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The conquest of Maranhão and Atlantic disputes in the geopolitics of the Iberian Union (1596-1626)¹

Alírio Cardoso*

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa os projetos existentes para a ocupação ou exploração econômica do antigo Maranhão, antes de 1626. Tais projetos, o francês, o inglês e o holandês, concorrem com o plano luso-espanhol de ocupação da fronteira entre o Norte do Estado do Brasil e as Índias de Castela entre os séculos XVI e XVII. Assim, a conquista do Maranhão (1615) será discutida a partir de duas questões: 1. A disputa por espaços de atuação nesta parte do Atlântico; 2. As grandes mudanças ocorridas no universo luso-brasileiro com a União Dinástica (1580-1640).

Palavras-chave: Estado do Maranhão; União Ibérica; século XVII.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the projects for the occupation or economic exploitation of the old Maranhão before 1626. French, English and Dutch projects competed with the Luso-Spanish plan for the occupation of the border between the North of Brazil and the Indies of Castile in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, the conquest of Maranhão (1615) will be discussed in relation to two questions: 1. Competition for spaces of action in this part of the Atlantic. 2. The major changes in the Luso-Brazilian universe following the Dynastic Union (1580-1640).

Keywords: State of Maranhão; Iberian Union; seventeenth century.

MARANHÃO OR MARAÑÓN?

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, judging by Spanish diplomatic documentation, Maranhão enjoyed relative notoriety. Information can be found about this region in the reports of important Hispano-Luso authorities, such as D. Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Spanish ambassador in England; D. Iñigo de Cardenas, Spanish ambassador in France; D. Juan de Ciriza, the well known secretary of Felipe III (1598-1621), and also D. Diogo

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de Menezes, then Governor-General of Brazil. Furthermore, the situation of this frontier zone is widely debated in various other documents produced by the Castilian bureaucracy, now available in the *Archivo General de Simancas*, and also in *Archivo General de Indias*. These sources, at the same time that they can help define better what was called 'Maranhão,' before it formally possessed the definition of 'state,' also provide important data for reflection on the role reserved for the north of Portuguese America in the context of the Iberian Union (1580-1640).

The conquest of Maranhão by the Portuguese occurred 35 years after the beginning of the political and dynastic union between the Portuguese and the Spanish. Various men took part in this military action who had already circulated through other places in the empire, including Castilians (see Table 1). Since it was a frontier situation, the region would feel the changes that occurred in the Portuguese universe during the Habsburg period.² Dominion over this territory, already widely visited by various European nations, needs to be understood from the perspective of Castilian interests in Portuguese Atlantic areas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This process is not distinct from the Spanish strategies of intervention, directly or indirectly, in places such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Angola, or the Kingdom of the Congo.³ In fact an exhaustive analysis of Spanish documentation points to the idea that the Portuguese occupation of Maranhão was part of the construction of a defensive network against the enemies of Castile, and now of Portugal as well, the scope of which would reach the extreme north of the state of Brazil, especially in the new areas linked to the Captaincy of Pernambuco.

As is well known the so-called Iberian Union occurred after the dynastic crisis that began with the death of the king of Portugal, D. Sebastião, in the famous Battle of Alcácer-Quibir on 4 August 1578. With the debility of the last of the House of Avís, D. Enrique and, on the other hand, the aggressive claim to the throne made by the Spanish king, Filipe II (1555-1598), well backed by his army under the command of the Duke of Alba (1507-1582), the greatest 'union of thrones' of modern history began. For sixty years Portugal and Spain gave a new meaning to the Catholic Monarchy, controlling, in addition to their European possessions, large overseas areas in the Americas, Africa and Asia. In the first two decades of the seventeenth century the central aim of the Hispano-Luso bureaucracy was to assure the possession of immense overseas regions in the different parts of the known world, constantly threatened by oceanic competitors: France, England and especially Holland. In the case of Brazil this policy would be translated into the creation of new administrative

units which would lead to the creation of the state of Maranhão and Grão-Pará in 1621.

The creation of these new units was thus part of a wider policy carried out principally in the reign of Felipe III (1598-1621). It is also relevant that during the sixty years of Habsburg government there was an unprecedented increase in the distribution of titles of nobility and position, in comparison with the discrete ennoblement policy of the Avís in the previous period. It is not by chance that in the direct aftermath of December 1640, the beginning of the Portuguese 'rebellion' against Castile, there already existed the fear of a counter-coup on the part of the Castilianized Portuguese, fearful of the heavy losses which could result from a radical change in government. This scenario was made even more complex by the Philippine strategy of making the Portuguese nobility circulate among different parts of the empire.⁴

Before 1621, when the state of Maranhão and Grão-Pará was created and separated from the jurisdiction of the state of Brazil, the region of Maranhão was known by various names and titles: Land of the Amazon River, Land of the Tupinambás, or even Land of the Caraíbas. Many chronicles, letters, memorials and planispheres represented Maranhão as a type of non-Brazil. In the representation of South America made at the end of the sixteenth century by the cartographer Arnoldus Fiorentinus Maranhão appeared as a region completely integrated in the Viceroyalty of Peru, physically separated from the state of Brazil.⁵ It can also be stated that Maranhão was conceived as a 'geographic' entity which was part of the Hispano-Luso empire, but which had not been militarily and politically dominated. In the cartography of the sixteenth century, the name *Marañón* is used to define the limit of Luso-Brazilian lands or to name the river that marked the frontier. These sources confused the Marañón River in the basin of the Vice-Royalty of Peru, with the Amazon River, sometimes called the Mar Dulce (Sweet Sea) or the Orellana River.⁶

A Portuguese Maranhão is not clearly differentiated from a Spanish Marañón. Nevertheless, we know that chroniclers such as Carvajal, Lopez de Gómara, Cieza de León, Oviedo y Valdés and also António Herrera, amongst others, already had information about the connection between the Indies and the Atlantic made through a Portuguese region located between the Vice-Royalty of Peru and the state of Brazil. Furthermore, the name *Marañón*, even designating something imprecise, would become common in chronicles from that time.⁷ Maranhão had appeared in 1535 as one of the *capitanias donatárias* (hereditary captaincies) created by D. João III to increase the defense and

productive use of the Luso-Brazilian coast. Originally, Maranhão was part of a triple concession of lands to be administered by João de Barros, the famous historian of Portuguese India; Ayres da Cunha, former *Capitão-Mor* of Malacca; and also Fernando Álvares de Andrade. Despite some attempts at occupation organized by these grantees, Maranhão remained as a virtually unknown region until the time of Felipe III (1598-1621).

In the last decades of the sixteenth century this territory was almost always identified as a transition zone, it was not even a formal part of the state of Brazil, nor of the Indies of Castile. Even without a formal definition, we are talking about an area that corresponded more or less to the current 'Brazilian' states of Pará, Amazonas, Acre, Amapá, Tocantins, Piauí, Maranhão and Mato-Grosso (north of the sixteenth parallel). Also at certain periods in the seventeenth century Ceará was also part of Maranhão. This was considered the natural frontier of Brazil. Almost all of this region was located to the west of the Tordesilhas meridian, a boundary which began to be openly ignored.

This enormous region was divided into two Royal Captaincies: the Captaincy of Maranhão, whose capital was the city of São Luis, captured from the French in 1615; and the Captaincy of Grão-Pará, whose capital was Belém, founded by the Portuguese in 1616, as the result of military actions involved in the capture of Maranhão. The natural frontier between Brazil and Maranhão was the Serra de Ibiapava, located in present day Ceará. On the other hand, the natural frontier between Maranhão and the Spanish Indies was always the motive of speculation, creating doubts about the limits between the Amazon and Marañón rivers.

There are few works on the impact of the Iberian Union on the conquest of Maranhão. The existing works almost always identify the conquest as an automatic and improvised response to the presence of the French on Maranhão Island from 1612 onwards. On the other hand, for some time part of the specialized historiography has agreed that this period signified for Brazil an increase in the bureaucratic complex, the reinforcement of the military hierarchy, and an increase in the construction of forts.⁸ Nevertheless, as in many questions related to the extreme north of Portuguese America, despite the current efforts of young researchers from various universities, this is still a field that needs greater study.⁹

The principal objective of this article is to discuss Hispano-Luso projects for the occupation of the old Maranhão, and their opportune clash with other projects: those of the French, the English and later the Dutch. We will also analyze how the actual conquest of Maranhão was favored by a policy of the

productive and defensive occupation of the equatorial band of the Atlantic¹⁰ undertaken by the governments of Felipe II and Felipe III, with the objective of reinforcing the commercial, political and military ties between parts of the empire in order to better organize their defense against the harassment of other European nations, but also to develop an inter-regional market through contact between the experiences in Maranhão, Peru and Brazil.

THE ATLANTIC COMPETITION

Since the end of the sixteenth century Portuguese and Spanish had known of the existence of other European projects for Portuguese America, especially in the north of Brazil. These projects had sufficient potential to compete with the Hispano-Luso initiatives. The authorities of the Iberian Peninsula knew of these 'plans' through various documents that informed of military advances, oceanic commerce and attempts to implement small fortresses and commercial trading posts in frontier zones. After 1580 the scenario only got worse, and the *topos* of the threat of European competitors gained a much larger dimension in Luso-Spanish documentation.

These competitors in the war for the dominion of Atlantic commerce are principally identified as: invaders (French), pirates and smugglers (English and Irish), rebels (Dutch) and also adventurers (Italians). For the Hispano-Luso authorities all these categories had their specific level of danger in accordance with certain international circumstances. In the last decades of the sixteenth century the English and the French threats were much more talked about, from the first two decades onwards of the seventeenth century the great danger to be extirpated was the Dutch presence.¹¹ This manifest fear was not a novelty in the overseas possessions. Vitorino Godinho has already stated that the Hispano-Luso military culture, especially the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, always cultivated a certain fear in relation to 'piracy.'¹² In the specific case of the northern coast of Brazil, alarming news reached Madrid about the supposed formation of a *Junta General* of protestants, a type of league of states composed of Holland, England and Ireland, who were supposedly planning a coordinated attack on the north of Portuguese America.¹³

In the same period there was also speculation about other accords involving French, English and Dutch. In 1615 the Spanish ambassador in France, D. Iñigo de Cárdenas, writing to Felipe III, imagined a preoccupying scenario in which the French and English could, according to what he said, "squeeze the throat of the Indies."¹⁴ For this reason in the first years of the

seventeenth century there was great concern among Hispano-Luso authorities about the defensive capacities of Portuguese areas close to Peruvian and Caribbean commercial routes. These warnings also spoke at times about the fear of a large Dutch invasion of the region to the north of Pernambuco, including here Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba and Ceará, even before 1624. Very quickly, with the increase in speculation about foreign interest, plans were drawn up to take Maranhão.

Before the definitive capture of Maranhão important expeditions were carried out, with or without the explicit permission of Madrid. The best known was the journey made by the captain and *alcaide* of Ceará, Martin Soares Moreno. This Portuguese captain had great fame as a specialist in indigenous languages and an expert in navigation along the northern coast of Portuguese America. In 1613 Martim Soares carried out, at the order of the governor of Brazil, Gaspar de Sousa, an expedition to explore the coast of Maranhão. His small fleet suffered from the great problem of sailing between Brazil and Maranhão: the strong contrary winds in this part of the Atlantic. Carried by the currents which led in the direction of the Caribbean, the voyage ended in August 1613 in the city of Santo Domingos. Martim Soares presented himself to the local authorities as a navigator under the order of the king. For this reason his ship was repaired at a cost of 230 ducats, which was to be paid by the *Casa de Contratación* in Seville, according to the various sources of information that exist about this voyage.¹⁵ This type of reconnaissance mission also served to register the principal groups of pirates and corsairs who sailed around Maranhão. Before we deal with the Hispano-Luso projects, it is worth summarizing the activities of the principal non-Iberian groups in these lands.

ENGLISH AND IRISH

The information about the English and Irish projects in Maranhão are abundant, although at times it is nothing other than pure speculation. Perhaps the first true report in relation to this is a report sent to Carlos V by the Venetian Sebastián Caboto (1484-1557) in November 1553. Caboto alerted the sovereign about an Anglo-French project to tack part of the Amazon River, organized by the Duke of Northumberland and the French diplomat Sieur de Boisdauphin. At the end of the sixteenth century English interest in the region was also stimulated by the voyage of Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) to the Orinoco River in 1595. In his *account* called *The Discoverie of the large, rich and bewtifull Empyre of Guiana* (1596), Raleigh not only recognized the

immense navigation capacity of rivers in the region, but also increased expectations about the existence of the legendary riches of the golden city of *Manoa*.

Raleigh's work was well received, with a second edition being published in 1599. It would not be long before other English followed his example, such as John Ley who reached the Lower Amazon in 1598, going as far as the Xingu River. Around 1608, we can find the Englishman William Davies sailing around these lands in the service of the Duke of Tuscany, Fernando I (1587-1609), carrying out the first Anglo-Italian voyage in the history of the Luso-Brazilian Amazon. In 1610 another expedition left London captained by Sir Thomas Roe, whose objective was once again to confirm the existence of the golden land of *Manoa*. Raleigh helped to finance this last expedition which counted on a 200 ton ship and 124 sailors and managed to sail more than 320 km along the Amazon. In 1620 Captain Roger North, with a reduced number of 120 English and Irish, tried to build a fort in the Amazon Basin to sell cinnamon and tobacco among other native products. In the same period reports also circulated about a young Irishman called Bernard O'Brien who had come to the region in the company of Captain Roger North. O'Brien had gone 65 km further up the Amazon, making friends with the Aruak speaking Indians and later acting independently from North. O'Brien may have reached the Trombetas River and then Suriname. Generally speaking, some of the most important English projects for the north of Brazil would later be associated with the creation of the *Guiana Company* in London (1627), which had started more organized projects involving Maranhão.¹⁶

On the other hand, as we enter the beginning of the seventeenth century Hispano-Luso concerns are increasingly concentrated on the Dutch. And there were reasons for this, since unlike the English, the 'Dutch rebels' were better organized, as well as having a greater naval and bellic structure and more specific projects for the Southern Atlantic. Nevertheless, it seemed clear that the central objective of English and Irish in the region was more inclined to the organization of small trading posts, with relatively limited intentions. The Dutch case was different in many ways.

DUTCH AND ZEALANDERS

In 1620 D. Diego de Cárcamo, who had been chosen previously to be the first governor of Maranhão, but who had never effectively assumed the position, was raising alerts about the risks of the Dutch presence in the region

of the current state of Amapá.¹⁷ As is well known, during the first half of the seventeenth century, a global war began between Spain and the United Dutch provinces.¹⁸ The conquest of Maranhão coincided precisely with the change in the scenario of this war, moving from European regions, especially Northern Europe, to more objective military actions in various parts of the Americas, Asia and Africa, becoming a conflict of global proportions.

Despite the truce, in place since 1609, between the new ‘republic’ and the Kingdom of Spain, during the first half of the seventeenth century the so called Confederates of Utrecht created a very aggressive policy in relation to Hispano-Luso overseas dominions. In the Atlantic the attacks became ever more clear and organized, especially after the foundation in 1621, of the *West-Indische Compagnie* (WIC). To worsen the general scenario, from 1605 onwards the Dutch Republics gained control over a considerable part of Asian commercial routes.¹⁹

This is the general scenario, based on which information began to circulate about the Dutch presence on the northern coast of Brazil. The first reliable information about the Dutch in the Brazilian Amazon dates from the second half of the sixteenth century. It is probable that Dutch and Zealand ships had explored the frontier between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers between 1598 and the first years of the seventeenth century. At that time the *Consultas* of the Council of Portugal, as we will see, had already clearly admitted the interests of the ‘States of Holland’ in the region of Maranhão, and were favorable to the implementation of defensive measures. In 1616, for example, the Portuguese Captain André Pereira stated that the Dutch were already on these lands and had built a fort with 300 well armed men near to the Gurupá River, with indigenous assistance. In fact, one of the great concerns in relation to Maranhão was exactly the enormous quantity of potentially Indian allies, who could be co-opted by enemy ‘forces.’²⁰

Other reports alerted the Council of Portugal about the dangers of a complete adhesion of the Tupinambá to the Dutch cause, due to a lack of care on the part of the Portuguese. In 1631, for example, an Irishman named ‘Gaspar Chilan,’ stated that “he knew for certain that the Dutch and other nations are populating every day the river and the lands of the Amazon and the Guiana coast,” and proposed to Felipe IV (1621-1640) to bring Catholic Irish to help protect Maranhão against these ‘heretics’ and in this way to ensure the loyalty of the Indians in that region.²¹

Despite the seriousness of these reports, we have to wait until the end of the Iberian Union to see an effective attempted Dutch invasion of Maranhão.

This much feared military action only occurred in November 1641, under the command of Almirante Jan Corneiliszoon Lichthardt, and was practically restricted to the island of São Luís, little affecting the captaincy of Grão-Pará, for example.²² In 1644 the Dutch, beleaguered internationally, definitively abandoned Maranhão, in what was one of the first anti-Dutch rebellions in Portuguese America.

In part the news about the Dutch projects for Maranhão before the actual 1641 invasion, have to be understood as a global reconnaissance process of economic opportunities on the part of the United Provinces of Holland, which began to aim at frontier areas between the Caribbean sea, the Vice-Royalty of Peru and Brazil. Years before, around 1613, much more concrete information had begun to arrive about another 'foreign' project for Maranhão, later known as Equinoctial France.

THE FRENCH

Among all the non-Luso-Castilian projects for Maranhão, the French occupation gained the most attention from the Hispano-Luso bureaucracy in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Unlike the English and Dutch, who initially set up small commercial and productive complexes on riverbanks, the French organized an action that even with limited proportions implied a military and civil occupation between 1612 - 1615. For this reason Equinoctial France was also the project that was most crystallized in local historiographic memory, often exaggerating certain aspects of this occupation. Nevertheless, many other more recent works have tried to understand this project through its failures, myths and internal contradiction, using the French documentation available about this.²³

France, as is known, made little mystery about the project for the partial occupation of Maranhão, leaving various documents in French, Portuguese and Spanish, including the reports written by the priest Fr. Claude de Abbeville and later Yves D'Evrex.²⁴ Also reasonably well known is the diplomatic documentation from shortly after the capture of São Luis fort by the Portuguese (1615) and the first Franco-Spanish negotiations carried out by D. Iñigo de Cárdenas, Spanish ambassador in France. In addition, it is also necessary to take into account that unlike the Dutch case, France had more stable diplomatic relations with the Catholic Monarchy. Despite this the French established an aggressive policy in the South Atlantic. At the end of the sixteenth century, between 1596 and 1597, explorers from France had tried to build fortifications

in the north of the Captaincy of Pernambuco, fighting battles with the Portuguese in Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba. In 1604 the French started their exploration activities in the region of what is now French Guiana, led by General Daniel de La Touche, the same soldier who would lead the occupation of Maranhão in 1612.

Generally speaking the project for Equinoctial France only began to be made effective through a report made by one of the explorers who travelled through the north of Pernambuco, called Charles De Vaux. De Vaux, who had spent years lost among the Indians of the Tupinambá nation, had convinced Henry IV on his return to France to make plans for the occupation of that part of Portuguese America. In 1611 the French regent Maria de Médici gave general instructions to implement the project. The fleet of three ships and around 500 men left the port of Cancale in Brittany in March 1612, stopping first on the island of Fernando de Noronha and afterwards in the Captaincy of Ceará. The French reached Maranhão in July 1612, occupying one of the smaller islands (Santa Anna) and shortly afterwards moved to Ilha Grande, where they immediately built a fortification.

In October 1612 the Spanish government already had secure information about French activities on the island of Maranhão, speeding up the (already existing) project to conquer that land. In the same period Felipe III sent instructions to the Governor of Brazil, Gaspar de Sousa, authorizing the expedition to conquer Maranhão. As is well known the French would only be expelled from there in 1615 in a military action carried out by Luso-Pernambucano soldiers and with extensive indigenous assistance. Nevertheless, sometime later the Hispano-Luso bureaucracy fed the fear of another Equinoctial France, this time with Dutch aid. At this time information began to circulate about a possible agreement between Daniel de La Touche and the United Provinces. According to one of the versions, La Touche, already considered one of the principal specialists in 'Maranhense' navigation, wanted to return to Maranhão with the military and logistical support of the Dutch, offering them his experience of business in the region. This is stated in an anonymous report sent to the Council of Portugal:

Notice // We were advised that Mons. de La Rabardier who is the French captain brought as a prisoner to Lisbon from Maranhão has offered to the States of Holland to return with people and vassals to fortify himself in Maranhão and has told them of the great advantages of this expedition and assured them it will obtain good results due to the neglect that he perceives in Spain and also believes

that some private individuals in Saint-Malo and in La Rochelle will agree with Rabardier and offer some vassals, though he will have to seek to obtain the most important forces in Holland and thinks that they will be given to him.²⁵

The reference in the 1620s to the Dutch was more than sufficient to call the attention of the Portuguese and Spanish, functioning as a powerful rhetorical force in the search for more investments in the region. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the decade the feeling of fear was considerably reduced due to information about indigenous mutinies in Maranhão and Grão-Pará, culminating in the great Tupinambá Mutiny of Cumã (on the continental part, opposite Maranhão island), which took place at the end of 1617. Hispano-Luso fear was understandable. In fact the authorities involved knew that anyone who obtained the support of the indigenous nations in Maranhão and Grão-Pará would easily conquer these areas. In order to prevent the possible damage of a joint Franco-Dutch action, or even worse Franco-Dutch-Tupinambá, the authorities in Lisbon tries to restrict the liberty of La Touche as much as possible, a Portuguese prisoner since 1615, despite the protests that began to arrive from France. The Marquis of Alenquer even seriously considered the possibility of contracting the services of La Touche, in order to keep the French general far from Dutch influence. It was clear that in this climate of fear, favored by Dutch initiatives in other parts of the world, the explorer with the most experience in the region of Maranhão should be isolated and contained. Hispano-Luso authorities, such as the Marquis of Marquês de Alenquer, secretary Juan de Ciriza, or Ambassador D. Iñigo de Cárdenas, took into account that as well as being a great expert in Maranhão, La Touche was one of the conquerors of French Guiana and supposedly had allies among the indigenous nations in that region.

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE IN THE CONQUEST OF MARANHÃO

The effective conquest of Maranhão was planned in the administration of the Count of Ericeira, D. Diogo de Menezes (1608-1612), and completed by D. Gaspar de Sousa (1612-1617), both governors of Brazil. Beforehand, there were some discussions with the Spanish ambassador in France, D. Iñigo de Cárdenas, to investigate the seriousness of the French occupation of the island of São Luis.²⁶ Between October and November 1612, D. Gaspar de Sousa gained royal approval to temporarily move the capital of Brazil to Pernambuco, in order to coordinate the actions of conquest through an administrative center

closer to Maranhão. Actually Felipe III hoped that Gaspar de Sousa himself would go to Maranhão to direct the military actions in person. Some of the *Cartas Régias* of Felipe III are quite elucidative about the Hispano-Luso project to conquer this area, revealing expectations about how the new territory should be captured. In October 1612 the sovereign gave instructions that the conquest be by sea, and that it would be convenient for at least 600 arquebusiers to go accompanied by 1000 Indian archers from Pernambuco. According to Felipe III there also should be sent tradesmen of 'all trades' and even 'noble men' men with 'capital' who could build mills and start trade in the new lands.²⁷

On the other hand, from the geopolitical point of view the incorporation of this region in the empire helped to resolve some of the problems in Felipe III's government. The occupation of Maranhão was part of the policy of constructing a line of defense along the northern coast of Brazil. In relation to this issue, three questions are always present in the available sources: 1. The immediate expulsion of the French; 2. Measures to counter the advance of the English and Dutch along the coast; 3. The possibility of commercial integration between Maranhão and the Indies of castile, especially the Vice-Royalty of Peru.

From the beginning of the project, Felipe III made it very clear that certain privileged councilors should be heard, specialists in Maranhão. This commission consisted of explorers such as Martim Soares Moreno, officers like Diogo de Campos and Alexandre de Moura; members of the Royal Council, such as Gaspar de Sousa, and titled nobles, such as the Marquis of Alenquer and the Duke of Lerma. The importance of these councilors in the 'affairs of Maranhão' was not restricted to the conquest in itself. Felipe III would depend on their opinions in decisions on military protection, political definition, or the economic options appropriate to the new lands. In various *Cartas Régias* Felipe III also publically encouraged the spontaneous cooperation of vassals. It was clear to the monarch that the incorporation of Maranhão in the empire had to be done with the maximum personal effort of the Portuguese, including private financial investment.

In fact the conquest of Maranhão was carried out using private investment, put into effect by a part of the Luso-Pernambucan bureaucracy which sought honors and positions in the new lands. There was a bureaucratic and military transfer from places such as Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará for the conquest of Maranhão. This transfer was also related to Luso-Brazilian families, such as the Sousas, the Albuquerque Coelhos, and the Castello-Brancos. In practice the conquest was at the same time a response to

a 'royal summons,' but also to the visualization by part of these political groups of various advantages in the construction of another oligarchy, independent of the state of Brazil.

All the regions in the north of Pernambuco played a role in the taking of Maranhão. Indian allies were brought from Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba; Ceará was a strategic point where the fleet would be resupplied; and the principal officers were Luso-Pernambucanos. Despite this, the occupation of Maranhão via Pernambuco was not the only possibility, other solutions were also feasible. In 1615 after the first information about the progress of the French-Portuguese conflict, the Count of Salinas, drunk on the spirit of co-vassalage favored by the Iberian Union, defended another proposal of help in the new lands:

With a consultation of the Council of Portugal, which mentioned that it understood that in La Rochelle eighteen ships were being prepared to aid the French who were in Maranhão, and had advised the Council to order the Viceroy of Portugal to dispatch Gaspar de Sosa which is the Governor of Brazil to quickly take measures to deal with this business of Maranhão before it become impossible, and since this subject is of such great importance for both Indies, I put the Council to consider whether it would be convenient for the Crown of Castile to also help it with ships and people or with the 1000 men destined for Chile.²⁸

The idea of sending Castilian soldiers who were supposed to go to Chile to Maranhão instead would be discussed in the *Consejo de Portugal*, based on the assumption that Maranhão was closer to the Castilian Indies and more distant from Brazil. In the end the Council decided that sending these soldiers would be inconvenient because the removal of so many men from this region would leave the field open for a Dutch advance in part so the south. It was clear that for the Count of Conde de Salinas the capture of Maranhão was part of a broad defensive concern against the enemies of Castile. In fact, there existed a broad acceptance of the Philippine formula on international armed intervention in the conquest process. Not by chance the original for the integration of Maranhão into the empire included the active participation of the Spanish.

Although the confirmation of the decree created the State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão, which was autonomous in relation to Brazil, dates from 1621, we know that since the end of 1612 there had existed a favorable disposition

in relation to the solution. In 1618 the creation of a new politico-administrative unit was a fully constituted decision. Felipe III already had a candidate for this new government, the Spaniard D. Diego de Cárcamo. Years before the Luso-pernambucano Francisco Coelho de Carvalho assumed the new state (1626), the first governor of Maranhão was a Spaniard.

D. Diego de Cárcamo was an old royal official who had been secretary to D. Antonio, Prior of Crato and had played an important role in the first negotiations between Spain and Portugal in August 1580.²⁹ At the beginning of 1620, already at an advanced age, the virtual governor was making demands to take charge of the new conquest, including: the guarantee of African slaves, investments in security, investments in the construction of sugar mills, as well as a loan of 10,000 cruzados from the government of Angola.³⁰ D. Diego de Cárcamo also wrote a number of reports on different questions related to the government of Maranhão, such as negotiations with the French court, or the Dutch threat. The identification that the old Castilian still had with the Avis was, from what it seems, one of the causes that prevented Cárcamo from definitely assuming the new government.

The sources available about the conquest of Maranhão do not allow us know how many Castilians were effectively part of the expedition. Nevertheless, we know that certain Spanish officers actively participated, such as the Andalusian Juan de Salinas or Francisco de Beça, possibly from the Kingdom of Castile. The presence of Spanish officers and soldiers was not a novelty due to the large-scale circulation of men through the empire. In fact, it is known that during the Iberian Union the participation of Castilians in this type of expedition was as common as the presence of Portuguese in Castilian commercial enterprises.³¹

Table 1 – Origin of some of the officers who participated in the conquest of Maranhão and Grão-Pará (1615-1616).

Name	Post	Origin
Alexandre de Moura	Captain General	Olinda (Brazil)
Antonio Vicente Cochado	Captain of the Fleet	Bahia (Brazil)
André Pereira Tamudo	Captain of the Fleet	Alentejo (Portugal)
Manuel de Sousa de Eça	Captain General / Captain of Infantry	Azores
Diogo de Campos Moreno	Sergeant Major	Tangiers or Terceira island

Francisco Caldeira Castello Branco	Captain General	Castello Branco (Portugal)
Francisco de Beça	Castilian Officer	Spain
João de Salinas	Sergeant?	Andaluzia (Spain)
Pedro Teixeira	Ensign	Villa de Cantanhede (Portugal)
João de Mandiola	Castilian Officer	Spain
Francisco de Velasco	Castilian Officer	Spain
Jerônimo de Albuquerque Maranhão	Captain General	Olinda (Brazil)
Luiz Guevara	Castilian Officer	Tangiers (Morocco)
Antonio Grisante	Officer	Braga (Portugal)
Martim Soares Moreno	Captain General	Santiago do Cacém (Portugal)
Matias de Albuquerque	Captain	Olinda (Brazil)
Bartolomeu Ramires	Uncertain	Azores
Domingos Correia	Master of Caravel	Ilha Graciosa (Azores)
Bento Maciel Parente	<i>Capitão de Mar e Guerra</i> (Captain)	Caminha (Portugal)
Diogo Botelho da Vide	Sergeant Major	Beira (Portugal)
Jerónimo de Albuquerque, 'o moço' or 'o sardo.'	Captain General	Olinda (Brazil)
Manuel Gonçalves 'Regueifeiro'	Chief Pilot	Leça (Portugal)

Source: Berredo, Bernardo Pereira de. *Anais Históricos do Estado do Maranhão*. São Luis: Alumar, 1988 [1749], § 198-199; § 248; §304-308; §436; § 763-780.

The conquest of Maranhão also called the attention of other co-vassals of Felipe III. Gaspar de Sousa, for example, wrote to the king notifying him that an officer from the kingdom of Naples called Constantino Paolo Garrafa, who was 'well born' and who had already served the monarch in the war in Flanders, had asked to go to Maranhão as Captain of Artillery. Sousa was inclined to send this Napolitan captain because of the need of 'people' in those lands and because he "was not one of the forbidden foreigners."³²

Actually the 'royal summons' for service in the new lands had a very rapid response. Many Portuguese, who had already circulated in other parts of the

empire, began to ask for positions to take part in the conquest of Maranhão. There are many examples about this. Simão Carvalho (from Porto) asked for the position of Ensign in Maranhão, as he had participated in the expulsion of the French and the protection of the land against the Dutch. Agostinho Ferreira (from Lisbon), who had already served Felipe II in Brittany asked for the position of Sergeant Major to serve in Maranhão. Another Portuguese, Andre Soares, who had served in Seville, said that he had gone ‘voluntarily’ to the conquest of Maranhão with a wife, children and ‘slaves’ and that there he had ‘lived the life of nobility,’ asked Felipe IV for the position of Clerk to the Council of São Luís. In fact one of the most emblematic questions about the conquest of Maranhão is the voluntary adhesion to the co-vassalage offered by the Dynastic Union. Similarly, the references to the conquest of Maranhão offer appear in qualification processes for the three military orders, even after the end of the Iberian Union. Captain Ayres de Sousa Chichorro, for example, asked for the Habit of Christ in 1650, stating that he had participated in the expedition to “the river of Amazonas when we were ordered to dislodge the Dutch and English who were fortified there, as in the time when the city of São Luis was occupied by the same Dutch and other meetings with the foreign enemies and natives of the land.”³³ Thus, the memory of the Philippine military actions was still fresh in the government of the first Braganças after the Restoration of 1640.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In a very diverse direction from the nationalist interpretation of the beginning of the twentieth century, in recent years studies about the Dynastic Union have emphasized much more the global, transoceanic and trans-frontier processes which presuppose economic, political and cultural exchanges between parts of the Empire. These studies have evaluated the dynamics that allowed the Portuguese and Spanish, often separately from palace decisions, to seek strategies to aggregate their mutual interests in various parts of the world. Generally speaking these new studies have tried to evaluate the global impact of the Hispanic Monarchy far beyond its European territories.³⁴ Another characteristic of this new phase are the many new comparative studies which have begun to trace a more accurate profile about the phenomena of ‘connected empires.’³⁵ On the other hand Luso-Brazilian historiography has re-dimensioned certain common places of study of the Dynastic Union,

approaching in a dynamic and innovative manner the problem of institutional and cultural changes, favored by the connections between the two kingdoms.

In the case of the conquest of Maranhão, it was clear that there did not exist a contradiction between the imperial projects and the private interests of men who simply sought wealth, new opportunities, positions and graces. In this way it is necessary to escape from the classical explanation that sees the conquest of the Amazon as an automatic response to the French invasion of the north of Brazil after 1612. The conquest of Maranhão was not a simple military operation to drive off 'pirates' from the north coast of the state of Brazil, it was part of a Hispano-Luso project for protection and commercial integration on the frontier between Portuguese America and the Castilian Indies. The frontier condition of this region is a constant theme in all the reports, chronicles and memorials from the time, leaving clear the scope of the question.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that the conquest of Maranhão was not an isolated action, disconnected from the great themes of the age. As we have seen information about this frontier region already circulated in the time of Carlos V and Felipe II, feeding speculation about the need for and the fidelity of the Tordesilhas Line. In the time of Felipe III the Maranhense frontier was quickly inserted in a general debate about the commercial use of the northern strip of Portuguese America, including Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará. It is necessary to take into account the fact that the same strategy that had been thought of in 1608 for the captaincies of the south of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Vicente, Espírito Santo), which gained a separate government with the appointment of D. Francisco de Sousa to the position. For this reason, there already existed an expectation that Felipe III would also opt for the political separation of Maranhão.

The conquest of Maranhão also represented the possibility of obtaining personal and collective advantages on the part of an idle part of the Luso-Pernambucano bureaucracy. The idea that the Portuguese of Maranhão could obtain advantages from the Dynastic Union contradicts the classical notion that the *Union* was an exclusive project of the highest parts of Hispano-Luso society, or a game limited to the highest Councils of State. Thus, during the first years of the conquest they began to call for the implementation of the proposals made by the first Luso-Maranhense bureaucracy for commercial approximation between Portuguese and Castilians, especially between the region of Maranhão and the Vice-Royalty of Peru. The adherence of the *House of Austria* thus seemed much less selective than is usually thought.³⁶ On the

other hand, this process of voluntary adhesion to the benefits of the *Union* was not exclusive to the conquest of Maranhão. Graça Ventura demonstrated that the general interest of the Portuguese in ‘Peruvian’ lands, already existing in previous periods, increased considerably after 1580.³⁷ Therefore, the Hispano-Luso bureaucracy which participated in the conquest of Maranhão was part of a much more ample movement with a pragmatic posture in relation to the confusing political situation created by the ascension of Felipe II of Spain.

Finally, the Hispano-Luso project for the occupation of Maranhão was not exactly the construction of a ‘new Potosi,’ although this idea was present at the time.³⁸ The Hispano-Luso projects for Maranhão was inclined towards an ‘economy of the frontier,’ taking advantage of the best in Brazil (sugar), and the best in the Indies (circulation of metals and goods, commercial exploration of the ‘drugs of the earth’). The state of Brazil, considered to be physically distant from Maranhão, was supposed to guarantee its first steps towards political and economic autonomy. In the future, Maranhão would have to reinforce the relations between the Portuguese and Castilian parts of the empire. Ultimately, many of these ideas and intentions assumed the continuity of the Iberian Union. So, as we know, many of these proposals about the form Maranhão should take, as well as the State of Brazil, had to be (in part) rethought after 1640.

NOTES

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² In relation to these structural changes in the Luso-Brazilian universe, with an emphasis on the Dynastic Union, see: CARDIM, Pedro. “O governo e a administração do Brasil sob os Habsburgo e os primeiros Bragança”. *Hispania*, v.LXIV, nº 216 (janeiro-abril, 2004), p.117-156. VALLADARES, Rafael. “El Brasil y las Indias españolas durante la sublevación de Portugal (1640-1668)”, Madrid: *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, nº 4 (1993), p.151-172. MARQUES, Guida. *L’Invention du Bresil entre deux monarchies. Gouvernement et pratiques politiques de l’Amérique portugaise dans l’union iberique (1580-1640)*. Paris: Doctoral dissertation presented to the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, 2009. SCHAUB, Jean-Frédéric. *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica (1580-1640)*. Lisboa: Livros Horizontes, 2001. For a study of the epoch, see: FRAGOSO, João; GOUVEA, Maria de Fátima; BICALHO,

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⁵ LANGEREN, A. F. van. “Map of South America” [1595]. In: BAGROW, Leo. *History of Cartography*. New Brunswick/Oxford: Transaction Publishers, 2009 (second expanded edition), p.103.

⁶ Carvajal’s famous chronicle started this tendency. CARVAJAL, Gaspar de, fr., *Relación que escribió fr. Gaspar de Carvajal, fraile de la Orden de Santo Domingo de Guzmán, del Nuevo descubrimiento del famoso Rio Grande que descubrió por muy gran aventura el capitán Francisco de Orellana, desde su nacimiento hasta salir a la Mar, con cincuenta y siete hombres que trajo consigo y se echó a su aventura por el dicho rio, y por el nombre del capitán que le descubrió se llamó el Rio Orellana*. Madrid: Consejo de la Hispanidad, 1944.

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¹³ “Le Roi a Iñigo de Cardenas”. 30 de noviembre de 1613. *Archivo General de Simancas, Estado (Francia), K 1453, A59*.

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