

Fragoso, João and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (organizadores). *Um reino e suas repúblicas no Atlântico. Comunicações políticas entre Portugal, Brasil e Angola nos séculos XVII e XVIII (A Kingdom and its Republics in the Atlantic: Political Communications between Portugal, Brazil, and Angola in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2017. 475 pp. ISBN: 978-85-200-1269-7.

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Contrary to the centralist view that has generally guided our understanding of the relationship between the metropolis and its colonies, and in keeping with the theses put forward by António Manuel Hespanha, the work *A Kingdom and its Republics in the Atlantic: Political Communications between Portugal, Brazil, and Angola in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* is imbued with the organizers' and the authors' concern with discussing several themes (without losing sight of the idea of a power center in Lisbon). These include: the dynamism of the dialogue and information that circulated between the kingdom and its republics; the decision-making process of central government bodies, such as the Overseas Council and the Office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions; the capacity for negotiation and mobilization of local representative bodies such as the municipal councils; and the action of the delegates of the royal power in the colonial sphere, such as the governors and other officials, who formed part of the colony's administration.

In this book, conceptions about the corporate, polysynodal, and pluricontinental character of the Portuguese monarchy are materialized in the form of studies on the political communications between Portugal and its territories in the South Atlantic, America (Bahia, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Pará, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais), and Angola, presented in the form of the partial results (the organizers are keen to inform the reader that the book is far from being conclusive) of the following project: "Political Communication in the Portuguese Pluricontinental Monarchy (1580-1808): Kingdom, Atlantic, and Brazil," coordinated by Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro. Databases are the main methodological tool placed at the service of this research—the one that covers the political

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communications between Portugal and its Atlantic territories consists of handwritten documents from the Overseas Council and the Office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions kept at the Historical Overseas Archive (Lisbon) and digitized in the context of the *Barão do Rio Branco Recovery Project*.² For Angola and Portugal, local collections of documents were also used in the creation of the database.

The book is composed of three parts, with 12 chapters written by 16 experts. The chapters generally have the following structure: an introduction, in which the current state of the historiography and the premises for examining the political communication in question are explained; the definition of the (quantitative and qualitative) methodology used for analyzing the themes of the political communication, according to the records obtained from the available documentation and incorporated into the Compol database through temporal reference points and established situations; and, finally, the conclusions and suggestions for new perspectives and approaches.

Part I, entitled “The Architecture of the Monarchy and the Circulation of Communication,” begins with the chapter by João Fragoso, whose main goal is to discuss the concept of the Portuguese pluricontinental monarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in contrast to the concept of composite monarchies that are marked by the competitive performance of four separate powers, represented by the Crown, the royal officials with functions in the colonial administration, the municipal councils, and the families. One of the most relevant aspects of Fragoso’s contribution to the concept of pluricontinental monarchy is his demonstration of the capacity of negotiation and the political commitment of the different instances of power—through an exchange of correspondence about governance, pleas for mercy, or military matters—which, ultimately, guaranteed the “management of the Empire.”

Chapter 2, “Courts, Councils, and Attorneys,” written by Maria Fernanda Bicalho, José Damião Rodrigues, and Pedro Cardim, is intended to fill a historiographical gap by discussing the *modus operandi* of the overseas councils in their attempts to manifest, or rather represent, their interests to the Crown. One of the highlights of the chapter is the approach that is adopted towards the councils, a subject that is still relatively unexplored and which José Damião handles perfectly in the case of the Azores. The performance of the attorneys of the American municipalities in Lisbon, mainly the municipality of Maranhão, caught my attention in particular, since these attorneys were quite frequently found at the courts in the eighteenth

² Sources available for consultation at the Digital Library of the National Library Foundation/RJ (*BNDigital*) – <http://resgate.bn.br>.

century. Perhaps the most famous attorney in the first half of the eighteenth century was Paulo da Silva Nunes, the attorney of the Councils of Belém and São Luís. His professional career is interesting to illustrate some aspects of the “constellation of powers” enunciated by Fragoso (p. 53-58). The correspondence and opinions of Silva Nunes connected the kingdom and its conquests in the north of Portuguese America, bringing the governors, councils, Jesuits, and local elites together around a structural issue—indigenous slavery.

In the third and last chapter of Part I, Maria Fernanda Bicalho and André Costa examine the polysynodal dimension of the Portuguese monarchy, focusing their analysis on the queries sent in 1642/1643 by the Atlantic republics to the Overseas Council, and the progressive erosion of their powers in the mid-eighteenth century, *pari passu* with the consolidation of the State Departments created in 1736, such as the Office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions. In fact, in the mid-eighteenth century, the Crown made efforts to promote the flow of political communications to that department. This can be seen in the letter sent by the Secretary of State Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Lavradio, the governor of Bahia, instructing him to send his proposals “from the Office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions, and never from the Overseas Council.”³ As far as the polysynody of the Portuguese monarchy’s decision-making system is concerned, this chapter of the book encourages further research into the flow of papers to the Office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions and the “interference” in colonial affairs by the Office of the Secretary of State for the Interior Affairs of the Kingdom, by way of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal. For this period, whose time span covers the simultaneous action of the Marquis of Pombal and Martinho de Melo e Castro in their respective departments (1770-1777), one could also investigate the question of a possible overlapping of powers.

Dedicated to “Themes of Communication,” Part II begins with a chapter that is apparently unconnected to the rest of the book, for it does not deal with matters typically associated with the daily life of the colonization and administration of the overseas regions. However, it offers possibly one of most original approaches in the book, since, in this chapter, Pedro Cardim and Miguel Baltazar show the importance of the dissemination of the royal regulations both in Portugal and in the overseas regions. Despite the difficulties that were encountered in compiling and locating the necessary records, for various reasons, such as the fact that many of the regulations were issued in a spoken form, and the effects

³ National Archive (RJ). Fund Marquis do Lavradio. RD.0.CRP.10, fl. 75. Notification: February 10, 1768.

of local conditioning factors, this dissemination of royal regulations is both a theme in itself of the political communication.

The next chapter, by Carla Almeida, Antônio Carlos Jucá de Sampaio, and André Costa, conceptualizes and contextualizes the question of taxation and, with theoretical and methodological rigor, problematizes the lack of any structure that was geared solely towards taxation, since fiscal affairs were managed by different agents. The authors situate the theme in the field of politics instead of economics—jumping up the established order of the chapters just as Jucá himself does on an individual basis when conceptualizing the economy, currency, and colonial world trade. They demonstrate that the production of wealth, the exchange of goods, and monetary circulation were all matters of negotiation and political decision-making in the collegiate bodies of the monarchy, in addition to reflecting the social hierarchies that existed in the places where they chose to undertake their analytical exercise using the Compol database.

Returning once more to the correct order of the chapters, Mafalda Soares da Cunha and Roberto Guedes Ferreira characterize the war—a war of conquest, a defensive war—both in the Kingdom and in the conquered territories (Bahia, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Angola) and consider the provision and logistics of the troops as “military matters”.

Avoid like this—in a precise execution of their methodology—the related issue of defense, which would imply placing emphasis, in the case of the Atlantic republics, on the managing institutions and the discourses conveyed in the political communication, similar to what was done in the case of the Portuguese councils”. It is inspiring for experts in colonial administrative history to see the possibility of deepening the debate—within the framework of the administration’s rules of procedure and due to the fact that the overseas governors were responsible for the political communication of military matters—on the effectiveness of the titles of captain-general for governors of some captaincies and of captain-general by sea and land for viceroys of the State of Brazil. In the latter case, we can conclude that they were not merely honorific titles, although they did directly affect the status of the royal officers and were, therefore, highly valued and even demanded in some cases.

The most extensive section of the whole book, Part III, is entitled “Institutional Agents and Areas of Communication.” It brings together several contributions about the political and administrative action of agents of the Portuguese Crown in America and Angola, the spaces of representation of the local powers, and the groups that composed the corporate and hierarchical society of the Ancien Regime, both in the Kingdom and in the overseas territories. Francisco Cosentino, Mafalda Soares da Cunha, Antônio Castro

Nunes, and Ronald Raminelli start with an ongoing historiographical essay on political and administrative history, in which the figure of the colonial governors differs from that provided by the interpretations of Caio Prado Júnior regarding their profile and attributions. The preponderant role of these agents in the exchange of information with the center in Lisbon is reiterated by a re-reading of the administration's regulatory instruments, which instructed the governors of the captaincies or the governor-general of the State of Brazil to communicate with the central power in Lisbon so that inquiries could be submitted to the synodal bodies of the monarchy. This was also the case with regard to the regulations for governors and captains-general of the State of Maranhão in 1655, which remained in force until the end of the colonial period. The proposition that the powers of the governors-general and the viceroys of America were broader and therefore differed from those of the governors of arms of the provinces of the Kingdom (although this is not made explicit here as it is in other citations) does not fail to be a criticism of Caio Prado Júnior. In *Formation of Contemporary Brazil*, although he acknowledged that the colonial governor had varied powers (military, for the governors of arms, and justice, in addition to other powers delegated by the king), the historian eventually considered this position to be similar to that of the governors of arms and, therefore, less the role of an administrator and more that of a military officer (1976: 301-2).

In the following chapter, considering the circuits of political communication involving the magistrates of the Kingdom and of several captaincies in Portuguese America, one of the main contributions of the authors to the ever-expanding historiographical production in Brazil is the indication, on the one hand, of a change in the main protagonists of political communications from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, when the general ombudsmen supplanted the governors as the people responsible for sending correspondence to Lisbon.

On the other hand, the fact that, despite the distance between them and because of the diverse range of requests for political decisions, the colonial magistrates communicated more often with the Crown than they did with their peers in the kingdom. In general, the main contribution of the studies on the judiciary in overseas territories has been to explore the web of positions linked to the judiciary and, in certain periods and places, to observe the accumulation of functions under the authority of these royal officials.

Continuing his research into municipal councils and political communication, which is published on a regular basis, Ronald Raminelli shows an improvement in "The Political Power of the Councils" in comparison to what he had previously published in

Nobrezas do Novo Mundo (2015), not only in terms of the size of the sample that he uses but also in relation to his management of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected in the Compol database, which refers to the Portuguese and overseas municipalities. At this point, the complementarity of the conclusions must be highlighted. The decrease in the correspondence issued by overseas councils, closely linked to questions of local administration in the first half of the eighteenth century, occurred in parallel with the increase in communications between the governors and viceroys and the office of the Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Dominions in the second half of that same century (Chapter 3).

In Roberto Guedes Ferreira's contribution, the penultimate chapter, political communication emerges as an expression of political disputes and agreements between the different agencies of the power of the Crown, the governor of Angola, and the Council of Luanda, changing according to the circumstances, such as the apparent "refusal" of the municipality to meet the request for an increase in the teachers' salary. In the closing chapter, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro and Francisco Cosentino use information obtained from the databases of both the kingdom and the overseas regions to demonstrate that political communication functioned as a reflection of the social hierarchies and the identities of the different groups present in the corporate society of the Ancien Regime through petitions and representations that once again emphasized self-government, as well as the councils and their members' capacity for mobilization, not only in matters of municipal administration but also in the management of disputes and in the search for privileges.

An impression that I might have mentioned at the beginning but have left to the end so that it may reflect the experience of reading the book is my awareness that the text shows an exemplary organic structure as well as a careful articulation of the parts and chapters through the introduction written by the organizers and the chapter by John Fragoso. *A Kingdom and its Republics in the Atlantic* is a first step towards identifying other possible approaches to political communication, based on databases and the use of the records of Portuguese municipalities, which previously was sometimes considered to be a secondary affair. The benefits of using these records are, however, much greater. The book confirms theses and opens pathways to internal communication circuits, for example between the main and the subordinate captaincies of the American continent. Last but not least, it stimulates the essential exercise of understanding that the political and administrative solutions in the pluricontinental monarchy derived from those dynamics and negotiations.