

MILITARY TRAJECTORIES IN THE AGE OF INDEPENDENCE: BETWEEN PROSOPOGRAPHS AND NARRATIVES

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In this issue, as we have been doing intermittently, *Almanack* presents his readers with another Fórum, composed of a central article and two commentators, around a common theme, this time the presence and role of the military and Napoleonic agents in the independence of the Latin America. The close partnership that *Almanack* develops with the Brazilian Society for the Study of the XIXth Century (SEO) has provided a privileged opportunity for the Fórum to be held in person. This is true again: the original versions of the texts published here were presented and debated at the international seminar that SEO, held in Natal, RN, November 2018. The central text of Professor Patrick Puigmal of the Universidad de Los Lagos (Chile) puts on screen an effort of more than twenty years of research by a large continental network of researchers, revolving around the presence of the military graduates of the Napoleonic battles in the Latin American independence processes and in the initial construction of the respective national states. The proposal offered advances, through the qualified debate of the commentators, to themes that go far beyond the temporality addressed - the experience of Latin American independence - to reach other fields and subjects extremely dear for historians. In the first place, it is necessary to mention the

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richness and heuristic potentiality of prosopographic studies, the so-called “collective biographies”, for historical research. Above all, the potential offered by the research product described in the article - a vast and detailed dictionary composed of biographies of Napoleonic soldiers who came to America throughout the Independence process - stands out as a fruitful way to think about independence in broad scope, going beyond the limited and limiting canons of “national history” that still persist in the treatment of the subject.

On the other hand, it is relevant to emphasize that the biographical dimension, a challenge as difficult as it is stimulating for historians, always invites us to think about the classic theme of the individual’s role in history, the complexity and uncertainty of choices, the human density of trajectories. Thus punctuated the commentators José Iran Ribeiro and Lucia Bastos Neves, enriching and problematizing the main text. In addressing this Fórum to our readers, it is worth remembering a third dimension, which acquires, at present, crucial importance: the imperative and irreplaceable need for the establishment and consolidation of international networks of researchers, such as the result of which we are now enjoying, if we wish our works reach, with data and empirical density, the broad horizon that we project as necessary to a renewed historiography.

As the by-centennial commemorations of Latin American independence approach, being our countries immersed in a disturbing political context affecting our common destiny, all these dimensions acquire intense relevance. We hope the discussion of this Fórum will signal our concerns to our readers, raising inspiring new agendas and shared research experiences.

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