

REVISTA PORTUGUESA de HISTÓRIA

tomo XXXII



COIMBRA 1997 / 1998
FACULDADE de LETRAS
da UNIVERSIDADE de COIMBRA
INSTITUTO de HISTÓRIA ECONÓMICA e SOCIAL

Versão integral disponível em digitalis.uc.pt

A noble life: Luis de Mendonça Furtado and the quest for fama in baroque Portugal and her empire

GLENN J. AMES

University of Toledo, Ohio

In the long history of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, men such as Vasco da Gama and Afonso de Albuquerque, to name but a few, were able to achieve fame and glory in the service of the Crown. In the historiography, however, it is much more common to find such cases for the 16th century when the *Estado* was first established and solidified than during the 17th century as the empire suffered the ravages of the 60 year Spanish “captivity” and the attacks of the Dutch United East India Company (VOC). The count of Linhares, in part because of his deeds, in part because he was one of few Viceroyes whose diaries have survived has received a good deal of notice.¹ Nevertheless, the general tendency to ignore individuals who admirably served in the *Estado* during the 17th century,

¹ For example, cf. Anthony R. Disney, “The Viceroy as Entrepreneur: The Count of Linhares at Goa in the 1630’s,” in R. Ptak and D. Rothermund (eds.) *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400-1750* (Stuggart, 1991) pp. 427-44 and the manuscript sources cited therein.

a period of intense competition from European and Asiatic competitors, is unfortunate. I have previously argued that the post-1668 period in Portugal witnessed an important campaign to rehabilitate what remained of *India portuguesa*. Beginning with the coup of late 1667 that installed Prince Regent Pedro and his supporters in power, every effort was made to reform the abuses which had helped undermine the *Estado's* former glory.² No individual played a greater role both before and during this crucial campaign than Luis de Mendonça Furtado e Albuquerque, the first count of Lavradio, a name that deserves recognition as a great figure in the history of European overseas expansion during the last half of the 17th century.

By 1640, and the “revolution” against the Philip IV, the luster of the Viceroyalty in Goa had been dulled. By 1656, and the death of João IV, it had been definitively tarnished. The *Estado* had suffered losses in Indonesia, at Hurmuz (1622), Melaka (1641), and Maskat (1650). The VOC had also begun an attack on Ceylon, had periodically blockaded Goa, and would soon extend the war to the Malabar coast. Nevertheless, as Virginia Rau and Anthony Disney have demonstrated “the viceroyalty of Goa [remained] one of the most lucrative patronage appointments in the gift of the Portuguese Crown.”³ The great service nobility of the seventeenth century that initially served the Habsburgs in Asia, like Linhares, and ultimately served the Braganzas, like Lavradio, sought to obtain “two of the career objectives most commonly pursued” by their class.⁴ The first was, in some sense, communal: to preserve and advance the interest of one’s noble *casa* or house, and family. The second objective was more

² Cf. Glenn J. Ames, “The *Estado da India*, 1663-1677: Priorities and Strategies in Europe and the East,” *Revista Portuguesa de Historia* XXII (1987) pp. 31-46; “The *Carreira da India*, 1668-1682: Maritime Enterprise and the Quest for Stability in Portugal’s Asian Empire, *The Journal of European Economic History* XX (1991) pp. 7-27; “The Goa *Rendas* and the Case for Indigenous Dominance in the Economy of Portuguese Monsoon Asia, 1600-1700,” in *Fra Spazio e Tempo: Studi in Onore di Luigi De Rosa*, edited by Ilaria Zilli (Naples, 1995) 1:1-12; and “Spices and Sulphur: Some New Evidence on the Quest for Economic Stabilization in Portuguese Monsoon Asia, 1668-1682,” *The Journal of European Economic History* XXIV (1995) pp.465-87.

³ Cf. Anthony R. Disney, “The Viceroy as Entrepreneur,” pp. 427-44; and Virginia Rau, *Fortunas ultramarinas e a nobreza portuguesa no século XVII* (Coimbra, 1961).

⁴According to Disney in “The Viceroy as Entrepreneur” p. 428.