

Casa da Ínsua – Hotel de Charme



Roteiro Luís de Albuquerque [Luís de Albuquerque Tour]

In the *Sala dos Retratos* [Portrait Room], we can see the three phases of the life of Luís de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres (1739-1797), founder of Casa da Ínsua. In the **painting 2**, the young captain Luís de Albuquerque at the age of 24, with the blueprint of Praça de Almeida in his hand and at the time when he was an aide to General Mac-Lean. Within the painting, the following inscription can be read:

“Luís d’Albuquerque de Mello Per.^a e Cáceres Fidalgo da Caza de S.M.F. e Capitão de Inf.^o com Ex^o d’Ajud. e das Ord. Do Sen^o Gen.al Fr.co M.e Leean” [Luís d’Albuquerque de Mello Per.^a e Cáceres, nobleman, Captain and aide to General Mac-Lean.]

In **painting 10**, Luís de Albuquerque is portrayed at the time of his appointment, by the Marquis of Pombal, for Governor and Captain General of Cuiabá and Mato Grosso, on the 13th of June 1771. Mirrored fact in the inscription: *“Luís de Albuquerque de Melo Pereira e Cáceres nobleman of his Majesty court, Governor and Captain General of Mato Grosso, appointed on the 13th of June 1771 / Miguel António do Amaral painted 1771 / year 1771”*

In **painting 12**, Luís de Albuquerque is portrayed after his years in Brazil, back to his *Casa da Ínsua* and his functions at the Portuguese court.

Biographical note

The eldest son of Colonel Francisco de Albuquerque (**Painting 7**) and Isabel Maria de Mello de Albuquerque Pereira e Cáceres, Luís de Albuquerque was born in the parish of S. Salvador da Vila do Ladário, on the 21st of October 1739 and he was christened that same day by his uncle Luís Bandeira Galvão. The house where he was born still bears the banner of the Galvão family on its front, topped by the date 1630.

Ladário was a village and parish with a charter by King Manuel, on the 5th of May 1514. The village lost the importance it once had and is today a small village in the parish of S. Miguel de Vila Boa, in the municipality of Sátão.

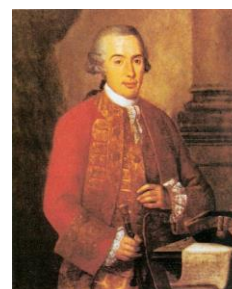
Luís de Albuquerque had siblings (two brothers and one sister), among whom João de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres stands out (**Painting 11**), who succeeded him as 5th Governor and Captain General of Cuiabá and Mato Grosso, where he died on the 21st of February 1796. The other brother, Manuel de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres (**Painting 13**), who served as Chief Justice of Rio de Janeiro and later in Porto, married Ana Benedita Forbes de Almeida e Portugal, daughter of the English Lieutenant-general João Forbes Shelluster, would be the one to continue the descending generation of Luís de Albuquerque. It was this brother who, following instructions sent from Brazil by Luís de Albuquerque, took charge of the construction of Casa da Ínsua.

Luís de Albuquerque studied French, English, geography, history, natural sciences, mathematics and drawing in Coimbra, at his grandparents' house and at the University. From the age of eighteen he became distinguished as a person of great dignity and intelligence both in the military field, as well as in the political, economic-administrative and social fields.

He was appointed nobleman of his Majesty João V court, on the 25th of October 1758, with the rank of cadet soldier of the Company, commanded by Colonel Francisco de Vila Nova, in the province of Beira. Four months later he was promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant. At the age of 24, on the 9th of April 1764 he was promoted to Captain appointed to be aide to Field Marshal Francisco Mac-Lean, Governor of Praça de Almeida, where he would remain until 1771. At this time he received a confidential letter, dated from the 20th of May 1771, informing him that the Marquis of Pombal was waiting for him. The Marquis of Pombal informed him that he had chosen him as Governor and Captain General of the State of Cuiabá and Mato Grosso in Brazil. The honourable proposal does not seem to have excited the young 31-year-old Captain and, on his return to Ínsua, he is said to have even shown his father the desire to refuse the invitation. However, his father managed to convince him not to shy away from the mission of his Majesty in Brazil. Luís de Albuquerque reconsidered and on the 13th of June came to accept the position for which he was nominated and later appointed by order of King José, on the 16th of June 1771.

After four months of bureaucratic preparations he embarked for Brazil, with the purpose of developing the immense territory of that Captaincy founded 20 years before and almost depopulated, potentially rich, but surrounded by neighbours adverse to the Portuguese presence. It was Luís de Albuquerque himself who wrote in his logbook:

“Today, Saturday the 12th of October, we left the port of Lisbon at a quarter to 9 a.m. on the ship Santa Ana Carmo e S. Jorge in the company of (blank) ships and 2 frigates. The Commander is José Sanches de Brito. The ship S. João Baptista soon departed and we continued our journey with fresh north-east wind, clear weather, flat sea and at noon we would be far 27 miles from the port and 9 minutes to the south.”



Luís de Albuquerque
in 1771

He was received on arrival by the Viceroy of Brazil, Luís de Almeida Soares Portugal, Alarcão Eça e Mello, Marquis of Lavradio and went on the journey to Mato Grosso by land, which made him the first governor of that state to carry out this feat.

Aiming to defend the territory against Castilian threats as well as against others, in surveying and developing the territory, Luís de Albuquerque exceeded expectations, managing to significantly increase the area of that Brazilian State, going far beyond the line defined at the time of King João II in the Treaty of Tordesillas. Based on cartographic surveys and new drawings and projects that he carried out, he created new cities and towns, enhancing its economic development. Many of the plans and drawings from that period are now reproduced and can be seen in several spaces and rooms at *Casa da Ínsua (prints and plants in A Mais Dilatada Vista do Mundo – Inventário da Coleção Cartográfica da Casa da Ínsua)*. He was also associated with the naturalist survey carried out in the region, which was the highlight of the *Viagem Filosófica*, conducted in the 80s by the Portuguese-Brazilian naturalist trained in Coimbra, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira.

He founded many towns and cities whose names were marked by his ancestry, of which these are an example: Vila Bela, Albuquerque, Vila Maria do Paraguai, Nova Coimbra, Mondego, Dão, Mareco, Coja, Sátão, Vouga, Zêzere, Estrela, Buçaco, Lamego, Sernancelhe and Viseu, among many others.

Another relevant work left by Luís de Albuquerque was the construction of the Real Forte Príncipe da Beira, located in present-day Rondônia, on the right bank of the Guaporé River, today called Guajará-Mirim, whose construction is contemporaneous with the plans sent to Portugal for building Casa da Ínsua. Work on the fortress began on the 20th of June 1776 and resulted in a gigantic work, with a quadrangular plan, almost a kilometre in perimeter and with ten metre high walls. This construction, due to its size and boldness, would, at the time, even astonish the megalomaniac Marquis of Pombal. In a dominant position on the border with Bolivia, this fortress is considered one of the largest built by Portuguese Military Engineering in Colonial Brazil and was one of the arguments that forced the Spanish to sign the Treaty of Santo Ildefonso, defining the borders in that area, whose adjustment was completed in 1777. This earned Luís de Albuquerque the phrase with which the Spanish leader of Santa Cruz de la Sierra would define him: “*The most ambitious of the Portuguese Governors*”.

This fortress was dedicated to the first Prince of Beira, José, eldest grandson of his Majesty King José, and at the time second in the line of succession, after his mother, the Princess of Brazil and future queen Maria I. The Prince of Beira José would eventually die young and would be his younger brother to succeed Queen Maria, as King João VI. The fortress *Forte Príncipe da Beira* in 2009 would be one of the monuments selected for the choice of the 7 World Wonders of Portuguese Origin.

In recognition of his work, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel of Cavalry, by royal document issued by Queen Maria I, on the 7th of August 1782.

After several requests from him to be replaced, on the 1st of October 1788, Her Majesty the Queen Maria I appoints his brother João de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres (**Painting 11**), as Governor and Captain General of Mato Grosso. João would take office on the 20th of November 1789. Luís, despite his poor health, would stay in Mato Grosso for more than half a year, preparing his brother for the difficult tasks that awaited him.

He would finally leave Mato Grosso on the 1st of June 1790. On the 18th of May 1791 he embarked for Lisbon in the “Santíssimo Coração de Jesus - Águia” (a miniature of this ship is displayed in the *Sala do Pêndulo*).

He would arrive on the 5th of July 1791, almost twenty years after he had travelled to Brazil, the reason why he was called “the oldest Governor of America” at the time.

As soon as he arrived in Portugal, he went to Ínsua to visit his father, who was sad after another of his sons had left for Brazil. However, Luís did not get to enjoy the beautiful manor that he had built. Right on the 22nd of December 1792 by royal order “Her Majesty in the much that the Crown would have to profit from the knowledge and merits of the former Governor of Mato Grosso, understood it best to appoint him Councillor of the Overseas Council”.

Returning to Lisbon, new honours awaited him: the Queen awarded him, by order of the 5th of October 1793, the “Comenda de S. Martinho de Chans”, and in an order of the 13th of the same month and year, dubbed him Knight of “Cavaleiro da Ordem da Milícia de Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo” on the 27th of December of that same year.

For this reason, he moved to Lisbon, where his poor health was severely shaken by the news of the death of his brother João, in Brazil on the 21st of July 1796. Finally, Luís de Albuquerque died on the on the 7th of July 1797, “and was buried in the neighbouring Church of S. Sebastião da Pedreira”.

Governors of Cuiabá and Mato Grosso, during the 18th century:

1st Governor - António Rolim de Moura Tavares, from 1751 to 1764, 2nd Governador - João Pedro da Câmara, from 1765 to 1768

3rd Governor - Luís Pinto de Sousa Coutinho, from 1769 to 1772

4th Governor - Luís de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres, from 1772 to 1789 5th Governor - João de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres, from 1789 to 1796