A economia de entreposto e a comparação com Genebra

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Genebra e Singapura construíram sua prosperidade comercial inicial sobre redes de comerciantes que confiavam uns nos outros por pertencerem à mesma comunidade. Em Genebra, a Internacional Protestante de banqueiros e comerciantes ligava a cidade a Lyon, Paris, Amsterdã e Londres. Em Singapura, os grupos dialetais da diáspora chinesa, a rede hadrami dos comerciantes árabes e os comerciantes chulias do golfo de Bengala cumpriam a mesma função. Nos dois casos, a rede transportava crédito, informação e pessoas através das fronteiras políticas.

A diferença está no número de redes e no papel do Estado. A elite comercial de Genebra era relativamente homogênea em religião e cultura, ao passo que o entreposto de Singapura foi desde o início um ponto de encontro de várias redes, cada uma com sua língua, sua religião e suas instituições. O Estado colonial em Singapura oferecia o quadro neutro em que essas redes se encontravam: um porto franco, um tribunal e uma força policial. A organização interna de cada comunidade ficava, em grande parte, a cargo de seus próprios líderes. Esse arranjo, em que um Estado forte garante um quadro comum enquanto comunidades diversas organizam seus próprios assuntos, é um dos legados duradouros da economia de entreposto.

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Em números

Tonelagem dos juncos chineses que chegavam a Singapura: 18.400 toneladas em 1841–1842, 3.280 toneladas em 1865–1866. Navios bugis de Wajo: 90 em 1824, cerca de 120 em 1825, cerca de 200 prahus por ano na década de 1830, cada um com tripulação de uns trinta homens. Residentes árabes: 15 em 1824, 465 em 1871. Naturais da Índia no censo de 1824: 756. Doação de Tan Tock Seng ao Chinese Pauper Hospital em 1844: $ 5.000. Participação do Sudeste Asiático no comércio total de Singapura: 48% em 1825 e 43% em 1865 (Wong Lin Ken).[1]

Notas

1. Wong Lin Ken, “Singapore: Its Growth as an Entrepot Port, 1819–1941”, texto acessado via Cambridge Core, setembro de 2026: o Sudeste Asiático respondia por 48% do comércio total em 1825 e por 43% em 1865. ↩

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