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From Cangaço to "New Cangaço": A Comparative Analysis between Historical Social Banditry and Its Contemporary Manifestations in Northeastern Brazil

Wallton Pereira de Souza Paiva[1,2,3], Rafael Gonçalves Mota[3]

[1]Department of Applied Social Sciences, Federal Rural University of the Semi-Arid Region, Fortaleza, Brazil
[2]Court of Justice of the State of Ceará, Fortaleza, Brazil
[3]Research Center of the Graduate Program in Law, University of Fortaleza, Fortaleza, Brazil
Email: wallton.paiva@ufersa.edu.br, rmota@unifor.br

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Abstract

This article analyzes the banditry phenomenon in Northeastern Brazil across two distinct historical periods: the traditional cangaço (late 19th century until the first decades of the 20th century) and the so-called "new cangaço" (late 20th century). The central research problem questions whether the "new cangaço" represents a modern evolution of social banditry, maintaining a direct connection with traditional cangaço, or if it constitutes a fundamentally distinct phenomenon that merely shares similar nomenclature. Using the deductive method, the investigation starts from a broad understanding of banditry to examine its specific manifestations in the Northeastern context. The methodology combines bibliographic-documentary research, historical-contextual analysis, and comparative analysis between the two phenomena. The study considers geographical, climatic, and socioeconomic aspects of the Northeast region, emphasizing the drought polygon, an area historically associated with cangaço. The investigation examines economic, political, and social factors that influenced the emergence and development of both phenomena, seeking to identify patterns, similarities, and differences that might indicate a possible historical continuity or rupture between them.

Keywords

Social Banditry, Cangaço, New Cangaço, Brazilian Northeast, Organized Crime

1. Introduction

The evolutionary process of humanity has led them to live in society. The univer-

sal conception of zoon politikon, from the expression attributed to Aristotle, demonstrates that humans recognize their limitations, and the need for community living alleviates weaknesses and increases survival chances. Living in society attracts political duties, duties of coexistence that, in turn, create an expectation of rights and consequently their respectability when acquired.

Since the dawn of civilization, with the emergence of fundamental innovations such as agriculture, metalworking, urban development, and writing systems (including administration), rural workers have always been in a peculiar social position. They perceived themselves as a distinct and subordinate class in relation to the ruling elites, despite often maintaining individual dependency ties with members of this upper class.

The refusal of this condition of inferiority was the genesis, in Hobsbawm's conception (Hobsbawm, 2015: p. 23), of the phenomenon he names as banditry, since the very existence of the bandit characterizes an insurgency against the prevailing social structure.

This study aims to examine two historical moments of banditry in the Northeast of Brazil. The first moment focuses on the phenomenon of traditional cangaço, which flourished between the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. The second focuses on what has come to be called the "new cangaço". The investigation intends to initially delve into the structural aspects of historical cangaço, analyzing its economic, political, and social roots. Subsequently, it seeks to establish a parallel with the "new cangaço", aiming to identify whether it represents a completely distinct manifestation or constitutes a contemporary version of the original phenomenon.

The central question guiding this research is: Can the "new cangaço" be considered a modern form of social banditry that derives directly from traditional cangaço, or is it an essentially different phenomenon with similar nomenclature?

This research adopts the deductive method as its methodological basis, starting from a broad understanding of the banditry phenomenon to then examine its specific manifestations in the Brazilian northeastern context. For better contextualization, a brief geographical characterization of the Northeast region will be presented, emphasizing the climatic, colonial, and economic peculiarities of the northeastern backlands, highlighting the drought polygon, which historically served as the main setting for the development of cangaço.

It is imperative to clarify that this analysis does not generalize the impact of traditional cangaço across the entirety of the Brazilian Northeast. Instead, the study meticulously delineates the geographical locus of this historical phenomenon to the sertão and the 'drought polygon'—regions characterized by specific climatic, economic, and social peculiarities that fostered its emergence and development. As detailed in Section 2, the Northeast comprises diverse physiographic zones, each with distinct historical trajectories and socio-economic formations. The focus on the sertão as the primary setting for cangaço (Queiroz, 1997: p. 23) reflects a precise contextualization of the phenomenon within its most historically.

Table 1. Comparative analysis between historical cangaço and new cangaço.

Characteristic	Historical Cangaço	New Cangaço
Period	Late 19th century until 1940	Intensification from 2010, with origins identified in 2003
Geographical Scope	Limited to the Northeastern backlands (sertão)	Throughout the national territory, including urban and rural areas, with potential for cross-border operations
Main Motivation	Mixed: personal revenge, honor, survival, and enrichment	Exclusively economic: enrichment through robberies
Leadership Structure	Centralized around charismatic figures (Lampião, Antônio Silvino, Corisco)	Decentralized, with multiple leaders and operational cells
Relationship with Population	Ambiguous: terror against enemies, but protection to allies, establishing bonds of compadrio	Purely instrumental: population seen only as an obstacle or means to achieve criminal objectives
Territorial Permanence	Nomadic groups that permanently inhabited the caatinga	Temporary actions with quick entry and exit from targeted locations
Arsenal	Inferior or equivalent to official forces	Superior to local police forces, with military-grade weapons
Use of Technology	Rudimentary, based on territorial knowledge	Advanced, including explosives, digital communication, and high-performance vehicles
Relationship with Local Elites	Complex: alliances with colonels and local political chiefs	Nonexistent or purely criminal, without formal political alliances
Protection System	Network of "coiteiros" (forced or voluntary allies)	Independent operational cells without the need for permanent local support
Treatment of Victims	Selective violence against enemies, with practices such as rape and mutilation	Instrumental violence, limited to what is necessary for the operation's success
Main Targets	Properties of enemies, travelers, farms, and small towns	Financial institutions, ATMs, and armored cars
Crime Economy	Resources spent locally, stimulating regional economies	Resources directed to other criminal activities (trafficking, money laundering)
Specialization	Low, with bands performing multiple criminal activities	High, with specialists in explosives, logistics, weaponry, and escape
Temporality	Seasonal, intensifying during drought periods	Permanent, with operations conducted regardless of weather conditions
Visual Identity	Characteristic and distinctive (leather hats, crossed cartridge belts)	Discreet, aiming for anonymity, usually with black clothes and balaclavas
Duration of Actions	Extended, with occupation of localities for days	Short, usually a few hours during the night
Planning	Relatively improvised, based on opportunities	Meticulous, with prior reconnaissance and predefined escape routes
Fate of Leaders	Generally killed in confrontations with police	Frequently arrested or fugitives, rarely killed in action
Cultural Impact	Strong, generating cordel literature, music, and regional folklore	Limited to media impact and sensationalism

significant and geographically delimited area of incidence, thereby avoiding an overgeneralization of its regional impact.

The study's development is primarily structured through bibliographic-documentary research, which includes the systematic collection and analysis of academic works on traditional cangaço, as well as the examination of primary historical documents.

Subsequently, a detailed historical-contextual analysis is conducted, identifying and understanding the economic, political, and social factors that influenced the emergence and development of cangaço, establishing the relationships between these different variables.

Finally, a comparative analysis is conducted between traditional cangaço and the "new cangaço" emerging at the end of the 20th century, identifying patterns, similarities, and differences between the two phenomena, evaluating the existence of possible historical continuity, despite the five-decade time gap, and verifying the hypothesis of the phenomenon's evolution versus the emergence of a new manifestation (Table 1).

2. The Brazilian Northeast Hinterland: Geographic, Climatic, and Historical Aspects of Regional Formation

Understanding the Brazilian territory and its regional division is a scientific task that has significantly evolved over time. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) has undertaken the institutional mission of establishing criteria for the grouping of States and Municipalities into regions, aiming not only to update the territorial knowledge of the country but also to provide a consistent basis for the collection and dissemination of statistical data.

The first attempt at regionalizing Brazil, in 1913, was based solely on physical aspects. However, since the 1940s, with the consolidation of the IBGE, more complex socio-economic criteria have been incorporated into the regional division process. During this period, Physiographic Zones were established, followed by the concepts of Microregions and Homogeneous Mesoregions (1968 and 1976), and then Geographic Mesoregions and Microregions (1990).

The configuration of the Brazilian Northeast as it is known today resulted from successive modifications. In 1942, the Great Regions were established, including the distinction between Western and Eastern Northeast. In the 1970s, a new macroregional division was formulated, introducing concepts that revealed the growing importance of economic articulation and urban structure in understanding the Brazilian space, thus consolidating the five major regions that remain today: North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and Central-West.

Currently, the Brazilian Northeast comprises nine states: Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco (including Fernando de Noronha), Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia (IBGE, 2017: p. 1). This configuration reflects not only an administrative division but also a deep understanding of regional dynamics, economic articulations, and the socio-cultural characteristics that distinguish this

important region of Brazil.

The colonization of Brazilian territory began in the Northeast region, favored by its strategic geographical position in relation to Europe and proximity to the African continent. This process of territorial occupation was characterized by the development of different economic activities, each adapted to the natural characteristics and potentialities of specific areas of the region.

On the coastal strip, extractive activities initially dominated, particularly Brazilwood. The Zona da Mata, advantaged by fertile soils and a favorable climate, became the ideal setting for the development of the sugarcane industry, which would establish itself as the main colonial economic activity. The interior of the region, known as the sertão, was gradually occupied by extensive cattle ranching, an activity of significant economic importance and a tool for territorial expansion and consolidation, especially after conflicts with the French in the northern region.

Complementing this economic mosaic, the cultivation of cotton and rice developed in the middle-north (current region comprising Maranhão and Piauí), while the southeast of Bahia thrived with cocoa cultivation. This diversification of primary-export economic activities not only characterized the occupation process of the Northeast but also established the foundations of the spatial and social organization of the region (Rocha, 2011: p. 13).

According to Queiroz (1997: p. 13), the northeastern hinterland has historically been a space of constant economic dynamism since the dawn of colonization. The author highlights that, although family structures and political power relations have retained certain traditional aspects over time, the hinterland economy has undergone continuous transformations, characterizing an unceasing process of changes persisting to the present day. This perspective contradicts the common view of a stagnant hinterland, revealing instead a territory in constant economic evolution, even while preserving certain core social and political characteristics.

The economic occupation of the northeastern hinterland, as taught by Rocha (2010: pp. 22-27), was structured from two main poles—Salvador and Olinda—initially driven by the need to supply the sugarcane zone with work animals and food. This inland movement was marked by a specific spatial organization established by Tomé de Souza, mandating the separation of grazing and agricultural areas by vast stretches of land.

The management of farms was conducted by cowboys, as Queiroz (1997: pp. 19-20) explains, compensated through the system of 'quarteação'—receiving one in every four calves born, along with the right to use the milk. These cowboys could gradually become small ranchers, although access to land ownership remained restricted, forcing poorer settlers to become tenants of large landowners.

This livestock activity evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries into a thriving dried meat industry, known as "carne do Ceará", boosting the growth of urban centers like Aracati, Russas, and Mossoró. Simultaneously, an extractive economy based on carnauba and babassu exploitation developed, alongside a local economy characterized by food production, cotton cultivation, and leather goods manufactur-

ing for diverse purposes.

Understanding the economic factors leads to examining the climatic factors of the Brazilian Northeast. The Northeast exhibits remarkable climatic diversity, with average temperatures ranging from 20˚C to 28˚C, and rainfall indices fluctuating from 300 mm to 2000 mm annually, depending on the area. This variation results from the interaction of various climatic factors like air masses, continentality, maritime influence, and altitude.

The northeastern hinterland, the region's central area, is predominantly characterized by a tropical semi-arid climate, extending to the north of Minas Gerais. This region exhibits very specific climatic features, with high average temperatures around 28˚C and a rainfall pattern marked by scarcity and irregularity, concentrating mainly during the summer and autumn. These climatic conditions directly affect the region's natural landscape, reflected in the flat relief shaped by climatic elements, in the hydrography characterized by temporary rivers flowing only during the rainy season, and especially in the vegetation. The caatinga, the typical vegetation of the hinterland, has developed specific adaptations to survive this environment, being xerophytic (adapted to dry environments) and deciduous (shedding leaves during drought), displaying characteristic species like mandacaru and palma (Rocha, 2011: pp. 58-61).

As Queiroz (1997: pp. 20-21) highlights, despite the severe climatic conditions marked by high temperatures and low rainfall, the northeastern hinterland experienced significant population growth during the 19th century. This demographic phenomenon is particularly notable considering the region's challenging environmental conditions, starkly contrasting with other Northeast areas like the eastern coast, where the humid tropical climate and the presence of the Atlantic Forest offer more favorable natural conditions. This population expansion in the hinterland demonstrates how human communities developed adaptation and survival strategies even in an environment marked by severe climatic limitations, although such growth later contributed to intensifying pressures on the available natural resources and the region's traditional socio-economic model.

For example, the Cariri region, located in the south of Ceará and known for its natural fertility and abundance of water, underwent significant socio-economic transformations from 1839. Population growth and the consequent fragmentation of rural properties through inheritance led to a crisis in the traditional production model. This fragmentation had two main impacts: first, it hindered the maintenance of large herds, as extensive livestock farming required vast pasture areas; second, the need to feed a growing population demanded expanded cultivation areas, further reducing spaces available for grazing. As a result, there was a gradual deterioration in the living standards of traditional families.

Despite its harsh climatic characteristics and the typical population dispersion from extensive livestock farming, the northeastern hinterland developed forms of social solidarity, especially evident in practices related to cattle management. The rodeos represented not only a moment of collective work but a cultural expression

of cooperation and sociability that transcended family limits, which was rare in traditional Brazilian rural society.

This peculiarity of the hinterland contrasts with the dominant pattern in other rural regions of Brazil, where pronounced individualism of large landowners prevailed. While in traditional farms each domain functioned as a self-sufficient microcosm, in the hinterland, the nature of cattle farming itself required certain levels of cooperation among neighbors, especially during cattle management activities (Vianna, 2005: p. 238).

However, it is important to note that this solidarity had well-defined limits. Social relations in the hinterland remained strongly hierarchical, with clear distinctions between landowners and cowboys. The system of 'quarteação', for example, while allowing some social mobility, maintained the basic power structures. Nonetheless, the specific needs of hinterland cattle farming created spaces of coexistence and cooperation that were not found to be parallel in other regions.

This characteristic of the northeastern hinterland helps explain the development of unique cultural manifestations and a specific social ethos, where mutual aid practices and collective sociability moments, like the rodeos, constituted fundamental elements of social organization. This aspect becomes even more relevant considering the population growth observed in the 19th century, as noted by Queiroz (1997: pp. 20-21), which intensified pressures on the region's traditional socioeconomic model but did not eliminate these characteristic solidarities of the hinterland.

When referring to the hinterland and its inhabitants, the popular 'sertanejo', the first notion that comes to the Brazilian mind is the northeast region of Brazil. In the popular song by Flávio José: "Sertão is Brazilian Northeast/And we want nothing from foreigners/Our most cherished things are beauty/Love, poetry, and nature/It's sertão!" (Medeiros, 1995).

Popular poetry ratifies a sense of pride, resilience, and solidarity, where the rural mass shows more susceptibility to enthusiasm and greater capacity for solidarity in the field of material struggle (Vianna, 2005: p. 357).

The power structure in the northeastern hinterland, initially based on the need to defend large rural landowners, laid the foundations for what would later become the phenomenon of cangaço. Just as the first colonizers organized their own protection force through the 'capangagem senhorial'—exemplified by figures like Jerônimos Leitão, Jorge Correia, and Sebastião Marinho—the large hinterland landowners developed similar armed self-defense systems (Vianna, 2005: pp. 248-249).

This organization of private paramilitary forces, originally conceived to protect properties and their inhabitants, ultimately established a tradition of institutionalized violence in the hinterland. The armed protection system, coupled with the specific characteristics of the region—like geographic isolation, harsh climatic conditions, and the peculiar social solidarity forms developed around cattle farming—created a conducive environment for the later emergence of traditional cangaço (Queiroz, 1997: p. 23).

This evolution from 'capangagem senhorial' to the cangaço phenomenon represents a key understanding for future analyses of social banditry in the Northeast, a theme that will be further explored in the next topic. The transition between these two forms of armed organization reflects not only changes in local power structures but also broader transformations in hinterland society.

3. Coronelismo, Senhorial Campanagem, and Economic Crises: The Origin of Cangaço

Brazil experienced significant population growth between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, increasing from 10 million inhabitants in 1872 to 34 million in 1931. However, this demographic growth was not accompanied by significant changes in the country's social and political structure, especially during the Old Republic (1889-1930). During this period, even in urban areas, Brazilian society remained strongly linked to rural interests. A hybrid social class emerged, which could be classified as "rurban", where even city dwellers maintained close ties with agricultural activities, be it through economic or social connections (Faoro, 2012: pp. 697-698).

This social configuration was directly reflected in the political structure of the Old Republic, which deliberately restricted popular participation in decision-making processes. The electoral system, by excluding illiterates from voting rights, effectively silenced most of the population, concentrating political power in the hands of a small, predominantly rural elite. Thus, despite significant population growth, the power structure remained practically unchanged, perpetuating a political management model that favored the interests of rural oligarchies at the expense of the growing marginalized urban and rural populations.

The initial occupation of the northeastern hinterland was characterized by a colonization process where the patriarchs of pioneering large families needed to ensure the protection of their domains. To this end, they established private armed groups, initially to defend their properties, families, and livestock against the incursions of indigenous peoples inhabiting the region.

However, after indigenous populations progressively moved to more remote interior areas, these armed groups were not disbanded. Instead, they assumed a new role: becoming power tools for local chiefs in their territorial and political disputes against rival families. This transformation from the original function of the armed bands laid the foundations for a power system based on force, characteristic of the hinterland region (Queiroz, 1997: p. 23).

This structure of private armed protection represents a fundamental element for understanding the subsequent formation of both coronelismo and cangaço in the northeastern hinterland, highlighting how institutionalized violence established itself as a mechanism of control and territorial domination from the early occupation of the region.

The phenomenon of coronelismo has its roots in the structure of the National Guard, an institution where the rank of colonel was conferred on the commander of the municipal regiment. This rank was not assigned randomly but was intended

for individuals who already held significant economic power and social prestige in their localities (Faoro, 2012: p. 699).

Over time, the term "coronel" transcended its military origin, coming to designate not only formally appointed officers but also large rural landowners who, even without the official rank, exerted similar political and economic power in their regions. These "traditional colonels" maintained the same status and influence as their officially recognized peers, sustaining a lifestyle and power structure that characterized the Brazilian rural elite.

This dual nature of coronelismo—official and traditional—consolidated a local power system in which authority derived both from material wealth and social prestige, creating a political structure that became characteristic of the Brazilian interior, especially in the northeastern hinterland, where geographic isolation and specific socio-economic conditions further strengthened the power of these local leaders (Leal, 2012: pp. 44-45).

In the context of the northeastern hinterland, rural society faced two main sources of social disruption: the quilombos and groups of migrants driven by drought, moving across the territory. However, none of these threats managed to provoke a unified or organized response from rural society.

Large rural landowners dealt with these issues independently, using their resources and private forces. The public power, especially during the colonial period and even afterward, proved to be less efficient in this type of action than the landowners themselves. This autonomy in maintaining order demonstrated the strength of private power in the hinterland (Vianna, 2005: p. 355).

Threats to the established order generally manifested in a localized manner, affecting only specific areas or regions without constituting a widespread danger that demanded a coordinated response. Thus, the landowners organized their forces of repression and control, treating these issues as simple rural policing problems, without the need for intervention by official authorities. This practice further reinforced the local power of the large landowners, who exercised not only economic dominance but also control over social order in their territories.

In regions marked by underdevelopment and the effective absence of state power, the political influence of the "colonels" was fundamentally based on their ability to mobilize loyal followers. This capacity for mobilization, whether for armed confrontations or electoral processes, overtook even material wealth, though this facilitated the maintenance of a loyal clientele through ostentatious demonstrations of power.

In this context, as Hobsbawm (2015: p. 151) notes, political strength derived more from the number of followers than individual economic prosperity. The system functioned if family interests prevailed over the pursuit of personal wealth. When this order was inverted, the entire traditional political structure began to collapse, creating ideal conditions for the flourishing of banditry.

This social configuration naturally established a demand for armed men, who could be incorporated into local power structures. Bandits represented a valuable

political resource: they constituted an available contingent that, under the protection of rural landowners, could act in both conflicts and as electoral agents, significantly increasing the prestige of their protectors.

The phenomenon of cangaço developed in two distinct phases. The first, known as "subordinate cangaço", was characterized by the existence of armed groups that maintained a direct relationship of dependency with the colonels and chiefs of the large hinterland families. These men had fixed residences on their protectors' lands, acting as private military forces serving the interests of those who sustained them. Subsequently, a second form of cangaço emerged, more autonomous and independent. In this phase, the armed groups broke their permanent ties with local political chiefs and large landowners, adopting a nomadic lifestyle. Without a fixed residence, these bands survived primarily through robberies and looting, establishing only temporary and circumstantial alliances with local political forces (Queiroz, 1997: p. 15).

The shrewdest leaders of these bands generally sought alliances with dominant factions capable of offering effective protection. Even while maintaining their independence, bandits were often treated as potential allies by powerful locals, who recognized the strategic importance of maintaining good relations with these armed groups, thus creating a complex system of interdependence where violence and politics intertwined in the construction and maintenance of regional power.

This evolution of cangaço, from subordination to autonomy, represents an important transformation in the power relations of the northeastern hinterland. What initially emerged as an extension of the private power of the colonels transformed into a more complex social phenomenon, with its own characteristics and greater independence from traditional local power structures.

The transition from subordinate cangaço to its autonomous form coincided with profound political transformations resulting from the proclamation of the Republic. During the monarchical period, the existence of two political parties—Conservative and Liberal—provided a local power structure that, although concentrated, still allowed some alternation and formal recognition of opposition. With the advent of the Republic and the establishment of the Republican Party as the sole political force, the dynamics of local power underwent significant alteration. Groups that managed to occupy political-administrative positions sought to perpetuate their power, systematically criminalizing any form of opposition. In this new context, those who opposed the dominant group were often labeled as bandits, turning political dissent into a police matter (Queiroz, 1997: pp. 25-26).

This reconfiguration of local power had a profound impact on the social structure of the hinterland. The police force emerged as a new instrument of political domination, used not only for maintaining order but primarily as a mechanism for persecuting opponents of the dominant group. This scenario contributed to the transformation of cangaço, which went from being an auxiliary force of the colonels to a more complex and independent social phenomenon, often representing a form of resistance to established power.

The evolution of cangaço into its independent form marked a significant break with the traditional power system in the northeastern hinterland. By detaching from the control of colonels and local political chiefs, the cangaceiro groups began to respond exclusively to the orders of their leaders, establishing a new power dynamic in the region.

In this context, three groups particularly stood out in the history of autonomous Brazilian cangaço: the band led by Antônio Silvino, that of Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, known as Lampião, and the group commanded by Corisco. Among these, Lampião's band achieved greater notoriety and historical relevance, both for the temporal extension of its activities and the scope and impact of its actions in the northeastern hinterland.

This transformation of cangaço, from an auxiliary force of the colonels to autonomous groups under charismatic leadership, represents a crucial moment in the history of social banditry in the Northeast, demonstrating how changes in local power structures could generate new forms of organization and resistance.

Social banditry represents a universal phenomenon characteristic of agrarian societies, where peasants and landless rural workers live under systems of oppression and exploitation exercised by dominant groups, whether they be landowners, governments, or institutions. In this context, a peculiar figure emerges: the bandit who, although considered a criminal by the constituted powers (State and local elites), maintains deep identification ties with the peasant society, often being seen as a hero and defender of the oppressed (Hobsbawm, 2015: pp. 41-45).

Despite the pertinent criticisms of Hobsbawm's model, the concept of social banditry still offers a valuable interpretive framework when applied exclusively to the first phase of Brazilian cangaço, known as subordinate cangaço" In this initial period, armed groups maintained direct dependency relationships with colonels and chiefs of large sertanejo families, establishing themselves in fixed residences on their protectors' lands. This configuration presented characteristic elements of social banditry as defined by Hobsbawm: the cangaceiros acted as forces of resistance against rival groups, frequently defending entire communities linked to their protectors, and established bonds of reciprocity with the local population. Violence, although present, was directed mainly against specific political adversaries, not assuming the indiscriminate character that would come to characterize the later autonomous phase. The criticisms of Hobsbawm's model, therefore, apply more precisely to the second phase of the phenomenon, when cangaceiros broke their permanent ties with local political chiefs and adopted a nomadic lifestyle, predominantly based on robberies and looting that affected both rich and poor, significantly distancing themselves from the classic definition of social banditry as an expression of peasant protest against oppression.

Since its earliest critiques, Hobsbawm's model of social banditry has been questioned for its excessive generalizations and the romanticization of the phenomenon. This is because its reliance on folkloric sources and popular narratives led to an 20overly positive evaluation, silencing cruel and antisocial aspects of banditry,

such as violence against peasants themselves and the subservience of bandits to the interests of local powerful figures. Furthermore, the use of police and judicial records revealed a complex network of relationships between bandits and rural elites, often characterized by complicity and mutual service, rather than a binary opposition. This interconnectedness made it difficult to sustain the idea of a bandit as a popular hero or defender of the poor, suggesting that banditry was frequently motivated by personal gain and that the distribution of stolen goods was more functional for the bandits than an act of social reparation. Such arguments led to the proposition that the term 'social banditry' might be inadequate for many realities, with 'political banditry' or 'guerrilla bandits' being preferred to describe groups with more complex and less pre-political objectives (Ferreras, 2003).

In the Brazilian context, the applicability of the concept of social banditry to cangaço is questioned. Hobsbawm (2015) used an excessively universalizing model, with precarious bibliography and based on legends, without delving into the specificities of cangaço. Unlike the image of the popular hero, many cangaceiro leaders came from relatively wealthy backgrounds and maintained relationships of protection and complicity with "coronéis" and politicians, acting more as patrons than as defenders of the poor. Violence and terror were indiscriminate, and material gains were for their own benefit, not for the dispossessed population. The very narrative of the social bandit in Brazil was, in part, shaped by ideological views of the time, such as those of the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) and the armed struggle, which sought to frame cangaço within a perspective of social revolt, often anachronistically and without documentary evidence. The emergence of the "new cangaço," with its purely economic and professionalized nature, reinforces the idea that the phenomenon evolved beyond any connotation of 'social banditry,' retaining only tactics of terror and territorial domination, but without the social component that Hobsbawm (2015) proposed (Pericás, 2015: pp. 46-48).

Cangaço, especially in its autonomous phase, fits this definition of social banditry by exhibiting the fundamental characteristics of the phenomenon. By breaking with the control of the colonels, the cangaceiros established a new dynamic of power in the northeastern hinterland, where their actions, although considered criminal by the authorities, often found support and backing among the rural population. This transformation of cangaço, from an auxiliary force of the oligarchies to independent groups, reflects the classic pattern of social banditry, where the outlaw simultaneously becomes an outlaw to the State and a symbol of resistance for the peasants.

This reasoning is confirmed by the writings of Queiroz (1997: pp. 33-39), who observes that during the first four decades of the 20th century, the northeastern hinterland was the stage for the activities of three major cangaceiro bands seeking to maintain their independence from both local political chiefs and official authorities. This autonomy was seen as a direct threat to the established order, as it represented a parallel power based exclusively on force.

To deal with this threat, the colonels often established strategic alliances with

the cangaceiro leaders, often strengthened by compadrio relations. These alliances, based on tacit mutual aid agreements, were characteristic of traditional Brazilian society and assumed relations among equals. Breaking these agreements was considered an unforgivable betrayal, turning former allies into mortal enemies.

The survival and impunity of the cangaceiro groups were favored by several factors. First, the hinterland's extent across various states allowed the bands, when pursued in one region, to find refuge in another. Second, a system of "coiteiros" was developed—forced allies offering support to the cangaceiros out of fear or financial interest. These coiteiros, usually small farmers, residents, or associates, often maintained dual loyalty: to the colonels and the cangaceiros.

Hobsbawm (2015: pp. 152-153) narrates a significant episode that demonstrates the complex relationship between official power, religion, and banditry in the northeastern hinterland. The author recounts how Lampião, having built his power that transcended the mere auxiliary force of local colonels, was involved in a complex political maneuver in 1926.

That year, the Prestes Column, a guerrilla movement led by a rebellious Army officer (who would later become the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party), reached the Northeast after two years of operations in other regions of the country. The federal government, concerned about the situation, sought support from Priest Cícero, a religious figure of immense political power in Ceará, hoping his spiritual influence could curb possible popular adhesions to the revolutionary movement.

Priest Cícero, reluctant to allow federal troops into his territory and aware of the complex relationship of his followers with groups considered "bandits" by the government, proposed an alternative solution. Lampião was invited to Juazeiro, where he received honors and was officially named captain by an inspector from the Ministry of Agriculture, also receiving armaments and ammunition for his band, with the mission of pursuing the Prestes rebels.

Initially enthusiastic about this official recognition, Lampião was, however, warned by an allied colonel about the likely temporary nature of these benefits. The colonel cautioned that, once the Prestes Column threat was eliminated, the government would likely invalidate his rank and deny the promised amnesty for previous crimes. This argument convinced Lampião to abandon the pursuit of Prestes, reflecting a common perception among the sertanejos: while armed groups were a known and manageable reality, the government represented a more unpredictable and dangerous force.

The maintenance of these alliances and protection was guaranteed by the extreme violence with which the cangaceiros punished those they considered traitors. The reprisals were not limited to individuals but often extended to their families and even entire communities, creating an environment of terror that reinforced the obedience of the coiteiros and discouraged denunciations to the authorities (Queiroz, 1997: pp. 33-39).

The economy of social banditry presented peculiar characteristics that went beyond mere subsistence. Although criminals' basic needs could be met with resources

like those consumed by local peasants—food, drinks, and clothing produced in the region—their demands often exceeded this basic level of consumption. The local population rarely refused to supply provisions to the bandits, both out of fear and respect. However, even in areas where the peasant economy was predominantly non-monetary, bandits needed financial resources to acquire specific items, such as weapons, ammunition, and luxury goods symbolizing their status. Furthermore, money was essential for bribing authorities and maintaining their protection networks. A significant aspect of the bandit economy was its dynamizing role in local commerce. Bandits, possessing financial resources superior to those of common peasants, became important consumers in the regional market. Their spending, characterized by ostentation and prodigality, especially benefited local merchants and service providers. Unlike large rural landowners, who often directed their resources to larger centers, bandits tended to concentrate their spending within the region, contributing to local economic redistribution, albeit through illicit means (Hobsbawm, 2015: pp. 140-144).

The economic dynamics generated by cangaço, despite its origin in illicit activities, established a peculiar cycle of resource circulation in the northeastern hinterland. The gains obtained through robberies and looting were reintroduced into the local economy through a pattern of ostentatious consumption, mainly benefiting regional merchants and service providers. This phenomenon was particularly notable in localities where Lampião's band established its temporary bases. The wasteful behavior of the cangaceiros, characterized by frequent festivities, gambling, and expressive spending, injected a considerable number of resources into the local economy. This financial movement stimulated commerce, strengthened traditional fairs, and promoted regional production. The economic prosperity resulting from the presence of the cangaceiros created a paradoxical situation: some local political leaders, recognizing the economic benefits of this presence, developed an ambiguous attitude towards the bands. Thus, an intricate network of economic interests was established, which, together with other social and political factors, contributed to the longevity of the cangaço phenomenon in the northeastern hinterland.

The phenomenon of cangaço generated a paradoxical response in sertaneja society. As Queiroz (1997: pp. 33-39) points out, while some young people were attracted to the ranks of the cangaceiros, others joined the police forces, especially the "volantes"—mobile groups of soldiers commanded by low-ranking officers chasing bandits in the countryside. These police forces sometimes incorporated private armed groups when farmers offered their men to participate in operations against cangaço.

In regions characterized by economic backwardness and weak state power presence, the political influence of the "colonels" was mainly based on their ability to mobilize loyal followers. This capacity for mobilization, whether for armed conflicts or electoral processes, became more important than material wealth, although the latter facilitated the maintenance of a loyal clientele through ostenta-

tious expenses demonstrating power and prestige. In this context, the accumulation of family influence overshadowed the mere accumulation of capital. The system only began to disintegrate when the pursuit of individual wealth diverged from traditional family interests.

This social configuration created ideal conditions for the flourishing of banditry, establishing a natural demand for armed men who could be incorporated into local power structures. In turn, bandits represented a valuable political resource: they constituted an available contingent of armed men who, under the protection of rural landowners or local aristocrats, could act in both armed conflicts and as electoral agents, significantly increasing the prestige of their protectors. The shrewdest leaders of the bands generally sought alliances with dominant factions capable of offering effective protection. Even when maintaining their independence, bandits were often treated as potential allies by powerful locals, who recognized the importance of maintaining good relations with these armed groups (Hobsbawm, 2015: pp. 150-151).

This dynamic created a complex system of interdependence between bandits and local elites, where violence and politics intertwined in the construction and maintenance of regional power. On the subject, Queiroz (1997: pp. 62-63) further highlights an important economic factor in the dynamics of cangaço: the scarcity of job opportunities in the northeastern hinterland. With cities saturated and an exodus to other regions of the country (either to the center-south axis in search of urban jobs or to the north during the brief rubber cycle), cangaço emerged as an attractive alternative for young people without prospects.

Independent cangaço began to disappear from 1940 onwards, coinciding with significant demographic and socio-economic transformations within Brazil. During this period, the Brazilian Northeast experienced the beginning of a transition from a predominantly rural society to a gradually more urbanized one (IBGE, 2007). This transformation was characterized by a strong concentration of labor in agricultural activities, with states such as Paraíba ranking among those with more than 40% of their total population employed in the primary sector.

The industrialization resulting from World War II accelerated the opening and expansion of new agricultural frontiers and urban centers, particularly in the southern regions of the country, such as northern Paraná. With the impossibility of importing foreign labor, these external conjunctural factors created a powerful migratory pull from the Northeast. This scenario already showed signs of what would become a significant rural exodus, evidenced by the fact that the Northeast was the only region in the country to register a female predominance in its population in 1940, probably due to male emigration in search of opportunities elsewhere (IBGE, 2007).

According to IBGE demographic indices 2007, Brazil's overall population quadrupled between 1940 and 2000, growing from 41.2 million to 169.8 million inhabitants, with the urban population increasing dramatically from 31.3% to 81.2%. Throughout this period, the Northeast maintained distinct characteristics: it had

the highest proportion of Catholics (98.9% in 1940, 79.9% in 2000), exhibited persistently high illiteracy rates (exceeding 80% in some states in the 1940s, improving to 30.1% in Alagoas by 2000), and showed remarkable educational advancement (school attendance for children aged 7 - 14 rising from 18.8% in 1940 to 92.9% in 2000). Despite these improvements, Northeastern states maintained the highest proportion of their workforce engaged in agricultural activities, reflecting the region's slower pace of industrialization compared to the Southeast, where states like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo had reduced their agricultural workforce to just 2.5% and 5.8%, respectively, by 2000.

The cessation of independent cangaço activities during this period is therefore demonstrably linked to these broader socio-economic transformations, rather than solely to state repressive actions. The mirage of high wages and enrichment in the southern regions caused waves of sertanejos to venture along the roads, seeking better opportunities. As these prospects of improved living standards were perceived as superior to those available in the sertão, the demographic base and socio-economic conditions that historically sustained cangaço as a response to localized labor market crises were fundamentally altered. This causal relationship underscores how the phenomenon's decline was primarily driven by changing economic opportunities that drew potential participants away from the region, highlighting the cangaço's sensitivity to broader national economic restructuring.

4. The "New Cangaço"

After examining the historical context of Brazilian coronelismo—including its geographical, economic, and social foundations—as well as the evolution of cangaço from a subordinate movement to an autonomous phenomenon with its socio-economic impacts, we move to analyze the phenomenon known as "new cangaço". This study seeks to answer the central question: Does the "new cangaço" represent a contemporary version of social banditry, maintaining a direct link to historical cangaço, or is it a fundamentally distinct phenomenon that merely shares a similar name?

The phenomenon known as "New Cangaço" intensified in Brazil, particularly from 2010, characterized by systematic attacks on financial institutions across the country. As Feitosa (2023: p. 4) notes, the term began to be widely used by the press to designate any attack on financial institutions that involved the besieging of cities.

This criminal phenomenon assumes peculiar contours that, according to Cavalcante (2023: p. 16), approach cinematic dimensions, establishing an interesting parallel with fictional representations of this type of crime. In fiction, these narratives often create a paradoxical relationship with the audience, which sometimes develops empathy with the criminals and their motivations. In Brazilian reality, however, these actions have spread terror and caused significant disruptions, especially in small and medium-sized inland towns, causing immeasurable financial

losses and reminiscent of Brazil in bygone times.

Cruz, Cardoso, and Sousa (2022: p. 2) deepen the analysis by highlighting that this new mode of organized crime has significantly impacted Brazilian society, especially in interior localities. The authors emphasize that the actions of these groups are mainly characterized by thefts and robberies of financial institutions and ATMs, executed with the use of explosives and overt violence. The methodology employed by these criminals includes the creation of a true "war scenario", resulting in widespread panic and profound consequences for affected communities.

Silva (2019: pp. 15-16) establishes important distinctions between historical cangaço and its contemporary version. The "new cangaço" has expanded its area of operation beyond the northeastern hinterland, establishing a presence throughout the national territory. The author highlights the high degree of specialization of criminals, who use military-grade weapons and explosives, and notes a significant change in leadership structure: unlike the centralized model of traditional cangaço, contemporary organizations feature a decentralized command structure with multiple leaders. Furthermore, the financial objectives of these groups transcend mere robbery, serving as sources of capital for other illicit activities, including loan sharking, money laundering, electoral campaign financing, and the trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The nomenclature "new cangaço" has its origin precisely dated in August 2003, when the television program Linha Direta, from Rede Globo, coined the term "neocangaceiros" to refer to a criminal group under the leadership of José Valdetário Carneiro. This leader was a member of the Carneiro family, established in the city of Caraúbas, in the Chapada do Apodi region, in the west of Rio Grande do Norte. The Carneiro family had previously been notable for executing what would be considered for many years as the largest robbery in Brazilian history in 1982—a robbery on the road between Mossoró and Olho D'água dos Borges/RN, known as "the 94 million robbery". This record would later be surpassed by the famous Bank of Brazil theft in Fortaleza, from which 194 million reais were stolen (Silva, 2019: p. 17).

Critical of the expression "new cangaço", Feitosa (2023: p. 5) observes that this term has been the subject of increasing questioning and review in the academic and journalistic fields, reflecting a growing perception of the inadequacy of this term to characterize current attacks against financial institutions. A gradual change in terminology approach can be observed in contemporary media. Some media outlets have begun using quotation marks when referring to the "new cangaço", while others suggest that current crimes represent an evolution of this phenomenon, signaling the recognition of a distinction that deserves more in-depth analysis. This narrative transformation highlights the need to establish a clearer distinction between the practices of historical cangaço and the specific characteristics of current attacks on financial institutions with city dominance.

While acknowledging the valid academic and journalistic critiques regarding the nomenclature "new cangaço", particularly those articulated by Feitosa (2023:

pp. 5-10), who identifies significant divergences from historical cangaço, this study deliberately retains the term. This methodological choice is predicated on the central hypothesis that the contemporary phenomenon, despite its distinct operational characteristics and expanded geographical scope, represents a "natural evolution" or "adaptation" of traditional hinterland banditry. The continued use of "new cangaço" thus serves to underscore the argued historical continuity and the persistence of fundamental elements—such as territorial domination and the systematic application of terror—that link these two manifestations of organized violence within the Brazilian context. This approach facilitates a comparative analysis that transcends mere superficial similarities, focusing instead on the transformation of underlying power structures and criminal methodologies across different historical epochs.

In the comparative analysis between historical cangaço and the contemporary phenomenon, Feitosa (2023: pp. 13-15) identifies significant convergence points in their fundamental practices, especially regarding city invasions and confrontations with local police forces. This similarity in modus operandi establishes an initial bridge between the two phenomena.

However, as the author (Silva, 2019: pp. 19-21) points out, the period between 1990 and 2000 marks a significant transformation in criminal practices when the so-called "new cangaço" began to terrorize the northeastern interior with a more sophisticated methodology, the actions, initially carried out during business hours, were characterized by the use of hostages as human shields and the use of powerful vehicles to ensure quick getaways to pre-established points. Furthermore, a significant evolution in this criminal model is observed with the emergence of "night cangaço", a variant that focuses on meticulously planned nighttime operations targeting ATMs and bank vaults with the use of explosives (Silva, 2019: p. 640). This tactical adaptation, according to the author, aims to maximize profits and minimize confrontations with police forces, in addition to avoiding more severe criminal charges such as capital murder.

The systematic use of terror as a coercive instrument represents another fundamental characteristic that establishes a line of continuity between historical cangaço and its contemporary manifestations. This strategy, which simultaneously aims to intimidate public forces and silence potential whistleblowers in the local population, is revealed as a long-standing military tactic, today known in military circles as "Shock and Awe".

The effectiveness of this approach can be illustrated through a historical episode documented by Queiroz (1997: p. 24), which occurred in Vila do Teixeira, Paraíba, in 1866. The case involved Liberato de Carvalho Nóbrega, a young leader of the Conservative party, who was detained by his political opponents from the Dantas and Cavalcanti Ayres families, belonging to the Liberal party. In response, his brothers Francisco and Augusto, with the support of their uncle Justino and relative Sebastião Raposo, mobilized approximately fifty people and strategically invaded the village of Cruzeiro. The mere show of force, materialized through the

commotion caused by the group, was enough to provoke widespread panic: adversaries sought refuge, the police forces abstained from intervening, and jailers abandoned their posts.

This historical episode demonstrates how the tactic of psychological terror, employed since the early days of cangaço, remains a central element in territorial domination strategies, whether in historical or contemporary contexts.

In a critical and systematic analysis, Feitosa (2023: pp. 5-10) fundamentally questions the appropriateness of the term "new cangaço" to describe the current phenomenon of city domination and attacks on financial institutions. The author develops his argument by identifying thirteen essential characteristics of historical cangaço that are entirely absent in contemporary criminal manifestations, thus demonstrating the impropriety of the current nomenclature.

In classical cangaço, during its independent phase, there was a specific set of practices and characteristics defining its nature: the systematic practice of explicit rape, the deliberate destruction of properties, and the maintenance of a fixed band whose members maintained close relationships with each other. These groups permanently inhabited the caatinga and were often driven by personal revenge, unlike current criminal organizations. The author further highlights other crucial distinctions: robberies in historical cangaço primarily aimed at victim demoralization, not material enrichment. The bands also characterized themselves by specific practices such as the liberation of prisoners and the formation of troops dedicated to revenge. Their activity was geographically limited to the region, supported by a network of coiteiros and marked by explicit relationships with both authorities and local rural elites.

Continuing this analysis, the author (Feitosa, 2023: pp. 11-13) details what he calls "city dominance pattern", a criminal phenomenon with its distinct characteristics fundamentally different from historical cangaço.

This contemporary model is characterized by highly organized actions, usually nocturnal, executed by heavily armed groups that dominate entire cities, subjugating the local population and using tactics of psychological terror, such as shooting into the air and ostentatious displays of force. The escape, meticulously planned, is carried out in high-performance vehicles, leaving a trail of panic and terror in the affected community.

Unlike historical cangaço, the "city dominance pattern" presents well-defined business characteristics. The first and most significant distinction is its exclusively economic purpose: there are no motivations of revenge, honor, or ideals of any nature—the goal is purely enrichment through robbery. This organization assumes a professional and structured character, something entirely alien to the practices of classical cangaço.

The geographical scope represents another significant contrast. While historical cangaço was limited to the northeastern hinterland, the actions of city dominance occur throughout the national territory, even crossing borders. This territorial breadth is enabled by an arsenal superior to that of police forces—another distinc-

tive element, as historical cangaceiros, although they might have had newer ammunition, never surpassed the firepower of official forces.

A particularly characteristic element of this new phenomenon is the presence of explosives experts, known as "blasters" or explosive experts, who apply specific technical knowledge to assess values in different types of banking and cash transport structures. This technical specialization underscores the professional and organized nature of these criminal operations, distancing them even further from the practices of historical cangaço.

Analyzing distinctions among modalities of banditry requires a more precise contextualization of their characteristic elements. Although there are obvious differences in the contemporary phenomenon, such as the absence of explicit rapes, the non-establishment of compadrio ties, and the preservation of properties, other aspects demand more careful reassessment.

According to Queiroz (1997: p. 15), cangaço was fundamentally a seasonal phenomenon, intensifying in drought periods and reducing its activity during rains when its members returned to the routine of sertanejo life. This temporal characteristic reveals that the existence of permanent and nomadic groups was an exception, not the rule, naturally impacting the very structuring of the bands.

The issue of permanence in the caatinga deserves a more contextualized analysis. During droughts, those with resources migrated to larger urban centers or the Zona da Mata. In contrast, the most economically vulnerable became migrants, taking with them the last of their belongings—usually a calf—seeking places with better infrastructure to survive the drought. As Queiroz (1997: p. 30) points out, these groups of migrants often became involved in crimes, mainly thefts motivated by hunger and conflicts related to extracting water from the few still available points, causing tensions with local communities. Movement under these conditions occurred in two ways: either through costly resources for those who had them or by forming groups traveling on foot, occasionally resorting to criminal activities. Thus, the caatinga environment generated two distinct manifestations of violence: traditional cangaço and the actions of migrant bands.

The analysis of "cangaceiros" activity reveals an important aspect of their "professionalization": territorial mastery as a fundamental strategic element. The caatinga, with its characteristic vegetation, harsh climate, and water scarcity, represents a challenging environment whose mastery provides significant advantages to those who know it, even in criminal activities.

It is crucial to contextualize that the expansion of transportation means in Brazil, marked by the growth of bus and automobile fleets and the consequent reduction of distances and travel times, coincided with the final period of errant cangaço. The current scenario presents a drastically different reality: vehicles are easily obtained, there is an extensive road network connecting various locations, and access to fuel and public transport is considerably broader and easier compared to the cangaço era.

Historical analysis of cangaço reveals that the bands' permanence in the caatinga

was more a consequence of the era's limitations than a strategic decision. This circumstance is directly related to another fundamental aspect: access and circulation of information. The advent of radio in rural areas only consolidated at the end of the 1940s, a period coinciding with the decline of coronelismo, marking a significant transformation in the communication dynamics of the hinterland.

The very itinerant nature of cangaço imposed important practical restrictions. The cangaceiros needed to keep on the move constantly, carrying only the essentials, with no possibility of establishing fixed bases to store their spoils. This characteristic is particularly revealing in understanding that the power of cangaço was more strongly tied to the social status of the cangaceiro than specifically to the accumulation of material wealth. The logistical difficulties of transporting and storing valuables made the financial aspect secondary to the prestige and social influence that the figure of the cangaceiro exerted.

In the context of historical cangaço, resources obtained could be freely spent in cities, a practice even desired by some local leaders. It is significant to note that, at that time, there was no need for sophisticated capital laundering systems—a practice that, contemporaneously with cangaço, was only beginning to develop in Chicago, United States, through the criminal activities of Al Capone and other gangsters.

The critical analysis of these elements reveals that the current strategy of temporary city domination for property crimes, although often considered an innovation, represents an adaptation of resources, strategies, and concepts characteristic of traditional cangaço. The main distinction lies in the modernization process, which does not necessarily imply a mischaracterization of the phenomenon but rather an adaptation to new technologies and mechanisms that enhance the effectiveness of criminal action.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the historical, geographical, and socio-economic formation of the Brazilian Northeast, particularly the "sertão" (hinterland), reveals a territory marked by complexities that transcend simplistic views. The regionalization process conducted by IBGE throughout the 20th century demonstrates how the understanding of the northeastern space evolved from a purely physical perspective to a more comprehensive analysis, incorporating socio-economic and cultural aspects that shaped power relations in the region. The occupation of the northeastern hinterland, initially driven by extensive cattle ranching, developed its own characteristics that distinguish it from other regions of the country, establishing a peculiar economic system that generated forms of social organization and power relations.

The study shows that cangaço, in its evolution from a subordinate to an independent form, reflects profound transformations in local power relations and socio-economic structures of the hinterland. Its extinction, more than a result of state repressive action, stemmed from structural changes in Brazilian society, driven by post-war industrialization, the opening of new agricultural frontiers, and the emergence of economic opportunities in other regions. The adverse climatic conditions

of the semi-arid region, far from representing just an obstacle to development, contributed to forging a resilient and adaptable society, as demonstrated by the population growth observed in the 19th century, even in the face of environmental limitations. The forms of social solidarity developed around livestock activities are evidence of a social organization that contrasts with the predominant individualism in other rural regions of Brazil.

However, the end of traditional cangaço did not mean the extinction of the power and violence structures that originated it. Family disputes, private power, and social inequalities persisted, only assuming new forms. This historical continuity explains the emergence of the "new cangaço" decades later, representing an adaptation of old practices to contemporary realities. The emblematic case of the Carneiro family, especially through the figure of José Valdetário Carneiro, illustrates how the power and violence structures of the hinterland did not dissipate but transformed, maintaining fundamental elements such as territorial domination and the use of terror as an instrument of power.

The evolution of social banditry into a more professionalized and economically oriented activity reflects an adaptation to the new socio-economic realities of the country. This transformation is evidenced mainly in the gradual loss of the social component that characterized the original cangaço, giving way to a more business-like approach to organized crime. Such change reflects broader transformations in Brazilian society, where economic relations came to predominate over the old power structures based on honor and revenge. The "new cangaço" incorporated characteristics of modern organized crime but maintained fundamental practices of traditional cangaço, such as territorial domination and the systematic use of terror.

Thus, the "new cangaço" represents not a rupture but a natural evolution of hinterland banditry, adapted to contemporary social, technological, and economic realities. This transformation, although it has altered fundamental aspects of the original phenomenon, maintains historical roots that allow understanding not only the history of the Brazilian Northeast but also the transformations in the manifestations of violence and power in developing societies. The analysis of this phenomenon offers important insights into how traditional social structures adapt and transform in the face of broader economic and political changes, maintaining certain fundamental characteristics while assuming new forms of expression, demonstrating that the bandit culture of the Brazilian Northeast did not disappear, it only transformed, developing forms of action more aligned with the demands and possibilities of the contemporary world.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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