

PATRIOTIC SOCIABILITY AND DEFENCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CAUSE

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Abstract

The philosophical modernity of the Enlightenment contributed to change cultural agents and international knowledge networks. The European agents and values of eighteenth-century intellectual communication were expanded and secularized. New forms of intellectual and patriotic sociability emerged in the public sphere. In this context, sociability was marked by the establishment of philanthropic, economic and patriotic associations. This study highlights the importance of three associations created and imagined in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: the *Sociedade dos Mancebos Patriotas of Coimbra* (1780); the *Montepio Literário* (1813); and the *Sociedade Patriótica Literária de Lisboa* (1822).

Keywords

Enlightenment, Sociability, Patriotic Societies, Philanthropy

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In the period between the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, significant changes occurred in Portugal's agents and mechanisms of literary, cultural, scientific and political sociability. The Enlightenment encouraged new perceptions of encyclopaedia culture and philosophy. Access to foreign publications through the clandestine circulation of books, periodicals, literary and theatre novelties, in cities such as Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, led to the creation of a diversified set of associative institutions (Araújo, 2003). In Portugal, as in other European countries, participation and interaction characterized leisure spaces, literary gatherings and philosophical sessions attended by cultural elites and educated men and women (Chartier, 1990). Social interaction and awareness of current issues by these social groups reflected changes in knowledge appropriating and sharing in cosmopolitan cultural circles, events and meetings that were marginal to court traditional interactions and academic sessions (Araújo, 2017a).

Therefore, modern sociability was felt differently in intellectual associations with a markedly pedagogical repertoire. This was the case in the literary, scientific and military academies, economic societies like the *Sociedade Económica dos Bons Compatriotas Amigos do Bem Público* (Economic Society of Good Compatriots Friends of the Public Good) of Ponte de Lima, aimed at local economic and educational development. It was also seen in more or less anonymous meetings in cafés, bars and public areas, where the politicization of debates was evident from the beginning of the 19th century.

In large cities, besides these conversation places exposed to onlookers and to spies or agents of the General Police Department, there were also literary salons. The best known were organised by the Marquise of Alorna. There were private and public gatherings, Masonic lodges, patriotic societies, reading rooms, the Public Library of Lisbon created in 1796, and other libraries with more controlled access, but visited by interested people and scholars from various social backgrounds.

These places enabled growing forms of sociability almost always associated with mundane, philosophical and political concerns, leading to a new urban sociocultural

¹ Article translated by Carolina Peralta.



morphology, especially in Lisbon. They dismantled the traditional coexistence areas of the elites, giving a more interclass nature to educational and recreational associations.

Despite the differences between the aforementioned associations and institutions - organized or informal, spontaneous or exclusive, secret or public, with or without the support of the king or a patron- in most the members aimed at progress and cultural modernization. At the heart of a renewed conviviality, shaped by secular concerns of the philosophical and scientific horizon of the second half of the 18th century in the distinct literary and academic scenes, "individuals looked for a place, more than just devoted to leisure, where they could think, debate and criticize freely. Free from the usual measures and conventions they had to follow, such as at the Court or the University, they update their interests and redefine, as actors, the public sphere they fit in" (Silva, 2020: 27).

As Maria Alexandre Lousada states, these new meeting and discussion spaces acted as authentic "social laboratories" and proved to be essential for the emergence of public political participation in the early 1800s, under the auspices of the French Revolution (Lousada, 2017: 319).

It is not possible to briefly evaluate the organization and meeting models of these associations, nor the result of their hard work. However, it is easy to see that many started with discussions in circles of friends on topics related to public improvement projects, philanthropic and educational works. The more enlightened minds considered that friendship and philanthropy converged towards improving the human race, inspiring action influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment (Ramos, 1988: 99).

In this context, the altruistic contribution of a few for the good of all led to the emergence of the friends of the common good societies, also known as patriotic societies. Their programmes showed that civil mobilization was determined by the correlation between education, philanthropy, scientific dissemination and promotion of economic activity. In Portugal, the model was inspired by the robust Spanish *sociedades economicas de los amigos del país*.

The expansion of economic societies began in the Basque Country with the *Vascongada* Society (1764), and had the strong support of Minister Campomanes.

In Portugal, economic societies comprising good patriots had a new understanding of scientific culture and its usefulness for the well-being of the nation. They had a renewed vision of patriotism, no longer anchored in warlike deeds, in ancestors and great honours, but in territorial belonging, social presence and active participation in the life of the community. In practical terms, it was patriotism based on the involvement of each for the good of all and for the economic development of the country (Catroga, 2013).

In 1770s and 1780s, there were several attempts to create establish patriotic societies in Minho, Elvas, Douro, Valença and Évora (Cardoso, 1989: 110; Vaz, 2002: 222). Only *Sociedade Económica dos Bons Compatriotas Amigos do Bem Público* (Economic Society of Good Compatriots Friends of the Public Good) of Ponte de Lima, founded in 1779-1780, operated regularly. It aimed to promote *Agriculture in all its branches, the Arts and Industry*. It intended to set up a library with economics works, publish books and found patriotic schools, free of charge, to teach crafts, such as weaving and bleaching linen. It aimed to acquire machinery, agricultural tools, seeds and plants, and to grant



pecuniary prizes to those who solved problems relating to the various branches of agriculture.

With an ambitious programme, the *Sociedade Económica de Ponte de Lima*, like other projects, ended up foundering due to the lack of solid social support base. Its vice-president, born in Ponte de Lima, was the enlightened minister António de Araújo de Azevedo, future Count of Barca, whose reformist goals never really took off but still influenced the creation of other similar associations. The attempt to set up the *Sociedade dos Mancebos Patriotas Estabelecida em Coimbra no ano de 1780 debaixo da Real Protecção de sua Alteza o Serenissimo Senhor Principe do Brazil* (Society of Young Patriots Established in Coimbra in 1780 under the Royal Protection of His Highness the Prince of Brazil), whose Literary Statutes we have analysed (Araújo, 2017b), deserves special mention.

Coming from academia and conceived by a group of students, this economic association sought to incorporate and take further the scientific spirit, based on the technical-experimental and rationalist matrix that presided over Pombal's reform of the University of Coimbra (1772). Guided by the certainty that education and dissemination of scientific knowledge was imperative, the young members of this association intended to establish an organization focused on the natural sciences and active in the development of regional production. They aimed to create a patriotic society to raise the awareness of the citizens of the kingdom's provinces to the social utility of technical-scientific knowledge. The Text that accompanied the Literary and Economic Statutes of the Society stated that "the young scholars, sons of the University, focused on Natural Sciences [...] will swear that in future they will offer the Homeland the efforts of their talents"².

The society that "resulted from the votes of good citizens" recommended that "unity, simplicity in behaviour, sincerity in consultations and conferences" be practiced in its activities and public and private meetings³. Among other activities related to the collection of Natural History samples, the promotion of crops appropriate to the soils and the development of local manufactures, the partners should regularly produce scientific writings on the field work to be undertaken. They had the translation of several educational works consistent with this and other patriotic projects. A few titles from this modern and specialized library of economic and patriotic texts included the *Discourse on the Education and Promotion of Artists (Educação e Fomento dos Artistas)* (1774) by Camponanes, published in different Portuguese versions, explaining the educational model practiced in Spain for the promotion of economic activities. But other texts circulated in Portugal in the 1780s, as shown by the translations and articles published in the *Miscellanea Curioza e Proveitoza* between 1781 and 1785 (Nunes, 2001: 55-61); the references to the Economic Society of Bern, created in 1766, made by José António de Sá in *Compendio de Observações que formão o plano de Viagem Politica e Filosofica que se deve fazer dentro da Patria* (1783), by Vilalobos e Vasconcelos in *Elementos de Policia Geral de Hum Estado* (1786-1787); and the translation by Francisco Xavier do Rego Aranha of *Elementos de Agricultura fundados sobre os mais sólidos princípios da razão, e da experiência, para uso das pessoas do campo, que mereceram o premio da Sociedade Economica de Berne em 1774 por Mr. Bertrand*, published in Lisbon in 1788.

² ANTT, Real Mesa Censória, no. 702.

³ ANTT, Real Mesa Censória, no. 702, pp. 26-27.



The s book dates back to the foundation and/or re-foundation of the *Sociedade dos Mancebos Patriotas de Coimbra*, whose life cycle was between 1780 and 1785, as per the handwritten text of its Statutes. As Manuel Henrique de Paiva, the publisher, explained in the dedication and remarks to this edition, the translation of that work, whose author was a Protestant pastor and a member of the Society of Bern, had been carried out by "bachelor FX Aranha (...) when he studied jurisprudence and natural history at the University of Coimbra: and having handed it to me to do as I pleased, I saw it as a work of great use to the Public, publishing it with some notes that clarified the topic" (Araújo, 2017b: 114-115).

Despite its institutional and educational nature, the *Sociedade dos Mancebos Patriotas Estabelecida em Coimbra* Coimbra did not come off the ground, as the students involved ended up being tried in 1781 following accusations of errant and wanton conduct. They were Manuel Henriques de Paiva, Vicente Seabra da Silva Teles, Francisco José de Almeida, Francisco de Melo Franco, António de Moraes Silva, and Pereira Caldas, among other students (Ramos, 2001: 311-326).

Also linked to public education, but with an eminently philanthropic purpose, another association emerged in 1813. It was the *Monte Pio privativo dos professores e mestres da Corte*, which only started to function regularly from 1816 onwards (Araújo, 2021). *Montepio* was formed by a group of royal professors with the purpose of remedying the progressive impoverishment of the class and responding to the difficulties experienced during the French invasions (1807-1811) and the post-war period. The association was based on a philanthropic and mutualist programme aimed at a wide range of members and families of teachers and educated men.

The founders of *Montepio* sought to ensure, voluntarily and freely, decent survival conditions in old age for a considerable group of individuals who stood higher than the rest of population by mastering written culture, but whose material resources were manifestly low. The initiative to set up this patriotic and mutualist association thus replicated the original meaning of other mutualist and charitable associations in Europe, as evidenced by the association's statutes.

The *Montepio Literário* project was conceived by Joaquim Lemos Seixas Castel-Branco, royal primary education teacher in Lisbon, knight of the order of Christ and owner of *Colégio dos Cardaes de Jesus*, which he founded in 1815.

Joaquim de Seixas Castel-Branco was an enlightened man. He had a subscription of *Annaes das Sciencias, das Artes e das Letras*, an exile newspaper published in Paris by Solano Constâncio, and based his pedagogical activity on the humanitarian and philanthropic ideals of the Enlightenment. He was also a supporter of British liberal constitutionalism. Before launching, with other supporters, the *Montepio Literário* project, in 1809 he published a pamphlet entitled (*Breve mas circunstanciada noticia do governo e constituição da Grã-Bretanha, com huma noticia geral de todas as revoluções que tem acontecido aos reis e á nação*/Brief but detailed news of the government and constitution of Great Britain, with general information of all the revolutions that have happened to kings and the nation). To our knowledge, this is the first writing containing explicit support of the English constitutional model published in Portugal. Therefore, this ideological reference was not indifferent to the mutualist sociability paradigm of Joaquim Lemos Seixas Castel-Branco, which, as a result of his intellectual preparation, ended up



being publicly supported in the context of the Napoleonic wars and the international crisis of the early 19th century.

Regarding the *Montepio's* statutes, the approval of this association was initially signed by just over 130 teachers and educated men. *Montepio* membership applicants were asked to confirm their profession, address and age. If they were not teachers, they had to present a certificate of *vitae et moribus* issued by the parish priest. All members had to be virtuous and hardworking individuals, discreet and respectful of the commitment read in the registration act and on which they had taken an oath upon admission. Once registered, they had the status of *compromissários*. They made an initial financial payment and paid a monthly fee to *Montepio*, in order to secure a subsidy, in case of illness and job loss in old age, or an amount due upon death for their widows and orphans. Upon registration, members had to indicate the names of direct family members who statutorily could benefit from the association's coffer.

Montepio brought together numerous educated minds. Some of its members were freemasons, such as António Maria do Couto (Marques, 1990: 342) and, most likely, some associates maintained contacts with the group of conspirators that met in Rua do Salitre, on the eve of the Gomes Freire de Andrade's conspiracy.

Due to its mutualist, social and cultural purposes, this association foreshadowed the emergence of a secularized pattern of sociability and new philanthropic concerns in society. Freely, voluntarily and through a system of contributions, it offered its members several types of mutual assistance, including a retirement pension granted to members and their widows through the creation of a financial fund.

Other important aspects to mention include: *Montepio* branched out throughout the country. It had its headquarters in Lisbon and delegations in the provinces. It was a secularized association formed by free and philanthropic men, with a philosophy different from the charity model of the religious brotherhoods. Its statutes forbade the associates to wear, in their annual celebration, religious attire, cape or insignia of another brotherhoods. The statutes also considered the "construction of a college of education" for orphans of the members and to be a shelter for their widows and unmarried daughters, which was never created (Couto 1816: 27). With the aim of doing good and educating the members, the Literary Office was later created in 1821. It was adjacent to the premises of the mutualist establishment in the same common space in Rua dos Douradores, 31.

In the first five years of *Montepio's* operation, the number of members increased continuously. By 1821, in Lisbon alone, around a thousand individuals had applied for membership (Couto 1821: 11). Despite its mobilization power and social appeal, the mutualist association went through financial difficulties. Soon after the start of the Provisional Board of the Supreme Government of the Kingdom in the capital, one of its first public acts was to appoint Manuel Fernandes Tomás *Montepio Literário* "honorary member"⁴. The recognition of one of the most influential political figures of the liberal movement denotes the support of the mutualist association for the new regime.

⁴ ANTT, Ministério do Reino, bundle 360, docs. 6 and 8. The document, sealed and dated 1 October 1820, is signed by the deputy magistrate Joaquim José Ferreira de Carvalho, Treasurer José António Monteiro and secretary Caetano Pedro da Silva. The letter justifying this gracious concession is also signed by the general prosecutor António Maria do Couto.



New rules were made during the liberal triennium to be followed in the institution, which was renamed "*Monte Pio Nacional*"⁵. These norms entailed continuities and changes, the most relevant being the one that gave women access to *Montepio*, with the status of benefactors⁶.

Although the recommendations of the *Montepio Literário* administrative Committee⁷, created by the liberal executive, were not followed, the philanthropic and humanitarian concerns of the political class widened the debate, giving it an interclass character and calling the participation of women in the mutualist association to the fore.

In the context of the 1820 revolution, patriotic and political sociability spread. Many of these active areas of convergence of citizens committed to regime change originated in Masonic and Para-Masonic institutions in the areas of culture, charity, journalistic activity and parliamentary politics (Gil Novales, 1975). According to A. H de Oliveira Marques, the "majority of patriotic societies created in Portugal in 1820-23 (about 18) and then, in 1834-42, "had Masonic origins". He does not equate them with lodges but considers them Para-Masonic organizations (Marques, 1997: 267).

The most important patriotic society of this period was officially founded in Lisbon (2-1-1822) and had 269 members. It was the *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* (Patriotic Literary Society), which had its origin linked to the *Gabinete de Leitura e Composição*, *Gabinete Literário*, *fundado por uma Associação de Patriotas Portugueses* (Reading and Writing Office, Literary Office, founded by an Association of Portuguese Patriots) to gather and undertake all efforts in favour of *Liberdade pela mais perfeita Constituição*⁸ (Freedom for the most perfect Constitution).

José Portelli, who was directly involved in the creation and functioning of *Montepio Literário*, was one of the founders of *Sociedade Literária Patriótica*, and of *Gabinete de Leitura e Composição*⁹. Accordingly, we believe that both institutions were the product of the same idea, as stated by Adrien Balbi in the *Essai Statistique Sur Le Royaume De Portugal Et D'Algarve*. This text associates the "members qui formaient le cabinet littéraire de Lisbonne, établi en 1821", with the "Académie littéraire, sous le titre de Sociedade Literária Patriótica de Lisboa" (Balbi, 1822: 1-19).

Benefiting from the freedom to meet and communicate that the new regime had enabled, the *Gabinete de Leitura e Composição* initially had an activity plan with a clear liberal political orientation, more inspired by the model of patriotic societies than by the traditional *cabinets de lecture* (in France) or the circulating libraries (in the UK). The Gabinete's founders wanted their project to support an orderly and enlightened civic education process, whose main intention would be *firmar a Liberdade pela mais perfeita Constituição* (establish Freedom according to the most perfect Constitution).

⁵ ANTT, Ministério do Reino, bundle 360, doc. 9, pp. 63- 68v – Coleção de Regras para o regimen do Monte Pio Nacional.

⁶ ANTT, Ministério do Reino, bundle 360, doc. 9, pp. 64v-65 – Coleção de Regras para o regimen do Monte Pio Nacional.

⁷ Little is known about the uncertain evolution of *Montepio*. It will have survived with increased difficulties until it became extinct due to a total lack of credit before the end of the second decade of the 19th century.

⁸ *O Portuguez Constitucional*, no. 37, 4 November 1820.

⁹ As attested in *Gazeta Universal* no. 30, 7 February 1822, p. 2, which reads: "M. R. P. Portelli, Father and founder of the Soc., whose idea he authored, and for the foundations of which he laid a cornerstone in his Literary Office".



To this end, they found it necessary to ensure, first, the observance of conditions indispensable to the support and consolidation of *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* that was created out of the *Gabinete de Leitura e Composição*. Thus, they guaranteed, through member subscription, the financial viability of the patriotic society and made all efforts to define an ideological education programme for civil society. Among the society's working requirements, the international character given to the activities of the members stood out. They should maintain regular contact with foreigners by reading Spanish, Italian, English and French newspapers and periodicals, and foster a close relationship with liberal agents in those countries. Thus, the *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* actively participated in what Maurizio Izabella called the Liberal International of southern Europe at the time of the Restoration.

The *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* had a literary office with reading rooms, planned to publish original works and translated works and published a newspaper. This was an ambition common to other similar organizations, namely the *Sociedade Patriótica Constitucional* and the *Gabinete de Minerva*. However, it did not manage to materialize that goal.

The newspaper of the *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* was generalist. It contained a series of articles on politics, art, industry, commerce, economics, science, history, and literature. It frequently disclosed the subjects discussed at *Sociedade Literária* meetings, which took place weekly. It reported and commented on the most recent international political events (with emphasis on the advances of the *Santa Aliança* and the independence claims of the Brazilian parliament members) and published laws, decrees, ordinances, as well as extracts from the sessions of the *Cortes*.

Five members were responsible for writing the newspaper. They included Almeida Garrett and Nuno Álvares Pereira Pato Moniz, who were responsible for the newspaper's editorial office (Balbi, 1822: 2-138), although no article published in *Sociedade Literária* newspaper had the author's name.

The newspaper was biweekly and its writers intended to publish supplements about the Constitution and Freedom. We find articles on these themes, such as the famous text entitled: *Dos amigos e inimigos da patria e da Constituição* (On friends and enemies of the country and the Constitution) written to strengthen support for the constitutional cause and to reproach all those who tarnished the *leys fundamentaes ou Constituição do estado* (fundamental laws or the Constitution of the state)¹⁰.

As emphasized by Maria Carlos Radich and Diana Silva, the analysis of its members shows its undeniable bourgeois nature (Radich 1982: 2-125; Silva, 2020: 102-103). In total, about 40% of the members were directly linked to trade and productive activities. Furthermore, 33% of the members of *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* were Freemasons (Marques, 1997: 270).

The sociological and cultural characteristics of the association were in line with the transformation of practices and spaces of sociability that took place in Portuguese society in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century. The civic patriotism of these emerging organizations was correlated with the rise of certain social groups. They stood out for their education or for being rich and sought to gain prestige and political influence in the

¹⁰ *Jornal da Sociedade Literária Patriótica*, vol. 1, pp. 234 and following.



space of intellectual interaction and leisure. In this context, one can see the impact that patriotic societies had on the bourgeoisie, mobilizing it to support liberalism and to develop the civic and political spirit indispensable to the preservation of the constitutional regime. To a large extent, the public credit of the *Sociedade Literária Patriótica* also involved the discussion, clarification and communication of everything that was discussed in the 1820 Cortes.

Finally, it is also interesting to note that it was precisely under the guidance of one of the Society's members, João Damásio Roussado Gorjão, with the likely collaboration of other colleagues, that the famous work of electoral propaganda, *Galeria dos deputados das Cortes Geraes Extraordinarias e Constituintes da Nação Portuguesa*, was written, referring to the first period of liberalism and published for public information, on the eve of the elections for the second legislature of the *Cortes*.

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