

The Social and Cultural Roles of the University of Coimbra (1537-1820). Some Considerations.

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Abstract

The University of Coimbra in Portugal shared the common calling of universities of preparing future ruling elites, but it fulfilled this mission in its own way. Considering the period 1537-1820, this paper presents some indicators of its specific social and cultural roles, such as the evolution of the numbers of students, their geographical origins (including a significant contribution from Brazil), and the kind of knowledge they were seeking. A second cluster of considerations focuses on the relationship with political (and ecclesiastical) power, not only in terms of the representation of the University's instrumental function, but also of its subsequent actual behavior – combining protection and control – such as in the granting of funding resources, the appointment of professors and academic authorities, and mechanisms conditioning access to future careers.

Keywords

University, Coimbra, students, elites, power, Brazil

Resumo

A Universidade de Coimbra participou na vocação comum às universidades de formar as elites dirigentes mas fê-lo à sua própria maneira. Tomando como referência o período que vai de 1537 a 1820, este artigo apresenta alguns indicadores das funções sociais e culturais que desempenhou, tais como a evolução da frequência estudantil, as origens geográficas dos estudantes (com um significativo contributo do Brasil) e o tipo de conhecimento que procuravam. Um segundo conjunto de considerações centra-se na relação da Universidade com os poderes político e eclesiástico, quer no que toca à representação da função instrumental que ela devia desempenhar, quer mediante a análise dos comportamentos que tal concepção acarretava consigo - num misto de protecção e controlo - tais como a afectação de recursos, a nomeação de professores e autoridades académicas e a criação de filtros condicionadores das futuras carreiras dos graduados.

Palavras-chave

Universidade, Coimbra, estudantes, elites, poder, Brasil

1. Introduction

1.1. One of the fundamental characteristics of universities throughout time has been the role they have played in the formation of ruling elites. The nature and level of the knowledge they offer and the social credit of the qualifications they provide make them the breeding ground for highly skilled individuals capable of influencing the course of public affairs in civil and ecclesiastical service, leading society in ideological and scientific issues, reproducing models, making laws, and so on. This universal task, however, has been fulfilled in different ways by different universities, depending on their specific curricula, the predominant branches of knowledge they cultivate, the territory in which they are established and the population they serve, and their relationships with other institutions, whether subordinate, parallel or competitive¹.

Within this context, this article is intended to be a case study focusing on some aspects of the University of Coimbra in Portugal between 1537 (the year of its definitive settlement in this town) and 1820. While attempting to sketch a few of the peculiar features of this university (trying also to perform some comparative work), we will provide the reader with selected bibliographical references that may widen the perspectives adopted here.

1.2. The peculiar historical features of the University of Coimbra may be approached through a curious quotation: “The University of Coimbra was founded in Lisbon [...] by the king Dom Dinis, the sixth of the kings of Portugal [...]”. This apparently incongruous expression, at the beginning of the historical abstract that opens the 1654 edition of the *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra*² reflects a reality – the moving of the University between Lisbon and Coimbra during the medieval period (the university stayed in Coimbra from 1308 to 1338 and from 1354 to 1377) – but it also reveals the understanding that, despite the changes in its location, the institutional identity remained unaltered.

One of the mainstays of this identity was the awareness of the role played by the University of Coimbra (we must remember that the statement quoted above was written in 1653) as a central point of reference for a vast territory, both on the continent and overseas. In spite of the existence of other institutions of higher education between 1559 and 1759 – namely the University of Évora – Coimbra was the only one to grant degrees in Law (Canon and Civil) and Medicine (and, after 1772, in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy as well). It is well known that a law degree was the main entrance requirement for higher administration both in Church and in royal service. As for theology, members of religious orders, which had their own domestic schools of advanced learning, sought at the Faculty of Divinity in Coimbra to earn the degree that would give them a broader recognition and afford them access to a professorship at the University. Even if, during the so-called “União Dinástica” (Dynastic Union, 1580-1640) significant numbers of students attended Spanish universities, especially Salamanca³, the position of Coimbra was never

¹ For a general overview of universities in the early modern period, see Walter Rüegg (gen. coord.) *A History of the University in Europe*, II – *Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996 (Portuguese translation: *Uma História da Universidade na Europa*, CRUP, Fundação Eng. António de Almeida, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2002).

² “Fundação da Universidade de Coimbra”, in *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra (1653)*, facsimile edition, Coimbra, Universidade, 1987, p. 3.

³ Salamanca was not the only ‘foreign’ university that Portuguese students attended in the early modern period, as demonstrated by the works by Luís de Matos and Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão about Paris, Montpellier, Toulouse or Alcalá de Henares. But it was undoubtedly the one with the largest share of Portuguese students (see Angel Marcos de Diós, “Portugueses en la Universidad de Salamanca de la Edad Moderna” in *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, III.2 – *Saberes y confluencias*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006, pp. 1101-

seriously challenged. In fact, the last two decades of the sixteenth century show a steady growth in the number of its students. This was interrupted for a few years by the devastating epidemic at the turn of the century, but resumed soon afterwards⁴.

This central role explains both the symbolic and cultural capital that Coimbra amassed over time and the interest of the royal power in controlling the University. In fact, for centuries, generations of graduates received their intellectual initiation there and created life-long emotional links, and the collective representation considering Coimbra as 'the University'. On the other hand, the period we focus on witnessed two of the most important reforms in the history of this University, both carried out by the central government: the first by king Dom João III, occurring as a consequence of the University's definitive establishment in Coimbra (1537), and involving the drawing up of abundant new regulations (which probably included new statutes in 1544, now lost or not yet found)⁵, the enlargement of the curriculum, the attribution of important funding resources, the introduction of humanism through the foundation of the Colégio das Artes⁶, and the recruitment of a selected and well-paid professorial corps⁷; the other occurred in 1772, under the personal supervision of the Marquis of Pombal and inspired by the Enlightenment and rooted in a severe criticism of the previous scientific contents and pedagogical methods.⁸ This abolished the old regulations (*Estatutos Velhos*), profoundly changed the curricula (with the creation of faculties of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy and an overall transformation of the others, especially Medicine)⁹, adapted or created an important set of facilities demanded by the

1128, with a comprehensive bibliography; *Os portugueses na Universidade de Salamanca desde a Restauração até às reformas iluministas do Marquês de Pombal*, Salamanca, Luso-Española de Ediciones, 2001).

⁴ Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, *A Universidade de Coimbra, 1700-1771. Estudo social e económico*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1995, p. 36; p. 107; Luis Enrique Rodrigues-San Pedro Bezares, *La Universidad Salmantina del Barroco, periodo 1598-1625*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986, I, p. 186.

⁵ Important sets of documents regarding this period were collected and published by Mário Brandão, *Documentos de D. João III*, 4 vols., Coimbra, Universidade, 1937-1941, and (together with Lígia Cruz) *Actas dos Conselhos da Universidade de 1537 a 1557*, Coimbra, Arquivo da Universidade, 1941-1976).

⁶ Mário Brandão, *O Colégio das Artes*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, I, 1924, II, 1933.

⁷ Sebastião Tavares de Pinho, "A mobilidade dos universitários, in *História da Universidade em Portugal*, Coimbra, Universidade de Coimbra-Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1997, I-2, pp. 989-1014.

⁸ The writing of new statutes in 1772 was preceded by the *Compêndio histórico do estado da Universidade de Coimbra* (1771), a voluminous collection of libel in which the Jesuits were charged with having caused the decline of the University. But the real target of the *Compêndio* was the old statutes, whose abolition they intended to justify, while putting forward the main ideas for the new ones.

⁹ An up-to-date reflection on the intellectual and pedagogical orientation of the reform is provided in the collective work coordinated by Ana Cristina Araújo, *O Marquês de Pombal e a Universidade*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 2000. The academic dimension of the 1772 Reform – in comparison with the pre-1772 status quo – is a lengthy subject demanding undivided attention (which is beyond our immediate purpose here). Amongst the many contributors, we could mention: Luís de Albuquerque, a specialist on the history of the Portuguese discoveries, cartography and navigation techniques, who paid constant attention to matters related to education (see his six-volume *Estudos de História*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1974-1978); Rómulo de Carvalho, with an important cluster of studies centered on the 18th century, especially *História do Gabinete de Física da Universidade de Coimbra desde a sua fundação (1772) até ao jubileu do professor italiano Giovanni Antonio Dalla Bella (1790)*, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, 1978, *História da fundação do Colégio Real dos Nobres de Lisboa: 1761-1772*, Coimbra, Atlântida, 1959 and, looking at the subject from a broader perspective, *História do ensino em Portugal: desde a fundação da nacionalidade até o fim do regime de Salazar-Caetano*, 3ª ed., Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001; José Silvestre Ribeiro, *Historia dos estabelecimentos científicos litterarios e artisticos de Portugal nos successivos reinados da monarchia*, Lisbon, Academia Real das Sciencias, 18 vol., 1871-1893.

experimental orientation of the new learning¹⁰, and once again recruited new professors and endowed the University with considerable assets (1774), previously owned by the Jesuits¹¹.

These interventions were based on the idea of the University as an instrument of the established powers. While the *Old Statutes*¹² generally stated that the disciplines taught at the University were intended for “the good government and maintenance of the *Respublica Christiana*”¹³, those of 1772 more explicitly asserted that the degrees granted by the University acted as “guidelines for both Supreme Powers, Spiritual and Temporal, in the appointment of persons to Dignities, Benefices, Offices and Employments”, on the assumption that those who possessed them were “the most knowledgeable and competent to serve the Church and the State”; in fact, this service was “the only reason why those Supreme Powers had conceded to the universities the right to grant degrees”¹⁴.

This theoretical and official acknowledgement of the political and social role of the University can be linked to some actual indicators. The information we have so far gathered on this subject may be understood by way of two main perspectives. The first one considers the University as a turntable – simultaneously a pole of attraction and dissemination – at the core of a vast area which included the Portuguese overseas dominions. Among these, and besides the Atlantic islands, a most significant place must be conceded to Brazil: along with its utmost importance for the economy of the realm, the early implantation of teaching structures (especially by the Jesuits) made this colony an important cultural partner and a source of university students and graduates, many of them with conspicuous postgraduate professional and political careers. The second perspective pays attention to the University as an instrument of the ecclesiastical and political powers for the (con)formation of cultural and governing elites (with the natural consequence of personal benefit).

2. A turntable at the core of a multicontinental area

2.1. Universities are a logical and physical space where the demand and supply of socially recognized qualifications meet. The number of students and graduates – which at every single moment results from the balance between the costs of education and the expected profits (namely in the exercise of skilled professions) – has been understood as the main indicator of the social utility or impact of a University¹⁵.

¹⁰ Matilde Pessoa de Figueiredo Sousa Franco, *Riscos das obras da Universidade de Coimbra: o valioso álbum da Reforma Pombalina*, Coimbra, Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro, 1983.

¹¹ D. Francisco de Lemos, *Relação Geral do estado da Universidade (1777)* Coimbra, Universidade, 1980, pp. 170-171.

¹² These were first drawn up in 1597, then reprinted in 1654 (with the addition of several minor changes) and remained in force until 1772 (Zília Osório de Castro, “A Reforma de D. Francisco de Bragança, in *(Universidade(s). História, Memória, Perspectivas. Congresso História da Universidade. 7º Centenário*, Coimbra, Comissão Organizadora do Congresso “História da Universidade”, 1991, vol. I, pp. 111-121)

¹³ *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra (1653)*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1987, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Estatutos (1772)*, I, p. 192.

¹⁵ The best example of this orientation is the collective work *Histoire Sociale des Populations Étudiantes*, études rassemblées par Dominique Julia, Jacques Revel et Roger Chartier, Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, I – 1986, II – 1989; or, among others, the now classic works, Lawrence Stone (ed.), *The University in Society*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975, and Richard L. Kagan, *Students and Society in Early Modern Spain*, Baltimore, 1974.

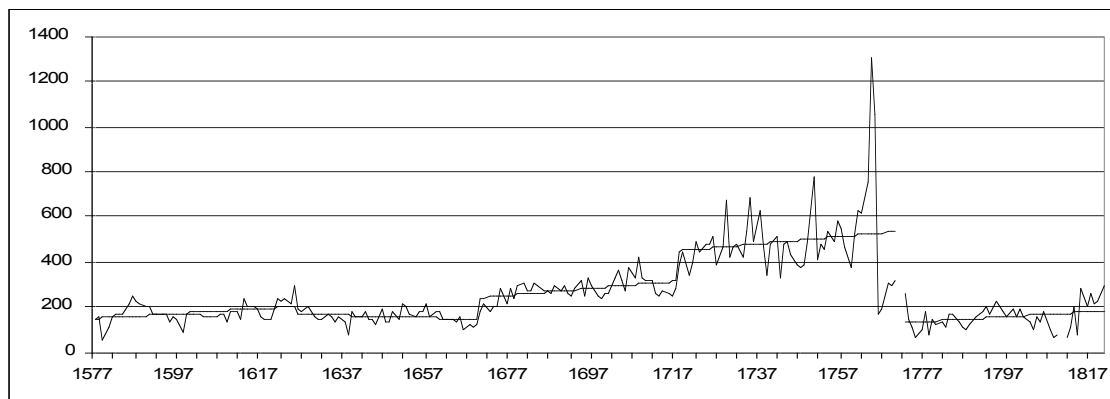
In the case of Coimbra, we have no accurate information about the number of students from 1537 to 1573, although some uneven data are available for the years 1537-1541 and a rough estimate can be made from the numbers of bachelor degree-holders in Law (an average of 35 per year, between 1539 and 1557). For 1573, and regularly from 1577 on, matriculations were recorded. Based on these, we can calculate both the total number of students actually enrolled¹⁶ and the ‘freshmen’ in Canon and Civil Law: since these two faculties accounted for 87.3% of the total student population (an average calculated for the whole period, 1573-1770), it is possible to put forward a plausible estimate of all the newcomers to the University and compare it with the period after the 1772 Reform. The results are shown in Table 1 and Chart 1.

Table 1. First matriculations (1577-1820) and comparison with total matriculations

Values of the linear trend/per year					Total matriculations (annual average)
Period	Initial value	Final Value	Difference	Angular coefficient	
1577-1625	150	203	+53	1.10	1017
1626-1669	170	147	-23	-0.54	1016
1670-1717	242	316	+74	+1.58	1639
1718-1770	450	535	+85	+1.63	2766
1772-1820	131	184	+53	1.11	871*

*Annual average for the period 1772-1790.

Chart 1. First matriculations (1577-1820) and trend lines



¹⁶ The matriculations for the period 1573-1772 were first counted by António de Vasconcelos, “Estatística das matrículas efectuadas na Universidade de Coimbra durante dois séculos (1573-1772), in *Escritos vários relativos à universidade dionisiana*, vol. II, Coimbra, Coimbra Editora, 1941, pp. 111-123. Vasconcelos gives us aggregate five-year figures for each faculty (from which he calculates annual averages). He also publishes (pp. 124-140) a more detailed report of the number of students in the nineteenth century (1800-01 to 1900-1901). The figures used here for ‘freshmen’ in Canon and Civil Law were obtained directly from archive records (Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, *Livros de Matrículas*) and, for the period 1772-1820, from Manuel Alberto Carvalho Prata, *Ciência e Sociedade. A faculdade de Filosofia no período pombalino e pós-pombalino (1772-1820)*, Guarda, 1989.

The first impression is one of continuous growth (until 1771), interrupted for some reason in the second stage (1626-1669), but without this affecting the trend's general orientation (the annual average of total enrolments almost equals that of the previous period). The great quantitative collapse came with the 1772 Reform, bringing the student population down to a level very similar to the one existing in the sixteenth century. Some interpretations can be put forward for this situation:

a. The sustained growth in the long term (corresponding also to a period of normative stability, especially in the requirements that were demanded for enrolment in a faculty) reveals an overall balance, with no apparent breakdown, between the expectations of professional placement on the part of those who sought a university degree and the professional positions actually available; or, if we prefer, between the costs of higher education and the material and symbolic profits it actually provided.

b. The minor decline after c. 1620 may be explained by a cluster of negative circumstances: demographic decline; fall in private consumption causing diminishing agricultural prices and the consequent fall in the incomes of those who lived off the land; decrease in commercial and maritime activity affecting the State's revenue, which was largely dependent on customs duties; and a moral crisis¹⁷. A war environment already existing under the Spanish Monarchy – whose major consequence was an increase in taxes – became a war economy after 1640. The war itself and the diplomatic effort necessary to obtain recognition of Portuguese independence by the European powers and the papacy demanded considerable resources, mostly obtained through taxation. It is significant that the end of the War of Restoration (1668) was immediately followed by a steady rise in Coimbra's enrolments.

c. Despite these difficulties there was no reversal of the trend. In this regard, Coimbra shows atypical behavior when compared with most European universities, which experienced a dramatic decline – beginning at different moments in the seventeenth century – in their student numbers. If the previous stage, in European terms, could be interpreted as an “educational revolution”¹⁸, this decline corresponds to the time of “alienated intellectuals”¹⁹, with the disproportion between the number of graduates and the number of suitable jobs available causing discontent and social unrest.

d. It was, in fact, the structural change taking place in 1772 (the reformers called it the “new foundation”) that led to the drastic fall in Coimbra's matriculation figures. The number of

¹⁷ For the so-called “crisis” of the seventeenth century, see, for all cases, António de Oliveira, *Poder e oposição política em Portugal no período filipino (1580-1640)*, Lisbon, Difel, 1990.

¹⁸ Lawrence Stone, “The educational revolution in England, 1560-1640”, *Past and Present*, 28, July 1965, pp. 41-80. The concept is based on a quantitative approach. Quoting Stone: “If it is accepted that [...] 2.5% of the annual seventeen-year-old age-group was going on to higher education, then the English in 1640 were infinitely better educated than they had been before. It was a quantitative change of such magnitude that it can only be described as a revolution” (p. 68). Kagan calculates a higher proportion (5.3%) of the eighteen-year-old male age group entering Spanish universities (*Students and Society in Early Modern Spain*, p. 200), and states that, for Italian universities, the sixteenth century “was the equivalent of a golden age” (“Universities in Italy”, in *Histoire Sociale des Populations Étudiantes*, I, p. 157).

¹⁹ Mark Curtis, “The Alienated Intellectuals in Early Stuart England”, *Past and Present*, 23, 1962, pp. 25-49. Wilhem Frijhoff (“Grandeur des nombres et misère des réalités”, in *Histoire Sociale des Populations Étudiantes*, I, p. 23) describes the situation in Germany under the concept of “überfüllungstheorie” (a theory foreseeing a dramatic shortage of jobs for graduates) and gives notice of the contemporary criticism of the surplus of students. A general perspective (including also, besides England, Germany and Spain, France and the Netherlands) by Roger Chartier, “Les intellectuels frustrés au XVII.^e siècle”, in *Histoire Sociale des Populations Étudiantes*, I, pp. 245-260).

years necessary for students to graduate was reduced from eight to five; more important, however, (since we are dealing with first enrolments) were the much more demanding university entrance requirements (and the stricter methods of assessment²⁰), enforced by the new *Statutes*. They were inspired by the criticism of the *Compêndio Histórico* and the personal views of the Marquis of Pombal, who explicitly declared²¹ that the great number of students who matriculated before had led to a lack of quality in learning, depriving the country of men necessary for other professions and (because the graduates couldn't find jobs suitable to their qualifications) acting as the source of social disturbance.

This so-called “enlightened Malthusianism” must be understood, however, in the context of both a thorough scientific renewal (with geometry and natural history becoming the basis for an up-to-date *forma mentis*, imposed on all faculties, even Law and Theology, and experimentalism being the core of scholarly work in the natural faculties – Medicine, Mathematics and Philosophy) and a new concept for the professor's mission, involving research – based on the idea of the “professor-inventor” – as well as the incorporation into teaching of one's own or someone else's scientific findings. In the mind of the reformers, quantity should give way to quality, and university education had to be restricted to a select intellectual and moral minority.

2.2. In addition to the quantitative evolution of enrolments, we must give some thought to the geographical origins of Coimbra's students, as another important feature for characterizing the attractiveness of the University.

Coimbra could be considered as the center of an informal teaching network. The necessary preparation for university education presupposed lower levels, which could be plain grammar schools or other institutions that included grammar, philosophy or even theology in their curricula. Sometimes (before 1772) the courses attended in those institutions could be counted as time spent at the University itself²²: this was the case with some Jesuit colleges (and, afterwards, Oratorian colleges) that possessed the privilege of the so-called “year of Logic” (the first course in Philosophy), which could be counted as a university course; but also of other monastic schools, especially the colleges of the religious and military orders settled in Coimbra, in which philosophy and theology were taught, their studies being recognized by their mere incorporation into the University. As far as latin grammar was concerned (the knowledge of Latin was the only entrance requirement to law faculties before 1772), the banishment of the Jesuits in 1759 – and the reform of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ studies which immediately followed – revealed the existence of an impressive number of private teachers and schools spread all around the country²³.

²⁰ For the first time in the University's history, students could be kept back in the same level/year if their assessment was not satisfactory. A more substantial participation in the expenses of learning was also required, through the increase in the fees to be paid at the time of matriculation. For a general view of the pedagogical aspects of the Reform, see Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, “A dimensão pedagógica da Reforma de 1772. Alguns aspectos”, in Ana Cristina Araújo (coord.), *O Marquês de Pombal e a Universidade*, pp. 43-68.

²¹ In his correspondence with Dom Francisco de Lemos, his personal appointment and the Rector of the Reform. (*Documentos da Reforma Pombalina*, collected by Manuel Lopes de Almeida, Coimbra, Universidade, I, 1937, doc. XXXV, pp. 54-56).

²² It should be remembered that, before 1772, the counting of the time that had elapsed (in courses of eight months, measured from the matriculation in October to the other matriculation in May – *prova de curso*) was the only requirement for applying for assessment. Law students only sat examinations during their fifth course.

²³ António Alberto Banha de Andrade, *A reforma pombalina dos estudos secundários*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1981, p. 619; see also Joaquim Ferreira Gomes, *O Marquês de Pombal e as reformas do ensino*, Coimbra, INIC, 1982, as well as several papers in the section “Reforma do ensino”, in *O Marquês de Pombal e a sua época, Actas do Colóquio, Pombal-Oeiras*, 1999, pp. 281-419.

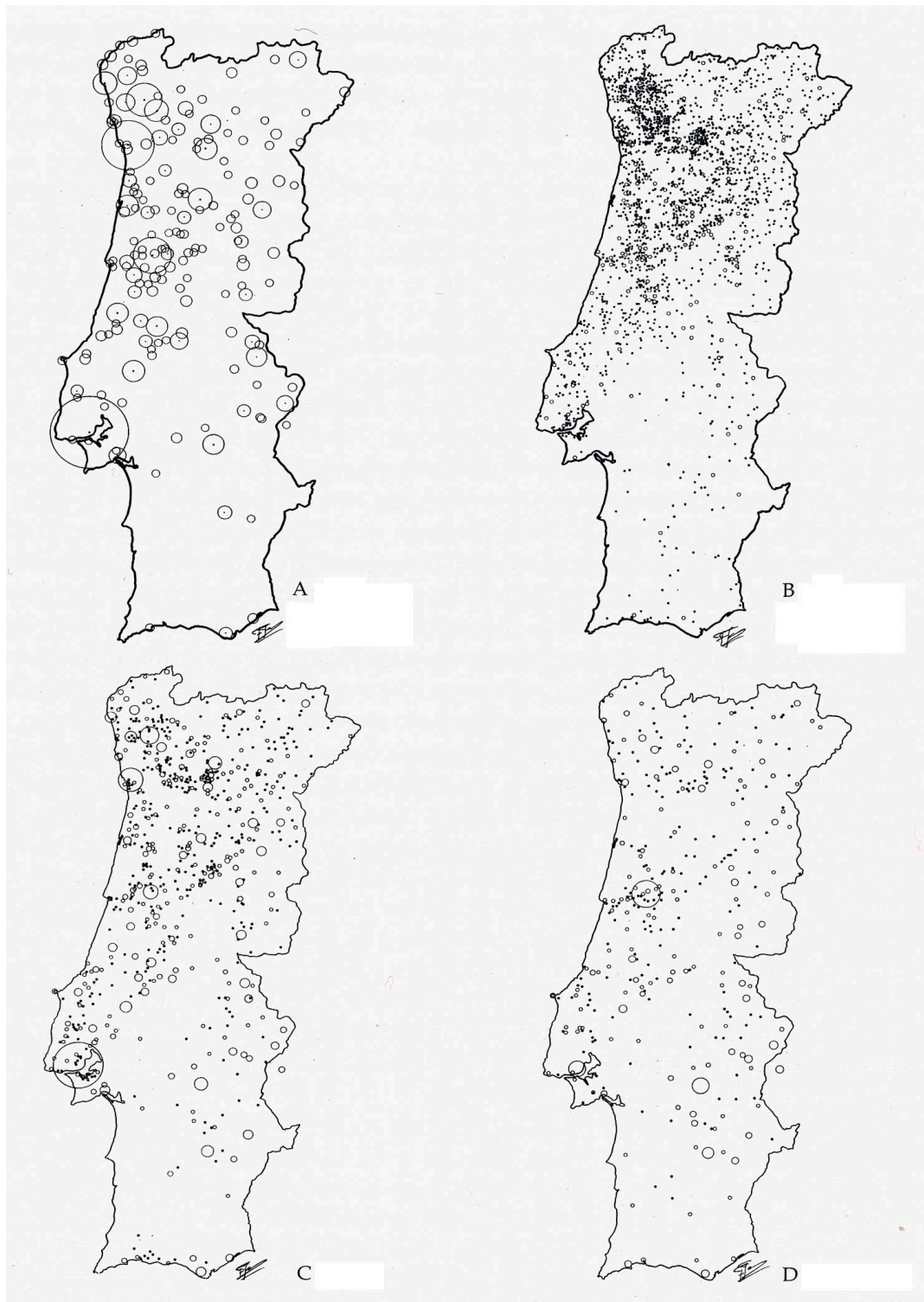


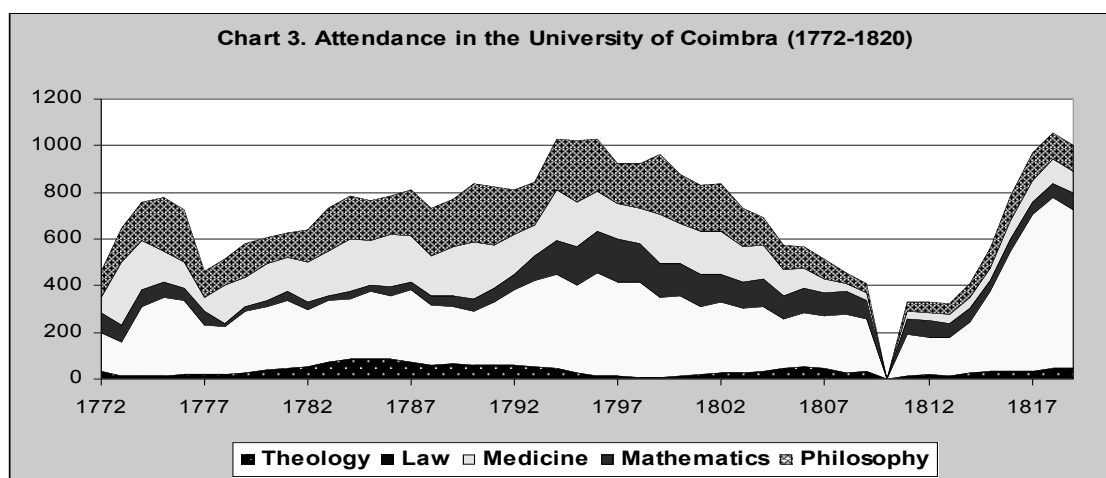
Chart 2. Geographic origins of graduates (1700-1771

A. Canon Law (places with ten or more graduates); B. Canon Law (places with 1 to nine graduates); C. Civil Law; D. Medicine

This explains why we find a strong correlation with population distribution when we draw a pattern of the geographic origins (1700-1771) (chart 2. A-D) of the continental graduates in Law and Medicine²⁴ (correlation coefficient = 0.88). The maps show the convergence of some important contributions with a myriad of small ones (some 2700 places of very different population sizes were identified). If we think in terms of urban and rural areas (we considered the population of 69 towns and small towns to be urban²⁵), there seems to be an almost even distribution: 47.41% of urban graduates as against 52.59% from rural areas. This overall proportion changes when we look at each faculty in turn: Canon Law presents the lowest percentage of students of urban origin (44.37%), while these are predominant in the case of Civil Law (56.52%) and Medicine (57.6%).

From this evidence, we can conclude that the sources of Coimbra students and graduates were widely spread throughout the realm, with a major contribution being made by rural areas: this fact must be understood in connection with the ever-growing preponderance of Canon Law until 1772, with an average proportion in terms of student numbers of 72% (1573-1771) as against 15.3% studying Civil Law²⁶.

Besides applying for royal service, graduates in Canon Law had great expectations in the profitable world of ecclesiastical benefices, for which canonistic studies were a specific preparation. The situation only began to change in the middle of the eighteenth century, being reversed (Civil Law overtaking Canon Law) in the 1780s, after the 1772 Reform. This reform – introducing the new faculties of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy with autonomous degrees, but also introducing disciplines whose attendance was compulsory to all students of the other faculties – once again changed the structure of Coimbra's attendance. (see Chart 3)



²⁴ It is not possible to perform the same operation with graduates in Theology since these were identified by the order they belonged to and the name they adopted when entering it, with no reference to the place where they were born.

²⁵ The criteria used for considering a place as urban were those proposed by Fernando de Sousa, *A população portuguesa nos inícios do século XIX*, Porto, 1979, p. 180.

²⁶ It should be noticed that each time (c. 1670 and c. 1718) there was an increase in the total numbers of matriculations, there was also a similar increase in the proportion of Canon Law students. The percentage of 15.3% for Civil Law is due to the higher proportions existing until the middle of the seventeenth century; in the eighteenth century, this proportion rarely rose above 10%.

Law (we must combine the numbers of Canon and Civil Law students because, after 1772, the first three courses were common to both faculties) continues to be the most highly sought after course, when compared to all other single faculties. But if we consider the natural science faculties together (Medicine, Mathematics and Philosophy), their proportion reaches 55.1% in the period 1772-1809, while Law represents 39.3% and Theology 5.6% (which comes to 44.9% for the so called ‘positive’ faculties). This is an interesting shift in the focus of university learning, reflecting the autonomy of the exact and natural sciences, the symbiosis between the jurist and the naturalist, and a new concept of Medicine. We can correlate this shift with other achievements, such as the creation, in 1779, of the *Academia das Ciências* in Lisbon, and the “philosophical voyages” undertaken both in continental Portugal and in the overseas colonies, as signs of an active curiosity focused on the ‘body physical’ of the country, the foundation of moral and political conscience²⁷. After 1810 there was a reversal of this trend, with the percentages of Law and the Natural Faculties being 59.9% and 35.1% respectively (with 5% for Theology).

We don’t yet know whether these changes in the attendance structure had any effect on the geographic origins of students: what we do know for sure, however, is that after 1772 the proportion of those coming from Brazil increased quite dramatically. This fact leads our attention to the flows coming from the Portuguese overseas colonies and from the Atlantic islands. Between 1700 and 1771, the number of graduates was as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Origin of Coimbra graduates, 1700-1771
(Law and Medicine)

	Canon Law	Civil Law	Medicine	Total	%
Continental Portugal	11837	2562	1062	15461	93.17
Brazil	602	160	46	808	4.87
Madeira	155	13	8	176	1.06
Azores	71	27	12	110	0.66
Angola	11	8	0	19	0.11
Others	15	2	3	20	0.12
Total	12691	2772	1131	16594	100.00

The numbers for the Atlantic islands are interesting²⁸; Brazil, however, shows a far greater contribution, increasing over time, especially when gold production (which began in Brazil in the last decade of the seventeenth century) provided more abundant resources. In Table 3 and Chart 4, the comparison between total first admissions and the Brazilian ones shows a narrowing gap and an increasing proportion of the latter.

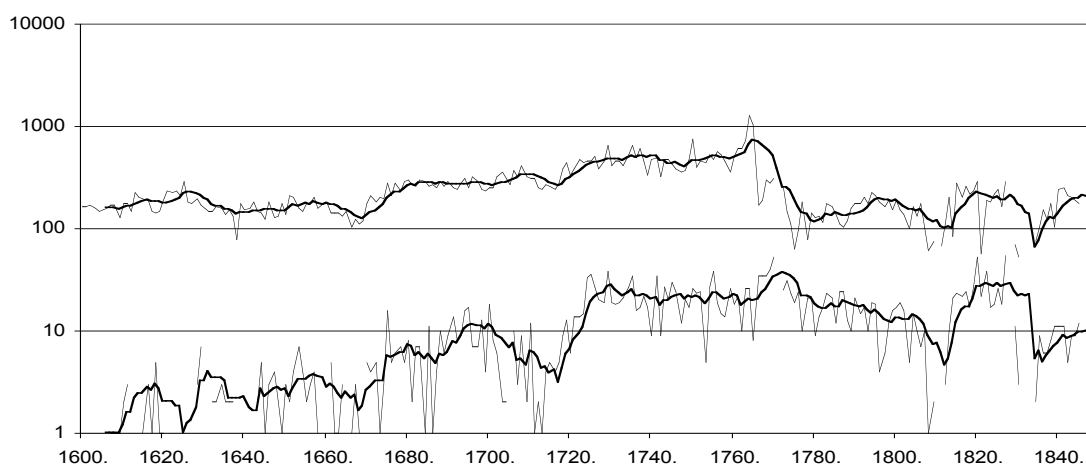
²⁷ I gave some more detailed thought to this matter in “O saber universitário e os universitários no Ultramar” (1772-1910), a chapter for the second volume of *História da Universidade em Portugal*, currently in print.

²⁸ In the period 1573-1730, 587 students from the Atlantic islands were matriculated at Coimbra University: 274 from Madeira, 159 from São Miguel, 108 from Terceira, 24 from Faial, and 32 from the other islands of the Azores. (José Manuel Azevedo Silva, “Estudantes madeirenses na Universidade de Coimbra entre 1573 e 1730”, *Revista de História das Ideias*, 12, (Coimbra, 1990), pp. 55-71).

Table 3. Brazilian students' percentage of total first admissions

Period	% (average)
1600-1719	1.83
1720-1770	5.57
1772-1850	9.73

Chart 4. Total (upper curve) and Brazilian students' first admissions compared (1600-1850).



More detailed figures reveal a stronger presence at some particular moments: in the years immediately before and after the 1772 Reform (1760-1771, 7.52%; 1772-1789, 15.6%) or between 1810 and 1829 11.6% (Rio de Janeiro was then the capital of the Portuguese empire). Equally interesting is the fact that the proclamation of Brazilian independence (1822) did not stem the flow coming from the other side of the Atlantic, thus highlighting, besides the political issues, the existence of cultural bonds that led to the creation of higher studies – especially in Law – that followed the model of Coimbra and were promoted by some of its former graduates in Brazil²⁹.

Keeping pace with the increasing numbers, the origins of Brazilian students spread over a wider area. Until 1720, the three main places (Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco) where the Jesuits had established their colleges, were followed by the mining region (Minas Gerais) and by some other places in the Northeast (Table 4 and Chart 5).

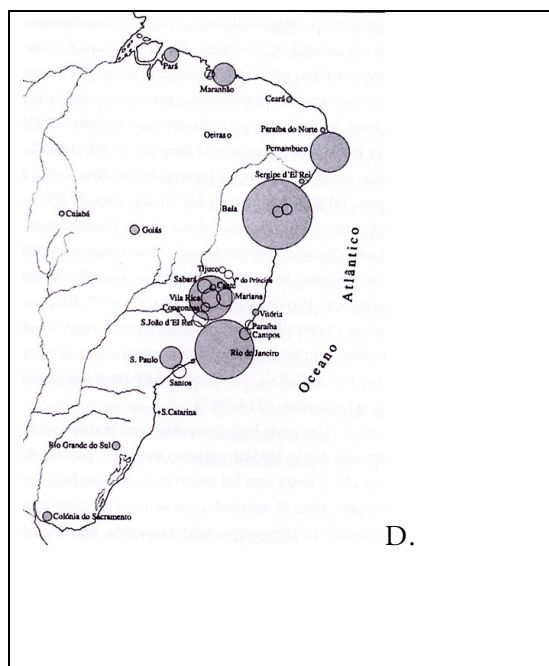
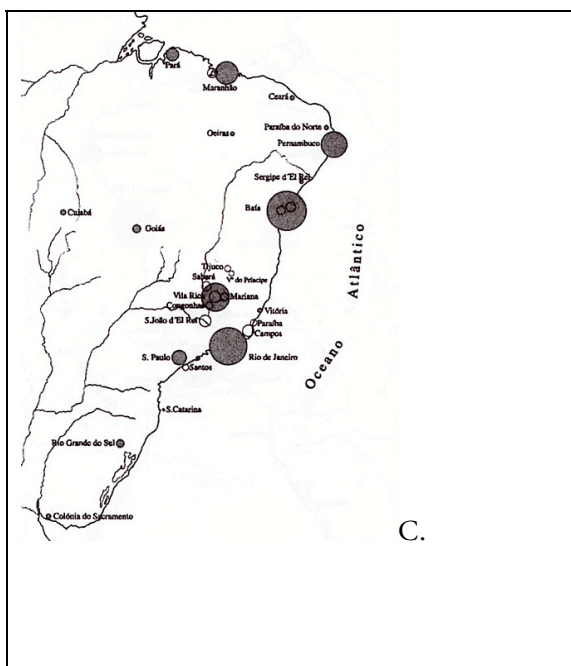
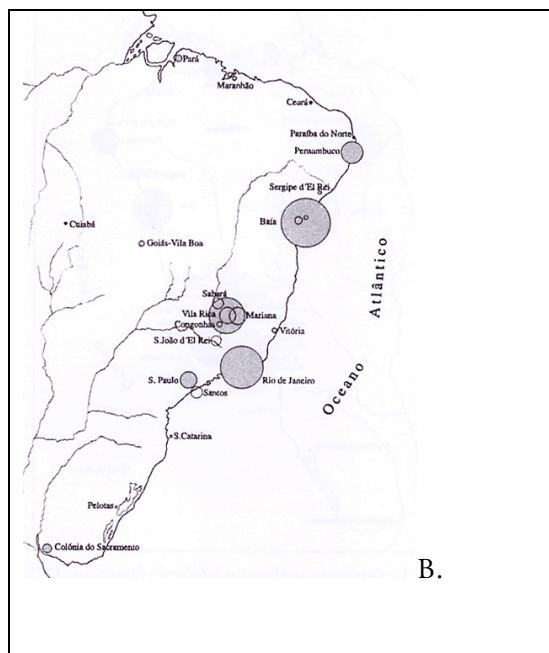
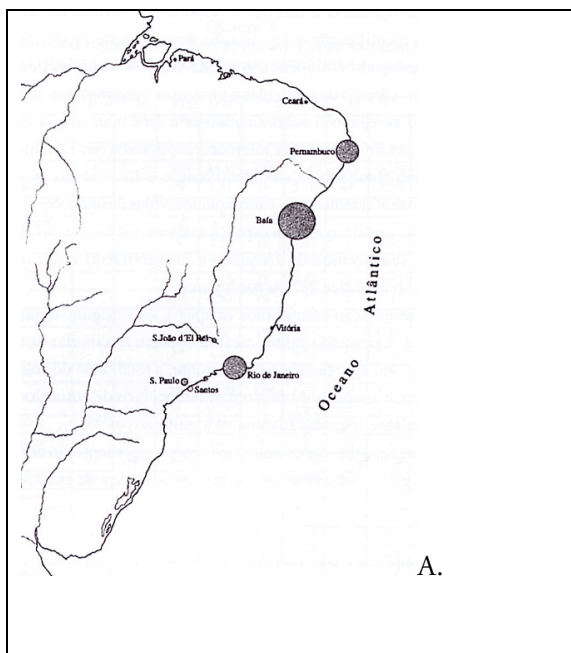
²⁹ Ernesto de Sousa Campos, *Instituições culturais e de ensino superior no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 1941, p. 285; Divaldo Gaspar de Freitas, *Paulistas na Universidade de Coimbra*, 1959, pp. 79-80.

Table 4. Origin of Brazilian students (1600-1850)

Designation	1600-1720		1721-1771		1772-1810		1811-1850		1600-1850	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
Brazil	16	3.38	3	0.26			1	0.19	20	0.72
Bahia	244	51.57	398	34.55	103	17.22	145	26.95	890	32.23
Other places			22	1.91	19	3.18	43	7.99	84	3.04
Total	244	51.57	420	36.46	122	20.4	188	34.94	974	35.28
Colônia do Sacramento			15	1.3	5	0.84			20	0.72
Goiás			6	0.52	10	1.67	4	0.74	20	0.72
Maranhão			3	0.26	30	5.02	75	13.94	108	3.91
Minas Gerais			36	3.13	17	2.84	2	0.37	55	1.99
Mariana			44	3.82	10	1.67	3	0.56	57	2.06
S. João d'El Rei	4	0.85	17	1.48	24	4.01	3	0.56	48	1.74
Sabará			22	1.91	13	2.17	5	0.93	40	1.45
Vila Rica			47	4.08	20	3.34	6	1.12	73	2.64
Other places			59	5.12	44	7.36	14	2.60	117	6.23
Total	4	0.85	225	19.53	128	21.4	33	6.13	390	14.13
Pará	2	0.42	9	0.78	17	2.84	16	2.97	44	1.59
Pernambuco	89	18.82	79	6.86	78	13.04	48	8.92	284	10.65
Other places	4	0.85	5	0.43	5	0.84	6	1.12	20	0.72
Total	93	19.66	84	7.29	83	13.88	54	10.04	314	11.37
Rio de Janeiro	99	20.93	307	26.65	135	22.58	103	19.14	644	23.32
Other places			7	0.61	14	2.34	23	4.28	44	15.94
Total	99	20.93	314	27.26	149	24.92	126	23.42	688	24.95
S. Paulo	4	0.85	25	2.17	19	3.18	9	1.67	57	2.06
Santos	5	1.06	24	2.08	7	1.17	1	0.18	37	1.34
Other places			1	0.09	1	0.17	6	1.12	8	0.29
Total	9	1.9	50	4.34	27	4.52	16	2.97	102	3.69
OTHER PLACES	4	0.85	18	1.56	25	4.18	23	4.28	70	2.54
Unidentified	2	0.42	5	0.43	2	0.33	2	0.37	11	0.4
TOTAL	473	100.00	1152	100.00	598	100.00	538	100.00	2761	100.00

Chart 5. Origin of Brazilian students

A. 1600-1720; B 1721-1771; C. 1772-1850; D. 1600-1850



The ‘treasure of science’ – i.e. the teaching institutions giving basic preparation – and the treasures dug from the gold mines joined forces to support a steady flow of university candidates. We must, however, emphasize the importance of the first of these: in fact, if in the second and third periods considered here (covering the years 1721 to 1810) the proportion of students coming from Minas Gerais became more significant, it decreased afterwards (1810-1850), while the other major

regions of student origin recovered and showed greater stability, with Rio de Janeiro profiting from the fact of its being the capital city³⁰.

The concept of a “turntable” (which we have been using) implies, besides a movement of convergence, another movement suggesting both a return and greater dissemination of students. In the middle, there was a communication of technical and axiological contents intended to (con)form individuals, according to their established social parameters. The University, however, is not only a middle point (physically and chronologically). It exercises power – when assessing and recognizing the results of apprenticeship – a subordinate power, however, which makes it an instrument of other powers.

3. An instrument of power(s) for the (con)formation of elites

3.1. Royal, ecclesiastical and municipal powers can be found at the origin of most universities. Coimbra had a strong connection to royal power: the king himself possessed the supreme authority as its Protector³¹, and enjoyed a wide range of practical prerogatives. Although a large space was left open for the presentation of proposals and information before resolutions were taken, the way of life and the government of the University depended on a pact that inseparably included protection, respect – for the statutes, privileges, institutional freedom, customs – and the right of the monarch to make final decisions on fundamental matters – the writing of regulations, the appointment of academic authorities and professors, the administration of University assets – as well as the power of inspection (by means of visits and reforms).

Protection had its utmost expression in the funding of the University. The usual way to do this was to provide a basic income – ecclesiastical tithes and manorial rights – which was then autonomously administered, except in the event of extraordinary expenditure or more relevant agrarian contracts. When the University was transferred to Coimbra, it already possessed such an income³², but it was greatly enlarged by Dom João III – with the necessary papal agreement – by means of two further incorporations of assets: one from the ‘Capela de Santa Catarina’, the other from the property owned by the Priory of Santa Cruz. More than just simply giving an account of the procedure adopted³³ – which was not without some difficulties and litigation³⁴ – it is worth emphasizing that these new assets would, in the future, account for 83.6% of the University’s total income.

³⁰ A more detailed view of these matters can be found in Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, “*Scientiae thesaurus mirabilis: estudantes de origem brasileira na universidade de Coimbra*”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, XXXIII (Coimbra, 1999), pp. 527-559.

³¹ The origin of this function is medieval and the first Protectors were royally appointed. Dom Manuel I (1495-1521) was the first king to personally hold this position. (Mário Brandão, *A Universidade de Coimbra. Esboço da sua história*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1937, pp. 121-126)

³² Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, “As finanças”, in *História da Universidade em Portugal*, I-1, pp. 39-67.

³³ For a detailed narrative, see Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, “As finanças (Universidade de Coimbra)”, in *História da Universidade em Portugal*, I-2, 1997, pp. 447-456.

³⁴ Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho; Maria José Azevedo Santos, “Contenda entre a Universidade e o Mosteiro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra na segunda metade do séc. XVI”, in *Universidade(s). História, Memória, Perspectivas*, vol. 3, pp. 39-61; Mário Brandão, *D. Lopo de Almeida e a Universidade*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1990. An extensive index of the University’s properties is provided in *Livro da Fazenda e rendas da Universidade de Coimbra em 1570 organizado por Simão de Figueiró*, transcription by António Gomes da Rocha Madahil, Coimbra, Universidade, 1940.

No other similar incorporation of assets was made until that mentioned above, by the Marquis of Pombal, in 1774, of the properties formerly owned by the Jesuits (who had been expelled in 1559). In 1777, Francisco de Lemos reported that the rents existing before 1774 amounted to 30,008,780 réis, and the new ones to 22,412,593 réis, i.e. 42.8% of the sum total of the rents and 36.5% of the University's total income³⁵.

This necessarily brief summary of the University's sources of income clearly shows that, at crucial moments of explicit and strong interference, the political power (in close association with the ecclesiastical one) did not dissociate scientific and literary renewal from the granting of the material means necessary to enforce it, thus considering the University an institution of public utility³⁶.

3.2. This concept had its counterpart in the ever central government's ever increasing intervention in fundamental aspects of the University's management. One enlightening episode was the banishment of Dominican friars from teaching positions at the University, in 1648, because they had refused to defend and teach the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This theological matter – at that time only accepted as *pia opinio*, thus allowing for academic debate – seemed to be beyond the range of civil interference, but in fact Dom João IV made it a political question³⁷. More regularly, inspection visits, (above all in the seventeenth century) indicate a watchful supervision focused in particular on disciplinary and moral issues³⁸.

On the other hand, royal intervention took place in a more constant and systematic fashion in the election of the Rector and in the appointment of professors.

The Rector was the “head of the University”, the natural president of the various boards or councils, but simultaneously some kind of *longa manus* of the king within the University: the function's somewhat ambivalent nature explains why he could not be chosen from among the professors, thus placing him in an intermediate position of some independence as far as strictly corporate interests were concerned. The form of his election changed over time: in the *Statutes* of 1503, this prerogative belonged to an electoral body of sixteen members and the elected Rector took up his functions even before royal confirmation³⁹; those of 1559 prescribed that the name of the person elected should be kept secret until royal agreement was obtained, without which he

³⁵ D. Francisco de Lemos, *Relação Geral do estado da Universidade de Coimbra (1777)*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1980. The University's total income amounted to 61,360,236 réis and included, besides rents, the fees and fines paid by the students, and the interest from loans.

³⁶ The words are used in the papal bull that allowed the assets of the Jesuits to be incorporated into the University: “Institutionem non solum sed conservationem quoque Universitatum Studiorum Generalium ex quibus tot bona in Divini Cultus augmentum in Catholicae Fidei presidium ac in publicam Christi fidelium utilitatem procedunt confovere iugiter Satagentes...” (Manuel Lopes de Almeida, *Documentos da Reforma Pombalina*, I, doc. CXVI, p. 198).

³⁷ Dominicans had enjoyed privileged access to the most important chairs at the theological faculty, to such an extent that they claimed for themselves the ownership of those positions. Dom João IV's decision was regarded as a severe punishment. For a more detailed account of this episode, Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, “Uma questão política: a exclusão dos lentes dominicanos das cátedras universitárias de Coimbra”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, XXXVI, vol. 1 (Coimbra, 2003-2004), pp. 423-444.

³⁸ We can mention the visit paid by Dom Francisco de Meneses, beginning in 1619, as an impressive example of this. See *Autos e diligências de inquirição (contribuição para a história da Universidade de Coimbra no século XVII)*, published by Joaquim Ferreira Gomes, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989. Based on this document and others (as yet unpublished), an academic study is currently being made of this “vigilant power”.

³⁹ *Statutos d'el Rei Dom Manuel*, in Francisco Leitão Ferreira, *Noticias Chronologicas da Universidade de Coimbra*, part two, 2nd ed., *Aditamentos e Notas* by Joaquim de Carvalho, pp. 774-775.

could not take his oath and begin his three-year governing period⁴⁰; those presented to the University in 1598 (and confirmed in 1653) enlarged the electoral body – including, thereafter, the professors – but they could only appoint three names: the king would choose one of them or order the election to be repeated if he considered that none of them was convenient for the University⁴¹.

Besides this centralizing tendency, we know that in some cases there simply was no election: Francisco Carneiro de Figueiroa reports that Dom João III directly appointed Rectors⁴² and points to some later, albeit exceptional, cases; and, from 1719 onwards, the Rector was never again elected. His role as mediator between the University and the royal power – while subordinate to the latter – reached its peak during the implementation of the 1772 Reform, under the close supervision of the Marquis of Pombal, at first in person⁴³, and then through an assiduous correspondence with Dom Francisco de Lemos, the Rector that the Marquis himself had created, and who, *in loco*, took care of the various proceedings. When political disgrace fell upon the Marquis of Pombal, Francisco de Lemos saw no other way to secure the Reform he had been engaged in than to try to persuade those who then held power of its virtue: his *Relação Geral* (1777), addressed to the queen Dona Maria, reveals that he was quite aware that the destiny of the University depended on her decision.

No less important than the Rector's nomination was the appointment of professors or lecturers (*lentes*). Dom João III made personal invitations⁴⁴ and this procedure was followed in a few other cases. Yet later, access to professorship was regulated: the *Estatutos Velhos* (1598) included a large section prescribing in detail the form of competitive application for vacant chairs⁴⁵. According to them, the students had the right to vote (their courses and social quality determining the relative weight of each personal vote) and the candidate that obtained the most votes was immediately invested – by the University's Secretary – in the chair he had been given. This somehow 'democratic' election suffered a major change in 1654, on the pretext that it caused conflict and disturbance. The students lost their right to vote and the evaluation of the candidate was entrusted to a small body of very high-ranking academic authorities and professors. They did not, however, have a decisive role: their opinions ('consultative votes') were transmitted to the *Mesa da Consciência e Ordens*, in Lisbon, and were filtered through this governing department and then presented for royal decision. This was, in fact, a major shift towards centralization.

However, central intervention was crucial not only at this first stage of a professor's career: most of the lecturers' promotions were made by internal arrangement (*ascenso*⁴⁶), depending on

⁴⁰ *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra* (1559), chap. 8, pp. 49-51

⁴¹ *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra* (1654), book II, tit. IV, pp. 43-45.

⁴² Francisco Carneiro de Figueiroa, *Memórias da Universidade de Coimbra*, Coimbra, Universidade, 1937, p. 98.

⁴³ The Marquis sojourned in Coimbra for a month (from 22 September to 24 October 1772), during which time he solemnly presented the new *Statutes*, reorganized the professorial body and appointed the new fellows of St. Peter's and St. Paul's colleges. ("Diário do que se passou em a cidade de Coimbra desde o dia 22 de Setembro de 1772, em que o Ill.mo e Ex.mo Senhor Marquês de Pombal entrou, até ao dia 24 de Outubro, em que partio da dita cidade", in António de Vasconcelos, *Escritos vários relativos à universidade dionisiana*, vol. I, 2nd ed., Coimbra, Arquivo da Universidade, 1987, pp. 342-388)

⁴⁴ J. S. Silva Dias, *A política cultural da época de D. João III*, Coimbra, Instituto de Estudos Filológicos da Faculdade de Letras, 1969; "Portugal e a Cultura Europeia (sécs. XVI-XVIII)", *Biblos*, Coimbra, 1953; Sebastião Tavares de Pinho, *A mobilidade dos universitários*, in *História da Universidade em Portugal*, pp. 991-996.

⁴⁵ *Estatutos* (1653), book III, tit. VI.

⁴⁶ The chairs of each faculty were ranked, the distinction between them consisting in the levels of dignity and reward, which were different for each of them. When one chair was declared vacant, the professor in possession

royal resolution, as did matters relating to retirement. These latter situations included decisions about the calculation of the length of time that professors had served, the amount of the reward to be received, and the different dignity of an honorable retirement (the *jubilização*, which was compatible with the exercise of some academic functions, in a higher position than actual lecturers), or else they were resolved with a simple decision, due in most cases to physical inability.

This capacity to intervene in the constitution and promotion of the body of professors was used to prepare the 1772 Reform: during at least the ten previous years, no professor was admitted or promoted to a higher rank, and no vacant chair was filled by a lecturer, although some competitive applications were apparently invited with that purpose in mind. The Marquis of Pombal was able to completely renew the whole group of professors, obliging the few who had remained to begin an honorable retirement (some of them were rewarded with canonries), maintaining their salaries and endowments.

3.3. The University colleges played a crucial role in the election of the Rector, and even more so in the recruitment of professors. The various Coimbra colleges⁴⁷ included a majority that belonged to religious and military orders and which supplied most of the teaching staff at the Theology faculty (the secular clergy being far less represented) before the 1772 Reform. Besides the *Colégio das Artes*, entrusted to the Jesuits from 1555 on (until 1759), two other colleges had peculiar characteristics: the so-called ‘secular’ colleges of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Very similar in their organization and in the purposes of their foundation (which caused serious rivalry between them) they received only a small number of selected graduates – in fact, each of them granted twelve *becas* (the name deriving from the gown that their members were made to wear) for fellows and two for ‘*porcionistas*’ (undergraduate students coming from the higher ranks of the nobility). Besides intellectual excellence, the admission requirements were very strict, including an inquiry into their “purity of blood” (descendants of Jews and of ‘new Christians’ were excluded) and political allegiance (extended to their ancestors). The candidates for fellowships could not be engaged to marry or be committed to entering a religious order. Once at the college, their daily life was ruled by strict discipline, solidarity (especially when competitions for vacant chairs were held), and a common autonomous government (the college Rector was elected from among the fellows, and the *capela* – the meeting of all the fellows in the college chapel – was the most important internal decision-making body). They were pivots of influence, participating in the University councils and lobbying in the election of the University Rectors;

of the one immediately below moved up one level, and so did all the others below him. This form of promotion, without any examination or competition, was called *ascenso*.

⁴⁷ António de Vasconcelos, *Os colégios universitários de Coimbra (fundados de 1539 a 1779)*, in *Escritos vários*, I, pp. 155-295, with a note for each of them. Vasconcelos counts eighteen colleges of religious orders (founded at different times) and two of the military orders. The college buildings greatly changed the face of the town, both in the lower zone – where a new street was created by their appearance (Rua de Santa Sofia, the present-day Rua da Sofia) – and around the royal palace where the University was housed. On this subject, see, among others, José Ramos Bandeira, *Universidade de Coimbra: edifícios do corpo central e Casa dos Melos*, Coimbra, Gráfica de Coimbra, 1943, 2 vols.; Ana Paula Margarido, Margarida Vilar Queirós, *A Universidade de Coimbra e as alterações da malha urbana da Alta*, in *Universidade(s). História, Memória, Perspectivas*, vol. II, pp. 357-394; António Filipe Pimentel, *A morada da sabedoria*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 2003; Pedro Dias (coord.), *A Universidade e a arte: 1290-1990: actas do colóquio*, Coimbra, Instituto de História da Arte, 1993; Pedro Dias, Nelson Correia Borges, “Instalações da Universidade de Coimbra”, in *História da Universidade em Portugal*, I, 2 pp. 405-439.

furthermore, their members occupied most of the teaching positions at the faculties of Canon and Civil Law⁴⁸.

The secular colleges were the most effective means of social promotion within the University system, either through an academic career (as a preparatory stage for higher administrative bodies⁴⁹), or more directly to ecclesiastic benefices and the civil service⁵⁰. They were a crossroads where influence and lobbying, networks of interest, lifelong affection and solidarity, and personal closeness with the *grandees* (who always hoped for a place as a *porcionista* for their offspring), all converged, in a mutual exchange of favors and promises of protection.

3.4. It is obvious that the scientific and pedagogical model of the University directly influenced the future activity of the graduates. Again, in relation to this particular aspect, the 1772 Reform brought an important change.

In general terms, the previously existing situation had opened up different occupational paths corresponding to the three major branches of learning (Theology, Law and Medicine): theologians sought, above all, a teaching position at the University (this is why they complemented their domestic studies with the required official degree, the doctorate), but they could also occupy outstanding positions within their own orders (abbots, provincials, etc.) or act as censors (determining doctrinal and moral problems, or revising writings before publication), thus performing an important cultural role; those who graduated as physicians went on to engage in practical life, and the few who remained as university professors had long careers – frequently combining teaching with clinical practice – which demonstrates that their choices were limited; on the contrary, law graduates could profit from a wide range of opportunities.

Law graduates did, in fact, largely outnumber those of the other faculties⁵¹: it is not possible to follow the postgraduate careers of most of them (even if we are able to organize nominative lists of all those who graduated either in Canon or in Civil Law). We do know, however, that a large proportion became lawyers – practicing in courts was one of the requirements for applying for royal service as magistrates – or notaries. A smaller group (about 15% of all graduates in the period 1700-1770) tried to enter the royal magistracy by subjecting themselves to an examination (*leitura de bacharéis*) at the *Desembargo do Paço* (which can be considered as a kind

⁴⁸ Cristóvão José Pinto Correia de Oliveira, *O Saber e o Poder: o Colégio Real de S. Pedro da Universidade de Coimbra (1700-1834)*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 1996; Ana Paula Félix Rocha, *O colégio de S. Paulo da Universidade de Coimbra. Estudo económico e social*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 2002; Margarida Cruz Brandão, *O Colégio de S. Paulo (1548-1580)*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 1973.

⁴⁹ José Subtil, *O Desembargo do Paço (1750-1833)*, Lisbon, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1994, pp. 404-409.

⁵⁰ They can be compared with the “*colegios mayores*” at Spanish universities, (especially Salamanca): Ana Maria Carabias Torres, *Colegios mayores: centros de poder*, 3 vols., Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986; Baltasar Cuart Moner, “Un grupo singular y privilegiado: los colegiales mayores”, in *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, I. *Trayectoria y vinculaciones*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad, 2002, pp. 503-536. See also some important contributions on the nature and classification of colleges in different European countries in D. Maffei and H. Ridder-Symoens (eds.), *I collegi universitari in Europa tra il XIV e il XVIII secolo*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1991.

⁵¹ In the period 1704-1771 (considering the degree required for the exercise of a profession – *bacharel formado* for Law and *médico aprovado* for Medicine), 12,130 students graduated in Law and 1,371 in Medicine. As we have seen, theologians wished to become doctors: between 1704 and 1758, there were 314 students who obtained that degree (Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, *A Universidade de Coimbra*, pp. 63-66). The nominative list of graduates (including the three degrees of *bacharel formado*, *licenciado*, and *doutor*), which can be organized from the annual “*Informações*” (1700-1770), amounts to 12,691 (82.1%) graduates in Canon Law and 2,772 (17.9%) in Civil Law, the sum total being 15,463.

of Ministry of Justice)⁵². Those who succeeded would be included in the group of the so-called peripheral magistrates of the Crown (*juiz-de-fora, corregedor, provedor*), climbing a series of steps that could lead them to higher courts (*Relação do Porto, Casa da Suplicação*, in Lisbon, *Desembargo do Paço, Mesa da Consciência e Ordens*, etc.) or to the royal councils.

The requirements for admission to the *leitura de bacharéis* included an inquiry *de genere*, meant not only to establish the ‘purity of blood’ of the candidates, but also to ensure that their parents and grandparents had not been ‘mechanical’ workers. Yet, once again, the University played an important role through a qualitative classification (*Informações da Universidade*) – *mediocre, sufficient, good* and *very good* – of each of the graduates, awarded every year by the assembly of Law professors and sent to the *Desembargo do Paço*: only those graduates classified as *good* or *very good* were admitted to the *leitura*⁵³.

The 1772 Reform added other new professional opportunities to the ones we have been mentioning, originating in the so-called “natural faculties” (Mathematics and Philosophy) and from their influence on the other ones, as we said above: the change in the University curricula had an important effect on the cultural shift taking place in the late eighteenth century. Although the curriculum was reformed from outside (if we consider that the central government could be viewed as an external entity and that the University was supposed to spontaneously ensure that its own academic knowledge was kept regularly up to date), it was established as an essential tool for reproducing models and ideals that would mould the intellectual and political rulers to be⁵⁴.

One major example of the political impact of the new model was the process that led to the independence of Brazil (1822). This issue has led historians, especially Brazilian ones, to establish a seminal connection between the education received in Coimbra and the set of conditions that permitted the emergence of a distinct Brazilian moral and political personality⁵⁵: the circulation of elites between the ruling country and the colony (implying not only the steady flow of students from Brazil and their later return there as graduates, but also the political and cultural roles that

⁵² Between 1700 and 1770, 2,381 Law graduates (1,331 [55.9%] in Canon Law, 957 [40.2%] in Civil Law – in the case of the other 93 [3.9%] we don’t know at which faculty they graduated) were examined at the *Desembargo do Paço*. It is worth noticing that the gap between Canon and Civil Law graduates (see previous note) was greatly narrowed when applied to the royal magistracy.

⁵³ From 1700 to 1771, the average percentage of *good* and *very good* students was 34.6% for Canon Law and 61.7% for Civil Law.

⁵⁴ This probably explains why the *Informações da Universidade*, which had been abolished in 1772, were reintroduced in 1782, this time in greater detail and covering all faculties (and not only the faculties of Law as before). Such information considered areas such as moral behavior, academic achievement, and the “qualities of prudence, honesty, unselfishness, and others that are necessary for those who are destined to serve the State”. (*Documentos da Reforma Pombalina*, I, doc. CC – 3 July 1782 – pp. 348-350).

⁵⁵ Virgínia Maria Trindade Valadares, *Elites setecentistas mineiras. Conjugação de dois mundos (1700-1800)*, Lisbon, Universidade de Lisboa, 2002; Ruth Maria Chitó Gauer, *A influência da Universidade de Coimbra na formação da nacionalidade brasileira*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras, 1995. Some important contributions can also be found in the proceedings of the conference “História da Universidade” (1990), in vol. 5 of *Universidade(s). História, Memória, Perspectivas*, pp. 105-176: Francisco J. Calazans Falcón, “Luzes e revolução na colônia. A importância da universidade da pós-reforma pombalina”; Manoel Luiz Lima Salgado Guimarães, “A civilização nos trópicos: intelectuais e história no Brasil na primeira metade do século XIX”; Afonso Carlos Marques dos Santos, “Da universidade reformada ao Brasil colonial: duas trajetórias iluministas”; Caio C. Boschi, “A Universidade de Coimbra e a formação das elites mineiras coloniais”; João Pedro Rosa Ferreira, “A Universidade de Coimbra na formação cultural e ideológica dos promotores da emancipação do Brasil. O caso de Hipólito José da Costa”.

both continental and Brazilian graduates played in a still politically unified territory⁵⁶); the expeditions to define the Brazilian borders or to explore the Amazonian basin (bringing together scientific curiosity and political control)⁵⁷; the unrest of the colony in the late eighteenth century, especially the emblematic *Inconfidência Mineira* (1789), an intellectually-based plot of rebellion against Portuguese rule; the events of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, when, pursued by the invading French army (1807), the king, Court and the whole of the administrative and government staff moved from Lisbon to the other side of the Atlantic (Rio de Janeiro), creating there government institutions that mirrored those on the continent (one of the consequences of this event being, as we have noticed, a remarkable increase in the numbers of Brazilian students and graduates at the Portuguese university).

Many of the founding fathers and early organizers of the newborn country⁵⁸, although guided by other influences as well, received their basic training in Coimbra; and it is significant that the first great interpretation of Brazilian history – the *História Geral do Brasil* (1854-1857) by Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen – presents the new nation as a civilized one, thus labeling Portuguese colonization as a civilizing process. It is obvious that the University of Coimbra played a major role in this civilizing task.

4. Some closing remarks

The physiological metaphor of the womb, which led to the concept of *alma mater* being applied to universities, not only defines them as generative and reproductive models of ideological and ethical (con)formation, but also as institutions profoundly embedded in societies to whose specific needs they respond over time and space.

In the case study we have presented – focused on the social and cultural contribution of the University of Coimbra between the sixteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century – attention was paid to some indicators of the intensity of the dialogue between University and society, matriculations and degrees obtained in particular. These showed some peculiarities when compared to those of other European universities, because of their evolution in the time span under observation and the vast area from which it collected students, which included continental Portugal and its overseas dominions. Some explanations for this can be found in the fact that Coimbra was the only University to grant degrees in the most sought after and useful branches of learning – that is to say, in Law – and fiercely defended its uniqueness.

⁵⁶ Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva *A cultura luso-brasileira. Da Reforma da Universidade à independência do Brasil*, Lisbon, Estampa, 1999; Magnus Roberto de Mello Pereira, “Brasileiros ao serviço do império. A África vista por naturais do Brasil, no século XVIII”, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, XXXIII (Coimbra, 1999), pp. 153-190; Ana Lúcia Rocha Barbalho da Cruz, *Verdades por mim vistas e observadas, oxalá foram fábulas sonhadas. Cientistas brasileiros do Setecentos. Uma leitura auto-etnográfica*, Curitiba, 2004.

⁵⁷ Ângela Domingues, *Viagens de exploração geográfica na Amazónia em finais do século XVIII: política, ciência e aventura*, Lisbon, Região Autónoma da Madeira, 1991, who emphasizes the convergent purposes of the expedition of 1780-1787 to set the northwestern limits of Brazil and the long scientific expedition (1783-1793) of the naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. See also: William J. Simon, *Scientific expeditions in the Portuguese overseas territories (1783-1808) and the role of Lisbon in the intellectual-scientific community of the eighteenth century*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1983; Artur César Ferreira dos Reis, *Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira: um cientista luso-brasileiro na identificação da Amazônia*, offprint from *Revista de Cultura do Pará*, ano 1 (4), Agosto-Outubro, 1971.

⁵⁸ Isabel Nobre Vargues, Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, *De Tiradentes às Escadas de Minerva, Catálogo da Exposição*, Coimbra, Faculdade de Direito, 1999.

This same reality also explains the strong and close links maintained with political power and the attention that this power paid to the University, both protecting and controlling it. The reforms introduced by Dom João III and by the Marquis of Pombal stand as examples of this close connection: they were dictated by important cultural shifts – humanism and the Enlightenment – and imposed by royal authority, but they show that the reformers found no better way or other institution in which to reproduce the models and ideals they thought most suitable to govern the *Res Publica*.

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