

Subalternity and Reparation – Emancipatory/autonomist  
Actions of the Political Elites of the Village/city of Campos dos  
Goytacazes (1820-1855)

Subalternidade e reparação – ações emancipatórias/  
autonomistas das elites políticas da vila/cidade de Campos dos  
Goytacazes (1820-1855)

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**Abstract**

Since it was a political-administrative and territorial rearrangement with national repercussions, the creation of a new province required complex political negotiations in the Brazilian parliament. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only two experiences were successful in this regard: Paraná and Amazonas. On that same occasion, the “good men” of the Municipal Council of Campos dos Goytacazes, in the province of Rio de Janeiro, maintained the desire that their city could become the capital of a new province. This article analyzes the political trajectory of this proposal to create the province of Goytacazes, which did not achieve the expected success. Finally, it considers how this ambition, which was the result of the local elite’s perception of the discrepancy between the importance of their municipality and the treatment received by the provincial authorities (Assembly and Government), came up against a context in which the liberal constitutional political culture required new support networks and new interpretations of political action.

**Keywords:** city council; province; local political elites.

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### Resumo

Por se tratar de um rearranjo político-administrativo e territorial de repercussão nacional, a criação de uma nova província exigia uma complexa negociação política no parlamento brasileiro. Ao longo do século XIX, apenas duas experiências foram bem-sucedidas nesse sentido: a do Paraná e a do Amazonas. Nessa mesma ocasião, os “homens bons” da Câmara Municipal de Campos dos Goytacazes, província do Rio de Janeiro, sustentaram a pretensão de que a sua cidade pudesse se transformar na capital de uma nova província. Este artigo analisa a trajetória política dessa proposta de criação da província de Goytacazes que não obteve o êxito esperado. Por fim, considera, então, como tal ambição, fruto da percepção da elite local sobre a defasagem entre a importância de seu município e o tratamento recebido das autoridades provinciais (Assembleia e Governo), esbarrava num contexto em que a cultura política liberal constitucional exigia novas redes de apoio e novas leituras do fazer político.

**Palavras-chave:** câmara municipal; província; elites políticas locais.

### Introduction

This article resulted from research carried out within the scope of the Laboratory of Regional History of Espírito Santo and Atlantic Connections (LACES), in the History Graduate Program of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES). It analyzes the emancipatory/autonomist actions of the political elites of the village of São Salvador/city of Campos dos Goytacazes, between the years 1820-1855, a period of political-administrative-territorial redefinition of the Kingdom of Brazil/Brazilian Empire. In this context, there were important intra/interprovincial disputes, starting with the fact that the political elites of the former captaincy of Paraíba do Sul defended the project of separating it from the district of Espírito Santo and joining Rio de Janeiro - which became a reality in 1832. Then, a few years later, between 1847 and 1855, they attempted to separate from Rio de Janeiro to form their own unit: the “populous, rich and abundant” province of Goytacazes.

In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the “good men” of the area—sugar owners, farmers, and merchants—believed that the nascent Brazilian Empire’s struggle for freedom from Portugal was mirrored in the struggle of the Campos dos Goytacazes District (hereinafter DCG) to free itself from the Espírito Santo Province. They were unhappy with that situation because they considered Campos dos Goytacazes one of the Empire’s most prosperous

regions and yet it was subjected to the “famished and poor”<sup>1</sup> district of the Espírito Santo Province. Thus, after much back and forth, in 1832, with a close vote, the district was dismembered and annexed to the comarcas of the province of Rio de Janeiro.

Those “good men” believed that, with this new status, they could transform the (economic, electoral, and demographic) potential of the district of São Salvador into political capital in Rio de Janeiro, one of the richest and most powerful provinces of the Empire—given that, although they belonged to the Rio de Janeiro administration, they generally participated in the political life of the Espírito Santo region. In this way, they hoped to create conditions to increase their own political status, achieve greater economic expansion, and ensure the reproduction of the slaveholding order, even though, publicly, they maintained the discourse of slavery as a civilizational setback to be remedied in the near future, provided a non-traumatic solution could be found to the issue of replacing the enslaved workforce.<sup>2</sup>

By having their city separated from the Espírito Santo region and annexed to Rio de Janeiro, the local political elite believed they had removed a major obstacle to their political/symbolic power and also opened space for greater economic prosperity. From then on, as the richest and most populous city in the interior of the province, with a significant electoral college, the “good men” would build the necessary political capital, which, in turn, would contribute to the accumulation of wealth and greater reproduction of their power. However, the Additional Act of 1834 created the neutral municipality of Rio de Janeiro, separating it from the province of the same name. Contrary to what some of their compatriots expected, the capital was transferred to Vila Real da Praia Grande, which, the following year, was renamed Niterói. Naturally, this decision resulted in the frustration of those who had fought for the separation:

Our suffering compatriots started to rebel and complain against the separation from the Espírito Santo Province for believing that we gained nothing, and on the contrary, many benefits could come to us with the approval of the Additional Act. This does not seem entirely unfounded to us; it would be quite

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<sup>1</sup> Idem.

<sup>2</sup> LEMOS, C. E. S. A vila de São Salvador: província do Espírito Santo ou do Rio de Janeiro (1820-1832)? *Revista Territórios & Fronteiras*, Cuiabá, vol. 11, n. 2, ago.-dez., 2018

feasible to move the Capital to this City, and given this situation, we would hold the largest number of Deputies.<sup>3</sup>

Some time later (1847/1855), in the midst of the Empire's "modernization" process, the political elites of the District of Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, supported by those of Itapemirim/ES, with which they had historical political/economic ties (such as the traffic of enslaved individuals and sugar production), demanded their departure from the province of Rio de Janeiro to become the capital of a new province, the province of Goytacazes, which, in turn, would annex part of the territories of Espírito Santo (Itapemirim), Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro.

Although there is a broad debate about the definition of political elites, in this study we adopted a perspective that articulates the most recurrent criteria among social scientists for this identification, that is, the position assumed by the subject in government institutions, the scope/impact of their decisions in such institutions and the reputation they enjoyed.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in the district, during the period investigated, a convergence between the economic and political elites is evident, as positions of authority were held primarily by landowners and owners of enslaved individuals (sugar and brandy producers), their close relatives, political allies, priests, and doctors. Although there were disputes between different factions, these groups generally shared the central tenets of the dominant project, namely, valorization of private property, defense of slavery and/or its gradual abolition, and strengthening of agricultural production as the basis of regional prosperity.

In 1855, the municipal Council was composed by the following councilmen: Antônio Francisco de Almeida Barbosa, João José Martins Leão, Joaquim Pinto Neto dos Reis (Baron of Carapebus), Antônio Joaquim da Silva Pinto, José Fernandes da Costa Pereira, Francisco de Paula Gomes Barroso, Canon Ângelo José da Fonseca, Canon Agostinho do Santos Colares and Canon Manoel de Brito Coutinho. They were divided into landowners and/or owners of an enslaved workforce, sugar and brandy farmers, pottery owners, some also merchants, doctors, military personnel, and canons. They occupied the position of jurors in the jury court, orphan and municipal judges, and members of various brotherhoods, five of whom were honored with different noble orders, among other positions. For example, Councilman Antônio Francisco de Almeida Barbosa was a sugar and brandy farmer, a second-degree voter,

<sup>3</sup> Monitor Campista, Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, 07 de set.1841, n.143, p.02/3.

<sup>4</sup> PUTNAM, R. D. 1976. *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

president of the Chamber of Deputies, judge, and provincial deputy, and belonged to the class of knights in the Order of Our Lord of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, it seems relevant to highlight the importance of the wealthy and ancient families (Vianna, Ribeiro de Castro, Pereira de Almeida, Araruama, Reis, among others) who, in addition to maintaining power for decades, established political and marital alliances at other levels, mainly to obtain private advantages such as better positions, noble titles, tax privileges, jobs for their own people—in short, various perks. Their representatives or people connected to them held strategic positions in the administrative, political, and legal structure of the district, such as collector of provincial and general revenues, police chief, deputy police chief, and municipal and district judge, among others.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, based on the triangulation of different historical sources, we analyze the discourses of the agents involved, highlighting their sayings, their unsaid statements, their silences, and their omissions in the political and interprovincial territorial disputes. Based on the New Political History and aided by Dialogical Discourse Analysis (DDA), we examine the discursive corpus of this political ambition, seeking to develop our hypothesis that, in 1855, by demanding the elevation of their district to the status of a province, local elites expressed a long-standing desire to restore their supposed political autonomy, reflecting the role they had previously played in the political culture of the Ancien Régime<sup>6</sup> (or old rule), revealing their difficulties in dealing with the new ways of doing politics.

For centuries, municipal councils enjoyed a certain prominence and autonomy in the dialogue with central authorities, playing an important role in maintaining the unity of the Portuguese Empire. However, in the independent Brazil context, the Law of October 1, 1828, significantly reduced the autonomy of the councils and subordinated them to the provincial assemblies, leading the councilors, as representatives of their citizens, to occupy a more subordinate position in the power struggle at various levels.

Thus, the attempt to propose the creation of the Province of Goytacazes in 1847-1855, in a context in which the constitutional liberal political culture continued to consolidate the State (and the provinces), revealed that the old

<sup>5</sup> Data obtained from: Representação. Monitor Campista, Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, nº 82, 21 de julho de 1855, p.2 / ALMANAK Laemmert. Almanaque Administrativo Mercantil e Industrial do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Laemmert, 1855.

<sup>6</sup> OLIVAL, Fernanda. *As Ordens Militares e o Estado Moderno. Honra, mercê e venalidade em Portugal (1641-1789)*. Lisboa: Estar Editora, 2001, pp. 15-38.

discursive/political strategies of its relative autonomy no longer had the same effect in this new configuration. Now, local political forces, framed by a new order, had to express their demands through negotiations with various authorities and at different levels. Thus, they would have to reach agreements with their representatives (if any), the Chamber of Deputies (Provincial and General), and the Senate, also relying on the coordination of political mediators who, serving as a bridge between different spaces/circuits of power, represented local interests before government authorities.

## Political Cultures and dialogism

Political culture, as an individual and collective phenomenon, is conceived in terms of its plurality of perspectives and historical evolution. Regarding the plurality of perspectives, in a given historical context, even if a hegemonic political culture exists, we can find a diversity of other competing, complementary, and asymmetrical cultures, with the power to influence each other, etc. In turn, in terms of evolution, these political cultures, born as responses to the problems experienced in a certain era, undergo changes over time, adapting to the new realities along the way. And it should be emphasized that political cultures stifled by hegemonic ones might age and retreat, but they do not die and their vestiges persist in the most inhospitable environments. Thus, we can understand them as

By means of their empirical studies, they verify the existence, at a given moment in history, of various systems of coherent and rivalry representations, which determine the society's view of those who participate in them, their organization, the place individuals occupy in them, the problems of power transmission, and systems that motivate and explain their political behavior.<sup>7</sup>(our translation)

That author also highlights two constitutive elements of this political culture. The first is the philosophical substrate that serves as the basis for the interpretations developed by the individual at different levels of their social experience, which may be a religious dogma, a political doctrine, a standard set of reflections, among others. The second is a set of historical references that serve as examples to guide the individual's behavior. These two aspects confirm the fact that there is no "coherent political culture that

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<sup>7</sup> BERSTEIN, Serge. Culturas políticas e historiografia. In: AZEVEDO, Cecília [et al.] *Cultura política, memória e historiografia*. Rio de Janeiro : Editora FGV, 2009, p.32.

does not precisely encompass a representation of the ideal society according to its image of society and the place that the individual occupies within it”.<sup>8</sup>

Among the political cultures of local elites, we will highlight those of the Ancien Régime and the Liberal Constitutional. In this case, according to Olival’s proposition, we understand the political culture of the Ancien Régime as that based on an economy of mercy, of distributive justice, in which, in exchange for services rendered and vassalage, the king, based on his liberality, granted material benefits, honors, glories, and privileges to his subjects.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, broadly speaking, a constitutional liberal political culture is based on the idea of a government limited by a constitution and popular sovereignty. In this new model, the fundamentals of political power are no longer concentrated in the idea of a monarch’s liberality, but shared among different branches of government, such as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, with the direct or indirect participation of citizens through universal or representative suffrage. In any case, in Brazil, liberalism has taken on various discursive and practical nuances, ranging from constitutional to predatory, heroic, conciliatory, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

Our access to the traces of the political cultures of the local elites of the Campos dos Goytacazes between 1820 and 1850 is based on a series of documents comprising annals of the Brazilian Parliament, minutes of the City Council, primary bibliographical works, official representations, and newspaper articles. In triangulating the material collected, we selected those discursive sequences that, in our view, presented the greatest potential for problematizing the meanings of the political disputes experienced, revealing the different voices that emerge from the hegemony of certain discourses. As these are sources expressed in different discursive textual genres, circulating in the fields of politics and the press, we chose to examine them from the dialogic perspective of language proposed by the philosopher/linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, highlighting from his reflections the problematization of the concepts of dialogism and ideology applied to the statements that structure the documents/sources used.

For Bakhtin, “the word is always loaded with an ideological or experiential content or meaning”<sup>11</sup>, present in all acts of understanding and

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.35.

<sup>9</sup> OLIVAL, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>10</sup> COSTA, Emília Viotti da. *Da monarquia à república: momentos decisivos*. São Paulo: Fundação Editora da UNESP, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Marxismo e Filosofia da Linguagem*. São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1988, p.95.

interpretation, it is the ideological phenomenon par excellence, capable of both reflecting and refracting reality. Because of the nature of dialogic language, the statements that make up a discourse are a link within a flow/chain of communication, a link that dialogues with previous and subsequent statements. Thus, “in all its paths to the object, in all directions, discourse encounters the discourse of others and cannot help but participate with it in a living and tense interaction”.<sup>12</sup>

Within this dialogic perspective, when dealing with discourse, we must pay more attention to the meanings of statements than to the meanings of sentences, since “discourse creates meaning, that is, it makes the words and expressions of the language go beyond the meanings recorded in the dictionary and say things that only the context shows”.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if we consider the different political cultures in their discursive/semiotic dimension, we can trace their divergences, convergences, complementarities, and exclusions, among the various possibilities that allow dialogism.

Thus, regarding the sources, we will pay particular attention to representation documents. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to find a series of representations of various natures that the Municipal Council of the village of São Salvador/city of Campos dos Goytacazes sent to higher authorities with demands seeking some kind of advantage. As a textual/discourse genre circulating among different political institutions, marked by power asymmetries between them, representations were understood as a document that expressed the act of representing an individual or a collective, bringing to the attention of the authorities a demand, a claim, a complaint, a compliment, or a valuable word, among others.

## Some steps backwards

Since the beginning of the colonization of the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the village of São Salvador, the center of the captaincy, was an area marked by several conflicts related to the dispute for power and the occupation and land exploitation.<sup>14</sup> For several decades, the

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<sup>12</sup> Idem, p.88.

<sup>13</sup> SOBRAL, Adail; GIACOMELLI, Karina. Observações didáticas sobre a análise dialógica do discurso-ADD. *Domínios de Linguagem*, v. 10, n. 3, 2016, p. 1078.

<sup>14</sup> RAMINELLI, Ronald. Os limites da soberania régia A capitania da Paraíba do Sul entre 1727 e 1730. *Almanack*, 2018, p. 167-204; NUNES, Letícia S. A atuação da Companhia de Jesus na capitania da Paraíba do Sul: a fazenda de Campos dos Goytacazes (1692-1762). Dissertation (History Master's Program). Vitória: PPGHist/Ufes, 2024, 195p.



exhausting dispute between the residents and the successive *Asseca* grantees, the conflicting information provided by the authorities of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, the difficulty in verifying whether the complainants' allegations were true, all of this contributed to the fact that, in 1732, the Overseas Council instructed the government of D. João V (1706-1750) to bring back the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul to the domains of the Royal Crown, which, in fact, would only happen years later, in 1753, under the government of D. José I (1750-1777).

After a difficult negotiation process that peaked in the signing of the Royal Order of June 1, 1753, Martim Corrêa de Sá, the Viscount of *Asseca*, then a donee, agreed to transfer the captaincy to the hands of the Portuguese Crown, which placed it, provisionally, under the ownership of the Ombudsman of Espírito Santo.<sup>15</sup> In fact, from a legal point of view, since the decree of January 15, 1732, which created the General Ombudsman of Espírito Santo, the village of São Salvador had its jurisdiction transferred from Rio de Janeiro to the district of the captaincy of Espírito Santo, whose head was located in the district of Nossa Senhora de Vitória.<sup>16</sup> On that occasion, that was the solution found by the Crown to relieve the Ombudsman of Rio de Janeiro which, according to its representative, dealt with the demands of a vast extension of land and it was really expensive to visit the whole region. However, about the unsaid, we inferred that this decision was also part of a need for regulating the region, in legal and tax terms, due to the gold rush in Minas Gerais.

As part of a set of controlling/centralizing measures by the government of the Marquis of Pombal (1750-1777), combined with the demands of the colonial authorities of various captaincies, the creation of the Rio de Janeiro Court of Appeal in 1751 placed the territories of Espírito Santo and the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul (Itacazes) as districts subordinated to the court of Rio de Janeiro. However, to the frustration of the local government of Itacazes, the possibility of the village of São Salvador (in Paraíba do Sul) becoming the head of a district would not occur because, two years later, in 1753, the captaincy returned to the Royal Crown, leaving the territory of the extinct captaincy under the jurisdiction of the district of Espírito Santo.

<sup>15</sup> Ordem Régia pela qual se determinou ao Ouvidor do Espírito Santo que tomasse posse da capitania dos Campos dos Goytacazes (Royal order determining the Ombudsman of Espírito Santo to take over the Captaincy of Campos dos Goytacazes). Lisbon. June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1753. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino\_CU\_017 - 01, Cx. 83, D. 1922 – Brasil- Rio de Janeiro. Projeto resgate, Biblioteca Luso Brasileira

<sup>16</sup> Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino\_CU\_017 - 01, Cx. 24, D. 2528 – 06 mai. 1732. Projeto Resgate, Biblioteca Luso Brasileira.

As mentioned above, in 1751, upon returning to the Portuguese Crown and becoming the city of Campos dos Goytacazes, the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul remained registered with the Ombudsman of Espírito Santo. This solution may have been considered the least problematic, considering that the villages of São Salvador and São João da Barra, while villages in the captaincy of Paraíba do Sul, were already part of the district of Espírito Santo<sup>17</sup>, which also held the functions of Provider of the Royal Treasury, as well as those of Legal representative of the assets of the deceased and absent heirs. In any case, the solution could be provisional, as the discursive sequence of the Royal Order of June 1, 1753, addressed to the ombudsman of the District of Espírito Santo, allows us to infer:

(...) I order by Decree on this date that as soon as the Captaincy is taken over, which from now onwards is fully incorporated to my Royal Crown, and in the absence of another provision it shall belong to this Ombudsman of Espírito Santo. (...) And after the Captaincy was taken over, another call suspended all officers, both from the justice and the militia, up to the confirmation by His Highness or the said Lord, and also seizing it and incorporating into the Royal Treasury all the income that belonged to the previous holder<sup>18</sup>

In this document, from the Royal Order, there is no direct instruction about transferring governance of the then captaincy of Paraíba do Sul to Rio de Janeiro. However, in subsequent years, we found documents indicating that that Governance remained under the jurisdiction of Rio de Janeiro, while the Judiciary remained registered in the district of Espírito Santo. It is quite possible that some record exists, but we were unable to find a Governance order explicitly stated, just as we have documents confirming the case of the registration in the Ombudsman Office located in the Vila de Nossa Senhora de Vitória.

In any case, over the decades, this division of the Campos dos Goytacazes District - economically/administratively and militarily subject to one captaincy and politically/legally subject to another – was established as

<sup>17</sup> PIZARRO E AZEVEDO, José de Sousa. *Memórias históricas do Rio de Janeiro e das províncias anexas à jurisdição do Vice-Rei do Estado do Brasil, dedicadas ao Rei Nosso Senhor D. João VI. Rio de Janeiro: Na Impressão Regia, 1820-1822.* PEREIRA E SOUSA, Joaquim José Caetano. *Esboço de um dicionário jurídico, teórico e prático: remissivo às leis compiladas, e extravagantes.* Lisboa, Na Typographia Rollandiana, 1825.

<sup>18</sup> Ordem Régia pela qual se determinou ao Ouvidor do Espírito Santo que tomasse posse da capitania dos Campos dos Goytacazes. Lisboa. 1 de junho de 1753. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino\_CU\_017 - 01, Cx. 83, D. 1922 - Brasil- Rio de Janeiro. Projeto resgate, Biblioteca Luso Brasileira.

a reality. At different points in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, due to overlapping and/or juxtaposed, but always cumulative, jurisdiction, this situation would produce uncertainties regarding the jurisdictional limits of the authorities and fuel disputes among the local elites of the main towns of the Espírito Santo region, seeking to increase their political power and materially reproduce their ways of life.

### **Reparation as the dismemberment of the Province of Espírito Santo and annexation to Rio de Janeiro**

In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, given the new era that was approaching and with a view to the emancipation of Portuguese America, there was certainly much work to be done: a Constitution; the international recognition of Brazil; the political/administrative organization of the territory; the delimitation of the rights and duties of citizens/subjects; the establishment of mechanisms to defend private property and justify enslaved labor, among many other actions. Another essential tool in that process was the geographic, natural, political, and civil statistical survey that could provide information for the work of the General Legislative Assembly and the governance actions of the Executive Branch.

When taking over the Province of Espírito Santo in 1830, President Gabriel Getúlio Monteiro de Mendonça, pursuant to the decree of November 25, 1829, which created a statistical commission for the Empire, sought to gather information on the situation of the province he was to govern—which gathered all the districts in the region. Thus, several orders were sent to the districts of São Salvador, São João da Barra, and other districts in Espírito Santo, urging local authorities to immediately submit reports containing information on the populations living there, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line troops, military expenditures, a list of school students, the age and medical profiles of people who had died recently, among other things. And, with the firm intention of improving the collection and distribution of public revenues, he also resolved to inspect more closely the province's revenues and expenditures, in light of the irregularities his administration claimed to have discovered.<sup>19</sup>

The municipal council of Campos dos Goytacazes did not react well to the request (orders) of the president of the province, considering it an abuse of jurisdiction because, in their view, the town was part of Rio de Janeiro, being subject to the Minister and Secretary of State for Imperial

<sup>19</sup> Correio Constitucional Campista, Campos dos Goytacazes, nº 10, p. 1, 03 fev. 1831.

Affairs<sup>20</sup>. However, they recognized its connection to Espírito Santo, since it was legally subject to the district whose head was located in Vitória, and the administration of its public revenues belonged to the Public Treasury Board of Espírito Santo. In any case, the council decided to send the information requested by the president, but this was accompanied by an official letter in which they explained the reasons why, in their view, the town of Campos dos Goytacazes did not belong to Espírito Santo.<sup>21</sup> Let's look at the reasons for the defense and the objections that can be raised against them!

The Decree of March 7, 1821, under the government of King John VI, had ordered that, with a view to drafting a constitution, the provinces should appoint deputies to participate in the General Assembly in the city of Lisbon. However, since it was not part of the province, the participation of the city of Campos dos Goytacazes in the electoral college of Espírito Santo was not automatic; a consultation with the Secretariat of State for Affairs (of the Kingdom) was required, which ultimately decided in favor of its participation in the election of Espírito Santo.<sup>22</sup>

In turn, the decree of February 16, 1822, promulgated by Prince Regent Pedro I, created the Council of Attorneys to be chosen by parish voters as the head of the district. However, the gentlemen's argument was that, according to the 1824 Constitution, the General Councils of the provinces were intended to "propose, discuss, and deliberate on the most interesting matters of their provinces; developing projects specific to their localities and emergencies".<sup>23</sup> Regarding Espírito Santo, thirteen councilors, or provincial "deputies," would be elected. The question then was: should voters from the village of São Salvador participate in the election for the General Council of the province of Espírito Santo (hereinafter CGPES)? When consulted by the provincial president, based on the Ordinance of May 14, 1824, the Secretariat of State for Imperial Affairs responded that the city in question should not participate because it was outside the province's boundaries.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Central government agency in charge of the administration of the Province of Rio de Janeiro before the Additional Act of 1834 which separated the Court from the Province.

<sup>21</sup> *Correio Constitucional Campista*, Campos dos Goytacazes, nº 14, p. 2, 16 fev. 1831

<sup>22</sup> *Correio Constitucional Campista*, Campos dos Goytacazes, nº 14, p. 2, 16 fev. 1831.

<sup>23</sup> Art.81, Capítulo V – Dos Conselhos Gerais de Província e suas Atribuições, da Constituição Política do Império do Brasil. (Art. 81, Chapter V – General Councils of the Province and their Attributions, of the Political Constitution of the Brazilian Empire) In: JOBIM, Nelson; PORTO, Walter Costa (Org.). *Legislação eleitoral no Brasil: do século XVI a nossos dias*. Brasília: Senado Federal, 3v. Subsecretaria de Biblioteca, 1996, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> Decree of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1824 providing for the location where voters from Campos and S. Matheus should

Broadly speaking, we can infer that these arguments sought support in the idea that to be considered a region under the governance of Espírito Santo, the city of Campos dos Goytacazes would need to be politically included in the list of towns eligible for that electoral college, meaning it could decide on provincial matters. This was not the case, given that, in both examples cited, a position from the State Secretariat for Affairs (located in Rio de Janeiro) was required at different times to determine whether or not the District's parish voters would participate in the elections held in Vitória.

In fact, the incorporation of DCG into the governance of Espírito Santo was a long-standing ambition of the authorities. In 1800, the captaincy's governor, Antônio Pires da Silva Pontes, sent a letter to the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas, Mr. Rodrigo Coutinho, requesting the annexation of DCG to the province of Espírito Santo. This measure would be beneficial for navigation and commerce, given that, unlike other coastal towns in Espírito Santo, DCG had a terrible port, unsuitable for large ships, detrimental to the flow of production, the receipt of goods, and international trade.<sup>25</sup> It is worth remembering that, between the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the port of São João da Barra, part of the DCG, functioned as an important commercial warehouse in the mercantile circuit articulated by Rio de Janeiro (SILVEIRA, 2013).<sup>26</sup>

In any case, President Getúlio Mendonça's perception was not unreasonable, as what was assumed by the legal inferences of this argument about the political dimension was not what actually occurred. Between 1820 and 1832, the DCG electoral college participated in most elections held in the province of Espírito Santo, except for those elections that involved choosing representatives to the province's General Council. And it's worth remembering that that Council did not legislate, only proposed matters that, in the form of bills, would be approved by parliament and the central government. As regards Espírito Santo, the non-attendance of elected members was a serious problem.<sup>27</sup>

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vote in the election of the members of the Province's council. In: *Coleção das Decisões do Governo do Império do Brasil – 1824*. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1886, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Letter sent by Antônio Pires da Silva Pontes to the State Secretary of Marine and Overseas, D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, AHU- Espírito Santo, cx 06, doc 447 – AHU\_ACL\_CU\_007, Cx. 06, doc 447.

<sup>26</sup> SILVEIRA, Patrícia Gomes da. *A Metrópole é Aqui: redes de abastecimento e o porto do Rio de Janeiro no comércio de cabotagem, 1799-1822*. Rio de Janeiro, 2013. Dissertation (Geography Master's Program). Geography Graduate Program (PPGG-UFRJ), 2013, p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> BRASIL, Câmara dos Deputados, session of 18/05/1830

What is clear is that, in important elections, not only did DCG voters exert influence in the electoral process, but also the elected representatives, José Vieira de Matos (prosecutor in 1822) and José Bernardino Baptista Pereira (substitute deputy in 1820 and, later, deputy in the first two legislative terms), were natives of the village of São Salvador dos Campos dos Goytacazes. Thus, the DCG not only participated in the political life of Espírito Santo, which, before the Additional Act of 1834, was truly significant, but its electoral college also carried weight in the political disputes that took place in the province, especially in the elections for deputy to Parliament.

Another issue omitted by the DCG representatives was the fear of being controlled by the CGPES, considering that, according to the law of October 1, 1828<sup>28</sup>, in addition to the administration of their public revenues by the Espírito Santo Public Treasury Board, the municipal councils would be financially subject to the oversight of that institution, which further confirmed the loss of the relative administrative and fiscal autonomy they had enjoyed during the colonial and British periods. And since they did not participate in the political elections that elected the members of the CGPES, the political elites of the DCG would be under the direction/control of representatives chosen by the active citizens of other towns in the Espírito Santo region.

The discourses of the offices and representatives that supported the positions of the DCG elites, although they recognized the emergence of a new political order, still bore the dialogical marks of an Ancien Régime political culture. In this case, in particular, with the tone of appeal to the “supposed” liberality of Pedro I and the logic of a mercy economy<sup>29</sup>, the “good men” had the expectation that the Council’s support for Brazilian Independence would result in a specific grace being granted to the village. In other words, the hope of elevating the village of São Salvador to the status of city and/or its separation from the province of Espírito Santo.

Within this process, many letters and (collective) representations were sent by the Council to His Imperial Majesty addressing issues related to the demands for “emancipation.” Regardless of the type of speech, as a rule, most were requests for a favor granted by Emperor Pedro I, who, in turn, would already be receiving in return support, loyalty, obedience, and subscriptions

<sup>28</sup> Law of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1828 – Providing for the Municipal Councils, setting forth attributions and the election process and Judges of the Peace. In: *Coleção das leis do Império do Brasil de 1828*. Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Nacional, 1878. P. 74-88.

<sup>29</sup> OLIVAL, Fernanda. *As Ordens Militares e o Estado Moderno. Honra, mercê e venalidade em Portugal (1641-1789)*. Lisboa: Estar Editora, 2001.

for various purposes. An emblematic case was the letter of thanks that the Council sent to the emperor for the favor of elevating the village to a city status:

Sir, this Chamber is sure that the days of duration of Your Imperial Majesty Court in this vast and wealthy continent, are all marked by the graces its peoples receive from the generous liberal hand of Your Imperial Majesty (....) And this also occurred in the city of Campos, then, this council believe it was not equivocal and only waited for the title to reach the foot of the throne and send those graces due for so high distinction.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the village of São Salvador had not been elevated to a city status, although, according to the Council, the three provisions issued by the Palace Court suggested this. After all, in the first provision, the emperor had expressed interest in doing so, and in the others, the term used to refer to the village was “city.” What remained unsaid, what remained silent, on this issue was the discomfort caused by the elevation of the town of Vitória to a city status the previous month (March). Given that, throughout Brazil’s emancipation process, the political elites of the village of São Salvador had worked hard to dismember their city of Espírito Santo, yet achieved nothing, leaving them with only political resentment.

Ultimately, the representations and official letters sent by “good men” requesting favors such as the dismemberment of the province, the elevation of the village to a city status, a change in the revenue collection site, a representative on the provincial Council of Attorneys, a representative in the Assembly, and other requests that would bring them emancipation and greater autonomy were not heeded. And, starting in 1823, the Emperor and some mediating authorities (the provincial attorney general, the Minister of State for Kingdom Affairs) began to use as a response (and, to some extent, an excuse) the fact that an assembly was being organized, and that, in the emerging new era, it was the parliamentarians who would be expected to respond to many of the demands put forward by the councilors regarding a new status for their village.

Thus, about a decade later, in the context of the abdication of Pedro I and the Regency Government, the political elites of the village of São Salvador once again organized themselves in defense of its complete annexation to

<sup>30</sup> Register of the thanking letter sent to A. S. M. R. Pedro I, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1823, p. 279 a 280. In: Arquivo Público Municipal Waldir Pinto de Carvalho, Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro.



Rio de Janeiro. At this juncture, one of the issues before Parliament was the system of government to be adopted. The exalted liberals advocated federalism, the Caramurus advocated unitarism, and the moderate liberals were more divided.<sup>31</sup> The position taken by the representatives regarding the dismemberment and annexation of the village of São Salvador was closely related to whether or not they supported one of those systems of government. Of those who spoke in the plenary, the majority of the exalted liberals and some of the moderates supported the dismemberment, while the Caramurus and some of the moderates opposed the proposal. However, in the end, it depended on the regional agreements and interests of each representative.<sup>32</sup>

To support their positions, the deputies used two main arguments: Those in favor of the separation of the municipality argued that, above all, the interests of the municipality's inhabitants should prevail, as this was an expression of the constitutional principle of popular participation in the province's destiny. On the other hand, those opposed to the separation of the municipality emphasized the defense of territorial unity and the province's political interests, which, guaranteed by the Constitution, should not be subordinated to local interests—as already provided for in the law of October 1, 1828, known as the Regulations of the Municipal Chambers.<sup>33</sup>

Representative José Bernardino responded to many of the objections, arguing that there was no decree annexing the village of São Salvador / Campos dos Goytacazes to Espírito Santo; it was linked to Rio de Janeiro economically, politically, and militarily, although legally and administratively, it was subordinated to the Espírito Santo district. He also highlighted the commercial relationship established with Rio de Janeiro, generating approximately six million cruzados, money derived primarily from the trade of and enslaved individuals. And, with the prohibition of this trade in 1831, if the town were annexed to the province of Rio de Janeiro, this capital could circulate as paper currency, strengthening the local economy<sup>34</sup>.

After intense debate, the bill was put to a vote in the session of June 14, 1832, receiving 34 votes in favor and 34 against. Due to the tie, the decision was

<sup>31</sup> BASILE, Marcelo. O laboratório da nação: a era regencial (1831-1840). In: Grinberg, Keila; Salles, Ricardo (Org.). *O Brasil imperial (1831-1870)*. v.2. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009

<sup>32</sup> LEMOS, C. E. S. A vila de São Salvador: província do Espírito Santo ou do Rio de Janeiro (1820-1832)? *Revista Territórios & Fronteiras*, Cuiabá, vol. 11, n. 2, ago.-dez., 2018

<sup>33</sup> LEMOS, C.E.S. *Vivendo em tempos de tirania: A vila de São Salvador dos Campos dos Goytacazes, tão perto do Rio de Janeiro, tão longe do Espírito Santo (1808-1832)*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Autografia, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Idem.



postponed for a new vote in the plenary on June 19, 1832, when, after intense political negotiations, the bill received 39 votes in favor and 22 against.<sup>35</sup> With that, the “good men” and their representatives breathed a sigh of relief: the demands of the São Salvador de Campos dos Goytacazes village council, led by Representative José Bernardino, had finally been met. However, for the local political elite, this victory did not end their ambition to transform the village of São Salvador into the capital of a new province.

### **Discourses to promote a city to a province status within a constitutional liberal political culture (1850/1855)**

In the context of the Regencies (1831-1840), as a city in the province of Rio de Janeiro, Campos dos Goytacazes competed with the city of Niterói for the status of being the capital of the province, given that it was considered by public opinion to be the most Fluminense of Fluminense cities, precisely because it was in the interior and not directly linked to the immediate influence of the court.<sup>36</sup> In any case, in 1834, Niterói was designated the capital of the province, provoking, at that time, a certain jealousy among the local “good men”.<sup>37</sup> In the twenty-one years that followed, these same gentlemen never abandoned the dream that, within the imperial state, their city would enjoy a position of relevance, one that would do justice to what they believed to be their wealth, population and level of civility.

On the other hand, in Parliament on August 17, 1854, a bill proposing the creation of a new province in Minas Gerais was debated. At the time, Honório Hermeto Carneiro Leão, the Marquis of Paraná, then president of the Council of Ministers and a conservative advocate of centralization of power, presented the imperial government’s position on the controversial proposal. He stated that, just as there were no financial resources to support such a proposal, the proposed division was not the most convenient, nor was there reliable statistical and population data to support the claim, considering that other regions could also become provinces.:

I think, Mr. President, that from the north of the province of Rio de Janeiro, the city of Campos could be the province of

<sup>35</sup> Annals of the Brazilian Parliament. Chamber of Deputies. Sessão de 1832. Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia do Imperial Instituto Artístico, 1874, t1, 14 de junho p.96.

<sup>36</sup> GOUVEIA, Maria de Fátima Silva. *O Império das províncias*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2008, p.33.

<sup>37</sup> LEMOS, C.E.S. *Vivendo em tempos de tirania: A vila de São Salvador dos Campos dos Goytacazes, tão perto do Rio de Janeiro, tão longe do Espírito Santo (1808-1832)*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Autografia, 2018, p.163/164.

Goytacazes; and that the limits of such province should include part of the territory of Minas, namely, the areas of Leopoldina, Pomba and Presídio. The province would not be very large but would be rich and well populated.<sup>38</sup>

Inspired by the Marquis of Paraná's speeches and counting on a few political allies such as provincial deputies João Caldas Vianna and Antônio Francisco de Almeida Barbosa (also a councilman), the council members believed in the mediation of an important local "advisor," Joaquim Francisco Vianna. Among the families that dominated regional politics, the Vianna family stood out, known for holding positions at various levels of government. The patriarch, Captain Paulo Francisco da Costa Vianna, an influential member of the local political elite, had sent his children to study in Coimbra, intending for them to pursue a career in literature. At the top of the family hierarchy was Joaquim Francisco Vianna, a mathematician, who occupied the position of Minister of Finance in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cabinet, organized by Honório Hermeto Carneiro Leão, with whom he had a good relationship. João Caldas Vianna, a law graduate, had been president of the province in 1844/45, appointed with the support of his brother, the minister, and also due to his good relationship with the conservative leadership.<sup>39</sup>

In this context, we infer that under the influence of the conservative Vianna family, the DCG councilors understood that this was the best moment (even in the face of the Marquis' negative speech)<sup>40</sup> to submit a representation to the Imperial Senate requesting the creation of a province named Province of Goytacazes. In this case, following the council president's own suggestion, that province would be formed by some cities from Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, and, as expected, with Campos dos Goytacazes as its capital.

The representation for the creation of the province submitted to Parliament follows the same dialogical path as that already addressed to Pedro I at the time of the demand for the dismemberment of the province of Espírito Santo, presenting the Village of Campos dos Goytacazes as populous,

<sup>38</sup> Brasil, Congresso Nacional, Câmara dos Deputados, "Annaes do Parlamento Brasileiro", Sessão de 17 ago. 1854. Rio de Janeiro: Typografia de Hyppolito José Pinto, 1876, p.187.

<sup>39</sup> LEMOS, Carlos Eugênio Soares de. A visita do Imperador Pedro II ao Norte da Província do Rio de Janeiro: disputas políticas no 4º distrito eleitoral (1844/1848). *Tempos Históricos*, Florianópolis, v. 25, n. 1, p. 348-389, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> They believed that the province could be created via Decree and its installation postponed to a time when the financial situation was more favorable, In: Monitor Campista, Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, 21 jul. 1855.

wealthy, civilized, orderly, geographically well-situated, with agricultural potential, and an unprecedented desire for emancipation. Regarding financial expenditures, which was one of the Marquis of Paraná's main objections, the tax-raising activities "will yield an annual income of 200 *contos de réis*, an amount that will soon double due to the progressive expansion of coffee cultivation and other industries." The Chamber concludes the representation with the following statement:

If the Village of Campos has grown around its center, and therefore, lacks many improvements that necessity claims, what will it be if owning a close center ready to attend to its urgent needs? All these considerations, linked to the good of the people, ask that you decree their emancipation in law: those who come after will speak well of their representatives, attending to their demands based on law and justice; and the municipal council is certain that these are the feelings and desires of all the people of the City of Campos dos Goytacazes<sup>41</sup>

When we compare the discourses of the City Council representatives within different historical contexts—that is, the turbulent years of the emancipation of Portuguese America and those of the consolidation of the Brazilian imperial state under the leadership of the Conservative Party—we notice that the attempt to adapt the terms and statements of their demands to the content of the political culture of a liberal constitutional order stood out. However, this attempt ended up being more limited to some formal aspects of liberal/constitutional discourse (the good of the people, national representation, the progress of civilization) than truly delving into the philosophical substrata of this new political culture to which they sought to adapt.

Between the 1920s and 1950s, aware that a new political configuration was emerging following the independence of Portuguese America and the 1828 law, the councilors used the DCG's resources to maintain some power in the regional political arena. In an attempt to adapt to the changing times, they leveraged their electoral potential to elect representatives, negotiating the transfer of votes to Imperial figures in pursuit of advantages such as tax exemption for sugar, approval of major projects like the Campos-Macaé

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<sup>41</sup> Idem.

Canal, the importation of new agricultural technologies, titles of nobility, appointments to prominent positions in state administration, and more.<sup>42</sup>

Initially, the councilmen demonstrated a certain political cunning; however, they underestimated the fact that the creation of a province was far more complex than awakening parliamentary empathy for mere local representation, supported by an important family in the regional political arena, especially since the interests of other regions of the federation that harbored ambitions of becoming a province were also at stake. In their relations with the “great” of the Empire, it wasn’t simply a matter of adapting the logic of the king’s liberality or of an economy of mercy in which, for decades, local elites, in exchange for favors, amassed positions, pensions, honors, titles, concessions, glories, and privileges. No, in the Chamber debate, the Marquis of Paraná himself and the deputies made clear the political dimension of the national interest in the creation of a province (the cases of Paraná and Amazonas), that this creation should be in accordance with the public interest, and not merely with the diffuse sentiments of a local elite who expected to see their “claims based on law and justice” met.<sup>43</sup>

Another interesting point to observe is how the signifier “emancipation,” in the sense of reparation for lost freedom and autonomy, appears in the discourses of these political elites over a long historical period: first against the arbitrary actions of the *Assecas* grantees in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the point that the Council wanted to assume the grant; then, for the right to elect a national deputy in the Parliament of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; later, the discourse in favor of the dismemberment of the Espírito Santo district/annexation to that of Rio de Janeiro; and finally, the infamous defense of the creation of the new province of Goytacazes, in 1855, with the city of Campos as its capital.

In the context of the 1950s, marked by the centralization process carried out by the *Squaremas*, it was a poor time to demand some kind of “autonomy” within the framework of a struggle to maintain political stability, seeking to extend the reach of power of a local elite without aligning it with the interests of the various provincial elites, even though the north of the province of Rio de Janeiro is a region with a strong conservative tradition. The Marquis of Paraná’s allusion to the DCG was merely part of a discursive

<sup>42</sup> LEMOS, C.E.S. *Vivendo em tempos de tirania: A vila de São Salvador dos Campos dos Goytacazes, tão perto do Rio de Janeiro, tão longe do Espírito Santo (1808-1832)*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Autografia, 2018

<sup>43</sup> *Monitor Campista*, Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, 21 jul..1855.

strategy to discourage the proposal to create a new province, using regions that could demand the same treatment.

## A panoramic view

Reflecting upon the process of construction of the Brazilian Imperial state reveals different issues, among which the national territory division and management outstand. In a classical work such as that by Tavares Bastos on provinces, the issue related to the territory internal division appears as a function of the decentralization defense, since in his opinion it did not seem “reckless to state that one of the Constitution errors was to divide the country into politically equal, with the same institutions and the same representation”.<sup>44</sup> Inspired by the North American model, he proposed a territorial reorganization of the Brazilian provinces, thus increasing the autonomy of the most illustrious and prosperous, while the poorer, less populated and even desert provinces would be reduced to the district condition. However, for the new division to be supported by the National Congress, it should respect the history, commerce, and traditions of the regions involved.

As suggested by Gregório, the territory division theme “has seldom appeared in our historiographic production”<sup>45</sup> and, when this occurs, it is always complementary to other themes or in particular case studies. Thus, in a classic work such as *O Tempo Saquarema* (The Saquarema Era), by Ilmar Mattos,<sup>46</sup> unlike what had been idealized by Tavares Bastos, the creation of new provinces was thought based on the executive branch force as a function of the State project led by the Conservative Power. Therefore, it is from this central logic that the creation of the Province of Amazonas can be explained, that is, based on the *saquaremas*’ interests and supported by the Congress as an accessory actor in the process.

<sup>44</sup> BASTOS, Aureliano Cândido Tavares. *A província – estudos sobre a descentralização do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: B.L. Garnier, 1870, p. 387.

<sup>45</sup> GREGÓRIO, Vitor Marcos. *Dividindo as províncias do Império: a emancipação do Amazonas e do Paraná e o sistema representativo na construção do Estado nacional brasileiro*. Doctorate thesis, USP, São Paulo, 2013, p.11.

<sup>46</sup> MATTOS, Ilmar Rohloff de. *O tempo saquarema: a formação do estado imperial*. 2.ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1990.

In general, different authors such as Carvalho<sup>47</sup>, Holanda<sup>48</sup>, and Faoro<sup>49</sup>, each one following their own interpretive line, even if not discussing the creation of new provinces, follow a path that suggests that the process was developed by the great literate elite and/or the bureaucracy of a central government located in Rio de Janeiro. As observed, in such approaches, regional and local elites are treated as mere accessory actors in a process that escapes them, who are deprived of more decisive action due to the extension of the centralized power in the hands of the great personalities of the Empire.

In such reflection, according to the research carried out by Gregório<sup>50</sup> on the creation of the provinces of Paraná and Amazonas, we also adopt the perspective presented by Miriam Dolhnikoff<sup>51</sup>, which considers that the liberal proposals of the 1930s enabled the emergence of a constitutional monarchy with certain autonomy. In this type of political arrangement, unlike the theses that advocated the existence of a completely subject provincial elite, we recognize spaces of maneuver where that group sought to negotiate and secure part of their interests with the central government, even though in the 1940s it faced limitations imposed by the Interpretative Law of the Additional Act of 1834.

Regarding the local political elites investigated (at the municipal level), although there was some space for maneuver, it was limited and constrained, due to both the Law of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1828 and the fact that part of their political action was still based in the mercy logic, thus lacking better political articulation at the provincial and national level, to guarantee the creation of a new province. Such creation depended on variables that also included the political weight of the provinces that would lose territory, such as Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo, in the disputes between liberals and conservatives, in the capacity to link the proposal for this creation to the national security ideals of the Brazilian Imperial State.

This province of Campos dos Goytacazes topic was explored by different authors who offered ways to deepen a more detailed study of the

<sup>47</sup> CARVALHO, José Murilo de. *A construção da ordem & Teatro de Sombras*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará-UFRJ, 1996.

<sup>48</sup> HOLANDA, Sérgio Buarque de (Org.). *História geral da civilização brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro. Bertrand Brasil. 2004.

<sup>49</sup> FAORO, Raymundo. *Os donos do poder*. Rio de Janeiro, Globo, 1987.

<sup>50</sup> GREGÓRIO, Vitor Marcos. *Dividindo as províncias do Império: a emancipação do Amazonas e do Paraná e o sistema representativo na construção do Estado nacional brasileiro*. Doctorate thesis, USP, São Paulo, 2013

<sup>51</sup> DOLHNIKOFF, Miriam. *O pacto imperial: origens do federalismo no Brasil*. São Paulo: Globo, 2005.

process that possibly was never even presented as a project in Parliament. Chrysostomo,<sup>52</sup> in her research, considered that the creation of a province was a goal of local elites to increase their political influence by constructing a discourse on the importance of their city for regional development. Thus, the history of this ambition was divided into three phases. The first corresponded to the construction of the image of their city's centrality in the *Fluminense* region; the second concerned the political movement for the creation of a province in 1855; and, finally, the third, in 1890, corresponded to the city's demand to be the capital of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Furthermore, Soffiati<sup>53</sup>, when analyzing the political movement in favor of the creation of the Province of Campos dos Goytacazes, in 1855, aligned with Chrysostomo's view, considered that the demand was supported by the interests of rural elites, based on a laudatory discourse about the city, which, due to its mythical character, won the support of the population, and the cherished dream continued through the following centuries. For that author, the historical roots of the movement should be sought in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and, in historiographical terms, in the discourse favorable to the project, as seen in the work put forward by historian Alberto Lamego.

According to Lamego,<sup>54</sup> The cholera morbus epidemic that struck the municipality in 1855 would have discouraged local residents in their struggle for the creation of the province. In fact, writing during the Estado Novo period, he was the first regional historian to address this topic. In his parochial perspective, at the time he was writing (1941/42), the city of Campos dos Goytacazes, a benchmark of progress and population growth over time, had all the material conditions to become a new state of the federation, thus taking advantage of the Vargas administration's intention to establish a new political, administrative, and territorial division of the Brazilian state.<sup>55</sup>

We problematize the process from different perspectives. The first concerns the coexistence of different political cultures, which leads us to an interpretation that prioritizes the project's failure by the inability of local elites to mobilize politically on a larger scale rather than an immediate cause such as an epidemic. The second concerns the temporal scope of the

<sup>52</sup> CHRYSOSTOMO, Maria Isabel de Jesus. Campos: a capital sonhada de uma província desejada (1835-1897). *Revista História*, São Paulo, vol. 30, nº1, p.56-89, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> SOFFIATI, Arthur. O movimento político de Campos em 1855. *VÉRTICES*, Campos dos Goytacazes/ RJ, v.14, n. Especial 1, p. 7-29, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> LAMEGO, Alberto. *A terra Goytacá – à luz de documentos inéditos*. Niterói: Diário Oficial, Tomo V, 1942, p.248.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, p.249.

approach, which, as proposed by the New Political History, attempts to escape the ephemeral short-term nature of political events in traditional historical approaches and consider the perspective of a political culture that extends over a long period of time. And, finally, the option to envision regional history structured by the connections of historical subjects in different spaces (local, provincial, national, “global”), but without attempting to reduce the regional environment to a microcosm that faithfully mirrors the characteristics of processes occurring at other levels. According to Abélès, this is about

continuing the analysis in its endlessness, but with the concern of lucidly activating the conditions for its realization. This approach offers the possibility of better understanding what is at stake in what has been called a political crisis for some years now, and which undoubtedly corresponds to a profound change in the relationship between civil society and politics. A change that simultaneously affects political spaces and public policies.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, we understand that, in pursuit of greater autonomy for their “homeland,” which would bring with it more political capital and authority for those in positions of governance, the political elites of Northern Rio de Janeiro had to deal with the administrative, political, and territorial changes that had occurred in Portuguese America since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, from Pombal’s “modernization” to the process of emancipation and the construction of the Brazilian imperial state, major challenges arose in considering the locality based on new reorganizations that encompassed different dimensions of the historical context.

In such terms, by defending the prevailing representations of their political culture, local elites ended up encountering challenges that required them to innovate their political practices. This approach, for which they were not always prepared and/or unable to perform, was not simply a matter of replacing the expectations of the king’s former “liberality” with the supposed “liberality” of the Empire’s great men. In reality, it required immersion in the general political network in which local interests had to be aligned with those of political elites at different levels, especially those of the province of Rio de Janeiro, to which the city council of Campos dos Goytacazes belonged.

In addition, there is the limitation imposed by the 1828 law, which subordinated local power to the provincial government, more than the 1824

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<sup>56</sup> ABELES, Marc. “O racionalismo posto à prova de análise”, in: REVEL, Jacques [org]. *Jogos de Escala: a experiência da microanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 1998. p. 103-120, p. 116.



Constitution proposed. During that period in the 1950s, the province of Rio de Janeiro was experiencing a severe financial crisis, which made it very unlikely that the provincial elites would accept that a city so important to their budget would be emancipated and take with it most of the northern part of the province, along with the wealth represented by its taxes, commerce, electoral college, workforce, etc. This would have meant a flagrant weakening of the province of Rio de Janeiro in relation to the other entities of the federation, with all the political and economic losses that would have represented in the political landscape of the time.

## Final Considerations

Finally, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the merger of the former state of Rio de Janeiro with the state of Guanabara took place during the administration of President Ernesto Geisel and was subsequently confirmed by Complementary Law N° 20 of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974, and implemented on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975. Since then, in times of crisis, news reports have frequently circulated in the media about the possibility of reversing the merger of the former states and returning to the previous situation. However, in this return, the possibility of the capital being moved to the interior, more specifically to the north of the state, remains open.

This issue brings us back to long-standing debates about populations' sense of belonging to their towns, cities, and federal entities, as opposed to top-down decisions about belonging that arise from political arrangements and fail to take into account the representations of those "below". In these terms, in the 1950s, the ambition to transform the city of Campos dos Goytacazes into the capital of a province was another example of how this recurring quest for reparations and autonomy was inscribed in the imagination of representatives of the local "good society." However, these new times, while they carried with them many of the old political practices, they also required some level of innovation in the integration of local interests at different levels of negotiation networks between dissonant actors and long-entrenched interests.

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