At some point in the 1780s, during his Philosophical Journey through Amazonia, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira spent some time in Monte Alegre and Santarém, two Indian towns on the lower Amazon noted for their ceramics production. His account of the ceramic bowls (*cuias*) made by the Indian women remains especially interesting for its detailed description of production techniques and volume. These villages produced five to six thousand *cuias* annually, earning 100 to 120 réis for each, “depending on the size, the color, the quality, or if it is smooth or in sections”. Europeans purchased most of the production: “the Indian women who know that the whites will buy them, make sure to perfect them”. But Ferreira seemed particularly interested in one important detail: the Indian women reserved part of their production for their own use, with not only material but also symbolic implications:

> The *cuias* are the Indians’ plates, cups, and all of their tableware. Each of them reserves one for the Principal [headman] from which to drink water or wine when he visits ... The bowl is distinguished by a shell ornament, attached by a ball of wax covered with beads, and a *muiraquitã* [a sacred green stone in the form of an animal] on top, which serves as a handle for the Principal. They offer it to him on a tray made from patauá palm shafts. No matter how hard I tried to buy one of these, it was not possible, so great is the esteem that they hold for the bowl from which their chief drinks.¹

What does this apparently trivial exchange tell us about indigenous resistance in colonial Portuguese America? Ferreira was surprised, frustrated really, with the

woman’s refusal to hand over an object of great ethnographic interest, even for a sum of money. Integrated into a commercial circuit and producing Portuguese-style ceramics, the Indian women of Monte Alegre and Santarém appeared to fit well within the civilizing scheme introduced as part of the Pombaline reforms some thirty years earlier. But the persistence of distinctive cultural practices, no matter how much adapted in form, left the uncomfortable feeling that the Indians had something to say about the terms of their own transformation.

As in the case this episode, evidence of indigenous practices and actions often appears indirectly in colonial documents. Unlike other colonial experiences in the Americas, written and iconographic references to native peoples in Portuguese America are fragmentary at best, and frustratingly silent at worst. This situation has improved considerably in recent years, insofar as colonial archival sources have become increasingly visible and accessible, but especially because anthropologists and historians (to a lesser degree) have taken a much greater interest in indigenous history. Evidence of Indians’ actions, reflections, and choices still come in shreds, but these shreds are growing in size, number, and density to the point where it is possible to piece together a much more nuanced picture of the varied ways in which native peoples faced the challenge of colonial rule. Indian voices are no longer so faint, as letters, trial depositions, petitions, wills, and other documents begin to amass. While these papers still present us with the issue of mediation, we no longer have to depend so much on narratives that were encapsulated and reproduced by missionaries, although such texts also may be read with fresh eyes. Finally, it should be mentioned that the recent boom in colonial documentation includes an interesting sort of subliterature dealing with issues of local Indian policy and confrontations. Closer to the ground than the lofty architects of royal legislation and plans for civilization, these often unpolished observers offer precious details concerning indigenous actors, whether in sporadic episodes or in broader, longer lasting social and religious movements.

Based in part on documentary research and in part on a discussion of recent contributions to the literature on Indians in colonial Brazil, this paper traces some of the ways in which scholars have treated the issue of resistance. One feature that the Brazilian case shares with other parts of the Americas is the terribly ambivalent meaning that resistance acquired in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The great Jesuit missionary and writer Antônio Vieira captured that ambivalency in one of his
Rethinking Amerindian Resistance

diatribes against Indian slavery in Maranhão, when he contrasted the Indians’ lack of
resistance vis-à-vis epidemic disease, which severely depleted the population, with
another kind of resistance, that is the facility with which the Indians would flee from
plantations and mission villages. While the problem of population decline invites
comparison with other parts of the Americas, another part of Vieira’s observations
points in a different direction: he explicitly compares Amerindian and African
slavery, favoring the latter, a point that has not been lost by generations of historians
who have focused much attention on African slavery, while ignoring the indigenous
presence almost completely, as if the Amerindian population indeed had been totally
wiped out. I will not treat the demographic question in any detail here, but it should
be noted that disease and population decline played an important role in rearranging
territorial configurations, identity claims, and power relations, with a bearing on
conditions and strategies for contesting or rejecting colonial rule.

Another aspect of the paper worth mentioning at the outset is the constant
interplay between trends and issues affecting the study of contemporary communities
and similar processes taking place in the colonial period. The recent phenomenon
often called “ethnogenesis” – one of the outcomes of identity politics and their impact
on guarantees to land and other rights – has many important precursors in colonial
times. Second, one recent trend in anthropological studies of myth and history within
indigenous discourse has focused on the “domestication of the Other”, which is part
of a larger picture involving the ways in which indigenous peoples selectively process
their relations with powerful outside forces, sometimes with “subversive”
implications. For the colonial period, studies on indigenous views and uses of
Catholicism – and of Calvinism, in the short period of Dutch occupation in the
seventeenth century – have benefitted from this perspective. Third, issues emanating
from different forms of indigenous participation in migratory movements, labor
markets, urban life, the military, and other activities in which they usually do not
appear as relevant, also form an important part of the colonial experience and raise
questions as to the boundary between resistance and other actions or activities that
include ethnic markers. Finally, the recent dynamization of Afro-Brazilian claims on
quilombo territories, which often involve the use of strategies tried and tested by
indigenous communities in their struggle for land, also invites scholars to look into
the colonial past for clues on the historical relations between Africans and Indians,
which often appear submerged in national narratives on slavery, mestiçagem, and social exclusion (NB: I will not present this part of the paper today).

Indigenous History and Resistance in Lowland (and Highland) South America

The problem of resistance in historical and ethnographic studies of indigenous peoples in Brazil has gained significant ground over the past 25 years, accompanying important changes in the ways Indians are perceived in the public sphere. For the better part of 500 years, the dominant discourse presented variations on the themes of destruction and disappearance, while a long sequence of colonial, imperial, and federal policy and legislation treated indigenous peoples as transitional entities, whose cultural distinctiveness fatally was to be lost in the processes of “civilization”, “acculturation”, or “assimilation”. Although social thinkers and policy makers diverged on important issues regarding violence, expropriation, and humanitarian protection, all seemed to agree that the Indians would not survive in the long run. Even social anthropologists, who encountered what they considered to be practically untouched primitive societies in remote areas of Central Brazil and the Amazon, tended to have a rather bleak outlook when considering the effects of “contact” with the outside world and with modernity. “Caught, like gamebirds in the trap of our mechanistic civilization”, in the memorable phrase from Tristes Tropiques, indigenous peoples became the object of schizographic approaches, as anthropologists divided their time and writings between the scientific study of exotic social and symbolic universes, on the one hand, and the nostalgic and melancholic description of their destruction by the agents of “civilization”.

While this dual character of anthropological fieldwork goes back at least as far as Curt Nimuendaju in the early twentieth century, by the 1940s perspectives on post-contact dilemmas came to occupy a large part of the anthropological agenda. Drawing inspiration from American cultural anthropology, acculturation studies provided a perspective on culture change directly associated with interethnic contact. But they also drew some criticism, mostly because they failed to recognize the problem of conflict (addressed by Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira) or because they failed to recognize the nefarious role of state policy in imposing certain kinds of transformation (addressed by Darcy Ribeiro). Perhaps more seriously for some ethnologists, acculturation studies showed little regard for indigenous perspectives, as
their main focus was on the ways in which contact distorted or subtracted from an original cultural integrity.

It was in this context that Florestan Fernandes contributed a pioneer analytical study of Amerindian resistance. Author of several studies on Tupinambá society, including a remarkable monograph on indigenous warfare, Fernandes adopted a structural-functionalist approach based on a systematic dissection of well-known historical texts, which had formed the base of Amerindian studies since the mid-nineteenth century. In an essay covering the state of the art of Brazilian ethnology, written in 1957, Fernandes asserted that in order to understand indigenous “reactions” to innovations imposed from the outside it was first necessary to perform a “rotation of perspective” and perceive these ethnographic situations from the vantage point of indigenous logics and logistics. In order to do so, ethnologists should continue to place a premium on studies that deliberately elide the contact situation in order to understand the social, political, and symbolic organization of indigenous societies in their own right. Shortly thereafter, Fernandes published his study of the “Tupi Reaction to Conquest”, which also appeared with a rather more anodyne title (extirpating the term “conquest”) in the first volume of the História Geral da Civilização Brasileira, where the Indians occupied their traditional position as “antecedents” to the history of Brazil. The “Tupi Reaction” drew not only from the historical evidence but also inferred a great deal from Fernandes’s own theoretical model of Tupi social organization, warfare, and religion. The author classified resistance in two different types: outright rebellion, which was doomed to failure, since the Portuguese military reaction would lead to the disarticulation of Tupi social organization and equilibrium. The second type consisted of mass flight to areas set well away from the presence of Europeans, where it would be possible to restore the state of equilibrium necessary to reproduce and maintain a vigorous Tupi society, at least in the terms of Fernandes’s model.

This approach placed a premium on isolation and autonomy, as if the survival of Amerindian societies in Brazil depended on these conditions. Indeed, acculturation studies and state Indian policy also remained primarily interested in “isolated” societies, in order to accompany the process of transformation from totally isolated to fully integrated, which was the touchstone of official policy well into the 1980s. It is no coincidence that one of the current state agency’s (FUNAI) main department still today is the Department of Isolated Indians. The contrast between fiercely
independent, “authentic” Indians and the totally dependent, culturally impoverished remains of once vigorous societies had been commonplace in Indian policy and Brazilian social and scientific thought since the mid-nineteenth century (if not before). Also from that time, intellectuals disputed the underlying causes, with a few prominent thinkers, most notably Darcy Ribeiro, underscoring the intrinsic relation between misguided Indian policy and destruction of indigenous societies.

Emergence of the Indian movement; importance of mediators. (**to be elaborated)**

New Indian history – first an effort to support Indian land claims with historical evidence of occupation, later develops on its own as an academic field. Two recent books of note, Pacificando o Branco (edited by Alcida Ramos and Bruce Albert in 2002) and Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia (edited by Michael Heckenberger and Carlos Fausto), add to earlier pioneer collections, such as Rethinking History and Myth (ed. J. Hill, 1988) and especially História dos Índios no Brasil (MCC, 1992), as well as the articles on Brazil in the Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas, SA volume, to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches. In her preface to Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha provides a synthesis of the main contributions:

In reference to Pacificando o Branco: “The authors endeavored to look into the modalities by which different Amazonian indigenous groups captured the invasion that befell them. Our historiography renders the events as their defeat: their narrative renders the same events as their labor of domesticating, of pacifying us together with our germs and our commodities”.

She also refers to the important theoretical contribution of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who rethinks Lévi-Strauss’s idea about the Amerindians’ “openness to the Other”, focusing on how different groups (especially Tupi) consider their relation to multiple Others within a framework of predation, which, according to Carneiro da Cunha, “translates into the regimentation of alterity for the production of identity, assimilating one’s enemy as a mode of reproduction”. While this approach affords new insights on warfare, cannibalism and other themes treated in a much different way by Florestan Fernandes, it also allows for a new reading of indigenous perceptions of colonial domination. “Predation, as EVC (1992) has eloquently shown, is the basic, given, relational mode. Given such assumptions, conversion to catholicism can be conversely seen by neophytes as predation on other people’s
God(s)... what the French called civilizing the native, can be reciprocally seen as the appropriation of foreign practices... Acculturation can thus be understood as a mode of social reproduction, as a kind of endogenous transformation”. While adopting Fernandes’ suggestion of rotating perspectives, MCC, EVC and others significantly have added history to their approach, something paradoxically missing from Florestan Fernandes’s Tupinambás. In Fernandes’s view, the Tupinambá had to reject all things foreign in order to restore their tribal stability and equilibrium, while in this other approach they must constantly change by seeking to capture and domesticate the Other’s symbols, material objects, technology, religion, and discourse in order to remain Tupinambá.

**Insert discussion on literature from Andean studies.**

**Identity Politics and Ethnogenesis in the Colonial Period**

A growing body of ethnohistorical literature has all but laid to rest the idea that the impact of contact, conquest, and the history of European expansion can be summed up in the decimation of native populations and the destruction of indigenous societies. This impact also produced “new peoples and new kinds of peoples”, as Stuart Schwartz and Frank Salomon point out in a recent article. According to Guillaume Boccara, who has introduced a new twist to the study of Mapuche ethnogenesis on the southern frontier of Spanish America, “scholars are widely recognizing the constructed nature of social formations and identities, as well as the dynamic character of cultures and ‘traditions’”. This author proposes to break down the radical opposition between precontact “purity” and postcontact “contamination”, underscoring in its place a perspective on the continuous process of cultural innovation. In developing such notions as “ethnogenesis”, “ethnification”, and “mestizaje” to qualify the processes of transformation unleashed by the conquest, Boccara lays out a provocative agenda for ethnohistorians focusing on lowland South America. For Neil Whitehead, another author who has examined postcontact

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3 Guillaume Boccara, “Mundos Nuevos en las Fronteras del Nuevo Mundo: Relectura de los Procesos Coloniales de Etnogénesis, Etnificación y Mestizaje en Tiempos de Globalización”, Mundo
transformations, these processes can include a broad spectrum of possibilities, “ranging from the total extinction of some ethnic formations to the endurance and invention of others”.  

One of the key notions prominent in these new perspectives, the term “ethnogenesis” has been reconfigured in an attempt to capture the articulation between endogenous patterns of change and the exogenous forces introduced by European expansion. In his introduction to a set of collected essays on ethnogenesis in the Americas, Jonathan Hill proposes an approach that goes well beyond a definition that is tributary to mid-twentieth century American cultural anthropology, which in his words considered ethnogenesis to describe “the historical emergence of a people who define themselves in relation to a sociocultural and linguistic heritage”. Referring specifically to the colonial world, Hill’s idea of ethnogenesis also involves the “simultaneously cultural and political struggles” deployed by native actors in their efforts “to create enduring identities in general contexts of radical change and discontinuity”. Put in another way, in order to grasp the cultural processes at stake in what has euphemistically been called the colonial encounter, we can no longer treat indigenous societies as local and isolated cultures. At the same time, however, Hill reminds us that we cannot fully understand “specific forms of ethnogenesis” only from the relations between subaltern peoples and the structures of domination and power, either. Thus, he points out that “[i]n addition to a people’s struggle to exist within a general history characterized by radical, often imposed changes, ethnogenesis is grounded in the conflicts within and among indigenous and Afro-American peoples”.

Analogous to Boccara’s approach, which deals more specifically with societies in “frontier” situations, Gary Clayton Anderson underscores indigenous agency and cultural creativity in response to the European presence along the northern frontier of Spanish America. According to Anderson, ethnogenesis is rooted in the process by which “bands altered themselves culturally to forge unity with other groups, abandoning languages, social practices, and even economic processes to meet

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the needs of the new order”. This process involved the integration of people from distinct groups (the case of captives, for example) as well as the incorporation and “reinvention” of European goods, technologies, and practices, including trade and the use of horses. The author also discusses the problem of “distribution of resources”, showing how social hierarchies developed through the concentration of power and wealth in certain segments, such as among elders or chiefs, for example. Anderson’s study provides an important example of how to employ “external” documentary sources to shed light on native attitudes and actions as their societies underwent significant changes in response to the advance of Europeans.6

This becomes important insofar as it underscores the internal dynamics of indigenous “reactions to conquest” in a different manner than that proposed by Florestan Fernandes, who assumed that the key to ethnic survival lay in the restoration of equilibrium in the “tribal organizational system”.7 However, while the new perspectives increasingly emphasize the agency of native actors, whose behavior seems to be informed as much by deeply-ingrained cosmologies as by their interpretations of the colonial situation, the literature is less clear in defining the relevant social units of analysis that need to be focused before and after the arrival of the Europeans. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, in his solid critique of the path-breaking História dos Índios no Brasil, points out this problem, asserting that “the freezing and isolation of ethnic groups is a post-Columbian sociological and cognitive phenomenon”. According to Viveiros de Castro, the designation of ethnic names “resulted from a complete misunderstanding of the ethnic and political dynamics of the Amerindian socius”. Grounded in a “substantivist and national-territorialist” conception of society, this misunderstanding strayed far from the “relative and relational nature of indigenous ethnic, political, and social categories”.8 In this sense, at least for the South American lowlands, the ethnohistorical mosaic of fixed ethnic groups that covers the postcontact map of Brazil stands in stark contrast to a constantly shifting precolonial configuration that can best be described as a kaleidoscope.

7 Fernandes, “Os Tupi e a Reação Tribal à Conquista”, p. 21-22.
But if the essentialization of ethnic categories was the fruit of a misconception, one might say that this misconception was not entirely free of second intentions. This classification of subordinate (or potentially subordinate) peoples into naturalized and fixed categories was a necessary step in the articulation of colonial domination, as Nicholas Dirks reminds us in a quite different context. Dubbed “ethnification” by Boccara and “tribalization” by other authors, this operation not only proved to be a fundamental tool in the consolidation of alliances and in the delineation of colonial policies, but it also established parameters for the ethnic survival of indigenous peoples, who began to deploy a broad variety of strategies within the contours and constraints increasingly dictated by colonial rule. This has encouraged scholars to treat the confused tangle of historical ethnic names with greater caution and precision, especially when tracing the relation between precolonial social forms and the social units that appear in the early sources, written after the settlement of European, African, and Asian peoples in the Americas.

Therefore, an intrinsic relation exists between the ethnic and social classifications imposed by the colonial order and the formation of ethnic identities. Indigenous identities thus developed both in relation to precolonial origins – sometimes in the form of denial – as well as in relation to other ethnic and social categories that were developing concomitantly in the colonial context. In Portuguese America, this differentiation intensified with the rapid expansion of the Atlantic slave trade and the corresponding growth of an African and Afro-Brazilian population.

Among the new ethnic and political configurations that emerged after the conquest, many grew out of the different ways in which indigenous polities became engaged in the colonial project, whether as allies, enemies or even refugees. Involvement in colonial wars or in the growing indigenous slave trade proved an important strategy for many groups seeking to maintain a good measure of political autonomy, paradoxically through their “collaboration” with advancing colonial powers. “Ethnic soldiering” emerged as a widespread, if little studied, phenomenon.

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10 Surprisingly, Amerindian-African relations in Brazil have not been extensively studied. For a recent appraisal of this theme, see Stuart Schwartz and Hal Langfur, “Tapanhuns, Negros da Terra, and Curibocas: Common Cause and Confrontation between Blacks and Natives in Colonial Brazil”, in Matthew Restall, ed., Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), pp. 81-114.
in which specific ethnic groups carried out colonial military actions against indigenous enemies, European invaders, and runaway slave communities. Other groups became specialized in supplying slaves to the Europeans as part of far-reaching trade networks involving highly prized European commodities, especially iron, firearms, and distilled liquors. Yet ethnic soldiering or supplying slaves involved far more than the Europeans’ manipulation of pre-colonial rivalries between ethnic groups, as early Brazilian historians would have us believe; rather, these processes often generated new sociopolitical units, defined by colonial observers in increasingly fixed, static terms.

In his interesting study of Mapuche ethnogenesis in Chile, Guillaume Boccara traces the transformation of warfare from its precolonial form to the postcontact *maloca*, a raiding enterprise that sought to acquire European goods, which strengthened the role of chiefs who began to wield “a new type of power”. This shift in warlike activities also involved constant attacks against *indios amigos*, that is, groups allied to the Spanish, who became an important source for horses. Like many other groups in frontier situations throughout the Americas, the Mapuche “reinvented” themselves in a somewhat paradoxical manner, exploiting their peculiar relationship with the colonial sphere in order to remain effectively independent from colonial rule.

In Brazil, much has been written about Tupinambá warfare, but practically nothing about its transformation. Florestan Fernandes began to outline a study of the “social function of warfare” in the early colonial setting, but other priorities took precedence and the work never came to be developed more fully. Early colonial

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documents indeed point towards a reconfiguration of indigenous warfare along the coast, including native testimonies concerned with the increasing sale of war captives, as well as evidence showing the specialization of some groups in supplying slaves directly to the Europeans. Later, other situations analogous to the Mapuche example emerged. The cases of the Guaiquirá and Paiaguá along the western frontier of Portuguese America in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century are well documented, while groups of “corsairs” – such as the Mura along the Madeira River or the Avá-Canoeiro along the Tocantins – also developed raiding organizations with frequent attacks on the Portuguese and their indigenous allies.\(^{15}\) Within the colonial context, groups that probably were of little expression – or even nonexistent – in precolonial times, achieved a much greater prominence.\(^{16}\)

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a succession of wars contributed to the reshuffling of indigenous polities into fixed ethnic groups. The sequence is long: the Tamoio war, the wars prosecuted by Mem de Sá in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, the conquest of Paraíba, the conquest of Maranhão and Pará, the Luso-Dutch war, the group of conflicts known as the Guerra dos Bárbaros (War of the Barbarous Indians), the destruction of Palmares, just to mention the most prominent episodes.\(^{17}\) Potiguar warriors, tough adversaries in the conquest of Rio Grande do Norte, later turned around and served the Portuguese in fighting against the Aimoré Indians of Porto Seguro and Ilhéus, and they even fought on the other side of the Atlantic, during the Angolan wars in the broader Luso-Dutch conflict.\(^{18}\) While the prevailing literature tends to establish a stable portrait of alliances and adversaries


\(^{18}\) In Angola, as in Brazil, they fought for both sides. The fleet commanded by Cornelis Corneliszoon Jol, the famed Houtbeeen (peg-leg), left Recife for Luanda in 1641 with at least 200 Indian warriors, probably Potiguar, though some sources suggest they were Tapuias (probably Tarairiu). See Alencastro, *Trato dos Viventes*, p. 444, and Charles Boxer, *Salvador de Sá and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1686* (London: Athlone, 1952).
based on pairings of enemy groups – as in the immemorial hatred between the Tupinambá and Tupinikin, or between the Potiguar and Caeté, or Botocudo and Puri – colonial documents show abundant examples of groups that slid from one alliance to another, adjusting to the conditions they faced.

From the early period of European expansion, then, ethnic names took on a relational and historically specific character. The pair of enemies Tamoio and Tememinó that emerged in sixteenth-century conflicts illustrate this process, as the former adopted a name meaning “ancestors” while the latter means, roughly, grandchild. Such references to kinship or generational relationships developed throughout colonial Portuguese America, especially among Tupi and Guarani groups who, in general terms, often referred to other Tupi and Guarani speakers as parentes, or relatives. It appears as though the term Tamoio emerged within the Tupinambá revolt that spread along the coast between the southern captaincies of São Vicente and Rio de Janeiro beginning in the late 1540s. This movement gained strength with the arrival of the French in the mid-1550s, establishing a rival European colony in Guanabara Bay that was bolstered by alliances with the Tupinambá. Significantly, in Hans Staden’s account, which the German gunner wrote at the beginning of the conflict, there is no mention of either term, Tamoio or Tememinó. Staden’s contemporary, Jean de Léry, refers to the Tupinambá’s northern enemies not as Tememinó but as Maracajá.19 “Wildcats”, this name gave way to Tememinó at some point, and this term became consolidated once the “índios do Gato”, or “followers of the Cat” sealed a long-standing alliance with the Portuguese. After fighting alongside the Portuguese to oust the French from Guanabara and to defeat the Tamoio, the Tememinó received rewards in lands and honorific titles, and their leaders maintained the privileges originally granted to D. Martim Afonso Araribóia well into the eighteenth century.20

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century sources reveal a tension between the attempt to establish a unified category for the coastal Tupi (initially as a contrast to

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the Tapuia) and the need to deal with the increasingly fragmented division of the coastal peoples into a large number of local groups, each adopting specific ethnic names.\(^{21}\) While part of the problem lies in the misreading by observers who understood little about Amerindian social organization, some of the accounts offer comments on the indigenous perspective on the “ethnification” process. For example, in Jesuit Jácome Monteiro’s early seventeenth-century account taken from Tupi informants, mythical cultural heroes had initially established the division between Tupi and Tapuia: “[The Tupi] also say that this Maíra Tupã divided the languages so that they could wage war on the Tapuias, but they do not know how to explain this any further”.\(^{22}\) But other indigenous narratives reproduced by colonial writers refer specifically to the origins of divisions between Tupi speakers themselves. In explaining “how the Tupinambá Indians established residence on the Island of Maranhão and adjacent areas”, Capuchin missionary Claude d’Abbeville fused the Christian notion of Earthly Paradise with a Tupinambá perspective on the history of conquest. The Indians told him of a “beautiful land that they call Caetê, or great forest”, located to the south of Maranhão. The Tupinambá, “the greatest and most valiant warriors”, lived in these lands until the Portuguese took control over them, and they “preferred to abandon their own country rather than to capitulate to the Portuguese”. They wandered for a long time through the interior until they reached the sea again, establishing numerous villages there. Others remained in the interior, living in the Ibiapaba Hills.\(^{23}\)

In evoking these great migrations, Tupinambá narratives in Maranhão certainly reflected historical events from the second half of the sixteenth century, especially the successive conquests of Bahia, Pernambuco, and Paraíba. The term Caetê, mentioned above, actually became a reference to one of the most bitter opponents to Portuguese expansion in northeastern Brazil, and these Indians became

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the main objects of a cruel declaration of “just war” in 1562, leading to their relentless persecution by the Europeans and their indigenous allies. But as the Tupinambá began to “hide themselves in the woods and in the most impenetrable forests”, this refuge served not only to escape from the Portuguese but also it afforded a space for the recreation of internal divisions. As the French missionary explained, the Tupinambá established several villages, “spreading themselves around and deriving their names from their places of residence, though maintaining the name Tupinambá, which serves to this day to qualify them”. According to Abbeville, many of the older Indians still remembered their arrival in Maranhão, when a great celebration took place. The narrative continues:

What happened was that they all became inebriated and one woman clubbed a man in the middle of the celebration, which resulted in a great riot that divided and separated the whole group. Some took sides with the offended victim while others stayed with the woman and the disagreement was so great that they were no longer great friends and allies and became great enemies; since then they have been in a state of permanent warfare, calling each other tobajaras, which means great enemies, or better yet, according to the word’s etymology: you are my enemy and I am yours.24

According to most amateur “Tupinologists”, who prefer the spelling Tabajara, this term means “owners of the villages”, which would lead us to believe that the Capuchin writer had made a mistake in his etymology. However, as in so many other cases in Brazilian history, this is an example of the linguistic corruption and resignification of a Tupi word that was much closer to Abbeville’s definition. In effect, this term combined the locational adverb toway (or tobai), which means “facing” or “in front of”. Tupi specialist Teodoro Sampaio considered the combination tobai+yara to mean “he who is facing, the neighbor in front”. But he also added: “This also means competitor, rival, emulator; or a man’s brother-in-law”.25 You are my enemy and I am yours: Abbeville captured the relational

25 Teodoro Sampaio, O Tupi na Geografia Nacional [1901], 5th ed. (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1987), p. 331. Carlos Fausto (personal communication) has suggested that toway+ara could be an agentive nominalization of the locational adverb toway, thus meaning “on the
dimension of this term perfectly. Indeed, throughout Portuguese America, the term Tobajara became a name referring to different peoples along the coast, wavering in meaning between ally or enemy, depending on the observer’s point of view. Hans Staden, for example, asserted in the mid-sixteenth century that the Tupinambá of São Vicente were called Tawaijar by their foes, “which means enemy”.

By the seventeenth century, however, this ethnic name became associated with specific Tupi populations. In the 1650s, Jesuit Antônio Vieira summarized the somewhat volatile history of the Tobajara of the Ibiapaba Hills, most likely the Tupinambá splinter mentioned above in Abbeville’s account. At the beginning of the century, the Jesuit priests Francisco Pinto and Luiz Figueira had converted the Tobajara, but the mission was abandoned following the violent death of the charismatic Pinto. When the Dutch occupied Pernambuco beginning in 1630, the once-baptized Tobajara were living like all other heathen, according to Vieira, forming an alliance with the Dutch and fighting against the Portuguese as well as other “Tobajaras [in Maranhão] of their own nation”. Dissatisfied with their Dutch allies in these costly battles, they rebelled and “decided to avenge the lives they had lost during this enterprise” by attacking the Dutch “by arrow and by sword”. In spite of this about-face in the alliance, Vieira did not think any more highly of the Tobajara, considering them to be “the wild beasts that were raised and hidden in those hills”. They became even “wilder” in Vieira’s view following the expulsion of the Dutch in 1654, when Protestant Indian refugees from Pernambuco joined them. “With the arrival of these new guests”, observed Vieira, “Ibiapaba truly became the Geneva of the Brazilian backlands”.

About a half-century later, some of the Indians of Ibiapaba provided their own version of their trajectory, which adds a different fold to the understanding of their ethnogenesis. Curiously, in sending a demand to King João V, the petitioners did not refer to themselves explicitly as Tobajara but simply as “Indians”. At the time they were living in a Jesuit mission, and the “Indians of the mission village in the Ibiapaba Hills” were experiencing hard times at that specific moment (around 1720), primarily because they had suffered many losses to warfare and disease, but also because the

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mission had received many new residents, mostly Tapuia survivors from the wars that had been raging throughout the northeast since the 1680s. In requesting lands and special privileges for their chiefs, they reviewed their postcontact history in an interesting manner. They reminded the crown that “long ago” their ancestors had left Bahia, which corresponds to Abbeville’s information but which was elided by Vieira. Their initial migration had been accompanied by “two other chiefs with numerous followers, who became separated after crossing the São Francisco River, and they disappeared into the Araripe Hills where they have hidden for over one hundred years, and they may be more than four thousand souls”. But this rebellious past was quickly replaced in the petition by the more positive image of faithful vassals who had rendered many services to the Portuguese crown, “not only in the Restoration of Pernambuco but continually since the Fathers of the Company [of Jesus] had settled them”. These petitioners subscribed to a pattern common to most colonists, as they established their vassalage in requesting a *sesmaria* grant on lands “that their fathers and grandfathers had cultivated”, but it is significant that they departed from this pattern in their effort to delineate a very particular memory of their colonial experience.28

The trajectory of Potiguar leaders in Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte also illustrates the process of ethnic consolidation within the context of colonial wars. Once again, the name itself is subject to controversy: were they Petiguar – tobacco chewers – or Potiguar – shrimp eaters?29 Over time, the latter term gained acceptance and its Portuguese equivalent, *camarão* (shrimp), became a surname for the indigenous dynasty that developed. Before the end of the sixteenth century, the Potiguar were staunch enemies of the Portuguese, especially after they garnered support from French traders who supplied them with firearms. After punishing wars against the Portuguese and their Tobajara allies, an important faction of Potiguar assented to a peace agreement in 1599. After accepting baptism and a new alliance


28 “Petição dos Índios da Serra da Ibiapaba”, received in Lisbon 12 October 1720, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Ceará cx. 1, doc. 90 (Projeto Resgate CD-Rom, AHU_ACL_CU_006, Cx. 1, D. 65). My thanks go to Professor Francisco Pinheiro of the University of Ceará for making a copy of his transcription available.

29 According to Sampaio, *Tupi na Geografia Nacional*, 306-307, the term Potiguara had the much more indecorous meaning of “eaters of excrement”, in other words, an offensive term used by enemies. Slightly corrupted, the term came to mean “shrimp eaters”.

with the Portuguese, they agreed to reorient their expertise in warfare towards repressing Aimoré rebellions in the captaincies of Ilhéus and Porto Seguero, to the south. Under the command of chief Zorobabé, six caravels set sail with 1,300 Potiguar and Tobajara warriors, who surprisingly were able to defeat and enslave several Aimoré groups.

Following Zorobabé’s triumphal return to Paraíba, the governor called on his services once again to squash a mocambo of “runaway Guinea blacks in the palm groves of Itapicuru”. He was able to capture some of the maroons and sold them to the whites, using the returns to buy a “field banner, drums, a horse and clothes” for an even more triumphal reception in Paraíba. He went as far as to ask the Franciscans to organize “a dance of curumins [Indian boys] and to decorate the church and open its doors to receive him”. While this mimicry of European pomp certainly attracted him, Zorobabé did not give up his desire to “take revenge” on his enemies and he began to prepare a war against chief Milho Verde (Green Corn), “a chief in the sertão who had killed one of his Christian nephews”. Most likely, however, his main objective was to capture Indian slaves to sell to the Portuguese. The Franciscans warned him that Milho Verde’s people “already were the king’s vassals and a just war against them could not be made without their order and consent from the governor”. But Zorobabé held a great deal of prestige among the colonists, who showered him with gifts “either to acquire Indians for their enterprises or because of the fear they had of him rebelling”. The governor apparently shared this fear and eventually imprisoned Zorobabé. While incarcerated, he faced several attempts on his life, and it seemed as if he were immune even to poison. Increasingly seen as a threat, he was sent to Lisbon, “but since this was a seaport and everyday boats come from Brazil and he could return”, authorities dispatched him to the interior town of Évora, where he died.30 (Comment: this is an example of what Thomas Abercrombie mentions in his book on social memory in Bolivia, which is the danger represented by hispanized Indians as perceived by Spanish authorities; also reminiscent of Homi Bhabha’s comments on the limits of mimicry – almost the same but not quite; which becomes, almost the same but not white)

The Camarão family suggests another path followed by the postconquest Potiguar. While Antônio Felipe Camarão’s role as a faithful ally to the Portuguese in

Rethinking Amerindian Resistance

the war against the Dutch is well known, this figure must be placed in a larger context, in a colonial world where alliance, vassalage, and privilege constituted important elements in the projection of native leaders. His father was a powerful Potiguar chief, who in the late sixteenth century had helped the French stall the expansion of Portuguese interests to the north of the São Francisco river. Potiguaçu – the Great Shrimp – was chief of the Potiguar on the left bank of the Potengi River in Rio Grande do Norte, and after a protracted negotiation, he agreed to the peace accord signed at the Reis Magos fort in 1599. He also consented to the presence of Franciscan missionaries among his people, and he himself was baptized Antônio Camarão in 1612. But this did not mean that these warriors set aside their arms. Much to the contrary, now allied to the Portuguese in their continued march to the north with the intention of taking Maranhão from the French, the Potengi Potiguar became indispensable allies in the many bloody conflicts that marked the seventeenth century. Potiguaçu led his warriors to participate in the early Maranhão campaigns around 1614, but he appears to have died on the way there.

Born around 1601, Antônio Felipe Camarão was still a child when dispatched to a relative’s village in Pernambuco, probably along with other Potiguar children who were sent to missions following the peace accord of 1599. In the words of a Jesuit writer, he was “raised and indoctrinated” by the Franciscans in their São Miguel mission, where he also learned to read and write. Following in his father’s footsteps, this Camarão became an important leader, commanding mission troops that were mobilized by crown authorities to combat threats to Portuguese control: French, Dutch, maroons, and especially indigenous enemies. Among the latter, several Potiguar groups played a major role, especially those of the Baía da Traição (Treason Bay) in Paraíba, who stormed the city of Salvador with the Dutch in 1625. For services rendered, king Philip II (IV of Spain) awarded this leader with membership in the Order of Christ with an annual income of 40,000 réis, along with another 40,000 as salary for his post as Captain-Major of the Potiguar Indians. Loyal vassal to the crown, Antônio Felipe Camarão thus received posts, honors and income, which were “perpetual”, that is, they were hereditary rewards. He was succeeded by Francisco Pinheiro Camarão, Diogo Pinheiro Camarão, Sebastião Pinheiro Camarão, and Antônio Domingues Camarão as Governors of the Indians of Pernambuco and
Attached Captaincies, thus establishing a veritable native dynasty that was to last well into the eighteenth century.  

**Participation in Colonial Society**

The presence of titled Indian dynasties in Portuguese America proved relatively rare and usually derived from rewards for military services, but it does afford a glimpse at the important role played by native actors in the unfolding of the colonial drama. To be sure, the inclusion of different indigenous populations within the colonial sphere – or at its margins – remains a key issue to be explored in greater details, especially since most of the pertinent unpublished sources in Brazilian and overseas archives deal with missions, land, and labor. A new image begins to emerge of political and spiritual leaders who operated within and often against the colonial order, securing a place for them as relevant historical agents. This picture stands in stark contrast to the more usual approach to resistance, often portrayed as amorphous, collective actions in stubborn defense of ancestral traditions. By shifting their focus to native strategies and actions, recent studies have underscored the need to revise a broad spectrum of questions, ranging from the so-called spiritual conquest, to Indian slavery, mission labor, and the impact of late colonial reforms, among others.

Mission villages provided an important space for the reconfiguration of indigenous identities throughout the colonial period, as Regina Celestino de Almeida

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32 There is a preliminary guide to the Brazilian archives: John Monteiro, *Guia de Fontes para a História Indígena e do Indigenismo em Arquivos Brasileiros* (São Paulo: NHIII-USP, 1994). Recently, a massive digitalization project copied a large part of Lisbon’s Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino and made this material available on CD-Rom. For a descriptive list of the published catalogues, see [http://www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/bibcom.htm#instrupesq](http://www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/bibcom.htm#instrupesq).

shows in her important study of Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{34} While missionaries made great efforts to show how the converted Indians had left their pagan pasts behind, their accounts also reveal rich details not only on the persistence of native religious manifestations but also on the ways they reconfigured their social and symbolic universe in the wake of devastating epidemics, forced migrations, and the imposition of a Christian cosmology.\textsuperscript{35} A suggestive example of this comes from the Jesuit Fernão Cardim’s “Epistolar Narrative”, which in describing visitor Gouveia’s inspection of the Brazilian missions and colleges between 1583 and 1590, supplies us with rich descriptions of how the mission Tupinambá adjusted to the new times.\textsuperscript{36}

Two aspects immediately stand out in this account: the reconfiguration of warfare and the centrality of rituals. From the start, the Jesuits caused perplexity among the Indians, as this episode told by Cardim suggests: “a boy, passing by the Visitor in a canoe, asked in his language: \textit{Pay, marapé guaranîme nande popeçoari?} [that is], Father, how can you be unarmed in these time of war and siege?”\textsuperscript{37} In fact, the Jesuits felt that they were well armed, with the word of God. They were, after all, the Soldiers of Christ and this military equivalency did not go unnoticed by the Indians. A few years earlier, in a letter sent by Diego Topinambá Peribira Mongetá Quatiá (probably a composite name disguising the true author of the letter, Jesuit Francisco Pires) to the Jesuit college of Coimbra, narrating “a pilgrimage to the interior, to where we set out armed with Christ’s cross and his words”.\textsuperscript{38}

According to these descriptions, the Jesuits met enthusiastic response from the Indians in the elaborate rituals they prepared, especially when they celebrated certain saints or when they conducted theater performances. The celebration of \textit{endoenças} (Holy Thursday) was conducted in both Portuguese and Tupi: “because there were many whites present, the \textit{mandato} [ablution ceremony] was given in Portuguese, and the passion in the native tongue, which caused great devotion and brought tears to the

\textsuperscript{34} Almeida, \textit{Metamorfoses Indígenas}, especially pp. 129-185 and 257-280.

\textsuperscript{35} For an outstanding study from this perspective, see Pompa, \textit{Religião como Tradução}, pp. 339-419.

\textsuperscript{36} This period is well studied by Charlotte Castelnau-L’Estoile, \textit{Les Ouvriers d’une Vigne Stérile: les jésuites et la conversion des Indiens au Brésil, 1580-1620} (Paris and Lisbon: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian/CNCDP, 2000).


\textsuperscript{38} Meninos Órfãos to the Coimbra College, 1552, \textit{Monumenta Brasiliae}, 1:378.
Indians”. Tupi constituted the main language in devotional performances, but it was not exclusive, since the Jesuits also taught Portuguese, Latin and even Spanish to the curumins, or Indian boys. In another ceremony in the same mission of Espírito Santo, “the Indians performed a dialogue in the Brazilian [Tupi] language, Portuguese, and Castillian, and they are very graceful in speaking peregrine languages, especially Castillian”.

While these accounts certainly tell us more about Jesuit strategies and intentions than about indigenous response, they do provide some clue as to how mission Indians forged a unique space of their own within the colonial project. The celebrations that were organized to receive the Jesuit authorities also included the performance of native traditions, such as the ritual sweeping of the visitor’s path and the welcome of tears. As they approached the Espírito Santo mission, Indian flute players met Visitor Gouveia’s entourage. “The Indian boys”, wrote Cardim, “hidden in the fresh forest, chanted several devotional hymns as we dined, which caused great devotion in the midst of those woods, especially along with the play just written to receive the Visitor, their new shepherd”. Cardim’s description suggests that the mission Indians performed these reception rituals in such a way as to prove their Christian devotion without abandoning their own traditions, which gained new characteristics on each new occasion. This was surprising to the Jesuit: “Everything brought out devotion under those forests, in these strange lands, even more so because such ceremonies were not expected of such barbarous peoples”. Indeed, the “Epistolar Narrative” recounts episodes that revealed the hybrid character of these celebrations, as there was a clear effort to integrate the new religious activities into pre-Christian patterns. “The curumins, or boys, their bows and arrows raised, shouted out their war cry, and painted in various tones, naked, they advanced with their hands raised to received the father’s blessing, saying in Portuguese ‘Jesus Christ be blessed’”. Even the devil proved to be an indispensable figure in the celebrations and in the theater performances in these missions. Cardim described one such celebration, remarking that “an anhangá, or devil, did not fail to appear, as he emerged from behind the trees; this was the Indian Ambrósio Pires, who had gone to Lisbon with Father Rodrigo de Freitas. The Indians celebrate this figure with great enthusiasm because of his

attractiveness, expressions and caginess; they always put some devil in all their festivities, if these are to be well celebrated”.

In short, sacred music, instructional dialogues, and carefully staged rituals were an important part of the lives of mission Indians. However, according to Cardim and with the disapproval of many priests, this did not mean the end of native chants and rites that they so diligently tried to extirpate. Following one of the devotional ceremonies described in the Epistolar Narrative, the Indians carried on the festivities on their own, to the rhythm of “gourds filled with stones (not unlike Portuguese boys with their tambourines)” and choreographed so “that they never miss a step, and stamp on the ground together in such a way that they make the earth shake”. Notwithstanding his attempt to relativize the scene through metropolitan analogies, Cardim in effect had witnessed a ritual to the sound of the maracá, reminiscing the glories of past warfare and vengeance. “I could not understand what they were chanting”, confessed Cardim, “but some of the priests told me that they were singing in verse about the deeds and deaths their ancestors perpetrated”. On another such occasion, “the procession was filled with devotion, with many torches and bonfires, and many of the Indians had to be disciplined, since they go at one another in a cruel manner, and this they hold not only to be a virtue, but they also consider it to be an act of bravery to take blood and become abaetê, that is, valiant”.

In a well-known passage of Claude d’Abbeville’s History of the Capuchin Missions in Maranhão, Tupinambá leader Japiaçu narrated the origins of the radical separation between Indians and whites:

We lived as one, you and us; but God, sometime after the deluge, dispatched his bearded prophets to teach us his laws. These prophets gave our father, from whom we descend, two swords, one made of wood and the other iron, allowing him to choose between them. He thought the iron sword was too heavy and chose the wooden one. Seeing this, the ancestor from whom you descend, who was more clever, took the iron sword. Ever since then, we have been miserable, because when the prophets saw that we did not want to

40 All quotes in this paragraph are from Cardim, Tratados da Terra, p. 222.
41 Cardim, Tratados da Terra, p. 234-35.
42 Cardim, Tratados da Terra, p. 247.
believe in them, they returned to the heavens, leaving their footprints inscribed with crosses in the rocks near Potiú. 

This interesting speech lends itself to several possible interpretations. At first sight, it appears to transform the tragic history of contact into myth, offering a native explanation — within an indigenous narrative genre — for the subordinate condition experienced by the Tupinambá of Maranhão in the early seventeenth century. But perhaps the most revealing aspect lies in the displacement of the subject, since it was the actions of the Indian’s ancestor that determined the march of history.

Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, in her comment on this and other examples of myths focusing on the origins of whites, emphasizes the fact that “in the myth, a choice is offered to the Indians, who rather than victims of some predestined force become agents determining their own fate. Perhaps they made the wrong choice. But at least they saved their dignity in having shaped their own history”.

Recognizing native leaders as subjects capable of tracing their own history is certainly an advance in Brazilian history. However, it should be noted that post-contact choices always were conditioned by a series of factors set in motion with the arrival and expansion of Europeans in the Americas. The demographic catastrophe that deeply affected native societies, while closely associated with the Europeans’ military, religious, and economic designs, left in its wake a desperate situation where fragmented societies became involved in an emerging colonial scenario. Facing increasingly unfavorable conditions, native leaders developed various responses, often adopting objects, strategies and discourses introduced by the colonizers. Hence native resistance, unlike the way in which it is usually portrayed, was not limited to the stubborn clinging to preccolonial traditions, but rather gained force and meaning as indigenous leaders and societies opened themselves to innovation.

European observers, who tended to portray as veritable savages the Indians who resisted and who by nature were openly hostile to the whites, did not always recognize this characteristic of indigenous politics. Sebastião da Rocha Pita, author of

43 Claude d’Abbeville, Histoire de la mission, pp. 69v-70.
a *History of Portuguese America*, published in 1730, expressed this view in a chapter on the Portuguese occupation of the *sertão* in Pernambuco, where he pointed that the landowners who had received grants measured in leagues, had to conquer that territory palm by palm, so great was the resistance put up by the barbarous heathen. The flip side of this image involved Indians who collaborated with colonial projects. An interesting portrayal of this second stereotype can be found in an anonymous, mid-eighteenth century document, listing 25 examples of “Famous Indians in Arms who contributed to the temporal and spiritual conquest of this State of Brazil”. Headed by Dom Felipe Camarão, the list includes several leaders who, according to the author, dispel certain current notions about the Indian’s supposed incapacity to act politically. “From these and other similar cases”, argued the anonymous writer, “clearly we can infer that the Indians of our Lusitanian America are not as limited, crude, and undisciplined as ordinarily portrayed, where they are treated more like irrational wild beasts and brutes than as men capable of reason”.

Among others, the author singled out “Pindobuçu, magnanimous, intrepid and brave who, wielding a wooden sword, threatened his own in order to maintain peace with the Portuguese and the favor of the Jesuit priests”. He also mentioned “Garcia de Sá, another famous preacher of the Faith, whose spirit resembled that of the Apostle of the Gentiles”. Or yet another Indian preacher: “The celebrated Jacaranha, great friend of the missionaries who dressed in a long blue habit with a red cross embroidered on his breast”. In addition to their assistance in the conversion field, the author also described the participation of Indians in other colonial activities, as in the dislocation of indigenous populations from the remote hinterland to the colonial settlements. For example, “the famous Indian Arco Verde (Green Bow), who proved so zealous in his faith that he traveled 400 leagues into the wilderness in search of his kinsmen in order to bring them under the control of the Church and the priests, with little fear of his enemies, whom he defeated, placing them in retreat and killing many”.


In effect, the author emphasized the collaborative role of these Indians. However, it seems clear that such activities involved much more than the mere manipulation of native leaders by colonial interests. Perhaps more to the point, these examples show how different indigenous subjects adopted some of the symbols and discourse of the Europeans, in order to forge their own space within the New World that was beginning to become delineated.

This same language can be found in the rebellious movements that opposed colonial rule. The Tupinambá of Maranhão, for example, in addition to the wooden swords, also used the written word in a conspiracy plotted by a leader named Amaro, who supposedly had been “raised” by the Jesuits in a Pernambuco mission. Brandishing a few Portuguese letters, Amaro pretended to read them to a large meeting of rebellious headmen, asserting that “the subject of these letters is that all the Tupinambá are to be enslaved”. According to colonial writer Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, “this suggestion was so diabolical that it soon took hold of the brutality of so many barbarians, who agreed unanimously that they should kill all the whites”.

Father Antônio Vieira, in his account of the Ibiapaba mission, also noted that rebellious Indians made use of writing in their efforts to negotiate peace with the Jesuits who were beginning to encroach on this “Geneva of the backlands”. One of the local leaders, Francisco, “presented letters to the missionaries, which they brought from all the headmen, encased in calabashes sealed with wax, so that they would not be damaged when the bearers cross the rivers”. Moreover, “the priests were impressed when they saw that the letters were written on Venice paper, and closed with sealing wax from India”.

This same fascination for writing appeared in Jesuit João Felipe Bettendorf’s late seventeenth-century account. Although they lacked paper and ink, the Jesuits did not give up trying to teach the Indians how to read and write. Remembering his first years as a priest in the Mortugura mission in Maranhão in the early 1660s, Bettendorf wrote:

And so they would not have to stop learning for want of books, ink, and paper,
I ordered them to make ink from carbon mixed with the juice from some plants

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and to write with that on the broad leaves of pacobeira palms; and to make it all easier, I put a little stick in their hands to serve as a pen and I taught them to form and become familiar with the letters, both large and small, in the dust [of the village] and sand of the beaches, which they enjoyed so much, that they filled the village and the beaches with letters.\textsuperscript{49}

As the Indians covered the beach with letters, the written word, not unlike the wooden sword, became another alternative from which indigenous leaders could choose. While the myth presented at the beginning of this section appears to dislocate the critical action deciding the group’s fate to a remote past, the content of the narrative referred explicitly to the contemporary situation experienced by the Tupinambá. Japiaçu knew very well who his interlocutors were. After all, the bearded prophets had returned, presenting new choices that were as challenging as the one presented to their ancestral father. It was at this crossroads, where tradition and innovation met face to face, that the history of the Indians was forged – and continues to be forged today – against the strong current of colonial expansion.

**Include section on Indian-African relations.**

**Conclusions (to be further elaborated)**

Breakdown of the binomial construct of resistance and collaboration, a politically sensitive issue for the indigenous movement. Interesting debates over images: which Indian leader should stand? Ajuricaba and Cunhambebe.

Whose history, what history? Gap between scholarly production and demands of indigenous movement and indigenous schools.

\textsuperscript{49} João Felipe Bettendorf, \textit{Crônica dos Padres da Companhia de Jesus no Estado do Maranhão} [1699], facsimile of 1901 edition (Belém: Secult, 1990), p. 156.