

Career and social trajectory in the monarchy and the Portuguese overseas empire, governors general of the State of Brazil (1640-1702)¹

Carreira e trajetória social na monarquia e no império ultramarino português, governadores gerais do Estado do Brasil (1640-1702)

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa as carreiras dos fidalgos portugueses enviados para o Estado do Brasil entre 1640 e 1702 como governadores gerais e caracteriza a sua qualificação social e os acrescentamentos sociais e poder político alcançados por eles em razão dos serviços realizados e dos cargos ocupados no reino e no ultramar, constatando sua elevada qualificação social e influência política na monarquia portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: governadores gerais; trajetória social; influência política.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the careers of Portuguese *fidalgos* sent to the State of Brazil between 1640 and 1702 as governors-general and describes both their social positions and the social ascension and political power they achieved due to the services performed and the positions held in Portugal and overseas. In addition, their high social positions and political influence on the Portuguese monarchy is noted.

Keywords: governors-general; social trajectory; political influence.

This paper analyzes the social and political trajectory of Portuguese *fidalgos* sent to the State of Brazil between 1640 and 1702 as governors-general. We intend to describe the social rank they achieved in return for the services they carried out and the positions they held in Portugal and overseas, which generated social advancement and political power. Initially we will analyze the *ethos* of the Portuguese *fidalgos*, comparing them with other European societies. Afterwards we will look at the social origins of the governors-general, analyze their careers before and after holding this position, and end with their insertion in the Portuguese synodal order.

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ELITES, ARISTOCRACY AND THE *ETHOS* OF THE PORTUGUESE *FIDALGUIA*

It has been recognized in the historiography “that the noble class occupies a prominent role in the *Ancien Regime*. It constituted the ‘hegemonic group’ in Gramscian terminology” (Atienza Hernández, 1987, p.9), exercising control over an important part of economic, social, and political power. Furthermore, it is also understood that “differences between societies should be sought to a great extent in the different characteristics of their elites” (Stone, 1985, p.21) and in the relations established between the various groups, in their unity or division, in forms of recruitment, the conditions existing for advancement and better social positions, and in the ethical and religious marks used for their identification as elites. For this reason the histories of European *Ancien Regime* monarchies differed, which is why we agree with António Domínguez Ortiz’s conclusion that

The expression ‘European nobility’ and ‘Spanish nobility’ have a deceptive simplicity. In all of the Europe the immemorial distinction has been maintained between common men and men who ... raised themselves above the masses, though the regional differences were profound and remained completely adaptable to changes. (Domínguez Ortiz; Alvar Ezquerro, 2005, p.91)

The expansion of court society in connection with the expansion of the central administration of European monarchies attracted and subordinated the aristocracy, with the result that those who “in another time had been feared and respected local potentates were converted into sycophant courtiers and submissive pensioners of the state” (Stone, 1985, p.189). Nevertheless, while this was a general tendency in seventeenth century Europe, the paths followed in each of the countries, especially in the Iberian Peninsula, are important for explaining the particularities of aristocracies and the governmental systems on this continent.

We start by showing that the nobility in the Iberian *Ancien Regime* adjectivized a form of conduct and did not have the contemporary sense of identifying a social group. The term which identifies the privileged layer was *fidalgo*, which despite the common Luso-Castillian taxonomy, differed socially in the two societies. In Spain they constituted a sector which occupied the lowest part of the social hierarchy, the group which included “nobles who are only this, nobles, if you allow me to play with words. It is on the fringe, a group which

in general needed honors more than their own noble condition” (Soria Mesa, 2007, p.41). Many *fidalgos*, despite their origins, had neither fortunes nor high ranking positions, and did not rise to superior positions on the noble scale, belittling *fidalgua* in Spanish society, to the contrary of the Portuguese, where this was a privileged situation, enjoyed by few (Bluteau, s.d., t.IV, p.107).² In Portugal, *fidalgo* signified

Son & of Someone, a Castilian word which in Portuguese meant ‘something.’ A gentleman was given this name to understand that his parents had inherited ‘Something’ which could be appreciated, such as nobility of blood, or income, and considerable finance because ‘Something’ also signified something of value. (Bluteau, s.d., t.IV, p.107)

Being a *fidalgo* involved the “requirement of being descended ‘from clean and noble blood and good and rich parents,’”³ in other words, a “*Fidalgo* was born... [and] transmitted the quality and condition to his heirs” (Magalhães, 1997, p.415). In Portugal, *fidalgua* and nobility did not have the same sense. Many were nobles due to their offices, conduct, or functions, but *fidalgua* was acquired by inheritance or the royal will, which always involved being recorded in the *Moradias* of the Royal Household (a book with the names of those who received a type of allowance).

In Spain the belittling of status of *fidalgo* refined the noble hierarchy in the sixteenth century with the Statute of Grandeur, the en masse creation of titles and bureaucratization of the granting of habits of military orders, who in the seventeenth century divided “nobles and grandees, who in the future would be the only ones seen by the masses as nobles, knights and *fidalgos*.” (Domínguez Ortiz, 1992, p.190). A differentiation was created between titles following the creation of the rank of *Grandeza* (Grandee) which involved specific powers and privileges for those who received it. For those who were ennobled the real distinction consisted in obtaining the rank of Grandee of Spain, since this was a very well defined group of the aristocracy, with a significant socio-political weight in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Carrillo, 1998, p.32-52). In Portugal, “The Grandees ... are the Dukes, Marquis and Earls, who like the Grandees of Castile, who with many other prominences can present themselves to the King” (Bluteau, s.d., t.IV, p.121). This description indicates that, unlike Spain where the monarch awarded the Grandee title, in Portugal it was inherent in the possession of title. While in Spain there were

many with titles, only a minority were Grandees, in Portugal, where few were entitled, all were Grandees.

During the *Ancien Regime* aristocracies arranged in their countries manners of living, enjoying, and demonstrating their difference and superiority in relation to the rest of society. What resulted “was undeniable to all the men of the sixteenth century, the development of a noble culture based on the assumption of social prestige.” (Guillén, 2007, p.39). The use of the terms *culture* and *prestige* gives meaning to “a series of daily practices and the existence of a standards of behavior, of social and political strategies perceptible to all spheres” (ibidem, p.39). In other words, “nobility is a cultural and acculturation model for the rest of society; in short, a way to produce a social world” (ibidem, p.39), a mode that manifested the strength of an ideology used to legitimate and reinforce the ties which unite it to society and which give meaning to it. This aristocratic mode of living results from the fact that in every society there existed “some principles or values by which the phenomenon of integration is produced which makes possible the very existence of society and efficiently contributes to its conservation” (Maravall, 1989, p.16). Similarly, according to Maravall, the existence and maintenance of a social group results from the conservational functions exercised and the compensatory retributions received. Three connected elements – integration values, conservational functions, and compensatory retributions – allowed the existence of a status where each individual is located together with those who occupy equivalent functions and possess a social role which determines with a certain homogeneity what each person does with these components. In addition, they permit the requirement of the recognition of the prestige resulting from the social position occupied or the accommodation, in its absence, of those who do not have it, and in consonance with what has been said, the members of the various social groups received compensation proportional to their status.

Jonathan Dewald, in a study based on England and France, highlights that, despite being profoundly conservative and reverent in regard the past, the aristocracy produced and enjoyed a culture which went beyond the *Ancien Regime*, a reflection in part of their flexibility towards the new cultural currents to which they showed great receptivity. In the 1500s, the aristocracy saw itself obliged to study due to the demands of political life: “These men read because they served the government. They needed to use the written word and were familiar with the law and with the widest terms of the political debate” (Dewald, 2004, p.217), making it even clearer, even for those with titles, “that education was a way to obtain power and honor” (ibidem, p.219).

Stone, analyzing English society, highlighted its differences with the European continent, pointing to the distinctions between the two societies and the specificities of the English aristocracy resulting from

the entrance of commercial wealth, the orientation of foreign policy to the promotion of economic interests, the influence of the interest generated by the East and West Indies over the House of Commons, the heavy taxation burden supported by the landed nobility, the importance of investment in social funds and the Bank of England, the relative freedom from personal oppression and the economic misery of the peasant ... (Stone, 1985, p.45)

These traits explain the movement of English elites to expand and extend the resources invested in the education which gave their sons an intellectual preparation suitable for the new demands of service to the British monarchy, increasingly requiring intellectual and administrative talents rather than military specialists. The ethos of the English nobility did not only valorize family origin, rather this social quality had to be associated with a virtue involving more than devotion to God and the Church, or just moral rectitude, but also the possession and dominion of technical knowledge, including “erudition, knowledge of languages and history ... since only by acquiring this new preparation could the nobility qualify to serve the Prince in both war and peace” (Stone, 1985, p.300). This involvement with cultural life in the *Ancien Regime* created changes in their lifestyle, with the “progressive interest of nobles of the Modern Age in intimacy” (Dewald, 2004, p.232) acquiring growing value, which Stone called “affective individualism,” and, particularly among the English and French, led to conduct which sought to “affirm the ethics of ‘individual merit’ in the nobility” (Monteiro, 2011, p.137), although still associated with royal service.

In Spain we can find “the devastating effects of money” (Soria Mesa, 2007, p.213) used to describe the social ascension of the aristocracy, acknowledging a constant and well resolved fight between change and continuity, the clash between immobile theorizing about *Ancien Regime* society and facts that indicate transformation, ascension, decline, integration, and social osmosis. Nevertheless, while there were many paths to aggrandizement, to receiving title, and to becoming a Grandee – purchase of offices, service to the monarch, formation of *majorats*, etc. –, all involved, depended on, or were resolved through monetary values. The crown expanded the aristocracy from the sixteenth century onwards⁴ using not only its power to make nobles or to concede

honors – habits of military orders, lordships, or titles – in exchange for services, but, “it would concede them also (and above all) in exchange for pecuniary services” (Molina Puche, 2009, p.224). A large part of the titles granted by the Hapsburgs involved pecuniary values.⁵ The explicit sale of *fidalgua*, for various reasons, was small,⁶ but indirect sales occurred, remunerating services or paying debts, for example, of creditors which the difficulties of the Royal Treasury had led to bankruptcy (Domínguez Ortiz; Alvar Ezquerro, 2005, p.169), something not encountered in other places.

Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro conceived of the noble manner of living and leading society as the *ethos* of the aristocracy of the Portuguese court⁷ which he saw as being based in the royal service and household. As a result, the system of paying for services, founded on royal *benesse*, was the path followed in Portugal by *fidalgos* desiring aggrandizement and titles. It was the path used by the aristocratic houses to expand by controlling court services, overseas conquests, war, embassies, and in other spaces of power. This conduct extended throughout all of society during the *Ancient Regime*, and the other social sectors sought in the Portuguese king payment for services carried out. From a simple resident in Bahia who asks for two places as nuns for his daughters,⁸ to *fidalgos* who for generations had relatives who served kings, like the governors who we will look at, requests for *mercies* were sent to a monarch who, in accordance with the stratification and corporate order in vigor, and the social position of the petitioner, might or might grant it.

In Portugal social aggrandizement was the result of royal mercies which paid for services provided, and after the Restoration this involved the country's overseas possessions.⁹ There was no sale of offices¹⁰ or, in an indirect or hidden way, of titles, for amongst other reasons because the number of titles was reduced.¹¹ Social ascension and aggrandizement were obtained through services provided to the monarchy, since serving the king in the expectation of achieving mercies (either economic or honorific) was the structuring conduct of political relations between the kings of Portugal and their subjects (Olival, 2008, p.389), since, “in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a unanimity about royal duty in paying for services” (Olival, 2001, p.25). For this reason, “it was almost always through royal donations that the great aristocratic houses accumulated new sources of income and only secondarily through marriages or the purchase of goods” (Monteiro, 2007, p.90), since they depended “more on lordly rights, tithes, the *censo* and emphyteutic leases [granted by the king] than the revenue from the large properties linked to *majorat* (*mayorazgo* in Spanish) they possessed around Lisbon and the south

of Portugal” (Monteiro, 2009, p.145), which composed only one fifth of their revenues.

This crucial role of the Portuguese monarchy in the ordering of the social space occupied by the aristocracy since in the fifteenth century due to the “*Lei Mental* [literally mental law], the awarding of titles, the forums of the residents of the royal household, treatment systems, beginning of curialization” (Cunha; Monteiro, 2010, p.48) reinforced “the centrality of the crown, as the principal body which granted mercies and recruited military, administrative and political services” (ibidem, p.48). More than the Spanish, the Portuguese monarchy had resources to distribute to lordships and *comendas*, in addition to the fact that “through the *Lei Mental*, lordships donated by the crown never lost their nature and could revert to it, on the one hand, while on the other the *comendas* of military orders were more numerous in the kingdom of Portugal” (ibidem, p.49). Nevertheless, in relation to intermediate and high-ranking offices – councils, governments in European territories, diplomacy, wars and conquests –, their number in Portugal was lower than in Spain. In Portugal “ascension in the noble pyramid only occurred through service to the crown whose remuneration was translated into revenue, titles, and other distinctions” (ibidem, p.50), which permitted the monarchy to prolong in time the control exercised by the aristocracy over positions in Portugal and its conquests.

Intimately linked to service to the monarchy, another element in the Portuguese nobility’s way of life was the household, “understood as a coherent set of symbolic and material goods, to whose reproduction all those born into it or who depended on it were obliged.”¹² The aristocracy in Portugal began to strongly organize itself through noble houses in the second half of the sixteenth century, when a profound competition began among them for status, assets and power. For this reason, the house implied obligations and strategies which involved all born into it, such as obedience to the male biological succession, avoiding the risks of incorporation by other houses, and achieving aggrandizement through services to the monarchy. Various forms of strategies were used, but in all of them the intention was to favor the house. This led to the effort to monopolize offices of the republic, provide services, receive royal donations, and seek longer lives for these donations, extending them to successors, encouraging civil activities and exploring the possibilities of the ecclesiastic career for celibate second born children. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, through royal donations, the aristocratic houses expanded their sources of revenue. However, the receipt and accumulation of benefits,

recurrently demanded the services of generations, as we can perceive in the *fidalgos* sent to the State of Brazil after 1640, who will be looked at below.

The Portuguese aristocratic houses, reinforcing their particularities, reproduced patterns of distinction throughout the *Ancien Regime*, perceptible in their expenses which, showing patterns of behavior which exhibited distinction and social superiority, continued to be made most often with the servants, the table and the stable.¹³ The “opulence of the tableware, the size of the retinues, the quality and ornaments of mounts and transport were marks of the place which each one had in the social hierarchy” (Cunha; Monteiro, 2011, p.228). In addition, these were expenses which were different from those of the aristocracies of other monarchies, so that “the Portuguese court of modern times was distinguished by its lack of ostentation and by constituting a space with less formalism than in other palace spaces in Western Europe” (Cardim, 2011, p.198). A reflection of this was education costs. According to Cunha and Monteiro, “what was paid for some things could not be spent on others.” We can add to this statement that expenditures reflected choices made as a result of, amongst other things, options based on priorities. According to Stone, while the English aristocracy gave priority to expenses on education, the figures in Portugal demonstrate another priority, and for this reason those with titles, or their successors and the successor of ancient houses, who were the authors of literary or similar texts between 1600 and 1830, on average only accounted for 13% of the total.

We now move to the analysis of the *fidalgos* who rendered service to the Portuguese monarchy as governors-general in the State of Brazil during the first 60 years of the Braganine dynasty, reconstructing their social trajectories before and after acting as governors of this American conquest, identifying their social and family origins, military careers, and their presence on the councils of the monarchy, looking at how their own and their houses’ social status increased due to the services carried out for the Braganine monarchy.

FAMILY ORIGINS AND *FIDALGUIA* OF THE POST-RESTORATION GOVERNORS OF THE STATE OF BRAZIL

The 15 *fidalgos* studied were governors-general of the State of Brazil between the Restoration and the end of the reign of d. Pedro II.¹⁴ In addition to the social position of *fidalgo* (Cunha; Monteiro, 2005, p.191-252) they enjoyed an elevated social position in the society of their epoch.¹⁵ These *fidalgos* went

to the State of Brazil because the monarch “chose them for offices, the government of the republic, the Men, with illustrious ancestors and coming from the ancient nobility” (Sampayo, 1754, p.346-347). Since “the office of King was in force over the preservation and rule of their vassals” (Parada, 1644, fol 34v.), the most qualified vassals had to assist the king “in the administration of justice and the defense of the Kingdom... without which political life in its perfection could not be conserved; it thus seems necessary that each one refrains himself within the limits of the office to what nature created” (ibidem, fol. 34v.).

After all, “the perfection of the republic, and of the same men, consists in each one occupying himself in the office proper for his state” (ibidem, fol. 35), since “the adornment of kingdoms, the credit of Monarchies was the nobility” (Sampayo, 1754, p.2), those who ennoble a government “are the nobles who assist him; without the nobility what will be lacking the illustriousness of the republic, all the majesty of the court, and all the retinue of a Prince” (ibidem, p.2-3).

According to Monteiro, we can, albeit within certain limits recognized by him, identify at the top of the social structure, as the “first ranking nobility of the kingdom,” a set of *fidalgos* almost all of whom resided at the Court and were formed “of around 150 landholders, *comendadores* and holders of palatine status, at the top of which were 50 of the houses of the Grandees of the kingdom” (Monteiro, 2001, p.253), including in this group those who had “the towns and their jurisdictions,” followed by the *alcaidarias-mores* [similar to Lord Mayoralties], (especially those of the Crown and the House of Bragança)” (Olival, 2001, p.140). In summary, the highest ranking Portuguese *fidalgua* during the *Ancien Regime* was the social group possessing various titles, privileges, and goods, who consisted of landholders (towns and jurisdictions), *comendadores*, holders of offices in the royal household, and the *alcaides mores*, while at the top of this hierarchy were the holders of titles, the Grandees of the kingdom.

Based on this criteria, we will argue below that those who governed the State of Brazil between 1640 and 1702 came from the highest part of Portuguese society, since as we will show they were *fidalgos* by inheritance and belonged to the families possessing goods, titles, and their own jurisdictions of hereditary *fidalgos* (see Cosentino, 2012). We will also see that due to their careers of service they received *mercies* which aggrandized and ennobled them, as well as their houses.

All 15 governors were undeniably born *fidalgos* and into elevated social positions. We reached this conclusion mapping their social trajectories,

careers, and the insertion in the governmental institutions of the Portuguese monarchy of their parents and grandparents, as well as of their wives and the latter's parents and grandparents.¹⁶

The parents, grandparents, and the 15 governors had *comendas*. In the case of the wives, 12 were daughters and 11 were also granddaughters of holders of *comendas*.¹⁷ 13 members of the governors' families, or their wives', were *alcaldes mores*,¹⁸ and in addition to their relatives, six of the governors had *alcaldarias*, some of them accompanied by *comendas*.¹⁹ Ten relatives had titles, three of the governors and seven of their wives, as well as various relatives who exercised functions and held positions of influence in the decision-making dynamics of court and the government. Also of relevance is the presence of relatives of the governors and their wives in the Council of State, while their presence in the Royal Household is very significant. In the Council of State were seven relatives, four of the governors and three of their wives. The proximity of the families with the monarch is representative in terms of the number of the members of these families – 18 relatives of the governors and their wives – in functions in the Royal Household, since “the possibility of communicating directly with the royal in person, since this could materialize in the capacity to influence the judgment of the king, as well as the possibility to receive greater rewards for the services provided” (Cardim, 2002, p.25), was of great importance.

In other words, the proximity of families to the monarch allowed privileged access and favorable conditions to ask for mercies for their own Houses. An example of this was Mathias da Cunha, a little known person, but with a career in the monarchy and Portuguese Empire suitable to his social origin and consistent with the position of his House. Grandson of d. Antão de Almada,²⁰ one of those who proclaimed d. João IV as king of Portugal, Mathias da Cunha followed a military career and participated in the principal battles against Spain. Beginning in Entre Douro e Minho,²¹ he was later governor of the cavalry of Campo Maior in Alentejo. He participated in the final battles of the War of the Proclamation which led to peace with Spain. These services explained in part his nomination to the Captaincy of Rio de Janeiro.²² Returning to Portugal he received a *comenda* of the Order of Christ²³ and continued his military career, being “nominated by his majesty general of artillery of the province of Entre Douro e Minho and governor of the same province...”²⁴ He was made a member of the Council of State²⁵ by d. Pedro II and in 1687 was appointed governor-general of the State of Brazil.²⁶

To this successful military career we can add his family relations and the social and political insertion of his house. As well as being the grandson of an

important proclaimer of the king in 1640, his paternal and maternal families contained had various relatives with positions in the Royal Household,²⁷ including his eldest brother, Manoel da Cunha, who “succeeded in the Majorat and house of his father, he was the *vedor* (auditor) of Queen D. Marie-Francoise the first wife of King Pedro II.”²⁸ We believe that while the career of Mathias da Cunha explains the positions and mercies received, the positions occupied by his House played a relevant role, even representing a family expansion strategy adopted for second sons such as him.

We will now move on to analyze the careers of these governors to understand their trajectories and their social ascension.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CAREERS AND SOCIAL TRAJECTORY OF THE GOVERNORS-GENERAL

The most important services rendered after 1640, due to the political scenario faced by the Bragantine monarchy, were the defense of Portuguese sovereignty, the survival of its dynasty, and the preservation of crucial regions of their overseas empire. War and diplomacy in Europe and the empire, on the frontiers of the kingdom and overseas, were the fundamental activities at this moment, and the governors who came to the State of Brazil between 1640 and 1702 occupied various functions and carried out services in these areas.

Initially, it should be highlighted that five of the governors-general (1/3) (see Valladares, 1995, p.103-136) participated directly or indirectly in the Restoration. Antonio Teles da Silva (Meneses, 1751, t.1, p.107) and d. Jerônimo de Ataíde, Earl of Atouguia (ibidem, p.107) were proclaimers of the new king; d. Antonio Luís de Sousa, 2nd Marquis of Minas, was the son of a proclaimer, d. Francisco de Sousa (ibidem, p.109). Mathias da Cunha was the grandson, on the maternal side, of d. Antão de Almada,²⁹ proclaimer and later the ambassador sent to England by d. João IV. Finally, Francisco Barreto de Meneses was the son-in-law of João Rodrigues de Sá e Meneses, 3rd Earl of Penaguião (ibidem, p.108), also a proclaimer of the Bragança dynasty.

Among the governors there existed family ties: d. Jerônimo de Ataíde, Earl of Atouguia, and Francisco Barreto were married to daughters of the Earls of Penaguião: the former with the daughter of the second earl, the latter with the daughter of the third. Roque da Costa Barreto and d. João de Lencastre were married with sisters – Luísa Antónia de Portugal and Maria Teresa Antónia de Portugal – daughters of d. Pedro de Almeida, governor of Angola and

Pernambuco. Moreover, Câmara Coutinho married a maternal cousin of João de Lencastre (Gouvêa, 2005, p.181-197). Alexandre de Sousa Freire and d. António Luís de Sousa had in common Álvaro Pires da Távora, Lord of the Majorat of Caparica, father of the wife of Sousa Freire, d. Joana de Távora e Lima, and maternal grandfather of the wife of d. António Luís de Sousa, d. Maria Madalena de Noronha. Finally, António Luís de Souza Telo de Menezes, Marquis of Minas, was initially married to d. Maria Manuel de Vilhena, daughter of the Marquis of Montalvão, from which there was no issue, and the second time with d. Eufrazia Filipa de Noronha, daughter of the Earl of Torre.

Ten governors (2/3) exercised various positions overseas. Before or after governing the State of Brazil they exercised functions in Africa, Asia or the Americas. Through the state of India passed António Teles da Silva,³⁰ António Teles de Meneses,³¹ António de Sousa Meneses,³² d. Vasco de Mascarenhas and António Luís da Câmara Coutinho. António Teles da Silva, António Teles de Meneses e António de Sousa Meneses were Captains of India ships,³³ while the highest position in the Portuguese empire, the governor of the state of India, was held by d. Antonio Teles de Meneses, d. Vasco de Mascarenhas and António Luís da Câmara Coutinho.³⁴

Some of the governors also exercised positions in other Asian parts of the Portuguese empire. António Teles de Meneses³⁵ and d. Vasco de Mascarenhas³⁶ were captains of the “fortress of Diu [who] after those of Malacca and Ormuz had been lost”³⁷ held in the hierarchy of the “Great offices which Your Majesty provides,”³⁸ the third position in importance after the Viceroyalty of the state of India, and the Captaincy of Sofala.

In Africa, d. Jorge de Mascarenhas, Marquis of Montalvão,³⁹ and Alexandre de Sousa Freire⁴⁰ were in Tangier and Mazagan. Also in African territories, d. João de Lencastre was governor and captain general of the Kingdom of Angola, which “Outside the Kingdom apart from India” came after the governorship of the State of Brazil.⁴¹

Some passed through Portuguese America before exercising the office of governor-general. The most important was the *Armada* of the Earl of Torre, in which there participated d. João Rodrigues de Vasconcelos e Sousa,⁴² Francisco Barreto de Meneses,⁴³ d. Vasco de Mascarenhas⁴⁴ and Antonio de Sousa Meneses. This fleet was a powerful squadron consisting of 33 Portuguese and Spanish vessels which left Lisbon on 7 September 1638 (Varnhagen, 2002, p.159). “Despite the losses, to disease or desertion, which occurred during the ten months spent in Bahia” (Boxer, 1973, p.133), the fleet “with the reinforcements received from Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and the Azores, when it

reached Pernambuco on 19 November 1639, had a total of 86 ships, transporting approximately 10,000 men” (ibidem, p.133). The Dutch were victorious after a series of naval battles in January 1640 along the coast of Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte” (Mello, 2007, p.47). The Earl of Torre returned to Bahia and part of his fleet was sent to the Caribbean, marking the total failure “of the only great attempt by the Austrians from Madrid to restore the Northeast” (ibidem, p.47). The presence of Portuguese *fidalgos* in this venture, despite its failure, had later counterparts in the Bragantine government, as we can see in the charter of António de Sousa Meneses for the general governorship of the State of Brazil, which states:

embarking ... in the year of six hundred and thirty-eight in the [armada] of the earl of Torre, going with it to Bahya, and Pernambuco, on whose coast finding himself in the battles which for the space of four days were fought in front of Itamaraca island with the Hollanders, he was hit by a cannonball in the right arm, fighting valiantly in the forecastle of his galleon castle...⁴⁵

Francisco Barreto de Meneses, Mathias da Cunha and Câmara Coutinho, in different scenarios, exercised government of the captaincies in the State of Brazil. After the 1638-1639 armada Francisco Barreto returned to the State of Brazil as General Field Marshall to command the fight against the Dutch in the Northeast, later becoming governor of the captaincy of Pernambuco. At the end of the seventeenth century, when the South Atlantic and Portuguese America were of increasing importance, Mathias da Cunha governed the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro, and Antônio Gonçalves da Câmara Coutinho the captaincy of Pernambuco. These two captaincies had their importance registered in the document “Important Posts that Your Majesty provides,”⁴⁶ and alongside the captain of Rio de Janeiro, the following is stated: “this post is more reputed because, despite the fact that it is subordinated to someone else, straight after Angola, none of the other posts have more repute in relation to the goodness of the earth and the utilities it is reputed for.”⁴⁷

The career of the 15 governors we are studying also involved the exercise of positions of command in the Portuguese military (see Cosentino, 2012). More significant still is the fact that 11 of them were members of the Council of War.

We cannot ignore what the Portuguese monarchy was facing and that the governments of d. João IV, d. Afonso VI and d. Pedro II were marked by military tension and threats to Portuguese sovereignty. It was a scenario which in

Portugal and its overseas possession demanded that the Portuguese *fidalgos* exercise military functions and participate in wars. The remuneration of services at this moment involved not only overseas services, but principally the defense of the Braganine restoration. However, previous military experience did not imply that their functions as governors-general would be restricted to the military field. Serving in Portuguese armies gave them the experience of command and qualified them to hold the position appropriate to their social origin, such as the governor-general of the State of Brazil.

The Restoration led to a reorganization of Portuguese military forces. Each province of the kingdom became a strategic unit of command led by the king through the Council of War, under the command of the governors of arms of each province (Hespanha, 2004, p.175). The region of the greatest strategic importance was Alentejo, followed by Minho, Beira, Trás-os-Montes, Estremadura and Algarves (ibidem, p.30). Also at this moment the military hierarchy restructured, with the most important ranks being that of *mestre de campo general* (roughly equivalent to major-general)⁴⁸ – the rank of 14 of the *fidalgos* we are analyzing – and that of governor of arms of the province,⁴⁹ a command held by eight of them.

The majority of the governors we are analyzing spent time in two of most important provinces of Portugal, Alentejo and Entre Douro e Minho, exercising command positions in these two regions, as well as participating in the principal battles in the war against the Spanish, experiencing these events as protagonists. They served in Alentejo at crucial moments for the consolidation of the Braganças, when “the great battles followed one after the other: the siege and Battle of Linhas de Elvas in 1658-1659; the Battle of Ameixial in 1663; the attack in Beira on Castelo Rodrigo in 1664; and the final battle, Montes Claros, in 1665, near Estremoz” (Gouveia; Monteiro, 1998, p.176). Alexandre de Souza Freire (who joined the Council of War in 1663 “as he had seen here in Beja when the enemy were encamped in Alentejo” – Macedo, 1940, p.188), Roque da Costa Barreto,⁵⁰ the Marquis of Minas,⁵¹ Mathias da Cunha⁵² and d. João de Lencastre⁵³ participated in these fundamental campaigns.

There were also those who held positions in the Armada,⁵⁴ among them Admiral⁵⁵ which, according to Bluteau, “In the past in Portugal, as now in France and in other kingdoms, the Admiral was the General of the sea, or of the Royal Armadas” (Bluteau, s.d., t.1, p.271). Among the obligations and privileges of the Admirals were “dividing maritime prizes and to the fifth part of them, giving order to ports, and presiding in all matters of sailing, as the prince of it...” (ibidem, p.272). The admiral “is the Captain General of the sea,

with simple and mixed imperium from the King, without appeal to any other person, and presides over all matters of navigation: as the Prince of it...” (Mendoza, 1998, p.166). Among those who exercised commands in the navy we can highlight Câmara Coutinho, who “served in the fleets, and was a Captain” (Sousa, 2007, p.357).

SOCIAL QUALIFICATION AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE: SOME CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, all 15 governors studied held *comendas*, at least five of them owned land,⁵⁶ and nine of them held had through inheritance, or received during their lives, titles and promises of titles, some only achieved in heirs. The *comendas*, landholdings, and titles gave these *fidalgos* a social position at the top of seventeenth century Portuguese society, since the possession of these benefits involved, in addition to social position, significant incomes, even if we consider that the three distinctions were often enjoyed simultaneously.

Elevated social qualification and the aggrandizement obtained through their careers gave the governors-general of Brazil political influence measurable by their presence in the most important post-Restoration royal councils, the Council of War and the Council of State. They were present in the both councils which at this time carried out the tasks essential for the defense of Portuguese independence and the sovereignty of the Bragantine dynasty: that of War (defense) and the State (diplomacy).⁵⁷

After the Restoration, the Council of War was created for military questions, “establishing a permanent unified command structure, which was regulated on 22 December 1643. It was a royal tribunal” (Hespanha, 2004, p.175) whose functioning followed the collegiate style, with rigorously defied ceremonies and hierarchies. It was concerned with “dispatching questions to the king, responding generals’ letters, appointing officials and military ministers, and evaluating private petitions” (ibidem, p.175). In addition, it was responsible for appointments to the important positions, and the organization, functioning, and provisioning of soldiers and war. In a document from the end of the 1660s,⁵⁸ we can find 17 councilors listed, 13 of them⁵⁹ appointed to the council in the difficult period of 1663-1669, including three of those we are studying: Francisco Barreto, Alexandre de Sousa Freire and Afonso Furtado de Mendonça.

Since the beginning the Portuguese monarchy had functioned by resorting to councils of vassals, assembled at the summons of the king. They were part of the “governing of the kingdom” and helped monarchs perform various tasks related to the exercise of the royal office, carrying out the tasks related to the “political life” of the kingdom (Prestage, 1919). The Council of State performed consultative and decision-making functions, meeting in the royal palace weekly. It did not have a determined number of members and used voting as a decision-making system. The king was not always present, and in these cases the Secretary of State⁶⁰ was responsible for hearing opinions and informing him.

The predominant understanding in *Ancien Regime* Portugal was that of the “usefulness of the council and the need for it” (Parada, 1644, fol. 222v.), and of criticism “of the blindness of those in authority who did not accept council, because it is an error found in our times, not so much of princes, but of superior ministers on whom the government of the republic, and all the Monarchy, most depends” (ibidem, fol. 222v.). For this reason, in the Council of State, “only those Ministers should enter who are as qualified in birth, as stupendous in science; because there peace or war is decided, and from where are appointed the Archbishops, Bishops, and most important positions, and also the places which immediately depend on the other Tribunals” (Castro, 1751, p.103). Councilors are the eyes of the monarch, while the other ministers are the hands: “The eyes keep watch and the hands will do the work for which they were created” (Parada, 1644, fol. 225). Three questions were dealt with in tribunals and about which the ruler received advice. First, was “the conservation and propagation of the state, which is done through the militia”; second was “the administration of public justice which depends on prudence and letters” and finally “private authority and conservation of honor, life, and taste” (ibidem, fol. 223v.). Parada argues about the importance of Council, emphasizing that while the need for receiving advice in questions of war, in those of the “political government on which depends justice and the administration of the republic... you must be very attentive about it,” since where there exist “more time and occasion to deliberate and discuss the difficulties, what they can offer the governing of the republic is still greater,” since “in peace only the council has by itself the weight of the republic, and the easier it is to make enemies surrender, than to quieten them and subject different aims, because the appetites of man... are the ones that fight...” (ibidem, fol. 224).

In this way, in the dynamics of functioning of the synodal politics of the Portuguese multi-continental monarchy, the Council of State was the

politically most important and influential collegiate in this monarchy, deciding all questions related to the Portuguese process of government, giving those who sat on it political power and influence as well as proximity to the monarch. Moreover, the political importance of this synod meant that appointment to the Council of State was accompanied by honor, aggrandizement, and privileges.⁶¹ Nevertheless, as we have highlighted above, more significant than honor, or associated with it, was the possibility of influencing the decisions most relevant to the monarchy. As well as privileges, the *fidalgos* who participated in the Councils of the Portuguese monarchy, notably the Council of State, including the 15 governors who we are analyzing, had power and political influence.

For various reasons, in the historiography of the few studies of these most important officials sent to the State of Brazil, their elevated social ranks has been minimized, masking in this way the ruling dynamic developed in this conquest, an analysis we will make on another occasion. In everything we have argued in this study, we have found that the governors-general sent to the State of Brazil between 1640 and 1702, were, to the contrary of what the historiography has stated, in addition to their elevated social position, thanks to their presence in royal councils, politically influential *fidalgos*, an aspect which has also been minimized in the historiography. Sent to this part of Portugal's American territories were *fidalgos* who occupied an elevated social position and who enjoyed political power in the Portuguese monarchy, influencing its social and political dynamics. The social and political position of those who were the governors-general of the State of Brazil portrayed the importance which this conquest, along with the South Atlantic, was acquiring in this complex and unstable scenario in the second half of the seventeenth century. Therefore, the State of Brazil, not as a colony, but by being part of the Portuguese empire, and an increasingly important part of the multi-continental empire,⁶² was the place where services were provided by a part of the most socially qualified Portuguese *fidalgos*.

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NOTES

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² An example of this is the rewarding by d. José I of the informer of the conspirators against his life: “as those who made this declaration are Plebeians, they shall be made into Nobles by me; as Nobles I will order that they be granted the titles of *Moço Fidalgo* (Young Noble) and *Fidalgo Cavaleiro* (Noble Knight) ... being *Fidalgos* of the above type I will grant them the mercy of titles ...” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p.144).

³ DOMÍNGUEZ ORTIZ, 1992, p.224. Covarrubias indicates that this term is equivalent to the “noble, caste and of ancient lineage” (COVARRUBIAS, 2003, p.591).

⁴ There were 60 for all of Spain in the reign of Carlos V, 205 in 1616, 533 at the beginning of the eighteenth century and more than 1300 at the end of this century (MOLINA PUCHE, 2009, p.224).

⁵ Such as the sale of offices in TOMÁS Y VALIENTE, 1999, p.151-177.

⁶ In a society where the values of nobility were in force, it was dishonorable that the privileged qualifications of a family could be chronologically determined. The truth of nobility was immemorial, according to the treatises of the epoch. In a society with these principles and values, no prestige could be acquired by purchasing *fidalgua*. On the other hand, it was possible, without any cost, to invent an immemorial *fidalgo* origin, making its purchase unnecessary (SORIA MESA, 2007, p.²⁵⁵).

⁷ According to him, “ethos or habitus, meant a ‘system of incorporated mechanisms’ inherited from previous generations, but constantly empowered and redefined in the context of the social practices to which it was orientated” (MONTEIRO, 2007, p.84).

⁸ Bahia – Coleção Luísa da Fonseca – AHU/ACL/CU/005-02, cx. 24, doc. 2837, 20 de julho, ant. 1678.

⁹ One “of the rare paths of access to being a Grandee was the Viceroy in India or Brazil, because in the most restrictive phase (1671-1760), around half of the titles were created in payment for those services” (MONTEIRO, 2007, p.86).

¹⁰ See STUMPF, 2012, p.279-298. This study relativizes sales in relation to lower positions.

¹¹ According to Monteiro, the differences between the Portuguese aristocracy and those of the rest of Europe “should not be thought of linearly in terms of ‘backwardness,’ assuming a single path of evolution and change. Rather it should be analyzed as a dimension of difference, whether Portuguese or Iberian” (MONTEIRO, 2011, p.137).

¹² MONTEIRO, 2011, p.137. For Spain, see: HERNÁNDEZ, 1990, p.416; and ATIENZA HERNÁNDEZ, 1987, p.42.

¹³ CUNHA; MONTEIRO, 2011, p.228. According to them, 56% of expenditure was on the kitchen, servants, and stables, reaching 69% if expenditure with works and taxes is included.

¹⁴ Jorge de Mascarenhas, Marquis of Montalvão (1640-1641); António Teles da Silva (1642-1647); António Teles de Meneses (1647-1649); João Rodrigues de Vasconcelos e Souza, Earl of Castelo Melhor (1649-1653); Jerônimo de Ataíde, Earl of Atouguia (1654-1657); Francisco Barreto de Meneses (1657-1663); Vasco Mascarenhas, Earl of Óbidos (1663-1667); Alexandre de Souza Freire (1667-1671); Afonso Furtado de Mendonça, Viscount Barbacena (1671-1675); Roque da Costa Barreto (1678-1682); António de Souza Meneses (1682-1684); António Luís de Souza Telo de Menezes, Marquis of Minas (1684-1687); Matias da Cunha (1687-1688); António Luís da Câmara Coutinho (1690-1694); João de Lencastre (1694-1702).

¹⁵ They were hereditary *fidalgos*: “The heroic deeds of ancestors, the Arms of noble Families, for which reason they will gain the important positions, which will be filled, are the clearest demonstration of Nobility. This is derived from grandfathers for their descendants, and the passage of time makes it more illustrious, recognizing in the children the naturalized glory acquired by the parents in the noble blood they will inherit from them” (SAMPAYO, 1754, p.345-346).

¹⁶ There were 15 governors and their 12 wives. For those who married more than once, we used the data of wives who produced children. António Teles da Silva, António de Sousa Meneses and Mathias da Cunha did not marry.

¹⁷ We did not find any reference to the possession of *comendas* of the paternal grandparents of the wife of Montalvão.

¹⁸ The *Alcaide* (warden) was responsible for guarding the castle or fortress swearing “fidelity at the hands of the Kings, with such austerity and scrupulous regalia that the slightest omission in the defense of the place would be punished with the crime of *lese majesty*” (BLUTEAU, s.d., t.I, p.217). Responsibility for defense gave them the possession of *regalia* for this and the *pleito & menagem* in the hands of the monarch (MATTOSON, 1988, p.145). *Alcaides* were “fidalgos on the part of the mother and father.” They made economic gains: “the jails, the penalties for forbidden arms, and those who lived badly, and the excommunicated, gallows, taverns, brothels, and in maritime places, those of the boats and ships that docked in the port, according to tonnage” (BLUTEAU, s.d., t.I, p.217) and a social and political position which gave them importance in the kingdom’s *Cortes*.

¹⁹ These are: d. João Rodrigues de Vasconcelos e Souza, Francisco Barreto de Meneses, d. Vasco Mascarenhas, Afonso Furtado de Mendonça, d. António Luis de Souza Telo de Meneses, and João de Lencastre.

²⁰ D. Antão de Almada was *Comendador da Fronteira* (Commander of the Frontier), one of those who proclaimed d. João IV as king, and ambassador of this monarch in England in the difficult post-1640s period. His daughter d. Antonia was wife of Tristão da Cunha, Lord of the Majorat of Paio Pires.

²¹ ANTT – Registro Geral de Mercês de d. Pedro II, Livro 2(1), fl. 286.

²² ANTT – Chancelaria de d. Afonso VI, Livro 42, fol. 126-126v.

²³ ANTT – Registro Geral de Mercês de d. Pedro II, Livro 2(1), fl. 286.

²⁴ ANTT – Índice do Conselho de Guerra (Decretos 1640-1670) – SANTOS, C.^{el} H. Madureira de. *Catálogos dos decretos do extinto Conselho de Guerra (na parte não publicada pelo General Claudio de Chaby)*. 1^o. vol., reinados de d. João IV a d. Pedro II. Lisboa: Gráfica Santelmo, 1957 (2 de maio de 1685).

²⁵ ANTT – Chancelaria de d. Pedro II, Livro 17, fol. 365-365v.

²⁶ ANTT – Chancelaria de d. Pedro II, Livro 17, fol. 370-371.

²⁷ BNL – Coleção Pombalina – cod. 315, fol. 209-210.

²⁸ BNL – cod. 315, fol. 210.

²⁹ “The initial group of the ‘*Tres Fidalgos*’ was transformed in 1638 into what would be the ‘hard core’ of the plot– ‘the magnates of the conspiracy’ – formed by five individuals: d. Antão de Almada...” (VALLADARES, 1995, p.116).

³⁰ ANTT – Chancelaria de Felipe III, Livro 29, fol. 219v.

³¹ ANTT – Chancelaria de Felipe III, Livro 40, fol. 28-28v.

³² BNRJ – Seção de Manuscritos, 1, 2, 5.

³³ After Vasco da Gama, the *carreira da Índia* (India Run) annually left for India. Initially the position of captain did not exist and “nominated as captains for the ships of the *carreira* were

... the principal *fidalgos* who were serving in the Indian fleet” (MATOS, 1994, p.124). Later, the position “came to be given to *fidalgos* as reward for services given, and in certain circumstances it could be transmitted and bought” (p.124). No nautical knowledge was required of the captains, since they were accompanied by experienced commanders and pilots. The captain had supreme command over everything and everyone and could also “transport without restrict a certain number of boxes, called ‘boxes of liberty,’ or bales with various dimensions and values whose number was proportional to the function of the crewmember” (p.124).

³⁴ About Câmara Coutinho: SANTOS, 2009, p.177-179.

³⁵ ANTT – Chancelaria de Felipe III, Livro 26, fol. 119, 6 de junho de 1630.

³⁶ ANTT – Chancelaria de d. Afonso VI, Livro 21, fol. 166. About the Earl of Óbidos see ALVES, 2012.

³⁷ BNL – Coleção Pombalina, cod. 653. This BNL document, probably from 1650 (CUNHA; MONTEIRO, 2005, p.208) presents various hierarchies and does not always respect an ordered sequence, for this reason it will only be used as a reference, important but limited. An example can be found on the first page where Tanger and Mazagão appear after the State of Brazil, but when listing part of the South Atlantic, the kingdom of Angola appears after the State of Brazil. These incoherencies – or perhaps not, as we do not know the logic of the author of the list – do not invalidate its immense importance.

³⁸ BNL – Coleção Pombalina, cod. 653.

³⁹ BNL – Coleção Pombalina, cod. 292, fol. 428.

⁴⁰ BNL – cod. 298, fol. 98.

⁴¹ BNL – cod. 653.

⁴² Cartas do 1º Conde da Torre, vol. I. Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 2001, p.266. About the Earl of Castelo Melhor, see ARAUJO, 2012.

⁴³ Cartas do 1º Conde da Torre, 2001, p.466.

⁴⁴ ANTT – Chancelaria de d. João IV, Livro 26, fol. 195.

⁴⁵ BNRJ – Seção de Manuscritos, 1, 2, 5.

⁴⁶ BNL – cod. 653.

⁴⁷ BNL – cod. 653.

⁴⁸ The *mestre de campo general* was responsible for “deploying and ordering practically all of the army, regulating provisions, deploying the army on marches, lodging, battalions, repairing accidents ... knowing whether to attack ...” (ANTT – Manuscritos da Livraria, 1096, fol. 50). For this reason, “it is necessary for this post a soldier who can said that they are consummated in the military art” (ibidem).

⁴⁹ The governors of arms of provinces were the heads of the military structure and “their order is not just related to the militia, but also the peoples and justice of the Province in which they govern, all posts up to *Mestre de Campo* can consult the King, he has authority and war-

rant not just in everything that touches officers of war, but also those of Finance” (ANTT – Manuscritos da Livraria, 1096, fol. 50v.).

⁵⁰ ANTT – Registro Geral das Mercês – Chancelaria de Afonso VI. Livro 29, fol. 116v.-117.

⁵¹ BNRJ – Seção de Manuscritos, 1, 2, 5.

⁵² BNRJ – Seção de Manuscritos, 1, 2, 5.

⁵³ ANTT – Chancelaria de d. Pedro II, Livro 38, fol. 411. Sobre d. João de Lencastre: GOUVÊA, 2005, p.192-197.

⁵⁴ António Teles da Silva, António Teles de Meneses, Afonso Furtado de Mendonça and António Luis da Câmara Coutinho.

⁵⁵ In the reign of Afonso V “there came to exist two admiralties, the Indian and the Atlantic, corresponding to the two large permanent navies in both oceans. The Atlantic had three fleets on active service: One, the *Estreito* (Narrow), which sailed between the coasts of the Algarve and Morocco, another which patrolled the northern coast of Portugal, and a third in the seas around the Azores” (SILVA, 1992, p.188).

⁵⁶ D. João Rodrigues de Vasconcelos e Souza (Lord of Valhelhas e Almendra, ANTT – Chancellery of d. Felipe III, Livro 35, fol. 114-116); d. Jerônimo de Ataíde, Earl of Atouguia (Lord of Peniche, Carnache, Monforte, Vinhais and Lomba and Paço da Ilha Deserta – Felgueiras Gaio); d. Vasco de Mascarenhas, Earl of Óbidos (Lord Salir do Porto); Afonso Furtado de Mendonça, Viscount of Barbacena (jurisdictions and income from the town of Barbacena, ANTT – Chancellery of d. João IV, Livro 26, fol. 310); d. António Luís de Souza Telo de Meneses, Marquid of Minas (Lord of Beringel and Prado).

⁵⁷ “The Councillors of State are implicitly Councillors of War... since without arms the state cannot be preserved; because arms are founded on power, which is the most feared among men... This is true, because Arms and Letters are the two arms of the Monarchy, we can see that Arms are never divided from the state...” (MELLO, 1720, p.20).

⁵⁸ ANTT – Coleção de São Vicente, Livro XXIII, fol. 176-176v.

⁵⁹ Except Salvador Correia de Sá e Benevides, Earl d. Fernando de Meneses, the Earl of Vila Flor and the Earl of Schomberg.

⁶⁰ In the meetings of the Council of State, there was present “one of the secretaries of the king, responsible for taking note of the resolutions to present them to the monarch” (MERÊA, 1965, p.7). For a more recent study, see: COSTA, 2008.

⁶¹ Roque da Costa Barreto, ANTT – Registro Geral das Mercês. Chancelaria de Afonso VI. Livro 29, fol. 117v.-118.

⁶² On the other hand, we want to register “that the state of India still granted ‘honor and advancement,’ in other words, it was still the model of social recognition and the target of material progress” as shown by Luís Frederico Dias Antunes in ANTUNES, 2012, p.217-242.

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