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**FIRST LINES OF SCHOOLING:  
REGIUS AND PRIVATE TEACHERS IN BRAZIL, 1759-1834**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article presents a brief overview of education in Brazil between 1759 and 1834. Delimited by the creation of the position of Regius teacher and by the decentralization promoted by the Additional Act of 1834, it discusses the process of state control, secularization, and promotion of schooling in the Portuguese America and the independent Brazil. Considering the regional characteristics of the colonial territory, the analyses carried out focus on the Capitania de Minas Gerais [Captaincy of Minas Gerais] because of its economic importance in the context of a “world economy”. The article provides a quantitative assessment of the schooling in various regions of Brazil and presents the profile of the teachers who worked in Mariana, Minas Gerais, contributing to the study of the first lines of school education in the Luso–Brazilian modernity.

**KEY WORDS**

Teachers; Education; Minas Gerais; Brazil; Centuries eighteenth and nineteenth.



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# First Lines of Schooling: Regius and Private Teachers in Brazil, 1759–1834<sup>1</sup>

*Alvaro de Araújo Antunes*

## INTRODUCTION

Assessing the entire production dedicated to the History of Education in Brazil, specialized historiographical research shows a shortage of studies on school education in the colonial period (Falcon, 2006; Faria Filho & Vidal, 2002; Fonseca, 2006, 2009a)<sup>2</sup>. The number of articles, communications, theses and dissertations that deal with education in Portuguese America is substantially lower than the number of studies devoted to the imperial period and, above all, the republican one (Antunes, 2015). Not characterizing a full absence, the dearth of studies on education in Portuguese America, which is noticeable by the comparison with the whole production in the area, deserves to be questioned for the benefit of future investigations.

Although it is difficult to determine the reasons for the historiographical production wanes, the authors Ana Maria de Oliveira Galvão and Eliane Marta Teixeira Lopes suggest as possible causes: the lack of documentary records on the everyday education in Portuguese America; the fluid and inconspicuous nature of education in the colonial period; the reduced contribution bequeathed by the teaching ways and structures from modernity to contemporaneity (Galvão & Lopes, 2010, p. 38). It is true that the causes listed require some kind of proof, being, above all, a commendable effort to understand the historiographical trends. Nevertheless, the alleged reasons that have been preventing the studies on education in Portuguese America should be questioned as to their epistemological relevance and validity, among other reasons, so that they will not become, by the power of inertia, insurmountable obstacles.

Initially, it is necessary to question the idea that the colonial period would be of little contribution to “understand the present” of education.

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<sup>1</sup> Research with support from the Foundation for Research of the State of Minas Gerais [Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais — FAPEMIG].

<sup>2</sup> Some surveys indicate percentages lower than 5% of studies dedicated to the colonial period against more significant figures for the republican and imperial period. Thaís Nivea de Lima e Fonseca, for example, examined the papers presented in specialized, international, national and regional meetings promoted in the early 2000s and found that the papers on the history of education for the so-called colonial period did not exceed 2% (Fonseca, 2009a). Denice Catani and Luciano Faria Filho, based on the investigation of one hundred fifty-seven research papers presented in the Thematic Working Group of History of Education in the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research on Education [ANPED] between 1985 and 2000, identified a percentage of 3.2% of studies on the colonial period (Catani & Faria Filho, 2002, p. 124).



Against this presumption, it is worth bringing back what António Nóvoa said about the History of Education. For him, regardless of the period circumscribed by the research, the History of Education is fit to cultivate a “healthy skepticism about the acclaimed educational innovations” (2004, p. 10). Besides this practical contribution and the specificity of an area of study, it is possible to add that History, in the breadth of its scope, contributes to the perception of otherness and to the construction of identities. The exotic past spells out the fundamental differences, and, at the same time, allows the perception of the familiar registered in the flow of the human and local continuities. Thus, the study of education in a historical perspective would contribute to the perception “of the logic of the multiple identities, through which we define memories, traditions”, beliefs and solidarities (Nóvoa, 2004, p. 10—author’s translation).

Another point raised by the authors relates to the fluidity of the concept of “education”. Indeed, in Portuguese world and the modern period, the concept of education had a breadth of meaning that corroborated an inaccurate awareness of its conceptual boundaries. In the dictionary of Don Raphael Bluteau, written in the early eighteenth century, the term education refers basically to: the dignified treatment of people according to their qualities; the act of raising someone; and the teaching/improvement of an understanding (Bluteau, 1728, v.3, p. 29). From the definition in the vocabulary, education would be something common to all, although variable depending on the quality of the student. The entry does not distinguish a direct association of the act of educating to an entity or a specific institution, which could raise the interpretation of education as something fluid and informal. Even when reduced to the meaning of “teaching and improvement of knowledge”, education keeps its boundaries very shadowy. However, in the same dictionary, the entry “school” names a place of cultivation of science, refinement and acquisition of knowledge that demands some spare time and dedication to studies (Bluteau, 1728, v.3, pp. 216-217). Thus, restricting the meaning given to education and slightly shaping it into the school form, the act of instructing would reach only a privileged set of people who had some spare time. Education, in its broadest sense, could be acquired in family, workshops, anyway, in the ample space of relationships promoted by social agents. In turn, school education would depend on a specific place, on spare time, and on agents able to engage each other in the cultivation of knowledge, among which the teachers linked to the Church and the State or acting more or less independently would be distinguished.

Although limited, the education promoted and structured by the religious orders and the secular administrative structures was not negligible. As a result, the vast majority of studies on education in Portuguese America chose the theme of education provided by religious orders—especially the Ignatian—

and education reforms promoted in the reign of D. José I [Joseph I], which brought education into the State orbit. Despite the initiatives of D. João V [John V], it was from 1759 that the Portuguese crown took a declared commitment to education. Under the influence of the Enlightenment bias, education starts to be understood as responsible for “making society happier and men, grown by virtue and science, more aware of their duties to humanity and to the homeland” (Araujo, 2003, p. 54—author’s translation).

The education offered by the State and the Church demanded a concentration of skills and responsibilities that generated documentary records. Such records have enabled investigations about instruction in Portuguese America. Thus, even if representing a small percentage of the overall production dedicated to the history of education, existing studies on Portuguese America contradict the alleged lack of documentary records on school education in the Luso-Brazilian modernity.

A more comprehensive and delicate look can reveal that education records abound. In the broadest sense of the definition or in its precise meaning as school improvement, education permeates each and every written record. The writing culture, fostered in school or not, can be enjoyed in the richness of its forms in each line, each word, each letter of each manuscripts and printed documents that circulated in modern times and now rest in the archives (Magalhães, 2014). Given the enormity of the direct and indirect records on education, it is untenable to claim the absence of documents for the History of Education in Portuguese America.

As stated, the reasons presented to explain the relative lack of studies on education in colonial Brazil are not epistemologically plausible and do not deserve credit. In fact, besides these reasons to explain the lack of studies on education in Portuguese America, a limitation of perspective and analytical provision imposes itself on the area. We must break with the baseless assumptions and address the methodological difficulties posed against the research of a multitude of historical records waiting to reveal the many facets of education.

Having considered the feasibility of studies on education in Portuguese America and set out the principles that should encourage and guide them, this article proposes to contribute with a brief quantitative overview of schooling in colonial Brazil, between 1759 and 1834. In this period, a centering process in which the Portuguese and Brazilian States were responsible for the coordination and management of school education started, which bequeathed to posterity rich documentary series. Based on documentary evidence and in specialized studies, this paper evaluates the said centralization process, highlighting its geographical scope and the secularizing character assigned to it. Finally, it advances in an attempt to draw a profile of the teaching profession in Brazil, considering both “Regius teachers”, paid by the State, and private tutors. In order to do that, the article presents the results of a wide and diverse



documentary research focused on the city of Mariana, one of the districts [termo] belonging to the county [comarca] of Vila Rica of the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, located in the center of Brazil.

## DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: REGIONAL SPECIFICITIES AND SECULARIZATION IN PERSPECTIVE

School education included the formal and official action of the State and the Church throughout the colonial period. It was an action limited by the reach of the structure able to offer instruction, and by the provisions of social exclusion characteristic of the *Ancien Régime* and the slave and missionary system. The education promoted directly by the Crown was more sensitive in the second half of the eighteenth century. In its turn, the Church has never ceased to watch over the moral and intellectual formation in Brazil. Priests spread the language and the Christian faith to various peoples and by various means, in the benches of the churches and seminaries, as teachers, and public and private roles. Was it promoted by the State or the Church, education was systematically and progressively monitored, acquiring an official status.

Since the beginning of the colonization of Brazil, the Church sought to catechize and instruct the Amerindians, without neglecting the education of the children of families who could afford to pay for the private education and seminary costs. Linked to religious orders, regular or not, the Church priests contributed to spreading a sort of education that blended worshiping and culture (Bosi, 1992). Through the sermons, the masses prayed in Latin, the teaching of the seminaries, and the civilizing action of the missions, the literate culture would permeate diverse strata of society. As well noted by José Maria de Paiva, literacy was religious, teaching was characteristic of the Church (Paiva, 2004, pp. 80-81). A church that, by the regime of the *padroado* [Royal Patronage], served the Crown.

Through the Orders, the Church cultivated literacy and contributed to the civilization of the vast extension of the Portuguese Empire. In Portugal, in the late sixteenth century, the Jesuits built schools in Coimbra, Lisbon, Évora, Porto, Braga, Bragança, Angra do Heroísmo and Funchal. They also had a university in Évora and taught at the University of Coimbra, which was responsible for providing instruction to the finest young people of the society (Ferreira, 2004, p. 59). Even at that time, in Portuguese America, the Jesuits opened colleges [colégios] in the captaincies of Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, São Vicente, and primary schools and various missions throughout the countryside, and especially the coast. Between 1554 and 1759, the

Society of Jesus administered 36 missions, 25 Ignatian houses 18 institutions of secondary education and various other primary schools (Shigunov Neto & Maciel, 2008, pp. 186-187). After all, according to Laerte Ramos de Carvalho, “the penetration and expansion of missionary work depended fundamentally on the establishment of schools” (Carvalho, 1978, p. 110).

Ahead of education and extending the Church's presence in the world, there were religious orders other than the Society of Jesus. The Franciscans, for example, developed catechetical actions in several locations in Brazil, among them in the captaincies of: Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Alagoas, Paraíba, Grão-Pará and Maranhão. According to Luiz Fernando Conde Sangenis, the Franciscans founded the School of São Francisco, in São Vicente, and the “convent-university” of São Antônio, in Rio de Janeiro. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Franciscans opened 29 convents, some with free lessons of grammar and basic literacy (Sangenis, 2004, pp. 100-101). The data presented could be multiplied if the contributions of other orders and women's institutions of seclusion and gathering are considered.<sup>3</sup> In any way, even with the narrower picture table, it is possible to discern the prominence of the religious orders in the dissemination of the written word and the Christian faith in the Luso-Brazilian modernity. This presence of religious ahead of education was shaken, but not eliminated, with the educational policy inaugurated in the reign of Joseph I.

In 1759, the government of King Joseph I ordered the shutdown of all colleges and classes established by the Society of Jesus. At the same time, as a palliative measure, he created free schools of Latin Grammar, Greek, Hebrew and rhetoric (Fernandes, 1994, p. 70). The persecution of Jesuits solved a series of impasses between the Crown and the congregation, involving economic and political issues related to the captaincy of Grão-Pará, the Treaty of Madrid and the Guaraní Wars (Falcon, 1982). Although it was a systematic attack against the Ignatian, to Laerte Ramos Carvalho “Pombal's, or better yet, King Joseph I office's antijesuitism was more an imposition of circumstances than the result of a pre-established program” (Carvalho, 1978, p. 102).

Although motivated by the circumstances, the attack orchestrated by Pombal's office was still systematic, since it recognized the power of the Society of Jesus in the larger sphere of their influence areas, including education, which came to be recognized as fundamental for the modernization plans of the Portuguese State. It was not without purpose that public lectures were originated at the same time the Jesuits were expelled. It was imperative to stop the ascendancy of the Ignatian above the

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<sup>3</sup> Leila Mezan Algranti (1999) and Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (1981) studied the peculiarities of this schooling dedicated to girls. According to these authors, the education of girls was restricted and focused on the role that they would take in adulthood. Female education was seen as necessary, since they would be the first teachers of their children, which emphasized their role as mothers and teachers. Because of that, their teaching should be different from that of the boys. These institutions prioritized learning to read, write, count, sew, and embroider, besides the religious education.



people and, for that, the Crown had to take responsibility for schooling. It becomes clear, by this logic, the importance given to education, which in the following years, would undergo a wide reform that would touch all levels of training.

The transformations inaugurated in 1759 gained strength with the implementation of educational and financial policies that enabled the creation of a true network of state schooling. The measures were taken “in order to unify the system by the adoption of a method, the definition of teaching contents, the authorization for banning books or establishment bureaucratic rules to be followed by the schools etc.” (Villela, 2010 p. 98–author’s translation). In order to economically support the changes, a tax called “literary subsidy” [*subsídio literário*], which levied on the production of brandy, vinegar and carne verde (“green meat”—meat from animals slaughtered recently, with no preservatives), was created. Managed by the Royal Treasury, the literary subsidy created conditions for the establishment of a public school system. With the tax, the State would facilitate its social intervention, albeit unevenly and with limitations.

In 1772, a plan that conjectured the recruitment of 837 teachers to meet the educational demands of various locations, with special attention to urban and coast areas, was set up (*Plano de 1772*–Plan of 1772) (Boto, 2004, p. 171). Within one year, the plan underwent a revaluation and 88 extra classes were added. Just over half of the schools created in recent years were aimed at basic literacy, that is, reading, writing, counting and catechism. Less demanded by the general population than basic literacy, secondary education would be responsible for nearly half of all the royal schools created. The relationship of these proportions, although slightly favorable to primary schooling, spells out an increase of technical knowledge, which corresponded to the Enlightenment stance of knowing oneself and benefiting from nature (Cassirer, 1994, pp. 65–66).

Practical limits were imposed on the reform and were evident from the start. Not all intended classes were actually opened. In the metropolis, from the 526 classes of basic literacy intended, only 33% were provided with teachers (Fernandes, 1994, pp. 75–76). The concentration of classes in certain localities also represented a clear restriction on the scope of the State initiatives. The Portuguese metropolis, with special emphasis on Lisbon and the heads of county, held the vast majority of the royal schools created. The reasons for this preference can be found in the developmental Pombaline spirit, as well as in the colonial exploration policy, as the literary subsidy collected in all parts of the Portuguese Empire served to promote unevenly distributed education. Whatever the real reasons for the uneven distribution of royal schools, the understanding of school education as exclusionary by principle would not be contradicted.

In Portuguese America, each region responded in a peculiar way to the impact of the expulsion of the Jesuits and to the effects of the Pombaline educational reform. For Mato Grosso, a captaincy located in the interior of Brazil, the result of these changes was limited, if not late. Gilberto Luiz Alves considered the presence of Jesuits in this inland region of Brazil to be small. Thus, schooling in Mato Grosso did not suffer from the expulsion of the Jesuits and did not immediately collect the fruits of the educational reform promoted in the reign of King Joseph I. It is possible to find incomplete references to Regius teachers only at the late eighteenth century. Scrutinizing memoir reports, Gilberto Luiz Alves found mention to only five Regius teachers in that region. In the author's opinion "if they existed, previously, it must have been very rare to have colonial masters in Mato Grosso" (Alves, 2004, p. 3).

In São Paulo, where the Jesuit presence was striking, the effects of the expulsion were attenuated not by the confining incorporation of Regius teachers, but by the presence of the monasteries run by Franciscans and Carmelites. Due to this presence, it is possible to deduce the maintenance of an education of religious nature, although unable to meet all the needs of the local administration, which resented the lack of people trained in literacy (Fragoso, 1972). According to Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, in 1768, the Governor of the Captaincy of São Paulo complained about the lack of people instructed for the education of the young. Only in 1774 did a local administrative determination announce the creation of basic literacy, Latin, Greek, rhetoric and philosophy classes (Silva, 1984, p. 104).

The news of teaching in Mato Grosso and São Paulo could indicate that the immediate results of the reform of 1759 were hardly experienced in Portuguese America. Such a statement, however, must be relativized by an approach that considers the plurality of regional specificities.

In many places of Portuguese America, the arrangements to mitigate the impact of the expulsion of the Jesuits were noticeable.<sup>4</sup> Laerte Ramos de Carvalho (1978, p. 129) and José Carlos de Araujo e Silva (2011, p. 55) tell us that in Bahia, as early as 1759, tenders for the provision of Latin and Rhetoric classes were opened. Nineteen candidates showed up, among which there were priests and Minorites, including two who had left the Society of Jesus. The existence of these priests was associated with the presence of religious orders in the region, a factor that must be considered to scale the secularization that would be provided by the Pombaline reform in education, an aspect that will be further explored when analyzing the case of Mariana.

The imminent effects of the Pombaline reform in other captaincies of Brazil are remarkable. In 1759, Manoel Silva Coelho and Manoel de Melo e

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<sup>4</sup> Investigating educational initiative promoted by the Portuguese government in 1759, Tereza Fachada Levy Cardoso says that until 1765 there was no Regius teacher in Brazil (Cardoso, 2004, p. 183). It is quite possible that this statement is not correct.



Castro were appointed Regius teachers for the Captaincy of Pernambuco. Other teachers who were natural of the land, such as Francisco de Souza Magalhaes, Father Felipe Nery da Trindade and also Father Manoel da Silva joined these teachers from Portugal (Carvalho, 1978, p. 131). In 1760, Eusébio Luiz Pereira was appointed Regius teacher of the captaincy of Grão-Pará (Carvalho, 1978, p. 131). In the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, there are references to the existence of a Regius teacher for the year 1761 (Fonseca, 2010, p. 20).

Two aspects can be highlighted in the examples above. The first relates to the presence of priests among the Regius teachers, which calls for a redefinition of the ordinary statement about the secular and lay character of the Pombaline educational reform. The second issue relates to the existence of Regius teachers working in Brazil shortly after the expulsion of the Jesuits. A modest simple presence at first, which would increase in 1772, however.

The offer of regius classes in Portuguese America would expand with the initiatives taken by the State in 1772. At this date, for Brazil, the reform plan envisaged the creation of 44 classes, as follows: 12 in Pernambuco, 10 in Bahia, 7 in Rio de Janeiro, 7 in Minas Gerais, 3 in São Paulo, 3 in Pará, 2 in Maranhão. The basic literacy classes added up to 17, against 15 Latin Grammar, 3 Greek, 6 rhetoric and 3 philosophy (Cardoso, 2004, p. 185). Through these data, it is possible to see a concentration of classes in the northeast and southeast of the Colony, more economically developed regions, which concentrated the majority of the population. Another aspect that is found in this drive of nationalization of education is a significant supply of secondary level classes, which, as pointed out before, corresponded to the Enlightened Pombaline project of a more technical instruction. The addition of classes made in 1773 broadened the picture by assigning to Minas Gerais two more classes in the county of Rio das Mortes, one Latin Grammar and another basic literacy.

According to Laerte Ramos Carvalho, what was fixed for the Portuguese America in the Plan of 1772 was only materialized and, perhaps, exceeded during the reign of Dona Maria I [Queen Mary II].<sup>5</sup> Returning to the data presented by Luís dos Santos Vilhena in his *Carta Oitava da Recompilação de Notícias Soteropolitanas e Brasíliaas...*, Carvalho shows that in Bahia, Sergipe del-Rei and Espírito Santo there were at least 42 Regius teachers acting between the years 1795 and 1797 (Carvalho, 1978, p. 135). A significant number, which would probably not be replicated in other locations of Brazil, however. At the turn of the century, the Governor of the Captaincy of São Paulo argued in favor of the increasing of basic literacy classes, then present in the capital, and in Santos, Paranaguá and Curitiba. In contrast to the lack of primary education, the captaincy had Latin Grammar teachers in São Sebastião, Santos, Paranaguá,

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Rogério Fernandes found that at the beginning of the government of D. Maria I 67% of the positions were occupied, against 33% in 1773 (Fernandes, 1994, p. 78).

Mogi das Cruzes and São Paulo, where the subjects of rhetoric and rational and moral philosophy were also taught (Silva, 2009, p. 205).

In general, we can say that in the reign of Queen Mary I the teaching of basic literacy expanded, in a reorientation of the educational provisions previously established in the reign of her father, King Joseph I.<sup>6</sup> To achieve the intent of increasing elementary teaching, Queen Mary I called upon the aid of the Church. The so-called “conventualization of schooling” broadened the opportunities of the Church, since it was recognized as essential to the education of the young (Fernandes, 1994, p. 78). As remarkable as the religious reorientation in the reign of Queen Mary I was, the state would not cease to regulate, finance and monitor teaching. The nationalization and centralization of education were guaranteed by the control exercised by the *Real Mesa da Comissão Geral Sobre o Exame e Censura dos Livros* [Royal Board of the General Commission on the Examination and Censorship of Books] and later by the reformed University of Coimbra, among other things. In fact, to Rogério Fernandes the control exercised by the University on teaching represents the “full recovery of Pombalism without Pombal” (Fernandes, 1994, p. 114).

The arrival of the royal family in Brazil brought structural and administrative demands that required a committee of agents minimally trained to deal with writing. Promoting and expanding teaching in Portuguese America was a way to ensure human resources for the various branches of the government. For the privileged sectors of society, the presence of the court in Brazil and the opening of the ports could mean unprecedented opportunities for job, enrichment, and social climbing. As a reflection of these conveniences, the newspapers of Rio de Janeiro announced the offer of private tutoring in several areas of knowledge, including English and French, for boys and girls (Silva, 2004, p. 137). As for public education, during the reign of D. João VI [King John VI], 120 teachers were appointed, while around 30 or 40 were retired (Villela, 2010, p. 100). Following his mother's steps, King John VI contributed to the expansion of the number of classes fixed in the Plan of 1772.

In 1822, after the independence of Brazil, significant changes in the educational policy, which remained state-owned and centralizing, were not noticed. The law of 15 October 1827 reaffirmed the importance of basic literacy for the Brazilian national project. The same law determined the teaching of basic literacy for all free citizens “in every town, village, and more populous places of the Brazilian Empire”. The Brazilian Imperial State only changed

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<sup>6</sup> According to Ana Cristina Araujo the classifications of the Enlightenment in Portugal, in terms of “Joanino (King John's) Enlightenment”, “Pombal's Enlightenment” and “Viradeira” is incongruous, because it perpetuates an ideological view of the “liberal and republican historiography about Pombal, as it obscures the brightness and the range of numerous and important cultural events prior to Pombal” (Araujo, 2003, p. 18).



the centralized model with the Additional Act of 1834, when the provinces came to take care of school education.

In summary, it can be said that the nationalization of school education marked the Luso-Brazilian academic world indelibly between the years 1759 to 1834. Minister of King Joseph I, Sebastião José de Carvalho Melo (The 1º Marquis of Pombal) inaugurated an official educational system, monitored and directed by the State. Despite its all-embracing nature, the state schooling addressed different parts of the Portuguese Empire differently. The limited and unequal distribution of public education together with the various demands and local characteristics did not exclude the private teaching opportunities, let alone the presence of priests among teachers. Even after the Pombaline reform, religion and catechisms continued to compose the curriculum of basic literacy.

Therefore, the irrefutable presence of religion and religious teaching asks that one put into perspective the secularizing character attributed to the reforms promoted by the Marquis of Pombal. The partnership between the Church and the Portuguese Crown suffered setbacks, the Jesuits were expelled, relations with Rome were shaken, but no secular State was established and education continued linked to religion and dependent on the priests. The Church would count on favorable conditions to expand its influence in the reign of Queen Mary I. The so-called “conventualization of schooling” tends to weaken in the following governments, without education having left the religious orbit.

The secularization of education meant, thereby, the recognition of the education usefulness for the Portuguese State imperatives that aimed at modernization. For this reason, the Crown created teaching inspection instruments, established educational guidelines and promoted the organization of a school system funded and regulated by the State. This secularization did not result in the removal, from the teaching profession, of clergymen and priests, whose presence in schools was more significant in the localities where there were seminaries and/or where the settling of regular religious orders were allowed. But what would be the case of Minas Gerais, where the regular orders had been forbidden to settle down? What would be the school presence in this region of great economic power at a global level? What would be the profile of the teachers at the headquarters of the Minas Gerais bishopric? Would the presence of priests and clergy among teachers be strong?

LITERATE MINAS: THE TEACHING PRESENCE  
IN THE CAPTAINCY AND THE PROFILE OF THE TEACHERS  
IN THE CITY OF MARIANA

The captaincy of Minas Gerais was distinguished in the Portuguese Empire by gold mining and diamond production, which, although having indicated a downward trend in the mid-eighteenth century, served to create internal markets, to agriculture, to the Royal Treasury, and to the dynamics of a “world economy” (Maxwell, 1995; Vieira, 2010). Indeed, compared to the economic relevance of the entire region, a need for the establishment of administrative bodies and structures, which were intended to regulate and exploit the richness and the peoples, was imposed. Crucial to the administrative action, the dissemination of writing, even if limited to certain social groups, should be encouraged through the promotion of school education.<sup>7</sup>

In the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, the city of Mariana was distinguished by a diverse economy, driven by the significant populational influx, which was motivated by gold mining (Carrara, 2006). To take care of administration and justice, besides the Town Council [Senado da Câmara], common to all Portuguese villages, Mariana also had a *juiz de fora*—a judge appointed from another region—, at least since 1732. Appointed directly by the king, the *juiz de fora* was an educated lawyer responsible for making justice in the first instance, which, hopefully, would be the most faithful to the laws of the kingdom. Elevated, in 1745, to the post of City, in order to house the headquarters of the bishopric, Mariana had a court of ecclesiastical justice, responsible for investigating the crimes under its jurisdiction throughout the territory of the bishopric of Minas Gerais. For these and other reasons, Mariana had a more complex administrative structure than most villages of Portuguese America.

Doctrinal watch and daily pastoral obligations were added to the legal regulatory role played by the seat of the bishopric. To care for the flock of the faithful, Friar Manuel da Cruz founded in Mariana the *Seminário da Boa Morte* [Seminary of Our Lady of Good Death], for the training of clergy and the education of the young. Under the care of Dean José Nogueira, the seminary started its activities in 1750. Dean and professor of moral theology and Latin, Nogueira belonged to the Society of Jesus (Selingardi, 2007, p. 99). This peculiarity is important because, in order to avoid any diversions of gold, the

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<sup>7</sup> Restricting the analysis to school knowledge does not disregard the existence of alternative ways of transmitting knowledge. Thus, one can think of a kind of teaching related to mechanical trades, which, in the eighteenth century, would be more tied to a practical knowledge, rather than a theoretical and written knowledge: “as well shown in societies without writing or schooling (...) numerous ways of thought and action—and often the most vital ones—pass on the practice by means of practical and totalized propagation, consolidated in the lasting contact between the one who teaches and the one who learns (“do as I do”)” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 35; translation my own).



circulation of regular priests and the establishment of religious orders was prohibited in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais. Thus, the license for the Ignatian priests to teach at and manage the *Seminário da Boa Morte* in its first years of operation depended on the *benelácito régio* [royal approval], which could only be achieved through Friar Manuel da Cruz, the bishop of Mariana (Rodrigues & Souza, 2007, p. 288).

As presented, in 1759, by royal order, the Jesuits, active catechizers and educators, were expelled from the Portuguese dominions, causing losses in the teaching of some towns of Portuguese America. The impact of the expulsion of the members of the Congregation of St. Ignatius was also felt in Minas Gerais, although to a lesser degree, given the aforementioned prohibition of the establishment of regular religious orders. In Curvelo, Sabará and Mariana, supportive priests and “hidden Jesuits” promoted seditions, instigated, among other reasons, by the dissatisfaction caused by the persecution of the Society of Jesus (Catão, 2007, pp. 669–670). Another negative effect of the expulsion of the Jesuits was felt in the *Seminário da Boa Morte* with the removal of a few Jesuits who were responsible for the education, management and regulation in the early years of the Seminary.

The prohibition of the establishment of regular orders did not include secular priests, since these did not organize themselves in orders, which were potentially dangerous to the royal authority in an economically strategic region. The administration of the sacraments and religious life depended on these men; therefore, the formation of a body of priests and secular clergy was soon indispensable to the bishopric, and it was possible thanks to Seminary in Mariana and to the College of Caraça, which began operating in the region of Catas Altas in the 1820s.<sup>8</sup> These religious colleges contributed to the cultivation of literacy and of the Catholic faith in Minas Gerais, and especially in Mariana. Despite the prohibitions and changes arising from the royal projects, the Church and the secular clergy were primordial for the schooling in Mariana. In this city, the secularization promoted by the reforms of Pombal had to adapt to contingencies and relied on the available local resources, which even led to the incorporation of clerics in the royal classes.

As presented, the Plan of 1772 appointed 44 courses of royal classes for Portuguese America (Gouveia, 1993, p. 422). From this lot, seven courses were destined to the Captaincy of Minas Gerais: Four basic literacy classes—located in Mariana, Villa Rica, São João del Rey and Sabará—, and three Latin Grammar—located in Mariana, Villa Rica and São João del Rey. The change in 1773 increased this number in one basic literacy class and another Latin Grammar, intended for the county of Rio das Mortes. This number was further extended over the years and, in 1814, Minas Gerais had 46 classes, 34

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<sup>8</sup> The monastic house founded in the second half of the eighteenth century was dedicated to Our Lady Mother of Men and became a college in 1820.

basic literacy and 12 Latin Grammar (Fonseca, 2010, p. 23). To this set, a rhetorical class was also added, and another philosophy, both in the city of Mariana, coming, in the end, to a total of 48.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the mentioned royal classes of philosophy and rhetoric, whose existence was no longer linked to the bishopric, the district of Mariana, in particular, had 6 classes of basic literacy and 2 Latin Grammar (Fonseca, 2010, pp. 33-34). The total of 10 royal classes in Mariana might not be enough to meet the demands of the district, but it was still higher than the 3 classes that were established in the district of Vila Rica, which was the head of the county and government headquarters of Minas Gerais.<sup>10</sup> If in Mariana the public school classes were insufficient, the situation for other locations of the Minas Gerais Captaincy did not seem to be more auspicious.

The nine existing royal classes in Minas Gerais in 1773 were not, in fact, a considerable contingent to deal with the massive population of free, white, brown and black men and women, who, in 1786, would add up to over 188,000 inhabitants. Considering only the free population, there were 26,000 inhabitants per teacher on average (População, 1899). According to the *Relação das Cadeiras dos Professores Régios...* [List of Classes of Regius Teachers...] made by the president of the Royal Exchequer, Luiz de Vasconcelos e Souza, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, there were 48 classes in Minas Gerais, but only 25 were active (Dados, 1902). At this time, the population of free, white brown and black men and women was around 280,000. Weighing these numbers, the ratio of staff to free inhabitants would be one teacher for every 11,000 inhabitants. Such quantities did not leave room for any verdict other than a massive lack of teachers in the illiterate hinterland of Minas Gerais.

However, for an accurate evaluation, it is necessary to consider the population in an age suitable to attend classes of basic literacy and Latin Grammar, which were, on average, people between 7 and 15 years old. The difficulty of this approach lies in the need to know the age of the population in a period in which censuses were rare and undetailed. There are, however, some records that allow us to estimate the composition in certain locations. In the Furquim parish, which was part of the district of Mariana, Thaís Nívea de Lima e Fonseca counted a population of 4,503 people in 1798, of whom 300 were schoolchildren (Fonseca, 2010, pp. 31-32). From this set, it is not clear how many were free, let alone who could benefit from the “school privilege”. If the difficulties of childhood condition of the time and region are

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<sup>9</sup> From a detailed study of various sources, Fonseca observed that the *Relação de 1814* [List of 1814], although made by the *Junta da Fazenda de Minas Gerais* [Board of Finance of Minas Gerais], incurs a series of errors. For example, it shows as vacant positions that were occupied and omits teachers whose names were on the payment lists (Fonseca, 2009b, p. 73).

<sup>10</sup> One of the elements that can help explain this difference is the size of the districts, and the district of Mariana was much bigger than that of Vila Rica. However, when all the Captaincy of Minas Gerais is considered, the county of Vila Rica, composed by the two mentioned districts, would have the greatest number of Regius classes, followed by the county of Rio das Velhas.



considered, and the significant amount of the number of slaves is taken into account, the only Regius teacher of Furquim would surely have much less than 300 students.

Despite the difficulties to precise the school demand in Minas Gerais, it is possible to build an expanded panel of royal teachers in the Captaincy using the official documentation. In addition to the already known *Plano de 1772* and the *Relação de 1814* [List of 1814], the *Livro de Assentamentos dos Professores Régios da Capitania de Minas Gerais* [Book of Records of Regius Teachers in the Captaincy of Minas Gerais] brings significant data for the period from 1774, when records began, until 1807, the latest date identified in the document. The teachers registered in the *Livro de Assentamentos* had their provisions transferred between the years 1774 and 1797 (Arquivo da Casa dos Contos, I-26, 3, 14, n.5). In the *Livro de Assentamentos* it is possible to identify 61 Regius teachers working in Minas Gerais, and 16 only for the district of Mariana.<sup>11</sup> Among the registered royal teachers, most were basic literacy teachers, which could have been motivated by local demands and by the appreciation of primary education of the reign of Queen Mary I. The fact that a huge number of teachers were licensed in the 1780s and 1790s contributes to this hypothesis. For the sake of the argument that has been made on the secularization of education, another element should be highlighted in the examined documentation: from the set of teachers registered in the *Livro de Assentamentos*, 32 clergymen were priests. This incidence indicates the inclusion of the Church in the school environment created and supervised by the State. At least in the eighteenth century, the Church remained considerably responsible for school education, despite the Pombaline reform and despite the restrictions on the presence of regular orders in Minas Gerais.

Going further than the records that address exclusively the Regius teachers, the analyses of a diverse scope of documents allowed the identification of several private teachers who taught at the district of Mariana. In total, for the period from 1750 to 1834, 149 teachers were nominally identified, among Regius and private and/or public teachers who were not employed by the State.<sup>12</sup> From this set, it seems, 24 entries are of students mistakenly enrolled as teachers. Excluding these individuals, there were 125 teachers placed at the district of Mariana alone. It is likely that this number was not enough to address the entire school-age population of the district,

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<sup>11</sup> Thais Nívea de Lima e Fonseca identified 261 Regius teachers working in Minas Gerais between the years 1772 and 1834. The county of Villa Rica stood out among the others, with just over a hundred Regius teachers, most of them appointed between the years 1814 and 1834 (Fonseca, 2009a, p. 74). In the district of Mariana, for the period between 1772 and 1814, among teachers of basic literacy and Latin Grammar, the author identified 10 substitutes, 2 full professors by appointment and 5 others without definition of status (Fonseca, 2010, pp. 64–69).

<sup>12</sup> Several sources were used to identify such teachers, such as civil and ecclesiastical lawsuits, post-mortem inventories, wills, *testamentários*, nominative lists, mail from the Mariana Town Council, *De Genere et Moribus* actions, marriage actions etc.

but, undoubtedly, that number exceeds estimates when considering only the Regius classes.

For the eighteenth century, the research identified 48 teachers, 24 of whom were Regius. It is worth noting that in the *Livro de Assentamentos* 16 Regius teachers appear, eight less than what was found in our survey, which scanned a larger set of documents. Obviously, the number of Regius teachers exceeded that of the classes available for the district of Mariana, because more than one teacher would teach those classes during the addressed period. This movement was due to death, to the change of teachers or even to the time limits fixed by the competent bodies for the teaching license of each Regius teacher.

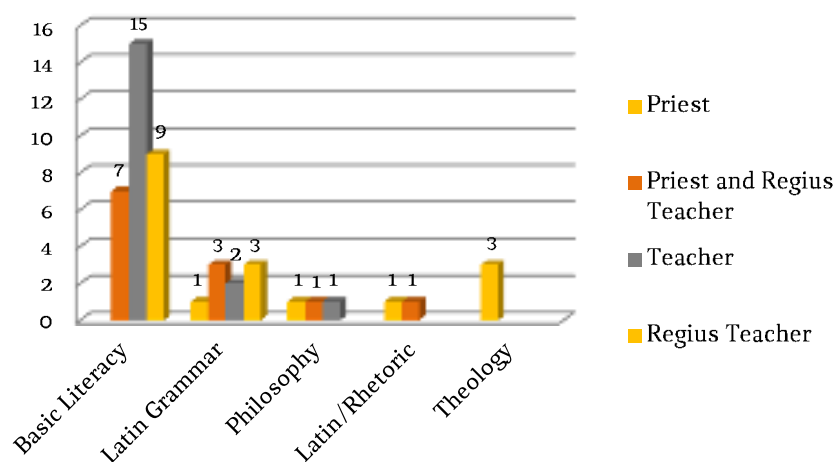


Figure 1. Teachers of Mariana 1750-1800 (Various sources<sup>13</sup>).

The graph shows a concentration of teachers in the teaching of basic literacy followed by Latin Grammar, a trend that continued in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Other areas of knowledge such as philosophy, rhetoric and theology are also represented and include a secondary training also offered by the *Seminário da Boa Morte*. The layout of these classes turned Mariana into a free preparation center for university education and ecclesiastical training. Because of that, there is the presence of 19 (39.5%) priests among the analyzed individuals. In addition, perhaps due to their careful training, clerics accounted for slightly more than half of the 24 identified Regius teachers. The representation of these religious among private teachers was more modest, adding up to 7 individuals only. Was it as seminary teachers or as Regius teachers, clerics took on the teaching of more complex subjects, which required a more careful education than basic literacy, as shown by the cases narrated below.

<sup>13</sup> Look note 12.



In Mariana, among the school subjects offered by the Church and the State, there was philosophy, a branch of science that gained prominence and Enlightenment outlines with the Pombaline reform. The subject was taught, at the seminary, by Canon Luiz Vieira da Silva and, in the city, in houses close to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, by Father Francisco de Paula Meireles.

Both priests had well provided libraries, teeming with Enlightenment authors. The list of books belonging to Meireles reveals his affinity with the Pombaline guidelines and with the training he received inside and outside the University of Coimbra. In Portugal, Meireles was even prosecuted by the Inquisition because of his unconventional ideas. According to the complainant, Father José da Purificação Ferreira, who would be a teacher of Rhetoric in Mariana, Meireles “uttered fearful ideas about sin and concubinage” (Fonseca, 2009b, p. 95). This most controversial facet of Meireles was not strongly expressed in his library, which consisted of 280 volumes and 94 titles. In it, few were the banned authors and many the ones sanctioned by the Pombaline censorship, such as Heineccius, Genovesi, Linnaeus (Antunes, 2011, p. 135).

Although he never left Brazil, Canon Vieira had books by Enlightenment authors, some of them banned from the Portuguese Empire. The works of Voltaire, Mably, Diderot, Robertson, Montesquieu etc were present in his library (Frieiro, 1981). Canon Vieira became known in history because of his participation in the *Conjuração Mineira* [Minas Gerais Conspiracy], which planned to take the government of the Captaincy of Minas Gerais and declare independence from Portugal. For Kenneth Maxwell, Vieira composed a group of scholars that devised the regiment of the Republic the *inconfidentes* (revolutionaries) dreamed of (Maxwell, 1995).

There are indications that Meireles, although Regius Professor, coveted the position held by Vieira in the Seminário da Boa Morte. In 1788, Meireles was accused of attempting against the life of Faustino Soares de Araujo, a mechanical trader who worked as a saddle maker. After exchanging several insults with Faustino, Father Meireles would have shot Faustino's store, grazing him in the arm. The case witnesses reported not only the aggression status, but also brought some valuable information about the nature of the author of the attack. One of these witnesses admitted having heard Father Meireles threatening to break the legs of Canon Vieira and take his teaching position in the seminary of Mariana. A year later, Vieira was accused, arrested and deported for having participated in the *Conjuração Mineira*. Despite the incident, Meireles failed to hold the position of teacher of philosophy of the Seminary, and died in 1794 (Antunes, 2011, pp. 137-138).

The examples of Meireles and Vieira give more concreteness to the profile of Regius and clerical teachers of Mariana. People with extensive knowledge, large libraries who were willing to question the order of the Church and the State that had educated them and that gave them financial support. Even embracing

God and the Church, these religious would not fail to engage with mundane aspects, whether in everyday conflicts, or in higher dreams of sedition. It is important to bear in mind that schooling would paradoxically provide discipline and sedition. But, after all, would the Portuguese Enlightenment not be paradoxical? Does not the very secularization of education of the Pombal times reveal something peculiar about the Portuguese Enlightenment?

Indeed, the presence of religious noticeable in the above graph allows us to put into perspective the secularization of education in the years after the Pombaline reform. This, however, does not imply that the reform had no effect in Minas Gerais. Actually, it was by the hands of priests such as Meireles that part of the Pombaline Enlightenment was spread through Minas Gerais.

In the nineteenth century, the presence of priests tends to attenuate, but it is still significant, especially because in the first decades of this century the College of Caraça starts to operate. The data collected by the research are not yet fully consolidated for this period. In part, the inaccuracy of the data is due to the incomplete records of the sources, which require more attention from the researchers. For example, the nominative lists investigated are sometimes obscure as regards the areas of expertise of teachers. Other times, students were registered as teachers. This is the case of 24 students of the College of Caraça, between 11 and 20 years old, appearing in a Nominative List of *Catas Altas* from 1822 as teachers. If these cases are overlooked, the total number of teachers identified for the period between 1750 and 1834 will be 125, as noted before.

The teachers included in the records of the nineteenth century totalize 77 individuals, being 28 Regius teachers, together representing 36.36% of the total teaching staff.

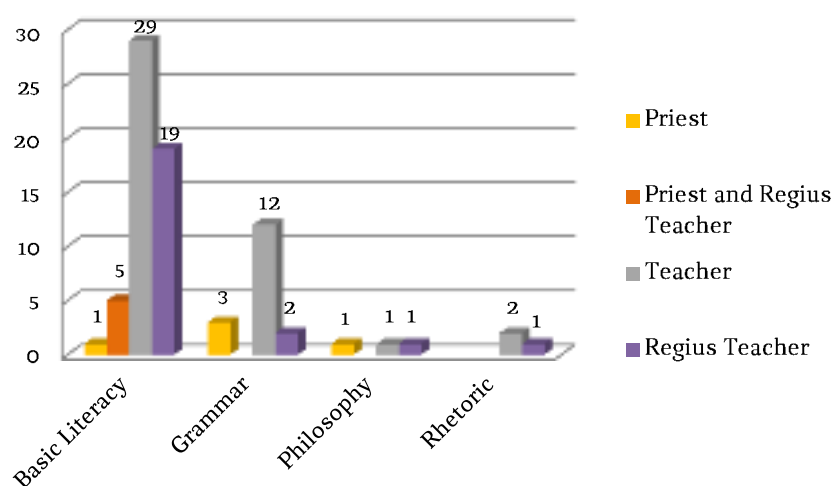


Figure 2. Teachers of Mariana 1801-1834 (various sources).



It is noticeable on the graph that the presence of clergymen and priests is proportionally smaller than the presence of lay teachers. It is possible that this disparity be associated with the history of the *Seminário da Boa Morte*, which was closed between 1811 and 1820. After that, the numbers of clergymen tend to increase, especially because classes were opened in the College of Caraça. However, the contribution of these institutions to the Mariana teaching staff took a while to be seen and would not be represented in the graph above. In any case, priests were still present among the teachers of grammar, philosophy and basic literacy, but not to the same extent as that of the previous century. Another explanation for this low representation can be found in the asseveration of the secularization of schooling initiated in the ministry of Sebastião Carvalho, confirming the effects of a “Pombalism without Pombal”, to use the aforementioned expression used by Rogério Fernandes.

Close to this picture of doubts, a caveat about the preponderant number of private teachers of basic literacy must be made. It was not always possible to determine whether the teacher registered in the documentation was basic literacy or Latin Grammar. In part, this uncertainty can be attributed to the naming changes that happened in the nineteenth century. According to some authors, in the eighteenth century, there was a clear distinction between “professores” [teachers] and “mestres” [masters/professors]. “Mestres” would be responsible for the most fundamental teaching of reading, writing, counting and the Christian doctrine, while “professores” took care of the more specialized education, such as Latin Grammar. This distinction tends to reduce in the nineteenth century and the term “professor” would also be used for the teaching of “basic literacy”.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the documents, references to “professores” without further elaboration were allocated in the “basic literacy” category, which could explain the great presence of these teachers.

Altogether, there were 28 Regius teachers teaching in the district of Mariana between the years 1801 and 1834, including one woman. Licensed in 1833, Francisca de Paula Egina was the only woman among the studied Regius teachers, which reveals a predominantly male teaching universe. There was an effort of the Brazilian Empire to include women in the public school system. The law of 1827 defined that the most populated villages should have a teacher to teach the girls “to read, write, the four operations, the Christian doctrine” and also “as prendas, que servem à economia domestica” (“the *prendas*, skills that serve the domestic economy”) (Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Mariana, livro 719).<sup>15</sup> According to the same law, the teachers would be appointed by the Presidents of the Provinces [Presidentes

<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century, more precisely in 1822, the Regius classes were renamed as public classes, which was considered in the survey.

<sup>15</sup> Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Mariana — AHCM [Historical Archives of the City Council of Mariana] Book 719.

das Províncias] and should be “Brazilian, known to be honest, and prove to have much knowledge in tests applied” (Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Mariana, livro 719). Despite the legal requirement, the case of Francisca Egina and the reality of education in Mariana reveal the discrepancy between the legislation and the school routine. A document issued by the Town Council of Mariana [*Câmara de Mariana*] in 1828, to the President of the Province indicates the difficulties in meeting the shortage of female teachers:

It is not possible for the Council to inform Your Honor about the establishment of the Girls’ Schools for we could not find enough ladies to be teachers so we can only remind Your Honor that the deceased Surgeon Mor Mr. Domingos Ferraz Chaves’s daughters or the late Lt. Narciso Gomes’s daughters (...), Lescadia and Narcisa could serve this city. (Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Mariana, livro 719)

In the same year, another record of the Town Council of Mariana mentions the creation and maintenance of schools for both sexes in the localities of “Piranga Pomba, Sumidouro, Barra Longa, Mercês, Presídio, Furquim, Ponte Nova, Catas Altas, and Santana dos Ferros” (Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Mariana, livro 719). Despite the evidence, there was no longer any supporting documentation of the actual installation of these schools. What is certain is that Francisca Paula Egina was the first female Regius teacher of the city of Mariana.

## CONCLUSIONS

Early in the Pombaline reforms of education, in 1759, it is possible to perceive the existence of Regius teachers in the Portuguese America. It is likely, however, that these teachers were insufficient considering the scarcity expressed in constant complaints from the authorities. This situation, however, has been shown to be more complex as the regional researches advance. While some studies have shown the absence of Regius and private teachers in captaincies of the interior of Brazil, such as São Paulo and Mato Grosso, others bring more promising information about coastal regions, especially the Northeast. These indications, however, tend to improve in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, revealing positive results of the Pombaline educational reform.



Notwithstanding the changes promoted by the coeval educational reforms and subsequent to the expulsion of the Company of Jesus, the strong presence of priests was noted among the teachers. As a result of these and other data presented, the secularization policy inaugurated by the Marquis of Pombal in the reign of King Joseph I did not separate the Church from the school environment, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the effects of “the conventualization of schooling” promoted by Queen Mary I were considerable.

Still, in the following century, a considerable expansion of lay teachers is noticed in the district of Mariana. This phenomenon may be the result, although diaphanous, of what Rogério Fernandes called “Pombalism without Pombal”. Nevertheless, perhaps the decay of the presence of clerics among teachers can be explained by local contingencies, involving the shutdown of the *Seminário da Boa Morte* between the years 1811 and 1820.

Finally, any conclusion that could be taken about the effects of the educational policies throughout the 1759-1834 period should consider the local specificities and contingencies, especially because such aspects served as criteria for the unequal distribution of Regius classes throughout the Portuguese empire. Furthermore, any consideration about teaching in a particular region should consider their economic, social and cultural particularities, since they directly affect the demand and the supply of schools. The recognition of this multitude of influencing factors poses a challenge to the researcher who cannot settle for peremptory statements that confirm the lack of teachers in Minas Gerais. The real challenge of the research is to expand the range of documents without fearing the effort and the difficulty of drawing the first lines of the history of school education in the Luso-Brazilian world.

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