



“A powerful argument in favor of the emancipation that so many people think is impossible”: the case of Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio, the first woman from Alagoas to receive a bachelor's degree in Law¹

“Um poderoso argumento a favor da emancipação que tanta gente julga impossível”:
o caso da primeira alagoana bacharela em Direito, Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio

“Un poderoso argumento a favor de la emancipación que tanta gente juzga imposible”:
el caso de Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio, la primera licenciada en Derecho de Alagoas

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Abstract

The analyses made in this article focuses on the educational training and professional trajectory of Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio, the first woman from Alagoas to obtain, in 1893, a Bachelor's degree in Law from the Recife Law School. Based on documentary sources, we seek to understand the paths taken by her, from her education to the exercise of her legal activity, observing the practices and tactics (CERTEAU, 2014), that she used to achieve her goals. We intend to contribute to the historiographical perspective that focuses on the diversity of women's experiences in a context in which they were commonly associated with the domestic milieu, as well as to understand how her educational trajectory contributed to define her paths in the legal career.

Keywords: Women's education; XIX Century; Law; Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio.

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Resumo

As análises deste artigo se debruçaram sobre a trajetória formativa e profissional de Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio, primeira mulher alagoana a obter o título de bacharela em Direito no ano de 1893, pela Faculdade de Direito de Recife. Com base em fontes documentais, procuramos compreender os caminhos trilhados por Anna Sampaio desde sua formação até o exercício da atividade jurídica, observando as práticas e táticas (CERTEAU, 2014) de que ela lançou mão para atingir seus objetivos. Intencionamos contribuir para a perspectiva historiográfica que enfoca a diversidade das experiências de mulheres num contexto em que, comumente, foram associadas ao espaço doméstico. Além disso, objetivamos compreender como sua trajetória formativa colaborou para definir seus caminhos na carreira jurídica.

Palavras-chave: Educação de mulheres; Século XIX; Direito; Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio.

Resumen

Los análisis presentes en este artículo enfocan en la trayectoria formativa y profesional de Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio, la primera mujer alagoana que obtuvo la licenciatura en Derecho, en 1893, en la Facultad de Derecho de Recife. Con base en fuentes documentales, buscamos comprender los caminos recorridos por Anna Sampaio desde su formación hasta el ejercicio de la actividad jurídica, observando las prácticas y tácticas (CERTEAU, 2014), que utilizó para lograr sus objetivos. Pretendemos contribuir a la perspectiva historiográfica que se enfoca en la diversidad de experiencias de las mujeres en un contexto en el que comúnmente fueron asociadas al espacio doméstico, así como comprender cómo su trayectoria formativa contribuyó para definir sus caminos en la carrera jurídica.

Palabras clave: Educación de las mujeres; Siglo XIX; Derecho; Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio.

Introduction

The Decree 7,247, of 1879, promulgated by Carlos Leôncio de Carvalho, at the time Business Minister of the Empire of Brazil — among other measures considered innovative for the period — authorized the admission of women to higher education in the country. Until then, those who wanted to pursue higher studies had to leave the country². In 1881, three years after the publication of the aforementioned decree, Ambrosina Magalhães from Paraíba was the first woman to enroll in a higher education course — in this case, Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of Rio de Janeiro, created as a course in 1808, when the Portuguese royal family settled in Brazil, making Rio de Janeiro the seat of the Portuguese crown. Only from 1884 onwards did other Brazilian women enter higher education, marking at first glance, an expansion of the professional field for women.

Between the year the decree was published and the first decade of the republic, only 13 women obtained higher education degrees in Brazilian institutions. This aspect reveals to us that despite the legal provision, the predominance of cultural and social values rooted in 19th century society, which confirmed the existence of women restricted to the role of mother and wife, as well as the distrust against their intellectual capacity, they were barriers that prevented more women from entering higher education. Added to this, we have the example of the engineering course, held in polytechnic schools, which received two female students at the end of the 19th century, but which only had the first female engineer graduate in the 1920s. There was then resistance regarding the presence of women in higher education perceived hostilities faced by some of these pioneers revealed in some of their memories, in addition to the prerequisites required for entry into higher education courses, often not included in the curricula offered to women in schools and which demanded more time and dedication from those who wanted to pursue formative studies.

Within the scope of legal courses, the *Faculdade de Direito de Recife* (FDR) was the first to receive the enrollment of women³. In 1884, Delmira Secundina da Costa (1866-?) from Pernambuco was the first woman to enroll at FDR, created, like the *Faculdade de Direito of São Paulo*, in 1827. Between the 1880s and 1890s, few women completed legal studies in the country. Others dared to follow these paths, such as Maria Coelho da Silva Sobrinho, Maria Fragoso and Maria Augusta Coelho Meira de Vasconcellos from Pernambuco; and Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio from Alagoas — all of them graduated from FDR. In the legal field, as pioneers, we had Myrthes Gomes de Campos, who graduated, in 1899, from the *Faculdade Livre de Ciências Jurídicas e Sociais* of Rio Janeiro; and Maria Augusta Saraiva, who, in 1902, graduated from the *Faculdade de Direito Largo São Francisco*, in São Paulo.

For this article, we took as our object of investigation the educational trajectory of Anna Sampaio from Alagoas, in order to understand the paths, she took during her undergraduate studies, as well as her performance in postgraduate studies. Our objective is to understand her as the result of a context in which she was allowed not only access to higher education, but above all, a change in mentality which conceived, at least theoretically, women as someone who could help in the progress of nation. The choice for the woman from Alagoas is justified because she represents a large part of the women who wanted to study, but in her provinces there was no offer of the desired level. In this

² We refer to Maria Augusto Generoso Estrela, from Rio de Janeiro, graduated in 1879 from the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women in the United States; and Josefa Águeda Felisbela Mercedes de Oliveira from Pernambuco.

³ At the time, there were only two law schools in the country: Recife and São Paulo.

way, just like men, women who invested in higher education did so by moving, investing, leaving their family, taking advantage of solitude, facing new things without guarantees and above all, breaking with the prejudice from those who insisted on considering their intellectual abilities inferior. Furthermore, Anna Sampaio, despite being the first lawyer in Alagoas, had little studied in Alagoas historiography. Her figure was commonly associated with the “sister of Maria Lucia Duarte”. However, the research that gave rise to this article found elements that make her one of the pioneering women in higher education in the country.

As it had already announced, the Decree 7,247, of 1879 brought significant advances both in expanding women's education and their insertion in the professional field. In addition to the aforementioned authorization for enrollment in Brazilian colleges, the decree instituted the co-education system and the creation of mixed schools and kindergartens, which should be run by teachers. In the view of some scholars, such actions promoted a greater space for women in the teaching career, which also contributed to the process of feminization of teaching that occurred between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th. However, there are also those interpretations that, far from attributing such power to the decree, see female engagement as the explanations for the feminization of the area.

In this sense, it is important to highlight that the legal provision met a much discussed social demand, especially by intellectuals, in the 19th century: the need for greater participation of women in public spaces. In order to achieve this, an education equivalent to men would be the most viable path. Still in the first half of the 19th century, Nísia Floresta, from Rio Grande do Norte, was one of the voices in defense of greater education and political participation for women. According to Lima (2019), Nísia Floresta spearheaded a proposal for emancipatory training for the female public, criticized at the time by conservative groups who considered it immoral. Floresta's writings, however, contributed to later projects in defense of women's intellectual autonomy. Just like the woman from Rio Grande do Norte, the Sergipe native living in Pernambuco, Tobias Barreto de Menezes in the 1870s, began in the Legislative Assembly of Pernambuco, to defend the entry of women into higher education courses, even confronting the biological arguments used to consider female capabilities inferior (BARRETO, 2017). In the final decades of the Empire and the beginning of the Republic, women's education came to be understood as the driving element for the process of female intellectual emancipation, and the Decree of 1879 represented, even under criticism, a realization of this achievement.

Two years after the publication of the Decree, colleges began to receive the first enrollments of women. This is because the legal document contained prerequisites for entry into each course offered. It is worth noting that the women were unable to attend to them immediately, so they resorted to classes, especially private ones, in order to fulfill the requirements that were linked to the fulfillment of some subjects. Despite being a society where there was a naturalized representation that women should dedicate themselves to the role of mother and home administrator. Her entry into higher education was perceived as an advance by a part of society, especially with the emergence of women's journals in that context. Furthermore, there was a break with the feminine stereotypes widespread in this situation. It is also worth highlighting that legal courses in the 19th century were training centers for the Brazilian elite, which was markedly male (CARVALHO, 2012).

Appropriating the concept of “tactics”, Certeau (2014), we sought to identify, in Anna Sampaio's actions and choices, the way in which she took advantage of or created opportunities to follow a path that was not common for a woman in that context. Thus, by analyzing the training and professional experience of Sampaio, the first woman from Alagoas

to obtain a higher degree, we set out to broaden the understanding of female experiences in the transition from the Empire to the Republic, extrapolating the representation that women only acted in the domestic space. Furthermore, we were interested in approaching a narrative that highlighted the active role of women in social spaces (PERROT, 2007), in the sense of contributing to a plural historiography, which contemplates these other narratives, disregarded for years by official historiographical research.

Despite being a pioneer in higher education in her state, little was preserved about Ana Sampaio's life — including in the physical collections of the state of Alagoas —, which points to the little importance given to preserving female memory. Because of this, it takes an effort from researchers — through sparse news — to compose a biographical narrative about this and other pioneering women. The lack of care in preserving women's history was also due to the patriarchal construction of our society and other societies, which tried to relegate them to a subordinate and passive condition in social dynamics (PERROT, 2007, 1998).

In order to carry out the proposed analysis, we used the following sources: approval lists for preparatory and final exams for each year of higher education; biographical profile about Anna Sampaio, published in the catalog of Alagoas personalities by Joaquim Barros (2005); advertisements published in Alagoas periodicals: *O Orbe*, *Gutenberg*, *Diário da Manhã*, *Diário do Povo* and in the printed newspapers of Pernambuco, *Diário de Pernambuco* and *Jornal de Recife*; list of bachelors in the Empire; registration record; University Degree; women's magazine *A Palavra*; travel column published in newspapers. The sources were obtained from the Digital Newspaper of the National Library, and the registration and diploma records were obtained from the Archives of *Faculdade de Direito do Recife*.

The periodicals served for this research as support for other publications, which are taken as sources here, such as exam approval lists and advertisements. We also emphasize that the narrative constructed about Anna Sampaio's trajectory was possible with the combination of small traces located in these newspapers in the period between 1870 and 1920. At the time, periodicals were spaces that, in addition to providing information, exposed the entire dynamics of nineteenth-century social life, including geographical movements in the sections on port entrances and exits. They have certainly become spaces for dispute, debate and socialization of discourses, which is why they allow us to take a look at everyday practices (LUCCA, 2010).

This text is organized into two sections, in addition to the introductory part and final considerations. In the first, we deal with Anna Sampaio's family context and formative aspects, with the intention of identifying the influences and conditions that allowed her to enter higher education, beyond the legal opening. In the second, we discuss her experience as a Law student and the traces of her practices developed after obtaining her bachelor's degree, especially in relation to her professional practice in the Province of Alagoas.

The Sampaio sisters

Born in the village of Palmeira dos Índios, current municipality of Alagoas, Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio was the youngest daughter of Capitulina Clotilde Alves Vieira, a primary school teacher, and José Vieira Sampaio, also a primary school teacher and notary in Alagoas. According to the researchers Ivanildo Santos (2019) and Danielle Dias (2021), the couple worked as teachers at Escola Primária de Penedo and had two more daughters: Maria Lúcia Sampaio Duarte and Suzana Alves Sampaio. While Anna Sampaio became known in history for being the first woman from Alagoas to obtain a higher education degree, her sister, Maria Lúcia Sampaio Duarte (1863-?), became famous for her work as an educator and journalist, having founded in 1889 the *Almanaque Literário das Senhoras*,

considered the first publication of its kind in the Alagoas province. The project circulated in several other provinces of the Empire, such as Bahia, Ceará, Court (Rio de Janeiro) and Portugal. Furthermore, Maria Lúcia Sampaio Duarte founded in 1883 the *Colégio Atheneu Alagoano*, intended for primary and secondary education for girls in the Province of Alagoas (BARROS, 2005; MADEIRA, 2018; DIAS 2021). Suzana Sampaio in turn, also dedicated herself to teaching training (DIAS, 2021). These women's experiences present evidence of the active participation of the female public in nineteenth-century public spaces, as well as allowing us to think about women's movements and investments in that socio-historical context.

Probably, the sisters were motivated by the family environment, favorable to the cultivation of letters and a break with the molds of female activity, mainly focused on the domestic sphere. The fact that Anna Sampaio's mother was a teacher points to a female ancestry that sought a certain social independence within the limits imposed by the period. Despite social participation, which deviated from the 19th century rule, little was preserved about their lives. Thus, we find on each of them few traces of their trajectories and social circulation until approximately the first two decades of the 20th century. According to Maria das Graças de Loiola Madeira (2018), Maria Lucia Duarte fell into obscurity after her second marriage; as for her sister, Anna Sampaio, it was possible to identify traces until the first decade of the 20th century.

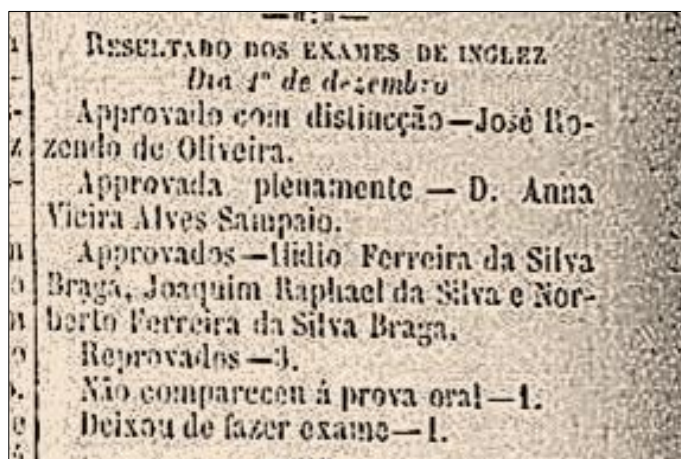
It was not possible to locate in the sources consulted, where Anna Sampaio attended primary school, but we can conjecture that she studied with her parents, as they taught classes in the village of Penedo (SANTOS, 2018). Regarding Anna Sampaio's secondary education, we were able to trace in the periodical *Gutenberg* (1883), that she studied at *Atheneu Alagoano*, a school founded in 1883 — by her aforementioned sister, Maria Lúcia — and aimed at training girls. At this institution, Anna Sampaio began studying for the preparatory exams, one of the requirements for admission to higher education courses. *Atheneu Alagoano* was one of the main training spaces for female youth in the Province of Alagoas, with a similar curriculum to that of *Liceu de Maceió*. This, according to Ivanildo Santos (2018), offered at the time the following subjects: Portuguese Grammar and Analysis of the Classics, Latin Grammar, French, English, Geography, History, Arithmetic, Physics, Chemistry, and Natural History. Expanding female schooling and enabling women to enter higher education was one of the purposes of *Atheneu Alagoano*, as can be seen in article 3 of its Statute:

Art. 3 This establishment, in addition to admitting internal, semi-internal and external students, as long as they do not suffer from contagious illnesses, will open its doors to women who wish to qualify in the subjects of the Normal Course for primary public teaching, and those who intend to study the preparatory courses required at the Colleges of the Empire. (O ORBE, p. 2, 1883 apud DIAS, 2021, p. 47)

At *Atheneu Alagoano*, the secondary education curriculum covered the subjects of Portuguese, French and English, Algebra, Geometry, Universal History, Landscape Design, Calligraphy, Commercial Bookkeeping and Notions of Natural Sciences — which includes Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Hygiene, Teaching Things (O ORBE, 1883). The curriculum composition allows us to understand that the training project designed for the girls enrolled at *Atheneu Alagoano* provided them with the opportunity to equalize their schooling knowledge, at a time when women's supposed intellectual and bodily inferiority was constantly pointed out as an argument against their schooling. At

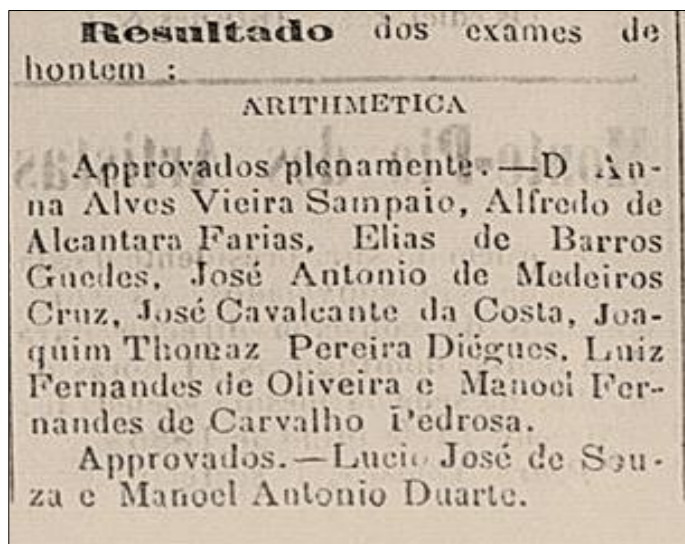
that time, to enter Law faculties, the preparatory exams required were Latin, French, English and its literatures, Rhetoric, Philosophy, Geography and Mathematics (BRASIL, 1854). To these were added, in 1879, through Decree 7,247⁴, the German and Italian languages (BRASIL, 1879). According to the lists of passes in the preparatory exams, published in the periodicals *O Orbe* and *Gutenberg*, Anna Sampaio took the tests between the years 1883 and 1886, when her name appears on the list of those who passed the exams carried out at the *Liceu de Maceió*. We can observe this finding in the following excerpts:

Figure 1: The *Liceu de Maceió* English Exams results.



Source: *Diário da Manhã* (1883, p. 1).

Figure 2: The *Liceu de Maceió* Arithmetic exams results.



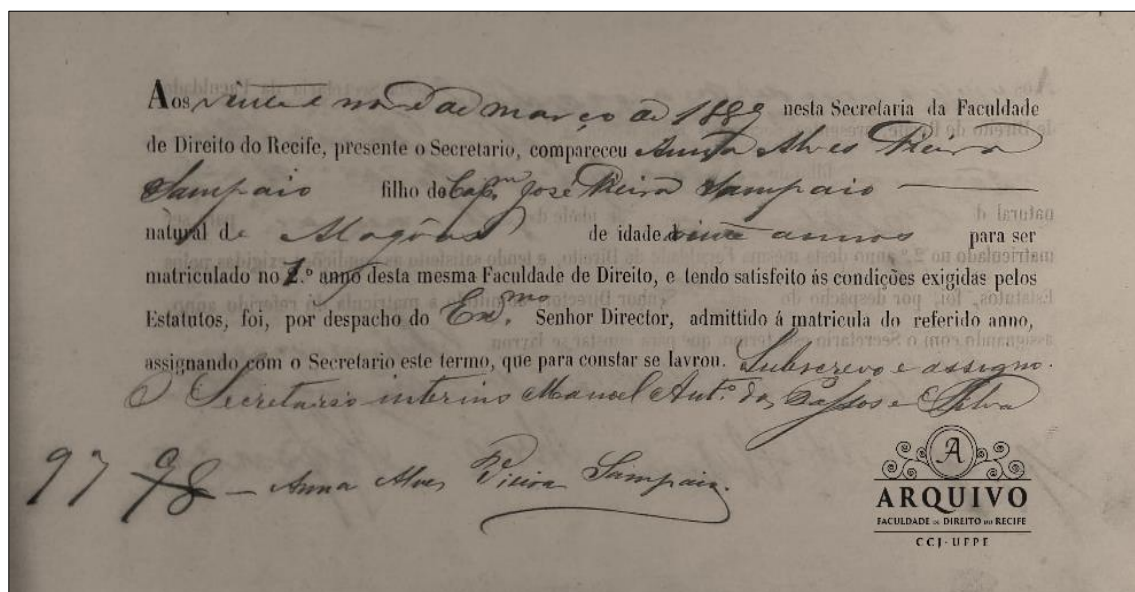
Source: *Gutenberg* (1886, p. 2).

When observing the period in which Anna studied for the preparatory exams, we noticed not only the requirements for entering higher education, but also, and above all, her determination to follow a professional career that was unusual for Brazilian women in that context. This is because she did not undertake initial training in teaching, a common practice among those who preceded her in the legal course (HUMBERTO et

⁴ Decree 7,247, of 1879, established that the *Liceus Províncias* were comparable to the *Colégio Pedro II* of Court or to the higher education institutions existing at that time, responsible for carrying out preparatory exams.

al., 2021). It is also interesting to highlight that the social and probably financial position of Anna Sampaio's family contributed to her dedication to her studies, as classes at *Atheneu* were paid for, and the fact that she was related to the owner of the establishment may have exempted her from paying in full. In this way, access to literate culture seems to have been facilitated, compared to the situation of most women at that period. After completing her preparatory studies, Anna Sampaio was approved and entered the *Ciências Jurídicas e Sociais* course at FDR, in 1889. She was 20 years old, according to her enrollment record.

Figure 3: Registration of Anna Alves Vieira Sampaio



Source: FDR Archive.

In the documentation consulted, no news was found about a request or receipt of any subsidy from the Province of Alagoas for Anna Sampaio to cover her stay in Recife. This suggests that she was able to complete her higher education with family resources. Another element that supports this idea is the fact that Anna Sampaio's name appears regularly in the lists of passengers traveling among provinces, highlighting a certain ease in moving geographically (JORNAL DO RECIFE, 1890). Her arrival in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, was reported in important Recife periodicals, such as *Diário de Pernambuco* — in issue 72 of 1889 — and *Jornal de Recife*.

In the same year that she entered Law School, Anna Sampaio published the book *Astronomia das Mulheres*, a translation from French of part of Conte de Foelix's⁵ work. According to the note regarding this translation, present in the *Jornal de Recife*, the text had 47 pages and was published in Maceió. The respective note addressed Anna Sampaio's translation as a “reaction against the misunderstood social prejudice that suffocates women's mentality, assigning them extremely narrow and limited limits” (JORNAL DE RECIFE, 1889, p. 2). This comment points out both a context that in general gave women a place of inferiority, and also that the student from Alagoas managed to go against this naturalized representation. In another publication about *Astronomia das Mulheres*, presented by the periodical *Diário de Pernambuco*, the book content was covered a little,

⁵ Conte de Foelix was one of the pseudonyms of the French novelist and pamphleteer Louis François Raban (1795-1870). *Astronomia das Mulheres* was originally published in 1849.

dealing with the theme of meteorology with the exposition of some of the main natural physical phenomena (DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO, 1889).

A year before the publication of *Astronomia das Mulheres*, Anna Sampaio translated, for *Almanaque Literário das Senhoras*, a text with the title *Arco-Íris*, also from the French Cte. Foelix. In this text, we found that there was a clear intention to instruct the reader on a certain topic — in this case, the formation of the rainbow using for this purpose a didactic language and, at the same time, capable of representing the images of the rainbow phenomenon, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

The combination of these seven colors is called the solar spectrum. The rainbow is nothing more than a decomposition of light by drops of water, suspended in the air that act as a prism. So, when you turn your back to the sun, you have a raining cloud in front of you, on which the sun has cast its rays, you can see in the atmosphere an immense arc made up of seven primitive colors: it is the rainbow. For its formation, the sun must be at least 45 degrees above the horizon; that's why in our climate we can only observe it at midday, often double, sometimes triple and even quadruple: this comes from a double, triple or quadruple refraction and the brighter the blacker the part of the sky through which he shows himself (ANNA SAMPAIO, ALMANAQUE LITERARIO ALAGOANO DAS SENHORAS, 1888).

Anna Sampaio's choices regarding translation show that for her scientific and physical-natural knowledge were also a right to women's education. Publications like this intended, in a way, to delegitimize the idea that women were intellectually inferior in understanding certain subjects. At the same time, they aimed to ensure that the female public had initial contact with areas of knowledge considered until then inappropriate for women. In 1890, advertisements were found, published in the periodicals *O Orbe* and *Diário do Povo*, about the approval, by the *Liceu* congregation, of the book *Meteorologia das Senhoras*, by Anna Sampaio, recommended for primary classes in the Province of Alagoas. At the time, Anna was in her 2nd year of law school. According to the advertisement published in the newspaper *O Orbe* regarding the sale of this book in bookstores and in the bazaar of the Province of Alagoas, it was an “instructive, recreational and appropriate work for elementary schools” (O ORBE, 1890, p. 4). Probably, the book was a continuation or a set of texts translated by the author in 1889, with the same content given the proximity of their respective titles and original authorship.

It is observed through Anna Sampaio's practices, that she was one of the few young women from Alagoas still recognized in her time as an example of female action in public space. It is also noteworthy that during the 1880s, there was an increase in women's publications, including magazines and periodicals. As Monica Jinzenji (2011) discusses, these publications indicate that the formation of women and their insertion in social spheres beyond the domestic space were beginning to be accepted elements in the public and political sphere, contributing in a certain way, to the process of female intellectual autonomy.

Traces about the academic and bachelor Anna Sampaio

Anna Sampaio's documentation available in the FDR Archive, informs us about some aspects of her time at the institution, such as her final exams, enrollment records

and her bachelor's degree. The exam judgment book shows that you have fully passed the subjects of Civil, Commercial and Maritime Law; Civil and Commercial Process; Forensic Practice; Administrative Law and Political Economy (Livro de Julgamentos, 1892-1900). In the fourth year of its course, on August 10, 1892, *Jornal de Recife* announced the schedule of a concert organized by academics from the *Faculdade de Recife*, in celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the legal courses. In this concert, Anna Sampaio presented the piano piece *Fantasia da Favorita*.

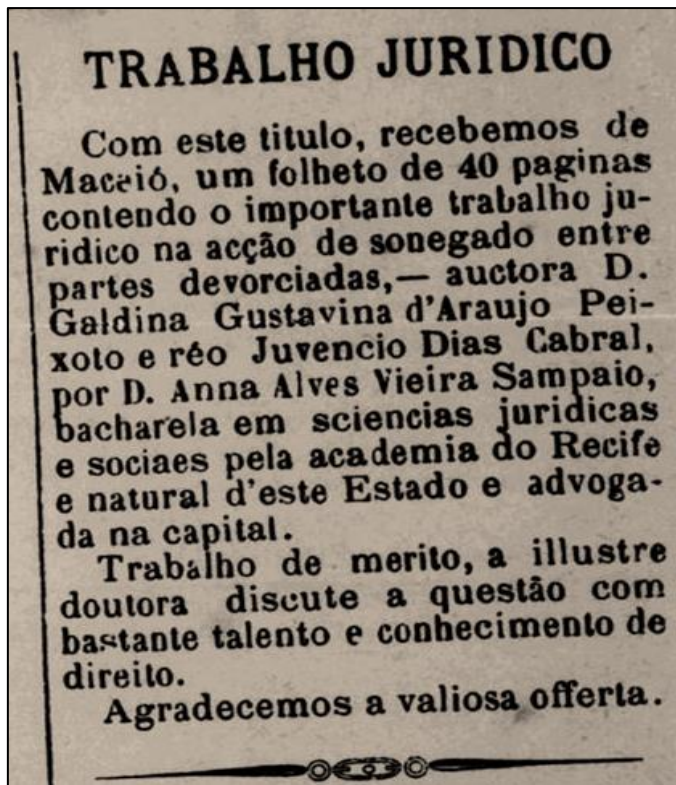
The obtaining of the degree of Bachelor of Law, in 1893, was reported in some provincial periodicals, including the Court Rio de Janeiro, where the printed *A Família*, literary newspaper dedicated to the education of mothers and families reported about the formation of another “lady lawyer” in the country, noting that “amid the notable delay in which the representatives of our sex are, these and other graduations soften the thought, which are like a powerful argument in favor of the emancipation that so many people consider impossible” (*A Família*, 1894, p. 5). This note could lead us to affirm that the pioneering spirit of the first women to enter higher education was a milestone in the process of valuing the intellectual capabilities of women in the country.

After completing the course, Anna returned to the Province of Alagoas, where she began to practice law in the capital Maceió, a difficult feat for women who faced the harsh weather of that context, in which the masculine culture still prevailed in the field of Law and therefore, strength, persuasion and oratory, in addition to legal knowledge, were required. Thus, even with diplomas, the practice of law by the pioneers did not have as favorable an opening as their entry into higher seats. Some of them, such as Delmira Secundina and Maria Coelho from Pernambuco, practiced law for a short time and ended up being forced to leave their legal career, dedicating themselves to home management and teaching. According to Amanda Galvínio (2019) and Humberto et al. (2021), the action of abandoning the profession by women, can be credited to distrust regarding female capabilities in the legal environment, as it was a space mostly marked by the male presence. This makes us note that opening up access to higher education, in addition to not guaranteeing training, was far from being a determining element for work in the chosen field, see what also happened with some of the first medical students in the country (BARRETO; SILVA, 2020).

Thus, by pursuing a legal career, Anna Sampaio broke yet another social barrier inflicted on women in that society, including her colleagues trained in the 1880s who were unable to continue in the profession. Anna Sampaio's role in the legal career, still in the first decade of the 20th century points to female pioneering in the area, as she continued to practice law, according to the sources consulted. In the *Almanaque do Estado de Alagoas* for the year 1894, it is possible to find Anna Sampaio's name on the list of graduates who could be hired. In the same year, the Alagoas magazine *A Palavra*, literary magazine dedicated to women's education and recreation and the periodical Gutemberg (AL) announced the receipt of a legal work by Anna Sampaio in a tax evasion action⁶, in which Anna Sampaio acted as Galdina Gustavina d'Araujo's representative, against defendant Juvencio Dias Cabral. In both publications, praise is given for the “doctor's” competence and knowledge of the matter, as it can be seen in the notes below.

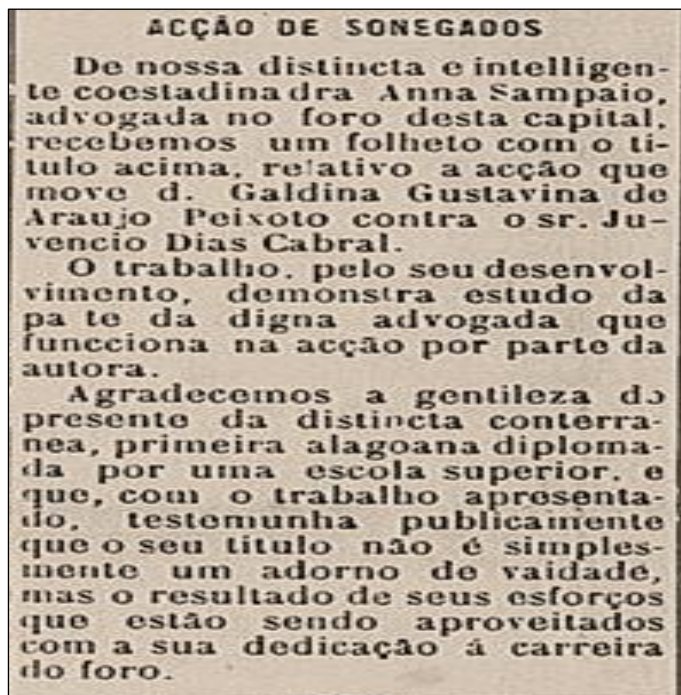
⁶ Action initiated to recover assets from heirs.

Figure 4: Anna Sampaio's legal work



Source: Gutenberg (1894, p. 2)

Figure 5: Commentary about Anna Sampaio's legal work



Source: A Palavra (1894, p. 2).

Both publications highlight Anna Sampaio's pioneering spirit not only through her entry into higher education and her study, as her diploma was not an "adornment of vanity", but through her involvement in her legal career. Also noteworthy is the tactic used by Anna to be commented on in the public space by sending her work to the local periodical and magazine. As Michel de Certeau (2018, p. 44) teaches, the strength of the weak is to take advantage of the means and opportunities to act within a system that oppresses him in some way, as they are small tactics that allow him to take a different course and make new possibilities emerge. In the context in which Anna Sampaio was inserted, women found themselves in the position of the weak as they were subjugated by the simple condition of being a woman, being restricted when occupying certain spaces considered to be male appropriation. Thus, Anna Sampaio knew how to use a highly circulated space, such as the periodicals of the time, as a tactic to assert her social position as a lawyer, probably with the intention of achieving new clients. It is worth noting that, at the time, printed matter represented one of the main vehicles of information, communication and training in the 19th century, that is, an important space for sociability during the period.

It is also worth highlighting that Anna Sampaio's social and economic condition contributed to her being able to occupy another professional space. The fact that her parents were teachers as announced, provided a favorable context for Anna to dedicate herself to her studies like her sister. This aspect also points to one of the elements that possibly kept another group of women away from higher education, that of class, since poor women did not have the conditions, first to prepare themselves to join the groups and then to remain in the institution far from their family nucleus, during their formative years. Therefore, Anna was part of a restricted group of women who were able to attend higher education, a variable that favored her insertion into the bureaucratic context in the Province of Alagoas.

In a list of taxpayers to pay taxes, published in 1896 in the newspaper *Gutemberg* (AL), the Anna Sampaio's name appears as a lawyer, corroborating her work in the legal career. Between 1895 and 1896, Anna Sampaio married doctor Júlio Plech⁷. According to publications and advertisements from the time published in the periodicals *Gutenberg* (1896, 1897, 1905, 1906, 1909) and *O Orbe* (1897, 1900), the couple lived in the city of São Miguel, now the Municipality of Alagoas, with Anna Sampaio working legal career in the capital Maceió. Together they had eight children — five of whom survived to adulthood. It was observed that, between the end of the 1890s and 1910, references to Anna Sampaio decreased and when mentioned in periodicals, they were small notes present in passenger lists for trips among provinces or abroad, best wishes for her birthday or family events where she was present with her husband.

Final considerations

Anna Sampaio's experience reveals to us clues about the actions of a woman who knew how to take advantage of the favorable context for a greater shift in the social way, thus being a woman of her time. When analyzing what was possible to find about her career, we observed that even the young Anna Sampaio had access to a more complete training than what was expected for women at the time. This factor, together with the openness expressed in Decree 7,247, made it possible for her to more than aim for a career different from those commonly "acceptable" for women at the time, such as teaching, for example. Pursuing a teaching career, a common decision among girls in that context who saw teaching as a form of social

⁷ Júlio Cláudio Gonçalves Plech was an English immigrant who graduated from the *Faculdade de Medicina* of Bahia in 1896 (CORRAL et al. 2009). He practiced medicine as a clinician specializing in fevers and children's illnesses in 1898 and served the poor without payment in Recife (Pernambuco) and São Miguel (Alagoas). In 1898, Plech was assigned as an army doctor to Recife.

emancipation, was not the path followed by our character, which in itself demonstrates that there was freedom of choice, even if not in its entirety, to women, at least within some families, in some college classes and in the city of Maceió.

As it had already highlighted, between the 1890s and 1910s it is possible to identify, in the sources found the name of Anna Sampaio in the passengers lists on trips. Between the years 1890 and 1892, her name appeared on the passenger list for the south of the country and for returning to Recife, where she studied. This aspect of Anna Sampaio's life allows us to understand that she was in a favorable position for this departure, whether to visit distant relatives or even continue her training after graduating. In any case, Anna Sampaio demonstrates that from her youth she had a certain social autonomy, compared to other nineteenth-century women.

Unlike what happened with women who graduated in Law before Alagoas, it can be seen that Anna Sampaio did not have so many difficulties in starting her legal career in Maceió, practicing law until at least the end of the first decade of the 20th century. This fact expands the representation of feminine practices at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th and also implies thinking that the entry of these women into higher education courses contributed to expanding a debate around female social emancipation, which began at the beginning of the 19th century. Despite living in a context in which the idea that a woman who worked outside the home would not be a good home manager or even that it was not in women's nature to have concerns other than those related to the family environment, the practices of pioneers contributed to calling these theses into question in a later period.

Knowing Anna Sampaio's trajectory, even though few sources, in addition to contributing to the expansion of female practices in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, allows us to understand the active role played by some of them who, even in a social space which sought to restrict women through various strategies, including scientific justifications, knowing how to tactically appropriate gaps and opportunities to build new possibilities for mobility and activity in that same context.

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