

The clothes and reigns during Brazilian Independence

An analysis of sartorial depictions of d. João VI and d. Pedro I in state portraits (1807-1831)

Las ropas e los regímenes durante la Independencia de Brasil: un análisis de las ropas y accesorios de d. João VI y d. Pedro I en retratos de estado (1807-1831) / As roupas e os regimes durante a Independência brasileira: uma análise da indumentária de d. João VI e d. Pedro I em retratos de Estado (1807-1831)

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the representations of d. João VI and d. Pedro I in state portraits, and their regency expectations, through an analysis of the sartorial items and the accessories into which they are depicted, between 1808 and 1831. We consider that the sartorial styles partially translate their understandings and plans about national politics and the role of the monarch or emperor.

Keywords: sartorial items; regency; Independence of Brazil; state portraits.

RESUMEN

El artículo compara las representaciones de d. João VI y d. Pedro I en retratos de estado, y sus expectativas de reinado, por medio de un análisis de las ropas y accesorios con los cuales son retratados. Consideramos que los estilos de indumentaria traducen parcialmente sus visiones y planos sobre las políticas nacionales y el papel del rey o emperador.

Palabras claves: indumentaria; regencia; Independencia de Brasil; retratos de estado.

RESUMO

O artigo compara as representações de d. João VI e d. Pedro I em retratos de Estado, e suas expectativas de regência, por meio da análise das vestimentas e dos acessórios com que são ilustrados, entre 1808 e 1831. Argumenta-se que os estilos de indumentária traduzem parcialmente seus entendimentos e planos sobre a política nacional e o papel de monarca ou imperador.

Palavras-chave: indumentária; regência; Independência do Brasil; retratos de Estado.

Introduction

On November 27, 1807, Dom João VI, Prince Regent of Portugal, departed to Brazil with his royal family. The voyage across the Atlantic marked the outcome of an intricate political conflict as the Portuguese monarchy faced pressures from different sides, particularly from France and England, and the threat of profound retaliation loomed. The decision to relocate to Brazil was a dramatic move in what was then a colonial relationship between a European nation and its dominion in South America – one that would cascade into deep consequences for the history of the two countries (Carvalho, 2017). The family traveled aboard three ships: *Rainha de Portugal*, *Afonso de Albuquerque* and *Príncipe Real* (Schwarcz, 2002, p. 222). Passengers on the latter included nine-year-old Pedro, one of Dom João's eight children and the future Emperor of Brazil.

The transition from a Portuguese colony to an independent country was no single event or abrupt break. Rather, it can be interpreted as a complex process, even in the choice of one form of government over another. The Portuguese monarchy, which still retained strong *Ancien Régime* colors, was overthrown in Brazil and superseded by a constitutional empire ruled by Pedro, after he declared independence from Portugal. While it is true that Brazil's emancipation did not mean a break from the ruling lineage (the House of Bragança), Dom João and his son Dom Pedro each had their own personal ruling and decision-making styles.

This paper explores the two monarchs' dress styles as an element of political communication. We look at bearing, clothes, and adornments as key features in expressing individual ruling styles over a royal succession marked by a regime change. Thus, we draw on material culture (and its representation in art) as a rich socio-historical source for interpreting (Ribeiro, 1998) a time of changing perceptions of what it meant to reign, and which nation was the ruling one. By looking into the key events of the two sovereigns' relocation, acclamation, or crowning, as well as their portraits, we bring out the prominence of attire as a means of making a statement, both cultural and personal, of the monarch's and the emperor's role and the wider interests on Brazil's fate.

Dress (representation) as an element to socio-political interpretation

Historical socio-political settings are undoubtedly complex and challenging to reconstruct. Studies in material culture, particularly dress and fashion, can provide a rich source for interpreting the dynamics of a historical period, such

as the one from the so-called *Ancien Régime*¹ in Europe, when monarchy was the dominating form of government. On that note,

the society was structured around rigid hierarchical divides. [...] On the upper ranks (dukes, marquises, and counts), the king bestowed the privilege of choosing “the men who shall occupy the chief posts in court, military, and overseas administrations.” These social actors formed the core of aristocratic power. They were nobles by blood and enjoyed high status as long-established, traditional members of aristocracy. Their rank was closer to the king’s on account of honors earned from military service and defense of the kingdom. But there were also other, newly inducted tiers of nobility, whose titles were obtained by venal appointment [...] and, as such, regarded as inferior in status to the greats of the kingdom. In the other orders of urban life, inhabited by the “common people”, [...] the variety of types was evident. (Oliveira, 2010, p. 113)

The Old Regime had long been molding a “culture of appearances” (Roche, 1989) where clothing and shoe styles signified strict social hierarchies. The “theater of the court” (Carvalho, 2019) was intended to convey societal hierarchies, consumption identities, religious beliefs and other social distinctions through clothing and manners. One of the main regulating instruments of social identification and control were the notorious sumptuary laws. After all,

it was [...] under the monarchy that etiquette became so important that reality and representation mingled in an intricate game. In this system, where ritual resides not only in customs but also in the laws themselves, and etiquette is a fundamental rather than subsidiary element, to see what the monarch sees is paramount. It is the king’s gaze that works the miracle, and the consensus around his ritual power that “clothes the naked”. (Schwarcz, 1999, p. 27, emphasis added)

In addition to these laws, other distinguishing elements, including insignia and colors, would operate as markers of origin, profession, or patronage of various social types (Silva, 2010). In a largely illiterate society, visual signs played a vital role in classifying a person, and hardly allowed for self-expression within the rules.

¹ While the term “*Ancien Régime*” is directly linked with the context of France, it can be understood to encompass variations and adaptations occurring elsewhere until its violent overthrow in the late 18th century.

With the demise of the Old Regime looming throughout the last quarter of the 18th century, the Portuguese royals clung to their royal manners through their arrival in Brazil, trusting that the “performance” helped keep the monarchy alive in the face of impending threats. Their idea was to establish a tropical version of the existing dynamics. If that was to succeed, venues to see and be seen were in order. Keeping up with the court fashion meant that the local elites – and even their enslaved servants – needed access to textiles, jewelry, accessories, and footwear (Lara, 2000) which were in short supply in Rio de Janeiro. This would create an incentive for their importation.

However, life in the colony had evolved in its own way, and the conditions and customs of the Old Regime could not simply be restored in the new royal home on the same terms as they used to be. Topical concerns of the modern day, such as citizenship, liberty, and compensation of labor, would be inescapable in the years to come (Soares; Bon, 2020). Back then, wearing shoes was forbidden to the enslaved section of the Brazilian population – which impinged on a fundamental social tenet of freedom.

Looking at dress and clothing in the context of Brazil’s independence, therefore, bears on discussing models of citizenship and politics that were being reexamined and reformulated. The limited availability of fashion artifacts for our study has shifted our focus to their historical depictions – starting from portraits (paintings and illustrations), in which clothes and adornments appear as eloquent symbols of an ideal of civilization. Nor are such works neutral – they are a mixture of the artists’ intent, context of production, and relationship with their subjects (Dias, 2006; 2011). Thus, the study of appearance through portraits and other references can be understood as an interface that entails “the skills of both an art historian and a historian” (Roche, 1989, p. 539).

The relocation of the Portuguese royal family to then-colonial Brazil in 1808 created a unique moment in historiography when, along with the voyagers themselves, whole ways of living, diplomacy, and expectations found a new home (Fragoso; Gouvêa; Bicalho, 2001; Fridman, 2010). It came about in a time when numerous economic activities were prohibited, and on a land where even the capital city was lacking in structural conditions at best, notwithstanding several reform and beautification initiatives (Carvalho, 2008).

Over the following years, a series of intense social and urban changes would take place. On top of that, the ongoing developments and decisions would lead up to intense civil war in Portugal, force the Portuguese royal family to return to Portugal in 1821, and culminate in the Independence of Brazil in 1822. Pedro was crowned the emperor of the newly emancipated country on October 12th

that year. Problems on both sides of the Atlantic would put him under mounting pressure and, in 1831, he abdicated the throne in favor of his son and returned to Europe. This seemingly brief period raised deep questions about relationship and fate; the role, meaning, and actions of the monarchy; the political agendas and reigning styles. When we contrast garments and accessories in the portraits of Dom João and Dom Pedro from the years surrounding the independence, disruptions and continuities between their intents and attitudes to regentship begin to surface.

What does a king's face look like? Aesthetics of Dom João VI and Dom Pedro I

Portraits of members of royalty are a practice which goes back a long time in history and “builds an iconic and symbolic narrative [...] of the legitimization of power that aims to glorify the monarchy” (Lambert, 2015). However, their consolidation as a privileged form of depiction in Europe can be traced to the 16th century onwards when the development of printing techniques allowed for a wider dissemination of “the monarch’s face”. The iconic aspect of portraiture gradually gave way to a “translation of the human soul”, which attained particular significance among the royalty, an estate ascribed with a divine nature whose physical body coexisted with a mythical one. This status allowed an idealization of virtue while still retaining a resemblance between the subject and their representation.

The so-called state portraits, as styled in the Renaissance, emerged as a powerful political tool that conveyed symbolic values and ideologies. One way to convey a message of stability of the reign was to maintain a relative stability of the portrayed subject that would allow for their immediate recognition. In this sense, the artwork is also an instrument (Pinelli et al., 2012).

In the late 18th and throughout the 19th century, royal portraits were commissioned not just by the royals themselves, but also by common citizens as a decoration and illustration for different spaces.² Painting would gradually make way for photography and new worldviews. Dom João VI and Dom Pedro I each sought his own way to connect through rapidly changing times, to varying degrees of success.

² With the portraits in high demand, some lesser-(re)known(ed) artists looked to ideal features when painting monarchs they had never met (Knauss, 2019).

“A model for sons and kings”: Dom João and an obsolescent regime

The House of Bragança, a lineage dating back to 1442, held the Portuguese throne between the 17th and 19th centuries. Throughout that period, the Portuguese monarchy extended beyond Europe to rule over an overseas empire (Hourcade, 2016), with territories in different parts of the world and a highly intricate, hierarchical administrative structure whereby the dominions abided by the rules of the metropole (Hespanha, 2001).

Furthermore, the Portuguese form of the Old Regime had developed very clear points about “the age-old question of power at the confluence of the secular with the spiritual and the transcendent” (Andrade Neves, 2011, p. 1). That is to say, about how the power dynamics and societal organization was understood, justified, and shaped, in earthly as well as supernal terms – for power did not always emanate from the human beings alone. Thus, one of the key concepts that had to be represented in state portraits was the so-called “natural order” pertaining to an incorporate society, where the role of the king had to be highlighted.

As can be seen, a state portrait aims to translate an individual while also epitomizing their role. In the Portuguese context, the corporate aspect drew on a metaphor of the functioning of nature as one whole, and often that of human anatomy. There was a notion of general harmony operating as a body that relies on the proper functioning of each organ, within a structure in which nature was governed by fundamental laws predetermined by the order of creation, “superordinate in the world, preeminent and above human volition or human laws” (Navarro, 2019, p. 229). That perception stemmed from a medieval concept that “had always been firmly grounded on the idea that every part of the whole contributed its own way towards the realization of cosmic destiny” (Hespanha, 1994 as cited by Navarro, 2019, p. 227).

Therefore, the “absolutist” element of the monarchy was mitigated by other sources of power and world view (Cardim, 1998; Macedo, 2010). However, the prince and king still figured as the “head” of a body that needed working – an image that translated into a spatial centralization of power, where Lisbon was the chosen *caput regni*, or head (capital) of the kingdom.³ By this principle,

3 To Hespanha (2001, p. 166-167), the Portuguese monarchy assumed a corporatist character “by which royal power shared political scope with other powers of higher or lesser import; the legislative authority of the Crown was limited and framed by legal doctrine (*ius commune*) and by local legal practice and customs; political obligations gave in to moral duty [...] or personal duty [...] the king’s officers enjoyed extensive protection of their rights and agency”.

over many centuries the assignment of power was seen in a favorable light, insofar as it was believed to stem from godly mandate as the originator of the communal body. As part of that metaphysical belief [...] each part of the society had a certain self-government faculty, and the king was a solidary part in the whole. The position of the monarch entailed working to maintain that system of relations, observing the order of things, and endeavoring to keep it unchanged as much as possible. His primary duty was thus to maintain order, to protect the long-established social balance, and to restore such order in times of conflict. (Cardim, 1998, p. 142)

Until practically the 1750s, that ruling structure aimed to “become a permanent, stable design” (Cardim, 1998, p. 137), expand its territorial reach, and retain a strong Christian alignment. However,

the second half of the 18th century was a momentous point in European history, marked [...] prominently by heated debate over regal and ecclesiastical power, the power of law, and the role of the judicial system. In major intellectual circles in Europe [...] the works of Voltaire and Marquis Cesare Beccaria’s treatise *On Crimes and Punishments* sparked agitation, rebuttals, and intense pamphlet circulation. In Portugal [...] efforts at a revision of the existing laws took place under Queen Maria, and a new, more progressive intelligentsia created a favorable opportunity for the influx of legal and humanitarian discussions that had been going on in cultivated circles elsewhere since at least 1760. (Lins Alves, 2014, p. 1)

These transformations, which contrasted with the old “natural order” metaphor and the role of each actor, had a direct effect on the expectations of Dom João about his role as king and the challenges facing him.

As the youngest son of Maria of Portugal (who would become Queen Maria I), João was not the first in line to the throne but became the heir upon the passing of his brother José. He would also become the first Portuguese king to accede to the throne while away from the metropole in 1818. He was born into an environment where portraying the royalty and aristocracy was an established practice:

Since the emergence of portraiture, portraits have been exchanged across European courts. Besides, when a king or prince was about to marry, portraits of brides-to-be were sent to the court, where the clothes in the pictures, as much as the faces, came

under the scrutiny of the young women of the court looking for fashion inspiration. (Ångström Grandien, 2017, p. 6)⁴

Interestingly, some portraits of Dom João and his brother Dom José got mixed up along the way, leading to misidentification of the brother in the picture (Knauss, 2019). In Figure 1, we see José in traditional 18th century costume, with two cross decorations.⁵ The simple flattened cross with ornaments at its corners and hanging from a red sash around the neck that stands out at the center of the picture is a Portuguese Military Order of Christ⁶ insignia (p. 81). On the left side of his chest (right of the picture from an observer's viewpoint) is a Spanish Order of the Golden Fleece.^{7,8}



Figure 1 – D. José, Prince of Brazil. Unknown author, unknown date. Oil on canvas, 43 cm x 34 cm. Museu Banco do Brasil. From: Knauss, 2019, p. 81

4 Any translations have been provided by us unless noted otherwise.

5 The military orders are a derivation from the first Crusades, when “the knights fighting in the name of the Christian God were promised forgiveness from sins and immediate entry into the kingdom of Heaven in the event of death on the battlefield” (Mosconi Ruy, 2011, p. 2.544). In the 12th century, “a group of Knights [...] committed themselves [...] to living as canon regulars and protecting the caravans of pilgrims” (Almeida e Cunha, 2009, p. 7), creating the Order of the Temple in reference to the Temple of Solomon.

6 Founded in 1318 by King Dom Dinis and confirmed by Pope John XXII in Avignon in 1319 by the Ad and ex quibus Papal Bull. It was intended as a substitute for the Order of the Knights Templar, extinguished in 1311 by then-incumbent Pope Clement V. The Pope was its first sovereign. Eventually, the Portuguese Crown took full control of it, assigning administrative powers over conquered territories. See <https://www.ordens.presidencia.pt/?idc=120>. Retrieved on Feb. 28, 2022.

7 Founded in 1429 by Philip III of Burgundy (Philip the Good), on the occasion of his marriage to Isabella of the Portuguese House of Avis. Initially created to defend the Christian faith and cavalry, observing the general principles of military orders. Nowadays it is merely decorative (Houart; Benoît-Jannin, 2006).

8 The placement of the badges and contrast with other portraits has established the identity of the man in the portrait as that of Dom José rather than his brother Dom João.

Figure 2a shows Dom João at the time of his marriage to Spanish Princess Carlota Joaquina in 1785.⁹ To celebrate the event, Charles III of Spain appointed him to the Order of the Golden Fleece. From then on, that decoration became the key symbol for identifying Dom João in portraits (Knauss, 2019). The picture shows Dom João posing with a two-colored sash called the “Triple Order Ribbon”, in which each color represents a different military order. From the top down, we see the Military Order of Christ (red); the Order of Avis¹⁰ (green), and the Order of Santiago¹¹ (red).¹² This picture is referred in a portrait of Carlota Joaquina, working as a pendant – in other words, the picture of Dom João appears on a cameo pinned to the princess’ neckline¹³ (Figure 2a).

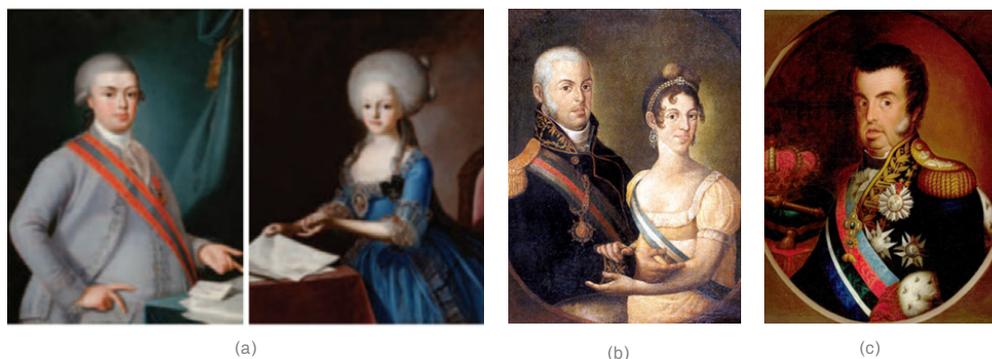


Figure 2 – a) Dom João with a reproduction of his portrait on the cameo worn by Carlota Joaquina. Unknown author, unknown date. Oil on canvas, 97 cm x 73 cm. Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáculo, in custody of the Embassy of Portugal in Brasília. From: Knauss, 2019, p. 88; b) Dom João and Carlota Joaquina. Manuel Dias de Oliveira, 19th century. Oil on canvas, 91 cm x 72 cm. Museu Histórico Nacional. From: Knauss, 2019, p. 122; c) Portrait of Dom João VI. Simplício Rodrigues de Sá, *circa* 1820. Oil on canvas, 70 cm x 83cm. Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo¹⁴

⁹ Their engagement was concurrent with that of João’s sister Mariana to Gabriel Antonio of Bourbon, son of Charles III. The wedding rings reaffirm a committed Iberian position.

¹⁰ The Order of Avis is one of the earliest military orders in Portugal; its origins date back to the 12th century and are closely associated with the eponymous dynasty (Almeida e Cunha, 2009).

¹¹ Founded in the 12th century, the Order of Santiago alludes to the patron Saint of Spain and was initially tasked with overthrowing the Moorish domination in Iberia, known as the Reconquista (Rosário; Reis, 2015).

¹² In 1796, Dom João would again be decorated by Charles III with the Order of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (the insignia was not pictured). Later that year, the Order of Santiago would change to violet. This has enabled us to place the date of the painting between 1789 and 1796, before the changes took place.

¹³ Knauss (2019) suggests that the pair of portraits might have been painted by Giuseppe Trono or someone in his atelier in Italy.

¹⁴ Retrieved online from: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Simpl%C3%ADcio_Rodrigues_de_S%C3%A1_-_Retrato_de_Dom_Jo%C3%A3o_VI.jpg on Feb. 16, 2022.

Note the subject often appears to be looking at the viewer. They bear expectations and questions and present themselves as direct interlocutors (Figure 2a, 2b, 2c). The pictures often focus on the upper trunk and above, suggesting the connections of the monarchy with traditional references – honors and decorations that emphasize the role of the prince and the king as guarantors of the greater peace, observing immovable natural laws. Also pictured are insignia upon insignia earned over time. The Golden Fleece is missing from Figure 2b, but the Order of the Tower and Sword,¹⁵ and the Triple Order Ribbon are depicted. Figure 2c shows three insignia jewels including

a habit of the Golden Fleece with a cross made of stones hanging from the neck, the badges of the Military Triple Order, the Order of Charles III¹⁶ and the Order of the Tower and Sword, on a body wrapped in an ermine mantle. Dom João VI is wearing a grand gala Admiral uniform of the Royal Armada, with matching gold epaulettes. The portrait is framed in an oval window complementing the frame, in a gradient hue. (Knauss, 2019, p. 140-141)

As the portraits neared the date the Portuguese royal family arrived in Brazil, Dom João is painted increasingly often in military uniform of a color strongly associated with war (navy blue) and increasingly gleaming references to his traditional origins and regalia. During the voyage, the figure of Dom João was compared to classic Hellenistic overseas conquerors: “Like Aeneas, Your Majesty came from a long journey to lay the foundations of a State that shall be the foremost of the world; like Aeneas, Your Majesty will be proclaimed a model for sons and kings” (Monglave, 1827 as cited by Rezzutti, 2020, p. 105, emphasis added). The prince is thought of as an inspiring and virtuous whole, since sound decisions foster harmony (even if through military means) and serves as a model for everyone else – it should last forever like the regime itself.

Upon arriving, the royal family found that personal portraits were uncommon in Brazil and almost always associated with religious institutions in honor of their benefactors (Dias, 2006), so that finding artists who were up to

¹⁵ The origins of the Order of the Tower and Sword dates back to the knights that set out in quests to conquer Africa. Little is known about its organization. It must have been very dear to João VI, considering he “restored” it in 1808. See *História da Ordem Militar da Torre e Espada, do Valor, Lealdade e Mérito* [History of the Military Order of the Tower and Sword, Value, Loyalty and Merit]. Retrieved from <https://www.ordens.presidencia.pt/?idc=117> on May 16, 2022.

¹⁶ An order created by King Charles III of Spain to award good services to the nation (Barros Ximenes, 2018). Its motto was “*virtuti et merito*” (“virtue and merit”).

standard was a laborious task (Knauss, 2019). Brazil owes part of its portraiture tradition to the French art mission that came to the country, a group which included watercolor artist Jean-Baptiste Debret and the painter Nicolas Antoine Taunay. They worked closely with the court, portraying royal members and depicting some of the most important events in their lives, including the arrival of the royal family in Brazil and the acclamation of Dom João as king.

At the reception of the royal family in Rio de Janeiro, a ceremony that took place on the Largo do Paço (“Palace Plaza”), the furnishings included

a wooden scenographic allegory lit by [...] multicolored glass cup lights consisting of a string of arches topped by a balustrade adorned with vases, pyramids, symbolic scripts, and Virgil verses. At the center of the balustrade was the coat of arms of Portugal in a sphere upholding the arms of the Senate of Rio de Janeiro. [...] Within the central arch, a large medallion with a picture of Dom João was adorned with a rose wreath. They were circled by symbols of the virtues assigned to the prince: religion, justice, prudence, strength, and magnanimity. In front of them, two genies surrounded a native, who had become a symbol of Brazil at that point. Asia on one side, Africa on the other. Kneeling with a cloak on, wearing buskins and with his headdress on the ground, the Amerindian offered the sovereign riches of the land: gold and diamonds. He held his heart in the right hand as another offering to the monarch, saying: “More than anything the heart...”. (Schwarcz, 2002, p. 241)

In this Brazilian adaptation of the Old Regime, mingling buskins with headdresses was tolerated, and the classic virtues of the princely figure were always extolled. In fact, the prince became a familiar entity to the population due to his relative public exposure, so that the face of the king could be learned and associated with his position. One of the main actions of the royal household was to order more festive days as well as holidays and observances including public celebrations.¹⁷ In addition to these occasions,

the public appearances of Dom João – in royal or other ceremonial processions – turned into land demarcations and linked his image to the very representation of

17 Schwarcz notes that “the feasts [...] turned into political rituals addressed to the people [...] [raising] the sovereign’s profile and connections with the new political circumstances. [...] The episode of September 7th [the proclamation of Independence] [...] was hardly mentioned by the press. [...] It was time to make the date “memorable”, to recognize the invested powers, and it was no coincidence that [...] the cry of “Independence or death” [was associated with] the figure of Dom Pedro: he was now identified as the founding father, the hero of independence” (2002, p. 371-372).

the Portuguese empire, expanded over the four corners of the world and governed from the colony. (Schwarcz, 2002, p. 290)

One of the biggest events certainly was the acclamation of Dom João as king in 1818, since the “formal recognition of a king served a role of validating the indiscernible connection of the head – the king – and the body of the kingdom, realizing the mystical and sacred nature of such union” (Hermann, 2007, p. 138). The choice of Rio de Janeiro as the venue for the ceremony was not unanimous and created rifts in the cross-Atlantic dynamics of the Empire.

Unlike in other monarchies, the King of Portugal was not crowned, but acclaimed, in yet another deference to tradition: the absence of a crown was intended as a gesture to Sebastian of Portugal, the king who never returned from the El-Ksar el Kebir war, as well as to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, who had been declared “sovereign of Portugal” by Dom João IV in 1646, thereby becoming the only entity entitled to wear it (Pegacha Pardal, 2018). The celebration was sumptuous: “The fact that the royals chose to have an acclamation ceremony in full splendor, even if late, suggested an effort by the king to distance himself from the political pressures back in the European continent and emphasize the power of Portuguese monarchy in the new setting” (Hermann, 2007, p. 125-126), with Napoleon’s defeat certain. The gesture suggested a U-turn in the original plans of the royalty, making Brazil the seat of the great House of Bragança.

[The ceremony] began in the City Palace with the arrival of Dom João in the wide central terrace [...]. The drapery was ornamented in damask patterns. [...] Dom João wore full ceremonial dress with a heavy red velvet mantle on his shoulders, embroidered with gilded coats of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarve, and a dark hat adorned with white feathers on his head. [...] After the acclamation by the crowd, the king sat and was handed a gold scepter which he held with his right hand. That was followed by the civil oath of office before the *desembargador do paço* [chief justice], and the religious oath before the bishop. [...] The royal flag was flown by the *alferes-mor* [chief standard-bearer], while the king of arms summoned the nobility and senior government officials to pledge allegiance to the new king. (Rezzutti, 2020, p. 105)

The acclamation traditionally used colors and direct references to the symbols of monarchy: the red velvet, the gold-embroidered coats of arms, the gold scepter, and the white-feather hat. But in Figure 3a, Debret chose to depict it as an event for the public, in an almost republican style, showing attendance of people from different social ranks and placing the king in the background. He can be recognized from the weight and volume of his mantle, the feathers on the hat, and for being the only person sitting. The figure of the king has no face in this watercolor; rather, it is a symbol.



Figure 3 – Acclamation of Dom João VI of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves. Jean-Baptiste Debret, 1834. Biblioteca Mário de Andrade [Mário de Andrade Library], São Paulo

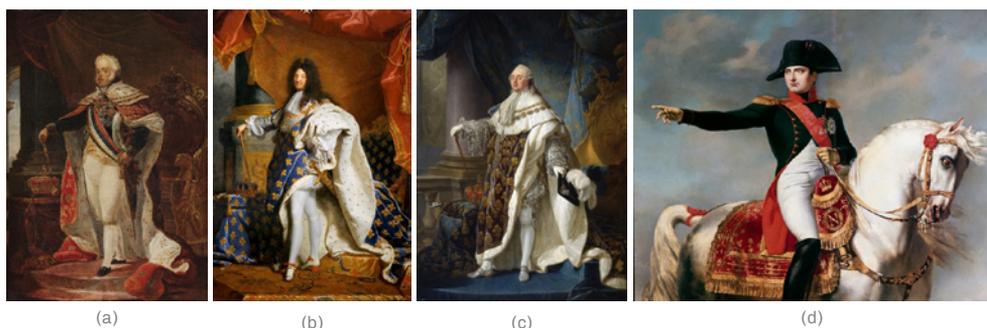


Figure 4 – a) Portrait of Dom João VI. Jean Baptiste Debret, undated. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes [National Museum of Fine Arts]; b) Portrait de Louis XIV en costume de sacre [Portrait of Louis XIV in Coronation Robes]. Hyacinthe Rigaud. Oil on canvas, 1701;¹⁸ c) Louis XVI, Roi de France et de Navarre, revêtu du grand costume royal in 1779 [Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, wearing his grand royal costume in 1779]. Antoine-François Callet. Oil on canvas, 1789;¹⁹ d) Portrait of Napoleon on the battlefield of Wagram. Joseph Chabard, 1810. Museo Napoleonico, Rome²⁰

18 Retrieved online from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Portrait_of_Louis_XIV_of_France_in_Coronation_Robes_%28by_Hyacinthe_Rigaud%29_-_Louvre_Museum.jpg on July 6, 2022.

19 Retrieved online from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cc/Antoine-Fran%C3%A7ois_Callet_-_Louis_XVI%2C_roi_de_France_et_de_Navarre_%281754-1793%29%2C_rev%C3%AAtu_du_grand_costume_royal_en_1779_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg on July 6, 2022.

20 Retrieved online from <https://www.franceinter.fr/histoire/napoleon-et-la-mode-la-garde-robe-au-service-du-mythe-napoleonien> on Feb. 17, 2022.

Despite virtually glorifying the individual over his role, Figure 4a is reminiscent of a number of references from the Old Regime. This is one of the best-known standing portraits of Dom João VI, along basically the same lines of three other portraits: Louis XIV by Rigaud (1701) (Figure 4b); Callet's Louis XVI (1789) (Figure 4c); and Napoleon by Gérard (1805), which introduced the tapestry shown in Figure 4d. Dom João looks friendly and confident; his face is brought out by his powdered hair and framed by a large "royal mantle of armillary spheres, castles and five escutcheons, gold-embroidered on scarlet velvet, French blue satin, gold and silver lamé" (Knauss, 2019, p. 147). Depicted

Royal Order of the Tower and Sword with the badge of the Order of Isabella the Catholic of Spain to the left.²¹ Down below on the left is the badge of the Order of the Legion of Honor²² restored by Louis XVIII of France, with the effigy of Henry IV (awarded in 1817), and on the right the badge of the Order of the Iron Crown of Austria²³ (also awarded in 1817). [...] In addition to the traditional silk sashes of the Grand Cross orders across the chest is a yellow sash of the Order of Isabella the Catholic of Spain. [...] The king's badges were awarded in the context of Portugal's insertion in international relations. As well as confirming the royal house's alliance with Spain and military alliance with England, the Portuguese Crown asserted its alignment with the traditional monarchies of Spain, France, and Austria in the context of the post-Napoleon Restoration. (Knauss, 2019, p. 147)

Thus, Debret's painting recalls the basis established in portraits of Dom João as prince-regent in previous years. This reference would shape a "royal portrayal style" for subsequent years.

However, the political and social instability deepened in spite of all the painters' efforts to establish a strong image of João with the virtues of the Old Regime, or even to associate it to the pageantry of the absolutist era in terms of composition. For a number of reasons, there were increasing calls for the return of the royal family to Portugal; slow decision-making (a trait often attributed to Dom João) led up to the Liberal Revolution of Porto and new complications in Luso-Brazilian politics.

21 A civil order in recognition of good services to the Spanish nation (Ceballos-Escalera y Gila, 2015).

22 A French order started by Napoleon Bonaparte in recognition of good services to the French nation. See official website of the Légion d'Honneur: <https://www.legiondhonneur.fr/>. Retrieved on May 16, 2022.

23 The Order of the Iron Crown was reinstated by Emperor Franz I of Austria, as a reference to the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy. It is a statement of nobility of its holders (Blom, 2003).

Without delving into details of the events that broke out in the process of independence and its many adjustments, we refer to portraits of Pedro, later Pedro I, who was pictured next to his father by Debret (Figure 5a).



Figure 5 – a) Portrait of Dom João VI and Dom Pedro I. Jean-Baptiste Debret, 19th century. From: Dias, 2002, p. 248; b) The young Pedro. Jean-François Badoureau,²⁴ circa 1821. Palácio Nacional de Queluz; c) Portrait of Dom Pedro I. Simplicio de Sá, circa 1830. Oil on canvas, 71 cm x 58 cm. Museu Imperial



Figure 6 – a) Crowning of Dom Pedro I. Jean Baptiste Debret, undated;²⁵ b) Portrait of Napoleon I. Tapestry piece by the Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins, based on a picture from the Atelier of François Gérard. Wool, silk, silver-gilt thread. 222.3 cm x 146.1 cm. Painted in 1805, woven in 1808-1811. Metropolitan Museum of Art²⁶

²⁴ Retrieved online from <http://www.historia.seed.pr.gov.br/modules/galeria/detalhe.php?foto=970&evento=5> on Feb. 28, 2022.

²⁵ Retrieved online from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Jean-Baptiste_Debret_-_Coro%C3%A7%C3%A3o_de_D._Pedro_I.jpg on July 6, 2022.

²⁶ Retrieved online from <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/199313> on Feb. 16, 2022.



Figure 7 – a) Coronation of Napoleon. Jacques-Louis David (1808). The Louvre;²⁷ b) Coronation of Dom Pedro I. Jean-Baptiste Debret. Watercolor, 1828²⁸



Figure 8 – Napoleon's boots. Private collection. From: Bossan, 2004, p. 58

27 Retrieved online from https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacre_de_Napol%C3%A9on_Ier#/media/Fichier:Jacques-Louis_David,_The_Coronation_of_Napoleon.jpg on Feb. 13, 2022.

28 Retrieved online from <https://aventurasnahistoria.uol.com.br/noticias/almanaque/curiosidades-sobre-a-coroacao-de-dom-pedro-i.phtml> on Feb. 16, 2022.

The aesthetics of rule as the mold of the Brazilian Empire

Fashion serves to shape the nobility of the empire.

Bourquin (2021)

Brazil's independence created a new empire. At the heart of its emergence was a contest between a sovereign monarchy and a popular representative government. Eventually, a liberal-inspired regime strongly founded on the drafted Constitution was established.²⁹ The adopted solution bore a resemblance to an idea of “civil empire” that had been developing in Portugal since the late 18th century (Oliveira, 2005, p. 52-53).

As early as in 1770, theologian Antonio Ribeiro dos Santos posited that “the highest power of a civil emperor is an absolute right to moderate and govern the actions of all members of his political bodies equally, for the sake of the public service to citizens” (Santos, 1770 as cited by Oliveira, 2005, p. 46). The Church is thus relegated from the realm of political decision-making, by contrast with the past regime, when its role oscillated over time. Putting aside the idea of justice as an application of superhuman harmony, the civil dimension “implies the supremacy of a moral government empowered by the inspection of the conduct of all men in the kingdom and capable of securing the means to coerce the various government bodies – regardless of their purpose” (Oliveira, 2005, p. 47). The ruler with decision-making authority thus stands out for their individual morals; they are no longer the conductor of a greater orchestra, but an individual whose conduct aligns with that of all others.

But then who was the emperor? Pedro could be viewed as a prince of fairly poor classical education (Lustosa, 2006; Rezzutti, 2020). Instead, he greatly enjoyed physical activity, and became known in the common lore as “naughty and reckless, a boisterous womanizer, a rowdy blusterer who, as a foreign visitor said, had the manners of a stable boy” (Lustosa, 2006, p. 11).

In 1817, he married Princess Maria Leopoldina (of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty) by proxy. During their engagement, Leopoldina was given

a miniature picture of the prince encircled by diamonds in a diamond necklace. An April 9th, 1817, letter from the Princess to her sister Marie Louise read: “I have just received a portrait of my dearly beloved Pedro. He is not remarkably handsome but

²⁹ A Brazilian empire was not a novel idea, and the actions of the royal household to stay on the American continent suggested an interest in adapting the greatness of the House of Bragança to new places.

has wonderful eyes and a beautiful nose. But his lips are even thicker than mine.” Six days later, she returned to the topic: “The Prince’s picture is leaving me in disarray. He has the beauty of an Adonis [...] everything about him is charming, his looks say, ‘I love you and want to you to be happy.’ I am already completely in love, what will become of me when I get to see the prince every day?”. (Rezzutti, 2020, p. 90)

Indeed, unlike his parents, Pedro is described as a beautiful child – he is compared to “a dove in the midst of owls” (Abrantes, 1902 as cited by Rezzutti, 2020, p. 51).

Handsome or not, Pedro was in the middle of two dynasties – Bragança by father and Bourbon by mother. The views of the sons of João and Carlota would ultimately shape political issues, including succession affairs. Figure 5b depicts Dom Pedro as a child with the same symbolic features as the prince’s, in Old Regime fashion.

When Dom João returned to Portugal, Pedro stayed behind as his lieutenant. Figure 5a could illustrate an almost shared starting point for the fledgling nation, seemingly easing the rupture from Portugal as both are portrayed with virtually the same set of references – military uniform, sash, insignia jewels. The distinguishing element is the direction of their gaze (both avoid the viewer). In Figure 5c, Simplício de Sá, who had portrayed the father earlier, now looked at the son, reviving the same symbols – colored sash, epaulettes, and insignia. However, the military looks of the emperor marks the difference between the spirit of the Old Regime and the new arrangement of civil, liberal, and constitutional empire.

As we have seen, the very notion of “civil empire” would entail a decisive role of the emperor, marked by personal judgement. Indeed, the tactical military aspect was one of the most revealing facets of the reasoning of a leader:

The new emperor is characterized [...] as “connected with the interests of the nation” and “defender of the Constitution”. [...] As a member of the nation, he is strongly bound to its aspirations and fate. He can lead it to happiness because he has become invested in the ideals of its people and governs them in their pursuit of freedom and assertion of their rights. Hence the emperor’s role as the “defender of the Constitution,” the one who stands at the forefront of the battle, ready to fight enemy forces to protect the rights of the people – the “inviolable rights” to be enshrined in the Constitution. (Oliveira, 2005, p. 53-54)

As a lieutenant, Pedro had discretionary authority over war, which empowered him with something of a “personal ruling department”. Back then, the

greatest ideal of emperor was none other than Napoleon, who inspired Pedro's bearing of "American prince [...] influenced by the liberal political language of the French Revolution" (Lustosa, 2006, p. 11-12). Figure 5c shows basically the same colors as Chabord's portrait of Napoleon, but unlike him, the future Emperor of Brazil candidly faces the viewer, whereas the French one assertively points a direction.

This reshaping of the "military dimension" as a space for individual expression of a vision of kingdom is especially clear in the coronation of Pedro in 1822. He "showed up in a green silk robe and riding boots with spurs, sporting a green velvet, poncho-style mantle lined with yellow satin embroidered with stars and gold garnish" (Schwarcz, 2002, p. 390). Furthermore, Pedro wore the crown, like a man who bears the weight of decisive authority. It resembled a papal miter, suggesting that his power emanated from Divine Providence. His deportment conveys the confidence and dominance of Napoleon (Figure 7b).

His boots translate a rigor allusive of the leadership of a Head of the Army and the rudeness of a rural regime that had taken roots in colonial times.³⁰ Thus,

not only did Pedro I's military uniform confer that soldier-king air about him, but the insignia he wore was suggestive of an emperor going to war, "marching before your eyes holding the tablet of Law in one hand and the baton of Justice in the other", i.e. the Constitution and the scepter. (Oliveira, 2005, p. 54)

Once more, Debret was the great painter of the coronation. It was no coincidence that he had been an apprentice to the same David who portrayed Napoleon's crowning (Figure 7a). During the ceremony, Pedro was invested with a power that "transcended human judgment and could not be challenged by the Constituent Assembly" (Oliveira, 2005, p. 57). We see him in the same robes as in Figure 6a, placed prominently as he is saluted mid-ceremony by Lúcio Soares Teixeira de Gouveia.³¹ Debret painted the new emperor in very favorable strokes, and

³⁰ Pedro's boots convey a harshness reminiscent of an episode involving Gertrudes Maria do Nascimento in São Paulo in 1790. Gertrudes had an abusive husband who harassed and beat her even in pregnancy. This led to her filing for divorce. A witness in the case "claimed they had seen '[her husband] chasing her and kicking her on various occasions with the same boots he had worn'" (Del Priore, 2009, p. 56).

³¹ The President of the Senate of the Hall (City Council) of Rio de Janeiro at the time.

the image of the soldier ready for battle could be felt in the protocol as Dom Pedro donned a military uniform under the royal mantle – thus he marched in procession to the church and appeared in the ceremony. His political power was hence based on the image of a protective government from which the idea of guarding constitutional rights emerged – by contrast with the 18th-century image of the king-savior of the realm and the souls of his subjects in line with the imperium traditions of those times. (Oliveira, 2005, p. 54)

Thus, the notion of a “liberal” empire implied all the agents had a vital role to play, starting from the Emperor himself. With powers at once transcendent of humanity and restrained by constitutional actions, the true mark of the sovereign would lie in his decisions and the world view he intended to impart. Pedro wore green and yellow robes and toucan feathers – but his boots still stood out. They empowered him to command, oppress and plan his strategies all at once. His figure goes hand in hand with increasingly liberal values and outstanding combating performance. The expectations around the new Empire were high.

However, his reign would only last nine years. Big challenges emerged from the new state of relations between Brazil and Portugal, including recognition of the independence. The establishment of the new regime faced objection and raised heated debate – what political choices should be made? What arrangements and limits should be adopted? (Lustosa, 2006) How could the many different views of the people be asserted? Various conflicts – land disputes included – underpinned institutional crises and the fragmentation of the process of “being a nation”.

Conflicts and uprisings broke out from everywhere, challenging the tenets of the empire – territorial centrality, concentration of powers in clear roles, geographical expansion. Some provinces opposed independence, whether out of resonance with Portugal (including Maranhão and Grão-Pará) or in resistance to what was perceived as Portuguese exploitation (e.g. Bahia). In the South, Argentina claimed the Cisplatine Province [now Uruguay] for the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata [the remaining Spanish dominion in South America] (Martins, 2010). The Confederation of the Equator would become the most extreme separatist movement facing the Empire, having been violently suppressed in 1824 (Pandolfi, 2007).

The territorial troubles were compounded by the abolitionist agenda and economic issues.³² Thus,

the [...] years of Dom Pedro's reign were marked by division – whether between settled Portuguese and citizens born in the country; or ideological divisions between supporters of a liberal model (with different variations) and those in favor of absolutism. Dom Pedro, too, felt torn all those years. (Lustosa, 2006, p. 138)

Internally, there was no consensus on the constitutional organization. With the first Constituent Assembly set up in May 1823, the role of the monarch was discussed in many configurations – not least due to the dubious position of Pedro I as Brazilian sovereign and heir to the Portuguese throne. Pedro I dissolved the Assembly on November 12 of that year, as a “way of protecting the Emperor's authority within a constitutional state arrangement” (Miranda Florindo, 2020, p. 176).

Subsequently, he appointed another council whose work resulted in the issuing of a Constitution by the Emperor on March 24, 1824.³³ The new Charter established a central, Executive power and a Moderating power embodied by the sovereign. It was yet another step towards his status of “liberal despot who wanted to secure freedom with his own hands” (Lustosa, 2006, p. 138).

Therefore, Pedro I was virtually an absolutist sovereign by his ideas, but his reputation among the population had deteriorated. He was struggling to please two lords: an absolutist strand of liberalism and the new nation – only he was also heir to the Portuguese crown. Even the colors in his coronation robes were dubious and conflicted. The green and yellow that had represented Brazil also alluded to the royal houses of Bragança and Habsburg as an honor to Pedro and his wife Leopoldina. The military boots were fraught with defeat: the Cisplatine province would be handed over in 1828; a series of uprisings opened cracks in the geopolitical fortress of the Empire; and the royal succession impasse in Portugal would breed new conflicts.³⁴

32 The conditions of recognition of Brazil's independence by Portugal included transferring Portugal's 1.4-million-pound debt with England to the Brazilian government (Lustosa, 2006, p. 166).

33 Miranda Florindo (2020) underlines the role of the town councils in structuring the Charter of 1824 into a system that reinforced the old politics as it was organized before Independence.

34 Dom João VI died in 1826 before having the chance to expressly name his “legitimate heir”. Pedro I, who would eventually take over the Portuguese throne as Pedro IV, gave the crown to his daughter Maria da Glória, on condition she marry his brother Miguel and he swear by the terms of the newly-drafted Constitution. However, Miguel betrayed his niece and stole the throne, which sparked a civil conflict.



Figure 9 – Pedro I hands in his abdication letter to Major Frias. Aurélio de Figueiredo, oil on canvas, 1910³⁵



(a)

(b)

Figure 10 – a) Dom Pedro, Duke of Bragança. Copy of a portrait by John Simpson, oil on screen (1834). Palácio Nacional de Queluz; b) Dona Amélia de Beauharnais Leuchtenberg, Duchess of Bragança, wearing a medallion with a portrait of Pedro I. Author unknown, 19th century. Palácio Nacional de Queluz

To make matters worse, a liberal system of relations was being formed with the Executive branch in the form of a Legislature, as well as a press-based public opinion (Pandolfi, 2007). In addition to the general public, the Emperor would have to deal increasingly often with a public sphere and outlets for expression, albeit suppressed ones. The eroding government was already unpopular in 1831; the Night of the Bottle Fights, a confrontation between Brazilians and Portuguese citizens in Rio de Janeiro (Ribeiro, 2000), would reach its point of no return.

Unable to strike a balance that could appease the mounting tensions, Pedro I abdicated the Brazilian throne to his son Pedro de Alcântara. Not surprisingly, he appears in Figure 9 presenting his resignation letter in military uniform, but

³⁵ Retrieved online from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abdicacao_Pedro_I_do_Brasil.jpg on May 15, 2022.

wore civilian trousers and did not wear his military boots. It was the end for his Napoleon ambitions; the new heir was virtually naked and was too young to sit the throne. Figures 10a and 10b reveal a return to values that were dear to the past regime, with the reinstatement of the Triple Order sash and decorations as well as a pendant where a cameo worn by Pedro's second wife Amélia showed his portrait.³⁶ The painting styles thus reflected the political vicissitudes of the times.

Conclusion: The portrait beyond the face

Paintings transcend the faces they depict – the sartorial choices, the details, convey intents, traditions, and translate the individuals they portray. During the Old Regime, the prince, as “head” of a body structured by the natural order of the age, had the prime role of “safeguarding the fulfillment of rights and duties, granting each social body what it deserves, within its role in the society.” (Souza Cardoso; Tadeu Santos, 2021, p.492). Thus,

according to the corporatist theory of power and society, the king's primary function was “to impart justice” – that is, to safeguard the social balance established and protected by law – which in turn would naturally create *peace*. Therefore, Justice was not just another area of government, but the quintessential one (*remote iustitia, regna latrocinia* [when justice is taken away, kingdoms become robberies], as St. Augustine wrote in his *Civ. Dei.*, 4.4). (Hespanha, 2006 as cited by Macedo, 2010, p. 6154, emphasis as original)

In doing so, the prince dealt with various dimensions of power: human power, the power of natural order, and the power of Creation, but also the political and military dimensions; the symbols translate those multiple fronts. The representations of Dom João adhered to such principles and sought to convey them through the various stages of the subject's life, including the relocation of the Empire to the colony.

However, with the Independence and the transition to a constitutional empire, several symbols of the concept of “civil empire” became consolidated, particularly that of military weight as an expression of the individual agency of the emperor. Thus,

³⁶ Although the portraits were painted later than 1831, they have been included on account of the revival of the pendant format, reflecting the style of the paintings of Dom João and Dona Carlota Joaquina discussed in the Figure 2a.

The figure of the emperor as a defender of the Constitution combined the role of executor of Divine Providence through political power – an idea that was closer to that of the 1700s savior-king – and that of a representative of the will of the people who elected Dom Pedro, to use language consistent with the ideals of the French Revolution. (Oliveira, 2005, p. 56)

This view, which was at first strongly inspired by Napoleon's ruling style, would change over the course of Dom Pedro's reign up until the abdication of an already-deteriorated emperor figure in the eyes of the liberal opposition, the public opinion, and the Army.

The portraits of the father and the son thus reflect very different ruling features, not only of the role of the prince and of the portrait itself, but also of the government's intent. These issues were debated in various spheres, including that of pictorial art, where the artists' perspectives, like the metaphors that conflate power and body, are revealed through the illustrations. In the sartorial compositions, the insignia and sashes give way to more straightforward symbols of the divine role of the bestowal of power, and of the military pace of empire-building. Power and the meanings of regentship are thus transferred from head to toe.

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