CHAPTER 2:

THE STATE OF MARANHÅO AND GRÅO PARÅ

In the second decade of the 17th century, when Portugal and its empire were governed by King Philip III of Spain, a party of Portuguese and Brazilian soldiers from Pernambuco were sent out to conquer the "East-West Coast" of northern Brazil (see Map 2). Their mission was to establish permanent outposts as a means of protecting that sector of the king's vast realms against northern European interlopers, and to explore its potential for economic development. In 1615, these troops drove a small party of French colonists and missionaries from their recently built fortress on the island of São Luis in Maranhão. During the following year, they pressed on and built a small fort of their own at a strategic site (now the city of Belém) located far to the west on the banks of the Pará river, which proved to the southernmost mouth of the great "river of the Amazons." Then, working out from these two bases, the few dozen Luso-Brazilian pioneers began the long process of exploring and attempting to place themselves in control of the vast and populous Amazon region and its resources.[1]

The first formidable barrier to this enterprise was a series of trading-posts which had been established along the lower Amazon by Dutch, English and Irish merchant adventurers beginning in about 1610. In these busy factories, each of them kept in operation for just a few years before being abandoned or relocated,

European manufactured goods were exchanged for the tropical forest products (principally tobacco, cotton and dyestuffs) which were brought in to them by the natives of the region. Profits were considerable; hopes were high, and the north European entrepreneurs were forever concocting plans for more permanent settlements and plantations. But theirs were private ventures, dependent on the availability of fickle capital in London or Amsterdam. The outposts were chronically short-handed; and (unbeknownst to the Portuguese) they lacked the critical support from the English and Dutch governments of that day which would have been necessary over the long term for their expansion, or even for their successful defense. Some of the Indian tribes of the lower Amazon valley had become so dependent upon these suppliers of iron tools and other merchandise, as to be willing to fight alongside them to defend their forts if needed. But as things turned out, the fair-haired Protestant traders were in no position to wage the offensive war that would have been required to keep the Portuguese vanguard out of the Amazon region; and the settlers of Maranhão and Pará had no difficulty in establishing their toehold.

Once installed in Amazonian outposts, the Portuguese colonists began to explore the country and forge tenuous alliances with a few of the still-independent tribes of Maranhão and Pará. These early collaborators with the colonialists helped them to expand the new sphere of influence; and that in turn helped tighten the settlers' resolve to drive out all potential European competitors and to bring all of the remaining Indians of the region under Portuguese control. The Old World epidemic diseases, which the settlers soon unwittingly introduced to Pará, then contributed greatly to softening the resistance of every native Amazonian people they struck; and Portuguese firepower helped to "pacify," or enslave, or drive into retreat most of the

remaining Indian communities within a few leagues of either São Luis or Belém. At the same time, the settlers moved to attack and destroy the Dutch and English outposts -- one by one over about a twenty-year period -- and to discourage every effort to establish new ones.[2] This early colonial war of conquest was fought, in Robert Southey's phrase, "according to the barbarity with which war was carried on in the New World by all nations alike."[3] The victors gave no quarter; the defeated, whether white-skinned or swarthy, were more likely to be hacked to pieces than taken prisoner or allowed to pack up and return to their homes.

In the process of completing this sweep, the new men of Pará conducted a reconnaissance of the lower reaches of the Amazon and its principal nearby tributaries; and they soon began the work of dividing the country among themselves in order to take effective possession. These settlers from Brazil were indeed a far cry from the comparatively peaceable Dutch and English trading-factors, content as they had been with a desultory commerce, and ill-equipped as they were for permanent occupation. The Portuguese were seasoned Indian-fighters and agents of a vigorous national enterprise, fully supported in principle by their Crown. The experience of a century of conquest in eastern South America had taught them that the surest way to extract fortunes from a new land such as this one was to "reduce" it once and for all. They were willing to expend whatever effort was needed to drive out any foreigner competitors and put the native inhabitants to work -- so that they might provide as soon as possible for the support of their conquerors, while at the same time producing goods of some sort which might be exported profitably and on the largest possible scale.

Problems of governance.

These new conquests were a long way from Brazil, however; and travel by sea to that colony's capital at the Bahia de Todos os Santos on the South Atlantic was made next to impossible by the force and direction of the prevailing winds along the East-West Coast. It was easier to sail back and forth from Europe. In recognition of this geographic fact, King Philip IV erected a new "State of Maranhão and Grão Pará" in 1621, with twin capitals and with a colonial administration entirely separate from that of Brazil, which maintained its own direct ties to Lisbon. (The incorporation of this entity to the Brazilian Empire would occur only two hundred years later, after the achievement of independence from Portuguese rule). The first royal Governor of Maranhão and Grão Pará arrived in 1624, bringing with him a party of soldiers and some additional settlers who directed the construction of permanent fortifications and undertook the clearing and cultivation of plantations. This freed the founding fathers for renewed efforts to push further into the hinterland, and guaranteed a permanent Portuguese presence on the lower Amazon.

By 1640, a century after Orellana's descent of the Amazon from Peru, the principal men or moradores of Pará and Maranhão had established themselves on small country estates and were attempting to raise sugar and tobacco with forced Indian labor. Others had set themselves up directly as the captains of subject Indian villages, supported more or less by their charges, and claimed the right to dispose of the persons and property of these "domestic Indians" pretty much as they chose. Moreover, they had prevailed upon the King to divide the outlying portions of the new territory into neo-feudal "captaincies" or marches, which for a few years provided the leading citizens with a faint semblance of seigneurial status within an incipient colonial society.[4]

In 1642-43, the Dutch invaders of Pernambuco returned to occupy São Luis for a period of several months -- a mere sideshow in their world war against newly independent Portugal; but once again, they were forced by the doughty settlers to depart. From that time forward, there was never any serious external military threat to Portuguese sovereignty in any part of Maranhão or Grão Parã (though in later years the fear of improbable attacks by the French from Cayenne, the Dutch from Surinam or the Spaniards from New Granada and Peru would be a matter of recurrent concern to colonial governments).

A key role in the establishment of this new Portuguese colony was played by Franciscan missionaries of the Province of Santo António in the home country, who arrived in 1617 and erected their first convento in Belém do Pará a decade later. In the early years, these friars helped cement the alliances with Indian tribes which made it possible to drive out the Dutch and English traders; one Franciscan even led Indian troops into battle against the hated heretics. Others established promising mission stations in the "pacified" Indian villages located near Belém, and far away to the north of the mouth of the Amazon on the Cabo do Norte. But in 1625 Frei Christóvão de Lisboa arrived to take charge as Superior of the Franciscans of Pará. Lisboa was a European of high moral principle, perhaps the first to make an appearance in Amazonia. Horrified by the labor system he saw being established in the colony (which will be discussed in more detail in Chap. 3), he set out upon the first of a series of missionary campaigns against the wholesale enslavement of the Indians of Pará. As an alternative, Frei Christóvão proposed that the spiritual and temporal administration of all Indian communities should be assigned to the missionaries. Not surprisingly, this recommendation ran into a brick wall of opposition from the

truculent settlers.[5]

Lisboa's classic argument was that the settlers of Pará had proved themselves to be men interested only in material gain, who were willing to subject the Indians to any sort of mistreatment in their scramble to get rich quick. The King, he believed, had envisioned a broader and more humane purpose when he authorized the extension of his empire into the Amazon Valley . He had expected that his subjects would help "civilize" the Indians and bring them into the fold of Christian society, while at the same time exploiting their labor in some reasonable and morally justifiable manner. This plan had been sabotaged in practice by the Portuguese settlers; and the result of their abusive treatment was that the Indians of Pará were learning instead to shun all contact with the white men, reject their teachings and refuse to serve them. In this way, the natives were being denied the gift of salvation and the benefits of civilized life, as well as being prevented from producing the great wealth for the settlers and for the Crown of which they were presumably capable. The settlers, maintained Lisboa, had by the time of his writing (just a decade after the founding of the colony) already antagonized even the most faithful of their early Indian allies, previously viewed as indispensable to the consolidation of Portuguese power; and they had even brought about an alarming depopulation of their own newly-acquired territory! Frei Christóvão's recommended solution was to deprive the moradores of any further role in the administration of the Indian aldeias (mission villages) of the colony, to impose severe restrictions on the practice of indiscriminate slave-raiding which they had established from the start, and to return if possible to a system of peaceful trade with the Indians such as that which had been practiced so successfully by the English and Dutch. These Protestant interlopers, lest his

countrymen forget, had succeeded in obtaining large quantities of tobacco and other goods from the Indians, and selling them at a handsome profit in Europe. This they had done by means of a simple system of barter, one which had never obliged them to to conquer or enslave, or undertake the expensive governance, of anyone at all.[6]

The settlers of Pará had, of course, no patience with these well-reasoned arguments; they were determined to administer their hard-won conquests as they saw fit, and they soon grew quite hostile to any priestly intervention in their affairs. Tensions rose to such a pitch that at one point a Franciscan was actually murdered in his chapel by a settler mob. After about 1630, therefore, the friars opted to withdraw from any public controversies and devote themselves to administering their missions on the far-away Cabo do Norte, and doing so in as inconspicuous a manner as possible. Ill-suited by training and temperment for political conflict, they lacked the financial resources with which to undergo litigation in Lisbon -- other than a seldom-paid royal subsidy, some occasional alms from the more pious settlers or their well-wishers back home, and the paltry produce of the domestic Indians residing in their aldeias. The Franciscans were handicapped too by the lack of any practicable alternative program for the organization of a new colonial society, or any significant influence at Court. The lonely crusader Frei Christóvão, for his part, first turned his attention to exploring and attempting to pacify some of the remaining warlike tribes of the lower Amazon valley. Then he went on to carry out the first serious study of the fabulous flora and fauna of the region, before returning to Portugal in despair over the prospects for colonial reform.[7]

Beginning in 1655, the Franciscans of Pará were eclipsed in the field of missionary endeavor by the Company of Jesus, men for whom political conflicts with

settlers over the temporal and spiritual control of Indians were a time-tested specialty. The Jesuits arrived in Pará with full support from the Crown, and were led at the outset by Padre António Vieira, one of the most extraordinary and influential Portuguese personalities of the age. The royal subsidies were paid to them on a regular basis; and these were amply supplemented by pious donations from Europe. Thus richly endowed, Vieira soon took up the cudgel left idle by Christóvão de Lisboa. He and his followers launched an all-out struggle with the settlers for control of the Indian labor force of Pará, and for political, moral and economic hegemony in the colony itself -- the struggle which was to dominate the subsequent century of the political history of Maranhão and Grão Pará.[8] During the decades that followed, the Jesuits established and administered several dozen mission villages in the lower Amazon valley and Maranhão. They built up prosperous fazendas (agricultural and stock-rearing estates) worked by Indian and some African slave labor; they constructed well-appointed churches and residences, and provided the most complete facilities available for the education of the settlers' children. All of these undertakings taken together comprised an imposing presence in the colonial society and politics of Pará, as well as a remarkably productive economic enterprise -- one which managed to carry on its lucrative import and export trade in all but complete independence from the government-regulated sector of the economy.[9]

During most of this "Jesuit century," the authority of the Crown continued to be deployed in support of the missionaries' efforts. The black robes were viewed officially as the only group in the colony who operated on the basis of internal discipline and high moral purpose. They could therefore be relied upon to look out for the Indians' "best interests," and in the final analysis for those of the King as

well. The Jesuits also exercised major influence, particularly during the 1680's, in the formulation of royal legislation concerning the administration of the Indians of Pará; and all royal governors were obliged them to treat them at least with circumspection. It was not until the 1750's, when the Empire was reorganized by the Marquis of Pombal according to the regalist principals of "Enlightened Despotism" and the Jesuit order was made into the symbol of everything archaic and undesirable in the realm, that their ascendence in Pará came to an end.

The Jesuits' role in the economy of Pará was as influential as their participation in its politics. In 1751, Gov. Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado reported to Pombal's government that the century-old exemption of the missionary religious orders from taxes on their shipments of cacao and other forest products to Portugal had put them at so great an economic advantage, that by then they virtually monopolized the modest export trade of the colony. The Jesuits, for their part, exported more than all the other orders combined. In addition, claimed the governor, they controlled the supply of meat, fish and food staples to the city of Belém, much of the retail trade of the colony, and the provision of a variety of services to the settlers by the skilled mission Indian workers whom the missionaries regularly hired out for wages paid in avance. All of this was as intolerable, according the economic theory of that day, as was the Jesuits' role in politics. As a consequence, in 1757 Pombal expelled the Jesuit order from Pará and Maranhão, as from Brazil and the rest of the Portuguese empire.[10]

João Lúcio de Azevedo, the most thoughtful student to date of the conflicted colonial government and society of Pará before the 1750's, once characterized it as a "defective political regime" -- by which he appears to have meant one not conducive

to an orderly capitalist economic development. From his 19th-century liberal point of view, there had been far too much centralization in the Lisbon government of the power and decision-making for early colonial Pará. Within the colony itself, too much power had been arrogated to themselves by the Governors, the Bishops, the superiors of religious orders and the military Captains-Major. Paradoxically, too much autonomy had also been allowed to the Municipal Councils of Pará and São Luiz, whose chronic turbulence had rendered impossible any smooth sailing by the ship of state. The legal framework for colonial rule had been ill-conceived, uncertain and constantly in flux; and the results had been "anarchy" in both government and the public services, royal revenues that were permanently disappointing, and chronic public discontent.[11] A social historian may be forgiven for seeking more fundamental explanations for the dysfunctions of colonial society in Pará, but Azevedo's appraisal of its formal system of government was remarkably incisive.

The principal figures in the colonial administration of Maranhão and Grão Pará were the Governor, the Ouvidor (chief magistrate and prosecutor) and the Provedor da Fazenda (comptroller and supervisor of tax collection). These were royal appointees; and each was assisted by a subordinate (the Captain-Major, Magistrate, and Tax Collector) assigned to each of the twin capitals. The principal seat of government was at São Luis do Maranhão during most of the 17th century, and at Belém do Pará (in most periods the scene of greatest commercial activity) after about 1690. Communications between these two cities, maintained for the most part by sea-going canoe in the absence of any sort of highway, were always difficult and erratic. Nevertheless, the chief royal officials were always obliged to divide their time between them; and when the Governor and his court were in one place, they found it

difficult to keep a tight rein on developments in the other.

A Roman Catholic diocese was erected in Maranhão in 1687, and another in Pará in 1720; but the secular clergy supervised by these two bishops were always few and comparatively ineffectual. Those there were tended to be confined to the principal towns of the colony, at least until the 1750's.[12] Control over most parishes and most church property remained, throughout our period, in the hands of the legally independent superiors of the missionary religious orders: the Jesuits, Observant and Capuchin Franciscans, Mercedarians and Calced Carmelites. These influential prelates were regularly convened, beginning in the 1680's, as a Mission Council (Junta das Missões) in each capital, with official responsibility for the supervision of Indian affairs. Most of the priestly services performed for all sectors of society, therefore, and most of the day-to-day administration of Indian life as well, were in the hands of the regular clergy.

The Cámaras (Municipal Councils) in Belém do Pará and São Luis do Maranhão sought to advance the "noble" settler interest. The wealthier moradores who comprised them were usually in open conflict both with officials sent from Portugal and with the superiors of the religious orders: "promoting conflicts, representations and demonstrations by the mob; imposing taxes on sales and salaries, decreeing levies, prohibiting business transactions, ordering arrests".[13] These were vociferous and belligerent bodies, whose independence reached the point of their requiring the Governor himself to appear before them whenever summoned. The Councils were guilty of many egregious abuses of the de facto power they enjoyed; but they also served the useful function of a "popular local magistracy," able to limit some of the excesses of greedy or abusive royal officials. On especially critical

occasions they would meet with the local clergy, nobility and officer corps in a Junta Geral reminiscent of the medieval town councils of Portugal -- an institution which although suffocated in practice by the expansion of royal power in the mother country, had never been entirely forgotten. Above all, however, the Cámaras served as the permanent focus of settler agitation against the Jesuits and other meddlesome religious orders, and of the perennial settler demand for an untrammelled authority to exploit Indian slave labor in whatever manner they saw fit.[14]

This political system was one in which power might be exercised more readily to prevent things from happening than to accomplish them. It was a system which was not at all conducive to cooperation between individuals and the government, or between the government agencies themselves, for the purpose of carrying out any long-term project of reform or of economic development. Laws, and in particular the confusing series of decrees concerning the "freedom" of the Indian laborers of the colony which will be examined in more detail below, were frequently overlooked. It became customary early on in Pará to purchase privilege, and to pay bribes where necessary to obtain the complicity of government officials in preventing any unwelcome application of the law.

The arrogant Captains-Major were especially notorious for flaunting authority and pursuing personal enrichment as they pleased. They functioned as chief political as well as military authorities during any absence of the royal Governor from either of the colony's capitals (which meant most of the time in Belém during the 17th century, and in São Luis during the 18th); and in particular they were well-placed to fit out and assign Indian crewmen to the great river-going cargo canoes, and send them up the Amazon for profitable enterprise in the back country or

sertão whenever they chose -- regardless of any official restrictions or regulations. But most other high officials also acted in arbitrary and self-serving ways; and in practice they were seldom made to answer to the King for any misbehavior. Clapping people in irons without sufficient cause, libelling them in correspondence with the Court, handing out episcopal excommunications for purely political reasons, offending a fellow citizen with abusive invective -- all of these were standard forms of the use and abuse of power in the hurly-burly of colonial politics. When a settler succeeded in protesting to the Crown of some violation of his rights or privileges (something that was difficult to do, since correspondence with Lisbon was normally done through the local office-holders!), the complaint was as likely as not to be overlooked by royal functionaries in the interest of maintaining the principle of a strong central authority.[15]

One especially oppressive feature of the colonial system in Pará, as elsewhere, was the government's policy of taxing the citizens (but not the enterprising religious orders) as frequently and as heavily as possible. This burden was exacerbated by the ancient custom of tax-farming, in which the right to collect a particular tax was auctioned off each year to the highest bidder. The tax farmer might then gouge the public with impunity, so long as the Royal Treasury had received its agreed-upon payment beforehand:

> There was the ten per cent tax (dízimo) on all merchandise that entered or left the colony; another ten per cent for the Captain-Major; the special levies on farinha de mandioca, lumber and other products; the twenty per cent (quinto) on slaves taken in just war; the ten percent on the fruits of the

land . . . on hides, oils, and cotton.[16]

In addition to these regular taxes, Governors felt free to attempt to exact one-time "voluntary donations" for special purposes from the wealthier citizens, whenever the need arose -- sometimes offering these as a means of qualifying for the royal favor. But taxes of every kind were at also regularly avoided in Pará, especially by the wealthy and well-connected; and this in turn contributed to a steady pressure from the royal government to increase them where it could, and to apply them on every possible transaction. The result was that the overall tax burden was not so much a steady and predictable drain on any household's surplus (as it has tended in modern times to be), as it was an endless series of seemingly arbitrary or unjust , and for that reason particularly onerous levies, which taken together contributed greatly to dampening the public morale and heightening the uncertainty of all enterprise.

The Royal Treasury also engaged in a variety of business endeavors on its own account -- operating fisheries and seaside salt-pans with Indian labor, selling African and Indian slaves to the settlers, sometimes even peddling imported goods. But for all that, its revenues were never sufficient to do more than barely cover the expenses of the colonial administration itself -- and in many periods they failed even to cover the salaries of colonial officials. The royal government in Lisbon was always complaining about the shortfall in revenues from Maranhão and Grão Pará; functionaries continually complained that their salaries were in arrears; settlers complained about the excessive taxes. Before the 1750's, everyone in Pará seemed in fact to be complaining year in and year out -- about the economic stagnation of the colony, and about its chronic, widespread and apparently irreducible poverty.[17]

The poverty of Pará: a contemporary diagnosis

In the 1680's, more than half a century after its foundation, the colony of Maranhão and Grão Para certainly was in terrible straits. Its population of European settlers was infinitesimal, and maintained an only tenuous control over the land. Labor for productive enterprises was chronically scarce; exports and with them the royal revenues were always disappointing. In the continuing absence of any signficant income from the operation of the production system of the colony, the Crown was ever reluctant to provide troops and supplies, or even salaries for the military and civilian officials who were responsible for its administration. In the event of a serious rebellion, or of an attack by any enemy, it seemed unlikely to observers that either Belém or São Luis would be in a position so much as to defend itself.

João de Moura, an astute commentator familiar with the administrative and commercial affairs of the colony in those days, wrote to provide the King with a remarkably lucid explanation of the nature and causes of these difficulties.[18] He began by noting that since the first settlers of the colony had come there from Pernambuco, their only idea of a way to make fortunes in Amazonia had been to plant sugar. To do this they had required a labor force of Indian slaves (since African slaves were for the most part unavailable); and these they had managed at first to obtain through barter with the more cooperative of their Indian neighbors. These native slaves had initially performed reasonably well for them -- docile folk that they were, afraid of their masters and afraid to run away lest they be captured and returned for punishment by the very chiefs who had sold them in the first place. But when the first slaves had sickened and died, as the great majority of them had done within a very few years' time, the demand for new manpower had led the settlers to

prey upon the same neighbors with whom they had originally traded for slaves. Friends had then become enemies, and the acquisition of slaves an occasion for war.

The colonial authorities had neglected to try and limit these slave-raiding wars, because at first they had agreed with the settlers that it was necessary to replenish their labor force with captives at any cost.[19] But over the medium term this had turned out to be a terrible mistake, since the slaves captured in wars waged against the settlers' nearby Indian neighbors had found it easy afterwards simply to run away and take refuge in their home communities. Between that handicap and what had turned out in practice to be the Indians' natural indisposition to accept the disciplines of forced field labor in commercial agriculture for the benefit of others, the settlers had never again managed to corral enough workers to operate their plantations at full production.

By the beginning of the fourth quarter of the 17th century, Moura recalled, the once-hopeful colony had found itself reduced to a few islands around São Luis in Maranhão (whose mainland missions and plantations had by that time been wiped out by the attacks of hostile Indians), and to a somewhat wider stretch of territory stretching along river banks near the mouth of the Amazon. Portuguese and Indian expeditions might scour the country in their continuous search for slaves, roaming farther and farther inland from these secured areas; but they had never been able to establish any permanent outposts in the sertão. The settlers of Pará had in the meantime gained a wide reputation among the Indians as unreliable and even traitorous allies; and they had convinced those Indians who had had any dealings with them that the humanitarian principles of Christianity, and of the royal Portuguese government, were a hollow fraud. All efforts by the King to impose

restraints on the rapacity of these Paraenses (settlers of Pará) had so far come to naught, as at the same time had efforts to facilitate the introduction of the African slaves which were by now seen by all as indispensable for the development of any stable and productive commercial agriculture in the tropics..

In João de Moura's view the second cause for the decline of the colony was, paradoxically, the discovery there early on of such readily exportable and lucrative forest products as the wild cacao and the Amazonian "clove" or cravo de casca.[20] These once promising productions had distracted the settlers for a time from every more substantial endeavor; but after a few years, due to the exhaustion of the more accessible groves due to feckless overharvesting, they had tended rather to decline than to increase. In the meantime, the Paraenses' concentration on the development of an extractive economy based on forest products had proven disastrous for the colony's incipient plantation agriculture.

The first settlers had been forced by their isolation from Brazil and Portugal, and by their absolute lack of capital, to borrow heavily in order to equip such plantations as there were in Pará. They had paid higher-than-normal prices for everything they imported, and they had lived permanently in debt. So long as these plantations had remained their only source of income, however, the planter-moradores had worked hard to increase their production and holdings and to try and meet their commitments. But when the possibility had been discovered of turning to the export of forest products -- products which at first fetched higher prices than they would do later on, and which required much less labor and capital to gather than did the products of a plantation -- there had been a headlong rush to the sertão. Mer-chants had insisted on being paid for their goods in cacao or cravo rather than in

sugar. The planters had then virtually abandoned agriculture, and from then on they had sent all the slaves they could mobilize into the forests after the drogas preciosas.

As plantations were abandoned, wrote Moura, he colonial merchants had grown less and less willing to risk bringing in expensive trade goods, and especially the highly valued slaves from Africa, for sale in Pará and Maranhão. The settlers had, in any event, decided by this time that Indian slaves were preferable to Africans for the work of collecting the products of their own native forests; and the pressure for the recruitment of Indian labor by any means available had accordingly grown apace. The entrepreneurs of cacao and cravo had seen modest increases in earnings at the outset; but production was severely limited over the long run by the wide distribution of trees of each species in the forest and the extreme scarcity of labor. Cacao and cravo production was not only irregular in quantity from year to year, but also of wildly uneven quality due to the complete lack of production standards in the colony. Total exports from Pará could never have competed with those of Brazil with its fully developed sugar and tobacco plantations; and by the 1680's Pará's production was in any event already in chronic decline.

Complicating this structural crisis was the fact that trade in Pará was done entirely on a long-term credit basis, since producers of whatever sort seldom had enough stock on hand at a given moment to pay for what they bought. This was not unusual in the Portuguese colonial economy; the retail trade at Bahia and elsewhere was done in the same way. But the wealthy men of Brazil controlled enterprises of reliable profitability; and if they could not pay their debts the first time around, they could be expected to pay them the second. The moradores of Maranhão and Pará, on the other hand, were unable to provide any such guarantees. They had in practice

foregone the claim they might once have had to the status of senhores or lords of the land, precisely by turning rather to the helter-skelter exploitation of the forests. The result was that those traders who did take the risk of selling goods to them were obliged to charge ever more excessive prices. The merchants of Belém were in the habit of providing trade goods in advance to the moradores, as they outfitted their canoes for travel into the sertão. If these collectors and slave-traders returned empty-handed, the merchants were obliged to provide them with even more goods for the next season in order to have any hope at all of being repaid. By the critical 1680's, with forest production in decline, all participants in this risk-ridden system found themselves hard put to survive.

Costs in the business of forest product collection had, moreover, recently been substantially increased by the institution (in an effort to increase the royal revenues) of a system for the government licensing of all expeditions to the sertão. Licence fees and the dízimos on forest production were at that time virtually the only sources of government revenue in the colony;[21] and they were also an irrestible opportunity for corruption. Licenses could be obtained in practice by paying or promising bribes to the Governor and the Captain-Major. Overall production was, however, too miniscule to allow for very much of this raking-off of the profits by greedy officals during any given year: "at the present time, the need is rather for someone to plant than for someone to harvest!"[22] The abandonment of commercial agriculture, thought Moura -- even of the relatively unproductive commercial agriculture which was allowed by the poor soils and the inefficient labor force of Pará -- had proved to be an unmitigated economic and fiscal disaster for the colony.

In conclusion, Moura argued that the King's interest and the interest of

establishing a stable and well-ordered colonial society had been ill-served by the kind of economic development which had taken place in Pará. It had been of little use to explore great areas of the sertão before the settlers had so much as established a firm base in commercial agriculture -- because without that critical base they could acquire no real wealth, no vested interest, no property to defend in the event of an enemy attack. In the second place, the Amazonian Indians employed in forest product collection had never been sufficiently "domesticated" to the Portuguese way of life. The work they did in the forests was arduous; and when the Indians deserted to escape it, as they frequently did, they could not help but spread a negative impression of the settlers and their colonial economic system among their still-independent fellow tribespeople and others. This made it chronically and increasingly difficult to recruit labor for any sort of settler enterprise.

Finally, in Pará only the relatively rich could afford to outfit a collecting expedition to send into the sertão. In the absence of more diversified and conventional kinds of productive activity, there was little employment for the poorer settlers. The labors of these citizens, such as they were, were therefore of little benefit to the State. It would have been better for the royal revenues, and for the organization of a stable colonial society, to have such people tilling the soil or performing skilled labor of some other kind -- rather than being employed as they were only seasonally by the wealthier moradores, as canoe-captains for voyages into the Amazonian heartland.[23]

Signs and consequences of the poverty of Pará.

In 17th century Pará, even the paltry and highly ephemeral wealth of which João de Moura spoke was decidedly a relative thing. It consisted neither in land,

which was available for nothing but was quickly depleted and made worthless by an inappropriate application of the methods of European agriculture, nor in buildings, of which there were few of substance in either Belém or São Luis and none elsewhere, nor in movable goods which were decidedly scarce and rudimentary. Wealth was to be found exclusively in the control of the Indian labor, since that was what was required to produce all the goods necessary for the maintenance of a household, and a small surplus of goods to barter with the merchants for a few essential products imported from Europe. But labor of any sort was seriously and chronically scarce in Pará; and as we will see, the labor force itself was both short-lived and unreliable.

The result of this precarious situation was that only a very few people managed to make themselves rich in colonial Pará, at least by any Brazilian or continental standard. This was a society in which "there was no kind of luxury, and the most ordinary and indispensible household items were constantly unavailable." In even the most prosperous homes, imported goods had for the most part to be substituted by the products of local artisanry. The settlers wore cotton cloth that was homespun by Indian women and dyed black with natural dyes. The slaves wore next to nothing. Household utensiles were rudimentary in the extreme.

Food, which had been extraordinarily abundant during the first years of the colony, became chronically scarce with the depletion of soils, the decline of agriculture and the over-hunting and over-fishing of areas immediately adjacent to the towns. In Belém, there was not so much as a municipal slaughterhouse or a store selling the everyday food staples of Portuguese households, until well into the 18th century. The Governor complained in 1689 that muskets, an item of prime necessity to a population of woodsmen and hunters anywhere in the world at that time, were

scarce in Pará because the settlers there were too poor to buy them. (He suggested that in the interests of the defense of the colony, the Royal Treasury ought perhaps to sell two hundred of these weapons at a subsidized price). All in all, in the nice understatement of Sue Gross, Pará was "no mercantilist dream:" its exports were neither quantitatively nor qualitatively sufficient to produce significant revenues for the government, nor could they pay for the regular imports of the luxury goods required by the elite, or even for the ordinary manufactured goods required by the population at large.[24]

Few ships visited the port. For several years following on 1667, the Royal Treasury took charge of importing iron, steel, knives and other trade goods on its own account -- accepting payment for them only in forest products, which the tax collector then sold to help pay the expenses of administration. Governors and other functionaries traded forest products on private account directly with Lisbon. The religious orders imported and exported relatively small shipments of goods tax-free for the maintenance of their missions and residences. There was so little conventional mercantile exchange within the colony, in fact, that for a long time there was no perceived need for any conventional European money! The prices for the few goods and services available in the colony were set by the Municipal Councils of Pará and São Luis in rolls of homespun cotton cloth or in balls of cotton yarn, and during the 18th century in arrobas of cacao beans as well. Taxes were paid in this money; Indian slaves were bought with it. The soldiers of the garrison and the few dozens of public employees (filhos da folha) were paid their wages in it as well, as were all categories of "free" Indian laborer.[25]

The demand for metallic coinage as a medium of exchange nevertheless

became a constant theme in the plaintive official correspondence between Pará and the court in Lisbon during the late 17th and early 18th centuries:

> without it it is difficult to do business, and people live by the most primitive kind of exchange, namely barter, without a specie commonly valued and serving as the medium for selling what they produce and buying what they need.

Coin would, it was hoped, do for Pará's economy what blood did for the human body --circulate and invigorate and thereby lead to increased productivity. The lack of it was seen as a kind of anemia which prevented people from trying to produce anything at all for which there was not a proven easy market in exchange for imported goods.[26]

In 1684, the King authorized the shipment to the colony of two thousand five hundred milreis (written 2,500$000) or a thousand cruzados each year -- an amount equal to the annual salary of the Governor of Maranhão and Grão Pará -- in copper and silver coins of lesser denomination; but for whatever reason, no such shipments appear to have been made. Small amounts of Brazilian coin did trickle in through commercial channels, but much of this specie must soon have been taken out of circulation and transformed into a commodity, since in 1706 the Governor was instructed to put a stop to its being sold at twice its value. By this time, the Crown had somehow been persuaded that the introduction of coin would in fact be "very prejudicial to the economy of Pará." In the event it was not until 1748 that the King finally authorized the Casa da Moeda in Lisbon to mint coins of copper, silver and gold intended for circulation in the colony on the basis usual elsewhere. The total value of that emittance was eighty thousand milreis (80,000$000) -- of which two

thirds were sent to Pará at that time, and one third to Maranhão. Thus it was that the first jingling pockets and jealously guarded cashboxes made their appearance in Pará just as the "Jesuit century" and the era of the Indian slave trade were drawing to a close.[27]

Despite this severe handicap the economy of Pará before the 1750's did not suffer, strictly speaking, from an absence of money. The officially designated substitutes for metallic coinage did peform in principle all of the economic functions of a conventional all-purpose money. They served as a medium of exchange, as a mode of payment and as a standard of value -- as well as allowing to some extent for the storage or accumulation of wealth.[28] But these Paraense fiber and seed monies were impracticably bulky; and they were always of unpredictable size, weight, quality and intrinsic value. They were easily counterfeited, and in many cases subject to deterioration through time. The result was that they performed their economic function only very clumsily:

> Since there is no real money in the marketplace, nothing is for sale there. The medium of exchange is produce, each item with its fixed price: a yard [vara] of cotton cloth is 200 reis; an arroba [15 kilos] of sugar, 1$200 [1.2 milreis]; an arroba of tobacco, 1$600; an arroba of cacao, 4$000; an arroba of cravo, 1$600. A man goes out to collect cravo, prepares it as well as cinnamon, and sells it for the standard price; another gathers it along with the moss on the tree-trunk, and stores it wet in a barrel so that it comes in black and burnt-out, without weight or substance, yet its value is the

> same; and another returns to do his work even more carelessly than that.[29]

One problem with this system was that the goods certified as money with their arbitrarily established standard values, were also commodities whose market value fluctuated with the demand for them. In 1708, the Municipal Council complained that the low cacao prices then prevailing were a disaster for the moradores. Merchants were refusing to accept payment in cacao, the legal medium of exchange, and insisted instead on cravo -- which could be acquired only by those who owned or could hire the Indian canoemen to send into the sertão to collect it. In the meantime, those who had stocks of cacao on hand were in double jeopardy because the devalued bean was certain to rot within the year if it was not shipped out of the country. The result of these and similar anomalies was the severe general shortage of imported merchandise in Pará, which the Cámara believed could only be remedied by the regular introduction of metallic coin.[30] In 1732, however, this problem remained unsolved. Cacao was the still the official money, valued then at 3$600 the arroba. Government salaries were being paid in cacao at that rate. But when the same beans were offered to a merchant for export, they fetched a price which varied between only eight and ten tostões ($800-1$000) the arroba, depending on demand.[31]

The use of cotton cloth as money was no less fraught with problems. The wages of Indian crewmen were set at two varas de panno (yards of homespun cotton cloth) per month at least as early as 1655.[32] But cloth was also subject to the vagaries of the market. More cotton was raised in Maranhão than in Pará, even before it became an important export crop there late in the 18th century. In 1670 the

Municipal Council of São Luiz was at pains to persuade the King that no cotton should be allowed to leave the captaincy of Maranhão, since specie was not supposed to be exported from any part of the empire! The problem was that cotton, which was for many decades the only money in Maranhão, had been moving to Pará at an alarming rate since the standard yard of cloth there was worth double its value in Maranhão.[33] In that same year an effort was made to prohibit the export of cotton from Pará as well, because it was

> the principle commodity with which this colony is governed, with which one equips a collecting expedition, pays the Indian crew, and dresses the settlers and soldiers. If it is exported the forest product industry will be lost and the royal revenues lowered, and a roll of cloth will come to be worth 28$000.[34]

The cloth in question was coarse homespun manufactured for the most part by the mission Indian women of Pará and Maranhão, a circumstance which provided the mostly Jesuit missionaries with yet another substantial source of income.[35] Before the arrival of the Europeans, some of the native peoples of Amazonia had spun tree cotton and twisted its fibers into hammocks, fishnets and other useful items. But with the exception of the Omaguas of the Solimões valley, who as we have seen were weaving cloth when the Europeans first found them, the Indians had learned the use of the spindle and loom from the missionaries. The cloth they made was by now worn universally by the working people of Pará and Maranhão, and by all but the wealthier settlers as well; as commodity, it was therefore an indispensable item in the intra-regional trade. The monetary unit was a standard one hundred-vara

rolo de panno of conventional width, woven of a standard thread with a thickness of twenty-six fibers. An officially-certified standard one-pound ball or novelo of the same thread was occasionally to be found in circulation as well.[36] The most serious disadvantage of this cotton money was that it was easily falsified by stuffing the balls of yarn with sticks and rags, or by weaving the cloth with a thread of too few fibers. A roll of inferior-grade cloth with the official value of 20$000 in Maranhão (or 30$000 in Pará) might therefore be worth considerably less in local transactions among those in the know. The same roll, moreover, might and fetch only 5-6$000 by the time it reached the Lisbon market.[37]

Among the principal victims of the poverty and the deficient monetary system of Pará were the soldiers in its garrisons. Though defense was a major concern to the government in all periods, the King was reluctant to pay for the regular maintenance of a permanent force of Portuguese troops in the colony. Peninsular soldiers were also generally reluctant to serve there -- so much so that many of those who went were sent out as degredados in punishment for some crime.[38] Conscription for service in Maranhão and Grão Pará was done ordinarily on the Atlantic islands of Madeira and the Azores. The service was involuntary; the recruitment was unexpected, and it often represented a severe hardship for the unfortunate draftees and their families. As many men as possible were recruited in the colony itself; but the possibilities there were limited by an official racial prejudice against Indians, by the miniscule size of the European and mestiço population, and by the fact that as a reward for having expelled the Dutch from Maranhão in 1644 the respectable moradores of Belém and São Luiz had been granted the "traditional rights of the citizens of Oporto" (a consideration similar to the medieval Castilian

fueros) -- which included a permanent exemption from military service![39] Skilled workers were also exempted in practice, because they were so scarce in the colony. The result was that the ranks of the unfortunate white islander conscripts could be supplemented generally speaking only by lower-class, generally mameluco or "half-breed" draftees from Pará and Maranhão who were not always reliable as defenders of the colonial status quo.[40] The officers of this ragtag army, led by the Captain-Major of Pará, were for the most part impecunious fidalgos or gentlemen, of preferably peninsular Portuguese origin. It was not unusual, however, for men even of the officer-candidate class to begin their service as ordinary soldiers -- and to advance through the non-commissioned ranks to officer status only slowly, within perhaps twenty or thirty years of service.[41]

Once he found himself subjected to military discipline, the lot of the ordinary foot-soldier assigned to this Amazonian frontier was miserable indeed. Poorly paid to begin with (18$000 or perhaps five rolls of cotton cloth a year in the early 18th century, ranging up to 48$000 for the captains of fortresses or garrison posts), the men received their wages on so irregular a basis that they were usually obliged to live in debt to the post storekeeper. When payday did arrive, they might receive a portion of cotton cloth or cacao according to the regulations; but they were more likely to receive instead one or another kind of imported European merchandise whose unit value had been inflated at will by the paymaster. These goods could then be returned to the storekeeper at half the price, if the soldier was unable to sell them on the open market. In addition, the storekeeper contrived to siphon off nearly half of the average soldier's earnings simply to pay for his rations of food and clothing.[42]

The fortresses in which these defenders of the realm were confined were for

the most part poorly constructed, because of the scarcity of skilled masons, building materials and government revenues. There was also little incentive for the disgruntled conscripts to maintain them. Artillery pieces rusted; battlements fell into ruins and were quickly overgrown; simply storing gunpowder and keeping it dry in the humid climate was so great a problem that there was often none to be had in the colony. Shipments of basic supplies were so infrequent that both officers and men were obliged to spend much of their time simply foraging for food. Discipline in the frontier forts was so lax, moreover, as to allow the troops to spend more time hunting for slaves and directing the collection of forest products than they did attending to the King's service. Desertions were commonplace, and virtually impossible to prevent.[43]

In 1722, a new Governor reported in dismay that in all of Pará and Maranhão there were not enough soldiers to defend either capital properly, or to man the necessary annual government expeditions to the sertão. The same soldiers were obliged to stand guard duty in the daytime and patrol the streets at night. If any of these were sent off on some special duty, the nightly rondas seen as essential to public security simply had to be abandoned. Military men were forbidden by the regulations from engaging in any kind of private business to supplement their incomes; but most were obliged to ignore this rule, because their monthly wages (paid at that time in cacao beans) were insufficient even to enable them to clothe themselves decently. The governor therefore asked the King to send him an additional four hundred men, and to authorize the additional expenditures which would be required to bring the service up to snuff. This authorization was not forthcoming. Thirty years laer, Gov. Mendonça Furtado wrote to the King that by then nobody wanted to be a soldier in Pará. People there preferred doing the lowest

kind of work to any sort of military service; and the moradores would put their sons to learning any sort of skilled trade half-way, simply as a means of avoiding conscription. The result was that there were no volunteers even for officer appointments, and that the few available footsoldiers had to be "recruited by violent means."[44] This situation was clearly intolerable from the point of view of any enlightened administrator; yet no solution was found to it during the first hundred and fifty years of the colonial history of Pará.

During the very late 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries the economic circumstances of Pará began, despite all of these handicaps and complaints, to improve somewhat. A long period of "anarchy" had culminated during the 1680's in an armed revolt led by morador Manoel Beckman in Maranhão. To this the government had responded by sending out a "strong" governor, Gomes Freire de Andrade, who attempted to reassert the authority of the State by bringing with him a coherent and authoritative body of legislation concerning the colony's always troublesome system of labor relations (see Chapter 3 below). Population and production increased thereafter, gradually but steadily. The towns of São Luis and Belém became small cities which fulfilled many of the requirements of urban life as defined in their day. The number of skilled workmen available for wages grew slowly. The amount of merchandise available in the marketplace tended to increase as well, in response to an increased output in both agriculture and forest product collection. The export trade, which had attracted only occasional ships during the 17th century and perhaps three a year by 1733, was loading half a dozen vessels annually by the mid-century. Charles de la Condamine wrote in 1743 that at that point Pará was exporting cravo de casca, sarsaparilla, vanilla, sugar, coffee and "above all cacao,

which is the medium of exchange in that country and constitutes the wealth of its inhabitants."[45]

This trade was at least occasionally profitable to the leading moradores and especially to the merchants of the colony, as well as to their suppliers in Lisbon and Oporto -- despite the frequent shipwrecks and the attacks waged on vessels arriving from Pará by the pirates of the Barbary coast. Commerce was also stable enough by the end of our period to make long-term credit operations increasingly feasible for the merchants of Belém and São Luis; suppliers were at last sending full shipments of European goods to the colony, and receiving in return substantial cargoes of forest and agricultural products -- with the balance made up perhaps with balls of homespun cotton yarn.

Nevertheless, even in its best days before the 1750's, Pará was neither a prosperous place for its inhabitants (even the Europeans among them) nor a fiscal success for the Crown. This anomaly was due in part to the firm control over several branches of production which was exercised by the tax-exempt Jesuits and other religious orders, and to their self-contained system of exploitation. More important still was the fact that both the missionary and the secular sectors of the economy were based upon a system of production which consumed the producers at the same time as it prevented the accumulation of capital. This subject will be explored more fully in Chapter 3. For the present, with due allowance for hyperbole in the settlers' constant complaints of poverty and imminent ruin, one is left with the impression of a decidedly unsuccessful colonial enterprise. Before the 1750's, the great bulk of the production of Pará was consumed locally; and the remainder was traded on decidedly unfavorable terms for the few European goods which were considered absolutely

essential to maintain a semblance of civilized life. Even in comparison to the poorer colonies elsewhere in the tropical world of its day, the economy of Pará was able at best to provide a pitifully low standard of living for a very small number of people.[46]

Resistance to "civilization"

Society in early colonial Pará, in addition to being chronically poor, was a living contradiction to some of the basic principles and expectations of Portuguese colonial administration. By the early 18th century, for example, such commercial agriculture as still existed was carried out not on the great seigneurial estates that were to be found in much of Brazil, but in widely scattered small and largely self-sufficient family farms. The domestic Indians living in the immediate vicinities of the twin capitals were to be found in perhaps two score villages, strung along the narrow várzeas within a few days' canoe travel from each town -- each of these with a few dozen or at most a few hundred people living under direct missionary supervision. The property-holding moradores might visit their modest homes in town for the holidays, or on occasion to buy and sell a very limited range of goods; but unless they were public employees or merchants (both very small groups), they spent most of their time on the isolated sítios where they did just as they pleased. There each settler presided over a few Indian families in addition to his own -- people whose productive activity was focussed primarily on feeding, clothing, sheltering, protecting and transporting the master and his family and retainers. Everything about this far-flung system contradicted the Iberian peninsular ideal of a clearly stratified, orderly, disciplined, pious and fundamentally urban society, surrounded by a productive countryside densely populated with hard-working peasants.

This situation was regularly lamented by the royal governors of Pará and

Maranhão, one of whom complained in the 1680's that it would be impossible even to mobilize the colonial militia in the event of any enemy attack, because its members lived so spread out on their miniscule estates, that there were several leagues of river between one and the next. As if that were not enough, the settlers themselves were obliged from time to time to:

> move from one place to another due to the weakness of the land which, after a few years have passed, does not produce fruits with the same vigor as at the beginning.

In this respect, the moradores lived more like Indians than like civilized gentry. Even if were it possible to persuade them to settle closer together, the governor concluded, these benighted settlers would soon find it impossible to make a living from any piece of landed property to which they were assigned.[47]

More than half a century later, another governor would lament that Pará was in fact no "republic" (that is properly ordered society) at all,

> because people here do not live in community, but separately. The house of every inhabitant of the place, every petty chieftain, is a separate republic in which are to be found all the skills required for its sustenance: stonemasons and carpenters to erect the buildings, tailors, shoemakers, barber-surgeons, huntsmen, fishermen etc.

These skilled Indian and mestiço workers were jealously kept by their owners or employers for their own use, or in the case of the Indian slaves sometimes for letting out at high wages collected in advance by the settler, to those who did not have full complements of Indians available on their own estates. The result was a great

shortage of "free" wage-laborers, and of goods and services of all kinds, throughout both Pará and Maranhão.

Even beasts of burden were scarce in this God-forsaken colony, because although there were plenty of cattle and even (especially in Maranhão) some horses, there was no one to manufacture saddlery, harness, or oxcarts -- or even to operate stables for hire. There were also for the most part no roads or trails suitable for horse traffic; the long distance transportation of both goods and people was done exclusively by canoes with Indian crewmen. In town, everything was therefore carried on the heads of Indian laborers, both men and women -- which meant that huge numbers of people were required to do something as simple as delivering sand and stone to a construction job. Worse yet, the few horses there were in Pará went unshod for the lack of a blacksmith, and as a result were frequently crippled and died for lack of care.[48]

In the mid-18th century, a reforming governor concluded that the economic development of Pará had been hamstrung by the very tradition of self-sufficiency that had developed in every household unit. As a result of it, there had never developed that class of skilled workmen available for hire at reasonable wages, without which there could be no prosperous and well-ordered society. As if this were not enough, the Christians of Pará had "not only adopted the customs of the Indians but their religious rituals as well." Sometimes it was difficult to tell the pagans from the Christians; and when all was said and done these citizens were difficult for a visitor from the motherland to recognize as vassals of the King of Portugal.[49]

Portuguese ideals with regard to the arrangement of civilized households fared little better in Pará. The settlers generally shunned the Indians' palm-thatched

houses, short-lived but easily replaced, and preferred more substantial European-style structures in earth, wood or stone. But the rains played havoc with earthen walls; termites ate the wood; and stone was scarce nearly everywhere in the valley. Great efforts were made to remedy such difficulties. The religious orders set up kilns to manufacture brick and the all-important red tiles for civilized roofing.[50] Lime for mixing mortar was made from shells gathered on the beaches and burned under piles of brush, a method which yielded as much ash and dirt as lime, so that the resulting mortar soon crumbled. The forests were explored until the varieties of lumber best suited for each purpose had been established; and arrangements were made for its cutting, moving and sawyering by laborious means. Building stone was brought as ballast in ships arriving from Portugal, or from quarries near São Luis. But in the best of circumstances, there were few skilled carpenters and masons to make use of such European-style building materials as could be obtained in Pará. The edifices of Portugal's colonial presence there were accordingly for the most part both unimpressive and chronically in need of repair. Few of them have survived to the present day.[51]

Perhaps even more exasperating to a mid-18th century peninsular administrator was the fact that the Portuguese language itself had been slow to take root in Pará. The principal medium of communication throughout Portuguese Amazonia during the 17th and 18th centuries was the lingua geral, a pidgin based on Brazilian coastal dialects of Tupí-Guaraní (one of the principal indigenous language families of the South American lowlands), which had been wrought by the Indians, missionaries and settlers in their day-to-day contacts around the Jesuit aldeias of 16th-century Brazil. This hybrid tongue with its Tupían vocabulary and grammar its

occasional useful terms and constructions adopted from the Portuguese had been brought to Maranhão and Grão Pará by the first missionaries and settlers; and it flourished there largely because in the early years there had been several peoples on the lower Amazon who spoke Tupían languages of their own. The Jesuits, who had set the fashions for mission life in Amazonia as elsewhere in Portuguese America, had learned to speak the lingua geral fluently in their Brazilian seminaries; and they taught it to novices in their establishments at São Luis and Belém. They also wrote grammars, vocabularies, canned sermons, prayers and catechisms in the language; and they used it all but exclusively in their work with the Indians of whatever linguistic background.[52] Each new generation of settlers in Pará had been obliged, by and large, to follow suit.

The Indians attached to Jesuit and other mission aldeias of the lower valley, or to the settlers' estates, all spoke the lingua geral; and they would quickly teach it to the frightened and disoriented speakers of Arawakan and Cariban languages who were brought in year by year as slaves or "converts" to live among them. The vocabulary of day-to-day life in the Amazonian system of forced labor was in any event minimal, and there were few occasions for eloquence. Settlers who employed Indian labor and commanded canoe crews learned at least the rudiments of the language, in order to communicate with their workers. Mestiços born in Pará learned it from their mothers. Trade relations up and down the valley were conducted in the lingua geral, not least because for a long time the Jesuits were the leading traders. Mestiços and even Europeans who spent the better part of their lives in the sertão, might sometimes therefore come to speak the lingua geral better than, or in preference to, their native Portuguese. Indian women from the sertão who were fortunate

enough to be resettled in the company of their families and others of the same tribe, might succeed in holding on to their native languages and learning the lingua geral only poorly; they might even succeed in passing elements of their own languages on to their children. But no Indian man of the downriver missions lived in enough isolation from the labor system to avoid becoming fluent in what became the Tupian lingua franca of the colony.[53]

Colonial policy at first encouraged the development of this alien language, as a medium deemed more suitable than Portuguese for teaching the Indians, and for expressing the limited concepts which they were considered capable of understanding. The Jesuits were expected to teach the lingua geral to the elite youth attending their colégios, so that they might grow up to participate in the administration of the colonial economy.[54] But it was soon perceived that by working exclusively in the lingua geral, the missionaries were creating an exclusive realm of activity. This had the effect of limiting the possibilities for contact betweenIndians andEuropeans (especially those newly arrived from the mother country), and at the same time it made the missionaries themselves indispensable to the State as interpreters, and as administrators of the Indian communities. Since the question of who should administer the aldeias was the principal burning issue of colonial politics, there was always pressure from the settlers for a "secularization" of the missions. This project was often supported by peninsular bureaucrats as well, as a means of achieving universal instruction in Portuguese (along with systematic training in the "mechanical" trades), so that the Indians might become more communicative, less isolated, and more useful to potential Portuguese employers. By the late 1720's, this change was a matter of high priority in royal policy ; but there seemed as yet to be no

way to bring it about.[55]

Governor Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, who introduced the regalist policies of his brother the Marquis of Pombal to Pará during the 1750's, was concerned with all the deficiencies in colonial society as he saw them. But he was particularly convinced of the urgency of the establishment of the Portuguese language as the universal means of communication. Soon after arriving from Portugal, he had found to his horror that outside the confines of the governor's palace in Belém, he had a hard time making himself understood to most inhabitants even of the capital city. He had brought with him instructions from Lisbon to install Portuguese-language schools in all the settlements of the colony. This, it was hoped, would lay the ground for eliminating the socially divisive lingua geral, while at the same lubricating the often awkward relations between the government and the Indian communities, as well reminding the population that they were subjects of the Portuguese king. The Governor did what he could to carry out this policy, even going so far as to threaten those settlers who refused to comply with it that he would remove any Indians who had been assigned to their administration. But by Mendonça Furtado's day the moradores were clinging as resolutely as the missionaries themselves to their traditional habit of speaking only the lingua geral with "their" Indians. It was their conviction that the Indians who learned Portuguese became "ladinos" (sly and untrustworthy persons capable of manipulating their employers) and were chronically disobedient.

In the end, even this energetic governor was obliged to acknowledge that he had failed abysmally in his effort to stamp out the "pernicious and abominable language" of Pará. On one occasion, having been introduced to the children of one of

the principal citizens of Belém, he found that they spoke the lingua geral fluently but understood very little Portuguese. On another, he was shocked to overhear a conversation under his window between two newly-arrived African slaves who had learned something of the lingua geral within weeks after arriving in Pará, but were still completely ignorant of Portuguese![56]

Disease and the poverty of Pará

People in Pará were not only chronically poor and indifferently "civilized" under the colonial regime; they were also seriously ill a great deal of the time -- especially if they were Indians. This is one of the characteristics of that society which is most difficult fully to recapture today. A great many people were sick at any given time. Most people were sick some of the time. Many people were sick most of the time. Paradoxically, if they lived through the various afflictions that all of them faced year by year, people might hope to live to advanced ages in the benign Amazonian climate; but most people succumbed to one ailment or another at a comparatively early age. Diseases -- the predictable seasonal fevers, intestinal disorders, malnutrition and venereal ailments, but especially the terrifying and unforeseeable acute crowd diseases or epidemics -- were the principal cause of life's being "nasty, brutish and short" for the great majority of people.

A true picture of the role of disease in everyday life, which would contribute mightily to advancing the economic, social and political history of the colony, awaits the combined efforts of researchers in the great mass of documents from colonial Pará which can be found in Portuguese and Brazilian archives, with researchers in the field of tropical epidemiology. But for present purposes we will simply sketch an outline of the history of the principal epidemics of the 17th and early 18th centuries -

- each of which represented a major crisis for the production system, depleting the labor force and obliging the Paraenses to renew their efforts to recruit more and more workers in ever more remote sectors of the Amazon valley. Epidemic smallpox attacked the Amazon region at least as early as 1621, when it arrived at São Luis do Maranhão in a ship from Pernambuco, "from which many people died, especially Indians."[57] Clearly, the prevalence of disease was a serious challenge to public policy from the first years of the colony. In 1644, the smallpox once more killed so many Indians in Maranhão that the Captain-Major urged that the colonists be allowed to fan out and capture people in the hinterland without restrictions of any kind, and that Indians be brought from Pará to São Luis replenish the labor force.[58] It was recognized early on that the labor system of the colony was itself a factor in worsening the mortality caused by disease. One of the many futile royal decrees aimed at curbing the excesses of that system noted that "the Indians in service to private citizens, after a few days of service either die of hunger and overwork, or take flight to the hinterland where they die a few days later."[59]

The first region-wide epidemic on record began in Maranhão in 1662. On that occasion the settlers there, foreseeing imminent ruin, petitioned Lisbon for immediate relief shipments of African slaves to supplement the rapidly depleted labor force. By February of 1663, the contagion had spread to Belém, where the Governor felt obliged to send missionaries with escorts of musketeers up-river to trade or raid for Indian slaves on an emergency basis, so as to calm "the general discontent due to the shortage of servants." The entire colony was soon "aflame with the plague of smallpox," with missionaries reporting that they'd been reduced to digging graves with their own hands,

> because there were villages where there weren't two Indians able to get about, where parents left their children to take flight into the forest in an effort to escape this pestilence and the prospect of dying unattended, deprived of everything they needed either to cure themselves or to sustain life.

On this occasion the smallpox itself was of a particularly horrifying nature, even to a European familiar from back home with its symptoms:

> the very humor and stench of it sufficed for this plague to stick to a human body, causing it to give off an abominable rotting odor and changing the Indian's reddish skin to black . . . in some cases with such devastating effect that the flesh fell off of them in pieces. This contagion worsened as the hot season came, in which epidemics rage more fiercely -- especially in Pará, where the land is wet because of the rivers.[60]

Figures on the number of people killed by this epidemic have not yet come to light, but it seems to have been especially devastating because, as often happened elsewhere in the colonial Americas, the population of Pará was struck by yet another plague while it was still laid low by the first. A slaving expedition on its way back from the upper Amazon valley in 1663 was struck by the measles, which killed most of the captives it was transporting in addition to much of the crew. It also spread into the villages they visited along the way, and from them throughout both Pará and Maranhão. This second epidemic was thought to have worked its way down the Solimões and Amazon from the Spanish Jesuit missions on the river Marañón. A

decade later, missionaries in Pará were still complaining of the depopulation that had been wrought in the villages by the two plagues working in tandem, as in the Jesuit aldeia of Mortigura where most of the inhabitants had died "of the smallpox and the other diseases that befell them."[61]

Another serious epidemic of smallpox struck in the mid-1690's, when plaintive letters from the Municipal Councils of both São Luis and Belém reported the aldeias "almost depopulated" once again, and implored the King for permission to accelerate their slave-raiding. Governor Carvalho wrote that the Indians and even the few African slaves in the colony had for the most part succumbed to the pox, which was a principal reason for his decision to lead a slaving and exploring expedition up to the Rio Negro region in 1697. Most of the slaves whom the governor had sent down to Pará on that occasion (as well as several of the Portuguese and seasoned Paraense sertanistas in the slaving party) had also died along the way, themselves the victims of some unspecified illness.[62]

A new epidemic, more disastrous than any before, arrived with the first Bishop of Pará in 1724. When Fr. Bartolomeu do Pilar was on his way from Lisbon to take possession of that newly-created see, his ship docked at São Luis where the smallpox was then raging anew. There he re-embarked with his party in the great sea-going canoes for the trip to Belém, and was said to have expressed concern lest his crewmen carry the terrible sickness from one city to the other. As feared and predicted, four of the crew fell ill during the journey to Pará, and had to be left to die at settlements along the shore. By the time the party reached Belém, another half-dozen Indian canoemen were burning with fever. The Governor (sick in bed himself at the time, with some other ailment) ordered the sick crewmen placed in a quarantine

hut that was located beyond the edge of the city; but the rest of the crew simply returned to their home in the Jesuit convent. There, within a few days' time, most of them came down with the bexigas as well. So did the Indians of the household of the sargent who had served as captain of the Bishop's canoes; and before long the smallpox was spreading through all the neighborhoods of Belém, as well as through the coastal villages in which the ailing crewmen had been left some weeks before.[63]

In the populous Jesuit aldeia of Maracaná, important as the site of the Pará government's only salt works and the provider of pilots for the canoe journey to Maranhão, eighty or more people died right away from this epidemic -- not counting an indeterminate number who fled to the forests to avoid the plague, and must have died there. The surviving refugees returned to the town after just a few weeks; but before long they were stricken anew. The epidemic also spread to ten or twelve of the nearby missions, with the same deadly results in each place.

In Belém, where crews had gathered for the annual cacao-collecting expeditions and several dozen Indians had been put to work building the new Bishop's residence, the mortality was even greater. The Bishop and other employers refused to allow their servants to leave town in search of safety at this critical juncture; and there were soon so many sick and dying that there was scarcely anyone of the laboring class left to bury them. Corpses were simply piled in the churchyards at night. Slaves at many of the settlers' outlying estates, on the other hand, were saved by their owners' precaution in prohibiting all communication with the city for the duration. But many of the cacao-collecting canoes which got away and headed for the sertão that year seem to have taken the infection along with them; and they communicated it to settlements all along the banks of the lower Amazon --

themselves suffering great losses as they went. Many of these canoes returned months later with only one or two of an initial twenty crewmen; some were lost altogether, and very little cacao was collected that season.[64]

Estimates of the total mortality from the epidemic of 1724-25 varied widely, but the Governor believed that not less than a thousand Indians in Maranhão and two thousand in the immediate vicinity of Belém do Pará had succumbed within a single year's time. Another observer put the loss at "many whites, and more than a thousand slaves, mostly Indians" in the city of Belém alone. Whatever the absolute figures, the productive apparatus of the colony was so severely undermined by this devastation of the labor force that several undertakings of top priority to the government, such as the launching of a war and slaving expedition against the Manao of the Rio Negro (see Chap. 8 below), or exploring a recently-discovered gold-bearing tributary of the Rio Tocantins, or completing work on the new cathedral, had to be postponed indefinitely for lack of Indians to man the necessary canoes and perform the other manual labor. Years later, the King was still receiving plaintive requests from the settlers of Pará, for permission to bring Indians down from the sertão to replenish the personnel from their estates which had been lost during this epidemic.[65]

The most devasting round of affliction by epidemic disease occurred during the 1740's, when another plague of smallpox followed quickly by the measles fell upon every Portuguese settlement and mission outpost in Pará and Maranhão during a six-year period. The result was the death of perhaps twenty thousand people -- between a third and a half of the entire domestic Indian population of the twin colonies -- and an all but complete breakdown of their systems of production. For

this epidemic a much fuller documentation is available than for the others; and little doubt remains about the extent of its devastation.[66] Thus the Jesuit century and the era of the Indian slave trade ended in a virtual holocaust, occurring in what could only be experienced by contemporaries as an era of divine punishment for the multifold sins and failures of the colonial society of Pará.

The structure of every sort of human undertaking was rendered dysfunctional by an epidemiological episode such as any one of these. Enterprises were cancelled or ended in failure; families and communities fell apart; belief systems wavered. On a day-to-day and year-to-year basis, people of all races in early colonial Amazonia were kept reminded -- by ever-present disease more than by any other single factor -- of the possibility of an early death and the unlikelihood of the fulfillment of any long-term plan or project. An epidemic with these consequences was a clear sign of the tenuousness of humanity's hold over the land and its productions, and of the fragility of people's ties to one another. Such an atmosphere was scarcely conducive to the construction of enduring social institutions, or to long-term investment, or to the accumulation of capital or the consolidation of trust. It was, on the contrary, an atmosphere that nourished the quest for quick and easy gain, the spirit of unscrupulous self-reliance, the attitude of social irresponsibility. The organic and the social pathologies of colonial Pará were as one.

Demographic limitations

The chronic poverty of the still-born and stagnant economy and society of 17th and early 18th century Pará was perhaps most directly a result of its demography. The few extant population figures for the colony in this period speak quite eloquently of the difficulties that would have faced any program for its

economic development. In 1637, two decades after the planting of the Portuguese flag at the mouth of the Amazon, it was reported that there were only two hundred moradores in Belém -- most of them soldiers, with a few clergymen and government officials. Between the private captaincies of Caeté, Camutá and the new fortress of Gurupá (the remaining portions of Pará which had thus far been placed under effective Portuguese control), there were at that time less than a hundred more settlers and no priests. The scarcity of Portuguese women was so severe in the fledgling colony that the King had recently been asked to send out a hundred of them, recruited by whatever means were available, on the assurance that these would have no difficulty in finding husbands! Twenty years later, António Vieira found that there were only eighty moradores and heads of family in Pará (this time excluding both the soldiers and priests). In 1672, an ex-Governor estimated that between the two towns and four captaincies of Maranhão and Grão Pará there were perhaps eight hundred European residents.[67] By 1718, a century after its founding, the entire free population of Belém (presumably including the mestiços of all castes and conditions as well as the European-born) consisted of five thousand people, "among whom a quarter have more than ordinary means" (that is, were persons "of quality" deriving income from some sort of production or trade made possible by the labor of others). In 1749, the Cámara of Belém was reporting just over fifteen hundred visinhos or full-fledged citizen moradores, white men of the class exempt from the legal obligation to work -- of whom a thousand were the heads of families, and the remainder unmarried soldiers or clergymen.[68]

In the absence of more detailed and reliable figures, we must be content with an educated guess that in the period between 1650 and 1750 with which we are

primarily concerned, the "respectable" settled population of Pará (that is, of Belém, Camutá, Gurupá, Caeté and the few smaller settlements around the mouth of the Amazon excluding the modern State of Maranhão) increased slowly but steadily from about two hundred to about fifteen hundred "Europeans," most of them male heads of families born in the New World. By the latter date, there may have been a like number of soldiers, clergymen and unattached free persons of mixed race who were accepted as "white" men and women for most of the practical purposes of the colony, or a total of some three thousand "settlers."

The number of African slaves in Pará was miniscule, and certainly smaller than the total number of whites, at any time before the establishment of the government-sponsored trading company which would import them on a regular basis between 1755 and 1778. In this respect the demography and correspondingly the popular culture of early colonial Pará were strikingly different from those of neighboring Brazil. A certain number of Africans were present from the beginning, however, as domestic servants and skilled laborers employed by the religious orders, the wealthier settler families, the higher government officials and some agencies of the government itself.[69] As a rough estimate, these may have been as many as a thousand by the mid-18th century, for a total non-Indian population of whites, mestiços and blacks of some four thousand people -- the majority of whom maintained their residences in the principal towns and nearby sitios, though some of the men were obliged to spend long periods of time far from home in the pursuit of a fragile living from the sertão.

The Indian population of Pará, in stark contrast, was much larger but tended to chronic decline throughout the early colonial period. A substantial Indian labor

force could be maintained by the colonists only by means of the steadily increasing recruitment of new people from the sertão. The population of "free" Indians in the aldeias under Jesuit administration (probably four-fifths of the total population of mission Indians in the colony) increased slowly despite their periodic decimation by epidemic disease, from about eleven thousand in 1696 to a peak of some twenty-one thousand in 1730. If we adjust these comparatively reliable figures to account for the Indians administered by the other religious orders of Pará, we have perhaps fourteen thousand people increasing to twenty-six thousand during that period. Twenty years later, following the terrible epidemics of the 1740's, Gov. Mendonça Furtado reported that there were sixty-three aldeias under missionary administration in the Diocese of Pará, including both the tiny upriver mission stations and the comparatively populous aldeias de repartição near Belém. These, as he understood it, housed at the time between a hundred and fifty and eight hundred people apiece -- which would give an average of four hundred seventy-five, a very high figure in view of what we know about the devasting recent losses of those missions in the recent epidemics.[70] If we assume rather some three hundred people per mission at the mid-century, we have a total of perhaps twenty thousand Indians still living under missionary administration as our period came to a close.

There is as yet no solid basis for estimating the total numbers of Indians held in slavery by the settlers, the government and the religious orders at any period in colonial Pará. Such formal population figures as may once have existed for the period before 1750 have not survived the deterioration of the archives for this region. But if we assume that there were an average of fifteen Indian slaves in each settler household throughout (a guess for which there is some basis in the many chance

references to the settlers' domestic establishments and their perceived needs for labor which may be found in other documents for the period), and if we add another third for the Indian slaves owned by the religious orders and by the government itself, we may "guesstimate" a gradual increase despite many setbacks from perhaps four thousand in the 1630's to thirty thousand in the 1730's. Azevedo believed that there had been a total of some sixty thousand índios domésticos (slaves and mission Indians combined) in Pará during the period just prior to the great epidemics of the 1740's; and it is reasonable to assume that perhaps half of these were Indian slaves.[71] By 1751, Mendonça Furtado was estimating that only twelve thousand Indian slave workers and their families remained alive on the settler estates of Maranhão and Pará taken together. If two thirds of these are assumed to have lived in Pará, and these are assumed to have had the small families characteristic of an unhealthy population in chronic decline (when they had any families at all), we may multiply the eight thousand by just three to get a probable maximum figure for the population of Indian slaves in Pará at the very end of our period. That figure would be somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty-four thousand.

The total population of Indians, whites, blacks and mestiços settled under European governance in the colony may therefore have been about five thousand people in 1650, increasing despite repeated wars and epidemics to some fifty thousand people in 1750 -- with the European element holding at less than five per cent throughout the period. It is, moreover, a reasonable though not yet documentable assumption that the racially mixed component of this population (both slave and free) had increased substantially and was much larger than the "European" by 1750. How much larger, it would be difficult so far to guess. But what was the

size of the colony's labor force, indispensable to its economic development?

In order to translate these guesstimates into an approximation of the size of the labor force of Pará, we must keep in mind that of the population of less than five thousand increasing to some fifty thousand over the century, presumably at least a third at any period were children and people too old for forced labor. A considerable portion of the remainder must have been wholly or partially incapacitated by disease at any given point in time. The total pool of Indian men and women available to work was then probably never greater than twenty-five thousand, and on the average probably closer to fifteen or twenty thousand. A great number of these, not less than three for every "European" in the colony, were permanently employed in providing food, clothing and transportation to the settlers and the missionaries -- leaving but a few thousand in all for commercially productive activities of every kind. This reserve of workers, steadily depleted by a high rate of "normal" mortality, was periodically cut back by epidemic disease to the point of critical shortage and replenished, as we shall see, by the recruitment of perhaps l,000 new people each year from the sertão The laboring population of Pará therefore grew only very slowly and quite unevenly during the 17th and early 18th centuries. That it grew at all was the result of the most strenuous efforts on the part of a few hundreds of settlers and their few thousands of Indian retainers.

All in all, the poverty of colonial Pará must be ascribed to a variety of causes among which ineffective governance, excessive taxation, corruption, reliance on an unregulated system of extractive production, the failures of the "civilizing mission" of Christian Portugal and the depopulation resulting from crippling epidemics must be deemed especially important. All of these found expression in the operation of a

singularly self-destructive labor system, one which wrought extraordinary hardship on virtually all of the inhabitants of colonial Pará while barely enabling the enrichment of a very few. That dysfunctional set of arrangements must now be examined in some detail, before we can return to our examination of its consequences for the history of the middle Amazon valley and its peoples.

[1]The "Spanish captivity" of Portugal, occasioned by a dynastic crisis, lasted from 1580 to 1640. For the short-lived French establishment in Maranhão, see Claude de Abbeville, Histoire de la Mission des Peres Capucins en l"Isle de Maragnan et Terres Circonvoisins [1613] (facsimile edition Graz, 1963) and Laura Fishman, "Claude d'Abbeville and the Tupinambá: problems & goals of French missionary work in early 17th-century Brazil," Church History 58 (mar 1989):20-35. The principal sources for the initial Portuguese expansion towards the Amazon delta were published as "Documentos leste-oeste" in the Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro [hereafter Anais BNR] 26 (1904):149-480 and in Cándido Mendes de Almeida (ed.) Memórias para a história do extincto Estado do Maranhão... Vol. II (Rio, 1874), pp. 153-266. Classic historical treatments of this expedition and the establishment of the Portuguese in Pará include Bernardo Pereira de Berredo, Annaes históricos do Estado do Maranhão (Lisboa, 1749), paragraphs 415-515; Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, História Geral do Brasil (8th ed. São Paulo, 1975) II sec. 26, pp. 139-86 & Robert Southey, History of Brazil (London, 1822; facsimile ed. NY, n.d.) I chap. 13, pp. 396-475.

[2]On the Dutch and English settlements, see James A. Williamson, English Colonies in Guiana and on the Amazon, 1604-1668 (Oxford, 1923), esp. chaps. III-V; Anon., A Publication of Guiana's Plantation (London, 1632; facsimile reprint in The English Experience no. 525; Amsterdam, 1972); Johannes de Laet, "História ou annaes dos feitos da companhia privilegiada das Indias Occidentaes desde o seu começo até o fim do anno de 1636," Anais BNR 30 (1908):1-166; & Aubrey Gwynn, S.J. "An Irish Settlement on the Amazon, 1604-1668," Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Sec. C, 41 (1932-34).

[3]History of Brazil I, pp. 578-80.

[4]The captaincies were Caeté, on the coast between Belém and Sao Luiz with its seat at what is today the town of Bragança; Cametá (or Comutá) near the mouth of the Rio Tocantins; Gurupá (or Corupá) on the main stream of the Amazon below the mouth of the Rio Xingú; and Cabo do Norte, roughly the modern territory of Amapá to the north of the mouth of the Amazon. A fifth captaincy was later created for the great island of Marajó, which lies astride the river's mouth; but this outdated system did not endure, and had no lasting impact on the structure of colonial society.

[5]A.C.F. Reis, "The Franciscans and the Opening of the Amazon Region," The Americas 2 (1954-55), pp. 173-84; and "A expansão portuguesa na Amazonia nos séculos xvii e xviii," Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [hereafter RIHGB] 245 (1959), p. 313. Cf. Mathias Kiemen, O.F. M. The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693 (Washington, 1954), pp. 20-24. Franciscan capuchinhos of two other Portuguese provinces, da Piedade and da Conçeição, established themselves on a smaller scale in Pará during the late 17th century.

[6]Lisboa-King (Maranhao, ? Oct 1623) and Lisboa-Conselho Ultramarino (Lx, 29 Oct 1647), in The Americas 8 (1951-52), pp. 357-59 and 7 (1950-51), pp. 218-20.

[7]Reis, "Franciscans" and Kiemen, Indian Policy, pp. 33-34, 37-43 and 47. Lisboa's monumental, richly illustrated História dos animais e árvores do Maranhão was first published in Lisbon in 1967.

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[8]For thorough accounts of this struggle, and the main elements of a general political history of Pará in the period with somewhat contrasting interpretations, see João Lúcio de Azevedo, Os Jesuitas no Grão Pará (2nd ed. Coimbra, 1930); and Serafim Leite, S.J. História da Companhia de Jesús no Brasil [hereafter HCJB], vols. 3 and 4 (Rio/Lisboa, 1943), as well as Kiemen, Indian Policy, chaps. 4-6.

[9]A hostile estimate in ca. 1727 put the volume of Jesuit business (that is of the annual production of their missions and estates in Pará and Maranhão) at 140 contos de reis (140,000$000). Freire (Relação rendas religiosos n.d.), ms. AHU Para Cx 3. This was about sixty times the stupendous annual salary of a governor of the colony in that period. Antonio Baena, Compéndio das eras do Pará (Belem, 1968) p. 157.

[10]FXMF-Pombal (Para, 24 nov 1751), in Mendonça Amazonia I, pp. 63-78. On the Jesuit expulsion, see Dauril Alden, "Economic aspects of the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil: a preliminary report," in Henry Keith & S.F. Edwards (eds.) Conflict & Continuity in Brazilian Society (Columbia SC, 1969), pp. 25-65 & Azevedo, Jesuitas, chap. 12.

[11]Azevedo, Jesuitas, pp. 174-81. For a sampling of the seemingly minor requests which had to be referred for resolution to Lisbon from Pará, see the numerous responses to petitions in the "Livro Grosso do Maranhao," pub. in the Anais BNR 66-67 (1948) entire (hereafter cited as Livro Grosso 66 or 67).

[12]P. José Monteiro de Noronha, "Roteiro da viagem da cidade do Pará ate as últimas colónias dos domínios portuguezes em os rios Amazonas e Negro . . . [1768]", pub. in Colleçao de notícias para a história e geografia das nações ultramarinas que vivem nos domínios portuguezes ou lhes são visinhas VI (Lisboa, 1856), p. 4 (hereafter cited as Noronha "Roteiro"). The first Bishop of Pará was the Carmelite friar P. Bartolomeu do Pilar, who arrived in 1724.

[13]Azevedo, Jesuitas, p. 177.

[14]Cf. Charles Boxer, Portuguese Society in the Tropics: The Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia and Luanda (Madison, 1965).

[15]Azevedo, Jesuitas, pp. 174-81.

[16]Azevedo, Jesuitas, p. 182 (author's trans.) Dízimo was a standard 10% tax on legally acquired earnings of any kind, which might in theory be "a Deus" (for the maintenance of the State Church) or "a El-Rei" (a part of the royal revenue).

[17]Azevedo, Jesuitas, pp. 182-84; cf. Gov. Furtado's complaint about the operation of the revenue system in FXMF-King (Para, 15 may 1754), in Anais da Biblioteca e Arquivo Público do Pará [hereafter Anais BAPP] 3, pp. 213-26.

[18]João de Moura, "Descripção histórica, e relação política do grande estado do Maranhão" (first section of his unpublished book, Collonia Portuguesa, [1684]), ms. BNL Fundo Geral 585, ff. 1-28v. No biographical information about this singularly well-informed analyst of the affairs of the colony has come to this writer's attention.

[19]A leading figure in the politics of the first three decades was Bento Maciel Parente, "the most successful Indian slaver in the country," who was made governor in 1633 and died a prisoner of the Dutch at São Luiz in 1643. Kiemen, Indian Policy, p. 44. Cf., on the role of Indian slavery in the early years of sugar planting in early Brazil, Stuart B. Schwartz, "Indian labor and new world plantations: European demands and Indian responses in Northeastern Brazil," American Historical Review 83,1 (feb 1978):43-79.

[20]A tree whose bark and seeds produced an essential oil similar to that of cloves, useful for the manufacture of perfumes or for alleviating toothache. Exports from Pará reached 10,000 arrobas (150,000 kilos?) a year in the 1660's, declining gradually thereafter to less than 1,000 a year in the 1840's. Cónego Francisco Bernardino de Souza, Lembranças e curiosidades do valle do Amazonas (Pará, 1873), pp. 405-07.

[21]In 1686, the Captain-Major of Pará complained to the King that when hostile Indians destroyed a single cravo-collecting expedition (killing the people, burning the bark and stealing the trade goods), they caused a substantial loss the royal revenues for that year. King-Gov. Andrade (Lx, 2 Mar 1686), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 72-73.

[22]Moura, f. 26; Cf. Domingos Tomás, "Sobre o Maranhão" [n.d. 1680's], ms. Ajuda 50-V-37, p. 394, who attributed the poverty of the colony to the get-rich quick mentality of governors appointed for short terms as a premium for other services, on the expectation that they would make fortunes by expropriating the labor of the Indians for their own purposes. The result was a diminished pool of labor for the productive enterprises of the settlers. This in turn contributed to keeping the available Indians overworked and underpaid (since wages were fixed by the government and by custom rather than being allowed to float with demand), and ultimately to a chronic decline in the labor force of the colony.

[23]Moura, ff. 15-28; Cf. Gov. Gomes Freire de Andrade's response in 1687, when the King ordered a reduction in cravo shipments to prevent a glut on the Lisbon market. The measure, argued the Governor, would reduce the royal revenues drastically since 3/4 of the dízimo used to pay the troops in Pará came from cravo, and the other 1/4 from cacao. A better way to control production, the governor thought, would be to prohibit all seamen, soldiers, foreigners and skilled workers from going up the river on collection trips of any kind, to forbid the sending up of African slaves as canoe captains and to establish a chain of permanent collecting stations (feitorias) in the sertão. In addition, the number of canoes sent up by the religious orders should be limited -- which measure, he said, would also cut back on the enslavement of Indians!. Andrade-King (Belem, 18 jul 1687), ms. AHU Para Cx 2. The King in response forbade "forasteiros & mamelucos" from travelling to the sertão; but at the same time he forbade the establishment there of permanent feitorias, whose effect he said would only be to keep the few available "free" Indian workers away from their mission villages for indefinite periods. King-Provedor da Fazenda (Lx, 8 nov 1690), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 132; King-Gov. Carvalho (Lx, 17 feb 1691) in Anais BAPP 1, pp. 102-03 (no. 55).

[24]Sue Gross, "The Economic Life of the Estado do Maranhão e Grão Pará, 1686-1751 (unpub. PhD. Tulane, 1969); Menezes-King (Belem, 4 noc 1689), ms. AHU Para Cx 2.

[25]The fixing of prices was done after consultation with the Governor, Ouvidor and Provedor da Fazenda. The wages of Indian laborers, also paid in cotton cloth, were established by the Governor in consultation with the Cámaras and Junta das Missões. Leite, HCJB IV, Appendix D, p. 372; Azevedo, Jesuitas, pp. 160-65.

[26]Cámara do Pará, "Papel que se deu à Rainha," (n.d.), ms. Torre do Tombo, Col. São Vicente 23 ff. 232-37 (author's trans.). The Cámara believed that in order to persuade the merchants of Portugal to send cash to the colony, the Crown might have artificially to increase its value in Pará (presumably by establishing new official prices for the products exported there).

[27]King-Gov. Molina (Lx, 30 jul 1706), in Livro Grosso 66, p. 285; Edgar de Araújo Romer, "O Estado de Maranhão e seu meio circulante," in Anais Museu Histórico Nacional (Rio) 2 (1941), pp. 23-46; Manoel Barata, "Apontamentos para as ephemerides paraenses," RIHGB 144 (1921), pp. 142-43. Cf. Gross, "Economic Life," pp. 124-17. The new coins, with the same value and denominations as those then used in Brazil, began to circulate in Pará in 1749. From that time forward, the governors and other functionaries were paid their salaries in metal coin. Previously, the governors had received 800$000 of an annual 2,400$000 in merchandise delivered to their representatives in Lisbon, and the rest in merchandise delivered at Pará. Baena, Compéndio, p. 157. The sudden influx of coin seems to have caused some serious economic dislocations in the short run, with both sellers and buyers, employers and employees having difficulty in adjusting to prices and wages paid in coin at rates based on the old official values in cacao or cotton cloth -- when the real market values of the demonetized cacao and cloth were turning out to be very different. FXMF-King (Para, 31 jan 1754), in Anais BAPP 3 (1904), p. 170. When a government monopoly trading company was established at Pará in the 1750's, it was obliged at first to do business "fiado, e a troco das produções espontáneas do pais . . . e algum arroz e algodão, grosseiramente fiados pelos gentios, cujos novelos erão empregados em Portugal para torcidas de candeiros." Jacome Ratton, Recordações cited in Barata, "Apontamentos," p. 143. By the end of the colonial period, metallic money was well enough established in Pará to be counterfeited! Ouvidor Bittencourt, Edital (Pará, 11 jun 1817), ms. IHGB Lata 195, doc. 45.

[28]Cf. Paul Bohannon, "The impact of money on an African subsistence economy," Journal of Economic History 19 (1959), pp. 491-92.

[29]P. João de Sousa Ferreira, "América abreviada: suas notícias e de suas naturaes, e em particular do Maranhão (Lisboa, 1693)" in RIHGB 57 (1894), pp. 45-46. The author maintains that metallic coinage would permit establishing the value of each product in relation to its quality. Merchants would not lose their money "metendo-o pelo ganho do dobro," since everyone would have to sell to those who could pay cash at the going market price. 50-100,000 cruzados in circulation should be sufficient, since even in a monetized economy large payments would continue to be made in commodities.

[30]Cámara-King (Belém, 26 jul 1708), ms. AHU Para Cx 3. The King asked for the Governor's opinion in this matter, and was informed that the problem was real, and was further complicated by "a falcidade com que se faz o pano de algodão," an abuse which it was altogether impossible to prevent, and by the fact that the Pará merchants were perpetually sabotaging the existing monetary system by accepting only "o que neste anno tem valor"-- which was sometimes cravo, sometimes cacao and sometimes salsa (sarsaparilla)! King-Freire (Lx, 6 set 1709) and Freire-King (Belem, 26 jul 1710), ms. in AHU Para Cx 3.

[31]Barata, "Apontamentos," pp. 142-43, who observes that similar problems were registered in the monetary use of cravo and salsa at 5$400 the arroba, and beginning in 1740 of sugar at 3$000.

[32]Antonio Vieira complained in his famous Sermão do Primeiro Domingo de Quaresma in that year, that the monthly wages of two varas of cloth were worth only two tostões ($200 reis), or less than 7 reis a day (an infinitesimal sum) -- yet there were settlers in Pará who would rather risk going to Hell than pay them! Gov. Negreiros observed in 1656 that it was impossible to comply with the King's order that the two varas a month be deposited by employers beforehand as a guarantee of payment, because of the great scarcity of cloth in Pará. The King replied that in that case he was to see to it that wages were paid half in cloth and half in iron tools. King, Provisão 12 jul 1656, in Livro Grosso 66, p. 28.

[33]J.F. Lisboa, Obras 3, pp. 416-17. The petition was renewed at the end of the century for the same reasons, and in 1701 the Cámara wanted exports of sugar forbidden as well!

[34]King-Gov. Freire (Lx, 7 feb 1713), in Anais BAPP 1, p. 141 (author's trans.).

[35]Private employers for the most part had too unstable and unskilled a labor force to set up an enterprise such as cotton spinning and weaving. In 1727, the Governor complained that whereas the Indian women of the Jesuit aldeias on the Tapajós had been in the habit of producing fine baskets to sell in the markets of Pará in exchange for the cotton cloth and other goods they required, the Jesuits were then obliging them to weave cloth -- with the result that no baskets entered the market and a once-flourishing trade was languishing. Freire, (Relação das rendas dos religiosos), ms. AHU Para Cx 3.

[36]Gross, p. 17.

[37]Gov. João da Maia da Gama threatened the "counterfeiters" of cloth with three months in prison. Edital (São Luiz, 18 aug 1724), cited in Romer, "Maranhão," p. 30. In explaining this measure to the King (and requesting that the penalties be raised to equal those for the counterfeiters of coin), the Governor explained that panno had previously been imported because too little of it was produced in Pará, selling for 40-50$000 the roll and barely circulated "porque tinha o preço conforme a falta." The moradores had then begun to plant, spin and weave cotton until by the mid-1720's this cloth was as available there as in Maranhão. Moreover, the cloth of Pará was finer, and people there preferred it to the coarser product of Maranhão. For this reason, and since it was then more plentiful than cacao in Pará, he wanted it established as official currency with a value of $300 reis the vara, or 30$000 the roll (although in Maranhão it was worth only 20$000). The King refused on grounds that cotton cloth should circulate only as a commodity in Para -- because that way it would be better made and fetch better prices for its producers, to the ultimate benefit of all. King-Gov. Gama (Lx, 28 feb 1725), in Livro Grosso 67, pp. 209-10.

[38]Azevedo notes that the degredados were seldom hardened criminals: "pela bárbara legislação vigente, delictos leves, fúteis pezadilhas, simples transgressões de lei se puniam com degredo," which could be the sentence of either a civil or an ecclesiastical court. Degredados might even hold positions of responsibility in the colony, if not condemned for "furto, falsidade ou crimes de ruim exemplo." Jesuitas, pp. 158-59.

[39]Gross, pp. 116-18. Azevedo adds that service in the regular army (infantaria paga) or militia (regimentos de ordenanças) was required of every man in Pará excepting Indians and "privilegiados," the full citizens or fidalgos who were eligible to serve in the Cámara. Jesuitas, p. 184.

[40]Samuel Fritz observed in 1691 that of six soldiers sent under Antonio de Miranda e Noronha to escort him from Pará to the Solimões (see Chap. 6), one was white, one a mulatto and four mamelucos. Journal of the travels and labours of father Samuel Fritz in the river of the Amazons between 1686 and 1723 (London, 1922. Hereafter cited as Fritz, Journal) p. 66.

[41]Azevedo reproduces the curious document by which one João de Almeida de Matta was sworn in to such a position in 1745. Jesuitas, pp. 387-88. The principal military posts, such as commander of a fortress or company of infantry, were filled by means of a public competition in which aspirants would submit their service records (collections of notarized testimonies regarding their virtues and accomplishments) for consideration by the Overseas Council in Lisbon. The great numbers of these service records kept in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino there, and little used in the present research, contain considerable material for the social history of any part of the Portuguese empire. For an example of what can be done with them in the study of the military organization itself, see David

Tengwall, "A Study in Military Leadership: The Sargento-Mor in the Portuguese South Atlantic Empire," The Americas 40,1 (jul 1983):73-94.

[42]Gov. Freire-King (Belem, 26 jul 1710), ms. AHU Para Cx. 3; Gross, pp. 139-40 and 170-71, who notes that colonial soldiers were obliged to provide their own uniforms, which were much more costly in Pará than in Portugal. In 1712, for example, an infantryman's hat, shoes and woolen stockings could be obtained for 8$500, or nearly half a year's pay. In the 1730's, the Governor authorized the soldiers of Pará to conduct cacao-collecting expeditions on the Cabo do Norte in order to help pay for their uniforms! Ibid., pp. 182-83. Several documents concerning this strange expedient are kept in BAPP 985.

[43]Gross, pp. 51-56. No serious effort was made to "modernize" the military establishment of Pará until the late in the 18th century.

[44]Conselho Ultramarino, Consulta (Lx, 2 dec 1722), in Nabuco, Limites I Mem Bres Ann I, pp. 33-34; FXMF-King (Para, 12 nov 1751), in Mendonça, Amazonia 1, p. 60.

[45]Cf. Baena, Compéndio, p. 157; Condamine, Relación abreviada de un viaje hecho por el interior de la América Meridional [1745] (Madrid, 1921), p. 111.

[46]João Lúcio de Azevedo, "A Companhia de Comércio do Grão Pará e o Marqués de Pombal," in his Estudos de história paraense (Pará, 1893), pp. 36-42, citing Jacome Ratton for the description of mid-century commerce. Cf. Gross, pp. 185-87, who sees evidence for an increasing standard of living during the period 1700-1750 in the construction of public buildings and well-appointed settler townhouses, and the appearance of some finery in public attire.

[47]Arturo de Sá e Menezes-King (Belém, 4 nov 1689), ms. AHU Para Ex 2. (author's trans.)

[48]Gov. Serra-Motta (Belém, 20 aug 1735), extracted in Barata, "Apontamentos," pp. 134-35.

[49]Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado [hereafter FXMF]-Directors (Pará, 15 nov 1757), in Mendonça, Amazonia 3, pp. 1156-60; and FXMF-Pombal (Pará, 21 nov 1751), in Ibid. 1, pp. 63-78. Cf. the observation of António Vieira in the 1650's that in Belém there was no "açougue, nem ribeira, nem horta, nem tenda onde se vendessem as cousas usuais para o comer ordinário," and that people lived so far apart that there was no "permuta de serviços, indispensavel numa sociedade policiada." There were not even canoes available for rent! People were so self-sufficient that each household required its own huge staff of servants: "Para hum homem ter pão da terra [farinha], ha de ter roça, e para comer carne, caçador, e para comer peixe, pescador, e para vestir roupa lavada, lavadeira, e para ir a missa ou a qualquer parte, canoa e remeiros." In well-to-do households, there were even weavers, seamstresses and shoemakers. Cited in Azevedo, Jesuitas, pp. 162-63.

[50]The most important of these olarias was that of the Mercedarian fathers at Val de Caens near Belem.

[51]Gross, pp. 37-41. For a contrasting view, emphasizing the adaptability of Portuguese colonial culture to the Amazonian milieu, and the durability of its architectural heritage, see A.C.F. Reis, "Vestígios artísticos da dominação lusitana na Amazonia," Revista do Serviço e Património Histórico-Artístico Nacional (Rio) 5 (1941).

[52]At the back of the Jesuits' preference for the lingua geral was perhaps P. Antonio Vieira's dismay at the prospect of trying to learn the many tongues of the "River Babel:" "As a rule, they can't be understood. Their pronunciation is so indistinct that the syllables, the vowels and consonants, not even the words can be distinguished in the confusion of sound." Cited in Robert Ricard, Etudes et documents pour l'histoire missionaire de l'Espagne et Portugal (Louvain, 1930), pp. 198-99.

[53]Farinha, A Expansão da fe na Africa e no Brazil: Subsídios para a história colonial (Lisboa, 1943), pp. 449-50; Artur Ramos, Introdução à antropologia brasileira I (Rio, 1944), pp. 67-70. The classic abanheenga form used by the 16th century Jesuits gave way in Pará to the more fluid and ever-changing nheengatú, which was used with canoe crews and in village trading throughout Brazilian Amazonia until the massive immigration of rubber tappers Ceará, and the replacement of canoe transport by steamship and motor launch, which occurred in the late 19th century. The lingua geral survives today only in corrupt form and in remote sectors of the Amazon valley, especially along the upper Rio Negro.

[54]Kiemen, Indian Policy, p. 170, citing a royal letter of 30 nov 1689 in the AHU with no reference. Years later, the King admonished the Carmelites, Mercedarians and Franciscans of Pará to send to the sertão only missionaries who were able to speak the lingua geral as fluently as the Jesuits. Once the Indians had learned basic Christian doctrine, they were to try to teach them Portuguese as well. King-Gov. Gama (Lisboa, 2 dec 1722), in Livro Grosso 67, pp. 189-90.

[55]King-Gov. Gama (Lisboa, 12 sep 1727), in Anais BAPP 2, pp. 190-91. The governor instructed missionaries henceforth to teach the Indians Portuguese, and to cease forbidding them to use it, which they had been doing as a means of impeding their communication with other whites! Baena, Compendio, p. 148. Cf. the "Instrução" to the Carmelite missionaries given by their Vice-Provincial Ignácio da Conçeição (Belém, 16 oct 1728), ms. AOC Cx Maranhão, no. 6.

[56]?-FXMF (Belém, 26 may 1756), ms. AHU Rio Negro Cx 1, doc. 11; and Castro-FXMF (Pará, 13 oct 1760), in Anais BAPP 11 (1969), pp. 301-02; FXMF-Tome Corte Real (Pará, 27 feb 1759), in Anais BAPP 8 (1913), pp. 38-41; A.F. Reis, Política de Portugal no vale do Rio Amazonas (Belém, 1940), p. 79.

[57]Prazeres, "Poranduba maranhense," in RIHGB 54, 1 (1841), p. 47; Barredo, Annaes paragraph 487 (1905 ed. I, p. 32). Earlier epidemics may well have been introduced by the Dutch and English traders, but there is no reference to them in the documents I have seen. For a recent reconsideration of the broader question of smallpox in colonial Brazil, see Dauril Alden and Joseph C. Miller, "The Slave Trade and the Transmission of Smallpox tro Brazil, 1560-1831," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 18 (autumn 1987):195-224.

[58]Kiemen, Indian Policy, p. 58.

[59]Ley de 10 nov 1647, in Coleção de Breves Pontifícios e Leys Régias (Lisboa, 1760?) II, pp. 5-6.

[60]Fonseca, "O Maranhão, roteiro dos papéis avulsos," in Congresso do Mundo Portugues XI (Lisbon, 1940), p. 205; Baena, Compéndio, p. 85; Berredo, Annaes, paragraph 1109 (1905 ed. II, p. 159); P. Joao Felipe Betendorf, Chrónica de missão dos padres da companhia de Jesús no estado do Maranhão, in RIHGB 72, 1 (1909), entire issue, p. 203 (author's trans.).

[61]Betendorf, pp. 212-13; Gov. Menezes-King? (Belém, 20 jul 1673), ms. AHU Para Cx 1.

[62]King-Cámara Maranhão (Lisbon, 10 dec 1695); King-Cámara Pará (Lisbon, 10 jan 1697); King-Gov. Carvalho (Lisbon, 17 jan 1697), all in Livro Grosso 66, pp. 155,166 and 167; AHU Cod. 268, f. 153, cited in Gross, p. 58; Carvalho-King (Belém, 20 jul 1697), in Nabuco, Límites I Mem Bres Ann I, pp. 15-17.

[63]Theodózio Constantino de Chermont, "Memória dos mais terríveis contágios de bexigas e sarampo d'este estado desde o anno de 1720 por diante," in Alexandre Rodrígues Ferreira, "Diário da viagem philosóphica pela capitania de São José do Rio Negro (1785-87)," [hereafter ARF, "Diário"] in RIHGB 48, 1 (1885), p. 29. Gov. Gama-King (Pará, 2 sep 1725), ms. AHU Para Cx 5. Condamine noted some years later that there was something approaching a worldwide pandemic of smallpox in 1723. Memoire sur la inoculation de la petite vérole (Paris, 1754), p. 17.

[64]Gov. Gama-King (Pará, 2 sep 1725), ms. AHU Pará Cx 5.; Chermont, "Memória," p. 29.

[65]Gov. Gama-King (Belém, 2 sep 1725) and Borges-King (Belém, 8 sep 1725), both ms. AHU Para Cx 5. Chermont's figure, perhaps too high, was 15,000 deaths in all of Pará. "Memória," p. 29. Gama wrote to slaving captain João Paes do Amaral (São Luiz, 14 mar 1725), ms. BAPP 907, ff. 101v-112, that the epidemic had left the moradores of both Belém and São Luiz "quasi com a geral perda de todos os seus escravos, ou a maior parte . . . [e] as canoas sem as equipações para fazerem viagem"; King-Gov. Freire (Lisbon, 29 oct 1727), in Livro Grosso 67, pp. 217-18, and in Anais BAPP 2 (1903), pp. 198-99; King, Alvará (Lisbon, 20 oct 1728), ms. BAPP 907, ff. 60-60v. Gross, p. 58 cites more such requests from AHU Cod. 270, ff. 34, 121 and 178.

[66]Gov. Francisco de Mendonça Gurjão-King (Pará, 16 apr 1749), ms. AHU Maranhão Cx 32; Chermont, Memória, p. 30; Anon., Notícia verdadeira do terrivel contágio que desde outubro de 1748 até o mes de mayo de 1749, tem reduzido a notavel consternação todos os certões, terras e cidade de Belém e Grão Pará (Lisboa, Imprenta Real, 1749), an 8-p. broadside preserved in the BNL. A fuller reprise of this episode will appear in the author's work in progress, Epidemics and the Poverty of Colonial Amazonia.

[67]Kiemen, Indian Policy, pp. 51-55; Azevedo, Jesuitas, p. 160, noting that "a peonagem, soldados e religiosos nao entravem no computo." He says that another source for this period gives 700 Europeans in all of Para and Maranhao, including those who lived on their estates and in the sertao; Kiemen, Indian Policy, p. 131; Azevedo cites Ferreira "Noticiário maranhense" (1685) for the figure of 500 settlers in Belém alone.

[68]Baena, Compéndio, pp. 141 & 157-58. Azevedo quotes Gov. Berredo for an estimate of 500 moradores in Belém in 1722, with the explanation that most people "melhor grangeavan suas vidas no sertão que permanecendo na ociosa miséria da cidade." Jesuitas, p. 160.

[69]On the African presence in Pará see Vicente Salles, O negro no Pará sob o regime da escravidão (Rio, 1971), which unfortunately has little to say about slave life itself before the 1750's.

[70]Leite, HCJB, p. 138; FXMF-Pombal (Pará, 21 nov 1751), in Mendonça, Amazonia 1, pp. 63-78.

[71] Jesuitas, p. 228.