
Introduction: An Obscured Genesis

In 1988, having completed a book on the society and culture of the elite in Rio de Janeiro, I began work on the conservative social and political thought which seemed their intellectual armature and expression. I sought the origins and nature of the Brazilian concerns with authoritarianism, race, and historical exceptionalism. Preliminary studies on the more recent figures in this tradition, Joaquim Nabuco, Oliveira Viana, and Gilberto Freyre, went well enough.¹ However, as I began work, about 1992, on the time and the studies of the thinker honored as the most prominent voice of the Conservative Party, the visconde do Uruguai, my assumptions began to dissolve. I found, in studying his work, that this most honored voice of the Conservatives read very much like a liberal. Moreover, neither his published work nor his correspondence jibed with what I understood from the historiography of the Monarchy. By 1995, I decided I would have to study the archival and contemporary evidence from Uruguai's time if I were to understand his context and his work. I could not understand the thought without understanding the society, the economy, and the politics of the Monarchy, and that has required a great deal of reassessment and historical research. That was the beginning of the book I now present to the reader.²

I was surprised to find out how much in the literature of Uruguai's era remained either unsettled or unknown. After all, his period was the time when the Brazilian nation was founded and structured, a nation unusual in the region for its relative stability and wealth. As a Latin Americanist, I had always thought this contrast compelling. One might have thought such aspects of a nation's birth would have made this past more attractive to scholarship. Instead, it remained a somewhat obscured genesis.

Yet, a basic narrative can be outlined simply. Traditionally, Brazil's early po-

litical stability is explained by the continuity of a monarchy from the colonial to the national period. In the midst of the Napoleonic wars, the Portuguese royal family fled a French invasion and established their court in Rio de Janeiro (1807–1808). By 1815, Brazil had been raised to the status of a kingdom. However, in 1820, a liberal revolution in Portugal began and the king, Dom João VI, was compelled to return to Europe (1821), leaving his heir, Dom Pedro, as Prince Regent of Brazil. It was the latter, acclaimed Dom Pedro I, emperor of Brazil, who led the nation to independence in 1822, beginning the First Reign (1822–1831), with the strong support of most politically active Brazilians and many of the Portuguese who had settled in the country. Doubtless the greatest appeal of independence under the prince was his association with traditional social and political order. Order was a sensitive issue for the European-descent elites, given Brazil's Afro-Brazilian majority (and large minority of African slaves), Haiti's revolutionary example, and the violent instability of Spanish-American neighbors. Despite this, rivalry between monarch and native elites and urban groups soon led to the former's abdication (1831) and the Regency (1831–1840), during which the political institutions, territorial integrity, and social order of the country were traumatically affected by numerous revolts. The Conservatives and the Second Reign (1840–1889) emerged in the reaction to these events and the liberal reforms of 1831–1834 associated with them and they responded to both. By 1852, Brazil's second emperor presided over a state which clearly dominated the nation. As I studied these matters, I decided upon writing a book which explained this achievement and the way in which it had begun to come apart by 1871.

This is what has been done. This study will show how specific elite elements resolved the issue of stability and continued prosperity by creating (1834–1837) a reactionary party that was the origin of the Party of Order, the basis, in turn, for what became the Conservative Party. It will also show how, as essential to this partisan organization, these reactionaries joined together to reconstruct the monarchy outlined in Brazil's Constitution of 1824. This will be done by clarifying links between the reactionaries, their ideology, their maintenance of African slavery, and the presence of successful sugar planting and the rise of the coffee-export interests of Rio de Janeiro. It will be argued that, in the era 1831–1852, slave-holding sugar and coffee planter and merchant interests in the port and province of Rio de Janeiro, tightly integrated with a clique of related magistrate statesmen and allied to similar sugar elites in Brazil's Northeast, successfully strove to theorize and construct a centralized, authoritarian state. It will also be demonstrated that they identified that state with the nation, and initially gained social and political hegemony as they confronted upheaval and disintegration. However, this study will also show that, in the years 1853–1871,

this party's leadership and their interests were successfully challenged by the monarch, Dom Pedro II, whose independent constitutional role was central to state authority by the design of that leadership itself. It will be argued that the emperor did this to mute the partisanship theretofore common, to strengthen his own position, and to achieve moderate reforms, particularly the gradual abolition of slavery, which he viewed as a dangerous and dwindling necessity.

Clearly a contribution to the broader debate over state power and class hegemony, this study will also provide a telling case study of state-building. It should inform the discussion concerning nationalism and new states that is of such enduring interest in the post-colonial world. Many of the issues contemporary post-colonial societies confront, in terms of political and economic stability; racial, social, and regional divisions; and the prospect of adapting North Atlantic political models, were faced and engaged by Brazilian policy makers with informative, if often depressing, results. This is their story.

In Brazil, the Monarchy's legacy of reactionary centralization has often legitimized the authoritarian political assumptions that beset the prospects for Brazilian democracy. The military dictatorship (1964–1985) from which Brazil has recently emerged was led by men profoundly influenced by this tradition, especially (as has been indicated by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and by Francisco Weffort³) in the way it was formulated by such thinkers as Oliveira Vianna. I have shown elsewhere that Vianna, in particular, explicitly recalled the Monarchy as a crucial counter-model to what he held were the disastrous results of "imported" liberalism.⁴ Thus, this present book, which will unfold the social and political processes that explain the construction and failure of the Monarchy, also speaks to themes of enduring political significance in Brazil.

Studies of Brazilian state formation and nineteenth-century political history have a long tradition. Nonetheless, I have found that the achievement of a common understanding upon which to build is lacking, significant lacunae abound, and scholars remain at odds over fundamental problems. The earliest works deal almost exclusively with political affairs and principal political actors. Constrained by the assumptions of their era, their authors did not consider the socio-economic context germane; slavery, for example, only arises in the traditional historiography as a policy issue in terms of treaties and legislation. The noted *fin-de-siècle* essays, like the analyses of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, suffer from too broad a stroke and too polemical a subtext. The essayists often saw the Monarchy as part of a natural evolution toward the Old Republic (1889–1930); the later analysts often saw it as a heroic anticipation of authoritarian dictatorship (1937–1945). Many works are marred by a tendency to extrapolate backwards from the later Monarchy and to eschew concern with the role and mechanics of the early parties—the same may be said of more recent works, as

well. The biographers of the Monarchy and those who followed often give us useful but narrowly focussed, partisan studies of noted statesmen. In the 1950s and '60s, a later generation, though it advanced the field with magisterial reinterpretations in light of the materialist, nationalist, and developmentalist preoccupations of the 1940s and 1950s, often neglected archival research.⁵

Since the late 1960s archival materials and a fresh sense of the political in terms of nation-building and social history have been brought to bear. Departing from the Weberian and Marxist trends which informed the 1960s interpretations of Raymundo Faoro, Cao Prado Junior, Paula Beiguelman, and Nelson Sodré, scholars, some of them American, armed such critical reappraisals with empirical research, a more rigorous approach successfully demonstrated by such pioneers as Emilia Viotti da Costa. Still, basic issues remain unresolved. The nature of the state and of its relationship to society, the role of formal political ideology and parties, the political life of the elites, and the impact of the emperor are all problems debated, dismissed, or subjected to vague reification in much of this work. The successes of Jose Murilo de Carvalho or Roderick J. Barman are, for the most part, exceptions that prove the rule. The refreshing turn to aspects of political history and culture or regional politics in such studies as those of Thomas Flory, Ilmar Rohloff de Mattos, Richard Graham, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, Judy Bieber, and Hendrik Kraay has, *faut de mieux*, often left these basic political problems unresolved or has had to rest upon these dubious foundations and untested generalizations. The same may be said for the rich studies of slavery and Afro-Brazilian agency by such scholars as Robert Conrad, Warren Dean, Sidney Chalhoub, Mary Karasch, Joao Jose Reis, and B. J. Barickman.⁶

The objectives here, then, comprise both a synthesis and the establishment of new positions. I have striven to build upon the achievements of my colleagues and predecessors, particularly Murilo de Carvalho and Barman, by addressing the history of the party generally considered the most significant in the regime. The debt of the author to the historiography concerning the era will be best demonstrated in the notes, where colleagues' achievements, ongoing debates, and differences between this analysis and others will be clarified for those interested.

Here, however, I should note my methodology and my assumptions. The questions pursued involve intellectual and political history in a socio-economic context. To get at them, forty years' private and public discussion has been closely studied to understand assumptions and perceptions and their relationship to political acts over the course of the era. The socio-economic context has been reconstructed in order to understand the evolving material parameters and pressures of the time, so that the relationships between them and the per-

ceptions and acts of elite political actors could be better understood. In a phrase, the methodology here presumes interaction between ideology and the material world and change over time. It also presumes that, in studying the construction and development of an authoritarian, hierarchical political world, subaltern elements' agency or the perception of that agency or its potential are essential parts of the analysis. I have worked hard to bring these matters to the forefront of the analysis when appropriate. The focus of study, however, has necessarily been the mentality and actions of the elites who dominated the society and the state successfully. My hope is that others will be able to use this work as the basis and context for more successful research concerning the oppressed.

It is this canvas of discourse and debate, knit to an understanding of the society and economy of the time, which is now to be spread before the reader. By conveying the complex interaction between state and society, between interests and ideology, between party and prince, it is hoped that the context and conception of the early Brazilian nation-state, its contradictions, and its legacy will be understood.

Certain salient conclusions of this study may be listed briefly. First, that the political elite emergent by 1837 was part and parcel of the socio-economic elites presiding over agriculture and commerce associated with African slavery and tropical export staples. The literature to date debates the relationship between state cadres and the socio-economic elites, with significant scholars urging an important distinction between the two and others claiming that the state was a mere tool of the elites. It will be shown here that the most significant statesmen were intimately related to the planters and merchants; however, it will also be shown that they articulated a vision of the state which, while speaking to the larger interests of their kinsmen and friends, went far beyond them towards a view of Brazilian society and its national capacity and future. The strength of the state that they articulated and constructed allowed for a definite autonomy of action, even against elite interests, which led to the very conflict central to the analysis here.

Second, it will be argued that the political elite fraction that emerged as dominant in the leadership of the Party of Order had left behind the decentralizing, more democratic potential of the liberalism of the era 1822–1834 and adapted a reactionary ideology in response to the continued centrality and expansion of a slavery-based export economy and the destabilizing events of the Regency, when subaltern violence, provincial secessionism, and intense elite competition for local and national state power threatened the social order and the nation state. The elite fraction at issue articulated this ideology while simultaneously organizing the Party of Order in the Chamber of Deputies and in

the Province of Rio de Janeiro, where its leadership had both an established socio-economic and familial base in the old planting lowland region and personal contacts among the pioneers of the emergent coffee frontier in the highlands. While some of this has often been accepted in the literature, the way in which this occurred, both ideologically and in terms of party organization, has been only partially explored, and that only at the level of intellectual and political debate and the obvious linkage between two or three key statesmen and highland coffee planters. The overwhelming significance of the lowland and Rio elites and their political representatives has been forgotten or unremarked.

Third, it will also be posited that the ideology of the Party of Order emphasized representative constitutionalism and dynastic monarchism in a successful attempt to stabilize political conflict and guarantee the socio-political order by using elements combining new and old charismatic values. This alone would set this study apart within the historiography, which has generally dismissed ideology and political partisan distinctions, or, when it has not, has emphasized only the authoritarian tradition of the Conservatives. The narrative and analysis will also make clear that the monarch in question unexpectedly asserted an increasingly independent political role, initiating political power shifts and state policies which, in turn, undercut the development of a representative parliamentary tradition, the right to hold slaves, and the social order associated with slavery.

Indeed, the issues of slavery, slave holding, race, the slave trade, and the abolition of slavery will necessarily form a basic, interweaving set of motifs in this analysis. Such is inevitable, given the interests and the nature of the elite, the society, and the state which make the Party of Order comprehensible.

This study, then, attempts two related achievements. First, a new focus on, and political analysis of, a complex period of foundational Brazilian history; second, a revision of any number of consecrated assumptions, particularly the role and nature of the Party of Order and its heir, the Conservative Party. To do these things, the author has had to sift through archival and published contemporary sources and to attempt the mastery of a great many period details. To convey the analysis and conclusions to the reader, the author must use many of these details, weaving them together as clearly as possible. The density of the texture will, I hope, prove useful and enduring. The errors and lacunae in the historiography often demonstrate that without such careful attention to these matters—lives, dates, constitutional disputes, political policies—the meaning of this past is incomprehensible. As the old saying goes, the devil is in the details. I have, however, emphasized as clear and accessible a narrative and analysis in the text as the matter will allow; I have also organized the study chronologically, to avoid the ahistorical assumptions and extrapolations so frequent in the liter-

ature. The more scholarly aspects of the work (historiographical issues, finer details, and so on) have been placed in the notes, not only to make my evidence clear, but to provide colleagues further direction, discussion, and debate.

In many historical fields, there would be no need to explain the desire to study either the elite or conservative politics, particularly in the history of a nation in which both have triumphed repeatedly. In Latin American history in general, and, certainly, in Brazilian history in particular, not only have these matters been relatively neglected, nineteenth-century political history as a whole has enjoyed relatively little scholarly attention, although Mexico has been an exception to the rule. Most of us, trained in social history or the newer methodologies and concerns associated with post-modernism, have focused on the oppressed, or on the era after the Monarchy's fall—usually both. In training, it was generally the same with me. Indeed, I first studied nineteenth-century Brazilian slavery with Emilia Viotti da Costa, nearly thirty years ago. Although the reader will find that, when the evidence compels it, I must often dispute Viotti da Costa's findings here, I have never disagreed with an argument she once made in seminar. She stated something to the effect that the struggle for social justice in Brazil desperately needed scholarly attention to the elites, for it was their triumph which continues to weigh heavily upon all Brazilians. It is their legacy that presents the challenge to those desiring progressive change.