

“We identify with civilization, within civilization”: Urban self-images in the Sertões of Bahia¹

“Vivemos identificados com a civilização, dentro da civilização”: autoimagens urbanas nos sertões da Bahia

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RESUMO

O artigo aborda as autoimagens urbanas construídas pela pequena intelligentsia sertaneja na Bahia do início do século XX. Por intermédio de textos de memorialistas e da imprensa de suas cidades, bem como do uso que fizeram da fotografia, investigo algumas dessas autoimagens do sertão como contraponto àquelas cristalizadas no imaginário nacional, principalmente após a repercussão de *Os sertões*, de Euclides da Cunha. O objetivo é identificar como as cidades aparecem nessas imagens e de que forma elas contribuíram para a construção de um espaço público urbano no sertão baiano identificado com a civilização, ideia a meu ver distante daquelas construídas pelos olhares externos.

Palavras-chave: autoimagem; sertão; civilização.

ABSTRACT

The article looks at the urban self-images constructed by the petty *sertaneja* intelligentsia in the early twentieth century in Bahia. Drawing on texts from memoirs, the local press, and the use made of photography, I investigate some of these images of the interior as opposed to those crystallized in the national imagination, especially after the impact of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*. The objective was to try to identify how local towns appear in these images and how the latter contributed to the construction of an urban public space in the interior of Bahia identified with civilization, which in my opinion was different from what was built in external perspectives.

Keywords: self-images; *Sertão*; civilization.

IMAGES OF THE SERTÕES OF BAHIA

The episode of Canudos was symptomatic in relation to the revelation of an *unknown Brazil*.² On the eve of the twentieth century and during the initial

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years of the republican regime, the country was shocked by a social reality which many Brazilians did not know or were not concerned about seeing. One of the results of the conflict was the emergence of the book which marked a phase of self-discovery of Brazil. *Os Sertões*, the magnum opus of Euclides da Cunha, developed a profound analysis of the country based on the *sertão*, its inhabitants, and on the war. This was based on his presence in the Bahian *sertão* in the final phase of the conflict, when he was there as the correspondent of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in 1897. In parallel to the writer's narrative, a set of photographs produced by the Bahian Flávio de Barros also left very significant images, produced during the war. In the first editions of *Os Sertões* some of these photographs were published. It was with this work that a petty *sertão* intelligentsia in Bahia established a constant dialogue over the following decades, when the self-images of its towns were developed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this article I propose an approach to the constructions of these self-images of the petty intelligentsia, both through memorialist texts and the local press, highlighting the use they made of photography. The aim was to identify how the cities appear in these photographs and in what way they contributed to the construction of an urban public space in the Bahian *sertão*, which in my perspective is very different from the images constructed by external viewpoints.

According to Ana Maria Mauad, during the nineteenth century it was the foreign perspective which framed Brazil, at the same time that it educated our own viewpoint, making us look at the culture imported from their countries (Mauad, 1997). In nineteenth century photography the Bahian *sertão* was practically only a target of external perspectives. In this configuration, it is possible to note two types: the one of exuberance and the one of misery. Foreign travelers, such as Augusto Stahl and Augusto Riedel, and afterwards Brazilians, such as Marc Ferrez and Ignácio Mendo, focused their lenses on the ostentatious landscape of the Paulo Afonso waterfall. Their photographs have a strong aesthetic appeal, typical of the pictorialist landscape tradition. Other striking images of the *sertão* produced at the end of the century include the war photographs of Flávio de Barros made during the final campaign against Canudos. The only photographer authorized by the army to cover the war, his photographs had the function of visibility to the winner's perspective – in other words, civilization faced with the scenario of misery that was the town of Canudos, and the power of the Republic represented by the infantry.

While the images constructed by the *sertão* in the nineteenth century were notably marked by the external perspective, in which most often there

prevailed the logic of the other, with the advent of new transformations which occurred in the technical and cultural scenario of the *sertão* towns in the first decades of the twentieth century, these towns came to have the opportunity to produce their self-images through photographers based in these locations, where in general there prevailed a logic of showing urban novelties as marks of progress and the civility of its people.

Since I make use of photographs contained in memorialist texts and newspapers, some of the characteristics of this media are highlighted. In relation to this, as Hans Belting argues, images should not be confused with their media (Belting, 2009). The former have always a mental quality, while the latter are material. Images and their media exist as two sides of the same coin. Although images emerged first, it is through media that they materialize and their policy of relations is established.

Photographic images do not appear in isolation in newspapers. They are part of written messages, they demand captions. Photograph accompany texts with the function of giving visibility to what is said about the towns and also forming a public opinion about them. Therefore, to analyze the context in which these images are inserted, attentive to their uses and functions, they have to be observed accompanied by their respective captions.

I believe that the diffusion and reception of the first photographic images which participated in the construction of an urbane and civilized look in the *sertão* occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century in newspapers from small towns and texts published in the annals of the V National Congress of Geography in 1916. All the papers which were read in the Geography congress are collected in two volumes. Some of these texts had photographs which, despite the poor printing quality, were important in spreading images of the Bahian *sertão*. In relation to graphical standards, newspapers from small towns were quite precarious, and the printing of photographic plates required a high investment. Usually they were prepared in Salvador, which prevented their constant use in weekly editions. Nevertheless, they were mainly responsible for crystalizing in the local imagination scenes of their own towns, thereby contributing to the education of the perspective of the *sertanejo*.

“THE LAND OF THE GOOD BEGINNING”

The advent of newspapers in various parts of the Bahian *sertão* significantly contributed to the creation of a literary and visual culture in these locations. Published on the pages of these small-scale media was the most

important news from around the world, Brazil, and the municipalities themselves, as well as literary and photographic productions. Little by little, the reading public based in the *sertão* also came to participate in the same adventure of the construction of the Brazilian man who wanted to be civilized, as if they were echoing Euclides da Cunha's prophecy when he said that "either we progress or we disappear" (Cunha, 2003, p.52).

It was generally on Sundays that copies of their weekly papers reached the hands of the *Sertaneja* population. For some decades they were one of the principal vehicles responsible for bringing world, national, and above local news to individuals in the *sertão*. In 1898 a small newspaper was launched in Senhor do Bonfim with the suggestive title *O Futuro* which years later would come to configure a more solid development of the press in that northeastern Bahian town and the project of the public construction of an image of the civilized *sertão*. Although it was geographically close to the *sertão* of Canudos, the new town of Bonfim sought to construct a self-image distant from what had been shaped in the lands of Belo Monte, although it was not free from all its marks. For this, the press was convoked as the special spokesperson of the lettered elite, desiring to diffuse this discourse. Photography also played in this context a special role in the visibility of an ordered and urbane *sertão*.

The largest and longest lasting newspaper from Senhor do Bonfim in the first half of the twentieth century was *Correio do Bomfim*. It started on 1 October 1912 and ran until 1 October 1942. Its owner and director, Augusto Sena Gomes, was a man of letters and seen by more than a few of its contemporaries as "the greatest intellectual of all time" (Silva, 1971, p.122). He exercised the functions of *intendente* in 1924 and councilor in 1926, 1936 and 1947. He gathered around *Correio do Bomfim* a significant group of regional intelligentsia, reaching municipalities such as Morro do Chapéu, Miguel Calmon, Jacobina, and Campo Formoso. Throughout the time it circulated the newspaper was the principal voice in the defense of large rural producers in the region against the state and the country, and a restless constructor of a discourse of the civilized city in the *sertão*. At various moments photography was used as an instrument to help diffuse this self-image, contributing to perpetuate a way of seeing the city of Senhor do Bonfim.

Nevertheless, the impression of the civilized city was not born with *Correio do Bomfim*, even though the latter was its principal internal and external propagator. Rather it had been progressively built by the petty intelligentsia in the city since its political emancipation in 1870, and propagated by its greatest representatives. In 1906, Lourenço Pereira da Silva published the first book

about the municipality: *Apreciação circunstanciada sobre o município do Bomfim*. This work followed the pattern of chorographies in vogue at the time, with a description of the geography and historical facts of the municipality. The author describes his image of the city as follows:

The first sight of this *beautiful sertaneja city* conveys a pleasant impression, from its *sober perspective*, principally if it is entered from the Jacobina and Campo Formoso roads.

Coming from the north side, also *surprising is the panorama*, which unfolds to curious views.

The *sober municipal palace*, the *beautiful Bomfim Church* and other *beautifully designed constructions*, soon present themselves as indications of the existence of *a civilized people*. If, on the other hand, one enters by the south side, the beauty of the construction exceeds expectations and also the beautiful orchards enchants us, some of which are within the city; a defect, but a beautiful defect. (Silva, 1906, p.53-54, emphasis added)

José Lourenço sought to call the attention of his readers to the existence of another type of *sertão* different from the one described by Euclides da Cunha, endowed with an urbanized town and refined inhabitants. According to Lourenço, Canudos had been dominated by ‘crazies,’ by an ideal constructed by ‘gross fanaticism,’ and its community never could have been helped by Senhor do Bonfim. He seeks to establish a clear frontier between the various *sertões* existing in Bahia at that time. There was the *sertão* of misery, of banditry, and fanaticism on the one hand, and on the other the productive *sertão*, of order and civility. It is important to remember that this work was only published a decade after the events of Canudos. According to José Lourenço, his people took pride in the fact that Senhor do Bonfim had been the first city in Bahia to recognize the Republic and that shortly after the end of the Canudos War, the *Intendente* Antônio Laurindo da Silva Duarte praised some of its heroes, giving their names to three arteries in the city, including giving that of Moreira César to one of its few squares.

The consecration of this image of the *sertão* was defended by Rui Barbosa in a lecture in Senhor do Bonfim during his *Civilista* Campaign in 1906. 33 years later, in an issue which highlighted the presence of the Federal Interventor Landulpho Alves and his committee for the opening of the First Regional Exhibition of Goats and Sheep, *Correio do Bomfim* reported that there had been two days festivities in the city for the visit of the “greatest of Brazilians”

(Figure 1). Rui was effusively welcomed in the train stations by a numerous crowd coming from various municipalities in the region. “The greatest genius of the race” arrived there with his committee like a “a procession of light worthy to accompany a sun of immense grandeur.” In his appreciative lecture, Rui Barbosa consecrated the presence of the *Sertanejos* in what he called the “capital general states of the *sertão*.” According to the newspapers, in the words of that ‘exalted’ public man, “Bomfim was the Land of Good Beginning – and that the good beginning was walking halfway to the good end.” As stated in this report, these words sounded at the time like a prophecy coming from the lips of those who preached “the gospel of democratic liberties.”³



Figure 1 – *Correio do Bomfim*, ano XVIII, n.1, 1 out. 1939, p.1.

Correio do Bomfim considered that Rui Barbosa’s prophecy was being realized at that moment. The success of the exhibition was commemorated by the newspaper as an “auspicious event.” Indeed, the relevant issue had six photographic images, a much higher number than normal. Amongst these were four portraits of people from national and international politics whose captions read: “Dr. Landulpho Alves, Federal Interventor in Bahia,” “Dr. J. Rocha Medeiros – Secretary of Agriculture,” illustrating the story on the front page about the First Regional Exhibition of Goats and Sheep; “Cons. Ruy Barbosa”, illustrating

the note remembering his presence during the *Civilista* Campaign, and “Hitler – the man who could have prevented the war,” illustrating the report about the war in Europe. The other two photographs are records of places in the city. In the first (Figure 2), the “Praça Telve reservoir and Argollo, the Exhibition venue” and in the second (Figure 3), the “City Hall in Bomfim in whose illuminated halls the magnificent ball was held on the night of the 29th, in honor of the Federal Interventor and his illustrious committee.”



Figure 2 – *Correio do Bomfim*, ano XVIII, n.1, 1 out. 1939, p.2.



Figure 3 – *Correio do Bomfim*, ano XVIII, n.1, 1 out. 1939, p.4.

Therefore, this manner of seeing the town of Senhor do Bonfim as a place of the dawning of a new era in the *Sertão*, marked by the ordering of its urban space and the establishment of civilization programs of the customs of its people, was followed and defended by the newspaper *Correio do Bomfim* during three decades it was published. Images were extremely important in this. As has been mentioned, the newspaper's offices had their own print works and functioning in parallel as a commercial establishment, offering its print services, and as a book and magazine dealership. Illustrated magazines with a large national and state circulation at the beginning of the century, such as *Eu*

Sei Tudo, *Bahia ilustrada*, *Fon Fon*, *Selecta*, *Renascença*, *O malho*, *Para Todos*, *Scena Muda*, and *Moda de Paris*, reached the region through the intermediation of the company that owned the newspaper, which also publicized them in its pages. Various purposes were fulfilled, such as entertainment, information, integration and, above all, educating the viewpoint of the *Sertaneja* population through the photographs and illustrations published.

According to Paulo Knauss, the illustrated magazines combined texts and images, establishing a connection between lettered and visual culture (Knauss, 2011, p.7-14). Published in their pages were photographs covering the tendencies of masculine and feminine fashions in the salons and public trips, scenes of artists from the cinema and radio, urban transformations and sporting scenes. Thus, those modes of reading and seeing established in the large urban centers, such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, were slowly taking over the lettered spheres of the *Sertaneja* population, which came to identify with these ideas, slipping into the content of the local printed newspapers, which functioned as its principal spokesperson in this discourse. It can be said that with this the *Sertão* began its participation in the national public space, especially in the photographic images, principally those transmitted in the illustrated magazines and newspapers.

In 1916, *Correio do Bomfim* published two photographs of the city (Figure 4). Their importance was principally due to the fact that they are possibly the first published images of the urban center of a small *Sertaneja* town in the Bahian northeast. At the very least it is the first in the newspaper in question, as well as being the oldest in circulation at that time. It was not possible to identify a precise data of the photographs. Although there is no reference of authorship, it is very probable that they are by Ceciliano Carvalho, possibly the only photographer who lived and worked in the town at the time, whose services were also announced in the newspaper. The quality of the reproductions was very precarious, which prevents a better visualization of their details. In the first is part of Praça Dr. José Gonçalves; in the other a perspective of Rua Conselheiro Franco, where, according to the newspaper, the town's Christmas festivities were held. The photographs sought to publically show in Bonfim, the presence of the streets and alignment of residential buildings. Lourenço Pereira da Silva states that this was the striking aspect of the new part of the city in opposition to the other, "distinguished by the beauty, vastness, and elegance of the construction" of the two existing squares and the streets "in their length and the beauty of their alignments" (Silva, 1906, p.59-60).



Figure 4 – *Correio do Bomfim*, ano V, n.16, 24 dez. 1916, p.1.

Nineteen century normative patterns are followed in the photographs, showing details of wide straight roads as in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, present in the albums of towns or illustrated magazines. This photographic profile fulfills the function of the official presentation of a town and also helps with the formation of public opinion about it. Thanks to its ‘true effect,’ the photographic image was used at the time for the social functions of the transmission of information and the ordering of urban space, counting on the press as one of its principal transmission vehicles. Margarita Ledo states that the contrast between information and opinion is based on the idea of credibility built in journalistic discourse (Ledo, 1998). For this reason, photography, due to its mechanical character and its documentary appeal, is converted into the principal instrument of authenticity.

When in 1897 Euclides da Cunha finally reached the Bahian *Sertão*, what called his attention in the landscape of the village of Queimadas was the decrepitude of its poor housing, ungainly and old in its only irregular square. In his wandering around those regions the impression that the journalist from Rio manifested was that perhaps Alagoinhas was “the best town in the interior of Bahia” at the time, with its “wide streets and immense squares” and without

“a narrow lane or twisting alleyway” (Cunha, 2003, p.68). Very probably when *Correio de Bomfim* transmitted those photographs of its town, it sought to give credibility to what its local chroniclers said, in other words the existence in the middle of those *sertões* of a small *urbe* which was expanding and sought to identify with the dictates of a modern aesthetic and harmonized with the novelties of the epoch.

“LAND OF THE FUTURE”

It is very probable that the first photographs of the town of Jacobina to reach public circulation in print media were those printed in the historical memoir of Afonso Costa from 1916, published in the V National Congress of Geography. Before this there was no newspaper in the town, and I could not find them in any of the periodicals in neighboring areas. Although restricted to a select group of interlocutors, this mode of seeing the town ended up constructing and perpetuating a way of entering into its urbanistic, architectural, cultural, economic, and political aspects.

The text entitled “My land (Jacobina of yore and now)” was selected to participate in the aforementioned Congress, held by the Geographic Society of Rio de Janeiro and presided by Teodoro Sampaio. Afonso Costa also wrote technical opinions about other texts received from various Bahian municipalities. The Congress, amongst other aspects, was relevant in the promotion of could be seen and talked about in the municipalities which composed the state of Bahia, many of them recently created at the time, and had a total of 1057 participants (Cardoso, 2011). Participating were the principal representatives of lettered elites in the Bahian municipalities, presenting their memoirs or chorographies, amounting to 75% of those inscribed in the congress. This select group was composed of doctors, lawyers, teachers, and public employees, amongst others. Afonso Costa was the most eminent of this circle in Jacobina, though at the time he was already working and living in Salvador.

The title of Afonso Costa’s text makes a subtle reference to the poem *Canção do Exílio*, by Gonçalves Dias. Like that poet, Costa wrote what can be considered to be the greatest ‘poem’ dedicated to his land, when he had left it. Nevertheless, to the contrary of the poet from Maranhão, Afonso Costa did not return to his native land, having moved from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro, where he became part of Carioca Academy of Letters and the Brazilian Historic and Geographic Institute, dying in 1955. It is possible that he lamented the fact that the small *Sertão* town did not offer the necessary conditions for a man like

him to remain there. Nationalist and with a strong nativist sentiment, his historical memoir constituted an internal perspective of the *Sertão*, at the exact moment in which a feeling of self-discovery was growing in Brazil. His intellectual formation was strongly marked by the dominant prism of Positivism reigning in institutions at the time, and his flowery writings had a strong Parnassian connotation.

The word *future* was really on the agenda of those *Sertaneja* towns. A promising future was what the new century announced for the *sertão* in the words of its chroniclers. Afonso Costa's text is marked both by a discourse which praises the glorious past, and by the hope for the promising future for his town. The first town created in the *Sertão* of Bahia and responsible for supplying the Portuguese crown with the gold extracted in the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth century Jacobina entered a phase of economic stagnation, in part resulting from the discovery of diamonds in the region of Lavras Diamantinas. Only in 1888 was it granted the status of a town, with the title of the “Agricultural Town of Santo Antônio de Jacobina.” In Afonso Costa's text there is a prognosis of the destiny of Jacobina as a ‘land of the future,’ principally after the arrival of the long awaiting railway which would promote its economic expansion (Costa, 1916).

Despite believing in the future development of his land, Afonso Costa's posture in relation to the aesthetic of the streets and public buildings denoted a grievance for being distant from the ‘modern *urbe*.’ In the 1923 text *200 anos depois: a então villa de Jacobina*, he states that the city was ‘elegant’ due to the mountainous landscape and the two rivers which ran through its middle, but its appearance in relation to urbanism and architecture did not correspond to the ‘good taste’ expected from what was “one of the richest lands in the state of Bahia” (Costa, 1923).

In his 1916 memorial, Afonso Costa published four photographs of Jacobina.⁴ Two scenes of the urban center near Praça da Matriz: one looking towards the church and the other towards Praça Rio Branco; a view of the *arraial* (village) of Itapicuru, and finally a partial external view of the town. There is no reference of authorship, something common at the time. In his History of Jacobina, the photographs have the significance of a ‘real effect.’ It was through these images that little by little a pattern of urban visuality was constructed for the town, often repeated in other photographs. Among the images selected by the historian, greater emphasis was put on the area close to Praça da Matriz, possibly the only one worthy of being externally visualized at that time. Itapicuru was probably presented as it was an area where the directors

and workers of Companhia Minas de Jacobina had lived. The final image, a partial view from above, assumes a distanced and wide-ranging perspective of the urban landscape that was both objective and scientific. In the 1930s, the local press published images which directly or indirectly echoed these four photographs.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the press, along with photography, was one of the medias which most contributed to the formation of an education of a viewpoint in Jacobina and to the construction of a self-image of the city identified with civilization. Between 1933 and 1943, there circulated in the region what would be the longest-lasting and most influential newspaper in Jacobina in the first half of the century: *O Lidador*. It was owned by Nemésio Lima a businessman from the town of Mundo Novo, where he had worked as a journalist with the newspaper *Mundo Novo*. *O Lidador* deserves to be highlighted in regional terms as the newspaper which most invested in the power of image, principally photography, publishing them as portraits, urban views, and advertisements. It was one of those most responsible for spreading photography in the *sertão* of Jacobina, promoting and educating the perspectives of *sertanejos* in the region.

In the 1930s and 1940s the cultural frontiers which separated the *sertões* from the outside, modern and capitalist, world began to weaken. I believe that this became possible principally due to photographic images. Participating in the experience of the creation and fruition of its self-images, the *sertanejo* perceived that he was living in harmony with the modernity of the Old World. Siegfried Kracauer, marked by a feeling of social disenchantment, denounced at the time the flood of photographs becoming part of people's lives. The great production of photographs was present in various places, especially in newspapers and illustrated magazines, obscuring from society its own economic and cultural reality. Kracauer referred to an attitude of political domination by some sectors of society, promoting, amongst other items, the cleansing of social memory. He stated that "never was there a time so little informed about itself. In the hands of the dominant society the invention of illustrated magazines is one of the powerful instruments to strike against knowledge" (Kracauer, 2009, p.75). The juxtaposition of images, in my opinion, prevented the formation of consciousness about facts. The 'idea-image,' like an avalanche of photographs attracts indifference in relation to the things that people want to say. In the illustrated magazine the public saw the world that they prevented themselves from perceiving. Observing the specificities of the Bahian *sertão* it

can be noted that this type of mediatic visual control was also reaching those populations.

Compared with other newspapers from the region, the use of images was a distinctive mark of *O Lidador*. The commemorative issue of its second anniversary, on 7 September 1935, contained the surprising number of 104 photographs. I did not find in any other newspaper from the region such a significant quantity of photographs in a single edition, which indicates the audacious character of the editor in that venture. The massive use of images in the press in the initial decades of the twentieth century was widely diffused in illustrated magazines, which certainly served as inspiration for that anniversary issue in Jacobina.

As announced in *O Lidador*, the photographs published in the special issue had the intention of showing what was related to the “social and economic progress” experienced by the city at that moment.⁵ The newspaper circulated with 24 illustrated pages, in comparison with four in its normal issues. The director ordered that the *clicheries* (plates) be prepared in Salvador for the printing of photographs, which counted on the direct collaboration of the resident photographer in Jacobina, Juventino Rodrigues, one of those praised in this issue for the services he provided to society in his studio, Ideal Photo.

The predominance of the use of portraits in the universe of photographs can be seen, corresponding to 75 percent of the total. Among these the most important were individual portraits. In general, they were images of those who were part of the political, economic, professional, educational, and artistic life in Jacobina and in Bahia. In summary, there prevailed the idea that the city was gifted with special people in a wide variety of areas, and more than this fundamentally these were the ones most responsible for its phase of development. The image of the *sertão* is, thus, one of a place marked by enterprising men. If, as Euclides said, the *sertanejo* was above all strong, when he devoted this strength to civilization, progress was inevitable. The newspaper suggest this idea, principally with its suggestive name. In the headline of the leading story – “Two years conquered!” – four portraits can be seen underneath with captions stating they are three founders of local newspapers and an assiduous collaborator of *O Lidador*: Amado Barberino, Francisco Vieira, Nemésio Lima and Paulo Bento, respectively (Figure 5).

The photographs which highlight urban views appear in second place in quantity, and are distributed over various pages of the newspaper. In one of them (Figure 6), entitled “Picturesque Jacobina,” there appear four images accompanied by captions: a view of the quay on the Ouro River, whose caption



Figure 5 – *O Lidador*, n.103, 7 set. 1935, p.1.

calls attention to the cement bridge linking Praça da Matriz to Rua Dr. Pedro Lago; a partial view of the town taken from one of the hills surrounding it; a partial view of Praça da Matriz, highlighting in the background the bandstand and Matriz Church, constructed with the authorization of the Queen of Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century (the caption states the seventeenth); finally, a partial view of Praça Rio Branco, where the weekly markets were held and where the seat of public power and security were located. It is valid to point out that the places in the images make a clear allusion to those mentioned in the 1916 article by Afonso Costa. This was the ‘idea-image,’ according to Kracauer, who participated in the public construction of Jacobina as a town at that time. In other pages are some photographs which highlight important new constructions in the context of economic, social, and educational development, such as the railway station; the reinforced concrete Manoel Novais bridge, linking the two parts of the city cut by the Itapicuru River; Antônio Teixeira Sobrinho Hospital and the Luiz Anselmo da Fonseca building which housed schools – the last three were built during the municipal administration still in power at that time.

It can be seen that in the image transmitted by the press the city was experiencing a time of progress. This perception was sensitively captured by the



Figure 6 – *O Lidador*, n.103, 7 set. 1935, p.3.

chroniclers at the time, who saw those works as the long desired participation in the civilized world, albeit in a quiet manner, characteristic of a small town without the “infernical movement of the automobiles” which marked life in the metropolises.⁶ Progressing without losing traditions, this was the proposition defended by the local intelligentsia. The newspaper indicate that traditions such as “*bumba meu boi, cirandinha, quilombos, dança de velho, marujada*, etc.,” still lived in Jacobina, as they had not been removed by the reforming function of those days. Even with the permanence of traditions, the report stated that “despite all this, we live with civilization, in civilization.”⁷ The photographs of the jazz group, philharmonic orchestras, *bailes de micareta*, and organized picnics served as witnesses of the new habits and the customs that had emerged (Figure 7). However, like Afonso Costa, the newspaper critic was concerned with the non-existence of aesthetic public works consistent with its economic importance and natural beauty, such as public gardens.

The modernizing image of the city was emphasized by the newspaper with the use of photographs in which directly or indirectly machines appear as symbols of progress, such as the train station or cotton processing machines. One of these, set up in the town, authenticated the idea of a phase of prosperity. Three photographs together on a page highlighted a report about *Companhia*



Figure 7 – *O LIdador*, n.103,
7 set. 1935, p.4.

de Força e Luz de Jacobina (Figure 8). According to the text, “with everything good and useful that Jacobina possesses, it cannot be denied that ‘Cia. de Força e Luz de Jacobina’ occupies the front rank.” The center image, a little above the others, stamps the portrait of Coronel Galdino César de Moraes, president of this company and considered by the company as principally responsible for the work. Alongside this are the inside of the mill and the dam built on the Ouro River. The use of photographs sought to associate the image of the coronel with progress. Implicitly, the newspaper sought to transmit that in the jingoistic context of a modern and nationalist Brazil led by Getúlio Vargas, there was space for the participation of small *sertaneja* towns as supporting actors for its growth. Apparently, in the local imagination, that promising ‘future’ dreamt by Afonso Costa was finally becoming reality.

OLD *SERTÕES*, NEW TIMES, OTHER IMAGES

Those hegemonic images of the Bahian *sertões*, crystalized in the national imagination as places where drought, misery, fanaticism, and violence predominated, principally with the repercussion of the magnum opus of Euclides da Cunha, were to a great extent softened by their *sertanejo* interlocutors



Figure 8 – *O Lidador*, n.103,
7 set. 1935, p.7.

through the advent in their small *urbes* of series of novelties identified with the presence of the long desired civilization. The arrival of the railway station, the press, entertainment such as theatre and cinema were great motivations for the promotion of new habits for those populations. Nevertheless, it was above all with photography that they learned to construct their self-images. Examining these images constructed a privileged window to visualize the marks of these new times in the Bahian *sertão*.

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NOTES

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² Expression taken from *Correio do Bomfim*, 13 Oct. 1940, were reference to the trips of President Getúlio Vargas to Goiás and Amazonas and his probably visit to Canudos.

³ "Lembrando as festas do Ruy". *Correio do Bomfim*, ano XVIII, n.1, 1 out. 1939, p.2.

⁴ The poor quality of the images in the tests reproduced does not allow their visualization.

⁵ "O Lidador – Edição especial a 7 de Setembro". *O Lidador*, n.100, 11 ago. 1935, p.1.

⁶ "Jacobina Pittoresca". *O Lidador*, 7 set. 1935, p.3.

⁷ "Sociedades e Festas". *O Lidador*, 7 set. 1935, p.4.

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