"For the Good of the King's Vassals" Francisco Xavier de Mendonca Furtado and the Portuguese Amazon, 1751-1759

Lucas Richardson
University of Kentucky, luker626@gmail.com

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.
STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student’s advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student’s thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Lucas Richardson, Student

Dr. Erik Myrup, Major Professor

Dr. Scott Taylor, Director of Graduate Studies
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE KING’S VASSALS”
FRANCISCO XAVIER DE MENDONÇA FURTADO AND THE PORTUGUESE AMAZON, 1751-1759

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By
Lucas Onesti Richardson
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Erik Lars Myrup, Professor of History
Lexington, Kentucky
2015
ABSTRACT OF THESIS

“FOR THE GOOD OF THE KING’S VASSALS”
FRANCISCO XAVIER DE MENDONÇA FURTADO AND THE PORTUGUESE AMAZON, 1751-1759

In the middle of the eighteenth century the Portuguese crown, under the influence of the Marquis of Pombal, sought to reform the political administration of its vast set of imperial holdings. As part of these reforms, in 1751 Pombal sent his brother, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, to the Portuguese Amazon to serve as governor of the state of Grão Pará and Maranhão. This study explores Furtado’s tenure as governor of the Amazon from his perspective, in an attempt to understand how and why he arrived at a set of policies known as the “Directorate,” which overhauled the region’s mission system and attempted to more effectively assimilate native Amazonians into Portuguese colonial society. Chapter One combines a look at Furtado’s initial years as governor with short digressions into the relevant historical background of the region. The analysis in this chapter focuses on Furtado’s influence on his brother, the Marquis of Pombal, as well as the early attempts at reform he pursues out of a growing sense of frustration with the Jesuit missionaries in the region. Chapter Two focuses on a long trip Furtado took upriver to a settlement called Mariúá, in order to negotiate the boundary demarcation with Spain. Over the course of two years away from his home in Belém at the mouth of the Amazon, Furtado’s opinion of the Indians evolves, influencing the implementation of the Directorate policy upon his return. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the legacies of Furtado and the Directorate.
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE KING’S VASSALS”
FRANCISCO XAVIER DE MENDONÇA FURTADO AND THE PORTUGUESE
AMAZON, 1751-1759

By

Lucas Onesti Richardson

___________________________
Dr. Erik Myrup
Director of Thesis

___________________________
Dr. Scott Taylor
Director of Graduate Studies

___________________________
July 30, 2015
Oi Mãe
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was incredibly fortunate to grow up in a bilingual household, thanks to a Brazilian mother and American father. My mom, or “mãe” as we call her in Portuguese, has always been the spiritual and cultural force in our family, and despite never living in Brazil we have always maintained a strong connection to her home country and the aunts, uncles and cousins who still live there. Safe to say, neither my interest in Brazil nor my ability to decipher eighteenth century Portuguese would have existed without her. Obrigado Mãe! From my dad I inherited a love for reading, as well as the habit of approaching all of life’s endeavors with a full and honest effort. Can’t never did anything. I also owe a tremendous debt to Dr. Erik Myrup for his guidance and mentorship—he is truly one of a kind. He opened his database up to me and was always available to talk through translation issues, help develop a narrative, and even catch a few minutes of a soccer game when a break was needed. He has a tremendous ability to see history as a story, and I am grateful to have had his influence throughout this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Gretchen Starr-Lebeau, who, despite a busy spring term, weighed in at key moments and provided some very helpful and meaningful feedback. And I would also like to thank Dr. Albisetti for his willingness to join the party at the last minute. Lastly, I would have thrown the whole thing out the window and gone on my merry way had it not been for the advice and encouragement of my wife Becky. AMH.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments...........................................................................................................................................iii

Chapter 1: Introduction...............................................................................................................................................1

Chapter 2: Welcome to the Jungle.............................................................................................................................13

Chapter 3: Journey Upriver....................................................................................................................................50

Chapter 4: Conclusion.............................................................................................................................................77

Bibliography.........................................................................................................................................................85

Vita........................................................................................................................................................................89
Chapter 1: Introduction

On May 28, 1759, Francisco Xavier de Menconça Furtado arrived in Lisbon after a journey across the Atlantic Ocean from Belém, a small city situated at the mouth of the Amazon River on the northern coast of South America. Furtado had been away from Portugal for eight years, serving the Portuguese crown as governor and captain-general of the state of Grão Pará and Maranhão, an area that encompassed the northwest region of modern day Brazil. As he stood on deck and peered out over Lisbon, Furtado would have probably appeared old and tired, worn out as he was by an eight-year assignment that in his mind had been about five years too long, especially for a man on the brink of sixty. Before stepping off the ship, it is easy to imagine him pausing for a moment to look out over the port of his hometown, to let out a sigh of relief and perhaps glance up at the sky and recite a quick prayer of thanks. It is similarly easy to imagine that Furtado was greeted at the port by his brother Sebastião José Carvalho e Melo, better known today as the Marquis of Pombal, Portugal’s secretary of state and the Crown’s most powerful minister at this point in time. As they walked together away from the ship, Furtado would have marveled at all Pombal had done to rebuild Lisbon after the great earthquake in 1755, which had destroyed the city and provided the Marquis with a platform to establish himself at the head of the royal government. And significantly, Pombal’s power

1 Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, A Amazônia na era pombalina: correspondência inédita do governador e capitão-general do Grão Pará e Maranhão Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, 1751-1759, (Sao Paulo: Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, 1963),1228.

2 Although Sebastião José Carvalho e Melo would not be awarded the noble title of Marquis of Pombal until September 1769, I have followed the usual convention of referring to him under the abbreviated title of Pombal throughout this work.
and influence would continue to play a role in his brother’s life. Indeed, a little more than a month after disembarking in Lisbon, Furtado would himself be promoted to the role of assistant secretary of state, working alongside his brother to oversee the administration of Portugal’s empire. ³ Just reward for eight years spent at the edge of the world. ⁴

For his part, Furtado had much to tell Pombal about the progress of a set of reforms he had implemented in Pará over the course of his final two years in the colony. Known as the “Directorate,” these reforms were the culmination of Furtado’s tenure as governor of the Portuguese Amazon and represented a significant shift in Portugal’s colonial policy in the region. The Directorate converted over forty religious missions throughout the Amazon to secular settlements, in the process revoking the authority of the missionaries in an effort to augment the state’s role in “civilizing” the Indians that populated the settlements. It represented a drastic shift in Portuguese colonial policy, as for nearly two centuries the Crown had relied on missionaries of various religious orders, especially the Jesuits, to educate, civilize, and in many ways protect Indians from greedy settlers desperate for free labor. Furtado and Pombal hoped that by diminishing the role of the missionaries in this manner, abolishing Indian slavery once and for all, and assimilating the Indians into the Portuguese colonial society and economy, the Amazon would finally match the rest of Portuguese America in economic output. Indeed, with the Directorate established and the outlook bright for the Portuguese empire, it would seem

---

³ “Alvará de Nomeação de Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado para Secretário de Estado, Adjunto ao Conde de Oeiras,” in Mendonça, Amazônia na era pombalina, 1228.
⁴ This speculative passage about how Furtado would have felt at his homecoming, and his relationship with his brother, is based on his own descriptions of his time in the Amazon, as depicted in Mendonça, A Amazônia na era pombalina.
that the brothers, reunited after eight years apart and hundreds of letters exchanged, had much to celebrate.

In this thesis, I tell the story of the establishment of the Directorate from the perspective of Mendonça Furtado’s eight-year tenure as governor of Grão Pará and Maranhão. The primary focus will be the governor himself, as I argue that the Directorate was born directly out of Furtado’s volatile approach to governing the Amazon and its inhabitants, and his combustible relationship with the Society of Jesus. For that reason, I rely heavily on Furtado’s personal correspondence, using it as a window into his mind to understand the process that led him to suggest and guide the implementation of the Directorate. More specifically, the correspondence between Furtado and the Marquis of Pombal is given special attention in order to demonstrate the extent of Furtado’s influence on his brother, highlighting how actions and events in the periphery influenced the formulation of colonial policies in Lisbon. In this regard, I borrow a framework provided by Neil Safier in his book *Measuring the New World*. Writing about an Enlightenment-era expedition in South America by European scientists seeking to determine the circumference of the earth, Safier argues that a set of ideas with origins in Europe were significantly influenced by the local contours of the peripheral environments in which they were implemented.5 Without doubt, the Enlightenment changed how many

5 Safier himself put it this way: “Rather than following the monarchical edicts and macropolitics that made it possible for a group of French savants to determine the Earth’s shape in South America, this book redirects our attention toward the local conditions that enabled them to carry out their observations on the spot. Experimental science in a colonial context, as elsewhere, was not practiced in a social vacuum. Instead, encounters unfolded spatially and temporally in unpredictable ways, especially between Europeans and the populations they found in the ‘new world.’” Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Society and South America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.
Europeans understood religion and led to new ideas that challenged the moral and political authority of the Church and other institutions throughout Europe. Along those lines, the Pombaline era in Portuguese history is often considered primarily from a royalist perspective as Pombal sought to institute social, political, and economic reforms that were formulated in Lisbon and whose purposes were to strengthen the crown. Yet, as I will show here, Furtado’s position in his brother’s government ensured the prominent role of the Amazon—and its various inhabitants, both indigenous and European—in contributing to the evolution of Enlightenment ideas in Lisbon during this period of time.

As noted above, because the story I am telling is primarily about Mendonça Furtado and the eight years he spent toiling in the Amazon, I rely heavily on his personal correspondence. Fortunately, the vast majority of Furtado’s correspondence while governor of Pará and Maranhão was compiled by Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça into three volumes under the title *A Amazônia na era pombalina: correspondência inédita do governor e capitão-general do estado do Grão Pará e Maranhão Francisco Xavier de Mendoça Furtado*. The volumes include, in chronological order, Furtado’s correspondence with Pombal and other Portuguese administrators, as well as various laws, decrees, Royal Instructions and messages received by the governor which help fill in some gaps left by his own letters. While I am incredibly grateful to Mendonça for compiling, transcribing and organizing over a thousand pages of documents, as I conducted my research I tried to be mindful of the nature of the source I was using, understanding that Mendonça’s work to compile this information meant the presence of
an additional filter on top of Furtado’s own.\textsuperscript{6} Additionally, I benefited greatly from the work of others for background on the region and its larger context, as well as the varying perspectives on the governor that they provide. In the historiography of the Portuguese colonization of the Amazon, Furtado’s story has typically been told as it relates to other, broader narratives of the era, which I will elaborate on below. Thus, my focus on the establishment of the Directorate from Furtado’s perspective is a subtle—though not insignificant—departure from larger scale depictions in which Furtado has typically filled the role of a Pombaline agent sent to implement an imperial agenda. As such, it will be helpful to briefly contextualize the various historiographic approaches to Luso-Brazilian history in which the Directorate era plays a significant role.

The broadest depictions of the era—in which Mendonça Furtado is typically ascribed the least active role—emphasize the economic reforms and geo-political machinations attributed to the Marquis of Pombal. Kenneth Maxwell, along with other historians of the Portuguese empire such as António Hespanha, José Subtil, and Nuno Monteiro, have discussed at length the nature of ‘pombalismo’ and the extent of Pombal’s influence as an ‘enlightened despot’ in the government of Dom José.\textsuperscript{7} Maxwell, in an article titled “Pombal and the Nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian Economy,”

\textsuperscript{6} Along these lines, I was consistently encouraged by the repeated discovery that other, more experienced historians also relied heavily on Mendonça’s three volumes in their work. See, for example, Dauril Alden, “Economic Aspects of the Expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil,” in Henry H. Keith and S.F. Edwards, eds., \textit{Conflict and Continuity in Brazilian Society} (Columbia, S.C., 1969), 25-65, and Dauril Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery in the state of Maranhão during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” Bibliotecha Americana 1.3 (1983): 91-142; and more recently, Heather Roller draws upon Mendonça’s volumes in \textit{Amazonian Routes: Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Communities in Northern Brazil}, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

\textsuperscript{7} Kenneth Maxwell claimed that Pombal essentially ruled Portugal during the reign of Dom José from 1750-1770 in Maxwell, \textit{Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
referred to the establishment of the Directorate reforms in the Portuguese Amazon as a primary example of the economic impetus driving Pombal’s policies, with Pombal depicted as the lead actor.\(^8\) In turn, Hespanha, Subtil, and Monteiro have emphasized the structural political changes that accompanied Pombal’s time in power and the manner in which Pombal’s influence on Dom José reflected earlier precedents.\(^9\) While the approaches of Maxwell and others are helpful in contextualizing Furtado’s tenure in the Amazon with the broader forces at work within Pombal’s government, they are limited in their portrayal of the Amazon itself because of their breadth. Indeed, Furtado’s presence and role in the region are largely lost within their sweeping generalizations of the Pombaline reforms.

On the other hand, when historians have focused more specifically on the Portuguese Amazon itself, they have often primarily treated the region as an arena for conflict between the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, and the Portuguese Crown, which climaxed during the Directorate era of the 1750’s. Indeed, Maxwell himself gives the Amazon enhanced scrutiny in an article entitled “The Spark: Pombal, the Amazon and the Jesuits,” arguing that Pombal’s understanding of Jesuit dissent to his policies in Pará ignited the conflict that led to their ultimate expulsion from the empire.\(^10\) Yet, despite acknowledging Furtado and his relationship with Pombal, Maxwell downplays the role of the governor, keeping Pombal as the primary protagonist in order to sustain a broader

---


narrative about the nature of the Pombaline reforms. While the depiction, taken broadly, is not necessarily incorrect, it is limited by its failure to recognize, in the mode of Safier above, the flow of information from periphery to core. In this regard, Dauril Alden, a historian of Maxwell’s generation has made an extensive contribution to our understanding of Portugal’s colonial project in the Amazon thanks to a long-term study of the role of the Jesuits in the Portuguese empire.\textsuperscript{11} In an article entitled “Economic Aspects of the Expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil: A Preliminary Report,” Alden argued, within the context of a larger narrative, that Mendonça Furtado fulfilled Pombal’s wishes by essentially conspiring to create a conflict through which the crown would take over the vast Jesuit holdings in the region. Alden’s argument, based on a detailed command of the sources, is persuasive while perhaps being somewhat overprotective of the Jesuit legacy.

While not seeking to directly refute Alden’s position, this thesis does qualify it to a certain extent, as I argue that rather than arriving with the intention of destroying the Jesuit project in the Amazon, Furtado built his case against them on the ground in the Amazon based in part on the belief that he could do a better job of creating the conditions for the assimilation of the Indians than could the missionaries.\textsuperscript{12} More generally, my

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{It appears that many of Alden’s more specific articles were born out of a massive, long term study of the Jesuits in the Portuguese empire that resulted in the encyclopedic book. See Dauril Alden, \textit{The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750}, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).}
\footnote{I am somewhat skeptical of Alden’s claim that “whether Mendonça Furtado’s primary mission in coming to Brazil was to assist his brother in the destruction of the Society of Jesus has long been a moot point. Those who deny that there was any such fraternal conspiracy point out that the captain-general’s instructions spoke favorably of the Jesuits’ charitable treatment of the Indians. But they must also take into consideration two of the so-called secret articles of those instructions which, even though they did not specifically mention the Jesuits, were obviously written with them primarily in mind.” Dauril Alden,}
\end{footnotes}
argument situates Furtado at the beginning of the larger movement to suppress the power of the Jesuits throughout the Iberian world. In this respect, as events on the ground in Portuguese America initiated the process of removing Jesuit influence throughout the larger Portuguese empire, a similar process was taking place throughout the Spanish empire during the reign of Charles III.\textsuperscript{13} Traditional depictions have characterized the Jesuit expulsion in the Spanish world as an important part of the Bourbon reforms, a seemingly coherent master plan undertaken by the Spanish crown to revive its empire after an extensive period of crisis.\textsuperscript{14} More recently, however, historians such as John Fisher have argued that these eighteenth century reforms in the Spanish case are “more realistically depicted” as a “halting, uncertain, inconsistent desire for imperial modernization and centralization, characterized more by delay, contradiction, and obstruction than by decisiveness.”\textsuperscript{15} Certainly, the same could be said of many of the reforms initiated by Pombal in the Portuguese world, including the expulsion of the Jesuits. As I will show throughout this essay, Furtado’s influence on the broader relationship between the Jesuits and the Portuguese crown supports the notion that the suppression of the Society of Jesus throughout the Iberian world was at least as opportunistic as it was intentional.

\textsuperscript{13} For additional background on the suppression of the Society of Jesus throughout the Iberian world, see Magnus Moerner, ed., \textit{The Expulsion of the Jesuits from Latin America} (New York: Knopf, 1965).
Finally, Mendonça Furtado’s role in establishing the Directorate has also been treated in broader historiography depicting the cross-cultural interactions between the Amazon’s indigenous population and Europeans. Within this field there exists a significant divide as different generations of historians have attempted to uncover an indigenous perspective for the region’s history. First writing in the 1960s and 1970s, historians like David Sweet, John Hemming, and Colin MacLachlan led the older generation. Sweet’s seminal dissertation, “A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed,” led the way in attempting to tell the story of the colonization and exploitation of the Amazon from the indigenous perspective. Cognizant of what he called “a bias in most historians…for the concerns and interests of the literate ruling class of any society,” Sweet preferred instead a “bias against the view of history as the story of the rich and powerful and well-educated.” And yet, while Sweet, Hemming and MacLachlan made great progress in highlighting the destructive influences of Portuguese colonization on the Amazon’s Indian populations, their narratives also generated criticism. By emphasizing the destruction and victimization of Indian society and culture by the Portuguese, these historians failed to properly recognize the agency of the Indians themselves in influencing the course of events. More recently, a new generation of historians, including Barbara Sommer and Heather Roller, has sought to undermine this notion of Indian victimization, highlighting, the role played by the Indians themselves in shaping colonial

---


Amazonian society. In turn, Furtado’s influence is featured in several of the works produced by these historians, yet his own perspective typically remains ancillary to their broader narratives about Pombal, the Jesuits, or European-indigenous relations.

Considering both the extent of his influence and the force of his personality, I argue that Governor Mendonça Furtado deserves his own platform in the midst of these competing historiographies. Thus, in what follows I set out to tell the story of the establishment of the Directorate in Grão Pará and Maranhão from Mendonça Furtado’s perspective—however misguided he may have been. In this respect, what follows is not intended to be an apologetic history. Indeed, in my interpretation, the governor deserves the reputation that Alden ascribed to him:

A one-time naval officer, Mendonça Furtado was imperious, hard-driving, crude, violent tempered, ambitious though completely loyal to his elder brother, pious in an Old Testament sense, gullible but suspicious of the motives of anyone, particularly one whom he regarded as inferior, who held views contrary to his own; he was therefore entirely uncompromising.

However, telling the story from his perspective will help us further understand both the nature and extent of his influence on a significant era in Portuguese and Amazonian history. As such, the story below will for the most part unfold chronologically, in order to show how Furtado’s beliefs and actions evolved over the course of his experiences, building up to the Directorate in 1757. Along the way, I will provide historical

---

background on various topics in order to contextualize challenges facing the governor, and their influence on the decisions he made.

In Chapter 1, I combine a detailed look at Furtado’s early years as governor with a series of digressions into relevant historical background on the region. After an initial discussion of the Royal Instructions outlining the crown’s expectations for Furtado’s role as governor, I focus on the idealistic and optimistic approach Furtado developed in positioning himself as a protector of the Indians, which incidentally put him in direct confrontation with the Amazon’s missionaries, particularly the Jesuits. While exploring the multifaceted reasons for Furtado’s immediate displeasure with the Jesuits, I argue that the governor was genuine in his belief that the Jesuits were doing the Indians a disservice in their administration of the aldeias (mission villages), and that he honestly believed that he could create a better system to oversee their assimilation into the region’s society and economy. In doing so, I look at the various ways Furtado attempted to establish his authority, including his exploitation of existing institutions in the Amazon and his attempts to create new ones for his own ends, including his attempts to thwart the influence of the Jesuits by creating new secular missions. Finally, I include references to various exchanges between Furtado and Pombal, in an attempt to emphasize the influence the governor had on his brother back in Portugal.

Chapter 2 begins with Furtado’s trip up the Amazon River to fulfill his obligations to establish the boundary between Spanish and Portuguese America as defined in the Treaty of Madrid of 1750. While stationed at a village deep in the heart of the Amazon for nearly two years waiting for the arrival of the Spanish delegation, Furtado had ample opportunity to visit various aldeias and observe the relationship
among the missionaries, Indians, and settlers. His reliance on Indians as guides and laborers on his trip dampened his optimistic opinion of their potential, and led him to suggest a more reserved version as well as the delayed implementation of a set of reforms established by Pombal in Lisbon based on Furtado’s recommendations. Significantly, Furtado did not experience a similar change in his opinion of the Jesuits based on his time upriver; if anything, his frustration only grew due to a belief that the missionaries were deliberately undermining him at every opportunity. The chapter ends with a discussion of the Directorate itself, and how it represented the culmination of Furtado’s tenure as governor of the region.

Of course, with such a heavy focus on the perspective of one man, I run into the danger of both undermining and overshadowing the other actors and larger forces at work in the Amazon in the eighteenth century. By focusing on Furtado, my intention is not to unduly amplify or overstate his significance. Rather, I seek simply to contribute an additional layer of understanding to the complex history of the relationship among the Portuguese and indigenous Brazilians. Ultimately, I believe that Furtado misinterpreted the motives, aspirations, and culture of the Indian population he was sent to oversee and incorporate into the empire. Yet, despite his errors, and thanks to the patronage of his brother, one of the more powerful figures of the age, Furtado and the Amazon would go on to play an outsized role in shaping an era.
Chapter 2: Welcome to the Jungle

On an October day in 1751, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado walked for the first time through the port city of Belém, in the Portuguese colonial state of Grão Pará and Maranhão. Situated at the mouth of the Amazon River, Belém in the mid-eighteenth century was merely a tiny blip on a river delta that was over two hundred miles across. The Amazon was so huge, so voluminous, its current so powerful, that the water flowing past the shores of Belém could reach as far as two hundred miles out into the Atlantic Ocean.\[^{20}\] Indeed, the Belém of 1751 must have felt quite small to Furtado considering its surroundings. Though it was the largest city in the Amazon, and the commercial hub of the region for nearly a century, Belém could boast only 2,500 inhabitants in 1750.\[^{21}\] For its part, Belém was entry point to a vast network of villages, plantations, and religious missions that lined the Amazon River and its many tributaries for thousands of miles, collectively making up the state of Grão Pará and Maranhão. The state was founded in the 1620’s by the Portuguese Crown in order to stake a political claim to the territory accessed by settler *entradas*, or entries to the colony’s vast interior in search of gold and other resources from the coastal regions. It remained, in 1750, a separate colony from the rest of Portuguese Brazil, with its governor reporting directly to Lisbon rather than the colonial capital of Salvador on the Bahian coast.

As Furtado wandered through Belém’s dirt streets and looked out upon the brown water of the Amazon, he would have been surveying a society in crisis. Over the previous decade, a smallpox epidemic had swept through the state and decimated its already sparse population. While the estimates vary, historians have suggested that somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants perished due to the epidemic between 1743 and 1749, the vast majority of them Indians.\(^{22}\) Considering that the entire state’s population in 1750 was somewhere around 40,000, Indians included, it is easy to understand the devastating effect the epidemic had on the colony’s economic development as nearly half of its inhabitants were now gone.\(^{23}\) Indeed, the economy must have been on Furtado’s mind as he surveyed his new home and considered its recent history. Significantly, the intention to improve the region’s commercial productivity was one of the primary reasons the Crown had sent him to Pará in the first place.

Compared to the emergence of a thriving plantation economy in the northeast of Brazil based on the cultivation of sugar and built on the backs of African slaves, the economy of the Amazon followed a more stunted trajectory. The climate and landscape made the establishment of large plantations difficult, which in turn limited the effectiveness and return on investment of African slaves.\(^{24}\) Instead, early Portuguese settlers in the Amazon capitalized on European demand for some of the region’s natural resources, including various spices and, most importantly, cacao. In turn, native Amazonians, with their knowledge of the region and innate ability to navigate the

\(^{22}\) Boxer claims 50,000, *Golden Age of Brazil*, 291, while Alden suggests 40,000, “Significance of Cacao Production,” 116.


\(^{24}\) For a more detailed analysis of the limited success of African slavery in the Amazon, see Dauril Alden’s “Indian vs. black slavery in the state of Maranhão during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” *Bibliotecha Americana* 1.3 (1983): 91-142.
waterways, proved more useful laborers in this endeavor than Africans, and over time a complex system of indigenous slavery developed, the remnants of which would occupy much of Furtado’s time and energy over the course of his tenure in Brazil. While cacao was central to Portugal’s economic exploitation of the Amazon in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the Amazon itself remained a small part of the empire. For every thirty ships that left the ports of Recife and Salvador on Brazil’s eastern coast every year, only one would depart for Portugal from Belém. Yet, as Portugal entered a new era under new leadership, the Amazon emerged as an opportunity for economic growth, the latest target in the Portuguese quest for Eldorado.

Essential to Furtado’s attempt to breathe life into the Amazon’s economy was the development of an almost personal mission to more effectively assimilate the Indians in the state of Pará as productive citizens, an objective that completely upended the region and would eventually culminate in the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Amazon and the permanent abolition of Indian slavery. When Furtado arrived in Belém in 1751, he inherited the legacy of over a century of conflict between settlers, missionaries and native Amazonians. For reasons that will be explored in more detail below, Furtado arrived in Pará under the impression that the region’s instability was due to the extensive power and influence of the missionaries, an impression that would only grow in the early years of his tenure. Without a doubt, the missionaries maintained a significant presence in the region. At this point in time, there were sixty-three aldeias, or mission villages, in the

---

26 For more information on the importance of Brazil to the Portuguese empire and the administrative changes that took place in the mid eighteenth century see Andrée Mansuy-Diniz Silva’s “Imperial re-organization, 1750-1808,” and Dauril Alden’s “Late colonial Brazil, 1750-1808,” in Leslie Bethel, ed., Colonial Brazil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 244-344.
Amazon—all under the care of missionaries representing four different religious orders. The most prominent order was the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), but also present in were Franciscans, Carmelites and Mercedarians. The aldeias themselves varied in size and scope, and fell under different categories as far as the overall purpose they served within the colony, with various degrees of autonomy or connection to the Crown. Historians estimate that altogether, before the devastating smallpox epidemic from 1743-1749, the missions collectively held roughly fifty thousand Indians. Competing with the missionaries for access to Indians were Portuguese settlers, who saw the Indians as an essential source of labor considering their knowledge of the area and their abundant population. As will be elaborated throughout this chapter, the history of the relationship between the missionaries, the settlers, the Indians, and the Crown’s representatives in the colony, presented Furtado with a complicated challenge upon his arrival in Pará.

The document outlining the scope of Furtado’s mandate as governor of the state of Grão Pará and Maranhão indicates that the Portuguese were well aware of the history of the region. Written in the name of the Portuguese king Dom José via his Secretary of State for Overseas Affairs Diogo de Mendonça Córte Real, who, curiously, was appointed to his post on the same day as Pombal, the “Royal Instructions” establishing Furtado’s position were a set of thirty-eight distinct articles covering a variety of topics. To what extent Pombal himself was involved in preparing these Instructions is not

27 Boxer, The Golden Age of Brazil, 290-291.
28 Boxer, The Golden Age of Brazil, 280.
29 Boxer, The Golden Age of Brazil, 291.
known, however their nature and their resonance with the scope of Pombal’s early years
in office indicate his significant influence.31 Within these Instructions, three prominent
themes emerged that clarify Furtado’s directive as governor within the context of
Portuguese (or Pombaline) colonial policy. To begin, the dominant concern reflected in
the Instructions was the status of the Amazon’s Indian population, as references to
Indians appear in some form or another in 18 of the 34 articles with content.32 Not
surprisingly, given their influence in the South American interior, the Jesuits and other
religious orders feature prominently as an area of focus for the governor, especially with
regard to potential reforms to their relationship with the Indians. Finally, the governor is
charged with further surveying the nature and extent of the region’s commercial
potential, including the expansion of trade and the potential for establishing plantations.
The overall impression left by the Instructions, especially in the convergence of the three
categories just mentioned, is of a mandate for Furtado to ensure that the state of Grão
Pará and Maranhão and its inhabitants—both the Portuguese settlers and the Indians—
more effectively and efficiently provided both economic and political support to the
Portuguese Crown.

Considering Pombal’s desire to extract more economic value from the Amazon
region despite a very limited increase in the migration of Portuguese settlers there,
reforming Indian policy with the hope of increased assimilation, economic integration

31 According to Kenneth Maxwell, Pombal “to all intents and purposes ruled Portugal
between 1750 and 1777.” In addition, according to Maxwell, Pombal’s “secret”
correspondence at the time reinforced much of what was contained in the Instructions.
See Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1995), 1, 52-53.
32 The articles are not individually titled, but are specific enough to be organized
thematically.
and miscegenation with Portuguese settlers, was vital to the Portuguese vision of an economically robust Amazon. With such goals in mind, it was essential to the crown that Indian slavery be abolished absolutely. To this end, the Instructions began with a brief overview of the region’s history, with the Crown acknowledging that laws established to ban the captivity of Indians in 1680 and 1688 did allow their enslavement under certain circumstances. Yet, according to the Instructions, those laws had been abused by the settlers and the missionaries over time, to the extent that reforms were called for and enacted by the Overseas Council in 1747 and 1748 in order to nullify slaving licenses granted by the Junta de Missões. The Instructions then alluded to the Crown’s Decree of January 28, 1751, which “declared that not one of these Indians can be enslaved, by no principle or pretext,” and asserted that all Indians employed as laborers were to be paid properly and “treated with humanity.” In order to contextualize these orders and the historical allusions within them, it is worth briefly considering the evolution of Indian slavery in the Amazon leading up to Furtado’s arrival in 1750.

Historians have commonly emphasized the influence of four competing factions in the development of Indian slavery in the Portuguese Amazon: Portuguese settlers demanding manual labor, the religious orders positioning themselves as protectors of the Indians, the Portuguese state establishing a legal framework for its colonial endeavors, and the role of the Indians themselves in resisting as well as supporting the enterprise. Over time, a system supporting various types of expeditions for collecting and distributing Indians was developed by Portuguese settlers, their Indian allies, and the

---

33 “Instruções Régias,” Article 4, Amazônia na era pombalina, 27.
34 “Instruções Régias,” Article 5, Amazônia na era pombalina, 27. Background on the Junta de Missões will be provided in more detail below.
35 “Instruções Régias,” Article 6, Amazônia na era pombalina, 27.
region’s religious orders. This system had its origins in a legal framework established over time to justify and protect the actions of Portuguese slavers in Africa and on the coast of colonial Brazil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\textsuperscript{36} Initially, the practice of enslaving natives in the Amazon was established through the practice of \textit{tropas de guerra}, the Portuguese term for the concept of ‘just war.’ A \textit{tropa de guerra} required the authorization of royal authority in the area, and was typically carried out under the justification of punishing hostile or non-compliant Indians, as well as Indians that did not immediately embrace Christianity.\textsuperscript{37} While \textit{tropas de guerra} were carried out with merely the veneer of religious sanction, \textit{tropas de resgate} were initially undertaken with much stronger religious influence and purpose. The term ‘resgate’ in Portuguese means ransom, and \textit{tropas de resgate} were sanctioned by the state to rescue Indians that had been captured by their enemies and were at risk of being consumed by cannibals.\textsuperscript{38} A rescued Indian owed between five and ten years of labor to the rescuing party, after which the Indian would be transferred to an \textit{aldeia}. Thus, both settlers and the religious orders governing the \textit{aldeias} benefitted from these expeditions, and over the course of the seventeenth century repeated \textit{tropas de resgate} were behind the exploration and sporadic building of settlements and missions along the Amazon basin. The Jesuits, for their part, publicly condemned slavery, but the system itself ensured they benefited from the \textit{tropas de resgate}, providing their aldeias with Indians indebted to the missions and the sponsoring religious order, for having been rescued from their indigenous enemies.

Significantly, the settlers, over time, would become dependent upon Indian labor and

\textsuperscript{37} Sommer, “Colony of the Sertão,” 406.
\textsuperscript{38} Sommer, “Colony of the Sertão,” 406.
through these various mechanisms would repeatedly find ways to circumvent the laws of
the Crown and the moral opposition of the missionaries to indigenous slavery.

Furtado’s task, then, was to draw a clear line in the sand prohibiting all forms of
Indian slavery, despite the obvious challenges presented by the settlers’ long history of
abuses and dependence on Indian slave labor, and the extent to which the practice was
embedded in Amazonian society. Perhaps anticipating some resistance on the part of the
region’s white settlers to this intrusion on their access to labor, the King’s Royal
Instructions charged Furtado with persuading the settlers of the benefits of African
slaves, “so that the settlers of that state (Grão Pará and Maranhão) observe this
Resolution completely and religiously.”

In addition, several of the Instructions indicated
that the continued use of Indian labor was permitted only as long as Indians were paid the
wages they earned. And yet, despite the ‘enlightened’ nature of the Instructions, the
absence of slavery did not necessarily mean the presence of complete freedom for the
Indians. There remained mechanisms in place that kept the Indian wage laborers bound to
their former situations.

Furtado was also tasked with addressing the relationship between the Indians and
the region’s missionaries, initiating a process that would culminate in the expulsion of the

---

requires that Furtado inform the Royal Secretary what number of black slaves should be
sent to the state each year.

40 Several historians have emphasized that notions of ‘freedom’ for the Indians in the
Amazon in the eighteenth century were different than we might understand them today.
For a better understanding of the nuances of Indian labor see Colin MacLachlan, “The
Indian Labor Structure in the Portuguese Amazon,” *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil* 9
Jesuits from the Amazon. Initially, however, the Royal Instructions merely acknowledged royal suspicions that some of the religious missionaries, operating within their aldeias, were likely abusing their position as protectors and civilizers of the Indians and were instead using Indian labor to their benefit and enrichment. In this respect, Furtado was instructed to work with the Bishop of Pará, an ally of the Portuguese state, to ensure that Indians were being paid properly for their work in the aldeias, and to inform the missionaries that their own efforts in the aldeias should remain focused primarily on religious instruction. Certainly, the Royal Instructions betrayed a lack of trust in the work being done in these mission villages, as Furtado was ordered to warn the missionaries to “take care to civilize the Indians so they are more capable of serving the public good, and that the contrary will meet (the King’s) disapproval.” Yet, in 1751, the Portuguese, at least according to these Instructions, had not begun to envision an Amazon without the Jesuits and the other religious orders. Indeed, Furtado had not been sent to Pará with an explicit directive to remove them. Rather, the Crown hoped to restructure its relationship with the missionaries, by re-asserting royal authority and opposing all dissent. In order to more properly understand the extent of the challenge facing Furtado in this regard, it is necessary to trace the origins of missionary activity in the Amazon region.

---

41 Kenneth Maxwell, “The Spark: Pombal, the Amazon, and the Jesuits,” Portuguese Studies (2001): 168-183. Maxwell argues that the Amazon provided the point of conflict which brought a number of factors into play, thus initiating a process that would see the Jesuits removed from all of the Portuguese empire during the Pombaline era.
42 “Instruções Régias,” Article 14, Amazônia na era pombalina, 30.
43 “Instruções Régias,” Article 16, Amazônia na era pombalina, 30.
44 “Instruções Régias,” Article 23, Amazônia na era pombalina, 33.
The history of European missionary endeavors in Portuguese America began with the inclusion of six Jesuit priests in the entourage of Tomé da Sousa, appointed in 1549 as Brazil’s first governor general. From the beginning, Portuguese settlers competed with the missionaries for access to the Brazilian Indians, with the Jesuits initially positioning themselves as protectors of the Indians in moral opposition to the settlers’ desire to enslave the natives and take advantage of their labor.\(^45\) The mission, or aldeia, system in Brazil was born out of this conflict, with the new missions serving as autonomous zones in which the missionaries could oversee the natives in their care and protect them from hostile tribes and greedy settlers.\(^46\) Thus, the presence of the Jesuits and other missionaries ensured that Portuguese colonial administrators would be confronted with a fundamental question over the course of the colonial period: Could ethical or religious concerns over Indian liberty be reconciled with the needs of settlers for labor?\(^47\) Two early examples help to illustrate the Crown’s muddled attempts at establishing a legal framework under pressure from competing constituents. In 1609, the Crown decreed the full freedom of all Indians in Brazil, outlawing indigenous slavery under any circumstances. Yet, after two years of vehement protests from settlers in Brazil, slavery

\(^{45}\) Dauril Alden notes that within a year of the Jesuits’ arrival in Brazil, they had positioned themselves against slavery, leading to the early establishment of missions with the purpose of autonomy in overseeing the Indians in their care. Dauril Alden, “Black Robes vs. White Settlers: The Struggle for ‘Freedom of the Indians’ in Colonial Brazil,” in *Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian*, edited by Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson (University of Utah Press, 1969), 24.

\(^{46}\) Alden, “Black Robes vs. White Settlers,” 23.

\(^{47}\) Alden, “Black Robes vs. White Settlers,” 25. Alden framed the question this way: “was it possible to respect the freedom of the Indians, as the Jesuits urged, and at the same time accommodate the legitimate needs of the settlers for manual workers?”
was legalized and the influence of the Jesuits was greatly diminished.\textsuperscript{48} Such wavering would dominate the status of the native Brazilian all through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, especially as new territory was acquired in the Amazon.

Throughout the seventeenth century, economic opportunists made their way into the Brazilian interior in search of gold and Indian slaves, as Jesuits, and members of other religious orders following close behind with their own designs on indigenous societies. The first Jesuit attempt to establish a permanent mission in the Amazonian state of Maranhão ended in disaster, as in 1643 Father Luis Figueira and his entourage perished at the hands of the Aruan Indians after their ship wrecked outside of Belém.\textsuperscript{49} Following in Figueira’s wake came Father António Vieira, who arrived in Maranhão in 1653. Vieira is often heralded by historians as the Portuguese version of the more well-known Indian advocate Bartolome de Las Casas of Spain, based in large part on Vieira’s work among indigenous populations in the Amazon.\textsuperscript{50} Vieira’s arrival in the region occurred in the same year that the Portuguese King, under pressure from the region’s settlers, yet-again revised his position and legalized Indian slavery in the colony. Vieira, an acclaimed public speaker, was appalled by indigenous conditions in the Amazon, and upon his arrival he initially attempted to use the pulpit to convince Portuguese settlers to abandon the enslavement and cruel treatment of the natives.\textsuperscript{51} When that approach failed, Vieira returned to Portugal, hoping to persuade the King to change his policy and reintroduce the ban on Indian slavery. He was successful, in part, as the King established

\textsuperscript{49} Hemming, \textit{Red Gold}, 316.
\textsuperscript{50} Alden, “Black Robes vs. White Settlers,” 30.
\textsuperscript{51} Hemming, \textit{Red Gold}, 319-321.
an additional law in 1655 that gave Jesuits full control of the region’s aldeias, and ensured their role in regulating the legitimacy of the *tropas de resgate* carried out by the settlers.\(^{52}\) Though Vieira failed to abolish Indian slavery, his advocacy—felt initially in the laws of 1655 and more forcefully in a set of laws decreed in 1680—established the role of the Jesuits in regulating the relationship between Indians and settlers up to Furtado’s arrival in 1751. Vieira’s lasting achievements were to extend the influence of the missionaries over the Indians, and strengthen the relationship between the Jesuits and the royal authorities. Though the support of the Crown would continue to vacillate between settlers and missionaries, it did so within the framework created by Vieira. As the crown sought to expand its powers in the eighteenth century, however, this would change. Indeed, by the time of Furtado’s arrival, the missionaries were simply considered by the new administration of Dom José to be a powerful, entrenched nuisance.

Under Pombal, the goals of the Portuguese state with regard to to its overseas empire became predominately economic, which his policies for the Amazon would certainly come to reflect. In this respect, the Instructions addressed Indian slavery and the missionaries’ subservient role in relation to the crown. Furtado was more specifically tasked with more directly addressing the economic potential of the Amazon region. In addition to curtailing contraband,\(^{53}\) he was instructed to carry out an assessment of the region’s natural resources and fertility, “in order to advance the commerce of this State.”\(^{54}\) In the process, he was warned, he should be careful not to offend or ostracize the region’s property owners, and to ensure them of their continued Royal protection by the

---

\(^{52}\) Hemming, *Red Gold*, 324.


Portuguese King. The political dimensions of Furtado’s assignment, fraught as they were with potential enemies among the settlers, missionaries, and even the Indians, made his project in the Amazon a challenging one. The Royal Instructions demonstrated the nature and extent of Pombal’s ambitions early in his tenure as a royal minister, and in his brother Mendonça Furtado, Pombal had a capable and willing agent who would prove, at least in energy and industry, worthy of the task. In this respect, Furtado’s eight year term as Governor of Grão Pará and Maranhão would be dominated by what would quickly become a personal mission to prove that the Jesuits were corrupt and that he himself could do a better job of civilizing the Indians than could the missionaries.

Upon his arrival in Pará in the fall of 1751, Furtado’s early impressions of the relationship between the missionaries and the Indians established a sense of frustration with the missionaries that would only grow in years to come. His first letter home to his brother, written November 21, 1751, was full of invective against what Furtado immediately perceived to be a corrupt mission system. Notably, Furtado began this letter, as he would all letters intended solely for Pombal, with the salutation “my brother of my heart,” setting the tone for a private, more intimate pattern to their personal correspondence. In this initial, unfiltered report, Furtado appears to have held nothing back as far as his opinion of the nature of the relationship between the religious missionaries and the Indians, and the current state of Indian freedom and civilization. Furtado included in this letter the story of an Indian named Manuel, of the Uricurú aldeia,

55 “Instruções Régias,” Article 32, Amazônia na era pombalina, 36.
56 The editor of Amazônia na era pombalina makes a note about this as well, stating “the brother to brother nature of this correspondence clearly shows that the letter is not intended for publication, which makes it grow in value as a historical document.” Carneiro de Mendonça, Amazônia na era pombalina, 63.
who had asked the Governor for permission to move away from his aldeia and live in the
city of Belém, because he was over sixty years old and wished to live as he pleased. 57
When Furtado asked Father Júlio Pereira, a local priest, what to do about Manuel, he
noted that Father Pereira became very angry and insisted that Manuel belonged to the
Uricurú aldeia and that he should go to it and continue to serve the Crown rather than
complain for his freedom. Furtado wrote to his brother that this response left him
questioning what the concept of freedom meant to Indians like Manuel, who in Furtado’s
understanding did not see themselves as free despite living in an aldeia. 58 Undoubtedly,
Furtado inclusion of Manuel’s story in a letter to his brother was chosen carefully, and it
is no surprise that his case was depicted in a manner intended to cast the missionaries in a
poor light.

From Furtado’s perspective, Manuel’s situation was emblematic of the corrupt
and exploitative reality of an aldeia system long managed with impunity by the religious
orders. In his view of Amazonian history, the religious missions had been given too much
power for too long, and despite—or perhaps because of—their tyrannical authority they
had failed in their mandate to convert the Indians to Christianity or instill any lasting
impression of Portuguese civilization. In the aldeias, wrote Furtado, “neither justice nor
King are there known,” and “the natives have not been converted…they are taught a
vernacular that they call the lingua geral…they spend most of their time practicing their
own rituals and are lightly instructed in the mysteries of the saintly faith,” although so
superficially that only a very few Indian men actually understood and believed in the

57 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, 1st
Marquis of Pombal, Pará, 21 November 1751, in Amazônia na era pombalina, 69.
58 Furtado to Pombal, 21 November 1751, Amazônia na era pombalina, 69.
Catholic doctrine.\textsuperscript{59} When combined with his initial impressions, Furtado’s awareness of the historical, political mandate granted to the religious orders as ‘protectors’ of the Indians from the exploitative desires of white settlers led him to the early opinion that the missionaries had simply “usurped” power and come to occupy a position not explicitly granted to them by the Portuguese state.

Indeed, the case that Furtado had started to build cast the Jesuits and the other religious orders as slaveholders in their own right. As he further explained wrote to his brother in that first letter home, “the Regulars are responsible for not only the spiritual government of the aldeias, but also the temporal and political government as well…so that they can freely monopolize the labor of these unfortunate Indians.”\textsuperscript{60} Such unchecked power on the part of the missionaries, especially considering the ability it gave them to exploit indigenous labor, was particularly frustrating to Furtado. He continued, “as the Regulars found themselves owners of these people, as they made themselves owners of the biggest and best property in the State, they came naturally to absorb all trade in the backlands as well as the city.”\textsuperscript{61} The story that Furtado had begun to tell Pombal—and himself—emphasized the duplicitous role of the religious orders in the evolution of Indian slavery in the state of Pará, which had resulted in their holding extensive power over the regulation of Indian labor. In consequence, from Furtado’s perspective, Indian slavery had persisted over time and embedded itself into the economic fabric of the region, stunting the Amazon’s commercial development.

Moreover, Furtado believed that the assimilation and civilization of the Indians

\textsuperscript{59} Furtado to Pombal, 21 November 1751, \textit{Amazônia na era pombalina}, 67.
\textsuperscript{60} Furtado to Pombal, 21 November 1751, \textit{Amazônia na era pombalina}, 70.
\textsuperscript{61} Furtado to Pombal, 21 November 1751, \textit{Amazônia na era pombalina}, 73.
themselves had remained equally stunted, despite the missionaries’ claims as their protectors and their teachers of Christian doctrine. That Furtado reacted poorly to the situation of the Indians in the Amazon’s aldeias is perhaps no surprise, given his mandate to re-establish royal authority, and the sense of justice with which he approached his position. What is surprising, however, is how quickly he came to blame the Jesuits and the other Religious orders. Although Furtado had ample opportunity to form his own opinions based on his energetic entrance to the Amazonian scene, it is worth considering to what extent he and Pombal were influenced by the more recent history of Portuguese attempts to govern the region. At the very least, Furtado’s critique built on earlier criticisms of the Jesuits coming out of the Amazon.

In the generations between the departure of António Vieira and the arrival of Mendonça Furtado, the conflict between the Jesuits and the settlers over the liberty of the Indians grew in depth and intensity. The Portuguese crown, caught between the factions, continued to swing its support from one side to the other, as if equally mindful of its own moral and economic responsibilities as a royal or imperial power—which in this case meant deciding between the settlers’ ‘need’ for labor and the religious orders’ desire to ‘protect’ and convert the Indians to Christianity. In the 1720’s, the situation grew so dire that the Portuguese Overseas Council decided to send its own investigator to the Amazon to determine the legitimacy of the latest set of accusations made against the Jesuits. The source of the accusations was a settler named Paulo da Silva Nunes, an inhabitant of Maranhão since 1708 who had significant experience in various aspects of the colony’s administration. Silva Nunes began his campaign against the Jesuits in the colony itself around 1722, when he started actively lobbying in and around Belém for the expulsion of
the Jesuits from the region.  

Ironically, Silva Nunes found little traction in Pará, as the governor of the state ordered his arrest on grounds that his actions might unnecessarily start a riot. Thereafter, he fled the colony and traveled to Lisbon to take up his case against the Jesuits to a new audience.

It was in Lisbon that Silva Nunes made a more lasting impression on the Crown where, acting as a representative of the more influential settlers in Pará and Maranhão, he built a persuasive case against the Jesuits. His arguments largely consisted of three main parts. First and foremost, drawing on official documents and historical references, he hoped to show that the Jesuits were interested more in accumulating wealth and power than capturing hearts and minds. Second, he portrayed the region’s Indians as barbaric heathens incapable and unworthy of civilization, only useful as beasts of burden. To bolster his argument, he asked, “if the Ethiopians (Africans) can be enslaved, why not the Indians of Maranhão?” This was undoubtedly an interesting question at a time in which the Portuguese empire owed so much of its wealth to the labor of African slaves, after nearly two centuries of constructing a moral framework capable of legitimizing African slavery while disparaging the enslavement of Indians. Silva Nunes’ third line of attack

---


63 Alden, clearly not impressed by Silva Nunes, made sure to point out that in avoiding his arrest and fleeing to Portugal, he “abandoned his wife and children.” *Making of an Enterprise,* 496.

64 Alden calls Silva Nunes a lobbyist, clearly hoping to emphasize the negative connotation the term carries in modern politics. *Making of an Enterprise,* 496


66 Quoted in Alden, *Making of an Enterprise,* 496.

was easily conflated with the first two, as he emphasized how easy it would be for the Amazon to be one of Portuguese America’s wealthiest outposts (rather than its poorest) if only the settlers had access to the Indian labor used by the Jesuits on their missions.\(^{68}\)

As noted above, Silva Nunes’ rhetoric and his claims against the Jesuits were together strong enough to catch the attention of the Overseas Council, which sent an investigator to Maranhão in 1734 to offer advice on how to reshape Indian policy.\(^{69}\) The investigator came down on the side of the missionaries, after finding local testimony and records supporting their claims over those made by Silva Nunes and other settlers. Significantly, the investigator noted that the Jesuits were very unpopular among the settlers, thanks to their role in Indian affairs, yet he emphasized that the settlers themselves were not poor and by no means lacked access to labor.\(^{70}\) Despite the investigator’s conclusions, and the momentary opportunity provided by Silva Nunes to consider, however briefly, the moral illegitimacy of slavery in general, it appears that little changed. Silva Nunes neither succeeded in removing the Jesuits and other religious orders from their position of authority, nor did increased scrutiny of the region that he brought about limit the Indian slave trade. If anything, the Council’s decision to maintain the statutes established in the 1680’s allowed for the system of \textit{tropas de resgate} to continue and even expand.\(^{71}\) Of course, an additional legacy of Silva Nunes’ advocacy against the Jesuits before the Portuguese court was his potential influence on future generations of Portuguese administrators. Mendonça Furtado’s correspondence with his brother and the Royal court are full of historical references to different phases of

\(^{68}\) Alden, \textit{Making of an Enterprise}, 496.

\(^{69}\) Alden, \textit{Making of an Enterprise}, 497.

\(^{70}\) Alden, \textit{Making of an Enterprise}, 497.

\(^{71}\) Alden, \textit{Making of an Enterprise}, 498.
Portugal’s history in the Amazon, and as discussed in further detail below, the brothers explicitly refer to Silva Nunes in their correspondence on multiple occasions. Thus, as we return to the Amazon in 1751 and continue to look at Furtado’s early activity as governor of Pará, it is important to keep in mind the influence of his—and Pombal’s—own expectations, based on their knowledge and interpretation of the region’s history.

Shortly after outlining for Pombal an initial list of Jesuit transgressions, Furtado made suggestions for more effective oversight of the region’s religious orders and their purported abuses. He advocated for the establishment of a new position in his government, a procurador—a term best translated as ‘advocate’—responsible for fielding and following up on complaints from the Indians. As he himself explained, “to defend the miserable Indians from the continual violence and injustices that they tolerate, not only from the secular clergy, who certainly are the minority, but from the Regulars, who are stronger, there is a need for a procurador who not only has intelligence, objectivity, and independence, but who is a good Christian man, and also highly active and resourceful.”

Furtado’s request for this new position so soon after his arrival is notable for several reasons. In the Junta de Missões, or Board of Missions, there was already an administrative body in place to field Indian appeals and claims of injustice, which, as governor, Furtado was head of. The Junta was another legacy of the advocacy of António Vieira, as it was created at his suggestion in 1655. Over time, its influence grew as the Junta was used by the Jesuits to extend their dominion over Indians affairs. Furtado attended his first meeting of the Junta on October 23, 1751, and while the records of the

72 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Pará, 28 November 1751, Amazônia na era pombalina, 79.
meeting are sparse, it is likely that the meeting helped inform his early opinion of the relationship between Indians, settlers, and the religious orders. Because the Governor served on the Junta alongside Jesuit representatives from the aldeias, it is similarly likely that, in his desire for a procurador, Furtado was essentially seeking to establish a secular alternative for responding to Indian grievances in order to diminish the influence of the religious orders. A secular procurador would certainly be much more easily controlled than a Junta composed of representatives from various missions, each with their own agendas. And, beyond this, the governor hoped to potentially diminish his workload and the pressure he was under by placing the burden of responsibility elsewhere.

By December of 1751, only a few months after his arrival in Pará, Furtado already appeared overwhelmed and exhausted by his new position. The Amazon’s tropical heat had clearly taken its toll. As he wrote to his brother, “The climate is not as healthy as we believed; I still have not slept a restful night; my head is always aching, and my chest has suffered very much.” He was uncomfortable enough with his situation to ask, almost desperately, to be replaced as governor at the end of his first three-year term, so that he could return home to Portugal. As he put it, “With all favor I must ask Your Excellency that you try with all possible diligence to see if you can arrange it so that on the same day that I reach my three years, my successor will arrive, because, in addition to being lost and reduced to utter ruin and misery, I find myself with little health to undertake the great

---

74 From the Wojtalewicz transcription of the Junta’s records, “The ‘Junta de Missões’,” 271.
75 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Pará, 22 December 1751, Amazônia na era pombalina, 128.
work that I have to do.”

Despite his despair, Furtado vowed to “continue to work diligently” and carry out his duties.

Even as he sought an alternative system and complained of personal exhaustion, Furtado became active in the Junta de Missões and looked to use it to his benefit as he set out to fulfill his responsibilities. In late December 1751 he wrote to the King that he had “called a Junta de Missões in order to arbitrate the salary that should be paid to the Indians going forward.” In that same meeting, Furtado issued a warning to the representatives of the missions who attended. He wrote to the Portuguese Secretary of State that he told the missionaries present at the Junta to focus their civilizing efforts on providing the natives with skills that would allow them to contribute to the state’s economy. Thereafter, he followed up on his statement with a formal letter carrying the same message to all of the religious orders. The minutes of the meeting of the Junta de Missões on February 21, 1752, provide some insight as to the types of issues the Junta handled, and that Furtado dealt with during his initial days as governor. Two cases brought before the Junta by Indians are particularly illuminating. The first case concerned an Indian woman named Angela, who claimed she had been violently captured in the backlands before being sold illegally into slavery. She appeared in front of the Junta to claim her freedom. Though the meeting’s minutes contain little detail, it appears that the Junta ruled in favor of “freedom from any captivity.” The second case referred to the situation of another Indian woman, Catharina. Catharina had originally been given as a

---

76 Furtado to Pombal, 22 December 1751, Amazônia na era pombalina, 128.
77 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the King, Pará, 22 December 1751, Amazônia na era pombalina, 131.
78 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Diogo de Menconca Corte Real, Pará, 8 January 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 165.
slave to another Indian, who died, which led to Catharina being illegally claimed by a third Indian. Upon review, Catharina was also declared “free from any captivity.” There is no record as to what this ruling meant for Angela and Catharina, and whether any mechanism existed to enforce the ruling or ensure their protection. It is hard to imagine that there were not hundreds, perhaps thousands, of similar cases to those of Angela and Catharina. These cases indicated the complexity of the situation facing Furtado early in his tenure as governor. The enslavement of Indians, despite being illegal for most of the previous century, was firmly entrenched in local society. The administrative body responsible for adjudicating the situation was overseen by representatives of the region’s various missions, a group which had its own agenda with regard to the Indians and participated in the various *tropas* responsible for assimilating Indians into Portuguese society. As Furtado would have seen it, settlers owned Indians, missionaries owned Indians, and even other Indians owned Indians. If anything, the one group missing in all of this was the state. Such a complicated, convoluted system certainly appeared incredibly inefficient to Furtado, and must have appeared ripe for reform. Indeed, as he continued into his inaugural year in Pará, Furtado’s frustration grew, fueling his confidence in the belief that he would be the one to finally solve the problem of indigenous labor that lay at the heart of the region’s perpetual economic stagnation.

As he progressed further into his first full year as governor, Mendonça Furtado settled in to a pattern of elaborating on his growing case against the Jesuits and the other religious orders, while suggesting and experimenting with potential solutions to assimilate the Indians into colonial society. In letters to both Pombal and to Diogo

---

Mendonça de Corte Real, who served alongside his brother as a minister for overseas affairs, Furtado eagerly referred to progress he had made on his duties as assigned in the Royal Instructions, particularly in terms of his relationship with the Jesuits as well as the demarcation of the border with Spain. With regard to tangible action taken, during his first few months he initiated the process of establishing a secular aldeia at Javari, a location on the Solimões River relatively close to Belém. In a letter to Pombal in late January 1752, Furtado explained his plans to establish the new aldeia, while complaining that he had received resistance from the Jesuits over his plan. This appears to have been Furtado’s second attempt within his first six months as governor to build a secular mission as an alternative approach to the religious missions. Such action, when considered alongside Furtado’s desire, discussed above, to create a new, secular procurador for fielding Indian grievances against the settlers, identifies a consistent pattern, initiated early in his tenure, of seeking to circumvent and undermine the authority of the region’s religious orders. It is also indicative of his desire to establish a more direct relationship between the state’s civil authorities and the Indians, in order to steward the civilizing process. In many ways, the governor seemed to be operating on the assumption that he could arrange a more effective way to assimilate the Indians than the system he

---

80 On January 20, 1752, Furtado wrote to Corte Real, “as expressed in article 30 of my Instructions… I called on certain people that I thought would have some information about those backlands, to inform me about them and to hear the ruling that was made for the boundary demarcation.” Amazônia na era pombalina, 181. Similarly, in his next letter to Corte Real, he wrote “In executing my royal orders, specifically Article 21, I opened communications with the Vice Provincial of the Company…” Furtado to Corte Real, January 20, 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 190.

81 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Pará, January 29, 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 223.

82 Furtado made similar references to a different mission in a letter to Pombal on January 26, 1752. Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Pará, January 26, 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 212-213.
had inherited. Though not surprising in light of his initial impressions of the Jesuits and their work on behalf of the Indians, and the mandate granted to him in the Royal Instructions, such quick activity speaks to his early mindset upon arriving in the Amazon. Certainly, Furtado must have been confident in his position, as well as the belief that his actions were consistent with the directives outlined in his assignment to serve as governor of Grão Pará and Maranhão.

Along with these initial actions to undermine the strength of the position of the missionaries over Indian affairs, Furtado took steps towards addressing the settlers’ demands for labor. He noted in his correspondence with his brother that attempts to import African slaves to divert the settlers’ demands for Indians was still premature, because the settlers would not be able to afford to pay for imported Africans.83 In a letter to Corte Real a few days later, Furtado more formally explained that, after a meeting at his house with “the principle dwellers of this city, and those who appeared to me most capable of discussing the number of African slaves that should be imported,” the colony was not yet ready for a different kind of slave. The problem appeared to be that the settlers, likely knowing they had relatively easy access to slave labor down the Amazon, argued that they could not front the cost of securing and transporting the slaves from Africa, and they feared defaulting on loans made to finance the undertaking and consequently losing their properties and their livelihoods altogether.84 And yet, despite these initial warning signs, Furtado would continue to explore the potential of importing African slaves to the region.

83 Furtado to Pombal, January 26, 1752. Amazônia na era pombalina, 212.
84 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real, Pará, January 28, 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 216.
Ultimately, Furtado would write seventeen letters home to his brother before receiving a response, a powerful reminder of the nature of the flow of information and communication in the eighteenth century. In July 1752, almost a year after Furtado’s arrival in the Amazon, the governor received his first set of replies from Pombal. The contemporary reader is left to wonder if Furtado was similarly disappointed at the letters’ contents, which were brief and to the point. Yet it serves as a good reminder that the Amazon was only a small part of the Portuguese empire at the time, despite Pombal’s hopes for its more prominent role. The correspondence from Pombal, just like the letters from Furtado, opened with the familiar “my brother of my heart,” followed by two paragraphs of more personal information and updates on the health of acquaintances in Europe. At this early moment in his tenure, with the Treaty of Madrid only recently signed, Pombal appears to have been primarily concerned with the establishment of the border with Spain at the edge of the Amazon. To this end, he wrote about recent updates to the demarcation, and informed Furtado that in addition to his responsibilities as governor, he had been elevated to “Principal Commissioner Plenipotentiary with ample and unlimited power,” in order to properly represent Portugal in the establishment of the boundary. The news of the appointment was followed by detailed logistical information and updates on the negotiations with Spain. That Pombal did not refer to Furtado’s reports regarding the Jesuits and the Indians is understandable considering these more pressing concerns. And yet, his subsequent actions with regard to the Jesuits and indigenous slavery very much speak to the extent of Furtado’s influence on his thinking.

85 The Marquis of Pombal to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Lisbon, July 6, 1752, Amazônia na era pombalina, 243.
It is in Pombal’s lengthier correspondence several months later that we see his opinion of assimilation begin to reflect Furtado’s observations and take its initial shape toward what would soon become policy. In response to Furtado’s various claims of corruption and abuse of the liberty of the Indians, Pombal in May of 1753 turned again to history, or his version of it anyway, in order to define a way forward. According to Pombal, in the history of conquest, assimilation and miscegenation were essential for the conqueror to dominate and civilize a subordinate group. Portugal’s own history was an excellent example. As Pombal wrote to his brother:

The only way to dominate a barbarous nation is to civilize it and establish a bond between conquered and conquerors, who will live in society under the same laws, as one people without any distinctions; if we conduct ourselves there (in Brazil) in relation to these wretched Indians as the Romans conducted themselves here (in Portugal), in no time at all in Pará there will be as many Portuguese as there are at present natives living in the forests – just as we ourselves have lived at certain periods. Indeed, we were barbaric ourselves once, like the Tapuia are today, the only difference being that we did not eat people.86

Taken from this perspective, the enslavement of the subordinate group could only impede the civilizing process, as it was essential that “the conquerors and the conquered live together under the union of civil society, in the observation of the same laws, forming one body without any distinctions.”87 Eventually, via miscegenation and the homogenization of cultural practices that would occur over time, the Amazonian Indian would become Portuguese.

Clearly—in Pombal’s understanding, at least—the Amazon’s long history of quasi-legal slavery of Indians, sanctioned by the state and regulated by the Religious

86 The Marquis of Pombal to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Lisbon, May 15, 1753, Amazônia na era pombalina, 391.
87 Pombal to Furtado, May 15, 1753, Amazônia na era pombalina, 390.
orders, had kept such miscegenation and homogenization from taking place. Particularly problematic to him was the pattern of “descimentos and resgates” which had helped maintain the division between the Portuguese and the native Amazonians. Such a pattern had left the Portuguese settlers increasingly dependent on Indian labor for their own livelihood, making an abrupt change in labor policy likely very difficult to implement without overwhelming protest or outright revolt. Further, the Indians themselves would make no easy transition into wage laborers or autonomous farmers, “as these people have endured so many years of impious usurpation of their liberty, that if granted liberty abruptly the Indians will flee the plantations and leave them without anyone to cultivate them.”

Assimilation, then, would require a complete overhaul of Amazonian society, though of course it would be essential that easy access to Indian laborers was ensured through any transition period.

Notably, neither the Jesuits nor any of the other religious orders occupied much of Pombal’s concern in this long letter. Of course, they wove in and out of his attention, as Pombal was well aware of their role in sanctioning the settlers’ access to Indian labor. Yet while the letter implies a clear mandate for Furtado as far as identifying opportunities to finally and permanently ensure the ‘liberty’ of the Indians, it is less clear at this point in time as to the position of the missionaries. Thus, two years into his tenure as governor of Pará, it remained up to Furtado to continue to experiment with various options and opportunities to diminish the influence of the missionaries and thereby promote more effective Indian assimilation.

---

A few months later, in a letter to the King in October of 1753, Furtado expressed a similar understanding of assimilation as Pombal had recently articulated in his May correspondence. The brothers were confident that the assimilation of the Indians could more effectively be achieved if certain barriers were removed and the Indians were brought closer to Portuguese society. An important barrier, of course, was the collection of religious missions along the banks of the Amazon that exercised considerable influence over the position of Indians in the region. A second significant barrier was the dependence of the settlers on Indian labor. Furtado’s actions sought to circumvent those barriers. He would create new, secular villages in which the Indians would genuinely learn Portuguese civilization. At the same time, he would begin the process of weaning the settlers off their dependence on Indian slaves by establishing a new General Company for the purpose of importing black slaves from Africa. Both actions were pursued under Furtado’s direction, with Pombal supporting from afar. In addition, Furtado would make a series of recommendations to his brother about significant changes to the position of the missionaries in the region, which Pombal formally incorporated into governmental policy in 1755.

In October 1753, Furtado described to the King the establishment of a new Vila down the river Guamá, where he sent 150 Indians that had been taken from the smugglers.89 “So that the people can begin to be civilized,” wrote Furtado, “I ordered a school to be opened that they tell me is working very well, and they are learning there the Portuguese language.”90 This new Vila on Guamá was strategically important in terms of

89 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the King, Belém, October 11, 1753, Amazonia na era pombalina, 414.
90 Furtado to the King, October 11, 1753, Amazonia na era pombalina, 414.
helping to facilitate trade and commerce, while also serving the empire as an outpost of assimilation. Furtado wrote to the King that he had in mind a location for another Vila, down the river Xingú, close to a settlement of white settlers, “where the land is excellent.” Such proximity and peaceful coexistence might induce “marriage between the whites and the Indians,” which was “the only way to populate this vast State and to make the local people realize that we honor and esteem them, and thus change into genuine love the hatred they quite naturally feel for us as a result of the poor treatment and the scorn we have shown them, and to give us a common purpose.”

The resonance between this sentiment and Pombal’s understanding of the history of assimilation, noted above, is striking.

Perhaps with greater assurance that he and his brother were united in their vision for the future of Pará and the nature of their civilizing mission, Mendonça Furtado escalated his activity as far as the creation of new aldeias and the administration of those already established. The Instructions sent by Furtado in December 1753 to Francisco Portilho e Melo “for the administration of the Indians of the aldeia of Santa Ana de Macapá” provide further insight as to Furtado’s priorities, as well as perhaps another example of Furtado’s naïve thinking. The Instructions indicate that Santa Ana de Macapá was a new village, not a replacement for an already existing settlement. Francisco Portilho e Melo, Furtado’s choice to lead the Vila, was known throughout the Amazon as a notorious slave smuggler, which Furtado well knew. Apparently Furtado hoped to use

---

91 Furtado to the King, October 11, 1753, Amazonia na era pombalina, 414.
92 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo, for the administration of the Indians in the Aldeia de Santa Ana de Macapá,” issued by Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, December 2, 1753, in Amazônia na era pombalina, 454-455.
93 Roller, Amazonian Routes, 34.
Portilho e Melo’s appointment to gain greater access to Indians and to begin to build a relationship with some of the region’s more influential settlers. And regardless of the man’s checkered past, as the administrator of Santa Ana de Macapá, Portilho e Melo was first and foremost to be an agent of assimilation. Indeed, in his first order to Portilho e Melo, Furtado instructed him to oversee the building of a church capable of hosting the celebration of mass, and to “take great care so that all of the Indians were well instructed in the Christian doctrine.” At the same time, the former slave-trader was to “look after with great efficacy” the civilization of the Indians, “making them work so that they can sell the fruits of their labor,” emphasizing that with their earnings they should dress themselves properly and buy whatever they felt they needed. Similarly, Portilho was to act with “all diligence to teach the Portuguese language,” and ensure that all practice with their native tongue was banned, unless required to “explain some word that they do not understand in Portuguese.” In addition, the Indians were to be “applied” to make canoes, in order to transport their goods to and from their village and also to the city (Belém), “so that they can get to know what is meant by commerce.”

Conspicuously, the Instructions did not specifically clarify the legal status of the Indians in this new aldeia, as it appears that at least some of the Indians ordered to this aldeia were done so as the result of a descimento in which Portilho e Melo himself was involved. “The Indians that you brought downriver (desceu) which you called your slaves you can apply to your own service,” wrote Furtado in the Instructions, “paying them their

---

94 Roller, Amazonian Routes, 34.
95 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 454.
96 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 454.
97 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 455.
wage as though they were free by their nature.” Furtado closed the instructions with a reminder that the assimilation of the Indians should be the settlement’s primary objective, which would not only benefit the Indians themselves, but was important to “the utility of the entire state.” Considering that no formal or official changes to policy had yet been issued, these Instructions for the aldeia at Santa Ana de Macapá can be understood as an example of Furtado experimenting with potential reforms to the Amazon’s mission system. In some sense, a serious interest in the civilizing mission was reflected here, and we see the reflection of much of what both the governor and Pombal had written about in terms of assimilation. Of course, the final passage of the instructions, with its emphasis on the potential ‘utility’ of the Indian, serves as a powerful reminder of the economic self-interest lurking within Furtado’s vision of any civilizing endeavors. While we will return to the fate of the settlement at Macapá and its slave-trading leader, we now shift focus to an assessment of Furtado’s evolving opinion of the potential of importing African slaves to the region.

Despite initial concerns about the potential benefits of African slaves expressed early in his tenure, in January of 1754 Mendonça Furtado began to plan the program that would become the core of Pombal’s economic reforms in the Amazon, and significantly, African slavery would play an important part. As he explained to Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real, the Portuguese Secretary for Overseas Affairs, “The origin of the re-establishment of this State from the ruin in which it finds itself currently lies in the

98 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 455.
99 “Instructions taken by Francisco Portilho e Melo,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 455.
creation of a General Company in order to introduce black slaves to Pará.”

Of course, the idea to introduce African slaves to the Amazon was not Furtado’s; several articles in his original Royal Instructions asked him to assess the region’s potential to welcome their importation. In fact, the idea’s origin preceded Furtado’s arrival entirely, which is no surprise considering the success of the slave-based plantation economy in Brazil’s northeastern states, and the curious moral preference by the Portuguese for African slaves over their indigenous counterparts. Indeed, Antonio Vieira himself had wondered whether Africans might placate the settlers’ desire for free labor.

The original idea, however, for bringing Africans to the Amazon initially came from a Portuguese entrepreneur, not Vieira. In the 1660’s a settler named João de Moura believed the Amazon state of Maranhão could thrive with the agriculture of tobacco and rice, crops that depended on the plantation system so successful in eastern Brazil. To that end, Moura suggested setting the region’s Indians free and providing them with land of their own which they could develop, along with creating a monopoly trading company to import African slaves from the Portuguese colony of Cape Verde. Antonio Vieira took up the call for African slaves a few years after Moura introduced it, and similarly connected it to the abolition of Indian slavery as part of his case to the Portuguese Crown. It took over a decade, but the crown responded in Vieira’s time by forming the Maranhão Company in 1682, requiring Lisbon merchants backing the company to sell over five

---

100 Mendonça Furtado to Corte Real, Belém, January 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 456.
101 “Instruccões Regias,” Lisbon, May 31, 1751, Articles 7 and 11, Amazônia na era pombalina, 28-29.
102 Dauril Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery in the state of Maranhão during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Bibliotheca Americana 1.3 (1983): 91-142
103 Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery,” 100
104 Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery,” 100.
hundred African slaves per year to the colony.\textsuperscript{105} This first attempt was short-lived, however, as a settler revolt in response to the power of the missionaries shifted the crown’s focus in the region and the Maranhão Company was unsuccessful.

Over the next seventy-five years, the crown maintained its interest in securing African slaves for the Amazon, hoping to emulate the economic success they had with plantations on the coast. To that end, emphasizing the connections between African slaves and the success of sugar plantations, the crown required that all African slaves work to produce sugar, regardless of location.\textsuperscript{106} This directive failed to acknowledge the challenges inherent in turning thick Amazonian jungle into cane fields. As such, if left up to market forces, settlers would persist in their demand and preference for Indian slaves over their African counterparts. A Portuguese governor stationed in the Amazon several generations before Furtado summarized the preference as such:

Native slaves are much different in worth from those who come from Guine and Angola...[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, because as soon as they become acquainted with Portuguese ways, they waste much time and they never do anything more than domestic service.\textsuperscript{107}

In addition to being less effective for the ‘typical’ work required of slaves in the Amazon, Africans were much more expensive. In the first half of the eighteenth century, as various efforts were supported by the crown’s representatives to find ways to bring Africans into

\textsuperscript{105} Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery,” 101.
\textsuperscript{107} Quoted in Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery,” 103-104.
the Amazon, black slaves remained four to ten times as expensive to purchase and support as Indian slaves, which was certainly a significant deterrent for the settlers. Thus, interest in African slavery vacillated along with the shifts in power and favor with the crown between the settlers and the religious orders.

Consequently, up until the mid-eighteenth century, African slaves were a minimal presence in the Amazon, with no more than a few thousand imported to the region by 1750. Yet, considering the potential to not only alleviate the dependence on Indian slavery but to support the transition to a plantation based economy, the allure of a successful slave trade persisted. Furtado wrote to Pombal about the establishment of the General Company at the same time that he suggested the idea to Corte Real. In his correspondence with his brother, Furtado was much more direct, claiming that “of all the diverse ideas that have occurred to me that could help repair in part the destruction that has taken place in this captaincy, none seems better than to establish here a General Company that could introduce blacks” to the region. As he was undoubtedly aware of both the recent and more distant history of the attempts to bring African slaves to the Amazon, and considering he was initially opposed to the idea early in his tenure, it is interesting to see him frame it this way in 1754. Using similar logic to that of Antonio Vieira almost a century before, Furtado conflated the creation of a General Company for the importation of African slaves not only with the region’s economic revival, but also with the potential to alleviate demands on the Indians. “We must experiment with the price of the blacks,” wrote Furtado, “so that they (the settlers) do not miss the scandalous

108 Alden, “Indian vs. black slavery,” 112.
110 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Belém, January 24, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 460.
contraband of the Indians.” That Furtado now saw himself (and the state) as a protector of the Indians from both the settlers and the Jesuits was an interesting departure from the Amazon’s history; typically, the state had relied on the missionaries to protect the Indians from the greedy settlers, while also trying to keep those same settlers content and economically productive.

Despite the welcome distractions provided by planning the new aldeias and pitching the launch of the General Company, a meeting of the Junta de Missões in February 1754 reinvigorated Furtado in his campaign against the Jesuits. It was apparent to him that in the three years he had lived in Pará, little had changed as far as Jesuit attitudes towards Indian slavery. “In the longer letter I sent to you back in November of 1752,” wrote Furtado to Pombal, “I shared with you how the Fathers of the Society were absolutely opposed to liberty. Now I must tell you that this fact persists as a general scandal.” In addition to his opinion as to their persistent abuses and their role played in sustaining Indian slavery, Furtado lamented the overall magnitude of continued Jesuit power. He was emphatic that the sources of their power were the aldeias they administered and the extensive property they possessed. He wrote to his brother, “The Regulars (are) the most powerful enemy of the state…who draw the largest part of their strength from their rural properties and from the great number of slaves that they keep there.” That the Jesuits were now enemies of the state in Furtado’s mind speaks to the extent to which the conflict had escalated. Furtado, in a moment revealing of both his

111 Furtado to Pombal, January 24, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 461.
112 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Belém, February 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 496.
113 Furtado to Pombal, February 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 498.
114 Furtado to Pombal, February 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 499.
close relationship with Pombal as well as the strength of his personality, closed this letter with an emphatic—and somewhat radical—call to action:¹¹⁵

Finally, my brother, I must not omit to tell Your Excellency, because I am a faithful vassal of His Majesty, and by the grace of God I only care to serve our august love with zeal, fidelity and honor: does His Majesty want to restore this state, or leave it in the same ruin and confusion it is currently in? If he wants to leave it in the same state of decadence I don’t have anything more to say; if he wants to restore and augment it, I am telling Your Excellency clearly and resolutely that it is impossible to achieve this very important end without taking away all of the property the Regulars possess, together with all of the aldeias they administer, leaving them only a sufficient living stipend.¹¹⁶

History has rendered this a pivotal message. It is important to remember the extent to which Furtado’s concerns with the relationship between the missionaries and the Indians, which were fresh on his mind thanks to the recent meeting of the Junta de Missões, influenced this decision. The power of the Jesuits, Indian slavery, and the Amazon’s economic stagnation were absolutely interconnected in the mind of the governor, and Furtado felt that the time had come to take significant action.

Over the next several months, Furtado wrote additional letters to clarify his recommendations for the course of action he proposed to Pombal in February of 1754. If anything, he grew more confident in the necessity of his idea, as his sense of frustration with the religious orders continued to build. He did qualify his recommendation somewhat, emphasizing to Pombal that he was not advocating for a sudden or violent

¹¹⁵ The editor’s note in the letter mentions that by his reading of Furtado’s correspondence, the suggestion was certainly radical. Furtado to Pombal, February 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 503.
¹¹⁶ Furtado to Pombal, February 18, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 503.
removal of Jesuit power. At one point, he even apologized to his brother for bringing the missionaries up yet again, acknowledging the redundant nature of his claims but emphasizing the duty he felt to continue to share such important information as it came up. Indeed, as 1754—Furtado’s third full year as governor—came to a close, it is easy to imagine him lamenting the fact that he had yet to be recalled to Portugal, as he had requested of his brother early in his tenure. Indeed, this perhaps contributed to the frustration he felt with the Jesuits, and encouraged his insistence on following the decisive course of action he had proposed. Yet there was no end to his tenure in sight; rather, while Pombal considered his recommendations in Portugal, the governor in 1754 was preparing to embark on yet another journey by boat, deep into the heart of the Amazon.

117 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Belém, March 8, 1754, *Amazônia na era Pombalina*, 528.
Chapter 3: Journey Upriver

Central to Furtado’s original directive as Governor of Pará was his responsibility for securing the border with Spain along Brazil’s interior. Three years into his tenure, the time had come for the governor to travel upriver into the heart of the Amazon jungle in order to negotiate with Spanish officials the boundary’s actual demarcation and ensure that it was legitimately established. Along the way, Furtado had the opportunity to visit various aldeias and other outposts, and in the process gained a more realistic and personal understanding of the colony’s day-to-day function. The trip, as we will see, tested his health as well as his patience, and came to have a significant influence on his opinion of the Indians and his thinking about their potential assimilation. Consequently, the trip upriver would inform both the design and implementation of the Directorate.

In the months preceding his departure, Furtado appeared almost obsessively preoccupied with the trip’s logistical arrangements and ensuring his own comfort deep in the Amazon. His most pressing concerns were the canoes that would carry his entourage upriver, having sufficient numbers of Indians to staff the trip, and securing and maintaining the correct amount of “farinha” [flour] to keep the group fed and healthy along the way. Originally, Furtado intended to buy the canoes from the missions and various settlers, however his trip was delayed when his suppliers failed to deliver and he realized he would have to order the canoes to be made for him.119 From the very beginning of his communications about the trip, Furtado complained about what he viewed as the Indians’ fickle nature. In Furtado’s understanding of the situation, the

119 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Belém, June 14, 1754, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 554.
Indians he was paying to accompany the expedition were deserting only to end up working for the missionaries, who incidentally were using them to make the very canoes he had to buy. “These desertions are made even more scandalous,” he wrote Pombal, “when these same deserters are employed, soon after arriving in their villages, in the service of the missionaries, making canoes to be sold.”

Predictably, Furtado found reason to blame the missionaries, believing them to be “opposed to the expedition,” and willing to do “anything possible for it to not have effect.” Significantly, Furtado never provided a political or religious explanation for the missionaries’ opposition to his trip upriver, believing that their resistance was personal rather than motivated by any sort of political objective.

The desertions came to be such a problem, even before the trip had even begun, that Furtado was forced to call an extraordinary meeting of the Junta de Missões in August 1754. The meeting’s minutes indicate that those representatives of the Religious Orders present were reminded that in previous meetings of the Junta, and in follow up letters circulated to the different missions, Furtado had requested that “each of the aldeias...make their Indians grow and fabricate all of the provisions that would help as many people as possible in the demarcation of the Royal Dominion of His Majesty.”

Yet, in Furtado’s view, rather than supporting the expedition to establish the boundary with Spain, the missionaries were undermining it. Indeed, as they persisted, Furtado

120 Furtado to Pombal, June 14, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 555.
121 Furtado to Pombal, June 14, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 555.
122 While the minutes for this meeting do not appear in the transcription of Paul Wojtalewicz, Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça claims to have extracted a copy from the book “Limites e Demarcações na Amazônia Brasileira” by Artur Cesar Ferreira. Mendonça, Amazonia na era pombalina 575.
123 “Termo de Junta Extraordinária,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 574.
argued that Indian desertions were causing the entire trip to be delayed. Towards the end of August, Indians continued to desert in droves, with over 200 Indians assigned to different tasks “fleeing to find their aldeias, which of course received them very well.”

“Continuing in this way,” wrote Furtado, “it is not possible that I leave this city, nor execute the important orders that His Majesty put me in charge of.” Furtado was so frustrated with the delay that he wrote a very dramatic, apologetic letter to Pombal, and insisted he was doing all he could to get the trip underway. Not until October 1754, several months after the initial departure date, were the governor and his entourage finally ready to head upriver.

The day of their departure from Belém began with a mass at the Church of Our Lady of Merces, led by Bishop Miguel de Bulhões, Furtado’s political ally who he appointed to oversee affairs in Belém while he was away. A simple diary kept by J.A.P. Silva, one of Furtado’s aides, tracked the entourage’s daily movements throughout the journey, though it is sparsely detailed and reads more like a log book than a journal. Twenty-three canoes gathered at the mouth of Amazon, with one in particular standing out in size and splendor. Based on its description in the diary, Furtado’s personal canoe sounds more like a yacht than a hollowed out tree. It had “one large, spacious chamber filled with cushions…six stools, two stuffed chairs…one large table and a cabinet made of yellow wood, with a picture of the King above it. [The chamber] had four windows on each side and two windows on the top panel…in the middle were the Royal Arms,

124 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Pe. Francisco de Toledo, Belém, August 20, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 575.
125 Furtado to Toledo, August 20, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 575.
everything very well gilded, and the rest of the canoe painted in red and blue."²¹²⁶

Considering this extravagance, it is little surprise it took such a long time for the canoes to be built!

Accompanying the Governor’s canoe were twenty-six rowers, all dressed similarly in white shirts, blue pants and blue velvet hats. While the diary gives no indication, presumably these rowers were Indians conscripted into Furtado’s service.²¹²⁷

There was a second large canoe painted in a style similar to the Governor’s, which required sixteen rowers of its own dressed in the same ensemble. Additionally, the diary notes the presence of eleven smaller canoes responsible for transporting the astronomers and engineers accompanying the Governor, ten canoes that served as storage and transported the infantry, and five small fishing canoes that would ensure the travelers remained well fed for the duration of the journey. Altogether, Furtado traveled upriver with an entourage of twenty-eight canoes. The diary notes that a total of 1,025 people accompanied him on the trip, 511 of them Indians. A total of one hundred and sixty five Indians ended up deserting the group over the course of the three-month journey to their destination upriver.²¹²⁸

The journey upriver, along with Furtado’s extended stay in the interior, which lasted over two years, had a significant influence on the Governor’s perceptions of the aldeias, the Indians, and the future of the region. The initial three-month voyage upriver would follow a pattern of fairly consistent travel with stops at various aldeias and “engenhos,” or plantations, along the way. As the canoes were built with small sails, the

²¹²⁶ “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 615.
²¹²⁷ “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 615-616.
group’s movement depended significantly on the winds, the force and direction of which the diary consistently notes with great detail. The Bishop of Pará traveled with the governor for the first week, before returning to Belém to assume his responsibilities governing in Furtado’s stead. The two corresponded regularly while Furtado was away. The entourage initially set out for an aldeia called Santa Ana do Igarapé. Before returning to Belém, the Bishop delivered a mass for the group on October 5, and according to the diary gave communion to Furtado and all others who wished to receive it. The diary contains several similar entries documenting various ceremonial procedures, with Furtado always at the center of focus.

After the initial visit to Igarapé, the travel party made quick stops at two different engenhos, before arriving on October 10 at a second aldeia, called Guaricuru. According to the diary, Guaricuru presented the trip’s “first manifestation of the resistance or hostility of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.” While the group had expected the Guaricuru aldeia to be one of the more densely populated missions in the state, they instead found it almost completely deserted. The diary noted the presence of only one priest, a German named Schwartz, along with “three old Indians, a few kids, and few female Indians” who were apparently wives of some of the rowers powering the group upriver. Upon arrival and after hearing mass, Furtado took charge and ordered the collection of “farinha,” or flour, from the aldeia as well as the services of six additional Indians that were needed to ensure all canoes had the proper number of rowers. As the place was essentially empty, Furtado ordered his soldiers to search for Indians throughout

---

129 “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 616.
130 “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 618.
131 “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 618.
the dwellings and the surrounding woods, where they found a number of Indians hidden. The diary noted that those Indians “confessed that all the people had fled, under the instruction of the Priests.”132 A letter written by Furtado to the Bishop of Pará shortly after departing Guaricuru corroborated the scene depicted in the diary, and the governor expressed frustration that the missionaries or the Indians did not properly receive his entourage.133

After the disappointing visit to Guaricuru, the group made a short trip an hour and a half upriver to the Arucará aldeia, which they found similarly barren. Silva noted in the diary that Furtado requested an additional ten Indians be taken from this aldeia in case more deserted, an indication of his growing lack of trust in the Indians traveling with him.134 From Arucará, they stuck to their canoes for four days, and reached the main vein of the Amazon River. They followed this to Gurupá, a military fort at which they stopped for three days to rest and gather supplies. Upon his arrival, Furtado received a military salute and immediately attended mass. The diary noted that at Gurupá the governor allowed the officers and other members of the entourage to share a table with him during meals.135 It appears that Furtado did not share his table with the Indians, however, because when they returned to the river in search of their next stop, they found that an additional sixteen had fled.136 After their next stop, a little over three weeks into the trip, the group lost an additional thirty-six Indians, which at this point put them significantly short of rowers. Silva noted in the diary that all thirty-six of these most recent deserters

---

132 “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 618.
133 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Guaricuru, October 20, 1754. Amazônia na era pombalina, 633.
134 “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 618.
came from the Jesuit aldeias, as if to contribute additional evidence in the case against the missionaries.¹³⁷

The entire three-month journey upriver followed a very similar pattern to its first three weeks. The group stopped intermittently at aldeias, engenhos and military outposts, with each stop a combination of mass, meals, and an increasingly desperate search to recruit Indians to replace the most recently departed contingent. By November 17, about a month and a half into the trip, Furtado noted in a letter to the Bishop that one hundred and eighteen Indians had deserted him.¹³⁸ By the time they arrived at Mariúá, their destination in the interior, in early January of 1755, Furtado had lost one hundred and sixty five Indians. Furtado wrote to the Bishop from Mariúá upon his arrival that “my journey was longer than I wanted; we had many days of necessary failures, to get more farinha and to pick up fugitive Indians.”¹³⁹

Furtado’s letters back to the Bishop from Mariúá help fill in the narrative gaps of the journey as depicted by the Silva diary. In the Governor’s mind, the state of desertion in which they found the Guaricurú and Arucará aldeias was undoubtedly a “demonstration of rebellion” on the part of the missionaries, though once again he never provided a specific opinion as to their motives.¹⁴⁰ He expressed a similar sentiment in letters sent home to Pombal in Portugal at the end of the voyage. Conveniently, the trip upriver also provided Furtado the opportunity to reconsider the secular aldeia he had

¹³⁷ “Diário da Viagem,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 621.
¹³⁸ Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Pauxís, November 17, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 638.
¹³⁹ Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Mariúá, January 4, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 640.
¹⁴⁰ Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Mariúá, January 4, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 644.
established in 1753 under the former slave trader Francisco Portilho e Melo, previously discussed in Chapter 1. Apparently, Furtado’s hopes had been dashed by Portilho e Melo’s ineffective leadership, as the former slave-trader failed to establish an effective environment for Indian assimilation. The aldeia was sparsely populated, and Portilho e Melo himself was minimally present. While Furtado was unable to visit the village himself, he sent a group of soldiers to escort a new leader to replace Portilho e Melo, under the pretense that the slave-trader-turned-civil-servant was needed by Furtado elsewhere in the Amazon for a new project.¹⁴¹ José de Barros, Portilho e Melo’s replacement, was reminded that his role was to civilize the Indians above all else, with an emphasis on school, language, and true religion.¹⁴² It is easy to imagine the governor’s frustration at the potential failure of this project, which had been completely his idea.

The journey upriver provided Furtado with a first-hand account of life in the state he governed. He was formally exposed to the complex ecosystem that developed out of the relationship between Indians, settlers, missionaries, and the Amazon itself. Given his biases, Furtado simplified the problems he faced as symptomatic of Jesuit resistance and influence over the Indians. Yet, as historians of the colonial Amazon have shown, Furtado was in many ways witnessing how the Indians themselves dictated the pace and direction of life along the banks of the Amazon River and its tributaries. Of course, it is impossible to know what personally motivated each of the one hundred and sixty five Indians that deserted Furtado, as reasons for absenteeism surely varied. Similarly, the situation of the two empty aldeias at Guaricurú and Arucará, which Furtado had little

¹⁴¹ Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Gurupá, October 20, 1754, Amazônia na era pombalina, 632.
¹⁴² “Instrucão que levou o ajudante José de Barros, Para Governar os Índios da aldeia de Santa Ana do Macapá,” Gurupá, October 21, 1754, Amazonia na era pombalina, 636.
doubt was due to Jesuit insubordination, could have been caused by a variety of factors that had little to do with the Governor’s presence. Yet, missions in the Amazon were naturally unstable, with permeable boundaries. The Amazon’s environment, as well as the history of the mission system itself, resulted in aldeias lacking consistency and permanence in terms of location and population. In addition, the Indians themselves had significant control over a particular aldeia’s situation. Indeed, the relatively inexperienced missionaries relied on the Indians to help them choose sites for the missions, as they knew little about the geographic features that might contribute to a successful mission.

Just as the situations of many of the missions themselves lacked stability, each individual mission’s Indian population was equally inconsistent. The variability in population was both structural and seasonal, as the settlers and missionaries shared Indians through the repartição, a distribution of laborers that saw one half of a mission’s male population rented out to the settlers for half of every year. The Indians that remained at the aldeia were often in and out of the physical space as well, collecting food or participating in other tasks at the discretion of the missionaries. Indians confined to the aldeias also maintained a certain degree of autonomy, and capitalized on opportunities to leave the missions at their own discretion. Indeed, aldeia Indians had opportunities to

---

143 As Heather Roller put it, “like their counterparts in northern New Spain and the Chaco, Amazonian missions were fundamentally unstable places with porous boundaries.” Roller, *Amazonian Routes*, 19.

144 Roller points out that “in one sense, the instability was distinctly Amazonian, caused by changes in the fluvial landscape. As they do to this day, the region’s multitude of rivers constantly shifted course, floods swept away chunks of riverbank, swamps or stagnant backwaters expanded, and channels silted up…” Roller, *Amazonian Routes*, 19.


leave the missions to visit families, attend festivals or participate in personal economic activities. With all this in mind, the desertions are somewhat unremarkable, as the Indians assigned to row Furtado’s canoes were undoubtedly accustomed to a more transient existence, and were unconcerned with what made Furtado different from other Portuguese men they had interacted with. Similarly, there were a variety of reasons why the aldeias he visited might have seemed barren. Of course, there may have been some validity behind Furtado’s belief that the Jesuits were behind much of what he identified as insubordination. Yet it is equally likely that Furtado misinterpreted the Indians’ actions due to his own ignorance of the extent of the Indians’ autonomy and the broader patterns guiding their lives. Nevertheless, perception becomes reality, and the depiction of the situation he sent back to the Bishop in Belém do Pará and to Pombal in Lisbon continued to emphasize the significant influence of the missionaries, the insolence of the Indians, and thus the need for major reforms.

While Furtado was settling in to his new home in Mariuá, he received a letter from Pombal in March of 1755 that informed him of a series of actions that he and the King had taken as a result of a number of Furtado’s recommendations made throughout the previous two years. In more ways than one, this was a critical letter, as its content signified the beginning of an extensive set of changes that would be implemented throughout the Amazon over the coming years. Each reform was connected in some way or another to Furtado’s work in his first few years as Governor of Pará, and suggestions he had advocated to his brother and the King in letters home. Pombal was aware that his brother was stationed upriver away from the state capital in Belém, and as such urged

him to keep these new policies secret until he was back in the seat of his power and had completed the negotiations over the boundary demarcation with Spain.

It is no surprise that the reforms first addressed the status of the missionaries in the region. Pombal wrote, “The first of the matters consists of the despotism that the regulars hold…on the monopoly on the freedom of the Indians, the harvest of the land and of the internal and overseas trade of this state which the same regulars claim.”

From there, Pombal went on to list the names of three prominent missionaries, from three different aldeias, who he wanted to be removed from the state and from all of Brazil. In addition to their dismissal, Pombal briefly described a resolution by the King in which a living stipend was to be established for the missionaries. The stipend was established in direct response to recommendations made by Furtado in 1754 and, notably, also made years earlier by Paulo da Silva Nunes, whose legacy was discussed in Chapter One. Then, after several exhortations for Furtado to maintain the utmost secrecy until he returned to Pará, Pombal wrote, “His Majesty has decided to reduce all missions and property to civil settlements,” exactly as had been recommended by Furtado in February 1754. In other words, the aldeias and agricultural property held by the Jesuits and other religious orders were now to be owned by the state. Rather than autonomously running their aldeias and managing their own property, the religious orders were now essentially employees receiving a stipend for their role. This reform was intended to completely

---

149 The missionaries listed were Manuel Gonzaga, of Piauí; Teodoro da Cruz, of Caeté; and Antonio José e Roque Hunderpfundt, of rio da Madeira. Pombal to Furtado, March 14, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 659.
150 Pombal to Furtado, March 14, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 660.
151 Pombal to Furtado, March 14, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 660.
revoke the authority of the missionaries over the aldeias, and severely undermine their influence in the region.

In conjunction with these religious reforms, Pombal wrote about changes with regard to slavery in the Amazon. Referring to a series of letters dating back to Furtado’s arrival, Pombal emphasized his desire to see the more effective abolition of Indian slavery under a new ‘Law of Liberties’ that he intended to announce in coming months. In including this update on Indian slavery after a longer discussion of the status of the missionaries, it seems certain that the two matters were connected in Pombal’s mind, as if one would logically follow the other. Ironically, in the same letter, Pombal also expressed the King’s approval for a “resgate dos indios”—an expedition to collect Indian slaves—for Furtado’s expedition upriver, a reminder perhaps of the limited nature of change, or at least the motives behind it.\textsuperscript{152} Next on Pombal’s list of follow up items was an approval of the “Company for the introduction of blacks to this State,” which Furtado had persistently recommended to his brother in a series of letters in 1754.\textsuperscript{153} Although Pombal went into no further detail at this point, the nature of his letter made it clear that more information was forthcoming on each of the topics only cursorily addressed in this initial letter.

Indeed, two months later Pombal wrote a follow up letter to Furtado to elaborate on what he described as the “three major items of business: the establishment of the Company for commerce and the introduction of blacks to this State; the establishment of

\textsuperscript{152} Pombal to Furtado, March 14, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 660-661.
\textsuperscript{153} Pombal to Furtado, March 14, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 661.
the stipend for the Regulars; and the liberty of the Indians.”  

It is interesting to note that in this letter, Pombal credited the General Company as the “basis of the two other aforementioned items,” as well as the “solid foundation of the spiritual and temporal happiness of this state.” He next set forth over two pages detailed information describing his vision for the success of the General Company, and offering his opinion on who might most effectively manage it. He closed this message with only a few quick sentences on the other two ‘items of business.’ He noted, briefly, that the missionary stipends were to be announced at the same time “in which the light was to go out of the Company,” with the Company in this case meaning the Jesuits. Pombal followed with only a brief reference to the publication of the law for the “liberty of the Indians,” which, in concert with the other actions taken, “will so significantly alter the circumstances that these people would not be able to protest, seeing that today we have their best interests in mind.”  

Presumably, Pombal was referring to the settlers’ best interests with this hopeful declaration that they might finally be convinced to end their reliance on Indian slave labor. Pombal’s focus on the economic potential of the reforms is yet another important reminder of his priorities for the Amazon.

For his part, in his assessment of this same set of reforms in July 1755, Furtado remained hopeful that the reforms would directly benefit the Amazonian Indian. It is in this regard that, despite still being stationed upriver in Mariúá, Furtado probably already knew the contents of Pombal’s May correspondence as well as the alvará, or charter, passed in June, which codified the new “Law of Liberties” for the Indians. After

154 Letter from the Marquis of Pombal to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Lisbon, May 12, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 693.
155 Pombal to Furtado, May 12, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 693.
156 Pombal to Furtado, May 12, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 697.
acknowledging and sharing in Pombal’s excitement about the potential of the General Company and the benefits of African slaves, Furtado turned his focus to the “abolition of absolute government that the missionaries had here.” He continued, as we “assign them to living by a sustenance stipend, and put them absolutely on the terms that I described to you in my letter of February 18 of last year…[we can] civilize the Indians, so that with them we can make copious settlements of useful people, and give them the true path that they should follow to save themselves.”

At this point, it seems as if Furtado was still convinced that the Indians, given their freedom, would take advantage of the opportunity to populate the settlements and become contented, productive vassals of the King. As he put it to Pombal, “When the Indians who assist us in these rivers see how we do them justice, and that we treat them with honor, in their liberty they will turn with ease to look for our settlements to live in peace and comfort.”

A sense of hope in the potential of his recommendations seemed to have captured Furtado at this exciting moment of his tenure as governor. Significantly, his views on the matter would soon change.

In August came official word from Pombal about the “Law of Liberties,” passed in Portugal on June 6, 1755. Pombal was fully aware that there was nothing new or groundbreaking in this law, rather it was simply a “renovation” of older laws whose “non-observance reduced Pará and Maranhão” to its current state of economic misery. Pombal provided no explicit assurance that he was confident this iteration of the law would succeed where others had failed for generations. Yet, by following up with a quick

157 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Mariuá, July 6 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 707. Parentheses indicate a change in tense – verb the same.
158 Furtado to Pombal, July 6, 1755, *Amazoônia na era pombalina*, 708.
159 The Marquies of Pombal to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Lisbon, August 4, 1755, *Amazônia na era pombalina*, 792.
mention of the General Company, as well as further instructions for establishing the
stipend for the missionaries, there was an implied confidence in the overall efficacy of
the packaged set of reforms. Pombal ended the letter to Furtado with two quick notes of
cautions for his brother to consider. First, he expressed trepidation that the Indians, once
granted their freedom, would desert their establishments—either in the missions or with
the settlers—and flee to the forests. Thus, it was essential that Furtado present the Indians
with the appropriate terms of the law, and assure them that they could soon own their
own property in order to support and even enrich themselves.160 Second, Pombal
reminded his brother that “the Indians have a propensity for laziness and a life of
inaction, and they lack the virtuous ambition that make men apply themselves to their
work on two grounds: to avoid living by the care of others, and to move upward in
society.”161 This message would resonate with the opinion of the Indians Furtado himself
had begun to develop while living away from Belém.

By the fall of 1755, Furtado had lived over a year away from his home in Belém.
Stationed well upriver in Mariuá, the governor spent much of the spring and summer
occupied with the boundary demarcation, or sick in bed thanks to the miserable
Amazonian climate.162 In November, he received the official documents containing the
Law of Liberties as well as the law diminishing the power of the missionaries. Furtado’s
response to these documents signaled a subtle yet important change to his perspectives on
abolition and the civilizing mission in general. In a letter written on November 12,
Furtado advised his brother as to what he felt would be the most effective implementation

160 Pombal to Furtado, August 4, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 794.
161 Pombal to Furtado, August 4, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 794.
162 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Mariuá, October 3,
1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 798.
of this package of laws. He advocated that the laws regulating the position of the missionaries be passed first, arguing that this would undermine their influence over the Indians and would help the King’s ensuing policies gain favor with the settlers. Then, he advised that the enactment in Pará of the Law of Liberties should be delayed by a few months or even a year, so that “the settlers can be trained in the new system, and at the same time to allow a few more shipments of blacks.” In addition to the delayed implementation of abolition, Furtado suggested a transition period for the Indians between slavery and freedom. He wrote, “it occurs to me that between absolute liberty and the vile state of slavery in which we find them, it would be convenient to have some time, perhaps around six years, during which the Indians are not allowed to leave the settlements in which we currently find them.”

As Furtado elaborated on his reasoning, it became clear that his time upriver, which kept him in close daily contact with the Indians serving him and his travel party, had influenced his opinion of their potential to immediately capitalize on their newfound freedom. His optimism had been tempered by his prejudices. He wrote, “I have infallible evidence that these Indians are not only barbaric and rustic, and, besides being lazy, do not love any convenience that will make them arrive at work.” Furtado was now apparently convinced that once granted their freedom, the Indians would simply leave their rural properties on which they lived to form their own establishments, or join a mocambo, which was a settlement of escaped slaves. Certainly, Furtado’s attitudes had at

163 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to the Marquis of Pombal, Mariuá, August 12, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 822-823.
164 Furtado to Pombal, August 12, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 823.
165 Furtado to Pombal, August 12, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 824.
166 Furtado to Pombal, August 12, 1755, Amazônia na era pombalina, 824.
this point changed from a somewhat positive perception of the Indians as docile and full of potential, to a much more cynical emphasis on their barbaric nature. There is a resonance here with the recent correspondence from Pombal, discussed above, which portrayed the Marquis’ negative outlook towards the natives. Yet, Furtado’s impressions were grounded in personal experience, and he remained hopeful that he could fashion a solution that would still lead to their effective assimilation. He was aware that transitioning the reliance of the settlers from Indian to African slaves was vital to their entire project, and believed that if the settlers were required to pay the Indians wages in the six year transition period, they would likely “take greater care to buy blacks.”\textsuperscript{167} Despite his newfound concerns over the Law of Liberties, assimilation of the Indians remained the goal, and Furtado hoped to maintain control of the situation.

In October 1756 Furtado, still stationed deep in the Amazon at Mariúá, met a native woman who had married a Portuguese settler and moved to Vila a Borba, a new secular settlement recently established by Furtado. The couple had a child, a young girl, and might initially have appeared to Furtado as a glowing example of his vision for reforms in the region. Yet, the native woman was unhappy in her marriage and concerned over her child’s safety, and had asked the Governor to take care of her daughter. Furtado obliged, and in telling the story to Pombal explained, “I accepted with good will her commission, and now am sending her [the child] to you to be presented to the Queen, so that Her Majesty can see a girl born in the bush,” and so that one girl out of thousands in the backlands might be considered blessed.\textsuperscript{168} This young girl, whose name was not given and the rest of whose story has likely been lost to history, serves as a potent symbol of

\textsuperscript{167} Furtado to Pombal, August 12, 1755, \textit{Amazônia na era pombalina}, 824.
\textsuperscript{168} Furtado to Pombal, Mariúá, October 17, 1756. \textit{Amazonia na era pombalina}, 1012.
Furtado’s tenure in the Amazon, encapsulating his desires to improve the lot of the natives; to see native women and Portuguese men marry; to see those unions begin to increase the region’s population and economic potential; and to gain favor in the eyes of his brother and the Royal family back in Portugal. That in order to help this young girl, Furtado decided to remove her from the environment he had spent five years reforming, is equally symbolic.

Furtado spent nearly two years stationed at Mariuá, waiting for the arrival of the Spanish delegation to discuss the demarcation of the boundary as dictated by the Treaty of Madrid. In fact, the Spanish delegation never showed up, adding to Furtado’s frustration and growing sense of stress. On several occasions throughout 1756 Furtado complained, in letters to his brother, to the Bishop of Pará, and to Tavares, the Governor of Mato Grosso, about his ill health and exhaustion caused by the heavy burdens of his work in the backlands. In five years in Brazil, Furtado had not adapted to, much less come to enjoy, the Amazon. He continued to rue the fickle nature of the Indians assigned to his entourage, who seemed almost to come and go as they pleased. In addition, the governor’s personal slave, a mulatto named Jacinto, deserted him at some point in 1756, leading Furtado to send several letters out to various contacts in the region asking for their help in returning the slave should they see him. Furtado’s correspondence gives

169 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to D. Anónio Rolim de Moura Tavares, Mariuá, November 20, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 176v-181r. For all references to letters from the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, I would like to thank Dr. Erik Myrup for providing access to his database of transcriptions.

170 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Mariuá, Bishop of Pará, June 1, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 56v-60v.

171 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Caetano José da Gama, Mariuá, June 16, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 85v-86r; Francisco Xavier de
no indication that the slave was ever returned. Despite the failed meeting with the Spanish, absentee slaves of all types, and the continued deterioration of the Governor’s health and good spirits, Furtado’s stint at Mariuá was significant for several reasons. First and foremost, his experience among the settlers and the Indians, visiting aldeias and observing his constituents in action, further shaped his thinking around the administrative structure of the state’s settlements. His observations of the Jesuit missions provided him with—in his mind at least—further proof of the need to secularize the administration of the aldeias, especially after a confrontation with the Father in charge of one of the missions. Finally, the delay gave him the opportunity to craft the policy that would become known as the Directorate, which he would implement shortly after his return to Belém, the capital of Pará.

Furtado’s understanding of the best way to ‘civilize’ the Indians, for their benefit as well as that of the Crown, solidified during his time upriver. Furtado continued to emphasize the importance of marriages between Portuguese soldiers and Indian women, despite his decision to step in and protect the little Indian girl he had sent to the queen, who was the product of one such marriage. In a letter to the Bishop of Pará, Furtado defended the practice on the grounds that not only would such unions help the state by increasing its population, it would also serve God by preventing Indian women from becoming prostitutes, and keeping young Portuguese soldiers from living lascivious lives.¹⁷² That Furtado believed that the missionaries in many of the aldeias continued to discourage these marriages was just one of the reasons the governor remained adamant

---

¹⁷² Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Miguel de Bulhões, Mariuá, July 24, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 120v-122r.
that loyal, secular leadership for the mission villages was absolutely essential. In a long letter to António Rolim de Moura Tavares, the Governor of Mato Grosso with whom Furtado had become close, Furtado elaborated on his vision for the potential of secular settlements through Brazil’s interior. It was essential, according to Furtado, that wise leaders such as Tavares and others continue to be appointed to positions big and small, so that the Crown’s Indian policies would be properly enforced and carried out. Indeed, if Jesuit leadership was to be replaced, the Indians might actually be civilized and the whole of the interior would become economically robust.\textsuperscript{173}

One Jesuit in particular drew the brunt of the Governor’s ire while he remained marooned at Mariuá waiting for the Spanish. Father Anselmo Echart presided over several aldeias throughout the interior. In the middle of 1756, Furtado received a report from one of his Lieutenants claiming that Echart had persisted in his refusal to follow the royal instruction to teach Portuguese to native children.\textsuperscript{174} In a follow up letter from Furtado to Echart, the Governor admitted that in order for the adult Indians to best understand the Christian doctrine, they should continue to be taught using the lingua geral. However, Furtado then elaborated at great length on the several instances in his term as Governor, dating back to a meeting of the Junta de Missões in 1751, in which the missionaries had been instructed to teach Indian children the Portuguese language, and avoid the use of the lingua geral entirely. He admonished Echart for “disobeying his

\textsuperscript{173} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to D. António Rolim de Moura Tavares, Mariuá, November 20, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 176v-177r.

\textsuperscript{174} Furtado acknowledged in his response the claim made by Lieutenant Diogo Antonio de Castro e Meneses, in a letter to Diogo António de Castro e Meneses, Mariuá, May 2, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 33r-37r.
sovereign,” though it is unclear whether Furtado meant himself, or the King.\textsuperscript{175} While Furtado hoped that his instructions would lead to some change in Echart’s seditious behavior, the episode confirmed for the Governor that there would be no progress in the Amazon, especially for the Indians, until the Jesuits were removed from power. Indeed, Furtado had by this time come to think of the Jesuits as something like a rogue or enemy nation. He wrote to Tavares on November 20, the day before leaving Mariuá, that all the Jesuits wanted was to gain power for themselves, and maintain the privileges they had secured for themselves at the expense of the Indians and the state of Portugal.\textsuperscript{176} As he finally gave up waiting for the Spanish delegation and made preparations to return to Belém, Furtado was absolutely convinced of the necessity of the reforms he was preparing to announce.

After a brief, month-long return trip downriver to Belém, the governor wasted little time in finally turning the laws issued by Pombal in Portugal in 1755 into an impressive document known as the Directorate. The document itself is over forty pages long, and organized into ninety-five distinct, specific articles enumerating a comprehensive set of social, economic and political reforms.\textsuperscript{177} Despite its origins in the Royal Decrees initially issued by Pombal in 1755, the Directorate is undoubtedly the culmination of Mendonça Furtado’s tenure as governor of Pará, as it reflects the evolution of his thinking and the extent of his belief in his own vision for creating lasting

\textsuperscript{175} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Anselmo Echart, Mariuá, May 19, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 41v-45r.
\textsuperscript{176} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to António Rolim de Moura Tavares, Mariuá, November 22, 1756, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 161, fols. 41v-45r.
\textsuperscript{177} “Directorio, que se deve observar nas povoacões dos indios do Pará, e Maranhão: em quanto Sua Magestade não mandar o contrario,” accessed via the Biblioteca Digital da Câmara dos Deputados, Centro de Documentação e Informação Coordenação de Biblioteca, \url{http://bd.camara.gov.br}. Accessed February 26, 2015.
change. The structure of the document itself reveals the mechanism by which Furtado believed change could be achieved, in that the civilizing, acculturation, of the Indians was an essential first step in ensuring their contribution to the economic and political elements of colonial society.\textsuperscript{178} Acknowledging the failure of the aldeia system under the administration of the religious missionaries, the Directorate established guidelines for the secularization and governance of the villages under civilian leadership. Although the missionaries were not forced to leave the colony, they were relieved of their leadership responsibilities and were largely ostracized by the new structure. Even the names of the aldeias were changed once the Directorate was implemented, with former names based on the língua geral being converted to Portuguese names, often borrowed from locations or people back in Europe. Symbolically, one village even took on the name “Pombal.”\textsuperscript{179}

The first fifteen articles of the Directorate emphasized the methods by which the civilization and Christianization of the Indians were to take place. In reality, there was nothing new or groundbreaking in this section; Furtado had already suggested many of the proscribed elements in his instructions for the secular villages he had tried to establish earlier in his tenure. The historical awareness present in so many of Furtado and Pombal’s letters, especially concerning the relationship between an imperial power and the people it conquered, carried over into this document. For example, Article 6, which outlined how the Portuguese language was to be the primary language for communication in the villages, asserted that “it was always an inalterable maxim practiced by all nations

\textsuperscript{178} For an in depth comparison of the Directorate in theory and in practice, see Colin Maclachlan, “Forced Acculturation in Portuguese America (1757-1799),” \textit{The Americas}, 28 (1972), 357-387.
\textsuperscript{179} It should be noted, however, that Carvalho e Melo would not receive the title of Marquis of Pombal until a royal decree issued in 1759.
that take new dominions by conquest, to soon introduce to the conquered peoples their own language, as it is indisputable that this is one of the most effective means to banish from the rustic peoples the barbarism of their ancient customs."180 Relying on similar justification, Articles 7 and 8 outline instructions for the establishment of public schools in each village, creating one for boys and one for girls whenever possible. The schools would be responsible for the religious instruction of both sexes. Boys would be taught reading, writing, and math in addition to farming, carpentry and other skills, while the girls would see literacy instruction supplemented by lessons in spinning, lace-making, sewing, and “all of the other proper ministries of that sex.”181 In addition, Indians who lacked them were to be given Portuguese last names whenever possible182 and all new dwellings in each settlement were to be built in the Portuguese manner, so that the Indians would be further encouraged to imitate whites.183 Lastly, intermarriage between Indian women and Portuguese men was encouraged and regulated by the Directorate, with special protection being granted to Indian women in order to protect them from abusive or husbands.184

To Furtado, the eventual success of the Directorate appeared to be based on the fact that the gradual adoption of Portuguese culture by the Indians would be followed naturally by a European-like enthusiasm for economic self-interest and the productivity that resulted. As such, the bulk of the Directorate focused on outlining how the various settlements would be governed from an economic perspective. Notably, the director of

180 “Directorate,” Article 6, 3.
181 “Directorate,” Articles 7 and 8, 4
183 “Directorate,” Article 12, 6.
each settlement was managed by an incentive-based system that saw his own salary
determined by a sixteen percent commission of the total value of goods produced or
collected by the people of his village.\textsuperscript{185} The Indians in each village were also expected to
operate under a system of incentives, with special privileges and rewards granted to those
who showed an ability to manage others and lead collecting expeditions to gather natural
resources for commerce.\textsuperscript{186} In addition, the Directorate stipulated that Indians were to be
encouraged to cultivate their own plot of land, in order to not only support themselves
and their families but to become accustomed to selling their surplus and growing their
personal wealth in that way.\textsuperscript{187}

Despite absolutely forbidding the continued enslavement of Indians, the
Directorate reflected Furtado’s desire to ensure that the Crown did not lose the support of
the region’s settlers. In addition to continuing to stress the importation of African slaves
through the General Company,\textsuperscript{188} the Directorate established regulations for the settlers’
continued use of Indian laborers on collecting expeditions. The law stipulated that the
villages would share the Indians with settlers on a six-month basis, as long as the settlers
agreed to pay the Indians’ proper wages up front. Notably, the regulations accounted for
the potential of Indians shirking their responsibilities or deserting the collecting
expeditions, as the wages were to be paid in full to the village director at the beginning of
the six-month term, and only delivered to the Indian workers upon the completion of the
expedition.\textsuperscript{189} This portion of the document is an incredibly insightful example of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{185} MacLachlan, “Forced Acculturation,” 366.
\textsuperscript{186} MacLachlan, “Forced Acculturation,” 366-367.
\textsuperscript{187} “Directorate,” Article 17, 8.
\textsuperscript{188} “Directorate,” Article 10, 5.
\textsuperscript{189} MacLachlan, “Forced Acculturation,” 368.
\end{flushright}
complex set of motives that drove the governor’s reforms, and also demonstrates how little Furtado had learned about the Indians in the six years he had spent in the Amazon.

The establishment of the Directorate was the pinnacle of Mendonça Furtado’s tenure as governor of Pará. It represented the culmination of his efforts to fulfill his assignment as established in the Royal Instructions outlining his position in 1751. After its establishment in February of 1757, Furtado remained in the region only long enough to see the initial stages of its implementation, before being recalled by his brother to fill a vacant position in Lisbon. Predictably, the Directorate was not received well by the missionaries. Despite the option they were given to remain in the converted missions and receive a stipend for their efforts to assist in the education of the Indians, most of the missionaries chose to leave their former aldeias in an act of resistance to the law. In a letter to D. António Rolim de Moura Tavares, the governor of the state of Mato Grosso, shortly after the announcement of the Directorate, Furtado appeared unconcerned with the negative reaction of the Jesuits and their resistance to secularization. He did, however, elaborate on his hopes for the economic benefits of secularization, especially as far as the Indians developing a love for material goods and wealth.

Furtado spent his final year as governor of Pará ensuring that the Directorate was properly implemented throughout the Amazon. In order to oversee the establishment of new settlements and to deal with various disorders caused by the transition to secular administration, Furtado took another long trip upriver, stationing himself at a village on the Rio Negro called Barcelos. While at Barcelos, Furtado maintained communication

190 Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to D. António Rolim de Moura Tavares, Pará, March 9, 1757, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 162, fols. 5r-7r.
191 Furtado to Tavares, March 9, 1757, Pará, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 162, fols. 5r-7r.
with other Portuguese administrators, who occasionally expressed frustration with the Indians and their apparent resistance to the civilizing measures proscribed by the Directorate. Furtado, however, remained confident that with patience and sustained commitment to the Directorate’s principles, the Indians would eventually be civilized.\textsuperscript{192} He continued to insist that the Indians remained the key to unlocking the Amazon’s economic potential, and that once they understood for themselves the benefits of producing and consuming goods, the entire region would benefit.\textsuperscript{193} As such, he encouraged village directors to treat the Indians well, so that the Indians might view them as teachers rather than enemies, and to act as good examples to the Indians by raising their own chickens and ducks.\textsuperscript{194} To the end, Furtado remained convinced that the Jesuits were undermining him at every turn. He complained to Tavares, the governor of Mato Grosso, that upon secularization, before departing their aldeias the Jesuits had persuaded the Indians that the Portuguese were coming to enslave them.\textsuperscript{195} Indeed, after secularization of the missions and up until the time of Furtado’s departure, conflict continued between the governor and the Jesuit missionaries, contributing to their removal from the Amazon’s interior in 1757 and their eviction from the rest of the empire two years later.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{192} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Teotonio da Silva de Gusmao, Barcelos, May 20, 1758, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Coleção PBA 162, fols. 163r-174v.
\textsuperscript{193} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to D. António Rolim de Moura Tavares, Barcelos, May 24, 1758, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 162, fols. 3r-7v.
\textsuperscript{194} Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Jose Garcia Galvao, Barcelos, September 12, 1758, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, PBA 163, fols. 112v-113v.
\textsuperscript{195} Furtado to Tavares, Barcelos, May 24, 1758, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, PBA 162, fols. 3r-7v.
\textsuperscript{196} For a detailed account of the final two years of the Jesuit presence in the Amazon once secularization was announced, see Alden, “Economic Aspects of the Expulsion of the Jesuits,” 47-50.
By February 1759, Furtado had returned once again to Belém where he was informed that he would soon be aboard a ship bound for Lisbon, his tenure as governor of Grão Pará and Maranhão complete. Pombal had commissioned him for a new position in Lisbon, where he would work alongside his brother to help oversee Portugal’s empire.¹⁹⁷

Two months later, in May of 1759 he was already back in Lisbon, far away from the heat and discomfort of the Amazon, never to return. Over the next several years Furtado remained in contact with Portuguese America in a professional capacity as part of his new role in the department of state, communicating with governors in various Brazilian colonies on behalf of his brother. However, the bulk of his work was done, and his legacy yet to be determined.

¹⁹⁷ “Alvará de Nomeação de Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado para Secretário de Estado, Adjunto ao Conde de Oeiras,” Amazônia na era pombalina, 1228.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

It is impossible to assess Mendonça Furtado’s legacy without stepping back to consider the impact of the Directorate itself, which officially lasted forty years until new reforms were erected in 1798. In order to attempt to understand the Directorate from a human perspective, it is worth briefly considering the stories of two Amazonian women that serve as symbolic bookends to Furtado’s time as governor. Their stories raise significant questions about the efficacy of the reforms he left behind.

Francisca was a Manao Indian woman born in a village along the Rio Negro sometime between 1700 and 1705. In 1718, she was taken as a slave by the captain of a cacao collecting expedition, who lacked the official authority to capture Indian slaves because he did not travel with a missionary. Francisca was taken—illegally—to Belém do Pará, where she would be traded to work as a servant for a Portuguese settler named Anna da Fonte, as payment for the provisions Fonte had provided to the collecting expedition. Over the course of the next twenty years with de Fonte, Francisca washed clothes; she survived a smallpox epidemic in 1724 and 1725 that likely killed many of her friends and acquaintances; she spoke a Manoan language as well as the Tapuian lingua geral used to communicate in the Amazon. She fell in love and pursued a relationship with a mestizo tailor in Belém named Angelico de Barros Gonçalves, and she built a strong network of friends and acquaintances in the city. Around the time of her fortieth birthday, in 1739, Francisca decided to petition the colonial authorities in Pará for her freedom, citing the illegal circumstances in which she had been captured. Because Anna de Fonte could not provide a legitimate certificate of enslavement, the chief-justice
of the colony ruled in favor of Francisca’s freedom. Fonte, however, appealed the decision to the Junta de Missões, which overturned the ruling because Francisca’s witnesses were unreliable. Francisca died a slave.  

About forty years after Francisca’s petition, in the year 1780, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado had come and gone, and the Directorate was now firmly established in Pará. In that year, the nineteen year-old daughter of an Indian woman and an African slave named Joanna Baptista sold herself into slavery for 80,000 reis. Such an action was as shocking to her contemporaries as it is to the modern-day reader. Yet when considered from the girl’s perspective, there is something sadly logical about the decision considering the quality of life she had to look forward to in Directorate-era Pará. As an orphan, Baptista lacked a strong family network and had no one to care for her, while as a slave, she could expect to be provided food and shelter, and a standard of living regulated by law. The 80,000 reis she made in the sale was a better deal than the 600 reis worth of cloth that the Directorate stipulated she would receive for working as a domestic servant in Belém. Indeed, despite banning slavery and attempting to more fully incorporate the Indians into the Amazonian economy, the Directorate developed into a rigid system of regulations that limited the options available to Indians.

Joanna Baptista’s decision to sell herself into slavery represented her desire to take control of her life, to grasp some security in a world that offered her very little.

When juxtaposed to Francisca’s efforts in pursuing her freedom in the same city forty years before her, Baptista’s actions offer a grim assessment of the success of the Directorate in assimilating Indians and including them in the Amazon’s society and economy. If he had been alive to hear about it, Baptista’s decision would surely have disappointed Mendonça Furtado. However, Furtado died in 1769, ten years after returning to Lisbon from Pará to take a position in the government of Dom José, thanks to the patronage of his brother, the Marquis of Pombal. He lived long enough to help oversee, from his position in his brother’s government, the Directorate’s early years, as he maintained communication with Portuguese governors stationed in Brazil.

From Joanna Baptista’s perspective, the Directorate was most certainly a failure, a good reminder of the grim prospects of the region’s non-white inhabitants in the colonial era. Yet, there are a variety of other, broader perspectives from which we might consider the historical legacy of the Directorate reforms: from their influence on indigenous Amazonians, to their role in the relationship between state and church in Portugal, to their impact on the economic development of Portuguese Amazonia. From the perspective of its intended purpose of formally incorporating the indigenous Amazonians into colonial the society and economy, the Directorate was almost undoubtedly a failure, thanks in large part to Furtado’s misguided understanding of the natural tendencies of both Indian laborers and Portuguese colonizers. In mandating the transition of the aldeias from religious to secular leadership, the Directorate required that a director, who was appointed by the governor, manage each new secular village. Furtado’s expectations for these village leaders were entirely unrealistic. According to Colin MacLachlan, in a study of the differences between the Directorate in theory and in practice, “as envisioned by
governor Furtado, the ideal director would be wise, firm but benevolent, and self-sacrificing. The Directorate unrealistically demanded a type of secular saint willing to sacrifice himself when in reality, the majority of settlers in Pará were desperate men locked in a struggle for survival and economic gain.200 Thus, the vast majority of the directors simply became tyrants preoccupied with their own economic gain, and treated the Indians accordingly.201 Indeed, despite purporting to ensure, once and for all, the absolute end of slavery for indigenous Amazonians, the Directorate certainly did not mean freedom for the Indians. Thanks in large part to the frustration Furtado developed with the Indians during his trip upriver to Mariuá, the governor ensured that mechanisms existed within the law that allowed the director and settlers leading collecting expeditions continued access to Indian labor. Under the Directorate, despite earning wages Indian laborers remained bound to the needs of the settlers and the Crown’s representatives, though they were no longer bound to the needs of the missionaries.

Since MacLachlan published his study of the Directorate in 1972, a shift has occurred in how historians portray the impact of the Directorate on the Amazonian Indians themselves. MacLachlan concluded his study with the assertion that, more than any other factor—even disease and economic exploitation—the forced acculturation outlined by the Directorate was most responsible for “the decline of the forest Indian.”202 More recently, historians have pushed back on the narrative of a naïve Indian culture

201 As MacLachlan put it, “the low quality of the directors perverted and corrupted the entire tutorial practice of the Directorate. They became tyrants who operated as the chief administrative and judicial officers without regard to Indian municipal officials.” MacLachlan, “The Indian Directorate,” 370.
helplessly destroyed by European imperialism, choosing instead to emphasize the ways in which the Indians themselves influenced the evolution of society and economy in Pará under the Directorate.\footnote{Barbara Summer, “Negotiated Settlements: Native Amazonians and Portuguese Policy in Pará, Brazil, 1758-1798,” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2000) and Heather Roller, \textit{Amazonian Routes: Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Collecting Expeditions in Northern Brazil}, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).} Their perspective makes clear that Furtado grossly misunderstood the Indians in his desire to see them adopt Portuguese ways. As Heather Roller emphasizes in her recent work on the region, despite secularization, Amazonian Indians “found ways to continue living in their homes and to follow long-established patterns of mobility.”\footnote{Roller, \textit{Amazonian Routes}, 55.} Indeed, just as Joanna Baptista ironically asserted control of her own life by selling herself into slavery, Indians throughout Directorate Pará found ways to influence the region’s development in spite of colonial reformers like Furtado.

With regard to reducing the power and influence of the Jesuits in the Amazon, Furtado and Pombal were undeniably successful. With his initial instructions, in 1751, to assess their position in the colony, Furtado methodically built a case against the Jesuits that portrayed a corrupt, greedy Order actively conspiring against the progress of the state. Furtado’s advocacy, in turn, provided Pombal with the information he needed to justifiably remove their authority over their aldeias, “sparking” their expulsion from the Portuguese Empire in 1759.\footnote{Kenneth Maxwell, “The Spark: Pombal, the Amazon, and the Jesuits,” \textit{Portuguese Studies} 17 (2001), 168-183.} As such, Furtado’s tenure as governor of Pará is an important example of how the eventual removal of the Jesuits throughout the Iberian world unfolded in a manner dictated by actions and events occurring at the edge of empire, and not at its core. What impact the departure of the Jesuits had on the Indians
themselves, their long-time ‘protectors’ from the exploitative desires of greedy settlers, is impossible to say. Certainly, the Jesuits had their own agenda, and out of necessity had been forced to accommodate and even participate in the complex slave trade that had developed in the Amazon since the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.

While the historians of earlier generations favored the conclusion that the removal of the Jesuits from the Amazon only sped up the “destruction” of native society, as noted above, Roller and Barbara Sommer have come to a different conclusion, emphasizing the agency and adaptability of the Indians regardless of who governed the aldeias.

Ultimately, Furtado and Pombal’s project in the Amazon that resulted in the Directorate was an economic endeavor, requiring a brief consideration of its economic legacy. To Pombal, increasing the population of the region was central to the Amazon’s economic development, which is why he and Furtado were so concerned with assimilating the Indians and importing greater numbers of African slaves. Significantly, the region’s population did increase, with the total number of inhabitants in Pará and Maranhão growing from about 50,000 in 1749 to 160,000 by 1800. However, the vast majority of that growth was due to the importation of African slaves, as about two-thirds of the population in 1800 was of African descent. As such, in the second half of the

---

206 John Hemming ends his vast study of the region with the removal of the Jesuits and the ensuing ‘destruction’ of the Indians. Hemming, Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians, 1500-1760 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). Similarly, Dauril Alden concluded that “whether the Indian was significantly better off under the tutelage of the fathers than the domination of the settlers depends upon the value system one holds and how one reads the evidence. For my own part I have no doubt that he was.” Alden, “Black Robes vs. White Settlers: The Struggle for ‘Freedom of the Indians’ in Colonial Brazil,” in Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian, edited by Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson, (University of Utah Press, 1969), 19-45.

eighteenth century, the economic development of the Amazon was a tale of two captaincies, with an African slave-based plantation economy catching hold in Maranhão, but essentially failing in Pará. Thus, while Maranhão developed into an economically viable colony, with thriving plantations producing rice and cotton for export, the economy in Pará remained dependent on cacao collection, to which Indian laborers were far better suited than African slaves. Accordingly, the economy of Pará remained relatively stunted compared to other regions in Brazil, further undermining any notion of the Directorate’s success.

Mendonça Furtado died in 1769, just before his seventieth birthday and a mere decade after his return from the Amazon. It is easy to wonder whether the toll of his eight years as governor of Pará had somehow shortened his life. Indeed, those eight years must have felt a lifetime to him, filled as they were with incessant conflict with the climate, the Jesuits, settlers, and an enigmatic Indian population that never embraced his reforms. It is similarly easy to believe that Furtado died frustrated with the limited success of the Directorate itself, which he had continued to help oversee from afar. For his part, Pombal would rule Portugal until 1777, when Dom José died and the Marquis’ many enemies forced him out of power. Pombal died five years after his fall from grace, in 1782. Upon his loss of power, Pombal’s critics and enemies began publicly airing their grievances, often in the form of poetry. One such poem, a sonnet, describes Pombal speaking to his two dead breathers, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado and Paulo de Carvalho (who also benefited from Pombal’s patronage), who are in hell. In a second sonnet, the brothers

respond to Pombal, telling him that they have made preparations for his arrival, and are eager to have him join them.\textsuperscript{209} In the minds of his contemporaries, Pombal’s vision of the Portuguese empire extended all the way to hell, and it was entirely appropriate that he sent his brother, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, to colonize it for him.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{209} “Papeis Vários,” [ca. 1777], Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, Secção dos Manuscritos, Coimbra, Portugal, Ms. 394, fols. 72v-73r. I want to thank Dr. Erik Myrup for providing me with this material.
\end{flushleft}
Bibliography

Archival Sources:

Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Colleccão Pombalina (PBA), codices 161-163.

Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


Alden, Dauril. “Indian vs. black slavery in the state of Maranhão during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Bibliotecha Americana 1.3 (1983): 91-142.


VITA

Lucas Onesti Richardson

**Place of Birth:**
Denver, Colorado.

**Educational Institutions Attended and Degrees Awarded:**
Dartmouth College (2003-2007), B.A. in Government
University of Kentucky (fall, 2013 – present), M.A. in History in progress.