

## Indigenous villages in the European cartography of the State of Maranhão


### Aldeias indígenas na cartografia europeia do Maranhão

### Pueblos indígenas en la cartografía europea de Maranhão

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## Abstract

This article seeks to reflect on the representation of the presence of Indigenous peoples in the colonial cartography of the State of Maranhão, a territory that was home to numerous villages prior to colonization and still has a significant Indigenous presence in contemporary times, which has been rendered invisible by history. European cartography only documented their presence but emphasized the location of towns and cities in Colonial Brazil. Today, with the goal of highlighting the contribution, presence, and permanence of these peoples, as well as critically analyzing the cartographic production and the context in which it was produced, we revisit the archives of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the digital library, where we examined the 17th-century European cartography to identify the presence of Indigenous peoples and, above all, representations that help us understand how they occupied spaces in the Territory of Maranhão during the colonial period.

**Keywords:** Cartography; Maranhão; Indigenous peoples.

## Resumo

Este artigo busca refletir sobre a representação da presença dos povos indígenas na cartografia colonial do Estado do Maranhão, território ocupado por numerosas aldeias antes do contexto da colonização e que ainda conta na contemporaneidade com expressiva presença indígena, que foram invisibilizadas pela história. A cartografia europeia apenas documentou sua presença mas deu ênfase à locação das vilas e cidades do Brasil Colonial. Hoje, na perspectiva de visibilizar a contribuição, presença e permanência destes povos, além de analisar de forma crítica a produção cartográfica e o contexto no qual ela se insere, revisitamos os arquivos da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, com ênfase na biblioteca digital, onde buscamos na cartografia europeia do Século XVII a presença dos povos indígenas e, sobretudo, representações que nos ajudem a compreender a forma como ocupavam os espaços no território maranhense no período colonial.

**Palavras-chave:** Cartografia; Maranhão; povos indígenas.

## Resumen

Palabras clave: Cartografía; Maranhão; Pueblos Indígenas Este artículo busca reflexionar sobre la presencia ancestral de los pueblos indígenas en la cartografía del Estado de Maranhão, un territorio ocupado por numerosas aldeas antes del contexto de la colonización y que todavía tiene una presencia indígena significativa en la contemporaneidad, que ha sido invisibilizada por la historia. La cartografía europea sólo documentó su presencia, pero enfatizó la ubicación de los pueblos y ciudades del Brasil colonial. Hoy, con el fin de visibilizar el aporte, la presencia y la permanencia de estas personas, analizando de forma crítica la producción cartográfica e las



circunstancias que la rodean, revisitamos los archivos de la Biblioteca Nacional de Río de Janeiro, con énfasis en la biblioteca digital. Buscamos en la cartografía europea del siglo XVII la presencia de pueblos indígenas y, sobre todo, representaciones que nos ayuden a comprender la forma en que ocuparon espacios en el territorio de Maranhão en el período colonial.

**Palabras clave:** Cartografía; Maranhão; Pueblos indígenas.

## INTRODUCTION

The state of Maranhão is one of the Brazilian states with the highest number of indigenous lands. This territory, heavily contested in the 15th century during the European Age of Exploration, served as a support point for access to the Eldorado of Peru and as a gateway to the Amazon rivers. A stage for major disputes among European colonizers, this territory was already inhabited in the 17th century by approximately 250,000 indigenous people from thirty different ethnic groups, some of which, such as the Krikati, Kanela, Guajajara, Tenetehara, and Gavião, continue to exist today, fighting for their land and for land demarcation. Most of them, like the Tupinambá people who inhabited the Island of São Luís, the Barbados, Amanajó, Tremembé, Araíoses, Kapiëkrã, among others, no longer exist in the same way as in the past, having undergone processes of extermination or assimilation.

According to the 2010 IBGE Census, the state had 38,831 indigenous people, 76% of whom lived in indigenous lands, with seven registered ethnic groups. The 2022 Census, according to updated IBGE data, shows that Maranhão is the third-largest state in the Northeast in terms of indigenous population. The state has 57,214 people who self-identify as indigenous. Indigenous peoples living in Maranhão, according to national indigenous peoples foundation FUNAI, belong to the following ethnic groups: Krikati, Krepyn Katejê, Timbira, Canela Memörtumre, Canela Ramkokamekrak, Gavião Pukobjê, Krenjê, Guajajara, Ka'Apor, Awá Guajá, Gamela, Tremembé, Tikuna, Awrao, Anapuru Muypurá, Kariu Kariri, and Tupinambá. In contemporary Maranhão, we observe the persistence and resistance of indigenous peoples in their fight for their ancestral lands. According to a survey conducted by geoprocessing laboratory Labgeo at the State University of Maranhão, reproduced below, the lands are located near the coastline and in the interior of the state.

Carlos Fausto, in *Fragments of the History of the Tupinambá Culture*, reports that there is difficulty among the colonial chroniclers in accurately naming the indigenous nations. The term Tupinambá was used to refer to a whole group of peoples from the Brazilian coast, generalizing different groups from the Tupi language family. The Tupinambá, therefore, represent a universe of nations and ethnicities, including those encountered by the chroniclers in the 16th century in Maranhão, Pará, and adjacent islands. According to Vainfas (2000, p. 544), the



Tapuias, along with the Tupi, were the two groups of Amerindians classified by the Portuguese. The term Tapuia is not an ethnonym; it referred to peoples with diverse languages and cultures, who, in the 16th-century documentation, were characterized as barbarians.

Reviving the indigenous presence in cartography is a way of documenting and understanding the forms of occupation and resistance in the territory by these peoples.

Rescuing the indigenous presence in cartography is a way to document and understand the forms of occupation and resistance in the territory by the indigenous peoples, the true owners of the ancestral lands, who in Maranhão were first documented through the works of French Capuchin priests: Claude d'Abbeville (1975) in *History of the Mission of the Capuchin Fathers on the Island of Maranhão* and Yves D'Evreux (2002) in *Journey to Northern Brazil*, undertaken between 1613-1614. The naturalist and memoirist priests who accompanied La Ravardière's expedition in 1612 spent four months in Maranhão and described the ephemeral project of France Equinocial in Maranhão with detailed accounts of the expedition, the foundation of São Luís Island, visits to the villages of Tapuitapera (now the city of Alcântara) and Upaon Açu (now the state capital, São Luís), as well as the daily life, habits, astrology, and worldviews of the peoples who inhabited the region. These two books report not only the spatial organization of indigenous settlements but also the construction techniques used in them.

In the narrative of the French priests, we find descriptions of their ancestral presence, particularly in Claude D'Abbeville's book, in Chapter XLVII, "*On the Customs of the Tupinambá Indians, Their Habitations, and Marriage*". He describes aspects of the architecture and spatial organization of the villages:

In general, the Tupinambá Indians inhabit the forests near the sea to fish, or along the riverbanks due to the freshwater necessary for life. Once the appropriate location is found, they cut down the forest and create a large square plaza, setting fire to it in order to destroy the vegetation and clear the land. They then construct, right in the center, four large buildings in the shape of a cloister. These cabins are made of wood and covered with pindó (a type of palm), from top to bottom, and they are long and wide in proportions deemed necessary to shelter the entire village (Claude d'Abbeville, 1975, p. 222).

First of all, it is important to note that these villages are not like ours, and even less do they resemble well-built cities, surrounded by bastions or trenches, moats, and grand palaces. Their villages, which they call Oca or Taba, consist of no more than four huts made of thick wooden poles and stakes, covered from top to bottom with palm leaves known



as Pindó, which are found in the forests. These leaves, when properly arranged, are remarkably resistant to rain (Claude D'Abbeville, 1975, p. 139).

The location of the villages was known to the French, who had been navigating the Maranhão coast since the 16th century and were allies of the Tupinambá, using their proximity to the indigenous peoples in their expeditions. D'Abbeville highlighted the existence of twenty-seven settlements on São Luís Island and between fifteen and twenty indigenous settlements in Tapuitapera, even listing the names of the villages in Chapter XXXII. Among the names by which these indigenous settlements were called, which are mentioned in the chapter, we highlight:

The first village is Timbói, which means the root of a certain tree called euve, with which they intoxicate the fish; the second village is named Itapari, which is a fish pond or trap; the third village is Carnaupió, which means carnaú tree. Euaíve is the fourth village, meaning 'old or muddy water.' Itaendave is the fifth village, which means 'wide stone.' The sixth village is Aracuí-jeuve, which derives from a bird; the seventh village is Indotuve, the place of pindó; the eighth village is called Oatimbup, which means the root of timbó; the ninth village, the largest of all, is Junipará, which derives from jenipapo, a bitter fruit; the tenth village is called Toroiepep, which means 'footwear'; the eleventh village is Januaré, meaning 'stinky dog'; the twelfth village is Uarapirã, or 'red hole'; the thirteenth village is Poieupe, which means 'gourd used as a plate'; the fourteenth village, Eussauap, one of the largest as well, is a place where crabs are eaten; the fifteenth is Maracanã Pisip, the name of a large bird; the sixteenth is Taperaçu; the seventeenth is Toroupê, which means 'beverage'; the eighteenth is Aquetene, the place of fish; the nineteenth is Caranaíve; the twentieth is Jeviree, which the French call Juiet; the twenty-first is called Eucatu, meaning 'cold water'; the twenty-second is Canua-Mirim; the twenty-third is Uri-Uaçu-Eupê; Maiova is the twenty-fourth, Pacuri Euve is the twenty-fifth and Euvapar is the twenty-sixth; the twenty-seventh is Meuruti-euve, which means 'palm tree.' These are the main names of the primary villages on the island, some with two or three hundred inhabitants, others with five or six hundred, so that across the island there could be between ten and twelve thousand souls (Claude D'Abbeville, 1975, p. 145).



The descriptions provided by the Capuchin priests, with precise geographic indications, made a fundamental contribution to the study of the formation of towns and cities in colonial Brazil. In this article, we highlight the cartographers Albernaz I and II, grandfather and grandson from a traditional Portuguese family, who left an important collection of atlases and maps of Maranhão, as well as the French cartographer Nicolas Sanson.

Although the maps emphasized the colonization project, the indigenous presence and the demarcation of all the villages were depicted without revealing conflicts or disputes, instead highlighting the marking of territories. The Europeans relied on the indigenous peoples' ancestral knowledge of the land, waters, and rivers in their occupation project. In this sense, cartography, charts, atlases, maps, and engravings (with particular emphasis on the Collection of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro<sup>1</sup>), as well as the detailed accounts of the French Capuchin priests, were essential tools for understanding and conquering the territory, and today they remain crucial for the study of colonial urbanism.

Maps and travelers' narratives together contribute to the understanding of the territory. According to archaeologist Arkley Bandeira (2015), the accuracy of the descriptions of each region of the Island of São Luís, as traversed by Claude d'Abbeville, is such that one can recognize in the Capuchin's work neighborhoods of the city that are still called by their indigenous names, such as Maracanã, Maioba, Turu, Pindoba, and Pindaí. By cross-referencing archaeological findings and historical information, particularly the accounts of Claude d'Abbeville, among the 27 villages recorded by the expedition, eleven have been identified in Upaon-Açu, many of them associated with the presence of shell mounds (Bandeira, 2015).

The scope defined in this article is part of a larger research project connected to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development-CNPQ Research Directory "Urban Ideologies and Architectural Languages of São Luís – MA" and a postdoctoral project within the National Academic Cooperation Program- Procad Amazônia program, which focuses on the study of Maranhão's cartography. This research is being conducted within the Architecture and Urbanism course of the Postgraduate Program in Socio-Spatial and Regional Development (PPDSR) at the State University of Maranhão (UEMA). Its aim is to catalog, understand, and critically analyze the cartography produced for the State of Maranhão between the 16th and 19th centuries, with an initial emphasis on maps available in the digital collection of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Subsequently, the research will extend to other national and international collections through critical analysis and understanding of the real and hidden objectives of the maps, applying a methodological and chronological approach, categorized by century and by the types of maps, charts, and geographical and urban atlases. The study adopts a decolonial and contemporary perspective, highlighting the role of the ancestral peoples' villages in the colonization process and their mapping. It also aims to reclaim cartography as an important educational tool and a source of reference

1 More information in <https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/>. Access on: July 20, 2024



for contemporary urban studies, contributing to the ongoing debate about urbanism in the State of Maranhão and its capital, São Luís, which was recognized and inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997.

## **MAKING INDIGENOUS VILLAGES VISIBLE IN EUROPEAN CARTOGRAPHY**

This article reflects on a stage of research conducted within the postdoctoral project Procad Amazônia between the Federal Para University -UFPA-UEMA, under the guidance of Prof. Rosa E. Acevedo Marin. The research aims to analyze the 17th-century cartography of Maranhão with a critical and reflective approach to the representation of Indigenous villages in maps, demonstrating the power relations within the colonial context. The research is in its early stages, and the results are not yet concluded; therefore, the article presents initial reflections, with many questions and considerations still open.

In this article, we conduct an analysis of the cartography with a focus on the 17th century, examining geographical maps intended to situate the territory, sandbanks, rivers, fortresses, Indigenous villages, and access points for ships. From an analytical perspective, we highlight the importance of interpreting the symbols contained in the maps. We must understand and read these maps beyond their symbols.

In this perspective, it is important to initially identify the elements present in the cartography by analyzing the symbols presented on each map. We observe that on 17th-century maps of Brazil, there are always markings of three points in the state of Maranhão with drawings. Here, we highlight some of them:

1. Compass Rose – This symbol was used on maps to identify the cardinal points, which are the orientation points on the Earth's surface (North, South, East, West), and to indicate the magnetic north. It was essential in locating the new towns and cities of colonial Brazil.
2. Symbol of the Portuguese Crown – This symbol represented the domain of the territory by the Portuguese Monarchy, indicating for whom the map was created and marking the power of the monarchy.
3. Leagues Scales – This symbol indicates the relationship between the dimensions of the real space and the space represented on the map.
4. Drawings of Geographical Elements – These symbols indicate rivers, sandbanks, villages, and markings for fortresses, towns, and villages

From these questions, in the search for a critical perspective on the production of colonial cartography, the theoretical framework of this research is based on authors such as João Pacheco Oliveira (2016), Allana Souto Cardoso (2018), Renata Malcher, as well as theses, articles, and dissertations on Amazonian cartography and the cartographers Albernaz I and II. Specifically, the geographer and cartographer John Brian Harley (2009), central to the methodological construction





of this research, argues that the historical circumstances and conditions defined by a specific context produce a map that is, without a doubt, a social and cultural document. All maps are linked to the social order of a given period and place. Harley's (2009) methodological perspective considers cartographic materials as human constructions that encompass both an imagistic (graphic representation) and textual (discourse) nature, which should be interpreted through the historical contexts involved. According to the author,

[...] A great part of the power of the map, as a representation of social geography, is that it works behind a mask of seemingly neutral science. It hides and denies its social dimensions while simultaneously legitimizing them. However, wherever we look from, the rules of society will survive. They have made maps, at the very least, an image of the social order as well as a measurement of the phenomenal world of objects (Harley, 2005, p. 195).

From this perspective, beyond the analytical and descriptive view of cartography, it is important to understand the historical map within its context, requiring the evaluation of several aspects:

- Who created the map?
- What were the cartographers and the circumstances in which the map was made?
- Why was it made and for whom?
- What was the purpose of the map?

In the case of the maps mentioned here, the cartography created had the primary objectives of providing support for the domination and colonization of the territory, recording access points via waterways, existing paths, ways to enter and seize the land, as well as demonstrating the power of religious orders and the monarchy. The representation of the Indigenous people was thus subordinated to these interests and, in some aspects—particularly those that pertain more to the symbolic elements of the map rather than the physical and geographical description of the territory—it was unreliable, originating from a colonizing point of view.

The research was conducted in the digital collection of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro, in the cartography sector, where we found approximately forty maps of the State of Maranhão. In this article, we highlight four maps for analysis, in which we can visualize the symbolic elements and the central issues of the research. In addition to the maps of Maranhão, the National Library, in 2023, following the debate on the time frame of Indigenous lands in Brazil, organized a section in the digital iconography of the library called “ancestral peoples2,” dedicated to maps

2 More information in: <https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/dossies/povos-originais/mapas-com-os-povos-indigenas/>. Access on: July 24, 2024





identifying Indigenous peoples. We selected some of these maps as references for the article, highlighting the cartographers Albernaz I and II and N. Sanson.

They are, in chronological order:

1. 1629 - Pequeno atlas do Maranhão e Grão-Pará - cart555828 - Albernaz I, João Teixeira, fl. 1602-1649. Available at: [http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo\\_sophia=1388](http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo_sophia=1388).
2. 1632 - Descrição dos Rios Pará e Maranhão - cart1004846, Albernaz I, João Teixeira, fl. 1602-1649. Available at: [http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo\\_sophia=27904](http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo_sophia=27904).
3. 1656 - Le Bresil 1656, Nicholas Sanson d'Abbeville (1600-1667). Available at: [https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html](https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html).
4. 1666 - Demonstração do Maranhão até o rio preguiças cart1004846, Albernaz II, João Teixeira, 1655-1699. Available at: [http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_cartografia/cart1079075/cart1079075.pdf](http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart1079075/cart1079075.pdf).

### CARTOGRAPHERS ALBERNAZ I, ALBERNAZ II, AND N. SANSON

Albernaz I, João Teixeira, fl. 1602-1649

Albernaz II, João Teixeira, fl. 1655-1699

Nicolas Sanson D'Abbeville 1600-1667

The Albernaz family, Portuguese cartographers, is connected to the Teixeira family, with the brothers João Teixeira Albernaz (I) and Pedro Teixeira Albernaz being the sons of Luís Teixeira. Among others, such as Estevão Teixeira, this family also includes João Teixeira Albernaz (II), the grandson of his namesake. João Teixeira Albernaz I (1602-1649) was the son of Luís Teixeira, whose activities in mapping the Portuguese colonial empire date back to the Iberian Union of 1580 to 1640.

Albernaz I was appointed cartographer to the House of Mina and India in 1605. Linked to the official bodies of the Guinea and India Stores, he created his most famous works in the first half of the seventeenth century, including 19 atlases, among which is the Atlas of Brazil from 1632, a treasure of cartographic art with ink drawings. The map of the Province of Brazil reveals the progressive expansion of geographic and cartographic knowledge of the forbidden Portuguese America. In this atlas, we find the "Description of the Pará and Maranhão Rivers" (fig. 5).

Regarding the work of the Portuguese cartographer, Sousa (2015) attests that:

[...] The nautical cartography of colonial Brazil by João Teixeira Albernaz I primarily refers to the production of certain atlases that served both nautical work and as guiding instruments for voyages, as well as those created for and commissioned by



nobles and the King. These, crafted with greater care, became luxury artifacts (Sousa, 2015, p. 27).

His grandson, João Teixeira Albernaz II, with talent and skill comparable to his grandfather, was responsible for the Atlas of Brazil, which includes the map of Maranhão from 1666 – Demonstration of Maranhão up to the Preguiças River (Figure 6).

Nicolas Sanson D'Abbeville (1600-1667) was the royal geographer at the courts of Louis XIII and XIV. He produced important maps of Brazil, including "Le Brésil" (Figure 7) and a map of the Amazon from 1680, titled "Le cours de la rivière des Amazones dressé sur la relato," which is part of the Ancestral Peoples Collection at the Digital National Library.

### 1629 - Small Atlas of Maranhão Grão Pará

The 1629 map, created by João Teixeira Albernaz I, is part of a collection containing three maps that show the connection between Maranhão and Grão Pará, highlighting the Pindaré, Mearim, Itapecuru, and Munim rivers, the four main rivers of Maranhão and essential axes for the state's inland expansion. The maps include representations of the locations of several indigenous villages. At the top, there is a notation indicating a large indigenous area called the "Province of the Guajajaras." We emphasize that the towns are depicted with specific symbols for small houses, and urban agglomerations such as the drawing of the city of São Luís (the current state capital) and the villages: "dos Brancos" and the indigenous village "Tapuitapera," indicating its proximity to the Cumã captaincy. It is important to note that the size of the depictions of the São Luís town and Tapuitapera village are relative, showing that both were large and densely populated, likely the main towns and villages from the cartographers' perspective. The placement of Tapuitapera on the map, near the igarapé and across from the city of São Luís, on the other side of the bay, corresponds to the current location of the historic center of Alcântara, a city that superseded the indigenous settlement. From the representation, it can be inferred that the Portuguese city had its origins in the indigenous village of Tapuitapera.

This 1629 map also marks the province of the Tupinambás, in addition to the province of the Guajajara. We observe drawings of other indigenous villages towards the state of Pará. These are also described by Claude D'Abbeville in his book, specifically in chapters XXXI-XXIV, which discuss the description of the Island of Maranhão and the main villages of Cumã and its surroundings. The symbolism reflects the equivalence of populations and spatial organizations, with similar sizes between the indigenous and European settlements. This fact supports the idea that the Europeans utilized indigenous knowledge of the land, waters, and winds in the demarcation and establishment of their towns and cities, as well as the sources of potable water and defensive fortresses.





Figure 1: 1629 - Small Atlas of Maranhão Grão Pará. Source: [http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo\\_sophia=1388](http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo_sophia=1388). Accessed on: July 25, 2024



Figure 2: Detail of the map "Small Atlas of Maranhão Grão Pará," showing that villages and religious settlements were represented in the same way and size. Source: [http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo\\_sophia=1388](http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo_sophia=1388). Accessed on: July 25, 2024

### "Description of the Pará and Maranhão Rivers" from 1632

The map containing the description of the Pará and Maranhão rivers is part of the Universal Atlas by cartographer João Teixeira Albernaz I, composed of 11 maps. We observe that in the 1632 map, the emphasis is on the geography of Maranhão, São Luís Island, and the sea access routes for ships. Notably, the four rivers and the indigenous villages are indicated, with particular emphasis on Tapuitapera, now the city of Alcântara, and the Cumã captaincy. Both are described by Father Claude



d'Abbeville (1975) in Chapter XXXIV, regarding the main villages of Cumã, where he highlights: "All these villages are much more populated, and their inhabitants are allies of the Indians of Tapuitapera and Ilha Grande, forming one nation, a confederation united in the war against other enemy nations" (D'Abbeville, 1975, p. 150).

This map is the only one to represent, on the Island, besides the City of São Luís, a village named Ytapaúí, which likely corresponds to the village called Itapari (ita – stone and pari – fenced or corral) in the "History of the Mission of the Capuchin Fathers on the Island of Maranhão," Chapter XIX. It was the second village visited by Claude d'Abbeville, where the father mentions a Frenchman who was very close to the indigenous people, and where baptisms of children were performed.

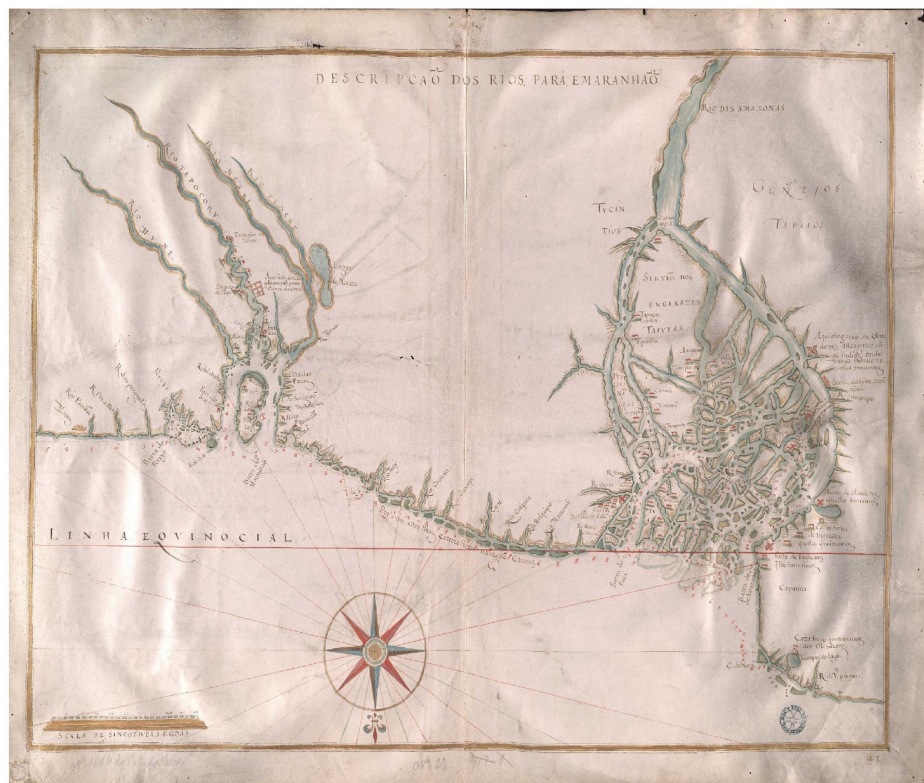


Figure 3: 1632 Description of the Pará and Maranhão Rivers cart1004846, Albernaz I, João Teixeira, fl. 1602-1649. Source: [http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo\\_sophia=27904](http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.asp?codigo_sophia=27904). Accessed on: July 25, 2024





Figure 4: Detail of the map "Description of the Pará and Maranhão Rivers" (1602-1649). Accessed on: July 25, 2024

### "Le Brésil" of 1656

This map of Brazil (Le Brésil) is dated 1656 and was created in Paris by Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville (1600-1667), the geographer to the King of France. It served as a reference for other maps, as Sanson created one of the first scientific maps of the Amazon region (Le Cours de La Rivière des Amazones). Cartographer Sanson hails from the same city as Capuchin Father Claude D'Abbeville, both from Abbeville, located in the Somme department, in the administrative region of Hauts-de-France, near the English Channel. Their narratives are reflected in the references to the island of St. Anna and Maranhão. In the detail of the 1656 map (fig. 8), we observe the marking of St. Anna Island below the word "Maragnan" and "opaonmirim" (referring to the Upaon Açu village), and in Chapter X of Father D'Abbeville's book, the departure of the French from St. Anna Island and the process of building a fort with the participation of the indigenous people is described (D'Abbeville, 1975).

We arrived at Jevirée on the great island of Maranhão, inhabited by Tupinambá Indians (D'Abbeville, 1975, p. 55, tradução nossa)<sup>3</sup>.

The 1656 map highlights Maranhão in yellow, and in the detail, we see the demonstration of three key points in the formation of the state: the Itaipuru River, Alcântara (under the name Tapuitapera), and São Luís. In the center, surrounded by a frame, there is a French text describing

Brazil: the eastern coast is owned by the Portuguese and divided into 14 captaincies. The interior of the country is inhabited by a large number of peoples, almost all unknown. We have marked the territories of the captaincies near

3 Chegamos a Jevirée na ilha grande do Maranhão, habitada por índios tupinambás (D'Abbeville, 1975, p. 55).



the coast, although their boundaries are uncertain (free translation).



Figure 5: Map "Le Brésil," 1656, detail of the Maranhão region. Source :[https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html](https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html). Accessed on: July 24, 2024



Figure 6: Map "Le Brésil," 1656, detail of the Maranhão region. Source:: [https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html](https://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart168862/cart168862.html). Accessed on: July 24, 2024

### “Demonstration of Maranhão to the Preguiças River, 1666”

The map “Demonstration of Maranhão to the Preguiças River, 1666” was created by the cartographer João Teixeira Albernaz II, a member of the Portuguese Albernaz family of cartographers and namesake of his grandfather, João Teixeira Albernaz I. The map is part of an atlas containing 16 geographic plates of the Brazilian coast and presents a navigation chart with all the markings of the bay, sandbanks, and access routes used by ships. It includes the symbolism of the compass rose and a scale in leagues, as well as the locations of the Tapuitapera village (now the city of Alcântara), “white settlement,” “Cumã settlement,” “village of the Tapuia Salinas,” and the rivers Itapecuru, Munim, and Maracu, as well as the Paca Islands and the Santa Maria Fortress. Father Claude D’Abbeville (1975), in his description of the villages of Maranhão, emphasizes the lands of Cumã as fertile and pleasant areas where the indigenous people reside.



Figure 7: 1666 “Demonstration of Maranhão to the Preguiças River” cart1004846, Albernaz II, João Teixeira. Source: [http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_cartografia/cart1079075/cart1079075.pdf](http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart1079075/cart1079075.pdf). Accessed on: July 24, 2024

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article aims to highlight the presence of Indigenous villages in the 17th-century European cartography of the Maranhão state, offering a new perspective in the critical analysis of the symbolism of maps, valuing and cataloging the presence of the ancestral Indigenous peoples who inhabited the territory at the beginning of the colonization process. The analysis of Maranhão’s historical cartography has traditionally been colonial in nature, and in this article, we juxtapose the maps



with the narratives of the French priest Claude d'Abbeville, who describes in detail the numerous villages of Maranhão.

In these maps, we demonstrate the persistence of Indigenous populations in the state of Maranhão, remnants of ancestral communities. Their chronology corresponds to the initial phase of the colonization process: 1629, 1632, 1656, and 1666. Upon analyzing the collection, we observe that all are geographic maps aimed at understanding and controlling the territory, identifying access routes by sea and sandbanks specific to the São Marcos Basin and the Atlantic Ocean. These maps seek to identify the four main rivers of the state as alternative routes for penetration and territorial protection, as well as to pinpoint the principal Indigenous villages, using symbols that indicate their size. A consistent symbolic marking of three strategic points is observed: the island of São Luís, formerly Upaon Açú; the captaincy of Cumã; the village of Tapuitapera; and the marking along the banks of the Itapecuru River, where a fortress was located. This triad highlights the historical formation of the state within the process of European colonization. When analyzing the historical context, we can identify these three locations as central in the territorial disputes between the French, Portuguese, and Dutch.

Although these maps may appear to merely describe the territory analytically and objectively, the cartography referenced here is a product of its time, shaped by its context, ideologies, and power relations. Harley's (2009; 2005) concept of "cartographic silence" helps us understand the omissions in these maps, particularly the suppression of political and social information in colonial cartography. Here, we are not discussing technological limitations or a lack of knowledge about the territory. According to Harley, "[...] I am not concerned with those silences arising from geographic ignorance, lack of data, errors, measurement limitations, deliberate design, or other aspects of specification and technical deficiencies. Here, I address political silences [...]" (Harley, 2005, p. 115).

The absence of information about conflicts, such as the territorial disputes between the Dutch, French, and Portuguese, the presence of slavery, the displacement and extermination of Indigenous peoples, or any information that might call into question European territorial control and sovereignty, is also fundamental to the analysis of these maps. Cartographic omissions are not explicit, but by critically questioning what remains unseen in these maps, we arrive at research questions that remain open: What more can colonial cartography reveal beyond its surface? How can we understand Indigenous occupation through a cartographic production that was designed to facilitate their domination and extermination?

Maps can also be viewed as testimonies to the fact that Indigenous ancestral knowledge of the land, waters, and climate was an important tool used by Europeans to conquer the territory. The alliances formed between the French and Indigenous leaders in the process of establishing France Équinoxiale, as well as Indigenous alliances and resistance against the Portuguese during colonization, support this



argument. The visibility of Indigenous presence in European cartography is a crucial step toward recognizing the role of Indigenous peoples in the formation of Brazilian cities. The positioning of villages, methods of constructing and occupying space, and the knowledge possessed by the original inhabitants of Maranhão also served as foundations for the establishment of European settlements in Colonial Brazil.

In contemporary times, the state of Maranhão still has a significant number of Indigenous communities, as recorded by FUNAI and IBGE. Historically situating these communities is a way to acknowledge their ancestral presence and to recognize Indigenous influences on Portuguese colonial urbanism and the spatial configuration of Maranhão.

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