ideas of the Imperial Government, I took the decision to gather at the end of this palace, on December 2nd, the greatest number of citizens of all political opinions in order to, among other noble commitments, wake up those for the construction of suitable asylums to bring up and educate those freed by the new law. For this, I appointed a commission of five members in each region, in charge of organizing the respective association, which will have a double purpose: Emancipation of slaves, creation and education of freed slaves. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.5 – own translation).

Regarding the position in favor of emancipation and the end of slave labor, it is interesting to analyze that Carneiro da Cunha was a monarchist and representative of the conservative party. We noted that he had a project to the province of Alagoas aimed at education and emancipation for the naive. Carneiro da Cunha mentions in the report the names of those responsible for organizing this association who should meet to plan the creation of the establishments. Supported by the Imperial Government, Carneiro da Cunha appeals to the Provincial Assembly in order to obtain financial resources to proceed with his project:

Although the Imperial Government is ready to give **the maximum assistance to associations of this order**, it seems to me that **the Provincial Assembly could not be indifferent to such a movement**. Thus, I hope **and count that this corporation**, giving further proof of its patriotism and dedication to the public cause, **will authorize the presidency to spend up to 20:000\$000 reais, on the emancipation and construction of asylums for creation and education of freed ones by the new law**. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.7. Our emphasis – own translation).

Faced with a context of gradual extinction of slavery, as well as the insertion of the State in labor relations, the concern became the replacement of slave labor for free labor and maintenance of manpower for farming. And this apprehension was also on the President Carneiro da Cunha's agenda, since for him the abolitionist Free Womb Law

brought, if not in the present, at least in a future that is not too distant, **the urgent need for manpowers that replace the freed ones by the law** and by repeated and multiplied liberalities, which day by day are reproduced throughout the country, serving even a highlight at all public and domestic parties as an obligation. It is necessary, therefore, that without wasting time we can send colonization to our country. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.7. Our emphasis – own translation).

When considering the need to switch from slave labor to free labor, Carneiro da Cunha proposed a commission that would be responsible for obtaining free workers through colonization to ensure the functioning of crops and employees for farmers who would lose their slaves.

Aware of this need felt by everyone, and **especially by the Imperial government, which spares no efforts, in order to meet such current demands**, at the meeting on December 2nd I appointed a commission composed of distinguished citizens, Commendador Manoel Sobral Pinto, Commendador Joaquim Serapião de Carvalho, Commendador Rodrigo Antonio Brasileiro Maceió, and merchants Manoel de Vasconcellos and Manoel Joaquim da Silva Leão, in order to organize an association or colonization company so that farmers in the province can obtain the free labor they need, under established conditions in the statutes approved by the Government.. (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.7. Our emphasis – own translation).

Supported once again by the Imperial Government, the Legislative Assembly was asked to dispose of the amount of 10,000\$000 (ten contos de réis) for the necessary costs in this commission and, thus, the assembly would provide “a clear proof of its interest in realizing this important benefit to agriculture in this province, which so much needs the protection of public coffers.” (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.7 – own translation).

Considering the situation in society and Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha's defense of an education aimed at the slavers' children, the importance of night classes in this context is inserted as an alternative of instruction for the population outside the ideal of civilization and education desired of that period in the 19th century, in Alagoas the naïve, after the free womb law, and in Paraíba the free poor.

The Rio Branco cabinet carried out many other reforms in addition to the Free Womb Law, such as: judicial reform, which expanded the *habeas corpus* and regulated preventive detention; reform of the commercial code and educational reform, introduction of the metric system that standardized weights and measures⁵; the infrastructure modernization of the country with expansion of the railway network; these last two reforms had the effective participation of Carneiro da Cunha, in the 1870s, while he governed the province of Paraíba.

Regarding the standardization of weights and measures, he was given to implement in the province and from that originated the Quebra Quilos Movement against the implementation of the imperial decree. It was during the government of Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha in the Province of Parahyba do Norte (1874 - 1876) that the quebra-quilo revolt broke out. In this context, the performance of Carneiro da Cunha face to these revolts provides us subsidies to better understand the posture of this subject in relation to these popular movements.

In a report sent to the Legislative Assembly, Carneiro da Cunha affirms his interest in punishing with “the most severe punishment from the higher authorities, I shall maintain the utmost rigor in its repression.” (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, Province of, Report, 1874, p. 11).

I was forced to take another line of conduct, maintaining the utmost severity in this service; once seen as the lack of work and honest occupation, the ignorant population seeks to attack those so appreciable rights in society. (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, Province of, Report, 1874, p.11 – own translation).

⁵ On the way Carneiro da Cunha acted and how the periodicals reported the events of the Quebra Quilos Movement, see Costa (2017).

The press reported on the events of the movement, especially the newspapers *O Despertador e A Província* – both of liberal principles and known for their positions of clashes and abundant political comments against *Jornal da Parahyba*, the press of the conservative party, whose founder/chief director was Carneiro da Cunha. In its pages, the periodicals did not spare criticism regarding the behavior of the president of Paraíba:

Didn't the government claim and still doesn't claim it has the determined support of the Nation? The time has come to confess as being weak and repelled by the people. It is a pity for Mr. Silvino to recognize himself as null too late, without any means to pursue the victims of the taxes created by him, and even more for this frail government, which plagues the country to enjoy abundance, comfort, luxury and all the means of corruption. [...] Powerless, weak and repelled by public opinion, they tremble in their lairs, and ask for troops, more troops – the only recourse of despots. (A PROVÍNCIA, 1874 – own translation).

The excerpt above, transcribed from an article published in the opposition newspaper *A Província*, shows its position regarding the way in which Carneiro da Cunha led the Quebra – Quilos revolt. In the print, the president of Paraíba is described as a “weak” who hides from public opinion and as a “despot” for having sent troops against the protesters, and acted violently to contain the revolt. Therefore, we find that Carneiro da Cunha's performance at that time reflects the posture of a politician from the conservative party concerned with maintaining order and social control.

In the context of educational reforms, we highlight Free Education as the object of great debates and discussions among political and intellectual elites in the second half of the 19th century. As stated by Costa (2015):

This favorable approach to thinking of the modern school as a moment of instituting a new form of sociability among individuals suggests the need to deal with these elements interdependently, the intellectual production of the actors who transit in this period - and here we place journalists, writers, politicians etc. – and the formation of the nation-state in Brazil. (COSTA, 2015, p. 90 – own translation).

Established in 1879 by decree by minister Leôncio de Carvalho, this educational reform contained twenty-nine articles and defined, among its determinations, primary education as compulsory and free education. Five years before the promulgation of the decree, Carneiro da Cunha exposed a contrary position and an argument based on the fragility that, for him, free education presented:

I recognize that **free education would be a mistake in the early days of our political existence, even a danger, when the principles of order and freedom, the love of work**, and the encouragement of great commitments were not well rooted in the public spirit, and it could be easily shocked by false and dangerous doctrines. PARAHYBA DO NORTE, Província da, Report, 1874, p.27. Our emphasis – own translation).

However, the question concerning free education was not accepted by the president at the beginning. His stance against this reform could also be identified when he presided over

other provinces. In a report to the Legislative Assembly of Rio Grande do Norte, on October 5th, 1970, Carneiro da Cunha demonstrated his position against the free education in that province. As we can see:

Should freedom of teaching be established? **It is my opinion that in our country at the present moment it is not convenient, or rather susceptible to social dangers.** Although, it is known that the boy's heart is formed primarily within the family, through the advice, examples, and his parents' virtues, the strength is to confess that either through the weakness of childhood, or the strength of teaching, **it could change or degenerate.** (RIO GRANDE DO NORTE, Província do. Report, 1870, p. 28. Our emphasis – own translation).

We can see, therefore, that his concern at that time was related to the way in which this free education would transmit doctrines and that they would be harmful for the construction of a model society. In addition, the State did not have the necessary conditions to sustain such a mode of teaching, since it required a practice of freedom in a country marked by centralization, seigniorial structure, slavery and patriarchy that impeded the implementation of a liberal order.

In other words, for Carneiro da Cunha, the fragility that free education presented to the country was a problem initially, since

Subversive, false, inaccurate ideas about true social principles; ineptly or malevolently instilled in the child's mind at an early age may have the most fatal consequences, otherwise the germ of evil instilled in his unprepared mind. Let us also look at this issue from the other side. **What is individual initiative in our country today? Unfortunately nothing!** Whether because of our social childhood, or because of the lack of opinion, resources, habits, customs, long and experienced practice of the freedom regime, **what is true and cannot be disputed with advantage is that between us everything is expected of government and by government. Individual initiative is null and has no result:** The very spirit of association that originates so much from an immediate and material interest is still so weak that it can even be considered null. (RIO GRANDE DO NORTE, Província do. Report, 1870, p. 28. Our emphasis – own translation).

Thus, we can observe elements that permeate countless discussions regarding the role of the individual and its relationship with social structures in a universe where the State, in fact, overpowers the subject and the subject always expects from the State answers about how to live. If Free Education, on the one hand, carried the ideas of liberalism regarding to individual action and that, in order to become decisive, there must be the freedom of this action, on the other hand, in Carneiro da Cunha's speech, it is noticeable at that time the conservative position, whose vision of human being and the individual's condition is relatively pessimistic. (PEIXOTO, 2013)

The positioning change of ideas that Carneiro da Cunha had in a few years later about Free Education draws attention, which makes his change of opinion insert him into the ranks of adherents of the period. A few years later, in 1874, Carneiro da Cunha changed the discourse on free education and became widely defended:

Today, however, all parties, all opinions dispute among themselves the primacy in the love of these **good principles, today everyone, without exception of class and conditions, seeks to illustrate themselves to better serve the public cause: it will be a great mistake not to let go of our aspirations.** Anyone who knows how to teach must teach; whoever wants to learn should look for the best preceptor. **The Government gives the public instruction, which it is obliged to: but learn where you want, and with whom you think is most suitable. The corrective of the bad teacher will be in the abandonment of the disciples.** (PARAHYBA DO NORTE, Província da, Report, 1874, p.27. Our emphasis – own translation).

This change of opinion by Carneiro da Cunha can be understood by the fact that the duty to offer education and to attend it are transferred to society, the educational initiative is no longer the State's, which makes it a characteristic discourse of liberal groups from the 19th century and not from Carneiro da Cunha's conservative party. Free education would be the ideological expression of a formal liberalism in the intellectual and political elites of that period, highlighting some positions of subjects such as Liberato Barroso, Tavares Bastos and Rui Barbosa, advocates of a reform for education that would permeate Free Education.

Liberato Barroso, minister of the Empire (1864) and general deputy (1864 and 1878), defended free education for all citizens, compulsory, free and decentralized education, where it was possible for city councils to create and supervise seats. He argued that:

Mandatory education without freedom of education is the worst of all despotisms, because it is despotism over intelligence; but freedom of education without compulsory education is freedom of ignorance and darkness, the strongest basis of despotism. (BARROSO, 1867, p. 7 – own translation).

Liberato Barroso's position finds the central point of the liberal argument in which the individual determines his actions, but for this occurs in fact, the individual must be free, that is, the determining factor of human action is developed when the individual is free to decide your own path. (PEIXOTO, 2013). Thus, in accordance with Liberato Barroso, the Imperial Government had “made a double error in the matter of primary education. The State, taking little care to generalize and spill education, creates at the same time obstacles to individual initiative and freedom” (BARROSO, 1867, p.10 – own translation).

Tavares Bastos (1839 – 1875) in the book *A Província* defines his project of a federalist monarchy for the country. The intellectual from Alagoas defended the autonomy of the provinces and a public and free education. In other words, in Tavares Bastos, “the issue of free education is defended under the accusation that any contrary manifestation is arbitrary; because, from his point of view, it is the most liberal of professions” (COSTA, 2015, p.99 – own translation).

Rui Barbosa (1849 – 1923) also defended free education alleging that the monopoly exercised by the State was something harmful (STEPHANOU & BASTOS, 2004). According to the author, the State should maintain schools so that there is freedom for all beliefs, conceiving that official education should not interfere with free education.

According to Maria Cristina Gomes Machado (2010), free education was postulated as a way to encourage the creation of educational establishments and stimulates free competition for the benefit of students and society, prompting teachers to dedicate themselves to their

teaching skills, as in fact we can see in Carneiro da Cunha's speech, when he referred to the “corrective of bad teacher”.

In the province of Alagoas, Carneiro da Cunha presided from February to December of 1872. In his reports, he emphasizes the defense of these reforms in education by stating that

above all, the magna and always important issue of free education and compulsory education stands out. It seems that in a country with a liberal government as we have, the education should be free.” (PROVÍNCIA DAS ALAGOAS, Report, 1872, p.21 – own translation).

As president in the province of Rio Grande do Norte, he emphasized: “Is it permissible that in a free country, like this Empire, education is not free? This is the question you can ask me. I will answer - Yes. (RIO GRANDE DO NORTE, Província de. Report, 1870, p.29 – own translation).”

Thus, we observe that two principles guide the Decree Leôncio de Carvalho: free education and free conscience. Therefore, we agree with Machado (2010) when he infers that such a measure, formalized in a decree form, could have several meanings, such as those of

freedom to open schools, freedom of thought or even as non-interference by the State in educational matters. On another plane, it could also be understood as the defense of liberal principles in Brazilian business, characterized by a still conservative policy, and the preparation for a new society based on individual freedom, as slavery was on the way to extinction. (MACHADO, 2010, p.95 – own translation).

Therefore, the defense of free education brought the idea that 'useful knowledge would form the useful citizen', mainly for work and moral education. In other words, an educational program directed to Brazilian needs and to prepare a nation that was moving towards a new government form and work, towards a project of civility. (COSTA, 2015).

Faced with the abolition of slavery, newspapers from Paraíba reported how the promulgation of the golden law reverberated through towns and cities, taking the population to the streets to celebrate. In an article entitled “*As festas da liberdade*”, the periodical *Arauto Parahybano* published on May 20th, 1888:

A large mass of people was in front of the “Gazeta” typography when Dr. Bernardino, who spoke on behalf of the same newspaper with his easy and powerful word [...] then followed the march to the presidential palace, **where Commander Silvino, on behalf of Mr. President who did not appear for guarding his consort, he toasted free Brazil and the Brazilian parliamentarian** [...] (ARAUTO PARAHYBANO, 1888 – own translation).

Carneiro da Cunha (who would later receive the title of Baron of Abiahy), as 1st vice president of the province, he replaced the presence of the provincial president himself, which highlights the mechanisms of strategies used to always be in the spotlight of public life, maintain your influence and power. The newspaper reported the abolition festivities in the capital of Paraíba that lasted for several days:

For the following day (Monday) the public of Parahyba was invited by bulletins to the party promoted by the newsroom of the *Despertador*. The rain that fell during the aforementioned day did not allow the march to

start, but it took place on the following day (Tuesday). Commander Silvino, in his palace, also dealing with the big issue, said that it was not from any political parties, and recalled Visconde do rio Branco and councilor Dantas, Saraiva and João Alfredo, strong cooperators in the issue of servile element. (ARAUTO PARAHYBANO, 1888 – own translation).

Therefore, it can be seen that political control ended up reflecting on the honors that the imperial power, recognizing its predominance over the province, granted and reinforced such power, while at the same time legitimizing the monarchy itself, reinforcing its institutions, subjects, values and reinvigorating its speech.

Upon arriving from the Republic, Carneiro da Cunha, as called Baron of Abiahy, found himself in the midst of the reorganization in political and party forces and saw a way to emerge to the new regime. In order to legitimize or disqualify opponents or collaborators of the various republican projects, whether or not members of the new governmental system, it tried to figure in this movement.

It is interesting to briefly point out Baron of Abiahy's attempt to remain in power and how in the newspapers he continued to be the center of political discussions at the beginning of the new regime.

According to Gomes (2017), the private and party relations between the republic's new representative, Governor Venâncio Neiva, and the head of the Conservative Party in the former monarchic regime, Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha - Baron of Abiahy, were well known. Governor Venâncio Neiva was not well known in Paraíba and became a politician recruited from the former dominant order of the Conservative Party in Paraíba.

Gomes (2017) points out that Venâncio tried to create a coalition government, in an attempt to harmonize the divergent groups. In accordance with the historian, Venâncio Neiva's stance displeased many supporters and the situation worsened even more when the governor tried to approach conservative supporters, especially Baron of Abiahy. Thus, a strong opposition to the adherents was accentuated, mainly against the monarchists. For many, “the baron did not hide his feelings as a monarchist, he kept the enemies of empire” (GOMES, 2017, p.2 – own translation).

Linda Lewin (1993, p. 208) states that Venâncio Neiva was a 'Silvinist Conservative' – referring to Silvino Carneiro da Cunha, Baron of Abiahy - a member of that party's ideals and loyal to Baron of Abiahy. The government was faced with the task of legitimizing itself, which would be a necessary condition for its political survival. Thus, facing the challenge of legitimation was imperative when the republic itself also needed to be legitimized among the people. (GOMES, 2017).

Baron of Abiahy had already approached the governing council that was established in Paraíba before Venâncio, days after the proclamation of the Republic on a provisional basis. Strategically, Eptácio Pessoa, Secretary of State, played an effective role in the attempt to resolve the legitimacy crisis that Venâncio Neiva faced in the first months of his government. The idea was to remove Venâncio Neiva from Carneiro da Cunha, breaking away the *Jornal da Paraíba*, of which the baron was editor-in-chief.

When using *Gazeta da Parahyba* newspaper, Venâncio Neiva tried to replace the lack of a periodical to represent his government. The aforementioned printed material came to function as an important instrument of defense against the criticism launched by *Jornal da Paraíba*, as well as serving to attack the Baron of Abiahy through a series of articles signed by Eptácio Pessoa. In the publication of 1890, the periodical distilled its criticisms of Carneiro da Cunha:

Mr. Abiahy may be the only former representative of the addicted parties of monarchy, because of the backwardness in which he finds himself, but not the man who is needed in the current regime for social reconstruction. And as proof, it is enough to read its national organ, which is only concerned with proclaiming everywhere, *urbi et arbi*⁶, that its editor-in-chief is the *nec plus ultra*⁷ of the nobles, the unique glory of this land, the giant dispenser of graces to Greeks and Trojans, which under his feet and hundreds of leagues away from his sacred person recognize and admire him, babbling that anguished cry of the fighters: - *ave, cesar, morituri te salutant!*⁸ If Mr. Baron of Abiahy did not suffer from presumption, he would have recognized the ridicule, which his late scribblers constantly spy on, since all this is derisory and grotesque for the Republic today.” (GAZETA DA PARAÍBA, 1890 – own translation).

In this sense, Epitácio Pessoa endeavored to separate the image of Venâncio Neiva from the Baron of Abiahy, and endeavored to build an image of government and Venâncio Neiva himself as legitimate representatives of republican values and principles.

Such parties no longer exist, and even to think about the influence they could exert today in the middle of the Republic would be an impossible and even antiquated thing; since they can no longer be taken into account except as ancient remains of a great army defeated and annihilated, which fled over time to make way for the new legions of democracy that walk unabashedly towards a future full of practical results for the benefit of humanity's holy cause.. (GAZETA DA PARAÍBA, 1890 – own translation).

The periodical highlighted Carneiro da Cunha's inability to face the new scenario, attacking him in such a way that his prestige and political performance during the old regime were negatively remembered:

Mastered in partisan struggles, and making politics a special profession, requirements that, according to the Newspaper, are essential for a good administrator, Mr. Abiahy would be suited to direct the destinies of a State, as he admitted that he had other qualities pointed out by the national body. Imagine it in a palace, replacing Dr. Venancio Neiva [...] and, modeling the probable government of Mr. Abiahy by the last provincial administration entrusted to him, let us see what would reasonably happen: The political leader, attending to the demands of his friends and co-religionists from the past; striving to preserve the prestige it supposes to have, despite the radical transformation that took place in the country and which, dating from 15 November, disorganized the old parties; attached to the vices and antiquities of the fallen system and from which he has not yet known how to let go; without

⁶ In free translation: to the city and the world

⁷ In free translation: the best

⁸ In free translation: Hail Caesar, those who are going to die salute you. Words addressed by the gladiators to the emperor, before entering into a fight.

the strength to put an end to the famous political conveniences, which once determined the most revolting attacks against justice and law; the man idealized by the Newspaper would inevitably make a clumsy and partisan administration, since in the very sheet he writes and which is the owner of his thought, he sustained and sustains, even after the advent of the Republic, backward ideas that were absolutely incompatible with the new order of things. [...] What is said in relation to the idealized type by the Newspaper extends to all those who carried to the Republic these credentials of those who lived from the vitiated policy of monarchy and assumed with similar importance the direction of one of our confederate states. (GAZETA DA PARAÍBA, 1890 – own translation).

Gomes (2017) explains that the secretary, Eptácio Pessoa, knew how the political game could be configured in favor of subjects such as Baron of Abiahy. Thus, through the newspapers, he used the importance of the personal and political prestige of these characters who, linked to the monarchy, adhered at the last minute to the dominant situation. In other words, as suggested by Gomes (2017), it was not enough for Eptacio Pessoa to just remove the baron from the government, it was necessary to overthrow his prestige.

Final considerations

The political activities of Silvino Elvídio Carneiro da Cunha, the Baron of Abiahy, coincided with the radicalization of reformism in the second half of the 19th century occurred in the entire Empire. The liberal political scenario of that period was marked by the urgency of reforms in all spheres of public administration and in this context, Carneiro da Cunha's ideas began to adapt to the new directions of all the provinces in this national context.

As the abolitionist campaign itself took shape, it was noticed that Carneiro da Cunha was expanding his reformism to insert himself in that new sociopolitical reality. Furthermore, despite his image associated with an effort at self-definition to some extent, over the last decades of the 19th century he became famous as an adherent. His proposals were refined in his set of ideas, as the intellectual and the politician matured.

Thus, the focus of his ideas helped him to understand how he perceived the reality of that lived context and then, according to his interests, he fought for a change or conservation by adhering or not to certain ideas.

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