

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Amazonian Atlantic: Cacao, Colonial Expansion and Indigenous Labour in the Portuguese Amazon Region (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)

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Abstract

A product native to the Amazon forest, cacao became the most important staple of the Portuguese Amazonian colonial economy from the late seventeenth until the mid-nineteenth century. Based on extensive research in Brazilian and European archives, this article analyses cacao exploitation in Portuguese Amazonia, examining its dual spatial dimension: the expansion of an agricultural frontier, and the expansion of an extractive frontier in the deep hinterland, with a particular focus on the role that Indian labour played in this development.

Keywords: Portuguese Amazon region; cacao exploitation; Indigenous labour; seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Introduction

A native product of the Amazon forest, cacao became the most important staple of the Portuguese Amazonian colonial economy during the late seventeenth and up until the mid-nineteenth century.¹ From the second half of the seventeenth century

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¹Charles R. Clement *et al.*, 'Origin and Domestication of Native Amazonian Crops', *Diversity*, 2 (2010), pp. 78–80; Sonia Zarrillo *et al.*, 'The Use and Domestication of *Theobroma cacao* during the mid-Holocene in the Upper Amazon', *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 2 (2018), pp. 1879–88; Dauril Alden, 'The Significance of Cacao Production in the Amazon Region during the Late Colonial Period: An Essay in Comparative Economic History', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 120: 2 (1976), pp. 103–35; William G. Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate, 1765–1914* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 176–2.

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onwards, when chocolate consumption in Europe began to increase,² and influenced by the experience of the Spanish colony of Caracas (Venezuela),³ the Portuguese Crown decided to spur on cacao exploitation and cultivation in the region. This momentum was most likely motivated by news sent from the Amazon region which indicated the commercial potential of cacao production.⁴ The process began with incentives for cacao cultivation – the *cacau manso* – and continued by encouraging cacao exploitation in the vast Amazonian hinterland (*sertão*; plural *sertões*), through the gathering of wild fruits – the *cacau bravo*.

Based on extensive research in Brazilian and European archives, this article analyses cacao exploitation in Portuguese Amazonia.⁵ The article examines the double spatial dimension of the cacao economy in the Amazon region – one related to the expansion of an agricultural frontier, and the other to the expansion of an extractive

²Regarding chocolate consumption in the Early Modern world, see Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe–XVIIIe siècle*, vol. 1: *Les structures du quotidien: le possible et l'impossible* (Paris: Albin Colin, 1979), pp. 213–14; Piero Camporesi, *Il brodo indiano* (Milan: Garzanti, 1990), pp. 109–22; Nikita Harwich, 'Le chocolat et son imaginaire, XVIème–XVIIIème siècles: le monde américain dans une tasse', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 32 (1995), pp. 261–93; Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*, pp. 11–20; Marcy Norton, 'Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics', *The American Historical Review* 111: 3 (2006), pp. 660–91; Edmund Valentine Campos, 'Thomas Gage and the English Colonial Encounter with Chocolate', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39: 1 (2009), pp. 183–200; Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures. A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Irene Fattaciu, 'Atlantic History and Spanish Consumer Goods in the 18th Century: The Assimilation of Exotic Drinks and the Fragmentation of European Identities', *Nouveaux mondes, mondes nouveaux*, 2012, <https://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/63480> (last accessed 8 Dec. 2020); Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Benjamin Sacks, 'The Global Exchange of Foods and Drugs', in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 139; Christine A. Jones, 'Exotic Edibles: Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, and the Early Modern French How-to', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 43: 3 (2013), pp. 623–53; Irene Fattaciu, *Socialità, esotismo e 'ispanizzazione' dei consumi nella Spagna del Settecento* (Trieste: Università di Trieste, 2018); *Empire, Political Economy, and the Diffusion of Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (London: Routledge, 2020).

³Rafael Chambouleyron, 'Como se hace en Indias de Castilla. El cacao entre la Amazonía portuguesa y las Indias de Castilla (siglos XVII y XVIII)', *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 40 (2014), pp. 23–43.

⁴Serafim Leite, SJ, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, vol. 4 (Lisbon/Rio de Janeiro: Portugália/INL, 1943), pp. 158–61; Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVIIe siècle, 1570–1670. Étude économique* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1960), p. 370; Alden, 'The Significance of Cacao Production', p. 115; Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise. The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 546–7; Timothy Walker, 'Slave Labor and Chocolate in Brazil: The Culture of Cacao Plantations in Amazonia and Bahia (17th–19th Centuries)', *Food & Foodways*, 15 (2007), pp. 85–9; 'Establishing Cacao Plantation Culture in the Atlantic World: Portuguese Cacao Cultivation in Brazil and West Africa, circa 1580–1912', in Louis E. Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro (eds.), *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp. 543–58; Karl-Heinz Arenz, *De l'Alzette à l'Amazone. Jean-Philippe Bettendorff et les jésuites en Amazonie portugaise (1661–1693)* (Saarbrücken: Éditions Universitaires Européennes, 2010), pp. 338–41; Rafael Chambouleyron, 'Cacao, Bark-clove and Agriculture in the Portuguese Amazon region, Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 51: 1 (2014), pp. 1–35.

⁵The Portuguese Amazon region constituted a separate and independent administrative province of Portuguese America, called the State of Maranhão and Pará. It comprised six captaincies (Maranhão, Pará, Tapuitapera, Cametá, Caeté and Joanes).

frontier in the remote hinterland – and the role that Indigenous labour played in the development of cacao exploitation.

The text deals with a period spanning from the late seventeenth century up until the mid-eighteenth century. It was only in the 1680s and especially from the 1690s onwards that cacao exploitation thrived, and this success resulted especially from strong economic policies issued by the Crown.⁶ Cacao exploitation and exportation increased throughout the eighteenth century, especially after the 1720s when, according to Dauril Alden, the product eventually found a ‘dependable market’ due to the popularisation of cacao consumption in Europe.⁷

We argue here that throughout the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, owing especially to cacao exploitation, a specific pattern of economic exploitation developed in the Portuguese Amazon region. This mode of production would undergo changes in the mid-eighteenth century, when the Crown abolished Indigenous slavery and secularised missionary villages. However, we argue that the combination of agriculture and extractive industry, as well as a significant quantity of native labour (whether enslaved, forced and/or tethered to missionary activities), became the basis of an economic system that would exist in the Amazon region throughout the colonial period. Thus, the exploitation of this colonial commodity would rely on both agriculture and extraction. Moreover, the exploitation of this staple, which was sent to the European markets, would rely on the intensive use of many forms of Indian labour.

Despite the importance of this period to the understanding of colonial Amazonia, the late seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth century in the economic history of the Amazon region have been neglected by historiography. Portuguese and Brazilian literature has presented the second half of the eighteenth century as a milestone. This is largely because the period marked the beginning of Dom José’s reign (1750–77) and the ascent of his powerful minister, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, known as the Marquis of Pombal. Although historiography has overstressed the extent of his reform policies in Amazonia, the year 1755 represented a change for commerce. During this year the Crown installed a monopoly trade company – the *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão* – which lasted until 1778, a few months after Pombal fell into disgrace.⁸ This trade company enjoyed the monopoly over Amazonian products traded to Portugal (especially cacao) and was obliged to deliver African slaves on a regular basis in order to foster agriculture.⁹ Even though the amount of cacao production did not necessarily increase, the institution of the trade company did alter the Portuguese mercantile

⁶Karl Heinz Arenz and Frederik Luiz Andrade de Matos, ‘“Informação do Estado do Maranhão”: uma relação sobre a Amazônia portuguesa no fim do século XVII’, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 175 (2014), pp. 349–80.

⁷Alden, ‘The Significance of Cacao Production’, p. 118.

⁸Manuel Nunes Dias, *Fomento e mercantilismo: A Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão, 1755–1778* (Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará, 1970), 2 vols. and António Carreira, *A Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*, Vol. 1: *O comércio monopolista Portugal-África-Brasil na segunda metade do século XVIII* (São Paulo/Brasília: Companhia Editora Nacional/INL, 1988).

⁹Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, ‘The Atlantic Slave Trade to Maranhão, 1680–1846: Volume, Routes and Organisation’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 29: 4 (2008), pp. 477–501; Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

circuits within which cacao was traded into Portugal and reexported to other countries on the European continent.¹⁰

Owing to their disconnection from the major Atlantic economic circuits as articulated in historiography (those which linked the American colonies to the African continent), seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Amazonian cacao production and trade within the Portuguese empire has been almost completely ignored by Luso-Brazilian scholars. One could argue that the cacao economy was sidelined by the centrality of African slavery and the African slave trade in the explanation of the colonisation of Portuguese America as a whole.¹¹ Except for the works of Manuel Nunes Dias, António Carreira and notably Dauril Alden, not much attention has been directed towards this commodity in Luso-Brazilian historiography.¹² These scholars, however, concentrated more on trade and less on local production (especially cultivation) and labour. Nunes Dias and Carreira analysed only the period of the second half of the eighteenth century.

Yet cacao was an important commodity in the Early Modern global economy. It was produced in many American colonies – in Central America, Ecuador, the Caribbean and Venezuela.¹³ It was traded between Spanish American colonies

¹⁰See Frederik Luiz Andrade de Matos, 'O comércio das "drogas do sertão" sob o monopólio da Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1755–1778)', unpubl. PhD Diss., Universidade Federal do Pará, 2019; and Diego de Cambraia Martins, 'A Companhia Geral de Comércio do Grão-Pará e Maranhão e os grupos mercantis no império português (c.1755–c.1787)', unpubl. PhD Diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2019.

¹¹See Camila Loureiro Dias, 'Os índios, a Amazônia e os conceitos de escravidão e liberdade', *Estudos Avançados*, 33 (2019), pp. 235–52; see also Aldair Carlos Rodrigues, 'The Colonial Brazilian "Slave Society": Potentialities, Limits, and Challenges to an Interpretative Model Inspired by Moses Finley', in Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron (eds.), *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 251–71.

¹²Nunes Dias, *Fomento e mercantilismo*; Alden, 'The Significance of Cacao Production'; Carreira, *A Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*. See also Walker, 'Slave Labor and Chocolate in Brazil'.

¹³Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520–1720* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008 [1973]), pp. 68–95, 235–52, 330–40; Carlos Rosés Alvarado, 'El ciclo del cacao en la economía colonial de Costa Rica, 1650–1794', *Mesoamérica*, 3: 4 (1982), pp. 247–78; Robert J. Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas: Formation and Crisis, 1567–1767* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989); Eugenio Piñero, *The Town of San Felipe and Colonial Cacao Economies* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1994); Philip MacLeod, 'Auge y estancamiento de la producción de cacao en Costa Rica 1660–95', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 22: 1 (1996), pp. 83–107; Janine Gasco, 'The Social and Economic History of Cacao Cultivation in Colonial Soconusco, New Spain', in Alex Szogyi (ed.), *Chocolate: Food of the Gods* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 155–63; Claudia Quirós, 'La sociedad dominante y la economía cacaotera de Rivas, factores determinantes para el surgimiento de la "hacienda de campo" en el Pacífico norte costarricense: primera mitad del siglo XVIII', *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 25: 2 (1999), pp. 49–71; Johannes Postma, 'Suriname and its Atlantic Connections', in Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.), *Riches from Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 287–322; Sheila Salazar, 'Cacao y riqueza en la Provincia de Caracas en los siglos XVII y XVIII', *Tierra Firme*, 22: 87 (2004), pp. 293–312; Frédérique Langué, 'Orígenes y desarrollo de una élite regional. Aristocracia y cacao en la provincia de Caracas, siglos XVI–XVIII' *Nouveaux mondes, mondes nouveaux*, 2005, <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/769> (last accessed 9 Dec. 2020); Nikita Harwich, 'Le cacao vénézuélien: une plantation à front pionnier', *Caravelle*, 85 (2005), pp. 17–30; Cameron L. McNeil (ed.), *Chocolate in Mesoamerica. A Cultural History of Cacao* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009), pp. 271–337; Nikita Harwich, *Histoire du chocolat* (2nd edn, Paris: Desjonquères, 2008), pp. 47–65; Meritxell Tous, 'Cacao y encomienda en la Alcaldía Mayor de

(Mexico being an important market) and extensively exported to Europe.¹⁴ Its main product, chocolate, was widely consumed in colonial Mexico and was slowly incorporated into the European diet, through a complex process of transformation of its original (i.e. American) forms of consumption.¹⁵

Beyond a focus on trade and consumption, one has also to look at this colonial product from the viewpoint of the social and spatial dynamics that its economic exploitation gave rise to. In fact, the development of cacao exploitation had a territorial importance for the Portuguese dominion, not only in the vast Amazonian hinterland, but also in the areas around the main Portuguese urban centres of the region. Moreover, as mentioned above, in contrast to other cacao economies in the colonial Americas (Central America, Ecuador and Venezuela), in the Portuguese Amazon its exploitation, both in the *sertões* and on cultivated plots, depended almost exclusively on an Indigenous labour force, at least until the late eighteenth century. This means that one cannot ignore the role played by native compulsory work in the constitution of Atlantic economies, which has usually been associated only with the African slave trade and plantation system.

Elucidating the importance of Amazonian cacao in Early Modern colonisation, this text is divided into four parts. First, we will examine cacao production in the Amazon region, both in the cultivated areas and in the *sertões*. Secondly, we will analyse the expansion of the Amazonian cacao economy in the late seventeenth century and first decades of the eighteenth century. Thirdly, we will analyse the relationship of labour force to cacao production. And finally, we will examine Jesuit production, in view of the fact that the Society of Jesus had privileged access to an Indigenous labour force and was frequently accused of prospering owing to its economic activities, which included cacao exploitation.

Sonsonate, siglo XVI', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 68: 2 (2011), pp. 513–37; María Luisa Laviana Cuetos, 'La base agraria', in Willington Paredes Ramírez (ed.), *Pensamiento en torno a la producción cacao-tera* (Quito: MCE-Fondo Editorial/Corporación Editora Nacional, 2011), pp. 203–32.

¹⁴Eduardo Arcila Farías, *Comercio entre Venezuela y México en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1950); Dora León Borja and Ádám Szászdi Nagy, 'El comercio del cacao de Guayaquil', *Revista de Historia de América*, 57–8 (1964), pp. 1–50; Ramón Aizpurua, *Curazao y la costa de Caracas. Introducción al estudio del contrabando en la provincia de Venezuela en los tiempos de la Compañía Guipuzcoana (1730–1780)* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1993); Robert Ferry, 'Trading Cacao: A View from Veracruz, 1626–1645', *Nouveaux mondes, mondes nouveaux*, 2006, <http://nuevo-mundo.revues.org/document1430.html> (last accessed 9 Dec. 2020); Jesús Hernández Jaimes, 'El fruto prohibido. El cacao de Guayaquil y el mercado novohispano, siglos XVI–XVIII', *Estudios de Historia Novohispana*, 39 (2008), pp. 43–79; Guillermina del Valle Pavón, 'Comercialización del cacao de Guayaquil por los mercaderes del Consulado de México en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 26: 2 (2010), pp. 181–206; Manuel Miño Grijalva, *El cacao Guayaquil en Nueva España, 1774–1812 (política imperial, mercado y consumo)* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2013); Enriqueta Quiroz, 'Circulación y consumo de cacao en la ciudad de México en el siglo XVIII', *Secuencia*, 88 (2014), pp. 37–64.

¹⁵Irene Fattaciu, 'The Resilience and Boomerang Effect of Chocolate: A Product's Globalization and Commodification', in Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla (eds.), *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492–1824: Circulation, Resistance and Diversity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 255–73. See also Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (2nd edn, London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), pp. 125–76 and 201–32; Harwich, *Histoire du chocolat*, pp. 67–87; Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, pp. 141–200; Fattaciu, *Socialità, esotismo e 'ispanizzazione'*.

Cacau Manso and Cacau Bravo

Throughout the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, settlers cultivated cacao on estates in the Amazon delta, mainly on the banks of the rivers surrounding the city of Belém. Thus, an agricultural zone strongly embedded in the complex Amazonian fluvial dynamic zone began to emerge from the late seventeenth century onwards (Figure 1). This late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century agricultural region, surprisingly, has been almost completely ignored by historiography. Scholars including Dauril Alden, who authored a pioneering work on cacao,¹⁶ tend to stress the existence of agricultural development only from the second half of the eighteenth century.

Officially, colonial governors made grants of land (*sesmarias*) on behalf of the king, and the settlers had to demand royal confirmation of the concession. Most of these lands had been occupied by Portuguese colonisers from the 1690s onwards. Thus many settlers demanded concessions for plots that they were already cultivating. In general, all over Portuguese America, tenure of the land and its obligatory economic exploitation became the main arguments for the concession of land grants.¹⁷ The expressions ‘possessing and cultivating’, or simply ‘cultivating’, were common in petitions.

In 1703, for example, Teresa de Melo Maciel claimed that she had been living off her cultivation of food crops and cacao ‘for more than 14 years’, and presented this as the reason why she had asked for royal confirmation of her lands.¹⁸ That same year, Manuel Lopes Reis demanded confirmation of the lands he had occupied ten years earlier and on which he had planted 3,000 cacao trees.¹⁹ In 1714, Felipe Marinho stated in his plea that for more than 15 years he had been cultivating his lands with cacao and annatto.²⁰

Usually, planters cultivated several crops. Many of these are impossible to identify, since the documents refer solely to *lavouras* and *roças*, which meant lands devoted to agricultural activities. In the case of the colonial Amazon, these terms probably indicated the cultivation of manioc (the primary starch-rich food of Portuguese America adapted from Indigenous agriculture) and other common subsistence crops (*mantimentos*). Thus, in 1702, one could find sugar cane (for a still), cacao and some cattle on the lands of Mateus de Carvalho e Siqueira.²¹ In 1721, Domingos de Araújo and Inácio Marques stated that they cultivated manioc as well as 5,000 trees of cacao.²²

¹⁶‘The Significance of Cacao Production’.

¹⁷Eivaldo F. Neves, ‘Sesmarias em Portugal e no Brasil’, *Politeia: História e Sociedade*, 1: 1 (2001), pp. 111–39; Nelson Nozoe, ‘Sesmarias e apossamento de terras no Brasil colônia’, *Revista Economia*, 7: 3 (2006), pp. 587–605; Carmen Oliveira Alveal, ‘Transformações na legislação sesmarial, processos de demarcação e manutenção de privilégios nas terras das capitanias do norte do Estado do Brasil’, *Estudos Históricos*, 28: 56 (2017), p. 251.

¹⁸Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon (hereafter AHU), Pará-Avulsos, caixa 21, doc. 1960.

¹⁹Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (hereafter ANTT), Chancelaria de Dom Pedro II, livro 45, fos. 318–19.

²⁰ANTT, Chancelaria de Dom João V, livro 44, fos. 124–5.

²¹ANTT, Chancelaria de Dom Pedro II, livro 27, fos. 294–5.

²²ANTT, Chancelaria de Dom João V, livro 60, fos. 274v–276.

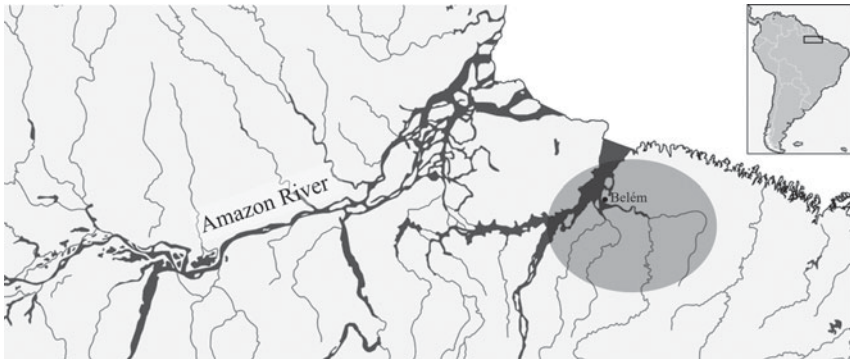


Figure 1. Agricultural region, late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century (shaded)
 Source: Authors' elaboration from: mapas.mma.gov.br/i3geo.

The Crown's effort to promote a cacao 'industry' in the Amazon met with some success. Many of the settlers explicitly stated they were 'planting' or 'cultivating' cacao on their lands. Moreover, the use of the words *cacaual* (cacao orchard) and *fazenda* (farm) of cacao in the land grants indicates the existence of concentrated cultivation of cacao, differing from the exploitation of 'wild cacao' found in the *sertão*.

Unfortunately, there is no indication in the documents whether the varieties cultivated and gathered in the hinterland were different or the same. It is also difficult to tell whether the beans gathered along the different rivers in the vast region of the Amazon came from the same varieties. Nevertheless, since gathering and planting (which were different economic activities) were undertaken in diverse regions and on different soils one can assume that the cacao beans came from different varieties or at least had different qualities.

During the period from the mid-1690s until the mid-1750s, we find reference to 893 land grants distributed by governors among the settlers in the captaincy of Pará.²³ Almost 28 per cent of the land grants (249) mention the cultivation of cacao (as well as other cultivated products). From the details of those grants in which crops were mentioned we learn that, compared to other products cited in the grants, cacao was by and large the most frequently quoted. As mentioned before, cacao was not the only cultivated product declared in the land grants. In colonial Amazonia, at least until the late eighteenth century, no settler cultivated one crop to the exclusion of all others. Moreover, although barely cited, manioc was omnipresent.

From the data related to the land grants, one can infer the strong influence that the city of Belém had in cacao cultivation. Of the 218 settlers who were already planting or who intended to cultivate cacao, 70 per cent declared living in the city of Belém. Moreover, the location of the grants indicates the importance for cacao

²³'Governor' here and throughout means 'Governor of the Sate of Maranhão and Pará'. One can find these data in three archives: ANTT, series Chancelarias Régias and Registo Geral de Mercês; AHU, series Pará-Avulsos and Maranhão-Avulsos; and Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará, Belém (hereafter APEP), series Sesmarias.

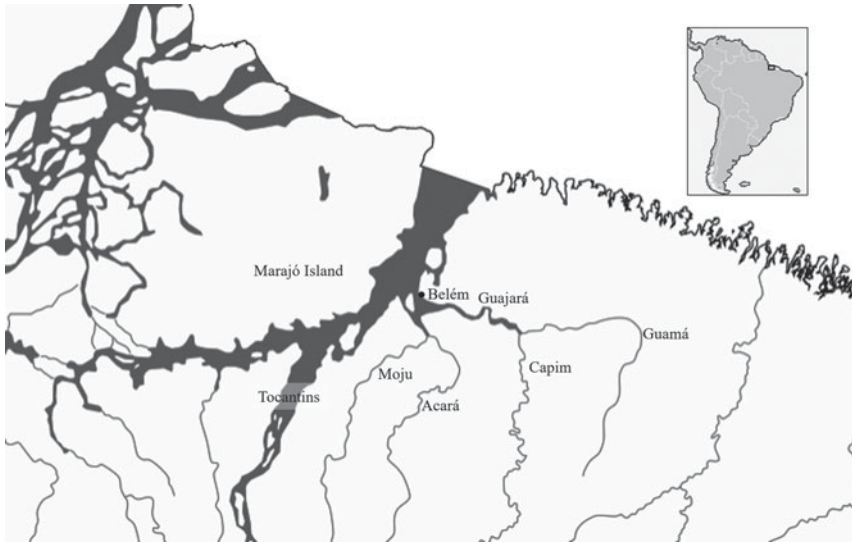


Figure 2. Main rivers with cacao cultivation

Source: Authors' elaboration from: mapas.mma.gov.br/i3geo.

cultivation of the river network that surrounds the city of Belém. The main rivers – the Guamá, Guajará, Capim, Moju and Acará – and some of their tributaries – such as the Irituia, Caraparu, Genipaúba, Itapecuru, Inhangapi – became a centre of cacao cultivation until the mid-eighteenth century (see [Figure 2](#)).²⁴

There is no certainty whatsoever as to the quantities of cultivated cacao that were represented in the region's exports. Unfortunately, sources do not differentiate cultivated cacao from fruits simply gathered in the forest, the *cacau bravo*. Explicit reference to the number of trees cultivated in some of the land grants and other documents come together to produce a total of 342,100 cacao trees cultivated by settlers (data from 1700 to 1750), distributed among 41 settlers. However, this was not a homogeneous scenario. There were people, such as Francisco Cordovil (1734) and Feliciano Primo dos Santos (1740), who cultivated 1000 trees, and Luís Faria Esteves (1714) and José de Silveira Goulart (1729), who had 21,800 and 36,000 trees, respectively.²⁵

²⁴From the second half of the eighteenth century onward, cultivation expanded towards new regions such as the Tocantins river and later along the mid-Amazon river banks near the mouth of the Tapajós river. See Alden, 'The Significance of Cacao Production'; Maria de Nazaré Ângelo-Menezes, 'Histoire sociale des systèmes agraires dans la vallée du Tocantins–État du Pará–Brésil: Colonisation européenne dans la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle et la première moitié du XIXe siècle', unpubl. PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1998; Mark Harris, *Rebellion on the Amazon: The Cabanagem, Race, and Popular Culture in the North of Brazil, 1798–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 133–41; and Siméia de Nazaré Lopes, 'As rotas do comércio do Grão-Pará: Negociantes e relações mercantis (c. 1790 a c. 1830)', unpubl. PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2013, pp. 159–98.

²⁵APEP, Sesmarias, livro 8, fos. 178–179v; APEP, Sesmarias, livro 12, fos. 85–6; ANTT, Chancelaria de Dom João V, livro 56, fos. 99–100; APEP, Sesmarias, livro 8, fos. 32v–33v.

Compared to Caracas production, for example, the Portuguese Amazon region did not represent an impressive number, at least if we count only those trees explicitly mentioned by settlers (the 342,100 trees mentioned above). According to data gathered by Robert Ferry, Caracas Province cacao cultivation increased from 434,850 trees in 1684 to 3,251,700 trees in 1720, reaching just over five million trees in 1744.²⁶ However, if we consider an average of 8,140 trees per grant (based on the numbers mentioned in the *sesmarias*),²⁷ and multiply them by the total of the land grants which explicitly mentioned cacao (including those settlers who intended to begin their plantations and those who already had plantations but did not provide the number of trees), we reach a final number of just over two million cacao trees, 40 per cent of Caracas' production in the mid-eighteenth century.²⁸

As already pointed out, however, cultivation was not the only way of exploiting cacao in the Portuguese Amazon region. The gathering of wild cacao fruits by settlers and clerics was still a very important practice throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Unfortunately, data concerning cacao gathering remain scarce and fragmented. A registry of the Royal Treasury of Pará, between 1700 and 1702 – the only systematic series for the Treasury – indicates that, in this period, 226 boats (*canoas*) went into the *sertão* to gather cacao and clove bark,²⁹ each boat paying the relevant taxes to the Treasury officials.³⁰ In 1729, Governor Alexandre de Sousa Freire (1728–32) indicated in a letter to the king that he had sent 112 *canoas* into the *sertão* for the gathering of cacao and clove bark. Winter (i.e. the rainy season), however, had been so harsh that their yield was disappointing.³¹ A register in 1738 indicates that, from October to December 1738, 101 *canoas* were sent into the *sertões* for the 'gathering' (*colheita*), as reported in the document.³² The rainy season (starting in October/November) determined the beginning of the expeditions into the *sertões* for the gathering of wild products, such as cacao, clove bark and sarsaparilla.³³

From the late seventeenth century and onwards, the Crown attempted to tighten control over the *canoas* travelling into the *sertão*, as the journey could lead to the illegal enslavement of Indians. Thus, cacao gathering and enslavement (legal or

²⁶Ferry, *The Colonial Elite*, p. 122.

²⁷This number is not vastly different from those recorded for the average plantations in the Venezuelan cacao estates. See Harwich, 'Le cacao vénézuélien', p. 20.

²⁸For the Portuguese Amazon region, Manuel Barata estimated a total of 1.5 million trees in 1730, which is not far from our calculation: *A antiga produção e exportação do Pará. Estudo historico-economico* (Belém: Livraria Gillet, 1915), p. 11.

²⁹*Dicypellium caryophyllaceum*: the bark of a tree which has a similar taste and smell to the Indian clove.

³⁰Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Manuscrits Occidentaux, Fonds Portugais, 39. The *canoas* used in colonial times for transportation on the Amazonian rivers were vessels of different types and sizes with a considerable capacity for trade goods. Normally they had a crew of 14 or 16 Indigenous rowers supervised by a pilot. In general, the construction of the colonial *canoas* followed traditional Indigenous techniques. Elias A. C. Ferreira, 'Oficiais canoeiros, remeiros e pilotos Jacumaúbas: mão de obra indígena na Amazônia colonial portuguesa (1733–1777)', unpubl. MPhil thesis, Universidade Federal do Pará, 2016, pp. 58–109.

³¹AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 11, doc. 1060.

³²APEP, codex 32, no folio number.

³³See AHU, Maranhão-Avulsos, caixa 6, doc. 725 (1685). This sarsaparilla was an Amazonian variety of the *Smilax* genus.

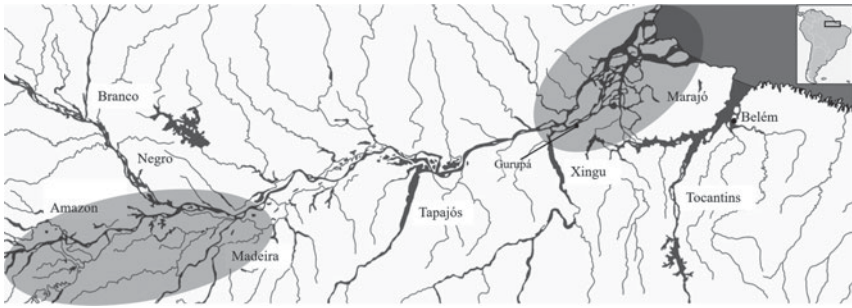


Figure 3. The cacao *sertões* (shaded)

Source: Authors' elaboration from: mapas.mma.gov.br/i3geo.

illegal) were not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive activities, as both practices took place in the remote hinterland. This was the reason why, in 1688, the king confirmed an order issued two years earlier by Governor Gomes Freire de Andrade, who compelled those who went into the *sertão* to register their *canoas* at the Gurupá fortress (see Figure 3).³⁴

According to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, native cacao was most present and concentrated on the Amazon river and some of its tributaries. Judge Maurício de Heriarte states that, downstream of the Negro River, there was 'a lot of cacao', which Indians used to prepare 'a wine for their drunkenness'.³⁵ The Jesuit Father João Daniel, who lived in the Amazon region in the 1740s and 1750s, also mentioned cacao growing around the Madeira river and all of the rivers that drained into the Amazon below it.³⁶ The abundance of wild cacao in the Madeira river region had already been noticed by Jesuit Father João Felipe Bettendorff at the end of the seventeenth century.³⁷ In the second half of the eighteenth century, Vicar-General José Monteiro de Noronha referred to the abundance of cacao along the Amazon river and some of its tributaries above and below its confluence with the Negro river, and on the archipelago between the great island of Marajó and the northern shore of the Amazon river (see Figure 3).³⁸

In the late 1720s and early 1730s, data from the missionary orders' estates (in the agricultural region near Belém) and Indian villages (in the remote hinterland) indicate that, at least for some clerics, wild cacao was exploited much more frequently than the cultivated version. One should stress, however, that the clerics could count on the labour of the many Indians from the missionary villages that they administered in the *sertões*. In fact, the Jesuits' plantations produced only 5.8 per cent of the

³⁴ *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, 66 (1948), pp. 87–8 (23 March 1688).

³⁵ Maurício de Heriarte, *Descrição do Estado do Maranhão, Pará, Corupá e Rio das Amazonas* [1662] (Vienna: Carlos Gerold, 1874), p. 48.

³⁶ João Daniel, SJ, *Tesouro descoberto no máximo rio Amazonas*, vol. 2 [1770s] (Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2004), pp. 83 and 467.

³⁷ João Felipe Bettendorff, SJ, *Crônica da missão dos Padres da Companhia de Jesus no Maranhão* [1698] (Belém: Secult, 1990), p. 464.

³⁸ José Monteiro de Noronha, *Roteiro da Viagem da cidade do Pará, até às ultimas colonias do Sertão da Provincia* [1768] (Pará: Santos & Irmãos, 1862), pp. 17, 20, 30, 33, 34, 44, 59, 69–70.

total amount of goods generated by the Society of Jesus in the Amazon region. In the case of the Carmelites, cultivated cacao comprised only 9.5 per cent of their Amazonian production.³⁹ For the religious orders, gathering was far more important than cultivation.

The Expansion of Cacao

Several sources reveal evidence of the expansion in cacao exploitation, which took place at the same time as an increase in cacao prices in the first decades of the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ Letters written from the Court to royal authorities in the Amazon region and from there back to Lisbon indicate a growing interest in cacao exploitation, most notably after the 1720s.

As early as 1721, the king commanded Governor Bernardo Pereira de Berredo (1718–22) to send samples of Amazonian cacao to the island of Príncipe, off the African coast. He had been informed that cacao could yield in ‘great abundance’ there.⁴¹ In an interesting case of intercolonial exchange,⁴² this order was reinstated several times in subsequent years, notably after the mid-1720s, a sign that the Portuguese Crown was aware of the importance of cacao in European trade.⁴³

In 1724, the king instructed Governor João da Maia da Gama (1722–8) to pay close attention to the production of local cacao, in order to achieve a quality ‘similar to that of Caracas’, so that it could fetch a ‘better price’.⁴⁴ A letter written by Governor João de Abreu de Castelo Branco in 1737 referred to the very first attempts at cacao cultivation in the Amazon region, in the late seventeenth century. He explicitly mentioned that it was from 1725 onwards that Governor Maia da Gama ‘encouraging planters, promoted this cultivation’, which was now widespread among settlers. He added that the ‘change in the price of cacao’ had positively contributed to this situation.⁴⁵

The impression of a cacao boom can be grasped from a series of manuscripts carrying news that were written in the city of Lisbon, in Portugal, between 1729 and 1734. In several short notes, the writer(s) mentioned the arrival of a number of ships from the Amazon region laden with cacao: 75,000 *arrobas* (1100 metric

³⁹AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 13, doc. 1223 (c. 1732).

⁴⁰Alden, ‘The Significance of Cacao Production’, p. 120; Ferry, *The Colonial Elite*, p. 128; Piñero, *The Town of San Felipe*, p. 153.

⁴¹AHU, codex 269, fo. 169v (20 Sept. 1721).

⁴²See Luís Ferrand de Almeida, ‘Aclimação de plantas do Oriente no Brasil durante os séculos XVII e XVIII’ [1976], in *Páginas dispersas. Estudos de história moderna de Portugal* (Coimbra: IHES/FLUC, 1995), pp. 59–129; José Roberto do Amaral Lapa, ‘O problema das drogas orientais’, in Lapa, *Economia colonial* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1973), pp. 111–40; Warren Dean, ‘A botânica e a política imperial: a introdução e a domesticação de plantas no Brasil’, *Estudos Históricos*, 4: 8 (1991), pp. 216–28.

⁴³AHU, codex 269, fo. 218 (19 Nov. 1722); AHU, Pernambuco-Avulsos, caixa 31, doc. 2818 (Recife, 20 June 1725); AHU, codex 270, fo. 7v (9 July 1726); AHU, codex 270, fo. 59v (11 July 1728); AHU, Pernambuco-Avulsos, caixa 38, doc. 3412 (Recife, 20 April 1729); AHU, codex 270, fo. 104v (12 June 1730). São Tomé and Príncipe would eventually become a centre for colonial Portuguese cacao production in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁴AHU, codex 270, fos. 274–274v (29 March 1724).

⁴⁵AHU, Maranhão-Avulsos, caixa 23, doc. 2420 (Belém, 7 Oct. 1737).

tonnes), 'which were sold for a high price', in December 1730.⁴⁶ We also hear of a ship which had been separated from the rest of the convoy, with a cargo of cacao, which 'will be of most importance, owing to the price of cacao, that increased because of the loss of the [Spanish] Indies fleet', in December 1733.⁴⁷ In the early 1740s, French scientist and explorer Charles-Marie de La Condamine also stressed the 'direct trade' between the Portuguese inhabitants of Pará and Portugal: this comprised 'many useful products' including clove bark, sarsaparilla, vanilla, sugar, coffee and 'especially cacao, which serves as money in the land, and makes rich its inhabitants'.⁴⁸

The religious orders also encouraged the expansion of cacao beyond the boundaries of the Portuguese colony. Thus, Louis de Villette, the Jesuit Superior of Cayenne, the French possession to the north, wrote in 1733 to his confrère José Lopes in Belém to reveal that 'we have planted a great number of cacao trees. I myself have planted about 25,000, of which only very few produced fruits.'⁴⁹

Data for cultivated cacao confirm the impression of a cacao boom. There was an increase in terrain dedicated to cacao cultivation after the 1720s: of the lands granted for its cultivation, almost 70 per cent were given after 1721. Moreover, the number of settlers claiming new and unoccupied lands for the planting of the fruit increased fivefold from the 1720s, and remained noticeably high up to 1740. This was a clear sign that the Crown's efforts to boost cacao cultivation were meeting with some success, as mentioned in 1737 by Governor Castelo Branco (see above).

Regarding the wild cacao that was gathered in the hinterland, from the late 1720s the royal authorities reinstated and tightened former orders regarding the expedition of *canoas* to the *sertão*, issued in 1688, as mentioned above. The concerns of the Crown and the royal authorities had a dual nature.

In the first place, journeys to the hinterland, although officially for the gathering of wild forest products, could lead to unlawful enslavement, since the expeditions which went to the *sertão* for cacao could be diverted to the illegal capture of Indians. This apprehension was evident in 1728 when Governor Alexandre de Sousa Freire reinstated the royal decree of 1688, which he decided to 'ratify' by issuing a new order. This new *bando* explicitly stated that 'no one who goes upstream into the *sertão* to extract those mentioned goods [cacao and clove bark] can ransom slaves [from Indigenous groups], without a special order'.⁵⁰ Even the legal use of free Indians from the missionary villages for the gathering of forest products became a concern. In fact, the same governor issued a second edict ordering the

⁴⁶João Luís Lisboa, Tiago C. P. dos Reis Miranda and Fernanda Olival (eds.), *Gazetas manuscritas da Biblioteca Pública de Évora*, vol. 1: 1729–1731; vol. 2: 1732–1734 (Lisbon/Évora: Colibri, UNL/UE, 2002; 2005), vol. 1, p. 89.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 303.

⁴⁸Charles-Marie de La Condamine, *Relation abrégée d'un voyage fait dans l'intérieur de l'Amérique méridionale* (Maastricht: Jean-Edmé Dufour & Philippe Roux, 1778), p. 174.

⁴⁹Pablo Ibáñez-Bonillo and Karl Heinz Arenz, 'Uma correspondência transfronteiriça na Amazônia colonial: a carta do jesuíta Louis de Villette de Caiena a seu confrade José Lopes em Belém (1733)', *História Unisinos*, 23: 1 (2019), p. 123.

⁵⁰APEP, codex 10, no folio number (9 Nov. 1728).

immediate restitution to the missionary villages of the Indians distributed among those settlers who went 'into the *sertão* to gather cacao and other products'.⁵¹

Secondly, royal authorities and councils were particularly concerned by the extensive exploitation of wild cacao and other products. In 1738, ten years after the orders issued by Governor Sousa Freire, Portugal's Overseas Council debated a letter from the judge of the captaincy of Pará, Manuel Antonio da Fonseca. The judge condemned the 'liberality' with which governors granted licences to settlers to go into the *sertão* to gather 'drugs and goods [*gêneros*]'. He asserted that 250 *canoas* had previously entered the hinterland, each with a crew of 20 to 25 Indians. He furthermore complained that in 1736 (when the letter was written), more than 320 *canoas* went into the hinterland, causing the 'destruction of the *cacauais* [here, wild cacao orchards]'. Besides the general concerns around the excessive exploitation of the Indians from the missionary villages, the members of the Belém city council and the royal counsellor in Lisbon – in this following the worries of Judge Fonseca – feared the 'excess of those who not only destroy most of those Indians, but also the fruits, gathered unripe and out of their season, with serious harm to trade'.⁵² Even if one has to take Fonseca's words with caution, owing to the frequent clashes between royal authorities, these letters and official decrees seem to indicate a considerable increase in cacao exploitation in the *sertões* from the 1720s onwards, contemporary with that in cacao planting in the surroundings of Belém.

Royal tithes also reveal a general increase in production: during the first half of the eighteenth century, they grew steadily in the captaincy of Pará. In 1697, tithes resulted in the sum of 24,000 *cruzados*,⁵³ in 1706 they amounted to 37,000 *cruza-dos*. Sums more than tripled between 1731 and 1734, and almost doubled in 1748.⁵⁴ This increase confirms the growth in the cacao economy. Since the religious orders, especially the Jesuits, routinely avoided the payment of the tithes by insisting on their tax-exempt status,⁵⁵ these sums can be interpreted as an indication of the settlers' exploitation of cacao, both on their own lands and in the hinterland.

Cacao was widely exported to Portugal, where it was consumed or reexported to other European countries. We find only crude export data for the period from 1730 onwards. Yet scattered documents show that cacao arrived in Lisbon before this

⁵¹APEP, codex 10, no folio number (23 Sept. [1729]). See André José dos Santos Pompeu, 'Novos olhares sobre as práticas do *sertão* na Amazônia colonial (século XVIII)', in Fabiano Vilaça dos Santos and Mônica da Silva Ribeiro (eds.), *Impérios ibéricos no antigo regime: governo, agentes e dinâmicas políticas e territoriais (séculos XVI–XVII)* (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2019), pp.339–58.

⁵²AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 19, doc. 1813 (1736–7).

⁵³A *cruzado* was worth 400 *réis* up to 1706, and then 480 *réis*. See Charles Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil (1695–1750). Growing Pains of a Colonial Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1962), p. 354. For comparison purposes, in the state of Maranhão in the late seventeenth century, an African slave was worth 400 *cruza-dos*.

⁵⁴Alam da Silva Lima, 'Do "dinheiro da terra" ao "bom dinheiro": moeda natural e moeda metálica na Amazônia colonial (1706–1750)', unpubl. MPhil thesis, Universidade Federal do Pará, 2006, p. 47; Raimundo Moreira das Neves Neto, *Em aumento de minha fazenda e do bem desses vassallos: a Coroa, a fazenda real e os contratadores na Amazônia colonial (séculos XVII e XVIII)* (Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2019), pp. 188–9.

⁵⁵Raimundo Moreira das Neves Neto, *Um patrimônio em contendas: os bens jesuíticos e a magna questão dos dízimos no Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará (1650–1750)* (Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2013), pp. 111–50.

time period, for example the 261 *arrobas* of cacao (almost 4 metric tonnes) traded by Gaspar Dias de Almeida, in 1715. We can similarly mention the 250 *arrobas* of cacao (3.6 metric tonnes) bought by Simão da Silva Rebelo in 1718.⁵⁶ From 1730 until 1755, the Amazon region exported an average of 42,000 *arrobas* annually (617.4 metric tonnes), although shipments were highly irregular.⁵⁷ During the functioning of the Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1755–78) average exports did not increase (38,000 *arrobas* yearly, or 560.3 metric tonnes).⁵⁸ It was only at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries that cacao exports rose significantly, as Dauril Alden has already pointed out and as indicated so clearly by the Portuguese trade balances (a yearly average of 113,000 *arrobas*, or 1600 metric tonnes, between 1796 and 1806).⁵⁹

Although Portuguese Amazonia did not become one of the most important producers in the world, cacao from this region was known as ‘cacao from Maranhão’, perhaps related to the fact that it was a different variety. In the list of goods for which taxes were paid at the customs in Bahia, for example, we find explicit mention of ‘*cacau do Maranhão*’.⁶⁰ In the registers of one of the Lisbon customs houses (the Casa da Índia, where cacao was taxed), one can find mention of ‘*cacau de Caracas*’, ‘*cacau de Índias*’ (both meaning cacao from the Spanish colonies), and ‘*cacau do Maranhão*’.⁶¹ Customs officials at the French port of Bayonne mention ‘cacao de Maraignon’ in the late 1740s and early 1750s.⁶² In December 1755, the port of Genoa registered the arrival of ‘*caccao di Maraglie*’ from Lisbon.⁶³

Labour Force

The expansion of the cacao economy required labourers. In the Amazon region, however, contrary to many of the cacao plantations of Spanish America, the majority of these workers did not come from Africa. Instead, the growth of the Amazonian economy, owing to the intensification of cacao exploitation both in the hinterland and on cultivated lands, was intertwined with the (legal and illegal) Indian slave trade as well as with an intricate forced work system based on free Indians.

The use of Indians as the main labour force for the gathering and cultivation of cacao in the Amazon valley evokes the complex and intensely discussed question of Indigenous peoples as, in Paul Cohen’s words, ‘Atlantic actors who have been largely, although not entirely, absent from Atlantic history’. An Amerindian

⁵⁶ ANTT, Conselho Ultramarino, livro 2, ff. 117–117v and 151v–152.

⁵⁷ For comparative reasons, between 1730 and 1739, cacao exports from Amazonia to Portugal represented a little more than half of the exports from Caracas to Spain. See Fattacciu, *Empire, Political Economy*.

⁵⁸ See AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 80, doc. 6627 (31 Aug. 1778).

⁵⁹ Alden, ‘The Significance of Cacao Production’; data for 1796–7, 1799–1806: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Lisbon, ‘Balança Geral do Commercio do Reyno de Portugal com os seus Dominios’; 1798: Arquivo Histórico do Ministério de Obras Públicas, Lisbon, Superintendência Geral dos Contrabandos.

⁶⁰ AHU, Bahia-Avulsos, Caixa 30, doc. 2711 (3 April 1727).

⁶¹ In April 1749, for example, Francisco Alves traded two barrels of ‘cacao from the Indies’. More than two years later, he bought two barrels of ‘cacao from Caracas’: ANTT, Alfândega de Lisboa, Casa da Índia, Direitos de Entrada, livro 143, fo. 27 and livro 37, fo. 78.

⁶² Archives Départementales – Pyrénées Atlantiques, Bayonne, document 2ETP1, 104.

⁶³ Archivio di Stato di Genova (Casa di San Giorgio), Imposte e tasse, carati i diritti, transito, no. 1829.

Atlantic history (as he calls it) could ‘reconstruct the commercial relationships which Amerindians brokered with Europeans and settlers, and which in turn drew American commodities into the Atlantic exchange’, especially through less European-centred studies. Thus, Atlantic history “needs” to include Amerindians to achieve the ecumenical objectives of its practitioners’. Cohen’s reflexion, although entirely based on North American historiography and samples,⁶⁴ is fully applicable to the Portuguese colony on the Amazon, where natural resources were extracted and colonial structures imposed simultaneously with and against the native peoples.

In the Portuguese Amazon region, Indigenous labour, both free and slave, was a complex and complicated issue that mobilised the Crown, the colonial authorities (lay and ecclesiastical), the settlers, the missionaries, and, of course, the Indians themselves, who had their own agenda when taking part in expeditions or cultivating the settlers’ plots.⁶⁵ On the Portuguese side, it was not the legitimacy of Indian slavery – officially allowed only in certain circumstances – but its interpretation and regulation that constantly placed different colonial agents in opposition with each other.⁶⁶

Even if the Crown tried insistently to prevent settlers and even officials from unlawfully enslaving Indians in the hinterland, illegal seizure was a common practice during the whole period. Unfortunately, for the late seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries there is no way of quantifying enslavement (legal or illegal) or the use of free Indigenous labourers with any reliability. Nevertheless, at the end of the seventeenth century, Judge Miguel da Rosa Pimentel accused settlers of behaving like ‘rulers of the *sertão*’ after passing the control post at the fortress of Gurupá (see Figure 3), mistreating and enslaving the Indians indiscriminately.⁶⁷ Previously, the governor had explicitly stated to the Overseas Council that he had decided not to punish those involved in illegal enslavement, since he had found out that virtually all of the settlers were involved,

⁶⁴Paul Cohen, ‘Was there an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept’, *History of European Ideas*, 34: 4 (2008), pp. 388–410.

⁶⁵See Heather Flynn Roller, *Amazonian Routes. Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Communities in Northern Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁶For a recent discussion, see Barbara A. Sommer, ‘Colony of the *sertão*: Amazonian Expeditions and the Indian Slave Trade’, *The Americas*, 61: 3 (2005), pp. 401–28; Márcia E. A. S. Mello, *Fé e império: as Juntas das Missões nas conquistas portuguesas* (Manaus: EdUA, 2009), pp. 243–317; Camila Loureiro Dias, ‘L’Amazonie avant Pombal: politique, économie, territoire’, unpubl. PhD diss., École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2014, pp. 91–178; Fernanda A. Bombardi, ‘Pelos interstícios do olhar do colonizador: descimentos de índios no Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará (1680–1750)’, unpubl. MPhil thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2014; Alexandre de Carvalho Pelegrino, ‘Donatários e poderes locais no Maranhão seiscentista (1621–1701)’, unpubl. MPhil thesis, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2015, pp. 60–161; Rafael Chambouleyron, ‘Indian Freedom and Indian Slavery in the Portuguese Amazon (1640–1755)’, in John Donoghue and Evelyn P. Jennings (eds.), *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500–1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 54–71; Camila Loureiro Dias and Fernanda Aires Bombardi, ‘O que dizem as licenças? Flexibilização da legislação e recrutamento particular de trabalhadores indígenas no Estado do Maranhão (1680–1755)’, *Revista de História*, 175 (2016), pp. 249–80; Almir Diniz de Carvalho Júnior, *Índios Cristãos. Poder, magia e religião na Amazônia colonial* (Curitiba: Editora CRV, 2017); Camila Loureiro Dias, ‘O comércio de escravos indígenas na Amazônia visto pelos regimentos de entradas e de tropas de resgate (séculos XVII e XVIII)’, *Territórios e Fronteiras*, 10: 1 (2017), pp. 238–59.

⁶⁷Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, codex 50-V-34, n. 43, fo. 199 (1692).

and so punishment could ‘devastate the whole colony’.⁶⁸ A year later, the king himself issued a general pardon to the settlers, directing, nevertheless, that all Indians enslaved against his laws were to be considered free (although the authorities had to send the freed slaves to the missionary villages, rather than back to their own original communities).⁶⁹ Unfortunately, there is no proof whatsoever of compliance with this royal order.

Regarding the free Indigenous labour force, from the mid-sixteenth century the Portuguese in Brazil adopted a system of conversion to Christianity which compelled the Indians to settle in specific villages, known as *aldeias*, conceived for this purpose. Besides receiving regular indoctrination, the natives were forced to work for the settlers, the Crown and the Fathers themselves, although preserving at least officially their ‘free’ status.⁷⁰ This was the basis of a system of native labour that was adopted a century later in the Amazon region.

Because the Indians formed the main source of labour throughout the colonial period in the State of Maranhão and Pará, the use of natives living in the missionary villages would become a bone of contention. Although the settlers, clerics and the Crown did not dispute the legitimacy of Indian forced labour, they constantly disagreed over its regulation and implementation. A considerable part of legislation in the State of Maranhão and Pará in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerned the work of those who were considered to be ‘free Indians’. The fact that the latter were under the guardianship of the religious orders, especially Jesuits and Franciscans, made it difficult for settlers and the religious orders to reach an agreement over the Indigenous workforce.⁷¹ One of the most controversial issues was the annual distribution of Indigenous labourers from the missionary villages to the settlers, which had been determined in 1686.⁷² Of special concern for the religious orders was the proportion of individuals to be distributed (usually, a third of the mission’s adult male population), and the time that they spent working for the settlers (up to six months), as defined by law.⁷³

The expansion of the frontiers (both agricultural and external) of Amazonian society and Portuguese dominion from the late seventeenth century onwards had a strong influence on both the slave and the free Indigenous labour systems. In fact, like cacao, Amazonian Indian slaves and free Indians were to be found in

⁶⁸AHU, codex 274, fos. 69v–70 (7 Oct. 1690).

⁶⁹*Regimento & Leys sobre as Missoens do Estado do Maranhão, & Pará* (Lisboa Occidental: Na Officina de Antonio Menescal, 1724), pp. 36–9 (6 Feb. 1691).

⁷⁰Concerning these questions, see Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, pp. 474–527; Carlos A. M. R. Zeron, *Linha de fé: A Companhia de Jesus e a escravidão no processo de formação da sociedade colonial (Brasil, séculos XVI e XVII)* (São Paulo: EdUSP, 2011).

⁷¹See Mathias C. Kiemen, *The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614–1693* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954); Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, ‘Índios livres e índios escravos: os princípios da legislação indigenista do período colonial (séculos XVI a XVIII)’, in Manuela C. da Cunha (ed.), *História dos Índios no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras/FAPESP, 1998), pp. 115–32.

⁷²*Regimento & Leys*, pp. 1–15 (21 Dec. 1686).

⁷³See Kiemen, *Indian Policy of Portugal*; Márcia E. Alves de Souza e Mello, ‘O Regimento das Missões: poder e negociação na Amazônia portuguesa’, *Clio*, 27: 1 (2009), pp. 46–75; Karl Heinz Arenz, ‘Entre supressão e consolidação: os aldeamentos jesuíticos na Amazônia portuguesa (1661–1693)’, in Suely Creusa Cordeiro de Almeida *et al.* (eds.), *Políticas e estratégias administrativas no mundo atlântico* (Recife: Editora Universitária da UFPE, 2012), pp. 311–35.

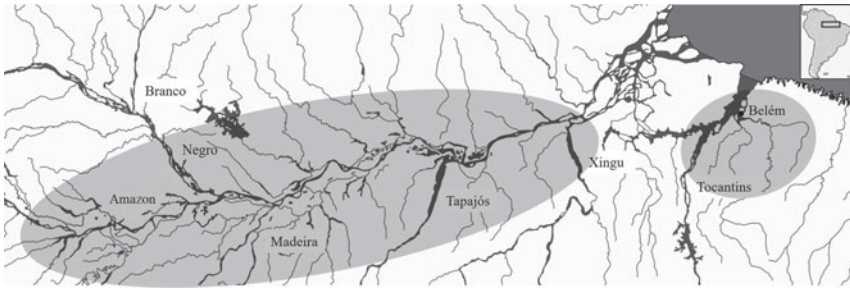


Figure 4. Belém's agricultural region (right) and hinterland (left)
 Source: Authors' elaboration from: mapas.mma.gov.br/i3geo.

the remote hinterland. The advance of territorial occupation meant not only an increase in settlement, but also the exploration of new *sertões* in the search of: 1) more Amazonian spices, such as cacao, clove bark, sarsaparilla and copaiba balm; 2) native prisoners, purchased from different Indigenous groups, captured in authorised wars or simply illegally enslaved; and 3) free Indians, who were brought from the hinterland to the mission villages and governed by clerics (mainly Jesuits, but also Franciscans, Carmelites and Mercedarians).

Thus, the hinterland and the agricultural region of the Amazon river delta (Figure 4) were closely linked.⁷⁴ The city of Belém, in the captaincy of Pará, represented the heart of a system in which *canoas* full of slaves and spices arrived from the *sertões*, and from where expeditions departed to the hinterland. Ships also arrived from and departed for Lisbon, carrying Amazonian products as well as African slaves, European products, new settlers, soldiers and colonial officials.

One can follow the links between the economic expansion of cacao and the increase in demand for labour by examining data for official requests to purchase native slaves (*resgates*), as well as demands to bring free Indians from the *sertão* into the *aldeias* (*descimentos*). Unfortunately, as mentioned above, these records are far from systematic, for they are scattered throughout the most diverse sources. Of the 249 land grants related to the cultivation of cacao mentioned above (note 23), 55 contain some information about Indigenous labour. In royal letters granting slaves or free Indians from the *sertões* to the settlers, we find 11 references to settlers who explicitly demanded Indians for their cacao plantations. Unfortunately, few of these references indicate the size of the cacao estates.

In 1732, for example, Amaro Pinto Vieira requested a land grant whilst claiming that he had 6000 cacao trees, and 60 'servants'.⁷⁵ Although there is no way of confirming the number of his labourers, eight years later he was granted an

⁷⁴See Rafael Chambouleyron, 'A prática dos sertões na Amazônia colonial (século XVII)', *Outros Tempos*, 10: 15 (2013), pp. 79–99; Nírvia Ravena and Rosa E. Acevedo Marin, 'A teia de relações entre índios e missionários: a complementaridade vital entre o abastecimento e o extrativismo na dinâmica econômica da Amazônia Colonial', *Varia Historia*, 29: 50 (2013), pp. 395–420; Dias, 'L'Amazonie avant Pombal', p. 292.

⁷⁵APEP, Sesmarias, livro 6, fos. 89v–90.

authorisation to purchase 30 slaves from the *sertão*, and 50 more in 1744.⁷⁶ José da Silveira Goulart, who claimed in 1731 that he had planted 36,000 trees,⁷⁷ lost 22 of his labourers in the great measles epidemic of the late 1740s.⁷⁸ Another big planter of cacao, Cláudio Antônio de Almeida, received his lands initially in 1731.⁷⁹ In 1740, he reported having planted 20,000 trees in his two leagues of land alongside the Capim river (see Figure 2).⁸⁰ In 1728, he had received a grant of 25 to 30 free Indians or slaves for the cultivation of cacao that he would supposedly initiate.⁸¹ In 1744, he received a new grant to buy 50 slaves from the *sertões* of the Japurá river, located in the distant western part of the Amazon basin.⁸²

The settlers' requests amounted to almost 4,000 Indians. There is no certainty as to exactly how many of these authorisations were indeed put into practice. Since cacao was never cultivated exclusively, there is no way of quantifying with any precision how many of the Indians worked on the cacao plots. Many of these Indigenous labourers, both free and slave, could also be used for the gathering of cacao (as well as many other spices) in the hinterland, since, as mentioned before, the exploitation of *cacau bravo* and *cacau manso* was not mutually exclusive.

Camila Dias and Fernanda Bombardi analysed the available data concerning authorisations to purchase slaves or bring free Indians from the *sertão* from 1690 to 1745. They concluded that the increase in labour demand corresponded to the expansion of the Amazonian economy.⁸³ The data from our research indicate how owners of land grants dedicated to the cultivation of cacao, especially after the 1720s, mobilised a complex and extensive mechanism of Indigenous labour exploitation. In addition, epidemics, which ravaged the native population in 1695–6, 1725–6, 1743–4 and 1748–9, increased the need for labourers. Analysing settlers' demands for slaves and free Indians, historiography has shown how the aftermath of these demographic calamities encouraged certain groups within colonial society to take initiatives in order to enslave or purchase free Indians from the *sertões*.⁸⁴ The available data give a clear indication that Indian labour was strongly associated with the exploitation of cultivated cacao.

⁷⁶ 'Livro dos Termos da Junta das Missões', transcribed in Paul D. Wojtalewicz, 'The "Junta das Missões": The Missions in the Portuguese Amazon', unpubl. MPhil thesis, University of Minnesota, 1993, pp. 118, 137.

⁷⁷ APEP, Sesmarías, livro 8, fos. 32v–33v.

⁷⁸ AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 32, doc. 3001 (1750).

⁷⁹ APEP, Sesmarías, livro 6, fos. 47–47v.

⁸⁰ APEP, Sesmarías, livro 10, fos. 27v–28.

⁸¹ Bombardi, 'Pelos interstícios do olhar do colonizador', p. 184.

⁸² Livro dos Termos da Junta das Missões', p. 135.

⁸³ Dias and Bombardi, 'O que dizem as licenças?'

⁸⁴ David Sweet, 'A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed: The Middle Amazon Valley, 1640–1750', unpubl. PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1974; Robin Wright, 'Indian Slavery in the Northwest Amazon', *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi*, 7: 2 (1991), pp. 149–79; Rafael Chambouleyron *et al.*, "'Formidável contágio": epidemias, trabalho e recrutamento na Amazônia colonial (1660–1750)', *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, 18: 4 (2011), pp. 987–1004; Bombardi, 'Pelos interstícios do olhar do colonizador', pp. 86–115; Antonio Otaviano Vieira Junior and Roberta Sauaia Martins, 'Epidemia y esclavitud en la Amazonia (1748–1778)', *Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 25 (2016), pp. 115–42.

Clerics and Cacao

A clearer picture of cacao cultivation and gathering, Indigenous slavery and forced work is provided by studying the Jesuits' estates. From this examination, it becomes clear that the Society of Jesus, the most influential and the wealthiest religious order in the region, followed the same pattern as the rest of the settlers (although it enjoyed some legal advantages that were not available to the lay settlers). From the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the missionaries promoted not only the annual gathering of cacao, but also its cultivation in their key estates and far-reaching mission network. In an attempt to create a solid economic foundation for their aim of evangelising the Indians, especially after their first expulsion from the colony between 1661 and 1663 (a reaction of the settlers to the Fathers' monopoly over the free Indigenous labour force), the Society of Jesus invested an increased effort in the production and exportation of cacao. The Fathers were aware of the huge demand for cacao beans in Europe.

Father João Felipe Bettendorff, Superior of the Amazon Mission at that time, engaged in the diffusion and cultivation of cacao trees throughout the colony. During the 1670s, he regarded cacao as one of the key products, besides clove bark, cotton and sugar, that could improve the profitability of the Maranhão Mission, as the Jesuits referred to their administrative circumscription in the Amazon. In his writings, Father Bettendorff highlighted his many attempts to plant cacao trees in the captaincy of Maranhão.⁸⁵ In 1678, his Italian confrère Pier Luigi Consalvi positively stressed Father Bettendorff's efforts to improve the economic situation of the mission by 'planting cacao of which is made the beverage called Chiccolata'.⁸⁶ Father Bettendorff's report also shows that he intended to cooperate, to a certain extent, with the settlers, as he considered cacao as a kind of solution to the economic crisis that at the time affected not only the Portuguese possessions in the Amazon region, but the entire Portuguese colonial world.⁸⁷ According to another letter, Father Bettendorff even succeeded in convincing Governor Inácio Coelho da Silva (1678–82) to visit one of the new cacao plantations that he had established, pointing out the importance of the product in the context of the increasing consumption of hot chocolate in Europe.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, sources also indicate that, at the end of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits' cacao production was affected by poor harvests. German-born Father Aloysius Konrad Pfeil hinted, in a letter from 1691, that the economic situation of the Mission

⁸⁵Letter from Bettendorff (São Luís, Maranhão) to Superior General Giovanni Paolo Oliva (Rome), 20 Sept. 1677, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome (hereafter ARSI), codex Bras. 26, fo. 43v.

⁸⁶Letter from Consalvi (São Luís) to Oliva, 27 Feb. 1678, ARSI, codex Bras. 26, fo. 53v. More than 40 years later, the Jesuit chronicler Domingos de Araújo favourably remembered Bettendorff's efforts towards the economic consolidation of mission work in the captaincy of Pará. See 'Chronica da Companhia de Jesus', 1720, Biblioteca Pública de Évora (Évora), codex CXV/2-11, fo. 234v.

⁸⁷Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, 'Portugal and her Empire, 1680–1720', in J. S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), vol. 6: *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688–1715/25*, pp. 509–39; Frédéric Mauro, *Des produits et des hommes. Essais historiques latino-américains XVIe–XXe siècles* (Paris/The Hague: École Pratique des Hautes Études/Mouton, 1972), p. 80; Carl A. Hanson, *Economy and Society in Baroque Portugal (1668–1703)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1981); Jean-François Labourdette, *Histoire du Portugal* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), pp. 344–422.

⁸⁸Letter from Bettendorff (São Luís) to Oliva, 7 May 1678, ARSI, codex Bras. 26, fo. 47. In this report, the Jesuit Superior mentions again his effort to diffuse the cacao tree among the settlers.

was extremely unfavourable due to the decreasing amount of cacao beans and clove bark for exportation.⁸⁹

In 1701, an anonymous Jesuit member of the Maranhão Mission suggested to the church authorities in Rome that there existed a supposed greed among the settlers for spices, and that abuses of the native labourers were taking place. One can infer from this report the importance of cacao and clove bark in European markets. The author was alluding to harsh competition between settlers and missionaries in the production and sale of these two highly important Amazonian spices.⁹⁰

One cannot, however, take the commitment of the missionaries and the expansion of their plantations as exemplary of the whole cacao exploitation system in the Portuguese Amazonian region. As mentioned above, although non-religious settlers and missionaries alike adopted the same economic model, exploiting both cultivated and wild cacao, the Jesuits had relatively free access to the labour force who lived in the many villages that the priests administered in the *sertões*, as well as close to the main cities and forts of the region.⁹¹

As the clerics also had workers, tools and expertise to fabricate *canoas* of various sizes, they were able to send expeditions into the *sertões* in search of Indians and spices, cacao included. During these incursions, they could rely on the many mission settlements scattered in the hinterland, as well as on a number of indigenous groups with whom they were already in contact. Furthermore, the Fathers received land grants not only from the Crown, but also from devout Portuguese settlers. Jesuits also routinely avoided paying royal tithes and were exempt from paying custom taxes, as mentioned above. As one can see, these factors provided enough reason for their secular businesses to prosper in the Amazon region, as indeed they did.⁹² Nevertheless, references to income from cacao or other tropical products are rare in the official correspondence of the Society of Jesus. One of the few examples is a letter from Father Inácio Ferreira, rector in Belém, who informed the Superior General in 1709 that 'he had sent 100 *arrobas* of clove bark and 400 of cacao to Lisbon in order to pay the expenses of the Mission'.⁹³

In 1704, the planters alleged in a complaint to the Crown that the Fathers were over-involved in cacao commerce, to the neglect of their spiritual obligations.⁹⁴ In the early 1720s, Paulo da Silva Nunes, an influential confidant of Governor Berredo, hyperbolically accused the Jesuits of being responsible for the systematic 'ruin of the State' of Maranhão and Pará through deliberate exploitation of the

⁸⁹Letter from Pfeil (São Luís) to Oliva, 27 Feb. 1691, ARSI, codex Bras. 26, fo. 366v.

⁹⁰'Informatio de Maraionensis Missionis Statu', 1701, Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Rome, codex Scrittura riferite nei Congressi - America Meridionale, vol. 1, fo. 518.

⁹¹According to Dauril Alden, the Jesuits 'depended primarily upon their Amerindian neophytes and catechumens in the interior missions to collect' cacao: *The Making of an Enterprise*, p. 546.

⁹²Dauril Alden, 'Economic Aspects of the Expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil: A Preliminary Report', in Henry H. Keith and S. F. Edwards (eds.), *Conflict and Continuity in Brazilian Society* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 1969), pp. 25–65; Paulo de Assunção, *Negócios jesuíticos: o cotidiano da administração dos bens divinos* (São Paulo: EdUSP, 2004); and Neves Neto, *Um patrimônio em contendas*.

⁹³Letter from Ferreira (São Luís) to Superior General Michelangelo Tamburini, Rome, 19 March 1709, ARSI, codex Bras. 26, fo. 211r.

⁹⁴Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, p. 546.

Indigenous labour force and the region's natural resources.⁹⁵ Berredo's successor, the Jesuit-friendly Governor João da Maia da Gama, responded that the Fathers produced more cacao, because, in addition to having more missions (and hence more Indians to work for them than the other religious orders and settlers), their missions were well run.⁹⁶

The disputes, however, did not affect ongoing Jesuit investment in cacao. Looking at the exports transacted by the religious orders in the Amazonian colony between 1743 and 1745 (the only detailed data that we have available), 78.7 per cent (a little more than 10,000 *arrobas*) were produced by the Society of Jesus, and 19.3 per cent (2600 *arrobas*) by the Carmelites. Cacao was the main product of both the Jesuits and the Friars of Mount Carmel – representing 81.4 and 90.9 per cent, respectively, of their traded goods.⁹⁷ Access to the *sertões* abundant in cacao, owing to the location of their missions, and to an Indigenous labour force were central to the endeavours of the Jesuits and the Carmelites.

Nevertheless, despite these numbers, one cannot state that the cacao activities of the Jesuits flourished to the detriment of settler cacao production, as the settlers would have the royal authorities in Lisbon believe. If one compares the production of the clerics with the data for all cacao exports, at least for the years 1743–5, the amount produced by the Society of Jesus represented only 5.4 per cent of the total.⁹⁸

Similarly to the settlers, the Jesuits produced cultivated cacao on their estates, located in the area surrounding the city of Belém. A tenacious foe of the Jesuits, Governor Alexandre de Sousa Freire, drew up a list of the estates belonging to the priests and also collated details of their production activities. Sousa Freire – unlike his already mentioned immediate predecessor, João da Maia da Gama – certainly exaggerated the priests' economic output in his efforts to prove to the Crown that the Jesuits had managed to ruin the Royal Treasury by routinely avoiding the payment of tithes. According to Sousa Freire, the clerics produced around 500 *arrobas* on their estates each year. And yet most of the cacao had come from the missionary villages in the hinterland. In their *aldeias* of Mortigura, Samaúma, Bocas, Guaricuru, Arucaru, Itacuruçá, Aricará, Tapajós, Cumaru/Arapiuns, Tupinambaranas and Abacaxis (on the rivers Tocantins, Xingu, Tapajós, Amazon and Madeira, and their tributaries), according to the governor, the Fathers processed around 5,400 *arrobas* of cacao (almost 80 metric tonnes).⁹⁹

At the time of their second expulsion from the region in the late 1750s,¹⁰⁰ the Jesuits themselves prepared a detailed inventory of the lands, goods and slaves that made up their estates. According to this document, they had two cacao

⁹⁵AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 18, doc. 1645; AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 17, doc. 1628. See Roberta Lobão de Carvalho, "A ruína do Maranhão": a construção do discurso antijesuítico na Amazônia portuguesa (1705–1759), unpubl. PhD Diss., Universidade Federal do Pará, 2018, pp. 121–217.

⁹⁶Parecer de João da Maia da Gama, governador que foi do Maranhão, sobre os Requerimentos que a El-Rei representou, Paulo da Silva Nunes contra os missionários', Lisboa Occidental, 22 Feb. 1730, published in A. J. de M. Moraes, *Corographia histórica, chronográfica, genealógica, nobiliária e política do Império do Brasil*, vol. 4 (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia Americana, 1858), p. 262.

⁹⁷AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 29, doc. 2799 (20 Oct. 1747).

⁹⁸AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 80, doc. 6627 (31 Aug. 1778).

⁹⁹AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 13, doc. 1223 (c. 1732).

¹⁰⁰The Jesuits were expelled from Portugal and the Portuguese territories for a second time in 1759.



Figure 5. Jesuit missionary villages (unbroken arrows) and estates (dotted arrows) mentioned by Governor Sousa Freire. The city of Belém is ringed; missions are indicated by 'M' and/or a church symbol. Source: Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Gav 4 N25, Mappa Vice Provinciae Societatis Iesu Maragonii, 1753 (detail); river names Tocantins, Xingu, Tapajós, Amazon and Madeira have been added by the authors.

orchards (*cacauais*) in Gibirié, five in Ibirajuba (which was not mentioned by Governor Sousa Freire), two in Jaguarari, and an 'old *cacauai*' in Taboatinga (also not mentioned by Sousa Freire) (see Figure 5).¹⁰¹ In his report, Governor Sousa Freire listed the slaves that the clerics had been keeping on some of their farms; included amongst these were 100 servants in Gibirié. In Ibirajuba, the clerics had 300 slaves, including 'negroes, *cafusos*,¹⁰² mulattoes and Indians from the land [*índios da terra*], besides many Indians from the villages [*aldeanos*']'. Moreover, he stressed that 'all the [missionaries'] lands here declared are cultivated by Indians, both male and female, from the villages [*aldeias*] that the same priests administer'.¹⁰³ Although we should approach Sousa Freire's document with caution, it indicates how crucial both free and slave Indigenous labour were in the development of the cacao industry in colonial Portuguese Amazon.

Father João Daniel, mentioned above, stressed the profitability of cacao orchards in the tropical climate of the Amazon when he recommended planting cacao in a system of crop rotation. As an example, he related the successful experience of a certain missionary – probably himself – in Cumaru on the Tapajós, where macaxeira (a kind of cassava), cacao seeds (which produced '10,000 trees') and banana would be alternated annually on flooded and sandy terrain.¹⁰⁴ However, this form of cultivation did not prevail, nor was it adopted by other growers, since the Jesuits were expelled in 1759.

Conclusion

From the late seventeenth century, a series of Crown policies for the region (which included the encouragement of cacao cultivation) and a general expansion in

¹⁰¹ ARSI, codex Bras. 28, fos. 11–11v; 12; 13–14v; 17.

¹⁰² *Cafusos* (or *cafuzos*) are persons of mixed African and Indigenous descent.

¹⁰³ AHU, Pará-Avulsos, caixa 13, doc. 1223 (c. 1732).

¹⁰⁴ Daniel, *Tesouro descoberto*, pp. 244, 248, 259, 449 and 465.

chocolate consumption in Europe led to the overall intensification of cacao exploitation in the Amazon region. This increase led to the extension of lands cultivated with cacao (close to the city of Belém) and to the intensification of cacao gathering in the remote hinterland. These two economic frontiers, each with their own specific economic dynamics, required and relied upon labourers. In Amazonia, these labourers were enslaved Indigenous groups and (at least officially) free Indians, compelled to work on the settlers' land and to row the *canoas* sent into the *sertão* by the Portuguese in search of more cacao (along with other Amazonian spices) and more Indians. This dynamic characterised the centrifugal nature of the Amazonian economy.

The expansion in Amazonian cacao, thus, did not follow the explanatory model which is most often applied to explain the development of a colonial economy: the introduction of an exogenous good (e.g. sugar cane) cultivated by imported labourers (e.g. African slaves). In fact, unlike in other cacao-producing regions, such as Caracas, the economy of Amazonian cacao – a product endemic to the region – was underpinned by recruitment of local forced labour, who also provided the necessary knowledge to explore and exploit this product. Moreover, the growth of the cacao economy was not solely reliant upon an increase in agricultural activities: it was mainly dependent upon the steady and continual opening up of the vast Amazonian hinterland, the gathering of wild fruits, and the search for additional labourers.

These dynamics of cacao exploitation in Portuguese Amazonia integrated the region through the Atlantic trade routes into the consumer markets in Europe. Contrary to Luso-Brazilian historiography, which emphasises the role of African slavery, the research undertaken so far indicates that the irrelevance of the Atlantic slave trade to cacao exploitation in Amazonia did not imply that the region became disconnected from the broader Atlantic network in the Early Modern period. Rather, intensive exploitation of Indigenous labourers underpinned the cacao exports destined for Lisbon and other European markets. Although native labour has been almost totally ignored by historiography, it was crucial for the setting up of an Atlantic trade route: an Amazonian Atlantic.

Spanish abstract

Siendo un producto nativo de la selva amazónica, el cacao se convirtió en el grano básico más importante de la economía colonial de la Amazonía portuguesa desde fines del siglo XVII hasta mediados del siglo XIX. En base a investigación extensa en archivos brasileños y europeos, este artículo analiza la explotación del cacao en la Amazonía portuguesa, examinando su dimensión espacial dual: la expansión de una frontera agrícola, y la expansión de la frontera extractiva en la profundidad de la selva, con un enfoque particular en el papel que el trabajo indígena jugó en este proceso.

Spanish keywords: región amazónica portuguesa; explotación de cacao; trabajo indígena; siglos XVII y XVIII

Portuguese abstract

Nativo da floresta Amazônica, o cacau tornou-se o produto básico mais importante da economia colonial da Amazônia Portuguesa no período entre o século dezesete e a metade do século dezanove. Tendo como base ampla pesquisa em arquivos do Brasil e da Europa, este artigo analisa a exploração do cacau na Amazônia Portuguesa, examinando sua dupla dimensão espacial: a expansão de uma fronteira agrícola e a expansão de uma fronteira extrativa floresta adentro, com particular ênfase no papel que o trabalho indígena teve nesse desenvolvimento.

Portuguese keywords: região Amazônica portuguesa; exploração de cacau; trabalho indígena; séculos dezesete e dezoito

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