

Translation of Machiavelli: from Portuguese India to Brazil

Presentation

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For a long time, in the Portuguese vocabulary, “translation” has meant the act of turning a spoken or written text from one language to the other. Therefore, a translator should be very familiar with the source language, and even more familiar with the desired language. According to the famous Luso-French clergyman, Bluteau (1638–1734), good translations should not be made of words, but of equivalences. For him, the term would be a rhetorical figure after the same word has been repeated with different meanings. Therefore, it refers to the famous saying “*traduttore, traditore*”, however, pondering about the possible fidelity of good versions.¹ The idea of transferring and transforming, which is related to the term, was emphasized in posterior dictionaries of Portuguese,² not to the detriment of the first meanings, but indicating the act of translating as clarifying the meaning of something. That is, translating would mainly involve interpreting, understanding, and explaining what needs to be understood.³

The dossier presented herein deals with some “translations” of the author Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) and his work, considering not only the first meaning of the word, but also the others, in search of equivalences and/or interpretations. In all of the cases, the dossier tries to understand some expressions assumed by Machiavelli in the lusophone world throughout time. These expressions were investigated not only in the Portuguese overseas empire of the modern time, from the 16th to the 18th centuries, but also in independent Brazil, from the 20th century.

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¹Raphael Bluteau, *Vocabulário português & latino*: aulico, anatomico, achitectonico...vols. 8 e 9, Coimbra, Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesu, 1712-1728, p. 233-234; 261. Available from: <<http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/pt-br/dicionario/edicao/1>>. Access on: June 9, 2014.

²Antonio de Moraes Silva, *Dicionário da língua portuguesa*: recompilado dos vocabularios impressos ate agora, e nesta segunda edição novamente emendado e muito acrescentado... Lisboa, Tipografia Lacerdina, 1789, p. 793. Available from: <<http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/pt-br/dicionario/edicao/2>>. Access on: June 9, 2014.

³Antônio Houaiss; Mauro de Salles Villar; Francisco Manoel de Mello Franco (orgs.), *Dicionário Houaiss da língua portuguesa*, Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2004, p. 2.745.

In stories of Portugal, its colonial conquests, and Brazil, the writings of the Florentine author went through a peculiar route. At first, they were read by interested humanists during the Portuguese expansion in the first half of the 16th century, heading to Africa, Asia, and America in the reigns of D. Manuel I and John III. In one of his prologues, Machiavelli boldly compared himself to the navigators who discovered the New World, drawing a parallel between his political theory and overseas journeys.⁴ Even though he did not incorporate more elaborate reflections in his books about the new conquests led by Iberian monarchies, after his death, his ideas resulted in the elaboration of texts that discussed the nature and the legitimacy of the government of Portugal in parts of the world, especially in the East. At that time, the ecclesiastical censorship in Rome and in Iberian countries still had not fully condemned the works of the Florentine secretary. So, Portuguese epopees were compared to deeds of ancient Romans, and the *Discorsi* — whose translation to Spanish had been ordered by Charles I and dedicated to the future Philip II of Spain — was a main source.⁵

We try to understand certain expressions assumed by Machiavelli in the lusophone world throughout time, in the overseas Portuguese empire from the modern time, but also in independent Brazil from the 20th century

The second half of the 16th century was marked by indexes of forbidden books (Roman, Portuguese, and Spanish) and by the reinforcement of catholic orthodoxy. However, paradoxically, the fame as a forbidden author and the appearance of antimachiavellism did not reduce the interest for these ideas — or for what they represented — in the Iberian environment, especially in Portugal. In this world of wars and affirmation of power with global pretensions, *Il principe* — as the opus-cule was known — and its author were definitive references. In the catholic environment that formally resisted him, Machiavelli personified political vices, usually opposed to Christian acting. But he could also inspire actions considered to be perfect in a concealed manner. At that time, the bad fame of the Florentine author was associated with the precepts of a perfidious reason of the State. However, his ideas were also found among authors that were formally defined as antimachiavellic.⁶

⁴Maquiavel, *Comentários sobre a primeira década de Tito Lívio: "Discorsi"*, 4. ed., Translation by Sérgio Bath, Brasília, Editora da UnB, 2000, p. 17.

⁵Giuseppe Marcocci, *L'invenzione di un impero: politica e cultura nel mondo portoghese (1450-1600)*, Roma, Carocci, p. 45-88; Giuseppe Marcocci, "Construindo um império à sombra de Maquiavel", *In: Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro; Sandra Bagno (orgs.), Maquiavel no Brasil: dos descobrimentos ao século XXI*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora FGV; Faperj, no prelo; Helena Puigdomènech, *Maquiavelo en España: presencia de sus obras en los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988, p. 81-133.

⁶As an example, the piedmontese Giovanni Botero (1544-1617), with special insertion in the Iberian world. Luís Reis Torgal; Rafaella Longobardi Ralha (orgs.), *João Botero. Da razão de Estado*, Translation by Rafaella Longobardi Ralha, Coimbra, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1992; Enzo Baldini (org.), *Botero e la "ragiondistato"*. Atti del convegno in memoria di Luigi Firpo (Torino 8-10 marzo 1990), Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 1992.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, in Portugal and in Brazil, there were other governors whose political practices could be identified as another form of using power, which was more objective and bold, different from the one that was commonly connected to characteristic pacts and mediations of a catholic monarchy supported by the neoscholastic philosophy. In Portugal, this political culture was reinforced in the conjuncture of the Restoration War (1640–1668).⁷

However, even in this field, many administrators and rebels incorporated strategies of dissimulation in their speeches; even though these strategies were not exclusively from Machiavelli, they were usually associated as being machiavellisms. Later, the participation of noble Portuguese men in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713) constituted another great moment of internationalization and contact with eccentric ideas in relation to the traditional royal Portuguese environment.⁸

This brief diachronic remission points to a different theoretical and methodological perspective for the analysis of governments, ideas, and practices in the Portuguese monarchy and its overseas conquests.⁹ Facing this world that was only superficially hostile to Machiavelli's ideas, it is advisable to read the opposing sources and be suspicious of the mere accusations of machiavellism, which were easily declared to denigrate the enemies. This was a time when the bad reputation of the Florentine author contaminated other forms of dissimulation and political strategies, which had existed since classical culture.¹⁰ So, there were many possibilities of heterodoxy and singularity, more frequent than those shown by the model analyses of modern European States to capture this major political and cultural context — actually, multifaceted. By the carefully kept copies of manuscripts, which now have disappeared, or by forbidden books deposited in monastic libraries, or even by editions that were never exposed by their owners, the ideas of Machiavelli survived and avoided their connection to machiavellism — which would have made them fragile for possible accusers.

A little far ahead, in the already republican Brazil and heading into the Revolution of 1930, the first translation of *Il principe* to Portuguese was done, two years before its European version. However, in a freed country there was much inquisitorial censorship, so the deprecating tone to approach whatever made reference to Machiavelli still survived. The book was published by a socialist publisher house in Rio de Janeiro to denigrate the ascending and strategic climb of a “machiavellic” Getúlio Vargas, according to its prologue. In Portugal, the translation of the same piece, known as “Fascist Machiavelli”, with prologue made by Mussolini, also connected the politics at the time, during the Second Republic, and the seminal ideals of the Florentine author from the 16th century.¹¹

⁷Luis Reis Torgal, *Ideologia política e teoria do Estado na Restauração*, Coimbra, Biblioteca Geral da Universidade, 1981-1982, 2 v.

⁸David Martín Marcos, *Península de recelos*. Portugal y España, 1668-1715, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2014.

⁹Different, for instance, from that promoted by Martim de Albuquerque, *Maquiavel e Portugal: estudos de história das ideias políticas*, Lisboa, Aletheia, 2007, com base no anterior *A sombra de Maquiavel e a ética tradicional portuguesa: ensaio de história das ideias políticas*, Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa; Instituto Histórico Infante Dom Henrique, 1974.

¹⁰Pablo Badillo O'Farrell; Miguel A. Pastor (orgs.), *Tácito y tacitismo en España*, Madrid, Anthropos, 2013.

¹¹Sandra Bagno, “*Il principe* nell'area luso-brasiliana e le sue prime traduzioni in portoghese”, In: Alessandro Campi (org.), *Il principe di Niccolò Machiavelli e il suo tempo*. 1513-2013, Roma, Treccani, 2013, p. 219-220.

So, let us return to the several meanings of the word “translation”. From Tuscany or Italian to Portuguese, but also from the Brazilian contemporary politician compared to the old writings of the famous author in the 16th century in relation to the practice of power. Could the Machiavelli who spoke to other times not have his ideas and advisement compared to the work of a contemporaneous character found among the members of the Portuguese overseas empire? The correspondence of the great Afonso de Albuquerque, governor of Portuguese India while the small book about principedoms was being written, shows how much his concerns about the conquest and the conservation of territories were similar to the texts in *Discorsi, Il principe*, and *Dell'arte della guerra*, regardless of some differences in other topics. Albuquerque did not read Machiavelli, but was prone to his ideas. Therefore, he would be a type of translation.

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It is possible to observe that Machiavelli and/or elements of machiavellism had interpretations, as in the cases of the governor general of the State of Brazil, in the 1660s, the 1st count of Obidos, and the governor of the captaincy, D. Pedro Miguel de Almeida Portugal, then future 3rd count of Assumar, in the second decennium of the 16th century. Their actions and writings present similarities with the advice given by the Florentine author, especially in *Il principe*. Even though — because of the aforementioned cultural and political embarrassment — it is too bold to state that these Portuguese noble men read the books by Machiavelli, their governments can be described as being machiavellic, due to the superposition created in the modern time between the stereotype itself and its source.

In other words, the elements of Machiavelli would also be present in these machiavellisms that, nonetheless, would already be his caricature.¹²

There is no doubt that this is a complex horizon for investigation, which requires philological and quantitative studies, as well as sensitivity and common sense for the analyses. It is also essential to operate with the term “machiavellianism” —, which appeared in Italy in the 20th century as an attempt of remission for the ideas of the famous author, more deprived from his stereotypes — and with the other words deriving from Machiavelli (“machiavellist”, “machiavellic”

¹²Michel Senellart, *Machiavélisme et raison d'Etat*. XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle, Paris, PUF, 1989.

and so on), whose name in Portuguese is already adapted. All of this shows his important reception in Portuguese-speaking countries.¹³

The small dossier is integrated to the set of accomplishments belonging to the project *Macchiavelismo e machiavellismi nella tradizione politica occidentale (secoli XVI-XX)*, directed by Enzo Baldini, from the University of Turin, and elaborated with the objective of promoting the formation of groups and colloquies in the West because of the ephemerides of the 500 anniversary of *Il principe*, written from the late 1513 to the early 1514. From 2007 on, courses, workshops, and study groups, as well as an international colloquium, were organized in *Universidade Federal Fluminense* (together with another event conducted in the *Instituto de Ciências Sociais* from the *Universidade de Lisboa*), in order to analyze the role of Machiavelli's ideas in the Portuguese and Brazilian universes, in the 19th century and in the present.¹⁴ Throughout this time, we have dealt with several "translations" and "betrayals": of books, ideas, and representations. Therefore, the articles by Ângela Barreto Xavier, Luciano Figueiredo, Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro, Vinícius Dantas, and Sandra Bagno constitute a brief sample of the huge possibilities of research that the field of history of political ideas can, at the time, bring to light.

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¹³Sandra Bagno, "Maquiavélico versus 'maquiaveliano'" na língua e nos dicionários monolíngües brasileiros", *Cadernos de Tradução*, vol. 2, n. 22, Florianópolis, 2008, p. 129-150. Available from: <<https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/traducao/issue/view/1121>> Access on: September 25, 2013.

¹⁴Hypermachiavellism. Available from: <<http://www.hpermachiavellism.net/>>. Access on: January 19, 2014. As results of these initiatives, the dossier by Gustavo Kelly de Almeida: Bento Machado Mota (orgs.), "Maquiavel dissimulado: heterodoxia no mundo ibérico", *7 Mares. Revista dos pós-graduandos em História Moderna da Universidade Federal Fluminense*, vol. 1, n. 1, Niterói, 2012, p. 6-49. Available from: <<http://www.historia.ufrj.br/7mares/?cat=6>>. Access on: February 14, 2014, and the book by Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro; Sandra Bagno (orgs.), *Maquiavel no Brasil: dos descobrimentos ao século XXI*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora FGV; Faperj, no prelo. These initiatives were also connected to the project coordinated by Ronaldo Vainfas, *Linguagens da intolerância: religião, raça e política no mundo ibérico do Antigo Regime* (Pronex CNPq/Faperj) and to the one produced by Ângela Barreto Xavier, *O governo dos outros: imaginários políticos no império português (1496-1961)* (Portugal, FCT). Available from: <<http://governodosoutros.wordpress.com>>. Access on: June 10, 2014.