ENGLISH SEAFARERS IN COASTAL BRAZIL DURING EARLY HABSBURG RULE (1580-1600)

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ABSTRACT

English Seafarers in Coastal Brazil during Early Habsburg Rule, 1580-1600

by

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This is a study of English seafarers in coastal Brazil during early Habsburg rule. By carefully examining the voyages of Edward Fenton (1582-83), Thomas Cavendish (1591-92), and James Lancaster (1594-95) this paper seeks to understand the role of the English in Brazil from 1580-1600. The differences of these voyages far exceed the years that separate them. The ascent of Philip II, king of Spain, to the Portuguese throne in 1580 was the first in a series of changes that occurred during this period that helped to politicize English overseas ventures. Another key event, the 1588 attack of the Spanish Armada off the English coast, helped to militarize such ventures and attributed greatly to an English increase in corsair activity and infringement on Spanish and Portuguese trade routes and ports. Thus, while Fenton's voyage was primarily concerned with economic issues, Lancaster's was highly political. While Fenton reserved using force only when necessary, Lancaster had no such reservations. Clearly differences run deep. Not only did overseas privateering voyages become more political, they served an economic, military and strategic agenda as well. Brazil went from being *a* destination along the way to *the* destination. This paper examines these contextual changes and their effect on such voyages.

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INTRODUCTION

Early in September 1594 a few wealthy Englishmen outfitted a number of ships with the intent of sacking the well-fortified coastal town of Recife in Pernambuco, Brazil. Despite the hefty price tag and astronomical risks associated with such a venture, three ships were prepared, and the veteran James Lancaster was appointed commander. The three ships, the *Consent*, the *Salomon*, and the *Virgin*, were outfitted with cannon, provisions, and upwards of two-hundred-and-seventy-five-men. Carrying no goods for trade and no riches for tribute, this was a voyage with the goal of destruction and profit. The expedition was a far cry from the public-private ventures of just twenty years past. It is the transparency of the goal of the Lancaster voyage that makes it unique. While violence and plunder played a part in many earlier seafaring expeditions, they were conducted under the guise of trade. Thus they had an air of innocence, and, as will be shown, legitimacy. What led to such an enormous transformation in such a small amount of time? Did English intentions, both private and public, really change or was this simply a case of the implicit becoming explicit?

To answer these questions I will focus on Brazil. There is little scholarship on the English in Brazil during early Habsburg rule. Furthermore, there is a common tendency when studying this particular period to focus primarily on a single country, whether Portugal, Spain, or England. By researching a variety of English privateer, commercial, and knowledge-seeking voyages to Brazil, I intend to take a broader perspective and examine the interconnection among England, Portugal, Spain, and Brazil. I ask two questions about English seafarers in coastal

Brazil during early Habsburg rule. First, what was the role of the English in Brazil from 1580-1600? Second, what led to the English increase in corsair activity and infringement on Spanish and Portuguese trade routes and ports? These two questions are highly connected. Before they are addressed it is imperative to determine the role the English played in Brazil prior to 1580. A foundation needs to be set, and for this I turn to Sir John Hawkins.

Hawkins was a prototypical Elizabethan entrepreneur, constantly capitalizing on the seemingly endless opportunities made available by the open seas. An innovator in what has come to be known as the triangular slave trade, Hawkins gained fortune and fame. Sailing southward from England, Hawkins would land on the western coast of Africa, load a number of natives aboard his ships, and transfer them to the New World. Once in the New World, he would travel to various port towns and harbors selling his goods via force or charm. Hawkins, like many English seafarers, cared little about Spanish monopoly, rules and regulations. This was the nature of Hawkins's third venture--that of 1568. Although Hawkins's voyage of that year had nothing to do with Brazil, his expedition sparked a battle on 16 September 1568 at San Juan de Ulúa in Mexico, which had important consequences.

Due to contrary winds and a heavy storm, Hawkins's fleet took cover in a Mexican harbor. His ships, disguised as a Spanish treasure fleet that was expected to arrive any day, confidently sailed in and dropped anchor. Tensions ran high once the Spaniards determined this was not the treasure fleet. Over the next couple of days the Spaniards became increasingly fearful that Hawkins and his men were up to no good. To prevent any misunderstanding, both sides hastily agreed to a truce. When the treasure fleet arrived the truce was broken, and a battle ensued. While Hawkins escaped, many of his men were captured. According to Robert Bromber, in "English *Abandonados* and *Afortunados*: Class and Spanish Justice in the Atlantic

World: 1568-1576," although the battle itself was not of great length, nor the lives lost astronomical in number, the ramifications were great. Bromber asserts: "What truly occurred in Mexico on the sixteenth of September was the freshet that turned, in very short order, into a raging torrent that eventually swamped the kingdom of Spain. The once amicable relationship between England and Spain began to unravel."[1] Hawkins's voyage altered the balance of a shaky relationship.

The battle at San Juan de Ulúa impacted English seafaring as well. While this battle did not necessarily change the way in which such expeditions were conducted, it certainly made them more risky. The relationship between England, a primarily Protestant country, and Spain, predominantly Catholic, had been seen as shaky, but not hostile. The Hawkins voyage changed this. Many of Hawkins's crewmembers were tried in various courts, including those of the Spanish Inquisition, which brought the religious differences between the two countries to the forefront. Hawkins's voyage along with the 1580 ascension of Philip II to the Portuguese throne and the 1588 attack of the Spanish Armada off England's coast, not only altered the relationship between major European powers, but their relations with Brazil as well.

The year 1580 was one of transitions for many in Portugal. Their king, Cardinal Henry died in January of that year. His inability over the years to gain permission to relinquish his vows of celibacy had left a gaping hole in the Portuguese line of succession. There was certainly no shortage of willing candidates for the throne. Those vying to be crowned included the king of Spain, Philip II, the illegitimate son of Prince Luis, Dom António, and the daughter of Prince Duarte, Catarina the Duchess of Bragança. Both Princes were younger brothers of King João III (r. 1521-1557). The choice of succession was not easy, because each of the three candidates had

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[1] Robert Bromber, "English *Abandonados* and *Afortunados*: Class and Spanish Justice in the Atlantic World: 1568-1576" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004), 17.

serious drawbacks. Many high officials were uneasy with Philip II, because accepting him would put Portugal's autonomy at stake. Although Dom António was the public's favorite, this mattered little in a monarchy. His uncle, Cardinal Henry, was infuriated by his indulgence in extravagance and loose loyalty to vows of celibacy. Rumors also spread questioning Dom António's legitimacy. Catarina, although legitimate, was female, and in the sixteenth-century where strict ideas of masculinity reigned, this was a drawback.

The death of Cardinal Henry without naming a successor led to much confusion throughout the country. Many of the noblemen in his inner circle agreed Philip II was the logical choice, and shortened the process of naming Philip. Fearing the public reaction, troops were gathered in case of a need to restore peace. Dom António did not give up hope of becoming king, and continued to gather public support. On 19 June 1580 he was announced king in several major Portuguese towns. The potential clash of these two claimants, along with public sentiment, elevated tensions. As a result, the naming of Philip as king of Portugal was delayed. Upset over the many delays and hesitations by the Portuguese nobility, and anxious to assume, in his opinion, his rightful place, Philip took matters in his own hands and appointed the Duke of Alba commander of an invasion force. On 27 June 1580 twenty thousand troops marched into Portugal, "too few for a real conquest, but enough now that the way had been prepared for bribery."[2] Dom António, in the meantime, fielded an army of his own, although it was only a fraction of the size. The two forces met on 25 August1580 in the Battle of Alcântara. Dom António's army of resistors was defeated, and his efforts to expel the Spaniards and claim the throne were thwarted.

For the next eight months, Dom António hid in Portugal before fleeing to England where he gained the confidence of key adventurers such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins.

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[2] H.V. Livermore, *A New History of Portugal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 267.

Yet, unable to garner the support of Queen Elizabeth, Dom António left for France. Months later Dom Antońio returned to England, and gained the Queen's confidence. Tired of Philip II and the ever-growing strength of the Spanish Empire, Elizabeth saw Dom António as the means to put a wedge in Spanish power and tap into the Spanish and Portuguese trade routes.[3] In the eyes of Dom António, an alliance with England could potentially help him acquire the Portuguese throne or, at the very least, provide him shelter and protection.

The Dom António issue played a key role in changing the intent of English seafaring voyages. He encouraged privateering by issuing letters of marque, licenses granted to private persons to seize the ships of Spain and their goods. While such letters were traditionally reserved for times of war, exceptions existed. For example, E.G.R. Taylor asserts that "Francis Drake claimed that he held the Queen's license to recover from the Spaniards the money lost by John Hawkins through Spanish treachery at San Juan de Ulloa in 1568."[4] While the Queen was not willing to start war with Spain, she certainly did not want Spain's power to go unchecked. Ventures, such as Fenton's 1582 voyage, were ordered not to incite Spanish aggression. In the eyes of the financiers and the Queen, a combination of interloping and harassment could accomplish much: Spain and Portugal's loss would be England's gain. It is safe to say that Portugal under Spanish authority was hardly the same country that it had been previous to the invasions. Growing regulations and restrictions on England had soured trade between the two countries. These frustrations increased when Elizabeth recognized Dom António as the real king of Portugal.

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[3] Elizabeth Story Donno, ed., *An Elizabethan in 1582: The Diary of Richard Madox, Fellow of All Souls* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1976), 18.

[4] E.G.R. Taylor, ed., *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1959), xli.

In November of 1580, shortly after Queen Elizabeth gave her support to Dom Antońio, a one-hundred-ton English ship named the *Minion* left for Brazil. Like the Hawkins' venture four years before, this voyage caused another stir in England and Spain's already rocky relationship. To an outsider like Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish resident ambassador to England, the nature of the voyage seemed political.[5] This, however, was not the case. The voyage, headed by Captain Stephen Hare, was put together shortly after John Whithall, an Englishman living in Santos, wrote a letter to his friend Richard Staper. Newly engaged to the daughter of a wealthy Italian living in Brazil, Whithall gained access to many of that region's elite men. Whithall wrote that he "talked with the Provedor and the Captaine, and they have certified me, that they have discovered certaine Mines of silver and gold [in São Vicente], and looke every day for Masters to come to open the said Mines: which when they be opened will inrich this countrey very much."[6] For the English, it was the prospect of finding these mines that fueled the voyage, not politics. However, the fact remained that this region was under Spanish authority, and disregarding this fact had political consequences.

The voyage was relatively uneventful. No skirmishes took place and little force was used. Two months after disembarkation the crew landed on the Isle of São Sebastian where, according to Thomas Grigs, "Purser of the [*Minion*]," "Thomas Babington, and others in our pinnesse, went a shoare to Guaybea, where they met with John Whithall his father and mother in lawe" and brought them aboard.[7] After a quick stop at the Island of Santa Catarina they arrived

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[5] Bernardino de Mendoza, "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King, 13 November 1580," Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers, English Affairs, of the Reign of Elizabeth [I]* vol. III (1580-1586). All cited Mendoza letters are as found in the Engel Sluiter Collection at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library.

[6] John Whithall "A letter written to M. Richard Staper," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* 12 vols. (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904), XI, 26. Although there is a previous edition published in 3 vols. (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newbery, and Robert Barker, 1598-1600) all citations come from the widely accessible 12 vols. reprint.

[7] Thomas Grigs "Certaine notes of the voyage to Brasill with the Minion of London aforesaid, in the yere 1580," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, XI, 34.

at Santos. The crew received friendly treatment and loaded their ships with sugar and fresh victuals. If the crew did not know the political ramifications of their actions they soon learned from the Portuguese Natives who were not allowed to use their mines. Grigs wrote that the Portuguese "cannot bee suffered to use their Mines of treasure in these parts, upon paine of death, the contrary being commanded by the king and the Vice-roy, who is as their king in place of authoritie."[8] Captain Hare must have realized that if Philip II forbade the Portuguese from profiting from the mines, the English would be forbidden as well.

The *Minion* infuriated the Spanish Ambassador. Mendoza was not only angry over England's disregard for Spanish authority, but he was also disturbed by the friendliness of the Portuguese officials toward the English crew. Mendoza made his views clear to Philip II in a series of letters. In one such letter, dated 1 March 1582, Mendoza writes that the English crewmembers violated a long standing "prohibition decreed in the time of King Sebastian, against Englishmen going to that part of the coast."[9] Mendoza believed that by violating this decree "the [*Minion*] might legally be arrested and confiscated."[10] For Mendoza it mattered little that the treaty "had only been for three years and expired in December 1579, when Antonio de Castillo came, 'erat pro gentium tacito consensus et in re mutup, comercio,' nothing have changed on either side."[11] Mendoza reasoned that if the *Minion* were to be confiscated, the English would have no grounds for claiming its restitution.

The *Minion* is a perfect example of both sides, England and Spain, trying to take advantage of the other. The English used Dom António's letters of marque as a means for disregarding Spanish territorial claims and overturning such decrees as the one cited by

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[8] Grigs, "Certine notes of the voyage to Brasill," 38.
[9] "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King, 1 March 1582."
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

Mendoza. The Spanish knew this. Mendoza worried that a weak response to the *Minion* would set a precedent. In a letter dated 13 November 1580 he wrote:

> it is of the greatest importance that on no account, should the English be allowed to imagine that they can go on that or any other voyage to the Indies, where prohibitions exist, excepting at the risk of being sent to the bottom. Otherwise they would continually fit out ships under the guise of trade, which would simply be sent to plunder all the property of your Majesty's subjects they should come across.[12]

While the English tried using transparent legal documents to gain access to the profitable Spanish trade routes, the Spanish countered with outdated treaties and legalese.

Hawkins' 1568 voyage and Philip II's ascent to the Portuguese throne helped to politicize English overseas ventures and determine what was officially allowed and what was not. The 1588 attack of the Spanish Armada off the English coast changed the rules of the game. By 1580, England and Spain were hostile but avoided a full-scale conflict until the surprise attack of the Spanish Armada. According to Wallace T. MacCaffrey, "The arrival of an invasion fleet manifestly intended not just to harass but also to subdue England meant that the character of the war altogether changed."[13] The reason is that "the actual appearance of [Philip's] fleet off [Elizabeth's] coasts had filled her with a haunting fear of its reappearance that would permeate all her judgments about the conduct of the war for the next decade."[14] Constantly worried about another attack, Elizabeth went on the defensive. Unwilling to jeopardize the defense of the English Isle by sending off the Royal Navy, Elizabeth looked to entrepreneurs to carry out her offense. In short, not only did the overseas privateering voyages become more political, they served an economic, military and strategic agenda as well. Brazil was no longer a mere stopping point, *a* destination along the way, but, as will be shown by the Lancaster voyage of 1594-1595, *the* destination.

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[12] "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King, 13 November 1582."

[13] Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588-1603* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 4.

[14] Ibid., 5.

CAPTAIN EDWARD FENTON'S 1582-83 VOYAGE

On 1 May 1582 four ships fitted for trade under the command of Captain Edward Fenton raised anchor and pointed sail towards the East Indies and Cathay. The disembarkation of these four ships carrying two-hundred-men and one-hundred-tons of goods was two years in the making. Although initially intended to be an assault on Spain and Portugal's trade monopoly, the venture was ultimately scaled down due to the potential political ramifications of such blatant action. The frequent alterations evident in the planning stages carried over to the voyage itself. Unfavorable winds and violent storms forced Fenton to alter course. Rather than head towards the East Indies, the fleet turned around and headed in the direction of Brazil. From a financial standpoint the voyage was unsuccessful, as two years at sea and skirmishes with the Spanish resulted in little trade and much damage.

Fenton's voyage raises a number of questions. First, although the overt political intentions seen in the planning stages disappeared, what role did politics ultimately play? Second, was attacking Spanish ships expected from the onset of the voyage? Third, when exactly did Brazil enter the picture? The answers to these questions are revealing of the role of English seafarers in coastal Brazil.

Preparations and Provisions

The lengthy preparations and constant tinkering of plans for the voyage give valuable insight into not only the concerns of the private financiers, but those of the Queen as well. In all

probability, what was to be regarded as "the voyage intended for China"[15] began as an ambitious scheme contrived by various influential seamen, such as Sir Francis Drake. Enraptured by the prospect of joining forces with the "Portuguese Pretender," Dom António, these seamen spent much time gathering materials and accumulating funds. Under the authority of Dom António, the planned voyage, coined *Enterprise I*, was to consist of "eight ships, pinnances, and barks…to establish a base of operation in Terceira and await the Spanish treasure fleet from the West Indies."[16] The project's hefty price tag necessitated funding from both private and public parties. Although supported by such private financiers as the Muscovy Company, the project's potential political ramifications made Queen Elizabeth wary and *Enterprise I* never materialized. Supporters of the venture were relentless, refusing to give up hope or put the issue to rest. Thus, "An alternative or Second Enterprise was also proposed. This was to send ships to Calicut on the Malabar Coast to establish a trade in spices in her Majesty's right as a party with Dom António."[17] However, citing the same risks as before, the Queen did not lend her support.

The venture that ultimately became reality was far different from *Enterprise I* and *Enterprise II*. E.G.R. Taylor, an expert on the venture, states:

> by August 1581, [Dom António] was being fobbed off with vague assurances, while Leicester [one of the main supporters of this venture] had developed quite different ideas for using the *Galleon Oughtred* [later named the galleon *Leicester*], which had already been fully furnished and armed to lead the 'Enterprise'. His plan was to secure the partnership of the Muscuvy Company, and send the ship (ostensibly at least) on a peaceful merchant voyage to the Moluccas.[18]

This voyage, intended for the East Indies and Cathay, was to consist of four vessels. While three of the ships, the galleon *Leicester*, the *Edward Bonaventure*, and the bark *Francis*, were financed by members of the Privy Council, the Muscovy Company, and Leicester himself, the fourth

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[15] Luke Ward, "The voyage intended towards China, wherein M. Edward Fenton was appointed Generall," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, XI, 172.

[16] Donno, 18.

[17] Ibid., 19.

[18] Taylor, xxx.

vessel, the *Elizabeth*, belonged to the Queen. "The general of the whole company was to be Martin Frobisher, whose early career had been as a privateer and who had had extensive experience at sea, most recently in the three voyages of the Northwest Passage."[19] Along with his assistants, Edward Fenton and Luke Ward, Frobisher handled all preparations (provisions, crew, etc.). However, on 27 February 1582, due to qualified accusations of the misuse of funds, Frobisher was relieved of his duties and replaced by Fenton. According to Taylor, "This was to exchange a sailor for a soldier, and was greatly resented by the mariners."[20]

On 9 April 1582 the Privy Councilors gave Captain Edward Fenton a twenty-four-point detailed set of instructions similar to those given to Frobisher two months before.[21] Held in high esteem, Fenton had authority to outfit his ships with whatever provisions he saw fit, as well as the responsibility of compiling a crew "to the number of 200 able persons," ten more than Frobisher was allotted.[22] In order to help ensure the successful execution of the voyage and lessen the financial risk, the Council appointed to positions of authority such experienced seamen and/or respected people as Captain William Hawkins, Captain Luke Ward, Nicholas Parker, Richard Madox, John Walker, Miles Evans, Randolph Shaw, and Mathew Talboys. While all had important tasks, four were named his assistants and acted as consultants throughout the voyage. Along with naming these individuals as part of the crew, the instructions also discussed practicalities such as the route(s) to be taken and procedures to be followed.

The ships were to be divided as such. In the galleon *Leicester* was to be Admiral Edward Fenton, Lieutenant William Hawkins, Captain Nicholas Parker, Chaplain Richard Madox,

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[19] Donno 23.

[20] Taylor, xxxii.

[21] [Privy Council] "Instructions for Martin Frobisher," February 1582, as found in the Engel Sluiter Collection in Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley.

[22] [Privy Council,] "Instructions for Edward Fenton" in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, XI, 163; see also [Privy Council] "Instructions for Martin Frobisher."

Merchants Miles Evans and Mathew Talboys, Master Christopher Hall, along with forty sailors, twenty-four men, and twelve boys. In the *Edward* were to be Vice Admiral Luke Ward, Chaplain John Walker, merchants Randolph Shaw and Peter Jeffrey, Master Thomas Pearsie, along with fifty-four sailors, sixteen men, and eight boys. John Drake was named Captain of the *Francis*, and William Markham master. They were to be joined by fourteen sailors, and two boys. On the *Elizabeth* was to be Captain Thomas Skevington, Master Ralf Crane, twelve sailors, and three boys.[23]

The instructions issued by the Council reveal the intent of the voyage, at least in the minds of its chief financiers. The outfitting of the four-hundred-ton galleon *Leicester*, the three-hundred-ton *Edward Bonaventure*, the forty-ton bark *Francis*, and the fifty-ton *Elizabeth* with provisions and crew was no cheap undertaking. Certainly something was expected in return: goods for trade and profit. The written instructions leave no doubt that in the minds of the financiers, those belonging to the Privy Council, the Muscovy Company, and others that this particular voyage, unlike its aborted predecessors, was one of trade. They give no indication that Brazil was ever a considered destination. Item eleven states:

> you shall have speciall regard after your departure from the coast of England, so to order your course, as that your ships and vessels lose not one another, but keepe companie together both outward and homeward.... And if any wilfulnesse or negligence in this behalfe shall appeare in any person or persons that shall have charge of any of the ships or vessels aforesayd, or if they or any of them shall doe otherwise then to them appertaineth, you shall punish such offenders sharpely to the example of others[24]

It is clear that the financiers drew up a blueprint which they saw most advantageous. Any deviation, they feared, could be economically detrimental. Only in extreme circumstances could Fenton change course. Although the venture was intended to be primarily mercantile in nature, due to the fact that the proposed trade route was commonly considered belonging to that of Spain

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[23] Richard Madox, *The Diary of Richard Madox* in *An Elizabethan in 1582*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1976), 121.

[24] "Instructions to Edward Fenton," 167.

and Portugal, it is unlikely that armed conflict would not have been considered by these men as, at the very least, a possibility. If expected, was such conflict welcomed?

As detailed as the instructions were, nowhere in the twenty-four points was it stated that violence against the Crown's enemies was prohibited. In its entirety, item twelve states:

> we do straightly enjoine you, and consequently all the rest imployed in this voyage in any wise, and as you and they will answere the contrary at your comming home by the lawes of this realme, that neither going, tarrying abroad, nor returning, you doe spoyle or take any thing from any of the Queenes Majesties friends or allies, or any Christians, without paying justly for the same, nor that you use any maner of violence or force against any such, except in your owne defence, if you shall be set upon or otherwise be forced for your owne safeguard to do it[25]

By not clearly stating "no piracy shall be committed," were the financiers of this particular voyage set on conflict? Did piratical notions and hatred of monopoly fuel the actions taken by the Muscovy Company, the Privy Council, and the Queen? I do not believe so. Although concerned by the growth of Portugal and Spain in terms of wealth and power, Queen Elizabeth did not want to ignite hostilities and/or incite a war. While the private parties would have supported a more ambitious venture, their motives, as her lack of support for *Enterprise I* and *Enterprise II* show, were more profit-oriented than politically motivated. Financial gain is the reason financiers risked their money and seamen risked their lives.

Sierra Leone

After three months of sailing, Fenton's fleet reached the coast of Guinea, and a General Assembly was called to determine the appropriate course of action. According to Luke Ward, Vice Admiral of the voyage, and second in command to Fenton, two points of issue were discussed. "The first, whether it were necessarie to water presently or not, which was thought very needful of all men, and so concluded. The second, where the best and aptest place was to water in, which was thought of the greater number to be at Sierra Leona on the coast of Guinie,

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[25] Ibid.

which was also concluded."[26] Thus, the ships were turned and the sails set at "southeast and east southeast,"[27] toward Sierra Leone. Land was spotted four days later that turned out to be just a bay. Tired, frustrated, and low on supplies, the fleet stayed the course. Five days later Sierra Leone was spotted and the four ships anchored near the river.

Fenton made two trips to Sierra Leone, as the sickness of the crew and the need to repair the ships forced them to return. During the second stay much trade was conducted with the Portuguese resident traders, or *lançados*. Luke Ward described the friendly exchange of goods between the English and the residents in detail. In need of supplies, Fenton was forced to exchange the bark *Elizabeth* for "80 mewes [moios?] of rice, 500 and odde weight of Elephants teeth, and a Negro boy."[28] Throughout the course of the two months, many other dealings were made, and both sides were satisfied. The relationship between the English seafarers and the Portuguese settlers was congenial. Ward described numerous occasions where Portuguese were invited upon the admiral's ship for dinner with both sides ending the night in good spirits after "having had many good speaches."[29] Supported by Dom António, the Englishmen did not deal with the Portuguese as Spaniards (enemies), but rather as allies. The English did not respect Philip II's restrictions on trade, and so long as the Portuguese agreed the two sides could live in peace.

As October came, so did the time to finally set sail and continue on with the voyage. However, almost as soon as the ships raised anchor another problem arose. The combination of the lateness of the season and unfavorable winds caused Fenton to call another assembly. The point of issue was whether to change course and head for Brazil. The West Indies was a far cry

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[26] Ward, "The Voyage," 173.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 175.
[29] Ibid.

from the original intent of the voyage. However, citing contrary winds, Fenton and some of the other captains were able to make a convincing case. Were conditions really as bad as Fenton and others made them out to be? Furthermore, what was to be done in Brazil? Was trade to be conducted, or was piracy to be committed? According to Elizabeth Story Donno, the winds were not as troublesome as Fenton and others made them out to be. It is her inclination that "the plan to run down the coast of Brazil and on to the Strait…had been bruited in England even before the departure," and that the captains' argument of contrary winds was an unarguable, therefore perfect excuse, and the possibility to conduct corsair activity all too irresistible.[30]

While it is impossible to know the exact reasons for the change in direction, or the extent of the legitimacy of Fenton's claims, what cannot be denied is the disgust of such persons as Chaplain Richard Madox. He speaks repeatedly in his diary of the piratical notions of the captains and members of the crew. Although such attitudes would have been appropriate upon the materialization of *Enterprise I* or *Enterprise II*, they certainly were not in conjunction with the instructions given by the Privy Council on 9 April 1582. Elizabeth Story Donno, citing Madox's numerous complaints, along with comments made by Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish resident ambassador to England from 1578 to 1584, stated: "In the eyes of the Muscovy Company and the Privy Council, the voyage was primarily for the sake of trade and secondarily for discovery . . . In the eyes of many members of the crew, however, the voyage was primarily for plunder and only secondarily for trade."[31]

Contrary to what Donno believes, there is insufficient evidence to justify the claim that the nature of Fenton's voyage was actually piratical and Brazil was the desired destination. Bernardino de Mendoza's correspondence with Philip II clearly shows that he believed Fenton

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[30] Donno, 31.
[31] Ibid., 29.

and his crew intended to go west and commit acts of piracy. Mendoza learned of "Fenton's intentions" through the Portuguese Juan Pinto. According to Mendoza, Juan Pinto escaped from the English after "[Fenton] captured him…and brought him to London, where the Councillors secretly examined him and begged him to remain in this country and go with English ships to the Rio de la Plata."[32] From this information Mendoza concluded that the English were up to no good, and that Fenton was no exception. Mendoza based this conclusion on pieced-together information. Over the course of the correspondence Mendoza became increasingly fearful of English plans. Pinto's news came two years after Mendoza learned of the *Minion*, an English ship that sailed to Brazil two years before Fenton. The *Minion* greatly troubled Mendoza two years before. He worried that it set a precedent for English interloping, and urged Philip II to take action. For Mendoza, the Fenton voyage justified past claims.

Mendoza's conclusions on Fenton were somewhat inaccurate. His assumptions were derived from a combination of hatred and bitterness. Mendoza developed strong hatred for Queen Elizabeth after the *Minion* incident. According to De Lamar Jensen, author of *Diplomacy and Dogmatism*, "Mendoza became convinced before his master did that coexistence with Elizabeth was no longer a desirable or even feasible policy."[33] In 1580 Mendoza advocated the seizure of foreign ships, such as the *Minion*, that illegally entered Spanish ports. Mendoza wanted the Spanish Crown to take a strong stance on all interlopers. Mendoza was more afraid of the political ramifications than the economic. Thus, not only did the ambassador see the Fenton voyage as an economic hindrance, but a political threat. In a letter written 4 May 1582 discussing the Fenton voyage, Mendoza states that "not only [should] they be prevented from

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[32] "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King 16 July 1583."

[33] De Lamar Jensen, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 63.

trading, but that they should be sent to the bottom without fail, with every man on board."[34] It is my belief that Mendoza's hatred for the Queen obstructed his keen sense of judgment. Mendoza's hastiness enabled him to wrongly conclude that Fenton's real intentions were drastically different from his public intentions. Fenton and the private financiers had political backing from Dom António and the Queen. Although such backing would suggest that although motivations might be primarily economic, they are not solely economic.

Brazil

After weeks at sea, the three ships saw the Brazilian coast. On 1 December 1582, an unknown ship was spotted that turned out to be of Spanish origin. On board were twenty-seven persons, eight of whom were friars. Through interrogation it was learned that a fleet of Spanish ships commanded by Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa were headed for the Straits of Magellan in pursuit of English privateers. After much advocating by Chaplain Richard Madox the Spanish crew was left unharmed and most of their belongings left intact. The Portuguese Lopez Vaz, a member of Gamboa's expedition to the Straits of Magellan, confirms this. He states "[Gamboa] found a barke wherein were some fryers going for the river of Plate: which friers told him of two great English ships, and a pinnesse, which had taken them, but tooke nothing from them, nor did them any harme, but onely asked them for the king of Spaines ships"[35]

The Spanish fleet described by the friars was not sent specifically after Fenton. On the contrary, the purpose of the Spanish fleet was to set up a colony headed by Sarmiento de Gamboa at the Straits of Magellan. Although it would not have been surprising that Philip II learned of Fenton's fleet, his reaction would be. In his discourse, Lopez Vaz ascertains that

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[34] "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King 4 May 1582."

[35] Lopez Vaz, "An extract out of the discourse of one Lopez Vaz," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, XI, 93.

Philip II "commanded Diego Flores de Valdes a noble man of Spaine, to passe thither with 23 ships, and 3500 men to stoppe the passage of the Englishmen."[36] The Englishmen cited here is most likely a generic reference, not a specific one to Fenton or any other Englishmen in the area at the time. Regardless of the intent of the Spanish ships, their interception of an English fleet would have been welcomed, as the West Indies were a prime source of revenue for Spain. The allowance of interlopers would not only have resulted in a loss of profit. It would have sent an unwanted message to the rest of the world that such action was tolerated.

The presence of the Spanish fleet posed a certain danger. A council was called and the decision was made to head toward São Vicente rather than stay course and cross the Straits of Magellan. John Drake, angry over the decision, left with his ship, the Bark *Francis*, in the middle of the night toward the River Plate. There, he and the surviving members of his crew were shipwrecked and lived for several months with the Amerindians found in the region. Although flustered over the loss of practically half their crewmen and much of their cannon, the remaining vessels stayed the course and turned sail toward São Vicente.

São Vicente

São Vicente did not turn out as Fenton and others hoped. Upon arrival, the crew discovered that the residents of the island pledged allegiance to Philip II and would not trade with the English. While contemplating whether to use force as a means for convincing them otherwise, Fenton spotted three ships in the distance, the ships mentioned by the Spanish friars. The skirmish at São Vicente is one of the most intriguing and revealing episodes in the entire voyage. Accounts of the events of 24 January 1583 are highly contradictory. While those

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[36] Vaz, "A Discourse," 92.

written from the English perspective (Luke Ward) offer instances of bravery, brilliance, and sheer military genius, those written from the Spanish or Portuguese perspective (Lopez Vaz) offer excuses.

The skirmish shows the increased hostility between England and Spain. Fenton's disregard for Spanish trade routes and ports led to the Spanish defense of what they defined as their rights. Second, the accounts suggest that hostility was building up to the point where neither side wanted to compliment the other by simply telling the truth. According to Luke Ward, at "About foure of the clocke this afternoone we saw three saile of ships come bearing in about the point."[37] It can be determined that a skirmish occurred shortly after their arrival. The battle was no light affair, as the exchange carried into the next day. By morning it was clear that the English had gained the upper hand. Luke Ward paints a graphic picture: "The 25 day, by day-light, we saw the viceadmirall sunke hard by us, so that his yards which were hoised acrosse, and his tops, and that over head, was above water: most of their men were gotten away in their boats, saving about fourtie persons which hung in the shrowds, and toppes."[38] Although only one of the three ships sank, the English clearly won the skirmish. The other two Spanish ships remained afloat not out of military skill, but Richard Madox's sympathy.

Although Fenton could not consider his voyage a financial success, he did garner some satisfaction from sinking a Spanish ship. During the skirmish his command was sound and his men performed well. Maneuvering damaged ships and commanding sick men was not an easy task. For Fenton, this was a shining moment in an otherwise gloomy voyage. No doubt the victory over the Spanish "aggressors" would please the Queen. However, this small feat would be overshadowed by their poor results of the voyage. Even Mendoza recognized the downward

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[37] Ward, "The Voyage," 194.
[38] Ibid., 195.

spiral the voyage was taking. In a letter dated 16 July 1583, Mendoza no longer calls for the sinking of the ships. He states:

> All the money spent on this expedition has been lost, and the merchants say that the English cannot make the voyage in ships of less than 1,000 tons burden, as they have to sail loaded with victuals, considering the way Englishmen eat, and they can only bring half a cargo home for the same reason. Even a cargo of spices will not pay under these circumstances, the voyage being so long."[39]

For Mendoza, harsh winds and heavy storms seemed to be punishment enough. Perhaps Mendoza believed that the effect of an unsuccessful voyage would convince England that ventures like these should not be undertaken more so than Spanish interference ever could.

England

For Fenton, the skirmish was the last straw, and the decision was soon made to return to Plymouth. For the galleon *Leicester,* the voyage home took a total of thirty-one-days. As for the *Edward Bonaventure,* the amount of time it took for the ship to return to England is uncertain. After the skirmish there was an effort to reunite with the galleon. However, it was soon deemed that returning to the island where the ship laid anchor was too dangerous. The ships would not reunite until the conclusion of the voyage at Plymouth. After a long voyage at sea Fenton and his crew were relieved to be home. The feelings expressed by Luke Ward, who concluded his discourse by stating "And thus I ended a troublesome voyage,"[40] were shared by all who participated.

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[39] "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King, 16 July 1583."
[40] Ward, "The Voyage," 202.

Conclusions

In terms of analyzing the intentions of English seafarers during the last two decades of the sixteenth-century, Fenton's voyage of 1582-1583 is of utmost significance. It was the first privateer venture to be undertaken after Philip II became king of Portugal, and strung together under the guise of Dom António's letters of marque. Fenton's voyage clearly shows the bold effect that Philip's ascension and Dom António's partnership had on English seafaring activity. Again, lengthy and cautious preparations are more revealing than the voyage itself. The English in 1582 and shortly before were walking a thin line between inciting war and maintaining peace. Queen Elizabeth, unlike some of the seafarers, did not want to cross this line. The execution of either *Enterprise I* or *Enterprise II* might have incited war. Thus, as Fenton's voyage was less overtly political and seemingly more economic in nature, it was less audacious than either of the proposed *Enterprise* ventures. As will be shown, this cautious approach to seafaring missions changed and ventures became not only overtly more political but more tactical as well.

CAPTAIN THOMAS CAVENDISH'S 1591-92 VOYAGE

Captain Thomas Cavendish's voyage of 1591 was bolder than the Fenton voyage, as fear of inciting war did not influence planning in his venture. This is because England and Spain were already in the midst of an undeclared war. The 1588 attack of the Spanish Armada escalated hostilities between the two countries to new heights. According to MacCaffrey, "From a somewhat peripheral encounter with Spanish arms, as auxiliaries to the Dutch rebels, the English now moved to a face-to-face confrontation with the whole power of the Spanish monarchy."[41] Even more so than Dom António, the Spanish attack on England in 1588 legitimized the actions taken by various privateers.

Cavendish's second voyage, an attempted circumnavigation of the world, was to be more ambitious than his first. The feeling he received upon arriving in England, a country still glowing after its improbable victory over the Spanish Armada, with his ships filled with booty, was not easily forgotten. David Quinn, the preeminent Cavendish expert states that "what [led to Cavendish to embark on his last voyage] was his expectation of repeating his previous success in plundering the Spaniards in the Pacific and also of doing something new, opening up direct trading contacts with China and, possibly, Japan, most probably by taking over the Spanish base in Manila."[42] In short, he had combined political, military, and economic aims. Thus, for all practicalities, the motives of the Cavendish voyage like Fenton's were primarily economic. Hence, the Cavendish voyage was more ambitious and militaristic. Where the Fenton voyage

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[41] MacCaffrey, 4.

[42] David Beers Quinn, *The Last Voyage of Thomas Cavendish, A Manuscript* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 20.

was regarded publicly as mercantile and educational in nature, the Cavendish voyage added plunder to this list.

A number of questions about the 1591 voyage of Captain Thomas Cavendish should be addressed. According to Quinn, "Plunder, trade and discovery, in that order but not necessarily with that emphasis, were thus the objectives of the 1591 expedition."[43] How much of an emphasis was placed on plunder, and how much on trade and discovery? Secondly, how much, and in what fashion was the Crown involved? This is difficult to answer, as there are virtually no available records of the preparations for this particular voyage. Thirdly, what role did Cavendish and his men play in Brazil? As this voyage was a circumnavigation from west to east, Brazil was considered to be a rest stop, a place where victuals could be had, and trade and plunder could be done. However, due to tremendous bad luck and harsh winds through the Straits of Magellan, Brazil ended up being much more than a brief resting point. Instead the expedition spent a long time along its coasts. By closely analyzing the events that occurred on this voyage, one will be able to gain a glimpse at the progressive role of the escalation of politics in the voyage.

Preparations and Provisions

More so than the Fenton voyage, the Cavendish voyage of 1591 was about the individual. This is not solely because the most complete account is the ghost-like writing from the dying Cavendish himself. Rather, after reading the accounts, it becomes apparent that his relentless will was responsible for the formulation of the venture, and its documentation. As Quinn wrote, "Cavendish's career cannot, so far, be followed fully during the years 1588-91. Yet, if the years

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[43] Ibid.

1586-88 may be classed as ones of 'getting,' those that followed were clearly years of 'spending.'"[44] After the tremendous monetary gains of his previous voyage, with the plundering and burning of the five-hundred-ton Spanish vessel, the *Santa Ana*, Cavendish gave far more than he received in return. According to Quinn, after acquiring the *Roebuck* and the *Black Pinnance*, and repairing the *Desire*, "[Cavendish] bought a large veteran, the 400-ton *Galleon Leicester*, which he intended to command himself."[45] It was Cavendish who set out during the months of 1589 and 1590 gathering ships, men, and supplies. It was Cavendish who sought out advice regarding the best possible route. It was Cavendish who had both the vision and the plan. The Queen, among others, sat back to wait for the benefits.

From Plymouth, England to the Coasts of Brazil

After two years of preparation and much cost, Thomas Cavendish was ready to set sail. According to Quinn, "On 26 August 1591 the *Galleon Leicester*, the *Roebuck*, the *Desire*, the *Daintie*, and the *Black Pinnace*, with some 350 men, left Plymouth, being seen off by, among others, Richard Hawkins and Tristram Gorges [Cavendish's confidant, friend, and executor of his will]."[46] Although it does not appear that the Queen was directly involved in this venture, she must have known of its undertaking. Just a little over two months before Cavendish set sail, "On 24 June 1591 a royal commission gave him license to depart on his voyage."[47] Thus it is quite reasonable to conclude that Queen Elizabeth had no qualms regarding the more ambitious nature of this voyage. It is unlikely that the Crown would look down upon corsair activity, as long as it was not against friendly ships and nations.

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[44] Ibid., 18.
[45] Ibid., 19.
[46] Ibid., 21.
[47] Ibid., 19.

Quickly after sailing out of sight of England Cavendish and his men spotted two Flemish ships. Although they were not necessarily hostile to the Crown, these two ships were nonetheless encountered and although they were not pillaged, demands were made for goods and information. Cavendish learned that the Spanish fleet, thought to be within the general direction they were heading, was gone. This was good news, as an encounter with a heavily armed fleet would undoubtedly bring more trouble than reward. The encounter with the Flemish shows that, first and foremost, this was a voyage for profit. Why else would Thomas Cavendish risk his livelihood, in terms of wealth and health, and sail within firing distance of the Flemish ships? Although love of country must have played some role, this was often watered down by the actions of the government. While men like Cavendish took on most of the risk, the Crown often gained the most.

The plan was to head towards Brazil, and nothing the Flemish merchantmen conveyed necessitated any deviation. However, to the dismay of Cavendish and his crew, contrary winds made them "becalmed for twenty-seven days during which scurvy and feaver did much damage."[48] Nearly a month later crewmember John Jane asserted that on "The 29 of November [the fleet] fell with the bay of Salvador upon the coast of Brasil."[49] Three days later they pillaged "a small barke bound for the River of Plate with sugar, haberdash wares, and negroes."[50] Not only did the fleet raise havoc off the shores, they also did their share of plundering on land. Much of this activity was a desperate attempt to gain food and supplies. The fleet had spent much longer out at sea than expected, and the many sick crewmembers with scurvy desperately required fresh fruit and water. However, Cavendish did not see Brazil as a mere provider and

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[48] Ibid., 21.

[49] John Jane, "The Last Voyage of Thomas Cavendish," in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, XI, 389.

[50] Ibid.

supplier of goods. According to Quinn, "Cavendish planned to sack the port of Santos and to use it as a base for equipping himself for the dangerous journey into the Pacific."[51] The town was sacked and burnt to the ground and thus never become a base en route to the Pacific. Cavendish's failed plan marks a departure in the role of Brazil. The attempt to make Santos a working base of operation and a continual supplier of goods made Brazil, in the eyes of the English, more than a mere pit stop on the way to the East. Brazil was now seen as a strategic point on the map.

The Attempted Passage through the Straits

The venture was well behind schedule, and these delays would later prove disastrous. The fleet now had to sail the Straits during the winter months. Far south and close to the pole, temperatures dropped and harsh winds were not uncommon. Nonetheless, Cavendish remained determined to pass through the Straits. While heading towards the Strait, the fleet was separated. This marked the beginning of the end of Cavendish and any hope of a successful voyage. While the fleet was briefly reunited, Cavendish's authority was clearly in decline. Cavendish realized this right away and mentioned his declining authority in the face of the rising hostility of the crew in his diary:

> but I moste vnfortuna[te] villaine, was matched with the moste abiect mynded & mutanus Companye that ever was Caried owt of Englande by anye man livinge / for I proteste vnto you that in ~ goinge to the Straightes of Magelanus after I was passed to the Southwarde of the Ryver of Plate and had bidden the furi[e] of stormes · whiche in deede I thincke to be such as worser mighte not be indewred, I neve[r] made my Course to the straightes warde but I was in Continuall daunger, by my ~ Companye which never ceased to practise and mutinie againste me, and haveinge gotten the appoynted place called Porte Desire I mett with all my Companye which had bynn there neere 20 daies before me.[52]

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[51] Quinn, 21.
[52] Ibid., 56.

Cavendish would not have gone to Port Desire. He wanted to stay the course and brace the straits. The decision was highly influenced by his crew.

When the fleet was reassembled, Cavendish was able to convince the crew to head for the Straits. But fourteen days after setting sail through the Straits, Cavendish and his crew had to give up and turn around. Fearing for their safety and worried by the steadfast attitude of their captain, two of the ships, the *Desire* and the *Roebuck* quietly and quickly sailed off during the night. Cavendish's decision to stay the course was a disaster. The only thing to show for their effort was frostbite, sickness, and countless horror stories to tell back in England. Perhaps the most devastating effect of trying to pass the straits was the separation of the fleet. With only half his fleet remaining, Cavendish's inability to coerce his crew to follow orders would result in many deaths and a continued loss of authority. As will be shown, his diminished role on the voyage, combined with his flare for the dramatic, would ultimately undermine his desire to live and cost him his life.

Unable to brave the Straits, Cavendish had no choice but to turn around. The two ships under Cavendish's authority, the galleon *Leicester* and the *Black Pinnace*, sailed back towards Brazil in search of provisions in hope that the countless numbers of sick crew members would recover. While the crew had initial success on land, stealing various items of value, greed got the best of them and their luck quickly came to an end. According to Quinn, while Cavendish desired quick raids consisting of landing ashore, stealing, and quickly returning to the ship, his men wanted to do otherwise. Thus, Cavendish's lack of authority and inability to take control of the situation resulted in disaster. When the men did not return, Cavendish got anxious. The next day a few men came back injured and an Indian (one of the guides they acquired on the voyage)

gave him "the worst possible news. The rest had been set upon, he said, by eighty Portuguese and three hundred Indians, and all, with their boat, had been killed or captured."[53]

Besides showing the continual decline of Cavendish's authority and the voyage itself, the attack by the Portuguese and the Amerindians is a clear indication that the relationship between England and Portugal had changed. The English did not first try and trade or ask for such goods from the Portuguese as Fenton had in 1582. After 1588, the Portuguese were guilty by association. The once amicable relationship between the two countries, and the ability for both sides to trade as long as the Portuguese did not pledge allegiance to Philip II were gone. This coincided with the change in the English perception of Brazil.

Shortly after receiving news of the ambush, the *Roebuck* was spotted. This may seem as a welcomed addition to the thoroughly depleted crew. However, the poor shape of the *Roebuck* and the even poorer shape of its crew became more of a burden than help. The condition of the ship deteriorated even further when an act of revenge, a planned attack on the Portuguese, backfired. Cavendish recognized this hindrance and wanted nothing more than to salvage the provisions aboard the *Roebuck*, transfer the men, and set the troubled ship aflame. When word got out about Cavendish's plan, the crew of the *Roebuck* was distraught. Cavendish desired one more thing--a return to the Straits. By this time he preferred to die there than return to England unsuccessful and empty-handed. Unable to convince the crew to head back, they decided reaching the island of St. Helena would be best. This was the last straw for those aboard the *Roebuck*, and the ship eventually set sail by herself toward England. Cavendish, by this time, was not himself. Perhaps both physically and mentally ill, Cavendish waited for death, passing his remaining time writing his manuscript.[54]

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[53] Ibid., 28.
[54] Ibid., 5.

The Voyage Home

Cavendish never made it back to England. How Cavendish died is a curious question that cannot be answered. According to Quinn, "It sounds as if [Cavendish] decided to commit suicide. When finally, the island [of St. Helena] could not be found and the vessel turned northward for England at last Cavendish made up his mind he was dying and began to prepare systematically for death."[55] Because of his death, little is known about the voyage besides the fact that his ship, the galleon *Leicester*, along with a few of the others such as the *Roebuck*, made it back to England. Quinn does his best to hypothesize by acknowledging that "we have no precise dates after the May parting but it is probable that the year was now well advanced: it was almost certainly October at least, and could have been November."[56]

From practically every standpoint, the voyage intended to reach the east via the Straits of Magellan was a complete and utter failure. There was not much opportunity for trade, and when there was, the fleet consumed the acquired goods. Due to the combination of a multitude of poor decisions, and bad weather and fierce storms due to horrible luck, many lives were lost and much money was wasted. Aside from the pillaging of a few merchant ships, nothing but perhaps experience was gained from what can only be described as a dreadful voyage. The venture undoubtedly lingered in the minds of the private financiers who contributed large sums, and clearly disappointed Cavendish's supporters and friends. A man who made his way into the inner circles of English nobility died prematurely due to brashness and inexperience. Cavendish's venture warns of the dangers associated with overseas exploration.

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[55] Ibid., 33.
[56] Ibid.

Conclusions

The Cavendish voyage of 1591-1592 reveals three points. First, from the voyage's conception, Brazil was one of a few selected destinations. Second, this Cavendish venture was more careless than its Fenton counterpart ten years earlier. Third, there was a noticeable change in the relationship between the English seafarers and the Portuguese settlers, a byproduct of the changing relationship between England and Spain.

The increased importance of Brazil and the lack of concern of Spanish feelings went hand in hand. The English perception of Brazil shifted. By 1591 Brazil was no longer considered an afterthought, but a formidable destination and a viable place to conduct trade. Much of this had to do with the changing relationship between England and Spain. While Dom António gave the English a legitimate excuse to interlope, the attack of the Spanish Armada on the English coast gave them a clear reason. Defense of one's country is often translated into the attack of one's enemy, as was the case with England and Spain. Brazil, traditionally considered as belonging to Portugal, became not only an economically enticing destination for English seafarers, but a destination of political and strategic importance as well. Brazil was now marked on the English maps, and its existence was no longer merely on the periphery.

While Fenton and his crewmembers conducted trade at various island outlets with the Portuguese settlers and native inhabitants, the Portuguese and Amerindians attacked Cavendish and his men. The English-Portuguese relationship could now be considered a black and white issue. No longer were some Portuguese acceptable to the English and vice-versa. The Portuguese were to be equated with the Spanish, and the Spanish were to be equated with the enemy.

CAPTAIN JAMES LANCASTER'S 1594-1595 VOYAGE

Captain James Lancaster's voyage of 1594-1595 marked a major shift in the amount of success, the role of Brazil, and the intent of the voyage. For Lancaster, from the onset, Brazil was seen as the goal. The three ships, the *Consent*, the *Salomon*, and the *Virgin* were outfitted for a single purpose – to sack the port town of Recife in Pernambuco. Although this was undoubtedly a risky venture, to Lancaster, his crew, and the financiers, the benefits seemed to outweigh the costs.

Motivations

Why was James Lancaster's voyage different from other voyages in the past? The notion that this change was an aberration or an oddity could not be further from the truth. While the enticement of Brazilian riches certainly played a role in the formulation of the venture, the motivations for Lancaster's voyage of 1594-1595 are far more political. This voyage was the culmination of hostilities between England, Spain, and Portugal.

Lancaster was a product of his times. By this I mean Lancaster was directly affected by certain major events that occurred during his lifetime, either through personal affiliation or geographic location. For instance, Lancaster spent a great deal of his childhood in Portugal, where he learned the language, customs, and traditions, and most likely grew a personal attachment to the country and its people. Sir William Foster, editor of *Lancaster Voyages*, states:

> That Lancaster spent much of his early life in Portugal appears from his own statement (recorded on p. 43): 'I have bene brought up among this people: I have lived among them as a gentleman, served with them as a souldier, and lived among them as a merchant.' In the absence of further

> particulars we can only fill in this outline by conjecture; but perhaps it is not giving too much rein to the imagination to surmise that he was sent as a lad to Portugal to learn the language and the mechanism of trading: that after some years spent as a merchant he bought an estate and settled down to cultivate it: that on the outbreak of the civil war (1580) he, like many other Englishmen, espoused the cause of Don Antonio and took up arms on his behalf: and that the victory of the Spaniards drove him to England as a refugee, with the loss of his property and money. Such a course of events would explain his bitter dislike of the Portuguese and his abiding sense of grievance against the nation.'[57]

Lancaster's dislike for Spain and support of Dom António undoubtedly fueled his desire to participate in privateer voyages in traditionally Spanish and Portuguese trade routes and waters after 1580.

Again, the attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588 provided the motive. Although Lancaster spent much of his youth in Portugal, England was still his country of birth, and was the land where his allegiance lay. He participated in the English defense that was hastily put together in the moments of havoc and confusion. According to Foster "It is with no surprise that we find Lancaster in command of the *Edward Bonaventure*, one of the London merchant ships that joined the operations (Laughton's *Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, vol. I, p. 326)."[58] The attack of the Spanish Armada, like the ascension of Philip II to the Portuguese throne, increased his hatred for a country now at war with his own.

Preparations and Provisions

Again, the preparation processes are as revealing as the voyage itself. However, there is little information about the preparation of Lancaster's voyage. With little public record, one must rely mainly on first-hand observations given by participants of the voyage. The account, written by an unknown chronicler most likely aboard the *Consent*, offers the clearest picture of

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[57] Sir William Foster, ed., *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to Brazil and the East Indies 1591 – 1603* (London: the Hakluyt Society, 1940), xiv.

[58] Ibid.

the provisioning process. He writes that John Wats, Paul Banning, and a few other chief financiers:

> Victualled three good ships, to wit, the *Consent*, of the burthen of 240 tunnes or thereabout, the *Salomon*, of 170 tunnes, and the *Virgin*, of 60 tunnes; and appointed for commanders in this voyage M[aster] James Lancaster of London, gentleman, admiral of the fleet, M[aster] Edmund Barker of London, vice-admirall, and M[aster] John Audley, of Poplar neere London, rere-admirall; having in their sayd ships to the number of 275 men and boyes.[59]

This is very telling. Not only does the crewman touch on the size and scope of Lancaster's voyage, but, lends information concerning the nature of the venture as well. It is hard to imagine two hundred and seventy-five men dispersing and climbing into three ships ranging from two hundred and forty-tons to sixty-tons. Preparing these ships and compiling a crew was a massive endeavor. Balancing crewmen and provisions would have been extremely difficult and time consuming. The large number of crewmen and limited carrying capacity of the three vessels left little room for supplies and even less space for non-essential goods (i.e., goods for trade). With no goods for trade, any possibility of profit for the Lancaster's voyage of 1594-1595 lay in seizure.

Even from its initial planning stages the voyage was to be far different than those of the past. Two hundred and seventy-five men is an extremely large crew. To put this in perspective, Fenton's voyage consisted of four ships, the four-hundred-ton galleon *Leicester*, the three-hundred-ton *Edward Bonaventure*, the forty-ton bark *Francis*, and the fifty-ton *Elizabeth*. Two of these ships were more than one-hundred-tons larger than Lancaster's biggest ship. "200 able persons,"[60] seventy-five fewer than Lancaster, manned these four ships. Occupation requires far more men and arms than trading, and Lancaster and his financiers knew this.

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[59] Anonymous, "The well governed and prosperous voyage of M[aster] James Lancaster" in *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*, 32. See also Hakluyt, XI, 43.

[60] Ward, "The Voyage," 163.

The International Flavor of the Venture

Unlike the previous voyages discussed, Lancaster's was filled with good fortune. There were hardly any troubles regarding weather and winds, and virtually the entire crew retained their health. From England, Lancaster and his fleet headed toward Maio, one of the Cape Verde Islands. On the way he spotted English ships in the distance. According to the Hakluyt account "The opportune arrival of Captain John Venner, with two ships, a pinnace, and a Spanish prize, afforded an opportunity of strengthening the squadron; and of this Lancaster prudently availed himself, agreeing to give Venner a fourth of the booty."[61] Not only did Lancaster arrive in the port of Recife in the town of Pernambuco on 18 April 1595 with almost all of his men healthy, ready, and anxious to fight. He had virtually doubled his fleet. This meant more firepower, making it easier to overtake the port.

Lancaster's luck did not run out in Maio. The plan was to sack the harbor of Recife and take all they could from the various warehouses that lined the shore and then move towards the town of Olinda. Once the fleet saw the harbor, they noticed three very large Dutch ships. According to the anonymous author, the three ships "had been sent from Europe to carry the carrack's goods to Portugal."[62] The ships would eventually carry the carrack's goods. When the three merchant ships spotted the English fleet, they immediately knew what their intent was, and there was no question regarding the willingness of the Dutch ships to partake. According to the anonymous author, who was one of the crewmembers who participated in the voyage, "The Hollanders that rode in the mouth of the harborow, seeing our resolution, layd out haulsers [i.e., hawsers] and wound themselves out of the way of us. Our admiral was very joyfull, and gave great incouragement to all his men; for to passe these three great Hollanders, he held it the

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[61] *The Voyage of Sir James Lancaster*, xix.
[62] Ibid., xx.

greatest danger of all."[63] With the problem of the Dutch ships resolved, Lancaster only now had to worry about the fort fortified with upwards of eight cannon within shooting distance of the harbor.

The men in the fort were quickly defeated and Recife occupied by the English and Dutch shortly thereafter. This is not to say that all resistance was squashed. Attempted ambushes by the Portuguese settlers and the Amerindians local to the area were quickly repelled, leaving the English with few casualties and the Portuguese and Amerindians with more. Shortly thereafter a fleet of French ships arrived in the harbor. A friend of Lancaster, Jean Lenoir, captained these ships. Lenoir had helped him back to England on his earlier voyage. According to the anonymous author, "Lancaster gave the newcomers a warm welcome and invited them to fill their ships with brazil-wood from the Recife warehouses – an invitation they were not slow to accept. In return they joined the English in guarding both the town and shipping."[64] Thus, not only did the venture become a collaborative effort consisting of four different fleets with English, French, and Dutch vessels, it also became an international affair as well.

Outcome

This voyage, unlike the others discussed, can be considered a complete success. Amid frequent attacks by Amerindians and the Portuguese settlers, Lancaster's men remained virtually unscathed throughout the occupation. The one exception is the death of twenty-plus men (mostly French) while hastily rowing to shore in search of loot. Lancaster was adamantly against such risky action, and when news came back of their deaths, he was utterly shaken. According to the un-named member aboard the *Consent*, when Lancaster finally decided to

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[63] Ibid., 37.
[64] Ibid., xxi.

depart from Recife, it was thirty-one days after his arrival. Although many of the men aboard the various ships wished to avenge the deaths of their fellow comrades, Lancaster disagreed. "The admirall was of the opinion to depart that night, saying it was but ill to seeke warres, since we had no neede to doe it."[65] That there were more casualties from a fire aboard one of the fleet's ships from a gun salute gone array is testament to the achievement of Lancaster and his fleet. Overseas travel in the sixteenth century was a dangerous proposition. So many variables needed to be taken into account, including weather, hostile ships, and hostile settlers. Crew members were at the mercy of the elements, fate, and chance. For whatever reason, Lancaster and his men remained virtually unscathed throughout.

The amount of loot brought back to England by Lancaster was enormous. The ships, carrying packs, barrels, and chests laden with brazil-wood, calicoes, frankincense, gum lucre, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and pepper were an awesome sight for those present on the harbor. According to one crewmember, "all [the ships] were laden with merchandizes, and that of good worth."[66] While it is impossible to know for certain how much profit was made from the voyage, the return value aboard the ships can be found. According to the appraisement conducted on 25 July 1595 by George Southweeke, Robert Cobb, Richard Thompson, Francis Tirrell, Francis James, and Thomas Honeman, the *Solomon* totaled 5035 Ł 16 s. 0d., the *Consent* totaled 6078 Ł 02 s. 11d., and the *Virgin* totaled 0367 Ł 00s. 00d., bringing the total for the English ships to 11480 Ł 18 s. 11d.[67] The *Red Lion* and the *Nicholas*, two of the three Dutch ships that took part in the attack, were also appraised. The value of the merchandise found on

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[65] Ibid., 47.

[66] Ibid., 49.

[67] *The appraisement and value on of sondry goodes brought into this port of London by James Lancaster*, found in PRO, London, HCA, 24/63. All appraisements of aforesaid voyage are as found in the Engel Sluiter Collection at Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

both the *Red Lion* and the *Nicholas* was estimated by the appraisers at 7120 Ł 00 s. 00d.[68] Clearly, the only thing that kept the ships from bringing back more goods was the limited space and weight considerations.

Conclusions

The foundation set in 1582 with Captain Martin Frobisher had evolved into a more daring and militaristic endeavor with Lancaster. Politics played a great role. While earlier voyages revolved around trade, Lancaster's venture revolved around violence. The venture was still profit-oriented. For the financiers, this was an investment, and like any businessmen, they wanted to see a return. The goals of the voyage were similar to those of past ventures: profit, discovery, and to put a dent in the Spanish-Portuguese trade monopoly. The difference lay in the means.

Brazil was the focal point and played a central role in the planning stages, the preparatory stages, and the actual voyage itself. Lancaster wanted nothing else but to reach the port town. He not only thought that it was possible to successfully sack the town. He also thought it was probable. Over the course of the voyage, Lancaster was proven right. The voyage, more so than the other three discussed, was an enormous success. Reaching Brazil and sacking the port of Recife undoubtedly brought immense wealth to Lancaster and his crew. Although the successful sack of Recife catapulted Lancaster to the status of Drake, "For nearly four years after his return in July 1595 we hear little or nothing of Lancaster."[69] This was Lancaster's choice. It appears he needed a little time before his next voyage, a voyage he decided to take in 1601.

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[68] Ibid.
[69] *The Voyage of Sir James Lancaster*, xxiii.

CONCLUSION

Fenton, Cavendish, and Lancaster's voyages are not only fascinating in themselves, but also significant as a collective whole. They must be viewed within the context of their times and in relation with each other. The end of the sixteenth century was a tumultuous period in European history. The desire for profit and the want for power resulted in a highly unstable political arena, where the balance of power seemed constantly on the verge of shifting. Not only did each of these voyages affect the relationships between these countries, but also these countries affected the nature of the voyages.

Although some scholars, such as Kenneth R. Andrews, assert "in the summer of 1585 the first of a host of volunteers took to the sea—some ships of reprisal, some private men-of-war equipped by gentlemen, some mere pirates 'weary of their former trade,'"[70] they seem to be discounting Fenton. To say Fenton's voyage of 1582 does not fit into the definition of a privateer voyage is nonsense. As described by Andrews, privateering "is to be distinguished from plain piracy on the one hand and from the semi-official enterprises of the sea and war on the other, though in neither case is the line easy to draw. The proper distinction between privateering and piracy is a legal one."[71] Fenton's 1582 voyage falls nicely within this definition. It was approved by the Queen and backed by Dom António's letters of marque.

Fenton's voyage of 1582 was significant. Like Hawkins before him, Fenton's venture set a precedent. It was one of the first privateering ventures to Brazil undertaken after the ascension

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[70] Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering Voyages to the West Indies 1588 – 1595* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1959), 4.

[71] Ibid., 5.

of Philip II to the Portuguese throne. Although the actual venture was a watered down version of two earlier proposals, the voyage marked a departure in the relationship between the two countries. For one, it showed a willingness on the part of England to test its boundaries in regards to Spain. Elizabeth did not want to provoke war with Spain, but she also was not going to stand idle and watch Philip's wealth and power increase. Secondly, the voyage depicts the close connection between politics and economics. The actions taken by the Spanish fleet near the Straits of Magellan indicate how prized these trade routes were not only from a monetary standpoint, but from a political standpoint as well. The importance attached to these trade routes was clearly depicted in the Mendoza-Phillip II correspondence. If the three Spanish ships that encountered Fenton and his crew let them pass undeterred, an unwanted message would have been sent, that it is okay to interlope. Third, Fenton's venture shows why these voyages need to be looked at within the context of the times. Out of the three voyages discussed, this one was the least ambitious. However, this was not Fenton's fault. The venture was as ambitious as the times would have allowed. In 1582 Spain and England were not at war. This voyage was pre-Spanish Armada. It would have been politically and economically unwise to engage in action that could potentially cause a war. After this act of aggression, however, the nature of the voyages changed.

The Spanish Armada occurred the same year as the earlier Cavendish Voyage, 1588. The attack's effect on English seafaring expeditions cannot be overestimated. Defense became a primary issue for England, so much so that the Queen forbade many of her ships from leaving Channel waters. While her majesty's ships guarded the defense of the Isle, the privateer and his vessels were in charge of the offense. The fundamental nature of the voyages did not dramatically change. The main goal was still profit. What did change, however, were their

means. Before, blatant aggression was condemned; now, it was tolerated. The relationship between the privateer and the Crown was mutually beneficial. Privateers and financiers had a chance to make a profit. At the same time, the Crown could, with little cost, negatively affect Spain.

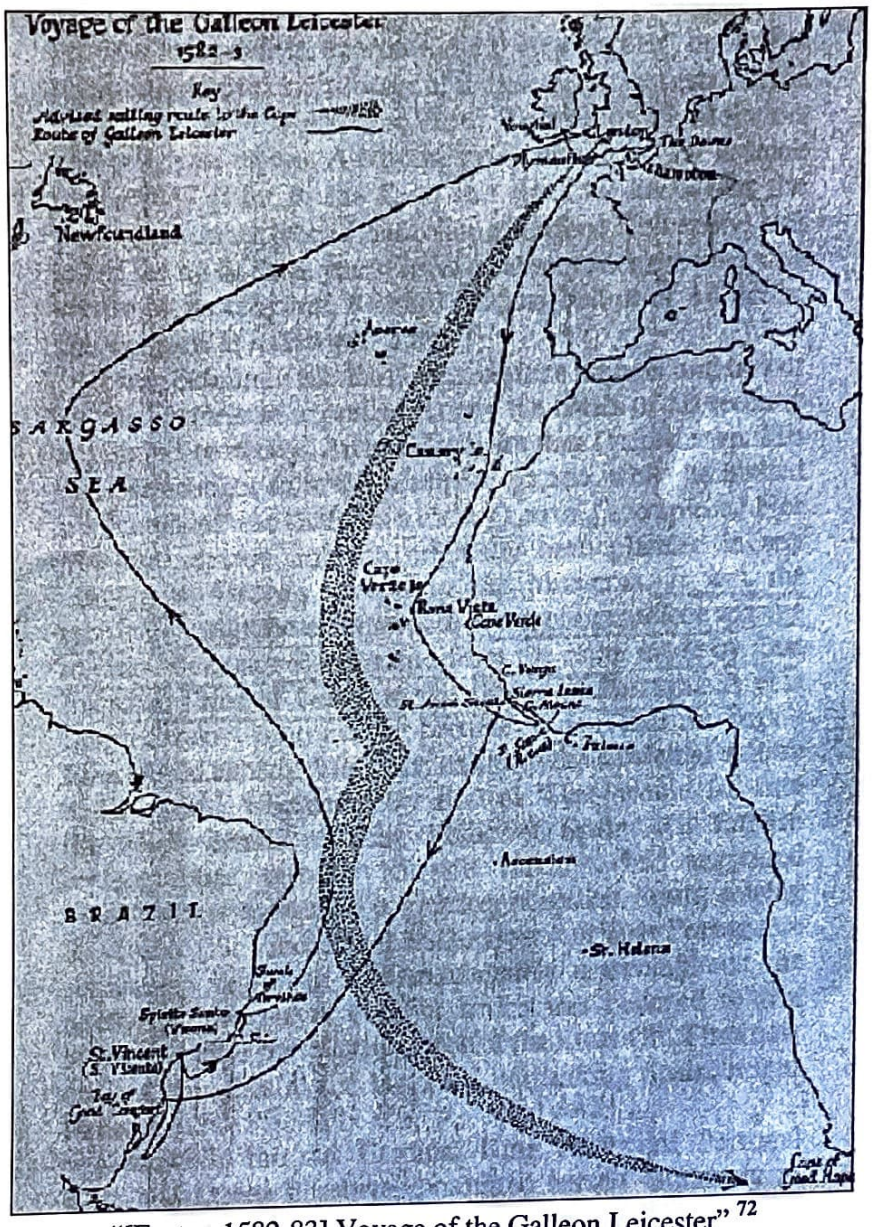
Where the Cavendish voyage differs greatly from its Fenton counterpart is in what was allowed and what was not. Fenton was given strict instructions to not attack unless attacked first. Cavendish, as far as it is known, was not given such orders. Thus, if on the one hand, the Cavendish project was a continuation and slight elevation of earlier policy, on the other hand, it was drastically different, unquestionably unique from past voyages. Cavendish's voyage was in the planning stages long before the attack. Therefore, it was not as audacious, nor as tactical as it could have been. Still, the venture was a challenge to Spanish authority. By going to Brazil and trying to find an alternative route to the East, via the Straits of Magellan, the English showed a disregard for the Spanish trade monopoly.

Lancaster's voyage of 1594-1595 was the most aggressive and daring of the three. Unlike the other voyages, Lancaster's did not involve trade. The goal of the voyage was to sack the port of Recife in Pernambuco, Brazil. Like most risky ventures, the potential upside was great. Failure, however, was possible on a number of levels. The voyage could have ended up like Fenton's and Cavendish's, that is to say, with damaged ships and a multitude of sick men. Furthermore, it was unknown how Philip II would react. Could there be massive retaliation, another Spanish Armada on the shores of England? Nonetheless, despite the risks involved, the voyage had much backing, and was approved by the Queen. The venture turned out almost better than could have been expected. With the help of the French and the Dutch the English were able to occupy the port and quell much of the resistance. While many seem to have died on

the side of the Portuguese and Amerindians, very few of the pirates died in the makeshift coalition. From all accounts, the voyage was a success.

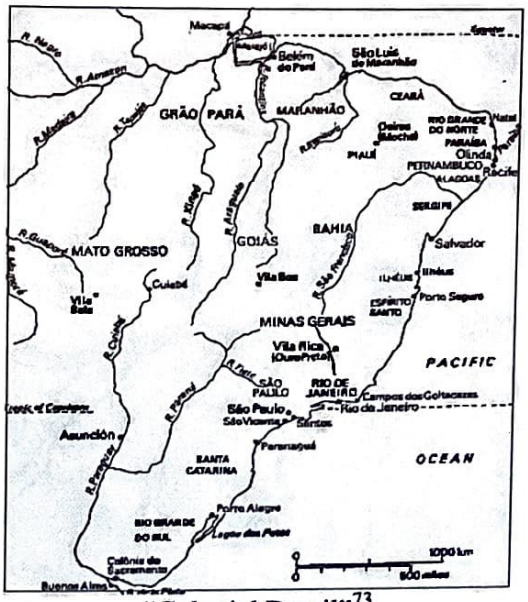
The success of the Lancaster voyage is not what makes it significant. What makes the Lancaster voyage significant is the nature of the voyage. For it is through the nature of the voyage that one comes to understand the answers to the two essential questions asked at the beginning of this paper, which were, "what was the role of the English in Brazil from 1580-1600, and what led to the English increase in corsair activity and infringement on Spanish and Portuguese trade routes and ports?" From the early planning stages to the befriending of the French and Dutch the Lancaster's voyage was polarized. More so than the previous voyages, the issues were black and white. The Portuguese were thought of as Spanish, and for this they were attacked. The nature of these seafaring voyages had progressed to a point of seemingly no return. From the course of 1580 to 1595 England and Spain had gone from toleration to aggression. A progression had taken place. But this aggression was not solely in terms of political policy. This progression could be seen in seafaring activity as well. For not only was privateering a business venture. It was also a means to pursue political ends as well. If politics changed, so to would the ventures.

MAPS



"[Fenton 1582-83] Voyage of the Galleon Leicester" [72]

[72] Taylor [map], xxvi.



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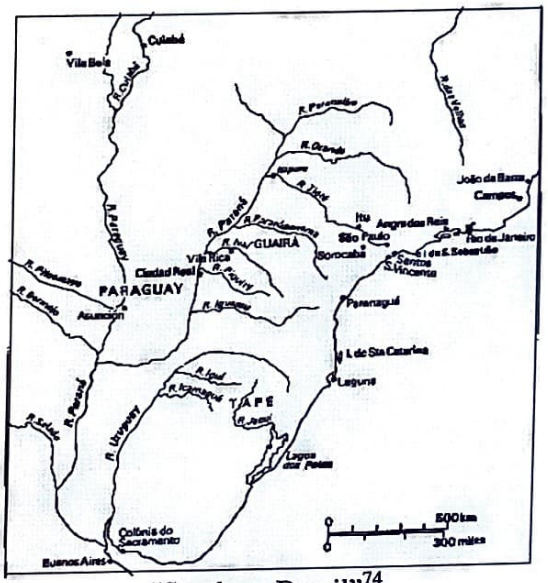

"Southern Brazil"[74]

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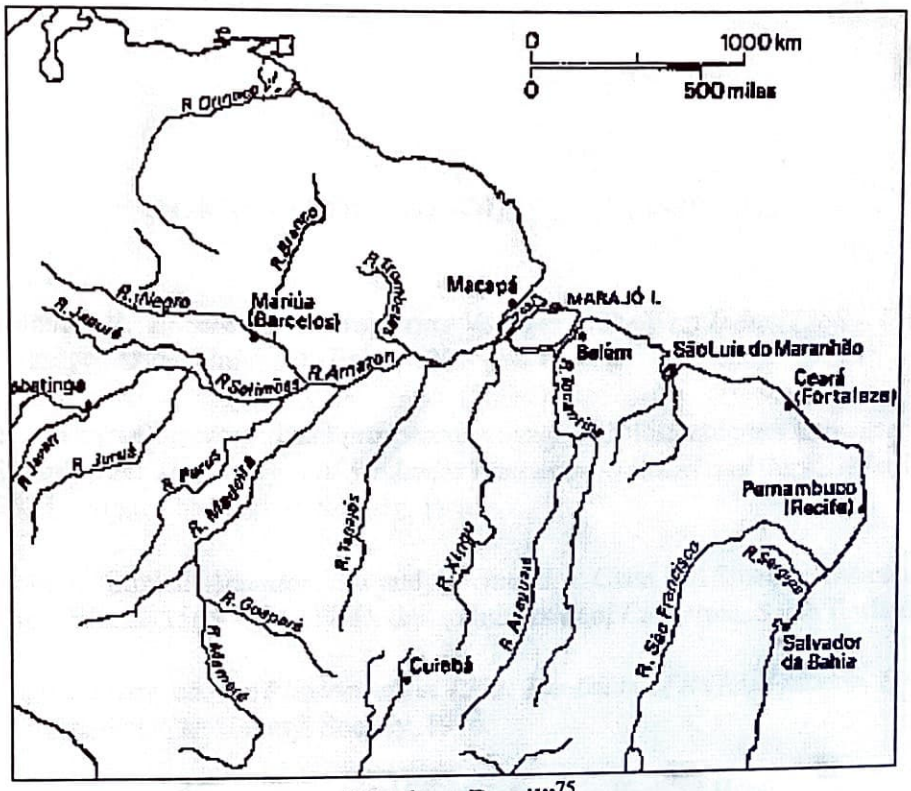
[73] Bailey W. Diffie, *A History of Colonial Brazil* [map], (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1987) Insert Sleeve.

[74] Ibid.



"Northern Brazil"[75]

[75] Ibid.

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