

Dossier: “Times of education and celebration: stories and lessons on independence, civilization and nation in America, Europe, and Africa”<sup>1</sup>

## **Emancipation processes in Central America: civilize, educate, and instruct (1820–1821)<sup>2 3 4</sup>**

### ***Processos de emancipação na América Central: civilizar, educar e instruir (1820-1821)***

García Láinez, Andrés Eduardo <sup>①</sup>

<sup>①</sup> Secretaría de Educación de Honduras - SEDUC, Dirección de Historia y Patrimonio – DIHIPA, Tegucigalpa, FM, Honduras. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UERJ, Faculdade de Educação - FE, Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação – ProPEd, Núcleo de Ensino e Pesquisa em História da Educação – NEPHE, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0466-304X>, [andres.segar@gmail.com](mailto:andres.segar@gmail.com)

#### **Abstract**

On September 15, 1821, Central America declared independence from the Spanish Empire. Beforehand, periodicals "El Editor Constitucional" and "El Amigo de la Patria" circulated, shaping public opinion about the impending event. With this context, the present work seeks to examine the relevance of the commemoration of the date from the analysis of the enunciative role of moderate liberty. The result of this exercise shows a series of representations organized in a kind of intellectual hierarchy that intended to guide the political lines of the new process, always pointing to moderation as a civilizing element. This leads one to reflect on the sedimentation of moderate freedom and its effects prior to the celebrations of the Bicentennial of Independence by the Honduran population.

**Keywords:** History of Honduran Education; Emancipation Processes; Press

<sup>1</sup> Thematic dossier organized by: José Cláudio Sooma Silva <<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3647-8703>> and José Antonio Miranda Sepulveda <<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4460-7704>>

<sup>2</sup> Responsible Editor: André Luiz Paulilo <<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8112-8070>>

<sup>3</sup> References correction and bibliographic normalization services: Vera Lúcia Fator Gouvêa Bonilha <[verah.bonilha@gmail.com](mailto:verah.bonilha@gmail.com)>

<sup>4</sup> Funding: Secretaria de Educação de Honduras – SEDUC; Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação – ProPEd; Programa de Estudante Convênio de Pós-graduação – PEC-PG

## **Resumo**

*Em 15 de setembro de 1821, a América Central declarou sua independência do Império Espanhol. Previamente, circularam os jornais El Editor Constitucional e El Amigo de la Patria, configurando a opinião pública a respeito do iminente acontecimento. Com esse quadro, o presente trabalho procura examinar a relevância da comemoração da data a partir da análise do jogo enunciativo da liberdade moderada. O resultado deste exercício mostra uma série de representações organizadas em uma espécie de hierarquia intelectual que pretendia orientar as linhas políticas do novo processo, apontando, sempre, a moderação como elemento civilizador. Isto leva a refletir sobre a sedimentação da liberdade moderada e seus efeitos prévios às comemorações do Bicentenário de Independência na população hondurenha.*

**Palavras-chave:** História da Educação Hondurenha; Processos de emancipação; Imprensa

## **Introduction**

On September 15, 1821, Central America declared its political emancipation from the Spanish Empire through an agreement signed by the elites of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. Present at the signing were Pedro de Molina as a witness and José Cecilio del Valle as the drafter of the Act of Independence. The roles played in the event by these two figures obeyed the record of the multiple places in which they transited, the marks of which appear as direct references in their periodicals about what was thought at that time about the emancipation process: *El Amigo de la Patria* and *El Editor Constitucional* (1820 and 1822). In this picture, moderate freedom appears as a transversal aspect of the emancipation process that shaped the positions of the ruling elite groups and the literate class of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. The dissemination of this type of freedom in the mentioned periodicals conveyed a series of representations constituted by a game of power relations in which liberal, sage, and enlightened individuals appear articulated to an intellectual hierarchy capable of

building a path destined to instruct the literate classes politically, which were called to include and guide groups considered peripheral, formed mainly by indigenous and mestizo people who generally worked as farmers and artisans.

Starting from this brief context, this paper considers a theoretical-methodological perspective that takes as a reference the Foucauldian postulates (Foucault, 1996, 2019) about the constitution of a discourse through the power relations that operate in certain hierarchies at a given time. The enunciation game, in these terms, produces a series of operations that deposit the relevance of what is considered an event, dimensioning its permanence in the others present, being, after all, a mechanism whose normalizing exercise is capillarized in the devices intended to control behaviors and conducts<sup>5</sup>. Along with this process, various representations that obey the interests of specific networks or groups of relations are also articulated, as manifested by Chartier (1991), with the printed medium being the material for dissemination, constitution, and analysis in this case.

With this articulation, it was possible to look at the 1821 Independence not as an isolated event but rather within a process that led it to constitute as a discourse that gives visibility to an agenda or program aimed at disseminating the moderate freedom found in the considered periodicals. The indications of this discourse on independence under the projection of a kind of moderate freedom are articulated with the enunciative act of educating, civilizing, instructing, and enlightening, which made it possible to problematize the propagation of mechanisms that emerged from the intention of politically guiding the literate class, placing as main references the representations of the liberal and the sage in the game of differentiation. With this, the work mentioned above dwells on reflecting on the importance of the event of the 1821 Independence as a breaking point, the ramification of which is indicated by the celebrations of Independence over two hundred years and the ways the mechanisms of instruction, such as the press and schools, capillarized and deposited its

---

<sup>5</sup> One may appreciate an expanded reflection of this exercise articulated to the problem of independence celebrations in a recent article published in the commemorative magazine "Umbral" of the Universidade Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM, Francisco Morazán National Pedagogical University) of Honduras. It attempts to understand how the narratives of university students evince the exclusionary and normalizing nature of the discourse of the celebration of independence within the academic environment (Pineda and García, 2021, pp. 61-66).

meaning regarding so-called moderate freedom. The article concludes with a reflection on the reverse of this discourse, which triggers security mechanisms and their violent effects on the Honduran population on the eve of the celebrations of the Bicentennial of Independence.

## The 1821 Independence discourse and its introduction into the school device at the end of the nineteenth century.

Before addressing the discursive sedimentation of moderate freedom, it is necessary to look at the capillarization attempts of the 1821 Independence discourse practiced at the end of the nineteenth century and which set the agenda for the following years. To illustrate this process, we refer to a text published in 1882 in Honduras entitled "*Compendio de la Historia Social y Política de Honduras aumentada con los principales acontecimientos de Centro-América para uso de los colegios de 2ª enseñanza*", prepared by Antonio Ramón Vallejo Bustillo<sup>6</sup> by order of the liberal government of Marco Aurelio Soto<sup>7</sup> (1876–1883). The text begins with a chapter entitled "*Sucesos preliminares*", which refers to the Independence of Central America with the following questions:

---

<sup>6</sup> (Tegucigalpa, 1844 – 1914). A presbyter retired in 1889, he was a lawyer and Private Secretary to President Marco Aurelio Soto, founder and director of the National Archive of Honduras in 1880, National Director of Statistics in 1887, and Director of the Colegio El Porvenir in Tegucigalpa in 1890. At the Central University of Honduras, he taught the course of Latinity at the School of Law. According to Gonzales (2005, pp. 96–98), Vallejo favored creating a National State and, along with Ramón Rosa and Soto, was considered one of the ideologues of the Liberal Reform in Honduras. The vestiges of this project were recorded in historical and statistical works, among which, in addition to the manual mentioned above, the following stand out: "*Colección de las Constituciones Políticas que en La República de Honduras se han decretado en los cincuenta y seis años que lleva de independencia (1878)*"; "*Apéndice: Documentos justificativos del tomo primero de la Historia Social y Política de Honduras (1883)*"; "*Censo General de la República de Honduras (1888)*"; "*Estadística de las Escuelas según el Censo de 1887 (1889)*"; "*Necrología del Presbítero Miguel Angel Bustillo (1892)*"; "*Primer Anuario Estadístico correspondiente al año de 1899 (1893)*"; "*Historia documentada de los límites del Estado de Honduras con Nicaragua (1893)*"; "*Historia documentada de los límites del Estado de Honduras y El Salvador (posthumous, 1926)*".

<sup>7</sup> He was born in Tegucigalpa (1846) and died in Paris (1908). Soto was President of Honduras from 1876 to 1883. The Manual mentioned above was part of a liberal reform project promoted by this President. These reforms were intended to affect the political, economic, and cultural spheres of Honduran society through the creation of a series of legal instruments, such as Public Instruction, Civil, Military, and Commerce Codes, and institutions, such as the National Archive of Honduras, the National Mint, normal schools, telegraphist schools, and hospitals, among others (see Argueta, 1990, pp. 166–169).

*¿Con qué denominación era conocida Centro-América antes de la Independencia?*

*Con la de Antigo Reino de Guatemala.*

*¿Cómo se gobernaba?*

*Por una Capitania General que residía en Guatemala.*

*¿Qué provincias componían el antiguo Reino?*

*Guatemala, Chiapas, San Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y Costa-Rica*

*¿Cómo estaban gobernadas?*

*Por Gobernadores políticos e Intendentes.*

*¿En qué año se crearon las Intendencias?*

*En 1788.*

*¿Qué sucesos prepararon la Independencia de Centro-América?*

*La independencia de los Estados Unidos<sup>8</sup>, cuya voz resonó por todos los ángulos del continente americano, las ideas redentoras que partían de la Francia<sup>9</sup>, y el grito dado en México el 15 de Setiembre de 1810 por el Señor Cura Don Miguel Hidalgo. —Estos acontecimientos fueron preparando la emancipación que más tarde debía verificarse en Centro-América y en todo el mundo de Colón. (Vallejo, 1882, p. 18)*

Such a record shows a chronological line written in the form of a catechism (question-answer) that takes as a basis the reference to some historical events and institutional structures of the former Captaincy General of Guatemala from 1810 to 1829. In the game of enunciation of the text, references to the experience of other processes of emancipation are placed as a kind of reference to a scenario of preparation for local independence. With this, the narrative solution offered by Vallejo (1882) seems to fulfill a double function. The first refers to the definition or constitution of a local event that is not isolated, but connected to an enunciative

---

<sup>8</sup> The date mentioned is 1776

<sup>9</sup> In reference to the revolution of 1789

network sedimented by historical constructions about the independence of the Americas, raised at the end of the nineteenth century.

Linked to this, the second function concerns the value of the document in its materiality as a political resource designed to reinforce a historiographical tendency regarding the capillarity of moral practices and practices of the construction of citizenship from the processes of education and enlightenment of the people. From this point on, the manual by Vallejo (1882) appears as a document prepared under the principles of the processes of conformation of the nation, sharing the scenario with other projects promoted by the end-of-century Honduran liberal reformer governments. Thus, national history becomes a reference for the civic instruction that would be taught in Secondary Education Schools. The referring individuals and the highlighting of specific events appear as a kind of discontinuity with the expansion of this discourse within the school system. The purpose of this project, in the end, led to the offering of a tool of capillarization of specific values to try to reinforce a kind of idea of the nation and of subjectivity regarding the constitution of national identity, as shown below:

*¿En qué tiempo se proclamó la independencia de Centro- América?*

*El 15 de Setiembre de 1821. Nosotros te saludamos*

*¡oh día venturoso! con todo el entusiasmo y delirio de nuestro corazón. Nosotros te saludamos, porque llegaste á tiempo á romper nuestras cadenas, á reivindicar nuestros derechos, á calmar nuestras grandes amarguras, a enjugar nuestras lágrimas vertidas en el espacio de trescientos años de perpetua esclavitud, á extirpar nuestra ignorancia con la ciencia, que es como el sol sobre las nubes, y á darnos la santa libertad, que es la primera aspiración del niño y la última invocación del anciano. Nosotros te saludamos, en fin, porque llegaste oportunamente con los remedios, con los únicos remedios, que hay contra la superstición, el fanatismo y la incredulidad: la ciencia y la civilización: porque llegastes á comprender que Honduras, con su ferro-carril interoceánico, tenía que ser más tarde ó más temprano, la estafeta del mundo, el verdadero paraíso de la tierra, la Babilonia de buena ley, donde se hablarán todas las lenguas, donde se confundirán todas las razas, donde pagarán su tributo todas las naciones y donde tendrán su juicio universal todos los errores y las preocupaciones todas! (Vallejo, 1882, p. 142)*

The rhetoric surrounding the reference to Independence Day in this quote reveals the enunciative choices intended to instruct a specific school population and which are permeated by allegories that detail the value given to such an event. The reference to September 15, 1821,

is followed by other statements that carry the recurrence of the plurality of the pronoun "we", which gives visibility to a specific narrative solution to try to create a sense of belonging to a group. On this enunciative surface emerges the proclaimed liberation of Central America from slavery and ignorance in terms of instruction. Science and civilization are placed, at this point, as remedies against superstition, fanaticism, and incredulity and, at the same time, as pieces to shape Honduras as a cosmopolitan place of world reference and racial convergences aligned with positivist postulations contained in regulations such as the Code of Public Instruction of 1882.

With this, the resumption of the 1821 Independence discourse may be perceived as a strategic element that obeys a kind of reading of the time carried out by individuals whose intentions are made evident in the plans for the conformation of the Nation-State through the dissemination of a kind of unity. The 1882 Manual, in this case, already indicated such a goal and, at the same time, conveyed the political project of the Liberal Reform by venturing into the field of the instruction of school populations, which materializes later in the series of articles such as civic education and commemorative events that refer to September 15 as an occurrence to be celebrated. Therefore, this mechanism that was being installed in the school apparatus at that time brings to light another problem that is articulated with the oversizing of the independence discourse that reinforces, at the same time, the sedimentation of the moderate freedom discourse.

## **The oversizing and revision of the 1821 Independence discourse.**

Before looking at this narrative solution as something solid and well settled, it is necessary to problematize its degree of transcendence as an event treated in the Manual by Vallejo (1882) and which is reinforced by these rhetorical elements that permeate the many present to this day. After all, and taking distance from the allegory in print, what happened on September 15, 1821? At first it was the signing of an agreement between the elites of Central America, in which the Captaincy General of Guatemala declared independent from the Spanish Empire the provinces of Cidade Real de Chiapas, Guatemala, Comayagua, San Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. As manifested in the Manual, the historical construction of this event allows one to see what Avedaños (2009) alerted to and posed as a problem

articulated to the oversizing of the importance of the date that, after all, eclipses the complex political phenomenon that developed from 1821 to 1823. Such a point leads one to think that the signing of the Act of Independence should not be treated as an isolated event, much less a peaceful one in political terms, but rather as a product of a complex process of tensions and disputes from 1810 to 1821.

One of the factors that led this process was the internal and external insurrection movements that marked a rupture in the environment of the Captaincy of Guatemala with the proclamation of the Plan of Iguala<sup>10</sup> in 1821. This plan motivated the first displacement movement when the Chiapas province declared itself independent from both Spain and the Captaincy General of Guatemala to soon attach itself to the Mexican Monarchy. The loss of this region would mark the path to be trailed by the other provinces after the signing of the Act of September 15. At the discretion of Avedaños (2009, p. 40), this first movement, provoked by the signing of the Plan of Iguala, represented a kind of warning for the administrative and political agents of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, distributed in networks of colonial institutions such as the Provincial Council, the ecclesiastical "*cabildo*", the audience, the university cloister, the consulate of merchants, the College of Attorneys, and the City Hall of Guatemala City. Hence, the author pointed out that these circumstances forced this sector of Guatemalan civil society to sign an agreement, officially stamped by the provincial deputies and the same City Hall, later forming a Provisional Board to exercise the governmental functions of the new stage of the provinces.

Soon, at the end of 1821, the Provisional Board received, reproduced, and discussed the invitation of annexation sent by the Constitutional Monarchy of the Mexican Empire when Iturbide was finishing installing his army in Chiapas. The situation divided opinions within the Provisional Board, which left in the hands of each of the provinces the fate they considered appropriate: annexation to the Empire or maintenance of independence. In the end, the last decision resulted in the issuance of an act of accession to the Mexican Empire on January 5, 1822. Despite the circumstances presented, September 15, 1821, ended up being a

---

<sup>10</sup> In reference to the plan proposed by Agustín Iturbide in the Mexican city of Iguala on February 24, 1821. This plan proposed a constitutional project for the independence of the former New Spain, based on seven fundamental points that defined the following: 1) the constitutional regime; 2) a moderate monarchy; 3) religious intolerance, but which still wanted to preserve its privileges; 4) a parliamentary representation; 5) integration of an Army of the Three Guarantees; 6) the principle of equality; 7) unrestricted respect for equality to property. For more information, see Soberanes Fernández (2011).



date that, as the Manual by Vallejo (1882) demonstrated, is remembered and considered to this day as a national civic holiday in Honduras. This event is reproduced and reinforced by the institutions of the Honduran State, especially educational ones. With this, it is necessary to question how an agreement of elites provoked by circumstances that threatened the interests of this group managed to capillarize itself in society in the form of a commemorative day.

Perhaps the Manual prepared by Vallejo in 1882 could offer a partial answer to this question; however, we would like to reserve ourselves a more refined exploration of this source to consider two others that seem much more pertinent to the scope of this study and that have already been referenced in the introduction. Thus, we make a strategic retrodiction to take as a starting point the short period from 1920 to 1822, which represents the context surrounding the signing of the Act of Independence. Such a displacement seems necessary to test the matrix mentioned at the beginning and then begin to understand the point of emergence of September 15 as a commemorative day and its subsequent discursive sedimentation through specific mechanisms of (in)formation, such as the press, which made it so that such an event was considered a permanent event, constituting a series of representations inscribed in Honduran national ephemeris over 200 years.

Such a proposal would be challenging to address in its entirety in this paper. Therefore, taking advantage of the ease and access to the sources that the virtual world offers, we decided to address a specific topic pertaining to the press as one of the forms of instruction of the literate class of the Captaincy General of Guatemala and the provinces of Central America from 1820 to 1822. For this purpose, we chose as sources for this research two periodicals – *El Editor Constitucional* and *El Amigo de la Patria* – that circulated in the province of Guatemala, reissued by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education in the second half of the twentieth century (1954 and 1969). Both were published as commemorative editions: the first on the centenary of the death of its editor, Dr. Pedro Molina (1777–1854), and the second as part of the pre-celebration of the sesquicentennial of Central American Independence.

The data from the time regarding the materiality of these sources show that *El Editor Constitucional* started circulating on July 24, 1820, and stopped in May 1821, resurfacing in the second half of that same year under another name, *El Genio de la Libertad*, concluding its circulation in December 1821. The internal structure of the periodical was divided into three

sections that varied from issue to issue: Public Papers, Public Instruction, and Varieties. Its editor, Pedro de Molina, was a physician, journalist, and politician born in Guatemala City on April 29, 1777, who died on September 21, 1854. His role as a journalist was not limited to the edition of this periodical but also to the foundation of another that circulated from 1848 onwards, entitled *El Album Republicano*.

On the other hand, the first issue of *El Amigo de la Patria* appeared four months after *El Editor Constitucional*, specifically on November 16, 1821, and its circulation extended until the beginning of 1822. The structure of this periodical comprised five sections that also varied from issue to issue: Science, Government, Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce. Its editor, José Cecilio del Valle, was born in Choluteca, Honduras, in 1777 and settled in Guatemala from 1789 onwards. Historiography analyzes Valle as a politician, official, and intellectual; however, there is another role that runs through and possibly interconnects all these other roles: Valle, the journalist. The permanent program for the Bicentennial of the University of São Carlos, the school from which Valle and Molina graduated, conducted a study in 2015 that presents a chronology in which it is possible to evidence the engagement of this figure with the press: in 1806, for example, he was censor of *La Gaceta de Guatemala*; in 1815, he edited the same periodical, this time under the subsidy of the Economic Society Friends of Guatemala. In 1820, he appeared as an editor of *El Amigo de la Patria*, and in 1825 he founded another periodical, *El Redactor General*.

Both periodicals circulated on a weekly basis and established debates regarding the political positions of the time. On the one hand, *El Editor Constitucional* is presented by the historiography of Central America as a liberal periodical of the elite group called, pejoratively, *Los Cacos*, part of the elite that criticized the colonial government of the time and that articulated the ideas of the Spanish liberals. On the other hand, some historians locate *El Amigo de la Patria* on the side of the elite labeled as royalists or servile people who favored local governments and King Ferdinand VII. One of the points in which both periodicals coincided was the Constitution of Cádiz of 1812, restored in 1820, as well as in the instruction of the literate class by the press, evidenced by the sections "*Instrucción Pública*" (Public Instruction) and "*Ciencias*" (Science), intended for this purpose.

The tension between both periodicals appears in different shades and degrees. *El Editor Constitucional*, for example, presented itself as an apparent surface of disputes of public

opinion. Pedro de Molina was not the only editor of the periodical; other figures, such as Montufar and Aycena, helped in the writing and reception of the texts and sometimes published under their pseudonyms to address topics about radical independence, confronted with the ideas of moderate freedom, and civil liberty, among others. On the side of *El Amigo de la Patria*, the authorship of the publications was attributed to José Cecilio del Valle, and they circulated his ideas about a kind of political project of the government. His stance was in favor of gradual, moderate, or evolutionary independence. Enlightened independence in which the sage would be the central figure of governments: a man for them to consult with the will to present the solutions and the path forward for societies.

Thus, among the tension related to the idea of what the independence of the provinces of Central America should be like, both periodicals recurrently conveyed different uses of the term "freedom" and its derivations, even manifesting some approximations between the two. At this point, we would like to indicate the methodological procedure that led us to choose the analysis of this word, which was based on the search for a series of statements that, at first, contemplated a repertoire of keywords, such as "enlighten", "instruct", "civilize", and "educate", widely addressed in the field of the history of education and from which, in particular, we expected a more significant number of occurrences to address the theme in question. However, during the search, we came across the word "freedom" and some of its derivations, which constantly accompanied such references, showing a result that led us to consider such a term of extreme relevance. Given this, Table 1 presents the comparison of the reference frequency of the searched keywords:

**Table 1**

***Occurrences of the searched keywords***

Words	<i>El Editor Constitucional</i>	<i>El Amigo de la Patria</i>	Total
<i>Ilustrar</i> (Enlighten)	78	146	224
<i>Instruir</i> (Instruct)	85	63	148
<i>Civilizar</i> (Civilize)	14	33	47
<i>Educar</i> (Educate)	51	17	68
<i>Liberdade</i> (Freedom)	359	186	545

The words "*instruir*" (instruct), "*civilizar*" (civilize), and "*educar*" (educate) have a frequency of 148, 47, and 68 occurrences, respectively, compared to the word "*ilustrar*" (enlighten) and its derivations. This last word appeared at the top, with a total of 224

occurrences, most of which came from *El Amigo de la Patria*, with 146. The word "*liberdade*" (freedom) had a total of 545 occurrences, most of which were recorded in *El Editor Constitucional*, with 359, as shown in Table 1.

Thus, to introduce our proposal on a specific form of instruction by the press during the process of emancipation of Central America, specifically from 1820 to 1822, we decided to start from the data on the occurrences; to take this word "*liberdade*" and ask ourselves: How does this idea of freedom operate in the periodicals? What does it allow doing in terms of analysis? What are the paths it opens? What are the paths it bars? To what is it serving? So, to address these questions, we chose to start with the following hypothesis: in a first analysis, the treatment of freedom in both periodicals is presented as a kind of border or limit that seems to erase the rivalries and confrontations that part of the historiography of Central America takes as a starting point to talk about independence. This borderline freedom is not just any freedom: it is specifically and constantly referenced in both periodicals (we refer to moderate freedom). Therefore, it seems that the objective of both periodicals focused on the idea of enlightening, instructing, civilizing, and educating their subscribers about this moderate freedom, placing as a central reference the transmission of two highly privileged representations that complement each other: that of liberals and that of sages.

## Moderate liberty and its caretakers: liberals and sages

Thus, the 545 occurrences of the word "*liberdade*" (freedom) in both periodicals present a series of indications in the discursive chains focused on the issue of moderation. These indications could be grouped into two initial categories: representations of individuals and ideas about the free press and free trade. However, for the scope of this study, we focused on the analysis of the first category, starting from the following question: How does the mark of moderate freedom appear in the set of representations that the periodicals conveyed? To understand these questions, we will take, as a basis for analysis, the representations of the liberal and the wise.

The representations of the liberal analyzed in *El Editor Constitucional* appeared under the figures of pseudonyms, a very striking characteristic of this periodical. Some of them literally with the following inscriptions: [PM]; [B]; P. A. F. J.; [JDD]; Juan Pansa; PM de la

Pedrera; El Precursor de la Constitución; Dr. G.G.; [DJBta]; F.O.; [El Sor Casta]; J. M. de la P.; [ParPM]; El Editor Tixereta; El Verdadero Patriota; [GG]; El Constitucional; E. E.; Agustín, Obispo de Barbastro; [M del P]; [JE]; Liberato Cauto; Precursor de la Constitución; El Español Liberal; Liberato Castro; [Pe. Bats.]; El Centinela; [Fr. Ma. Beta.]; Filántropo; S.C.; El Admirador; Patriota Verdadero; M. A.; Lord Inglés; Los imparciales; [Manuel Montúfar]; Universal Observador.

With this repertoire of pseudonyms, it is possible to make two initial observations. The first is that the authors, by recording themselves using these terms in the periodical, could have played a specific role as a mechanism for guiding the public opinion of the literate class of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. At first, the large number of pseudonyms seems to reflect a kind of strategy of the editors to use this type of resource to establish a field of disputes of ideas and print their positions on issues articulated to civil liberty, free press, and free trade. Pedro Molina and Montufar, for example, editors-in-chief of *El Editor Constitucional*, printed their signatures using pseudonyms such as *PM*, *Liberato Cauto*, *Filantropo*, and *Sor Casta*. Even without there being an explanation for why such pseudonyms were used, at first glance, it is possible to observe some indications articulated to their political positions about moderate freedom. This leads to the second highlight of the pseudonym repertoire, mainly with the names *Liberato Cauto* and *El Sor Casta*, for example, which warned potential readers to a kind of positioning of caution or prudence in the comments published in this periodical.

The adjectivations of the pseudonyms of *El Editor Constitucional* make sense when they appear in an apparent field of disputes organized by the same editors of the periodical to make prevail the principle of moderation in different publications, suggesting, mediating, and adjusting the stances of other possible editors on issues associated with the debate of the free press, free trade, or criticism of the legal provisions that circulated at that time. However, on the other hand, in *El Amigo de la Patroa*, the publications appear under the given name José Cecilio del Valle. The stances of this author on the subject of moderate freedom are very close to those present in the other periodical. With this approach, the interesting thing to stand out in both periodicals, either under the pseudonym or the given name, is that the strategic positions or functions in the game of enunciation are placed as a central element.

The liberal and the sage, therefore, were representations, the dissemination of which was considered necessary to contribute to a kind of agenda aimed at making more effective

the mechanisms of instruction of the literate class by the press in relation to moderate freedom in the eminent process of emancipation of Central America that was developing at that time, being motivated, mainly, by the movements that took place in Mexico with the signing of the Plan of Iguala in 1821.

With this, the representations of the liberal and the sage link to the idea of freedom under the stance of moderation. The sage, for example, in *El Amigo de la Patria*, shows himself as a kind of civilizing agent and instructor of governments, indigenous people, and artisans. For that case, in its first issue, published on October 16, 1820, such a figure appears with the following reference:

*En la escala de los seres, el hombre es el primero. En la escala de los hombres, el Sabio es el mas grande. El Sabio es el que más se aproxima a la Divinidad: el que dá honor a la especie, y luces a la tierra. El nacimiento de otros hombres es suceso ordinario que no influye en las sociedades. El nacimiento de un Sabio es época en la historia del género humano.* (Valle, 1969, p. 5)

Thus, stemming from the hypothesis about a kind of self-promotion of Valle's own profile in Guatemalan society, the representation of the sage reveals itself throughout the publication as a being that helps to avoid "*una sociedad de bordas salvajes*" (Valle, 1969, p. 7), an example for the youth with aspirations to cultivate the sciences and that should be motivated to "*trabaja[r] para ser Sabios*" (Valle, 1969, p. 10) because being sage represents the "*carrera grande de la gloria*". On the other hand, the same publication likewise mentions the need for souls to govern political bodies and that "*las almas de estos cuerpos deben ser los Sabios*", thus benefiting the construction of an "*enlightened patriotism*". The sage is placed as an agent who "*dá al Gobierno teorías benéficas de administración, y al hombre métodos útiles de trabajo*" (Valle, 1969, p. 02) and "*que ha de iluminar la obscuridad del África, ilustrar la India, y derramar luces sobre nuestra patria*" (Valley, 1969, p. 5).

This last stance, which articulates the sage as a moderating figure or as a man for governments to consult, is also shared by *El Editor Constitucional*. As an example of this, this periodical reproduced a publication entitled "*Proclama de la Junta Provisional. Madrid 10 de marzo de 1820*" in which the matter of the free press that made reference to a given normative instrument of the time was addressed:

*¡Sabios! empleadla constantemente en prestar al Gobierno y a vuestros semejantes vuestras luces, y los frutos de vuestras tareas, de aquel modo que exige el decoro de la misma sabiduría del Gobierno, y que la igualdad de derechos reclama de hombre a hombre. (Molina, 1954, p. 6)*

The sage, in this case, appears in their plurality, operating as moderator or judge of the word according to a given government. Such a stance is manifested in some publications carried out from December 1819 to January 1820. With this approximation, the term "liberdade" (freedom) appears to be regulated by an individual characterized discursively, taking as a basis the specific debate on freedom of expression raised at that time. In *El Amigo de La Patria*, such a representation presents a different tone but one that maintains the line of moderation in which the skill of the sage needs to be invested in different "civilizational" or "civilized" dimensions. From containing "bordas de salvajes" to instructing the youth, to intervening in the political circle, this being the privileged place or desire of the editors. Thus, it is possible to find moderate freedom in an operation that could be called intervention and moderation, which works as an element that, far from manifesting rivalries or disputes between both periodicals, complements them and, in the end, ends up building, for potential readers, this space for creating meaning around a freedom thought of by the elites of the Captaincy General of Guatemala.

The liberal, on the other hand, appears under the tone of a set of statements that put, in the game of differences, the representation of what it was to be a liberal and a servile being. In the third issue of *El Editor Constitucional*, for example, freedom shows itself as "germen celestial de gloria [...]" (Molina, 1954, p. 32). Along with this representation, the liberal is described as an individual whose behavior should take distance from those who present themselves as defenders of a freedom considered as a privilege for few, a place reserved only for "un servil diestro, tanto más peligroso, cuanto sabe combinarse mejor con el egoísmo y disfrazarse más a los pueblos" (Molina, 1954, p. 6). Hence, the liberal and the servile represent "las voces que más se oyen y que designan dos clases siempre en contradicción como la luz y las tinieblas". The marked denunciation of those considered "serviles" ends up constituting the representation of the liberal in a game of opposition. In this case, the frame of representations of the servile differs from that of the liberal for being "una facción, siempre reconcentrada en sus miras particulares, siempre adberida a las personas y jamás al público, no puede nunca dominar sino sobre las ruinas de la libertad y del orden" (Molina, 1954, p. 14). In this exercise of contrasts of representations, the liberal is presented by the periodical as follows:

*El liberal es el reverso de este cuadro. La naturaleza repartió a todos los seres un principio activo, que es el resorte del movimiento vital del universo. Desde la simple atracción de la materia, hasta el pensamiento y la libertad del hombre, el soplo divino del Creador se difunde animando el gran todo. Los seres son más o menos admirables según se descubre en ellos este fuego elemental de la vida. Si el hombre degenerado y esclavo lo desconoce, el hombre natural y libre lo siente con toda su energía. Yo quiero, yo soy dueño de mí, dice el salvaje en sus bosques y el ciudadano en medio de la patria; mientras que el servil entre las bordas de imbéciles, grita: el príncipe quiere por mí, el príncipe es dueño de la vida y de la libertad. (Molina, 1954, p. 30)*

Freedom appears as a matter of displacement of the liberal in the series of differences with which they are considered servile, relegating this last representation to the "*bordas de imbéciles*", a category lower than savages and citizens of the homeland. This construction of the representation of the liberal, marked by its differences from the servile, may be observed in greater detail in other publications. For the case, in a note published in *El Editor Constitucional* written by *El Precursor de la Constitución* in the Gulf of Mexico and dated April 12, 1820, freedom is inscribed under specific parameters, even making a kind of historical retrodiction:

*Pero alerta, compatriotas: no perdáis de vista la ley de diez de noviembre de mil ochocientos diez, ni os engañéis en su genuina inteligencia, confundiendo al liberal con el libertino, a la libertad de imprenta con el abuso de esta libertad. Sobre todo, venerad el sacerdocio; respetad las autoridades, cualquiera que sea su clase: considerad al ciudadano y no agucéis vuestra pluma contra el servil para injuriarle o deprimirle, sino para instruirle en la doctrina constitucional. Así honraréis la ley de la libertad de la imprenta; así haréis honor a vuestro suelo; así transmitiréis vuestro nombre a la posteridad; así quedaréis cubiertos de gloria. (Molina, 1954, p. 44)*

The representation of the liberal is built on the rhetoric of moderation, which enters the game of disputes to exercise a kind of balance with references to regulations and the law on the free press, marking its limits in the representations that convey excesses, i.e., the abuses of freedom or the libertinage of individuals. The adjustments for those who considered themselves within the spectrum of a liberal stance are found most markedly in *El Amigo de la Patria*, linked mainly to a kind of political plan. Months before independence was announced, Valle pointed out that the free man was the one who accepted to be governed by the law (1969, p. 308). He even mentioned that the inheritance of the colony for the liberated people



was the establishment of a liberal and just government (Valle, 1969, p. 192), in a clear reference to the Spanish Constitution of 1812, which would retake effect in 1820.

In summary, the analysis of the marks found in the representations of the liberal and the sage, conveyed by both periodicals, denotes one of the ways the elites of the former Captaincy General of Guatemala tried to instruct the literate class about what the editors, direct representatives of this group, disseminated about moderate freedom. This term was constituted according to the demands and interests of the time, which placed on a broad agenda the establishment of control mechanisms for events or occurrences that could take place outside that record considered moderate, taking as a thermometer the insurrection movements of Mexico and South America. The press, in this case, fulfilled a specific role to temper the spirits in the conduction of an emancipation that was still intended to be adjusted by the normative apparatuses in force at that time.

## **The 1821 Independence discourse and the ramification of moderate freedom in the context of the Bicentennial.**

The awareness of the political emancipation promoted by the elites of the former Captaincy General of Guatemala sought to be disseminated by the press through the transmission of representations that ended up being a kind of moderate freedom. Such a term or condition entered this panorama of emancipation as a regulating discursive element that attempted to create a sense of unity for newspaper subscribers. The themes articulated to civil liberty or the dissemination of representations of political and intellectual figures such as liberals and sages could be understood as discursive resources used to try to guide the public opinion of the time in Central America during the emancipation process. In other words, the constitution of what was considered freedom should be shaped by these individuals, authorized to speak on behalf of the elites of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, with profiles that were incrementally built in each publication of the issues of both periodicals. Thus, the clashes or debates shown within *El Editor Constitucional* and *El Amigo de la Patria* found their approximations in the representations of these two figures that ended up

accommodating what was seen as moderate freedom that suited the interests of the elites at the time.

Therefore, in this instruction by the press, it is possible to observe the dissemination of discursive relations placed in an apparent field of disputes but which complement each other to denounce what the editors considered servile practices in local governments. Such a condition was treated as a kind of obstacle to the political project that was being elaborated by the elite of the Captaincy at that time, which sought the path of moderate emancipation. When observing both periodicals at this discursive level, it is possible to notice how the clash of the political game was limited by the instruction of moderate freedom marked by the Spanish Constitution of 1812. The same observation appears with its particularities in each periodical when referring, for example, to the debates on free trade and freedom of the press, as well as to the damage that could cause the path of natural freedom, surreptitiously illustrated by the dissemination of news referring to the movements of insurrection that took place in other regions of America. These discourses, marked by an apparent rupture, transited in a limited and controlled space by the dissemination of publications that addressed civil liberty and moderate ideological stances (*El sabio y el liberal*), and the dissemination and exaltation of moderate freedom in territories considered civilized (mainly European countries).

With this, it is not difficult to correlate, at the discursive level, to a project of instruction by the press in Guatemala, which placed moderate freedom as a central axis in the face of the events that developed from 1820 to 1821 in America and Europe. In this panorama, an agreement emerged between the elites with the signing of an act that is considered, to this day, as an official guarantee of the political emancipation of Guatemala (Central America) from September 15, 1821. The mentioned project of instruction by the press was not a plan organized by the parties that disputed public opinion at the time. Each periodical analyzed followed its own political agenda of instruction, marking its particularities and interests. The use of the word "project" is only to highlight the approximations of intentions with regard to the publications concerning the matter of freedom.

After all, the approximation of both periodicals was through the dissemination of the representations of the liberal and the sage, linked to what was considered moderate freedom. This approach, however, does not erase the rivalries between both periodicals but rather opens a path to think about the mechanisms used by the editors to carry out the readings of

the circumstances of the time articulated to the events that had been developing since 1820. From this, it is fitting to determine the role of the historical remissions observed in some publications, which ended up establishing positions and gradations of opinions, sometimes contrasting, among the elite groups. However, such stances were tempered or softened when references were made to peripheral groups, such as indigenous people or artisans. With this, the treatment of this moderate freedom directed towards the agents or literate class in contact with these groups appeared as a background in both periodicals, arising from the news about the signing of the Plan of Iguala, the Empire of Iturbide, and the emancipation of Chiapas from the Captaincy General of Guatemala.

This, as initially discussed, accelerated the plans of the elites of the Captaincy to establish an agreement that materialized with the signing of the Act of Independence on September 15, 1821. Valle and Molina, the editors of both periodicals, were present at this event: the former as the drafter of the Act and the latter as part of the witnesses of the event. Therefore, the correlation of the project of instruction by the press in Guatemala on moderate freedom becomes visible, at the discursive level, in the 15 points that make up the Act of Independence, which represents the maximum expression of the interests related to this moderate freedom.

When examining this document, it is possible to observe the relationship between moderate freedom that operated in the periodicals and Items 10, 11, 12, and 16. Item 10, for example, conditioned the freedom of the provinces of the Captaincy General of Guatemala on a gesture of moderation, preserving the pure and unalterable Catholic religion and respecting and protecting its people and property. Item 11 mentioned a complement to the need of the religious community to cooperate with the peace and quiet of the people during the transition, urging fraternity and concord in the general feeling of independence to stifle individual passions that, at the discretion of the signers, divided tempers that could produce dire consequences. Item 12 called for moderation to prevent the city halls from not taking measures to preserve the order and tranquility of the Capital and the immediate villages. Hence, starting from the discursive assembly of a kind of security device, item 16 proclaimed the happy independence of Central America, perpetuating, in a medal and the memory of the following centuries, the date of September 15, 1821. In the post-signing years and up to nowadays, this symbolic representation of Independence Day has become a celebration with

different biases over the 200 years, having as a central element the moderate freedom addressed in the periodical and perpetuated in the Act of Independence.

The way this type of freedom operates in the celebrations of September 15 offers clues to reflect on the adjustment mechanisms used in institutionality as a manner of controlling the behaviors of populations, especially school populations. Take the case of Honduras as an example. Towards the centenary of Independence in 1901, several provisions were issued by the inspector of primary education of Comayagua and published in the periodical *La Instrucción Primaria* (1895–1903). These provisions instructed local school authorities to organize Independence Day commemorative events. In them, it was intended that the classes of elementary schools of both sexes be interrupted to carry out a great fraternization in a visible place of the municipal capitals of the department of Comayagua. On that day, the students would be submitted to a battery of tests on Homeland History, recitations, greetings to the flag, patriotic chants, readings articulated with the facts of September 15, 1821, and presentations of embroidery works and writings. The usual uniform would not be required since the more significant simplicity should characterize such a celebration: only a symbol in the colors of the national flag hanging on the chest of students was allowed. When the day came, the civil and military authorities and the general public would be invited to witness such acts (Cueto, 1901, p. 1010).

Soon, in 1921, taking advantage of the celebration of the centenary of Independence, *El Boletín de la Escuela Normal de Varones* published a note on the activities that were being carried out in honor of the celebration of the centenary of the homeland, among them the reference of a movement of intellectual teachers who managed to make Congress decree Teacher's Day on September 17 to value or praise the work of the apostles of teaching, the implementation of institutions such as School Colonies, gymnasiums, scout clubs, libraries, museums, and school savings banks (Escuela Normal De Varones, 1921, p. 148). Then, towards the sesquicentennial, according to Lopez (2016), the so-called patriotic parades emerged from 1940 to 1946, the period of the dictatorship of General Tiburcio Carías Andino. In this period, educational institutions prepared months in advance to show the maximum cultural expression of "civic-mindedness" and patriotic "fervor" through a march that would begin on the Calle Real of Comayagua to follow to the central square of Francisco Morazán in Tegucigalpa and pay honors to the hero of Central America. Afterwards, students and teachers, in a disciplined manner, would proceed to the Metropolitan

Cathedral to thank God, then to the Presidential House to receive greetings from the dictator, who would make the parading mass wait for a speech that was never delivered.

Finally, close to the bicentennial, there are once again patriotic parades, but with greater complexity to their organization. A "military carnival" composed of students distributed in different functions, one of them being the war bands, the procession of which was usually finished at the National Stadium of Tegucigalpa. At such parades, teachers and students waited for the attentive smile of approval of the authorities, among them the military. An alternative parade emerged in the background, sharing the broad backdrop of the festivity. Citizens, mostly teachers, unhappy with the ways of governing in these first twenty years of the nineteenth century, appeared in the streets in demonstrations, expressing their discomfort, questioning the government, and highlighting the violation of their rights since 2009, the year of the Coup d'État, no longer waiting for a smile from the authorities but for answers and solutions. However, the counter conduct, in this case, would make emerge again what item 16 of the Act of Independence prescribed to apply the active measures *of the authorities to preserve the order and tranquility of the celebrations*.

In a broad sense, the idea of moderate freedom that unfolded over these 200 years seems to have its reverberations in the machine of instructing, civilizing, and educating the people in the continuous process of emancipation of Central America. The starting point that we have taken, i.e., the periodicals, demonstrates the concern to instruct citizens about this freedom that was born along with the signing of the Act of Independence on September 15, 1821, the provisions of which unfolded in commemorations surveilled by the authorities in Honduras over the 200 years, leaving only a record of the patriotism or civic-mindedness of the teachers and students, suffocating the counter conducts to maintain the principle of moderation, which partly answers one of the first questions we formulated in the beginning: Why did September 15, 1821, become a prominent date of celebration of Independence? Why was it not another date, such as the de-annexation of Central America from the Mexican Empire, the formation of the Federation of Central America, or its dissolution? Would it be because of the origin of the violence that permeates these dates? Or, on the contrary, would it

be because, with the title of "first independence", it is possible to hide the effects of violent mechanisms barely visible in the immaculate independence celebrations?

On the other hand, what we were able to perceive from this path of the material that refers to the independence celebrations, at least in Honduras, is that freedom seems to be only an ornament or a kind of placebo in which students and teachers are invited to establish a sort of break with everyday school life, exchanging the daily uniform for simple clothes or costumes and classes for rehearsals or a few marches. However, at the limit of this apparent freedom, we find the principle of moderation imposed by a series of provisions, rules of behavior, conduct, and discipline of the bodies so that teachers and students properly celebrate Independence Day. The "military carnival" culminates with a bow, a sign of respect for the authorities, a sign of a job "well done" for the teachers. On the other hand, freedom outside these principles of moderation imposed by the authorities seems to have its own consequences: oblivion/obliteration and, on the contrary, repression.

## References

- Argueta, M. (1990). *Diccionario Histórico- Biográfico Hondureño* (Vol. Colección Realidad Nacional no. 29). Editorial Universitaria.
- Avedaños Rojas, X. (2009). *Centro América entre lo antiguo y lo moderno*. Universitat Jaume.
- Chartier, R. (1991). O mundo como representação. *Estudos Avançados*, 5(11), 173-191.  
<http://www.revistas.usp.br/eav/article/view/8601/10152>
- Cueto, J. M. (1901, sep.). Disposición del Inspector de Instrucción Primaria de Comayagua. *La Instrucción Primaria*, IV(63), 1010.
- Escuela Normal de Varones. (15 de Septiembre de 1921). El Centenario y la Escuela. *Boletín de la Escuela Normal de Varones*, Año I(5), 148.
- Foucault, M. (1996). *A ordem do discurso. Aula inaugural no College de France, pronunciada em 2 de dezembro de 1970* (2. ed.). Loyola.
- Foucault, M. (2019). *A arqueología do saber* (8. ed.). Forense Editorial.

Gonzales, J. (2005). *Diccionario Biográfico de Historiadores Hondureños*. Guaymurás.

López, N. (2016, set.). El periodismo necesita inversión. Para compartir esta nota utiliza los íconos que aparecen en la página. *El Heraldito*.  
<https://www.elheraldito.hn/pais/1000095-466/cu%C3%A1ndo-comenzaron-los-desfiles-en-honduras>

Ministerio de Gobernación. (1882). *Código Fundamental de Instrucción Pública*. Tipografía Nacional.

Molina, P. (1954). *El Editor Constitucional*. Guatemala: Ministerio de Educación Pública.  
[http://memoriacentroamericana.ihnca.edu.ni/uploads/media/El\\_editor\\_constitucional\\_Escritos\\_Pedro\\_Molina.pdf](http://memoriacentroamericana.ihnca.edu.ni/uploads/media/El_editor_constitucional_Escritos_Pedro_Molina.pdf)

Pineda y García (2021, oct.). Conmemorando el Bicentenario de Independencia: un diálogo con las narrativas de los estudiantes. *Revista Umbral*. Edición Conmemorativa del Bicentenario de la Independencia de Centroamérica, Año VIII (9), 61-66.

Redacción. (15 de setembro de 2018). Accidentada marcha de la resistencia en Día de la Independencia en Honduras. *El Heraldito*. <https://www.elheraldito.hn/pais/1216552-466/accidentada-marcha-de-la-resistencia-en-d%C3%ADa-de-la-independencia-en-honduras>

Soberanes Fernández, J. L. (2011). El plan de iguala o el origen del estado mexicano. *Revista Mexicana de Historia del Derecho*, XXIV, 91-110.  
<https://revistas.juridicas.unam.mx/index.php/historia-derecho/article/view/10124/12152>

Valle, J. (1969). *El amigo de la patria*. José de Pineda Ibarra.  
[http://memoriacentroamericana.ihnca.edu.ni/uploads/media/El\\_editor\\_constitucional\\_Escritos\\_Pedro\\_Molina.pdf](http://memoriacentroamericana.ihnca.edu.ni/uploads/media/El_editor_constitucional_Escritos_Pedro_Molina.pdf)

Vallejo, R. R. (1882). *Compendio de la Historia Social y Política de Honduras aumentada con los principales acontecimientos de Centro-América para uso de los colegios de 2.ª enseñanza* (Vol. I). Tipografía Nacional.

---

**Submission data:**

*Submitted for review on April 12, 2021; revised on June 28, 2022; approved for publication on July 28, 2022.*

**Corresponding author:** *Secretaría de Educación de Honduras, Dirección de Historia y Patrimonio – DIHIPA, Centro Cívico Gubernamental, CEP 1110,1 Blvd. Juan Pablo Segundo Esquina con República de Corea Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. Honduras C.A. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UERJ, Faculdade de Educação - FE, Programa de Pos-graduação em Educação – ProPEd, Núcleo de Ensino e Pesquisa em História da Educação – NEPHE, Rua São Francisco Xavier, 524. Grupo 12.037-F, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil.*