




Presentation

Dossier Stories of the São Francisco River: Subjects, Territories, and Temporalities


José Vieira da Cruz

Ph.D. in History from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), member of PROFHISTÓRIA/Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), and the Graduate Program in History at the Federal University of Alagoas.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2901-2390>

Pedro Abelardo de Santana

Ph.D. in History from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), member of the Graduate Program in History at the Federal University of Alagoas and PROHIS/Universidade Federal de Sergipe.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5305-4844>

 [10.28998/rchv13n26.2022.0017](https://doi.org/10.28998/rchv13n26.2022.0017)



The dossier “Histories of the São Francisco River: Subjects, Territories, and Temporalities” aims to give visibility to works that focus on research centered on and/or associated with the São Francisco River as a geographical, economic, social, cultural, and historical unit. The selected studies establish a guiding thread for understanding the diversity of historical temporalities, webs of sociabilities, multiple uses of spaces, and dynamics of institutions associated with the process of conquest, occupation, and settlement of the aforementioned territory—from its source in the states of Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe to the shores of Alagoas and Sergipe. In this way, the studies address research that intertwines the experiences of men and women throughout time around the river’s headwaters, tributaries, banks, dams, hydroelectric plants, and the estuary of Velho Chico.

In this regard, among the submitted, reviewed, and approved works by the dossier’s organizers and the Editorial and Advisory Board of the Magazine, preference was given to texts that demonstrated the application of the chosen approach — a (re) interpretation based on the dialogue of sources and available bibliography — regarding the plots, intricacies, and social, economic, and cultural fabrics associated with the São Francisco River and its multiple, plural, and dynamic historical temporalities.

With this purpose in mind, 12 articles and 01 review authored by researchers from different states, institutions, and fields of study were selected. The collection of these contributions lends a special character to this dossier due to the quality of the articles, the multiple temporalities addressed, and the diversity of analyzed topics.

Within this thematic axis, the first four articles delve into the colonial period. The first, titled “The First Republic of the Emboabas: Social Sovereignty and Political Sovereignty in the Seventeenth-Century São Francisco Backlands”, portrays the mentioned backlands in present-day Minas Gerais during the colonial period. It explores a significant aspect of our history: local powers competing for and gaining primacy over Portuguese administration. The following text, “The Islands of the São Francisco River: Jurisdictional Conflicts in the Formation of an Internal Border in Portuguese America (1732-1758)”, deals with the São Francisco River as a border and the disputes over its islands among Pernambuco, Bahia, and Sergipe, presenting maps and diverse documentation from the eighteenth century. The third article, “Through the Hinterlands of Porto da Folha/Sergipe in the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries”, addresses a region in the hinterlands of Sergipe, part of the current municipality of Porto da Folha, once an entailed estate. The central issue explored is the formation of the agrarian structure,

juxtaposing the interests of cattle ranchers, impoverished populations, quilombolas, and indigenous communities. The final text related to the colonial era, “The Salt of the Earth in the Nineteenth-Century Backlands”, spans from the eighteenth century to the following century. The research focuses on a regional economy based on salt deposits used for human consumption and gunpowder production, contributing to regional growth in the navigable area of the São Francisco River.

Three articles in the dossier focus on the period of independent Brazil. One of them, “Manumissions in Penedo: Local Context, National Issues (1840s to 1880s)”, is an extensive article that, as the title suggests, deals with manumission documents in Penedo, examining the patterns of granted manumissions. Additionally, it engages with the national historiography in a contemporary manner. The following text, also concerning enslaved individuals, “Turbulent Troublemakers and Well-Behaved Workers: The Cases of the Celebrated Mandú and the Emancipated Enslaved by the Manumission Fund in Penedo, 1876/1877”, draws from the *Jornal do Penedo* and focuses on the daily lives of enslaved individuals in the final years of the slave period, emphasizing concepts of sociability, resistance, and agency. The last investigation in this section, “A Sanctuary and a Natural Wonder: Teodoro Sampaio, the São Francisco River, and the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus da Lapa (1879)”, presents the perspective of the Brazilian engineer Teodoro Sampaio on the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus da Lapa in Bahia during a scientific exploration trip to the São Francisco River in 1879. It utilizes various sources and pays attention to the control of the sanctuary by laypersons.

The last five articles depict the last two centuries, the 20th and 21st centuries. The first one, “The Valley and the River: Historical-Geographical Outline of the Lower São Francisco by Francisco Henrique Moreno Brandão (1905)”, evaluates a work by Moreno Brandão, an Alagoan historian influenced by racial and mesological determinism, about the São Francisco River. The analyzed work provides a description of the natural landscape. Next, the article titled “Concerning Salespeople, Country Folks, and Textile Workers: Interests and Conflicts Regarding the Temporal Aspect of Labor in Penedo (1957-1963)”, using the *Jornal de Penedo* as a source, analyzes the concept of work habits for three professional categories: salespeople, factory workers, and rural laborers. Continuing, the article “Ploughshares of Agrarian Reform in the São Francisco Backlands: Experiences of Peba and Lameirão, Delmiro Gouveia, Alagoas, 1986-1989” discusses the strategies, experiences, and mobilizations in support of agrarian reform that resulted in the establishment of the Peba and Lameirão settlements in the municipality of

Delmiro Gouveia, Alagoas, in the São Francisco River hinterlands. This occurred in the context of the New Republic, the First National Agrarian Reform Plan, and the 1988 Constitution. It represents a shared experience of agrarian reform constructed and nurtured through strategies of the Landless Rural Workers' Movement, practices of New Unionism, and the methodology of the Theology of the Hoe.

The last articles in the dossier are “Petrolina (PE) Over Time: A Study of the Political Formation of the City to the Present Day”, which discusses the political formation of the municipality in Pernambuco based on Ronald Chilcote's thesis. It explains the continued political dominance of the Coelho family up to the present day, emphasizing the concepts of ‘coronelismo’ (local political bossism) and ‘assistencialismo’ (clientelism). Finally, the article titled “From the Mouth of the Old Chico to the Mouth of the Sergipe River: A Temporal and Spatial Analysis of the North Coast of Sergipe” conducts a study that traverses history and geography, showcasing the economic profiles of this region in Sergipe throughout the centuries. It concludes that the current concentration of land ownership is driving population migration to other areas of the country.

The dossier concludes with the review titled “Indigenous and Quilombola Identities Among Neighbors on the São Francisco River”. This review offers an assessment of the book “Becoming Black or Indian” by Jan Hoffman French, an American anthropologist. This recent work delves into the construction of new identities among quilombolas and indigenous communities in the localities of Mocambo and Ilha de São Pedro along the São Francisco River.

Therefore, it is observed that the set of contributions presented in this dossier engages in discussions about the process of conquest, occupation, and settlement of the current Brazilian territory, focusing on one of its most important rivers: the São Francisco River. Originally known as ‘Opará’ by indigenous peoples, it was also called the “River of the Currais” by colonists, landowners, and settlers associated with cattle ranching. Additionally, it was known as the “River of National Integration” due to its extensive navigable stretches, serving as a vital transportation and communication route between the states of the Southeast and Northeast that are bathed by its waters: Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe. In addition to being a crucial source of water for human and animal consumption, it has played a role in agricultural irrigation, traditional fishing, aquaculture, hydroelectric power generation, and tourism.

In summary, the studies on the São Francisco River have a unique nature when it

comes to understanding the society, culture, and history of this vast, multicultural, and diverse country. Along its banks, at different historical moments, individuals with the most diverse cultural identities have woven countless social, economic, political, and cultural relationships. The São Francisco River is, therefore, a gift intertwined with a web of meanings, senses, and stories.

We hope you enjoy the dossier, and we hope that it can further explore, disseminate, and stimulate other related studies. Happy reading!

Dossier coordinators

José Vieira da Cruz

Pedro Abelardo de Santana

Translators: Paula Granato Aymoré Martins; Ana Paula Gonçalves Lacerda; Bruna Queiroz Assunção and Nayara Souza de Oliveira.

Layout and technical review: Joel Santos Reis.