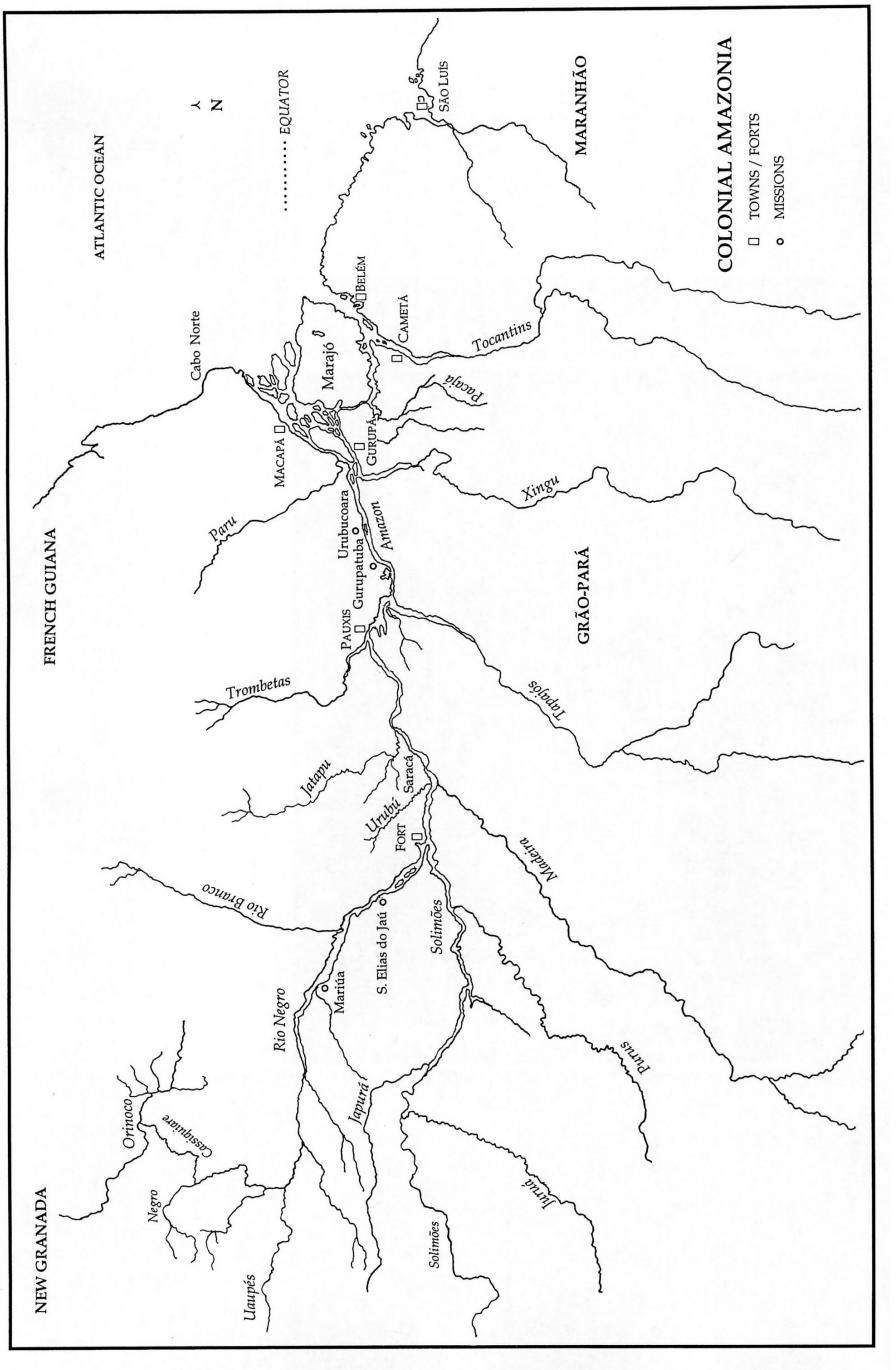
The Americas
61:3 January 2005, 401-428

COLONY OF THE *SERTÃO*: AMAZONIAN EXPEDITIONS AND THE INDIAN SLAVE TRADE*

After expelling their European rivals from the Amazon in the early-seventeenth century, the Portuguese set about exploiting the principal assets of the vast basin—the indigenous inhabitants. As allies, converts, and slaves the native population provided the labor and much of the social fabric of the developing colony. While a variety of canoe-borne expeditions ventured ever farther up the main river and its tributaries seeking elusive gold, harvesting forest products, and expanding the crown's domain, prosperity and power for the leaders and sponsors of those forays derived mainly from the human cargo brought downstream to missions, forts, and other settlements. As a result, crown and colonial authorities attempted to regulate and control the expeditions, and fierce competition developed among institutions and individuals involved in the process. Documents in Portuguese and Brazilian archives reveal the key role played by the Indians themselves in collaboration with the little-studied cross-cultural intermediaries, known as *cunhamenas*.

The vast forests of the *sertão*, or interior, had long sustained a large Indian population and the early development of the colonial economy depended fundamentally on the extraction and exportation of natural products, including spices, cacao, oils, and dyes, rather than on extensive plantation production. Masters of their environment, natives worked the annual collecting canoes that traveled the labyrinth of waterways. A modest amount of tobacco cultivation, especially early in the seventeenth century, and cotton, food crops, and sugar demanded additional laborers. Skilled Indians also wove cloth, cut lumber, constructed dwellings, fished, hunted, and manned all forms of transportation, from the ubiquitous river canoes to the wealthy colonists' sedan

* The author gratefully acknowledges research support from Gettysburg College and the Biblioteca Nacional—Fundação Luso-Americana in Lisbon, Portugal.


NEW GRANADA
FRENCH GUIANA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
N
EQUATOR
COLONIAL AMAZONIA
TOWNS / FORTS
MISSIONS
MARANHÃO
GRÃO-PARÁ
SÃO LUÍS
BELÉM
CAMETÁ
MACAPÁ
GURUPÁ
PAUXIS
FORT
Cabo Norte
Marajó
Urubucoara
Gurupatuba
Saracá
Mariúa
S. Elias do Jaú
Tocantins
Pacajá
Xingu
Amazon
Trombetas
Jatapu
Uruhi
Rio Branco
Rio Negro
Orinoco
Cassiquiare
Negro
Uaupés
Iguará
Solimões
Madeira
Purus
Juruá
Tapajós

chairs.[1] In the northern Brazilian captaincies of Pará and Maranhão, slaves were more likely to be native than African, at least until well into the eighteenth century.[2] As the governor of Maranhão asserted in 1686, "[A] settler esteems more the service of one Indian than that of two Negroes; the former . . . know how to row canoes and make them; they are industrious in hunting and fishing; . . . they have the skill and ability to comprehend all the work they have to do for the whites, which one does not find in the . . . Negroes. . . ."[3] Demand for new slaves rose precipitously when European markets opened for cacao in the 1720s and when smallpox and measles ravaged the native population in the early 1720s and 40s.[4] Little had changed from the previous century when the celebrated Jesuit Antônio Vieira reported on the impact of such epidemics: "Because the entire wealth of the colonists is based on their slaves, it is commonplace for people who at one point thought of themselves as extremely rich and well off to fall into abject poverty."[5] The constant demand for slaves pushed expeditions farther into the interior and fueled the production and importation of trade goods.

While the need for native labor certainly motivated the expeditions to the sertão, I would suggest a broader perspective. Unlike other regions of the Americas, in the vast Amazon basin, land had little intrinsic value. The control of Indians, through alliance or by force, conferred power. They could procure more slaves and were essential to any military undertaking in the region. In turn, natives, often as willing participants in contests for power, used the colonizers for protection as well as to take revenge on their enemies. All sectors of society jostled for influence with the Indians, whether through legislation, as in the case of the colonists and missionaries, or

[1] Dauril Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery in the State of Maranhão During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Bibliotheca Americana* 1:3 (1983), p. 96; Vieira to Padre Provincial do Brasil, 1654, in *Cartas do Padre António Vieira,* ed. J. Lúcio d'Azevedo, 3 vols. (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1925), vol. 1, p. 366; Padre António Vieira to Câmara do Pará, Pará, 12 Feb. 1661, in Azevedo, *Cartas*, vol. 1, pp. 579-83.

[2] We should not overlook the significant African slave population in the region early on, or the continued reliance on native labor after the crown abolished Indian slavery in 1755, however. For a recent study of Africans in the region, see Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "A 'Safe Haven': Runaway Slaves, *Mocambos*, and Borders in Colonial Amazonia, Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82:3 (August 2002), pp. 469-498.

[3] Quoted in Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," p. 103.

[4] Dauril Alden and Joseph C. Miller, "Out of Africa: The Slave Trade and the Transmission of Smallpox to Brazil, 1560-1831," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:2 (Autumn 1987), pp. 205-06; Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," p. 113; Governor João da Maya da Gama, São Luis do Mar.m, 14 Mar. 1724, Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará, hereafter APEP, cod. 10 (old number 907), docs. 100-04, fls. 545-563; Termo de Junta de Missões, 31 Oct. 1744, in Paul David Wojtalewicz, "The 'Junta de Missões': The Missions in the Portuguese Amazon" (M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1993), pp. 135-36.

[5] João Capistrano de Abreu, *Chapters of Brazil's Colonial History 1500-1800*, trans. Arthur Brakel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 109.

through private enterprise, as in the case of the resourceful cunhamenas, men who married into native families to gain a network of allies. Crown officials, missionaries, soldiers, private citizens, and mission Indians competed for authority in the interior and a share of the slave trade.

Prospecting for gold and the expansion of Portuguese territorial claims persisted, even as they became secondary to Indian enslavement. The governor instructed the leader of an expedition that set out in 1649 to discover the legendary gold lake of El Dorado to purchase slaves while he was in the interior.[6] Despite nearly a century of failed efforts to strike it rich, private citizens sent expeditions up the Tocantins River in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and in the 1720s the commander of the fort at Gurupá led his men on a prospecting venture.[7] During the 1740s, slave traders on the Rio Negro continued the quest for the elusive Lake of Gold, the reputed source of earrings traded out of the region.[8] A single success stands out in the documentation—gold strikes on the upper Tocantins River in the late 1730s made not by anyone from the Amazon, but by Paulistas who moved north out of Minas Gerais to Goiás.[9]

Territorial expansion benefited from the slaving expeditions as Portuguese traders clashed with the Jesuit Samuel Fritz, whose mission reached down from Spanish Peru along the Solimões River, while competition between the Portuguese and Dutch on the Rio Branco became fierce in the early eighteenth century.[10] A 1744 tropa solved one of the great American geographical mysteries when it confirmed the existence of the Cassiquiare canal linking the Amazon Basin, via the Rio Negro, to the upper reaches of the Orinoco River.[11] If policymakers saw these as struggles to claim territory, the conflicts were played out on the ground as efforts to control people.

[6] David Graham Sweet, "A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed: The Middle Amazon Valley, 1640-1750" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 218-19.

[7] See Royal Order, Lisboa, 27 Feb. 1725, in *Annaes da Bibliotheca do Pará* 1 (1902), pp. 225-231; Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 157.

[8] Samuel Fritz, *Journal of the Travels and Labours of Father Samuel Fritz in the River of the Amazons between 1686 and 1723*, trans. George Edmundson (London: Hakluyt Society, 1922), p. 77; Robin Michael Wright, "History and Religion of the Baniwa Peoples of the Upper Rio Negro Valley" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), pp. 127-28.

[9] Commander Francisco Ferras Cardozo, Lieutenant Coronel João Pacheco do Couto, and their companions discovered gold on the Manoel Alves River above the Tocantins falls. See Termo, Governor's Palace, Belém, 4 Feb. 1739, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 140 (130); [Governor] João de Abreu Castelo Branco to king [João V], Pará, 20 Feb. 1743, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, hereafter AHU, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 25, D. 2377.

[10] See Fritz, *Journal of the Travels*, pp. 84-103, 118-131, for example; Nádia Farage, *As muralhas dos sertões: os povos indígenas no rio Branco e a colonização* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra; ANPOCS, 1991).

[11] Ignacio Szentmartonyi, "Sequente Notitiate de Rio Negro," in Robin Wright, "Indian Slavery in the Northwest Amazon," *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi* 7:2 (December 1991), p. 155.

The central role of Indian labor in the North makes comparisons to other regions somewhat problematic. The analogy between Brazilian *bandeirantes* generally and the French *coureurs de bois* of Canada is logical because both groups of men adapted to native culture and survival strategies.[12] Also, in São Paulo, Amazonia, and Canada, private trading and intermarriage between Europeans and natives coexisted with a Jesuit mission system. A fundamental contrast must be made, however—in Canada, the French traded manufactured goods for furs; in Brazil, they were exchanged for human lives. Thus the fur traders might be more aptly compared to the sixteenth-century Norman "interpreters" in Rio de Janeiro, who settled in coastal native communities to facilitate the brazilwood trade.[13] The Indian slave trade on the Amazon and in São Paulo is better compared to the English colonies of southern North America, where shifting alliances and warfare were used to obtain captives and where allies could become slaves when links to the interior broke down or during times of severe labor shortages.[14]

New sources help clarify the mechanics of Amazonian expeditions, the role of participants, and the reliance on native allies. As John Monteiro has stressed, historians typically praise or vilify the bandeirantes, but generally ignore the important role of the natives in shaping the colony.[15] Complex negotiations among the contestants demonstrate that the simple categories of "Indians" and "Europeans" are inadequate to describe political realities. Indeed, indigenous Amazonians were divided by a multiplicity of factors beyond ethnic and cultural differences. Many natives became slaves, while others participated in the slave trade. Some, as allies of colonial agents, became members of the native colonial elite and owned indigenous slaves themselves.[16] This short study shows how a variety of enterprising traders found wealth and advancement in the sertão in the 1730s and 40s, prior to the policy shift which effectively ended Indian slavery under the Enlightenment-era Pombaline reforms of Governor Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado.

[12] This comparison has been made, for example, by Richard M. Morse, ed., *The Bandeirantes: The Historical Role of the Brazilian Pathfinders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 20.

[13] See Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, trans. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[14] See John Manuel Monteiro, *Negros da terra: índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994); Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[15] John Monteiro, "O escravo índio, esse desconhecido," in *Índios no Brasil*, ed. Luís Donisete Benzi Grupioni, 3rd ed. (São Paulo: Global; Brasília: MEC, 1998), p. 105.

[16] Native leaders in Monte Alegre, formerly the mission Gurupatuba, refused to give up their slaves even after Indian slavery was abolished, see "R.^{am} das pessoas q' ainda concervão Indios no Seo Serv.^{o} com tt.^{o} de escravos, . . ." Director Pedro Jozé da Costa, Monte Alegre, 24 July 1761, APEP, cod. 107 (20), doc. 51.

NOMENCLATURE AND REGULATIONS

Northern expeditions included two types of *tropas*, *guerra* (war) and *resgates* (ransom), as well as *entradas*, *bandeiras*, and *descimentos* (descents). The *tropa de guerra* carried out "Just Wars," which required formal authorization by crown authorities, to punish hostile Indians or those who rejected or impeded the spread of Christianity. Captives taken in such a war could be enslaved. The Portuguese not only termed Indian slaves "*escravos*," but also "*peças*" (pieces) or "*negros*" (blacks).[17] The word entrada, more common in the seventeenth century, referred to such forays.[18] *Tropas de resgates* were state-sponsored trading parties to ransom war captives, an ostensibly humanitarian enterprise since purchasing bound captives (*índios da corda*) "rescued" them from cannibalism. The ransomed Indians procured on these trading expeditions were required to work for five or ten years to cover their purchase price, after which time they were to be placed in missions. In the North, the term "bandeira" referred to the individual canoes or small groups of canoes that ventured out from the tropa de resgate base camp.[19] The leaders of these two types of tropas were called "*cabos*." Descimentos derived their name from the verb *descer* (descend), because they brought natives downriver from the interior to Portuguese settlements near the coast. Missionaries, soldiers, and native allies conducted the descimentos, relocating "free" Indians to the missions or to native villages set up near forts where they could be catechized and let out to settlers on a revolving schedule for wages. Descimentos could be voluntary or forced, legally speaking.[20]

[17] These terms were also used in São Paulo, see Monteiro, *Negros da Terra*, especially pp. 137, 155, 165. I have not seen "negros da terra" used in the North. Caution is advised when trying to distinguish between African and Indian "negros."

[18] Dauril Alden defined them as "punitive military forays intended to punish recalcitrant Indians and to procure prisoners," see Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," p. 97.

[19] The term apparently evolved from its medieval military usage referring to a 36-man unit, see discussion in Morse, *The Bandeirantes*, p. 22.

[20] For a more complete description of the legal distinctions, see 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: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura: FAPESP, 1992), pp. 115-132. Other valuable studies include Mathias C. Kiemen, "The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1954); Expedito Arnaud, "A legislação sobre os índios do Grão-Pará e Maranhão nos séculos XVII e XVIII," *Boletim de Pesquisa da CEDEAM* 4: 6 (1985), pp. 34-72; Heloísa Liberalli Belotto, "Trabalho indígena, regalismo e colonização no estado do Maranhão nos séculos XVII e XVIII," *Revista Brasileira de História* 2:4 (1982), pp. 177-92; Colin MacLachlan, "The Indian Labor Structure in the Portuguese Amazon, 1700-1800," in *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil*, ed. Dauril Alden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 199-230; Perdigão Malheiro, *A Escravidão no Brasil: ensaio histórico, jurídico, social,* 3d ed., 2 vols. (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes; Brasília: INL, 1976).

When the Portuguese arrived in the North, they brought legislation regulating their relationships with the Native Americans that had been formulated over centuries of contact first with Moors in Iberia and later with indigenous groups along the coast of Brazil (see Metcalf, this issue). The three basic approaches: making allies with a group and convincing them to relocate, working through allies to acquire slaves, and making war on rebellious natives to capture slaves, persisted from very early in the colony, with only sporadic modification. Responding to energetic opposition on the part of the Jesuits, for example, the crown briefly abolished Indian slavery in 1680, but colonists' protests and the crown's inability to enforce the law led to compromise.

While legal precedents and first-hand experience shaped the specific legislation that regulated each type of expedition, interpretation and local conditions caused a certain amount of "slippage" among the categories. Although descimentos were generally taken to missions or forts, in the 1720s, the governor liberally handed out "alvarás de descimento" to individuals, giving them license to take groups of "heathen couples" for their private use.[21] Another type of slippage occurred as one type of expedition could lead to another, as in the Just Wars declared against natives who impeded resgates. When a trading expedition by Antônio Arnáu de Vilela tried to capture the neighbors of an Arawak settlement on Lake Saracá in 1663, the Arawaks cleverly divided the expedition and executed Vilela by smashing his skull. This led to a punitive expedition the following year.[22] Tropas de guerra, in turn, did not always end in wholesale slaughter or enslavement. In 1744, the leader of a tropa against Maranhão Indians accused of having killed settlers, burned fazendas, and stolen horses and cattle, followed the governor's directives and was able to secure over 1,500 new vassals for the king. What might have been a slaving trip or a massacre became a descimento to the Maranhão missions.[23] The actions of expedition members and independent natives were unpredictable, as all participants responded to immediate interests and events. Leaders often ignored the legal restrictions imposed on each type of expeditionary force; abuses and illegal enslavement were common.[24] In this turbulent scenario, many individuals

[21] See APEP, cod. 10 (907), docs. 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 68, for example.

[22] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 291-96.

[23] 12 July 1738 and 5 Aug. 1744, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 101-02, 128-31. War broke out with the Guegues a few years later, however, see chief magistrate to governor, Moucha, 6 Nov. 1747, APEP, cod. 49 (1163), doc. 6.

[24] For accounts of the horrific abuses perpetrated in the sertão, see John Hemming, *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians, 1500-1760* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), especially chaps. 15 and 18.

participated in all types of expeditions, and over the years, became powerful and independent figures in the sertão.

"JUST WAR" AND THE TROPAS DE GUERRA

The Portuguese colony in the North was born of warfare between competing Europeans and their indigenous allies. When the French, in alliance with the Tupinambá, founded São Luís in Maranhão in 1612, the Portuguese moved northward from Pernambuco to take the post in 1615. The following year, they established fort Persépio de Belém at the southern entry to the Amazon Basin, in what would become the separate captaincy of Pará. The mainland Tupinambá initially realigned themselves with the Portuguese, but soon became disaffected by the incessant demands of the slave trade. Twenty-four headmen organized a "confederation" and attacked the fort at Belém in January of 1619. These recalcitrants became fair game for a Just War—Bento Maciel Parente, soldiers, and Tobajara and Tremembé allies spent the rest of the year in reprisals, enslaving rebels along the Atlantic coast. The Portuguese then moved upriver against the Irish, English, and Dutch trading forts and non-allied natives, finally expelling the Dutch from their fort at Gurupá in 1623.[25]

Tropas de guerra spearheaded Portuguese expansion over the next century, enslaving natives as they went. Governor André Vidal Negreiros conducted an attack on the Nhengaíba of Marajó Island in 1653, while retribution against natives on the Tocantins River took 420 legal captives.[26] Not all captured "enemies" became slaves, however. During an expedition in 1628, led by Pedro da Costa Favela, the Pacajá came out on the river to meet the Tupinambá allies of the Portuguese. According to the Jesuit João Betendorf, blood tinged the Pacajá River from the multitude of dead on both sides. Despite their violent resistance, most of the captured Pacajá were not enslaved but were sent to form five mission villages in Cametá, Pará, and Maranhão.[27]

[25] John Manuel Monteiro, "Escravidão indígena e despovoamento na América Portugesa: S. Paulo e Maranhão," in *Brasil nas vésperas do mundo moderno* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1992), pp. 150-51; Hemming, *Red Gold*, pp. 223-28; H. B. Johnson, "Portuguese Settlement 1500-1580," in *Colonial Brazil*, ed. Leslie Bethell (1987; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 44; Joyce Lorimer, ed., *English and Irish Settlement on the River Amazon, 1550-1646* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1989), pp. 115-22.

[26] Monteiro, "Escravião indígena," p. 156.

[27] João Felipe Bettendorff, *Crônica da missão dos padres da Companhia de Jesus no Estado do Maranhão*, 2d ed. (Belém: Fundação Cultural do Pará Tancredo Neves; Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 1990), p. 97; Curt Nimuendajú, "Little Known Tribes of the Lower Tocantins River Region," in *The Tropical Forest Tribes*, vol. 3 of *Handbook of South American Indians*, ed. Julian H. Steward (Washington, D.C.: 1948), p. 203.

A 1653 expedition up the Tocantins River illustrates how closely Just Wars were linked to the slave trade and how natives used an alliance with the Portuguese to take revenge on their enemies. The captain major of Pará planned to take captives and divide them among Portuguese households. To gain the Jesuits' complicity in an enterprise of questionable legality he offered them a share of "rebel" slaves. Far up the Tocantins, the Jesuit Antônio Vieira, who accompanied the expedition, discovered the native allies desired revenge on their enemies, who had unearthed the bones of one of their wives, and "took the skull back to their lands, where they broke it, as they are accustomed. . . ."[28] Dismayed by both Portuguese and indigenous motives for war, Vieira refused to lend legitimacy by continuing any farther with the tropa, which ultimately netted 500 slaves.[29]

Later seventeenth and early eighteenth-century tropas de guerra were intent on maintaining a steady supply of captives and on gaining control of the slave trade. Confronting the dual threats of native resistance and independent traders, they often resorted to unauthorized innovation. Hilário de Souza Azevedo, a well-known backwoodsman, led a 1684 tropa de guerra to the Saracá region using native allies, who killed two of the enemy headmen and deferentially made Azevedo a gift of the severed heads, arms, and shinbones. The expedition went on to capture 500 slaves and Azevedo was rewarded with trade goods from the treasury.[30] The tropa led by Diogo Pinto da Gaya in 1721, sent to punish Indians accused of having killed a Carmelite friar, instead took slaves from the Japurá River. Although no just cause existed for war against these captives, the Junta das Missões, the council on Indian affairs consisting of the bishop, chief magistrate, and the head of each religious order, legitimized their enslavement.[31] When the Manao, who controlled trade on the Rio Negro, reportedly attacked part of a tropa de resgates under Manoel de Braga and killed his allied chief, the governor sent a 'tropa de guerra e de resgates' under João Paes do Amaral against them in 1725.[32] Belchior Mendes de Morães extended the war, attacking the neighboring Mayapena in 1728. David Sweet argued convincingly that this heightened warfare responded to the increased demand for slaves, which was not being met by the regular tropas after the 1724-25 smallpox epidemic.[33]

[28] Vieira to Padre Provincial do Brasil, 1654, in Azevedo, *Cartas,* vol. 1, p. 356.

[29] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 125-26.

[30] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 298-300.

[31] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 483-84.

[32] Governor João da Maia da Gama to P.e Superior Jozeph Vidigal, Bellem do Parâ, 14 Aug. 1724, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 8, D. 705.

[33] For a detailed account of the Manao-Mayapena War, see Sweet, "A Rich Realm," chap. 10.

The later phase of the war under Morães brought severe criticism both because captives were taken illegally and because the cabos abused mission Indians. In 1729, the commissary of the Province of Santo Antônio informed the king that the Urubucoara mission Indians were convinced that the cabos "were not sons of God" because they had mistreated the old mission padre, robbed the Indians, and violated the women. The tropa later delivered over 600 prisoners to Belém, although no war had been declared against the captive Indians who pleaded for peace.[34] The following year, the commissary accused Morães of unjustly enslaving over 3,000 Indians and of working in collusion with the governor and chief magistrate with whom he shared thousands of ill-gotten cruzados.[35] The Jesuits also railed against the governor, and in 1732 asked for his dismissal.[36]

Tropas de guerra faded out in Pará after these depredations on the Rio Negro, although in 1738-39 colonists presented cases before the Junta das Missões against the Acorôa assú on the Tocantins River and the Mura on the Madeira. The Mura had reputedly attacked and killed men who collected forest products in the region. The Acorôa assú were blamed for murders at the newly discovered mines, while an unnamed group was held responsible for killing people en route to Belém from the mining camp. The Junta sent both cases to the royal magistrate who in turn deferred his decision to the crown.[37] The crown refused both: the war against the Mura because it could not be considered "just" and was deemed unnecessary; the war against hostile natives on the Tocantins because travel along that route had been prohibited to deter contraband from the gold mines to the south.[38]

TROPAS DE RESGATES

Royal orders to establish tropas de resgates accompanied the first governor when he arrived in Maranhão in 1624. The first such tropa, led by Pedro de Teixeira in 1626, included a Franciscan, 26 Luso-Brazilian soldiers, and

[34] Comissário Provincial do Convento de Santo António, fr. Joaquim da Conceição to king [João V], Convento de Santo António do Pará, 6 Oct. 1729, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 11, D. 1063.

[35] [Comissário Provincial da Provincia de Santo António] e deputado da Junta das Missões, fr. Joaquim da Conceição to king [João V], Convento de Santo António do Para, 30 Sept. 1730, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 12, D. 1157.

[36] Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," p. 115.

[37] 6 and 29 Sept. 1738, 26 Sept. 1739, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 107-08, 113-14; Governor's instructions, Belém do Pará, 9 Sept. 1739, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 208 (195).

[38] Royal Order, Lisboa, 10 Mar. 1739, in *Autos da devassa contra os índios Mura do Rio Madeira e nações do Rio Tocantins (1738-39): facsímiles e transcrições paleográficas*, intro., Adélia Engrácia de Oliveira (Manaus: FUA; Brasília: INL, 1986), pp. 162-63.

many Indian allies.[39] The general composition of the tropa changed little over time. Jesuits, rather than Franciscans, accompanied later expeditions, which retained the same mix of mission Indians and soldiers. Abuse of legislation regulating the trade was another constant. Destinations shifted, however, as adventurers, explorers, and slavers surged up the main river and its tributaries, contacting innumerable native groups.

While early seventeenth-century expeditions, such as Bento Maciel's notorious expedition to the Tapajós,[40] focused on the Lower Amazon, by the end of the century, the distant Solimões and Rio Negro were frequent destinations. Portuguese slavers threatened to haul off the natives of the Solimões, unless they could supply captives for ransom.[41] In 1657, the tropa de resgate, accompanied by the Jesuits, moved into the Rio Negro, and in subsequent years returned some 600 slaves annually. Slavers also purchased captives from the Arawaks on the Urubú River, while Jesuits, who established a mission at the mouth of that river in 1660, vouched for their legality.[42] Over the next century, traders worked their way up the Rio Negro, scouring the headwaters of the vast basin by the 1740s.

As the tropa pushed into the interior, legislators and missionaries considered the finer points of how the profits from these expeditions should be divided. As early as 1649, Governor Luís de Magalhães levied a tax on the sale of all slaves from the interior. Jesuit-backed legislation of 1655 established the basic legal structure of the expedition, and required the cabo and the accompanying Jesuit to supply written certification for each slave. The state would sell half the slaves taken to recover the cost of the expedition, while the governor and tropa members shared the profits.[43] Following a hiatus with the 1680 law prohibiting Indian slavery, legislation passed in 1688 brought back the mandated annual resgate expedition organized by the Jesuits and administered by the royal treasury. Slaves were sold to individuals in Belém and São Luís to recover their purchase price and to pay the Jesuits and the cabos.[44] This active role played by the state at this stage stands in contrast to the unregulated private trade in São Paulo,[45] although authorized individuals could also outfit slave-trading canoes in the North.

[39] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 117-18.

[40] Cristóbal de Acuña, "Nuevo Descubrimiento del Gran Rio del Amazonas, en el año 1639," in *Informes de Jesuitas en el Amazonas, 1660-1684* (Iquitos, Peru: IIAP; CETA, 1986), pp. 95-96.

[41] Fritz, *Journal of the Travels*, pp. 91, 96.

[42] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 290.

[43] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 131.

[44] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 141-42, 466.

[45] Monteiro, "O escravo índio," p. 112.

From 1710 into the early 1720s, official tropas declined as private slavers, legal and illegal, proliferated. The tropas waned because the Jesuits at this time refused to accompany them on the grounds that they required a hefty levy of mission Indians as crew members, while the governors promoted private expeditions because they no longer profited from the tropa trade. Thus private enterprise took over, funded by well-to-do citizens, such as fazendeiros and ranchers, royal authorities, bishops, and town councilors. Pressure on the sertão also increased as illegal slaving became a common sideline on the 250-300 canoes that annually traveled up the Amazon tributaries to collect forest products during these years. When a royal magistrate investigated this illegal slaving in 1721, he found the practice so widespread that the only solution was to offer a general amnesty. He recommended the official tropa de resgates be reinstated.[46] In 1723, the new governor, João da Maia da Gama, reinitiated the tropa system and, over the next 25 years, tropas still accompanied by private slavers increased on the Solimões and Rio Negro.

From the mid-1730s until ordered out of the sertão in 1747, tropas de resgates were fixtures on the Rio Negro. Expedition captains, who tended to be relatively wealthy men of some social standing, included Diogo Pinto da Gaya (1733-34), Christóvão Ayres Botelho (1736), Lourenço Belfort (1737-39; 1744-45), José Miguel Ayres (1738, 1748-49), João da Cunha Correira (1738-41), and Estácio Rodrigues (1741-43).[47] If they were replaced with frequency during this period, the Jesuit in charge of judging the legitimacy of the slaves was not—Padre Aquiles Maria Avogadri accompanied the tropa for fourteen years. Although he initially had some doubts about condemning natives to slavery—Lourenço Belfort complained he was "impeded by scruples"—Avogadri apparently heeded his provincial's advice and was soon an active participant in the trade.[48] To obtain captives, the royal treasury advanced goods, which the cabos then distributed on credit to native allies or independent traders. To purchase 50 resgates in 1741, for example, Captain Rodrigues received iron, steel, cloth, beads, knives, shirts, tobacco, fish hooks, hats, razors, mirrors, salt, needles, and ribbon.[49] Belfort took similar

[46] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 466-70, 481-82, 526; Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," pp. 110-12. For further detail on the tropas de resgates and private slaving, see Sweet, "A Rich Realm," chaps. 9 and 11.

[47] João de Abreu de Castelbranco, Belém, 4 Dec. 1737, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 19; APEP, cod. 26 (933), docs. 53, 118[a], 204, 292; Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 598-600, and Appendix J, pp. 729-33; "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 87-88, 108-110, 113.

[48] [Acting Provincial] Jozé Lopes to P.e Achiles Maria, Coll.o do Pará, 6 Mar. 1738 [copy] and [João de Abreu to Lourenço Belfort], nl, 13 Mar. 1738, Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, hereafter BNL, Colecção Pombalina, hereafter PBA, cod. 631, fls. 2-3; Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 601-02.

[49] Instructions to the treasurer of resgates, Belém, 26 Nov. 1741, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 394 (339). See also Pará, 20 Nov. 1743, APEP, cod. 25 (985), docs. 496 (430) and 497.

goods into the interior in 1744, in addition to copious amounts of aguardente.[50] Indeed, while "trinkets" and tools generally come to mind as typical trade items, salt, tobacco, and alcohol were surely just as significant.[51]

The number of licenses conceded by the Junta das Missões to private individuals who accompanied (or whose agents accompanied) these expeditions indicate that while the slave trade had reached astounding proportions, it benefited only a fraction of the population. Between June of 1738 and August of 1745, the Junta approved petitions from roughly 275 individuals for a total of about 10,250 slaves. Recipients included the Paraense elite, many of whom received more than one grant often only a few years apart: priests Manoel de Almeida, João de Masceno, Luís Felipe de Sousa, Antônio da Sylva, João Coelho da Sylva; canons Antônio de Mattos Franco, Lourenço Ferreira Moraes, and Antônio Francisco Potflis; state authorities, such as the State Executor João da Veiga Tenorio, Secretary of State Mathias Paes de Albuquerque, and João Pinheiro de Amorim, the procurator of the Indians (whose job it was to represent the natives' legal interests); soldiers, including Elias Caetano, who served on the tropa, and captains João Gomes da Costa and Gonçalo Gomes; and elite women, such as D. Teresa de Vasconcellos and D. Teresa Francisca Xavier de Carvalho. Cabo José Miguel Ayres received permission to trade for 40 slaves some years after he led the tropa, while the Junta granted one of his successors, Estácio Rodrigues, permission to take 30 slaves a few years prior to his promotion to cabo. The data also demonstrates the shifting geographical operations of the tropa, first on the Rio Negro then moving to the Japurá in 1744.[52]

Considering the long history of the trade, few records have been located to document the fate of Indians judged as legitimate slaves at the base camp by the tropa officers. Certifications of 1,334 slaves and 43 free Indians ransomed on the Rio Negro and interviewed by Belfort and the Jesuit Avogadri between June 1745 and May 1747 are extant, providing the name, age, gender, and ethnic or linguistic affiliation of each captive.[53] Yet these provide only a partial accounting, since self-interested cabos and tropa members under reported and pilfered slaves to avoid taxation.[54] Records of Indians who were judged

[50] Instructions to the treasurer of resgates, Captain Antonio Roiz' Martins, Pará, 29 Nov. 1744, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 542 (472).

[51] Similar trade items were valued in other regions of Brazil, see Monteiro, *Negros da Terra*, p. 63.

[52] The lists are scattered throughout the meeting minutes in "The 'Junta de Missões.'"

[53] Wright, "Indian Slavery in the Northwest Amazon," pp. 164-77; APEP, cod. 44 (1110).

[54] Instructions to the purveyor of the royal treasury, Belém, 3 Feb. 1739, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 139 (128); Instructions to the royal magistrate, Belém, 14 Sept. 1739, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 222 (198).

"conditional" slaves after they reached Belém are also available. These Indians were conceded to individuals for five years to cover their purchase price before being turned over to a mission. The recipients of these Indians had to formally recognize before state authorities their obligation to treat them well and instruct them in the Christian doctrine. Thus we find records of them in the minutes of the Junta das Missões, among the governors' papers, and especially in the Livro das Canoas kept by the secretary of state.[55]

These often detailed records reveal the pervasiveness of the trade in the northern interior, the impact on native communities, and the active participation of natives in the trade. In 1739, for example, Jesuit Marco Antônio Arnolfini interviewed eleven people purchased by the soldier Amaro Gonçalves. These were an old man, Camecú, his wife Guimaraní, and their three children, accompanied by Camecú's brother-in-law Guajú, his ten-year-old son, and Mabacé, a relative. This group was taken captive by enemy Headman Jarimá, sold to another headman named Juvá, who then sold them to the soldier. When asked why the headman Jarimá fought with him, Camecú replied that he had done nothing bad to the headman, the man simply wanted to kill him. Gonçalves also purchased a young woman named Maneduá of a different ethnic group from Headman Pariva, and a youth named Jaricú and his wife Mapeini from Headman Juvá, who wanted to kill and eat them. When Gonçalves redeemed Jaricú for the price of a hammock, the young man was already condemned and about to be killed. Thus, of this group, the Jesuit judged only Jaricú to be an "escravo de condição" and conceded him for five years to the soldier; the others were free and, while they too were handed over to work for Gonçalves, they were also assigned a mission and thus were due wages.[56] As these cases show, whether Indians were "rescued" from cannibalism according to the proper legal conditions, or taken in war and sold to native intermediaries in the trade, they ended up as part of the colonial work force.

Changing attitudes toward Indian slavery are revealed in the Junta das Missões discussions of the mid-1740s. The governor raised doubts about the practice of consigning Indians to settlers to pay off their purchase price when they had been judged free by the tropa. In August of 1744, the Junta did not seem concerned about the general practice, only that there should be

[55] Márcio Meira, ed., *Livro das Canoas: documentos para a história indígena da Amazônia* (São Paulo: Núcleo de História Indígena e do Indigenismo da Universidade de São Paulo; FAPESP, 1994).

[56] "Reg.to das pessoas q' se concederão o Amaro Glz', . . ." Governor João de Abreu de Castelbranco, Belém do Pará, 19 Sept. 1739, APEP, cod. 25 (985), doc. 225 (201). For more on Rio Negro headmen who allied themselves with slavers and supplied captives, see Wright, "History and Religion of the Baniwa," pp. 129-32.

some guarantee that the missionaries claim them at the appropriate time.[57] Their attitude changed a year later when they reconsidered the problem. They decided that the governor should inform the cabo of the tropa that any captives judged to be free by the missionary should be sent immediately to a nearby mission "and in no way should they be given to the people who ransomed them, nor should they be transported to the city [for possible sale] or to any other place by their purchasers." The Junta recommended that the traders should not use their goods to "purchase peças, who by their nature are free." Despite this drastic change in policy and rhetoric, during the same session the Junta conceded free Indians to work for four petitioners for the standard five years. [58] Yet the meeting foreshadowed a shift in policy.

The situation in 1745 had indeed changed, mostly because of the terrible epidemics, which had swept through the North during the previous two years. As the Belém town council noted in 1744, there simply were not enough Indians in the sertão of the Rio Negro to meet demands. To remedy the situation, they recommended that the tropa de resgates, under Estácio Rodrigues and the Jesuit Aquiles Maria Avogadri, set up a new base camp at the mouth of the Rio Negro, so they could "bandeirear" on that river as well as on the nearby Japurá, Purus, and others.[59]

With the arrival of the new governor, Francisco Pedro Gorjão de Mendonça, in 1747, the Junta das Missões finally took up the question of whether they should authorize another tropa and if so where it should be located. The opinions of the Junta members merit a detailed discussion because they illustrate the range of attitudes in the colony, even among missionaries. The Carmelite provincial thought the tropa to the Rio Negro should be suspended "because of the many slaves that have been extracted from it," but because the tropa was "necessary" to the state, other rivers should be investigated. The royal magistrate abstained from voting, but observed that the tropas de resgates were important, "not for the conservation of the state, but for the taxes they provided to the crown." The representative of the Province of Conceição thought the tropas could be sent anywhere but the Rio Negro, because there were many other rivers filled with "Indian slaves taken in the wars they always have among themselves." The heads of the Mercedarians and the Province of Piedade agreed with him. The Jesuit provincial, in noteworthy contrast, voted to let all the sertões "rest" for a few years, during which time they could investigate whether there were

[57] 26 Aug. 1744, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 131-32.
[58] 22 Sept. 1745, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" p. 143.
[59] 31 Oct. 1744, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 135-36.

any Indians who could be lawfully ransomed. Both the head of the Province of Santo Antônio and the bishop thought that because there were not enough potential slaves to meet labor demands, descimentos to supply free wage laborers should be encouraged instead.[60] Although the Junta members disagreed about the best course of action, this meeting marked the end of the era of the tropas de resgates. In 1747, the Overseas Council recalled the tropas, declared the licenses approved by the Junta das Missões void, and required that the governor prevent unauthorized enslavement and descimentos.[61] Although it took a few years for the tropa to actually leave the Rio Negro, there would be no more such voyages after Governor Mendonça Furtado took power at mid century.

DESCIMENTOS: ALLIANCE AND DISLOCATION

Like the tropas of war and resgate, the practice and legal codification of the descimento existed early on in the colonial North. When the Jesuits arrived in 1653, Antônio Vieira advocated the descimento, which would draw the natives to Christian living and access to trade goods.[62] During the colonial period, missionaries, soldiers, and native headmen all participated in the process of contacting native peoples and convincing them to move to the missions. Once they relocated, the natives were considered vassals of the crown, retaining their freedom and a right to land and wages. Authors of new legislation in 1718 cited native "barbarity," such as their nudity and lack of government, to justify both peaceful and violent descimentos, requiring all the Indians brought downriver in this way to settle in the Jesuit missions.[63]

While descimentos were generally accomplished through negotiation with the goal of making allies and resettling free mission Indians, abuses were not uncommon. In 1718-19, for example, friar Manoel Nunes forwarded a descimento downriver from the Urubú to his father's fazenda in

[60] 3 Nov. 1747, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 148-50.

[61] Ofícios (minutas) do [secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real] to [governador e capitão general do Estado do Maranhão e Pará] Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Lisbon, 28 April 1753, AHU_ ACL_CU_013, Cx. 34, D. 3185; Article 5, "Instruções régias públicas e secretas, para Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Capitão-General do Estado do Pará e Maranhão," Lisboa, 31 May 1751, reprinted in João Lúcio de Azevedo, *Os Jesuitas no Grão-Pará: suas missões e a colonização* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930), Appendix F, pp. 416-27; and in *A Amazônia na Era Pombalina: Correspondéncia Inédita do Governador e Captião-General do Estado do Grão-Pará e Maranhão Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado 1751-1757,* (hereafter *AEP*), ed. Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, 3 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Histórico e Geográphico Brasileiro, 1963), vol. 1, pp. 26-38.

[62] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 128.

[63] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 473-74.

Pará, where they were put on the market "like so much cinnamon-bark, without any fear of the Lord."[64] A decade later, when private traders sent Indians from the same region to Belém to be sold, three headmen complained that they were supposed to be part of a descimento to the missions.[65] Another trader delivered half of an Arawak descimento to a Mercedarian mission and kept the rest for himself. When ordered to restore the natives to the mission, the trader avoided compliance, claiming they had run away.[66]

The Junta das Missões approved petitions to undertake descimentos from a variety of individuals. In 1737, the Junta authorized native leader José Aranha from the Tocantins River to accompany Francisco Portilho de Melo (a well-known cunhamena) to the "last sertões of the Rio Negro" to effect a descimento, and they gave the headman from the fort at Gurupá permission to make a descimento from "the neighborhood."[67] They granted a request from missionaries to bring relatives of natives from the Rio Negro to join those already settled at their missions.[68] José Miguel Ayres, as captain of the fort at Gurupá, received permission to undertake a descimento at his own expense in 1738.[69] They even acceded to one trader's petition to recruit Indians to work at the Macapá fort, despite the man's having been found guilty of illegal slaving.[70]

A measure of ambivalence persisted in the Junta's rulings. As a former captain of the tropa de resgates, Ayres petitioned the Junta in 1741 to gain control of a Rio Negro headman, Juno, and some fifty of his relatives and followers, some of whom were captured and sold to Ayres for ransom by the Manao. Claiming that he set them "free" once he recognized their unjust captivity, Ayres effectively argued they should be considered a descimento, but not one he would entrust to a mission. The cabo instead succeeded in retaining the entire group to work on his fazenda, ostensibly for wages.[71] The Junta also approved a petition from the nuns, or lay sisters, Marianna Bernarda and Maria Margarida to descend 200 "peças,"[72] which would seem to be a contradiction in terms since "peça" was synonymous with "slave"

[64] Quoted in Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 313.

[65] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 314.

[66] See Chief Magistrate Francisco de Andrade Ribeiro to the king [João V], Belém do Pará, 23 Sept. 1730, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 12, D. 1145.

[67] 26 Oct. and 14 Dec. 1737, "The 'Junta de Missões,'"pp. 88-89, 93.

[68] 9 Nov. 1743, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 127-28

[69] 18 Jan. 1738, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 93-94.

[70] 19 Jan. 1739, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 111-12.

[71] 27 Oct. 1741, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 119-120.

[72] 23 Dec. 1745, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" p. 145.

and members of descimentos were by their nature free. Descimentos continued to be encouraged by crown authorities and carried out by local intermediaries throughout the remainder of the colonial period.[73]

CUNHAMENAS—SPECIALISTS IN DESCIMENTOS

Often missionaries and soldiers worked together, perhaps because some natives insisted on matching a female relative of the headman with a lay captain to establish kinship ties before they would agree to relocate. These men, who after accepting the native women were called cunhamenas, led descimentos especially in the Rio Negro region among Arawakan peoples.[74] The practice of the cunhamena dates at least to the late 1690s when a sergeant from the Rio Negro fort, Guilherme Valenta, settled down with the daughter of a Manao headman. He went into business, which David Sweet suspected was slave trading, conducted with the assistance of his new relatives, "or at least corralling people for a descimento to be resettled at the service village of the Rio Negro fort."[75] Sweet also cited the example of José Lopes who worked the Rio Urubú, perhaps in tandem with the missionary in the area. Lopes received an appointment and was awarded a gold medal by the king in 1701. Sweet noted that the operations of men like José Lopes, who went into business for himself in the slave trade, became "a regular pattern of penetration on the Rio Negro in the 18th century—with the important difference that most slave-trading transfrontiersmen were on much less cordial terms with the authorities."[76] Until the mid-eighteenth century, however, governors awarded these men military posts. In fact, the careers of the cunhamenas paralleled those of other military men of the era. Only when Pombaline controls reached far into the interior did the situation change.

Typically mamelucos, or mestizos of mixed European and Native American ancestry, the captains of descimentos were familiar with the ways of the sertão and the city. One of the more powerful, a notorious cunhamena named Pedro de Braga, landed before the Inquisition in Lisbon in 1756. His confession provides insight into the methods used to gain allies in the interior.

[73] See "Diretório que se deve observar nas Povoações dos Indios do Pará e Maranhão," 1757, reprinted in Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto, *Índios da Amazônia, de maioria a minoria (1750-1850)* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1988), pp. 165-206, articles 78 and 79. For successful descimentos, see, for example, [Governor] Manuel Bernardo de Melo e Castro to [secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar] Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Pará, 5 Nov. 1760, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 47, D. 4344.

[74] These men are the subject of a forthcoming article by the author entitled "Kinship and Alliance in the Eighteenth-Century Indian Slave Trade in Northwestern Amazonia."

[75] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 523.

[76] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 310-11.

Appointed a captain of descimentos by the governor,[77] Braga would present gifts to the headmen, who, if they decided to relocate to the missions, would in turn give a daughter or other close female relative to be the captain's "wife." Braga noted that there was nothing scandalous about this—the practice was customary among indigenous people, who would not "descend to the missions without first giving a daughter."[78] Over the years, the cunhamenas became powerful through these ties. As one rival noted, "the allies, or cunhamenas, of Captain Pedro de Braga . . . recognize no other vassalage than that to Braga."[79] These men supplied new groups of Indians to the missions, sold illegal slaves as a side line, and maintained a powerful network of allies in the sertão.

THE EXEMPLARY BRAGA HERITAGE

The career of Pedro de Braga's godfather, Pedro Martins de Braga, may have served a heroic example for the younger man. In 1724, when Pedro de Braga would have been about fourteen, Martins de Braga petitioned for dismissal from the army because his health was declining, in part from fevers acquired in the sertão. A native of Belém, he had seen 30 years of service as a soldier. In 1698, he had guarded the fort of Macapá, then located at Cabo Norte on the Atlantic coast, against the French. From 1708 to 1710, as an infantry captain on a sanctioned tropa de guerra, he attacked the Parequis nation, "rebels against the Portuguese Crown and murderers of missionaries." Martins de Braga encountered these "heathen" on the Rio Jatapu, where he fought them in the middle of the waterfalls, at night. His commander reported that it had been impossible to judge the number killed, "because they were buried in the waves," but some 90 prisoners were taken during the battle. Martins de Braga then tracked the combatants who escaped to their ranchos, where he captured another 300.

During the same period, the governor ordered the expedition to the Rio Negro to arrest "Portuguese criminals," who had for years been assaulting villages and capturing the natives "without respect for the law." As leader of this expedition, Martins de Braga captured 14 of these men despite suffering from a raging fever. A decade later, the governor certified that Martins de Braga successfully "induced" a great number of Indians from the missions to

[77] Reg.to de hua Patente do posto de Cap.m dos descim.tos passada a Pedro de Braga, Cid.e de Bellem do Grão Pará, 2 Dec. 1745, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 313, pp. 264-65.

[78] Pedro de Braga, 1758, Inquisição de Lisboa, hereafter IL, Processo 5169, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon), hereafter ANTT, fls. 71-75.

[79] Fran.co Xavier de Andr.e to governor, Mariuá, 18 Feb. 1752, BNL, PBA, cod. 625, fls. 69-70.

accompany an expedition to explore the Tocantins River. Even the missionaries supposedly admired his impeccable conduct in carrying out this assignment. A career in the sertão allowed him to prosper—he received a land grant from the king in 1721 and he was able to petition that his son, Antônio de Braga, who administered his fazenda, be excused from military service.[80]

Martins de Braga's career represents the era when prospects for advancement were to be found in the sertão. Pedro de Braga followed a similar path, induced by the promise that through successful descimentos he might gain the post of captain at the Rio Negro fort.[81] As the younger Braga forged his career, "going native" in the process according to some, he ended up rivaling the captain at the fort and the captain of the tropa de resgates. One observer stated that for nearly a decade Pedro de Braga had been "living with the heathen in their rites as if they were in the middle of the sertão," and Braga admitted as much in his Inquisition testimony.[82] As the careers of these men demonstrate, the colonial and indigenous worlds were inextricably linked

WEALTH, NOTORIETY AND A MILITARY CAREER

Military men made their careers in the slave trade. The fort on the Rio Negro received little government support, but it was a lucrative post, where the soldiers did little other than accumulate extractive products and slaves. As early as 1715, the commander at the fort, Captain Diogo Rodrigues Pereira, made a descimento of people to the fort, assisted the resgates, and profited from his own participation in the slave trade.[83] In the early 1720s, the tropa soldier Belchior Mendes de Moraes, who would later lead the war against the Mayapena, made a tidy sum for himself—contacting headmen and advancing goods in return for delivery of slaves.[84] Even in 1747, a detractor complained that the commander of the Rio Negro fort, João Rodrigues da Cruz, cared only for his own personal profit.[85] Low status and the lack of pay did

[80] Pedro de Braga identified a man named Pedro Martins de Braga as his baptismal godfather. It is likely that the older man was also a relative since the younger Pedro's father's name was Mario Martins de Braga and his paternal grandfather was Francisco Martins de Braga. Braga, IL, Processo 5169, ANTT, fls. 92v-93; Pedro Martins de Braga, Carta de Confirmação, D. João V, 5 Feb. 1721, Registo Geral de Mercês, ANTT, Lv. 12, fl. 303; Requerimento, Standard-Bearer Pedro Martins de Braga to king [João V], Belém, Aug. 1724, [Ant. 27 Oct. 1726], AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 10, D. 864. Another son, the soldier João de Almeida de Braga, served in the company of Captain Diogo Pinto da Gaya, the well-known tropa leader.

[81] Braga, IL, Processo 5169, ANTT, fl. 81v.

[82] João Roiz' da Crus to governor, Fortaleza de Jesus Maria Jozeph, 16 Aug. 1752, BNL, PBA, cod. 625, fls. 110-112v.

[83] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 322-24.

[84] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 487-88.

[85] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 326.

not deter the early-eighteenth century soldier as he prospered in the slave trade, although by 1751 Mendonça Furtado noted northerners took drastic measures to avoid military service.[86] Perhaps it was already suspected that the new governor would curb native slavery. Until then, the documents clearly show how individuals, as soldiers, officers of forts, and captains of descimentos, rose through the ranks by virtue of the trade.

The career of Francisco Xavier de Andrade illustrates this process. In 1740, he led a bandeira from Lourenço Belfort's tropa de resgates up the Rio Branco where he spent two months.[87] In 1749, he became captain of descimentos for the Mariúa mission on the Rio Negro, and his appointment noted that he had served on the tropa de resgates, trading at his own expense.[88] By 1755, Andrade had risen to the post of sergeant major on the Rio Negro.[89]

Similar steps marked the careers of many military men. When the governor appointed Francisco da Costa Pinto to be second-in-charge to Belfort on the tropa de resgates, his qualifications were listed as "capable, experienced, and practiced in those sertões because he occupied the post of captain of descimentos with satisfaction."[90] André Miguel Ayres, a soldier in Belém for years, became captain of the Tapajós fort in 1743, having served as a captain at Gurupá and as second-in-command to his brother José Miguel Ayres, cabo of the tropa de resgates on the Rio Negro. He was praised for having pacified an Indian uprising against the tropa that had threatened its subsistence and "ruined the commerce."[91] Pedro de Souza Passos received a promotion to the rank of captain, having honorably served as a solider for 22 years, as quartermaster (almoxarife) on a tropa de guerra to the Tocantins, and as treasurer on the tropa de resgates to the Rio Negro.[92] João Guedes Aranha was named captain of descimentos for the Indian settlement at the Rio Negro fort in 1749, having served as a soldier for over 26 years, as sergeant at Macapá and at Pauxis, and as a lieutenant at the Rio Negro fort.[93] Almost without excep-

[86] [Francisco Xavier Mendonça Furtado to king], Pará, 12 Nov. 1751, *AEP*, vol. 1, p. 60. For more on the penurious life of soldiers, see Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 67-69.

[87] Sweet identified him as the nephew of Belchior Mendes de Moraes, see Sweet, "A Rich Realm," p. 603. During this same period, a Francisco de Andrade served as a sergeant at the Fort at Gurupá and was appointed captain of descimentos for the Fort at Pauxis, although it is unclear if this was the same man. See 22 Dec. 1747, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 369, fl. 319.

[88] 8[?] Apr. 1749, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 431, fls. 343-44.

[89] Investigation by the Inquisition Commissioners, Prova da Justiça, Braga, IL, Processo 5169, ANTT, fls. 27-27v, 107v.

[90] Bellem, 9 Nov. 1744, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 292, fls. 251-52.

[91] 12 Oct. 1743, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 275, fls. 237-38. The relationship between the two men is clarified in 23 Oct. 1738, APEP, cod. 32 (989), docs. 4 and 5.

[92] 9 Feb. 1746, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. [327], fl. 273.

[93] Belem, 5 July 1749, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 442, fl. 351.

tion, officers at forts, traders on slave canoes, and leaders of descimentos, whatever their actions, were considered loyal servants to the crown.

Remarkably similar careers characterize the cunhamenas of the Rio Negro, who caused such a stir when Governor Mendonça Furtado's administration took over because they had multiple Indian wives and operated with relative autonomy. Mendonça Furtado disparaged their "rotten" lifestyles, condemned them as greedy traders in contraband slaves, and referred to them as "régulos," a term used to refer to the leader of a barbaric hoard.[94] This attitude is reflected in the historiography, limited as it is, which paints the men as rather crude subjects. [95] Yet the documents show that the men emerged from the same military trajectory as other officers. Manoel Dias Cardozo, appointed captain of descimentos for the mission Santo Elias do Jaú, had served the crown in tropas de guerra and resgates, and had made descimentos at his own cost.[96] Pedro de Braga followed a similar path, as did the powerful Francisco Portilho de Mello, who served as a soldier in Belém for twenty years, before going to the Rio Negro sometime prior to 1737 as a captain of descimentos "to treat with wild heathen." He successfully remitted a headman and 80 vassals for the missions. In 1740, the Junta granted him license to trade for 50 slaves, and his father or brother (both were named Domingos) received two separate grants totaling 75 slaves. In 1743, the governor named Francisco captain of the fort at Macapá, although when he failed to descend with his numerous allies, the appointment was voided and the governor gave the post to someone else.[97] Portilho had been given the opportunity to attain the coveted position as captain of the fort, primarily because he had a large contingent of native allies. When he finally moved with them to Macapá a decade later, Mendonça Furtado rewarded him with an elaborate suit of clothing, which clearly indicated his favor.[98] The cunhamenas, powerful through their native allies, were tolerated when they could be made to serve the state.

[94] Fran.co X.er de M.ca Furtado to the king, Pará, 3 Nov. 1753, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 35, D. 3273.

[95] The captains of descimentos and cunhamenas have largely disappeared from the historiography, due in part I suspect to their vilification by mid-eighteenth century reformers, who perceived the cunhamenas as powerful agents of disorder. Notable exceptions are Robin Wright and David Sweet, who referred to them as "private slavers" and "transfrontiersmen," respectively. See Wright, "History and Religion of the Baniwa," pp. 126-28; Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 664-671.

[96] Cid.e de B.em do Para, 30 Mar. 1749, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 430, fls. 342-43.

[97] 23 Nov. 1737, 19 Jan. 1739, 19 Nov. 1740, "The 'Junta de Missões," pp. 88-89, 111-13; 118; B.em do Para, 7 Nov. 1740, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. 187, fls. 158-59; Cid.e de Bellem do Para, 15 Apr. 1743, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. [?], fl. 215; 14 Dec. 1743, APEP, cod. 26 (933), doc. [285], fl. 246. Francisco may have followed in his father's footsteps. In 1724, the governor ordered a Sergeant Major Domingos Portilho de Mello e Gusmão to explore the Tocantins and "reduce" Indians to populate a new settlement. [Governor João] da Maya da Gama, "Regim.to a d.os Portilho de Mello," Bellem do Para, 18 July 1724, APEP, cod. 10 (907), doc. [85?], fl. 506-08 [?damaged].

[98] Instructions to the treasurer of resgates, 2 Dec. 1753, APEP, cod. 55 (986), doc. 758.

COMPETING FOR INDIANS

Because successful trade led to wealth and power, the men who led expeditions of all types competed with one another. Missionaries, especially, bickered with the tropa de resgates, with private individuals, and with each other over control of native peoples. In 1730, competition between a Carmelite on the Japurá River and a tropa from Maranhão, for example, resulted in the tropa capturing mission Indians and hauling them off to São Luís.[99] At about the same time, Friar Joaquim da Conceição complained to the Junta das Missões about a private citizen, who illegally descended Indians from the Mercedarian's district of the sertão. The padre was outraged because members of the Junta das Missões (the bishop, provisor, and royal magistrate) voted in favor of the private individual.[100] The fathers of Piedade and the Carmelites also fought over descimentos in the Junta. The former petitioned for a group of Cavarapitana Indians who supposedly only wanted to descend to the Gurupatuba mission, not with the Carmelites from whom they allegedly fled.[101] After the Junta approved their petition in October of 1744 and the descimento took place, the Carmelites brought the case back to the Junta, citing a 1701 royal order, which stated that missionaries should not make descimentos from the districts of other orders.[102] In another case, the cabo of the tropa de resgates to the Rio Negro appealed the decision of the tropa missionary to the Junta das Missões. The missionary (Aquiles Maria Avogadri) had deemed 45 Indians slaves and 32 "de condição." The cabo wanted the 32 to be interviewed again to increase the number of slaves and hence, the profits of the expedition.[103]

The cunhamenas fought with one another, not surprisingly, and with official Indian traders for influence with the natives. Braga and Portilho, as one witness testified in 1755, "were nearly always going around competing about who was more powerful and had more wives. . . ."[104] Competition between Braga and Lourenço Belfort, cabo of the tropa de resgates and a wealthy landowner from Maranhão of Irish descent,[105] resulted in murder. According to Belfort, Braga and his group passed the guard Belfort had set

[99] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 491-92.

[100] Comissário Provincial do Convento de Santo António, Fr. Joaquim da Conceição to king [João V], Convento de Santo António do Pará, 6 Oct. 1729, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 11, D. 1063.

[101] 5 Oct. 1744, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" p. 135.

[102] Requerim^o do R^mo P^e Prov^al do Carmo, 18 Aug. 1745, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" p. 142.

[103] 15 Mar. 1745, "The 'Junta de Missões,'" pp. 139-40.

[104] Investigation by the Inquisition Commissioners, Braga, IL, Processo 5169, ANTT, fl. 27.

[105] Arthur Cézar Ferreira Reis, *História do Amazonas*, 2d ed. (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia; Manaus: Superintendência Cultural do Amazonas, 1989), pp. 77-78.

up at the falls "by force of arms," instigated an uprising among the natives on the Rio Uaupés, and ambushed a bandeira. At one point, Belfort succeeded in capturing Braga, but could not keep him prisoner. Belfort's native allies and other men on the tropa requested that Braga be set free because he was in debt to all of them.[106] In other words, they had all advanced goods to him in return for slaves, confirming his pervasive role in the slave trade. While Belfort portrayed Braga as a tyrant, his account also suggests that Braga and his allies acted ruthlessly to protect themselves and their monopoly on the trade. If a competitor succeeded in forming an alliance with an enemy group, Braga's allies would have been subject to capture and slavery. Just as Braga defended his interests, Belfort surely had his own prosperity in mind, since, according to one report, he acquired over 1,000 Indian slaves on the Rio Branco alone for his personal use.[107] Even if Belfort's charges were self motivated, the conflict demonstrates the competition between cunhamenas and the official tropa de resgate in the sertão.

While the cunhamenas and the missionaries often worked in tandem on the Rio Negro, at times they vied for influence with the natives.[108] Francisco Xavier de Andrade, a captain of descimentos himself, testified in 1755 that the work of the missionaries was jeopardized because the natives realized that in allegiance with a cunhamena they could practice the same rites as in the forest. When the missionaries railed against the practice of having multiple wives, the natives reasoned that if it were so terrible, whites would not do it too. Indeed, the witness believed that "the heathen follow the example of these men more than that which the missionaries preach." Braga and Portilho even persuaded the natives not to join the missions because there they would not be able to have many women or use inebriants. Andrade claimed to base none of this on hearsay; he knew it because he was there and saw it.[109] Granted, Andrade was also in competition with Portilho and Braga, so his bias infects his detailed testimony.

The competition among the cunhamenas, the official tropa leaders, and the missionaries led to contenders "stealing" their opponents' native people. Braga and Padre José de Trinidade encountered Portilho and Padre

[106] Lourenço Belfort to [Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado], Mar.am, 8 Feb. 1753, BNL, PBA, cod. 621, fls. 214-16. Also see Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 599-600, 669.

[107] Sweet, "A Rich Realm," pp. 620-21 n. 44

[108] Alida Metcalf has described a similar competition between mamelucos and Jesuits in sixteenth-century Bahia. See Alida C. Metcalf, "O jesuita como intermediário na Baía nos fins do século XVI," in *De Cabral a Pedro I: Aspectos da colonização Portuguesa no Brasil*, ed. Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (Porto: Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique, 2001), pp. 79-88.

[109] Investigation by the Inquisition Commissioners, Braga, IL, Processo 5169, ANTT, fl. 27v.

Avogadri on the way down the Amazon. When Braga saw some of the people he had descended among those enslaved by Avogadri, he burst into tears. (Whether this was a sign of emotion, as Padre José cast it in his letter, or a customary and proper greeting is impossible to know.) When Braga asked that his people be released, he was told that they had fled from his settlement and Portilho had captured them; they were to be turned over to the Mercedarians in Belém. If Padre José wanted them, he could purchase them back later.[110] Avogadri arrived in Belém with sixteen canoes of people, probably over 200. He gave only a few to the missions, the rest became slaves. Among these were 33 people for the Mercedarian fazendas, sold by Francisco de Portilho. After digesting the reports of the Jesuit's behavior, Mendonça Furtado concluded that Advogadri himself had been "in the sertão tyrannizing Indians for many years under the pretext of descimentos."[111] While the missionaries, traders, and tropas fought with each other, natives often lost out.

MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REFORMS

As this brief review of the northern expeditions demonstrates, interethnic contact, alliances, and conflicts dominated the sertões of the Amazon during the colonial period leading up to the Pombaline reforms. The men involved in the slave trade spent much of their lives in the sertão and were often connected to one another and to native leaders through family ties. The trade was a way of life. To transform the practices that had prevailed in the North for over a century, Mendonça Furtado faced a daunting challenge.

The activities of the men who made their careers on the Amazon were in the colonial context "traditional," but they became unacceptable as the state constructed new power relations. The prosecution of the cunhamenas and royal efforts to end slaving expeditions in the North followed the devastating epidemics of the late 1740s and coincided with Portuguese-Spanish plans to demarcate the boundaries between the realms in the interior of South America. A generation earlier, the solution to a shortage of labor would have merely entailed, as some members of the Junta das Missões suggested even in 1747, moving the base of slaving operations to

[110] Fr. Jozé do Trind.e to [provincial of Jesuits?], Tubarê, 4 Jan. 1752, BNL, PBA, cod. 630, fl. 52-53. See also M.el de Mor.ce Castro to governor, Rio Negro, 15 Nov. 1752[1?] and Frans.co Portilho de Mello to governor, Rio Negro, 15 Nov. 1751, BNL, PBA, cod. 630, fls. 36-37, 41. Portilho also captured a descimento of Baniwa arranged by rival cunhamena Cardozo and shipped them downriver to Avogadri. See Wright, "History and Religion of the Baniwa," pp. 133-34.

[111] [Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Pombal], Pará, 26 Jan. 1752, *AEP*, vol. 1, p. 212.

another river. But policy shifted away from indigenous slavery, which seemed unenlightened and allowed the colonists too much autonomy, toward African.[112]

Mendonça Furtado claimed the Indian slave trade gave the Spanish and Dutch a superior moral position in the territorial rivalry. He reasoned that because the tropa leaders frequently condemned free Indians to slavery, the natives had come to despise the Portuguese and often fled to Spanish and Dutch territories for protection. The new governor also accused the tropas de resgates of raiding for captives, rather than purchasing them as the law required. He had no respect for the men who made up the tropas, disparaging the leaders and claiming the rest of the troop was made up of "as many unworthy, licentious men as there were in the state."[113]

As the governor saw it, the tropas had used two methods to achieve their ends. In the first instance, they would "tempt the headmen with rum, beads, and tools," to make war on their neighbors with whom they had been living in peace. They would then tie up the prisoners to make them bound captives and pay for them whatever goods they judged adequate. If the native allies did not think the payment was sufficient, the tropa would tie up the headman, his followers, and family, and haul them off with the other slaves. In the second method, a patrol of men would go into the forest and "under the pretext of friendship, trick some people, grab them, tie them up, and bring them as slaves to the base camp." At the camp, the missionary would question the captives to judge their status, but the procedure was invalid because "at this point they would be terrorized." Tropa members might whip the captives or perhaps kill one of them to ensure that the rest would respond to the missionary as coached. The captives would be judged legitimate slaves, despite the illegalities, because the examiners also had an interest in the slave trade. Mendonça Furtado had proof of the "frivolous way that the missionaries treated this heavy responsibility." As a part of the process of legal enslavement, the padre, leader, and scribe, after interviewing the captives, were required to sign a formal registry. The governor had in his possession blank pages signed by Padre Aquiles Maria Avogadri. He found "the maturity such matters demanded" totally lacking.[114]

[112] For a detailed discussion of Overseas Council debates and policymakers' decision to establish a trading company to ship African slaves to the North, see Alden, "Indian Versus Black Slavery," pp. 129-140.

[113] [Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Pombal], Pará, 10 Nov. 1752, *AEP*, vol. 1, p. 290.

[114] [Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Pombal], Pará, 10 Nov. 1752, *AEP*, vol. 1, pp. 291-92.

By early 1754, Mendonça Furtado had taken a radical stand against contacting Indians in the sertão. When a prominent entrepreneur, who wanted to start an indigo plantation and needed labor, petitioned the governor for the right to make his own descimentos, Mendonça Furtado lashed out. He wrote to the Overseas Council: it "is the same as saying he wants to be a conquistador, or to say it better, a despot of the sertões, a privilege that from my point of view should never be granted, neither to an individual nor even to a padre, as long as they have an interest in the labor of the Indians."[115] This was the heart of the problem—everyone had an interest in indigenous labor. The governor reported that he could trust only three people to undertake the descimentos ordered by the crown, two ministers sent to Belém by the king the previous year and the state secretary. Anyone else, including the missionaries, he asserted, would fall victim to their own greed and enslave the Indians.[116] The governor and the crown acted to consolidate state power in 1757, when they took the administration of the natives away from the missionaries and placed it in the hands of civil authorities. They effectively banned Indian slavery, and established a trading company to supply the North with African slaves. A few years later, they expelled the Jesuits entirely.[117]

This review of northern expeditions to the interior to acquire native allies and slaves shows that these forays not only supplied labor markets, but fueled the economy and shaped society. The historiography tends to champion the Jesuits and other critics of illegal practices and echoes Governor Mendonça Furtado lambasting accusations. During first half of the eighteenth century, however, everyone, including the missionaries, participated in the trade, and authorities rewarded slavers for their enterprise with positions that allowed them even more opportunity. Enforcement of legislation to control the trade was minimal and the missionary oversight was undermined by complicity. Many men, including the cunhamenas, advanced their military careers on tropas de resgates, as members of Just War expeditions, and on descimentos to the missions. Through promotion they attained special status in the colony, which many retained even after Mendonça Furtado

[115] Governor Fran.co X.er de M.ca Furtado to Diogo de M.ca Corte Real, Pará, 1 Feb. 1754, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 36, D. 3323.

[116] [Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Pombal], Pará, 25 Feb. 1754, *AEP*, vol. 2, p. 515.

[117] For more on Pombaline reform of the Amazonian missions, see Colin MacLachlan, "The Indian Directorate: Forced Acculturation in Portuguese America," *The Americas* 28 (April 1972), pp. 357-87; Hemming, *Red Gold*, chap. 21; Rita Heloísa de Almeida, *O Diretório dos índios: um projeto de civilização no Brasil do século XVIII* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1997), chap. 5; Barbara A. Sommer, "Negotiated Settlements: Native Amazonians and Portuguese Policy in Pará, Brazil, 1758-1798" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 2000), chap. 2; Ângela Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vassalos: colonização e relações de poder no Norte do Brasil na segunda metade do século XVIII* (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000), chap. 2.

took power. Under Pombal's reforms, authorities opted to disband the tropas and expel the cunhamenas, but they still promoted descimentos and the acquisition of Indians for wage labor. No one seriously considered the good Jesuit's alternative—to let the sertões rest.

Gettysburg College BARBARA A. SOMMER
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania