

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MARANHÃO: BECKMAN'S REVOLT *

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Two leading Brazilian historians of the nineteenth century, Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen and João Francisco Lisboa, viewed Beckman's Revolt (1684-1685) in Maranhão as the first "nativist" uprising against the basic concept of Portuguese colonial rule. In this study, I shall show that the revolt was brought about largely by local considerations. The rebels' single goal was to correct injustices forced upon their province as the result of a series of royal edicts from Lisbon, especially those dealing with the colonists' supply of Amerindian slave labor which had been entrusted to the resident Jesuit missionaries. A further burden on Maranhão at the time of the revolt was a commercial monopoly (*estanco*) introduced into the province by the metropolitan government which had sought to avoid utilizing the royal treasury to foster economic development in a marginal overseas territory lacking profitable resources.

I. Early Colonial Maranhão

The history of seventeenth-century Maranhão is dominated by a lengthy conflict between Padre Antônio Vieira (1608-1697) and the Jesuits, on the one hand, and the creole settlers, on the other. The overriding question in Maranhão during those years concerned the colonists' control over Indian slaves. The crown in distant Lisbon found itself the frequent and reluctant arbitrator of this continuing dispute. But the persuasive Padre Vieira convinced both Kings João IV (1640-1656) and Pedro II (1668-1705) to support the Jesuit tutelage over the Amerindians of Maranhão.

The province found itself in a marginal position vis-à-vis the remainder of colonial Brazil. In terms of geography and climate the captaincy was situated in a transitional area between the thick tropical rain forests of Pará and the Sahara-like dunes of coastal Ceará. Consequently, during the early colonial era Maranhão was an impoverished peripheral territory unsuitable for sugar production or other large-scale tropical economic enterprises. Colonized in 1615, nearly a century after the prosperous sugar-producing captaincies of Bahia and Pernambuco, Maranhão suffered acutely from an absence of capital and saw itself forced to exist on a rude barter economy. And its cash-producing extractive activities, consisting principally of tropical drugs, fruits, and nuts, relied mainly on Indian labor. The neighboring territory of Pará with its denser tropical forests was, by contrast, more fortunate. Its products, especially clove and cacao, were easily

*A grant from the Fulbright Commission of Lisbon enabled me to do research at the Biblioteca da Ajuda where I found the letter from Manoel Beckman to Pedro II.

transportable and became important money-earners. For the economy of Maranhão to subsist, slaves were needed. But lacking capital to import Africans, as had been done in Bahia and Pernambuco, the Maranhenses sought to enslave the readily available Tupi Indians. However, their intention countered the catechistic objectives of the Portuguese Jesuits and Padre Vieira. The latter envisioned a Jesuit suzerainty over the Amerindians throughout a vast portion of the Brazilian North, from Maranhão to Pará and inland along the Amazon River and its tributaries. In the administrative unit of Grão-Pará e Maranhão (eventually including the present-day states of Amazonas and Ceará) which was ruled directly from Lisbon, Vieira wanted the indigenous population to be congregated into village missions, where both temporal and spiritual control would be exercised by the Society of Jesus. Consequently, the most accessible Amerindians were gathered into *reduções* by the Ignacian fathers and thereby sheltered from the predatory white settlers of Maranhão.

During colonial Brazil's first two centuries Lisbon issued confusing and contradictory legislation concerning the Amerindians. As a result, disorder characterized relations between whites and Indians in Maranhão: "ora a liberdade. . . ora o captiveiro."¹ For example, a law in 1609 had declared all Brazilian Indians free. Its wording was vague, however, and the royal representatives were unable, or often unwilling, to enforce its provisions. The loopholes in that law were such that Indian captives from inter-tribal warfare could be used as permanent indentured servants by the white settlers. The Amerindians could also be forced to labor if they received remuneration.²

Portuguese legislation between 1624 and 1686 reflected an ever-growing influence on the part of the Jesuit representatives in Lisbon concerning the protection of the Brazilian Indians. The first Jesuits had reached Maranhão between 1624 and 1626. In 1638 the first Indian reductions (*aldeias*) were entrusted to the Ignacian fathers. Finally, after years of influencing João IV, Padre Vieira himself arrived in São Luís in 1653 with a royal charter that provided the Jesuits with exclusive control over all the Indians in Grão-Pará e Maranhão.

Padre Vieira had earlier witnessed the terrible destruction of Amerindian villages in the Brazilian North during the founding of Grão-Pará e Maranhão. Enslavement, European diseases, and overwork had led to the decimation of the native population. He had computed the number of Indians in the captaincy prior to Portuguese settlement at more than a million, probably a slight overestimate, and had recognized some 500 substantial villages.³ Well aware that the municipal chamber of São Luís was pro-enslavement, the Jesuit leader urged the Society of Jesus in Maranhão to adopt a stance which would thwart such aggressiveness by the creoles. Understanding that the confusing legislation from metropolitan Portugal had fostered considerable confusion and disorder in Maranhão, Vieira strove, through his intransigent attitude, to be a bastion in the defense of the Amerindians. In his sermons to the people of São Luís, especially "O Sermão de Santo Antônio aos Peixes" (1654), Vieira chastized their attempt to bring civilization to the Indians by means of barbarities.

By 1655, because of mounting pressures from the settlers, the Jesuits felt obliged to loosen somewhat their strict hold on the labor supply. The creoles were given permission to organize Indian-hunting slave parties (*entradas*) provided that a Jesuit father

accompanied each expedition. Any Indians taken captive were obliged to labor for the colonists, but only for a six-month period.⁴

At the death of João IV in 1656, Afonso VI (1656-1668) came to the throne in Lisbon. The deceased king, considering Padre Vieira his most cultured subject, had consistently lent him a ready ear. Behind Afonso, however, stood a palace faction which was wary of the Jesuit leader's power. To dilute the Jesuits' formidable role in Brazil, the new monarch opted to divide the Indian *reduções* of Grão-Pará e Maranhão among all the Lusitanian religious orders and grant the Indian chiefs temporal powers in their own villages. As a consequence, the municipal chambers of the province regained their prerogative to force-draft Indian labor. Moreover in 1661, a sudden creole uprising in São Luís brought about the temporary expulsion of the Jesuits from Maranhão. This small-scale mutiny had the tacit support of the resident governor, who was sympathetic to the grievances of the colonists. After their quick success, the local residents took the law into their own hands, and immediately descended on the defenseless Indian *reduções* in order to fulfill their labor needs. The king, unable to punish an entire province, was for the moment forced to acquiesce.⁵ Since the expulsion had involved only the Jesuits and not his own royal appointees, the monarch was able, without losing face, to disregard the Maranhenses' behavior. However, in 1668 a coup in Lisbon ousted Afonso VI. His successor, Pedro II (1668-1705), thought highly of Padre Vieira, and the Jesuits soon regained their influence. Reflecting the Society's renewed prestige, Portugal's Amerindian legislation of the seventeenth century culminated in an *alvará* (April 1, 1680) which forced the creoles of Maranhão to return all Indians to Jesuit custody. This law specified that there would be no enslavement of the Indians; that the crown's magistrate (*ouvidor*) would be authorized to liberate all Indians held by any creole citizen; that, in warfare, Indian captives would be treated as prisoners of war and not enslaved; that Indians could labor for colonists only if their wages were deposited beforehand with the government; that the government in Lisbon would endeavor to import annually into Maranhão at least 500 African slaves to alleviate the labor crisis; that the Jesuits would retain both spiritual and temporal control over the Indians of Grão-Pará e Maranhão; and that only members of the Society of Jesus would be permitted to enter the *sertão* to seek Indians.⁶

Padre Vieira, however, was not deaf to the creoles' pleas for a labor supply in Brazil's primitive North. As early as 1661, he had sent a letter to the municipal chamber of Belém urging as an alternative the use of African slaves.⁷ Vieira reasoned that the African black, accustomed to slavery for centuries in Africa, should be utilized in Maranhão in place of the Indian. Thus, after the promulgation of the regulations of 1680, royal policy sought to stimulate the transporting of African slaves to Maranhão and the North. But only a negligible number actually reached the province:

Foram trazidos escravos negros por conta do erário real e distribuídos pelos moradores, que deveriam pagá-los dentro de três anos; mas não convinha tal sacrifício ao governo da metrópole, já a braços com sérias dificuldades financeiras.⁸

Seventeenth-century Portugal, heavily in debt and still recovering from its prolonged and fiscally ruinous conflicts with Holland and Spain, was unable to supply Maranhão with expensive African slaves. The colony was so poverty-stricken that its tax

base failed to cover the crown's expenses of local administration. The government of Pedro II was obliged to place a special levy on commercial shipments from Portugal to Maranhão: "A real fazenda não devia suportar o desembolso, nem o risco, mormente tratando-se de longínquas colônias."⁹ In reality, deficit-plagued Maranhão remained a perennial source of concern to Lisbon.

The mother country, however, through its improvised policies, had contributed to the constantly simmering anarchy in Maranhão. Minor revolts had been numerous since its founding in 1615. Simonsen lists upheavals in 1618, 1625, 1628, 1634, 1677, and 1680 as well as the first expulsion of the Jesuits in 1661, prior to Beckman's Revolt.¹⁰ The Lisbon government centralized its control too tightly in Europe. The governors, and later "capitães-mor" (the capital of Grão-Pará e Maranhão was transferred from São Luís to Belém before Beckman's Revolt), who were sent from Portugal to São Luís, lacked the authority to make decisions in the interests of the colonists. During Beckman's uprising these *renóis* remained stubbornly loyal to Lisbon and had to be deposed by force.

II. The Commercial Company

Pedro II was finally able to transfer responsibility for Maranhão to a chartered venture, the "Companhia de Comércio do Maranhão e Grão-Pará," similar in makeup to a previous (and unsuccessful) Portuguese enterprise in Maranhão in the 1660's. Floated by a group of Lisbon investors headed by Pedro Alves Caldas,¹¹ the Company's charter went into effect in 1682, and coincided with the arrival from Lisbon of a new governor, Francisco de Sá de Menezes, who was to implement its provisions in Maranhão before taking up residence in Belém.

Accompanying the new governor was a stockholder, Pascoal Pereira Jansen, who was to serve as the Company's resident agent in São Luís and Belém. The historical reports are contradictory concerning the arrival of Sá de Menezes and Jansen. Meireles states that the people of Maranhão realized the potential damage the Company would cause and refused initially to allow Menezes and Jansen to disembark at São Luís in 1682.¹² Most other sources, however, imply that the people welcomed the two *renóis* with open arms. Unaware of the long-range potential consequences of the charter, they apparently believed that the Company would guarantee Maranhão's economic salvation. In any case, the new governor, through "temor, persuasão, e suborno, conforme as pessoas,"¹³ overcame whatever immediate resistance there may have been in the captaincy. And Jansen, brandishing large sums of money, was able to bribe the more persistent skeptics among the upper classes.

The royal charter of 1682 granted the Company a twenty-year *estanco*, or monopoly, over the commerce of Grão-Pará e Maranhão. The import and export of all articles of trade was to be directly regulated by the Company, which would also sponsor and control one annual ship to Lisbon. All private trade with the exterior was prohibited and to guarantee compliance, the Company held powers of confiscation. Jansen published a tariff of the Company's official prices which was to be adhered to by the colonists in all transactions. The entire produce of Grão-Pará e Maranhão was to be purchased by the

Company at controlled prices. The Company was also pledged to import at least ten thousand African slaves at the rate of five hundred annually, and sold at a price dictated by the Company. It was further agreed that the shareholders in Lisbon would send specialists to Grão-Pará e Maranhão to stimulate the cultivation of cacao and vanilla.¹⁴

Yet another contradiction in Lisbon's Indian policy emerged: although Indian slavery had been abolished, the Company was authorized the free use of as many as one hundred Tupi married couples in each urban center of Grão-Pará e Maranhão in order to grow food for the awaited African slaves. And, under the charter, the governor himself was unable to interfere with the Company, and civil or criminal suits against it were to be heard only by a special court in Lisbon.¹⁵

When the promised slaves did not arrive during the next two years, a wave of complaints arose from the anguished residents.¹⁶ The Jesuits adamantly refused to lend Indians to ease the creoles' acute labor shortage. Further enraging the colonists was the fact that the Ignacian fathers were exempt from the Company's strict controls. The royal governor maintained the restrictions against Indian-hunting expeditions by non-Jesuits.

According to Meireles, the Company employed false weights and measures, brought textiles of inferior quality from Lisbon, and its promised annual cargo ship failed to adhere to a schedule.¹⁷ The Company's Indian servants, in addition, milled *farinha* and undersold local producers, thus driving the latter into desperate straits.¹⁸ Salt and wine, already luxuries, became even more scarce.

Rumors of corruption among the local royal officials spread throughout Grão-Pará e Maranhão. Although by law the governors were prohibited from participating in trade or earning additional income while serving in the Portuguese overseas colonies, Sá de Menezes was reputed to have forced his own shipment of clove onto a Company vessel, thereby causing the removal of shipments belonging to private residents.¹⁹ Hélio Viana notes that Jansen secretly maintained his own private business, and raised the prices of the few slaves who did arrive from Africa.²⁰ Bishop Dom Gregório dos Anjos, apparently in collusion with the Company, was accused of utilizing Indian slaves on a private clove-gathering expedition.²¹ But while he may have reaped handsome personal profits, Gregório dos Anjos appears also to have tacitly opposed the Company. Jealous of the Jesuits' omnipotence, the local bishop feared that the *estanco* would irrevocably fortify the Society's power. The resident clergy, many of whom were creoles who identified more with the colonists' than with Lisbon's interests, openly opposed the monopoly. The pulpits of São Luís seethed with denunciations of Jansen and his Company; one sermon even portrayed the stockholders of the Company as the new Pharisees.²² On the eve of Beckman's revolt, another sermon delivered by a respectable local priest, probably with the bishop's knowledge, declared that the remedy for the abuses from Portugal was in the hands of the Maranhenses themselves.²³ Other orders, especially the Carmelites and Franciscans, tried to check the Jesuits' prestige and power by siding with the colonists against the commercial Company. The Capuchins, in fact, allowed their convent to be used as a meeting place by Beckman and his conspirators.

III. Beckman and his past

Manuel Beckman ("reinol de origem teutônica"²⁴), also referred to as "Bequimão" and "Beckeman" was a prosperous small-scale sugar planter, who owned the Vera-Cruz plantation on the Mearim River, then a two- or three-day canoe trip from São Luís. Born in Lisbon of a German father and a Portuguese mother, he settled in Maranhão in 1662.²⁵ A possibly Jewish background may have motivated his departure. Through his industriousness he gained acceptance to the upper class of Maranhão, and in 1669 became a councilman (*vereador*) of the municipal chamber of São Luís.

However, in the 1670's he appears to have run afoul of the colonial authorities by opposing the then governor of Pará, Inácio Coelho, who had chosen a half-breed (*mameluco*) to be "capitão-mor" in Maranhão. After retaliatory legal proceedings, "marked with the odious irregularities and injustices of despotism,"²⁶ Governor Coelho banished Beckman to Gurupá, a village on the Amazon River in distant Pará. From his exile in Gurupá, Beckman sent to Pedro II an eleven-page letter of appeal dated June 13, 1679. In it he systematically refuted Governor Coelho's charges that he had been an agitator and a murderer, and begged for clemency.²⁷ The appeal was apparently successful since Beckman was permitted to return to Maranhão in 1680,²⁸ after two years of exile.²⁹ The king also recommended that Pará choose a different "capitão-mor" for Maranhão.

Beckman's sense of injustice was further engrained when he reached Mearim to find his *fazenda* in ruin from years of neglect. His resentment and bitterness increased his antipathy toward the crown's policies. The continued domination of the Indians by the Jesuits and the tyranny of the chartered Company eventually led him to plan the revolt of 1684:

Revoltado com a injustiça que sofrera, fez causa comum com os descontentes, mesmo porque reconheceu impossível reestabelecer, nas condições atuais, o seu engenho, "Vera-Cruz," no Mearim.³⁰

He became chief of the conspirators "pela superioridade de ânimo de que já dera prova."³¹ Beckman was also encouraged by the knowledge that the Maranhenses who had been involved in the first expulsion of the Jesuits in 1661 had escaped punishment. On that occasion even the royal governor had tacitly abetted the ouster. In 1685, however, Beckman did suffer capital punishment since he had begun his revolt by deposing the king's representative and the peninsular bureau-crats.

Among the historians who have analyzed this uprising, Southey states that Beckman entertained the fantastic notion that the Portuguese pirate Dom João de Lima, then operating off the Brazilian coast, would come to the aid of Maranhão.³² The Jesuit historian, Serafim Leite, is critical of Varnhagen and João Francisco Lisboa, who interpreted the events of 1684 and 1685 as an heroic first "nativist" revolt against Portuguese colonial rule.³³ Berredo published the first history of the revolt in 1746. He had obtained most of his material from a manuscript by a contemporary observer, Francisco Teixeira de Moraes, who, as an official of the royal treasury in Maranhão, was clearly unfair to Beckman.³⁴ In his study, Berredo sought to compensate by depicting

Beckman more objectively. The Jesuit chronicler, Padre João Betendorf, another eyewitness, portrayed the rebel leader as an incarnation of the devil but allowed traces of sympathy for Beckman and his cause to surface at times.³⁵

Secondary sources list some additional participants in the revolt. Among them were Beckman's younger brother Tomás, a lawyer and talented writer of political satires, who was belatedly dispatched to Lisbon to plead the rebels' cause. The most colorful figure, however, was a militant anti-Jesuit, Jorge de Sampaio, a legal scribe who was in his seventies by 1684. As early as 1653 when a group of Ignacians arrived in São Luís, Sampaio publicly insulted the disembarking missionaries and exhorted the residents of São Luís to expell them.³⁶ In 1663 Sampaio had journeyed to Lisbon on behalf of the municipal chamber of São Luís to request Afonso VI's permission for that body to sponsor its own Indian-hunting *entradas*. A popular priest, Frei Inácio, of the Nossa Senhora do Carmo Church in São Luís, another active participant, used his pulpit to urge the Maranhenses to open revolt.

IV. The Revolt

The revolt began in São Luís on the night of February 24, 1684. The conspirators, who had held numerous meetings, gathered in the São Antônio Convent for final plans. Although the less courageous participants at first balked at the idea of forcibly deposing the royal "capitão-mor," Beckman and his followers proceeded into the streets in the dark, where they mingled with a passing religious procession. After months of urging from the pulpits,³⁷ which functioned as the newspapers of that era, the rebellion was finally under way.

The immediate goals — the arrest of the "capitão-mor," Baltazar Fernandes, the seizure of the offices and warehouses of the Company, and the house arrest of the Jesuits — were accomplished by dawn. The only resistance was from minor peninsular authorities, such as the royal treasurer, Teixeira de Morais.³⁸ In the morning a three-member junta, consisting of Beckman, a priest and a peasant (Eiró), was constituted. This act gave a democratic hue to the creole uprising, since the upper class (*nobres*), the local clergy, which had played an active role in the planning,³⁹ and the lower class (*povo*) were represented. The junta convoked a militia to replace the king's soldiers who were for the most part deemed untrustworthy. Recalcitrant royal bureaucrats were jailed or banished by the junta. The takeover appears to have been accomplished without much violence. Only Southey mentions deaths resulting from the rebellion.⁴⁰

Beckman's cohorts were elated at their immediate success. Under the rallying cry of "slaves for everyone," he and his followers had swept into power. The motto was especially effective since it could be directed at the Jesuits, who had monopolized the Indians, as well as the Company, which had failed to deliver the promised African laborers.

The revolt, which João Lúcio de Azevedo has described as nothing more than a "motim de aldeia,"⁴¹ soon lost momentum. Beckman journeyed across the bay from São Luís to Alcântara to seek support and sent a message to Belém requesting an alliance. In

both cases, he was quickly rebuffed, since neither municipal chamber saw any potential benefit in an alliance with São Luís. Moreover, the governor at Belém, Sá de Menezes, had a royal militia garrison at his command. Furthermore, the leaders of Pará, believing in the basic fairness of the monarch when properly informed, had previously decided to send a petition to Lisbon outlining their specific local grievances.

When the Jesuits in São Luís were informed of their imminent expulsion, they adopted a strategy of conciliation and obeyed the junta's orders to remain inside their convent. They volunteered to surrender their temporal jurisdiction over the Indians, and insisted publicly, according to Betendorf, that they had never wished to be burdened with that extra duty.⁴² Betendorf, an eyewitness to these events, transcribed the meeting between Beckman and the Jesuit superior a few days after the revolt, noting the rebel leader's polite tone, but portraying him as a diabolic figure.⁴³ Betendorf himself personally warned him of the king's impending wrath.⁴⁴

Beckman soon discovered that the Jesuit proposals to relinquish control over the Indians had been received favorably by the rebels. He immediately drafted and presented a speech, transcribed by Betendorf,⁴⁵ in which he reminded the Maranhenses of the past treacheries perpetrated against them by the Society of Jesus, and blamed it for the colony's ills. At the same time, the junta set the date of the Jesuits' banishment for Palm Sunday (March 26, 1684). Although the creole revolt accomplished its primary goals, the self-imposed isolation from Lisbon compounded the province's deprivation.

V. The Breakdown of the Uprising

Beckman's movement crumbled within the next few weeks. After Pará's denial of support, the more perceptive adherents in São Luís realized that their cause was lost. There had always been a rivalry between São Luís and Belém, and the latter "estranhou as demasias a que se arrojara o povo de São Luís."⁴⁶ The governor and bishop of Belém labored to keep the rebels of São Luís isolated. The creoles of Maranhão soon became disenchanted with Beckman and his immediate followers. The rebel government lacked authority, there was no improvement in the material life of Maranhão, and communications with the outside were eliminated.

The unexpected arrival at São Luís of two Company ships with a scant cargo of two hundred African slaves resulted in a further loss of prestige for Beckman. Since he had to opt for a lottery to distribute the slaves, Beckman was immediately accused of favoritism by those who drew blanks. He caused further consternation by demanding that the Company be reimbursed for the slaves per contract. When Sá de Menezes sent a representative from Belém to bribe Beckman, the latter's refusal and the public exposure of the attempt did raise his popularity for a short period.

João Francisco Lisboa and other historians were unable to ascertain the reasons for the continued delay in dispatching Tomás Backman to plead the rebels' cause in the mother country.⁴⁷ João Francisco Lisboa theorizes, however, that Beckman himself stalled, still hoping for an alliance with Pará. Southey, as mentioned earlier, suggested

that the leader hoped to join forces with the Portuguese pirate, Dom João de Lima, and employ him as a link to the outside.⁴⁸

Whatever the motive, the delay probably cost Beckman his life, since an immediate representation in Lisbon might have demonstrated the creoles' basic loyalty to the Metropolis. When Tomás Beckman finally did depart for Portugal in October, 1684, the expelled Jesuits, including Betendorf, had already reached Lisbon and submitted their account of the mutiny. Pedro II had already made his decision when Tomás reached Portugal. In Maranhão many of the rural landowners who supported the revolt believed it a lost cause by the time of Tomás departure. Many of them deserted Manuel Beckman and left São Luís to return to their rural estates.

Within a few months the volunteer militia lost its sense of discipline. Berredo attributes this in part to the fact that the physically unfit creoles had to remain on duty outside at night in the rain and dampness.⁴⁹ The militia's collapse signified the end of the revolution for all practical purposes. In a final effort, Beckman sought to have himself appointed as dictator so as to deal forcefully with malcontents and opponents. The junta, with a surprising display of independence, refused his demand, and the leader, dejected, retired to his residence in São Luís, scarcely able to appear among the hostile citizenry.⁵⁰ Discipline among the rebels had collapsed by the time Miguel Bello da Costa, another emissary from Pará sent to bribe Beckman, arrived in São Luís. Noting the deteriorating political situation, Bello da Costa took control of the volunteer militia and assumed the post of "capitão-mor." Thus, even prior to the arrival of Gomes Freire, the city was nominally in royal hands.

VI. Gomes Freire

Gomes Freire, Pedro II's personal choice to bring order to Maranhão, reached São Luís on May 15, 1685. He had already conferred with Padre Betendorf in Portugal. Tomás Beckman, upon landing at Lisbon, was arrested, turned over to Gomes Freire for interrogation, and sent back to Maranhão on the royal ship. The king, informed about the desperate condition of the rebels, deemed any compromise or special promises unnecessary. Pedro II took decisive action to prevent the rebellion from spreading to other parts of Brazil, and to discourage an alliance between Maranhão and Louis XIV's subjects in French Guiana.⁵¹

After anchoring off São Luís and sending his emissaries to sound out opinion in the city, Gomes Freire moved ashore and quickly reestablished the royal government and the *estanco*. He freed prisoners, restored the king's functionaries to office, and invited the Jesuits to return. When much of the population fled in fright, Freire promulgated a general pardon, except for the activist participants. Assuming power peacefully, the new governor divided the rebels into the two categories of "mais culpados" and "menos culpados."⁵² Some accounts imply that Gomes Freire might have been lenient toward Beckman and Sampaio, had they not been so audacious. Beckman himself openly attempted to free his brother from the local prison which was within sight of Freire's residence. Finally, after a hearing and investigation into the rebellion, Sampaio was jailed,

and rewards were placed on the heads of Beckman and Eiró, who was the people's representative on the junta. Beckman was seized at his Vera-Cruz property several months later and, promising not to escape, went honorably to São Luís. He was seemingly eager for punishment: "a própria vítima parecia oferecer-se quase voluntária."⁵³ He and Sampaio were judged and hanged within a month (November 2, 1685). Eiró was a fugitive in the interior for many years until his pardon. The "menos culpados," such as Tomás Beckman, were exiled for short periods. Beckman was soon vindicated, however, as Gomes Freire, after consulting with Pará and Lisbon, abolished the *estanco*, and Maranhão returned to its former practice of free and open trade.

VII. Conclusions

The revolt, local in scope, was hastily organized, having neither plan nor doctrine. It did not question the basic relationship of the colonists vis-à-vis the metropolis. There was no serious attempt to challenge Pedro II's control, or even the slightest hint of bringing about a republic. No documents were unearthed to indicate that Maranhão intended to ally itself with a power hostile to Portugal. And those punished died "protestando seu arrependimento e beijando a mão que os punia."⁵⁴

The obvious grievance, symbolized by Tomás Beckman's mission to Lisbon, was that the Maranhenses were unjustly treated by a coalition of resident royal bureaucrats, the Jesuit missionaries, and the commercial Company. It was believed that the king, when properly informed by Tomás Beckman of the wrongs perpetrated against the colonists of Maranhão, would redress those grievances.

When confronted with Beckman's rebellion, however, Lisbon held all the advantages. Since the rebels were effectively isolated within their own province, the monarch could simply wait for them to grow weary. After quelling the revolt, the king and Gomes Freire tacfully avoided alienating the colonists. Only the upper echelon leaders were punished while the clergy involved in the uprising were fully pardoned. After the principle of royal authority had been reestablished, the revolt was soon vindicated through certain reforms, such as the eventual abolition of the *estanco*, "que nem aos próprios interessados dera resultado."⁵⁵

After the revolt was put down, the Society of Jesus returned to Maranhão with the intention of increasing its authority. However, the crown gradually began to apply pressure on the Jesuits. For instance, other religious orders in Grão-Pará e Maranhão were soon given a share of the Indian missions. With the causes of Beckman's uprising still vivid in their minds, the crown and the Jesuits were more receptive to the colonists' labor demands on the Amerindians. The Society of Jesus never regained the authority it had had in Maranhão before the events of 1684-1685.

Beckman's revolt was the climax of more than half a century of problems and extreme hardship for the colonists in peripheral Maranhão. The collapse of the revolt was a harsh lesson. After 1685 they continued to pursue their goal of an available labor supply, but now without violence. Only a century later would Brazilians begin to question seriously their centuries-old ties to Portugal.

NOTES

¹ João Francisco Lisboa, *Jornal de Timon, Apontamentos, Notícias e Observações para Servirem à História do Maranhão*, 4 volumes. São Luís, 1865, III, 172.

² Matias C. Kieman, "The Indian Policy of Portugal in America, with Special Reference to the Old State of Maranhão, 1500-1755," *The Americas*, V (April, 1949), 149.

³ João Francisco Lisboa, p. 251.

⁴ Kieman, p. 159.

⁵ João Lúcio Azevedo, *Os Jesuítas no Grão-Pará, Suas Missões e a Colonização*, 2.^a edição. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930, p. 139.

⁶ Kieman, p. 165.

⁷ João Francisco Lisboa, *Jornal de Timon e Vida do Pe. Antônio Vieira*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições de Ouro, 1968, p. 344.

⁸ Roberto Simonsen, *História Econômica do Brasil*, 4.^a edição. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1962, p.318.

⁹ João Lúcio Azevedo, p.141.

¹⁰ Simonsen, p. 311.

¹¹ The individual stockholders are listed in Mathias C. Kieman, *The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1954, p. 148.

¹² Mário Martins Meireles, *História do Maranhão*. Rio de Janeiro: D.A.S.P., Serviço de Documentação, 1960, p. 129.

¹³ João Lúcio de Azevedo, p. 142.

¹⁴ Kieman, *Indian Policy*, p. 149.

¹⁵ Meireles, p. 128.

¹⁶ Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, London, 1819, II, 605.

¹⁷ Meireles, p. 130.

¹⁸ Hélio Viana, *História do Brasil*, 2 Tomos. São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1961, I, 310.

¹⁹ João Francisco Lisboa, *Timon*, p. 216.

²⁰ Viana, p. 310.

²¹ Meireles, p. 130.

²² João Francisco Lisboa, p. 217.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 217

²⁴ João Capistrano de Abreu, *Capítulos de História Colonial 1500-1800*, 4.^a edição. Rio de Janeiro: Briguier, 1954, p. 208.