

Brazilian Machiavellians: dissimulation, political ideas, and colonial rebellions (Portugal, 17th–18th century)¹

Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo[1]

Abstract

The political theory on the power of the Catholic monarchy in Portugal, despite not seeing dissimulatory expedients with good eyes, could not prevent their use in face of the severity that assumed the resistance struggle of the subjects in America. In many of these situations, the use of dissimulation was supported, especially between 1640 and the mid-18th century. In the most important sphere of debates on the political problems of the colony — the Overseas Council —, the recommendation of the art of dissimulation was openly advocated but progressively condemned, once that, apparently, it was unable to diminish rebellions. The defense of dissimulation in *The prince*, even different from the Reason of State, guides the debates that take over the authors of *política christiana*, or Christian Politics, in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Keywords: dissimulation; Portugal; Brazil colony.

Maquiavelianas brasileiras: dissimulação, ideias políticas e revoltas coloniais (Portugal, séculos XVII e XVIII)

Resumo

A teoria política sobre o poder da monarquia católica em Portugal, apesar de não ver com bons olhos os expedientes dissimulatórios, não conseguiu evitar seu uso diante da gravidade que assumiu a luta de resistência dos súditos na América. Em muitas dessas situações, se sustentou o uso da dissimulação, especialmente entre 1640 e a primeira metade do século XVIII. Na mais importante esfera de debates dos problemas políticos da colônia — o Conselho Ultramarino —, a recomendação da arte do segredo foi francamente defendida, mas, progressivamente, condenada, uma vez que, aparentemente, foi incapaz de reduzir as revoltas. A defesa da dissimulação em *O príncipe*, mesmo se distinguindo da razão de Estado católica, baliza o debate que toma conta dos autores da política cristã nos séculos XVI e XVII.

Palavras-chave: dissimulação; Portugal; Brasil colônia.

Maquiavelianas brasileñas: disimulación, ideas políticas y revueltas coloniales (Portugal, siglos XVII y XVIII)

Resumen

La teoría política sobre el poder de la monarquía católica en Portugal, a pesar de no ver con buenos ojos los expedientes disimuladores, no pudo evitar su uso en la gravedad de la lucha de resistencia por los sujetos de América. En muchas de estas situaciones, el uso de la disimulación fue apoyado, especialmente entre 1640 y la mitad del siglo XVIII. En el ámbito más importante de las discusiones de los problemas políticos de la colonia — El Consejo de Ultramar —, una recomendación del arte del secreto fue abiertamente defendida, pero condenada, ya que, al que parece, no fue capaz de reducir las revueltas. La defensa del disimulo en *El príncipe*, mismo que sea diferente de la razón de Estado católica, orienta la discusión entre los autores de la *política christiana* en los siglos XVI y XVII.

Palabras clave: disimulación; Portugal; Brasil colonia.

Machiavellianes brésiliennes: dissimulation, idées politiques et revoltes coloniales (Portugal, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles)

Résumé

La théorie politique du pouvoir de la monarchie catholique au Portugal, bien que pas en voyant d'un bon œil les montages dissimulateurs, n'a pas pu éviter de les utiliser face à la gravité des luttes de résistance des sujets en Amérique. Dans la plupart des situations, la dissimulation a été soutenue surtout entre 1640 et la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle. Dans le plus important cadre des débats politiques — Le Conseil d'Outre-mer —, la recommandation de l'art du secret a été défendue, mais ensuite condamnée progressivement, car apparemment n'a pas été en mesure de réduire les révoltes. Les arguments en faveur de la dissimulation dans *Le prince*, tout en se distinguant de la Raison de l'État catholique, a marqué un tournant dans le débats couverts par les auteurs de la *politique chrétienne* aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles.

Mots-clés: dissimulation; Portugal; Brésil colonial.

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[1] Department of History at Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) – Niterói (RJ) – Brazil.

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*He who knows not how to dissimulate, cannot reign.
Phrase attributed to Louis XI, king of France*

The intention and the gesture

It was a time when people would die for their honor. By honor, Luís Barbalho Bezerra, governor of Rio de Janeiro, succumbed. For a loyal conqueror, forged in the struggles against the Indians, the Dutch, corsairs and other beasts that hovered São Paulo and, further on, the *fluminense* village (Rio de Janeiro), it was fatal to fail on answer the expectations of his king. The circumstances, as it usually is in most situations with this type of outcome, concerned money.

The 1640s was extremely harsh for the people of Rio de Janeiro. Affected by the European disputes that would resound the Portuguese Empire, an enormous fiscal pressure, aggravated by problems associated with trading of sugar and *aguardente da terra*, demanded collaboration from the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro to finance the defenses of the harbor in face of the Dutch's advance, which had occupied the northeast in 1630 and Angola in 1641. Contributing to the tense atmosphere, the disclosure of the Papal Brief of 1639, prohibiting Indian slavery, undermined the relations between settlers and Jesuits. On top of it all, in the first years of the decade, a smallpox epidemic devastates a good part of the population of slaves.²

It is in this delicate environment that Governor Luís Barbalho receives the order of the king, in 1643, to send all the money coined in Rio de Janeiro to Bahia, in order to help in the defense of the capital of the Portuguese America. The *inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro* react to the orders with a mutiny, in an attempt to seize the safe with the coveted coins from the governor. Best organized, the rebels prevent Barbalho from fulfilling the will of Your Highness and he, devastated by the weight of dishonor, dies a few days later.³ Wasting no time, the municipal council and the residents immediately elect the captain-general Duarte Vasqueanes as his successor. But the Governor General of Brazil had other plans for the local administration. Based in the city of Salvador (Bahia), Antônio Teles da Silva dispatches the *mestre-de-campo* Francisco de Souto Maior to take over the captaincy. More rebellions occur. Vasqueanes, who barely sat on the seat, mobilizes the entire military garrison to stop the plans of the outsider. In vain. Under a heavy atmosphere of confrontation, going ahead with "armed hands" properly accompanied by a Rosary, the *mestre-de-campo* faces the opponents and fulfills the order of the Governor General.⁴

The members of the Overseas Council, the institution that completed its first years of operation since its re-creation in 1642, were summoned to judge and advise

²Vivaldo Coaracy, *O Rio de Janeiro no século XVII*, 2. ed. rev. e aum. Preface by Francisco de A. Barbosa, Rio de Janeiro, J. Olympio, 1965, p. 119.

³Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU from now on), Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, Lisboa, 25 de outubro de 1644, cód. 13, f. 131v-133.

⁴*Idem*, Bahia, Luísa da Fonseca, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino e Treslado de uma junta que se fez sobre os avisos que agora se tiveram do Rio de Janeiro e da morte de Luiz Barbalho Bezerra, Rio de Janeiro, 4 de maio de 1644, doc. 1077, fl. 6-7.

the king on the “scandal of the turmoil”⁵ Moved by prudence and with no hesitation, the counselors recommended the governor to avoid punishing the rebels at any cost.⁶ Despite the outrage, he should not order any investigation to determine the responsibilities for it. The formula for dealing with such sedition was recommended to Francisco de Souto Maior in a very clear manner, leaving him to adopt “as necessary as it is, the dissimulation of those [punishment demonstrations] for the time being”. If the attitudes of the subjects had been admittedly severe, even more severe were the overly delicate circumstances that threatened the existence of Rio de Janeiro, a decisive place for the imperial articulation in South Atlantic. The decapitalization of the local economy without Angola and the Prata river — the former, a slave market, conquered by the Dutch; the latter, the source of silver, closed definitely to the Portuguese with the end of the Union of the Crowns of Spain and Portugal (1580–1640) — was the final drop of water. In face of that, few doubted that an exemplary repression should be ruled out, recognizing that, in order to preserve Rio de Janeiro, it was essential to bet in the harmony of the local environment and count on the “militia and [the] continuation of the fortification, which absolutely depends on the unity of the people”.

Unknowingly, a challenge that would relentlessly consume them from there on was being faced. I am not referring to the dilemma of recommending punishment or pardoning the subjects who resisted royal authorities, but to the expedient of dissimulation, which, driven by the recurrent conflicts in the regions of the Portuguese America, contributes to the debate on political struggle in modern era.

The suggestions of the Overseas Council reinforced the formation of a political cohesion in such a delicate moment of rupture of the Union of the Crowns. Just like it was going on in the reign, the communication with the parts of the Empire was fundamental.

In a practical way, the management of the Portuguese Empire is translated, in parts, by the own dialogue between the Superior Councils of the monarchy, which discussed its diplomatic, military, financial and patrimonial administration. However, on the other hand, the management also suffered from interference of papers coming from peripheral areas of the Empire. The local elites were the ones who would write to the king, either through their wills or as a remedy, or expressed their intentions and interests through the Municipal Councils, official correspondence, among other forms of political communication. They informed the local realities, subsidized the decisions and made the government possible.⁷

⁵Since the book from Marcelo Caetano, *O Conselho Ultramarino: esboço da sua História*, Lisboa, Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1967, it took some time for the Overseas Council, as a specific study theme, to become interesting again. Among them, see Edval de Souza Barros, *Negócios de tanta importância: o Conselho Ultramarino e a disputa pela condução da guerra no Atlântico e no Índico (1643-1661)*, Lisboa, Centro de História de Além-Mar, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, 2008 and Eric Lars Myrup, “Governar a distância: o Brasil na composição do Conselho Ultramarino, 1642-1833”, In: Stuart Schwartz; Eric Myrup (eds.), *O Brasil no império marítimo português*, Bauru, Edusc, 2009, p. 275-276.

⁶It is necessary to note that the debates and opinions waged under the power of the Overseas Council, for various reasons, were not always fulfilled in practice for those who ruled the government. This study does not have the intention of granting the execution of the recommended measures that, sometimes, were to late or could be avoided by the governors who did not shy away from executing and punishing.

⁷Marcello José Gomes Loureiro, *O Conselho Ultramarino e sua pauta: aspectos da comunicação política da monarquia pluricontinental (1640-1668) – notas de pesquisa*, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos, Colloques, mis en ligne le 14 octobre 2013*. Available from: <<http://nuevomundo.revues.org/65830>>. Accessed on: Spt. 6, 2014; *Idem*, *A gestão no labirinto: circulação de informações no império ultramarino português, formação de interesses e construção da política lusa para o Prata (1640-1705)*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2012.

Ministers suggest the governor, to “use all leniency”. Francisco de Souto Maior accepted the view, confirming to be “too much work” and unpredictable for the safety of Rio de Janeiro to punish the rebels, noticing yet, “as it deserves such indignation from our nation”. He also sensed something more serious in the “discontent of the residents”, because those would even have been of “suspicious loyalty”. It was not difficult to imagine that subjects, on whom depended the security of a vital region of the overseas empire, faltered in their loyalty to the king. From the final document of the Board of the Governor General, prepared to evaluate the circumstance, there escaped a sentence modeled by the political manuals that had been circulating in catholic countries: “when the strengths are not in accordance to the ends, it is the dissimulation in such matters the safest means between the conservation of the state and the authority of the princes”⁸

Its effects in that context did not let down the formula of the art of ruling over colonial subjects: “lenient and willing”, the residents calmed down, even agreeing to pay more taxes. The result of the dissimulation, according to the statements of the counselors, allowed *inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro* to realize they deserved punishment and, in recognition of the Royal mercy shown, became confident and zealous in relation to heir king. More than the deserved rigor, the ministers wrote, “the fear and regret they feel” would have weighted as an instrument of collective discipline. Signed on October 11, 1644, the “as it seems” of D. João IV commanding the fulfillment of those terms closures the first chapter of the dissimulated execution as a state policy.⁹

Treated with reserve in political vocabulary of catholic thinkers in the Iberian Peninsula, the recommendation of concealment would then gain importance in debates that involved the Portuguese authorities surprised by the unpredictable multiplication of subjects’ discontent spread throughout the New World. The uprisings that took place in Brazil between 1640 and the mid-18th century, showing an impressive number of formal rebellions in which authorities were defied at different levels, demanded that new steps should be taken to deal with the disharmony shaking the political body of the monarchy, specially affecting the relations with the overseas subjects.¹⁰

Some decades later, the solutions for dealing with rebel subjects would return to the agenda of the officers who integrated the Overseas Council. About the same city (Rio de Janeiro), the news arriving were more disturbing, reporting a rebellion started in November 1660 in which the people had deposed Salvador Correa de Sá e Benevides and named a new governor and

⁸AHU, Bahia, Luísa da Fonseca, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino e Trelado de uma junta que se fez sobre os avisos que agora se tiveram do Rio de Janeiro e da morte de Luiz Barbalho Bezerra, Rio de Janeiro, 4 de maio de 1644, doc. 1077, fl. 6-7.

⁹*Idem*, Francisco de Souto Maior governador do RJ da conta de como tomou posse daquele governo e avisa de algum particular tocantes a segurança daquela capitania, cód. 13, fl. 122-123v.

¹⁰For an overview of the colonial rebellions, see Laura de Mello e Souza, “Motines, revueltas y revoluciones en la América portuguesa de los siglos XVII y XVIII”, in: Enrique Tandeter (ed.), *Historia General de América Latina: procesos americanos hacia la redefinición colonial*, vol. 4, Paris, Ediciones Unesco, 2000, p. 459-473, and Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo, *Rebeliões no Brasil colônia*, Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Editor, 2005.

other representatives for the Municipal Council. The reasons were again related to the fiscal pressure exerted to cover expenses on defense and the elimination of the local power of economically important groups.¹¹ Taking advantage on the temporary absence of the ruler of the captaincy, soldiers, farmers, and aggregates arrested the interim governor Tomé de Souza Alvarenga and named Agostinho Barbalho, son of the late Luís Barbalho Bezerra, for the position. A few months later, in February 1661, Jerônimo Barbalho would substitute the brother in the power. Salvador Correa de Sá e Benevides reacted. At the beginning of April in the same year, troops coming from Bahia and São Paulo and a Portuguese army went into action for retaking the power of the captaincy. After arresting the leaders responsible for the riot, Benevides did not falter, sentencing Jerônimo Barbalho to death and shortly executing the capital punishment.

The uprisings that took place in Brazil demanded that new steps should be taken to deal with the disharmony shaking the political body of the monarchy

The episode was still fresh to the ministers of the Overseas Council. In this institution, the crisis would be unloaded and it was supposed to debate and propose solutions for the colonies: “No other organism of the government”, says Laura de Mello e Souza, “has put so much effort, either with right or wrong calls, in the redefinition of the Portuguese Empire then, being aware that an urgent change was needed in order to conserve the command”.¹²

In April 1661, after the Overseas Council consolidated their reflections on the survey in Rio de Janeiro and on the procedures of the governor, it once again started to defend the discretion on the investigation of the guilty. Despite recognizing that “the deal is so severe and of such importance”, they believe that the actions taken there should be the same as the ones taken in protests in other parts of the Empire, as in Macau (1646) and in Ceilão (1652), when, unlike the punishment, “there was little evidence by the distance”.¹³

The dissimulation in relation to the wanton trials and judicial proceedings against crime committed by the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro triumphs,

¹¹Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo, *Revoltas, fiscalidade e identidade colonial na América portuguesa: Rio de Janeiro, Bahia e Minas Gerais (1640-1761)*, PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1996 (chapter 1 - “A revolta da cachaça”); Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá e a luta pelo Brasil e Angola, 1602-1686*, São Paulo, Edusp, 1973, p. 306-345 (chapter VII - “Capitão-general do sul”); Antonio Filipe Pereira Caetano, *Entre a sombra e o sol: a Revolta da Cachaça, a freguesia de São Gonçalo do Amarante e a crise política fluminense (Rio de Janeiro, 1640-1667)*, Master’s dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2003.

¹²Laura de Mello e Souza, *O sol e a sombra: política e administração na América portuguesa do século XVIII*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2006, p. 90.

¹³AHU, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino sobre o que escrevem os oficiais da câmara do Rio de Janeiro acerca do levantamento que houve no povo daquela capitania contra Tomé Correia de Alvarenga, Lisboa, 7-4-1661, cód. 16 (consultas mistas), fl.11-12.

despite the summary execution of one of its leaders. It was up to the monarch, especially in difficult circumstances such as that in which the instruments of power would not be able to act effectively, to adopt a paternal conduct with the subjects “without, in any way, letting them notice they had done something wrong”, similarly to what was done to the citizens in the crisis of 1644. And the counselors conclude their vote: “the healthy truths of the state teach that it is better to give them now a vote of trust rather than to exasperate them, providing them with a pretext to use another nation [...]”.¹⁴

While in 1644 there is a mention of suspicion of disloyalty, now the focus has a right target, alluding to the possibility that the *fluminense* use the other Crown. This last statement is quite original when applied to a territorial domain of the Portuguese Empire and, at the same time, a key for the understanding of the basis of defense of dissimulation by the authorities. After all, since the end of the 16th century, with the war of independence of the Netherlands with Spain, the rebellions became a means to mobilize communities and to review their position in relation to the king. In the period between the death of Luís Barbalho and the death of his son Jerônimo, something changes even more in the European political circumstances when Catalonia, also through a rebellion, breaks relations with the Spanish Crown and seeks subjection to the French King. In the eyes of the counselors, the risks caused by the *fluminense* sedition could go the same way: high treachery or the irredentism of their own vassals.

These ghosts seem to restrain the punitive impulse, giving place to dissimulation in several other disputes. News of similar disturbances was brought to the counselors from Pernambuco in 1666. Later in the month of August, Governor Jerônimo de Mendonça Furtado, the “*Xumbergas*”, annoyed with the elite, represented by the Municipal Council of Olinda, was arrested and shipped back to Lisbon. The governor was accused of a series of tyrannical acts that hurt the interests of the local groups and, as it was claimed, the interests of Their Majesty, for he would steal from donations, facilitate illicit trade with the French, recoin and disrespect ecclesiastical immunities.¹⁵ In order to rule, the Municipal Council of Olinda organizes a temporary board and communicates Count of Óbidos, viceroy of Brazil, that they were in control of the city. The reaction of the Overseas Council does not seem very different from before. Although they recognize the insolence demanded an exemplary punishment, however serious was the behavior of the vassals, the best would be to resolve whatever had happened.¹⁶

¹⁴Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino, maio de 1661. Publicado em Frazão de Vasconcellos, *Archivo nobiliarchico portuguez*, 1ª série, n. 6, p. 13 *apud* Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá e a luta pelo Brasil e Angola*, 1602-1686, São Paulo, Edusp, 1973, p. 338.

¹⁵The episode of the deposition of the governor of Pernambuco, with all its complexity, inaugurates *A fronda dos mazombos – nobres contra mascates*: Pernambuco 1666-1715, seminal work of Evaldo Cabral de Mello, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1995. See chapter “O agosto do Xumbergas”, p. 19-50.

¹⁶*Ibidem*, p. 46.

Praise, hesitation, and decline

There were concerns from the first decade of the 18th century onward when a centralizing policy is implemented, limiting the maneuvers of the colonial elite, leading to one of the insurgent scenarios that marked the relations between Portugal and Brazil.¹⁷ There is a considerable reduction in local autonomy of the magistrate, which was aligned with the interests of the Crown and the transference of expenses from the defense to the local administration. The subjects react from different parts of America in different ways.¹⁸

When dealing with the violent resistance of the inhabitants of São Paulo on giving political space in the administration of the recently annexed Minas, the authorities and governors of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were advised many times to cover for any punitive impulse. “Between punishment and forgiveness”, writes Adriana Romeiro, “the Council judged best to dissimulate the antics of the inhabitants of São Paulo”.¹⁹ In 1709, in one of the most dramatic episodes of this dispute between authorities under the service of Portugal and the conquerors of Minas, inhabitants of São Paulo and *emboabas*, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, D. Fernando Martins Mascarenhas de Lencastre, was expelled by his rebel vassals when trying to get into the gold mining domains with his committee. In face of that crime, the following governor, D. Antônio de Albuquerque, who received the same imperious task of controlling Minas, at the end of the same year, would be advised not to try to restore the honor of his predecessor in those circumstances. The ministers of the Overseas Courthouse advised him to “take the most prudent, and dissimulated, course for not risking a business with the highest consequences there might be”.²⁰

In Bahia, rumors among the residents of Salvador announcing taxes, increases in the prices of salt, and other news awaited the new Brazilian Governor General, D. Pedro de Vasconcellos e Souza in 1711. In addition, the payment of the soldiers was extremely late. In October, in a fit of fury from the residents, the governor was surrounded and watched powerlessly the whole city rebel — sailors, priests, mechanics, small traders.²¹ Led by a slave trader, missing one arm and, therefore, called “the *Maneta*”, the rebels destroy some houses until they calmed down to a procession the Archbishop improvised. Before the end of the day, the crisis was resolved through negotiations and the governor, coerced, forgave them all and ruled out any possibility of new tributes and price increases. Forty days later, in the beginning of December, a new turmoil starts and an armed mob crying “Live the People and die the traitors” surrounds D. Pedro to pressure him into preparing, without delay, a squad to navigate to Rio de Janeiro and fight the

¹⁷Laura de Mello e Souza, “Motines, revueltas y revoluciones en la América portuguesa de los siglos XVII y XVIII”, In: Enrique Tandeter (ed.), *Historia General de América Latina: procesos americanos hacia la redefinición colonial*, vol. 4, Paris, Ediciones Unesco, 2000, p. 459-473.

¹⁸For Pernambuco, see Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A fronda dos mazombos – nobres contra mascates: Pernambuco 1666-1715*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1995.

¹⁹Adriana Romeiro, *Paulistas e emboabas no coração das Minas: idéias, práticas e imaginário político no século XVIII*, Belo Horizonte, Editora da UFMG, 2008, p. 80.

²⁰*Ibidem*, p. 302. The author reminds that the prudence adopted did not prevent the use of punishments.

²¹Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo, *Revoltas, fiscalidade e identidade colonial na América portuguesa: Rio de Janeiro, Bahia e Minas Gerais (1640-1761)*, PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1996.

French who occupied the city. Amidst the negotiations, the news that Rio de Janeiro was already free of the corsairs arrived. Days later, the governor orders a wanton determining the abduction of goods, imposes punishments and even public whipping, and threatens of exile to the leaders of the protest.

The attitude of the Governor General causes a great stir. As soon as it comes to know his deeds, the Overseas Council has no doubts that the pacification of the rebellions was a total disaster. D. Pedro de Vasconcellos had rushed into things, given proof of his total inability with the political conducting of such disturbances in the colony. He had forgiven rebels (without having this power, prerogative of the king) who resisted the charge of taxes ordered by the King and punished, with nearly tyrannical effort, subjects who only wanted to defend the patrimony of the kingdom against invaders. And also he would write to Council requesting a new wanton. Very contradicted by the recklessness of D. Pedro, one of the counselors admits that “the governor [...] has been so committed to punishing that it seems like he wants to ensure all his wrath all over that city.”²² Gradually, the debates around the court were tracing the delicate contours involving the art of governing distant subjects.

In Lisbon, while the implicated people languished in prison, a long discussion is dragged on for seventeen months until the final decision of the King involving, as is seldom seen, a task force of ministers of the Overseas Council and *procuradores da Fazenda e da Coroa*. This time, the matter demanded more than that which the ministers of the Overseas Council had to offer. The recurrent colonial rebellions became a matter that called for an intervention of other instance of the Royal counseling.²³ The debates did not only indicate the impatience with the hostile attitudes by overseas subjects, but they also question the efficiency of the dissimulatory devices used so far to deal with the rebels.²⁴ The situation in the beginning of the 18th century was different from that faced by the Overseas Council in the immediate years after the Restoration of 1640. The repeating rebellions in Brazil for at least 50 years and the occurrence of more than 10 rebellions spread throughout Brazil (not to mention the numerous rebellions in Minas) demanded great attention and were becoming unbearable. This seems to have led to the change in conducts.

The *procurador da Coroa*, in December 1712, advocates, for example, the exemplary punishment. In his opinion, he has highlighted the ineffectiveness of forgiveness in previous instances when benevolence was not able to prevent new turmoils.

²²AHU, Parecer de Antonio Roiz da Costa, s.d., Bahia, non-identified detached archive, box 6, doc. 108.

²³Although the Overseas Council offers the essential documental material for our interpretation, other agents and institutions weighted in the directions taken by the management project of political crisis. See, in particular, Maria Fernanda Bicalho, “As tramas da política: conselhos, secretários e juntas na administração da monarquia portuguesa e de seus domínios ultramarinos”, *In: João Fragoso; Maria de Fátima Gouvêa* (eds.). *Na trama das redes. Política e negócios no império português. Séculos XVI-XVIII*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2010, p. 343-371. It also needs to be considered that the endorsements of the Overseas Council were not deliberative, assisting the king with advices that could or could not be admitted. The massive use of this documentation, on the other hand, should not lead to the conclusion that the Council's decision to determine the outcome of the insurrections or of the action of officers regarding those.

²⁴The theme of the granting of forgiveness has been widely studied by João Henrique Ferreira de Castro in his PhD project “Castigar sempre foi razão de estado? O debate sobre a punição às revoltas ocorridas no Brasil: da defesa dos perdões à progressiva legitimação da violência (1660-1732)”, developed in the Graduate Program in History of the Universidade Federal Fluminense, associated to the political culture of the Old Regime and to the negotiations involving the local elites.

These residents from Bahia saw that the ones from Minas [1707–1709], the two from Pernambuco [1710–1711], the one from Sergipe del Rei [1708] and from the São Francisco river, not only were not punished, not even the leaders, but also usually forgiven [...] and therefore they have gotten excited into doing this one

says the *procurador*.²⁵ The conclusion is not really surprising: “if you forgive the others, there will be no people anywhere in Brazil who will not riot and oppose against the resolutions of Your Majesty, with so much loss of a good and peaceful government”.²⁶ He leaves a lesson in this regard:

Great is the virtue of mercy, especially among Princes. But it is of such nature that if exercised repeatedly and ordinarily, it degenerates into habit, because it invites the offending, and under this assumption I understand that this turmoil not only should not be forgiven, but also not even dissimulated, better to punish with the severity of the law, not the people, because this one Your Majesty shall forgive, but the leaders, the engines, the consultants and the troublemakers should be judged and arrested.²⁷

This retreat to dissimulation had its limits, as the *procurador* himself recognized by saying that

everything I have been requesting is understood in the case in that there are no French in Rio de Janeiro or in any other part of Brazil, because while they were here I find of my best convenience to dissimulate this case, until the fear of them ceases.²⁸

The ministers of the Overseas Council shared the same opinion, which the king would later subscribe when granting the forgiveness to all in 1713, since their taxes would start being charged again.

With or without dissimulation, applying punishments to this kind of protest, which is nearly always integrated by the local elites, could have opposite effects. Instead frightening people, it could raise the irritation among the subjects of Bahia. Considering the permanent presence of the enemies tracking wealth and alliances with the *brasílico* residents in a coast so far from the kingdom, it was not a good idea to alienate them. Thus, the Overseas Council recommended that the penalties and probable executions should be avoided at all cost except “in case the State is taken by some army, or enemy squad, because in this case it won’t be convenient to use of these means [punishments and executions], but to save them for a quieter time”. Until then, “only use the terms of mildness

²⁵...the first two by Your Majesty, and the other ones by the governor of Bahia, except for the one from Sergipe Del Rei who it is not known if he was...”. AHU, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil (BNB), Documentos Históricos (DH), 1952, vol. 96, p. 42.

²⁶*Ibidem*.

²⁷*Ibidem*, p. 42-43.

²⁸Parecer do procurador da coroa no Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, *Ibidem*, p. 43.

and persuasion”.²⁹ Weighing the many risks of fanning the dissatisfaction of the governed themselves in such delicate situations, it is recommended:

Let us cover this cause in perpetual silence”, forgiving the first of the mutiny and, in case they get convicted for the second mutiny, taking away the infamy that has gone by [incurred] by sentence.³⁰

And they ask the counselors, as it would be expected, for the head of the unqualified governor. Under the sign of concealment they would once more make the necessary peace for a good colonial government.

“Great is the virtue of mercy, especially among princes. But it is of such nature that if exercised repeatedly and ordinarily, it degenerates into habit, because it invites the offending”

Although the forgiveness sweetened by the dissimulation has once more survived in this debating sphere, a certain consensus on the prevailing dissimulation was recommended in the Royal debates when dealing with the rebels was dissolved. The discussions on the attitude of the governor were a moment of inflection in the application of dissimulation. A clear division regarding the punitive option or the dissimulated forgiveness starts being drawn in the court of the Overseas Council. With the rebellions in 1710–1711 in the main captaincies of the Portuguese America, Pernambuco, Bahia, and Minas Gerais, hesitation hovering between punishing, forgiving, and dissimulating will be greater. In a passage of a letter written in 1715 to the governor of Pernambuco, Félix Machado, the conflicting opinions on the matter have been described:

I always understood that no Republic could be if it lacked prizes for the good and punishment for the bad. To this last group, by what experience has shown me, belong many of the residents of this captaincy [Pernambuco] and as usual they got away very well from the insolences that they committed, how was it possible that they would cease to continue those?

He remind that up to that point the opinion that punishments should be avoided prevailed, which was

founded on the idea that, if the rigor against the offenders continued, the uprising could increase; and that the embarrassing situation that the Kingdom was in would not give room to the procedure to be severe [...] and prudence persuaded that, for the time being, the punishment would be dissimulated.

²⁹AHU, BNB, DH, 1952, vol. 96, p. 50.

³⁰*Idem*, Bahia, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, Lisboa, 12 de janeiro de 1713, non-identified detached archive, box 7, doc. 96.

And he teases: with time, it seems to me that it was not the best opinion that was followed.³¹

The repressive spiral progresses. In face of the sedition of 1720 in Vila Rica, in the heart of Minas, the evaluation on the theme reappears, in the intense debates that followed on the attitudes of the governor who summarily executes leaders. The outcome became legendary. After weeks of popular turmoil, pressures, demonstrations, and armed actions, the Count of Assumar reunites with the *Companhia dos Dragões*, an elite troop that had arrived especially to suppress mutinies in Brazil, and massacre the main ones involved. They attack the center of resistance in the nearby hills, putting the houses of the leaders on fire. Those who are not able to escape are sentenced to death, and one of the leaders, Felipe dos Santos, is hanged and dismembered publically in Ouro Preto. Such repressive expedients follow the order of exemplarity and act as a tool of terrorizing: “The Count [of Assumar] ordered him to be dragged through the streets, then hanged, dismembered, more for terror than for punishment”³² The prudence that linked the pair forgiveness/dissimulation was replaced by the impatient punishments.

If the concealment of the intentions was part of the government plan to contain the protests, the dissimulation could be built on a political resource, triggered by the rebellion groups, as the same weapon adopted by the other end of the relationship to the authorities.³³ These resources may be seen in Vila Rica when, for their leaders, the false news spread to discredit the governor turn into “mechanisms of political action used in a moment of struggle for the power”, according to the recent study by Jonathan Martins Ferreira.³⁴

Before this author, Maria Verônica Campos, in an important thesis on the governance in Minas, which is not yet published, did a very good job translating the ways dissimulation assumed in this rebellion:

What was a defect in the rebel would become a virtue in the ruler. There is no contradiction there. As governor, the use of dissimulation was a sign of prudence and consideration. In the subject, especially a mutineer, it was a serious offense and proof of disrespect to the King and his representatives.³⁵

³¹Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A fronda dos mazombos – nobres contra mascates*. Pernambuco 1666-1715, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 403.

³²Laura de Mello e Souza (ed.), *Discurso histórico e político sobre a sublevação que nas Minas houve no ano de 1720*, Belo Horizonte, Sistema Estadual de Planejamento, Fundação João Pinheiro, Centro de Estudos Históricos e Culturais, 1994, p. 166.

³³One of the most original studies by Rosario Villari, *Elogio della dissimulazione: la lotta politica nel Seicento*, 2. ed., Roma, Laterza, 1993, p. 25, is the discussion of the way how opposition and resistance to the power in the 17th century take hold of a resource developed in the previous century exclusively for government actions.

³⁴Jonathan Martins Ferreira, *À margem da “palavra oficial”: dissimulação e boatos no motim de Vila Rica*, Master’s dissertation, Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros, 2013, p. 141. About the theme of dissimulation as a resource for political opposition, also see Fernando R. de la Flor, *Pasiones frías: secreto y simulación en el Barroco hispano*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2006, especially chapter “Ocultación y engaño em la colonia”, p. 173-182, and Rosario Villari, *op cit.*, especially, p. 25-29.

³⁵Maria Verônica Campos, *Governo de mineiros: de como meter as minas numa moenda e retirar-lhe o caldo dourado – 1693-1737*, PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2002, p. 227.

The Overseas Council was split on the decision taken by the governor: on the one side, those who believed in the need of dissimulative expedients, on the other side, those were wedded to the punitive ideology. Most part of the group (Luís de Mello da Silva, Alexandre da Silva Correia, João Teles da Silva, João Pedro de Lemos and João de Souza) subscribed, despite the differences in the details, the opinion about the turmoil in Vila Rica:

They were extremely insolent, and of a bad example, and for that worthy of a serious demonstration, and of no sort of forgiveness, or dissimulation, because the many who have been forgiven, or dissimulated, were the cause of these and will be the cause for more, if they are not punished". [Further on it is said that:] as for the procedure of burning the houses in the hill and the death of Philippe dos Sanctos [*sic*], supposedly seemingly that this procedure was quick and violent this is the same remedy of such brutal offenses, with seditions and popular surveys, where the punishment must be immediate, and thus it was legal to use force, which the Count ignores, where there is nothing more than the verification of truth, without form or figure of judgment, especially in flagrant offenses.³⁶

The council advocated some kind of dissimulation with the punishment:

That in such similar and tighten cases the governor and the general may do anything that seems like a remedy for them, even if not able to show his motives, nor he shall be questioned about those; the point is that the turmoils calm down and the activities are executed.³⁷

In the work they seek to defend the relentless action that ended the rebellion, the Count of Assumar directly condemns dissimulation in those cases. In the amazing *Discurso histórico e político (Political and historical speech)*, he makes his the suggestions of Diego de Saavedra Fajardo "in his idea of a Christian-politician Prince", who directly adopts: "it is convenient not to dissimulate such offenses, so that they don't get stronger for bigger ones" as well as that the punishment should be applied without hesitation, "beheading the authors of the sedition and the head being put to show in public". Nothing, they would say, frightens or reassures best the people.³⁸

The dissimulation was condemned along with forgiveness which, up until then, governors were allowed to grant. The words of the Count of Assumar and the counselors regarding the new repressive guidelines are not more of the same. They were in sync with the orders given by D. João V, on January 11, 1719, prohibiting the governors in Brazil to grant forgiveness in cases of rebellions,

³⁶AHU, Sobre a conta que da o conde de Assumar D. Pedro de Almeida governador e capitão general das Minas Gerais dos motins e tumultos que nelas tem havido, e vão as cartas que se acusam, cód. 233, fl. 218-223v.

³⁷*Ibidem*.

³⁸Laura de Mello e Souza (ed.), *Discurso histórico e político sobre a sublevação que nas Minas houve no ano de 1720*, Belo Horizonte, Sistema Estadual de Planejamento, Fundação João Pinheiro, Centro de Estudos Históricos e Culturais, 1994, p. 163.

on the grounds that due to forgiveness, the rebellions were increasing.³⁹ João Henrique de Castro says that:

up until that moment, the Portuguese Crown had never given such a clear demonstration that forgiveness had lost its prestige in Portugal in the last years and, in a very special way, of how much the rebellions in Brazil contributed to that.⁴⁰

The dissimulation would go on, however, providing evidence of its utility. Even though it is no longer part of the language used by the overseas counselors, colonial authorities would use the resource in this moment with apparently no space left for forgiveness. In the hinterlands of Minas Gerais, the interim governor Martinho de Mendonça de Pina e de Proença has used simulation in order to be successful in the imprisonment of the ones involved in a frightening riot near the banks of *São Francisco* and *das Velhas* rivers. After being controlled, without much access to carry out diligences and imprisonments in the farms and locations that were isolated and distant from the center of the captaincy, the governor uses a shameless ruse. He spreads among the population the news that the wanton regarding the sedition was concluded and the diligences were closed, also informing that the judges who visited the properties would only inspect the abductions. Disarmed the spirits, the governor's officers manage to arrest almost all the involved ones, who were soon sentenced.

Although the forgiveness sweetened by the dissimulation has once more survived, a certain consensus on the prevailing dissimulation was recommended when dealing with the rebels

The well-instructed governor knew what he was doing and the advantages of the simulation were almost always reprehensible, as argues Martinho de Mendonça.

Although it is not legal to positively deceive someone, it is prudently legal in these cases to use the negative mistake, or simulation, providing an occasion to deceive [...] caution and artifice, with which one has been involved with, which may facilitate a great deal of prison matters.⁴¹

³⁹Carta de Sua Majestade ao Governador sobre não poder dar perdões a nenhum culpado como se declara (11/01/1719), Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia. Microfilms, Ordens Régias n. 6, flash 4, doc. 3 *apud* João Henrique Ferreira de Castro, *A repressão à revolta de Vila Rica de 1720: perdão e punição sob a ótica da justiça no império ultramarino português*, Master's dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2012, p. 232. According to the author, this Royal prohibition plays a crucial role in the proper understanding of the attitudes of the governor Count of Assumar to dismiss forgiveness.

⁴⁰João Henrique Ferreira de Castro, *op cit.*, p. 247.

⁴¹Instruções de Martinho de Mendonça de 1 e 2 de maio de 37, p. 133 *apud* Diogo de Vasconcelos, *História média de Minas Gerais*, Preface by Francisco Iglésias, Introduction by Basílio de Magalhães, 3. ed., Belo Horizonte, Itatiaia/INL, 1974.

From the debates following the rebellion of the *Maneta* in Bahia in 1712, Royal order of 1719, precluding the grant of forgiveness by governors and, considering yet the majority opinions of the Overseas Council in relation to the repression without chance of forgiveness and without dissimulation of the rebellion of Vila Rica in 1720, the art of secrecy seems to ebb as for the dealing with colonial rebellions.

To dissimulation, the public exemplarity of punishments; to forgiveness, the punishment. The examination of the conflagrations which occur in the following period indicates certain differences to what was being unfolded up until that point — and perhaps even effected those changes. The areas of the formal rebellions are reduced to colonial communities. They occur less frequently and few of them, from 1720 on, are capable of aggregating the local elites to other social groups, with the exception of the hinterland rebellions in Minas in 1736. From the 21 rebellions accounted between 1720 and 1757 in the survey made for the site *Impressões rebeldes — palavras e documentos que forjaram a história dos protestos no Brasil* (Rebellion impressions — words and documents that forged the history of protests in Brazil),⁴² most of them expressed some kind of common protest in colony in which there were segmented demands of specific social groups, such as slaves, Indians, and soldiers.

Even if it does not disappear, being used in situations of exemplary punishment against rebels, the language of dissimulation loses space, influenced by a movement ruled by the process of centralization and reduction of the force of the Overseas Council from the 1730s on.⁴³

Oscillating between the extremes of forgiving and punishing, the possibility of dissimulating, even with all the cost represented by its proximity to lying, was a deeply discussed exit in the political culture of the New World. It became the best Catholic political contribution to deal with specific circumstances when governing over subjects in distant and little docile domains in the conditions of injustice, lack of protection, and evidence of tyranny that the colonial condition would impose.

Maquiavelices

The cast of ideas that circulated the debates between the colonial governors, the ministers of the overseas board and other royal counselors sought to defend the role of dissimulation in delicate circumstances, even if one of the qualities of the king was the compromise with truth, without speaking of virtue and prudence. The vocabulary of officers in the Luso-Brazilian world as for the dissimulation little differentiates from what is often heard: “a prudent prince cannot and should not keep his word if that will be harmful to himself”; or yet, “there never missed reasons for princes to dissimulate”.

⁴²<http://www.historia.uff.br/impressoesrebeldes/>. Accessed in: 07/14/2014.

⁴³As well as the political weight of the Council varies throughout time in this article, its role in relation to the different kingdoms and political circumstances also varies.

This last sentence read in this context is much more exciting. They were taken from a written work from over a century before rebel vassals in America would agitate the Portuguese politics. In the famous chapter XVIII of *The prince*, by Niccolò Machiavelli, published in 1513, “The way Princes should keep their faith”, the secretary of Florence evokes the legitimacy of deception by kings. The Florence man writes that:

One should know, however, that there are two ways of fighting: one by law, the other, by force [...] To the prince it is necessary to, however, knowing how to conveniently avail himself of the animal and the man [...] One without the other [nature] is the source of instability [...] a prince obliged to serve from the nature of the beast, should remove from it the qualities of the fox and the lion, for this one has no defenses against bounds [traps] and the fox, against wolves. He needs then to be a fox to recognize the boundages and a lion to terrify the wolves [...] a prudent prince cannot and should not keep his word if that will be harmful to himself and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer [...] given that [men] are treacherous and that they would not keep faith [the word] with you, also you too are not bound to observe it with them. There never missed reasons for princes to dissimulate the breaking of the sworn faith.⁴⁴

Few lines ahead, it goes further, adding that, to put those principles in practice, the prince shall “be a great simulator and dissimulator”.⁴⁵

The defense of the “art of treachery” by governors, excused from keeping their word at any cost, was, according to Maurizio Viroli, one of the most subversive advices given by *The prince*.⁴⁶ Machiavelli openly contradicted the classics, when considering dissimulation as indispensable to the governing of the prince, who should use it for as long as it would be necessary.⁴⁷ His ideas also go against the genre Mirrors for Princes that achieved great success in Europe from the mid-15th century onwards, irreducibly defending the Christian virtues as a supreme value to be preserved by those who rule.⁴⁸ Among the ones that interest us the most, Giovanni Pontano then advised the princes that “nothing is more unfortunate” than a king not keeping his word, even if “in face of their enemies”.⁴⁹ In the same way that the work of Machiavelli demolished

⁴⁴Nicolau Maquiavel, *O príncipe*, Escritos políticos, Translation by Livio Xavier, 3. ed., São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1983 (Os pensadores), p. 73-74.

⁴⁵*Ibidem*, p. 74.

⁴⁶Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998 (Founders of Modern Political and Social Thought), p. 88. Perez Zagorin defends the force of argument in this chapter of his work, even though he highlights the news of notion that the prince is not bound to keep the faith with his subjects: *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 6 (see chapter “Dissimulation in historical context”, p. 1-14). See also Quentin Skinner, *Maquiavel*, Pensamento político, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1988, p. 69-70.

⁴⁷*Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁴⁸*Ibidem*. See also, Marcelo Jasmin, *Política e historiografia no Renascimento italiano: o caso de Maquiavel*, In: Berenice Cavalcante (org.), *Modernas tradições: percursos da cultura ocidental (séculos XV-XVIII)*, Rio de Janeiro, Access, 2002, p. 181.

⁴⁹Quentin Skinner, *Los fundamentos del pensamiento político moderno*, vol. 1, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993, 2 vols., p. 152.

the humanist principles that recognized the principles of honor, glory, and virtue above anything, emphasis on the central role of dissimulation is given. The governor needed, for him, to learn how not to be virtuous in order to keep his power in face of the human perversity surrounding him. The Secretary would write in his book that the prince “not necessarily should have all good qualities” but “it should certainly look like so”⁵⁰

“The reason why Machiavelli attaches so much importance to the arts of dissimulation and concealment becomes clear when we observe his other statement concerning the role of virtues in political life”, says Quentin Skinner.⁵¹ Not always the virtuous attitude from those who rule should be necessarily virtuous, if the most perverse one could bring about more advantages. But in order to act this way, tending in a final analysis to keep his power, it was essential that the prince appears to be virtuous. Good dissimulation was everything.

Machiavelli openly contradicted the classics, when considering dissimulation as indispensable to the governing of the prince, who should use it for as long as it would be necessary

Machiavelli took far the defense of dissimulation as the key to success, confronting the traditional Western thought that despite also considering it as a way to success, he ended up condemning it. Dissimulation, as the subject of debates associated to Ethics, existed at least since the Classical Age.⁵² It was a central topic in the Western ideology, in theological and philosophical morals, as defended by Perez Zagorin, we are relating the dilemma of human consciousness to conduct, to virtues and addictions, confronting those to the problem of lies. Anyone “who thinks they can get to lasting glory by pretending” is overly wrong, wrote Cicero (Book II of *The moral obligation*). Contrary to the solid roots from which true glory comes, “all forms of pretenses soon fall to the ground like fragile flowers”, he would say.⁵³ Saint Augustine would not forgive any kind of lies, no matter what the circumstances, associated to sin and evil.⁵⁴ Since failing on telling the truth was a problem to any Christian, it is understandable the difficulty to accept the lies from governmental domain.

⁵⁰Quentin Skinner, *Los fundamentos del pensamiento político moderno*, vol. 1, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993, 2 vols., p. 157.

⁵¹*Ibidem*, We will not deploy any more than necessary here the discussion on the virtue and *virtù* of Machiavelli's work, theme of a quite vast bibliography.

⁵²Felix Gilbert, “Machiavellism”, In: Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the history of ideas*, tome III, New York, Charles Scribner, p. 116-126.

⁵³Quentin Skinner, *Maquiavel*. Pensamento político, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1988, p. 71.

⁵⁴Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990 (see chapter “Dissimulation in historical context”, p. 114). See also Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the culture of secrecy in early modern Europe*, Berkeley; Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2009, p. 17.

When practiced by authorities, it corroded the principles of the constitutions of the kingdom.⁵⁵ Theologians and moralists have studied the problem to reflect on in what situation the lie would be justified.⁵⁶

New perspectives on the secret sprouted not in Italy alone. If Machiavelli emphasized the use of dissimulation as opportunity and need in face of the politics of a prince, it would also become a tool to maintain the order, under the new idea of the Reason of State permeated by the Catholic spirit.⁵⁷ From the 16th century onwards, the rigidity of the models of a virtuous ethics was adjusted to the requirement of the “baroque policy”, which develops categories and spaces of innovation. It was about the overcoming of old paradigms, unable of facing the changing world, in which the opposition and the active resistance to power demanded an official elaborate technique exclusively to governmental actions.⁵⁸ Moral restraints are necessary for political acting, stepping away from orthodox values and deserving a common space among political language.⁵⁹

For Rosario Villari, dissimulation is one of the expressions of this “baroque policy”. It is the most important key to its complexity in the 16th and 17th centuries, becoming even, for him, one of the aspects of political life and customs.⁶⁰ In this last century, the dissimulation theory was already consolidated and properly presented within the political vocabulary, assuming a universal value. Therefore, the Italian historian states that, “dissimulation is permissible and honored to the Prince, advisable to the courtier and in certain conditions tolerable to the common man”. Connected to that, patience is valued as a virtue of the subjects. Prudence and patience have a deep affinity with dissimulation (this being equivalent to the art of patience). It is the fundamental element of political prudence. The insistent exaltation of prudence as a fundamental virtue of the prince proposed a behavioral model that, objectively, tended to assume universal value, far beyond the intentions of the theorists and moralists.⁶¹

Slowly, it was included in the practices of the government in the Portuguese monarchy, without crediting Machiavelli. Except when condemning him. In this anti-Machiavelli moment, it was due for an approach between dissimulation and the ideas of the Florentine secretary. In America, more precisely in Rio de Janeiro in 17th century, the criticism proved vigilant. The governor Salvador Correa de Sá e Benevides wrote a letter to the Queen regent of Portugal, D. Luísa de Gusmão, on April 10th, 1661, in which he narrated the circumstances, already mentioned here, and why he had been temporarily away from his government.

A passage of our interest in this document refers to the mention that Salvador Correa de Sá e Benevides does to the participation of the captain, nobleman, and owner Agostinho Barbalho Bezerra, in whose lands there

⁵⁵See José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997.

⁵⁶Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation in historical context*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 1-14.

⁵⁷Rosario Villari, *Elogio della dissimulazione: la lotta politica nel Seicento*, Roma, Laterza, 1987, p. 18-19.

⁵⁸*Ibidem*, p. 25.

⁵⁹*Ibidem*, p. 28-29.

⁶⁰*Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁶¹*Ibidem*, p. 28-29.

is the beginning of the armed resistance and that, right up next, would have been dredged by the rebels in São Francisco convent, where he took refuge and where he was elevated to the status of governor by the people.⁶² Benevides describes as a common situation in these kinds of processes when someone was chosen and driven by the mob to rule the government. In the text, Agostinho defends that he performed the duties well, conciliating and trying to keep things under control. He registers, however, that the crowd, always instable, suspected of the new governor's loyalty to the cause. Benevides then writes about the opinion of the rebels about the attitudes of Barbalho: "it seemed like *Maquiavelice*", for he would have given evidence, after taking over the power, that he had only accepted the position so he could earn "awards from Our Majesty" and escape the punishment for his participation in the rebellions.⁶³

The use of "*Maquiavelice*" in a figurative sense suggests the associations, evidently negative ones, that the attitudes of simulation and dissimulation assumed in relation to the Italian thinker. In this specific context, the use of the expression "it seemed like *Maquiavelice*" by Agostinho Barbalho is closer to the idea of simulation rather than dissimulation, for he would have created adherence to the movement, hiding intentions that contradicted the cause. Simulation is the device through which you want to show things one way, but in reality it is another.⁶⁴ For the rebels, a reprehensible attitude; for Benevides, maybe not. On the contrary, it is a lie with no such moral severity, that is not confused with mistakes nor affects Catholic morals when maintaining the order is necessary.⁶⁵

The unflattering reference to the term "it seemed like *Maquiavelice*", which is associated to simulation, provides a convenient counterpoint. The word brings about a veiled anti-Machiavellian criticism that gave the opposition arsenal to the principles of the Italian thinker in Portugal. On the one side, it is evident that there is a discomfort with the presence of Machiavellian assumptions there, first of all because, as put into general terms by Claude

⁶²About the episode, see Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo, *Revoltas, fiscalidade e identidade colonial na América portuguesa: Rio de Janeiro, Bahia e Minas Gerais (1640-1761)*, PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1996 (chapter 1 - "A revolta da cachaça").

⁶³"...in the opinion of many more guilty it seemed like *Maquiavelice* [N.T. in English the expression could be close to Machiavellian] to forgive [him?] of punishment, and that instead this one would reward Your Majesty with the continuation of the government, in my absence...". Notícia de um motim, no Rio de Janeiro, enviada à Rainha Regente, dona Luísa de Gusmão, por Salvador Correia de Sá. Rio de Janeiro, 10 de abril de 1661. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Reservados, cód. 10563/83, fl. 195-196.

⁶⁴Some Spanish thinkers of the 17th century established the difference between dissimulation and simulation. The action of dissimulating is legal, corresponding to the attitude of not revealing what one knows or suspects of; to simulate, on the other hand, is featured as a reprehensible action as it says one thing and does another. The theme is shown in José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, p. 257. According to Torquato Accetto, simulation is a dishonest action on courtisan moral, misleading: "One simulates that what is not, and dissimulates what is": Torquato Accetto, *La disimulación honesta*, Buenos Aires, El Cuenco de Plata, 2005, p. 21.

⁶⁵Regarding the formulation in the positive sense of simulation by the Catholic moral in Portugal, see the work by Bruno Silva de Souza, *O fantasma de Maquiavel: antimaquiavelismo e razão de Estado no pensamento político ibérico do século XVII*, Master's dissertation, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica, 2011, p. 70 *et passim*.

Lefort, “Machiavelli invites the reader into an interrogation on political fundamentals, and he starts it by prohibiting them to lean against the truths established by the human and Christian traditions”.⁶⁶ For that, his book was forbidden in Portugal, rejected next to other “immoral and wicked politicians” such as Bodin and Hobbes.⁶⁷

On the other hand, it is necessary to clearly distinguish from the Italian thinker. Luís Reis Torgal states in his work, in which he studies the conceptions of power from the main authors of the Restoration era, that, in a certain way, everyone shares the compromise of the *política christiana*, or Christian Politics with a sort of “art”, which will require using calculation and ability”.⁶⁸ Prudence competes here as the virtue of the prince and a fair, Christian and peaceful government. In his words, it is the fundamental virtue that plays “in the *Política Christiana*, or Christian Politics ethics, the role of substitute to the ‘immoral’ Machiavellian politics”.⁶⁹ The Catholic thinkers in the main texts of the second half of the 17th century formulate and debate dissimulation, as says Bruno Souza in a study on anti-Machiavellism in Portugal, “an expensive theme to Catholic authors when it is time to differ a certain Catholic prudence authorized Machiavellian characteristics of guile and mischief”.⁷⁰

From the 16th century onwards, the rigidity of the models of a virtuous ethics was adjusted to the requirement of the “baroque policy”, which develops categories and spaces of innovation

One of the good examples is Sebastião Cesar de Meneses who, in *Suma politica*, dedicates himself to the Reason of State, stepping away from Machiavellian formulations. Within the themes studied by him, there is the reputation of the prince, capable of carrying out a good beginning for a government. Bruno Souza stresses that “contrary to what Machiavelli defended, for Catholic authors, it wasn’t [just] about appearing to have the qualities, but to have them indeed”.⁷¹ Sebastião César de Meneses, when defending the qualities that guide a Christian

⁶⁶Claude Lefort, “Sobre a lógica da força”, In: Célia Galvão Quirino; Maria Teresa Sadek (eds.), *O pensamento político clássico*, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2003, p. 35-58; 56.

⁶⁷António Manuel Hespanha (ed.), *História de Portugal*, vol. 4, Lisboa, Estampa, 1992, p. 121. About Anti-Machiavellism in Portugal, see Martin de Albuquerque, *Maquiavel e Portugal*. Estudos de história das ideias políticas, Lisboa, Alêthea Editores, 2007.

⁶⁸Luís Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do Estado na Restauração*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981, p. 186.

⁶⁹*Ibidem*, p. 182.

⁷⁰Bruno Silva de Souza, *O fantasma de Maquiavel: antimaquiavelismo e razão de Estado no pensamento político ibérico do século XVII*, Master’s dissertation, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica, 2011, p. 68.

⁷¹*Ibidem*, p. 61 (see, specifically, chapter “Sebastião César de Menezes: os alicerces da razão de Estado”).

prince, considers dissimulation as a negative quality, permitted, however, when used with prudence and without intention of lying.⁷²

In any man, dissimulation is bothering, and in a prince it is even more abhorred [...] However, dissimulation is not meant to deceive, and pretend, which the lie opposes to what is understood and true.⁷³

Outside Portugal, but in constant dialogue with the Portuguese in the 17th century, Spanish thinkers in debates on the crossroads of *política christiana*, or Christian Politics caution dissimulation. Baltazar Gracián, in his *Manual da arte da descrição* (1653), argues that “the greatest proof of wisdom is dissimulation.”⁷⁴ Francisco de Quevedo, in *Política de Dios*, strongly condemns the arts of dissimulation; in another work, he gives in to the State to postulate: “he who does not dissimulate does not rule, he who does not know how to dissimulate cannot be preserved. Dissimulation in Princes is honest treason against traitors.”⁷⁵

Arts and tricks

In the front line of the conflict, literary officers of the Crown would inspire in the recommendations of the Catholic thinkers to guide themselves in the agitated sea of America. The enunciations of the art of the secret that the royal counselors and authorities wielded when dealing with the Luso-Brazilian rebellions were not new.

Martim de Albuquerque highlights that:

If the Portuguese theorists of the 17th century *in genre* reproved the doctrine of the State, the political cruelty, the deceit, breaking the word, the fraud and simulation as government methods, it does not mean the absence of a practical Machiavellism, especially during the Restoration movement. These explain the fact, though it does not justify it, that the consequences of the country that struggles for survival, was not, consequently, always easy to act according to ethical norms.⁷⁶

⁷²Peter Burke seems to have not noticed the difference when mentioning that many of those who violently attacked Machiavelli may be caught recommending dissimulation and even the rupture of treaties as he used to do. Peter Burke, “Tacitism, scepticism, and Reason of State”, In: James Henderson Burns (ed.), *The Cambridge history of political thought 1450-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 479-499; 483.

⁷³Sebastião César de Menezes, *Suma política*, 1649, p. 103-104 *apud* Bruno Silva de Souza, *O fantasma de Maquiavel: antimaquiavelismo e razão de Estado no pensamento político ibérico do século XVII*, Master’s dissertation, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica, 2011, p. 63.

⁷⁴Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 1-14; 8 (see chapter “Dissimulation in historical context”).

⁷⁵Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, “*Primera parte de la vida de Marco Bruto*”, Madrid, 1644, In: *Obras de Quevedo*, vol. I, [S.l., s.n.], p. 163 *apud* José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, p. 256.

⁷⁶Martim de Albuquerque, *Maquiavel e Portugal*. Estudos de história das ideias políticas, Lisboa, Alêtheia Editores, 2007, p. 76-77.

Thus, even refusing Machiavelli and his “immoral pragmatism”, this does not mean refusing the exercise of a pragmatic policy, aware of the constraints of that time as well as historical constraints — the tacitism.⁷⁷

Under the idea of the Reason of State, claiming Catholic principles, the way seems opened to justify the use of dissimulation in distant domains, turning America into its great laboratory. Historian Evaldo Cabral de Mello, in his works on the rebellions in Pernambuco, discusses with his usual precision the role of dissimulation and explains the distinction between its application in the Portuguese American context and the ideas of the Florentine. When referring to the attitude of an ecclesiastic authority, under specific context, it was observed that:

He tried, therefore, to dissimulate, to use the verb in the sense embodied by the “*política christiana*, or Christian Politics”, which played, in Catholic countries, the role of functional equivalent to Machiavellism, officially condemned by the church. Thanks to dissimulation, rulers could, without the risk of losing their souls, delay, ludibriate and mystify when the service and tranquility of the King were at stake.⁷⁸

The condition of “Machiavellism’s functional equivalent” in the search for objective results in dramatic circumstances destined to contain higher damages to the Portuguese kingdom develops under a certain discursive pattern on the dissimulation in face of punishment to the rebellion subjects in Brazil. That, without harming the ideals of virtue and prudence which should surround the image of the king and the officers who represented and served him.

Under these circumstances, condensation and intensity of the sedition in the overseas domains of Portugal, especially in America, turn the policy of dissimulation into a unique experience, once the theorization built in Europe in the 17th century has instantly reached the level of practice. According to what was observed so far, it was admitted in specific conditions, which would preserve the monarchy, indicated for practical purposes. One of which was to avoid that exemplary punishment, deserved by rebels in the eyes of law, would result in more dissatisfaction due to social impact with eventual arrests, executions, confiscations, and deaths. On the contrary, as one of the officers once said, better than to punish, the government will “only use the terms of mildness and persuasion”.⁷⁹ The conduct converged in advantage what looked like a weakness: the parental conduct that symbolized the image of the king

⁷⁷António Manuel Hespanha (ed.), *História de Portugal*, vol. 4, Lisboa, Estampa, 1992, p. 133. About tacitism, see José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, p. 379; Luís Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do Estado na Restauração*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981, p. 138.

⁷⁸Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A fronda dos mazombos – nobres contra mascates*: Pernambuco 1666-1715, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 298.

⁷⁹Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, BNB, DH, 1952, vol. 96, p. 50.

would get stronger before the subjects “without, in any way, letting them notice they had done something wrong”. Or yet, as mentioned before, “the healthy truths of the state”, one of the counselors would say, “teach that it is better to give them now a vote of trust rather than to exasperate them”.⁸⁰ According to the theologian Carvalho de Parada in his *Arte de reinar* (1643), the prince must not use of excessive force, which causes hatred.⁸¹

Even because, to instigate vassals with punishment threats was bad business in the political circumstances of a distant government, as it was often admitted. In the occasions in which “the State is taken by some army, or enemy squad, [...] it won’t be convenient to use of these means [punishments and executions], but to save them for a quieter time”.⁸² Or yet “if the rigor against the offenders continued, the uprising could increase”.⁸³ Others express similar fears, which could give them “a pretext to use another nation”.⁸⁴

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To buy time in crisis situation was a virtue of a prudent prince. It was recommended to let time pass, overcoming the difficult circumstances so that we could win up ahead, using virtuous means, without being contaminated by evil.⁸⁵ The waiting, according to Rivadeneyra, should accompany dissimulation. As a proof of prudence of the ones who rule the crowds: “watching the conjecture and reason also dissimulates some things, however serious and deserving they might be, and keep them to their own time”.⁸⁶ Given the alterations by Évora, as the successive protests became known in that city in 1637, which radiated through the territories of the Union of the Crowns of Spain and Portugal Kingdom, Castela faltered before the “mood rebels”. It was feared, according to

⁸⁰Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino, maio de 1661. In: Frazão de Vasconcellos, *Archivo nobiliarchico portuguez*, 1ª série, n. 6, p. 13 *apud* Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá e a luta pelo Brasil e Angola*, 1602-1686, São Paulo, Edusp, 1973, p. 338.

⁸¹Luís Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do estado na Restauração*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981, p. 181.

⁸²AHU, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, BNB, DH, 1952, vol. 96, p. 50.

⁸³Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A fronda dos mazombos – nobres contra mascates*. Pernambuco 1666-1715, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 403.

⁸⁴Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino, maio de 1661. In: Frazão de Vasconcellos, *Archivo nobiliarchico portuguez*, 1ª série, n. 6, p. 13 *apud* Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá e a luta pelo Brasil e Angola*, 1602-1686, São Paulo, Edusp, 1973, p. 338.

⁸⁵José Antonio Maravall, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, p. 249.

⁸⁶*Ibidem*, p. 248.

D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, the possible influence of the example for other Spanish domains:

To some it seemed that one should dissimulate those uneasy people, until a better time, in exchange of not confessing to the monarchy nations if there was anything as daring in them; others understood that with the mistake it would come befitted the punishment.⁸⁷

The temporary suspension of punishment, or of the judicial process, was almost always accompanied by dissimulation: “For the time being”, punishments would wait; “until the fear would cease” in case of a foreign threat, it was preferable to wait; the punishments, were due “save them for a quieter time”; “prudence persuaded that, for the time being, the punishment would be dissimulated”. These were some of the recommendations with the rebels in colonial America. The idea of time is, therefore, special for the prudent, what Gracián calls “the art of letting in”. Giving in now to win later.⁸⁸

Not few times, the recommendation not to punish rebels in Brazil colony would come together with the imposition of a general silence on the matter. “Let us cover this cause in perpetual silence”, many times was written. It was about updating the New World with Christian political lessons, especially in relations to the punitive justice by the princes. Sebastião César de Meneses admits that there are certain guilts for which, for political reasons, it is best to avoid punishment. He says: “There are punishable cases that convey not being so, not to perpetuate their memory, instead of their correction.”⁸⁹

On the other hand, condemning dissimulation, which demonstrates being unable to reduce crisis, and the defense of exemplary punishment come from the same Christian political sources. The concealer must be exemplary, for it reaffirms the authority of the prince and avoids more rebellions. In their defense, the overseas counselors affirmed that the punishment was the “remedy of such brutal offenses, with seditions and popular surveys, where the punishment must be immediate”.⁹⁰ They would adapt elaborated truths under the European baroque political drama. They would inspire in a principle equivalent to the one defending dissimulation, although it suited to justify the inverse attitude. The principle of love with which the kings should treat their vassals was defended, being calibrated by respect and authority. Antônio de Sousa Macedo supports the use of occasional punishment as a way to maintain order and stability:

⁸⁷D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, *Tácito português*. Vida, morte, ditos e feitos de El rey Dom João IV de Portugal [ca. 1638], Lisboa, Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, 1995.

⁸⁸José Antonio Maravall, *Teoria del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, p. 249.

⁸⁹*apud* Luís Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do Estado na Restauração*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981, p. 210.

⁹⁰Sobre a conta que da o conde de Assumar D. Pedro de Almeida governador e capitão general das Minas Gerais dos motins e tumultos que nelas tem havido, e vão as cartas que se acusam, AHU, cód. 233, fl. 218-223v.

“severity doesn’t cause hate, but respect, with a punishment there are a lot of guilts, and it is a great Clemency to be cruel once”.⁹¹

It also says that “the mediocre penalty bothers, it doesn’t frighten, it shows that the crime was not fully disapproved, or that the prince did not dare punishing, which makes him negligible [*sic*], and the people insolent”.⁹²

Many are the passages expressing the resolute reasoning of some counselors: “no sort of forgiveness, or dissimulation, because the many who have been forgiven, or dissimulated, were the cause of these and will be the cause for more, if they are not punished”.⁹³ Here, the Catholic thinkers seem to provide the general lines of these lessons. Diego Saavedra Fajardo wrote: “The confidence in forgiveness makes the subjects daring, and disorderly mercy creates contempt, causes disrespects, and causes the ruin of the States”.⁹⁴ The counselors wrote something very similar to this in their opinions: “Great is the virtue of mercy, especially among Princes. But it is of such nature that if exercised repeatedly and ordinarily, it degenerates into habit, because it invites the offending”.⁹⁵

Although inspired and clearly based on the readings of moralists and thinkers under the *política christiana*, or Christian Politics, the recommendations and the field of action of authorities had been in Brazil not only for the Catholic morals but, especially, by the politician risks of high treason, disloyalty and loss of equity. In the face of that, dissimulation was welcomed as a government instrument. The way it took over the language of dissimulation in Brazil widened the possibilities of the *política christiana*, or Christian Politics to adjust to the exaggerated restlessness and the extreme risks verified in these domains of the Portuguese monarchy.

When it is a matter of preserving the power, ensuring common good, and fulfilling harmony on the land of men, the Christian thinkers could overcome violence and the practical expedients attributed many time to Machiavelli, from whom they wanted to imagine themselves miles away from. But false appearances may dissolve under the light of irony. D. Francisco Manuel de Melo revealed the place for things when he suggested that “our Court, [...] can read and teach arts, and tricks to the Tacit, and Machiavellians”.⁹⁶

⁹¹*apud* Luís Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do estado na Restauração*, vol. II, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981, p. 197.

⁹²*apud ibidem*, p. 199.

⁹³Sobre a conta que da o conde de Assumar D. Pedro de Almeida governador e capitão general das Minas Gerais dos motins e tumultos que nelas tem havido, e vão as cartas que se acusam, AHU, cód. 233, fl. 218-223v.

⁹⁴Idea de un principe politico christiano: representada en cien empresas, por Don Diego de Saavedra Fajardo ... En Monaco [s.n.], a 1 marzo 1640; En Milan [s.n.], a 20 de abril 1642. Available from: <<http://archive.org/details/ideadeunprincipe42saav>>. Accessed on: Feb. 4, 2014.

⁹⁵AHU, Parecer do Conselho Ultramarino, BNB, DH, 1952, vol. 96, p. 42-43.

⁹⁶...D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, while addressing Francisco de Sousa Coutinho, will state that: “The mischief in such that (according to what I hear), our Court, not being old, can read and teach arts, and tricks to the Tacit, and Machiavellians” *apud* Martim de Albuquerque, *Maquiavel e Portugal*. Estudos de história das ideias políticas, Lisboa, Alêtheia Editores, 2007, p. 77.