

Historical Theory as the Hermeneutics of Historiography: an interpretation of *Do Império à República* by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda¹

Arthur Assis

ABSTRACT

This text provides an interpretation of *Do Império à República*, a work by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda examining Brazilian political history in the second half of the nineteenth century. Based on concepts developed by the historical theorist Jörn Rüsen, the article focuses on three aspects of the aforementioned book: the theoretical artifacts that structure the interpretation of the crisis of the Brazilian Monarchy; the narrative patterns used to give meaning to that past experience; and the orientation context that functions as

a source of criteria of significance/meaning for both interpretation and representation. This analysis intends to show that historical theory is not only a means to abstractly explore the complex questions connected to the production of historical knowledge, but also a tool for obtaining concrete images about the intellectual practice of professional historians.

Keywords: Theory of history; Historiography; Jörn Rüsen; Sérgio Buarque de Holanda.

One of the responsibilities of the theory of history, since the propaedeutic conferences of eighteenth century German historians that unveiled its modern version,² has been to answer the question: what do historians do when they ‘do’ history? However, in the last 250 years historians and philosophers who have discussed this issue have reached frequently contradictory and not rarely irreconcilable responses. A consensus that could bring to an end the many and fruitless dichotomies that have marked reflection on history and historiography is far from being achieved – dichotomies such as realism and constructivism, method and narrative, objectivity and subjectivity, science and life, amongst various others. However, I believe that at least part of the impasse would be overcome if it could be agreed that in ‘doing’ history professional historians

* Associate Professor, Department of History, Universidade de Brasília. Campus Darcy Ribeiro – ICC-Norte. 70910-900 Brasília – DF – Brazil. arthurassis@unb.br

put into play at least three fundamental procedures. First they – and even those better hidden behind methodological fantasies such as pure empiricism or total impartiality – consciously or unconsciously assume positions in the socio-politico-cultural contexts in which they are inserted. In second place, historians research registers of pre-existing experiences – and their choice of themes and structures of interpretations is frequently related to their expectations of the future, which also develop in relation to their self-appreciations of the present itself. In third place they write narratives which, since they refer in a controlled manner to the experience of the past, are intended to be plausible.³ Of these three constitutive dimensions of the professional practice of historians – (1) the position of the historian; (2) research of sources; (3) writing of history –, the last represents a synthesis of the rest. It is thus natural that historiography is (or should be) a preferential source of all theoretical reflection interested in discussing the nature and significance of historical science.

It is possible to relate the historical theory and historiography in different manners. For example, it needs to be recognized that the history of historiography not only complements reflections on the theory of history, but also places itself as an imperative logic of the latter. The historical-theoretical approach that does not take seriously the historicity inherent in practices of historical investigation and writing automatically loses coherence.⁴ Theoretical reflection on historical science thus extracts great benefits from its proximity to historiographic studies. This relationship between the two fields can, nonetheless, be inverted to the benefit of the former. Historical studies can be mobilized to help in the comprehension of texts written by historians; they can provide a perspective that allows us see new aspects involved in historiographic production; they can make a vocabulary available capable of expanding the field of what can be said about a historical text. In this case it is reasonable to say that historical theory functions as the *hermeneutics of historiography*. In the rest of this work I intend to explore this possibility through an interpretation of an important text in the Brazilian historiographic tradition, *Do Império à República* (From the Empire to the Republic- 1972) by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1902-1982).⁵ I seek to show how that hermeneutics can be put into operation in practice, instead of giving it a theoretical basis. In agreement with this objective, I will base my interpretation on the theory of history formulated by the German historian Jörn Rüsen.

It is unnecessary to extensively justify the choice of *Do Império à República* as an object of analysis, since Holanda's entire work has been highlighted by

exegetes, both his contemporaries and more recently, as of fundamental importance for historical culture and for Brazilian social thought.⁶ This widely recognized importance, however, is to a large extent the result of the relevance given to one publication in particular, *Raízes do Brasil* (1936).⁷ Historiographic research on Holanda's works follows the same tendency and is marked by a disproportional concentration, in my opinion unjustified, on the first and most famous of his books. In the context of the general enthusiasm for *Raízes do Brasil*, mentioning that the author himself 40 years after the publication of the book, described it as "surpassed and completely outdated" – and furthermore that he said he "would never write [it] again" – corresponds to rowing against a strong intellectual tide.⁸ Only recent works, such as those by Mariana Françaço and Robert Wegner, have tried to counterbalance this old tendency by placing in focus Holanda's texts about the expansion of Brazilian territory – such as those included in collections like *Monções* (1945) and *Caminhos e fronteiras* (1957).⁹

Nevertheless, little attention has been dedicated to the last of the historical monographs published by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Do Império à República*. In part this may be because the circumstances involving the history of this text are so intricate. Conceived as an article that was supposed to summarize the crisis of the Brazilian Empire and to close the volume referring to the monarchical period in the collection *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, the work ended up with a much greater scope and length than originally intended. It was published in 1972 as the seventh volume of the same collection, but it is known that, since 1976 at least, Holanda had been working on a new edition of the text and had the idea of restructuring the plan of the work and expanding it substantially.¹⁰ He did not conclude the reworking of the text, but in May 1981 – in an interview given a little under a year before his death – he said he was working on this project. In addition, he categorically stated that the rewritten version of *Do Império à República* would come to be his most important book (Graham, 1982, p.8). Perhaps the cardinal methodological precept of intellectual history is that authors converted into objects of investigation never hold a monopoly on the interpretation of their own works, and there is no reason why this should not be applied to the study of Holanda's texts. Nevertheless, there are even less reasons to ignore Holanda's self-evaluation of *Do Império à República*. After all some heavyweight commentators, in harmony with the author's own opinion, have highlighted the centrality of the text in the general panorama of his work and its relevance for the comprehension of the historical process that led to the proclamation

of the Republic.¹¹ All of this I think shows that *Do Império à República* deserves to be given much more attention.

Having said this in relation to the principal empirical reference of this work, it is now fitting to make a brief presentation of its principal theoretical reference, i.e., Jörn Rüsen's theory of history. Rüsen is one of the most important contemporary philosopher of history and his name and work has become increasingly known in the Brazilian historiographical scenario – due to a large extent to the translations and interpretations made by investigators such as Pedro Caldas, Astor Diehl, René Gertz, Estevão de Rezende Martins and Luiz Sérgio Duarte da Silva. Rüsen studied philosophy, history, German literature and pedagogy in the University of Cologne, where he did his doctorate in 1966 on the theory of history of Johann Gustav Droysen (1808-1884). Since then he has worked in different German and foreign institutions, especially in the University of Bochum (1974-1989), the University of Bielefeld (1989-1997), as well as the Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities (KWI) of Essen, which he directed between 1997 and 2007. Born in 1938, Rüsen would be socialized in the context of the then newly born *Bundesrepublik*. He was part of a generation of intellectuals who felt committed to the ideas of the Enlightenment, who were sympathetic to social democracy and naturally who had to deal with the traumas inherited from national socialism.¹² Rüsen's theory of history de Rüsen accommodates these and other concerns, projecting them in the debate about the nature, meaning and function of historical knowledge. In my opinion his great merit consists of having satisfactorily reconciled the contemporary emphasis on the constructive/narrative character of historical writing with the much less recent tradition of reflection on the strategies of the control and management of historical material, which is structured around the concept of method.

Rüsen designed his theory of history during the 1970 and systematically developed it in the trilogy *Fundamentals of a Theory of History (Grundzüge einer Historik)*, which was originally published during the 1980.¹³ Rüsen's theoretical project is synthesized in the concept of the disciplinary matrix of the science of history. The disciplinary matrix sought to include all the essential elements present in the production of history by professional historians, representing a conciliatory solution to the impasses that marked the debate about history and historical knowledge in the 1980s. By opting for this path, Rüsen sought to integrate discordant points of view. His objective is to both to overcome a narrow conception of objectivity – which, trusting in research methods as infallible means to unveil the truths hidden in the sources, always tend to repress

the theme of historical representation – and to offer an alternative to a radically constructivist and vision of historiography – which does not satisfactorily clarify the nature and the relationship between the writing of history and historical research. It is this dual purpose that informs his definition of the five fundamental principles of scientific historical knowledge:

- 1) needs for orientation;
- 2) directive views of the historical interpretation of past experiences;
- 3) empirical methods of research;
- 4) forms of representations; and
- 5) functions of orientation. (Rüsen, 2001, pp.26-36)

Rüsen isolates these principles from the multiplicity of paradigms of historical research and historiography, which much before the 1980s had made the field of the science of history vast and complex. It is also worth noting that the concept of *disciplinary matrix* proposed by Rüsen not only contains an objective description of the fundamentals of historical science, but also involves to a certain extent implicit normative ideas.¹⁴

With his disciplinary matrix Rüsen specifies how the science of history carries out the cultural task which he sees as defining all forms of historical discourse and thought, the ‘constitution of meaning’ (*Sinnbildung*). The interpretation of *Do Império à República* which this leads to intends to look at the aspects of the cultural constitution of meaning present in this history of Brazilian political cultural in the second half of the nineteenth century. Three of the five principles specified here will be located in Holanda’s text. In first place I will explore the two theoretical structures that shape the text’s *directive views of interpretation*, namely the category of ‘crisis’ and the concept of the ‘personal power of the Emperor’. Afterwards I will focus on the *forms of representation* in order to examine the specific modes of narrative constitution of meaning which are apparent in the text. At the end I will discuss the relationship between the text and the *needs for orientation* that characterized the context in which the former was conceived, researched and written.

INTERPRETATIVE ARCHITECTURE

One of the most clarifying points of view that emerges from Jörn Rüsen historical theory is that history is a certain way of perceiving and interpreting

the temporal change in/of a determined historical subject (for example a person, an institution, a collectivity, a form of knowledge, a culture, a form of economic organization) (Rüsen, 2007a, pp.43-45). In the case of *Do Império à República* the main historical subject is evidently the Brazilian imperial regime. The first logical requirement in analyzing any change is the demarcation of the starting and end points between which the change takes place. Again *Do Império à República* is no exception to the rule. The change looked at by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda is that one which led the Brazilian Empire into its dissolution. His end point has long been maintained in the Brazilian political memory as a moment of inflection: 15 November 1889. His starting point, on the other hand, was borrowed from old nineteenth century interpretations which saw 1868 as the beginning of the end of the monarchical regime.

Do Império à República, therefore, covers the last two decades of the history of the Brazilian Empire. In the structuring of Holanda's interpretation of the changes that culminated in the proclamation of the republic two principal theoretical structures can be found – one with a dynamic character and the other with a static one. The first corresponds to the historical category of 'crisis' and is concretized in the argument – sustained sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly by Holanda – that the years 1868-1889 were essentially marked by a crisis in which the bases of power of the Brazilian monarchical regime were corroded.

The thesis that historical interpretations are structured by theoretical artifacts, including historical categories, is important in Rüsen's theory of history – who it can be said *en passant* articulates in this point a complex critical dialogue with the Kantian theory of knowledge.¹⁵ According to Rüsen, historical categories are present in all histories, especially under the ambit of the *directive views of the interpretation of the experience of the past*. In general terms, historical categories point to the general temporal nexuses that make certain realities of the past recognizable as historical realities (Rüsen, 2007a, pp.93-94). This definition assumes that there is not, nor was there ever, a fixed, definitive and absolute historical reality to which a history should correspond. Rüsen thus argues that the experience of the past *is not* intrinsically historical, but *becomes* historical. This transformation of the 'past' into 'history' occurs when a specific empirical content is related to the registers of historicity which in a given current context provide meaning to the activity of remembering the past. For Rüsen the fact that the predicate 'historical' is only attributed to a determined event or experience based on this type of relationship between the past and present confers visibility on the control role played by categories. In

the procedures for the construction of history, categories are key pieces in the theoretical networks with which the subject of knowledge recognizes the space of historical experience within the wider field of the experience of time. In *Do Império à República* the historical category of 'crisis' serves as a criteria for the delimitation of the facts that should be addressed by the interpretation, thereby allowing that a segment of the reality of the imperial political past be taken as specifically historical. This category corresponds to a cognitive structure that is noted whenever the experience is perceived and understood as an experience in which the historical subject was (or is) called into question.

As has already been mentioned, *Do Império à República* attributes an interpretative function of great importance, the starting point of the crisis of the regime, to a particular historical event: the fall in the middle of 1868 of the liberal ministry led by Zacarias de Góis e Vasconcelos (1815-1877). The subsequent ascension of Visconde de Itaboraí (1802-1872) – one of the most important members of the orthodox wing of the Conservative Party – to the position of president of the Council of Ministers, as well as the concomitant dissolution of the Congress, is presented as a mini-coup d'état. More than once in the text, this criticism is accompanied by the commentary – proffered in what is almost a tone of retrospective prophecy – that in the medium term the effects of the political turnaround in question was revealed to be strongly harmful to the preservation of imperial institutions (DIR, pp.7-8, 105). Having established the starting point of the interpretation, Holanda moves on to the reconstruction of an infinity of political experiences that marked the existence of the regime until its dissolution in 1889. He specifically concentrates on ministerial compositions and decompositions, the dissolutions of congresses, parliamentary arguments, episodes linked to the Paraguay War and the external policy of the regime in the River Platte region, in structural transformation of the army and the development of republicanism, amongst other themes. Not rarely in order to explain what he takes to have been the crisis manifest in all of these (and in many other) experiences, he resorts to the extrapolation of the temporal marks delimited as the frontiers of the principal theme of the narrative. Previous and later periods in the political history of Brazil are also incidentally covered, as well as cases referring to the history of other modern state formations. Nonetheless, the most important is that with these digressions and those referring to the 1868-1889 period Holanda seeks to reinforce in the complex succession of events represented by him the sense of crisis, the idea that the imperial institutions built during the nineteenth

century were from 1868 onwards suffering from conditions and conjunctures that favored their fragility.

The centrality of the historical category of crisis in *Do Império à República* can be exemplified in light of various other passages in text, such in Chapter 1 of Book III¹⁶ where the author reconstructs the parliamentary discussions about what would become known as the *Lei do Ventre Livre* (Free Womb Law - 1871). The ministry in power was then led by Visconde do Rio Branco (1819-1880), a moderate conservative who was quite interested in advancing the cause of the emancipation of slaves. Rio Branco was far from proposing a radical project for the abolition of slavery, but nonetheless his proposal were badly received by a large part of his colleagues in the Conservative Party. This conflict led the head of the government to request the dissolution of Congress, a Congress formed by an overwhelming majority of his own party. Since the Emperor agreed to the request, Rio Branco's cabinet was kept alive and he remained as president of the Council of Ministers until 1875. With these further four years in government he broke all records of permanence in the position, but according to Sérgio Buarque de Holanda this persistence was illusory in relation to the real health of the regime. The profound result of the long duration of Rio Branco's government was the fragmentation of an essential pillar of the support for the Monarchy, the dichotomy between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. When some pages later, he returned to the same episode, Holanda commented that "one of the notorious effects of the bitterly contested fight in 1871 over Rio Branco's emancipation project was the weakening, which would not cease to worsen until the advent of the Republic, of the line dividing the two parties" (DIR, p.245).

It is evident that Holanda perceived the fragmentation of the Conservative Party – resulting from the conflict between its old guard and a faction that on reaching power adhered to the reformist platform that had previously been dear to the liberals – as a further symptom of the crisis dealt with in his book. A metaphor used by him to synthesize the effects of this process offers a particularly irrefutable testimony to the centrality of the 'crisis' category in the directive views of interpretation. After 1868, he claims, an "inclined plane for the regime" emerged (DIR, p.247). This geometric image leaves no doubt that Holanda conferred on his interpretation the meaning of a memory of the experience of the fall of the political regime that founded the Brazilian state. He explains the 'crisis' as the process of the dissolution of the pillars that sustained the Empire. The recourse to the category of crisis therefore summarizes his perception that in the final decades of the nineteenth century

there occurred a process of corrosion of the cultural supports that allowed an agreement between the state, the political elite and society, an agreement which underpinned the regime. In this context Holanda considers the coup d'état that inaugurated the Republic in 1889 as the final link in a complex chain of previous events. Such events led to an increasing abrasion of the conditions that sustained the imperial regime (DIR, pp.348-349), and this process would have a much more profound historical meaning than the relatively contingent episode of the proclamation of the republic. For this reason Holanda's book is not a history of the proclamation of the Brazilian republic, but rather of the political crisis that preceded it.

Do Império à República attributes the incapacity of the monarchical regime to renew the political and cultural supports that gave consistency to its network of power more due to inherent characteristics of the regime than to external factors. These characteristics are covered by the mediation of the second of the theoretical structures marking the text, the concept of the 'personal power of the Emperor'. This concept condenses the opinion that the political system in vigor during the monarchical period was marked by structural personalism, in the face of which everything related to progressive political doctrines, such as liberalism and democracy, was weakened. Correspondingly the Emperor occupied the position of the principal actor in the political scenario, with the result that the other individual or institutional actors were reserved only a secondary, subaltern position, when not merely figurative. Thus, the Second Empire was characterized by the personal government of D. Pedro II, while the entire political community was at the mercy of imperial whims:

His Majesty [would not dare] to tear the web of a fraudulent parliamentarianism, which was imposed despite the constitution, so as not to be accused of arbitrariness. What other name could, however, be given to the power that upheld in a web of plots and although exercised softly, could come to be a capricious force? (DIR, p.72)

Another good example of the direction exercised by the concept of the personal power of the Emperor on the interpretation presented in *Do Império à República* is the ironic presentation of the 'docility' said to have marked the behavior of Zacarias de Góis e Vasconcelos in his relationship with the Emperor on the three occasions when he was the head of the Council of Ministers. Holanda's thesis of the docility of Vasconcelos is reinforced by recalling various episodes when the latter radically changed opinion about certain issues in

order to adjust to the positions defended by D. Pedro II. The most curious case is Vasconcelos' sudden goodwill about the question of the emancipation of slaves, as expressed in some of his speeches given in 1867 and 1868 as the head of the government. Holanda contrasts this with a later situation when Vasconcelos, back in Parliament after the dissolution of the cabinet, voted against the Free Womb Law. The author presents this variation of opinion as proof that the Emperor tended to interfere in government subjects when he felt like it, as well as that these interferences were necessary to maintain the political system.

In effect, for Sérgio Buarque de Holanda the arrangement that allowed the structuration and sustaining of the state in nineteenth century Brazil culminated in the excessive concentration of decision making power in the hands of the holder of the Moderating Power (*Poder Moderador*) – the fourth power that appears in the Imperial Constitution as the “key to the entire political organization” of the regime.¹⁷ This thesis that the political life of the Empire was based on the personal power of the monarch dates, however, from much before the publication of *Do Império à República*. It debuted in some political pamphlets that, from the first decades of D. Pedro II's rule, criticized the hypertrophy of imperial powers – texts such as *Libelo do povo* (1849) by Francisco de Sales Torres Homem (1812-1876), *Biografia do Conselheiro Furtado* (1867) by Tito Franco de Almeida (1829-1899), the famous *Circular* (1860) by Teófilo Ottoni (1807-1869), and *A província* (1870) by Aureliano Tavares Bastos (1839-1875). For Ottoni, for example, the ‘personal government’ of D. Pedro was the expression of an “organic vice of the system”.¹⁸ Previously Torres Homem had presented a similar diagnosis when he commented that the miseries of the monarchical system arose out of the circumstances where it was maintained in complete dependence on the “interminable whims of individual caprice [of the Emperor]”.¹⁹ Furthermore, after the end of the Monarchy, the concept of the ‘personal power of the Emperor’ came to play the role of an important element in the structuration of pro-republican interpretations of the imperial past. At the end of the 1920s, when the agitation that would put an end of the First Republic had started, authors such as Vicente Licínio Cardoso and Gilberto Amado transposed the thesis of personal power from the more strictly political field to that of academic historiography. Counterpoised to this were historians with a more conservative or monarchist tendency, which given the instability of the republican period, insisted on remembering the relative calm in the golden years of the Second Empire.²⁰

It is easy to perceive that the general characterization of the imperial political

system used by Holanda in *Do Império à República* is located in the estuary of this liberal-democratic (and later republican) tradition of the interpretation of the monarchical past. In the historical argument structured by the concept of the ‘personal power of the Emperor’ there can naturally be found a built-in direct criticism of the monarchical regime (and above all of the Second Empire). In the case of Holanda’s interpretation, the most perverse effects of the hypertrophy of ‘personal power’ were the constant obstructions of democratic advances, particularly the reluctance to promote both the abolition of slavery and the expansion of electoral participation.²¹ This retrospective opposition to the monarchical regime should be understood in light of the then current context of orientation on top of which Holanda composed his history of the end of Empire. Nevertheless, before accessing this relationship between the text and its context, it is appropriate to consider in detail the narrative strategies which the author used to establish his interpretation of the Brazilian monarchical past.

NARRATIVE AND MEANING

As can be inferred from the preceding analysis of the theoretical architecture of *Do Império à República*, the directive views of historical interpretation have a twofold nature. They are subjective tools that historians use to interpret the experience of the past, as well as objective empirical references. In fact it would be more correct to say that they are structures in which subjectivity and objectivity are inextricably fused. For example, it can be asked if the crisis of the Brazilian imperial regime, as addressed by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, consists of an objective fact, empirically based on the sources, or if it is only a theoretical and subjective form that conceptually mediates this finding. Obviously, there is no simple response to this question, nor is it my objective to satisfactorily answer it. Raising it, however, serves to highlight a further central aspect of Rüsén’s theory of history, which will now be put into contact with Holanda’s text. This aspect acquires a clear expression in this definition: “history is a bridge between the past and the present, simultaneously created by events and their interpretation”.²²

The assumption of the inseparability between event and interpretation, between objectivity and subjectivity is the basis of one of Rüsén’s principal theses, namely, that ‘doing’ history is ‘constituting meaning’ out of the experience of time (Rüsén, 2001, p.59). It is significant that he avoided here

the formulation ‘institution of meaning’ (*Sinnstiftung*) in favor of ‘constitution of meaning’ (*Sinnbildung*).²³ By making this terminological option, Rüsen intended to establish a distance in relation to the epistemological constructivism which is implicit in the competing term. For him it is not adequate to speak of an ‘institution of meaning’ through historical thought, because this is never done independently of the mediation exercised by the memory of the human experience of the past. Even if human memory is incapable of recovering the facts exactly as they really occurred, Rüsen insists that recollecting and narrating are not arbitrary acts or completely lacking objectivity. In each articulation of human memory, according to him, there are always objective elements, and the discourse of the institution of meaning fails exactly to the extent that it neglects this basilar circumstance (Rüsen, 2007b, pp.77-78).

Rüsen specifies four fundamental types of constitution of meaning through historical narratives: traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic.²⁴ Before locating concrete manifestations of these types in Holanda’s text, it is worth briefly defining each of them. The *traditional* narrative creates meaning through the eternalization of a given historical subject, emphasizing permanencies and subliming transformations. The *exemplary* narrative, in turn, expands the potential meaning of traditions by introducing the possibility of reference to stocks of non-autochthon experiences. It constitutes meaning through the elaboration of the past in abstract historical examples, capable of orientating decision-making and actions. The *critical* constitution of meaning acts on experiences, the highlighting of which can unsettle or contradict the directives of historical thought in vigor and thus the social relations sustained or legitimated by traditional narratives. Finally, the *genetic* narrative is distinguished by systematically and productively incorporating temporal change as an element of the constitution of meaning. In this last type, the experiences addressed by historical memory make the temporal differences between the past and the present evident, resulting in the temporalization – or the historicization – of experience (Rüsen, 2007b, pp.48-63).

A short look at the plot of *Do Império à República* reveals that the predominant narrative mode in the text is without a doubt genetic. The central theme of the book is precisely a historical transformation, the one that led the Empire into non-existence. Fundamentally the book retraces the genesis of the Republic in Brazil, constituting meaning through the emphasis on the qualitative temporal difference that exists between the starting and end points of the interpretation – in other words between 1868 and 1889 –, as well as through the interrelation of the interpreted past and present of the interpretation. The predominance of

the genetic narrative and the concomitant focus on temporal change does not imply though that the representation of the past produced by Holanda is exempt from the elements that point to durations in change. Above all, the Brazilian state and nation figure in the text as meta-subjects which are guarantors of the perception of the continuity between the Brazil of the Empire and that of the Republic. Of course what is involved here are not narrative elements with a purely atemporal nature, as manifested in traditional narratives, but rather mixed forms which are the result of the combination of genetic and traditional types. In *Do Império à República*, the persistence of the state form and of national values during temporal change is not presented as the result of the determination by an original tradition in which the original and definitive characters of Brazilian culture would be condensed now and forever. To the contrary, the duration that is perceived, interpreted and presented in the text is a dynamic duration. The perception of Brazilian political experience at the end of the nineteenth century and, above all, of the phenomena of the state and nation as dynamic durations is allowed by the theoretical performance of a genetic category, that of crisis. As has already been demonstrated, this category also structures the interpretation of the transformations that led to the end of the Empire and the restructuring of the Brazilian state brought about by the nascent Republic.

The second form of the historical constitution of meaning that is most obvious in *Do Império à República* is, without a doubt, the critical. The main criticism communicated by the text is related to certain directives of thought that are incompatible with the type of political mentality implicitly defended by the author. Particularly interesting for the approach of manifestations typologically adaptable under the critical narrative mode is Chapter 1 of Book IV. Here Holanda is especially concerned with the parliamentary debates that took place in the first half of 1879, after the submission to Congress of a government proposal for the reform of the electoral system. This ministerial proposal allowed for direct elections and greater restrictions on electoral participation. The first part of Holanda's chapter focuses on discourses of parliamentarians who positioned themselves specifically in relation to the intention of the government to approve the reform through constitutional revision. In long citations and paraphrases, Holanda recalls points of view that were present in the arguments sustained by defenders and opponents of the project. Evident in these passages is his negative evaluation of the arguments of those parliamentarians who intended to assure that the introduction of the direct vote would be accompanied by a drastic reduction in electoral participation.

Holanda identifies the arguments that characterize the contemporary criticism of this project with the political norms and values that he himself professed, in his present time. Accordingly, he mentions, with special sympathy, the discourses of the deputy José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1827-1886), the parliamentarian who asserted that the possible approval of electoral reform would represent an outrageous exclusion of the masses from Brazilian political life (DIR, pp.205-208). Holanda also notes that the most consistent defense of governmental proposal was presented by the deputy Rui Barbosa (1849-1923). The latter stated that for the necessary balance of the electoral system the introduction, in addition to pecuniary restrictions on political participation, of what he called a 'literary census' was necessary. The idea of the exclusion of illiterates, which this formula intended to legitimate, is criticized by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda in this passage:

To respond to these arguments, the opposition could have alleged, for example, that knowing how to read and write as the decisive condition of discerning to vote well is at most a dubious proposition as demonstrated by the fact that it is the subject of so much discussion. Nevertheless, what is certain is that the exclusions proposed in the project would eliminate an astoundingly large proportion of the electorate, and that many of the alleged incapacities came to be debated and contested. In the specific case of illiterates it was admitted that they could be excluded where, as in Connecticut, they were less than 1% of the population. However, would it be democratic to exclude them where, and this was the case of Brazil, they amounted to 80%? (DIR, p.221) ²⁵

These words verbalize Holanda's criticism of the directives of historical interpretation found at the base of the argumentation in favor of the 1879 electoral reform project, directives that Rui Barbosa mobilized and synthesized in his discourse. In his condemnation, Holanda identifies the political values that provided support to the criticisms aimed at the governmental project with his own present horizon of political expectations. In this way the criticism housed in *Do Império à República* gains the meaning of a tool capable of offering resistance to the current legacy of the criticized interpretative directives. This is what is evident in Holanda's remark that 'many of the criticism then made on the creation of elite suffrage are still relevant in our days' (DIR, p.227).

Furthermore, this remark points to the intimate connection between the critical and exemplary modes of the constitution of meaning, which is

perceivable in the text. In fact, almost all the manifestations of exemplary *topoi* in *Do Império à República* are subordinated to the performance of critical functions. This implies that the experience presented by the text as a historic example often has the significance of a counter-example, of a condemnable and avoidable pattern of acting. This quote illustrates the point:

The evils of any government based on the active and effective support of the governed tend not to put the stability of the regime in serious risk, since a defined target is not offered for those who contest the status quo in the large mass of those who participate through suffrage in the political process. Something similar does not occur when the cause of the bad governments and abuses of power is identifiable with a person of flesh and bone who commands everything and can do everything. (DIR, p.73)

In this passage the narrative genetically presents the development of the nineteenth century criticisms of the ‘personal power’ of the Emperor. For this it resorts to the abstract typification of the differences between democratic and non-democratic political regimes, culminating in a criticism of the directives of thought that sustain non-democratic regimes. Out of these narrative operations there, thus, emerges the exemplary message that the pulverization of political responsibility is something desirable when the goal the stabilization of a political regime. Messages such as this are resources of historical orientation which allow the extraction of general ‘teachings’ (examples) from the experience of the past, which can be taken into account by current agents. Such exemplary messages give expression to the conception of history associated with the theme *historia magistra vitae*, the mode of the constitution of meaning that predominated in western historical thought until its modernization between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁶

Exemplary *topoi* are easily identifiable in passages of the text in which the reference to the public or private figure of D. Pedro II leads to a conclusion on the improprieties of his personality and his inaptitude for the exercise of power. Rüsen shows that at times the exemplary narrative is associated with the demonstration of virtue or prudence (*Klugheit*) by historical characters, and that through this procedure exemplary narrative suggests to present actors consolidated models of action (Rüsen, 1982, p.549). In de Holanda’s narrative, the exemplary idea of virtue is several times used to illustrate characterizations of the personality of the second Brazilian Emperor. In effect, D. Pedro II figures throughout the text, and especially in Chapter 2 of Book I, as a type of anti-hero

whose physical and intellectual attributes were much below the requirements necessary for a good statesman. This (counter)exemplary image of the Emperor appears clearly in this passage:

While on the one hand [D. Pedro II] was tireless in work and in movement, on the other he was dominated by the somewhat fatalistic idea that everything would come naturally in its time, leading him to always run from dangerous precipitations. Counterpoised to his active efforts was the perplexity caused by the possible consequences of a leap in the dark. The result was that the uncontrollable eagerness of mobility was lost in itself in a St. Guido's dance. And since he himself ended up being, even while denying that he was, the uncontested judge of the proper opportunity to act, everything ended up paralyzed or waiting for the moment when a greater wait could be catastrophic. (DIR, p.19)²⁷

Returning to the general context of the narrative, both the above mentioned general rule that non-democratic regimes tend to be unstable, and the resort to the characterization of the Emperor as a counter-model of a good political leader sufficiently document the overlapping of exemplary and critical forms. What occurs in *Do Império à República* is, however, a subordination of the meaning constituted in an exemplary form by that one constituted in a critical way. The former fulfills a complementary role in relation to the latter, for it reinforces, through the reference to exemplary generalizations, the negation of the remembered past, as well as of its current effects. The criticism proposed by the text works both retrospectively and prospectively, and is based on the generality of the (trans-) historical examples of what is politically good, bad, right and wrong. This results in a consistent historical orientation that suggests to receptors of the need not only the overcoming, through present action, of persistent negative traits in the Brazilian historical experience, but also the opening of new opportunities for the future.

Finally, there can also be isolated and analyzed in Holanda's text, manifestations of the traditional mode of the historical constitution of meaning. Traditional narratives are related to the affirmation of (personal and collective) identity through reference to the origin of existing orders of meaning. These origins are presented by traditional histories as extraordinary 'places' of experience, situated either before or after in time and, in every case, outside the circumscription of ordinary temporality (Rüsen, 2007b, p.48). By setting in the 'origins' the source of the meaning of current life, the traditional *topoi* of

historiographical discourse invited or coerced the subjectivity of agents to renew or restore the original characters presented to them as worn out or lost in the middle of the present experience (Rüsen, 1982, p.545). A cautious look at *Do Império à República* reveals that one of its assumptions is a reference to a place of origin, which is established under the predominance of traditional forms. This place is defined by the historical proper noun 'Brazil'. References like this are a *sine qua non* condition of histories conceived and written from a national perspective, but they do not necessarily contradict another general idea that is implicitly found in all historical thinking, that of 'humankind'. For Rüsen humanity is the most general of the criteria of meaning used in the formation and consolidation of identities (Rüsen, 2001, p.126). This definition directly reflects the circumstances that, in the most abstract sphere possible, history, as Marc Bloch says, is "the science of human beings in time".²⁸

In *Do Império à República*, 'humankind' and the 'Brazilian nation' function as compatible and complementary regulative ideas. The text carries the meaning of a partial history of the formation of the Brazilian nation; a history focused on the transformations suffered by the principal agent that stimulated nationality, the state, during the epoch in question, the second half of the nineteenth century. The proper noun 'Brazil' and all the words derived from this are textual elements that stabilize the perception of the time lived, and to be lived, by a certain collective of human beings of whom are part the past individuals addressed by the text, the present individual that writes the text, as well as the future individuals to whom the text is primarily addressed. These textual elements have a traditional character, because they configure a duration that is placed somehow beyond time, and which can for this reason equally reach all three temporal dimensions. 'Brazil' indicates a unified duration of the perception of the passing of time as a process, since it appears in Holanda's discourse as referred simultaneously to the past, present and future. This characteristic is actually common to any historical representation that intends to represent the past as the *Brazilian past*. When this characteristic gains predominance over the narrative totality, it is common for the result to approximate more 'mythological history' than academic historiography.²⁹ However, this is not the case in *Do Império à República*, because in the text the atemporal durations established by the action of traditional *topoi* are absorbed back into the context of a genetic interpretation that temporalizes them. The work of the dynamization of traditional narrative elements is concretely realized through the articulation of these to the genetic category of 'crisis', installed in the nucleus of the narrative. The traditional idea of 'Brazil' therefore

converges into the representation of a temporal change: the crisis that culminated with the proclamation of the Republic. In this way preserving part of its content of traditional meaning, even if this content only came to serve as the source of historical orientation after the temporalization imposed by the hegemony of genetic *topoi*.

CONTEXT OF ORIENTATION

Another important question to be resolved by any theory of history is related to the determination of what motivates general interest in historical texts. The most famous answer to this question was given by the nineteenth century historian Leopold von Ranke, who stated that it was not the function of history to judge the past or instruct the present, but simply to ‘show how things really were’.³⁰ In general terms, Ranke postulates here that historical knowledge possesses an end in itself, in other words that the interest for history is guided by pure interest in knowing the past. In the second half of the twentieth century one of the most vehement defenders of the same argument was Paul Veyne, for whom the interest in history emerges not from existential or pragmatic demands, but from a “simple curiosity for the specific”.³¹ Both Jörn Rüsen and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda disagree with this position. For Rüsen the interest in historical knowledge comes from the relationship that is established between the experiences of the past, reconstructed by a historian, and the needs for orientation that characterize its present time. It is this relationship between the reconstructed past and the present of reconstruction – and not the simple subjective curiosity of a researcher – that provides the most important criteria regulating historical interest. According to Rüsen, the historical meaning of the experience remembered from the past depends on the context of the orientation of the present, in other words the set of needs for orientation that are characteristic of determined temporal-space circumstances. The mobilization of the past by historical remembrance allows the effects of the past which is present in current life to be perceived and interpreted. In this way the expansion of the subjective conscience of historicity is stimulated, and human suffering and action can be better oriented (Rüsen, 2001, pp.83-84).

Once again, starting from the position of Rüsen, it is plausible to say that narrative structures, such as those identified in the passages of Holanda’s text, only effectively constitute meaning when they intermingle with the needs for orientation, found diffused in a current context of experiences, meanings and

expectations. *Do Império à República* can be interpreted as a historiographic manifestation that was produced based on a context of specific orientations and as a response to the demand for meaning. The history narrated by Holanda does not involve, therefore, only a pure and simple description of the events that contributed to put an end to the Brazilian monarchical regime. If it makes sense to speak of historical explanation, this never merely concerns the enunciation of events. In fact, Holanda's explanation for what *was* the end of the Empire involves a genetic view into the development of a series of events that were constitutive of Brazilian historical experience in the monarchical period. This outlining, nevertheless, only gains meaning in light of the tacit assumption that the process in question (as well as the experiences enclosed in it) was important for the formation of the world in which the author and receptors of the text lived. In the final analysis, therefore, the author focuses his historical investigation on the final decades of the Second Empire, but his ultimate objective is to understand a question that extrapolates this temporal delimitation, namely: why is it that in Brazil until the end of the third quarter of the twentieth century democracy did not establish himself? Consolidated during the second half of the nineteenth century – and structured around the cultural supports inherited from Iberian colonization – the Brazilian political tradition was, in Holanda's view, strongly marked by personalism, by a tendency towards authoritarianism and by its incompatibility with modern democratic values. Furthermore, it is not difficult to perceive that for him this political tradition still was in force in the socio-political context that buoyed the preparation and reception of his book.

In effect, by criticizing the central traits of the imperial political experience, Holanda is also criticizing the entire Brazilian political tradition, and obviously its then contemporary developments too. Various passages in the narrative leave clear (although not completely explicitly) the temporarily comprehensive meaning of this repudiation of Brazilian authoritarianism. An example worthwhile exploring is found in Chapter 3 of Book V, which deals with the social and cultural transformation which the Brazilian army went through in the nineteenth century. In a part of this chapter Holanda highlights that the common practice of choosing civilians to occupy military ministerial positions was one of the factors that contributed to the increase in the animosity of the army in relation to the imperial government. Afterwards, it is noted that the situation in which the minister was not a 'specialist' in the areas of his jurisdiction had not been exclusive to the military sector of the government and this had occurred various times in other areas, especially finance and

agriculture (DIR, pp.334-335). According to him, this provided good reasons not to take the absence of a representative of the military corporation at the head of the ministry as a grave offense, but the fact is that these good reasons, especially in the 1880s, were not taken into account. By interpreting (and criticizing) the reasons for this lack of consideration, Holanda based himself on a rule of historical experience, whose ambit transcends the circumstances of the Brazilian past to which the author refers in a more explicit manner. The good reasons in question were overlooked by the military:

first, because the members of a class, which hold arms for the defense of institutions, are easily subject to the temptation to use them to subvert the same institutions, when these seem to be a nuisance or noxious to the nation or their profession, and the profession is often confused with the nation by those who exercise the former. Next, because in a fight between politicians and soldiers, the former have almost no chance of coming out well. Politicians may forget this, but soldiers know well how the will of a few can be worth much more than the authority of others, in accordance with the irrefutable principle than the armed man is always right. (DIR, p.335)

It is plausible to state that these words have a resonance of meaning that extrapolates the dimension of the experience of the imperial past recalled, invading the temporal circumscription of the present experienced by Holanda and his public at the time of the preparation and publication of the text. It is worth noting the date of its first edition – 1972. As is well known, at this time the Brazilian state was controlled by the armed forces, which in 1964 demolished the ‘democratic experience’ initiated in 1945,³² and which in 1968, with the publication of Institutional Act no. 5, reinforced the authoritarian character of the new regime. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s position in relation to the political order that came into force with the military regime was one of criticism and opposition. This can be confirmed in several of his interviews and declarations to the press, especially at the end of the 1970s. Moreover, it is also confirmed by his submission of his retirement from the Universidade de São Paulo in 1969, which, as is well known, occurred in protest at the severe political persecution suffered by many of his colleagues. In a statement given in 1977, for example, about the cancellation of the annual encounter of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (*Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência* - SBPC) by the government, he stated that anything could be expected, “after the restoration of absolutism in Brazil”.³³ The context of the

orientation within and for which *Do Império à República* was prepared is the same that inspired the opposition to the military regime registered in the statement above.. In the citations such as that one referring to the ‘temptation’ to take power that ravaged the military, the same attitude is equally perceptible, even if it is not manifest in such an explicit manner in the 1977 declaration. The difference is that *Do Império à República* disguises the criticism of the military regime in order to allow it penetrate a public space, in which since the coup, and especially since 1968, those in power had exercised power with an iron hand. Various passages from the text contain obvious criticisms of the political conditions of contemporary Brazil. However, these criticisms were not presented as such; they were joined with the general rules of historical experience to be thus coded in the form of abstract examples. Therefore, in *Do Império à República*, the already mentioned anchoring of the critical constitution of meaning in exemplary *topoi* consists not just of a discursive strategy with an aesthetic and rhetorical nature, but also a practical strategy of personal protection, which the author resorts to in a political environment hostile to the free circulation of ideas. By criticizing the regime in a ciphered manner, Holanda was able to, on the one hand, avoid dangerous exposure which could result in a direct intellectual confrontation with the military; on the other hand, he was also able to dribble state censorship, disseminating strongly critical argument in relation to all forms of authoritarianism and the blunting of democracy. All this reinforces, I believe, Maria Odila Dias’s statement that *Do Império à República* was “the form the author [Holanda] gave to this resistance against the military regime”.³⁴

Holanda’s opposition to the military regime, prepared in the form of a critical interpretation of the imperial political past, is a response to the context of orientation in which his narrative was composed. At the core of this is located a fundamental conviction: that democracy is the most desirable principle for the organization of political life. In effect, the utopia of the democratization of political relations in Brazil was shown to be a constant that characterized almost all of the author’s work, especially the texts in which he historically deals with political aspects of the Brazilian experience. A good indication of the participation of this aspiration in *Do Império à República* appears in a passages in which Holanda seeks to explain the fact that nepotism, so harshly criticized during the imperial epoch, had remained even stronger during the First Republic. In this context, he says that:

In the exercise of power, nothing suggests that [the military] are led to seek

new paths to expand popular participation. The accusation of favoritism or nepotism or, as was said, *filhotismo* (childism) which had hung so strongly around the necks of the civilian oligarchies, were even stronger against some military governments, such as Deodoro and, principally his nephew, Marshall Hermes da Fonseca ... Different things cannot be expected when conditions are not created for the participation of the mass of the people in political life. (DIR, p.348)

The criticism of the persistence of nepotism in the First Republic presented this phenomenon as the result of the absence of democratizing concerns among the political forces who worked in favor of the 1889 institutional rupture. For Holanda, only effective popular participation in politics would definitely annul the perverse effects of Brazilian traditional political values, which were a legacy of Portuguese colonization, established by the Empire and to a large extent preserved by the Republic – despite the profound social transformations which since the second half of the eighteenth century had caused a certain destabilization of the ‘colonial inheritance’.³⁵ The desire to construct democracy in Brazil and the expectation that it would be achieved are, thus, the foundation of the criticism of the predominantly non-democratic orientation of the Imperial political elite. In relation to this, his position in favor of democracy was evident in the final chapter of *Raízes do Brasil* (1936) entitled ‘Our Revolution’.³⁶ In this chapter Sérgio Buarque de Holanda clearly demarcates his political position, marking it as being different from traditional oligarchic liberalism – the preferential target of criticism in *Do Império à República* –, revolutionary communism, as well as the then ascendant fascisms. Despite the more than 30 years separating the publication dates of *Raízes do Brasil* and the text on the end of the Empire, there is a continuity from one to the other of this political assumption. The democratic conviction and the desire to construct Brazilian democracy led Holanda to condemn in the 1936 text the persistence of a political tradition consolidated by the Empire, even after it no longer existed (Holanda, 1997, pp.176-177). In the 1972 text a similar interpretation of the imperial experience is mounted under the influence of the same conviction. Thus, what differentiates the two texts is not the political convictions that inform the respective interpretations, but the level of their empirical basis. It is obvious that the second text refers systematically to a large amount of information obtained through the source research, something that *Raízes do Brasil* does not do – and this is the main reason why Sérgio Buarque de Holanda would later minimize the importance of the essay he had written in the 1930s.

As has been seen, *Do Império à República* is a historical narrative that, in addition to its vast empirical content, includes three distinct political criticisms: the criticism of a non-democratic past order (that of the Second Empire); the criticism of its replacement (by the military on 15 November 1889) by a regime that also did little for democracy; and finally the criticism of the continuity between the past and the present of Brazilian political life, (a continuity of which at that time the military regime established in 1964 was the great emblem). By converging into a genetic narrative of the crisis of the Brazilian Empire, these three political criticisms weave a temporally complex and wide-ranging unity of meaning, which Holanda presents as a reference for the orientation of the thought and action of the receptors of the text.

The manifestation in *Do Império à República* of an interpretative perspective similar to what is found in *Raízes do Brasil* is an interesting piece of data that can also be adapted into the context of Holanda's intellectual trajectory. It is known that after *Raízes do Brasil* the author came to focus his historical investigations on themes such as the *bandeiras* and *monções* (land and river expeditions) that propelled the expansion of Brazil towards the West (*Monções*, 1945; *Caminhos e fronteiras*, 1957), as well as the edenic motives that were present in the European imaginary at the time of the conquest of America (*Visão do Paraíso*, 1959). It is also known that the critical posture of the author of *Raízes do Brasil* of the tradition inherited from the colonial period was mitigated by the (genetically fixed) valorization of some positive and productive aspects of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil (Wegner, 2000). The later return of the author to a strictly political theme and a critical perspective of the Iberian tradition in *Do Império à República* thus introduced a certain interpretative continuity in relation to the first and most famous of his texts and, at the same time, a discontinuity in relation to the texts he published between the 1940s and 1960s. This can perhaps be understood as the result of the adaptation of his historical thought to the demands arising out of the so-called 'years of lead' of the military regime in twentieth century Brazil. In this adaptation, Holanda was not betraying methodical ideals the he himself regarded as crucial to the practice of historiography. To the contrary, those ideals are only being dignified, by being put into direct relation with the exercise of the orientation functions from which historiography cannot escape. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda was well aware of the existence and significance of these functions, which according to Jörn Rüsen are so important for the realization of historical thinking in its scientific version. Holanda showed this in an interview given in the 1970s,:

I would say, together with Benedetto Croce, that all history is contemporary history. In other words, we always privilege an aspect in function of our reality ... We tell history through the daily experience of our problems, of our reality. Historians always have been and always will be the easy prey of their time.³⁷

NOTES

¹ The research that served as the basis for this text was financed by the Capes Foundation.

² Blanke, Horst Walter; Fleischer, Dirk; Rösen, Jörn. Theory of History in historical lectures: the German tradition of Historik, 1750-1900. *History and Theory*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp.331-356, 1984.

³ Certeau, Michel de. A operação historiográfica. In: _____. *A escrita da história* (trad. Maria de Lourdes Menezes; tec. rev. Arno Vogel). Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1982, pp.56-108.

⁴ Momigliano, Arnaldo. Historicism revisited. In: _____. *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico, tomo primo*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1980, pp.23-32.

⁵ Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Do Império à República* [1972]. 4.ed. São Paulo: Difel, 1985. (História Geral da Civilização Brasileira, tomo II, vol. 2). To economize notes the reference to *Do Império à República* is made in the body of the text accompanied by the abbreviation DIR.

⁶ Dias, Maria Odila L. da Silva. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, historiador. In: _____. (Org.). *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda*. São Paulo: Ática, 1985; Figueirôa, Silvia. S. B. de Holanda. In: Boyd, Kelly (Org.). *Encyclopedia of historians and historical writing*, vol. 1. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999, pp.550-551; Iglésias, Francisco. Evocação de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. *Revista do Brasil*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp.122-128, 1987.

⁷ Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Raízes do Brasil* [1936]. 26.ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997.

⁸ Coelho, João Marcos. A democracia é difícil: entrevista com Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. *Veja*, 28 Jan. 1976.

⁹ Françoze, Mariana. Os outros alemães de Sérgio: etnografia e povos indígenas em “Caminhos e fronteiras”. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, vol. 22, no. 63, pp.137-152, 2007; Wegner, Robert. *A conquista do Oeste: a fronteira na obra de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2000. Also worthy of mention in this context is: Nicodemo, Thiago. *Urdidura do vivido: “Visão do paraíso” e a obra de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda nos anos 1950*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2008.

¹⁰ Coelho, 1976. For more details about the intended new edition of *Do Império à República*, see Graham, Richard. An interview with Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp.3-17, 1982 (cit. pp.8-10). In the interview Sérgio Buarque said that he had rewritten around 450 typed pages of the new text. Recently, around 150 of these pages were published in book form. See: Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Capítulos de história do Império* (Org. Fernando A. Novais. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010).

¹¹ Dias, 1985, pp.44-53; Faoro, Raymundo. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: analista das instituições brasileiras. In: Candido, Antonio (Org.). *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda e o Brasil*. São Paulo: Ed. Fund. Perseu Abramo, 1998, pp.59-70; Iglésias, Francisco. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, historiador. In: VV.AA. *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: 3º Colóquio UERJ*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1992, pp.9-53 (cit. p.37); Queiroz, Sueli Robles de. Professor e historiador. *O Estado de São Paulo*, 11 July 1982.

¹² Wiklund, Martin. Além da racionalidade instrumental: sentido histórico e racionalidade na teoria da história de Jörn Rüsen. *História da Historiografia*, no. 1, pp.19-44, 2008 (cit. p.22).

¹³ The trilogy consists of these volumes: Rüsen, Jörn. *Razão histórica: os fundamentos da ciência histórica* (trans. Estevão de Rezende Martins). Brasília: Ed. UnB, 2001 (ed. orig.: *Historische Vernunft*. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Rüsen, Jörn. *Reconstrução do passado: os princípios da pesquisa histórica* (trans. Asta-Rose Alcaide; rev. Estevão de Rezende Martins). Brasília: Ed. UnB, 2007a (ed. orig.: *Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit*. Grundzüge einer Historik II: Die Prinzipien der historischen Forschung, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); and Rüsen, Jörn. *História viva: formas e funções do conhecimento histórico* (trans. Estevão de Rezende Martins). Brasília: Ed. UnB, 2007b (orig. ed.: *Lebendige Geschichte*. Grundzüge einer Historik III: Formen und Funktionen des historischen Wissens, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

¹⁴ For more detailed discussion of the Rüsen's theory of history, cf. Assis, Arthur. *A teoria da história de Jörn Rüsen: uma introdução*. Goiânia: Ed. UFG, in print; Caldas, Pedro S. P. A arquitetura da teoria: o complemento da trilogia de Jörn Rüsen. *Fênix – Revista de História e Estudos Culturais*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2008 (Review of “Reconstrução do passado”; “História viva”); Carr, David. History as orientation: Rüsen on historical culture and narration (Review of: “Geschichte im Kulturprozeß”; “History. Narration, Interpretation, Orientation”). *History and Theory*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp.229-243, 2006; De Jong, Henk. Historical orientation: Jörn Rüsen's Answer to Nietzsche and his Followers (Review of “Historische Orientierung”). *History and Theory*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp.270-288, 1997; Martins, Estevão de Rezende. Consciência histórica, práxis e cultura. A propósito da teoria da história de Jörn Rüsen. *Síntese Nova Fase*, vol. 19, no. 56, pp.59-73, 1992; Megill, Allan. Jörn Rüsen's theory of historiography between modernism and rhetoric of inquiry. *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no.1, pp.39-60, 1994; Wiklund, 2008.

¹⁵ Martins, Estevão de Rezende. O uso de categorias na ciência histórica. *Leopoldianum*, vol. 10, no.29, pp.5-24, 1983.

¹⁶ *Do Império à República* is divided into five parts, called 'books'.

¹⁷ *Constituição Política do Império do Brasil* [1824] (commented by José Carlos Rodrigues). Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, p.67 (Title 5, chap. 1), 1863.

¹⁸ Ottoni, Theophilo Benedicto. *Circular dedicada aos Srs. Eleitores pela Provincia de Minas Geraes* [1860]. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Typ. do Correio Mercantil, 1860, p.132.

¹⁹ Torres Homem, Francisco de Sales. O Libelo do Povo [1849]. In: Magalhães Júnior, R. (Ed.). *Três panfletários do Segundo Reinado*. São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, pp.3-126, 1956 (cit. p.108).

²⁰ Stein, Stanley. A historiography do Brasil, 1808-1889. *Revista de História*, São Paulo, vol. 29, pp.81-131, 1964 (cit. pp.103-109).

²¹ For an interpretation than is not really marked by the concept of the 'personal power of the Emperor' but at the same time which is dissociated from the old apologies for the Second Empire, see Carvalho, José Murilo de. *A construção da ordem: a elite política imperial; Teatro de sombras: a política imperial*. 4.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003.

²² Rösen, Jörn. *Kann gestern besser werden? Zum Bedenken der Geschichte*. Berlin: Kadmos, 2003, p.13.

²³ Rösen's most complete explanation of his theory of the 'historic creation of meaning' was presented in Rösen, Jörn. Was heißt Sinn der Geschichte? (Mit einem Ausblick auf Vernunft und Widersinn). In: Müller, K.; Rösen, J. (Org.). *Historische Sinnbildung*. Problemstellungen, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien. Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1997, pp.17-47.

²⁴ Rösen, Jörn. Die vier Typen des historischen Erzählens. In: Koselleck, R.; Lutz, H.; Rösen, J. (Org.). *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung*. München: DTV, 1982, pp.514-605 (cit. p.520) (Theorie der Geschichte: Beiträge zur Historik, Band 4); Rösen, 2007b, pp.43-68.

²⁵ Following this quote another passage reaffirms the same criticism: "The great importance assumed by the 1879 debates on electoral reform is not found in the fact the government project aimed to form a social elite that could be superimposed on the mass of the people and represent it, without any mandate, in the political decision that affect everyone... What was combated in the official proposal was the intention, not at all hidden, of its authors to consecrate the existence of this layer of privilege, legalizing in this way the situation that it was necessary to correct" (DIR, p.222).

²⁶ Grafton, Anthony. *What was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Kessler, Eckhard. Geschichte: Menschliche Praxis oder kritische Wissenschaft? Zur Theorie der humanistischen Geschichtsschreibung. In: *Theoretiker humanistischer Geschichtsschreibung*. Nachdruck exemplarischer Texte aus dem 16. Jahrhundert. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1971, pp.7-47;

Koselleck, Reinhart: *Historia Magistra Vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte.* In: *Vergangene Zukunft.* Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003, pp.38-66; Landfester, Rüdiger: *Historia Magistra Vitae.* Untersuchungen zur humanistischen Geschichtstheorie des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts, Genf: Librairie Droz, 1972; Muhlack, Ulrich. *Geschichtswissenschaft im Humanismus und in der Aufklärung.* Die Vorgeschichte des Historismus. München: C.H. Beck, 1991.

²⁷ We will see below other interesting examples of the same case: “And how not to feel that that flutelike voice, almost falsetto, seemed to badly suit a king, a son of kings, born to rule? And those far too thin legs clashed with his well-endowed physique? It was on the more solemn occasions when these contrasts became particularly visible, when His Majesty, holding the scepter, presenting himself in state dress: very tight trousers, white silk shoes, a mantle made from toucan throat feathers, a tall and heavy crown, which circled his entire head, the infallible ‘cashew head’ of the caricaturists, and covered the pronounced salience at the front” (DIR, p.17); “And always wanting to show himself knowledgeable about everything, wanting to prevent everything, to know everything, (‘I know, I know’), this absorbing vigilance was often not met by measures taken in advance or already put into practice and ended up poisoning them” (DIR, p.19); “He wanted to see the abuses in the electoral system suppressed, but he retreated before the need for a drastic decision. He strove for the extinction of slave labor, but thought that there could not be enough prudence in this question. He wanted Brazil to have its finances in good order with a very solid currency, even when this desire could disturb the promotion of material progress, popular education and immigration that he so desired. His meticulous prudence stopped being a virtue when it became a nuisance: too much ballast and too little sail” (DIR, p.20).

²⁸ Bloch, Marc. *Apologie pour l’Histoire ou Métier d’Historien.* 2.ed. Paris: Armand Colin, 1952, pp.4-5.

²⁹ Hübinger, Gangolf. Geschichtsmysen in ‘völkischer Bewegung’ und ‘konservativer Revolution’: nationalistische Wirkungen historischer Sinnbildung. In: Blanke, H. et al. (Org.). *Dimensionen der Historik: Geschichtstheorie, Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Geschichtskultur heute: Jörn Rüsen zum 60. Geburtstag.* Köln: Böhlau, 1998, pp.93-104 (cit. p.95). Hübinger presents a good definition for the term ‘historic myths’. According to him this involved discursive constructions that served for the sacralization or demonization of places of memory; which invent traditions as interpretations of the origin or end; and which evaluate epochs as paths to salvation or perdition (as right or wrong paths). For this reason historical myths offer identifications of accentuated religious content, which are in contradiction with the hypothetical character of modern (historical) science.

³⁰ Ranke, Leopold von. Vorwort zu den ‘Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535’ [1824]. In: Hardtwig, Wolfgang (Org.). *Über das Studium der Geschichte.* München: DTV, 1990, pp.44-46 (cit. p.45). See the interpretation of Ranke’s famous saying by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda himself: Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. O atu-

al e o inatural na obra de L. v. Ranke. *Revista de História*, no. 100, pp.431-482, 1974 (cit. pp.437-442).

³¹ Veyne, Paul. *Como se escreve a história/Foucault revoluciona a história* (trans. Alda Baltar and Maria Auxiliadora Kneipp; tech. rev. Gerusa Jenner Rosas). Brasília: Ed. UnB, 1998 (esp. pp.51-78).

³² Skidmore, Thomas. *Brasil: de Getúlio a Castelo* (trans. Ismênia Dantas). Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976, p.17. It is worth noting that the original title of Skidmore's book, published in 1967, is *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: an experiment in democracy*.

³³ Statement given to *Folha de S. Paulo* (19 June 1977). Other passages of public declarations given by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda at the end of the 1970s are also interesting for the understanding of the critical meaning present in *Do Império à República*. In an interview with Jary Cardoso, published in *Folha de S. Paulo* (30 May 1978), he started to answer a question about what type of country was Brazil as follows: "It is a country which gave itself the luxury in the middle of the twentieth century of restoring absolutism, captaincies, the inquisition and the political banishment of citizens. Before this revolution, which calls itself the Redeemer, there was another Redeemer, who banished no one. She herself was banished, she was called Princess Isabel"; In another interview, this given to Bernardo Bera, published in the newspaper *Última Hora* (20 May 1978), he characterized the political and electoral systems created by the military as follows: "the electorate nowadays forms a minority, it is a group formed by the president. Until when, I do not know ... It seems a joke invented by the government: these will be the opposition and those will support the government! The opposition exists, but it will never take power, it will have to accept to be the opposition. This is something unique in the world! President Geisel said that even in the Empire there were two parties. No! Even at that time, the Liberal Party was born out of a previous one, it was not imposed! ... When the people do not vote, there is no democracy".

³⁴ Dias, Maria Odila. Sérgio Buarque na USP. *Revista de Estudos Avançados*, São Paulo, vol. 8, no. 22, pp.269-274, 1994.

³⁵ In relation to the latter point, see Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. A herança colonial: sua desagregação. In: _____. (Org.). *O process de emancipação*. São Paulo: Difel, 1982, pp.9-39 (História Geral da Civilização Brasileira, Tomo II, vol. 2).

³⁶ Candido, Antonio. A visão política de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. In: _____., 1998, pp.81-88. Some texts in which Sérgio Buarque himself explicitly presents his concerns with the effectiveness of democratic values were recently republished in: Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Por uma nova história* (org. Marcos Costa). São Paulo: Ed. Fund. Perseu Abramo, 2004.

³⁷ Coelho, 1976. Another recognition of the importance of the orientation function of historical knowledge by Sérgio Buarque appears in a conference paper apparently not published by the author, and given in the 1960s at the invitation of students from the Afonso

de Taunay Center of Historical Studies. The manuscript containing 17 typed pages is located in the Central Archive of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp) and ends as follows: “What we, scholars and students of history, have to do is above all to seek to live above our time, to feel our pulses, sense, if possible, their directions and if necessary to assist in their aspiration, even though we may put ourselves at risk of being seen as non-conformists, demolishers, and even seditionists”.