EARLY BRAZIL

Early Brazil presents a collection of original sources, many published for the first time in English and some never before published in any language, that illustrates the process of conquest, colonization, and settlement in Brazil. The volume emphasizes the actions and interactions of the indigenous peoples, Portuguese, and Africans in the formation of the first extensive plantation colony based on slavery in the Americas. It also includes documents that reveal the political, social, religious, and economic life of the colony.

Original documents on early Brazilian history are difficult to find in English, and this collection will serve the interests of undergraduate students, as well as graduate students, who seek to make comparisons or to understand the history of Portuguese expansion.

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EARLY BRAZIL

A Documentary Collection to 1700

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PREFACE

This collection of documents, many of which are translated here for the first time in English and some of which have not been published before in any language, has been selected to bring to students and general readers basic texts of early Brazilian history. As such, they are part of the broad topic of Europe's expansion in the early modern era and, specifically, of Portugal's role in that process and in the encounter and clash of peoples and cultures that it set in motion. After Vasco da Gama reached India and returned to Portugal in 1498, the way had been opened for trade with Asia by way of the Cape of Good Hope. A second expedition of thirteen ships sailed for India in March 1500 under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral, but on the outward voyage, its route out into the Atlantic, taken to avoid the contrary winds and currents along the West African coast, brought this fleet to an unexpected landfall on what most (but not all) historians believe was, to Europeans at least, an unknown shore.[1] First contact with the local inhabitants was peaceful; the Portuguese carried out a little trade and exploration; a cross was erected on Friday, the first of May; and a mass was celebrated. The fleet's secretary, Pero Vaz de Caminha penned a report in the form of a letter to the king (I-1) about the new land. A ship was dispatched back to Lisbon, and the remainder of the fleet then proceeded on the Cape route toward India. Cabral called the new land the "Island of the True Cross" but that denomination was soon replaced by "Land of the Holy Cross," and then in practice by other less spiritual designations. Some of the early mariners referred to this coast as "the "land of parrots," others called it the "land of the bedsheets" because the white sand of the beaches looked as though

1 The so-called policy of secrecy or governmental control of information has been expounded by a number of authors. The implication is that earlier Portuguese voyages of exploration in the Atlantic had already made contact with Brazil but, for diplomatic reasons and the desire to exclude competitors, had kept the information secret. Although there is no documentary evidence of the policy, its existence would help to explain the seemingly peculiar route of Cabral's voyage and the success of including Brazil in the Portuguese sphere in the subsequent negotiations with Castile in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). See Jaime Cortesão, *A política de sigilio nos descobrimentos* (Lisbon, 1960); Luís de Albuquerque, *Dúvidas e certezas na história dos descobrimentos* (Lisbon, 1990).

sheets had been laid out on the shore, but the most popular name soon became *Brazil*, a word of debated etymology derived either from the legends of a mystical Atlantic island named "Brasyl" or from the valuable reddish wood that seemed the color of embers (*brasas*) extracted from the large brazilwood trees that grew in the forests of the new land. In the sixteenth century, in the age of tapestries and before the age of chemical dyes, the color red was particularly hard to produce, and so word of the new Portuguese "discovery" spread rapidly (I-2). Other Europeans, especially French merchants and sailors from Normandy and Brittany, also began to explore the Brazilian coast, contact the indigenous inhabitants, and trade for brazilwood. Despite this competition, the Portuguese crown remained more interested in the spices and riches of India than in a land of naked "gentiles," parrots, and dyewood.

For the first thirty years or so, the Crown turned to private individuals who, under royal contract, would exploit the dyewood and in return take on the task of further exploration and defense, recognizing royal sovereignty but, in effect, assuming the burdens of control. This system had been used previously on the coast of West Africa in the Atlantic islands, and the small outposts and trading stations under the direction of a manager were much like the "factories" (*feitorias*) that had organized trade in those places. The Portuguese claims, although recognized by Castile in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), remained in question, and both Spanish expeditions and French interlopers continued to visit the Brazilian coast despite Portuguese diplomatic protest. The Portuguese king, Dom João III, moved to eliminate the competition for dyewood by sending naval expeditions in 1527 and then again in 1532 under Martim Afonso de Sousa, whose instructions also required the establishment of settlements. The first town, São Vicente, was established by him in that year.

By that date, it was already clear that Portugal had to assume the burden of settlement if it hoped to keep foreign rivals from seizing this territory, a desire that probably became more intense when news of the exploits of Cortés in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru reached Lisbon. Still, the Crown was committed to its Indian Ocean gambit, and so it turned once again to a combination of private initiative under royal sponsorship by redeploying an institution, the hereditary seigneury, that had medieval precedents but that had already been modified and adapted to overseas colonization in Madeira and the Azores.[2] These fifteen donations or lordships along with the title of captain were awarded between 1533 and 1535 to twelve nobles (*donatarios*)

2 H. B. Johnson, "The Donatary Captaincy in Perspective: Portuguese Backgrounds to the Settlement of Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 52 (1974), 203–14; António Vasconcelos Saldanha, *As capitanias do Brasil. Antecedentes, desenvolvimento e extinção de um fenómeno atlântico* (Lisbon, 2001).

who, in return for extensive powers and rights of taxation, were expected to colonize and develop their grants (II-1). Within each captaincy, the lord had the power to grant lands, administer justice, found towns, and collect revenues. Some of these powers were much like those of the old feudal nobility in Portugal, and even though the Crown emphasized that these grants were not feudal, the temptation for the captains was to treat them as such.

The project was only partially successful. Most of the donataries had no Brazilian experience. Some of them did not assume the challenge at all and did nothing; the four northernmost captaincies were not settled. In others, the captains squabbled with the colonists who had their own ideas of what the juridical and social character of the new settlements should be. Most of all, there was trouble with the indigenous population, who objected to the settlements that implied the taking of land, the disruption of hunting and fishing grounds, the taking of women, and eventually the imposition of forced labor. Only in a few places did the captaincy system seem to flourish, usually because of the fortuitous combination of positive relations with the indigenous people and the introduction of a major export crop, sugar. In both the captaincies of São Vicente on the southern coast and in Pernambuco to the north, alliances through marriages, trade, or military cooperation with some indigenous peoples facilitated the process of settlement. Also in both regions, sugarcane cultivation was successfully introduced. But the shift from economic activities based on dyewood collection to that of plantation agriculture altered the relationship with the native peoples from one of the barter of trade goods for the intermittent labor of felling trees to one of constant labor, which the native peoples rejected. This led donataries such as Duarte Coelho of Pernambuco (II-2) to petition for the importation of African laborers and also to increasing levels of violence between the Portuguese and the indigenous inhabitants of Brazil.

From the very first moment of contact, the Portuguese had been both attracted and repelled by the indigenous people of Brazil. Vaz de Caminha's report had stated that these people lived in a state of innocence like Adam before the fall, and his fascination with their seemingly open sexuality was repeated by many of the first Europeans who arrived. In fact, five of Cabral's crew had tried to jump ship in order to stay. During the first decades, the Portuguese and other Europeans had developed a kind of proto-ethnography distinguishing among the various groups that spoke languages of the Tupi-Guarani family, most of whom were semisedentary agriculturalists, and the many peoples who spoke languages of other families and who were, for the most part, hunters and gatherers, and thus considered less civilized by both the Portuguese and the Tupi speakers (IV-2; V-1). The endemic warfare among the Tupi, their cannibalism, their nudity, and their seeming lack of "civilization" all provoked depreciation, but neither the Portuguese nor

the French could gather dyewood without them, and many Europeans took indigenous women as wives or concubines, thereby producing increasing numbers of *mamelucos*, that is, children of mixed origins.

By 1549, the continued presence of the French on the coast, growing hostility with the indigenous peoples of the coast, and the failure of a number of the captaincies moved the Crown to attempt a reorganization of the colony. In that year, a large expedition was sent out under Tomé de Sousa as governor-general to establish a royal capital. He founded the city of Salvador on the Bay of All Saints in the captaincy of Bahia, a place where the donatary had died at the hands of the Indians and where a small settlement already existed, to some extent the result of the presence of a Portuguese man who had married and settled among the Tupinambá around the bay (III-2). The expedition included royal treasury and judicial officers as well as six Jesuit missionaries. There were also about a thousand penal exiles that had been sent to colonize. The instructions (III-1) given to de Sousa authorized him to distribute lands and to promote the sugar economy, and they extended broad powers to him as governor. The successful donataries such as Duarte Coelho of Pernambuco disliked this infringement on their authority, but there was little they could do.

The royal governors, Tomé de Sousa and his successors, especially the legally trained Mem de Sá (1558–74), began to confront the central problems of the colony, brutally eliminating Indian resistance, fostering the sugar economy, and sponsoring the intensive missionary activities of the Jesuits (III-4, 5). Chief among these challenges was the continuing presence of the French, now in the form of a colony at Guanabara Bay, which included Huguenot participation and which had allied with a number of indigenous groups along the southern coast. Mem de Sá initiated a campaign against this colony of "Antarctic France" (IV-1, 2) and, after heavy fighting from 1565 to 1567, finally destroyed it (III-6, 7). In 1567, the Portuguese established their own city of Rio de Janeiro on the bay as the seat of a second royal captaincy, but at this time, it was a settlement far less important than Bahia or Pernambuco, where the sugar industry was now in full swing. By 1593, those two captaincies were producing more than 80 percent of the colony's income.[3]

The growth of that industry and its need for large numbers of laborers led to the increasing enslavement of Indians by the colonists at the same time that Jesuit missionary activities and the foundation of missionary villages, or *aldeias*, were growing. Jesuit activities throughout the colony had expanded under the leadership of men such as Fathers Manoel da Nóbrega and José de Anchieta, who led the struggle to eliminate the worst abuses of the Indians,

3 Harold B. Johnson, "The Settlement of Brazil, 1500–1580," in *Colonial Brazil*, Leslie Bethell, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 37.