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Challenges of democracy in Brazil from a historical perspective

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Abstract

The first aim of this paper is to discuss the current challenges of democracy in Brazil, from a historical perspective. It starts by stating the theoretical standpoint used to approach the subject: power relations stem from, economic, social and cultural features of a given society. In this context, Brazilian society has been characterized from the start by inequalities, patronage and personal relations. The medieval roots of the colonization mixed with modern slavery to produce a society composed by subjects to the king and local potentates from several centuries (1500-1889). The late introduction of such concepts as citizenship and democracy, from the early republican period, 1989 onwards, meant the maintenance of several traditional features of social relations, such as several rights restricted to the elites, clientage, and the continued exclusion of the large majority of the population of political life. From the 1930s, with the emergence of nationalism and the continued struggle of the subaltern, advances such as the female right to vote (1934), were followed by a crypto fascist regime (1937-1945). The struggle against Nazi-fascism in Europe (1942-1945) led to the demise of the dictatorship and the establishment of democracy (1945-1964). However, in the context of the Cold War (1947-1989), democracy was mired by conflicts and contradictions, with the exclusion of communists and of illiterates of the body politic. At the heyday of the Cold War, long military rule (1964-1985) stamped out opposition, several people were killed and many more expelled or internally exiled. The struggle for democracy gained momentum from the 1970s, as the military enacted an amnesty (1979), and elections for state governors and senators (1982).

From 1985 up to now, democracy has been a most important feature of social life in Brazil. The 1988 constitution included for the first time illiterates, devolved power to communities, and established diversity as a value. In the last quarter of century thus, democracy has enjoyed both popular and elite favor, with benefits percolating to ordinary people and helping the advancement of social equality. The democratic setting enabled disputes and conflicts to be dealt by different social actors respecting differences. The historical weight of the traditional features of Brazilian society continues to hinder social justice and a more active participation of people in politics. Brazil continues to be one of the most unequal societies, so that even if the overall well-being of the people is in continuous improvement, the perception of inequality contributes to social tensions. Minorities and people with specific behavior, beliefs and stands are also prone to being bullied by majority understandings and even prejudice. Conflict is part of any social life, but it may be acute in very unequal settings, as is still the case of Brazil. So, after achieving the rule of law and the formal respect for human rights, it is increasingly felt that democracy depends on setting up the conditions for more social equality. This explains several distributive schemes since the 1990s, such as notably the granting of funding for programs aiming at keeping poor children in school, considered to be one of the most effective ways of fostering social improvement. The same goal applies to several measures trying to improve education for descendants of

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former slaves (people of African descent), but also in relation to natives and other groups. All those schemes have been scrutinized and discussed, but the main challenges for democracy in Brazil today are related to overcoming social imbalances and patronage still hindering a more open society. However, considering the short period of democratic rule in Brazil, the advances have been impressive and worth building upon them.

Introduction

The first aim of this paper is to discuss the current challenges of democracy in Brazil, from a historical perspective. It starts by stating the theoretical standpoint used to approach the subject: power relations stem from, economic, social and cultural features of a given society. Let's start with the deeper roots.

Latin America: Modern Civilizations with Old Roots

More than a region, Latin America is one of the many concepts resulting from Enlightenment and the French Revolution, a new way of understanding the world and dividing it. Nowadays, Latin America is felt as natural a concept as the meter, a major invention by the French in their search for universal ways of measuring the world. Latin America is a concept used for the first time in 1856, in Spanish, and 1861, in French. It was an attractive name, as it did not refer to the Iberian colonizers, but to a rather vague "Latin" origin (Heydenreich 1995:231-234). It took several decades for it to be adopted. In fact, Brazil rejected the term during the nineteenth century, and to this day still a clear separation exists between Brazil and Latin America, understood as "Spanish-speaking America". However, Latin America is now a label used in most countries by both scholars and ordinary people as a shortcut for describing the independent countries extending from the southern border of the United States of America to Cape Horn, formerly part of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, as well as the old French colony of Haiti (Pendle 1963:13). This definition of Latin America directly links to the process of building nation states in the nineteenth century and for this reason it usually does not apply to areas formerly under Spanish or French rule, like large parts of the United States, or to those colonies still under direct colonial rule, like French Guyana (Bethel 1984).

However, this traditional definition is not entirely consistent or satisfactory as an analytical device. In the last five hundred years or so, the first three centuries were characterized by the rule of two competing Iberian crowns, the Spanish and the Portuguese, whose legacy is still very much felt to this day (Weckmann 1992; 1993; Funari 1998). Accordingly, in this book, I use Latin America to refer to the Iberian civilizations in the Americas. A more appropriate name would be Iberian America, a term officially in use in Spain but otherwise not widely used. Latin America here then refers to Spanish and Portuguese civilizations in the Western Hemisphere. The two Iberian Peninsula kingdoms spread not only their administration, but also their language and culture to large areas, and it is thus possible to differentiate two Iberian Americas: the areas under the control of the Castilians and those under Portuguese rule, the former being also named Hispanic, and the later known as Brazil. The two areas differed also in the official languages used: Castilian or Spanish in the areas under Spanish rule and Portuguese in Brazil. Even though native languages were and are widely spoken in several areas within Latin America, the official languages have always been only Spanish and Portuguese. Although quite close, the two languages have been more a factor of difference than of interaction.

This chapter deals with Hispanic and Portuguese Americas in both a contrasting and integrative way. The Iberian roots of Latin America explain many shared general traits, mores, customs and ways of life, so much so that for outside observers, Brazilians, Mexicans, and Argentines are seen in quite the same light. Perhaps the most important shared cultural outlook is a syncretic form of Roman Catholicism, but several others too are true, like the Roman legal system, a Mediterranean approach to life, even a shared mixed experience in living with Muslims and Jews, as well in the fight against both. The differences, however, are no less impressive, as Portugal forged its own identity, in the first centuries of the second millenium AD in direct opposition to the Castilians. Portugal was the only Medieval kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula able to keep independent from the Imperial ambitions of the Castilians, and the result were two different civilizations in Europe itself. Castilians invented an Empire in the Peninsula and named it Spain, the old Roman name for the entire Iberian Peninsula, in a clear challenge to Portugal. The rivalries and differences were only to increase with time with the colonization of the Americas further splitting the two civilizations. When Portugal was ruled by Spain from 1580 to 1640 it kept its own administration, and the experience

only reinforced the sense of difference in both sides. This book addresses thus both sides of the coin: the common features and the diversity between the Spanish and the Portuguese.

The Iberian Peninsula in the late Middle Ages and the origins of the conquistadors

Latin America starts in the Pyrenees, in the Iberian Peninsula, in Southern Europe. To understand Latin America it is necessary to understand first Iberian cultures and their long history. Nearly seven hundred years of continuous Roman involvement have left their mark on many aspects of contemporary life in both Spain and Portugal and in their American offspring. Iberia is the largest peninsula in Europe (580,160 square kilometers) and comprises different geographical areas, occupying a unique position in the crossroads between the Mediterranean, Europe, Africa and the Atlantic. A country of passage, it has been settled by several peoples. There are six main geographical regions: the Mediterranean coast, the Ebro valley, Andalusia, the north and south Meseta, the Atlantic coast and the northwest. The Mediterranean coastline has always been linked to the vast Mediterranean basin, with Greek and Phoenician settlements, later Roman and Arab, always open to Italy and the Middle East. The Ebro valley is the main route of communication between the Mediterranean and north-western Spain. Andalusia to the south is dominated by the Big River of the Arabs, the Guadalquivir ("The big river" in Arabic). Andalusia itself means "Spain" in Arabic. But much earlier than the Arabs, southern Spain was a major route of communication between the Atlantic and inner Spain, as well as with Africa. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs and Jews shaped this unique mixed region which played an especially important role in the colonization of the Americas. At the heart of the Peninsula, the vast tableland known in Spanish as Meseta dominates the landscape. It was here that the Castilians would build their imperial capital, Madrid. The Atlantic coast is a narrow strip from northern Portugal to the south. To the north, there is the rocky nub of Galicia and the Cantabrian coastline.

The Romans conquered the Iberian Peninsula as a direct result of a struggle with her old North African rival, Carthago, the powerful Semitic empire with several settlements in Spain. It took Rome almost two hundred years to conquer the whole peninsula, even though the Mediterranean and southern areas stayed under Roman rule

since the end of the third century BC. By the mid-first century AD, a mixed population of Iberian, Celtic, Semitic and Roman descent lived under Roman rule, lived in Roman towns and cities, and used Latin as their tongue. The spread of Latin resulted in the development of several Romance languages in the Middle Ages and still in use: Castilian (known as Spanish), Portuguese, Catalan and Galician. Only in the high lands between modern Spain and France did survive a non-Romance language, Basque, spoken mainly by peasants until the recent development of an autonomous Basque government in the area, since the late 1970s. Hispano-Roman society was, in many ways, the result of a self-generated fusion of Italic, Native Iberian and others (Keay 1988). The population of the peninsula was varied both in ethnic origin and in their attitude to Rome (Goodman 1997). In the second century AD, Roman emperors were born in Spain or of Spanish extraction, and Rome's imprint in the peninsula and later in their colonies is very much felt. It is no coincidence the fact that the term coined to refer to the former Iberian American colonies is precisely "Latin" America, referring as it does to their Roman ancestry.

A most recognized face of Roman society in the peninsula is slavery, practiced by the Carthaginians and expanded by the Romans, an institution which continued in use during the Medieval and then early Modern periods. Another feature of Roman origin is academic architecture, grounded on the fundamental importance of layout, order, proportion, symmetry and stylistic perfection. The Spanish crown much later re-appropriated these values, both by highlighting the Roman architectural heritage and by reading the classics. The Romans regarded the development of cities as perhaps the most effective way of consolidating their rule (Thorpe 1995:19), and Romans spread in Spain the grid plan. Romans cities were walled and two major avenues crossed at the center, the *cardo* and *decumanus*. Just at its heart, there was a forum, the center of community life, with temples, civic buildings and the market place, all of which would later inspire the foundations of Hispanic cities in the Americas (Contin and Larcamón 1996). Native towns were not planned and were usually grown in the hills, the so-called *oppida*, while Roman towns were preferably settled in plain and open areas (Funari 1997a). Roman private housing is also worth mentioning. The typical *domus* was a single storey building planned around two unroofed spaces, the atrium in the part nearer the street and the perystile further back. The house was inward-looking, with few windows to the outside, again features which will be re-emerge in modern times.

Catholic church buildings developed from another Roman traditional building, the basilica, originally an administrative building. The word "basilica" is Greek – it means kingly or royal – and it consists of a roofed peristyle. However, the Catholic basilicas were seldom built over Roman temples, even though pre-Roman hallowed ground often kept their religious importance by being honored with Catholic chapels (Mierse 1999:299). Again, the experience in the Americas replicates this pattern, using previous native sacred sites to the advantage of Catholic faith.

During the centuries of Roman rule the Iberian Peninsula was converted to the official Roman Catholic faith. The fourth century AD saw the appearance of ecclesiastical buildings as an important new focus in town life. Literary and archaeological evidence show that church buildings began to dominate the centers of major towns as they became ever more closely identified with the state. The decline of secular public buildings matched the first appearance of churches and other Catholic buildings, marking a significant step towards the small fortified ecclesiastical centers of early medieval Spain. Catholicism was vibrant, intolerant of pagans and heretics, producing the great Christian emperor Theodosius (AD 379-395), born at Cauca (modern Coca). Theodosius tried to impose a rigid Catholic orthodoxy on heretics and pagans, culminating in AD 391 with the banning of pagan sacrifices and the closure of all pagan temples (Keay 1988:172-201). Catholic orthodoxy established itself in the Iberian Peninsula and its grip on power and society was to be longstanding.

The Peninsula was settled by Germanic peoples, the Sueves in the north-west and the Visigoths elsewhere. The Visigoths mixed with the local elites, adopted Romance tongues and converted to Catholicism. Large properties continued in use, slavery was even reinforced, the institution being explicitly justified by the great thinker, Isidore, archbishop of Seville. After Saint Isidore, "God in his just judgment created slaves and masters, so that freedom of slaves be controlled by their masters" (Gourévitch 1976:55). Free people, on the other hand, were losing rights, so that they were described the same way as the slaves, as *serui*, the medieval serfs. The Church got hold of vast urban and rural lands. In both Sueve and Goth areas the Church was the most important authority and even in remote areas, like notably in Galaecia, it was the main conveyor of tradition. In Galaecia, area which produced two closely related Romance languages, Galego and Portuguese, the Church was so important that it was

able to impose liturgical terms to refer to the days of the week. While in other Romance languages in the Peninsula and elsewhere kept Pagan names (Lunes, in Spanish, Monday, Martes, Tuesday and so on), in Portuguese they are called Segunda-feira, Terça-feira, attesting to the pervasive role of the Church even in remote areas (Mattoso 1997:310).

The enduring material culture of the Moors

Muslims conquered most of the Peninsula in the early 8th century and more than half of it stayed under their rule for several centuries. Al Andaluz was the name in Arabic of Muslim Spain and to this day southern Spain is called Andalusía. The colonizers came from North Africa, Berbers and Moors, spreading not only the new faith but also the Arabic language and a new material world. It is believed that half of the population under Andalucian rule continued to practice Catholicism in Goth style (Torres 1997: 365-372), but conversion to Islam was also widespread. Arabic was used as learned language from the tenth century. Several languages were in use, however, by the scholars, notably Arabic, Latin and Hebrew, while the people used Romance tongues, heavily influenced by the Arabic used by the elites. The spoken Arabic left its imprint in Iberian Romance languages and is an important indication of Arab material culture introduced in everyday usage. Some dwellings were made with unburnt bricks dried in the sun, adobe (from Arabic *al tub*), others used glazed tiles (*azulejos*, from *al zualij*), and some had a roof terrace (*açotéia* from *al sutaihah*). To go into it, it was necessary to use the *aldrava* (large knocker). Other architectural features introduced by the Moors were the alcove (a recess, from *al cobba*) and a hall or lobby (*saguán* from *satwan*), as well as balconies, courtyard houses, and roof framing system (Mahfouz and Serageldin 1990). Inside, there were baskets without handles (*açafates*), ornaments (*alfaias*) and cushions *(almofadas*), carpets (*alfrombras*), casket (*ataúde*), household furniture (*enxoval*; *ajuar*). In towns, there were minarets (*almádenas*), butchery (*açougue*), and urban quarter (*barrio*). Lunch was also an Arab meal (*almuerzo*), using olive oil (*aceite*) and several other ingredients from the Arabic (like *arroz, acelga, azeitona, alfarroba, açafrão, acepipe, albarrã, alcachofra, almôndega*). Agriculture techniques are Moorish, such as irrigation ditching (*alfobre*) , as well as the water mill (*aceña*) (Caro Baroja 1983: 239-349), the village itself (*aldea*), hamlet (*arraial*) store (*armazém*), reservoir (*açude*), alembic (*alambique*), quarter *(arrabalde*). Several trades

bear names of Arabic origin, like tailor *(alfaiate*), practical veterinarian (*alveitar*), armorer (*alfageme*), muleteer (*almocreve*), as well as measures and weights, like *arroba* (measure of weight), *quilate* (carat), quintal. Several officials and administrative functions are still named with Arabic words, like *alcalde* (mayor), *almoxarife* and *alguazil* (bailiffs), *almotacel* (alderman), *alvará* (permit), *masmorra* (dungeon). *Alforges* or saddle bags were in use, as well as *alfinetes* (pins), but also pliers (*alicates*). Moorish weapons and military buildings were adopted, as *zaga* (spear), *alfange* (sword), *alcáçar* (fortress), *adaga* (dagger), *atalaia* (watch tower), *ameia* and *adarve* (battlement), *alcáçova* (castle), *arsenal* (Bueno 1967:31-34;101-103). Social life and institutions were Arabic too, as attests the names for freedman (*forro*). Caravel, a most important kind of ship for early modern sail, is also a result of Arab and general Mediterranean techniques. The word itself of probable Greek origin, "lobster", but it was through the Arabs that the word was introduced in Italian (*caravella*), Spanish (*carabela*) and Portuguese *(caravela*) (Eguilaz y Yaguas 1886; Lopes de Mendonça 1892). The modern Caravel though was invented by the Portuguese in the 1430s (Fonseca 1934; Barata 1987), not least thanks to Arab technology in both boat building and in astronomic and cartographic matters (Miceli 1997:73).

Glazed pottery was one of the most enduring introductions by the Moors (Mazahéri 1986:281-285; Riu 1989:157-160). This glazed pottery was to be known as *maiolica*, from the name of the Isle of Mayorca, and it was in use in the Christian areas by the 13th century (Jiménez 1987; Berti and Rizzo 1997). In fact, ceramics of Moorish filiation are still produced in southern Spain (Llorens Artigas and Corredor Matheos 1970:164). Portuguese or Spanish written with Arabic letters were called *aljamias*. It is thus difficult to underestimate the importance of Moorish influence in general (Dozy 1946; Andrade Filho 1989) and in material culture in particular. The archaeological study of Moorish Iberia is still in its beginnings (cf. Riu 1989:41; Marques 1995), but it is clear that landscape (Navarro 1995), cityscape, housing and everyday life artifacts of Moorish origin shaped both the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America.

Under the Moors, the Jews established a prosperous community, known as *Sefarad*. Jews arrived in great numbers from all parts of the Islamic world to settle in *Al Andalus*. The Jewish intellectuals became co-workers of the learned Arabs, becoming as the Christians Arabic-speakers. Maimonides (1135-1204) is the best representative of

this mix of Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian and Muslim mix. When the Christian kingdoms began to conquer the lands under the Moors, Jews faced restrictions. Jews living in ghettos (known as *juderías*) in Seville, Cordoba, Toledo, Barcelona and in several other cities, and towns were often attacked by mobs, under the auspices of the Catholic church. There was a continuing and relentless pressure from the Catholic Church and the states to bring reluctant Jews to the Catholic faith. Some became *conversos*, soon to be called New Christians and also *Marranos,* literally "pigs". For several centuries, people were accused of being hidden Jews, persecuted by the Inquisition. The introduction of the *Auto-da-fé,* or "act of faith" led to the execution on the stake of several people of Jewish descent since 1481 (Grigulevich 1980). For more than three hundred years the pyres blazed in Portugal, Spain and her Latin-American domains (Lea 1908). Ferdinand and Isabella signed an edict expulsing the Jews from Spain on the 31st of March, 1492. Soon afterwards, Portugal in 1496 and Navarra in 1499 followed suit and also expelled the Jews (Pedrero-Sánchez 1994). This led to mass conversion and to later persecution of New Christians and also to a large movement of Sephardim ("Spaniards" in Hebrew) to the Netherlands, France and elsewhere in both Europe and the Islamic world. The imprint of the Jewish into the Iberian material world was not as extensive as that of the ruling Moors (but see Cantera and Millás 1956; López Álvarez 1986), but Jewish and New Christian influence continued for centuries in Latin America, not least in the constant persecution by the Church (Grigulevich 1980).

The Outset of Colonial Expansion

The Iberian Peninsula was not only under the grip of Catholic repression, it was also under the influence of the Renaissance. In the late Medieval period, there was a growth of a fresh, humanistic exploration of Greek science and on Latin culture in general. The revival of Antiquity began in Italy but later reached the Iberian world, so much so that the civilizations of Greece and Rome were re-introduced as subjects of direct study. An outstanding achievement of early Spanish humanism and of printing skill was the publication, delayed until 1522, of the famous Complutensian Polyglot Bible, a tri-lingual edition with the original Hebrew paralleled to the Greek Septuagint and to the Latin Vulgate translations. Iberian vernacular languages were spoken for several centuries, and they were written in ordinary contexts since the 12th century

(Freches 1970:11-21). By the end of the fifteenth century, the main languages in use were Castilian (later to be known as Spanish), the official language of the Spanish court, Portuguese/Galician, Catalan, all of them Romance languages, and Basque. In the beginning of the sixteenth century Castile was able to establish a Spanish monarchy superseding several Medieval kingdoms, so that there were only two vernacular languages officially in written use: Spanish and Portuguese. Latin had for centuries been the official language, but the new interest in Roman authors led to a more classical use of Latin by intellectuals beyond the clerics. Latin continued in use for the whole modern period, until the nineteenth century, for various purposes, both in the Peninsula and in the colonial world.

The late Medieval period witnessed an outward expansion of the Iberian powers. The main strategy followed by Portugal in the west and León-Castile and Aragón to the east was the seizure of external resources. This first took place in the Peninsula itself, with the *Reconquista* of Muslim areas, but soon the expansion was to Africa and then the Far East by the Portuguese, and to the Mediterranean by the Spaniards. As the Muslims were expelled from the Western Mediterranean, in the East the Ottomans were conquering the ancient Byzantine Roman Empire. The massive Ottoman Empire would block direct European access to the Orient for over three centuries and caused the deflection of Portugal and Spain to search a western route to the East. Portugal explored the African coast, reached the Cape of Good Hope and then India, while the Spanish crown financed Columbus (Wolf 1984:34-36).

In the Iberian Peninsula, pastures were extended at the expense of arable, especially during the fifteenth century and the interests of the cereal growers were systematically neglected. Payments to the Castilian Crown by the sheepherders guild, called Mesta, became a major source of royal revenue, accelerating the decline of agriculture. As the price of wool was stable, sheep raising was favored by the state, and wool was exported to Flandres and to Italian towns. The dominant pursuit came to be livestock keeping. Pastoral economy throttled industrial development in Spain. The distribution of conquered land from the Moors was very uneven, so that large *latifundia* were owned by a small number of estate owners. Thanks to irrigation systems and agricultural techniques of the Romans, sometimes preserved and improved by the Moors, new crops were available for consumption and export. Fruits, vegetables such as

sugar, cotton, citrus fruit, peaches, strawberries, rice, figs, dates, almonds, saffron, mulberry trees and silk worms were exotic and profitable industries left by the Moors (Miskimin 1975:61-65).

In Portugal, the bulk of the population worked the land, most of them under feudal rules, the cultivators paid in kind or money and also rendering two or three days a week of unpaid labor. Agricultural rents and labor dues supported a military mobility and a large Catholic clergy. The merchants grew in importance from beginning of the fifteenth century, dealing with the export of grain, olive oil, wine, pork, salt and dyestuffs for English cloth. Merchants continued to work in a feudal context, through concessions and contracts, as a bureaucratic estate. Raymundo Faoro (1976:73-96) refers to the late Medieval period in Portugal as the "freezing of the bureaucratic estate", when the nobility, the clergy and the merchant stratum consolidate as stable estates, precluding the development of modern classes. Medieval men had long exhibited geographical curiosity and as early as 1344 the Kingdom of Castile claimed and had extracted from the papacy a title to the Canary Islands, off the coast of Africa. By the early fifteenth century, the stimuli for discovery existed in strength, and Portugal combined practical experience, Arab science, and open inquiry in an eclectic approach to the problems of the Atlantic. John I and his sons conquered Ceuta, a Moorish fortress on the southern side of the Straits of Gibraltar, in 1415 (Bourdon 1973:53-67. To some extent, the victory was a logical stage in the long reconquest of lands from the Arabs, and there was a strong element of medieval Crusade in the motivation for the attack. Portugal was recognized as an independent kingdom by the papal bull *Manifestis probatum*, in 1179, as a conquering kingdom against the Moors. Pope Alexander III donate to King Afonso Henrique *de omnia loca que... de sarracenorum manibus eripueris* ("all the places he gains from the Sarracens"), and the king is described as *sicut bonus filius et princeps catholicus* ("good son and Catholic prince"). Reconquest was thus a Medieval ideology extending to the modern period (Edmann 1940; Boissellier 1994:139-141). Several Papal bulls and other documents refer to the conquest of Muslim territory in the Iberian Peninsula and later in Africa as actions as important as the Crusades to the Holy Land. For several centuries, indulgences were given to Iberian fighters. Later, in the Americas, the same indulgences were given to those conquering and converting Indians. This practice continued in use until the nineteenth century (Rabello 1984). At the same time, this venture can be considered as

an early example modern colonialism. Henry the Navigator, Prince of Portugal, led the expedition against Ceuta, a major center of the Saharan gold trade. Once in North Africa, Portugal aimed at controlling the gold trade and sidelining the Muslim enemies of Christendom. The Portuguese discovered Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands, developing labor-intensive sugar plantation worked by African slaves, anticipating the whole American exploration in the next century (Orser and Fagan 1995:53).

Prince Henry the Navigator progressed slowly, hindered by fear of the unknown and by fantastic rumors, as the famous fear that the sea became warmer as one sailed south it would at some point boil as a caldron. By 1434 Cape Bojador was rounded; by 1444 Cape Verde and the river Senegal had been reached. The slave trade began in earnest in the 1540s, and slave trade produced a lot of state revenues for Portugal. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the Atlantic islands were raising sugar, competing with traditional Mediterranean producers (Amado and Figueiredo 1999). Grown on fertile soils and with slave labor, the competitive products of the Atlantic made a dramatic impact upon the European market. Once the profitability of the explorations had been proved, nothing could restrain further progress and southward and westward voyages grew in intensity. The Portuguese trading station at Elmina, on the Gold Coast, was established in 1482, becoming a trade center for slaves, ivory, gold and pepper (Miskimin 1975:158-163).

The Spanish Crown entered the race for the west late but was able to reach the New World first. Columbus returned to Spain in 1493 convinced that he had landed in eastern Asia. Christendom was confined and suffering defeats in the Mediterranean; its bastions against Islam were falling. Long-lived Medieval traditions, such as that of St. Thomas in India, meant the possibility of contact with Catholic peoples in the other side of the Islamic world. A practicable sea route to Asia promised thus both an enticing prospect of trade in silk and spices, but also strategic inroads against Islam. Still on his second voyage, Columbus identified Cuba as China:

“After that I wish to leave for another very large island, which I believe must be Cipangu (Japan), according to the signs which these Indians whom I have with me make; they call it “Colba”. They say that there are ships and many very good sailors there. Beyond this island, there is another which they call “Bofio, which they say is also

very large. The others, which lie between them, we shall see in passing, and according to whether I shall find a quantity of gold or spices, I shall decide what is to be done. But I am still determined to proceed to the mainland and to the city of Quinsay and to give the letters to Your Highnesses to the Grand Khan, and to request a reply and return with it" (Columbus 1960: 41).

It took some time until "New World" was to be introduced in the vocabulary of the period (Parry 1969:3-5). Soon after that, in 1494 Portugal and Spain signed a treaty at Tordesillas, dividing the world between the two countries. The treaty established that all the lands 170 leagues to the west of the Azores were Spanish, those to the east were Portuguese (Romano and Tenenti 1986:177-180). The Portuguese arrived at South America in 1500, and in the following year the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci was sent by the Portuguese to explore the South American coast. Vespucci was the first to consider that South America was a separate continent. Vespucci was the first to call the western hemisphere "New World" and afterwards the continent gained his name, America. In the first decades of the sixteenth century Portugal sent several expeditions to South America. It was called successively *Ilha de Vera Cruz* ("Isle of the true Cross"), *Terra de Santa Cruz* ("Land of the Holy Cross"), sometimes *Terra dei Pappagalli* ("Land of the Parrots") and finally Brazil, the name of a Medieval mythic island to the west of Ireland. Brazil is probably a word of Celtic origin, **Bres* in old Irish meaning "noble", "lucky", that is a mythic "Promised Land". The name could have come from Breiz ("Brittany") and Izel ("Low"). Low Brittany refers to the three westernmost departments of Brittany and Breton sailors used to give the name Brittany to newly found places. Since the Middle Ages, Brazil wood was called *verzino*, in Italian, a product of the mythic island (Weckmann 1993: 29-40; Funari 1997b).

Common Features of Iberian Societies at the Outset of the Colonization of the New World and their Enduring Character in Later Centuries

The divine mission of the Church and the monarchy was the basis of political doctrine, and it remained so for several centuries during the modern period. Iberian kings were dutiful followers of the Church and in return the Church granted money to the crown, sent its knights and tenants to serve in the royal armies, and provided experienced counselors for the court. Iberian monarchies owed its spiritual character to

the Church. Popular support for the monarchy was reinforced by the theoretical conception of the Church on the two powers, secular and clerical. Typically the serf tilled a plot of land owned by a lord or baron who gave him a life tenure and military protection as long as he paid an annual rent in products, labor, or money. In the large *latifundia* resulting from the conquest of enemy land, peasants could be evicted at the owner's will. Around the baronial villa peasants had their village, part of a manor. The landed proprietor was known as *dominus* (Lord) in Latin language documents, *señor* in Romance. The feudal law of property recognized several forms of land possession. Unconditional ownership was reserved for the king, while lords were considered as tenants and inheritance was through the Germanic principle of primogeniture. Younger sons were encouraged to venture forth and carve out new estates in conquered lands. Torture was revived in the thirteenth century, when Roman and ecclesiastical law were extended to large areas of the Peninsula. Out of Germanic customs of military initiation, crossed with Muslim influences, chivalry flowered. A knight was a person of aristocratic birth, but not all men of good ancestry were eligible. Younger sons were normally sidelined.

Marx (1978:52) refers to feudal relics in capitalist society, but in the Iberian world those "relics" continued for centuries, hindering the development of capitalism. In feudal society, relations which were far removed from the nature of feudalism were given a feudal form, probably the best example being simple money relations. Even though there was not trace of mutual personal service as between lord and vassal, they work under a patronage and patriarchal framework (Marx 1978:408). The elites were concerned with nobility (*hidalguía, fidalguia*) and purity of Catholic blood (*limpieza de sangre*), but also disdaining business and manual occupations. Particular attention has always been paid to the special privileges of the grandees, the growing abyss between rich and noble few and the poverty-stricken masses, the enormous numbers of the clergy, the absence of an enterprising bourgeoisie, the fatalistic acceptance of exploitation, the pervasion of the government bureaucracy by the nobility and privileged few, the crippling effects of the sale of offices, and the formidable powers of grandees on their vast estates, or *latifundia.*

Spanish kings gave charters of self-government to many towns and municipal independence, a long-term feature of Spanish administration. Spanish monarchy was

imperial, encouraging the maintenance of local traditions, languages or dialects, customs. In this respect, Spain was inspired by the Roman example. The earliest instance of representative political institutions in Europe was the summoning of the *Cortes*, courts, in 1188, the Cortes de León. The courts comprised nobles, clergy and businessmen. At Castille, they were called for the first time in 1250. Portugal, on the other hand, was a centralized state. In the first meeting (*concilio*) of León to which representatives of cities were summoned, in 1188, King Alfonso IX promised to consult the bishops, nobles, and "good men", the three estates (or *brazos*, arms) of the State. In the fifteenth century the turbulence of the nobility in both Portugal and Castile became so great as to lead to a reaction among the towns and the clergy in favor of the Crown and so to a fatal weakness in the power of the Cortes in the two kingdoms (Myers, 1975: 65). Already in the late fifteenth century, the initiative in legislation was in the hands of the royal council and the Iberian monarchies legislated by decree. The Cortes were reduced to an assembly of subservient flatterers.

Brazil: present and past

Brazil is the largest and most populous country in Latin America, with more than 190 million inhabitants in an area comprising 8,547,400 square km. Some 15 % of the population lives in the countryside, 85% live in cities and towns and more than half live in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. 90% have access to home TV, there are more mobile phones than inhabitants, and more than half the literate population has access to the internet (some 10% of the population is illiterate). Social inequality is still the third largest in the world, as indicates the Gini index (0.56), but it has been diminishing stably in the last few years. Nominal GDP was US$ 1,543.7 in 2009, 2842.36 per capita (67th position worldwide). According to official statistics and race classifications, half of the population is white, 42 % mixed race and 8% black, even though there is a lot of discussion about the race classification in Brazil (data come from Droulers and Broggio 2005 and official Brazilian statistics). Some would argue that most of the population is of mixed European, Native Brazilian and African descent (cf. Funari and Pinon 2011).

Now we may turn to Brazilian history and why maroons are so a ubiquitous and important feature in Brazil. Brazil has been shaped by the Medieval Portuguese background of the colonization (Weckmann 1993), from patronage (Faoro 1976) to racial mixing and cultural interaction (Funari 2006). The Portuguese reached Ceuta, in North Africa, in 1415 and then continued their conquest first of Africa, then of South America, reaching the shores of Brazil in 1500. The first decades were used to explore the land, settled from the mid 16th c. The Portuguese transplanted their experience with sugarcane slave plantations from the Atlantic Islands to Brazil and established sugar mills in the cost from Recife to Salvador, while the back lands were left first to some Jesuit priests and then to pioneer settlers who mixed with local native Indians. Those settlers soon lost most of their Portuguese, adopting for the next two centuries native Tupi (Noll 2010). They were Indian and slave raiders, in search also of precious mines, stones and forest drugs. There were thus, as put Noll (2010), two main settlement areas: the coast under the control of the Portuguese authorities and speaking Portuguese, and the vast interior of the continent, inhabited by natives and explored by Tupi speaking settlers.

During colonial rule (1500-1822), there were two main economic activities and four administrative periods. The colony was administered loosely by the Portuguese until the fateful disappearance of King Sebastian, fighting the Moors in Africa, in 1578 and the absorption of Portugal by Spain until 1640. Messianic Sebastianist movements followed for the next centuries, including a major one in a late 19th maroon, Canudos, explored by archaeology and discussed below. During this period of so-called Iberian Union, the colony was invaded by the Spanish European rivals, the Dutch (1630-1654), who settled in the north eastern coast, at Recife. Finally, from the independence of Portugal in 1640, Brazil was under the aegis of a newly established overseas council (1642). As a consequence of the Napoleonic onslaught, the Portuguese court was transferred to Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, the new capital of the Portuguese Empire. The arrays of empire prepared Brazil to independence in 1822. In economic terms, sugar cane in the coast developed fast, with the acumen at the late 17th c., even though sugar plantations continued to play a major role for the next centuries in the northeast of Brazil, until a recent diversification of the economy. Sugar plantations used native Brazilian and African slaves as workforce and maroons are often mentioned from the 17th onwards. In the early 17th c. a large maroon was established 60 km inland,

comprising several towns, known as Palmares or Angola Janga (Little Angola). The settlement grew large thanks to several factors, not least three main ones: Native cooperation and participation, Dutch and Spanish and later Portuguese rivalry and the oppression of colonial rule. Several attacks by local troops were unsuccessful, decade after decade, until at the end of the century Paulista slave raiders were employed to destroy it in 1694, and to kill the last king, Zumbi, in 1695 (for traditional accounts, cf. Carneiro 1946; Rodrigues 1933; a critical approach in Cròs 1997).

From the early 18th c., another economic activity developed in the back lands: mining. This urban activity led to the development of several towns and spread the use of Portuguese to the interior of the continent and Africans were brought in large numbers to work in the mines. Natives continued to prevail in the northern coast from Pernambuco captaincy to the Amazon, while Africans were a majority in the mines. References to maroons were rife also from the early settlement of the mines districts.

Late colonial rule was odd, in that the colonial power was established in the colony itself in 1808, the only case in modern European colonialism. When the court left Rio de Janeiro to return to Lisbon, in 1820, the heir to the throne, Peter, stayed and proclaimed independence in 1822, establishing monarchy (1822-1888) and keeping slavery, now complemented by coffee plantation in the main southern axis between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and then spreading towards the west of the province of São Paulo. The reasons for the continuing unity of Portuguese America as Brazil have been discussed since the 19th c., but Richard Morse (1962) classic assessment is still deemed valid: unity was a Portuguese feature (as opposed to Spanish inner divisions), inner commerce was strong (as opposed to Spanish America) and finally personalist monarchic leadership was accepted in traditional old regime style.

Almost from Independence, emancipation has been an issue and later a strong movement against slavery developed (Azevedo 1995), contributing to the spread of maroons both in the countryside and in urban areas. Emancipation (1888) and the toppling of monarchy (1889) led to renewed maroons, as settlements on the ground and as a social concept. Emancipation did not mean the end of maroon settlements; quite to the contrary, they were then free to grow and to gather more people. By then, quilombo

(maroon) was a most common topographic term, concurred by other descriptions of popular, irregular and unofficial settlement and modern anthropological definitions of quilombo include all those squatting sites outside mainstream legal framework.

The oligarchic republic established in 1989 was no less oppressive to those humble social groups and the first large rebellion against the state was a messianic, sebastinist movement at Bahia State, Canudos, led by a monarchist popular Catholic preacher, Antônio Conselheiro. The settlement gathered thousands and resisted the onslaught of the military for quite some time, until being destroyed, with most people slaughtered in the process, in 1897. However, maroons continued to grow and to challenge social inequalities in the following decades of the oligarchic period (1889-1930). The early 1930s witnessed first a flowering of democracy, including elections and female vote, but a fascist dictatorship (Estado Novo, 1937-1945) led to exiles, persecutions, and to official restrictions to maroons and to the study of resistance and freedom fighters (Orser and Funari 2001).

The restoration of democratic rule (1945-1964) enabled maroons not only to grow, but also led to a growing scholarly interest in subject, so that scholarship considered the study of maroons was a key part of the struggle for social justice in the country (Funari and Carvalho 1985), with Palmares and Canudos at the forefront. A military coup led to a long dictatorship (1964-1985), including persecution, exile, missing people, and much more against dissenters. The restoration of civilian rule led to a sprout of freedom initiatives, starting by the early decision of declaring Palmares a national heritage site just a few months after restoration of civil liberties. Then, the democratic constitution of 1988 established the right of maroons to their own lands, and several federal, state and town laws not only did protect maroons as fostered the archaeological study of maroons as part of Cultural Research Management activities. Furthermore, scholarly interest in the subject led to a huge increase in historical, anthropological, sociological and archaeological study of maroons, again as part of the struggle for freedom, diversity and human rights (Carvalho, Soares, Silva and Funari 2009).

Economic development, government, democracy, and a critical approach

Development is a modern concept: the ancients would never think about it. They were concerned about love (*eros*), war (*polemos*), citizenship (*politeia*), even frankness (*parrhesia*), arrogance (*hybris*) and fate (*moira* or *tykhé*), but not something growing from inside out – this is the ultimate meaning of development (in plain English, development means "ulfoding", like *physis* in ancient Greek, cf. Fattal 2011: 38). Even less would the medieval people. It definitely is a modern concept. It is not ethical, nor personal, even less erotic; it is indeed modern, as it refers to the realm of the practical world, to the reproduction of capital. *Entwicklung*, as would say Karl Marx. For contemporary economists, there is no mystery, as put Lucas (1988: 3) at the heyday of Margaret Thatcher (ops, I am not referring to Meryl Streep!):

Quote:

"By the problem of economic development I mean simply the problem of accounting for the observed pattern, across countries and across time, in levels and rates of growth of per capita income".

End quote.

As simple as that!

And still, economic development is probably much more complex than that. England got it first, as the first and most important developed power in the world: the Empire with no sunset. Karl Marx was mesmerized by Britain, no doubt. Then, the United States got the prize and still keeps it, being challenged by Japan and Germany (in the 1980s) and China, India, and Brazil (today). However, whatever our stand on the relevance of economic development – as opposed to human development or happiness – it is beyond dispute that it matters a lot for governments all over the world and this leads us to our second subject: government and policies (so that we are including archaeology here). Governments are concerned with the well-being of people and there is a growing recognition that public policies are central to the implementation of effective and socially relevant strategies. Since Theodore Lowi's (1964; 1972) simple inversion of a political banality – that politics determines policies – political scientists continue to discuss (Mooney 1995: 599) whether and how "policy determines politics", as proposed Lowi (cf. Rodrigues 2010: 44) This discussion is particularly relevant in the context of

the Americas, considering the long-standing democratic tradition in the United States and Canada and the late 20th c. democratic trend all over the Americas. However, democracy is not necessarily prone to social justice and

quote

"democracies are not necessarily more efficient economically than other forms of government".

endquote

(Schmitter and Karl 1991: 227).

In any case, democracy and the rule of law are huge achievements and they enable people to fight for their rights, not a mean feature, at least from my own Latin American standpoint, considering the heavy weight of dictatorial rule suffered in the region for so long and considering, furthermore, the secular authoritarian and patriarchal Iberian background (DaMatta 1987; 1990; cf. Funari 2006 with further literature). Democracy is not enough to wipe out huge inequalities (Singer 1986: 7), but still it is probably a sine qua non for diminishing them without suppressing freedom. Democracy also entails fairer public policies, taking them as "government wide institutional rules and routines" (Barzelay 2001), always subjected though to political, rather than narrow technical imperatives (Pelletier 2005: 893). Public policies in democracies are taken here as no neutral endeavor, but as potentially challenging attitudes, as pointed out recently three senior scholars, Goodin, Rein and Moran (2008:7):

The job of the policy analyst is to "speak truth to power" (Wildavsky 1979), where the truths involved embrace not only the hard facts of positivist science but also the reflexive self-understandings of the community both writ large (the polity) and writ small (the policy community, the community of analysts).

"To speak truth to power" is an expression with heavy religious connotations (cf. Acts, 3, 3-4) and consequently associated with human and civil rights movements (Cuomo 2003). Public policies scholars have been stressing the importance of a critical approach, as put recently Dryzek (2008: 195):

Quote.

"The impetus of critique is also toward evaluation and improvement, not just description and explication".

End quote.

There is thus a need to put government decisions and public policies in the due historical and political context, so that we can propose not only a critical assessment, but also the avenues open for action in the direction of more just and fair social relations. This approach is often associated with the left and social reformers, and rightly so. However, the concerns regarding social inequalities are equally at the heart of conservative thinking (Ferguson 2012). As lamented British novelist and later prime-minister Benjamin Disraeli (1998) in 1845, in his novel *Sybil of the two Nations:*

Quote

"Two nations; between whom there is intercourse and no sympathy…the rich and the poor".

End quote

Even if we do not agree with the conservative diagnosis or remedies (cf. Murray 2012), the larger point is that social inequalities are seen as a problem to be addressed by any government.

Conclusion

From 1985 up to now, democracy has been a most important feature of social life in Brazil. The 1988 constitution included for the first time illiterates, devolved power to communities, and established diversity as a value. In the last quarter of century thus, democracy has enjoyed both popular and elite favor, with benefits percolating to ordinary people and helping the advancement of social equality. The democratic setting enabled disputes and conflicts to be dealt by different social actors respecting differences. The historical weight of the traditional features of Brazilian society continues to hinder social justice and a more active participation of people in politics. Brazil continues to be one of the most unequal societies, so that even if the overall well-being of the people is in continuous improvement, the perception of inequality contributes to social tensions. Minorities and people with specific behavior, beliefs and stands are also prone to being bullied by majority understandings and even prejudice. Conflict is part of any social life, but it may be acute in very unequal settings, as is still the case of Brazil. So, after achieving the rule of law and the formal respect for

human rights, it is increasingly felt that democracy depends on setting up the conditions for more social equality. This explains several distributive schemes since the 1990s, such as notably the granting of funding for programs aiming at keeping poor children in school, considered to be one of the most effective ways of fostering social improvement. The same goal applies to several measures trying to improve education for descendants of former slaves (people of African descent), but also in relation to natives and other groups. All those schemes have been scrutinized and discussed, but the main challenges for democracy in Brazil today are related to overcoming social imbalances and patronage still hindering a more open society. However, considering the short period of democratic rule in Brazil, the advances have been impressive and worth building upon them.

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