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Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

“Práticos na terra:”
Arguing for Indigenous Labor and Colonial Development in Portuguese America, 1532-1757

By

Maria Barreiros Almeida Reis

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Elena Schneider, Chair
Professor Margaret Chowning
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Summer 2024

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ABSTRACT

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by

Maria Barreiros Almeida Reis

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Elena Schneider, Chair

This dissertation traces the debates over the regulation of Indigenous labor in Portuguese America. I follow these debates as they first unraveled in the northeastern sugar-planting regions of sixteenth-century Brazil, and then as they traveled to the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, a Portuguese colony in the eastern Amazon that was administered separately from the State of Brazil. I draw from extensive research in multiple imperial archives, with manuscript sources in Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, to analyze the development of a school of thought among sectors of the settler population that argued for Indigenous slave-trading and/or increased settler access to Indigenous workers in mission villages. I show how settlers and their opponents manipulated a portfolio of arguments to demand different labor regimes and policies. In their arguments for increased access to Indigenous laborers, settlers claimed that they were poor, that they were dependent on Indigenous skilled labor, that relying on Indigenous workers was more practical than relying on enslaved Africans, and that Indigenous peoples were “*práticos na terra*,” or experienced in the land, and thus the best-equipped workers in the region. I thus draw attention to the ubiquity of “pragmatic” arguments to labor debates, focusing on how settlers wielded ideas of utility, feasibility, poverty, and the common good, to make their demands.

Countering the historiographical assumption that Europeans had a long-standing preference for African enslaved labor, my dissertation argues that Maranhão was a colony where a great variety of ideologies about Indigenous and African peoples were tested, questioned, and reconceptualized across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In particular, Portuguese ideas about Indigenous peoples’ proclivity to work were much more nuanced than the historiography has posited. With time, these arguments became increasingly racialized, as settlers activated ideas about the Indigenous versus the African body and correlated skin color to one’s ability to work. Furthermore, settler arguments demanding greater access to Indigenous laborers often implicitly and explicitly contested the framework of “disease, flight, and capacity to work,” a framework long embraced by the historiography as an explanation for the rise of African slavery in the Americas. In their arguments, settlers in Maranhão wielded their on-the-ground experiences to contend that Indigenous labor was more practical than relying on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, that disease outbreaks justified more slave-trading, and that Indigenous peoples were more apt to the kinds of work required for Amazonian production. Thus, I argue that this framework was as much a constructed argument subject to debate as it was an explanation of a material reality.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful to the various historians, colleagues, archivists, and friends who made this dissertation possible. My undergraduate advisors, Caroline Humfress and Ana del Campo, were incredibly influential in encouraging me to do pursue a PhD in History. At Berkeley, I am forever grateful to my advisors: Margaret Chowning, Elena Schneider, and Bruce Hall. Margaret took a chance on a Medieval historian who had never formally studied Latin America. This past year, Margaret amazingly sorted through my messiest drafts to help me identify my key arguments and ideas. I am very lucky to have Elena as the chair of my dissertation. Elena taught me everything I know about the Atlantic World. She has relentlessly encouraged me to craft big arguments and express them in the clearest manner possible. Bruce spent countless hours brainstorming this dissertation with me. In our calls, I would tell Bruce every single idea that went through my head, and he was able to help me synthesize these ideas into clear ideas and narratives. At Berkeley, I had the pleasure of learning from incredible historians like Rebecca Herman, Rebecca McLennan, Brian Delay, Stephanie Jones-Rogers, Trevor Jackson, and James Vernon. Outside of my department, Candace Slater's courses on Brazilian literature and film were some of the biggest sources of inspiration for my dissertation. Special thanks to Nathaniel Wolfson for his support in my last years of writing.

My graduate school family helped me every step of the way. Thank you to my dearest friends: Grace Goudiss, Lois Rosson, Claire Wrigley, Simon Brown, Peter Vale, Kyle Jackson, Brandon Williams, and J.T. Jamieson. These friends transcended from colleagues to family, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grace, Lois, and Claire are the smartest, coolest, and most wonderful best friends that anyone could ever ask for. Grace and I have been through what feels like multiple lifetimes together. I am so grateful for her love and for how hard she makes me laugh. When I look back at all my fondest memories in California, Lois was always there. I am especially grateful for our amazing bike rides through the Berkeley hills together and our chats at Inspiration Point. Claire has been an amazing roommate and work wife. At various points on our calls, Claire seemed to understand my dissertation better than I understood it myself. Our final dissertation workdays at Moffit were incredibly fun, even if a little bleak. I am also grateful to my colleagues Henry Schmidt, Sourav Ghosh, Gabriel Lesser, Evan Fernández, Derek O'Leary, John Handel, Eva Vaillancourt, and Joseph Ledford. Special shout-out to Sabrina Soracco and Yana Zlochistaya. Our writing group, which essentially became dissertation group therapy, was a wonderfully generative space for thinking through my ideas and clarifying my writing.

I would also like to thank the archives, libraries, and grant-awarding institutions at Berkeley that made my research possible. I am very grateful to the Institute for International Studies, the Global, International, and Area Studies Office, as well as the Center for Latin American Studies. Special thanks to the archivists and staff at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, particularly Susan McElrath. The Bancroft's incredible collection became a critical place for my research, especially when COVID prevented me from accessing archives abroad.

The small and mighty Dutch Studies community in the United States welcomed me with open arms. Thank you to Esmee van der Hoeven for relentlessly trying to teach me Dutch. After Wijnie de Groot and Frans Bloom's summer workshop in 2021, a couple of us decided to meet weekly to work on our seventeenth-century Dutch paleography. Thank you to Jason Perlman,

Rob Naborn, Julie van der Hout, Erik Odergard, Amanda Faulkner, Marian Leach, Miguel Durango, B.J. Lillis, Jennifer Motter, and Carolina Monteiro for all the wonderful sessions of the “Dutch Study Group.” This group, which has now been meeting weekly for over three years, has miraculously made reading seventeenth-century Dutch paleography a blast.

The Fulbright Foundation generously supported my research and allowed me to have one of the best years of my life. In Lisbon, I had the pleasure of workshopping my dissertation with Pablo Ibañez Bonillo, Rafael Chambouleyron, Mariana Candido, Moreno Pacheco, Lexie Cook, Manoel Rendeiro Neto, Bruna Santiago, and Pablo Hernández Sau. I am especially grateful to Mariana Meneses Muñoz and Eugenio Lucotti, two colleagues who became dear friends. Above all, thank you to Pedro Cardim who became an incredible mentor and advisor in Lisbon. Pedro put me in touch with Stuart Schwartz and João José Reis, who both provided me with critical advice on the execution of this project. In Spain, I had the incredible help and tremendous generosity of Manuel F. Fernández Chaves, Rafael M. Pérez García, José Luis Belmonte Postigo, and Joe Albanese. In Brazil, Ronaldo Vainfas and Carlos Zeron guided me to new sources and avenues of investigation. I am also thankful to Leslie Bethell and Rogério Werneck, who patiently listened to my rants about my dissertation.

At the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory in Frankfurt, I received incredible feedback on my dissertation from Thomas Duve, Rômulo Ehalt, Luisa Coutinho, and Raquel Siquotti. I also made wonderful friends. Thank you to Karolina Marques Machado, Renato Onofri, Julieta Rabanos, Melanie Merlin, Sabarish Suresh, Gilberto Pedrosa, Marko Sukačić, and Maria del Pilar Ramirez Restrepo.

While I was abroad, my high school and college friends made the effort to visit me whenever they could. Thank you to all the members of the Bethesda “the Book Club.” Thank you so much to my wonderful St Andrews friends, whether in London or in the States. Thank you to Ilaria Maresi for welcoming me to her home in Amsterdam on multiple occasions. And thanks so much to Anna Ordóñez, who after a decade, remains unchallenged in the competition for the world’s greatest mentor.

None of this would be possible without my family. Thank you to my brother, Rodrigo, and my sister, Renata, for all their love and support. My parents and I had to expand the meaning of family when we moved to the U.S. Thank you to my Washington D.C. family, or “*padrinhos virtuais*,” Roberto, Maria Amélia, Ricardo, and Helvia, who have always made me feel loved and supported, even when I chose to become a historian and not an economist.

Above all, I must thank my parents and my fiancé. My parents, Ana and Zegui, always encouraged my passion for history. From our shared love for Brazilian music to watching old movies, the three of us have always spent a lot of time together talking and learning about the past. Franz became my travel companion and my rock in the uncertainty of the last years of a doctorate program. Whether by taking me to a La Liga match, on a weekend road trip in Andalusia, or on a hike in Schwarzwald, Franz turned my research trips into some of my most treasured memories. I dedicate my dissertation to the three of them.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABNRJ: *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*

AHU: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisboa

ANTT: Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisboa

BA: Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisboa

BL: British Library, London

BNP: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisboa

ESC: Engel Sluiter Collection at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

FBN: Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

KB: Koninklijk Bibliotheek, Den Haag

NA: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag

RIHGB: *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*

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A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

This dissertation uses early modern Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch sources. Translating these sources was no easy task. To the best of my ability, I have attempted to stick as closely as possible to the original sources. When that approach becomes incomprehensible to modern English-speaking audiences, I have adjusted and modernized the translations. For example, in certain sources, I have chosen to shift the order of clauses and punctuation for clarity, especially as early modern writers rarely used punctuation. Occasionally, I have inserted missing words in brackets to clarify the subject or object of a sentence. For key quotations, I have included the transcription in the footnotes, though I have chosen not to modernize the spelling of these transcriptions.

INTRODUCTION

In 1839, the secretary of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (IHGB), Januário da Cunha Barbosa lamented the shift from Indigenous labor to African slavery in colonial Brazil. Barbosa argued that Brazil's historic reliance on African slavery had hampered the development of the Brazilian empire's Indigenous population, as well as its agricultural sector. Establishing himself as someone who was "not a patron of slavery, the Indians, nor the Blacks", Barbosa claimed that Indigenous peoples historically had "aptitude for all kinds of work" and would have been better suited than enslaved Africans to work in plantations.¹

In his treatise, Barbosa provided an overview of the history of Indigenous labor versus African slavery in Brazil. He derided Antônio Vieira, the seventeenth-century Jesuit who opposed Indigenous slavery in Portuguese America.² Commonly described as the Portuguese Empire's Bartolomé de las Casas, Vieira proposed the introduction of enslaved Africans to areas of Portuguese America where practices of Indigenous slavery and coerced labor were still widespread, most notably Maranhão and São Paulo. In 1661, the Jesuit famously described Indigenous peoples as more prone to flight, less capable of work, and less resistant to disease.³ Almost two hundred years later, Barbosa refuted Vieira's interpretation, arguing that Indigenous peoples were "not as averse to work as the patrons of African slavery have claimed." The secretary of the IHGB concluded that:

"The poor Blacks, outside of their native country, have less aptitude for our work than the Indians, and the benefit of liberty that [the Indians] received after many laws that have been cited, bore little to no fruit for them due to a lack of catechesis, as well as [a lack] of a well-established system [to introduce them to] civilization. The necessity of workers would have obligated farmers to be more humane to the free Indians, had it not been so easy to buy Black slaves to substitute [the Indigenous] in their fields."⁴

¹ Januário da Cunha Barbosa, "Se a introdução dos escravos africanos no Brasil embaraça a civilização dos nossos indígenas, dispensando-se-lhes o trabalho, que todo foi conviado a escravos negros. Neste caso qual é o prejuízo que sofre a lavoura Brasileira," *RIHGB* 1 (1839): 123-129. For an explanation of Cardoso's role as Secretary of the IHGB and his understanding of Indigeneity, see Luis Fernando Tosta Barbato, "O indígena nas revistas do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro: entre o problema e a solução (1839-1845)," *Revista Espacialidades* 6, n. 5 (2013): 6-17.

² Chapter 3 discusses Antônio Vieira and his arguments around Indigenous slavery and labor in detail. Vieira understood Indigenous slavery as legitimate in cases of just war but disputed what he saw as frequent abuses in slaving expeditions. For a biography on Vieira, see Ronaldo Vainfas, *Antônio Vieira: O Jesuíta do Rei* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011). For his views on the legal status of Indigenous peoples, see José Eisenberg, "Antônio Vieira and the Justification of Indian Slavery," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 40, no. 1 (2003): 89-95; Carlos Zeron, "Vieira em movimento: subjacências da distinção entre tapuias, tupis e negros," *Estudos Avançados* 33, no. 97 (2019): 171-192. For Vieira's ideas about empire, see Thomas Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues: Antônio Vieira and the Missionary Church in Brazil and Portugal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). In this dissertation, I use the Portuguese spelling of Antônio, rather than the Brazilian spelling of António.

³ It is important to note that Vieira did not invent the explanatory framework of "disease, flight, and capacity to work", but he did famously wield this framework in his correspondence with the Municipal Council of Belém in 1661. See BA 54-XI-27, n. 12.

⁴ Barbosa, "Se a introdução dos escravos africanos no Brasil," 128. "Os pobres negros, forá de seu paiz natal, são menos aptos aos nosso trabalhos, do que os índios; e o beneficio da liberdade, que eles receberam, depois de tantas leis que ficam citadas, tornou-se de pouco ou de nenhum fructo pela falta de catechese, e de um

Barbosa's writing can be read as part of a larger intellectual movement in nineteenth-century Latin America, when elites attempted to reconcile the histories of Indigenous and African peoples with narratives of the newly established nation-states.⁵ These elite narratives valorized historic Indigeneity while tending to exclude contemporary Indigenous peoples from the nation-building process. They were also increasingly steeped in racial ideologies, framing Blackness in opposition to civilizational progress.

Yet more than being just a product of nineteenth-century nation building and racial thinking, Barbosa's treatise was partaking in a much older conversation. Since the effective colonization of Brazil in the sixteenth century, Portuguese elites compared the labor capacities of Indigenous and African peoples and used these comparisons to make larger claims about who should be working in the colony. Usually, these comparisons heavily favored the work of enslaved Africans. In 1636, a Jewish-Portuguese planter in Dutch Brazil explained to the Staten Generaal that sugar plantations were a sort of "hell, where only people like these Blacks can endure the work."⁶ Such comments were so widespread that, by the middle of the seventeenth century, elites partially attributed the wealth and success of the sugar-growing captaincies of Bahia and Pernambuco to the mass importation of enslaved workers from Africa, particularly Angola.⁷ As Antônio Vieira explained in 1648: "without Blacks, there is no Pernambuco, and without Angola, there are no Blacks..."⁸ While African peoples were portrayed as the most capable workers, Indigenous peoples were said to be unfit for plantation labor. In 1611, the French traveler François Pyrard described how the Natives of Brazil were "not at all prized as slaves, inasmuch as they work neither well nor willingly."⁹

These tropes were not just used in Brazil, but across the Americas. In his 1542 *The Destruction of the Indies*, the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas described Native Peoples of the Americas as some of the "...least robust of human beings: their delicate constitutions

systema bem concertado de civilização. A necessidade de trabalhadores obrigaria os fazendeiros a ser mais humanos com os índios livres, se lhes não tivesse sido fácil comprar negros para os substituir em suas lavouras. Os negros, portanto, servem de embaraço á civilização dos índios; e o que mais é, servem não pouco de retardar a nossa propria civilização, o que deixo de tratar, por não ser d'este programma."

⁵ There is an extensive literature on the appropriation or exclusion of Indigenous and African identities in nineteenth-century Latin American nation-building. See Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); John Monteiro, "Tupis, Tapuias e Historiadores: estudos da história indígena e do indigenismo," (Dissertation for Livre Docência, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2001): 170-179. Lilia Schwarcz, *Nem preto nem branco, muito pelo contrário: cor e raça na sociabilidade Brasileira* (São Paulo: Claro Enigma, 2012); Lilia Schwarcz, *O Espetáculo das Raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil (1870-1930)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993). Recently, Patrícia Martins Marcos has argued that these racial typifications and "whitening" projects, often associated with nineteenth-century nation-building, started in the colonial period. See Patrícia Martins Marcos "Configurations of the Human: Population, Patriarchy, and Medical Power in the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Atlantic (1720-1800)," (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2022).

⁶ "Brieven van Joseph da Costa," 1636, NA_1.02.01 12564.6: "He tam grande o trabalho que se chama a hum engenho destes inferno, e somente semalhante gente como são estes negros o podem aturar."

⁷ These comments were especially prominent during the Dutch West India Company takeover of Angola in 1641. See AHU Angola Avulsos Cx. 4, D. 18; AHU Bahia Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 39; AHU Bahia Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 45; AHU Bahia Avulsos, Cx 1, D. 61.

⁸ Antônio Vieira, "Carta XLVI ao Marques de Niza," August 12, 1648. *Cartas do Padre Antônio Vieira*, ed. João Lúcio de Azevedo, (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1925): 243.

⁹ François Pyrard, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas, and Brazil Volume II*, 1619, trans. Albert Gray (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1890): 319.

make them unable to withstand hard work, or suffering, and render them liable to succumb to almost any illness, no matter how mild.”¹⁰ Las Casas framed this incapacity to work as closely related to Indigenous vulnerability to newly-introduced European diseases.¹¹ For Las Casas, this idea that Indigenous peoples were inherently weak and vulnerable, alongside the trope that Indigenous peoples frequently fled population centers in the face of widespread settler violence, compromised the conversion project.¹²

Historians have since embedded these tropes and explanations into the grand narrative of the transition from Indigenous to African slavery.¹³ Nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars made sweeping generalizations and racialized claims about African peoples’ proclivity to manual labor and Native Peoples’ natural idleness.¹⁴ Economic historians focused on the comparative advantages and productivity gains of enslaved African work that created a better return on investment for plantation owners.¹⁵ Adopting African slavery was thus part of the process of colonial development, a natural progression once plantation owners had higher levels

¹⁰ Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, trans. Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin Group, 1992): 10. Las Casas famously engaged in a debate about the nature of Native Peoples with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. For more on the Valladolid debates and the thinking of Sepúlveda, see Francisco Castilla Urbano, *El pensamiento de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: Vida activa, humanismo y guerra en el Renacimiento* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2013).

¹¹ There is considerable scholarship about the demographic impact of the introduction of European diseases in the Americas. For two prominent works on the topic, see Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 30th edition (Westport: Praeger, 2003); William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor, 1998). Recent works on the topic have turned away from some of the biological essentialism of earlier histories. See David S. Jones, “Virgin Soils Revisited,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2003): 703–742; Suzanne Austin Alchon, *A Pest in the Land: New World Epidemics in a Global Perspective* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003).

¹² Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, 32–34. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century sources in colonial Brazil regularly mentioned an Indigenous propensity to flee, buttressed by this notion that Indigenous peoples’ status as native to the land meant that they were more familiar with their environment and thus more capable of fleeing. There is surprisingly little scholarship on this topic. Most of the works on flight have focused on maroon communities and *quilombos* in the Atlantic world. For maroon communities in the Atlantic World, see Manolo Florentino and Márcia Amantino, “Runaways and *Quilombolas* in the Americas,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, eds. David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 708–740. For Brazil, see João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (eds.) *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996).

¹³ This argument is found in almost all grand narratives of the transition from Indigenous to African slavery. See Boris Fausto, *História do Brasil*, (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994): 49; John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016): 31; Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 22; A.J.R. Russell-Wood, “Iberian Expansion and the Issue of Black Slavery,” *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (1978): 16–42. In overviews of slavery in the Americas, see David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 99; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800*, (London: Verso, 1998): 136; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975).

¹⁴ Nelson Werneck Sodré, *A ideologia do colonialismo: seus reflexos no pensamento Brasileiro*, (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Superior de Estudos do Brasil, 1961); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, 27th edition, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2014): 65.

¹⁵ Celso Furtado, *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fundo de Cultura S.A., 1959): 57; Stuart Schwartz, “Plantations and Peripheries, c. 1580 – c. 1750,” in *Colonial Brazil*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 118–127.

of capital.¹⁶ Cultural historians have analyzed these discourses as part of the Othering of Native Peoples, specifically how early modern Europeans used the tropes of idleness, alongside related concepts like “savagery”, “inconstancy”, and “bellicosity”, to justify the subjugation and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. Across the historiography, this perception of Indigenous incapacity to work, alongside the explanations of the impact of disease and the propensity to flee, have worked together to explain a European preference for enslaved African work. This preference, in turn, helps us understand the rise of African slavery, not just in Brazil, but across the Americas.

Since then, our historical understandings of Native Peoples and of the so-called transition from Indigenous to African slavery in the Americas have become much more nuanced. In the last few decades, anthropologists and archeologists have disrupted the notion that Indigenous peoples in Brazil were nomadic and unaccustomed to cultivation. These works have been particularly fruitful in the Amazonian context, where archeological evidence of large-scale, permanently settled and cultivated soils disrupt many of the traditional interpretations of Amazonian social formation.¹⁷ Furthermore, historians of the Atlantic World have shown how Indigenous slavery and coerced labor continued well into the colonial period and co-existed with African slavery.¹⁸ In the case of Brazil, this was particularly true in the captaincies once described as the “peripheries” or “backwaters” of the Portuguese Empire, those regions that lay outside of the profitable sugar-planting zones of the Northeast.¹⁹ In these areas, discussions about how to regulate Indigenous labor and slavery were endemic to the politics of the colony.

¹⁶ Celso Furtado, *Formação Econômica do Brasil*, 57.

¹⁷ For an overview of the cultural diversity of prehistoric Amazonia, see Alf Hornborg, “Ethnogenesis: Regional Integration, and Ecology in Prehistoric Amazonia,” *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 4 (2005): 589-620. For agricultural practices, see William Denevan, *Cultivated landscapes of native Amazonia and the Andes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For settlement patterns, see Michael Heckenberger, James B. Petersen, and Eduardo Goés Neves, “Village Size and Permanence in Amazonia: Two archaeological examples from Brazil,” *Latin American Antiquity* 10, no. 4 (1999): 353–76; Eduardo Goes Neves, “Paths in Dark Waters: Archaeology as Indigenous History in the Upper Rio Negro Basin, Northwest Amazon,” (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 1998). For political formation and warfare, see Carlos Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism in Amazonia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Carlos Fausto and Michael Heckenberger, eds. *Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia: Anthropological Perspectives*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007); Brian R. Ferguson and Neil Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1992).

¹⁸ There has been a growing historiography on Indigenous slavery and slave-trading in the wider Atlantic World. See James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); In Brazil, John Monteiro, *Negros da terra: índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo*. (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994). For theoretical discussions of Indigenous histories in the Atlantic scholarship, see Paul Cohen, “Was There an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept.” *History of European Ideas* 34, no. 4 (2008): 388-410.

¹⁹ I use “peripheries” and “backwater” in quotations because these terms have fallen out of fashion, the former associated with World Systems Theory. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). For a Latin American history response to these ideas, see Steve J. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism,

This dissertation examines how elites received, wielded, and subverted these tropes in one of those periphery areas: the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, also known as Portuguese Amazonia or, how it was known in the colonial period, Maranhão.²⁰ A Portuguese colony largely corresponding to modern-day Eastern Amazon, Maranhão was administered separately from the State of Brazil until 1772. It was a poor colony where the mass importation of enslaved Africans did not occur until the mid-eighteenth century, since widespread settler poverty provided merchants with little incentive to operate the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the region.²¹ Characterized by a mixed economy of commodity extraction, cattle ranching, and small-scale plantations of tobacco, sugar, and cotton, colonial Maranhão was a place where settlers relied primarily on Indigenous labor for production. As one settler in the 1660s explained, Maranhão was a colony where “settlers and Indians make up one body politic.”²² Indigenous peoples worked as soldiers, captains, farmers, rowers, fishermen, collectors, and more. They also worked as slaves, given that Maranhão was the site of an internal slave-trade.²³

This dissertation follows the debates about Indigenous labor, first as they appeared in the northeast captaincies of Brazil in the sixteenth century, and then as they traveled to and changed in the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará. In these debates, elites espoused a wide range of ideas about how to approach the regulation of Indigenous labor. Nevertheless, there was a relatively consistent trend that the population primarily interested in economic production or colonial expansion (i.e. plantations owners, the military elite, merchants, and sometimes, colonial

and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean,” *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (1988): 829-872.

²⁰ I use the term Maranhão since it was the preferred term for the historical actors I analyze. The State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará changed names on a couple of occasions during the colonial period. First founded as the State of Maranhão in 1621, by mid-century the colony became the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará. A century later, the colony became the State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão, signaling the growing importance of Pará and its capital city of Belém. For the sake of simplicity, I stick to the name Maranhão, since it was the most prevalent actor category during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

²¹ For more on the trans-Atlantic slave trade to Maranhão, see Rafael Chamboleyron, “Escravos do Atlântico equatorial: tráfico negreiro para o Estado do Maranhão e Pará (século XVII e início do século XVIII),” *Revista Brasileira de História* 26, no. 52 (2006): 79-114; Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, “The Atlantic Slave Trade to Maranhão, 1680-1846: Volume, Routes, and Organization,” *Slavery and Abolition* 29, no. 4 (2008): 477-501; Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Colin MacLachlan, “African slave trade and economic development in Amazonia, 1700-1800,” in *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, ed. R.B. Toplin, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974): 112-45; Daniel B. Domingues da Silva and Alexandre Vieira Ribeiro, “Amazonia and North-East Brazil in the Atlantic slave trade: an assessment of the Brazilian slave trade North of Rio de Janeiro,” *Atlantic Studies* 17, no. 4 (2020): 485-507.

²² BA 54-XIII-4, n. 42.

²³ For histories of the Indigenous slavery in Maranhão, see Alexandre Pelegrino, “Bonds of Belonging: Slaving, Indigeneity, and Race in Amazonia (Maranhão, Brazil, 1688-1798),” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2023); Camila Loureiro Dias, “O comércio de escravos indígenas na Amazônia visto pelos regimentos de entradas e de tropas de resgate (séculos XVII e XVIII),” *Territórios & Fronteiras* 10, no. 1 (2017): 238-59; David Graham Sweet, “A rich realm of nature destroyed: the middle Amazon valley, 1640-1750,” (PhD diss, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1974); Rafael Chamboleyron, “Indian Freedom and Indian Slavery in the Portuguese Amazon (1640-1755),” in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, 1500-1914*, eds. John Donoghue and Evelyn P. Jennings (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 54-71; Nadia Farage, *As muralhas dos sertões: Os povos indígenas no Rio Branco e a colonização* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1991); Barbara Sommer, “Colony of the Sertão: Amazonian Expeditions and the Indian Slave Trade,” *The Americas* 61, no. 3 (2005): 401-28.

administrators) staunchly advocated for increased access to Indigenous workers, either free, coerced or enslaved. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to this population as “settlers.” In a poor colony like Maranhão, settlers saw access to Indigenous enslaved labor as fundamental to their wealth, given that, as Barbara Sommer explained, Maranhão was a colony where land “held little intrinsic value.”²⁴ But settlers also asked for a multitude of labor regimes, advocating for greater access to Indigenous laborers in mission villages (*aldeamentos*), the ability to recruit mission laborers for personal services, as well as lay control over the distribution of workers. As such, settler demands for Indigenous labor were often tied to larger questions about the common good (“*o bem comum*”) for colonial society.

Demands for settler access to Indigenous workers were met with resistance from certain missionary orders and, sometimes, from imperial administrators. The Jesuits saw lay control over mission village labor and unregulated slaving expeditions as counterproductive to the missionary project of Christian discipline and conversion. Lisbon walked a tight rope in supporting the aims of the Jesuits and the perceived economic needs of the settlers.²⁵ More importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, both the Jesuits and imperial administrators understood Maranhão’s poverty as related to its incapacity to develop a large-scale plantation economy based on enslaved African labor. Maranhão thus contrasted sharply with the successful sugar-growing northeastern captaincies of Bahia and Pernambuco, or how it was known at the time, “the State of Brazil.”

In the face of opposition, Maranhão’s settlers were often on the defensive, having to justify their demands for Indigenous laborers and practices of Indigenous slave-trading. To ask for Indigenous labor, they tested a series of arguments: they claimed they were poor, they claimed they had no other options, they claimed their environment was unique, and they claimed that they were dependent on Indigenous skill. Sometimes, settlers argued that Indigenous peoples were “*práticos na terra*”, experienced in the land and thus the best equipped laborers in the region. By the early eighteenth century, their arguments became more racialized as settlers increasingly activated ideas of the Indigenous versus the Black body, a population’s natural capacity to work, and correlated skin color to a person’s ability to serve.

By analyzing these debates, my dissertation argues that Maranhão was a colony where a great variety of ideologies about Indigenous and African peoples were tested, questioned, and reconceptualized across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I do not aim to determine a monolithic or unanimous preference for Indigenous versus African labor. Rather, I tell an intellectual history of how settlers and their opponents manipulated a portfolio of ideas to demand different labor regimes and policies. In this portfolio, we can identify two trends. First, Portuguese ideas about Indigenous peoples’ proclivity to work and cultivation were much more complicated and heterogenous than the historiography has posited. Second, pro-Indigenous slavery arguments often implicitly and explicitly contested the framework of “disease, flight, and capacity to work.” In their arguments, settlers in Maranhão wielded their on-the-ground experiences to contend that Indigenous labor was more practical than relying on the trans-

²⁴ Sommer, “Colony of the *Sertão*,” 402.

²⁵ Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos: os princípios da legislação indigenista do período colonial (séculos XVI a XVIII),” in *História dos Índios no Brasil*, ed. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992): 115-132. Labor policy in Portuguese America, with few exceptions, always allowed for the enslavement of enemy groups. In the history of Portuguese America, there were only three instances where the Crown completely abolished Indigenous slavery: 1609, 1680, and 1755. Those instances are discussed in this dissertation.

Atlantic slave trade, that disease outbreaks justified more slave-trading, and that Indigenous peoples were more apt to the kinds of work required for Amazonian production.

By showing how these debates disputed, reinforced, and subverted the framework of “disease, flight, and capacity to work,” I argue that this framework is as much a constructed argument by people on-the-ground as it was a material reality. This framework should thus be understood as an interpretation of history that was contested by elites in Portuguese America. As Bahian planters reflected on the large-scale importation of enslaved Africans in their sugar plantations, the framework of “disease, flight, and capacity to work” became a helpful “catchphrase” to explain the transition in labor regimes. When this framework was applied to a different colonial context, it suddenly made less sense. In Maranhão, settlers, missionaries, and colonial administrators all espoused different opinions on the applicability of that framework to the Amazonian context. Debates over labor in Maranhão were thus debates about whether a “Brazilian” model of colonial development could be imposed onto Maranhão.²⁶

Second, I argue that there is a fundamentally racial component to arguments about capacity to work. Settlers and missionaries tested out various stereotypes about Indigenous and African peoples when writing their petitions and opinions on labor policy. Some of these stereotypes were baseless, while others were informed by the observation of skilled practices on-the-ground. Yet the Portuguese made these skilled practices seem inherent and monolithic, rather than historical and specific to certain peoples, regions, and individuals.²⁷ These stereotypes were also contradictory and unstable. Settlers disparaged Indigenous peoples to ask for enslaved African workers, and they disparaged African peoples to demand Indigenous laborers. It was their very instability that made them useful and flexible to support settler arguments.

Third, I draw attention to the ubiquity of discussions over work, utility, and feasibility to colonial ideologies of labor and slavery. Studies on European preconceptions of Indigenous peoples look primarily to travel chronicles and legal opinions, which describe Indigenous peoples as “inconstant”, “lazy”, “bellicose”, and “savage.” While these classic Othering arguments were critical for settlers justifying slaving expeditions, focusing on these preconceptions alone obscures the centrality of “pragmatic” ideologies about work, service, utility, and the common good, to debates about labor policy. Indeed, settlers in Maranhão pointed to their dependency on Indigenous skill, arguing that increased access to Indigenous labor would lead to the “growth and conservation” of the colony. I argue that these pragmatic ideologies are fundamental to our understanding of the development of labor regimes, colonial state-formation, and racial thinking.

Work and Service in the Early Modern Portuguese Thought

²⁶ Michael Cowen and Robert W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, (London: Routledge, 1996): 14. Cowen and Shenton understand development ideologies as informed by the opposition between “the human aversion to work and the natural capacity for work.”

²⁷ I draw inspiration from Mark Harris’s understanding of skills as historical, rather than “inherited and isolated from practice and context.” See Mark Harris, “Riding a Wave: Embodied Skills and Colonial History on the Amazon Floodplain,” *Ethnos* 70, no. 2 (2005): 199. I am also inspired by Jane Guyer and Eno Belinga’s explanation of compositional knowledge in pre-colonial Equatorial Africa, and the conceptualization of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as a sort of brain drain. See Jane Guyer and Eno Belinga, “Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 91-120.

To understand these pragmatic ideologies, we must understand how the early modern Portuguese understood both people and colonization through the lens of service and work. This preconception informed discourses about Native and African peoples and their respective proclivities to work. I point to six interrelated patterns of early modern Portuguese thought. First, work and service were the drivers of colonization. Second, the best kind of work was that of cultivation, though certainly not for the noble elites. Third, early modern Portuguese peoples were acutely concerned with “peopling” colonies with men of experience, specifically those persons who had previously held offices in other colonies or who had experience in specific forms of production. Fourth, problems in colonization were attributed to people not having experience or the ability to perform certain types of labor. Fifth, people were naturally inclined and/or “powerful” to carry out certain types of work. Relatedly, idleness and laziness were common pejoratives, but pejoratives that were so widely and inconsistently used that they lose coherent explanatory power. Finally, colonization was, in some senses, a work of replication. Settlers followed the productive practices of their predecessors in a particular colony.

In the Portuguese Overseas Empire (*ultramar*), the agreement between the Crown and its vassals was that work and services would be rewarded with certain privileges, an exchange that structured social and political relations in a pluricontinental empire where vassals of the King carried out the work of colonization.²⁸ Writing from the colonies, vassals of the King, whether Portuguese settlers or Indigenous peoples, attested to the sheer amount of work and service that they had done to receive privileges (*mercês*) from the Crown.²⁹ In exchange, vassals received remuneration for their work, such as military honors, land grants, and official posts.

Land grants were critical in colonization, encouraging cultivation and permanent settlement. In the Portuguese mainland, cultivation historically held moral superiority, despite the fact that noble classes did not carry out this work. António Manuel Hespanha explained how the 1446 *Ordenações afonsinas portuguesas* established the three categories of people that made up the backbone of Portuguese society: the defenders, the orators, and those that “work the land.”³⁰ This reverence for cultivation stemmed from the *Reconquista*, when Portugal suffered from vacant lands and population centers that were too concentrated.³¹ Disregard for cultivation was a sort of failing. The Flemish humanist Clenardo described fifteenth-century Portugal as a place

²⁸ There is an extensive scholarship on the history of service and privileges between vassals and the Crown in the Portuguese Empire. See Fernanda Olival, *As ordens militares e o Estado Moderno: honra, mercê e venalidade em Portugal (1641-1789)* (Lisboa: Estar Editora, 2001); Fernanda Olival, “Mercado de hábitos e serviços em Portugal (séculos XVII-XVIII),” in *Análise Social* 38, no. 168 (2003): 743-769. Rodrigo Ricupero, *A formação da elite colonial: Brasil, c. 1530- c. 1630* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2008). For an overview of Portuguese imperial expansion, see Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, eds, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808: A World on the Move*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Antonio Manuel Hespanha, *As vésperas de Leviathan: Instituições e poder político Portugal – Séc. XVII*, (Coimbra: Livraria Almedina, 1994); António Manuel Hespanha, “Antigo regime nos trópicos? Um debate sobre o modelo político do império colonial português,” in *Na trama das redes: Política e negócios no império Português, séculos XVI-XVIII*, eds. João Fragoso and Maria de Fátima Gouvêa (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2010): 43-94.

²⁹ Olival, *As ordens militares e o Estado Moderno*, 109.

³⁰ António Manuel Hespanha, *Imbecillitas: as bem-aventuranças da inferioridade nas sociedades de Antigo Regime*, (São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 2010): 34.

³¹ Harold Johnson, “The Donatary Captaincy in Historical Perspective: Portuguese Backgrounds to the Settlement of Brazil,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 52, no. 2 (1972): 211.

where “agriculture was held in contempt.”³² Clenardo described how the Portuguese nation was characterized by their “extreme debilitation...if there are people more taken to laziness than the Portuguese, then I do not know where they may be.” Given the centrality of work and service, laziness and idleness posed considerable problems to the social fabric of early modern Portuguese society.

These anxieties about the cultivation of the land manifested in early discussions about Brazil. The early exploration of the colony depended on the Brazilwood trade, especially given the absence of easily exported minerals. This changed with the “terrestrial turn” a phenomenon that happened across the Portuguese empire in the mid-sixteenth century.³³ The turn to agricultural, rather than extractive work, seemed to be a solution to the on-going issue of temporary settlement. In Brazil, the “terrestrial turn” was signaled by three events in close succession in the 1530s: the 1530 expedition of Martim Afonso de Sousa, the creation of the General Government in 1532, and the establishment of the Donatary Captaincy system in 1534. All three of these events aimed at curbing foreign penetration in the colony, and all three were deeply concerned with putting more people on the ground. Created in 1534 and based on late medieval Portuguese practices, the Donatary Captaincy system was fundamentally concerned with encouraging “the settlement and development of vacant territory.”³⁴ Donatary captaincies did not confer captains with the rights to the land, but rather the rights to the usufruct of these lands. Captains were rewarded the right to confer deeds to those who could live in and improve the land.

Cultivation and effective occupation were only possible with the “peopling” of Brazil. In his 1576 *Tratado da Terra do Brasil*, the historian Pero Magalhães Gândavo wrote that the “happiness and growth of this province depends on it being peopled by many.”³⁵ Gândavo expressed a widespread sentiment of the time: that “peopling” Brazil was necessary for the development of the colony. This preoccupation with “peopling” was not merely applied to the Portuguese settler population, but also to the enslaved populations.³⁶ In the early decades of European settlement in Brazil, the priority of governance, outside of the mandate of Christian conversion, was to people a colony with settlers who could serve well, benefit the colonial project, and bring rents to the *senhores* and to the treasury of the Crown.³⁷ Being of service meant anyone who could facilitate the colonial enterprise: carpenters, builders, blacksmiths, shipyard personnel, sailors, soldiers, and merchants. Indeed, early modern Portuguese peoples understood the world as an order created by God that was unequal, hierarchical, and mutually

³² Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, *O Humanismo em Portugal: Clenardo* (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 1926): 271. “Se algures a agricultura foie m tida em desprezo, é incontestavelmente em Portugal. E antes de mais nada, ficai sabendo que o que faz o nervo principal duma nação é aqui duma debilidade extrema; para mais, se há algum povo dado à preguiça sem ser o português, então não sei eu onde ele exista.”

³³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of Iberian Overseas Empire, 1500-1640,” *American Historical Review* 112 no. 5 (2007): 1372.

³⁴ Johnson, “The Donatary Captaincy in Historical Perspective,” 211. Colonial settlement in Brazil derived most of its traditions from the late medieval Portuguese *senhorio* system and the attempts to populate lands captured in the *Reconquista* through land grants, or *sesmarias*.

³⁵ Pero de Magalhães Gândavo, *Tratado da terra do Brasil: história da Província Santa Cruz, a que vulgarmente chamamos Brasil*, 1576 (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2008): 77.

³⁶ David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Sherwin Bryant, *Rivers of Gold, Lives of Bondage: Governing Through Slavery in Colonial Quito* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁷ AHU Códice 112, fl. 1-9.

dependent, and where people had their own utilities, powers, and capacities that were tied to their larger state in society.³⁸ This kind of thinking about the division of tasks based on peoples' proclivities was summarized perfectly by the first donatary captain of Pernambuco, Duarte Coelho, who noted that in Brazil "...amongst all the dwellers and settlers, some work sugar mills, because they are powerful for this, others work on cotton, others work on provision..."³⁹

Settlers, Donatary captains, governors, and colonial administrators worried considerably about the quality and experience of the primarily male population coming to the newly established colony. Colonial officials made very specific requests for certain types of settlers to "people" Brazil, demanding those that could cultivate and permanently settle the land. In 1546, Duarte Coelho suggested a ten-year ban on Brazilwood exploration since certain men were pretending to establish farms when they were in fact "exploiters of Brazilwood."⁴⁰ In 1551, Brazil's first Royal Treasurer (*provedor-mor da fazenda*), Antonio Cardoso de Barros, asked for married men since only they knew "how to enrich and sustain the land."⁴¹ Plantation owners also asked for men of experience, especially in sugar production. In 1545, Ambrósio de Meira, an overseer (*feitor*) in the Captaincy of Espírito Santo, critiqued the quality of the sugar in Brazil, since "officials do not yet have knowledge of the conditions of the land, and [the sugars] that are grown are not as good as the ones from Madeira."⁴²

Just as officials demanded settlers with work experience, they also blamed the colony's problems on the lack of experienced or capable workers.⁴³ Many of the colony's early settlers were *degradados*, or exiles, due to the lack of volunteer settlers. Expressing concern about the lack of permanent settlers in Brazil, Duarte Coelho wrote to the King asking for people who would stay in the colony, as well as "apt and sufficient people" and "not just any men, because those do not add to [the colony] but undo the good that must be done..."⁴⁴ Gândavo explained that problems in production in Brazil had nothing to do with the quality of the lands, and were likely the result of the "negligence of the settlers, who do not dispose themselves to this type of work [of cultivation], for whatever reason they do not do this, I do not know"⁴⁵

Stereotypes about idleness, inconstancy, and flight were tested on a wide variety of peoples, not just the Native Peoples of Brazil. In 1546, Coelho asked the King to halt the number

³⁸ Ant3nio Manuel Hespanha, *Imbecilias*, 36.

³⁹ "Carta de Duarte Coelho," April 15, 1549, in *Cartas de Duarte Coelho a El Rey*, 2nd edition, eds. Jos3 Ant3nio Gonsalves de Mello and Cleonir Xavier de Albuquerque (Recife: Editora Massangana, 1997): 114. "Isto, senhor, parece malicia, porque em todas as terras do mundo se costuma e usa o que eu aqui costume e uso e tenho posto em ordem, a saber, que entre todos os moradores e povoadores uns fazem engenhos de a3ucar, porque s3o poderosos para isso, outros canivais, outros algodoais, outros mantimentos, que 3 a principal e mais necess3ria cousa para a terra."

⁴⁰ "Carta de Duarte Coelho," April 15, 1549, in *Cartas de Duarte Coelho* (1997): 114

⁴¹ Mafalda Soares da Cunha, "A Europa que atravessa o Atl3ntico (1500-1625)," in *O Brasil Colonial Vol. 1*, eds. Jo3o Frago and F3tima Gouv3a (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civiliza33o Brasileira, 2014): 286. Migrants to sixteenth-century Brazil were usually single men from Douro or Minho. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Crown tried to deliberately bring more couples from the Azores.

⁴² "Carta de Ambr3sio de Meira para El Rei," September 26, 1545, *ABNRJ* 57 (1935): 14.

⁴³ On3simo T. Almeida, "'Experi3ncia a Madre das Cousas' – On the 'Revolution of Experience' in Sixteenth-Century Portuguese Maritime Discoveries and Their Foundational Role in the Emergence of the Scientific Worldview," in *Portuguese Humanism and the Republic of Letters*, eds. Maria Berbara and Karl A.E. Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 377-393.

⁴⁴ "Carta de Duarte Coelho," December 20, 1546, in *Cartas de Duarte Coelho a El Rey* (1997): 102.

⁴⁵ G3ndavo, *Tratado da terra do Brasil*, 30. "...neglig3ncia dos moradores que se n3o querem dispor a esse trabalho, qual seja a causa por que o deixam de fazer, n3o sei"

of exiles coming to the colony, describing them as “...not for any kind of work, coming poor and naked, who do not let go of their bad behaviors, and in this they always plan on fleeing.”⁴⁶ Coelho’s quote is particularly interesting because he derided Portuguese exiles with descriptors that were usually used to disparage Indigenous peoples (i.e. nudity, flight, and incapacity to work). Early modern Portuguese sources in Angola provide further evidence of the malleability of these concepts. In 1619, the Bishop of Congo and Angola, Manuel Baptista, described the Moxicongo people as “without virtue, shame, truth, or constancy” and as people who are “idle and lazy.”⁴⁷ These characteristics thus explained why the Moxicongo’s fertile lands were filled with “such little provisions.” Balthasar Rebello, a captain tasked with finding precious metals in Angola in the early seventeenth century, asked for slaves from São Tomé “because the natives of the land are not for working nor receiving payments.”⁴⁸ Rebello understood the occupation of Angola as a risky enterprise given that the “land is very sick and the people very deceitful.”⁴⁹ Even in Angola, the site of much of the trans-Atlantic slave trade itself, the Portuguese complained about the capacities of the local population as a potential labor force and demanded an enslaved labor force from another region. This perhaps reveals the key dimension of natal alienation of labor forces for colonial state-building.⁵⁰

These descriptions of the *degradados*, the Moxicongo, and other peoples of Angola show us that the Portuguese operated with a toolkit of negative stereotypes related to work and the inability to carry out work. This does not mean that the Portuguese did not identify materials differences in the populations that they encountered. But it does tell us that the Portuguese applied the descriptors of idleness, inconstancy, deceit, and flight relatively promiscuously to non-Europeans, and on extremely rare occasions, these concepts could even be applied to Europeans themselves.⁵¹ These descriptors are thus more helpful as a way of unpacking how the Portuguese understood people and society.

This idea that problems in a colony could be attributed to the quality of the people colonizing the land was perfectly summarized by the 1618 text, *Diálogos da Grandeza do Brasil*. One of the most important texts in Brazilian history for understanding settler mentalities, *Diálogos* was written by Bahian plantation owner Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão. *Diálogos* structured as an exchange between two characters, Brandônio and Alviano, as they tried to understand the colonization of Brazil. *Diálogos* explained colonization as a process of imitation. Brandônio explained that: “In this Brazil of ours, the first settlers tended to grow sugar; and there were so many of them that the rest kept imitating them, as is custom in the world.” Because the first settlers in Brazil planted sugar, they thus occupied “...themselves only with planting sugar canes, when they could occupy themselves with many other things.”⁵² Brandônio argued that this

⁴⁶ “Carta de Duarte Coelho,” December 20, 1546, in *Cartas de Duarte Coelho a El Rey* (1997): 102.

⁴⁷ AHU Angola Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 112.

⁴⁸ BA 51-IX-25.

⁴⁹ BA 51-IX-25.

⁵⁰ For more on natal alienation and social death, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231-49.

⁵¹ Klas Rönnbäck, “‘The Men Seldom Suffer a Woman to Sit Down:’ The Historical Development of the Stereotype of the ‘Lazy African,’” *African Studies* 73, no. 2 (2014): 211-227; José da Silva Horta, “A representação do africano na literatura de viagens, do Senegal à Serra Leoa (1453-1508),” *Mare Liberum* no. 2 (1991): 209-339.

⁵² Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão, *Diálogos da Grandeza do Brasil*, 1618, (Brasília: Edições do Senado Federal, 2010): 54. “Nesse nosso Brasil os seus primeiros povoadores deram em lavrar açúcares; pois que muito é que

tendency to replicate stemmed from the nature of Portuguese *conquistadors*, who only “incline themselves to work in those exercises in which above all they can most profit from.” He noted that this tendency to imitate was not just true in Brazil but throughout the Iberian Atlantic World:

“...our Portuguese who peopled the Azores, since the first ones threw themselves in the wheat agriculture, [they] to this day work with this. The Castilians, who peopled the Canary Islands, planted vines, and this is the same exercise they participate in today. Those that peopled the islands of Cabo Verde made use of the trade in slaves, and with this, they make a living. In the island of São Tomé, they worked on cultivating sugar with many slaves, and they continue to do this.”⁵³

Diálogos framed colonization as subject to path dependency. Settlers were inclined to imitate and repeat the same kinds of labor and same methods of production as their predecessors. This kind of thinking can help us understanding why debates in Maranhão about Indigenous labor often slipped into larger discussions about what colonial models should be emulated and imitated.

We can broadly sketch three themes from these patterns in early modern Portuguese thought. First, early modern Portuguese peoples operated with a set of ideas about the centrality of work and service to colonization. Second, the Portuguese were heavily informed by “experience” and history. In debates over how to solve a particular problem, settlers on-the-ground usually drew from what “experience had shown,” often pointing to other colonial contexts as examples to emulate or reject. Third, early modern Portuguese colonizers used the pejoratives of laziness and idleness frequently and promiscuously. Portuguese settlers used these pejoratives to justify the exploitation of a particular population or to suggest the use of another labor force. Understanding this intellectual/cultural baggage of early modern Portuguese people can help us unpack and contextualize debates about labor in Portuguese America.

Seven Key Characteristics of These Arguments

My dissertation analyzes how settlers and their opponents manipulated a portfolio of ideas and tropes to advance their labor interests and ideologies. What arguments were made to demand Indigenous labor, and how did these arguments compare to what was said about African labor? I focus on close readings of a wide range of petitions, often mediated by the Portuguese Overseas Council, the tribunal established in 1642 that heard and determined cases across the Overseas colonies.⁵⁴ To the best of my ability, I point to the positions of the people making

os demais os fossem imitando, conforme o costume geral do mundo, que tenho apontado? E este é o respeito por onde no Brasil seus moradores se ocupam somente na lavoura das canas-de-açúcar, podendo se ocupar em outras muitas cousas.”

⁵³ Brandão, *Diálogos da Grandeza do Brasil*, 53 “de onde vejo que os nossos portugueses que povoaram as ilhas dos Açores, pelos primeiros se haverem lançado em agricultura do trigo, até o presente permanecem nela, os castelhanos, que povoaram as ilhas de Canárias, deram em plantar vinhas, e o mesmo exercício guardam até hoje em dia, e que os povoaram as ilhas do Cabo Verde tiveram proveito da comutação de negros, e com isso vivem deles, nessa permanece; na ilha de S. Tomé deram em lavrar açúcar muito negro, com ele continuam até o presente, e tendo aparaelho para o fazer melho, não se querem ocupar nisso.”

⁵⁴ In line with historians of the pluricontinental Portuguese empire who have shown the fundamental role of written political communication in imperial governance, I read these petitions as a core part of colonial state-building. See João Fragoso and Nuno Monteiro Gonçalo (eds.) *Um reino e suas repúblicas no Atlântico: Comunicações*

certain arguments and try to unpack why they are making these arguments. I also aim to put these arguments in larger conversation with other parts of Portuguese political and economic thinking: their ideas about good governance, cultivation, labor, and colonial growth.

Historians of colonial Brazil have paid considerable attention to the “Black Robes versus White Settler” debates on Indigenous labor. Many of the scholars who have written on this topic were institutional historians of the Society of Jesus, who primarily focused on the Jesuit defense of Indigenous freedom.⁵⁵ This field has been since been greatly expanded by the works of Brazilian historians who have nuanced Jesuit views, particularly since the Jesuits themselves largely sanctioned and benefited from Indigenous slavery.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, virtually all works on the topic focus exclusively on the “Black Robes” over the “White Settler” perspective of these debates. Indeed, the few works that focus on these debates from the settler perspective tell this history through the framework of “*anti-jesuitismo*,” or the movement across the Portuguese Empire that sought to dismantle the Jesuits from their central place in colonial governance.⁵⁷

This project counterbalances a scholarship that has focused primarily on missionary perspectives at the expense of a serious treatment of settler ideologies developed on-the-ground.⁵⁸ I thus read these debates with a focus on what the settlers were saying. Though I use missionary sources extensively, I read these sources dialectically, with an eye to missionary responses to settler claims of dependency on Indigenous skill and labor. Second, I focus primarily on the part of these debates that were interested in “pragmatic” arguments about the

políticas entre Portugal, Brasil, e Angola nos séculos XVII e XVIII, 1st edition (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira: 2017); António Manuel Hespanha, “Fazer um império com palavras,” in *O governo dos outros: poder e diferença no império português*, eds. Ângela Barreto Xavier and Cristina Nogueira da Silva (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2016): 67-100.

⁵⁵ João Lúcio Azevedo, *Os Jesuítas no Grão-Pará: suas missões e colonização* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930); Serafim Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil, Tomo III* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1943); Mathias Kiemann, *The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1954); Dauril Alden, “Black Robes versus White Settlers: The Struggle for ‘Freedom of the Indians’ in Colonial Brazil,” in *Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian*, edited Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969): 19-45; Dauril Alden, “Indian versus Black Slavery in the State of Maranhão during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Iberian colonies, New World societies: essays in memory of Charles Gibson*, edited by Richard L. Garner and William B. Taylor (Private printing: 1986); Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); David Sweet, “Black Robes and Black Destiny: Jesuit views of African Slavery in 17th-century Latin America,” *Revista de Historia de América*, n. 86 (1978): 87-133.

⁵⁶ Carlos Alberto de M. R. Zeron, *Linha de fé: a Companhia de Jesus e a escravidão no processo de formação da sociedade colonial (Brasil, séculos XVI e XVII)*, trans. Antônio de Padua Danesi. (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2011); Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, “Vieira e os conflitos com os colonos do Pará e Maranhão,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 40, no. 1 (2003): 79-97.

⁵⁷ This is part of a long-standing tradition in Brazilian colonial history of relying heavily on Jesuit sources, especially since Jesuit missionaries left a huge corpus of letters. See the work of José Eduardo Franco, *O Mito dos Jesuítas em Portugal, no Brasil, e no Oriente (séculos XVI a XX), Vol. 1* (Lisboa: Grávida Publicações, 2006); Roberta Lobão Carvalho, “A Ruína do Maranhão: a construção do discurso antijesuítico na Amazônia portuguesa (1705-1759),” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Pará, 2018); Stefan Gatzhamer, “O antijesuitismo europeu: relações político-diplomáticas e culturais entre a Baviera e Portugal (1750-1780),” *Lusitânia Sacra* 2, no. 5 (1993): 159-250.

⁵⁸ For a key study on *letrado* ideas about slavery, see Ronaldo Vainfas, *Ideologia e escravidão: Os letrados e a sociedade escravista no Brasil Colonial* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986). Vainfas does not focus on Indigenous slavery.

growth and conservation of the colony. Settlers often justified access to Indigenous labor by wielding concepts of Native Peoples as “savage,” “cannibals,” and enslavers of their own people. While these arguments are present in almost all the settler correspondence, I highlight the understudied arguments related to service, capacity to work, poverty, experience, utility, and the common good. Settler strategy in petition-writing was thus fundamentally about manipulating this portfolio of “Othering” arguments and “pragmatic” arguments.

This dissertation thus primarily focuses on these “pragmatic” settler arguments. These arguments display seven main characteristics. The first characteristic is that these arguments were largely, though not exclusively, made by the sector of the population that was primarily interested in military expansion and production: plantations owners, merchants, and captains. Settler petitions to Lisbon were often from elites, the literate class (“*letrados*”) considered the “good men” (“*homens bons*”) of the empire.⁵⁹ Sometimes, these settlers receive support from those in positions of power in colonial government, such as governors (*governadores*), royal treasurers (*provedor-mor*), captain generals (*capitão-mor*), royal judges (*ouvidor-geral*), and the secular clergy. Many of the sources used in this dissertation are petitions from settlers represented through the unified voice of the Municipal Council (*Câmeras Municipais*). Municipal Councils, which replicated the structures of governance in mainland Portugal, played a fundamental role as brokers of local power in the pluricontinental Portuguese Empire.⁶⁰ As a collective, the Municipal Councils was constituted by the *letrados*. The Councils had the power to recommend new governors, establish strategies of defense, and regulate local commerce. In the case of the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, the Municipal Councils of Belém and São Luís were instrumental in opposing limitations on settler access to Indigenous labor, though the positions of the Councils vacillated through time and included their own internal disagreements.

Second, settler arguments drew their authority from the fact that they were based on lived experience. Though theologians across the sixteenth-century Iberian World opined on the moral and intellectual capacities of Native Peoples, conversations about Indigenous capacities took a different turn in the colonies, when the realities of colonial production meant that elites became increasingly concerned with Indigenous proclivity to work.⁶¹ Settlers arguing for increased access to Indigenous mission village labor or slavery also derided both theologians in Europe and

⁵⁹ For an analysis of Portuguese colonial administration, see Ricupero, *A formação da elite colonial*, 127-69; Maria Fernanda Bicalho, “Conquista, mercês e poder local: a nobreza da terra na América Portuguesa e a cultura política do Antigo Regime,” *Almanack brasileiro* 2 (2005): 21-34.

⁶⁰ For more on Municipal Councils in the Portuguese Empire, see Charles Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics: The Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia, and Luanda, 1510-1800* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965); Ronald Raminelli, “Monarquia e câmaras coloniais: sobre a comunicação política, 1640-1807,” *Prohistoria* 21 (2014): 3-26; Maria Fernanda Bicalho, “As câmaras municipais no império português: O exemplo do Rio de Janeiro,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 18, n. 36 (1998).

⁶¹ The theorists of the School of Salamanca were interested in assessing the moral and intellectual capacities of Indigenous peoples. My dissertation focuses primarily on notions of capacity to work, topics that the theologians of Salamanca did not discuss. For scholarship on the School of Salamanca, the sixteenth-century intellectual movement in the Iberian Peninsula that took a leading role theorizing Indigenous rights, slavery, and international law, see Miguel Anxo Peña Gonzáles, *La Escuela de Salamanca: De la monarquía hispánica al orbe católico* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2009). For the School of Salamanca and Indigenous rights, see Francisco Castilla Urbano, *El pensamiento de Francisco de Vitoria: Filosofía política e indio americano* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1992); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For thinkers from Salamanca and the issue of African slavery, see António Manuel Hespanha, “Luís de Molina e a escravização dos negros,” *Análise Social* 35, no. 157 (2001): 937-960.

missionaries on-the-ground. The former lacked an understanding of local realities, while the latter were accused of hoarding Indigenous laborers themselves. In their writings, settlers and their opponents wielded their on-the-ground experience to make claims about what “experience” had taught them about labor in the colony. In Maranhão, settlers increasingly “localized” their arguments to take more seriously the specificities of the Amazonian environment and the colony’s production.

The third characteristic of these settler arguments is that they called for multiple forms of Indigenous labor, not just slavery. Settlers asked for slaving expeditions, but they also recommended systems of temporary captivity (*indios de condição*, *indios da corda*), the replication of the *encomienda* system, and the drafting of workers living in mission villages. In these settler petitions, slippage between these different categories of work were common. In other words, a settler would sometimes start a petition asking for one type of labor and end the petition asking for another. When analyzing sources, I make sure to point out the specific type of labor being requested, though I maintain my broader category of analysis as Indigenous labor to make room for the many different visions over how to organize work.

The fourth characteristic of these settler arguments is that they sometimes placed Indigenous and African work in opposition, even though in reality, settlers asked for both Indigenous and African laborers. When elaborating on their poverty in a petition to the Overseas Council, settlers frequently claimed they needed both more access to Indigenous workers and more access to enslaved Africans. Yet sometimes, when demanding a particular type of labor regime, settlers explicitly compared Indigenous and African capacities to work. These comparisons should be understood more as a rhetorical strategy than revealing any kind of inherent preference. I contend that settlers in Maranhão largely wanted both increased numbers of enslaved Africans AND access to Indigenous administered labor or slave-trading. I view these discursive strategies as instrumentalist and self-serving.

The fifth characteristic is that these arguments were highly contextual and episodic in their deployment, often a reaction to a change in legislation. As Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalves explained, topics of political debate in the Portuguese Empire were “primarily dictated by immediate concerns and problems faced by various individuals and social groups.”⁶² We can largely trace the emergence of these arguments to moments when the Crown attempted to restrict settler access to Indigenous labor. Conversely, in moments of relatively liberal policies on settler slave-trading or access to the labor pool in mission villages, we often see increased demands for African slaves in the colony. Outbreaks of disease were another instance in which demands for enslaved Africans went up, yet demands for Indigenous labor did not necessarily go down. A key argument of this dissertation is that outbreaks of disease led to a series of responses, one of which was settler demands for more Indigenous slave trading, not less.

The sixth characteristic is that, in these debates, participants often referred to other Atlantic colonies as examples to emulate or reject. As Rafael Chamboleyron has argued, settlers in Maranhão often used the “Spanish Indies” (by which settlers largely meant Peru) and the “State of Brazil” (by which settlers largely meant Pernambuco and Bahia) as points of reference.⁶³ To ask for access to Indigenous mission village workers for personal services, settlers suggest the replication of the *encomienda* system like in the “Spanish Indies.” To ask for

⁶² Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (eds.) *Political Thought in Portugal and its Empire, c. 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 43.

⁶³ Rafael Chamboleyron, “Conquistas diferentes e de diferentes climas: o Maranhão, o Brasil e a América portuguesa (séculos XVII e XVIII),” *Esboços* 26, no. 4 (2019): 84-103.

the introduction of greater number of enslaved Africans to the colony, they would claim that the “State of Brazil” only saw growth with enslaved workers from Angola. Though settlers often had misguided ideas about other colonies, the wielding of these comparisons tells us about the role of emulation and the use of historical examples in political debates across the Atlantic world.

Lastly, these discourses used repetitive language and constantly borrowed from previous writings. The *letrados* drew from a shared intellectual repertoire and discursive toolkit to make their case to the Crown. As was often the case in the early modern period, these requests to the Crown followed a format, where settlers pitched an idea by arguing that it was in the best interest of God and the treasury of the Crown. I show how *letrados* often explicitly copied each other’s language in their descriptions, petitions, and treatises. In fact, the treatise used in the opening of this dissertation is a perfect example of this propensity to copy language. Writing in agreement with Barbosa, José Silvestre Rebello cited Manuel Guedes Aranha, a seventeenth-century procurator discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, to claim that Indigenous peoples were more capable of work.⁶⁴ This tendency to copy phrases or ideas was best described by António Manuel Hespanha, who explained how literature jurists in early modern Portugal often relied on “sound bytes...or short phrases that expressively condensed one rule” and that turned into “an accessible and efficient instrument in oral communication.”⁶⁵ Scribes would continue to jot down these “stereotyped forms of writing” that would seep into vulgar discourse while insinuating technical knowledge behind it. We should thus understand “disease, flight, and capacity to work” as one of these stereotyped forms of writing, a catchphrase that traveled and changed according to different colonial contexts.

Historiographical Interventions

This dissertation makes four historiographical interventions. The first is on the history of transitions in labor regimes. Considerable work has been done to explain why African, rather than Indigenous, slavery predominated in the Americas.⁶⁶ In the case of Brazil, these narratives told a story of a neat substitution from Indigenous slavery to African slavery that was largely explained by a perceived Indigenous inability to carry out agricultural work and upheld the narrative of Native Peoples as “fated for extinction.”⁶⁷ In 1978, Stuart Schwartz published an article that complicated these interpretations, framing the transition as a result of Indigenous

⁶⁴ Barbosa, “Se a introdução dos escravos africanos no Brasil,” 130. For a detailed discussion on Manuel Guedes Aranha, see Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ António Manuel Hespanha, *Como os juristas viam o mundo. 1550-1750. Direitos, estados, pessoas, coisas, contrados, ações e crimes* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015): 12.

⁶⁶ For texts on the rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the Americas, see David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Stuart Schwartz and Russell R. Menard, “Why African Slavery? Labor Force Transitions in Brazil, Mexico, and the Carolina Lowcountry,” in *Slavery in the Americas*, edited by Wolfgang Binder (Würzburg: Köningshausen und Neumann, 1993): 89-114; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000). For texts on slavery in Africa, see Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: a history of slavery in Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁶⁷ Neil Whitehead (ed.) *Histories and Historicities in Amazonia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003): viii. For an example of a history of the defeat of Native Peoples, see John Hemming, *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

agency rather than an inherent incapability of Indigenous peoples.⁶⁸ Schwartz used this framework, alongside the rise of an increasingly profitable and sanctioned trans-Atlantic slave trade, the accumulation of capital of Bahian planters, and the missionary influence on labor legislation, to explain the rise of African slavery in Bahia. Nevertheless, Schwartz's article still upheld "disease, flight, and capacity to work" as a literal explanation of what had happened on-the-ground. He credited the explanations of "disease, flight, and capacity to work" as the reason why there was a hegemonic and widespread preference for enslaved African laborers among early modern Portuguese settlers.⁶⁹ Since Schwartz, historians have troubled the neat narrative of the transition from Indigenous to African slavery. Historians of Brazil's New Indigenous Histories have shown how Indigenous labor was widely exploited throughout Portuguese colonial rule in the Americas.⁷⁰ Furthermore, historians have increasingly debunked the idea espoused by Luiz de Alencastro that Indigenous slavery never took off in Brazil because no Indigenous community established itself as a "regular supplier of captives" to Portuguese settlers.⁷¹ In the Amazon, there was indeed a robust Amazonian slave trade, where Indigenous peoples and European settlers traded captives in the interior of the Amazon.⁷²

Despite the growing sophistication of these explanations, the framework of Indigenous incapacity work, and its related concepts of disease and flight, are still deeply embedded in the grand narrative of the history of slavery in the Americas.⁷³ My dissertation intervenes in this scholarship by investigating "disease, flight, and capacity to work" as a discursive framework subject to debate in the colonial period. When missionaries claimed that Maranhão would never grow without enslaved Africans because Indigenous peoples were not "durable" for work, they were responding to settler arguments that Maranhão was fundamentally different from the State of Brazil and thus required different labor solutions.⁷⁴ With time, settler arguments more explicitly rejected the imposition of this framework, arguing that Indigenous peoples were more capable laborers and that enslaving Indigenous peoples in the hinterlands was more just than purchasing enslaved Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This dissertation is, therefore, not

⁶⁸ Stuart Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations: European Demands and Indian Responses in Northeastern Brazil," *American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (1978): 43-79.

⁶⁹ Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations," 66; Giuseppe Marcocci, "Escravos ameríndios e negros africanos: uma história conectada. Teorias e modelos de discriminação no império português (ca. 1450-1650)," *Tempo* 16 n. 30 (2011): 41-70.

⁷⁰ Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (ed.), *História dos índios no Brasil*, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992); Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Os índios na história do Brasil*, (Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2010); Heather F. Roller, *Amazonian Routes: Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Communities in Northern Brazil*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). For Indigenous histories outside of the context of labor, see Hal Langfur (ed.), *Native Brazil: Beyond the Convert and the Cannibal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); Heather F. Roller, *Contact Strategies: Histories of Native Autonomy in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Pedro Puntoni, *A Guerra dos Bárbaros: povos indígenas e a colonização do sertão nordeste do Brasil, 1650-1720* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2000); Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁷¹ Luiz de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Videntes*, 118.

⁷² Pelegrino, "Bonds of Belonging;" Barbara Sommer, "Colony of the Sertão;" Camila Loureiro Dias, "O comércio de escravos indígenas;" Camila Loureiro, Dias, Fernanda Bombardi, and Eliardo Guimarães da Costa. "Dimensão da população indígena incorporada ao Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará entre 1680 e 1750: Uma ordem de grandeza," *Revista de História* no. 179 (2020): 1-40.

⁷³ See footnote 13 in this introduction.

⁷⁴ BA 50-V-37, n. 134.

a refutation of the material realities of this framework. Rather, I argue that in a colony where the institution of African slavery could not take off, and where settlers conducted an internal slave trade, a counterargument to the transition narrative had to be developed. I thus reject the historiographical tendency to use the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas and António Vieira as definitive interpretations of Indigenous and African peoples' capacities as laborers and as slaves.

Second, I intervene in the history of backwater colonies in the Atlantic world. Maranhão has often been portrayed as an underdeveloped periphery.⁷⁵ This underdevelopment has been used to explain both the colony's reliance on Indigenous labor and its generalized poverty. Over the past two decades, historians in Brazil have pushed back on the idea that Maranhão received little attention from the Crown until the centralizing reforms of the mid-eighteenth century.⁷⁶ Rafael Chambouleyron has shown that the Portuguese Crown was, in fact, deeply concerned with Maranhão, though this concern was primarily about how to lift the colony out of poverty.⁷⁷ By both revisiting and assessing new archival material, these scholars have shown that Maranhão does not fit neatly into the explanatory models of Brazilian history, which tend to prioritize the histories of the sugar-producing regions of the Northeast in the colonial period.⁷⁸

My dissertation intervenes in this scholarship by showing that this historiographical critique was a point of discussion among the Portuguese in Maranhão at the time. Settlers in Maranhão defended their reliance on Indigenous labor by pointing to the various ways that Maranhão was not like Bahia and Pernambuco. By citing their region's environmental particularities, unique commodities, and extractive systems of production, settlers looked instead to emulate other colonial models, such as Spanish Peru or Portuguese Goa. Thus, I show how a region traditionally seen as a backwater was actually a generative space for new ways of thinking about what a colony should look like.

My third intervention is on the historiographical debate about early modern racial thinking in the Atlantic world. Atlantic scholars increasingly agree that racial thinking played an important role in early justifications of slavery, reversing the economism of earlier arguments on racism.⁷⁹ Yet this scholarship has two limitations. First, it has focused almost exclusively on Spanish America, ignoring the specificities of Portuguese racial thinking.⁸⁰ Second, most of this

⁷⁵ Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil*, 28; Schwartz, "Plantations and Peripheries, c. 1580 – c. 1750," 118-127.

⁷⁶ For an overview of this historiography, see the introduction of Helidacy M. M. Corrêa, "'Para aumento da conquista e bom governo dos moradores': O papel da Câmara de São Luís na conquista, defesa e organização do território do Maranhão (1615-1668)," (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2011); Rafael Chambouleyron, *Povoamento, ocupação e agricultura na Amazônia colonial, 1640-1706*, (Belém: Editora Açaí, 2010).

⁷⁷ Chambouleyron, *Povoamento, ocupação e agricultura*, 16,

⁷⁸ I discuss this historiography in greater detail in Chapter 2

⁷⁹ María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); James Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 143-66; David Nirenberg, "Race and the Middle Ages: The Case of Spain and its Jews," in *Rethinking the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007): 71-87; Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Race is about Politics: Lessons from History*, trans. Lara Vergnaud (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁸⁰ Most of the works on Portuguese racial thinking focus on purity of blood and hierarchies of color. See Ronald Raminelli, "Impedimentos da cor: mulatos no Brasil e em Portugal, c. 1640-1750," *Varia História* 28, no. 48 (2012): 699-723; Hebe Mattos, "'Black Troops' and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and his Black Regiment," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 6-29; João de Figuerôa-Rêgo and Fernanda Olival, "Cor da pele, distinções e cargos: Portugal e espaços atlânticos

scholarship understands race as the formation of identity categories that structured subordination in a totalizing imperial project. For example, this scholarship has focused on large-scale colonies like Mexico or Peru where racial ideology set hierarchical systems like the Spanish *sistema de castas*.⁸¹ Rather than focusing on race as constructed social categories and identities, I focus on race as a language for materializing different visions of colonization. I argue that when settlers claimed Indigenous peoples should be enslaved for their knowledge of Maranhão's forests or because of their natural proclivities in swimming, they were making larger arguments about how Maranhão should be structured, peopled, and governed. I think with historians who understand race as a way of making "an argument about the world, as a moral ordering device, even at times as a way of conjuring a utopian vision."⁸² I also argue that these racialized stereotypes were flexible, inconsistent, and contradictory, as all racial claims are. I thus disrupt the idea that racial typifications of Indigenous peoples in relation to African peoples were ever stable, showing that settlers were incredibly promiscuous in their use of racial language for instrumentalist needs.

The fourth intervention is in the history of Indigenous slavery in Brazil. Despite the growing body of scholarship on Indigenous slavery in Brazil, relatively scant attention has been paid to an intellectual/cultural history of settler ideologies on Indigenous slavery. The scholarship that does exist on this topic has either relied heavily on sixteenth-century travel literature or it has focused on legal/theological debates about just war.⁸³ In both strands of scholarship, there is an overemphasis on the Othering discourses. In other words, settler ideas about Indigenous peoples are summarized by descriptors like "inconstant," "lazy," "bellicose," and "cannibals."⁸⁴ While these concepts were essential to settler understandings of Native Peoples, they only tell part of the story. When arguing for increased access to Indigenous laborers in mission villages and/or more slaving expeditions, settlers noted that they needed Indigenous workers to fish, to hunt, to cultivate, and to navigate. They claimed that Indigenous peoples were indispensable workers in the colony, and that without them, they would find themselves in poverty. Settlers thus both wielded Othering language in conjunction with a language of dependency and utility. By looking instead at settler petitions and political treatises concerned with the "growth and conservation" of the colony, my dissertation unearths discussions centered around which labor force or regime provides the most "utility" for the colony.

portugueses (séculos XVI a XVIII)," *Tempo* 30 (2011): 115–145. See Ângela Xavier, "Purity of Blood and Caste: Identity Narratives among Early Modern Goan Elites," in *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, eds. Max. S. Hering Torres, María Elena Martínez, and David Nirenberg (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2012): 125–150; Muriel Nazzari, "Vanishing Indians: The Social Construction of Race in Colonial São Paulo," *The Americas* 57, no. 4 (2001): 497–524.

⁸¹ María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*; Stuart Schwartz, *Blood and Boundaries: The Limits of Religious and Racial Exclusion in Early Modern Latin America*, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2020); Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

⁸² Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 9.

⁸³ Heloísa Liberalli Bellotto, "Política Indigenista no Brasil Colonial (1570–1757)," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 29 (1998): 49–60.

⁸⁴ Ângela Barreto Xavier and Cristina Nogueira da Silva (eds.) *O governo dos outros: poder e diferença no império Português*, (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, 2016); Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, "Imagens de índios do Brasil: o século XVI," *Estudos Avançados* 4, no. 10 (1990): 91–110; Ronald Raminelli, *Imagens de colonização: A representação do índio de Caminha a Vieira* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1996); Dauril Alden, "Changing Jesuit Perceptions of the *Brasis* during the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 2 (1992): 205–18.

Chapter Structure

My dissertation examines settler petitions, plantation records, treatises, legal opinions, and imperial correspondence to reconstruct the on-the-ground debates over Indigenous labor in Portuguese America. My first chapter starts by analyzing these debates in Bahia and its neighboring captaincies, providing critical context for conversations around Indigenous labor in early colonial Brazil. The rest of the dissertation focuses on how these debates manifested in the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, from the colony's founding to the final abolition of Indigenous slavery in 1755.

Chapter 1 begins in sixteenth-century Bahia, the principal captaincy of the State of Brazil. I focus primarily on the debates that unfolded over Indigenous labor from the beginning of Crown regulation of Indigenous slavery in 1570 to the second decade of the seventeenth century, when enslaved Africans became the critical majority of laborers in the captaincy's plantations. By unpacking sources advocating for both the regulation and, I look at how concerns over disease, flight, death, and security were all malleable concepts used to both buttress arguments for Indigenous and African labor. I identify the key arguments for Indigenous service, such as mounting debt from the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the practical experience of Indigenous peoples, and vulnerabilities in colonial defense without Indigenous laborers. In this chapter, I reinterpret the famous 1585 *Tratado Descritivo Brasil* by Gabriel Soares de Sousa. While this text has been used as evidence of European notions of Indigenous idleness, I show that Soares de Sousa had much more nuanced understandings of Indigenous capacity to work and understood Brazil as a colony run on Indigenous labor.

Chapter 2 looks at the early conquest and founding of the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará. The first section focuses on the booster literature for the colonization of Maranhão from both the Portuguese and the Dutch conquests of the region in the 1610s and 1640s, respectively. I show how there was a relative consensus that Maranhão's Indigenous peoples were ideal workers for a wide range of tasks, including the work of cultivation. By analyzing the Dutch West India Company sources on Maranhão, I argue that Indigenous slavery, in particular the enslavement of "Tapuyas van Maranhão," became a key selling point for the WIC conquest of São Luis in 1641. The chapter's second section focuses on early debates between missionaries, settlers, and colonial administrators over the *cativeiro dos índios*, or the widespread slaving practices of Portuguese settlers. I argue that missionaries, settlers, and colonial administrators consistently made comparisons to other colonies as a way for advocating for a specific labor policy. In analyzing the wielding of these examples, we can trace divergent interpretations on the history of Indigenous labor, Indigenous slavery, and the transition in labor regimes in both the State of Brazil and in Spanish America.

Chapter 3 focuses on the height of the "Black Robes versus White Settler" debates in Maranhão. From 1652 to 1684, Indigenous labor and the *cativeiro dos índios* became the key political questions in the colony, especially with the arrival of Antônio Vieira in 1653. I reinterpret Vieira's debates with the Municipal Council of Belém and individual settlers as a debate about the merits of dependency on Indigenous workers and the applicability of the model of the "State of Brazil" onto Maranhão. I argue that settler discourses increasingly considered the specificities of the Amazonian economy and environment. Settlers used the booming *Drogas do sertão* trade and critical role of navigation in this trade as key arguments for why they depended on Indigenous skill and labor. I show how labor debates became much more oppositional, pitting

Maranhão's extractive system of production based on Indigenous labor against the Bahia/Sugar/Angola modal of colonial development.

Chapter 4 focuses on the formation and maintenance of the system of the Amazonian slave trade (1688-1755), when the Portuguese Crown placed Indigenous slavery a purview of the State. I focus on the procurator case presented to the Court of Lisbon in 1685 on behalf of the Municipal Council of Belém to protest the law of 1680. I then turn to the published and manuscript sources from the period of peak slave-trading in Maranhão. In all these sources, Municipal Council petitions began to explicitly reject the framework of "disease, flight, and capacity to work." In this period, settlers argued that only Indigenous slavery would solve the colony's problems, as Indigenous peoples were "*práticos na terra*" and understood the colony's environment and methods of production in a way that could not be replicated with enslaved African workers. I show how ideas such as the Curse of Ham, skin color, and natural proclivities towards certain types of work became increasingly embedded in the debates about labor.

In my conclusion, I give a brief overview of the history of Portuguese Amazonia after the 1755 decree on Indigenous liberty, the final expulsion of the Jesuits from the colony in 1757, and the establishment of the Diretório dos Índios in 1757. I point to possible future avenues of research, in particular the case study of Minas Gerais. At the height of Minas's mining boom in the early eighteenth century, settlers, governors, and merchants debated whether enslaved persons from the Costa da Mina were more capable of work than enslaved persons from Angola. I then reflect on how the historiography's embrace of the hegemonic argument of "disease, flight, and capacity to work" has obscured a much more complicated and nuanced historical reality, as well as perpetuated highly problematic and inaccurate stereotypes about Indigenous and African peoples.

CHAPTER 1

“All our Remedy and our Sustenance:” Indigenous Labor and the “Growth and Conservation” of the Early Colonial Bahia and its Neighboring Captaincies, 1532-1612

In 1609, the Habsburg Crown unequivocally banned the enslavement of Indigenous peoples in the State of Brazil.¹ Royal efforts to limit slaving expeditions in the interior of Portuguese dominions had started as early as 1570s, but the 1609 decree (*alvará*) was the first attempt to abolish the practice of Indigenous slavery and call for the freedom of the colony’s Native Peoples.² The 1609 decree also firmly placed the distribution of mission labor under the control of the Society of Jesus, claiming that any Indigenous laborer recruited from a mission village to work for a settler had to do so voluntarily and be paid.

The decree caused an uproar in the Municipal Council of Salvador in Bahia. The Jesuit Provincial Henrique Gomes reported that the law was “so badly received by the people and Municipal Council of Salvador, who are against this law and against us... [that they] raised the largest rebellion that I have seen in my time in Brazil.”³ Gomes cited the words of a local rebel, Gaspar Gonçalves, who claimed that the Jesuits were trying to take away “all of our remedy and our sustenance, that the Indians our fishermen work to earn.” Gonçalves’s description of the necessity of Indigenous workers was a relatively common argument among settlers in Portuguese America protesting restrictions on Indigenous labor. In their attempts to maintain access to slaving expeditions and mission village labor, settlers in early Brazil made a series of arguments about the central role of Indigenous peoples in the “growth and conservation of the State.” The taking away of Indigenous workers, conversely, was the reason for the settlers’ chronic poverty.

This chapter focuses on arguments that placed Indigenous work as central to the “growth and conservation” of the State of Brazil, specifically in the sugar-planting captaincies of the Northeast in the sixteenth century.⁴ These arguments surfaced in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century during the near-constant debates over the best policy for administering Indigenous labor. In these debates, settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials largely agreed that Indigenous labor was the backbone of the colony. The fundamental disagreements stemmed from how this labor should be distributed and under what conditions Indigenous peoples could be enslaved. Despite advocating for fundamentally different outcomes, these voices argued for the benefits of Indigenous labor, whether forced, waged, or enslaved, often in comparison to African labor, even in the very seat of Brazil’s first sugar boom.

¹ For explanations of the Iberian Union in Portugal and Brazil, see Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica (1580-1640)*, (Lisboa: Livros Horizontes, 2001); Pedro Cardim, “O governo e a administração do Brasil sob os Habsburgo e os primeiros Bragança,” *Hispania* 64, no. 216 (2004): 117–156; Guida Marques, “O Estado do Brasil na União Ibérica: dinâmicas políticas no Brasil no tempo de Filipe II de Portugal,” *Penélope: revista de história e ciências sociais* 27 (2002): 7-35.

² Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos,” 115-132. There were three instances where the Crown called for the complete abolition of Indigenous slavery, in 1609, 1680, and 1755. All three instances will be covered in this dissertation.

³ “Carta de Henrique Gomes,” July 10, 1610, in *História da Companhia de Jesus do Brasil, Tomo V*, edited by Serafim Leite (Lisboa: Livraria Portuguesa, 1945): 5-7.

⁴ This chapter centers around Bahia and its neighboring captaincies of Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, and Espírito Santo. Because of the scarcity of sources for the history of sixteenth-century Brazil, I use evidence from the captaincies of Pernambuco and Paraíba when appropriate.

Historians have often pointed to a widespread settler preference for African enslaved labor.⁵ There are valid reasons to reach this conclusion. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, most enslaved workers on Bahian sugar plantations were from Central Africa as a result of the capital accumulation of Bahian planters due to the sugar boom.⁶ Further evidence of this preference is the fact that Indigenous slaves cost less than African slaves, with few exceptions.⁷ Historians have also looked at sources from the period which noted the superiority of enslaved African workers. For example, a letter from the Municipal Council of Salvador in 1556 explained that:

“The slaves of Guiné are of more use and more secure than those natives, and this would guarantee much benefit to the people at the service of your Highness, increasing your profits and the safety of the land, because these Native slaves are too uncertain and those of Guiné are safer and of much more service...”⁸

Though historians frequently assert this preference in their explanations of labor transitions, there are two problems in imposing the notion of a widespread settler preference for enslaved Africans. First, this interpretation has obscured the heterogeneity of the discourses about labor in early colonial Brazil, many of which placed Indigenous labor and sometimes Indigenous slavery as the fundamental drivers of growth and the preservation of the new Portuguese territories in the Americas. Second, the evidence for this assumption relies on the fact that settlers wielded the concepts of flight, security, inconstancy, laziness, and disease to disparage Indigenous work, when these concepts were quite malleable and used by the Portuguese promiscuously to discuss both Indigenous and African peoples. Indeed, settlers in sixteenth century Brazil were also concerned about flight and death among enslaved African laborers.

Given evidentiary constraints, this chapter does not try to determine if there was a settler preference for Indigenous work and Indigenous slavery versus African slavery. Rather than a unanimous preference, I propose a different way of thinking about this. Depending on what they were petitioning for, settlers and missionaries drew from different discursive toolkits. To ask for African slaves or protect Indigenous workers, settlers and missionaries mentioned flight, disease, and later, capacity to work. But to advocate for settler access to Indigenous laborers or the regulation of missions, settlers and missionaries wielded five arguments: 1) they listed all the different work that Indigenous peoples carried out in the colony; 2) they expressed concern that Africans were too expensive and that their importation was leading to widespread settler debt; 3) they claimed that Indigenous peoples were more useful as laborers because they were native to

⁵ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 66; Marcocci, “Escravos ameríndios e negros africanos,” 42-3.

⁶ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 62; Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 66.

⁷ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 70.

⁸ “Apontamentos enviados a el-rei pelos oficiais e povo da cidade do Salvador do Brasil a respeito do governo da sua Terra,” December 18, 1556, in *As Gavetas do Torre do Tombo Vol. X*, ed. Antonio da Silva Rego (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos da Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1974): 437. “...por elles por serem mais proveitosos e seguros os de Guine nestas partes que os naturaes e nisto se segyra muito proveito ao povo serviço a Vossa Alteza pelo aumento das suas remdas e seguridade da terra porque os escravos daqui naturaes são muito incertos e os de Guiné alem de serem mais seguros são pera muito mais serviço e aproveitão outrosy pera ajudarem a deffemder a terra.”

the land; 4) relatedly, they claimed that Indigenous peoples were instrumental in the defense against enslaved Africans who were “*levantados*”, or rebellious; 5) They wielded the trope that Indigenous peoples were incapable of self-government and should be placed under the purview of either the settler population or a missionary order.

To unpack these arguments, this chapter first explains the multiple forms of Indigenous labor and the various regulations over this labor in early colonial Brazil. Then, I reinterpret the writings of Gabriel Soares de Sousa to show how the plantation owner both disparaged Indigenous workers and pointed to the centrality of their labor for the colony. Soares de Sousa used classical tropes used to justify the exploitation of Indigenous peoples, such as cannibalism and bellicosity, but he equally made “pragmatic” arguments about poverty and dependency on Indigenous skilled labor. The third is to work through manuscript and published sources to unpack arguments that saw Indigenous labor, rather than enslaved African labor, as key to the colony’s growth. This chapter unpacks several of the ideas that are important in this dissertation: the preference for cultivation, the idea that Indigenous peoples did specific tasks that no one else could do, the idea that Indigenous workers were better for defense, and the need for practical men all emerge in Bahia during this period. These arguments are significant in that they formed the basis of a shared discursive repertoire that, throughout the history of Portuguese America, settlers drew from to protest regulations over Indigenous labor. The fact that these arguments appeared in the sixteenth century sugar-planting regions of Brazil also disrupts the notion that Indigenous peoples were only coveted as workers in Portuguese America’s peripheries.

Indigenous Service and Indigenous Slavery in Early Colonial Brazil

The region of the Bahian Recôncavo, with its rich subtropical soils by the coast, became a key site for the development of sugar plantations in the sixteenth-century, while its satellite captaincies, despite having their own plantations, often supplied Bahia with foodstuffs and Indigenous slaves. Indigenous peoples in sixteenth-century Bahia were a mix of Tupi peoples, peoples from Macro-Jê linguistics groups, and isolated linguistics groups such as the Tuxá, Natu, and Katembri living by the lower São Francisco River.⁹ Soils near the coast tended to be much more agriculturally productive than those of the interior, so Indigenous people who lived by the coast made use of this soil. The proximity to the ocean allowed Indigenous peoples to access fish, seafood, and salt, all key components of the Indigenous diet.¹⁰

In the first decades of their presence in Brazil, the Portuguese quickly exploited these local populations primarily through slavery. Enslaved Indigenous persons were taken to Portugal and traded in islands in the Caribbean, and up until the early seventeenth century, Indigenous slaves outnumbered African slaves on most plantations.¹¹ In his 1576 *Tratado da terra do Brasil*, Gândavo referred to the enslaved Indigenous population of Pernambuco as the “principal wealth of the land.”¹² Gândavo also famously described the internal Indigenous slave trade: “From here

⁹ Maria Hilda Baqueiro Paraíso, “De como se obter mão-de-obra indígena na Bahia entre os séculos XVI e XVIII,” *Revista História* no. 129-31 (1994): 182-3.

¹⁰ Jorge Couto, *A construção do Brasil: Ameríndios, Portugueses, e Africanos, do início do povoamento a finais de quinhentos*, 3rd edition, (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Forense Universitária, 2011): 49.

¹¹ Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 65-6. A typical sugar mill/plantation complex in the 1580s would have at least 70 African and Indigenous slaves, though bigger plantations would have about 120 enslaved workers.

¹² Gândavo, *Tratado da terra do Brasil*, 35.

they are taken and bought in all the other captaincies, because here there are many, and cheaper than in all the coast.” Another key characteristic of Indigenous slavery in Portuguese America was that Indigenous women often made up a considerable portion of the enslaved labor force.¹³

In early colonial Brazil, legislation on Indigenous labor changed virtually once a decade. Two years after the 1609 decree that abolished Indigenous slavery, the Crown issued a revision. This 1611 revision allowed Indigenous peoples to be enslaved through limited definitions of just war, specifically if a *junta* determined these wars to be legitimate. The 1611 revision also required that Indigenous peoples be placed in mission villages closer to settler populations so they could more easily be recruited as laborers. It replaced Jesuit supervision of the mission villages with a lay captain, who would assign Indigenous people “as workers to the colonists for set wages.”¹⁴ This revision is representative of the vacillatory nature of Indigenous labor legislation in Portuguese America. Once understood to be contradictory, Beatriz Perrones-Moisés has since argued that the constant reversals and issuing of new legislation was a strategy on the part of the Portuguese Crown to balance the interests of missionaries, settlers, and colonial officials across the empire.¹⁵

Regulations on Indigenous labor and slavery initially seemed to have limited impact on actual practices on-the-ground.¹⁶ Alida Metcalf has shown slaving expeditions increased during the period between 1570 to 1600 in the Bahian Recôncavo. This increase at first seems counterintuitive, since it shows a “reinforcing [of] Indian slavery in spite of high mortality, royal laws to the contrary, and the increase of African slavery.”¹⁷ This increase complicates our understandings of a neat transition from Indigenous to African slavery in Brazil. Settlers in Bahia largely opposed imperial regulations on Indigenous labor, often continuing slaving expeditions which had been carried out since the effective occupation of Brazil.

Royal attempts to regulate Indigenous work in Brazil started halfway through the sixteenth century. The 1547 *Regimento de Tomé de Sousa*, which dictated the terms through which Brazil should be governed, suggested that Indigenous slavery be curbed. The *Regimento* pointed to the detrimental effects that slavery had on local relationships and demographics.¹⁸ But it was only in the second half of the sixteenth century that the Crown started legislating against abuses on Indigenous labor. Indigenous labor regulation responded to two phenomena in mid-sixteenth century Brazil: 1) outbreaks of disease, especially in the 1560s, that had devastating effects on Native populations; and 2) rising missionary influence in local affairs, especially with the governorship of Mem de Sá (1557-1572).¹⁹

The definitive arrival of the Society of Jesus in Bahia in the mid-sixteenth century, as well as their increasing influence with governors in the colony, spurred stricter regulation of Indigenous labor. By and large, the Jesuits in Brazil understood that access to Indigenous labor was essential for any productive enterprise in the colony. The Jesuits themselves exploited Indigenous labor and understood work as fundamental to the conversion project, though

¹³ Alida Metcalf, “The entradas of Bahia of the Sixteenth Century,” *The Americas* 61 no. 3 (2005): 375.

¹⁴ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 7.

¹⁵ Perrones-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos,” 116. Francisco Ribeiro da Silva, “A legislação seiscentista portuguesa e os índios do Brasil,” in *Brasil: Colonização e escravidão*, ed. Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1999): 15-26.

¹⁶ Zeron, *Linha de fé*, 336; Metcalf, “The entradas of Bahia,” 375.

¹⁷ Metcalf, “The entradas of Bahia,” 375.

¹⁸ AHU Códice 112, fl. 1-9.

¹⁹ For more on the impact of disease in early colonial Brazil, see Alida Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005): 119-156.

positions on how labor should be regulated were not unanimous.²⁰ In particular, the views of Manuel de Nóbrega formed the basis of a relative consensus among the Society of Jesus on how to approach questions around Indigenous labor and slavery. Nóbrega understood Indigenous peoples a “servile people.”²¹ Yet he was acutely concerned with the decimation of the Indigenous population, which he understood as caused by both disease and violence from the settler population. Nóbrega’s views had a direct impact in shaping Crown regulation, leading to the first decree regulating Indigenous labor in 1570.²² The 1570 decree did not ban indigenous slavery, but rather defined that enslavement had to be carried out either through legitimate means justified by the concept of just war.²³ It reiterated that Indigenous peoples could only be captured in just war, a process that required the “authority and license of [the King] or the governor...” As Carlos Zeron explains, the 1570 decree should be understood as sanctioning a “limited form of slavery” placed under the purview of local administrators.²⁴ This law was reinforced in 1595, when a new decree clarified the meaning of just war by claiming that any war had to be authorized by the King.²⁵

There were two types of slaving expeditions grounded in the principles of just war: *resgates* (ransoms) and *guerras* (wars). The Portuguese had been using these methods for slaving peoples in the Mediterranean and the West Coast of Africa since the fifteenth century.²⁶ *Resgates* and *guerras* dictated by the principles of Just War were thus almost always the policy of the Portuguese Crown in the Americas. In other words, allies could not be enslaved but enemies (often referred to as the *gentio*, or heathens) were often subject to enslavement.²⁷

Resgates involved Portuguese troops negotiating an Indigenous prisoner through the trade in a wide variety of goods, most prominently iron tools. The justification behind *resgates* was that a captive Indigenous person was already enslaved or that they were going to be consumed through cannibalism. Though some Indigenous societies in pre-colonial Brazil practiced cannibalism in ritual warfare, this was not a unanimous practice among the native peoples of

²⁰ One example of disagreement between early Jesuit missionaries in Brazil was the debate over voluntary slavery. See Rômulo da Silva Ehalt, “Jesuit Arguments for Voluntary Slavery in Japan and Brazil,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 39 no. 80 (2019): 87-107; Alfredo Storck, “The Jesuits and the Indigenous Slavery: A Debate over Voluntary Slavery in Brazilian Colonial Period,” *Mediaevalista: Textos e Estudos* 31 (2012): 67-80; Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Sobre a servidão voluntária, outro discurso: escravidão e contrato no Brasil Colonial.” In *Cultura com aspas e outros ensaios*, edited by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (São Paulo: Ubu, 2017): 169-181.

²¹ Manuel de Nobrega has been credited with reconciling the productive demands of the colony with the conversion aims of the missionaries. For an analysis of this consensus, see Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 57-158.

²² Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 329.

²³ Mem de Sá passed this law with direct influence of the Mesa da Consciência e Ordens. Giuseppe Marcocci describes the *Mesa da Consciência* (“Board of Conscience”) as the “royal council of theologians devoted to issues like war, commerce, conversion, and slavery, shaped the imperial ideology.” See Giuseppe Marcocci, “Conscience and Empire: Politics and Moral Theology in the Early Modern Portuguese World,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 18 (2014): 473-494.

²⁴ Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 329.

²⁵ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 5.

²⁶ Metcalf, “The Entradas,” 376. For an introduction to Portuguese enslavement practices in West Africa, see Kenneth Baxter Wolf, “The ‘Moors’ of West Africa and the beginnings of the Portuguese slave trade.” *Journal of Medieval & Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 3 (1994): 449-69.

²⁷ Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos,” 124.

Brazil.²⁸ *Resgates* were also justified through the notion that Indigenous peoples held captives themselves. The question over whether Indigenous peoples had slaves in pre-colonial times is contested in the historiography. There is consensus that Amerindian societies in pre-colonial times took war captives and “incorporated captives in a more or less subordinate position.”²⁹ The disagreement largely stems from whether these practices of captivity can be understood as slavery. For Whitehead and Lagebaek, it was colonial society that turned captives into slaves/commodities.³⁰ They cite the differences in Amazonian captivity, such as the incorporation of captives as kin, the fact captives were not “crucial to the reproduction of the economic system” nor “bought sold or traded as chattel”, and that captivity was not a hereditary status.³¹ Other scholars have disagreed, arguing that these definitions of slavery are too tied to the paradigm of African chattel slavery in the Americas.³²

For the settlers, there were several advantages to *resgates*. For one, this system was much more flexible and involved little capital being tied up, especially when compared to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. *Resgates* also allowed both Indigenous peoples and the Portuguese to maintain diplomatic contacts through the flow of ransomed captives, which buttressed Portuguese efforts to establish colonial control. Yet *resgates* were subject to a series of controversies. For one, different parties disagreed over how long a ransomed captive should serve. Original agreements stated that an Indigenous person ransomed would serve in captivity for ten years, or until the slave’s work paid back the price of their ransom.³³ Settlers would frequently pay more than the set prices for a ransomed slave so that they would be able to maintain these slaves for the rest of their lives. The primary concern of the settler population, often in retaliation to the Jesuits, was the extent of missionary involvement and how strict the definitions of war would be.

The second method to enslave people was through wars (*guerras*). *Guerras* had to have legitimate cause. One legitimate cause was when an Indigenous group or person committed acts of violence against the Portuguese or their allies. This fact helps us understand why settlers so often relied on the tropes of Indigenous peoples as barbarians and bellicose. Missionaries and colonial official derided the excessive bellicosity of Portuguese peoples, who started wars to justify slaving, as was the case with the expedition of 1603 to the Jaguaribe River by Pero Coelho de Sousa. Although Indigenous people did resist sixteenth-century Portuguese colonialism in a variety of ways, claims of “rebellions Indians” (*índios levantados*), such as the

²⁸ For anthropological interpretations of Indigenous practices of cannibalism, see Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Inconstancy of the Indian Soul: The Encounter of Catholics and Cannibals in 16th-Century Brazil*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

²⁹ Fernando Santos, *Vital enemies. Slavery, Predation, and the Amerindian Political Economy of Life*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009): 4.

³⁰ See Brian R. Ferguson and Neil Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1992).

³¹ Santos, *Vital Enemies*, 4. Scholars of African history have extensively debated definitions of slavery and the relationship between slavery and kinship. See Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa: historical and anthropological perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977). See Claude Meillassoux, *The anthropology of slavery: the womb of iron and gold*, trans. Alide Dasnois, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991).

³² Santos, *Vital Enemies*, 5. Though Fernando Santos has argued that not all Amerindian societies engaged in captivities, he focuses on “native regimes of capture and servitude: the set of patterned relations of extreme dependence that are found within a particular regional system of interethnic power relations at any given juncture.”

³³ Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, 128.

Aimorés burning down plantations, were common tropes for justifying aggression. Another justification for just war, albeit widely disputed, was when an Indigenous group or person acted as a barrier to the conversion project.³⁴

To carry out slaving expeditions, either *resgates* or *wars*, settlers made *entradas* in the hinterlands. *Entradas* often involved gathering a group of Indigenous workers from a mission village. One captain was nominated for the journey with a crew of approximately 30 men, some who are recruited directly by the captain while others are chosen by the Municipal Council or the Governor. The Governor presented instructions (*Regimento*) to the captain, requiring that slaves be made in the form of the laws of the Crown. There were plenty of instances of illegal slaving that were not sanctioned by the State. These were often carried out under the pretenses of gold or bioprospecting.³⁵ Once the slaves were brought back to the colonial cities, they were supposed to be sold across colonial society in a manner that was equitable.

Indigenous peoples did not work only as slaves in early colonial Brazil. One of the primary goals of the Portuguese was to relocate Indigenous peoples from the hinterlands to mission villages. These processes were known as *descimentos*, which literally translates to “bringing down.” These expeditions brought Indigenous peoples in closer proximity to white settlements so that they could easily labor in these centers. Most *descimentos* aimed at targeting allied populations, and were executed by both settlers and missionaries with the goal of populating the settlements near the large cities, especially after outbreaks of disease. *Descimentos* were supposed to be consensual, non-violent, and after 1587, required the presence of a missionary.³⁶ Metcalf’s analysis of Jesuit letters shows a wide range between 2,000 to 20,000 indigenous peoples that were brought from the hinterlands during a short term of two years.³⁷

Once Indigenous peoples were in a mission village, their labor could be divided for a series of needs across the colony. Those laborers could be hired by settlers to work on their plantations or work as soldiers for royal service. They would also be called up to help carry out *resgates*, *descimentos*, or *guerras*.³⁸ Settlers often asked for the administration of Indigenous workers, where an Indigenous laborer would perform personal services to a specific settler. For example, in the 1580s, the Count of Linhares asked the King to allow the *descimento* of Indigenous peoples “through peace and friendship to serve in this plantation, and to have in it their liberty, and as I can see through petitions the necessity of these Indians for the administration and benefit of this plantation, and being informed that this will allow in Reaes 1,000 *arrobas* of sugar to be made given that these are the necessary people, and that this will result in the benefit of my treasury.”³⁹ Access to Indigenous labor, either for defense or plantations, were thus seen as paramount for settlers throughout the sixteenth century.

Settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials disagreed over who should be responsible for the division and distribution of worker, as well as how Indigenous peoples should be compensated for administered work. In the sources from the period, settlers often asked that a lay captain control the distribution of labor in the mission villages. A common criticism among the settlers is that the missionaries barred them from having this access. Meanwhile, the Jesuits

³⁴ Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, 124

³⁵ Metcalf, “The entradas,” 382

³⁶ Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, 118.

³⁷ Metcalf, “The Entradas,” 383.

³⁸ Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, 118.

³⁹ ANTT Maço 16, D. 18.

criticized the Portuguese settlers for using *descimentos* to carry out slaving expeditions.⁴⁰ The Jesuits advocated that this work in plantations be both seasonal and salaried, so that Indigenous peoples could plant provisions for settlers and themselves.

Though the regulation of Indigenous labor was contested across colonial society, there was widespread consensus that Indigenous slavery was legitimate if carried out under the principle of just war and that Indigenous laborers in mission villages were essential to the productive enterprise of early colonial Brazil. The controversies between settlers and missionaries were not a neat story of missionaries advocating for complete Indigenous liberty and settlers advocating for slavery. Settlers asked for a wide variety of labor regimes, while Jesuits validated the labor needs of settlers and accepted that the principles of Just War allowed for the legitimate captivity of Brazil's Native Peoples. The disagreements between settlers and missionaries often stemmed from who had control over the distribution of mission village labor and what constituted a just war. In their disagreements, we can trace the testing out of different ideas and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, their proclivity to work, and the extent to which their labor would lead to colonial growth.

Gabriel Soares de Sousa on Indigenous Peoples and Brazilian Work

The writings of Gabriel Soares de Sousa provide some of the best examples of settler arguments used to advocate for access to Indigenous labor. Soares de Sousa's writings deployed both classic Othering paradigms (cannibalism, bellicosity, laziness) in conjunction with "pragmatic ideologies" that thought deeply about utility, the common good, and the necessity of Indigenous workers to carry out tasks in colonial Brazil. Assessments of Indigenous peoples' abilities and capacities as workers thus served as a bridge between these two poles of Othering and pragmatic thinking. It was both a way to Other Indigenous peoples, as well as evidence of how Indigenous laborers were essential for settler wealth.

Soares de Sousa was a prolific plantation owner in Jaguaripe, south of the Bahian Recôncavo, about 14 leagues from the city of Salvador. He arrived in Bahia in 1569 and spent 17 years there, establishing himself as a key political player in the region. In 1584, he traveled to Madrid to garner political and financial support for a planned expedition in the interior of the river São Francisco, in the hopes of finding precious metals, and presumably, carrying out slaving expeditions. Soares de Sousa's texts were presented to D. Cristóvão de Moura, the first viceroy of Portugal in the Iberian Union.

The texts that Soares de Sousa presented at the court of Madrid in 1585 have since posthumously been grouped. One of these texts were the series of grievances that he presented against the Jesuits. The other text, the *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil*, has become one of the most important sources in the study of sixteenth-century Brazil. *Tratado Descritivo* has often been read by historians describing "Invention of the Indian," most famously analyzed by John Monteiro, who argued that Soares de Sousa helped establish the Tupi/Tapuya distinction.⁴¹ When the Portuguese arrived in Bahia, they simplified Indigenous identities to two categories: Tupi and Tapuya. This simplification reduced the complexities of various linguistic and cultural

⁴⁰ Metcalf, "The Entradas," 383.

⁴¹ See John Monteiro, "Tupis, Tapuias e Historiadores," 12-35.

differences.⁴² Broadly speaking, Tupi peoples were seen as more likely to be allies and “friends of cultivation” while the Tapuyas lived in allegedly nomadic lifestyles.⁴³

As such, *Tratado Descritivo* has been interpreted as a classic case of settler Othering of Indigenous peoples. These interpretations have placed Soares de Sousa in a long tradition of European travelers who pointed to Indigenous barbarity, bellicosity, and cannibalism to understand Native peoples. Historians have read Soares de Sousa’s text alongside the other sixteenth-century chronicles, like the travelers Hans Staden, Jean de Léry, and André Thevet.⁴⁴ Soares de Sousa’s chronicle certainly repeated some of the same tropes as these travelers. It also followed the same format as the typical sixteenth-century travel chronicle, going through each captaincy of Brazil, describing its general geography and the customs of the local Indigenous population.⁴⁵ Yet the problem with this analysis is that Soares de Sousa was not a traveler in Brazil. He was a man who lived in Brazil for 17 years, who went to Madrid with the intent of coming back, and who had a quite clear vision for what he understood as for the necessities of colonial development.⁴⁶ Soares de Sousa pointed not only to the abundant capacities of the land, but also pointed out the work that Indigenous peoples could and did carry out. In fact, the Brazil that Soares de Sousa described was one where the Indigenous peoples do all the work. Indigenous peoples in Brazil harvested manioc, they planted *maçarandiba*, they defended the colony, they fished for crabs, and they were slaves and freed workers.

Indeed, Soares de Sousa understood colonial Brazil through the lens of work and how much work was required to make the colony productive. In his opening remarks, Soares de Sousa explained that Brazil was “very well-stocked in provisions of considerable substance and which require less work than those of Spanish America.”⁴⁷ The process of colonizing Brazil took a “great amount of work due to the little experience and information that existed then over the coast.”⁴⁸ Soares de Sousa described the appeal of the potential conquest of the Amazon by explaining that a takeover could be done with “little work and not much capital.”⁴⁹

This lens of understanding Brazil through work also extended to how Soares interpreted the region’s Native inhabitants. As much as Soares de Sousa differentiated Indigenous peoples by their degrees of “barbarity”, he also differentiated Indigenous peoples based on their proclivities for work and their relationship to cultivation. As with the duality of the bellicose Indigenous person and the domesticated ally, he also presents a duality between those Indigenous groups that he sees as workers and those that he does not. Soares de Sousa’s understandings of work can be mapped onto the Tupi/Tapuya distinction, where he was more likely to see Tupi peoples as

⁴² John Monteiro, “As populações indígenas do litoral brasileiro no século XVI: Transformação e resistência,” in *Brasil nas vésperas do mundo moderno*, ed. Jill Dias (Lisboa, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1992): 122.

⁴³ John Monteiro, “The Crises and Transformations of Invaded Societies: Coastal Brazil in the Sixteenth Century,” in *The Cambridge History of Native Peoples of the Americas*, eds. Frank Solomon and Stuart Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 975.

⁴⁴ Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Imagens de índios do Brasil: o século XVI,” *Estudos Avançados* 4, no. 10 (1990): 91-110.

⁴⁵ Gabriel Soares de Azevedo, “O avesso da costura: uma análise dos escritos de Gabriel Soares de Sousa,” (PhD diss, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2015): 30.

⁴⁶ Vera Lucia Amaral Ferlini, *Açúcar e colonização* (São Paulo: Alameda Casa Editorial, 2010): 44.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Soares de Sousa, *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil em 1587* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Darcy Ribeiro, 2013): 10.

⁴⁸ Soares de Sousa, 12.

⁴⁹ Soares de Sousa, 16.

capable of cultivation and Tapuya peoples as incapable of work. His understanding of Tupi peoples' capacity for agriculture did map onto material realities.⁵⁰ For example, when Soares spoke of the Potiguares, he noted that they were in a state of constant and "extremely cruel warfare" with the Caetés [Kaetés]. But he also notes that they were "great agriculturalists of their provisions, and they are always well-stocked, and they are good hunters and archers that never make a mistake when they shoot. They are also great fishermen, in the ocean as well as in the freshwater rivers."⁵¹ When Soares described the Tupiniquins, he claimed that they were people "of great work and service, and always in the wars they help the Portuguese, against the Aimorés, Tapuias and the Tamoios." The Tupiniquins were "great fisherman, hunters and seamen, they are brave men who hunt, fish, sing, dance, and like the Tupinambá, in the matters of war they are industrious, and men who can do a lot..."⁵² The Tupinambá were "men of great strength and a lot of work; they are very bellicose, and in their own way hard-working, and they can serve in many functions, though they are not trustworthy...they are great hunters and fishermen, and friends of cultivation."

Soares also understood some Indigenous peoples as incapable of work. For Soares, the Guianases were prone to:

"...little work and much rest, do not cultivate amongst themselves, they live off the animals they hunt and the fish that they take from the rivers, as well as the wild fruits that the forest gives; they are great archers and enemies of human meat. They do not kill who they capture but accept them as their slaves; in their encounters with white people, they do not cause any harm, only good company, but those that accept a guaianá slave do not expect any service from them, because they are people who by nature like to rest and do not know how to work."⁵³

Soares de Sousa thus distinguished those that were capable of work and those that were not primarily through the lens of cultivation. Yet he also acknowledged the importance of other types of work, such as fishing, hunting, and defending. According to Soares de Sousa, fishing was of paramount importance: "There is not one settler in the farms of Bahia who does not send an Indian every day to catch these crabs; in each engenho about four or five of these *mariscadores* are sent, who bring enough catch to feed all the people of service..."⁵⁴ Enslaved

⁵⁰ Generally, Tupi peoples tended to practice small-scale agriculture through the planting of manioc, peanuts, and maize. We also know that the bulk of the agricultural work was done by women, except for the clearing the lands for cultivation, which was done by men.

⁵¹ Soares de Sousa, 28.

⁵² Soares de Sousa, 68. "É gente de grande trabalho e serviço, e sempre nas guerras ajudaram aos Portuguezes, contra os Aimorés, Tapuias, e Tamoios, como ainda hoje fazem esses poucos que se deixaram ficar junto do mar e das nossas povoações, com quem vizinham muito bem, os quaes são grandes Pescadores de linha, caçadores e marinheiros, são valentes homens, caçam, pescam, cantam, bailam, como os Tupinambás, e nas cousas de Guerra são mui industriosos, e homens para muito, de quem se faz muita conta a seu modo entre o gentio,"

⁵³ Soares de Sousa, 100. "É gente de pouco trabalho, muito molar, não usam entre si lavoura, vivem de caça que matam e peixe que tomam nos rios, e das frutas silvestres que o mato dá; são grandes flecheiros e inimigos de carne humana. Não matam aos que cativam, mas aceitam-nos por seus escravos; se encontram com gente branca, não fazem nenhum dano, antes boa companhia, e quem acerta de ter um escravo guaianás não espera dêle nenhum serviço, porque é gente folgazã de natureza e não sabe trabalhar."

⁵⁴ Soares de Sousa, 301. "E não há morador nas fazendas da Bahia que não mande cada dia um índio mariscar destes caranguejos; e de cada engenho vão quatro ou cinco destes mariscadores, com os quais dão de comer a

Indigenous people were also critical for the defense of the colony, alongside enslaved Africans: “4,000 blacks of Guiné, and 6,000 Indians of the land, who are very good archers, together with the people of this city, will make a very reasonable army.”⁵⁵

Read alongside his grievances to the Jesuits, the *Tratado* shows how Portuguese settlers had much more complicated views of Indigenous propensity to work than established historical narratives would have us think. In 1587 Soares de Sousa presented his grievances against what he saw as excessive Jesuit jurisdiction in matters of Indigenous labor. One of his main grievances was that the Jesuit reaped financial benefits due to their control over Indigenous labor, despite the fact that the priests earned alms in their captaincies. According to Soares de Sousa, the Jesuits “...gain much revenue from their lands; they have a farm with many slaves of Guiné where they gather all their provisions in abundance.” They also were able to harness the work of Indigenous peoples, and with that, the Jesuits had “...much feed from hunts and birds that are hunted by the *gentio* in the missions that [the Jesuits] govern in such a way that they have no need for things from the kingdom.”⁵⁶

To make his case for greater settler control over Indigenous labor, Soares de Sousa wielded both pragmatic arguments as well as the typical Othering arguments to justify slaving expeditions. For the latter, he argued that Indigenous peoples were incapable to self-govern, drawing from theological discussions. Soares asked that the King “...allow these Indians to be enslaved for it is known that in their lives and customs they are not capable of being free, and they are deserving of being enslaved for the great damages they have committed against the Portuguese, killing and eating hundreds and thousands of them, including a bishop and many priests...”⁵⁷ In terms of the former, Soares de Sousa most explicitly stated his view on work in Brazil by responding that:

“The State of Brazil cannot be sustained without many slaves of the land (*gentio escravos da terra*) to cultivate its plantations and its farms. Without this work, the state would be unpopulated. The Priests do not understand this since they are the ones that reap the benefits of these *gentio*, who because they bring them to fish regularly and have them as sailors in their boats and have them hunt, and in their pens they keep and incircle the cows, mares, and pigs; [the Indigenous] labor in all their works in every capacity, they work in their brickwork, where they make roofs, tiles, and tableware that is necessary, they work with the cars and in the farms, and in the winter they walk by the beaches

toda a gente de serviço; e não há índios destes que não tome cada dia trezentos e quatro Que trata de diversas castas de caranguejos. centos caranguejos, que trazem vivos num cesto serrado feito de verga delgada, a que os índios chamam samburá; e recolhem em cada samburá destes um cento, pouco mais ou menos.” In fact, we know from Fernão Cardim’s work that crabs were a critical component of the diet of enslaved peoples, see Fernão Cardim, *Tratado da Gente e da Terra*, 91.

⁵⁵ Soares de Sousa, 128.

⁵⁶ “Capítulos que Gabriel Soares e Sousa deu em Madrid ao Sr. D. Cristovam de Moura contra os Padres da companhia de Jesus que reside no Brasil, com umas breves respostas dos mesmos padres que deles moram avisador por um seu parente a quem os ele mostrou” in *ABNRJ* 62 (1940): 363. “Tem muito de renda das suas terras; tem uma granja com muitos escravos de Guiné donde lhe vem todos os mantimentos em abundância...tem muita caça de alimária e aves que lhe caça o gentio das aldeias que governam; de maneira que não tem necessidade de coisas do reino.”

⁵⁷ “Capítulos que Gabriel Soares e Sousa deu em Madrid,” 379.

searching for amber-gris which are very useful, which [the Jesuits] do not want other people making use of.”⁵⁸

Soares de Sousa’s writings show how settlers, particularly those advocating for more access to Indigenous peoples, did not simply disparage Indigenous labor. Native peoples could be industrious and friends of cultivation, and others could be “lazy” and incapable of manual labor. Nevertheless, for Soares de Sousa, the settler population of Brazil was fundamentally dependent on the local Indigenous population to carry out various types of work in the colony. Though we do not know if Soares de Sousa was the first settler to make this argument, his grievances against the Jesuits served as a sort of template for settler discourses. His claim that Indigenous peoples cultivate plantations, fish, hunt, and build homes, were all discursive themes that came up again and again in settler arguments for Indigenous labor. Soares de Sousa garnered support for his expedition before traveling back to Brazil, where he died carrying out his expedition in 1590.

Indigenous Labor for the “Growth and Preservation” of the State of Brazil

The last quarter of the sixteenth century in Bahia saw a series of debates about how to regulate Indigenous labor, often, though not always, pitting the settler population against the Society of Jesus. In these debates, settlers and missionaries wielded a series of tropes to justify their positions on Indigenous labor. These tropes often pointed to fundamental qualities of Indigenous peoples as workers. Despite the fact that settlers and missionaries often demanded different regulations, there were multiple ideas circulating in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that understood settler reliance on African enslaved labor as unsustainable, and that Indigenous labor was central to the “growth and preservation of the State of Brazil.”

Settlers and missionaries that advocated for greater Jesuit control over mission villages regularly brought up the necessity of Indigenous workers to safeguard the settler population against “rebellions” enslaved Africans. These opinions were fundamentally concerned with the flight of enslaved Africans and the rise of *quilombos* (maroon communities) in the hinterlands of Bahia. In 1595, the Desembargo de Paço, the main judicial body in Portugal, evaluated a series of opinions on Indigenous labor given the failures of the 1570 and 15875 decrees to curb slaving expeditions. These opinions were instrumental in influencing the 1595 decree, which prohibited slavery expeditions unless sanctioned by Governor-general of Brazil.⁵⁹ One of the opinions was of André de Aguiar, who had previously served as the colony’s royal judge. Aguiar was fundamentally concerned with “peopling” as a method of security for the state, and he understood mission villages as key for this defense. Aguiar explained that between the tower of Garcia D’Avila up to the Rio Real, and from the Rio Real to the São Francisco River, there were

⁵⁸ “Capitulos que Gabriel Soares e Sousa deu em Madrid,” 379: “se não pode sustentar este Estado do Brasil sem haver nele muitos escravos do gentio da terra pera se grangearem os engenhos, e fazendas dela, porque sem êste favor despovoar-se-á, ao que os Padres não querem ter respeito, porque êles são os que tiram os proveitos dêste genio, perque os trazem a pescar ordinariamente e por marinheiros nos seus barcos e a caçar, e nos seus currais lhes guardam e cercam as vacas, éguas e porcos; trabalham-lhes nas suas obras em todos os officios, trabalham-lhes nas suas olarias, onde lhes fazem a telha, ladrilho, e louça necessária, trabalham-lhes com os carros, e nas roças, e no inverno andam-lhes pelas praias buscando ambar no que lhe dão muitos proveitos, no que não querem que se aproveite a outra gente. E porque v. m. me tem já per suspeito lhe não digo mais, porque me não ha de crer, nem digo o que tenho dito senão por obedecer ao que me tem mandado.”

⁵⁹ Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 341.

almost no indigenous peoples in mission villages, but rather quilombos of “*negros de Guiné*, Angolans, Cangicos that fled Bahia.”⁶⁰ Cosme Rangel, who had also served as a royal judge, claimed that “Brazil cannot sustain itself nor have commerce without the *gentio da terra*, for the administration and benefit of the treasury, as well as for the conservation of the peace: especially now that there is a greater quantity of people from Guiné, who everyday rebel, kill, and steal.”⁶¹ Rangel understood that Indigenous peoples were “quasi gastado e consumido....” And the reason for that is the treatment of the Indigenous by the settlers.⁶²

The concept of security functioned as malleable language both for demanding for enslaved Africans and demanding more Indigenous workers. We know that to ask for enslaved Africans, Portuguese settlers often pointed to the perception these enslaved populations were less likely to flee. Gândavo claimed that the colony’s “slaves from Guiné...are more secure than those Indians of the land because they do not flee and do not have a place to go.”⁶³ Yet settlers advocating for lay control over Indigenous peoples also used as justification the need for security against enslaved African rebellions, and increasingly, *quilombos*. In 1610, the Municipal Council of Paraíba, who wanted less Jesuit control over Indigenous labor, affirmed that the people of Brazil “put themselves in danger...with this lack of Indians.” Without Indigenous peoples to serve the settlers, the Portuguese population faced the threat of rebellions from enslaved peoples from Guiné.⁶⁴ Another justification for greater access to Indigenous laborers was the alleged threat of the Aimorés. The Aimorés were an Indigenous group that lived in the Recôncavo and the captaincy of Ilhéus. Aimoré politics against Portuguese colonization involved a widespread and continuous process of warfare, especially evident in the burning down of engenhos and the killing of enslaved people on the plantations. Aimoré action was one of the main sources of concern for the administrators of Sergippe do Conde and Santana, who complained that there “was always war on the land” that prevented sugar production in the region.⁶⁵ Witnesses to a 1583 report carried out by the judge Anthonio D’Azevedo complained that Aimoré warfare was leading to the deaths of “white people, slaves of Guiné and of the land.” These actions were leading to the unpeopling and abandonment of sugar plantations, since engenho workers could not even go to the hinterlands to procure materials, like wood, without which there is no sugar production. Ambrosio de Sousa explained that because the “tapohios [tapuyas] had taken the woods the supplicants are not powerful for entering the forest to procure wood to make sugar.” Duarte Francisco’s testimony made clear that “we cannot make sugar or anything else without the forest...”⁶⁶ Duarte Francisco complained that his enslaved workers could not go in the forests to collect timber without getting killed, and for this reason his *engenhos* stand still and there is “more cost than benefit.”

Another argument for Indigenous laborers was the usefulness of these workers. Settlers would make claims that they were dependent on Indigenous laborers for their productive enterprises. The Municipal Council in Paraíba explained that “since we have seen through experience that there is no drug in Brazil that can be traded except sugar, which cannot be grown, except in parts that can be conserved, which will not be possible if the *gentio* are under religious

⁶⁰ BA 44-XIV-6, fl. 194-194v. Transcribed in Carlos Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 522-6.

⁶¹ BPE CXVI-I-33, ff. 69v-71, transcribed in Carlos Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 505.

⁶² BPE CXVI-I-33, ff. 69v-71, transcribed in Carlos Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 505.

⁶³ Gândavo, *Tratado da terra do Brasil*, 53.

⁶⁴ ANTT Corpo Cronológico Parte I, Maço 115, D. 108.

⁶⁵ ANTT CSJ Maço 15, D. 9.

⁶⁶ ANTT CSJ Maço 15, D. 9.

protection.”⁶⁷ This claim from the Municipal Council disrupts the notion that Indigenous peoples were not seen as adequate for the work of sugar plantations.

There were also divergent understandings on the impact of disease, yet both sides understood disease as something that could be remediated through different policies. The Municipal Council of Paraíba claimed that Indigenous peoples living under Jesuit missions were more likely to fall ill and lose “their rituals and old customs.”⁶⁸ The 1611 letter claimed to understand that Indigenous slavery in Brazil was untenable and a “forced enterprise”, and as such, they demanded instead that Indigenous peoples be placed under secular administration where they would be under less risk of death from disease, more likely to be converted, and would bring more profit to the treasuries of the Crown. This interpretation was not shared by Cosme Rangel, who explained that the decimation of Native populations was the result of Portuguese settler control over Indigenous populations. Rangel recommended that no Indigenous person in Brazil be enslaved, because “experience has shown that even though some may be enslaved through justified means...there are so many deceits carried out by the settlers under the pretenses of ‘just titles.’”⁶⁹ These enslaving expeditions have led to the “destruction of the hinterlands.” Instead, he advocated creating a position where captains and judges could visit both missions and plantations to make sure that Indigenous peoples were working according to the laws. Rangel advocated for a seasonal system of paid labor, where Indigenous peoples would have enough time to plant their own provisions and provide services to the lay population. Any Indigenous person held as a slave until then would be analyzed to make sure that they were rescued in accordance to just-war, and if not, they would be liberated.

Both sides also wielded the argument that Indigenous workers were useful because they were native to the land and because they existed in greater numbers. This idea of Indigenous usefulness was used to justify *descimentos* of Indigenous workers. Aguiar, writing against Indigenous slavery, argued that “The conservation of the State of Brazil and the growth of its treasury consists in having many *gentio* of this very earth because they are very useful in their service, and the greatest force in the land that could be used against the corsair enemies, [there should be] as many Indians in as much quantity along the coast with the whites.”⁷⁰ Martim Leitão, the royal magistrate of the State of Brazil, expressed this preference for Indigenous workers even more explicitly. Leitão advocated for *descimentos* to bring Indigenous peoples from the hinterlands to the population centers on the coast as a security measure. One key purpose of these resettlements, Leitão argued, was preventing the flight of enslaved Africans. By 1595, Bahian sugar mills already had a majority of enslaved workers from Africa, with Leitão estimating that each plantation owner had somewhere between 100-200 enslaved African workers, “and these are always very rebellious, and since the *gentio* of the land are the principal force and sustenance of every event that occurs in Brazil, they are much more to the service of your Majesty.”⁷¹ He advocated that the laws practiced in Brazil as they are in New Spain and Peru, where the indigenous serve the whites “as free men.” Leitão argued that it was necessary to bring *gentio* to the coast for the conservation and growth of Brazil because:

⁶⁷ ANTT Corpo Cronológico Parte I, Maço 115, D. 108.

⁶⁸ ANTT Corpo Cronológico Parte I, Maço 115, D. 108.

⁶⁹ BPE CXVI-I-33, ff. 69v-71, transcribed in Carlos Zeron, *Linha de Fé*, 505

⁷⁰ BA 44-XIV-6, fl. 196

⁷¹ BA 44-XIV-6, fl. 191

“...as they are Natives and sons of this land, so for the service and maintenance of this land and everything else, one of the land is worth four of Guiné, not to mention that the [slaves] from Guiné are consumed in such a way that it will lead to the total ruin of Brazil.”⁷²

Leitão wielded two important tropes in favor of the regulation of Indigenous labor. The first is the idea that Indigenous peoples were “Natives and sons” of the land, implying that Indigenous peoples were able to execute work that neither enslaved Africans nor local settlers could perform. The second is the notion that the mass importation of enslaved Africans was leading to the financial ruin of settlers in Brazil. Certain settlers advocating for Indigenous slavery would use the same argument. Gaspar da Cunha, an administrator at the sugar mill Sergipe do Conde, wrote to his landlord in 1585 with his opinions on how the *engenho* should be run.⁷³ Cunha asked the Count of Linhares to “petition the King to bring down Indians for the missions for the defense of the borders...”⁷⁴ Cunha claimed that through his “experience that he has on the land” and from what he “understands of the *engenho* Sergipe do Conde”, he recommended that the Count of Linhares:

“...should not try too hard to bring Blacks of Guiné under his direction, the ones that are here are enough, because too many of these are too costly and harmful, both in the farms as well as in the neighboring parts, they are not so necessary nor so useful when compared to the Indians of this land...”⁷⁵

The idea that the importation of enslaved Africans was leading to the financial ruin of the settlers was a real consideration in the debates about labor in Bahia. The Jesuit Fernão Cardim wrote in his *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brazil* that “there are men here with 40, 50 and 80 thousand cruzados; some owe a lot for the great losses they have with the slaves from Guiné, many of whom die, and for the many costs that they have in their treatment.”⁷⁶ Another person who shared this opinion was Diogo de Meneses, the governor of Brazil in from 1608 to 1612. He was the second governor of Brazil who opposed Jesuit control of Indigenous labor. Meneses

⁷² BA 44-XIV-6, fl. 193. “porque como gente natural e filhos da própria terra para o serviço e meneio della e tudo o mais val hum da terra por quatro de Guiné, além disso vão se os mesmos consumindo de maneira com os de Guiné que com razão se pode por isso recear total ruína do Brasil.”

⁷³ The richest on-the-ground source base for early colonial Brazilian history are the documents in the Cartório dos Jesuitas detailing the Engenhos of Sergippe and Santana. Engenho Sergippe, located in the Recôncavo of Bahia, was founded by Fernão Rodrigues Castelo Branco through a land grant. In 1571, Castelo Branco renounced his grant and handed its control over to the governor Mem de Sá, eventually being handed over to Mem de Sá’s daughter, Filipa de Sá, who married to the 3rd Count of Linhares. By 1576, the *engenho* was firmly in control of Filipa de Sá, who in her will, left the *engenho* to the Colegio de Santo Antônio of the Company of Jesus. Engenho Sergippe only transferred to Jesuit control in September of 1618. See Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 233.

⁷⁴ ANTT CSJ Maço 8, D. 9: “...e devia V.S. valer de provisao do Rey izenta dos que oces pa poder mandar de ser destes indios para ter aldeas assim pa difensao da fronteira, que ho *engenho* esta como para homeneio e proveito dele e ? entendo V.S. que mais necessario de tudo poz que avendo esse pode deitara a dormir sobre homenes e proveito dele e orno lembrar a V.S. que bens a izenta a provisao.”

⁷⁵ ANTT CSJ Maço 8, D. 9. “de matar muyto por mandar hir negros de guiné pa o meneio dele os que tem bastão por que de mais se sez de muyto custo & prejudiciaes asy a fazenda como a vizinhança não são tão necessários e proveitozos nela como os índios desta terra...”

⁷⁶ Cardim, *Tratados da Terra e da Gente*, 334.

deployed a popular argument that the goals of the Crown towards Indigenous peoples were better served if they were placed under the control of the settlers in administrations. Meneses believed that through settler administration, there would be two benefits to the State and the Treasury of the Crown:

“The first being that the service in the *engenhos* would be easier [to carry out] and less costly, which the free Indians would help in through their own desires in the service of sugar mills and farms and provisions, and the other is that it would not be so necessary in this state to have to many *negros de Guiné*, who are responsible for the poverty of these men, because [men] spend everything when buying them, and when they need fifty *negros* in one *engenho* they find that they have less than half because they flee and place themselves in the forest, and there are so many of these that in this way they make villages, and run rebellious and no one can stop them and they will grow to an extent that it will cost a lot of work...”⁷⁷

Meneses’ statement serves as a reminder that ideas about flight and death were used not just to advocate for African slavery, but also to propose alternative labor regimes that relied instead on Indigenous labor. For Meneses, the large-scale importation of enslaved Africans was a considerable financial problem for the settler population. Meneses argued that the *negros de Guiné* “last so little” and for the settlers to remedy their losses, they “...turn to the merchants who give them credit, until they can pay them back with the income from new products.”⁷⁸ For Meneses, the work of the colony could only be done by either the *negros de Guiné* or the *gentio da terra*, but “the former are [the colony’s] total destruction.”⁷⁹ As such, Meneses became a key advocate settler access to mission village laborers, claiming that the “solution of the missions is the principal” resolution to settler debt. In 1612, he petitioned the Crown for permission to allow Indigenous work among the settlers:

“The main reason that I’ve come to this conclusion is seeing the little capacity of these people, and how little the state receives from them, and since it is the case that without them being put in order the State will not be able to grow, which it needs to do for its greatness, and for all the benefit that it will give this Crown of Your Majesty, since here

⁷⁷ “Diogo de Meneses para El-rei,” August 23rd, 1608, *ABNRJ* 57 (1935): 39: “E disto se recebem dous grandes bens para o estado e a fazenda de V.Mag. o primeiro o serviço dos engenhos ser mais fácil e menos custoso e ajudarem os índios sendo livres e por suas vontades ao serviço dos engenhos e das roças e mantimentos, e outra he não ser necessário a este estado tanto negros de guiné, os quais he a maior parte da pobreza dos homens porque tudo gastão na compra delles, e quando cuidão tem sincoenta negros que hum *engenho* ha mister achao esse com menos a metade porque fogem e metemse pelos matos, e são tantos os que desta maneira andao que fazem aldeas, e andao alevantados e ninguém pode com elles e podem crescer de maneira que custe muito trabalho o desbaratallos...”

⁷⁸ “Diogo de Meneses para El-rei,” May 8th, 1610, *ABNRJ* 57 (1935): 68: “como estes lhe durão tão pouco que muitas vezes lhe acontece tellos por pagar, e não os terem a elles, por lhe morrer, com o immenso trabalho que paixão, não sendo possível menos e pera remédio disto se socorrem aos mercadores que lhos dão fiados. até lhos poder pagar pello rendimento de suas novidades...”

⁷⁹ “Diogo de Meneses para El-rei,” May 8th, 1610, *ABNRJ* 57 (1935): 69: que ha em ter gente com que trabalhem e esta não a ha que senão ou os negros de Guiné ou o *gentio da terra*, hos primeiros são a sua total destruição, e por isso se hão de remedear, e hão de ficar sempre no mesmo estado, o remédio das aldeas ehe o principal...”

there are no people of service except them, and the slaves that come here from Guiné, and those cost too much for the settlers and last very little, meaning that the poor settlers do not have enough wealth and are indebted and tired, and in this way they cannot grow their plantations. These Indians, sir, are very barbarous people, and they do not have any government, nor can they govern themselves, and they so lack [these capacities] that they cannot even sustain themselves...”⁸⁰

Meneses wielded both ideas of Indigenous incapacity and barbarity, alongside practical considerations of economic sustainability, to make his pitch for why settlers should have more access to laborers in mission villages. In a 1608 letter, Meneses claimed that the Indigenous of Brazil knew nothing of Christianity because of the “lack of communication that they have from us, as well as their limited understanding”, proposing that the King should mandate that Indigenous peoples be distributed “throughout this coast according to the necessities of the settlements and plantations”, with a priest who can teach them doctrine and “one white man who could serve as their captain.” The captain would be responsible for compensating Indigenous work through wages. In the almost fifteen existing letters from Meneses to the King, the governor made clear his preference for Indigenous workers.

In debates about how to administer and regulate indigenous labor, both free and enslaved, settlers and missionaries used a series of common tropes about the benefits of Indigenous labor. These tropes played around with the interpretations of how disease outbreaks occurred, which populations posed a bigger security risk, and the inherent capabilities of indigenous and African peoples as workers. These debates serve as a reminder that the “flight, disease, and capacity to work” framework was very much up to debate through most of sixteenth and early seventeenth century in the sugar-planting northeastern captaincies of Brazil.

Diogo de Campos Moreno's *Livro que Dá Razão do Estado do Brasil* (1612)

Diogo de Campos Moreno's 1612 “*Livro que Dá Razão do Estado do Brasil*” is one of the most helpful texts for unpacking settler arguments for Indigenous labor in early colonial Brazil. *Livro que Dá Razão* was primarily a policy prescription for the colony, though Campos Moreno also included helpful empirical information about the number of plantations in each captaincy. Above all, Campos Moreno saw increased settler control and access to mission laborers as the key to production and settler satisfaction. Campos Moreno also advocated for Indigenous slavery, using many of the arguments outlined in the introduction of this chapter.

In many ways, Campos Moreno was a typical conquistador figure of the early modern Portuguese empire. Born in Tangier in 1566, Campos Moreno moved to Brazil in 1602 where he served as the royal soldier of Bahia. He worked for Diogo de Meneses in Bahia, and thus, unsurprisingly, shared some of the same opinions as the governor. Drawing from his on-the-ground experience in the colony, Campos Moreno identified what he saw as the main problems

⁸⁰ ANTT, Fragmentos, Maço 1, D. 6: “A principal razão que a isto me moveo foi ver a pouca capacidade desta gente, e o pouco fructo que este Estado recebia delles, sendo assi que sem elles se porem em ordem não poderá ser este Estado augmentado, como he rezão que seja pella grandeza delle, e pello muito proveito que dará a coroa de V.Mg. porque como nelle não ha outra gente de serviço se não elles, e os negros que vem de Guiné, e estes custão muito a os moradores e durao pouco, não tem os pobres moradores cabedal e andão individuos e cansados, e assim se não podem estender em suas lavouras. Estes índios senhor he gente mui barbara, e que em si não tem governo nenhum nem per si se podem governar, e são nisto tão faltos em tudo que nem no que lhe toqua a seu sustento...”

in Brazil. In his view, the most successful captaincies were the royal, rather than Donatary, captaincies, as these necessitated more royal oversight over the “peopling” and colonization of the land. For Campos Moreno, the lands of Brazil, like the Portuguese themselves, were “capricious, [the land] in production, and [the people] in inhabiting it.”⁸¹ As soon as the Portuguese settlers would hear of better lands to occupy, they changed locations like nomadic peoples.⁸² To him, this meant that profitable lands were quickly abandoned. Once again, we see the preference for fixed settlement and production in the land. Moreno understood this as a political problem, a result of the “lack of respectable people in government.”

A significant portion of Campos Moreno’s treatise is dedicated to advocating for more settler access to Indigenous labor. He addressed the two key questions of Indigenous labor in the colony. First, how administered labor should be controlled and distributed, and second, the processes of Indigenous slavery. When addressing the former, Moreno claimed that religious control over the *gentio* of Brazil was so strong, that any law permitting settlers to use Indigenous labor could not work in practice. He contended that lay control was better, “derived from the doctrine that they (as incapables) badly learn or that are badly taught, in the absence of the lay captains, because the Indians who live among the whites not only are the best Christians, as they are raised with their sons, but also learning trades that are beneficial to the Royal Treasury.”⁸³ Under this religious authority, Campos Moreno claims, there is a loss of “much profit and treasury for your Majesty that without a doubt the Indians can provide.”⁸⁴ Campos Moreno’s claim that Indigenous peoples would increase the profits of the Crown serves as a reminder how settlers used arguments based on the idea of utility and the common good to make their case for Indigenous work.

For Campos Moreno, flight was a problem that could be fixed with policy changes. It was thus not an inherent essence of Indigenous peoples as laborers. Settler control over Indigenous laborers would prevent “the growth of *mocambos* between the slaves or groups of runaways that are called *santidades*, and all these other damages that we have seen on this coast...”⁸⁵ Campos Moreno saw Indigenous and African flight as related, and we know that several quilombos did indeed have both Indigenous and African peoples.⁸⁶ The Indigenous are “so inexperienced in the use of our justice and our obedience that they quickly go to the forest where they make abominable communities and rituals coming together with the slaves of Guiné who are also runaways and which leads to deaths, scandalous robberies and violence through which reason we cannot cross the hinterlands or grow the populations in the interior.”⁸⁷

Campos Moreno claimed that different colonial contexts required different solutions. As a man deeply involved in the Portuguese expansion into Northern captaincies, most famously Maranhão, Campos Moreno he believed that even if African slavery worked in Pernambuco and Bahia, this labor regime would not function in the new captaincies. As Campos Moreno explained, ideas about Indigenous peoples’ natural liberty should not restrict labor policy

⁸¹ Diogo de Campos Moreno, *Livro que Dá Razão do Estado do Brasil*, 1612 (Recife: Arquivo Público Estadual, 1955): 108.

⁸² Campos Moreno, 108.

⁸³ Campos Moreno, 110.

⁸⁴ Campos Moreno, 110.

⁸⁵ Campos Moreno, *Livro que Dá Razão*, 110.

⁸⁶ Scott Joseph Allen, “Identidades em Jogo: negros, índios e a arqueologia da Serra da Barriga,” In *Índios do Nordeste: temas e problemas*, edited by Luiz Sávio de Almeida, Marcos Galindo, and Juliana Lopes Elias (Maceió: Editora UFAL, 2000): 247.

⁸⁷ Campos Moreno, 113.

“because we learn that republics that are opposite and different should be governed by principles that are opposite and different.”⁸⁸ A captaincy like Pernambuco, for example, was in a completely different state than its neighboring regions. Pernambuco had 90 active *engenhos* with about 4,000 settlers, with the port of Recife serving as the point for sending sugar. But even in Pernambuco, whose settlers “were powerful in slaves from Guiné because of the many ships from Angola that arrived every year, there still is a need for missions of free Indians since they are used to people the lands within...”⁸⁹

To make his case for greater settler access to Indigenous laborers, Campos Moreno referenced Peru. Campos Moreno lauded Pedro de la Gasca, the viceroy of Peru that quashed the Pizarro rebellion in 1548 by suspending the New Laws.⁹⁰ The Pizzaros had rebelled after the introduction of the New Laws to the colony. The New Laws of 1542 abolished the *encomienda* system, the model used in sixteenth century Spanish American colonies where conquistadors were assigned the labor of Native Peoples subject to specific chiefs (*caciques*).⁹¹ Moreno claimed that Gasca was able to get rid of the “Estados dos Indios,” the governing body that gave governing rights to Indigenous peoples, as well as rid the colony of “inconveniences” by returning some form of “personal service” to the conquistadors. This meant that the settlers “became free and became subject jointly to one reason that serves God, the King, and the people”, which all settlers benefit from.⁹² Gasca’s viceroyship saw the “new distribution of *encomiendas* to those who had supported [him.]”⁹³

Campos Moreno did not necessarily think this system was replicable in Brazil. The Indigenous in Brazil, compared to those of Peru, were “inconstant, incapable, and outside of any governance or reason on their own and under incompetent tutors [the Jesuits] they are of even less worth, because in spiritual, temporal and personal they live for the missionaries...” Moreno’s views contrast sharply to those of the 1595 Desambargo do Paço opinions. The anonymous author of the introduction started his 1595 text wondering why Brazil could not rid itself of Indigenous slavery as had been the case in Peru and Japan, given that “the *gentio* of Brazil and of Peru are all of one nature and condition.”⁹⁴ The comparison of Indigenous peoples from the Andes and the Brazilian littoral and interior was a constant theme in discourses about Indigenous labor. Moreno’s comparison between the State of Brazil and Peru points us once again to the importance of historical examples, usually framed by the Portuguese at the time as “experience”, in petition and treatise writing in the early modern period.

⁸⁸ Campos Moreno, 109.

⁸⁹ Campos Moreno, 190: “moradores desta capitania suposto que são poderosos em escravos de Guiné pellas muitas entradas que aqui fazem todos os annos navios d’angola, todavia padecem nescessidade de aldeas de Índios forros por se como sam dados a povoar pella terra dentro em qualquer sítio que achão comodo fordo ajudados de gente forra a sua posse fora mais notável, e mui crecidas suas pouoagbes e fazendas, em que Ilhes devem muito pois também ajudarão a conquistar e povoar ate o Rio Grande.”

⁹⁰ The new historiography has shown that the New Laws of 1542 did not end the practice of indigenous slavery in Spanish America. See Nancy van Deusen, “Why Indigenous Slavery Continued in Spanish America After the New Laws of 1542.” *The Americas* 80, no. 3 (2023): 395-432.

⁹¹ For an explanation of the *encomienda* system, see Robert G. Keith, *Conquest and Agrarian Change: The Emergence of the Hacienda System on the Peruvian Coast*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976): 28-54.

⁹² Campos Moreno, *Livro que Dá Razão do Estado do Brasil*, 109.

⁹³ Keith, *Conquest and Agrarian Change*, 28.

⁹⁴ Biblioteca da Ajuda, 44-XIV-6, 182.

Campos Moreno also staunchly advocated in favor of Indigenous slavery. He acknowledged that the natural liberty and the “health of souls” of Indigenous peoples was an unquestionable goal for the Crown. To Campos Moreno, Portuguese vassals needed “sugar mills, sugar canes, farms, livestock, woods, and slaves.” Campos Moreno lamented that in Brazil the settlers had to fend for themselves, that they lacked essential things, but above all they lacked slaves.⁹⁵ This was particularly damaging as “without slaves there are no revenues and profits from Brazil” and that the lack of “slaves is the most considerable, since on them depends the remedy for all the others.”⁹⁶

Campos Moreno thus proposed the solution of more slaves coming to Brazil. Campos Moreno posed the idea that slaves should be “...those from Guiné coming from the conquests, or the commerce with Ethiopia, or ones from this land, or from one of these or the other.”⁹⁷ Next he resolved any indecision among these options by explaining that: “Slaves from Guiné, who are bought at a high price, because of the many tithes or rights that have to be paid for them in Angola, make the growth of this republic difficult and expensive, as well as short-lived.”⁹⁸ These slaves from Guiné “for the most part last so little time” that rather than ridding the settlers of their problems, the settlers find themselves in more poverty.

Campos Moreno’s arguments trouble the tropes of Indigenous flight and diseases making them ill-suited for servitude. Enslaved peoples from Africa were also subject to disease and seemed equally capable of fleeing. Given the high prices that settlers paid for enslaved African laborers, Campos Moreno concluded that the “Indians of the land seem to be easier and less costly and [exist] in greater numbers.”⁹⁹ But in so far as these Indigenous workers were under the dominion of the Jesuits, there would only be “misery for the seculars” through which the growth of Brazil would be almost impossible.” The Indigenous under religious authority will be “more barbarous and lazier than ever”, while the “whites...would find themselves without service or who to serve.”

There are two key points that we can take away from Campos Moreno. The first point is that advocates of Indigenous slavery made “pragmatic” arguments: there were more Indigenous peoples, enslaved Indigenous persons were cheaper, and these people were practical in the land. This was contrasted sharply with enslaved African workers, who were deemed to be expensive and too prone to flight or death. Given the importance of “peopling” for Portuguese peoples, it thus comes to no surprise that Indigenous peoples were seen as ideal laborers, and that outbreaks

⁹⁵ Campos Moreno, *Livro que dá Razão do Estado do Brasil*: 112: “e tanto se sustenta de violências que a primeira cousa forçada é a água por levadas e calhas trabalhossas e compridas, trazida a força de onde mais importa, e o fogo de continuo abrasando grande cópia de lenhas e uma quantidade grande de gado vacuum, que neste trabalho more e se consome, e um número grosso de escravos que cada ano vai por este caminho, sem os quais não ha que tartar em fazendas ou rendas do Brasil, e também se qualquer das outras cousas falta, porém a dos escravos é a mais considerável, porque dela depende o remédio de todas as outras.”

⁹⁶ Campos Moreno, 111-2.

⁹⁷ Campos Moreno, 112: “Estes escrauos an de ser de Guine vindos das conquistas ou comercios de Thiopia ou an de ser da propria terra ou de hums e de outros.”

⁹⁸ Campos Moreno, 112-3: “Os escravos de Guiné, como se compram caros, por causa dos muitos dasios ou direitos que dêles se pagam em Angola, fazem difícil e custoso o crescimento desta república e tão pouco durável, quanto morrem ou vivem a seus senhores pois que, violentados, pela maior parte duram tão pouco que em lugar de livrarem da miséria a seus anos, acontece darem com eles na enxovia, donde também se vem a consumir a propriedade para os que os compraram, como vemos cada dia.”

⁹⁹ Campos Moreno, 113: “Os índios da terra, que parecem de maior facilidade, menos custo e maior número, como andam metidos com os religiosos as quais vivem sujeitos e aos quais adorando pagam pequenos dasios, de maravalia fazem serviço, nem dão ajuda aos leigos, que seja de sustância.”

of disease saw increased calls for African enslaved workers. Second, Campos Moreno espoused the idea that different captaincies required different solutions. We can interpret his comments about Pernambuco as an understanding that different economic conditions and different rates of accumulation of capital required different labor strategies. As someone thinking seriously about Portuguese expansion within the Americas, Moreno understood that the systems of labor in the rich sugar producing captaincies of the Northeast could not be replicated elsewhere. Therefore, he was able to think flexibly about labor strategies and the characteristics of Native and African labor forces. These arguments of practicality and feasibility would remain central to the Portuguese settler lexicon in the Americas in captaincies where Indigenous labor was fundamental to economic production.

This chapter has shown that opinions over the capacity of Indigenous peoples to work were more complicated and heterogeneous than the historiography has established, even in the heart of Brazil's sugar economy. There were divergent opinions on what kind of labor constituted the backbone of the State of Brazil's growth, as well as divergent opinions over who should be carrying out this labor. Ideas of Indigenous peoples as useful laborers due to their status as native to the land, Indigenous incapacity to self-govern, and security, all became discursive instruments for settlers and missionaries to petition the Crown. Another key consideration was poverty. Those that advocated for the importance of Indigenous labor in the colony saw settler debt from purchasing enslaved Africans as an existential problem for the colony. Even if planters in Bahia and Pernambuco could increasingly afford enslaved African labor, this certainly did not apply for many of the captaincies of Portuguese America. By the early seventeenth century, we see a line of thinking that acknowledges that the model of Pernambuco and Bahia might not be able to be replicated in other captaincies of Portuguese America.

By the mid-seventeenth century, much of the success of Bahia and Pernambuco with the sugar boom was attributed to the transition to enslaved Africans as the primary labor force. This did not mean that pro-Indigenous labor arguments went away. Instead, this thinking about the utility of Indigenous labor and servitude migrated to other parts of Portuguese America. As we will see in the next chapter, many of these arguments and discursive tropes appeared in Maranhão to justify Indigenous slavery or secular control and access to Indigenous labor. Specifically, the rationale emerged that Indigenous peoples were more practical as laborers and experienced in the land and that using Indigenous labor was more viable for the colony's economy. The discursive practices in Maranhão to justify Indigenous service should thus be understood as in continuity, rather than sharp divergence, from the State of Brazil.

CHAPTER 2

“Wealth in the Power of the *Gentio*.” Reexamining Indigenous Labor and Slavery in the Conquests of Maranhão, 1600-1652

The State of Maranhão, founded in 1621, occupied a distinct place in Portuguese America. In the past few decades, scholars have emphasized two characteristics in particular: Maranhão’s political distinctiveness from Brazil and the dominant role of Indigenous labor in the colony’s economy.¹ Maranhão was politically distinct because it was a separate state from Brazil until 1772. Though the colony had its own administrators, Maranhão was ruled directly from Lisbon because wind patterns made it easier to sail from São Luis to Lisbon than from São Luis to Salvador. The colony was also founded during the Iberian Union (1580-1640), when the Spanish Monarchy was sovereign over Portugal. Though the Council of Portugal made all final decisions relating to its overseas possessions, questions over the governance of Maranhão could go all the way up to the Council of the State and the Court in Madrid. As the most Iberian colony in the Americas, the occupation of Maranhão was part of the Habsburg attempt to control maritime space and trade in the Equatorial Atlantic.²

Maranhão’s second particularity was the fundamentally Indigenous make-up of the colony. With a relatively small population of African peoples and Portuguese settlers, Indigenous peoples made up the bulk of Amazonian society. As Alírio Cardoso has explained, Indigenous peoples worked as soldiers, dictated alliances, and acted as the backbone of the labor force.³ Plantations of tobacco, sugar, and cotton, cattle ranching, as well as the extraction of the *drogas do sertão*, the naturally occurring commodities found in the interior, all operated through the work of Indigenous peoples under a multitude of labor regimes. Maranhão was also the site of an Indigenous slave trade, where Portuguese settlers participated in the trade in captives in the interior. Cardoso identified these characteristics, among others, as fundamental in making Maranhão a sort of “non-Brazil.”⁴

Over the past few decades, scholars in Brazil have argued that the traditional frameworks of Brazilian history, constructed around the examples of Bahia and Pernambuco, have not adequately explained the history of Maranhão. One example, as argued by Rafael Chambouleyron, was Maranhão’s lack of a hinterlands/littoral binary, a binary that explains much of the history of colonial Brazil.⁵ While settlers in southern captaincies stayed in the

¹ For an overview of Maranhão’s particularities, see Alírio Cardoso, *Amazônia na Monarquia Hispânica: Maranhão e Grão-Pará nos tempos da União Ibérica (1580 – 1655)*, (São Paulo: Alameda Casa Editorial, 2017): 48; Chambouleyron, *Povoamento, ocupação, e agricultura*, 15-28.

² See Helidacy Maria Muniz Corrêa, “Para aumento da Conquista e bom governo dos moradores: o papel da Câmara de São Luis na conquista, defesa e organização do território do Maranhão” (PhD diss, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2011). See Alírio Cardoso, “The conquest of Maranhão and Atlantic disputes in the geopolitics of the Iberian Union (1596-1626),” *Revista Brasileira de História* 31, no. 61 (2011): 317-338; Rafael Chambouleyron, “Como se hace en Indias de Castilla” El cacao entre la Amazonía portuguesa y las Indias de Castilla (siglos XVII y XVIII),” *Revista Complutense de Historia de America* 40 (2014): 23-43. Patrícia Melo Sampaio and Mauro Cezar Coelho, “O Atlântico equatorial: sociabilidade e. poder nas fronteiras da América Portuguesa,” *Revista da História* 168 (2013): 16-23; Guy Martinière, “Geopolítica do espaço português da América. O Estado do Maranhão,” In *Nova História da Expansão Portuguesa. Vol. VII: O Império Luso-Brasileiro 1620-1750*, ed. Frédéric Mauro (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1991): 103-142.

³ Cardoso, *Amazônia na Monarquia Hispânica*, 48.

⁴ Cardoso, 47.

⁵ Chambouleyron, *Povoamento, ocupação, e agricultura na Amazônia Colonial*, 17.

littoral settlements, this was not the case in Maranhão, where greater fluvial access and the reliance on production in the interior meant that Maranhão's economy was based on excursions to the hinterlands. Another example is the tendency to understand colonial Brazil through the economic model of sugar plantations based on the work of enslaved African workers. As such, historians have used the case study of Maranhão to push back against these traditional frameworks for understanding colonial Brazil.

In this chapter, I show how this debate, fundamentally concerned with whether Brazilian models could be imposed onto Maranhão, played out in the colony's first fifty years. After the Portuguese consolidation in Maranhão, settlers on-the-ground, theorists in Lisbon, and missionaries of various orders were conscious that this space was somehow different than the State of Brazil. Given this difference, there was extensive debate to what extent Maranhão should follow in Brazil's footsteps. I focus primarily on these debates as they pertained to questions of labor and slavery. I build on the existing scholarship that has shown how the conquest and early colonization of Maranhão was incredibly influenced by the lessons of Brazil and by the example of the Spanish Indies.⁶ I argue that settlers and their opponents wielded these examples of other colonies to make their case for what labor policy should look like in Maranhão.

This chapter contains two sections, which make interrelated arguments. The first section focuses on the conquests of Maranhão, both in 1615 by the Portuguese and 1641 by the Dutch. Both conquests were driven by notions that Maranhão, unlike Brazil, was 1) a place of infinite *gentio* and laborers 2) a place of Indigenous slave-trading. I show how the region's bounty of Indigenous laborers was seen as an asset, and that there was largely an agreement across all sectors of the colony's population that Indigenous peoples were ideal workers in the region. Indigenous peoples in Maranhão were not considered weak or unsuited for manual labor. Rather, they were described as great cultivators with extensive experience in navigation and an understanding of their environment.

The second section focuses on the period of the effective governance of the colony, after the dissolution of the Iberian Union and the expulsion of the Dutch from São Luis. I trace the conversations, especially in the decade of the 1640s—between the Overseas Council, the governors, and the Municipal Councils—that tried to make sense of Maranhão's different labor practices, as well as to determine to what extent the laws and practices of the State of Brazil should apply to the State of Maranhão. I show how a key discursive tool to make sense of labor in the colony was the comparison to other colonies. Settlers and missionaries wielded the examples of the State of Brazil, by which they meant Bahia and Pernambuco, and the Spanish Indies, by which they largely meant Peru, as colonies to emulate or reject. For settlers who advocated for lay control of labor, it was the Spanish Indies that served as the best template for Maranhão's labor policy. Governors, Municipal Councils, and individual colonists petitioned the Crown asking for a replication of the *encomienda* system, where colonists received grants of laborers, a system that had long been outlawed in many, but not all, parts of Spanish Americas.⁷ For missionaries, Maranhão should reject both models as to not repeat the histories of the decimation of the indigenous populations. In other words, Maranhão was a do-over, an opportunity to avoid the same mistakes that led to the transition in labor regimes in the State of

⁶ Cardoso, *Amazônia na Monarquia Hispânica*; Rafael Chamboleyron, "Conquistas diferentes e de diferentes climas: o Maranhão, o Brasil e a América Portuguesa (séculos XVII e XVIII)," *Esboços* 26, n. 4 (2019): 84-103

⁷ For an explanation of the *encomienda* system, see footnote 87 in Chapter 1.

Brazil. In these conversations, missionaries, settlers, and colonial officials showed divergent interpretations of the history of the transition in labor regimes in Bahia, Pernambuco, and the Spanish colonies.

Maranhão as the Land of Infinite Gentry

In September 1616, Phillip III wrote to the Governor of Brazil relaying news about the conquest of Maranhão.⁸ The Habsburg King cited the report from a captain on-the-ground, Francisco Caldeira de Castelo Branco, to emphasize the abundance and endless riches of this region. Maranhão supposedly contained “...all the provisions that can be found in Brazil” and boasted “infinite *gentry* who are domesticated and different than all of those from that state [Brazil].”⁹ This Indigenous population could “easily accommodate to the work of planting canes and cultivating plantations.” After citing the many naturally occurring products in the region, ranging from cotton to tobacco to tree-bark dyes, the report concluded that “the State of Brazil has nothing compared to this one.”

The Caldeira report represents the ways that Maranhão was framed in the early correspondence discussing the colony’s conquest. Like most early modern accounts aiming to boost colonial ventures, the Caldeira report focused on the region’s natural riches, promising to replicate or even out-perform an already successful colony. Unlike its southern neighbor, Maranhão promised an Indigenous population that was larger, more capable, and more willing to cooperate with the Portuguese than the Indigenous of Brazil. Such reports became selling points to encourage more resources to be sent north to secure the region from imperial rivals, as well as to encourage more migration to the colony.

The first decade of the seventeenth century saw increased northward expansion of the Portuguese in the Americas, an expansion made possible by the Iberian Union.¹⁰ Contemporary sources understood Maranhão as a gateway to Peru or Brazil, worrying administrators receiving reports of small Dutch, English, and Irish settlements along the river’s basin in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.¹¹ In a 1615 consultation, Manuel de Sousa de Eça explained that “if the Dutch and the English start trading in the Amazon River, it seems to this Council that this would be a very grave matter” for that river “divides the States of Brazil and Peru, and it is all navigable, and through this river they can enter further in the interior of that province.”¹² It was particularly the French expedition of La Ravardière in 1612 to São Luis Island that spurred the Crown to send troops northwards from Pernambuco.

One major source of anxiety for Iberian administrators and Portuguese conquistadors was the preservation of Indigenous alliances. The Tupinambá had migrated northwards from the

⁸ Here, I use Phillip III as his Spanish title rather than Phillip II, as he would have been known in Portugal.

⁹ “Carta de Sua Majestade sobre o Pará,” September 4, 1616, in *Anais do Museu Paulista* Vol. 3 (São Paulo: Museu Paulista, 1927): 11. “...E a terra fertilíssima de todos os mantimentos que costuma haver no Brasil, infinito gentio muy domestico, e diferente de todo o daquelle estado, e muito acomodado para effeito de se plantarem canas e se fazerem engenhos...”

¹⁰ Cardoso, “The conquest of Maranhão”, 320.

¹¹ “Pareceres do Conselho do Estado de Hespanha a respeito da empresa do Maranhão,” 1615, *ABNRJ* 26 (1905): 301. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

¹² “Consulta del Consejo de Portugal al Rey de España Felipe 3 sobre la empresa del Marañon, y de lo acaecido alli con unos Franceses que pretendian extablecerse en aquella tierra,” 1615, *ABNRJ* 26 (1904): 293. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

southern captaincies in the sixteenth century, partially to escape Portuguese settlements.¹³ Tupi peoples settled in the Lower Amazon, where they developed methods of food production that allowed for the significant expansion of their populations, including the domestication of plants.¹⁴ The French friar, Claude D'Abbeville, described the speech of the Tupinambá chief Japy-açu:

“...we had already decided to leave this coast and abandon this land, fearful of the Portuguese, our mortal enemies, and we would place ourselves in the *longunquos* woods where there is not a Christian, spending the rest of our days away from the French, our good friends, without sickles, axes, knives, and other merchandise, reduced to a primitive and sad life like our ancestors, who cultivated the land by knocking down trees with axes made of hard rocks.”¹⁵

D'Abbeville's report revealed the willingness of groups like the Tupinambá to establish alliances given a long history of violent exchanges with the Portuguese. French settlers and Indigenous peoples exchanged iron tools such as sickles, axes, and knives as some of the key merchandise for the trade in goods and the trade in people.¹⁶ La Ravardiére's expedition resulted in the establishment of a short-lived French colony in São Luis based on small-scale tobacco plantations and bartering with the Tupinambá. As a response to this perceived threat, Madrid approved in 1612 the expedition of Martim Soares Moreno, nephew of Diogo de Campos Moreno who was discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁷

Given French control of São Luis Island, governors and officials in Pernambuco became increasingly invested in securing Indigenous alliances. In 1615, the governor of Brazil, Gaspar de Sousa, instructed that 1,500-2,000 Indigenous bowmen and soldiers from Pernambuco accompany the expedition of Alexandre de Moura to conquer the colony. When writing to Alexandre de Moura, Sousa explained that “without Indians war cannot be waged...”¹⁸ Moura himself had expressed concerns about the openness of the waterways in the region, which reduced the utility of forts for defense. His conclusion, therefore, was that Maranhão's geography

¹³ See Pablo Ibáñez-Bonillo, “The Portuguese Conquest of the Amazon Estuary: Identity, War, Frontier (1612-1654),” (PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2016). Claude D'Abbeville, *História da Missão dos Padres Capuchinos na Ilha do Maranhão e suas Circumvisinhanças*, trans. César Augusto Marques (São Luis: Typografia dos Frias, 1874): 72.

¹⁴ Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 46.

¹⁵ D'Abbeville, *História da Missão dos Padres Capuchinos*, 72: “...já tínhamos resolvido deixar esta costa e abandonar este paiz com receio dos Peros (isto é, Portuguese), nossos mortars inimigos, e irmos embrenhar-nos pelos matos longunquos, onde nunca nos visse christão algum, passando o resto dos nossos dias longe dos Franceses, nossos bons amigos, sem foices, machados, facas, e outras mercadorias, e reduzidos a vida primitiva e bem triste de nossos antepassados, que cultivam a terra e derrubavão as arvores com machados de pedras duras.”

¹⁶ For a discussion on the use of black stone axes, see William Denevan, “Machados de pedra versus machados de metal: a ambiguidade da agricultura de coivara na Amazônia pré-histórica,” *Amazônica* 2, no. 2 (2010): 358-370.

¹⁷ “Carta del Presidente de la Española con testimonio de una información del Capitán Martin Suarez Moreno, que fue a examinar el Rio Marañon, por orden el Gobernador del Brasil,” December 15, 1613, *ABNRJ* 26 (1904): 180.

¹⁸ “Carta de Gaspar de Sousa,” June 15, 1615, *Livro primeiro do governo do Brasil, 1607-1633* (Rio de Janeiro: Departamento de Imprensa Nacional, 1958): 121. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

necessitated peaceful relations with the Indigenous population.¹⁹ As such, contemporary reports already emphasized a unique environment that posed challenges unlike those faced in Brazil.



Figure 1: Atlas of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, ca. 1629.²⁰

Aside from an understanding that Indigenous peoples were key for its defense, early reports of the conquest emphasized that Maranhão was a place of abundant laborers. The idea that Maranhão was a region of *infinite gentio* was widespread in the early chronicles and booster literature of the conquest.²¹ This notion was used by both those advocating for the expansion of the missionary project as well as those advocating for an untapped pool of labor: Maranhão was a place of many souls and many workers. In both instances, the colony promised to be unlike Brazil, where the standard interpretation was that the Indigenous population had been destroyed by disease and settler violence. When recounting his 1615 expedition, Alexandre de Moura suggested that Maranhão supply Indigenous workers to the southern captaincies:

“In Brazil there are very few *gentio* of whom there is great necessity because of the *negros de Angola*, who knowing that there are no [Indigenous people], rebel easily, and there are many today that have rebelled, it would be wise to send the priests some

¹⁹ AHU Maranhão Cx. 1, D. 8. “Não ha naquellas partes porto fechado tudo são braços de mar em que pode entrar e sair po ronde quizer, e asi são pouco effeitos fortalezas. E a maior de todas he os grandes mattos e o estar bem com os naturais para o que importa muito irem religiosos.”

²⁰ João Teixeira Albernaz, “Pequeno atlas do Maranhão e Grão-Pará,” ink drawing, ca. 1629, FBN, Divisão de Cartografia.

²¹ “Carta de Manoel de Sousa Eça,” February 20, 1618, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904), 136.

[Indigenous peoples] that would like to go there because there are so many in Maranhão.”²²

Early chronicles promised a more capable labor force by distinguishing between Indigenous peoples of Maranhão from those of Brazil. Simão Silveira’s 1618 *Intentos da Jornada do Pará*, for example, encouraged the exploration and “peopling” of the region. Silveira refuted the “erroneous opinions” of predecessors who claimed that this land was a “uninhabitable zone.” He described instead a place where “the *gentios* of the land are honorable, ingenious, and there are some that are mannerly compared to those in Brazil. They are very easy and docile, who allow for and seek our friendship.”²³ Given the historic violence between Indigenous groups in the Northeast and the Portuguese settler population, it is perhaps unsurprising that Silveira emphasized the “docility” of the local groups.

Correspondence from the conquest pointed to the potential skilled labor that Indigenous peoples could carry out, much of which aligns with historic Indigenous practices. In 1615, Manuel Gomes, a Jesuit who accompanied Alexandre de Moura, described the island of São Luis and the neighboring region of Pará, as a place with many *gentio*, where Tapuyas easily construct canoes and are “great cultivators.”²⁴ Jácome Raimundo Noronha, who would be one of the first governors in the colony, suggested Pará as one of the places to build ships for the various types of wood given that the “Indians of the land can help because they are good carpenters by the riverside.”²⁵ Amazonian peoples were known for their cultivation of manioc and other tubers through seedlings, rather than seeds, and managed the lands through controlled burns.²⁶ This was especially critical in an area where permanent agricultural locations did not work due to excessive humidity of the land.²⁷ They were also known for canoe constructions and innovations in fluvial navigation.

Reports also suggested that Maranhão held productive potential and that this potential was different than that of Brazil. Chambouleyron has shown how Maranhão’s promise of forest goods and spices was discussed in imperial circles to make up for dwindling Portuguese power

²² AHU Maranhão Cx. 1, D. 8. “No Brazil ha muito pouco gentio tendo delle muita necessidade por respeito dos negros de Angola que sabendo o não ha se levantarão fasilmente como já oje ha muitos levantados seria acertado passarẽ os padres algũs que por sua vôtade quizerẽ ir pois são tantos os do Maranhão E para.”

²³ Simão Estácio da Silveira, “Intentos da Jornada do Pará,” 1618, *ABNRJ* 26 (1904): 364-5. “O gentio da terra he biroso, engenhoso, et em alguas polidos mas que outro do Brasil muito fácil o tratável, que deja e procurada nossa amizade e nos entragos os filhos para os determinarmos com os quaes se deve usar toda a justiça e caridade para os edificar e lhes conquistar os ânimos, porque nella estão cifras todas as virtudes, e com ella mais que com as armas se conquista, como diz a sabedoria.” Rafael Bluteau defined an “homen polido” as “bem ensinado, apurado no trato da corte, e procedimentos dos homens bem nascidos.” He defines brioso as “cuidadoso” and zealous in their honor. Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulário Português e Latino* (Coimbra: Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus, 1728): 575.

²⁴ “Carta que o Padre Superior Manoel Gomes escreveu ao Padre Provincial do Brasil,” 1615, *ABNRJ* 26 (1904): 334. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

²⁵ “Relação dada por Jacome Raymundo de Noronha sobre cousas tocantes ao governo do Maranhão,” May 10 1637, *Documentos para a história do Brasil, especialmente para a do Ceará Vol. 4*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Minerva, 1921): 260. “...pella muita copia de madeira que ha de toda a sorte” and the “índios da terra ajudarão muito por que são bons carpinteiros da ribeira.”

²⁶ Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 61.

²⁷ Couto, 61.

in India.²⁸ Early sources about the promises of the colony make this form of boosterism clear. In the 1620s, Duarte Ribeiro Macedo, a known political economy theorist of the Portuguese empire writing from Lisbon, spoke of the 37 commodities (*genêros*) that could be produced in the Amazon region.²⁹ He identified coffee, cacao, bark-clove, sugar, tobacco, vanilla, cotton, rice as all possible commodities of production in the region. Macedo was fundamentally concerned with identifying how much work was needed to extract or collect any of these, as well as the type of people needed for each task. He largely advocated for the use of the local labor force, who he referred to as Tapuyas, and he was keenly aware of gendered divisions of labor among the Indigenous populations. When speaking about Ambar-gris, for example, Macedo explained that the commodity was usually found on the beaches in the captaincy of Cumã, “more often than not found by the Tapuyas, who walk on the beaches, but who destroy it since they do not esteem it for use.”³⁰ Whether because of the colony’s lack of capital and/or due to the belief that its productive potential necessitated local laborers, Macedo saw Indigenous peoples as the primary drivers of Maranhão’s growth.

Macedo did not just see Indigenous laborers as fundamental in extractive activities, but also in cultivation. Despite the promise of extractive goods in the interior, Macedo expressed a preference for cultivated, rather than wild, cacao. Cultivated cacao was less risky, without the uncertainties of extraction and the drying up of forest goods. Macedo was also concerned that extractive enterprises would result in the frequent loss of slaves when navigating the forests.³¹ When discussing sugar, Macedo noted that the floodplains of the rivers Irapicuru and Marim were especially promising “for the construction [of the *engenho*]” and that the “...Tapuyas, who conveniently live by these rivers, could do this for their own utility.” Macedo continued claiming that the use of these Indigenous laborers would allow plantation owners “to amass great quantities of money, that the slaves, who are continuously dying and fleeing, take up, and it would further remove the Tapuyas from the misery which they live, teaching them the ways of commerce through cultivation.”³² It was thus not slavery that would lead to Maranhão’s growth.

Even if some settlers and theorists emphasized Maranhão’s potential as a site of extraction, early settlers in Maranhão certainly did try to emulate the success of Pernambuco and Bahia’s sugar plantations. Maranhão was first conquered by settlers in Pernambuco, and later peopled by families from the Azores, all of whom were tasked with erecting sugar plantations and mills. By 1622, the Treasury Inspector of the State of Brazil, Antonio Barreiros, was given

²⁸ Rafael Chambouleyron, “Cacao, Bark-Clove and Agriculture in the Portuguese Amazon Region in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth-Century” in *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 51 no. 1 (2014): 1-35; Rafael Chambouleyron, “‘O cravo do Maranhão’ e a Amazônia global (séculos XVII-XVIII),” *Revista de Índias* 82, no. 285 (2021): 329-361.

²⁹ For more on Macedo, see Virgínia Rau, “Política económica e mercantilismo na correspondência de Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo,” *Do Tempo e da História* 2 (1968): 3-48.

³⁰ ANTT, Manuscritos Do Brasil, Livro 39.

³¹ ANTT, Manuscritos Do Brasil, Livro 39. “...porque com isto evitam o muito tempo que perdem os escravos em os conduzir dos matos onde se acham ao povoado, em que sucede as vezes gastar-se muitos dias.”

³² ANTT, Manuscritos Do Brasil, Livro 39. “Para construção daquele é fácil conduzir as lenhas, por ser rio baixo, o que podiam fazer por utilidade própria, os mesmos tapuias, que se acham situados nestes rios com conveniência dos senhores dos engenhos, e não menos dos canaviais sendo lavradores deles, o que fazia não se for necessário mais gente que precisa para a sua fábrica; circunstância, que adiantaria muito a fazenda dos ditos lavradores, fazendo que ajuntassem as grandes somas de dinheiro, que consomem os escravos, que continuamente estão morrendo, e fugindo, e fazia adiantar os tapuias tirando-os da miséria em que vivem, ensinando-lhes por esta forma a saberem negociar por meio da cultura.”

2.5 leagues of land in Itapecuru to build two *engenhos* within three years.³³ Alongside small-scale sugar plantations, early colonial Maranhão relied heavily on the tobacco trade, with the Crown banning tobacco sales from rival powers to protect local production.³⁴ But one aspect that was hard to emulate was the importation of enslaved Africans. This was because merchants had little incentive to trade in Maranhão due to the lack of profits from a small largely impoverished population of 300 settlers by 1623.³⁵ Because they failed to attract foreign trade, settlers could not amass enslaved Africans or attain goods. In 1623, Dom Francisco de Moura wrote to the Conselho da Fazenda complaining that the surplus profits from Angola-Brazil trade would not be enough to sustain Maranhão. Moura recommended that the King order a contract, whereby ships would have to make the voyage to Maranhão with flour, cloth, apparel, and medicine, until they will do so voluntarily by reason of colonists and sugar productions.³⁶

Though early correspondence theorized the colony's bounty of Indigenous laborers, the small settler population constantly complained about lack of access to both Indigenous and African laborers. The Municipal Councils of Belém and São Luis frequently petitioned about the lack of goods and people in the colony: soldiers, ammunition, provisions, laborers, and slaves. In 1619, the newly elected members of the Municipal Council, asked that the conquerors of Maranhão be paid with "Slaves of Angola, because with those people we secure the *gentio*, and they're also of much service for the production of *engenhos* and other services."³⁷ Here, we see once again the standard "template" for asking for enslaved African laborers. But there were also plenty of complaints from the Municipal Councils about the lack of Indigenous laborers. In February of 1623, the Municipal Council, wrote that only 44 out of the original 153 families remained in the colony; "the cause is because they are poor people, and the land does not allow for the whites to work, which makes them need Indians..."³⁸ The Municipal Council complained that captains abused the system of distribution of laborers by hoarding Indigenous workers and selling goods at exorbitant prices to settlers, thus perpetuating their alleged poverty.³⁹

Some of these complaints emphasized the inability to carry out tasks in the region without an Indigenous labor force. In 1645, the Municipal Council of Belém wrote a letter to the Overseas Council, the newly established tribunal that ruled on all matters related to the colonies of the Portuguese Empire, complaining that settlers did not have enough Indigenous workers for plantations or cultivating provisions.⁴⁰ Speaking on behalf of the settlers of Pará, Manuel Alvares da Cunha, João do Porto, Francisco Madeira, and Domingos Monteiro complained about the "penury in which they live caused by the lack of natives for the plantations..." The Municipal Council explained that since the Crown had conceded the administration of the *gentio* to the missionaries of Saint Anthony, the *engenhos* were no longer operating and that:

³³ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 1, D. 42. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

³⁴ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 1, D. 115.

³⁵ Simão Estácio de Silveira, *Relação Sumaria das Cousas do Maranhão*, 1624, 9th edition, ed. Jomar Moraes (Sao Paulo: Edições AML, 2013): 65.

³⁶ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 1, D. 56. Copy in ESC Carton 51.

³⁷ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 34. "...escravos de Angolla, porque com esta gente se asegirão gentio, e tambem sam de muito serviço para a fabrica dos engenhos e para o mais serviço."

³⁸ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 77.

³⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 77.

⁴⁰ The Overseas Council was established in 1642, after the dissolution of the Iberian Union. It functioned as intermediaries between the colonies and the Crown. For the history of the Overseas Council in the Portuguese Empire, see Erik Lars Myrup, "Kings, Colonies, and Councilors: Brazil and the Making of Portugal's Overseas Council, 1642-1833," *The Americas* 67, no. 2 (2010): 185-218.

“...the owners of these plantations are impoverished, living only with the hope that the Crown will reinstate a solution, such as sending an order...to this Senate to permit the settlers to go into the hinterlands at their own expense for the utility of the people....because this entire state depends on Native people who go into the wild forests to look for meat with their arrows, and who fish from the rivers with their spears.”⁴¹

The 1645 letter explained that these problems stemmed from local government abuses. Indeed, the Municipal Councils in Maranhão rarely understood problems of labor as separate from problems of governance. Claims that governors and captains or the missionaries hoarded Indigenous laborers were widespread. All these petitions attempting to secure lay control of or access to Indigenous labor and slaving expeditions relied on a discourse that emphasized settlers’ sheer dependence on Indigenous workers.

Both the reports from the Portuguese conquest and the first letters from the newly established Municipal Councils emphasized that Maranhão’s promise lay in its Indigenous population as laborers. They emphasized Indigenous peoples in Maranhão as somehow different than those of Brazil, with greater capacity to work. They also emphasized the unique dependency that the settler population on Indigenous laborers, both because the colony lacked African slaves and because Indigenous peoples could carry out specific tasks in the region.

“Just as they do in Angola”: Maranhão as a Place of Infinite Slaves

Early colonial Maranhão was also the site of an Indigenous slave trade. Though evidence is scarce, the sources discussed below point to a small slave trade from the Amazon to the rest of Brazil and to the Caribbean. Substantive quantitative evidence on the topic is lacking. This trade can be deduced by the widespread Portuguese condemnations of practices of illegal slaving expeditions during the early years of the conquest, as well as from Dutch sources before and during the West India Company takeover of Maranhão (1641-1644).⁴²

There was relative confusion over whether the laws that regulated Indigenous slavery in the State of Brazil should apply to Maranhão or the captaincies in the north. During the conquest, Portuguese settlers could not engage in indigenous slave trading along the Coast without the written permission from the Governor.⁴³ As early as 1617, Gaspar de Sousa recommended to the Crown that settlers receive licenses to carry out slaving expeditions in the hinterlands “in the same way that your Royal Majesty allowed with the *gentio* of Brazil, because in this way the settlers will have Indians to help them with their plantations and farms, and it will help in the

⁴¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 177.

⁴² “Capítulos que o capitão Bento Maciel Parente apresenta contra ho capitão Jeronimo d’Albuquerque e seus filhos a saber Antonio D’Albuquerque e Mathias D’Albuquerque,” November 12, 1618, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 144-152.

⁴³ “Carta de Dom Luis de Sousa Regimento dado a Domingos Lopes Lobo,” September 9, 1617, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará Vol. 4*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Minerva, 1921): 11. “E porque nenhum resgates se podem fazer na costa deste estado sem licença minha por escrito a ninhua pessoa de qualquer calidade que seja consentireis que de fora o venha fazer ao dito Seara e seu destrito sem vos apresentar a licença posto que amostre de qualquer Capittam da Capitania do dito estado.”

conquest, peopling and growth...”⁴⁴ Diogo de Meneses, the governor of Bahia discussed in our last chapter, stated that “the *negros* that had come from Maranhão were instrumental when they arrived with the governor of Pernambuco.”⁴⁵ Here, Meneses referred to an internal slave trade of captives from Maranhão to other captaincies.

Not all administrators accepted this burgeoning Indigenous slave trade. In a 1623 letter, the King demanded an investigation to determine if the slaves sent to Brazil from Maranhão had been enslaved in accordance to the principles of just war.⁴⁶ Another letter had accused the 1634 expedition of Pedro Teixeira, which was meant to explore the interior, of wanting to “solely enslave Indians” and take them to work in sugar plantations.⁴⁷ Several people denounced the rampant enslavement in Maranhão’s early years. In 1621, Manuel Gomes, the Jesuit who had accompanied Alexandre de Moura in his expedition to São Luis, had already denounced the practices of the Portuguese enslaving Indigenous peoples. Gomes estimated that in the Rio do Pará the Portuguese had enslaved or killed over 30,000 Indigenous peoples.⁴⁸ These slaving expeditions were allegedly being carried out under “frivolous causes.”⁴⁹ Certain settlers, on the other hand, complained that these captives were not fairly distributed. In 1621, they accused the Captain-General of Maranhão, Antonio de Albuquerque, of selling many “*peças do gentio da terra*,” a term used on the West African coast to measure enslaved people, for excessive prices that made “the conquest of the settlers impossible.”⁵⁰

Indigenous peoples resisted these practices. Mandioca Fubá, the chief of the Tabajáres, accused Antonio de Albuquerque being the “captives, [?], and fisherman of the whites and their

⁴⁴ “Lembranças que fez Gaspar de Sousa que foi governador do Brasil do que convinha a Conquista do Maranhão,” 1617, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 130. “...captivos em cordas na forma que V.Mg. dispos do gentio do Brasil, porque assym terao todos os moradores Indios que os ajudem em suas lavouras e fazendas, e hira. Conquista e a povoacao della em engrandecimento.”

⁴⁵ “Carta del Presidente de la Española,” December 15, 1613, *ABNRJ* 26 (1904): 183. Citing a letter from Diogo de Meneses, this letter claims that: “Los negros que vinieron del marañon fueron de mucha importancia en benir á verse con el governador en pernambuco si esto pudiere ser puedeles traer Almeida quando huelva á Pernambuco á los menos unos a dos para que asi queden mas domesticos y pierdan el miedo a nuestras cosas.”

⁴⁶ “Informações e avisos de Antonio Monis Barreiros sobre o Ceará e Maranhão,” August 9, 1628, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 303-304.

⁴⁷ “Información del Licenciado Don Alonso Pérez de Salazar, Presidente de la Audiencia de Quito, en que da cuenta de la resolución que se tomó en la vuelta de los Portugueses a las Provincias del Marañón,” May 19, 1639, in *Pedro Teixeira, a Amazônia, e o Tratado de Madri*, edited by Sérgio Eduardo Moreira Lima and Maria do Carmo Strozzi Coutinho, (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2016): 143. “...solamente para cautibar Indios y llevarlos para servirse de ellos en los trapiches de Azucar, y venderlos las han de hazer en las poblaciones de este rio y introducir la comunicacion con estas provincias.”

⁴⁸ “Carta do Jesuíta Padre Manoel Gomes que foi na Armada de Alexandre de Moura ao Maranhão, July 2 1621, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 273-289.

⁴⁹ “Regimento para o Capitão-mor do Maranhão, Antonio de Albuquerque, e adjunto o Capitão Diogo da Costa Machado,” March 22, 1619, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará Vol. 4*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Minerva, 1921): 23.

⁵⁰ “Capitulos que o capitão Bento Maciel Parente apresenta contra ho capitão Jeronimo d’Albuquerque e seus filhos a saber Antonio D’Albuquerque e Mathias D’Albuquerque,” November 12, 1618, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 150.

women, cooks and servants of the whites.”⁵¹ By 1617, the Tupinambá on the island of São Luis had staged a rebellion against the slaving expeditions. The witness reports of the rebellion showed how it was staged under the leadership of an Indigenous man by the name of Amaro who had read a letter that the Indigenous of Cumã were about to be enslaved.⁵² A war broke out among the Indigenous peoples of the mission village of Cumã in 1618, leading to the death of 37 men.⁵³ The rebellion was quashed in 1623, but effectively ended a year later when the Portuguese established alliances with the Tupinambá and the Tabajáres.

Maranhão’s potential as a site of a slave trade was also a consideration for the Dutch West India Company’s conquest of São Luis. Dutch privateers had long expressed interest in occupying and/or trading in the Amazon region.⁵⁴ After the invasion of Recife in 1630 and the consolidation of Dutch rule in northeastern Brazil in 1635, the directors of the WIC, known as the Heren XIX, planned their expansion northwards into Maranhão. Under the command of Jan Lichthardt, Dutch forces captured São Luis in November of 1641. The occupation ended after a Portuguese settler revolt against the Dutch in 1644.⁵⁵

Though the Dutch conquest of São Luis was short-lived, Maranhão posed a considerable challenge for the WIC when it came to questions about the legitimacy of Indigenous slavery. In 1636, the Staaten General forbade the enslavement of Indigenous peoples in Brazil with some limited exceptions for war captives.⁵⁶ Yet Wim Klooster explained that “free reign was given to Indigenous slavery in Maranhão.”⁵⁷ A closer look at sources from the period show us that Dutch attitudes over the legitimacy of Indigenous slavery differed between Maranhão and the other conquered captaincies of Dutch Brazil. Even before the WIC takeover of São Luis, sources referred to the “Tapuyas van Maranhão”, or in a few instances, the “Brasilianen van Maranhão”, as a population to be enslaved. This distinction was not merely based on the Tupi/Tapuya binary, but rather relied on the notion that if an Indigenous person came from Maranhão, they were subject to enslavement. Though these sources sometimes contradict one another, they generally recycled this concept that the Indigenous population from Maranhão was uniquely positioned for enslavement, and somehow different than Indigenous people from other captaincies of Brazil.⁵⁸

⁵¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 30. “serião cativos e sopoados e Pescadores do brancos e suas molheres, cozinheiros e serventes do brancos.”

⁵² AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 15. For more on this rebellion, see Pablo Ibáñez-Bonillo, “Desmontando a Amaro: una re-lectura de la rebelión Tupinambá (1617-1621),” *Topoi* 16, no. 31 (2015): 465-90.

⁵³ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 11

⁵⁴ For more on early Dutch settlements in the Amazon, see Joyce Lorimer (ed.), *English and Irish Settlement on the River Amazon, 1550-1646*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1989). For indigenous-Dutch relations in the Amazon region, including small-scale slave trading, see Lodewijk Hulsman, “Nederlands Amazonia: handel met indianen tussen 1580 en 1680” (PhD diss, University of Amsterdam, 2009).

⁵⁵ For the history of the Dutch conquest of São Luis, see Josué Montello, *Os Holandeses do Maranhão* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Saúde, Serviço de Documentação, 1947). See Mário Martins Meireles, *Holandeses no Maranhão: 1641-1644* (São Luis: PPPG/EDUFMA, 1991).

⁵⁶ See Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016): 238-9. See Joris van den Tol, *Lobbying in Company: Economic Interests and Political Decision Making in the History of Dutch Brazil, 1621-1656* (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 75.

⁵⁷ Klooster, *The Dutch Moment*, 239.

⁵⁸ Britt Dams, “Comprehending the New World in the Early Modern Period: Descriptions of Dutch Brazil (1624-1654)” (PhD diss., Universiteit Gent, 2015): 23. Dams’ work focuses on how Dutch chroniclers “recycled” each other’s material. This is evident in my sources where some authors repeat verbatim what other authors have said.

The unique status of the “Tapuyas van Maranhão” stemmed from three justifications: Maranhão as a site of a pre-existing slave trade, the lack of alliances between the Dutch and the Indigenous of Maranhão, and the settler reliance on Indigenous slaves in the region. In all three instances, the notion of Portuguese precedence was key in shaping the discourses and the policy of the Dutch. This category of slaves, “Tapuyas van Maranhão”, emerged sometime in the mid-1630s, continued through Dutch occupation, and disappeared in late seventeenth-century retellings of the history of Dutch Brazil. The similarity between these discourses and those of Portuguese settlers suggests that the Dutch were learning directly from Portuguese plantation owners on-the-ground.

Dutch sources referred to Maranhão as a site of a pre-existing slave trade, a colony outside of the Northeast that functioned more like Angola than the captaincies of Brazil. This can be seen in the 1638 WIC report, “*Sommier Discours over den state vande vier geconquesteerde capitánias Pernambuco, Itamarica, Paraíba ende Rio Grande.*” “*Sommiers Discours*” described the colony’s *engenhos*, the state of relations between Dutch and Portuguese settlers, as well as the composition of the colony’s enslaved population. Regarding the last, the report noted that there were three groups of enslaved people in Dutch Brazil: “those from the coast of Africa, those from Maranhão, and those natural to these lands.”⁵⁹ We can assume that the natural to these lands refer to the *Brasilianen*, a Dutch term that largely though not exclusively referred to allied indigenous groups in Brazil.⁶⁰ When justifying the enslavement of the Indigenous from Maranhão, “*Sommiers Discours*” noted that: “As for the slaves from Maranhão, the Portuguese traffic in them, just as they do in Angola.”⁶¹ Similarly, a 1636 WIC report described the inhabitants of Brazil as either free or enslaved: “The free are Brasilianen, Tapuyas, Europeans. These are either Dutch or Portuguese... The slaves are Tapuyas from Maranhão or Blacks from Angola, Guinea, or Cabo Verde.” The report continued by explaining how: “The slaves from Maranhão are Brasilianen or Tapuyas, that, so the Portuguese say, will be captured and eaten by their enemies... who are then taken to Brazil as slaves to be traded, although the Portuguese tend to steal in the transport and sale.”⁶² Both these documents took seriously Maranhão’s position as a separate colony and framed the region as a supplier of enslaved workers, as evident by the direct comparison to Angola. In both instances, the fact that the Portuguese had an established slave trade in the region set a precedent for the WIC’s policy on Indigenous slavery.

The WIC decision to conquer São Luis likely considered Maranhão’s status as a site of a slave trade. Early Dutch travelers to the region emphasized Maranhão as a place with abundant

⁵⁹ “Sommier discours ouer den staet vande vier geconquesteerde capitánias Parnambuco, Itamarica, Paraíba ende Rio Grande, inde noorderdeelen van Brasil,” January 8, 1638, in *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap Deel 2* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1879): 292. “Wij hebben gesproocken vande vrije, nu volght oock yets te seggen vande slaeven, die drierley mogen gesecht sijn, want sijn of vande cust van Africa, off van Maranhaon, of van dese lants naturelen.”

⁶⁰ Rebecca Parker Brienens has a helpful explanation on how the Dutch understood indigenous peoples in Brazil. See Chapter 4 “Between the Savage and the Civilized Eckhout’s Brasilianen and Tapuyas,” in Rebecca Parker Brienens, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006): 95-130.

⁶¹ “Sommiers Discours,” January 8, 1638, in *Bijdragen* (1879): 293. “Wat belangt de slaven van Maranhaon, die sijn daer door de Portugesen gehandelt, euen gelijk sij die in Angola handelen.”

⁶² “Rapport van den state van de geconquesteerde landen in Brasil, gedaen ter Vergaderinge van Haere Doorluchtige Hooch Mogentheden de Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden, door Servaes Carpentier, Politiquen Raedt aldaer ende tot dien eynde uit den Raet van Brasil gecommitteertm 1636,” ESC Carton 55.

laborers. Jacob van den Keere's 1638 letter detailed his stay in the region for allegedly 13 years.⁶³ Keere argued for the Dutch takeover of the Amazon not only because of its strategic location between Brazil and the West Indies, its natural provisions, but also because this was a region where Indigenous peoples, free and enslaved, would be at the service of the Dutch. Keere described the Amazon as the most "fertile and fruitful place in all of Brazil" that can be conquered by the Dutch at little cost. Other than the abundance of naturally occurring commodities in the region, Keere argued that there was not a "lack of enslaved and free Indians to be placed in the plantations and to sell." He explained that "those Indians in the mouth of the river and under the obedience of the Portuguese are good subjects and work together to carry out any service." Keere concluded that the directors of the Heren XIX can expect, throughout this region, to "always have some thousands of Indians at his service without any expense."

Dugardin Ardaeghe's 1638 "*Beschrivinge van Maranhão*" also promised a conquest that could provide the WIC with slaves. Ardaeghe provided a summary of Maranhão's history, recent explaining how the French took over the colony for 25 to 26 years, in a time where the colony was "full of inhabitants" including the "nations named Tapuyas and Tupinambás, who the Portuguese mostly killed and many of them ran away to secret places in the woods." In this report, Ardaeghe explained that:

"The island of Maranhão is very fruitful with manioc...which is used to make flour or *farinha* in place of [wheat] bread to be eaten with meat or fish, which are caught by their slaves, by land as in by the surrounding rivers, in which slaves are great in numbers, these are bought in the Amazon River, for wood knives, so that sometimes the slaves are sent to the West Indies, sailing there by boat, and are purchased for good price by the Spaniards to use them to work in the mines..."⁶⁴

It is unclear how Keere and Ardaeghe spent so long in these regions. One theory is that they were part of the small Dutch settlements on the banks of the Amazon River in the beginning of the seventeenth century, but it is also likely that they were both exaggerating the extent of their experience in the colony. For both Ardaeghe and Keere, Maranhão was a region where enslaved people were already made, a site of a preexisting slave trade that the Dutch could coopt for their own purposes. In other words, it was a region where Indigenous peoples subject to enslavement were one of its natural resources.

Indigenous peoples from Maranhão were enslaved both to labor within the colony and to be traded elsewhere. Lodewijk Hulsman showed how Dutch smugglers and traders in the 1630s and 1640s enslaved Indigenous peoples from Maranhão and trafficked them to the Caribbean.⁶⁵ Even after an attempt by the WIC to ban Indigenous slavery in Maranhão in 1642, this trade continued. Jan Maxwelt, who in 1643 was ordered under arrest by the governor of Dutch Brazil,

⁶³ "Voorstel van Jacob van der Heere voor en reis naar Maranhão en de rivieren van de Amazone," August 30 1638, NA, 1.05.01.01 Kamer Zeeland Box 46. The Nationaal Archief document names the author Jacob van der Heere, but closer inspection of his signature shows that his last name was likely Keere.

⁶⁴ "Beschrijving van Maranhao bij Dugardin Ardaeghe," November 1638, NA_1.05.01.01 Kamer Zeeland Box 46: "soo te lande als inde omliggende rivieren, welke slaven sijn in grooten, getale hebben, die sijn inde rivieren van amazons gaarn coopen, voor vijllen ofte houmessen, soo dat sijn somtijden van hare slaven senden near de westindien, die daer varen, met bercken, ende krijgen daer goet gelt voor want de spaerjaerden de selve gebruycken en in haer mijnen te wercken, aengaende de vruchten als anassen, pacomen, batttaten, mandewijne hebbe sijn in overvloed."

⁶⁵ Hulsman, "Nederlands Amazonia," 138.

Johan Maurits, was found to have “taken and transported free Brazilianen on a boat out of Maranhão and sold as slaves in the island [of St. Eustacius].”⁶⁶

Another justification for the enslavement of Indigenous peoples in Maranhão related to the system of alliances. Adrian van der Dussen’s 1639 report noted that while the Dutch had freed the Brazilianen, the “slaves from Maranhão” were considered legitimate by the King of Spain, and that the Dutch have “allowed for the continuation of their enslavement, seen as the Brazilianen of Maranhão do not give us any benefits which create obligations on our part.”⁶⁷ Caspar Barlaeus’s famous 1647 account described:

“Some of the slaves are Brazilian Indians or Africans, others were brought from Maranhão. The Portuguese bought Indians who had been captured by the Tapuyas, who sold them as slaves. They had been our allies and were abandoned by us in the Bay of Traição, when Boudewijn Hendriksz was admiral of the fleet. All have now been given their freedom. The ones from Maranhão were also bought as captives from the enemy; they are restricted by their servitude and not entitled to a change in status. A third group of slaves is made up of Africans; of these the ones from Angola are the best workers.”⁶⁸

Both Van der Dussen and Barlaeus’s accounts show how obligations, or in other words, alliances, were fundamental in determinations for slavery. Indigenous alliances were critical in the Dutch takeover of Brazil, as was the case with the Potiguares in Pernambuco and the Tarairiu of Rio Grande do Norte.⁶⁹ Indigenous peoples from Maranhão supposedly did not receive these privileges.

⁶⁶ “Resolutiën der Kamer van Zeeland, 1644-1646,” in *Documenten behorende bij de Nederlanders op West-Indien Eilanden* Vol. 2, edited by J.H.J. Hamelberg (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1901): 22. “...de welcke eenige vrije Brazilianen met een barcque uijt de Maranhaon soude hebben vervoet, ende aende eijlanden voor slaven verkoght.”

⁶⁷ “Rapport over Brazilië van Adrian van der Dussen”, September 10 1639, NA_01.05.01.01, Kamer Zeeland, Box 46: “De slaven uit de Maranhao sijn oock aldaer gerantsoeneert van haere vijande daerse gevangen waer in en near Brasi onder gebracht evengelijck do negros de angola.”

⁶⁸ I use Blanche T. van Berckel-Ebeling’s translation from Caspar van Baerle, *The History of Brazil under the Governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau 1635–1644*, trans. Blanche T. van Berckel-Ebeling Koning (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

⁶⁹ Ernst van den Boogaart, “Infernal Allies: The Dutch West India Company and the Tarairiu, 1631-1654,” In *Indios do Nordeste: temas e problemas*, edited by Luiz Sávio de Almeida, Marcos Galindo, and Juliana Lopes Elias (Maceió: Editora UFAL, 2000): 101-28.

The WIC did not condone Indigenous slavery in Maranhão unquestioningly. There were multiple attempts to ban or limit the practice. An undated report from Adrien van Bullenstraten, Pieter Bas and Hendrik Hamel, clarified the WIC policy that: “no Natives from Brazil could be made into slaves, not even the Tapuyas brought from Maranhão, no matter the nation, condition or quality.”⁷² Though there were attempts by the WIC to curb this enslavement, these attempts were met with resistance by the Portuguese population. An outbreak of smallpox in São Luis in 1642 led the directors of the Maranhão conquest to explain to Johan Maurits that settlers believed that:

“...in Maranhão there are no other slaves than the *Brasilianen* and that by liberating them, all the inhabitants would be ruined in one day, since their entire wealth depends on it and, without that, all the sugar mills and cane fields would essentially deteriorate, through which the expected results of the Company would also come to fail, because the free *Brasilianen* do not want to hire themselves out to anyone to work for a daily wage, saying that they do not want to be forced to work, and that they in all ways do not have to worry any further than for filling their stomachs, which is easily achieved.”⁷³

Settlers thus tested the idea that the status of enslavement made enslaved peoples more likely to carry out work, as well as the argument that without Indigenous workers, given the lack of other workers, the colony would fall into poverty. Their ideas were upheld by some Dutch captains working on-the-ground. Gedion Morris, later director to the Dutch takeover of Maranhão, best exemplified this vision of labor in Maranhão in his letters to WIC directors. In his corpus of letters, Morris described his experiences in Maranhão over the span of eight years. Like the previous authors cited, Morris spent a good deal of his 1637 “Beschrijving van Noord-Brazilië” describing the potential of the Maranhão region as a place for agricultural development and extraction of commodities. More so than Keere and Ardaeghe, Morris argued for the colonization of Maranhão to make use of a region that the Portuguese had neglected. He noted many difficulties that the Portuguese faced, including resistance from local Indigenous groups, naming the Corories and Kakayes as two groups that frequently attacked missions and Portuguese holdings. Yet he advocated for the takeover of the colony, noting that it was a place where the Dutch could “traffic in the thousands of slaves of foreign nations that are neighbors there.” These Indigenous slaves could also be sent to “Pernambuco, as the Portuguese used to do, and before the war started there, this was their biggest business.”⁷⁴ Morris also co-authored a letter with Jan Maxwell, the man accused of trafficking in Indigenous peoples from Maranhão in the Caribbean, and who was later appointed the Commandeur van *Brasilianen* after his work in Angola and St. Thomé. Morris and Maxwell argued that WIC control over Maranhão meant acquiring “7,000 slaves and 14,000 free Indians, who for very little retribution could work the

⁷² KB, Special Collections KW 76 A 16: “Edogh alsoo vooordesen bij u Ed. Mog. Resolutien zijn genomen, dat gene naturellen van Brazilie tot slaven souden worden gemacket often gehouden, het zij deselve Tapuyas gevangen van Maranhao ofte van wat natie conditien ofte qualiteijt, die oock soude mogen wesen, welcke ons van tijt tot tijt zijn toegecomen.”

⁷³ “Generale brief (kopie) van gourverneur-generaal Johan Maurits van Nassau en de raden G. Hamel, A. van Bullestrate en D. Codde van der Burgh, aan de vergadering van de Heren IXI”, September 9 1642, NA_1.05.01.01 Box 57, D. 33. Translation by Julie van der Hout.

⁷⁴ “Beschrijving van Noord-Brazilië door Gedion Morris”, October 22 1637, NA_1.05.01.01, Kamer Zeeland, Box 46.

land for the cultivation of beneficial products.”⁷⁵ They described Maranhão as a rich land with “cities, aldeas, *engenhos*, slaves, and other accessories.” By acquiring Maranhão, they argued, the West India Company would also “obtain a traffic in slaves.”⁷⁶ Give Morris’s testimony, the capture of São Luis can perhaps be understood as an attempt to acquire a slave trade, like the conquests of Elmina and Luanda in 1637 and 1641, respectively.

Disease presented a complicated dynamic for advocates of Indigenous slavery and slave trading. Though Morris was concerned about the outbreak of smallpox in São Luis, he saw disease as a reason for more, not less, slave-trading. Morris explained how a shortened supply of Indigenous slaves would mean that in four to five years the sugar “mills were standing still.” He advocated that the government allow for the Dutch to “buy and sell the Indigenous, just as we do the Blacks,” noting that the Dutch would not misuse Indigenous slaves like the Portuguese, who “abuse this trade abhorrently.”⁷⁷ Morris continued by using ideas of cannibalism and possible conversion, like the Portuguese did, to justify indigenous slavery. Morris’s testimony is further evidence as we will continue to see in this dissertation, that outbreak of disease was often used as a reason to keep Indigenous slave trading, not to stop it.

Though the Dutch relied on well-known arguments of just war and conversion to justify the enslavement of Indigenous people in Maranhão, it is striking that the region’s pre-existing traffic in slaves served as one of the primary arguments for Dutch colonization, despite the Dutch ban on Indigenous slavery in Brazil. The Dutch case on Maranhão serves as another example of the ways that the Amazonian colony forced reconceptualization of Indigenous slavery and Indigenous peoples’ role as the key labor force in the colony, in a way that disrupted accepted paradigms.

Debating Labor and Colonial Development

The State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará saw a series of political changes under restored Portuguese rule. After the dissolution of the Iberian Union in 1640 and the end of Dutch occupation of São Luis in 1644, the Brigantine monarchy started paying increased attention to a

⁷⁵ “Rapport van Gedion Morris en John Maxwell over Maranhão”, February 1640, NA_1.05.01.01, Kamer Zeeland, Box 46, trans. *RIHGB* 58 (1895): 260.

⁷⁶ “Rapport van Gedion Morris en John Maxwell over Maranhão”, February 1640, NA_1.05.01.01, Kamer Zeeland, Box 46, trans. *RIHGB* 58 (1895): 261.

⁷⁷ “Brief van Gedion Morris te St. Lowijs de Merenjhon, aan de bewindhebbers van de kamer Zeeland”, April 7 1642, NA_1.05.01.01, Kamer Zeeland, Box 57, n. 157. “Haertoevoer krijgen van slaven, door de welcken sij het land cultiveren ende haer ingenien doen malecken dese toevoer van slaven dervende soo soude door het af sterven van haere slaven in het verloop van vier a vijf jaren haer moolen moeten stile staen, te meer indien hier sulcken sterffte onder hier comt gelijk daer fledert onse comste haer geweest is want ich gelove dat ter in de tijt van viermaenden soo slaven als vrije meer al seen duysent sillen vande kinderpocken gesterven sijn, ende noch daegelick tamerlijck 85 sterven maer hier valt in een questien voor, ofte onsen regeringe sal toestaen dat wij de indianen sullen mogen coopen ende vercoopen, gelijk wij de swarten doen, de wijle de selve in Brasilien warden vfeij gekent, haer op van diene n tot antworde dat het niet alleen 2 seer profijtelijck en is voorde compagnie, maer ook Christelijck is, dat dien handel in dese quartieren getolereert, wanneer de selve niet misen bruikt en wordt, end at ten insichte dat inde riviere van de amazonis meer als dertig diverse naties van indianen sijn die tegen den andere orlooge voeren, eeniche van wederlijck gevangen crigende soo vreten sij die op, soo daer nieman en waere die de selve van hare coopen wilde, der halven moet desen handel toe gelaeten worden om het leven van soo daemiche slaven te behouden, ten dien in sichte heft het de connich van spaenjen getolereert, maer dese portugesen door hare begerlijckheidt tot slaven misbruicken dese handel geuwelijck want vinden de geen slaven near hun contentement soo droingen sij de vrije.”

colony seen as vulnerable amidst imperial wars. One strategy from the Crown was to increase the number of settlers in the colony.⁷⁸ In particular, couples from the Azores and Madeira were encouraged to come to Maranhão to mitigate the colony's "lack of people for its defense."⁷⁹ The other major political change related to the effects of the dissolution of the Iberian Union. With the establishment of the Overseas Council in 1642, settlers began petitioning directly to this tribunal to resolve matters that could not be resolved within the Councils or between the Councils and the governor.

The 1640 restoration and the end of the Dutch occupation led to increased attention on the topic of Indigenous labor. It was relatively unclear to what extent the labor policies established in the State of Brazil should apply to the newly established and separate colony of Maranhão. Two key debates were whether lay captains should administer the mission villages, and whether settlers could have Indigenous laborers under their personal administration, in other words, to labor and serve individual settlers. This debate picked up in 1624 when the Franciscans successfully advocated for the abolishment of lay captains, disrupting settler access to Indigenous workers.⁸⁰

In their correspondence to the Crown, settlers, Franciscan, and Jesuit missionaries alike used a series of arguments to advocate for their preferred systems of labor. To ask for enslaved African laborers, settlers would cite the example of the State of Brazil. But to ask for Indigenous workers, they cited the example of the "Spanish Indies," specifically the *encomienda* system. Missionaries warned that neither of these colonies should be replicated, given the effects that lay access to Indigenous workers had on populations of both Brazil and Spanish America. Settlers and missionaries also showed divergent understandings of the main problems plaguing Maranhão. Missionaries understood the *cativeiro dos indios* as the colony's existential threat, a term used to refer to Indigenous slave traders who did not follow Crown regulations in their expeditions, often using excessive violence to enslave Indigenous peoples and with little care for the process of conversion.⁸¹ Meanwhile, settlers understood the lack of laborers and their poverty as the main problem in the colony. Nevertheless, there was a wide consensus that, in Maranhão, the population was dependent on Indigenous workers because of the challenges posed by the environment and the necessity of Indigenous skilled labor.

During the colony's first twenty years, settlers demanding more laborers often made comparisons with the Spanish Indies. Calls for a replication of the *encomienda* system, the system through which settlers were given grants of laborers that was practiced in Peru and New Spain, were widespread. Often, these calls would equate the *encomienda* system to the system of administration, where settlers would have exclusive access to a set of Indigenous workers. Calls for the replication of an *encomienda* system started as early as 1615, with the instructions of Gaspar de Sousa suggesting the division of "all the Indians of that great river once they are conquered and pacified into village units, giving and distributing them in *encomiendas* among the settlers in the form and manner of those of Peru."⁸² In 1619, the newly elected members of the Municipal Council petitioned the Crown that the "great utility" of the colony which in a few years could enrich as "many people as in Spain", though it needed "men with capital" as well as

⁷⁸ For more on migration to the colony, see Chambouleyron, *Povoamento, ocupação, e agricultura*: 29-72.

⁷⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 5, D. 519.

⁸⁰ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 31.

⁸¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 209.

⁸² "Carta de Gaspar de Sousa," June 15, 1615, *Livro primeiro do governo do Brasil, 1607-1633* (1958): 121.

systems to administer the labor of Native Peoples “like in the Indies.”⁸³ The Municipal Council thus interpreted the *encomienda* system as the reason behind the wealth of settlers in Spanish America.

The captain general and later governor of the state, Bento Maciel Parente, also endorsed replicating the *encomienda* system.⁸⁴ Parente, who was staunchly opposed by the Municipal Council, criticized the forms of illegal slave trading in the region. He accused settlers of abusing the law in their slaving expeditions. According to Parente, settlers would pay higher prices for Indigenous slaves so that they could hold them captive for more than ten years. For Parente, the Crown should pass a decree forbidding any captive service of more than ten years. In 1635, he proposed to the Overseas Council that he receive the administration of Indigenous couples from the provinces of Quasahijaras, Pacaiar, Peguape, and Gurupá, who would serve as defense against the “rebellious Tapuya Indians.” According to the governor, these enemy groups prevented the security and thus the cultivation of the *engenhos*.⁸⁵ He suggested taking on the costs of carrying out *descimento* expedition to relocate Indigenous peoples to live next to plantations. Parente cited Gaspar de Sousa’s 1615 instructions as a precedent to justify his call for an *encomienda* system.

In response to settler demand for an *encomienda* system, both judges and missionaries gave the historical example of how this system of labor had not worked in Spanish America, specifically how these systems of lay control over Indigenous peoples led to the decimation of local populations. The judge Francisco Leitão responded to Parente’s request had to be rejected “because as sufficient information has shown, it does not appear that these administrations and *encomiendas* of Indians are for the benefit of the service of God and Your Majesty.”⁸⁶ Leitão explained that these systems have no place in Portuguese America, since the Crown had established that there “...should be none [of this system] in Brazil, since in practice it involves a type of servitude and captivity that Your Majesty has prohibited...” Leitão also noted that the example of what had been done in the Spanish colonies did not seem apt given the “general scandal that has spread throughout the world on the harassment and [bad] services that have been done to the Indians with this system and the damage that has resulted [from its use]”⁸⁷ Here, Leitão took seriously what had been anti-Spanish reactions to the *encomienda* system, a system

⁸³ “Carta dos Câmaristas de S. Luiz do Maranhão a El-Rei narrando a instalação da primeira camera do logar e serviços que vão fazendo,” 1619, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904) 237.

⁸⁴ Parente was a divisive figure in early politics of Maranhão. He had accused the former governor, Jeronimo de Albuquerque and his sons, of being absent from their posts. See Corrêa, “Para aumento da Conquista,” 110.

⁸⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 37.

⁸⁶ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 37.

⁸⁷ AH AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 37. “...por que em quanto por suficientes informações não consta que estas administrações e encomiendas de índios são de proveito do serviço de Deus e de V.Mg. por alguns particulares rezões que não tenham lugar em outras partes e conquistas do Brasil, e que não pode tem esse algumas alterações e rebelião de gente tao incomfidente ou outro semelhante danno. Não tem elle este voto por convenientes estas encomendas e administrações por que de mais de que V.Mg. ter mandado que as não haja no Brasil, em effeito ella envolve este gênero de servidão e cativoiro que V.Mg. tem prohibido e ordenado que não haja naquele gentio, e não lhe parece comparável o exemplo do que se fez em Indias de Castella, salvo se for para se proceder e nesta pretensão de Bento Maciel Parente com maior circunstâncias pela geral clamor e geral escândalo que pelo mundo tem corrido das vexações e servidores que se tem feito por este caminho aos Índios e dos danos que deso resultarão.”

much maligned with the promulgation of the Black Legend by Dutch and English writers in the seventeenth and later eighteenth century.⁸⁸

This did not stop settlers from Maranhão from consistently petitioning for lay captaincies or the replication for an *encomienda* system. About a decade later, Bento Maciel Parente's son, alongside Álvaro de Sousa, would also make a bid for *índios encomendados*. Álvaro de Sousa, the donatary captain of the Caité and member of the War Council, wanted to establish lay control over and recruit laborers from the mission village of Maracãna. Despite petitioning for lay administration, Sousa quickly turned into asking for slaves. Sousa wrote to the Overseas Council claiming that Indigenous peoples themselves had "captive slaves, and warfare among one another, and it is their custom to eat one another, resulting in the great loss of souls, and that to rescue these gentio, both the condemned and the prisoners, would be beneficial to reduce them to the holy faith, rid them of death, and for the whites to have those who serve in the farms and the canes, since without these slaves it would be impossible to sustain the coasts of Maranhão and Brazil."⁸⁹ Drawing upon all the standard arguments in favor of enslaving more Indigenous people, Sousa's letter is a perfect example of the slippage between asking for administration, lay control, and asking for Indigenous slavery.

The responses to Sousa's petition showcase the multiple interpretations of the functioning of the *encomienda* system. In October of 1645, the Overseas Council recommended that the King rule against their petition, since the petition did not defer to the ideas of the theologians and zealots who had "affirmed that giving the administration of the *gentios* and Indians of Brazil and parts of Maranhão [was] worse than making them captives, because the Portuguese are more willing to take care of their captives so that they can work with care, giving them enough to eat and what is necessary for human life, which they do not do to those under administration."⁹⁰ Permitting administration would inevitably lead to Indigenous peoples running away, and "for this reason the innumerable *gentio* of Maranhão, Pará, Pernambuco, Tamaraca, Paraíba and other parts of the State of Brazil have been perishing."⁹¹ Maranhão thus served as an opportunity to avoid making the same mistakes as Brazil. The Overseas Council responded to Parente and Souza by asking that they choose a religious denomination to oversee mission labor.⁹² Nevertheless, as had been mostly consistent with both the Crown and the missionaries, the Council understood the importance of Indigenous workers to the productive output of the colony. The report conceded that the land could not be cultivated "without the work of the

⁸⁸ See Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, "Introduction," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008): 5-9.

⁸⁹ AHU Maranhão Cx. 2, 209. "...escravos de corda, guerra entry si, e he estilo seu comerem se huns aos outros, resultando disso em perderemse suas almas, e que de se resgatar o ditto gentio, assim condenado e prisioneiro, se seguia do...bens, que erao redduzilos a nossa santa fe, os livrallos da mortem, e terem os brancos quem os sirva em suas rossas e canevaes, sem os quais escravos era imposivel sustentar a costa do Maranhão e Brazil..."

⁹⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 181. "Parece ao Conselho não diferir a petição...affirmão que darem em administração os gentios e índios do Brazil e partes do Maranhão he peor que captivalos porque os portugueses a quem se dão estas administrações inda que se sirvam dos seus captivos e os fazem trabalhar tem cuidado de hes darem de comer e o necessário para a vida humana e pello contrário aos que estão debaixo de sua administração."

⁹¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 181.

⁹² AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 181; AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 37.

Indians,” though it agreed that administered work should be kept under the priests, “as is the case in India.”⁹³

The other opponents of lay control or unrestricted access to Indigenous laborers were the recently arrived Franciscan missionaries in the colony. The Franciscans, who already had a firmly established presence in the colony by the 1617, became the key oppositional force to the Municipal Council.⁹⁴ After the murder of a missionary by a settler mob in 1623, the Franciscans sent an official complaint to the Overseas Council. In this complaint, the head of the Franciscan order in Maranhão explained how Portuguese settlers had made themselves captains of the mission villages of the *gentios* of Maranhão. They cited the frequent abuse of lay captains when recruiting mission laborers, arguing that settler control over Indigenous labor “...comes at great detriment to the service of God and Your Majesty, because as experience has shown, both in the Brazilian coast as well as in the Indies of Castille, that these captains only have their eyes on temporal profits.”⁹⁵ Cristovão de Lisboa, the prominent Franciscan who arrived in the colony in 1625, became one of the lead voices in abolishing the system of lay captaincies. Lay captains were allegedly treating Indigenous peoples as captive workers, creating Indigenous opposition to the white population, and preventing conversion. According to Lisboa, this system was detrimental to Portuguese interests in the region, since it stifled trade, the growing of provisions, and the Christian conversion project. Lisboa noted that:

“Since we do not have the Indians with which to defend ourselves, we do so with difficulty, because the land is covered and hidden by many trees, so only the Indians, as Natives and practical in the land, are accustomed to fighting in similar sites with the same bow and arrow that [the whites] do not know how to use, since ours for the same region have little effect. You will find that both Brazil and the Indies of Castille were conquered with the [allied] *gentio*, whose friendship was cultivated by the captains, who understood that without [the Indigenous allies], they could not attack nor defend themselves.”⁹⁶

Lisboa’s statement is a reminder that this notion of Indigenous peoples as “practical in the land” was used especially in petitions claiming the centrality of Indigenous peoples for colonial defense. He elaborated on these ideas in another petition from the same year, where he explained that:

“Because this entire coast cannot be sustained, defended, nor peopled without the Indians, and if they go to the hinterlands, it becomes impossible for us to live in those

⁹³ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1, D. 37.

⁹⁴ For the history of the Franciscans in the colony, see Maria Adelina Amorim, *Os franciscanos no Maranhão e Grão-Pará: missão e cultura na primeira metade de seiscentos* (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, 2005).

⁹⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 1 D. 37: “o que he em grande detrimento do serviço de Deus e de V.Mag. porque os tais capitães como a experiencia o tem mostrado, assim em toda a costa do Brasil como nas Indias da Castela, tendo sopostos os olhos no proveito temporal.”

⁹⁶ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 1 D. 63, “Como não temos os Índios por am com que nos defendemos dos que o nosso e sem eles o fazemos c dificuldade por ser a terra mui coberta e cheia de arvoredos mui ser onde se sabem e podem pelejar os Índios como naturais e práticos na te e costumados a pelejar em semelhantes postos com as mesmas arm arco e flechas de que nos não usamos, sendo as nossas para semelhantes lugares de pouco efeito, donde se achara que o Brasil e Indias de Castela foram conquistadas com os mesmos gentios nossos amigos que os ca grangearam por entenderem que sem eles não podiam ofender aos outro nem defende.”

parts, because with these Indians leaving, there is no one to cultivate these lands, and we all have great hunger since it is the Indians that deal with the provisions that becomes our bread, and [with them] we do not lack anything, because they are the fishermen and the hunters that maintain the land...”⁹⁷

Lisboa’s language was not too dissimilar from that of Gabriel Soares de Sousa’s 1587 grievances against the Jesuits, focusing on Indigenous peoples as the defenders, sustainers, and fishermen of the colony. Lisboa differed from Soares de Sousa in his conclusions about what lessons the experiences of the Spanish Indies offered. Lisboa believed that the “destruction” of the Indigenous population was a consequence of lay control over labor, and that conquests should be achieved “always through the help of the same Indians” since those settlers that did not create alliances with Indigenous population “lost themselves, because those with experience always work to have Indians to do all the services possible.”⁹⁸

A few decades later, Lisboa interpreted the rise of African slavery in the Americas as resulting from excessive settler control over Indigenous labor, suggesting that this same historical trajectory could be avoided in Maranhão. When writing to the president of the Overseas Council in 1647, Lisboa explained that in the Indies of Castille, settlers had caused so much damage to the Indigenous population, that the colony had to bring “Blacks from Angola to have people to serve and to cultivate the land.”⁹⁹ Lisboa believed that the lands in Maranhão were so inherently impoverished that “there is no more to do than to capture Indians to sell them and make them work, and in short time, all of them will perish.”¹⁰⁰ Despite many colonial authors pointing to the profitability of the land, Lisboa pointed to an anxiety that, just like with Angola, Maranhão was becoming a site where the trade in people was more profitable than anything else.

The Jesuits, who were not yet a major force in the colony, also advocate for curbing lay control over indigenous labor in Maranhão.¹⁰¹ In 1621, Manuel Gomes, the Jesuit who had accompanied Alexandre de Moura in his expedition to São Luis, had already denounced the practices of the Portuguese enslaving indigenous peoples. Gomes explained that:

“For this reason, General Alexandre de Moura, knowing the great evils that these injustices had caused to the State of Brazil and the Indians of Castile, left instructions to

⁹⁷ Luiza Fonseca, “Two Petitions of Frei Cristóvão de Lisboa, O. F. M., Custos of Maranhão, to the King [October, 1623],” *The Americas* 8 no. 3 (1952): 357. “Porque todas estas costas se não podem sustentar, defender, nem povoar sem os Índios, e indo se para o sertão ficamos impossibilitados a viver naquellas partes, porque indo se os Índios fica terras sem quem as cultive e em grande fome por serem os Índios tratao do mantimento que naquellas partes serve de pam, e não com caristia das mais cousas, porque elles são os pescadores e caquadore com estes officios mantem a terra, principalmente nestes princípios não pode aver criado bastante para o sustentamento ordinário, também os Índios de fazer as rogas cortando o arvoredado e mato fazerem os engenhos e se aproveitar a terra, e se aproveitarem as m que ella produz...”

⁹⁸ Fonseca, “Two Petitions of Frei Cristóvão de Lisboa,” 359. “E todos os Capiães que nas Indias de Castella conquistarão os Indios, e os que no Brazil fizerão o mesmo foi sempre com ajuda dos mesmos Indios, e os que levarão outro estilo se perderão, pello que os experimentados trabalharão sempre por ter os Indios de sua parte careando os com todos os favores possiveis.”

⁹⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 228. “...fez tanto o danno, que os injustos cativeiros fizeram, que he necessario escravos todos os annos as Indias da Castella, (?) de Negros de Angola para haver quem sirva e cultiva a terra.”

¹⁰⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 228. Also in Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 64-5.

¹⁰¹ Sweet, “A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed,” 47.

the captains to ensure that God and the King were well served. He offered them some Tapuya slaves owned by some Indian principals, to not aggravate the robbers by telling them that they did not have to go out to look for slaves, that they would not be offered others, giving them things that satisfied them..."¹⁰²

While Gomes saw the State of Brazil as an example of injustice, the Jesuit missionary, Luiz Figueira Barreiro, had another understanding of events on the ground. Like most missionaries, he understood the *cativeiro injusto* as Maranhão's fundamental problem. Figueira explained how there were many illegal slave-traders in the colony, who sold captives outside of the lands of the conquest, while others subjected Indigenous workers with "great violence obligating them to heavy work such as making tobacco, where they work for seven or eight months continuously day and night, and only giving [the Indigenous] three or four pieces of cloth." This ill treatment meant that Indigenous peoples would "flee to the forest" and "depopulate the missions."¹⁰³ Figueira explained that the *gentio* in Maranhão were "countless and very extensive, who could be divided into missions and hinterlands by many religions, and that all the missionaries that are sent there will be few given such a large population."¹⁰⁴

Figueira, unlike Lisboa, cited the example of Brazil as the colony to emulate. This likely stemmed from the Jesuits' extensive influence in the administration of missions in Brazil. The missionary argued that it should be the Jesuits in particular who should oversee the missions in Maranhão, citing the successful experience of Brazil where Jesuit administration of the missions meant that the "Indians were content in the service of the republic that they forgot their heathenism." He concluded that this could only be replicated if there were no lay captains in the mission labor system, because "it is a civil war between the missionaries, Indians, and captains, and [the Indigenous] should only be accountable to the Priests who are subordinated to the governor and captain generals and the justice of the land as they are in Brazil."¹⁰⁵ For Figueira, the experience of Brazil thus meant many things. It was both a success story of missionary control over the indigenous population, as well as a story of Indigenous decimation and policy failure.

Meanwhile, the settler interpretation was that it was the lack of administration that destroyed the Indigenous population of Brazil. The chief magistrate of Pará, Francisco de Barradas de Mendonça, wrote a description of the state in 1648 that was highly critical of the missionaries. He noted that the colony was now "so lacking in Indians and settlers" and that the settlers no longer have the liberties that are enjoyed in Brazil of using free Indians to work on their plantations.¹⁰⁶ In an early eighteenth-century history of Maranhão, the former governor of

¹⁰² "Carta do Jesuíta Padre Manoel Gomes que foi na Armada de Alexandre de Moura ao Maranhão," July 2, 1621, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará, 1608-1625 Vol. 1*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1904): 273-289.

¹⁰³ "Sobre hum memorial que fez Luiz Figueira Religioso da Companhia de Jesus sobre as cousas tocantes a conquista do Maranhão" August 10, 1637, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará Vol. 3*, ed. Guilherme Studart, (Fortaleza: Typ. Minerva, 1910): 29.

¹⁰⁴ "Sobre hum memorial que fez Luiz Figueira", 30.

¹⁰⁵ "Sobre hum memorial que fez Luiz Figueira", 34.

¹⁰⁶ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 1, D. 72: "Achei que a justiça se não administrou número neste estado e que o governo das câmeras, fazenda e milicia herao o que os superiores queriao e não o que despunhao seus regimentos e leys do reyno, cauza por onde esta conquista esta tão emfraquecida de índios e moradores que se V.m.de lhe não acodirom com o remédio de que necessita brevemente se perdera de todo..." "Aos moradores que tiverem engenhos deve V.Mg.de conceder as liberdades de que gozão os mais do Brazil obriguando aos

Maranhão wrote of that the case of Brazil confirmed that it is “the lack of administrations that reduces to almost nothing the immense number of those *gentilismo*, which, at the time, were much less barbarian.”¹⁰⁷

Petitions from settlers and missionaries led to a series of decrees passed in the 1640s to regulate Indigenous labor in Maranhão. One 1638 decree, under the direct influence of Figueira’s petition, placed the missions and the ecclesiastical orders under the Jesuits.¹⁰⁸ In August of 1640, another law was passed that reinforced that Indigenous peoples should be under the obedience of the missionaries, as was the case in Brazil. The 1640 law also forbade lay captains. If any settler wanted to recruit Indigenous workers, they would have to come to the Jesuit priests first. The priests would keep the indigenous population from being diverted to labor that “is not of great utility”, but that Indigenous workers would contribute to the agriculture of the lands for the “common good” and that when dealing with private lands, they can cultivate in so far as they consent and without harm.¹⁰⁹ Another key decree from the period was the law of 1647, which regulated the administration of Indigenous workers to carry out private services for settlers. Though Indigenous peoples could be recruited from mission villages to work for settlers, they would have to be compensated for that work, and to spend enough time planting their own provisions.

In 1647, the new governor of Maranhão, Francisco de Coelho Carvalho, provided a different interpretation of the history of Maranhão and the problem of the *cativeiro dos índios*, which he attributed to the Iberian Union. In the aftermath of the Iberian Union, when anti-Castilian sentiment was prominent among Portuguese elites, the governor Carvalho explained that the only reason the *cativeiro dos índios* went unchecked in Maranhão was because the Spanish Crown “...unjustly persuaded and made room for the use of cruelty for the Indians” because Castille had always sought to “undo and thwart the Kingdom of Portugal and its States.”¹¹⁰ Carvalho blamed the Crown of Castille for encouraging slave trade since the:

“...king of Castille knew that it was not possible to defend these states without the *gentio*, so he plotted the *cativeiro*, making them turn the Indians into our enemies so that we could lose everything, since the Indians fetch the food for the vassals of your Majesty, in peace and in war they row the canoes, they die in the fields of war with us to defend the possessions of Your Majesty which the slaves do not do because just hearing “captive” is enough cause to break the little spirit that they have left.”¹¹¹

superiores lhe darem índios forros para lhes trabalharem nas fábricas de asucar por seus paguamentos o neguarem-lhos he cauza de não aver já muitos nesta conquista e ficar V.Mg. de por esta via defraudado nos dizimos e direitos que podem acrescer a sua fazenda real.”

¹⁰⁷ Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, *Annaes históricos de Berredo*, 1718 (Florença: Typografia Barbéara, 1905): 216.

¹⁰⁸ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 52.

¹⁰⁹ “Carta Regia de 8 de Agosto de 1640,” in *Coleção Chronológica da legislação portuguesa*, Vol. 5, edited by J.J. de Andrade e Silva (Lisboa: Imprensa de F.X. de Souza, 1855): 238.

¹¹⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 213.

¹¹¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 213. “e como el rei de Castella sabia que não era possível defendesse estes estados sem gentio maquinou o cativeiro e o pôs por obra para que os índios fossem nossos inimigos para que asi se pudesse perder tudo mais facilmente e estos índios buscão de comer aos vassalos de Vossa Mag. na paz e na guerra remão as canoas, morrem na guerra comnosquo em campo em defensão das prazas de Vossa Mag. de o que não fazem os escravos porque só o nome de cativo he cauza bastante para lhe quebrar o animo e brio ainda que o tenham e como ss.or se a de dar satisfação ao gentio deste estado que em todas as guerras delle

Carvalho's letter testified to the accepted understanding among all sectors of the colonial population that Indigenous work was necessary for the development of the colony. Carvalho explained how "in these parts of America and Oriental India, all the possessions and wealth and utilities" are "within the hinterlands in the power of the *gentio*." Carvalho's quote demonstrated a belief that Maranhão's form of production was predicated on local knowledge, and thus depended on harnessing the labor of local populations. He continued his critique by saying that because the *gentio* opposed their own enslavement, they refused to show the Portuguese "those parts of the hinterlands where all such utilities could be found."¹¹² Carvalho pointed to gold and silver as potential riches that the Portuguese were missing out on.

These debates among various sectors of Maranhão's population show us that there were various interpretations of how Indigenous labor functioned or had been regulated in other colonies. In these interpretations and debates, we see different ideas over what caused outbreaks of disease, how to prevent flight, and to what extent Indigenous peoples were capable of work. Rather than understanding these various interpretations as fixed opinions, we should read these debates as settlers and their opponents wielding different interpretations to advocate for different labor goals. When settlers cited the wealth of the *encomenderos* in Spanish America, they were making a larger point about how Indigenous labor should be regulated in Maranhão. Colonial examples and what had played out on-the-ground between Indigenous peoples, settlers, and missionaries became central discursive tools and arguments in the early discussions during Maranhão's early colonial state-building process.

Despite these divergences, there was widespread agreement across all sectors of the population that Maranhão was somehow different than the State of Brazil in its productive potential and its reliance on Indigenous laborers. Settlers, municipal authorities in Maranhão, Dutch and Portuguese officials, the Overseas Council, and local judges engaged in this fiercely contested debate about what labor systems and modes of expropriation would lead to colonial economic development, though they all agreed that Native labor was tantamount. As Carvalho explained, Maranhão was a place where the wealth lay "in the power of the *gentio*." Indigenous peoples in Maranhão were not incapable of manual labor or plantation work: they were the bedrock of a colony that presented different conditions than its southern neighbor. In the next chapter, I show how this consensus was disrupted with the definitive arrival of António Vieira and the Society of Jesus in Maranhão.

assim com holandeses como com gentio sempre nos ajudarão com grande valor e lealdade e isto muitas vezes sem minha presençia e como também se viu na restauração desta prassa que abaixo de deus o gentio foi a principal cauza no Siarra como temos para notissia restauração a Vossa Mag.de aquela prassa matando os holandeses que estavam..."

¹¹² AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 213. "E como nestas partes da América e Índia oriental todos os averes e riquezas e utilidades de porte estão pella terra dentro em poder do gentio procurou o tal rei com esta razão destado..."

CHAPTER 3

Colonial Growth and Capacity to Work Amidst the “Ruin” of the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, 1652-1684

In 1663, a knight (*cavaleiro*) by the name of Manuel da Vide Soutomaior painted a bleak picture of the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará.¹ The colony only had around 700 settlers divided among its two royal captaincies (Maranhão and Grão-Pará) and four Donatary captaincies.² Travel and communication between these captaincies was challenging due to long distances and complex river systems. The two royal captaincies did not provide much in revenue for the Crown, and all the wealth of the settlers “constituted more or less of Indian slaves.” For Soutomaior, this reliance on Indigenous slavery was an existential threat to the colony. Slaving expeditions could only now occur in the Amazon River, because along the coastline of Maranhão, Pará, and Gurupá, “there are no longer any Indians.” Soutomaior believed that if these slaving expeditions continued, then “the Portuguese [would] extinguish the rest of these Indians....as [had] happened in Brazil.”³ For the knight, the “conservation of the government, of all the Portuguese that occupy and people these captaincies, and all of its growth, depend on the Indians and on granting them justice, both to the Christians and to the *gentio* who are not vassals.” In his opinion, only the Jesuit missionaries could safeguard Indigenous interests and guarantee their justice.

Writing in the aftermath of the 1661 rebellion that led to the first expulsion of the Jesuits in Maranhão, Soutomaior demanded the restitution of Jesuit missionaries to the colony. Soutomaior was thus participating in the larger conflict between the Jesuits and the local settler population that was endemic to the politics of Maranhão in the seventeenth century. Though these debates started as early as the colony’s founding, they became even more central to the politics of colonial Maranhão with the arrival of Antônio Vieira in 1653. An influential orator and theorist of the Portuguese Empire with considerable influence in the Court, Vieira fundamentally changed the debates about Indigenous labor in Maranhão.⁴

This chapter focuses on the discussions about labor from the period between 1652 to 1684, from when the Society of Jesus firmly established itself in Maranhão to their second expulsion from the colony in 1684. During the period covered in this chapter, the Portuguese Crown vacillated on permitting or forbidding slaving expeditions, as well as on granting missionary versus lay control over administered labor.⁵ In moments where the legislation changed, a flurry of writings about what kind of labor was necessary for the “growth and conservation” of Maranhão arrived in Lisbon. This chapter will show how, in the discussions about the growth and conservation of Maranhão, different ideas emerged over whether enslaved Africans or Indigenous peoples were the solution to the colony’s “ruin.”

¹ One report from 1662 described Soutomaior as a “cavaleiro” who defended the Jesuits during the settler rebellion against the Society of Jesus in 1661. See “Relação dos Sucessos do Maranhão, 1662,” in Serafim Leite, *Novas Cartas Jesuíticas: De Nóbrega a Vieira*. (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1940): 318.

² BA 54-XIII-4, n. 42a; AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 519.

³ BA 54-XIII-4, n. 42^a.

⁴ These debates have been covered by the “Black Robes versus White Settlers” historiography, a body of scholarship that has focused primarily on the ways that the Jesuits attempted to safeguard Indigenous liberty from settler abuses. See Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 474-501. Dauril Alden, “Black Robes versus White Settlers: The Struggle for ‘Freedom of the Indians’ in Colonial Brazil,” 25.

⁵ Decrees regulating labor were constantly shifting in this period, with new laws passed in 1652, 1653, 1655, 1663, 1677, 1680, 1682.

Though settlers in Maranhão petitioned the Crown for both enslaved African laborers and Indigenous workers, I focus on the arguments that they wielded when they asked for the latter. I argue that settlers increasingly incorporated local considerations into their arguments, putting in clear view that Maranhão was not like Brazil, either for political, economic, or environmentally determined reasons. This specificity of environmental conditions was made possible by the booming *Drogas do sertão* trade. Though there were many forms of production in Maranhão, settlers leaned on this burgeoning trade to make a case that Indigenous service was fundamental for the extraction of forest-products in the colony. Settlers continued to express their dependency on Indigenous labor and sheer poverty without Indigenous workers, but in this period, they argued that Indigenous peoples were uniquely capable of carrying out Amazonian work, such as navigating the colony's rivers and identifying forest-products.

I also argue that the growth of Maranhão's forest-product economy meant that Indigenous labor became increasingly associated with the process of extraction. As such, missionaries on-the-ground and imperial officials contesting Maranhão's colonial model not only critiqued the *cativeiro dos índios*, but also the settler tendency to focus on extractive, rather than agricultural, work. Opponents of settler control over Indigenous labor or of unchecked Indigenous slavery thus used this association to explain the "ruin" of Maranhão, in other words, the colony's backwardness and poverty. These opponents suggested the imitation of the State of Brazil's model of enslaved African laborers and sugar cultivation, positing this model as the ideal form of colonial development in Portuguese America. In their debates over the "ruin" of Maranhão, we also see African versus Indigenous capacity to work framed in opposition. These racial attitudes about the differences between African and Indigenous bodies are likely familiar to readers, as they proliferated elsewhere in the Americas, but they were not the only way to frame the comparison and were in fact specific rhetorical strategies of missionaries and imperial officials seeking to curb Indigenous slavery. These discourses reveal different sets of possibilities for colonial thinking about the "utility" of Indigenous labor and servitude.

Antônio Vieira versus the Settlers of Maranhão and Grão-Pará

The definitive Jesuit arrival and the tenure of Antônio Vieira in Maranhão had two consequential effects: the expansion of the mission system and the regulation of Indigenous labor. By 1658, Vieira and approximately 50 other Jesuit missionaries had started a process of intense missionary activity in the island of São Luis and the nearby hinterlands, thus acting as key agents of expansion into the interior.⁶ Relatedly, Vieira's arrival spurred the beginning of increased Jesuit control over the regulation and distribution of Indigenous labor.⁷ There were two key labor domains in which the Jesuits garnered control. The first was on the administration and distribution of laborers in the mission villages. During his time in Maranhão, Vieira sought to guarantee Jesuit control over the mission villages. This attempt was successful when, in 1652, the Crown granted the Jesuits control over a few indigenous mission villages in both Maranhão

⁶ Karl Heinz Arenz, "Entre supressão e consolidação: os aldeamentos jesuítcos na Amazônia portuguesa (1661–1693)," in *Políticas e estratégias administrativas no mundo atlântico*, eds. Suely Creusa Cordeiro de Almeida, Gian Carlo de Melo Silva, Kalina Vanderlei Silva, George F. Cabral de Souza (Recife: Editora Universitária da UFPE, 2012): 311–35; Karl Heinz Arenz, *Fazer sair da selva: As missões jesuítas na Amazônia* (Belém: Editora Estudos Amazônicos, 2012).

⁷ Zeron, "Vieira em movimento," 172.

and Pará.⁸ Broadly speaking, the Jesuits in Maranhão advocated for the payment of Indigenous laborers as well as the regulation of their seasonal work, limiting a laborer to work for a settler only six months in the year. They staunchly opposed the settler idea that an *encomienda* system or a system of lay captains could work in Maranhão, even if they acknowledged the necessity of Indigenous workers for any form of production in the colony.

The arrival of the Jesuits also signaled the beginning of concerted efforts to regulate slaving expeditions. In his first years in Maranhão, Vieira took relatively conciliatory position on the matters of Indigenous slavery.⁹ He recommended that during confessions with settlers, missionaries should avoid discussing “the matter of the Indians.”¹⁰ In 1657, he suggested that other missionaries exercise “extreme caution in not uttering any word to the Portuguese or the Indians that they might understand that we do not favor the *resgates* or that we believe they should not happen, or that there should be few of them.”¹¹

Vieira and the Jesuit missionaries in Maranhão understood the systems of Indigenous captivity and slavery as counterproductive to production. Slaving expeditions caused unrest, flight, and the deaths of thousands of souls. Restrictions on the *cativeiro dos índios* led to “a greater quantity of Indians cultivating the lands.”¹² This position was not unique to the Jesuits. In 1667, a representative of the Capuchins petitioned the Overseas Council asking for financial support so that their missionaries could establish a mission for the Aroam people. According to this representative, the “many of the *gentio* in the Amazon River were rebellious, escaping their missions for the forest due to the damages that the whites inflict on them, impeding commerce and communication in the hinterlands.”¹³ For both the Jesuits and the Capuchins, the *cativeiro dos índios* was a problem for the colony’s economy.

Meanwhile, sectors of the settler population, including certain governors, fundamentally disagreed with this position. As had been the case in the State of Brazil, mission villages acted as critical pools of labor for the settler population. Settlers also explicitly noted that they relied on Indigenous slaves as their source of wealth. In 1652, settlers protested the passing of a decree that freed all Indigenous slaves in the colony, a decree that was later reversed due to settler outcry. Indeed, the early 1650s saw multiple laws passed that led to escalating tensions between the Municipal Councils and the Jesuits.¹⁴ Amidst secular discontent over the new legislation, Dom Pedro called for an urgent consult in 1655 to determine the terms of just captivity and the control over Indigenous administrations. This council, known as the Junta das Missões, became a key body in the colony to determine the legitimacy of indigenous slavery and how to regulate free work. As described by Paul Wojtalewicz, the Junta became a site for resolving “issues regarding the lives of those Indians living in the mission villages, licensed and supervised upriver expeditions by the settlers, coordinated missionary activity in the region, and made

⁸ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 80.

⁹ See Zeron, “Vieira em movimento,” 172; See Eisenberg, “Antonio Vieira and the Justification of Indian Slavery,” 89-95.

¹⁰ José Eduardo Franco, Pedro Calafate, and Ricardo Ventura (eds.), *Obra Completa Padre António Vieira: Escritos Sobre os Índios*, Tomo 4 Volume 3 (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2014): 24.

¹¹ “Papel da Bibliotheca Nacional de Lisboa. De Letra do Padre António Vieira, todavia sem assinatura” in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará: Volume IV*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1921): 74.

¹² BA 50-V-37, n. 92.

¹³ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 522.

¹⁴ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 104; AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 4, D. 400.

recommendations about the waging of war against indigenous groups.”¹⁵ With delegates from the Desembargadores do Paço, the Mesa da Consciência e Ordens, and theologians from various denominations, including Antônio Vieira, the Junta’s purpose was to analyze “laws old and new” to understand when Indigenous captivity could be legitimate. Under the orders of Dom Pedro, the delegates should keep in mind that “whatever consciousness does not find” will go in favor of the vassals of the colony, “whose conservation and growth depend on having slaves.”¹⁶

The passing of a 1655 royal decree was a major achievement for the Jesuits in Maranhão. The decree forbade Indigenous slavery except under certain definitions of just war. Additionally, another decree from the same year guaranteed that the division of Indigenous laborers in mission villages would be carried out by the Jesuits. The decree’s olive branch to the settler population was the stipulation that one elected lay representative by the Municipal Council, known as the *repartidor*, would be present during the division of laborers to make sure that the settlers received workers.¹⁷ Indigenous worker recruited from a mission village would be compensated with two pieces of cotton cloth per month, sometimes three or four pieces, depending on the type of work.¹⁸

Despite this relative compromise, local conditions exacerbated settler and Jesuit tensions, eventually leading to the outbreak of the 1661 rebellion. By the 1660s, eighteen mission villages had been reduced to three villages, primarily due to the outbreak of smallpox.¹⁹ Opinions from the Municipal Council and petitions to the Overseas Council showed overwhelming support for lay control of the Indigenous villages, a system of expropriating labor, as well as more slaving expeditions in the interior. Settlers expressed concern at the elevated prices of fruits and cloth, which lowered their purchasing power for slaves of the interior.²⁰ They also reacted negatively to the imprisonment of the Guarapaúba chief, Lopo de Sousa. Vieira had accused Lopo de Sousa of enslaving free Indigenous peoples and selling them to the settlers.²¹

The correspondence leading up to the 1661 rebellion is particularly fruitful for understanding how settlers and missionaries tested out different arguments about work and poverty to protect their interests and beliefs. These arguments are apparent in the correspondence between Vieira and certain settler representatives. Vieira engaged in two notable debates. The

¹⁵ Paul Wojtalewicz, “The Junta de Missões/Junta de Misiones: A Comparative Study of Peripheries and Imperial Administration in Eighteenth-Century Iberian Empires,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 226.

¹⁶ “Ordem Régia exigindo uma urgente consulta sobre casos em que se podem cativar os Índios”, March 15, 1655, *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará: Volume IV*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1921): 70.

¹⁷ Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 119.

¹⁸ Mauricio de Heriarte, *Descrição Do Estado do Maranhão, Pará, Corupá e Rio das Amazonas*, 1662, ed. F.A. de Varnhagen, (Vienna: Imprensa do filho de Carlos Gerold, 1874): 9.

¹⁹ Heriarte, *Descrição Do Estado do Maranhão*, 9; AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 4, D. 499. For more on this particular smallpox outbreak, see Rafael Chambouleyron, Benedito Costa Barbosa, Fernanda Aires Bombardi, and Claudia Rocha de Sousa, “‘Formidable contagion’: epidemics, work and recruitment in Colonial Amazonia 1660-1750.” *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 18, no. 4 (2011): 987-1004.

²⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 4, D. 429.

²¹ “Representação de Jorge de Sampayo e Carvalho contra os Padres da Companhia de Jesus, expondo os motivos que teve o povo para os expulsar do Maranhão,” 1661, *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará: Volume IV*, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Studart, 1921): 110. For the conflict between Lopo de Sousa and Antônio Vieira, see Almir Diniz de Carvalho Júnior, *Índios Cristãos: A conversão dos gentios na Amazônia Portuguesa (1653-1769)*. (PhD diss, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2005).

first was with Jorge de Sampaio e Carvalho, governor of Maranhão, as well as one of the key leaders of the rebellion. The other was with the representatives of the Municipal Council of Belém in 1661. In both exchanges, Vieira wielded the historical example of the State of Brazil, crediting the colony's success to its rejection of Indigenous slavery and embrace of African enslaved laborers. Meanwhile, Sampaio and the Municipal Council of Belém wielded their utter dependence on Indigenous labor, administered and enslaved, to make their case for unjust colonial labor practices.

In his 25 complaints against Vieira, Sampaio made the common argument that the Jesuit themselves made use of and profited from Indigenous enslaved labor. He painted a picture of a broad consensus established by the 1653 law, which allowed for licit *resgates* and the division of mission village laborers among the different religious orders. This, he claimed, had been “accepted and embraced by all the people and the head of the state.”²² The law of 1653 was overturned with the passing of the 1655 decree, making the Jesuits the “absolute masters of that State.” Among many other things, Sampaio accused Vieira of going into the hinterlands to “ransom a large quantity of slaves” for himself and his supporters. According to Sampaio, “the Indians generally say, that after the Priests of the Company started administrating them, they are now their captives, and that they lack the commerce that they once had with the Portuguese.” Sampaio claimed that Vieira spread “falsities” to arrest various settlers on the claim that they were enslavers of Indigenous peoples. Sampaio's argument relied on the notion of the common good, or that labor should be fairly distributed among the population. For example, Sampaio explained that:

“When the governors under the service of Your Majesty would ask for Indians from the Priests after hearing that they were necessary in other captaincies and to labor in the works of Your Majesty, the Priests would excuse themselves in giving them to us, saying that they did not have any, and at the same time and in many instances they were bringing infinite number of Indians to their own service, in their works and communities, and for this there were always Indians, but for the Royal Service and the common good, there were never any.”

Another argument, buttressed by examples he had heard from local settlers, was the economic disruption caused by the lack of Indigenous laborers. Indeed, Sampaio's 25 points painted a picture of a colony that could not achieve its productive potential because of the lack of Indigenous laborers. Though the 1655 law required the Jesuits to comply with the repartition of Indigenous laborers to the settlers, Sampaio claimed that missionaries refused to comply. Sampaio told a story of a settler by the name of Alferes João Ribeiro, who went to the Jesuits asking for an Indigenous woman to be a wetnurse. The superior asked if the child had been baptized, to which Ribeiro replied that yes. The superior then allegedly claimed that a wetnurse was not needed because the child would go to heaven if they passed away. Other disruptions were more explicitly commercial. Sampaio cited that the discovery of salt pans in the captaincy of Pará, claiming that they could not be explored due the “Priests not wanting to give Indians for its benefit.”²³ Since the Jesuits had become in charge of Indigenous labor, “tithes and the royal revenues were greatly diminished, due to the lack of their service” leading a bushel (*alquiere*) of

²² “Representação de Jorge de Sampaio e Carvalho” 1661, 110.

²³ “Representação de Jorge de Sampaio e Carvalho” 1661, 113.

bread flour to cost 1,000, rather than 200, réis.²⁴ Sampaio told another story of a ship leaving from Pará with cargos of sugar and tobacco and 70 Portuguese that shipwrecked on its third day. They shored up in enemy lands where they had to defend themselves, and “asking the priests for Indians to help save them, [the Priests] responded that the Indians remain quiet on this matter because the fewer Portuguese there were, the fewer enemies there would be.” Sampaio ended the letter asking for the observation of the 1653 law, and that the missionaries that remain be those of the other orders currently in the state.

Arguments about Indigenous peoples’ inherent capacities as workers were widespread in the lead up to the 1661 rebellion. Vieira himself drafted a reply to each of Sampaio’s points, where he emphasized Indigenous idleness and incapacity to work as key explanations as to why it was in the settlers’ best interests to move away from Indigenous slavery and administered labor. In his ninth point, Vieira explained that:

“...all the service for the settlers of that State is carried out by the Indians naturals of the earth, who with their natural weakness, and the idleness, rest, and liberty through which they are raised in, are not capable of handling for very long the kind of work that the Portuguese put them to, especially those of the sugar canes, mills, and tobaccos.”²⁵

In explaining this, Vieira borrowed heavily from a certain paradigm established by sixteenth century missionaries in the Americas, such as de las Casas and Nóbrega. But he took his argumentation a step further. In his correspondence with Sampaio and with the Municipal Council of Belém, Vieira wielded the example of the State of Brazil to demonstrate the dangers of reliance on Indigenous labor. Like the Franciscans discussed in the previous chapter, Vieira did not seek to replicate what he considered to have been the historical mistakes of sixteenth and early seventeenth century Brazil. In his reply to Sampaio, Vieira wrote:

“...there are many [Indigenous peoples] who through these reasons are continuously dying; and since they make up all the wealth and remedy of those settlers, it is ordinary to see [the settlers] fall into great poverty in a short time, especially those that were once rich. Because [here] the wealth does not consist in lands, which are communal, but rather in the fruits that each person produces, and whose only instrument [for production] are the arms of the Indians.”²⁶

Vieira certainly understood Indigenous peoples as the key labor base in Maranhão. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Jesuits themselves exploited Indigenous labor. It is thus hard to conclude that Jesuits had a certain idea about Indigenous idleness while settlers did not. Rather than a fundamental disagreement, we should read these debates as different actors testing various discursive tools. For Vieira, the notion of an inherent Indigenous idleness served to convince

²⁴ “Representação de Jorge de Sampaio e Carvalho,” 114.

²⁵ António Vieira, *Obras Escolhidas*, Vol. 5, ed. António Sérgio, (Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa, 1951): 298. “A nona e a última causa, e que em parte vem a ser forçosa, é ser todo o serviço dos moradores daquele Estado com índios naturais da terra, os quais por sua natural fraqueza, e pelo ócio, descanso e liberdade em que se criam, não são capazes de aturar por muito tempo o trabalho em que os portugueses os fazem servir, principalmente o das canas, engenhos e tabacos, sendo muitos os que por esta causa continuamente estão morrendo...”

²⁶ Vieira, *Obras Escolhidas*, 298.

settlers that they could not achieve the same level of economic growth with Indigenous slaves, as they could with African slaves. Furthermore, like Lisboa's writings discussed in the last chapter, Vieira understood the example of Brazil as one of failure in part of the history of Indigenous peoples. In a 1658 letter, Vieira explained how lay administered missions were responsible for the "destruction of the Indians, and this became the reason why in the past 100 years all [the Indigenous] were removed from Brazil who existed in the beginning."²⁷

While outbreaks of disease were certainly consequential to the Indigenous populations in Portuguese Amazonia, we know Maranhão was predominantly an Indigenous colony throughout the colonial period. As such, the impact of disease was certainly up to debate between the Jesuits and the settlers. For most missionaries, Maranhão was both a place of the "destruction of the Indian" and also a place of millions of souls. For the settlers, Maranhão was a place of countless slaves. The new governor of Maranhão, Pedro de Melo, described Maranhão as a place where the interior was "vast and the slaves that exist in them are not few, as experience has shown us"²⁸ Some of the same ideas as Melo's were espoused by the Senate of the Municipal Council of Belém in their January 1661 letter to Vieira. Written by the scribe Manuel Ribeiro Porto, the letter was signed by the most senior member of the Municipal Council, Manuel Cordeiro Jardim, two senior judges, and the procurator Manuel Baz. According to the Municipal Council, the problems of Maranhão all "result from the lack of slaves, when there are many and in the hinterlands in great quantities, where they can be rescued."²⁹ As such, the question of the impact of disease and Indigenous demographics was consistently wielded to make a larger policy suggestion in petitions.

The second disagreement between Vieira and the Municipal Council of Belém was over to what extent Indigenous slavery would serve as the remedy for the local population, or in other words, to lift them out of poverty. This disagreement can be seen even more starkly in the exchange between Vieira and the Municipal Council of Belém in 1661. Writing to the Jesuit about their discontent, the officials of the Council expressed the "great necessities that are experienced by these people, caused by the limitations they have experienced due to the lack of slaves who serve them, without whom it is impossible to live."³⁰ Settlers could not bring their families to live in the colony, because they lacked workers "to row the canoes to come here, and as we know for sure that navigation cannot be achieved without slaves."³¹ Here, the settlers referred specifically to enslaved Indigenous peoples, given their historic reliance on Indigenous peoples as navigators in the colony. The letter from Belém continued by explaining that the settlers lacked an enslaved labor force to collect woods, farm the land, or fetch water. Furthermore, the representatives of the Municipal Council complained that an Indigenous slave cost approximately 70,000 *réis* and had to be bought from deceased members of the colony, since the colonists were no longer able to carry out slaving expeditions.³²

In his 1661 reply to the Senate of Pará, Vieira challenged the notion that "only the lack of slaves" explains the colony's problem. According to the "news and experiences" that he had received, there were multiple causes to Maranhão's problems.³³ Vieira cited the problem in

²⁷ BA 50-V-37, n. 136.

²⁸ Franco et al. *Obra Completa*, 314.

²⁹ BA 54-XIII-4, n. 42^a.

³⁰ BA 54-XI-27, n. 12.

³¹ BA 54-XI-27, n. 12.

³² BA 54-XI-27, n. 12.

³³ BA 54-XI-27, n. 12.

quality of the land, the lack of good governance, and the drop in sugar prices as possible explanations for the lack of revenues from the colony. Vieira was certainly correct that settlers exaggerated the extent to which the colony's problems could all be attributed to the issue of the lack of enslaved laborers. This was particularly true of settlers who had a vested interest in slave trading in the interior. Vieira claimed that slaving expeditions in the hinterlands would not be an adequate long-term solution to the settlers' complaints, because "as much as [these expeditions] make slaves, many more are those that die." Vieira continued:

"As we see from the daily experience of this State, and what we have seen from Brazil, where the settlers never received remedy until they were served by slaves from Angola, since the Indians of the earth are less capable of work, and less resistant to disease, and, since they are near their lands, they can more easily flee..."³⁴

Vieira's writings were part of a long-standing tradition among missionaries citing disease, flight, and capacity to work as reasons why Portuguese America needed to rely on African, rather than Indigenous, slaves. In many ways, Vieira's primary argumentative tool in this instance was to tie growth to African slavery. In using these arguments, Vieira was responding to settlers who revealed their sheer dependency on Indigenous laborers to carry out work in the colony and to accumulate wealth.

The Municipal Council of Belém drafted one more response that was presented to Vieira in-person at the College of Santo Alexandre, to which Vieira allegedly refused to answer. In this second letter, the Municipal Council explained that missionary control over Indigenous labor restricted profits. Settlers could neither "tend to farms, nor the plantations." The Jesuit control over the missions had not been "of utility to the people, only causing losses, because it is a sure thing that from this captaincy all canoes, Indians, soldiers, and settlers, and everything; and there is no doubt that the Indians of the missions, our allies, that were part of these troops, took more profits from the slaves...than the whites of this captaincy."³⁵ The 1661 Municipal Council letter serves as a reminder of the ways that ideas about utility, the common good, and the generation of wealth factored into debates about Indigenous slavery. The debates leading to the 1661 rebellion show how the example of Brazil and notions of capacity to work were used as argumentative tools in debates about labor. Despite Vieira's views that Indigenous peoples were necessary laborers in the colony, his disagreement with the Municipal Council shows how ideas of Indigenous weakness, counterposed to a notion of African slavery as necessary for success, were used as instruments in debates about labor. After the outbreak of the rebellion in Belém in 1661, the Jesuits were expelled from the colony. By 1663, a compromise was established where the Jesuits would be allowed to return to the colony, but they would no longer have control over mission village labor and slaving expeditions.

³⁴ BA 54-XI-27, n. 12; "...como mostra a experiência de cada dia neste Estado, e o mostrou no Brasil, onde os moradores nunca tiveram remédio, senão depois que se serviram com escravos de Angola, por serem os índios da terra menos capazes de trabalho, e de menos resistência contra as doenças, e que, por estarem perto das suas terras, mais facilmente ou fogem ou os matam as saudades delas."

³⁵ BA 54-XI-27, n. 12; "de utilidade a este povo, antes lhe tem causado perdas; pois é coisa certa que desta capitania vão canoas, índios, soldados, e moradores, e tudo o necessário para elas; e não há dúvida que os índios das aldeias, nossos aliados, que foram as ditas tropas, tiraram melhor lucro dos escravos, que nelas houve, que os brancos desta capitania."

In the 1660s and 1670s, settler arguments for Indigenous work and slavery increasingly took the specificities of the colony’s environment into account. Settlers claimed that Indigenous peoples were uniquely capable of carrying out extractive work and navigating settlers down the colony’s rivers. Though arguments about settler dependency on Indigenous work and skill appeared before this period, the rise of Maranhão’s extractive activity meant that these claims became more widespread and explicit. This was particularly true when settlers petitioned to extract the *drogas do sertão* from the hinterlands. Products such as bark-clove, sarsaparilla, cinnamon, and cacao became local currencies and some of the colony’s main exports.³⁶ The rise in this trade also meant deeper Portuguese penetration into the hinterlands, such as the tributaries of the Xingu, as well as more slave-trading activity in the interior.

Expeditions to enter the hinterlands relied extensively on Indigenous rowers, navigators, and fetchers of commodities. To prepare for a journey into the hinterlands, Indigenous workers were gathered from missions, alongside approximately 30 white settlers under a single captain nominated by the governor and the Municipal Council. Indigenous workers, both free and enslaved, carried out the expedition down river. In 1679, the governor Ignacio Coelho da Silva reported that 180 Indigenous workers were needed to help a single expedition, claiming that the settlers had complained that in that year had there been little bark-clove or cacao extracted “due to the lack of Indians to go fetch these.”³⁷

Another critical task for Indigenous peoples was the identification of new commodities. The governor of the colony, Francisco de Sá e Meneses, explained that when he arrived at the court in Lisbon, he “brought two small samples of *china china*, that I had given to some chiefs, and they gave these to some of their relatives in the interior. They told me, after due diligence, that they did not find bark like the samples, which they lost; they brought me many others, but from other trees.”³⁸ Meneses’s account attests to the key role that Indigenous peoples played in identifying possible forest products for export, and that knowledge exchange was a fundamental part of the *Drogas do sertão* trade. Captains and collectors in Maranhão were frequently looking for new forest products. A letter from 1690 described the difficulties of finding bark-clove due to overextraction but deliberated that a new product that the Indigenous call Puxam could be “used in place of cinnamon” and that “the Indians take [this] for stomach pain.”³⁹ Knowledge exchange and co-production were thus necessary components of this trade.

Bark-clove exploration became one of the most attractive enterprises for settlers, though some doubted the long-term viability of this type of production. Sometime after 1656, an unnamed account to the Overseas Council described the failure of the sergeant-general, Felipe de Fonseca e Gouveia, in furthering the clove trade. Clove trees were often found in areas with too few settlers. Gouveia also noted that planting clove trees in certain soils was not successful. At the same time, expeditions to extract clove were both costly and time-consuming, taking over a month to fetch 4 arrobas of bark-clove in areas around 100 leagues from the city of Belém.⁴⁰

³⁶ Rafael Chambouleyron, “O cravo do Maranhão” e a Amazônia global (Séculos XVII-XVIII).” *Revista de Índias* 82, no. 285 (2021): 329-61. André Pompeu, *As drogas do sertão e a Amazônia colonial (1677-1777)*, (PhD diss, Universidade Federal do Pará, 2022).

³⁷ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 181.

³⁸ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 3, D. 219.

³⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 7, D. 820.

⁴⁰ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 105.

Settlers asking for expeditions for the *Drogas do sertão* often engaged in slaving expeditions, as the two processes were intimately tied. A 1651 consult expressed that it was public knowledge that one of the armadas went into the hinterlands “not for the discovery of mines, but to ransom slaves.”⁴¹ The evidence for this was the amount of iron that was being taken into canoes, because “in that State, taking iron is synonymous with ransoming slaves.”⁴² The head vicar of the colony, Domingo Anthunes Thomás, accused these expeditions of being against royal decrees, where settlers used Indigenous peoples to “assault the unexpected.”⁴³

The intertwined of extracting forest products and slave trading elucidates why settlers so often demanded the right to carry out expeditions. Maurício de Heriarte, the principal judge in the colony, wrote a report in 1662 titled the Description of Maranhão. Heriarte’s description revealed the intertwined relationships between finding forest products, exploring new lands, and slaving expeditions. Heriarte was fundamentally optimistic about Maranhão: “These lands are capable of large settlements for the lands are vast and there are many Indians.”⁴⁴ Much like Soares de Sousa, Heriarte commented on different Indigenous groups by distinguishing them as either productive or lazy. In describing Indigenous peoples around the Rio Negro, Heriarte claimed that these people were “corpulent and strong, sharp in plantations. They make great curiosities with wood, without having tools, with animal bones only they craft as much as they want.”⁴⁵ Heriarte described the province of the Cambebas, which he says is the best province, “not only because of sustenance but also the people.”⁴⁶ The Cambebas lived on dry land, without canoes, who did not go to the islands, but they were “abundant in provisions, fruit, fish, turtles, through which [they] sustain themselves. They use much good-quality tobacco...they are careful, hardworking, and strong people. They usually dress themselves with shirts and pants, and the women with mantas, showing that they are more honest than most of the Indians of these rivers.” Heriarte also praised this province as a place where: “There are infinite slaves that are made in these plantations along the margins of the river, with tools like rocks and turtle shells.”⁴⁷ These types of texts often encouraged further expansion into the hinterlands for both slaves and forest products.

Indigenous abilities were not just used as a justification for expeditions in the interior, but also to ask for more soldiers for defense. Royal administrators frequently drafted Indigenous peoples to work as soldiers. Settlers saw this military service as particularly important given the threat of the “Tapuyas do Corso”, a generic name for Indigenous enemies. Settlers often accused the “Tapuyas do Corso” of burning sugar mills, similarly to the settler accusations against the Aimoré in sixteenth-century Bahia. In 1682, Pascoal de Sá complained about Tapuyas do Corso in the Rio Itapecuru, which was leading settlers to relocate from their original site to a new location eight leagues away. Pascoal de Sá asked for indigenous laborers from the missions to work as “soldiers and safeguard when they can accompany us, because as natives they know how to penetrate the forests, and with this security, the settlers would resolve themselves to cultivate

⁴¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 3, D. 295: “E geralmente foi fâma publica que a dita armada não foi a descobrimento de Minas, se não a resgates dos índios”

⁴² AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 3, D. 295: “naquella estado, o mesmo he levar ferrages que hir a fazer resgates.”

⁴³ BA 50-V-37, n. 137

⁴⁴ Heriarte, *Descrição Do Estado do Maranhão*, 24.

⁴⁵ Heriarte, 45.

⁴⁶ Heriarte, 53-4.

⁴⁷ Heriarte, 54.

lands.”⁴⁸

The argument that Indigenous peoples knew how to “penetrate the forests” and navigate the waterways were widespread in seventeenth-century Maranhão. In 1663, the royal captain of Gurupá lodged a formal complaint to the eldest member of the Municipal Council of São Luis against the colony’s governor, who was allegedly sending his own servants to slave trade in the hinterlands. The captain explained how the settlers: “...do not work without the Indians, nor farm for ourselves or for anyone else, any fruit of the land, nor can we navigate to any part.”⁴⁹ The idea that Indigenous populations in Amazonia were artful in navigation was not just something said by settlers. Vieira’s book, *História do Futuro*, discussed how the Maranhões were “known...particularly for their exercise in and art of navigation, which the Maranhões were known for among the Indians, since they were inventors of their seafaring, as people born and raised more in water than in land.”⁵⁰ Vieira himself had explained how the Igaruanas people had taken their name from the word igará, meaning canoe. In this way, their name can be understood as meaning something akin to “lords of the ships.”⁵¹

Increasingly, the dependency on Indigenous workers due to their ability to navigate waterways appeared again and again in settler petitions. In 1672, the Crown’s procurator, Mateus Mousinho, wrote an opinion (*parecer*) about Indigenous captivity and mission labor. He reiterated that Indigenous peoples should not be made captive, unless under the four cases provided in the law of 1655. Mousinho also advocated the upholding of the law of 1647, so that Indigenous people could work freely, which would be convenient for Indigenous brought down from the hinterlands (*índios descidos*) so they could “apply themselves to mechanical tasks.”⁵² In response to Mousinho, the pro-settler governor of Maranhão, Ruy Siqueira, refuted these conclusions. Siqueira explained in a petition that: “The State of Maranhão is composed of two settlements as cities, four captaincies, with a sum of 800 settlers, all poor, miserable, and whose complete remedy depends on the *gentio*, given the impossibility of being served by Blacks from Angola and Guiné.” Siqueira continued that even if enslaved workers from Angola and Guiné were sold in the colony:

“...we could barely conserve the state in the present time without the native Indians since all [of the colony’s] commerce and services are accomplished through water...and since the cities are elevated in islands, the settlers cannot cultivate their farms in these islands if not through water, and these Indians are of much use in these navigations...”⁵³

⁴⁸ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 6, D. 671.

⁴⁹ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 132.

⁵⁰ António Vieira, 166-. *História do Futuro: livro ante primeiro, prologomeno a toda a história do futuro que se declara o fim e se provam os fundamentos dela: matéria, verdade, e utilidades da história do futuro*. Lisboa: Editores J.M.C. Seabra & T.Q. Antunes, 1855: 163.

⁵¹ Quoted in Cohen, *The Fire of the Tongues*, 167.

⁵² AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 569.

⁵³ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 569; “...o que tudo consta de oitocentos moradores todos pobres e miseráveis, e que o seu total remédio depende do gentio, com que se (...) a impossibilidade de se poder servir com negros de Angola e Guiné, demais, que quando dita se pudera vender, mal se poderia conservar esse estado no tempo presente sem os índios naturaes, sendo todo o seu comercio e serviço por agoa, o tanto assim que estando as cidades elevada em huma ilha, os moradores não podem cultivar fazendas, que tem na mesma ilha se não por agoa e (?) os sobreditos índios prestíssimos nestas navegações de ordenáreis se verde em elles miseráveis naufrágios”

This was not the first time that Ruy Siqueira had discussed Indigenous peoples as practical in navigation. In a 1661 letter advocating that the captaincy of Ceará be part of Maranhão's jurisdiction, Siqueira argued that it was too difficult to navigate from Ceará to Pernambuco. Siqueira claimed that "gathering knowledge of the Coast and the Land through practical pilots, the native Indians," was essential for these two states. If the jurisdictions were divided, it would be harder to convince "these practical men nor would they want to leave their homes...to risk themselves given the difficulties of knowing that coast."⁵⁴ Writing to the Overseas Council in 1672, the Municipal Council used their procurator, the captain Manoel Campeio de Andrade, to express that "...for the conservation and growth of that state it is necessary to ask for the *descimento* of free Indians from the hinterlands of the Amazon River, the Rio Negro, the Aroans, and Tocantins, and other areas:

"...because without these Indians there is no way of conserving this state, either in peace or in war, or to discover and make new settlements, and for the ordinary assistance of (?) of your majesty, since they row the canoes and take the governors to visit the captaincies of the magistrates..."⁵⁵

The Municipal Council surely caught the attention of the Overseas Council by claiming that the collection of tithes could not be done without Indigenous rowers. Governors and judges would visit captaincies for multiple reasons, including for the collection of tithes by the Royal tax collector, and tax collections went to the royal revenue of the Crown. By 1672, one of the councilmen of the Overseas Council reported that the biggest source of unhappiness and bad governance according to the settlers was the presence of the Jesuits. Though Feliciano Dourado agreed with the Jesuits, he described settlers who could not make trips from Pará to Maranhão since the Jesuits would refuse to give them access to Indigenous laborers.⁵⁶

These arguments should be read with some skepticism, since they tended to homogenize both peoples and made the colony seem less complex. For one, extraction was not the only productive activity in Maranhão in those decades. São Luis and its surrounding areas also relied on cattle ranching, small-scale sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations, while Belém became a key site for the trade in forest products and in Indigenous slaves. It was not just extractive services that required Indigenous workers. Donatary captains and plantation owners would also ask for *descimentos* of Indigenous workers, usually couples, to work in sugar mills.⁵⁷ But it was extraction above all that became the key argument among settlers to ask for Indigenous workers.

Rather, my key argument is that the rise of the *drogas do sertão* trade and the colony's fluvial system became two characteristics that settlers latched onto to make their case for greater access to Indigenous workers, either free or enslaved. Though these arguments responded to observed practices of Indigenous peoples on-the-ground, they were just one of many arguments that settlers tested in their attempt to gain access to Indigenous laborers. Another common settler

⁵⁴ "Requerimento de Ruy Vaz de Sequeira para que o Ceará volte a ser agregado ao Governo do Maranhão," 1661, in *Documentos para a História do Brasil e especialmente a do Ceará*, Vol. 4, ed. Guilherme Studart (Fortaleza: Typ. Minerva, 1921): 133.

⁵⁵ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 569.

⁵⁶ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 568.

⁵⁷ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 154. In 1673, the donatary captain of the Island of Joannes, Antonio de Sousa Macedo, asked the Crown to persuade Pedro Cesar de Meneses the authorization to use indigenous workers in the sugar mills of those islands.

argument for Indigenous slaves was that there were no other workers but the Indigenous in the colony. One anonymous letter compiled with Ruy Siqueira's opinions from 1672 explained:

"...the settlers of Brazil can serve themselves without the Indians of that State, because of the great quantities of Blacks that are sold to them from Guiné and Angola. Only the settlers of São Paulo serve themselves with [the Indians], and not with the Blacks, as do the settlers of Maranhão. They cannot serve themselves without the Indians of that State, because in that State [of Maranhão] there is no commerce with the Blacks of Guiné and Angola."⁵⁸

The comparison with São Paulo, the other region of Portuguese America that relied extensively on enslaved Indigenous workers, shows a consciousness among the settler population that these regions were fundamentally different than the State of Brazil.⁵⁹ The effect of the *Drogas do sertão* trade is that it "Amazonified" their discourses. Whereas Cristovão de Lisboa and Jorge de Sampaio made claims of dependence on Indigenous work that were quite similar to the claims of sixteenth century settlers in Bahia, the expansion of a new sort of economy centered around navigation and the finding of forest goods gave settlers more evidence to justify their dependency on Indigenous workers. As such, we can see the process where discourses used in sixteenth-century Bahia increasingly changed and adapted to new local conditions in Maranhão.

The Capacity and the "Ruin" of the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará

As problems in Maranhão's economic model started to surface in the late 1670s and 1680s, the colony became subject of intense debate between São Luis and Lisbon. The colony faced a series of problems aside from plantation burnings, such as currency shortages and outbreaks of disease.⁶⁰ Sugar plantations were scarce because of the lack of laborers and settler relocation given Indigenous resistance through the burning of plantations. Aside from problems in the plantations, overextraction in the *drogas do sertão* trade was also particularly damaging to the local economy. As David Sweet explained, collectors relied on credit from merchants for their expeditions to the hinterlands: "If the collectors returned empty-handed, they were obliged to provide more for the next season to have any hope at all of being repaid. In the 1680s with the forest production in steady decline, all participants in this risk-ridden system found themselves very hard-put to survive."⁶¹

In the late 1670s and early 1680s, both subjects on the ground and imperial officials in Lisbon understood Maranhão as a colony in ruin. Imperial administrators and missionaries who

⁵⁸ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 569: "...que os moradores do Brasil se podem servir e servirem sem os índios daquelle Estado, por quanto tem negros que lhe vão a vender de Guine e Angola, e somente os moradores de São Paulo se servem com elles, e não com os ditos negros, e da mesma maneyra os moradores do Maranhão se não podem servir sem os índios daquelle estado, porque não ha naquelle estado comercio com os negros de Guine e Angola."

⁵⁹ For more on slavery in São Paulo, see Muriel Nazzari, "Transition toward Slavery: Changing Legal Practice Regarding Indians in Seventeenth-Century São Paulo," *The Americas* 49, no. 2 (1992): 131–55; Muriel Nazzari, "Vanishing Indians: The Social Construction of Race in Colonial São Paulo," *The Americas* 57, no. 4 (2001): 497–524.

⁶⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 5, D. 547.

⁶¹ Sweet, "A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed," 58–9.

tackled the subject to Maranhão's ruin understood the region's poverty as resulting from a reliance on Indigenous labor and the type of extraction conducted in the Amazon. Missionaries, some local officials, and imperial agents increasingly set themselves in opposition to this type of colonial economy and its reliance on the system of *cativeiro dos índios*. As such, these figures presented a series of letters in the late 1670s presenting alternatives and solutions for a colony in crisis. As a counterpoint to the rhetoric of settlers seeking profit from Indigenous skills and labor, a largely missionary and imperial discourse evolved that understood the *cativeiro dos índios* as the problem of the colony, the dependence on Indigenous laborers as uncondusive to economic development, and extractive work as inferior to cultivation.

These writers saw Indigenous captivity as a reason why the colony was less productive than it could be, and the "kind treatment of the Indians" as the solution for the growth of the colony.⁶² The principal vicar of the colony, Domingo Anthunes Thomás, expressed his concerns about Maranhão's growth in a 1679 letter.⁶³ Thomas pointed to the seeming contradiction that the State of Maranhão and Pará is "the most abundant and fertile" with lands ripe for sugar plantations "just as good as those of Bahia" and yet "the poorest and most miserable, according to reports."⁶⁴ Thomas opposed the colony's reliance on extractive production. He decried how settlers became too interested in sending enslaved Indigenous workers to the hinterlands for commodities rather than developing the colony's agricultural capacities. The settlers, according to Thomas, would:

"...send troops to the hinterlands for slaves, send canoes for bark-clove and cacao, occupying all the mission Indians, while those that stay in the missions have to task themselves with making canoes and woods, and so the settlers have no one to help them in their service [plantations], nor do the Indians have time to grow provisions, through which the settlers sustain themselves...with these continuous works [the Indigenous] die and there will be no more of them."⁶⁵

When describing slaving expeditions, Thomás painted a vivid picture where approximately 200-300 Indigenous peoples, some soldiers, and a white captain that left Pará in 1679 to the hinterlands of the Amazon River, "where it is certain that they have ended with their lives with such long and continuous work." Thomas described the *cativeiro dos índios* as having "less humanity" than "the Moors and the Turks that conquer Christian lands."⁶⁶ In the 1670s, there were widespread calls across sectors of the colonial population for the establishment of a company to bring enslaved Africans to Maranhão.⁶⁷ Thomás himself reached this conclusion,

⁶² AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 547.

⁶³ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 5, D. 595.

⁶⁴ BA 50-V-37, n. 137.

⁶⁵ BA 50-V-37, n. 137. "Começa a cogitar os modos com que ha de ajuntar cabedais, manda tropas ao sertão para escravos, manda canoas ao cravo, e ao cacao, em que se ocupão todos os índios das aldeas forros, e alguns que ficão também se occupão a serviço fazendolhes canoas e madeiras por cujo respeito os moradores não tem quem os ajuda em seu serviço, nem os índios lugar para fazerem mantimentos, com que os moradores se sustentavão, e maes do tempo, por pouco mais de nada os índios mal pazes, e com estes contínuos trabalhos morrem e acabam."

⁶⁶ BA 50-V-37, n. 137. "Que naquele estado assisti, mouros e turcos conquistando terras de Christãos se hão com mais humanidade e menos rigor, do que os portugueses usao com os pobres índios, o modo que se usa e prática no fazer escravos daquele estado he o seguinte."

⁶⁷ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 5, D. 547

noting that the development of the colony would only occur with the introduction of enslaved Africans. According to Thomás:

“For the growth of that state, slaves from Angola and Guiné are necessary, and there should be someone who brings them, either by the order of the Governor or a merchant nominated by Your Majesty, who would sell [slaves] at a fair price, because until now they have been excessive selling them at 120,000 réis...because with these conveniences the state will grow and be richer and more powerful, and the profits of your Majesty will grow...since we know that Brazil did not have growth until Blacks from Angola and Guiné arrived there, and when they stopped using Indigenous slaves, and the same is true for the Indies of Castille.”⁶⁸

These suggestions became increasingly steeped in a language of African capacity and durability as laborers, as opposed to Indigenous incapacity.⁶⁹ The vicar Bartolomeu Galvão echoed many of the same opinions as Thomás, explaining that “And as we know in all of Brazil, when they used native *gentios* [as workers] they did not have plantations, nor did they have abundance before they had [enslaved Africans].”⁷⁰ According to Galvão:

“It is certain that we cannot conserve and grow that state if those settlers do not have Blacks to work on the plantations, and for the lack of these, [the settlers] use the Indians, enslaving many of them. Your Majesty should tend to this by sending to that State Blacks from Angola and the Costa da Mina, because those are for more durable work.”⁷¹

The stereotype that Africans were more “durable” for work was not new. We have evidence of similar discourses in the early seventeenth century. Maranhão proved to be an interesting place for the deployment of this argument, since religious authorities increasingly used this argument to counter a settler preference for Indigenous laborers. In other words, while in seventeenth-century Bahia, the idea of African durability was used to make sense of the transition in labor regimes, in Maranhão, this paradigm was now used to counter the arguments of settlers, who insisted on their dependency on indigenous slavery. Take, for example, the Procurator of the Jesuits, Francisco de Mattos, who commented on the settler letters that he had been receiving from Maranhão and Pará. In 1679, Mattos explained:

“What these letters imply is that the work of the Indians is more convenient than the work of the Blacks. This is a manifest error, because the Indians are not for enduring

⁶⁸ BA 50-V-37, n. 137: “se augmentará o estado, e fará rico e poderoso, e crescerão as tendas de V.A., e sobrando o número pois se sabe que o Brasil não teve augmento se não depois que nelle entrarão os negros de Angola e Guiné, e deixarão os escravos do gentio da terra, e mesmo as Indias de Castella.”

⁶⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 5, D. 547

⁷⁰ BA, 50-V-27, n. 134: “E assi o conheço todo o brazil, que emquanto se valerão dos naturais gentios não fizerão lavouras, nem tirarão abundância dos frutos, em quanto não tiveram esta gente.”

⁷¹ BA, 50-V-37, n. 134: “Também he certo que se não pode conservar e augmentar aquelle estado sem terem aquelles moradores negros que lhes fabriquem as lavouras e por falta destes se remedeão aquelle gentio, cativando muitos sem o serem V.A. deve acodir a isto, mandando meter naquelle Estado negros de Angola ou da Costa da Mina, que estes são para o trabalho os mais duráveis”

work, like the Blacks, because [the Indians] are more debilitated by nature than [the Africans] as experience has shown.”⁷²

Mattos recommended that the Crown focus on “placing Blacks in Maranhão, because only with them can the state be conserved, as is done in all of Brazil.”⁷³ In all these letters, much like the writings of Vieira in 1661, the institution of African slavery is framed as the key to conservation and to growth. And in all these letters, there was an established relationship between colonial growth and a racialized notion of African durability and proclivity to work, that contrasted to an Indigenous incapacity to work.

Missionaries and vicars were not the only ones who placed African slavery as the key to colonial growth. Plenty of settlers in Maranhão, sometimes through the unified voice of the Municipal Councils, demanded increased number of enslaved Africans in the colony. Most of these petitions repeated the same discursive frameworks. In 1665, a petition from the officials of the Municipal Council of São Luis noted that the smallpox epidemic had impoverished the population, asking for *Tapanhunos* of Angola and Guiné to work in the farms.⁷⁴ The petition explained that: “as experience has shown us throughout the State of Brazil in the city of Bahia and in the entire coast of Pernambuco...[only] after serving themselves with Tapanhunos slaves did they see growth.”⁷⁵

Sometimes, settlers framed their demand for African slaves not as about the growth of the State of Brazil, but as a result of the fact that they had no access to Indigenous laborers. This was in response to the many attempts of the Crown to regulate Indigenous labor. In 1675, Marcel Nunes da Costa, a captain in Pará, petitioned the Overseas Council for more divisions of Indigenous peoples in missions, since “in that captaincy there are no other people to serve, leaving the supplicant helpless.”⁷⁶ In 1673, officials of the Municipal Council of São Luis asked for the formation of a company to bring enslaved Africans. The letter claimed that for the “conservation and growth of the State, it would be very necessary to bring slaves from Angola, Guiné, and Cacheu, because observing the laws of your V.M. that we do not use those from ransomed slaves of the *gentio natural*, necessarily, there must be others, for we cannot live without them, as are used in Brazil...”⁷⁷ The settlers demanded that they pay only half of the rights of new enslaved people for a period of five years. Early efforts to bring enslaved Africans were private. The settlers of Pará formed a private company, giving their capital to a man named

⁷² BA, 50-V-37, n. 84: “O que nestas cartas se diz e insinua de ser conveniente e mais acertado valer menos do trabalho dos índios, que dos negros, he erro manifesto; porque os índios não são para aturar o trabalho, como os negros, por serem de natureza mais débil, q elles, o que tem mostrado a experiencia. E a razão de que trabalhando por jornal pago, se não os negros e seustalos, he fabil em toda a maneira; por que aonde se hande buscar cabedais, para esses pagamentos dos índios, se nos ouvera de servir só delles, e excluir os negros, quando hoje”

⁷³ BA, 50-V-37, n. 84:

⁷⁴ *Tapanhunos* was a colonial term, derived from Tupi, used to describe enslaved Africans, used most commonly in Maranhão. See Stuart Schwartz and Hal Langfur, “Tapanhuns, Negros da Terra, and Curibocas: Common Cause and Confrontation between Blacks and Indians in Colonial Brazil,” in *Black and Red: African-Indigenous Relations in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 81-114.

⁷⁵ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 4, D. 499, Cx. 4, D. 506.

⁷⁶ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 160

⁷⁷ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 5, D. 576.

Antonio Coutinho to bring slaves from Angola.⁷⁸ By 1676, Antonio de Barros Bezorrra and Manoel Preto Beldoz were tasked with forming a Company in the West African ports of Cacheu and Guiné after a consultation with the Overseas Council.⁷⁹ Fundamentally though, the Crown had little incentive to bring enslaved Africans. Settlers in Maranhão largely did not have enough capital as slaves were sold at too high prices to make up for the journey.

Ultimately, there seems to be a slight settler bias of enslaved African workers for plantation and Indigenous laborers for extraction, though this divide was far from neat and straightforward. I use the term slight because, as this dissertation has shown, settlers in Maranhão asked for Indigenous laborers to work in sugar plantations quite frequently. But we can see a certain settler bias of enslaved African workers for cultivation, and indeed slaves for cultivation. The settler João de Ornelas da Câmara asked for African slaves in his letter from the 1660s to Queen D. Luiza. Citing the “various utilities of Maranhão”, Câmara was a proponent of bark-clove and cacao cultivation in the colony.⁸⁰ He lamented the lack of reforestation in the region, expressing concern that the frequent cutting down of bark-clove trees in Pará would soon mean that there would be “no more of this drug.” Câmara credited these acts to the fact that it was more costly to remove the bark than to chop down the entire tree, as it was a time-intensive process. This created a process through which settlers look for more distant regions to access trees, and Câmara predicted that this would also happen in Xingu, a recently explored river system where “many trees have been discovered recently.”⁸¹ Câmara credited settler greed as part of the colony’s problem: “Since the lands in which they find these trees are not theirs, they do not apply themselves to their benefit, and everyone takes what is in their private interest, without consideration to the common good.”⁸² Câmara suggested a policy of encouraging the cultivation of trees, which would bring better quality products and its flowers could be useful. This required three steps. First, to order that only the bark be removed from the trees so that they could keep producing, and that those who remove the clove be ordered to tend to the forest and plant as many trees as the land can manage. With cultivation, there soon could be a monopoly on clove. He suggested nominating an official whose sole responsibility was to manage clove production, “giving him the whites, Indians, and canoes necessary” to work in Capim and Xingu. Câmara also lamented the lack of enslaved Africans: “The growth of this state depends on having *Blacks*.” For Câmara, the *cativeiro dos indios* was problematic for the colony “because we do not have as much service from these [Indigenous peoples], as from one slave from Angola, whom the settlers long for, and with whom they know they will secure the growth of their wealth, and they would forget Indigenous captivity, which means they would flee less from us, and they would more easily arrive at our settlements and be reduced to our holy faith.”

While settler claims for African slaves may seem contradictory to the petitions asking for Indigenous slaves, we should understand these claims as testing out arguments rather than steadfast preferences. Settlers had certain claims they made to ask for African slaves and certain claims they made asking for Indigenous slavery. These claims could seem contradictory but were not mutually exclusive. We can determine certain patterns from when these discourses arise. One pattern is that arguments lauding Indigenous labor and slavery were most common during times where the Crown was attempting to restrict settler control or when there was a change in

⁷⁸ ANTT, Coleção São Vicente, vol. 23.

⁷⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 770

⁸⁰ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 147.

⁸¹ ANTT, Coleção São Vicente, vol. 23.

⁸² ANTT, Coleção São Vicente, vol. 23.

legislation. When it came to disease outbreaks, we can see settler petitions both demanding enslaved Africans and more slaving expeditions in the hinterlands. Another likely explanation related to the personal interests of the supplicants. Expeditions in the interior to gather the *Drogas do sertão* were also expeditions that led to illegal slave trading activity. Captains of expeditions likely ransomed captives and sold them illegally and had direct financial stake in the indigenous slave trade. Another factor affecting advocacy for African or Indigenous slavery, or both, was the nature of extractive versus plantation work. If settlers thought that extractive work more easily led to flight, then we can understand why settlers like Câmara would advocate for a shift to the cultivation, rather than extraction, of forest products.

The idea that Maranhão should follow in Brazil's footsteps was best represented by João de Moura, a vassal in the court of Lisbon, who spent limited time in the colony and wrote a three-part treatise on the State of Maranhão.⁸³ João de Moura's treatise fundamentally sought to solve Maranhão's problems with a Bahian model. It was not a coincidence, for example, that Moura used the same structure and much of the same language as Brandão's 1612 *Dialogos sobre as Grandezas do Estado do Brasil*, discussed in this dissertation's introduction. Rather than discussing Brazil, Moura superimposed Maranhão on some of the same sentences. Just like *Dialogos*, Moura structured his treatise as a dialogue between two friends, one called Thought and one called Discourse.

The main objective of the treatise was to answer how a colony with such promise had found itself in ruin. Moura even reached the same conclusions as Brandão: Maranhão's problems were not the land, but the people and their governance. Like Brandão, Moura emphasized the importance of cultivation and agriculture for colonial development rather than any naturally occurring commodities. Brandão was writing in the peak of the sugar economy of Brazil, as the economy had turned away from Brazilwood. Seventy years later, Moura was writing to protest the excessive reliance of Maranhão on the *drogas do sertão* trade. "Thought" and "Discourse" discussed a series of ideas on why this could be the case. At one point, "Discourse" concluded that this must have to do with the lack of quality of the land, since the Portuguese had been in Maranhão for almost 70 years, which is "enough to know growth" in a colony. The answer must be that the land is not fertile or the climate not healthy. "Discourse" concluded that if the Amazonian colony was as fertile as it was alleged, the "sugars would be as good as those of Bahia, the cacao would not be inferior to those of the Indies, and clove could compare to the quality of those from Malaca."⁸⁴

In the dialogue, "Thought" argued that all the problems that the Amazon faces are social, rather than environmental ones. He noted that waiting times to deliver the previous year's yields meant that sugars spoiled quickly, which did not happen in other parts of Brazil, where embarkations were much more frequent and happened the same year in which sugars are produced. "Thought" continued that if the sugars of Maranhão were not as good as those of Brazil, it was because they were badly produced, given the lack of laborers and capital. Unlike Brazil, "Thought" explained, Maranhão had an incredible system of navigable rivers, with winds easily allowing for navigation against the tide and riverbanks full of fertile land. This meant that this entire region was full of possible commodities, including those commonly found in Portuguese overseas possessions in the East, such as pepper, cinnamon, clove, apple, and cardamom. "Discourse" agreed with "Thought", noting that these goods from Maranhão could

⁸³ BNP, Manuscritos Reservados, Códice 585.

⁸⁴ BNP, Manuscritos Reservados, Códice 585.

substitute for the loss of India, without having to deal with the difficulties that the Portuguese encountered in India, such as the constant need for a supply of silver.

Moura emphasized the importance of cultivation over extraction. “Thought” claimed that the cacao was tastier and bigger when cultivated rather than when fetched from the forest. He credited Maranhão’s ruin to the discovery of the *drogas do sertão*. He explained that when Portuguese settlers arrived in Maranhão, they did not have enough capital to erect sugar and tobacco plantations. When they discovered cacao and clove, they quickly became tempted to “... go to the forest [rather] than to cultivate land, and because fetching those drugs necessitates slaves, they left the plantations with no one, because the most amount of people that were sent to the interior, the more cacao and clove was gathered.” This caused terrible damage to the colony. If the settlers of Maranhão “had sugar plantations like those of Bahia, Pernambuco, and Rio, they would have, as those settlers have, merchants to bring them slaves from Africa, so that it would no longer be necessary for them to vex the naturals of the land.” Here, Moura was likely referring to the accumulation of capital that allowed Bahian planters to import enslaved Africans more easily.

Relatedly, Maranhão had a problem in labor. First, the State did not have many people, when “peopling” was the key to growth in Portuguese America. Second, systems of Indigenous captivity threatened cultivation. According to “Thought,” the main problem of the colony was that:

“The first Portuguese that occupied this State were from Pernambuco, and since those were accustomed to the production of sugar, when they found themselves in control of Maranhão, they quickly began to edify sugar mills, necessitating a great quantity of slaves, as you know, and in that time they ransomed these slaves from the neighboring gentio, where at first they found sincere friendship that in time converted itself into hate, born out of ambition in finding those that could work in sugar and in the farms”⁸⁵

“Thought” continued by explaining that with time, it became clear that these slaving expeditions “were not the way to grow the State.” Since the Portuguese started waging war on enemy groups, suddenly those that “had been taken from violence of war, as Natives of the land, knew of and had places to flee to, and as the settlers faced these flights, and because the *gentio* are not naturally much for work, [the settlers] never saw themselves full of servants, committing various insults, captivating those that were free.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ BNP, Manuscritos Reservados, Códice 585: “Os primeyros Portuguezes que occuparão este Estado forão de Pernambuco, e como estes na terra donde sahirão estava costumados a fabricar dos assucares, tanto que se virão seguros na posse do Maranhão, começarão logo a edificar engenhos, necessitando estes de quantidade de escravos, como sabeis, os quais naquelle tempo resgatavão Gentio vezinho, em quem no princípio acharão sincera amizade, que depois se converteo em ódio, nascido da ambição, com que procuravão quem trabalhasse nos assucares, e nas mais rocas que fazião”

⁸⁶ BNP, Manuscritos Reservados, Códice 585: “...foy a ambição motive do ódio, este das guerras que sobreviverão, que os Portuguez não procuravam atalhar, por imaginarem que com ellas alcançariam melhor o alvo de seu dezejo, que era captivos, o tempo que tudo mostra, lhes fez patente não ser este o meyo de se augmenter o Estado, porque quando os escravos era resgatados dos vezinhos amigos, não tinham guarida nas fugidas, sofrião com paciência, e com a mesma servidão, porque não ouzavão fugir para os amigos daquelles aquem foiados; os que se tomarão com a violência da Guerra, como erão naturais da terra, sabião por onde havião de fugir, e tinham para onde; e como os moradores por estas fugidas, e por o gentio não ser naturalmente para muyto trabalho, nunca se visem fartos de servos, comettidos varios insultos, captivando os que erão livres,

Moura's petition shows how ideas about labor, the type of production, and colonial development were all tied together in Portuguese colonial state-building. For Moura, experience had shown that an ideal colony was one based on enslaved African labor and producing cultivated goods in a plantation complex. Even if those goods were not sugar, these products would be better if they were cultivated rather than extracted.

As such, by the 1680s in Maranhão, we can broadly identify two styles of argumentation about labor in Maranhão. On one hand, those demanding Indigenous workers or slaving expeditions in the hinterlands claimed that Indigenous peoples had unique capacity as laborers in the region, especially for finding forest goods, penetrating the forest, and navigating the waterways. On the other hand, those demanding access to the trans-Atlantic slave trade would cite how the State of Brazil only grew when enslaved Africans were introduced. In other words, copying the model of the State of Brazil was the solution to Maranhão's ruin. In both of these styles of argumentation, petitioners pitted Indigenous versus African capacity to work to make their larger claim. While ideas of African durability in plantation contexts proliferated, so did arguments that Indigenous peoples were the most practical and experienced workers in the region.

The flurry of petitions on the *cativeiro dos índios* and Maranhão's generalized decline had an impact in Lisbon. In 1680, for the second time in the history of Portuguese America, The Crown issued a decree that definitively banned Indigenous slavery in the colony. The royal decree of 1680 granted the missionaries power over the distribution of labor and unequivocally forbade Indigenous slavery, demanding that all Indigenous peoples found captive be liberated and taken to missions. In order to compensate for the eradication of Indigenous slavery, the Crown promised more enslaved African laborers in the colony. In 1682, the Crown established the General Commercial Company of Maranhão to solve Maranhão's labor and production crisis. This company had the monopoly (*estanco*) to introduce 10,000 enslaved persons from Africa to Maranhão and Pará, holding the promise of fixing Maranhão's chronic poverty.

The Failed Resolutions of the 1680s and Beckman's Revolt

The fundamental promise of the law of 1680 was that the abolition of Indigenous slavery would be accompanied by introduction of enslaved Africans in large numbers, but this promise was not met. Despite some small numbers of enslaved Africans arriving in São Luís, the General Commercial Company was incapable of meeting its target of delivering 500 enslaved African persons to the colony per year.⁸⁷ In 1680, the Municipal Councils of São Luís and Belém protested the ban on Indigenous slavery and the fact that the "slaves they so badly needed would not arrive."⁸⁸ According to the settlers, the enslaved workers that did arrive tended to go only to the governors and the ministers of the colonial government.⁸⁹ Settlers also complained about the royal monopoly on cacao, which discouraged settlers from working on cultivation of the crop.⁹⁰

Writing to the Captain-General in January of 1684, the governor Francisco de Sá de Meneses commented on the arrival of enslaved people from Cacheu after the establishment of

e vivião de baixo da fé da amizade, como este procedimento se desacreitou a nação, reputorse mal a religião, para com o bárbaros, em que não havia capacidade para destinguir mais que pelos exteriores."

⁸⁷ Silva, "The Atlantic Slave Trade to Maranhão," 478.

⁸⁸ AHU Maranhão Cx. 6, D. 672.

⁸⁹ AHU Maranhão Cx. 6, D. 649.

⁹⁰ BA, 50-V-37, n.136

the General Commercial Company of Maranhão. Meneses claimed that these arrivals meant that the settlers could finally “be encouraged to tend to their conveniences” as enslaved Africans are “more convenient for this land.”⁹¹ Indeed, Meneses seems to share in a common idea in the 1680s that the “augmentation and conservation” of Maranhão, in other words, its colonial development, would only follow from the arrival of African slaves to the colony. As Meneses himself would say ten months later in another letter, “only with the Blacks could we grow this state, as these settlers have seen.”⁹² A few months later, Meneses noted that the arrival of enslaved Africans had not fixed the colony’s problems: “it seems to me that even with many of these the settlers have not resolved themselves to produce in the plantations because of the *Tapuyas do Corso*.”⁹³ Meneses was referring to Indigenous groups burning plantations, allegedly as a response to widespread slaving expeditions. .

In response to the failures of meeting these promises, over 100 settlers gathered in the main square of São Luis in February 1684, to protest the administration of the governor Francisco de Sé de Meneses. The rebels charged towards the colonial guard, stormed the governor’s office, and arrested the Captain General Balthazar Fernandes. Once inside the office, the rebels formed a junta that demanded the dissolution of the General Commerce Company of Maranhão, and called, once more, for the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Maranhão. This brought about a rebellion on the part of the settlers that had support from other religious missionaries, such as the secular clergy, the Franciscans, and Carmelites.⁹⁴ According to the twelve residents representing the rebels, the people of Maranhão, in light of the “lack of government and assistance from the governors of the city” and for “having no one to govern us or to defend us from an invasion,” had resorted to governing themselves. This act of civil disobedience was justified due to the “oppression and tyranny of the newly established monopoly company” and the “infinite damage” inflicted upon the settlers by the Jesuits. Requesting immediate remedies from the Crown, the rebels stated that these colonial institutions had “destroy[ed] the people who with such loyalty and at great cost have restored the state of Maranhão.”⁹⁵

Beckman’s Revolt, named after its leader, the Portuguese-German immigrant and plantation-owner Manuel Beckman, overtook the settlement of São Luis for almost all of 1684. Though the rebellion was set back when the neighboring village of Belém refused to join the movement, the Portuguese crown still took well over a year to quash the uprising. Upon hearing about the state of chaos in this geographically strategic frontier region, Dom Pedro II ordered a new governor to restore royal rule in São Luis. But by then, the rebellion had already lost much of its momentum with the breakdown of the volunteer militia. By June of 1685, the Portuguese army had taken back control of the colony. And by November of that same year, Beckman and his co-conspirator, Jorge de Sampaio, had been hanged for treason.

Beckman’s Rebellion was the culmination of a series of settler grievances to three perceived problems: the lack of defense, the effects of the monopoly company, and the lack of

⁹¹ BA, 51-V-44, f. 114-114v.

⁹² BA, 51-V-44, f. 214v

⁹³ BA, 51-V-44, f. 114-114v.

⁹⁴ Marcia E. A. Mello, “O Regimento das Missões: poder e negociação na Amazônia Portuguesa,” *Clio* 27, no. 1 (2009): 50.

⁹⁵ “Proposta que Fizeram os Procuradores do Povo Sobre o Governo da Cidade de São Luis do Maranhão,” in *A Revolta de Bequimão*, ed. Milson Coutinho (São Luís: Instituto Geia, 2004): 199-201.

laborers.⁹⁶ In terms of the lack of laborers, the Municipal Council of Sao Luis protested the ban on Indigenous slavery and the inability of the Company to deliver enslaved African workers to the colony. Analyzing the writings of the colony's leader, Manuel Beckman, shows how settler grievances tested a series of contradictory arguments. Writing in 1679, five years before the rebellion, Beckman outlined all the problems that he saw in the governance of Maranhão. For the purposes of my analysis, I focus only on his comments regarding labor.

Beckman identified three issues for labor in Maranhão. First, he decried the lack of slaves, both Indigenous and African. Capitalizing on imperial fears of Dutch and French expansion in the Cabo do Norte, Beckman claimed that he would not have a lack of enslaved African workers if he lived under Dutch control.⁹⁷ He complained that Portuguese merchants "sell us Indians for 60 and 80,000 réis, when we ourselves can go get them in the hinterlands."⁹⁸ Beckman recounts how after he left prison for the first time, he found himself "lost and in a farm without people," particularly because he "could not find an Indian that cost less than 60,000 réis." Presumably, these higher prices were a result on the restrictions on slaving expeditions, dwindling the supply of enslaved peoples in the colony. He complained that when he did have access to Indigenous laborers, these workers would "live for very little" and were "overworked to cover their costs", preventing adequate returns on his investments.

The second problem was Jesuit control over Indigenous labor. Under the Jesuits, Beckman argued, the Indigenous do not "retrieve clove, cacao, nor any other drug for it is against the laws of Your Highness, and they only have to work for six months for payment, and then the other six months they work for themselves, against the service of God and of Your Highness and against the laws and regiments" of the Portuguese Crown.⁹⁹ The supplicant explained how the Jesuits have mistreated the indigenous population, noting that the "sign of the holy cross" is essentially "a misleading instrument for the enslavers." For Beckman, there were ample justifications for the subjugation of the Indigenous population to the settlers, since for him, "the Indians in general being, without exception, of greedy and self-serving nature to the extreme, lacking anything akin to ambition of fame, honor, and opinion; more prone to drinking than eating..." By explaining how Indigenous peoples were "miserable with liberty", Beckman seemed to be suggesting the formation of something akin to the Spanish American *encomienda* system. As such, the supplicant argued in his policy recommendation that this labor should be distributed among the settlers, since no imperial ruling had been effective in preventing slaving expeditions. Indeed, Beckman made clear that settlers in Maranhão would continue to enslave Indigenous peoples no matter what the metropole decided, and as such, only looser restrictions

⁹⁶ In general, historians have written about Beckman's Rebellion in three ways. First, much of the nationalist historiography depicted the uprising as one of many nativist conflicts in the seventeenth century that acted as precursors to the story of Brazilian independence. Others have claimed that the rebellion's testimonies are some of the first discernable examples of an emerging "*criollo consciousness*" among settlers in the Portuguese colony. For an example of this type of argument, see Stuart Schwartz, "The Formation of a Colonial Identity in Brazil," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Historians have since focused on how the rebellion was grounded in extremely local concerns. See Murray G. MacNicoll, "Seventeenth-Century Maranhão: Beckman's Revolt," *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* 4 no. 1 (1978): 129-39; Rafael Chamboleyron, "'Duplicados clamores: Queixas e rebeliões na Amazônia colonial (século XVII).'" *Projeto História* no. 33 (2006): 159-178.

⁹⁷ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 727. For more on Dutch slave trading in the Rio Branco, see Farage, *Muralhas dos sertões*, 85-120.

⁹⁸ BA 50-V-37, n. 21.

⁹⁹ BA 50-V-37, n. 21

on settler access to mission village laborers would prevent enslavement. Beckman requested that the Prince Regent give Indigenous peoples “relief and rest” through “our rigorous subjection and obedience, and so that the “mercy and justice of Your Highness is extended to thinking about them.” All these ideas rested under Beckman’s surefire assumption that the state of Maranhão “will not be conserved without the labor of Indigenous peoples.”

Beckman’s letter was representative of a settler understanding in Maranhão that, even if enslaved Africans were introduced to the colony, the region necessitated settler access to Indigenous labor. It also shows us how settler demands for unfree labor were tied to ideas about equality, good governance, and justice for the vassals of the Crown.¹⁰⁰ Beckman’s Revolt was a turning point in Maranhão’s history, as it brought about the series of debates that would legalize Indigenous slavery and make Indigenous slavery part of the State’s function. Beckman’s armed resistance built upon other writings from the colony to make the case to the crown, ultimately a compelling one, that Indigenous slavery and other forms of servitude were a fundamental right of colonists and needed to be made accessible to all in Maranhão. Prohibitions against it, which might work elsewhere, could not stand there. It shows how crucial Indigenous labor was to the Portuguese enterprise in Maranhão and the inevitable resistance any time the Crown tried to regulate it.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, advocates of increased settler access to Indigenous labor and slavery effectively developed an Amazonian discursive toolkit to justify their reliance on this labor. This discursive toolkit included pointing not just to their poverty or their lack of other laborers, but also the unique capabilities of Indigenous peoples to carry out local work. Four years after Beckman’s Rebellion, the Portuguese Crown would fundamentally alter its position by systematizing slaving expeditions and making Indigenous slavery the purview of the State. The radicalization and racialization of settler arguments is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁰ For a relevant analysis of unfree labor and debates about population and labor in the English Atlantic, see Abigail Swingen, “Labor: Employment, Colonial Servitude, and Slavery in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic,” in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire*, eds. Phillip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 46-75.

CHAPTER 4

“*Práticos na Terra*.” Advocating for Indigenous Service and Slavery, 1685-1757

In 1686, the governor of Maranhão and Grão-Pará, Gomes Freire de Andrade, wrote to the *Junta dos Negócios do Maranhão* outlining the reasons behind the decline of his colony. Freire de Andrade acknowledged that he could not “speak as a theologian” but he could “speak as a soldier.”¹ For the governor, the confusing and contradictory laws on Indigenous labor were Maranhão’s fundamental problem. When missionaries gained control over slaving expeditions and mission village labor, settler access to Indigenous slavery became “impracticable.” A person could only be enslaved through limited definitions of just war, or if they were deemed to have already been in captivity. For Freire de Andrade, settlers would not invest in buying an enslaved person when they “could come to their senses and claim that they were not a servant.”

According to the governor, Maranhão could only function if there were slaves from Angola and fair distribution of Indigenous workers among the settler population. But in the last decades, there had been no efforts to evenly distribute Indigenous laborers “nor did the slaves from Angola come.” Besides, he elaborated, “natural slaves make an incomparable difference in worth to those that come from Guiné and Angola.” For Freire de Andrade:

“A settler receives more service from one Indian than from two Blacks, because these [Indigenous peoples], as sons of the forest, are practical in it, and since they were raised in the rivers and the creeks they know how to row and make canoes, they are industrious in hunting and fishing, sustaining themselves and their masters, and they have the talent and ability to learn all the work that they have to do for the whites, which one does not find in the *Tapanhunos*, or *negros tintos*, because those, as soon as they assimilate, waste time and do not occupy themselves with anything other than domestic labor.”²

Freire de Andrade was writing as a flurry of petitions arrived in Lisbon to resolve the colony’s political crisis.³ In the aftermath of Beckman’s Rebellion and the second expulsion of the Jesuits in 1684, the Portuguese Crown established the *Junta dos Negócios do Maranhão* to hear various opinions, both from lay and missionary representatives, on the questions of labor in the colony.⁴ The Municipal Council in Belém took a leading role in the negotiations by sending a procurator to Lisbon to make a case against Indigenous liberty at the court.

¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 763.

² AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 763. “Os escravos naturais fazem huma incomparável diferença no préstimo aos que vem de Guiné e Angola, e a esse respeito estima hum morador mais o serviço de hum Indio que o de dous negros; porque estes como filhos do mato são práticos nelle, e como criados nos rios e guarapes se sabem remar as canoas e fazelas, sao industrissimos na cassa e pescaria sustentando-se della e seus senhores; tem génio e habilidade para aprenderem com presteza tudo o que vem obrar aos brancos, o que se nao acha nos Tapanhunos, ou negro tintos, porque primeirante que deixem de ser boçais gastão largo tempo e nunca os ocupam mais que para o serviço domestico.” Kiemen’s interpretation of the term *boçal* is “as soon as they learn Portuguese.” See Kiemen, *The Indian Policy of Portugal*, 157.

³ For more details on Gomes Freire de Andrade and the Municipal Council of São Luis, see Rafael Chambouleyron and Fabiano Vilaça dos Santos, “Cartas para um antigo governador: Correspondência da Câmara de São Luis do Maranhão para Gomes Freire de Andrade (1691-1700),” *Revista de História*, no. 180, (2021): 1-24.

⁴ Mello, “O Regimento das Missões,” 46-75. Mello’s article includes an analysis of some of the members of this Junta, which included the president of the Overseas Council, various members of the Overseas Council,

The result of these consultations was the establishment of the *Regimento das Missões* in 1686 and the decree of 1688, which became the frameworks for mission village labor and slavery in Maranhão until the middle of the eighteenth century. These two acts have been described by Dauril Alden as the “compromise between the maximum goals of the settlers and those of the Black Robes.”⁵ The 1686 *Regimento* granted the four missionary orders in the colony control over the mission villages, inaugurating a period of missionary expansion into the hinterlands.⁶ The 1688 decree made Indigenous slavery a state process, where the Royal Treasury funded and drew income from slaving expeditions.⁷ As Camila Loureiro Dias explained, the 1688 decree saw the “institutionalization” of the trade in Indigenous peoples, “a bet on the use of the local labor.”⁸

The growing historiography on Indigenous labor in the Amazon shows how the system established in 1686 and 1688 allowed for mass displacement of Indigenous peoples from the hinterlands into the cities to labor either as slaves, temporary captives, seasonal workers, or mission laborers. Dias et al estimate that, from the period of 1680-1750, somewhere between 100,000 to 265,000 Indigenous peoples were brought from the hinterlands through *resgates*, *guerras*, private *resgates*, and *descimentos*.⁹ For illegal slaving processes alone, this number is estimated to be nearly 170,000. These numbers contrast sharply to the total of 11,000 enslaved people brought to the colony through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the same period.¹⁰

This chapter focuses on the arguments made by those who wanted to create, preserve, and expand the Amazonian slave trade and the system of lay control over Indigenous labor. Though the *Regimento* of 1686 and the decree of 1688 were meant to be a compromise that ended the labor debates in the colony, disagreements between various sectors of the population ensued over the extent and the frequency of slave raids and *descimentos*. Settlers tested a series of arguments in moments where lay control was jeopardized, either by the Crown, Indigenous peoples, missionaries, or external events such as the outbreak of disease. These discourses came to prominence during key debates about Indigenous service: 1684-1688 to the *Junta dos Negócios do Maranhão*, in the 1693 published text *America Abreviada*, 1724-1736 with the Paulo da Silva Nunes controversy, and 1751-1755 when centralizing reforms spurred the Crown to revisit the topic of the abolition of Indigenous slavery.

When settlers felt that that access was threatened, they tested arguments that subverted accepted interpretations of Indigeneity, Indigenous slavery, and Indigenous peoples as compared to African peoples, particularly their natures as workers. Specifically, I will focus on how settlers wielded their on-the-ground experiences to argue that Indigenous peoples were uniquely capable to carry out Amazonian work, and that the slave-trade within Maranhão was more just and

the King’s secretary, the procurator of the Crown, the former governor of Maranhão, and deputies in the Junta das Missões.

⁵ Alden, “Black Robes versus White Settlers,” 34.

⁶ Dias, “O comércio de escravos indígenas,” 243.

⁷ Sweet, “A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed,” 466.

⁸ Dias, “O comércio dos escravos indígenas,” 244.

⁹ Dias, Bombardi, and Costa, “Dimensão da população indígena,” 23. Dias et al identified five modalities of labor: *descimentos officias*, *resgates officias*, *descimento privado*, *resgate privado*, *guerras*, and *escravos ilegais*. For *descimentos*, they relied primarily on Jesuit accounts, while for the slaving expeditions, they rely on the books of the tropas. For more on *descimentos*, see Fernanda Bombardi, “Pelos interstícios do olhar do colonizador: descimentos de índios no Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará (1680-1750),” (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2014).

¹⁰ Silva, “The Atlantic Slave Trade to Maranhão,” 478-485.

practical than relying on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. As this dissertation has shown, arguments about dependency on Indigenous skill were not new. These arguments stemmed from a long-standing tradition of Portuguese captains, plantation owners, and governors protesting restrictions on labor by revealing their dependency on Indigenous laborers and claiming that Indigenous peoples had unique abilities to serve in local environments. In this period, settlers relied increasingly on the notion that Indigenous peoples were ‘sons’, ‘masters’, and ‘practical’ in their lands. Relatedly, they increasingly relied on the argument that the land in Maranhão was different than that of Brazil. Settlers also compared the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the Amazonian slave trade, noting the hypocrisy in permitting the former while restricting the latter. This did not mean that there were not demands for enslaved African laborers. Settlers in Maranhão wanted consistent access to Indigenous labor and enslaved laborers from Africa. But when access to Indigenous labor was threatened, settlers questioned why Africans could be enslaved but not Indigenous peoples, and they denigrated African peoples’ abilities as workers. By mid-century, these arguments became more racialized as notions of physical capacity, ‘robustness’, and skin color intersected with conversations about who was born to serve.

“If the Lands Made the Law:” Making the Settler Case in Lisbon

Following the tumult of Beckman’s Rebellion, representatives of the Municipal Council and governors wrote extensively on the issue of Indigenous labor regulation in the State of Maranhão and Grão-Pará. In 1685, procurators went to Lisbon on behalf of the Municipal Council of Belém. Procurators were part of a larger body of leadership within the councils who functioned as their principal advocates at the Royal Court. This was one of many representative practices in the pluricontinental Portuguese Empire, a way for local elites to rebalance power by making their case to the metropole.¹¹ Not all colonies had this privilege. São Luis only received permission to represent itself in the Court of Lisbon in 1674.¹²

Manuel Guedes Aranha was one of those procurators hired to represent the Municipal Council of Belém in Lisbon.¹³ Aranha was a captain in the colony who had been living in Grão-Pará for over twenty years.¹⁴ He was the son of one of the first conquistadors in the region, Francisco Aranha, who in 1649 had “discovered the bark-clove forest” that was part of the early *Drogas do sertão* boom in the colony.¹⁵ Manuel Guedes Aranha was thus a typical figure for representing the Municipal Council: a man with a military background who had occupied

¹¹ Pedro Cardim, Maria Fernanda Bicalho, and José Damião Rodrigues, “Representação política na monarquia pluricontinental portuguesa: Cortes, Juntas e procuradores,” *Locus: Revista De História* 20, no. 1 (2016): 85-88. Cardim et al. describe the courts as a space where the “common good of the people” was determined through a series of consultations and discussions, stemming from a larger tradition in the Iberian Peninsula of consultations and “participatory governance.”

¹² Cardim, Bicalho, and Rodrigues, 88.

¹³ The second procurator might have been João de Souza Ferreira. Comparatively little is known about him. João de Souza Ferreira is introduced as the *Provedor da fazenda dos auzentes do Grão Pará* in the print edition of *Noticiario Maranhense* (1685) but described as a priest (prebistero) in *America Abreviada* (1693).¹³ Once speculated to have been the same text, *Noticiario Maranhense* and *America Abreviada* differ in that the latter included discussions of post-1686 events. Whether or not Ferreira was there, the first half of *America Abreviada*, published in Lisbon in 1693, contains the same text from Manuel Guedes Aranha and even references Aranha.

¹⁴ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 2, D. 89.

¹⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 2, D. 92.

important offices in the colonial government and was thus familiar with the interests of the settler population and methods of production in the colony.

Like most colonial descriptions to the Crown, Aranha started by boosting the case of Maranhão by claiming that its land was more promising than that of the State of Brazil. The rivers that flood the terrains “make the cultivation of the land easier for the settlers, and they are all navigable and abundant in fish and hunt.”¹⁶ The cotton grown in the region was the best in the Americas and the principal form of currency of the state. It was also a region that already produced slaves and commodities. The Xingu River, for example, had been explored “under the pretext of slaves as well as the bark-clove that has been extracted and continues to be extracted.”¹⁷ At the same time, Maranhão faced a series of difficulties that led to its poverty: complicated navigation, limited fortification, absentee governors, and the practice of Indigenous peoples burning down plantations. Tapacurú, which once had several sugar mills and cattle, was barely populated by settlers in 1685. Though this statement can be interpreted as evidence of widespread and coordinated Indigenous resistance, it was also in line with a common trope among settler arguments dating back to sixteenth-century Bahia, when plantation owners would complain about the Aimoré people. The argument that ‘Tapuyas’ were burning plantations was frequently cited by settlers as a reason for their poverty that portrayed them as blameless victims, as well as a common justification for the waging of warfare, and thus, slaving expeditions.

Like João de Moura, Aranha’s 1685 petition argued that the problem of Maranhão was social-political, not environmental. Maranhão’s biggest problem, according to Aranha, was the lack of people to serve: “there are not people of service, they do not cultivate canes, tobaccos, and other products, that the lands are capable of.”¹⁸ This is because of restrictions on the recruitment of Indigenous laborers, as well the exorbitant prices of enslaved Africans: “the Portuguese find it difficult to bring Black people for such high prices, so that it seems impossible to earn a Black person in their lifetime for one hundred thousand réis, which is the least that they cost, problems that do not seem small to remedy”¹⁹

Aranha depicted an impoverished colony due to the lack of workers. When describing the city of Belém, for example, Aranha described a city of 500 settlers where “there is not a lack of poverty.”²⁰ Any meaningful production of wood in the colony, for example, required “many arms and much iron” to chop down forest trees, and at least 15-20 “*negros de remo*” (literally Blacks of the paddle) to carry the wood. Aranha explained that these “*negros de remo*” were the ones that all the commerce depended upon “...not only because of the difficulties of [navigating] the forest but because everything is divided by waters.”²¹ The use of the term “*negro de remo*” is interesting. In the first century of Portuguese colonization of Brazil, *negro* was used to refer to both Indigenous and African slaves. This went out of fashion by the seventeenth century, though

¹⁶ Manuel Guedes Aranha, *Papel Político sobre o Estado do Maranhão*, 1685, *RIHGB* 46, Part 1 (1883): 2.

¹⁷ Aranha, 10.

¹⁸ Aranha, 4.

¹⁹ Aranha, 4. “...pela falta que depois que os Governadores pasaram a assistir no Pará lhe fez os poucos Indios escravos que la lhe chegavam, atenuando-se tambem com o trato os forros domésticos, servindo tudo de animar os silvestres; aonde os Portugueses acham pouca conta trazerem pretos por tão alto preço que parece impossível ganhar um negro em sua vida cem mil réis, que é o menos que custam, dificuldades que não parecem pequenas de remediar.”

²⁰ Aranha, 12.

²¹ Aranha, 11. “...por não poder haver outras estradas, assim pela difficuldade dos mattos como por todas estarem cortados de agoas.”

in this instance, the term *negro de remo* certainly referred to Indigenous slaves in this context, as it was almost exclusively Indigenous peoples who led canoe expeditions into the hinterlands.

Aranha argued that the State could not grow and develop without more access to Indigenous labor. He demanded the return to the previous 1655 policy on Indigenous slavery, which allowed enslavement in four instances: 1) just war; 2) if an Indigenous person or group prevented the conversion of other Indigenous peoples; 3) if an Indigenous person who was already captive was going to be eaten; 4) if an Indigenous person was already being traded as a slave. To make his case, Aranha included descriptions of all the work that had to be performed exclusively by Indigenous peoples. In describing the city of Belém, Aranha explained that:

“This city is badly provisioned with fish, because there are not white fishermen, and only the Indians who are naturally lazy with some form of antipathy, when they want to, have any use....some [Indigenous peoples] go through the forest, and others through water, and quickly bring provisions; which neither whites nor Blacks from Africa can do; since the majority of those do not know how to swim, and if they enter the forest, they do not know how to leave it...”²²

These sorts of racialized statements combined traditional European tropes about Indigenous peoples, primarily the stereotype that Indigenous peoples were inherently averse to work, with a belief that there were tasks that only Indigenous peoples could carry out. They also inverted the kinds of comments that were usually made about African versus Indigenous labor.²³ Going even further, Aranha described Indigenous laborers as carrying out specialized work in the region with great skill. This included the collection of rice produced naturally by floods, where the “native Indians navigate in small canoes and use their paddles to shake [the rice] before the river recedes in the spring.”²⁴

“And since all commerce is through the rivers where ordinarily one finds deer, tapirs, capybaras, bands of pigs and other hunt, where the navigators easily make use of these encounters, while only the tigers do not accept us easily, because they are irritated or suspect some form of assault, they turn over the canoes, and it is necessary to grasp the paddles so that they do not come on the canoes and wreck all of us”²⁵

²² Aranha, 12. “É a cidade mal provida de peixe, por nao haver pescadores brancos, e so índios naturalmente preguiçosos com alguma especie de antipatia, suporto que, quando querem, so eles tem tanto préstimo, que, quem faz com elles jornadas, não costuma levar mais matalotagem que farinha e sal; e remando de pala manha ate o meio dia, como e uzo, tomando terra, em quanto se acende fogo, entao uns pelo mato, e outros pela agua, e logo trazem provimento; o que o branco nem o negro da Africa pode fazer; porque alem de pela maior parte não saberem nadar, si entao no mato, não sabem sair”

²³ Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

²⁴ Aranha, 13-4. “...Não somente se produz como os mais mantimentos, plantado-se, mas de natureza o ha em varias partes pelo rio das Amazonas em campinas que no inverno se alagam e crescendo sempre á flor da aga o conduzem os natureaes Indios entrando em canoas pequenas por elle e sacundido-o nellas com os remos antes que o rio abaixa na primavera.”

²⁵ Aranha, 11-12. “...e como todo o commercio é pelos rios assim ordinariamente se encontram veados, antas, capivaras, bandos de porcos e outras caças, onde com facilidade se aproveitiam s navegantes do enconro, e só o de trigres não aceitam de boa vontade, porque se vão enfedados ou desconfiam de algum aggravo, viram a canoa, e é necessario apertar o remo por que lhe não chegue a saltar dentro e a todos desbaratar, mas como somente as pessoas que podem ter por fora suas vivendas e com que discorrer o termo vivendo por suas

Aranha's interpretation is in keeping with the settler tradition of frequently citing Indigenous mastery over the "art of navigation" as a reason for increased access to forms of labor and reflects the skills Native populations had in this realm. For Aranha, this kind of work was not accessible to those "that do not have good canoes and *negros* where they can conquer the rivers, the waves, and the beasts."²⁶ Once again, Aranha used the term *negro* to refer to Indigenous, rather than African, enslaved peoples.

The procurator's petition thus established to the metropole the necessity of this specialized work for the colony's productive capacities. The problem, then, was the colonial government's attempts to restrict access to Indigenous laborers, largely because of missionary influence. Aranha explained how the first provisions brought to Maranhão during the colony's early decades allowed Indigenous peoples to be captive if they were already deemed to be in captivity, or if a captive was about to be consumed by an enemy. Once again, we should read these arguments with a heavy dose of skepticism. While forms of Indigenous captivity and/or cannibalistic practices were certainly present among some groups, especially those where warfare, raiding, and the incorporation of enemies were central to social organization, there is an active debate in the historiography over whether this constitutes slavery. Indigenous forms of captivity, for example, largely did not pass on the status of captive to their offspring.²⁷ Settlers homogenized practices of trade-in-peoples by calling it slavery, a homogenization that was necessary to justify *guerras* or *resgates*. As discussed in previous chapters, a key issue in the exchange of captives was the debate over perpetual versus temporary captivity. Aranha declared that royal legislation never made clear to the settlers that Indigenous captives could only be held for a set number of years, as they followed the 1626 law established by the Junta do Governador that determined that captives who cost more than five axes or ten silver coins would be captive for their whole lives.²⁸ This contrasted to the practice where captives could be bought for an established price and had to be freed after ten years in captivity.

For Aranha, it was Jesuit missionary influence, above all, that distorted the facts and reality on-the-ground to the metropole. Accepted practices were reversed with the arrival of the missionaries, who provided the King with "bad information" about the colony. The passing of the 1652 decree, as discussed in the last chapter, led to the protest of the settlers. Aranha described these historical processes in detail, explaining that without Indigenous laborers, settlers could not "sustain their families." Nor would settlers be able to live in the forest without Indigenous workers. Settlers were able to reach mission villages to recruit free Indigenous peoples as seasonal laborers through the help of Indigenous slaves.²⁹ Aranha described the settler outcry:

"How can we prepare for resistance without slaves, our companions at home, the first one to take up arms, taken by the love of being servants, as the experience has shown us in

fazendas logram esas abundâncias por distancias apartadas das cidade de poucas participa o comum que não tem boa canoa e negros com que se vençam os rios das ondas e feras."

²⁶ Aranha, 11-12.

²⁷ Santos, *Vital Enemies*, 4.

²⁸ Aranha, 15.

²⁹ Aranha, 18. "Estavam fabricando o assucar, tabaco, e outros gêneros e mantimentos em que sustentavam suas famílias e os presidios do estado, e que sem elles não podiam ter nem viver nos mattos como é estillo cada familia na sua Ilha ou no seu Igarape, que são os rios pequenos..."

the wars of Maranhão and Pará. To the slaves we owe much help, as mediated by the industry of the masters, and of God above all.”³⁰

Though Aranha’s treatise can be read as a rejection of the Vieira argument that “disease, flight, and capacity to work” made African peoples better slaves than Indigenous peoples, he did not completely ignore some of the common Jesuit arguments for limiting Indigenous slavery. For example, Aranha lamented what he saw as the diminishing population of Indigenous peoples in the hinterlands.³¹ He understood the importation of enslaved Africans as an important solution to the colony’s problems, as consistent with settler petitions in the second half of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, he understood Indigenous and African peoples serving different functions and performing different kinds of labor. He explained that “some Blacks among the Indians are of great utility, since [the town] is also badly provisioned of meat, as there are no naturally occurring ducks.”³² One recommendation made by Aranha was to establish the fix the price of iron and Black slaves as the same as in Brazil, in a way that would revitalize Maranhão’s economy. This price fixing would mean that the “few Indians that remain” could be reserved for the “resistance in the forest,” in keeping with the tendency in colonial Brazil to use Indigenous peoples as soldiers.³³

But fundamentally, *Papel Politico* rejected the imposition of the Bahia [here referred to as Brazil] comparison to Maranhão, not just because of the lack of capital among settlers for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but because Indigenous peoples possessed skills that were fundamental to the kind of work that had to be carried out in the colony. Aranha explained this most succinctly:

“Neither are these lands like those of Brazil, where every month a [great] quantity of Blacks arrives; something that has not happened in the State of Maranhão because of its issues. If the law were determined by the nature of land [i.e. soil], it would not be capable, even if it had Blacks, to live only with them. [Nor would it be feasible] without some Indians as guides and pilots of the seas, since the Blacks, not to mention the whites, would not know how to find their way out of these paths. Nor would they know how to leave the forest with the prey with which we sustain ourselves in this state, at least in Pará, since we do not have a butcher for the lack of pastures.”³⁴

³⁰ Aranha, 19-20. “Como se poderiam reparar para a resistência sem seus escravos, companheiros de caça, que erao os primeiros que tomavam as armas na mão, levados do amor da criação, como tinha mostrado a experiência em todas as ocasiões das guerras do Maranhão e Pará? Aos escravos devemos sempre grande auxilio, mediante a indústria dos senhores, e a de Deus primeiramente.”

³¹ Aranha, 12.

³² Aranha, 12. “...porem sempre alguns negros entre os índios sao de muita utilidade... como também é mal provida de carne, por não haver patos da natureza...”

³³ Aranha, 12.

³⁴ Aranha, 20. “Nem estas terras eram como as do Brasil onde todos os mezes lhe entravam quantidade de negros, o que não tinha o Estado do Maranhão, por suas diffiuldades, e que se os estillos das terras faziam lei, não eram estas capazes, ainda que em algum tempo tivessem pretos, pera se viver só com elles, e sem alguns índios para guias e pilotos dos mares, por não haver outras estradas de que os pretos nem assim se saberiam livrar quanto mais aos brancos, e menos entrarem e sairem dos mattos com a caça de que no Estado se vive pelo menos no Pará, por não haver acougue...”

Aranha's statement showed a consciousness on the part of Maranhão's settler population that this colony was a different space, that its environment was unique and its labor specialized. The type of land comment was a direct rebuttal of the imposition of a Brazilian model onto Maranhão, a place of different soils and different productive outfits. Freire de Andrade himself made a similar comment in his 1686 letter to the Overseas Council, where he stated:

"There is not a place in this state for the arguments of the priests about Brazil, due to the many differences between these two states, in its commodities, in its hinterlands, in its poverty, and in its principals."³⁵

Like the Portuguese and Dutch discourses discussed in Chapter 2, Aranha and the settlers he represented understood Maranhão as a place that produced licit slaves. According to Aranha:

"Everything here is forests and seas, in which hinterlands there have always been licit slaves because it is the way of the natives to enslave themselves in their wars and to eat their captives, using their services before they eat them. And if the laws were made with good reason, we would not witness those brutes with their slaves, while the white man abides by his rules of not buying them to remedy his difficulties..."³⁶

After Beckman's Rebellion and the failure of the General Company, there was a radicalization of arguments that noted settler dependency on Indigenous laborers. Settler ideas about the unique ability of Indigenous workers to extract commodities in the hinterlands certainly disseminated to the imperial center, something that was rare before 1686. In 1687, Dom Pedro II responded to the governor of Maranhão Arthur de Sá de Meneses on the matter of the extreme poverty of the settlers of São Luis, "due to the lack of slaves for cultivation, which can be remediated by conceding licit *resgates* in a manner that services God and myself, because without the Native slaves (*negros naturaes*) it will not be possible for them to discover de hinterlands..."³⁷ Similarly, Dom João in 1720 wrote to Cristóvão da Costa Freire that the governor must find a balance between respecting missionary authority but allowing Indigenous peoples to serve the interests of the white population "since it was of such convenience to have those people serve and to help feed and enrich [the settlers] with the *drogas* that they extract from the hinterlands for the commerce, and that all is made easier through the help and diligence of these same Indians who are so practical in those lands where the same commodities grow."³⁸

³⁵ AHU Maranhão Avulsos, Cx. 7, D. 763.

³⁶ Aranha, 20. "...e ser tudo matos e mares, em cujos certões não deixava de haver sempre escravos licitos, por ser estilo entre os naturaes cativarem em suas guerras, e comerem os cativos, servindo-se de outros, em quanto não os comem; e si as leis se fazião de boa razão, nenhuma parecia justificar estarmos vendo ser virem-se aquelles brutos com os seus escravos, e os homens brancos com preceito de os não comprarem para remediar as dificuldades, que só os indios sabem, e podem vencer por filhos d'ellas."

³⁷ "Para o Governador do Maranhão sobre a representação da pobreza em que se achavão aquelles moradores por falta de escravos, se lhe diz haver-se passado varias ordens sobre este particular os quaes se deve cumprir," November 15, 1687, *ABNRJ* 66 (1948): 78-79.

³⁸ "Para o Governador do Maranhão sobre se lhe ordenar enfalivamente execute os capítulos do Regimento, fazendo com que os missioarios sejam tratados com toda a veneração e respeito," June 8, 1720, *ABNRJ* 67 (1948): 174. "Sendo de tanta conveniencia nao so enterem os povos delle quem os sirva, mas quem os ajuda a alimentarem-se e emriquecerem-se com as drogas que se extraem dos sertões para o commércio o que tudo se

With the passing of the 1688 decree, settlers won their battle on the issue of Indigenous labor. They were thus able to convince Lisbon that without Indigenous workers, there would be no economic growth in Maranhão.

Reinterpreting Indigenous versus African Slavery for Maranhão's Context

The normalization and institutionalization of Indigenous slavery in Maranhão was accompanied by a series of writings that tried to reframe indigeneity and the “Indigenous race” in the context of licit slavery. One treatise that set out to accomplish this text was João de Sousa Ferreira’s 1693 “*America abreviada suas notícias e de seus naturais, em particular do Maranhão, titulus, contendas, e instrucções a sua conservação e augmento mui uteis.*” This text is a compilation of decrees, opinions, and treatises on the issues of Maranhão, in particular, the colony’s debates around labor and economic growth. Compared to our previous author, Manuel Aranha, we know considerably less about Ferreira. Ferreira was a priest who had lived in Maranhão for over 20 years, part of the secular clergy of Maranhão that worked primarily with the settler population.³⁹ Some historians have claimed that Ferreira was the second procurator with Aranha in Lisbon.⁴⁰ For the purposes of my analysis, I focus on the 1693 treatise, *America Abreviada*.

America Abreviada, borrowed from sixteenth-century writings, when settlers and missionaries alike agreed that the bulk of the labor in Brazil should be carried out by its native population. The text republished Cosme Rangel’s 1585 opinion on Indigenous labor, as analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation. Though Rangel refuted Indigenous slavery, his text made clear that the State of Brazil should rely primarily on Indigenous labor for its growth. The inclusion of Rangel’s opinion serves as evidence of the ways that colonial writers and theorists constantly borrowed from one another, and thus shared largely similar discursive repertoires.

Though *America Abreviada* contains a series of texts, the fifth chapter most explicitly engages with questions of indigeneity and Indigenous versus African slavery. Titled “*America Abreviada: News of its inhabitants,*” this chapter can be understood as a staunch defense of Indigenous slavery that rejects the distinction between Indigenous peoples and African peoples as made by the theologians of Salamanca and the Jesuits in Brazil. Ferreira opened this section with the following provocation: “Suppose there is no law that says we should not have captive Indians, but that only prohibits the bad practices through which [the Indigenous] have been used.” Ferreira claimed that it was clear that not all Indigenous peoples can be enslaved: “there is not a lack of opinion on how vassals should not be captives, for they are in their lands as innocents through natural law and straight hair.”⁴¹ Distinctions in hair texture, like skin color, were racialized markers in early modern Portuguese racial thinking.

Ferreira understood Indigenous peoples in the Americas as not of one essence, but rather being of three categories. The first category were the *Índios do curso*, a term similar to Tapuya used to describe Indigenous peoples seen as enemies of the Portuguese. Ferreira described the *Índios do Curso* as those “without home or domicile, without any obedience, and very similar to

facilita pela mão e deligencia dos mesmos índios como tão práticos naquellas terras onde nascem os mesmos gêneros.”

³⁹ Sweet, “A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed,” 51.

⁴⁰ See footnote 19 in this chapter.

⁴¹ João de Souza Ferreira, *America Abreviada: suas noticias e de seus naturaes, e em particular do Maranhão, títulos, contendas e instrucções a sua conservação e augmento mui uteis*, 1693, *RIHGB* 57, Part I, (1894): 98

the curse of Ham.”⁴² The second type of Indigenous person were those that trade with the Portuguese, who “know no vassalage other than their own self-interest.” These Indigenous peoples lived in homes, but if the Portuguese do not frequently interact with them, they are quickly “taken by the devil.”⁴³ Ferreira painted a portrait these groups’ own processes of cruelty by describing an instance where his neighbor, Manuel Baz, had witnessed an Indigenous woman, who was his slave, cooking the organs of her son. When prompted as to why she was cooking her son’s organs, she responded that she would not miss him, since she had other children.⁴⁴ In this anecdote designed to horrify, Ferreira warned of the dangerous morality of this particular group. Accusations of Indigenous peoples eating or selling their kin were common arguments by settlers petitioning for slavery, one that was often staunchly rejected by the Jesuits.

Beyond practices of cannibalism, Ferreira explained that Indigenous practices of captivity were enough to justify the Portuguese participation in the local slave trade. While cannibalism was an important part of the settler toolkit to Other Indigenous peoples and justify just war, Ferreira equally considered the role of tradition in justifying slavery. Ferreira explained that when the Indigenous “gave” the Americas to the Portuguese, Indigenous peoples “regularly ask[ed] for help from the Portuguese to wage war on their enemies.” Ferreira claimed that captivity was a long tradition among the Indigenous and “this alone makes the law.”⁴⁵ Ferreira himself endorsed the “*xeramunha ropi*”, likely a Tupi phrase that means “the ways of our ancestors.”⁴⁶ He claims that the Portuguese had been helping and buying slaves from Indigenous groups for 70 years, “which seem sufficient, as the law affords.” To Ferreira, these processes of captivity did not contradict the order of the world, where God had always intended there to be “the big and the small, the free and the enslaved.”⁴⁷ The fact that Indigenous slavery was an established practice thus justified and legitimized its continuity.

The third category of Indigenous peoples were allies of the Portuguese. Ferreira claimed that even their allies were also descendants of Ham, drawing parallels between Indigenous and African peoples. The priest concluded that the Americas were once the island of Atlantis cited by Aristotle, which also included the Canaries, Madeira, and the Azores, all of which are “peopled by Blacks”, since it was in such short proximity to Africa. He concluded that “American Indians, tigers, jaguars, monkeys, and other animals that are found in the Americas” are “the same as those from Africa.” Yet he maintained that Indigenous peoples did not come from a single nation “because otherwise they would not be confused by such a variety of languages.”⁴⁸

⁴² Ferreira, *America Abreviada*, 98-99.

⁴³ Ferreira, 99.

⁴⁴ Ferreira, 114-5. “...meu vizinho Manoel Braz, que vindo-se-lhe dar parte de uma i3ndia, sua escrava, que na roça tinha morto um filho, acudindo-la, a achou sentada ao fogo, fazendo da cabeça do filho frigideira com as tripas e miúdos dentro, e mexendo, e perguntado a razão, dice, que comia aquele filho por lhe não fazer falta, pois inda lhe ficava outro.”

⁴⁵ Ferreira, 100.

⁴⁶ In the *Lingua Geral Amazonica*, which derived from the Tupi language, *Xeramunha* means grandfather. See Jean-Claude Muller, Wolf Dietrich Ruth Monserrat, Cândida Barros, Karl-Heinz Arenz, and Gabriel Prudente (eds.) *Dicionário da Lingua Geral Amazônica* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2019): 303.

⁴⁷ Ferreira, 102. “...porque como Nosso Senhor se esmerou tanto n’esta obra do mundo, como couza sua, parece quiz que houvesse n’elle grandes e pequenos, forros e escravos.”

⁴⁸ Ferreira, 105. “...corria aquella ilha pelo Oceano para o poente. Aristóteles, u d’esses autores, acrescentava que era tal a ilha de Atlante que o senado dos Atenienses prohibira em tempos antigos a seus cidadãos o navagerem para ella, por nao desampararem a patria, por suas delicias e frescura, e na parte citada tão grande ila, ao que parece, so podia ser America, estendo-se por todas as ilhas Canarias, Madeira, Açores, e por todas as que se acham povoadas de gente preta, que, como signaes da terra, ficaram aparecendo da qual iria opuca

In many ways, Ferreira's 1693 text was revisiting topics discussed in Salamanca, by Las Casas, and the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth century. He often did not fundamentally disagree with the conclusions formulated by these groups. Nóbrega, for example, included a discussion in his 1555-6 *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio* over whether Indigenous peoples were subject to the Curse of Ham.⁴⁹ As explained by Diogo Ramado Curto, Ferreira's "purpose was to alter earlier Jesuit writings that were against positions held by the Society of Jesus locally and hence to defend the enslavement of Amerindians."⁵⁰ Nóbrega and Vieira understood Indigenous labor as necessary and defended slavery in certain instances. But both unequivocally recommended African slavery as the solution to the State of Brazil and the State of Maranhão, respectively. Ferreira, on the other hand, used the logic of the Curse of Ham to explain that 'Tapuyas' should be enslaved.

"Because if that curse was divinely arranged, it literally applies to Indians as well as blacks; whoever among [the Indians] is brave becomes the master, and whoever is weaker becomes a slave, and many are slaves of slaves"⁵¹

The Curse of Ham, the biblical story that became the key justification for Black slavery, increasingly allowed for the association of Blackness to slavery.⁵² Ferreira upheld the Blackness of Indigenous peoples in his writings. In applying the Curse of Ham to Indigenous peoples, Ferreira did not divorce the Curse of Ham from blackness but rather attributed blackness to Indigenous peoples and used supposed Indigenous blackness as an argument in favor of enslaving the Native population. He noted that "Blacks and Indians are overall similar in their vices and features, such as their noses and in other *grossarias*; and even in color many of the Indians are black, like the naturals from Angola, and some in Angola are red just like those from

distancia a de Africa, como significa a particula innvagable erat. Dahi sem duvida concorrem os índios Americanos, tigres onças, macacos, e outros animais que na America se acham, sendo os mesmos de Africa, e não se dar o cazo que algumas das sobreduttas derrotas os trouxesse, nem os naturaes da America mostram proceder de uma so nação, como de qualquer das apontadas, ou do príncipe Atlante e seu irmao, como diz a Monarchia Luzitana, tom. 1, cap. 13, porque nestes termos não estariam confundidos com tanta variedade de linguas, e teriam alguma política de muita que tinham todas aquellas nações, escrevendo suas memórias para se acharem em todo o tempo; pois o não se fazerem, se não faria d'ellas mencao"

⁴⁹ Manuel de Nóbrega, *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio*, in *RIHGB* 43 Part 1 (1880): 146.

⁵⁰ Diogo Ramada Curto, *Imperial Culture and Colonial Projects: The Portuguese-Speaking World from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, translated by Alison Aiken (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020): 242.

⁵¹ Ferreira, "America Abreviada," 108. "...todo o que chegou a ser ladrão adulterino, ou por qualquer outra culpa semelhante, fica escravo com toda sua geração; e como seja de fe, que tribus, pretos, Índios, e os mais todos descendemos de uma parte, e a divizao das linguas sahio da Babilonia, de la todos trariam costumes e linguas, ainda que uns ja fossem escravos e outros senhores, e assim se começou o mundo, ut supra. Por que si aquella maldição foi disposição divina, assim se acha ao pe da letra cumprida nos índios como nos pretos; quem entre elles foi valente, e senhor, e quem mais fraco e torna-se escravo, e muitos são escravos de escravos."

⁵² For more on the Curse of Ham, see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2003); William McKee Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the 'Sons of Ham,'" *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (1980): 15-43.

America.”⁵³ With this sentence, Ferreira relativized race and disrupted accepted categories and hierarchies.

For Ferreira, it was thus the practices of captivity among the Indigenous that justified their slavery, as was the case in precolonial Africa. He equated Africans and Indigenous peoples as similar in their rituals, customs, and laws: “because they have the same inclinations consisting in idleness, sensuality, and drunkenness, in captivating and eating each other.” In reference to slavery, Ferreira claimed that whereas Indigenous peoples are sold “by their chiefs in America, in Africa the blacks are sold by their King.”⁵⁴

Despite spending a few pages equating Indigenous and African peoples, Ferreira shifted in his text to claiming that African people were superior: “Africans are different in their political capacities and participation in politics”, where they could be introduced “to the liberal arts, which their poverty, time, and teachers allow them to do.”⁵⁵ We can attribute this vacillation to the constant inconstancies of early modern racial thinking: Africans were considered lazy and hard workers. These contradictions were widespread in early modern discourses. Ferreira claimed people from Africa were:

“...more constant, of more faith and of more importance, and who become so attached to their faith when they receive it, they sometimes remain holy even without Mass, they grieve, and they have feelings; what is not found in the Indians, unless they are forced; for they are inconstant, without measure or reason. And there are also very devout black people who pray; and the Indians have not ordinarily forced them to pray more than while they are teaching them, they repeat it, even though they are more *ladinos* and raised with the whites; however, they are indecisive, they are easy to lean in any direction, and in the same way to salvation”⁵⁶

Perhaps most interestingly was Ferreira’s equivocation of the two slave trades. Ferreira advocated for the enslavement of Tapuyas by critiquing the notion of displacement of one’s land.

⁵³ Ferreira, 112. “Pretos e índios em tudo são semelhantes nos vícios e feições, como nos narizes e outras grossarias; e ainda na cor muitos índios são pretos, como os naturaes de Angola, e outros de Angola são vermelhos como os da América.”

⁵⁴ Ferreira, 108. “Mas os índios, que proximamente poderiam apressar a América e se acharam na América, são tão semelhantes aos pretos da África em ritos, costumes, exercício, uzança e leis, como si ambas estas duas nações fossem uma, mostrando trazerem seu principio da primeira propagação do mundo e da escoria d’ella, como herdeiros e imitadores na maldição de Cham: todo o que fez crime foi escravo com sua familia, e e mandado vender pelo seu principal na América, como em África os pretos são vendidos pelo seu rei.”

⁵⁵ Ferreira, 103. “...todos uns, por terem as mesmas inclinações consistentes na ociosidade, sensualidade, e ebriedade, em cativarem-se e comerem-se uns aos outros, e em suas festas guardarem as mesmas cerimoniais”, “...Porem diferenciam-se os pretos na capacidade de qualquer política, tanto que d’ella participam, introduzindo-se de seu moto proprio nas artes liberaes, que sua pobreza, tempo, e mestres lhes permitem.”

⁵⁶ Ferreira, 103. “E gente mais constante, de mais fé e de mais alguma conta, e tão pegados da fé, que em a recebendo, si ficam algum dia santo sem missa, se lastimam, e têm sentimento; o que se não acha nos Índios, si os não obrigam; pois são inconstantes, sem fém medida ou pezo, nem conta. E ainda das rezas ha pretos mui devotos; e os índios ordinariamente não ha obrigado-os a rezar mais que enquanto os estão ensinando, elles repetindo, ainda que sejam mais ladinos e criados com os brancos; porém assim como são indecisos, são faceis de inclinar a qualquer parte, e da mesma maneira á salvação, tendo no ultimo transito quem lhes assista, como o azeite d’azeitona quando a pedra a trilha, ainda que antes seja verde e amargosa. Mas entre elles se acham os pretos soberanos, e os índios os respeitam ainda que todos escravos, como gente que reconhece alguma dívida velha, escravos de escravos”

“...if it is reasonable to capture black people, banishing them from their lands, it seems less scrupulous to have Tapuyas captive, leaving those who are natural masters of their plants and creations, as if were not captives, nor could such captivity be taken for granted by theologians in Europe, where there is such hunger and cold that they wear and eat what their masters give them; and in Brazil there is such a difference, that, it is enough to know, there is no hunger, nor cold: we eat by their hand, and when they want”⁵⁷

America Abreviada made a case for the importance of local context, something that the theologians of Europe allegedly could not understand. Ramado Curto calls these texts from Maranhão “the representation of municipal power as the defender of local interests, which suggests almost a kind of republicanism adopted by those born in the colony and elected by the Council who, with their families and properties, were well established.”⁵⁸ I understand this as part of a larger tradition of “on-the-ground” reasoning for slavery in Portuguese America. It rejected European theologian impositions by claiming the specificities of the local context, usually by wielding a settler’s lived experience. This reasoning mixed classic Othering critiques (i.e. calling Indigenous peoples ‘barbarians’, ‘inconstant’, and ‘lazy’) with “on-the-ground” considerations that have been overlooked by the historiography, primarily, the notion that Indigenous skill and dependency on Indigenous labor justified a slave trade. As Ferreira claimed:

“...everything is so fertile and proportionate compared to Europe that [the Americas] exceeds its abundance, and if the Indians were missing there [in Europe] they wouldn't be missed as much as they are in our state, nor would the reasons for their vexations be so risky”⁵⁹

He pointed to the many differences between Europe and life in Maranhão: “In Europe a man with some cattle, a wagon, and a plow, and enough land is richer than one settler in America with thirty slaves, or people of service” because the latter “cannot benefit in any way from wagons, because of the waters, nor from the plow, because of the forests”⁶⁰ This demand for labor meant that every day settlers had to “search for other Indians, to replace the ones that each

⁵⁷ Ferreira, 116. “...se ha razão para se captivarem pretos, desterrando-os de suas terras, menos escrúpulo, parece, se podia fazer de possuir Tapuias cativos, ficando no seu natural senhores de suas plantas e criações os que deles querem tratar, como se não fossem captivos, nem tal cativo se podia tomar pelo reputado dos teólogos na Europa, onde ha tal fome e frio que vestem e comem o que seu senhores lhes dão; e no Brasil vai tanta diferença, que, baste saber-se, nao ha fome, nem frio: comemos por sua mão, e quando eles querem”

⁵⁸ Ramado Curto, *Imperial Culture and Colonial Projects*, 244.

⁵⁹ Ferreira, 118. “Os gêneros de serviço são dois: lavradores e mineiros: os índios livres servem a quem e em qualquer delles chegando a ser cassado paga doze reales todos os annos a El Rei e so e escusado do feudo todo aquelle que se sujeita a servir a qualquer dos senhores das sobreditas fábricas, e se estas não foram defesas aos Governadores não so seriam senhores os senhores dellas, mas tudo estaria ja arruinado tanto porque ninguem lhe preferia no serviço dos índios como porque para satisfazer tao repetidas sedes não haveria ja vontade de índio que não estivesse esgotada; mas parece se considerou bem este ca e quasi de graça, e tudo tao fertilissimas descobertas e proporcionadas as da Europa que lhe excedem na abundância, e seos índios la faltassem não fariam tanta falta como nos do nosso estado, nem as razões de suas vexações correriam tanto risco.”

⁶⁰ Ferreira, 127.

day flee, fall ill, and die...” Ferreira thus disparaged Indigenous peoples and repeated the utter dependence of Maranhão’s local population on Indigenous workers.

His recommendation, like many in Maranhão had recommended before him, was an Indigenous labor system that combined secular administration of mission labor and slaving expeditions. His opinion was that the Crown could order slaving expeditions at the expense of the Royal Treasury: “while there are forests in America, there will not cease to be *Tapuyos*, and among them slaves; where else could continuous capital be drawn from, if not from the Indians?”⁶¹ He also recommended, like many figures discussed earlier in this dissertation, a system more similar to that of the “Indies of Castille”, though with some key differences. Rather than bringing all of the Indigenous population to one center, Ferreira recommended more mission villages spread across the two captaincies given the extractive nature of the local economy. He explained that *repartimentos* of the families brought from the interior had to be done carefully among the local population, with the presence of various officials, and that these officials would settle “the terms of service” in the “same way as the Indies of Castille.”⁶² Ferreira’s explanation of the *encomienda* system, which includes the description of a *repartimento* of “slaves”, shows an interesting misunderstanding of the Spanish American labor system.

America Abreviada functions as a perfect example of how ‘Othering’ discourses met a kind of on-the-ground understanding of local conditions to create an argument for widespread Indigenous slavery and lay control over administered labor in Maranhão. Despite the text’s discussion of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, it is clearly grounded in an Amazonian context. Ferreira tried to make a universal argument about indigeneity in the Americas, while at the same time arguing that local context and on-the-ground experience matters. He also relied heavily on racialized language, such as the Curse of Ham, skin color, hair type, and inherent vices, to make his case for the justified enslavement of Indigenous peoples.

Continuing Controversies, Epidemics, and Labor Demands

The early eighteenth century in Amazonia was characterized by the expansion of the Portuguese into new areas of the hinterlands, including the Solimões, Madeira, and by mid-century, the Rio Negro and the Rio Branco. This expansion went together with the systematization and expansion of what Alexandre Pelegrino calls the “Trans-Amazonic Slave Trade.”⁶³ It was not just the Portuguese who carried out this slave trading, but the Dutch in the Rio Branco and the French in Cayenne.⁶⁴ In all manners of acquiring laborers, Indigenous peoples played key roles as intermediaries, drivers of canoes, collectors of goods, and soldiers. Indigenous peoples also occupied important positions in the colony, such as captains and

⁶¹ Ferreira, 120.

⁶² Ferreira, 119.

⁶³ Pelegrino, “Bonds of Belonging,” 65. Pelegrino describes the Transamazonic slave trade as “...the violent displacement of thousands of Indigenous captives from the interior of the South American continent to coastal settlements. Portuguese and Indigenous groups exchanged war prisoners through a complex network of raiding economies. Long-distance canoe journeys through the Amazon River and several major tributaries connected the slaving areas to cities, farms, and ranches close to the Atlantic coast. Portuguese law dictated different forms of Indigenous labor recruitment, mainly *resgates*, *descimentos*, and just wars. These different practices are better understood in a continuum rather than well-defined, distinct categories.”

⁶⁴ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 9, D. 951, D. 962.

sergeants.⁶⁵ Indigenous groups themselves controlled slave trading in the interior. The Manao, an Arawak-speaking multiethnic people, controlled the trade in the Rio Negro until the Portuguese waged war to control the river in the 1720s.⁶⁶

Despite the 1686 Regimento and the 1688 Alvará serving as a compromise between Jesuit and settler interests, there were continuing controversies and clashes over the control of labor in the colony. These issues particularly came to head because missionaries affiliated with the Junta das Missões had to participate in and sanction slaving expeditions and *descimentos*. Jesuit missionaries complained that settlers practiced slaving expeditions illegally. In 1730, an Indigenous man from the Mortigúra mission alerted the Padre Reitor of the Jesuit College of Pará to an incident of illegal enslavement. Two canoes from Manãos had arrived with “*peças* made slaves” of people from four missions [Camariana, Javiaari, Janacú and Macaravú] who were enslaved “by mistake in the River of Manãos” by the captain, Belchior Mendes de Moraes. In reality, the people that were meant to be enslaved should have come from Maiapênas or Cubiába. The man from Mortigúra explained that the Portuguese “would make them slaves without them being slaves.” This man relayed that the people he had been talking to had explained that they had “never aggravated the whites, who we have always assisted with manioc flour, with bread. with fish, with meats, with fruits, and with all that we have, and that we used to go to the villages to trade and contract with them as friends.”⁶⁷

Settlers, on the other hand, pointed out the attempts of both the colonial government and missionaries to prevent regular slaving expeditions or *descimentos*, creating a barrier to constant access to labor.⁶⁸ In 1720, the captain-general Francisco Manuel de Nobrega registered a formal complaint that the superior of the Jesuits, Manuel de Seixas, refused the concession of Indigenous workers in the Colégio de Nossa Senhora da Luz.⁶⁹ The concession was the building of four large canoes in the forests of Maracanã to carry materials to the local fort, and that Indigenous peoples from the Colégio had to help construct these canoes. Manoel de Seixas responded by noting the many vexations and ill treatments of the Indigenous population during the division of laborers.

Settlers also complained that state-sanctioned Indigenous troops had become increasingly rare, which compromised the safety of the colony. In 1700, the *Procurador da Fazenda* (Treasury Inspector) wrote that the “lack of resgates has made Maranhão destitute of Indians, and consequently of plantations and defense.”⁷⁰ In that instance, the Overseas Council agreed with the *Procurador*, ordering more ransom expeditions to be carried out as these are “the only remedy that exists for the vassals of Your Majesty in that state.”⁷¹

⁶⁵ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 10, D. 1028. In 1700, a group of Indigenous men occupying posts as captains and sergeants, complained of ill-treatment from the missionaries during their posts as captains, and that they were “treated like the *negros*, which is against the Regimento das Missões.”

⁶⁶ Santos, *Vital Enemies*, 27; Barbara Sommer, “Colony of the Sertão,” 409.

⁶⁷ BL, British Guiana Papers, Vol. 2, D. 4. “...nunca agravamos brancos, que sempre lhe assistimos com farinha, com beijús, com peixe, com carnes, com frutas, e com aquilo que tínhamos, que hiamos ao arraial tratar e contratar com elles como amigos...”

⁶⁸ For an explanation of the various forms of mission village labor and their distribution, see Sue Gross, “Labor in Amazonia in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century.” *The Americas* 32, no. 2 (1975): 211-21.

⁶⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 12, D. 1241.

⁷⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 10, D. 1032. “A falta de resgates tinha destituido o Maranhão de índios, e consequentemente de lavouras, e de defensas...”

⁷¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 10, D. 1032. “Ao conselho parece o mesmo que ao Procurador da Fazenda, e que se deve ordenar a que com effeito se facao os resgates dos índios, por ser este o único remédio que ha para

By the early eighteenth century, it was more common to hear that no matter the legality of Indigenous slavery as an institution, the colony could not survive without it. In the first few decades of the eighteenth century, the Overseas Council ordered a series of investigations to find compromises between these different stakeholders in Indigenous labor in Maranhão. One of these investigations was a 1722 report by the commissioner Francisco da Gama Pinto. Gama Pinto explained that any state attempts to limit enslavement or *descimentos* were futile. The commissioner explicitly doubted the existence of legitimate Indigenous slaves, claiming that these were probably very few in comparison to how many were needed. For him, this reality necessitated not only more *tropas de resgate*, but also more *descimentos* to fulfill the labor needs of the settlers. He asked that zealous people carry out these descimentos, as most people are so badly treated along the way that “through this ill treatment the majority die along the way, and the ones that do not arrived moribund, and quickly become useless in work.”⁷² One critic acknowledged that Indigenous peoples were made slaves through illegal means in the colony not just by secular settlers but also the religious orders, and it would not be possible to free these enslaved workers without causing the ruin of the state.⁷³

In 1723, Gama Pinto presented the case of the Municipal Council of Belém, who explained that the violations of the laws on *resgates* were done because of the lack of servants in the state, because observing these laws “completely extinguishes the people who serve, who we need in great quantity.” The settlers asked for yearly troops to be expedited to the hinterlands, funded by the settlers with captains appointed by the Municipal Council. They asked that the Indigenous peoples brought from these troops be divided amongst the settler population, as well as workers for the missions, but that the Indigenous workers stay “in perpetual service to the settlers and their heirs, while the settlers remain obligated to give the Indians everything that is necessary and two free days a week.”⁷⁴ Effectively this would establish a system of slavery, where the perpetuity and inheritability of labor would be guaranteed.

Conflicts between Jesuit missionaries and the settler population were augmented in the 1720s because of an outbreak of disease in the midst of the colony’s cacao boom. While cacao production and extraction had its origins in the seventeenth century, it did not become the colony’s key export until the 1720s.⁷⁵ While the Portuguese government encouraged the cultivation of the crop, excursions into the hinterlands to extract cacao were more common because they were cheaper and easier. Settlers relied heavily upon Indigenous labor for the work of extracting cacao from the hinterlands. Navigating canoes were often tricky when the tides were not in their favor. The priest Manuel de Esperança estimated that if a canoe was sailing

que os vassallos de V.Mg. naquela estado, por não ter conveniência e melhorarem da miséria em que se achão e a consequência de se augmentarem bem a Fazenda Real.”

⁷² AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 608.

⁷³ AHU Pará, Avulsos Cx 23, D. 2119.

⁷⁴ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 651. “...extingue totalmente a gente de serviço, de que necessitam em grande quantidade.” The solution they ask for as “tirarse todos os annos indios dos certos por tropas expedidas pellos governadores a custo dos moradores alternativamente com cabos propostos pellos câmeras; e que os índios tirados por estas tropas se repartirão pelos moradores, que fizerem as despezas dellas; e que se repartao também por todos os índios que V.Mg. manda descer para o fornecimento das aldeas, ficando os índios obrigados a perpetuo serviço aos moradores e seus heyderos, e os moradores obrigados também em dar aos índios todo o necessário e dous dias livres na semana.”

⁷⁵ Dauril Alden, “The Significance of Cacao Production in the Amazon Region during the Late Colonial Period: An Essay in Comparative Economic History,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120, no. 2 (1976): 112.

against the tides, this meant that one canoe could reach only about five leagues in a day, and that would mean both with the help of winds and paddling without any rest.⁷⁶ Governors were ordered to equip canoes with larger number of Indigenous workers, “as experience has shown that 50 canoes navigated by Tapuyas extract more cacao than 100 canoes that are badly equipped as we see in the canoes of the missionaries.”⁷⁷ The Superior of the Santo Antonio Mission, André do Rosário, in 1733 complained that his missions were lost because settlers would remove Indigenous workers for the collection of cacao, for there is not a person in the colony “that does not want to send them to the hinterlands while the Indians each day are less but the number of canoes each day bigger.”⁷⁸

The outbreak of the 1724-1725 smallpox epidemic put huge pressures of the labor force.⁷⁹ and inspired a variety of opinions on what this meant for labor. One report from Belém in 1725 explained that the contagion lasted from September of 1724 to February of 1725, “having taken from this city many whites and more than 1,000 slaves, especially the Indians, that are the necessary instrument for all the commerce and support of these people, they are the ones that cannot be substituted...”⁸⁰ The letter assessed that the *tropas do resgate* were not sufficient to remedy this problem, asking instead for the importation of enslaved Africans.⁸¹ In 1722, Francisco da Gama Pinto explained that the colony needed an *asentista* (person with an *asento*, or contract for trading African captives) that every year was obligated to place 800 or a 1,000 enslaved Africans in the colony to “pay in three or four years, because the current state of the land does not largely permit another form of payment.”⁸²

Alongside petitions for access to Indigenous workers, demands for African captives were also common in the first half of the eighteenth century, though settlers in Maranhão primarily complained about the difficulty of purchasing Africans because of excessive prices.⁸³ David Sweet’s explanation is that the Amazonian economy relied primarily on extractive commodities that, though often were valued higher than sugar, were much more uncertain to acquire. Drying up of forest goods was a common phenomenon. Merchants selling enslaved Africans required payment in commodities like cacao, especially in an economy with virtually no circulation of

⁷⁶ BA 51-VII-27, n. 14.

⁷⁷ AHU Avulsos Maranhão Cx. 16, D. 1710. “Também se deve ordenar que os governadores feita somma dos índios que houver para repartir não concedão licenças para mayor número de canoas, da que aquella que bem se puderem equipar com as duas partes do tapuyas das missões, que restarem dos números para o serviço real, porque a experiência mostra que sincoenta canoas navegadas com os tapuyas da sua letição tirao mais cacao do que sem mal equipadas como se ve nas canoas dos missionaries.”

⁷⁸ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 15, D. 1424. “...pois não ha mamaluco nesta cidade nem mulato nem farausteiro nem oficial que não queira mandar ao certão sendo os índios cada vez menos fazerão que tenho dito e o numero das canoas cada vez mayor.”

⁷⁹ Sommer, “Colony of the *Sertão*,” 409.

⁸⁰ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 9, D. 768. “...um contágio terrível de bexigas que atacando se em todo o Estado em Setembro do anno passado se não terminou mais que no fim de fevereiro, e ainda dara quasi extinto nesta capitania, tendo levado nesta cidade muitos brancos e mais de mil escravos, principalmente índios, que são o instrumento necessário a todo comercio e sustenção dos povos, som os quais se não pode substituir, e isto em tempo que a sua pobreza estava como esta na expectação do beneficio.”

⁸¹ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 9, D. 768.

⁸² AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 608.

⁸³ “Para os Officiaes da Câmara do Maranhão sobre se nom alterar o preço dos negros que ve da Mina,” *ABNRJ* 66 (1948): 240.

currency in coins. When settlers could not provide commodities, these trades were impossible to see through.⁸⁴

Other settlers understood the outbreak of disease as a reason to permit more Indigenous slave trading. Francisco de Potflis, a settler who owned a sugar mill in Carnapijô, complained in 1721 about his inability to mill sugar for “many of his slaves had died and fled.” This problem was aggravated by the fact that “no slaves from Guiné were coming.” He thus asks for a license to ransom 200 “slaves heathens of the earth.”⁸⁵ Bernardo Pereira Berredo, the governor who wrote the King on Potflis's behalf, recommended that Potflis be allowed to rescue “100 couples of slaves in the same way that this right was conferred to Captain Joseph Sanchez de Britto.”

In the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, we see that that settler population had competing interpretations of what solutions were necessary given the impacts on the Native population of disease and flight. Settlers in Maranhão and Grão-Pará largely wanted both enslaved laborers from the Amazon and the trans-Atlantic slave trade; however, there was a widespread sentiment among settlers that the trans-Atlantic slave trade could not take off in the colony given the financial conditions of the colony's settler population.

Arguments for Indigenous Slavery in Anti-Jesuit Petitions

In the context of the epidemics of the mid-1720s and the cacao boom, a new campaign against Jesuit control over administered labor and enslavement expeditions mounted in Maranhão. In many ways, this campaign was the culmination and apex of settler arguments for Indigenous slavery in Maranhão. In this section, I focus primarily on a published book called *Coleção das Representações, Propostas, e Providencias, sobre as ruínas que aos Povos do Estado a Gram Pará e Maranhão fizeram aos denominados Jesuitas, até o fim do Reinado ao Senhor Rei dom João Quinto (1686-1755) que faz parte das Terribilidades Jesuíticas no Governo de D'el Rei dom João Quinto*. This volume is a compilation of petitions, decrees, and consultations that was created after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the colony in 1757. This source book has largely been interpreted by historians as part of a larger phenomenon of anti-Jesuit sentiment in the Portuguese empire and globally.⁸⁶ My analysis will focus on the settler letters defending Indigenous slavery, as well as the responses to these petitions from imperial and colonial administrators, as well as from Jesuit missionaries themselves. I show how these discussions hinged on the topic of Indigenous versus African capacity to work, in a way that was becoming increasingly racialized by the middle of the century.

Paulo da Silva Nunes, 1724-1736

A significant portion of the writings in the *Coleção* relate to the Paulo da Silva Nunes controversy. Silva Nunes was a Portuguese man who had moved to Belém in 1708 to operate a small-scale farm. He had a military background, having served as secretary to Governor Costa

⁸⁴ Sweet, “A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed,” 58-9.

⁸⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 7, D. 593.

⁸⁶ See Roberta Lobão Carvalho, “‘A ruína do Maranhão’: a construção do discurso antijesuítico na Amazônia portuguesa (1705-1759),” (PhD diss, Universidade Federal do Pará, 2018).

Freire.⁸⁷ He served in a series of posts in Maranhão, including as “captain-major of two Amazonian towns, superintendent of fortifications, and commander of an elite militia company”⁸⁸ He eventually fled to Portugal in 1724 after attempting to stage a rebellion against the governor of the colony.⁸⁹

Silva Nunes took a leading role in advocating for increased settler access to indigenous slaves and administered workers in the first half of the eighteenth-century. The principal demand of Silva Nunes was for compliance with the 1718 decree. In 1718, the governor of Maranhão, Bernardo Berredo, a key ally of Silva Nunes, had allowed for the *descimentos* of Indigenous peoples to be executed with violence or force, whereas previously *descimentos* were only supposed to recruit voluntary laborers.⁹⁰ These forced *descimentos* would bring Indigenous families to Belém and São Luis to be divided equally among the settler population and the missions. In the 1720s, the Jesuit leadership, a new pro-Jesuit governor, and the Junta das Missões all attempted to reverse the practice of forced *descimentos*. Silva Nunes thus mounted a campaign against the governor, João de Maia, and the colony’s leading Jesuit, Jacinto de Carvalho. He did this by appointing himself as the procurator of the Town Council of Belém, who initially largely supported his campaign but would later distance themselves from his politics.⁹¹

Silva Nunes’s letters are emblematic of centuries of settler arguments against restrictions on Indigenous labor. He relied heavily on his on-the-ground experience, deriving his authority to speak on behalf of the people of the colony based on his “practical experiences that were acquired in the manners of living of those white settlers and Indians.”⁹² He claimed to have navigated “more than 130 leagues in canoes” throughout the Amazon, despite the many dangers of the earth and the dangers from the “*gentio* who eat human flesh” In fact, Silva Nunes explained that just like “a person with no experience in navigation could not correctly conduct from this port a ship to India”, not even the “ministers for as well educated as they might be in the laws of justice, cannot with certainty judge causes that depend on practical judges and an understanding of the circumstances.”⁹³ Once again, settlers refuted the imposition of restrictions on labor by those deemed unfamiliar with the colonial context.

For Silva Nunes, the Indigenous, “as natives and practical in those lands” are “the best laborers in these lands, that for these reasons, and without any other, the secular settlers were able to cultivate and grow various *fabricas*” of the colony.⁹⁴ In a 1733 representing the Municipal

⁸⁷ Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 495. Alden described Paulo da Silva Nunes as “peninsular-born, familiar with Latin and Spanish, and unusually well-read in theological and juridical sources, as well as in the major chronicles of the Spanish Empire.” Silva Nunes served during the first years of the War of Spanish Succession. He lived until 1746.

⁸⁸ Alden, 495.

⁸⁹ AHU Pará Avulsos Cx. 9, D. 779

⁹⁰ Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 494.

⁹¹ Carvalho, “A ruína do Maranhão,” 160-173.

⁹² AHU Cod. 485, fl. 8.

⁹³ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 8. “...porque assim como nenhuma pessoa alheia da prática da navegação pode com acerto conduzir deste porto huma nao a India, ou a outro qualquer Poerto aonde nunca foi de barra em fora, perdendo a terra de vista; nem os ministros por mais doctor que sejam nas leys e zellosos da justiça, podem com acerto julgar huma cauza que depende de louvados práticos e scientes das circumstancias em que se funda, sem primeiro os ouvirem, do mesmo modo que se deve proceder na causa destas propostas antes de serem consultados a V.Mag.”

⁹⁴ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 16, D. 1645.

Council, Nunes wrote that the service of the “Indians, both men and women, both of the missions and the hinterlands...is essential for the augmentation and conservation of that state, where there are no other laborers and these are the best as raised and practical in the culture of those lands.”⁹⁵ The discourse of “practical in the land”, used by sixteenth century officials like Martim Leitão, gained new valance in the Amazonian context.

Silva Nunes was part of a much larger tradition in settler thought that practicality, utility, and experience were fundamental values in the formation of a colony. In terms of the latter, Silva Nunes demanded one third of the missionized Indians to work for the “common good of the vassals, so that with they can go in canoes, to extract cacao and other goods that are produced in the hinterlands.”⁹⁶ The lack of preservation of this system was “where the damage arises.”⁹⁷ Evidence of this damage was the inability of any cargo to be loaded into three small ships in Para in 1728.⁹⁸

In this letter, Silva Nunes condemned the Overseas Council and the Mesa da Consciencia for not responding to the demands of the settlers, and for ruling in favor of the Jesuits.⁹⁹ Like his predecessors, Silva Nunes accused the missionaries of keeping Indigenous workers to themselves to make canoes, woods, and fish, for their “private interests”¹⁰⁰ But more importantly, Silva Nunes’s letter revealed several inherent assumptions about the State of Maranhão and Pará. He argued that Maranhão was not Brazil, but instead a different territory that meant that different solutions and policy options had to be applied, more like those used in Spanish American zones of large Indigenous populations.

“All of this wealth has yet to be obtained by the Crown of your Majesty and your vassals; because these [vassals] do not freely use the service of the Indians of that State in the way that they are used by the Crown of Castille and its vassals in the Spanish Indies. For that reason, they make use of the wealth of these places.”¹⁰¹

For over a century, settlers in Maranhao used the example of the Spanish Indies as an alternative model for their colony’s labor policy. Silva Nunes was part of the longer tradition of stating that Maranhao was not like Brazil. In one letter from March 1726 from the Municipal Council of São Luís, Nunes described how he had two private consultations with the Secretary of

⁹⁵ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 12.

⁹⁶ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 16, D. 1628. “Para com eles hirem nas canoas, a extrahir dos certos o cacao, e os maes generos, que nelle se produzem.”

⁹⁷ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 16, D. 1628. “De não se guardar esta ordem nasce o damno.”

⁹⁸ AHU Maranhão, Cx. 16, D. 1628.

⁹⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 18, D. 1856; AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 19, D. 1942.

¹⁰⁰ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 16, D. 1645. “...sabe o seculares onde o Padre missionario tem pelloos mattos escondidos 20, 30, 40 e mais índios, em feitorias de canoas, de madeyras, de pescarias, e outras muitas fábricas, para o seus negócios particulares, chega a elles pátrios, fase bom pagamentos, dalhe bom tratos e livros para o seo serviço.”

¹⁰¹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 16, D. 1645. “Todas estas delessias e riquezas não logra até agora inteiramente a Coroa Portuguesa, con seos vassalos porque não vierão estes nem ainda não livremente dos meyoos de que va a Coroa de Espanha, para aproveitarse das suas índias occidentaes, andando tão provida natureza, para augmentar estas duas coroas, espirital e temporal, que os mesmos meyoos que duda huma, deo tambem a doutra, porque ha nos sertões do Maranhão, como houve e ha ainda nas indias occidentais, que estão no continente do Maranhão, infinitos índios, que não tem fe ley nem rey, nem forma de repúblicas, e vivem como bárbaros atropelando as leys...” There is another version of this source dated to 1655 that is attributed to Silva Nunes. AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 3, D. 367.

the State about his proposals, during which he defended the colony's reliance on Indigenous slavery. He noted that in these consultations, there were conversations that "talked about blacks", presumably about the introduction of enslaved Africans to the colony. Nunes described how he gave convincing reasons for why:

"...the blacks are not the most precious remedy for these people in this current time, and rather that the [use of] Indians [is] much more convincing, and that petitions asking for these [Indians] should not be confused with petitions asking for those [Africans]."¹⁰²

After hearing Nunes, the Secretary of the State wrote immediately in the name of the King to the Overseas Council, so that the demands of the settlers of Grão-Pará were resolved as quickly as possible. Silva Nunes claimed that the State was operating at a loss of more than 50,000 cruzados a year.¹⁰³ To compound this problem, the outbreak of smallpox in 1725 exacerbated this misery.

"And as the contagion of smallpox three years ago, in that entire state, took more than six million tame Indians to the residents, not to mention those who died in the villages, from the missionaries, those people find themselves exhausted of all remedies..."¹⁰⁴

The Jesuit missionary, João Teixeira, wrote a long response refuting each of Silva Nunes's arguments. Flight, according to Teixeira, was a result of the "vexations with which the whites persecute [the Indigenous]," rather than an inherent proclivity of Native peoples.¹⁰⁵ He accused the supplicant of actually just being interested in engaging in the slave trade, and that they "exaggerate" the claims about the lack of Indigenous workers: "because while they ask for licenses to go to the forests to remove salsa, clove, and cacao, they use these licenses as a means to capture the Indians."¹⁰⁶ João Teixeira claimed that it was the trade in slaves, which came at the expense of the cacao trade, that explains the diminished revenues of the state.

The Junta das Missões also ruled on the matter, rejecting Silva Nunes's claim and his stated preference for Indigenous slaves. The Junta's opinion condemned those that "...dare to prefer the Tapuyas, who claim that [the Tapuyas] do not have a rational soul and were born to be

¹⁰² "Carta de Paulo da Silva Nunes a Câmara de Belém," in *Corographia histórica, chronográfica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil, Tomo 4*, ed. Alexandre José de Melo Moraes, (Rio de Janeiro: Typografia Americana, 1860): 288. "...e reparando algumas falarem em pretos, e em eu nelles não tratar da dita proposta lhe dei razões tão eficazes que m'as admito e conveio nellas, por não serem os pretos os mais precisos para o remédio desses povos no tempo presente, e só sim mui convenientes os Indios, e para não confundir o requerimento destes com aquelles, que sempre depois tem lugar."

¹⁰³ BL, British Guiana Papers Vol. 2, D. 10.

¹⁰⁴ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx, 16, D. 1628: "E como o contágio de bexigas ha tres annos, em toda aquelle estado, levou aos moradores mais de seis mil índios mansos, sem fallar nos que morrerão nas aldeas, dos missionarios, achão exaustos aquelles povos de todos os remédios para subsisterem com a possibilidade de que necessitão."

¹⁰⁵ "Carta do Padre João Texeira," in *Corographia histórica, chronográfica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil, Tomo 4*, ed. Alexandre José de Melo Moraes, (Rio de Janeiro: Typografia Americana, 1860): 333.

¹⁰⁶ "Carta do Padre João Texeira," in *Corographia histórica*, 335.

slaves to the whites, whose opinion inflames all of us.”¹⁰⁷ By the early eighteenth century, discussions over whether or not Indigenous peoples were born to be servants were more widespread in official correspondence. Speaking to the *homens bons* of São Luis in 1709, the governor of Maranhão, Cristóvão da Costa Freire, had to explain the latest decision of the Crown to limit Indigenous slave-trading.¹⁰⁸ The Crown demanded that Indigenous workers be paid and be given time off to cultivate their own lands. Costa Freire, who was sympathetic to the settlers’ attempts to control Indigenous labor, explained that:

“I do not mean with this that [the Indigenous] should be treated as the whites, since it seems that nature created them more to serve than to dominate, and if there are servants by nature, as claimed by the Philosopher, these are them, and the Blacks, who ordinarily, by their nature, are not capable to self-govern and maintain an orderly republic according to the maxims of reason...”¹⁰⁹

Equating the “Tapuyas” and enslaved African peoples, as Ferreira had done in *America Abreviada*, was an increasingly common argument to justify the exploitation of Indigenous peoples in the eighteenth century. Even more striking were the comparisons between the two slave trades. Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real, the Secretary of the State to João V, responded to the controversy in 1736 by claiming that:

“Either Hugo Grotius is correct that all forms of slavery are unjust or existing practice is, that is, that all are equally valid, for I do not perceive any difference in the taking of slaves in Angola and the Mina Coast and in this State because some are sold by their fathers, others are stolen or are sold by the rulers.”¹¹⁰

The judge Francisco Duarte dos Santos summarized both sides of the debate and presented his own opinion through the Overseas Council in 1734. He noted that the Jesuits were likely correct that the settlers grossly exaggerated their lack of slaves, citing that many settlers owned anywhere from 50, 100, to 200 slaves. Duarte dos Santos understood the problem as fundamentally about disease and the physical capacity of Indigenous peoples as laborers. He argued the following about Indigenous slaves:

“[They]...would be the majority if the Indians were not as subject to deaths as is experienced, as their death is hastened by the great impression made on their minds by the change of land and the quality of their complexion which is at the same time weak. These are different from the slaves of Angola and Costa da Mina, who, because they are stronger and more robust, live and maintain themselves better in these captaincies, so it

¹⁰⁷ AHU Maranhão Cx. 16, D. 1710. “No expressado pensamento concorrem muitas pessoas desta cidade se bem ha outras que se atreviem a preferer os Tapuyas não tem alma racional e que nasem para serem escravos dos brancos a cuja opinião a juizo acendem todas.”

¹⁰⁸ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 11, D. 1101.

¹⁰⁹ AHU Maranhão Avulsos Cx. 11, D. 1101. “Não quero dizer com isto que ? igualmente tratados como os brancos, que a natureza parece, que os creou mais para servir q tue para dominar, e se ha servos por natureza, como teve para si o Philosopho, são estes, e os negros, que ordinariamente, por natureza, não são capazes de se regar por si, e reterem republica ordenada, segundo os ditamos do rezão, o que digo he que não devem ser tratados com tanta...”

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 498.

seems that the blood of the Tapuyas should be separated from the service of this State, and if in their place black slaves were introduced, this would not only calm the concerns that reign here, since the only discussion in this State is about the Tapuyas themselves, but it would also overwhelm the temporal and spiritual interests of these people..”¹¹¹

Duarte dos Santos concluded his report by explaining that the “Tapuyas, either for lacking a rational soul, or for being created in their nature with a distinction in their color and their customs, are not meant to serve the whites.”¹¹² Once again, the racialized argument of an inherent African strength and capacity to work was used to contest settler demands for Indigenous slaves.

The Paulo da Silva Nunes controversy encapsulates how settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials in Maranhão repeatedly revisited the “disease, flight, capacity to work” explanation of the transition from Indigenous to African slavery. In Maranhão, settlers refuted the imposition of this overdetermined explanation and actually reimagined fundamental questions about the nature of Indigenous peoples, their relationship to African peoples, and their potential as slaves. This discussion serves as a reminder that “disease, flight, capacity to work” as a paradigm, which has so often been accepted in the historiography as the grand narrative of the transition from Indigenous to African slavery, was often an imperial and consistently a Jesuit interpretation of the history of Brazil that was imposed onto another colonial contexts, where it faced considerable resistance.

The Town Councils on the Eve of the Ultimate Abolition of Indigenous Slavery, 1751-1753

Other than the sources from the late 1720s and early 1730s on the Paulo da Silva Nunes controversy, the *Coleção* contains a series of sources written from Municipal Councils during the last five years of sanctioned Indigenous slavery in the colony. Here, I briefly discuss the context of abolition before I jump into analyzing three sources, two from the Municipal Council of Belém in 1752 and 1753, and the other from the officials of the Senate of the Villa de Nazareth de Vigia in 1754.

The traditional historiographical narrative is that abolition of Indigenous slavery happened because of centralizing reforms, though this explanation is only partially helpful. In 1751, the imperial administration drafted a plan for the reform of Maranhão that mandated the exploration of new forms of economic production, a revaluation of the Jesuit missionary system, and a ban on Indigenous slave trading. Barbara Sommer and Alexandre Pelegrino have shown how territorial rivalries spurred this abolition of indigenous slavery. Sommer showed that the

¹¹¹ AHU Avulsos do Pará, Cx. 18, D. 1643. “...e destas seria a mayor parte se os índios não fossem tão sujeitos a mortandades como se experimenta, pois lhes apressa a morte a grande impressão que lhes faz nos animos a mudanca de pais e qualidade de sua compleição que he nimiamente frouxa e débil, no que se distinguem estes dos escravos de Angola e Costa da Mina, os quaes por serem mais fortes e robustos vivem e se conservão melhor nestas capitánias, pello que parece que se apartasse o sangue dos Tapuyas do servisso deste Estado, e em seu lugar se emtroduziam escravos pretos não só acalmaria as inquietações que aqui reinão, de que o único assunto são os mesmos Tapuyas, mas também sobregarião interesses temporaes e espirituaes a estes povos, ainda que ao princípio reputado por dura e fatal esta inesperada novidade.”

¹¹² AHU Avulsos do Pará, Cx. 18, D. 1643. There is an error in the Moraes transcription of this source. The original manuscript shows that Francisco Duarte dos Santos wrote that the Indigenous “nascem para servirem os brancos”, rather than “não são para servirem os brancos”, which are two vastly different conclusions.

governor of Maranhão, Francisco Xavier Mendonça Furtado, believed that the Indigenous slave trade “gave the Spanish and Dutch a superior moral position in the territorial rivalry.”¹¹³

There was also the influence of continued outbreaks of disease, particularly in the late 1740s, that gave the Crown and Overseas Council incentive to curb abuses against the Native population or worried the crown about loss of Native population. One 1753 letter established that, given the effects of Indigenous deaths due to disease, the settlers had decided to form a company to bring African captives from the Coast of Guiné to Maranhão.¹¹⁴

But just as there were those that used outbreak of disease as a reason to encourage the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there were others who held fast to the idea that Maranhão could not function without widespread access to Indigenous service. In 1752, when the topic of the abolition of Indigenous slavery became more widespread, the Municipal Council of Belém wrote a staunch defense of maintaining Indigenous slavery: “trafficking is a way of life, and without them it is not possible to carry out, in terms of paddling the canoes, fishing, hunting”¹¹⁵ The attempt to limit the *Tropa de Resgates* was badly received in Belém:

“Your Majesty’s Resolution will not come in time to preserve the decadence of these people, nor will the introduction of Blacks be enough to make up for the lack of *Tapuyas*, because these new remedies are always very easy to promise but difficult to put in practice, and more often these novelties take away from the health of the body politic.”¹¹⁶

Here, the Municipal Council of Belém seemed to make an argument about feasibility. Settlers in Maranhão had historically been promised the widespread introduction of enslaved Africans, and these promises had largely not been met, as had been the case in the 1680s. Once again, we see the language of the common good and, in this case, the health of the body politic, as key arguments for the preservation of the system of Indigenous slavery.

A year later, the same Municipal Council issued a similar letter that emphasized the familiarity that Indigenous peoples had with the Amazonian environment. The letter acknowledged the plan to bring African slaves to Maranhão, given that it was not to the “liking of your Majesty to continue the *tropas dos resgates*, through which we have ransomed the Indians in the hinterlands of this same State, who are the slaves with which the settlers of this

¹¹³ Sommer, “Colony of the *Sertão*,” 426.

¹¹⁴ AHU Cod. 485, 309/570.

¹¹⁵ AHU Cod. 485, 311/570. “e alvará citados na dita representação que fizemos ao Governador se da grande utilidade a mizéria em que o povo se acha e a substância do Estado, e a concorrência dos índios que he perciza em respeito das circunstâncias; porque o tráfico e modo de viver sem elles se não pode effectuar, em rezão do remar as canoas, pescar, cassar, e osmais, que na representação refferida se expendeo sabem que a sobre ditta observancia dos dittos capitaes do regimento das missões, e alvara sera quazi impossivel e observasse não se dividindo a administração temporal e a espitirual, que alias se experimentaram sempre a confusão em que nos acham, e da mesma sorte a miséria e decadencia em que se acha o Estado...”

¹¹⁶ AHU Cod. 485, 312/570. “A resolução de V.Mag. não pode vir a tempo de preservar a decadência deste povo, nem a introdução dos pretos será suficiente para suprir a falta dos Tapuyas porque os remédios novos forão sempre tão facis de discorrer como dificultosos de praticar, e mais vezes tirão que dão saude ao corpo politico as novidades, porque antes costumam crescer que evitar o damno de forma que moradores hera melhor nao fazer experiencia dellas, mais de qualquer modo, como nenhum remedio futuro pode servir para aprezenate atenuacao mais que tao somente a brevidade das expedicao das tropas de resgates.”

conquest have always served themselves with.”¹¹⁷ The letter explained that the *povo* answered the Governor and Captain General, that the outbreaks of smallpox meant that the State was lacking “slaves and cultivators” and that the settlers were very poor without “finding themselves without the capital in the present time to buy and pay for Blacks, that the benevolent V.Mag. wants to send.” Yet the most striking argument made by the representatives of the Municipal Council was that “the Blacks do not know the way of cultivation of this state” and that it would take time for enslaved Africans to learn how to handle the land. The letter continued that African captives “are not capable for the common work of rowing canoes in the trips, nor fish nor hunt in the forest for sustenance nor to collect the drugs.”¹¹⁸

“The nations Tapuyas are those that for all the above mentioned work are the most apt, for since their birth they are used to it, and born in the forest, and to leave the forest, they have a natural instinct, they can always row canoes, jump to the sea when there is a shipwreck...which the Blacks cannot do, when those go in a canoe, they are the ones that die, for they do not have the natural science of swimming, like said Tapuyas.”¹¹⁹

An almost word-for-word repetition of Aranha’s *Papel Politico*, the signatories of the letter relied on ideas of Indigenous peoples’ unique capacities to work to justify their practices. Unlike Aranha’s text, the 1753 letter used the concept of “natural science”, gesturing even more prominently to a notion of inherent capabilities in certain populations. Like Aranha, these settlers did not refuse the importation of enslaved Africans: “It is true, that if Your Majesty sends some Blacks, this could still be useful because among the settlers, even if there are few, there are some that can buy them. But these will not be worth it without the Indians, nor can they be conserved without them...”¹²⁰ Yet these sorts of economic arguments often went hand-in-hand with the assessments of the capacities to work of both Indigenous and African peoples. According to the representatives in Belem, it was:

¹¹⁷ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 312-312v. “...agrade da V.Mg. continuarse nas tropas dos resgates, por meyo dos quais se resgataram indios nos certos deste mesmo Estado, que erao os escravos com que os moradores desta conquista se sirvirao sempre “

¹¹⁸ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 312-312v. “...ficou destruindo de escravos e cultores, que lhe beneficiassem de cultivassem as fazendas, e consequentemente lhe colhessem os leveres e gêneros da terra, pella grande mortandade que houve nos escravos, que passerao de vinte e cil mil alem dos forros que forão em mayor número, e depois destas as muitos fugidos, que se tem seguido, e por estas faltas se andão os moradores mui pobres, de sorte que mal podem sustentarsem se não achao com cabedal para no tempo prezente comprarem e pagarem os pretos, que a benegnio de V.Mag. lhes quer mandar, nem em muita ann. A poderao fazer, pella mesma pobreza, e decadência que se achão, alem de que os alem de que os pretos não sabem o modo da cultura deste estado e será necessário tempo para a ella se admitirem, saberem-na fazer. Não são capazes para o trabalho comum e geral que vem a ser remarem canos nas viagens que se podem fazer, nem pescar e caçar nos mattos para o sustento dos seus nem a colherem os gêneros, e haverseis pelo espesso dos mesmos [doc. cortado] de precisamente se andem perder, de sorte que os tais negros so poderão [doc cortado] nas próprias fazendas sem delas sairem.”

¹¹⁹ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 312-312v

¹²⁰ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 312-312v. “He certo, que o mandar V.Mag. alguns pretos, não deixa de ser util porque entre os moradores, ainda que poucos, alguns haveram que os possam comprarem, nem estes se podem valer sem os índios, nem os conservarem sem elles, tanto pello que fica ponderão, como porque ainda que o todo podesse que nas pode servisse somente com pretos, havendo como ha todos os moradores muitos falos de cultores, serão necessários quarenta ou sesenta annos, para poderem vir aquelles....”

“more favorable [to have] *tropas de resgates* which has always sustained this State, which makes it easier for the settlers to buy Indians, or ransom them, because of their price and the cost of the *resgates* are a quarter of what a Black can cost, and it is growing consensus Indians are more capable for work...and for all these reasons it is more useful and favorable for the settlers to serve themselves with these Indians”¹²¹

Once again, rather than concluding that settlers themselves had one concrete position on the topic, we see how capacity to work appeared alongside other arguments, such as financial strain or moral arguments. Capacity to work thus functioned as a flexible and racialized paradigm that could easily serve settler’s discursive needs.

The innovation in settler arguments in the eighteenth century was the comparison between the slave trades. In 1754, the officials of the Senate of the Villa de Nazareth de Vigia sent a letter to the Provedor of the Fazenda Real, Mathias da Costa e Souza. The letter was signed by two judges, three representatives and the procurator of the village, Angello Luis Pereira. By 1754, it seemed that the officials of Belém had reversed their earlier stance by advocating for the introduction of enslaved Africans, perhaps because they anticipated the policy changes stemming from Lisbon. The senators of Vigia responded to the proposal in the Municipal Council of Belém suggesting the use of “Blacks, that are slaves because the Tapuyas are considered free.”¹²² The officials of Nazareth complained that they were not part of the conversation, and that they had only heard of the proposal because one judge had sent them the proposal, expecting deliberation from the people of Nazareth de Vigia.

This letter from the officials of Nazareth illustrates the way the conversation had moved to direct comparisons and contrasts between Indigenous and African slave trading. It does so by pointing out the inconsistency of supporting the enslavement of Africans rather than Indigenous peoples, which the officials claimed have been much better examined and justified. It is a reflection on captivity more broadly, opening with a discussion of whether anyone can be enslaved. The officials once again pointed out the contradictions of the slave trade in the Americas versus the slave trade in Africa. According to the letter:

“In all the settlements in Angola, Cabo Verde, São Tomé, Mozambique, and etc. the colonists are served with Black slaves in the same land of those Blacks, as such it seems true and comes from logical conclusion that the Tapuyas can also be slaves and are better slaves since they are more fairly examined to determine their status.”¹²³

The signatories upheld their right of the legitimate captivity of Tapuyas. According to the officials, these questions over slavery had already been thoroughly debated and decided by

¹²¹ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 312-312v. “Alem de que suposta a miséria e pobreza em que se acha o Estado das as razões, ainda pella baixa em que derao os gêneros, sendo poucos os que ha annos se tem colhido, fica sendo maes favorável havendo tropa de resgates que sempre se sustentou este Estado, mais fácil sera aos moradores delles prarem índios, ou resgaterem nos, porque o preço delles, ou o custo dos resgates a ser huma quarta parte do que pode custar hum preto, e a crescendo o achar índios maes capazes para o trabalho, como fica expellido, e por todos essas fica sendo aos moradores mais util e favorável servirense com os taes índios.”

¹²² AHU Cod. 485, fl. 320/570. “...pretos, que são escravos por se considerarem livres of Tapuyas.”

¹²³ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 321/570. “E em nestes povoações todas de Angola, Cabo Verde, Sam Thome, Moçambique, e etc se estao servindo com os pretos escravos os habitadores todos daquellas mesmas partes das terras dos pretos, logo parece he verdade, e vem por consequência certa, que taobem os tapuyas podem ser escravos, e são melhormente escravos pello mais justificado exame que se tem feyto a seu respeito.”

previous Kings. The Municipal Council pointed to the hypocrisy of “these so-called protectors of the liberty of the Tapuyas” who do not do the same for the “liberty of the Blacks, without any understanding that if Blacks can be slaves, the Tapuyas can also, and if the Blacks cannot be slaves, neither can the [Tapuyas].”¹²⁴ The officials of Nazareth emphasized that there was no abolition of Indigenous slavery that did not lead to the “total ruin, deplorable backwardness and known decline of this State.”¹²⁵ The loyal vassals are the ones who “cannot work, nor are they of use, for these violent services, nor for the regime of canoes that we see in this state, and the hinterlands divided by rivers to enter the forests.”¹²⁶ It is the Tapuyas, who are “practical, robust, and acculturated” who “sustain all the settlers...who do not have the capital to buy the necessary blacks.” Old tropes of Indigenous peoples as practical, paired with the language of robustness, show how eighteenth-century discourses both became increasingly racialized but also drew heavily from earlier discourses on Indigenous slavery.

On the eve of abolition, we see the most radicalized and racialized forms of the discourses and arguments traced in this dissertation. Rather than pointing to their dependency on Indigenous peoples and their skills, settlers in eighteenth-century Maranhão increasingly compared Indigenous bodies to African bodies, making explicitly racial arguments about these populations’ proclivities to work. In doing so, they subverted the framework of “flight, disease, and capacity to work,” arguing that even if this framework could explain the history of the State of Brazil, it could not explain life and labor in Maranhão. Despite protests by some sectors of the secular population, the decree on the liberty of the Indigenous peoples of Maranhão was issued in 1755. After 1755, Indigenous slavery would never again be sanctioned by the Portuguese colonial state.

¹²⁴ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 321/570. “...de que, se estes chamados procterores da liberdade de sua novo rezoos alguma, terminantes pela liberdade geral dos tapuyas, podem ser que estas mesmas me lictassem (?) da liberdade dos pretos, sem aminimia desporidade que se os prettos podem ser e são escravos, tão bem os Tapuyas podem ser, e são escravos, e se estes o não podem ser, tão bem nem aquelles.”

¹²⁵ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 321/570.

¹²⁶ AHU Cod. 485, fl. 321/570. “...não podem trabalhar, nem prestão, para estes serviços violentos, nem para o continuado governo de canoas de (?) se ve neste Estado, e os sertões cortados de Rios, servem para fazer entradas aos matos.”

CONCLUSION

In 1751, the new governor of Portuguese Amazonia, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, was tasked with modernizing a colony long perceived to be a backwater of empire. As part of the Portuguese Crown's larger modernization project, Mendonça Furtado called for the establishment of new villages and cities throughout the colony. Indigenous peoples would be encouraged to resettle in these villages and adopt European ways of living. Writing to a captain tasked with establishing a village in São José do Macapá, Mendonça Furtado instructed the captain to encourage the settlement's Native inhabitants "to work and cultivate the land" and to prevent them from falling into "their abominable vice of laziness, nor in the other equally pernicious [vice] that is the disregard for manual labor, which has reduced this land to its current penury and misery."¹ By promoting agriculture in these new villages, Mendonça Furtado hoped to reverse the dynamic in the colony where "only the Indians are those that are put to work" while white settlers would not even "...pick up a tool to work the land."²

The Pombaline Reforms, the mid-eighteenth-century centralizing reforms of the Portuguese Empire, sought to overhaul the governance of Maranhão. Under these reforms, the colony changed its name to the State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão and moved its capital to Belém, thus solidifying a long-standing trend of the transfer of power from São Luis to Belém.³ Furthermore, reformers in Lisbon encouraged permanent settlement and cultivation in a region known for extraction, absentee workers, and Indigenous peoples that lived "dispersed across the forests."⁴ To accomplish these goals, Indigenous peoples would no longer live in mission villages under the supervision of the Jesuits, but rather live in secular villages run by civil administrators. The new colonial administration substituted the system established in 1686 by the *Regimento das Missões* with the *Diretório dos Índios* (1757-1798).⁵ The *Diretório* sought to secularize and

¹ Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, "Instrução que levou o capitão-mor João Batista de Oliveira quando foi estabelecer a nova vila de S. José de Macapá," December 18, 1751, in *Amazônia na Era Pombalina. Correspondência do Governador e Capitão-general do estado do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado Vol. 1, ed. Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, (Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2005): 171. "Por ser preciso e conveniente aos serviços de S. Maj. que na nova povoação e fortaleza do Macapá haja uma pessoa que não só contenha aqueles novos moradores em paz, mas que também os persuada ao trabalho e cultura das terras, não deixando precipitar esta gente no abominável vício da preguiça, nem no outro igualmente pernicioso que é o do desprezo do trabalho manual, o qual tem sido muita parte de se reduzirem esta terra à penúria e miséria em que se acha."

² Mendonça Furtado, "Instrução que levou o capitão-mor João Batista de Oliveira," December 18, 1751, in *Amazônia na Era Pombalina* Vol. 1 (2005): 172. "Para evitar o abuso que está tão arraigado nestas terras de que só os índios são os que devem trabalhar, e que a todo o branco é injurioso pegar em instrumento para cultivar as terras, não consentirá V. mercê que estes povoadores se sirvam de índio algum para o trabalho da cultura; no de qualquer outro mais que, somente daqueles que lhes estão destinados para pescadores e caçadores, enquanto os mesmos povoadores se não fazem práticos no modo de haverem estes mantimentos; porque S. Maj. é servido que eles se conservem no mesmo exercício de trabalho que tinham em suas terras."

³ For more on the administrative and political changes to the colony, see Fabiano Vilça do Santos, *O governo das conquistas do norte: trajetórias administrativas no Estado do Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1751-1780)* (São Paulo: Annablume Editora 2011).

⁴ ANTT LO Maço 4, N. 156; Roller, *Amazonian Routes*, 131.

⁵ See Colin MacLachlan, "The Indian Directorate: Forced Acculturation in Portuguese America (1757-1799)," *The Americas* 28 no. 4 (1972): 357-387; Patrícia Maria Melo Sampaio, "'Vossa Excelência mandará o que for servido:' políticas indígenas e indigenistas na Amazônia Portuguesa do final do século XVIII," *Tempo* 12, no. 23 (2007) 39-55.

standardize the administration of Indigenous peoples' labor, a shift made even more clear with the final expulsion of the Jesuits from the colony in 1757.

The other fundamental change of the mid-century reforms was the abolition of Indigenous slavery. After years of deliberation, the Portuguese Crown issued the 1755 decree on Indigenous liberty, though news of the decree only reached São Luis and Belém in 1757.⁶ Indigenous peoples could no longer be enslaved under any circumstances. The colony's royal judge gained the power to arrest anyone who tried to enslave an Indigenous person and to immediately grant former enslaved persons their freedom.⁷ Indigenous peoples were encouraged to learn the ways of Portuguese life, and they could no longer be referred to as "negros da terra," or *blacks of the land*.⁸ The association between slavery and Blackness, therefore, could now exclusively be attributed to enslaved Africans. To compensate for the abolition of Indigenous slavery, the Crown gave a monopoly on the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the new General Company of Pará and Maranhão. From 1757 to 1778, the General Company brought approximately 26,000 enslaved African persons, primarily from Upper Guinea, to Grão-Pará and Maranhão.⁹ Plantation owners were slowly able to amass capital. In particular, the captaincy of Maranhão and the city of São Luis became one of the fastest growing plantation economies of Portuguese America.¹⁰ According to one plantation owner in Maranhão in the 1770s, the introduction of enslaved Africans finally enabled the colony's agricultural development.¹¹

The mid-century reforms thus suggest the victory of a particular kind of thinking about colonization, work, and Indigenous versus African labor. Nevertheless, while it is tempting to frame the mid-century reform as a story of the transition from one of these models of colonization to another, the realities of life and production in Amazonia remained multiple and complicated. Recent scholarship has emphasized the massive continuities between the pre- and post-reform periods. Some historians have argued that the abolition decree did very little in granting freedom to Indigenous peoples, with methods of coerced work persisting for much of the colonial period.¹² Others have shown how the process of abolition was neither smooth nor quick. As Alexandre Pelegrino has argued, Indigenous peoples took a leading role in litigating for their freedom, while plantation owners sought to subvert abolition by attributing Blackness to their former enslaved Indigenous workers.¹³ Furthermore, despite the large-scale introduction of enslaved African workers to the colony, the State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão still remained a colony based primarily on Indigenous labor and co-production.¹⁴ And as much as the new state

⁶ Robeilton de Souza Gomes and Marcia Eliane Alves de Souza e Mello, "'Sua Majestade é servida'? O processo de construção da Lei de Liberdade dos índios do Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1751-1759)," *Saeculum: Revista de História* 26, no. 44 (2021): 473–87.

⁷ ANTT LO Maço 4, N. 156.

⁸ Marcos, "Configurations of the Human," 160.

⁹ Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil*, 51.

¹⁰ Hawthorne, 51. "After the CGPM's monopoly ended, slave imports increased substantially. The crown managed to jump-start Amazonia's economy by providing cheap African labor through the CGPM. By 1778, plantations were producing significant quantities of cotton and rice, and planters were able to afford large purchases of African slaves, so shippers increasingly visited the region."

¹¹ AHU Pará Cx. 71, D. 6033. Quoted in Hawthorne, 47.

¹² Farage, *As muralhas do sertão*, 50.

¹³ Pelegrino, "Bonds of Belonging," 204. In Chapter 5 of his dissertation, Pelegrino argues that there were significant continuities in Indigenous bondage.

¹⁴ Ângela Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vassalos: colonização e relações de poder no Norte do Brasil na segunda metade do século XVII*, (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000).

encouraged settled agriculture, processes of extraction were still fundamental to the Amazonian economy.¹⁵

In line with historians who have increasingly pointed to the continuities between the pre- and post-reform period, we should remain skeptical that settler discourses changed overnight. A key avenue for future investigation is to trace settler arguments for Indigenous laborers after the 1755 decree. Another topic of future research is to investigate whether these discourses were unique to Maranhão. There is no doubt that the regional specificities of Maranhão, its reliance on Indigenous laborers, the prevalence of an internal slave trade, and its extractive economy, made this colony an ideal space for generating different ideas about how a colony should grow and develop that deviated from a certain established norm. But those settler arguments did not spontaneously arise in Maranhão, even if these settler arguments reached their logical extreme in Portuguese Amazonia. As we saw in the first chapter of this dissertation, ideas that Indigenous peoples were experienced in the land, that enslaving Indigenous peoples was more practical than relying on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and that Indigenous laborers were the backbone of the colony's growth, surfaced in sixteenth and early-seventeenth century Bahia, the heart of the State of Brazil's early sugar-boom. As such, historians should look to other areas of Portuguese America, primarily those that relied on Indigenous labor like São Paulo, to trace debates about capacity to work, colonial development, and Indigenous versus African labor.

Another avenue of investigation is to understand how ideas about capacity to work were used to distinguish among the various African populations subject to enslavement in Brazil. Minas Gerais in the early eighteenth century is one possible case study. During the gold rush in Minas, settlers and merchants claimed that enslaved peoples of the Costa da Mina were superior workers when compared to those of Angola, especially in mining. In 1726, the Viceroy of Brazil protested Lisbon's attempt to curb slave-trading in the Costa da Mina. Viceroy Cesar de Meneses claimed that Mina slaves were superior workers, and that "the Blacks of Angola are not useful in the mines and can only work as domestic laborers" and that it was thus "impossible to impede the trade with the Costa da Mina."¹⁶ The fact that many of these arguments about the superiority of enslaved workers from the Costa da Mina came from slave-traders tells us that these tropes about capacity to work were key rhetorical strategies for settlers advancing their labor interests to the Crown.

Considering regional specificities can thus help us complicated some accepted paradigms in the discursive and intellectual histories of slavery and labor. Over the past few decades, historians of Brazil have pushed back against the tendency of telling the history of colonial Brazil through models that are not region-specific, especially those that tend to impose the narratives of Permabuco and Bahia onto other captaincies. This dissertation has shown that these debates, fundamentally concerned with questions of regional specificity and the imposition of models of colonial development, actually took place among elites in the colonial period themselves. In the case of Maranhão, the continuous debates about how to develop and lift this region out of poverty made it an ideal place for discussing different models of colonization. In these debates, settlers, missionaries, and colonial administrators often pitted two models of

¹⁵ Roller, *Amazonian Routes*, 13

¹⁶ Quoted in Pierre Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo: Do tráfico de escravos entre o golfo do Benim e a Bahia de Todos-os-Santos, do século XVII ao XIX*, translated by Tasso Gadzanis, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021): 56; see also Carlos da Silva Jr, "Ardras, minas e jejes, ou escravos da 'primeira reputação:' políticas africanas, tráfico negreiro e identidade étnica na Bahia do século XVIII," *Almanack* 12 (2016): 6-33. For an example of this language in a primary source, see AHU São Tomé Cx. 5, D. 547.

colonization, that of [extraction/Indigenous labor] and [cultivation/African labor] against each other, though the reality on-the-ground was always more complicated. Even if settlers used the cacao trade and the extraction of the *Drogas do sertão* to justify access to Indigenous labor, they equally demanded Indigenous laborers for work in sugar, tobacco, and cotton plantations.

Yet even if these arguments were exaggerations and simplifications that created binaries in a world that was clearly more complicated, these arguments also partially responded to realities. We know that Maranhão was a colony based on Indigenous production, where Indigenous peoples were the majority of the population, where they carried out the bulk of the labor, and where they carried out labor that sometimes was indeed specialized and highly skilled. When settlers in Maranhão claimed that they needed Indigenous rowers to navigate the waterways and to find bark-clove in the interior, they both homogenized and essentialized Indigenous skills, but they also revealed a likely accurate dependency on Indigenous workers for certain types of production. It thus should not be surprising that these same settlers advocated for the perpetuation of these social and economic models. The settlers writing these petitions were largely familiar with Indigenous peoples, and they exploited their work throughout the colonial period. This points to the importance of not limiting our interpretations of settler ideologies on Indigeneity to the encounter literature, which tends to exclude concerns of production.

Furthermore, as the growing number of scholars dedicated to studying Indigenous slavery have shown, even if Indigenous slavery was displaced by African slavery, these displacements happened at different rates across different locations of the Atlantic world. If “disease, flight, and capacity to work” could be used to explain the prevalence of African enslaved workers in mid-seventeenth century Bahia plantations, this framework certainly could not explain seventeenth-century São Paulo or Maranhão. To advocate for an Indigenous slave-trade, a system long-maligned by the Crown, settlers in Maranhão had to come up with arguments to justify their slaving expeditions. To do so, settlers claimed that their colony had a unique environment, they questioned the accepted interpretations of Indigenous and African peoples as workers, and even the legitimacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The history of Indigenous and African slavery in Brazil has largely been overdetermined by the larger material explanations. This dissertation has attempted to trouble this overdetermination. The framework of “disease, flight, and capacity to work” was not just an explanation of a material reality. It was also a constructed argument and an interpretation of history, and, like all interpretations of history, it was subject to debate. Recent scholarship has done a tremendous job showing that the history of Native Peoples in the Americas was not just a history of decimation to disease.¹⁷ Scholars have also shown how flight was an act of resistance taken by all populations subject to enslavement, and not somehow an act that Indigenous peoples could “instinctually” carry out due to their familiarity with their environment.¹⁸ Despite the growing sophistication of this scholarship, the historiography still has not troubled this idea of a monolithic and static European preference for African laborers. When historians unquestioningly replicate this idea that Europeans saw African peoples as the most capable of work, they obscure the heterogeneity of ideas about Indigenous and African peoples as laborers. Portuguese peoples lauded Indigenous work and they called African peoples “lazy,” and they derided Indigenous workers and claimed that African peoples were more “durable” for plantation work. The adoption of African slavery in parts of Brazil cannot be attributed to some inherent African

¹⁷ Pelegrino, “Bonds of Belonging,” 5. Pelegrino argues that the “narrative of substitution contributes to Indigenous people’s disappearance in historical processes.” See footnote 11 in the Introduction of this dissertation.

¹⁸ See footnote 12 in the Introduction of this dissertation.

capacity as plantation workers or to work as slaves. It should be understood because of the scale of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, including the scale of its violence. When we uphold these ideas of a homogeneous and unchanging European preference for enslaved African workers, we obscure the ways that early modern Portuguese peoples constantly contradicted themselves when they wielded racial stereotypes. Ignoring this heterogeneity or attributing these discourses to some notion that Indigenous peoples did not take to settled agriculture and manual labor perpetuates a series of negative stereotypes about Indigenous AND African peoples. When we make racialized tropes seem monolithic and homogeneous, we obscure one of the constitutive components of racial stereotypes: that they are contradictory, flexible, and malleable, and that despite their contradictions, they can persist and somehow reinforce themselves. It is this malleability and resiliency that explains why racial stereotypes continue to plague modern societies.

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