

The transfer of the court to Brazil, 200 years afterwards

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Abstract

This essay presents a brief survey of the main activities that took place in both Portugal and Brazil in the context of the programmes put forward to celebrate the bicentennial of the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil. This general assessment offers a critical account of the main art and history exhibitions, university conferences and seminars, and published materials in books or special issues of academic journals. The list of publications is deliberately focused on the years 2007 and 2008. Though the aim of this article is not to provide a critical historiographical revision, it concludes with a brief appraisal of the most relevant contributions of the commemorative events for the renewal of Portuguese and Brazilian historiography related to the problems and period under analysis.

Keywords

Transfer of Portuguese court, D. João, historiography

Resumo

Procede-se neste texto a uma apresentação das principais actividades desenvolvidas, quer em Portugal quer no Brasil, no âmbito das comemorações do bicentenário da transferência da corte portuguesa para o Brasil. Trata-se de um balanço que regista as mais importantes exposições artísticas e documentais, colóquios e conferências de carácter académico, e publicações em livro e em números especiais de revistas. O elenco de publicações referenciadas é deliberadamente centrado nos anos de 2007 e 2008. Apesar de não ter propósitos de revisão historiográfica, o texto conclui com uma breve apreciação dos contributos fundamentais das comemorações para a renovação da historiografia luso-brasileira relativa ao período histórico e às problemáticas em análise.

Palavras-chave

Transferência da corte, D. João, historiografia

I

2007 and 2008 were years that afforded a series of different moments in the evocation or commemoration of the bicentenary of the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil. This article seeks to provide a review of the main events that were organized to celebrate the occasion. Given the impossibility of recording here all the initiatives that were proposed, an attempt will be made to draw attention to those that have left lasting marks through their contribution to the renewal of the historiographic legacy relating to this historical period. Based on these records, which take us beyond the merely ephemeral tone of the festivities, an attempt will be made to provide an overview of the novelties that have been brought to the study and interpretation of the significance and implications of the transfer of the court to Brazil and its subsequent stay there. This is, after all, the particular merit that commemorations always have, or, in other

words, they create an opportunity and a pretext for deepening and enriching our knowledge about a given historical period.

In fact, the commemorations of the transfer of the court to Brazil were an occasion that proved to be a fruitful pretext for remembering and analyzing a period that was decisive for the building of the Portuguese and Brazilian historical destiny. However, in each of the two countries, the responsibility and initiative for the organization of the various events proceeded at quite different rates and with notably different dynamics. In Portugal, a commission was set up to take responsibility for the commemorations, and, notwithstanding the great interest and commitment shown by its commissioner, it achieved little more than to ensure that it was duly represented at public sessions where the transfer of the court was evoked. Bereft of both its own budget and program, without any institutional framework worthy of this name, and relegated to a secondary position in sharp contrast to the pomp and circumstance dedicated to politically more useful celebrations—as was the case with the commemorations of the Portuguese Overseas Discoveries and as will certainly be the case with the commemorations of the Implantation of the Portuguese Republic—the Portuguese Commission (“200 Years Portugal-Brazil”) saw its role being fulfilled through initiatives promoted by academic and university institutions.

In the Brazilian case, a greater political commitment was to be noted on the part of the various state governments that organized or promoted conferences, lecture cycles, small exhibitions, educational programs for secondary schools and even naval parades, historical reconstructions, gastronomic competitions and allegorical processions. Because of the very contents of the central message that was intended to be conveyed—the historical rehabilitation of the figure of Dom João and the royal family, whose image, even in the quite recent past, had been so completely denigrated by the official Brazilian historiography and the popular opinion that inevitably echoed those sentiments—it is easy to understand the greater commitment to be noted in the institutional support afforded to the various commemorations that took place in Brazil.

Particular emphasis should be given to the direct involvement of the Prefecture of Rio de Janeiro, which supported the ambitious and successful program of the “Commission for the Commemorations of the Bicentenary of the Arrival of Dom João and the Royal Family in Rio de Janeiro”—or “Dom João VI in Rio” in short—chaired by the Ambassador Alberto da Costa e Silva. The sponsorship that this commission gave to the organization of multiple educational, cultural and recreational activities, ranging from the most erudite cycle of lectures to the more popular parade of samba schools at the Rio Carnival, provided a safe guarantee of the quality of a commemorative program of enormously symbolic importance and with undeniable public repercussions.

The periodicals and magazines with the largest circulations in Brazil (*Globo*, *Folha de São Paulo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Veja*, *Época*, amongst others) organized special dossiers and supplements about the transfer of the court. The *Revista de História da Biblioteca Nacional* (Nr. 28, January 2008) published a special issue devoted entirely to this theme, about which some of the most prestigious historians studying this period wrote articles in a language that was accessible to the general public. The TV Globo television channel and its associated Globo News network organized a series of news reports, documentaries and interviews, *1808—The Court in Brazil*, amounting to a total of 10 hours of television broadcasts and ensuring a widespread promotion and public sharing of the significance of Dom João’s voyage to Brazil and subsequent stay there.

The success of the work undertaken by the “Dom João VI in Rio” commission may be closely scrutinized in the future thanks to the digital and printed records of the multiple initiatives to which it gave its support, namely the publication of sources and original studies about the many different aspects of the court’s move to Brazil, the presence of the royal family in Rio de Janeiro and the transformation that was to have such an overall effect on the colony, which had suddenly acquired the status of an imperial headquarters.

Independently of the importance of the commemorations held in Rio de Janeiro, the celebrations that took place in Bahia also deserve to be mentioned, since this was the first point of arrival of the Prince Regent Dom João and a part of his retinue. The state government promoted various initiatives remembering the royal landing and disembarkation and the Geographical and Historical Institute of Bahia organized a conference from 13 to 16 May 2008, where special attention was paid to the theme of the opening of the Brazilian ports to free trade with friendly nations, this being the first measure decreed by Dom João on his arrival in Brazil. During the months of March to June 2008, an exhibition was held at the Bahia Art Museum about *Bahia in the Time of Dom João*, which sought to provide a reconstruction of aspects of urban life, everyday family life and the festive atmosphere that was engendered by the episodic

stay of the royal entourage in the region, from 22 January to 26 February 1808. The exhibition catalogue (Athayde 2008) clearly illustrates the importance and fascination of the objects, set in the context of their own time and place, for enhancing our understanding of this unique moment in the history of Bahia.

Another exhibition worthy of mention was the one held at the National Historical Museum in Rio de Janeiro, from March to July 2008, under the general title of *A New World, a New Empire. The Portuguese Court in Brazil, 1808-1822*. This exhibition also resulted in the publication of a catalogue with texts and pictures highlighting the most significant aspects of the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean and the adaptation of the royal family, the court and the government to their new life in the Tropics (Tostes 2008). The sheer number and variety of exhibitions held in Rio de Janeiro, or in other neighboring cities, throughout 2008, was truly impressive. Merely by way of example, one could mention the ones that were held: at the Federal Justice Cultural Center, about the history of some institutions created as a result of the court's installation in Rio; at the National Museum of Fine Arts, about the collection of paintings transferred and acquired by Dom João during his stay in Rio; at the Casa França-Brasil (Alfândega), about fashion, costumes and accessories at the court of Dom João VI; at the Arte Sesc (Flamengo), about *Rio de Janeiro, capital of Portugal*; at the Museum of Ingá, about *Niterói in the time of Dom João VI*; and at the Imperial Museum of Petrópolis, where two thematic exhibitions were held, whose titles clearly illustrate the contents on display: *Maritime crossings—tragic reports of the sea voyages across the Atlantic made by the Portuguese court and other sailors*, and *Dreams—the plans and achievements of a merciful and intelligent prince, who wanted to stay in Brazil forever*.

Still in the field of art exhibitions, mention should also be made of the thematic exhibition about *Health and Medicine in Portugal and Brazil—200 Years*, which took place at the Historical Museum of Rio de Janeiro from July to September 2008 and at the Museums of the Escola Politécnica in Lisbon from November 2008 to January 2009. Other exhibitions that were held in Lisbon were *Rio and Lisbon, Constructions of an Empire*, from June to July 2008 at the Universidade Lusíada, dedicated to the problems of appropriating the territory and organizing the urban space, and the temporary exhibition of prints and paintings that was held at the National Museum of Ancient Art, from November 2007 to February 2008, under the title of *The Changing Empire, 1807-1821*.

II

There were various academic and university meetings dedicated to this theme. The first initiative that should be mentioned was a set of open lectures that took place in Rio de Janeiro between 22 May and 13 June 2007 at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute under the general title of *1808—The Transformation of Brazil: from Colony to Kingdom and Empire*. This course was an important landmark at the early beginning of the commemorations with more than 300 participants and subsequent publication of the lectures in a special issue of the *Revista do IHGB*. From 8 to 10 October 2007, the Institute of Scientific and Tropical Research and the Overseas Historical Archive promoted the conference entitled *Memories of the Portuguese-Speaking World: the Court's Departure for Brazil*, where roughly 20 papers were presented. Its main concern was to survey the archives and documentary sources available for the study of this period. On 29 and 30 October 2007, the Brazilian Academy of Letters organized a meeting at its headquarters in Rio de Janeiro on *The Role of Dom João VI in the Union of Portugal and Brazil*, with the participation of members of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. Also in 2007, from 26 to 30 November, the *1st Commemorative Conference of the Departure of the Royal Family for Brazil, 1807-2007*, with sessions alternating between the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, the Portuguese History Academy, the Naval Academy and the Lisbon Geographical Society, with the collaboration of the Military History Commission. The 4th Conference of the Brazilian Historical Institutes was held from 21 to 23 October 2008 at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute in Rio de Janeiro on the theme of the *Bicentenary of the Arrival of the Portuguese Court in Brazil*, with 19 institutes from various Brazilian states being represented.

The two largest academic conferences, with the greatest varieties of themes (each with roughly 50 papers presented and discussed) took place from 9 to 14 March 2008 at the Fluminense Federal University in Niterói, and from 4 to 6 December 2008 at the Institute of Social Sciences in Lisbon. The first of these conferences, entitled *1808—The Court in Brazil*, centered on the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of the court's stay in Rio de Janeiro. The second, entitled *Portugal, Brazil and Napoleonic*

Europe, attempted to set the transfer of the court in the context of the conflicts and upheavals taking place at that time in Europe.

The simultaneous presence at these conferences of Portuguese and Brazilian historians was an important factor for ensuring a valuable interchange of points of view, experiences and historiographic traditions, adding to the range of different perspectives available for the interpretation of the historical period under analysis. This fruitful dialogue was also the main motive of interest and the central aim of the organization of the conference that took place at the Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian in Paris, from 26 to 28 May 2008, expressly dedicated to commemorating the *200^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de la famille royale portugaise au Brésil*. A similar motivation was to be found in the first part of the meeting between Portuguese and Brazilian historians held at the Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa on 24-25 November 2008, with the title of *Between Portugal and Brazil. The Court in South America (1808-1821). An overview and historiographic perspectives*, an initiative which is set to be continued in 2009 by the Jaime Cortesão Chair of the University of São Paulo.

Another interesting and notable feature, when one considers the range of conferences and lecture cycles that were held, is the unprecedented encounter between members of the academic world and representatives of the business community of both countries. The clearest possible demonstration of the fact that it is both possible and desirable for there to be a dialogue between historians and businessmen was given by the conference organized by the Federation of Commerce of the State of São Paulo, which took place on 28-29 November 2007 on the theme of the *200th Anniversary of the Opening of the Ports*, at which papers were presented on the significance of the liberalization of the colonial trade arising from the opening of the Brazilian ports decreed in January 1808, although it also dealt with the challenges of the modernization of the present-day Brazilian port structure. A similar situation was to be noted at the two conferences promoted by the Banco Espírito Santo—the first in Lisbon on 10-11 April, 2008, and the second in Bahia on 21-22 November 2008—at which the commemorations of the bicentenary served as a pretext for historians, social scientists, businessmen and political actors to discuss *1808-2008 and the future of economic relations between Portugal and Brazil*.

The above-mentioned conferences and meetings are far from amounting to an exhaustive list of such events.¹ Yet this selection, which has sought to record the most important conferences, covers a total of roughly 200 papers, a number that clearly shows how the commemorative pretext can become a factor encouraging the development of new research. Some of the papers presented correspond to sporadic and isolated studies without any continuity, or others which return to and recycle materials that have already previously been worked upon. However, most of these papers will be revised, published and included in books; others will be redirected and submitted for publication in specialized journals; while yet others will be used by their authors as chapters of books that are already under preparation. In short, the series of academic and university conferences motivated by the bicentenary of the court's transfer to Brazil represents, in itself, an invaluable contribution to the broadening of our knowledge of this theme.

III

At the same time, a number of publishing initiatives have been developed, showing the results of innovative research projects. In this context, one should mention the special dossier on “The Portuguese Court in Brazil” published by the Portuguese review *Ler História* (Nr. 54, 2008), with six articles re-examining various aspects relating to changes in the monopoly over colonial trade and the reorganization of the new imperial space as a result of the invasion and occupation of the metropolitan territory (Pereira 2008). The *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* published a special issue (a.168, Nr. 436, July-September 2007) on the theme of the transfer of the court to Brazil, with a total of fifteen articles corresponding to the lectures given at the above mentioned course “1808—The Transformation of Brazil: from Colony to Kingdom and Empire” (Lyra 2007). The specific theme of “Trajectories and sociabilities in Brazil at the Court of Dom João VI” received the attention of six articles included in the special dossier of the Brazilian journal *Tempo* (Vol. 12, Nr. 24, January-June 2008)—organized by our much beloved, but so sadly and prematurely deceased, friend, Maria de Fátima Gouvêa—in which the theme of the court's transfer is analyzed from a viewpoint that pays special attention to new reflections

¹ Cf. Carvalho, 2008, who mentions other events promoted by the various Brazilian Historical Institutes. As far as the Portuguese part is concerned, it is important to note that the theme of the court's transfer to Brazil is inevitably to be found at the multiple conferences that have been organized and will take place over the next few years on the French Invasions and the Peninsular War, which are not covered by this review.

upon the history of the different social actors and networks (Gouvêa 2008). The review *Acervo* (Vol. 21:1, January-June 2008), of the National Archive of Rio de Janeiro, published a special issue on “The Court in Brazil, 200 years”, composed of nine articles in which various aspects of the theme of the court’s transfer were examined (Heynemann 2008). Finally, the *Revista Brasileira* (Year XIV, Nr. 54, January-March 2008) of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, dedicated a thematic issue with fifteen contributions to the subject of the presence of Dom João VI in Brazil.

Despite the proliferation of new studies motivated by the commemorations of the bicentenary, it is essential to note that the theme has been constantly returned to, not only by Portuguese and Brazilian historians, but also by authors of other nationalities. And there are a number of recent contributions, published prior to the impetus provided by the commemorations, that establish essential guidelines for analyzing the transfer of the court to Brazil and its multiple implications, such as the books by Jurandir Malerba (2000), Kirsten Schultz (2001) and Lilia Schwarcz (2002), and, less erudite but with a greater media impact, the book by Patrick Wilcken (2004). There was clearly some historiographic innovation in this process, which also included the reconstruction of the figure of Dom João VI based on new biographical records that definitively removed from the scenarios of his representation the traditional images of pusillanimity and indecisiveness, accompanied by other perceived flaws related to his lack of the elementary political capacity to govern his subjects to his own satisfaction. Thus, the serene biography of Jorge Pedreira and Fernando Dores Costa (2006) made a decisive contribution to stemming the tide of historiographic mutterings that insisted on ridiculing and belittling the figure of the king, and finally went some way towards confirming the positive and pioneering eulogy put together by Oliveira Lima (1908), and opportunely republished in 2006. The same change of direction can be noted in the synthetic records produced with biographical notes and an overall contextualization of the activity of Dom João VI in Brazil, recently published by Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (2008) and Rui Figueiredo Marcos (2008).

Besides producing the new contributions to the biography of Dom João, prince and king of Portugal and Brazil, 2007 and 2008 were years of fruitful publishing activity, particularly in relation to new studies about the court’s transfer to Brazil and its life in Rio.² As far as the publication of new sources is concerned, attention should be drawn to the carefully prepared edition of the previously unpublished letters of Carlota Joaquina (Azevedo 2007), a work that provides us with a different image of the ill-loved queen, based on the personal and intimate records of her family correspondence. Another text published in Portuguese for the first time was the account of the voyage written by Thomas O’Neil (2007), which, despite its somewhat fanciful nature, is one of the rare testimonies referring to the conditions under which the royal entourage undertook their voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The publication of the letters that Luís Santos Marrocos wrote to his father and other family relatives between 1811 and 1821 (Marrocos 2008), a masterful collection of records and news about life at the court, and about the political, economic and cultural situation in the capital of the empire in the tropics, made it possible for readers to enjoy a more complete contact with one of the most highly appreciated sources for the reconstruction of the social environment in Rio de Janeiro during the period of the royal family’s stay in that city. Also in the field of epistolary sources, reference should be made to the publication of *Correspondência Luso-Brasileira* (2008), which includes a significant chunk of the letters exchanged between the Pinto da França and Garcez families during the course of the court’s sojourn in Brazil.

Our knowledge of the sources available for the study of the action of the government that was installed in Rio and its relations with the regency in Lisbon became more accessible with the study and contextualization provided by Ana Canas (2007). Another study with essential heuristic attributes was made by Kenneth Light (2007), based on the previously unpublished and painstakingly gathered information (which is kept at the Public Record Office and in other archives belonging to the British Royal Navy) about the sea voyage of the English fleet that accompanied the entourage of the Prince Regent Dom João.

I shall now highlight some of the works published at the time of the bicentenary celebrations, which help us to deepen and renew our historical knowledge about the transfer of the court to Brazil. The opening of the ports and its significance within the context of a broader opening up and liberalization of the Brazilian economy, creating new opportunities for the development of greater economic and political autonomy, is the theme linking the 12 essays included in the work published by Luís Valente de Oliveira

² It should be stressed that all the bibliographical references presented below relate to books published during the years 2007 and 2008. No individual identification is made of the articles published in the special issues of the reviews mentioned above.

and Rubens Ricupero (2007). The same theme of the opening of the ports and the problems faced by a colony that suddenly saw its dependence on Portugal transferred to the British Empire is also re-examined by José Jobson de Andrade Arruda (2008).

The establishment of new traders in Rio, their relationship with the traditional trade structures, their technical development with a view to satisfying the needs of an increased demand for consumer products and capital equipment for manufacturing production, are all subjects that are analyzed in the book by Isabel Lustosa and Théo Lobarinhas Piñeiro (2008). The international framework of the court's transfer, and its understanding in the light of the events that shaped the dynamics of the western world in that same year of 1808, are presented and discussed in the book by Andrea Slemian and João Paulo Pimenta (2008).

The court's presence in Rio caused multiple changes to be introduced into urban life and led to the need for new equipment and public spaces. The creation of the Botanical Garden, the organization of scientific studies in the fields of natural history, for example those taking into account the acclimatization of plants of Asian origin, the new leisure programs and the fascination aroused by the exuberant beauty of both native and transplanted plants and plant species, are just some of the ingredients that make the book by Rosa Nepomuceno (2007) particularly attractive. In a different register, exploring the problems related with the influence of the tropical climate on the new European inhabitants, the diseases, the proposals made for basic sanitation facilities and the elimination of swamp areas, or, in other words, the concerns with questions of public health, are all clearly evident in the texts from the period written by Manuel Vieira da Silva and Domingos Guimarães Peixoto, which have now been edited and commented by Moacyr Sciliar (2008).

The establishment of the Royal Press in Rio de Janeiro gave rise to various publishing activities, including, most notably, the publication of the *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro*. The book by Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (2007) offers us a selection of articles and a guide to the themes and news that earned the attention of the editors of the *Gazeta*, a useful source for accompanying the daily heartbeat of a city that was avid for information and news. At the level of the intellectual life and new cultural environment provided by the city of Rio de Janeiro, attention is drawn to the book by Vasco Mariz (2008) on music in the time of Dom João VI, and the repertoire of concerts and musical activities that took place in the Capela Real or the new Teatro de São João. On this subject, it should also be mentioned that the commemorations of the bicentenary created an opportunity for the fresh release of recordings revealing the compositional skills and quality of musicians such as Marcos Portugal and Padre José Maurício Nunes Garcia.

Lilia Schwarcz (2008) published an interesting and controversial study on Nicolas-Antoine Taunay and the French artistic mission, questioning the very existence of the "mission" as a deliberate project commissioned by the court, maintaining that, above all, it was the outcome of random circumstances that made it possible to bring about a fortunate combination of the court's political will and the enforced exile of French artists who had a neoclassical background but were imbued with Napoleonic convictions. Also linked to the field of the history of art in Rio de Janeiro during the time of Dom João VI is the important study by Renata Santos (2008) on engraving and its use in books and newspapers, the production of maps and pictures used for propaganda purposes, caricatures and ephemeral printed material, the techniques used in engraving and the making of prints and their social and political uses.

The multiple implications of an economic, social, political and cultural nature arising from the transfer of the court to Rio de Janeiro are recorded and noted in the dictionary organized by Ronaldo Vainfas and Lúcia Bastos Pereira das Neves (2008). This is a work with legitimate aspirations of providing a synthesis, written in the style of the compilation of encyclopedia entries, with an alphabetical sequence and order that is difficult to understand, but which is undeniably interesting from the point of view of its systematization.

And there are, of course, books of a non-academic nature without the erudition of university research, but which, perhaps because of this, are fortunately and inevitably destined to enjoy a successful reception amongst the general public. This is the case, for example, with the book by Ruy Castro (2008), which presents us with a romanticized story of the adventures of the Infante Dom Pedro and his friend Leonardo, penetrating inside the customs and habits of a new sociability constructed in the empire's newly emerging capital. An empire that this mischievous boy (who, in 1808, was only 12 years old) was to receive crowned in glory when, in January 1822, he was bold enough to say, "I shall stay," and to shout, in September 1822, "Independence or Death." This is also the case with the novel by Hélio Loureiro (2008),

which tells us of the misadventures of an imaginary cook of the prince Dom João, who set sail with him for Brazil, reinvented new gastronomic delights with Brazilian ingredients, enjoyed a few love affairs and was saddened when he had to return to Portugal, and who, besides feeding his king well, also fueled the speculation taking place about the regicide caused by a fatal dose of arsenic being mixed in with the food. The cook was only allowed to enjoy the revenge of similarly victimizing those who had dragged him into this terrible plot.

Guaranteed publishing success does not always testify to the quality of the narrative, but there are other means of achieving fame. Dom João, Dona Carlota, ministers, secretaries and public men turned into comic strip characters: this was the idea ingeniously expressed in the form of drawings by Spacca, supported by a safe and reliable text written by Lília Schwarcz (2007), in which there is no shortage of intrigue, suspense and great creativity in the graphical conception of a storyline about the Brazilian João told in comic form.

But when we talk about publishing success, the greatest emphasis must be given to the book *1808* by Laurentino Gomes (2007), a genuine bestseller that remained at the top of the sales lists in Brazil and Portugal for practically the whole of 2008. Organized into short chapters of fluent and incisive prose, the book was meticulously conceived to appeal to an audience that was unaccustomed, or even allergic, to academic writing. Although the book does not succeed in avoiding some easily refuted commonplaces, it is only fair to recognize that the book corresponds to a serious project to transpose the various political contexts, social settings, cultural atmospheres, economic limitations and international constraints associated with the court's presence in Brazil into an accessible language, without forgetting the attractions provided by small stories of courtly life and by the portraits and biographical profiles of great characters. The book's major defect is perhaps the sinister and rather warped phrase used as its subtitle, creating an expectation of jocularity that is not matched by the seriousness of the contents of historical investigative journalism that the author successfully manages to express. The explicit references to the "mad queen," the "frightened prince" and "the corrupt court" are a painful demonstration of the rules of the weak marketing that an author can be subjected to, much to the enjoyment of those who sell books as if they were selling soap.

IV

From the synthetic references or simple mentions made above about books and essays included in collective editions, articles published in academic reviews or in periodicals with a wide circulation, as well as lectures and papers presented at conferences that are still awaiting publication, there can be no doubt that we are now faced with a rich source of information and additional knowledge about the period of the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil and its subsequent stay there. It is my firm belief that, today, much more is known than was the case two years ago about the multiple perspectives from which the court's stay in Brazilian territory can be considered: from the political language to the musical language, from the construction of the urban space to the formation of the territorial identity, from the territory's internal administration to its dealings with the world outside, from economic considerations to police matters, from the organization of justice to health care, from the orders of the realm to the secrets of the court, from the territory's literary and cultural life to its scientific discoveries. And, there are many other aspects that embody the difference between the colony that was the jewel in the crown and the colony that became the capital of the empire.

The various institutions created in Brazil in 1808—Ministries, the Council of State, the Military Council and the Council of Justice, Law Courts, the Intendancy of the Police, the Board of Trade, the Royal Printing Press, the Bank of Brazil, the Botanical Garden, the Academy of Midshipmen, the Medical and Surgical School, amongst others—are better known today and have been researched in an innovative fashion, associating the work of investigating the archives with the hermeneutic questioning about their place and function in the new legal and political order of the Portuguese-Brazilian empire. And the minutiae of the micro-analyses about individual political actors or economic agents serve as a complement to the essays providing an overall interpretation of the full extent of the changes brought about by the transfer of the court to Brazil.

Without attempting to make a comprehensive synthesis of the perspectives of historiographic renewal already undertaken or in progress, I believe that it is pertinent, in terms of this overview, to

highlight two essential *lines of force* that run through the most recent historiographic production about the court's transfer.³

First of all, there is the definitive consolidation of the interpretation that the departure or retreat of the Prince Regent Dom João, with his family and court, has to be seen as the outcome of the long process of Portugal's involvement in the highly belligerent conjuncture to be found at that time between the main European states, polarized into supporters of either France or England. Since 1804, Portugal had been attempting and successfully managing to follow a policy of neutrality which, after October 1807, ceased to be possible. Almost simultaneously, Portugal complied with the French wishes and promised to accept the terms of the Continental Blockade, staging a false declaration of hostility towards England and secretly combining with this power as a way of safeguarding the royal family's retreat to Brazil. In seeking to remain on good terms with each of the two rivals, Portugal ended up finding itself in the strange situation of declaring war against them both. Which was clearly an exercise in neutrality that presaged the worst possible fate for its territory.

In the European context and in the midst of the crossfire in which it found itself involved, Portugal's saving grace was the strategic importance of its ports and the enormous wealth and potential of its colonial empire, especially the Brazilian one. The reduced dimension of its economic or military power at a European scale did not allow it to enjoy any special prerogatives as an arbiter. However, the grandeur of its overseas empire exacerbated its inevitable fate of becoming a tempting target for European strategic ambitions and rivalries that it could definitively avoid no longer. If the territory had to be defended, the crown and the headquarters of the empire needed to be transferred to the place where it was most important to do precisely this: Brazil.

In this way, the vexed question of deciding whether the Prince Regent Dom João was a coward or a brave man is rendered pointless, as is the question of whether the flight to Brazil was a fortuitous event or was the result of lengthy and careful planning. In short, the relevant question of interpretation consists of understanding the transfer of the court from the point of view of the Portuguese positioning on the European chessboard on which was played out the destiny of the countries that refused to accept the Continental Blockade decreed by Napoleon. This particular direction taken by research is an irreversible fact and has been pursued, above all, by Portuguese historiography on the European side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The second line of force that can be noted in more recent studies about the continued presence of the Portuguese court in Brazil relates to the interpretation of the importance of that presence for the construction of Brazilian national unity and political independence. This subject has been of particular interest to Brazilian historiography, which can be considered perfectly natural in view of its legacy of a highly critical interpretation of the possible benefits that were brought by Dom João and his court. A very clear testimony to this tradition of being opposed to the presence of Dom João VI is to be found expressed in the writings of the great historian Evaldo Cabral de Mello, which the commemorations of the bicentenary have helped us to remember. In his view, the attempt to create or refound a new empire as a result of the magical gesture of transferring the court to Brazil was thwarted, since, "in reality, the construction of the empire was no more than a rhetorical question, with which the Dukes of Bragança who held the Portuguese crown sought to do away with the painful impression created in Europe by their sudden withdrawal to South America, presenting this move as a measure of great discovery destined to enable Portugal to replenish its energies in the New World in order to be able to return to the Old World as a leading power" (Mello 2002, 46).

This approach gives greater importance to the later confirmation of incompetence and the incapacity to go beyond idle rhetoric and implement an effective reform of the political, institutional and economic system in Brazil. It explains the reasons for the failure of the mere replication of the system existing in the continental metropolis, whose transfer was motivated by the invasion and consequent break-up of the territory. Or, in other words, it observes events and considers the reasons that show that it was impossible to translate the imperial project into concrete policies and actions for constructing a system suited to the new circumstances, namely those resulting from an economic regime founded under the aegis of liberal principles.

This model of interpretation, whose legitimacy and pertinence I do not wish to call into question in any way, comes close to what Maria Odila Silva Dias has defined as the "internalization of the

³ For a broader historiographic view, covering a wider range of the studies produced before 2007, see the very useful guide compiled by Lúcia Guimarães (2008).

metropolis,” or, in other words, it reinforces the idea that the arrival of the court in Brazil did no more than create the conditions for the “transformation of the colony into an internalized metropolis” (Dias 1972, 171), making it possible to integrate the dominant elites in Brazilian society into the structures of power that reproduced the metropolitan model, without causing any subversion or challenge to the established social order. But it is also this type of analysis that favors a critical view of the luxuries and extravagances of a royal house that essentially brought benefits to Rio de Janeiro, thus making it possible for the city to impose its central power over the other captainships of Brazil, which remained peripheral and subject to fiscal exploitation.

Now, it is this skeptical and critical view of the new administration of the Portuguese-Brazilian empire that has been subjected to examination and discussion, necessarily introducing the problem of discovering to what extent the arrival of the court in Rio de Janeiro was an important step towards avoiding a fragmentation similar to the one that occurred in Spanish America and consequently creating the conditions for unifying the immense territory of Brazil. This is an argument that has been put forward by Maria de Lourdes Viana Lyra (1994) and Andréa Diniz Silva (2006), in their assessments of the outcome of the reforms implemented by the powerful minister D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, which José Murilo de Carvalho neatly summarized in the following terms: “Without the arrival of the court, there would be no Brazil. In other words, the arrival of the court was a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the existence of Brazil as we know it today” (Carvalho 2008, p. 555).

The debate is far from having reached the point where we might consider it to be definitively closed. But there is no doubt that the commemorations of the bicentenary created an opportunity for going deeper into this and other subjects that are decisive for our understanding the significance of the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil and its subsequent presence there. Now that the dust has settled and the festivities are over, it is time to pause for a while and digest and rethink the huge volume of activities that I have tried to list here.

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