# CHAPTER 5:

# PATTERNS OF PENETRATION:

# SLAVERS AND MISSIONARIES ON LAKE SARACA

# AND THE LOWER RIO NEGRO

On the northern bank of the Amazon just below the mouth of the Rio Negro and opposite that of the Rio Madeira, there is a vast region of forest and hill country which is drained by small rivers running down from the Guiana highlands and may be seen as bounded by the rivers Jauaperí and Guatumã (see Map 6). These rivers are full of rapids which hindered early navigation; and the forests along them appear to have been comparatively poor in the products which were of importance to colonial commerce.[1] As a result, this region was never extensively explored or settled by Europeans; and it remained for the most part unfamiliar even to the Brazilians until the 20th century. Several of these little-travelled streams converge, however, on the great Lake Saracá -- a jewel of the Amazonian várzea which in colonial times was rich in fish and manatee, and dotted with fertile islands. The Indians of this wide region, known generically as "Arawaks" (Arauaquis, Aroaquis) to the colonial Portuguese, were thought at the outset of Paraense expansion up the Amazon to be very numerous and susceptible to enslavement. The effort at their

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[1]On the sparseness of exploitable resources along the Rio Urubú in particular, see J.P. Caldas' letter to the Director of Serpa (Barcelos, 31 jan 1787), ms. in AHU Rio Negro Cx 8, doc. 7. The only species of tree that was of commercial interest was the penima, which produced a fine wood for cabinet-making; and the export of timber from the middle and upper Amazon was barely beginning in Caldas' day. The same letter, based on intelligence provided by sertanista Pedro Gonçalves of Silves on Lake Saracá, explained that the Urubú was virtually unnavigable. In the first ten days going up it, there were two rapids which could be passed only by small canoes of 10-12 crewmen (too small for substantial cargo shipments). Then there was a waterfall which was altogether impassable because it was very high and bound by sheer rock faces; beyond that in fresh canoes, it was two weeks of difficult travel to the headwaters. At the time of Caldas' writing, the Portuguese had maintained a permanent settlement on Lake Saracá near the mouth of the Urubú for nearly 100 years -- yet they were still uncertain as to whether there might be a route to the Dutch trading-posts up that river. This although there was a folk tradition in the area that it had once been possible to obtain Dutch tools from the upriver tribes. Sampaio, Diário IV, p. 6.

"conquest" was the first step towards a permanent occupation of the central Amazon valley; and it will serve to introduce some of the main themes of our story.

Ethnographic information about the early southern "Arawaks" of this region is exceedingly scarce and confusing. There is almost none of value to be found in the colonial documents; and few descendents of the peoples in question have survived to be studied by modern anthropologists. The historical record does suggest that they were quite numerous at the beginning of the modern era, and that there may have been a continual splintering and moving about of tribes following their traumatic encounters with the Europeans during the 17th century. The references to them from different periods provide a confusing welter of differing tribal names for these little-known peoples; and even the basic distribution into "language families" appears to be a matter of controversy: a well-informed Brazilian scientific traveller of the 19th century still considered them all to be "Arawakans"; while the Handbook of South American Indians from the 1940's classifies the majority as "Cariban" peoples.[2]

In the 19th-century, the not very numerous survivors of the aboriginal population of this region lived near the headwaters of the Jauaperí, Urubú, Jatapu, Guatumã and other rivers; and they were accustomed to travelling down any one of them from time to time to trade, or to make the occasional raid on an isolated Brazilian settlement. Observers reported that they wore no clothing save a loincloth died red with urucú, and an elaborate headdress of feathers. Their few villages might consist in as many as five hundred people living in palm-thatched triangular houses, each with a single doorway covered by a mat. These malocas, apparently multi-family dwellings, were scattered around a large central house which was inhabited by the unmarried young men, built in the same fashion as the others but surrounded by a triple stockade made of heavy tree-trunks. Families were polygamous;

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[2]João Barbosa Rodrigues, short notes in Moraes Filho (ed.) Revista da Exposição Antropológica Brasileira (Rio, 1882), pp. 36-37, 47-48 and 61-62. He speaks of the Pariquis, Uaimirí, Uasaí, Jauaperí and Crixaná as surviving fragments of the aboriginal Arawak. Cf. John Gillin, "Tribes of the Guianas and the Left Amazon Tributaries," in HSAI III, pp. 799-860, which has the above tribes as Cariban and includes only the Arawak (calling themselves "Locono") and Tarumã in his "Arawakan" category.

marriages were contracted "without ceremony" after an agreement between parents. The groom prepared the first roça for the household, and the bride's family provided the domestic utensils. The principal weapon for hunting or warfare was a cylindrical bow longer than a man was tall, used with exceptionally long bone-pointed arrows. Clubs and lances were also employed, as well as a knife made with animal teeth. The bodies of the dead were burned at great ceremonies, during which the people painted themselves with urucú, danced incessantly and drank great quantities of manioc beer. The calcified bones of the departed were then buried in urns, in or near the dead people's houses.[3] In the absence of any ethnographic information from an earlier era, we can do no better than to assume that some of these characteristics must in some measure approximate the culture of the peoples of the Lake Saracá hinterland, at the time of their first contacts with the sertanistas from Pará.

Jesuit foundations

The "Arawaks" living between the Urubú and Jamundá rivers north and east of the great lake were visited by the Jesuit pioneers Manoel Pires and Francisco Velloso in 1657, and again by Pires and another companion in the following year. These padres were travelling with a tropa de resgate under captain Vital Maciel Parente which was on its way to make the first official slaving expedition from Pará to the nearby Rio Negro; and they were supervising the conduct of this trade according to the formula for its legimitation which had recently devised by António Vieira (see Chap. 3).[4] In each of these two years the tropas returned to Pará with over six hundred Indian slaves, some of them presumably obtained by trading with the Arawaks at Saracá. Then in 1660, the Jesuits of Pará established their first upriver mission there, on an island near the mouth of the Rio Urubú to which they gave the

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[3]Rodgrigues, work cited.

[4]Other Portuguese tropas may have reached the Negro in earlier times, such as the gold-seekers under Bartolomeu Barreiros de Athayde from São Luis (see Chap. 4) in 1647-50. Vital Maciel Parente (son of one of the principal figures in the early history of Pará) led the first tropa de resgates there for which there is reliable documentation. This expedition was not mentioned by Berredo, the standard chronicler of 17th-century Pará, and so was overlooked by classic writers such as Sampaio and Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. But Serafim Leite reconstructs a sketchy account of the expedition from the Jesuit chroniclers and the writings of António Vieira. HCJB III, pp. 370-371.

name Santa Cruz.

Two priests were transported to the new mission, and installed there with the help of a third slaving expedition. This tropa managed, while it remained on Lake Saracá, to collect another three hundred slaves -- the legality of whose purchase from the Arawaks was duly certified by the Jesuit missionaries.[5] A church was built, and a few Indians were settled at Santa Cruz; but this mission nevertheless failed to survive for more than a few months, due to the sudden expulsion of the Jesuits from Pará and Maranhão in 1661. According to these pioneer missionaries to Lake Saracá, there were no fewer than ninety-six Arawak villages in the general vicinity of the Rio Urubú and the neighboring Rio Anibá, at the time of their first contact. Assuming an average population of only a hundred people per village, this would mean an aboriginal population of some ten thousand Arawaks. The Indians were quite friendly at first, and appeared to be pleased at the opportunity to exchange their prisoners of war for scarce European manufactured goods.[6] The missionaries therefore expected to be able to support their new outpost primarily from the proceeds of a brisk trade in Indian slaves with the occasional passing tropa from Pará.

During this same period, the Jesuit missionaries from Saracá explored the lower reaches of the Rio Negro as well; and they established a mission station at a place called Tarumãs, just a few leagues up from that river's mouth on the west bank, where they settled a

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[5]João Francisco de Lisboa, "Vida do P. António Vieira," in his Obras IV (São Luis, 1865), pp. 432-34; Leite HCJB III, pp. 371-73. The willingness of the Arawaks to sell slaves in those early years is attested by the Jesuit Betendorf, p. 235: "em taes aldeias ordinariamente se resgatavam 500 [read "numerous"] índios, que os seus senhores livremente vendiam, tomados de tapuyas de outras nações a que davam guerra." Manoel Pires, who accompanied all three of the above-mentioned expeditions to Lake Saracá and the Rio Negro, was back on the Solimões in 1671. He was a picturesque figure, once a parish priest at Paredes in Portugal who had made famous a miraculous fountain and shrine there. Later, having retired for a time to a hermitage in Rome, he returned to Portugal on foot to join the Jesuits. As one of the men who spent most time in the central Amazon valley, during the 17th century, he would be an invaluable informant for the present purpose; but the exhaustive researches of the Jesuit historian Leite revealed no reports at all from Pires about these experiences. Neither, it seems, did he uncover any first-hand accounts by padres Francisco Velloso, Francisco Gonçalves, Manoel de Sousa (present at the founding of the Aldeia de Santa Cruz and later killed by Indians in the "Sertão dos Condurizes") or João Maria Gorzoni -- all of them Jesuit colleagues who accompanied Pires on one or another of his trips.

[6]Leite, HCJB III, 381-82; Betendorf, p. 108.

group of Arawaks recruited on the nearby Rio Anavilhenas. It was their intention at first to open the entire region of the Negro and Solimões valleys as a Portuguese Jesuit mission field, to be administered in the same fashion as their well-publicized aldeias of the lower Amazon and its southern tributaries. But the Jesuits of Pará were chronically short-handed and over-extended; and they were distracted from this long-term central Amazonian project, even after returning from their first exile, by the perpetual conflict in which they were engaged with the settlers and the other religious orders of Pará. There is little if any evidence of Jesuit activity in the region during the 1670's and 80's. But between 1688 and 1691, Padre João María Gorzoni was in and out of the Tarumãs mission; and he succeeded briefly in establishing another station on the Rio Matarí between Lake Saracá and the mouth of the Negro. The Tarumãs people, unattended by missionaries the better part of the time, seem to have been persuaded to collaborate with the Jesuits and Paraenses in their slave-trading along the lower Solimões, since in 1689 it was reported that the "Cuchivaras" living around the mouth of the Rio Purús viewed them as fearsome enemies.[7] But in 1691, the Jesuit superior of Pará was obliged to inform the King that he still had no missionary who could be made available for sending to the Rio Negro region on a permanent basis. He was, he said, training some novices for that purpose; but in the end that effort fell through as well. In 1693, the youthful Padres Conrado Pfeil and João José Luca were assigned to the missions of Matarí and Tarumãs respectively; but within a few months' time, both of them had fallen gravely ill and were complaining that they feared for their lives at the hands of the ungrateful Indians. When these men acknowledged an abysmal failure and returned to Pará, the Jesuits abandoned their efforts in this sector altogether; and this time they wrote to the King to ask that they be relieved of any responsibility for it.[8]

The result of this false start was that, whereas in general the Jesuits played a decisive

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[7]Leite, HCJB III, p. 375; Fritz, Journal, p. 65.

[8]King-Carvalho (Lisbon, 7 jul 1691), Livro Grosso 66, p. 126; Leite HCJB III, p. 376; Betendorf, p. 541.

role on the colonial mission frontiers in both Brazil and Peru, in the central Amazon valley the "black robes" contributed very little. They were the first missionary explorers of that region on both sides; and as will be seen they continued to play a crucial, if scarcely a "missionary's" role in the Indian slave trade. In the mid-18th century, they would be called upon to serve once again very briefly on the upper Solimões. But the history of the establishment of the Christian faith, and of the institutions of Portuguese colonial society on the Negro and Solimões region can be written with very little reference to any Jesuit participation. Accordingly, it must also be written without the help of the marvellous documentation which Jesuit missionaries left behind them, for use by students of the histories of most of the other frontier regions of the Americas.

Initial "Pacification"

The recently "missionized" country around Lake Saracá was beset in 1663 by a large troop of Portuguese soldiers and Indians led by Antonio Arnau de Vilela, a morador of Maranhão who had helped to bring about the Jesuit expulsion from the colony not long before. In the heady time of unrestricted settler power which followed on that revolt, he had persuaded the governor to appoint him captain of a great expedition which was to scour the hinterland for slaves during a period of three years, operating without the usual legal restrictions, in the hope of bringing back a large number of serving people and great profits to the settlers who invested in its outfitting. The need for Indian slaves was especially pressing that year, because of an especially devastating epidemic of smallpox (see Chap. 2) which had recently wiped out large numbers of people on the plantations and in the aldeias of both Pará and Maranhão. Many settlers had lent their support to this enterprise, or stood forth to join the expedition in person.

The tropa went first to the lower reaches of the Rio Madeira; but they grew discouraged there by reports of the ferocity of the Indians living along its banks, and left after having acquired only fifty slaves. From there, they went to the village on Lake Saracá which had been the site of the short-lived Jesuit mission, and announced to the "Guanavena

and Caboquena"[9] Indians of that place their intention of trading with them for slaves. These were "gentios de paz" (peaceable pagans or savages), having had more or less agreeable experiences with their first missionaries; they received the slavers hospitably, supplied them willingly with food, and welcomed the opportunity to barter a few captives for trade goods. But when they proved unable to provide as many Indian slaves as Vilela had hoped to obtain from them, their friendship with the Portuguese grew testy. The impatient captain then ordered unprovoked night attacks on several neighboring villages, rounding up their inhabitants and placing them under guard in hastily-constructed corrals for later shipment to Pará. This clumsy sertanista procedure for labor recruitment, the product of half a century's experience among the inland tribes of Maranhão and the lower Amazon basin, was strikingly similar to that employed by the Caribs as reported by Gumilla on the Orinoco. Leaving a detachment of his men at the island village, Vilela then had an armed camp built for his troops on the lake shore. The rumor then spread among the Arawaks that the white men planned to make slaves of all of them; and they were obliged to develop a plan for their defense.

The natives first got Vilela to commit the fatal error of dividing his forces. Their messengers told him that farther up the Urubú river there were many more populous settlements; and they offered to show the Portuguese the way up to them, in return for a kind of truce. A party led by Pero Silveira, another ring leader of the anti-Jesuit movement who had been proclaimed juiz do povo (people's magistrate) by the moradores of Pará, then set off up the Urubú with a group of Arawak guides. Meanwhile, the Indians of the Lake Saracá region divided into several parties to make their preparations for war. Next morning, one

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[9]The problem of nomenclature is a knotty one here. One contemporary source calls the Indians in question the "Arauaquizes" and another the "Caboquenas e Guanavenas." The latter were supposed to have lived the Rio Urubú, and to have been exterminated in the wars here described; whereas the "Arawaks" survived and were to be found over a much larger area. The terms "Guanavena and Caboquena" do not appear in the documents consulted for periods later than the 1660's, at which time however the Portuguese visitors had no basis for making accurate distinctions between the tribal groups of this region. It may be that the names were those of the chiefs of the specific Arawak communities that traded with the first tropas to visit Lake Saracá; but they may also refer to altogether different groups.

band arrived at Vilela's stockade with a group of women tied up like slaves to be delivered to the captain. The Portuguese sentinels were apparently caught off their guard, because they let the armed party in and allowed them to go to captain Vilela's hut without an escort. When the captain heard that there was a delegation of Indians outside with slaves for him, he got out of bed and came out so hurriedly that he forgot to stop and arm himself. At the doorway, the Arawak chief felled him with two blows of a mace, which broke his skull and smashed in his teeth and jaw (as the Jesuit chronicler tells us, with all the relish of the righteous giving account of divine vengeance against unregenerate sinners). The hapless sertanista died after three days, without having regained consciousness or received the sacraments.

The intepreter of Vilela's troop was one Francisco de Miranda, who had accompanied the earlier slaving expedition whichb helped establish the first Jesuit mission at Saracá. The mission Arawaks knew him well. In fact they had sent emissaries on a special trip to Pará at that time, asking the Jesuit superior never to allow Miranda to return to their country, because of some unspecified atrocity that he had committed against them. But at the time of the settlers' mutiny; the unpopular interpreter had been quick to join the anti-Jesuit faction; and he had availed himself of this first opportunity to return. That morning the Arawak avengers proceeded from Vilela's hut to Miranda's, and they managed to kill him as well before the soldiers could stop them. A battle then broke out both inside and outside the stockade, in which the Arawaks succeeded in dispatching most of the Portuguese and their Paraense Indian levies before being driven off by musket fire. Among the pursuers that day was Frei João da Silveira, a Mercedarian friar from Pará who had been a soldier before taking holy orders. Silveira had been brought along by the tropa to provide spritual guidance to the slavers; but as it turned out, he was still a good hand with the cutlass. This chaplain, and his companion Frei Raimundo, were among the few survivors of the massacre of 1663.

Following the battle at the stockade, a large party of Arawaks set off in forty-five canoes to put an end to the remaining Portuguese who were stationed at the ex-mission aldeia on Santa Cruz island in the lake. But the eighteen soldiers and two hundred Indian

levies under captain João Rodrigues Palheta were ready for them; they had in fact been just about to set forth and go to the assistance of Vilela. In the unequal naval battle between archers and musketeers which followed, the Arawak attackers were badly defeated. Some of them managed to reach the lake shore escape into the forest; but the majority were run down and had their throats cut in rapid succession, according to the custom of European soldiers in that bloodthirsty age.

The party under Pero Silveira was led meanwhile by its Arawak guides into a remote part of the forest. When night fell and the troops were exhausted, the Indians killed nearly all of them in an ambush. Silveira and some others were taken prisoner to a nearby Arawak village, where they were put to death in ceremonial fashion. According to the Jesuit chronicler, these Arawaks like other Amazonian Indians had the custom of selecting the young men of their number who had most distinguished themselves in battle, and subjecting them to a month-long fast. At the end of this trial they would hang them up high in hammocks inside large huts especially built for the purpose, where they were beaten and subjected to the painful bites of insects to see if they were capable of withstanding pain without complaint. After this, the young warriors would be obliged to observe several days of feasting and drinking on the hut floor beneath them, without once calling out for food or water. Then they would be dressed in full regalia and taken out to do battle with prisoners of war who had been saved for this purpose. If they managed to kill these prisoners, they were allowed to assume their victims' names as badges of honor, and were at last granted full adult membership in the tribe. Silveira lost his life in such a ritual; as we know because an Indian soldier who had served and been taken prisoner with him managed to escape, and returned to Saracá to tell the story.[10]

After the Portuguese survivors of this massacre had withdrawn, the Arawaks (or "Guanevenas and Caboquenas") appear to have gone on an anti-European rampage. When

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[10]Betendorf, pp. 204-212; Baena, Compéndio, p. 85.

the inevitable punitive expedition was on its way up to chastise these "rebels" late in 1664, they found at the ex-Jesuit aldeia of Tapajós, located at a great distance down the Amazon from Lake Saracá, that the inhabitants there had recently been obliged to abandon their town and take refuge in the forest to escape from the Arawaks' attacks, launched against the Tapajós people presumably in retribution for their having provided levies and supplies to Vilela's expedition the year before.[11]

The news of the massacre on the Rio Urubú caused a great outcry for revenge in Pará, where Governor Ruy Vaz de Sequeira was able in short order to raise a force of five hundred domestic Indians led by their own chiefs (enraged by the Arawaks' having slaughtered innocent Indian crewmen along with the Paraenses), as well as four companies of locally recruited infantry. This tropa de guerra set out for the Urubú country in thirty-four war canoes, under the leadership of Pedro da Costa Favela, a veteran of the Teixeira expedition of 1638 and the perpetrator of a great massacre of the Icahuates on the upper Napo (see Chap. 4). Leaving Pará in early September of 1664, the expedition arrived at the first "Caboquena" village late in November and found it abandoned. There they built a stockade, while the bulk of the troops headed out into the forest in pursuit of the enemy who were now living "in the rocky ravines of the high hills." They found at least some of them, and there ensued a series of furious battles in which the Portuguese gave no quarter.

Favela's expedition has "gone down in history" as one of the more spectacular and genocidal episodes of the centuries-long war of the Europeans and their Latin American descendents against the native Amazonian peoples. It must indeed have been a ferocious affair; but there is confusion in the contemporary sources with regard both to the numbers of Arawaks put to the sword, and to its long-term results for Arawak society. When a party of reinforcements arrived to join Favela's men a few weeks after the war began, they found the

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[11]Berredo, paragraphs 1134-36, pp. 516-517. Betendorf, p. 236, says that this wave of Arawak reprisals continued for some time after the Portuguese had "punished" them for the massacre of Vilela's men.

captain "already covered with blood from the much-deserved punishment of the Indians." The enlarged tropa de guerra was later said to have wiped out "three hundred aldeias," killed some seven hundred of the most valiant warriors of the enemy tribes, and captured about four hundred people who were tied up and sent down to Belém as slaves. Favela returned to Pará soon afterwards and received a hero's welcome, because he was believed to have destroyed for ever "all cause for fear in those who wish to travel in those forests." There was glory for him, and for all of his followers.[12]

The figure of three hundred "aldeias," like the ninety-six from the Jesuit accounts mentioned above, was presumably an exaggeration but not a sheer figment of imagination. It is more comprehensible if we read "malocas" rather than "aldeias," and conceive rather of the single multi-family dwellings isolated in the forest which were commonly used by the terra firme peoples of Amazonia, than of large villages such might be found on the banks of rivers.[13] It seems likely too that there were many more than eleven hundred people living in these settlements (the total for those reported dead or captured on this occasion), and that most of the inhabitants of these "villages" must in fact have managed to escape into the forest, having been neither killed nor enslaved by Favela's men, and survived to rebuild their communities.

This supposition is sustained by the Jesuit chronicler Betendorf, a visitor to the Lake Saracá region in the 1690's, who says that the Arawaks withdrew in the face of the great numbers of Favela's party; and that after three months of continuous entradas against them, the tropa had taken only three hundred captives -- mostly old people and children! The

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[12]Berredo, paragraphs 1134-38, pp. 516-18 is the standard source for this episode, which has gotten into the popular literature by way of Baena, Compéndio pp. 88-89 and Sousa, Lembranças, pp. 181-84.

[13]There is as yet no documentary evidence for this habitation pattern among specifically the Arawak around Lake Saracá, but Rodrigues (see note 2, above) reports it for those living on the headwaters of the Guatumã and Jauaperí two hundred years later. Large villages were possible ecologically only in areas where there were annually flooded beaches for gardening, along rivers which provided a plentiful supply of fish. This was the situation on Lake Saracá itself (one of the more densely populable localities in central Amazonia), but not at all in its hinterland where Favela's men did their slaughtering. The terms "aldeia" and "maloca" are virtually interchangable in early Portuguese sources referring to settlements of "uncivilized" Indians in any period.

Indians had also gone to great lengths to make it difficult for the Portuguese to wage a prolonged war against them. They had left no large manioc plantations behind to be harvested by their enemies, and had hidden their food supplies carefully before departing. The "three hundred aldeias" were, then, probably for the most part abandoned multifamily dwellings isolated in the forests, in which the furious invaders found no food and only a few stragglers with whom to fill out their barbarous "body count" and their gangs of slaves destined for Pará, before putting the palm-thatched huts to the torch. The Jesuit chronicler says that at one point during the carnage, the Portuguese captured a principal Arawak chief named Caybutena, once a brave warrior, who had by that time reached an advanced age and gone blind. The soldiers nevertheless "took vengeance on him for all their relatives and friends who had been treacherously slain in the sertão."

Many of the three or four hundred slaves who were sent down to Governor Sequeira in Pará on this occasion actually died on their way from Saracá -- the victims of disease and also of hunger, since this tropa de guerra had gone up the river without sufficient supplies of farinha with which to feed them. This accelerated mortality continued apace, moreover, among the same slaves once they reached Pará -- in part because the slave-trading Arawaks, though vigorous and perfectly capable of hard work while living freely in their home territory, proved to be a fiercely resistent people in captivity, unwilling to submit to the regime of forced labor. They preferred to die quickly (for example, by poisoning themselves) rather than labor on the settlers' plantations once life had lost its flavor and purpose for them. As captives they languished, and would eventually succumb to the ravages of malnutrition and disease. Betendorf says that the Arawak slaves frequently died of the "bloody cramps" (caimbras de sangue), which he attributed to the change of air and climate. He also observes that the Rio Urubú was a region both rich in edible plants and free of mosquitos -- suggesting thereby both a possible dietary and an epidemiological explanation

for the elevated mortality of Arawak slaves in Pará.[14]

This very rough approximation of the probable demographic impact of the 1664 expedition serves to illustrate an important point regarding the conditions of jungle warfare in the colonial Amazon valley. Where small and inadequately supplied forces of Portuguese and Indians attacked large groups of Indians who were defending familiar ground, and were able easily to withdraw to temporary camps deep in the forest, it was unlikely that outright massacres would contribute very much to the decline of an Indian population. The slaughter on the Rio Urubú is referred to in even the most general historical surveys of the Amazon, as an example of how with superior firepower and vengeful spirit, the Europeans might simply exterminate a tribe which had incurred their wrath. But that standard view involves a very misleading oversimplification of the process of depopulation, one which by the 1660's as we have seen, was well underway in central Amazonia.

The view that the Rio Urubú Arawaks must have managed to survive Pedro da Costa Favela's war, and may not even have been seriously diminished by it, is given support by the military service record of a famous sertanista of the last quarter of the 17th century, Hilário de Souza Azevedo. While proposing himself as a candidate for the job of Captain-Major of Pará years later, Azevedo claimed that at some point between 1675 and 1682 he had gone to the Rio Urubú to

> set aright the altercations that we had with those savages, attracting them to trade, paying them for their pieces (slaves) at more than the just price, sending people up to talk with the chiefs of the Caribí and Anibá who had been hiding in the forest due to the hardships brought on them by the whites, plying them with gifts so that they'd come down in friendship or allow us to visit their country. [15]

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[14]Betendorf, pp. 232-36. The Jesuits may be taken as reliable informants about Arawak attitudes toward slavery, since they had themselves worked with other Arawaks to enslave several hundreds of them in 1657-1660.

[15]Conselho Ultramarino, "Nomeação de pessoas para o posto de capitão--mor do Pará" (Lx, 22 sep 1690), ms. AHU Pará Cx 2.

Having failed to exterminate or to enslave the better part of the Arawaks, therefore, the Portuguese sought a decade later to reestablish contact with them and to persuade them with gifts of trade goods to return to their old pattern of peaceful slave-trading. In order to achieve this, they were obliged to seek these people out in their hiding-places, and try to persuade them to come back and settle somewhere near Lake Saracá -- where the travelling moradores of Pará would be able to transact business with them more conveniently. There is no indication in the documents which have emerged so far, of whether Azevedo's mission was even temporarily successful -- unless we may attribute to that success the great esteem in which Azevedo was supposed in the 1690's to be held by everyone in the Arawak country, as well as by everyone in Pará.

In 1684, however, this same Hilário de Souza Azevedo led another tropa de guerra against the "Arawaks and Carapitenas" of the Saracá region, people who were accused this time of having killed some thirty Portuguese and a larger number of Indian crewmen in isolated raids against a series of forest product collecting expeditions from Pará and Maranhão during the previous five or six years. This charge suggests that Azevedo's early peacemaking had been only partially successful, and that the Arawaks -- by now thoroughly dependent on the trade goods they had once obtained by slave-trading with the Paraenses -- were willing to experiment with other means of obtaining them. In order to carry out his new assignment, Azevedo sent for help to the mission Indians of the Rio Negro and Rio Matarí (presumably including the Tarumãs), having learned through years of experience that "among barbarians, the lack of Religion causes people to hold no other loyalty than to their economic interests." These allies proved so zealous in the King's service that when they captured two Arawak chiefs alive, rather than send them back as captives they killed them and sent their heads, arms and shinbones to Azevedo as a token of respect. The captain then thanked them for their trouble, and rewarded them generously with trade goods from the supplies of the Royal Treasury. Two other enemy chiefs escaped from the tropa somewhere

in the vicinity of the Rio Matari; and Azevedo succeeded in having them captured and handed over for punishment by simply offering a reward to these Indian allies.[16]

In the course of a six-month campaign, this tropa de guerra claimed to have killed some five hundred Arawak warriors in addition to an unspecified number of old people, women and children. This carnage was attributed at the time, not to the bloodthirsty Azevedo (whose principal concern throughout, says a pious chronicler, was to minimize human suffering -- that is, to capture the Indians rather than killing them, and send them downriver as slaves to Christian masters), but to the fact that once the Indian levies from Pará had lost their fear of this hated enemy, they ran amok and killed even more people even than the soldiers, giving "free rein to their inclinations." By the time this war was over, the Azevedo expedition had also captured some five hundred Arawak slaves, in addition to recovering a dozen more indios domésticos who had taken leave earlier of one of the Jesuit aldeias of Pará, and had attempted to make new lives for themselves around Lake Saracá.[17]

This new effort to "pacify" the Arawaks was apparently no more successful than that of the 1660's. In 1685, the military commander of Pará reported to the King that the Indians of the Urubú and Guatumã had attacked a collecting expedition once again, and had killed eight whites and forty Indians while they were "split up in the forest, peacefully collecting clove bark, and had burned everything they had with them."[18] Once again in 1692, Hilário de Souza Azevedo was sent to suppress the "rebellious Maraguazes" of the Rio Matarí, and at

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[16]Fr. Domingos Teixeira, Vida de Gomes Freire de Andrade (Lisboa, 1727) II, pp. 389-90 and 406-08.

[17]Gomes Freire de Andrade-King (Belém, 19 jul 1687) and Andrade-Conselho Ultramarino (Lx, 12 feb 1693), ms. AHU Pará Cx 2. Andrade maintained that the Portuguese had accomplished all of this without losing a man (soldier or Indian crewman). He was also at pains to explain that since the Royal Treasury lacked the resources with which to maintain all these slaves in the downriver Jesuit aldeias for the required year of acclimatization, he had simply ordered them divided up among the moradores -- each with a legal document indicating that he was not really a slave but a prisoner of war (which of course made no difference at all to the slaves in question, but appears to have satisfied scruples based on the Regimento das Missões). In later years, slaves taken by a tropa de guerra were considered slaves in perpetuity for that reason alone.

[18]King-Gomes Freire de Andrade (Lx, 2 mar 1686), in Livro Grosso 66, pp. 72-73. This disaster had left the settlers who invested in the expedition penniless, and caused a serious loss of revenues to the Royal Treasury. The King authorized the Governor to punish the guilty Indians in any way he saw fit.

the same time on this occasion to "punish the white men who were up there wreaking destruction among the Indians" (a reference presumably to resident transfrontiersmen, allied with the Arawak chiefs, who were attempting by this time to engage in the Indian slave trade on a free-lance basis). This expedition was also charged with installing the newly trained Jesuits Luca and Pfeil in what were to be their short-lived missions on the lower Negro and Matarí.[18]

Frei Theodózio da Veiga and the Mercedarian Mission

A new era in the history of the Lake Saracá region began in about 1685, with the establishment there of a Mercedarian mission station under Frei Theodózio da Veiga. The Mercedarian order, headquartered in Spain rather than in Portugal, had established itself in Pará in about 1640 as we have seen, by sending a group of pioneer missionaries down from Quito with the returning Pedro Teixeira expedition. These men adapted well to the developing colonial society of Pará and its customs, and were successful over the years in recruiting members there. Within a few decades' time they built a series of convents and churches, and learned to support themselves by the operation with Indian slave labor of a few plantations and artisan workshops near Belém, as well as of extensive cattle fazendas on the island of Marajó and in the hinterland of São Luis.[19] Their situation in the colony was

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[18]King-Gov. António de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho (Lx, 28 nov 1693), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 147. Azevedo spent some sixteen thousand cruzados of his own money on the outfitting of this expedition, and even so was able to bring back enough slaves to make a substantial profit from it! Betendorf, p. 541; King-Azevedo (Lx, 28 nov 1695), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 154. Hilário de Sousa Azevedo, the first master sertanista and slaver of the central Amazon valley, ended his career as Capitão-Mor of Pará. He died in 1697, when sickness broke out while he was accompanying Governor Carvalho's expedition to the Negro. Carvalho-King (Belém, 26 jun 1697), in Nabuco, Limites I Mem Bres Ann I, pp. 15-17. His will provided for the construction of a chapel to be administered by the Franciscans of Pará, and the payment of 50$000 a year to them for the maintenance of a hospital for men who came down sick from the sertão. King-Carvalho (Lx, 20 dec 1697), in Livro Grosso 66, pp. 172-73.

[19]The convents were those of Pará (est. 1640), São Luis (est. 1654), Tapuitapera or Santo António de Alcántara (est. late in 17th century) -- and later Cameta (est. 1706), as well as a small hospício on the Rio Mearim in Maranhão. São João, "Relação," (1726), ms. in Archivo del Reino de Valencia, Clero 255. The Mercedarian estates were listed with estimates of the value of their annual production in three independent surveys, conducted between about 1727 and 1735 (on which, see the explanatory notes for Appendix G listing the estates of the Carmelite order). They were as follows: 1) Val de Caens near Belém, a sugar estate producing only rum (two thousand canadas of aguardente comum and five hundred of aguardente de cabeça) with a pottery which manufactured ordinary crockery, forms for cooling sugar and roofing-tile for a total value (including rum sales) of 3,200$000; 2) Tocunduba, a sugar estate producing five hundred to a

something of an anomaly after the declaration of Portugal's independence from Spain; the convents in Maranhão and Grão Pará can from then on have maintained only intermittent contacts with their superiors in Madrid, and they must have had no influence at all at the Lisbon Court. But the settlers of Pará had for the most part made them feel quite at home; and unlike the often morally contentious Jesuits and Franciscans, the Mercedarian friars themselves seem to have functioned more as ordinary participants in that society than as its self-appointed guardians of Christian values. Occasionally a Mercedarian would be chosen to accompany a tropa de guerra or resgate on its travels through the Amazonian interior (as would Carmelites or Franciscans from time to time, seen as alternatives to the officially preferred Jesuits). These chaplains, little mindful of the original purpose or "charism" of their order (which had been to "rescue" the Christian slaves who had been captured by Muslims in the wars of the western Mediterranean, by offering themselves in exchange),[20] would certify the "legitimacy" of Indian enslavements as readily as anyone else, and receive in return a portion of the slaves taken by each expedition, whom they would then dutifully send on to the Mercedarian establishments in Pará or Maranhão.

The interest of the Mercedarians in the Urubú territory may have had its origin in the harrowing experience of friars João da Silveira and Raimundo, who had accompanied António Arnau de Vilela to the region in 1663.[21] However that may be, the country around

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thousand canadas a year of ordinary rum worth 500-1,000$000; 3) eight cattle estates on Marajó with a total of six thousand head [cattle sold for 10-20$000 a head at that time; if a quarter of this number were sold each year, they would have produced 15-30,000$000 a year]; 4) three much smaller cattle estates and one producing only horses in Maranhão --Moreytuba, Ubacá and two on the Rio Mearim -- with a combined potential income which was less than a fifth of those on Marajó; 5) two large island roças (one in Pará and the other in Maranhão) producing 1,500-2,500$000 worth of farinha and other food staples. The total annual earning of the order's estates may therefore have been in the neighborhood of 25-30,000 milreis or 65-75,000 cruzados a year, derived overwhelmingly from the sale of cattle to feed the people of Belém and São Luis.

[20]See for example James W. Brodman, Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier (Philadelphia, 1986).

[21]A.C.F. Reis maintains that the Lake Saracá mission was founded by this Fr. Raimundo, at the time of the massacre perpetrated by Pedro da Costa Favela. História, p. 53. In this he is almost certainly mistaken; but it may be that the occasional visits of Mercedarians accompanying parties of slavers and forest product collectors dates from that time.

Lake Saracá was to be the location two decades later of their first and only missionary effort in central Amazonia. Frei Theodózio da Veiga, already distinguished as the founder of the populous Aldeia das Bocas on the lower Amazon (later placed under Jesuit administration), had been assigned as chaplain to a tropa de guerra sent against the Arawaks (apparently that of Hilário de Souza Azevedo in 1684). Disturbed by the killing and destruction he had seen, Veiga decided on the spot that rather than returning to Pará with the tropa he would stay there and establish a mission. There is no record of the methods he employed to carry out this astonishing feat; but not long afterwards, a commission of missionized Arawaks from the Urubú travelled down to Pará to ask that the Governor assign Frei Theodózio to them as missionary on a permanent basis. They insisted in particular that their resident priest not be a Jesuit, though the Jesuits were charged still at that time with all new mission establishments along the Amazon. This was presumably because the black robes were still associated in their minds with indiscriminate slave-raiding, and with their own catastrophic experiences of the 1660's. They wanted Frei Theodózio, "because they knew him, and because he had kept them from being made slaves." This last note suggests that a part of Veiga's strategy for establishing his mission among peoples so recently conquered in war may have been precisely to intervene in some way with Azevedo, so as to cut short the destruction and enslavement of his prospective neophytes.[22]

The new mission on Lake Saracá was the westernmost Portuguese outpost in Amazonia for nearly a decade; and it laid a foundation for the European occupation of what was to become one of the longer-lasting and more prosperous communities of the Central Amazon valley, known after the 1750's as Silves. The Mercedarian missionaries who

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[22]São João, "Relação," (1726), ms. ARV Clero 255, no. 21; King-Gov. Arthur Sá de Menezes (n.d. 1689?), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 106. Sampaio, Diário CCXCVII-IX (1903 ed. pp. 65-66) has Fr. Theódozio accompanying a party under Pedro da Costa Favela with Arawak levies (!!) in the late 1660's -- which he believes went to the Rio Negro and established the mission to the Tarumas. A.C.F. Reis accepts this version (without mentioning Sampaio as the source) and gives the date as 1668. But Sampaio wrote a hundred years after the fact; and in the absence of more evidence, this indication that Veiga may have been familiar with the Urubú country for nearly two decades prior to 1685 must be treated with some skepticism. Cf. A.R.F. "Diário" in RIHGB 50, 2 (1887), p. 126.

worked there have received almost no attention in the history books, however -- perhaps because unlike the Jesuits they left no detailed written accounts of their activities, and because they failed to expand their sphere of influence so as to play a larger role in the 17th and 18th-century trade in Amazonian slaves and forest products. Their modest contributions to the process of destruction with which this book is concerned might indeed have gone almost entirely unrecorded, had it not been for the lingering, almost proprietary interest of the Jesuits in the Saracá mission during its early days, and the occasional inspections made of it (in the absence of any formal Mercedarian apparatus for mission administration) by travelling Jesuit visitadores.

The original assignment of the Arawaks' friend Frei Theodózio da Veiga to this post was apparently due itself to the fact that at that time the Jesuits, viewed by the colonial government as the only really effective missionary order, had declared themselves unable to provide any missionaries for the Lake Saracá area. Given that, the Junta das Missões had asked the Mercedarian Commissary to release the respected Veiga for missionary service, while obtaining from the Jesuit superior an exceptional authorization for him to administer the holy sacraments to Indians. Finally, when the official Repartição of the mission territories in Portuguese Amazonia was made by the King in 1693, the Lake Saracá field was assigned to the Mercedarians on a permanent basis. It remained in their hands from that time forward, until Pombal's secularization of all of the missions of Pará and Maranhão during the 1750's.

In 1688, an official tropa de resgates was sent to the Urubú and Negro rivers under captain André Pinheiro, with a Jesuit missionary companion. This tropa was able to trade for a large number of slaves between the two locations, thanks in part to the fact that they found Veiga's mission already in full operation on Lake Saracá. Frei Theodózio had succeeded where Hilário de Souza Azevedo had failed, in getting the Arawaks to return to accessible settlements, and to offer their services once again as slave-dealers to the Paraenses. That is to say, he had persuaded his neophytes to wage war (or perhaps to continue waging war)

against the tribes of the hinterland on a regular basis, with the purpose of capturing people to be sold as slaves to Pará.[23]

The Jesuit chronicler Betendorf, then a travelling inspector of missions for his own order, visited the new Mercedarian establishment for a week at some point late in 1691. He left us with the most detailed information yet available about Frei Theodózio's system of mission administration, and about customs of the slave-trading Arawaks as well. Betendorf was received at Nossa Senhora da Conçeição, the principal aldeia, where there was a comfortable missionary residence and the church building had already been completed. The village itself was situated on high land along the Rio Urubú[24] and surrounded by an unusually rich black soil. The Urubú was poor in fish, as has been noted; but the Indians managed to keep themselves well-supplied by descending to Lake Saracá in a body during the dry season, to catch great amounts of it which they ate while the fishing was good, and then smoked to take back to their homes once the lake's waters rose. At the time of year when Betendorff made his visit, the waters were low; and the channels running out to the main stream of the Amazon were so shallow that it was difficult to find passage through them for a canoe. This was a circumstance which must have improved the fishing, while at the same time helping to maintain the Arawaks' dry-season camps in a valuable protected isolation.

There were not many native "aldeias" (or "malocas") on the banks of the Rio Urubú itself; but inland along the forest tracks, these were quite numerous. So much so that Betendorf's companion, who went exploring with a soldier and a few Indian guides, managed to visit seventeen of them in only two days, travelling east from the Urubú towards the Rio Anibá, where there was another Mercedarian mission station. Once again, the settlement pattern revealed here is that of the terra firme peoples of Amazonia, rather than that of the

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[23]Leite, HCJB III, pp. 382-83.

[24]Casal, Corographia II, pp. 302-03 and Amazonas, Dicionário, p. 70 refer to a 19th-century freguezia of N.S. da Conçeição on Lake Canumá, which runs out into the Rio Urubú near the place mentioned by Betendorf.

várzea dwellers. Near the village of Conçeição itself, on both sides of the river, Veiga had settled the people he had persuaded to come in from the forest in six little hamlets -- each with its chapel visited by the missionary on a regular basis. These outposts were so close by, in fact, that he could see most of them from the veranda of his house on the high bluff.

An official inventory of the missions of Amazonia, drawn up in about 1695, refers to abandoned or at least unstaffed missions in the "Sertão dos Agus" and "Amarati," between the lower Rio Negro and Lake Saracá, and to the "many peaceful aldeias" situated inland from them. Three villages are mentioned without names for the Rio Anibá, and more than twenty for the Rio Urubú -- all of them said to be administered by Frei Theodózio, who, it is noted, "has brought in a great quantity of savages." In addition, a Frei Manoel das Neves was said at that time to have gone up the Urubú to serve in the "many friendly villages" of the "Carapitena" people. More competent men such as these would be needed, it was made clear, if this newly established Mercedarian mission field were to become a complete success.[25]

It was Frei Theodózio's custom to say the Mass in his church each day, and afterwards to instruct the Indians in Catholic doctrine there, after the Jesuit fashion -- although, says Betendorf, a bit less thoroughly! Late in the afternoon, he would oblige all of the men and women (some of whom still went about naked for the lack of any cloth with which to have the requisite clothing sewn for them) to attend the singing of the "litanies of our Lady." The Jesuit observer also visited some of the neighboring chapels, where he discovered that the Indians had placed "some indecent clay figurines" about as decorations. Consumed with rage at this sight, as he puts it, "I broke them all up with my staff." It was much to be lamented, thought Betendorff, that neither Frei Theodózio's principal church nor his outlying chapels had yet been provided with the proper European ornaments,

> because the mission was just getting started and the barbarians still had little

[25]AHU Pará Cx 2; also in AHI 340-1-2, doc. 26.

affection for Godly ways, being entirely devoted to eating, drinking, dancing at their festivals, and living to do as they like, like animals (my emphasis).

Veiga, though apparently rather less concerned than his stern visitor with the customary proprieties of Christian community practice, nevertheless sought advice about how best to administer the sacraments to neophytes such as these. He was told that he should baptize only the children of those Indians who were most securely established in their Christianity. The rest, including all of the adults, should be indoctrinated thoroughly as catechumens first -- and baptized only on their deathbeds, or when Veiga was certain both that they had learned their lessons, and that they had grown so dependent on him as never to want to return to their homes in the forest. As soon as the people did fill those critical requirements, he thought it both appropriate and desirable that they be baptized so as to enter upon their lives as full-fledged Christians and vassals of the Portuguese Crown.

Frei Theodózio complained to his visitor that at one point not long before, he had experienced some difficulty with the Arawak pagés or shamans of the neighborhood. These shameless witch-doctors had taken to telling their fellow tribesmen that one day soon the whites were going to turn into Indians and the Indians into whites. Betendorf unfortunately has no more to say to us than that about an apparent flowering of the millennarian imagination among the long-suffering Arawaks. One cause for such visions may have been the terrible earthquake (a very unusual occurrence in the Amazon valley) which occurred in that region, problably in 1690 -- a disturbance which had shaken the country along the Urubú (where according to Veiga it had caused a sort of tidal wave which engulfed the village), and as far away as the Rio Negro.[25] In any event, when the miraculous transmutation of whites and Indians failed to take place, these pagés had turned to an effort to incite violence against the whites. They had caused such a stir, in fact, that some of the

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[25]Betendorf did not believe this story of an earthquake and tidal wave, but cf. Edmundson, intro. to Fritz' Journal (London, 1922), p. 9n, who points out that Samuel Fritz attributed the fact that on his way back to the Solimões from Pará in 1691 he was asked for protection by the Indians of Tarumãs on the lower Negro, both to their previous experiences with the Portuguese slavers and to this earthquake.

Arawaks had been persuaded to attack and kill their missionaries. But at the last minute Frei Theodózio had somehow managed to reestablish his authority over this unruly flock -- among other things by selling one of the guilty pagés as a slave to captain André Pinheiro, when he was on his way back to Pará from the Rio Negro!

The Jesuit misionary and chaplain of that same Pinheiro expedition (padre João Maria Gorzoni) had returned to Pará from the journey with the son of a principal (chief) of the "Abuqueno" (Caboquena?) tribe. This intelligent young man was subsequently taught the lingua geral, and trained in the ways of the Portuguese and Paraenses for a few months, at the Jesuit convent of Pará. Betendorf was pleased to be able to return this boy to Frei Theodózio in 1691, with the suggestion that he should be taken back to his father's village, distant some six days' travel from Conçeição, and used as a means of persuading the remaining "Abuquenos" to come down to settle near the mission. Before taking his departure, Betendorf was at pains to remind the boy (who was expected eventually to succeed his father as leader of the tribe) of the awesome responsibility he had taken upon himself, to work hard so as to bring his people under the "yoke" of Christian life and practice, and see them resettled in a mission aldeia near the banks of the Amazon. The boy appeared to agree with this at the time; but Betendorf -- recalling the experience several years later -- later heard nothing to suggest that any such descimento had actually been carried out. This did not surprise him, "since you cannot trust these faithless, lawless and rulerless savages."

The staple protein foods in Conçeição were smoked fish and the meat of the large numbers of turtles from Lake Saracá which were kept corralled in the aldeia for daily slaughtering during the flood season. The Jesuit visitor was also much impressed by the system of drum signals which was employed by the natives of that region, to warn their neighbors when any strange canoes arrived. They were able to inform people over a wide area by means of these relayed messages, indicating the number and sizes of the approaching canoes (large canoes for the white men, smaller ones for the Indians) within just one hour -- with the result that it was virtually impossible to catch them by surprise. Betendorf thought

that this might be a good system for adoption by the inhabitants of defenseless villages lying near the sea-coasts back home in Europe!

Frei Theodózio had some twenty Indian slaves in his company when Padre Betendorf visited him, people whom he had brought up from Pará with the permission of the Mercedarian superior, to help feed and defend him and to assist with the other work of the mission. This made him considerably less dependent than were most Amazon missionaries, travelling as they did without slaves of their own, on his ability to cajole the mission Indians into providing these services for him. The Jesuit visitor talked with these mission slaves, who were presumably Indians from other regions long acclimatized to the society of Pará (if not actually born and raised there); and he found them to have bitter complaints about the quality of the food that the Urubú country could provide, and the absence of other amenities of the life to which they had grown accustomed in Pará . These retainers hoped earnestly that Frei Theodózio would soon decide to give up his arduous mission, and return with them to the "civilized" downriver aldeias.

Betendorf encountered Veiga when he was a sick old man, nearly blind but still unwilling to give up his mission because, as he said, he had spent some three thousands cruzados to get it going just a few years before (including the large stocks of trade goods which he had been obliged to distribute among the Indians in order to get them resettled in the first place). He was rueful about this investment, because he had been told before he came that there were great quantities of wild clove bark in the region, which could be extracted by the mission Indians and shipped down to Pará on a commercial basis. But as it had turned out there was nowhere nearly enough of this valuable commodity to repay the debts he had incurred. Moreover, he feared that when he left the mission it would be lost to the Mercedarians and returned to the Jesuits.[27] According to the account of a fellow-Mercedarian which was written some thirty years later, Frei Theodózio had personally seen

[27]Betendorf, pp. 492-96.

to the establishment of the principal mission headquarters village near Lake Saracá, as well as of five "domestic" aldeias on the Rio Matarí, seven on the Rio Urubú, one on the Rio Anibá and another called Guiribí on the faraway Rio Guatumã. In addition he had "pacified" the Arawaks all the way up to the Urubú headwaters, so effectively that from his time forward there was no more "trouble, wavering or treason among them" .[28]

The missions on the Rio Matarí had been established when Hilário de Souza Azevedo led his tropa de guerra against the Maraguazes there in 1692. The "Maraquaz" Indians of that sector had been forewarned of his arrival; and so they had mostly dispersed into the forest before the Paraenses got there. Once that raid was over, Azevedo had sent the Swiss Jesuit Aluísio Conrado Pfeil (or "Pateil") to serve as missionary there, and had provided him with a stock of tools for winning over the natives. The apparent expectation was that Azevedo's fearsome reputation would inspire enough "respect" in the Indians to make it safe for Pfeil to live and work on the Rio Matarí. But as things turned out, that mission had never gotten underway because of Pfeil's limitations and because of the undiminished hostility of the Maraguazes. Even the trusted contact man there, another chief's son who had been captured years before and taken for indoctrination and language training to Pará, befoere returning home in the company of Pfeil himself, had eventually turned against him. This man had even gone so far as to plot the murder of the young missionary, having been dissuaded from this project only at the last minute, and by the fear of inevitable reprisal. By this time Pfeil himself had fallen ill; and after barely escaping with his life had made his way back to Pará by way of Veiga's mission. No documents have appeared which reveal how the Mercedarians remedied this debacle, but they seem indeed to have accomplished that feat in some fashion; and afterwards they managed to hold onto the Rio Matarí mission until sometime in the second quarter of the 18th century.[29]

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[28]São João, "Relação," ms. in ARV Clero 255, no. 21.

[29]Betendorf, pp. 539-41; Moraes, HCM, p. 516, says that the Matarí missions had ceased to exist by 1744. In 1754, Gov. Furtado visited a town known as "Santa Ana do Matapí" at approximately the same location, on Santa Ana island at the mouth of the river "Matapi." See also Leite III, p. 375.

In 1694, the new Mercedarian superior of Pará was instructed by the King to send a few more of his men to the Urubú -- subject to the approval of the respected Frei Theodózio, whose reputation as an exemplary missionary had apparently reached Lisbon by that time. The King later authorized an annual subsidy of 100$000 for each Mercedarian missionary assigned to that region -- an unusual expression of interest and confidence on the part of a government which was chronically short of funds. But this offer was apparently never put into effect, since the Mercedarians were later able to claim that their mission to the central Amazon had been erected and maintained for several years without any cost to the Royal Treasury.[30]

A posthumous appraisal of Frei Theodózio's career by a thoughtful Mercedarian author reveals some of the reasons for the great esteem in which he was held. This writer considers that although "Viega" was the only notable Mercedarian missionary who had yet been produced by the convents of Pará and Maranhão (as of 1726), he was also one of the more successful missionaries from any order who had worked along the Amazon in any period. During his long career, he had persuaded innumerable "savages" to settle in Christian aldeias almost singlehandedly, among them some who had previously been among the most powerful and warlike enemies of the Portuguese in the entire Amazon valley. So successful had he been at this, in fact, that not only the Indians to whom he preached directly, but also many from the tribes of the interior with whom his neophytes were in contact, had sought out Frei Theodózio's protection year after year -- agreeing in exchange to give up their traditional ways, and accept "the better system of the rational life."

In Veiga's later years, he was joined by younger and more energetic friars, who attended the malocas of the back country while he remained at the Aldeia de Saracá. Frei Theodózio died at Saracá sometime before 1704; and according to the Merecedarian

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[30]King-Gov. Maranhão (Lx, 26 nov 1694), in Regimento e Leys das Missões do Estado do Maranhão (Lx, 1724), pp. 79-82, printed pamphlet in Evora Cod. CXV/2-12, ff. 159-160v; see also ff. 154-56 for the same recommendation in 1701; King-Provedor Mor of Maranhão (Lx, 18 feb 1696), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 160; São João, Relação, ms. in ARV Clero 255, doc. 21.

apologist there were no rebellions among the Arawaks even after he had gone. A group of new converts who were plotting an uprising at the time of his death were repressed by the "Old Christian" Indians themselves. Instead, a week-long funeral ceremony was held by these loyal Indians for their late missionary, even though there was no priest there to organize and direct it. Years later, it was observed that some of the revered founder's household goods were being preserved and revered as holy relics in Saracá.[31]

Decline and Fall of the Mercedarian Mission.

Frei Theodózio seems to have been assisted in his labors during tha last years, not only by his fellow-Mercedarians but by at least one zealous layman from Pará. In 1701, the King sent out from Lisbon a gold medal with the instruction that Governor António de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho was to present it to one José Lopes, in a ceremony to be held before the Junta das Missões. Lopes had earned the King's gratitude by serving for several years without compensation on the Rio Urubú, "seeking by means of his teaching and example to reduce the Indians to the Catholic religion." If this exemplary citizen so desired, the King expressed his willingness to go so far as to ship Lopes' wife out to Pará from her home in Portugal at the royal expense; and in the meantime he was honoring him with an appointment as "Captain of the Sertão and District of the Mercedarian Missions." The apparent reason for the granting of these most unusual distinctions was that the conscientious Governor Carvalho had informed the King of José Lopes' services in the most glowing of terms, and had suggested that some such recognition would be a way of persuading him to remain at his valuable work on the Urubú.

José Lopes is hard to bring into focus from the sketchy historical record. A comparatively recent immigrant, he seems to have learned the ways of the Amazon quickly and turned his attention to the transfrontier. Attaching himself to the Mercedarian mission was a means of carving out a small empire for himself in Frei Theodózio's wilderness.

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[31]São João, "Relação," ARV Clero 255, doc. 21. Veiga was not among the several Mercedarians listed for the year 1704 in ms. AHU Cod. 274, f. 187v.

Beginning as a volunteer helper and supervisor of Indian labor in the missionary's service, he must later have succeeded in allying a certain number of Indians to himself so as to go into business on his own as a provider of Indian slaves to Pará. This would, as will be seen, become a regular pattern in the gradual occupation of the Rio Negro and Solimões valleys by individual Paraenses during the first half of the 18th century -- with the important difference that most of these slave-trading transfrontiersmen were on much less cordial terms with the authorities. In Lopes' case, the King hastened to reply to Gov. Carvalho that he should be kept in the government service if at all possible. There were no funds in the Royal Treasury with which to provide a salary for an improvised bush-captain such as he; but if Carvalho though it absolutely necessary to do so, money for that purpose might be taken from the proceeds of the government-run tropas des resgates.[32] The assumption that Lopes was an active slave-trader is supported by the suggestion that he should be paid from the proceeds of that trade, as it is by the King's own presumption that he might be willing to serve on the Rio Urubú without a salary.

However exceptional the accomplishments of Frei Theodózio da Veiga may have been, the official Mercedarian view of his benign and lasting impact was certainly an inaccurate one. By 1707, the Governor of Pará was complaining to Lisbon about the lack of missionary zeal being shown by the Commissary (Superior) of the Order in Pará, Frei Manoel Correa Pestana. According to the Governor, few Indians then remained in the mission aldeas around Lake Saracá; and even at Nossa Senhora da Conçeição most of the inhabitants had "fled to the forests two years ago, for fear that some of them were going to be tied up by the missionaries themselves and shipped down to Pará and São Luis for sale, as is their customary procedure." The Commissary appeared to have done nothing to prevent such abuses on the part of Fr. Theodózio's successors, and there was evidence that

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[32]King-Carvalho (Lx, 28 jan 1701), Livro Grosso 66, pp. 208-09.

he was himself mixed up in the illegal slaving.[33]

In 1712, the King upbraided the Mercedarian Commissary of Pará for having abandoned the mission field altogether, leaving the Aldeia de Saracá without so much as a single resident priest -- although at some point previously, a friar had been named to that post and approved by the Junta das Missões. He surmised that by this time the Indians there must be in desperate need of spiritual assistance, and was persuaded that the Commissary had failed to send the necessary men to assist them "for reasons of his own private interst." The same situation prevailed, according to his information, with regard to the aldeas of Urubú and Matarí

> which ended by rising against their missioners, who -- since you neglected to visit them as the other superiors of religious orders do -- conducted themselves as they saw fit, giving a bad example to the other Indians and providing the pretext for their disobedience.

The Commissary was ordered to staff his missions with competent personnel, and to make regular visits in the supervision of his men, or see the lot of them expelled from the colony on royal orders.[34] This earnest admonition does not seem, however, to have had the desired effect. In 1730, the King was obliged to write once again to the Commissary, to say that he had been informed of the abysmally inadequate administration of the Mercedarian missions, and instructing him that they were to be reformed along lines to be suggested by the Jesuits. In particular, he was to prevent the missionaries on the Urubú from engaging in any sort of business on an private basis.[35]

At some point just prior to 1712, the Mercedarian missions appear indeed to have been wiped out temporarily by a new rebellion of the Arawaks. The veteran Frei João das

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[33]Conselho Ultramarino, Consulta (Lx, 10 oct 1707), ms. in AHU Cod. 274, f. 187v. The Conselho was of the opinion that the Governor of Para ought to look into this matter. For some hints regarding the economic state of the mission in ca. 1704, see Appendix D.

[34]King-Comissário das Mercés (Lx, 19 dec 1712), in Livro Grosso 67, p. 111.

[35]King-Comissário (Lx, 17 ago 1730), in Livro Grosso 67, p. 249.

Neves was killed at that time, which provided the government with an always-welcome occasion to send out a tropa de guerra, authorized to bring back as many Indian slaves as it could capture, without paying for them in scarce trade goods or bothering with the formality of legal certification by the Jesuits. On this occasion the Arawaks must once more have withdrawn far inland after giving vent to their wrath, travelling to a place well beyond the headwaters of the Urubú -- because the tropa which was sent after them (led by one Domingos de Sá) was obliged to make its way up the Negro and Jauaperi (see Map 6) to find them in their place of retreat. There is no indication of the outcome of this repression in the documents presently available, nor of the number of Arawaks who were removed to Pará as a result. It is also unclear by what means the mission itself was reestablished; what is certain is that within a very few years, the Mercedarians were at work on Lake Saracá once again.[36]

In 1720, a disgruntled Mercedarian friar with experience on the Urubú submitted a secret report to the ever-critical Jesuits on this subject. In it, he lamented the criminal abuse of Indians by the "presidents" and other missionaries at Lake Saracá over a period of some fifteen years (presumably, since the death of Frei Theodózio da Veiga). These difficulties had begun in the administration of a second Frei Raymundo, one who had

> left this back country in such terrible shape that we were on the verge of losing the missions altogether due to his outrageous treatment of the villagers, whom he would not even allow the time they needed to plant their gardens.

This missionary and a group of sertanista companions had kept the Indians so busy at forced labor on his slaving and collecting expeditions, that they had been hard put to provide food for their families -- something which was presumably at least partly responsible for the abovementioned rebellion of 1712. Then in 1718 or 1719 Frei Manoel Nunes had been sent up to head the mission; and he had reinstituted the same procedures and worse. Nunes had

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[36]Anon., "Sinopse," (1764), ms. in BNR 32, 21, 1 no. 1; Sampaio, Diário IV (1903 ed., p. 6); Edmundson, "Dutch on Negro II, p. 21n.

gone so far as to oblige his subalterns to draw up false documents attesting to the legitimacy of all the slaves captured by the Arawaks in his employ; and together with another unprincipled missionary named Frei Ignacio da Costa, he had carried out a descimento from the Rio Urubú of Indians who were then sent on to his own father's estate in Pará, and sold there "like so much cinnamon-bark, without any fear of the Lord." Then, before leaving his post to return to Pará in 1719, the unconscionable Nunes had left instructions with another missionary, Frei João de Mattos, that he was to hand over another forty Indian laborers -- and as many more as might be called for -- to Captain Diogo Rodrigues Pereira of the Fortress of the Rio Negro (see below). This was on the pretext that these people were needed for the Royal Service; but the free mission Indians in question were in fact destined to be tied up and shipped to Pará as slaves -- with Pereira, Nunes, da Costa and another Mercedarian sharing in the profits. Among the many people who were unjustly enslaved during this period, a large percentage had been Arawaks who were already settled in the Mercedarian aldeias, and ostensibly in the process of becoming Christians.[37]

Similar complaints were made a decade later, when two canoe-captains travelling under private auspices from Pará paid a visit to the Urubú missions in 1728 or 1729. Their procedure for gathering slaves was simply to raid these long-established mission villages with their already "domesticated" Indian populations, and capture anyone they could find. On this occasion, they killed seventeen people and captured a good number more, some of them taken from the very canoes in which they were attempting to escape up the river. When these illegal slavers returned to Pará and were in the process of disposing of their captives, three chiefs from the Urubú missions arrived there to explain to the authorities that the slaves in question had been part of a peaceful descimento, one which they had themselves been in the process of bringing down to settle near the Aldeia de Saracá. The Junta das Missões considered this case, and decided that the unfortunate victims of this miscarriage of justice

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[37]Fr. João de Almeida-P. Jacinto de Carvalho ([Abacaxís,] 10 jun 1720), ms. in BNL Fundo Geral 4517, ff. 416-17v.

should be returned to their homes at Lake Saracá; but the Ouvidor (Public Prosecutor) intervened to take the side of the slavers in the case, reasoning that since the Indians had already been delivered to Pará, in the end it would be more practical to retain them captives bound in perpetual servitude.[38]

Between 1727 and 1735, three separate surveys of the missions of the various religious orders of Pará were conducted as part of the ongoing official effort to learn something about their annual earnings as business enterprises, and about the taxes which they might pay if the royal government could be persuaded to revoke their exemptions.[39] These surveys enable us to form at least a vague indication of the progress of the Mercedarian and other missions during those years. On the Rio Guatumã in 1727, there was said to be a single mission station, recently established and not yet organized for any productive activity; by 1735 or so, there were two villages on the Guatumã, whose people were collecting some three hundred arrobas of cacao each year -- merchandise which, together with a variety of other products of the forests and rivers, could be sold by the missionaries in Pará for some 2,000$000. The mission on the Rio Urubú (or the nearby Anibá) had a labor force of some one hundred men in 1727, of whom the twenty-five allotted by law for the support of the missionary were sent out each year to bring in some two hundred arrobas of cacao. The remainder were made available as needed to canoe-expeditions from Pará, which would stop at the mission in search of crewmen for the collection of forest products in the Saracá region itself, or along the Madeira or Solimões. Two other small aldeias on the Urubú and one on the Matarí were so badly reduced in population that they had barely enough people to make the few pots of turtle-oil or manatee lard which they needed to buy necessary supplies in Pará. By 1735, the Matari mission was populous once more, and and well-enough organized it was thought to produce two hundred

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[38]Lopes-King (Belém, 8 oct 1729), ms. in BNL Fundo Geral 4517, ff. 109-114.

[39]For a critical discussion of these sources, see notes to Appendix G on the economic activities of the Carmelite missions.

arrobas of cacao; production on the Urubú at that time was up to three hundred. During their peak years in the 1730's, in other words, the Mercedarian missions around Lake Saracá came to include a more or less disciplined labor force of a few score canoemen and forest product collectors, who could be sent out to gather merchandise worth perhaps 4$000 milreis or 10,000 cruzados -- the proceeds from which might be used by the missionaries as they alone saw fit.

The Lake Saracá mission field appears to have been at least partially restored during the 1730's and 1740's, but what can be said so far about its day-to-day operation during that period is sparse indeed. In 1743, there were said to be five Mercedarians at work in three mission stations within the area: Frei José da Silva at Guatumã; Frei João Pimentel and Frei José de Quadros at Anibá; and Frei António de Matos and Frei João de Almeida (the bitter complainant of 1720) at Matarí. It will be noticed that the old headquarters village of Nossa Senhora da Conçeição on the Urubú and the station on Lake Saracá itself have been omitted from this list.[40] The revival was, in any event, only short-lived. The aldeia located three leagues up the Rio Guatumã was abandoned in 1745, when the Indians there got disgusted with the missionary's exactions and simply returned to the forest, abandoning him to his own devices. The once-populous Rio Urubú seems never to have had a permanent mission on it after the rebellion of 1712, and then to have been inhabited only by isolated settlements of "Arawaks."[41] A survey of missions made in 1751 gave the Mercedarians only one surviving outpost, "in the sertão of the Urubú" (the usual name for the Lake Saracá region as a whole).[42] By 1759, it was reported that the Urubú station and all others in the area had been abandoned for, or consolidated into, a single mission located just north of the lake on the lower Rio Anibá just east of the lake.[43] In 1774, when Saracá had evolved into the

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[40]Alvarez, Informação (Pará, 18 oct 1743), ms. in AHN(R) Cod. 231, vol. 2, ff. 1-2v.

[41]Moraes, HCM, p. 515; Noronha, "Roteiro," in Nabuco, Limites I Mem Bres Ann I, p. 178.

[42]Pinheiro, "Relação," in Azevedo, Jesuitas, p. 415.

[43]Moraes, HCM, pp. 515-516.

thriving secular community known as Silves, there was no sign at all of habitation up the Rio Urubú. That it had once been a densely settled area was evident to travellers, however, from the "frequent vestiges found there of previously inhabited towns."[44]

As the days of the regular missionaries, the transfronteirsmen and the Indian slave trade drew to a close in the 1750's -- and just before the Amazon missions were transferred from the authority of the religious orders to the authority of the Bishop and Governor of Pará -- a quaint and much-belated set of instructions for the comportment of the missionaries assigned to Lake Saracá was drawn up by the Mercedarian Commissary of Pará. The occasion was Governor Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado's preparation for a large-scale expedition which was to travel up to the Rio Negro and meet with a Spanish commission from Guayana, in an effort to to determine the location of that portion of the border between the Spanish and Portuguese empires. This expedition was expected to require what were in Paraense terms vast amounts of food, material and manpower, to provide for the temporary installation of some five hundred soldiers and functionaries at a base camp on the Negro; and all of the administrators of missions along the river were being asked to cooperate with this expedition to the fullest. The Commissary's instructions were drawn up, ostensibly, so that the Mercedarian missionaries at Lake Saracá might make the best possible impression upon Gov. Furtado when he visited them in passing. The instructions are laconic enough, but they nevertheless reveal quite a good deal about the Mercedarian "mission system" in retrospect, and about its real objectives. The Commissary reveals at the outset that he has been led to draw up these regulations because "we are informed that the missionaries there do not fulfill their obligations perfectly." His wayward followers are therefore sternly enjoined to:

1) be God-fearing; keep their churches clean and take good care of the ornaments;

2) provide daily instruction in Christian doctrine to the Indians, and to do so in the

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[44]Sampaio, Diário IV (1903 ed.), p. 6.

Portuguese language rather than the traditional lingua geral -- attending especially to the young boys, "obliging them to attend school and learn to read and write." Some of these boys should also be instructed in the mechanical trades, while the rest should be put to raising pigs, chickens and ducks, or working the mission's manioc, corn and bean fields in order to help produce supplies for the forthcoming expedition;

3) Indians should be treated kindly, and attended during any illnesses they might suffer. It was particularly important to administer the sacraments to the dying, so that they might expire like good Christians (a strange counsel for one Catholic priest to feel called upon to pass along to another!);

4) no woman over seven years of age was to enter any missionary's house under any circumstances. If the missionary was obliged, for example, to receive his laundry from a female parishioner, he was to receive it outside the door.

Then came the fundamentals:

5) Governor Furtado was to be supplied with a detailed list of the Indians available for the royal service in each mission village; and this list was to be updated each year. The missionaries would then deliver to the governor any Indians he might request for the royal service, and instruct these men before their departure that they would be punished harshly if they dared to desert. Indians who returned home before the expiration of their terms of service should be sent down to Pará to receive their punishment. Missionaries who hid any Indians from the recruiting parties, or provided refuge to deserters, would themselves be sent back to the monastery in Pará for harsh punishment.

6) No Indian laborers might be delivered to private parties under any circumstances, except on explicit orders from the governor, nor might the missionaries any longer buy or sell Indians [my emphasis]. Missionaries were not to engage in private commerce of any kind, sending canoes full of merchandise down to sell to private parties in Pará. All such canoes were henceforth to deliver their goods exclusively to

the Mercedarian convent, where they would be disposed of as the Commissary saw fit.[46]

These instructions shed cold light on the basic function of the Urubú mission as an institution for the mobilization of Indian labor. In the late 17th century, it had proved more effective than the private tropas de resgate or even the tropas de guerra in prying slaves and descimentos out of the Lake Saracá hinterland, for service either locally or in Pará. It had kept the peace after a fashion, and had made it unnecessary to expend great sums and risk lives in order to keep up the movement of forced laborers to Pará.[47] The founder Frei Theodózio de Veiga had been endowed with sufficient skill to win the considerable loyalty of some of his charges, and to persuade them to settle on the lake and become nominal Christians, forming the labor force of a relatively permanent community. He had also transformed them into active collaborators in the work of gathering Indian slaves from their neighboring tribes, for transportation to Pará. After his death and despite some setbacks, this work was carried on by less capable men -- who perhaps barely succeeded in holding the beachhead at Lake Saracá, until the arrival of the settlement frontier and the institutions of Portuguese colonial government, in the mid-18th century.

The document is also eloquent testimony to the de facto isolation of the transfrontier missionary from the authority of his superiors in Pará. The first four injunctions are altogether perfunctory expressions of standard policy about mission administration, mixed with the Pombaline concern of Furtado with increasing production and spreading the Portuguese language and culture. There is no hint in them of any first-hand knowledge of

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[46]Silva, "Actas para se observarem" (Pará, 2 oct 1753), ms. in AHN(R), Cod. 231, vol. 2, ff. 15-16. The insistence on vocational training, literacy and the Portuguese language represent the secular educational ideal of the Pombaline regime, introduced by Governor Furtado. It bears no relation to the historical experience of the Mercedarian or other frontier missions, and was of course never put into practice.

[47]In 1701, the King gave explicit statement to this basic function of the upriver missionaries. He forbade them to engage in the trade in forest commodities (an utterly vain insistence), but reminded them that they were obliged to carry out resgates and descimentos on a regular basis. King-Junta das Missões do Pará (Salvaterra, 3 feb 1701), in Regimento e Leys . . . (Lisboa, 1724), printed pamphlet in Evora Cod. CXV/2-12, ff. 154-56.

the life of the mission, or of the Commissary's having been in any regular communication beforehand with his missionaries. The information that the missionaries "do not fulfill their obligations perfectly" has the ring of a rumor which has only recently come to the Commissary's attention, and which does not concern him greatly. He is at pains to insist that commercial transactions in the products of the labor of the mission Indians be channelled through the Mercedarian establishment so that the Order (or the Commissary!) may share in their profits; but he does not appear to be outraged at their not having been disposed of in this fashion up to that time.

This last note, together with the reference to Theodozio de Veiga's personal indebtedness resulting from the establishment of the mission, and the later complaints about missionaries participating directly in the slave trade, reveal the Mercedarian trans-frontier missionary very clearly to have been in essence an individual entrepreneur. The picture is that of a man who was not so much a "civilizer" of Indians as a special kind of transfrontiersman who made his way to the sertão primarily or at least partially in search of adventure and personal profit. Such a missionary could not in practice be controlled from Pará; and his success or failure as an administrator and exploiter of Indians depended entirely on his own skill and resources, and those of his collaborators. There is further indirect evidence for this interpretation in the very scarcity of documents for the period. Research to date has revealed not a single report from a Mercedarian missionary to his superior, nor any request for assistance from the convent in Pará. The instructions outlined above were clearly written not as a normal part of the mission-administration process, but at the request of an outsider in the most special of circumstances -- with the object of acquainting the undisciplined missionaries with their obligations to the newly assertive central government of the colony.

The Fortress of the Rio Negro

One result of the "opening" of the central Amazon valley to Paraense expansion, the phenomenon with whose first stages we have been concerned in the present chapter, was the

establishment in 1694 of the first permanent military outpost in that region: the Fortaleza da Barra do Rio Negro, distant ancestor to the modern city of Manaus. This was done in response partly to the ever-present perception "Dutch threat" from the north, partly in anticipation of possible Spanish expansionist movements down the Solimões (see Chap. 6), and perhaps primarily to discourage the Indians of the region from interfering in any way with the business of slave trading and forest product collection it was developed by the men of Pará. The fort itself was a modest affair, no more than a small stone guardhouse on the eastern bank of the river just above its mouth; but it may nevertheless be seen as a manifestation of the renewed vigor of Portuguese expansion into the Amazon valley during the 1690's. The Fortaleza da Barra was to remain as the westernmost outpost of Portuguese colonial "government" in Amazonia for more than half a century. The difficulties which attended its construction were an ill omen for the colonialist project; and the sorry history of the fort itself reads more like an epitaph than like a chronicle of conquest.

The construction was initially entrusted by Governor António de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho to the seasoned sertanista Hilário de Souza Azevedo, early in 1692. But work on the project was delayed for several months, due first to a lack of funds with which to procure the supplies not locally available and obtain the necessary armaments, and then for the lack of a master mason to direct the building itself. Military engineer Manoel da Mota finally got the building underway in November of 1693; but for one reason or another the structure was never actually completed. There was a rough stone building to house the soldiers and store their supplies; but for a long time there was not so much as a completed breast-works behind which they might hope to defend themselves in the unlikely event of an enemy attack.

Manning the Fortress was itself a serious problem. A dozen troops arrived late in 1694; but a few months later a military inspector was obliged to report that the outpost was:

> badly garrisoned, having as it does an inept commanding officer with six soldiers and no artillery, where what is needed is a competent lieutenant with

a sargent and eighteen soldiers.[48]

The inspector thought that if it was to be of any use at all in "keeping the foreigners out," the fort should also be provided with a battery of guns on each side of the river.

Not the least of the problems of the commanders of this outpost was the chronic uphill struggle to persuade Indians from the surrounding region to settle nearby voluntarily, and go to work at the fort for wages. A corporal reported in 1695 that he had visited some villagers on the Rio Anuvicenas (a tributary of the lower Negro across from Tarumãs) and the Rio Matarí to explain to them that the fortress had been built for their protection, and that as vassals of the King it was their duty to keep it supplied with food and manpower (as well as with any crewmen who might be needed by expeditions that visited the fort from Pará). For any such services, he explained, they would be paid the conventional wages in cloth. But this corporal, like the Carmelite visitor Frei Victoriano Pimentel who visited the lower Negro in 1702, found the Indians of the district to be so well-stocked with Dutch trade goods, and still in such regular contact with their suppliers of these goods, as to remain very reluctant to enter into the system of "free" wage labor imported from Pará.[49]

References to this fortress during the next fifty years are very scarce and miscellaneous in the documents from the period, something which is in itself perhaps a testimony to the economic and political insignificance of the place. Governors of Pará paid it little enough mind; the King seldom had occasion to give any thought to it at all. The garrison was therefore permanently understaffed; the men there seldom received a prompt payment of their full wages, and they were only very poorly and erratically supplied with the

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[48]Carneiro, Informe (Lx, 30 dec 1695), ms. AHI 340-1-2, doc. 38. Edmundson "Dutch on Negro II" provides notes on the construction problems, citing ms. in the AHU (then BNL "Arquivo do Conselho Ultramirano"), "Consultas 843," "Requerimentos 68," and "Cartas do Maranhão" (references which do not conform to the modern organization of that archive). He says that the first commander of the fort was Ambrósio Muniz Barreiros, followed by Luis de Moraes Bitancour. Cf. King-Carvalho (Lx, 28 nov 1693) and King-Azevedo (Lx, 28 nov. 1695), in Livro Grosso 66, pp. 147 and 154.

[49]António de Miranda e Noronha-Gov. Carvalho (Belém, 25 may 1695), in Nabuco, Limites I Mem Bres Ann I, pp. 8-11. Cf. Pimentel, "Relação," in Wermers, "Estabelecimento," p. 545.

goods necessary for subsistence or for the performance of their duty. During long periods, it seems, these soldiers were for all intents and purposes left to shift for themselves. The men assigned there were often, if not usually, disgruntled degredados undergoing punishment for some crime or misdemeanor -- men like Alferes Bruno de Azevedo de Faria in the late 1720's, against whom Governor Gama had "trumped up" charges in anger over something he had done; or Joaquim Gervásio da Mota, who had deserted from the garrison in Pará but had the misfortune of being recaptured on the Rio Tocantins, and was then sentenced to a punitive ten years of degredo at the Fortress of the Rio Negro.[50]

This was, moreover, the only fort in all of Pará and Maranhão which seldom if ever had a priest in permanent residence. The nearest padres were Carmelite missionaries residing four or five days' journey away, which meant that all those who died at the Fortress were denied the consolation of the sacraments.[51] The buildings were in a permanent state of disrepair, and for decades were never seen by a government inspector (the responsible officals being unwilling to undertake the long and expensive journey from Pará just for that purpose). Soldiers sent there in what was ostensibly the King's service, therefore spent most of their time collecting forest products and Indian slaves "for their own profit and that of their commanders;" and they were so disorderly and undisciplined as a rule, that they might go so far as to commit murders on duty without being punished for them.[52]

The post of Commander of this God-forsaken frontier outpost was, nevertheless, one which was actively sought after and vied for by the enterprising soldier-sertanistas of the colony, throughout the first half of the 18th century. An assiduous researcher into the history of the region was unable in the 1780's to learn much either in Pará or on the Rio

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[50]King, Alvarás (Lx, 6 sep 1728) and (n.d. 1728), ms. BAPP 907, ff. 45-45v and 50v-51.

[51]King-Gov. Freire (Lx, 15 jul 1715), in Livro Grosso 67, pp. 132-33; A.R. Ferreira, "Diário," in RIHGB 50,2 (1887), p. 111; and J.M. Ayres-Gov. Gurjão (Belém, 4 jan 1749), ms. BAPP 1023, ff. 166-173.

[52]King-Gov. Serra (Lx, 26 jan 1733), in Anais BAPP 6 (1907), pp. 167-68, citing a letter from the Ouvidor of Pará dated 10 aug 1732.

Negro about the history of this fort (he could not even establish the names of its successive commanders!); but he did report his conclusion that "what is certain is that in slaving days it was always known as one of the more lucrative posts."[53] The reason was that a base at this outpost enabled an enterprising officer to establish himself as a virtually independent slave-trader and forest product collector with access to a vast region of the sertão -- the Negro and Solimões valleys which in those days were the principal fountain of wealth in Amazonia, as well as being its place of refuge from all forms of official supervision. The Commander of the Fortress operated there with virtual impunity, and with just a bit of the weight of royal authority at his disposal; and he had virtually nothing to do but organize expeditions for his own profit, or devote himself to raking off some of the proceeds from the labors of others who did so, as they passed by on their return trips to Pará.

When Captain Diogo Rodrigues Pereira assumed command of the fort at some time before 1715, he found the place completely lacking in amenities. There was no missionary, no contingent of Indians to feed the troops or defend them against their enemies, not even a stock of liquor in its storeroom. So he wrote to the King to ask for permission to round up two hundred Indians (a hundred married couples) at his own expense, and to settle them near the guardhouse so that they might serve the needs of the garrison. In order to accomplish this, he said, he would need the services of fifty domestic Indian crewmen from the downriver aldeias, and a royal order to the effect that "some of the white men living in the sertão" should lend a hand with the recruitment. In addition, he wanted authorization to purchase sixty slaves on private account each year, along the central Amazonian rivers, to send down for sale in Pará.[54]

These requests seem to have been granted, because years later in the course of

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[53]"uma das comandancias pingues." A.R. Ferreira, "Diário," in RIHGB 50,2 (1888), p. 110. According to Ferreira, the first commander was Angélico de Barros (on whose resignation in embarrassing circumstances in 1709, see Chap.6).

[54]King-Gov. Serra (Lx, 26 jan 1733), in Anais BAPP 6 (1907), pp. 167-68, citing a letter from the Ouvidor of Pará dated 10 aug 1732.

requesting a promotion this officer claimed that he had gone up the Negro on the King's orders and brought down a descimento to the fort (a project carried out at great personal expense, he was at pains to add, considering the food, clothing, tools and canoes which had been required to transport and maintain more than two hundred people). Peireira recalled that he had also served the King by reconnoitering the mouths of the Rio Branco (tributary of the Negro), gathering intelligence about the Dutch trade there, and even pursuing a great "convoy" of the Hollanders' merchandise which had been brought across from the Rio Essequibo to barter with the Manao people of the upper Negro valley. In addition, he asserted that had always assisted the missionaries of the tropas de resgate, and that he had fought bravely against hostile Indians. To top things off, he had built a chapel at the Fortress and had even paid a priest out of his own pocket to serve there for a short time.[55]

Not long after setting himself up on the Negro, the enterprising Pereira explained in a letter to the King that there was no way to prevent the continuation of the vigorous Dutch trade along that river (carried out through "their Indian followers, who are always in touch with ours") from a base at its mouth. In order to do this it would be necessary to relocate the fortress to a site twenty days' travel up the Negro, just above the mouth of the Rio Jauaperí -- a place from which the garrison could monitor the movement of canoes in and out of the Rio Branco, and intercept those bearing Dutch goods once and for all. Pereira offered to carry out this relocation, and to do so at his own expense if the King would grant permission, "all in the interest of simply remaining in his post."He claimed, moreover, that missionaries of long experience on the Negro were in support of his plan. There can be little doubt that Captain Pereira and his friends saw an opportunity for profit in this enterprise -- presumably through replacing the Manao traders of the middle Negro (see Chapter Seven) as middlemen in the trade with the Dutch![56]

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[55]King, Patente (1724), in Nabuco, Limites II Mem Bres Ann III, pp. 9-11.

[56]Conselho Ultramarino, Consulta (Lx, 8 jul 1719), ms. AHU Cod. 274, ff. 265-66. Cf. King-Gov. Berredo (Lx, 27 jul 1719), ms. AHU Cod. 269, f. 115.

The King apparently authorized Gov. Berredo to encourage Pereira in his scheme; but a year later he was complaining that Berredo had failed to provide him with details about the volume of the Dutch-Manao trade, and what merchandise was involved, as well as with a report on Pereira's progress in preventing it. Among other things, Pereira had been instructed to make a map indicating the rivers flowing into the Negro, and the potential he saw for the economic exploitation of each of them. Later still, Pereira apparently tried to capitalize on the King's fleeting interest in his project by requesting appointment as "Sergeant-Major of the Frontier and New Fortress of the Rio Branco," with a salary equal to that of a captain in the infantry or the Captain-Major of Gurupá, to be guaranteed for the rest of his lifetime and that of an heir; but there is no indication of the outcome of his petition.[57] The new fort was never built, for reasons which are not entirely clear; but Pereira soon found other ways to earn a living. A decade later, while still Commander of the Fortress of the Rio Negro, he was actively involved in the Indian slave trade for his own profit, with full knowledge of the governors of Pará.[58]

As a private enterpriser, however, the Commander was subject to some of the same conventional hazards and obligations as other businessmen in the colony. In 1736, a Captain (presumably the same Diogo Rodrigues Pereira) was removed from his post at the Fortress of the Rio Negro by interim Governor Antonio Duarte (the Captain-Major of Pará) "for not having bribed him with a certain number of arrobas of cacao, or a slave or two, as is well-known." In his place, the shameless Duarte appointed a notorious murderer and slave-raider (amarrador de tapuyas) named Manoel Maciel Parente (presumably the grandson of Bento and son of Vital Maciel Parente, two of the leading personalities of the 17th-century

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[57]King-Berredo (Lx, 19 oct 1720), and (Lx, 1 feb 1721), in Nabuco, Limites I Mem Bres Ann I, pp. 31-33.

[58]Gov. Freire, Portaria (Belém, 20 dec 1731), ms. BAPP 907, ff. 150v-51. The Provedor da Fazenda had informed Freire that Pereira had brought down some "peças de resgate" but neglected to declare them (at Gurupá?) for tax purposes. Pereira was ordered to straighten that matter out forthwith, but there was no hint of reprimand for his having engaged in the private slave trade while supposedly serving the King as commander of a frontier garrison. Gov. Serra-Pereira (Belém, 20 oct 1732) ms. BAPP 907, ff. 161-61v, indicates that at that point Pereira was also cabo of an official tropa de resgates!

slave trade in Pará). Both Duarte and Parente were determined, it seemed, to make use of the strategic position of commander at the Fortress to line their own pockets as quickly as possible.[59]

The commanders of the Fortaleza da Barra during the 1730's continued to do everything in their power to retain a permanent Indian labor force at the post. People were needed there year in and year out, to fish and raise manioc for the soldiers and to man the canoes on their collecting expeditions. Entreaties were made to prevent the Carmelites from moving their nearby mission from Tarumãs up to a healthier site on the Negro near the mouth of the Rio Jaú -- where it would also be less subject to predatory requisitions of labor by the commanders of the Fortress. But the new mission of Santo Elías do Jaú was nevertheless in operation well before 1740. At about the same time, there was talk of moving the Fortress itself to a healthier and more fertile spot known as Poraquequara (the "place of the electric eels") near the Negro's mouth ; and at one point a "Captain of Descimentos" named Manoel de Torres Bezerra was offered the job of commander if he would agree to build a new fort there and establish an aldeia to serve it.[61] This seems never to have been accomplished. In 1740, Captain João Pereira de Araujo succeeded in establishing a short-lived service village for the fort at "Tarumãs tapera" (the abandoned Jesuit and Carmelite mission site).[62] Araujo was also assigned by the Governor to round up the half-dozen Portuguese deserters from his fort, and "anyone else capable of military service" whom he might find on the loose without government license in the sertão, and to

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[59]Machado-King (Belém, 22 sep 1736), ms. AHU Para Cx 3. The author was a morador of Pará who may well have been a personal enemy of one of these men -- or a frustrated candidate for the job as commander!

[61] Araujo, Atestação (Belém, 2 oct 1741), ms. AOC Cx Maranhão; Castelbranco, Orden (Pará, 31 jan 1739), ms. BAPP 985, no. 133. In this case the current Commander, Manoel Caetano de Tavora, as well as the Carmelite missionaries along the Negro, were instructed to provide Bezerra with enough Indians to open roças at the new site; Moraes, HCM,p. 527. The move may eventually have been made, since the outpost is called "Forte de Boraquequara" on a crude map of the region drawn during the 1750's. "Mapa hydrográphico dos Rios Amazonas e Negro," Mapoteca do Itamaraty, 46-28.

[62]Castelbranco, Orden (Pará, 31 jan 1739), ms. BAPP 985, no. 133. In this case the current Commander, Manoel Caetano de Tavora, as well as the missionaries along the Negro, were instructed to provide Bezerra with enough Indians to open rocas at the new site.

confine all these people in the garrison in order that it might keep itself more fully staffed.[63]

In about 1747 a commander of this out-of-the-way Fortress died in his post; and he was duly replaced by the man who appeared to the King to be the best-qualified of several eager applicants: João Rodrigues da Cruz. But Cruz did not distinguish himself by his efficiency. Under his administration, the guardhouse was described by a traveller as the "only stone structure on the Rio Negro, with three walls complete and its quarters completely in ruins, as is the parapet." There was only the remnant of a chapel there, without ornaments of any kind and the Fortress was unattended by a priest.[64] Another visiter complained that the Captain had done nothing since he took up his duties but attend to private business concerns, leaving his fort to be "overgrown by the jungle, with no quarters at all for its soldiers, and the garrison starving for the lack of a fisherman."[65] It then befell João Rodrigues da Cruz to receive the energetic Governor Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado on his visit to the Rio Negro in the mid-1750's, and cooperate with him in the painful process of establishing the institutions of royal government in that region (see Chapter 9). But before those events took place, the penetration of the Amazonian transfrontier according to the patterns which we have been examining would repeat itself throughout the Negro and Solimões valleys and beyond.

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[63]Gov. Castelbranco, Ordem (Pará, 29 nov 1739), ms. BAPP 985, nos. 250 and 51. When Condamine visited the fort in 1741, the Commander and most of his men were away slaving with the tropa de resgates.

[64]J.M. Ayres-Gov. Gurjão (Belém, 4 jan 1749), ms. BAPP 1023, ff. 166-173. Cf. Anon.-? (Rio Negro, 20 sep 1748), ms. BNL Col. Pomb. 625, ff. 66-67v, the report of an inspector of fortifications who made the same observations, but thought that the fort could be put in working order without great expense. Reis says that the Carmelites established a chapel of N.S. da Conceição on this spot, but gives no date. História, p. 54. By 1759, there was a querulous Carmelite in residence, who seems once to have threatened to beat the commander with a stick. FXMF-Thomé Corte Real (Pará, 1 mar 1759), in Anais BAPP 8, pp. 41-44.

[65]Anon.-FXMF (Belém, 23 feb 1751), ms. BNL Col. Pomb. 625, ff. 61 (68)-62.