

The biggest enterprise a Christian prince ever had in his hands: to conquer and conserve territories in the Indian Ocean in the times of Machiavelli¹

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Abstract

Can we establish connections between the theoretical thinking of Machiavelli about the conquest and conservation of territories and the actions of Afonso de Albuquerque in the territories of the Indian Ocean (described in an intense correspondence between him and the king D. Manuel I of Portugal)? In this essay, I try to answer this question by adopting a transnational perspective of the political and intellectual dynamics of the early-modern period. This approach enables me to identify the common cultural background among the political elites from Southern Europe in the 16th century, and helps to explain the existence of interesting continuities between Albuquerque and Machiavelli. Simultaneously, their different biographies and contexts of action — Machiavelli's were mainly Italian, while Albuquerque's were Portuguese, African and Asiatic — contribute to explain some of the differences in the political solutions proposed by them in their writings.

Keywords: Machiavelli; Afonso de Albuquerque; Portuguese empire.

A maior empresa que nunca um príncipe cristão teve nas mãos: conquistar e conservar territórios no Índico nos tempos de Maquiavel

Resumo

Quais conexões se podem estabelecer entre o pensamento teórico de Maquiavel em torno da conquista e conservação de territórios e a prática de Afonso de Albuquerque, nos territórios do Índico, plasmada numa intensa correspondência trocada com D. Manuel I? Esse é o problema ao qual se procura dar resposta neste ensaio, no qual se recorre a uma perspectiva transnacional das dinâmicas políticas e intelectuais da época moderna. Esse enfoque permite identificar a existência de uma tessitura cultural comum às elites políticas do sul da Europa quinhentista, que ajuda a explicar a existência de interessantes continuidades entre essas duas figuras políticas da Europa de Quinhentos. Ao mesmo tempo, suas diferentes biografias e contextos de ação — o de Maquiavel, essencialmente italiano, e o de Albuquerque, português, africano e asiático — ajudam a explicar algumas das diferentes soluções políticas que se podem encontrar na escrita de ambos.

Palavras-chave: Maquiavel; Afonso de Albuquerque; império português.

La empresa más grande que jamás tuvo un príncipe Cristiano en las manos: conquistar y mantener a los territorios en el Océano Índico en tiempos de Maquiavelo

Resumen

¿Qué conexiones se pueden establecer entre el pensamiento teórico de Maquiavelo en torno a la conquista y el mantenimiento de territorios y la práctica de Afonso de Albuquerque en los territorios de la India, que se traslada en una intensa correspondencia con D. Manuel I? Ese es el problema que se enfrenta en este ensayo. Utilizamos una perspectiva transnacional de las dinámicas políticas e intelectuales de la era moderna. El enfoque nos permite identificar la existencia de un contexto cultural común a la elite política del siglo XVI en el sur de Europa, lo que ayuda a explicar la existencia de continuidades interesantes entre esas dos figuras políticas europeas de esa época. Al mismo tiempo, sus diferentes biografías y contextos de acción — de Maquiavelo esencialmente italianos, y de Albuquerque, portugueses, africanos y asiáticos — ayudan a explicar algunas de las diferentes soluciones políticas que se pueden encontrar en la escritura de ambos.

Palabras clave: Maquiavelo; Afonso de Albuquerque; el imperio portugués.

La plus grande entreprise qu'un prince chrétien a déjà eu: conquérir et conserver des territoires dans l'océan Indien au temps de Machiavel

Résumé

Quelles connexions peuvent être établies entre la pensée théorique de Machiavel sur la conquête et rétention des territoires et les activités d'Afonso de Albuquerque dans les territoires de l'océan Indien, et une intense correspondance avec D. Manuel I? Nous nous efforçons de donner une réponse à ce problème dans cet article, en utilisant une perspective transnationale de las dynamiques politiques et intellectuelles de l'époque moderne. Cet approche nous permet d'identifier l'existence d'une trame culturelle commun aux élites politiques de l'Europe du sud du XVI^{ème} siècle, pour expliquer l'existence d'intéressants continuités entre ces deux personnalités politiques. En même temps, leur différences biographiques et de contextes — celui de Machiavel, essentiellement italien; et celui d'Albuquerque, portugais, africain et asiatique — aident à expliquer quelques solutions politiques qui peuvent se trouver dans leur textes.

Mots clés: Machiavel; Afonso de Albuquerque; empire portugais.

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This work analyses the relationship between the ideas of conquest and political conservation of Afonso de Albuquerque (c. 1453–1515), as they are expressed in his correspondence between 1507 and 1515, with those of Machiavelli (1469–1527) in *Il principe* (1513), in *I discorsi sopra le Decade de Tito Livio* (1519), and in the less known treatise *Dell'arte della guerra* (1521).²

The writings of Machiavelli, as it is well known, occupy a central position in Western libraries and encyclopedias about these two topics, and Machiavelli is considered by many as the founder of “modern political science”³ In turn, the deeds of Albuquerque also present, although to a lesser extent, a paradigmatic character, because some of the greatest military achievements — foundational acts — of the Portuguese empire are attributed to him. These achievements earned him the epithets of Caesar of the East or Alexandre the Great, and also explain why he has become an icon in the Portuguese collective memory through statues, squares, gardens and streets, names assigned to schools, frigates and aircrafts, paintings, prints, numerous books, and even centennials. Albuquerque’s fame also transcends the exclusively Portuguese universe. The British orientalist Morse Stevens wrote, in a biography of Albuquerque published in 1892, that “Afonso de Albuquerque was the first European since Alexander the Great who dreamed of establishing an empire in India, or rather in Asia, governed from Europe”. This *topos*, which is present in earlier texts, continues to stimulate the writing of literary works with Albuquerque as a subject, although he has not been recognized as part of the pantheon of the greatest strategists.⁴

The aim of the following discussion is not to confirm his epithet. I propose, instead, to explore the parallels and possible connections that can be established between Albuquerque and Machiavelli — one more inclined to military action (Albuquerque), while the other (Machiavelli), although not unaware of it, focused more on the cabinet policy and political reasoning.⁵ These parallels have not yet been explored by those interested in the study

²Mikael Hörnquist, “Machiavelli’s military project and the art of war”, In: John M. Najemy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 112-127.

³It is impossible to quote here the vast literature about Machiavelli, so I suggest to the reader a visit to a website where it is possible to find a very complete list of references. Hyper Machiavellism. Available from: <<http://www.hypermachiavellism.net/?q=en/materiali/bibliografie>>. Accessed on: May 26, 2014.

⁴Consult, in this regard, Fernando Gomes Pedrosa, *Afonso de Albuquerque e a arte da guerra*, Cascais, Câmara Municipal de Cascais, 1998. The same kind of adjectives can be found even today on several websites, thus contributing to the preservation of this common sense. See Morse Stevens, *Albuquerque*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, preface. The same idea emerges in Frederick Charles Danvers, *The Portuguese in India*, London, W.H. Allen, 1894, and Richard Stephen Whiteway, *The rise of Portuguese power in India: 1497-1550*, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 2007 [1899]. There are some biographies of Afonso de Albuquerque available, among which, the most reliable still is the one from Geneviève Bouchon, *Albuquerque: lion of the seas Asia*, Lisboa, Quetzal, 2000. See also Edgar Pestage, *Afonso de Albuquerque, Governor of India: his life, conquests and administration*, Watford, Voss & Michael, 1929; António Baião, *Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Livraria Ferin, 1913; Costa Brochado, *Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Portugália, 1943; Elaine Sanceau, *Afonso de Albuquerque: o sonho da Índia*, Lisboa, Livraria Civilização, 1953. All of them, however, focus on the “Indian” period of Albuquerque, neglecting, for lack of sources, most of his life.

⁵Robert Black, “Machiavelli in the Chancery”, In: John M. Najemy (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Machiavelli*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 31-47.

of the political culture of the early-modern period. Privileging major texts and major authors, the history of political ideas did not consider those that, as Albuquerque, did not leave systematic political testament of their actions (this status is not yet attributed to his letters).⁶ For its part, the political history of the 16th century has privileged political action in European and Mediterranean areas, rarely connecting these with “overseas” experiences — as if they were separate histories. The hegemony of “national history”, which tended to relegate the “overseas imperial history” to a distinct disciplinary field (perhaps because the “imperial history” of some historiographical powers, such as France and Germany, was essentially European) contributed to this. Moreover, this long-lasting hegemony, now fortunately overcome, did not favor this type of questioning.⁷

Are there connections between the political thoughts of Afonso de Albuquerque and Machiavelli? If yes, how can they be explained? Do they point towards the existence of a Mediterranean cultural common background in the political culture of the 16th century, of Christian and humanistic roots, with ubiquitous imperialist aspirations, covering, among other political entities, Florence (Italy) and Portugal?⁸

These dimensions/questions will be investigated through the analysis of the correspondence written by Afonso de Albuquerque to the king D. Manuel I and other members of the 16th century Portuguese court.⁹ With letters being one of the main social practices of modern written culture,¹⁰ the 116 missives written by Afonso de Albuquerque between 1507 and 1515 from the Indian Ocean coast constitute a very rich and diversified body of documents. It is possible to find very long letters, almost mini-treatises, as the one of April 1, 1512, medium letters and very short letters, in which Albuquerque addresses

⁶See, besides the works mentioned before, João Rocha Pinto, “O vento, o ferro e a muralha – a construção do império asiático no século XVI”, In: Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Estudos e ensaios: em homenagem a Vitorino Magalhães Godinho*, Lisboa, Sá da Costa, 1998.

⁷The same type of reflection can be observed in Francisco Bethencourt, “The political correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortés”, In: ____; Florika Egmond (eds.), *Correspondence and cultural exchange in Europe: 1400-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, and supports the interesting book of Kate Lowe (ed.), *Cultural links between Portugal and Italy in the Renaissance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000. See also Alfonso Borrero Cabal; Luisa d’Arienzo, *Toscana e Portogallo*. Miscellanea storica nel 650º aniversario dello Studio Generale di Pisa. Studi del Dipartimento di Scienze della Politica dell’Università di Pisa, Pisa, ETS, 1994.

⁸About the imperialist aspirations of Florence and its influence on Machiavelli, see Mikael Hörnquist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004. Nonetheless, this study covers only the European space.

⁹See *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1884. Albuquerque’s correspondence has been the subject of translations into the English language. See Walter de Gray Birch, *The commentaries of the Great Alfonso Dalboquerque, Second viceroy of India*, New York, B. Franklin, 1963; John Villiers; Thomas Foster Earle (eds.), *Albuquerque, Caesar of the East: selected texts*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1990. Because of a methodological choice – in order to avoid contaminating the discourses produced by Albuquerque with the narration that his contemporaries did of him – I do not use in this essay the 16th-century chronicles that elaborately describe the deeds of Albuquerque, which is the case of the *Lendas da Índia*, by Gaspar Correia, *História das conquistas dos portugueses na Índia*, by Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, and *Décadas da Ásia*, by João de Barros, not to mention the *Comentários*, by Brás de Albuquerque.

¹⁰Claudio Guillen, “Notes towards the study of Renaissance Letter”, In: Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (ed.), *Renaissance genres: essays on theory, history and interpretation*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1986; Antonio Castillo, “Introducción”, In: ____ (comp.), *Escribir e leer en el siglo de Cervantes*, Barcelona, Gedisa Editorial, 1999, p. 19-38.

only small issues. As Francisco Bethencourt pointed out in an inspiring comparative study about the correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortès, the majority of these letters (two-thirds of the total) is from 1513 and 1514, having been written mainly between October and November, in order to be included in the fleet leaving for Lisbon at that time.¹¹ This means that these letters were from a period when not only the main conquests of Albuquerque had already happened — Goa (1510), Malacca (1511), and Ormuz (1515) — but also some of his failures, for example, Aden (1513). They refer to a time when the conditions to conserve these conquests started to be defined. Among them, stood out the plan to control key points, the diplomacy, and the well-known “marriage policy”.

The political history of the 16th century has privileged political action in European and Mediterranean areas, rarely connecting these with “overseas” experiences

In an important text, Earle recalls that is impossible to analyze Albuquerque’s missives without taking into account its communicative status. First, the letters of Albuquerque responded to those that had been previously sent to him, namely by D. Manuel I, with instructions and also warnings. At the same time, they dialogued with missives produced by his rivals, since many of them created a background of controversy regarding his actions, which demanded a justifying speech by Albuquerque.¹² Moreover, most of the letters from Albuquerque are part of a larger sphere of writing that also completes and authorizes them: notebooks with detailed information about specific issues (accounting, men at service, issues concerning the state of the vessels, among others), warrants, bills of lading, orders, and so on.¹³

Besides these texts, that establish a unity of discourse to which the letters of Albuquerque are part of (some of them missing) these letters are also shaped by their interlocutors, their expectations and the perception that Albuquerque had of them (and vice versa). In addition to the dialogue with the king of Portugal having an explicit dimension of response to requests and demands made by him, the contents of these letters are also the consequence of Albuquerque’s relation to the king, not only as a vassal, governor, and knight of the Order of Santiago (with all the duties implied in these statutes), but also as a subject

¹¹Francisco Bethencourt, “The political correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortès”, *In: _____*, Florika Egmond (eds.), *Correspondence and cultural exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹²John Villiers; Thomas Foster Earle (eds.), *Albuquerque, Caesar of the East: selected texts*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1990, p. 49-51. The second chapter of the book by Catarina Madeira Santos, *Goa é a chave de toda a Índia: perfil político e institucional da capital do Estado da Índia*, Lisboa, CNCDP, 1999, presents a good account of these exchanges and tensions.

¹³Unfortunately, it is yet to be made a material history of the documentation produced by Afonso de Albuquerque, its preservation and transmission, its features, omissions, particularly in comparison with the documentation produced by other rulers of the empire, his contemporaries, and subsequents.

that combined all these identities and could not be reduced to any of them. We do not know what Albuquerque actually thought of D. Manuel, but his letters enlighten part of this imagination that, quite often, is very critical.¹⁴ That explains the difference between the letters to the king and those to Duarte Galvão, who was Albuquerque's childhood friend and also a humanist and chronicler of the kingdom. Their conversation reflects an ongoing dialogue initiated in Lisbon since the days of youth and continued despite the physical distance. It also justifies the difference to other letters written to other parties.¹⁵

In light of these dimensions of the available correspondence of Albuquerque, first I will try to extract information on his ideas about the conquest and conservation of territories¹⁶. Second, I will select all references made to the previous intellectual background and the political experience of Albuquerque. If the first exercise aims to investigate the existence of a consistent political thought of Albuquerque, the reconstruction of his knowledge and his experiences when he left for the Indian Ocean enables us to identify the roots of reference of his thinking. At the same time, it allows us to identify the parallels that existed between the Florentine and Portuguese worlds.

The following sections are dedicated to these problems. The first part is about the identification of the themes developed by Albuquerque regarding the conquest and conservation of territories (with special emphasis on the role played by war). Whenever pertinent, this identification will be done in a dialogue with the treatises of Machiavelli. In fact, I propose a very simple — perhaps too simple — procedure. I read the letters of Albuquerque bearing in mind what Machiavelli had proposed about the same topics in *Il principe* (a synthesis focused on the role of the ruler in the conservation process of the land), in *Discorsi* (in the first and third books, many observations on the conservation of territories can be found, while the second book is full of discussion on matters of conquest), and *Dell'arte della guerra* (exclusively dedicated to the war, and less studied).

We know that Albuquerque had no access to the writings of Machiavelli — he was already dead when Machiavelli wrote *Discorsi* and *Dell'arte della guerra* — and that Machiavelli did not use the “Portuguese successes” as relevant examples for his considerations, although he was aware of many of them.

Apparently, the European and Mediterranean centered political imagination of Machiavelli did not predict — unlike what happened with other Florentine

¹⁴Francisco Bethencourt, “The political correspondence of Albuquerque and Cortes”, In: ____; Florika Egmond (eds.), *Correspondence and cultural exchange in Europe, 1400-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 229.

¹⁵For André Crabbé Rocha, *A epistolografia em Portugal*, Coimbra, Livraria Almedina, 1965, p. 65-67, Albuquerque “wields the pen with the fearless force of one who draws the sword”, with nothing missing in him “to be a real writer”.

¹⁶About these, see the study by Fernando Gomes Pedrosa mentioned before, *Afonso de Albuquerque e a arte da guerra*, Cascais, Câmara Municipal de Cascais, 1998, but also the books from João Paulo Oliveira Costa; Vítor Rodrigues, *Conquista de Goa, 1510: campanhas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Tribuna, 2008, and *Idem, Conquista de Malaca, 1511: campanhas de Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Tribuna, 2011, or even the thesis of José Virgílio Amaro Pissarra, *A armada da Índia. Cômputo, Tipologia e Funcionalidade da armada de guerra portuguesa do Oriente (1501-1510)*, M.A. dissertation, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, 2001.

humanists — the relevance of the overseas conquests initiated by the Iberians. Still, the topics of Machiavelli's treatises do not always form a coherent whole, due to the changes of the author facing the political changes of his own world, but also to the writing routines of a period when rhetorics worked according to parameters distinct from the current ones — leveraging precisely the textual inconsistencies.

Comparatively, the experience of Albuquerque is both wider and narrower. It is wider because his actions occurred in European (Castile and western Mediterranean), African (North Africa), and Asian (western until eastern Indian Ocean) territories. He discloses in his letters the conversations he had in these various contexts with their political actors and the practical experience he obtained from such places and their people. His knowledge was, in that sense, much more detailed than Machiavelli's, which was conditioned (with the exception of the Ottoman Empire) by readings of those territories and peoples, considered at a permanent disadvantage when compared with the Greeks and Romans.¹⁷ Considering their lives as a whole, Albuquerque seems to have been more cosmopolitan than Machiavelli — and I know this is a bold assumption, but I consider it deserves to be stated. Or, to say it differently, Albuquerque had experienced the “new worlds”, while Machiavelli had not.

In addition to these structural differences, it is important to stress another important distinction. While Machiavelli's reasoning on military action focused mainly on ground war, the ones from Albuquerque concentrated on naval war (about which there is virtually nothing in any of Machiavelli's books).

Given the possible parallels but also the obvious differences, is it possible to justify the research and analysis of connections between these two worlds geographically and politically distinct? I believe it is, especially if we consider the hypothesis that the worlds in which Machiavelli and Albuquerque grew up were not so different, after all; an aspect that will be examined in the second part of this study.

To retrieve the shared cultural fabric of Albuquerque and Machiavelli's worlds, it becomes necessary to adopt a transnational perspective of the political and intellectual dynamics of the early-modern period, namely by using what Ulrich Beck and Nathan Snazder designated as methodological cosmopolitanism.¹⁸ Methodological cosmopolitanism allows us to construct a history that explores the intersection of less visible variables and includes multiple voices, a history that allows us to have a more rigorous understanding of the circulation of political languages and to identify the continuities that can be established between historical dynamics apparently discontinuous. Such a methodology involves identifying the response to Asian, African, and Amerindian cultures in

¹⁷In reality, the works *Il principe*, *I discorsi* or *L'arte della guerra* (see online editions: Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: May 25, 2014, starting from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971) make few references to Asia. The protagonist of the work *L'arte* openly asserts, moreover, that his reasoning about the war focuses on Europe (Machiavelli, *L'arte della guerra*, p. 43).

¹⁸Ulrich Beck; Nathan Snazder, “Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2010, p. 381-403.

the political speeches made by the Portuguese agents (and European agents, in general) that came into contact with them, abandoning the diffusionist perspectives that continue to seek — and almost only — the influences that the European models had in other places.¹⁹ It also means mapping the varied discourses on the conquest and conservation of territories delivered in these decades by other Europeans to identify other paths of cultural communication.²⁰

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to pursue these two goals in this short essay. At the moment, I only try to reconstruct Afonso de Albuquerque's intellectual culture and the materiality of the intellectual contexts of those with whom he interacted, in order to identify the transnational threads of his political culture and the possible relationships that can be established between his ideas of conquest and territorial conservation and those of Machiavelli.²¹

“So that Your Highness has all the riches in the world”: to conquer and conserve territory in the Indian Ocean²²

In a letter to king D. Manuel dated October 16, 1510, Albuquerque (governor of the State of India between 1509 and 1515) advises the king, against opposite voices, to make war, because “from good war comes good peace”. In the Indian Ocean, this war had two goals — to expel Islam and make the Portuguese king one of the richest in the world.²³ The control over the trade in the Red Sea raised big expectations, and the enrichment of D. Manuel (often Albuquerque repeats the *topos* that soon the king would have money enough for “all the expenditures of the world that Your Highness wishes to make”) was the natural consequence of destroying the Islamic power. This could be damaged in its heart if its center of gravity could be controlled.

But what would permit to achieve such ambitious goals? According to Albuquerque, it was necessary to meet a set of conditions. First, to build a reputation of strength. For the king to be respected in the Indian seas, it was necessary that the other princes feared his capacity. “Does Your Highness know what is the craftiness of these Moors?”, Albuquerque asks rhetorically, offering himself the answer: “the main thing that they dedicate

¹⁹A similar conclusion can be drawn from the text of Annabel Bret, “Scholastic political thought and the modern concept of State”, In: ____; James Tully (eds.), *Rethinking the foundations of modern political thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. In the case of letters from Afonso de Albuquerque, the tension between sea and ground power is very clear, with the local princes doubting the power of the Portuguese because it was precisely not based on ground warfare.

²⁰In dialogue, particularly, with the proposal of Serge Gruzinski em *L'aigle et le dragon*. Démesure européenne et mondialisation au XVIe siècle, Paris, Fayard, 2012.

²¹See, in this regard, the considerations of Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The birth-pangs of Portuguese Asia: revisiting the fateful ‘long decade’ 1498-1509”, *Journal of Global History*, n. 2, 2007, p. 261-280. Specifically on the political thought of Afonso de Albuquerque, the only available study is from Carlos Coimbra, *O pensamento político de Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1932.

²²Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1512”, In: ____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 35.

²³*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 16-10-1510”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 4-12-1513”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 20; 226.

to is discovering how many of us are here, and which weapons we have; and if they see in us strength they cannot contest, then they receive us well and give us their goods". This shows that force was one of the strategies adopted by Albuquerque. One way to achieve fame was to punish enemies exemplary, whenever necessary. Accordingly, the king should always seek "revenge against the Rex and masters of India that do us wrong" because this was "one of the things that contributed more to your fame and credit in these parts".²⁴

The conquest of Goa exemplified this. Albuquerque displayed naval power of the Portuguese as a suggestion that he could "come over to Goa with more vessels, if he wished, and to show power to India", so that the enemies were "sure of the power and greatness of the fleets of Your Highness", and that we could "assemble twenty, thirty, and forty ships, if necessary". This display of strength "will resound everywhere, and great things will come to you, without having to conquer and master them, because of this fear and awe".²⁵

Albuquerque was convinced that, besides facilitating the conquest, the fame of strength would make it easier to get voluntary donations of territories, as well as renditions from princes afraid of being attacked by the Portuguese. A similar reasoning can be identified in Machiavelli. When he discusses the relationship between *virtus* and fortune in the construction of the greatness of Rome, challenging the thesis of Plutarch and Livy, according to whom fortune was responsible for the Roman Empire reaching the size that it did, Machiavelli says that it was *virtus* (mainly expressed by force) that allowed the Romans to arouse fear in the neighboring peoples, preventing them from attacking.²⁶

However, the fame of strength did not depend only on weapons. It was also essential to have good people, as well as trained armies. "Good fortresses, many people in horses, much artillery and good weapons" — this statement summarizes the conditions Albuquerque considered necessary to conserve India, recognizing, nevertheless, that he does not have them but instead "half a dozen rotten ships and fifteen hundred men".²⁷ The need for people and weapons is a recurring topic in the correspondence, and the dissatisfaction about its scarcity is equally constant. Despite this, the sending of people and the impact that this had is acknowledged. According to Albuquerque, after the arrival of new contingents, "Rex and Masters from all places wrote me with many

²⁴Afonso de Albuquerque, "Carta a D. Manuel de 16-10-1512"; "Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1512", In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1884, p. 19-21; 40.

²⁵*Idem*, "Carta a D. Manuel de 17-10-1510"; "Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1510", In: *Ibidem*, p. 21-23; 26-29; 49.

²⁶Machiavelli, *I discorsi sopra le Decade*, book 2, chap. 1 (see online edition: Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Available from: <http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>, starting from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli*. Tutte le opere, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Accessed on: June 17, 2014).

²⁷Afonso de Albuquerque, "Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1512", In: *Ibidem*, p. 35.

offerings, because of fear and not for their own will and all this is quiet”.²⁸ The sending of Swiss guards, requested by him in 1512 to “teach these people that come from there, to not run away or disarray for five hundred ps., and to the ones who have more obligations to take good care of themselves” is considered, two years later, “the biggest mercy in the world”.²⁹ Actually, what Albuquerque desired was to establish ordinances, that is, organized, stable, regular armies, combining infantry and artillery, on which he could always count.³⁰

Strength and reputation, as long as they were based on naval power and organized troops, were, therefore, two essential conditions to achieve a good conquest. To these conditions, Albuquerque adds some others. One was knowledge. To find out the local conditions in advance was essential to succeed in the military campaigns. Statements of this type are frequent: “I have known this because of accounts from the same Moors”, or “all the time they inform us of all the things inside the Purple sea”; we know that there were, indeed, many reports requested by Albuquerque. The *Summa Oriental* of Tomé Pires and the *Livro do que vio Duarte Barbosa* are the best known examples.³¹

*For the king to be respected in the Indian seas,
it was necessary that other princes feared his skills.
“Does Your Highness know what is the craftiness
of these Moors?,” asks Albuquerque*

To understand the social and political conditions of the places to conquer, allowing, for instance, the exploitation of the divisions of local powers wherever they existed, was another condition. For example, the fact that “the Turks are enemies amongst themselves” facilitated the enterprise of some of the territories under their rule. Overall, Albuquerque believed that “the Gentiles” were “men full of novelties”, a feature that favored their attraction to the Portuguese party in exchange for money and privileges at sea: “if they find a Portuguese captain who will give them a fine work and payment, a thousand pedestrians will soon come following, and they will take the income from the land as a payment of

²⁸Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 18-10-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 16-10-1510”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 1-4-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 9-10-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 30-10-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 30-11-1513”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 19-20, 29-65, 83, 91, 95 et seq.; 135 et seq.

²⁹*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 16-10-1512”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 19-21.

³⁰See, for this purpose, Fernando Gomes Pedrosa, *Afonso de Albuquerque e a arte da guerra*, Cascais, Câmara Municipal de Cascais, 1998, p. 61; 89 et seq.

³¹Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 4 de dezembro de 1513”, In: _____, *op cit.*, p. 226 et seq.

their wages”.³² In short, to buy friendship and hire local soldiers was relatively easy, which also benefited the conquering process.

On the other hand, there was divine providence, since without its support any enterprise could be doomed to failure. Albuquerque often repeats the idea that the successes in India “appear to be decided by God”.³³ With the “help of the passion of our Lord” — he wrote in a letter —, he would be able to achieve “the destruction of Mecca”.³⁴ Luís Filipe Thomaz wrote one of its most emblematic studies³⁵ about this question: the “destruction of Mecca, the end and termination of the cult of Mohammed, the division and discord among its cults” was an omnipresent topic among the Portuguese elites of that period. It was in this context that Albuquerque saw in the sky “a large and very clear cross, very well made and resplendent”, “with our Lord showing us that sign in the direction of Prester John, where we had served Him so well”.³⁶

This type of “sign” led Albuquerque to fully agree with a statement of Duarte Galvão, who said that things in India were “divinely discovered and divinely kept”. For Albuquerque, even his successes in Malacca proved that “our Lord carries the business of India in His hand”. Aware that the deed of Malacca had been reckless, Albuquerque explains the decision to do it by his divine allegiance: “I made my way via Malacca, because it delighted our Lord”, also admitting that “I left India not as the king had ordered me, but as a man who would have to explain it in this world and the Hereafter”. The whole letter is full of allusions of this kind, either to justify the success in conquests, to explain a special luck in a moment of danger, or even to justify situations that seemed improbable to him (“it seems like a godly thing that the Portuguese want so much to marry and live in Goa”).³⁷

In other words, Albuquerque placed the conquests in the Indian Ocean in a simultaneously temporal and eschatological plan, with the political allegiance to the king appearing to be smaller than his loyalty to Christ.³⁸

How would this tension be interpreted by Machiavelli had he considered Albuquerque’s action worthy of reasoning? On the basis of the proposed interpretations of Machiavelli by Maurizio Viroli, different from the more conventional literature on the Machiavelli’s perception of religion (understood,

³²Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1510”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 26-29.

³³*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 3-12-1513”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 196.

³⁴*Idem*, “Carta a Duarte Galvão”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 395 et seq.

³⁵The political imaginary of the Portuguese Court was filled with a providentialism that could even have prophetic and millenarian overtones, as it was already pointed out by Luís Filipe Thomaz, in his seminal article “L’idée impériale manuéline”, overtones that also characterized, according to Sanjay Subrahmanyam, the Eurasian space (Luís Filipe Thomaz, “L’idée impériale manuéline”, In: Jean Aubin (ed.), *La Découverte, le Portugal et l’Europe – Actes du Colloque*, Paris, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1990, p. 35-103).

³⁶Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a Duarte Galvão”, In: _____, op cit., p. 395 et seq.

³⁷*Idem*, “Carta ao rei D. Manuel I de 22-13-1512”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 56.

³⁸*Idem*, “Carta ao rei D. Manuel I de 30-11-1513”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 135.

in most cases, as strictly functionalist, free from any eschatological dimension), Machiavelli becomes a supporter of a reformed Christian religion, a religion that encouraged the political *virtus* and the good citizen. Viroli admits that, in the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli attributes the weakness of the Italian political life to its attachment to the Catholic religion, but, according to him, Machiavelli was thinking of the pre-reformed Catholic religion, namely the Italian Catholicism of his time, not the Catholic religion in general. On the contrary, for Machiavelli, genuine religion stimulated action, it was dynamic. In short, it was virtuous.³⁹

We know that the military actions of Albuquerque were to a large extent motivated by a religion of that type (as we shall see further, Albuquerque's family was intensively associated with religious reformism), although it is not always clear to what kind of glory Albuquerque truly aspired. Was he seeking secular fame, and with it, the consideration of his prince and of his "polis" — what Machiavelli would surely approve —, or the divine recognition, that is, his personal glory, becoming a sort of "mercenary of God" (which the Florentine would certainly criticize)?⁴⁰

As an alternative, Machiavelli could have also understood the relationship that Albuquerque had with the divine providence as a belief in fortune, and not in *virtus* (although, for Albuquerque, the divine aspect was an outcome of his *virtus*). If this was his interpretation, Machiavelli would criticize Albuquerque for believing that the "arbitrariness" was a variable that could determine the successes and failures of conquests. For Machiavelli — who we could qualify as a control freak — the annulment of the uncertainty of circumstances was crucial to the success of political affairs.

Instead of choosing any of these interpretations, we may ask now what are the points in which Machiavelli and Albuquerque explicitly diverge? First, there is the role played by social and political conflict within the cities or territories to conquer. From the letters of Albuquerque, it can be perceived that the tensions inside the territories to conquer were an adjuvant factor for the conquest. The Portuguese had become experts in exploiting these divisions, usually allying with disgruntled factions to achieve the desired results. What Machiavelli suggests in *Discorsi* is quite different. Machiavelli was convinced that, alternatively, an external attack could serve as a catalyst for internal cohesion, creating an unexpected effect of force that could, in contrast, jeopardize the success of the attack. The aim of Machiavelli is clear: more than exploiting the internal divisions of the enemy — and therefore, depending on exogenous factors —, it was through a powerful and dreadful army that a political entity could expand and increase its territories. In other words, military success depended primarily on endogenous factors. It is true that in *Il principe*, Machiavelli is less decisive, accepting that it was almost

³⁹Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli's god*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, Preface.

⁴⁰This interpretation would be possible from the theses produced by Timothy J. Lukes, "Martialing Machiavelli: reassessing the military reflections", *Journal of Politics*, vol. 66, n. 4, 2004, p. 1089-1108.

impossible to conquer a new province without internal assistance.⁴¹ Seven years later, he seems to give less importance to this variable.

It is the same principle — the tension between endogenous and exogenous variables — that leads Machiavelli to criticize the use of mercenaries. After being himself involved in the creation of a Florentine militia in 1506, Machiavelli elaborates extensively on this topic in *Il principe*, *Discorsi*, and *Dell'arte della guerra*. For some authors, Machiavelli was truly convinced that Florence could not expand territorially because it relied on armies composed of mercenaries and auxiliaries, which is why he started to defend the constitutions of armies consisting of citizens. These were the only ones that could guarantee that the aspirations and stability of the principalities depended not on fortune but on *virtus*.⁴² The armies composed of mercenaries would hardly have a genuine love for the prince and for the *patria*, in order to justify the fight for these under any circumstances.⁴³ Using the example of the Romans, Machiavelli believed that imperial expansion depended, to a large extent, on the quality of the armies composed of citizens, equally essential for political stability (that is to say, for the conservation of the republic). These armies would be more virtuous if they combined the good Roman techniques with some of the new features of their times — particularly, the ones developed by the “Germans” and the “Swiss”.⁴⁴

As it is well-known, the Portuguese enterprise in the Indian Ocean was composed, instead, of a mixture of soldiers, among whom many were mercenaries, in addition to such “hundred thousand peasants” that a Portuguese captain could easily muster, if he could afford to pay them. Despite being in line with the dominant military culture, this was in total contradiction with what Machiavelli advocated. At the same time — as we have seen before —, Albuquerque was quite aware of the risks mentioned by the Florentine, and this was one of the reasons why he asked the king to send Swiss guards.⁴⁵

Adding to armies, Albuquerque’s policy regarding fortresses is again in opposition to what Machiavelli proposed, and in line with the common culture of the period regarding fortresses, as well as with what would be theorized, even

⁴¹Machiavelli, *I discorsi sopra le Decade de Tito Livii*, book 2, chap. 25; *Il principe*, chap. 3, p. 5. Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edited from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

⁴²Mikael Hörnquist, “Machiavelli’s military project and the art of war”, In: John M. Najemy (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Machiavelli*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 113-118.

⁴³Machiavelli, *op cit.*, chap. 20; chaps. 12-14.

⁴⁴*Idem*, *L'arte della guerra*, book 2 (see online editions: Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: May 25, 2014). See, in this regard, the considerations of Timothy J. Lukes, “Martialing Machiavelli: reassessing the military reflections”, *Journal of Politics*, vol. 66, n. 4, 2004, p. 1089-1108.

⁴⁵Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 16-10-1510”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 19-20.

a century later, by other strategists.⁴⁶ For Machiavelli, the fortresses were usually built to defend the prince from the “conquered”, revealing, therefore, a “bad prince”. When they were built to defend the prince against external enemies, their usefulness depended on the existence of a good army.⁴⁷ However, if there was a good army, the fortresses became almost unnecessary, because the army’s responsibility was to defend the conquered territories. If the army was bad, the fortresses became harmful. In this regard, Albuquerque follows, once again, the dominant military thinking, which predicted the fortification of territories under political dominion. In the case of the Indian Ocean, a belt of fortresses was definitely part of a plan of conservation of territories, since Albuquerque considered the efforts developed by the Crown insufficient to ensure the safety of Indian conquests.

For “India to be in peace”, said Albuquerque, “for three years we shall have three thousand well-armed men and good equipment to make fortresses and many weapons”. Concluding that “the things mastered in these parts by Your Highness with a good fortress [‘but also with the help of Portuguese men in helmets *amtras ameyas*’], would speak well of him until the judgment day”.⁴⁸ The fortresses were so important to Albuquerque’s plan that in December 1512 he warns the king as follows. According to him, “Your Highness will not put India on track, or will have to always send a lot of the people to these parts”, if fortresses were not built in the “main places”.⁴⁹ That is, unlike Machiavelli, for whom the fortresses without people were virtually useless, to Albuquerque, they constituted, instead, the only alternative to the shortage of human resources.⁵⁰

There are points, however, where the Florentine and the Portuguese apparently converged: reputation, political friendships, and certain conquering techniques. The certainty that the fame of the prince was a crucial factor for success in war unites them from the outset. The perception of the prince’s power deterred enemies from attacking, leaving the decision of when and how to do it to the other part.⁵¹ In turn, Machiavelli also considers — as Albuquerque does — that to have a friend in the town or in the province to

⁴⁶Fernando Gomes Pedrosa, *Afonso de Albuquerque e a arte da guerra*, Cascais, Câmara Municipal de Cascais, 1998, p. 103-107. About this culture of fortification and its practice in Portugal, see Andréa Doré, *Sitiados. Os cercos às fortalezas na Índia (1498-1622)*, São Paulo, Alameda, 2010, p. 75 *et seq.*

⁴⁷Machiavelli, *I discorsi sopra le Decade de Tito Livii*, book 2, chap. 24. Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edition from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

⁴⁸*amtras ameyas*: between the crenels (of castles). Vítor Rodrigues, “A guerra na Índia”, In: António Manuel Hespanha (coord.), *Nova história militar de Portugal*, vol. 2, Manuel Themudo Barata; Nuno Severiano Teixeira (eds.), Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2004, p. 200-201; Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel I de 1-4-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 30-10-1512”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 33; 40; 51; 54; 97.

⁴⁹*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1512”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁵⁰Incidentally, this would be the interpretation of Carlo Theti in *Discorsi delle fortificazioni, espugnazione & difese delle città, & d'altri luoghi*, de 1589, *apud* Andréa Doré, *op cit.*, p. 77.

⁵¹Machiavelli, *op cit.*, chap. 1.

conquer was important, because it facilitated the entry in it,⁵² though, and unlike Albuquerque, he associates this friendship with the positive effect of the prince's reputation — which drew many friends — and not to the political disunity within the territory to conquer.⁵³

Through the letters of Albuquerque we can also see that there were similarities concerning some of the tactics that could be adopted in the conquering. For Machiavelli, short wars were the best wars, and the best attacks were strong attacks, with open violence, although seeking to destroy as little as possible.⁵⁴ Albuquerque also aims to accomplish the same idea, but in the context of naval war: short and forcefully attacks, through a combination of naval power and artillery capacity that would replace with advantage the traditional methods.⁵⁵

There are points, however, where the Florentine and the Portuguese apparently converged: reputation, political friendship, conquering techniques

We could proceed with this mapping of the points of divergence and contact between Machiavelli and Albuquerque concerning the conquest of new territories. However, since both for Machiavelli and Albuquerque conquest and conservation were deeply interconnected, let us move forward and ask: what happens when we analyze their reasoning about the best conditions to conserve these territories? These reasoning can be divided into two types: the geopolitical, and that related with the government of populations.

The establishment of a network of cities that helped each other, in which Goa played a central role, was one of the most important conditions for the sustainability of conquests, according to Albuquerque. Goa did not require a lot of people for its defense (about 400 men), being able to resist to “two, three or four thousand men”. Besides this, Goa was self-reliable from the demographic and economic points of view.⁵⁶ One could add to these benefits the fact that, in case of a loss of “India”, “from Goa Your Highness could win it back”. Besides,

⁵²Machiavelli, *I discorsi sopra le Decade de Tito Livii*, book 2, chap. 1. Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edited from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

⁵³*Ibidem*, chap. 1; chap. 30.

⁵⁴Still in the second book of *I discorsi*, in the chapters 6 and 32. *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵Vitor Rodrigues, “A guerra na Índia”, *In: António Manuel Hespanha (coord.), Nova história militar de Portugal*, vol. 2, Manuel Themudo Barata; Nuno Severiano Teixeira (eds.), Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2004, p.198.

⁵⁶Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 17-10-1510”, *In: _____, Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 22.

it was from Goa that “your people could enter the kingdoms of Aquém and Narsynga”, that is, advance on the territorial conquest.⁵⁷

The other cities of that league were Kochi, “main escape and trading post of all India, because it is the middle of everything and it can be reached by navigating from all other posts, which you should have in India to take advantage of it”; Aden, because it is in “the mouth of navigation in the strait”, with all the ships that came from Judah to India going through there; Hormuz, which had “a lot of people, and a good advice is to govern and master it because it will pay for everything, even if it requires much, it also yields much”, and the main and biggest territory in India was Malacca, “a very big thing”.⁵⁸

One of the most important studies about the State of India focuses precisely on the foundational character of this model and its scope in the structuring of the Portuguese imperial experience. According to Luís Filipe Thomaz, Albuquerque was inspired by the Greek imperial experiences (Minoan and Athenian), by the Hanseatic League, and certainly by the Aragonese empire when he proposed a network of fortified towns as a political and administrative structure of the State of India. This model was characterized by the combination of a maritime dominion, which relied on a strong naval power, reinforced by the control of territorial key points.⁵⁹ Not disagreeing with the interpretation of Thomaz in regard to the beginnings of the State of India, I believe that it can be enlightening to consider Machiavelli’s writings on the leagues of cities (adding them to the ones analyzed by Thomaz) and the advantages that they had brought to the greatness of Rome. For Machiavelli, the model of a network of cities with greater success had been precisely the one established by Rome, which allowed the grandeur of that city and its territorial expansion project.⁶⁰ Is it possible that Goa, the Rome of the East, evoked this other experience, too? In the trail of what has been explained by Catarina Madeira Santos, I would say yes.⁶¹

⁵⁷Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1510”, In: ____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 26-29.

⁵⁸*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 1-4-1512”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 4-12-1513”; “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-9-1515”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 53; 199 *et seq.*; 370.

⁵⁹Luís Filipe Thomaz, “A estrutura político-administrativa do império português”, In: ____, *De Ceuta a Timor*, Lisboa, Difel, 2004; *Idem*, “Albuquerque”, In: Joel Serrão (ed.), *Dicionário de história de Portugal*, vol. 1 (A-C), Porto, Livraria Figueirinhas, 1979; António Manuel Hespanha; Catarina Madeira Santos, “Os poderes num império oceânico”, In: António Manuel Hespanha (ed.); José Mattoso (dir.), *História de Portugal. O Antigo Regime (1620-1807)*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1993; António Manuel Hespanha, “A constituição do império português. Alguns enviesamentos historiográficos”, In: João Fragoso; Maria Fernanda Bicalho; Maria de Fátima Gouveia (eds.), *O Antigo Regime nos trópicos: a dinâmica imperial portuguesa (séculos XVI-XVIII)*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2001; Kirti Chaudhuri, “O estabelecimento no Oriente”, In: Francisco Bethencourt; Kirti Chaudhuri (eds.), *História da expansão portuguesa*, vol. 1, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2008, p. 163-191.

⁶⁰Mikael Hörnquist, *Machiavelli and empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 131 *et seq.*; Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra le Decade de Tito Livii*, book 2, chap. 5. Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edited from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli*. Tutte le opere, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

⁶¹Catarina Madeira Santos, *Goa é a chave de toda a Índia*. Perfil político da capital do Estado da Índia, Lisboa, CNDP, 1999, p. 113 *et seq.*

The will of the prince was also crucial for territorial conservation. To the Governor of the State of India, it was clear that King D. Manuel should be more concerned with the conservation of his conquests than with those that had been achieved by his predecessors (in Africa, namely). Albuquerque regretted that the king ignored “the things of your victory and your fame that are so far from your kingdoms, so big and so rich”. Moreover, according to Albuquerque, either the king had the financial resources to assure the permanence in the several fronts in which he was involved — the areas of India and Africa, the aid to “friends” with large fleets, the ships he ordered to produce, the fleets that he was sending to the strait —, or he had to choose in order to save his most precious possessions.⁶²

The prince also played an important role in designing the government of the populations of the imperial territories. Similarly to what Machiavelli argued in 1503 in “Del modo di trattare el popolo della Valdicchiana ribellati” (although later, and once again, he has taken slightly different stands), a similar reasoning could have been applied to Goa: either total and violent destruction, or the benevolent treatment to the losers.⁶³

Let us consider, the description made by Albuquerque in the letter dated December 22, 1510, to D. Manuel. On the one hand, Albuquerque was decided to “not let a Moor alive in Goa, nor enter it”; on the other hand, he showed benevolence toward some people: “for now, it is better to let stay those people that seem to be good”; “I told to not kill the farmers and Brahmans”; “I reassured the ‘small’ people and workmen, caulkers and carpenters, blacksmiths, painters, and soon we will have abundance of workmen for all that is necessary”.⁶⁴ That is, the solution that Albuquerque came up with combined violence and benevolence.

The Moors could also be given, as he explains in a letter of November 23, 1512, in which he states that “the Moors of this land know well the love I have for them and how I instruct them, and the confidence I have on them”.⁶⁵ In other words, alluding to a plethora of choices that, curiously, had many similarities with what was suggested by the Florentine, Albuquerque believed, as Machiavelli did, that the analysis of the circumstances dictated the best decisions.

Besides the relationship with local populations, the relationship of the prince with the “settlers” was also essential. Particularly attentive to the “psychology of the settler”, Albuquerque refers frequently to the need of controlling the uncertainty, in order to prevent disincentive and laxity

⁶²Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel I, 1-4-1512”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque segundas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 33 *et seq.*

⁶³Techniques explicitly advocated by Machiavelli in “Del modo di trattare el popolo della Valdicchiana ribellati” *apud* Mikael Hörnquist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 103.

⁶⁴Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 22-12-1510”, In: _____, *op cit.*, p. 26-29.

⁶⁵*Idem*, “Carta a D. Manuel de 23-11-1512”, In: *Ibidem*, p. 100.

among the Portuguese people who lived in Indian Ocean areas.⁶⁶ One way of doing this was to promote marriages between Portuguese soldiers and Indian women, multiplying, through this way, the local Portuguese community and ensuring the continuity of the imperial presence.⁶⁷ In addition to those, there were other less controllable factors such as the dissimulation of the Indian kings, as well as fortune, not always favorable to the Portuguese. Regarding the failure in conquering Aden in a letter of 1513, he explains that “all these captains, knights and noblemen climbed up the wall, and they entered [in the fortress] boldly and with lots of effort and desire to serve Your Highness, as if you were there looking at them”. However, “fortune, envy of their honor, made the stairs to break all at the same time”, contradicting even the “help of our Lord”, with which they would have “concluded it, because there was no one in the town who would dare to fight us”. The mention of this combat between “fortune”, the old Roman goddess, and providence, won by “fortune”, is very interesting and it suggests that the intellectual imagination of Albuquerque, oscillated between a Christian framework and a classical culture shared by the elites of that time; expressed in a suggestive way in this episode.

Since it is impossible to synthesize, within this study and with the necessary complexity, the thoughts of Machiavelli on these subjects, it is difficult to evaluate the connections between this type of speech and what Machiavelli wrote about the conservation of new territories both in *Il principe* and in *I discorsi*. Therefore, I will only recall some well-known ideas that the Florentine had developed on these matters.

For Machiavelli, it was clear that the type of conquest (either dependent on *virtus* or on fortune) was an important condition for the future conservation of the conquered territories. A conquest resulting from the force of armies had more possibilities of conservation than a conquest that was an outcome of a combination of factors based more or less on contextual reasons. In both cases, the conservation of new territories always implied a lot of difficulties, starting with the impossibility of the prince to satisfy the aspirations of all those who had helped him in the conquest.⁶⁸ When what had been conquered was a “provincia disforme di lingua, di costumi, di ordine”,⁶⁹ these difficulties were even greater, and that was definitely the case of the territories conquered by Albuquerque in the Indian Ocean. Maintaining this type of provinces was only possible if the prince lived there, or sent colonies of his subjects, who should live in places

⁶⁶Anthony John Russell-Wood, “Fronteiras de integração” e “A sociedade portuguesa no Ultramar”, In: Francisco Bethencourt; Kirti Chaudhuri (eds.), *História da expansão portuguesa*, vol. 1, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2008, p. 238-281.

⁶⁷Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta ao rei D. Manuel de 1-4-1512”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 33.

⁶⁸Machiavelli, *Il principe*, chap. 6, chap. 7, p. 19-20, 22 *et seq.*, Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edited from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli*. Tutte le opere, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

⁶⁹N.t.: “a miscellaneous province in terms of language, habits, and organization”.

close to each other, since this was the only way to avoid the dependency of these territories on many people and weapons, which could become too costly, consuming all the benefits obtained with the conquest. In other words, more than in the fortresses, it was in human resources — and their will to preserve the territories where they lived — that lay the key to their conservation.

Let us consider this second case, since it has some similarities with the “marriage policy” of Albuquerque. According to Machiavelli as for Albuquerque, houses and lands that once belonged to inhabitants of those territories should be distributed to settlers. That, of course, was inexpensive, although offensive to those from whom such goods were taken. However, as long as the offended remained poor and scattered, not only there was no danger, but also this policy of redistribution would act as an example to others. Simultaneously, protecting the weak and weakening those who were powerful, not letting the reputation of the foreign powers grow, were three other equally important instruments — according to Machiavelli — to conserve such territory.⁷⁰

More than in fortresses, it was in human resources — and in their will to preserve the territories where they lived — that lay the key to their conservation

This quick mapping shows us that we can easily identify similarities between Machiavelli and Albuquerque, namely in the areas concerning the relationship between force and political reputation, the more effective conquering techniques, and the role of the settlers in the conservation of the territories. In turn, the differences are also clear, especially those regarding other equally important dimensions: this is the case of the role played by mercenaries and fortresses in the conquest and conservation of territories, as well as the role attributed to fortune (also translated as divine providence, in Albuquerque’s case) in the successes and failures of the conquests. If these differences are not surprising, knowing about the different life-courses of the two protagonists, the convergences deserve a more detailed explanation. In order to do that, it becomes necessary to revisit the cultural contexts in which Afonso de Albuquerque lived.

A “great scholar” with “much prudence, discretion and knowledge”

A “great scholar” with “much prudence, discretion and knowledge”: this is the self-portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque in a letter to King D. Manuel in 1513,

⁷⁰Machiavelli, *Il principe*, chap. 3. Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana. Edited from Mario Martelli, *Machiavelli*. Tutte le opere, Firenze, Sansoni, 1971. Available from: <<http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/>>. Accessed on: June 17, 2014.

adding, in the same missive, that he was “old enough to know good and evil”⁷¹ In other letters, Albuquerque also underlines his qualities: namely, not having “neither background nor status” that allowed him to disobey the king. For this reason, his service was rational and his diligence in executing the king’s orders (“here on this land not one thing is done other than what Your Highness orders and demands from there”) was big. His insistence is probably connected with the fact that he belonged to the Order of Santiago, where the first virtue was, precisely, obedience.⁷²

Apart from indicating a reflexive personality, these and other self-representations seem to fulfill a rhetorical function as well. Through them, Albuquerque authorized both his practices as the content of his letters, the most reliable testimonies of his action.

That Albuquerque could be a great scholar is not, however, a quality that can easily be associated with him, especially when we remember that he has been considered the Caesar of the East, or, as Stevens Morse wrote, a new Alexander the Great. Adding to that, being a great scholar meant to master a body of knowledge that framed, necessarily, the worldviews of those who were, in fact, great scholars. Rarely, the political action of Albuquerque was interpreted in light of these qualities. But if we accept this connection, Albuquerque becomes a lettered knight, in the manner of the Emperor Clarimundo João de Barros, or like some ‘discretes’ of the treatise of Baltasare Castiglione, antedating D. João de Castro, who completely embodied this model decades later.

The referential universe of his “background and status” (his family, his membership to the Order of Santiago and the education at the court of Afonso V) can help us to understand this paradox.

Let us begin with the “status”. We know that on the paternal side Albuquerque belonged to a family of educated officers at the service of the House of Avis. The great-grandfather was the personal scrivener of D. João I, and participated in the conquest of Ceuta, being a sacred knight there, and receiving afterwards the title of Lord of Vila Verde de Francos and of Alenquer. Before the conquest of Ceuta, Gonçalo Lourenço Gomide received a letter of donation from D. João I that allowed him to create “mechanisms to produce irons, saw wood, produce woollen cloths and make paper” in Leiria, which would originate the first paper mill in Portugal (the second one would be established in Batalha in 1514 by Manuel de Góis, a brother of Damião de Góis). Little more is known about that mill, but according to some authors, its existence explains why one of the first Portuguese typographies was in that city.⁷³ Furthermore, Gonçalo Lourenço

⁷¹Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta a D. Manuel de 3-12-1513”, In: _____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1884, p. 162. The many references to the media in which the bureaucratic memory was recorded corroborate this idea, highlighting the need for paper of Portugal. These references can be found in the letters from Albuquerque, and were concerns of an official attentive to the requests of a lettered administration.

⁷²Afonso de Albuquerque, *op cit.*, p. 187; António Maria Falcão Pestana de Vasconcelos, “A Ordem de Santiago em Portugal nos finais da Idade Média (normativa e prática)”, *Militarium Ordinum Analecta*, n. 2, CEPESE/FEEA, 1999.

⁷³Ana Maria Leitão Bandeira, *Pergaminho e papel em Portugal: tradição e conservação*, Lisboa, CELPA - Associação da Indústria Papeleira, 1995, p. 59.

Gomide built a family pantheon in the vestry of Grace Church in Lisbon, which was, according to Lurdes Rosa, a large space of lineage that he arranged with the friars to be his, his wife, and his lineage's place of burial. His goal was to associate his lettered status with symbolic capital.⁷⁴

Despite the great prospects that Gomide clearly aspired for his lineage, his son, João Gonçalves Gomide, grandfather of Albuquerque, would lose the job of personal scrivener after murdering his wife, Leonor of Albuquerque.⁷⁵ Since then, the generation of João Gomide started to bear the mother's surname, Albuquerque, and it is already with that name that the father of Afonso de Albuquerque — Gonçalo de Albuquerque — would be known. The building of a stately palace in this village, where Albuquerque possibly spent his early years, is attributed to him while he was the 3rd Lord of Vila Verde de Francos. Adding to that, Gonçalo de Albuquerque was part of the private council of king Afonso V.⁷⁶

Afonso de Albuquerque's mother was D. Leonor de Menezes, daughter of the first Count of Atouguia, D. Álvaro Gonçalves de Ataíde. The maternal grandfather also participated in the conquest of Ceuta, having taken part, in 1416, in the embassy sent by the King to the Council of Constance, and, in 1429, in the embassy sent to Castile, aiming at the reconciliation between king D. João II of Castile and the kings of Navarra and Aragon. Governor of the house of infant D. Pedro, D. Álvaro de Atayde had himself arrested in a "crafty manner", according to Ruy de Pina, during the dissensions between the infant and his nephew D. Afonso V, taking the side of the king, of whom he had been a tutor.⁷⁷ Ataíde married D. Guiomar de Castro, preceptor of D. Leonor (sister of Afonso V and future empress of Germany), to whom we owe the foundation of the important convent of S. Francisco de Xabregas in Lisbon, in 1455. Deeply associated with the Franciscan reformism, D. Guiomar contributed equally to the foundation of the convent of S. Francisco de Atouguia da Baleia.⁷⁸

Being the second born child, Afonso de Albuquerque had as an older brother Fernão de Albuquerque, overseer of the house of D. Jorge, the bastard son of king D. João II and master of the Order of Santiago. One of his sisters married D. Fernando de Noronha, governor of the house of queen D. Joana, the Great Lady, and captain-general of Salir. Garcia de Noronha, future viceroy of India,

⁷⁴Maria de Lurdes Rosa, "As almas herdeiras". Fundação de capelas fúnebres e afirmação da alma como sujeito de direito (Portugal, 1400-1521), PhD thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, 2004, p. 486-487.

⁷⁵First, he was an assistant of D. Leonor Teles, and, then, of the Master of Avis, whom he represented as ambassador of Portugal in the signing of the Windsor Treaty. See Maria Cristina Fernandes, *A ordem de Santiago no século XIV*, Porto, FLUP, 2002, p. 70; 112.

⁷⁶José Manuel Vargas, *Aspectos da história de Alhos Vedros (séculos XIV a XVI)*, Alhos Vedros, Junta de Freguesia de Alhos Vedros, 2007. He received several donations in 1449, probably as a reward for service to the king at the battle of Alfarrobeira (Humberto Baquero Moreno, *A batalha de Alfarrobeira. Antecedentes e significado histórico*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, 1980, p. 690-691).

⁷⁷Humberto Baquero Moreno, op cit. 1980, p. 723-724.

⁷⁸Besides the mother of Afonso de Albuquerque, other descendants of the couple were D. Martinho de Ataíde, second count of Atouguia, D. João de Ataíde and D. Vasco de Ataíde, both priores do Crato, Albuquerque's uncles, and all of them very close to D. Afonso V (Paula Pinto Costa, "A ordem militar do Hospital em Portugal", *Militarium Ordinum Analecta*, n. 3/4, 2000, p. 262-263).

and Isabel de Castro (the wife of Pedro Álvares Cabral) were two of the children of this union.

These few data are enough to allow us to discuss the “status” of Afonso de Albuquerque, placing him in the context of a nobility that remained, since the beginning of the Avis monarchy, near to the crown and involved in African enterprises,⁷⁹ and of an intellectual elite, who, since the beginning of the Avis dynasty, participated in its bureaucracy. In other words, Albuquerque’s biography integrates him, simultaneously, in a chivalrous universe (of those that integrated, in particular, the African campaigns) and in the universe of letters (of those who had a routine, like Machiavelli, between manuscripts and papers, between formulas and written protocols, between official and semiofficial documentation), both entrenched with the political and military fates of the Avis dynasty.⁸⁰

What can be said about his “background”, as a knight of the Order of Santiago and as someone that circulated in the courts of D. Afonso V and D. João II?

Unfortunately, there are few documents in the archives of the Order of Santiago related to Albuquerque, but we know that while he was the knight of this order Albuquerque, he must have spent at least one year in one of its convents (although he could have spent part of the year outside the convent, with had authorization of the master). After this year, he would be entitled to profess, receiving the insignia, and then being knighted.⁸¹ At that point, Albuquerque would already have the three vows of Friar-knight (chastity, obedience, and poverty), submitting to the obligation of fasting, enjoying the right to test, and use certain colors and fabrics, because of his noble status. Furthermore, he had some civil and ecclesiastic privileges.⁸²

Was Albuquerque already a member of the Order of Santiago in the Battle of Toro in 1476 (along with other figures such as D. Francisco de Almeida, his future rival in India), when he was about 14 years old, the minimum age to receive a knighthood? Or did he get this distinction when he participated, in 1480 and 1481, in the squadron sent to the aid of D. Fernando II of Aragon, seeking to prevent the advance of the Ottomans in the Gulf of Tarentum?

We cannot answer this, but apart from Iberian and Mediterranean lands, the military experience of Afonso de Albuquerque prior to his trip to the Indian Ocean was linked with the African world, in which the Order of

⁷⁹In 1484, he was already registered as a noble knight in the book of houses of D. João II, for example.

⁸⁰See, in this regard, José Bono, *Historia del derecho notarial español*: I, La Edad Media. Madrid, Junta de Decanos de los Colegios Notariales de España, 1979; Guido Van Dievoet, *Les coutumier, les styles, les formulaires et les “Artes Notariae”*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1986; Maria de Lurdes Rosa, “Quadros de organização do poder na Baixa Idade Média. Estrutura familiar, patrimónios e percursos linhagísticos de quatro famílias de Portalegre”, *A Cidade*, n. 4, 1991, p. 47-65.

⁸¹Afonso de Albuquerque, “Carta ao rei D. Manuel I de 3-12-1513”, *In: ____*, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, 1884, p. 189. See António Maria Falcão Pestana Vasconcelos, “A Ordem de Santiago em Portugal nos finais da Idade Média (normativa e prática)”, *Analecta Ordinum Militaris*, n. 2, CEPESE/FEAA, 2000, p. 140-141.

⁸²Carlos Fernando Russo Santos, Priest, *A Ordem de Santiago e o papado no tempo de D. Jorge, De Inocência VIII a Paulo III*, Porto, FLUP, 2004, p. 42 et seq.; 59-60; António Maria Falcão Pestana Vasconcelos, *op cit.*, p. 124.

Santiago participated actively, especially under the rule of prince D. João — D. João II since 1481.⁸³ Although it is generally accepted that he has followed Afonso V in the military campaigns of Tangier and Asilah, where he stayed for several years, there are no reliable sources to confirm this. But we do know that he commanded the defense of the Graciosa Island, near Larache, in 1489, and participated in combats in Asilah in 1495, where one of his brothers died.⁸⁴

Still, given the conditions that allowed his entry, as well as the novitiate for a year, it appears more likely that his ordination as a knight was an outcome of the first trip to the Indian Ocean, from which he would return to the kingdom in 1502, going back to India with a general captaincy, already with the status of knight of the Order of Santiago. One thing is certain, though: just before 1507, and if we leave out the friars with sacred orders, Albuquerque was part of a distinctive group of 53 knights and 32 commanders of the Order of Santiago (one of whom was his brother, Fernão de Albuquerque, a member of the “Thirteen”, that is, with important government duties in the Order).⁸⁵

His “background” as a knight of the Order of Santiago happens after his “upbringing” in the court of Afonso V. Like other children of officers of the Afonsine court — as was the case of António Carneiro, Duarte Galvão, and Martinho Castelo Branco, three of his most consistent and lasting friends, with Duarte Galvão even marrying his cousin Isabel de Albuquerque —, Afonso de Albuquerque received a royal scholarship to be educated in the palace.⁸⁶ Rita Costa Gomes and Saúl Gomes told us that that these children learned to perform a number of roles, helping with the chapel, the chamber, the repostaria⁸⁷, the pantry, the canopy, the hunting, the riding and the stable, receiving, at the same time, a lettered education.⁸⁸ The bachelor Pedro Alvares, the master of grammar Afonso Rodrigues, or the canonist João Rodrigues might have been some of his teachers.⁸⁹ It is also possible that Albuquerque met at this period the infant D. João, the future king D. João II. Even if his education details are

⁸³Anselmo Braancamp Freire, “A guarda de D. João II no ano de 1490”, *Arquivo Historico Portuguez*, vol. 5, 1903-1917, p. 345-366.

⁸⁴In 1490, he was part of the guard of D. João II, under the command of Fernão Martins de Mascarenhas; this African period was mediated by a stay in the kingdom (Anselmo Braancamp Freire, *op cit.*)

⁸⁵Fernão de Albuquerque would also be an overseer of the House of D. Jorge, Commander of Horta Lagoa, who belonged to the group of Thirteen in 1508 (Maria Cristina Pimenta, “As ordens de Avis e de Santiago na Baixa Idade Média”, *Militarium Ordinum Analecta*, n. 5, 2001, p. 179; 405; Francis A. Dutra, “New knights in the Portuguese order of Santiago during the Mastership of D. Jorge, 1492-1550”, *Humanista*, vol. 2, 2002, appendix, p. 113; 115. António M. F. P. Vasconcelos claims that 1503 was his entry year (*Nobreza e Ordens Militares*, vol. 2, Porto, FLUP, p. 117). Please note that, among those who received the Order of Santiago, were no less than Gregório Lopes and his son Cristóvão Lopes, two of the leading painters of the Portuguese court of the 16th century and representatives of the classicization of it through paintings.

⁸⁶A list from 1473 indicates various kinds of scholarships, from 7 to 8 thousand reais for the children of nobles of greater importance, and from 5 to 6 thousand reais for those who followed, including children of magistrates and the mid nobility (Saúl Gomes, *Afonso V*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2006, p. 164). See, in this regard, Humberto Baquero Moreno, “Um aspecto da política cultural de D. Afonso V: a concessão de bolsas de estudo”, *Revista das Ciências do Homem*, série A, n. 3, 1970, p. 177-205.

⁸⁷N.t.: Room in the palaces intended for making sweets and liqueurs.

⁸⁸Rita Costa Gomes, *A corte dos reis de Portugal no final da Idade Média*, Lisboa, Difel, 1995; Saúl Gomes, *op cit.*

⁸⁹Saúl Gomes, *op cit.*, p. 59.

scarce, the compliments of Munzer and Cataldo,⁹⁰ and the references made by Garcia Resende to the taste of the future king for “disputes of great theologians and scholars”, add something about the atmosphere of this court.⁹¹

Still, the information about the contents of the education in the royal palaces of Avis remains incomplete. Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho defined the princes of Avis as “cultured men and of solid literary formation”, supporters of religious literature, chivalry novels, courtly love narratives, and promoters of reading and translating the “classics” into vernacular, reiterating a relatively consensual image that hangs over the generation of Avis.⁹² We know that both D. João I and D. Duarte and the infant D. Pedro wrote treatises related to their government and the government of the republic, referring either to moral theology or classical knowledge, and that a treatise on chivalry, however disappeared, is attributed to D. Afonso V himself.⁹³

Afonso V was, according to Ruy de Pina, “very familiar with books, especially those in which the virtuous habits and clear deeds of the illustrious past kings and princes were truly written”. Furthermore, “as he was very prudent, he knew that books, despite being dead counselors, always teach and give truthful and wholesome advice, free and exempt from the passions of the living advisors.”⁹⁴ It is also known that Afonso V ordered the construction of the first royal library between 1450 and 1451, inspired by the one of the kings of Aragon, which not only united the libraries of D. João I and D. Duarte (and of his “Loyal Counselor”, of course), but also kept the treatises of the infant D. Pedro and his translations — that was the case of *De officiis*, by Cicero, and supposedly *Epitoma rei militari*, by Vegetio, quoted in the treatises of D. Duarte and also referenced by Zurara —,⁹⁵ treatises that are attributed to Afonso V (although disappeared), works of Seneca, *Vida* and *Commentarios*, by Julius Caesar; *Pharsalia*, by Luciano; *Décadas*, by Tito Lívio, and *Vida de Alexandre*.⁹⁶ It is to notice that some of these books were

⁹⁰Luis Adão da Fonseca, *D. João II*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2005, p. 187 *et seq.*

⁹¹*Ibidem*, p. 193.

⁹²Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, *D. João I*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 2005, p. 258 *et seq.*; João Gouveia Monteiro, “Orientações da cultura de corte na 1ª metade do século XV (a literatura dos príncipes de Avis)”, *Vértice*, 2ª série, n. 5, 1988, p. 89-103; Augusto Aires de Nascimento, “As livrarias dos príncipes de Avis”, *Biblos*, vol. LXIX, 1993, p. 265-287; and, also, Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, “Les relations du savoir et du pouvoir dans le Portugal médiéval (XIVe et XVe siècles)”, *In: Raphaela Averkom et al. (eds.), Europa und die Welt in der Geschichte*. Festschrift für Dieter Berg zu seinem 60. Geburtstag, Bochum, Dieter Winckler, 2004, p. 313-334.

⁹³According to António de Sousa Caetano, the infanta Filipa, daughter of D. Pedro, would also have been the author of several works (António de Caetano e Sousa, *História genealógica da Casa Real portuguesa*, vol. II, Coimbra, Atlântida, 1946, p. 47).

⁹⁴Rui de Pina, *Chronica de D. Afonso V*, tome 1, Lisboa, Escripório, 1901-1902, Prólogo.

⁹⁵Vegetio, *Compendio de arte militar*, ed. de João Gouveia Monteiro and José Eduardo Braga, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2004, p. 139.

⁹⁶Also in the library of the monastery of Batalha there were several other Italian works, including some from Lorenzo Valla, Giovanni Pontano and so on; and the same happened in the library of the convent of San Francisco de Leiria, which received as a donation the library of infante D. Fernando, brother of Afonso V (Saúl Gomes, *op cit.*, p. 157; Augusto Aires de Nascimento, *op cit.*, p. 265-287).

purchased in Florence at the time of the Medicis, a city that the court of Afonso V had important relationships with.⁹⁷

Furthermore, in the reigns of both D. Afonso V and D. João II, the movement of students between Portugal and Italy⁹⁸ and of humanists in the opposite direction is large, with the arrival of Cataldo Sículo, master of D. Jorge and secretary of D. João II, in 1485, considered by many as the formal beginning of Portuguese humanism. Already before that, however, men like Vasco Fernandes de Lucena bore all the insignia of humanists, engaging in laudatory prayers, or in the translation of books from Latin into Portuguese.⁹⁹

The passion that Afonso V showed towards useful books urges us to think that the education of young people raised in the Court had an explicit literary dimension. Would Albuquerque have been in contact with some of these books and the ideas of *virtus* transmitted by them? Certainly yes. Geneviève Bouchon raised the hypothesis that Albuquerque had heard of the deeds of Alexander and Cesar through his contact with Italian masters, considering, somehow, that these were the models that inspired his action. António Baião also defended the Latin and humanist education of Albuquerque, in the context of which he would have read the stories of Alexander the Great (but also of El Cid).¹⁰⁰ In favor of these hypotheses, there is a reference in the *Commentarios* written by Brás de Albuquerque reporting a meeting between Albuquerque and a Muslim, in which the latter said that he had read the life of Alexander, to what Albuquerque answered that he also had read it, and he was very fond of it.¹⁰¹

In short, it is quite likely that reading the “classics” had been a part of the “background” of Albuquerque in the Afonsine and Johannine courts, seasoned with his experience in traditional stages of the war — the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Unlike Machiavelli, experience in the overseas and maritime war was part of his military training early on, whereas the Florentine had more knowledge of the ground war. Like Machiavelli, although in very different tasks (since Albuquerque has always been associated with the military career), the court life was also part of his experience. Possibly, some military heroes have acted as concrete models for his action in the Indian Ocean, unlike the Florentine, who uses them in the written observations.¹⁰² I believe that Albuquerque did try to inscribe his biography in a genealogy of

⁹⁷See, with this purpose, Albinia de la Mare, “Notes on the Portuguese patrons of the Florentine book trade of the 15th century”, as well as Kate Lowe, “Rainha D. Leonor of Portugal’s patronage in Renaissance Florence and cultural exchange”, In: Kate Lowe (ed.), *Cultural links between Portugal and Italy in the Renaissance*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁹⁸António Domingues de Sousa Costa, *Portugueses no Colégio de S. Clemente e Universidade de Bolonha durante o século XV*, Bologna, Real Colégio de España, 1990. 2 v.

⁹⁹Américo da Costa Ramalho, *Para a história do humanismo em Portugal*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1988-2000. 4 v.

¹⁰⁰António Baião, *Afonso de Albuquerque*, Lisboa, Livraria Ferin, 1913, chap. 2; Geneviève Bouchon, *Albuquerque: leão dos mares da Ásia*, Lisboa, Quetzal, 2000, p. 21.

¹⁰¹Brás de Albuquerque, *Commentarios do grande Afonso de Albuquerque*, tome 1, Lisboa, Joam Barreyra, 1557, chap. XXVII.

¹⁰²It is known that these models not only circulated, but the kings of Portugal publicly associated themselves with them. And it is no coincidence, surely, that shortly before Albuquerque conquered Hormuz, his comrade in arms Tristão da Cunha would perform in Rome a magnificent entrance *alla romana*.

classic heroes, like Caesar and Alexander, and medieval heroes, such as El Cid and Nuno Álvares Pereira. As Vincent Barletta recently argued, the persona of Alexander was evoked in Portuguese chronicles since the beginning of 15th century. However, the cult of recent heroes — among which was infant D. Fernando — was stimulated.¹⁰³ This is evident in a letter to Duarte Galvão (some time after the conquest of Malacca), in which Albuquerque compares the ways value and honor were measured in the previous century, and how these were measured in the century they lived. Albuquerque considered that it would be very difficult for Nuno Álvares, if he was his contemporary, to establish a new lineage and a house with such a state!¹⁰⁴ Did Albuquerque thought of himself as a Nuno Álvares of the Indian Ocean? Possibly. But apart from this imitative intentionality, the construction of Albuquerque also depended on this combination of resources of memory and understanding and reminiscences triggered by concrete situations. Like Machiavelli, Albuquerque was very sensitive to circumstance.

The passion that Afonso V showed towards useful books urges us to think that the education of young people raised in the Court had an explicit literary dimension

Conclusion

It is time to return to the initial questions. Concerning whether there are relationships between the political thought of Afonso de Albuquerque and that of Machiavelli on the themes of conquest and conservation of territories, I believe that the right answer is yes. The previous pages show that although there was not total convergence between the two (namely, there were strong divergences about some ways to accomplish the conquest, such as the use or not of mercenaries and fortresses), there are a number of issues in which the thoughts of Albuquerque and Machiavelli were similar.

The question of power — and of the reputation of the Prince associated with his manifestations and the perception that others had of it — is obviously one of them. But topics such as the league of cities (the model initially applied by Albuquerque in the conquest and conservation of India) or the conservation of territories using colonies of settlers, to whom houses and lands should be distributed, are also interesting.

One can wonder whether these similarities prove the existence of Mediterranean common cultural background in the political culture of the 16th century — of Christian and humanistic roots, with ubiquitous imperialist

¹⁰³Maria de Lurdes Rosa, "Do 'santo conde' ao mourisco mártir: usos da santidade religiosa no contexto da guerra norte-africana (1415-1521)", *In*: Michael Kraus; Hand Ottermeyer (eds.), *Neue Welten*. Portugal und das Zeitalter der Entdeckungen, Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2007.

¹⁰⁴Afonso de Albuquerque, "Carta a Duarte Galvão", *In*: ____, *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, ed. Raymundo António Bulhão Pato, vol. 1, Lisboa, Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1884, p. 395 *et seq.*

aspirations, covering, among others, Florence (Italy) and Portugal. From this common cultural background, similar solutions could result. Despite being a hypothesis still rooted in much uncertainty — even if studies that explore the relationship between these two cultural worlds are no longer irrelevant —,¹⁰⁵ I believe that there are plausible reasons to answer affirmatively that question. Indeed, most recent studies on the cultural history of 15th century Portugal — in the sequence of previous works, particularly about the Portuguese humanism — have mentioned the strong relationship between the Italian and Portuguese cultures, and, specifically, between the Portuguese and Florentine courts. More research is needed in this area to confirm the hypothesis proposed here, but it is likely that, in many ways, the bookish education of Albuquerque was not very different from that of the contemporary Florentines under similar conditions.

The third question posed at the beginning — whether we can think that, similarly to Machiavelli, the strategy and tactics adopted by Albuquerque in the Indian Ocean conquests resulted from a combination of his military and political experiences and the influence of classical tradition — is somehow associated with the previous question. We know now that the libraries of Avis were filled with classical books, including *Vida de Alexandre; Comentarios*, by Julius Caesar; *Décadas*, by Tito Lívio; and *Epitoma de re militarii*, by Vegetio. The latter, for example, was part of the education of any European knight, belonging to the “intellectual formation of Western heads of war”, through which Albuquerque would have discovered its precepts directly or indirectly. Vegetio, as well as Leonardo Bruni, who was influenced by Vegetio, inspired Machiavelli to develop his theses against the mercenaries.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that Albuquerque searched for knowledge about the maritime war also in *Epitoma*, by Vegetio, selecting from this treatise what was most useful to him. Something similar could have happened in the response to *Décadas*, by Tito Livio, which inspired Machiavelli and constituted a true encyclopedia on the glory of the Romans and an essential reading for the Portuguese elites of the 16th century.

¹⁰⁵Artur Moreira de Sá, *Humanistas portugueses em Itália*. Subsídios para o estudo de Frei Gomes de Lisboa, dos dois Luíses Teixeiras, de João de Barros e de Henrique Caiado, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional; Casa da Moeda, 1983.

¹⁰⁶Vegetio, *Compendio de arte militar*. Edited by João Gouveia Monteiro and José Eduardo Braga, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2004, p. 126; 130.



Figure. Image of Afonso de Albuquerque from the collection of portraits organized by Diogo Barbosa Machado (1682-1772). The cutout figure, by an anonymous author, was engraved with a burin and taken from an edition of the book *Ásia portuguesa*, by Manuel de Faria e Sousa. Apparently, it was based on the original that was in the gallery of viceroys and governors of Goa, created by D. João de Castro, in which the Portuguese power in the region is dramatized, with clear political intentions. The aesthetically hybrid representation of the character is noteworthy, combining elements of Portuguese and Asian origins, which was frequent in works produced in the court of Goa. Other portraits in the gallery of the viceroys also show an Indianized taste. Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *Ásia portuguesa*, tome I, Lisboa, Officina de Henrique Valente de Oliveira, 1666, p. 171 e Diogo Barbosa Machado (ed.), *Retratos de varões insignes em campanha e gabinete*, tomo VI, [Lisboa] s. n. t., Rio de Janeiro, Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil, iconographic section.