

# **Conflicts and Conspiracies**

Brazil and Portugal 1750-1808

**Kenneth Maxwell**

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# CONFLICTS & CONSPIRACIES

BRAZIL AND PORTUGAL 1750–1808

*Kenneth Maxwell*

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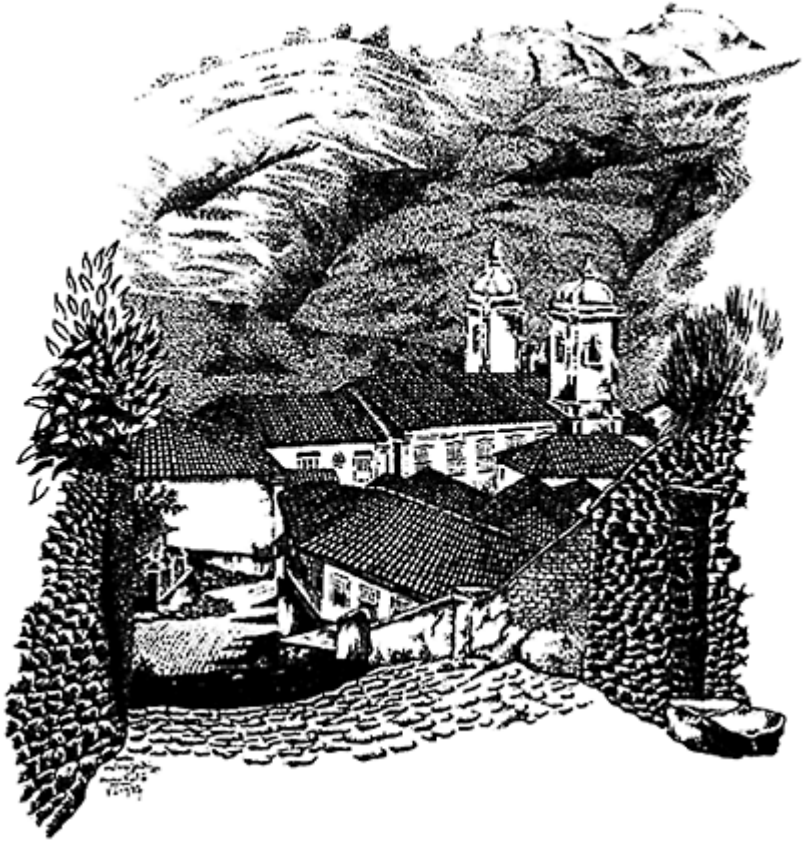
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FOR MY FATHER AND MOTHER



*Matriz de N.Senhora do Pilar*

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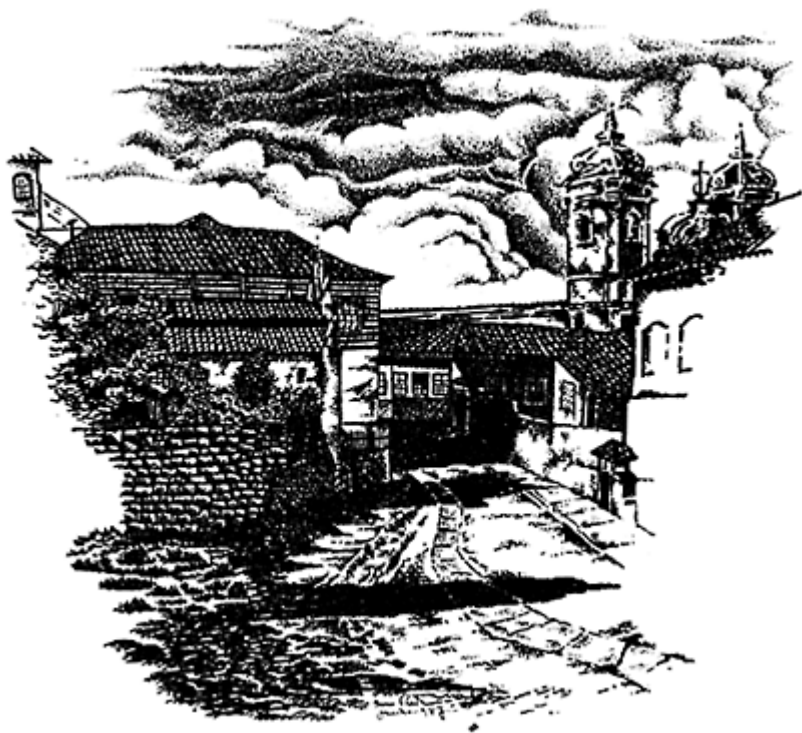
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*Matriz do Pilar vista da rua da Glória*

## FOREWORD

Portugal and its empire are enigmas in modern world history. They are enigmatic because they represent trajectories that seem so at odds with each other. From the fifteenth century, Portuguese mercantile explorers tied together the China Seas, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic into an increasingly integrated system of trade, migration, and political conquest. In pioneering seaborne world trading systems they gave them a European center. Accordingly, historians have often argued that the Portuguese, as forerunners, created systems of rule and exploitation that were eventually superceded by the more “modern” practices devised by the Dutch, French and English. As the first, the Portuguese empire was therefore also the most archaic, and its outposts, so the story goes, subsided into backwardness and lethargy. When Abbé Raynal penned his famous portrait of the Atlantic Empires in the late eighteenth century, Portugal figured as a metropolis bound to the past, and the colonies tied only to the center by precarious convenience.

At the same time what appeared so archaic proved very elastic, if not enduring. If the Portuguese were the first to explore littoral Africa in the fifteenth century, and slip around the Cape of Good Hope into Asian waters, they were also the last to disband their African claims in the 1970s. In between was the longest stretch of colonial experimentation, adaptation, and endurance of all European orders. What is more, Portugal laid claim to the largest settler colony of all time: Brazil. As Portuguese rulers knew, from the Marquis de Pombal in the 1750s to the Salazar clique in the 1970s, Portugal was not a “great” nation without colonies—only empire could elevate the metropolis to the concert of European nations. This meant not inflexible imposition (though there was a lot of brutality to the means), but a process of constant negotiation, adaptation, and evolution that was effective enough to appear static and unmoving. It meant also that the politics of imperial establishment, control, and unraveling took place not just in Lisbon, but also in the peripheral outposts in America, Africa and Asia.

Kenneth Maxwell, more than any living historian, has introduced readers to the apparent enigmas of the Portuguese empire—how the first of Europe’s overseas expansionists could also figure among the very last. But unlike the received wisdom, Maxwell shows that these enigmas are more superficial than real. Without depriving the history of Portuguese expansion and contraction of its peculiarities, oddities and contradictions, behind the crusty façade of the Portuguese system of colonial rule was a great deal of dynamism and flexibility. What Edmund Burke urged George III to do in Ireland and America—rule an empire that included the colonies as constituent parts of it—the Portuguese took to heart and practiced from the outset to the protracted and rather ugly end. Maxwell’s books cover the temporal span from the apogee of Portuguese rule

in the biggest of all Atlantic colonies, Brazil, to the denouement of Europe's formal stakes in Africa. The sweep of Maxwell's oeuvre is unique and breathtaking, from his portrait of eighteenth-century reform in *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment* to *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*. Maxwell not only places Portugal on the map of world history, he also shows why it is so important to question thoroughly historic conventions that treat Portugal (and Spain for that matter) as a bit player, setting the stage for later historic actors to dominate the drama of the making of modernity. In the process, he turns the history of empire over and over to show how central it has been as a force in modern world history. And to exemplify this dimension of modernity there are few better cases than the Portuguese.

At the same time Maxwell does not credit Portuguese rulers with possessing the unique alchemy for how to create and keep peripheral dominions serving a metropolitan master. In contrast to some historians who believe there is a right and a wrong way to rule empires (some, with astonishingly frank prescriptions for how the United States should convert "failed states" into protectorates and govern their fissiparous forces), Maxwell gives nostalgic selectivity for a mythic past of imperial magnanimity a wide berth. In his important narrative of the overthrow of the Salazarista dictatorship in 1974 (*The Making of Portuguese Democracy*), he paints a stark portrait of a sclerotic and venal regime clinging to African possessions precisely because it believed its own rhetoric. The endurance of the Portuguese empire was so costly and brutal that it took the enforcers in the Portuguese military to rise up against authorities in Lisbon—only to leave swaths of Africa, like Angola and Mozambique, embroiled in civil war. The ironies compounded: it was a revolt within the Portuguese military that brought down the dictatorship; it was the transition to democracy in Portugal that led to the hurried withdrawal from Africa. So while Portugal joined a post-fascist civilian European order, its former colonies were condemned to militarized politics and civil war. The enigmas might be cast away because Portugal is no longer so bizarre, and thus dismissable, exception to a historical norm about the rise and fall of empires, yet paradoxes and strangeness can nonetheless abound.

Imperial adaptation, crisis, and restructuring is the central theme of this book, Maxwell's first, based upon his doctoral thesis from Princeton under the supervision of the historian of Brazil, Stanley J. Stein. Many of the themes that will run through Maxwell's subsequent works can be seen in this seminal contribution. What makes this book even more remarkable is how much it is both a product of its time while transcending it. In the 1960s, when Maxwell went to graduate school and conducted his archival work, anti-colonial movements and discourses were reaching their fever pitch. The examples of Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam, and the rise of a very influential intellectual current in Latin American history and social sciences—the "dependency" approach to Latin America's structural problems—radicalized our understandings of what causes empires to collapse and what motivates peripheral peoples to embark on a quest for self-determination. At the time, historians were turning away from the personalized and contingent accounts of how "new" countries broke away from imperial rulers. They turned against the proposition that inspired metropolitans saw the light and let their colonies go, and that nationalist visionaries in the colonies "invented" nations in the periphery and galvanized an insurgent movement to drive out colonial officials. Rather, structural forces came to the fore—the demise of mercantilism, the

transformation of the slave trade, and the industrial revolution—to dictate the timing and pattern of imperial breakups.

Some of these structural forces are at work in *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750–1808*. If the traditional historiography accented the personal role of visionary nationalists like “Tiradentes” as the progenitors of Brazilian independence, or the savvy brokering of the British envoy to London, Lord Strangford, for the survival of the Bragança monarchy, or even the sagacious and moderate acts of the Bragança dynasts, Maxwell shifts the analysis to the social and economic movements that gave each of these characters any historic prominence at all. Indeed, rather than locating the dynamics of Portuguese imperial affairs in the contingent conflicts between leaders or aspirants, underlying Maxwell’s story in this book is the clash between several contradictory economic and social logics. Lord Strangford’s protagonism only makes sense in the context of Lisbon’s incomplete efforts to loosen the ties of military and commercial dependency on London and the lobbying to British merchants at home and in Portugal to keep their dependent ally from falling into French hands; Tiradentes’ revolt in the late 1780s only makes sense as part of a much broader reaction on the part of the propertied elites of his region against the fiscal and commercial pressures of the Portuguese crown; and decisions by the monarchs were more reactive to these sorts of pressures than in command of them.

One set of conflicts looms especially large in this book: the effort of the Portuguese regime to redesign the terms of pacts between the metropolis and its colonies, and one colony above all, Brazil. This was the handiwork of the Marquis de Pombal, who would rule the empire from his omnipotent ministerial post for a generation, shake up the empire, if not to its foundations enough at least to unleash tensions that would reach into the furthest corners of the empire. If his goal was to create a more centripetal empire, with Lisbon figuring more prominently as a hub drawing in money and merchandise, the dislocating and ultimately violent effects were felt in the outposts—especially the colony of Minas Gerais, where gold and diamonds had been a lucrative staple for much of the eighteenth century, and which had become one of the largest slave production centers in the history of the Atlantic world. In trying to change the relations between center and periphery, Pombal opened up a dynamic and conflictual bargaining between the components of the empire as a whole, leading up to the exodus of the monarchy from Lisbon in late 1807, when French troops stormed into the heartland of the old empire. Thereafter, imperial bargaining was irreversibly decentered to the periphery, and only then setting the stage for independence of the erstwhile colony. Thus, one of the many fascinating aspects of *Conflicts and Conspiracies* is how potentates of Minas Gerais, long-accustomed to being able to smuggle, avoid taxes, and buy off officers at will, reacted to the effects of imperial policies (which were aimed at tightening the screws on such abuses), and then managed to cover the tracks of their involvements through a peculiar, self-serving relationship between the governor, the Visconde de Barbacena. Once again, personal dealings only make sense when set against the backdrop of colliding interests.

At the same time, Maxwell’s analysis of the structural tensions within the empire departs from some of the prevailing norms of the dependency approach of the 1960s and 1970s—and gives this book a more timeless personality. For while some advocates of the dependency approach tended to accent the forces of the metropolis *over* the peripheries,

for Maxwell what is at stake is the dynamic *between* them that constitutes the imperial political economy. If later dependency advocates nuanced their models to give the periphery some “autonomy” (in the argot of the time), Maxwell’s epic did more than simply anticipate the shift—he saw that it was more than a relative independence that the colony enjoyed, but that imperial dynamics rest on constant interaction, literally conflict and conspiracy between the parties that make up the whole. There are, therefore, multiple layers to the story—from Anglo-Portuguese relations, to center-periphery conflicts, to the politics of local disputes and contests over the spoils of empire. At all these levels personalities will matter, but not because structural forces and material interests are irrelevant. Rather, for Maxwell it is because the history of empire is made up of so many fluid forces pulling to and fro that individuals involved in advocating for and mediating between these forces will make a difference because the outcomes of conflict remained indeterminate. And it is this approach to empire that endures as a vital contribution to imperial history well beyond the Portuguese scope.

Maxwell’s story is required reading for any historian of the age of revolution or of empires more generally. But this does not mean that he flattens the Portuguese case to fit more universal explananda. While Maxwell’s approach can be applied elsewhere, he never loses sight of what makes Luso-Brazilian affairs distinctive, and therefore useful for broader comparative analysis. The relationship between Brazil and Portugal was always difficult to squeeze into any uniform mold, which tempted quite a few historians to ignore it altogether. The largest of Europe’s new world colonies did not break away from the metropolis because it was the home of a new nationalist gestalt; when it became independent it hung onto monarchy as a principle of statehood; and unlike almost all of the rest of the Americas, it never confronted secessionist movements that effectively broke up the union. This is not to say there was no bloodshed over independence, that republicanism had no purchase in Brazil, or that regional forces did not rise up against Rio de Janeiro as the latter defied Lisbon. What is important is that all of these features of the making of new nations in the Americas need not, after reading this book, be treated as automatic or natural features of our hemispheric experiences, as if self-rule somehow logically implied popular rule. These outcomes, too, need to be explained and should not be presumed before the crisis of Europe’s empires in the Americas led to their breakup.

In *Conflicts and Conspiracies* there are several interwoven stories—about the climax of imperial rivalry in Europe, about the implosion of mercantilism in the colonies, and about changes of the Portuguese empire that transform, without toppling, the foundational idea on both sides of the Atlantic: that empire and nation are not as antagonistic precepts of modern statehood as many nineteenth century historians would insist. Maxwell’s narrative integrates these accounts by exploring the imperial innards, the conflicts and conspiracies that kept the imperial question alive in the age of revolution while at the same time lending empire remarkably enduring features whose legacies persist to this day.

*Jeremy I. Adelman*  
*Walter Samuel Carpenter III Professor in Spanish Civilization and Culture*  
*Princeton University*  
*April 2004*

## PREFACE

Independent Brazil adopted a monarchical system of government unlike most former colonial territories in the Western Hemisphere, and Portuguese America, unlike Spanish America, did not fragment into numerous separate states. One objective of this study is to suggest an interpretive framework that might aid in explaining some of the particular circumstances which led to Brazil's special historical development. Taking a critical, formative period, 1750 to 1808, I have attempted to determine how social, political and economic compulsions moulded policy and events, or were moulded by them.

Essentially, the objective of this work then is to delineate the broad interaction of Portugal and Brazil during the second half of the eighteenth century. I seek to explain how and why Portuguese colonial policy changed: something which can only be done with the closest attention to the complex evolution of metropolis and colony during and after the long preeminence of the Marquis of Pombal. For better or worse, therefore, Pombal and his actions form an important thread to the argument. Equally significant is Portugal's relationship with the rest of Europe, most particularly the changing pattern of her connection with Great Britain, which had far-reaching consequences for imperial policy. And, as important, I seek to explain the situation in Brazil.

In the process of research, questions arose concerning accepted chronology, especially in the case of the famous Minas conspiracy of 1788–9, when plotters in the interior gold mining zone attempted to foment an armed uprising against the Portuguese crown. Using the fiscal and business records of the oligarchs of Minas Gerais, I was led to conclude that the historical record had been distorted, and that an important group of entrepreneurs, counting among them some of the richest and most influential men of the region, had escaped incrimination at the time, and later disappeared from history. The distortion, I believe, originated in the testimony of the then governor of Minas, the Visconde de Barbacena, whose reports to Lisbon and the viceroy in Rio de Janeiro were accepted in certain important aspects as an accurate account of developments. Barbacena, as I hope to demonstrate in these pages, was far from being an unbiased or disinterested witness. His story, and most particularly his dating of events, is not trustworthy. Later on circumstances served to perpetuate the governor's distortions and I seek to show how and why this happened.

I make no claim, however, to have uncovered startling new archival materials. Generations of Brazilian historians have dug deep for anything of relevance to the life and activities of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, the *Tiradentes*, one of the key figures in the conspiracy and a man who was later to become the national hero of Republic Brazil. What I have attempted is a reassessment of multiple contemporary sources, some from

archives, some from published documentary collections, some known, some unknown. I do not intend to disparage or belittle *Tiradentes* here. He was clearly a catalyst of revolution in the troubled Minas of 1788. A firm propagandist of an independent, republic, and self-sufficient Minas Gerais, he intended to initiate the revolt. Had circumstances not conspired to thwart him there can be little doubt that he, unlike some of his co-conspirators, would have taken the action he promised.

I believe, however, that in the long run, overconcentration on the role of *Tiradentes* has tended to minimize the importance of the movement of which he was a part. The conflict in Minas was, in my opinion, the result of socio-economic divergence between Minas Gerais and Portugal, and of a class confrontation between colonial and metropolitan interest groups. The whole episode, it seems to me, was of critical importance for its impact both on the Brazilian white élite, and on the imperial policies of the metropolitan government. Thus, unlike the great Brazilian historian Capistrano de Abreu, who regarded the movement as so unimportant that it did not merit inclusion in his history of colonial Brazil, I claim that it was of central importance to the period. I have tried, therefore, to present here, based on archival research in Brazil, Portugal, Great Britain, and Spain, the broad socio-economic basis of the conspiracy and to delineate its impact.

This is no definite study of the Minas conspiracy, a fact it is important to stress. It may well be that to write such a history is an impossible task. The subject matter consists of secret conventicles, furtive reports of even more furtive meetings, interrogations, skulduggery, and murder. I do not claim to have all the answers. What I have done is to interpret events as seems most logical and consistent with the evidence at hand. My method was to make a careful and detailed chronology of all the material available. Then I examined the individual testimony of those arrested for participation in the plot, first as a unit and afterwards against the chronology. The resulting reconstruction was then tested against the evidence obtained from public and private correspondence, fiscal, business, and administrative records.

I have been careful in the footnotes always to state exactly the time, place and circumstances of all the evidence taken from the interrogations, and in the construction of the narrative have always placed the evidence from these sources as nearly as possible in its exact chronological sequence. And if the language in these citations appears ungrammatical and the orthography inconsistent, it should be remembered that the records were subject to much redrafting, and reported verbatim the words of men who often possessed only a rudimentary education. Wherever there is any question of doubt I have cited the evidence in full, and to justify important comments in the text on the opinions and attitudes of the conspirators, I have also cited in full the passage or passages on which I have based my conclusion. This may seem excessive, but with material by its nature speculative, it is essential that as complete a body of evidence as is feasible be presented. Then, where concrete statements are not possible, as for example over the mysterious death of Cláudio Manuel da Costa, the reader himself can decide.

But the Minas conspiracy is only part of the story. It is seen as one element, even if a vital one, in a wider interaction of historical circumstances. Nor are the issues discussed here peculiar to Brazil and Portugal. The second half of the eighteenth century saw much discussion of and attempts at imperial reform by all the European powers. And the epoch was also that of the American, French and Haitian revolutions, all of which had

considerable impact on Portuguese America. Certainly the developments in Portugal and Brazil during these years are less well known than those elsewhere, and I hope what I have to say may be of value for those interested in comparative analysis of such phenomena as the enlightenment, colonial revolts, enlightened absolutism, slavery, economic nationalism and so on.

The limitations of this study, however, should also be borne in mind. I have remained as strictly as possible within the chronological limits, 1750 and 1808, and while developments during these years were of great importance for the consequent history of both Portugal and Brazil, it will nonetheless be necessary for much more work on the period leading up to the final break between the two countries in the 1820s before any well-informed opinion can be returned on the causes of independence. And while I have limited myself to the Luso-Brazilian system and its international connections, it may well be that my canvas is still too large, and that I have raised more questions than I have provided answers. I recognize that many of the issues discussed here await more detailed quantitative study. I hope, however, at the very least, that this book will point out the directions that such research might take.

Any historian who writes about a society and culture other than his own does so at some risk. And especially when treating a matter so intimately a part of Brazil's national heritage as the *Inconfidência Mineira*, I am well aware that I tread sensitive ground. In the last resort the history of Brazil will and must be written by Brazilians. This work I offer as a contribution to that task. Hopefully Brazilians will find it useful. I trust they will be patient of my errors, and that this work will be worthy of those illustrious foreign historians of Brazil, not least my fellow countrymen from Robert Southey to Charles Boxer, who have gone before.

*Kenneth Maxwell  
Coombe Water  
West Monkton  
Somerset  
September 1971*

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I am most grateful to Professor Jeremy Adelman of Princeton for his preface to this new edition of *Conflicts and Conspiracies*, which helps place the book in its own historical and historiographical context. I am also thankful for the generous and at times very lively reaction the book provoked in Brazil on its appearance in translation under the title *Devassa da Devassa* in 1977. Looking back, after the passage of 30 years, I am more conscious than ever of the extraordinary opportunity I had to spend over five years of research and writing on this project. I had intended originally to write on the independence of Brazil, but after almost two years of research I realized that it was impossible to begin to understand the independence period without first understanding, as best I could, what had happened in the late eighteenth century. Then after many months of work in the archives, and with some major chapters of my dissertation already written, I ran into a young Brazilian journalist at a party given at the apartment of a friend of mine who was then at the British embassy in Rio. I rashly said I was interested in the Minas Conspiracy and was asked at once what I thought of the third interrogation of conspirator *x* which appeared in volume *y*, page *z*. I do not now remember the details, but it shocked me into realizing I could not begin to write about proto-nationalism during this period at all without first making a very careful analysis of the records of the interrogations and trial documents in the case of this precocious plot to overthrow colonial rule, which I confess that I had not done at that point. The young Brazilian journalist in question, then working as a stringer for a prominent Rio de Janeiro society columnist, subsequently became one of Brazil's most eminent political columnists and a major historian in his own right of the military regime Brazil was then living through: Elio Gaspari. But his comments set me off on another three years of research. To complete this I postponed taking a job and rather presumptuously turned up one morning at the Newberry Library in Chicago, one of the great depository of books and documents relating to the colonial history of the Americas—including Portuguese America, which is not always the case—to ask if they would give me a fellowship for a year to do this research and complete the book, which miraculously, via the good offices of the late and great bibliographer Fred Hall, I was given. At the Newberry Library I was put to work in a marvelous space inside the old library vault where I could keep all the materials I needed on hand and slowly and systematically go over them and write. Chicago was great fun too, but that is another story. And of course I have still to emerge from the eighteenth century and get back to the project on the independence of Brazil I had originally envisioned.

As I indicated in the first edition, I owe particular debt to Professor Stanley J. Stein of Princeton University for his constant encouragement and his incisive criticism, as well as

to Lawrence W. Towner, then Director of the Newberry Library, Chicago, for the opportunity of spending a year working and writing in the most ideal conditions. Research was financed by a Ford Regional Studies Fellowship 1964–6, a Princeton Regional Studies Fellowship 1966–8, and by a Newberry Library Gulbenkian Fellowship 1968–9. I am also grateful to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation of Lisbon and the Foundations then Director of International Projects, Dr. Guilherme de Ayala Monteiro, for their support during 1964. I thank my friends, Carlos Guilherme Mota, David Davidson, Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, Pedro Luís Carneiro de Mendonça, Orlandino Seitas Fernandes, João Gomes Teixeira, and Herculano Gomes Mathias, for their help and encouragement, and Dr. José Honório Rodrigues for reading and criticizing the manuscript.

For the second edition I am grateful to João Candido Portinari for permission to use his father's splendid painting of the arrival of the Portuguese Court in Brazil in 1808 for the cover. The second edition faithfully reproduces the first—I have not altered the text. The defects and interpretations remain of course my own responsibility.

*Kenneth Maxwell*  
*New York City*  
*April 2004*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AAP</i>	<i>Anais da Academia Portuguêsa da História</i> , Lisbon
<i>ABNRJ</i>	<i>Anais da Biblioteca Nacional</i> , Rio de Janeiro
<i>ACC</i>	<i>Anais do Congresso Comemorativo do Bicentenario da Transferência da Sede do Governo do Brasil da Cidade do Salvador para o Rio de Janeiro</i> (3 vols., Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1967)
<i>ADIB</i>	<i>A Inconfidência da Bahia, Devassas e Sequestros</i> (2 vols., Biblioteca Nacional Rio de Janeiro, 1931)
<i>ADIM</i>	<i>Autos da Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira</i> (7 vols., Rio de Janeiro, 1936–8). (DMG): used to identify depositions taken from witnesses by Araújo Saldanha and Caetano Manitti in Minas devassa in Vila Rica; (DRJ) to identify depositions from witnesses taken in Vila Rica by Machado Torres and Pereira Cleto of the viceregal or Rio de Janeiro devassa.
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon.
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência</i> , Ouro Prêto, Minas Gerais.
<i>AMHN</i>	<i>Anais do Museu Histórico Nacional</i> , Rio de Janeiro.
ANRJ	Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.
APM	Arquivo Público Mineiro, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais.
BMP	Biblioteca Municipal do Porto, [Oporto.]
BNLCP	Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, Pombal Collection.
<i>CCANRJ</i>	Mathias, Herculano Gomes, <i>A coleção da casa dos contos da Ouro Prêto</i> (Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 1966).
<i>CCBNRJ</i>	Casa dos Contos Collection, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. <i>Correspondência inédita</i> Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, <i>A Amazônia na era Pombalina. Correspondência inédita do Governador e Capitão-General do estado do Grão-Pará e Mamhão, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado 1751–1759</i> (Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, 3 vols., Rio de Janeiro, 1963)
<i>DISP</i>	<i>Documentos Interessantes para a História e Costumes de S.Paulo</i> , São Paulo.
<i>HAHR</i>	<i>Hispanic American Historical Review</i>
IHGB	Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Arquivo. Rio de Janeiro.

IHGB/AUC	The Arquivo Ultramarino collection of transcripts in the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro.
<i>MHPB</i>	Cel. Inácio Accioli de Cerqueira e Silva, <i>Memórias Históricas e Políticas...</i> (6 vols., annotated by Braz do Amaral, Bahia, 1940).
PRO	Public Record Office, London (FO=Foreign Office, BT=Board of Trade).
<i>RAPM</i>	<i>Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro.</i>
<i>RHSP</i>	<i>Revista de História, São Paulo.</i>
<i>RIHGB</i>	<i>Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro.</i>

## GLOSSARY

- ALDEIA Mission village. Amerindian mission settlement supervised by the Jesuits.
- ALFERES Lieutenant, ensign, standard bearer.
- ALQUEIRE A measure of capacity. Equivalent to 36.27 litres in Rio while it equalled 13.80 in Lisbon.
- ALVARÁ Royal decree.
- ARROBA A measure of weight equal to 32 lb, or 14.75 kilograms.
- CACHAÇA Sugar cane brandy.
- CAIXA Treasurer or cashier.
- CAPITÃO-MOR In this period most often the commandment of a company of second line militia.
- CAPITANIA Captaincy, territory, an administrative unit.
- CASA DE FUNDIÇÃO Smeltery, foundry-house.
- CASA (OR MESA) DE INSPEÇÃO Inspection board to oversee production and export of colonial staples, especially sugar and tobacco.
- CASA DE SUPLICAÇÃO Supreme Court of Appeals.
- COMARCA Administrative district, county.
- COMISSÁRIOS VOLANTES Itinerant traders.
- COMPADRE Ritual godparent relationship.
- CRUZADO Portuguese coin, worth 400 *reis*.
- DATA Mining claim, allotment.
- DESEMBARGADOR Judge, senior crown magistrate.
- DERRAMA In this period, a claim for arrears on unpaid quotas of the Royal fifth (*quinto*).
- DEVASSA Judicial inquiry
- DÍZIMO Church tithe.
- ENTRADAS Customs duties on merchandise, slaves and livestock entering Minas Gerais.
- FAZENDA (i) Landed state estate; (ii) Treasury.
- GARIMPEIRO Gold or diamond prospector, often illicit.
- JUNTA DA FAZENDA Captaincy exchequer board.
- JUNTA DO COMÉRCIO Board of Trade, Lisbon
- OUIDOR Crown Judge, Circuit Judge, Superior Crown magistrate of comarca.
- MESTRE DO CAMPO Colonel of infantry regiment.
- MINAS GERAIS The General Mines. Colonial captaincy of Brazil, subsequently province and then state.
- MINEIRO (i) Miner; (ii) An inhabitant of Minas Gerais.

MISERICÓRDIA, SANTA CASA DA Holy House of Mercy, charitable lay brotherhood.  
MORGADO Entailed estate.  
PARDO Colored man, most often mulatto.  
PAULISTA An inhabitant of São Paulo.  
PROCURADOR Person with power of attorney.  
PROVEDOR Comptroller, Superintendent of a bureaucratic office.  
PROPINAS Perquisites, emoluments, rake-offs.  
QUINTO Royal fifth.  
REGIMENTO Standing orders, instructions, rules and regulations.  
RÉIS Money of account.  
RELAÇÃO High Court of Appeals.  
SARGENTO-MOR Commissioned military officer.  
SESMARIA Concession of land.  
SENHOR DE ENGENHO Owner of a sugar mill.  
TIRADENTES Nickname of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, literally the tooth-puller.  
VEREADOR Municipal councillor.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations are from Manuel Bandeira, *Guia de Ouro Preto*, Publicações do Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional N. 2 [Illustrations by Luis Jardim] (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1938).

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## ORTHOGRAPHY

In direct transcription I have preserved the original spelling and punctuation, hence scribal inconsistencies in footnotes of this type. Elsewhere I have attempted to follow modern Brazilian form, i.e., Correia for Corrêa, Menezes for Menezes, Melo e Castro for Mello e Castro. In the English text American spelling is used.



*O Castelo dos Nobres*

# CHAPTER 1

## DISPOSITIONS

It might be said, that hitherto Portugal existed only for England. She was, as it were, entirely absorbed by her. It was for her that the vine flourished at Oporto, that the tree of the Hesperides burdened itself with its golden fruit, that the olive diffused its sweet and unctuous tides; it was for her that the sun of the Brazils hardened the diamond in the bowels of the earth, and it was for her that Portugal rendered her banks and her soil inhospitable to industry.

*Europe and America, translated from the French of the Abbé de Pradt by J.D. Williams (2 vols., London, 1822) 1, 425.*

When great new dispositions are necessary they should always be put forward by ancient names and in ancient clothing.

Manuel Teles da Silva to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Vienna, 25 Sept. 1750 *Anais da Academia Portuguesa da História*, 2nd series, vol. VI (Lisbon, 1955) 313–15.

In late July 1750, amid multifarious relics, lulled by assorted chanting ecclesiastics, João V, a moribund Portuguese *Roi Soleil* at last expired. Within three days of the accession of José I, there began the predominance in affairs of state of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, later to be the Marquis of Pombal. Hardworking, taciturn, inquisitive, Carvalho e Melo had been Portuguese minister in London, then special envoy at Vienna. The political testament of Dom Luís da Cunha, delegate to the Utrecht treaty negotiation and ambassador in Paris, recommended him for his ‘patient and speculative temperament’.<sup>1</sup> Others were not so complimentary. The British diplomat Benjamin Keene wrote: ‘It is a poor Coimbrian pate as ever I met with, to be as stubborn, as dull, is the true asinine quality. [...] I shall only say that a little genius who has a mind to be a great one in a little country, is a very uneasy animal.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘Maximas sobre a reforma... dirigidas ao Sr. D. José... por D. Luís da Cunha...’ Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Pombal collection (BNLCP) código 51, folio 178v; Kenneth R. Maxwell, ‘Pombal and the Nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian Economy’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review (HAHR)* XLVIII, No. 4 (November 1968) 608–31.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Keene to Abraham Castres, October 1745, Sir Richard Lodge (editor) *The Private Correspondence of Sir Benjamin Keene K.B.* (Cambridge, 1933) 72. Keene had been in Lisbon

from 1745 to 1749, before his appointment as envoy in Spain. Abraham Castres was (from 1746) British consul in Lisbon. Both men died during 1757.

News of Carvalho e Melo's ascendancy in the government reached

Vienna during September of 1750. Manuel Teles da Silva, an emigré Portuguese of aristocratic lineage who had risen high within the Austrian state, wrote at once to Lisbon. 'We are not slaves of fashion and foreign practices', he told the new minister, 'we conserve unalterably the names and external practices and national establishments, but still less are we slaves of ancient habits and preoccupations. If there is puerility in fashions, there is folly in the obstinacy of old ways.' Manuel Teles da Silva, created Duke Silva-Tarouca by Charles VI in 1732, was president of the council of the Netherlands and Italy, and a confidant of the Empress Maria Theresa. He recalled his 'intimate conversations' with Carvalho e Melo, and recommended that 'when great new dispositions are necessary they should always be put forward by ancient names and in ancient clothing'.<sup>1</sup>

'Great new dispositions' Carvalho e Melo clearly had in mind. He was fifty years of age at the accession, and was one of a generation of open minded officials and diplomats who had given much thought to imperial organization and the mercantilist techniques believed to lie behind the startling and growing power and wealth of France and Great Britain.<sup>2</sup> Carvalho e Melo had written in 1742 that 'all the nations of Europe are today augmenting themselves by reciprocal imitation, each carefully watching over the actions of the others'.<sup>3</sup> Such careful watching was his 'most interesting duty in London', he told Cardinal da Mota.<sup>4</sup> The Duke Silva-Tarouca remarked in 1757: 'For eight years Your Excellency observed with a vision more secure than that of corporal eyes the constitution of Great Britain, of her forces and accidental riches, and for another period of five years in Vienna of Austria Your Excellency with equal judgement and perspicacity observed the non-accidental riches and forces of these most fertile states.'<sup>5</sup>

Carvalho e Melo's observation of the European situation had been

<sup>1</sup> [Manuel Teles da Silva] to [Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo], Vienna, 25 September 1750, 'Correspondência entre o duque Manuel Teles da Silva e Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo', edited by Carlos da Silva Tarouca, S.J., *Anais da Academia Portuguesa da História (AAP)* 2nd series, vol. VI (Lisbon, 1955) 277–422, citations from 313–15.

<sup>2</sup> Manuel Nunes Dias, 'Fomento Ultramarino e Mercantilismo: A Companhia Geral do Grão Pará e Maranhão 1755–1778', I, *Revista de História (RHSP)*, No. 66 (São Paulo, April-June 1966) 426; Moses Bensabat Amzalak *Do estudo e da evolução das doutrinas económicas em Portugal* (Lisbon, 1928) 88–98; [Teles da Silva] to [Carvalho e Melo] Vienna, 3 November 1755, *AAP*, 346–8.

<sup>3</sup> J.Lúcio d'Azevedo, *O marquês de Pombal e a sua época* (2nd edition, Lisbon, 1922), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Cheke, *Dictator of Portugal, a life of the Marquis of Pombal 1699–1782* (London, 1938) 33.

<sup>5</sup> [Teles da Silva] to [Carvalho e Melo], Schönbrunn, 25 July 1757, *AAP*, 379.

shrewd and systematic, and the same shrewdness was evident in his private affairs. From a family of country gentry, notorious for doctored genealogies, he had suffered personal rebuffs as a young man at court.<sup>1</sup> In the face of bitter opposition, however, he had married Theresa de Noronha, a widowed niece of the Count of Arcos, an arrangement which related him to the high nobility.<sup>2</sup> His second marriage to the Countess Daun in Austria brought the personal blessing of the Empress who counted him among her ‘ancient friends’. In Vienna the Portuguese envoy’s ‘skill, uprightness, amiability, and especially his great patience’ had won the praise of all at court according to the French minister. Maria Theresa herself told Carvalho e Melo’s wife that she owed the ‘preservation of the monarchy’ to the Daun family.<sup>3</sup> It was Maria Anna of Austria, the Queen Regent of Portugal, who first recalled Carvalho e Melo from Vienna to join the ministry in Lisbon.<sup>4</sup>

The diminished stature of the Iberian nations in the eighteenth century had forced both Spanish and Portuguese statesmen to face the formidable problem of modernization. It became increasingly evident that governmental efficiency and imperial consolidation were essential if either country was to retain its influence in a competitive and jealous world. Carvalho e Melo was in London during the critical years between 1738 and 1745, the era of the war of the Spanish Main and Vernon’s attack on Cartagena. It was a period crucial to the crystalization of imperial ideas and mythology in Britain, and inevitably brought to the forefront of Carvalho e Melo’s mind those long held preoccupations about the future of the Portuguese territories. The envoy’s concern was aggravated by the deep offense given to his own sensibilities by the casual way in which the British took the Anglo-Portuguese relationship for granted, and his suspicion that the ‘envy of our Brazil so strong in English hearts’, as he put it, would lead them to an attack on Portuguese America.<sup>5</sup>

Carvalho e Melo set out to investigate the causes, techniques and mechanisms of British commercial and naval superiority, and during his sojourn in London succeeded in obtaining a most detailed appreciation of the British position. His remarkable library in London reflected his interests. With the books of Thomas Mun, William Petty, Charles Davenant, Charles King, Joshua Gee, Joshua Child, select reports on colonies, trade,

<sup>1</sup> Ercília Pinto, *O marquês de Pombal, lavrador e autodidacta em Souré* (Coimbra, 1967) 12, 29, 34.

<sup>2</sup> John Athelstone Smith, *The Marquis of Pombal* (2 vols., London 1843) 1, 42; Cheke, *Dictator of Portugal*, 17, 19, 60.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Correspondence of Maria Theresa with the countess of Oeiras’, appendix, Smith, *Marquis of Pombal*, 11, 376–7; also 1, 55–6.

<sup>4</sup> Antônio Ferrão, ‘O marquês de Pombal e os meninos de Palhavã’, *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, Estudos Pombalinos*, 1st series, No. 1 (Coimbra, 1923).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Ofício...[Carvalho e Melo], London, 8 July 1741, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (RIHGB)* IV (2nd edition, Rio de Janeiro, 1863) 504–14; Richard Koebner, *Empire* (2nd edition, New York, 1961) 82; Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire 1763–1793* (2 vols., London, 1952, 1964) 11, 626–30; and the classic study by Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies 1739–1763* (London, 1936).

mines, woolen manufactories, specialized tracts on sugar, tobacco, fisheries, parliamentary acts of tonnage and poundage, shipping and navigation, fraud in customs houses, the book of rates, ordinances of the British marine, and above all, with a heavy concentration of works on the English trading companies, his collection was a veritable treasure house of mercantilist classics.<sup>1</sup>

Out of his extensive reading and his personal observation Carvalho e Melo came to see the control Britain exercised over his country not only as the root cause of the social and economic malaise of the Portuguese nation, but also as one of the prime causes of the rapid advances of the British economy. He believed the Cromwellian treaty of 1654 had fixed on the newly independent Portugal a system of control which had made her more a slave of English interest than ever she had been of Spain. The English had achieved possession without dominion. It was a relationship which enabled them to absorb the vast riches which had come after the discovery of gold and diamonds in Brazil, and Carvalho e Melo held that the colossal capital the mines produced almost wholly passed to Britain.

This great influx of Brazilian gold to Britain had provided in Carvalho e Melo's opinion the mean for the creation of her formidable marine and vigorous arts and manufactories. The increase of bullion and circulating medium in Britain had stimulated agriculture, raised land values, and brought about the rejuvenation of manufacturing industry. And Portugal was concerned also with the results of these changes, for the Portuguese market was a guaranteed and lucrative outlet for British manufactured goods. Portugal in fact had allowed her riches to be used against herself, and the wealth of the mines were hence chimerical to her. 'The negroes that work the mines of Brazil must be clothed by England', Carvalho e Melo observed, 'thus the value of their produce becomes relative to the price of cloth.' It did not interest Britain whether the political situation in Portugal was good, indeed the opposite was the case. The effects of the system of control without responsibility had been the weakening and discrediting of the Portuguese government machine and the moral and intellectual viability of Portuguese society.<sup>1</sup>

There was a great deal of truth in the new minister's diagnosis, and by placing the problems squarely into the broad imperial framework the connections and interrelationships between the issues at stake became evident. The prosperity of metropolitan Portugal in the mid-eighteenth century depended directly on the fluctuations of the colonial economy. The gold, sugar, and tobacco of Brazil formed the basis of the South Atlantic commercial complex. Sugar and tobacco provided profitable re-exports to

<sup>1</sup> Based on the catalogues of Carvalho e Melo's books in London, BNLC, codices 165, 167, 342, 343. Most of these works were in French editions or manuscript translations as Carvalho e Melo does not appear to have acquired enough English to read them in the originals.

<sup>1</sup> This synopsis of Carvalho e Melo's views is based on a wide reading of his instructions, memorials, and observations, in particular the extracts from his writings in Smith, *Marquis of Pombal* 1, 82–6, 109–26, and the 'discurso político' in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino Lisbon (AHU) códice 1227.

Spain; gold a means to balance the unfavorable trade with the north and pay for the import of wood and grain.<sup>2</sup> ‘The two cities of Lisbon and Oporto may be justly considered as the two eyes of Portugal’, commented the traveller Arthur Costigan, ‘for here centre the whole riches of the country and all their trade with foreign nations, and their own possessions in the Brazils; upon which last especially depends their whole existence as a people, and the immediate support of the throne.’<sup>3</sup> During the decade 1740–50, in the port of Lisbon alone, the annual movement of shipping surpassed 800 vessels, of which about 300 were Portuguese, and a third of these directly engaged in trade to Brazil.<sup>4</sup>

Specialization among the Brazilian regions was reflected by a specialization of products carried by the fleets. The Rio fleet brought gold and substantial shipments of hides and silver. From Pernambuco came wood and sugar. The fleets of the north, of Grão Pará and Maranhão carried cacao. The riches of Bahia were legendary. A fleet of thirty to forty ships left each year for Lisbon with cargoes of gold, silver, diamonds, jasper, cacao, balsam, cotton, tobacco and sugar.<sup>1</sup> So acute was the reliance on Brazil that D. Luís da Cunha foresaw the transfer of the court to Rio de Janeiro. The King would take the title ‘Emperor of the West’ and appoint a viceroy to rule in Lisbon. In the recommendation composed in 1736 for the use of Carvalho e Melo’s uncle, Marco Antônio de Azevedo Coutinho, on his appointment as foreign secretary, D. Luís da Cunha had envisioned a Portuguese Empire in America extending from the Plata and Paraguay to north of the river Amazon. ‘It is safer and more convenient to be where one has everything in abundance’, he wrote, ‘than where one had to wait for what one wants.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the Portuguese grain trade, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Prix et Monnaies au Portugal 1750–1850* (Paris, 1955) 147–9; for Spanish-Portuguese trade, Jean François Bourgoing, *Voyage de ci-devant due du Chatelet en Portugal...* (2 vols., Paris, 1798, 1808) 1, 228; comments on the importation of wood from northern Europe, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Sr Fernando de Lavra, 26 January 1752, and [Mendonça Furtado] to [Carvalho e Melo], 15 July 1757, *A Amazônia na era Pombalina. Correspondência inédita do Governador e capitão-general do estado do Grão Pará e Maranhão, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado 1751–1759* (Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, 3 vols., Rio de Janeiro, 1963); hereinafter cited as *Correspondência inédita*, 1, 214–15; 111, 1119–20.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur William Costigan, *Sketches of Society and Manners in Portugal* (2 vols., London, 1787) 1, 285.

<sup>4</sup> Jorge Borges de Macedo, ‘Portugal e a economia “pombalina”: temas e hipóteses’, *RHSP*, No. 19 (July–September 1954), 83.

<sup>1</sup> For background and development of Atlantic fleet system, Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal et l’Atlantique au XVIIIe siècle 1570–1670* (Paris, 1960); fleet specialization, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, ‘Le Portugal, les flottes du sucre et les flottes de l’or 1670–1770’, *Annales-économiques-sociétés-civilisations*, v année, No. 2 (April–June, 1950) 184–97; The Bahia fleet, Johan Brelim, *De passagem pelo Brasil e Portugal em 1756* (translation from Swedish by Carlos Perição de Almeida, Lisbon, 1955) 106.

<sup>2</sup> Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, *Instruções inéditas de D. Luís da Cunha a Marco Antônio de Azevedo Coutinho, revistas por Pedro de Azevedo e prefaciadas por Antônio Baião* (Coimbra, 1929) 211, 214, 215; C.R.Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil 1695–1750* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962) 323–4.