NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Shaping the Body of the Nation: “Organicist Agrarianism” in 1930s Brazil

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Field of History

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores an intellectual and political tradition that questioned the use of natural resources and the socioeconomic structures of rural Brazil in the early 20th century. “Organicist agrarianism” postulated an orderly transformation of the Brazil under the guidance of the state in the name of a natural and eternal “agricultural vocation.” This vision entailed the creation of a large class of small landholders that, thanks to the educational and technical improvements offered by the state, had the responsibility to enhance agriculture production and to hinder environmental degradation. Alberto Torres, a political writer active in the 1910s, was the major inspirator for the project, but also of the reactionary reading of Brazil’s rural identity that his follower Oliveira Viana produced in the 1920s. With the end of the First Republic and the rise to power of Getúlio Vargas in 1930, “organicist agrarianism” informed the agenda of a varied group of elite members who, in 1932, founded the Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres. Among its affiliates, activists who operated in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro and in the Ministry of Agriculture emerged for their commitment to implement the principles of “organicist agrarianism,” especially between 1932 and 1934, in the realms of scientific research, education, conservation, and agrarian policies. This study uses the methods of intellectual and political history to delineate the origins and the characteristic of “organicist agrarianism” as a set of values and ideas, to reconstruct the specific conditions in which it became a viable political alternative, and to explain its defeat and eclipse from the Brazilian scene, in spite of the central role that rural and environmental issues have played in contemporary Brazil.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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During my frequent trips south of the Equator, scholars and staff offered help and advice at several Brazilian institutions. I treasure the time spent at Arquivo Nacional, Biblioteca Nacional, Casa de Cultura Heloísa Alberto Torres, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (Fundação Getúlio Vargas), Museu da República, and – as I am still dismayed at the recent loss of one of the most enchanting places in Rio de Janeiro – the Museu Nacional. Obrigado.

Conversations with Afrânio Garcia provided many stimulating insights that influenced the design of this research. Although the intricacies of institutional relations crushed the dual degree arrangement that I tried to pursue with the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, I am glad that I had the opportunity to meet such an indefatigable scholar. Merci.

My debt of gratitude towards the members of my dissertation committee – Brodwyn Fischer, César Braga-Pinto, Dain Borges, and Paul Gillingham – is not restricted to the realms of academic advising and intellectual exchange: their responsiveness, patience and encouragement were simply indispensable for completing this project. Thank you.

Finally, my travel companion and wife Manola has been part of this adventure since day one, and I can only be thankful to her for bearing with me. The fact that I am writing these words on the very day of Jole’s first birthday makes our accomplishments, I think, less modest. Grazie.
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABE</td>
<td>Associação Brasileira de Educação</td>
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<td>ABI</td>
<td>Associação Brasileira de Imprensa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>Academia Brasileira de Letras</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIB</td>
<td>Ação Integralista Brasileira</td>
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<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Aliança Liberal</td>
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<td>ANL</td>
<td>Aliança Nacional Libertadora</td>
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<td>ARENA</td>
<td>Aliança Renovadora Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>State of Bahia</td>
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<td>C3O</td>
<td>Clube 3 de Outubro</td>
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<td>CCHAT</td>
<td>Casa de Cultura Heloísa Alberto Torres</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>State of Ceará</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNPq</td>
<td>Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESG</td>
<td>Escola Superior de Guerra</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEBRAE</td>
<td>Federação Brasileira de Associações de Engenheiros</td>
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<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>State of Goias</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAB</td>
<td>Instituto dos Advogados Brasileiros</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBC</td>
<td>Instituto Brasileiro de Cultura</td>
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<td>IHGB</td>
<td>Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>State of Maranhão</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDB</td>
<td>Movimento Democrático Brasileiro</td>
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<tr>
<td>MG</td>
<td>State of Minas Gerais</td>
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<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Northeastern region</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAB</td>
<td>Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil</td>
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<td>PB</td>
<td>State of Paraíba</td>
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<td>PE</td>
<td>State of Pernambuco</td>
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<td>PI</td>
<td>State of Piauí</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPR</td>
<td>Partido Popular Radical</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Partido Republicano</td>
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<td>PRP</td>
<td>Partido de Representação Popular</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>Partido Socialista Brasileiro</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSD</td>
<td>Partido Social Democrático</td>
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<tr>
<td>RJ</td>
<td>State of Rio de Janeiro</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>State of Rio Grande do Sul</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAAT</td>
<td>Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>State of Santa Catarina</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNA</td>
<td>Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>State of São Paulo</td>
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<tr>
<td>STF</td>
<td>Supremo Tribunal Federal</td>
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<td>TCU</td>
<td>Tribunal de Contas da União</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSE</td>
<td>Tribunal Superior Eleitoral</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<tr>
<td>TST</td>
<td>Tribunal Superior do Trabalho</td>
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<td>UDN</td>
<td>União Democrática Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>UERJ</td>
<td>Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFB</td>
<td>União Feminina do Brasil</td>
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<tr>
<td>UFRJ</td>
<td>Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro</td>
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1. Introduction

In early 1930s Brazil, two major issues that had been plaguing the country since colonial times and that national authorities had traditionally overlooked became central in intellectual and political debates: natural resources depletion and agrarian inequalities. Within the space of a few months, between 1932 and 1934, an unprecedented ensemble of actions and reforms challenged the status quo in the boundless rural and forested areas of the South American giant. They included: educational initiatives directed to rural communities; legislation for the management of natural resources; infrastructure plans in the most depressed regions of the nation; a national strategy for the creation of professional syndicates and cooperatives in the countryside; public banking institutions to facilitate agriculture credit; and promotion of small landholding against latifundia. The protagonists of these endeavors were civil servants, politicians and scientists who operated in the two most important public institutions that were in charge of studying and taking action on Brazil’s nature and rural world: the National Museum and the Ministry of Agriculture. A civil society organization named after a 1910s intellectual – the Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres – functioned as a networking hub and a think tank for members of the Brazilian elite who, in the name of national integration and prosperity, advocated for the transformation of agrarian structures, living conditions in the countryside and use of natural heritage. For heuristic purposes, I term this set of worldviews, beliefs, criticisms and proposals “organicist
agrarianism,” and this dissertation explores the genesis of this tradition and the role that it played in 1930s Brazil.

1.1. The Concept “Organicist Agrarianism” and Some Methodological Considerations

Throughout this study, I employ the term “organicist agrarianism” as an analytic tool to summarize the key values and principles that the protagonists of the story defended and promoted. Although the concept is not found in sources, it helps to capture the combination of two broad readings of society that functioned as the pillars of the reformist programs for the countryside under examination. In the first place, “agrarianism” entails a massive symbolic and practical investment on the countryside, intended as the repository of genuine collective identity and of the most valuable resources for national prosperity. In Brazil, such a reading of the nation’s soul is usually conveyed by the notion of “agricultural vocation.” According to this view, in its less conservative formulation, rural Brazil should be the focus of an extensive campaign of protection and reform, in order to guarantee a balanced and ordered modernization for the whole country. The second term of the definition – “organicist” – refers to a specific conception of society, centered on the biological metaphor of the human body. Organicism views human communities as hierarchical but harmonious systems, in which each component contributes to the wellbeing of the whole in accordance to its natural qualities and functions, as

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occurs with the limbs of a human being. This vision operates, at the same time, as an interpretive tool for the understanding of social relations and as a normative political goal, i.e. as an ideal to which a virtuous nation should adhere in the name of the common good.²

The values and goals of “organicist agrarianism” elude an easy ideological categorization on the classic left-right political spectrum. The broad definitions on which political scientists and philosophers achieved a relative consensus – the “left” upholds social change and fights inequality, while the “right” resist the former and accepts the latter – are ineffective to capture the complexity of my subject of study.³ Scholarship on many of the protagonists of “organicist agrarianism” – specifically, Alberto Torres (chapter 3), Oliveira Viana (chapter 4), and Juarez Távora (chapter 7) – consistently regards them as conservative thinkers and politicians, and it is thus useful to briefly address the nuances of the term “conservatism.” Maintenance of the status quo, opposition to progressive politics and lack of a constructive political proposal are the features that prevail in common-sense uses of this label.⁴ However, a closer examination at the wide range of specific formulations of conservative ideas permits to identify different, often diverging, currents within this large political family. In particular, for my purposes, it is useful to consider the concept of “radical conservatism” as a stimulus for a better understanding of the subtleties of “organicist agrarianism”.

At the opposite extreme to reactionary conservatism is the radical conservative school, whose members insist that a relevant conservatism must embrace

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democratic modernity positively instead of viewing mass society with the hostility characteristic of reactionary ideology. This can most effectively be done, radical conservatives maintain, by rallying the masses behind leaders who reject both the liberal commitment to parliamentary institutions and the socialist emphasis on class conflict in favour of an ideology which fuses nationalism and socialism in a synthesis intended to integrate the whole population. If reactionary conservative ideology is constructed “from above,” so to say, radical conservative ideology is constructed “from below.”

As I will show in the following chapters, the proposers of “organicist agrarianism” shared the awareness that Brazil had to be firmly guided on its path towards modernity, as well as the conviction that social conflict could only be defused if all Brazilians participated in a collective effort of national integration. The specific historical conditions in which this ambitious operation should occur were of capital importance in the eyes of its advocates, and they must be equally central in my investigation.

The key for a balanced appreciation of the interplay between ideas, socio-economic processes, and the sphere of power resides in a balanced conceptualization of the problematic relation between “text” and “context.” My intention is to overcome the contraposition between the two terms that occurs when one of them overtakes the other in the perspective of the interpreter.

One technique that comes at hand in order to avoid oversimplification and mechanism in the analysis of historically situated ideas is the recourse to the individual and collective biographies of the main actors involved. The work that Sergio Miceli accomplished on the early 20th-century Brazilian pre-modernists and modernists, in the vein of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of the intellectuals, constitutes my reference point. Structures of class, generational and regional

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5 Ibid., 297. Emphasis added.
bonds, family and patronage relationships, professional careers and interactions with the state, are all factors that play a decisive role not only in the formation and diffusion, but also in the appropriation and attempted application of the ideas under study. In particular, the biography of Alberto Torres emerges as a crucial element for his twofold role. When he was alive, he was the protagonist of an advanced, if unsystematic, attempt to forge an intellectual program that could also be a plan for political action, which was grounded in his youth formation, his experience as a reformist governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and his later years as a thinker, a polemicist and the inspirator of an intellectual circle. After his death, he became the idealized heroic figure to which a significant number of the protagonists of post-1930 Brazilian cultural and political life appealed. This latter moment intersects with the equally important configuration of the heterogeneous and branched group of personalities that founded the SAAT in 1932 and that also requires an analytic prosopography.

A second important contribution for a more sophisticated approach to the text-context question comes from the debate on “misplaced ideas” that Roberto Schwarz started in the Brazil of the 1970s. It touched on two fundamental questions. On the one hand, the very notion of idéias fora do lugar interrogates the dynamic relations between the realm of cultural and intellectual life and the sphere of socio-economic structures and processes. On the other hand, at a narrower level, the assessment of the place that ideas occupy in a country like Brazil also calls into question the very possibility of an original Brazilian political thought – and of course also of several others branches of creative production that are less relevant here. Both contemporaneous

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8 Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, “As idéias estão no lugar,” *Cadernos de Debate* 1 (1976), 61-64.
and more recent\textsuperscript{9} critiques of Schwarz’s initial judgment on 19\textsuperscript{th}-century liberalism in the Brazil of slavery and clientelism – a “second-degree” and “ornamental” ideology that nonetheless had the universal function of revealing the contradictions of the capitalist system – pointed in a specific direction: the need to overcome Brazilian “exceptionalism.” The peculiarities of Brazil’s social, economic and political trajectory became an inner part of the analysis of ideas and not the background against which their genuineness and appropriateness should be determined.

Notions such as “importation” and “authenticity” played an important role in the very shaping of Brazilian intellectual life and are a constituent part of the nationalist discourse that Schwarz submits to critique. Nonetheless, the fact that these concepts recur in most texts of early Brazilian social thought – and, as we will see in the following chapters, are central in “organicist agrarianism” as well – does not imply that the interpreter should take them at face value and employ them as analytic tools. Apparent contradictions, such as the coexistence of formal equality before the law and slave labor in Imperial Brazil, or, for our concerns, the (relative) oblivion of a broadly conceived rural question until recent times and the concurrent oversight of its pioneering assessments, should not be considered as the sign of an asynchronous Brazil, or of a Brasil errado.\textsuperscript{10} On the contrary, the “pragmatic dimension” of ideas\textsuperscript{11} should become the primary object of our inquiry, and the text-context relation should be newly conceived as a fluid process of mutual interaction, in which ideas are not simply compared to, and judged against,


\textsuperscript{10} The reference is to a classic critical essay on the mixed results of the 1930 Revolution, Martins de Almeida, \textit{Brasil errado: ensaio político sobre os erros do Brasil como país} (Rio de Janeiro: Schmidt; Civilização Brasileira, 1932).

\textsuperscript{11} Palti. This approach is in line with one of the most innovative developments in late 20\textsuperscript{th}-century intellectual history, i.e. the emphasis on the “work-like” proposed by Dominick LaCapra. A good synthesis of his approach is “Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts,” \textit{History and Theory} 19, no. 3 (1980), 245-276.
This move entails a healthy shift from a one-dimensional history of ideas in (and against) context to a more balanced history of ideas making (and made by) contexts. In this way, my object of study – “organicist agrarianism” – will emerge as an opportunity to interpret the Brazilian rural question beyond dualisms (ideas vs. reality, conservation vs. change), and as a multi-dimensional problem that marked Brazil throughout its history.

1.2. Research Goals

This study has the purpose of:

- Identifying the socioeconomic context and the intellectual sources from which “organicist agrarianism” originated as a distinctive tool for the interpretation of Brazilian agricultural and environmental problems, and for the elaboration of policies to solve them.

- Exploring the trajectories of personalities and institutions that, in the specific context of the first half of the 1930s, made “organicist agrarianism” a compelling force on the Brazilian political scene and within the state apparatus, and analyzing the actions and measures that it inspired.

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• Determining the reasons behind the sudden retreat of “organicist agrarianism” and the failure of the initiatives that it stimulated from the mid-1930s on.

Because this research combines intellectual and political history, it allows us to better understand the role that land, as a complex notion that involves all the spheres of human life and the natural world, played in the formation of Brazilian identity and social thought. In addition, it contributes to revise consolidated narratives on the Brazilian rural question, showing that sectors of the intellectual and political elite developed an early, albeit partial, understanding of its intricacies and committed themselves to an alternative path for a wide-ranging transformation that intended, at the same time, to preserve social order, improve living conditions and make the country progress.

1.3. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 discusses the central role that the problems related to the countryside and the natural environment have played in the history of Brazil since colonial times. My purpose is to outline the long-lasting social and economic structures and century-old debates that, by the beginning of the 20th century, had set the stage for rise of “organicist agrarianism” as both an interpretation and a response to the national rural question, especially after the 1930 Revolution and the resulting opening up of new political opportunities.
Chapter 3 presents Alberto de Seixas Martins Torres (1865-1917) as the key intellectual figure who, in the 1910s, systematized the set of views and ideas on which “organicist agrarianism” later developed. In particular, I use his major writings to illustrate the arguments behind his critique of the status quo perpetuated by Brazil’s First Republic (1889-1930) and his proposal for structural changes in the Brazilian rural world, in the context of a radical reform of the nation’s institutions.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the specific version of ruralismo that one of the most important students of Alberto Torres, the essayist and university professor Francisco José de Oliveira Viana (1883-1951), elaborated in the 1920s. It shows how similar premises about the “agricultural vocation” of Brazil could lead to very different interpretations and recommendations, as Oliveira Viana defined an intellectual platform for the defense of traditional land tenure patterns and power relations.

Chapter 5 introduces the Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres, an elite circle that was founded in 1932 to perpetuate the legacy of Alberto Torres. An overview of its major activities and a prosopographical analysis of its founding members highlight the attractiveness that “organicist agrarianism” exerted on important sectors of the Brazilian ruling class in the wake of the 1930 Revolution.

Chapter 6 delves into the public institution that hosted the most important advocates of “organicist agrarianism:” the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro. This historic scientific and educational establishment became, in the mid-1930s, the venue in which activist scientists put forward ambitious initiatives for the integration of rural populations into the body of the nation.
and for the protection of its natural resources, which culminated in the issuing of the 1934 Forest Code.

Chapter 7 explores the trajectory of Juarez do Nascimento Fernandes Távora (1898-1975), a reformist military officer who helped define a peculiar nationalist and inter-class political platform, as the result of the disputes that agitated the forces that supported the 1930 Revolution, and to implement a corporatist project for the countryside, when Vargas appointed him as Minister of Agriculture in the years 1932-1934.

Chapter 8, finally, explains how “organicist agrarianism” rapidly succumbed in the new political context of post-1934 Brazil, points towards possible later moments of resurgence of this set of ideas, and comments on the relevance of this underscored political tradition for the study of Brazilian history.
2. Brazil and the Rural Question: The Build-up of a Socioeconomic, Environmental, Intellectual and Political Problem

“The history of Latin America has been written on and by the land. This is not an invocation of Physiocratic dogma, and still less a piece of folkloric nostalgia. It is simply a fact.” What can rightly be claimed for the entire region is, if possible, even more true for its largest country, Brazil. A few annotations suffice in order to clarify to what extent the rural world dominated the socioeconomic structure of the country well into the 20th century.

Some statistical indicators help us to set the frame of the picture. If the Portuguese colony was grounded for centuries on export crops and minerals, the Brazil that celebrated a century on independence obtained, in the mid-1920s, 75% of its revenues from the export of a single agricultural product, coffee. Moreover, in 1920 almost 70% of the Brazilian labor force was employed in the primary sector. In the following half century, the proportion of rural workers gradually declined, but it made up more than 60% of the total in 1950, and still 44% as late as in 1975. The extremely unequal distribution of land is captured by the trend of its Gini index,

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which got worse across time: 0.84 in 1950, 0.85 in 1975.\textsuperscript{17} If we adopt current international demographic standards and definitions, when Brazil was entering the third millennium 30\% of its population and 80\% of its municipalities could still be termed “rural.”\textsuperscript{18}

On a more qualitative basis, it is hard to overemphasize the role that rural patronage and latifundist elites, and, more recently, peasants’ unions and landless movements played in the formation of modern and contemporary Brazil. Conflicts over occupation, ownership and use of land are a constant since the colonial period. More recently, land reform has been for decades a matter of harsh contention in public opinion and in the political debate, and in some conjunctures became so divisive that directly conditioned major political events, as in the case of the 1964 coup.

2.1. The Socioeconomic Structures of Rural Brazil since Colonial Times

The legacy of the colonial period and of the “long 19\textsuperscript{th}-century” is the background in which land established itself as a critical factor for development and, at the same time, as a primary source of contention in modern Brazil. The dawn of European colonization of newly discovered Brazil coincided with the transplant of \textit{sesmarias}, a 14\textsuperscript{th}-century land grant system that in Portugal served the purpose of stimulating a better tillage of a scarce good: fertile soil. In

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} José Eli da Veiga, “The rural dimension of Brasil,” \textit{Estudos Sociedade e Agricultura} 12, no. 1 (2004), 71-94. These numbers refer to municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants and/or a population density smaller than 80 inhabitants per square km.
the completely different context of 16th-century Brazil – an immense, vastly unknown and dispersedly populated region – sesmarialismo produced a number of unintended consequences. The Crown assigned immense portions of vaguely marked territory to aristocrats who were required, in exchange, to make the land productive. In the lack of effective instruments of political control, Brazilian sesmarias survived for centuries in violation of all the key provisions on which the system was built: boundaries were rarely traced and frequently violated, land was sold and exchanged, and production was assured by exploitative means in accordance to the changing cycles of profitable commodities. For the growing concern of colonial authorities and the metropole, the agriculture of 18th-century Brazil was plagued by inefficiency and conflict, concentration of land in precarious legal conditions, shortage of foodstuff crops, and a natural environment depleted by rudimentary techniques. The rationalizing reforms proposed by Enlightened thinkers in the last decades of the colonial period were in part converted into laws and regulations in Pombaline Lisbon, but suffered from an excess of legalism and the lack of resources for their implementation.19

The Brazil that became an independent monarchy in 1822 and abolished sesmarias with the 1824 Constitution had hardly dismantled the system that dominated the fundamental structures of the country. An elite who profited from land-hungry export commodities had no interest, in a situation of abundance of land and maintenance of slavery, in constructing a capable legal and administrative system that effectively regulated access to and ownership of land. The growing power of the landed oligarchy in independent Brazil, as well as the beginnings of the

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extremely profitable cycle of coffee, rendered this period (1820s-1840s) the “fase áurea do posseiro,” in which the occupation and accumulation of land without any legal title became the unwritten rule of economic expansion and nation-building.

The *posse* turned into a national problem only when one of the factors in the inexhaustible-land-and-labor binomial was significantly altered. The promulgation of the *Lei de Terras* coincided with the abolition of the international slave trade under British pressures (1850), because the same conservative politicians who started planning a transition to free labor perceived the necessity to reform and control access to land. As in the case of slavery, alterations in laws and regulations were the result of compromise solutions, and were inspired by gradualism. The ambition of the law was twofold. First, it aimed at the substitution of *posse* with legal property as the dominant model of land occupation, and thus at granting titles to those who were effectively cultivating the land. In addition, lawmakers intended to create a market for land, through the sale of unoccupied and unused plots (*terras devolutas*), in an effort to attract foreign immigrants and thus initiate the dismantling of slavery. The history of the attempted application and continuous adjustments of the *Lei de Terras* for more than half a century shows a pattern of constant discrepancy between goals and actual outcomes. Up to the early 20th century, *posse* kept flourishing, as latifundists continued to profit from the possibility of expanding their estates and abandoning exhausted areas, and, under the decentralizing federalist republic inaugurated with

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20 The expression was minted by the earlier scholar of the Brazilian land question Paulo Garcia, and is quoted in Ligia Maria Osório Silva, *Teress devolutas e latifúndio: efeitos da lei de 1850* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 1996), 81.
the 1891 Constitution, were able to make their interests determinant in the definition of state-level policies.21

The hegemonic system of *posse* and virgin land acquisition benefited, to some degree, both large and small landholders only in the few areas in which geographic and social conditions allowed the specialization in a lucrative export crop. This is the case of coffee-dominated Western São Paulo, where the state-sponsored *colonato* system, from the 1880s on, created a relatively virtuous cycle for the traditional landed elite as well as for newcomers from Europe. Research shows that a significant number of the latter became propertied and contributed to the modernization and industrialization of the state, and thus to its exceptional status in the early decades of the 20th century.22 Where other staples became progressively less advantageous, but continued to dominate with their exploitative, labor-intensive and environmentally damaging features, oligarchic control over land and workers tended to be reinforced. The sugar industry of Pernambuco is exemplary to this respect: in spite of a falling demand on international markets, the sector survived thanks to a process of “modernization without change:”23 i.e. an economic and technological transformation of production (from the *engenho* to the *usina* system) that kept

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and even worsened land accumulation, workers’ conditions, and an ideology of exploitation against humans and the environment.24

The Brazil of the early decades of the 20th century was the result of a model of development – to use an anachronism – in which economic actors and political authorities treated land and natural resources, in practice even more than in theory or in the law, as inexhaustible goods available for exploitation. A situation of “open frontier,” in spite of regional variations, rendered (timid and largely flawed) attempts to impose a rationalization of land tenure patterns mostly vain. However, the fact that the entire history of Brazil could be narrated as a process of increasing shortsighted depletion of natural and human resources, in which land and labor generally did not receive particular consideration till recent times, does not mean that alternative voices have been absent.25

2.2. A “Natural Eden”? A “Rural Nation”?

The Countryside and the Environment in Brazilian Intellectual History

The notion of Brazil as an essentially rural country, blessed with flourishing nature, an astonishing variety of climates and landscapes, fertile soils and a rich subsoil, is a cliché with a lasting and elaborate tradition. Scholarship has pointed out the impact that the “Edenic theme”

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25 Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) is the single most important source that marked a turnaround in academics’ interest in the topic.
has produced since the 16th century, when the Portuguese exploration and colonization of Brazil were conceptualized through the vision of the New World as a conserved corner of Creation, and thus as the remnant of the primordial and harmonic state of nature. The debate on the peculiarities of American nature was particularly heated during the European Enlightenment, and caused controversies over the alleged degeneration of the creatures of the New World, and the dubious possibility of a “civilization” in the tropics. Echoes of such a dispute played a primary role in the formation of Brazilian identity, especially in the early 19th century, in the years around Independence (1822). It has already been noted that the European intellectuals’ oscillation between two antithetic images of the Americas – as a barbarian and inhospitable land, on the one hand, and as a lush and productive tropical garden, on the other – deeply affected the formulation of a national conscience in Brazil. As a matter of fact, the predictable defense by local literati of Brazilian fitness for modern civilization could not escape the constraints of “a relation between ‘center’ and ‘periphery’” in which patriotic pride for the homeland was irreparably inscribed in an imported European imaginary.

The role of foreign intervention in this cultural process can be illustrated through an important episode. In 1840, the recently founded Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, the most important cultural institution of the Empire (1822-1889), held a contest for the selection of

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26 The classical work on this topic is the Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Visão do paraíso. Os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1959). For a summary of the early modern debate, see José Murilo de Carvalho, “O motivo edêncio no imaginário social brasileiro,” in Cidadania, justiça e violência, ed. Dulce Chaves Pandolfi, José Murilo de Carvalho, Leandro Piquet Carneiro, and Mario Grynszpan (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1999), 19-22.


29 Ibid., 39.
an official proposal for the writing of Brazilian national history. The winner was the essay titled “Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil” (“How History of Brazil Should Be Written”), composed by the German scholar Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, who was at the time best known for his widely acclaimed botanic treatises on the Brazilian flora. Among his recommendations, he suggested a twofold mission for the historian of Brazil: on the one hand, to infuse a sentiment of patriotic unity in the Brazilian reader, as the cement of the freshly established nation; on the other hand, to charm European readers stressing the exotic qualities of the country, not least, of course, its natural luxuriance and fertility. This constituted a seminal moment for the forging of an enduring link between the discourse on the nation and its geographical representation in terms of natural richness and agricultural productiveness.

The nation-nature binomial was crystallized later through formulae such as Afonso Celso’s *Porque me ufano de meu país* (*Why I Take Pride in My Country*) a pamphlet that was successfully published and circulated in the year 1900. The author enumerated eleven justifications for Brazilian patriotic pride, and physical geography took the lion’s share in his argument. Natural Brazil – with its continental size, varied vegetation and climate, lack of natural disasters, and spontaneous abundance of resources – was even superior to historical Brazil, whose four-century trajectory was nevertheless enthusiastically represented by Celso. As a matter of fact, such a conceptualization of Brazil still permeated the collective mentality, far beyond intellectual debates, at the end of the 20th century. For instance, data from some mid-1990s opinion polls showed that “nature” was the single most shared reason for national pride.

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among the Brazilian population, surpassing other fundamental components of the patriotic imaginary (and foreign stereotypes), such as soccer, music, and carnival.\textsuperscript{32}

Within this long trajectory of discourses on nature as a central factor in Brazilian identity, an autochthonous tradition of preoccupation with the environmental and socio-economic conditions of the countryside started to take form in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Thanks to its inspiration in the scientific and philosophical principles of the Luso-Brazilian Enlightenment, this uninterrupted, although minority, line of thought developed as a rationalist, reformist and “progress”-oriented set of ideas. This characteristic not only differentiates Brazilian proto-environmentalism and conservationism from its European and North American counterparts, that were more influenced by Romanticism, spiritualism, and an aesthetic fruition of nature.\textsuperscript{33} It also determined an early fusion of discourses on the environment with economic, social and political concerns. The champions of this tradition, in fact, were some of the most prominent intellectuals and statesmen of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, such as José Bonifacio, André Rebouças, and Joaquim Nabuco.\textsuperscript{34} With different nuances, they linked the two pillars of the system inherited from the colonial period – extractive agriculture and slavery – to the structural fragilities of Brazil. According to this reading, only the concurrent abolition of slavery, a redistribution of land, substantial investment in education and infrastructures, as well as a reorientation of production toward the domestic market, would save the country from backwardness and inefficiency. Attempts to pass reforms in this direction were frustrated and, as we have seen, latifundia, exploitation of labor and land, and agro-exporting remained dominant. What is more, the

\textsuperscript{32} Carvalho, “O motivo edênico”, 25-33.
\textsuperscript{34} See José Augusto Pádua, Um sopro de destruição: pensamento político e crítica ambiental no Brasil escravista, 1786-1888 (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2002).
fundamental links that these thinkers established between natural depletion, economic inefficiency and social destructuration, and thus their systemic outlook on Brazil, were marginalized from mainstream intellectual debates.\textsuperscript{35}

In the context of the transition from the Empire to the Republic – which, as noted above, also coincided with the progressive widening of regional disparities – a different line of inquiry on nature, space and identity emerged in Brazilian social thought. In this phase of exacerbated contradictions, dominated by divergent evaluations of both the Brazilian environment and the country’s racial stock, a shared trope nonetheless crystallized: the idea of the coexistence of “two Brazils,” i.e. the notion of a country that was culturally and geographically split in two halves, each of them also plagued by disruptive internal tensions. On the one hand, there was the \textit{litoral}, a “civilized” urban Brazil, somehow attuned to Europe on the path of progress, but also perceivable as inauthentic and alienated from the bulk of the nation. On the other hand, the backward, telluric \textit{sertão} stood out for its poverty, disease, superstition, violence, and thus for its need of “civilizing” interventions, but also for its function as a repository of the most genuine Brazil. This contraposition led to an highly problematic, if not pessimistic, look at the real possibilities of national modernization, as the most paradigmatic intellectual work of this period, Euclides da Cunha’s \textit{Os Sertões}, attests.\textsuperscript{36} When the dualistic thesis was the source of inspiration for a policy agenda, it produced discourses and practices that rested on the polarization between

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 281-285.
\textsuperscript{36} Nísia Trindade Lima, \textit{Um sertão chamado Brasil: intelectuais e representação geográfica da identidade nacional} (Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ; Universidade Candido Mendes; Editora Revan, 1999) and Luciana Murari, \textit{Natureza e cultura no Brasil (1870-1922)} (São Paulo: Alameda, 2009).
litoral and sertão, the city and the countryside, with the latter invariably subordinated to the former and rarely analyzed in its most patent structural fragilities: land tenure and use.\textsuperscript{37}

The development of Brazilian social thought in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century was deeply affected by the prevalence of the dualistic thesis. The latter, in conjunction with the centrality accorded to the issue of race in intellectual debates as well as the persistence of oligarchic domination over the countryside, contributed to marginalize the rural question as a problem of national relevance that encompassed the use of natural resources, human conditions, socio-economic structures, and political power. As a result, the tradition of the “great interpreters” of Brazil, in spite of its pluralism, shows a substantial cohesion around a common concern and, concurrently, a specific subject of study. In fact, most of the classic texts in Brazilian social thought written between the turn of the century and the 1960s framed their reflection around the notion of formação.\textsuperscript{38} This preoccupation with the historical formation of the fundamental structures on which the Brazil rested produced, inevitably, different interpretations. However, the center of attention for the most influential authors – with the more than noteworthy exception of Gilberto Freyre – is the role of the state.\textsuperscript{39} The two main formas de pensar o Brasil\textsuperscript{40} that can be singled out in alternative to excessively simplistic dichotomies – conservative vs. progressive, authoritarian vs. democratic – clearly show this common trait. One tradition – best synthesized by Oliveira Viana with the

\textsuperscript{37} Two intertwining, but nonetheless different stories – that of sanitation reforms initiated in the Brazilian countryside in the late 1910s, and that of the personage of Jeca Tatu in Monteiro Lobato’s writings in the same years – clearly show this unsolved dualism. See Lima, Um sertão chamado Brasil.

\textsuperscript{38} See, among others, Ricupero.

\textsuperscript{39} Even the proposal of looking at the multifaceted authoritarian tradition in Brazilian political thought as a distinctive “ideology of the State,” different from the currents that privilege a focus on society and the market, cannot escape from the obvious observation that all factions primarily look at the problem of forms of government. The “ideology of State” argument is elaborated in Bolivar Lamounier, "Formação de um pensamento político autoritário na Primeira Republica. Uma interpretação" In História Geral, 343-374.

\textsuperscript{40} See Brandão.
contraposition between *país legal* and *país real* (see chapter 4) – postulates the need of a tutelary State for the transformation of a society plagued by “backwardness.” A second current – in which figures as different as Joaquim Nabuco, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Raimundo Faoro can be grouped – emphasizes the urgency of attaining the autonomy of civil society from the State in order to overcome Brazil’s long-term fragilities. In both cases, the *pars destruens* and the *pars construens* of the reasoning do not escape from the theme of forms of (mis)government.

Land and its problems are certainly important factors in these different interpretations, but they are rarely tackled as the target of specific proposals, and even less are treated in the light of a crucial observation: the exhaustibility and finitude of natural resources.

### 2.3. The 1930 Revolution, the Vargas Era, and the Politicization of the Rural Question

Scholars commonly identify the “prehistory” of the politicization of the agrarian question in the crisis of the First Republic, and more decidedly in the first Vargas era (1930-1945). The most diverse studies on the subject generally share a common denominator: the determinant factor for the opening of the rural question was, in its early stages, the policies implemented by the post-1930 state, with their intended and unintended consequences. Such an assumption finds a number of confirmation in empirical inquiries.

The earliest, and to some extent still common-sense, interpretation of the 1930 Revolution has privileged the notion of discontinuity. However, the thesis that the 1930 regime change represented a “bourgeois revolution,” in which the oligarchic system of the First
Republic, centered on *paulista* (from São Paulo) coffee elites, was disempowered, has been debunked since the late 1960s. The work of Boris Fausto pioneered the alternative reading of 1930 as a conflict internal to the traditional ruling classes, that was resolved mainly via negotiation and compromise, and that produced, instead of a rupture, an accommodation between old and new interests, at least in the short run.\textsuperscript{41} To our purposes, this continuity in fundamentals is fully evident in coffee and export crop policies that remained a priority under Vargas and reinforced the traditional principles of protection and valorization.\textsuperscript{42}

Continuity also marked government policies in the field of industrialization, which even under Vargas were rather limited. Manufacturing remained mainly an erratic process of low-value handicraft goods substitution, in spite of the consequences of the First World War and of the Great Depression on international trade, which spurred some import substitution experiments.\textsuperscript{43}

An important factor that helps to explain such a limited interest in industrialization by political leaders and entrepreneurs resides in a shared conviction, derived from classical economic thought. The Ricardian theory of comparative advantage postulated the specialization of each country in products that, in terms of quality and costs, would be competitive on the international market. Such a notion, in the case of Brazil (and Latin America at large), meant a permanent reliance on the export of crops and raw materials, and the perception of industrialization as an improper “artificial” enterprise. Scholarship showed the substantial endurance of this belief, among Brazilian elites, until the late 1930s, and registered a significant

\textsuperscript{43} Dean, “The Brazilian Economy, 1870-1930,” 714-719.
change in favor of industrialist policies at the intellectual level only after the Second World War, when the process of industrialization was already underway.\footnote{Joseph L. Love, “Economic ideas and ideologies in Latin America since 1930,” in \textit{The Cambridge History of Latin America}, vol. 6, part 1, \textit{Latin America since 1930: Economy, Society and Politics}, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 395-402.}

Scholars, nonetheless, have identified two main areas of innovation in the tackling of agricultural problems during this period. In the first place, although the construction of a \textit{trabalhista} culture and legal framework privileged the urban proletariat,\footnote{Angela Maria de Castro Gomes, \textit{A invenção do trabalhismo} (Rio de Janeiro; São Paulo: Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro; Vértice, 1988).} the process of top-down incorporation of citizens-workers into Vargas’ project of nation-building also had an impact on the countryside. The sugar sector, because of its strategic importance and the exigencies of the semi-industrial \textit{usina} system, was the only branch of the rural economy whose labor relations were formally and, at least in part, effectively regulated in this period. Thanks to the 1941 \textit{Estatuto da Lavoura Canavieira}, and to the extensive recourse of workers to labor courts, sugar \textit{colonos} were rather successful in asserting their rights against \textit{usineros}, in spite of the rigid restrictions imposed by the state on unionization.\footnote{For the area of the state of Rio de Janeiro dominated by sugar production, see Luis A. González, “Work, Property, and the Negotiation of Rights in the Brazilian Cane Fields: Campos, Rio De Janeiro, 1930-1950,” in \textit{Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society since Late Colonial Times}, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 113-143.} More broadly, historians and social scientists have showed how, from the 1930s on, the new language of rights and democracy disseminated over society and penetrated into the countryside, contributing to early experiments in peasants mobilization and appeals to authorities.\footnote{Cliff Welch, \textit{The Seed Was Planted: The São Paulo Roots of Brazil's Rural Labor Movement, 1924-1964} (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), Rogers and, mainly on the post-1964 period, Biorn Maybury-Lewis, \textit{The Politics of the Possible: The Brazilian Rural Workers' Trade Union Movement, 1964-1985} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).} However, the limited impact of these initiatives, in terms of scale and effectiveness, demonstrates the lack of a systematic agenda for...
the construction of a rural working class that could equate the investment of the state on urban labor.

A second realm of inquiry concerns the policies adopted for the improvement of living conditions and productivity in the countryside. According to the empirical research available, two key principles guided the Vargas state: technocratic intervention and national integration. A broad array of experts, organized in new or renewed state agencies, was put at work on what were considered the most urgent areas of intervention for a dysfunctional countryside: physicians fought endemic diseases and malnutrition, engineers tackled droughts in the Northeast, agronomists improved the quality and yield of crops. In addition, from the late 1930s on, the *Estado Novo* launched a program of agricultural colonization in peripheral regions such as Amazonia and the Center-West, misleadingly considered “empty” territories. What on paper was considered a balanced solution for a variety of urgent concerns – the defense of borders and strategic areas in the context of WW2 and nation-building, the control of social pressure through the relocation of landless peasants, the economic exploitation of “unused” soils – was to a large extent a failure of social engineering, that the later civilian-military regime replicated on a larger scale in the 1970s.

The literature available on the rural question during the 1930s-1940s, in spite of the variety of lines of inquiries that it followed, shows a shared limitation, and a rather contradictory

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49 Eve E. Buckley, “Political Impediments to Technological Diffusion in Northeast Brazil, 1909-1964,” *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 7, no. 2 (2009), 146-171.
50 Rogers.
one. As a matter of fact, the focus on state policies is not accompanied by the needed attention to the decision-making process that led to preferring a set of policies instead of others, or inertia instead of action. State interventions on the countryside under Vargas, in their ideological underpinnings as well as in their practicalities, are to a large extent treated as a *fait accompli*, and not as the outcome of a process in which alternative agendas and interests interacted, and frequently collided with each other. If the 1930 Revolution should be studied as an open and complex process of negotiations and conflicts, and not as a crystallized event, such an oversimplification of the State as an actor should be rebutted. Some key sectors of state policy during this period have been already profitably studied as areas of contention that produced less than one-dimensional, fully coherent outcomes.

The examination of the alternative set of values and goals that the epigones of Alberto Torres elaborated and tried to implement in the early 1930s will contribute to a revision of a still excessively monolithic understanding of the period as a whole, and of the processes through which the rural question rose on the Brazilian political scene.

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3. The Life and Thought of Alberto Torres

3.1. The Life Trajectory of Alberto Torres in the Context of Turn-of-the-century Brazil

Alberto de Seixas Martins Torres\(^5^4\) was born in 1865, during the later phase of the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889).\(^5^5\) The socioeconomic structure and political regime that were organized under the constitutional reign of Pedro II (1840-1889) had been based on a centralized institutional framework that served the interests of the traditional elites. Under the equilibrating power of the monarch, two loosely organized parties – the Liberals and the Conservatives – competed for representative and executive posts. Most such posts were occupied by members of the planter and merchant families of the historically richest provinces of the country: Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais in the Southeast, Bahia and Pernambuco in the Northeast. These were the areas in which the slave system of plantations and mines had taken root since colonial times, and substantially endured after independence. However, during the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century, the fulcrum of the Brazilian economy was shifting toward the flourishing coffee fields of São Paulo, whose entrepreneurial sectors had limited access to national power. In the same period, forced labor was slowly abandoned through the gradual abolition of slavery, and

\(^{54}\) Where not otherwise noted, the information on Alberto Torres’ life is taken from Augusto Saboia Lima, *Alberto Torres e sua obra* (São Paulo: Companhia Editoria Nacional, 1935).

numerous incentives for European immigration were put in place. This transition was producing dramatic changes in the Brazilian demographic and social landscape. A variety of “progressive” ideas were taking root among emerging sectors of society, including the military, who started questioning the capability of the two intertwined dominant institutions of Brazil – the monarchy and slavery – to promote modernization. The obvious touchstones, both in terms of political institutions and economic advancement, were Western Europe and the United States.

Torres was born in the hinterland of the capital city, Rio de Janeiro, the fulcrum of the Imperial court system around which national political and economic interests were represented and articulated. His affluent family was an integral part of the patronage chain that presided over the functioning of the Imperial society, and his father, Manoel Martins Torres, was a prominent magistrate and senator. Equally important, he was a large landowner. The family fazenda constituted not only the environment in which Alberto spent his childhood, but was also a long-lasting symbolic and material point of reference during his adult life. Torres dedicated one of his major books to the key figures of the beloved “intimate living together of childhood” that he had the privilege of experiencing: his maternal great grandmother, and the “dead slaves” and those “still alive of her estate.” One of his early biographers does not hesitate to describe Torres’ “great nostalgia” for the “Brazilian rural environment.” As Roberto Ventura points out, “the theme of the decadence of the large rural property,” and what he calls the associated feeling of a saudade do engenho (literally, “sugar mill nostalgia”) characterized at least two generations of

57 Alberto Torres, A organização nacional. Primeira parte. A constituição, nova edição (São Paulo; Rio de Janeiro; Recife; Porto Alegre: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938 [1914]), 7: “a memória dos escravos mortos, bem como aos ainda vivos de sua fazenda.”
58 Augusto Saboia Lima, 13.
59 Ventura, 126.
Brazilian intellectuals in the decades that immediately preceded and followed the year 1900, from Sílvio Romero and Joaquim Nabuco to Gilberto Freyre and José Lins do Rego. The role of this nostalgic idealization of the fazenda, surely connected with a retrospective outlook on infancy and family ties, cannot be underestimated in understanding the pro-rural agenda that dominated Torres’s thought.

The sense of loss, in the author’s attitude toward the countryside, has deeper roots than a generic reminiscence of a personal gilded youth. The very trajectory of the town in which Torres had his family roots emerges as a paradigmatic one, concentrating some of the key processes that changed the destiny of the Rio de Janeiro province in the late 19th century. Itaboraí, Torres’ hometown, was from colonial times one of the richest settlements in the coastal lowlands that surrounded the city of Rio de Janeiro. Its economy was based on sugar and coffee production and therefore, in accordance with the Brazilian social structure of the time, on slave labor. When the complete abolition of slavery was proclaimed in 1888, the depletion of the fluminense (from the province/state of Rio de Janeiro) plantation system had already reached an advanced stage, as geographical and economic factors were already favoring the coffee business in São Paulo. The decline of prosperous Itaboraí was made particularly sudden and dramatic by the decline of its traditional role as a commercial river port, which had historically provided the most convenient connection between the backland mountain region of the province and the capital city. In 1860, a few years before Torres’ birth, the first stretch of the Niterói-Cantagalo railroad was inaugurated, abruptly making waterways obsolete. The personal experience of such a sudden downfall is

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60 Ibid., 123-126.
clearly reflected in some of Torres’ idiosyncrasies, such as his conviction that the development of the Brazilian railroad network was one of the major reasons behind what he considered to be a process of national disjuncture.\textsuperscript{62}

Alberto Torres’ formal education also followed one of the most habitual patterns at the time for his social class: in 1886, when he was 21, he graduated in law. Juridical studies were the rule for the offspring of the elites; the possibilities of higher education were very limited in Brazil at that time, and medicine was the only other major option.\textsuperscript{63} Nevertheless, beginning in the last decades of the Empire, the emphasis on juridical education – \textit{bacharelismo jurídico}, in Portuguese – \textquoteleft was related with technocratic bureaucratization, participating in the formation of the nation state and formulating, through evolutionism and positivism, the early expression of a modernizing ideology.\textquoteleft\textsuperscript{64} Law played a manifold role in Torres’ career. In the first place, as a consequence of personal and familial falls from grace, law was a profession that provided material gains and, to some extent, survival. The young graduate Torres opened a law firm in Rio de Janeiro and later, between the end of his active political career and the beginning of his intellectual venture, he served as a judge of the supreme court (1901-1909). Beyond that, Brazilian law also was the butt of harsh criticism in the face of Brazil’s failures as a state and as a society: such shortcomings, in fact, were often attributed to the fact that the institutions and regulations in force had proved ineffective in administering the country. At the same time, law also was a positive instrument to reform the state and govern society. On it, Torres built at least

\textsuperscript{62} Torres, \textit{A organização nacional}, 259-266.

\textsuperscript{63} An original study that explores continuities and changes in the Brazilian elite professions, between the Empire and the Republic, is Edmundo Campos Coelho, \textit{As profissões imperiais: medicina, engenharia e advocacia no Rio de Janeiro, 1822-1930} (Rio de Janeiro; São Paulo: Record, 1999).

\textsuperscript{64} Ventura, 122.
part of his hopes for a better Brazil, through the proposal of a detailed constitutional reform, as will be discussed below.

It is important to notice that his path through higher education was far from direct. Torres left the protective environment of the patriarchal fazenda when he was just 14 and started an academic peregrination that brought him to the main urban centers of the country. After three years at the Rio de Janeiro’s school of medicine, he moved to São Paulo to enter law school and then transferred again during his third year to Recife, where he finally obtained his law degree. Such a troubled academic trajectory, in spite of the successful career that he was able to later build, exemplified the sort of uncertainties that the decaying Imperial elites were facing in the years that immediately preceded and followed the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. Family economic downturns and the crisis of the Imperial political system posed serious threats to inherited social status, and they reduced the possibility of ascending through the traditional patronage channels previously provided by the hegemony of the old flumiense landed elites. Also, cultural life, formerly protected by the Imperial court, was at the time undergoing a process of professionalization: market interests and competition started to deeply affect intellectual accomplishments, as men of letters were forced to financially depend on publishing houses and new state bureaucratic institutions.

Torres came of age just in time to participate in the upheavals that brought the Empire to an end. As a young lawyer in the Rio de Janeiro of the late 1880s, Torres actively supported the two progressive causes of the moment: abolitionism and republicanism. Within the space of two

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66 Miceli is a rich social history of Brazilian intellectuals from the late 19th century to mid-20th century. Nevertheless, Alberto Torres is not among the cases analyzed by the author.
years, the nominal goals of these campaigns were attained, as slavery was extinguished in 1888, and the monarchy was overthrown in 1889. Since Torres found himself on the side of the immediate winners, he enjoyed a brilliant and rapid political ascendance that spanned about a decade. His career encompassed the posts of state (1892-1893) and federal (1893-1896) deputy, a brief appointment as federal minister of justice (1896-1897) in the cabinet of the first civilian president, Prudente de Morais, and a term as president (i.e. governor) of the state of Rio de Janeiro (1897-1900).

Torres’ activity in this last position – the only executive office that he held – not only reflected the thematic nucleus of what would become his theoretical project, but also provided an explicit opportunity for the kind of self-criticism that led him to turn to the role of public (and polemical) intellectual. In fact, during his presidency he proposed reforms that would become the pillars of his later nationalist program, such as the modernization of public education and the reorganization of the agricultural sector. However, those measures generated resistance within the *fluminense* political elite and, in Torres’ own words, were mainly “deferred because of political perturbations, for which I was not responsible.” In the same text, recalling the moment when he left the presidency, Torres openly states: “my confidence in the political regime that we had adopted could not be so firm anymore, as I was so disillusioned with events.”

A more critical reading of this detachment from the very “political regime” that Torres had helped to build in his youth, and passionately served in his adulthood, suggests a further step in our interpretation. As a lively member of the waning oligarchy of the Empire, Torres was able

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67 Torres, *A organização nacional*, 13: “preteridos por efeito de perturbações políticas, de que não fui causa.”
68 Ibid.: “já não podia ser tão firme – desilludida, como fôra, pelos factos – a minha confiança no regime político que havíamos adoptado.”
to fully participate in the transition from the old to the new regime, ascending to important political positions, but found himself marginalized in the new structures of the Republic. Consequently, his frustration at the failure of his reformist presidency of Rio de Janeiro acquired in his writings a broader meaning: a sense of the “impracticability” (“impraticabilidade”)\(^{69}\) of the entire project of state and society that the federalist 1891 Constitution and its supporters had envisioned. In this way, Torres was not only lamenting the steady political marginalization of the fluminense aristocracy, as an effect of the rising hegemony of the São Paulo elites in the civilian republican governments that assumed power after 1894.\(^{70}\) He was also seriously questioning the outcomes of the regime change as such, using his own experience as an insider to give authority to the radical alternative that he was proposing to the intellectual and political circles of Brazil.

After a decade serving as a judge of the Supreme Court (1901-1909), Torres was ready to inaugurate his new career as a vocal analyst of Brazilian reality and as an energetic advocate of a turnaround in the country’s destiny.

In the few years that preceded his sudden death from cancer in 1917, at the age of 51, Torres wrote extensively on the major Brazilian newspapers of his time and published five books. The two of them that appeared in 1914 - *A organização nacional. Primeira parte. A constituição* and *O problema nacional brasileiro. Introdução a um programa de organização nacional* – were the result of a revision of articles and essays written between 1910 and 1912,\(^{71}\)

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) The first three civilian presidents of the Brazilian Republic – Prudente de Morais (1894-1898), Campos Sales (1898-1902), and Rodrigues Alves (1902-1906) – were direct expressions of the coffee interests of São Paulo, whose oligarchy substantially controlled national politics until the breakdown of the First Republic in 1930. See Fausto, “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 811-814.

\(^{71}\) The other three volumes were *Vers la paix: études sur l'établissement de la paix générale et sur l'organisation de l'ordre international* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1909); *Le problème mondial: études de politique internationale* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1913); and *As fontes da vida no Brazil* (Rio de Janeiro: Papelaria Brasil, 1915). While the latter is a 40-page pamphlet that recapitulates the reasonings of his two major works, in the
and were destined to exert a strong influence on the debates of the following two decades. Torres’ imagery and arguments, in particular, laid the ground for the development of a specific reading of Brazilian problems and prospects that centered on the rural dimension of the country: “organicist agrarianism.”

3.2. The “Organic-statist” Tradition Between Politics and Science

A dismissive historiography, mainly inspired by Marxism and negatively biased, traditionally presented the ideas of intellectuals like Alberto Torres as a moment in a sort of degenerative trajectory in Brazilian socio-political thought. In fact, Torres has mainly been characterized as an “idealistic” blessed with an intuitive capacity to grasp, at least partially, the seriousness of national problems, but also as a thinker short of practical proposals and too ambivalent toward the oligarchic regime. Later on, more nuanced analyses convincingly pointed to a broader political tradition, dating back to the Empire, or even to the colonial period and the medieval Catholic doctrine, that has been termed “organic-statism.” Scholars of

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two earlier books in French Torres expounded his proposals for a peaceful resolution of controversies and pragmatic cooperation among nations, in the spirit of turn-of-the-century cosmopolitism.


73 The term is borrowed from Alfred Stepan’s discussion of the theoretical and historical fundamentals of such a tradition within the broader Latin American context in The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 26-45.
Brazilian intellectual history refer to it with different expressions, such as “ideology of the State,”74 “iberismo,”75 and vision of the “State as the ‘demiurge’ of society and history.”76

The core elements of such a conception are the primacy of state institutions as benevolent agents for collective organization and change; the hierarchical notion of society as a body made of naturally different parts, which nonetheless are called to an harmonious cooperation; finally, and consequently, the rejection of any social construction based on principles that could nourish competition or strife, such as the free market or class struggle. The desired institutional structure, within this school of thought, tended to favor a corporatist regime with a strong central government. This last was called to take charge of the regulation of the diverse interests that coexisted within society, and it had control and suppression of conflict as its main goals. Torres’ writings undeniably show a rather strict adherence to these broader ideals of the organic-statist tradition, which the author explicitly contrasted to the theories and practices on which the Brazilian Republic had been build and operated. An overview of the main arguments and motivations that backed his intellectual endeavor is important in order to better comprehend how his ruralista project took shape.

The pair of tropes that the author employed in his attack on the political status quo centers on the notions of “importation” and “imitation”.77 Ever since the independence period,

74 Lamounier, 356. See also 356-373.
76 Octávio Ianni, Pensamento social no Brasil (Bauru; São Paulo: EDUSC; ANPOCS, 2004), 43.
77 These themes are among the dominant leitmotivs of the author, and scattered references to them are present in all his writings. For a relatively systematized discussion of them, see Torres, A organização nacional, 211-224.
according to Torres, Brazilian elites had relied almost exclusively on political doctrines elaborated in Europe and North America. He observed how the institutional architecture of the Empire mainly derived from British constitutionalism, and it produced a compromise between monarchical authority and parliamentarianism. The pernicious effects of the latter, such as factionalism and politicking, had been successfully tempered only thanks to the efforts of two centralizing and authoritative forces: the Emperor and the enlightened leadership of the Conservatives. The 1889 regime change, in this analysis, became the final step into the crisis. The removal of the monarch and the adoption, in 1891, of a constitution that mimicked United States federalism led to a dramatic strengthening of state oligarchies. Their disruptive power, in the absence of any moderating authority, penetrated local and national institutions. As a consequence, the federal government surrendered to the ruling elites of the wealthiest and most powerful states of the union many key functions, such as the dispensation of justice and the administration of budgets. According to this perspective, reinforced local patronage mechanisms and partisan interests inevitably produced a centrifugal spiral that severely threatened not only national priorities, but the very survival of the nation.

Torres explicitly encapsulated such a paradoxical situation in the following observation:

In Brazil, the central State is a factor of disintegration. The damaging influence on Brazilian life of anti-social interests, as they are created and nourished around public power from the municipality to the Union, is a fact whose extent has not yet been comprehended by the observers of our public affairs. This regime must be substituted with another one, that will be capable to accomplish with the task of the present generation for the future of Brazil.78

78 Alberto Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro. Introdução a um programa de organização nacional, 3ª edição (São Paulo; Rio de Janeiro; Recife; Porto Alegre: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938 [1914]), 54: “O Estado é, no Brasil, um fator de dissolução. A influência deletéria dos interesses anti-sociais, criados e alimentados em torno do poder publico, desde os municípios até a União, sobre a vida brasileira, é um fato cujo alcance não foi ainda atingido pelos observadores das nossas coisas públicas. Este regime deve ser substituído por outro, capaz de levar a termo o encargo da geração presente para com o futuro do Brasil.”
Unsurprisingly, some components of the political mobilization that in the late 1920s challenged the established authorities and finally overthrew them in 1930 reclaimed this reading of the First Republic.\textsuperscript{79}

Torres’s call for a stronger central state, nonetheless, was not only motivated by the need to correct failing institutions and policies. Another fundamental reason for a cohesive internal reorganization of the country was the inescapable need for Brazil to compete in an instable world context. In his writings on Brazil, what he called “an ungoverned country” (“um país desgovernado”)\textsuperscript{80} was doomed to be an early victim in any international conflict, and to be subaltern and irrelevant in any negotiation.\textsuperscript{81} Although the ideal of a possible balanced alliance of nations was frustrated, for the time being, by the outbreak of the Great War, Torres maintained the strong conviction that Brazil had to find its peculiar political and socioeconomic path within the international system. In order to do so, the nation had to rationally and pragmatically recognize its limits and potentials in comparison with the main powers of the West. Torres’ rural project, as we will see, constituted the core of this attempt to enhance Brazil’s security and prestige in the eyes of the outside world.

A final note should be devoted to the analytic tools that Torres employed in his works. As a matter of fact, methodological problems were covered rather briefly and unsystematically, and scientific discourses were constantly subordinated to political preoccupations. In other words, his priority is not to elaborate an instrument to analyze Brazil as a pure subject of inquiry, but to

\textsuperscript{79} Fausto “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 819-829, provides a summary of the characteristics and strategies of the different political forces that led to the 1930 regime change.

\textsuperscript{80} Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro, 275.

\textsuperscript{81} Torres, A organização nacional, 276-284.
recast politics as a totalizing empirical art for the construction, of society and, consequently, of governance. In his own words:

> Politics needs to recover its force and its prestige, as it should be recognized as the central organism of all social functions that it is destined to coordinate and harmonize – to rule. It needs to extend its action over all the spheres of activity, as an instrument of protection, support, equilibrium and culture.\(^{82}\)

This reasserted primacy of politics was coherent with Torres’ personal position as a former statesman advocating immediate political reforms, and thus with the more focused goals of his intervention in the public debate. As the polemical and unsystematic style of his writings also attests, Torres was rather uninterested in establishing himself as an academic intellectual. The politician, in a word, definitely took precedence over the social scientist.

### 3.3. Brazil as a “Colony:”

**Alberto Torres and the Criticism Towards the Agro-exporting Model**

Torres, in the light of his eminently political goals, did not develop either a sophisticated philosophy of history, or a detailed historical analysis, in order to sustain his interpretation of Brazilian problems. His premise, nonetheless, was that countries formed as a result of colonial enterprises were undermined by the disorganized, unscrupulous and egoistic exploitation that they underwent. As a result, they inevitably lacked the social cohesiveness that was required for

\(^{82}\) Torres, *A organização nacional*, 231: “A política precisa reconquistar a sua força e seu prestígio, fazendo reconhecer-se como órgão central de todas as funções sociais, destinado a coordená-las e harmonizá-las — a regelã-las — estendendo a sua ação sobre todas as esferas da atividade, como instrumento de proteção, de apoio, de equilíbrio e de cultura.”
the spontaneous formation of a prosperous nation: they could only be, in Torres’ own words, “social improvisations due to chance” (“improvisos sociais do acaso”)\(^8^3\) and “societies without people” (“sociedade sem povo”).\(^8^4\) The author’s key preoccupation was to describe the specific effects of such a general principle on the Brazil of his time. His focus, in this regard, was on the economy.

Torres’ reading of Brazilian economic structures underscored the survival of the exploitative and egoistic qualities that were introduced with Portuguese colonization. His harsh criticism subjected domestic and international actors to a single condemnation that acquired the tone of an anti-capitalist discourse. The historical “organic vice” constituted by “the large landed estates, the exclusive exploitation of land, and the stimulus to intense exploitation”\(^8^5\) enabled a solid alliance of interests between Brazilian economic elites and foreign speculators. Brazil’s most fertile soils, monopolized by the traditional landed aristocracy, almost exclusively produced goods for export. National agriculture, therefore, did not pass from being “a colonial service for export” (“um serviço colonial da exportação”)\(^8^6\) and “a mosaic of areas of production for export” (“um mosaico de zonas de produções para exportação”).\(^8^7\) Landholders benefited from this scheme through an accumulation of wealth and prestige that, in Torres’ terms, reduced them to a condition of “parasitism” (“parasitismo”)\(^8^8\) that recalled a feudal situation.\(^8^9\) International investors, on the other hand, were offered the opportunity not only to make considerable profits,

\(^{8^3}\) Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 93. Emphasis in the original.
\(^{8^4}\) Torres, *A organização nacional*, 117. See also 93-97 and 113-117, and *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 81-102.
\(^{8^5}\) Ibid., 203: “um vício orgânico, uma fonte provável de ruínas e de desordens futuras: a vasta propriedade territorial, a exploração senhorial da terra, o estímulo de intensa exploração.”
\(^{8^6}\) Ibid., 272.
\(^{8^7}\) Torres, *A organização nacional*, 264.
\(^{8^8}\) Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 218.
\(^{8^9}\) Ibid., 215-218
but also to penetrate all the vital ganglions of the country, extending their control over mining, commerce, infrastructures, and industries.\(^\text{90}\)

In this picture, the massive flood of foreign immigrants in the country\(^\text{91}\) also contributed to the spoliation of national resources:

In this plundered land, our commerce, foreign labor and usurious credit siphon off abroad, as capital, almost all the product of this irresponsible and brutal destruction. In exchange, we receive articles and objects that are not even close to equivalent to the cost of the provoked ruin, and that leave among us, in works and unnecessary goods, just a minimal fraction of their value.\(^\text{92}\)

The attack on “unnecessary goods” referred to two crucial elements of Torres’ analysis. First, it was an element of the broader claim against the distorted trade balance of the country. The author contrasted the hemorrhage of valuable crops and raw materials from Brazil with the importation, paid with export proceeds and public debt, of luxury goods for the benefit of the well-off.\(^\text{93}\) Second, Torres regarded the immoderate consumption of superfluous products as one of the ominous effects of another broader process: urbanization. The examination of this problem

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 198-204, and A organização nacional, 228-232. Dean, “The Brazilian Economy, 1870-1930” 707-709, attests that foreign capital, especially from Britain, was crucial for the financing of local and central governments, and for the development of a transportation and communication network. Moreover, “[c]apital invested in Brazilian industry, up to 1920, was obtained in the main from importers of immigrant origin and from abroad, largely through émigré entrepreneurs” (716).

\(^{91}\) In eight decades, between 1851 and 1930, about 4.3 million immigrants entered Brazil: about one third of them were Italian; in quantitative terms, the peak of foreign immigration occurred between the 1880s and the early 1910s; São Paulo and, in general, the Southeast absorbed the majority of this flow. See Chiara Vangelista, Dal vecchio al nuovo Continente. L’immigrazione in America Latina (Torino: Paravia, 1997). A more detailed summary on migration patterns, with chronological and geographical variances, can be found in Fausto, “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 779-787.

\(^{92}\) Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro, 39-40: “Nesta terra, assim saqueada, o comércio, o trabalho estrangeiro e o crédito de usura que possuímos, drenam, em capital, para o estrangeiro quase todo o produto dessa inconsciente e brutal destruição, dando-nos, em troco, gêneros e objetos, que, muitíssimo longe de representar o preço da ruina de que resultam, não deixam, entre nós, em obras e bens voluptuários, senão fração mínima de seu valor.” See also A organização nacional, 250-275.

\(^{93}\) Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro, 207-209
permitted Torres to shift from a critique of the Brazilian economy to a critique of Brazilian society.

At first, Torres’ look at the urban environment assumed a purely moralistic tone. The city was a place where an already fragile social body disintegrated and became corrupted.

The contacts between urban and country lives, [...] and the fusion of urban and country mores constitute, in our case, the specific causes of future disintegration. Beaches, ports, border, littoral and cosmopolitan cities, settlements along major transport links [...] are, everywhere, mixed zones of circulation and social disaggregation, areas of invasion for loose morals and perversion of characters.\(^{94}\) The moral superiority of the rural lifestyle and set of values was not discussed at length in Torres’ works, but it is an obvious postulate of this argument. The contraposition of an irenic countryside and a chaotic and dissolute city was one of the rhetorical instruments that early-20th-century intellectuals employed to criticize the process of modernization of Rio de Janeiro.\(^{95}\)

Nonetheless, Torres also developed another argument that was far more relevant for its socioeconomic and political implications.

Major Brazilian cities, starting with the federal capital, became a magnet for internal migration from the countryside, as a result of the combined force of poor living conditions in rural areas and of the seduction of urban jobs and activities.\(^{96}\) Consequently, Torres stated,

\(^{94}\) Ibid., 73-74: “contatos da vida urbana com a do campo, [...] na fusão dos costumes das cidades, com os costumes da roça. As praias, os portos, as fronteiras, as cidades à beira-mar e cosmopolitas, os povoados à margem das grandes vias de comunicação [...] são, em toda a parte, zonas mistas de difusão e desagregação social, áreas de invasão de costumes fáceis e de perversão dos caráteres.”

\(^{95}\) For a comprehensive perspective that looks at the (lettered) public opinion, see Nicolau Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão: tensões sociais e criação cultural na Primeira República* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983), 78-118, who then focuses on two of the most influential – and most polemical – writers of this period, Lima Barreto and Euclides da Cunha.

\(^{96}\) In the light of historians’ findings, Torres’ argument appears at least controversial. At the national level, internal migration was rather limited before the 1920s. Nonetheless, the city of Rio de Janeiro – the urban setting that Torres knew the most – constituted a noteworthy exception, as net internal migration figures for the 1890s exceeded 85,000 (Fausto, 785-786). This is a considerable datum, since, according to the 1900 census, the city numbered 811,000 inhabitants. See Roy Gilbert, “Rio de Janeiro: The Make-Up of a Modern Megacity,” *Habitat International* 19, no. 1 (1995), 94.
Brazilian society is producing “an urban proletariat that is far bigger than the one we should have.” It is fundamental to note that, in Torres’ social analysis, the urban setting and the new labor relations imposed by incipient industrialization, were responsible for the transformation of generic lower sectors of the population into “proletarians,” in the political sense of the term. It is not a coincidence that this observation was immediately accompanied by a discussion of the threats posed by socialism and by the conflict between capital and labor to the “organic-statist” ideal of a harmonic society. This is a crucial point for the understanding of the ruralista project that the author proposed.

Torres, after focusing on the overall moral, social and economic conditions that undermined the construction of the Brazilian nation, subtly identified the linchpin of a possible turnaround: an end to the unnatural proletarization of Brazilian peasants under the effect of degenerating forces. As we have seen, the author considered the entire life of contemporary Brazil the byproduct of “colonial exploitation” (“exploração colonial”). The country was, on account of its elite of politicians and literati imbued with imported ideologies, a “moral and intellectual colony” (“colônia moral e intelectual”) as well as, on account of its subordination to foreign actors, an “economic colony” (“colônia econômica”). The state, as it was fully controlled by the beneficiaries of such a neo-colonial order, exerted a “disturbing and degrading influence […] as the creator and fomenter of speculation, of illegitimate businesses, of industries with no base in our nature, […] and of fraudulent fortunes.” The possibility of breaking such a

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97 Torres, A organização nacional, 33: “um proletariado urbano muito superior ao que deveramos ter.”
98 Ibid., 33-35.
99 Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro, 31.
100 Ibid., 77.
101 Torres, A organização nacional, 192: “a influência perturbadora e aviltante do Estado, como criador e fomente de especulações, de negócios ilegítimos, de indústrias sem base em nossa natureza […] e de fortunas fraudulentas.”
mighty apparatus of entrenched interests resided, in the author’s view, in the recognition of Brazil’s “authentic” character: this was the core of Torres’ remedies.

3.4. “Pátria is the Land:”

Alberto Torres and the Reform of Brazilian Agriculture

The Edenic vision constituted the starting point of Torres’ proposal for the restructuring of Brazil. The claim that Brazil was a natural paradise was presented, with a certain magniloquence, as a corollary of a universalist interpretation of human history, that closely linked nature and civilization.

The inter-tropical is the cradle of the human animal; the most perfect type of the animal kingdom fixed in temperate or warm climates; there the early and most flourishing civilizations blossomed; there the aspirations and desires of the men of all regions naturally converge! […] It is natural that man tries to go back to his cradle, as he always finds there fertile soils and climates favorable to life.  

In light of Torres’ categorical dismissal of Brazil’s extant political and economic organization, the consequence of such a peremptory statement were evident. If a blessed land such as Brazil was plagued by inefficiency and stagnation, the reason resided in fundamental mistakes made by the ruling groups. This meant that the substitution of “alienated” leaders and structures was not only possible, but it should be accomplished through the recognition of the

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102 Ibid., 59-60: “A zona intertropical é o berço do animal humano; foi em climas médios, ou cálidos, que se fixou o typo mais perfeito do reino animal; ahi floresceram as primeiras e mais luxuriantes civilizações; para ahi convergem, naturalmente, as aspirações e os desejos dos homens de todas as regiões! [...] É natural que o homem tente voltar para seu berço, sempre que ahi encontre terras ferteis e climas propícios á vida.”
“authentic” core of the country’s nature. Brazil pertained to the part of the world with the “most perfect” climates, landscapes and creatures, and this awareness, in the author’s view, was the necessary premise for any serious national project.

The key word that Torres employed to propose his own solution was *pátria* (homeland). He offered a twofold definition of this notion, as he connected the environmental and the economic dimensions under the seductive label “*pátria of the children*” (“*a pátria dos filhos*”).

This constituted a reaction to what the author termed “sentimental” or “emotional” patriotism, i.e. the superficial and inane sense of belonging that the oligarchic elite cultivated to conceal the country’s spoliation. But, even more important, the “*pátria of the children*” was also contrasted with the “*pátria of the fathers*” (“*pátria dos pais*”). His new patriotic discourse, in this way, emphasized the future of the nation, more than its past, and acquired a new programmatic dimension. Torres’ pragmatic patriotism mainly operated on two terrains: the environment and the economy.

The Brazilian neo-colonial system was mainly based, in Torres’ words, on “the pimping of our soil” (“*o lenocinio do nosso solo*”). The author’s reaction to the depletion of Brazilian natural resources was articulated through a proto-environmentalist language that emphasized the long-term consequences of shortsighted policies.

[I]t is necessary to react against the notion that is now prevailing everywhere that the economic destiny of peoples is to exploit resources or to make them exploit, progressively devastating mines, deposits and new virgin areas. This implies the irremediable destruction of the treasures that were elaborated during the entire

103 Ibid., 136.
104 This contraposition is developed rather fragmentarily throughout Torres’ writings. See especially ibid., 113-123 and 138-193.
105 Ibid., 136.
106 Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 198.
107 The long-term history of the irregular exploitation of Brazilian natural resources, and especially of its wood lands, is critically reconstructed in Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*. 
What was needed was therefore a reversal of principles, granting to the collectivity the rights that were now abused by the economic elite.

Any kind of natural resource is the heritage of the people who inhabits the national territory; but the individuals who hold the property of the soil and subsoil consider themselves, and almost always legally are, rulers of their wealth. Every individual and every generation squanders in this way, egoistically, precious resources that have an immense value.

A second crucial aspect of the unreasonable use of natural resources regarded agricultural production. Torres polemically indicated the Brazilian dependency on imports for the supply of basic foodstuffs:

It is surely not an exaggeration to say that, in our entire territory, there is no district, no settlement, no estate in which Argentine dried meat and Argentine or North American wheat is not consumed; meat and bread – the two primary, elementary and unavoidable foods for contemporary peoples.

It is not just a case of economic and trade relations [...] but a case of subordination of the national economy to foreign economies, as a living organic body. After almost a century of independent life, a territorially immense and underpopulated country that lacks the basic elements for peoples’ nutrition and that is fit to produce, should only attribute this fault to the recklessness of its national politics.

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108 Torres, *A organização nacional*, 228-229: “é força reagir contra a noção, corrente por toda a parte, de que o destino econômico dos povos é o de explorar ou fazer explorar riquezas, devastando sucessivamente minas, jazidas e novas regiões virgens, o que importa decretar a destruição irremediável de tesouros elaborados durante toda a formação da Terra, em simples sacrifício à cobiça, ao passo que vão sendo desprezadas as terras a que se roubou o húmus, e eliminadas as populações que as habitavam. Tal tem sido a nossa política, destruidora e imprevidente.”

109 Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 195: “As riquezas naturais, sob quaisquer formas são patrimônio do povo que habita o território nacional; mas os indivíduos que têm a propriedade do solo e do subsolo julgam-se, e o são quase sempre, em Direito, senhores de suas riquezas. Cada indivíduo e cada geração dilapidam, assim, em proveito próprio, fontes preciosas de imensos valores.”

110 Torres, *A organização nacional*, 217: “Não há, certamente, exagero em dizer-se que não existe, em toda a extensão do nosso território, um distrito, uma povoação, uma fazenda, onde não se faça consumo da carne-seca argentina e da farinha de trigo, argentina ou norte-americana; a carne e o pão — os dois primeiros, os dois elementares, os dois imprescindíveis gêneros da alimentação dos povos contemporâneos. Não é um simples caso de relações econômicas e comerciais [...] mas um caso de subordinação da economia nacional à economia estrangeira, em objeto orgânico vital. Um país, vastíssimo em território e despovoado, carecendo dos primeiros elementos da
According to historians, a severe crisis in foodstuff production and supply was affecting Rio de Janeiro in this period, although the picture for Brazil as whole was less dramatic.\textsuperscript{111} As a matter of fact, the problem of provisions was one of the most harshly denounced and debated issues in the press of the federal capital at the time.\textsuperscript{112}

In Torres’ argument, the obvious consequence of such an imbalance was the widespread diffusion of malnutrition among the Brazilian population, which he exposed in several passages.\textsuperscript{113} In the 1910s, thanks to pioneering scientific and medical expeditions into the Brazilian backlands, the dramatic health conditions of the rural people had become a topic of heated debate among the intellectual and political elite.\textsuperscript{114} In the author’s eyes, the scandal of a starving population intimately affected the entire body of the nation. Thus, “[i]t is necessary to reestablish the nutrition and circulation in the organism of this country.”\textsuperscript{115}

The organic metaphor of the nation as a living body that needed to be properly fed, as well as the image of a timeless riches squandered by a handful of speculators, clearly pointed to the idea of a “pátria of the children.” The reestablishment of the natural boundary between the pátria, as the land in geographical terms, and the nation, as the people inhabiting that space,
became the priority, because “[a]s we ruin the land, we also quit forming the nation. As we abandon the land and neglect the nation, we abandon the Pátria, because the Pátria is the land, as a habitat, and mainly, sentimentally and rationally, the nation, i.e. the people.”

In more concrete terms, the rescue of the binomial pàtria-nation passed through “a policy of conservation of nature” (“política de conservação da natureza”) and the “found[ing of] the economy of our Pátria” (“fundar a economia da nossa Pátria”). This double task, even for a jurist like Torres, took precedence over the reorganization of the country’s institutional framework. As a matter of fact, “not even a barbarous nation can be free without security and juridical guarantees; it cannot be free if it does not dominate its sources of wealth, its means of support, the living outcomes of its production and its commerce.”

According to Torres, Brazil should thus adopt a new policy toward the use of its natural heritage. Given the unbalance between the country’s continental dimension and its relatively small number of inhabitants, as well as the extant predominance of extensive agriculture, Torres considered any expansion of the cultivated areas dispensable. What was really preferable, according to him, was to “not only save [the soils] that still remain virgin, but also mend and restore those that are already compromised.” In a country with extremely unequal land tenure patterns, and in which the coffee boom had generated a highly speculative land market, such

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116 Torres, O problema nacional brasileiro, 41: “Assim esgotando a terra, deixamos, também, de formar a nação. Abandonando a terra, e não cuidando da nação, abandonamos a Pátria, porque a Pátria é a terra, como habitat, mas principalmente, para o sentimento e para a razão, a nação, isto é, a gente.”
117 Ibid., 213.
118 Ibid., 103.
119 Ibid., 238: “Uma nação pode ser livre, ainda que bárbara, sem segurança e sem garantias jurídicas; não pode ser livre, sem o domínio de suas fontes de riqueza, de seus meios de nutrição, das obras vivas de sua indústria e do seu comércio.”
120 Ibid., 50: “não só poupar as que nos restam em estado virgem, senão reparar e restabelecer as que já estão comprometidas.”
an approach would have constituted a dramatic reversal. Moreover, this meant a rejection of the landed elites’ historical role in the process of internal colonization. We are here faced with a first fundamental step toward calling into question the traditional role played by the landed aristocracy in the definition of rural policies.

The keystone of Torres’ reformist project was education. On the one hand, in accordance with his broader argument on “alienation,” he underlined the ruling classes’ ignorance of the problems and potentialities of Brazilian primary industry, as he noted that “[t]his land still needs to be wholly studied” (“A terra, esta, está de todo por ser estudada”) and “[w]e still do not know what our land can produce and how it must produce.” The author employed an image that would become central, from the 1920s on, in the formulation of Brazilian identity as well as of concrete governmental policies: the contraposition between *litoral* and *sertão*, i.e. the coastal area and the backlands.

We walked toward the ocean, we need to go back to the center: we flew, as we abandoned the land that implored our care. We wanted to form our head before we had a body; we planted imported seeds and we are still not able to produce seeds; we import and cultivate alien fruits as we abandon the fruits of our climate.

The reference to “seeds” and “fruits” clearly had a double meaning: metaphorically, it alluded to the import of foreign ideas and institutions; literally, it recalled the contrast between

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122 Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 102.
123 Torres, *A organização nacional*, 45: “Nós não sabemos ainda o que a nossa terra pode produzir e como deve produzir.”
124 The entire Lima, *Um sertão chamado Brasil* is devoted to this important theme, which is analyzed mainly in its implications for Brazilian intellectual history and the development of social sciences. For an overview of its political meanings and uses, see Chauí, *Brasil*, 66-70.
125 Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro*, 116: “Tendo caminhado para o oceano, precisamos regressar ao centro: voamos, abandonando a terra, que implorava os nossos cuidados. Quisemos formar cabeça, antes de possuir um corpo, plantamos sementes importadas, e ainda não sabemos produzir sementes; importamos e cultivamos frutos alheios, abandonando os frutos do nosso clima.”
the production of crops for export\textsuperscript{126} and negligence in producing foodstuff for domestic consumption. Even more significant is the choice of an indefinite “we” as the collective subject of the movement from the coast to the interior. At a first level, Torres was demanding novel attention to the problems of the rural world from the leading elite. The terms of the request were markedly paternalistic and rather ingenuous, as the author pointed to the need to

convince capitalists [\textit{os homens de capital}] to comply with a provident policy. It should avoid the vain hope of resisting the inevitable evolution of the problems of labor and capital, but it should protect the Brazilian economy from the risk of surrendering in the name of alien interest, and should prepare our society for a substitution of institutions and costumes, without subversion and sacrifices.\textsuperscript{127}

The goal is clear: the well-off should accept a pragmatic compromise that, in exchange from some limited concessions (the “provident policy”), would establish a wardship over the masses, and would create “a civilization in which the socialist reaction would be exotic,”\textsuperscript{128} as Torres’ explained in a previous passage. The author’s intuition regarding the subordination of labor to state control through the granting of some benefits was destined to play a central role in Brazilian history under the Vargas regime. What is distinctive in Torres’ plan is the terrain on which such a harmonization of society should have been attained: it was not the city with its industrial workers and civil servants, but the countryside.

Beyond the plea to the economic elite, in fact, Torres delved into an ambitious project of social engineering that he encapsulated in a rather evocative image: “[t]he Brazilian people need […] to be ‘immigrated’ [to the countryside] to retake possession of its land and to enjoy its

\textsuperscript{126} Incidentally, both sugarcane and coffee were effectively introduced in Brazil by the Europeans, as they are indigenous, respectively, of Southeast Asia and Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 227: “convencer os homens de capital, da necessidade de aderir a uma política previdente, que, sem a esperança vã de resistir à evolução inevitável dos problemas do trabalho e do capital, defenda a economia brasileira do risco de ser imolada, em proveito de interesses alheios, e prepare a nossa sociedade para ir substituindo as instituições e os costumes, sem subversão e sem sacrifícios.”

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 203: “uma civilização, onde a reação socialista seria exótica.”
In the face of the risks posed, in term of pauperization and politicization, by the ongoing urbanization of the Brazilian masses, Torres’ focused on a package of measures that would favor the “re-ruralization” of the people. The Edenic myth, in this case, would serve as a psychological spur to motivate common citizens to abandon the urban setting or to remain in the countryside. In fact, nothing could serve this purpose better than “the stimulus [provided by the] hope of attaining fortune through rich, promising and fertile lands.”

This awareness of the potential of Brazilian soils was one of the goals of the new system of popular education that Torres prescribes, as he criticized the Republican school system.

We never had economic policy, economic education, formation of a productive spirit, work of propaganda and stimulus in favor of applied activities. On the contrary, we organized a “public education” that, from the primary school to the academies, is just a channel system for the exodus of the youth from the countryside to the cities, and from production to parasitism. What was really needed, in Torres’ view, was a model of civic and vocational education targeted at the training of those “who trudge in the working of the land and that have not yet learnt to use the plough of the Egyptians and the Greek.” This statement on the lack of modern agricultural techniques, that at first sight appeared to be merely a rhetorical device, had much substance in the Brazil of Torres’ times. According to the economic historian Warren Dean, in this period

[t]he technological backwardness of Brazilian agriculture was extreme. […] The plough was irrelevant to this regime; indeed in some regions it was entirely

129 Ibid., 142: “O povo brasileiro precisa [...] ser “imigrado” à posse da sua terra e ao gozo de seus bens.”
130 Ibid., 154: “o estímulo da esperança de fortuna sobre terras ricas, prometedoras e férteis.”
131 Ibid., 273: “Nunca tivemos política econômica, educação econômica, formação de espírito industrial, trabalho de propaganda e de estímulo para a aplicação das atividades. Organizamos, pelo contrário, uma «instituição pública», que, da escola primária às academias, não é senão um sistema de canais de êxodo da mocidade do campo para as cidades e da produção para o parasitismo.”
132 Ibid., 206: “que mourejam no labor da terra e que ainda não aprenderam a guiar o arado dos egípcios e dos gregos.”
lacking. In 1920 less than 14 per cent of farm properties included in the census employed them, and many of these were probably wooden versions.\textsuperscript{133}

The modernization of the agricultural sector through the teaching of modern methods and the introduction of efficient tools was directed toward the increased production of crops for domestic consumption. This, in Torres’ mind, should have been attained through a modification of the traditional land tenure. In his own words:

\[\text{[n]ext to big cultivations that produce for export, [we need to] create small cultivations that will produce for domestic consumption; our outcasts would be incorporated into society, and Brazil would have a broad class applied to the work of supplying the middle classes with the nourishment that now, even in the cities, is scarce and poor.}\textsuperscript{134}

Torres was explicit in stating that he did not see the extension of small-scale property as a way to completely eliminate the latifundium. The author’s call for a pragmatic accommodation with the landed aristocracy prevented any possibility of radical land reform. At the same time, his emphasis on a policy of environmental conservation was at odds with any expansion of tilled land over virgin soils. Therefore, the proposed compromise was a moderate program of land redistribution that demanded that large landholders accept some sacrifices. “Large estates – Torres wrote – are an evil that cannot be suppressed in Brazil, but that needs to be progressively limited, and whose abuses and vices should be generically contrasted.”\textsuperscript{135} Among these “abuses and vices,” were the peasants’ exploitative working and living conditions, which landowners, in the author’s opinion, should improve.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{133} Dean, “The Brazilian Economy, 1870-1930,” 709.
\textsuperscript{134} Torres, A organização nacional, 169: “Ao lado da grande cultura, que explora as produções que se exportam, fundar-se-ia a pequena cultura, para as produções de consumo; os nossos pârias seriam incorporados à sociedade; e o Brasil possuiria uma vasta classe aplicada ao trabalho de lhe fornecer o alimento, que, até nas cidades, é escasso e mau, para as próprias classes médias.”
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 287: “A grande propriedade é um mal que não pode ser extinto no Brasil, mas deve ir sendo progressivamente limitado, e energeticamente combatidos os abusos e vícios que acarreta.”
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 256.
However, the creation of a large sector of small-scale landowners was the cornerstone of the project. Torres showed a penchant for the adoption of cooperation and mutuality in order to efficiently organize agricultural activities, in terms of access to credit and machinery, organization of labor, production and distribution. Examples of successful cooperatives, drawn from Europe and even Australia, were discussed in detail in many passages of Torres’ writings. The benefits of a less concentrated and more evenly distributed land were undeniable in the author’s mind.

The land can provide all we lack for living. As we create common agricultural installations [the cooperatives] able to produce for commerce, and as we grant to as many Brazilians as possible the opportunity to obtain from the land everything a family requires, like in the most civilized countries, we would solve two problems: the supply of basic items for ordinary life to the populations occupied in other activities in the cities; and the creation of comfort and prosperity for the majority of our citizens.139

The methods and the concrete policies that were needed to attain such a virtuous, all-embracing result were, after all, secondary. The goal was the foundation of a “an agrarian republic” (“uma república agrícola”)140 as the benign physical geography of the country not only suggested as an opportunity for progress, but prescribed as a destiny:

Our country needs to be, primarily, an agrarian country. It would be ridiculous to deny it this destiny, in the face of its extended territory.141

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137 Ibid., 291-292.
138 On Europe, see ibid., 168. The author also translates, transcribes and comments on a long excerpt from a lecture pronounced in Philadelphia by the Australian politician John A. Cockburn. In it, the beneficial consequences of state intervention in the reorganization of agriculture through cooperation are extolled (ibid., 39-44).
139 Ibid., 172: “A terra nos pode suprir tudo de que carecemos para viver. Com a criação das indústrias agrícolas comuns, capazes de produção para o comércio, e com a localização do maior número possível de brasileiros em situação de poderem obter da terra, como se dá nos países mais civilizados, tudo de que pode carecer uma família, resolveríamos dois problemas: o de suprir, nas cidades, as populações ocupadas com outras indústrias, dos gêneros indispensáveis à vida ordinária, e o de criar conforto e prosperidade, para grande número de patrícios nossos.”
140 Ibid., 168.
141 Ibid., 288: “Nosso país tem de ser, em primeiro lugar, um país agrícola. Fora ridículo contestar-lhe esse destino, diante de seu vasto território.”
The evident destiny of Brazil is to be an agrarian country: every action that tends to misdirect it from this destiny is a crime against its nature and against human interests.\textsuperscript{142}

It cannot be denied that Torres’ propositions revealed an idealistic approach. The chance to obtain even a marginal surrender of the economic and political elites’ monopoly on land – and control on labor – were rather unrealistic, at least until the oligarchic arrangements of the First Republic remained in place. Moreover, Torres’ essays lacked further details on the specific content and modalities of his proposals’ implementation. However, his trust in the potential of a centralized institutional framework and of an enlightened ruling group as foolproof instruments for the implementation of radical changes would prove his appeal after the old regime was overthrown in 1930.

\textsuperscript{142} Torres, \textit{O problema nacional brasileiro}, 214-215: “O Brasil tem por destino evidente ser um país agrícola: toda a ação que tender a desviá-lo desse destino é um crime contra a sua natureza e contra os interesses humanos.”
4. A Reactionary Reading of Alberto Torres’ Intellectual Legacy:

the Elitist Ruralismo of Oliveira Viana

One of the most prolific and successful disciples of Alberto Torres was Francisco José de Oliveira Viana (1883-1951). Although he was eighteen years younger than his master, Viana shared with the intellectual from Itaboraí a number of characteristics. He was also born into a landowner family of the Rio de Janeiro hinterland, and maintained for his entire life a deep attachment to the fazenda that he inherited in Saquarema.\(^{143}\) The latter municipality actually epitomized the fate of the late Imperial political system: the town and its plantation interests were so identified with the traditional Conservative Party that its members were nicknamed, at the national level, saquaremas.\(^{144}\) Although the Viana family occupied just a minor place in the town’s elite circles, the disruptive crisis unfolding in the late 19th-century political order and among its oligarchic ruling class certainly had a deep impact on Oliveira, whose opportunities for advancement in social status through the influential ruling class of Saquarema were dramatically jeopardized. A law degree also united Torres and Viana: the latter obtained his qualification in 1905. However, this was not his initial intention: according to a testimony, law


school was a second choice after he missed the opportunity to enroll in the military Polytechnic School,\textsuperscript{145} which was in those years a stronghold of scientific positivism and modernizing ambitions.\textsuperscript{146}

For reasons of social status and age, Oliveira Viana’s entry into the public intellectual debate was rather different from Torres’. The possibility of a political career was out of reach for a middle-ranking member of the faded provincial elite. After his graduation in 1905, Viana made his living teaching in high schools and as a private tutor, before he obtained a university professorship in the Rio de Janeiro State School of Law in 1916, as well as contributing to local and national newspapers. Both were typical occupations of impoverished individuals with intellectual talent and ambitions who sought their fortune in the major cites of early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Brazil.\textsuperscript{147} Viana met Torres as early as 1907 and, according to their correspondence and a number of Viana’s explicit claims, the interaction with the older master was crucial for his debut as a political essayist.\textsuperscript{148} According to the same sources, discrepancies were not infrequent in their intellectual relationship, and this chapter aims at illustrating how a set a common values and beliefs could lead to very different, and to a certain degree opposing, interpretations of Brazil.

It is not surprising that historians have been particularly harsh with Viana, when he was discussed within the broader history of Brazilian authoritarian thought. He was seen as Torres’ “misled disciple,”\textsuperscript{149} and as an intellectually mediocre observer of Brazil, whose “delirium”\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{147} Miceli, 79-81.
\textsuperscript{148} See the documents quoted in Needell, “History, Race, and the State,” 10.
\textsuperscript{149} Tavares, 60. See also 37-65.
\textsuperscript{150} Leite, 295.
produced a “confused and contradictory elaboration,”¹⁵¹ that directly inspired the coming of Vargas’ dictatorial regime (1937-1945), with which Viana himself collaborated as a legal consultant. Also method and style of his writings have been heavily criticized. An historian highlighted the “instrumental, or even ritual character of quotation” in Viana’s work, as a means for asserting himself as a serious scientist.¹⁵² Unsurprisingly, coherently with the xenophile cultural environment that Torres and Viana described and criticized, the most celebrated intellectual authorities in the Brazil of the time were European and North American. Therefore, Viana’s books and essays were rich in references to the most advanced theories and methods for the study of human society. The author presented his first work, *Populações meridionais do Brasil* (1920), as the result of the “[n]eed to complement history as criticism of documents with new disciplines: geography, anthropology, psychology, sociology.”¹⁵³

Viana’s most systematized volume among his early writings, *Evolução do povo brasileiro* (1923), constitutes the best example of this “scientific” attitude. It opened with two methodological chapters in which the author clarified his eclectic appropriation of a variety of paradigms that included German historicism, European social psychology, French anthropogeography, and Anglo-Saxon climatic determinism. Rejecting the uncritical application of social evolutionism, Viana stated his belief in the heterogeneity of the human experience and in multi-causality as the principle that commands change. Therefore, he grounded his study of the Brazilian trajectory in an analysis of the combined action of historical and environmental factors: such a composite method, from his perspective, constituted the only suitable path toward

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 300. See also 290-305.
¹⁵² Carvalho, “A utopia de Oliveira Viana,” 85.
“objective” knowledge. Such an emphasis on the construction of a scientific historical social science is crucial not only in explaining Viana’s insistence on the remote roots of Brazilian peculiarities, or in understanding his academic ambitions in the changing context of Brazilian higher education. It is also revealing of the priority that scientific research had for him over immediate political goals, at least in this early phase. Nonetheless, the interpretations and the prescriptions for the rural world that he developed in his major works from the 1920s – the ones on which this chapter focuses – will be far from exempt from political implications.

4.1. “We Are the Latifundium:”

Oliveira Viana and the Deterministic Necessity of Large Estates

Oliveira Viana’s early publications showed a decided penchant for historical analysis. His first book, *Populações meridionais do Brasil*, published in 1920, was conceived as a part of an ambitious multi-volume project on the country’s social history. Geographic macro-regions were the units that he proposed to study in order to capture the essence of the different “types” who cohabited the immense national territory. Therefore, the book on the “Center-South” – the area now called Southeast, which included the state of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Minas Gerais – should have been followed by other three volumes, devoted to the “South,” the “North” and the

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Amazon, respectively. Although Viana did not completely abandon this undertaking, it is evident that his conclusions on the centrality of the southeastern experience profoundly affected his perspective and his publishing agenda. His 1923 book *Evolução do povo brasileiro* – which, as noted above, he conceived as the culmination of his efforts as a social scientist – was essentially a national extension of his early interpretation of the “Center-South.”

The preface of *Populações meridionais do Brasil* clearly stated the Southeast’s primacy as the historical core of Brazil’s national trajectory. Anticipating one of the central threads of his intellectual project, Viana justified his regional focus observing that “the major center of gravity for national politics, after Independence, fixed in the area of elaboration of the *matuto* [i.e., Southeastern] type.” The function of Rio de Janeiro as the political capital of independent Brazil and the role of its elites in the construction of the state, in the author’s view, were sufficient reasons for his approach. Significantly, the unquestionable economic centrality of the southeastern region, at least from the 18th century on, was not a relevant part of his premise. What is however fundamental is the rural connotation of the southeastern social “type” that Viana picked out. In his own words, there was no doubt that “the specific weight of the social mass of the country is given by the men of agricultural formation.” As “[r]oots of the nation, [the rural populations], thanks to their spirit, their industriousness, their human flood, make the

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155 Viana, *Populações meridionais do Brasil... Centro-Sul*, xxi-xxiv. What Viana terms here “North” does not correspond to the area that now goes under this name and that roughly corresponds to the Amazon basin. On the contrary, the author is here referring to the Northeast.

156 The second volume of the series, the one devoted to the South, was published the year later the death of Viana by two of his disciples under the title *Populações meridionais do Brasil: história, organização, psicologia. Segundo volume (póstumo): o campeador rio-grandense*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1952. However, this very lateness attests the marginality that this project gradually came to play in the broader intellectual trajectory of the author.

157 Viana, *Populações meridionais do Brasil... Centro-Sul*, xxiii: “o grande centro de gravitação da política nacional, depois da Independência, se fixa justamente dentro da zona de elaboração do typo matuto.”

158 Ibid., xxii: “porque o peso específico da massa social do paiz é dado pelo homem da formação agricola.”
The combination of an elitist bias toward ruling groups and the conviction that Brazilian society had a fundamentally rural nature lead Viana, rather tautologically, to focus his attention on a dominant actor: the traditional landed aristocracy.

*Populações meridionais do Brasil* was, to a large extent, the history of the genesis and rise to power of the latifundists. According to the author,

[i]t is in this mass of rural large landholders that the only really superior class of the country forms, [as the group] in which the greater amount of authority is concentrated. [...] This is its final function in our history. It started the pastoral and agricultural movement of the I century [the 16th c.]. It started the internal colonizing [sertanista] movement of the II century [the 17th c.]. It started the mining movement of the III century [the 18th c.]. It was the pillar of the Independence political movement and of the foundation of the Empire. As the magnet of all the social classes of the country, its entrance on the scene of high national politics is the major event of the IV century [the 19th c].

In order to explain the incontrovertible superiority of the landed elite, Viana made recourse to his peculiar version of the Edenic trope, which, in line with his scientific ambitions, he cloaked in the language of geographic determinism. Expanding Torres’ perfunctory reading of the colonial experience, Viana highlighted several factors that inevitably led to the hegemony of large-scale properties. Abundance of untilled lands, very low population density, loose control of Portuguese colonial authority, and natural obstacles to the formation of an urban network

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159 Ibid., xxv-xxvi: “Matrizes da nacionalidade, dellas, do seu espirito, da sua laboriosidade, de seu affluxo humano, é que vivem as cidades do hinterland ou da costa, e crescem, e se / desenvolvem.”

160 Ibid., 39-40: “É nessa massa de grandes proprietarios rurais que fórma a unica classe realmente superior do paiz, aquella em que se concentra a maior somma de autoridade social. [...] É esta a sua ultima função em nossa historia. Della parte o movimento pastoril e agricola do I seculo. Della parte o movimento sertanista do II seculo. Della parte o movimento minerador do III seculo. Nella se apoia o movimento politico da Independencia e da fundação do Imperio. Centro de polarização de todas as classes sociaes do paiz, a sua entrada no scenario da alta politica nacional é o maior acontecimiento do IV seculo.” In his works, Viana adopted a peculiar chronology and counted centuries starting from the Portuguese discovery of Brazil in 1500.
cooperated during the early colonial period to produce a close-knit class of landholders.\textsuperscript{161}

However, Brazilian physical peculiarities also determined the configuration of the rest of society. On the one hand, the imbalance between available resources and labor was solved with the importation of African slaves: the consequent ethnic mixing and formation of a racially stratified society were equally unavoidable.\textsuperscript{162} On the other hand, more importantly, the poor, in spite of their subordination and deprivation, had the privilege of inhabiting a corner of Eden:

It is at this point that we vividly sense as the action of the environment influences the structures of society. Under the amenity of our tropical climate life becomes an easy enterprise. Like the Greek, all of us can live under the sun and the stars, singing. There is no bad weather here. In every season a perpetual spring delight spreads. […] [The Brazilian] is nourished, more than by his efforts, by the tropical nature and its prodigality.\textsuperscript{163}

Such a munificent living environment dispensed the slave and the peasant from hard work, and permitted the master to adopt, as an integral part of his superior set of values,\textsuperscript{164} a benevolent attitude toward his labor force. The myth that described Brazil as a cornucopia of easy sustenance and wealth was here fully at work. The “excess of land” (“excesso de terra”)\textsuperscript{165} moreover, was the main cause of the looseness of social relations. “Neither does the landowner necessarily need the field hand, nor does the latter necessarily depend on the landowner.”\textsuperscript{166} The typical latifundium is so extended that the landowner could tolerate low productivity, and both

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 61-68.  \\
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 69-81.  \\
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 162: “É nesse ponto que sentimos vivamente como a ação do meio cósmico influí sobre a estrutura da sociedade. Sob a amenidade dos nossos climas tropicais a vida se torna empresa fácil. Como os gregos, todos nós podemos viver ao sol e às estrelas: cantando. Não há aqui intempéries. Em todas as estações derrama-se um perpétuo encanto primaveril. […] Mais do que o seu esforço, é a natureza tropical, com a sua prodigalidade, que o sustenta.”  \\
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 48-53.  \\
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 163.  \\
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 164: “nem o fazendeiro precisa necessariamente do lavrador braçal; nem este depende necessariamente do fazendeiro.”
\end{flushright}
forced and free workers could easily find opportunities for survival, within and outside the porous boundaries of the estates.

In Viana’s view, a disaggregated society like this was not able to produce any countrywide solidarity. The only unit within which an enduring order was constructed was the latifundium itself. “The great rural lord makes of his sunny mansion his world. In it he lives his existence as in an ideal microcosm: and everything is like society does not exist.”167 In this fragmented world of self-sufficient large estates, the only logic that could preside over social relations was that of the clan. Viana does not limit himself to describing the penetration of patron-client dynamics into every corner of Brazilian society.168 He also delves into an analysis of the collective psychology that the clan patterns imposed on commoners. Their portrait is encapsulated in the following lines.

Our peasant, valiant, brave, proud, even arrogant, only feels well when he is under a chief, to whom he obeys with the passivity of a perfect automaton. […] This intimate certainty – that somebody thinks for him and, at the right moment, will set the tone for action – calms, reassures, pacifies and dampens him.169

If the common Brazilian was imbued with “the passivity of a perfect automaton,” no threat to the social and political order could originate from him.

In fact, unlike the European masses, the Brazilian populace was not interested in “liberties” (“liberdades”)170 and accepted with good grace to live under an authoritarian regime
inspired by “Caesarism” (“cesarismo”).①71 Such an inert population was completely unsuitable for political mobilization and insurrections,①72 and totally impermeable to foreign subversive ideologies such as socialism and communism.①73

It is rather surprising to notice such a dismissal of popular radicalism in writings that were composed in the late 1910s. Although the Brazilian Communist Party was only constituted in 1922, just after the publication of early Viana’s works, anarcho-syndicalism was already significant in those years. In 1917 a month-long general strike had paralyzed the city of São Paulo, and workers had been able to obtain noteworthy concessions. In 1918, Rio de Janeiro had been the scene of an unsuccessful anarchist insurrection that was supported by long factory strikes.①74 Thus, by the time of Populações... and Pequenos estudos, tangible events had already broken the illusion that Brazil was a society in which a pacific and satisfied populace submissively obeyed the ruling classes. Nonetheless, Viana showed no interest in recognizing this reality, and did not even adopt the polarization between city and countryside that his master employed to counter the politicization of the masses that the urban setting was provoking. Apparently, his blind trust in the unchallengeable role of the landed elite as the predestined controller of society left no room, in his rhetoric and reasoning, for any alternatives.

Therefore, in Viana’s social history of Brazil even the resort to conflict and violence constitute a monopoly of the national ruling class. The progressive emergence of the southeastern rural aristocracy moved through two main axes of positive development: territorial

①71 Ibid., 378.
①72 Ibid., 381-401.
expansion and pacification. In the author’s account, in fact, the highly combative notables of the early colonial period, who used the unstable populace as cannon fodder to compete for local power and assets, underwent a dramatic change. This occurred first by means of the so-called *bandeiras* – privately organized expeditions into the backlands in search of slaves or natural resources: “in two centuries, paulistas [people from São Paulo] scattered around almost the entire Brazil”\(^{176}\) This key process of internal colonization transformed the “rural civilization” ("civilização rural")\(^{177}\) of the Southeast into the dominant formula for the organization of society at the national level.

Concurrently, new economic cycles led to a progressive rooting of the aristocracy in Brazil’s territory. Initial semi-nomadic and predatory activities, such as slave hunting and gold washing, were abandoned in favor of cattle ranching, mining and agriculture. In this way, using Viana’s iconic images, “gold transforms the *sertanista* warrior in a pacific worker. Later, this pacific worker turns into a sedentary farmer. In this way, at the beginning of the IV century [the 19th. c.], this extremely restless society is perfectly stabilized.”\(^{178}\) According to the author, the conversion to new intensive crops – sugar and coffee – and the centralizing efforts of conservative governments finally produced a beneficial equilibrium by the mid-19th century.\(^{179}\)

Viana’s detailed analysis of the ascending trajectory of the landed elite had a precise function: to contrast the pacific order attained under the Empire with the abrupt decline that

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\(^{175}\) Viana, *Populações meridionaes do Brasil... Centro-Sul*, 237-257.

\(^{176}\) Ibid., 112: “Em dous seculos, os paulsitas dispersam-se por quasi todo o Brasil.”

\(^{177}\) Ibid., 84.

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 113: “O ouro transforma o guerreiro sertanista em Industrial pacifico. Depois, esse industrial pacifico se faz agricultor sedentario. De modo que, ao entrar o IV seculo, essa sociedade agitadissima esta perfeitamente estabilisada.” See the entire previous section 82-113.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 168-174, 285-290, and 411.
followed Abolition and the proclamation of the Republic. This was of course functional to Viana’s main goal: the substitution of the incumbent political system with a new institutional and administrative order. More specifically, his deterministic reconstruction of Brazilian history served a dual purpose. On the one hand, the rural aristocracy was celebrated as the nation’s only valuable social actor, and as the protagonist of a glorious endeavor only interrupted by the misjudgments of the recent Republican period. This dictated that only a state that was regarded as independent from broader society, and as the patrimony of a restricted elite, could alter, for better or for worse, the course of history. Coherently, as we will see, Viana’s proposal unfolded only on the terrain of a narrowly conceived elite-state relationship. On the other hand, the vast majority of the Brazilian population was basically placed outside history, as a mere object of superior and broader forces. As it should be now evident, the myths of Brazil as a natural paradise and as an eminently rural country have, in Viana’s argument, a truly conservative function. Non-elite Brazilians have a fixed mentality, and a given set of values and material needs that a benign nature and a hierarchic social order have determined and are unquestionably able to fulfill.

Therefore, there is an important difference between the two versions of elitism displayed by Torres and Viana. The former noticed with anxiety the possible politicization of the masses, and identifies the place in which this could happen, the city, as the changing environment where the rural poor sought new opportunities. As a result, in his mind the Brazil of the 1910s still offered the possibility to head off such a drift with policies inspired by the Edenic myth. Viana,

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180 Such a conception is explained in ibid., 341-365. Chauí, *Brasil*, 70-95, discusses the long-lasting success of this political vision in Brazilian history, and its resistance nowadays.
in contrast, showed little concern about the mobilization of the lower classes. In his close-knit
analysis, they simply lacked not only any tangible reason for claims, but also the capacity to
escape from submission. Both intellectuals paternalistically considered the populace as an other-
directed subject without a political role, but they also displayed rather different perspectives on
the socioeconomic environment in which Brazilians lived. Viana, resorting to the Edenic vision,
swiftly blocked any critical consideration of inequalities and unbalances. He fundamentally
accepted the socioeconomic status quo, as a product of incommensurable geographical and
historical forces, and only contested the extemporary Brazilian political framework.

4.2. The Latifundium as an “Ideal of Happiness:”

Oliveira Viana and the Consolidation of the Landed Aristocracy

We have seen how Viana, in his early publications, was mainly interested in providing a
comprehensive “scientific” interpretation of Brazil’s entire history. This was the goal of his two
most ponderous volumes of this period, Populações meridionais do Brasil (1920) and Evolução
do povo brasileiro (1923). However, a second, closely related focus also occupied much of his
attention during these years, especially in shorter essays: the distinction between a “utopian” and
an “organic” idealism.\textsuperscript{181} This effort was evidently connected with a denunciation of the artificiality of Brazilian cultural and political life during the national period, and especially after the proclamation of the Republic in 1889.\textsuperscript{182} Under the label of “utopian idealism” the author categorizes the “bookish liberals” (“liberaes por biblio-suggestão”)\textsuperscript{183} of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, together with socialism and communism, as examples of “regressive utopias” (“utopias regressivas”).\textsuperscript{184} Nevertheless, what is more relevant at this point is the notion of “organic idealism.” Viana defined it as an ability to plan the future on the basis of positivistic “experience,” i.e. on “objective” analyses of the specific reality for which a project should be formulated.\textsuperscript{185} Thanks to what he presented as an acute and dispassionate interpretation of Brazilian history, Viana thinks to have acquired a fully authoritative voice able to prescribe what was in his eyes a simple and self-evident solution to Brazil’s problems. The “organic” qualification of such an intellectual effort explicitly referred to the positivistic ideal of the study of human societies as if they were the biological entities dissected by natural scientists. Yet, it also recalled one of the fundamental elements of the “organic-statist” conception to which Viana adhered: the idea of society as a human body in which limbs and organs – i.e. social groups – were assigned specific tasks that they must accomplish for the superior good of the whole.

\textsuperscript{182} The reaction against an “artificial Brazil” informs the methodological preface to Populações meridionaes do Brasil… Centro-Sul, xxviii-xxxiii. The historical reconstruction of the modalities and the agents that nurtured this process of alienation during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century is discussed in O idealismo na evolução política, 38-80.
\textsuperscript{183} Viana, O idealismo na evolução política, 82.
\textsuperscript{184} Viana, “Nacionalismo e questão social,” 113. See also 110-115 and 118-119.
\textsuperscript{185} Viana, O idealismo na evolução política, 15-17.
Viana argued that, in the case of Brazil, historical and geographical circumstances – not least the Brazilian Eden – had determined the irreversible power of the “rural seduction” (“sedução rural”) on the national ruling classes. The indissoluble bond between the land and the elite was reinforced by a racial argument, according to which “the property of land tends to go almost exclusively to the ethnically superior elements” of the population. Since Viana formulated these observations as scientific historical laws that governed Brazilian society, no room was left for any alternative social construction that deviated from the concentration of land in the hands of a small cluster of proprietors.

It is important to notice that the author did not give these conclusions a universalist meaning, i.e. he was not considering the Brazilian socioeconomic structure as the best set-up in absolute terms. On the contrary, in the name of human diversity, his works are rich in comparisons between Brazilian affairs and examples taken from the “civilized” countries of Europe and North America. Viana, for example, insisted that land tenure patterns were one of the crucial reasons for the irremediable dichotomy between Brazil and other more fortunate nations. Since the early colonial period, all human and natural factors had cooperated in providing no “elements for the formation of a class of small landholders. This is still one of the great faults of our social organization.”

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186 Viana, Populações meridionaes do Brasil... Centro-Sul, 24.
187 Ibid., 118: “a propriedade da terra vae caber, quasi exclusivamente, aos elementos ethnicamente superiores da massa emigrante.”
188 Incidentally, in spite of the author’s presumable intentions, this tendency surely contributes to the perpetuation of one of Viana’s ubiquitous polemical targets: the cultural subjection of Brazil to allegedly superior, if not normative, foreign historical experiences and ideologies.
189 Ibid., 205-220 and 317-339.
190 Ibid., 68: “não ha, pois, elementos para a formação de uma classe de pequenos proprietarios. Essa é ainda uma das grandes falhas da nossa organização social.”
middle class, in the European acceptation of the expression,”191 and deprived it of the “vitality of small rural properties.”192 But, in accordance with Viana’s rigidly deterministic approach, these claims could not be the premise of broader socioeconomic reforms of any kind. For the author, it was indubitable that “our rural society resembles a big and imposing building, surrounded by scaffolds, incomplete, abnormal, with unadjusted beams and still without any foundations.”193 However, Brazil already had a providential group of master masons – the landed aristocracy – who could unshakably strengthen the construction if they follow the wise directions of a first-rate architect – an “organic” idealist like Viana himself.

The raw material for this work of social consolidation was equally at hand. Rural people, who “always show pacific and tranquil costumes”194 still constituted 90% of the Brazilian population.195 Therefore, the unbreakable hierarchical link between landholders and peasants was still substantially inviolate, in spite of the mistakes made by the “utopian” idealists of the Republic. As Viana wrote, “in this colossal mass of more than twenty million rural people, including rural proletarians and big landholders, who form the anthropological and social base of the nation, our character preserves its original mark, purity and temperament.”196 So, the rural

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191 Ibid., 168: “a inexistência de uma classe média, no sentido europeu da expressão.”
192 Ibid., 174: “vitalidade dos pequenos domínios.”
193 Ibid., 176: “a nossa sociedade rural lembra um vasto e imponente edifício, em arcabouço, incompleto, insólito, com os travejamentos mal-ajustados e ainda sem pontos firmes de apoio.”
194 Ibid., 289: “se mostram sempre de costumes pacíficos e calmos.”
195 Viana, “Ruralismo e urbanismo (Expressões de um conflito),” in Pequenos estudos, 20. This roughly correspond to the aforementioned data from the 1920 census, according to which 84.4 percent of Brazilians lived in the countryside (Fausto, “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 786).
196 Ibid., 21: “nessa massa colossal de vinte e tanto milhões de campeônes, entre proletários rurais e grandes senhores de terra, que formam a base anthropologica e social da nacionalidade, o nosso caracter guarda o timbre, a pureza e a tempera primitivas.”
world was a place where time was somehow frozen, where “authentic,” traditional socioeconomic and political relations were preserved and nurtured.

In this irenic picture, the process of internal migration of the poor from the countryside to the cities was thus insignificant, both in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Manpower was still abundantly available in the backlands of Brazil, and the “strong rural virtues of our people”\textsuperscript{197} were reassuringly dominant there. Here we face the nodal point of Viana’s proposal. Nothing was offered to the lower sectors of society, not even in the paternalistic and top-down modality adopted by Torres. The only prescriptions that Viana presented were destined for the traditional privileged class, not only as the sole actor involved in their implementation, but also as the exclusive beneficiary.

The landed aristocracy was the repository of the traditional spirit of conquest that molded colonial Brazil. As a “race of pioneers” (“raça de pioneiros”)\textsuperscript{198} it still had a historical role to accomplish. In fact

\textit{[t]he colonizing movement that started more than three centuries ago, with the Northern shepherds and the sertanistas of São Vicente [roughly the São Paulo area], has not stopped, nor retracted; on the contrary, it continues, obscurely and quietly, toward the most interior frontiers of our civilization.\textsuperscript{199}}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 28: “as fortes virtudes ruraes da nossa raça!”
\item \textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 16.
\item \textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 16-17: “O movimento colonizador, iniciado, ha mais de tres seculos, com os boiaderos septentrionaes e os sERTANISTAS de S. Vicente, não parou, nem retroagiu; continua, ao contrario, obscuro e silencioso, por todas as fronteiras mais interiores da nossa civilização.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The lucrative expansion of coffee plantations was, in the author’s eyes, the most considerable example of this dynamic in recent times.\(^{200}\) This incidental point, in Viana’s broader argument, is evidently far from Torres’ perspective.

The myth of the frontier, which would become a successful trope in the following decades, was here introduced as a corollary of a specific reinterpretation of the Edenic vision.\(^{201}\) Even four centuries after the beginning of colonization, large portions of Brazilian territory were still virgin, and many fertile soils and natural resources were available for exploitation. As a matter of fact, as Viana claimed, “among us the land is still to a large extent a desert. Within the latifundia, the available and cultivable portion is huge.”\(^{202}\) Implicitly, the author is here hinting at the necessity not only of expanding the boundaries of large estates, but also of increasing the profitability of land within consolidated proprieties. In spite of Viana’s hesitancy about detailing his project, the suggested direction seems rather clear: the intensification of the process of conversion of traditional latifundia to intensive agriculture, on the pattern of what had happened in the Southeast with the coffee boom. This model, of course, did not entail any significant reform of traditional land tenure and labor relations.

In order to boost the expansion of tilled lands and the reinforcement of the latifundium, Viana’s ruralismo comprised a final step. Unsurprisingly, it regarded the social role of the landed elite, and it was presented as a reaction to a process of decay that had been taking place over the

\(^{200}\) Ibid., 18.  
\(^{201}\) The ideal of an expanding frontier in the western region of the country, as a pathway toward Brazilian progress and entrance into modernity, became a key element in Vargas’ propaganda during the 1930s. It was also retaken, with the addition of a novel attention for the Amazon region, by the military regime that took power in 1964. See Lima, *Um sertão chamado Brasil*, 41-44 and 151-152; and Chauí, *Brasil*, 37-43 and 66-70.  
\(^{202}\) *Populações meridionais do Brasil... Centro-Sul*, 163: “entre nós a terra está ainda, na sua maior parte, em deserto. Nos latifúndios, a porção disponível e aforável é vasta.”
past few decades. In the author’s words, the culprit of the Republican failure was the “recent tendency of the superior ruling classes of the country to concentrate in the capital cities; as a consequence, [we observe] a deep and widespread crisis in their professional means of support.”

Public service has become the magnet for the ambitions of a generation of lettered men who, especially in Rio de Janeiro, were impoverished by the reallocation of economic and political power to the members of the São Paulo upper crust. As a consequence, even in a society of illiterates in which an academic degree was a mark of distinction for a select few, Viana was apprehensively observing a tendency toward an “excess of graduates, politicians and bureaucrats.” The author, in accordance with his overall approach, presented a historical sketch that captured the core of his argument. It deserves a lengthy quotation.

In the old times, the dominant tendency among graduates and politicians was totally in favor of the countryside: the professional life of the graduate and the public life of the politician always gravitated around the rural estate, that is, the fazenda with its cattle, its coffee and cane plantations, its sugar mills, its abundant slaves. This was the dominant aspiration of the superior ruling classes of the country during the Empire. After 88 (and maybe a little earlier), this ideal disappeared [...] and [the upper classes] started to consider public employment as their major aspiration, and as the softest and noblest way of life. Graduates and politicians always existed abundantly, in the current as in the old regime. But, during the Empire, social relations among these two groups could be represented as the following equation: politician + graduate = big landholder [fazendeiro]; during the Republic, this equation has changed and is now formulated as politician + graduate + bureaucrat. It seems like nothing, but it is a revolution.

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203 Viana, “Ruralismo e urbanismo, 22-23: “tendencia, de origem recente das classes superiores e dirigentes do paiz a se concentrarem nas capitaes; dahi, como consequencia, uma crise intensa e extensa nos seus meios profissionaes de subsistencia.” Emphasis in the original.

204 Viana defends with conviction the prestige of university degrees against what he considers a growing bias against intellectualism in Brazilian society (ibid., 26-27).


206 Ibid., 25-26: “Nos velhos tempos, a tendencia dominante entre os doutores e os politicos era toda para o campo: a vida profissional do doutor e a vida publica do politico tinham sempre como centro de gravitacao o domnio rural, isto é, a fazenda, com os seus gados, os seus cafesaes, os seus cannaviaes, os seus engenhos, a sua numerosa escravaria. Esta é que era a aspiracao dominante das classes superiores e dirigentes do paiz, durante o Imperio. Depois de 88 (e talvez um pouco antes), esse ideal desappareceu dentre as aspiracoes das altas classes, que entraram
At this point, it is important to recall Viana’s personal trajectory as the young offspring of a decadent family of provincial landholders, whose chances to aspire to a political role had vanished under the Republic. Thanks to an early move to the capital city and a first-rate formal education, Viana was able to make his living as a teacher within public institutions, and finally to obtain a chair in the prestigious Rio de Janeiro State School of Law in 1916, when he was only 33. From that year on, therefore, Viana was one of those “graduates” whose “professional means of support” coincided with “public employment.” Indeed, he himself was a victim of the siren charm of the job opportunities offered by the state in big cities. Thus, his plea for the opening of a “field of other, more lucrative professions”\textsuperscript{207} for intellectuals was not selfless at all. What was particularly significant was the fact that the return to a livelihood based on an idealized rural world appeared to Viana as the preferable, if not the sole, option. In his mind, as his overall interpretation of past and present Brazil showed, nothing was materially or morally superior to the fazenda.

The day in which our current graduates and politicians will find in the tranquil possession of a rural estate, \textit{as the generations of fifty years ago}, their ideal of happiness, joy will come back for our people, and the moral tone of society will be immediately revitalized.\textsuperscript{208}

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 27: “o campo de outras profissões mais lucrativas.”

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.: “O dia em que os nossos doutores e os nossos políticos actuaes assentarem, como as gerações de ha cincoenta annos passados, na posse tranquilla de um dominio rural o seu ideal de felicidade, a alegria voltará ao nosso povo; o tonus moral da sociedade se revitalizará de prompto.”
The identification of Brazilians with the latifundium is thus enriched with a providential component. Viana regarded the defense of the landed aristocracy as the most valuable instrument for overcoming many aspects of the Republican crisis, not least the material precariousness of intellectuals. In fact, they and the elite in general were called to embrace a “renovation of this old national cult of the fat and nourishing Earth [...] to ‘regenerate’ our character and to ‘nationalize’ our soul.”

Incidentally, as was mentioned in the biographical section, he was for his entire life a proud holder and a regular frequenter of his family estate in Saquarema. Nonetheless, it difficult to decide if this affective bound sufficed to qualify Viana as a loyal worshipper of the “national cult of the fat and nourishing Earth” that he himself proposed.

In conclusion, Viana’s ruralismo was exclusively focused on the needs and potentialities of the elite, as the force that dominated land resources and occupied a primary place in the Brazilian society. In turn, the economic component of this plan was limited to a consolidation of the traditional, “natural” system, which Brazil’s geography and history had deterministically produced: large estates controlled by an affluent and powerful clique.

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209 Ibid., 25. “renovação desse velho culto nacional da Terra opima e nutridora [...] para ‘regenerar’ o nosso caracter e para ‘nacionalizar’ a nossa alma”
A comparison of the *ruralista* discourse of Torres and Viana’s permits us to uncover the substantial divergences that the affiliation of both intellectuals to the Brazilian conservative and authoritarian tradition conceals at first sight. Two main factors account for such differences. First, the two men were not occupying similar positions when they produced their intellectual endeavors. Only eighteen years separated Viana (b. 1883) from Torres (b. 1865), and both came from a rather similar social and geographical background, i.e. the decaying landed elite of the Rio de Janeiro hinterland. Nonetheless, Torres had already concluded a brilliant political career and was a retired magistrate when he became a polemicist. On the contrary, the young Viana intended his essays as a means to foster his ambitions as a university professor, within the competitive environment of the Rio de Janeiro higher education system. In spite of a shared political urgency and a common call for “objectivity” and “pragmatism,” the works of the two intellectuals differed substantially. Torres employed his “scientific” and totalizing art of politics as a weapon to frontally attack the incumbent socioeconomic structure and political order, as he indissolubly linked the former with the latter in an overall condemnation. Viana, instead, conceived of a Brazilian historical social science that could provide him a leading role in the national academic realm. As Viana adopted the predominantly deterministic logic of the scientific discourse of his time, his analysis of the Brazilian past and present tended to provide a rather static picture, in which long-term economic and social phenomena found full justification.

The element that decisively set apart the two intellectual and political projects was their opposites use of the Edenic theme in the construction of the shared conviction that Brazilian
“authenticity” resided in the rural world. Both authors defended the traditional notion that interpreted the country’s fortunes as a result of the blessing of a generous nature, and that saw in the potentialities of its countryside the key for a bright future. However, the specific plans prescribed for the revival of rural Brazil and, by extension, of the nation as a whole pointed to diverging measures and goals.

According to Torres, the power of the landed aristocracy that for centuries had dominated Brazil should have been scaled down. Far from proposing revolutionary transformations, Torres requested the elite to abandon predatory methods in the exploitation of natural resources, and to compassionately surrender portions of its most valuable asset – land – in order to favor the constitution of a new class of small-scale landholders. The latter, in this argument, was not only a solution to widespread poverty, malnutrition and diseases, and to the unbalance of the Brazilian economy, but also an antidote to the process of politicization that the urban drift was producing on the masses. In short, a mixed package of paternalistic concerns over the conditions of the poor and the environment, and of growing anxiety about the rise of popular and radical politics, prompted Torres to propose a peculiar elitist and authoritarian project. In it, the “re-ruralization” of significant portions of the Brazilian lower strata was the price to be paid by the elite in order to keep the masses excluded from political mobilization, and to renovate and rationalize the oligarchic system of power. Benign Brazilian nature, and especially its fertile soils and favorable climate, were the main resources for the realization of such a plan of social engineering.

Viana’s reading of Brazilian long-term historical trajectory produced a story whose protagonists invariably were, over more than four centuries, the latifundium and large landholders. The peculiar geography of Brazil had determined an entrenched social
configuration, in which a cliquey group of proprietors monopolized land and presided over the broader society with a mixture of paternalism and authority. Landless peasants, who constituted the vast majority of the population, developed a passive and docile attitude that averted any form of social conflict, as Mother Nature kindly met their basic needs. In contrast to Torres, Viana employs the Edenic vision as a fully conservative instrument. It not only justified deep inequalities in the distribution of resources and power, as it took shape though history, but also demolished any prospect of change of the country’s fundamental socioeconomic structures. If in Torres’ project proletarians should have been transformed into farmers, in Viana’s vision it was the elite that should have been “re-ruralized,” also promoting the expansion of the large properties over new untilled lands. A continental and underpopulated country like Brazil, in fact, offered unexhausted opportunities for the reconstruction of a healthy and honest landed aristocracy, that should have presided over the revitalization of the nation from their estates.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of the thought of the two authors has permitted to highlight how ruralismo could function in different modalities and could justify alternative political projects. In this respect, the centrality that Torres granted to a restructuring of Brazil, in which land tenure and the organization of production should have been changed, dramatically diverges from Viana’s reduction of ruralismo to an identity discourse for the elite, that did not challenge, but instead reinforced, the existing socioeconomic structures of the country. However, the “seduction” of land\textsuperscript{210} operated in both cases, with different modalities, as the driving force

\textsuperscript{210} Both authors actually use this term, but of course referring to two different actors. Viana argues in favor of the “rural seduction” of which the ruling class was traditionally a victim (Populações meridionaes do Brasil... Centro-Sul, 24), while Torres states that “property is […] a powerful seduction” for the common people (A organização nacional, 169).
for prudent reforms and adjustments of Brazilian fundamental structures, with the goal of providing order and stability for the realization of the country’s progressive destiny.
5. An Elite Networking for a Rural Nation:

the Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres in 1930s Brazil

On November 10, 1932, a few dozens of Brazilian notables met in Rio de Janeiro and formally created an organization called Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres (SAAT). The very name of the entity suffices to highlight the peculiarity, if not the uniqueness, of the enterprise. Its trajectory is barely remembered and dramatically understudied,\textsuperscript{211} partially as a consequence of the loss of the rich archive that the SAAT itself zealously constructed until 1959, when it burned together with the building in which it was hosted.\textsuperscript{212} Nevertheless, the SAAT constituted the first and only formalized entity that explicitly positioned Torres’ thought at the center of cultural and political debates. Equally important, it operated as a meeting point for the figures who applied the principles of “organicist agrarianism” in their specific areas of

\textsuperscript{211} The only academic studies that, to my knowledge, devote some specific attention to the SAAT as such are two recent Brazilian master’s theses: Carolina Marotta Capanema, “A natureza no projeto de construção de um Brasil Moderno e a obra de Alberto José de Sampaio” (MA thesis, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2006), 119-123, and, with more details, Silvia Oliveira Campos de Pinho, “Alberto Torres: uma obra, várias leituras” (MA thesis, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2007), 169-189.

\textsuperscript{212} The fate of the SAAT archive is accounted in a letter by Edgar Teixeira Leite to Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, dated April 23, 1970, which is kept in the Coleção Teixeira Leite, Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. The source is referenced in Pinho, 173. An article from the Rio de Janeiro Fire Department magazine permitted to date to September 30, 1958 the fire that completely destroyed the building at 117 Rio Branco Avenue where – among other offices and companies – the Jornal do Comércio and the SAAT had their headquarters. See “O Incêndio do Jornal do Comércio,” Avante Bombeiro 9 (1959, 79-81). Two repositories provided me with some scattered and incomplete, but nonetheless informative, documentation on the general experience of the SAAT: the records of the Casa de Cultura Heloísa Alberto Torres in Itaboraí (RJ), a cultural institution named after Alberto Torres’ daughter and SAAT founding member, and archive of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, an institution solidly bound to the SAAT. It is a tragic coincidence that also the building of the National Museum and the vast majority of its invaluable collections were destroyed by fire on September 2, 2018.
intervention, as we will explore in the following chapters. As an elitist club that was restricted to people who played important roles in the Brazil of the time, the SAAT concentrated considerable social and political capital, and it demonstrated the widespread penetration of discourses on rural issues into the Brazilian ruling class during the early Vargas years.

This chapter presents the group of personalities that signed the founding act of the SAAT in order to trace a collective profile that could help to better understand what backgrounds, interests and resources were encapsulated, and to some extent represented, by the organization. In addition, it offers an overview of SAAT activities in the earliest and more significant period of its activity (1932-1939), to answer the simple questions of what the SAAT was, which principles inspired it, and what interventions attempted and, at least in part, carried out.

### 5.1. Tracing a Collective Profile

Two documents that list the founding members of the SAAT\textsuperscript{213} allowed me to conduct a prosopographical study of the group of fifty characters who established the organization in 1932. Although it was not possible to identify all of them, the resulting sample was sufficiently large to

\textsuperscript{213} The data are available, with some notable discrepancies in Alcides Gentil, \textit{A ideia de “constituição” no pensamento de Alberto Torres. Conferencia realizada na sociedade dos amigos de Alberto Torres} (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. S. Benedicto, 1932), 20, and in \textit{Sociedade dos Amigos de Alberto Torres 1932-1939 no setimo aniversario de sua fundação} (Rio de Janeiro: no publisher, 1939), 13-15. Both documents are part of the archive of the Casa de Cultura Heloísa Alberto Torres in Itaboraí (RJ). Further references to material from this collection will be marked with the abbreviation CCHAT in parentheses.
evaluate the fundamental characteristics and to venture some meaningful generalizations. Thanks to a systematization of all the biographical data that were collected, the SAAT cohort was analyzed in terms of dates and places of birth, family origins, social class, educational and professional background, and forms of participation in civil society and politics. The result is a comprehensive picture of this segment of the Brazilian elite that can help to reappraise the role of the SAAT in its larger context, as well as to better situate those who constituted, as we are about to see, some of the protagonists of the intellectual and political life of 1930s Brazil.

214 The chart in the following pages summarizes the most relevant biographical information of the thirty-one founding members of the SAAT who I was able to identify. I employed the aggregated data to produce a collective profile of the group. Main sources were Dicionário histórico-biográfico brasileiro, https://cpdoc.fgv.br/acervo/dhbb, and Dicionário histórico-biográfico da Primeira República, https://cpdoc.fgv.br/dicionario-primeira-republica (accessed March 5, 2019).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Adalberto Ribeiro</th>
<th>Agenor de Roure</th>
<th>Alberto J. de Sampaio</th>
<th>Alcides Bezerra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Swiss immigrants</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Italian immigrants and traditional colonial Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Law (Recife, 1908)</td>
<td>Dentistry (Rio de Janeiro)</td>
<td>Medicine (Rio de Janeiro)</td>
<td>Law (Recife, 1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>OAB Paraíba (president), IAB Paraíba</td>
<td>Jornal do Commercio; IHGB</td>
<td>Museu Nacional; Rondon Mission Academia Brasileira de Ciências</td>
<td>Academia Carioca de Letras (pres.); several cultural institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Lawyer in Recife</td>
<td>Journalist in Rio (Jornal do Brasil, Gazeta de Notícias, A Notícia, Tribuna, Jornal do Commercio); official in Congress; secretary of pres. Epitácio Pessoa (1919-22); magistrate in the TCU</td>
<td>Assistant (1905-1912), then director and professor (1912-1937) in the Botany section of the Museu Nacional; member of the Rondon Mission (1912); scientist and writer; pioneer of phytogeography in Brazil; general secretary of the Academia Brasileira de Ciências (1933-35); one of the author of the 1934 Código Florestal Federal</td>
<td>Civil servant; State deputy; director of the National Archive (1922-38); journalist and writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Federal Inspector for Education in Paraíba; Secretary of the Paraíba Constituent Assembly</td>
<td>Interim Minister of Fazenda (1930); Constitutional Commission (1932-1933)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>UDN; Constituent and Senator (1946-51)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Author of three books on human and natural geography, and several scientific and pedagogical articles</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>President of the SAAT; author of several works of philosophy, history, literary criticism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAAT founding members biographical data, table 1 of 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
<th><strong>Places / Dates of Birth / Death</strong></th>
<th><strong>Family Origins</strong></th>
<th><strong>Higher Education</strong></th>
<th><strong>Affiliations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></th>
<th><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></th>
<th><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></th>
<th><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Álvaro Alberto</td>
<td>Rio de Janeiro, 1889 - Rio de Janeiro, 1976</td>
<td>Son of a scientist</td>
<td>Sociedade Brasileira de Química (pres. 1920-28); Academia Brasileira de Ciências; CNPq (founder and pres.)</td>
<td>ABE; ANL (UFB)</td>
<td>Navy officer; professor of chemistry and metallurgy in the Escola Naval (from 1916)</td>
<td>Professor in the Escola Técnica do Exército (1935-37)</td>
<td>Atomic energy expert; pres. of the IAEA predecessor (1946-47); founder and pres. of the CNPq</td>
<td>Brother of Armanda Álvaro Alberto; important role in 1950s civil atomic project; author of scientific and technical works, and of <em>O problema das palavras e sua solução atual</em> (1939)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armanda Álvaro Alberto</td>
<td>Rio de Janeiro, 1892 - ?, 1974</td>
<td>Daughter of a scientist</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Founder and pres. of the UFB, within the ANL; tried and acquitted in 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sister of Álvaro Alberto; wife of Edgar Sussekind de Mendonça; author of pedagogical works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Torres Filho</td>
<td>Campos (RJ), 1899 - Rio de Janeiro, 1960</td>
<td>Landowners</td>
<td>Agriculture Ministry; SNA; <em>Jornal do Comércio</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employee of the Agriculture Ministry; administrative, directional and educational tasks; professor in the Escola Nacional de Agronomia; first secretary in the SNA (1929)</td>
<td>Several governmental appointments on rural, economic and regional (NE) problems; first vice-president of the SNA (1930-1943) and acting president</td>
<td>Leader in the SNA; rector of the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (1946-1949); honorary pres. of the Confederação Rural Brasileira (1951)</td>
<td>Many proposals inspired by Torres’ ideas; 1937 plan for sugarcane ethanol; “rural organization” instead of “land reform” (late 1940s and 1950s); author of hundreds of articles and books on rural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augusto Saboia Lima</td>
<td>Petrópolis (RJ), 1894 - Rio de Janeiro, 1963</td>
<td></td>
<td>Law (Rio de Janeiro, 1915)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Law professor in Rio de Janeiro; founder of the Escola Agrícola do Rio das Flores; magistrate in MG (1918-24) and Rio de Janeiro (1924-)</td>
<td>Career in the judiciary; author of the Aviation Law and Minors Law</td>
<td>Member of the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (1946-)</td>
<td>President of the SAAT; author of <em>Alberto Torres e sua Obra</em> (1918, 1935), and of several works on juridical, socioeconomic and political issues</td>
</tr>
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</table>

SAAT founding members biographical data, table 2 of 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Barboza Lima Sobrinho</th>
<th>Belizario Penna</th>
<th>Candido Motta</th>
<th>Domingos Velasco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>Traditional NE family; son of a notary, nephew of a PE governor</td>
<td>Imperial aristocracy</td>
<td>Son of a prominent politician from São Paulo</td>
<td>Son of a serviceman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Law (Recife, 1917)</td>
<td>Medicine (Salvador, 1890)</td>
<td>Law (São Paulo, 1919)</td>
<td><strong>Escola Militar do Realengo</strong> (1920); <strong>Law</strong> (Niterói, 1931)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>ABI; PSD-PE; ABL; PSB; MDB</td>
<td>Correio da Manhã; SNA; AIB</td>
<td>PRP; <strong>Semana de Arte Moderna</strong>; AIB; Labor and Education Ministries; PR; STF; TSE; ABL; AIB; <strong>Academia Paulista de Letras</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reação Republicana</strong>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Journalist (<em>Jornal do Commercio</em>); career in the <em>Jornal do Brasil</em> (1921-); pres. of the ABI (1926-27); neutral in the 1930 Rev.</td>
<td>Physician and councillor in MG; in Rio, career in federal health services (1904-); 1910s rural sanitation campaigns; supporter of 1924-27 revolts and of the 1930 Revolution</td>
<td>Journalist and PRP member; participant in the <strong>Semana de Arte Moderna</strong> (1922); one of the founders of Klaxon, “Verde-Amarelismo” (1926), “Bandeira”</td>
<td>Army officer (1920-); journalist and anti-oligarchy activist; <strong>Reação Republicana</strong> (1921-22); activist in 1922, 1924 and 1930 insurrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Deputy for PSD-PE (1935-37); supporter of Vargas and Estado Novo; pres. of the Instituto do Açúcar e do Álcool (1938-46)</td>
<td>Director of Departamento Nacional de Saúde Pública (1930-32); interludes as Education and Health Minister (1931-32); member of the Câmara dos 40 in the AIB</td>
<td>Journalist; founder of Ação Nacional within the PRP (1930); participant in Plínio Salgado 1932 initiatives (Política, SEP, AIB); participant in the Constitucionalista Rev. (1932); state deputy for the Partido Constitucionalista (1934-37); SP chief of the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (1939-).</td>
<td>GO Secretary of Security (1930-31), <em>Clube 3 de Outubro</em> (1932); commander of GO loyalist troops in the Constitutionalist Revolution (1932); founder of the Partido Social Republicano in GO (1933) and leader of its “leftist” branch; const. rep. and deputy (1934-37); ANL supporter, jailed in 1936-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Founder of (1945) and const. rep. (1946-47) for PSD-PE; PE governor (1948-50); prosecutor in Rio de Janeiro (1951); pres. of ABL (1953); deputy for PSB-PE (1959-63); return to journalism; against the 1964 coup; member of the MDB (1965) and vice-pres. candidate (1974); pres. of ABI (1978-2000); Diretas Já activist</td>
<td>Labor Minister assistant (1946-51); Education Minister (1954-55); pres. of the Partido Republicano (1955); law professor in São Paulo; magistrate in the <em>Supremo Tribunal Federal</em> (1956-68) and pres. of Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (1964-66); ABL and ABI member</td>
<td>Founder of the <em>Esquerda Democrática</em> group (1945); const. (1946); founder of the PSB (1946); senator and party leader (1951-); journalist; TST judge (1961-)</td>
<td>Founder of UDN, member of the Esquerda Democrática group (1945); const. (1946); founder of the PSB (1946); senator and party leader (1951-); journalist; TST judge (1961-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Ethanol pioneer and pro-trabalhismo (1930s-); nationalist and statist positions till the 1990s; author of several books on a variety of themes</td>
<td>Author of works on health and social issues</td>
<td>Author of several books on a variety of themes, including Alberto Torres e o tema da nossa geração (1931)</td>
<td>Supporter of a “national party” project in 1933; supporter of corporatism and of a strong, interventionist government; oil campaign (1948) and Petrobras project; author of books on law, social issues and politics</td>
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SAAT founding members biographical data, table 3 of 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Felix Pacheco</th>
<th>Fernandes Távora</th>
<th>Fidelis Reis</th>
<th>Humberto de Campos</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>Son of a magistrate, nephew of a senator</td>
<td>Landowners, anti-oligarchic politicians</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Son of a petty trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Law (Rio de Janeiro)</td>
<td>Pharmacy (Rio de Janeiro, 1900), Medicine (Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, 1903)</td>
<td>Agronomy (Uberaba, 1901)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>Jornal do Commercio ; ABL</td>
<td>Reação Republicana ; Aliança Liberal ; Academia de Letras do Ceará</td>
<td>Several rural associations in MG</td>
<td>Correio da Manhã ; ABL ; Casa de Rui Barbosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Journalist; director and owner of the Jornal do Commercio (1899-); pioneer of fingerprints techniques; deputy and senator for Pt; Foreign Relations Minister (1922-26); symbolist poet, translator, critic</td>
<td>Physician in the Amazon and CE; Campanha Civilista (1909-10); State Deputy (1913-14, 1919-20); Reação Republicana (1921-22); dir. A Tribuna (1920-25); founder of the AL in CE (1930); leader in the 1930 Rev.</td>
<td>Federal civil servant on immigration and rural issues (1909-); founder and teacher in the Belo Horizonte Engineering School; PR-MG state (1919) and federal deputy (1920-1930); Lei Fidélis Res (1927) on professional education; against Japanese and African-American immigrants</td>
<td>Neo-Parnassian poet; journalist in PA (1903-12), then in Rio de Janeiro (O Imparcial, Correio da Manhã); deputy for MA (1920-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interventor in CE (1930-31); member of the Clube 3 de Outubro; leader, const. rep. and deputy (1933-37) of the PSD of CE; supporter of Armando Sales candidacy for 1938</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>School inspector; director of Casa de Rui Barbosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Founding member of the UDN (1945), const. rep. and deputy (1945-47); PTB senator (1947-51); UDN vice-pres. and senator (1954-63)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Author of poetry, translations and commentaries on Baudelaire</td>
<td>Brother of Juarez Távora; author of works on psychology, social, economic and political issues</td>
<td>Author of books on political, social and economic issues</td>
<td>Author of poetry, short stories, chronicles, memoirs, literary criticism</td>
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SAAT founding members biographical data, table 4 of 8
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Places / Dates of Birth / Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Origins</td>
<td>Youngest daughter of Alberto Torres</td>
<td>Landowners, Imperial aristocracy</td>
<td>Landowners; son of an officer of the Guarda Nacional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliations</td>
<td>Rondon Mission; Museu Nacional</td>
<td>PR-RS; SNA; Reação Republicana; AL; Banco do Brasil</td>
<td>IHGB; Labor Ministry; ABL</td>
<td>PR-RJ; ABL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1930 Career</td>
<td>Pro-abolition and republican militant; executive in railways co.s; RJ Public Works Secretary (1893-94); dir. RS hydraulic co. (1895-1905); PR-RS state (1897-1906) and federal deputy (1906-09, 1913-19, 1922-30); reformist estanciero (1909-); Agriculture, Industry and Commerce Minister (1919-22); Reação Republicana (1921-22); SNA pres. (1926-31); AL vice-pres.; leader in the 1930 Revolution</td>
<td>Writer; professor of law in Rio de Janeiro (1916-); executive in the Instituto de Fomento e Economia Agrícola do Estado do Rio (1920-)</td>
<td>Writer; advisor for the Labor Ministry on labor legislation (1932-1940); magistrate in the Tribunal de Contas da União (1940-1951)</td>
<td>Journalist; PR-RJ state deputy (1915-21); lawyer; alderman in Vassouras (1929-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-1945 Career</td>
<td>Member of the Rondon Mission (1912); assistant of Roquette Pinto in the Museu Nacional (1918-); feminist; professor of anthropology, ethnography and archaeology in the Museu Nacional, Universidade do Distrito Federal (today UFRJ) and Instituto Lafayete (today UERJ); director of the Museu Nacional (1938-55)</td>
<td>Dir. of Banco do Brasil (1930-43)</td>
<td></td>
<td>PPR-RJ const. rep. and deputy (1933-37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-1945 Career</td>
<td>Writer; advisor for the Labor Ministry on labor legislation (1932-1940); magistrate in the Tribunal de Contas da União (1940-1951)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UDN const. rep. and deputy (1945-52); parliamentary leader (1952); secretary positions in RJ government; journalist and professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Key Facts and Publications</td>
<td>Author of several anthropological works</td>
<td>Pioneer of oil exploitation, energy policies, agrarian education (esp. when minister); pres. of the First Agriculture Congress (1908)</td>
<td>Disciple of Alberto Torres; author of about 20 books of sociology, politics, history, and law</td>
<td>Author of books on politics, socioeconomic issues and law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>José Bernardino Paranhos da Silva</td>
<td>Juarez do Nascimento Tavora</td>
<td>Jurandir Mamede</td>
<td>Mario Casanta [Mário Casasanta?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>Imperial aristocracy</td>
<td>Landowners, anti-oligarchic politicians</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Engineering (Escola Politécnica do Rio de Janeiro, 1915-16, abandoned; Escola Militar do Realengo, 1919)</td>
<td>Escola Militar do Realengo, 1927</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>Jornal do Commercio</td>
<td>Legião de Outubro; Clube 3 de Outubro; Agriculture Ministry; ESG</td>
<td>Clube 3 de Outubro;</td>
<td>Education Minister; Academia Mineira de Letras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Director of the Colégio Pedro II boarding school (1907-10); executive position in education federal agencies</td>
<td>Officer in the Army (1920-); protagonist in all tenentista revolts, jailed and exiled; disagreements with Prestes; leader of the AL and commander of the 1930 Rev. in the NE</td>
<td>Juarez Távora’s right-hand man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Military commander in the NE (1930-31) and against São Paulo (1932); member of govt. commissions (1931-32); Clube 3 de Outubro (1931-32); acting pres. of the I Congresso Nacional Revolucionário (1932); Agriculture Minister (1932-34); defeated candidate as CE governor for the PSD (1935); pro-intervention in WW2</td>
<td>Military commander in the NE; police chief in PE (1931-37); Clube 3 de Outubro; officer in the FEB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>UDN member and pro-Gomes (1945 and 1950); anti-Communist, pro-internat, cooperation stance on oil, atomic energy and industries; member (1950-) and director (1952) of ESG; potential candidate as pres. and vice-pres. in 1954-55; PDC member (1958-) and deputy (1962-64); Transportation and Public Works Minister (1964-67)</td>
<td>Pro-Gomes (1945); founding member and instructor in the ESG; anti-communist activist; participant in the 1964 coup; defeated pres. candidate against Costa e Silva (1966)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Author of História do Brasil (1930), published by Jornal do Commercio</td>
<td>President of the SAAT; brother of Fernandes Távora; friend of Ari Parreiras; author of works on political and socioeconomic issues, and of memoirs</td>
<td>Author of works on literature, linguistics, education, history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Magalhães Correia</td>
<td>Plínio Salgado</td>
<td>Protogenes Guimarães</td>
<td>Roberto Marinho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Traditional catholic and conservative family; son of a pharmacist</td>
<td>Son of a Navy officer</td>
<td>Son of a journalist, founder of <em>O Globo</em> (1925)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Escola Militar do Realengo, Escola Nacional de Belas Artes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Escola Naval</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>Correio da Manhã; Museu Nacional</td>
<td>PRP; <em>Semana de Arte Moderna</em>; AIB; <em>Partido de Repr. Popular</em>; Agriculture Ministry; ARENA; Academia Paulista de Letras</td>
<td></td>
<td>ABL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Sculptor and designer; journalist (<em>Correio da Manhã</em>); self-taught naturalist; curator in the Natural History section of the <em>Museu Nacional</em>; professor in the <em>Museu Nacional</em> and the <em>Escola Nacional de Belas Artes</em></td>
<td>Self-taught intellectual; teacher, journalist, writer (1913-); one of the founder of the anti-oligarchic <em>Partido Municipalista</em> (1918); collaborator of the <em>Correio Paulistano</em> (1920)-; participant in the <em>Semana de Arte Moderna</em>; one of the founders “Verde-Amarelimismo” (1920); state deputy for PRP (1927-); member of Ação Renovadora Nacional; against the 1930 Revolution</td>
<td>Navy officer; pioneer of the Air Force (1916); leader of the 1924 revolt; rear admiral (1930)</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Support to Vargas provisional government; member of the SP Legião Revolucionaria (1931); founder of the newspaper <em>A Razão</em> (1931) and the <em>Sociedade de Estudos Políticos</em> (1932); founder and leader of the <em>Ação Integralista Brasileira</em> (1932-37); presidential candidate (1938); exiled to Portugal (1939-45)</td>
<td>Dir. of Air Force (1930-31); Navy Minister (1931-35); PPR-RJ candidate (1934); contested elections and RJ governor for the Coligação Radical Socialista (1935-37)</td>
<td>Director of <em>O Globo</em> (1931-); pro-Constitutional Rev. (1932); against ANL and AIB; supporter of the Estado Novo; pro-intervention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Founder and leader of the <em>Partido de Representação Popular</em> (1945-65); pro-Dutra (1945) and pro-Gomes (1950); director of the Agriculture Ministry’s <em>Instituto Nacional de Imigração e Colonização</em> (1956-62); deputy (1959-1974); support to 1964 coup; vice-leader of ARENA (1967-9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-Gomes (1945), pro-UDN, pro-Quadros (1960); pro-coup (1964)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Teacher in art modeling and sculpture for the SAAT; author of <em>O sertão carioca</em> (1936)</td>
<td>Friend and collaborator of Candido Motta; Agrarian reform projects (late 1950s-early 1960s); author of more than 70 works - poetry, narrative, theater, chronicles, letters and essays</td>
<td>Friend of Ari Parreiras; in favor of a new conciliatory party in RJ (1935-)</td>
<td>Author of Uma trajetória liberal (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Saturnino de Brito Filho</td>
<td>Urbano Berquó</td>
<td>Virginio Campello</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Origins</strong></td>
<td>Son of the pioneer of Brazilian hydraulic engineering</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education</strong></td>
<td>Civil and mining engineering (Ouro Preto, 1923)</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliations</strong></td>
<td>FEBRAE; South American and world organizations of engineers</td>
<td>Correio da Manhã</td>
<td>Agriculture Ministry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-1930 Career</strong></td>
<td>Work with his father on hydraulic project throughout Brazil, esp. NE and Amazon (1923-29)</td>
<td>Lawyer and journalist (Correio da Manhã)</td>
<td>Assistant in the Agriculture Ministry’s Chemistry Institute (?-1923-41-?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1930-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Professor of hygiene and urban sanitation in the Universidade do Brasil (later UFRJ); founder of FEBRAE (Brazilian Federation of Engineers Associations) (1935)</td>
<td>Member of the Conselho Consultivo do GO (1931-32?); possibly British spy during WW2</td>
<td>Forestry Service (1931-32-?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-1945 Career</strong></td>
<td>Pres. of FEBRAE (1946-76)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Key Facts and Publications</strong></td>
<td>Author of 11 books on sanitation and hydraulic engineering (1933-1971)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

SAAT founding members biographical data, table 8 of 8
5.2. Origins and Background

5.2.1. Generational Profile

In spite of the patchy information available, it is possible to trace a rather clear generational profile of the group.215 The majority of the founding members were born in the decade that immediately followed the overthrow of the Empire and the founding of the Republic.216 Since only three individuals were more than preadolescent at the time of the regime change,217 a preliminary straightforward observation is that the group as a whole constituted a segment of the earliest generation that was born, or at the very least came of age, entirely under the First Republic, without any significant direct experience of the long and relatively stable reign of Pedro II (1831-1889). Although caution is always necessary when we come to generalizations, the age group of the SAAT coincides with generations that either have been recognized by historiography or have in some way identified themselves as such.

The most significant of the latter cases is the group of young intellectuals who in 1924 had published Á margem da história da República, a collection of political essays that vigorously posed the issue of “thinking Brazil” at a time in which was somehow obvious “to feel that Brazil retrograded.”218 Contributors such as Tristão de Athayde (b. 1893, alias Alceu Amoroso Lima) and Gilberto Amado (b. 1887), as well as the organizer Vicente Licinio Cardoso (b. 1889),

215 Only thirty-six dates of birth were identified (72% of the sample).
216 Twenty-one SAAT founders (58%) came into the world between 1889 and 1899.
217 Ildefonso Simões Lopes was born in 1866, Belizario Penna in 1868, and Agenor de Roure in 1870. Ten other founding members (27%) were born between 1876 and 1886. Finally, the remaining two were slightly younger than the average: Roberto Marinho, b. 1904, and Jurandir Mamede, b. 1906.
218 Á margem da história da República, 347: “sentir que o Brasil retrogradou.”
formulated their sharp criticisms against the oligarchic political system on the grounds of a shared disillusionment with liberal republican ideals and with their inoperative applications in Brazil.\textsuperscript{219}

An equally clear example of generational dissatisfaction with the Republic at the upper-class level comes from what Sérgio Miceli called the \textit{homens sem profissão}, “men with no profession.” In his prosopography of São Paulo-based writers and artists, mainly born in the 1890s, Miceli points at their common background as members of the decayed imperial elites who, frequently under the burden of social stigmas and physical handicaps, pursued careers in the growing cultural industry of the period, especially collaborating with newspapers and state agencies.\textsuperscript{220} Although, in contrast with the \textit{carioca} circle of \textit{À margem da história da República}, this is a study centered on the \textit{modernista} loose group based in São Paulo during the 1920s, it is significant that the different experiences of the same cohort which created the SAAT centered around a common core of discontent and redemptive ambitions. Although, as we will discuss later, SAAT founding members tended to occupy a different place in Brazilian society than Miceli’s dispossessed intellectuals, this story also intersects the trajectory of the SAAT.\textsuperscript{221}

A final broad-spectrum observation on SAAT as an age group could be added. The vast majority of the members were middle-aged at the time of the creation of the SAAT: fourteen were in their thirties (b. 1893-1899) and twelve in their forties (1883-1892), and altogether they made up 72\% of the total. This means, in general, that the association was the product of a group

\textsuperscript{219} It is not by accident that we find three of the authors of the 1924 volume among SAAT founding members: Celso Vieira, José Antonio Nogueira, and the prominent Oliveira Viana.

\textsuperscript{220} See Miceli.

\textsuperscript{221} The “homens sem profissão” Candido Motta and Plínio Salgado constitute the \textit{paulista} component of the SAAT creators.
of people who to a large extent already had the opportunity to establish themselves in intellectual and professional terms, and who were therefore able to bring their expertise and networking capital to the SAAT. The turning point of 1930, of course, produced important alterations in their personal trajectories, but caught them in a period of their life in which experiences and capabilities had already been accumulated, and their potential could be put at the service of a shared cause. This substantially distinguishes the SAAT from the abovementioned 1920s articulations, that in different ways mainly expressed the juvenile political and intellectual fervors of an ambitious but, to a large extent, rootless generation.

5.2.2. Geographical Provenances

In the light of the crucial importance of regionalism throughout Brazilian history, an overview of the distribution on the country’s map of the SAAT founders’ birthplaces is unquestionably relevant. Once again, even if information is only available on a subset of the sample, the resulting profile is rather meaningful, and some of its features deserve to be underscored.

In the first place, almost half of our characters were from the Rio de Janeiro area, understood here as the summation of the homonymous state and the Federal District. As a matter of fact, this subgroup is almost equally divided between those rooted in the capital city and those coming from the interior of the state. More precisely, eight cariocas and nine fluminenses make up 47% of the total.

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222 The group is the same just analyzed in terms of ages: thirty-six individuals, 72% of the total sample of biographies.
223 More precisely, eight cariocas and nine fluminenses make up 47% of the total.
Janeiro with the group. Obviously, both the interior and the capital cities constituted the setting of the eponymous hero’s trajectory. Alberto Torres himself was the offspring of a distinguished family of the Imperial aristocracy who had dominated the political and economic life of the *fluminense* provincial town of Itaborai until the proclamation of the Republic. Moreover, he had spent his entire adult life in the capital city, where he had developed his multiple careers: lawyer, politician, judge, and eventually intellectual. Finally, Rio de Janeiro constituted the standpoint from which Torres’ analysis of Brazilian problems, as well as his proposals for change, had been formulated and disseminated. Therefore, it is not surprising that said area was the epicenter of Torresian thought and activism, also because Torres’ direct mentorship had already produced a cluster of disciples there in the 1910s.

The importance of the provincial contingent is not limited to the case of the state of Rio de Janeiro. A second important characteristic, in fact, is that fewer than half of the founding members came from capital cities, while the majority of them were rooted in minor cities and rural areas.\(^{224}\) This is the case, for instance, of all the three individuals from the state of Minas Gerais\(^{225}\) – the second most important contributor of SAAT creators – and of four of the nine northeasterners.\(^{226}\) If we consider that the capital cities of some of the peripheral Brazilian states, as in the case of Goiás (in the homonymous state, where two founding members where born) and Florianópolis (in Santa Caterina, who is present with one name), were far from being large urban centers, the overall picture of the SAAT is that of a markedly rural and provincial group, in terms

\(^{224}\) Sixteen came from state capitals and nineteen from interior locations. Of one of the characters, Oris Soares, we only know that state of origins, Paraíba, and not the precise location.

\(^{225}\) Belizario Penna from Barbacena, Fidelis Reis from Uberaba, and Mário Casasanta from Camanducaia.

\(^{226}\) The founding members from the northeastern states came from Pernambuco (two, both from Recife), Ceará (the two Távora brothers from Jaguaribe), Paraíba (two, one from João Pessoa and the second unknown), Bahia (one, from Salvador), Maranhão (one, from Miriíba), and Piauí (one, from Teresina).
of provenience. This datum is of course in line with the demographics of 1930s a Brazil. In spite of a process of urbanization that was already underway, the number of big cities was extremely limited and the country had a predominantly agrarian economy and society, including in its highest ranks. However, the organization of a group of activists who represented thirteen states and a number of micro-regions appears as rather unusual in the Brazilian context of the time, and, as the analysis of social class and careers will show in the forthcoming sections, the clout of rural and provincial values and interests already emerges as crucial.

A third and last observation cannot be escaped. Two of the most important regions of the country make up about three fourths of the sample: Rio de Janeiro accounts for roughly half, and the Northeast for exactly one fourth. Considering the changing balances in the distribution of power, wealth and preeminence among regions throughout Brazilian history, two fundamental areas stand out as clearly underrepresented in the SAAT: the South and São Paulo. Southern Brazil provided only two of the SAAT founders, although two distinguished ones. The first was the illustrious politician, president of the Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura (1926-1931), and director of Banco do Brasil (1930-1943), Ildefonso Simões Lopes, from Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. The second was the Navy officer, Navy Minister (1931-1935) and governor of Rio de Janeiro (1935-1937), Protogenes Guimarães, from Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. The southern region had historically been characterized by a scattered population, extensive agriculture and cattle farming, border disputes with the Spanish Empire and later with neighboring nations, and

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227 According to the 1920 census data, only 16.6 per cent of the Brazilian population lived in urban centers with more than 20,000 inhabitants, and two thirds (69.7 per cent) of the workforce was employed in agriculture. See Boris Fausto, “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 786.

228 It must be noted, however, that the different organizations and institutions in which Lopes and Guimarães took up a career were headquartered in Rio de Janeiro.
repeated insurrections against Rio de Janeiro’s authorities. Nonetheless, in the 1930s such a peripheral and often restless area had acquired a different role. On the one hand, demographic growth, mainly thanks to European immigration, and a process of modernization and economic expansion had made of the region, and especially of the larger state of Rio Grande do Sul, an important actor also in the political life of the Republic.\(^{229}\) On the other hand, the old regime had been overthrown by an opposition movement that had in the Rio Grande do Sul elites one of its pillars, and in the *gaucho* Getúlio Vargas its uncontested leader.\(^{230}\) The fact that, in a Brazil that was dominated by Vargas and his entourage, the SAAT did not significantly represent southern, or at least Rio Grande do Sul, interests deserves an explanation. A possible economic factor was the relative prosperity of the local primary sector, which was only mildly affected by the crisis of 1930s, and thus could seem less in need of a reform.

The situation of São Paulo finds another, and rather clearer, set of explanations. The state had been the fulcrum of the Old Republic system, as its coffee industry had dominated Brazilian economy and its notables had controlled national politics. After a decade of agony, the oligarchic regime was crushed by the 1930 Revolution and in its wake the leverage of the *paulista* elites over the fortunes of Brazil appeared compromised. In addition, just a few months before the establishment of the SAAT, São Paulo had been the scene of an armed insurrection against Vargas’ provisional government in the name of pro-constitution claims and, equally important,  


an autonomist, paulista identity discourse. Therefore, SAAT goals, from its emphasis on a reform of the agricultural sector to an overall nation-building project within the framework of the post-1930 equilibrium, were patently at odds with those paulista intellectual and political circles, which Torres and his followers identified with the incompetent ruling class of the Old Republic. It is no coincidence that the only two of the SAAT founders were from São Paulo: Plínio Salgado and Candido Motta (Filho), both linked to the nativist vein of 1920s Modernismo and to the local oligarchies but, after the failure of the 1932 Constitucionalist Revolution, involved – although at totally different levels – with the project of a nationalist mass movement in line with European fascist experiences: the Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB).

In conclusion, the average SAAT founding member, for what concern regional affiliations, could be a provincial from several of the Brazilian states or a carioca. More frequently – as the upcoming examinations will confirm – he had significant ties to the then decadent rural areas of one of the two earliest areas of settlement in the country: Rio de Janeiro and the Northeast. On the contrary, the two most dynamic and, to some degree, “youngest” areas of Brazil – the South and São Paulo – emerged as considerably distant from the SAAT project. Even this brief evaluation of geographical roots permits to appreciate how the “nationalism” of SAAT discourse and practice was far from constituting a balanced proposal representing the

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233 Salgado created and ruled over the AIB for its entire existence (1932-1938), and reinstated the project in the 1940s. Motta Filho, who had shared the fluctuating political and intellectual trajectory of Salgado up to 1932, almost immediately became reconciled with the traditional paulista republicanism and embarked on a more moderate career in Brazilian politics and institutions.
complexities of the country as a whole, and could not count on equal appeal throughout the different and diverse regions of Brazil.

5.2.3. Families and Social Ranks

Information about the family background of SAAT founding members is rather limited and often superficial.\textsuperscript{234} Therefore, generalizations should be particularly prudent in this case. Nonetheless, some significant observations are not only possible, but also useful in order to better characterize the social profile of the organization.

The most represented social rank is, unsurprisingly, that of landowners. This class had traditionally constituted, and to a large extent still was in the 1930s, the fulcrum of the Brazilian elite, since agriculture traditionally constituted the bulk of national economy and landed estates were at the same time the main sources of wealth, social prestige, and political power. To the significant number of members generically identified as sons of latifundists\textsuperscript{235} we should add the not so scant cluster of scions of the Imperial aristocracy,\textsuperscript{236} whose fortunes were tied equally to their role in the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century monarchy and to their possessions.

The prominence of the Brazilian upper class in the SAAT is coupled with an almost equal representation of what appears as a rising middle class. Although the definition of such a rank in early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century Brazil is not an easy task, some of the profiles clearly point in this direction.

\textsuperscript{234} It is constituted by twenty-three individuals, i.e. by less than half of fifty identified personalities.
\textsuperscript{235} Six individuals: Arthur Torres Filho, Attilio Vivacqua, Barboza Lima Sobrinho, Fernandes Távora, J.F. de Oliveira Viana, and Juarez do Nascimento Tavora.
\textsuperscript{236} Four individuals: Belizario Penna, Edgard Teixeira Leite, Ildefonso Simões Lopes, and José Bernardino Paranhos da Silva.
The military career was one of the most frequent social elevators for brilliant young males, and the sample shows two sons of fathers identified solely as army and navy officers.\textsuperscript{237} Other parents’ professions that are represented in the group are those of petty trader, pharmacist, journalist, and engineer.\textsuperscript{238} In some other cases, when SAAT founders are only identified as the offspring of recent immigrants, some further biographical details permit to suppose, in very general terms, a bourgeois background.\textsuperscript{239}

To summarize these data, the best possible approximation on the SAAT social profile seems to be a relatively balanced mixture of upper- and middle-class origins, with roots in the most traditional landholding and in a diverse range of qualified occupations mainly bound to urban life and, in the case of the military, to state service. The elite character of the organization, as the upcoming examination of SAAT members’ careers will fully prove, is undeniable. However, a few qualifications should be added to this otherwise static picture.

First of all, although an ethnic profile would require further information in order to be soundly traced, it can be noticed that, in spite of the predictable prevalence of Portuguese names, persons with attested, or at least very probable, recent immigrant origins are not an exception.\textsuperscript{240} The openness to immigrants and descendants of foreigners stands out as a meaningful element within the entity’s national project, which inevitable called for a definition of \textit{brasilidade}. In

\textsuperscript{237} Domingos Velasco and Protogenes Guimarães, respectively.
\textsuperscript{238} Humberto de Campos, Plínio Salgado, Roberto Marinho, and Saturnino de Brito Filho, respectively.
\textsuperscript{239} This is the case of Agenor de Roure, a dentist from a Nova Friburgo’s Swiss family, and Alcides Bezerra, a lawyer of Italian and Portuguese ancestry.
\textsuperscript{240} In additions to the two offspring of European families cited above, in the full list of SAAT creators there are at least three Italian names (Attilio Vivacqua, Mário Casasanta, and Virginio Campello), three Spanish (Hérvil Chaves, José María Vilela, and Urbano Berquó), and two Middle Easterner ones (Demetrio Hamam and Wady Nassif).
addition, considering the nativist positions taken by the SAAT in the second half of the 1930s,\textsuperscript{241} it seems more than possible that attitudes on race and immigration changed rather swiftly within the organization.

A second essential annotation relates to some key specific attributes of the SAAT founders’ families, beyond class affiliations. As a matter of fact, even the scant information available on immediate ancestors exhibit a relatively negligible history of political activism in those families. Since the group is to a large degree a cross-section of the higher strata of Brazilian society, the fact that only a few of the SAAT creators had close relatives who held political posts is not without significance, also because many of them actually operated in opposition or at the margins of the Old Republic ruling class.\textsuperscript{242} As we will see soon, political experiences and ties in the lives of SAAT members were on the contrary crucial, but this characteristic seems to be more the result of their personal ambitions and achievements than as the by-product of family political capital. However, signs of dynamism are more substantial in the extra-political realm. Some of the SAAT founders’ fathers distinguished themselves as pioneers in different areas. An important scientist, the founder of the Law School of Niterói, the creator of the newspaper \textit{O Globo}, and the foregoer of Brazilian hydraulic engineering are

\textsuperscript{241} SAAT efforts to discourage the Vargas government to permit immigration from the Middle East are briefly discussed in Jeffrey Lesser, “Immigration and Shifting Concepts of National Identity in Brazil during the Vargas Era,” \textit{Luso-Brazilian Review} 31, no. 2 (1994), 23-44.
\textsuperscript{242} Only in three cases there is a history of noteworthy political careers (Barboza Lima Sobrinho, Candido Motta, and Felix Pacheco), in addition to the two Távora brothers – who were born into a family that opposed Ceará’s oligarchy – and, of course, the two children of Alberto Torres himself. The direct political involvement of the aristocratic families of the four noblemen mentioned above was not particularly significant in the republican period.
among the parents of some of the protagonists of the SAAT story, of course in addition to Alberto Torres himself.

Lastly, families played a role in the constitution of the organization as such, as kinship stands out as one of the micro-network within the SAAT. The most obvious case is obviously that of Alberto Torres Filho and Heloísa Alberto Torres— the offspring of the eponymous hero—but at least three pairs of brothers (Távora, Álvaro Alberto, and Roquette Pinto) should also be signaled. A further observation concerns the only two women—Armanda Álvaro Alberto and Heloísa Alberto Torres—who made their way into the SAAT original circle. Although their brilliance and successes in public life undeniable match those of their male colleagues, it is difficult to underestimate their family ties as a factor in their possibility of getting involved. The relevance of a surely quantitatively minimal, but nonetheless qualitatively exceptional female presence in the male-dominated SAAT should be emphasized. However, not only the numerical imbalance, but also the lack of women unrelated to male participants point to the existence of a gender barrier that not even a productive professional and intellectual trajectory could fully break down.

In summary, even a partial and approximate assessment of family backgrounds and social ranks permit to draw some meaningful conclusions. The SAAT was predominantly a creation of sectors of the Brazilian upper and middle class, bound in part to traditional landholding and in part to bourgeois occupations. In spite of their privileged positions in society, those groups had been relatively marginal within the power system of the Old Republic and, although this should

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243 Respectively, the Álvaro Alberto sybiling, Edgard Teixeira Leite, Roberto Marinho, and Saturnino de Brito Filho.
be proved through further research, in the case of the agrarian notables had possibly been experiencing some form of economic downturn. The overall lack of political (and to some extent economic) prominence was partially compensated by a certain degree of dynamism in civil society, with a few relevant examples of success in intellectual and technical enterprises. At the moment of its creation, the SAAT was also open to newcomers to Brazil, and possibly provided opportunities for their integration and social ascendance in this early period. In short, the milieus from which the SAAT founders originated seem to constitute an intermediate area within the Brazilian social hierarchy. On the one hand, it stood a step under the oligarchic elite that monopolized power in the First Republic and of which the paulistas, so underrepresented in the SAAT, were a central component. On the other hand, this sector amalgamated features of the traditional ruling classes – such as the bond with land and the link with the Imperial past – with an openness to new activities and enterprises. Although the generation of the SAAT, as we are about to see, stands out for a rather novel insertion in society, the nexus with the deeply-rooted values and interests of the Brazilian upper classes was not completely severed.
5.3. A Place in Society

5.3.1. Careers: Education and Professions

Even a rapid look at the information available on the educational background of SAAT founders provides a clear picture.244 Only an handful of them did not get a university degree, and even this small group actually stand out for exceptional intellectual and professional achievements.245 The vast majority of members completed higher education and constitute a selection of what historians of Brazil call *profissões imperiais*, i.e. the qualifications that the 19th-century elite monopolized well into the 20th century.246 Almost half of the group completed a law degree, that represented a usual step to pursue not only legal professions, but also careers in politics and civil service. Medicine and engineering completed the trio of options from which the upper-class male youth most commonly chose in the Brazil of the time, and both are also represented in the SAAT cohort.247

This rather unsurprising picture for such an elite group would not be exhaustive without an appreciation of the conspicuous number – about one forth – who had other higher education experiences, which we can group in two areas. On the one hand, three SAAT founders were graduates of the earliest Brazilian Schools of Agriculture, which aimed at the systematization of

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244 On education, we have sufficient data on 39 individuals, 78% of the sample.
245 The five characters who did not hold an advanced degree were the only two female founders, Armanda Álvaro Alberto and Heloisa Alberto Torres, who nonetheless became prominent educator and anthropologist, respectively; the two writers Humberto de Campos and Plínio Salgado; and Roberto Marinho, the press baron of contemporary Brazil.
246 See Coelho.
247 The sample shows sixteen law graduates, five medical doctors and three engineers.
knowledge and training in one of the most crucial sectors in the country’s economy.\textsuperscript{248}

Considering the priorities set by the SAAT, the presence of some pioneers of Brazilian formalized agronomic education is not unexpected. On the other hand, a second and larger group was made by career officers who went through the most prestigious and selective military schools of the country: the \textit{Escola Militar do Realengo} and the \textit{Escola Naval}. These institutions, as well as the military career at large, provided opportunities of upward social mobility to non-elite individuals who lacked the resources and the connections needed to access higher echelons. Military schools offered not only career prospects, but also a rigorous scientific and technical training, usually culminating in an engineering degree, and thus complemented the still weak Brazilian higher education system. This combination of middle-class social ambitions and access to advanced training produced a dynamism that overflowed into politics. From the late 1910s, cadets joined officers in the call for reforms of the First Republic that culminated in a number of military uprisings and decisively contributed to the 1930 regime change.\textsuperscript{249}

The tracking of professional achievements in the biographies of the SAAT creators presents several challenges, given the lack of homogeneity of the information available and the complexity and richness of many of the lives analyzed, which thus defy categorizations.\textsuperscript{250} Some

\textsuperscript{248} On the introduction and development of agronomy in Brazilian higher education, see Guy Capdeville, “O ensino superior agrícola no Brasil,” \textit{Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos} 72, no. 172 (1991), 229-261. The three SAAT members who held an agronomy degree were Arthur Torres Filho, Edgard Texeira Leite, and Fidelis Reis.

\textsuperscript{249} On the role of military schools and their cadets in Brazilian politics, see Miriam de Oliveira Santos, \textit{Berços de Heróis: O papel das escolas militares na formação de “Salvadores da Pátria”} (São Paulo: Annablume, 2004). Among the SAAT founders, Domingos Velasco, Juarez Távora, Jurandir Mamede e Magalhaes Correia graduated from \textit{Realengo}, while Álvaro Alberto, Ari Parreiras and Protagenes Guimarães were trained in the \textit{Escola Naval}. I discuss military officers’ political activism in the 1920s, known in Brazil as \textit{tenentismo}, in chapter 7, for its relevance for the trajectory of Juarez Távora.

\textsuperscript{250} Career data are available for 40 individuals, 80% of the sample. The vast majority of the characters studied here concurrently pursued, and frequently shifted across, different occupations throughout their existences. As a result, the numbers reported in this section cannot be added up, but just compared in order to spot overall trends.
general observations are nonetheless possible. In the first place, half of the members of the group had a history of civil service, here loosely understood as any position in municipal-, state- and federal-level public institutions, ranging from administrative jobs in minor local offices to top appointments in the national magistracy. If we couple this category with the substantial number of SAAT members who had experiences as teachers at various levels, as well as with the significant clusters of servicemen and scientists, it is evident that public institutions represented by far the most important employer for the people involved in the SAAT project. The state, as in the case of Miceli’s *homens sem profissão*, constituted for this group a crucial resource in terms of job opportunities, in contrast with the overall profile of the SAAT founders’ families, which apparently occupied, overall, a more distant position from the public sector. These impressions are confirmed by the relatively low number of private sector occupations. The fact that only five SAAT members in the sample practiced at some point in their lives the *profissão imperial* par excellence – the legal profession – marks a significant discontinuity in the traditional pattern of the Brazilian elites’ careers, especially if we consider the high proportion of law graduates in the group.

The only substantial cases of activities not formally connected with state institutions concern intellectual professions. In particular, the SAAT hosted a cluster of reputed writers and artists. Nonetheless, this group hardly represented an exception to the trend of state proximity, if

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251 The sample shows fifteen instances of education jobs, while military careers and scientific research positions (mainly in the *Museu Nacional*) recurs six times each.
not dependency. In fact, all these intellectuals also relied on public employment and political careers, in order to earn a living.252

Journalism in particular had a greater importance, as it constituted, after civil service and education, the third most frequent typology of occupation.253 Under this umbrella term, specific positions ranged from occasional contributions to the ownership and/or directorship of some of the most important national newspapers, as in the case of Felix Pacheco (Jornal do Commercio), M. Paulo Filho (Correio da Manhã), and Roberto Marinho (O Globo). Incidentally, these last cases were some of the few instances of important entrepreneurship initiatives among SAAT founders, since businessmen active in any sector represented only a tiny minority.254 Journalism flourished in the Brazil of the early 20th century as a crucial player for the formation of the elite public opinion, and provided, together with state agencies, opportunities for employment and social advancement to members of both the decaying traditional elite and the rising middle class.

The assessment of SAAT founders’ education and careers, in addition to generational, geographic and family considerations, confirms the picture of the organization as a meeting point for representatives of two broader groups that, within the Brazilian society of the period, occupied a relatively precarious position. In the SAAT, as a matter of fact, members of the

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252 Six people could be included in this subset, and their creative activities were always supported by other occupations: Alcides Bezerra was a civil servant, a state deputy, and the director of the National Archive; Felix Pacheco (also a prominent journalist) served as a senator and then as a minister in the First Republic; Humberto de Campos was a deputy, a school inspector and the director of the cultural institution Casa de Rui Barbosa; J.F. de Oliveira Viana was a law professor, a ministerial advisor and a magistrate; Magalhães Correia worked as a curator and a professor in the Museu Nacional and the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes; finally Plínio Salgado had a lengthy career in politics.

253 Thirteen cases of journalist activities were tracked in the sample.

254 Beyond the media tycoons Pacheco and Marinho, only two of the most active and dynamic characters had significant entrepreneurial experiences, but all connected to the primary sector: Edgard Teixeira Leite, in the sugar industry and in mining, and Ildefonso Simões Lopes, in agriculture.
economic and political upper-classes that remained in the background during the Old Republic met with a minor, but nonetheless substantial group of ascending bourgeois who found in public employment – including the military – and intellectual careers the best chances to rise up the social ladder. In general terms, the state and the opportunities that it provided, especially after 1930, appear as the pillar on which this diverse group, made by a decaying elite and an ascending middle class, grounded their projects and ambitions. More precisely, as we are about to see, institutional networks and politics, both during and after crisis of the First Republic, constituted the main resources on which this intermediate sector invested and, in the final analysis, constructed its cohesion and identity.

5.3.2. Social Capital: Institutional Networks and Politics

The study of the biographies of SAAT founding members uncovered another fundamental common trait: most of them were interlinked through a precise network of institutional affiliations. These mutual bonds show how the SAAT experience did not took place in isolation, within these circles of the Brazilian elite, but on the contrary rested on, and contributed to, a rather close-grained network of formal spaces in which socialization, common interests and shared projects took place. An evaluation of the most recurring national-level entities to which SAAT creators linked their names will also provide a clearer picture of the larger institutional context in which the entity operated, and of the material and symbolic resources that Torres’ followers were able, or at least tried, to mobilize in order to pursue their goals.
SAAT activists occupied prominent positions in the most prestigious Brazilian cultural institutions of the time. Eight personalities were admitted, at some point of their careers, in what was the most sought-after and select circle for Brazilian intellectuality: the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (ABL), founded in 1897. Equally significant was the number of members – four – of the *Academia Brasileira de Ciências* (ABC), created in 1916 to provide a venue for coordinating scientific research in a country that still lacked a modern university system. Other SAAT exponents were also affiliated with the most traditional cultural body of post-independence Brazil, the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (IHGB), founded in 1838, and with a number of other national and regional entities of the kind.\(^{255}\) Altogether, the qualitative and quantitative relevance of SAAT members’ participation in the system of Brazilian cultural institutions not only confirms the elite connotation of the association, but also the centrality that it collectively occupied in the intellectual life of the country. Many SAAT founders made a significant investment on, and intensively contributed to, the conceptualization and interpretation of Brazil, as the individual production of fiction and non-fiction publications also attests.

A second institutional network that shaped the SAAT is more specific, and explicitly bound to the main goal that informed its experience: a comprehensive transformation of the Brazilian countryside. In this case, the network is composed by a trio: the *Museu Nacional*, the Agriculture Ministry, and the *Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura* (SNA).\(^{256}\) The *Museu Nacional* (see chapter 6) was established in 1818 and incarnated the efforts to provide Brazil with a

\(^{255}\) The sample show three members of the IHGB, five fellows of different state-level *Academias de Letras*, and single instances of affiliation to institutions such as the *Academica Brasileira de Educação*, the *Sociedade de Geografia* and the *Casa de Rui Barbosa*.

\(^{256}\) SAAT affiliates to these entities were, respectively, five, six, and four.
modern institution of conservation as well as scientific and anthropological research. During the First Republic, the museum had been under the authority of the Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio. In 1930, the provisional government unbounded from the latter a stand-alone Ministry of Agriculture, and Brazil had for the first time an autonomous national agency entirely dedicated to the problems of the rural world (see chapter 7). Finally, the SNA, founded in 1897, represented the main non-governmental entity through which landholders, technicians and reformers articulated their interests and formulated policy proposals. The SNA was so influential that, in the long period during which the federal cabinet lacked an agriculture portfolio, between 1892 and 1907, it unofficially carried out its functions.

A quick look at the leaderships of this trio of institutions and of the SAAT itself highlights the symbiotic relationship in which these bodies lived, especially in the 1933-1934 period. As a matter of fact, in this biennium a quadrumvirate presided over the SAAT. Among its members, Ildefonso Simões Lopes – the only one in charge during both years, and de facto SAAT chief – had been in the past Minister for Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (1919-1922) and, more recently, president of the SNA (1926-1931). Arthur Torres Filho, quadrumvir in 1933, was an officer in the Agriculture Ministry and was the first vice-president – and then acting president – of the SNA (1930-1943); he later became the rector of the Universidade Rural in Rio de Janeiro (1946-1949), which – as we will see – was the outcome of a SAAT proposal. Alberto Sampaio, another SAAT leader in 1933, was the director of the Botany section of the National Museum (1912-1937). Juarez Távora, when he entered the 1934 SAAT quadrumvirate,

257 Maria Margaret Lopes, O Brasil descobre a pesquisa científica: os museus e as ciências naturais no século XIX (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997).
was in the last year of his tenure as Agriculture Minister, that he had started in the final days of 1932; he also later held the SAAT presidency in 1936. In addition, other two prominent figures in the SAAT were Edgard Teixeira Leite, an Agriculture Ministry employee since the 1910s and then the second vice-president of the SNA, and Edgard Roquette Pinto, director of the *Museu Nacional* (1915-1936). It is easy to conclude that the tight network of the “agriculture institutions” represented the real core of the SAAT, which could therefore count on an impressive social capital of relations and influence, and which had the capacity to heavily affect the shaping of rural policies at the highest levels, as we will see in detail in the following chapters dedicated to the National Museum and the Ministry of Agriculture.

A third decisive resource on which the SAAT could count was constituted by some of the most important newspapers based in Rio de Janeiro. The *Jornal do Comércio*, one of the oldest dailies in Latin America (it was established in 1827), functioned as the closest partner of the SAAT. Its owner and director since 1899, Felix Pacheco, was one of the founding members of the association. What is more, reports on SAAT activities appeared on a daily basis on its pages, and the two enterprises even shared the same venue on one of the main boulevards in Rio de Janeiro. Another important *carioca* mouthpiece, the *Correio da Manhã*, founded in 1901, was well represented in the association and regularly covered its initiatives. Finally, one of the members of the SAAT was Roberto Marinho, the young director of the recently founded *O Globo*, which was destined to dominate the Brazilian media industry in the following decades. In

259 “Jornal do Comércio,” in *Diccionário histórico-biográfico da Primeira República*, [https://cpdoc.fgv.br/sites/default/files/verbetes/primeira-republica/JORNAL%20DO%20COM%C3%89RCIO.pdf](https://cpdoc.fgv.br/sites/default/files/verbetes/primeira-republica/JORNAL%20DO%20COM%C3%89RCIO.pdf) (accessed March 5, 2019).

260 In addition to Pacheco, other four SAAT founders contributed regularly to the *Jornal do Commercio*.

261 The director of the *Correio da Manhã* M. Paulo Filho and other four contributors appear in the list of SAAT creators.
consideration of the centrality of press in the formation of elite opinion in the Brazil of the time, the availability of the direct support of three widely circulated newspapers constituted a strategic resource.

In conclusion, the combination of strong participation in the institutionalized national and local cultural and intellectual scene, a pervasive presence in the most important state and civil organizations that presided over the strategic sector of agriculture, and – last but not least – the support of some key national newspapers made the SAAT stand out as an exceptionally equipped actor on the Brazilian public scene. Participation in politics, which is the final factor considered here, provided the necessary linkage to the changing structures of power of 1930s Brazil, and opened avenues for the potential transformation of SAAT visions and proposals into concrete projects and policies.

The analysis of the political trajectories of SAAT founders produces a rather diverse picture. As a matter of fact, more than one third of the sample group lack any significant political experience, before, during and after the period of SAAT activity. This, of course, did not mean the impossibility to intervene on the public scene, as these non-political characters occupied strategic positions in many of the institutions discussed above, often with a technocratic profile of expertise and prestige that assured them much influence on public opinion and the state.

A substantial number of SAAT creators had considerable familiarity with politics. About a third of the sample shows a variety of experiences in elective offices during the First

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262 Fourteen individuals (38%) out of the thirty-seven on which we have enough information.

263 Just to mention the most patent cases, Arthur Torres Filho was a leading figure in agronomy and rural policies from the 1920s to the 1950s, Edgard Roquette Pinto and Heloísa Albertino Torres held in succession the directorship of the Museu Nacional almost uninterruptedly for forty years (1915-1936 and 1938-1955, respectively), and Oliveira Viana was an influential governmental advisor on labor law during the crucial decade of the 1930s.
Republic, ranging from provincial town aldermanship to state and federal parliamentary terms. Even without a detailed reconstruction of pre-1930 individual party affiliations and ideological creeds, which would exceed the boundaries of this research, a common characteristic is nonetheless clear: the high incidence of political participation that was in some way oppositional to the status quo. In fact, the SAAT hosted three participants in the so called Reação Republicana of 1921-1922, a campaign that unsuccessfully proposed the proto-populist carioca senator Nilo Peçanha for the presidential election as an alternative to Arthur Bernardes, the representative of the dominant alliance between the São Paulo and the Minas Gerais elites. A few other cases show a history of opposition, or at least criticism of dominant oligarchies, at a local level. The Távora brothers had a family tradition of conflict with the Ceará ruling elites, while the only two paulista SAAT founders – Plínio Salgado e Candido Motta – had a rather turbulent history of internal opposition within the unbeaten Partido Republicano Paulista in the 1920s and even in the early 1930s. In the more peripheral state of Espírito Santo, Attilio Vivacqua was one of the organizers and leaders of the Partido da Lavoura, an antagonist of the local branch of the Republican party.

Another crucial group completes this picture of the SAAT as an entity with a strong contingent of historic opponents of the oligarchic regime: the tentistia cluster. Five of the Army

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264 Twelve SAAT founders (32%).
265 This is the case of José Monteiro Soares Filho, alderman in Vassouras (RJ) in 1929-1930, and Mauro Roquette Pinto, alderman in Juiz de Fora (MG) (1919-26).
266 On the Reação Republicana, see Fausto, “Brazil: The Social and Political Structure of the First Republic, 1889-1930,” 817-819. The three notables who had been involved in the movement were among the most prominent figures of the SAAT: Edgard Teixeira Leite, Fernandes Távora, and Ildefonso Simões Lopes. A fourth one, the army officer Domingos Velasco, was a vocal supporter of Reação Republicana but held no political offices at the time.
and Navy officers267 who contributed to the establishment of the SAAT were among the most active in the military revolts that took place during the 1920s, and they were frequently jailed and exiled for their deeds.

Unsurprisingly, this conspicuous group of civil and military opponents of the 1920s was also an integral part of the leadership of the mobilizations that brought to the overthrow of the regime in 1930. The veterans of the Reação Republicana were among the animators of the Aliança Liberal (AL) that supported Getúlio Vargas in the electoral dispute with the paulista Júlio Prestes. Indeed, Fernandes Távora was the founder of AL in Ceará, and Ildefonso Simões Lopes the vice-president of the national AL. The SAAT tenentes were among the military commanders who carried out the 1930 Revolution, and who later led the loyalist forces to crush the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932 in São Paulo. All of them, in addition, were involved in the creation of the Clube 3 de Outubro, that in 1931 attempted to group in a political organization the supporters of Vargas’ provisional government.

If we consider what emerged from the data regarding the pre-1932 period, the collective political profile of the SAAT members is clear, although not homogeneous. The group included a conspicuous number of intellectuals, scientists, and specialists in different areas who, in spite of their frequent involvement with state institutions and policymaking, restrained themselves from any personal direct participation in politics and in elected or appointed offices. On the other hand, an even greater cluster came to the SAAT with at least some political experience, and

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267 Domingos Velasco, Juarez Távora (who is the protagonist of chapter 7), and Jurandir Mamede held commanding positions in the Army, while Ari Parreiras and Protogenes Guimarães were affiliated to the Navy.
many of them actually were among the architects of the regime change occurred in 1930 and were part of the inner circles of Vargas collaborators.

In conclusion, the SAAT stands out as an extremely rich amalgamation of diverse affiliations and experiences within both politics and civil society. Although only a few dozen men (and two women) constituted the organization, the web in which they were woven touched many strategic institutions and capitalized on momentous political participations. The professional component – with its network of prestigious cultural entities, lobbies, state agencies, and media – complemented and, if we look at some individual biographies, even interpenetrated the political one – which built itself up through the civil and military opposition mobilizations of the 1920s. The resulting profile is that of an extremely powerful cluster of brilliant and dedicated activists that were able to count on an exceptional array of resources in order to pursue their ambitions.

Before moving on to explore how SAAT members pursued their specific “organicist agrarianist” agendas in the two most relevant public institutions for rural matters – the National Museum and the Ministry of Agriculture –, an examination of the founding principles and the most important projects of the SAAT will clarify how the organization directly intervened in Brazil’s public scene during the 1930s.
5.4. Reviving an Intellectual Hero: Alberto Torres and the Establishment of the SAAT

The idea of establishing a formal entity that could celebrate and perpetuate the intellectual legacy of Alberto Torres dated back to the immediate years after his death. A short press clipping datable to 1919 mentioned the proposal of a *Sociedade de Conferencias Alberto Torres*. Nevertheless, the project only materialized more than ten years later, after dramatic changes that provided a far more favorable political and cultural context for such an endeavor: the 1930 Revolution, which brought the First Republic to an end and established Vargas’ provisional government.

The creation of the SAAT, in November 1932, immediately followed the suppression of the São Paulo insurrection that threatened the incumbent regime in the name of constitutionalism and local self-government. It also preceded the May 1933 elections for the Constitutional Assembly that Vargas had called to replace the old republican charter, which was *de facto* abolished after his rise to power in 1930. The moment was extremely delicate, but also rich in opportunity. In the view of Vargas’ supporters, the collapse of the First Republic, the successful resistance to the claims of the São Paulo rebels and the imminent writing of a new constitution opened an unprecedented space for the redefinition of the general principles and institutional structures on which the country had to be grounded.

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268 “Sociedade de Conferencia Alberto Torres,” press clipping, no author, no source, no date (but probably 1919) (CCHAT).

In this context, the figure of Alberto Torres was evoked as a guiding spirit to orient an entire generation of enlightened reformers in a fundamental work of renovation and reorganization of Brazil. The precursory qualities attributed to Torres, his interpretations and his calls for action translated, in the language of SAAT creators, into a powerful prophetic discourse.

“The figure of the magnificent sociologist and thinker,” according to the poet Humberto de Campos, “moves forward out of the dusk and regains its place next to the living, and he presents himself, thanks to his vibrant thought, as more alive than them.” More prosaically, but not less conclusively, Mauro Roquette Pinto wrote: “After we have finally accepted his theories and advices, Brazil will follow its most suitable path. […] Any page that you randomly open in Alberto Torres’ works comes in useful to alleviate our economic sufferings.”

Admirers of Torres considered his ideas perfectly attuned to the new course opened in 1930 under the leadership of Vargas: on the one hand, he had criticized the now crushed oligarchic regime for its reliance on an alien and equivocal liberalism; on the other hand, he had invoked a new politics centered on the appreciation of Brazilian reality, in its strengths and limitations. After two years of uncertain and conditional measures, the context of late 1932 appeared ideal for the evocation of Torres’ legacy and its translation into a clear-cut program of political intervention.

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271 M. Roquette Pinto, “O panorama economico do Brasil”, press clipping, no source, no date (but probably March 1933) (CCHAT). Quando houvemos aceito definitivamente suas theorias e seus conselhos o Brasil seguirá o rumo que lhe convém. […] Qualquer pagina que se abra no acaso nas obras de Alberto Torres serve para lenir as nossas afflicções economicas.”
The 1936 statutes of the SAAT listed ten “fundamental goals” that the entity would pursue. Half of them specifically referred to the revivification and diffusion of Torres’ contributions, “because until now they are,” in the wording of the charter, “the best comprehensive program about our [national] issues.” In this area, the SAAT intended to reprint Torres’ essays and to publish his dispersed works, to create throughout the country “Torres study centers” and to introduce Torres “methodology” in the Brazilian education system. An equally crucial role that the SAAT assumed was to “define the fundamental principles of Alberto Torres’ thought.” The mission of setting and keeping orthodoxy under control is reiterated in the statutes, which established a Special Assembly that was composed exclusively by the founding members, promulgated final deliberations on any doctrinaire controversy and sanctioned transgressors.

The SAAT also gave itself another set of more general political goals. The list opened with the ambitious task of “promoting the study of national problems, with the purpose of indicating the adjustment of institutions to the facts of our experience, in the light of the world politics events.” and ended with other two definite duties: “promote by every possible means and way continental and universal fraternity,” and “stimulate at any rate the study and the

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272 Only the revised statutes approved in 1936 were retrieved. No copy of the original charter has been located, and thus it is at the moment impossible to determine why and how in 1936 the SAAT proceeded to a revision.
274 Ibid., 8.
275 Ibid., 12, 15-16, and 19-20.
276 Ibid., 7: “promover o estudo dos problemas nacionais, com o fim de indicar a adequação das instituições aos fatos da nossa experiência, á luz dos acontecimentos da política mundial.”
solution of Brazilian rural problems, in their threefold facet: political, social and economic.”

A twofold conception of the Brazilian nation emerges from these formulae. On the one hand, SAAT creators stressed the importance of placing Brazil in the broader changing context of the international system, considering the country as a respectable actor in the Americas and in the world at large. On the other hand, they explicitly defended the vision of Brazil as an essentially rural nation, whose “facts of experience” could only lead to an original solution for socio-political and economic questions. The comprehensive framework of the SAAT rested on two pillars: the tutelary deity of Alberto Torres, and the proud participation of Brazil in the alliance of nations. Nonetheless, its fundamental content – the nation to be defended and built – was almost exclusively defined by the “rural problems,” in an implicit but fully legible declaration of priorities that went beyond the practical concern over natural resources and the primary sector.

As Torres taught through his “rediscovery” of his homeland, and as the placement of Brazil in the international division of labor demanded, the country was not simply incidentally rural, but was inherently such. The SAAT’s concrete initiatives, therefore, were based on the conviction that the rural world incarnated the authentic identity of the nation, that only accepting and following its genuine nature it could fully satisfy the material and spiritual needs of the population, in both its elite and popular sectors.

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277 Ibid., 8: “promover por todos os meios e modos a fraternidade continental e universal,” and “estimular de todos os modos, o estudo e a solução dos problemas rurais brasileiros, sob o triplce aspecto – politico, social e econômico.”
5.5. The SAAT in Action: Rural Education and the Northeast

Two documents illustrate the concrete undertakings that the SAAT envisioned and, in part, implemented in the earliest years of its existence. In July 1936, the general secretary of the organization, Raul de Paula, compiled a comprehensive report for the federal deputy, and founding member of the SAAT, Fernandes Távora. In 1939, on the occasion of its seventh anniversary, the entity published a pamphlet that detailed its principles and activities.

In the first place, it is significant that the two documents are not particularly rich in details on the expansion and rooting of the organization outside its central base in Rio de Janeiro. The 1936 report counts forty-two sections of the SAAT, and generically places them “in [the states of] Amazônia, Ceará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Bahia, Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, Piauí, in the capital cities and in the provinces.” The 1939 pamphlet – rather surprisingly, given its explicit celebratory purposes and its official SAAT imprint – does not present any number on this matter. It is possible to argue that the SAAT mainly operated as a centralized organization, as the apparently successful activities that are described below seem to confirm. Even when SAAT interventions enjoyed widespread diffusion far from the capital city, they appear less as the result of local branches’ efforts than as the outcome of centrally planned and directed national strategies. This dirigiste scheme is fully

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279 *SAAT 1932-1939* (CCHAT).
coherent with the prevailing political culture of the SAAT members, and of pro-Vargas circles at large, as it was centered on a tempered federalism and a strong central state intervention in the periphery.

Raul de Paula devoted far more pace in the same document to what he called “nossa organização ideal,” which clearly constituted the core of the SAAT project for Brazil: the Clube Agrícola Escolar (“School Agriculture Club”). This educational experiment, which functioned in conjunction with public primary schools, was clearly the boast of the group’s enterprises, and it is discussed at length and with much pride in the documents. The 1936 report provides the following description of what constituted a School Agriculture Club:

[…] an institution that is designed to “ruralize” education and to implement the school curriculum. The Clubs cultivate their own garden, plant mulberry, take care of their own woods, plant cereals; they manage the orchard, fight pests, do small rural works, carry on health campaigns; they organize educational weeks; they protect nature; they, thanks to their associates, revive school, implement the school curriculum, shape an objective mentality to build a better nation.

The author of the report vaguely mentioned the creation of one thousand Clubs throughout Brazil, while the 1939 pamphlet had a far more detailed page with quantitative data. According to it, the Clubs were present in all the units of the federation and amounted to a total of 729. Distribution varied appreciably, ranging from single digit presences in Acre, Sergipe, Pará, Alagoas, Espírito Santo, and Rio Grande do Norte to the impressive numbers of

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Ibid: “instituição destinada a ruralização do ensino, e realização do programa escolar. Os Clubs plantam sua horta, cultivam a amoreira, fazem seu bosque, cultivam cereaes; formam o pomar, fazem capanha [sic] aos insectos nocivos, realizam pequenas industrias rurais, levam avante campanhas sanitárias; organizam semanas educativas; protegem a natureza; e elles pelos seus socios assim agindo, dão vida á escola, executam o programa escolar, formam mentalidade objectiva para construírem uma nacção melhor.”}

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
Santa Catarina (99), Pernambuco (112) and Minas Gerais (113). In spite of such a heterogeneous distribution, the Clubs emerge as a substantial nation-wide reality, and the SAAT investment of them was significant.

School Agriculture Clubs are celebrated in a newspaper article by the president of the SAAT, Rafael Xavier, as one of the fundamental pieces of the larger project of creating a Brazilian rural pedagogy. Such a goal was shared with federal and state institutions, that in the Vargas years devoted novel attention to the educational needs of the countryside. However, the SAAT claimed a large degree of autonomy, and the merit of leading this process of constructing “a new pedagogy […] where the agronomist and the professor tied together in the same objective spirit to transform the teaching administered to the rural populations of the country, who up to then were subject to the same methods and processes applied of urban teaching.”

These efforts culminated in four key national events centered on rural education. In May 1933, the SAAT organized in Rio de Janeiro a course for rural teachers coming from all over Brazil, who received training in the areas of “hygiene, agriculture, sericulture, apiculture, protection of nature, fight to erosion and pests, prevention of venom poisoning, reforestation
lectures, small rural works, pottery, regional museum and libraries.” In July 1934, the “Primeira Semana Ruralista do Brasil” was held in the provincial town of Itanhandú (MG), with a series of expositions, conferences, educational activities, and distribution of material. Along the same lines, in November 1934 the “Primeiro Congresso de Ensino Rural” took place in Salvador with the cooperation of Governor Juracy Magalhães and the ministers of Education and Agriculture. This two-week event essentially was an extension of the previous one at a larger scale – 120 educators actively contributed – and ended with the foundation of a Rural Normal School in the provincial town of Feira de Santana (BA). Finally, in 1936 a “Universidade Rural Brasileira” – following up a project already envisioned in the very statues of the SAAT – was launched in Rio de Janeiro through the organization of a vocational course for teachers.

Such a dense and complex program for the development of rural education was only in part a response to the socio-economic fragilities of the Brazilian countryside. What Xavier called “a new spirit, in the soul of the Brazilian peasant [who was] educated and direct towards beneficial and useful work,” was not solely intended as a tool for modernizing agriculture and making Brazilian backlands productive. It also was, explicitly, a fundamental battle in “a fight for the integration of Brazil on its own social and political trajectory” As Alcides Bezerra wrote in his preface to the 1939 pamphlet, “the follower of Alberto Torres is a soldier and only

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288 Ibid.: “hygiene, agricultura, sericicultura, apicultura, potecção á natureza, combate á erosão, aos insectos damninhos, ophidismo, aulas de reflorestamento, pequenas industrias rurais, arte marajoára, molelagem [sic], arquitetura paisagista, museu regional, bibliothecas regionaes.”
290 Ibid., 5.
292 Xavier, “O ensino rural:” “um espirito novo, na alma do campônio brasileiro educado e dirigido para uma faina proveitosa e útil.”
293 Ibid.: “a luta pela integração do Brasil na sua directriz social e política.”
aspires to be a soldier. [...] Our work program aims at making a stronger, better educated and more civilized Brazil, for the future generations of rural and urban Brazilians.”

In this work of civilizing and integrating the nation, a prominent role was also assigned to a specific Brazilian region, which in the view of the SAAT members required special care in order to be reinserted in the body of the country: the Northeast. Together with the abovementioned initiatives on rural education, the other unprecedented event organized by the SAAT was the “Congresso do Nordeste,” a multi-day conference that took place in Rio de Janeiro in from December 2 to December 12, 1933. According to its program, the event proposed to couple scientific and technical evaluations of the specific problems of the region with a propositional component that should have led to concrete interventions. The undisputed focus was the issue of droughts, a recurring plague that in the same period was receiving increasing attention from the federal government. General proposals for the resolution of the problem included the construction of dams and irrigation systems, coupled with the “parceling out of plots of land, to be sold or rented out to settle families of national workers” and the constitution of cooperatives and consortia.

This overview of the major activities promoted by the SAAT clarifies the specific goals and methods that the organization adopted. In clear continuity with Torres’ teachings, the SAAT combined an overall appeal for the strengthening and revitalization of the nation with specific

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294 SAAT 1932-1939, 6: “O torreano é um soldado e só aspira ser soldado. [...] O nosso programa de trabalho é orientado no sentido de fazer para as futuras gerações de brasileiros, do campo e da cidade, um Brasil mais forte, mais culto, mais civilizado.”


298 Congresso do Nordeste, 2: “parcellamento, com a venda ou arrendamento das terras beneficiadas, para localisação de famílias de trabalhadores nacionais.”
experiments of social engineering. Both rural education and the recovery of the Northeast – by far the two priorities of the SAAT – were in the first place strategic elements in the process of “reappropriation” of Brazil that Torres himself had proposed in the 1910s. The reformist elite of the early 1930s, in a phase in which the fortunes of Brazil seemed fully at stake, saw Torres’ head-on attack on the First Republic, for the misgovernment and insularism that rendered it alien to its own country, as an unparalleled opportunity for action. SAAT militants perceived entire areas of the country’s geography – the rural world as such, and the Northeastern states – as limbs severed from the national body, and they stressed the necessity of a permanent suture. This last could be attained through a combination of technocratic measures – the training and dissemination of specialists in rural education, and large- and small-scale engineering works in the Northeast – with a stiffly controlled and highly hierarchical mobilization of what were regarded as the immediate beneficiaries of such a program: the Brazilian peasants.

The School Agriculture Clubs, as well as the reorganization of land and labor through small landholding and cooperativism, aimed at stabilizing and integrating the rural population. In the minds of SAAT activists, the construction of a more cohesive and prosperous Brazil went together with a form of civic education that equated, for the countryman, the bond to land and agricultural work with the bond to the nation. As Xavier captured in his article, the SAAT had established a “work program […] for the great destiny of a common action that is able, in a short time, to peacefully revolutionize our political fundamentals and to crystallize its superior designs in a perfect economic, social and educational order.”

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299 Xavier, “O ensino rural:” “programma de trabalho […] para o largo destino de uma acção commum capaz de, em breve, revolucionar pacificamente os nossos fundamentos políticos, crystallizando os seus superiores designios numa perfeita ordem economica, social e educativa.”

Activist Science, Popular Education and the National Museum

in the 1930s

In October 1932, one month before the creation of the SAAT, an ambitious publishing project materialized on the Brazilian cultural scene with the appearance of the first issue of the *Revista Nacional de Educação* (RNE). The recently born Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs, established by Vargas in November 1930, was its financial sponsor, as well as the governmental agency in charge of the institution that edited the new monthly review: the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro. A year and a half later, in April 1934, when the RNE was rapidly approaching the end of its brief existence, an unprecedented scientific and political event took place in the capital city: the First Brazilian Conference on the Protection of Nature. When it came to decide where the convention sessions should be held, the choice immediately felt on the neoclassical São Cristóvão Palace in the Quinta da Boa Vista park, where the royal family used to reside in the 19th century, and where the National Museum had found its permanent venue in 1892. The coordinators of the two initiatives – Edgar Roquette-Pinto and Alberto José de Sampaio, respectively – had several traits in common, including prominent roles in the hierarchy of the National Museum and reputable scientific careers. In addition, they also were founding members of the SAAT.
The substantial ties between the National Museum and the SAAT are the focus of this chapter. The two entities occupied very different positions in the Brazil of the 1930s. The National Museum was the oldest and the most prestigious scientific institution of the country, while the SAAT had just recently come into existence as a private circle of elite intellectuals and activists. However, a cluster of individuals, ideals, goals and activities clearly emerge, especially in the dense handful of years ideally framed by the foundation of the RNE and the first conservationist conference, i.e. from 1932 to 1934. In particular, three of the five SAAT founders who had relations with the National Museum are the protagonists of this chapter: anthropologist Edgar Roquette-Pinto (1884-1954), and naturalists Alberto José de Sampaio (1881-1946) and Armando Magalhães Correia (1889-1944). Their work in the areas of scientific research, publishing and popularization established “organicist agrarianism” as a valid tool for the redemption of rural Brazil and for a rational management of its natural resources. Their major accomplishment in terms of public policies was to inspire the 1934 Código Florestal, the first forest code in Brazilian history.

6.1. The National Museum and the Early Scientific Work of SAAT Founding Members

In 1818, King João VI established the Royal Museum (future National Museum) with a twofold mission that, in spite of repeated reinterpretations and readjustments, it retained up to the

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300 Edgar Teixeira Leite (1895-1983) studied Botany at the National Museum in the 1910s. Heloísa Alberto Torres (1895-1977), one of the two daughters of Alberto Torres, played a central role in the administration of the museum, first as vice-director (1935-1937) and then as director (1937-1955), as I will discuss in chapter 9.
20\textsuperscript{th} century. On the one hand, the institution combined an ever-growing collection of specimens of the country’s flourishing tropical nature with samples and objects from other regions of the world. The museum’s microcosm, with its thousands of natural and cultural items, tangibly represented the insertion of Brazil in the wider international realm of scientific research and refined cosmopolitism. On the other hand, the museum had the task of deepening knowledge about Brazil’s natural resources, in order to expand productivity and profits in the key sectors of agriculture and mining. Since the beginning, therefore, scientific, aesthetic and moral purposes were not disjunct from the pursuit of direct economic outcomes.

Emperor Pedro II’s reforms in the 1870s emphasized research and knowledge dissemination activities, with the launch of the review *Archivos do Museu Nacional* in 1876 and of evening classes for the cultured elite of the capital city. In this period, the museum experienced two other important changes that deeply affected its subsequent trajectory well into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. First, a stand-alone ethnography section was created and rapidly became a pillar of the institution’s mission. Second, the vocation for applied knowledge was sanctioned by the incorporation of the museum into the jurisdiction of the early State Secretariat for Agriculture, Trade and Public Works, established in 1860. Until 1930, as a matter of fact, the museum remained dependent on the different governmental agencies for agricultural affairs that followed one another under various names.\textsuperscript{301}

An occurrence that was only loosely related to the National Museum – one of Rondon’s expeditions in the Brazilian backlands in the 1910s – became a foundational experience for the

two oldest and then most prestigious figures among the four scientists that exactly two decades later we found side by side at the National Museum and in the SAAT. In 1912, the director of the botany section Alberto José de Sampaio and the professor of anthropology Edgar Roquette-Pinto joined a mission promoted by the Rondon Commission in what today is the state of Rondônia, at the time the Amazonian portion of Mato Grosso. Both the undertaking and the later state took their name by the project supervisor, army major Cândido Rondon (1865-1958). The ambitious task, which run from 1907 to 1915, consisted in constructing a telegraph line in the most remote inland region of the country, then inhabited almost exclusively by indigenous peoples. 302 Such an unprecedented endeavor, mostly inspired by a paternalistic and ill-fated intention of integrating “virgin” lands and “backward” populations into the Brazilian nation, nonetheless also acquired an exceptional scientific value, thanks to expeditioners like Sampaio and Roquette-Pinto. The latter, according to one of his biographers, seized this opportunity to act, at the same time, as ethnographer, sociologist, geographer, archaeologist, botanic, zoologist, linguist, physician, pharmacologist, jurist, photographer, cinematographer and folklorist. He took notes on all aspects of the region – from the forest to the [single] tree and leaf – soil composition, mountains profiles, river flows, waterflow intensity and the rich variety of fauna. During the visits to the tribes who were already pacified, he measured the skulls of the Indians, compared their weights and height, analyzed their endemic diseases, and described their forms of production, commerce, and transportation. He recorded their scientific knowledge, family relations, political organization, religious habits, linguistic forms, manual skills, songs and dances. He also carried out the first dissection of an indigene – in fact, an indigenous woman – on which we have records. Roquette did not leave a single loose end. He took music notes of the songs of the natives and, what is more, engraved them in wax drums with the portable phonograph that was used at the time. He filmed all he could and photographed or drew the rest. Not to mention all the stones, arrowheads and indigenous items that he collected and transported for thousands of kilometers across rivers, swamps and trails opened in the forest. 303

Such a formative fieldwork experience produced immediate scientific outcomes. In 1916, the Archivos do Museu Nacional published a groundbreaking article by Sampaio, who used the knowledge that he and other naturalists acquired in the expedition to systematically map the flora of Mato Grosso.\footnote{Alberto José de Sampaio, “A flora de Mato Grosso. Memória em homenagem aos trabalhos botânicos da Comissão Rondon,” Archivos do Museu Nacional, 19 (1916): 1-126.} Such a monographic treatise incarnated Sampaio’s inclination towards highly specialized scientific work, and started his decades-long career as the foremost expert in the geographical distribution of plants in Brazil: a focus that deeply informed his later conservationist and agrarianist interventions in the realms of popularization, education and policies.

The eclectic, prolific and literarily-gifted Roquette-Pinto went far beyond the production of academic papers destined to a specialist audience. Rondônia (1916), an edited version of his 1912 field notebook, enjoyed an immediate success and had the honor of being compared to Euclides da Cunha’s Os Sertões (1902).\footnote{Castro, “Roquette-Pinto: o homem-multidão.”} The two books shared the merit of shockingly introducing the Brazilian cultivated elite to immense portions of the national territory, with their unfamiliar natural features, as well as their neglected populations. What is more, Rondônia was also an explicit intervention in the heated debate in which Alberto Torres was taking part during the same years. The painstaking descriptions of the natural environment of Mato Grosso and the médico, farmacêutico, legista, fotógrafo, cineasta e folclorista. Anotou toda a aparência da região – da floresta à árvore e à folha – a composição dos solos, o contorno das montanhas, o fluxo dos rios, a intensidade das quedas e a riquíssima variedade da fauna. Nas visitas às tribos já pacificadas, mediu os crânios dos índios, comparou seus pesos e altura, analisou suas endemias e descreveu suas formas de produção, comércio e transporte. Registrou seus conhecimentos científicos, relações familiares, organização política, hábitos religiosos, formas lingüísticas, habilidade manual, cantos e danças. E ainda realizou a primeira dissecação de um indígena – na verdade, uma indígena – de que se tem notícia. Roquette não deixou um fio solto. Anotou musicalmente os cantos dos nativos e não contente, gravou-os em cilindros de cera com o fonógrafo portátil que se usava na época. Filmou tudo que pôde e fotografou ou desenhou o resto. Sem contar o que recolheu de pedras, pontas de flechas e objetos indígenas, que transportou pelos milhares de quilômetros através de rios, pântanos e picadas abertas na selva.”
physical and cultural traits of the indigenous peoples that inhabited the region converged into an overarching interpretation: the backwardness of peripheral Brazil was the result not of an inhospitable land or the racial taints that supposedly afflicted its inhabitants, but of abandonment by public powers. Roquette-Pinto did not read the strong link between humans and nature that characterized the *sertão* as a deterministic condemnation to isolation and poverty. On the contrary, following Euclides da Cunha’s steps, such a nexus should prompt the launch of a “*sertanejo* ethnography” devoted to comprehending the specificities of rural and indigenous Brazil, with a view to designing and implementing actual integrationist policies.  

By the early 1930s, when Torres’ agrarianist and organicist ideals enjoyed a peak of credibility in Brazilian intellectual and political debates, the applied anthropology envisioned about fifteen years earlier in *Rondônia* had already laid its foundations. Roquette-Pinto, from his prestigious and powerful position of director of the top Brazilian scientific institution of the time, could make a resolute claim:

> Anthropology offers to the people in charge of the fate of this country a tremendous service, because it give them evidence that should not be overlooked in favor of discouraging rhetorical fantasies.  
> Anthropology proves that man in Brazil needs to be *educated* and not *replaced*. The general process of adaptation of races to the different Brazilian environments proceeds according to what science can desire. The anthropology of Brazil denies and demoralizes the pessimists.  

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307 Roquette-Pinto, *Ensaios de antropologia brasileira* (1933), 172: “*Aos responsáveis pelos destinos deste país presta, assim, a antropologia, um enorme serviço, apresentando-lhes documentos que não devem ser desprezados em benefício de fantasias retóricas desanimadoras. A antropologia prova que o homem, no Brasil, precisa ser *educado* e não *substituído*. O processo geral de adaptação das raças aos diferentes meios brasileiros segue de acordo com o que a ciência pode desejar. A antropologia do Brasil desmente e desmoraliza os pessimistas.*” Emphasis in the original.
The volume *Ensaios de antropologia brasiliana* (1933) collected sixteen essays that Roquette-Pinto had published since the mid-1920s, now presented as a full-fledged book without explicit references, significantly, to its composite origin. This heterogeneous material, mostly devoted to physical anthropology and eugenics, did not just debunk any racial theory that devalued the Brazilian biological stock, but also denounced what actually caused the dramatic disparities in health and socio-economic indicators among national ethnic groups. The tool that Roquette-Pinto employed to accomplish this twofold operation was eugenics.

Since the 1910s, the scientific discipline created by Francis Galton in the 1880s had found enthusiastic supporters in Brazil. A theory that postulated the possibility to better the physical and psychological characteristics of human beings was well received in the intellectual circles that were debating over the modernization of a country marked by the heritage of African slavery and racial mixing. The First Brazilian Congress on Eugenics, which Roquette-Pinto presided over in Rio de Janeiro in 1929, crystallized the different, to a large extent divergent, trajectories that the movement was taking. In this occasion, Roquette-Pinto defended what was at the time a minority position in Brazil, but the prevailing one in the international literature. He was in fact a supporter of Mendelian inheritance, the groundbreaking genetic theory by Gregor Mendel that claimed the preeminence of reproduction processes over environmental factors to determine biological inheritance. Such a thesis, for a nationalist activist scientist like Roquette-Pinto, had the double advantage of discrediting geographical determinism, and thus the

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pessimistic reading of Brazilian nature and climate, as well as of restricting the application of eugenics to the cure of illnesses and the general improvement of health and well-being.

Roquette-Pinto openly opposed radical practices such as immigration bans and sterilization campaigns, which aimed at impairing racial mixing and favoring the whitening of the Brazilian population, in contrast of the vocal backup that they were receiving by other champions of Brazilian eugenics like Renato Kehl.309

With the support of an extensive theoretical discussion of the international debate on eugenics,310 Roquette-Pinto was able to present what he considered the conclusive evidence in favor of the Brazilian racial stock. A decade-long fieldwork on the physical and psychological traits of about two thousands Brazilian males in their early twenties resulted in a long article published in 1928 in the Archivos do Museu Nacional, then presented at the 1929 eugenics convention, and finally republished as chapter 15 in the 1933 volume.311 The result was a systematic classification of Brazilian “anthropological types,” in accordance with the emphasis on both empirical knowledge and scientific taxonomy that informed the mindset of Torres’ followers. The criteria for the identification of the four major groups were phenotypical, and depended on an unsophisticated reading of skin colors: white (“leucodermos”), black (“melanodermos”), yellow (“xanthodermos”, a mestizo with white and indigenous origins) and

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310 Edgar Roquette-Pinto, Ensaios de antropologia brasileira (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1933), 5-16, 55-62 and 77-87.

grey ("phaiodermos", a mestizo with white and black origins). However, neither a racial hierarchy nor a contempt for miscegenation were implied. On the contrary,

In view of all the data condensed in this monograph, it can be concluded that none of the types of the Brazilian population presents any stigma of anthropological degeneration. On the contrary, the characteristics of all of them are the best one could desire. It is also proved once again that crossbred, far from being a fusion or welding, in Brazil followed biological laws that were already known, and in no way – it is documented - can be considered a degenerating factor.312

The evidence that Roquette-Pinto himself and other researchers collected was in fact unequivocal: the differences detected among racial groups on a variety of indicators – from fertility rates313 to moral and mental abilities,314 to the incidence of a number of illnesses315 should only be ascribed to diverging socio-economic conditions. Poverty, malnutrition, lack of education and health services mostly afflicted black and mixed-race populations, whose perceived backwardness was not related to their genetic heredity. Roquette-Pinto could thus easily answer his own rhetorical question, with the help of what he considered a “truly wise and deep sociologist:”

So, where does inadequacy come from? Only and exclusively from a decisive element: lack of national organization. (Alberto Torres). Brazil, as the wise man stated, must be a work of political art. It is a nation that will be what the educated classes will make of it. National organization in Brazil mostly means education of the people, nationalization of the economy and circulation of ideas and wealth.317

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312 Ibid., 169-170: “À vista de todos os dados condensados nesta monografia, pode-se concluir que nenhum dos tipos da população brasileira apresenta qualquer estigma de degeneração antropológica. Ao contrário. As características de todos eles, são as melhores que se poderiam desejar. Fica também provado mais uma vez que o cruzamento, longe de ser uma fusão ou caldeamento, seguiu aqui leis biológicas já conhecidas, e de nenhum modo - documentadamente - pode ser considerado fator disgênico.”
313 Ibid., 9-11.
314 Ibid., 50-53 and 61-62.
315 Ibid., 44-45 and 170.
316 Ibid., 17: “sociólogo realmente sábio e profundo.”
Such a “work of political art,” to be carried out by “the well-educated classes” in order to finally provide Brazil with a “national organization,” by the end of the 1920s could count on the contributions of other future SAAT founding members employed at the National Museum. What Roquette-Pinto had established in the realm of physical anthropology – the dignity and potential of the Brazilian population as such – was reinforced by the work of Alberto José de Sampaio in the equally crucial field of forestry.

Sampaio, thanks to his scientific credentials and his peak position at the National Museum (director of the botany section), was invited to the First International Congress of Silviculture, held in Rome in April-May 1926. The report that he presented there became a book, titled *O problema florestal no Brasil em 1926*. The applied, even political purpose of the publication was explicitly declared by the author, who spoke for his entire institution when he offered the “contribution of the National Museum to the efforts that the recently created Forest Service will make to favor a rapid surge in the rational extractive industry.”

The Forest Service of Brazil had been created in 1921, as a special section of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade without a dedicated budget and actual powers over forested lands, which were under the control of the individual states: in fact, only in 1925 a decree regulated and effectively made operational the new office. Sampaio was thus urged to put both his scientific

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principalmente, *educação do povo, nacionalização da economia e circulação das ideias e da riqueza.*” Emphasis in the original.

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knowledge and the prestige of his institution at the service of the nation, in the face of what had been so far a too timid intervention by public authorities.

The possibility of a balanced management of Brazil’s forest resources, which could enhance both production of valuable goods and conservation of irreplaceable natural treasures, was Sampaio’s final goal. The ambition to guide the Forest Service towards the design and implementation of a systematic national plan for Brazilian forests emerges in every page of the 1926 report. The growing demand for forest products (especially timber, firewood and charcoal), due to demographic and industrial expansion, called for a “rational silviculture.” Among the most visionary tasks that Sampaio assigned to the Forest Service, two deserve to be highlighted: a control of the destructive practices that had historically dominated the private sector, and the launch of a comprehensive “forested cities” project.

According to the botanist, the country was in desperate need of a specialized governing authority for natural resources that could be able to operate a transition from the century-long practices of deforestation without replacement to a planned reforestation of the most strategic areas. In particular, the Forest Service should have treasured the expertise of scientists like Sampaio himself as well as the lessons learned through pioneering private experiments, such as the 1860s reforestation of the former Tijuca coffee fields in Rio de Janeiro\(^\text{320}\) and the 1900s “forest gardens” of the Companhia Paulista de Estradas de Ferro in São Paulo.\(^\text{321}\) Empirical and academic evidence suggested that the most effective solution to stem the depletion of forests and to guarantee the availability of key resources for the population – lumber and firewood, but also comestibles and water – was a systematic reforestation of barren terrains at the outskirts of urban

\(^{320}\) Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, 223-225.
\(^{321}\) Ibid., 236-238.
areas, employing also fast-growing alien species such as the eucalyptus. Indeed, “não é a reconstituição integral da flora primitiva que se processa, mas sim a silvicultura econômica que tem em vista obter, no menor prazo possível, os mais abundantes e os melhores produtos florestais possíveis.”

Such a productivist and non-chauvinistic approach, however, was only one component of Sampaio’s “rational silviculture.” Another equally important element was the realm, to resort to current language, of ecological equilibrium and improvement of living conditions. In particular, the author envisioned a Brazil of *cidades-jardins* or *cidades-florestas*, in which every municipality should be required to have one third of its surface wooded. In this way, every region would have become self-sufficient in the production of forest goods, and would have reached an environmental balance that was beneficial in terms of health, climate and landscape. At this stage, in the mid-1920s, Sampaio’s pragmatic proposal was certainly concurrently informed by scientific data and patriotic sentiments, but mostly by the more immediate urgency of offering a mission and a program to the languishing Forest Service. As a result, the main protagonists and beneficiaries of such a groundbreaking project – the Brazilian people, especially its vast rural segment – remained in the background and hardly played a role in the virtuous system that Sampaio envisioned.

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323 Ibid., 114-124.
6.2. The “Gilded Age” of Activist Science at the National Museum, 1932-1934

The 1930 Revolution and Vargas’ provisional government brought an important novelty for the National Museum: the newly founded Ministry of Education and Health replaced the Ministry of Agriculture as the governing body of the institution. This administrative change also marked a reinforcement of the public role of the National Museum, whose undeniable academic prestige and innovative scientific production was thus destined to transcend the narrow limits of specialist circles and governmental organizations. With the Decree 19,801 of March 27, 1931, the National Museum received a renewed administrative organization and was explicitly invested with an educational role that went beyond the formation of researchers and specialist: “popularize natural sciences and research findings, studies and explorations with all the means at its disposal.”

Armando Magalhães Corrêa – another employee of the National Museum who participated in the creation of the SAAT – is an excellent example of such a turn towards popular dissemination of information and knowledge. Differently from his colleagues, Corrêa was an artist by training, with a degree in sculpture from the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes and noteworthy skills as a draftsman. His self-taught expertise as a naturalist became a valuable resource at the National Museum, where Corrêa operated from the 1920s forward as an illustrator of plants and animals, and later as a natural history professor.


325 Franco and Drummond, 87-88.
Personal experience of a less-known region of Brazil, as in the case of his other associates, played a crucial role in Corrêa’s turn to organicist agrarianism. However, his immersion in neglected rural Brazil did not took place in remote backlands, thousands of miles from the Atlantic coast and major urban centers. In 1929 Corrêa, who was interested in owning a scientific station to conduct naturalistic observations and enjoy family weekends, purchased a small chácara (country house) in Jacarepaguá, just 20 miles from Rio de Janeiro’s city center. What is today a middle-class neighborhood of the bustling metropolis, next to the ocean-side upper-class planned district of Barra da Tijúca, was at the time a small community of poor farmers and fishers. The fascination that this exotic area, which was nonetheless situated within the borders of the federal district, exerted over Corrêa was such that he soon moved his permanent residency there.

Corrêa’s journal of personal impressions and interpretations of that piece of sertão carioca became a series of illustrated newspaper articles published in the Correio da Manhã between 1931 and 1932, and a book dated 1933 but only actually printed in 1936. The material stands out as an excellent example of the “sertanejo ethnography” proposed by Roquette-Pinto, who wrote the volume’s foreword. Corrêa certainly lacked the scientific rigor of academic anthropologists, but he tirelessly applied his attentive gaze to capture the specificities of the Jacarepaguá region, and used as his analytic skills and civic passion to infer a general lesson that should have been applied for the common good of Brazil. The last paragraph of Roquette-Pinto’s preface captured the limits and value of Corrêa’s work with a daring metaphor.

The picturesque sensibility with which the artist was able to describe the different and specific professional types of the *Sertão Carioca* makes us forgive the lack of style. What is more, the simple, informal, hasty, even careless way with which Magalhaes Corrêa wrote his notes gave the volume a taste of wild fruit, harvested on the tree, still warm from the sun.\(^{327}\)

Corrêa’s short chapters compose a detailed taxonomy of the natural and human features of the Jacarepaguá region, which only a colloquial tone and a plain style partially set apart from the meticulous scientific classifications produced by his colleagues. Descriptions of the *sertão carioca*’s climate, geology, flora and fauna are followed by sympathetic sketches of the variety of activities carried out by the inhabitants: fishing, agriculture, cattle and poultry farming, craftsmanship, street vending. The overall picture that emerges is that of a society built around a symbiotic relationship with its surrounding environment, to a large extent autonomous from the nearby urban world, and de facto self-sufficient.

The harmonious bond between humans and nature in Jacarepaguá, however, was not without threats. Harmful behaviors noticed by Corrêa range from following superstitious “macumba” (i.e., Afro-Brazilian cults)\(^{328}\) to slash-and-burn and deforestation practices.\(^{329}\) However, all of them are interpreted as external interferences that found fertile ground in communities plagued by ignorance and deprivation. To support his thesis, the author reported dramatic examples of lack of medical assistance and school services,\(^{330}\) and constantly referred to the harshness of the everyday life in the *sertão carioca*. Corrêa was thus hardly a romantic idealizer of rural Brazil, who moralistically contrasted the relic of an idyllic past with the

\(^{327}\) Ibid., 9: “O pittoresco com que o artista soube descrever os differentes e individualizados typos profissionaes do Sertão Carioca, faz perdoar o desleixo do estylo. Direi mais; a maneira simples, desataviada, apressada, descuidada mesmo, com que Magalhães Corrêa foi traçando as suas notas, deu ao volume um sabor de fructa agreste, colhida na arvore, ainda quente do sol.”

\(^{328}\) Ibid., 206-221.

\(^{329}\) Ibid., 88, 119, 153-155.

\(^{330}\) Ibid., 114, 189, 206.
alienating conditions of modern urban life. On the contrary, the hundreds of pages of notes and drawings of *O sertão carioca* were the necessary premise for a specific political proposal, as it was actually detailed in the conclusion of the volume dated December 1932, in the very wake of the creation of the SAAT.

In concluding these pallidly described observations, which I collected in the backlands of Rio de Janeiro, I did so with the conviction of rendering service to our ignored brothers, whom I purposely called *sertanejos*. Abandoned completely by the public authorities, without a rural code, without any efficient medical assistance, without adequate education, they live forgotten in this vast region of the Federal District, as if they were not Brazilians.

[...] I described in detail the *sertão carioca* to make it an example of the calamity that affects the entire Brazilian territory.

The explicit reference to the *sertão carioca* as an example of the prevailing conditions in rural Brazil as a whole stands out as a particularly powerful rhetorical device. Corrêa was not reclaiming a remote, uncivilized and menacing *sertão*, far from the centers of political and economic power, but a *sertão* that was in the geographical proximity of the reader and that the author himself inhabited. Such a domesticated and unthreatening region, therefore, deserved the qualification of *sertão* for a twofold reason: first, as the repository of the most authentic national spirit and customs, i.e. the pillar of a potential “*sadia brasilidade*” to be constructed; second, as a patent example of abandonment by public authorities.

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331 This is actually the core of the interpretation proposed in Carlos E. Sarmento, *Pelas veredas da capital: Magalhães Corrêa e a invenção formal do sertão carioca* (Rio de Janeiro: CPDOC, 1998).

332 Corrêa, 236-237: “Ao terminar estas observações que colhi, ainda que pallidamente descriptas, do sertão carioca, o fiz com a convicção de prestar um serviço aos nossos irmãos ignorados, que propositadamente denominei “sertanejos”. Abandonados completamente pelos poderes públicos, sem código rural, sem assistência médica eficiente, sem instrução adequada, vivem esquecidos nessa vasta região do Distrito Federal, como se não fossem brasileiros. [...] Particularizando o sertão carioca, o fiz como exemplo dessa calamidade que abrange todo o território brasileiro.”
“Rumo aos campos” is the motto that Corrêa borrowed from a conference held by Sampaio in May 1932 to introduce his programmatic manifesto, which was explicitly connected to Torres’ thought through a long quotation from *As fontes da vida no Brasil* that depicted Brazilians as foreigners in their own homeland.333 Four areas were indicated as crucial for such an ambitious project of social engineering for the rural world: “rural sanitation,” “rural education,” “police and legal assistance,” and “population.” This last action was intended to complement the more concise and self-explanatory previous ones – the extension to the countryside of basic services in the realms of health, education and the rule of law – with what we can term as a dedicated program of local socio-economic development. Unsurprisingly, the strong points put forward by Alberto Torres (see Chapter 3) and adopted by the SAAT in those very months (see Chapter 5) were all present: infrastructure (hydraulic works and roads), protection of natural resources, cooperativism, credit and technical support for agriculture, the promotion of small landholding against latifundia.334 By late 1932, the time was ripe for introducing in the national cultural and political debate a systematic, albeit abridged, proposal for the organic transformation of rural Brazil.

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333 Ibid., 237-238.
334 Ibid., 238-239.
6.3. A Tool for the Popularization of Science and Practical Knowledge Across Brazil: the *Revista Nacional de Educação* (1932-1934)

The trajectory of the *Revista Nacional de Educação* (RNE), whose twenty-one issues were published monthly between October 1932 and June 1934, corresponds to the peak of the National Museum’s popularization efforts.\(^{335}\) The very funding and distribution scheme that was behind this unprecedented publication marked a major difference from the academic *Archivos do Museu Nacional*, at the time in their sixth decade. The Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs, the newly created public authority in charge of what Vargas’ provisional government deemed priority matters for the future of Brazil, was its tutelary deity. The RNE was in fact financed through the “Cinematographic Tax for Popular Education” that was collected on public screenings of educational films, according to the Decree 21,240 of April 4, 1932.\(^{336}\) The “Instructions” that the minister issued on April 22 to make the latter operative described the RNE as

A popular magazine for the popularization of sciences, letters and arts, [...] written in language accessible to the people, [which] will be abundantly illustrated and will have enough circulation so that the Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs, the newly created public authority in charge of what Vargas’ provisional government deemed priority matters for the future of Brazil, was its tutelary deity. The RNE was in fact financed through the “Cinematographic Tax for Popular Education” that was collected on public screenings of educational films, according to the Decree 21,240 of April 4, 1932.\(^{336}\) The “Instructions” that the minister issued on April 22 to make the latter operative described the RNE as

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\(^{335}\) The only comprehensive scholarly discussion of the RNE is Regina Horte Duarte, “«Em todos os lares, o conforto moral da ciência e da arte»: a Revista Nacional de Educação e a divulgação científica no Brasil (1932-34).” *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 11 (2004): 33-56.

\(^{336}\) Decreto no. 21.240, de 4 de Abril de 1932, in Arquivo Histórico da Câmara dos Deputados, [http://www2.camara.leg.br/login/fed/decret/1930-1939/decreto-21240-4-abril-1932-515832-publicacaooriginal-81522-pe.html](http://www2.camara.leg.br/login/fed/decret/1930-1939/decreto-21240-4-abril-1932-515832-publicacaooriginal-81522-pe.html) (accessed March 5, 2019). See also Duarte “Em todos os lares,” 36, and Rosana Elisa Catelli, “Roquette-Pinto e a comunicação: registro, visualização e internalização da cultura,” *Revista Brasileia de História da Mídia* 2, no. 1 (2013), 148. The same levy also funded, again under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs, the creation of a film library at the National Museum and the launch of the *Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo*, which was established in 1936 and was directed until 1947 by Roquette-Pinto himself.
can distribute it through all federal, state and municipal educational institutes, free of charge.\textsuperscript{337}

Therefore, public powers, through a joint effort conducted by the Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs and the National Museum, had the explicit goal of providing peripheral spearheads of formal and informal education with an accessible tool for the popularization of science and practical knowledge across Brazil.

RNE director Roquette-Pinto immediately set the tone and the purpose of the review, in continuity with his decade-long commitment to nationalist anthropology and popular education. The opening editorial, meaningfully titled “Reafirmando,” was a frontal attack on “maus compatriotas” (“bad fellow countrymen”) who insisted in debasing Brazil’s racial stock and environments, as well as an appeal for the human potential of the Brazilian people, to be pursued through an investment on education, especially in the countryside.\textsuperscript{338} The epigraph in full view on every issue of the RNE summarized this ideal of cancelling social and geographical distances through the spread of a knowledge that coupled applied value with spiritual uplifting: “Em todos os lares do Brasil, o conforto moral da Ciência e da Arte” (“In all households of Brazil, the moral comfort of Science and Art”).

Each issue of the RNE was a rich collection of accessible but accurate articles that covered the most relevant fields of science and culture. Pieces on national and foreign fine arts coexisted with discussions on Brazilian flora and fauna, agriculture, meteorology, anthropology, geography, history, poetry and music. The articles, and the occasional transcriptions of

\textsuperscript{337} “Instrucoes - Decreto nº 21.240, de 4 de Abril de 1932,” Revista Nacional de Educação, 1, no. 1 (1932), 15: “Uma revista popular de vulgarização de ciências, letras e artes, [...] redigida em linguagem acessível ao povo, [que] será amplamente ilustrada e terá tiragem suficiente para que o Ministério de Educação e Saúde Pública possa distribuí-la por todos os institutos de ensino federais, estaduais e municipais, gratuitamente.”

\textsuperscript{338} Roquette-Pinto, Edgar. "Reafirmando,” Revista Nacional de Educação, 1, no. 1 (1932), 7-18.
educational radio programs and public lectures, were penned by specialists in the different subjects, affiliated to the most prestigious Brazilian institutions, from the National Museums to the SAAT itself. The review’s function as a popular encyclopedia for Brazilians was supported by a well-edited iconography (pictures of people, animals and landscapes; reproductions of works of art), as well as by educational tools, such as basic literacy exercises and anthological excerpts from the writings of national authors, including Alberto Torres. The sophisticated back covers of all issues published in 1933 confirm the high level of both the editorial work and the nationalist educational mission embodied by the RNE. 339 Charts with statistical data on Brazil alternated with thematic maps of the country and, in one occasion, with a chronology of national history from 1500 to 1930, the year of two major events that deserved to be highlighted: not only Getúlio Vargas’s rise to power, but also, even more importantly for the process of nation-building, the creation of the Ministry of Education and Health. 340

The RNE role in the dissemination of knowledge across Brazil, however, went beyond the production of multifarious printed materials for the passive consumption of its readers. The best example of its ambition to stimulate active involvement of the beneficiaries of the educational project is the fully-fledged campaign for the construction of local collections of flora and fauna specimens. From the very first issue of the review, a series of articles 341 prompted readers, in particular teachers and their pupils, to collect and scientifically classify plants and

339 From no. 4 (January 1933) to no. 15 (December 1933).
340 No. 15 (December 1933).
animals to overcome one of the prime shortcomings in the relationship that Brazilian people kept up with their own country: their ignorance of the various and extraordinary natural features of the land that they inhabited. Such an *ante litteram* instance of citizen science pursued, according to RNE authors, a number of additional meritorious goals. Pedagogically, such a hands-on approach to the teaching of sciences in schools could help students to better grasp the application of the scientific method to the study of nature. In addition, the gradual creation of a system of peripheral naturalistic exhibits could make science accessible to a larger share of the population, while the National Museum could only attract visitors mostly from the capital city and its surroundings. Finally, scientific research itself could tremendously benefit from such an informal network of naturalistic observers and collectors distributed over the national territory: the RNE, in fact, explicitly encouraged the dispatch of unclassified or unusual specimens, with the prospect of having them studied by the professional botanists and zoologists of the National Museum and, when appropriate, presented on the review.

Thus, from Brazil to the Museum, the sending of materials would enable the National Museum to consolidate the new position that several of its members embraced and defended: *to be a Museum of Brazil, for Brazil.* Different from the imperial metropolitan museum of Emperor João VI, which faced the world, *the National Museum turned to the conquest of the national territory, to the inventory of its nature and culture, to the education of its inhabitants and to the formation of a people.*

The pedagogical agenda of the RNE epitomized one of the most important common objectives of the SAAT activists who operated within the National Museum as preeminent

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342 Duarte “Em todos os lares,” 54: “Assim, do Brasil para o Museu, o envio de materiais possibilitaria ao Museu Nacional consolidar uma nova postura, assumida e defendida por vários de seus membros: *ser um Museu do Brasil, para o Brasil.* Diferenciando-se do museu metropolitano imperial de D. João VI, voltado para o mundo, *o Museu Nacional dirigia-se à conquista do território nacional, ao inventário de sua natureza e de sua cultura, à instrução de seus habitantes e à formação de um povo.*” Emphasis added.
scientists: the emphasis on applied and widespread knowledge. Specialized research, with its resulting findings of national and international relevance, and pioneering efforts to establish new fields of study in Brazil did not exhaust the public role of academics. On the contrary, the review paid a close attention to simple and effective educational projects that could generate long-term benefits for the future of the nation, especially if they were carried out at the local level and in the most remote regions of the country.

The very emphasis on peripheral Brazil was, for such a publishing endeavor, unprecedented as well as problematic: Roquette-Pinto himself had to admit the difficulties that he was encountering in the distribution of the RNE,\textsuperscript{343} whose last issue came out in June 1934. However, the actual reasons behind the abrupt closing of this ambitious educational project were essentially political. The Decree 24,651 of July 10, 1934 created, within the Ministry of Justice and Domestic Affairs, the Departamento de Propaganda e Difusão Cultural (Department of Propaganda and Cultural Diffusion), and the RNE had to become its “órgão de publicidade”.\textsuperscript{344} This new role as a government propaganda bulletin never materialized, and the RNE, severed from the institution that nourished its mission and coordinated its efforts – the National Museum – simply disappeared.\textsuperscript{345}

\textsuperscript{343} Edgar Roquette-Pinto, “Comentários,” Revista Nacional de Educaç\'ao 1, no.3 (1932), 1.
\textsuperscript{345} Only in 1941 the new Department of Press and Propaganda [“Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda”] will start publishing the review Cultura Política as an official mouthpiece for Estado Novo intellectuals and ideologists. See Adriano Codato and Walter Gundalini Jr., “Os autores e suas ideias: um estudo sobre a elite intelectual e o discurso político do Estado Novo,” Estudos Históricos, 32 (2003), 145-164.
6.4. A Scientific Basis for an Integrated Protection of Nature: Alberto José de Sampaio’s Biogeography

The work on nature conservation by Alberto José de Sampaio in the first half of the 1930s fully reveals a novel sensibility for practical and popular measures, within the reinforced framework of a comprehensive national strategy. The volumes *Phytogeographia do Brasil* (1934) and *Biogeographia Dynamica* (1935), both published in the prestigious “Coleção Brasiliana” of the Companhia Editora Nacional,\(^{346}\) testified of the ambition to design a blueprint for the protection of natural resources in Brazil, through an unprecedented holistic approach that implied an overall vision for the transformation of Brazilian society, well beyond the more limited approach of “rational silviculture” that Sampaio had proposed a few years earlier.

Large sections of both books were devoted to establishing the intellectual foundations on which nature conservation had to be grounded in Brazil. Sampaio underlined the long-term preoccupation with a balanced relationship between humans and the environment that the most authoritative thinkers had conveyed in the preceding decades. Extensive quotations from José Bonifácio and Alberto Torres, coupled with references to international pioneers of conservation and events functioned at the same time as warnings and calls to actions, in the face of a priority matter that threatened national prosperity and required immediate intervention.

Cooperation among public and private actors, in the context of an informed and participant population, was the main methodological innovation in Sampaio’s new proposal.

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which marked a substantial change if compared to the ambitious but more limited plan for a “rational silviculture” that the biologist had put forward just a few years earlier in *O problema florestal no Brasil em 1926*. In his own words,

> it is necessary that an adequately enlightened public opinion support the technicians to carry out the works that are under their responsibility for the protection to Nature, that is, “leads to do and allows to do,” as Alberto Torres said; each person must carry out, let do and help to do, because each citizen shares at least a moral responsibility in the destruction that takes place in the Natural Patrimony of Brazil.

Such an emphasis on the necessity of active common citizens for an effective improvement in the protection of nature, however, did not imply a relaxation in the role of state powers. On the contrary, Sampaio mentioned Mussolini’s forestry policies as a positive example, and in particular the militarization of Italian forest rangers as a way to ensure that actions were conducted with “strict discipline and constancy.”

Brazil, nonetheless, should adopt a less centralized model in the distribution of jurisdictions over environmental matters:

> [a]ll this means that, in the study of the flora, there is a part, the Agronomic, which includes silviculture, especially the economic one, that is in the jurisdiction of Ministries of Agriculture; and there is another educational part, [that concerns] defense of nature and Natural Monuments, that is in the jurisdiction of Departments of Education; it is sufficient to remember that Landscape Architecture competes to Fine Arts Schools and that all Universities tend to keep “Biological Stations” [to conduct] original studies.

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347 Alberto José de Sampaio, *Phytogeographia do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1934), 17-18: “é preciso que a opinião pública, convenientemente esclarecida, facilite aos técnicos o desenvolvimento dos trabalhos que lhes competem, de proteção à Natureza, isto é, “conduza a fazer e deixe fazer”, como disse Alberto Torres; cada pessoa deve no caso realizar, deixar realizar e ajudar a realizar, porque cada cidadão tem parte, pelo menos moral, na responsabilidade da destruição que se opera no Patrimônio Natural do Brasil.” Emphasis in the original.


349 *Ibid.*, 13: “Quer isso dizer que há, no estudo da flora, uma parte, a Agronômica, compreendendo silvicultura, em especial econômica, competindo a Ministérios da Agricultura; e outra parte educacional, de defesa da natureza e Monumentos Naturais, competindo a Departamentos de Educação; basta lembrar que a Arquitetura Paisagística compete a Escolas de Belas Artes e que as Universidades tendem todas a manter ‘Estações Biológicas’, para estudos originais.”
The role of the military as well, according to Sampaio, had to be contained, especially in comparison with coeval European authoritarian experiences:

the military component of the defense of our forests may be subordinated to the criterion adopted by Italy with its Forest Militia, with the difference that there the whole forest service is militarized, whereas in Brazil it will have to be divided between several Ministries, according to their specific jurisdictions, although it is obvious that the Ministry of Agriculture should retain most of the competences.350

The notion that protection of nature was a complex task that required a balanced combination of intellectual, technical, civic and political forces in order to succeed was the pillar of Sampaio’s reasoning. In fact, it informed all the component parts of the new applied scientific discipline that he wanted to create and termed, alternatively, biogeography or “biocenose.”351

The 1935 book, in its more systematic structure, mimicked the wished harmonious and structural cooperation of the best resources available in the country. Its first section, titled “Ambiência,” summarized the state of the art of conservationism and rational use of natural resources in Brazil. A plurality of actors and actions emerged as equally critical players: intellectuals, writers and artists;352 educational initiatives promoted by schools and local authorities;353 laws and regulations;354 private citizens and organizations.355 Sampaio’s personal contribution to the cause, as a preeminent naturalist and authoritative voice of the National

350 Alberto José de Sampaio, Biogeographia Dynamica (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1935), 104: “a feição militar da defesa de nossas florestas pode ser subordinada ao critério adotado pela Itália, com a sua ‘Milicia Forestale Italiana’ [sic], com a diferença que lá todo o serviço florestal está militarizado, ao passo que no Brasil terá de ser subdividido por vários Ministérios na parte que interessar a cada um, a maior contribuição competindo ao Ministério da Agricultura, como é natural.”
351 Ibid., 165. The term “biocenosis” was coined by the German naturalist Karl Möbius in the 1880s to indicate the interactions of living organisms in a given space and time; the concept was a forerunner of more successful scientific terms such as “ecosystem” and “biosphere.” See Christian Lévêque, Ecology: From Ecosystem to Biosphere (Enfield: Science Publishers, 2003), 22.
352 1. “Letras e artes”
353 2. “Movimento educacional”
354 3. “Influsso dos poderes públicos”
355 4. “Influsso das associacoes paritculares”
Museum, was undoubtedly to improve the knowledge of Brazil’s environment\textsuperscript{356} and to offer solid scientific basis upon which new conservationist legislation could be elaborated. However, coherently with an organicist agrarianist perspective, the scope of his work was wider.

Sampaio’s vision of the country and its destiny was categorical:

Nobody challenges the notion that Brazil is an essentially agrarian country, and every effort must be made to make it more and more widely agrarian. [...] The extension of our territory means that, even if a considerable growth of cities and industries – first and foremost, the steel one – takes place, Brazil will never lose its identity as an essentially agrarian country.\textsuperscript{357}

Such confidence in the centrality of the primary sector in the Brazilian economy did not extend to the evaluation of its historic configuration in a country marked by the long heritage of a colonialist, exploitative model.

The empiricism that had been dominating needs to be modified, as modern Agronomy prescribes, and in our specific context we have difficult problems to solve, such as latifundia, whose roots are deep, [and depend on a] truly colonial mentality that will require many decades to be changed. [...] The paradigms that we must adopt are, for example, [those of] countries whose fortune is based on small landholdings, which do not obstacle big companies that require big capital: [i.e.] rural life in France and the United States.\textsuperscript{358}

Far from being an admirer of the status quo in the Brazilian countryside, Sampaio defended the same pro-active, reformist approach towards the rural world and its inhabitants that

\textsuperscript{356} Large portions of the two works analyzed here are scientific treatises on the specificities of Brazilian regional floras (\textit{Phytogeographia do Brasil}) and on ecosystemic interactions among plants, animals and humans (\textit{Biogeographia Dynamica})

\textsuperscript{357} Sampaio, \textit{Biogeographia Dynamica}, 111-112: “O Brasil, país essencialmente agrícola, é noção que ninguém discute e todos os esforços devem ser feitos para que seja cada vez mais amplamente agrícola. [...] A extensão de nosso território faz crer que, ainda mesmo que se multipliquem muito as cidades, bem como as indústrias, entre as quais a siderúrgica terá de ser a mais importante, nunca o Brasil perderá o conceito de país essencialmente agrícola.”

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid., 111: “O empirismo que vinha dominando é que precisa ser modificado, como visa a moderna Agronomia e nesse particular temos problemas dificílimos a resolver, entre eles o de latifúndios cujas raízes são profundas, verdadeira mentalidade colonial, que exigirá ainda muitas décadas para que se modifique. [...] Os paradigmas a adotar são, por exemplo, os países cuja fortuna se baseia no ‘pé de meia’ popular, sem prejuízo das grandes empresas que exigem capital vultuoso; assim, a vida rural na França e nos Estados Unidos.”
he adopted for the protection of nature, which he conceived as a component of a larger strategy for the prosperity of his homeland.

In continuity with his earlier discourse on “rational silviculture,” Sampaio’s blueprint for an efficient balance between forests and tilled lands aimed at the coexistence of different environments for the satisfaction of a plurality of needs.

It would be absurd if we wanted to return to the old forest extension, because it was necessary to clear areas to establish cities, agriculture, cattle farming, and economic activities in general; it will suffice that we remain in the golden mean and we rationally maintain:

1. The forest that protect water springs.
2. Forests in cultivated areas, with a proportion of 40% [of the total surface), to maintain favorable climatic conditions for crops [...].
3. Forests and parks to mitigate the climate in the cities, with a proportion of 20-25% of the urban area.
4. Natural landscape forests in the rural areas, which also function as a source of food, game, fruit, tubers, etc.
5. Economic or production forests, to obtain wood, firewood, coal, etc.359

However, even for a specialist in botany, the people living in the Brazilian backlands had to be the main focus of the desired intervention. Sampaio was clearly influenced by Roquette-Pinto’s earlier discussions on race and environmental adaptations when he claimed that “[p]ara a Ecologia e a Genética o sertanejo representa a população-clímax, condicionada através dos tempos pelas condições ambientes e pode ser muito melhorada, à mercê dos melhoramentos do ambiente.”360

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359 Ibid., 25-26: “Seria absurdo pretendêssemos voltar ao antigo coeficiente florestal que for preciso desbravar, para que se estabelecessem cidades, a Agricultura, a Pecuaria, as Indústrias em geral; bastará que fiquemos na justa medida, mantendo racionalmente:
1. Florestas protetoras de mananciais.
2. Florestas, na razão de 40%, nas áreas agrícolas, para manterem as condições climáticas favoráveis às culturas [...].
3. Florestas e Parques de conforto climático, nas cidades, na razão de 20 a 25% da área urbana.
4. Florestas naturais, de paisagem, no habitat rural, servindo também de fonte de alimentação, pela caça, frutos, tuberos, etc.
5. Florestas econômicas ou de rendimento, para corte, isto é madeira, lenha, carvão, etc.”
360 Sampaio, Phytogeographia do Brasil, 150-151. Emphasis in the original.
The possibility of, and the need for, a synergic “betterment” of the environment and its human inhabitants is the premise of Sampaio’s proposals for the integration of the “rustic man” in Brazilian society that he exposed in the chapter “Indígenas e Sertanejos” of *Biogeographia Dynamica*.

Man is also part of Nature and, where he lives in a rustic state, he is one of the natural elements of his specific habitat, but the protection that he asks or needs is rather different from the protection of Nature in general. Animals and plants need to be protected, so that they do not become extinct, that is, so they multiply freely, retaining their rusticity. It is not the case of the natives and of the *sertanejos,* since they must be extensively benefited by Civilization, that is, integrated in social life, through their own contribution in the improvement of their habitat. In order to be able to provide such a contribution, he must be educated, but his inclusion in civilization must not be hurried, because it takes him many years to completely lose his habits and taboos.

[...] The education of the natives and of the *sertanejos,* with regard to the discipline that concerns us, has the double aim of providing them with the permanent abundance of means of subsistence within Nature, and prevent them from being perpetual factors in the destruction of Nature.\(^{361}\)

In this line of reasoning, the betterment of living conditions in the backlands and a forward-looking management of finite natural resources could be concurrently attained through a gradual and patient work of education, which had to be coordinated by experts who were trained in the specificities of rural Brazil.

\(^{361}\) Sampaio, *Biogeographia Dynamica,* 210: “O homem também é parte da Natureza e onde ele exista em estado rustico, é um dos elementos naturais do habitat respetivo, mas a proteção que sugere ou precisa, é bem diversa da proteção à Natureza em geral. Animais e plantas precisam ser protegidas, para que não se extinguam, isto é, se multipliquem livremente, conservando sua rusticidade. Não é o mesmo o caso de indígenas e sertanejos, pois estes devem ser amplamente beneficiados pela Civilização, isto é, integrados na vida social, através de seu próprio concurso na melhoria de seu habitat. Para que possa dar esse concurso, precisa ser educado, não se devendo ter pressa em chama-los imediatamente à civilização, porque são precisos muitos anos, para que percam completamente seus hábitos e seus tabus. […] A educação dos indígenas e dos sertanejos, sob o prisma da disciplina que nos ocupa, tem o duplo fim de proporcionar-lhes na Natureza a fartura permanente de meios de subsistência e impedir que sejam eles (índio e sertanejo), eternos fatores de destruição da Natureza.”
It is time to provide the Rural School with all pedagogical elements that it needs to successfully carry out its high mission.

[...]

What we must do now, that is, what the Nation must do from now on for the rural man, [...] was already defined by our pedagogues [...]. We can now think frankly about the technical details that should inform Rural Education, to which the educator will have to subscribe as a true “sertanista” or “ruralista” who knows in depth his own people and his own region in all their aspects.\textsuperscript{362}

In conclusion, the applied environmental science that Sampaio proposed epitomized the main characteristics of “organicist agrarianism” as a worldview and as a tool for intervention on current affairs. The body of the nation that deserved new policies was formed not only by different social classes and professional categories, but also by a complex maze of interactions between humans and nature. A healthier, more productive and less endangered environment could only be the result of a rational and coherent collaboration among human and natural actors, in the context of a goodwill composition of often diverging interests. Advanced scientific research, such as that carried out by Sampaio himself and the National Museum as a whole, should be combined with popular education and dissemination of practical knowledge across the country, as a project like the RNE had been trying to favor and the SAAT, in the same years, was urging under the same label of ensino rural. However, such an ambitious agenda, which should have reached also the most remote corners and the less integrated populations of the country, needed a solid legal framework at the national level in order to succeed.

\textsuperscript{362} Ibid., 215-216: “Compete agora que seja provida a Escola Rural, de todos os elementos pedagógicos, para que possa bem desempenhar-se de sua alta missão. [...] O que nos compete fazer agora, isto é, o que a Nação compete fazer d’ora em diante pelo homem rural, [...] já está definido pelos nossos pedagogos [...]. Podemos pensar agora francamente nos detalhes técnicos, a entregar á Educação Rural, onde o educador se terá de individualizar ou definir, como um verdadeiro sertanista ou ruralista, conhecendo a fundo sua gente a [sic] sua região, sob todos os pontos de vista.” Emphasis in the original.
6.5. The 1934 Forest Code: Pioneering Environmental Legislation in Brazil

The group of activist scientists in the National Museum could celebrate 1934 as a year of historical successes in their campaign for the defence of natural resources in Brazil. On January 23, the provisional government issued Decree 23,793: thanks to it, for the first time in its history, Brazil had a Forest Code. The feat was also destined to remain unique for more than thirty years, because only at the beginning of the military regime a New Forest Code was passed, in 1965. When the country was in the middle of a constitutional process that aimed at producing a new charter and at putting an end to Vargas’ rule by decree, it seemed that years of untiring scientific and educational work at the Quinta da Boa Vista were able to place “protection of nature” at the center of the political debate in Brazil, and to finally produce the much needed positive measures at the national level.

The principles established by the Forest Code were directly inspired by the project of Sampaio, who acted as an advisor to the commission that elaborated the law. Article 1 established the social value of forests for the Brazilian collectivity, terming them “a common good shared by all the inhabitants of the country” and subjecting their private use to the limits established by the code itself. The unregulated and shortsighted exploitation that Sampaio had

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363 See José Augusto Drummond, “A legislação ambiental brasileira de 1934 a 1988: comentários de um cientista ambiental simpático ao conservacionismo,” Ambiente e Sociedade 2, no. 3-4 (1999), 127-149.
denounced, as a follower of a longer tradition of complaints against natural devastation in Brazil, was finding for the first time a nation-wide legislative response.

General rules and procedures to be followed in the exploitation of wooded lands included unprecedented protectionist measures. Landowners could not cut down more than three quarters of trees in their estates, and only after consulting local authorities (Articles 23-25). The federal government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, became responsible for the safeguard of all existing natural parks – including those created by states and municipalities – and for the demarcation of new protected areas, that could even include privately owned lands (Articles 9-11). The national government’s strengthened powers over the management of forests and natural resources responded, at the same time, to the centuries-old predominance of private interests and to the lack of coordination that had made earlier conservationist initiatives ill-fated. Coherently with Sampaio’s project, the new law aimed at transforming the central government into the coordinating authority of an organic intervention for the well-being of the nation.

Sampaio’s philosophy is also evident in the overall approach that prevailed in the code with regard to natural resources management. Rationalist silviculture, and thus a balanced use of forested lands for the legitimate needs of the Brazilian population and economy, predominated over conservation, and on stricter environmentalist preoccupations that would have been anachronistic in the 1930s. The categorization of different types of forests, for instance, followed the taxonomy that Sampaio formulated in his major works:

- “protetoras,” i.e. those of public utility because of their hydrogeological, military or conservationist relevance (Art. 4);
• “remanescentes,” i.e. those that are part of parks, sanctuaries and recreational areas (Art. 5)
• “modelos,” i.e. the artificial ones, resulting from replanting (Art. 6);
• “de rendimento,” i.e. all the others (Art. 7).

The latter category, which evidently encompassed the majority of Brazil’s public and private forested lands, benefited from the looser restriction of commercial exploitation, as a result of a stance that was mainly productivist.

The Forest Code was not an isolated act. Within a few months, between January and July 1934, the government approved a Hunting and Fishing Code, a Mining Code and a Water Code, which were all inspired by the principles of collective responsibility and public guardianship over the most valuable natural resources of country: the national government, as it could be expected, was sanctioned as the main actor in charge of their application. Coherently, the new charter that the Constitutional Assembly elaborated in the same months, and was finally promulgated on July 16, assigned to the Union the jurisdiction over “assets under federal control, mineral resources, mining, metallurgy, waters, hydroelectric energy, forests, hunting and fishing and exploitation of them,” and left to the single states only subordinated authority over the matter.

By mid-1934, the pioneering work conducted at the National Museum since the 1910s and, more decidedly, in the last biennium was able to produce a substantial impact on Brazilian society and politics. Engaged researchers and gifted writers like Roquette-Pinto, Corrêa and Sampaio had elaborated an applied science that mixed advanced anthropological and naturalistic knowledge with dedication to interpret the "authentic" Brazil that, with its problems and potentialities, had been overlooked by most intellectuals and decision-makers. Their trust in governmental institutions had led them to experiment with unique popular education enterprises, such as the Ministry of Education and Public Health Affairs’ RNE, and to directly influence the earliest body of legislation on natural resources management of the country. Thanks to the prestige and resourcefulness of the National Museum and its most brilliant employees, “organicist agrarianism” seemed on the verge of becoming the inspiration for a radical change in Brazil’s path of development.

1-pl.html (accessed March 5, 2019), Art. 5: “bens do domínio federal, riquezas do sub-solo, mineração, metallurgia, águas, energia hydro-electrica, florestas, caça e pesca e a sua exploração.”
On November 15, 1932, only five days after the foundation of the SAAT, delegates of the major political organizations that were supporting Vargas’ provisional government convened in Rio de Janeiro for the opening of the First Revolutionary National Congress. The main goal of the convention, which closed its works on November 17, was to negotiate a shared program that could reconcile the divergent ideas and proposals that the supporters of the 1930 Revolution had been putting forward for the future of the country. The vice-president of the event, and its de facto coordinator, was the Army major, preeminent revolutionary leader and SAAT founding member Juarez do Nascimento Fernandes Távora. According to his own account, the outcome of the meetings was for him a source of “disappointment” as well as of “later concerns and chagrins.” As a matter of fact, the resulting creation of the Partido Socialista Brasileiro marked the success of leftist forces within the assembly, to the detriment of right-wing movements such as the Ação Integralista Brasileira – whose delegates abandoned the sessions prematurely – as well as the more moderate positions defended by Távora and the organization...

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370 In his memoirs, Távora defines his ideological orientation as “uma concepção social-democrática” (Ibid., 66) and recalls the ironic definition of “socialismo cor-de-rosa” that his adversaries coined to label it (Ibid., 67).
that he represented, the Clube 3 de Outubro (C3O). The latter had been established in February 1931 in the wake of the fall of the First Republic by some of the most active military and civilian leaders of the insurrection that had overthrown the First Republic a few months earlier. Also in the case of the C3O, the effort was to promote unity within an already fragmented movement, in which ideological and regional divergences abounded and threatened the future of the provisional government.

The succinct theses that Távora unsuccessfully submitted to the First Revolutionary National Congress in the name of the C3O were grounded on an ambitious mediation between two pairs of diverging leanings: first, between the “social tendency” (“tendência social,” i.e. popular claims) and the “national realities and aspirations” (“realidades e aspirações nacionais”); second, between the “hypertrophy of the Executive” (“hipertrofia do Executivo”) and the “waste of efforts” (“dispersão de esforços”) of parliamentarism. The motion regarded citizens and social classes as equally vital “cells of the body politic” (“céuulas do corpo político”), and therefore demanded

- the interest of collectivity (common good), over individual interests –
- the Union, indisputably over the federated States –
- nationalism, over internationalism –371

These formulations are evidently in line with Alberto Torres’ thought of the 1910s, but the fierce debates and unsolved conflicts that surrounded them in the momentous year of 1932 were the continuation of a longer trajectory, in which Juarez Távora played a primary role. The phenomenon of tenentismo, one of the movements that since the 1920s aggressively challenged

371 Ibid., 67: “- o interesse da coletividade (bem-comum), acima dos interesses individuais –
- a União, inconstrastavelmente sobreposta aos Estado federados –
- o nacionalismo, acima do internacionalismo –”
the Brazilian political and socio-economic status quo, was led by young military officers like Távora. Even more important for a history of organicist agrarianism, on December 22, 1932, only one month after his political failure at the First Revolutionary National Congress, Juarez Távora was appointed Minister of Agriculture by Getúlio Vargas: an executive post that allowed him to design and (attempt to) implement policies for the transformation of rural Brazil. In this chapter, the larger context in which Távora’s political convictions as they matured in the 1920s and early 1930s provides the background for an analysis of his performance as Minister of Agriculture in the eighteen months between his nomination and his resignation, in July 1934. It will emerge that organicist agrarianism had never been so close to becoming the dominant doctrine in Brazilian rural policies as in that year and a half in Brazilian history.

7.1. Juarez Távora and the Long March of Tenentismo: The Emergence of a Nationalist Inter-class Political Platform (1922-1932)

Juarez do Nascimento Fernandes Távora was born in 1898 and was the fifteenth child of a landowning family of Jaguaribemirim, today Jaguaribe, a rural municipality in the interior of the Northeastern state of Ceará. He was named after the Mexican president of indigenous origin, Benito Juárez, and his family had a tradition of opposition to the local oligarchy aligned with the First Republic. After receiving an early education in his home state, from 1911 to 1915 he studied in different schools throughout the country (Rio de Janeiro, Juiz de Fora and Porto
Alegre), following the different postings of his father, a career military officer. Together with his brother Fernando (another SAAT founding member), in 1915 he started engineering studies and, a year later, entered the Escola Militar do Realengo. After graduation in 1919, the young lieutenant spent the early years of the 1920s in the corps of engineers and as an auxiliary instructor in the same military school.\(^{372}\)

From 1922 to 1930, Juarez Távora rapidly emerged as one of the leading figures of the so-called “lieutenants’ movement”, or tenentismo, an oppositional current within the junior army officers ranks that repeatedly staged armed insurrections throughout the country. Juarez Távora’s participation in the two major uprisings in Rio de Janeiro (1922) and São Paulo (1924), with the resulting imprisonments, desertions and conspiracies, prepared the young revolutionary for the role of \textit{de facto} vice-commander of the peak experience of armed tenentismo: the Prestes Column (1925-1927). For more than two years, a few hundred rebellious Brazilian servicemen marched for more than 15,000 miles in the backlands of the country, touching thirteen Brazilian states and often crossing the borders with Bolivia and Paraguay, in an attempt the escape repression from the federal army and to avoid the crushing of the tenentista cause.\(^{373}\) Távora himself could only take part to the early months of this epic enterprise, because on the last day of the year 1925 he was arrested in Teresina (Piauí) and imprisoned in Rio de Janeiro. However, this phase of the lieutenants’ struggle against oligarchic Brazil was decisive not only for its clout within the future 1930 Revolution, but also and foremost for the definition of divergent currents

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within the tenentista movement. In particular, the growing confrontation between Távora himself and the leader who gave his name to the column, Luís Carlos Prestes, would prove decisive.

Historians traditionally interpreted early tenentismo up to 1927 – the year by which the Prestes Column had fully disbanded and all its leaders had been either arrested or forced into exile – as the result of the encounter of professional claims inside the armed forces with the growing discontent at the political structures of the First Republic. On the one hand, young low-rank officers not affiliated with the dominant elites voiced their unease about the lack of opportunity to ascend to high-ranking posts, as well as an overly slow process of modernization of the Brazilian military. On the other hand, early tenentista political demands were restricted to the restoration of an equilibrium among powers and institutions (e.g. a curtailment of state authorities compared to federal ones and a more autonomous judiciary) and to an electoral reform, with measures that could reduce fraud and manipulation, such as the adoption of the secret ballot. If we exclude some generic calls for an enhanced public education and for a better planning of economic activities, the movement did not question the socio-economic structures of the country, nor did formulate a clear-cut proposal for reformist policies. Early tenentismo could be correctly described as “very radical in its form and limited in its ideology.”

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beyond a vague appeal to liberal principles and a moralizing stance. In spite of a social profile that positioned the tenentes as a sort of middle-class vanguard against an elite-dominated political regime, their mobilization was mostly motivated by the assertion of their career ambitions and by the defense of the institutional role of the military. The events that followed the dismantling of the Prestes Column in early 1927 led to dramatic changes in this vague political platform.

Luís Carlos Prestes (1898-1990) shared with Juarez Távora not only his birthdate, but also his military education, as he also graduated in 1919 from the Escola Militar do Realengo. A protagonist of the uprisings of 1922 and 1924, Prestes abandoned the military after their failure, but remained loyal to the tenentista cause, and became the main organizer of the rebellious army that took his name. From his exile in Bolivia and later Argentina, between 1927 and 1930 Prestes completed his conversion to Marxism, as a result of contacts with communist leaders from other Latin American countries and of a growing conviction that Brazil’s acute socio-economic problems could not be overcome through a mere reform of the oligarchic republic. However, up until 1931, well into the Vargas’ provisional presidency, which was supported by the vast majority of the tenentista leaders, Prestes refused to join the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the Communist International, as he had the ambition to mold a broader revolutionary movement that went beyond USSR-sanctioned strategies.376

The main tool that Prestes employed to pursue his goal was the manifesto that he published on May 30, 1930, when the forces that a few months later supported the 1930

Revolution had still to form a coalition. Távora in the following days, answered Prestes both
publicly and privately. The exchange of opinions between Prestes and Távora that occurred
between May and June of 1930 marked the first clear-cut ideological and strategical split within
tenentismo and, more specifically, a decisive step into the definition of Távora’s organicist
agrarianist positionings.

Prestes opened his manifesto with a denunciation of the recent presidential vote as

Another electoral farce, methodically and carefully prepared by politicos, [...] and
carried out with the ingenuous contribution of many people and of a large number
of dreamers who were still not convinced of the futility of such efforts.
[...] an apparently democratic campaign, but which, in the end, was nothing more
than the struggle between the opposing interests of two oligarchic currents.377

Prestes then criticized the appropriation of revolutionary discourses by Vargas’
supporters and the acquiescence of those who wanted to pursue an authentic change in the face
of a political program that was too fainthearted.

A simple change of the man in power, the secret ballot, promises of electoral
freedom, of administrative honesty, of respect for the Constitution and of a stable
currency, and other panaceas do not solve anything and do not interest in any way
the vast majority of our population. Without its support any revolution that will be
carried out will be a simple struggle between the dominant oligarchies.378

377 “Anexo No. 3. Manifesto de Luís Carlos Prestes,” in Juarez Távora, Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 1º
volume. Da planície à borda do altiplano (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora; Livraria José Olympio
Editora: 1973), 344: “[m]ais uma farsa eleitoral, metódica e cuidadosamente preparada pelos politiqueiros, [...] levada a efeito com o concurso ingênuo de muitos e de grande número de sonhadores ainda não convencidos da
inutilidade de tais esforços. [...] uma campanha aparentemente democrática, mas que, no fundo, não era mais do que
a luta entre os interesses contrários de duas correntes oligárquicas.”
378 Ibid., 345: “Uma simples mudança de homem no poder, voto secreto, promessas de liberdade eleitoral, de
honestidade administrativa, de respeito à Constituição e moeda estável e outras panacéias nada resolvem nem podem
de maneira alguma interessar à grande maioria de nossa população, sem apoio da qual qualquer revolução que se
faça terá o caráter de uma simples luta entre as oligarquias dominantes.”
According to the author, only the pursuit of “economic independence” from both the
domestic landed oligarchies and Anglo-American imperialism, who kept “our rural and urban
peoples” in “a regime of semi-feudal exploitation,” could save the country.\textsuperscript{379} The process
through which this result could be attained was a “authentic national insurrection of all
workers,”\textsuperscript{380} with a program that, in addition to an extension of social and labor rights, included
complete liberation of all agricultural workers from all forms of feudal and
colonial exploitation; [...] confiscation, nationalization and division of lands; [...]delivery of the land for free to those who work it. [...] [c]onfiscation and
nationalization of foreign companies, latifundia, concessions, communication
routes, public services, mines, banks; cancellation of external debts.\textsuperscript{381}

Prestes’ call for a proletarian revolution and a drastic revision of property rights in favor
of the central state and the lower social classes constituted an abrupt departure from the
comparatively much milder claims of 1920s \textit{tenentismo}, especially in the context of the Brazil of
mid-1930, when political balance and the whole institutional framework were heavily under
attack by opposition forces that were far from united. Since Prestes was aware of the delicacy of
the moment, he submitted copies of his manifesto, before it was published, to the major leaders
of the \textit{tenentista}. Among them, Távora was the one who burden himself with the task of reacting
to it.

Távora had been able to escape from prison by January 1927 and returned to his
opposition and conspiratorial activities full time. By mid-1929 he had become, unlike Prestes,

\textsuperscript{379} Ibid., 346: “independência econômica,” “nossas populações dos sertões e das cidades,” “um regime de
exploração semifeudal.”
\textsuperscript{380} Ibid., 347: “verdadeira insurreição nacional de todos os trabalhadores.”
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 348: “ completa libertação de todos os trabalhadores agrícolas, de todas as formas de exploração feudais e
coloniais; [...] confiscação, nacionalização e divisão das terras; [...] entrega da terra gratuitamente aos que a
trabalham. [...] [c]onfiscação e nacionalização das empresas estrangeiras, dos latifúndios, concessões, vias de
comunicações, serviços públicos, minas, bancos; anulação das dívidas externas.”
one of the main supporters of Vargas’ candidacy at the forthcoming presidential elections. After another brief imprisonment in Rio de Janeiro in early 1930 and Vargas’ defeat in the March elections, Távora was on the verge of becoming one of the key organizers of the future pro-Vargas insurrection, with a preeminent role as the military commander of the rebellious forces in the Northeast. When Prestes announced his new views, Távora seized the opportunity to elaborate, for the first time, an outline of his political program.

According to his memoirs, Távora received the manifesto on May 25, 1930 and sent Prestes a letter two days later, reacting to his “ideological drift” (“desvio ideológico”) and “communist idiots” (“idiotismo comunista”). Távora conceded that Vargas’ presidential campaign had been insufficient, and that the country was in desperate need of radical reforms. Nonetheless, he envisioned “a government made of enlightened and honest people, established in the name of all classes, able to regulate, impartially, the interests of each one of them,” and not the proletarian regime proposed by Prestes, whose proposal “will kill our revolution, because 90% of those who read [the manifesto] will interpret it as communist.” Tactical concerns over the widespread hostility that too radical a program would have generated in public opinion combined, in Távora’s argument, with an explicit belief in solidarity between different interests and social classes, as was to be expected from a believer in the organicist nature of society.

After the publication of Prestes’ manifesto on the press, Távora compiled an extended public response that appeared on the Diário Nacional of June 19, 1930. If we believe his own

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383 Ibid., 269.
384 Ibid.: “um governo de gente esclarecida e honesta, estabelecido em nome de todas as classes, capaz de regular, imparcialmente, os interesses de cada uma delas,” and “matará nossa revolução, por que 90% dos que o lerem o identificarão como comunista.”
account, he asked all the other insurrectional leaders to endorse the document, but none exposed himself to the risk. The text opened with an implicit reference to Alberto Torres’ main argument against the First Republic: the criticism of “the defective practice of a Constitution [that is] disconnected from the realities of the national life” and the call to “nationalize our Constitution – that is, make it possible to the defective elite that we have to implement it correctly.” The pessimistic evaluation of both the implementation of the republican constitution and the current ruling class entailed the explicit defense of extra-legal actions as the only possible route towards the redemption of Brazil. But affinities with Prestes’ proposition did not go beyond this point. Távora rejected the concept of a proletarian insurrection to be carried out by urban and rural workers that, according to his assessment, lacked “Cohesion, initiative, audacity and, above all, military efficiency.” The author judged a Bolshevik revolution, inspired by the Russian experience, as another instance of that “exoticism” (“exotismo”), that had been afflicting Brazil since independence when a form of government has to be devised: “the Monarchy with its evolution towards English parliamentarism, and […] the Republic, which copied North American presidentialism.” Alberto Torres’ dramatic image of a Brazil in which, because of the adoption of foreign laws and institutions, Brazilians lived as aliens in total total detachment from the country’s reality immediately comes to mind.

385 “Anexo no. 5. Carta de Juarez Távora,” in Ibid., 365.
386 “Anexo no. 4. Réplica de Juarez Távora ao manifesto de Luís Carlos Prester, in Ibid. 349: “a prática defeituosa de uma Constituição, divorciada das realidades da vida nacional.”
387 Ibid., 350: “Nacionalizar a nossa Constituição – isto é, torná-la capaz de ser bem executada pela elite deficiente que possuímos.”
388 Ibid., 351: “coesão, iniciativa, audácia e, sobretudo, eficiência bélica.”
389 Ibid., 352: “a Monarquia com sua evolução para o parlamentarismo inglês, e […] a Republica, copiando o presidencialismo norte-americano.”
Távora explicitly referred to the intellectual from Itaboraí when it came time to define the characteristics of the new political and socio-economic arrangements that he wanted to pursue after overthrowing the old regime.

I do believe in the balance and excellence of a regime based on the proportional representation of all social classes and constituted as an impartial regulator of their needs and mutual interests. And I suppose that the democratic republican regime (democratic in a less ample and more real sense than we have given it to date) is the one that will most easily allow us to approach this ideal equilibrium.

Let us therefore try to adapt it to our realities – following the guideline already pointed out by Alberto Torres, in his *Organização Nacional*, or by a parallel path that seeks the new tendencies and needs of our people and our environment. The strengthening of civil liberty, through a careful reform of Justice; the establishment of the economic independence of the masses, by the diffusion of small property; the effective and practical restraint of the arbiters of power, by the creation of a new authority of political control; the social balance, established by the proportional representation of class; and, in the end, the continuity that is indispensable to the task of solving the big national problems, by the persistent influence of technical councils, which permanently overlap to the impermanence of governments – these are the basic points for which Brazilian revolutionaries must fight.390

In spite of the perfunctory nature of this statement, the ideal of a corporatist republic, in which different class interests could be represented and technocratic entities could guide policies adapted to the peculiarities of the country, clearly emerges here as Távora’s dominant vision.

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390 Ibid., 353. “Creio, sim, no equilíbrio e excelência de um regime baseado na representação proporcional de todas as classes sociais, e erigido em regulador imparcial de suas dependências e interesses recíprocos. E suponho que o regime republicano democrático (democrático num sentido menos amplo e mais real do que esse que até hoje lhe temos conferido) – é aquele que mais facilmente nos permitirá aproximar-nos desse equilíbrio ideal. Tratemos, pois, de adapta-lo às nossas realidades – seguindo a diretriz já apontada por Alberto Torres, na sua *Organização Nacional*, ou por um caminho paralelo, que busque as novas tendências e necessidades do nosso povo e do nosso meio. O fortalecimento da liberdade civil, por uma reforma criteriosa da Justiça; o estabelecimento da independência econômica das massas, pela difusão da pequena propriedade; a coibição efetiva e prática dos arbítrios do poder, pela criação de um novo organismo de controle político; o equilíbrio social, estabelecido pela proporcional representação de classe; e, enfim, a continuidade indispensável à obra de solução dos grandes problemas nacionais, pela influência persistente de conselhos técnicos, que se superponham, permanentemente, à temporariedade dos governos – eis os pontos básicos por que se devem bater, vencidos ou vencedores, os revolucionários brasileiros.”
Coherently, the same organic collaboration among the different components of the larger body of the nation was expected to connote the desired revolution to come.

I think that the revolution is not the privilege of a class or of a few predestined individuals: - it is the universal common patrimony, of all the disillusioned and desperate seekers of legal protection, against the arbitrariness of tyranny. There should thus be place in their ranks for the radical communist, the anarchist, the socialist, the moderate revolutionary, the liberal and the conservative; for the civilian and the soldier; for the bourgeois and the proletarian.\textsuperscript{391}

This passage displays still a strong moralistic tone in the definition of those who deserved, within Brazilian society, to exercise political agency: Torres’ elitist trust in the potential of enlightened experts combined here with the vanguardist attitude of 1920s tenentes, with the pretension to embodying the aspirations of all well-intentioned Brazilians.

Távora’s hint about the creation of a society based on small landholding is of course particularly relevant to our purposes, and it found further developments in a private letter to Prestes that, on June 25, closed the polemical exchange between the two former comrades, precipitating a final breaking-off. In this text, Távora used the topics of land tenure and rural labor as examples of both his desired changes and the methods to be employed to produce them.

I will reply, even more literally, to your “agrarian” argument. I continue to think that the rough and total confiscation of a latifundium that was honestly acquired and cultivated is an unnecessary robbery – even if, for its economic and social purpose, our reason admits and justifies it. [...] Latifundium is evil. Small property is good. Sure. But this evil and this good are subject, like everything in this world, to the general law of relativity. I think, for example, that it is a serious error of objective vision to want to extinguish, at a stroke, the current economic regime of the latifundia and, with another stroke, to demand to replace it on the same day with a complete regime of small property.

\textsuperscript{391} Ibid., 351-352: “Penso que a revolução não é privilégio de uma classe ou de alguns poucos indivíduos predestinados: - é o patrimônio comum universal, de todos os desiludidos e desesperados de proteção legal, contra os arbitérios da tirania. Deverá haver, assim, lugar em suas fileiras para a o comunista extremado, o anarquista, o socialista, o revolucionário moderado, o liberal e o conservador; para o civil e o militar; para o burguês e para o proletário.”
As in the case of the abolition of slavery in 88, we would suffer a very serious economic crisis, with perhaps unforeseeable consequences.\(^{392}\)

In Távora’s proposal, a substantial alteration of the structural inequalities and inefficiencies of rural Brazil had to be pursued through moderate means, gradually and peacefully, and thus, implicitly, through forms of appeasement and collaboration with the landed elites. The same judicious scheme had to be applied to other burning issues, such as external debt and foreign interests in the country.\(^{393}\) In his own words, the “revolution has its own prestige, and will keep it, necessarily, as long as its claims summarize the average aspirations of the national collectivity.”\(^{394}\)

Most historians qualified the political ideas of Távora and the other tenentes who did not follow Prestes’ turn to the left as petty-bourgeois, for being simultaneously against the interests of the entrenched elites, and also paternalist toward the lower social strata.\(^{395}\) It is true that the very dispute with Prestes put Távora in a sort of “centrist” position on the Brazilian political scene, between the new Marxist internal current and the common oligarchic enemy of the First Republic parties. However, any reference to the defense of “middle-class” interests seems misleading. The embryonic Brazilian bourgeoisie of the time was to a large extent aligned with

\(^{392}\) “Anexo no. 5. Carta de Juarez Távora,” in Ibid., 358-359: “Vou responder, ainda mais ao pé da letra, a sua argumentação “agrária”. Continuo pensando que o confisco sumário e total do latifúndio honestamente adquirido e cultivado é um roubo dispensável – ainda que, pela sua finalidade econômica e social, a nossa razão o admite e justifique. [...] O latifúndio é um mal. A pequena propriedade é um bem. Está certo. Mas esse mal e esse bem estão sujeitos, como tudo neste mundo, à lei geral da relatividade. Penso, por exemplo, que é um grave erro de visão objetiva querer extinguir, com uma penada, o regime econômico atual do latifúndio e, com outra penada, pretender substituí-lo, no mesmo dia, pelo regime integral da pequena propriedade. Tal como no caso da abolição da escravatura, em 88, iremos sofrer uma crise econômica gravíssima, de consequências talvez imprevisíveis.”

\(^{393}\) Ibid., 360-361.

\(^{394}\) Ibid., 356: “revolução tem prestigio próprio, e tê-lo-á, necessariamente, enquanto condensar em seus própitos reivindicadores as aspirações medias da coletividade nacional.”

\(^{395}\) See for example the recent Guillaume Azevedo Marques de Saes, O desenvolvimento brasileiro segundo a visão militar, 1880-1945 (Curitiba: Prismas, 2015).
the dominant elite and removed from the “progressive” preoccupations for the conditions of the Brazilian population at large that Távora and other leaders of the 1930 Revolution, with all their limits, expressed. What emerged from Távora’s discourse was the trust in a reformist approach for the resolution of the most controversial and harmful problems of the country, which an enlightened vanguard had to persuasively offer to all Brazilians of good will, regardless of their social status. However, this “average wise man” program could only have a chance if the decaying old regime could be superseded.

Távora emerged from the successful 1930 Revolution of October as one of the most trustworthy supporters of the new provisional president Getúlio Vargas. In the immediate aftermath of the coup, when the new rulers were hectically trying to establish a new route for the country, he accepted a series of temporary positions, sometimes just for a few weeks, including the role of Minister of Transportation and Public Works. However, he mostly remained a military commander, now with the rank of major, and was nicknamed “Viceroy of the North” (“Vice-rei do Norte”) because of the plenipotentiary authority that he received from Vargas on Northeastern affairs.

The elaboration of a fully-fledged political platform had to wait until the creation of the Clube 3 de Outubro (C3O) in February 1931 and, more specifically, for the process that led to the publication of its official program exactly one year later. However, it must be noted that Távora was not a member of the commission that elaborated the document between December 1931 and February 1932, although the program is defended by Távora in his memoirs and was

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396 I derive these observations from Fausto, A Revolução de 1930, 51-85.
used as the basis for the “Theses” that he personally presented to the First Revolutionary National Congress the following November,\(^{397}\) with a disappointing outcome, as we have seen.

The doctrinaire works of the C3O in 1932 were not only influenced by the composite nature of its ranks and file, in which military and civilian personalities as well as radical and moderate views coexisted and often conflicted. Even more, during that year two key events loomed over the troubled process of organizing a cohesive movement in support to the new regime: in April, Vargas officially announced the convening of a constitutional assembly in 1933, while in July an anti-Vargas uprising erupted in São Paulo. The latter was finally crushed by loyalist forces in October, also thanks to Távora’s military leadership, but only made more evident what was at stake in the process of creating a new charter for Brazil: the definition of the institutional framework and the political principles on which the country had to rest.

C3O’s programmatic documents can be inserted in the nationalist and anti-oligarchic current that Alberto Torres had inaugurated in the 1910s and that Juarez Távora had recently revived in his polemical exchanges with Prestes. The old regime was attacked for an idealistic reliance on institutions that were not attuned to the Brazilian reality and only favored corruption. Centralization was the first principle that should have informed the new constitution, with a stronger federal government with a broader role in economic planning; an independent judiciary organized at the national level; a unified military that absorbed local and state-level militias. Inter-class corporatism inspired the vision of a republic grounded on those “who work and produce” (“que trabalham e produzem”),\(^{398}\) who had to be represented in an elective corporatist

\(^{397}\) Távora, *Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2\(^{\text{a}}\) volume*, 62-64.

chamber and by a corporatist vice-president at the political level, as well as in professional
organizations and unions at the social level. A technocratic component of specialized councils
and commissions had to support executive and legislative powers in the formulation of policies.

The chapter on economic affairs detailed a number of principles and measures that should
have benefited the primary sector and the rural population. Within the latter, “producers” and
“workers” should be equally considered “an undisputable vital force for the Nation” who
deserved “the decent existence of the human being.” In the frame of a respect for private
property and of capital, “when socially productive,” the C3O demanded “the obligation on the
part of the government to reduce as much as possible all the forms of latifundia,” and to
“intensify the colonization of untilled lands,” with the goal of “stimulating as much as possible
the formation and the sustenance of small landed estates.” Together with preoccupations about
the lack of basic services and technical assistance in the countryside, as well as about the need to
protect natural resources from depletion, the program also showed an unusual awareness of the
limits of the legal and fiscal systems when it came to land ownership and use. The C3O
proposed, on the one hand, the institution of a “Land Court, which studies and solves the
disputes relating to the ownership, possession and exploitation of lands;” on the other hand, a
land tax on large estates.

In spite of all the efforts put forward to direct the process of refoundation of the Brazilian
republic, the C3O was the victim of its own strategies, in the context of the heated campaign for

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399 Ibid., 210: “uma indiscutível força vital da Nacionalidade,” “a existência digna da pessoa humana.”
400 Ibid., 210-211: “quando socialmente produtivo,” “a obrigatoriedade, por parte dos governos, de reduzir ao
mínimo possível todas as formas de latifundios,” “Intensificar a colonização das terras incultas,” “estimular o mais
possível a formação e a manutenção da pequena propriedade rural.”
401 Ibid., 211: “Tribunal de Terra, que estude e resolva os litígios relativos ao domínio, posse e exploração do solo.”
the election of the delegates at the constitutional assembly. In fact, the organization suffered from the decision, with Távora’s earnest consent, to reject the possibility of becoming a political party, in July 1932,\textsuperscript{402} and from the minority positioning in which it was forced during the First Revolutionary National Congress that sanctioned the foundation of a leftist party, in November 1932. As Távora himself noted,

after the Electoral Law was issued, the elections for the Constituent Assembly were called and the date of its inauguration [was announced], revolutionary activities would have to move from apolitical groups, such as the C3O, to party organizations. Political parties began to be founded in the various States [...]. The C3O kept its position as a non-partisan entity and implicitly granted its members the freedom to join the revolutionary parties that they preferred. Its main concern became the communication of his ideas to the new parties in formation in the States, in order to facilitate their defense, within the National Constituent Assembly.\textsuperscript{403}

The C3O \textit{de facto} ended its activities in late 1932. After a short revival with a new leadership that defended authoritarian and militaristic positions, it was formally terminated in April 1935. By November 1932, the month in which the SAAT was founded, Távora’s ambition to impose a novel political program to the new regime by means of a non-partisan organization, and thus without the resort to party politics and factionalism, had been crushed. Nonetheless, he was immediately presented with a golden opportunity, especially for the sake of organicist agrarianist principles and goals: on December 22, 1932 he was appointed Minister of Agriculture in Vargas’ cabinet.

\textsuperscript{402} Távora, \textit{Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2\textsuperscript{o} volume}, 62.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 67-68: “Com a decretação da Lei Eleitoral e a fixação de eleições para a Constituinte e data da instalação desta, as atividades revolucionarias teriam de deslocar-se, de grupamentos apolíticos, como o Clube 3 de Outubro, para as organizações partidárias. Os partidos políticos começaram a ser fundados nos vários Estados […]. O Clube 3 de Outubro, mantendo-se em sua posição de órgão não-partidário, concedeu, implicitamente, aos seus associados, a liberdade de se filiarem aos partidos revolucionários que preferissem. Sua preocupação maior passou a ser a comunicação de suas ideias aos novos partidos em formação nos Estados, a fim de facilitar a defesa das mesmas, perante a Assembleia Nacional Constituinte”
7.2. Juarez Távora in the Ministry of Agriculture: in Charge of Brazilian Rural Policies (1932-1934)

According to his memoirs, in the early days of December 1932 Távora was informed that Vargas was considering him for the post of Minister of Agriculture. He recalled that, in order to take an informed decision,

I cautiously collected some information about the state of affairs within that minister. This information was, in fact, disheartening: - irrational administrative structure; inadequate facilities; insufficient budgetary funds, and personnel not interested in exercising their functions.404

This bleak general picture of the situation in the ministry could only be worsened by its current condition: the minister in charge had been nominated ambassador to Argentina almost one year earlier, so rural policies had been lacking a dedicated political guide for months.405 But the obvious extended negligence in which the institution in charge of the primary sector had been left was not the only reason why Távora considered accepting the office.

Two reasons led me, however, to consider more seriously the possibility of accepting the invitation in case it finally materialized: - first, to collaborate with the loyal companions of the revolution who, in the Northeast, faced the horrors of one of the most cruel droughts that had ever plagued this region of the country; and, secondly, to be able to participate, as a member ex officio of the Constituent

404 Ibid., 89: “colhi, cautelosamente, algumas informações sobre a situação dos negócios daquela pasta. Essas informações eram, em verdade, desalentadoras: - estrutura dos serviços irracional; instalações inadequadas; verbas orçamentárias insuficientes, e pessoal desinteressados do exercício de suas funções.”
405 The predecessor and the successor of Távora in the Agriculture Ministry were, respectively, Joaquim Francisco de Assis Brasil (in charge from November 1930 from December 1932) and Odilon Duarte Braga (in charge, after a full year of interim regency, from July 1933 and November 1937). Both were members of the traditional regional oligarchies (Assis Brasil from Rio Grande do Sul and Braga from Minas Gerais), with a solid background in the politics (and politicking) of the First Republic, despite their support to the 1930 Revolution. Consequently, their tenures as Agriculture Ministers were marked more by unease about growing authoritarian trends and Vargas’ fluctuations on the liberal principles front than by reformist rural policies.
Assembly – whose election had already been set for October 1933 – in the elaboration of the future Constitutional Charter.406

It is clear that Távora regarded the possibility of playing a formal executive role within the government as an opportunity not only to favor positive actions in his home region, the Northeast, but also and foremost to influence the process of writing of the new charter and its outcomes. However, Távora’s interest in the agriculture portfolio was not merely instrumental. In a letter to Vargas, dated December 11, Távora conditioned his acceptance upon the granting of a certain autonomy in the reorganization of the ministry and in the implementation of new policies, but apparently the president did not answer him and simply proceeded with the formal appointment on December 22.407

In spite of the lack of an explicit backup from the head of government, Távora was not shy of stating his actual intentions.

This mission (of the Ministry of Agriculture) is very important and the disloyalty or neglect with which it has been pushed into the background in the national administration as a whole is a true crime of against the Homeland. We are a Country in which everything needs to be organized, and in which nothing is more disorganized than production.

Alberto Torres – the deepest and most realistic among Brazilian political thinkers – rightly said that “since colonial times our agricultural activity has been a process of devastation of the land, and nobody protested.” It is urgent that we react against this real plundering of the country’s natural riches, which lasted for centuries, and that we take, definitively, the path towards the rationalization of our production.408

406 Ibid., 89: “Dois motivos levaram-me, entretanto, a considerar, mais seriamente, a eventualidade de aceitar o convite, se, afinal, ele viesse a formalizar-se: - primeiro, colaborar [...] com os leais companheiros de revolução que, no Nordeste, enfrentavam os horrores de uma das secas mais cruéis, que já haviam flagelado essa região do país; e, em segundo lugar, poder participar, como membro nato da Constituinte – cuja eleição já fora fixada para outubro de 1933 – da elaboração da futura Carta Constitucional.”

407 Ibid., 89-91.

408 Juarez Távora, O Ministério da Agricultura na vigência do governo provisório (1930-1933) (Rio de Janeiro: Oficinas Gráficas da Diretoria de Estatística e Publicidade, 1933), 19: “Essa missão (do Ministério da Agricultura) é relevantíssima e constitui um verdadeiro crime de lesa-Pátria o desamor ou descaso com que tem sido legada a plano secundário no conjunto da administração nacional. Somos um País onde tudo está por organizar-se, e no qual nada
The inspiring role of Alberto Torres, once again, was made explicit in order to highlight how the unrelenting depletion of natural resources mirrored the disorganization of the primary sector and of the public institutions that were supposed to direct it.

A thorough administrative and technical reform of the Ministry of Agriculture was, consequently, a top priority under the new administration. Távora submitted the entire agency to a radical reorganization and created four “National Departments” that had to coordinate operations in its key areas of jurisdiction: “Plant Production,” “Animal Production,” “Mineral Production,” and “Scientific Research.” A number of specialized technical services in charge of the most strategic sectors were created ex novo or transferred from other federal agencies, usually after exhausting negotiations. The most revealing example of the latter was the Serviço Técnico do Café. Significantly, the Ministry of Agriculture had always lacked formal competence over what was by far the dominant Brazilian export crop and, although the Ministério da Fazenda (“Ministry of the Economy”) had a coffee department, actual policies had traditionally been carried out at the state level, with São Paulo in a dominant position.

mais é desorganizado do que a produção. Disse, com razão, Alberto Torres – o mais profundo e realista dos pensadores políticos brasileiros – que «a nossa atividade agrícola, desde os tempos coloniais, tem sido um processo de devastação da terra, sem protesto de ninguém». Urge que reajamos contra esse verdadeiro saque às riquezas naturais do País, que dura séculos – encaminhando-nos, decisivamente, pela senda da racionalização de nossa produção.”

409 Távora, Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2° volume, 92-93, 96-98, 100, 111-112. The radical changes carried out in the administrative and technical apparatus of the ministry, including details on budgets and organization charts, are painstakingly described in the official reports of the period: O Ministério da Agricultura na vigência do Governo Provisório (1930-1933) and O Ministério da Agricultura em 1933-1934.

410 Távora explicitly denounced these limitations when it came to interfere with vested coffee interests – Távora, Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2° volume, 98-100 – and the lack of funds allocated for an effective operativeness of the new service – O Ministério da Agricultura em 1933-1934 (Rio de Janeiro: Diretoria de Estatística da Produção, 1934), 24-25. For a concise analysis of coffee policies in the Vargas years, see Gordon-Ashworth.
major interventions concerned the opening of new experimental stations to improve specific products, enhanced quality controls on crops, and strengthened statistical services.\footnote{The ministerial statistics department that Távora founded in 1933 one year later, thanks to his own efforts, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (today, IBGE), which is still the main federal institution for the collection and analysis of information about the country’s demographics, geography and economy. See “Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística,” in Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro, http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-tematico/fundacao-instituto-brasileiro-de-geografia-e-estatistica-ibge (accessed March 5, 2019).}

The philosophy behind Távora’s reforms, which aimed at providing Brazil with a modern and efficient Ministry of Agriculture, coupled technocratic and organicist principles. Rationalization and centralization of decision-making and jurisdictions, in fact, were carried out through an expansion of the ministry’s capacity to organize and produce specialized knowledge, as well as through a ramification of agencies, in the corridors of the institution but also across the Brazilian territory, that could operate as transmission belts of the directives coming from the head of the portfolio.

Távora’s most ambitious and comprehensive project in his new role was by far the *Plano Nacional de Organização e Defesa da Produção Agrária* (“National Plan for the Organization and Defense of the Agrarian Production”), in which “organicist agrarianism” found its top achievement.

In organizational and legal terms, the plan entailed the creation of the Diretoria do Sindicalismo-Cooperativista (“Directorship for Cooperativist Syndicalism”)\footnote{Decreto no. 22.380, de 20 de Janeiro de 1933, in Arquivo Histórico da Câmara dos Deputados, http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1930-1939/decreto-22380-20-janeiro-1933-519891-publicacaoooriginal-1-pe.html (accessed March 5, 2019).} – which after a few months was renamed Diretoria da Organização e Defesa da Produção (“Directorship for
the Organization and Defense of Production”)

– and the issuing of three laws that aimed at a complete restructuring of the entire primary sector in a corporatist fashion, through the establishment of professional consortia, cooperatives and a rural credit system.

Cooperativism was far from being a novelty in Brazil’s rural world, or in the governmental and non-governmental organizations that presided over the sector. The solidaristic principles of the cooperativist movement, which was born in continental Europe in the 1890s when a harsh economic crisis threatened to exacerbate class struggle, reached Brazil and were applied in some pioneering private experiments at the turn of century, mostly thanks to German and Italian immigrants. However, in Brazil the major breeder of cooperativist ideas was the state apparatus, and in particular the Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio (“Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade”) since its creation in 1906. Although early national legislation on cooperatives, between 1903 and 1907, did not produce noteworthy results, in the 1910s and 1920s an intense debate took place among ministry’s officials and consultants. In particular, the defendants of a model of autonomous cooperatives with strictly socioeconomic ends clashed

with those who advocated for an integrated, hierarchical system in which cooperativism was instrumental to a state-directed professional syndicalization across society.\footnote{On cooperativism in the context of early 19\textsuperscript{th}-century Brazil, see Ângela de Castro Gomes, \textit{A invenção do trabalhismo} (São Paulo: Vértice, 1988), 159-168, and Sonia Regina de Mendonça, \textit{A política de cooperativização agrícola do estado brasileiro (1910-1945)} (Niterói: Editora da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2002), 28-35.}

Custódio Alfredo Sarandy Raposo was the undisputed leader of syndicalist cooperativism and, as a long-term civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, he actively promoted his model, including by means of periodical articles and books. His most systematic volume, \textit{Teoria e prática da cooperação} (1911) already envisioned a comprehensive national system of inter-class “consórcios” or “sindicatos profissionais:” each of them should have grouped employers and employees of the same economic sector who resided in a given municipality, and then become part of a pyramidal scheme as members of larger state- and federal-level trade organizations.\footnote{Custódio Alfredo Sarandy Raposo, \textit{Teoria e prática da cooperação} (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1911).}

If the status quo of the First Republic was inherently hostile to a similar arrangement, post-1930 Brazil seemed ready to accept a social engineering plan that promised to integrate rural areas and impoverished populations, under governmental control, in a larger national effort that would have simultaneously improved living conditions in the countryside and Brazilian economy at large. In particular, when Juarez Távora, as the leader of a self-declared inter-class and non-partisan movement interested in building a stronger and cohesive Brazil, rose to the post of Minister of Agriculture, Sarandy Raposo and his proposal came in handy to try to experiment with a third way between traditional oligarchic control over land and calls for a proletarian revolution in the countryside.
Raposo became the director of the agency that, with two different names, from January 1933 supervised the implementation of the Plan, and he compiled the two major reports that accounted for its development. As early as April 1933, Raposo could proudly announce that his Directorship was already operational and committed to a scrupulous preparatory work for the imminent launch of new laws on syndicalist cooperativism. More specifically, the office was conducting a census of the existing rural cooperatives, unions and credit institutions throughout Brazil, and was preparing drafts of the future decrees on the matter. The next intended step was to recruit and train “propagandistas-organizadores” to be sent all over the country, at least one per each state of the union, to inform the interested parties of the upcoming reforms. Apparently, this figure of lay missionary of rural corporatism never materialized, as there is no trace of it in other official documents, nor in Távora’s memoirs. The most probable reason for the failure of this measure is indirectly pointed out in the second part of the same report, in which Raposo denounced the lack of financial and human resources in his department. According to his calculations, a very conservative estimate of the costs of the project showed that the budget that was allocated to the department in 1933 had to be increased by more than 50%.

By the end of the year, the first legislative pillar of the Plan had been set: in December 1933, an *ad hoc* decree determined that

> it is possible for individuals who practice similar or related professions to organize themselves in professional-cooperative consortia, with the purpose of studying, defending and developing the general interests of the profession, the

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420 Ibid., 179-180.
economic and professional interests of its members, and the realization of their economic goals in consumption, credit and production cooperatives.  

Syndicates could be freely established (Art. 5), and individual membership was voluntary (Art. 8), but had to be approved and registered by the Ministry of Agriculture (Articles 5 and 14), which could also provide them with financial support (Art. 13). Consistent with Raposo’s early proposal, syndicates could form state-level federations, which in turn could unite in a national confederation (Art. 7).

Further legislation had to wait until July 1934, on the eve of the promulgation of the new constitution and the formation of a new government. One decree painstakingly regulated the formation of consumer, producer and credit cooperatives within syndicates, and mimicked the same three-degree organizational structure of the latter, with state and national level coordinating bodies (Art. 26). Another measure created the Rio de Janeiro-based Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural, whose role was defined as follows:

Art. 7. The main goal of the Bank shall be to finance the economic and professional organization of agents of rural activity in professional-cooperative consortia, in state federations and in the national confederation of such consortia, and shall carry out operations to support crop production, cattle farming and rural activities, including extractive industries.

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421 Decreto no. 23.611, de 20 de Dezembro de 1933: “é facultado aos indivíduos de profissões similares ou conexas organizarem entre si consórcios profissionais-cooperativos, tendo por fim o estudo, a defesa, o desenvolvimento dos interesses gerais da profissão, dos interesses econômico-profissionais de seus membros, e a realização de suas finalidades econômicas em cooperativas de consumo, crédito, produção e modalidades derivadas.”

422 Decreto no. 24.647, de 10 de Julho de 1934.

423 Decreto no. 24.641, de 10 de Julho de 1934: “Art. 7 - O Banco terá, como objetivo principal, o financiamento da organização econômico-profissional dos agentes da atividade rural em consórcios profissionais-cooperativos, em federações estaduais e na confederação nacional desses consórcios, e realizará operações para auxílios da lavoura, da pecuária e das indústrias rurais, inclusive as extrativas.”
Also in this case, the legislator emphasized the importance of a branched structure, with local credit institutions and agents active at the state and at the municipal levels (Art. 6). Coherently with the overall plan, favorable conditions were granted to cooperatives that originated from syndicates, which qualified as the preferential clients of the new state-sanctioned rural credit (Articles 31-34).

The new charter that came into effect in the very same days included some provisions that established general principles for future agrarian policies and facilitated access to land for rural workers. In particular, Section 4 of Article 121 featured two priority goals: “radicating men to the field” (“fixar o homem no campo”), in order to contain internal migration towards urban centers, and “taking care of their education” (“cuidar da sua educação rural”), in continuity with the campaigns that entities like the SAAT (see chapter 5) and the National Museum (see chapter 6) were promoting. Three further norms responded to the chronic problems of landless peasants and posseiros (see chapter 2).

Art. 121, Sec. 5 – The Union shall promote, in cooperation with the States, the organization of agricultural colonies, where the inhabitants of impoverished areas who wish to do so and those without work shall be sent.

[...]

Art. 125 – Every Brazilian who is not a rural or urban owner, who occupies for ten consecutive years, without opposition or recognition of somebody else’s domain, a stretch of land up to ten hectares, who makes it productive through his own work and who resides there, will acquire the dominion of the land, by means of a properly transcribed adjudication.

Art. 126 – Taxes that are levied on rural property with an area of not more than fifty hectares and with a value up to ten contos de réis, if possessed as a family property, shall be reduced by fifty percent.425

424 Constituição de 1934.
425 Ibid.: “Art. 121, Sec. 5 – A União promoverá, em cooperação com os Estados, a organização de colonias agrícolas, para onde serão encaminhados os habitantes de zonas empobrecidas, que o desejarem, e os sem trabalho. [...]

425 Ibid.: “Art. 125 – Todo brasileiro que não for dono de área rural ou urbana, que ocupe por dez anos consecutivos, sem oposição ou reconhecimento de alguém, uma área de até cem hectares, que a transforme em terra de cultivo, e que residir por ali, adquirirá o domínio do imóvel, por meio de escritura transcrita adequadamente.”
The Ministry of Agriculture’s triangular system of syndicates, cooperatives and credit indirectly found support in the 1934 Constitution. It did not institutionalize the corporatist strategy for the Brazilian countryside that Távora and Raposo had designed, but it laid the foundations – on paper – to create favorable circumstances for its implementation. The state offered to the lower strata of rural population (the unemployed, the landless, the squatters and even the legal owners of small plots of land) the opportunity to become stable and independent farmers: the ideal condition to become member of a community of producers who collaborated with each other for the sake of their own prosperity as well as for the common good of the nation.

Távora’s satisfaction with the launch of the Plan could not match the enthusiasm expressed in his 1934 report by Raposo. The latter could celebrate the crowning achievement of his long career as a civil servant and as an advocate of corporatist cooperativism, and could thank Vargas government for having swept away “the plutocratic interests [that] impeded the evolving of the [cooperativism] campaign in the administrative and political spheres.” The long list of early successes in implementing the Plan throughout the country, with hundreds of syndicates and cooperatives already established or about to be created, include some insights into

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Art. 125 – Todo brasileiro que, não sendo proprietario rural ou urbano, ocupar, por dez annos continuos, sem opposição nem reconhecimento de dominio alheio, um trecho de terra até dez hectares, tornando-o productivo por seu trabalho e tendo nelle a sua morada, adquirirá o dominio do sólo, mediante sentença declaratoria devidamente transcripta.

Art. 126 – Serão reduzidos de cincoenta por cento os impostos que recaiam sobre immovel rural, de área não superior a cincoenta hectares e de valor até dez contos de réis, instituido em bem de familia.”

426 See Távora, *Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2° volume*, 94-96. Of course, he was writing his account almost four decades after the facts.


the reception of the reform in specific institutions or trades. The Instituto de Cacau da Bahia, for example, could count on pro-cooperativism executives, according to Raposo. However, “a compromise solution that fitted the organization of the Institute” “was going to be necessary in order to fit an independent agency into the hierarchical model sanctioned by the new laws.”

Even more, Raposo subtly hinted at the difficulties that his department was encountering in carrying out the compromise solution that they chose in order to tackle the ticklish case of coffee producers in São Paulo: an integration of the syndicalist-cooperativist scheme into the bulwark of local oligarchic interests, the Instituto de Café do Estado de São Paulo.

Nonetheless, after one year and a half of hard work, Raposo could express his confidence in “economic and social reforms that make fraternity and justice possible among men who work without enjoying the benefits of their daily labor and sacrifice.” What is more, he could proudly claim to have provided a practical answer “to the exploiters of proletarian suffering, who often deceive him with the lure of political conquests and ignore, in bad faith, how illusory and impossible these are without the foundation of the economic conquest.”

The Távora who, four years earlier, polemized with Prestes and his call for a proletarian revolution could have only seconded this assertion of the primacy of orderly socioeconomic gains for Brazilian producers of all classes over the promise of a violent political emancipation that would have destroyed the national economy and society. By 1934, Torres’ ideal of a peaceful and gradual transition

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429 Ibid., 148-158: “um meio termo adaptável à organização do Instituto.”
430 Ibid., 150-153.
431 Ibid., 161: “reformas econômicas e sociais, possibilitadoras da confraternidade e da justiça entre os homens que trabalham sem gozar os proventos do labor e do sacrifício quotidiano.”
432 Ibid., 160-161: “aos aproveitadores do sofrimento proletário, que frequentemente o iludem com o engodo de conquistas de ordem política, desconhecendo, de má fé, quão ilusórias e impossíveis são estas sem o fundamento da conquista econômica.”
towards a more equitable agrarian society, in which peasants could get access to land and mutually cooperate to make it productive under the aegis of the state, seemed on the brink of becoming reality.
8. Conclusion:

The Fate of “Organicist Agrarianism” in Post-1934 Brazil

When, on July 16, 1934, the Constitutional Assembly promulgated the new charter and sanctioned the end of almost four years of provisional government through the indirect election of Getúlio Vargas as president, “organicist agrarianism” seemed to occupy a promising position in the cultural and political agenda of the country, as well as in some of its more important institutions. As I discussed in chapter 5, by the end of its second year of existence the SAAT had been able to carry out important initiatives that responded to two of its founding goals: raising awareness of the specific problems of the Northeastern region, through a dedicated national conference in December 1933, and prompting the creation of specific resources for education in the countryside, by means of courses and meetings on ensino rural. The public institution that hosted the more active contingent of Torres’ followers – the National Museum (chapter 6) – had also contributed to the development of popular education at the national level with the editorial experiment of the RNE, which issued its last volume in June 1934; had made overlooked areas of the country, such as the rural district of the city of Rio de Janeiro, become an example of the fragility and the potential of rural Brazil, thanks to Corrêa’s writings on the sertão carioca; and finally, had produced a direct impact on the earliest Brazilian legislation on natural resource management, as the result of Sampaio’s efforts at creating a national applied science for the
administration of forested lands. Chapter 7 examined how the most important leader of the
nationalist and inter-class current of tenentismo, Juarez Távora, had been able to use his powers
as Ministry of Agriculture, from December 1932 to July 1934, to implement at the national level
a blueprint for the construction of a corporatist society in the countryside, in which producers
would have collaborated within syndicates-cooperatives and more easily gotten access to credit
for the modernization of the sector.

Nevertheless, the transition towards a constitutional government and the building up of
the conditions that led to the establishment of the Estado Novo dictatorship in November 1937,
thanks to which Vargas remained in power until 1945, proved detrimental to the
accomplishments that proponents of “organicist agrarianism” had achieved in the previous years.
Both the new charter and the new Vargas cabinet were a compromise solution between belle
époque oligarchic liberalism and the social demands that came from both left- and right-wing
forces. 433 Although the Constitution included some principles that reinforced the tutelary role of
the state over natural resources434 as well as rural workers and small-scale landowners,435 actual
political balances and priorities limited their implementation.

The electoral dispute for the formation of the Constitutional Assembly in 1933 had
reactivated local politicking among regional factions, which was reinforced by the state-level
ballots that followed the issuing of the new charter.436 Juarez Távora himself was caught up in

433 See Ângela Maria de Castro Gomes, “Confronto e compromisso no processo de constitucionalização (1930-
1935),” in História Geral da Civilização Brasileira, t. 3, v. 10, O Brasil republicano. ed. Boris Fausto (São Paulo,
Difel, 1981.), 7-77.
434 See chapter 6.
435 See chapter 7.
436 Ângela Maria de Castro Gomes, ed., Regionalismo e centralização política: partidos e Constituinte nos anos 30
the net of Ceará’s heated campaign: he resigned his post as Minister of Agriculture the day before the new constitution came into force, did not accept Vargas’ offer to become the president of the very Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural that he helped to create, and unsuccessfully ran for a seat in his home-state assembly in October 1934.437

At the central level, the three years of formally constitutional rule between 1934 and 1937 were marked by a growing emphasis on the strengthening of the state apparatus and of propaganda, especially after the failed communist coup that Luís Carlos Prestes guided in November 1935. The leftist threat, in the context of the tense international scenario that led to World War II,438 contributed to a consolidation of the alliance between Vargas and high-ranking military officers, whose agenda differed significantly from the tenentista one: if the latter, as I argued in chapter 7, pledged to change Brazilian institutions and socioeconomic structures, the former was centered on the maintenance of social and political order. When the solidity of Vargas’ constitutional government started to be threatened, even veterans of the 1920s insurrections became more concerned about repressing subversion than about pushing for reforms, and they seconded the stabilizing role of the armed forces.439 Once again, Távora’s trajectory is paradigmatic: in late 1934, he returned to his military career and did not object to Vargas’ authoritarian turn in 1937.440

437 Uma vida e muitas lutas. Memórias. 2° volume, 115-119.
440 “Távora, Juarez,” in Dicionário Histórico-Biográfico Brasileiro.
The new scenario of post-1934 politics deeply affected the fate of national policies on the rural world and natural resources, as well as the evolution of the public institutions that contributed the most to them, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Museum.

The new Minister of Agriculture, Odilon Braga, hampered the implementation of corporatist cooperativism in rural Brazil, selectively cutting budgets and, later, dismantling the Directorship for the Organization and Defense of Production. This shift responded not only to the new political climate in Rio de Janeiro, but also to a coalition of organized local interests that had opposed the plan since its inception. As Sarandy Raposo feared (see chapter 7), one of the major centers of resistance was the state of São Paulo: both the landed elite of the Sociedade Rural Brasileira and the local government’s Secretaria de Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio operated against the implantations of syndicates and cooperatives, which paulista landowners and politicians accused of being, alternatively, the cells of an authoritarian corporatist republic or the seeds of a future Bolshevik revolution. 1934 laws on syndicalization and cooperativism were formally repealed in 1938, to sanction the final abandonment of the corporatist experiment in the Brazilian countryside.441

Up to the end of the Estado Novo in 1945, dominant agrarian policies at the national level focused on the protection of traditional export crops, which suffered greatly from the post-1929 depreciation on the international market. By means of newly created autarquias – specialized state agencies in charge of managing the fortunes of a single product – the government established quotas, controlled prices, regulated markets and allocated credit, as in the case of

sugar with the Instituto do Açucar e do Alcool (1933) and of coffee with the Departamento Nacional do Café (1934).\textsuperscript{442} With regard to social rights and rural labor, the well-known primacy that Vargas accorded to the protection of the urban working class did not translate into complete disregard for peasants. Workers in the cities and the countryside formally obeyed to the same labor laws, although implementation in peripheral Brazil was far from widespread. Nonetheless, the new possibility that workers obtained to file lawsuits against employers and landowners made litigation the main form of agency that lower-class rural population employed in this period. In addition, this unprecedented incorporation into the legal system prompted the formation of a peasant identity and of a political conscience that will contribute to the later claims and mobilizations of the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{443}

The two main items that the SAAT, as I presented in chapter 5, had stressed the most since its creation – rural education and the problems of the Northeastern region, especially its endemic droughts – kept their places in the Brazilian political agenda, but underwent rather similar twists. \textit{Ensino rural} initiated a shift that led it to mostly become a professional training of the adult workforce, outside the regular cycles of primary and secondary education. The process culminated in the 1946 \textit{Lei Orgânica do Ensino Agrícola}, approved immediately after the fall of the \textit{Estado Novo}, and in the following US-Brazil bilateral agreements that provided funds and

\textsuperscript{442} Gordon-Ashworth, 87-105.

personnel for a vocational and technical training that intended more to modernize and increase agricultural production than to integrate rural communities in the body of the nation.\textsuperscript{444} A technocratic approach also prevailed in infrastructural projects for the depressed Northeast, where the efforts that governmental engineers and agronomists made into mitigating the dramatic consequences of cyclical dry periods rarely questioned the atavistic problem of land tenure patterns. Large dams and irrigation systems mostly benefited large estates, whose owners could systematically count on manipulation and corruption, and employees of state agencies like the \textit{Inspetoria Federal de Obras Contra as Secas} (“Federal Inspectorate for Works to Combat Drought”) growingly blamed peasants’ ignorance and lack of cooperative spirit for their unsuccess.\textsuperscript{445} The policies on rural education and the fight against droughts during the 1930s and 1940s did not leave much room to “organicist agrarianism” discourses on countrymen redemption and disregarded key socioeconomic factors: in the first place, the unequal access to the most crucial natural resource, land.

The progressive Forest Code that the government passed in 1934, as I argued in chapter 6, was the most direct outcome of years of scientific work at the National Museum and the primary legal instrument available to put an end to centuries of unregulated exploitation and unreasonable depletion of natural resources in the country. However, its actual impact was minimal, mostly because landowners and enterprises could easily bypass its prescriptions and authorities lacked the resources (and often the will) to enforce it.

The Forest Code’s defects were soon revealed. An owner might cut down valuable hardwoods and allege that he had fulfilled his obligation to replant by simply allowing capoeira to grow back. The courts decided that an owner who had reduced the forest on his land to the minimum one-quarter could then sell the forested quarter; the new owner would enjoy the right of clearing three-quarters of his purchase – and so on, down, presumably, to the last sapling. Industrial firms easily evaded their obligation to replant by hiring independent contractors, who were not affected by the code. The federal government, furthermore, was assigned insufficient means to enforce the codes. The Forest Guard that it called for was not established; instead, local police forces were expected to undertake forest protection as an additional duty. [...] A multiplicity of agencies was responsible for executing the code. Prosecution was undercut by a new penal code, which reduced forest crimes to misdemeanors, and by a reluctance to apply a law that was being rewritten. By 1957 there had been only one conviction under it!  

Warren Dean explained such a divergence between the letter of the code and its application as the result of measures that Brazilian rulers only adopted as a token in their efforts to modernize the country along the lines of what their counterparts did in the “civilized” nations of North America and Europe, without a real intention to enforce them: as a Brazilian saying goes, it was a lei para inglês ver, “law for the Englishman to see.”

Such an interpretation underestimates the impact that the rapid political changes that took place immediately after the passing of the Forest Code had on the cluster of reforms that “organicist agrarianism” inspired, as well as on their advocates. If the growing law-and-order attitude of the military high command could count on a shared esprit de corps to absorb and defuse Távora and reformist tenentismo, institutional and epistemological changes weakened the activist science that pioneers like Roquette-Pinto, Corrêa and Sampaio promoted from the National Museum. Significantly, the latter was headed by a descendant of Alberto Torres himself when this process took place.

447 Ibid., 284.
Heloísa Alberto Torres (1895-1977) was the youngest of the three offspring of the intellectual from Itaboraí. She had begun her long career at the National Museum in 1918, when she was 23 and had just lost her father. Her interest in cultural anthropology developed under the guidance of Roquette-Pinto, who was her mentor until her promotion to substitute professor in 1925: an unprecedented accomplishment for a woman. Before the end of the decade, and her promotion to the directorship of the Anthropology and Ethnography Section of the institution in 1930, Heloísa had accomplished the bulk of her scientific fieldwork. Between 1925 and 1930, the young anthropologist had delved into the study of the Marajó people, who inhabited the homonymous island at the mouth of the Amazon River. Although she never published any finished work on the subject, Heloísa testified in her notebooks and conferences the transformative impact of such a first-hand experience of remote Brazil and its native culture. During the 1930s, cultural appreciation for indigenous civilizations and concerns about their survival led Heloísa to play a preeminent role in the early state heritage preservation agencies that regulated research fieldwork (*Conselho das Expedições Artísticas e Científicas no Brasil*, established in 1933) and policies towards native peoples (*Conselho Nacional de Proteção aos Índios*, established in 1939).

Heloísa went on to have a brilliant administrative career in the National Museum: she became vice-director in 1935 and then director in 1937, a position that she held until 1955. The process of specialization and institutionalization of academic disciplines that took place in this period in Brazil altered the formal configuration and mission of the National Museum. The latter

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448 See Adelia Maria Migliевич-Ribeiro, “Uma mulher intelectual em tempos pioneiros: Heloísa Alberto Torres, nação e a formação das ciências sociais brasileiras,” *Onteaiken* 10 (2010), 79-92. For an in-depth analysis on Brazilian heritage policies in the period, see Williams, 52-134.
passed under the control of the Ministry of Education and Health in 1941 and, five years later, became one of the schools of the *Universidade do Brasil*, which was created in 1937 as the first national-level and state-directed higher education institution of the country.\(^{449}\) One of the direct consequences of these institutional changes was that the museum lost most of its autonomy in the designing of research and educational activities. Heloísa made repeated efforts to preserve a distinctive model of interdisciplinary activist science that did not separate nature from culture and considered as a national top priority the improvement of knowledge about how communities lived and could prosper in their specific environments. However, domestic and international trends urged on a narrower and more specialistic definition of fields of inquiry and, especially after World War II, on a direct use of scientific and technical expertise for macroeconomic development.\(^{450}\)

“Organicist agrarianism,” in conclusion, was the victim of a combination of internal limits and external circumstance. On the one hand, its supporters envisioned their proposals and actions as components of a non-factionalist agenda for the common good of all Brazilians and the body of the nation. The rejection of party politics – sometimes explicitly and repeatedly, as in the case of Távora and the C3O (see chapter 7) – as a viable instrument to affirm their ideas and plans limited the possibility to exert a durable influence. An organization like the SAAT, which never went beyond the format of a notables’ cultural circle, was not sufficiently strong and cohesive to coordinate the initiatives that Torres’ followers carried out within specific institutions like the National Museum and the Ministry of Agriculture. On the other hand, the


political scenario quickly deteriorated: Vargas’ appeasement of local elites, the resurgence of regionalist factionalism and the growing emphasis on strengthening the state to ensure social order hampered the implementation of reforms that challenged the status quo. Finally, the rise of a socially conservative technocratic approach to tackle the major issues that “organicist agrarianism” could only regard as parts of a larger system – from rural education to scientific research, from agricultural infrastructures to economic development – determined the defeat of a holistic doctrine that had the ambition of incarnating the only authentic path for the progress of Brazil.
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