
Introduction

Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro

1. Portugal, Iberia and Overseas Expansion

This volume gathers and reflects on the wealth of political thought produced in Portugal between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a selection of texts on the social order, government and politics, written by Portuguese authors, the majority of them born in peninsular Portugal, as well as a few natives or long-term residents of colonial Brazil.

Portugal is not commonly associated with the most important developments in the history of European political thought, and much less so on a global scale. The relatively minor role of the Portuguese kingdom in European politics partly accounts for its scant contribution to standard grand narratives of Western political thought. This is mirrored by its somewhat peripheral geographic location and role in relation to the main stages of European high politics. Moreover, the fact that the Portuguese language was not exactly a major tool of communication in the sixteenth- to eighteenth-century European republic of letters also helps explain the under-representation of Portuguese involvement in the history of political thought. The texts gathered here admittedly made a rather limited impression on European contemporaries, as well as on subsequent historiography. Their place in the gallery of the great contributions to the ‘advancement’ of modern political thought is undoubtedly modest. Finally, the fact that Portugal is part of the Iberian world, in the past associated with backwardness and with anti-modernity – characteristics incorporated into the anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic tendency that was particularly noticeable in the works of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century non-Spanish historians, many of them Protestants – has also

Introduction

served to vindicate the lack of interest in most of those who wrote about politics in this southern European kingdom.

The purpose of this volume is not to attempt to rectify this situation, nor to correct a perceived slight by arguing for the modernity of the political thought produced in the Portuguese context. This book does not intend to show that in Portugal the development of political thought followed a similar trajectory to that elsewhere in Europe. Rather, it is to demonstrate that the Portuguese context, despite the above-mentioned factors and barriers, was the setting for vibrant political debate, often shaped by, and emerging in response to, very particular assumptions, circumstances and concerns. The following pages will demonstrate that many of the controversies that took place in Portugal centred on themes similar to those being discussed in other European contexts. Others, however, were linked to the specific nature and history of the Portuguese monarchy and its interactions with other polities.

Over the past two centuries, studies of political thought in early modern and eighteenth-century Portugal have developed two contrasting paradigms.

The first is a legacy of the early eighteenth-century critical thought of Portuguese society. It argues that Renaissance political and scientific culture in Portugal was quashed by the Counter-Reformation and by the Inquisition, both committed to isolating the Portuguese from other European contexts. This isolation was only occasionally broken by a small number of intellectuals and men of letters who spent long periods abroad. Exposure to foreign influences turned these men into severe critics of the Portuguese reality. They came to be known as *estrangeirados*, a sort of alien intellectual vanguard teleologically portrayed as the forerunner of a future modernity. Many of their writings were printed in the early nineteenth century,¹ and this body of work eventually shaped the way political thought in Portugal was portrayed by liberals and, later, during the twentieth century, by republican, anti-Salazar and socialist intellectuals.²

¹ Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion in this volume of some of the writings of the eighteenth-century diplomat Luís da Cunha. Nineteenth-century intellectuals agreed with much of the core of the liberal political discourse, whose roots date back to the early Enlightenment period. António Sérgio at the beginning of the twentieth century did the same, and, more recently, so did historians such as Vítor de Sá and, in particular, Vitorino Magalhães Godinho. The best overview of this matter is Dias, 1952; on the concept of *estrangeirado*, see Cortesão, 1952–60, vol. 1. See also Boxer, 1969 and Macedo, 1974.

² António de Oliveira Salazar ruled Portugal as dictator from 1928 to 1970.

1. Portugal, Iberia and Overseas Expansion

At the other extreme, early nineteenth-century anti-liberal intellectuals initiated a different tradition of studies on Portuguese political thought. It underscored the idea that Portuguese intellectual life was fundamentally concerned with national realities and therefore deliberately rejected foreign influences. A striking feature of this intellectual tradition is its frequently essentialist vision of political thought in Portugal and its empire.³ It was elaborated further by early twentieth-century ‘integralist’ and monarchical–traditionalist thought, and was eventually incorporated by the historiography supporting Salazar’s dictatorship.

These two paradigms have one feature in common: to a certain extent they are both based on the assumption that cultural isolation was a fundamental characteristic of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Portuguese intellectual life. Although successively modified and transformed, these two paradigms have had a long-lasting influence, and it is only relatively recently that scholarship has provided a more nuanced vision of the historical trajectory of political thought in Portugal.

Over the past half-century, studies have identified a series of specific nexuses between, on the one hand, the political debates taking place in Portugal and, on the other, global political and intellectual contexts.⁴ The periods and themes covered by this scholarship include: the reception of humanism in Portugal and its impact on political thought; empire-building and the development of political ideas, in particular the debates on the status of Asian, African and Amerindian peoples; the political thought produced during the period when Portugal was part of the Spanish monarchy (1580–1640); Portugal’s secession from the Spanish monarchy (1640), and the wealth of political thought generated by this event; the early stages of Enlightened political thought in Portugal; mid-eighteenth-century royal reformism and the development of an explicitly absolutist tradition of political thought; and, lastly, the late eighteenth-century period, in the course of which a new set of categories emerged in political discourse.

³ This essentialist vision of Portuguese political thought is the basis of early nineteenth-century anti-liberal political discourse. It remained present in the early twentieth-century *Integralismo Lusitano* movement. António Sardinha is significant in this respect. Subsequently, this tradition of thought was revived by a series of important mid-twentieth-century historians, such as Macedo, 1974. On Portuguese identity, see Albuquerque, 1974b.

⁴ See Buescu, 1996; Furtado, 2012. For an overview of early modern European political thought, see Skinner, 1978.

Introduction

These recent studies have demonstrated that political thought produced in early modern Portugal was influenced by the fact that, between the sixteenth and the early eighteenth centuries, Portugal shared the Iberian space with the crowns of Castile and Aragon. These neighbouring political formations had many similarities with regard to their political culture and forms of government.⁵ These included a common political vocabulary, categories, modes of discourse, repertoires of rule, institutions, and often language.⁶ Many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century natives of Portugal were fluent in Castilian and Italian in addition to Latin and Portuguese, and various texts selected for this volume illustrate this. Before, during and after the incorporation of the Portuguese into the Spanish monarchy,⁷ some of the major works of Italian, French and English political thought were known in Portugal through Castilian or Latin versions. In the mid-seventeenth century knowledge of French improved significantly among Portuguese elites and men of letters, leading to increasing (and unprecedented) attention being paid to French authors and cultural-artistic models.

This link with the Castilian-Aragonese cultural and intellectual sphere, established in the late middle ages, remained very intense throughout the early modern period. This fact is evident in several texts selected for this volume, devoted to the same subject matters that were also being discussed in Castile or Aragon. The connections and exchanges between the different Iberian contexts were denser than they are today, and this phenomenon explains the entangled and intercultural character of political discourse across Iberia. Many of these debates were closely intertwined and even inseparable.

People across the Iberian Peninsula shared a set of fundamental ideas about the collective life, the origin of political power, the foundations of social order and the nature of royal authority. In Portugal as well as in Castile and Aragon, human beings were believed to have a natural inclination to cooperation and living in society. Apart from the Aristotelian concept of man as a political animal, it was also believed that the Catholic model of the family was the most perfect expression of an ordered human community. The idea that the domestic unit was the basis for social life was deeply rooted in contemporary culture, and the same could be said of the belief that the patriarchal family – with its internal discipline – was the matrix for collective life. Likewise, urban centres were usually

⁵ Bouza, Cardim and Feros, 2019. ⁶ Gil Pujol, 2007. ⁷ Elliott, 1991 and 2014.

1. Portugal, Iberia and Overseas Expansion

understood as an aggregation of families, and kingdoms were often conceived as conglomerates of villages, towns and cities, each one of them with its distinct jurisdictional identity. While regarded as self-sufficient units in political and jurisdictional terms, urban centres were also the stage for the development of a series of government institutions based on political participation, as well as of criteria for defining who belonged to the local community.⁸ Across Iberia the concept of ‘resident’ (*vizinho/morador* in Portuguese, *vecino* in Castilian) was elaborated in the urban context, as a means of distinguishing members of the local community (and thus entitled to local resources and public office) from non-members. The Portuguese terms *vizinho/morador* and *cidadão* could mean ‘(local) citizen’. Another category of belonging was ‘natural’. Although its usage varied significantly by context, it could either be intended to mean ‘born in a certain locality’ (city, town, village: *vizinho*), or to designate belonging to a larger territorial unit, such as a province or the Portuguese kingdom as a whole.⁹ As for the terms ‘vassal’ and ‘subject’, they essentially referred to the bond of allegiance between an individual and the monarch. Whereas ‘vassal’ pointed to a bond involving reciprocal duties and rights, ‘subject’ underscored the individual’s condition of subordination to the lord. Until the eighteenth century the former term was more frequently employed. In the late eighteenth century the term ‘citizen’ began to be used in a broader and supra-local sense.

The aforementioned ideas were widely shared in Portugal, Castile and Aragon. The same could be said about notions of kingship. Each of the various Iberian polities had its own narrative about how it had become an independent kingdom in the early medieval period. However, and in spite of some differences, they all thought of their foundational moments as arising from the long struggle (subsequently denominated the ‘Reconquista’) against the Muslim polities that ruled the Peninsula. All these foundational narratives had in common the emphasis on the Christian component of kingship, as well as its providential character. In addition, most of these accounts spoke of kings ‘elected’ by the vassals, thereby fuelling pactist understandings of royal authority.

The bond between the king and the people, or his vassals, was originally conceived as being akin to the relationship between a lord and

⁸ Coelho and Magalhães, 1986.

⁹ For a contrast with the Spanish and Spanish American contexts, see Herzog, 2003.

Introduction

a vassal. Such a bond was closely related to face-to-face commitments, typical of smaller political formations. The principle that best described it was ‘loyalty’, a virtue that established a reciprocal bond between lord and vassal. This bond was present in narratives about the origins of each of the Iberian kingdoms. Such narratives spoke of an ancient pact between the people and the ruler, a *pactum subjectionis*. Significantly, this pactist character of the political regime was not incompatible with a strong notion of hereditary monarchy.

Also deeply rooted in the Iberian notion of lordship was the idea that love was the true foundation of political allegiance. This political understanding of love materialized in a discourse about communal life based on the idea of Christian salvation as a collective enterprise, the primacy of the common good over particular interests, and on a persistent suspicion of self-love and material gain. It also materialized in the *auxilium*, regarded as a voluntary and reciprocal service between lord and vassal (*officium*).¹⁰

Just as important for kingship was the virtue of justice. Analogies between the role of the judge and the duties of a monarch were frequently drawn in early modern Iberian literature. The main task of the ruler was to uphold justice, which meant not only maintaining the social order, but restoring it in the wake of political crisis, determining a just punishment for those convicted of crimes and adequately rewarding services rendered by vassals. In the centuries leading up to the end of the Ancien Régime, rewarding services became a fundamental component of kingship, central to securing the vassals’ allegiance and to maintaining the social order.

All Iberian polities were based on a highly hierarchical social order. The principle of natural inequality as the foundation of social order was deeply rooted in the Portuguese, Castilian and Aragonese contexts. This fact contributed to the acceptance as part of the natural order of the domination of noblemen over non-noble individuals. In addition, for the nobility the monarchy represented an important support and a guarantor of its forms of social domination.¹¹ In exchange, the internal solidarities of the elites gave cohesion to the crown apparatus, eventually permeating the whole political system.¹² Noble culture and the aristocratic ethos thus shaped many aspects of social life, and Iberian society, and in particular Portugal, became increasingly obsessed with forms of aristocratic distinction. Genealogical culture, extolling ancestral services to the crown,

¹⁰ Cardim, 2001. ¹¹ Cunha, 2000. ¹² Yun-Casalilla, 2019.

1. Portugal, Iberia and Overseas Expansion

along with the juridical discourse about entails and seignorial regime – two fundamental pillars of the aristocratic ruling groups – were therefore significant for understanding contemporary political culture.

This multifaceted bond between the king, his vassals, the clergy and the nobility was periodically re-enacted, across the Iberian Peninsula, in the form of the oath of allegiance taken by the Estates in representative assemblies summoned at the accession of each new king. On such occasions, the monarch swore to uphold the laws and the privileges of the kingdom and its multiple corporate bodies, so that no vassal should doubt his intentions on this score. Significantly, only after the royal oath did the representatives swear allegiance to the monarch. Moreover, in contexts of political crisis monarchs often resorted to oaths in order to secure their vassals' allegiance. As a 'sacrament of power', the oath associated loyalty and fidelity, adding a strong religious element to political allegiance.¹³ Disloyalty to the king would thus become not just a crime against the civil order, but also an attack on the religious order – of which the strongly negative connotations of words such as 'treason' and 'rebellion' provide a clear indication.

Portugal and the other Iberian polities shared these ideas about social order, royal authority and political allegiance. This set of ideas persisted for a very long time, in part because the Reformation had a limited impact in the Iberian Peninsula. As a result, Portugal, Castile and Aragon remained strongly Catholic, and Catholicism became a key element of political identity, both individual and collective. In addition, there was another commonality between the Iberian polities: they coped more or less simultaneously with the challenges of ruling increasingly vast and scattered territories, and the heterogeneous peoples who lived in them.

From the fifteenth century Portugal undertook a series of conquests in north Africa. At the same time, Portuguese seafarers carried out successive incursions across the Atlantic and along the west coast of Africa. The Aragonese, meanwhile, had since the thirteenth century engaged in territorial expansion across the Mediterranean, whereas the Castilians gradually eroded and finally conquered the Muslim kingdom of Granada. At the end of the fifteenth century, Castile and Aragon established a political union that gave rise to the Spanish monarchy, a vast conglomerate of territories (in Europe and other continents) that soon became a major player in European politics. Finally, in 1492 Columbus

¹³ Cardim, 1998.

Introduction

completed his first journey to the Americas in the service of the Castilian crown, while Vasco da Gama headed the first Portuguese maritime expedition to reach India in 1498.

Such unprecedented territorial aggrandisement necessarily challenged the traditional notions of *vizinho/morador/cidadão*, and the same could be said about the ‘natural’ category. Initially developed within local communities governed by municipalities in the Iberian Peninsula, the criteria for belonging to a collective were applied – not without difficulty – to ever-greater territories and to increasingly diverse populations. Unsurprisingly, discussions about inclusion and exclusion became more pressing and complex, in particular when it came to categorizing individuals of Jewish or Muslim ancestry whose phenotype was not easily distinguishable from the so-called ‘Old Christians’.¹⁴ Colonizing lands densely populated by Asian, Amerindian and African peoples also proved to be a challenge in this regard. Derogatory terms like ‘barbarians’, ‘gentiles’, ‘pagans’ or ‘kaffirs’ were used to classify the populations with whom the Portuguese came into contact.¹⁵

This territorial expansion also tested notions surrounding the bond between the king and his vassals, which had developed under wholly different circumstances, and now had to adapt to the vastness and heterogeneity of the two Iberian monarchies. Prior to this, being Portuguese meant being born a royal vassal in the peninsular lands, descended from Portuguese parents, displaying characteristics and habits

¹⁴ Marcocci, 2014a. In late fifteenth-century Iberia the large-scale (and forced) conversion of Jews and Muslims led to a distinction between this group, known as ‘New Christians’, and those who were already Christianized. ‘Old Christian’ became synonymous with not having Muslim or Jewish ancestors. The expression ‘New Christian’ had become current in Portugal by the mid-sixteenth century to designate the descendants of Jews converted to Christianity. It was eventually used to distinguish, in a discriminatory way, the newly converted and their descendants.

¹⁵ When dealing with persons of other religious confessions, most Portuguese distinguished those who had had previous contact with Christianity from those who had had none, and also distinguished the followers of the three ‘religions of the book’ (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) from those who followed a religion without a sacred book. They used ‘infidel’ as a derogatory term for Muslims. ‘Heretic’ and other equally derogatory terms – such as ‘apostate’ – were used in respect of Protestants and, to a lesser extent, Jews. The terms ‘gentile’ and ‘pagan’ were the most frequently used – in Asia, Africa, America and some parts of Europe – for the followers of religions without a sacred book and with little or absolutely no contact with Christianity. Some of these terms continued to be used in the late eighteenth century, for instance when referring to the religion of Ancient Rome. The terms ‘barbarous’, ‘savage’ and ‘*cafre*’ (kaffir) were used to express ethnic superiority vis-à-vis non-Europeans, as well as for raising doubts about the human nature of the creatures so designated.

1. Portugal, Iberia and Overseas Expansion

uniquely associated with the Portuguese and, most importantly, being a Roman Catholic. In the years that followed, this conception of the basis for political allegiance had to be adjusted to the multi-continental and multi-ethnic character of Iberian polities.¹⁶

The aforementioned ideas were widely shared across the Iberian Peninsula, and faced similar challenges in the wake of overseas expansion.¹⁷ However, with regard to the production of political thought, there were two important distinctions between Portugal and its Castilian–Aragonese neighbours.

First, in terms of its political ‘constitution’, Portugal was not a composite monarchy. Within its Iberian territory, Portugal was a single ‘kingdom’ (systematically referred to as *reino*), with no regions enjoying notable fiscal or jurisdictional autonomy, nor populations with a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity.¹⁸ As for the Portuguese territorial possessions on other continents, from the sixteenth century the word *Estado* was used to name the most prominent (*Estado da Índia* and *Estado do Brasil*). The term ‘conquests’ was also often employed, and subsequently ‘overseas dominions’ became a frequent way to classify them. In parallel, the crusading zeal and the idea that the seaborne expansion was a natural continuation of the war against the Muslims in Portugal also shaped the way such territories were regarded, in particular the north African and Asian parts of the Portuguese empire. However, none of these territorial entities developed into a body with political and jurisdictional autonomy. Portugal remained a unitary monarchy until the end of the Ancien Régime, and the publication of the collection of royal laws (the *Ordenações* of 1603, which incorporated those of 1513) also contributed to an image of institutional uniformity within Portugal and its empire. It should therefore be of little surprise that political thought addressing the complexities and challenges associated with composite polities was largely absent in Portugal.

The Spanish monarchy, by contrast, had a fundamentally composite structure. It comprised a series of ‘principalities’, ‘kingdoms’, and ‘crowns’, its internal ‘constitution’ was very diverse in jurisdictional terms, and its European lands were inhabited by populations with a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity. It was also marked by a significant degree of legal pluralism and decentralization, with each of

¹⁶ Xavier, 2012; Flores, 2018. ¹⁷ Biedermann, 2018.

¹⁸ Coelho and Magalhães, 1986; Disney, 2009a.

Introduction

its territories possessing a strong jurisdictional personality. This internal heterogeneity came to shape many of the political debates in Castile and Aragon. Since Portugal was not a composite monarchy, its authorities did not have to deal with the tensions between different territories that plagued polities such as the Spanish monarchy, the Anglo-Scottish union, or even France. As a consequence, in Portugal there was nothing comparable to the major ‘constitutional’ reform known as the *Nueva Planta* in early eighteenth-century Spain.

Secondly, it must be borne in mind that Portugal embarked on a series of conquests outside Europe, in the Atlantic and then the Asian world, before all its Iberian neighbours and that these conquests encompassed areas and peoples with greater diversity.¹⁹ This early contact with African, Asian and Amerindian societies and cultures ultimately accounts for certain specific features of the political thought that emerged within the Portuguese context. Governing a far-flung empire was obviously different from ruling over a relatively contiguous and more homogeneous political formation. Ruling on a global scale, coping with ethnic difference (in particular across Asia), establishing *dominium* over the seas, legitimizing the violent occupation of the lands of local peoples, justifying the enslavement of thousands of Africans (and, to a lesser extent, Amerindians) and redefining the status of local individuals and groups are just a few examples of imperial challenges that were debated by the Portuguese before other Western Europeans did so.²⁰

To argue that the political thought produced in Portugal had many specific features is not the same as claiming that there ever existed a quintessential tradition of ‘Portuguese political thought’. The editors of this volume do not postulate the existence, in Portugal, of an essentially ‘national’ thought, that is, an accumulated, coherent body of thought endowed with unique traits that were evident in different spaces and throughout the many centuries of Portuguese history. On the contrary, the writings gathered here reveal a great variety of perspectives, sensibilities, concerns and themes. Moreover, they are also illustrative of the many interconnections between the debates in Portugal and the controversies that were taking place in other contexts, both across the Iberian Peninsula and beyond the Pyrenees. Thematic discontinuity is

¹⁹ Xavier, 2008; for a comparative perspective, see Paquette, 2019.

²⁰ Bethencourt and Curto, 2007; Disney, 2009b; Pagden and Subrahmanyam, 2011; Flores, 2015.