

Anti-Jesuitism in the Portuguese Amazon (First Half of the Eighteenth Century)

*Antijesuitismo na Amazônia portuguesa
(primeira metade do século XVIII)*

Roberta Lobão Carvalho*,¹

English version: Nuhu Ayuba

RESUMO

As pesquisas sobre a Amazônia portuguesa colonial costumam abordar, sobretudo, os períodos mais agitados daquela região, como o de atuação do padre Antônio Vieira no século XVII ou o período pombalino na segunda metade do século XVIII. Esta pesquisa estuda justamente uma parte da História do Maranhão e Grão-Pará negligenciada porque, aparentemente, não houve grande agitação: a primeira metade do século XVIII. Em nossas análises, destacou-se a atuação de um agente com ideias peculiares, que compreendemos como uma espécie de projeto de governo conflituoso em pontos importantes com o projeto pensado para a região pela Coroa portuguesa. Esse agente é Paulo da Silva Nunes, inimigo acérrimo da Companhia de Jesus, que atuou na colônia e posteriormente na Corte realizando uma dura campanha contra a ação dos jesuítas naquela região e contra as leis que, em sua concepção, favoreciam apenas os padres. Para tanto, au-

ABSTRACT

Research about colonial Portuguese Amazon usually elaborates periods of agitations in that region, such as the action of priest Antônio Vieira in the seventeenth century or the *pombalino* period in the second half of eighteenth century. This research brings part of Maranhão and Grão-Pará's neglected history, apparently, because it does not fall in the period of large agitations: the first half of eighteenth century. In our analysis, the performance of an agent with peculiar ideas stood out, that we understood as a kind of conflicting government project in important points with the project conceived for the region by the Portuguese Crown. This agent is Paulo da Silva Nunes, a strong enemy of the Society of Jesus, who participated in the colony and later in the Court, carrying out harsh campaigns against Jesuits in the region and against the laws, which to him only favoured the priests. Therefore, he declared himself the prosecutor of the

* Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Maranhão (IFMA) – *campus* Santa Inês, Santa Inês, MA, Brasil. roberta.carvalho@ifma.edu.br <<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8344-099X>>

tointitulou-se Procurador dos Povos do Maranhão e Grão-Pará e fez de sua campanha antijesuítica um projeto político, social e econômico para a região.

Palavras-chave: Paulo da Silva Nunes; Companhia de Jesus; século XVIII; Amazônia colonial.

people of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, and transformed his anti-Jesuit campaign into a political, social and economic project for the region.

Keywords: Paulo da Silva Nunes; Society of Jesus; Eighteenth century; colonial Amazon.

Anti-Jesuitism originated alongside with the foundation of the Society of Jesus, gaining strength successively as it expanded in the world. This affirmation is easily proved as we analyse the historical documents on the group's activities in any part of the world. The role of Jesuits in missionary, educational, political, economic fields, moral theology, wealth acquisition and management along the century, its ideal of mission, its multicultural practices among others, have always been hardly criticized and persecuted intensely in Europe and other conquered places like Asia, Africa and America and wherever it is present (Franco, 2006).

In this article, we intend to analyse the anti-Jesuit trajectory of Paulo da Silva Nunes' strategy to construct and implement a government project in Maranhão and Grão-Pará with several conflicting points to the project presented to the region by the Court. This way, the anti-Jesuitism of this agent would not only be limited to simple local economic matters. It was part of a political project aiming at a rational state, administratively 'efficient' and commercially profiting. Therefore, as principal sources, we will use petitions and reports written by Paulo de Silva Nunes, supposedly representing the colony dwellers of São Luís and Belém Chambers and the Oversea Counsel between 1724 and 1742, where he exposes from his point of view, reasons for the 'ruins' of Maranhão and the key 'remedies' for such situation.

Paulo da Silva Nunes was born in Portugal, and had a background in Theology and Law (Franco, 2006, pp. 187-188). He was intellectually prepared; he knew the Latin language well enough, and knew the relationship between Portugal and Spain, as we have read in his letters. He had military experience from participating in the first years of the long Spanish Succession War (1701-1713), during which he had probably met his future ally Bernardo Pereira de Berredo (Azevedo, 1999).

Silva Nunes came to Maranhão in 1707 together with governor Cristóvão da Costa Freire (1707-1718), working as a secretary. In 1712 Silva Nunes was

appointed Chief Captain of the Vila da Vigia, in Pará, to substitute Francisco da Costa. Such substitution according to Cristóvão da Costa Freire, was not only based on Silva Nunes' capacity, but for using his personal resources to construct the Chambers and prisons, for being an honoured person, and still, for moving to that village a hundred indigenous couples (AHU, code 269, 1712).

The future prosecutor also occupied important positions during Bernardo Pereira de Berredo's regime (1718-1722) such as Captain in the Privileged Infantry (*capitão da Infantaria de Privilegiados*) and Captaincy of Grão-Pará (*Capitania do Grão-Pará*), fortification superintendent of the same city and captaincy and Chief Captain of Vila de Icatu, close to São Luís, Maranhão state (AHU, cx. 21, doc. 1942, Pará Special). According to Dauril Alden, the position as Privileged Infantry Captain guaranteed him a space in the local aristocracy and a chance to marry "a descent of one of the most famous aristocratic founding fathers, the seventeenth-century explorer-warrior Pedro Teixeira" (Alden, 1970, p. 43).

Silva Nunes spent almost seventeen years in the colony (1707-1724), until he sought for refuge at the Court, after being accused of planning a riot against and Society of Jesus priests and João da Maia da Gama's government (1722-1728) that had succeeded that of Berredo (AHU, cx. 9, doc. 779, Pará Special). In a letter written in 1724, Dom João V writes about the arrest of Silva Nunes, communicated to him the previous year by João da Maia for royal endorsement. According to the document, Silva Nunes acted against the government because he desired to be "singular, only observing the law in the strictest". While Berredo acted in a different way and "governed with great responsibility, setting free the serving indigenous people" (AHU, code 269, 1724).

As we can see, the good governor, in perception of the prosecutor and the local population, was someone willing to modify or even ignore the royal laws for the 'good' of the peoples, which would be, in the case of the Amazonian colony, indiscriminate use and unregulated indigenous labour. João da Maia would proceed with 'tyranny', because, by denying him unrestricted access to indigenous labour, he would cause greater sufferings to the population. Thus, in the prosecutor's point of view, it would be right to suggest the expulsion of the governor.

To Silva Nunes, it was necessary to solve the colony issue, if not, "everything was lost". In his campaign, he got support from the São Luís Chamber Officials that were "against" João da Maia's regime. The plans against the governor were treated by key colonial society representatives, that would later become Silva Nunes' accomplices in the intense campaign against the Society

of Jesus: the councilman Clemente Palheta (AHU, code 269, 1724), the natives Antônio de Sousa Soeiro and Manoel de Oliveira Pantoja – described as a “proud, unquiet and disturbing man”, that had been banished at the time of Cristóvão da Costa Freire’s government for the involvement in the distribution of lampoons, spread on the street at night urging residents to expel Jesuit priests (Moraes, 1858, t. IV, p. 321),² and also the Chief Captain of Pará Captaincy, Manuel Madureira Lobo, arrested after the seizure of documents, inciting illegal captivity of Indigenous people, and also charges on being part of the organization of the riot (AHU, cx. 8 doc. 682, Pará Special).

The Society of Jesus priest at that time, Jacinto de Carvalho, reported Silva Nunes’ activities, pointing him out as the head of the movement. For this, João da Maia solicited the reports presented by Silva Nunes from the councilmen and his arrest, seeing that the offensive and seditious activities of the prosecutor could lead to a possible rise against Jesuits (Dias, 2008, p. 115).

In the following year, Dom João V replied in support of the governor’s decision. However, the monarch made it clear that “you cannot hold anyone in prison for more than the stipulated period”. Hence, he recommended Silva Nunes to be sent to the Kingdom if he repeated the activities reported by the governor. Also, if anyone should rise against the governor, he must be punished to serve as an example (AHU, code 269, 1724). It did not take too long for Silva Nunes to gain liberty and seize the opportunity to escape to the Kingdom in 1724, leaving behind in “Pará [...] a wife, four children (two boys and two maiden girls), other family members and his farms” (AHU, cx. 19, doc. 1942, Maranhão Special). While according to Franco, Silva Nunes had left “three women, many children and wealth” (Franco, 2006, p. 187). To Azevedo, he had “left all his farm, which was insignificant, in Pará” (Azevedo, 1999, p. 171).

PAULO DA SILVA NUNES’ PRINCIPAL PROPOSALS

Despite the contradictions regarding Silva Nunes’ financial condition in the colony, and also his civil status, we cannot overlook – probably by the positions he occupied – he was aware of the population’s socio-economic situation, also, the means, forms and complications of the local government gave him enunciative conditions, constructed historically, to understand the situation of the colony. That is to say, he knew how to design economic and managerial strategies, and in his letters and petitions, he seems to aim at setting-up a certain state order in Maranhão and Grão-Pará. In other words, Silva Nunes was looking for a way to rationalize the region’s economy and politics, with the aim

of consolidating its borders by populating the region, establishing Portuguese as a single language³ and strengthening production and trade by easing access to indigenous labor and permitting money circulation.

Therefore, different from the ideas defended by royal officials⁴ and various laws – such as that of April 1st, 1680, which determined the unrestricted liberty of the indigenous people, and encouraged the sending of enslaved Africans to Maranhão, and even the 1686⁵ Mission Regiment – inserting African slaves into the region. According to the prosecutor, all of those would not solve the “ruin of the state” because they were not “the most accurate remedies for the people in the present time.” On the contrary, it would be more convenient to use the indigenous people through the payment of wages, food provision, clothing and the teaching of Christian doctrine, and good morals (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, p. 288).

This position as it all seems was built on his experience in the region which allowed him to understand the local population. Even the most affluent did not have resources for the “purchase of slaves of African origin”. Therefore, indigenous people’s work force would be the most viable alternative in that inept economic system, since it was unable to meet the economic power for the acquisition of enslaved Africans.⁶ In a letter from 1723, the syndicating judge Francisco da Gama Pinto stated that it was necessary to remedy the labor problem of the region “to bring down” between eight hundred and one thousand slaves per year. In addition, residents should have three or four years to pay for them, because the situation in most parts at that time did not allow other forms of payment (AHU, cx. 7, doc. 608, Pará Special). Once again, at least in the correspondence of the time, the situation of aggravated poverty was evident.

The prosecutor also showed a strong desire to review the role played by the Jesuit villages, since in the eighteenth century, the Amazon territory was sparsely populated, with the village housings and establishments being relatively stable and defensive on the borders with Spanish America. To modify this scenario, it would be necessary to consolidate the conquest, populating the region systematically, mainly through the secularization of those spaces. To this end, he asked the Councilors to send well-mannered white men to administer the villages and farms in place of the Jesuits. To justify his request, he claimed that this was a ‘good’ procedure to among other things mitigate the physical punishment suffered by the indigenous people. He requested according to issue that had been taken up by the Mission Board,⁷ which was presided over by former governor Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, where the residents

could make descent of the indigenous people given to them through a letter issued on March 9th, 1718 to the missionary villages (AHU, code 485, vol. 1, fl. 552).

It is important to highlight that, despite Silva Nunes' claim to take-up the seat recommended by Berredo, the former governor's proposal at the time was not well received by the Court. In 1719, Dom João V wrote to Berredo with a harsh tone, that "first of all you have to apply my royal orders, and do not suspend them [...] in that regard, I command you unflinching fulfill them in their present form" (AHU, code 269, 1719a).

However, to implement his protonationalist⁸ project, Silva Nunes ignored the warnings previously given by the Crown, and insisted on the same arguments and petitions. Apparently, he believed in the legality of his supplications and demands by repeatedly insisting that the residents were oppressed by the royal officials, and claiming benefits from those who worked in conquering and consolidating the territory.

Silva Nunes believed it was necessary to eliminate everything that, according to him, was a hindrance: royal officials who were against the residents, missionaries; especially the Jesuits, foreigners par excellence – for not having a Portuguese origin as well as not having many Portuguese in their lineage – and supposedly not committed to the project of making Portugal a modern nation. This project was to be carried out through the rich Portuguese possessions, however ruined by the action of that Order, characterized as foreign and without any commitment to the king, due to its expansion and universal 'vocation'.

PAULO DA SILVA NUNES'S ALLIES

According to Maria de Fátima Gouvêa and João Fragoso, a colonial society can be understood as a tangle of structures and social relations full of fractures and conflicting interests. However to understand a social organization as "The set of rules shared between its agents – thus enabling social relations – it does not imply that such rules are entirely coherent [...] even if it would function as a rigid machinery, and insensible to everyday dramas". On the contrary, precisely for being a system of norms, colonial society used to be "impregnated with inconsistencies", mainly because it was in continuous movement (Gouvêa; Fragoso, 2010, pp. 15-16).

From the perspective of a society in motion, we study Paulo da Silva Nunes' performance as the Prosecutor of the Maranhão People. A strong

opponent of the relationship established between the Portuguese Crown and the Jesuits in the Portuguese Amazon, he craved that his understanding of the nature, politics, religion, and work in the region would be incorporated by the royal authorities, in order to carry out his political project of ‘salvation’ of that ‘ruined state’. To this end, he predicted the removal of Society of Jesus’ members, the governors and royal officials from the state so that his government would be in charge of the Chambers of Maranhão and Pará (AHU, code 485, vol. 1, fls. 154r-187v).

Struggling to realize his objectives, he used all the possible spaces of movement in that society, both physically and symbolically, however he did not act alone. We can say that the ideas defended by Silva Nunes were related to indigenous people’s captivity and the inertia of the royal laws, because they were initially defended by the Local Chambers, settlers and royal workers such as the former governors Bernardo Pereira de Berredo and Alexandre de Souza Freire (1728-1732), and the chief Captain of Pará Captaincy, Manuel Madureira Lobo. To them, the fact that there were few Portuguese to cultivate the land, the use of indigenous people labor was indispensable, and the laws that favored the Jesuits, while permitting indigenous labor were the needs of the peoples of Maranhão and Grão-Pará.

This way, the Crown had to attend to such peculiarity, because there would be a diversity of peoples, provinces, men and commercial activities, and there should also be laws, specifically, to regulate the liberty of indigenous people and labor in the colony, since prohibiting the enslavement of indigenous people in that context meant understanding the socio-political diversity of that region, and the local population. We note this idea in the supposed *Proposal of the Pará Chamber* sent to the king by Paulo da Silva Nunes in 1724:

The same thing has happened in law [as in economic and worker diversity in Portugal, Brazil, and Maranhão], which in some was repeated, in others it was a crime, and in others it was unreasonable; in the law of Moses usury was permitted, in the law of Toronino, the Egyptians were allowed to be thieves; in the law of Licurgo, homicide was not punished; Solonine’s law disguised adultery [...]

Just as among the peoples, provinces, men and laws, there is a difference: It is necessary to understand that in the state of Maranhão, one cannot cultivate without the service of the Indigenous people on their habitats; an example at this point is: supposing that the scandal publishes it, the absolute modesty will not express it; because the RR missionaries are the first that would be affected, without the

services of their enslaved indigenous people, that *Uni concessum alteri concedendum, quia quod uni non nocet, et alteri prodest et concedendum et non potest negari*.

A conspicuous reason cannot be given so that the Missionary Reverend may legalize the use of *quod ad illos* indigenous labor, and deny them of other vassals of His Royal Majesty. (Moraes, 1859, t. III, p. 335)

In this document, the prosecutor shows a profound knowledge about the diversity of laws and their interpretations, developing his arguments to solicit a law that would observe the differences in Maranhão and Grão-Pará, and other regions under the Portuguese Empire, most especially, related to labor force. City councils and native settlers believed it was their right to use indigenous workers for the common good of the colony and the rise of the state, a formula constantly repeated and documented. Therefore, they requested the right to perform forceful descent of indigenous people, following orders of Bernardo Pereira de Berredo and Alexandre de Souza Freire in the Board of Missions.

In the year Silva Nunes arrived at the Court, he took to Lisbon *Chapters about the bad management of the Maranhão State governor and Captain-General (Capítulos sobre o mal procedimento do governador e Capitão-General do estado do Maranhão)*, in which complains are found “many times discussed, contested and decided by Your Majesty” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, p. 259). In the document, there are complaints against the Jesuits favorable attitude by Governor João da Maia. In addition, the perspective related to the needs of the society, the government, the economy of the region, the work and nature of the indigenous people stand out. There is a claim that white residents did not want to enslave the indigenous people, but to employ them and pay them wages. However, at the same time, the document questions indigenous people’s humanity, claiming that they were not “true humans, but wild brutes unable to practice the Catholic faith” and ends up provoking the favorable posture of the Jesuits towards African slavery: “if the Ethiopians can be enslaved, then why should it be contrary for indigenous people of Maranhão?” (Azevedo, 1999, p. 170).

To those men, the attitudes against the Jesuits and the governor through riots and revolts, were a profound part of the matter, far from simple economics, such as the way governors conducted public administrations. The prosecutor claimed to have thrown himself into the sea eagerly for being arrested and oppressed by the powerful; therefore, he needed to bring to the king’s feet the “ruins that threatened this state, and the measures he needed instantly”

(Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 286-291). The documents exposed the supposed oppression suffered by the people before royal and Jesuit officials, and at the same time, they legitimized the quest for the population's "common good". According to Nicola Matteucci, common good is different from public and individual good, since it concerns individuals who are members of a state, this way, common good could only be attained together (Matteucci, 1995, p. 106). That is for Maranhão and Grão-Pará states to be ordered from a temporal and natural point of view, it was necessary to dispose of what prevented its proper functioning, even if it was a religious orders, the royal laws, or even the governor.

João da Maia da Gama claimed that Paulo da Silva Nunes had fled to the Kingdom, allegedly called by Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, with whom he had "made plans" which was "induced by malicious people" (AHU, cx. 9, doc. 779, Maranhão Special). However, Berredo had left Belém discredited, because, contrary to expectations, his tenure was not extended, and was replaced by João da Maia – who was his enemy. In addition, his rule and behavior in the colony underwent thorough scrutiny (Alden, 1970, p. 45). By analyzing some letters exchanged between the king and Bernardo Pereira de Berredo during his rule, we note the dissatisfaction of the Court over his administration, especially regarding the compliance with indigenous legislation.

Unlike Christopher da Costa Freire's administration praised in the letters exchanged with King João V, the king seems to be constantly calling Berredo's attention. For example, in October 1719, the Crown sent a series of letters about non-compliance with the laws concerning the descent and division of indigenous peoples. These letters were answers given to the Superior of the Mission of the Society of Jesus, Manuel de Seixas regarding his complaints against the abuses committed by the Captain-General of the city of São Luís, Francisco Manoel de Nóbrega. Apparently, the monarch demanded measures from the governor against the behavior of the Chief Captain, who according to him, wished to "occupy more than two parts of the indigenous people in the village of São José [de Tapuitepera, which is currently called Alcântara], using all tools at disposal against my laws, and great obstruction of God's work" (AHU, code 269, 1719b). In 1720, the king wrote again to the governor, highlighting his dissatisfaction with the failure to observe the chapters of the regiment, especially regarding the treatment of Jesuits, and claimed to have been: "informed with great bad feeling that if we do not observe the chapters of the Regiment of the government of the same state in which I recommend that all missionaries and other ecclesiastical persons who will deal with the conversion

of the Indians be respected, and that they be revered and respected as if is due” (AHU, code 269, 1720a).

According to him, the monarch used arguments referring to the extreme historical importance of the Society of Jesus activities and emphasized in the same letter, that the religious assisted the governors, predecessors of Berredo, in the conquest and territorial expansion, and most importantly by subjecting the indigenous people to obey the king. The integration of the natives into the colonial project through joint missionary works with the indigenous people is recognized by the observation “that everything is facilitated by the hands and diligence of the same indigenous people as they are used to those lands”. For these reasons, the king insisted on “unfailingly” executing the chapters of the Mission Regiment, and missionaries should be treated with respect by the governors to set an example to the indigenous people (AHU, code 269, 1720a).

Dissatisfied with Berredo’s attitude towards a compliance with the Regiment and indigenous legislation, the monarch in addition to demanding obedience to the laws and respect for the Jesuits, asserted:

For various reasons, both in the service of God and mine, I have ordered that the administration of the indigenous people, both spiritual and temporal, belongs only to the missionaries [...] [and] this disposition should not be changed. I ordered you to inviolably keep the laws that are in this matter, that I will punish anyone who interferes on the rule of the villages and makes use of indigenous people without orders to do so. (AHU, code 269, 1720b)

In addition, he ordered the governor not to interfere with other spheres of the colony’s administration – something meaningless, since the governor-general was the extension of the Portuguese Crown in the colony (AHU, code 269, 1721a). The analysis of these orders, so close and so emphatic is important because, it allows us to understand that the plan of government of Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, Alexandre de Souza Freire, Paulo da Silva Nunes and the Chambers of São Luís and Belém for Maranhão differed greatly from that of the Portuguese Court. The former governor wanted to diminish or revoke once and for all the religious power over Maranhão, while the Crown reminded him of his obligation as a royal official, to comply with royal laws without questioning or modifying them. This mismatch between the Crown and Berredo is clear in several other letters⁹, showing the governor’s dissatisfaction with the indigenous legislation or against it. It seems this would have led to the probe taken

against him by the syndicator Francisco da Gama Pinto during the transition from his government to that of João da Maia da Gama.¹⁰

The inquiry authorities, debauchery or residences were normally withdrawn when the Crown suspected the work of its officials. According to Adriana Romeiro, since 1625, in the case of the Overseas Governments, the syndicators responsible for withdrawing residence were required by a royal order, to go in the company of their successors to their respective posts. Since the seventeenth century, residences could only be removed when the investigated person was out of the place where he had served, in order to have no direct influence on the investigation processes (Romeiro, 2017).

To Silva Nunes, Berredo ruled as a father to the residents, while for the Court, he acted seductively and left Maranhão under heavy investigation. From this, we can understand how much the group that supported Silva Nunes' actions believed that laws and actions of the Crown were unsuitable for Maranhão, and how much it initially trusted and invested in his campaign. Silva Nunes left for Lisbon on his own, confident of his influence, supported by the people and members of the city council. This large support was due to his participation in Berredo's government, the campaign he had started and also for having funded the construction of the city Council and Vila de Vigia's prison. However, at the beginning of his campaign, he complained that the Pará Chamber was not in favor of his departure to the Court, and his intention to convey the 'remedies' for the 'ruin' of Maranhão to the king, denying him financial aid and the power requested, to act on behalf of the peoples of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, in a venture that he believed would be brief and positive. (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, p. 286 and 291).

In the year 1726, interceding for Silva Nunes, Berredo wrote to the Belém Chamber requesting financial support for the prosecutor who was using all means to remedy the state, and only due to the variety of projects existing in the Kingdom, he had not achieved his goal: "yet great pace have been set ahead with the good administration of Paulo da Silva Nunes, I assure you that he is the best prosecutor that we can have here, hence you have to help him" (Moraes, t. IV, p. 291). However, neither his superior's intervention was sufficient to get the expected support. After analyzing the letters written by Silva Nunes to the Chambers of Maranhão and Pará, and to Clemente Soeiro Palheta, one of his accomplices in the riot organized against João da Maia and the Jesuits, we noticed that he was practically on his own. He himself claimed to have been unworthy of two different Senate House formations (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 286-291).

The Chambers of Pará and Maranhão did not collaborate with the prosecutor. João da Maia claimed to have been advised by a prosecutor named João de Souza, that Silva Nunes had written to them, stating that he was sure of the success of his representations about the indigenous people and the consequent “expansion of the state”, since “a lot was heard and answered by His Majesty”, for example, Silva Nunes was being accused by the members of the chambers, who he believed were his main allies (AHU, cx. 9, document 779, separate doc. Pará).

Even with the posture of the colonial organs, the prosecutor did not cease to appeal. He would make requests informing people that he was working on a large collaboration with Berredo, from which they expected great results, which would later be approved by the House senators. We believe that since there are no other mentions of this “large collaboration”, it was just an “invention” of the prosecutor to get the interest of the Chambers. As we can see, Silva Nunes implied that his way to Court was facilitated by Berredo, and believed on returning to Maranhão and Grão-Pará later in 1726, as he stated in a letter he sent to the Belém Chamber: “I trust in God, everything will be completed the year in which I intend to return home, a State which I know would have suffered the inhumanity that are done to those who do good” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, p. 286).

Such news were based on meetings supposedly held with the king, in which Silva Nunes took the petitions to the monarch. They would have been received with “such good demonstrations” by the king, hoping that by the year 1726, his requests would be granted because in the meeting he had consoled the king with words of hope and remedies. For this, he acted without any authorization or appeal from the Pará Chambers “to whom I notified my departure and intention” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, p. 286).

In the second letter written to the Pará Chambers in 1726, different from the first one, Silva Nunes had a worrying tone. He affirmed having met the king “fourteen times”, and “for God’s service, that of His Royal highness and the common good of the people”, he was requesting the senators to apply his “zeal and method, so that this time, the Gordian knot would untie” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 287-288). In fact, in the year of his departure, he requested a different procedure from the “secular House”, “[that] was timid or lacking zeal” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 287-288). They suspected that he was acting for his personal benefit and not for the good of the people, because they had taken the previous letter to Governor João da Maia da Gama. The chamberlains only sent Silva Nunes the requested authorization, but denied him financial

support, stating that he should settle with the money he had (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 287-288).

In addition to failing to obtain the financial resources to support him in the Court, Silva Nunes complained to have received as prizes two “extravagant accounts, that the government presented to the Overseas Council against me”. However, in order to legitimize his request for financial aid, he claimed to have had two private hearings on the petition with a Secretary of State (whose name he did not provide), who had ordered all the papers of the extravagancies emitted by Judge Francisco da Gama Pinto, in order to analyze and solve them. The prosecutor expected Bernardo Pereira de Berredo to be heard and for him to cast a “vote in favor of the peoples” (Moraes, 1859, t. IV, pp. 287-288).

The letters of the prosecutor varied from worried and negative tones, in relation to the Chamber House, to optimist tones, such as the stance of the Crown. In this context, we become doubtful: were the news from the different meetings with the king and the audiences such as the State Secretary true? If they were, what was the reason for the Overseas Council to demonstrate and analyze the petitions that only happened between 1734 and 1736? In our conception, these affirmations constituted rhetorical arguments in view of the financial aid received. It seems the prosecutor had high expenses and was going into debt, because as we know his expectations to spend just a year in Court did not come true.

Silva Nunes’ support network quickly broke. In the year 1738, fourteen years after sending his first petition, his situation was that of penury. In one notice from the State Marine and Overseas Secretary, António Guedes Pereira to the Councilor of the Overseas Council José de Carvalho e Abreu, there is information that the prosecutor was totally ripped of the means to survive with dignity: “in such extreme poverty that he had nothing to decently wear, nor to feed on, to a point of going from door to door to seek for alms, as a beggar” (AHU, cx. 21, doc. 1942, special doc. Pará). The situation got to this point as we have said “the peoples” of Maranhão and Grão-Pará as well as the two Chambers had no skill, incomes and interest in supporting the prosecutor in the Court. However, the most emblematic was the lack of “courage” of that population to continue the campaign as they observed the little results produced by Silva Nunes’ many years of requests (AHU, cx. 21, doc. 1942, Pará Special).

The syndicating judge Francisco Duarte dos Santos was sent to Maranhão and Grão-Pará in the 1730s as a result of the accusations made by Silva Nunes in order to clarify the contradictory discourses on the action of the Society of

Jesus and the situation of the indigenous people in that region. However, the judge's opinion was in no way favorable to the self-proclaimed prosecutor, and in 1734, the Overseas Council considered it convenient for the king not to allow Silva Nunes to return to Maranhão "because he is a seditious and proud man, in as much that he has already petitioned suggesting Your Majesty to withdraw the governors and ministers from the state, so that his government would be in the Chambers of Maranhão and Pará" (AHU, code 485, vol. 1, fl. 552r). This way, it will put to end the hopes of the prosecutor from returning to his family after achieving his long-awaited petitions.

By that time his chief patron, Berredo, had already left the Court to serve in the Mazagão stronghold in Morocco from 1734 to 1745: "abandoning the sterile and often odious intrigues in which he was involved, he went to Africa, where, as a soldier, he found the most honorable and glorious field of his activity" (Azevedo, 1999, pp. 222-226). As for Alexandre de Souza Freire, he left his post as the governor of Maranhão and Grão-Pará in 1732 in a very adverse situation, with a lawsuit filed against him due to alleged excesses committed in his administration. (AHU, c. 20, doc. 2089, Maranhão Special). He returned to the Court in a complicated financial situation. In a Consultation done by the Overseas Council about an Illegal Offensive War, which was conducted by Corporal Belchior Mendes de Mendonça, and issued by Alexandre de Souza Freire, the council's advisers made their views on the governor clear. According to the royal officials, he was inept for the office, because he was inflicting royal laws, solely for his and his family's own benefit. Therefore, they advised the king to send a governor to the state "to observe His Majesty's laws and orders and for Alexandre de Souza Freire to depart on the first ship to the kingdom" (AHU, code 485, vol. 1, fl. 211v). In the same document, they suggested the removal of the governor from residence and all probes filed against him in the region's prelate representations (AHU, code 485, vol. 1, fl. 212r).

Even with the existent adversities and the absence of evidence of his work, the prosecutor claimed that he needed "His royal majesty's piety" to dress and feed with dignity in order to "continue to apply the king's orders with the same zeal, constancy and fidelity, which he had been requesting for the past fourteen years, as royal vassal expenses, because they were very important in the service of God and His Majesty" (AHU, cx. 21, doc. 1942, Pará Special). The prosecutor tried for the last time in 1738, repeating his previous requests. Probably, due to the debts acquired from his fight against the Jesuits, Silva Nunes was finally arrested in Limoeiro. According to Serafim Leite, "the Jesuits had defamed and reduced his pecuniary resources, and made him feel the bitterness

of prison” (Leite, 1943, p. 207). Where he was only released in 1746, probably the year he died (Azevedo, 1999, p. 302).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The documents produced by Silva Nunes followed a certain standard. The majority of them started by observing the time he was at the Court to seek for a solution to the problems of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, recalling the years in which he had lived in the colony, constituting a direct witness to the “ills” allegedly caused by the Jesuits. Then he described and presented the colony as a “rich and promising land” which, in his view, was not properly managed. Thus, the prosecutor keenly pointed out the problems, but also identified their causes, and proposed solutions.

In this argumentative structure, we recognize the organization of a government project for Maranhão and Grão-Pará, conceived by Paulo da Silva Nunes, Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, Alexandre de Souza Freire, and for a period, by the councils of São Luís and Belém. This project was in some points in time, conflicting with the Kingdom’s project for the region. Thus, we understand that Silva Nunes presented a kind of civil disobedience against officials and royal laws, unrelated to the needs of the peoples of Maranhão and Grão-Pará. For this reason, in his documentations, he always emphasized that he was living in the colony, having full information about local needs better than the administrative agents of the Kingdom.

The prosecutor tirelessly sought to be heard to remedy the situation in Maranhão and Grão-Pará, and to eliminate the main causes of the ‘ruin’ of the region. According to him, the biggest obstacles to the implementation of his project were the Society of Jesus and the royal laws, which were among others, favorable to the Mission Regiment Order. Thus, we understand that Amazonian anti-Jesuitism, mounted in the first half of the eighteenth century, was part of a broad government project, aimed at banning the use of the general language, sending white couples to populate the colony, giving ‘freedom’ to indigenous people to practice paid labor for anyone they wished to, make money circulate in the region and boost trade, govern through the city councils, expel the Society of Jesus from those lands and secularize the Jesuit settlements. According to the prosecutor, all these would solve that region’s problems.

However, the documentation produced by the Prosecutor was shelved for over 17 years in the Overseas Council archive. Only in 1755, a scribe from

Marquês de Pombal called Paulo de Carvalho brought them to light as a ‘weapon’ against the Jesuits. Possibly he was a friend of Berredo’s and knew Paulo da Silva Nunes, because according to Azevedo, most of the papers must have been handed over to the scribe by the author himself (Azevedo, 1999, p. 187). The reunion of these documents resulted in a collection known as “the terrible Jesuits in King Dom João V’s government” (*As terribilidades jesuíticas no governo de D’El Rei Dom João Quinto*) (AHU, Code 485, vol. 1).

Indeed, some ideas defended by Paulo da Silva Nunes, such as those previously mentioned, were revisited in the Pombalinas laws, especially in the Indigenous people Directory (*Diretório dos Índios*), promulgated in 1755. Paulo da Silva Nunes’s complains were not heard in the first half of the eighteenth century, but they served as a weapon for Pombalino’s anti-Jesuitism, which had succeeded in ending the action of the Society of Jesus, not only in the Portuguese Amazon, but worldwide.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino – AHU (Overseas Historic Archive)

Maranhão Special

NOTICE of [State Marine and Overseas secretary], António Guedes Pereira to the [overseas councilor], José de Carvalho e Abreu, in order to investigate Paulo da Silva Nunes’ request about the people of Maranhão and Pará, in which he requested food and clothing. Attachment: Application 17th of March, 1738, Lisbon. AHU, cx. 21, doc. 1942.

Pará Special

LETTER [of the governor and Chief Captain of Maranhão State] João da Maia da Gama to the King [Dom João fifth] about the numerous problems that happened after the freedom of Paulo da Silva Nunes. Attached: Report and letter (Copy). 20th of September, 1725, Belém do Pará. AHU, cx. 9, doc. 779.

LETTER of the commissioner of Royal service diligence of the Maranhão and Pará Captaincy, Francisco da Gama Pinto to the king [Don João fifth], about the captivity of the indigenous people against royal provisions. Belém do Pará, 21st of August, 1722. AHU, cx. 7, doc. 608.

CONSULTATION of Overseas Council to king Dom João fifth, about reasons why the governor and Chief Captain of Maranhão State, João da Maia da Gama arrested the Chief

Captain of Pará Captaincy, Manuel da Madureira Lobo, and the complaints against him. Attached: letters, opinions and request. Lisbon, 23th of March, 1724, AHU, cx. 8, doc. 682.

DISPATCH of the Overseas Council about the former governor of Maranhão, Alexandre de Sousa Freire. 24th of April, 1733, Lisbon. AHU, cx. 20, doc. 2089.

APPLICATION to the prosecutor of Maranhão State, Paulo da Silva Nunes to King Don Pedro fifth, in a help and response solicitation in relation to the complaints presented against the Overseas Council and Order and Consciousness Bureau on performing their duties. AHU, cx. 19, doc. 1942.

Registration of royal letters to the governor and other entities of Maranhão (1673-1712) – Codex 268.

TO Pará Chamber Officials – About the damage that follows from those residents that are far from the Amazon River beds and their slaves. Lisbon on July 24, 1709. AHU, code 268.

Registration of royal letters to the governor and other entities of Maranhão (1673-1712) – Codex 269.

To Francisco da Gama Pinto – About withdrawal of the inquest of captivity of the Tapuyas indigenous peoples from the Guanore nation. Lisbon, [?] March, 1722. AHU, code 269.

TO the Governor of Maranhão – About the representation of Father Manuel de Seixas, Superintendent of the Society of Jesus missions. Lisbon, October 12, 1719. AHU, code 269.

TO the Governor of Maranhão – About punishing anyone who interferes on the government of the villages to use the indigenous people without orders. Lisbon [?] July 1720b. AHU, code 269.

TO the Governor of Maranhão – About approving the arrest of Paulo da Silva for his scandalous practices and rioting [He confesses in many letters, and he seemed to say that he did well]. Lisbon, March 18, 1724. AHU, code 269.

TO the Governor of Maranhão – About not interfering in the jurisdiction of the Pará Royal Farm Ombudsman, December 12, 1721a. AHU, code 269.

TO the syndicator Francisco da Gama Pinto. Lisbon, December 4, 1721b. AHU, code 269.

COLLECTION of the representations, proposals, and measures, about the ruins of the people of the state of Grão-Pará, and Maranhão done by the Jesuits, until the end Lord king don john the fifth's reign (1686-1755), which is part of Jesuits' bad activities in the government of king Dom João the Fifth/Maranhão – AHU, code 485, vol. 1.

PRINTED SOURCES

LETTER by Bernardo Pereira de Berredo to the Senate of Pará. In: MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 4, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858, p. 291.

LETTERS by Paulo da Silva Nunes to the Pará Chamber. In: MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 4, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858, pp. 286-291.

MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 3, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858.

PAPER that Father Jacinto de Carvalho, in the General Maranhão Missions, presented to the King to join the two requirements made by prosecutor Paulo da Silva Nunes. Dated from the College of Santo Antônio, in December 16, 1729. In: MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 3, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858, pp. 305-330.

OPINION of João da Maia da Gama, governor of Maranhão, on the requirements that Paulo da Silva Nunes presented to the king against the missionaries. In: MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 4, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858, pp. 258-274.

PROPOSAL by Pará Chambers to His majesty presented by state prosecutor Paulo da Silva Nunes. It has some slight differences, although of little importance when compared to the other with the same title (1724). MORAES, Alexandre José de Mello. *Corographia histórica, chronográphica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*. T. 3, Rio de Janeiro: American Typography, 1858, p. 355.

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NOTES

¹ Doctorate degree in Amazon Social History at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). This article is part of my Doctorate thesis *The Ruins of Maranhão: An Anti-Jesuit Discourse Construction in the Portuguese Amazon (1705-1759)*, defended in 2018.

² Some documents cited in this article are found in Alexandre José de Mello Moreas’ book *Corographia histórica, chronográfica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Bra-*

sil, volume I, II, III and IV, that is why when cited, I will reference the paper, however the titles will be available at the bibliography section.

³ Referring to the linguistic politics of the Portuguese Royal Crown, check out Prudente, 2017.

⁴ For example in a letter written in 1709 to the Chamber officials in Pará, the court shows worries about the absence of “blacks, mamelukes and more slaves” to work in the Amazon river valley (AHU, code 268, 1709).

⁵ These laws created by Pedro II must be understood as organic as they integrated a series of laws deemed necessary to discipline the common people, royal officials, and missionaries regarding the use of indigenous people as labor force (see ARENZ; SILVA, 2002).

⁸ The topic of ruins of the state was rooted in the speeches of that time, that is, the miserable situation of the population always stood out. Look up AHU, code 268 (1673-1712).

⁷ On the functioning of the Board of Missions and the competence of the governor see Mello, 2009

⁸ In defining protonationalism, Eric Hobsbawm differentiates between popular feelings of supralocal identification and, as in the case of Paulo da Silva Nunes, the efforts of “selected groups” linked to a state seeking extension and popularization. (HOBSBAWM, 2008, pp. 63-64).

⁹ “To the Maranhão governor – About ordering you to observe the law on indigenous people with the warning that their distribution to the service of the residents of Vila de Vigia is the same as in the 3rd part. In this same form he wrote to the superior priest of the Society of Jesus mission Fr. Manuel de Seixas. Lisbon 12th of October, 1719”, “To the Maranhão governor – To inquire from him about his complaint on the Superior General of the missionaries of the Society of Jesus. Lisbon, 12th of October, 1719”; “To the governor of Maranhão – to order you that in any case of indigenous people distribution among the Senators and residents of *Vila de Vigia*, it should be done under the supervision of the missionary of that Village. Lisbon [?] 1719”; “To the governor of Maranhão – About informing you on the complaint made by the Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus of chief Captain of Maranhão against the order of his majesty. Lisbon, [?]1719”; “To the governor of Maranhão – About making you obey unviolently the laws of indigenous people sharing. Lisbon, [?]171” AHU, code 269 (1712-1726).

¹⁰ For more information about terms of this inquest, check-up the thesis of Carvalho (2018).

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