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THE POLICE NEWSLETTER OF PACOTILHA AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BLACK SKIN POPULATION IN POST-ABOLITION MARANHENSE (1888 – 1890)

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Abstract: The newspaper Pacotilha had daily circulation in Maranhão immediately after abolition. It was a press outlet willing to deal with a variety of subjects such as politics, arts and events relating to the capital São Luís. This way, themes related to public security and police events had space in this periodical. The purpose of this article was to understand how the newspaper Pacotilha represented black-skinned men and women in texts designed to address issues related to public security and police incidents in the immediate post-abolition period (1888 – 1890). The editions of Pacotilha published between May 13, 1888 and 1890 and found in the collections of the Benedito Leite Library, Historical Archive of the State of Maranhão and Hemeroteca Digital constituted the documentary basis of this research. The texts present in the documentation in which the police and public security themes were present were indicated; In these, expressions that refer to people with black skin were discriminated against and put into dialogue with the literary and social context in which the Pacotilha newspaper was immersed. To this end, we also carried out bibliographical research on the social conditions in which Maranhão found itself in the historical context under analysis. The texts that dealt with the topic under discussion and that presented expressions that refer to the black-skinned population indicated a tendency not to directly indicate the skin color of the individuals, treating them through indirect expressions. The fear of vagrancy and the prejudice expressed in the indication of the inability of the black population to adapt to the status of citizen achieved through the promulgation of the Lei Áurea constituted the bases for the formulation of the Pacotilha texts that dealt with the topic under study.

Keywords: Pacotilha, black population, post-abolition, public security, police.

INTRODUCTION

The newspaper Pacotilha began its activities in 1880 in the context of the intensification of struggles to end the legalized enslavement of workers in Brazil and in a period of greater erosion of monarchical institutions in the political scenario. Its founder was journalist Victor Lobato. Ludovicense, born on April 28, 1854, to parents Amélia Maria Branco Lobato and Victor Lobato. He was an intellectual with experience in the literary field and administration, characteristics reported in the pages of the Pacotilha newspaper:

While still a public servant, he had direct influence on <Arrow>, which João Afonso do Nascimento organized, and on <Newspaper for All >, from which <Pacotilha> emerged, the title of one of its sections. To dedicate himself body and soul to the new initiative, he left his position as government secretary (PACOTILHA, 1921, p. 02).

The Pacotilha newspaper was initially a weekly periodical, then became a daily one, generally containing four pages, the first and last being intended for publishing notices and commercial advertisements. The two central pages contained news texts, analyzes and specific columns on various subjects such as politics, literature, national and international events. Victor Lobato and his collaborators sought to make Pacotilha a popular newspaper, with simple, accessible language, capable of interacting with multiple subjects. Given this search undertaken by Victor Lobato in relation to the variety of content, it was not long before texts whose content was focused on police themes were present in this periodical.

Public order, monitoring of state attitudes, as well as security at community level, were themes that permeated police actions against poor segments of the population. However, the popular classes with a lower level of access to the capital, in the 1800s, had a large

proportion of black or mixed-race individuals in their composition. For Schwarcz (1993), at the end of the 19th century, racial theories spread throughout Brazilian society and served as an ideological basis for the classes that owned the means of production to deal with the inclusion of the black-skinned population in a social condition in which the legalized enslavement of workers did not exist. In the content of these racial theories, the principle that poverty, violence, crime and addictions were maximized because of the genetic vulnerability of the black “race” was present, making social security problems an item of racial discussion.

The newspaper Pacotilha participated intensely in the debates regarding the racial issue in the face of the implementation of the Áurea Law, frequently publishing texts that aimed to analyze political and social situations through the rise of black individuals to the status of citizens and the social conditions present in the incidence from behaviors considered deviant or criminal to the criticism of the historical context under analysis, as indicated (Pereira, 2007).

Describing and analyzing the way in which Pacotilha interpreted police events and issues relating to community security through the possible participation of subjects with black skin are necessary to understand how classes deprived of the means of production were represented in the Maranhão press and how racial issues were treated in the journalistic field. Therefore, this article aims to understand the representations of the black-skinned population in texts on police and institutional security themes present in the Pacotilha newspaper in the three-year period after the enactment of Lei Áurea.

THE NEWSPAPER PACOTILHA AND SÃO LUÍS IN THE FIRST YEARS OF POST-ABOLITION

São Luís, the city of origin of the newspaper Pacotilha, at the end of the 19th century presented a situation of strong economic decline according to the press of the time. The theme of Maranhão’s decadence was present in the pages of the Pacotilha newspaper through texts by its collaborators. However, this subject had a wide scope, reaching the literary, academic and artistic fields, as indicated (Pereira, 2007).

Public authorities were the target of intense criticism regarding the city’s infrastructure. Public health, road structures and public safety were the most prominent themes observed in the columns about São Luís that we found in the historical section under analysis.

16 texts were identified that directly dealt with the structural situation of São Luís in the indicated historical context. These texts were not signed by any editor, however, we believe that they give the reader a basic view of how the Pacotilha editors understood the situation in the capital of Maranhão in relation to the topic in question. These themes, associated with the current political and economic situation, mainly based on the end of the enslavement of the black population, formed the basis of the Pacotilha editors’ perspective on state security in relation to the situation of the black population in the post-abolition period.

This way, Braga (2017) indicates that the city’s structure in terms of public health, for example, generated an environment of potential confrontation between the State apparatuses and more precarious portions of the population, mostly made up of individuals with black skin. As an example of such a shock, disease prevention programs, through vaccines, faced resistance from the population, adherence levels were insufficient and public

authorities were looking for mechanisms to get the population to adhere to vaccination campaigns.

In Pacotilha it is possible to observe this intention of the authorities. Announcements inherent to notices calling for vacancies in public bodies such as schools and offices, the requirement for vaccination, are constant, for example, what is observed in news about vacancies at Liceu Maranhense in which the obligation to present a supporting document is reported. of vaccination (Pacotilha, 1889, p.03).

In turn, the infrastructure of streets, public spaces and buildings exposed the population to the elements. The buildings where important public organizations such as hospitals, public slaughterhouses, schools and sanitation systems operated received systematic criticism from the writers of the Pacotilha newspaper.

In turn, the structural problems of the city of origin of Pacotilha reflected the economic difficulties materialized in the highlighted time frame. Pacotilha's writers experienced the environment of uncertainty and economic fluctuations experienced by Maranhão in the period leading up to the promulgation of the Law of May 13, 1888 and immediately after abolition.

Aluísio Azevedo, an example of a great literary personality at the time who wrote in Pacotilha, used his artistic production to denounce the state of decline of São Luís:

Aluísio experienced the contradictions and difficulties of life in a youth immersed in debates about freedom and citizenship, this quality was important in the representation of the city in the work: ``O Mulato``. The work ``O mulato`` is highlighted as one of the first and most relevant literary constructions that give rise to the naturalist aspect, a tendency conceived by the modern realist school, this information is important, since the way this author describes the city permeates the way of understanding coined

together with the conception of naturalist style (DINIZ, 2008, p. 40).

Nascimento Moraes, another important name in Maranhão literature who remained among the writers of Pacotilha, wrote ``Vencidos e Degenerados`` as a text critical of post-abolition Ludovicense society. By telling the story of a young mixed-race young man who wanted to become one of the greats of journalism, he exposed the structural contradictions of the city through the racist and classist conceptions of the layers that hold political and financial power, as observed (Araújo, 2017).

The city represented by Nascimento Moraes resembles interpretations given by Aluísio Azevedo. A city lacking urban facilities capable of offering the population minimum services in the most different areas of the community's existence. Such precariousness is denounced on the pages of Pacotilha and forms the main content of the development environment of this periodical.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BLACK POPULATION IN PACOTILHA'S POLICE NEWS

Although without legal basis, slavery remained a set of modes of representation of individuals' daily lives, its reminiscences continued to specify the way in which black people must dispose of themselves in daily chores and tasks. Certainly, a possible breach of this normality could give rise to the need for intervention by the police as the body responsible for maintaining the established order.

Thus, cases in which dark-skinned individuals denied submissive behavior based on alleged racial inferiority could cause shock with reminiscences of everyday normality arising from slavery. Tradition, ways of life and representations of material reality were not extinguished through a legal act. Thus,

the newspaper Pacotilha reported in issue 78 of 1889 a case that dates back to this clash between the new legal status of the black population and the current slavery tradition.

According to the editor:

In the city of Livramento, black Maria Antonia was punished with two dozen cakes, at the police headquarters, by order of deputy Jose Gabriel.

The same Maria Antonia informed that this punishment had been applied to her, solely because she did not want to serve a woman, from whom the deputy received two pounds sterling to punish her. (Pacotilha, 1888. p. 3)

The writer does not specify the location of the city, but the case narrated shows that a black woman refused to serve another woman. Due to this action, the black woman suffered physical punishment from the police deputy. The writer tried to publish quickly, simply, without making further comments about the case. However, the description of the punished woman's skin color, as well as the publication of this woman's speech regarding her conviction, demonstrate that the police representative's action was supported by the accused's condition as a dark-skinned woman.

The confrontation between the reminiscences of slavery and the new legal condition of work inaugurated by the Law of May 13, 1888 was the subject of debate at Pacotilha. Thus, in a text entitled *A Nova Era*, present in the Publications on Request column of issue 9 of 1889, this topic was treated in a way that explained how public security, according to the writer, must be implemented through the freed condition of the skinned population. black.

Given the difficulties faced with the end of legally enslaved labor, the editor indicates that the blame for the low productivity of crops and industries must not be blamed on the freedmen:

No, it's not the freedmen we must complain about, we are the ones who don't really cultivate cannaviaes and are watching the liquidation of our mills left in the vortex of oxidation. We must not complain about those unfortunate people, we repeat, because the vast majority of them, once they are paid and treated better than the old ways, work perfectly. (Pacotilha, 1889, p. 02)

For the editor, the problems faced by the Brazilian economy in the post-abolition period came from the State's inability to promote greater freedom of initiative in the market and a greater public financing structure, with high taxes being described as another important cause of economic difficulties.

The editor takes a stand against measures that affect the freedom of individuals with black skin by forcing them into forced labor regimes or persecution of them for reasons related to their work activity. This way, the use of the police as a state force responsible for monitoring the black population so that they adapt to a certain work regime is criticized by the writer of the text.

The editor does not fail to place the black population in a situation of social inferiority. The writer, even though he is against the use of the police in relation to the freed population, defends the use of police forces against marginalized parts of the population:

Fighting, however, for compulsory work, banning the great law of supply and demand, for forced recruitment when the very liberal law of February 27, 75 is part of our legislation, does not seem like a philanthropist who, long before the general abolition, had abolished captivity, in his lordly domains, and, not even the peaceful police chief, who, holding office for more than a year, had only given one hearing and had not carried out the arrest of a single representative of the enormous portion of vagrants that infest the municipality. (Pacotilha, 1889, p. 02)

These population segments that lived on

the margins of the work system, in general, were made up mainly of individuals with black skin. For the editor, vagrancy was seen as a public security problem, a social phenomenon to be dealt with directly by the police. The black population became the object of police treatment and placed at the center of measures against the phenomenon of vagrancy. Racial content dominated the treatment of individuals who were unable to access socially accepted ways of working.

In a text published in the newspaper *Pacotilha*, in a column of the same name, the writer describes this situation as being a national characteristic and shows observations taken from the period in which the Law of May 13, 1888 was imminent:

Things got to the point that, while the Emperor publicly declared in São Paulo that the chains had not been made to discipline slaves, in Rio de Janeiro the main occupation of the police was to hunt down escaped blacks, arrest them, handcuff them, escort the gentlemen to the farms, in cars that they had built expressly for this purpose. (Pacotilha, 1889, p. 02)

This way, the newspaper *Pacotilha* also reported police incidents in the interior of the State. In a text published under the title *Grajahu*, the writer describes a situation of homicide committed by an individual in the *Grajahu* region. According to the writer, when describing the detachment officer's report:

It is noted that sixteen leagues away from this city, in the town of Ribeirão das Flores, the murder of Marcellino da Cunha Rosa, a murderer in the person of Jose Camillo, was found in Santa Cruz on the Riachão border and has already been pronounced by the courts of that border and He was also accused of stealing cattle in the pastures of farms near *Grajahu*. I directed an investigation there that managed to capture him on the 22nd of this month, and after being interrogated by me, he confessed to actually being a criminal of both crimes. (Pacotilha, 1889, p. 02)

However, the police officer knew that there was a possibility that other criminals were hiding near that region, so he set out to try to arrest other individuals accused of crimes by the courts. He was looking for two individuals accused of murder at the home of a third individual also accused of murder. The owner of the residence used as a hideout is mentioned as already known to the press for having carried out a high-profile crime.

Upon arriving at the intended location, the investigation did not find the individuals it was looking for, however, it ended up finding another individual accused of crimes. At the place of arrest, the detachment received information that another person accused of crimes was on the way:

Having come to my attention through private communication and then through the police sub-delegate of the 3rd district that in Lagoa Secca, 18 leagues away from this city, a black individual named Manuel, on the night of the 17th to the 18th, murdered with a gunshot to Raimundo Francisco Sertão and stabbing his wife and by violent means to his four little children, the eldest being between 7 and 8 years old and two still pagans, he stole what he could, drove and set fire to the house, which was reduced to ashes and therefore exterminated this entire unfortunate family (...) (Pacotilha, 1889, p.02)

It is observed that the long investigation uncovered a significant number of individuals accused of crimes and victims. The description of the accused and victims included indications regarding names and family and location associations, but only one individual was not classified according to the standards previously described. The black-skinned individual was identified by racial pattern, unlike the others mentioned in the news.

This same mechanism is used in the news regarding the crime of aggression against a child, when a woman is reported according to the pattern of raciality indicated in the

previous example:

People who pass through Rua da Palma every day are asking us to draw the police's attention to a black woman, living in the lower part of a townhouse on that street, in the block between dos Barbeiros and Quebra Costas, and who atrociously punishes a child, every day, with severe spankings, for an extraordinary period of time. We are told that the poor child is sometimes almost unable to cry or scream, overwhelmed by the pain of punishment. It would be good for the police to carry out an examination of the unfortunate person who was punished. (Pacotilha, 1889, p. 03)

The use of skin color to differentiate individuals involved in crimes, whether as perpetrators or in some other position, is observable in the news regarding police incidents. In reference to other individuals, no mention of bodily characteristics is observed in any of the texts covered by this research.

However, the mention of skin color was not adopted by the Pacotilha columnists along with pejorative adjectives for the individuals mentioned. Skin color as an identifying entity did not necessarily imply the clear attribution of any characteristic to a given individual due to racial characteristics. In news about robberies and thefts in the public cemetery area, the construction of the text using racial characteristics without further analysis about this same characteristic is notable:

The thieves are throwing Manguinhos out on the sides of the public cemetery. Tonight, Mr. Pinheiro, who no longer has a breeding head, was attacked by two daring thieves, one of whom tried to climb the gate, dissuading him from this effort with a load of lead that they dumped on his legs. When the gun exploded, the man fell to the side of the street and fled, which leads to the assumption that he had missed the shot. Whoever gave us this information assumed that a tall, well-known black man was one of the burglars of other people's farms. (Pacotilha, 1888, p. 03)

The writer begins the text ironically, proposes a quick analysis of the situation in terms of public security in the area of the public cemetery, talks about the victims and deals with humor in the response given to the possible assailant. However, when reporting the description given of one of the possible criminals, he uses few words, does not comment on the description as he had previously done with other items in the text.

Treating individuals with black skin in a way that makes them inferior based on their skin color seems to be a practice subject to intense repression in the literary environment of Pacotilha, although there are spaces for such an occurrence. Thus, these spaces of racialization of discourse are possible, with greater intensity, in news that do not directly transport the theme to an approach at the level of state security. We cite as an example the following news published in Pacotilha: "We are asked to draw the attention of those who compete to an old black idiot, living on Rua de Sant'Anna, who lived in a state of almost complete nudity, thus depriving families of from the neighborhood reach the windows." (Pacotilha, 1888, p. 03)

Generic terms are part of the mechanisms for describing and constructing news by Pacotilha newspaper writers. In a text published in issue number 249, it is possible to pay attention to this practice: "We are asked to draw the attention of the police to some kids who at night go to Rua da Madre de Deus in the corner of Palha, where they practice the greatest folly and immorality." (Pacotilha, 1888, p.03)

Terms that were already traditionally usable were also part of the writing mechanisms. In news published in the Pacotilha newspaper, the columnist reports that late at night, pharmacist Abreu Sobrinho was alerted that a man was lying near the building of his establishment in a serious state of intoxication.

Traveling to the location, the pharmacist verified the veracity of the warning and upon examining the victim, he noted the existence of a serious wound caused by a blade:

Despite the whistle blowing that will continue, only half an hour later will 3 police officers appear. After arriving at the scene, the police deputy from the 1st district, accompanied by experts, carried out a criminal investigation on the patient, whose injury was found to be serious. Since the offended party cannot declare his name and that of his offender, the authority would be unable to provide these clarifications, if it were not for the information provided by an old black man who said his name was the offended João Marcollino da Cruz, known as João Piloto, and who was presumed to be the perpetrator of the injury, a man from Ceará named Laureano, resident of Rua da Saúde. (Pacotilha, 1888, p. 02)

Therefore, the linguistic mechanisms used by the writers went through a description of the events without further delimitations to the racial aspect of the individuals. Such delimitations occur in a simplistic or indirect

way. The texts seek to explain the event as arising from public security items.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A total of 400 editions of the Pacotilha newspaper were analyzed, referring to the historical section under analysis. In all editions, there are, generally, on the second and third pages, news relating to police-themed events. However, in only six editions we found descriptions of news in which the term: ``black``, make direct or classificatory mention of individuals.

It was found that the writers of the Pacotilha newspaper preferred not to describe the racial characteristics of individuals when describing journalistic facts inherent to the police theme. However, this indication is not enough to highlight the Pacotilha columnists as exempt from racial analysis in relation to the black-skinned population, since other indicator words with possibilities of use to describe the black-skinned population were not used in this study.

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