



Building an empire in the Age of Revolutions: Independence and immigration in the Brazilian borderlands

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ABSTRACT

Throughout Brazil's Independence process, its central elites and the Crown planned what was to become of their new nation. Arguments over political systems and the continuation of slavery were at the heart of the debate, which drew in rich, poor, and the enslaved alike. As the empires of the Old World were rent at the seams by wars and conflicts, Brazil was rethinking its role in the world. In this article, inspired by the dialogue between micro-history and global history, and by the trans-imperial trajectory of the Bavarian doctor Georg von Schaeffer, I examine the political ideas that informed the consolidation of the Brazilian Empire as a *de facto* empire. I also situate the ideas and proposals put forth by Schaeffer, a representative of the Brazilian government in Europe, within the crisis of legitimacy sparked by the Napoleonic invasions, the subsequent independence of Portuguese America, and the array of political projects that were able to emerge as a result. Through an analysis of the diplomatic documentation produced by the Brazilian Empire's main posts in Europe, I reveal a complex web from which the Brazilian government drew information, and the channels that carried news of alliances, clashes, and political repertoires that would go into the making of a tropical empire.

Keywords: Empire; Independence; global history; micro-history; diplomacy.

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Construindo um império na Era das Revoluções: Independência e imigração nas fronteiras brasileiras

RESUMO

Durante o processo de Independência do Brasil, as elites centrais e a coroa planejaram o que seria do novo país. Argumentos sobre sistemas políticos e a continuidade da escravidão estavam no centro do debate, alcançando ricos, pobres e escravizados. Enquanto os impérios do velho continente se esfrelavam em guerras e conflitos, o Brasil repensava seu papel no mundo. Neste artigo, inspirado pelo diálogo entre micro-história e história global, e através da trajetória transimperial do médico bávaro Georg von Schaeffer, examino as ideias políticas que informavam a consolidação do Império brasileiro como um *império* de fato. Também situo o ideário e as propostas expressadas por Schaeffer, um representante do governo brasileiro na Europa, dentro da configuração que possibilitou que diferentes projetos políticos emergissem diante da crise de legitimidade decorrente das invasões napoleônicas na Península Ibérica e da subsequente Independência da América lusa. A partir da análise de documentação diplomática originada dos principais postos do Império brasileiro na Europa, revelo uma complexa rede de informações que alimentava o governo brasileiro; por esses corredores de informações fluíam notícias sobre alianças e conflitos e repertórios políticos utilizados na construção de um império tropical.

Palavras-chave: Império; Independência; história global; micro-história; diplomacia.

Construyendo un imperio en la Era de las Revoluciones: Independencia y inmigración en las fronteras brasileñas

RESUMEN

Durante el proceso de independencia de Brasil, las élites centrales y la corona planificaron lo que sería del nuevo país. Argumentos sobre sistemas políticos y la continuidad de la esclavitud estaban en el centro del debate, alcanzando a ricos, pobres y esclavizados. Mientras los imperios del viejo continente se desboronaban en guerras y conflictos, Brasil pensaba su papel en el mundo. En este artículo, inspirado por el diálogo entre la Microhistoria y la historia global a través de la trayectoria transimperial del médico bávaro Georg von Schaeffer, examino las ideas políticas que informaban la consolidación del Imperio brasileño de hecho. También situó el ideario y las propuestas expresadas por Schaeffer, un representante del gobierno brasileño en Europa, dentro de la configuración que permitió que diferentes proyectos políticos emergiesen ante la crisis de legitimidad desencadenada por las invasiones napoleónicas en la Península Ibérica y de la subsiguiente independencia de la América lusa. A partir del análisis de la documentación diplomática originada de los principales puestos

del Imperio brasileño en Europa, revelo una compleja red de informaciones que alimentaban el gobierno brasileño; por esos corredores de informaciones fluían noticias sobre alianzas, conflictos y repertorios políticos utilizados en la construcción de un imperio tropical.

Palabras clave: Imperio; Independencia; historia global; microhistoria; diplomacia.

On the evening of May 15th, 1827, the Bavarian doctor Georg Anton von Schaeffer sharpened his quill and began a letter to his immediate superior, the Marquis of Queluz, then the Brazilian Empire's Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was writing from Bremen, one of the chief free cities in northern Germany and a major European port. Schaeffer informed Queluz that the situation on the Old Continent was nearly untenable. "The political horizon has grown quite menacing," he wrote, going on to say that "the Turks will be hard-pressed to avoid hostilities with Russia, with England on its side. Spain, given over to [political] factions, is in ruins... The king of Saxony has died and his brother Anton has succeeded him to the throne".

In a few curt sentences, Schaeffer, then Brazil's representative at the Diet in Frankfurt and the diplomatic contact for the Hanseatic cities of Lübeck, Bremen, and Hamburg, laid out Europe's tangled dynastic transitions, fretted over alliances between powers and sovereigns, and warned of looming conflicts.

But that wasn't all. The circumstances at hand also represented an opportunity. As Schaeffer saw it, the time had come for Brazil to fulfill its destiny, led by Pedro I: "by peopling itself with industrious Germans, Brazil will be the first and most powerful State in the Universe," he predicted.¹ While Europe's empires were engulfed in internal wars and political strife, the Brazilian empire, in its newfound vigor, would show the world its power and reveal its universal mission, justifying its leadership and legitimizing its expansion (KUMAR, 2017, p. 6). As the heir to a long Portuguese imperial tradition, to a realm that had spread to the four corners of the world in centuries past, Brazil was charged with populating its vast continental sweep and defending its borders. And foreign immigration, in this case, would be the solution.

Georg Anton von Schaeffer was born in Münnerstadt, in Bavaria, in 1779, one of the youngest children of Nikolaus and Margareth Schaeffer. He studied pharmacology at Würzburg, in the Franconia region, and received his medical degree at the University of

¹ In this letter, Schaeffer also took the opportunity to ask for help: "please send me some pecuniary aid as soon as possible... the seven years I have spent in His Imperial Majesty's service have been as twenty in labors, cares, and afflictions!" Finally, he noted that he had ordered that a Mass be said in honor of Leopoldina, the recently deceased Brazilian empress – although "at the Rites which I had conducted for the august Empress, no one from the [Hamburg] Senate attended". Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, henceforth AHI. Missão Schaeffer. May 15, 1827.

Göttingen in 1803.² During the Napoleonic wars, he served as a doctor to the Russian troops and was made a noble under the auspices of Alexander I. Having traveled the world, he arrived in Brazil and was hired as a major in the royal family's guard of honor. Schaeffer offered his services to the prince regent Pedro I and was sent to the German territories by Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, in 1822. There, he served for seven years as a Brazilian diplomatic agent, during which time he published a book singing the praises of the country he represented, made enemies in the Old and New World alike and undertook a daring project of social engineering, based on the militarization of imperial society and an inward push (into its own territory).

Schaeffer is a familiar figure in the historiography of German immigration to Brazil, with some casting him as a swindler, an opportunist, and a "merchant of souls" (BÖSCHE, 1929; SCHLICHTHORST, 1943), while others, looking to reframe his biography, have argued that the orders from Rio were sufficiently vague as to give their agent in the field a mammoth scope of action (and to allow him to make promises that would never be met) (OBERACKER JR., 1975; HUNSCHE, 1975; ROCHE, 1969). Few, however, have had broad access to a body of correspondence spread across archives in Germany, Russia, the United States, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia. The marks Schaeffer left across the globe have yet to be systematically studied to this day.

In this article, through Schaeffer's trans-imperial trajectory and his correspondence, both diplomatic and private, I have undertaken an analysis of the political ideas that informed the consolidation of the Brazilian Empire as a *de facto* empire. I also situate the ideas and proposals put forth by Schaeffer, a representative of the Brazilian government in Europe, within the crisis of legitimacy sparked by the Napoleonic invasions, the subsequent independence of Portuguese America, and the array of political projects that were able to emerge as a result (ADELMAN, 2006). In broad strokes, I cover the period from 1815 to 1831, seeking to understand how and why Schaeffer was recruited by the royal couple (then-regents Pedro and Maria Leopoldina) and by their minister José Bonifácio to serve as a Brazilian agent in Europe. Through an analysis of the diplomatic documentation produced by the Brazilian Empire's main posts in the Old World, I also reveal a complex web that fed information to the Brazilian government – to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Emperor, as well as, to a significant extent, the Empress. These were the channels that bore news of alliances, clashes, and the political repertoires that would go into the making of a tropical empire.³

² José Juan Pérez Meléndez has observed that the University of Göttingen was a key node in the political networks that organized the flow of European immigrants to Brazil under the reign of Pedro I (1822-1831). The university was also crucial for German territories, its importance "analogous to that of Coimbra in the Lusophone world after Pombal's reforms" (MELÉNDEZ, 2016, p. 84-85).

³ In the words of Kirsten Schultz, "in designating the new polity as an 'empire' the defenders of D. Pedro and independence recognized what eighteenth-century Portuguese statesmen had characterized as Brazil's continental dimensions and copious resources. They reaffirmed, as the royal exiles and the city's residents had in the 1810s, that Brazil was a place where prosperity and political renovation could be achieved. Furthermore,

An “Empire-Builder”

Some years after having received his medical degree from Göttingen with a thesis entitled *De Peste*, published on April 11th, 1803, Georg von Schaeffer became a surgeon at the Julius-Hospital in Würzburg. There, he practiced medicine, marrying the daughter of the Hospital’s miller. One of his biographies reveals that in 1808, “with Germany’s subjection” to the French, “and his personal suffering ever greater, under the tribulations of war,” Schaeffer “decided to move to Russia,” where he immediately entered public office: he became a Collegiate Assessor.⁴

When Napoleon Bonaparte’s troops invaded Russia in 1812, Schaeffer was immediately recruited into the army as a doctor. “Having withstood great suffering during the campaign,” he eventually signed a contract with the Russian-American Company in 1813.⁵ Here, we lose track of his wife and whatever fate befell her.⁶ The fact is that the Company was meant to establish new colonies in North America. Its main foothold, and headquarters, was in Novoarkhangelsk, or New Archangel, where Russians traded for pelts with the locals; but the firm’s expansionist aims didn’t stop there. While the War of 1812, fought between the United States and England, served as an opportunity for the company to bulk up its maritime fleet and establish Fort Ross in northeastern California, the Russians dreamed of dominating the sandalwood trade in the Sandwich Islands (now Hawai’i) (OWENS, 2015).

For four years, Schaeffer traveled the globe in the service of the Russian-American Company. In 1813, he took part in a Russian circumnavigation attempt bound for Hawai’i. If the *Suvorov* took a route similar to her predecessor, *Neva*, the ship might have stopped at England, the Canary Islands, Rio de Janeiro, and Easter Island before reaching its final destination. It was on this trip that the then-naval surgeon first set foot in Brazil, in May of 1814 (PIERCE, 1965, p. 31). He spent four weeks in Rio, saw Sugarloaf Mountain and Corcovado, and was able to visit the multiple ports around the capital city.

Schaeffer’s mission in the Sandwich Islands would also involve rescuing the cargo of the Russian brig *Bering*, which foundered on the coast off Waimea during a storm in January 1815. The ship and the goods it carried were seized by the local leader, Kaumualli’i, and the

this independent Empire of Brazil was built on the conviction that the monarch was a ‘protector’ of rights, as well as of interests formerly denied or suppressed by the so-called old colonial system” (SCHULTZ, 2001, p. 279).

⁴ M. B. TERMO’S *Lebens-Geschichte des Baron von Schäffer, durch die Fackel der Wahrheit beleuchtet*. Rostock: Adlers Erben, 1827, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3-4.

⁶ Schaeffer left an heir (his daughter) and a widowed wife upon his death in the late 1830s. I could not confirm whether Schaeffer remarried in Brazil or not, but his daughter (Theodora Schaeffer) and widow (Wilhelmine Florentine Schaeffer) resided in Colônia Leopoldina (today Helvécia) in 1840. See *Relação dos Lavradores da Colônia Leopoldina*. Seção Colonial, Agricultura, Maço 2329. Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia.

crew had to be evacuated to Novoarkhangelsk. Leveraging hostilities between Kaumuallī'i and King Kamehameha I, Schaeffer moved not only to recover the *Bering* and its cargo, but also to establish (virtual) Russian control over part of the archipelago, envisioning “a great opportunity for the Company and himself alike” (PIERCE, 1965, p. 11). The mission, at least initially, was a success. Talks began, and after months, Schaeffer and Kaumuallī'i agreed that Russian soldiers would be made available to aid in the conquest of other islands and then in toppling Kamehameha I. September of that year brought the construction of Fort Elizabeth (the ruins of which still remain; MILLS, 2002). By October, a Russian flag flew over one of the valleys of the province of Hanalei on Kauai'i.

The entire plan, however, was swiftly dismantled by the leadership at the Russian-American Company, both in Novoarkhangelsk and St. Petersburg, who feared that Schaeffer was being used by Kaumuallī'i in his attempt to settle old scores with Kamehameha I. Once made public, the plan became a source of tremendous embarrassment and ultimately struck a serious blow to Russian influence in the Pacific, leaving the United States and England ever more dominant. As an unexpected conflict loomed, Schaeffer was forced to flee: on July 7th, 1817, he headed for Canton on a Russian ship and later took refuge in Macao. A lengthy investigation was undertaken in St. Petersburg, from which he emerged unscathed.

In 1818, Schaeffer traveled again to Brazil. This time, he was bearing seeds for Maria Leopoldina, come from Macao (they were later sent on to the Empress's sister, Marie Louise, Napoleon's widow).⁷ According to his memoirs, he was “warmly welcomed” by “her Highness the Archduchess”, an experience that cemented Schaeffer's “desire to return to Brazil at the conclusion of my business in Europe” (SCHÄFFER, 2007, p. 40).

Schaeffer headed back to the Old World on a Russian ship and would only see the tropics again in 1821, a few months after the Porto Revolution.⁸ The political winds in Brazil's capital had certainly shifted considerably since 1818. Multiple visions of the nation circulated simultaneously in newspapers, pamphlets, leaflets, and in the minds of Brazilians in the period immediately preceding independence (LUSTOSA, 2000). It was a time of rapid change and intellectual effervescence in response to the complex internecine transformations to which the Iberian empires were suddenly subject (ADELMAN, 2015b, p. 53-85). Between January 1821 and September 1822, Portuguese America would see defenses of greater autonomy for its provinces, divergent ideas about the union of the American territories under the (more or less centralized) rule of Rio de Janeiro, royalist and Portuguese plans for “recolonization,” D. João VI's return to Portugal after the death

⁷ SCHAEFFER to unknown recipient. Macao, Aug. 8, 1817. Private collection; LEOPOLDINA to Marie Louise. Rio de Janeiro, Dec. 10, 1817 (KANN *et al*, 2006, p. 320).

⁸ In March 1821, Schaeffer asked D. João VI to concede “a piece of land for himself and for certain other friends,” where he would dedicate himself to “cultivating the natural goods of the land, but also to promoting the cultivation of other exotic articles, while constructing mechanisms toward increasing the value of production, such as sawmills and gristmills”.

Miqueias Henrique Mugge

of Queen Maria, his son Pedro's declaration that "I am staying," his acclamation as the Perpetual Defender of Brazil, and, finally, the definitive break from Portugal.⁹ None of this happened in a straightforward, linear fashion, obviously. Correspondence from Pedro, Leopoldina, and their political circle evinces their insecurities and indecisions, as well as the pressure they were under from both local and metropolitan elites.¹⁰

In this context, one might imagine that a figure like Schaeffer – who had traveled the world over between 1808 and 1822 (see Figure 1), with stops in Brazil, China, the German territories, Hawaii, and Russia – might serve to carry out José Bonifácio's designs to stabilize Brazil politically, get a foothold in European politics, intercede on Brazil's behalf, and if and when the time came, maneuver for international recognition of its independence – which, at the time of Schaeffer's hiring, loomed on the horizon.¹¹ Schaeffer's proximity to Maria Leopoldina certainly worked in his favor; he had been the arch-duchess's confidant and right-hand man, going so far as to plan emergency escape plans and providing her with cash at critical junctures.¹²

⁹ A summary of the period may be found in the book by Andréa Slemian and João Paulo Pimenta (2003).

¹⁰ While the general populace had no access to inner political circles, they also participated in the process (RIBEIRO, 1997; NEVES, 2003; CARVALHO; BASTOS; BASILE, 2012).

¹¹ By May of 1822, "an essential break had already taken place" (DOLHNIKOFF, 2012, p. 144-145). Formal recognition by Portugal only came on August 29, 1825, mediated by England. The United States was the first nation to recognize an independent Brazil, followed by Mexico.

¹² See, for example, the following passage from a letter from Leopoldina to Schaeffer: "Under the strictest secrecy, such that no living soul may even suspect of it, I beg of you to charter a vessel bound shortly for Portugal, as my husband should travel within three days and I must remain here indefinitely, for reasons I cannot divulge, am not permitted to, and am forced to seek my own salvation in flight, with my husband's consent. In this vessel, which ought to be safe and swift, I should hope to find accommodations for a German family of six. Do me the kindness of procuring a good wet nurse, a healthy and handsome young woman, for my little son who is to be born at sea, and thus will be neither Brazilian nor Portuguese. I am henceforth depositing my fate, my happiness, in the hands of a German, a fellow countryman, and I hope I shall not be disappointed" (KANN *et al*, 2006, p. 378).

Miqueias Henrique Mugge

Figure 1: Places visited by Georg Anton von Schaeffer between 1808 and 1829

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Map based on information in correspondence sent and received and from the book *O Brasil como Império independente (Brazil as an Independent Empire)* (SCHÄFER, 2007).

This is to say that when he was hired by the future emperor and by his most loyal minister at the time, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, Georg Anton von Schaeffer was more than a globetrotter. He was an “empire-builder”, in Richard Pierce’s apt turn of phrase.¹³ He was familiar with the administrative ins and outs of Russia, one of the world’s largest empires, he had worked for a colonial firm, come into contact with other imperial projects, and could navigate European politics (especially when working around the edges) like no other Brazilian agent.

Even more importantly, Schaeffer shared a sense of futurity¹⁴ with certain political elites, the notion that Brazil, as the natural heir to Portugal, with its renewed vigor, in dialogue with its European peers, could well occupy a central place on the post-Congress of Vienna stage. In short, Schaeffer was not the only one harboring utopian visions of Brazil as a “great and powerful empire” within the global power structure in the early 19th century. Those who shared in that dream made it seem eminently attainable.¹⁵

¹³ “...this ship’s surgeon turned empire-builder...” (PIERCE, 1965, p. 33).

¹⁴ Here, futurity also encompasses what Koselleck refers to as a “horizon of expectation,” shaped by the perspective of the historical actors involved and their sense of what has yet to occur and what remains to be revealed (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 255-275).

¹⁵ To quote Silvestre Pinheiro in “Cartas sobre a Revolução do Brasil”: “to organize, on this extraordinarily vast continent, an empire that, by virtue of its size, the variety of its climates and by the peerless wealth of its production, cannot but rise to be, within a matter of a few years, the most flourishing of any known to history”. Lyra has analyzed how the collective imagination of the Coimbra-educated elites in Rio de Janeiro converged on a vision of “a rosy imperial future” and toward the “certainty of national greatness, in light of Brazil’s potential” (LYRA, 1994, p. 191-227; SOUSA, 2019). Another proposal for altering land distribution

Brazilian Cossacks in a Tropical Russia

A “tropical Russia” in the making. This was how the French ambassador in Montevideo, Pierre-Daniel Martin-Maillefer, portrayed Brazil in 1847: it had “the advantage of organization and perseverance amidst the turbulent or poorly formed States of South America,” as he saw it (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 171). In a phrase, Martin-Maillefer captured Brazil’s political stability, conquered by mid-century, and its continental dimensions, in contrast to its fractured neighboring republics, sunk in civil wars. The metaphor stuck: it was adapted and popularized by Gilberto Freyre in *The Masters and the Slaves*, where he wrote of an “American Russia” (FREYRE, 1997, p. 51-52). In both cases, there seems to be a “logic” or “territorialist rationale”: the hazy frontiers of both empires seemed “ripe terrain for experimentation and new forms of sociability” (MAIA, 2005, p. 347; MAIA, 2007, p. 91).

Before Martin-Maillefer, before Freyre, and before those who compare Brazil and Russia to this day, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, the patriarch of his country’s independence, sought out inspiration from the far-flung Russian steppes when it came to designing policies for the borders of the Brazilian empire. This strikes me as a clear choice on the part of Bonifácio and his interlocutors: they would not have seen European empires as naturally fated to fail, in steep decline or in their last act. On the contrary: many political actors of the revolutionary era still operated within a specific, modernizing imperial vocabulary (BURBANK; COOPER, 2010, p. 13-35).

But where were the imperial characteristics that defined the Brazilian Empire? Marc Hertzman (2015) questions whether a Brazilian empire ever did exist – or, rather, if our current-day discussions of empires and imperialisms may have eclipsed the applicability of the term *empire* to the Brazilian case, making it a sort of paradox. Are all empires belligerent titans? Can an empire be simultaneously vast and anemic?

Sanjay Subrahmanyam has spoken of the Brazilian Empire as a “state that pretended to be an empire, though there are good reasons to doubt its pretensions” (SUBRAHMANYAM, 2009). Hertzman, meanwhile, argues that we must think “beyond extraterritorial expansion” (2015, p. 3) in order to characterize 19th-century Brazil as an *empire*. This would entail including the long, ongoing processes of the usurpation and occupation of land, the violent campaigns against Indigenous peoples, and perhaps other forms of “internal colonialism” as well (2015, p. 3). The trans-imperial trajectory of our main character and the repertoires both he and José Bonifácio drew on are exemplary, in this sense.

was the report presented by Domingos Borges de Barros, who represented Bahia at the Courts in Lisbon, on March 18th, 1822. According to Márcia Motta, the proposal encouraged emigration to Brazil and ensured “freedom of religion and opinion for those who came” (MOTTA, 2009, p. 221). Unless I am mistaken, Borges de Barros neglected to address military issues, but included specific items related to the integration of Indigenous peoples. “The project was a plan for the future, and hence omitted the strife-ridden past” when it came to land reform, Motta observes (2009, p. 227).

When Georg von Schaeffer was hired by the Brazilian government and sent to the “Court of Vienna in Austria”, he bore with him instructions drawn up by José Bonifácio and signed by D. Pedro I. Schaeffer was charged with presenting himself to the Emperor of Austria, “the august father-in-law” of the Emperor, and “informing him” of Pedro I’s decision to stay “in this, the Kingdom of Brazil, a decision [Pedro I] was compelled to take by the political circumstances in Rio and the desire of its peoples”.¹⁶ This was to be the only objective of which the public might get wind. In secret, Schaeffer was tasked with “penetrating into the cabinets of Austria, Prussia, and Bavaria” and “putting into practice every measure conceivable to obtain [their] support for the Brazilian cause”, as well as “establishing the same relations with the diplomatic agents of foreign courts, even with the smaller powers”. After all, the instructions advised, “the agents of a small court may provide clarifications and secrets of State that would otherwise be hard-won”.¹⁷

After a short adjustment period in which he was always to pursue “the interests of the Brazilian cause”, the envoy would focus on his “central task”: to prepare the emigration of soldiers to rural-military colonies which would be “organized along the lines of the Cossacks of the Don and the Ural”. Fighting men, “under the guise of colonists”, would emigrate and serve a six-year military term, traveling alongside “genuine colonists” who would only be called upon to serve in times of war, “in the fashion of the Cossacks or an armed militia”. Each colony of farmer-soldiers would be led by an *ataman* – a clear reference to the political organization of the Cossacks in southern Russia.¹⁸

In these aims, Schaeffer would be supported by people in German, Danish, and Swedish ports, who would see to the emigrants’ passage and arrange for the crews of boats, frigates, and ships, “who will receive a stipend”. He would be responsible for naming these contacts. Pedro I’s instructions to his newly minted representative concluded by encouraging him to make it clear to Europeans that “Brazil has proclaimed its political independence, but it does not desire absolute separation from Portugal,” and confirmed Schaeffer’s wages, at one conto and two hundred mil réis per year.¹⁹

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No sooner had he arrived in Havre de Grace, in France, on October 12th, 1822, Schaeffer wrote to José Bonifácio under the pseudonym “Andreas Pythagorawitschen” (who identified himself as “a Brazilian mulato”, the same nom de plume he used to publish pro-Brazilian articles in the European press). Having spent 95 days on board a ship bound for the Old

¹⁶ A letter from Leopoldina reveals that Schaeffer was ferrying “a collection of natural history, as well as a portrait of my dutiful daughters, and two bracelets, one Brazilian and one African, although their taste is somewhat wanting” (KANN *et al*, 2006, p. 402).

¹⁷ ARQUIVO Histórico do Itamaraty. 267-04-20. Dispatch. Aug. 21, 1822.

¹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹ *Idem*.

World, our protagonist confirmed that he was bent on forming rural-military colonies. The first, he wrote, would be located in southern Bahia, a region populated by “savage tribes,” especially on the banks of the rivers “Doce, Mucuri, Viçosa, Caravelas... and others”.²⁰ Later along, the colonies would spread along the banks of the “São Francisco, Parnaíba, Tocantins, Araguaia, Xingu [and] Tapajós” Rivers, “and in Rio Grande do Sul.” The correspondence also reveals a close connection to José Bonifácio’s plan to transfer the capital of the newly minted empire inland: “the new capital would be best situated between the 15th and 16th parallels and the 47th and 48th meridians west of Greenwich,” and would be connected to the coast by rivers and canals. Military colonies would be fundamental to the plan: “they will be established successively, and will be spread as if along concentric lines in the direction of São Félix in Tocantins, along the coasts and rivers”. And he went on:

My plan [...] will develop the beautiful and fertile wilderness of Brazil with thousands of workers, and, as in the rural colonies of Europe, will swiftly bring a degree of civilization to the savage tribes of the interior sufficient to organize them in agricultural tribes and submit them to the laws of society and fixed settlements, transforming them in no time from wild cannibals into peaceful, hard-working citizens who will become the most useful and loyal subjects of the Brazilian Empire.²¹

In this sense, the consolidation of a major Brazilian empire would rely on an audacious plan for the “interiorization of the metropolis” in which center and periphery would become one (DIAS, 2005). As Dolhnikoff writes (2012, p. 121), Bonifácio himself had been concerned with “adopting policies to civilize the Indians” and incorporate them “as citizens of a new constitutional monarchy” since the studies that laid the groundwork for *Negócios do Reino do Brasil*. Bonifácio’s agenda included “the dire need for a true land reform”. It seems clear from their correspondence that Brazil’s “founding father of independence” found in Schaeffer an interlocutor. In his letters, Schaeffer implies that he was an active participant in the debate over the creation of the colonies, suggesting locations, organizational structures, and recommending officers to lead the troops.²²

In short, his initial task was indeed to muster “Brazilian Cossacks” – a group of reservists in peacetime and active-duty troops in wartime. And Schaeffer, in search of needy men (and their families), would find fertile ground in an impoverished Europe. He also held secret meetings with the authorities in German territories in which he sought permission to carry out his mission. It seems clear that the formation of an imperial militia by way of border colonies was indeed a major concern. If the new Empire was to

²⁰ The colony would be joining similar undertakings in the region, such as the Colônia Leopoldina, which also received German and Swiss immigrants (MIKI, 2018, p. 28-62).

²¹ SCHAEFFER to José Bonifácio. Havre de Grace, Oct. 12, 1822. AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

²² *Idem*.

be united, violence would be not only necessary, but also a founding element of an order based on force and coercion.

To defend a continental territory marked by fractured sovereignty (SCHULTZ, 2016, p. 223-224), Bonifácio and Schaeffer drew inspiration from a well-known model of the era: the Cossack hosts established by the tzarist government along the Don and Ural river basins. In the late 18th century, the Russian monarchy had granted lands along the border, mainly on the southern steppes, to loyal veterans and their families. In an attempt to defend the region from attacks by hostile forces from within (the native Tartars) and without (the forces of the Ottoman Empire), “each town and settlement was at once an agricultural community and a military rallying point” (FERGUSON, 1954, p. 140). The officials leading the settler-soldiers were trained at the military school in the imperial capital, and local nobles also joined as lower-ranking officers. Most men were only called up to serve under extraordinary circumstances. In peacetime, they worked the land and lived in their homes with their families. The State provided them with weaponry, seeds, and horses.

In Russia, what had been a gradual advance in the border region in the 18th century became a full-blown fever at the turn of the 19th; plans for colonization were “on everyone’s mind”. The appropriation of “wild borderlands” (which happened to be inhabited by “wild peoples”) would simultaneously serve to defend the Russian empire and gradually become “a salve for the overly refined soul”, a civilizing undertaking (SUNDERLAND, 2004, p. 97-98). In the period following the Napoleonic wars, the founding of military colonies – some by Cossacks, as Bonifácio observed, but others by loyal groups of pacified citizens that included Romani, Moldavians, and Bulgarians – was seen as a State enterprise to be bureaucratized and systematized (SUNDERLAND, 2004).

Under the reign of Alexander I (1801-1825), the system would be overhauled in an attempt to boost both the ranks of the military and agricultural production. Most colonies lay in the *gubernii* of Novgorod, in the north, and Khar’kov, Kherson, and Ekaterinoslav in the south. These small villages were meant to be autonomous units, with their own schools, churches, and hospitals, and subject to strict rules designed to improve community hygiene. The daughters of peasants were forced to marry soldiers in the colonies where they lived (BITIS; HARLEY, 2000, p. 321). Analyzing the accounts of an English observer, Alexander Bitis and Janet Harley gather that the colonies which inspired Bonifácio and Schaeffer were an empire within an empire, “deliberately isolated from the population in the surrounding countryside and governed by their own, separate, laws and judicial system” (BITIS; HARLEY, 2000, p. 324-325).

The Russian political repertoires wielded in the defense of its southern borders aimed to subject the multiple peoples who already lived in the region. Dominion over rivers and passes would be regulated not only by the existence of militarized villages, but also by fortified lines. This would make it possible to control the migratory flows of nomadic

populations and limit their access to summer pastures in the region which natives used seasonally.²³ With the development of the colonies, “what had been a perilous frontier had been decisively turned into an imperial borderland” (KHODARKOVSKY, 2002, p. 133). A civilizing plan lay beneath it all, as Schaeffer was to echo in one of his letters: “as with the rural colonies of Europe, [the project] will swiftly bring a degree of civilization to the savage tribes of the interior” of the new empire. The aim was to subject the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the inland territories of a newly independent Brazil “to the laws of society and fixed settlements, transforming them in no time from wild cannibals into peaceful, hard-working citizens”.²⁴

Figure 2: The regions around the Don and Ural Rivers, where the Russian government established military settlements that would inspire plans by Bonifácio and Schaeffer



In other words, the emergent Brazilian empire, like its European peers, was also constantly searching for information about how to structure such colonies. This situated it clearly within the imperial power structures of the early 19th century, a phase marked by imitations and adaptations, during which “leaders looked at each other with envy and emulation” (ADELMAN, 2015a, p. 79).

The ministerial shakeups during Brazil’s turbulent *Primeiro Reinado* period might well have led to an even more frenzied search for trustworthy information, since not all of the

²³ On land tenure and ownership in 19th-century Russia, see Ekaterina Pravilova (2014).

²⁴ SCHAEFFER to José Bonifácio. Havre de Grace, Oct. 12, 1822. AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

ministers were aligned with Schaeffer or shared José Bonifácio's aims. Bonifácio himself was dismissed as Minister of Foreign Affairs on July 17th, 1823, and was followed by a string of short-lived successors.²⁵

In the wake of Bonifácio's fall, Brazil's envoys in Europe found themselves in a predicament. Schaeffer didn't trust the Empire's representative in London, the Baron of Itabaiana, whom he accused of refusing to transfer his fees or reimburse him for the additional costs he had incurred through the immigration project, as well as causing political complications in Lower Saxony. Oberacker Jr. (1975, p. 42-43) also reveals that the Emperor's orders were often disobeyed by ministers who judged Schaeffer's activities in Europe overly expensive and changed his marching orders more often than not. Meanwhile, the time lag involved in letters exchanged between Brazil and the German territories only made the situation even more confounding.²⁶

Even so, interest in settlements on the borders of imperial territories was unflagging. Luiz Souza Dias, an agent sent to St. Petersburg, arrived in Paris and took it upon himself to locate publications about Russia's latest border settlements. On June 10th, 1825, Souza Dias wrote to the Viscount of Cachoeira that he was looking for "a copy of the plan of the rural military colonies lately installed in the Russian Empire", and would contact the Russian consul in Paris to that end.²⁷ In a letter on July 13th, from London, lamenting not having been able to find the full plan, he included a pamphlet that "seems to give a fuller idea... of their organization".²⁸

During the time when Schaeffer and Brazil's other envoys were in Europe, a booklet of around fifty pages was published in English, French, and German, detailing the system of military colonies on the borders of the Russian empire. The study, by Robert Lyall, may have been the publication that Souza Dias sent off from London to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Rio, since it was quite popular at the time (LYALL, 1824). Lyall, a member of the Royal Asiatic Society in London and the Imperial Societies of Agriculture and Natural History and of the Physico-Medical Society at Moscow, wrote that the greatest advantage of an empire having control over its borders was "the military force which they [the borders] furnish for its defence". The colonies, meanwhile, contributed three crucial factors: they

²⁵ Between 1823 and 1830, seven men (all nobles) served the Emperor in the post: the Marquis of Caravelas, the Viscount of Cachoeira, the Marquis of Santo Amaro, the Marquis of Inhambupe, the Marquis of Queluz, the Marquis of Aracati and the Marquis of Abrantes.

²⁶ In a letter from mid-February 1826 to the Empress Leopoldina, Schaeffer wrote: "Now I hope that the persecutions and defamation in Europe may finally come to an end; but I have considerable doubts as to whether that will come to pass in Brazil as well. Even the Baron of Itabayana in London has been hostile toward me and will pay me no more". On April 23rd he complained again, this time to the Emperor, adding that, given Itabaiana's refusal to send more funds, he was becoming seen as a "swindler" in the German territories. See: SCHAEFFER to Leopoldina, Missão Schaeffer. Feb. 21, 1826. AHI.

²⁷ SOUZA DIAS to the Viscount of Cachoeira. São Petersburgo, Jun. 10, 1825. AHI.

²⁸ SOUZA DIAS to the Viscount of Cachoeira. São Petersburgo, Jul. 13, 1825. AHI.

cut down on costs with a standing army; expanded the number of reservists; and increased the population and hence agricultural production. In thirty years, he gauged, Russia would have six million men trained and ready for military service, and “the world [was] not likely to sit idle” (LYALL, 1824, p. 13; 39). For the European powers, it was time to learn and compete. For Brazil, to learn and adapt.²⁹

Imitation, adaptation, competition

While Schaeffer and Bonifácio saw Russia as a prime example, other Brazilian envoys were gathering a broader bibliography that might inform the shaping of an empire in the tropics, which necessarily included militarizing imperial borders. The letters exchanged between the Brazilian consul in Vienna, Antônio Telles da Silva, and his superiors in Rio, throughout 1825, show that he had taken upon himself to investigate Austria’s activities on the edges of its empire. On June 29th of that year, for example, Telles da Silva wrote to the Viscount of Cachoeira, a minister in the imperial cabinet, to say that he had asked the Baron of Stürmer (a diplomat in the service of the Habsburg monarchy, an old hand at dealing with the Ottoman Empire), for a copy of the plan for “the military colonies founded in the Austrian States,” and that he would speak to the Prince of Metternich about the matter. In the same missive, he reported that “the scholar Carlos de Heizinger [sic],” whom he’d met with, “has published an interesting work on these opportune establishments, which are known here by the name of ‘military frontiers,’ some indication of the state and system of government of said colonies.” He enclosed the books along with the letter, concluding that “from my impression of these colonies, it seems that a similar establishment of soldiers who are also farmers would prove not only applicable, but quite advantageous for our beloved land”.³⁰

The two volumes of Carl von Hietzinger’s book, published in 1817 and 1820, respectively, provide a portrait of the “military borders” of the Habsburg domains. The *Militärgrenze*, occupying a region that would spill over present-day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania, and Hungary, were populated by *Grenzer* (frontiersmen), many of them from the German territories, who colonized the area in exchange for land titles, religious freedom, and tax breaks – a combination very similar to the one Schaeffer would offer colonists looking to migrate to Brazil. In 1828, the border region had a population of close

²⁹ Most contemporary works on the Cossacks in Russia highlighted the military service offered by Cossack militias, and their loyalty to the throne. Brazilian diplomats and statesmen seem to have drawn from these sources; there is no mention, in their writings, of the many uprisings of settler-soldiers and their families, nor their countless creative methods for avoiding service (O’ROURKE, 2000, p. 14).

³⁰ TELLES da Silva to the Viscount of Cachoeira. Viena, Jun. 29, 1825. *Arquivo Diplomático da Independência*, v. 4, p. 210.

to a million. O'Reilly writes that the Austro-Hungarian *Militärgrenze* were among the most important borders in Europe, in economic, social, and military terms. Located on the divide between the Habsburg territories and the Ottoman Empire, these military colonies were “vital to the survival of Austria, and of Europe as a whole” (O'REILLY, 2018, p. 10). They served as a first line of defense against Ottoman invasions and doubled as a barrier against the spread of disease, having warded off mass contagion by the bubonic plague since the 16th century. Just as in the basins of the Don and Ural Rivers, this complex region was governed by a variety of codes and privileges, in a diverse legal framework (BENTON, 2011, p. 57-69). Customs there were so different from the Court and “so great was the militarization of the frontier zone that by 1799, the local authorities claimed to be able to provide one hundred thousand troops out of a population of just over eight hundred thousand”. In short, these, too, were “at once peasant and soldier” (O'REILLY, 2018, p. 9; 10; 16; *passim*).

While information flowed down official channels about imperial systems of protection and control, Georg Anton von Schaeffer was busily recruiting thousands of soldiers from the German territories, “under the guise of colonists”, to join the ranks of the Brazilian empire – an activity that had been prohibited in no uncertain terms after the Congress of Vienna (1815).³¹ Between 1824 and 1829, he put together 27 transatlantic voyages, transporting 3,917 soldiers and 2,782 colonists to the new empire (plus 765 unspecified passengers, for a total of 7,464 migrants) (LEMOS, 1993, p. 85). Using terms drawn from the military organization of the Russian Cossacks (officers were called *sotniks*, potential directors were dubbed *atamans*), Schaeffer recounted to the foreign ministers and to the imperial couple, Pedro and Leopoldina, all the logistics involved in each batch of travelers, in an active network of correspondence that used the very ships that carried the future inhabitants of Brazil's borderlands.

The process of sending settler-soldiers involved a broad network of participants in the German territories, from tavern owners and traders to major merchants, officials who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars and knew potential recruits, and priests and pastors, who spread the word and the pamphlets put together and printed by Schaeffer (DREHER, 2010). On the other hand, the mission also called for political savvy, in the task of convincing European nobles that it was in the interest of their sovereignty for their subjects to emigrate to Brazil. This process involved the bowing and scraping and other customary ceremonies of the European courts (ELIAS, 2006, p. 86-126). From 1822 to 1829, Schaeffer traveled to Bavaria, the Palatinate, Lower Saxony, Holstein, Mecklenburg, and many port cities, including Bremen, Altona, Hamburg and Hanover, pressing through the pain of the gout which afflicted him throughout 1825 and the first half of 1826. Part of the envoy's expenses

³¹ “It will be prohibited to send troops even after recognition [of Brazil's Independence], and thus dispatching them has become quite the onerous task, which I nevertheless hope to complete”. SCHAEFFER to D. Pedro I. Jun. 20, 1825. AHMIMP.

for 1825 indicate that the logistics of the voyages themselves only came to 17% of his annual budget, while payments to “many people who have taken an interest in the good of Brazil” accounted for 12%. A fourth of his total budget went to “many dinners held on the birthdays of Their Imperial Majesties”.³²

Schaeffer’s residences were impeccably located: a three-bedroom apartment in the St. Georg neighborhood of the Hamburg suburbs and an ample house in the New City, or Neustadt, where he would have rubbed elbows with the most privileged of Hamburgers. It was here that he held banquets, met with European nobles, and set up “notary’s offices”, as he called them, where, with the help of secretaries, he organized the lists of potential migrants and contractors. Being there in one of the most important European ports of the time also meant that he was ideally positioned to pick up on geopolitical information, which was then ferried on to the Emperor.³³

At the same time, Schaeffer also secretly dispatched weaponry to be used by the Brazilian forces,³⁴ as well as prototypes.³⁵ To the empress, he sent cash, jewelry, and pets. For the emperor, horses and research material. Scientists also tagged along on the trips – crucial elements in the jigsaw puzzle that was the making of an empire. Equally central were the hardened officers who had served in the Cossack regiments around the Don River and in the Austro-Hungarian *Militärgrenze*. On at least two occasions, Schaeffer recommended these veterans to the emperor.³⁶ Telles da Silva, in Vienna, also brokered the emigration of experienced Austrian officers.³⁷ Their know-how would be essential to the success of the colonies of “Brazilian Cossacks”.

The project under Schaeffer’s wing was extremely expensive, which spurred complaints from other European envoys and from the ministry in Brazil.³⁸ Meanwhile, on Brazil’s

³² See bills attached to Schaeffer’s letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hamburg, Oct. 31, 1825. AHI. Missão Schaeffer. The dinners were also essential to the mission led by Antônio José Rademaker in Copenhagen and Stockholm. See: RADEMAKER to Aracaty. Stockholm, Jul. 27, 1829. AHI. Copenhagen.

³³ See Schaeffer’s letters from Feb. 2, 1823, Jan. 2, 1825, Jun. 20, 1825, Aug. 20, 1825, Jan. 17, 1826, Jan. 25, 1826, and Mar. 28, 1826. AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

³⁴ “let slip a few words as to certain weaponry which had been ordered here to be sent to Brazil... saw the samples of daggers and other weapons in a house in Hamburg”. MELLO Mattos to Santo Amaro. Hamburg, Apr. 7, 1826. AHI. Hamburg.

³⁵ See Schaeffer’s letters from May 1, 1823, Jul. 27, 1823, Jun. 24, 1825, Oct. 14, 1825, Oct. 31, 1825, May 23, 1826, Jun. 23, 1826, and Apr. 15, 1828. AHI. Missão Schaeffer. See also his letters from Mar. 24, 1824, Jan. 2, 1825, Feb. 26, 1825, May 12, 1825, Jun. 20, 1825, and Nov. 12, 1829. AHMIMP.

³⁶ In January 1825, Schaeffer wrote to the emperor recommending the Baron of Lilljehook, “a descendant of an illustrious Swedish family, currently serving as an officer in the retinue of His Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, as his papers shall attest.” In June, he recommended “Henrique Reyter, 18 years a lieutenant in the service of Austria.” See Schaeffer’s correspondence from both dates. Hamburg, AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

³⁷ TELLES da Silva to Carvalho e Melo. Vienna, Jul. 31, 1828. *Arquivo Diplomático da Independência*, v. 4, p. 215.

³⁸ Sending immigrants on the *Friedrich*, in 1826, cost just over 7 contos de réis; expenses on the voyage of the *Harmonia*, in 1828, came to 20 contos. See: Letters from Schaeffer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hamburg, Jun. 23, 1826; Bremen, Apr. 15, 1828. AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

frontiers, conflicts were cooling off in the north and heating up in the south: with the pacification of the Confederation of the Equator, the international struggle over the Cisplatine Province came to dominate politics at home and abroad. Ministerial musical chairs sparked insecurities on the other side of the ocean; even as word came down that the funds for immigration were drying up and troops would no longer be necessary, the empress Maria Leopoldina wrote privately to Schaeffer to ask for “many, many soldiers” (KANN *et al.*, 2006).³⁹

While in Brazil the ministerial shakeups and constantly shifting political situation had tensions running high, recruitment efforts in Europe were hardly without incident. As costs piled up, so did the German authorities’ distaste for Schaeffer – they gradually began boycotting or working to ban his activities – and his health deteriorated, preventing him from working for months on end. Another major factor was competition with other nations, which were at war and likewise in need of soldiers. Mello Matos, for example, wrote from Hamburg to Rio to say that the Netherlands were also jockeying for recruits in the German territories, bound for military service in their overseas colonies (at war since 1825). He attached a copy of the conditions the Dutch were offering soldiers to his letter, and underscored Hamburg’s senators’ resistance to the establishment of a “public recruitment office”.⁴⁰

Greece, which was waging its own war of independence against the Ottoman Empire and Egyptian forces, was also brokering deals with the king of Bavaria, with an eye to bolstering its army’s ranks. Up until the battle of Navarino, on October 20, 1827 – when British, Russian, and French fleets united to destroy the Ottoman armada – competition for men and weapons was stiff. In May 1826, Schaeffer wrote: “German troops are being recruited to Greece, which offers many benefits for those who enlist”. In September, Mello Mattos reported that Brazil’s agents were fighting an uphill battle – Bavaria was willing to recognize its officers’ time served in the Greek army, on top of their wages and service in their original corps. Brazil, which had yet to have its independence recognized by most European countries, was unable to do likewise, in part because the idea was for the soldiers and officers to settle permanently in its border colonies.⁴¹

A closer look at diplomatic correspondence reveals the Brazilian agents’ keen desire to insert their efforts into this global regime, which, in broad strokes, entailed imitation,

³⁹ See correspondence from June 12, 1824 (“send 3,000 men, all young bachelors”); from May 16, 1825 (“send me the books straightaway and many, many soldiers, as I believe they are increasingly necessary”) (KANN *et al.*, 2006).

⁴⁰ Soldiers were to serve for at least six years, had to be between 18 and 36, and stand at least 1.57m tall (5’2”). The conflict in question was the Java War (1825-1830) (CAREY, 2008, p. 505-656). Mello Mattos’s reference to Dutch competition for soldiers from the German territories may be found in his letter from September 30, 1826, addressed to Inhambupe. AHI. Hamburg.

⁴¹ Schaeffer to Inhambupe. Bremen, May 23, 1826. AHI. Missão Schaeffer; Mello Mattos to Inhambupe. Hamburg, Sep. 30, 1826. AHI. Hamburg.

competition, and adaptation (ADELMAN, 2015a).⁴² While Schaeffer's immigrant-recruiting machine was chugging along, Brazilian diplomats were anxious for the nation they served to *be seen as* an empire by European peers.

For that to happen, the new empire had to act as if it were one of them. From territorial empires, such as Russia and Austria, it would draw inspiration for “self-colonization,” looking to develop its own hinterland and shore up its borders – using white European subjects who, alongside the peoples they were to subjugate, would be affected by the colonizing drive they were helping to carry out (KUMAR, 2017, p. 236). This inspiration was made very clear in conversations with European counterparts – hence the importance of meetings with ministers, sovereigns, and nobles, both in the German territories and the Austrian capital. Telles da Silva, for example, was to spread the word that Brazil planned to “monarchize” its neighbors.⁴³

The same concern is visible in the book “O Brasil como Império Independente” (*Brazil as Independent Empire*), by Georg Anton von Schaeffer. Published in 1824 in Altona, it served as a piece of propaganda for the new country and circled widely throughout Europe.⁴⁴ In Schaeffer's telling, Brazil is a unique, special nation with a singular purpose to fulfill in the world. Alongside comparisons to Russia and Austria, the book explains how advantageous it would be for the Old World to have an empire in the Americas.⁴⁵ Brazil's “independent, flourishing” empire would provide “significant aid as a *partner* to its old land *of origin*” (SCHÄFER, 2007, p. 298). There is a clear move to stake out lineage – a key argument for the existence of an empire – and status: Brazil, as Europe's heir, would step into an imperial global regime⁴⁶ as a “tranquil, united” whole (SCHÄFER, 2007, p. 312).

⁴² On October 6, 1829, the Brazilian envoy in Copenhagen and Stockholm forwarded a full account of Sweden's naval forces to Rio de Janeiro. See: RADEMAKER to Aracati. Stockholm, Oct. 6, 1829. AHI. Copenhagen.

⁴³ “Furthermore, *it will pursue a project of gradually converting the republics formed out of the Spanish colonies into monarchies...*” See instructions received by Telles da Silva. *Arquivo Diplomático da Independência*, v. 4, p. 8. Schäffer's book was published in Altona in 1824, and later in Amsterdam.

⁴⁴ In a letter from August 1825, Schaeffer wrote to D. Pedro I that several nobles from the German territories helped him publish the book. See: SCHAEFFER to D. Pedro I. Hamburg, Aug. 20, 1825. AHMIMP.

⁴⁵ Two passages are symptomatic of the comparisons, which appear throughout Chapter 6 of Schaeffer's book: “If one might make a statistical and geographical comparison between Brazil and the empires of Europe, only Russia and Austria could compare to it”; and “Austria has in Steiermark, Kärnthen, Kain, Ídira, Galícia, and Salzburg its Minas Gerais; ad in the Carpathians and Siebenbürgen, its Goiás, a province that, like Mato Grosso, represents Brazil's Hungary” (SCHÄFER, 2007, cap. 6). For an analysis of Schaeffer's book, see Mügge (2022).

⁴⁶ Maria Leopoldina was a crucial element in this argument, as Schaeffer makes plain in a piece published in German newspapers on September 12, 1822: “Hear, ye peoples, and wonder: a man, the Prince Regent of Brazil, married to *a princess of the oldest and most venerable imperial house in Europe...* is fulfilling his duty to govern”. Attachment to letter from Schaeffer to José Bonifácio. Havre de Grace, Oct. 12, 1822. AHI. Missão Schaeffer.

An Empire of Borders

As Andréa Slemian writes, throughout the process of Brazil's independence and the recreation of its monarchy along constitutional lines, there was an intense dialogue “with the latest news from the Western political world” (SLEMIAN, 2014, p. 173). As we have seen throughout this article, the empire taking shape in the Americas “blended a variety of institutional practices” (ADELMAN, 2015b, p. 79), situating itself within a *global regime* that was undergoing an intense transformation from its peripheries inward.

At the eve of the bicentennial of Brazilian independence, the time seems ripe for us to ask not why Brazil was different, but what led it to be so similar (MAXWELL, 2003, p. 145-170). This is not a matter of reviving the discussion about colonial legacies, but rather of turning our attention to imperial adaptations. After all, Brazil, as I have sought to show here, was not merely a “successor to the Portuguese state” or even “the Portuguese state itself”, as has been argued elsewhere (BANDEIRA, 2012, p. 171).

With an eye to the innovations of the era, statesmen, politicians, and even the envoys directly engaged with the “minor courts” of Europe planned – at times with a utopian bent – a great empire that, as they saw it, might become “the center of commerce for the world”.⁴⁷ Indeed, the Brazilian diplomats serving in Europe did not merely seek recognition of the new nation's independence, arguing that what had taken place was a natural, peaceful transition; they also sought, actively and effectively, to gain access to an “archive” containing information about imperial theory and practice.⁴⁸ During the *Primeiro Reinado* period, Schaeffer held the keys to it.⁴⁹

As we have seen, Schaeffer and Bonifácio shared a clear project of exporting a certain kind of institution to the borderlands of the empire in the making. These institutions would serve as a bridge between center and periphery, creating a common culture that would ensure the superiority of the institutions and ideologies of the center. In Brazil, that superiority would come through force – an armed force which would, as in Russia, control the territory of peoples seen by the elites as nomadic or savage. This would be the path toward integrating Indigenous peoples into the new empire, as Bonifácio had planned since

⁴⁷ Schaeffer to D. Pedro I. Hamburg, Aug. 20, 1825. AHMIMP.

⁴⁸ This archive, despite not existing in a single physical space – as Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum have pointed out – was shared by imperial powers, and contained practical knowledge that was constantly challenged, tested, and refined (KAMISSEK; KREIENBAUM, 2016).

⁴⁹ The recognition of Brazil's independence by European powers, the establishment of the 1824 Constitution and the waning of internal and external conflicts, as well as the death of Leopoldina, Schaeffer's great admirer and supporter, meant that his services were no longer necessary. Schaeffer traveled to Brazil in 1828 and wrote to the Emperor on several occasions, requesting honors and the payment of his debts. The last we know of him is a letter from 1829, signed from Göttingen, in which he requested a diplomatic post. Some say he died in disrepute in Frankenthal, in southern Bahia (modern-day Helvécia and Nova Viçosa) (OBERACKER JR., 1975, p. 86).

the 1810s. Following in the steps of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian models, this plan rested on the creation of hierarchies. Egalitarianism was not high on the list of priorities and few of these first colonists, as we well know, became Brazilian citizens after the 1824 Constitution went into effect.

Coda

On paper, the settlements of farmer-soldiers would help work toward the gradual abolition of slavery, a plan drawn out by Bonifácio and shared by Schaeffer. In practice, however, things went quite differently. The plans for settlements in Brazil, as well as the idea of moving the capital inland, were soon changed. The flow of immigrants would only increase, sparking internal tensions and complicating imperial prospects. The need for soldiers to fight in the Cisplatine War meant that many immigrants were shipped off to the front as soon as they arrived in Rio de Janeiro and never settled on Court-designated lands. Immigrants who did receive small holdings, however, were scattered across the vast territory. With geopolitical tension focused in the south, following the pacification of the Confederation of the Equator and the establishment of settlements on the banks of the Mucuri in Bahia, most new arrivals headed for Rio Grande do Sul, founding the *colonies* of São Leopoldo, Dom Pedro de Alcântara, Três Forquilhas, and São João das Missões. These immigrants, in turn, also came to own slaves – in yet another demonstration of the importance of slavery to the very existence of Brazil’s borders.

At a glance, the project as a whole would seem to be a failure. However, the 1832 Naturalization Law favored foreign soldiers, who were given a much easier path toward citizenship in the new Empire as compared to their European peers (and even more so, when compared to free Africans).⁵⁰ The fact that these immigrants were granted land certainly placed them, hierarchically, well above the vast majority of the Brazilian population, for whom access to land often rested on patronage and economic dependency.

On the other hand, few promises were kept. In the end, even in the wake of the uprisings of foreign soldiers, the fall of D. Pedro I and the creation of the National Guard, a citizen militia, in 1831, the Brazilian empire never relinquished the hybrid military organization that was a hallmark of 19th-century global empires. As the citizen militia organized itself, it became the backbone for the revolts that shook the regency; and the army’s perennial weakness led to a new wave of imported German soldiers in 1850. By reforming the Guarda Nacional that same year, the empire sought stability, looking to bolster itself with a combination of regulars, irregulars, and mercenaries.

⁵⁰ “Article 2. Those subject solely to the test of the third paragraph: [...] § 4 Those who have taken part in one or more campaigns in the service of Brazil, or who have been gravely wounded in its defense”. See: *Coleção de Leis do Império do Brasil, 1832*, v. 1, pt. 1, p. 116.

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