

Imagined Republics: The United States of America, France, and Brazil (1776–1792)

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Introduction

In early 1789, a republican, constitutionalist, and anti-colonial rebellion was planned in Brazil. It challenged empire in the apex year of the Atlantic revolutions. It revealed the weaknesses as well as the strength of imperial adaptation in the face of challenges on both sides of the Atlantic. The Minas Conspiracy also revealed the ambiguities and misinterpretation of the commitment of the individuals involved in the United States, in France, and in Brazil at this critical moment of political transition. The conspiracy occurred in Minas Gerais, at the time the most important region of Portugal's vast intercontinental overseas empire. Minas Gerais, in the mineral-rich mountainous interior of Brazil, in 1788 was called the "soul" of the Portuguese empire in America by Martinho de Melo e Castro (1716–1795), who was the Portuguese secretary of state for the navy and the overseas dominions.¹ Minas Gerais was the source of Portugal's vast eighteenth-century wealth in gold and diamonds.

The would-be insurgents in Brazil took their inspiration from the successful war of American independence from Great Britain and the establishment of the United States of America. This is an Atlantic history of the diffusion of republican and anti-colonial ideas that links North America, Europe, and Brazil between the years 1776–1778 and 1789–1792 in the complex and contradictory history of the transatlantic transmission of constitutional models. It is a history of Atlantic empires at a moment of profound transformation that joins the nation-building experiments in North America to the new constitutional republic the conspirators in Minas Gerais intended to create in Brazil in 1789. At the center of this "imagined" Brazilian republic was a book: the *Recueil*

¹ Martinho de Melo e Castro para o governador e capitão-general de Minas Gerais, Visconde de Barbacena, January, 29, 1788, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Minas Gerais, caixa 94.

des loix constitutives des colonies anglaises.² The original edition was purportedly published “in Philadelphia.” In fact it was published in France. The copy held by the Minas conspirators was a pirated edition.³

Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson both served as envoys from the United States to the court of the French King Louis XVI. Franklin was the American envoy from 1776 until 1785, and Jefferson from 1785 to 1789. Both Franklin and Jefferson were to play key roles in the transmission of constitutional and republican ideas between the United States and France and subsequently, and inadvertently, between France and Brazil. In 1778 Franklin was instrumental in the publication of the *Recueil* in France. In 1787 Jefferson met secretly at Nîmes in southern France José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho, a young Brazilian student from Rio de Janeiro who was studying medicine at the University of Montpellier. Charles Gravier, the Comte de Vergennes, the French foreign minister, was seeking to avenge France’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War. He was Franklin’s intermediary in the publication of the *Recueil*, which contained the foundational constitutional documents of the United States of America: the Declaration of Independence, a first draft of the Articles of Confederation, a census of the English colonies of 1775, a navigation act, the honorary doctoral degree awarded to General George Washington by Harvard University, and the constitutions of six of the thirteen original American states—Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, with additional documents concerning South Carolina and Boston. José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho and his fellow Brazilian students in France and Portugal—

² *Recueil des loix constitutives des colonies anglaises: Confédérées sous la dénomination D’États-Unis de L’Amérique-Septentrionale. Auquel on a joint les Actes d’Indépendance, de Confédération et autres Actes du Congrès Général, traduit de l’Anglois. Dedié a M. le Docteur FRANKLIN, En Suisse, Chez les Libraires Associes, M. DDC. LXXVIII* (A collection of the constitutional laws of the English colonies, confederated under the title of the United States of America, to which is appended the Declaration of Independence, of Confederation, and other acts of the General Congress, translated from English and dedicated to Mr. Dr. Franklin, published in Switzerland by Chez Les Librairies Associés, 1778).

³ Two copies of the *Recueil* were published in 1778. One claimed it was published in Philadelphia, “et se vend à Paris, rue Dauphine, chez Cellot & Jombert, jeune fils, Librairies, la seconde porte cochère à droite, au fond de la cour.” The second, a pirated edition, claimed it was published “en Suisse.” This is the copy today held in the collections of the Casa do Pilar of the Museu da Inconfidência in Ouro Preto, where I was able to examine it. I am most grateful to the director of Museu da Inconfidência, Dr. Rui Mauro, for permission to examine the *Recueil* in 2003 and in 2013, and to the staff of the Casa do Pilar, especially Suely Perucci, on both occasions for all their assistance and help.

and in England in the case of fellow Coimbra University student José Álvares Maceil from Minas Gerais—were all fascinated by the American struggle for independence and the constitutions included in the *Recueil* precisely because of what these revealed about the vulnerability of the Portuguese empire in Brazil.⁴

In May 1789, the Portuguese governor of Minas Gerais, Luis Antonio Furtado de Castro do Rio de Mendonça e Faro, the viscount Barbacena, discovered that a copy of the *Recueil* was in the hands of the Minas conspirators in 1788–1789 in Vila Rica and that it had informed the model for the independent, republican, and constitutional government they intended to establish after Portugal’s rule was overthrown. Barbacena had first been told about the proposed uprising by Colonel Joaquim Silvério dos Reis two months earlier on March 15, 1789, at Cachoeira do Campo, his country residence to the northeast of Vila Rica. On March 25, 1789, Barbacena wrote secretly to the viceroy in Rio de Janeiro, Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa, who was his uncle, to warn him of the projected revolution. A formidable conspiracy existed, he told the viceroy, among the “powerful men and magnates” in Minas Gerais who “are the most capable and likely that I know for so great an evil.” “The people of any importance or greatest stature in the captaincy are almost all debtors in all they possess to Her Majesty,” he continued, “and only a revolution could adjust the accounts to their benefit.” He had acted with the “most judicious measures and the greatest circumspection” and because he was “without forces and without advise, because the officers of the only regiment that I have are for the most part, interested in the revolution... it is certain he had at his disposal no more than 70 soldiers... [and] no force in which he had confidence... and not a single barrel of gunpowder.” He had as a consequence “resolved to dissimulate.” In an annotation by the copier of

⁴ Durand Echeverria, “French Publications of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitutions 1776–1783,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 47, no. 4 (1953): 313–38; and Gilbert Chinard, *Notes on the French Translations of the Forms of the Government of the Several United States, 1778–1783* (American Philosophical Society, 1943), 88–106; Franklin Papers 23:213–14, Duc de la Rochefoucauld to Franklin and Silas Dean, January 20, 1777, and 26:426–27, 592, Edme-Jacques Genet to Franklin, May 9 and June 5, 1778. For an overview of the history of republicanism in Brazil, see Lilia M. Schwarcz and Heloisa M. Starling, editors, *Dicionário da República: 51 textos críticos* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019); Heloisa Murgel Starling, *Ser republicano no Brasil Colônia: A história de uma tradição esquecida* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018); and Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *A outra Independência: O federalismo pernambucano de 1817 a 1824* (São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2004).

the document as a “pos-datum,” Silvério dos Reis is said to have mentioned that he suspected that there “had, or had been, some kind of correspondence with France about this business, or that there had been a person who had in some way promoted it.”⁵

Colonel Silvério dos Reis had been intimately involved with the plotters. He was a major landowner, militia commander, slave owner, and a contractor of the tax farms of Minas Gerais. He was also a major debtor to the royal treasury on both of his contracts. The revenues in Minas Gerais were farmed out to local businessmen in return for the payment of a set annual sum to the royal treasury. The main revenues in Minas were the *dízimos*, the 10 percent tithe owed to the Church but collected by the state, and the *entradas*. The *entradas* were taxes on imports and exports into Minas Gerais, mainly on trade between Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. In June 1786 the secretary of the Junta da Fazenda (the exchequer board) of Minas Gerais, Carlos José da Silva, reported to the secretary of state for the overseas dominions in Lisbon, Melo e Castro, that Silvério dos Reis, together with João Rodrigues de Macedo, the region’s de facto banker, major entrepreneur, and tax farmer, owed between them over a million *milreis* to the royal exchequer. Barbacena found himself dangerously exposed in March 1789, especially because of the involvement of senior officers of the Minas Dragoons in the plot, including the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Francisco de Paula Freire de Andrade. The plot also involved the participation of leading lawyers, magistrates, and landowners. Barbacena acted immediately to strengthen the “Portuguese party,” especially over the month between the arrest of Tiradentes in Rio de Janeiro on May 10, 1789, and the arrest of the major conspirators in Minas Gerais on June 12, 1789. This allowed time for the quiet deployment

⁵ Cachoeira do Campo, March 25, 1789, Carta do Visconde de Barbacena ao Vice-Rei, Luis de Vasconcellos e Sousa, relatando a denúncia recebida de Joaquim Silvério dos Reis, *Autos de Devassa* 8 (1977): 118–31; the references are from Barbacena’s letter under the heading, 17, 18, 22, 23, *Autos da Devassa* 8 (1977): 122, 124, 128. For a skeptical view of the influence of the *Recueil*, see João Pinto Furtado, “Uma república entre dois mundos: Inconfidência Mineira, historiografia e temporalidade,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 21, no. 42 (2001). For a chronology of the *inconfidência*, see *Índice Chronológico, Autos da Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira* (Brasília: Câmara dos Deputados/Governo do Estado de Minas Gerais, 1976–1983), 1:387–411; see also the “Introdução Histórica” for an excellent overview by one of the editors, historian Herculano Gomes Mathias. *Autos da Devassa* 1 (1976): 13–66; *Autos da Devassa* 1 (1976): 16; São João del Rei, October 30, 1789 (?) Carta para Cidade do Porto relatando notícias da repressão a Inconfidência Mineira, Biblioteca Municipal do Porto, Código 146, *Autos da Devassa*, 9, (1977), 34–40 with extensive notes by Tarquínio J. B. de Oliveira, 40–43.

by the viceroy from Rio de Janeiro to Vila Rica of a squadron of three hundred cavalry from the viceroy's own bodyguard, which arrived in Vila Rica on June 24, as well as two hundred infantry from the Portuguese regiments of Moura and Bragança.⁶

On June 15, 1789, Colonel Francisco Antônio de Oliveira Lopes had testified that “for the plan [for the insurgency], Dr. José Álvares Maciel had brought a volume [*código*] of laws by which the English Americans are governed.” He said that the vicar Carlos Correia de Toledo had said that Álvares Maciel would be responsible for making gunpower and establishing factories (*fábricas*) and that he remembered “that his cousin, Dr. Domingos Vidal de Barbosa, while in France, knew that one of the students at the University of Montpellier, also a son of this America, wrote a letter to the Minister of English America resident in Paris about the liberty of this Portuguese [America].”⁷

The United States and Portugal

Fortuitously for the Portuguese authorities, they were able to hide the Minas Conspiracy from international attention. In 1789 the attention of the world was focused on the dramatic developments in Paris where the French Revolution had broken out. The Bastille was stormed on July 14, and in October Louis XVI was forced by an angry mob to leave Versailles for the Tuileries Palace in Paris. Furthermore, in 1789 the United States was hoping to negotiate a commercial treaty with Portugal. In support of Britain, Portugal had closed its ports to American shipping on July 4, 1776, an ironic (but accidental) coincidence with the date of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin was instructed to address the Portuguese ambassador in Paris, D. Vicente de Sousa Coutinho, and to complain about the shipping decree. In the letter signed by Franklin and Silas Deane, the American representatives in France, on July 16, 1777, reaffirmed the

⁶ Ofício do Visconde de Barbacena a Luis de Vasconcellos e Sousa, Vice-Rei, recomendando a prisão de Tiradentes, e participando do envio de Joaquim Silvério dos Reis ao Rio de Janeiro, Cachoeira do Campo, April 15, 1789. *Autos de Devassa* 8 (1977): 132–35; Cachoeira do Campo, Ofício do Visconde de Barbacena a Luis de Vasconcellos e Sousa, Vice-Rei, apresentado Joaquim Silvério dos Reis, April 19, 1789, *Autos de Devassa* 8 (1977): 136–37.

⁷ Lucas Figueiredo, *O Tiradentes: Uma biografia de Joaquim Jose de Silva Xavier* (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018), 43–60, 242–67; “Tiradentes: O homem, a história e a construção simbólica da nação,” in *Em busca de um rosto: A república e a representação de Tiradentes*, ed. André Figueiredo Rodrigues and Maria Alda Barbosa Cabreira (Sao Paulo: Humanitas/Fflch, 2020), 49–65.

“desire of the United States to live in peace with Portugal and requested in the name of the Congress that the measure be withdrawn.” The Portuguese, however, sent a copy of Franklin’s letter on to the British, noting “in your cause, you see, we are exposed to similar insults.” On February 6, 1778, France recognized American independence and entered into a formal alliance with the United States. In July 1778 France engaged in combat for the first time on the American side. The publication of the *Recueil* and its dedication to Franklin in 1778 was an important part of the effort by the American commissioners to persuade the French to support the American cause. Between 1778 and 1783 the Portuguese quietly and repeatedly showed a willingness to provide aid to the Americans up to the point that their treaty obligations to the British would allow. The Portuguese also believed that a fragmented British Empire could serve Portugal’s interests by establishing a countervailing power in the North Atlantic world. Portugal recognized the independence of the United States on February 15, 1783, and a decree abolished the edict of July 4, 1776, and directed that “in all ports of these realms... passage and entry shall be given to all ships arrived from Northern America.” Between 1783 and 1786 negotiations took place in Paris between the Portuguese ambassador Vicente de Sousa Coutinho and Franklin.⁸

In November 1785 John Adams, the US envoy in London, had a long conversation with the Portuguese envoy, Luis Pinto de Sousa Coutinho. Luis Pinto had recently arrived from Lisbon, and the two envoys discussed in detail the prospects for a commercial treaty between the United States and Portugal with an enumeration of their respective desires. Luis Pinto had been the governor of Mato Grosso on the far western frontiers of Brazil. He made it clear to Adams that “the Americans could never be admitted to Brazil.” In mid-March 1786, Jefferson crossed the English Channel and arrived in London from his post as the American envoy in France. Jefferson and Adams continued

⁸ José Calvet de Magalhães, *Portugal and the Independence of the United States* (Lisbon: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 1963); Timothy Walker, “Atlantic Dimensions of the American Revolution: Imperial Priorities and the Portuguese Reaction to the North American Bid for Independence (1775–83),” *Journal of Early American History* 2, no. 3 (2012): 247–85; James Piecuch, “A War Averted: Luso-American Relations in the Revolutionary Era, 1775–1786,” *Portuguese Studies Review* 5, no. 2 (1997); Jose Calvet de Magalhães, *História das relações diplomáticas entre Portugal e os Estados Unidos da América (1776–1911)* (Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1991), 15–67.

the negotiations for a commercial treaty with Luis Pinto. A preliminary treaty was signed by Adams and Jefferson on April 24, 1786, though it was never approved or cosigned in Lisbon. The Americans' demand for access to Brazil was again totally rejected. Jefferson, however, in 1785, had already recommended a league between Portugal and the United States in defense of American shipping in the Mediterranean against pirates from Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis. In May 1786, Portugal's naval squadron was instructed by Lisbon to "defend and protect American ships from harassment and attacks." Jefferson was well aware of Virginia's commercial interests in exports to Portugal.⁹

The Bill of Rights proposed by James Madison in the House of Representatives was approved on September 25, 1789, and these amendments to the United States Constitution were then sent to the various North American states for ratification. This process was completed on December 15, 1791. These developments in the United States made the Articles of Confederation, the key constitutional text published in the *Recueil*, obsolete. Benjamin Franklin had met with Felix Antonio Castrioto, a Portuguese journalist living in Paris who had published three pamphlets in France supporting the American cause. After Queen Maria's accession to the Portuguese throne in 1777 and the fall from power of the Marquês de Pombal, Castrioto returned to Portugal carrying the letter to the Portuguese foreign minister from Franklin and Deane. Castrioto also petitioned the Portuguese court to lift the ban on American shipping, and he resumed the publication of the *Gazetta de Lisboa*. On September 18, 1778, he reprinted the "Resolution of the Province of Pennsylvania, taken by its Respective Assembly, with the purpose of Reaffirming the Sovereignty and Independence of the United States of America." Castrioto observed: "The division between England and her Colonies represents the most memorable Revolution that we have had in our world, because the consequences which will come of it will necessarily have a great influence on

⁹ Calvet de Magalhães, *Portugal and the Independence of the United States*, 17–67. Calvet de Magalhães details the various reports on the conversations from Adams in Paris, Jefferson in Paris and London, Luis Pinto in London, Vicente de Sousa Coutinho in Paris, and Martinho de Mello e Castro in Lisbon. Adams had his initial conversations with Vicente de Sousa Coutinho in Paris.

the general systems of Nations. Because of this, everything related to it well deserves a place in the annals of our times.”¹⁰

Castrioto spoke prophetically about the “memorable Revolution” in transatlantic affairs. Brazilians would also recognize the revolutionary, republican, as well as the anti-colonial, message and the model that the establishment of the United States of America represented, most especially those young Brazilian students who were studying at the reformed University of Coimbra in Portugal and who were continuing to pursue their postgraduate studies in France at the University of Montpellier and the University of Bordeaux. Ironically, by 1790 the constitution of the Republic of Pennsylvania, published with great emphasis in the *Recueil*, had been substantially rewritten to diminish its democratic provisions and to strengthen the power of the executive.¹¹

Benjamin Franklin and the *Recueil* in France

Benjamin Franklin, then seventy years of age, was famous as a leading figure in natural philosophy and a prominent member of the Republic of Letters. By the time he arrived in France as a diplomat on December 21, 1776, Franklin had distinguished himself over the course of several decades as a journalist, polemicist, moralist, and scientist and as the deputy postmaster of the English colonies in North America, a political thinker and leader, and a philanthropist. Franklin was well acquainted with leading figures in the French Enlightenment. These included Louis-Alexandre de la Rochefoucauld d’Enville, a natural scientist, president of the Academy of Medicine, and a member

¹⁰ The conciliatory letter from Franklin was conveyed to Portugal by Castrioto. The document is now in the Portuguese archives and has the annotation: “Original in English by Franklin and Another Agent of the Insurgents of English America.” Torre do Tombo (Portuguese National Archives) Arquivo do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, caixa 1, no. 1, letter of B. Franklin and S. Deane to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, dated July 16, 1777.

¹¹ Letter of Felix Antonio Castrioto to the secretary of state, Ayres de Sá e Mello, November 12, 1777, caixa 1, no. 3. Calvet de Magalhães published a facsimile of the letter from Franklin and Deane of July 1777. See also J. Paul Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: A Study in Revolutionary Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936); Robert F. Williams, “The Influences of Pennsylvania’s 1776 Constitution on American Constitutionalism during the Founding Decade,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 112, no. 1 (1988): 25–48; Kenneth Owen, *Political Community in Revolutionary Pennsylvania 1774–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Francisco Xavier Machado witness statement, 1, Testemunha 20a, 188–91; Casa do Desembargador Pedro José Araújo de Saldanha, Vila Rica, June 26, 1789; Testemunha 13a, João Dais da Motta, said that the conspirators had spoken of aid from France (some ships) and England, 177.

of the Royal Academy of Sciences, who would be a strong supporter of the North Americans in their revolt against England. Franklin also counted among his acquaintances the abbé Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, future author of a 1784 commentary on the constitutions of the United States as published in the *Recueil*, in the form of a series of letters addressed to John Adams.¹²

Thanks to his international renown, a previous visit to Paris in 1767, and his ongoing correspondence with prominent European *philosophes*, Franklin was already famous and revered in France. His celebrity would only grow over the course of his mission. He was indeed the ideal choice for this critical task. The publication of the *Recueil* in 1778 was intended by the American delegates in Paris as propaganda that would introduce the American constitutional experiments to Europe. Its aim was to encourage France to assist the American Revolution at a critical stage in the armed conflict between the North American colonial revolutionaries and the British government. Franklin was the perfect revolutionary for the purpose of reassuring the French privileged class, different enough to be interesting but familiar enough not to be frightening, a Philadelphia rustic with years of experience at court, an American who mispronounced their language but could create a splendid bon mot. Franklin helped reinforce Vergennes's Anglophobia in 1777–1778, and, more importantly, helped assure it would not be counterbalanced by fear of dangerous American revolutionaries. It was in this context that the *Recueil* was published, and this was the propaganda text in French which the Minas conspirators possessed and discussed in late 1788 and early 1789.¹³

¹² Durand Echeverria, "Image et influence de Benjamin Franklin en France avant et Pendant la Révolution de 1789," *Tocqueville Review* 9 (1989); correspondance of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld with Franklin and Silas Deane, January 29, 1777, and of Edmé-Jacques Genet with Franklin, May 9 and June 5, 1778, Franklin Papers 23:426–27, 592. On Franklin's activities in London and his connections there during his three sojourns (1724–1726, 1757–1762, and 1764–1775), see George Goodwin, *Benjamin Franklin in London: The British Life of America's Founding Father* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2017).

¹³ Joyce Chaplin, *The First Scientific American: Benjamin Franklin and the Pursuit of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). On Franklin's relationships, fame, and image in France, see Gilbert Chinard, *L'Apothéose de Benjamin Franklin* (Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1955); Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Franklin and His French Contemporaries* (New York: New York University Press, 1957); Bernard Baylin, "Realism and Idealism in America Diplomacy: Franklin in Paris, Couronné par la Liberté," in *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Abbé de Mably, *Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des États-Unis* [Remarks concerning the government and the laws of the United States of America] (London: J. Debret, 1784); Bruno Carvalho, "Partial Enlightenment: Precedents and Possibilities for 18th-Century Luso-Brazilian Studies," *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 29 (2016): 1–15.

In 2013 an annotated critical edition of the 1778 *Recueil* in Portuguese was published in Brazil with Penguin and Companhia de Letras. This was a collective effort, and I was able to complete the project with the essential scholarly collaboration of Gabriel de Avilez Rocha, Bruno Carvalho, and John Huffman, who provided a detailed analysis of the problems of translation and representation in the French texts. They collectively had the historical knowledge and the linguistic skills to analyze the American and French texts and to annotate the Portuguese translation. The Portuguese edition was titled *O livro de Tiradentes*. Professors Heloisa Murgel Starling and Júnia Ferreira Furtado of the Federal University of Minas Gerais contributed an essential essay of analysis to the introductory texts. The *Recueil* opens with a dedication to Franklin by the editor, Claude Ambroise Régnier. Régnier was a French lawyer and politician and later a supporter of Napoleon. In his 1778 introduction to the *Recueil*, Régnier wrote that the North American constitutional laws are “one of the most beautiful monuments of the human knowledge and, at the same time, constitutes the purest democracy ever imagined.” Régnier is careful to note that he has merely “collected” (*rassemblées*) these documents. In fact they were lifted verbatim from *Les Affaires*. The Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, as well as the state constitutions, were strategically deployed by Franklin and Silas Deane to construct the image of a cohesive confederation of fully functional governments, the better to secure loans and alliances. Franklin told the committee of secret correspondence of the Congress: “All of Europe is with us. Our Articles of Confederation being by our means translated and published have given an Appearance of Consistence and Firmness to the American State and Government that begins to make them considerable.” Franklin reported that they were being read “with rapture.” The shift from future tense to present tense in the French translation also transfigures a nation about to be created into one already established and proclaiming its own unity. Because of the consistency and relative uniformity among the constitutions, the appearance of unity is also apparent in the state constitutions, where the declarations of rights (paired with explicit commitments to democratic

principles) declares that government derives its authority from the people and is founded on a compact for the common good. Frequent free elections would provide the mechanism by which the people would control and shape the government, as well as hold their representatives accountable. The declaration of rights of each state is in some cases contained in the first articles, in some cases in a bill or declaration of rights as a separate statement.¹⁴

The Pennsylvania constitution in the *Recueil* begins by “declaring the rights of the inhabitants of the Republic of Pennsylvania.” The original September 28, 1776, Pennsylvania constitution, however, spoke not of a “Republic” but of “the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth or State of Pennsylvania.” And “republic” is used wherever “commonwealth” is used in the original. The constitution of Pennsylvania declared that the “the king of Great Britain commenced, and still continues to carry on, with unabated vengeance, a most cruel and unjust war against them, employing therein, not only the troops of Great Britain, but foreign mercenaries, savages and slaves.” The Pennsylvania constitution in the *Recueil* has extensive explanatory footnotes written by Franklin. Under the title “of Note of an American,” Franklin writes: “Perhaps one is surprised to find a distinction of free men in a country in which it is believed that all men are free. There still are in America two classes that aren’t; one, entirely enslaved, blacks. In reality, a variety and even a majority of the Colonies always opposed their importation, and with frequency made laws to stop it; but, since the consent of the Crown was necessary for the confirmation of these laws, they could never be established, the King having always rejected them as contrary to the interests of the English African Company; therefore, the prohibition of importing these unfortunate victims of European avarice was one of the first operations of the General Congress; and it should

¹⁴ On the American mission to the French court, see also Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935); Claude Anne Lopez, *Mon Cher Papa, Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Robert Middlekauff, “Benjamin Franklin, Pragmatic Visionary: Politician, Statesman, Diplomat,” and Ellen R. Cohn, “The Printer at Passy,” in *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*, ed. Page Talbott (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005); Jonathan R. Dull, *Benjamin Franklin and the American Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Jonathan R. Dull, “Franklin the Diplomat: The French Mission,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 72, pt. 1 (1982): 1–76; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

be believed that it will soon legislate on the fortune of blacks currently within the extension of the 13 States.”¹⁵

Franklin added in his footnote that in Pennsylvania some proprietors had already freed their enslaved people, though many existed within the “colony and many more within the Southern Colonies.” He then describes the role of minor infants (*les Enfants mineures*), apprentices, and indentures (*les Domestiques engage*) which he says facilitates the colonies acquisition of new inhabitants. In 1777, in Philadelphia, Franklin was chosen to be the first president of the republic of Pennsylvania and John Morris to be the secretary. The radicalism of the 1777 Pennsylvania constitution provoked much opposition. John Adams, in his own copy of the *Recueil*, wrote in comments on the text that “the following Constitution of Pa, was well known by such as were in the secret, to have been principally prepared by Timothy Matlock, Jas. Gannon [*sic*], Thomas Paine and Thomas Young, all ingenious Men, but none of them deeply read in the Science of Legislation. The Bill of Rights is taken almost verbatim from that of Va. The Form of Government, is the Worst that has been established in America, & will be found so in Experience. It has weakened that state, divided it, by that Means embarrasses and obstructs the American cause more than any other thing”.¹⁶

The Pennsylvania constitution extended voting rights to all taxpaying free men, guaranteed unrestricted freedom of the press, established a unicameral legislature with term limits, no standing army in times of peace and strict subordination of military power to civilians, a thirteen-member executive council, a president elected by the assembly and council, a provision that all legislation should be held so that Pennsylvanians could assess the proposed laws, a council of censors to oversee activities and protect the constitution from violation, open-door sessions of the general

¹⁵ Dull, “Franklin the Diplomat”, p. 27.

¹⁶ Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, letters to the committee of secret correspondence, March 12, 1777, American Philosophical Society and Yale University, “The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,” <https://franklinpapers.org/>. John Adams’s copy of the *Recueil* is held in the special collections of the Boston Public Library.

assembly, accessible education (schools and universities), and regulation of profits deemed excessive. Its efforts to avoid perpetuity in office and a political aristocracy of incumbents are also noteworthy. In fact, John Adams was perceptive in his criticism: the 1777 Pennsylvania constitution was replaced in 1790. Richard Ryerson claims that “by late 1776 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was perhaps the most vital participatory democracy in the world.” The Pennsylvania constitution contained a radical provision: it abolished property and financial qualifications not only for the electorate but also for those seeking office. The state constitutions also gave considerable attention to reinforcing the impartiality, integrity, and independence of the courts and judges and upheld the basic continuity of rights under English common law. They also provided protection against the gruesome application of judicial power and provided protection against cruel and unusual punishment. All the state constitutions sought to secure freedom of religion. The declarations of freedom of the press, of the judiciary, and of religion, along with many others, coexisted with the continuing practice and legal recognition of slavery. As far as the slave trade was concerned, the text of the navigation act, included in the *Recueil*, differs substantially from the original by giving additional emphasis to the prohibition of the slave trade. In the *Recueil*, only the constitution of Delaware made any provision for the abolition of slavery.¹⁷

The 1778 *Recueil* is the way in which the Brazilians in Minas Gerais perceived and understood North America’s anti-colonial and revolutionary attempt to organize new independent constitutional government in former colonies. It was a vision mediated through French translations. All these were organized and heavily influenced in the way they were presented by the critical intervention of Benjamin Franklin. This gave the French text, as Carvalho, Huffman, and Rocha observe, “the weight of an original in this context.” Thus in significant ways the French text modifies or diverges from the originals in English and provided, in the words of Carvalho,

¹⁷ Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Record Group 26: Records of the Department of State, Basic Documents; <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>. The Articles of Confederation, in George Athan Billias, *American Constitutionalism Heard Round the World, 1776–1989* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 27–32, 66–86.

Huffman, and Rocha, “an angled snapshot of the process by which the architecture of the United States government was constructed”¹⁸: the image of unity, the transfiguration of a nation poised to be created, to an already established nation, proclaiming its own unity. This was all undoubtedly a welcome shift of emphasis for the American envoys in Paris and at Versailles seeking French military and diplomatic support. Pennsylvania’s constitution, moreover, would have received the most attention from readers due to its prominent placement in the *Recueil*, its association with Franklin, and the sheer number of footnotes it received in this edition. The “Note d’un Americain” also gave an artificial coherence to the decidedly antislavery slant of the collection and to the supposition that general abolition was imminent as well as restrictions on slavery and the slave trade, and it gave a particular emphasis to the constitution of the republic of Pennsylvania. Franklin certainly by 1778 wanted slavery abolished and the slave trade ended, yet most North Americans at the time did not, especially in the southern states.¹⁹

The *Recueil* in this sense portrayed in large part an “imagined” North American republic organized (and distorted) according to Benjamin Franklin’s interpretation. This is how the French saw the constitutional innovations in North America in 1778 and how the Brazilians via the *Recueil* also perceived the North American constitutional arrangements in late 1788 and early 1789 when they were planning their own republican constitutional structure which they intended to implement in Minas Gerais once they had overthrown Portuguese rule after the expected imposition of the massive tax of the *derrama* in 1789. The Minas conspirators in 1788 owned two copies of the *Recueil*. The *Tiradentes* copy claimed on its frontispiece that it was published “en Suisse.” This was a pirated edition. It was identical in all other respects to the *Recueil* that claimed on its frontispiece

¹⁸ Carvalho, Huffmann and Rocha “O conteúdo do Récueil”, 101-5.

¹⁹ David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); also published in Brazil as *Declaração de Independência: Uma história global* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011), especially pp. 27–88. Bruno Carvalho, John Huffman, and Gabriel de Avilez Rocha have provided detailed analysis on the content of the *Recueil* and problems of translation and representation, “O conteúdo do Recueil: Problemas de tradução e representação,” in Kenneth Maxwell, ed., *O livro de Tiradentes* (São Paulo: Penguin Classics and Companhia das Letras, 2013), 67–105. On the honorary degree given by Harvard to George Washington, see the discussion by Gabriel Rocha, “George Washington in Minas Gerais,” *ReVista* 6, no. 3 (2007): 78–79.

that it was published in Philadelphia. Two copies of the *Recueil* were brought to Minas Gerais in 1788 by former Brazilian students at the University of Coimbra, one by José Álvares Maciel and the other by José Pereira Ribeiro. The copy owned by Pereira Ribeiro appears to have been smuggled out of Minas Gerais at the time of the arrests of the conspirators in June 1789.²⁰

Thomas Jefferson in France

The Minas conspirators saw the American Revolution as relevant because they perceived the tax demands (the impending *derrama* or special levy) placed on them by Portugal as similar to those the British had imposed on their North American colonies. In fact the tax demands the Portuguese government insisted on in 1788 to make up for the arrears in payments on the fifth of the gold production were to provide the occasion as well as the date for the uprising. Barbacena, the new governor and captain general, had arrived in Minas Gerais on July 11, 1788, with a massive directive, composed by the secretary of state for the overseas dominions, Martinho de Melo e Castro, intended as a reformulation of policy for Minas Gerais. The captaincy of Minas Gerais had been for most of the eighteenth century the location of the first great gold rush in modern history. After 1720 it also became the major source of the world's diamonds. Melo e Castro claimed in his directive that all means of collecting the royal fifth on the gold production from Minas had been "eluded by the inhabitants." The Mineiros, he said, had sought "to persuade that the mines were exhausted." He dismissed these claims as being a subterfuge to disguise the abuses and frauds

²⁰ From here it may have traveled to Pernambuco, where it may have informed the federalist republican revolt of 1817. J. Paul Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: A Study in Revolutionary Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936); Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765–1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Chinard, *Notes on the French Translations*, 90, 19; Annotations of John Adams in the Adams Library, Boston Public Library, 233.7, cited also by Iain McLean, "Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen," in *The Future of Liberal Democracy: Thomas Jefferson and the Contemporary World*, ed. Robert Fatton Jr. and R. K. Ramazani (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 13–30.

practiced in the captaincy. The fall in gold returns, he asserted, was a result of “the general relaxation of those charged with the inviolable observance of the laws.”²¹

Barbacena was ordered by Melo e Castro, on his arrival in Minas Gerais, to call together the Junta da Fazenda (the exchequer board) of the captaincy and to read the stipulations of the Alvará of December 3, 1750, when the inhabitants of Minas Gerais had agreed to guarantee to the royal exchequer one hundred arrobas of gold per annum. Barbacena was to remind them that when this quota was unfilled a per capita tax or *derrama* was to be imposed on all the inhabitants of the captaincy to make up for the unpaid arrears. In 1788 these arrears amounted to 538 arrobas of gold. The payments under the Minas tax farms were also in arrears. Barbacena was also instructed by Melo e Castro to void all tax farms in Minas Gerais and to institute legal proceedings against the debtors of the royal treasury “of whatever quality they may be.” These tax demands appeared to be similar to those Britain had attempted to impose on the English colonies in North America. The Minas conspirators saw in the North American Declaration of Independence and the constitutional documents reproduced in the *Recueil* a model of a successful colonial revolt and a framework for discussing the institutions they intended to create for their own independent republican government after their revolt had succeeded. The interrogations of the prisoners arrested in Vila Rica in July 1789 quickly revealed a direct connection between the Brazilian conspirators and Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson had declined the invitation to serve as one of the American envoys to France in 1776 and again in 1782. But in 1785 he agreed and succeeded Franklin. In 1786 Jefferson received a letter from Montpellier dated October 2. It was signed with the pseudonym “Vendek.” Montpellier was the oldest faculty of medicine in Europe, dating from 1220. Vendek, in his letter to

²¹ Registro da carta do Ex. Senhor General sobre a suspensão da derrama, Vila Rica, 14th march 1789, in *Revista do Público Mineiro*, 7, 1903, pp. 979-80; also in AHU, Minas Gerais, box 57. Portaria do Visconde de Barbacena, Villa Rica, June 30, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 2:87-88. Also *Livro Recueil des Loix Constitutives... A qual entrega a testemunha*, in Minas Gerais, caixa 93, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisboa, Portugal. Also *Cartas, Denúncias e Diligências* 26, no. 10, July 10, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 474-75; José Caetano César Manitti to Visconde de Barbacena, Villa Rica, February, 12, 1790, *Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência, Ouro Preto*, 11 (1953) 89; “perguntas feitas ao Coronel Francisco Antonio de Oliveira Lopes, Rio de Janeiro, November 21, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 4:332; and “perguntas feitas ao . . . Oliveira Lopes,” Villa Rica, July 21, 1789, 11, 58; also the “terceiras perguntas feitas ao Padre José da Silva de Oliveira Rolim,” Vila Rica, October 21, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 11:273.

Jefferson, wrote that he had a matter of great consequence to communicate but his bad health did not permit him to travel to Paris, and as he was a foreigner in France, he wished Jefferson to recommend a safe channel for correspondence via “François Vigarous” (Vigourous), counselor to the king and professor of medicine at the University of Montpellier. Jefferson replied on October 16.²² In his second letter to Jefferson, Vendek declared he was “a Brazilian.” He told Jefferson that “the slavery in which his country lay was rendered each day more insupportable since the epoch of your glorious independence.” Brazilians had decided to follow the example of the North Americans, to break the chains that bound them to Portugal. To solicit the aid of the United States was the purpose of his visit to France. “Nature made us inhabitants of the same continent and in

²² The letter is not in the Jefferson archives, but Vendek refers to the date of Jefferson’s letter to him in his response to Jefferson on October 21. Other Brazilians had continued their studies in France or gone directly to the faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, where fifteen Brazilians had matriculated between 1767 and 1793. Between 1785 and 1790, eleven Brazilians had matriculated, including José Mariano Leal da Câmara de Gusmão from Rio de Janeiro in 1785 and Manuel Arruda da Câmara from Pernambuco, who received their doctorates in 1790 and 1793, respectively. Sumário de testemunhos sobre a ligações de José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho e Thomas Jefferson, Auto de perguntas feitas acerca de uma carta escrita ao Ministro dos Estados Unidos da América Setentrional por um estudante do Brasil que se acha em Montpellier, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 5; *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 5.1 — Autuação, Casa do Ouvidor, 7-07-1789, II.5.2 – Portaria do Visconde de Barbacena/Villa Rica, 30-06-1789, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 5.3. Inquirição deste Sumário, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 5.3.A; Assentada, Cadeia Publica, 8-07-1789, II,5, 3.I – Francisco Antonio de Oliveira Lopes, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 87–91; *Autos da Devassa* (1978): 5.3.2 – Domingos Vidal de Barbosa (28 years old) *Autos da Devassa* 2:92–95; and the subsequent interrogations, confrontations, and testimony of Oliveira Lopes and José Pereira Ribeiro (twenty-five years old) who denied any knowledge of the matter; *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 97. José Maia e Barbalho to Thomas Jefferson, Montpellier, October 2, 1786, and José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho to Thomas Jefferson, Montpellier, November 21, 1786; in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 10:427 and 10:546–47. Vendek to Jefferson, Montpellier, October 9, 1786; Vendek to Jefferson, Montpellier, November 21, 1786; Jefferson to Vendek, Paris, December 26, 1786; Vendek to Jefferson, Montpellier, January 5, 1787; in *Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência* (Ouro Preto, 1953), 2:11–13. The correspondence between Maia e Barbalho and Jefferson and between Jefferson and John Jay is also published in the *Autos da Devassa* 8:19–35. Jefferson also commented to Jay on a conversation he had with a Mexican in Paris. He told Jay he had been more cautious in his comments with the Mexican because “as for us, if Spain would give us favorable terms to our trade and surfaced other difficulties, was not likely to abandon the right and presents advantages, although small, in other future uncertainties, for they were large”; Thomas Jefferson from José da Maia, December 26, 1786, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-10-02-0398>. Thomas Jefferson to José da Maiá, March 19, 1787; Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, May 4, 1787; National Archives, “Founders Online,” <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/>; in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 11:338–43; also in *Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência*, 2:13–19.

consequence in some degree compatriots.” The following year, when visiting the antiquities at Nîmes, in southern France, Jefferson arranged a secret rendezvous with Vendek.²³

Vendek’s real name was José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho. He was a native of Rio de Janeiro. His father was a leading merchant and public works contractor in Rio de Janeiro with contacts in Bordeaux. Maia e Barbalho had matriculated in 1783 at the University of Coimbra in Portugal where he studied mathematics. He was a student of Professor Vigourous at Montpellier where he matriculated in the faculty of medicine in 1786.²⁴ Montpellier had long been a major part of a European-wide intellectual network. Montpellier’s professors were part of an international network of natural scientists, which included Domenico Vandelli in Portugal and Joseph Banks at the Royal Society and the Linnaean Society of London. Professors Antoine Govan and Pierre Brossond (who had studied at the University of Edinburgh) were both members of Maia e Barbalho’s examining committee. They had links with the network of scientific practice developed in the towns of Sheffield, Birmingham, and Manchester. These men were all part of what James Livesey has called the “provincial enlightenment.” It had been to Birmingham that José Álvares Maciel had gone after graduating from Coimbra. Domenico Vandelli was a correspondent of Carl von Linné, the Swedish

²³ Rafael Dias da Silva Campos, “Os 15 de Montpellier: Medicina, política e relação de poder nas Luzes entre Montpellier, Coimbra e Brasil (ca. 1770–ca. 1820),” Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, December 2018; Rafael Dias da Silva Campos, “The Luso-Brazilian Medical Students at Montpellier and the Establishment of an Intellectual Elite between Two American Empires,” in *Cross-Cultural Exchange and the Circulation of Knowledge in the First Global Age*, eds. Amália Polonia, Fabiano Bracht, Gisele C. Conceição, and Monique Palma (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2019); Rafael Dias da Silva Campos and Christian Fausto Moraes dos Santos, “Doutores da devassa: Sedição e teses médicas de Luso-Brasileiros em Montpellier,” *História Unisinos* 17, no. 1 (2013): 61–66; Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the “Improvement” of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Sue Minter, *The Apothecaries’ Garden: A History of the Chelsea Physic Garden* (London: Sutton Publishing, 2000); Augusto da Silva Carvalho, *O abade Correia da Serra: Separata das “Memórias”* (Lisbon: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1948). I am most grateful to Lucas Bertolo for his research in the Fonds Anciens, Faculté de Médecine, Université de Montpellier, and in the archives of the University of Bordeaux into the Brazilian students and Professor Joseph Marie Joachim Vigarous.

²⁴ He dedicated his thesis to Vigarous. It dealt with erysipelas fever, an infection of the upper layer of the skin, mostly caused by a streptococcal bacteria, which results in a red rash with raised edges. Its symptoms include fevers, chills, shivering, and high temperatures. The University of Montpellier, in addition to its famous medical school, also had the oldest botanical garden in Europe, founded in 1592.

naturalist.²⁵ Vandelli moved from Lisbon to Coimbra, as did his natural history collection, at the end of 1772 and the beginning of 1773, much to the delight of the Rio de Janeiro-born bishop-rector of the reformed university, Francisco de Lemos (1735–1822). Incorporated into the Vandelli collection was that of Joseph Rollen van Deck, who had been a member of the Spanish-Portuguese Commission in 1750 charged with the demarcation of the Amazonian frontiers between Spanish and Portuguese America. Van Deck corresponded with Joseph Banks during and after Banks's visit to Lisbon in 1766 and then had been appointed to lead the Portuguese diplomatic mission to Morocco in 1773, where he died. Maia e Barbalho had worked under Vandelli at Coimbra before leaving for the University of Montpellier. José Álvares Maciel was one of Vandelli's most accomplished students and had gone to Birmingham after graduating. It is most likely that Maia e Barbalho's use of the pseudonym "Vendek" was an allusion to Van Deck.²⁶

The Rio de Janeiro connection to Montpellier and Bordeaux was also made through another Brazilian student, Eleuterio Jose Delfim, the son of Antonio Delfim Silva, an entrepreneur in the public works in Rio and a slave trader with Mozambique. The slave trade with Benguela in Angola and Quelimane in Mozambique was controlled and financed by Rio's entrepreneurs. Jose Delfim had matriculated at Montpellier in the faculty of medicine on October 13, 1786. He then returned to Rio before arriving back again in Lisbon in July 1788, where he stayed in the house of Joaquim

²⁵ Vandelli had moved to Portugal in 1764. In 1770 the *junta da providência literária* oversaw the post-Jesuit educational reforms, and in particular the root and branch reform of the University of Coimbra, carried out in person in 1772 by the future Marquês de Pombal, where the practical application of chemistry, mathematics, physics, and botany were intended to encourage the development of the agriculture, industry, and commerce under the patronage of ministers of the government.

²⁶ I have also drawn from William Simon's unpublished papers: "The Foundation of the Natural History Museum of the University of Coimbra: An Aspect of the Role of Science during the Eighteenth-Century Reform Period in Portugal"; "A renovação da História Natural (Lineu e Buffon) e seus reflexos na Universidade de Coimbra: Domingos Vandelli e seus alunos brasileiros," *Curso de Conferências*, Rio de Janeiro, August, 15, 1988; and "Dr. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's Amazon Formulary: Sources of Luso-Brazilian Medicine in the Late Eighteenth Century." While in Villa Bela in the captaincy of Mato Grosso, Rodrigues Ferreira was able to work in the private library of Governor Luís de Albuquerque de Melo Pereira Cáceres. He prepared a medical memoir, "Enfermedades endêmicas de Matto Grosso." The manuscript text of his "Receituário brasiliense" (Brazilian pharmacopoeia) was kept in the archive of the Museu Bocage in Lisbon, but it was destroyed in a fire in the building in 1978; D. M. Davidson, "Rivers and Empire: The Madeira Route and the Incorporation of the Brazilian Far West, 1737–1808," PhD diss., Yale University, 1970. David Davidson was also one of the authors in the original Newberry Library volume, Dauril Alden, ed., *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil: Papers of the Newberry Library Conference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 61–102.

Pereira de Almeida. He later went to Goa and Mozambique, where he became a major slave trader. Eleuterio Jose Delfim, however, may well have had established connections between Rio de Janeiro, Bordeaux, and Montpellier through his family's business interests, apparently interested in exploring relationships with the United States. In the first denunciations given in Vila Rica in May 1789, the willingness of merchants from Bordeaux to provide three ships had been mentioned.²⁷

Thomas Jefferson had impressed on Maia e Barbalho when they met at Nîmes in May 1787 that he had no authority to make an official commitment and that the United States desired to cultivate the friendship of Portugal, with which they enjoyed an advantageous commerce. In fact Jefferson was at the time more interested in obtaining a commercial treaty with Portugal and Morocco and in securing the safety of American shipping in the Mediterranean. Maia e Barbalho was suffering from tuberculosis and on his way back to Brazil; he died in Portugal in February 1788. A detailed account of Jefferson's comments to him reached Minas Gerais in Brazil via fellow students Domingos Vidal de Barbosa Lage and José Álvares Maciel. Vidal de Barbosa had matriculated at Montpellier in 1785 but had then gone on to graduate in medicine at the University of Bordeaux in 1788. Bordeaux was a major port city at the center of the French slave trade. It is highly likely that Rio de Janeiro slave-trading merchants, like the family of Eleuterio Jose Delfim, had commercial connections in Bordeaux. Between 1716–1720 and 1784–1788 the value of French overseas trade had increased threefold. After the American War of Independence a new boom took place. French Saint-Domingue, “the Pearl of the Antilles,” in the 1780s was responsible for three-

²⁷ On Bordeaux, see the Musée d'Aquitaine, “Bordeaux in the 18th Century: Trans-Atlantic Commerce and Slavery,” <https://www.musee-aquitaine-bordeaux.fr/en/article/modern-area>, and François Hubert, Christian Block, and Jacques de Cauna, eds., *Bordeaux au XVIIIe siècle: Le commerce atlantique et l'esclavage* (Bordeaux: Le Festin, 2018). The museum has permanent exhibition rooms on the Atlantic slave trade and the role of the town of Bordeaux.

quarters of the French commercial exchanges with the colonies. In 1788, 465 ships were sent from ports in France to Saint-Domingue.²⁸

During the 1780s there were 150 Portuguese-Jewish firms in Bordeaux with links to communities in Amsterdam, London, and Curaçao and to Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, and these connections were much more likely to have provided the means for confidential correspondence. On Saint-Domingue the production and export of sugar was the most dynamic element in the wealth of France's islands in the Antilles. Sugar and indigo production needed irrigation on the plains, but coffee production also expanded on the larger hillside properties run by small and medium-sized businesses. The importation of enslaved Africans doubled in the 1780s when each year some 30,000 were unloaded on Saint-Domingue. Luso-Atlantic merchants from Angola and Mozambique and from Benin in the Gulf of Guinea were all critical components in the Atlantic slave trade.

Vidal de Barbosa was a landowner at Juiz de Fora, on the road between Rio de Janeiro and Vila Rica. He said that Maia e Barbalho “wished to make himself another Monsieur Franklin with respect to Portuguese America.” Vidal de Barbosa was himself an enthusiastic propagator of the writings of the Abbé Raynal, reciting passages by heart. Raynal greatly influenced the thinking of many educated Brazilians during the 1780s. Raynal's *L'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* was an essential part of the greatest private libraries in Brazil and was quoted by many of those inspired by the example of the United States. Raynal provided an extensive account of Brazil, was contemptuous of Portugal, condemned British political and economic influence, and recommended that the ports of Brazil be opened to the trade of all nations. Vidal de Barbosa was not alone in his educational

²⁸ The role of the Portuguese and Brazilians in acquiring enslaved African human cargo from Benin, Angola, and later from Mozambique and in providing one of the principal means of exchange—Brazilian rolled tobacco from Bahia, used by British and French, as well as Portuguese slave traders on the West African Coast—was central to the whole commercial operation; Ana Lucia Araújo, “Forgetting and Remembering the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Legacy of Brazilian Slave Merchant Francisco Félix de Souza,” in *Crossing Memories: Slavery and African Diaspora*, ed. Ana Lucia Araújo, Mariana Pinho Candido, and Paul E. Lovejoy (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011); Alberto Costa e Silva, “The Final Years of Francisco Félix de Souza on the Slave Coast,” *Revista do Centro de Estudos Africanos* 23 (2004): 9–23; Alberto Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza, mercador de escravos* (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004); and Alberto Costa e Silva, ed., *Imagens da Africa* (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012).

accomplishments and political enthusiasms. Three hundred Brazilian students had matriculated at Coimbra between 1772 and 1785. Twelve out of twenty-seven Brazilians who matriculated at Coimbra in 1785 were from Minas Gerais, ten out of nineteen in 1787.²⁹

José Álvares Maciel, son of a wealthy Mineiro merchant, landowner, and tax farmer, was a contemporary of Maia e Barbalho at the University of Coimbra. He graduated in 1785 in natural philosophy at Coimbra where he studied mathematics, rational and moral philosophy, and natural history. While at Coimbra Vandelli encouraged Álvares Maciel to construct and launch hot air balloons following the techniques developed by Joseph Priestley and to conduct mineralogical research in the mountains of Estrela, close to Coimbra. After graduation Álvares Maciel traveled to England and spent eighteen months, from 1786 until 1788, in Birmingham, the center of the Midlands Enlightenment and the home of Priestley, who was a friend of the Portuguese expatriate scientist João Jacinto de Magalhães (J. H. de Magellan). Álvares Maciel studied the new

²⁹ Other Brazilians had continued their studies in France or gone directly to the faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, where fifteen Brazilians had matriculated between 1767 and 1793. Between 1785 and 1790, eleven Brazilians had matriculated, including José Mariano Leal da Câmara de Gusmão from Rio de Janeiro in 1785 and Manuel Arruda da Câmara from Pernambuco, who received their doctorates in 1790 and 1793, respectively. Sumário de testemunhos sobre a ligações de José Joaquim Maia e Thomas Jefferson, Auto de perguntas feitas acerca de uma carta escrita ao Ministro dos Estados Unidos da América Setentrional por um estudante do Brasil que se acha em Montpellier, *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 5; *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 5.1 — Autuação, Casa do Ouvidor, 7-07-1789, II.5.2 – Portaria do Visconde de Barbacena/Villa Rica, 30-06-1789, *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 5.3. Inquirição deste Sumário, *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 5.3.A; Assentada, Cadeia Publica, 8-07-1789, II,5, 3.I – Francsico Antonio de Oliveira Lopes, *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 87–91; *Autos da Devassa* (1978): 5.3.2 – Domingos Vidal de Barbosa (28 years old) *Autos da Devassa 2*:92–95; and the subsequent interrogations, confrontations, and testimony of Oliveira Lopes and José Pereira Ribeiro (twenty-five years old) who denied any knowledge of the matter; *Autos da Devassa 2* (1978): 97.

manufacturing techniques. It was where he could be “better instructed in chemistry.” It was in Birmingham that José Álvares Maciel bought his copy of the *Recueil*.³⁰

When Álvares Maciel reached Minas, he was appointed tutor to Barbacena’s children at the governor’s county residence at Cachoeira do Campo. Barbacena had arrived in the captaincy with his family in July 1788. Maciel was twenty-seven years old at the time. The viscount, entering Álvares Maciel’s room unexpectedly, found him reading an account of the history of the uprising in English America according to the testimony of Silvério dos Reis taken in Rio de Janeiro when he was held incommunicado on the viceroy’s orders at the fortress on the Ilha das Cobras on May 18, 1789. Silvério dos Reis also reported that the *desembargador* Tomás Antônio Gonzaga was “for many months in [Vila Rica] . . . working in preparing (*em urdir*) the said insurrection and making the new form of laws which would regulate and govern, all in favor of the people and abolishing the payment of certain tributes.” Vidal Barbosa and Álvares Maciel, like many of the other conspirators involved in the Minas plot, were leading members of colonial society, and like the leaders of the North American struggle, they were landowners and slave holders, military or militia officers, magistrates and lawyers, bankers, and speculators. Gonzaga, Cláudio Manuel da Costa, and the canon Luís Vieira were all men who “have ascendancy over the spirits of the people,” the

³⁰ Maciel had matriculated at Coimbra in 1782, Maia in 1783; see “Estudantes Brasileiros em Coimbra,” *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional* 52:172, 174; Caio Cesar Boschi, “A Universidade de Coimbra e a formação intelectual das elites mineiras coloniais,” *Revista Estudos Históricos* 7 (1991): 100–111; Francisco José Calazans Falcon, “Luzes e revolução na colônia: a importância da Universidade de Coimbra pós-reforma pombalina, Universidade(s): História, perspectivas; Actos do Congresso, História da Universidade, vol. 6, 1991); Fernando Taveira da Fonseca, *A dimensão pedagógica da reforma de 1772: Alguns aspectos* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2000); Cruz and Pereira, “Ciência, identidade e cotidiano”; “Les Portugais à l’Université de Montpellier (XII–XVIII siècle), Memórias e Documentos para uma História Luso-Francesa, vol. V; Oswaldo Munteal Filho and Mariana Ferreira, eds., *Minas Gerais e a história natural das colônias: política colonial e cultura científica no século XVIII* (Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro, 2005); Elizabeth A. Williams, “Medicine in the the Civil Life of Eighteenth-Century Montpellier,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no. 2 (1996): 205–32; Elizabeth A. Williams, *A Cultural History of Vitalism in Enlightened Montpellier* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003); James Livesey, “Botany and Provincial Enlightenment in Montpellier: Antoine Banal Père and Fils 1750–1800,” *History of Science* 43, no. 1 (2005): 57–76; James Livesey, “London by the Light of Montpellier: Scientific Networks between Northern Europe, Britain, and Languedoc, 1680–1789” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 4, no. 4 (2010): 85–102.

Brazilian-born commander of the Minas Dragoons, Lieutenant-Colonel Freire de Andrade, who was Álvares Maciel's brother-in-law, told Colonel Alvarenga Peixoto in 1788.³¹

The Constitutional Proposals

The Minas plot had been disrupted prior to denunciation by Silvério dos Reis. The revolt had been timed to follow the imposition of the *derrama*. This was expected in late February or early March of 1789. The viscount Barbacena, however, had decided not to proceed as instructed by Melo e Castro. The chronology is clear. Silvério dos Reis made his denunciation of the Minas conspiracy in person to Barbacena on March 15, 1789. This was a day after Barbacena had told the municipal council of Vila Rica not to proceed with the *derrama*. Barbacena's letter to the municipal council of Vila Rica was dated March 14, 1789. Barbacena was no traditional Portuguese official. He had also benefited from the educational reforms of the Marquês de Pombal. He was a student at the College of Nobles and of Professor Vandelli at Coimbra.³² After his arrival in Minas in 1788 Barbacena had drawn his own conclusion about the capacity of the Minas population to meet the draconian fiscal demands he had been instructed to impose by Melo e Castro. He concluded that the imposition of the *derrama* would be inadvisable given the economic circumstances of the captaincy. In his letter

³¹ “E só se recorda ouvir dizer a um primo o Dr. Domingos Vidal de Barbosa que, estando na França, soube que um dos estudantes da Universidade de Montpellier ousou, sendo filho desta América, escrever uma carta ao ministro da América Inglesa residente em Paris sobre a liberdade desta, a Portuguesa”; Francisco de Oliveira Lopes, inquirição, in Vila Rica, June 15, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 62. “O mesmo Alferes fora a casa dele e lhe mostrara um livro escrito em francês, pedindo-lhe que lhe quisesse traduzir um capítulo dele, que vinha a ser o dito livro em francês *A Coleção das leis constitutivas dos Estados Unidos da América* e o capítulo que apontava vinha a ser a seção oitava, sobre a forma da eleição do Conselho Privado, por cujo conteúdo ser invulgar ao douto alferes, ele, Testemunha, traduzia; o qual, depois, folheou o mesmo livro e como quem queria achar outro lugar, deixando-lhe ficar o mesmo livro. Com capa de papel pintado, apenso desta devassa: depois do que se retirou o dito alferes”; testemunha 20, Francisco Xavier Machado, June 27, 1789, *Autos da Devassa* 5 (1982): 188–91. André Figueiredo Rodrigues, “Seizures among the Participants of the Inconfidência Mineira as a Source for Research on the History of Books and Libraries (1789),” *História* 36 (2017), doi.org/10.1590/1980-436920170000000035.

³² On the activity of Eleuterio Jose Delfim in Montpellier and Goa and Mocambique, and Lorena's relationship with the Portugese entrepreneur Jacinto Fernandes Bandeira, 272-274, 274-280; On Bernardo Lorena's relationship with the Tavora family and with D. Jose I, Gonçalves, *O reino, a colônia e o poder*, 189-194; Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995) 79-82; Adeldo Gonçalves, *O Inconfidente que virou santo: estudo biografico sobre Salvador do Amaral Gurgel*, Estudos Avancados, vol. 24, no. 69, (Sao Paulo, 2010).

to the *câmara* of Vila Rica, he states that he had taken this decision because of the “circumstance of the captaincy and on his own initiative.”

Barbacena knew that he could count on the support of Queen Maria of Portugal in making this decision. She had been so concerned about the scale of the demands being proposed by Melo e Castro that she had instructed Melo e Castro to tell Barbacena that he was to impose the *derrama* “only if the people of Minas Gerais were in a condition to support the tax.” When the *derrama* was not imposed as had been expected, Gonzaga told Luís Vieira that “the occasion had been lost.” By the time Tiradentes arrived in Rio de Janeiro in early May 1789, he had little faith in his associates in Minas. He dismissed the commander of the Minas Dragoons, Freire de Andrade, as being what he called a “banana.” But although Barbacena did not impose the *derrama*, he did not lift the order that the tax farms be voided, nor did he indicate that he would cease to demand repayment of the arrears owed to the royal treasury by the contractors, nor did he cancel the suppression of the various auxiliary regiments. And on March 3, 1789, Silvério dos Reis was called to account by the Junta da Fazenda of Minas, which called him “crooked, dishonest and a falsifier.” Silvério dos Reis was among the greatest tax farmers in Minas Gerais at the time. He was also one of the most indebted. He had evidently decided, in light of Barbacena’s decision not to impose the *derrama*,

that he would find another way to escape his debt obligations by denouncing the Minas Conspiracy of which he had been a leading participant.³³

The discussion of the new constitutional arrangements for Minas among the Minas conspirators had taken place in late 1788 and early 1789, during the period they were anticipating the imposition of the *derrama*. The substance of their discussions we only know from the interrogations and witness statements and subsequent reexamination and new interrogations from the three *devassas*. All those being interrogated were seeking to diminish or deny their involvement. Many of them, though not all, were able and distinguished magistrates, lawyers, merchants, and clerics. But what is revealed is their inspiration from the example of successful struggle of the North American English colonies for independence from Great Britain, the influence of the constitutions of the North American states, especially the 1776 constitution of Pennsylvania, as well as the role of the works of writers such as Abbé Raynal, including his “revolution in America,” and Abbé Mably’s commentary on the North American constitutions published in the *Recueil*.

With the information that exists from the interrogations and the private and official correspondence that survives, it is possible to discern an outline of the proposals of the Minas conspirators. The most dramatic testimony in the *devassa* ordered by the viscount Barbacena came from Francisco Xavier Machado. He was thirty-four years old, Portuguese-born (Anadia, Coimbra),

³³ Registro da carta do Ex. Senhor General sobre a suspensão da derrama, Vila Rica, 14 de março de 1789, in “Revista do Publico Mineiro”, VII (1903), 979-980; also in AHU, Minas Gerais, caixa 57. The observation from Gonzaga is from Luiz Viera “continuação de perguntas”, 23 January 1790, *Autos da Devassa*, 4 (1981), 300. For a discussion of the chronology see Maxwell, *A Devassa da Devassa*, 231-232; For a discussion of the chronology and documentation, see Kenneth Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies*, 141-149; Martinho de Melo e Castro ao Visconde de Barbacena, Ajuda, 7 de fevereiro de 1788, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Códice 610; José Joaquim de Rocha, *Geografia histórica da capitania de Minas Gerais*, (edição crítica de Maria Ifigênia Lage de Rezende, Belo Horizonte, Fundação João Pinheiro, 1995); *Notícias da Capitania de Minas Gerais por Claudio Manuel da Costa*, Arquivo, Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro, DL 828.14; I am grateful to Bruno Carvalho for this reference; Junia Ferreira Furtado, *O livro da Capa Verde: o regimento diamantino de 1771 e a vida no distrito diamantino no período da Real Extração* (São Paulo, Annablume, 1996); *Autos da Devassa*, 10 (1983), 330; Registro da carta do Senhor General sobre a suspensão da derrama, Vila Rica, 14 Março de 1789, Visconde de Barbacena aos Senhores Juiz e Officiais da Camara de Vila Rica, Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro VII (1902 pp. 979-980; also in AHU, Minas Gerais caixa 57; Visconde de Barbacena a Luis de Vasconcelos e Sousa, 25 de Marco de 1789, AHU, Minas Gerais, caixa 94; Julio Jose Chiavenato, “A conjuração e o mineira e a devassa”, *Inconfidência Mineira as Varias Faces*, (Sao Paulo, Editora Contexto, 2000); “século XVIII: Opressão Fiscal e Resistencia dos Colonos” Serie Historia dos Tributos no Brasil Colonial 1500-1822, Parte,IV, !700/1808, (Rio de Janeiro, 2007). 94-121; Robson Jorge de Araujo e Carlos A.L Filgueiras, “O Visconde de Barbacena e o Químico Jose Alvares Maciel: Encontro na ciência e desencontro na politica,” *Quim. Nova*, Vol 40, No. 5, 2007, 602-612.

and a *porta-estandarte* (standard-bearer) from the cavalry regiment of the Vila Rica garrison. He had met frequently with Tiradentes while he was Rio on the days leading up to Tiradentes's arrest on May 10, 1789. It was known in Vila Rica on May 17, 1789, that the Alferes had been arrested in Rio. Cláudio Manuel da Costa was warned that evening and told to burn any incriminating papers. Gonzaga had not been at home, but a warning for him been left the next morning at the house of Dr. Diogo P. R. Vasconcellos, where José Pereira Ribeiro was staying. Pereira Ribeiro owned the second copy of the *Recueil*, which he had loaned to Gonzaga, Manuel da Costa, and Vieira da Silva, canon of the cathedral of Mariana and professor of philosophy at the Mariana seminary.³⁴

Álvares Maciel testified that he had purchased a history of English America at the same time he had purchased the *Recueil* in Birmingham. There are also several references in the *devassas* to a “*historia da America Inglesa*,” which seems likely to have been William Robertson's *History of America*, which was also published in French as *L'histoire de l'Amérique*. Francisco Xavier Machado had given Tiradentes two pistols and had left Rio de Janeiro to return to Vila Rica the day before Tiradentes was arrested. Machado was responsible for bringing the *Recueil* that Tiradentes had in his possession back to Vila Rica. Tiradentes evidently trusted him, and Machado knew about Tiradentes's plans to evade the viceroy's soldiers and escape back toward Minas Gerais. Machado told the *desembargador* Pedro José Araújo de Saldanha and José Caetano César Manitti, in the Minas *devassa* on June 27, 1789, in Vila Rica, that while both were in Rio he had had several discussions with Tiradentes about the reasons Minas “with its large population could become independent like North America.” Several days later, Machado testified, Tiradentes had “come to

³⁴ Ricardo R. Salazar, “Contagious Revolution? The role of the United States in the Minas Conspiracy” (unpublished graduate paper based in the first edition of the Autos da Devassa) History Department, Harvard University) (This was based on an analysis of the first publication of the Autos da Devassa (Rio de Janeiro, 1936-1938), as was my book *Conflicts and Conspiracies* (1973); Also the analysis by Rafael de Freitas e Souza, *Combate nas Luzes, A recepção e leitura do 'Recueil' pelos inconfidentes*, (Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2004); Junia Ferreira Furtado, “Cartography in dispute: the frontiers of Brazil in Abbe Raynal's *Histoire des Deux Indes*, *Culture&History*, Digital journal, 10 (2), December 2021, (cultureandhistory.revistas.ccic.es); Guilherme-Thomas Francois Raynal, *A revolução da America*, prefacio de Luciano Figueiredo e Oswaldo Munteau Filho, trad. Regina Clara Simoes, (Rio de Janeiro, Arquivo Nacional, 1993); Laura de Mello e Sousa, *Desclassificados do ouro: e pobreza mineira no século XVIII*, (Rio de Janeiro, Editora Graal, 1990); Carla Maria Junho Anastasia, *Vassallos rebeldes: violência coletiva nas Minas na primeira metade do século XVIII*, (Belo Horizonte; C/Arte, 1889).

his house and showed him a book written in French, asking him if he could translate a chapter of it, which was the French collection of the collection of the constitutional laws of the United States of America, and the chapter he pointed to was the eighth section.” Section 8 of the *Recueil* is the constitution of the republic of Pennsylvania. Tiradentes was interested in “the election to privy council,” and he “leafed through the book to find another place.” He also testified that Tiradentes had sought out another colleague in Rio to translate from English books about the American Revolution (probably Robertson’s *History of America*) and had sought to borrow an English dictionary.³⁵

Like the North Americans, the Minas conspirators intended to elect officials. Each city would have a council or parliament and would send representatives to the capital in São João del Rei. A university “like Coimbra” would be established in Vila Rica. The conspirators decided that a mint was to be established after their revolt. The diamond mining district of Minas Gerais was to be freed from the restrictions of the draconian diamond regulations which were to be abolished. Manufactories were to be established and the exploitation of the iron ore deposits encouraged. A gunpowder factory would be set up. Freedom was to be granted to native-born enslaved people and persons of mixed ancestry. Parish priests were to collect the *dízimos*, the 10 percent levy raised on the condition that the state would use this to sustain teachers, hospitals, and establishments of charity. All women who produced a certain number of children were to receive a prize at the expense of the state. There was to be no standing army. All citizens were instead to bear arms and when necessary to serve in a national militia. No distinctions or restrictions of dress would be

³⁵ Professor João Pinto Furtado contests my interpretation in *Devassa da Devassa* in his *O manto de Penelope: história, mito e memória da Inconfidência Mineira de 1788-9* (São Paulo, Companhia da Letras, 2002), and his “A Inconfidência Mineira: um novo tempo ou reedição do Antigo Regime,” Maria Fernanda Lage de Bicalho, Luiz Carlos Villalta (org) *Historia de Minas Gerais; as Minas setecentistas*, (Belo Horizonte, Autentica-Companhia do Tempo, 2007), v. 2, 629-648; For a discussion of these contrasting interpretations, see Andre Figueiredo Rodrigues, *A Fortuna dos Inconfidentes* (Sao Paulo, Editora Globo, 2010), 45-47; Kathleen J. Higgins, *Licentious Liberty in a Brazilian Gold-Mining Region: Slavery, Gender and Social Control in Eighteenth-Century Sabará, Minas Gerais* (University Park, Penn State University Press, 1999); *Formação de Culpa* (1) Rio de Janeiro, *Inquirições de Testemunhas*, (1) Rio de Janeiro, *Fortaleza da Ilha das Cobras*, 3, I Assentada, May 18, 1789, *Testemunha 1a*, Joaquim Silvério dos Reis, *Autos da Devassa*, 4 (1981), 43-52, especially 45, 50.

tolerated, and the local leaders would be obliged to wear locally manufactured products. All debtors to the royal treasury would be pardoned. The new capital was to be São João del Rei.³⁶

Padre Oliveira Rolim commented that “the Abbé Raynald had been a writer of great vision, because he predicted the uprising of North America, and the captaincy of Minas Gerais with the imposition of the *derrama* and was now in the same circumstances.” Several points of disagreement over policy arose among the conspirators. They were divided over the best method of dealing with the viscount Barbacena. Some favored his expulsion from the captaincy. Others argued for his execution, including Gonzaga, who said the governor’s execution was a sure way of making a commitment to the uprising irreversible. It was essential that the governor die first because it was necessary to place “the common good over the private” and that “some would remain neutral but would follow the party of independence when the general was dead.” The question of slavery became a point at issue. Álvares Maciel regarded the presence of so large a percentage of Black people in the population as a possible threat to the new republic should the promise of their liberation induce them to oppose Brazilian-born White people. This is precisely what the British had done in the course of the American War of Independence, and it was a point made in the texts contained in *Recueil*. Alvarenga Peixoto, one of the greatest slave owners among the conspirators, recommended that the enslaved people be freed so that they could become defenders of the new republic and committed to its survival. Álvares Maciel pointed out that such a solution might be self-defeating as the proprietors would be left with no one to work the mines. A compromise solution was eventually proposed that only native-born Black persons and persons of mixed ancestry should be freed in the interests of the defense of the state. No mention was made of compensation. The issue of debt was significant. Many were debtors on the royal tax farms in the

³⁶ For the context of the Minas conspiracy, Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil & Portugal 1750-1808*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1973; A new edition was published in paperback by Routledge (London and New York, 2004). In *Brazil Conflicts and Conspiracies* this was translated and published by Paz e Terra in 1977, “A Devassa da Devassa. A Inconfidência Mineira: Brasil e Portugal 1750-1808”, (Sao Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1977); A new and illustrated edition was published in 2010, Kenneth Maxwell, *A Devassa Da Devassa: A Inconfidência Mineira (1750-1808)* (Edição ampliada e ilustrada, Paz e Terra, Sao Paulo, 2010).

captaincy. Under the terms of the Peace of Paris of 1783, by which Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States, the North Americans did not have to pay debts for royal property forfeited or pay taxes owed. Freire de Andrade told the conspirators that “it was possible to refuse this payment by turning America into a Republic.” The fate of the Portuguese in the captaincy was debated. Father Carlos Correia wished them to be eliminated, a solution opposed by Alvarenga Peixoto. He said that “sons could not be expected to rise against their fathers” and that all the support possible would be needed during the early years of the republic.³⁷

There was also disagreement over the nature of the flag or arms of the new republic. Tiradentes suggested the adoption of a triangular symbol representing the Holy Trinity in imitation of the allusion to Christ’s five wounds on the cross in the Portuguese arms. Alvarenga Peixoto attributed to Manuel da Costa the design of the flag for the new republic inspired by the English American republic with the inscription in Latin: *Libertas aquo spiritus*. The idea did not find favor. The Latin phrase was probably transcribed incorrectly during the interrogations and should have read: *Abe o libertas a quo spiritis* (meaning “the one who gives life to liberty”). The phrase, quoted from Algernon Sidney’s *Discourses Concerning Government*, was adopted as a motto by Jefferson, who used it as a coat of arms and seal in several of his papers. Bruno Carvalho suggests that Maia e Barbalho may have been the source for Manuel da Costa’s suggestion. Alvarenga Peixoto proposed an Indian breaking the chains of oppression, with an inscription from Virgil: *Libertas quae sera tamen*, and this suggestion seems to have been that received with most favor.³⁸

³⁷ See analysis and citations in Maxwell, *A Devassa da Devassa*, 207; Domingos Vidal de Barbosa, *Testemunha* 27.a. 13 July, 1789, Vila Rica, Casa do Desembargador Pedro Araujo de Saldanha, José Caetano Cesar Manitti, *Autos da Devassa*, 1 (1976), 212-217, *Autos da Devassa*, 1 (1976), 212- 217; Perguntas feitas a José Alvares Maciel, Rio de Janeiro, 26 de novembro de 1789, *Autos das Devassa*, 4 (1981), 398; Jose de Rezende Costa, *Testamunha* 52.a., 28 de Julho, 1789: Casa de Desembargador Pedro de Araujo Saldanha, Jose Caetano Cezar Manitti, *Autos da Devassa*, 1 (1976), 254-259.

³⁸ Bruno Carvalho, “An Arcadian Poet in a Baroque City: Claudio Manuel da Costa’s Urban Pastorals, Family Life, and the Appearance of Race,” *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, April 2016, No 12; Also his “Writing Race in Two Americas: Blackness, Science, and Circulation of Knowledge in the Eighteenth-Century Luso-Brazilian World and the United States,” *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol 57, No 3, Fall 2016, 303-324.

The views of the Minas conspirators verged at times on economic nationalism. The sentiment was most explicit in the statements of Tiradentes, though he was clearly not alone in his opinions. He praised the beauty and natural resources of Minas Gerais as being the best in the world. Free and a republic like English America, he claimed, Brazil could be even greater because it was better endowed by nature. With the establishment of manufactories, he said, there would be no need to import commodities from abroad. Colonel José Aires Gomes, shortly after talking with Tiradentes, claimed that the merchants of Rio de Janeiro were behind the uprising because they desired “freedom of commerce” and were fomenting the revolution in their “own self interest.” The merchants of Rio de Janeiro would seek the support of Minas Gerais, “so that together they might make an English America.” The conspirators believed that “the nation that first provided assistance during the war would be the nation that gained the most advantages in its harbors.” Vicente Vieira da Mota, bookkeeper for João Rodrigues de Macedo, said that Tiradentes “went on to speak without any reservation that this captaincy could live independent of the government of Portugal; that it could be a Republic and achieve Freedom.” At Macedo’s house, Tiradentes had spoken of the “fertility and richness of this Province, that it had diamonds, and gold, and could produce with very little effort many goods, so that there was no need for anything from Europe; that if it had another form of government that was a Republic like English America it would be the happiest country in the world.”³⁹ The Brazilian would-be insurgents, however, had very much misjudged the priorities of the United States, and of Thomas Jefferson in particular. The United States was still anxious for a commercial treaty with Portugal. Luis Pinto de Sousa Coutinho’s appointment as foreign minister on December 15, 1788, was seen as a hopeful sign by Jefferson. Writing from Paris during March 1789, Jefferson recommended that “the negotiations may be renewed successfully if it be the desire of our government.

³⁹ Testemunha Inácio Correia Pamplona, Vila Rica, 30 junho de 1789, Autos da Devassa, 1 (1976), 147.

I think myself it is in their interests to take away all temptation to our cooperation in the emancipation of their colonies.” Jefferson had concluded that the interests of the United States were better served by a deal with Portugal than by encouraging a risky adventure in South America. Portugal’s demand for rice and other grains was a market for North American production, and most especially for the exports of Virginia. On April 30, 1789, George Washington was installed as the first president of the United States in New York. Jefferson was his first secretary of state. Washington requested a synopsis of Jefferson’s report to Jay, which Jefferson sent to him on July 22, 1790, together with his notes on Brazil and Mexico, but it produced no change in policy.⁴⁰ Jefferson, as secretary of state, was more interested in the fate of American shipping in the Strait of Gibraltar and the threat of the Barbary pirates and the Algerians than in the fate of would-be revolutionaries in Brazil, despite the fact that, as Maia e Barbalho had told him at Nîmes in 1787, the Brazilians had taken their inspiration from his words in the American Declaration of Independence.

Benjamin Franklin, however, remained faithful to his antislavery and anti–slave trade opinion, and in his later years he was a vocal abolitionist. On his return from Paris in 1787, Franklin became the president of the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of the Abolition of Slavery. The society not only advocated the abolition of slavery but made efforts to integrate freed, formerly enslaved, people into American society. In his last public act, Franklin sent to the vice president, John Adams, then presiding over the first Congress of the United States at Federal Hall in New York City, a “Memorial of the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in bondage & the Improvement of the condition of the African Race.” He signed the petition on February 3, 1790, asking “that from a regard for the happiness of

⁴⁰ Gordon S. Barker, “Unravelling the Strange History of Jefferson’s Observations sur le Virginie,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 112, no. 2 (2004) 13-177; John Chester Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery* (New York, 1977); Claudio Manuel da Costa spoke of the social role of Black Churches in Minas Gerais in his unpublished “Noticias da capitania de Minas Gerais” Ms in the Instituto Historico e Geografico Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, DL 828. 14; Perguntas feitas a José Alvares Maciel, Rio de Janeiro, 26 de Novembro de 1789, *Autos da Devassa*, 4 (1981), 398.

Mankind a society was formed several years since in this State by a number of citizens of various religious denominations for promoting the abolition of slavery and for the relief of those unlawfully held in bondage.” Franklin urged the Congress “to use all justifiable endeavours to loosen the bonds of Slavery and promote a general enjoyment of Freedom. Restoration of liberty to those unfortunate men, who alone in this land of Freedom, are degraded into perpetual Bondage, and who, amidst the general joy of surrounding freeman, are groaning in Servile subjection, that you will devise means for removing this inconsistency from the Character of the American people.” Franklin’s petition was introduced to the House of Representatives on February 12, 1790, and to the Senate on February 15, 1790. It was immediately denounced by proslavery congressmen, and there was heated debate in both houses of Congress. The Senate took no action on the petition. The House of Representatives referred Franklin’s “memorial” to a select committee.⁴¹ Franklin’s petition to the first Congress of the United States was tabled. On April 17, 1790, just two months later, Franklin died in Philadelphia at the age of 84. But he had delivered on his assertion in his footnote to the constitution of the republic of Pennsylvania in the *Recueil* where he wrote that the first act of

⁴¹ Benjamin Franklin’s antislavery petition to Congress was introduced to the House of Representatives on February 12, 1780, and to the Senate on February 15, 1790. The Senate took no action on the petition, and the House referred the petition to a select committee for further consideration; National Archives, “Benjamin Franklin’s Anti-Slavery Petitions to Congress,” <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/franklin>. See also Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, 226–29; David Brian Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Don E. Fehrenbacher and Ward M. McAfee, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gary B. Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1990). On March 5, 1790, Mr. Abiel Foster of New Hampshire, for the select committee, reported on the petitions of “the people called Quakers, and the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.” He observed “that the General Government is expressly restrained from prohibiting the importation of such persons ‘as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, until the year 1808.’ 2d. That Congress, by a fair construction of the constitution, are equally restrained from interfering in the emancipation of slaves who already are, or who may, within the period mentioned, be imported into or born within any of the said States. 3d. That Congress have no authority to interfere in the internal regulations of particular States.” Congressman James Jackson of Georgia was especially vociferous in defending slavery. The Bible and nature justified slavery, said Jackson. If slaves were freed, who would tend the fields of the South? Library of Congress, “A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774–1875,” American State Papers, 1st Congress, 2nd Session, No. 13, “Abolition of Slavery,” March 5, 1790, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsp&fileName=037/llsp037.db&recNum=19>.

Congress would be to legislate on the question of slavery and the slave trade. He gave the first Congress of the United States the opportunity to act; the first Congress declined the opportunity.⁴²

The Rediscovery of the *Recueil*

In Rio de Janeiro Tiradentes had pointed to section 8 of the “Constitution de la Republique de Pennsylvania,” and in particular to section 19 of the constitution, which he wanted translated. Section 19 delineated the method of electing the *conselho privado* from the city and the counties and described the severe limitation on office holding to three years. Xavier Machado said “the content was most special to the Alferes.” The reference is to the election of the supreme council with executive powers in the *Recueil*. Xavier Machado also testified that Inácio José de Alvarenga Peixoto had “for two years been writing laws,” and that en route he had met the prisoner, the *desembargador* Gonzaga, the vicar of São José (Carlos Correia de Toledo), and Alvarenga Peixoto, and it was said that he had also “entered into the same uprising was the same Vicar of São José and the Lieutenant-Colonel of his Regiment, Francisco de Paula Freire de Andrade.” The section of the constitution of Pennsylvania about which Tiradentes was so “enthusiastic” decreed that because of the limitations placed on the term of office “more men will be trained to public business... and moreover the danger of establishing an inconvenient aristocracy will be effectively prevented.”

The viscount Barbacena in his *relatorio* of July 11, 1789, his first account to Lisbon, to Martinho de Melo e Castro, of the Minas Conspiracy, had written that Colonel Francisco Antônio de Oliveira Lopes had described that he had heard that “a dozen Brazilian students at Coimbra had

⁴² Rio de Janeiro, April 10, 1791, Ofício de Sebastiao Xavier de Vasconcellos Coutinho a José Caetano César Manitti, Escrivão da Devassa-MG (nomeado Intendente do Ouro em Vila Rica), incumbindo-lhe providencias e viagem ao Rio, *Autos da Devassa* 8 (1977): 343–45; Vila Rica, February 12, 1790, “RESUMO da Devassa-MG (1 Parte) por José Caetano César Manitti, Escrivao da mesma,” *Autos da Devassa* 8 (1977): 258–67. The Constitution of Pennsylvania, September 28, 1776, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, “Plan or Frame of Government for the Commonwealth or State of Pennsylvania, Section 19, For the Supreme, executive council of this state shall consist of twelve persons chosen in the following manner: the freemen of the city of Philadelphia, and of the counties of Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks. Respectively, shall be chosen by ballot of one person for the city and one each county aforesaid to serve for three years and no longer (...) by this mode of election and continual rotation more men will be trained to public business (...) and moreover the danger of establishing an inconvenient aristocracy will be effectively prevented (...) Any person having served for as a councillor for three successive years, shall be incapable of holdng that office for four years there afterwards...”

joined hands to achieve the independence of their fatherland, but of these only three were now here,” and that Alvarenga Peixoto “had for two years been working on laws of the new government... to which can be added Dr. Jose Álvares Maciel, who had arrived from Lisbon and England, and is for certain one of the Student confederates from Coimbra: one of the most prestigious.” Barbacena added that “he had always thought that the sentiments, opinions and influence of Brazilian *bachareis* that return to their fatherland, especially those instructed in political and public rights, the interests of Europe, and with knowledge of the productions of nature, and much more those who passed through foreign universities, as had some done so without sufficient reason, was very risky.” He also said he was investigating whether there had been any correspondence from abroad or any foreign support. Despite his denunciation of Álvares Maciel and Freire de Andrade in his letter to Melo e Castro, neither was arrested until October 1789. Álvares Maciel remained at the viscount’s home at Cachoeiroa do Campo and the lieutenant-colonel remained in his post as commandant of the Dragoons. They were arrested only by order of the judges sent from Rio de Janeiro by the viceroy, and even then, the arrests were delayed for twenty days.⁴³

The copy of the *Recueil* that had been given to the viscount Barbacena in Minas Gerais in May 1789 was brought to Rio de Janeiro when the investigations by the judges of the Alçada were reopened in 1791. The *desembargador* Saldanha had died April 19, 1791, which meant that José Caetano César Manitti, brought the Minas *devassa* and related papers with him to Rio in 1791 where they were turned over by the new viceroy, the Conde de Resende, to the head of the Alçada, *desembargador* Vasconcelos e Sousa, and into the hands of the scribe (*escrivão*) Francisco Rodrigues da Costa. Manitti was then nominated to be the *escrivao auxiliar* of the Alcada, where he

⁴³ Testemunha 20^a, Francisco Xavier Machado, Assentado, 27th June 1789, Vila Rica, casa do Desembargador Pedro José de Araujo de Saldanha, Bacharel José Cetano Cesar Manitti, Autos da Devassa, 1, (1976) 188-191. The Constitution of Pennsylvania, section 19, is translated in the Appenso XXVIII, Coleção das Leis Da Colônias Inglesas Confederadas — in: Autos da Devassa, 3 (1981), 19-135, at 81-84.; “Secção décima nona, O Supremo Conselho” in “Constituição da Republica de Pennsylvania,” Kenneth Maxwell (coord.) O Livro de Tiradentes, 227-229.

substituted for the *desembargador* Marcelino Pereira Cleto, who left to join the high court of Bahia. The *Recueil* remained in the archives of the secretary of the Brazilian empire in Rio de Janeiro, “inside a green bag” attached to the documents of the original *devassas*. In 1860, the copy of the *Recueil* was removed from the archives and given by the director of the National Library, historian Alexandre José de Mello Moraes, to the public library in the city of Desterro (today Florianópolis) in the southern state of Santa Catarina. The note written by Mello Moraes on the first page of the *Recueil* is as follows: “I offer this precious book to the Public Library of Santa Catarina, for being the document number 26. I thought it has been part of the huge process of the Conjuração de Minas, of the Tiradentes. I suppose that this code belongs to the Desembargador Tomas Antônio Gonzaga, or to Dr. Cláudio Manuel da Costa, as a historic process, to be kept, Rio de Janeiro, 30 de Janeiro de 1860.”⁴⁴

The classification of the *Recueil* as *apenso 26* was made by the *escrivão da Alçada*, *desembargador* Francisco Luís Álvares da Rocha. This was the copy of the *Recueil* appended to the *devassa* of Minas Gerais as number 26 by Manitti. Mello Moraes had no connection to Santa Catarina; the gift of the *Recueil* formed part of a collection of books he gave to the newly established provincial library in Desterro. He described his actions as follows in his *Historia do Brasil-Reino e Brasil-Imperial*, published in Rio de Janeiro in 1871: “Appended to the original process, I found a copy of the Constitutions of the United States of America, translated into French, which made me know clearly that the revolution of Minas was a reality, and that either already had

⁴⁴ “Introdução histórica,” *Autos da Devassa 1* (1976): 17–85; Rui Mourão, *Museu da Inconfidência* (Sao Paulo: Banco Safra, 1995); Freitas e Souza, “A aquisição do Recueil para o arquivo da Casa do Pilar de Ouro Preto/Museu da Inconfidência”; Rafael de Freitas e Souza, “Combate nas luzes,” 30–40.

written ‘constitution’ for the new republic, or was planned, as exist in the American constitutions basis for it.”⁴⁵

The National Library of Rio de Janeiro published the *Autos da Devassa*, in seven volumes between 1936 and 1938, edited by the library’s director, Rodolfo Garcia. Between 1976 and 1983, the Brazilian Congress and the government of Minas Gerais published a more complete edition of the *Autos da Devassa* in ten volumes (the eleventh volume was published later). The language was modernized and supplementary documentation was included with annotations and introductory commentary by the editors—Tarquínio J. B. de Oliveira, a retired businessman, historian, and enthusiast of the Minas Gerais conspiracy, and historian Herculano Gomes Mathias. These volumes also incorporated documents held by the Galveias family, descendants of Martinho de Melo e Castro, purchased at auction in London by the Brazilian government in 1976.⁴⁶

The second volume of the *Autos da Devassa*, published in 1978, contains a transcription of the frontispiece of the *Recueil*. Volume 3, with a partial transcription of the text of the *Recueil*, translated into Portuguese, contains the Declaration of Independence, Harvard’s honorary degree for George Washington, the Articles of Confederation, and the constitutions of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Virginia. The *Recueil*, at the time of the publication of this volume of the *Autos da Devassa* in 1978, was still held in Biblioteca Publica de Florianópolis. (There is a photograph of the “Estado atual do livro que pertenceu a Tiradentes” between pages 99 and 100.) The translation in volume 3 attributes the footnotes made on the constitution of the republic of Pennsylvania to Régnier, though they were in fact made by Benjamin Franklin.

⁴⁵ The copy of the *Recueil* in Mariana, which was brought to Minas Gerais by José Pereira Ribeiro, was borrowed by Luís Vieira da Silva, Gonzaga, and Cláudio Manuel da Costa; see footnote by Tarquínio J. B. de Oliveira, *Autos da Devassa* 2 (1978): 496. Luiz Carlos Villalta, “Usos Inventivos fo livro e contestação política: A Inconfidência Mineira,” in *Usos do livro no mundo Luso-Brasileiro sob as Luzes: Reformas, censura, e contestações*, 459–509 (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço Editora, 2015).

⁴⁶ Notas explicativas, Herculano Gomes Mathias, *Autos da Devassa* 4:17, 31–39.

In September 1981, Professor Delson Gonçalves Ferreira obtained a duplication of the text of the *Recueil* from the Newberry Library. In 1984, Tancredo Neves, then the governor of Minas Gerais, and his secretary of culture, José Aparecida de Oliveira, requested that the governor of Santa Catarina, Esperidião Amin, return the *Recueil* to Minas Gerais. After consultations in the Assembly of Santa Catarina, Governor Amin agreed, and on April 21, 1994, Tiradentes Day, the *Recueil* arrived with great ceremony in Ouro Preto. In 1989 the *Recueil* was transferred and catalogued by the *arquivo* of the Casa do Pilar of the Museu da Inconfidência.⁴⁷

What does an examination of this text tell us about the plans for the Minas conspirators to establish a constitutional republic on the North American model in Brazil in 1789? The copy of the *Recueil* held at the Museu da Inconfidência, which I have been able to examine, has annotations in ink and in pencil. The annotations made in pencil cover many of the same points made in the text. I had originally thought these might have been made later, but I changed my mind after I was consulted by Richard Ramer, an antiquarian book dealer, on the authenticity and likely provenance of two manuscripts he had obtained of travels in Brazil. I was able to identify these as being the diaries of Luis de Albuquerque, the governor of Mato Grosso between 1771 and 1791, of his travels by the land route to Vila Bela in Mato Grosso from Rio de Janeiro via Minas Gerais and Goiás, and of his return route via the Madeira and Amazon Rivers to Belém. These diaries, which were subsequently obtained by the Newberry Library, were written in pencil; both have been reproduced and published in Brazil in 2014 by Janaína Amado and Leny Caselli Anzai.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Starling, *Ser republicano no Brasil Colônia*, pages 161–75.

⁴⁸ Janaína Amado and Leny Caselli Anzai, *Luis de Albuquerque: Travels and Administration in the Captaincy of Mato Grosso (1771–1791)* (São Paulo: Versal Editores, 2014). The Newberry Library's copies of the Albuquerque Diaries were provided by John Powell, Digital Services Manager; the volume is excellently edited, illustrated, and documented. On the emergence of the Madeira-Momore-Guapore Rivers as Brazil's far western border, see David Michael Davidson, "Rivers and Empire: The Madeira Route and the Incorporation of the Brazilian Far West, 1737–1808," diss., Yale University, 1970. For the governorship of Luis de Albuquerque and Pombal's conception for the Amazon-Far West connection from Vila Bella to Belem via the Madeira River; For the background to the European mapping of the South American frontier region, see Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Oráculos da Geografia Iluminista: Dom Luís da Cunha e Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon D'Anville na construção da cartografia do Brasil (1750–2016)* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2012); Rubens Ricupero, *A diplomacia na construção do Brasil (1750–2016)* (Rio de Janeiro: Versal Editores, 2017), 23–71; and Simon, *Scientific Expeditions*.

So now I think that these pencil annotations also may well have been made in the period between 1788 and early 1789 when the Minas conspirators were discussing the new constitutional republic they intended to establish. The ink and pencil annotations have also been examined by Rafael de Freitas e Souza in his 2004 master's dissertation under the supervision of Professor Joao Pinto Furtado at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. He provides a breakdown of the ink annotations on pages 45–49 and of the pencil annotations on pages 207–208.⁴⁹ I have also examined the *Recueil* at the Casa do Pilar at the Museu da Inconfidência which is, in places, badly damaged and was rebound, as well as the facsimile of the original text of the *Recueil* at the Newberry Library and two copies of the *Recueil* (one purportedly published in Switzerland and one purportedly published in Philadelphia), which altogether provide the basis for my analysis here.

What do these annotations in ink and in pencil on the *Recueil* show us?⁵⁰ The annotations were most probably made while the discussion was taking place as to what the statutes of the constitutional republic in Minas Gerais might have looked like, and at the moment the Minas conspirators were actually discussing the new form of constitutional republic they envisioned. These annotations are not mediated and distorted, nor are they deliberately obfuscated, as was the case of the responses to interrogations by the skilled lawyer and former judge Tomás Antônio Gonzaga, during the *devassas*. The annotations explain, in particular, the intensity of the discussion on slavery and role of the enslaved at the time of the uprising and within the new republic they envisioned. They show that they were interested in the legal processes, penal law and criminal proceedings, the judgment by peers, the constraints on the leadership of the state, the subjection of the military to civilian control, the means of representation by elections, and property rights.

⁴⁹ Rafael de Freitas e Souza, “Combate nas Luzes: A recepção e leitura do *Recueil* pelos inconfidentes,” dissertação, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, UFMG, 2004.

⁵⁰ The annotations are mostly made on the constitution of the Republic of Pennsylvania, which was largely written by Benjamin Franklin, and most particularly on his footnotes concerning the definition of the status of slaves and of free and unfree people and on the right to freedom of religion. (The pencil annotations on the Virginia constitution, which had been largely written by Thomas Jefferson, relate to general principles.)

Many of these specific annotations reveal the work of a legal mind, which points very much to Gonzaga and Manual da Costa. Júnia Furtado and Heloisa Starling have called Minas Gerais in 1788–1789 “a society of thought” (*uma sociedade do pensamento*). Here we see would-be revolutionaries translating these aspirations into concrete institutional procedures. The Mineiros were not seeking to create an “invented” republic. They were much more imagining how a new Brazilian constitutional republic might be constructed. They were interested, these annotations show, in elections, in laws, in the organization of a new republic with representative assemblies, in the fair administration of justice, in the freedom of expression, and in public education and a university.

Tomás Antônio Gonzaga, a nominated high court judge and the principal magistrate of Vila Rica; Cláudio Manuel da Costa, the most eminent Vila Rica lawyer and former secretary to the governor of Minas Gerais; Francisco de Paula Freire de Andrade, military officer and commandant of the Dragoons; Inácio Alvarenga Peixoto, also a former chief magistrate and poet; José Álvares Maciel, former student at the University of Coimbra, who had just visited the heartland of the industrial revolution in England where he had bought the *Recueil* while in Birmingham; Father José da Silva e Oliveira Rolim, a prominent priest from the diamond district; the canon Luís Vieira and padre Carlos Correia de Toledo, leading ecclesiastical figures; as well as the most influential entrepreneur and de facto banker of the region, Joao Rodrigues de Macedo: these were the men who had conspired to overthrow the rule of Portugal in its richest overseas province in 1789. They had imagined a constitutional republic on the North American model. They had been inspired by the most radical of the constitutions of the new North American states contained in the *Recueil*, and in particular by Benjamin Franklin’s short-lived republic of Pennsylvania as it was extensively described and annotated and, in many ways, imagined by Franklin for propaganda purposes in its French iteration in the 1778 *Recueil*.

In Brazil, those who had been inspired by the *Recueil* were denounced, imprisoned, and exiled to Africa or, in the case of the ecclesiastics, sent to imprisonment in Portugal. Tiradentes was publicly executed by hanging in Rio de Janeiro, his decapitated head sent to Vila Rica to be hoisted onto a pole in the main square and his body cut into four pieces for public display at the entrances into Minas Gerais. Yet all were participants in an Atlantic history that joined the constitutional republican experiments in the United States, via their translation and, at times, their mistranslation in France, to their use as a manual for republican, constitutional, and revolutionary innovation by Brazilians in Minas Gerais during 1789, the very apex year of the Atlantic revolutions. In the end, this is the history of a Brazilian constitutional republic which was imagined by the Minas conspirators in Vila Rica. It is a moment when the specifics of the Age of the Enlightenment were translated into concrete proposals for governance. And it is the history of a memory, a project of what might have been but which, like the *Recueil* itself, was for many decades thereafter deliberately suppressed and was almost lost to history.