



**“O bedel desempenha bem o lugar”:
narratives about secondary education workers in Parahyba do Norte (1842-1888)¹**

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narrativas sobre trabalhadores da instrução secundária na Parahyba do Norte (1842-1888)

“O bedel desempenha bem o lugar”:
narrativas sobre trabajadores de la enseñanza secundaria en Parahyba do Norte (1842-1888)

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Abstract

The article discusses the existence of a job performed in the secondary school universe in the 19th century: the beadle. This is a role present in different spaces such as public offices, churches, and especially in high schools. The beadle's role was to discipline students, maintain order, assist the management and teachers, among others. The first part of the text investigates these obligations in different provincial laws of the North region (currently the Northeast), in dialogue with the historiography of Brazilian education. The second part focuses on Paraíba, following the trajectory of three individuals who held the position there. With the contributions of the social history of education, and the orientation of history seen from below, the importance of historiography in looking not only at students and teachers, but also at other roles performed in the world of work in 19th-century education is highlighted.

Keywords: Beadle; Paraíba; 19th century; Secondary education; Education workers.

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Resumo

Discute-se a existência de um trabalho realizado no universo escolar secundário no século XIX: o bedel. Trata-se de uma função presente em diferentes espaços como repartições públicas, Igrejas, e especialmente em liceus. A função do bedel era disciplinar estudantes, manter a ordem, auxiliar a direção e os docentes, entre outras. Na primeira parte do texto, investiga-se tais obrigações em diferentes legislações provinciais da região Norte (atual Nordeste), em diálogo com a historiografia da educação brasileira. Na segunda parte, centra-se a discussão na Paraíba, acompanhando a trajetória de três sujeitos que ali exerceram o cargo. Com os aportes da história social da educação, e a orientação da história vista de baixo, destaca-se a importância da historiografia voltar o olhar não apenas a estudantes e professores, mas também sobre outras funções exercidas no mundo do trabalho na educação oitocentista.

Palavras-chave: Bedel; Paraíba; Século XIX; Instrução secundária; Trabalhadores da educação.

Resumen

Hablamos de la existencia de un tipo de trabajo realizado en la enseñanza secundaria en el siglo XIX: el bedel. Estaba presente en diferentes espacios como oficinas públicas, iglesias y en las escuelas secundarias. El trabajo del bedel consistía en disciplinar a los alumnos, mantener el orden, ayudar a la dirección y a los profesores. La primera parte del texto investiga estas funciones en diferentes legislaciones provinciales de la región norte de Brasil, en diálogo con la historiografía de la educación brasileña. La segunda parte centra la discusión en Paraíba, siguiendo la trayectoria de tres individuos que ocuparon el cargo allí. Utilizando las contribuciones de la historia social de la educación y la orientación de la historia desde abajo, destacamos la importancia de que la historiografía mire no sólo a los alumnos y profesores, sino también a otras posiciones ocupadas en el mundo del trabajo en la educación del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: Bedel; Paraíba; Siglo XIX; Enseñanza Secundaria; Trabajadores de la educación.

After classes, I would go up to the dormitory, taking advantage of the relaxation of the police in the hall. The inspector in charge was Silvino. Fearful of reprisals from the big boys, the prudent janitor let things go.

Raul Pompéia

In *O Ateneu*, by Raul Pompéia (1888), a worker appears in the accounts of the institution's daily life: the beadle. This employee was not a teacher or director, roles that are usually the subject of historiographical analyses, but he played an important role in the dynamics of the boarding school. He was responsible for discipline, punishing inmates who behaved inappropriately, controlling students, preventing fights and unwanted actions, and sometimes “letting bad behavior go unpunished,” as the character Silvino, in the excerpt above, does.

Still unknown, the beadle is an agent linked to the educational universe and its origins date back to France. In Brazil, this role existed since the colonial period, as recorded in the *Ratio Studiorum* (Saviani, 2013), and remained active throughout the 19th century, working especially in secondary education. Despite this, the beadle is still little explored in research on the history of education. In addition to a dissertation about the subject (Lira, 2022), it appears in a few works such as that of Silva and Araújo (2013), who discuss the representation of the beadle in letters published in the press or in works about discipline, inspection and school control mechanisms (Zanoti, 2017; Rennó, 2009). However, its existence as a type of specialized worker, which shows the varied possibilities of understanding the schooling process of Brazilian society in the 19th century, is still a topic to be debated.

In Paraíba², a province in the North region (current Northeast) in the 19th century, a series of individuals occupied this disciplinary and auxiliary role at the *Liceu Paraibano* and, later, at the *Escola Normal*. Mentions of them can be found in the press, in educational legislation and in documentation related to secondary education. This article aims to analyze the performance and trajectories of beadles in secondary public education, inserting this worker into the social history of education.

We start from the hypothesis that the role of beadle brought visibility to its occupant, allowing him to form social networks in the province and achieve different possibilities of labor and social inclusion. Our analysis is based on educational legislation; on reports by provincial presidents and directors of public education and various documents on public education; and on the press. Although these sources are official, produced by dominant sectors, we chose to analyze them from the perspective of those “from below” (Thompson, 2012). These documents of diverse natures, read against the grain and analyzed together, allow us to follow these workers in imperial society, highlighting their contribution to secondary education and also how this position enabled changes in their lives.

From the perspective of Thompson's history seen from below and his contributions to social history (Thompson, 1981, 1987) and the dialogue with the historiography of Brazilian education, we intend to discuss the importance of the beadle role and present the trajectories of three beadles who worked throughout the 19th century in the region. To this end, in addition to searching for the term *beadle*, we used the “name thread” (Ginzburg, 1989) to find references to these individuals in the sources consulted.

² During the 19th century the province was called Parahyba do Norte. We will use this name when dealing with citations and Paraíba in the free text.

This article is divided into two parts. In the first, we will discuss the role of beadle, showing its existence in different provinces based on the historiography of education. In the following part, divided into three subtopics, we will analyze the trajectories of individuals who occupied the role of beadle in Paraíba. With this, we will discuss similarities in what was expected of their performance and differences due to the numerous possibilities of being a worker in Brazilian imperial education.

The beadle and Secondary Education in Imperial Brazil

Between 1825 and 1879, 23 high schools were created in different Brazilian provinces (Ferronato, 2012). Much of the research on the history of education during the imperial period focuses on the analysis of teachers and students, but these institutions had employees distributed across several sectors, such as management, secretariat, teaching, inspection and supervision of students, reception and cleaning. Although the same person was sometimes responsible for more than one of these duties, this myriad of functions can be seen in the legislation about high schools and in press articles that reported on episodes involving school institutions. In this topic, in dialogue with research about the history of education, we focus on examples from provinces in the then Northern Region, in order to understand what the position of beadle was like during the period.

In Pernambuco, a province neighboring Paraíba, the creation of the *Liceu* dates back to 1825. The law indicated different functions to be performed in that space: director, secretary, teachers, doorman and beadle. Regarding the latter, it decreed: “like the *Liceo da Cidade do Recife*, the salary of the Drawing teacher being raised to five hundred thousand *reis*; two hundred thousand *reis* for the doorkeeper with the role of beadle [...]” (*Diário de Pernambuco*, 22/ 06/1836, Law No. 24 of September 1825, our emphasis). This legislation therefore determined that the duty of monitoring student behavior was the responsibility of the beadle, who should combine this role with that of doorman, with a single salary.

In 1834, the *Ateneu do Rio Grande do Norte* was created. The law that regulated its organization, from March 1835, determined that the beadle should control indiscipline and monitor student attendance, in addition to being available to the school administration for whatever was requested. In 1836, the *Liceus* of Bahia and Paraíba were created (Ferronato, 2012; Miranda, 2017). The laws and regulations of these institutions provided for employees with the role of supervising student behavior. However, in each place the role had a different name. The Statute of the institution in Bahia, from 1841, had similarities regarding the obligations related to the disciplinary control of students and assistance to the management and teachers, similar to the legislation of Rio Grande do Norte. However, the job title was doorman and assistant. The Statute of the *Liceu Paraibano*, from 1837, named him beadle and defined his duties: “the beadle has the obligation to ensure that during the *Lyceo* exercises there is absolute silence in the corridors, not allowing anyone to disturb or interrupt the work” (*Parahyba do Norte, Lyceo Statute*, 1837, art. 50). In other words, in Paraíba the beadle had duties similar to those in the other provinces.

At the *Liceu do Maranhão*, created in 1838, the situation was similar in terms of disciplinary roles and appointments. Its statutes determined that the doorkeeper should be responsible for, among other things: “During any exercise of the *Lyceo*, the Doorkeeper is obliged to be present and will take care to ensure that the utmost silence reigns in the Corridors, and that no one is allowed to disturb or interrupt the work” (*Estatuto do Lyceu do Maranhão*, 1838 *apud* Ribeiro, 2006, p. 133).

The Maranhão Statute refers to the silence required during classes and that the doorkeeper was responsible for ensuring order and acting in accordance with the rules. His obligations were specified in four articles of the aforementioned document. In addition to monitoring the students, the doorkeeper's duties included: maintaining the cleanliness of the classrooms, opening and closing the classroom doors at the scheduled times, cleaning the furniture and other cleaning needs of the teaching environment. A presidential report from Maranhão in 1870 highlighted the need to hire other employees: "the inspector requests the creation of a post for a porter who will act as a servant and courier, to assist the doorman who currently combines the functions of his job with those of a caretaker, servant and courier" (*Relatório do Vice-Presidente de Província do Maranhão*, 1870, p. 16, our emphasis). The presidential report indicated the need for a caretaker's assistant to assist with external obligations, perhaps accumulated by the same person.

The *Liceu do Ceará*, founded in 1844, appointed the position of beadle as of 1857: "Create two posts in the *Lycêo*, one for a clerk and the other for a beadle, *who will also serve as an archivist*" (Ceará, *Resolução* No. 818, 1857, *apud* Vieira, Farias, 2006, p. 26). In other words, the beadle should simultaneously perform the role of discipline controller and archivist. In Ceará, "the president appointed teachers, principal, vice principal and beadle and organized a school statute" (Oliveira, 2007, p. 29). The latter shared the organization and supervision of students.

In Sergipe, the positions of beadle and doorman were also presented as different functions, but performed by a single person. The provincial report of 1872, when dealing with secondary public education in the province, created in 1847, mentioned the "beadle and doorman of the Atheneu" (Sergipe, *Relatório do Presidete da Província*, 1872, p. S1-46).

The *Liceu de Alagoas*, created in 1849, was similar to the one in Sergipe. There, the disciplinary service of the students was carried out by the doorman: "The Law that created the *Lyceu*, immediately considering the constitution of its administrative part, established in art. 6th that the establishment would have a Director, a Secretary and an Usher serving as Doorman, appointed by the Government" (Duarte, 1961, p. 202). In the province of Alagoas, the name beadle appeared in the list of volunteers from the country and was used as the surname of the assembly delegate "José Bedel da Silva Leite" (Alagoas, *Falla dirigida à Assembleia Provincial*, 1865, p. 7). We conjecture that receiving the title of "bedel" in the surname may have meant some distinction for this subject. It is important to highlight that the "beadle" was not only found in schools, but also in other environments such as secretariats of public departments and churches (Lira, 2022). In the religious sphere, for example, in the province of Pernambuco, we find a mention of the "beadle and subdeacon: José Raymundo Baptista in the seminary of Olinda" (*Almanak de Pernambuco*, 1859, p. 250). In 1860, the priest was listed as a priest and Latin teacher in the same place, where he worked as a beadle (*Almanak de Pernambuco*, 1860 p. 331). The 1869 *Almanak*, in Pernambuco, recorded the presence of a beadle in the office of the *Faculdade de Direito e Ginásio Provincial*. In the *Ginásio Provincial* section, the "beadle Hemernegildo Marcellino de Miranda" appeared (*Almanak de Pernambuco*, 1869, p. 43). In the "*Faculdade de Direito*" section, the document, when describing the employees of the house, said: "beadle, Manuel Bruno Alves Couto" (*Almanak de Pernambuco*, 1869, p. 51).

The existence of the beadle as a position, function or distinction, exemplified by examples from different northern provinces and in different periods, reinforces the importance of taking a closer look at these individuals. In the next topic, we will examine this existence in more detail by focusing on Paraíba.

The beadle in Parahyba do Norte

As we highlighted above, Brazilian secondary education presents similarities in terms of the creation of positions and functions. Regarding beadles, laws and regulations demonstrate the polysemy in the appointment to this position and the different obligations attributed to the individuals who occupied it during the imperial period. In Paraíba, we also found the presence of beadle at the *Liceu* and a caretaker at the *Escola Normal* (Araújo, 2010).

As in other regions, the control function was a fundamental part of the daily life of educational institutions, such as the *Liceu*. The same individual who was known as a beadle, with the responsibility of ensuring discipline, also had other duties. The law that created the *Liceu Paraibano* in 1836 determined: “The doorman referred to in the same article and who will also serve as a beadle and librarian, will be appointed by the President of the Province, upon proposal by the Director of the *Lyceu*, and will receive a salary of three hundred thousand *réis*”. And it added: he should “take care of the cleanliness and tidiness of the house and ring the bell for the entrance and exit of classes” (Parahyba do Norte, Law no. 11 of March 24, 1836). Later, his duties would be detailed:

The Beadle's duties include: Opening and closing the Lyceum. Taking care of the cleanliness and tidiness of the house. Ringing the bell to signal the start and end of classes. Notifying the principal whenever teachers are absent and delivering to him at the end of the month a list of absences for both teachers and students. Warning students who violate the provisions of Article 59 or disturb the order of silence in the Lyceum, reporting this to the principal if they do not refrain (Parahyba do Norte, *Law No. 7*, of June 4, 1846, our emphasis).

In other words, the beadle's duties included cleaning, controlling the behavior of students, and ensuring the attendance of students and teachers. Several men were appointed beadles throughout the 19th century in Paraíba, performing their duties in different ways. We can find the individuals who performed the beadle's duties in the 19th century newspapers. Among them, we highlight three in order to analyze their trajectories: Laurindo Peregrino de Mello, Gervázio Victor da Natividade and Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos. Their work was part of the development of secondary education during this period in which Brazil was undergoing the process of formation as a nation. They played a leading role in different social spaces, developing various activities in parallel with their work as janitors, and their trajectories help us understand the world of work in the literate universe of Paraíba. The implosion of the idea of passivity of the working class, a mark of history seen from below in the sense of E. P. Thompson (2012), also contributed to the change in the interpretation of the actions of subjects other than those originating from the dominant classes, as were these subjects.

Gervázio Victor da Natividade: beadle, lieutenant and journalist (1842-1861)

Gervázio Victor da Natividade was not the first to work as a janitor at the *Liceu Paraibano*. Before him, José Gomes Pessoa had held the position at the institution from 1837 to 1841. However, we chose to speak of Natividade because of his social versatility beyond this professional position. His longevity in the role probably helps to explain why his name is mentioned so often in the sources.

As we have seen, the law that created the *Liceu*, in 1836, mentioned the position of beadle associated with doorman and librarian. From 1841 onwards, Natividade began to appear on the lists of employees at the *Liceu*, being registered as a doorman until 1849. In some documents, he was called beadle. In 1845, an ordinance determined: “Order payment to the doorman of the Lyceum of this city Gervazio Victor da Natividade of four hundred thousand nine hundred and eight reis for the expenses incurred at the *Liceu* in the past year” (*Arquivo Público da Paraíba*, Ordinance, 1845, manuscript). It is worth remembering that the salary of a doorman/beadle would be 300 thousand *reis*, according to the Resolution of 1846, which dealt with secondary education. In 1858, there were changes. The salary table stated: “Beadles, doormen and janitors received a salary of 600\$ and a bonus of 100\$ (Parahyba do Norte, *Law No. 9*, October 29, 1858).

In 1849, we find the subject in a police report, involved in a situation caused by the elections, being mentioned with the title of lieutenant:

Also being a prisoner: Lieutenant Gervazio Victor da Natividade who was in *Goyanna* for a few days, and left there on leave in early December and never returned. These were the officers from here who marched to *Pedras de Fogo*, and from there to *Goyanna*, and there they assisted the authorities in maintaining public order and strengthening the legal forces in that province against troublemakers, who were trying with great fury to plunge it into the depths of anarchy. (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Presidente da Província*, 1849, p. 5).

In the same year and in the following years, Natividade's salary appeared in the report of the president of the province. According to the list of employees of the Lyceum attached to the report of the director of public education in 1852, Natividade held the position of beadle. In 1861, he was praised: “the beadle of the *Liceu* performs his duties well” (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Director da Instrução Pública*, 1861, p. 9).

In that same year, he requested to be released from his position. We do not know the reason for this decision, only that in the decree another person was appointed to occupy that position:

By decree of June 26, Gervazio Victor da Natividade was dismissed, at his own request, from the position of beadle. He was succeeded by João Licinio Vellozo, who also requested and obtained dismissal, and that position is currently held by Laurindo Peregrino de Mello, appointed by decree of December 7 last year (*A Regeneração*, June 28, 1861, p. 2).

One possible explanation for the request is that he held another public office. In the same year, he was listed as an official secretary of the government (*A Regeneração*, 1861). In other words, he combined his duties as a doorman with other positions. In addition to his title as lieutenant, while serving as a doorman/doorman, Natividade worked as an editor for newspapers printed at the printing press of José Rodrigues da Costa, such as *O Governista Parahybano* (1850 to 1854) and *O Parahybano* (1855). In addition, he published in the press of another province, the *Diário de Pernambuco*, and was mentioned as a journalist in approximately 55 editions of this newspaper between 1854 and 1855.

As for his relation with the owner of the printing press, he and José Rodrigues da Costa were close. Peixoto (2017) states that, in addition to having printed newspapers at José Rodrigues da Costa's printing shop, they became members of the *Irmandade da Misericórdia* on the same day. The author states:

I believe that, possibly, the ties established between the typographer and the civil servant crossed the professional barrier, since in addition to Gervazio Victor da Natividade having used the printing shop to print his newspapers, he also entered another space of sociability, the *Irmandade da Misericórdia*, on the same day that José Rodrigues da Costa also became a member (Peixoto, 2017, p.111).

Gervazio Victor da Natividade had distinct professional and social experiences. Between the 1850s and 1860s, he organized journalistic content and the printing of reports presented to the Legislative Assembly, as well as the presentations of provincial presidents and vice-presidents (1854-1855). In the latter year, he held the position of both government secretary and beadle, as shown in the Map of Employees of the *Liceu (Parahyba do Norte, Relatório do Vice-Presidente de Província, 1855)*. His name continued to appear in these documents until 1861, confirming his presence in public administration as a literate man with access to the province's political and intellectual elite. Nineteenth-century society and the multiple possible experiences were organized in a hierarchical order. This order organized, subjected, defined limits, but did not entirely determine the actions of subjects who were “social beings,” who reacted and had the capacity for reflection, who were capable of reacting to “interrelated events or to many repetitions of the same event” (Thompson, 1981, p. 15). Gervazio's different actions show the possibilities of workers in 19th-century Brazil who took advantage of accumulated experiences to act in that society. Experience in the sense proposed by Thompson, which makes transformation possible based on what was experienced. The experiences of this individual indicate the dynamics of his professional practice: lieutenant, school beadle, journalist and government secretary. He had a long professional life until his death in 1878: “the head of the second section, Gervazio Victor da Natividade, a long-time employee, very practical and conscientious, passed away” (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Presidente da Província, 1878, p. 16*).

The profiles of the individuals who occupied the position of beadle at the Liceu were distinct. Next, we will discuss who worked after Natividade: Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello, who had unique experiences in public education, as well as being a teacher and secretary.

Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello: beadle, primary school teacher and secretary (1861-1864)

After the dismissal of Gervásio Victor da Natividade and a brief stint by another person in the position, Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello was appointed beadle in 1861, a position he held until 1864. The first records about Bandeira de Mello are from dispatches from the provincial government in his first month in office (*A Regeneração, April 20, 1861, p. 2*). In June, his name appears in a dispatch to the Provincial Treasury:

I forward to Your Majesty for convenient purposes, the enclosed extract of the high school employees' timesheet of this city, relative to the month of May that has just ended, and the sheet and documents also enclosed, of the expenses made in that establishment during the same month, in the amount of thirty-one thousand nine hundred and sixty *reis*, which should be sent to the respective beadle Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello (*A Regeneração, 12/06/1861, p. 2*).

In the same period, the Director of Public Education alluded to the need to hire an assistant: “it is absolutely necessary to have a servant who assists the beadle, and is incubated from the external service of this department” (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Diretor da Instrução Pública*, 1861, p. 11). The need to create a position of beadle's assistant was reiterated at other times. In 1862, the director of public education reported that the Public Education Secretariat was located in one of the rooms of the *Liceu*, where the bureaucratic actions of education were carried out, including the organization of notices. And he highlighted the Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello's work: “The beadle performs his duties well” (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Diretor da Instrução Pública*, 1862, p. 9), repeating the phrase used previously about the function, as shown above.

The good relation between the beadle and the public administration can be seen not only in the mentions of his performance but also in the authorization to grant him a bonus, even though the hiring of the assistant was requested again the following year: “It is necessary that you authorize me to employ the beadle of the Lyceo in collaboration with any bonus, and to create an assistant for the same beadle” (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Diretor da Instrução pública*, 1863, p. 21).

In 1864, Bandeira de Mello appears on the jury of the Capital of the Province, along with a series of illustrious men: teachers, captains, lieutenants, doctors, among others (*O Publicador*, 07/28/1864, p. 3). According to Ameno (2011), those chosen to serve as jurors had two profiles: people with established political ties to deputies and candidates for this position, or socially recognized members of the public. As a result, Bandeira de Mello was qualified to participate in trials, being socially recognized as a citizen.

In the same year, 1864, Bandeira de Mello would be qualified to participate in the competition to become a teacher of primary education in the Province. He passed the competition, and in September he was dismissed from his position as a janitor and appointed as a teacher: “The president of the province, at the proposal of the director of public education, decided to dismiss Laurindo Bandeira de Mello from his position as beadle of the high school in this city” (*O Publicador*, 07/09/1864, p. 1). In the same edition, a dispatch announced his appointment as a teacher in the town of Baía da Traição:

The president of the province, in consideration of what has just been proposed by the directorate of public education, appoints citizen Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello to temporarily manage the primary education department in the town of Bahia da Traição, who must request the appropriate title from the secretariat, with this order rendering ineffective the order appointing citizen Eufrazio Fonseca Galvão for the same purpose (*O Publicador*, 07/09/1864, p.1).

He taught in the town until 1866, when he exchanged jobs with the elementary school teacher from Pilões (*O Publicador*, 08/27/1866, p. 01). That same year, in the section *A Pedidos*, Laurindo complained about his living conditions and appealed to the provincial government to have “compassion” for the interim teachers:

Here are the good fruits reaped by the interim primary school teachers, who are as persecuted as if they had not proven their qualifications in a rigorous competition. I, burdened with a large family, and so poor, have just seen my small luggage swallowed up by the waves, leaving everyone with only the clothes on their backs, without the state or the province showing even a hint of compassion!!!... Parahyba, September 28, 1866. Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello (*O Publicador*, 10/01/1866, p.4).

The dissatisfaction of elementary school teachers was a constant in the pages of the nineteenth-century press. Amid the clamor when he asked the provincial government for compassion, the former beadle left records about his personal life and economic situation. He reported being married, with a large family to support and in a very poor financial situation. The historiography of education in Paraíba discusses the teaching profession, reinforcing this place:

Being a teacher was, in a special way, being part of the erudite universe and obtaining, from the arrangements that the profession allowed, guarantees among the few who mastered the literate culture. However, the remuneration for teaching work was not in accordance with the social importance of the profession that the presidents of the province announced (Santos, 2020, p. 139).

Shortly after complaining about “seeing my small baggage swallowed by the waves”, Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello was appointed to the position of secretary at the *Colégio de Educandos Artífices*. Would the public complaint about the situation of poverty have helped in the change of function within the universe of public education in Paraíba? What we know is that he worked at the Colégio for four years, holding the positions of primary school teacher and school secretary (Lima, 2008). He also taught in Vila de Jacoca (1869) and Vila de Bom Conselho (1871), regions close to the capital.

Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello established himself as a teacher in the Province. We cannot find answers in the available sources to questions such as the following years of his teaching career, whether he retired or the date of his death, for example. However, we know that he was a literate man who articulated himself socially to occupy different spaces within public education. He began his work and social relations as a beadle and, over the years, consolidated his position as a teacher of first letters and a teacher at the *Colégio de Educandos Artífices*.

Bandeira de Mello is both exemplary and common, and should be understood based on the dynamics of the society in which he lived, since “people are as determined (and no more) in their values as they are in their ideas and actions, they are as much ‘subjects’ (and no more) of their own affective and moral conscience as of their general history” (THOMPSON, 1981, p. 194). In the next topic, we will present the subject who succeeded Bandeira de Mello in the position of beadle of the *Liceu Paraibano*, who also combined another position with this function, that of ensign.

Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcelos: beadle and ensign (1864-1881)

Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos began his activities as a beadle in September 1864, as shown by his appointment: “The president of the province has found it convenient to appoint citizen Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos to the position of beadle of the high school of this city, for which title he requested from the secretary of the presidency” (*O Publicador*, 07/09/1864, p. 01). On the same day, an order confirmed the authorization received for him to dedicate himself to the High School, at the same time that he requested exemption from the National Guard: “Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos, beadle of the High School of this city, requests exemption from national guard service. Issue an order in the requested form” (*O Publicador*, 19/03/1864, p. 01). Before being appointed as a beadle, Vasconcellos worked in

the police force as an ensign, a service from which he requested exemption again and was granted, in September 1865:

Informing you about the request of the 1st National Guard of this capital of Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos, who asks Your Excellency to order his exemption from battalion service, since he serves as a beadle of the Lyceo of this same capital, I must tell Your Excellency that I will judge the petitioner's request if it is granted, since the head of that one declares, at the end of the official letter that I return with the petition, that he will suffer the same if the employee does not obtain the requested exemption (Parahyba do Norte, *Oficio*, 1865, p.108).

The requests for exemption in different years are noteworthy. Exactly one year after his appointment as a beadle, he requested exemption from the position of ensign. What would lead an officer to request leave from the police force to serve in a school? To carry out the work of an ensign in the 19th century, it was necessary to be young, be 18 years of age or older and have served in the army for at least two years in certain positions (SILVA, 2020). The legislation determined: “The positions of Ensigns and Second Lieutenants will be filled by Sergeants, by Cadets who have served for some time as Inferior Officers, and by students of the Military School in accordance with the respective Law” (*Brazil, Lei de Promoção de Oficiais*, 1850).

In Paraíba, ensigns commanded enlisted men and contributed to local tranquility with groups of up to 165 cadets and inferior officers, as indicated in the reports of the presidency of the province between 1846 and 1889. Poor free individuals were recruited for military service and, when they joined military ranks, were subject to military organization (Gomes, 2019). The experiences ranged from recruitment, which could be coercive, to long marches, poor nutrition and poor weapons, and could even lead to armed conflict. However, remaining in military service was a choice aimed at the opportunity for social advancement in the armed forces, even though they were concentrated in lower official positions (Gomes, 2019).

With the title of ensign, individuals could also work in prisons, enlisted men, in the corporation's secretariat and even in public departments in administrative positions. Would Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos have chosen the position of beadle due to the instability regarding his personal safety, since it was common in provincial reports to record the murders of these officers? Or would the position of beadle be more interesting due to the social networks that could be built? The Thompsonian explanation that understands experience not only as a “junction point between ‘structure’ and ‘process’”, but a point of disjunction between alternative and incompatible traditions” (Thompson, 1981, p. 183) can help explain the trajectories of these beadles:

Experience arrives without knocking on the door and announces deaths, subsistence crises, wars, unemployment, inflation, genocide. People go hungry: those who survive think of the market in a different way. People are arrested: in prison they meditate about the law in new ways [...] Within the social being, changes occur that give rise to a transformed experience: and this experience is decisive, in the sense that it exerts pressure on the existing social consciousness, poses new questions and provides much of the material with which the most elaborate intellectual exercises deal (Thompson, 1981, p. 200).

Leaving the official role of ensign and becoming a beadle may have represented a situation of greater tranquility and stability. Furthermore, the position could bring social visibility, due to direct contact with the public education authorities, school administration, teachers and students from the elite, the public that attended the *Liceu Paraibano*.

Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos served as a beadle for 17 years. During this period, his name appears several times in official documents published in the press. These are matters related to the position, and bureaucratic duties such as health leave, absences, among others. In 1867, for example, the president of the province granted “3 months of leave with pay to the beadle of the lyceo Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos to treat his health outside the capital” (*O Publicador*, 02/04/1867, p. 01). We found no records of the illness or the reason for it being treated outside the capital, nor where he would have received the treatment. However, other documents from the provincial bureaucracy provide access to aspects of Vasconcellos’ professional life. In 1868 and 1869 he took several leaves of absence for health reasons, all with pay. Assistants were provided to perform the duties related to the position: “The president of the province decided to grant the dismissal requested by the assistant beadle of the Lyceo of that capital, João Pereira de Oliveira Feitosa. He also appointed Luiz de França Barbosa to the aforementioned position” (*O Publicador*, 14/04/1869, p.2).

In 1872, Vasconcellos, still a beadle, requested an adjustment to the salary of an officer: “the same gentleman reads the opinions of the commission about Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos’ the petitions, beadle of the Lyceu of this capital, requesting an increase in the salary of Ignácio de Souza Gouveia, 2nd retired officer in the government secretariat” (Parahyba do Norte, MINUTES of August 3rd, 1872). Would he have performed some function as an officer or another position in the provincial administration? Or could this responsibility also be attributed to the position of beadle? We found no records in the sources.

He continued working until 1881, when he was fired for bad behavior, more specifically for drunkenness:

On July 11, the beadle of the Lyceo, Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos, was fired for the convenience of the public service, since he is of public notoriety and could no longer continue to perform his duties due to habitual drunkenness. This dismissal prompted some criticism from an opposition newspaper, which, responding as it should, did not deal with the matter again (Parahyba do Norte, *Relatório do Presidente da Província*, 1881, p. 10).

We found no other complaints about Joaquim's behavior, but the presidential report claims that the “habitual drunkenness” was “public notoriety”. The political dispute is clear in the complaint that an opposition newspaper had taken the opportunity to “report” about the matter, but the dismissal had silenced the complaints. In the following years we find no references to him, but in 1889 he is identified as a “former beadle” in a news item about his retirement: “retired Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos former beadle of the Lyceo” (*O Liberal Parahybano*, 04/07/1889, p. 03, emphasis added). That same year, he died, leaving a widow who should receive his salary:

To the citizen inspector of the State Treasury, recommending that he pay D. Virginia Pavão de Vasconcellos, widow of the retired beadle of the Lyceo, who died on the 29th of the next month, the salary to which

he was entitled from the 1st to the 27th of the aforementioned month (*O Estado da Parahyba*, 11/29/1891, p. 03).

The record presents his wife's name and reinforces that he was retired, in addition to informing the date of his death. The brief professional history of this beadle shows us that, like Gervázio Victor da Natividade and Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello, Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos performed several functions in Paraíba society, standing out as a beadle.

Final considerations

In the social organization of nineteenth-century Brazil, the selection of public servants was configured as an attempt to maintain social order (Dolhnikoff, 2005). Public education, as a social sphere, should collaborate with the political, cultural and commercial procedures in force. In this perspective, secondary education is included. Provincial presidents, directors of public education, directors of institutions, teachers, janitors, secretaries and doormen had different functions that complemented each other in the system that organized primary and secondary education. In this article, we focus on the experiences of individuals who worked as janitors, a position still little studied by the historiography of education but which appears as an important function in the organization of secondary education.

The beadles' experiences were different. Therefore, we emphasize the relevance of the position in three aspects: first, its work as a disciplinarian, showing that there was no uniformity of the expected order, passivity of being and being as students in social places, even if these were intended for the elite, as it was the case of the *Liceu*. The second is the role of the beadle as a platform for social visibility. This is possibly why Gervázio Victor da Natividade, a lieutenant and journalist, and Joaquim Pavão de Vasconcellos, a career ensign, chose the beadle functions. And our third argument about the relevance of being a beadle in Paraíba concerns Laurindo Peregrino Bandeira de Mello who, from the position, established himself as a teacher of first letters and at the *Colégio de Educandos Artífices*. In this sense, the concept of experience defended by Thompson (1981) helped to understand the relations among material life, social structures and the agencies of these subjects in relation to contact with the literate universe and, more specifically, with secondary education that was organized and developed during the 19th century in Paraíba.

These Paraíba beadles were not the only ones who worked in the province in the 19th century, but their trajectories help to understand the universe of education workers in the period. They had in common the proximity to the literate universe not only by working within a school institution but also by performing functions related to writing, such as the secretary of the *Liceu*, the production of documents for the public education board and finally, teaching and journalism. The discussion woven leaves traces for other investigations stipulations that delve deeper into the issues presented, considering other subjects, comparing the beadle's exercise in different regions, analyzing their performance in various social spheres such as public offices and churches in the 19th century, among other possibilities.

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