

## COLONIAL COLLECTING EXPEDITIONS AND THE PURSUIT OF OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AMAZONIAN *SERTÃO*, c. 1750–1800

Every year during the second half of the eighteenth century, as river levels dropped, an average of 1,500 Indian crewmen departed nearly 50 villages for the remote interior forests and waterways of the Amazonian *sertão*.<sup>1</sup> During the next six to eight months, as they searched for cacao, sarsaparilla, nuts, or turtle eggs, the crewmen might experience all manner of hardships—epidemics, tribal attacks, famine, mutinies, or the loss of the village canoe and its cargo, to name just a few. Then, upon arriving home, they might find their families reduced to utter poverty or sickness, their wives taken in by other men, or their crops abandoned and devoured by pests. Yet despite the arduousness of the state-sponsored collecting expeditions and the hardships imposed upon those left behind, the trips offered a range of opportunities that other kinds of compulsory labor did not. Some of those who were not required to participate, such as the native officials, even did so voluntarily.<sup>2</sup>

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Abbreviations used in the notes are as follows: Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará, Belém (APEP); Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon (AHU); Arquivo do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro (AIHGB); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro (BNRJ); and Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (ANTT). Abbreviations in the document citations refer to Caixa (Cod.), Documento (Doc.), Códice (Cod.), and Fólio (fl.). All source translations are my own; punctuation has sometimes been inserted to clarify meaning, and tense usage has been rendered more consistent.

1. Adequate English translations of the term *sertão* include *backlands*, *wilderness*, or *frontier*. On the various meanings attached to the term and its usage among colonial authors as well as historians, see Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 4, 292-294. For sources on average crew sizes, see note 15.

2. In her dissertation, Barbara Sommer presented several cases of voluntary participation in the expeditions that initially sparked my interest in the phenomenon (“Negotiated Settlements: Native Amazonians and Portuguese Policy in Pará, Brazil, 1758-1798” [Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2000], pp. 135-136, 281), as did David Sweet’s passing observation, for an earlier period of Amazonian history, that Indians seemed to have preferred working as crewmen on slaving expeditions to other types of colonial service that did *not* entail a trip to the *sertão* (“A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed: The Middle Amazon Valley, 1640-1750” [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1974], p. 580).

The Directorate legislation on the administration of the Indians (1757-1798) sought to regulate the distribution of native labor such that all able-bodied, non-elite men were employed in either royal service, communal agriculture, service to private parties, or the annual collecting trips.<sup>3</sup> Lists of people engaged in each task and accounts of their productivity fill volume after volume in the colonial archive, representing four decades of recordkeeping by village directors in the captaincies of Pará and the Rio Negro.<sup>4</sup> Yet for all this documentation, we know extremely little about the work experiences and preferences of colonial Indians. Those of the collecting expedition crewmen are the one exception, due to a minor paperwork requirement on the part of village directors that has been almost entirely overlooked by historians.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the cargo manifests, crew lists, and accounts of trip expenditures, directors were also expected to record testimonies from returning crewmen as to the behavior of their *cabos*, the canoe boss and expedition leader, during the trip. Although the majority are formulaic proceedings, some three dozen of these *devassas* (official inquiries) provide unparalleled descriptions of events that occurred in the sertão and depict, often dramatically, the limits of colonial control in that sphere. And in contrast to almost every other type of colonial Amazonian source, the officials recording the *devassas* quoted or paraphrased Indians themselves—or at least, they purported to do so. When read

3. The literature on the Directorate has expanded in recent years to include case studies of its interpretation and application in the different colonial captaincies of Brazil. On the Directorate in Brazil in general, see Rita Heloisa Almeida, *O Diretório dos Índios: Um projeto de civilização no Brasil do século XVIII* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1997). On Amazonia, see Nádia Farage's pathbreaking book, *As Murallas dos Sertões: Os povos indígenas no Rio Branco e a colonização* (Rio de Janeiro: ANPOCS, 1991); Ângela Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vassallos. Colonização e relações de poder no Norte do Brasil na segunda metade do século XVIII* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 2000); Sommer, "Negotiated Settlements"; Patrícia Maria Melo Sampaio, "Espelhos Partidos: Etnia, Legislação e Desigualdade na Colônia Sertões do Grão-Pará, c. 1755-1823" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2001); and Mauro Cezar Coelho, "Do sertão para o mar—Um estudo sobre a experiência Portuguesa na América, a partir da Colônia: o caso do Diretório dos Índios (1751-1798)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, 2005). On the Directorate in Bahia, see B. J. Barickman, "'Tame Indians,' 'Wild Heathens,' and Settlers in Southern Bahia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *The Americas* 51:3 (January 1995), pp. 337-351. For Ceará, see Isabelle Braz Peixoto da Silva, *Vilas de Índios no Ceará: Dinâmicas Locais sob o Diretório Pombalino* (Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2006). For Rio de Janeiro there is the excellent analysis of Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Metamorfoses Indígenas: identidade e cultura nas aldeias coloniais do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2001).

4. The directors' reports are held at APEP, scattered among more than 400 codices in the *Correspondência de Diversos com o Governo* series.

5. Secondary sources that describe the collecting expeditions generally rely on either the Directorate legislation itself or the account of the Jesuit chronicler João Daniel (see note 10). These include Colin M. MacLachlan, "The Indian Directorate: Forced Acculturation in Portuguese America," *The Americas* 28:4 (April 1972), pp. 357-387; John Hemming, *Amazon Frontier: The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians* (London: MacMillan, 1987), pp. 43-46; Robin Anderson, "Following Curupira: Colonization and Migration in Pará, 1758 to 1930 as a Study in Settlement of the Humid Tropics" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Davis, 1976), pp. 27-45; Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, "A Falácia do Povoamento: Ocupação Portuguesa na Amazônia Setecentista," in *Meandros da História: Trabalho e poder no Pará e Maranhão, Séculos XVIII e XIX*, ed. Mauro Cezar Coelho, et al. (Belem: UNAMAZ, 2005), pp. 21-33; and Sampaio, "Espelhos Partidos," pp. 146-153. Two recent studies that delve more deeply into local sources on extractive activities are Sommer, "Negotiated Settlements," pp. 119-136; and Coelho, "Do sertão para o mar," pp. 230-243, 281. Their systematic use of village-level correspondence has laid to rest any lingering doubts about the feasibility of studying colonial Amazonian history and its native protagonists.

alongside the other documents in the directors' reports, the devassas serve as a window onto how the collecting expeditions worked in practice and how they were experienced by their native participants in different places and time periods. They add another dimension to the recent historiography on Indians' efforts to exercise choice and to carve out spaces of autonomy within the constraints of the Portuguese colonial system.<sup>6</sup>

This essay uses the crewmen's testimonies to address the broad question of what opportunities they encountered on their annual forays into the interior. More specifically, it aims to provide a satisfactory explanation for the cases of apparently voluntary participation in the expeditions—cases that undermine the conventional view that only coercive measures could induce Indians to take part. The essay first situates the *comércio do sertão* within a context of Crown efforts to harness native collecting expertise and knowledge of the interior for regional economic development. It then explores the ways in which the expeditions afforded room for independent action, fostered the expansion of social networks, and shaped the economic prospects of native Amazonians.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING THE COMÉRCIO DO SERTÃO

“There are so many manatee and turtles, that if one piled together just those that have been taken and eaten until now, they would make mountains larger than those of Potosí.” In this (possibly) hyperbolic remark, a Jesuit missionary compared the Amazon's bounty of natural resources with the famous mineral reserves of the neighboring viceroyalty of Peru.<sup>7</sup> Everyone with a stake in the Amazonian economy, from the most humble settler to the Overseas Council in Lisbon, wanted to believe in the possibility of a major Amazonian export boom based on the extraction of wild products like cacao, sarsaparilla, Amazonian clove (*cravo*), nuts, resins and oils from trees, lard from turtles and manatee, and a large variety of native spices with untranslatable names.<sup>8</sup> The official consensus by the mid-eighteenth century was that the main obstacle to such a boom was the region's chronic labor shortage: Indians, with their indispensable knowledge of the interior and its treasures, had not yet been effectively mobilized for the cause, and so fortunes like those of the Potosí silver barons remained frustratingly out of reach.

6. Some of the most influential or pioneering works in this vein include Farage, *As Muralhas dos Sertões*, the collection of essays in Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, ed., *História dos Índios no Brasil* (São Paulo: Schwarcz, 1992); Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vasallos*; Sommer, “Negotiated Settlements”; and Almeida, *Metamorfoses Indígenas*.

7. Padre Domingos de Araújo, “Chronica da Companhia de Jesus da Missão do Maranhão, escripta em 1720,” AIHGB, 1.2.32, Livro 1, Capítulo 11, fol. 62.

8. There was at least one short-lived export boom before the Directorate period, in cacao from 1730-1734. See Dauril Alden, “The Significance of Cacao Production in the Amazon Region During the Late Colonial Period,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120:2 (April 1976), p. 120.

Collecting canoes, sponsored by missionaries or private parties, had operated extensively but sporadically in the Portuguese Amazon since at least the mid-seventeenth century, recruiting crewmen from those same settlements that would later become Directorate villages. Exports of uncultivated products (the so-called *drogas do sertão*) fluctuated during this earlier period in response to labor shortages, disruptions in transatlantic shipping, overexploitation of collecting grounds, and price instability. The decade immediately preceding the implementation of the Directorate was one of the most discouraging for the Amazonian export trade: the quantity of products like cacao or sarsaparilla rose and fell dramatically from year to year, and not a single royal fleet docked at the capital city of Belém in 1746, 1748, 1752, or 1754.<sup>9</sup> During the 1740s and early 1750s, as epidemics spread in capillary patterns along the river system, canoe sponsors could no longer enlist adequate numbers of crewmen for the expeditions.<sup>10</sup>

One goal of the bundle of reforms directed towards the Amazon after mid-century (usually referred to as the Pombaline Reforms, after Portugal's powerful prime minister, the Marquês de Pombal) was to remedy these obstacles to economic prosperity.<sup>11</sup> With its inception in 1757, following the transfer of temporal authority over the Indians from missionaries to civil officials, the Directorate legislation attempted to institutionalize the comércio do sertão: to establish a set of standard procedures by which collecting canoes would be dispatched annually from each Indian village, to regulate participation in the expeditions and compensation of those involved, and to curtail contraband trade and illegal labor practices, both of which had run rampant during the missionary era.<sup>12</sup> Around the same time (1755), the Crown established a royal monopoly trading company, the *Companhia Geral do Grão Pará e Maranhão*, with the goal of promoting economic development in the Amazon region through regular transatlantic shipping and the supply of African slaves for agricultural enterprises. Shipping did become more frequent, and small numbers of slaves arrived to work on the sugar estates

9. For annual export data from 1730-1755, see "Mappa dos diferentes Géneros, que dos Livros d'Alfândega da Cidade do Pará consta se exportarão do seu Porto, desde o anno de 1730, até o de 1755" AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 80, Doc. 6627. For comparison, export figures during Directorate years (1756-1777) are available in the same document. In his analysis of cacao export data in this series, Alden found that yearly export averages were slightly lower during the latter period (when the royal trading company, the Companhia Geral do Comércio, operated), but the downward trend in exports of the late 1740s and early 1750s was reversed (Alden, "The Significance of Cacao Production," p. 126).

10. João Daniel, *Tesouro Descoberto no Máximo Rio Amazonas* [c. 1758-1776] (Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2004), vol. 2, p. 248. On epidemics, see Arthur Vianna, *As epidemias no Pará* (Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará, 1975); and Dauril Alden and Joseph C. Miller, "Out of Africa: The Slave Trade and the Transmission of Smallpox to Brazil, 1560-1831," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18:2 (1987), pp. 195-224.

11. A general treatment of the Pombaline reforms is offered by Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

12. According to David Sweet, private collecting expeditions during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries often collected as many Indian slaves as they did forest products, and slaving activities—carried out under the auspices of officially licensed collecting expeditions—continued even after government slave-ransoming expeditions were reauthorized in the 1720s ("A Rich Realm," pp. 468-470).

and cattle ranches around Belém, but the economy continued to revolve around Indian labor and extractive activities until at least the late 1780s or early 1790s.<sup>13</sup>

The collecting expeditions occupied the largest portion of the villages' labor force and made a significant contribution to Brazil's total exports, especially in cacao. About one-third of village men participated in the expeditions, as opposed to roughly a fifth in royal service, a sixth in private service, and the rest in an assortment of jobs that included fishing for Directorate officials and rowing on the merchant canoes that plied the route between Pará and Mato Grosso.<sup>14</sup> Treasury reports show that between 1772 and 1788, expeditions from each of the Pará villages employed an average of 37 crewmen while those from the generally smaller villages of the Rio Negro captaincy employed an average of 30.<sup>15</sup> Their productivity in the sertão justified what was, at the time, a major outlay of human resources. Cacao was the most economically important export from the Amazon during the eighteenth century, and Directorate villages sent a yearly average of nearly 8,000 *arrobas*, or 250,000 pounds, of the beans to Lisbon. This comprised about 20 percent of the total cacao exported from the Amazon; the rest was supplied by private parties who gathered wild pods or, by the 1780s, cultivated them on plantations along the "cacao corridor" between Santarém and Óbidos.<sup>16</sup> During the late eighteenth century, Brazil ranked second among New World exporters of cacao, nearly all of it derived from the Amazon.<sup>17</sup>

Article 46 of the Directorate established that "among all the branches of business that constitute the commerce of this State none is more important, or more

13. Robin Anderson detects a shift in Directorate economic policy around 1788 or 1789, when the attention of village directors and governors turned towards agricultural activities and away from collecting expeditions. She attributes this to changing priorities among policymakers who confronted population declines in the Indian villages as well as shortages in wild products due to overexploitation ("Following Curupira," pp. 121-122). The encouragement of agriculture in the villages was not a new idea—the Directorate legislation itself identified it as a top priority—but very little agricultural development seems to have taken place in the villages until Governor João Pereira Caldas came into office, in the 1770s, with a mandate to increase production of crops for both local consumption and export. Despite improved agricultural production during his tenure, extractive activities were a mainstay of the economy well into the following decade.

14. Labor distribution data is summarized in *Ibid.*, p. 125.

15. Data on average crew sizes was gleaned from AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 71, Doc. 6055 (for the year 1772); Cod. 72, Doc. 6102 (for 1773); Cod. 76, Doc. 6389 (for 1775); Cod. 79, Doc. 6533 (for 1776); Cod. 81, Doc. 6648 (for 1777 and 1778); Cod. 88, Doc. 7212 (for 1779-1781); Cod. 98, Doc. 7790 (for 1788).

16. Cacao production data for the Directorate villages is available in the "Mapa(s) gerai(s) do rendimento" series in AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cods. 51, 61, 64, 66, and 69. To determine the portion of cacao supplied by Directorate villages, I compared production data from a seven-year sample (1761-1772) of these *mapas* with total cacao export data available in AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 80, Doc. 6627 for those same years; some but not all of this data is available in Alden, "The Significance of Cacao Production," pp. 124-125. On the emerging "cacao corridor," see his p. 126, note 173. The Indian villages may have collected even more cacao when they were run by missionaries, if one royal investigator's figures are correct; see the "Cópia da informação e parecer do Desembargador Francisco Duarte dos Santos, que sua Magestade mandou ao Maranhão em 1734, para se informar do governador temporal do Índios e queixas contra os missionários [1735]," in *Corographia Histórica, Cronográfica, Genealógica, Nobiliária, e Política do Império do Brasil*, A. J. de Mello Moraes, ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Brasileira, 1860), pp. 139-140.

17. Alden, "The Significance of Cacao Production," p. 132.

useful, than that of the Sertão”; and it put the primary responsibility for the success of the expeditions on the shoulders of the village directors.<sup>18</sup> Subsequent articles stipulated how many should participate in the expeditions and for whose profit. The various Indian officials in the village could send two to six Indians each (depending on the official’s rank) to work for them in the sertão, as long as they paid their salaries; the officials could also accompany the expeditions if they so wished.<sup>19</sup> An additional ten to 12 Indians should go to work for themselves, to be paid a percentage of the profits upon the conclusion of the trip.<sup>20</sup> Although Indian women were supposed to stay in the village to work in agriculture or local industries, the occasional crew list showed them participating in separate, all-female collecting expeditions in pursuit of nuts or tree resins in nearby forests.<sup>21</sup> Each expedition also had to be accompanied by a cabo—a person of “known fidelity, integrity, honesty, and truth” who would supervise the crewmen and coordinate the whole enterprise—to be nominated by the village council and headmen and approved by the Indian crewmen. Although not stipulated in the text of the legislation, cabos were white or, much more rarely, *mameluco* (mixed white and Indian) men, possibly Portuguese-born in the case of the former but more commonly Brazilian-born.<sup>22</sup>

Notably silent on the actual conduct of the crewmen and their boss in the sertão, the Directorate simply prescribed careful supervision at the village port upon the canoe’s return (i.e., the directors had to perform an examination of the cargo and solicit testimonies from each of the crewmen as to the behavior of their cabo) and also at the port in Belém, where the products were eventually to be deposited with the Royal Treasury. The final instructions on the expeditions concerned profits and payments: the state was to be paid back for the supplies it had furnished the expedition, tithes were to be levied on certain products, and finally the profits were to be split between the cabo (20 percent), the director (about 16 percent), and finally the native officials who had sent Indians on their behalf and the crewmen who had gone to work for themselves (whatever was left, with pilots and

18. *Diretório, que se deve observar nas povoações de índios*, Article 46, reproduced in José Oscar Beozzo, *Leis e Regimentos das Missões: Política Indigenista no Brasil* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1983).

19. *Ibid.*, Article 50.

20. *Ibid.*, Article 52.

21. References to female participants can be found in the following APEP codices: Cod. 177, Doc. 38; Cod. 190, Doc. 23, Doc. 40, and Doc. 53; Cod. 201, Doc. 94; Cod. 202, Doc. 65; Cod. 202, Doc. 74; Cod. 491, unnumbered doc., fls. 49-51; Cod. 491, unnumbered doc., fls. 45-48; Cod. 497, unnumbered doc., fls. 35-38; Cod. 517, Doc. 31. Sending women on collecting expeditions was specifically forbidden by the *Intendente* Luís Gomes de Faria e Souza during the early Directorate period (see his letter to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, September 15, 1762, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 53, Doc. 4839), but the practice nevertheless continued.

22. *Diretório*, Article 53, in Beozzo, *Leis e Regimentos*, and Daniel, *Tesouro Descoberto*, vol. 2, p. 91. Despite the stipulation that cabos be nominated by municipal councils and village headmen, cabos were often appointed by the governor, supposedly because there were no “suitable” candidates in the villages (*Intendente Geral do Comércio* Mathias José Ribeiro to Governor Martinho de Souza Albuquerque, Belém, November 27, 1783, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 90, Doc. 7366).

bowmen typically receiving larger shares than regular crewmen).<sup>23</sup> Although not specified in the Directorate legislation, additional deductions apparently became customary: a portion for the treasurer, alms for the Church, and a deduction in support of the Public Works in Belém. The governor who oversaw the abolition of the Directorate system calculated that, after all of the deductions were taken, only 30 percent of the profits was left to divide among the crewmen of Pará, and perhaps just 15 percent for those of the Rio Negro captaincy.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, crewmen were always supposed to be paid by the Treasury in goods, rather than cash, due to their “rusticity and ignorance” of financial responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

Several subsequent dispatches from officials in Belém addressed collecting operations in the sertão, an aspect of the expeditions that the Directorate had ignored. In 1783, for example, a document produced by the *Intendente Geral do Comércio* (General Secretary of Commerce) laid out explicit procedures for the collection of each product. At least one example is worth quoting at length, for what it reveals about official understandings of what happened (or perhaps more accurately, what was supposed to happen) in the sertão:

When going after cacao, the canoe should leave the village by the 15th of December; heading up the Amazon River, it goes to the Madeira, Perú, or Solimões Rivers. As is customary, [the crew] finds a spot on a riverbank, where they make a factory (*feitória*), building a thatched hut with a large frame at its base, upon which to dry the cacao. Having arrived at this destination, which should be around the 20th of January, they prepare the mats (*tupés*), which imitate the mats woven in the Algarve, upon which to dry the cacao and also move it inside when it rains. [The crew] also makes enough small canoes for them to split up [into different teams] in search of cacao, and leaving the cabo behind in the factory with two Indians, they go upriver. They collect cacao fruit along the margins of the rivers, and sometimes they go about a half league into the interior of the forest, picking the fruits there . . . for a period of six, eight, or more days. Returning to the factory, they turn the cacao over to the cabo; the Indians who did not go the first time now join the others and return to collecting the fruits, until they have gathered an adequate amount and can no longer find any more. They dry the cacao well, such that when it is squeezed in one’s hand, the skin [of the pod] should split open, indicating that it is perfect; it is then loaded on the village canoe in a protected compartment. . . . When the harvest of cacao is over, which is

23. *Diretório*, Article 56, in Beozzo, *Leis e Regimentos*. The cabo’s percentage was not actually specified in the legislation but was later set at 20% (MacLachlan, “The Indian Directorate,” p. 366). A detailed listing of the payments-in-kind made to each crew member, along with their monetary value, can be found in Director Luis de Amorim to governor, Boim, October 23, 1760, APEP, Cod. 107, Doc. 83. This shows the three pilots earning goods valued at 14\$205 réis each; the two bowmen earning 12\$171; and the rest of the 26 crewmen earning between 8\$955 and 9\$263. The difference in payments among the regular crewmen would correspond to whether the one had gone to work for himself (and had therefore received a cut of the profits) or had worked on behalf of the native officials for a fixed salary.

24. Governor Francisco de Souza Coutinho to Queen Maria I, Belém, March 22, 1791, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 100, Doc. 7963.

25. *Diretório*, Article 58, in Beozzo, *Leis e Regimentos*.

normally in March, the canoe should go after a different product, such as Amazonian clove (*cravo*), which is collected in the following manner. . . .<sup>26</sup>

Each product had its set of collecting guidelines, but these did not actually represent an innovation on colonial Amazonian collecting practices, which had evolved over the past century—or much longer, if one considers their basis in traditional indigenous livelihoods. The Jesuit João Daniel's description of a typical cacao expedition during the missionary era (pre-1757) is remarkably similar, down to the minor details about the construction of the factory and the division of crewmen into different collecting bands.<sup>27</sup> The Intendente was most likely summarizing procedures that had long become customary, and his purpose was probably to educate a newly arrived governor about the colony's extractive activities, rather than to regulate or reform anything *per se*. The guidelines, however, left no room for surprises; they placed what had always been an autonomous, and therefore irregular, operation into a standard mold. As the rest of this essay will show, the collecting expeditions rarely conformed. They had always afforded a host of opportunities for unsupervised activities and the pursuit of disparate interests.

While some higher officials in the colony took advantage of this situation for personal gain, others railed against its abuses. This produced a long paper trail of denunciations and counterdenunciations of people who had stakes in the collecting economy. "I found," one high court judge wrote in 1761, "that nearly all of the cabos pursue their own business [in the sertão], to the detriment of the miserable Indians. . . . To the Articles 41, 42, 53, and 54 of the Directorate they give no observance whatsoever; and when, upon the departure of these same cabos for the sertão, I told them how they should conduct themselves, they thought so poorly of this, that they wanted to argue with me."<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, the legislative articles he cited were those that contained prohibitions on the trafficking of cane liquor in Indian villages (Nos. 41 and 42) and that laid out basic expectations for the cabo's honesty and fairness (Nos. 53 and 54). Another dispatch from the judge detailed the particular misdemeanors he had investigated, numbering nine cases in all and leaving the impression of a widespread network of illegal exchange among Directorate officials in Pará. Six cabos and three village direc-

26. "Formalidade, q' se costuma observar no Negocio feito nos Sertões" Intendente Geral do Comércio Mathias José Ribeiro to Governor Martinho de Souza Albuquerque, Belém, November 27, 1783, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 90, Doc. 7366. For more on the seasonal navigation of Amazonian river routes, see Roberta Marx Delson, "Inland Navigation in Colonial Brazil: Using Canoes on the Amazon," *International Journal of Maritime History* VII, no. 1 (1995), pp. 1-28; and David Michael Davidson, "Rivers and Empire: The Madeira Route and the Incorporation of the Brazilian Far West, 1737-1808" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1970).

27. Daniel, *Tesouro Descoberto*, vol. 2, pp. 79-94, especially p. 84.

28. *Desembargador* Luís Gomes de Faria e Souza to *the Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar*, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, November 17, 1761, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 51, Doc. 4689.

tors were accused of selling the products of the expedition for their own profit, stealing from the collective supplies, and diverting the labor of Indian crewmen, to name just a few of their transgressions.<sup>29</sup>

Twenty years later, the comércio do sertão was still a tangle of unregulated activities. A crusading ex-governor described, like the judge before him, the “collusion” of directors with cabos and various treasury officials, who perpetrated “a thousand tricks and extortions against the simple credulity of the miserable Indians.” José de Nápoles Telo e Menezes was particularly incensed by the payment practices of the Treasurer of the Indians, who offered, in exchange for the precious drogas do sertão, “goods of no value or utility, [selling them to the crewmen] at arbitrary and exorbitant prices.”<sup>30</sup> In other instances, Indians were apparently given nothing whatsoever for their labor, as happened to the crewmen of the village of Azevedo, who, according to a document submitted by Telo e Menezes, had not received their payment-in-kind even four years after the expedition.<sup>31</sup> Although the ex-governor blamed the Treasurer for such abuses, he extended his critique more broadly to the directors and cabos. On the latter, he did not mince words:

These cunning men, who are at the same time among the most lazy and negligent, ordinarily provide no service except to conduct the village canoe to the location of the factory in the sertão; where, upon retreating to a hut that is constructed for their accommodation and that of the supplies, nothing bothers them; [they go on] eating and drinking aplenty, at the cost of the miserable ones [the Indians]; meanwhile, these make their way through the forests, bringing back the products of the harvest until the weather or water [levels] necessitate their return.<sup>32</sup>

In its singular focus on the cabo as an abusive and exploitive figure, this description and others like it tell only part of the story.<sup>33</sup> Although they clearly indicate that the comércio do sertão as practiced was a far cry from the Directorate model, they convey very little about the role played by the Indians themselves. Did the crewmen, like the delinquent cabos and directors mentioned above, participate in an underground network of exchange that helped compensate for the paltry payments that they received from the Treasury? Did they take advantage of their

29. Ibid. to the Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, 3 August 1761, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 50, Doc. 4593.

30. Written during his tenure as governor and included as an attachment to a letter to the queen. Governor José de Nápoles Telo e Menezes to the Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Martinho de Melo e Castro, Belém, November 28, 1780. Attached Doc. 1 in AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 94, Doc. 7502.

31. Attached Doc. 1 in AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 94, Doc. 7502.

32. Attached Doc. 4 in AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 94, Doc. 7502.

33. For another contemporary account with a similar tone, see Antonio José Pestana e Silva, “Meios de Dirigir o Governo Temporal dos Índios [1770s?],” in *Corographia Histórica, Cronographica, Genealógica, Nobiliária, e Política do Império do Brasil*, ed. A. J. de Mello Moraes (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Brasileira, 1860), pp. 140-142.

autonomy in extractive activities to work, as one director alleged, “at their discretion, and whenever they [felt] like it”?<sup>34</sup>

Many historians have assumed that whoever *could* avoid the state-mandated collecting expeditions, did avoid them.<sup>35</sup> There is, however, ample evidence to suggest that some men participated voluntarily. As Barbara Sommer has already noted, some were native officials who were not obligated to go to the sertão, like the *Sargento* Theodósio Ferreira, nephew of the headman of Sousel, who had recently been granted a *patente*, or official certificate, for the post of *Alferes* (Standard-Bearer, or second lieutenant). When notified of the promotion, however, he told the director “that he did not want to be an *Alferes*, a post that his uncle had sought for him; he wanted to remain a *Sargento* and wanted to go on the collecting canoe to the sertão this year to work for himself, [rather than] be seated in front of everyone with his father standing up” (in other words, he did not want to be promoted above his father’s rank). Here was a situation in which someone preferred to go on what was undoubtedly an arduous expedition, rather than be promoted to a higher ranking office in the colonial bureaucracy and be obligated to serve in the village.<sup>36</sup>

Other examples of volunteers include the headman who offered to serve as pilot for his village’s expedition, allegedly because he wanted to visit and trade with an independent Indian nation; the brother of an expedition pilot who hopped on the canoe as a stowaway, hoping to evade a royal service assignment; the Indian from Veiros, who, on his way back from royal service upriver, stopped to visit relatives in Porto de Moz and ended up accompanying that village’s expedition; or the Indian from Monte Alegre, possibly a runaway, who joined the expedition of the village of Portel.<sup>37</sup> Of course, we cannot be sure that these men were volunteers in the true sense of the word—serving entirely out of free will—but if they were

34. Director Venuslão José de Souza Moraes to governor, Boim, [n/d] 1777, APEP, Cod. 317, Doc. 12.

35. See, for example, Arthur César Ferreira Reis, *A política de Portugal no vale amazônico* (Belem: Secretaria do Estado da Cultura, 1993), pp. 54–55; Caio Prado Júnior, *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 246–248; Hemming, *Amazon Frontier*, p. 45; MacLachlan, “The Indian Directorate,” pp. 374–375; Robin Anderson, *Colonization as Exploitation in the Amazon Rain Forest, 1758–1911* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), pp. 34–35; Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, “Os Vassallos d’El Rey nos Confins da Amazônia: A Colonização da Amazônia Ocidental, 1750–1798,” *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional* 112 (1992), p. 72.

36. Director Manoel Ignácio da Silva to governor, Sousel, August 17, 1764, APEP, Cod. 141, Doc. 36. My attention was first drawn to this case by Sommer, “Negotiated Settlements,” pp. 135–36 and 215, where the document is also quoted. As she points out, Theodósio Ferreira did end up holding the post of *Alferes* but was listed as absent from his village in 1776 (p. 215).

37. Director Belchior Henrique Weinholtz to governor, Pinhel, April 18, 1770, APEP, Cod. 215, Doc. 53; Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor, Portel, September 16, 1778, APEP, Cod. 330, Doc. 53; Director Faustino Antonio de Souza to governor, Veiros, September 18, 1772, APEP, Cod. 244, Doc. 15; and Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor, Portel, October 13, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 21. For additional cases of voluntary participation (including that of Indian officials), see the following APEP documents: Cod. 129, Doc. 93; Cod. 142, Doc. 371; Cod. 175, Doc. 3; Cod. 236, Doc. 18; Cod. 389, Doc. 31; Cod. 423, Doc. 13; Cod. 561, Doc. 4.

coerced by anyone, it was not done in an effort to adhere to official policies on labor distribution.

It is also worth pointing out that there is no record of apparently voluntary participation in any other kinds of state-sponsored labor, such as work on the construction projects in Belém, service on the border demarcation expeditions, or rowing for the royal merchant canoes heading to Mato Grosso. Although difficult to quantify, the directors' reports do point overwhelmingly to higher rates of absenteeism for these other kinds of compulsory labor.<sup>38</sup> And although there were certainly cases in which people fled on the eve of the collecting canoe's departure, it was as common, or perhaps more common, for crewmen to complete the expedition to the sertão but then make themselves scarce upon returning to the village, in order to avoid the long and risky trip to Belém to deliver the products.<sup>39</sup> It is also significant that, according to the annual Treasury reports, crew sizes remained fairly constant between 1772 and 1788.<sup>40</sup> Given the limited ability of the state and its local representatives (directors, cabos, and native officials) to consistently draft Indians for other kinds of labor, their success at filling seats on the collecting canoes must have relied on more than force alone.

Along these lines, a few scholars have recognized that colonial Indians faced a more complex set of options with regard to the Directorate labor system than simply a choice between submissive compliance or flight. Sommer suggests that Indians may have viewed them as a respite from harsher labor obligations and from village responsibilities, and Mauro Cezar Coelho mentions that the crewmen would have enjoyed access to unsupervised commercial activities in the sertão.<sup>41</sup> The devassas and complementary sources examined below confirm these impressions and provide further evidence of the opportunities presented by a trip to the sertão.

38. Directors' reports indicate that labor at the forts (especially Macapá) was the most frequently deserted type of service, followed by construction projects elsewhere in Pará (i.e., in Mazagão and Belém).

39. Cases of Indians fleeing prior to the departure of the collecting canoe can be found in the following APEP documents: Cod. 177, Doc. 74; Cod. 201, Doc. 62; Cod. 218, Doc. 45; Cod. 257, Doc. 69; Cod. 472, Doc. 27. On Indians who went to the sertão but then avoided the trip to Belém, see APEP Cod. 198, Docs. 53 and 61; Cod. 214, Doc. 10; Cod. 258, unnumbered doc.; Cod. 312, Doc. 26; Cod. 328, Doc. 6; Cod. 470, Doc. 80. It was not uncommon for crewmen to be waylaid in Belém for up to three months, their labor diverted to royal building projects, canoe trips to Marajó Island, or private service. This was technically illegal, but many governors sanctioned the practice, and such experiences may explain why many Indians preferred to absent their villages temporarily in order to avoid the trip to the city (Intendente João de Amorim Pereira to the *Secretário de Estado do Negócio do Reino e Mercês*, Belém, December 31, 1777, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 78, Doc. 6508; and Manoel Bernardo de Melo e Castro to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, August 17, 1761, in ANTT, *Ministério do Reino, Informações dos governadores e magistrados das Ilhas Adjacentes e Ultramar*, Maço 597 (Cod. 700), unnumbered document).

40. See note 15 for sources.

41. Sommer, "Negotiated Settlements," pp. 135-136, 281; and Coelho, "Do sertão para o mar," p. 281.

## THE CREWMEN'S TESTIMONIES

Our knowledge of the collecting expeditions' exploits in the sertão depends heavily on the devassas, in which crewmen testified as to the behavior of their cabos. The questions used to elicit these testimonies reveal the prevailing colonial/bureaucratic concerns of the period: contraband, inefficient use of manpower, unsanctioned contacts with independent native groups, and abusive labor practices. For example, in a typical 1770s inquiry the crewmen were asked:

1. If they had gathered more products than those that they delivered;
2. If by fault of the cabo they had failed to gather more products;
3. If they had gathered the products in any lands where they might have encountered the Mawé Indians;
4. If the cabo had treated them charitably (*com caridade*).<sup>42</sup>

The crewmen's testimonies on each of these points (or a more general response) would then be duly recorded by either the village scribe or the director himself, specifying each crewman's name, age, and sometimes marital status and village of origin. The pilots (*jacumaúbas*) of the expedition typically provided the first testimonies, followed by the bowmen (*proeiros*), in recognition of their higher status among the crewmen.<sup>43</sup> Usually the pilots' testimonies were the most detailed, with subsequent testimonies either agreeing with what the pilot said or giving a statement with fewer specifics; sometimes, however, there were discrepancies among the testimonies as to what had happened on the expedition. The number of crewmen available to testify ranged from all of those who participated in the expedition to the half dozen or so who could be rounded up after most had left the village center for their homesteads in the surrounding area. Typically, expedition crews had a week or two of rest in the village, often timed to coincide with the São João festivities in June, before a subset of crewmen headed to Belém to deliver the products.<sup>44</sup>

42. Devassa of Cabo José da Silva Godinho, Pinhel, July 27, 1771, APEP, Cod. 234, Doc. 44.

43. The Jesuit João Daniel wrote that the position of pilot is "a trade and art that among them [the Indians] is one of the most dignified posts in their settlements, and they [the pilots] are respected and obeyed by the native residents (*nacionais*)" (Daniel, *Tesouro descoberto*, vol. 1, p. 343; and on bowmen, see p. 346). Just as *jacumaúba*—from the Tupi-based *lingua geral* word for the piece of wood (*jacumã*) typically used in place of an oar—appears in the sources more often than the Portuguese term *piloto*, one commonly encounters native terminology for the expedition canoes (*igaritês*, *ubás*), the types of waterways traversed (*igarapés*), and the products collected in the sertão (such as *andiroba* and *copaiba* oils). On indigenous influences on colonial canoe fabrication and design, see Delson, "Inland Navigation"; and the classic work by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Monções* (Rio de Janeiro: Casa do Estudante do Brasil, 1945). Canoe fabrication is described in Daniel, *Tesouro descoberto*, vol. 2, pp. 47-56.

44. In the 1760s, the Intendente Geral mandated a minimum of eight days of rest between the return of the collecting canoe from the sertão and its departure to Belém (mentioned in Director José Couto Ferreira da Silva to governor, Soure, September 3, 1769, APEP, Cod. 202, Doc. 67).

A thorough search of the directors' reports yielded 185 devassas, representing 44 different Directorate villages in Pará and the Rio Negro and spanning the years 1763-1795. Most are formulaic proceedings, with each of the testifying crewmen apparently in favor of their boss's conduct and claiming no knowledge of any deviant behavior. But some 36 of the devassas are distinctive: they contain testimonies that are critical of the cabo and/or provide what seem to be firsthand (non-formulaic) accounts of the expedition.<sup>45</sup> They reveal how the expeditions were experienced by the crewmen themselves and what they perceived as transgressions of their rights or as negligence on the part of the cabo. A highly incriminating devassa always caused a stir in the small world of the village, whether or not it resulted in the cabo's imprisonment or transfer to a different location, and as such it constituted a strategy for airing grievances, defending one's actions in the sertão, and influencing the conditions of one's participation in the expedition.<sup>46</sup>

The nonformulaic devassas vary so widely in content that it would be impossible to choose a representative one. The following excerpt does, however, provide an idea of how the crewmen's testimonies were typically structured. Recorded by a scribe in the home of the Director of Oeiras, in 1772, the first testimony—by the most senior Indian on the crew, most likely one of the expedition's two pilots—reads as follows:

Dionísio Régis, a widowed Indian, about fifty years old, more or less, put his right hand on the Holy Gospels and promised to tell the truth about what he was asked. Questioned according to the procedures of the devassa, the witness said [the following]: that having gone to collect on the Solimões River, where there was cacao and where the witness knew that they would get a good harvest, by fault of the cabo they went back downriver, leaving behind what would have been a certain harvest. The cabo said that it did not matter to him whether the canoe got any products or not, and seeing that he was a man who could not be reasoned with (*era homem que não admitia razão*), they did not say anything. . . . Furthermore, as they were peacefully setting up a factory, the cabo ordered the Indian Feliciano to go cut wood for the factory, to which the Indian responded that there were no machetes, since all of them were presently being used in the forest. . . . After a little time had passed, the cabo grabbed a very thick piece of wood and treacherously struck the said Indian with it,

45. The devassas of the cabos are appended to some of the directors' reports in the *Correspondência de Diversos com o Governo* series at APEP. Aside from several devassas in Codex 258 that were too damaged to be legible, I believe that I consulted all those that exist in the archive, and none are known to exist in other repositories. Note: included in the total of 185 devassas are five "summaries" of devassas contained in the directors' correspondence (no formal devassa was available).

46. The outcomes of negative devassas are mostly unknown, though it is telling that new cabos were often assigned for the following year's expedition (implying that the offending cabo had been removed). I was able to connect a few devassas to subsequent references to cabos being imprisoned; see, for example, the devassa of Cabo Antonio José da Silva, Pombal, September 28, 1773, APEP, Cod. 2633, Doc. 22; and the letter that mentions his imprisonment the following year, Director Francisco Coelho da Silva to governor, Pombal, August 30, 1774, APEP, Cod. 269, Doc. 76.

letting him fall to the ground, and afterwards took a knife and stabbed him in the cheek and then again in the right hand. And when the relatives of the Indian saw that the cabo was about to kill him, they pinned [the cabo] down to take the knife away so that nothing further would happen. And that is all [the witness] said, having been questioned and heard by the Director. . . . He signed [the testimony] with a cross, since he does not know how to read or write.

The five remaining witnesses in the devassa, all married men in their 30s and 40s, told essentially the same story but in slightly different words and sometimes with additional details. All of the witnesses emphasized the cabo's culpability for the meager harvest of cacao, his irrational behavior in the sertão, and his vicious attack on one of the crew members (who, interestingly, was not among the witnesses).<sup>47</sup>

The devassas present the historian with a difficult interpretive task, for several reasons. The first has to do with their irregular coverage. Although the majority of Pará and Rio Negro villages were represented over time, many individual directors were remiss in sending devassas to the governor, as indicated by the constant admonishments they received. This raises the question of whether the omission was purposeful—intended, for example, to protect a delinquent cabo—in which case the existing devassas would be biased towards well-behaved officials.<sup>48</sup>

The second, related problem is the fact that the crewmen's testimonies were elicited and recorded by a third party who may or may not have had a personal stake in the proceedings, and the director, regardless of whether he served as scribe, possibly played a mediating role in the inquiry as well. Interested in precisely these aspects, Coelho used a much smaller sample of these sources—a total of ten, nearly all formulaic devassas—to examine relationships of reciprocity between cabos and directors. He pointed out that one official would typically certify the behavior of the other: the director would make sure that the devassa came out positively, and the cabo would send a brief statement, or *certidão*, attesting to the director having fulfilled the duties of his post.<sup>49</sup> Given the likelihood that directors and cabos were connected by kinship or social status, their documentation of one another's behavior would seem to have been of little use to the higher authorities.<sup>50</sup> However, I found a few cases in which the devassa testimonies were

47. Devassa of cabo Francisco de Brito Mendes, Oeiras, August 18, 1772, APEP, Cod. 240, Doc. 19.

48. Another major gap in coverage is due to a c. 1775 order for the directors to send the devassas to the Intendente Geral do Comércio instead of the governor; the papers of the former, if any still exist, have never been identified. A handful of directors erroneously continued to send the devassas to the governor, such that only 18 devassas were found for the period 1776-1795, compared to a total of 167 for 1763-1775.

49. Mauro Cezar Coelho, "O Diretório dos Índios: Possibilidades de Investigação," in *Meandros da História: Trabalho e poder no Pará e Maranhão, Séculos XVIII e XIX*, ed. Mauro Cezar Coelho, et al. (Belém: UNAMAZ, 2005), pp. 66-67.

50. A cabo might be the son or son-in-law of a director, as in the village of Santa Ana de Cajari (APEP, Cod. 269, Doc. 52), Alter do Chão (APEP, Cod. 442, Doc. 14), or Baião (APEP, Cod. 354, Doc. 94).

critical of the cabos, and yet the director defended him in his accompanying letter—which indicates that incriminating testimonies might have been collected even when the director and the cabo were in solidarity with one another.<sup>51</sup> And in at least two instances, the devassa testimonies were very critical of the cabo, but he nonetheless signed a statement in favor of the director.<sup>52</sup>

The third problem concerns what was lost in translation. It is very likely that most crewmen did not speak fluent Portuguese and instead communicated in the *língua geral*, the Tupi-based lingua franca that predominated in colonial Amazonian communities throughout the eighteenth century. In villages with large numbers of recently resettled Indians, as in the Rio Negro captaincy, neither Portuguese nor *língua geral* would have been widely spoken, and translators would have been more difficult to find for particular indigenous languages. Recently resettled Indians were not supposed to serve on the collecting canoes until they had spent two years living in the colonial village, but there is no evidence that this rule was enforced, and it seems reasonable to conclude that they testified as crewmen. Surprisingly, many canoe crew lists from Rio Negro villages register Indians with non-Christian names—indicating that they had arrived so recently as to not have undergone baptism—although these were never among those called to testify in the devassas.<sup>53</sup> We can only assume that some devassas were recorded without the aid of a translator and that those written testimonies were only approximate renderings of what was said—if they were not entirely fabricated.

Finally, even if the scribe or director comprehended and recorded the testimonies verbatim, the Indian crewmen may have purposefully given distorted accounts. Of the 36 nonformulaic devassas, 21 followed in the wake of an unsuccessful expedition (i.e., when the canoe or products had been lost or otherwise compromised). Of these, just over half featured testimonies that blamed the cabo for the failure (11 out of 21 devassas).<sup>54</sup> Given his own accountability for the success of the expedition, the director was at pains to find someone to blame, and so the

51. Letter from Director Faustino Antônio de Souza to governor and devassa of Cabo Manoel Gonçalves da Silva, Veiros, September 26, 1775, APEP, Cod. 283, Doc. 115. See also devassa of Cabo Angelo de Lemos Correa, Serpa, June 15, 1772, APEP, Cod. 240, Doc. 14. At the end of this devassa, the director appended a note in defense of the cabo, who had been criticized by the crewmen.

52. Devassa of Cabo Antonio Francisco Franco and accompanying certidão (signed by the cabo) of the behavior of Director Antonio Luis de Amorim, Javary, July 1773, APEP, Cod. 258, Doc. 20. See also the letter of Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor and accompanying certidão (signed by Cabo José Sanches de Brito) of the director's behavior, Portel, October 13, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 21. There is no devassa appended to this documentation, but the director's letter describes the content of the testimonies.

53. See, for example, the crew list for the village of Alvarais, which included 20 crewmen with indigenous names among a total crew of 48. Director João Pedroso Neves to governor, Alvarais, August 12, 1776, APEP, Cod. 300, Doc. 8, fl. 22.

54. In the rest of the devassas (15 of 36), the success of the expedition was not specified in the sources. Nine feature testimonies critical of the cabo; five feature some that are critical and others that are not; and one features testimonies that give no comment on the cabo's behavior.

crewmen would have been wise to deflect all culpability away from themselves and onto their cabo, whether or not this was actually the case. Or they may have been pressured or threatened by the cabo to cover up whatever mishaps or deviant activities had occurred during the expedition, as in the case of the Indians of Borba, whose cabo instructed them not to tell the director about the goods he had sold illegally in another settlement. The crewmen ended up telling, which is how we know about the subterfuge.<sup>55</sup> This may also help explain the seven devassas in which testimonies blamed external factors—food shortages, floods, or product scarcity—for the expedition’s disappointing outcome, rather than the cabo. There were also two inquiries in which crewmen blamed another member of the crew; and one in which the crew could not agree on the reasons for the failed expeditions, with some of the crewmen implicating the cabo and others blaming external causes.

There were surely many other instances in which the crewmen and the cabo were in solidarity with one another, or at least protective of those practices and arrangements that were mutually beneficial to both parties. As suggested by Coelho’s research on relationships of reciprocity in the colonial villages, a formulaic, positive devassa—or the complete absence of one—might actually indicate that more, rather than less, had been done to undermine the standards set by the Directorate.<sup>56</sup> Upon an expedition’s return to the village of Serzedelo, no devassa was conducted at all. This was, according to the director,

because all those [crewmen] who are heading to the City [to deliver the collected products] are so conspiratorial with their Cabo and so close to him that not a single one wanted to come testify. . . . Only with severe punishment will they come forth to confess the truth, since the Cabo allows them all of the cravo they care to find for their *putações* [probably *potabas*, i.e., bonus portions often traded illegally] and has given them lots of cane liquor, which is all the Indians want.<sup>57</sup>

The overwhelming proportion of devassas in which the testimonies approved of the cabo’s behavior (149 out of 185) should be understood in this context. Their often formulaic testimonies might indicate a smoothly functioning relationship between cabo and crew—whether based on dutiful adherence to the Directorate or, more likely, on the protection of common interests—or they might mask real antagonism between the two. Without corroborating sources, it is impossible to tell.

55. Letter from Director Francisco Rodrigues Coelho to governor and devassa of Cabo José Cosme de Brito, Borba, August 24, 1772, APEP, Cod. 240, Doc. 29. For a similar case of the cabo intimidating the crewmen so they will not testify against him, see letter from Director Francisco Coelho da Silva to governor and devassa of Cabo Antonio José da Silva, Pombal, September 28, 1773, APEP, Cod. 263, Doc. 22.

56. Coelho, “O Diretório dos Índios,” pp. 66–67.

57. Director José Vicente Pereira to governor, Serzedelo, October 22, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 20.

Given the problematic nature of the devassas, they must be read critically alongside the other documents that typically accompanied them: the directors' letters, in particular, but also the crew and cargo lists, the accounts of expenditures, and the *certidões* of the various village officials. These complementary sources often clarify details alluded to in the devassa testimonies or may even change their meaning completely, as in the case of devassas that are revealed to have been falsified or rigged.

## SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS ON THE EXPEDITIONS

Going to the sertão for six to eight months was always arduous, often detrimental to family life, and sometimes fatal, but it was not an exile experience. The Amazon Basin conjures up images of an endless, sparsely populated territory—as if, in the words of the renowned naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, “all of the people in it can be likened to Noah’s family, in the middle of the postflood world.”<sup>58</sup> The impression of low population density is relatively accurate, as long as we are speaking of the postcontact era.<sup>59</sup> But as Daniel Usner has pointed out for the lower Mississippi Valley during the eighteenth century, the standard image of territorial vastness and sparse occupation “not only exaggerates the boundlessness of life in the valley” but causes us to overlook important intraregional connections. Like their counterparts in the frontier economy of Louisiana, colonial Amazonians spoke a lingua franca, exchanged local products for liquor, intermarried, and built credit relationships that joined them into cross-cultural network that, while not egalitarian, was characterized by fluid social relations.<sup>60</sup> Brooke Larson has identified a similar process in late-colonial Cochabamba, where native and mestizo migrant populations developed an “interior hybrid world” based around popular religious festivals, market fairs, taverns, pilgrimage sites, and colonial institutions like town councils. In the Amazonian case, these “dispersed sites of microcollectivities,” as Larson calls them, were most often located on navigable waterways, which ensured that diverse groups of people would continually be passing through.<sup>61</sup> It is telling that as far back as 1686 and 1720, there had been royal prohibitions on soldiers, mamelucos, blacks, and sailors (*homens do mar*)

58. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, “Diário da Viagem Filosófica pela Capitania de São José do Rio Negro.” *Revista Trimestral do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 48 (1885), p. 65.

59. On the relatively high density of precontact populations, see William M. Denevan, “A Bluff Model of Riverine Settlement in Prehistoric Amazonia,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86:4 (1996), pp. 654–681.

60. Daniel H. Usner, “The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44:2 (1987), pp. 167–68.

61. Brooke Larson, *Cochabamba, 1550–1900: Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia*, expanded edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 351, 353–354, and note 30. See also Thierry Saignes, “Indian Migration and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Charcas,” in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*, ed. Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 187–189.

entering the sertão for collecting purposes.<sup>62</sup> Authorities considered this mix of people to be a dangerously unruly one, but, as Hal Langfur has argued with regard to the so-called “forbidden lands” of eastern Minas Gerais, the sertão could not be cordoned off by decree. Attempts to do so may have made it even more alluring.<sup>63</sup>

The collecting canoes dallied at various way stations as they headed into the sertão and again during their descent downriver, a practice that colonial policymakers sought to restrict because of the opportunities it afforded for contraband trade, “disorderly conduct,” and delays in the expedition’s progress. One director reflected recent orders when he wrote: “Your Highness does not permit anyone to go on the collecting canoe except the necessary Indians . . . and I warned the cabo that after departing from this village to go to the City [of Belém], he must not allow anything to be taken off the canoe nor accept packages from anyone in the places where [the canoe] stops.”<sup>64</sup> As the previous pages should have made clear, however, efforts to limit the crewmen’s autonomy were only as effective as the cabos themselves, who might be just as eager as the Indians (or more eager) to spend a few days eating, drinking, and bartering in the nearest colonial village, fort, fishing camp, or native settlement.

In many cases, the crewmen chose where to go, what to collect, and how long to stay. Even before expeditions departed, the decision about where to go collecting and what product to pursue typically fell to the native officials, pilots, or crewmen as a group, as they were thought to have more expertise in these matters.<sup>65</sup> En route, the crewmen might be left to their own devices; numerous devassas and directors’ letters implicate cabos for “abandoning” the crew. Instead of accompanying the Indians in their collecting rounds or staying in the factory to supervise the processing of the products, many cabos left to seek out female consorts or trading opportunities in nearby villages and homesteads. Others simply returned early to the village and waited for the collecting teams to come back on their own.<sup>66</sup> Referring to the devassa he had recently conducted, the Director of Alen-

62. “Livro Grosso do Maranhão,” in *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: Divisão de Obras Raras e Publicações, 1948), Vols. 67-68, p. 172.

63. Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands*, pp. 49-54.

64. Director Luis Gomes de Faria e Souza to governor, Pombal, October 1, 1761, APEP, Cod. 108, Doc. 15.

65. Final decisions on collecting grounds might be made by the director or cabo but were usually worked out in consultation with the Indian officials and crew. On the decision-making process, see Director Lucas José Espinosa de Brito Coelho Folqman to governor, Pombal, August 6, 1770, APEP, Cod. 220, Doc. 7; Director Jesuino Manoel de Gusmão to governor, Ponte de Pedras, February 11, 1772, APEP, Cod. 241, Doc. 33; and Director Antônio José de Freitas to governor, Almeirim, October 12, 1785, APEP, Cod. 424, Doc. 48.

66. See, for example: Devassa of Cabo Fernando Correa, Alenquer, August 29, 1772, APEP, Cod. 240, Doc. 37; devassa of Cabo José Correia de Brito, Silves, September 16, 1775, APEP, Cod. 284, Doc. 45; Director Manoel da Fonseca Zuzute de Macedo to governor, Outeiro, September 30, 1787, APEP, Cod. 442, Doc. 38; Director Joaquim Francisco Printz to governor, Obidos, May 18, 1781, APEP, Cod. 373, Doc. 47; Director João Marçal da Silva to governor,

quer reported that “the Indians said nothing with respect to the cabo, and nor could they, because although he departed from the village with them, he did not accompany them while they collected sarsaparilla.”<sup>67</sup> This cabo had dispatched each of the two pilots in separate canoes with crews of eleven Indians each, and the teams had gone off collecting on different rivers while the cabo and several other crewmen retired to a fishing camp not far from the home village. Each of the two collecting teams returned separately, weeks after the cabo had already come back to Alenquer, and the director was not pleased by the crewmen’s appearance when they finally disembarked:

Returning from collecting, they sold a lot of sarsaparilla along the way back to the village, and it was obvious that they had done so, because both of the expedition teams (*bandeiras*), which the cabo had dispatched at the Solimões River, returned to this village completely drunk, not only pilots but also rowers. All of this [was] caused by the cabo failing to accompany them, as is his obligation.<sup>68</sup>

Assuming that this was a faithful description, the director may have been correct in his conclusion that the collecting teams had taken advantage of their autonomy to stop and trade along the way home, receiving liquor in exchange for sarsaparilla. Another possibility is that they had enjoyed visiting and drinking with upriver friends or relatives, or had attended a village festival, which usually featured copious amounts of alcohol.<sup>69</sup>

Probably more common than completely unsupervised exploits were situations in which the crewmen followed the initiative of their cabos in stopping to trade and fraternize at places en route. It is impossible to know from the devassas to what extent the crewmen were complicit in these stops, because they shrewdly used their testimonies to depict themselves as unwilling participants or disapproving witnesses to the cabo’s excesses. Not surprisingly, these types of testimonies most commonly followed unsuccessful expeditions, when blame had to be attributed.

Complicit or not, it is clear that the crewmen regularly came in contact with a wide range of people during the expeditions. The 1774 devassa of the cabo of

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Baião, May 16, 1774, APEP, Cod. 271, Doc. 67; Director Herónimo Pereira da Nóbrega to governor, Arraiolos, August 18, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 32; and Director Domingos Gonçalves Pinto Bello to governor, Serzedelo, January 4, 1781, APEP, Cod. 341, Doc. 46; devassa of Cabo Leandro José, [n/d] 1770, Faro, APEP, Cod. 235, Doc. 26.

67. Director João Euquério Mascarenhas Villa Lobos to governor, Alenquer, October 26, 1793, APEP, Cod. 470, Doc. 70.

68. *Ibid.* Another instance of prohibited drinking among crewmen is mentioned in Sommer, “Negotiated Settlements,” p. 281.

69. The collecting expedition of Porto de Moz, for example, stopped in the upriver village of Pombal for the festa of São João on their way back from collecting Amazonian clove on the Xingú River (Director Francisco Fernandes de Macedo to governor, Porto de Moz, October 10, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 29).

Silves, in the Rio Negro captaincy, is fairly representative of a number of incriminating inquiries that occurred in the wake of an unsuccessful expedition. According to one crewman's testimony, the cabo stopped at "all of the settlements, making disturbances, inviting friends and women to be used (*mulheres para usar delas*), giving drinks to one and all, taking bottles of cane liquor out of the canoe for his guests, and, loaded with [the alcohol], picking fights and [causing] disorders."<sup>70</sup> The other crewmen gave similar reports of drunken revelries and raucous behavior in various settlements and homesteads, including Santarém, Porto de Moz, and Taguapuru. The director's letter provides additional ammunition against the cabo: asked to account for the scanty amount of products that he brought back—and having used up most of the manioc flour supplied to the expedition—the cabo threatened the director with a knife and subsequently fled.<sup>71</sup>

Other cabos sent crewmen on errands to far-flung settlements or assigned small groups to work for individual settlers along the way. The cabo of Portel, Bernardo Ferreira Brazão, sent two crewmen to clear a plot of land and build a house for a woman in Silves; he also sent three Indians in one of the "king's canoes" all the way to Borba, on the Madeira River, to fetch a canoe that he had purchased from a settler there. When the director asked the crewmen whether all of the products they had collected had arrived with the rest of the cargo in the village, one crewman replied that he had no idea about the cargo, because he had always been away on errands.<sup>72</sup> The cabo's misuse of the crewmen's labor can be interpreted in two ways: either as exploitation or as a mutually beneficial arrangement. Although they could not say so to the director, going on an independent trip to Borba may have had its attractions for crewmen. It was, after all, on the way to the most famous turtle hunting grounds of the region, and the village itself was frequently visited by merchants on the route to and from the captaincy of Mato Grosso.

Although the main waterways offered the most opportunities to participate in social networks, the expeditions found company in the interior forests, too: intentionally or not, crewmen regularly encountered independent native groups, usu-

70. Director Ignácio Caetano de Bequemam e Albuquerque to governor, Silves, [n/d] 1774, APEP, Cod. 268, Doc. 4.

71. Ibid. For a similar devassa (in which crewmen describe the cabo's trading and fraternizing in various villages along the Rio Amazonas), see devassa of Cabo José Monteiro Lisboa, Fragoso, August 24, 1764, APEP, Cod. 141, Doc. 54. For directors' letters that summarize incriminating devassas, see Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor, Portel, October 13, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 21 (on illicit trading in Serpa and Silves); and Director Joseph Bernardo da Costa e Asso to governor, Serzedelo, July 29, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 16 (on detours to other rivers and illicit trading in Bragança).

72. First and second testimonies in the devassa of Cabo Luis Rodrigues Lima (with reference to interim Cabo Bernardo Fernandes Brazão), Sousel, September 6, 1771, APEP, Cod. 236, Doc. 10. Note: Cabo Brazão had taken over for Sousel's regular cabo, who fell ill during the expedition. Interestingly, Brazão was one of the delinquent cabos investigated by the high court judge in 1761, and apparently his offenses at the time—illegal trading of turtle lard and cane liquor—had not kept him from assuming what was probably the most desirable cabo post in Pará. Portel was the largest Indian village in the captaincy and consistently sent the greatest number of crewmen into the sertão.

ally referred to as *gentio* (heathens) in the sources.<sup>73</sup> Colonial authorities only encouraged these encounters to the extent that they served as a means of persuading *gentio* to resettle in colonial villages. Other purposes were generally considered suspect, as indicated by questions posed to crewmen in the *devassas*, i.e., whether the *cabo* had traded arms or gunpowder with any Indian nations.<sup>74</sup> Again, as with the reports of stopping at way stations to trade and socialize, the crewmen were understandably reluctant to portray themselves as accomplices in any dubious encounters with independent native groups, and especially with those considered hostile to Portuguese colonization efforts. As mentioned before, all trade with the Mawé Indians had been prohibited since 1769, “because experience has shown,” the governor at the time wrote, “that these miserable men resist the overtures we make to them to leave their pagan ways, because of the introduction of tools (*ferramentas*) and other products provided by the people who go to trade with them. It is necessary to reduce them to necessity, such that they will end up resettling when they come to need [these tools], seeing themselves deprived of the assistance that until now has been inconsiderately given to them.”<sup>75</sup> In addition to the Mawés, other suspect nations during the second half of the eighteenth century included the Mura, the Mundurucú, the Juruna, and their various allies. Because these groups were highly mobile and involved in collecting expeditions themselves (especially for turtles that laid eggs along the low-water beaches of the Amazon, Madeira, and Solimões Rivers), they frequently crossed paths with the village collecting canoes.

Some of these were violent encounters that the crewmen would have undoubtedly preferred to avoid, such as the ambush attacks that resulted in fatalities among them.<sup>76</sup> Their attitudes towards nonviolent encounters with independent native groups are difficult to gauge in the sources. Of the four *devassas* that describe such encounters, two sets of testimonies blame the failure of the expedition on the *gentio*; one set blames the *cabo*; and the other blames the pilot of the expedition, who was also the village headman.<sup>77</sup> In the testimonies that blamed

73. On usage of the term *gentio* in colonial Brazil, see Barickman, “‘Tame Indians,’” p. 327, note 6; and Almeida, *O Diretório dos Índios*, pp. 261-262.

74. *Devassa* of Cabo Francisco da Silva Chaves, Melgaço, [n/d] 1793, APEP, Cod. 497, Doc. 54.

75. Governor Fernando da Costa de Ataíde Teive to Pedro Maciel Parente, Director of Santarém, Belém, October 3, 1769, AIHGB, Lata 283, Pasta 10. On the tactic of introducing tools to indigenous groups in order to encourage their dependency on these items, see Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vassallos*, pp. 143-144.

76. Many documents mention attacks on collecting expeditions that resulted in the loss of life, or at least the loss of the canoe's cargo and supplies. See, for example, Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor, Portel, September 16, 1778, APEP, Cod. 330, Doc. 53; Director José Antonio de Brito to governor, Monte Alegre, November 1, 1793, APEP, Cod. 497, Doc. 51; and Director Pedro Vicente de Oliveira Pantoja to governor, Faro, November 3, 1794, APEP, Cod. 470, Doc. 82.

77. The two *devassas* in which crewmen blame the expedition's failure on the *gentio* are: *Devassa* of Cabo Luis Bahia de Mesquita Monteiro, Sousel, October 17, 1774, APEP, Cod. 268, Doc. 66; and the *devassa* of an unnamed *cabo*, Alter do Chão, August 22, 1775, APEP, Cod. 284, Doc. 17.

members of the expedition, the crewmen made much of their fear of independent Indians and their wish to have nothing to do with them. One witness described the Cabo of Silves' illicit contact with the Mawés as follows:

He rested in their village [and made] no further effort to collect anything, [his goal] being only to trade with the gentio of the forest, to whom he distributed a roll of cloth and almost all of the hardware that was brought for the equipment of the canoe. And that is why the expedition failed, because he went against the opinion of the pilot and the rest of the fearful Indians, telling them that the Governor (*Senhor General*) had told him that he could go collecting wherever he pleased.<sup>78</sup>

Fear and aversion are also the dominant themes in the testimonies regarding a particularly controversial expedition from the village of Pinhel. This time, the crewmen denounced the activities of their village's headman, Sebastião Pinto, who joined the crew voluntarily as pilot and proceeded to conduct the expedition into tribal territories over the objections of the crew and cabo (the latter refused to go, but the crew apparently had little choice). According to one crewman, headman Pinto told him upon their arrival, "I brought you all here in order to get rid of the canoe and for the gentio to kill you." (Or, as he was quoted in another testimony, "I don't care about collecting; I just want to get rid of the canoe and for the gentio to kill you.") The crewman claimed not to know what business Pinto had in the village of the gentio, "because [we] fearfully did not come very close to the houses where the headman was."<sup>79</sup> Another crewman added that they only went to heathen territories because they feared retribution from the headman and his brother-in-law, who also participated in the expedition. If other letters from the director are to be believed, Pinto had used the expedition to solidify further an alliance that he had been building over time with several Indian nations, with the ultimate goal of coordinating an attack on the colonial settlements along the Tapajós River.<sup>80</sup> Given the serious nature of the alleged conspiracy, it is not surprising that the crewmen would want to go on the record as being frightened, unwilling participants in the visit to the gentio.

Evidence from other, less polarized sources suggests that fear and aversion were *not* the stock responses of colonial Indians when they encountered independent native groups. Various directors' letters recount the expeditions' positive contacts with gentio and emphasize the active role of crewmen in initiating and mediating these encounters. During Monte Alegre's collecting expedition in 1788, for example, the crewman Valentim Antonio "had had the occasion to speak with"

78. Devassa of Cabo Manoel José, Silves, [n/d] 1774, APEP, Cod. 268, Doc. 4.

79. Devassa of Cabo José da Silva Godinho, Pinhel, July 21, 1770, APEP, Cod. 220, Doc. 9.

80. Letter from the Director Belchior Henrique Weinholtz to governor, Pinhel, April 18, 1770, APEP, Cod. 215, Doc. 54; and *ibid.*, September 18, 1769, APEP, Cod. 202, Doc. 77.

the Mawé Indians, his own nation of origin, and “they indicated to him [their] great desire to leave behind their paganism and come to this village, and in fact he brought with him a few people from the said tribe, who are [living] here in contentment.”<sup>81</sup> Documents like this one reflect the time in which they were written. Informal encounters with the Mawés would have once been prohibited, and in general, official permission from the governor was required before entering into resettlement negotiations with Indian nations. By the 1790s, however, authorities were less suspicious of unsupervised or spontaneous contacts with independent native groups, and they recognized that informal trade was a time-honored technique for convincing them to resettle. “All of the pilots told me that trading with the gentio is necessary,” one director wrote in 1792, “as it serves as [a means of] persuasion (*prática*)”—i.e., to resettle or to maintain friendly relationships with colonial Indians and settlers. He went on to ask that this type of commercial exchange be officially sanctioned by the treasury via the provisioning of extra trading items.<sup>82</sup> Informal trade was eventually even promoted between colonial villages or expeditions and the Mura—one of the colony’s most traditionally hostile tribes—because it had been shown to be an effective method of bringing them into the colonial sphere.<sup>83</sup>

Over time, as wild products became more difficult to find in the sertão, trade between collecting canoes and independent native groups also came to be seen as a necessary means of gaining access to more distant and impenetrable territories.<sup>84</sup> Governor Francisco de Souza Coutinho officially sanctioned trade and other forms of communication between collecting expeditions and independent native groups in 1790, but individual directors had been reporting such contacts for quite some time and with no sense of wrongdoing.<sup>85</sup> “They were looking for products in the center of the gentio’s territories, and the cabo found himself in evident danger,” one director recounted in 1775, so “in order to save their lives as well as to get the gentio to show them the best place for collecting and help them [with the collection], he distributed all of the [expedition’s] supplies to them . . . with the approval of the pilot and the rest of the crewmen.”<sup>86</sup> Similarly,

81. Director José Antonio de Brito to governor, Monte Alegre, October 16, 1790, APEP, Cod. 465, Doc. 34. Other examples of resettlements that resulted from contacts made on collecting expeditions can be found in the following APEP documents: Cod. 240, Doc. 40; Cod. 260, Doc. 20; Cod. 268, Doc. 33.

82. Director José Cavalcanti Albuquerque to governor, Vila Franca, June 1, 1792, APEP, Cod. 470, Doc. 43.

83. The following APEP documents describe informal trade with the Mura: Cod. 424, Doc. 44; Cod. 431, Doc. 47; Cod. 435, Doc. 50; Cod. 435, unnumbered doc., fls. 96-100; Cod. 454, Doc. 4.

84. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira noted that colonial collecting expeditions had to travel farther and farther afield to find products that once grew close to the settled zones. He also mentioned crown efforts to preserve over-exploited plants, such as a 1688 edict prohibiting the collection of cravo on the Tocantins and Capim Rivers (“Diário da Viagem Filosófica,” pp. 72-73).

85. Governor Francisco de Souza Coutinho reversed the 1769 order forbidding communication and trade with the independent Indians in his carta circular of 1 September 1790, APEP, Cod. 466, Doc. 30.

86. Director Venuslão José de Souza Moraes to governor, Boim, September 12, 1775, APEP, Cod. 284, Doc. 44.

the Cabo Bernardo Fernandes Brazão sent a message to his village's director while the expedition was still in the forest, reporting that an Indian nation required payment to collect the sarsaparilla that bordered their lands, and that he had already given them everything he had; the crewmen, too, "have handed over additional tools of their own (*das suas mãos*), such that they are removing the sarsaparilla [roots] with their fingernails; and I have been stripped of everything, even my shoes; [the gentio] have taken my socks and all."<sup>87</sup> He then requested further supplies to be sent to him from the village, with the rationale that the gentio, if properly bribed, would be able to collect a hefty load of sarsaparilla and to produce great quantities of manioc flour, as indicated by their numbers—over 1,500 people in all. He was still careful to specify that he had not gone to the "River of the Mawés," as this had remained an official concern in the late 1770s, but was clearly confident that he was doing the right thing by giving the canoe's supplies to this unnamed Indian nation.<sup>88</sup>

A final category of people encountered by crewmen in the sertão were not supposed to be there; these were the fugitive black slaves and the Indians who had fled from their assigned villages. In light of the longer history of friendly contacts between fugitive communities and colonial Indians, these encounters may have been welcomed by both sides.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, they provided crewmen with a chance to demonstrate their loyalty to the government and perhaps earn an award for their service, if they could successfully bring the runaways back to the villages (in the case of Indian absentees) or to their owners (in the case of slaves). When the members of Portel's expedition managed to convince a group of 35 Indian absentees to accompany the crew back to the village, they received rare praise from their director, who wrote to the governor of the "zeal, hard work, and care" with which the Indians had accomplished this spontaneous mission.<sup>90</sup> Similar praise would have no doubt been forthcoming after Serzedelo's crewmen captured four fugitive slaves, had these not escaped at the first opportunity.<sup>91</sup> In such

87. Cabo Bernardo Fernandes Brazão to Director Antonio Gonçalves de Souza, Vila Franca, [n/d] 1777, APEP, Cod. 317, unnumbered doc., fl. 114.

88. Ibid. For other reports of crews that received collecting tips and assistance from independent Indian groups, see Director Boaventura de Cunha Caldeira to governor, Arraiolos, August 23, 1792, APEP, Cod. 447, Doc. 40; and Director Francisco Coelho de Mesquita to governor, Alter do Chão, September 18, 1774, APEP, Cod. 268, Doc. 28 (this last document is cited in Sommer, "Negotiated Settlements," p. 103).

89. As one of the anonymous reviewers of this article pointed out, relationships between fugitive and colonial communities were complex, ranging from mutual hostility to collaboration, depending on the context. See Stuart B. Schwartz and Hal Langfur, "*Tapanhuns, Negros da Terra, and Curibocas: Common Cause and Confrontation between Blacks and Natives in Colonial Brazil*," in *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), pp. 81-114; and more specifically on the Amazon, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "A 'Safe Haven': Runaway Slaves, *Mocambos*, and Borders in Colonial Amazonia, Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82:3 (2002), pp. 469-498.

90. Director Francisco Ruberto Pimentel to governor, Portel, October 13, 1779, APEP, Cod. 346, Doc. 21.

91. Director Francisco Rodrigues Coelho to governor, Serzedelo, August 23, 1793, APEP, Cod. 497, unnumbered doc., fls. 59-61.

situations, one group had a legitimate reason to be in the sertão while the other was there clandestinely, and it is not inconceivable that collecting crews would have used their legitimacy as leverage to exact certain favors; for example, they might have requested help with collecting in exchange for not telling the director of the runaways' whereabouts. But if there were indeed any such arrangements, they never made it into the documentation.

A common theme runs through all of the above examples of social encounters: the opportunity to make contacts far outside of one's own village, whether Indian crewmen actively pursued them or not. Such contacts were not completely free of the constraints imposed by the colonial labor system—since a cabo was often waiting to report on the crewmen's behavior, and vice versa—but the very nature of the collecting expeditions ensured ample room for individual action. As the Intendente Geral and other officials had recognized, the collection of wild products was done most efficiently when Indians split into smaller, autonomous teams; when the pilots were given free rein to direct these teams as they saw fit; when the cabo remained stationary in order to receive the products and coordinate their processing; when the expedition went off the beaten path to collect in tribal areas; and when the crew had the option of stopping in nearby settlements to replenish supplies. As the previous pages have shown, it is impossible to establish the crewmen's complicity in the exploits attributed to their cabos, or to determine the extent to which illicit activities occurred on the 149 expeditions that resulted in positive devassas. What we do know is that colonial Indians perceived a wider array of options within the Directorate labor system than historians typically have. Like the Sargento Theodósio Ferreira, who rejected his promotion in rank to be able to go to the sertão, there were those who preferred the unpredictable twists and turns of a collecting expedition over the more routine duties of village life.

### CREWMEN'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND CLAIMS

In generally overlooking the autonomous character of the collecting expeditions, historians have also missed the larger implications of this for our understanding of native participation in market-oriented activities. Robin Anderson states, for example, that "Indians had no decisions to make on what they were to collect, since all such choices were made at higher levels. They were simply expected to produce what they were told by their Directors" and that "[t]here is no evidence to suggest that Directorate Indians had any concept of marketability or profit margin in relationship to the goods they were producing."<sup>92</sup> Similarly, in an otherwise perceptive article about the effects of Directorate policies on the Rio Negro

92. Anderson, *Colonization as Exploitation*, pp. 30, 34-35.

captaincy, Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida maintains that “all attempts to awaken the interest of the Indians in the production of surpluses were frustrated.”<sup>93</sup> With a few exceptions, the overwhelming impression from the historiography is that native Amazonians not only resisted involvement in the *comércio do sertão* whenever possible, but that the collecting expeditions operated solely at the helm of coercive cabos and in the economic interests of non-Indians.<sup>94</sup> It is not my intention to minimize the role of coercion in the recruitment of crewmen, the conduct of the expedition, or the payment procedures, but to point out that many Indian crewmen were evidently able to use the collecting expeditions to their own material advantage. A thorough survey of all the locally produced documentation on the expeditions turns up a compelling number of examples in which crewmen defended their economic interests, required incentives to work on the collecting canoes, and asserted their preferences to collect under conditions that they perceived as more favorable. In a broader sense, then, colonial Amazonians staked out a degree of commercial autonomy within the existing system of state-sponsored collecting, either individually or in groups.<sup>95</sup>

In one remarkable case, the crewmen of the villages of Alenquer and Faro petitioned to send their collected products—about 74 arrobas (approximately 2,368 pounds) of sarsaparilla and 90 *canadas* (about 63 gallons) of *copaíba* oil, respectively—straight to Lisbon on the ships of the royal trading company, the *Companhia Geral do Comércio*. They proposed doing this “at their own expense and risk,” with the reasoning that “those products have a higher estimation in the City of Lisbon than in this one [Belém], where the same *Companhia* pays a very low price relative to that fetched [overseas].” Not surprisingly, the administrators of the *Companhia* strongly objected to the idea of allowing Indians to contract directly with buyers in Lisbon.<sup>96</sup> Although this may well have been the only petition of its kind, its significance should not be overlooked. The crewmen’s behav-

93. Almeida, “Os Vassallos d’el Rey,” p. 72.

94. Authors who emphasize the coercive aspects of the expeditions are listed in note 35. The primary exceptions, as already noted above, are the recent studies by Coelho and Sommer. The latter author mentions several examples of Indians demanding payment for services rendered to crown or village officials, including one case in which crewmen refused to go collecting for the native headmen because they did not expect to receive their salaries (“Negotiated Settlements,” pp. 134–135; see also Coelho, “Do sertão para o mar,” p. 281).

95. For reflections on how to interpret the varied responses of Andean Indians to European market expansion, see Steve J. Stern, “The Variety and Ambiguity of Native Andean Intervention in European Colonial Markets,” in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*, ed. Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 73–100. For a case study that argues for the voluntary nature of native participation in colonial credit institutions (the *repartimiento de comercio*) in Oaxaca, Mexico, see Jeremy Baskes, “Coerced or Voluntary? The *Repartimiento* and Market Participation of Peasants in Late Colonial Oaxaca,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28:1 (1996), pp. 1–28. For a critique of Baskes and an attempt to reframe the question, see Kevin Gosner, “Indigenous Production and Consumption of Cotton in Eighteenth-Century Chiapas: Re-Evaluating the Coercive Practices of the *Reparto de Efectos*,” in *New World, First Nations: Native Peoples of Mesoamerica and the Andes under Colonial Rule*, ed. David Patrick Cahill and Blanca Tovías (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006), pp. 129–143.

96. Intendente João de Amorim Pereira to the Secretário de Estado do Negócios do Reino e Mercês, Belém, December 31, 1777, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 78, Doc. 6508.

ior falls in line with the kind of selective market engagement identified by Steve Stern among Andean highlanders, who “voluntarily ‘engaged’ certain market sectors and opportunities in order to alleviate or avoid other market-linked oppressions and in order to resist more abject surrender to market forces and demands on terms they could not control.”<sup>97</sup> The Indians of these two Amazonian villages—both located far upriver from the capital—were well aware of the monetary value of what they collected and had attempted to remedy the discrepancies in who profited from them under the state-run system.<sup>98</sup>

Payments and other material incentives did, in many cases, motivate native participation in the expeditions. Directors frequently made reference to efforts to incentivize production through the timely payment of salaries, the remittance of more desirable payments-in-kind, and the supply of other types of material bonuses. If these incentives were not forthcoming, collecting expeditions often could not get off the ground. Several directors reported that it was very hard to convince Indians to go on the expeditions if they had not received satisfactory payments in the past; the men would only agree to go after being repeatedly assured that adequate compensation would be provided.<sup>99</sup> More dramatically, over 20 people absented the village of Serzedelo to avoid serving on its collecting canoe, and those crewmen who remained behind offered the director three reasons for their compatriots’ disappearance:

First, because the cabo treated them badly [during previous expeditions] and did not pay them for the [extra] services they completed in the City; second, because their payment for the collected products was made at the Treasury House in goods that they did not want, since they had [received] them in previous years; . . . and third, because of the delay in paying them, since once they arrived back here [in the village], it was already time to return to collecting, and there was no time to plant at their homesteads for the sustenance of their families.<sup>100</sup>

97. Stern, “The Variety and Ambiguity of Native Andean Intervention,” p. 90.

98. Crewmen also disputed the division of profits amongst themselves. In one case, a “major, unpleasant controversy” erupted among the crewmen of Santa Ana de Cajarí over the fact that, out of the twenty Indians who had gone on the expedition, sixteen had worked for the native officials (on fixed salaries) and only four had worked for themselves (for profit shares). The director said he did not even dare to draw up a crew list indicating such designations, as this would only inflame the crewmen further (Director Segismundo de Costa Pimentel to governor, Santa Ana de Cajarí, August 1, 1777, APEP, Cod. 312, Doc. 1).

99. Director Diogo Luis de Rebello de Barros e Vasconcelos to governor, Tabatinga/Javary, [n/d] July 1778, APEP, Cod. 329, Doc. 25; Director Sebastião da Rocha to governor, Serzedelo, July 26, 1778, APEP, Cod. 329, Doc. 24; and also see the example in Sommer, “Negotiated Settlements,” pp. 134–135. Desirable payments-in-kind were even more difficult to come by in the Rio Negro captaincy. The governor of that captaincy lamented that if the shortages of European goods were only for the current year, he could more easily reassure the Indians that goods would be forthcoming, “but since there is a shortage every year in this or that type of product, it is more difficult to convince them that it is due to no ships arriving from Portugal.” Governor Joaquim de Mello e Póvoas to the governor of Pará, Barcelos, February 17, 1760, APEP, Cod. 96, Doc. 46. Various product “wish lists” of Indian officials from the Rio Negro villages can be found in APEP, Cod. 96, Docs. 15, 18, and 21.

100. Director Joseph Bernardo da Costa e Asso to governor, Serzedelo, May 3, 1773, APEP, Cod. 257, Doc. 69.

Discontented Indians might even stir up a mutiny in the sertão. One allegedly asked his fellow crewmen, “Why must you exhaust yourselves collecting when in the City of Belém they don’t pay you well[?]” while another supposedly tried to persuade his companions that “they should not tire themselves with work, having been deceived by a few bolts of cloth at the Treasury.”<sup>101</sup> Disillusionment among crewmen had been a problem from the very beginning of the Directorate. Back in 1759, one governor had noted the Indians’ mounting suspicions that their collected products benefited only the king and that they had been duped into working for wages or goods that were not forthcoming from the Treasury. He also noted the prevalent conviction among crewmen that they had been better paid back when the missionaries had sponsored the expeditions.<sup>102</sup>

Cabos played an important role in providing incentives, some of which were given “under the table,” in order to compensate for insufficient payments from the treasury. The crewmen came to expect and even demand these incentives. This is apparently why, according to one Intendente, the 41 collecting expeditions of Pará and the Rio Negro accounted for the consumption of 2,400 canadas (about 1,674 gallons) of cane liquor per year, for an average of about 41 gallons per expedition. As he explained it, “[t]he Indians who go to the sertão are so accustomed to the use of this drink, that when it is lacking, they take the rebellious stance of refusing to work or collect anything more.” The liquor supply had dried up during the 1761 expedition of the Rio Negro hamlet of Poiães, and the crewmen had told their cabo “to buy some right away, or they would not work any further”; the cabo had no other choice but to buy a *frasqueira* (a case containing about 10.5 gallons) of cane liquor from a settler in exchange for three arrobas (96 pounds) of cacao. This was an exorbitant price to pay for fewer than a dozen gallons of domestically produced liquor, but the situation apparently warranted it. As the author pointed out, even the Directorate legislation sanctioned the distribution of cane liquor to the crewmen—in what amounted to recognizing it as a necessary evil—while prohibiting its trade in the Indian villages.<sup>103</sup> In the absence of coinage, cane liquor was the “money of the sertão.”<sup>104</sup>

101. Devassa of Cabo Caetano José Marreiros, Santa Anna do Maracapucu, August 4, 1765, APEP, Cod. 157, Doc. 10; Director Manoel Moura e Castro to governor, Pombal, June 30, 1761, APEP, Cod. 106, Doc. 88.

102. Governor Bernardo de Mello e Castro to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, August 9, 1759, BNRJ, Cod. 11, 2, 043, fls 42r-43r.

103. Desembargador Luís Gomes de Faria e Souza to the Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, November 20, 1761, AHU, Pará Avulsos, Cod. 51, D. 4698. See also Article 42 of the *Directório* (Beozzo, *Leis e Regimentos*).

104. As characterized by Governor Francisco de Souza Coutinho in a letter to Martinho de Mello e Castro, Belém, September 23, 1790 (AIHGB, Lata 284, Livro 2, Doc. 29).

Another customary incentive was that of the *potaba*, a term of Tupi etymology meaning “gift” or “portion.”<sup>105</sup> One director reported that each Indian typically kept at least half an arroba and as much as a whole arroba of sarsaparilla or cravo (16-32 pounds) of their own harvest, “which they commonly call potabas,” and “this quantity among a large number of Indians adds up to a large number of arrobas . . . without it being possible to know where it ends up.” The implication, of course, is that these portions were traded illegally to “defraud” the expedition, though the director admitted his own ignorance as to what the Indians did with them.<sup>106</sup> There is some evidence that potabas served as a means of illicit exchange between the cabo and the crew, a practice that may have been rooted in native traditions of reciprocal gifting.<sup>107</sup> The authorities would not likely find out about such exchanges unless the relationship between the cabo and crew members broke down amidst allegations of abuse, as it did during Pombal’s expedition in 1773. In the subsequent devassa, several crewmen testified that the cabo had given them combs made of turtle shell and horn, to be paid back in collected products upon the expedition’s conclusion. Conflicts arose when the Indians were unable to make good on the deal. One crewman said that he agreed to pay 60 bundles (*canudos*) of cravo for the combs but only ended up gathering 40, which nearly led to a violent confrontation between the two men. (The director concluded the devassa by stating that “I asked no further [questions] because those who should have testified did not come to this inquiry, despite having been called various

105. Antônio Gonçalves Dias, *Diccionario da lingua tupy: chamada lingua geral dos indigenas do Brazil* (Lisbon: F.A. Brockhaus, 1858), p. 148. The entry “potaba” includes the following definitions: *dádiva* (gift or donation), *mimo* (gift), *oferta* (offering or gift), *parte* (part), *quinhão* (portion or share), and *ração* (ration). The term can also be used to refer to *esmolas* (alms) or *dízimos* (tithes).

106. Director Venuslão José de Souza Moraes to governador, Boim, [n/d] 1777, APEP, Cod. 317, Doc. 12. Although he did not use the term potaba, the Jesuit João Daniel described a very similar system during the pre-Director era, in which the missionaries conceded to Indian crewmen any fragment of Amazonian clove that was irregularly sized for bundling with the rest of the cargo; the cabos then traded cane liquor or other trinkets for these portions, which sometimes added up to 10, 12, or more arrobas (Daniel, *Tesouro Descoberto*, vol. 2, p. 93).

107. There are very few references to *potabas* in the historiography, and further research is needed on the practice. Barbara Sommer recounts how visiting officials received “*potavas*” of food and livestock, and she notes that one of these officials, Bishop Queiroz, “specified that it was customary to pay double the value of the gifts, which is what he did. . . . This exchange perpetuated the indigenous value placed on reciprocity and paying double may have be [sic] calculated to show the bishop’s authority, as generosity would have been expected from him” (“Negotiated Settlements,” p. 135). Sweet similarly defines “*putava*” as a “‘gift’ of food offered by village women to passing canoe expeditions, in ritual exchange for trade goods” (“A Rich Realm,” p. 816), which is exactly how they appear in the correspondence of Governor Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado. During his 1754 trip from Belém to the Rio Negro, the governor received “*putavas*,” or “customary presents,” from Indian women in each of the villages along the way, usually consisting of great quantities of bananas, which he “paid for” in ribbons, cotton cloth, and salt (“Diário da Viagem” in Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, ed., *A Amazônia na era pombalina: Correspondência inédita do Governador e Capitão-General do Estado do Grão-Pará e Maranhão, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, 1751-1759* [Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, 1963] vol. 2, pp. 256-288). With reference to a different colonial captaincy (Ceará), Ricardo Pinto de Medeiros cites a case in which native headmen required Indians to pay them potabas of a half *pataca* (a type of colonial coinage) when they went to work as cowhands in the interior (“Política indigenista do período pombalino e seus reflexos nas capitanias do norte da América portuguesa,” in *Actas do Congresso Internacional o Espaço Atlântico de Antigo Regime: poderes e sociedades* [Lisboa: Instituto Camões], 2008. v. 1, p. 15). I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this last reference and for drawing my attention to the ambiguities around the term.

times; it could be out of fear of the cabo, since he does not leave his house, even to shave or wash, without a cutlass [*catana*] in hand.”<sup>108</sup> We can assume that in the vast majority of cases, however, the potaba system benefited both parties and so never made it into the documentation in the form of a denunciation.

According to the devassa testimonies, Indians felt real indignation when the fruits of their labor were lost. The crewmen of Almeirim testified that their cabo had been in a hurry to get out of the sertão and so had foolishly applied too much heat in the toasting of the sarsaparilla, causing it to burn and thus ruining three weeks worth of work. As a result, several crewmen abandoned the expedition in disgust at “seeing their labor lost,” and another crewman (one of the work party leaders) even threatened to kill the cabo. In his cover letter, the director concluded that the Indians did not need a cabo at all to be successful at the comércio do sertão. This is a rather surprising statement for the director to make, in light of the rebellious actions of the crewmen; it suggests that he believed their actions had been taken out of genuine distress over the cabo’s negligence.<sup>109</sup> And he was not the only director to give Indians the benefit of the doubt when it came to their claims about economic losses or setbacks on the expeditions.<sup>110</sup>

If some authorities believed that colonial Indians had their own economic interests at stake, at least one prominent contemporary held the opposite view. The late-eighteenth-century naturalist and traveler, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, reported that the Indians “even practice the malice” of burning the parts of the sarsaparilla plant that would normally allow it to reproduce after its valuable roots had been harvested, “because they hope that sarsaparilla will be extinguished once and for all, to see if this also extinguishes the persecution that they feel [as a result of] their laziness and their love of idleness.”<sup>111</sup> Although the local-level correspondence does describe work stoppages and other acts of protest on the expeditions, I never found any examples like this of crewmen deliberately destroying products or sabotaging the expedition without cause. Of course, we would expect the Indians’ own testimonies in the devassas to leave out such incriminating details, but we do not find them in the directors’ letters either. These latter sources do frequently portray Indians in a negative light, but without providing evidence of the kind of behavior alleged by Ferreira. If crewmen engaged in rebellious or recalcitrant behavior in the sertão, it was apparently related to a specific

108. Devassa of Cabo Antonio José da Silva, Pombal; September 28, 1773, APEP, Cod. 263, Doc. 22.

109. Devassa of Cabo Pascoal Lopez and letter from Director Fernando Serrão de Oliveira to governor, Almeirim, September 23, 1765, APEP, Cod. 157, Doc. 65.

110. See, for example, Director Joaquim Francisco Printz to governor, Obidos, May 18, 1781, APEP, Cod. 373, Doc. 47; Director Herónimo Pereira da Nóbrega to governor, Arraiolos, August 18, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 32; and Director Pedro Vicente de Oliveira Pantoja to governor, Faro, September 18, 1791, APEP, Cod. 465, Doc. 101.

111. Ferreira, “Diário da Viagem Filosófica,” p. 73, where he also discusses the effects of unsustainable collecting practices on cacao and cravo.

grievance or to what they perceived as transgressions of their rights as crewmen. These transgressions included the cabo's carelessness with their canoe's supplies or collected products, as in the example of Almeirim's expedition; infliction of punishment without just cause; and stinginess with collective supplies like liquor, knives, and fishhooks.<sup>112</sup>

Crewmen also objected when cabos disregarded their collecting preferences. Two years before the sarsaparilla-burning incident and under a previous cabo, the crewmen of Almeirim bitterly recounted how 17 of their number had been sent to collect sarsaparilla, despite their protests that cacao was extremely abundant at that exact time of year (April) and that they did not want to miss out on its harvest. But, as the pilot put it, "because of his bad humor, and the little credit that he gives to the Indians," the cabo ignored their preferences and sent the group off on its own for an entire month—and with only a meager a supply of manioc flour. Cacao, it should be noted, was one of the Indians' favorite products to collect, and not only for economic reasons; it grew on the resource-rich margins of lakes and rivers, and was itself a tasty snack to eat along the way or to ferment for drinking. In contrast, sarsaparilla was only found in the interior forests, far from reliable water and food supplies, and the plant was covered in thorns, so digging up its roots was a painful ordeal.<sup>113</sup> In another inquiry, the crewmen of Serzedelo and Piriá (two neighboring hamlets that usually joined together for the annual expedition) declared that their cabo had called them back too early from gathering cravo, despite their preference to stay and collect until their manioc flour supply had been used up.<sup>114</sup> Like other devassas that denounce the cabos, both of these examples likely represent the exceptions rather than the rule; under normal circumstances, cabos probably did take Indian collecting preferences into account.

There is no doubt that most cabos wielded a great deal of power and influence over the crewmen and the course of the expeditions. At the same time, however, Indians were able to leverage their expertise as navigators and collectors to protect their interests and to pursue their own commercial and social agendas. Both cabos and directors were well aware of the fact that no one knew the sertão better than a seasoned expedition pilot or longtime crewman; this may be why 60- and

112. See, for example, the story of a pilot who tried to kill his cabo after being reprimanded for not collecting enough: Director Bento José do Rego to governor, Olivença, August 1, 1765, APEP, Cod. 157, Doc. 4. On cabos who were stingy with collective supplies, see: devassa of Cabo Joaquim José de Acenção, Serzedelo and Piriá, July 29, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 16; devassa of Cabo José da Silva Godinho, Pinhel, July 27, 1771, APEP, Cod. 234, Doc. 44; devassa of Cabo Isidoro dos Santos Portugal, Lamalonga, July 22, 1770, APEP, Cod. 217, unnumbered doc. Sommer also cites a case in which a cabo was killed by the crewmen after threatening to punish them for breaking one of his bottles of liquor ("Negotiated Settlements," p. 281).

113. Devassa of Cabo João Rodrigues Uzarte, Almeirim, September 3, 1763, APEP, Cod. 131, Doc. 7/8. On Indians' preference for collecting cacao over sarsaparilla or cravo, see Daniel, *Tesouro Descoberto*, vol. 2, pp. 85-86; on p. 83, he also describes their fondness for collecting (and eating) turtle eggs.

114. Devassa of Cabo Joaquim José de Acenção, Serzedelo/Piriá, July 29, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 16.

even 70-year-old men sometimes appeared on crew lists.<sup>115</sup> Native expertise in that realm forced cabos to depend on Indians to an extent not experienced by administrators of other colonial endeavors that required Indian labor (e.g., royal construction projects), and any efforts to maintain absolute control over the expeditions were usually counterproductive. Reporting the desertion of his entire crew en route, one cabo explained, perhaps not without irony, that the pilot “had spent the whole trip asking me where we were going, and as I only told him that he would go where I ordered him, he persuaded the rest to follow him [in running away].”<sup>116</sup> Likewise, directors found themselves making concessions to crewmen, because they too depended on them for their cut of the profits. As the Director of Serzedelo pragmatically concluded, “it would be prejudicial to the expedition, if they were to go against their will.”<sup>117</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

In many cases, participation in the collecting expeditions was likely a means of avoiding more onerous types of service or resisting “more abject surrender” to colonial demands by engaging them on one’s own terms. Such a pattern of participation was, as Steve Stern suggests for Andeans who voluntarily participated in colonial markets, an effort to hedge one’s bets that closely resembled Indians’ relations with the political-judicial structure of the colonial state.<sup>118</sup> That is why the devassas of the cabos, modeled as they are on formal judicial inquiries, are such rich sources for our understanding of the complexity with which Indians responded to the pressures of colonial life. The devassas sometimes permitted Indians to influence the terms of their participation in the extractive economy, as an alternative to resisting involvement in the expeditions altogether. Barring those cases in which third parties tampered with the testimonies, the crewmen could use them to get a cabo reprimanded or fired from his post, to protest publicly what they saw as transgressions of their rights as crewmen, or to justify their actions in the sertão to the director and to higher officials in Belém.

Participation in the state-sponsored comércio do sertão was just one of several strategies that native Amazonians developed to fulfill their obligations to the colonial state, while pursuing social agendas and material resources that would otherwise remain inaccessible.<sup>119</sup> As with other kinds of long-distance mobility—

115. For example, the 70-year-old Alfonso de Paiva provided one of the testimonies in the devassa of the Cabo of Alter do Chão, August 22, 1775, APEP, Cod. 284, Doc. 17.

116. Cabo Pedro de Figueiredo de Vasconcelos, Tajoperu, February 8, 1766, APEP, Cod. 167, Doc. 39.

117. Director Joseph Bernardo da Costa e Asso to governor, Serzedelo, July 29, 1773, APEP, Cod. 260, Doc. 16.

118. Stern, “The Variety and Ambiguity of Native Andean Intervention,” pp. 84, 90.

119. On similar strategies in the colonial Andean context, see the overview provided by Brooke Larson, “Andean Communities, Political Cultures, and Markets: The Changing Contours of a Field,” in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration*, pp. 21–22, as well as the case studies in the rest of the volume.

whether sanctioned by the state or not—participation in the collecting expeditions did entail physical risks and lengthy separations from one's family and larger community. But for many crewmen, the trips offered a variety of opportunities that included trading with settlers or independent native groups, visiting relatives in other settlements, moving around autonomously, and accumulating bonuses. The crewmen's experiences outside of their villages, furthermore, exposed them to a wide range of people, places, and ways of living, both within and beyond the areas of effective colonial control. Such experiences shaped their priorities and interests in ways that colonial policymakers could not have predicted when they mandated participation in the comércio do sertão.

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