

Spices in Portuguese Amazon region: vegetable retail and Atlantic trade in the end of the Spanish Monarchy

Alírio Cardoso^[1]

Abstract

In the first half of the 17th century, several proposals to recover the Portuguese economy were presented, especially after the end of the Iberian Union (1640). Around the same time, residents of the States of Maranhão and Pará proposed a solution: to explore local products similar to ancient Asian spices. The purpose of this study was to analyze the emergence of spices in the Portuguese Amazon, and the role of this region in the political and economic contexts of the end of the monarchy.

Keywords: spices; Amazon; 17th century.

Especiarias na Amazônia portuguesa: circulação vegetal e comércio atlântico no final da monarquia hispânica

Resumo

Na primeira metade do século XVII, surgem diversas propostas para recuperar a economia portuguesa, principalmente após o fim da União Ibérica (1640). Na mesma época, os moradores do Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará propõem uma solução: a exploração de certos produtos locais semelhantes às antigas especiarias asiáticas. O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar o fenômeno do surgimento das especiarias na Amazônia portuguesa e o papel da região no contexto político-econômico do fim da união monárquica.

Palavras-chave: especiarias; Amazônia; século XVII.

Espicias en la Amazonia Portuguesa: circulación vegetal y comercio atlántico al final de la monarquía hispánica

Resumen

En la primera mitad del siglo XVII, diversas propuestas para recuperar la economía portuguesa surgieron, especialmente después del final de la Unión Ibérica (en 1640). En el mismo periodo, los residentes del Estado de Maranhão y Grão-Pará, en Brasil, propusieron una solución: la exploración de algunos productos locales similares a las antiguas especias asiáticas. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar el fenómeno del surgimiento de especias en la Amazonia portuguesa, y el rol de la región en el contexto político-económico del final de la unión monárquica.

Palabras clave: especias; Amazonia; siglo XVII.

Les épices dans la l'Amazonie portugaise: circulation végétale et le commerce atlantique à la fin de la monarchie hispanique

Résumé

Dans la deuxième moitié du XVIIe siècle, de nombreuses propositions ont été faites pour récupérer l'économie portugaise, surtout depuis la fin de l'Union Ibérique (1640). A la même période, les habitants de Maranhão et Grão-Pará ont proposé une solution : exploiter de certains produits locaux semblables aux épices asiatiques. L'objectif de ce travail a été analyser le phénomène de l'apparition des épices dan l'Amazonie portugaise, et le rôle de la region dans le contexte politique et économique à la fin de l'Union monarchique.

Mots-clés: épices; Amazonie; XVIIe siècle.

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[1] Department of History, Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA) - São Luís (MA) - Brazil. E-mail: aliriosj@yahoo.com.br

Acclimatization and vegetable diaspora

Between the last years of union with Castilia (1580–1640) and the early days of Brigantine Restoration, several proposals to recover the economy of the Kingdom of Portugal were raised.¹ In this troubled political context, full of threats of all kinds, the residents of Maranhão and Grão-Pará participated in the Portuguese collective efforts to discover new means of increasing the Atlantic trade.² The aim of this paper was to discuss the role of certain natural products, the spices, responsible for the rebirth of wealth dreams among the inhabitants of the northern Portuguese America. The history of these genres, which gained international fame in course of the 18th century, needs further systematic studies, especially on the value assigned to them in the context of economic experiments of the first half of the 17th century.³

In the state of Maranhão, the emerging trade of local products is also presented as an alternative to the growing crisis of the sugar market. It is known that, in Portuguese America, the international crisis of the mid-17th century manifested as systematic global loss sugar value, and then tobacco, a problem that was aggravated by the emergence of a northern competitor: the Caribbean.⁴ However, our intention is not to summarize the economic situation of the region in the 17th century. This broader view can be found in several other papers.⁵

¹About the Portuguese integration to the Spanish monarchy, with emphasis on the role of the Portuguese America, see: Rafael Valladares, "El Brasil y las Indias españolas durante la sublevación de Portugal (1640–1668)", *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, n. 4, 1993, p. 151-172. Guida Marques, *L'Invention du Brésil entre deux monarchies*. Gouvernement et pratiques politiques de l'Amérique portugaise dans l'union ibérique (1580–1640), PhD Thesis, *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, Paris, 2009. Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Portugal na Monarquia Hispânica (1580-1640)*, Lisboa, Livros Horizontes, 2001. For studies on the impact of the monarchy over the Portuguese political culture: Pedro Cardim, "O governo e a administração do Brasil sob os Habsburgo e os primeiros Bragança", *Hispania*, vol. LXIV, n. 216, 2004, p. 117-156. José Carlos Vilardaga, "São Paulo na órbita do império dos Felipes: conexões castelhanas de uma vila da América portuguesa durante a União Ibérica (1580-1640)", PhD Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2010. For other aspects: Diogo Ramada Curto, *Cultura Política no tempo dos Filipes (1580-1640)*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 2011. Fernando Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal no Tempo dos Filipes*. Política, Cultura, Representações (1580-1668), Lisboa, Edições Cosmos, 2000. Santiago Martínez Hernández (ed.), *Governo, política e representações do poder no Portugal Habsburgo e nos seus territórios ultramarinos (1581-1640)*, Lisboa, CHAM; Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Universidade dos Açores, 2011, pp. 69-96. João Fragoso; Maria de Fátima Silva Gouvêa, "Monarquia pluricontinental e repúblicas: algumas reflexões sobre a América lusa nos séculos XVI-XVIII", *Tempo*, vol. 14, n. 27, 2009, p. 36-50. Rodrigo Bentes Monteiro, *O rei no espelho: a monarquia portuguesa e a colonização da América, 1640-1720*, São Paulo, FAPESP; HUCITEC; Instituto Camões, 2002.

²José Luís Cardoso, "O pensamento económico na Época da Restauração", *Penélope. Fazer e desfazer a História*, n. 9-10, 1993, p. 135-149.

³For an outline of the problem of drugs similar to Asian products in the 17th century: Rafael Chambouleyron, "As especiarias da Amazônia", *BR História*, vol. 1, 2007, p. 70-74. Alírio Cardoso, "Uma nova Ásia no Atlântico? Projetos de integração do Maranhão ao Império Luso-Espanhol (1609-1656)", In: CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE AMERICANISTAS, 52, 2009, Sevilla. *Actas...* Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2009. vol. 1, p. 561-575. Arthur César Ferreira Reis, *A Amazônia que os Portugueses revelaram*, Belém, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura, 1994, p. 45-46.

⁴Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, "As frotas do açúcar e as frotas do ouro, 1670-1770", In: *Idem, Mito e mercadoria, utopia e prática de navegar: séculos XIII-XVIII*, Lisboa, DIFEL, 1990, p. 477-495.

⁵Beyond the references cited in this paper, the reader can find general information about the Amazonian economy in the 17th and 18th centuries in the following publications: António Carreira, *A Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*, São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional; Brasília, INL, 1988; Jerônimo de Viveiros, *História do comércio do Maranhão (1612-1895)*, vol. I, São Luís, Associação Comercial do Maranhão, 1954. Sue Gross, *The economic life of the Estado do Maranhão e Grão Pará: 1686-1751*, PhD thesis, Tulane University, New Orleans, 1969. Arthur César Ferreira Reis, *Aspectos económicos da dominação lusitana na Amazônia*, Rio de Janeiro, Serviço de Documentação da SPVEA, 1960.

We do not intend to discuss the case of the Portugal-Maranhão cocoa either, a subject that has already been addressed in more comprehensive studies.⁶ Our interests are the products presented, mainly between the governments of Filipe IV and John IV, as equivalent to substitutes or imitations of famous Asian genres: cloves, cinnamon, pepper, and nutmeg. This phenomenon was not limited to the 17th-century Amazon and must be compared with previous and contemporary processes.

In the 17th century, as the Dutch took over major producing areas of “drugs” in Asia, the possible Portuguese-American substitutes for famous spices of the East started being more appreciated in the Councils of Portuguese bureaucracy.⁷ The space of Batavo over this trade was already unquestionable. In fact, the Dutch *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (the East India Company) established an aggressive price and monopoly control policy on three major products of the Asian market: pepper, cloves, and nutmeg. The Dutch would regulate the supply from known production centers: Ceylon, the Moluccas, Banda Islands, and Malabar. The intention of this type of control was very clear: to eliminate European competition, especially the Spanish-Portuguese.⁸ Thus, one cannot overlook the importance of this trade. It is estimated that in the first half of the 17th century, despite the growing interest in textile products, spices accounted for over 75% of Dutch spending in Asia.⁹

The debate on the reproduction of Asian drugs in America is contemporary with discussions on how to fix the Portuguese economy after its political independence. After December 1st, 1640, different proposals for the regeneration of the kingdom finances were made, such as the inclusion of new Christian capital, increase in population, or promotion of manufacturing. Scholars such as Antonio Vieira, Severim Manuel de Faria, and Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo, some of them quite committed to the policies of John IV, admitted that the restructuring of the Portuguese economy should necessarily lead to a reduction in external financial dependence and to the strengthening of business activities.¹⁰

⁶Dauril Alden, “The significance of cacao production in the Amazon region during the late colonial period: an essay in comparative economic history”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 120, n. 2, 1976, p. 103-135. *Idem*, *O significado da produção de cacau na região amazônica*, Belém, Editora da UFPA/NAEA, 1974. Rafael Chambouleyron, *Portuguese colonization of Amazon region: 1640-1706*, PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2005, p. 184-200.

⁷Charles Boxer, *A Índia portuguesa em meados do século XVII*, Lisboa, Edições 70, [s.d.], p. 67.

⁸Om Prakash, “Restrictive trading regimes: VOC and the Asian Spice Trade in the Seventeenth Century”, *In: Michael N. Pearson (ed.), Spices in the Indian Ocean World*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1996, p. 317-336. Ernst van Veen, “Les interactions luso-néerlandaises en Europe et en Asie (1580-1663)”, *In: Francisco Bethencourt; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro (eds.), L'Empire portugais face aux autres Empires. XVI^e-XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose; Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2007, p. 41-68.

⁹Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Mito e mercadoria, utopia e prática de navegar: séculos XIII-XVIII*, Lisboa, DIFEL, 1990, p. 452.

¹⁰Manuel Severim de Faria (1583-1655), an important Portuguese scholar, was the canon and precentor of Sé de Évora. Nephew of Baltasar de Faria Severim, he wrote about many aspects of the Portuguese economy, politics and society of his time, including *Discursos Vários Politicos* (1624). Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo (1618-1680), a magistrate from Coimbra University, played an important role in Portuguese diplomacy after the Restoration. He is also known for his writings about international politics and the Portuguese economic development. For more information about the economic ideology of that time, see: José Luís Cardoso, “O pensamento económico na Época da Restauração”, *Penélope. Fazer e desfazer a História*, n. 9-10, 1993, p. 135-149.

Regarding the state of Maranhão, many of these proposals stated that a possible way for them to enter markets would be the systematic exploitation of the wealth of their plant kingdom, with acclimatization of species from different parts of the world due to the supposed fertility of the Amazonian soil.

In fact, interest in the Portuguese-Maranhão “drugs” is part of a much bigger process of shifting expectations of wealth from precious metals to vegetables. The 17th century was a period of renewal of the “commercial diaspora”, name given by Russell-Wood to trade and movement of genres of animal and plant origin, between the known parts of the world.¹¹ This new stage has resulted above all in the acclimatization of known Asian products into new cultivation spots, mainly on American soil. This process is not new, having begun on a large scale between the 15th and 16th centuries, with Portuguese experiments on islands (Madeira, Cape Verde, and Azores).¹² However, it is worth remembering that even certain Asian “drugs” would only go from the native forests where they were harvested to the system of farming and acclimatization in different parts of South and South-east Asia due to a persistent European demand.¹³

In the state of Maranhão, the emerging trade of local products is also presented as an alternative to the growing crisis of the sugar market

For many reasons, interest in the acclimatization of exotic plants in Portuguese-American soil gained strength along the 17th century. One of the most important factors was, as noted before, the rise of the Dutch competition in Asia.¹⁴ As to the State of Maranhão, Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo is one of the best known voices that at times speculated about the advantages of “transplantation” of Asian genres in the region. In a speech published in 1675, Macedo openly supports the cultivation of cinnamon and clove as a defense strategy against the Dutch, because, “If we produce them [the spices] in Maranhão, the Portuguese will be able, at an easy navigation path, to sell them in Europe at a price the Dutch

¹¹Anthony John R. Russel-Wood, *Um mundo em movimento. Os Portugueses na África, Ásia e América (1415–1808)*, Lisboa, DIFEL, 1992, p. 227-276.

¹²For a general view, see: Anthony John R. Russell-Wood, “Padrões de colonização no Império Português, 1400–1800”, *In: Francisco Bethencourt; Diogo Ramada Curto (dirs.), A expansão marítima portuguesa, 1400–1800*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 2010, p. 171-206. Para o caso açoriano, ver: José Damião Rodrigues, *Histórias atlânticas. Os Açores na primeira modernidade*, Ponta Delgada, CHAM; Universidade Nova de Lisboa; Universidade dos Açores, 2012.

¹³John Keay, *The spice route. A history*, Berkeley; Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2006, p. 19.

¹⁴Anthony John R. Russel-Wood, *op cit.*, p. 323. Mendes Ferrão, “Principais especiarias tropicais”, *In: Inácio Guerreiro (ed.), A epopéia das especiarias*, Lisboa, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1999, p. 44-67.

cannot pay bringing them from India.”¹⁵ However, according to Macedo, the main reason for Maranhão being able to grow Asian drugs is its location on the globe, where the climate conditions, involving heat and humidity, are similar to those in the faraway Asia.¹⁶

These products, due to their variety and according to the use that each place attributed to them, had several properties: culinary, medicinal, pharmacological, aromatic, or simply aesthetic. It was also believed that some spices had “humoral properties”, such as the black pepper, used for treating asthma problems, or cinnamon and nutmeg, used to treat digestive and liver problems, or even to relieve flatulence.¹⁷ According to local habits, a single “drug” could have different functions.¹⁸ For example, in the *Tratado de las drogas y medicinas de las Indias Orientales* (1578), the Portuguese physician-surgeon Cristóbal Acosta (Da Costa), a resident of Burgos, stated that clove could be used not only for headaches after being crushed and applied directly on the patient’s forehead, but also as a remedy for the stomach, eyes, heart, and many other organs: “women chew it often, for good breath”.¹⁹ In New Spain, for example, there was an increase in the exports of products used for the treatment of syphilis to Europe, especially in the late 17th century, due to the renewed fame of genres such as guayacán, tuzpatli, and cocolmea root as related to the illness.²⁰ However, in *Vocabulário Português e Latino*, by Raphael Bluteau, the term “spice” means only “aromatic drugs” as related to Asian genera.²¹ In the Portuguese America, the term “drug” could also be applied to sugar and pau brasil (glowing wood), as well as to aromatic and medicinal products of Indian origin such as copaiba.²²

Many American exotic products became famous with time, especially through the writings by missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries. Scholars who have dedicated themselves to inform the Europeans about the Portuguese-American nature sought ranking formulas according to the properties of each species. In his work *Do clima e terra do Brasil* (1584), Fernão Cardim priest divides the rich vegetation of the region roughly into five categories: 1) fruit

¹⁵Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), “Discurso sobre a transplantação das Plantas de especiarias da Azia p.^a a América, ou nossos Brazis e conveniencias que disto poderá rezultar a Portugal com diminuição do commercio Holandeses// escrito// por Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo”, Paris, 15 de março de 1675, Manuscritos do Brasil, livro 39.

¹⁶*Ibidem*, fl. 4.

¹⁷Paul Freedman, *Lo que vino de Oriente*. Las especias y la imaginación medieval, València, Universitat de València, 2010, p. 81.

¹⁸For a systematic approach of stimulating “drugs” and pharmacological spices, see: Antonio Escohotado, *Historia general de las drogas*, 3. ed., Madrid, Editorial Espasa, 2000.

¹⁹Cristóbal Acosta, *Tratado de las drogas y medicinas de las Indias Orientales*. Edición Facsímil, León, Universidad de León; Colegio Oficial de Farmacéuticos de la Provincia de León, 1995 [1578], p. 33.

²⁰Consolación Martínez García, *Drogas importadas desde Nueva España (1689-1720)*. Estudio estadístico farmacoterapéutico, Sevilla, Universidad de Sevilla, 1991, p. 91-98.

²¹Raphael Bluteau, *Vocabulario portuguez & latino*: aulico, anatomico, architectonico ..., vol. 3, Coimbra, Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesu, 1712-1728, p. 261. Disponível em: <www.brasiliana.usp.br>. Acesso em: 13 de fevereiro de 2015.

²²Henrique Carneiro, “Transformações do significado da palavra ‘droga’: das especiarias coloniais ao proibicionismo contemporâneo”, in: Renato Pinto Venâncio; Henrique Carneiro, *Alcool e drogas na história do Brasil*, São Paulo, Alameda; Belo Horizonte, Editora PUC-Minas, 2005, p. 13.

trees (acajú, mangaba, ombú); 2) medicinal trees (copal, angaíba, caaroba); 3) oily and aromatic trees (Andá, aiabutipita, janipaba); 4) “herbs” (cassava, naná, pacoba); and 5) trees for logging (pau brasil, cedar, angelim). Cardim also wrote a chapter on the animals, trees, and herbs from Portugal that could be grown in Brazil, in which he discusses the success of the acclimatization process for orange, cider, lemon, and fig trees in Portuguese-American soil.²³

In Maranhão, the best example of this attempt of classification, according to some formula proposed by *Historia Naturalis*²⁴ of the 16th and 17th centuries, was the work *História dos Animais e Árvores do Maranhão* (probably written between 1625 and 1631), by Father Cristóvão de Lisboa, first custos of the Franciscans in the region and blood brother of the famous Manuel de Faria Severim.²⁵ The work of Father Lisboa is an accurate cataloging work with precious drawings of some of the most important species of the Amazonian flora and fauna. Despite its late publication and assumed incompleteness, *História dos Animais e Árvores do Maranhão* has the merit of being a study prior to the work of Dutch naturalists of the Nassovian phase of the State of Brazil.²⁶ Father Lisboa’s work brings a simple classification — “fish”, “animals”, “birds”, and “trees” —, but provides enough visual details of several species, some of them even with their indigenous names indicated.²⁷ Among the “trees”, one can find some of the plants with potential commercial value, especially cotton and pepper.

In Brazilian and Brazilianist historiography, the export trade of the so-called “hinterland drugs” is primarily related to the Pombal period and the phase of tax incentives with the establishment of the General Company of Grão-Pará and Maranhão (1755).²⁸ However, in the first decades of the 17th century,

²³Fernão Cardim, “Do clima e terra do Brasil e de algumas cousas notaveis que se achão assi na terra como no Mar”, In: *Idem, Tratados da terra e gente do Brasil*. Introduções e notas de Baptista Caetano, Capistrano de Abreu e Rodolpho Garcia, Rio de Janeiro, Editores Leite & Cia, 1925, p. 35-146.

²⁴See Robert Lenobre, *História da idéia de natureza*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 1990. Fernando Cristóvão, “A literatura de viagens e a história natural”, In: Fernando Cristóvão (coord.), *Condicionantes culturais da literatura de viagens*. Estudos e bibliografias, Coimbra, Almedina; Centro de Literaturas de Expressão Portuguesa da Universidade de Lisboa, 2002, p. 187.

²⁵Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), “Historia dos animaes e arvores do Maranhão pelo muito Reverendo Padre Fr. Christovão de Lisboa Calificador do Santo Officio, e fundador da Custodia do Maranhão da Recoleção de Santo Antonio de Lisboa//Anno [written between 1625 and 1631], códice 1660. First edition dates from 1960. Frei Cristóvão de Lisboa, *História dos animais e árvores do Maranhão*. Preface by Alberto Iria, Lisboa, AHU; CEU, 1967.

²⁶To know more about the impact of the presence of the Dutch, see: José Manuel Santos Pérez; George F. Cabral de Souza (eds.), *El desafío holandés al dominio ibérico en Brasil en el siglo XVII*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006.

²⁷To know more about the technical aspects of the works by Cristóvão de Lisboa, see: Ariane Luna Peixoto; Alexandra Escudeiro, “Pachira aquatica (Bombacaceae) na obra ‘Historia dos animais e árvores’ do Maranhão de frei Cristóvão de Lisboa”, *Rodriguésia*, vol. 53, n. 82, 2002, p. 123-130; David C. Oren, “As aves maranhenses do manuscrito (1625-1631) de frei Cristóvão de Lisboa”, *Ararajuba. Revista Brasileira de Ornitologia*, vol. 1, 1990, p. 43-56; João Francisco Marques, “Frei Cristóvão de Lisboa, missionário no Maranhão e Grão-Pará (1624-1635) e a defesa dos índios brasileiros”, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras (Universidade do Porto)*, vol. 13, 1996, p. 323-352; Luzia Fonseca, “Fr. Cristóvão de Lisboa, O. F. M missionary and natural history of Brazil”, *The Americas*, vol. 8, 1951-1952, p. 289-303.

²⁸For a summary of this process, see: Manuel Nunes Dias, *A Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1755-1778)*, Belém, 1970. For an overview, see: Kenneth Maxwell, “Pombal and the nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian economy”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 48, n. 4, 1968, p. 608-631; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, “A rede económica do mundo atlântico Português”, In: Francisco Bethencourt; Diogo Ramada Curto (dirs.), *A expansão marítima portuguesa, 1400-1800*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 2010, p. 115-144.

between the reigns of Filipe IV and John IV, the dream of making money following the Asian islands mode, by selling spices, was part of the plans of the first residents of the region. Over time, these products gained value of export in the international market, and also value of exchange in the local market. It is important to remember that, until the first half of the 18th century, Maranhão did not have contact with currency/coins and, despite the large price fluctuations in the international market until 1750, soldiers, local transactions, and tithes were paid with “hinterland drugs”. It was the so-called “natural currency”, a phenomenon emblematic of the importance of these products in everyday life of Grão-Pará and Maranhão.²⁹

The first news

In the early 17th century, there were speculations about the existence of hinterland products with commercial value in Europe. In *Relação da missão do Maranhão* (1609), the Jesuit Luis Figueira stated, for example, that the French would do trafficking of various varieties in the region, including inkwood, timber, ground pepper and native cotton.³⁰ The activities of the French were already known in this part of the world, and the region between current French Guiana and Maranhão was seen as a zone where cases of smuggling and piracy were high. However, there are no reliable data on the values of trafficking, although this type of activity was well known to the Portuguese navigators and bureaucrats, even before the military takeover (1615).³¹

Some reports of that time illustrate the value assigned to spices by traffickers from other countries. Years before the takeover of São Luís by the French, a navigator called Manuel Martin Santiago affirmed that while he did trafficking of wine between the Canary Islands and Pernambuco, he was captured by a French ship and taken to the very same Maranhão. Manuel Martin would have remained a prisoner of the French soldiers for about two years, long enough to witness how the French business of pepper, cotton, and inkwood exploitation worked, products that the so-called “pirates” obtained from the Indians and for which they paid with weapons, tools, and fabrics. One night Manuel Martin stole a boat and with the help of four other Portuguese prisoners he made it to the Caribbean, letting the Spanish authorities know about the whole situation.³²

²⁹Alan José da Silva Lima, *Do “Dinheiro da terra” ao “Bom dinheiro”*. Moeda natural e moeda metálica na Amazônia colonial (1706-1750). Master’s, Universidade Federal do Pará, Belém, 2006. For more information about metallic money in the Portuguese America, see: Fernando Carlos G. de Cerqueira Lima, “Uma análise crítica da literatura sobre a oferta e a circulação de moeda metálica no Brasil nos séculos XVI e XVII”, *Estudos Econômicos (São Paulo)*, vol. 35, n. 1, 2005, p. 169-201.

³⁰Luis Figueira, “Relação da missão do Maranhão [1608-1609?]”, *In*: Serafim Leite, *Luiz Figueira: sua vida heróica e sua obra Literária*. Lisboa, Agência Geral das Colônias, 1940, p. 108-109.

³¹Alirio Cardoso, “A conquista do Maranhão e as disputas atlânticas na geopolítica da União Ibérica (1596-1626)”, *Revista Brasileira de História*, vol. 31, n. 61, 2011, p. 317-338.

³²“Carta del presidente de la Española con testimonio de informacion del Capitan Martin Suarez Moreno, que fué á examinar el Rio Marañon, por orden del Gobernador del Brasil”, Santo Domingo, 15 de dezembro de 1613, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 26, Rio de Janeiro, 1905, p. 180-181.

In 1614, questioning of the French soldiers captured in a battle confirmed that they had been doing trafficking for a long time, with some “drugs” found in the forests of Maranhão. Under questioning, Estevan Marichal, a Norman aged 32, claimed he and his companions used to explore, among other things, cotton, tobacco, and lapis lazuli.³³ Noel La Mota, from the city of Rouen, 21, said he had arrived to Maranhão in 1614, knowing the first French ships used to carry tobacco, yellow inkwood, and ground pepper.³⁴ Well savvy, Juan de Pache, born in “Boutin”, near Burgundy, went to Maranhão accompanied by his wife and a 12-year-old daughter. Juan de Pache had never seen gold, or silver, or lapis lazuli, but he said he was well aware of the values of cotton, tobacco, pepper and other “drugs that [the French] *sacavan provecho*” in Europe.”³⁵

*Many American exotic products
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The search for exotic products is believed to be one of the motivations behind the Portuguese expansion into the Amazon delta and the subsequent founding of the city of Belém (1616). In 1617, several reports were made to *Casa de Contratación* of Seville addressing the takeover of Grão-Pará months earlier. In these reports, made by cosmographers and experienced navigators, two reasons for the occupation are pointed: defense against the Dutch and the possibility of benefiting from cocoa, vanilla, indigo, and other “drugs” that were abundant in the area. Apart from the French and Dutch reports, as they had already been doing trafficking in the region, some Portuguese and Spanish nurtured the hope of finding certain products there. After all, those parts were very close to the Kingdom of Nueva Granada, the famous land of cinnamon.³⁶

Information about Dutch trading posts was also widely diffused, mainly aimed to the exploitation of tobacco and inkwood. In 1615, it emerged that

³³“Interrogatorio dos prisioneiros francezes do combate de Guaxenduba”, 20 de novembro de 1614, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 26, Rio de Janeiro, 1905, p. 264-266. Todos os interrogatórios foram transcritos e traduzidos, como de costume, pelo secretário Tomás Gracián Dantisco.

³⁴*Ibidem*, p. 267-269.

³⁵*Ibidem*, p. 273-276.

³⁶“Carta Del L.^{do} D. Francisco de Texada y Mendoza, sobre la poblacion del Rio Marañon — Acompaña una relacion de lo que parece por los ynformes que ha remitido la Casa de la Contratacion, de personas practicas, sobre la poblacion que los portugues intentan hacer, 50 leguas adentro del Rio Marañon; y de lo que contiene un memorial del padre Xptoal de Acuña, sobre el descubrimiento del Rio de las Amazonas. Fecha de la carta — en Sevilla à 14 de febrero 1617”, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 26, Rio de Janeiro, 1905, p. 369; 373.

a Batavian navigator named Pedro Luís claimed to have built “wealth” on the Amazon River by trafficking dyes, tobacco, and different sorts of spices. Back to Haia, Pedro Luís tried to convince other investors that in Maranhão he had met only a few French and that land could offer “much more profit for business men”.³⁷ At the same time, it was said that Theodor Claessen, an Anabaptist from Leiden, had concrete plans of investing in the region’s products and was looking for both investors and support of the General States to materialize it.³⁸

These early reports also show comparisons with Asian “drugs”, especially clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, and even pepper. Indigenous names would be hidden, which makes the recognition of some plants that still exist in the Amazon flora very difficult. The soul of business was a comparison, after all. In addition to functioning as a powerful rhetorical strategy, linking the expectations of the “new” Maranhão with the glorious past of the “old” East, these reports also turned a number of exotic products — often with dubious commercial value — into attractions that deserved at least a closer look by the Finance Taxpayers Council and, later on, by the Overseas Council. It was in any case the myth of the “Golden Goa”, one of the Portuguese reminiscences, that was best used as a rhetorical strategy.³⁹

Relação Sumária das Cousas do Maranhão (1624), the most well-known work of Captain Simão Estácio da Silveira, shows countless comparisons.⁴⁰ In the new lands of Maranhão, according to the Azorean captain, there was a fruit that was similar to mangos found in India; durians similar to those of Malacca; musk equal to that of China; cinnamon very similar to that of Ceylon; and, finally, an herb similar to the one from which indigo was made in India.⁴¹ Works like this, with detailed descriptions of moral and natural attributes of the New World, were based on previous works about the Indians of Spain, especially *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, by José de Acosta

³⁷Archivo General de Indias (AGI), “Avizos tocantes à la India Occidental. Explican los progressos que olandeses, franceses e ingleses, hacian en las riberas del rio de las Amazonas &”, Palácio, 24 de maio de 1615, *Patronato* 272, R3.

³⁸*Ibidem, Idem*, “Oficio del Duque al Presidente del Consejo de Indias acompañandole un papel donde se avisa los puertos que holandeses pretenden poblar entre el Marañon y la Margarita, y explicando el mapa de estas costas que dice acompaña (no está)”, Valladolid, 27 de junho de 1615, *Patronato*, 272, R3.

³⁹Rafael Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580-1680)*. Declive imperial y adaptación, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2001, p. 11. Rosa Maria Perez, “Sonhos imperiais. Negociações e rupturas do colonialismo português na Índia”, In: Rosa Maria Perez (ed.), *Os portugueses e o Oriente*, Lisboa, Dom Quixote, 2006, p. 129-149.

⁴⁰Simão Estácio da Silveira, a Portuguese of Azorean origin, was the general attorney of São Luís chamber and one of its founders in 1619. He arrived in Maranhão as captain of one of the ships of Jorge de Lemos Bittencourt, bringing about 300 other residents from the Atlantic islands. Author of several writings favoring the integration of the Portuguese and Spanish in the context of monarchic union, he was also one of the supporters of the Portuguese migration to the lands of Portuguese Amazon. José Honório Rodrigues, “Simão Estácio da Silveira”, In: *Idem, História da História do Brasil*. Primeira parte: Historiografia colonial, São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1979, p. 81-82.

⁴¹Simão Estácio da Silveira, “Relação Sumaria das Cousas do Maranhão. Escripção pello capitão Symao Estácio da Sylveira. Dirigida aos pobres deste Reyno de Portugal”, *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, vol. 94, 1974 [1624], fl. 43-44v.

(namely *the Fourth Book*).⁴² Simão Estácio da Silveira himself admits that the Jesuit's book was one of his sources of inspiration, especially with regard to narrative style and description of the nature.⁴³ In fact, the example of Indians of Castile had excellent points of comparison. However, especially in the time of John IV, the comparison between the new “drugs” and old Asian products ended up as an effective strategy to allow them access to the European market.

Clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg

The history of Amazon spices gained a new dimension between the reigns of Filipe IV (1621–1640) and especially John IV (1640–1656), when new products are discovered and a more deep evaluation is made by the Portuguese authorities, including the shipment of samples to the Kingdom. From the Amazon forest to the councils of Portugal, a certain tree bark with properties similar to those of Moluccan clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*) starts drawing attention. The “clove of Maranhão”, “casca-preciosa”, or “pau-cravo” (*Cassia caryophyllata*, *Myrtus caryophyllata*, *Dicypellium caryophyllatum*, among others) was extracted from aromatic and medicinal trees and looked very much like dry cinnamon. This exotic product would be part of expectations of wealth among locals.⁴⁴

Again, Captain Simão Estácio da Silveira had already made reference to the native clove in his work *Relação* of 1624, suggesting that the knowledge about the product was quite common in the region since 1618, when he took up residence in Maranhão.⁴⁵ Despite previous news about the existence of woods with culinary, aromatic, and medicinal properties, appropriately called “drugs”, Estácio da Silveira was the first one to make a clear association between the Indian clove and clove of Maranhão. However, the absence of a direct allusion to ground clove in *História dos Animais e Árvores do Maranhão*, by Father Cristóvão de Lisboa, is quite significant, although he cites pepper, cotton, and other types of commercial interest. Similarly, there is no concrete information to support that the Dutch and the English, between 1599 and 1623, were selling a plant called “clove” in the Xingu River warehouses.⁴⁶ It is known that these dealers had great interest in shipping

⁴²Josef de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, Edición crítica de Fermín del Pino-Díaz, Madrid, CSIC, 2008 [1590], p. 97-151.

⁴³Simão Estácio da Silveira, “Relação Sumaria das Cousas do Maranhão. Escripita pello capitão Symao Estácio da Sylveira. Dirigida aos pobres deste Reyno de Portugal”, *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, vol. 94, 1974 [1624], fl. 39.

⁴⁴See “Cravo do Maranhão”, In: César Augusto Marques, *Dicionário histórico-geográfico da Província do Maranhão*, Rio de Janeiro, Cia. Editora Fon-Fon e Seleta, 1970, p. 238-239. According to Roberto Simonsen, in 1686, the consumption of clove in Portugal was close to 4,000 units, a limit imposed for local production to avoid a fast depreciation of the product in the European market. Roberto C. Simonsen, *História econômica do Brasil (1500-1820)*, São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1978, p. 372.

⁴⁵Simão Estácio da Silveira, *op cit.*, fl. 32.

⁴⁶Lodewijk Hulsman, “Swaerooch: o comércio holandês com índios no Amapá (1600-1615)”, *Revista Estudos Amazônicos*, vol. VI, n. 1, 2011, p. 178-202.

other drugs, such as tobacco, sugar, wood, and *ucurú*, to Europe — the latter serving as food seasoning among the English.⁴⁷ Until 1624, Estácio da Silveira had not seen a clove himself, so the information provided by other residents would do for him.⁴⁸

However, for Captain Álvaro de Sousa, donatario of the Captaincy of Caeté and son of the former governor of Brazil, Gaspar de Sousa, the clove found in Maranhão was quite real. In 1646, he sent some samples of the plant to the Council of Finance and, by a royal order, these were passed to the Overseas Council so that they could examine the potential of the “spice of Pará”.⁴⁹ The consultation by the Overseas Council was favorable to innovation:

Several steps were made by order of this Council with the latest samples, being stated that clove, although different by the look, tastes almost the same as that of India, and it could be as good or even better if grown and enjoyed, which gives high hopes that the bark of their trees has the same effect of the clove.

The same query also referred to other species that accompanied the clove samples. In this document, for the first time a “round fruit” is mentioned, having the same properties of the Asian nutmeg.⁵⁰ There are detailed descriptions of this fruit based on the species known in the 18th century. The Portuguese-Brazilian chronicler Ignacio Accioli (1808–1865) explains in its *Corografia Paraense* that the walnut-of-pixurim, or puxuri (*Laurus pixuri*, according to the author), was a kind of fruit with two almonds inside and had aromatic and medicinal properties. There were two kinds: the small pixurim, which was thinner and more expensive, and the bulk pixurim, which was much more common. The trees bearing these fruits were known as *hinidáo* by the Indians and grew only along the margins of rivers of the region, being very rare on dry lands. In order to be consumed, the fruit should be dehydrated with fire to decrease its amount of oil.⁵¹ In fact, a major problem associated with the export of this plant was the limited number of existing techniques for the extraction of excess oil, which greatly harmed the quality of the Pará nut.⁵²

After identifying some of the new species and evaluating their commercial potential, the next step was to discuss the resources available for the protection of areas of incidence, particularly in light of the news about a possible return of the Dutch to the region. Therefore, directors of the Overseas Council suggested

⁴⁷Arthur César Ferreira Reis, *Limites e demarcações na Amazônia brasileira*. A fronteira com as colônias Espanholas, vol. 1, Belém, Secult, 1993, p. 35.

⁴⁸Simão Estácio da Silveira, “Relação Sumaria das Cousas do Maranhão. Escripita pello capitão Symao Estácio da Sylveira. Dirigida aos pobres deste Reyno de Portugal”, *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, vol. 94, 1974 [1624], fl. 43.

⁴⁹AHU, “Sobre as amostras de cravo e mais especiarias q. veio do Maranhão e pertencer ao mesmo Cons.^o a averiguação delle”. Lisboa, 3 de agosto de 1648, códice 14 (Consultas Mistas), fl. 124v-125.

⁵⁰*Idem*, “CONSULTA do Conselho Ultramarino ao rei D. João IV, sobre a fortificação dos portos do Estado do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 18 de setembro de 1648 [neste caso, nossa referência é à consulta de 22 de agosto de 1648], Maranhão (avulsos), cx. 3, doc. 267.

⁵¹Ignacio Accioli de Cerqueira e Silva, *Corografia paraense ou descrição física, histórica e política, da Provincia do Gram-Pará*, Salvador, Typografia do Diário, 1833, p. 15-16.

⁵²Roberto Southey, *História do Brazil*, Tomo quarto, Rio de Janeiro, Livraria de B.L. Garnier, 1862, p. 408.

monitoring and “safety of drugs and fruits found in Maranhão”.⁵³ It was clear that the fear of the return of the Dutch did not stop the hopes of negotiated peace after the Portuguese Restoration.⁵⁴ “To withstand any attempt by the enemy”,⁵⁵ especially when it came to the trade of achievements, is a legacy of the previous period.

The danger related to the Dutch was not just rhetorical. It is known that, years after their expulsion of Maranhão (1644), news and reports on the presence of Batavian boats and even on concrete projects of the return of the United Provinces to the north end of Portuguese America were divulged. Despite the known local strategy of exaggerating certain information on the subject, especially for the search for more funding for the region, these new Dutch projects were real, and one of the most interesting involved the name of counselor Gisbert de With, who also participated in the Dutch government of Paraíba.⁵⁶

The existence of “drugs” on the land in a given captaincy was undoubtedly a promotional feature for the donatario. What happened in the Captaincy of Caeté, where Captain Manuel Furtado, born in Beja, became known as the discoverer of the clove of Maranhão, is a good example. In 1646, the donatario Alvaro de Sousa decided to name him “Captain Clove Discovery”, a position that should be held for three years. Captain Furtado would then be primarily responsible for the discovery of new reserves and the extraction of the product *in natura*, with the donatario paying for 10% of production. In practice, this meant that Captain Furtado, on behalf of Álvaro de Sousa, would gain a monopoly on all exploitation of cloves. The provision of Álvaro de Sousa, following the style of Royal Provisions, states that “no one can extract clove of these lands, except for Manoel Furtado or the people to whom I [Álvaro de Sousa] give license”.⁵⁷ Depending on the possible benefits of exploitation, Captain Furtado won no less than a promise of royal mercy.

⁵³AHU, “Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino ao rei D. João IV, sobre a fortificação dos portos do Estado do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 18 de setembro de 1648, Maranhão (avulsos), cx. 3, doc. 267.

⁵⁴Ronaldo Vainfas, “Guerra declarada e paz fingida na Restauração Portuguesa”, *Tempo*, vol. 14, n. 27, 2009, p. 82-100. Ver também: Thiago Groh de Mello Cesar, “A política externa de D. João IV e o Padre Antonio Vieira: as negociações com os Países Baixos (1641-1648)”, Master’s, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2011. Pedro Cardim, “Entre Paris e Amsterdão. António Vieira, legado de D. João IV no Norte da Europa (1646-1648)”, *Oceanos*, n. 30-31, 1997, p. 134-154.

⁵⁵AHU, “Sobre as varias Experiencias q. se fizerão cõ as Especiarias E drogas do Maranhão, E [convir] se fortifique os portos vizinhos da terra donde se [crião]”. Lisboa, 22 de agosto de 1648, códice 14 (Consultas Mistas), fl. 130-130v.

⁵⁶*Idem*, “CONSULTA do Conselho Ultramarino ao rei D. Afonso VI, sobre o aviso de António Raposo, agente em Amsterdã, de que vai gente da Zelândia (Holanda) para povoar um porto 50 léguas abaixo do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 23 de agosto de 1657, Maranhão (avulsos), cx. 4, doc. 408. *Idem*, “CONSULTA do Conselho Ultramarino ao rei D. Afonso VI, sobre o requerimento do procurador do Estado do Maranhão, António de Albuquerque Maranhão, em que relata a saída de gente da Zelândia (Holanda) para povoar terras e ilhas na capitania do Pará e rio das Amazonas”. Lisboa, 11 de setembro de 1657, Maranhão (avulsos), cx. 4, doc. 409.

⁵⁷Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, “Treslado de huma provizam porque o Governador e Capitam g.^{al} desta Capitania faz mersse a Manoel Furtado de nomiar por Capitam do descobrimento do Cravo p.^a que elle por tempo de tres annos o va bus=car com as clauzulas ao diante declaradas”. 10 de dezembro de 1647 [cópia da Provisão de 1 de agosto de 1646]. Coleção Vidigueira, Livro da Fazenda da Capitania do Cayete, 1636-1661. Reservados 2, códice 1, fls. 70-70v [Firmas: Manoel Furtado; Theotonio da Cruz].

Thus, if the said product resulted in “considerable advantage to the Royal Treasury”, His Majesty would give him the mercy of a habit of São Tiago or Avis. In addition, the corresponding annuity at the mercy would be taken from the farm income over clove.⁵⁸

The rediscovery of clove by Manuel Furtado and Álvaro de Sousa inspired imitators. Thus, other authorities confirmed the finding of the Captaincy of Caeté, extending the zone of incidence of spices to the forests of the Captaincy of Grão-Pará. In 1648, the Sergeant-Major Filipe da Fonseca Gouveia, who had been in India, stated that in the Captaincy of Grão-Pará and in Gurupá, there were large quantities of the popular spice and, by his knowledge on the subject, that clove was “better than cloves from Moluccas”. In addition, in captaincies, there was also a nutmeg similar to that of the Band Islands and it was in sufficient quantity, as the Sergeant-Major said, “to load many boats with them”.⁵⁹ Shortly thereafter, in 1652, Filipe da Fonseca received a license from John IV to go to the Kingdom, with the warning of bringing “as many samples of clove, nutmeg and the mace extracted from it as possible”, as well as long pepper.⁶⁰

*The search for exotic products
is believed to be one of the motivations
behind the Portuguese expansion
into the Amazon delta*

Despite the explicit encouragement by the government of John IV, there had been two major problems of logistics, leading to a more rational use of these products. The first one was clear: the distance between the area of extraction and the ports of exit for Europe. Therefore, since the 1650s, there were several attempts to cultivate these spices. Internal acclimatization — from the Amazonian forests to fields close to cities — never really worked as expected. This had been the weak point of the presentation of “drugs” from Maranhão to the Kingdom

⁵⁸ANTT, “M.^{el} Furtado”. Lisboa, 17 de outubro de 1646, Registro Geral das Mercês (RGM), Portarias do Reino, Livro I, fl. 383v.

⁵⁹AHU, “CONSULTA do Conselho Ultramarino ao rei D. João IV, sobre o aviso do sargento-mor Filipe da Fonseca e Gouveia, relativo ao estado em que se encontrava a fortaleza do Gurupá, e envio de socorro; à grande quantidade de especiarias que nela havia e solicitando sucessor e licença para voltar ao Reino”. Lisboa, 5 de setembro de 1648, Maranhão (avulsos), cx. 3, doc. 265. *Idem*, “O sarg.^{to} mor do estado do Maranhão Fellippe da Fonçeca, e gouveia avisa do estado em q. se achou a fort.z.^a do Gurupá, e socorro q. se lhe deve enviar, e da m.^{ta} quantidade de cravo, nós moscada e massa q. nella ha e na do Pará; pede sucessos e liçença p.^o se vir p.^a o Reino”. Lisboa, 5 de setembro de 1648, códice 14 (Consultas Mistas), fl. 133-133v.

⁶⁰*Idem*, “CARTA RÉGIA (capítulo) do rei D. João IV, para o capitão-mor do Maranhão, Baltasar de Sousa Pereira, a conceder ao sargento-mor do Maranhão, Filipe de Fonseca Gouveia, licença para embarcar livremente para o Reino e para que traga consigo amostras de cravo, pimenta longa e noz em massa”. Lisboa, 8 de agosto de 1652, Maranhão (avulsos), cx.3, doc. 316.

authorities.⁶¹ Another much more worrying question was the labor supply available. Because of the characteristics of such products, which should be harvested from the forests and transported in boats with minimal processing, it was clear to the residents that trade would only be profitable if they could use a huge number of indigenous workers. This was one of the greatest issues during the reign of John IV.

Fruits of the land and “tears of blood”

It is hard not to relate the news about the discovery of new “drugs” to the search for control of native work. In the reign of John IV, for the first time tougher laws were created against exploitation of indigenous labor by the Portuguese, increasingly limiting the possibility of private managing of Christianized Indians, a policy strongly influenced by Father Antônio Vieira, who was a friend of the king. In 1645, for example, Álvaro de Sousa asked permission of the Overseas Council to privately manage the Indians of a village called Maracanã, on lands donated by the King in recognition of his father’s services, Gaspar de Sousa, the former governor of the State of Brazil.

Using old rhetorical formulas, Álvaro de Souza argued that the obedience of Indians of the region was part of his rights as donatario and direct representative of the king.⁶² The Overseas Council was unfavorable to the request at first. The opinion of the Council, signed by important people such as Salvador Correia de Sá, reminds the unfortunate situation of the indigenous people who, even being Christianized, would cry “tears of blood” in the hands of private managers. However, the counselors admitted that the exploitation of the plant wealth of Maranhão, as they lacked African workers, depended largely on Indians, and without their work lands would not be “fruitful”. Finally, a proposal for a fee on the native labor, to be paid by the Chambers and enforced by the Church, is created.⁶³ This was one of the first concrete proposals in the reign of John IV to set rules to indigenous worker in the region.

Álvaro de Sousa, with good relations in the Court, actually anticipated the harder process of native labor regulations that would become a hallmark of the House of Braganza. So, by the decree of November 10, 1647, D. João IV confirms the “freedom” of Christianized Indians by prohibiting any form of secular management of their work, and, according to the law, “the Indians can freely serve and work with whoever owns them and pays for their work.”⁶⁴

⁶¹AHU, “Notícias sobre a existência de árvores de cravo, de noz-moscada e pimenta na capitania do Pará e a tentativa de plantio da árvore de cravo”. [Post. 1656?], Pará (avulsos), cx. 2, doc. 105.

⁶²*Idem*, “Sobre a liberdade dos índios do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 24 de outubro de 1645, códice 13 (consultas mistas), fl. 258-259.

⁶³*Ibidem*.

⁶⁴“Ley por que S. Mag.^{se} mandou que os Índios do Maranhão sejam livres, e que não haja administradores nem admenistração nelles, antes possão livremente servir e trabalhar com quem lhes bem estiver e melhor lhes pagar seu trabalho”. Lisboa, 10 de novembro de 1647, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 66, Rio de Janeiro, 1948, p. 17-18. Atualizamos a grafia.

Few days later, the king decides to allow residents, as he allowed Álvaro de Sousa, to manage Indians with “gentleness” and always followed up by a missionary.⁶⁵ The following year, by another royal resolution, indigenous work was prohibited in the months when they were engaged in subsistence crops (December, January, May, and June).⁶⁶ These new rules, which, in a way were an attempt to better define the role of the Christianized Indians in the Portuguese communities, culminated in the law *Provision on freedom and bondage of people from Maranhão*, of October 17, 1653.⁶⁷

Such rules were the basis for future legislation on people’s work and strengthened the legal differences between “vassals” and “rebels”. However, the law from 1653 also reaffirmed the implicit relationship between ally Indians and the exploitation of fruits, with prohibition of governors and “ministers” to take part in these activities, as was customary. In 1656, an old proposal was presented again: payment of Indians’ work in fabrics and tools, formalized by the Governor André Vidal de Negreiros. Later on, the king signed it into law (June 12, 1656).⁶⁸ In short, as Stuart Schwartz said years ago, the Portuguese built a picture in the Amazon never known before in native communities: the indigenous worker.⁶⁹

In general, the argument that exploitation of natural resources of Maranhão was exclusively dependent on the constant supply of native worker through slavery functioned as a strategy of opposition of the Portuguese residents to new regulations limiting the use of indigenous labor. In this sense, information about the existence of new spices and convenient presentation of new products as substitutes for those from Asia boosted the voices of those who considered the new Brigantine laws harmful to the emerging economy of Maranhão. Therefore, before being commercially exploited, the “drugs” were used as a means of showing the need for secular administration of people or for smoother laws regulating forms of slavery.

The proposals on spice trade gained strength in the same period the debate on the need for rules for indigenous work invaded royal Councils. Pieces of news about new “drugs” were powerful arguments themselves, able to change the feelings of the Kingdom authorities as to the need for a more secular control over indigenous work.

⁶⁵AHU, “P^a Fran.^{co} Coelho de Carv.^o sobre a liberdade dos índios do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 14 de novembro de 1647, códice 275 (cartas), fl.121.

⁶⁶“Provisão para os governadores do Maranhão nem outra pessoas alguma ocuparem os Índios forros nos Mezes de Dezembro, Janeiro, Maio e Junho nem na lavra do tabaco”. Lisboa, 9 de setembro de 1648, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 66, Rio de Janeiro, 1948, p. 19.

⁶⁷“Provisão sobre aliberdade e Captiveiro do gentio do Maranhão”. Lisboa, 17 de outubro de 1653, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 66, Rio de Janeiro, 1948, p. 19-21.

⁶⁸AHU, “Sobre o q. avisa Andre Vidal de Neg.^{os} G.^{or} do Maranhão, açerca de convir pagarse o trabalho dos índios, a metade em pano, e a outra metade em ferramentas”. Lisboa, 16 de junho de 1656, códice 15 (consultas mistas), fl. 233v. “Provisão sobre sepagar o trabalho dos Índios forros do Maranhão a metade em panno e aoutra metade em ferramenta”. Lisboa, 12 de julho de 1656”, *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. 66, Rio de Janeiro, 1948, p. 28.

⁶⁹Stuart Schwartz, “Indian labor and world plantations: European demand and Indian responses in Northeastern Brazil”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 83, n. 1, 1978, p. 43-79.

Final comments: extraction versus plantation?

The Amazonian economy of the 17th century has been compared with the *coureurs de bois* of Canada because of its dependence on indigenous labor, favorable disposition to extractive activities of animals or plants, and its small participation in the whole Atlantic trade.⁷⁰ From this perspective, the State of Maranhão, by its relative isolation from the State of Brazil, and mainly by the reduced value of its importation of African slaves from the Angola route, would remain as an obstacle until the mid-18th century.⁷¹ According to this principle, the Portuguese Amazon was far from an ideal framework due to lack of structural actions established by the Portuguese commercial capitalism, whose best examples were the economies based on large plantation systems.⁷² This wealth accumulation formula, and its socioeconomic and cultural consequences, has always been on the agenda of what we traditionally call “nation building”, as the role assigned to the Amazon economy was not completely clear.⁷³

The exploitation of the plant wealth of Maranhão, as they lacked African worker, depended largely on Indians

In any case, this does not seem to be an appropriate way to forward the debate on the 17th-century Amazonian economy. The problem is to compare the Amazonian economy of the 17th century, with its limitations and characteristics, with the Portuguese-Maranhão economic world at the time of the Marquis of Pombal (1750–1777). Recent studies have used a distinct approach to study the commercial dynamics of this territory before Pombal.⁷⁴ In general, these works are much more attentive to the strategies of material survival of the residents of the north end of Portuguese America, which, even outside the South-Atlantic trade circuits, tried to create other paths to enter the world economy. Indeed,

⁷⁰Richard M. Morse, *The Bandeirantes: the historical role of the Brazilian pathfinders*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1965, p. 20-21. Barbara Sommer, “Colony of the Sertão. Amazonian expeditions and the Indian slave trade”, *The Americas*, vol. 61, nº 3, Janeiro, 2005, p. 405.

⁷¹Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico sul*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000, p. 141. Ciro F. Cardoso, *Economia e sociedade em áreas coloniais periféricas: Guiana Francesa e Pará, 1750-1817*, Rio de Janeiro, Graal, 1984, p. 97.

⁷²However, the formulas for wealth accumulation in overseas empires were far more diverse than one may think. For more information, see: João Fragoso; Maria de Fátima Gouvêa (eds.), *Na trama das redes: política e negócio no Império português, Séculos XVI-XVIII*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2009.

⁷³This was the conclusion by Caio Prado Júnior, in *História econômica do Brasil*. Caio Prado Júnior, “A colonização do Vale Amazônico e a colheita Florestal”, In: *Idem, História econômica do Brasil*, 42. ed., São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1997, p. 74.

⁷⁴Rafael Chamboleyron, *Portuguese colonization of Amazon region: 1640-1706*, PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2005. José Maia Bezerra Neto, *Escravidão negra no Grão-Pará. Séculos XVII-XVIII*, Belém, Paca-Tatu, 2001. Dauril Alden, “Indian versus Black slavery in the state of Maranhão during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries”, *Bibliotheca Americana*, vol. 1, n. 3, 1984, p. 91-142.

contrary to the conclusions of historiography, the 17th-century Amazon economy was relatively dynamic, despite not having a large share of the total trade of Portuguese America. To facilitate these activities, the Crown adopted a land distribution policy for residents who had some leather to invest. This sesmaria policy had a dual purpose: to increase the defense against European competitors, also increasing the military protection available, and to encourage growth, with wide private investment.⁷⁵

In this scenario, investing in the exploitation of natural products exactly like in the Asian islands has always been considered a good option for the residents. The fame of these “drugs” survived well beyond the government of John IV, gaining famous defenders over time. In 1673, for example, Duarte Ribeiro de Macedo, while living in Paris, wrote another essay entitled “*Discurso sobre os gêneros para o comércio que há no Maranhão e Pará*”. In this work, Macedo presents the 37 most important spices found or produced in the north end of the Portuguese America, including several local versions of known Asian genres: clove, cinnamon, vanilla, musk, ginger, and indigo. Macedo also explains that many of these products, despite being “fruits of the forest”, could be grown on “farms”, just like farmers did with sugar.⁷⁶

However, the phenomenon of discovering and exploiting new “drugs” cannot be boiled down to a simple rhetoric imitation of the golden phase of Asian trade. This is a good example of how Portuguese residents of border areas took advantage of knowledge about different monarchies.⁷⁷ This pedagogical look at the mosaic of Hispanic monarchy does not exclude Peruvian and Caribbean examples, as shown by the texts of Simão Estacio da Silveira. Indeed, the argument that Maranhão would be an extension of the Peruvian ecology favored the idea that new achievements would also be suitable for the acclimatization of plants of the Viceroyalty.

On the other hand, residents of the old Maranhão did not dismiss the possibility of living on sugar, as well as their blood relatives of the State of Brazil. As stated by Rafael Chamboleyron, in a way, the eternal dilemma of the Amazon between an economy based on extraction and the development of export agriculture was born at this point.⁷⁸ The difference, in the first half of the 17th century, was that the “drugs” and sugar were not necessarily rivals or exclusive. Each model of producing wealth had a space. And, contrary to what

⁷⁵Rafael Chamboleyron, “Plantações, sesmarias e vilas. Uma reflexão sobre a ocupação da Amazônia seiscentista”, *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*, n. 6, 2006, p. 2260. Arthur César Ferreira Reis, *A política de Portugal no Valle Amazônico*, Belém, Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 1993, p. 26-27. Antônia da Silva Mota; José Dervil Mantovani (eds.), *São Luís do Maranhão no século XVIII: a construção do espaço urbano sob a lei das Sesmarias*, São Luís, Edições FUNC, 1998.

⁷⁶ANTT, “Discurso sobre os generos p^o o comercio que há no Maranhão, e Pará: composto por Duarte Ribeiro de Maçedo quando estava em França no anno de 1673”. Paris, 20 de janeiro de 1673, Manuscritos do Brasil, livro 39, fls. 19-26.

⁷⁷Pedro Cardim, “Los portugueses frente a la Monarquía Hispánica”, In: Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño; Bernardo J. García García (eds.), *La monarquía de las naciones. Patria, nación y naturaleza en la Monarquía de España*, Madrid, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2004, p. 355-383.

⁷⁸Rafael Chamboleyron, *Portuguese colonization of Amazon region: 1640-1706*, PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2005, p. 184-209.

one might think, even in the late 17th century, the Crown encouraged the search for new exotic products by offering tax advantages.⁷⁹

The phenomenon of Amazonian spices should be considered from a myriad of examples and influences from the Spanish-Portuguese world. It was clear that the best economic model for the residents of the State of Maranhão was the one able to gather the best of each place: Brazil's sugar and the Castilian Indians for the transportation of goods, based on the best phase of "drugs" trade in Asia. Thus, the spice trade was never intended as the only possibility, even in the texts by Simão Estácio da Silveira. The economic proposals for the region were multidirectional, adjusted to the condition of boundary of the territory. In the opinion of its residents, the Amazon was able to learn from the mistakes and successes of the Portuguese and the Spanish around the world.

⁷⁹Rafael Chambouleyron, *Portuguese colonization of Amazon region: 1640-1706*, PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 2005, p. 208.