Early Modern Catholic Missions in Brazil: The Challenge of the Outsiders

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4.1 Introduction

Jesuits Manuel da Nóbrega and José de Anchieta recounted their horror on the feast of Corpus Christi in Rio de Janeiro in 1563, as the Tupi, the native peoples of the coast of Brazil, celebrated by drinking alcohol, dancing, and gnawing on the leg of a Portuguese slave. Anchieta recounted the scene:

And they [the Tupi] carried on drinking and dancing with a great party ... And one of the worst [Tupi] said, "Don't make me mad, because I already killed one of yours and ate him,"—referring to a Portuguese slave who was from Rio de Janeiro. And then this man sent one of his women to take off a shinbone that he had saved to make flutes. The others seeing this said, "You killed and ate him, let us eat him also." And asking for flour [to accompany the meal], one Tupi took one strip [of meat], another Tupi took another, [and] they began to gnaw on the leg like dogs.¹

The Portuguese colonization of and evangelization in Brazil was fraught with obstacles, of which cannibalism was only one. If the Portuguese survived the arduous journey to Brazil in the early 1500s, disease, death, wild animals, motley crews of colonists and natives, and a lawless nation awaited them. How did the Catholic Church make converts in these conditions?

4.2 Background

According to Brazil’s most well-known Jesuit, António Vieira (1608–1697), evangelization was only possible with colonization. Colonization started slowly in Brazil due to the vast amount of territory and the limited number of people to colonize. Portugal began the largest seafaring movement of the 15th century while being one of the smallest kingdoms in Western Europe in terms of land mass and population size. Therefore, after the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral and his crew landed in Brazil in 1500, settlement was minimal for the next fifty years. In 1530 King João III of Portugal delegated the promotion of settlement to several captains. In an effort to populate (povoar) the new-found colony, King João III divided fifteen lots (sesmarias) among twelve proprietary Portuguese captains. The system failed. Portuguese settlements in Asia, which seemed more promising, absorbed disproportionate numbers from a homeland of only one million people. In Brazil, moreover, the colonists and native peoples often did not get along. The size of Brazil also meant that the distance between captaincies was great and their climates and landscapes varied.

Beginning in the 1530s and 1540s sugar cultivation became a widespread staple of Brazilian agriculture.² Brought from the Old world to the New, sugar was the catalyst that eventually made Brazil the most successful colony in the Portuguese empire. Pernambuco, in the northeast, immediately began to prosper owing to good leadership in the captaincy, decent relations with the Indians, and the presence of people from the Old World who were skilled in building and running sugar mills.³ The region led Brazil in sugar production, with five mills in 1550 and sixty-six by 1580.⁴ The Portuguese city of Olinda, high in the hills (people from Lisbon were used to this landscape) was one of “the most noble and populous vilas” in the north, as the one of the first chroniclers of Brazil, Pero Magalhães de Gândavo, recorded.⁵

São Vicente (present-day São Paulo) was the only other captaincy to fare well initially, though Bahia also had potential to do well. A large-scale sugar business in São Vicente, however, would not emerge until the 17th century, leaving Bahia and Pernambuco as the colony’s main ports in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁶ From 1500–1549 there was no government presence in Bahia. The Bay of All Saints in the captaincy of Bahia had ideal soil conditions and a perfect port for sending sugar back to Europe, but poor leadership and skirmishes with the Indians prevented progress in the early 1500s. In 1548 the Portuguese

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¹ Serafim Leite, (ed.), Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu. Monumenta Brasiliae IV (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1960), 146. Letter by Father José de Anchieta to Father Diego Lainez from São Vicente, January 8, 1565. All translations are my own.
³ Ibid., 18.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Pero Magalhães de Gândavo, A primeira história do Brasil, (eds.) Sheila Moura Hue and Ronaldo Menegaz (Lisbon: 2004), 53.
⁶ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations, 18.
crown, realizing the importance of sugar production in the region, created the capital city Salvador next to the Bay and in 1549 the first governor, Tomé de Sousa, arrived and began to organize the sugar economy there.

The first Europeans missionaries came into contact with people of the Tupi-Guarani language group. The two groups had separated before the arrival of the Europeans. In 1500 the Tupis occupied the most important portion of the coastal zone between Ceará and Cananéia (São Paulo) and the Guarani dominated the southern coast from Cananéia to the Lake of Ducks (Rio Grande do Sul). Europeans further distinguished groups that spoke a derivation of Tupi. There were the Tupinambá in Bahia, and the Tupiniquin and Aimoré south of Camamú to Espírito Santo.9 In the early 16th century the indigenous population of Brazil has been estimated at somewhere between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.8 Three circumstances drastically reduced numbers over the course of the 16th century. First, the Portuguese enslaved the Indians for manual labor on their plantations. Second, epidemics were widespread throughout Brazil in 1562, 1578–1579, 1581, 1585, and 1597.10 Droughts were also common. Last, the entradas, or the missions to bring the Indians down (descer) from the populated woodlands to the coast in Bahia and Pernambuco from 1570-1590, further decimated the native peoples as they were exposed to disease and arduous labor.11 By the 17th century Amerindians were outnumbered in their homeland. Around 1640 the total population of the Northeast of Brazil was divided into approximately 30,000 Portuguese, 30,000 African slaves, 16,000 Amerindians, 12,000 Dutch (which consisted of many Europeans allied with them) and 1,500 Jews.12

4.3 Jesuit Missions

Within this colonial structure, Christianity slowly took root. The Catholic missionary enterprise required official support in Europe from a state leader or monarch and the willingness of a religious order to carry out the plan. The padroado (Royal Patronage) in Lisbon organized the missions. Six religious orders were active in Brazil under the padroado: Jesuits, Franciscans, Carmelites, Benedictines, Capuchins, and Oratorians.13 The Padroado also financed the secular clergy in Brazil. Between 1551 and 1676 there was only one diocese, located in Salvador da Bahia, and it was not until 1676–1677 that dioceses in Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro and São Luís de Maranhão came into existence.14 In 1622, the Holy See established the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, which attempted to centralize the missions and to move priests and bishops into areas of Brazil that were not served by religious orders in the missions. The power of the padroado, however, was strong and continued to finance religious endeavors after 1622. Our knowledge of the secular clergy in Brazil is left wanting. Of the regular clergy, the Jesuits were the most active order in Brazil and hence, the focus of this chapter. They were favored by the king and gifted early leaders in the evangelization of Brazil. They were also the most influential group to try to convert the native peoples of Brazil. In terms of their evangelical, educational, and cultural influence, the Jesuits had no other ecclesiastical rivals in Brazil until the 1750s.15

The Society, founded by Ignatius of Loyola, began in Paris in 1534 when Ignatius and a small group of friends partook in the Spiritual Exercises. The Society came to Brazil because it had a strong relationship with the Portuguese monarchy. The crown supported the Jesuits' eagerness to evangelize. In 1549 the Jesuits arrived in Brazil and eventually made their main center and college in Salvador of Bahia. Within fifty years they established colleges in Rio de Janeiro, Olinda, São Paulo, and Vitória. In the Jesuit colleges and aldeias, or missionary settlements, the Jesuits learned a type of Tupi which they made into a written and standardized format for the sake of instruction.

The Jesuits found the Tupi, new to the Christian religion, to be a tabula rasa. At first, the Tupi's apparent lack of worship spaces and discernible Tupi idols meant that missionary work in Brazil took a distinct course from that of Spanish America. Owing to the lack of visible deities, missionaries debated whether the Tupi had a religion.16 Despite what the Jesuits initially thought, the Tupi did

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7 Jorge Couto, A construção do Brasil: Ameríndios, Portugueses e Africanos, do início do povoamento a finais de Quinhentos (Lisbon: 1995), 56.
8 Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 29.
9 Couto, A construção do Brasil, 62. The first census was not administered until the 1770s in Brazil, see Dauril Alden, “The Population of Brazil in the Late Eighteenth Century: A Preliminary Study,” The Hispanic American Historical Review 43 (1963): 173–205.
11 Ibid., 383.
have their own religious practices. Particularly famous were the santidades, or the rituals of the caraibas, or Tupi prophets, who initiated large gatherings in the village. The Tupi were known for preaching elegantly in the mornings and evenings, smoking herbs, entering into trances, and contacting the spirits of the Gods. Anchieta, SJ. estimated that from 1549 to the mid-1580s, the Jesuits had converted over 100,000 Brasis.

**4.4 Historiography**

Fernão Cardim, S.J., José de Anchieta, S.J., and Manuel de Nóbrega, S.J. recorded the initial conceptual and practical challenges of bringing a new territory into the Christian fold. Monumenta Brasiliae houses many of the Jesuit letters from Brazil. Traditional Jesuit historiography on Brazil exalted the virtues of the Jesuits who did this arduous work. The Jesuits in Europe who compiled the first histories of the Society of Jesus often mentioned Brazil since many of their brothers died as martyrs in, or on their way to, Brazil. Nicolaus Orlandinus (1620), Louis Richéôme (1611), Bartolomé Guerreiro (1642) and Antonio Franco (1714), for example, glorified Brazil’s martyrs. The first large scale compilation of the Society’s activity in Brazil was Simão Vasconcellos’s Crônica da Companhia de Jesus do Estado do Brasil (1663). Vasconcellos was a prolific Jesuit and wrote the life of Anchieta, among many other works, commemorating the first Jesuits’ efforts.

In the same celebratory vein, Serafim Leite’s ten volume work, História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil (1938–1950), is the classic modern work on the Jesuits in colonial Brazil. Leite grew up in the Amazon for part of his childhood and then became a Jesuit in Brazil. He sees Catholicism as triumphant in Brazil, and the Jesuits as central players in the conversion of the country. The ten volumes were republished in 2004. Charlotte Castelnau L’Estoile shifted the focus away from praising the Society in favor of a more somber view of the Jesuits’ evangelization in Brazil. Les Ouvriers d’une Vigne Sterile (2000) interprets the Jesuits as tilling a sterile vine. Historians have focused more recently on
the Jesuits' unique way of proceeding, on the tensions within the missionary project, and on the obstacles the Jesuits faced on the path to “saving souls” in Brazil. These lines of research reflect on how the Jesuits interacted with, and interpreted, the role of outsiders in Brazilian lands.

In the past, Jesuit studies tended to focus on the Jesuits as an entity in themselves rather than on the Jesuits’ relations with the world. Martyrdom and the potential of sainthood of Anchieta and Vieira are examples par excellence. The fourth exercise in St. Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises, however, called on the Jesuits to go out into the world and do the work of God. Historians are writing about how Jesuits interacted with people that comprised their spheres of influence—other Europeans, Protestants, African slaves, and indigenous peoples. While Ignatius's attention was mostly on ministry, the Jesuits found themselves acting as scientists, doctors, healers, administrators, and advisors to kings and viceroys around the world.

## 4.5 Jesuit Support of Slavery and Violence versus Jesuit Accommodation

How the Jesuits understood, interacted with, and often supported African, and at times Indian, slavery is a subject of much debate in the historiography. On a practical level, the Jesuits in Brazil relied on Indian labor at times. On a theoretical level, the propensity of the colonists to enslave the Tupi conflicted with the mission of the Jesuits, who were teaching Catholicism and educating the Tupi in European manners and customs. This caused a variety of conflicts between the Portuguese colonists and the Jesuits. The Portuguese landowners worked the indigenous people incessantly in the sugar and tobacco fields. Owing to this hard labor, many Indians fled the Jesuit villages and ran into pits and, in turn, had an antagonist relationship with some of the Portuguese landowners. Another example of conflict that ensued between the Jesuits and the colonists was over the bandeiras, or military-like brigades led by Portuguese or people of mixed Portuguese-Indian ancestry, backed by Indian allies, who journeyed west and south from São Paulo with the goal of capturing Indians to be used for labor on the plantations and to search for material wealth. The bandeiras would raid Jesuit aldeias and forced the Jesuits to retreat. The Jesuits were expelled from Santos and São Paulo in 1640, despite the efforts of Spanish Jesuits the year before to obtain a bull from Pope Urban VIII which reiterated the prohibition against Indian slavery. The Jesuits estimated that 300,000 Indians were taken from the Paraguay mission alone. A final example of conflict between the Jesuits and colonists was over cattle expansion into the inland wilderness (sertão). Because the Jesuits controlled Indian labor and owned large amounts of cattle, the ranchers would protest.
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Practically speaking, the Jesuits in Brazil employed both Native Americans and Africans as slaves as Carlos Moura Ribeiro Zeron has shown. His study untangles the controversy over whether the Jesuits had indigenous slaves. While most of the Jesuit writings from Brazil try to hide their use of Native Americans for labor within the aldeias, Zeron shows how historians have misunderstood the Jesuits' position on indigenous slavery because they cannot comprehend how it fits in to their mission to save indigenous souls. Jesuits in Brazil often differed in opinion on the subject and debated the issue with those in Europe. The aldeias, as Zeron shows, were often seen as reservoirs of soldiers and a workforce for the colony. While there were some Jesuits who insisted on the freedom of the Indians, most notably Antônio Vieira in the 17th century, most of the Jesuits accepted, at least for practical reasons, the use of indigenous labor from their aldeias to help run the Jesuit enterprise. Dauril Alden examined inventories from Jesuit estates and found, for example, that in 1572 on the Santana estate that "only 8.1 percent of the slave force consisted of Guinea

28 See for instance, “Memorial sobre as Terras, e Gente do Maranhão, e Gram Pará, e Rio das Amazônias,” Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Bras 11, 507v. "No temporal tambem os pobres indios padecem grandes injustiças dos Portugueses, que aqui se não podem referir por extenso; como são muitos cativeiros, injustos, contra a forma das leis de sua majestade mandando os vender para fora da terra, e das conquistas. Outros os opprimem com grande violencia, obrigandoos a serviços mui pesados, como he faser tabacco: em que se trabalha sete, e oito meses contínuos de dia, e de noite ... e por isso fogem para os matos, despousando suas aldeias. E outros no mesmo serviço morrem de desgosto sem remedio algum. De todas estas causas ha muitos exemplos ...

29 Ibid., "E os religiosos por falarem contra estas injustiças e violencias, são odiados, e perse­guídos."
31 Ibid., 471.
32 Ibid., 469.
33 Ibid., 461.
34 Carlos Moura Ribeiro Zeron, Ligne de foi : la Compagnie de Jesus et l'escelage dans le processus de formation de la société coloniale en Amérique Portugaise, xvi-xviiie siècles (Paris: 2009).
35 Ibid., 486.
slaves; Indians constituted the remainder. Likewise, Rafael Ruiz found that in the early seventeenth century in São Paulo the Jesuits sent caciques to round up the Indians to live near the mines.

The Jesuits were, at times, persecuted by the indigenous peoples (and possibly for good reason). In 1650 the Governor of Maranhão wrote to King João IV about the Indians of the backlands of Itapêrê who fled the engenhos (sugar plantations) and killed three Jesuit priests. The governor explained that the Jesuits were abusing the indigenous slaves, who then escaped and took revenge. The Jesuits also, like the colonists, amassed a fortune from the sugar fields of Brazil, which required a substantial labor force.

These abuses, however, have recently been ignored in favor of an emphasis on accommodation. This raises several questions. First, we might ask how different were catechetical methods in Europe and the Americas? A “horizontal” methodology, which compares missions among themselves, might shed light on additional dimensions of how conversion and subjection fit into the Jesuit paradigm. José de Anchieta, the most influential Jesuit in the early Brazilian mission, engaged in both subjection and accommodation. Held in captivity by warring indigenous groups, Anchieta realized that an element of force was necessary to evangelize at times. He was inspired by Luke 14:23, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in.”

Manuel da Nóbrega in Diálogo da conversão do gentio (1556) also believed that the only way to convert the Indians was to impose a moderate degree of subjection. While the Portuguese Crown and the papacy forbade forced conversion, subjection (i.e., compelling the Indians to the aldeias) was allowed, leaving open a variety of interpretations.

For the most part, the Jesuits in Brazil did not directly engage in the natural slavery debate, in part because it had already been resolved by Spaniards. The notable exception is the debate that took place between Manuel da Nóbrega and Quirício Caxa, a professor of moral theology at the Jesuit college of Bahia. The Jesuits trained in Europe were influenced by Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery, which stated that proper mastery over one’s passions exempted some people from subjection and qualified them to master others. The legal tradition for legitimizing the conquest of infidel lands began with Pope Innocent IV (d. 1254). He defended dominium, or the natural right of Christians and infidels to own property and establish governments. The pope, however, could override infidels’ rights to land as he was responsible for the salvation of all people. Offenses against natural law in the late middle ages exempted perpetrators from natural law’s protection and constituted evidence of the absence of a true polity at which point the pope could intervene. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the pope could sanction the conquests of infidels who violated natural law, but forced conversions were not permitted. Christian conquest was still debated in the 15th century. In 1537, Paul III (d. 1549) declared in Sublimis Deus (1537) that the Indians could be converted.

Even when the slave labor of the Native Americans was morally, legally, and philosophically called into question throughout the Spanish and Portuguese empires, African slaves provided the workforce for Jesuit plantations despite repeated orders from the Superior General of the Society to not keep slaves at the colleges. The Jesuits in Brazil did not follow orders. They insisted that there was nobody else who could complete their daily tasks. Except for a few

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36 Alden, The Making of an Enterprise, 520.
38 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Brazil, Avulsos, Capitania de Maranhao, Cx.3, D.285.
41 Castelnau-L’Estoile, Lesouvriers d’une vigne stérile, 99.
48 Muldoon, Popes, Lawyers and Infidels, 120–124.
49 Parts of this paragraph were taken from my article on the subject. Anne McGinness, “Between Subjection and Accommodation: The Development of José de Anchieta’s Missionary Project in Colonial Brazil,” Journal of Jesuit Studies, January 2014.
50 Alden, The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750, 508.
outliers, they never questioned the use of African slaves in colonial society. From 1550–1575 it is estimated that 10,000 Africans arrived in Brazil, and from 1576–1600 there were 40,000. The Portuguese obtained slaves from Angola and Guinea. Alden and Schwartz have shown that there is no evidence that the Jesuits treated their slaves any better than the plantation owners. Quilombos, or communities of runaway slaves, attest to the brutal conditions throughout Brazil from which they fled.

More recently, scholarship has turned away from Jesuit support of violence, in its various forms, toward the Jesuits’ creative ‘way of proceeding.’ Some of these studies, however, are not true to the origins of Jesuit accommodation. As Emanuele Colombo and Thomas Cohen recall, St. Ignatius ‘way of proceeding’ derived from St. Paul’s words: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Colombo and Cohen urge scholars to study Jesuit accommodation as it relates to its historical and theological roots (and not based on anachronistic definitions of accommodation). As an angle into accommodation, scholars have focused on how Christianity did not simply replace indigenous worldviews but how European Catholic and indigenous worldviews melded together. In the literature on conversion in Spanish America, art historians, historians, and anthropologists have focused on Catholic priests who spread the faith to indigenous peoples and colonists and on indigenous peoples’ adaptation to Catholicism. Some scholars demonstrate how the Church tried to impose orthodoxy and eradicate pagan rituals. Others show how Christianity adjusted to indigenous sensibilities to appeal in a new setting. As Charlotte Castelnau L’Estoile has shown convincingly, the ‘Tupi appropriated relics and lifted up the bones of a Jesuit martyr as a prophet in their own culture, since the custom of relics was not that foreign to them.’ Other historians have shed light on how the Tupi might have perceived Christians. Cristina Pompa’s pioneering study of indigenous conversion in Brazil shows the dialectic between the Brazilians and missionaries in an effort to create a Christian community. She attempts to understand the multiple meanings of Christianity and conversion among indigenous peoples. Renato Cymbalista has tried to show how faith, fidelity, courage, honor, and vengeance played a role in how the Tupi understood Christian martyrdom in their own terms. Lacking documents written by the Tupi, he drew on Jesuit sources and the work of anthropologist Viveiros de Castro to imagine Tupi perceptions. Anthropologists have engaged with Jesuit sources, such as the classic Alfred Metraux (1930s) and more recently Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who studied in depth the Tupi warrior and spiritual culture. Is the Brazilian Catholicism that emerged best described in its own terms, as a distinct tradition? Further comparisons with other sites in Spanish America would draw out the implications of Brazilian religious mestiça
gem further.

4.6 Four European Powers and Their Challenge to Catholicism in Brazil

The Jesuits were not only learning how to adapt to life with the indigenous peoples of Brazil, they also had to contend with three other European powers, which further complicated their missionary project. The French, Dutch and Spanish empires also occupied colonial Brazil. In defiance of the Papal Bull of 1493 and the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 that divided the New World into

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51 For more information see Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul séculos XVI e XVII (São Paulo: 2000), 389, n. 130.
59 For an analysis of the centrality of vengeance in Tupi society see Eduardo Batalha Viveiros de Castro, From the Enemy’s Point of View. Translated from the original Araweté, o povo do Ipixuna (São Paulo: 1992).
60 Métraux, La religion des Tupinamba et ses rapports avec celle des autres tribus Tupi-Guarani.
Portuguese and Spanish territories, the French had two brief intervals in Brazil: France Antarctique, in present day Niteroi (Rio de Janeiro), and France Équinoxiale in Maranhão. The French were motivated by the allure of the exotic New World and its riches. The Tupi had fascinated French merchants since 1500. While some Frenchmen viewed France Antarctique as a commercial or military post, others saw it as a refuge for the elect to escape persecution in Europe.62

José de Anchieta and Manuel de Nóbrega, the provincial, had barely arrived when they faced interference from the French. In 1555 a group led by the Nicolas Durand de Villelagnon (1510–1572) established France Antarctique. Jean de Léry, a lay artisan while in the colony and afterwards a minister, wrote what has become the standard account of the French settlement, *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amérique* (1578).63 Many French scholars have adopted Léry’s version.64 Léry’s adventures after France Antarctique took him to battles in Lyons and Sancerre during the French Wars of Religion.65 Wañ delayed his writing on Brazil for eighteen years. When he finally wrote the history of the French colony, his experiences with the French Wars of Religion colored his view of Brazil. Publication also coincided with the beginning of the Black Legend.66 Scholars today, such as Léonce Peillard and John McGrath, have shown ways that Léry fabricated his *Histoire* in order to support the Huguenot cause during the Wars of Religion, as he was a minister of the Reformed religion when he wrote it.67 For Léry, the Catholic Villegagnon was the culprit behind the colony’s collapse when Villegagnon condemned three Protestants to death. Accompanying Villegagnon were André Thévet, a Franciscan priest and cosmographer, and Nicolas Barré, a learned Catholic man who wrote an account of their journey.68 André Thévet had come with Villegagnon to establish Catholicism in the colony, yet he returned to France because of an illness only ten weeks after arrival, leaving the French colony bereft of spiritual guidance.

Villegagnon’s disputes with colonists coupled with his initial tolerance of Protestants (and some even claim that he professed himself to be Protestant), and then later intolerance, caused many disputes in the short-lived colony. Villegagnon, after he returned to France, aligned himself in 1561 with his former Catholic patrons, the Guises. Villegagnon published many works when he returned to France, which could be seen as a *mea culpa* for his initial tolerance of Protestants in Brazil and offer a Catholic perspective on the collapse of the colony. This corpus has largely been unstudied and offers insights into the pamphlet wars that ensued over the debates of the Eucharist. While Léry has been the focus on this short lived colony, future research would do well to incorporate new sources and perspectives.

The Jesuits were active in the area near the French fort and two were even taken into captivity by warring indigenous tribes. Anchieta wrote fourteen letters and two poems that offered some reflections on the French presence in the area. In his epic poem *De Gestis Mendi da Saa*, Anchieta wrote that “the generation of Calvin rejects with impiety the celestial nourishment, they do not even believe that the substance of the bread contains Christ.”69 We could conjecture that the French Calvinists who had deviated from the Catholic faith were more appalling to Anchieta than the indigenous pagans to whom the Good News had not yet reached.

61 For more on the French involvement in Brazil prior to their colony, see Vasco Mariz and Lucien Provencal, *La Ravardière e a França Equinocial* (Rio de Janeiro: 2001), chapter 1.


66 McGrath, “Polemic and History,” 386.


Even though the first French mission to Guanabara Bay failed, the French were not discouraged. Originally Henry IV was in charge of the second expedition to Brazil, France Equinoxial, but his assassination in 1610 left Marie de Medici in command. In 1611 she sent four Capuchin friars to accompany the expedition to Maranhão led by Bénil de la Touche de la Ravardière, a Protestant, and François de Razilly, a Catholic. Razilly left the colony prematurely, possibly preventing a repeat of Guanabara Bay. The accounts of the Capuchins Claude d’Abbeville and Yves d’Evreux provide a rich picture of 17th century life. In 1615 French support for Fort St. Louis ended. The Portuguese expelled the French shortly thereafter.

Spain was the next empire to try to control Brazil. In 1580 Spain took over the Portuguese crown, which extended Spanish jurisdiction into Portuguese overseas territories. King Philip II divided Brazil into two states: the State of Brazil with its capital in Salvador da Bahia, and the State of Maranhão with the capital of São Luís. Philip II also prohibited trade with the Low Countries, yet Dutch involvement in the sugar trade in Brazil did not cease. Because of the lucrative trade, the Dutch continued to construct sugar refineries in the Northern Netherlands. This led to the Dutch invasion of Brazil in 1630. From 1580–1640, while the Iberian kingdoms were united under the crown of Castile, the Portuguese empire was in decline around the globe, leaving room for Dutch intervention. In 1640 Spain was weakened by the Thirty Years’ War, the Catalan revolt of 1640, plague mortality, and trade depression, among other things. The difficulties of Castile led to Portuguese separation. On December 1, 1640 the Portuguese revolted against the Castilian crown. The following day João, duke of Bragança, assumed the throne and declared Portugal’s independence. The crown of Castile did not recognize João IV as king and the Portuguese and Castilians would contend for the Portuguese crown for the next twenty-eight years. The Spanish monarchs still wielded a large influence over Portugal. Moreover, the Inquisition had aligned with the Habsburgs in 1640. Pope Urban VIII also did not recognize João IV as king (nor would the papacy recognize the crown of Braganza until Spain did in 1668). This period in Brazil is documented in a recent collection of essays titled O Brasil na Monarquia Hispânica.

The Dutch seized the opportunity to strike while Spain was losing its power and influence. The Jesuits and their missions suffered under the Dutch West India Company. The Counter-Renmonstrant (or militant Calvinist) party of the Republic wished to renew war with Spain—economically if not militarily—by striking at Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South America and the West Indies. Supported by Calvinist refugees from the Spanish Netherlands, the charter Octroy established the Dutch West India Company in 1621. Religion played a role in the Company as the Dutch saw Brazil as part of the battle against Spain to gain ground for the Protestant faith. The Dutch, unlike the French, were well organized. Informed by the booming printing press in their homeland, their experiments in organizing a society of multiple confessions were, more or less, sorted out in the Dutch Republic. In 1630 the Dutch invaded Pernambuco and then conquered the northern portion of Brazil with their capital in present-day Recife. In 1630 the Dutch began to limit Catholic clergy activity. In 1636 the West India Company expelled the Jesuits from Dutch territory. Count Johan Maurits of Nassau-Seigen, who served as Governor of Dutch Brazil from January 1637 to May 1644, bestowed upon Dutch Brazil the greatest degree of religious liberty in the Western world. It was a haven for New Christians, persecuted in the Old World, for which there is ample literature. The Jews who migrated to Brazil were allowed to practice their faith freely. Maurits also tolerated Catholic worship. Religious tolerance,
however, was not wholesale. It was still illegal to practice the Catholic faith. Recent scholarship has advocated the term “confessional coexistence” instead of tolerance.\(^8^0\) Despite it all, between 1630–1640 it is estimated that 10,000 Portuguese Brazilians migrated south to Bahia to escape the Dutch living in the North.\(^8^1\) In 1639 the Dutch West India Company expelled sixty friars, who, as the Catholic hermit Father Manuel Calado do Salvador (1584–1654) reported, felt as though the Count broke his promise to the Catholic clergy of Brazil.\(^8^2\) Manuel Calado is a rich source for Catholic life in Dutch Brazil, as is António Vieira, S.J.\(^8^3\)

When Luso-Brazilian forces won Brazil back from the Dutch, most of the Tupi allied with the West India Company fled to the Ibiapaba mountains.\(^8^4\) António Vieira, S.J. visited Ibiapaba in 1654 and called the area “La Rochelle” and the “Geneva of all the interior of Brazil.” Vieira then went to Portugal and insisted that the Jesuits had a role in securing the salvation of the Indians. In his instructions he included a mandate concerning the “reformation of those Brazilians who had been influenced by the Dutch.”\(^8^5\) The Jesuits in Ibiapaba worked to bring the native peoples of that region back into the Catholic fold.

### Atlantic and Global History and the Missions

Brazil has long been known to Francophone and Lusophile historians, especially historians from the Annales tradition, such as Pierre and Huguette Chaunu, Frédéric Mauro, and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho. Chaunu, Mauro, and Godinho studied Atlantic economic systems, their trading networks, labor markets, and connected financial histories. Charles Boxer, Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, and Stuart Schwartz have greatly contributed to our understanding of the economic and political history of Brazil and Portugal.\(^8^6\) A. J. R. Russell-Wood, Francisco Bethencourt, Diogo Ramada Curto, and Kirti Chaudhuri have produced excellent comprehensive overviews of the Portuguese empire.\(^8^7\) In a turn away from the Annales school toward a cultural and religious history of Brazil, Stuart Schwartz, Laura de Mello e Souza, and Alida Metcalf have improved our understanding of conversion, popular culture, and go-betweens in Brazil.\(^8^8\)

The religious history of Brazil, as it relates to Atlantic and Global history, requires further study. The concept of Atlantic History is essential for analyzing broader trends in the history of Christianity among Europe and Iberian, French, and Dutch territories. More recently, scholars have included Brazil within the fields of Atlantic history of the early modern Atlantic empires, but more work could be done in relation to the missions.\(^8^9\) Thomas Cohen, Ana

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\(^{8^1}\) Schalkwijk, *Reformed Church*, 276.

\(^{8^2}\) Frei Manoel Calado, *Valeoros Lucideno e triumpho da iiberdade* (Lisbon: 1648), 52. Calado explains how the friars reacted to Nassau, believing he broke his promise.


\(^{8^4}\) Ibiapaba mountain range is in the west of Ceará. There they formed a community named “Palmares of Indians” and gathered perhaps as many as 4,000 people. Schalkwijk, *Reformed Church*, 213.


\(^{8^6}\) Vieira, *Obras*, 5: 83. “Considerando, porém, os padres que a sua primeira obrigação era acudir à reformação dos indios já baptizados, e que estes da serra tinham sido os primogêntios desta missão ...”
Valdez, Alcir Pécora, José Eisenberg, and Lauri Tähtinen worked to correct the imbalance as it relates to intellectual history and the Jesuits in Brazil.\(^{92}\)

Recently Atlantic history has been encompassed in Global history, which seeks to decentralize European perspectives by widening the historical perspective both chronologically and geographically. Empires of Europe are studied alongside Chinese, Mughal, Ottoman, Russian, and many indigenous empires.\(^{93}\) Mark Meuwese, David Richardson and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, among others, have made Brazil part of a global study.\(^{94}\) In terms of the missions, Luke Clossey studied the Jesuit network globally and compared the Society in Germany, Mexico, and China.\(^{95}\) Dauril Alden's *Making of an Enterprise*, places the Brazilian province within the context of the other Jesuit provinces of the Portuguese empire and explains the logistics of how these missions functioned as a global enterprise.\(^{96}\)

The global study of empires analyzes the transmission of culture, of which religion is one aspect. Expansion transferred European cultures and concerns overseas and indigenous civilization to Europe. Christianity in China, Japan, and India, which has been well studied, looked quite different from Latin America, as the Jesuits sought to penetrate deeply, sympathize with, and negotiate with Asian cultures. They often began through converting lords, local rulers, or lower-rank officials. As Brazil had no indigenous rulers, the Jesuits sought a strategy from the bottom up, like in parts of China where they made converts among some peasants and artisans.\(^{97}\)

Ananya Chakravarti worked to correct this imbalance with her comparative study of Jesuits in Brazil and India.\(^{98}\)

### 4.8 Future Research

Historians of early modern Christianity have separated the missions from European Christianity by focusing on the people to be renewed or converted: Catholics, Protestants, and pagans. John O'Malley, among others, has shown that the study of the early modern Catholic Church must include reform, renewal and overseas missions simultaneously.\(^{99}\) Robert Bireley, likewise, argues that a proper understanding of 16th-century Catholicism must take into account the missions, as well as the growth of state sovereignty, economic restructuring, the rise of Renaissance humanism, and the Protestant Reformation.\(^{100}\) He calls for an all-encompassing approach to the “long” 16th century—a cry which has not yet been answered in Latin America.

One reason why Bireley's call has gone unanswered is because scholars separate the concerns of overseas missionaries and priests in Europe. This stems, in part, from the Council of Trent, which never mentioned the missionary Church in its eighteen-year history.\(^{101}\) A second reason why scholars have separated European Catholicism and the missions is because missionaries had a millenarian outlook and sought to reconstruct the primitive church. While this is true, at the same time early modern religious figures did not conceive of a vast difference between missions (literally meaning “to be sent forth”) to Europe and South America. Calling South America the “other indies,” early modern Jesuits recognized that the same challenges were present around the world.

Protestantism was one challenge that Catholic priests faced in parts of Europe and Brazil. Most historians have dismissed the Protestant religious legacy in Brazil as inconsequential and thus, have not studied the effect that Protestants had on Catholic missions. Throughout the history of Dutch Brazil more than 50 Reformed ministers served in 22 congregations.\(^{102}\)

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96 Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*.


99 John O'Malley in *Trent and all that: renaming Catholicism in the early modern era* (Cambridge: 2000).


101 John W O'Malley, *Trent and all that*, 68.

first state-sponsored Protestant missionary endeavor anywhere in the world. Equally important is how the Protestant presence in Brazil shaped the experience of Catholic missionaries and the creation of a Catholic Brazilian society. Take, for example, the case of slaves brought from West Africa. While some slaves converted to Catholicism before the arduous journey and life in captivity in Brazil, they did not necessarily follow Catholicism. Typically, they preferred whichever confession afforded them greater liberties, as evidenced in the Minutes of the Reformed Church. This was an instance of pragmatic concerns, rather than faith, shaping confessional preference. The presence of Protestants in Brazil begs the question of how Catholic missions compared to Protestant missions in Brazil and throughout the Portuguese empire.

Another aspect that has gone unnoticed in the historiography is the added challenge Protestants presented to the Catholic evangelization of the Tupi. Catholic priests, at times, had to evangelize differently in Brazil than in other places in Latin America because of the threat of Calvinists. Because the Reformed Church waged competition for souls in Brazil, Catholic priests imposed orthodoxy, in part, through preaching against Calvinists and Lutherans. They understood that Catholic rituals and doctrine had to be enforced among indigenous peoples and colonists. The Dutch Brazil episode, therefore, is crucial to our understanding of the Catholic legacy that the Portuguese bequeathed to Brazil. Were the Catholics who remained in Brazil more zealous in their faith because of the confessional tensions, or were they, at least, anti-Protestant? Danny Noorlander has shown how Brazil had its own Reformation in Dutch Brazil.

Finally, while the Jesuits provide one model of Catholic missions, more of the story remains to be unearthed. The secular clergy and other religious orders have been eclipsed by the attention given to the Jesuits. If we are to portray an accurate picture of Catholicism in early modern Brazil, the Franciscans made considerable inroads. We might ask, then, how did the Jesuit and Franciscan missions compare to each other? How did their art and architecture compete on the town squares in Salvador of Bahia, for instance?

4.9 Conclusion

The presence of a native population in addition to four colonial powers made the Brazilian missions distinctive in Latin America. European wars and civil wars were fought on Brazilian soil, compounding native conflict and bloodshed. Change in government regimes from Portuguese (with French interference) to Spanish, Dutch and then back to Portuguese rule contributed to instability, as different governments mandated religious changes. In the end, however, the Jesuits survived these regime changes, adapting as necessary. It was not other European powers but the Marques of Pombal in Portugal who ended the Jesuits' colonial missions. The Jesuits' landholdings, and the revenue generated from them in Brazil and the Amazon, among other factors, provided the rational that the Marques of Pombal needed to confiscate Jesuit land and expel the order from the empire in 1759.

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105 Schalkwijk, The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil, 1630–1654.