

## ARTICLE

# Libraries in public education in Maranhão Empire: books, readings and readers

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### ABSTRACT

This article describes the libraries of Maranhão in the Brazilian Imperial period as spaces of sociability according to their nature, function and projection, analyzing the role of these institutions in public education in the province of Maranhão. It identifies and compares the strategies in use by the Portuguese Reading Office, the Provincial Public Library and the Popular Library of Maranhão for their establishment, operation and access, stimulating the formation of readers and distinct reading practices in different target audiences. Cultural history is used as a theoretical-methodological approach, crossing different sources: reports/official letters from provincial presidents and public education inspectors, education laws and regulations, minute books, the local press and regional literature.

### KEYWORDS

history of libraries; reading practices; public instruction; Maranhão Empire.

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## ***AS BIBLIOTECAS NA INSTRUÇÃO PÚBLICA NO MARANHÃO IMPÉRIO: LIVROS, LEITURAS E LEITORES***

### **RESUMO**

Neste artigo, descrevem-se as bibliotecas maranhenses no período imperial como espaços de sociabilidade segundo sua natureza, função e projeção, analisando-se o seu papel na instrução pública na província do Maranhão. Identificam-se e comparam-se estratégias em uso pelo Gabinete Português de Leitura, pela Biblioteca Pública Provincial e pela Biblioteca Popular Maranhense para a sua instauração, funcionamento e acesso, que estimularam a formação de leitores e práticas de leituras distintas em públicos-alvo diferenciados. Utiliza-se a história cultural como abordagem teórico-metodológica, cruzando-se diferentes fontes: relatórios/ofícios dos presidentes da província e dos inspetores da instrução pública, leis e regulamentos da instrução, livros de minutas, a imprensa local e a literatura regional.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

história das bibliotecas; práticas leitoras; instrução pública; Maranhão Império.

## ***LAS BIBLIOTECAS EN LA INSTRUCCIÓN PÚBLICA EN EL MARANHÃO IMPERIO: LIBROS, LECTURAS Y LECTORES***

### **RESUMEN**

En este artículo, se comprenden las bibliotecas de Maranhão en el período imperial como espacios de sociabilidad según la naturaleza, función y proyección de las mismas, analizando el papel de estas instituciones en la instrucción pública en la provincia de Maranhão. Se identifican y comparan estrategias usadas por el Gabinete Portugués de Lectura, por la Biblioteca Pública Provincial y la Biblioteca Popular Maranhense para la instauración, funcionamiento y acceso que estimularon la formación de lectores y las prácticas de lectura distintas en diferentes públicos. Se utiliza la historia cultural como enfoque teórico-metodológico, cruzándose diferentes fuentes: relatorios/oficios de los presidentes provinciales e inspectores de la instrucción, leyes y reglamentos de la instrucción, libros de minutas, la prensa local y la literatura regional.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

historia de las bibliotecas; prácticas de lectura; instrucción pública; Maranhão Imperio.

## INTRODUCTION

The debate about the several libraries established in Imperial Maranhão as spaces of sociability according to their nature, function, and projection, as well as about the works produced and consumed therein — specifically, the textbooks written, published, disseminated and put into circulation by national and local writers, publishers, politicians, and teachers — prompted me to draw on a series of resources stored at the current places of memory (libraries and the public archive) and cross them with information appearing in other media of different nature and provenance. Such documentation does not fail to provide some representations of book and reading *between places* which were relevant then, nor to indicate situations concerned with reading practices that were unrecognized by and remained illegitimate in *non-popular culture*, nor, in addition, to provide clues regarding the spaces dedicated to keeping books and fostering public instruction through reading: the Portuguese Reading Cabinet (*Gabinete Português de Leitura*) and the Provincial Public Library (*Biblioteca Pública Provincial*); the Popular Library of Maranhão (*Biblioteca Popular Maranhense*) and the Military Library; the school libraries established at the Maranhão's Literary Institute (*Instituto Literário Maranhense*), at the Agricultural School in Cutim, and at the Maranhão's Lycée (*Liceu Maranhense*), as well as those conceived/planned for schools of first letters (Castellanos, 2010, 2016).

The identification of themes related to books, reading and reading practices in press advertisements, the analysis of discourses and reviews contained in local newspapers (either regarding the use of these artifacts and the places they were kept in, or regarding the situation of the several libraries as reading spaces, their rules of procedures and *modus operandi*), according to their targeted public, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the assessments made by presidents of the province and public school inspectors (as recorded in reports on school textbooks), and even the understanding of the conceptions, complaints, accusations or dissatisfactions brought forward by teachers, literary delegates, and librarians, as expressed in their correspondence and in works dealing fragmentarily with the subject helped me to comprehend several issues, among them:

- the variety of media and their consumption;
- the dynamics established between books, readings, and readers in the various libraries set up as spaces of sociability;
- the strategies employed to impose authorized written material and permission for such readings;
- and the tactics of appropriation adopted by the individuals involved in the circuit of books and writings, among inks and prints — even if tenuously.

Along the period, the production, circulation, and distribution of printed materials, particularly newspapers, took on a significant role and unprecedented proportions. The cultural ambience was characterized by considerable dynamism, as illustrated by the blossoming number of recreational and literary societies, the recurring lectures and conferences on literature, politics, and science, and the

publication of works both locally-produced and originating in other provinces. These were reading practices and appropriations of the written-read developed with the mediation of various cultural media, whose main objective was to express the economic, political, social, and cultural concerns drawing from the vicissitudes caused by groups and fractions having antagonist and dissenting interests. But to what extent did the several libraries established at the time as reading places influence the circulation of books and the formation of readers in Maranhão? How did these establishments operate and how much access did people have to them? Did the setup and maintenance of such libraries affect the formation of readers and education in imperial Maranhão? In this regard, aided by cultural history as a theoretical-methodological approach, I identify, analyze, and acknowledge these spaces as places that encouraged different reading practices and readers of different levels, contributing to public education in the province of Maranhão. This is done even though the scarce theoretical material addressing the places where books were stored and read at that time, and the sparse and difficult official documentation relating to these institutions, are hindrances for a more vertical analysis of the access, circulation, and consumption of textbooks in these spaces of sociability.

## THE PORTUGUESE READING CABINET

The Portuguese Reading Cabinet, founded on October 9, 1853, had the purpose of disseminating a taste for reading, providing the public with good books from its assorted collection, in addition to offering patriotic civic sessions and illustrative conferences, although there is little information in the State's Public Archive (its statute and rules of procedure) and at Benedito Leite Public Library (its catalogue). The society's *Provisional Statutes* (in Art. II of Title I) clearly express the goals proposed to foster instruction and the means utilized in this *space of sociability* to materialize its operation and intents, holding it necessary to: purchase selected books addressing science, literature, and art; subscribe for the most credited national and foreign periodicals concerning these areas of knowledge; and instruct through all means possible and compatible those shareholders who wished it (Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853)<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1).

The collection consisted of 4 thousand volumes in 1866, and expanded in 12 years to 4,367 titles, distributed among 8 thousand copies (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1866); the Cabinet thus found itself "much augmented and considerably improved", according to José Rodrigues de Araujo, the library's bookkeeper (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1878, p. 115). Such data, when compared to the reports presented by Fabio Hostilio de Moraes Rego (1875) to the National Exposition and by Cesar Augusto Marques (1876) to the Philadelphia Exposition, show discrepancies in the inventory of works. Information given by these authors is not coincident and also disagrees with that recorded by the association's bookkeeper. While, for Rego, the

1 Published by the printing company owned by J. C. M. da Cunha Torres (Rua de Nazaré, no. 20), in São Luís, state of Maranhão.

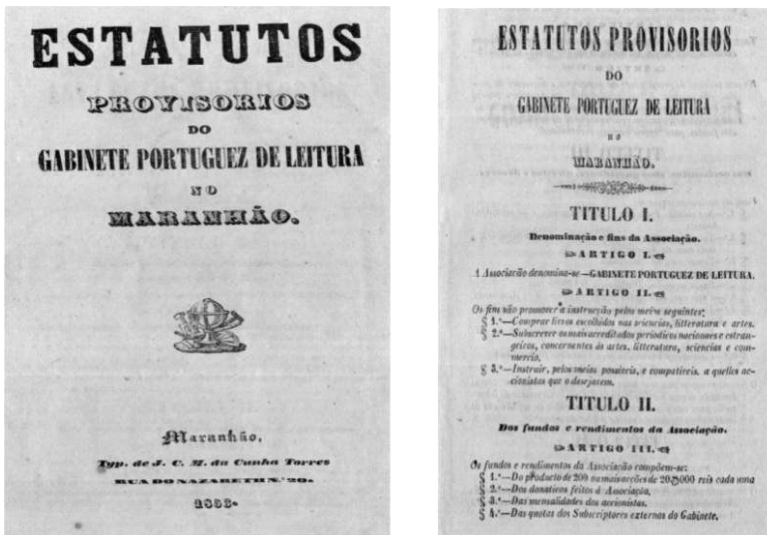


Figure 1 – Provisional Statutes of the Portuguese Reading Cabinet, São Luís, MA.

Source: Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853, p. 1.

Portuguese Reading Cabinet had 5,479 volumes in 1875, for Marques, in the following year, that space contained 4 thousand works contained in 11 thousand volumes.

In spite of the mismatched information between the inventory and the above-mentioned reports with regard to the number of titles and volumes in the cultural facility in question, be it as a result of the purchase and donation of new books, be it due to loss or deterioration of books, the important point is to understand that such venue of books, reading, and readers could only accept as members “Portuguese subjects”, according to the statutes and rules of procedure. However, any person who behaved properly and had good appearance could subscribe to and benefit from the institution, regardless of sex and nationality, as determined by title XVIII of article XXI in the statutes:

§ 1 They should be moderate, orderly people of *honest occupation*.

§ 2 They should *have sufficient means to cover any loss of books*, or objects they take away from the Cabinet.

§ 3 *They should pay in advance the value of the subscription* which shall be – monthly 1\$300 réis [reals], for 6 months 6\$000 réis, and for a year 12\$000 réis”. (Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853, p. 7, my emphases)

According to article 8º of the rules of procedures, “the members and subscribers [might] take home to read one volume at a time, [and must not] claim another one before returning the first” (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1866, p. 98) for a period of four to eight days, and would be penalized with a fine of 2\$000 réis for the loss or destruction of any volume, charged extra (!) of the subscription

fee paid trimonthly. In addition, article 5º clearly precludes touching the books on the shelves, which “must be [requested] to the Keeper, and returned to him to be placed in the correct order [...] and all will necessarily remain in silence, in order not to [disturb] the readers” (Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853, 1853, p. 7). Another specificity of the library was that no book was allowed to be read in the facility other than those permitted; article 7º states that reading in the Cabinet should be limited to “the dictionaries, atlases, consultation books, as well as those included in the catalogue with note (N. S.)<sup>2</sup> [...] the periodicals and separate sheets [would be] conserved on the tables at disposal of readers for 15 days, and taken away after that” (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1866, p. 100). The rules set forth by such regulations seem to have been adopted to control the entrance of people — connected or not with the institution — in view of the library’s limited physical space, to prevent the reading of books, and/or as a strategy to protect the borrowing/returning dynamics aimed, in turn, to attract new readers and, therefore, new subscribers; even if, as previously stated in a report by Marques (1876, p. 48), the place “regularly received 5 or 6 people per evening”.

By drawing on the rules of procedure and statutes, I can examine the strategies used to determine what books should be read and how, the behavior rules readers should comply with and the specific public the institution interacted with. Although I did not have access the catalogue to be able to analyze the nature of the material allowed and to identify the titles readers were authorized to read — in an attempt to establish relationships between the books allowed in this particular library and those recommended, approved, adopted, and distributed in public schooling — I at least encountered some of the works received by, donated or imported to the institution in advertisements printed in local press.

Of the books acquired by the Portuguese Reading Cabinet and advertised in *O Publicador Maranhense* (1857) (Maranhão’s Publisher), I quote: *O descobrimento da America* (The discovery of America), by Campe (2 volumes); *O descobrimento de Portugal* (The discovery of Portugal), by Damião Antonio de Lemos (20 volumes); *História da Revolução Francesa* (The History of the French Revolution), by Desodoards; *história natural* (Natural History), by Plínio (translated from the Latin, 2 volumes); *História da independência de America* (The history of America’s independence), by C. Botta. For other areas of knowledge, I cite *Compêndio de geografia* (Geography Compendium), by Geraldês (1 volume) and *Geografia* (in Latin and Greek), by Strabão (1 volume); *Dicionário de botânica* (Botanics dictionary), by Benevides (1 volume) and *Ovidio’s methamorphoses*, by Castilho (1 volume), among other subject matters.

Among notices and advertisements of various kinds and the competition between several newspapers for spaces of publicity, the news covered attempts made to reorganize the institution and the means adopted by some of its members to prolong its existence (after 18 years of seamless operation), as per press statements. According to *O Publicador Maranhense* (1871, p. 72, my emphases), the promotion of conferences and courses directed at “instructing members and others who [wanted to] take this

2 Despite several attempts, I could not figure out the meaning of “(N. S.)”.

opportunity [not being difficult, as it were] for the wealthy [...] to help this institution worthy of public protection", was a strategy which ensured the maintenance and operability of the institution as a venue of books and reading, and as an environment suitable for male and female readers. This is because, while nothing was found to confirm female attendance, this possibility cannot be ruled out since women were taken into account in the very statutes and might have been non-legitimate users of such cultural artifacts in their homes, although included only covertly in the borrowing system.

In observing the titles advertised and finding in them sets of themes corresponding to the many spheres of knowledge and specific disciplinary fields (history, grammar, geography, botany, philosophy, and religion), based on its collection, I not only view the Cabinet as an environment for the formation of readers and a space of sociability, but also as a place of consultation and aid in Maranhão's schooling, since part of its stock consisted of textbooks or books utilized by teachers. On the other hand, the different genres of writing and themes of entertainment — such as exemplified by *Último rei dos franceses* (The last french king) by Alexandre Dumas (4 volumes), *Poesias* (Poems) by Faustino X. de Novaes (1 volume) and by Antonio da Cruz e Silva (6 volumes) and the *Revista Popular* (Popular Magazine) by I. M. Campello (1 volume) (*O Publicador Maranhense*, 1857, p. 3) —, in being part of the acquired titles "with the purpose of providing members and subscribers with mild and pleasant reading, the works having been very carefully selected" (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1878, p. 115), were advertised, put into circulation, and consumed by means of the borrowing system even if they belonged to the group of readings not allowed at the institution, as per article 7º.

Although works of this kind were not authorized, the rules slowly turned into self-funding strategies adopted by the institution. This is because, due to the circulation of books through the borrowing and return system, such regulations began to foster interest in new works, the bringing in of new readers and, allegedly, the integration of new subscribers on behalf of stability. Internal rules, while ensuring the survival and functioning of the establishment, also showed that the place's maintenance depended on donations by private individuals and on the monthly fees paid by members. The association's funds and revenue came from "the product of 200 or more shares of 20\$000 *reis* each, the donations made to the Association, the monthly fees paid by shareholders and the quotas held by subscribers external to the Cabinet" (Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853, p. 1). Thus, the rules of procedures and the statutes show clearly the full responsibility of Portuguese members in financially supporting the library, the prohibitions inherent to the reading of non-approved texts as a strategy for circulation, dissemination, and consumption of books aimed at attracting new readers and subscribers, the demands and rules imposed onto a specific and restricted public, and the lack of interest and zeal by the provincial government towards the institution.

Therefore, despite the fact that the library was considered (according to the newspapers) an environment for the cultivation of the letters, which promoted the interaction of people with books and disseminated knowledge by stimulating reading, it carried signs of elitist predominance, the aches and pains of an excluding culture and the limited conception of a space of sociability for a given public (with good

manners and a stable job!) in certain specific policies, in its culturally-rooted social representations, and in the advocacy of partisan interests to the detriment of the common good. Consequently, in view of the devices mobilized in its internal rules of procedure and the norms set forth in its statutes, the institution was denied, as long as it existed, to be conceived and accepted as a meeting place for readers from different social cleavages and a reading space with direct and indirect readers of varied profiles.

The strategies adopted for the subsistence, maintenance and functioning of the library, as well as its operationalization by advocates of culture, the letters, and education (even if within a restricted and limited social circle) did not prevent it from losing strength as an institutional space along the Empire, from losing its position as a place where written culture was kept; nor inhibited its gradual disappearance, followed by the drawbacks of a regime that was undergoing changes and heading for extinction; although its memory remained in Maranhão's collective imaginary as a place that once fostered reading, assuring a close connection with books, a space for the proliferation new readers, and an environment which contributed to public education in imperial Maranhão. Antonio Pedro Salgado, in his chronicle at *Revista Elegante* (Elegant Magazine), in 1896, expresses his sadness at watching the decline of the institution: "seeing readers, the abandonment of the letters and the fine arts among us [one may] say that *Athens became Bohème*, [having] disappeared due to lack of readers, the only library that [we had]: the Gabinete Português" (Maranhão, Estatutos Provisórios do Gabinete Português de Leitura, 1853, p. 3, my emphasis).

However, if the individuals acknowledged and allowed in the institution were a minority of members and subscribers (and possibly other indirect readers who made use of its collection at home through the borrowing system), how did access to books and reading work for other individuals interested in writing for reading, but who had no financial means to borrow books or become subscribers? If this *space of sociability* (in the general meaning of the word) was restricted and limited to a well-mannered public, with stable jobs and sufficient means to not only safeguard the right to subscription but to incur the costs (in the form of fines) of any possible loss or damage to volumes, how was reading disseminated among those who were not contemplated by this keeping place of literate culture? Were there any reading spaces where the poor were allowed in? Which ones? Were there indeed venues that operated as institutionalized reading places for such a readership? How was access to books and printed materials granted? These are the questions I attempt to clarify, taking into account the limitations inherent to the sources.

## THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Very little is known about the libraries of the imperial period, except for what is offered in the study conducted by Moraes (1973) and by Braga (2002). It's the papers by Castro and Pinheiro (2006), Silva (2012), Castellanos (2011), Furtado (2012), and Borges (2013), however, that reveal more consistently the trajectory of the Provincial Public Library in the 1800s; although in these articles references are found, even if incomplete and generic, to other types of libraries according to their nature and function. Thus, the lack of a theoretical framework for the period in question to fill the gaps

regarding these *spaces of sociability* where books, readings, and readers intertwined, and the scarce details found in official documentation about the Public Library as a keeping place of culture and as a provider of books and readings to people with no other possible access to them, induced me to intercept and cross the comments, criticisms, decisions, and different viewpoints identified in the reports by province presidents and by public instruction inspectors, and in the *inventory-reports* or *occasion reports* done by the bookkeepers or librarians of the establishment. I also contrasted them with the accusations, requests, and speeches regarding this reading space recorded in the press or in the official letters found in the Public Archive, in an attempt to understand the role played by the Provincial Public Library in society and public schooling, and the influence it may have had on its regular customers, as well as to discern the strategies adopted by those in charge of its functioning, of the care and renewal of its collections, aimed at making the institution a meeting place for readers, readings and books.

The establishment of a public library in Maranhão was proposed in the Provincial Assembly<sup>3</sup> of 1826; but only in 1829 were measures taken to actually implement it. Because president Araújo Vieira's request to build it was denied by the Imperial Government, allegedly due to budget constraints, "the then future Marquis of Sapucaí [recurring to] popular subscription" (Moraes, 1995, p. 271) opened it for the public in the Convent of Carmel<sup>4</sup> in 1831, with 1,448 volumes purchased with money from donations made by residents of São Luiz (the capital city), none of it from the public treasury. Although the institution was dedicated to educating the youth by fostering interest in reading, the books acquired, donated or purchased for its collection were meant to preserve religious principles, the ethical and moral values legitimated by the imposed regime, and to contribute to the formation of good, trustworthy men and women (Pinheiro, 2004; Castro, 2007). The *contrary books* (non-authorized works) were expurgated by a Commission created for that purpose, given that the establishment was contiguous to the Lycée and served as a source of reference and consultation during lessons.

Departing from the dynamics established within the Portuguese Reading Cabinet between books and readership, the Provincial Public Library, in article 7º of Chap. II of its statutes, presents a completely opposing logic with regard to access to the building and the dissemination, circulation and consumption of books, even if maintaining some restrictions similar to the previous institution's regarding individual behavior and book browsing without touching the shelves, with a direct request to the usher<sup>5</sup>. If, according to the above-mentioned article, "all people who

3 By dr. Antonio Pedro da Costa Ferreira (member of the Province's General Council) and future Baron of Pindaré, on July 8, 1826.

4 The Convent of the Carmel was built in 1627, in the old hill of Santa Bárbara, currently João Lisboa Square. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among the functions foreign to its purpose, it served as the headquarters of the provincial police; as first office of the Provincial Public Library (1831); as Maranhão's Literary Institute (1865); and Maranhão's Lycée (1838) (Moraes, 1995).

5 Assistant to the librarian appointed for that institution, according to the Statutes of the Public Library, set forth by law no. 9, of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1835 (Castro, 2009b).

present themselves decently dressed should be given the books they request, as well as pens and ink [and] no one allowed in [had permission] to take them away from or return them to the shelves; for such they should see the usher” (Castro, 2009a, p. 28) — requirements and rules similar to those practiced at the Cabinet —, regarding contact with books, accessibility to reading and the search for new readers, far from being a *space of sociability* restricted to members and to subscribers as set forth in its statutes, in this “Public Bookstore” (as it was also called), “one would not [be allowed] to borrow any book and take it outside the Library”. That is to say, to have a right to books and reading, regardless of the genre of the text, such practices should be performed on-site, which (theoretically) ensured greater mobility of the titles disclosed and consumed, a growth of the real readership, the search for potentially new cultural consumers and a greater representation and influence of this public space in the realm of education.

This keeping place of written culture created, along its existence, strategies of survival and ways to establish itself as an educational institution. Book imports, purchases and donations, the sale of books in poor conditions (at a low price and measured by weight, not by unit), accusations made in official letters, in the local press and in face-to-face interactions at the Provincial Assembly, as well as the burning of volumes, were usual practices that made this library a place of belonging and of interacting with books, an environment representative of reading practices and a space where a diversity of readers could meet — although in its imperial stage it had been the target of compliments, criticisms, and deprivations, the product of constant fights between divergent political stances, of heated ideological confrontations and of the constant economic crises it had to face.

Donations to the institution included two collections of *Flora Fluminense* (Rio de Janeiro’s flora) written by Friar Marianno da Conceição Vellozo and gifted by the Regency on behalf of H. M. the Emperor (Maranhão, 1832a); *Regimento das prisões na America Septentrional* (Regiment of Prisons in Northern America), translated by Antonio Candido Ferreira (Secretary of the Government of the Province of Pará) (Maranhão, 1832b); *Zoophito*, offered by engineer lieutenant Jose Joaquim Reis Lopes (Maranhão, 1835d); *Ensaio sobre estradas* (Essay on roads), by Richard Lorelli Edgmont (Maranhão, 1835c); the book *O catholico e o methodista* (The catholic and the methodist), by fr. Luis Gonçalves dos Santos and offered by His Excellency the Diocesan Bishop (Maranhão, 1839), and finally, a shipment of copies in different genres: *Marcha das viagens ás partes do mundo* (March of the travels to parts of the world), by Depping de Gasthros, and *Geographia universal* (Universal geography [9 volumes]) (Maranhão, Ofício, 1837), among other works.

The books mentioned and located in official letters appear in the catalogues devised by librarian Manoel Pereira da Cunha, which were sent to the President of the Province (Maranhão, 1835a) in 1835, as well as in the inventory prepared by Trajano Candido dos Reis when he took office at the institution the same year (Maranhão, 1835b). However, if the list of titles (mostly) does not present the books classified according to themes nor authors, which may show a certain similarity with listings of works that had no need for such information, on the other hand, the language in which these cultural productions are presented and

their titles, in addition to being part of different genres and subject matters, allowed me to identify some of them as textbooks or regular books, depending on their nature and function.

The works listed by Manoel Pereira da Cunha which were apparently already utilized in schooling included: a *História do Brasil* (Brazil's History), by Beanchamp; *Introdução à história* (Introduction to History), by Puffendorfo; *A educação* (Education), by Campan; *Elementos da história* (Elements of History) and *História universal* (Universal History), by Milot; *Lições da História Natural* (Lessons of Natural History), by Cote; *Curso de moral* (Course on morals), written by the author of *Aelia e The-souro* (Aelia and the Treasure); *Aritmetica, álgebra e geometria* (Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry) and *Geografia moderna* (Modern Geogrphy), by La Croix; *Elementos de matemáticas* (Elements of mathematics), by Volfio; *Lições elementares de matemática* (Elementary lessons of mathematics), by Linco; *Geografia* (Geography), by Guttirrie and *Methodo para estudar a geografia* (Method to study geography), by Lenglet; *Gramática portuguesa* (Portuguese grammar), by Lobato and *Gramática* (Grammar), by Costa Duarte; *Curso de literatura* (Course on literature), by La Harpe and *Educação* (Education), by Rousseau, among other productions. In the librarian's opinion, the institution had been set up with 1,448 volumes; the other books were "purchased by Domingos José Roiz de Sá Viana, and forty-four more were given by his Excellency the President Candido José d'Araujo Viana before his departure with which [he completed] the gift of two hundred volumes" (Maranhão, 1835a).

That same year, when Trajano took over as director of the library, he recorded further titles for public education: *Oeuvres completes* (Complete works), by La Fontaine; *Les fables o Esope Phrygein* (The fables or Aesop the Phrygian); *Novo método da gramática* (New grammar method) and *Arte de furtar* (The art of stealing), by father Antonio Vieira; *Cours complete d'agriculture* (Complete course on agriculture [utilized at the School in Cutim]); *Historie eclesiastique: pour servir de continuiacion à celle...* (Ecclesiastic history to serve as continuation to that...), by Monsieur l'Abbé Fleury; *História do Maranhão* (History of Maranhão), by Bernardo Pereira de Berredo and *Compêndio histórico dos princípios da Lavoura do Maranhão* (Historical compendium of Farming principles in Maranhão), by Gaioso (adopted in the Lycée of Maranhão); *História de Gil Braz de Santilhana* (The story of Gil Brazl de Santilhana), by Lesage; *Geographia moderna* (Modern geography), by Antonio Jose da Silva Rego and *Nouveau Dictionnaire geographique* (New geography dictionnaire), by Vigiena; *A Bíblia Sagrada* (The Holy Bible [translated]), by Antonio Pereira de Figueiredo; *Filosofia* (Philosophy) and *Elementos de física* (Elements of physics [booklet]) by Hent; *Cours de chimie* (Course on chemistry), by B. Lagrange and *Princípios do desenho linear* (Principles of linear drawing [booklet]), utilized in the House of the Artificer Apprentices<sup>6</sup>; among other works representing 469 titles listed in the 1835 inventory and distributed in 1,984 volumes.

6 Institution created in 1841 to serve poor and deprived children, providing them with education in several areas of the mechanical arts: carpentry, woodwork, dressmaking, barrel making etc.

If one analyzes these books based on their titles, even if this is an incomplete and limited assessment, it is possible, according to the different areas of knowledge contained in the volumes quoted, to say that some were used as a support in secondary schooling after the Lycée was institutionalized in 1838. On the other hand, the textbooks for elementary school that were conceived, produced and utilized for this purpose were more difficult to identify in the inventories, except for the location of a few: *Gramática portuguesa* (Portuguese grammar), by Lobato, and *Gramática* (Grammar), by Costa Duarte; *Curso de literatura* (Course on literature), by La Harpe; *Oeuvres complètes* (Complete works), by La Fontaine; *Novo método da gramática* (New grammar method), by father Antônio Vieira and *A Bíblia Sagrada* (The Holy Bible [translated]), by Antonio Pereira de Figueiredo, which presented contents concerning primary instruction and might have guided the pedagogical practice of teachers and helped students develop reading and writing.

If, on the one hand, providing access to books and fostering reading with the ultimate aim of promoting the formation of readers were the institution's main objectives, as it advertised books and put them into circulation for consumption, on the other hand, the fact that speaking in a loud voice and walking around the interior were prohibited, while adequate dressing was viewed as a safe-conduct for attendance under warnings of expelling<sup>7</sup> due to ideological, social, political, and/or cultural issues, revealed an elitist view of the institution and led to restricted access — admission being given only to individuals with some purchasing power, most particularly those for whom reading and writing practices were active practices. These are rules which seem to reinforce the major and perverse function of libraries, strengthening exclusion depending on their attending public or legal nature; however, Inspector of Public Schooling Antônio Marques Rodrigues (author of *O livro do povo* — The book of the people) advocated for their usefulness as places of culture in an official letter sent to the President of the Province, Ambrosio Leitão da Cunha, arguing that such a public reading facility was “where the poor, whose scarce means did not [allow] then to acquire the lights of the book, [might] with no monetary sacrifice earn the wealth of education” (Maranhão, 1865a), having a minimum of education thus guaranteed.

From the Convent of the Carmel, the Provincial Public Library, which was attached to the Lycée<sup>8</sup>, moved from one place to another several times during the imperial age. On July 23, 1866, it was transferred to Maranhão's Literary Institute as determined by the Provincial Assembly, containing 1,900 volumes, and later on, when this Association was dissolved (even though its collection had considerably increased) became “the property of *Sociedade Onze de Agosto* (August 11<sup>th</sup> society) [having] 4000 volumes, in addition of many leaflets” (Marques, 1876, p. 48)<sup>9</sup>. The library, now

7 Article 8º of the Statutes of the Public Library, set forth by law no. 9, of April 30 1835 (Castro, 2009a).

8 Compliant with law no. 312, of November 24, 1851, according to the report sent on April 1, 1865, by Public Instruction Inspector Antônio Marques Rodrigues to the President of the Province, Ambrosio Leitão da Cunha.

9 According to law no. 991, of June 10, 1872 (Viveiros, 1936).



**Figure 2 – The building of Sociedade Onze de Agosto.**

Source: Photo published in newspaper *O Novo Mundo*, 1875, p. 4.

occupying the building's great hall, although it went through its greatest growth at the time, ended up precluding the continuation of the pedagogical conferences and drawing lessons that took place in it (Castellanos, 2011)<sup>10</sup> (Figure 2).

The Society was closed down in 1876, moving to the See Cathedral and returning later to the original place. It was completely forgotten once it was no longer included by the province in its budgetary laws and or mentioned by the Presidents in their reports<sup>11</sup>. As its collection deteriorated due to the lack of funds (for restoration/ operation) and lack of new purchases, it seemed that the Provincial Public Library had come to an end, gradually ceasing to exist up to the moment of its disappearance, caused by general carelessness. This, for some, suggested that its existence was unnecessary. When the Republic was proclaimed, there were certain changes, starting with its name, that changed from Provincial Public Library of Maranhão to Public Library of Maranhão at state level (Castro, 2007).

10 *Sociedade Onze de Agosto* was founded in August 1870, by Drs. João Coqueiro, Antonio de Almeida Oliveira, Martiniano Mendes Pereira, and Manoel Jansen Pereira (located on the Egypt Street) and aimed at offering night courses for artists and creating a Teacher-Training Course (*Curso Normal*, according to Provincial law no. 1088, of July, 1874) in order to qualify teachers for elementary education. However, after opening such a course “on August 20, 1873, attended by 59 students” (Marques, 1876, p. 50), the society did not manage to actually produce any graduates (Viveiros, 1936).

11 No longer functioning and, as the building was ruined, dr. Jose Manoel de Freitas, then president of Province, by enforcing art. 11 of law no. 1,155, of September 5, 1876, ordered the society to indemnify its creditors, and the respective building became a provincial asset (Castellanos, 2011, p. 70).

## OTHER LIBRARIES IN IMPERIAL MARANHÃO

While information on the nature and types of the books donated, purchased, advertised, consumed, and put into circulation by the Portuguese Reading Cabinet and by the Provincial Public Library is incomplete, what is known about establishments of the same kind and the dynamics they engaged in is almost insignificant. Traces of Maranhão's Popular Library and the Military Library, signs of the libraries set up at Maranhão's Literary Institute, at the Lycée, and the Agricultural School of Cutim, and, even of the school libraries conceived and/or planned for schools of first letters are sparse, despite some mentions in *O Publicador Maranhense* (1872, p. 2) of the differences between "literary and scientific libraries" and "popular libraries". The first were sought only by "those who devote themselves to the study of the letters and science, after acquiring the knowledge of humanity and higher courses"; the latter were characterized by having books on mechanical and liberal arts, didactic works, methods of science applied to arts and other easy-to-understand texts within the reach of minds "not yet tempered by reflective and deep study". In other words, the "popular libraries" built for the people should include in their collections booklets, handbooks and compendia dealing with "mechanics, industry-applied chemistry, political economy, in summary, ideas that [might] advance and develop the intelligence of the working classes, which in general dedicate themselves to rural work and the liberal arts" (*O Publicador Maranhense*, 1872, p. 2, my emphasis).

Records of school libraries and how they operated in schools of first letters are still missing. However, indications about the intentions and/or planning of these facilities, which relied on private donations on behalf of public schooling, even if sparse, are evident along the whole imperial age. Montezuma Alfredo Corrêa de Castro, by mediation of the judicial clerk of Villa de São Vicente Férrer, for example, offered on June 12, 1877, the amount of 20\$050 réis raised from "the costs with arbitration lawsuits for the release of slaves from that town" (Maranhão, 1877, page not numbered) — an order issued to the Treasury by the president of the Province, Francisco Maria Manuel Correia de Sá and Benevides — to be used to purchase books for the destitute boys of the elementary school of the said village. Bachelor Augusto de Mello Rocha, in turn, notified on August 26, 1873, the completion of the building offered by him for the school of first letters in Vila do Rosário to operate. Volumes of several works, as well as other artifacts of school material culture<sup>12</sup>, also formed "the core of a future library that [should] be founded in that building [ensuring] Your Excellency that such books be received by the literary delegate and also the furniture intended by the same giver for the aforementioned school" (Maranhão, L., 1877, page not numbered).

Regarding Maranhão's Popular Library<sup>13</sup>, the Military Library, and Maranhão's Literary Institute, the report by Rego (1875) only mentions the amount of

12 See Castellanos (2020).

13 Set up at Formosa street, its management Commission included Dr. Antonio de Almeida Oliveira, Dr. Gentil Homem de Almeida Braga, and Policarpo José Pinheiro, according to the 1875 *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, and the librarian was Albano Jansen P. de Lima, according to the *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão* (1878).

books; Cesar Marques (1876), when comparing the centers of written culture in São Luís, provides other clarifications. The Military Library contained 700 volumes of literature, science, arts, legislation, industry, and religion, whose access was limited of the officers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion who had founded it. In the opposite direction, the Popular Library, established with private donations in 1872 and offering free access, had been “attended by 2633 readers, and in 1873 by 3107. [Its collection had] 4169 volumes of very precious works [and] among many books which [he gave] to this Library, [he] also [made] presents of the very rare, complete works [...] by the author of *Flora Fluminense* [Rio de Janeiro’s Flora], the only volume in the Province” (Marques, 1876, p. 48) — in reference to Friar Marianno da Conceição Vellozo, Rhetoric Lecturer at the Convent of Saint Paul, who also taught Natural History at the Convent of Saint Anthony. The library of Maranhão’s Literary Institute, on the other hand, aimed to “investigate the history, geography, and ethnography of Brazil, particularly of this province, *disseminating education and developing a taste for the letters and science, by means of courses and schools free of charge*” (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1866, p. 4). Even before its implementation as a reading place, its collection had already been enriched “by over one thousand volumes offered by her Excellency Madam Olympia Gonçalves Dias, from the assets of her late husband — the sublime Brazilian poet — Antonio Gonçalves Dias” (*Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, 1866, p. 6). This collection was acknowledged for its variety and quality even before the great halls and other belongings of the Provincial Public Library were bestowed on the Institute — according to the project presented by Joaquim Serra to the Legislative Assembly in 1865 —, because it lacked a building, thereby becoming a space for the safeguard of culture in 1866.

Concerning the libraries at Maranhão’s Lycée (1838)<sup>14</sup> and at the School in Cutim<sup>15</sup>, other traces are found. With regard to the first, its director Casemiro Sarmiento (also Public Instruction Inspector), in a letter to Jerônimo Martiniano Figueira de Melo (President of the Province), questioned whether he should comply with what was set forth by Art. 62 of the Lycée’s Statutes<sup>16</sup> — which divided books and compendia utilized in teaching from the works indicated for exams, along with other archived books which served to clarify teachers’ doubts (such as dictionaries and grammars) — or yield to the “abuses by teachers” who did not agree with such a division (Maranhão, 1844). The second library, initially aimed at teachers with the acquisition of books from the School of Grignon in France (conceived as a reference center), after the ploughing method was adopted in the School in Cutim with the purpose of training qualified workforce and applying modern methods to farming, had its library gradually begin to focus on the students, with books such as: *Catecismo de Agricultura* (Agricultural Catechism) by Antônio de Castro Lopes, who requests its approval/use to the Board of Public Schooling (Maranhão, 1865b); *Manual do plantador de algodão* (The cotton ffarmer’s handbook) (1858), by

14 Created by law no. 77, of July 24, 1838. See Castro (2009a).

15 A school created in 1865 with the purpose of taking in poor, deprived boys to provide them with agrarian professional training.

16 Lycée’s Statute, 1838. See Castro (2009a).

Turner (advertised in New York), which presented the best articles from agronomy newspapers “and observations by experienced and intelligent farmers from the United States regarding such a plant, whose cultivation, even if underdeveloped, [is] in this Province, one of the major branches of public wealth” (Maranhão, 1858); *Compêndio histórico dos princípios da Lavoura do Maranhão* (Historical compendium of the Farming principles in Maranhão), by Raimundo José de Sousa Gaioso, and another book about the sugarcane planting process, to be handed out free of charge to farmers (Maranhão, 1847) — the latter mediated by the “Philomathic” (Science-Friendly) Society and the Society of “Agriculture and Rural Industry in Maranhão” (Cabral, 1984). According to *O Globo* (1859), the school and its library managed to be a “novelty of the empire [a] glorious administrative standard, [a] new era of civilization in Brazilian agriculture [and] progress instead of routine”<sup>17</sup>.

In 1874, when Maranhão’s Popular Library was referred to in *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão*, the election of its board of directors was announced and it “[was going to] serve during the next social year at the ‘Popular Library’”. Its members were invited to gather “in the customary grand session, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the current month at 7:00 p.m.”, to “[celebrate] the institution’s anniversary at its headquarters”, in honor of the services provided to the letters. Three days later, in that month of October, an account was given of the general annual meeting by a reading of the report and the trial balance after the session was opened. The most voted candidates were Almeida Oliveira, Gentil Braga and Cesar Marques, a “vote of praise” having been given “in the minutes to Mr. Polycarpo José Pinheiro and Ramos Villar, for the services rendered [to the] institution by the former as a director, and by the latter as a provincial assembly man”. According to Oliveira (2003, p. 282), the characteristic feature of the Popular Library was “to serve all in everything, *providing free of charge all genres of reading that they [might] need, to be made use of at home or at the headquarters*”; that is, the Popular Library earned this name not only because it had been founded with donations from the people, but because it allowed books to be taken out for external reading, thus stimulating interest among the population at large.

The following year, if the *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão* (1875, p. 3) praised the zeal of Mr. Antonio Rego, who, “despite his long absence, had not [forgotten] his homeland, and [had just] offered one hundred volumes of works to this Library”, it also published, on June 7, 1875, a request by Albano J. P. Lima (the institution’s librarian) to have all books returned whose date of recall had expired. In it he asked people who were in possession of books for external reading, after their expiration date, to return them along with the fines they owed, so that, if such books were still needed, new deadlines could be set and their state of conservation could be verified in accordance with the rules of procedure. However, in August of that same year, requests for donations from private individuals were intensified in view of the institution’s precarious situation, through a notice in *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão* (1875, p. 2), since the public treasury had no responsibility over the institution due to it being private:

17 A couple of words our crop. A theme addressed in the newspaper *O Globo* (1859, n. 57, p. 1).

The advantages are quite tangible that result from this very useful institution. Wishing to demonstrate them is an idle redundancy. However, *the only one we have, after many efforts to found it, open it, put it to stand* – full of important volumes, and being an abundant free-of-charge plethora of juicy popular instruction, is about to be closed down (that is incredible!) *if lack of monetary support on the part of the population persists!*

It is said that the sum of the *Popular Library's* income is hardly enough to pay for the gas! The rent of this humble place in the building where it is located is overdue; and its dignified employees have never been compensated. *The Popular Library is an institution free of charge, that is certain; but it has to be sustained by the people, on whose behalf its maintenance is done.* If everyone contributes with a small amount, the institution will not disappear. It is not necessary to do the least sacrifice for that: the ostentation of the wealthy does not need to discourage the greediness of the poor. Everyone should give what they can and want to. There is a box that can take much or little: both blend together in it and work for the benefit that is wished for. *Let's therefore support the Popular Library. I am an ordinary person and I am saddened every time I see the institutes created for the common good perish.* I believe all will feel like this. Let us do this! The Library is open every evening. Let us go there in person or send a little allowance, and the *Popular Library, friend and master of the people, will uphold itself.*

*One from the people.*

Besides the letters with requests of approval and adoption, sent by several agents implicit in the book circuit, of the donations and distribution of artifacts and the buy-and-sell advertisements in the newspaper, some authors preferred as a publicity strategy to present their books, comment on their writings, and explain their conceptions in the pedagogical and popular conferences, through which the donations collected would also (sometimes) uphold Maranhão's Popular Library. Oliveira (2003), who from 1871 onwards delivered several lectures on education at the evening school *Onze de Agosto* — including *A necessidade da instrução* (The need for instruction), *A sociedade e o princípio da associação* (Society and the principle of association), and *Discurso sobre a educação feminina* (A speech on female education) (Vieira, 2003) — also clarified in the preface to *Conversas Públicas* (Public Conversations), held at the Association's Teacher-Training School, that the sales product of the two presentations to be conducted at the institution — *Os metais* (The metals) and *A instrução e a ignorância* (Instruction and ignorance) — would benefit Maranhão's Popular Library, and he therefore hoped for, to achieve “such a useful end, [for] support from the public. He did not [assign] a fixed price for this publication, because [he relied] on the generosity and patriotism of the population, who would not [refuse to] assist us in such an enterprise” (Souza and Oliveira, 1872, p. 3).

The pedagogical conferences were intended for teachers and reflected on educational problems and teaching methods, course curricula and bibliography to be accepted, approved and adopted in the classroom, as well as discussing the titles that needed to be replaced or eliminated, depending on how outdated their contents

were; that is, “to see that the advantages of the pedagogical conferences [were] not elusive, [it was enough] to indicate the purpose they were to fulfill: improving the teachers’ performance by a kind of mutual teaching” (Oliveira, 2003, p. 220). The popular conferences, in turn, were aimed at the families of the students, at the guest speakers, who were specialists in specific subjects, and at the general public (literate or not) interested in certain themes. On the illiterate audience, the lectures’ influence “[might] be less strong, but it [would not be] less true and sensible than onto the literate. As [the conferences] were general and constant, they [might] provide or reform the education of a people” (Oliveira, 2003, p. 191). This is because, if much is learned from reading a book, much more is learned from reading a book and having it explained. Therefore, since the main purpose of the popular conferences was to spread useful knowledge to the people hungry for clarification and learning, it may be said that “the conferences complement not only the work of schools, but also that of libraries for all those who do not possess the knowledge that is indispensable to the reading of certain books” (Oliveira, 2003, p. 193). In summary, both the pedagogical and the popular conferences aimed to raise the community’s awareness of themes related to natural science and physics, to share the dynamics of the school programs based on modern pedagogy, and to foster discussion, dissemination and consumption of works; still, they did not manage to save Maranhão’s Popular Library from the miserable situation it had drowned in.

If in the official documentation I have not so far found more data about this institution, nor the precise date of its termination. In local literature, there are a few indications: Damião, the main character of *Os tambores de São Luís*<sup>18</sup> (The drums of São Luís), by Josué Montello, was hired by dr. Almeida Oliveira as librarian of Rua Formosa (two steps away from the Carmel Square), an address which coincides with that provided in the *Almanak do Diário do Maranhão* (1878, p. 12) for Maranhão’s Popular Library. However, in spite of “eleven glazed shelves that filled the room, where more than two thousand volumes nudged each other, almost all of it literature, some of it on Law and Philosophy, and a good number of old newspapers from Maranhão” (Montello, 1917, p. 471), aimed at ensuring access to readers and reading in the evening hours, it seems that these survival tactics ended when the institution closed down and transferred its collection to “the Portuguese Reading Cabinet on Rua do Sol” (Montello, 1917, p. 521). That is, far from discussing a literary critical perspective, the place of romance in history and the possible ways of using it as an object and/or source, this source made me think about searching for information in documents of a different kind, which if intersected with official sources may point to other accounts, facts, and feats; but such discussion is beyond the scope of this work. Finally, if the official documentation has not so far shown signs of the closing down of Maranhão’s Public Library and the circumstances surrounding its closure, at least clues have remained in abeyance which urge for further developments.

18 Considered by the national and foreign critique as a great novel written in Maranhão, which pieces together “the epic struggle of the black race in the process of our historical formation” (Montello, 1917, 4<sup>th</sup> cover).

## CLOSING REMARKS

At this point, I can claim that the libraries of Imperial Maranhão became true *spaces of sociability*, regardless of their characteristic nature, function, and projection. This is because not only did the books, the readings and the readers make themselves present and interact with the local context, contributing to shape different reading practices, to circulate textbooks and even to disseminating and supporting public schooling, but these keeping places of learned culture in a way advertised titles, made books available for reading, and stimulated a growth in the number of readers. This they did by making use of a variety of strategies for the imposition of the rules described in their statutes and/or rules of procedure, by selecting the books to be offered to the public and even by establishing a borrowing system whereby books could be studied or consulted on-site (as was required in the Provincial Public Library) or taken home under the condition of a fine in the case of expiration or damage to a copy (as was done in the Portuguese Reading Cabinet and Maranhão's Popular Library).

However, beyond the above-mentioned strategies, the borrowing system and even the intentions behind each tactic used (according to the power relations established) — which ultimately depended on the level of differentiation of the practices of sociability and the inequalities inherent to these practices —, it is necessary to highlight the objective differences between the Provincial Public Library and Maranhão's Popular Library in those days, to define them as two separate institutions with different origins and ends, divergent accessibility according to the publics conceived in their statutes/rules of procedure and collections that were historically constructed in different ways. These demarcations help undo some inaccuracies that have been suggested by researchers in the history of education and even by librarians; the Provincial Public Library's move to *Sociedade Onze de Agosto*, under law no. 991, of June 10, 1872 (Viveiros, 1936), seems to have contributed to produce an interpretive symbiosis in the references made to the two reading facilities. The fact that the building where *Onze de Agosto* was located had carved in its front the insignia "Popular School" (see Figure 2) seems to suggest that publications related to Maranhão's Popular Library are wrongly associated with the Provincial Public Library that used to operate there — margins of existence between two spaces of sociability and reading that are different in their nature, function, and projection, that had not so far been demarcated.

Whereas the Provincial Public Library in Maranhão was proposed to the Provincial Assembly in 1826, and measures were only actually taken in 1829 to officially open it at the Convent of the Carmel in 1831, with the favors of the public treasury as legally set forth, Maranhão's Popular Library, in addition to relying on private donations, turning its back to the public purse, was created on October 19, 1872, for the people and financially supported by it. Whereas the first culminated with the Republic, although it underwent periods of splendor, turbulence, and decay in its seamless 58 years of operation, which attest to some longevity; the second had, although its termination date has not been found in official sources, as signs appearing in other sources seem to indicate, a short period of operation.

Short, but intense in the tactics of appropriation used, which derived from the pedagogical and popular conferences, from the borrowing system implemented and from unrestricted access. Even though it was the result of private enterprise, Maranhão's Public Library was given this name because it allowed books to be taken for external reading and consequently stimulated the interest of the general public, regardless of social cleavages or the cultural background of the readers, in addition to having a collegiate board of directors: three elected directors, one secretary and two alternate members. The borrowing dynamics was contrary to that of the Provincial Public Library or "Public Bookstore" (as it was also called), whose statutes and director allowed "no book [to be] lent outside the institution, so that such [reading] practices should take place onsite". This seemed to guarantee (theoretically) a greater mobility of the titles advertised and consumed, a growth in the actual readership and greater representation and influence of this public space on schooling. Such dynamics also contrasts with that implemented by the Portuguese Reading Cabinet — founded on October 9, 1853, and supported by donations from the shareholders (Portuguese subjects of the crown) —, since the circulation of books through the borrowing system would promote interest in new works, the search for new readers, and the integration of new subscribers in defense of stability, which was the responsibility of the Portuguese members by means of the rules of procedure and statutes, in response to the lack of interest and neglect by the government towards the care of the institution.

Obviously, in a governmental system that was quintessentially excluding and refractory, as was the case in the imperial period, it cannot be expected that reading, books and libraries would be thought of and directed, in their totality, to all and for all. However, if arbitrarily the books were intended for a specific public in some spaces, if reading was (theoretically) allowed to individuals who were part of the social fabric, if public schooling was denied to most of Maranhão's residents along the two kingships, and if some places of learned culture somehow absorbed the socially and culturally constructed evils, leading to a system whose essence, in order to subsist, was the exploitation of men in a slavery regime; it seems that these determinations did not preclude the existence of other libraries with different goals and objectives. Different reading facilities — such as the Provincial Public Library, Maranhão's Public Library, and the Portuguese Reading Cabinet, places such as the Military Library, the libraries of the Maranhão's Literary Institute, of the School in Cutim and Maranhão's Lycée, and even the libraries in schools of first letters — ensured that a diversity of publics had access to books and reading, according to the nature and function of each space; places were the poor, the black and the women also learned, directly or indirectly, to read and/or write. Finally, it seems that the multiple economic and social determinations were unable to avoid that individuals not belonging to the world of reading, of writing, and of the library took an interest in books and reading, and such non-natural objections did not prevent the strategies implemented in the imposed regime, permeated by power, from showing limitations in the control of individual tactics of cultural liberation of individuals interested in books, by understanding what was written and by those spaces of sociability and reading. The reader in this case is plural, and, regardless

of how he is classified in relation to reading, lives under an imposed law; and the least skilled reader, he who is least acknowledged and most apart from the rules provided, establishes plural dimensions and creativity in a thousand ways of appropriation and representation (Certeau, 1994). These are deviationist practices in relation to the written-read that translate into and make up multiple manners of “non-authorized furtive hunts” — operational schemes that, in each individuality, set up the place where an incoherent plurality takes action, often in contradiction with its relational determinations, expressed in the modes of operation or in different schemes of action.

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