

From Seaman João Cândido to the Black Admiral: memorial conflicts in the construction of the hero of a centenary revolt

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RESUMO

Este artigo discute a consolidação da Revolta da Chibata (Rio de Janeiro, 1910) como um tema da memória nacional brasileira, através da análise de diferentes momentos e tentativas de recuperação, apropriação e de comemoração do levante. Discuto como a edificação do marinheiro negro João Cândido como um herói nacional foi, ao longo do século XX, um processo complexo, que revela valores de diferentes temporalidades, contextos e lugares sociais. Analisando três níveis de memória – coletiva, nacional e individual –, busco compreender como as celebrações relacionadas a essa revolta revelam também violências, silêncios e esquecimentos, ao mesmo tempo em que embates são travados na procura por reconhecimento e legitimação de um ícone na época da celebração de seu centenário.

Palavras-chave: Revolta da Chibata; memórias; Marinha; Herói Nacional; questões raciais.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the consolidation of the “Chibata Revolt” (“The Revolt of the Whip”) (Rio de Janeiro, 1910) as a theme in Brazilian national memory, through the analysis of different moments and attempts at the restoration, appropriation and commemoration of the rising. I discuss how the building of the black sailor João Cândido as a national hero was a complex process during the twentieth century, which reveals values of different temporalities, contexts and social places. Analyzing three levels of memory – collective, national and individual –, I seek to understand how the celebrations related to this revolt also revealed violence, silence and forgetfulness, at the same time that clashes occur in the search for the recognition and legitimacy of an icon in the celebration of its centenary.

Keywords: Chibata Revolt (“The Revolt of the Whip”); memories; Navy; National hero; racial questions.

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May 2010. President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, at the end of his mandate, celebrated the launching in Pernambuco of the oil tanker *João Cândido*.¹ The Petrobras ship was applauded as a symbol of national pride and received, against the wishes of the Ministry of War, the name of first class seaman João Cândido Felisberto (1880-1969), leader of a revolt of sailors which had occurred one hundred years before. The black sailor João Cândido continues to be the most remembered figure in this movement, while at the same time the history of his life reveals different memorial combats, involving the adhesion of politicians, different currents of social and black movements, but also controversies, especially in relation to the institution of origin, the Brazilian navy.

The construction of the personality of João Cândido dates to the events of the night of 22 November 1910, when a group of more than one thousand enlisted sailors from the Ministry of War rebelled in Guanabara Bay, taking control of the most important ships in the fleet at the time, notably the battleships *Minas Gerais*, *São Paulo* and the scout *Bahia*, directing the guns of these ships against the federal capital. The sailors, most of whom were black, *pardos* and from the North and Northeast of Brazil, demanded better conditions and the end of corporal punishments, especially the abolition of the whip (*chibata*).²

The rebellion last approximately five days and mobilized society and the opinion of the time. Parts of the press were sympathetic to the sailors, as well as certain parliamentarians, and the government ended up giving an amnesty to the rebels.³ Nevertheless, a few days later the state authorized the publication of a decree that allowed the removal from the Navy of persons considered 'harmful to discipline' on board ships (Decree 8400, Nov. 28, 1910). Approximately one thousand sailors were dismissed from the Navy by the beginning of December causing an atmosphere of suspicion among the subalterns and officers on navy ships. In this context, a second rebellion broke out in the Naval Battalion, which was rapidly massacred by the official forces of the Brazilian republic under the power of a state of siege. Various arrests were made and the ship *Satélite* was prepared to deport 491 people to the north of Brazil, amongst whom were sailors and other representatives of the poorer classes, identified as 'vagabonds, prostitutes and army soldiers,' many of whom died during the journey because of bad conditions or were executed. In another measure aimed at extermination, Navy authorities incarcerated sailors and naval marines in prisons in naval complex on Ilha das Cobras during Christmas 1910. Most of the prisoners died within three days due to the lack of fresh air, aggravated by the adding of a lime

solution in the cells, and from dehydration due to the heat. In one cell which contained 18 people, only two men survived, the naval soldier João Avelino Lira and the seaman João Cândido. Two years later a Council of War was formed to verify the participation of the November rebels in the December 1910 revolt. 70 men were summoned, but only 10 appeared, the others were said to be “disappeared, shot, dead from sunstroke.” João Cândido and his nine companions present were absolved.⁴

This set of facts became known to Brazilian historiography as *Revolta da Chibata* (the Revolt of the Whip in English), the title of the classic work by the journalist Edmar Morel published in 1959 (Morel, *op. cit.*, 2009). It involved an exemplary case of the use of violence by the state to repress rebels, of a revolt that revealed the contradictions of the young Brazilian republic, an attempt by enlisted sailors to gain expression for themselves. This was an event in the historic sense of the word, capable of dividing time between the before and afterwards, revealing social mechanisms that were apparently little visible and becoming remembered and ‘celebrated’ afterwards in different manners.⁵ Its construction as a historic object – as well as the recovery of João Cândido in national memory – reveals the existence of various memorial layers and forms of appropriating an event. Both the silences and the need to talk are dimensions present in the violence of the event.⁶

This article intends to discuss to what extent the need to recall an event and a hero is marked by various forms of forgetting – provoked by forms of authoritarianism, by choices or crystallizations. First, I will show how the memory of the Chibata Revolt was present in a series of cultural manifestation at the beginning of the twentieth century, revealing a social need to revive and to understand the events, despite the bad feeling that can be caused. Following this, I analyze the conflict between those who desired to commemorate the revolt and celebrate its greatest hero – especially leftwing writers who, like Edmar Morel, tried to give it a new role in the history of Brazil – and those who, to the contrary, tried to make it seem as if it had never happened – such as police and naval authorities. Finally, I will try to understand the recovery of João Cândido by other more contemporary actors, such as social movements and black movements, and the creation of places of memory. In the same way, knowing that memory is also a form of selection,⁷ I listen to the voices contained in the accounts of the descendants of two rebel seamen, the children of João Cândido and Adalberto Ferreira Ribas, as well as the statement of a former navy officer who became interested in the question. The memory of this event thus participates in its own history and there is much to say about

it between its first appearances in popular culture and the most recent speeches of President Lula.

FROM IMMEDIATE MEMORY TO FORGETTING: THE EVENTS AS
CELEBRATED BY POPULAR CULTURAL PROJECTS AT THE BEGINNING OF
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Between the end of November and the beginning of December 1910, the black composer and clown Eduardo das Neves (1874-1919), also known as Dudu das Neves and Diamante Negro, wrote the canzonet *Os Reclamantes* about the sailors' revolt.⁸ In this the despair of the inhabitants of Rio, who fled from possible bombardments, is portrayed with humor, concretizing a second moment in the reception of the event. The compositor exalts João Cândido, 'a sailor with an opinion,' contributing, along with other organs of the press who called him 'admiral' very early on,⁹ to his transformation from someone anonymous into someone famous. Nevertheless, the main moment highlighted in the canzonet is the return to order after the November Revolt, perhaps as a form of avoiding problems with the authorities who at that time used to censor some popular cultural manifestations with police action.¹⁰

The 1910 sailors revolt has also been used as a theme in the Brazilian cinema since its birth. In November of that year three documentary films about the subject were recorded and it also inspired the creation of a short silent fiction film between 1910 and 1912 entitled *A vida de João Cândido* (The Life of João Cândido).¹¹ This film was one of the first Brazilian cinema productions censored. It is believed to have vanished, and there is little information about its content. A note published in *Correio de Manhã* on 23 January 1912 said that the Rio de Janeiro police chief had:

prohibited its exhibition, ordered the advertising posters to be apprehended and gave orders to arrest the distributors of these posters. And with this Sr. Belizário made this his objective, because if he had not done so, perhaps by this moment all of Rio who be in revolution ... to see the film that was being shown on Rua Marechal Floriano.

A year after the banning of the film, in January 1913, the Spinelli Circus organized a session "in honor of the former sailor João Cândido" (*O Paiz*, Jan. 24, 1913). One of the principal attractions of the Spinelli Circus was the black clown Benjamin de Oliveira (1870-1954), a slave who had fled at the age of 12

from a plantation in Pará de Minas, a city of the state Minas Gerais, to join the circus world.¹² However, to continue to exist this type of circus also had to establish good relations with the authorities. Therefore, a few days before the announcement of the organization of the show in honor of João Cândido, the head of police in the federal district, Belizário Fernandes da Silva Távora, the same person who had banned the showing of the film about the life of the sailor, had been in the audience of one of the Spinelli Circus shows (*O Paiz*, Jan. 21, 1913).

The memories of João Cândido, the sailor

After the release of João Cândido by the military justice in December 1912, the journalist and writer Paulo Barreto, known as João do Rio, decided to publish a series of articles – in the format typical of the *feuilletons* of the time – in the periodical *Gazeta de Notícias* entitled “Memórias de João Cândido, o marinheiro.”¹³ Although *Gazeta* insisted on the authenticity of João Cândido’s writings, who is supposed to produced his ‘memories’ when interned in a mental hospital and in the Navy prison while he was awaiting trial, they were presumed to be the work of the columnist.¹⁴ Nevertheless, various things indicate to us that on the one hand João Cândido did without a doubt accompany the production of the chapters, adding to them much important information that only he or a very close colleague could have known, and that, on the other hand, he probably was not the only person responsible for the final text that was published, other people also modified it.¹⁵

We can divide the ‘Memories of João Cândido’ into three parts. First, he talks about his beginnings in the navy and his international voyages. His memories are thus like a ‘travel diary’ (first person narrative, chronological time, discontinuities and impressions of the Other). This type of text can be frequently encountered in publications of Navy officers, who usually give their texts, as did João Cândido, with a strong nationalist feeling. The specificity of the ‘Memories’ nevertheless resides, nevertheless, in the fact that the account is by an enlisted subaltern sailor, to whom very rarely the ‘place of writing’ is attributed.

Second, the ‘Memories’ narrate the facts of the sailors’ revolt from its organization to the amnesty. A series of information which only someone who had been on the ships could provide is given to the readers. João Cândido equally reveals various details, such as precise times, the names of the other ‘rebel commanders’ (as they were known in part of the press at the time) and

the movement of the ships. Here the text assumes the vigor typical of ‘war diaries,’ another type of narrative generally restricted to officers.

Finally, a third moment in João Cândido’s story fulfills the function of an accusation: he accuses the government of having contributed to the preparation of the December revolt in the Naval Battalion and as a conclusion he exposes his feeling of injustice in relation to his dismissal from the Navy. Telling, recalling, is also a form of accusation. Some points of the account coincide with other accounts by João Cândido during his life. Nevertheless, these narratives are not identical and we can find moments of discontinuities and the alteration of some references which leads us to think about the authenticity of his account as well as its contradictions and variations.¹⁶

However, shortly after being published by the press, the ‘Memories’ were forgotten. The first to become silent about this publication was João Cândido himself, who would not mention its existence to any of his biographers or interviewers, also stating that the manuscripts written in the hospital and the Navy prison had been destroyed (Morel, *op. cit.*, p.286). Nevertheless, rewritten and taken up in other discourses, these memories are evidence of the presence of the question in the first years of the twentieth century and collaborated to the construction of the character of the seaman in the collective memory, at the same time that the other leaders began to be forgotten.

FROM THE FIRST WRITTEN WORKS TO POLITICAL USES:

JOÃO CÂNDIDO AND THE VERSIONS OF THE CHIBATA REVOLT

The first works which took the side of the rebel sailors date from the 1930s, such as the book written in 1931 by the communist poet and French surrealist Benjamin Péret (1899-1959). Péret lived in Brazil between 1929 and 1931, for the first time, when he met the principal names of local modernism. However, he was arrested and expelled from the country for being seen as a “person dangerous to public tranquility.” During the period he collaborated with translations and wrote the preface to a work about the revolt of the Russia cruiser *Potemkim* in 1905.¹⁷ He saw the revolt of the Brazilian sailors as a *Tupiniquim* (Brazilian) version of the Russian mutiny. However, his book, which was entitled the ‘Black Admiral’ in honor of João Cândido, was never published because the manuscript was apprehended by Getúlio Vargas’ police and probably almost completely destroyed. Only four pages were found later

in the 1980s. Péret analyzes the revolt as an expression of the class struggle and calls on Brazilian workers to enter into a ‘revolutionary general strike.’

In 1934 another clandestine publication was issued in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, following to an extent the same direction as Benjamin Péret’s book. The author, using the pseudonym Benedito Paulo, was identified as the doctor Adão Pereira Nunes, also a writer and affiliated to the Brazilian Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Brasileiro* – PCB). Brazil is presented as ‘semi-colonial country,’ whose ‘oppressed people’ needed to know stories such as the sailors’ revolt in order to form a popular class consciousness.¹⁸ The text was fully reproduced in *Jornal do Povo*, a periodical directed by the humorist Apparácio Torelly (1895-1971), the so-called Barão de Itararé and also a member of the PCB,¹⁹ which indicates that the question interested the intellectuals of this group at the time. As a result of this publication an anecdote was registered which revealed the existence of the repression of this question: a journalist was said to have been kidnapped and physically assaulted by six navy officers. When he returned to the newsroom of his newspaper after recovering he placed a sign on the door of his office saying ‘enter without knocking.’²⁰

Nevertheless, João Cândido would also assume in the period an almost opposite political orientation: he was a sympathizer of *Ação Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Action), a movement with fascistic tendencies founded in 1932, whose slogan was ‘God, the Patria and the family.’²¹ João Cândido said that he had been personally approached by its leader Plínio Salgado and that he had joined the organization along with various other sailors and officers from the Navy (Morel, *op. cit.*, p.225-226). The fact that he had participated in a popular revolt which had made him a legitimate icon for leftwing intellectuals and politicians did not signify, however, that João Cândido was an assumed man of the left. To the contrary we should see him in his context and in his complexity as a historic agent.²²

The ‘Chibata Revolt’: the journalist and the sailor

While it was difficult to discuss the sailors’ movement until the 1930s, during the Getúlio Vargas’ *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) the subject appears to have disappeared from bookshops and public life. However, with the return to democracy, the question returned to the press and animated controversies involving Navy officers. The retired commander Luís Altran de Alencastro Graça reacted in a newspaper with a wide circulation to a report about the

memory of the sailors revolt published by the journalist Raimundo Magalhães Junior in *Diário de Notícias* in 1948. The officer said about João Cândido that: “if this unfortunate name belongs to history in the opinion of the illustrious journalist, who has so kindly taken on his cause, it should not be in the guise of a hero. It is better not to possess history in order not to confuse it with the annals of criminology.” (Cited by: Arias Neto, *op. cit.*, p.278). In 1949, Commander H. Pereira da Cunha published an ‘official version’ of the revolt in an issue of *Revista Marítima Brasileira*.²³

At the end of 1958 a well-known journalist in Rio de Janeiro decided to publish a book detailing his ten years of research related to the question. This was Edmar Morel (1912-1989) who published *A Revolta da Chibata* (Morel, *op. cit.*) in Rio de Janeiro. It became a landmark in the memory of the event, baptizing the rebellion and intermixing it at the same time with his own history.

The historic themes were frequently chosen by the reporter Morel and he used methods very close to those of the historian, such as printed sources in archives and press collections. However, he always presented himself as a journalist or reporter, assuming more easily the importance of the presence as a starting point. Moreover, while the author’s investigation process is close to the historian’s method, his writing is very different. While the historian feels it necessary to cite dates, make references to source, to interrupt his text with footnotes, Morel as a reporter prefers to privilege of the fluency of the narrative, which he believed should not be interrupted much by these type of references.²⁴ Nevertheless, even without showing proof of his relations with other schools of thought, he establishes dialogues with other lines of historiography, namely through the recovery of the figure of a ‘hero of the rabble,’ in his discourse. In this way, he proposes both a reading of ‘history seem from below’ and a biographic commitment which seeks to reveal the history of common but extraordinary men, a perspective created by English social history, as in the work E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, or in Italian micro-history, whose greatest reference is the work of Carlo Ginzburg.²⁵

In its first edition *A Revolta da Chibata* had 11 chapters which established in a chronological manner a recreation of the different moments of the rising, from the presentation of the subject in accordance to the author’s perspective to the repressive measures, also including the organization of the revolt and the press coverage at the time. Other chapters which told the history of the book and the life of João Cândido after the revolt were added. Edmar Morel also tells how when the work was almost finished he went to visit João Cândido

in his house in São João de Meriti, in the Baixada Fluminense region on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, bringing with him various object “to awaken memories” (Morel, *op. cit.*, p.245-246). João Cândido’s participation in the work is greater than that of a simple character. He also became a type of actor of his writings, calling the book “my history.”²⁶ The old sailor became a friend of the journalist, and the two were seen together in various parts of Rio and photographed beside each other a number of times. At the launch of the first edition of *A Revolta da Chibata*, the two men signed autographs together alongside the workers who had helped produce the book. The photograph shows João Cândido at 78, but still tall and slim, seen as a ‘more reserved,’ figure alongside Edmar Morel, who was 46, short (he was approximately 1.52m), described as a very friendly person, talkative and funny. The journalist and the sailor wrote dedications in the books:



The impact of the book was greater than expected. The press and the public received it in an enthusiastic manner and new generations were able to finally discover the history of the rising. In one month more than 275 articles were published by the Brazilian press (Morel, 2009, p.266). In December 1959 *A Revolta da Chibata* was, according to *O Globo* on 30 December, the third bestselling book, surpassed only by *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* by Jorge Amado

and *Bilhetinhos de Jânio* by J. Pereira. The work had other more pragmatic consequences for the life of João Cândido. In 1959 he was voted in the State Chamber of Rio Grande do Sul a retired sailor's pension, allowing him to give up the job of selling fish in the market in the center of Rio, where he had worked for 40 years (Morel, 2009, p.250-251).

In addition new responses were once again echoed among Navy officers. On 25 February 1960, Commander Oliveira Bello wrote a report about the life of João Cândido, which was published in the fourth edition of Edmar Morel's book under the title 'official version.' In the report the officer described João Cândido's origins, his entrance into the Navy, and the journeys he had made. He also gave a physical and psychological description of the sailor orientated by racial thought:

He is black, with black curly hair, dark eyes, tall and well nourished, an elusive look, ugly, a large mouth, walks sluggishly, introverted, with few words and gestures; all this is inherited from his parents. A hybrid temperament ... Vulgar and little developed intelligence, sly and cunning... (Bello, Luiz Alves de Oliveira. "Sucintos elementos...", In: Morel, 2009, *op. cit.* p.259-262)

The Chibata Revolt and the military coup

João Cândido became a figure who was particularly exploited by a new group of sailors, organized in the Association of Sailors and Naval Marines of Brazil (*Associação de Marinheiros e Fuzileiros Navais do Brasil* – AMFNB), created in 1962 in a context of the politicization of society and the fear, on both sides, of a coup d'état. The sailors' association demanded improvements in their conditions and the expansion of their civil rights, inserted in a more general scenario of demands which marked the João Goulart government (1961-1964).²⁷

On 25 March 1964, the anniversary of the association, the sailors organized a meeting that was held in the metallurgic trade union offices and ended with the imprisonment of various members (Capitani, *op. cit.*). However, as after the 1910 revolt, the imprisoned sailors and marines were amnestied by President João Goulart, a fact which was used, as we know, as one of the pretexts for the military coup a few days later (Rodrigues, 2004, *op. cit.*). João Cândido was present at the meeting. The carioca newspaper *Última Hora* published on 27 March 1964, with the title '1910 Revolt present in 1964,' a

photo of the former sailor at 84 wearing a suit, as he liked to do on those occasions, alongside the new leader of the sailors and marines, the so called Cabo Anselmo. The image reproduced together the two leaders of the enlisted men of the Navy, the past the present. A continuity can thus be implied between the two movements, at the same time that the conservative sectors of Brazilian society were warned about the possibility of a new rebellion.



However, other elements indicated that João Cândido and the 1964 sailors did not exactly share the same line of thought. João Cândido remained skeptical about the movement of the younger sailors since for him, “Sailors’ revolts only work at sea” (Morel, *op. cit.*, 2009, p.255). In this way he criticized the fact that the discourses and acts of the members of AMFNB reinforced political questions external to the naval world. The Association of Sailors and Naval Marines of Brazil was later much discredited and seen as a ‘black page’ in the history of Brazil, according to the immediate memory of the events. A year later the collaboration of the president of the association, Cabo Anselmo, with the Brazilian civil and military dictatorship was announced.

On 31 March 1964 army forces organized and overthrew the João Goulart government, implemented the ‘1st April revolution’ or the military coup as it became known. On 14 April of the same year, Edmar Morel heard on the radio that the ‘High Command of the Revolution’ had stripped him of his political

rights for 10 years. The principal reason for this act was the publication of *A Revolta da Chibata*. After this he could not vote, exercise a public function and had difficulties in working with the press. Nevertheless, he reacted with much humor to the loss of his rights. He had the decree suppressing his rights that had been published in *Diário Oficial* framed and hung in his office, saying that it was his more important ‘qualification’ (Almeida, 2009, *op. cit.*, p.551-560).

During the early years of the military regime the question of the sailors’ revolt was ‘removed’ in the same way, while João Cândido followed his life normally, living in his house in São João de Meriti, in the Baixada Fluminense region. His principal forms of distractions were religion – he had joined the Brazilian Methodist Church – and reading. On 6 December 1969, João Cândido died from lung cancer at the age of 89.

At the beginning of the 1970s the question was stimulated by other cultural manifestations, such as the samba *O mestre-sala dos mares*, recorded in 1975 by João Bosco and Aldir Blanc. The musicians stated that they had various problems with censorship. They had difficulty in understanding the requirements of the censors, until they received the following explanation, according to Aldir Blanc: “You are not understanding... You are changing words such as revolt, blood, etc., and it is not there where the difficulties are... ... The problem is this history of black, black, black...”²⁸ Some passages in the original lyrics were changed, with ‘blacks’ being replaced by ‘saints,’ ‘admiral’ by ‘traveler’ and ‘sorcerer’ by ‘sailor,’ keeping the original rhymes and meter and suggesting in their place figures of poetic language. The history of the composition provides us with an example of how censorship in the period could spread the official racist vision of the Brazilian dictatorship.

In 1986 the fourth edition of *A Revolta da Chibata* was issued. The context of re-democratization allowed the subject to be returned to, but the book generated new reactions on the part of Navy officers and in 1988 Vice-Admiral Hélio Leôncio Martins published a work, the fruit of his own research, entitled *A Revolta dos Marinheiros, 1910*, in the form of a response book or an updating of the official version of the Navy in a more elaborate and deeper form. The book was divided into three parts (the November rebellion, the December rebellion and the punishments) and intended to adopt a neutral position in relation to the movement and its consecrated denomination (the Chibata Revolt), refuting the recognition of João Cândido as its greatest leader and hero, as he explained:

This phase of life of the Brazilian Navy, with such transcendent consequences, suffers when it is analyzed and describes from a dual deformation. The officers, victims of physical aggression, from the brusque loss of discipline to which they were conditioned, the unjust, vehement attacks, from Congress and public opinion led by the press, by narrating and commenting on the facts occurred, principally clung to what they represented as primitive, enlisted, fierce, always maintaining a defensive attitude in relation to the honor of the Navy ... On the other hand, leftwing writers have using the rising, which was purely military, to transform it into a popular movement... (Martins, *op. cit.*, p.7-8).

THE PERSONAL TESTIMONIES OF THE NATIONAL HERO: VOICES AND PLACES OF MEMORY

The sailors' revolt also exists in the memory of individuals and groups close to the principal actors or those who claim affinity with the movement. The memory of the revolt is thus not only preserved in its 'written' dimension, but is also present in the words of different social actors, confirming its importance of the collective memory in the solidification of personal memories.²⁹

Vice-Admiral Hélio Leôncio Martins received me in his apartment in Copacabana on 9 August 2006. Leôncio Martins, who was 92 at the time of our meeting, is the son and grandson of Navy officers. He said that his father had watched a corporal punishment ceremony with the use of the *chibata* (whip), when he was still a naval cadet. According to the Vice-Admiral: "He managed to stand it, but he had a younger colleague, who was called Pareras, and who was a kid of 14, who fainted at the sight of the blood. That was the impression it gave, it was horrible."

Duality marked the thought of Vice-Admiral Martins. He divided the time between before and after the revolt and liked to separate the crews between different groups: the younger and the older, the good and the bad elements, as we can see in the following passage:

the men who went to the Navy were almost animals. It was the scum of humanity who accepted to be sailors. However, suddenly the ships began to be mechanized, from the second half of the nineteenth century. Then different people were needed. Even an expression was invented: before men of iron were needed for

wooden ships. Now, men were needed who were not of wood, but technicians, for iron ships.

According to this vision, the perpetuation of corporal punishments was a sign of Brazilian backwardness, but the effective suppression of punishments could only occur when crews were substituted. The contradiction between personnel and material, one of the arguments used by different authors, especially in the military, to explain the causes of the revolt has an origin in this type of reading.³⁰

In relation to the presence of racism in the Navy, the Vice-Admiral refutes the thesis that the Brazilian Armada was a racist institution. To the contrary he argues that the difficulties blacks had in rising above all had a social explanation, positioning himself in this way in relation to an important Brazilian debate which opposing social and racial exclusion:³¹

To enter the Naval School, you had to enter with an enormous investment ... In this way it drove away the poorest people and the blacks from the Navy. Thus, there existed this vision that blacks did not enter. I had three black colleagues in the Navy ... One had a terrible complex that he was not sent on voyages to the United States, he was taken off these. But he was not taken off because of this, he was taken because of the Americans. If he went there they would create problems, he would not be able to go to the same places as the other officers. But there was no prejudice ... There was never this prejudice in the Navy. The Naval College is full [of blacks]. Now it is difficult to enter ... the intellectual levels of blacks is still very low, because it is related to the economic level. So the Navy has this difficulty. The Naval College is an extremely difficult exam with 3000 candidates for 200 place. A very violent selection. The blacks are at disadvantage.

On 24 July 2002 I interviewed Adalberto Nascimento Cândido, the youngest child of João Cândido and Ana do Nascimento. 64 at the time of the interview, Candinho talked to me in the offices of the Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (ABI, the Brazilian Press Association), where he had worked since 1953 and where he had been given his nickname. He had joined ABI with the assistance of Edmar Morel, an active member of the association. Candinho did not dare to question his father much about the revolt, because, as he said: "My father was very closed in these aspects ... [But] when someone, journalists, looked for him, he told everything."

Adalberto Cândido also says that his father was sometimes recognized on the street. However the new descendants of João Cândido have difficulties in

obtaining recognition, as Candinho says about his own grandson: “My grandson, when his teacher talked about his father said: ‘I am his great-grandson.’ She said ‘that is not true.’ He had to bring a document.” This incident raises a more profound problem related to the recognition of the less privileged and Afro-Brazilian parts of society, because for the teacher from a public school it seemed very difficult to believe that one of her students could be a descendent of famous people, of characters and heroes from school history books.³²

Another daughter of João Cândido, Zeelândia Cândido, also sought to restore the memory of her father. Aged 78 when she gave the interview, Dona Zeelândia – as she was known – received me in her residence in São João de Meriti on 24 July 2002 (Zeelândia Cândido died in September 2006). She was the sixth child of João Cândido Felisberto and his second wife, Maria Dolores, who committed suicide when Zeelândia was only four. Zeelândia Cândido was very proud of the way her name was written, since it had been chosen by João Cândido himself, who had been inspired by a transatlantic liner called *Nova Zeelândia*, also spelt with two Es.

Her family moved to São João de Meriti when she was seven. According to Zeelândia, her father was in search of tranquility. At this time the periphery was calm, ‘almost without any political movements.’ She described João Cândido as a loving father, ‘the old fashioned type,’ a happy man who liked to sing and to dance, but who sometimes like to be by himself, to be quiet, a little sad, ‘perhaps thinking of the revolt and what he had experienced.’

In relation to the sociability of the former sailor, Dona Zeelândia remembered that when she was a girl, former sailors used to visit him to talk and to sing. She remembered part of a song written by them which celebrated the inversion of order imposed during the revolt, evoking the names of other ‘rebel officers:’ ‘It even had a refrain that they sang to my father which I still remember: ... During the revolt, João Cândido was the admiral, Avelino the chief officer and Gregório the commander. João Cândido might still remember that his name is recorded on the ship Minas Gerais...’.

The revolt is also a family affair for the descendants of another former sailor. On 12 September 2009, I interviewed in the company of the historian Marco Morel, in a restaurant on Saquarema beach, Marcos Valério Ribas and Adaleia Ribas Barbosa, 65 and 80 years old respectively, the children of Adalberto Ferreira Ribas, who participated in the revolt as an ‘artillery officer’ on the scout *Bahia*. Ribas was 19 in 1910. He was white, from Bahia and had joined the naval apprentice school in Salvador, at the age of 13 or 14, as a way

of escaping the seminary and the ecclesiastical career to which he was destined, according to what he told his children. He had a brother in the Navy, Beda Ferreira Ribas, who was a year older. It seems that Beda Ribas did not participate in the sailors' revolt and was promoted in the Navy and the Air Force, becoming an officer, while Adalberto was precociously removed from the institution for participating in the 1910 revolt.

Ribas was seen by his children as someone interesting, even heroic, with high self-esteem and who liked to talk and to tell stories about his life. Nevertheless, like João Cândido, he did not feel comfortable talking much about the revolt to his children, a silence that was perhaps justified by fear of persecution. He escaped from the imprisonments and deportations in December 1910 and did not present himself to the Council of War in 1912, although he had been summoned, fleeing instead to the interior of Santa Catarina. After that he assumed his principal profession: working as a teacher. In addition, he was a great admirer of French culture, as his children said at different moments of the interview. Actually, as they remembered the former seaman had taught all his students to sing the *Marseillaise* and to recite Victor Hugo's poems in French. More than the 'truth' of these account, which reveal to us projections and imagination, these references to French culture made by individuals from a poor origin in this context allow us to relativize a vision according to which Francophilia in Brazil was solely a feeling among the elites.

In relation to his political positioning, Ribas' children added an interesting element: like João Cândido, Adalberto Ferreira Ribas also participated in *Ação Integralista Brasileira*. During the conversation, Marcos Valério Ribas said that he had thought about entering with a request for indemnification from the Brazilian state in the name of his father and alongside the family of João Cândido and perhaps other rare sailors who had survived the persecutions, built a family and transmitted the memory of the 1910 revolt.

Places of memory for a national hero

In the 1990s and 2000s new cultural manifestations emerged in relation to the figure of João Cândido. Other publications and a new written memorial also appeared, motivated by research in the humanities (Almeida, 2009; Arias Neto, 2001; Morgan, 2001; Nascimento, 2002). Furthermore, João Cândido and the Chibata revolt returned to the scenario through films and plays.³³ He was also honored in physical spaces: his name baptized schools, roads and monuments. In São João de Meriti, the city where João Cândido had lived for

the last 39 years of his life, a road was named after him. Other cities also did this, such as Nova Iguaçu (in Rio de Janeiro State), Rio Pardo (Rio Grande do Sul, the sailor's native state) and Uberaba (Minas Gerais). João Cândido also had two schools named after him, one an Integrated Educational Center (*Centro Integrado de Educação – Ciep*) in São João de Meriti, and the Marinheiro João Cândido School in the district of Santa Cruz (Rio de Janeiro city). In March 2007 a *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto* (MTST – Homeless Workers Movement) choose the name the 'black admiral' to baptize an occupation of land measuring 1.2 million square meters in Itapecerica da Serra, on the outskirts of São Paulo. These places of memory allow us think, on the one hand of memorial crystallizations and cleavages and, on the other hand, of the forms of the inscription of the past in the present.³⁴

Parallel to this, the name of João Cândido was claimed by different spheres of social movements. Approximately 1500 sailors expelled from the Navy, many of whom were arrested and persecuted during the civil and military dictatorship, organized into two associations – UMNA (*Unidade de Mobilização Nacional pela Anistia* – National Mobilization Unity for Amnesty) and Modac (*Movimento Democrático pela Anistia e Cidadania* – Democratic Movement for Amnesty and Citizenship). They demanded a definitive amnesty and reintegration in the Navy for themselves, something which they have been achieving during recent governments. They have also demanded, along with the family of João Cândido, the patron of their movements, for the definitive amnesty for the sailor and his colleagues, as well as the due indemnification.

These movements have been reinforced by another significant current: black movements, which gained greater vigor in the 2000s. New activist programs were encouraged, giving rise to changes in legislation, such as Measure 63, dated 26 August 2002, which created the Diversity in University Program, a mechanism that legitimated racial and social quotas for entering public university and Law 10639, adopted in 9 January 2003, which made obligatory the inclusion of the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in schools in Brazil.

In this context Federal Law no. 11756, dated 23 July 2008 gave “post-mortem amnesty to João Cândido Felisberto and other participants in the movement.”³⁵ Thus, while João Cândido is a popular hero claimed by social movements, cultural manifestations and regional authorities, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, he has also been turned into a national hero, recognized by public authorities at the federal level. One of the final acts in his transfiguration into a national hero occurred on 20 November 2008, with the

inauguration of a three meter statue of the black admiral in Praça XV, in the port zone of the Rio de Janeiro, in the presence of President Lula, the Minister of Racial Equality, Edson Santos, and public and artistic personalities linked to black movement activism. The dates of the commemoration are not random: 20 November is marked by the anniversary of the death of Zumbi dos Palmares in 1695 and was chosen as the day of Black Consciousness, a bank holiday in some Brazilian cities. It replaced the former holiday of 13 May, the day of the abolition of slavery, considered by the black movements as a day symbolized by the concession of the elites in power and not as a significant day in the struggle of the black people. In his speech, Lula exalted the courage of the sailor and defended, at the time when the first black president had assumed power in the United States, a Brazil built on *mestiçagem* (racial intermixing). João Cândido thus moved closer to the sea, to the Brazilian navy complex and the fish market where he had worked after being expelled from the Navy.³⁶

Nevertheless, no one from the Navy was present at this inauguration. Since the Brazilian Navy does not support any of these places of memory, we can say that João Cândido has difficulty in getting his strongest identity recognized: the Brazilian sailor. On 9 March 2008 the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* published in a report on this subject an official communication from the Navy:

The Chibata Revolt ... was a sad episode in the history of the country and of the Navy of Brazil (MB) ... The MB has always had the firm conviction that questions involving any type of demand will obtain the due comprehension, recognition and support for higher decision, through the exercise of argumentation and above all dialogue between the parties, which is of fundamental importance for the proper exercise of leadership and for the establishment of times of loyalty. Notwithstanding the facts that caused that crisis, the movement cannot be considered as an 'act of bravery' or of a 'humanitarian nature.' Lives were sacrificed, material belonging to the Department of Finance damaged, and the integrity of the capital threatened. This Force believes that other forms of persuasion and convincing were not exhausted by the mutineers, for which reason the Chibata Revolt is considered to be an illegal rebellion, without any moral or legitimate basis, notwithstanding the undesirable and inadmissible breaching of hierarchy. In the history of Brazil many questions linked to humanitarian rights were resolved through legal paths, without too much haste. The abolition of slavery, a subject much more wide-ranging and of great importance on the scale of national values, was resolved in a gradual manner, initially through lesser laws, which complemented each other,

until the definitive law was achieved in May 1888. Whatever may have been the intentions of Mr. João Cândido Felisberto and the other mutineers who supported him, using the idea of the restoration of human dignity, the MB does not recognize any heroism in the actions of that movement. Official and trusted studies of the question have not even certified the true mentor of the revolt.

This form of thinking nevertheless runs against current historiographical currents, against social movements and the actions of recent Brazilian governments. It reveals the difficulties that the naval institution encounters in resolving a conflict between forgetting (amnesia) and pardon (amnesty).³⁷ The sailors were amnestied twice by political authorities, in 1910 and in 2008, by never by naval authorities. During their centenary, the history of the memory of the revolt of Brazilian sailors could not be untangled from memorial conflicts.

CONCLUSION: A HERO FOR WHAT AND FOR WHOM?

The history of the memorial of the sailors' revolt and the process of the transfiguration of João Cândido into a hero reveals various nuances regarding mechanisms of national memory in Brazilian society. First, it refers to the need to evoke history in different moments and by different actors, as a form of denouncing the continuity of institutionalized violence and revealing the capacity of 'common men' to react. This is the case of the first representations in theater and in the cinema; the actual writings of João Cândido; the first texts of leftwing writers and the expansive research of Edmar Morel; popular music and more recent representations; the convergence of social and black movements. It thus involves an event that belongs to the past, but is returned to in 'different presents' of Brazilian society, in the search to create experiences and models that serve in the combat of various times and movements, "to leave oneself and to go in search of the Other" (Todorov, *op. cit.*, p.32). The history of the Chibata Revolt is thus inscribed in a broader scenario of the search for citizenship.

Second, the memory of the revolt is not unique, thus the interest in studying it and integrating in the understanding of this event – a priori with a political nature. Thus, as there exist different versions of the event, studying its processes of construction seems to me to quite interesting and in this analysis the existence of other histories can be found, frequently forgotten, which relate to other demands. This is the case, though in a very different or even opposing

manner, of the memory of families of former rebels and Navy officers. The two groups seek a positive image and are concerned with the writing and the preservation of a 'glorious past.' Memory has to serve the groups, make them exist and provide them with the pride of belonging to a common past. Memorial demands are, thus, opposed to silences and can vary in accordance with the contexts: for the descendents of the sailors, speaking of the revolt these days is possible and desirable, different from their ancestors who often opted for silence.

Finally, for public authorities returning to the figure of João Cândido and the revolt is a form of responding to the needs of memory in relation to two types of victims of Brazilian history: those persecuted by military authoritarianism, and in particular the Afro-Descendents. Since the sailors were mostly black, *pardos* or mixeds and their primary demand was the abolition of the whip – symbols of the punishments to which slaves were submitted –, honoring João Cândido and remembering the Chibata Revolt is something that permits at the same time the denunciation and rewriting the history of slavery and its inheritances during the post-abolition period. Thus, the different places of memory of the Lula government dedicated to João Cândido (ships, statutes, laws) serve to transmit this message and to construct heroes for new generations; positive identifications for other 'victims' and their heirs these days. João Cândido did not substitute Zumbi, however, beyond all the polemics and despite the many names and histories of forgotten sailors, he allows the establishment of other types of analogies with the present time, principally due to his greater contemporaneity (20th century). These forms of honoring were both manners of dialoguing with the demands of social movements of the present and communication adopted by the Lula government.

NOTES

¹ Cf. www.monitormercantil.com.br/ (accessed on July 7, 2010).

² In relation to this revolt, see: ALMEIDA, Sílvia Capanema P. de. "Nous, marins, citoyens brésiliens et républicains": identités, modernité et mémoire de la révolte des matelots de 1910'. Doctoral dissertation in history. EHESS, Paris, 2009; ARIAS NETO, José Miguel. "Em busca da cidadania: praças da Armada nacional, 1867-1910". Doctoral dissertation. Departamento de História, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, 2001; MARTINS, Hélio Leôncio. *A revolta dos marinheiros, 1910*. São Paulo: Editora Nacional; Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação Geral da Marinha,

1988; MOREL, Edmar. *A revolta da chibata [Organização de Marco Morel]*. [1959]. 5.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2009; MORGAN, Zachary Ross. "Legacy of the Lash: Black and Corporal Punishment in the Brazilian Navy, 1860-1910". Thesis, Departamento de História, Brown University, 2001. NASCIMENTO, Álvaro Pereira do. *Cidadania, cor e disciplina na revolta dos marinheiros de 1910*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad/Faperj, 2008. NASCIMENTO, Álvaro Pereira do. "Do convés ao porto: a experiência dos marinheiros e a revolta de 1910". Doctoral dissertation, Departamento de História, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2002.

³ Among the periodicals sympathetic to the movement was *O Correio da Manhã*. Among the parliamentarians, the actions of Rui Barbosa, who gave speeches with a great impact, were particularly interesting. See: BRASIL, *Anais do Senado Federal*, 1910, Livro V.

⁴ AN, Supremo Tribunal Militar, Processo "João Cândido e Outros", Série Judiciária, Sub-série: Processo Crime, 1913, BW 2847 (3v.).

⁵ In relation to the notion of event that we adopt, see: FARGE, Arlette. "Penser et définir l'événement en histoire: Approche des situations et des acteurs sociaux". In: *Terrain*. n.38, March 2002.

⁶ POLLAK, Michael. *Une identité blessée: études de sociologie et d'histoire*. Paris: Métalié, 1993.

⁷ TODOROV, Tzvetan. *Les Abus de la mémoire*. Paris: Arléa, 2004.

⁸ The lyrics and a recording of this song can be consulted at: www.franklinmartins.com.br/som_na_caixa_gravacao.php?titulo=os-reclamantes (accessed on July 30, 2010).

⁹ Such as *Correio da Manhã*, which gave the sailors officers' ranks, like admiral, chief officer, commander, etc., and *Gazeta de Notícias*, where the reference to the nickname 'black admiral' was found, probably a creation of João do Rio. The journalist was responsible for the consolidation of this name in the press at the time.

¹⁰ FLÉCHET, Anaïs. "Aux rythmes du Brésil: exotisme, transferts culturels et appropriations. La musique populaire brésilienne en France au XXe siècle". Doctoral Dissertation in History. Université de Paris I, 2007, p.39-50.

¹¹ ARAÚJO, Vicente de Paula. *A bela época do cinema brasileiro*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1976, p.354.

¹² SILVA, Ermínia. *Benjamim de Oliveira e a teatralidade circense no Brasil*. São Paulo: Ed. Altana, 2007. I would like to thank the author for information about the shows in the Spinnelli Circus in honor of João Cândido.

¹³ Published between 31 December 1912 and 12 January 1913. Recently republished in: MOREL, 2009.

¹⁴ RODRIGUES, João Carlos. *João do Rio: uma biografia*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1996. João Cândido was interned in January 1911 in the *hospital dos alienados* (mental hospital) and afterwards in the Navy Hospital in the Ilha das Cobras prison. He spent almost two years in these institutions when he wrote or dictated his memories and embroidered three

towels according to different sources. See: ALMEIDA, 2009; CARVALHO, José Murilo de. “Os bordados de João Cândido”. In: *Pontos e bordados: escritos de história e política*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 1998; MOREL, Marco. “Anexo I : Introdução do organizador”. In: MOREL, 2009, p.285-319.

¹⁵ Productions of the same type also existed in Paris, such as, for example, the memories of the prostitute Casque d’Or, a young woman linked to the apache gangs in the city. Her ‘memories’ were published in the literary journal *Fin de Siècle* from 5 June to 3 August 1902. The text was corrected and probably adapted by the journalist Henri Frémont. Cf. DELUERMOZ, Quentin (Org.). *Chroniques du Paris apache (1902-1905)*. Paris: Mercure de France, 2008. João do Rio used to travel to France and to appropriate the creations of the local press (RODRIGUES, 1996).

¹⁶ CHARTIER, Roger. “Le monde comme représentation”. *Annales ESC*, n.6, 1989, p.1514-1515. Other accounts by João Cândido are registered in: MOREL, 2009; MIS. *João Cândido, o almirante negro*. Rio de Janeiro: Gryphus/Museu da Imagem e do Som, 1999.

¹⁷ See: KAREPOVS, Dainis. “Présentation de l’Amiral Noir de Benjamin Péret”. In: “Benjamin Péret et Le Brésil”. *Trois Cerises et une Sardine*. Publication de l’association des amis de Benjamin Péret à Paris, n.17, Oct. 2005.

¹⁸ PAULO, Benedito [Adão Pereira Nunes]. *A revolta de João Cândido*. Pelotas, 1934, p.1-2.

¹⁹ The coincidence between the text of Adão Pereira Nunes and the issues of *Jornal do Povo* is highlighted by the historian Marco Morel (MOREL, 2009).

²⁰ MOREL, 2009, p.232. KONDER, Leandro. “O Barão de Itararé”, In: FERREIRA, Jorge; REIS, Daniel Aarão. *As esquerdas no Brasil I: a formação das tradições, 1889-1945*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007, p.187-198.

²¹ TRINDADE, Héglio. *La Tentation fasciste au Brésil dans les années 1930*. Paris: Ed. Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1988.

²² BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Raisons pratiques: sur la théorie de l’action*. Paris: Seuil, 1994. LORIGA, Sabina, “La biographie comme problème”. In: REVEL, J. (Dir.). *Jeux d’échelles: la Micro-analyse à l’expérience*. Paris: Hautes Etudes-Gallimard-Seuil, 1996, p.209-231.

²³ CUNHA, H. Pereira da. “A revolta na esquadra brasileira em novembro e dezembro de 1910”. *Revista Marítima Brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro, 1949.

²⁴ In relation to these proximities and divergences, see: SCHMIDT, Benito Bisso. “Constituindo biografias... Historiadores e jornalistas: aproximações e afastamentos”. *Estudos Históricos*. Rio de Janeiro, n.19, 1997.

²⁵ GINZBURG, Carlo. *Le Fromage et les vers: l’univers d’un meunier du XVI^e siècle*. Paris: Flammarion, 1980; HOBBSAWM, Eric. *Pessoas extraordinárias: resistência, rebelião e jazz*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1998.

²⁶ MOREL, Marco. *João Cândido e a luta pelos direitos humanos, livro fotobiográfico*. Brasília: Fundação Banco do Brasil, 2008, p.94.

²⁷ For a current approach to this context, see: FERREIRA, Jorge (Org.). *O populismo e a sua história*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001. In relation to the sailors' movement, see: CAPITANI, Avelino Bide. *A rebelião dos marinheiros*. Porto Alegre: Artes e Ofícios, 1997; RODRIGUES, Flávio Luís. *Vozes do mar: o movimento dos marinheiros e o golpe de 64*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2004.

²⁸ BLANC, Aldir, "Mestre-Sala dos mares", In: MIS, *op. cit.*, p.22.

²⁹ HALBWACHS, Maurice. *La Mémoire collective*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1997. HALBWACHS, Maurice. *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1994. The interviews below were transcribed in my doctoral dissertation: Almeida, *op. cit.*, 2009.

³⁰ Cf. ALMEIDA, Sílvia Capanema P. de. "A modernização do material e do pessoal da Marinha nas vésperas da revolta dos marujos de 1910: modelos e contradições". *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, v.23, n.45, 2010. Republished in: *Revista Brasileira de História Militar*. n.3, Rio de Janeiro, Electronic publication, 2010: www.historiamilitar.com.br/Artigo2RBHM3.pdf.

³¹ In relation to these conflicts, see: FRY, Peter. *A persistência da raça*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005.

³² This example allows us think, in light of the discussion about the theory of recognition, about how certain individuals could be bequeathed an *a priori* subaltern place and about the difficulties of construction a black and poor hero. See: MENDONÇA, Ricardo Fabrino. "Dimensão intersubjetiva da auto-realização: em defesa da teoria do reconhecimento". *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, v.24, n.17, jun. 2009.

³³ In the cinema three short films were produced about the subject. The first was shot in 1987 (*João Cândido, um Almirante Negro*, Emiliano Ribeiro, 10 min), a second dates from 2004 (*João Cândido e a revolta da chibata*, made by students of the NGO *Nós do cinema*, 20 min) and a third was released in 2005 (*Memórias da chibata*, by Marcos Marins, 15 min, 2005). We should also mention the play *João Cândido do Brasil. A revolta da chibata* (Teatro Popular União and Olho Vivo, São Paulo, Casa Amarela, 2003), as well as a project for a feature film, documentary and miniseries to be made by Marcos Manhães Marins.

³⁴ NORA, Pierre (Dir.). *Les Lieux de mémoire I. La République*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

³⁵ The text of this law can be seen at: www.leidireto.com.br/lei-11756.html (accessed on Aug. 26, 2009).

³⁶ The statue is now in the gardens of the Museum of the Republic, in Catete, due to pressures from the Navy, which was against its presence in Praça XV, not very far from the naval complex. Cf. www.naval.com.br/blog/?p=1943, among other sources (consulted on Aug. 26, 2009).

³⁷ RICOUER, Paul. *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Le Seuil, 2000.

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