

Senzala insurgente: Malungos, parentes e rebeldes nas fazendas de Campinas (1832).

By RICARDO FIGUEIREDO PIROLA. Coleção Várias Histórias. Campinas, Brazil: Editora UNICAMP, 2011. Figures. Tables. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. 303 pp. Paper, R\$58.00.

The history of Brazil has been shaped by a slave system fed by the massive importation of Africans. Over the last several decades, the study of slavery in Brazil has exploded. In *Senzala insurgente*, Ricardo Figueiredo Pirola has added to that body of knowledge, providing a detailed and important examination of slavery in an emerging sugar zone.

The heart of the book is a slave revolt planned in Campinas in 1832 that was discovered before it could be implemented. The resulting criminal investigation, combined with provincial censuses, inventories, and parish registers, provides the documentary base for this book. Pirola effectively weaves these together to provide the reader with an in-depth view of the inner dynamics of the slave community and its relationship to the slaveholding class. At the same time, Pirola connects this slave community with their home in West Central Africa.

In meticulously unraveling this slave plot, Pirola places it within the context of broader historiographical issues. He argues for the combined centrality of class and religion—two main historiographical themes often considered separately—to the revolt. In addition, he argues for the significance of Bantu-led plots in southeastern Brazil, a point that allows him to show how slaves were aware of broader movements in Brazil during the turbulent decades around independence.

The scene of the projected revolt, Campinas, underwent rapid transformation from a subsistence economy to one dominated by sugar exports in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. This brought tremendous demographic changes: by 1832 the enslaved population had surpassed the free population; a balanced creole/African population had become heavily African; a reasonably balanced community in terms of gender had become male dominated; the slave community had become younger; and slave ownership had become increasingly concentrated (the majority owned in units of 50 or more). Almost all the identified participants in the plot lived on 15 *fazendas*, whose 11 heads were themselves frequently connected by family ties. We get to see two communities internally linked.

There were 32 active participants in the plot (plus 1 ex-slave), only 3 of whom were born in the area. Twenty-five were Africans, 80 percent of whom were from the northern Congo region (identified as Congo, Monjolo, and Cabinda). This region produced 90 percent of the key plotters, with 6 of the 11 described as Monjolos. The plotters were individuals enslaved for a decade in Campinas, time enough to establish social connections with other slaves. These ladino slaves were mature in age and experience. They also had, Pirola argues, the strongest links to the slaveholding class due to their work as craftsmen, domestic slaves, and skilled workers.

This foiled revolt allows the author to provide a valuable insight into important elements of Brazilian society. *Senzala insurgente* is a good example of “thick description,”

as Pirola reconstructs the social links that wove together the sugar elite and the slave community. He documents the formation of a sugar elite in Campinas in the period after 1792, confirming much known about this process. More novel and important is his exploration of the construction of the slave community and the role of community ties in the projected revolt. Importantly, Pirola reconstructs the family ties built around marriage and godparentage that linked together slaves on a number of sugar properties. Godparentage was particularly useful for allowing slaves to connect to the free population as well as for cementing ties within the slave community. Through these ties Pirola explores the process of creating in Brazil a West Central African identity transcending ethnic differences, analyzing the nature of West Central African societies and cultures and relating those characteristics and values to those that evolved in Brazil.

The author also adds to our knowledge of individual slaves when he examines the lives of two key plotters, Diogo Rebolo and the ex-slave João Barbeiro. Pirola's reading of the spiritual world of the slave community is particularly deft: Diogo Rebolo is presented as a spiritual leader connecting the religious culture to the plot itself.

Pirola connects this failed plot to a large number of important issues. He demonstrates an understanding of the historiography of slavery and places his views within that context. Given the paucity of key sources of information, Pirola mixes speculation into his analysis, but these forays are clearly identified and generally flow from the discussion. Finally, Pirola provides a transcription of the criminal investigation that served as the starting point for this study.

Senzala insurgente demonstrates what can be gained by closely reading local sources and placing that analysis into the context of broader issues and situations. It is a very good example of microhistory, providing rich insights into a wide range of issues of historiographical importance.

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