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INTRODUCTION

When the so-called "Conspiracy" of Pintos completed two centuries I was still in Goa, and my contribution to the celebration of the second centenary of this event was intendedly a muted one. As an eminent Indo-Portuguese historian Prof. S. Subrahmanyam put it explicitly in his recent and much acclaimed book, I too had no intention of fighting the colonial wars all over again. I only edited and published (and with an unavoidable delay of two years) a collection of essays presented by Goan researchers at the Indian History Congress (Goa University, November 1987). But to these was added one more on my initiative, and that was related to the "Conspiracy" of Pintos by Mariano Dias. It was meant to complete and balance another thought-provoking paper already forming part of the collection and dealing with the "protesting priests of Goa". The book appeared as *Essays in Goan History* (1989). The centenary passed pretty unnoticed, though some stray write-ups did not fail to appear both in Goa and in Portugal. In Goa Dr. Carmo Azevedo celebrated the bi-centenary by starting his article in the Goan daily *Herald* (Panjim, Aug. 10, 1987, p. 2) in a nationalist tone: "It is a matter of legitimate pride for Goans that they organised the second anti-colonial revolt in modern history. (...) It took place only fourteen years after the Boston Tea Party (1773) which led to the generalized revolt among the American colonies and their War of Independence (1775-83) and two years before the Minas Gerais Conspiracy (1789) which likewise, eventually led to the independence of Brazil (1822)". The author further suggested that relevant documentation in Goa and Portugal was kept under wraps lest the unpalatable truths should come to light. Much of the information that is available to us has come through the book that is now being introduced in its first English translation. However, in 1985 a Portuguese researcher found in the Municipal Archives of Porto a very important document relating to the "Conspiracy" and entitled *Copia da Sentença de Conspiração e alta traição contra o Estado*. Based on it he wrote "Há dois séculos: Revolta frustrada para a independência de Goa" (*História*, no. 75, pp. 32-46). My attention was drawn to it by my old professor and friend, Leopoldo da Rocha, author of the classic work on the *Confrarias de Goa* (Lisbon, 1973). He arranged to send me a

photocopy of the document traced by Ivo Carneiro de Sousa in Porto. It is very likely that this document reached Porto with the personal belongings of the Judge José da Rocha Dantas e Mendonça (former judge of the High Court at Porto) who came to Goa as judge of the High Court and conducted the inquiry and gave the sentence in the case of the "Conspiracy". He died in Goa in August 1792.

We believe that this English version of J. H. da Cunha Rivara's *A Conjuração de 1787 em Goa* will make this event better known to a wider readership and to researchers worldwide. Fresh interest and re-evaluation of the event can thus be expected, and with new linkages and evidence that may be available or found by researchers on the period and related subjects elsewhere. Mr. Dias in his above-mentioned chapter in the *Essays in Goan History*, refers to Cunha Rivara's research efforts as *disinformation*. He sees Rivara, who was Chief Secretary of the Goa government from 1855 to 1877, as disturbed by the events in the neighbouring British India where the colonial rule was severely shaken by the so-called "Sepoy Mutiny" of 1857, and by various rebellions of Sawant Desais and Ranés from Kolhapur and Sawantwadi on Goa border in the previous decades. The fears of the much weaker Portuguese administration in Goa should not be ignored in such a situation. There is much evidence of this in the official correspondence in Goa Archives (*Monções* 232 & 233B, *Estrangeiros*, and *Confidenciais*). The Portuguese feared that these Maratha insurgencies would spill into Goa, and his fears were not unfounded. The Portuguese had allowed telegraph linkage between Bombay and Surat crossing Daman. The British troops were also allowed passage through Goa for undertaking some operations to check the rebels. Some rebels from Sawantwadi had sought refuge in Goa. The Portuguese had accepted their request for asylum, but proposed to take them to Africa, which they flatly refused on grounds of pollution. The British tried to have them extradited, but the Portuguese administration tried its best to honour its pledge of refuge and to take the rebel Desais of Sawantwadi to Timor as a compromise solution. The British reluctantly yielded and offered a steam vessel "Prince Arthur" to ensure that they were transported to the agreed destination. Incidentally and strangely, no one seems to remember today this rebellious component of Timor population when so much is been said and written in Portugal about the Timorese identity and their will to fight for their autonomy against Indonesia ("L.F. Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor*, Lisboa, 1994. This collection of essays includes one on Goa and four on Timor. Cf. Review in *Indica* (Bombay, Sept. 1995). The author provides no answer to our

question on Timor. While providing a good picture of social relations in Goa of the time of *Conjuração* and citing Rivara's contribution to historiography, he has nothing to say about his political predilections and involvement, which is essential for a critical assessment of his overall performance and contribution as historian). Where did the rebel Desais disappear? Goa Government, and Rivara as its representative, collaborated fully with the British administration and its representatives Lords Canning and Elphinstone in quelling the revolt or mutiny, as the British chose to call it. Rivara had therefore reasons to be suspicious of anything that smacked of nationalist pride in Goans. His research on *Conjuração* has to be seen in the background and not necessarily aimed at minimising the revolutionary nature of the plot as was done by the British historiography with reference to the Mutiny of 1857. However, the claim for meticulous research and free from all bias (*limpa da mancha da paixão*) needs to be more critically checked. Rivara was certainly aware of the efforts of *Ultramar* and *Ilustração Goana* to rehabilitate the Goans who had fought the Portuguese colonial pretensions and suffered for it, like Bernardo Peres da Silva or Mariano José Conceição da Rocha. The Portuguese liberalism gave the Goan intelligentsia an opportunity to attempt this, and Rivara's *historical research* may be seen as a counter-exercise. Barreto Miranda's description of the *Sentença de Conspiração e Alta Traição* as a judicial murder of the martyrs of Bardez is seen by Mr. Dias as the red rag that provoked Rivara's research on *Conjuração*, specially in the sensitive context of comments on the elections in Nagoa (Bardez) in 1861, as it is plain from p. 115 of the original Portuguese text of the book. Rivara was personally and emotionally involved in these elections on behalf of white interests and had referred in the *Boletim do Governo* to the mean and duplicitous character of the Goan natives. For him (as to many Europeans and Americans even today) the innate Indian subtlety was always an expression of meanness and machiavellism. Hence, this book is not just a contribution to the history of Goan nationalism, but also to the history of the colonial mentality of the author and of the time when he wrote it.

There is much evidence of emotionalism in Rivara's published reactions (called *reflexões*) on the issue of Portuguese crown patronage (*Padroado*) that was being cut to size by the Propaganda Fide in the changed political-military scenario in the East, where the British had taken over as the dominant colonial power. Some of these *reflexões* of Rivara appeared without appending his name to them, and simply as authored by a Portuguese. But that does not fail to reveal how emotional

and hysterical the man could become over the issues that touched his patriotic feelings, while the issue of "conspiracy" being used for electoral purposes by the natives of Bardez is condemned by Rivara as fanning "pseudo-patriotism of crude mob". His impressive and voluminous *Archivo Portugues-Oriental* and his interest in Konkani writings have left many a Goan historian and nationalist obliged to his historical contribution. A more critical assessment needs to be undertaken of Rivara as documentalist and historian of Portuguese India.

One could draw here a parallel to the Conspiracy of Goa with a similar development in the Philippines under the Spanish rule (one can find more parallels in the colonial histories of Goa and the Philippines but with chronological delays in the Philippines). There too the anti-colonial feelings manifested themselves in the narrow struggle of the Filipino clergy for justice. Its most noted spokesman was Fr. Jose Burgos. He and some other priests lost their lives in their campaign for the "filipinization of the parishes". Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere* have recorded the representative value of this struggle in the wider anti-colonial resistance. The colonial discrimination seen as colour discrimination was not exclusively a Portuguese fault, neither was it entirely absent despite greater degree of integration achieved by the Portuguese in the colonial societies, chiefly due to their interest in religious activities. It was not greatly different with the Spanish situation, but these had to deal with less developed native populations than did the Portuguese in the East, except in the Philippines where the Hindu and Muslim influences were already sufficiently marked. It was the educated clergy among the natives who experienced the discrimination first, and when the white colonialists had no other superiority to display, they usually fell back on the colour superiority. Racism has always been the last desperate resort of the dominant groups to assert their right for domination. If Rivara believes that this was not true in the context of the Conspiracy of Goa in 1787 he was not reading all the facts for reasons best known to him and also to us. Prof. Boxer has already drawn the parallel between the Conspiracy in Goa and *Inconfidencia* of 1787 in Minas Gerais. He points to the difference in the treatment meted out to those found guilty. In Brazil only one of the eleven condemned to death was executed, but in India the repression was more savage, and fifteen Goans were executed with great barbarity. He concludes: "It is difficult to believe that this different treatment was due to anything else but colour prejudice, since those reprieved in the *Inconfidencia Mineira* were all

white and the Goan victims were all coloured" (*The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1969, pp. 199-200).

The conspiracy, wrongly linked by tradition almost exclusively with Pintos (a psychiatrist-friend of mine with whom I discussed this matter some years ago, jokingly asked me if it was really a *conspiração* or a *constipação* of Pintos. He seems to have made a point: the native colonial society represented by the Pintos seems to be felt left in the cold), had three priests leading it, and one of them from Pinto family, namely Fr. Caetano Victorino de Faria, Fr. José António Gonçalves and Fr. Francisco Couto, who had felt their talents and self-dignity hurt by the dominant Portuguese colonial interests of the time and as represented by the metropolitan whites and by the Goa-based *mestiços* or *descendentes*. But when these Goan priests were bypassed in favour of the South Indian St. Thomas clerics for the appointment to the vacant sees of Cranganore and Mylapore, they did not seem to realise that they were contradicting themselves by their colonial and discriminating attitude towards the local candidates of South India. The Malabar clergy certainly had greater right to rule over their churches than Goa-born clerics. Rivara gloats on this point to ridicule the ambitions of the Goan priests. However, a more recent piece of evidence in the form of the published diary of Bishop Cariattil and written by the priest who accompanied him (*Varthamana-pusthakkam*, trans. & edit. by Placid J. Podipara, Rome, 1971) discloses the large game-plan of Fr. Caetano Victorino de Faria, the real mastermind of the plot to displace the Portuguese and to take over the control of responsible posts in Goa. He was not opposed to Cariattil's appointment to the Cranganore See, but he would do it after taking over the metropolitan See of Goa. He had even shown special interest in ordering from Milan specially cut Malayalam letter-types which were better than those of the Propaganda. It appears from the new evidence that the departure of the priests Francisco Couto and José António Gonçalves to Rome for further studies was not their own move as presumed by Rivara, but on instructions of Fr. Caetano Victorino de Faria. It was only when Cariattil was appointed and his own claims were ignored that Fr. Caetano Victorino de Faria seems to have decided on the revolt. And was the death of Bishop Cariattil in Goa and before reaching his See natural, or part of the conspiracy? It remains unclear.

One could usefully consult the documents appended to the *Refutação Analytica* published by a Goan in Bombay, and of which Rivara served himself to draw the information on the inquiry. He could not find any original, but only the doc. 24 of *Refutação Analytica*, which copied the

original from the Archives of the High Court in 1835 and had found it already in a bad condition. Curiously, the orthography of this document does not tally fully with the document found in Porto District Archives. What is also curious is the arrangement chosen by Rivara to present the details of the inquiry and punishments meted out to the condemned. By grouping them under similar penalties, Rivara found a way of avoiding the unpalatable expressions in the original of the inquiry text which refers to tortures administered to extort confessions. Rivara has no use for these details, but seeks rather to distract the reader by referring to the Frenchman serving as Sergeant Major of Cavalry in Bardez and was very kind in the way he effected the arrest of two Pintos in Saligao. Incidentally, a study of local rebellions in the bordering region under British rule in 1844 by Dr. P. P. Shirodkar (*Purabhilekha-Puratatva*, III, no. 2, 1985) reveals direct link of some Pintos of Candolim with the rebels. It is only on the basis of these continued links of Candolim Pintos with the rebel elements during the time of Rivara that perhaps justify his appending a genealogical tree of the family to his book. The native discontent in Goa sensed by Rivara was not of his imagining, but despite his long title of the book suggesting a wider scope than just the event of 1787, he failed to go beyond the condemnation of the Conspiracy to the study of the roots of the problem and its many manifestations. The whole issue is still awaiting a well-documented research on the Goan native society in the 18th century and later. We can look forward to the posthumous publication of Mira Mascarenhas in the *History of Christianity in India* (edited by the Church History Association of India). A doctoral dissertation on late 18th century Goa has recently been published by M. J. M. Lopes. Unfortunately it limits its scope to quantifying and presenting graphically the results of the Pastoral Visitations to which I had drawn public attention twelve years earlier, and does not bring any substantially new interpretation into the debate.

The Viceroy of Goa in 1760 (not too far before the “Conspiracy” date) had studied the reluctance of Goan natives to participate in the Portuguese military service and wars of the New Conquests, and he decided among other things to issue an ordinance banning under heavy penalties the use of the expression *negro* (black) or *cachorro* (dog) to refer to the Goan natives. His ban was aimed at the Portuguese, including expressly the *mestiços* (*porque nestes ainda mais que nos mesmos Europeos reina aquella luciferino vicio*). He was referring to the vice of pride (*soberba*) or what we may describe as the “white superiority”, smacking of racism, which he considered greatly responsible for the native difference towards

the Portuguese colonial interests. The growing white superiority of the *luso-descendentes* needs to be understood as a reaction to their losses in Daman and Bassein where they owned large estates and which had been overrun by the Marathas in 1739. It was a bitter experience for the *mestiços* to swallow. A growing pressure of Goan natives to deprive them also of their monopoly over the local army made them more insecure and hostile. The Viceroy deserves credit for the boldness of his assessment, which was not a virtue of many of his countrymen then or later. The official cultural openness was also an expression of short-lived Pombaline reforms. To be fair to Portugal, its policy during the colonial times (at least in Goa) and even in the post-colonial period has not denied its citizenship to its former colonial subjects. In practice, the integration of the colonial subjects into the metropolitan society may not have been always free from certain prejudices based partly on conscious discrimination, or more often on problems of cultural adaptation.

Just a few years before the year of publication of *Conjuração*, the Goan natives had succeeded in obtaining the abolition of the local army, heightening thereby the insecurity of the *descendentes* and also the patriotic fears of Rivara. Various revolts of the Ranes should not be considered seriously as any freedom struggles of Goans. Their revolts were largely in defence of feudal rights that were being challenged by the Portuguese administration and by new plantation interests that had come into Satari in the wake of demand for teak for the construction of the new railway line. Satari forests were the real target, when plantation concessions were being sought by some foreign companies ostensibly for coffee and cotton cultivation. Lands were also being usurped by a State sponsored *sociedade patriótica de baldios* as a hopeful project of reducing pressure on cultivable land in the Old Conquests of Goa, and thereby hoping to stem the tide of emigration. All this came after the time of Rivara, but his great interest in the preservation of the Goa village communities was also a covert expression of preserving an institution which was by its very nature caste-oligarchical and opposed to any structural change in the property relations as demanded by needs of modernisation and as analysed by Francisco Luis Gomes in his *A Liberdade da Terra e a Economia Rural India Portuguesa* (1862). Was Cunha Rivara trying to ignore the non-Brahminical sage from Salcete? He sought to pamper the traditionally entrenched rural interests, predominantly of the Brahmin caste and keeping them thereby satisfied with their inherited pride, rather than meddling into the general public issues. He seems to have had little influence on the Bardez and Tiswadi

Brahmins who led the Conspiracy of 1787. His defence of the Goan village communities should not be interpreted as an exercise of political altruism. We must, therefore, note that he belonged to the historical trend of his contemporary Alexandre Herculano in Portugal, as a champion of middle class gentry and its municipal and corporate institutions. His publications and those sponsored by him through Felipe Nery Xavier or Miguel Vicente Abreu reveal this preference. His historical intervention was therefore not devoid of political orientation, just as in the case of Herculano in Portugal. Despite their great stress on archival documents, they saw in history a guide for the political needs of their present. Rivara's *Archivo Portugues-Oriental* was an extension of *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica* to the colonial history in the East. His patriotic defence of Padroado rights also reflects Herculano's special concern. Rivara did honour the Portuguese colonial administration as a worthy parallel to his contemporary and able administrator-historians of British India, such as Elphinstone, Duff, Maine, etc. Rivara was convinced that history was an essential tool for a successful colonial administration.

Some other considerations before we conclude: Whether there were links of the Goan conspirators with Tipu Sultan or not, we have had more research recently coming out from Ernestina Carreira on the basis of the contemporary French documentation. The Mhamai link of this period of Goa's history and their greater involvement in Malabar trade at this juncture needs perhaps to be better explored to obtain more clues to the conspiracy episode and events of the time. There are also some other lines of analysis that have not been pursued: What was the British reaction to the episode? Did they take notice of it at all? Had the conspiracy succeeded, what would be its fate under the growing British hegemony, let alone the interests of the French or of the neighbouring native chieftains, including the Marathas and Tipu Sultan? There is another curious side-issue of the conspiracy to which very recently a Goan writer, Carmo de Noronha, had made a reference. He refers to one of the consequences of the brutal suppression of the conspiracy on the psyche of the Goans from Bardez, unlike those of Salcete who were not involved in the conspiracy (with one single exception?) and consequently did not have to face the repressive measures. These responded enthusiastically to State sponsored programmes and subsidies for Goans wishing to proceed to Portugal for higher studies. Hardly anyone from Bardez opted for it for a very long time. It appears to be a reasonable historical explanation for the preference shown by Bardez people to emigrate to non-Portuguese territories instead.

To conclude, I wish to touch on another characteristic Goan trait (perhaps reinforced by Portuguese heritage of *má lingua*) in the attitude of two outstanding Goan disciples of Rivara, namely, Felipe Nery Xavier and Miguel Vicente Abreu. Both made notable contribution to Goan historiography under the direction and patronage of Rivara. While Abreu was an employee of the Government Printing Press, Xavier was a first grade official in the Department of Finance. They did not seem to be above petty academic rivalry, and Abreu felt victimised by the other, when he saw his pay cut to half of what was approved in the State budget. I am not sure what was the final outcome, but he pleaded with Rivara, the then Chief Secretary of the government, to protect his interests. The text is thought-provoking in the context of the history of mentalities: "If Your Excellency feels that I have the law on my side, please do not leave it to the interpretation of Mr. Felipe Nery, because this country chief (I am sorry to say so) does not seem to be inclined to help his own subject as you Portuguese officials do, whenever you have an opportunity to help. It is for this reason that God has been kind to place you over us. May the Lord keep your Excellency, my chief and protector, for many years." (translated from the correspondence of Rivara at Evora Public Library). Abreu seems to reflect what is contained in an old Konkani proverb of Goa: *Firgyanchea payam mel'lem borem, punn Kan'dyachea sangata jiel'lem nhoi*, meaning it is better to die at the feet of a Portuguese man, than to live in the company of a Goan Christian (*Canarim, kan'dy*). But João de Barros tells us that a Portuguese does not suffer as much by being forgotten as with the praise of another! (*Decada I: da Asia*). We need a more human portrait of Joaquim Heliodoro de Cunha Rivara and a clearer picture of his involvement and response in the Goan cultural and political ambience. Such an attempt is bound to reveal that "historical objectivity" is only a qualified human achievement. Perhaps this publication of Rivara's work in English translation may motivate wider interest in this man who is barely known in his own country.

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