

A Note on Two Recent Books on the Patterns of Portuguese Politics In the 18th Century

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Abstract

This article discusses two recent studies about the model of the Portuguese political system in the late Ancien Regime. According to the first of these, there was a gradual change towards a system of centralized royal decision-making. This silent transformation had originally begun during the reign of João V with the introduction of an advisory body, the Council of State (*Conselho de Estado*), which was later replaced by regular discussions with more or less transient *validos* (royal favorites). Despite reinforcing the power of the *Secretarias de Estado* (Secretariats of State), the consulate of the Marquis of Pombal did not substantially change the pattern, with the “dictator of Portugal” (M. Cheke) behaving as an epigone of the traditional *validos* and being little affected by the contemporary Enlightened policy. In contrast, the other study discusses the way in which Pombal took advantage of Lisbon’s earthquake to install a brand new system of government, based on a cohort of trustworthy followers of his political plans. These people were decisively inspired by the contemporary ideas of reform, namely by advisers originating from Italy and Austria, whose thinking was based on new concepts of the public good, planned government, civil service and meritocracy.

Keywords

absolutism, enlightenment, *pombalismo*, corporate monarchy, government.

Resumo

Este artigo discute dois estudos recentes sobre o modelo do sistema político português nos finais do Antigo Regime. Segundo o primeiro, teria havido uma mudança gradual no sentido de uma progressiva centralização do processo de decisão real. Esta silenciosa transição teria começado durante o reinado de D. João V, com a intervenção de um órgão colectivo, o Conselho de Estado, o qual viria a ser substituído na função de aconselhamento do rei por discussões mais ou menos regulares com validos de carácter transitório (favoritos reais). Apesar de reforçar o poder das Secretarias de Estado, o consulado do Marquês de Pombal não teria alterado substancialmente o padrão de governo, tendo o “ditador de Portugal” (Marcus Cheke) assumido um epigonal comportamento de um valido tradicional, pouco influenciado pelo modelo político do iluminismo contemporâneo. Pelo contrário, o outro estudo discute o modo como Pombal aproveitou o terramoto de Lisboa para instalar um sistema de governo completamente novo, baseado numa corte de seguidores fiéis das suas ideias políticas. Estes os seguidores eram decisivamente influenciados pelas ideias de reforma, nomeadamente oriundas de publicistas austriacos e italianos, cujo pensamento se baseava em conceitos novos de interesse público, de governo planificado, de serviço público e de meritocracia.

Palavras chave

absolutismo, iluminismo, pombalismo, monarquia corporativa, governo.

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Two of the leading Portuguese historians writing on Portuguese politics in the 18th century have recently published somewhat divergent opinions about the innovative nature of the political pattern of *pombalismo*¹. Although the aim and scope of each book are different, the contrasting positions that they adopt about the changes in political models during the course of the 18th century, covering the reigns of both João V and José I, are well grounded empirically and clear enough to invite fertile discussion. Both authors are excellent *connoisseurs* of the period; both have engaged in widespread prosopographic research that enables them to fully understand the personal networks of the ruling groups; both are well informed theoretically, although they have somewhat different leanings: Nuno G. Monteiro is more given to a “social history” approach; José Subtil is more attracted by authors such as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault and therefore leans more towards a symbolic-oriented narrative or even towards a narrative in which the greatest prominence is afforded to an objective mechanism, such as communication channels or the handling of administrative affairs.

I have tried here to place the two studies in a form of dialogue, keeping to a minimum my own opinions about a theme whose empirical background I cannot claim to master as well as they do.

In a synthetic chapter on the baroque monarchy, Nuno G. Monteiro reassesses the prevailing impression of an overwhelming continuity in the patterns of politics after the Restoration of Portugal from Spain right through to the end of José I’s reign. For him, once the war was over, the dominant political models deviated notably from the corporatist model, installing “a new configuration of centers of power, together with different mechanisms for the structuring of social elites” (p. 28).

Insisting on his thesis about the singular lack of corporations in Portugal that could mediate between the royal and the “(micro-)local” levels, the author also reasserts his claim that Portugal was not a “composite monarchy”. This is true only if we choose to take a narrow view of the formally institutionalized (and mostly territorial) corporations; but it is highly questionable if our field of vision is widened sufficiently to take into account ecclesiastical bodies, proto-bureaucratic formations equipped with legal warranties, or even larger municipal corporations, not to mention the centrifugal overseas domains. For him, the fact that palatine courts were established within the Court is in itself enough to be able to disregard their capacity of corporate resistance.

Therefore, the key idea in this book is the trend towards a centralization of the political decision-making process around an ever smaller ruling group formed from *grandees* and *suchlike*. This reduced notion of centralization also presupposes a similar shrinkage of the concept of realm (and power), as if both realities represented no more than a simple transaction between the king and the high nobility, to the exclusion of every other political entity, even one as conspicuous as the Church, with its multiform apparatus, or the *noblesse de robe et de plume*, who populated the Court at several levels.

The author is, however, less assertive in talking about the consolidation of the royal capacity to rule. Figures are given about the growth of royal servants, which support his conclusion of a “slow” and “petty” reinforcement of the crown apparatus (p. 31). However, it is hardly possible to find evidence of any closer political linkage of these new officers to the crown, as their previous highly protected legal status was maintained: they remained unaffected by any attempts to install a commissary-based administration in civil government or in the crucial social area of justice. Even if we overlook everything but the transactions between the king and the aristocratic

¹ Monteiro, 2006; Subtil, 2007.
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group of the grandees, it can be said that the king's incapacity to control (either directly or through some high-placed political broker) the aristocratic playground of the grandees into which the *Conselho de Estado* (Council of State) had seemingly turned² prolonged the decerebration of the corporate monarchy, albeit continuing with a different mood.

The reign of João V would be the period that marked the beginning of a gradual change³ (p. 33), led by a circle of courtiers who were educated and informed about the outside world. One of the most convincing arguments has to do with the changes made to the image of the king, portraying him as a faithful follower of the religious orthodoxy, as well as a powerful ally of Roman diplomacy. Both aspects resulted in a reinforcement of the centrality of the royal religious spaces – such as the Royal Chapel, now the *Basilica Patriarcal*, or the Mafra monastery – in the life of the Court. Another outcome was the progressive loss of protagonism of the *Conselho de Estado*, which was increasingly replaced by informal assemblies and, eventually, by the taking of decisions by the monarch, assisted by his principal minister, the Secretary of State. The setting up, in 1736, of three *Secretarias de Estado* may have represented a decisive turning point in the pattern of government; however, Monteiro, agreeing with other scholars, is highly skeptical about the results of such a reform. The system of issuing a private decision supported by an array of high courtiers continued until the end of the reign. From this hazardous evolution (“sem rei nem roque” (with neither rhyme nor reason), a saying that seems to be contemporary with this period and relates to an eminent personage from amongst these ad hoc assistants to the king), it is not easy to draw an overall conclusion about the central political issue: was the Portuguese government inaugurating a new pattern, definitively removed from the corporatist model? The “fall of the Council of State” should surely have meant a gain in the king's independence from a permanent group of grandees. However, he did not move in the direction of a planned despotism, of the kind that was being developed at that time in the Enlightened principalities of Europe; instead, he established a rather erratic form of despotism, changing his policies just as frequently as he replaced his counselors.

Whilst the realm was apparently enjoying the peaceful benefits of a golden and sleepy moment, the complete absence of any planned policy can be deduced from the scarce quantity and poor quality of the legislation that was produced, and from the lack of any consistent plans for dealing with the huge issue of overseas policy (despite a series of rather poorly enforced measures adopted for Brazil, where the gold rush had already begun). As Monteiro says, if we discount the apparently impressive foreign policy, what remains is the maintenance of the traditional system of services and awards, some of which were poorly tolerated by the law courts, which were responsible for the supervision of judicial decisions. Most of the time, the palatine administrative paperwork concerned the management of the king's graces and favors, in keeping with a pattern that lay at the very heart of the corporate monarchy⁴. The already mentioned silent change should rather be seen as a regression, with the pattern of government by councils involving a return to a highly personal and erratic style of royal government, in which the king's decisions were inspired by all and sundry. Nothing could have been further removed from the idea of planned despotism, shortly to be inaugurated by subsequent events and personalities.

² As Monteiro reminds us (quoting a French report, 1684, used by E. Prestage) “The King is a Prince with no lack of spirit [...] ; however, as he feels himself to be too dependent upon the nobility [...] he does not dare to decide anything on his own, forwarding everything to the Council of State [...] A principal Minister does not exist in Portugal; rather it is the members of the Council of State who are called ministers”.

³ Cf. Monteiro, 2006: 47 ff.

⁴ Cf. Monteiro, 2006: 37: “day-to-day policy [...] was still and continued to be the same”.

Any evaluation of the pattern of government to be found under José I is necessarily subject to a theoretical divide. It can be judged either as a form of government by *validos*, in keeping with an accepted 17th-century style (Sully, Richelieu, Olivares) or as a form of cabinet government, led by projects and not by personalities, embodying the intellectual *apport* of the Enlightenment. Closely linked to this divide is a yet more fundamental partition: that between personal rule and Enlightened rule, the latter being the one that prevailed in Northern and Central European politics (cf. p. 230 ff.).

This distinction is a rough one and only ideal-typical, as Monteiro stresses. Whatever the case, this form of rule with a 17th-century orientation was seemingly characterized by:

- the existence of a *valido* or prime minister, whose power derived from his mere insinuations into the king's will;
- the overwhelming dominance of the Court over the public space, giving no room for public opinion independent of that of the ruler;
- the absence of any intellectual and political links between intellectuals and the ruler(s);
- the absence of a ministerial government;
- the absence of a coherent political program, with all efforts being directed towards gaining personal possession of the royal will;
- the reinforcement of the ruler's network of clients;
- the enrichment of the ruler.

The question is: was this the situation under Pombal? Or does Pombal's rule correspond to the typical pattern of the most conspicuous Enlightened monarchies, like that of Walpole's England, Fleury's or Turgot's France, Friedrich's Prussia or von Caunitz's or von Haugwitz's Austria?

For sure, Portugal was neither England nor France, nor Prussia, Austria, or even Tuscany. This is because, in actual fact, none of these really states corresponded to any of the others. Once more, the idea of a *Sonderweg* proves to be a projection of the concept that history has canonical models of development.

It is easier and more sensible to answer the first question: did the government of Portugal, under Pombal, continue to follow the model of a regime based on rule by *valido*, as briefly outlined above?

It seems beyond dispute that Pombal exploited the aftermath of the earthquake in the most efficient manner, namely by convincing the king that he was his most immediate and reliable source of aid. In fact, he already was. As he did not belong to the traditional elite of the *grandees*⁵, achieving this position was no mean feat. Nonetheless, together with the protection that he certainly enjoyed at Court, his experience of life in the more "Enlightened" countries proved to be a valuable asset. Secondly, he demonstrated, over the following years, that his reputation was entirely justified; he was not only able to bend men to his will, but also to rule a kingdom, introduce reforms, produce a better administration, reform education (even to the point of discussing some core university programs personally), reorganize the country's financial administration, and rebuild the army, just as he also supervised the rebuilding of the capital city.

He certainly enjoyed overwhelming power over the public space, leaving no room for the expression of dissent. However, taking advantage of his own readings, together with those of his closest supporters, he was perfectly happy to import – selectively, it is true – the results of debates that had long been taking place outside. Anyone who has read the cumbersome prologues of

⁵ See the synthesis of his biographical notes in Monteiro, 2006: p. 48 ff.
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contemporary legislation or studied the academic programs or textbooks of that time (which shaped the way of thinking of the new generation, who both fueled and carried on the revolution) cannot but be impressed by the underlying thesaurus of readings and by the consequent renewal of doctrinal horizons. Without daring to risk what was perceived as the (inner) *pax publica*, they profited from the (outer) public space. By virtue of a general clause which afforded complete discretion to lawyers and courts, the extreme was reached whereby the laws of the “most cultivated and refined Nations of Europe” (*Estatutos da Universidade, Faculdade de Leis*) were enforced in Portugal in relation to what were considered to be crucial matters” (“in political, economic, mercantile and maritime matters”, II, V, 2, § 16). This was the link that could be found between the intellectual elite and the rulers. It did not take the form of personal contact, or involve the issuing of fanciful invitations to foreign philosophers; instead, it was based on the almost immaterial contact that books can provide. Through laws and reforms, through propaganda, a virtual public space was set up, whose impressive development was already visible in the late 18th century, and which, later on, was continued and eventually gave rise to the revolution.

The existence of a government depends upon concepts. Is a polyphonic body, like the Council of State, a government? Or, at the other extreme, does a cohort of faithful followers amount to a cabinet? Most certainly not; instead, it is something in between: an amalgam of independent-minded individuals who have been gathered together because of their common agreement about the basic outlines of a policy, but who nonetheless enjoy the possibility of dissenting, perhaps without brilliant results, but also without any dramatic risks. Both Nuno G. Monteiro and José M. Subtil are to be numbered amongst the few historians who, being well acquainted with Pombal’s political personnel, can decide if this condition was fulfilled in the day-to-day handling of public affairs. However, if it was not, its absence is not to be attributed to the lack of a strategic program, but rather to the insufficient autonomy of the ministers.

For the most part, those ministers were clearly Pombal’s protégés. Anyway, he did not operate according to the model of the old beneficial system, in which services were requested in return for economic (mostly, landed) rewards. His clients were now people who had earned his political trust and were minimally capable of performing the required tasks. As became evident after his fall, Pombal did not have an eager cohort of clients, but perhaps a legion of more or less critical followers, since they could now publicly express their opinion and continued to do so in the ensuing decades, celebrating their hero as a reformer - and surely not only because of their alleged Masonic or anti-clerical comradeship.

José M. Subtil’s book has a more precise focus. His point is to emphasize the major influence of Lisbon’s earthquake (1755) upon the structural changes in the political system of modern Portugal.

This implies that, for him, the thesis of a meaningful political reform under João V cannot cope with the empirical data, no matter whether one adopts a prosopographic or an institutional approach to the study of government personnel, government organization or the political/administrative culture. Being an expert both in the prosopography of ruling groups – including the grey areas of pure bureaucrats and magistrates – and in the structure and performance of the highest level of administration, he is able to finely scrutinize the processes of political decision-making, as well as the group of people that effectively held decision-making posts. Establishing a division in the years immediately after 1755, Subtil transmits the idea that the early years of José I’s reign continued to be largely subject to the traditional patterns of governance that had prevailed throughout the reign of his father, who had mostly preserved the

institutional design, the composition of political elites and the overall model of politics of his predecessors⁶.

His conclusions point to the continuation of the old system of government.

According to his opinion, which is based on a careful analysis of the ruling personnel and institutions, João V's reign was not a period of sensible innovation insofar as the general practices of power in the late 17th century were concerned: the hegemony of the grandees, the majority enjoyed by the traditional lawyers in palatine courts and councils, and the lifelong holding of posts, together with the recognition of the rights of succession of offspring. Based on an account of José I's enthronement, Subtil concludes that the most important posts at Court continued to be held by the high nobility in 65% of the cases, mostly representatives of old noble houses (prior to João IV the percentage had been 85%) (p. 63). Of the 85 members of court councils, 71 were high court judges (*desembargadores*). Most of the councils and courts were populated by old men at the end of their careers: this was the case with the *desembargo do Paço* (the kingdom's Supreme Court, p. 74), *Conselho da Fazenda* (the Treasury Council, a body that Subtil considers to have been responsible for the coordination of policies, p. 76), *Mesa da Consciência* (a royal body with consulting powers, charged with administering the properties and governing the affairs of the Military Orders, p. 77), *Conselho Ultramarino* (the Overseas Council, p. 78) and the *Senado da Câmara* (the Senate, p. 80), as well as the *Casa da Suplicação* (the Petitions Division), a second instance court, which nevertheless benefited from a profound renewal at the end of the period⁷.

Subtil's analysis of the guests invited to José I's enthronement and the ceremonial structure of the event confirms that, at that time, the symbolic order of the old politics still prevailed (p. 87).

Before beginning his analysis of Pombal's period of rule, he explains the nature of the divide, by pointing out the set of characteristics which, having been ascertained by historical evidence, marked the turning point in the transition to a post-corporatist administration:

- a. Privilege gave way to personal trust and merit;
- b. The award of civil posts evolved from inheritance to being based on precariousness, becoming dependent upon the monarch's discretion;
- c. Traditional courts and councils with a stable legal status and established procedures were replaced by ad hoc and temporary boards and *Intendentes*, who acted as mere commissars of the Head of Government;
- d. Symbolic power shifted from the high nobility and was awarded according to political loyalty and professional merit;
- e. Lawyers reassessed their power by molding their education and culture to a new legal paradigm, centered on public utility or, in a broader sense, utilitarianism;
- f. The Court was replaced by the government as the locus for politics.

According to Subtil, what triggered the whole change was the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which provoked the final collapse of the corporatist and polysynodal political system.

Monteiro – as well as others, namely Ana Cristina Araújo – had already emphasized the political impact of the catastrophe of 1755 (p. 81, ff.), pointing out how this had promoted the

⁶ In spite of a reform of the State Secretariats (1736), which has tended to be overrated historiographically, even though historically it proved to be ineffective and was soon reabsorbed (cf. p. 86).

⁷ Surely due to the fact that this court did not represent the end point in a bureaucratic career; anyway, the average age of the *desembargadores* was 53.

personal importance of Pombal, who took advantage of the situation to seize the reins of power, even before this was formalized by his appointment as *Secretário de Estado dos Negócios do Reino* (Secretary of State of the Affairs of the Realm), almost six months later, on 4 May, 1756). His rush to the royal palace to assist the monarch⁸; the creation of an inorganic government, in which the grandees and the presidents of the palatine courts were mostly present, despite their being rapidly inundated by the flood of written orders issued by Pombal⁹; the dramatic widening of the scope of State action¹⁰; the eventual affirmation of the *Secretariats of State* as a center of political decision-making (albeit acting as Pombal's *factotum*). However, as the basic tenet of Monteiro's narrative is to lay emphasis on an ongoing process of change, beginning in the late 17th century and whose last phase (*pombalismo*) was seemingly a moment of extreme dramatization, propaganda and apologetic historiography, less importance tends to be given to the structural nature of the changes.

What happened was the opposite, in Subtil's view. The earthquake had the same concentrated impact as a war (both in terms of the time itself and in terms of its occurring in one central political spot): the unexpected and sudden destruction¹¹ of the administrative apparatus (p. 112 ff.¹²), the Herculean tasks to be performed, the dramatic acceleration of the pace of administrative activity, the need for technical skills and for a strict centralization of decision-making and action. The "providential" nature of the catastrophe in forcing the country into a process of modernization was immediately perceived by some contemporaries, who compared it to a gigantic flood, which had to be tackled urgently, efficiently and ruthlessly, if necessary (p. 111). It was, however, not a remote or seasonal war. It was here and now that the disaster struck. Practical needs called for expedient measures, which served as a test for later, more definitive reforms in the future. In some cases, as Subtil points out, the situation was similar to a state of emergency, making it possible to ignore previously sacrosanct private rights, such as that of property ownership. As happened in the destroyed areas of the city, where reconstruction imposed a *tabula rasa* on the old rights of land ownership (pp. 130, 134 ff.)¹³, a brand new sensitivity to public interest – a key concept in the years to come, both before and after the revolutions – came into being in a civil context. Because of fraudulent bankruptcies, an *ad hoc* board was set up to prevent and punish attempts against the Public Good, reinforcing the mechanisms of economic control in a way that was congenial to mercantilism, but was now combined with a new sense of discipline.

The way in which people were chosen and brought together as an efficient tool of active government led to the setting up of task-oriented teams (p. 118 ff.), comprising people of quite diverse profiles. This led to a dramatic change in the nature of the established social hierarchies, of the sort that only a catastrophe could blur. Later on, when people's spirits had recovered (p. 120), it was already too late to return to the old hierarchies. Moreover, the very practice of government

⁸ Which also denotes a fine sense of understanding of the seriousness of the situation, along with an acute political flair.

⁹ But probably also paralyzed by their own inability to work within such a new pattern of government.

¹⁰ Described in greater detail for the following years in Ch. 10 of Monteiro's book.

¹¹ For a synthesis of the damage caused, see Subtil, 2007 (p. 125 ff.).

¹² With a highly detailed description of the everyday life of administrative business.

¹³ Subtil argues that this weakening of the concept of property and its subjection to public interest lay at the origin of subsequent land reforms concerning entailed property (*morgados, capelas*) and life annuities over estates (*cansos*).

itself set entirely new standards for the choice of personnel: from now on this would be based on personal confidence, efficiency and technical skills (p. 121 ff.).

The intensity of this overwhelming political rupture would be greatly increased by another political earthquake – the (problematic) attempt on the king's life (1758), followed by an alleged plot against Pombal himself, arising from the criticism of his major political decisions, which were confirmed by the crown. Taking advantage of the ungodly turn of events, Pombal set up a notorious political investigation committee – the *Junta da Inconfidência* – to which he invited both faithful and dubious political supporters. This clever stratagem allowed him to test the fidelity of those invited onto the committee, enlisting those who readily accepted the commission among his faithful political cohort and expelling the reluctant ones from the Court or sending them to jail. As a side effect, this act drew a line of distinct partition through the political class: scorn and hatred divided the newly chosen political personnel, who were seen as collaborating in Pombal's dirty work, from the older elite linked to the members of the traditional aristocracy, who were immediately labeled as collaborators in the conspiracy. Finally, he also succeeded in decapitating the upper echelons of the high nobility. The way was thus paved for the introduction of new political personnel, while the new regime that was requested in response to the almost complete destruction of the realm's capital called for an active and effective government, similar to the models to be found at that time in Central-Western Europe, a region that was familiar to the man who had formerly served as a diplomat in Josephine Vienna.

For Subtil, the brand new State summit, formed by Pombal's unconditional supporters, was the government of 1756 (7 September), politically homogeneous, faithful to Pombal, and consisting of his own brother, Francisco Xavier Mendonça Furtado, ex-governor of Brazilian Maranhão and seemingly his privileged informer on Brazilian affairs (p. 90). The matrix of a government of "*criaturas*" remained in operation until 1766, while the personal protection afforded to the Prime Minister by the military was reinforced and the core supervisory institution of the "police" (*Intendência Geral de Polícia*, 1799) was installed (p. 91). The traditional palatine courts were not only repopulated with new politically updated personnel¹⁴, but were more strictly controlled in their decisions, namely through the reform of a discrete institution (one to which less attention has been paid by historians), the *Procuradoria Geral da Coroa* (the Crown Prosecution Service). This body was not only given the task of reviewing the advice proffered by the traditional courts before the concentration of the final decision in the *Secretaria de Estado dos Negócios do Reino* headed by Pombal¹⁵, but also served as the core tool of government¹⁶. Its members belonged to the cream of the "pombalistas" (José Seabra da Silva, João Pereira Ramos de Azevedo Coutinho, and José António Salter de Mendonça)¹⁷. After the domestication of the traditional administration, a new one was installed, inspired by the models of bodies led by both intendants and commissars

¹⁴ The cleansing of the *Desembargo do Paço* was completed in 1761. The *Casa da Suplicação* was placed under the presidency of one of Pombal's indefectible supporters (Pedro Gonçalves Cordeiro Pereira). The same pattern of renewal was followed for the other palatine courts (*Mesa da Consciência e Ordens*, *Conselho de Estado* and *Senado da Câmara de Lisboa*) (cf. p. 97).

¹⁵ Cf. Subtil, 1996: Ch. II.

¹⁶ Controlling key departments, such as the *Intendência Geral de Polícia*, the *Erário Régio* (the Royal Treasury, itself restructured according to a centralized and efficiency-oriented pattern), and the *Junta do Comércio* (the Board of Trade), which supervised the new mercantile companies (cf. Subtil, pp. 99-100).

¹⁷ On the politics of reshaping the central administration between 1766 and 1777, see Subtil, 1996: Ch. IV. *e-JPH, Vol. 5, number 2, Winter 2007*

typically found in France and Central Europe (cf. 93)¹⁸. The personal dependency of these new types of civil servants was reinforced by their loose professional links: the *alvará* (royal charter) that created the new offices emphatically declared that their posts “had the nature of a merely precarious performance of service (*serventia*), always removable at my royal discretion”. Their situation was further legislated for in a subsequent general royal charter of 23 November, 1770, in which the civil servants’ “customary right” to inherit their parents’ posts was declared “erroneous, abusive and unfounded”.

Precisely because of the narrower scope of his work, Subtil can be more detailed and systematic in the discussion of his topic. On the other hand, his personal style of anticipating the aims that are to be proved and basing his arguments on the availability of the required evidence makes his discourse very clear and convincing. Monteiro, on the other hand, sets himself a more complex task. His topic is the overall history of a reign, furthermore centered on the person of the king. Pombal was surely the reflected image of the king; however, this bizarre optical effect – highlighted in the editorial project itself – causes his portrait to become somewhat blurred, as if one were trying to describe Philip I’s face from his shadowy reflection in the mirror that can be seen in the background of Velazquez’ *Las Meninas*. Nonetheless, some less shadowy parts of his book are to be found in his concept-oriented discussions – namely those on the subject of enlightenment, despotism and government in Ch. 14 – or his somewhat fuzzy assessment of the renewal of political patterns during João V’s reign, an evaluation whose only purpose, in a book on José I, is to introduce a general guideline which is then unrelentingly followed throughout the text, that of downgrading the effects of Pombal’s political innovations. According to Monteiro, these were begun before him, later adapted and balanced by him during his period of office, and were almost completely suppressed after he had gone¹⁹.

¹⁸ While, in the first half of the 18th century, only half a dozen posts of *Intendente* were created, another fifty or so were set up in the second half of the century (cf. Subtil, 2007, p. 101).

¹⁹ This last step is very hard to prove in the case of the core matter of legal education. Almost one hundred years later, Pombal’s “creatures” at Coimbra’s Law School – namely, Pascoal de Melo – continued to structure the very nature of the teaching of law, therefore being responsible for the development of the intellectual groupings of the State’s liberal elite in both Portugal and Brazil.

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