

**POR UMA HISTÓRIA CRÍTICA DA COLÔMBIA (1853-1953)**

***POR UNA HISTORIA CRÍTICA DE COLOMBIA (1853-1953)***

***FOR A CRITICAL HISTORY OF COLOMBIA (1853-1953)***

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**RESUMO:** O presente trabalho consiste em uma revisão bibliográfica acerca das principais discussões concernentes à História da Colômbia entre 1853 e 1953, íterim singular para sua atual configuração sociopolítica e econômica. Problematicamos, por conseguinte, textos constitucionais e debatemos fontes secundárias com o intuito de compreender o Liberalismo Radical (1863-1885), a *Regeneración* (1885-1904) e a reconstituição democrática (1904-1953). Rechaçando uma simples e irrisória enumeração dos presidentes colombianos dessas conjunturas históricas, nosso trabalho transcende os manuais colombianos caracterizados pelo cunho político-factual, os quais são objeto das críticas do revisionismo histórico colombiano. Uma contínua dificuldade repousara na escassez de obras historiográficas referentes à História da Colômbia disponíveis em âmbito brasileiro. Ademais, o estudo do passado colombiano constitui em uma tarefa fundamental da historiografia latino-americana, tornando-se inclusive uma necessidade intelectual. Afinal, compreender a trajetória da Colômbia enquanto país integrante da América Latina torna-se imprescindível para o estudo dos demais países que compõem a região.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** História da Colômbia. América Latina. Revisão bibliográfica.

**RESUMEN:** *El presente trabajo consiste en una revisión bibliográfica sobre las principales discusiones sobre la Historia de Colombia entre 1853 y 1953, un interino singular por su configuración sociopolítica y económica actual. Por lo tanto, problematicamos textos constitucionales y debatimos fuentes secundarias para comprender el liberalismo radical (1863-1885), la regeneración (1885-1904) y la reconstitución democrática (1904-1953). Rechazando una enumeración simple y burlona de los presidentes colombianos de estas coyunturas históricas, nuestro trabajo trasciende los libros de texto colombianos caracterizados por la naturaleza político-fáctica, que son objeto de crítica del revisionismo histórico colombiano. Una dificultad continua ha sido la escasez de trabajos historiográficos sobre la historia de Colombia disponibles en Brasil. Además, el estudio del pasado colombiano es una tarea fundamental de la historiografía latinoamericana, llegando incluso a ser una necesidad intelectual. Después de todo, comprender la trayectoria de Colombia como país miembro de América Latina es esencial para el estudio de los otros países que conforman la región.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Historia colombiana. América Latina. Revisión bibliográfica.*

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**ABSTRACT:** *The present work constitutes itself in a bibliographical revision about the main discussions concerning the History of Colombia between 1853 and 1953, unique period for its current sociopolitical and economic configuration. We therefore problematize constitutional texts and discuss secondary sources with the aim of understanding Radical Liberalism (1863-1885), Regeneración (1885-1904) and democratic reconstitution (1904-1953). Rejecting a simple and derisory enumeration of the Colombian presidents of these historical conjunctures, our work transcends the Colombian manuals characterized by the political-factual, which are the object of criticism of the Colombian historical revisionism. A continuing difficulty rested on the scarcity of historiographical works related to the History of Colombia available in Brazil. In addition, the study of the Colombian past constitutes a fundamental task of the Latin American historiography, becoming even an intellectual necessity. After all, understanding the trajectory of Colombia as an integral part of Latin America becomes essential for the study of the other countries that are part of the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** *History of Colombia. Latin America. Literature review.*

## Introduction

The Spanish colonial state, especially under the rule of the Burbons dynasty, focused on extracting the wealth of the at the time New Granada, on building an inefficient network of institutions - such as monopolies and trade restrictions - and on expropriating the lands of indigenous peoples. Despite some economic dynamism, this led to a stagnant domestic economy. Independence had little impact on this situation until the liberal revolution of 1850, when many of the colonial structures were revoked. Undoubtedly, even when liberals abolished slavery and monopolies, and allowed indigenous peoples to have land in full control, their policies led to a contraction of more than forty years in economic activity. For William Paul McGreevey (2015), the situation was somewhat similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union. While everyone was in agreement that Soviet economic institutions were massively inefficient, their collapse caused an economic downturn in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. In both Colombia in 1850 and the Soviet republics in 1989, the basic prerequisites for economic development were not fixed in those places. Colombian liberals would make this development even more difficult to achieve.

Tax reforms after 1850 ended up breaking the central state and the hyper federalism of the 1863 *Rionegro Constitution* left that central state without a monopoly on controlling violence. Thus, there was no entity capable of promoting public goods, such as infrastructure or school education, or promoting economic development. The consequent absence of state intervention, disorder and civil wars contributed considerably to the economic decline. The decline was transformed into expansion around 1890, when the coffee economy awoke, basic

transport infrastructure was established - especially railways - and there was a transition to sustainable growth.

To talk about the history of Colombia from *one century to another* - according to the expression of Muñoz (2016) - is not a task without intentions. Certain difficulties were encountered during the formulation of this work. A primary challenge was to understand Colombian history as a reality intrinsic to the *Latin American* context of the 19th and 20th centuries. To resolve possible doubts, it becomes conniving to analyze the very construction of the meaning of the term Latin America. As R. L. Farret and S. R. Pinto (2011, p. 31) present, the change of the term *Hispano-america* to Latin America would be mediated by the descendants of the ancient Creole elites, who aimed to promote the formulation of a unique identity for the subcontinent. Despite consolidating itself in the course of the 19th century, the name “Latin America” was built in order to distinguish Hispanic Americans from Americans and Europeans (FARRET; PINTO, 2011). The countries that made up Latin America claimed to be free and united nations around interests and cultural ties. Above all, they contested the American influence in the rest of the American continent<sup>2</sup>. *Latin America* was opposed to its antithesis: *Saxon America*.

The United States emerged in the 19th century as a regional power. From the creation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, with its motto “America for the Americans”, its imperialist ambitions in relation to the countries of the continent became clear. It was only, initially, a warning to the European powers, in the sense that they would not try to reactivate the colonial rule over the continent, this doctrine started to be used, even in the 19th century, as an interventionist justification for the entire American continent. Its motto could therefore be interpreted as “America for North Americans”. The strength of its regional imperialism could be felt by Mexico in the late 1840s, when the war waged by both countries and which resulted in the surrender of approximately 2.4 million square kilometers of Mexican territory to the United States. In addition, it is worth remembering the feat of William Walker (1824-1860), an American who, from 1855, became the great political head of Nicaragua (FARRET; PINTO, 2011, p. 34).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A gradual substituição da influência inglesa nos antigos domínios espanhóis para a intervenção estadunidense fora alvo das críticas de José Martí. Para mais informações acerca do assunto, recomendamos a leitura Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Os Estados Unidos despontavam no século XIX como uma potência regional. A partir da criação da Doutrina Monroe em 1823, com seu lema “A América para os americanos”, suas ambições imperialistas em relação aos países do continente ficaram claras. Tratando-se apenas, inicialmente, de uma advertência às potências europeias, no sentido de que não tentassem reativar o domínio colonial sobre o continente, essa doutrina passou a ser empregada, ainda no século XIX, como justificativa intervencionista para todo o continente americano. Seu lema poderia ser interpretado, portanto, como “A América para os norte-americanos”. A força de seu imperialismo regional pôde ser sentida pelo México no final dos anos 1840, quando da guerra travada pelos dois países e que teve como saldo a cessão aos Estados Unidos de aproximadamente 2,4 milhões de quilômetros quadrados do território mexicano. Além disso, vale lembrar a façanha de William Walker (1824-1860), norte-americano que, a partir de 1855, passou a ser o grande chefe político da Nicarágua (FARRET; PINTO, 2011, p. 34).

The need to assert America's exceptionality is the key to American political culture. [...] This same obsessive need to affirm the exceptionality of the United States appears in discussions about American foreign policy. The underlying message is clear: the United States is to be trusted, whether in Iraq or elsewhere, because the United States is just and altruistic, and has demonstrated this over two centuries of history (BANDEIRA, 2009, p. 25)<sup>4</sup>

Colombia shares many elements common to the countries of the American continent, such as the Spanish language and the Catholic tradition - characteristics of the states descended from the Hispanic domain. Synchronous historical processes and phenomena, such as political emancipation and the liberalism-protectionism conflict at the end of the 19th century, allow the researcher to identify the similarity of Colombia's history to the group of nations in Latin America<sup>5</sup>. For Ailton de Souza (2011), the concept of "Latin America" was born in the 15th century, during the conquest and colonization of the American continent by the Iberians. Many of the uses of the term had a prejudiced and mistaken nature. Thus, "[...] much of the foreign historical literature contemplated the region from a negative and even discriminatory view in relation to its people, its culture or geographic aspects."<sup>6</sup> (SOUZA, 2011, p. 31). The terminology "Latin America" has an essentially French origin, derived from *Amérique Latine*, being used in order to legitimize France's dominion over present-day Mexico. Since then, the meaning of this concept has changed its connotation, although it continues to be used to categorize Iberian colonized countries.

However, despite the linguistic and religious similarities, the protagonism of the political and economic elites constituted, in parts, a singular characteristic of Colombia throughout the period to which we propose to analyze. After all, "[...] from the moment of independence until the first half of the 20th century, national construction projects were directed by military, agricultural, commercial, industrial and banking elites [...]" (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 13, our translation<sup>7</sup>).

As we build our narrative about *Colombia from one century to another* - using the expression of Rafael Rubiano Muñoz (2016) -, our demands for a critical History of Colombia

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<sup>4</sup> A necessidade de afirmar a excepcionalidade dos Estados Unidos é a chave da cultura política norte-americana. [...] Essa mesma necessidade obsessiva de afirmar a excepcionalidade dos Estados Unidos aparece nas discussões sobre a política externa norte-americana. A mensagem subjacente é clara: os Estados Unidos merecem confiança, seja no Iraque ou em qualquer outra parte, porque os Estados Unidos são justos e altruístas, e assim o tem demonstrado ao longo de dois séculos de história (BANDEIRA, 2009, p. 25)

<sup>5</sup> In fact, in exemplary publishing, Leslie Bethell (2004) had organized Latin American history under temporal categories, implicitly sharing the ideal that certain thematic constants can be found in the study of the subcontinent.

<sup>6</sup> "[...] grande parte da literatura histórica estrangeira contemplava a região a partir de visão negativa e até mesmo discriminatória em relação ao seu povo, sua cultura ou aspectos geográficos."

<sup>7</sup> [...] desde el momento de las independencias hasta la primera mitad del siglo XX, los proyectos de construcción nacional fueron dirigidos por las elites militares, hacendarias, eclesiales, comerciantes, industriales y bancarias [...] (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 13).

will become explicit to the reader. Chronologically, we will start from the government of José Hilário López (1849-1853), ending our discussions with the profascist period of Laureano Gómez (1949-1953). Although we use political chronological goals, our study will not consist of a tiresome list of Colombian presidents. Colombia, as a nation inserted in Latin American standards, demands a history of a critical character, whose new themes, objects and approaches need to overcome the factual and eminently political-state narrative.

“Peacebuilding is more difficult than achieving peace. It is one thing to silence rifles and another thing to build peace. It takes more time, more effort to change feelings, prejudices, to change ways of thinking”<sup>8</sup> (MANETTO; TORRADO, 2018). In an interview with *El País Brasil*, former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) highlights the concern that led his government mandate: peacebuilding. The argument meets the propositions of Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez (1990), for whom war and politics have historically been part of the Colombian nation.

War and politics, order and violence, violence and democracy, and at the limit, life and death, are some of the multiple oppositions and complementarities from which Colombian history can be deciphered. To tell the truth, if there is something that stands out in the historical development and daily life of this country, it is the non-resolution of antagonisms, its stubborn coexistence, as if they were part of a natural disposition of things (GÓMEZ, 1990, p. 07, our translation<sup>9</sup>).

Violence - although it does not consist of a constant in Colombian history as it appears in Paraguay (QUINTEROS; MOREIRA, 2016) - is a topic that must be addressed by anthropological history and historical sociology, not only with the intention of understanding the recent FARC action, but above all for the study of political and ethnic violence in the country. This gap, the resolution of which transcends our purposes, deserves to be addressed by current Colombian historiography. Manifested in the governance of Laureano Gonzáles, violence will be addressed by us throughout the final formulations of the text, remaining a constant in our narrative.

What is remarkable, from a century to another in Colombia, is how it has not been possible to consolidate democracy as a regime or as a mentality. It is also very clear that in the field of national integration and in the political

<sup>8</sup> “A construção da paz é mais difícil que a conquista da paz. Uma coisa é silenciar fuzis e outra coisa é construir a paz. Leva mais tempo, mais esforço para modificar sentimentos, preconceitos, modificar modos de pensar”

<sup>9</sup> Guerra y política, orden y violencia, violencia y democracia, y en el límite, vida y muerte, son algunas de las múltiples oposiciones y complementariedades a partir de las cuales se hace decifráble la historia colombiana. A decir verdad, si hay algo que obsesiona en el devenir histórico y en la cotidianidad de este país es la no resolución de los contrarios, su terca coexistencia, como si formaran parte de una cierta disposición natural de las cosas. (GÓMEZ, 1990, p. 07).

ideological field, opposition, divergence and differences, were resolved through extermination, imprisonment, exile or violence. Another element of analysis that appears in the face of the interpretation of a century of political processes in the country, is that war has been a consubstantial element or factor of identity and nationality, and on the other hand, that legality and illegality, institutionality and violence, democracy and anarchy have coexisted in what in recent years has been conceived since political sociology as the “Almedrón”, that is, a coexistence of order and violence, or of the rational functional as forms of irrationality (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 16-17; our translation<sup>10</sup>).

Studying the Colombian past from Brazil is not an easy task. We will seek to respond succinctly to a demand and instigate the production of new investigations.

### The radical Liberalism

With the end of Gran Colombia in 1849, the Liberal and Conservative Parties would rise, whose disputes would lead to the Colombian political game. Thus, “Explosive and frequent civil wars, involving a considerable portion of the population, alternated with brief periods of peace throughout the 19th century. Such rivalry crystallized a bipartisan system, [...] which has endured for over a hundred and fifty years.”<sup>11</sup> (CHECCHIA, 2000, p. 02). During the 1850s and 1880s, therefore, the Liberal Party would prevail in the country. In fact, under what explanation should we lean to understand the liberal reforms between 1853 and 1885-86? In a notorious work for the field of the History of Religions, Religiosities and Beliefs, Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2008), whose first chapter in *The Pilgrim and the Convert* is entitled “The Shattered Religion: Previous Reflections on Religious Modernity”, allows us understand these liberal reforms as a moment of *modernization* in Colombia. After all, according to the author, modernity corresponds to the moment in which the secularization of the State and the secularization of politics develops, elements verified in ultraliberal Colombia at the end of the 19th century.

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<sup>10</sup> Lo que es notable, de un siglo a outro en Colombia, es cómo no se ha podido consolidar la democracia como régimen o como mentalidad. Es muy notorio también que en el terreno de la integración nacional y las diferencias, se resolvían mediante el exterminio, la cárcel, el exilio o la violencia. Otro de los elementos de análisis que surgen ante la interpretación de un siglo de procesos políticos del país, es que la guerra ha sido un elemento o un factor consubstancial de la constitución de la identidad y de su nacionalidad, y de otro lado, que la legalidad y la ilegalidad, la institucionalidad y las violencias, la democracia y la anarquía han convivido en lo que en los últimos años se ha concebido desde la sociología política como el “Almedrón” o sea, una coexistencia del orden y la violencia, o de lo funcional racional con formas de irracionalidad. (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 16-17).

<sup>11</sup> Explosivas e frequentes guerras civis, envolvendo porção considerável da população, alternaram-se com breves períodos de paz durante todo o século XIX. Tal rivalidade cristalizou um sistema bipartidário, que [...] resiste há mais de cento e cinquenta anos.”

In the Constitución de Rionegro, originally published in 1863, the states that made up Colombia at that time - namely Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, Panama, Santander, and Tolima - now enjoy broad sovereignty, showing the decentralization established in the regime country's political system. In that same constitutional charter, the need was established that these states should be based on a “popular, elective, representative, alternative and responsible government.” (COLOMBIA, 1863, our translation<sup>12</sup>). The post-1848 world was striding towards a new democratic and liberal political standard, and Colombia was not exempt from this reality<sup>13</sup>. The reforms that inaugurated this liberal order ended up consolidating political parties and promoting the growth of democratic societies. Thus, the corporate and hierarchical participation of Colombian citizens in the country's politics in the early 19th century will give way to more effective participation in liberal Colombia. In addition, the effective extinction of the slave system in Colombia would be established. Freedom becomes a central element in the country and in its Constitution.

Article 15. It is an essential and invariable basis of the Union between States, the recognition and guarantee by the General Government and the Governments of each and every State, of the individual rights that belong to the inhabitants and passers-by in the United States of Colombia, to know:

1<sup>st</sup> The inviolability of human life; by virtue of which the General Government and that of the States undertake not to enact the death penalty in their laws.

2<sup>nd</sup> Not to be condemned to corporal punishment for more than ten years.

3<sup>rd</sup> Individual freedom; that it has no more limits than the freedom of another individual; that is, the ability to do or omit everything that the execution or omission of which does not result in harm to another individual or to the community.

[...]

6<sup>th</sup> The absolute freedom of the press and of the circulation of printed matter, national or foreign.

7<sup>th</sup> The freedom to express your thoughts orally or in writing without any limitation.

8<sup>th</sup> The freedom to travel in the United States territory and to leave it, without the need for a passport or permission from any peacetime authority (COLOMBIA, 1863, our translation<sup>14</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> Gobierno popular, electivo, representativo, alternativo y responsable.

<sup>13</sup> Dedicado a discurrir sobre os padrões políticos da Europa do século XIX, João Fábio Bertonha (2005) evidencia que a Revolução Francesa representou um momento único na história política ocidental, com o rompimento do próprio conceito de político que havia anteriormente e o advento de um novo. Novos padrões se afirmariam, os quais questionavam as ideias que regiam e justificavam o poder no período anterior (como o “direito divino dos reis”). O povo como fonte última do poder, a democracia representativa, a igualdade jurídica entre todos os cidadãos passou a formar a base da idealização política a partir de então, com reflexos imediatos nas estruturas de poder dos Estados europeus e do mundo como um todo.

<sup>14</sup> Artículo 15. Es base esencial e invariable de la Unión entre los Estados, el reconocimiento y la garantía por parte del Gobierno general y de los Gobiernos de todos y cada uno de los Estados, de los derechos individuales que pertenecen a los habitantes y transeúntes en los Estados Unidos de Colombia, a saber:

1.º La inviolabilidad de la vida humana; en virtud de lo cual el Gobierno general y el de los Estados se comprometen a no decretar en sus leyes la pena de muerte.

2.º No ser condenados a pena corporal por más de diez años.

Would the freedom granted to Colombian society and the institutionalization of the end of slavery be followed by social inclusion projects? Or would ethnic and cultural segregation prevail in relation to Amerindians and Afro-descendants? Questions of this kind can also be applied to other Latin American countries, in which a similar scenario has taken place: the social marginalization of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities. Much of the freedmen would remain on the farms as servile labor. They would be lessees subordinate to Colombian farmers, who imposed abuses and arbitrariness. In fact, the situation of poor Colombians is similar to that of Paraguayan yerba mate producers, since both were subordinated to an almost slave regime led by the demands of the foreign market (KALMANOVITZ, 1997).

After the 1863 Constitution, some social and political reforms were established in the country, which caused some transformations in the nation, in political institutions and in citizenship in general, because it was intended to change the mentalities of the inhabitants in the country, to overcome the Catholic and Hispanic past and constituting a nation oriented towards work, capital ethics and production. Among other objectives, economic development was fostered and cultural progress was encouraged, by decreeing secular and free education, increasing literacy and incorporating the country into the vanguard and currents of thought worldwide (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 14-15, our translation<sup>15</sup>).

Between 1860 and 1880, Western regimes adopted liberalism as a guiding principle for state policies; governments began to subordinate themselves to the country's economic interests, continuously seeking to respect the liberal ideal of *Laissez Faire*. This principle of the minimum state would also be introduced in Colombia at the end of the 19th century, when the country's coffee economy would be guided by the laws of the international market. From then on, the Colombian State's interference in private life would be restricted and the freedom of individuals to lead themselves would be defended. In the 19th century Brazil, the thought of Tavares Bastos (1839-1875) would gain prominence, whose work *The Province* (1870) -

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3.º La libertad individual; que no tiene más límites que la libertad de otro individuo; es decir, la facultad de hacer u omitir todo aquello de cuya ejecución u omisión no resulte daño a otro individuo o a la comunidad.

[...]

6.º La libertad absoluta de imprenta y de circulación de los impresos, así nacionales como extranjeros.

7.º La libertad de expresar sus pensamientos de palabra o por escrito sin limitación alguna.

8.º La libertad de viajar en el territorio de los Estados Unidos, y de salir de él, sin necesidad de pasaporte ni permiso de ninguna autoridad en tiempo de paz. (COLOMBIA, 2018)

<sup>15</sup> Tras la Constitución de 1863, en el país se establecieron algunas reformas sociales y políticas que causaron algunas transformaciones políticas y en la ciudadanía en general, porque se pretendió cambiar las mentalidades de los habitantes en el territorio del país, superar el pasado católico e hispánico y constituir una nación orientada al trabajo, la ética capital y la producción. Entre otros objetivos, se fomentó el desarrollo económico y se aliento el progreso cultural, al decretar la eucación laica y gratuita, aumentar la alfabetización e incorporar el país a las vanguardias y corrientes depensamiento a nivel mundial (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 14-15).



produced during the monarchical regime of Pedro II - would stand out for defending the country's decentralization, claiming the implantation of a federalist system. Thus, Tavares Bastos represented the advent of liberal ideals in Brazil. In fact, his analyzes are part of this liberal context that characterized Latin America at the end of the 19th century.

Evidently, this period of implantation of political liberalism in a large part of the West coincided with the moment of the advent of liberal capitalism in Colombia, when the country would actually enter the world market. The Colombian economy would stand out for exports of primary products - especially cotton, indigo and tobacco -, growing by about 29% between 1850 and 1885 (KALMANOVITZ, 1997). A large amount of the country's agricultural production was consumed by European or American industries, returning to Colombia in a processed manner. Consubstantially formed by immigrants of German and Jewish origin, a strong bourgeoisie would be formed in the final decades of the 19th century, contributing to modify customs and consumption patterns in the Colombian nation.

The opposition to this liberal model would be composed of an agrarian, Catholic and Hispanic caste, known as **La Regeneración**. An opposition between liberals and protectionists would be established, a scenario that would reproduce throughout the American context. However, the conflicts that developed between 1850 and 1880 should not be seen as a revolutionary dichotomy between liberals and conservatives, as Jaime Jaramillo Uribe (n/d) does. The liberal reforms in this context would be reversed with a civil war in 1885, whose reversal would be realized with the 1886 Constitution. Thus, the liberal measures inaugurated with the **Constitución de Rionegro** would be revoked, emerging a centralist, authoritarian and presidential regime. A new period would install itself in the History of Colombia:

Undoubtedly, there were many contradictions that did not overcome radical liberals, among them, the privileges of power given the relations between the classes and the bureaucracy; fraud in the electoral system; disputes over regional sovereignties; the pluralism of a culture anchored in miscegenation; the demands of the world economy; the construction of the political community and the autonomy of individual and civil liberties; the control of smuggling, weapons and the problem of punishment and the death penalty, among other things. These contradictions were exploited by the conservatives in the opposition, who encouraged implicitly or head-on through the press and public opinion, the discredit of the radical project and encouraged the crisis that resulted in a civil war in 1885, which defeated them and established a conservative regime in the hands of Rafael Núñez and Miguel Antonio Caro. Núñez and Caro conceived their political reform as Regeneración and these two conservatives embarked on the path of a “dystopia” that they considered, among many other projects, the return to the Spanish heritage, centralization, the sacredness of the country, the censorship of the press, the freedoms, the containment of political opposition, as well as imposing a presidential regime

that limited the democracy defended by liberals through the 1863 Constitution (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 38, our translation<sup>16</sup>).

## La regeneración

During the final decades of the 19th century, especially after 1880, the Christian West will undergo a process of political secularization. Many of the governments that until then were linked to the Church began to sever their relations with that institution, tending to become secular<sup>17</sup>. Cemeteries and marriages are subject to the jurisdiction of the State, which needs to guarantee cultural tolerance for its increasingly diverse population. Thus, cultural and religious hybridization phenomena become legitimate in this new society that claims to be tolerant and secular<sup>18</sup>. This is the trend that is becoming more and more routine in Western countries.

However, a very different picture will still prevail in Colombia after 1885, when the ideals of a medieval Spanish Christianity came to reign. After all, “[...] the conservatives appealed to the Catholic *ethos* led by supporters of *Regeneración*, who appealed to the citizens' obedience and submission, supported further by the heritage of the Spanish medieval Christian world” (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 39, our translation<sup>19</sup>). **Regeneración** consisted of a regime and a political-cultural project that led the Colombian state between 1885 and 1902. The period begins with the “moral restoration” proposed by the conservatives, reaching the “War of the Thousand Days” (1899-1902), which was responsible for overthrowing the *Regeneración* regime. As sociologist Darío Mesa (1982, p. 90 *apud* MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 41-42) suggests, the political leaders of this conservative group only knew how to maintain power through client relationships. When we look back, post-1885 Colombia corresponded to an eminently rural country, a land of warlords, civil wars and local chiefs.

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<sup>16</sup> Sin embargo, muchas fueron las contradicciones que no superaron los liberales radicales, entre ellas, los privilegios del poder dada las relaciones entre las clases y la burocracia; el fraude en el sistema electoral; las disputas de las soberanías regionales; el pluralismo de una cultura anclada en el mestizaje; las demandas de la economía mundial; la construcción de comunidad política y la autonomía de las libertades individuales y civiles; el control del contrabando, las armas y el problema del castigo y la pena de muerte, entre otras. Estas contradicciones fueron aprovechadas por los conservadores en la oposición, quienes alentaron soterrada o de frente a través de la prensa y la opinión pública, el descrédito del proyecto radical y alentaron la crisis que derivó en una guerra civil en el año de 1885, que los derrocaba e instauraba el régimen conservador de la mano de Rafael Núñez y Miguel Antonio Caro. Núñez y Caro concibieron su reforma política como *Regeneración* y estos dos conservadores emprendieron el camino de una “disutopía” que consideraba entre muchos otros proyectos, la vuelta a la herencia Española, la centralización, la sacralización del país, la censura a la prensa, la disminución de las libertades, la contención de la oposición política, como también imponía un régimen presidencialista que limitaba la democracia refrendada por los liberales a través de la Constitución de 1863 (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 38).

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see Giacomo Marramao (1997).

<sup>18</sup> We use the term “cultural hybridism” based on the concept of Peter Burke (2003).

<sup>19</sup> [...] los conservadores apelaron al *ethos* católico liderado por los adeptos de la *Regeneración*, quienes apelaron a la obediencia y a la sumisión de los ciudadanos, apoyados además en la herencia del mundo cristiano medieval español (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 39).

The Regeneration period was generated from a civil war in 1885, which “boosted the manor farm sector led by Miguel Antonio Caro and Rafael Núñez, and imposed a regime that was called 'The power of grammarians'” (MUÑOZ, 2016, pp. 44-45; our translation<sup>20</sup>). As Malcolm Deas (2006) complements, Colombian scholars - a kind of university intelligentsia - would be responsible for entering political power during this period of Colombian history. And, in fact, the control of education proved to be fundamental for the maintenance of political hegemony. As presented by Aline Helg (2001), Colombian schools had their programs defined in line with the political regime in force. The political patronage established by the conservatism of the *Regeneración* came to have an influence on the school education of the young Colombian, leading him to be colluding with caudillismo and nepotist phenomena. The rulers who ended up composing the *Regeneración* saw others - that is, non-Catholics and non-conservatives - as absolute enemies, who should be exterminated from the national territory.

The *Regeneración* used Catholic rhetoric and under its guise it stimulated a policy of extermination that included its maintenance in power through electoral fraud and corruption and even with the slogan of a homeland, a faith, a nation, a citizen, primarily Catholic and conservative. The peculiarity of the *Regeneración's* domination and political control was to isolate liberals by all means from the political space and to combat the ideas of *Laissez Faire*, federalism, administrative decentralization, individual freedoms and secularization of the country, or all those ideologies that were close to modernity and the political revolution (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 46-47, our translation<sup>21</sup>).

When analyzing the 1886 Constitution, its religious and unitary character is immediately apparent. After all, its first article ratifies Colombia's centralism: “The Colombian Nation is reconstituted in the form of a unitary Republic” (COLOMBIA, 1886, our translation<sup>22</sup>). As defined in Article 194, Governors would be appointed by the central government, being the mediators of the presidential power and the power in the Departments.

*Article 195.* The Governor is responsible for:

1<sup>st</sup> To carry out and ensure that the Government's orders are carried out in the Department;

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<sup>20</sup> [...] impulso el sector de la hacienda señoral liderada por Miguel Antonio Caro y Rafael Núñez, e impuso un régimen que se denominó “El poder de los gramáticos” [...] (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 44-45).

<sup>21</sup> La *Regeneración* utilizó la retórica católica y bajo su ropaje alento una política de exterminio que incluía su manetimiento en el poder mediante el fraude electoral y la corrupción e incluso con la consigna de una patria, una fe, una nación, un ciudadano, primordialmente católico y conservador. Lo peculiar de la dominación y el control político de la *Regeneración* fue aislar por todos los medios del espacio político a los liberales y combatir las ideas del *Laissez Faire*, el federalismo, la descentralización administrativa, las libertades individuales y la secularización del país, o todas aquellas ideologías que eran cercanas a la modernidad y la revolución política (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 46-47).

<sup>22</sup> La Nación Colombiana se reconstituye em forma de República unitaria (COLOMBIA, 1886).

2<sup>nd</sup> To direct administrative action in the Department, appointing and separating its agents, reforming or revoking their acts and dictating the necessary measures in all branches of the Administration.

3<sup>rd</sup> Take the voice of the Department and represent it in political and administrative matters.

4<sup>th</sup> Assist justice to the terms determined by the law.

5<sup>th</sup> Exercise the right of surveillance and protection over official corporations and public establishments (COLOMBIA, 1886<sup>23</sup>).

The War of the Thousand Days, fought between 1899 and 1902, expressed antagonism among Colombian ideological forces. It represented the growing dissatisfaction of liberals and moderate conservatives in the face of fraud in the electoral system, the tightening of censorship of the press and abuses of coffee export taxes. The founder of the journal **El Spectador**, Fidel Cano Gutiérrez, would strongly oppose the restrictions imposed on the Colombian press. For Muñoz (2016, p. 48), the law of May 6, 1888, known as **Ley de los Caballos** - by which the president was given wide powers, who could consider what crimes were against society and who should be penalized and shot - would be the most authoritarian law of the period of the *Regeneración*. The political authoritarianism established would be one of the reasons that would instigate the War of the Thousand Days.

[...] it was Miguel Antonio Caro's ultra-Catholic rhetoric, his intransigence and intolerance that generated disagreements and quarrels and it was even his political attitude that fueled the war conflagration. Opposition sectors, both radical liberals and moderate conservatives, when excluded and marginalized from the game and control of political power found themselves in the need to rise through words and then with weapons due to the systematic persecution and liquidation within the political order supported by the leaders and directors of *Regeneración* (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 46, our translation<sup>24</sup>).

The rise of the 20th century signaled the end of the civil war, closing a cycle that resulted in the loss of Panama in 1903 and the emergence of Rafael Reyes (1904-1909) to power, which sought to be a national reconciler.

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<sup>23</sup> *Artículo 195*. Son atribuciones del Gobernador:

1<sup>a</sup> Cumplir y hacer que se cumplan en el Departamento las órdenes del Gobierno.

2<sup>a</sup> Dirigir la acción administrativa en el Departamento, nombrando y separando sus agentes, reformando o revocando los actos de éstos y dictando las providencias necesarias en todos los ramos de la Administración.

3<sup>a</sup> Llevar a voz del Departamentoy representarlo en asuntos políticos y adminsitrativos.

4<sup>a</sup> Auxiliar la justicia en los términos que determine la ley;

5<sup>a</sup> Ejercer lo derecho de vigilancia y protección sobre las corporaciones oficiales y establecimientos públicos. (COLOMBIA, 1886)

<sup>24</sup> [...] fue la retórica ultra-católica de Miguel Antonio Caro, su intransigencia e intolerancia la que generó las desavenencias y desacuerdos e incluso fue su actitud política la que atizó la conflagración bélica. Sectores de oposición tanto liberales radicales como conservadores moderados, al ser excluidos y marginados del juego y control del poder político se vieron en la necesidad de alzarse a través de las palabras y luego con las armas debido a la sistemática persecución y liquidación dentro del orden político respaldado por los líderes y dirigentes de la *Regeneración*. (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 46)

## From republicanism to proto-fascism

[...] the War of the Thousand Days was not a palace war, large low sectors of the population were involved and it can even be said that through it, there were inclusions and the rise of the lower classes of Colombian society. As a “reparation war”, the war conflagration restructured the power game of the Colombian political system. The war not only caused the loss of part of the national sovereignty - Panama - but also made the country’s geography visible and fostered the rise of regional elites (MUÑOZ, 2016, p.51, our translation<sup>25</sup>).

With the rise of Rafael Reyes to power in 1904, whose program was based on the motto “More administration, less politics”, the objective was to promote the political inclusion of liberal minorities, state modernization and national integration. Reyes instigated political decentralization, drawing a break with the previous period. The project called *Republicanism* would emerge on the Colombian political scene, formulated by Carlos E. Restrepo in *Orientación Republicana*. This new project provided for State intervention in the social field, especially with the aim of controlling the masses and social conflicts generated by the proletarianization and massification of society (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 53). As a further president, Restrepo intended that the government of Reyes be able to solve the problems accumulated in Colombia, especially with regard to its social plan.

Intervening in society and helping the citizen became an important way of integrating Colombians in the process of organization and modernization of the country - a fundamental issue after years of socioeconomic restrictions. Thus, liberalism and capitalism were articulated by the project of *Republicanism*. Despite the liberal left-wing government of Alfonso López Pumarejo, extreme right tendencies would emerge in Colombian politics under the proto-fascist regimes of Eduardo Santos (1938-1942) and Laureano Gómez (1949-1953). For Muñoz (2016), these right-wing governments imposed the second *Regeneración* on the country. In conclusion, “On June 13, 1953, a coup d’état by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla demonstrated the inconsistencies such as the incapacities with which the civilian political elites of Colombia had led and conducted the country in 50 years” (MUÑOZ, 2016, page 57, our translation<sup>26</sup>).

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<sup>25</sup> “[...] la Guerra de los Mil Días no fue una guerra palaciega, se vieron involucrados amplios sectores bajos de la población e incluso se puede afirmar que a través de ella, hubo inclusiones y ascensos de las clases más bajas de la sociedad colombiana. Como “guerra reparación”, la conflagración bélica reestructuró el juego de poder del sistema político colombiano. La guerra propició no solamente la pérdida de un parte de la soberanía nacional – Panamá – sino también, visibilizo igualmente la geografía del país y fomento el ascenso de las elites regionales” (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 51).

<sup>26</sup> El 13 de junio de 1953, un golpe de Estado propiciado por el General Rojas Pinilla demostraba las incoherencias como las incapacidades con que las elites políticas civilistas de Colombia habían liderado y conducido el país en 50 años (MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 57).

## Final considerations

Our work was based on the text of R. R. Muñoz (2016), contained in the important collection about the History of Latin America directed by professors Marcela Cristina Quinteros and Luiz Felipe Viel Moreira. Many difficulties appeared during the writing process, especially with regard to the scarcity of material available in Brazil. In our attempt, we sought to produce a didactic text, the purpose of which was to highlight the gaps in the history of Colombia and the multiplicity of themes available for study.

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## How to quote this article

MULZA, Giovana Eloá Mantovani. Por uma história crítica da Colômbia (1853-1953). **Rev. Sem Aspas**, Araraquara, v. 8, n. 2, p. 193-208, jul./dez. 2019. e-ISSN: 2358-4238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29373/sas.v8i2.13037>

**Submitted:** 12/10/20219

**Required revisions:** 30/11/2019

**Approved:** 08/12/2019

**Published:** 30/12/2019