

“For Fear of the Holy Office”

Accusations from Minas Gerais
at the Inquisition Court (18th century)

“Por temer o Santo Ofício”

As denúncias de Minas Gerais no Tribunal da Inquisição (século XVIII)

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RESUMO Este artigo trata da identificação e análise das denúncias inquisitoriais nas Minas Gerais setecentistas registradas nos fundos dos *Cadernos do Promotor e Documentação Dispersa do Tribunal da Inquisição de Lisboa* domiciliados no Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT) em Portugal. Ele tem por objetivo construir um panorama quantitativo da natureza dos delitos, dos períodos de incidência e das regiões, cotejando os dados com a recente historiografia sobre a ação do Santo Ofício

Received: 6 August 2015 | Approved: October 2015

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-87752016000100009>

Varia Historia, Belo Horizonte, vol. 32, n. 58, p. 203-224, jan/abr 2016

na América Portuguesa. Para tanto, procedemos ao levantamento dos casos delatados, de 1692 a 1821, inserindo-os nos seus respectivos delitos previstos nos títulos dos Regimentos Inquisitoriais, para dimensionar um panorama da ação inquisitorial, da malha de seus agentes e dos envolvidos na teia inquisitorial nos territórios das Minas Gerais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Inquisição, denúncias, Minas Gerais (século XVIII)

ABSTRACT This article identifies and analyzes the accusations set down in the Lisbon Inquisition's *Cadernos do Promotor* (Prosecutor's Notebooks) and *Documentação Dispersa* (Miscellaneous Documents) relating to Minas Gerais. These sources are deposited in Portugal's Torre do Tombo (ANTT) national archives in Lisbon. The article aims to build a quantitative overview of the nature of the accusations, the time periods, and the regions, comparing results with recent historiography of the Holy Office's work in Portuguese America. From this perspective, it assembles the cases, from 1692-1821, placing them in their respective categories under the Inquisitorial Regulations to give an overview of the work of the Inquisition, its network of agents and the people caught in the inquisitorial web in Minas Gerais.

KEYWORDS Inquisition, accusations, Minas Gerais

INTRODUCTION

It is by now a well-known fact that the historiography of colonial Minas Gerais plays an important and decisive role in research on Brazil. To a large extent, this resulted from a shift in the 1980s from orthodox Marxist historiography towards the new influences in the history of the *Annales* and the renovated Marxism of the British School, which have disseminated new themes, subjects, and the use of extensive support from documentary sources. Together with this theoretical and methodological revolution, the expansion of graduate programs in Brazil has led to a wealth of research that has unearthed a diverse range of themes covering the entire historiography of Minas, from "power relations, the rebellions and

inconfidência revolt movement, slavery, and the world of social, family, quotidian and material life to culture and religion” (Furtado, 2009, p.120).

Of course, religion is the subject that has the greatest impact on cultural approaches in which the concepts of “folk culture and religion” have particular weight, no longer focusing on studies of the Church as an institution but on the differences between prescribed religion and religious practice (Schwartz, 2009). In this regard, one of the most exciting avenues of research involves the activities of the Inquisition Court, in all its nuances.

Despite significant historiographic output, little progress has been made in investigating the depth and breadth of the reach of inquisitorial activities. This is partly because we do not even have a general overview of the individuals concerned, since we are hampered by the monumental scale of the resources in the Torre do Tombo national archives and lack the research tools to help identify sources.

Ever since the collaboration of Capistrano de Abreu and Antônio Baião in the 1920s, historians have made tremendous efforts to retrieve information from the codices produced by the Inquisition’s activities in Portuguese America. Scholars such as Eduardo Prado, José Gonçalves, Rodolfo Garcia, Eduardo França, Sonia Siqueira, Amaral Lapa and, more recently, Ronaldo Vainfas, have made a decisive contribution to developing this overview, bringing to light important manuscripts produced by all three Inquisitorial visitations to Brazil.¹ Anita Novinsky

1 We are only citing the scholars who have transcribed documentary sources related to the activities of the Portuguese Inquisition in Brazil, particularly regarding the three visitations published in: ABREU, Capistrano de. *Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil pelo licenciado Heitor Furtado de Mendonça*. Denúncias da Bahia – 1591-1593. São Paulo: Eduardo Prado, 1925; ABREU, Capistrano de. *Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil pelo licenciado Heitor Furtado de Mendonça*. Confissões da Bahia – 1591-1592. Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguet, 1935; PRADO, Eduardo. *Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil*. Denúncias da Bahia (1591-1593). São Paulo: Eduardo Prado, 1925; MELLO NETO, José Antônio Gonçalves de. *Primeira Visitação do Santo Ofício às Partes do Brasil*. Denúncias e confissões de Pernambuco (1593-1595). Recife: FUNDARPE – Diretoria de Assuntos Culturais, 1984; MELLO NETO, José Antônio Gonçalves de (org.). *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício às partes do Brasil pelo licenciado Heitor Furtado de Mendonça*. Confissões de Pernambuco. Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 1970; GARCIA, Rodolfo. Introdução. Livro

has taken this further with the series “Fontes para a História de Portugal e do Brasil” (“Sources for the History of Portugal and Brazil”) by mapping the names of the New Christians implicated and arrested by the Holy Office (Novinsky, 2002; 2007). However, despite these auspicious initiatives, we have not produced an overview of those involved in the Court’s activities in Portugal’s overseas colonies. This article intends to contribute to that undertaking by determining the scale of the Holy Office’s activities through the location and analysis of accusations found in the archives of the *Cadernos do Promotor* (Prosecutor’s Notebooks; CP) and *Documentação Dispersa do Tribunal da Inquisição de Lisboa* (Miscellaneous Documents of the Inquisition Court of Lisbon; DD) regarding Minas Gerais.

The *Cadernos do Promotor* contain a vast series of documents that mainly consist of accusations originating from several parts of Brazil that were referred to the Inquisition Court in Lisbon. Organized chronologically from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, and containing an average of 300 to 600 folios, these loose manuscripts were bound in the form of a codex containing parts of inquisitorial procedures, such as reports, summaries, investigations and fragments of processes. In this collection of 61 codices there are 37 for the period between 1692 and 1802 containing a total of 384 accusations related to Minas Gerais. The *Documentação Dispersa* consists of 74 boxes that contain loose folios consisting of 4,004 references to Brazil, of which 605 originated from Minas Gerais. Likewise, this collection predominantly contains accusations interspersed with summaries and confessions, concentrated largely

das denúncias que se fizeram na visitação do Santo Ofício à cidade do Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos do Estado do Brasil, no ano de 1618 – inquisidor e visitador o licenciado Marcos Teixeira. *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, tomo XLIX, 1927. p.75-198; FRANÇA, Eduardo de Oliveira; SIQUEIRA, Sônia. Introdução. Segunda visitação do Santo Ofício às partes do Brasil pelo inquisidor e visitador licenciado Marcos Teixeira. Livro das Confissões e ratificações da Bahia – 1618-1620. *Anais do Museu Paulista*. São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, tomo XVII, 1963. p.121-547; LAPA, Amaral. *Livro da Visitação do Santo Ofício da Inquisição do estado do Grão-Pará (1763-1769)*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1979; VAINFAS, Ronaldo. *Confissões da Bahia*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997.

in the period between 1780 and 1820.² Housing a total of 989 accusations originating in Minas Gerais, from the beginning of its colonization at the turn of the eighteenth century to the end of the Inquisition Court in the nineteenth century, these archives are therefore mandatory sources for scholars because the identification and analysis of these manuscripts makes it possible to establish the setting of inquisitorial activities, from its control network, made up of its agents, to those caught up in the inquisitorial web in Portugal’s overseas possessions. It is also possible to retrieve a list of names of informers, the accused and others involved – all of whom were entangled by ecclesiastical and inquisitorial agents who pursued investigations on behalf of the Holy Office.³

We have worked towards that end by going through the materials of interest folio by folio to bring to light accusations regarding Minas Gerais in order to present an overview of the nature of the accusations, territorial jurisdiction and timeframe during the long period between 1692 and 1821. In addition to calling attention to the existence of as yet little known documentation that has not even been systematized, the results of the data presented in this article give a very different idea of the magnitude of the role and extent of the Inquisition Court’s activities in Minas Gerais. It maps the gamut of offenses, revealing the motives behind the transgressions of its people and the social, ethnic and cultural diversity of the accused. It shows that the correlation between the number of accused and the instructed processes was noticeably uneven, raising questions about the reasons for this disparity by suggesting

2 The *Cadernos do Promotor* (CP) and *Documentação Dispersa* (DD) are documentary sources on the Lisbon Inquisition Court, and are available online on the website of the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo: <http://antt.dgarq.gov.pt>. For a detailed description of that collection, see FARINHA, 1990, p.157-207.

3 For details on the contents of the charges and the processes of the inquisition identified, see RESENDE; SOUSA, 2015. This is an analytical inventory that describes the accusations and processes, with the following fields: number according to the ANTT page, manuscript number, name of the accuser, basic details of the accuser, the name of the accused, information on the accused, the place where the crime was committed or where the accusations were made, the year of the accusations or when they were referred, and observations. In the end there is a name index of all the individuals charged.

limitations of the mechanisms and/or resistance to the workings of the inquisitorial system.⁴ It also helps realize the effective range of the network of agents that extended into the most remote places, and shows the chronological milestones of the court's action in Minas, ranging from the earliest colonization of the territory to the Inquisition's death rattle in the nineteenth century. It contributes to the study of the Holy Office in Portugal's overseas colonies by presenting an overview that is imperative for determining the extent of the Inquisition's activities in Minas Gerais over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

“FOR CONSCIENCE’ SAKE”: OFFENCES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MINAS GERAIS

The cartography of the *mundi peccati* in Minas enables us to give a general overview of the typology of offenses and their number per period and region, which gives us an overview of the activities and reach of the Holy Office.⁵ That rich wellspring of sources has revealed a Minas Gerais that was occupied by a multicultural population of Europeans, Africans, Amerindians and people of mixed race who brought together practices with different origins. These actors and their practices are the subject of historiographic investigations into their cultural nature and identities, studies that sometimes emphasize the importance of the origins of these groups' traditions and sometimes reinforce the construction of solidarity among them, based on the shared experience of that slaveocratic and socially stratified society (Mott, 1993; Nogueira, 2004; Resende, 2005; Sousa, 2012). Without covering the entire panorama,

4 RESENDE; SOUSA, 2015, p.17.

5 It is important to note that, in order to produce these analytical tables, we took into account the entire range of accusations, from a confession (presentation of guilt) to a summary of testimony from the investigations in which they proceeded to establish an inquisitorial process. Sometimes, they were letters or brief messages in which the commissioner undertook to refer the case officially to the Holy Office. Sometimes it involved just one accused, but sometimes there were several, which is why we have provided a detailed list of everyone concerned.

many of those behaviors and practices were perceived as unorthodox by the Church, which attempted to mold customs and beliefs in accordance with the standards of Catholic doctrine. Within that logic, the episcopal visits, known as “small inquisitions,” played a decisive role as an instrument of control over the faithful by calling on everyone to denounce others or confess their own guilt. Carrying out a mission that was both pastoral and vigilant, the Church kept a close watch on the lives and everyday routines of its parishioners with a view to controlling the territory and its people. Through interrogations, it collected a large variety of offenses: heresy, apostasy, blasphemy, witchcraft, blessing or healing, bigamy, perjury, pimping, bestiality, incest, concubinage, usury, gambling and failure to follow religious precepts (Figueiredo, 2007). The cases on that list that fell outside the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court were promptly referred to the Inquisition Court in Lisbon for examination and judgment. In this sense, through their investigations, the episcopal visits joined forces with the Holy Office in controlling the faith and the observance of spirituality, playing complementary roles and contributing to the control of Minas, a harmonious relationship that has been the subject of pioneering studies on the institutional complementarity and collaboration between the two courts (Boschi, 1987; Figueiredo, 1997; Figueiredo; Sousa, 1987; Sousa, 1999; Feitler, 2007; Santos, 2013). They also reveal a complex and interwoven world of agents of the Faith, family members and commissioners, who played a decisive role in the identification of crimes, the reception of accusations and the delivery of those involved. The activities of this network of court officials has attracted the interest of researchers who have systematically mapped the profiles and the activities of these actors (Calainho, 2006; Rodrigues, 2011).

This panorama of accusations in Minas contains a range of inquisitorial transgressions that go from heresy, blasphemy, contempt, witchcraft, bigamy, solicitation, and sodomy to obstructing the Ministry of the Holy Office and perjury, all of which were offenses under the Inquisitorial Regulations.

Table 1 - Accusations per motive

| Motive | Number |
|--|------------|
| Of heretics and apostates of the Holy Faith. | 31 |
| Of schismatics. | 02 |
| Of blasphemers and those who utter heretical, reckless or scandalous propositions. | 271 |
| Of those who offend or show irreverence toward the Blessed Sacrament on the altar or sacred images or receive the Blessed Sacrament without fasting. | 53 |
| Of witches, sorcerers or diviners who invoke the devil and have a pact with him or use the art of judicial astrology. | 294 |
| Of bigamists | 60 |
| Of those who say mass or hear confession, not being priests. | 04 |
| Of confessors solicitant during the sacrament of confession. | 35 |
| Of those who impede or obstruct the ministry of the Holy Office. | 24 |
| Of those who read or keep books by heretics or of some unholy sect. | 75 |
| Of those who commit the abominable crime of sodomy. | 39 |
| Of those who break the seal of confession. | 25 |
| Of perjury. | 03 |
| No information. | 11 |
| Other. | 62 |
| Total | 989 |

Sources: ANTT, IL, *Cadernos do Promotor and Documentação Dispersa* (1700-1820).

One recurring theme was the issue of New Christians, which is amply discussed in Minas's historiography, including Anita Novinsky's seminal works (2013) on Marranism, whose legacy for colonial society was criticism of the Catholic faith and elements that shaped Enlightenment thinking in the eighteenth century. According to that scholar, the link with New Christians was based less on faith than on the mutual feeling of exclusion and belonging to a different identity from that of the so-called Old Christians.

The first works to observe the participation of the recently converted in the settlement of Minas Gerais focus on understanding the role of New Christians in the discovery of the gold routes, the region's occupation and economic development, and relations between them and their crypto-Judaizing strategies (Salvador, 1992; Fernandes, 2000). New Christians were present among the first pioneers in Minas, and Antônio Rodrigues de Arzão, a well-known explorer, is attributed with the discovery of gold. They actively participated in the process of demarcating routes and building the first camps and towns, working in mining, food production and territorial conquest. They also furnished loans and held posts such as lawyers, doctors, teachers, businessmen, and so forth. Minas was one of the most popular areas for New Christians in the eighteenth century, where some adapted to local customs, attending Mass and Catholic celebrations, while others were laicized, maintaining an apparent acceptance of Christianity but professing their personal beliefs in their own homes (Assisi, 2013). Studies of families reinforce this view, as in the case of Vale and the Nunes brothers (Gorenstein, 2013; Furtado, 2013). The secret society “brotherhood of Faith” was organized in Ouro Preto, and vestiges of its material culture are being investigated by Historical Archaeology projects through excavations of the homes and properties of New Christians (Guimarães, 2013). The 31 accusations against heretics and apostates, including Judaizers, present a highly suggestive range of these behaviors.

Other actors also played leading roles in this inquisitorial setting. In addition to the cultural baggage of European settlers, Amerindians and Africans also took part in this process. Their practices were closely watched by the Church, which undertook surveillance of colonial society, especially to control heresies and superstitions that posed a threat to Catholic doctrine. With regard to magical arts and practices, we have found 294 cases of crimes such as witchcraft, divination and faith healing, which stand out as the most frequently denounced offenses in Minas, like the rest of the colony.

The most important study of magical-religious beliefs and practices in colonial Brazil is the classic work *O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz* (The

Devil and the Land of Santa Cruz; Souza, 2011). This rich study has led to the emergence of further research that has redefined the matter on the basis of fresh approaches and perspectives. Souza seeks to establish the relationship between the practices present in the colony, as well as those observed in the metropolis, considering the processes of cultural hybridity that gave rise to the specificity of colonial religious practice. In her view, magic and sorcery helped ease the suffering that arose from the violence and hardships typical of slave society, and at the same time, maximized conflicts, since these practices were also used to appease angry masters or inflict damage on their property. Blacks and Indians were, par excellence, the foremost healers in the colony and helped overcome all sorts of misfortunes by means of divination, Calundú religious ceremonies, potions and prayers. In this sense, magic did not annul the official religion but maximized the power of the sacred, the object of general fascination due to that which it symbolically represented. This was the case of the Amerindians in Minas Gerais who were accused of witchcraft, among other transgressions, by the episcopal investigations (Resende, 2003; 2005).

Using the documentation on episcopal visits and the *Cadernos do Promotor* of the Lisbon Inquisition, we have sought evidence and testimony regarding magical-religious practices reconstructed in Minas Gerais by the black population, either enslaved or freed, which sought to adapt and survive in the most varied situations of daily life (Nogueira, 2004; Sousa, 2012; Moreira, 2013). It was common to produce amulets, cards and *benzeduras*, which combined prayers, herbal potions, and the use of powders or spells to bend people's will. The "witches" gained renown, and were feared and often punished by the society of which they formed part because they were considered to be experts in the use and knowledge of various plants. These practices appear to be largely associated with blacks and people of mixed race, which does not mean that they did not also belong to the religious universe of the whites in the colony, as was the case with Leandro da Rocha de Oliveira. He sought to cure his ailments with the help of two black men and an Amerindian who, through dance, claimed to speak with the devil. One of the black men made an "incision" in Oliveira's legs, from which he sucked out bones and hair

with his mouth.⁶ Thus, we must consider, as several studies show, that the recreation of magic-religious practices in eighteenth-century Minas should not be viewed as having boundaries that were static but tenuous and deeply fluid (Sousa, 2012). They arose from the intersection of various cultural references, where prayers and Catholic symbols were interpreted and empowered ceremonies of African origin in a plurality of appropriations, in which the individual exercised their freedom to adapt and choose elements that conferred their own meaning.

These studies, which focused on the movement of practices and knowledge, also paid attention to the ways of receiving Catholic doctrine, which was often interpreted in an unorthodox manner. The Church's strict vigilance did not fail to note the sharp tongues of parishioners who criticized Christian dogma, including doctrinal principles. It is striking that blasphemy and propositions (verbal offences) generated the second-highest incidence of accusations. Deemed to be blasphemous and heretical acts, Minas produced 271 accusations in this regard, some of which revealed extraordinary life stories.

One important contribution to the permeability and reception of doctrine is the case study of Pedro de Rates Henequim (Gomes, 1997; Romeiro, 2001). In his propositions, Henequim said that he favored cohabitation, fornication, interpretation of scripture through the cabala, the existence of male and female angels, and the temporary nature of the torments of Hell. He also claimed that God had begun the creation of the world in Brazil and that it was the site of the earthly paradise from which a new empire would arise, based on the ten lost tribes of Israel. Henequim was emblematic in his heretical propositions, but he was not alone. Other researchers have embarked on these prosopographic studies, whose biographical theme, set in its socio-cultural context, has produced a number of promising works due to the varied profiles of their characters.

Although blasphemy and propositions were not always as serious, some indicated very similar topics, such as, the case of Romão do Amaral, whom

6 Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo [ANTT], Inquisição de Lisboa [IL], Documentação Dispersa [DD], cx. 1604 – doc.15136.

the Holy Office accused in the early eighteenth century of uttering “ill-sounding” words and disrespectful sonnets about the laws of the Church (Sousa, 2013). In his speech, there reverberated questions that were prevalent in the colony and constantly reinterpreted by those who were circulating those ideas. Romão, “the poet behind the mountains,” stated, among other things, that the body of Christ was not present at the consecration of the communion, that Our Lady could not have been a virgin after giving birth, that the Pope was a man like any other, and that indulgences were worthless. He also said that God had created men and women so they could have intercourse, and that if Christ considered fornication a sin, He should expect Heaven to be empty. Romão’s irreverence angered the people of Arraial dos Perdões, who beat him and cut off his hand.

Blasphemy and propositions circulated in Minas and were the subject of reflection and reinterpretation by people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. For example, we have the scathing José dos Reis, a resident of Arraial de Santa Luzia, who in 1796 remarked that “God no longer remembered him, nor he, God” and that “he believed that there was no such God, that he had wasted his money on Masses and rosaries of Our Lady and that is what he lacked”.⁷ Or even the misinterpretation by a mulatto who was denounced for stating categorically that “Christ was a mulatto” upon hearing a sermon in church in which the priest professed “Cristus et imolatus.” Creative misunderstandings like this must certainly have echoed in many parts of Minas.⁸

Circulating throughout that region, ideas, blasphemies and proposals were also passed on from hand to hand through a large library of Enlightenment works was condemned by the Holy Office index and the source of uproar and an avalanche of complaints. Books and knowledge gave rise to anxiety and questions regarding the limits and balance of colonial ties, and could instill pride in the settlers. In a clear example of this situation, in Minas Gerais, 52.7% of the libraries of *inconfidência* rebels

7 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1629 – doc.16734.

8 ANTT, IL, Caderno do Promotor [CP] 130, Livro 319, fls.0851-0854, doc.390.

such as Canon Luís Vieira da Silva consisted of secular books, and only 35% of books were linked to the sacred sciences (Villalta, 1997, p.362).

Generally speaking, it was commonplace for books and ideas to circulate amongst the *inconfidência* rebels through loans and discussions of works such as those by Abbé Raynal, among other thinkers who sympathized with the Enlightenment. The reading of books led to inventiveness among their readers, who sometimes subverted their contents. Also, oral, public and private readings were common, which brought about different interpretations, depending on the context and understanding of the interlocutors, including the illiterate. Thus, ideas never ceased to circulate and encourage questions, concerns and challenges.

The list of banned books did not prevent them from circulating in many libraries. Father João Luís de Sousa Saião made 75 accusations that implied the existence of that collection. In 1807, he even denounced his own brother, José Luís de Sousa Saião, for reading a book of poetry by Abbot Paulino.⁹ He went so far as to purchase the banned book *Autorité du Roi* in Lisbon, and on arriving Minas, immediately denounced the bookseller Pedro José Reis.¹⁰ Without a doubt, he must have read it closely during the long Atlantic crossing. His accusations also included Montesquieu’s *Le Temple de Gnide* and Voltaire’s *La Pucelle d’Orléans; Politics*, by Bielfeld, several volumes of the *A History of the People of God*, by Berruyer; the French work, *The Code of Humanity*, as well as the book *Histoire philosophique et politique de établissements du commerce des européens dans les deux Indes*, by Abbé Raynal, and poems by authors such as Bocage and Pope (possibly the British author Alexander Pope).¹¹

Some priests were also involved in other kinds of complaints, and quite serious ones. The offense of soliciting a penitent to engage in vile and sexual acts deeply wounded the institution of the Catholic Church, which in the mid-eighteenth century, embarked on a hunt for solicitants

9 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1615 – doc.15823.

10 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1615 – doc.15823.

11 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1636 – doc.16968; cx.1596 – doc.14907; cx.1630 – doc.16836; cx.1591 – doc.14584.

in Brazil. A seminal work has brought to light 425 cases of priests who desecrated the sacrament of penance and were reported to the Lisbon court between 1610 and 1810 (Lima, 1991). It was vitally important that these offenders be punished to ensure that the quality of the sacrament of confession was guaranteed and the clergy was “reformed” along Tridentine lines, especially with regard to the purity of the faith at the expense of deviations and offenses arising from the “weakness of the flesh.” The 35 cases that we are now presenting give an idea of the greater magnitude and extent of the situation being analyzed, leading to new research on these issues in Minas Gerais (Silva, 2014).¹²

Crimes involving the clergy were not always restricted to a single charge. Father Manoel Macedo, who lived in Macacos, was accused of solicitation and sigilism (revealing the secrets of the confessional). In revenge, he threw feces and urine into the water supply of his parishioners, raging ironically that his excrement “was neither filth nor perversity because he ate good food.”¹³

It is not by chance that the accounts of chroniclers, clergy and administrators give an image of the Brazilian colony that is permeated with portrayals of a miserable, sinful land where moral and sexual disorder reigned supreme. Therefore, it was considered that in Minas, everyone, black and white, lived under lax moral rules, sodomy being the worst of all the sins of the flesh. An abominable sin, the nature of the offense of sodomy has been hotly debated, with replies and rejoinders between authors that range from its heretical character to the defense of a gay subculture. In *Trópico dos Pecados* (Tropic of Sins), Vainfas (2010) writes that sodomy was linked to an attack on the faith when the sexual act was consummated, as it meant that the defendants did not keep Catholic doctrine. Thus, the author sees the association on the part of the inquisitors between the crimes of sodomy and heresy. Mott (2000) has countered that the persecution of *fanchonos* was more linked to an attempt to break up a gay counterculture, which the inquisitors considered an identity

12 See, for example, ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1594 – doc.14724; cx.1584 – doc.14097.

13 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1600 – doc.15042.

and immoral. In this regard, referring to sodomy as essentially heretical would be a mistake, as the sodomites did not commit errors in matters of faith, but committed the “error of desire.” More thorough research is required to understand other meanings of allegations of sodomy without essentializing the nature of the offense – for example, the exceptional case of Manoel José Correia, who escapes the logic of this debate because he was accused of being a sodomite and described as a hermaphrodite, which gives a different perspective in the analysis of this offense.¹⁴

The target of investigation because they violated the sacrament of marriage, bigamy and concubinage revealed a debauched and libidinous lifestyle among the inhabitants of Minas in the view of Catholic morality (Figueiredo, 1997). Of the 60 accusations, one particularly noteworthy charge involves the celebrated case of trigamist Manoel de Sousa, who, after getting married on the island of São Sebastião, had married a second time in Minas Gerais and again, this time changing his name to Antônio Pereira, married a third time in Bahia.¹⁵

The occurrence of “similitudinary bigamy,” an offense in which a priest gets married in violation of the sacrament of his order, revealed the trajectory of Father José Rodrigues Pontes, born in the town of São José in Rio das Mortes County, who was accused of that crime by the Holy Office. Father Pontes justified himself with an “excess of primal affection” for marrying the young Policena, forging for that purpose a papal brief in which he was relieved of his religious vows (Januário, 2013, p.352). The case of Father Pontes confirms the state of appearances of colonial society during the old regime, marked by lax morals and cloaked in superficial morality. The most serious offense, in the Church’s eyes, was that “similitudinary bigamists” put at risk, as alleged heresy, the sacrament of holy orders, corrupting inviolable ecclesiastical obligations, especially celibacy, which represented part of the identity of the clergy and the maintenance of their hierarchy.

14 ANTT, IL, CP 134, livro 322, doc.324-331. See also, ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1594 – doc.14721; cx.1618 – doc.15965.

15 ANTT, IL, DD, cx.1639 – doc.17063.

Scattered throughout Minas Gerais, these complaints covered a broad swath of territory, from the hinterland to the towns, focusing on Vila Rica County, where the seat of the bishopric was located.

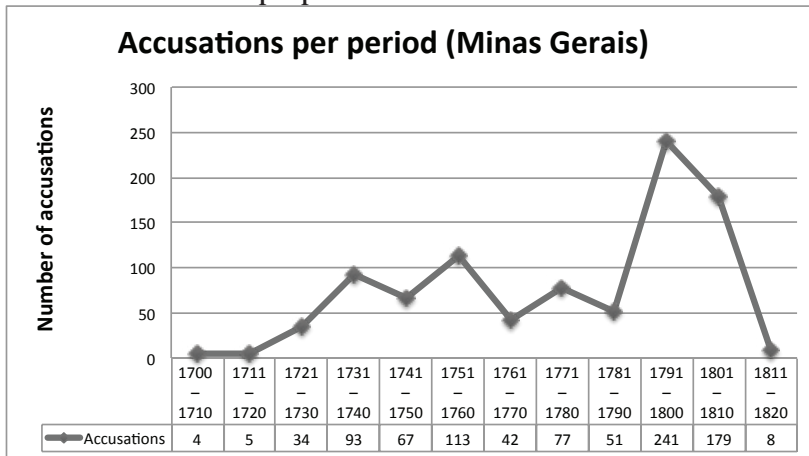
Table 2 - Accusations per County

| Accusations per County | Number |
|------------------------|------------|
| Rio das Mortes | 155 |
| Rio das Velhas | 270 |
| Serro do Frio | 82 |
| Vila Rica | 396 |
| Not reported | 86 |
| Total | 989 |

Sources: ANTT, IL, *Cadernos do Promotor e Documentação Dispersa* (1700-1820).

Another factor these accusations have in common is how closely connected Minas Gerais was to Portuguese America. This link is expressed in the activities and scope of the Lisbon Inquisition Court, with different nuances and rhythms over the course of the eighteenth century.

Graffic 1 - Accusations per period



Sources: ANTT, IL, *Cadernos do Promotor e Documentação Dispersa* (1700-1820).

The peaks shown in this chart suggest that the Inquisition Court was more active during the two periods highlighted.¹⁶ We can conjecture, in the first case, the close links between the third visitation to Grão-Pará e Maranhão, which must have greatly encouraged the network of agents to carry out their responsibilities. However, the second peak refers almost exclusively to the activities of Vicar João Luís de Sousa Saião, who systematically forwarded accusations to Commissioner Nicolau Gomes Xavier. Significantly, we can see here that his activities distorted the results, since they do not necessarily express strict austerity on the part of the Holy Office during that period, but merely the energetic activities of some individuals who, embodying the discourse of vigilance, obstinately informed Lisbon of infractions for fear of being found to be in collusion with the accused. Of the total of 989 accusations, 175 resulted from Saião’s excessive zeal.

Another example of the uniqueness of this period is the charges of witchcraft, which, despite being decriminalized in the Regulation of 1774, coming to be viewed as superstition, continued to be sent to Lisbon. Although this went completely against the council’s orders, it may have been justified because, in Minas, a profound fear of complicity with the transgression had been deeply instilled and crystallized in the mentality of that society.

CONCLUSION

We believe that, by including the new inquisitorial accusations, the update of this mapping reconfigures the role of the Inquisition in Minas Gerais. This new situation calls into question not only how many people were involved, due to the significant increase in the number of accused, but also the nature of the complaints, which encourages a review of previous studies and once again calls for further investigation of this exciting topic.

16 Of the total of 989 accusations, we have excluded 75 in this chart for which there was no precise date.

Key points for this reflection are the extravagant activities of some agents, the territorial expansion of the inquisitorial network, the extension of timeframes, the different social and cultural backgrounds of those involved, as well as the understanding of the reasons for legal practice in the selection of cases, since we have observed a strong similarity between the accusations among those accused, although some were tried while others were not.

If Minas Gerais gives rise to such a surprising situation, when further inquisitorial studies are published, as Antônio Baião has already predicted, we can expect to see many more “dramatic episodes” of the Inquisition throughout Brazil.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank the “Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship 7th European Community Framework Programme” – CHAM, FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Universidade dos Açores.

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