

# Seditious Books and Libertinism in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais (18<sup>th</sup> century Brazil): the Library of Naturalist José Vieira Couto

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the library of the naturalist José Vieira Couto, a Brazilian doctor who was appointed by the Portuguese Crown to study the captaincy of Minas Gerais, on which he wrote several reports (“Memoirs”) between 1799 and 1802. His library, a varied and eclectic collection, was of a substantial size for its time, containing at least 226 works. Many of these demonstrate his familiarity with Enlightenment thinking – also the case with learned elites in Nueva Granada in Spanish America, as will be seen in a few examples. But this is not all. The study of the books that he and many of his friends, constituting a “society of thought,” possessed in their libraries, can be used to study the ideas common to this group, accused of participating in an uprising bent on declaring the captaincy’s independence. This paper seeks to focus on the study of two books about the independence of the United States of America (which this society of thought discussed intensely while they prepared their own rebellion), in an effort to reconstitute some of their reading practices. Similarly, an understanding of their political and scientific thought will show how this was inseparable from their religious conceptions.

**Keywords:** library, books, libertines, Natural History, Enlightenment, Brazil, Nueva Granada, 18<sup>th</sup> century, 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Libros sediciosos y libertinismo en la Capitanía de Minas Gerais (Brasil, siglo XVIII): la biblioteca del naturalista José Vieira Couto

## RESUMEN

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la biblioteca del naturalista José Vieira Couto, médico brasileño nombrado por la Corona portuguesa para estudiar la capitanía de Minas Gerais, desde donde escribió varios informes (Memorias) entre 1799 y 1802. Su biblioteca, una variada y ecléctica colección, era de un tamaño considerable para la época, que contiene, al menos, 226 obras con unos 601 volúmenes. Muchos de ellos demuestran su familiaridad con el pensamiento de la Ilustración - también el caso de las élites letradas en Nueva Granada en la América española, como se verá en unos pocos ejemplos. Pero esto no es todo. Los libros que él y muchos de sus amigos, que constituían una “sociedad de pensamiento”, poseían en sus bibliotecas, se pueden utilizar para estudiar las ideas comunes a este grupo, acusados de participar en una sublevación para la independencia de la capitanía. Este artículo trata de centrarse en el estudio de las obras sobre la independencia de los Estados Unidos de América (que esta sociedad de pensamiento discutió intensamente mientras preparaban su propia rebelión), en un esfuerzo para reconstituir algunas de sus prácticas de lectura. Del mismo modo, la comprensión de su pensamiento político y científico mostrará cómo éste era inseparable de sus concepciones religiosas.

**Palabras clave:** biblioteca, libros, libertinos, Historia Natural, Ilustración, Brasil, Nueva Granada, siglo XVIII, siglo XIX.

**SUMMARY:** 1. A Society of Thought. 2. The Republic of Mazombos and Its Books. 3. José Vieira Couto and His Library. 4. The Example of the American English – Reading Practices. 5. Books, Irreligiosity, and Sedition. 6. Conclusions. 7. Bibliography.

## 1. A SOCIETY OF THOUGHT

This article seeks to analyze, as a starting point, the library of José Vieira Couto, a Luso-Brazilian naturalist who lived in the village of Tejuco (Diamantina) in the northeast region of the captaincy of Minas Gerais in Portuguese America between the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1</sup> The aim at hand is to show how the books he owned shaped the worldview that he and the group or “society of thought” to which he belonged had come to adopt. During the Enlightenment, societies of thought brought together educated men who shared ideas and discussed their scientific, aesthetic, political, and (ir)religious views. They would meet in private locations –salons, academies, or cafés– and were linked by the correspondence between them or by the texts they read, comprising a sphere of public opinion<sup>2</sup>. As the books and readings shared by the society members were important bases for the formulation of their thought, this article focuses on an examination of Vieira Couto’s library and the analysis of literary practices shared by his group. The analysis is centered on books about the independence of the United States, a subject they studied avidly and which served to inspire the rebellion they were preparing. Finally, using other books in these men’s possession, the article examines how the seditious ideas behind these aspirations for independence from the Portuguese empire reflected their heterodox religious positions. In a mirror to Enlightenment France, 18<sup>th</sup> century Minas Gerais boasted its own Literary Underground, replete with sedition and libertinism<sup>3</sup>.

In order to identify a society of thought, one must begin by investigating how the individuals that make it up were able to meet, cultivate themselves, recognize one another, and share common identities. In this case, our starting point is a group of educated men who took part in a seditious uprising in Minas Gerais in 1789, an attempt to separate the captaincies of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro from the Portuguese empire (some evidence appears to indicate that the captaincy of São Paulo may have been included as well). The uprising was discovered before the rebels could begin their work, and thus never came to fruition. Its leaders were imprisoned, accused of “inconfidência” (Royal disloyalty)<sup>4</sup>, tried, and some were found guilty. Despite this,

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a larger project that seeks to articulate a study of Vieira Couto’s library, sketch his personal biography and understand its intersections with his time; and analyze how he took in these texts and his vision of the world, using his writings and the testimonies against him given to the Inquisition. I thanks CNPq and Fapemig for the support.

<sup>2</sup> FURTADO, 2006, pp. 69-86.

<sup>3</sup> DARNTON, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> During the reign of D. José I, the crime of inconfidência (Book V, Title IV, of the Ordenações Filipinas) came to be applied by a special court, named Juízo da Inconfidência, created in 29 October 1778. The crime apply to all those guilty of a lack of faith or fidelity toward the prince, or infidelity to the figure of the king, which included blasphemy or seditious conversations.

the movement, which came to be known as the “Inconfidência Mineira”, would become an important episode in Brazil’s political memory<sup>5</sup>.

In all, 24 defendants were sentenced and found guilty of the crime of inconfidência, going down in history as the “inconfidentes” – the disloyal ones. But many of those who took part in the movement were never put to trial, though considerable evidence against them may be found in the *Autos da Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira* (ADIM), the collection of all of the procedural documentation behind the rebels’ trial. Through a careful examination of the Autos, Márcio Jardim has identified no fewer than 84 participants: 15 military men, 62 civilians (many of them employees or tax officials of the imperial administration), and 7 priests<sup>6</sup>. But not all who took part in the Inconfidência belonged to the society of thought. The society was a more exclusive group within the broader circle of rebels. Its members were equally erudite<sup>7</sup>; they shared the same sentiment of patriotism and the same readings; they identified with the political style of the Marquis of Pombal<sup>8</sup>, who had been minister to D. José I (1750-1777) and who placed great value on Brazilian-born citizens’ capacity to administer the empire; they displayed libertine and Masonic inclinations; they had an intellectual camaraderie sprung of their time as students at the University of Coimbra<sup>9</sup> and/or as participants in one or more literary academies; they supported a republican regime modeled on that of the North American colonies<sup>10</sup>; and they believed that Portuguese America had taken on greater importance in the balance of imperial power<sup>11</sup>, and that the learned men born in the colony were essential to the formulation of its policies – and ought, therefore, to be rewarded<sup>12</sup>. Many of these ideas were inspired by the reading and discussion of a number of books; hence, the examination of these men’s libraries becomes a fundamental element in understanding this society of thought, which I label the “Republic of Mazombos”.

The choice of terms comes from the fact that both of these –republic and mazombos<sup>13</sup>– appear multiple times in the rebels’ texts, as listed in the “Autos da Devassa”, and were important in identifying and lending internal cohesion to the group. While the word republic appears countless times over the course of the Autos and was the

<sup>5</sup> See MAXWELL, 1973; FURTADO, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> JARDIM, 1989, pp. 46-310.

<sup>7</sup> The confessor to defendants held in prison, said that some referred to the uprising as “the gathering of poets,” (...) “as nearly all were poets with a seat in the Portuguese Parnassus, or were apprentices.” *Autos da Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira* [from now on ADIM], 1977, v.9, pp. 162, 177.

<sup>8</sup> MAXWELL, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> This camaraderie extended to a few Brazilian students in Montpellier and Bordeaux. Virginia Trindade Valadares (VALADARES, 2004), argues that the influence of the University of Coimbra was small and insignificant among the defendants, given the small number of students from that institution who participated in the rebellion, which I radically disagree with (FURTADO, 2012a; FURTADO - STARLING, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> On republican ideals within the Inconfidência, see FURTADO - STARLING, 2013, pp. 107-132.

<sup>11</sup> In the Autos, this issue comes to light in declarations made by the rebels, such as saying that, after the uprising, “this America would be fit to become a Europe.” ADIM, 1976, v.1, p.179.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the elements that unite and identify this society of thought, see: FURTADO, 2012a, pp. 291-321, and FURTADO - STARLING, 2013, pp. 107-132.

<sup>13</sup> According to Roberta Stumpf, the term appears seven times in the texts of the accusation, the denouncers, the accused, and witnesses. STUMPF, 2010, p. 200.

form of government that some thought should be adopted after independence<sup>14</sup>, the term *mazombo*, which appears less frequently, was nonetheless another important element in the identification of the group's members. The word referred to men born in Brazil, who held a common sense of the homeland<sup>15</sup>; but, at the time, the label was not given to merely any son of Brazil, rather only to the children of European parents. The term, however, was "associated to affirmations of the capacity of men of Minas to govern"<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, *mazombo* referred precisely to those who, like themselves –educated sons of the white Luso-Brazilian elite– were able to serve in the imperial administration. The word served to define their shared identity. Some examples of the use of these two expressions: the defendants stated that "the infamous heads of the revolution wished to erect a free and independent republic"<sup>17</sup>; declared that he had been jailed "by a sort of uprising with ideas of a Republic"<sup>18</sup>; and the officer Joaquim José da Silva, nicknamed *Tiradentes*, the only defendant to suffer the death penalty, used to say publicly around the captaincy, "in the taverns and barracks where he found himself", that they would be heroes, "as they defended their Homeland; [and] that the *mazombos* were worthy as well [as the Portuguese], and knew how to govern"<sup>19</sup>.

## 2. THE REPUBLIC OF MAZOMBOS AND ITS BOOKS

A new relationship between theory and practice comes into play here, necessarily mediated by books and by the Enlightenment library, which distinguishes between the knowledge produced by practical workers and empiricists, from that of the erudite<sup>20</sup> – a common phenomenon across Iberian America. A quick look at the *Autos da Devassa* gives us a sense of how important it was for the Minas rebels to own books, as some texts were shared amongst the group. A few books generated heated arguments, and many inspired, or were the foundations for, their plans. For example, in the viceroyalty of Nueva Granada<sup>21</sup> the library of Clemente Ruiz –the first naturalist to undertake an Enlightened voyage through the region– had quite a good collection of books, which his contemporaries considered the bedrock of the knowledge he had accumulated.

The rebels read more than just the books they owned; reading aloud was well established, and the members of this society of thought would often lend each other books. Multiple witnesses made reference to books loaned or discussed amongst

<sup>14</sup> The majority supported a republic modeled on the United States, but there were those who argued for a representative monarchy, based on the English system. This would spark heated debates. See FURTADO, 2006, pp. 79-83.

<sup>15</sup> For its centrality, see FURTADO, 2012a, pp. 110-114.

<sup>16</sup> STUMPF, 2010, p. 202.

<sup>17</sup> ADIM, 1977, v. 9, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> ADIM, 1978, v. 2, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 155, 123-124.

<sup>20</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 140, 267.

<sup>21</sup> Nueva Granada is chosen for comparison due to the fact that many similarities can be drawn between the presence of naturalists, the literate groups, their seditious ideas and their libraries in the two regions.

them. By way of example, after canon Luís Vieira da Silva's books were confiscated, one of his friends drew up a petition asking for two of the books to be returned, as they were in fact his possessions and had been lent to the cleric<sup>22</sup>. Loaning books was also common amongst educated men in Nueva Granada. José Celestino Mutiz had owned, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "an appreciable library for collective use", which even Humboldt made use of when he traveled there. A variety of naturalists and learned men had access to his bookcases, compensating for the painful lack of books in Santa Fe at the time. Another "library that functioned as a collective" was that of naturalist and botanist Francisco Antonio Zea, which part of a new group of learned men would make permanent use of. Zea, along with Antonio Nariño, was arrested in 1794 and accused of drawing up a Spanish translation of the French text *The Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Zea had studied alongside Francisco José de Caldas, Camilo Torres Tenorio, Francisco Antonio Ulloa, and José María Cabal – all learned men, who would later come together in the *Semanario del Nuevo Reino de Granada* and become active in Colombia's fight for independence. In Bogotá, some of them, such as Francisco Antonio Zea and Jorge Tadeo Lozano, took part in the *Casino* salon, which was directed by Antonio Nariño – thus forming, as was the case in Minas Gerais, an Enlightened society of thought aiming for independence<sup>23</sup>.

The Atlantic nature that one may identify in the Minas uprising stems not only from the rebels' connection to the American Revolution, but also from their links to Europe; they were well aware of changes afoot in the Old World<sup>24</sup>, and books, as vessels of information and ideas, were important mechanisms linking these spaces. The influence of the Enlightenment on the Inconfidência has already been well studied, as its texts were prominent among the books in the libraries confiscated from defendants<sup>25</sup>. But I am interested in pursuing this thread even further. What else did the members of this Republic of Mazombos read, besides the texts of the French Enlightenment, and how did they read their sources? How did these books inspire their seditious ideas?

### 3. JOSÉ VIEIRA COUTO AND HIS LIBRARY

I will begin by analyzing the library of one of the rebels: José Vieira Couto, who made a name for himself in Brazil as a naturalist and came to certain prominence in the captaincy of Minas Gerais. He was born in 1752 in the village of Tejuco, in the diamond-producing region in the northeast of the captaincy<sup>26</sup>. He graduated from the University of Coimbra with a degree in Philosophy in 1777 and before returning to Portuguese America, he traveled to Germany to study how the local mines operated,

<sup>22</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 189-190.

<sup>23</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 279, 262-263

<sup>24</sup> According to Maxwell, the story of the Inconfidência Mineira "is an Atlantic story, taking in Brazil, North America, Europe, and their interaction". MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> FRIEIRO, 1981; LEITE, 1989; VILLALTA, 1992, pp. 367-395; VILLALTA, 1995, pp. 19-52; NEVES - NEVES, 2004, pp. 11-28.

<sup>26</sup> FURTADO, 1994, pp. 13-47.

and to Holland. Upon his return from Europe, he brought a number of books in his luggage, some of them full of seditious ideas. The extent of his participation in the Inconfidência Mineira has never been fully clarified –the accusations against him were not investigated at the time– but it is known that he took part in a number of important meetings meant to prepare for the uprising. He was not, however, a mere bystander, as the accounts of his involvement attempt to affirm; rather, the books filling his shelves and the readings he made of them reveal his active participation in the movement and his affinity with the ideas of the society of thought of the Republic of Mazombos.

After his European sojourn, Vieira Couto settled back in Tejuco and made a living by practicing medicine. In December 1798 he was tasked by Queen D. Maria I, under the auspices of the Real Academia de Ciências de Lisboa (Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon), with traveling around the diamond-producing region and evaluating its mineralogical potential; in his own words, “giv[ing] an exact report of the metals of this district and of the royal interests that one may expect from the same”<sup>27</sup>, which he did the following year<sup>28</sup>. In 1801, he was charged with a similar mission – evaluating a new discovery of diamonds around the Indaiá River<sup>29</sup>. Between 1799 and 1802 he wrote *Memórias Econômicas*<sup>30</sup> on these and other expeditions he had taken part in, and sent them to the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon.

In his house on Bonfim Street, the naturalist kept a substantial library, with a varied and eclectic assortment of books. His collection was of a significant size for the period, comprising 226 titles in some 601 volumes<sup>31</sup>. As was the case with the canon Luís Vieira<sup>32</sup>, many of his books revealed his familiarity with the ideas of the French Enlightenment. There were Montesquieu’s complete works, including *L’esprit des Lois* (1748); two volumes of Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie Pratique ou Etablissement de Grand Nombre de Manufactures* (1751-1772); and *Les ruines, ou, Méditation sur les révolutions des empires* (1791), by Volney. But that was not all<sup>33</sup>. By poking through his bookshelves, we may shed light on the development of a Luso-Brazilian naturalist and doctor on the threshold of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and in the scope of his readings, we may glimpse his vision of the world, especially in terms of nature, politics, and religion, which were intrinsically bound together.

At a basic level, studying libraries bears the difficulty of classifying their books, an indispensable step in the analysis of their content. Scholars are forced to seek out criteria that are generally external to the actions of the figure who compiled the collection, while they take care to steer clear of anachronistic categories, trying to

<sup>27</sup> COUTO, 1994, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> On Vieira Couto’s work as a naturalist, see FURTADO, 1994, pp. 13-47; SILVA, 2002, and FURTADO, 2010, pp. 189-212.

<sup>29</sup> COUTO, 1905, pp. 55-166.

<sup>30</sup> “Economic Memoirs” was the literary genre of choice for the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, as the studies of nature that its members carried out in the realm of the Natural Sciences were inseparable from these products’ pragmatic economical utility.

<sup>31</sup> A list of books annexed to the inventory of José Vieira Couto can be found in: Rio de Janeiro. Arquivo Nacional. Inventário nº 417, caixa 1.409, galeria A. The list is partly transcribed in: LEITE, 1990, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> FRIEIRO, 1981.

<sup>33</sup> LEITE, 1989, pp. 22-26; LEITE, 1990, pp. 24-29.

at least find classification parameters compatible with the collector's context. These collections have generally been classified by the subjects they deal with, which allows for innumerable possibilities<sup>34</sup>; but one must not forget that every library is formed over time, meaning that no analysis can do without a temporal aspect, be it the time in which the works were produced or the time during which the collection itself was put together.

As for the temporality of production, Vieira Couto's collection demonstrates a broad chronological scope, ranging from works of classical Antiquity to the first scientists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Let us examine a few examples from one of the thematic sections of his library –Medicine– as these books would have been essential for his professional practice. One finds everything from classic studies to the recent publications that were transforming the area's principles and practices. He owned Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* –a gem of Antiquity, a founding text at the heart of the Hippocratic-Galenic method practiced at the time– but he also possessed recent revisions of the Hippocratic corpus, as was the case with *Medicina Hippocratica exponens Aphorismos Hippocratis*, by Joannes de Gorter, published in Venice in 1795. New theories, classifications, and treatments were present as well: from Boerhaave's *Aphorismi de cognoscendis et curandis morbis* (1709), which transformed all the knowledge of anatomy and the functioning of the human body, and recent comments on Gerard Swieten's work, published between 1773-1775, to *Apparatus ad nosologiam methodicam* (1775) and *The Edinburgh Practice of Physic, Surgery, and Midwifery* (1803), both by the Scottish doctor Cullen, who had introduced a new classification in nosology, or the classification of diseases; to *Da Vacina*, by the Brazilian Melo Franco, who supported vaccination against smallpox, to the 1780 work *Observations sur les causes et les accidents de plusieurs accouchements laborieux*, which introduced the use of forceps for greater success in deliveries.

As in medicine, other sections of Vieira Couto's library included a few books dating from Antiquity, others from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and, finally, the latest in the field, reflecting the birth of modern science as based on a new instrumental rationality. His oldest original edition book was *Pharmacopeia Collegii Regalis Londini*, published in London in 1682 during the reign of Charles II. His latest acquisition, *Mémoire sur l'éducation classique des jeunes médecins* by François-Christophe-Florimond de Mercy, published in the year of Vieira Couto's death, in 1827, indicates that the naturalist continued to update his medical knowledge even toward the end of his life. From this perspective, his library takes on a temporal dimension, without which one cannot hope to understand it fully. So, as for the time spent compiling this collection, Vieira Couto bought books throughout his life. His library seems to have begun while he was studying at Coimbra, when he bought volumes like *Compêndio Histórico da Universidade de Coimbra* and *Estatutos da Universidade de Coimbra*, required for his education<sup>35</sup>. These were hardly random references. The first one, written in 1771, described the decadent state of the university and the need for changes, justifying and forming the basis of the reforms carried

<sup>34</sup> On thematic classifications, see for example: DARNTON, 1991, p. 155; NEVES - NEVES, 2004, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> For the books used at the University at that time see VILLALTA - MORAIS - MARTINS, 2013, pp. 33-103.

out shortly thereafter by Pombal. Among other changes, the Marquis introduced the course in Natural Sciences. The second, the new statutes published in 1772, reflects precisely these changes, which reinforced the spirit of experimentation and the new scientific bent of the institution's courses. Vieira Couto also owned Luís Antônio Verney's *Verdadeiro Método de Estudar para ser útil à Republica e à Igreja* (1746), in two volumes, which advocated for new methods of teaching in Portugal and had inspired Pombal's latter reforms.

His journey to France, Germany and Holland marked another important period of book acquisition, when he had access to many publications from the region. Most of these were of a scientific nature and many were related to mineralogy, stemming from his visit to German mines, probably around Freiberg. The notary who inventoried his books simply recorded that the naturalist owned two other volumes written in German besides the *Manuel der Naturalische*, perhaps referring to a 1771 translation of the book of the same name by Frenchmen Buffon, Duchesne, and Macquer. Vieira Couto had access to French editions of the writings of the most prominent German mineralogists (such as Johann Gottlob Lehmann, Christoph Andreas Schlüter, and Christian Carl Schindler). His European jaunt also allowed him to buy books that were banned from circulating in Portugal, due to their seditious content. In Amsterdam, he bought Joannis Clerici's *Ars Critica* on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1780, as he noted on the front cover of his copy. It was likely also there that, certainly influenced by contact with the local Sephardic Portuguese community, he bought the *History of the Jews* by the Roman writer Flavius Josephus (ca. 37 to 100 BCE), which shed light on the history of the Jews during the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Christian era, and described their rebellion against Roman domination.

But even from the little village of Tejuco, Vieira Couto continued purchasing, receiving, and selling books, an indication that geographic distance could not keep the latest publications from circulating, no matter where the educated elite happened to be living. For example, his copy of the first edition of Fourcroy's *Système des Connaissances Chimiques*, published in 1801, was acquired on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1804. This was made possible because Vieira Couto had set up a society for bookselling with his fellow Tejuco native Simão Pires Sardinha, another member of the Inconfidência Mineira and of this Society of thought, who had fled to Portugal after the movement was quashed<sup>36</sup>. Pires Sardinha bought the books in Europe and dispatched them from Lisbon to Tejuco, where José Vieira Couto sold some. Though remote, the town became a market for books. Owning these volumes allowed intellectual elites to access, read, and discuss the latest European publications, configuring a sphere of public opinion in the form of a literary underground. In 1795-1796, the books shipped from Lisbon included the review published by the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon<sup>37</sup>, of which Vieira Couto kept 4 volumes for himself.

Interestingly enough, in Nueva Granada, a number of learned men also became booksellers, importing books not only for themselves but also with an eye to selling

<sup>36</sup> Denúncia contra Simão Pires Sardinha. Mariana, 22 de agosto de 1802. Lisboa. Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo [from now on ANTT]. Inquisição de Lisboa. [from now on IL] Maço 28, Processo nº16.966.

<sup>37</sup> Licença para embarque de livros, ff. 1-4. Lisboa, 1795-1796. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória. Caixa 161.



them, thus alleviating the effects of the local market restrictions. Naturalist and doctor José Celestino Mutis, whose library of around impressive 9.000 volumes, that impressed Humboldt when he was there, “was ‘used collectively’ by part of the intellectual generation forming the first Enlightened group,” also lent and sold a variety of books and was known to give them to his disciples, as was the case with Francisco José Caldas. Other learned booksellers included Antonio Nariño, who was also involved in the translation and printing of a number of books he imported, including the *Rights of Man* – which would lead to his imprisonment; and brothers Camilo and Jerónimo Torres Tenorio, in Popayán, who used the business to pay for their meager domestic budget<sup>38</sup>.

Of the 226 books that Vieira Couto owned, only 9 (4%) could not be identified, as their titles were transcribed incompletely. As for the subjects that the collection included, 118 books, representing 53% of the whole and 54.4% of the 217 catalogued and classified books, had to do with natural history and were directly tied to the practice of medicine and fields related to the study of nature, with an emphasis on mineralogy and chemistry. The category with the greatest number of books was medicine, with 36; mineralogy, metallurgy, and geology brought in 23; while the other subjects tied to the study of nature (botany, agriculture, art and crafts) came to 25 titles and were essential for carrying out the examination and study of the territories of the captaincy, the job he had been charged with. But books such as *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa* and *Voyages au Montamiata* expressed not only the period’s taste for exploring the world, they also served as inspiration for Vieira Couto’s research reports, some of which were written in the style of travel guides. The need to standardize observations of nature and their travel report style is a typical feature of Enlightenment literature. “The practice of traveling [was] an activity connected both to the interests of the metropolis and to the advancement of knowledge, an activity at the very heart of the political, economic, and cultural construction of the West”<sup>39</sup>. In addition to these travel books, Vieira Couto also owned a guide on how the naturalist ought to travel, entitled *Observations sur les voyageurs*, inserted within Corneille de Pauw’s *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains*. His library also probably boasted volumes of the April 1666 edition of *Transactions Philosophiques*<sup>40</sup>: including Robert Boyle’s famous recommendations on how to keep a proper record of one’s travels<sup>41</sup>, with the aim of producing a “good Natural History, to build upon, in time, a Solid and Useful Philosophy”<sup>42</sup>. Interest in geography was connected to the study of History, as one confirmed the other, and both were part of the field of Natural History<sup>43</sup>.

The Humanities (politics, philosophy, education, ethics, history, literature, grammar, and music) covered 98 works, representing 43.3% of the total and 45.1%

<sup>38</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 282, 285, 261, 282-283.

<sup>39</sup> PIMENTEL, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>40</sup> We cannot say precisely what copies Vieira Couto owned, but he references volumes from the year 1687, and it is possible that he also owned the 1666 year volume.

<sup>41</sup> *General heads for the natural history of a country*.

<sup>42</sup> PIMENTEL, 2003, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> FRIEIRO, 1981, p. 36.

of the classified works. Interestingly enough, the second-largest category of books after medicine was history, with a total of 31 – a number explained by the relationship that Enlightenment thinkers established between nature and human action. It was due to this relationship that, for these thinkers, the study of nature took on a political dimension. In the words of Abbot Raynal, one of the authors that Vieira Couto read, “nature in America is revolutionary”<sup>44</sup>. As this author saw it, the close connection between the two forces of man and nature produced a causal relationship, and was the only factor able to explain the American Revolution; he also argued that philosophers ought to seek knowledge through examination<sup>45</sup>. In this sense, Couto shared the ideas Enlightenment philosophers held of their role in society, characterized by free thinking and the use of reason working as actors in their historical process, their actions always preceded by reflection. This worldview was presented in his books, which emphasized keeping one’s spirit open to observation and letting doubt come before conclusions. In one of his books, Jean de Senebier advised the philosophers that “dogmatism was the worst enemy of observation” and that “philosophical doubt should extend to everything that exists about the object being studied, from the ideas of others to those of great men, whose authority is generally irresistible”<sup>46</sup>.

The libraries of learned men in Nueva Granada also embraced a broad variety of subjects, generally concentrated in the field of natural sciences that their owners happened to specialize in. We may glean some idea of the books that José Celestino Mutis held in his extensive library, and which he sold in Santa Fe, by examining two lists of his purchases –one from 1786 and one from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century– analysed by Renán Silva<sup>47</sup>. Of the 203 books he ordered, 87 (42.9%) had to do with medicine, hygiene, mathematics, and the natural sciences, his professional interests; but there were also books on politics, legislation, economics, and agriculture (16), philosophy and literature (25), and history and geography (16). Juan José D’Elhuyar, tasked with administering the local Mines, had a library of 166 books, of which 86 were on chemistry and natural history (51.8%), 32 on civil history (19.3%), 13 grammars and dictionaries, nine on philosophy, moral theology, and the humanities, and eight on economics. Jacques Brisson’s *Eléments ou Principes Physico-Chimiques*, which was translated to Spanish as *El Diccionario Universal de Física*, was one of the most popular books in Nueva Granada<sup>48</sup>; Vieira Couto owned a copy in French.

Vieira Couto’s library is eclectic in terms of schools of thought, and reveals the changes taking place in bodies of knowledge over time, with the most recent books in step with the science of the age. And so, in the field of mineralogy, Vieira Couto owned everything from *Metallurgie ou Art de Tirer et Purifier les Métaux*, by the Spaniard Álvaro Afonso Barba, a work heavily influenced by alchemy and published in 1669, to Robert Jameson’s *System of Mineralogy*, published in Edinburgh in 1808, which proposed a more scientific and rational classification of the mineral elements. One is struck by the outsize presence of Scottish Enlightenment authors, whether in

<sup>44</sup> FIGUEIREDO - MUNTEAL, 1993, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>45</sup> RAYNAL, 1993, p.75.

<sup>46</sup> SENEBIER, 1802, pp. 97, 101.

<sup>47</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 300-301.

<sup>48</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 300-301, 303, 206.

mineralogy, medicine, or history. We find, among others including Cullen, Robert Jameson's *Manual of Mineralogy* (1821) and David Hume's *History of England* (1754-57). Recognition of the importance of the new medicine being taught at the University of Edinburgh in the renovation of the field may be attested by the fact that the Portuguese government sent and sponsored students to the Scottish institution in the 1790s<sup>49</sup>. In terms of literature, there was the Greek poet Sappho; the Renaissance classic *Don Quijote*; the verses of Camões, exalting Portugal's discoveries; and the recent poetry collection *The Seasons* (1730), by the Scot James Thomson, which had inaugurated a more naturalist aesthetic in poetry, freer of rhetorical exaggerations. He owned *The Adventures of Telemachus*, a novel that had become quite popular, mainly among the Enlightened elite, establishing itself as one of the favorite texts of the moment in Nueva Granada<sup>50</sup>.

Nevertheless, and as is the case with similar documents of the period, the inventory list of Vieira Couto's books takes in only the books that he owned at the time of his death, not all those he read over the course of his life. Some titles, banned from circulating in the Portuguese empire, may have been hidden by his relatives; others may have been read without his having owned them. In this sense, there are several signs in the *Autos* of shared readings; free thinkers as these men were, some such readings provoked heated discussions<sup>51</sup>, a few striking examples of which follow.

## 4. THE EXAMPLE OF THE AMERICAN ENGLISH – READING PRACTICES

### 4.1 The Dangerous Abbot

One of the books that was intensely discussed by the members of this society of thought was *Histoire Philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, by Abbot Raynal, first published in 1770. The work allowed the rebels to establish a link between the independence of the American colonies<sup>52</sup> and their aspirations and plans for the Inconfidência Mineira, as, according to the author, all “the new hemisphere ought one day to disjoin itself from the old”<sup>53</sup>. The *Autos* allow us to trace how the book entered Minas, and the different ways in which it was read and interpreted by the Republic of Mazombos, presenting itself as a rare and precious object of study for those interested in the history of books and

<sup>49</sup> D. João de Almeida de Mello e Castro. Missão em Londres, 7-IX-1792. ANTT. Casa dos Condes de Galveas. MAÇO 7. Doc.2.

<sup>50</sup> SILVA, 2008, p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> Guilherme and Lúcia Pereira das Neves analyze the library of the enlightened Brazilian Francisco Agostinho Gomes (1769-1822) through the book list of volumes he had sent to Brazil. They conclude that his library reflects the “embarrassed” Luso-Brazilian Enlightenment (NEVES - NEVES, 2004). I strongly disagree with the existence of an atypical, restrained and deformed Luso-Brazilian Enlightenment (FURTADO, 2012b; FURTADO - STARLING, 2013) as does István Jancsó (JANCÓS, 1997) who discusses the ideas of egalitarianism and revolution in the Bahia rebellion of 1799.

<sup>52</sup> On the rebels' readings of Raynal, see FURTADO, 2006, pp. 80-71. On the book's impact in Brazil, see PIMENTA, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> RAYNAL, 1993, p. 131.

reading. One copy belonged to one of the *inconfidentes*, the recently graduated lawyer José Pereira Ribeiro, who had returned from his studies at Coimbra<sup>54</sup>. His travel companion from Europe was Domingos Vidal de Barbosa Lage, a doctor who had just graduated from Montpellier and Bordeaux, and who had taken part in a meeting with Thomas Jefferson in France, seeking the United States' support for the new nation that would emerge<sup>55</sup>. On the journey, the two read and discussed Raynal's book; and Vidal, becoming an enthusiast of the work, came to memorize a few passages that he would recite to his cousin, once back in Minas. Another who would partake in the several discussions of Raynal's work among the rebels was canon Luís Vieira da Silva. Some considered his arrest as directly linked to his owning a French book that discussed the uprising (this was undoubtedly Raynal), as "the canon was always seen accompanying events in English America, reading of their history". The emancipation of the English colonies had become "the dominant passion of said canon," and he did not miss a chance to discuss it, such as one evening after a dinner at Cláudio Manoel da Costa's house, when a few of the rebels were present<sup>56</sup>. These secret meetings, moving from house to house, would blossom into a full-blown Literary Underground when the members, Vieira Couto included, took to discussing the key points in preparing the uprising, as the best system of government and the laws that would be implemented, sometimes while they sipped their coffee<sup>57</sup>.

The topic of the American Revolution was a frequent one; this meant that news arriving from North America by way of books, was always hotly debated. In October 1788, for example, the subject came up again when Vieira Couto and Englishman Nicolau Jorge Gwerck were present. The conversation was witnessed by Vicente Vieira da Mota, who was working as the bookkeeper for their host, João Rodrigues de Macedo, and would later report the dialogue to the authorities. One issue divided those present: whether the Brazilian movement ought to follow the example of the United States and become a republic, or that of England, remaining monarchical and representative. There was no consensus; we know that while the canon Vieira was given to a "natural complacence as to the success had by said American rebels", and "always placed himself on the side of the French", others, such as Gwerck the Englishman, Vicente Vieira da Mota the bookkeeper, and Macedo, all involved in the uprising, "were realists" and took "the side of the English"<sup>58</sup>.

Among other readings that members of this society of thought made of Raynal's work on North America, one might recall that the book presented a formula to be followed in order to replicate the uprising in Minas. Father José de Oliveira Rolim, one of the priests implicated in the movement and a Tejuco native like Vieira Couto, would affirm that "Abbot Raynal had been a writer of great vision, because he foretold the uprising of North America, and that the captaincy of Minas Gerais,

<sup>54</sup> ADIM, 1978, v. 2, p. 206. Colonel Francisco Antônio de Oliveira Lopes claimed that he knew that José Pereira Ribeiro "had the *Philosophical and Political History*, by the Abbot, and the *Laws*, by the English Americans".

<sup>55</sup> MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> ADIM, 1978, v. 2, pp. 207, 67; 1977, v. 9, p. 36; 1978, v. 5, pp. 102, 124.

<sup>57</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 118, 308. On José Joaquim da Rocha, see FURTADO, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> ADIM, 1982, v. 5, p. 102; 1978, v. 2, p. 246; 1981, v. 3, p. 332; 1978, v. 2, p. 246; 1976, v. 1, p. 104.

with the introduction of the ‘derrama’<sup>59</sup> tax, would be in the same circumstances now”<sup>60</sup>. Indeed, Raynal had linked the right to colonial rebellion against the king and excessive tax burdens to the vexation, oppression, restriction, or suppression of local government and the disorder of the Portuguese local authorities<sup>61</sup>. They would use the same argument to justify their right to insubordination, as had been the case in the English colonies<sup>62</sup>; thus, the Abbot’s book would be a guide to organizing a rebellion in Minas. Basing on Raynal, the *inconfidentes* believed that the movement would be sparked by their ability to recruit members convinced of the Portuguese kingdom’s royal oppression, a particularly sensitive topic in Minas where, over the past few decades, heavy taxes had been levied on mineral production in general and the decline of gold production in particular<sup>63</sup>. Tiradentes, who had been the most vocal in public, raged against the burden of these taxes and boasted that the mines were rich, but in “a wretched Country, because once all the gold and diamonds are taken from it, nothing will be left,” and called its inhabitants “poor sons of America, perpetually starving, with nothing of their own”<sup>64</sup>.

This same transitivity between oppression and intolerable taxes, as presented by Raynal, had already been established by Second Scholasticism, whose principles had legitimated royal power in Portugal since the Restoration in 1640 and was based on the axiom that political power belongs to the people, who concede it to the king in the form of a contract that, while perpetual, may be withdrawn in cases of tyranny. The concept that royal power was legitimated via a pact, and not merely through lineage, became a central mechanism guaranteeing the loyalty of the governed in the Portuguese empire. Love, not fear, was the primary element exchanged between the king and his vassals, wherever they might be in Portugal’s vast holdings. Second Scholasticism legal discourses on royal power have been identified by the latest historiography<sup>65</sup> as important components of the ideas shared by the *inconfidentes*; and it was no coincidence that José Vieira Couto owned *Tractus de Legibus, De lege naturali*, by Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), one of its most prominent thinkers. The author postulates the relationship between the various hierarchies of laws (divine, natural, and human), and argues that human law, derived from nature, was positive, as men create their laws with the aim of governing republics. The law of nature, meanwhile, provides the moral basis for the positive laws of republics, thus refuting that political societies are created by God, and affirming that secular republics are constituted by their citizens. Thus, subjects’ consent would be the foundation of any

<sup>59</sup> Since 1750, the “imposto do Quinto” (Fifth Tax), on gold, had determined a quota of 100 *arrobas* per year. When the quota was not met, a “Derrama”, a charge of the latte tax, could be decreed in order to bring in back taxes.

<sup>60</sup> Apud MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> “A short while ago a general loaded with money had left this Country [Minas] and another was already on the way to do the same.” ADIM, 1976, v. 1, p. 173.

<sup>62</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 159, 168, 173, 176, 183-184.

<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that diamond production in this period was not declining – on the contrary. But the fact that its production and commerce were monopolized by the Crown (which had operated the Royal Diamond Extraction service since 1771) was painted as an oppressive, intolerable situation. See FURTADO, 2012c.

<sup>64</sup> ADIM, 1976, v.1, p. 183.

<sup>65</sup> VILLALTA, 1999; FURTADO, 2006, pp. 80-83.

political society. In the vein of Portuguese citizens' acclamations of D. João IV, which cropped up across the empire after the Crown Restoration, in 1640, the *inconfidentes* decided that they would kick off their sedition with a cry of "Long live the people!" They thus shifted the foundation for the political power they were hoping to institute, from divine power to the people.

The rebels believed "that it was necessary to seek out a cause on which all were discontented" in order to make the people rise up. They had learned this lesson from Raynal, who described how the American colonists had resisted taxes on tea and sugar, making this the trigger for war. Opposition to this tax had spread to resistance to any sort of taxation without representation, defying the orders of British Parliament, which insisted that it had the right to tax colonists in order to finance the military defense of the colonies; and that opposition had led to independence. Seeking to mimic this chain of events, the *inconfidentes* believed that the moment in Minas was ripe, as the governor was about to launch the *Derrama*<sup>66</sup>, calling in all back taxes on gold.

But as Raynal saw it, knowledge was the province of philosophers, who ought to be men of words, not action; and he wrote that philosophical speculation did not bring civil disturbance, as, "if men are happy in their form of government, they will preserve it. If they are unhappy, it will be neither your opinions, nor mine – it will be the impossibility of suffering more and longer that will determine men to change them, a salutary movement that the oppressor will call a revolt, although it is nothing more than the legitimate exercise of an inalienable and natural right of the man being oppressed"<sup>67</sup>. That is to say, ideas alone would not be able to spark an uprising, and oppression had to precede it. The latter created discontentment and the will to act, thus legitimizing the movement<sup>68</sup>. Only with an understanding of this premise, which was part of the Minas rebels' primer in 1789 and was present in Portugal's second scholasticism, can we understand the rebels' insistence that they had to take advantage of the air of dissatisfaction around the introduction of the *Derrama* and control of the diamond region, where metropolitan oppression would be felt more severely through the royal monopoly on diamond extraction. Hence, when the new governor of the captaincy, the Count of Valadares, suspended the tax shortly after the *inconfidência* was found out, the rebels felt that the revolutionary momentum had been lost.

The example of the uprising in English America, which was quite fresh in their memories, was vital for the imitation, whenever possible, of tactics and strategies employed in the fight for independence as well as the establishment of a new government. As for what had happened there, information came to Minas in the books that these men read, which served as inspiration. Not by chance, the history section in Vieira Couto's library was thus quite large, with important books on British history (Hume, William Belsham) and American history (Corneille de Pauw), significant interest in the topic of the decline of empires (Gibbon, Volney), and the rising up of

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<sup>66</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 214-215.

<sup>67</sup> RAYNAL, 1993, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> CAVALCANTI, 1998, p. 29.

the oppressed (Flavius Josephus). Books on America were staples of the libraries of the learned elites of Nueva Granada as well, who were obsessed with the French texts discoursing on Spanish decadence. As for the latter, Vieira Couto owned a French translation of *Rétablissement des Manufactures et du Commerce d'Espagne* (1753), from the 1740 original by Bernardo de Ulloa.

Examples indicating that the American model was an inspiration for the inconfidentes appear in a number of cases. When pressed on the impossibility of a revolt in Minas, vicar Carlos Correia de Toledo responded that the war would take three years, that Minas Gerais would be joined by the captaincies of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (just as the English colonies had formed a confederation), and that he considered that they were better positioned than the American English, “who, when (...) they shook off the yoke, had fewer arms and, nevertheless, resisted until they achieved their liberty”; moreover, well aware of the riches of his captaincy, which far exceeded those available to the Americans, he declared that they could live off the products of the interior, which was “even better [than the North American one], for the greater resources it contains,” such as salt, gold and diamonds, which would more easily help maintain the uprising. Domingos Vidal Barbosa pointed out that “the American English, on bare beaches, with no other resources but a bit of dried fish, some wheat and a few mills, had sustained such a vast war”. José Joaquim da Maia, meanwhile, who had met with Jefferson in France, guaranteed the minister that they had supplies “with which to make gunpowder; there was iron, and, in sum, everything necessary for Brazil to be independent (...) and that the first nation to aid them during the war, would have the greatest advantage in their ports”. This exaltation of Minas’ lands was common among the rebels, who went as far as to “exaggerate its beauty, fertility, and wealth”<sup>69</sup>. This pride stemmed not only from the central place that the region took on in the empire, as they saw it, but also out of the necessity to insist on the new nation’s ability to sustain itself. They told Jefferson, for example, that the gold mines produced 26 million réis<sup>70</sup>.

Their strategy for moving ahead with the resistance also mirrored American war tactics. Domingos Vidal Barbosa would say that Canon Luís Vieira, a great scholar of the movement, “had made a plan by which to furnish the security of this Country, and another by which to reign, saying that, on this continent, nature had made it defensible.” He knew that the North Americans had had to abandon their “bare beaches” and were “obliged to retire to the mountains”, where they could better defend their territory. In Brazil, meanwhile, regarding the geography of the region between Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, “nature had made it defensible by itself”; “in order to push into the latter, one had to pass a chain of ranges and rivers and penetrate far into the mountainous central plain”<sup>71</sup>. Based on the tactics of the Brasília war, that they learned with the Indians, they decided that in order for troops arriving on the coast to not reach the backlands of Minas, “the entrance to Rio de Janeiro need only be guarded by a number of ambush parties”. But, independently of the number of men

<sup>69</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 184, 204, 156, 255-256, 215, 214, 189. The interior was referred to as the “sertão”, term that, at that time, simply meant land far from the sea, as was the case with Minas Gerais.

<sup>70</sup> ADIM, 1977, v. 8, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 214-215.

recruited for the uprising –200 according to some, a thousand according to others, and all the people of the land, according to still others– Tiradentes had warned one of those who dared to doubt the movement “that the uprising of English America began with an individual”<sup>72</sup> and had been successful, while the Brazilians were far more numerous.

#### 4.2. The Laws of the American Confederation

Another book about the United States was also very important for the uprising. This was *Recueil de Lois Constitutives des Etats Unis de L’Amerique*<sup>73</sup>, which would be of particular inspiration in the establishment of the new government to be erected. One witness reveals details of the sharing and discussion of this book; as it was written in French, a translation was required so that all those who were not fluent could read it. The *Recueil* allows for an interesting discussion about the ways in which it was read by the rebels in Minas. Francisco Xavier Machado stated that Tiradentes came to his house, showed him the book and asked him to translate a passage. This was an octavo edition, with a cover of painted paper, which Tiradentes always carried with him<sup>74</sup>. The book had first belonged to José Álvares Maciel, who had returned to Minas after studying at Coimbra and brought “the code of laws by which the American English governed themselves”, and subsequently gave it to Tiradentes. They had access to another copy, brought by José Pereira Ribeiro, another student returning from Coimbra. The *Recueil* was used extensively by the group to draw up the laws of the new republic<sup>75</sup>.

Another important element revealed by Machado’s testimony is that, although he did not speak French, Tiradentes was familiar with the book’s contents and had a visual memory of some passages, as he was able to quickly leaf through it and identify parts to be discussed. On the occasion of their meeting, Machado translated the eighth section for him, on the election of the Privy Council. After their conversation, Tiradentes lent Machado the book. Another military man, Pedro de Oliveira e Silva, related that Tiradentes, “one day, brought me a diary that tells of the uprising of English America, so that I might translate certain passages for him”. The soldier kept the book a few days, doing what Tiradentes had requested, and then had it sent back<sup>76</sup>.

Simão Pires Sardinha was also sought out at his house in Rio de Janeiro by Tiradentes, who was carrying “some English books for him to translate certain parts that were also about [English] America”. It does not seem that these books belonged to him, but rather that they were loaned to him in Rio, as he “had gone around searching through

<sup>72</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, p. 331.

<sup>73</sup> On *Recueil* see MAXWELL, 2013a; MAXWELL, 2013b, and for details on the version Tiradentes owned, see HUFFMAN - ROCHA, 2013, pp. 107-132.

<sup>74</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, p. 189. This copy of the book was confiscated by the authorities during the trial, and is held today at the Museu da Inconfidência in Ouro Preto.

<sup>75</sup> ADIM, 1978, v. 2, pp. 46, 496-497.

<sup>76</sup> ADIM, 1976, v.1, p. 308.



bookshops for books about the English uprising”<sup>77</sup>. We know that the inconfidentes owned a number of books about the American Revolution: the canon Vieira owned *Histoire de l'Amérique*, by Robertson; others, the “works by Mabbly on the American constitutional experiment, including *Observations sur le gouvernement des États-Unis de l'Amérique*”. Vieira Couto had *History of Great Britain from the Revolution*, by David Hume, and *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains*, by Corneille de Pauw. The latter, taking the massacre of Native Americans by the Spanish as an example, unfurled a Physiocratic apology for agriculture in detriment of mining, and argued for the independence of the colonies. The Autos “contain at least fifteen references to the possession of books related to the ‘American English’”<sup>78</sup>.

The breadth of languages covered in Vieira Couto’s bookshelves, like others of the period, was considerable, as Latin had ceased to be the universal language of the educated elite some time before. For example, there sat works written in Portuguese, French, Spanish, German, English, Italian, and Latin. Similarly, the section of foreign-language dictionaries included 5 volumes, covering the latter three languages. In the libraries of Nueva Granada, Latin had also “lost its privileges as the exclusive language of scientific culture”. In addition to translating important works into Spanish, local intellectuals made an effort to learn other languages; José Celestino Mutis, for his part, planned to learn Swedish to read “his admired naturalists,” especially Linnaeus, whose 10-volume *Equillis Aur de Stella Polari* could also be found in Vieira Couto’s library. Upon hearing this idea, Mutis’ interlocutor said “that it would be of little use” and that his time would be better spent learning German. The library of Juan D’Elhuyar, inventoried in 1796, had 71 books in Spanish, 51 in German, 35 in French, seven in Swedish, and two in Latin, a reflection of these new times<sup>79</sup>. Dictionaries were another example of the circulation of books amongst the rebels; this was the case with one French dictionary, which belonged to Tiradentes and certainly helped him in the operation of reading books in foreign languages, the *Recueil* in particular.

Machado’s declaration that Tiradentes had asked him to translate the section on the Privy Council is one piece of evidence about some of the topics being tackled in the laws that the inconfidentes were preparing for their new republic, partly inspired by the legislation of the American colonies and by the reading of passages of *Recueil*. Another topic to have been present in the new legislation was that “for the first three years, the chosen [soldiers] would serve; and then the rest would serve annually”<sup>80</sup>. Term limits for recruitment were included in all the American state constitutions, reproduced in *Recueil*, “so as to avoid the formation of a new dominant class”<sup>81</sup>. The rebels’ belief in the power of virtuous men’s ability to govern, in the mold of Franklin, Jefferson, and others, was articulated by Tiradentes when he said that the “land would be well governed, erecting itself in a Republic”. José Resende Costa Filho

<sup>77</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 308, 189-190, 206.

<sup>78</sup> MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 38.

<sup>79</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 275, 274, 305.

<sup>80</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, p. 193: “and all those in debt to the Royal Treasury would be pardoned”.

<sup>81</sup> MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 24.

confessed that the rebels would have constructed “seven Parliaments”<sup>82</sup> as in some American states.

Tiradentes’ copy of the *Recueil* shows underlined passages and annotations in the margins, indicating a few of the ways in which the text was received. “One of the notes condemns the nature of the punishments”. This same concern with the softening of justice and punishments is reflected on page 106, where a passage is underlined stating that “there ought not to exist retroactive laws –all ought to have recourse to an easy, complete Justice, without reserve and without delay– and there ought not to be exaggerated fines, or cruel or unusual punishments”<sup>83</sup>. The Virginia Declaration of Rights, approved on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1776 and included in the book, “guaranteed the right to trial by jury, freedom of the press and religious liberty, condemned ‘cruel and unusual punishments,’ and baseless search and seizure”<sup>84</sup>. Another passage underlined stipulated that standing armies were a danger to liberty, arguing that military units should be subordinated to civil authority<sup>85</sup>. Like the American revolutionaries, Tiradentes, although a military man, supported the abolishment of the professional army and its substitution by civil militias. When Ana da Silva asked him to intervene on behalf of her son, who hoped to enlist as a soldier in the captaincy’s paid troops, he said “that for now she should let it be” and “that shortly he would be enlisted,” and “there would be no need to ask anyone’s permission”. As in the United States, they questioned the purpose of “so many Regiments and so many troops, as had been created, obliging the poor soldiers to don uniforms straightaway”<sup>86</sup>.

As Maxwell reminds us, *Recueil* was a collection of laws “affirming that government’s authority comes from the people, and basing themselves on a pact for the common welfare”<sup>87</sup>. Moreover, like the Americans, the *inconfidentes* incessantly affirmed that “the mazombos were worthy as well, and knew how to govern,” that “the natives of [Brazil] also wished to form a republic”<sup>88</sup>, indicating that they also saw all power as coming from the people.

The first document in the *Recueil* was a census of the 13 colonies, taken from Régnier’s book, which reported a total of 3,056,678 inhabitants. Following the precautions and the model of the Americans, the rebels in Minas acquired a map of the population from military officer José Joaquim da Rocha, who joined the movement. The document, which Rocha had drawn up himself, estimated the population of the captaincy<sup>89</sup>. This was strategic information vital to planning the uprising and the numbers were shown to Thomas Jefferson as part of the effort to convince the United States of the viability of the uprising and the new nation’s ability to support itself<sup>90</sup>.

The second document was the Declaration of Independence of the English colonies, from July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776. This text, establishing a link between liberty, equality,

<sup>82</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 181, 255, 258.

<sup>83</sup> JARDIM, 1989, p. 76.

<sup>84</sup> MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 23.

<sup>85</sup> JARDIM, 1989, p. 76.

<sup>86</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, pp. 184-188, 328.

<sup>87</sup> MAXWELL, 2013b, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> ADIM, 1976, v. 1, p. 151.

<sup>89</sup> See FURTADO, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> ADIM, 1977, v.8, pp. 29-30.

and happiness, was clearly an important source of inspiration for the rebels in Minas. The Declaration began with the vastly well-known affirmation that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. This trio of values was at the top of the agenda for the *inconfidentes*. Tiradentes vociferated in the taverns that all their action “was summarily directed towards the public happiness and welfare”, that they professed “these and other seditious liberations, all with the end of liberty.” He bellowed that “the people (...) wished to live in liberty” and declared that, after the uprising, he would be “the happiest man in the world,” and that “he hoped to make this land happy as well”. They agreed amongst themselves that happiness would be the first present to be offered to the people, and that, as soon as the movement was set in motion, colonel Francisco de Paula Freire de Andrada would “say a prayer for the people, announcing their future happiness to them”<sup>91</sup>. In Abbot Raynal’s book, independence was justified as returning “an inalienable, natural right of man,” namely, the right to happiness and the end of the unhappiness wrought by oppression<sup>92</sup>. José Joaquim da Maia, when he wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1786 declared that the Portuguese were “usurpers, against the laws of nature and of humanity, with no aim but to oppress us”<sup>93</sup>.

## 5. BOOKS, IRRELIGIOSITY, AND SEDITION

One striking characteristic of José Vieira Couto’s library is its lack of religious books, something quite rare for the captaincy at that period, with nary a copy of the Bible. The only religious book (0.4% of the total), Flavius Josephus’ *History of the Jews*, was historically oriented, but gives us a clue as to the owner’s (ir)religious beliefs, strongly marked by the skepticism characteristic of Jewish circles in Amsterdam. A similar bent may be seen in the libraries belonging to naturalists in Nueva Granada. Mineralogist Juan José D’Elhuyar did not own a single religious book; in 1786 José Celestino Mutis ordered 29 books on theology, religion, and morality, but this category disappears in the order from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the books he did own dealt more with morality than with theology; zoologist Jorge Tadeo Lozano, meanwhile, owned just one religious book, *La historia de Cristo paciente*. But even those who professed their faith, practiced a “religion of the Enlightened,” characterized by “a religious practice that was less external and formal, and more spiritual and... highly intellectualized”<sup>94</sup>.

Several other books that Vieira Couto owned, though directly dealing with the application of knowledge from other fields, contained messages about religion and give us an idea of the far from orthodox views that he professed in this area. The link between irreligiosity, libertinism and political nonconformity comes to the fore in several of Vieira Couto’s books. Volney’s work, *Les ruines, ou, Méditation sur les*

<sup>91</sup> ADIM, 1976, v.1, pp. 143, 151, 194, 186-188, 165 e 215.

<sup>92</sup> CAVALCANTI, 1998, p. 29.

<sup>93</sup> ADIM, 1977, v.8, p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> SILVA, 2008, pp. 303, 300-301, 306-307, 317.

*révolutions des empires*, criticized Catholicism. Erasmus of Rotterdam, in his *Colloquia Familiaria*, was a harsh critic of the Catholic Church, denouncing “the monks as constant clients of prostitutes and advised a girl who desired to remain a virgin to ‘avoid those lusty and big-bellied monks. Chastity is in greater danger within the cloister than without’”. Genovese, author of *Elementa Metaphysicae* (1743), had his writings declared heretical and was condemned by the Archbishop of Naples, who removed him from his position as theology teacher in that city<sup>95</sup>. The *Encyclopédie*, organized by Diderot and D’Alembert, was considered an incisive instrument in the service of the critical spirit, wielded by critical thinkers against the political and religious elements of the time. As for the books that Simão Pires Sardinha sent Vieira Couto, it was said that “they tried to say that there was no hell, because when a creature dies its soul goes to frolic in the Elysian Fields”<sup>96</sup>. Since the Middle Ages, the link between political and religious ideology was an important aspect of Western Christian mentality, consolidating the divine right of kings as an important basis for the justification and acceptance of European monarchies by their subjects. This connection between the loyalty owed to a monarch and the expression of faith was a constant in Portugal, as seen in the very definition of *inconfidência*<sup>97</sup>, although by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the foundation for the continuation of monarchical power was undergoing a transformation.

The argument here is not that the mere possession of banned books was sufficient cause to provoke an uprising or revolution. Vieira Couto’s brother, José Joaquim, would say much the same when he was found to own several such volumes. He stated that “reading books, and knowing how to read them, without abuse, was permitted”. José Joaquim emphasized the critical spirit present in those who did not let themselves be seduced by the ideas in banned works. “Quite the opposite, [these] served to support the maintenance of its ends, respecting the laws of decency, and of respect to the Church and the State”. Another member of the Republic of Mazombos, Antônio Mayer, when confronted with the fact that reading banned books had inspired heretical ideas in him, would protest “that the false principles of those writings did not for a moment make him hesitate as to the truths of our holy religion”<sup>98</sup>. Despite this defense, it was clear that these works corroded the pillars upon which absolutist states rested –law, faith, and King– and it was not by chance that the Inquisition associated libertinism and insubordination to the possession of banned books.

It is clear that, as in other places during the same period, these educated mazombos fused Enlightenment philosophy with a dose of licentious practices and ideals. Books that the inquisitors generally referred to as “French,” which were considered libertine or Jacobin, were the foundation for much of the heterodox content in their moral, religious, and political ideology. As for José Vieira Couto, witnesses claimed that the vessels for his ideas were books, especially a Dutch volume that was always in his pocket. In his travel to Brazil, he was accused by the priest to not go to the mass and

<sup>95</sup> LEITE, 1990, p. 28.

<sup>96</sup> Denúncia contra Simão Pires Sardinha. Mariana, 22-VIII-1802. ANTT. IL. Maço 28, Processo nº16.966.

<sup>97</sup> On definition of *Inconfidência* crime, see note 4.

<sup>98</sup> Processo contra José Vieira Couto. Mariana, 12-V-1789. ANTT. IL. Processo nº 12.957, and Processo contra José Joaquim Vieira Couto. Mariana, 1-IV-1800. ANTT. IL. Processo nº 16.809.

instead to read a French book that was always with him<sup>99</sup>. And so, when he wished to prove to his companion Thomázia that confession was useless, “he showed her little books or read them to her.” He did the same with an aunt of his: “to persuade [her of] things against our faith and confirm it (...) he had read her a book that he carried in his pocket, which confirmed the heresies he was saying.” On the ship on which he had returned to Brazil, “in place of reading some pious book, he set himself to reading books of history, or of medicine”, “and the scandal was such that the ship’s captain quarreled and argued with him over this libertinism”. That was probably *Ars Critica*, by Jean Le Clerc, who was a defender of religious tolerance, and whose interpretations of the Divine Trinity, original sin, and other religious dogmas, were considered heterodox by the Catholic Church.

With regard to Tejuco, all the foreign travelers who came to the town in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were impressed by the local cultural scene. French traveler Auguste de Saint-Hilaire declared that “I found in this locale more instruction than in the rest of Brazil, more taste for literature, and a livelier desire to instruct oneself”<sup>100</sup>. He emphasized the locals’ talent in calligraphy, grammar, and music. During his stay, he was able to rub elbows with a cultured, refined elite, well versed in French (including Vieira Couto, with whom he could chat in his native tongue, an interaction which struck him particularly). Humboldt would record a similar impression of Popayán, in Nueva Granada, where Zea, Torres, and Caldas were naturalists. “The inhabitants of this city have more culture than one might expect,” he noted, finding “an intellectual effervescence”. He associated this prevailing cultural wealth to books, as everyone “desired to possess books and know the names of illustrious men” and “all know chemistry and physics because they saw *The Spectacle of Nature*”, by Abbé Plûche<sup>101</sup>. The link between books and ideas was intrinsically linked made by Enlightened elites, no matter where they were, as Paris in Europe, and Tejuco, Santa Fe and Popayán, in South America, are examples.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the ban on “all books injurious to religion, the state, or customs”<sup>102</sup>, these volumes were always present on the shelves of local libraries, especially those of members of the Republic of Mazombos, as was Vieira Couto’s case. Through the reading and shared discussion of these philosophical books, the members of this society of thought could formulate ideas that defied religion and the State and were the basis for revolutionary and independent movements in America. The study of part of the library of naturalist and doctor José Vieira Couto, located in Tejuco village, in

<sup>99</sup> The naturalist Alejandro Malaspina was prosecuted by the Inquisition in Cartagena with similar accusations. He missed the masses in the ship he travelled to America, show little piety when attending it, and was always in his cabin reading forbidden France and English books, he was accused of being libertine as he discussed with the priest about the transmigration of the human soul. PIMENTEL, 2008, p. 170.

<sup>100</sup> SAINT-HILAIRE, 1975, p. 33.

<sup>101</sup> Apud: SILVA, 2008, p. 214.

<sup>102</sup> DARNTON, 1991, p.14.

the diamond district of the Minas Gerais captaincy, and the readings he shared with other Enlightened members of the Republic of Mazombos, contribute to an analysis of their views and their vision of the world, as books emerged as an important source of inspiration that shaped their thoughts. As was the case with Enlightenment France, 18<sup>th</sup> century Minas Gerais boasted its own Literary Underground, replete with ideas of sedition and libertinism. As for their strategies in setting off a revolt against the Portuguese monarchy in a movement known as Inconfidência Mineira, and the construction of a new republican order to be set in place, the reading of books was fundamental. They were especially inspired by the case of their North American compatriots' movement of independence and the *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes*, by Abbot Raynal, and *Recueil de Lois Constitutives des Etats Unis de L'Amérique* were fundamental sources of information that were intensely discussed by these enlightened mazombos. By reading certain books, this society of thought could share a radical political culture, shot through with religious, moral, and political heterodoxy.

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