

1. The myth of a precious absolutism

mito formado em volta da ideia da emergência de um poder monárquico absoluto, suplantando as demais forças sociais do reino

The chronology of such a transformation was also straightforward: the fifteenth century saw the emergence of centralized royal power, and the crucial moment in that sudden centralization occurred during the reign of King John II (1482-1495) .

Durante este período, o monarca teria combatido o poder da nobreza, preparando para os seus sucessores um poder forte e extremamente centralizado.

Este processo teria ainda beneficiado do ouro vindo do Ultramar.

Another important stage of this process was the year 1581 when Portugal joined the Spanish Monarchy.

referência à perspectiva nacionalista/tradicional que considera os anos seguintes como um «dark period» , não o considerando por isso merecedor de estudos aprofundados

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As for the early eighteenth century -- the reign of King John V (1706-1750) , it was (and still is a commonplace among historians to regard the magnificent and luxurious court life of that period as a further reason to believe that absolute royal power was already a fait accompli in Portugal.

é esta ainda a imagem que transmitem os manuais escolares do ensino secundário

2. Rethinking Portugal's political history

(a) The study of the political culture

Nos últimos anos os estudos feitos procuram um estudo mais abrangente (compreensivo) dos acontecimentos políticos da época. Os anos 80 e 90 viram surgir novas formas de abordagem a estes problemas.

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... several lines of approach may be identified. The first sign of revision came from the so-called «history of political ideas», as some scholars promoted a comprehensive analysis of contemporary political discourse about society and its government.

contestação de A. M. Hespanha face à tradicional ideia de dicotomia Estado/Sociedade: Hespanha has taken the view that the society of the ancien régime was characterized by a sort of «decentralization» of power. In other words, Hespanha regards early-modern Portugal as a society in which power was dispersed and decentralized, distributed not only among the various bodies with administrative responsibilities, but also among the different dimensions of political and social space.

esforço no sentido de encontrar as categorias básicas ou sistemas de classificação usados pelos indivíduos da época em estudo, de forma a identificar os «paradigmas» sobre os quais a prática política se fundava (A. M. Hespanha)

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Hespanha's approach took two different directions: on one hand he made an in-depth study of the complex set of images and social representations of statecraft; on the other, he sought to assess the effectiveness of these images on political behaviour, on political practise.

até ao séc. XVIII, os escritos sobre temas políticos recorrem a assuntos e a vocabulário de diferentes origens: da literatura ética Clássica (Aristóteles), ao antigo debate sobre as virtudes profanas (Xenofonte e Séneca, sobretudo).

... there was a need to substitute the expression «political theory» for a broader «political culture», thus enriching its significance, and also enlarging the group of people and literary traditions that contributed to the debate on the significance of politics throughout this period.

... As a result of the persistence of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, there was an enduring notion of a natural constitution of the society, regarded as having been created by God.

... Hespanha argues that [these images] had a striking influence both on the distribution of power among the several spheres of society, and on the political practise of the time.

In fact, it was a recurrent trope of this tradition that each part of the social body had some specific rights and duties, which had resulted from this natural constitution.

imagem de uma sociedade onde o rei, mais do que um soberano absoluto, é um poder entre poderes, uma autoridade forçada a respeitar a constituição natural da sociedade, pela qual cada membro tem assegurados deveres e direitos

(b) The pluralist nature of power

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referência ao fraco conhecimento da organização clero português do início da Idade Moderna, apesar da sua forte presença entre a elite governadora do reino

As is already well known, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the church had a most effective administrative apparatus, and its impact on the provinces was a very powerful ones. A nível local, parece não haver dúvidas de que o poder da Igreja era muito superior ao do aparelho administrativo do rei.

... Another seat of power, the aristocracy, is also a crucial area for an understanding of the early-modern political process.

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também acerca do poder da aristocracia os estudos se encontram ainda muito incompletos

(c) Research into royal administration

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referência à obra de HESPANHA, A. M. - *Visperas del Leviatán* (1989)

chama a atenção para o relevante papel dos funcionários da coroa

The personnel of the Crown have come to be seen as sharing interests of their own, frequently quite different from the values which were promoted by the authority for whom they were working, namely the king. This point is reinforced if one remembers the crucial role played by the jurists during this period.

... Moreover, although in principle favourable to the Crown, they developed a tight esprit de corps and often resisted some of the king's decisions in order to protect their own corporate interests.

... much greater emphasis on the material conditions by which power was exercised and territory was administered in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries.

a partir do séc. XVI a Coroa desenvolveu um trabalho de estudo e descrição do território face à sua grande diversidade e aos contrastes existentes

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Although very irregular and gradual, these measures were taken with the aim of making royal government more effective by rationalizing the royal administration.

... At the same time, there have been several attempts to explore the links between royal power and the financial resources which were increasingly essential for the effectiveness of government.

(d) The Portuguese political framework and its transformation

o processo de mudança da administração real no início da Idade Moderna

There is no doubt in current historical investigation that this emphasis on «process» is very pertinent for (103) an understanding of the significance of the developments that took place. Such an approach leads to a concept of society as a process rather than as a static system .

... over this period it is quite clear that the above-mentioned «decentralization» of political discourse tended to diminish, as the debate on the general issue of statecraft was gradually monopolized by a smaller group of people strongly connected to the Crown. As a result, there seems to have been a kind of decline of the jurists as the main political theorists, as the new type of debate on statecraft emerged.

alterações significativas também ao nível administrativo e governativo

... the influence of Spain in the organizational structure of Portuguese administration and government. According to some recent research, during the ministry of the Count-Duke of Olivares (1622-1640) , there was a strikingly «modernizing» Spanish reform programme in Portugal.

tendo sido encarada pela historiografia nacionalista como uma revolução contra os espanhóis, a revolta de 1640 é vista pelos estudos mais recentes como uma resposta ao impacto negativo na elite portuguesa da política de Olivares

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... Significantly, it was a commonplace of their complaints that Olivares had failed to respect the natural constitution of society

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3. The historiography of the Cortes of Portugal

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... most studies used to insist on an idealized picture of the medieval Cortes.

... Parallel to this idealization of the medieval Cortes, there has been an enduring tendency to regard the early-modern Cortes as a decadent and ineffective institution, overcome by the expansion of royal power.

... As far as the representatives were concerned, far from defending the needs of the commonwealth, they were described as being pliant, and most of the time corrupted either by the Crown or by the nobility.

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... there is no doubt that the Cortes was never able to limit, in an effective way, the power of the monarch.

... Yet, in spite of thir essential weakness, the Cortes met quite frequently troughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and every time this assembly was in session, it represented an event of crucial importance in the political life of the realm. In fact, not only was the Cortes the perfect setting for political interaction -- the place where the protagonists of the political struggle met -- it was also a time when the Crown made an extraordinary investment in ceremonial.

importância do cerimonial das Cortes; rico programa simbólico