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CARVALHO, José Liberato Freire de (Coimbra, 1772-Lisbon, 1855)

José Liberato Freire de Carvalho – better known as José Liberato or simply Liberato – was one of the most prominent Portuguese memoirists and publicists of the 19th century, spreading his activity across areas such as political and cultural journalism, historiography, oratory, and parliamentary archives. According to Inocêncio, ‘he was born in Quinta de Montesão, in the suburbs of Coimbra, on 20 July 1772’ (Inocêncio Francisco da Silva, *Dicionário Bibliográfico Português...*[Portuguese Bibliographical Dictionary], vol. IV, 1860, p. 417).

The son of Dr Aires António Antunes Freire and Maria Joaquina Sequeira de Carvalho, two of his brothers – D. António da Visitação Freire de Carvalho (1769-1804) and Francisco Freire de Carvalho (1779-1854) – were also prominent in the world of literature, both having been members of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, with outstanding academic output. The former, a regular canon of St Augustine, taught history and geography at the monastery of São Vicente de Fora. The second, a hermit of St Augustine, taught History and Antiquities at the School of Arts in Coimbra. A third brother, Luís António Freire de Carvalho (1766-1833), met a tragic fate for political reasons: ‘after having all his possessions confiscated, lost and devoured since 1828 and [...] [being] imprisoned in 1832’, he died in the Tomar prison during the reign of D. Miguel (José Liberato Freire de Carvalho, *Memórias...*, 1855, p. 360). The example of his older brothers clearly marked José Liberato, who joined the monastery of São Vicente de Fora, where he lived with D. António da Visitação. From an early age, he showed a deep love of History and Antiquity, while at the same time observing the customs and realities of the world outside the monastery walls. His formal studies were limited to ecclesiastical studies (Theology and Philosophy), combined with a variety of historical and political readings on a self-taught basis.

Liberato, a man of culture and freedom, severed all ties with the threefold ecclesiastical, academic and political reality of his time: he abandoned his religious status (like his brother Francisco Freire), going into exile in London (1813); he resigned, towards the end of his life, as a member of the Academia das Ciências, due to a change in the articles of association that downgraded him from full member to correspondent, the category with which he had joined the institution almost fifty years earlier (1853); and fought, through the force of his writing and his ideals, not only against the maintenance of the Ancien Régime in Portugal



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(especially Miguelism) but also against the deviations of the Chartist regime itself, whose censorship prevented him from being elected to parliament for the fifth time in 1840.

His contact with the ideas of Encyclopaedism and the French Revolution enthused him and led him to be initiated into Freemasonry. One must realise that in the decades between 1790 and 1810, the various Masonic affiliations and lineages were not only incompatible with aristocratic, ecclesiastical, artistic and academic forms of social life but also mirrored the very division of Portuguese and European societies into traditionalist, reformist, moderate, and radical sensibilities.

Liberato's (literally, freedman, former slave) ideals of freedom and liberation, both individual and national, would, according to this dual logic, Masonic and historical, involve a search for light, the enlightenment of the human spirit and of the elites, which, once achieved, would allow for the regeneration of customs and peoples. Hence, the importance of enlightening his readers, not only through journalism but also through historiographical, Masonic and parliamentary memoir writing that he cultivated. Liberato's life was both unique and characteristic of his time due to the various obstacles he faced. At the age of 80, he himself tells us in his memoir: 'Although my situation in life was neither high nor brilliant, it was not obscure: I served my country with all the resources of my intelligence; I contributed a lot to giving it freedom; I suffered banishment, imprisonment, emigration, and hardship for it' (J.L. Freire de Carvalho, *Memórias* [Memoirs], *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6).

Liberato had four occupations over the course of several decades of his troubled life. He was a political journalist (especially between 1814 and 1823 and in 1827-28), archivist for the Chamber of Peers (from 1834), ministerial official (1821-27), and administrator of the National Press (1836-40). He also held public office as a member of parliament in four legislatures (1822, 1834, 1836, and 1839), standing out above all for his intervention in favour of the law banishing D. Miguel and his descendants (*Idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-375).

It was thanks to a historical memoir written by his brother, D. António da Visitação, that he was admitted to the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa by the Duke of Lafões (1719-1806) in 1800. Lafões, Assistant Secretary of State to the regent D. João (the future King João VI), used this report to prove that, when faced with the dilemma of which was the most fruitful alliance that Portugal could enter into, that of the British monarchy or that of the French republic, the latter would be preferable, given 'the little faith and loyalty with which the English have always behaved towards us' (*Idem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27). Another memoir by D. António da Visitação on the advantages of studying nautical geography in Navy classes also earned him the appointment by the future Count of Linhares as a member of the Sociedade Real Marítima de Lisboa [Royal Maritime Society of Lisbon].

This knowledge of history, placed at the service of political power and certain strategic views, was one of the characteristics of Liberato's intellectual career, just as it was his brother's (and indeed several other contemporary journalists and academicians). Appointed Grand Orator of the Masonic lodge *Fortaleza* [Fortress] and a member of the Academy in the same year, 1804, Liberato thus began a period of more than thirty-five years in the public eye, several of which were spent banished inside and outside the kingdom.

He was suspected of being Francophile during the Noblemen's Conspiracy (1805-1806) and in 1809. He



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was, therefore, imprisoned without charges for two years (1811-1813). In 1813, he renounced his ecclesiastical status and went into exile in Great Britain, where he used his intelligence on publications such as the *Investigador Português em Inglaterra* [Portuguese researcher in England] (1814-18), in the employ of the Count of Funchal and later as the sole editor of *O Campeão Português* [The Portuguese Champion] (1819-21). With this newspaper, he sought to prepare a change in mentalities and institutions in Portugal, which would eventually come about with the revolution of 24 August 1820.

A man of multiple fields of knowledge and cultural interests, Liberato, a journalist, memoirist and historian, is one of the examples of 19th-century figures characterised by his historiographical production with a strong ideological slant, which still indelibly conditions the vision of the 19th century in the national scientific and cultural community. In this sense, he was a predecessor of Alexandre Herculano, Oliveira Martins, and Teófilo Braga.

Framed in a rich and varied cultural and institutional turning point, in which London and Paris affected domestic diplomacy and politics, Liberato – like Portuguese society itself – received influences that were only superficially contradictory. His political and historiographical alignments are similar to those of leading decision-makers, such as the future Counts of Barca and Linhares and the Count and Marquis of Funchal, apparently associated with *French* and *English* deals, but in reality conditioned by the elites and institutions that prevailed after the French Revolution, as well as by the responses that successive London cabinets were providing to Paris' *Europeanising* greed.

Liberato, fascinated by the culture, freedom of expression and freedom of the press that prevailed in conservative London (where he lived for several years), nevertheless nurtured Masonic and revolutionary (even Iberianist) ambitions, reflected in the pronouncement from Oporto on 24 August 1820 and the conquest of Lisbon on 24 July 1833. He also contributed greatly to the outbreak of these events and to the historicist account of their background.

A journalist and memoirist in exile, both in London and Paris and in besieged Oporto, José Liberato constructed a discourse where historical ideas go hand in hand with narratives of the journeys (not always dignified) of the figures and protagonists of *Vintismo* and the various Chartisms. Through his account of the past and the present he witnessed (especially the years between 1814 and 1834), Liberato left behind a picture of Portugal's history after the 16th century characterised by decadence, obscurantism and slavery, to which he also added the secondary status of being a British satellite, which even the regenerative ideals of the new constitutional regimes were unable to reverse. Giving men and their bloody civil wars an interpretation of the struggle of Good against Evil, of Light against Darkness, Liberato, the idealistic and teleological historian, is contradicted by Liberato, chronicler of his own time and memoirist of successive (and postponed) national regenerations. He saw the British alliance from the Treaty of Methuen onwards as one of the causes of decline, which did not prevent him from recognising freedom of the press following the British model as one of the factors of national progress.

With the *Vintismo* period, José Liberato Freire de Carvalho returned to the kingdom, aware that he had

contributed greatly to the new order. Elected as a member of parliament and continuing to influence public opinion with his *Campeão Português em Lisboa* [Portuguese Champion in Lisbon] (1822-1823), he saw the regime eroded by its own contradictions and destroyed following the *Vila-Francada*. Signing a declaration of protest, along with seventy-eight other representatives of the Sovereign Congress, Liberato became a front-line enemy of the counter-revolution, of the political projects of D. Carlota Joaquina and D. Miguel, the Prince exiled during the *Abrilada* [Aprilade] (1824), but appointed regent by D. Pedro IV (1827) and acclaimed and sworn in as king in 1828.

In *Ensaio político sobre as causas que preparam a usurpação do infante D. Miguel no ano de 1828, e com ela a queda da Carta Constitucional do ano de 1826* [Political essay on the causes leading up to the usurpation of Prince Miguel in 1828, and with it the fall of the Constitutional Charter of 1826] (1840), Liberato took on what can only be understood as the role of a doctrinaire, after having played that of a political journalist. The very title of the book is indicative of a search for the political causes of what, for posterity and for the liberal tradition, will always be known as the *Usurpation*, thanks to the intervening role of some of the most important theoreticians of liberalism in Portugal, such as – in addition to Liberato himself – Luz Soriano, Herculano, and Garrett.

The author seeks to uncover the roots of this unique and symbolic event in Portuguese history, the *Usurpation*: he sees it as the culmination of a long tradition of struggle between the *true* national institutions, reinvigorated by *Vintismo* (the traditional courts established in Lamego) and their absolutist *degeneration*. This conflict, in his opinion, was fuelled both externally and internally by expansionism and the constant overt and unofficial interference of the London executives.

For José Liberato, the historical figures embody diametrically opposed moral and political principles, symbolising civilisation and savagery, progress and decadence. It is not only the figures of Suberra (in *Ensaio político* [Political essay]) and Palmela (in *Memórias...* [Memoirs]) who seek to manoeuvre or control the ideological interests grouped around D. Carlota Joaquina and D. Miguel, gradually allowing themselves to be entangled in a strategic web over which they will both lose control – which will mean the imprisonment and death of Suberra and the exile of Palmela (even under Chartism). It is a whole political game of characters from the first, second and third lines – among them Saldanha, Silva Carvalho, Rodrigo da Fonseca, D. Pedro IV, and Liberato himself – who move in a truly fascinating but obscure theatre of shadows. José Liberato does so according to the dictates of Cornelius Tacitus in his *Annals*, each one recounting the abuses and follies of imperial dynasties (that of Augustus and the Luso-Brazilian one) and their respective cliques.

In this and other works, José Liberato purposely uses the blurred concepts of essay – *Ensaio histórico-político sobre a constituição e governo de Portugal* [Historical and Political essay on the constitution and government of Portugal] (1830) – and memoir – *Memórias com o título de anais para a história do tempo que durava a usurpação* [Memoirs with the title of annals for the history of the time the usurpation lasted] (from 1841-43). Thus, he recognises his own scientific unpreparedness for the construction of a solid and methodical (albeit documented) historical discourse, his nature as a passionate and intervening witness, and



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his role as a philosopher reflecting on a troubled or bloody era, in the wake of Voltaire and Tacitus.

A man of neoclassicism and pre-romanticism, a classicist like António Feliciano de Castilho and José Agostinho de Macedo, a conspirator and revolutionary like the men of the Sanhedrin and the friends of D. Pedro, José Liberato Freire de Carvalho drank from the sources of Antiquity and the methods of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa [Lisbon Academy of Sciences] to produce an immediatist history, like José Acúrsio das Neves and Garção Stockler, not always exempt from a functional historical vision, of criticism and polemics.

However, once we understand and accept this double and inseparable historiographical and ideological nature, so evident, after all, in all Portuguese 19th-century historiography (even in Alexandre Herculano), we can then understand the true richness of Liberato's historiographical production – namely, a documented search for sources and direct testimonies; an acute awareness of the political interests involved in the events narrated; and the constant use of classic historical examples from European literature and politics. Such stylistic richness, of course, does not exempt him from criticisms of sectarianism, such as those directed at him by António Viana (*Silva Carvalho e o seu Tempo* [Silva Carvalho and his time], vol. I, 1891, pp. 372-74, no. 1), taken up by João Carlos Alvim, in the re-edition of *Memórias...* [Memoirs] (1982, pp. XVI, no. 7, XVIII, no. 9, XIX, no. 12 and XX, no. 15). However, for a better understanding of the subject, they should be positioned in the context of the Masonic struggles around the *Grande Oriente Lusitano* [Great Lusitanian Orient], especially between the Saldanhista and Carvalhista currents (Oliveira Marques in *História da Maçonaria em Portugal* [History of Masonry in Portugal], vol. II, 1996, pp. 52 and 54-55, and Fernando Catroga in *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] directed by José Mattoso, vol. V, 1996, p. 204).

Lastly, we should look at some recent readings on the impact of Liberato's work on later historiography. Luís Reis Torgal draws parallels between José Liberato Freire de Carvalho and other proto-liberals and liberals, such as Manuel Fernandes Tomás (1771-1822) and Manuel Borges Carneiro (1774-1833) – the anonymous author of *Portugal Regenerado* [Regenerated Portugal] in 1820. Reis Torgal, thus, recognises in Liberato's *Ensaio histórico-político sobre a constituição e governo de Portugal* [Historical Political Essay on the constitution and government of Portugal], the presence of the 'true paradigm of liberal historical interpretation', whose 'outlines of historical analysis [...] were to be followed and glossed over by liberal and republican historiography' (*História da História em Portugal...* [History of History in Portugal], 1996, p. 32). Sérgio Campos Matos, in turn, specifies the importance of the central legacy of José Liberato's historiography, the 'democratic and anti-British theses', decadent and anti-Pombaline, in the historiographical production of José de Arriaga and Oliveira Martins (in *Historiografia e Memória Nacional* [Historiography and National Memory], 1998, pp. 95-96).

It is well known that during the constitutional experiment of 1820-23, the concepts of *true freedoms and guarantees*, advocated in an unwritten constitution *sworn* in at the mythical Cortes de Lamego and recovered with the Sovereign Congress of the *Vintismo*, attracted various political factions, both conservative and revolutionary, in Portuguese society (many of them politically active in later historical periods). So much so



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that the mythology of a proto-constitutional pactualism, supposedly already existing in both the Lusitanians and the Portuguese of the time of D. Afonso Henriques, is central to the ideology of some liberals and counter-revolutionaries: several of their leading figures coexisted as *Vintist* members of parliament, all feeling the need to mould such historical-legal *truths* into a single fundamental text in the form of a constitution or granted charter. These were the cases of José Ribeiro Saraiva, José Acúrsio das Neves (future *Miguelists*), Abbot Correia da Serra and João Pedro Ribeiro, for example – as well as José Liberato Freire de Carvalho (see the parliamentary career of this quintet summarised in Zília Osório de Castro (dir.), *Dicionário do Vintismo e do primeiro Cartismo...[Dictionary of Vintism, and first Chartism]*, 2002, vols. I, pp. 418-24 and II, pp. 308-13, 522-26, 597-99 and 626-34).

Later, on 2 May 1828, the Duke of Cadaval and the Viscount of Santarém, respectively D. Miguel's Assistant Secretaries of State for Dispatch and Foreign Affairs, strenuously argued at a meeting of State Councillors for the need to hold traditional courts to legitimise D. Miguel's monarchy. This was also the concern of some of the speakers at the so-called Lisbon courts, such as the Bishop of Viseu (Francisco Alexandre Lobo) and Acúrsio das Neves, members of the Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. Like the *Vintists* and Chartists, some *Miguelist* figures were also concerned with providing a historical and legal basis for a pactualism that would justify the *free choice* of D. Miguel as D. João VI's successor, invoking the contractual mythology of the Cortes de Lamego in this regard (see Sérgio Campos Matos, *op. cit.*, pp. 267 (and nos. 318 and 320) and 277, and Daniel Estudante Protásio, *O 2.º Visconde de Santarém – Pensamento Histórico e Acção Política...*[The second Viscount of Santarém- Historical thought and Political Action] , 2008, pp. 148-159 and 188-193).

António José da Silva Pereira's classic analysis of the Rule of Law, liberal 'traditionalism' and the dissemination role played by publicists and editors from the liberal diaspora such as Rocha Loureiro, Hipólito José Furtado de Mendonça and, of course, Liberato (in *Revista da História das Ideias* [Journal of the History of Ideas], vol. 2, 1979, pp. 139-145) should be mentioned as an essential source for framing this issue (especially for the production of so-called progressive authors).

In conclusion, the historiographical, memoirist and journalistic work of José Liberato Freire de Carvalho exemplifies, in a fascinating way, how the historiographical production of some liberal (and counter-revolutionary) figures, committed from an ideological point of view was essential to founding later visions and conceptions of the era; as well as that of its myths and heroes; and that of the coeval national refoundations and regenerations, perpetuated and repeated, uninterruptedly, to this day. This makes it all the more urgent to carry out a monographic study on Liberato, a champion of political freedoms, a champion of libertarian journalism and a supporter of a history of combat.

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