

Most Indian slaves, in Amazonia and elsewhere in colonial America, lived lives that were so severely constricted by hunger, ignorance, disease and harsh discipline that they had no opportunity for such exercises. They died within a few months or years of their captivity; and for most of them there was little question of striving for an improvement in social status.

Francisca's homeland was more than a thousand miles to the west and up the Amazon from Belém do Pará in the valley of the great Rio Negro, which curves down from what is now the Brazil-Colombia-Venezuela border region to empty into the Amazon at the modern city of Manaus. The Negro was called a "starvation river" by colonial traders and explorers, flowing as it did from rain forest soils so badly leached that the river bore very little of the silt that might raise and enrich the land along its banks during the annual flood. It was never able to support a dense population of fisherfolk and horticulturists such as once lived along the silt-bearing rivers that flow into the Amazon from the Andes. The people of its basin lived in small, widely scattered groups, or in larger communities which subsisted by trading far and wide, sometimes even bringing in a portion of their food from distant places. It was Francisca's fate to be born in this somber country in a time of hardships and, rather than growing to womanhood in the peaceful company of her own people, to be torn away and made a pawn in strange men's games.

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a large, powerful tribe of traders and warriors known as the Manao ranged freely over much of northwestern Amazonia from a base along the middle reaches of the Negro. When first seen by Europeans in about 1640, and again in about 1690, the Manao appeared to be a fierce and warlike people feared by their neighbors. They went entirely naked and kept their heads plucked free of hair—"in order, they say, that they may have nothing to be laid hold of in battle." Their foreheads as far back as the ears were smeared with a black pitch to strike terror in the hearts of their enemies. These were the people among whom Francisca was to spend her childhood. Each flood season they would make their way in swift dugout canoes down through the labyrinth of channels connecting the swollen Negro to the also flooded but immensely fertile

## Francisca: Indian Slave

DAVID G. SWEET

In 1739 Francisca, an Indian slave woman of the city of Belém do Pará near the mouth of the Amazon River, was persuaded by her young lover, Angélico de Barros Gonçalves, to petition the Portuguese colonial authorities for her freedom. The case was based on the grounds that she had been illegally enslaved in the back country many years before. With the help of the Public Defender of the Indians in Belém, she assembled a number of reliable witnesses to prove this contention at a hearing before the chief justice of the colony. The justice found in her favor; but the case was then appealed by Francisca's owner to the Council of Missions, charged with supervising the administration of the "domestic Indians" of Pará. In the end the litigation was unsuccessful, and Francisca was obliged to remain a slave. This was, as far as can be established today, an exceptional case at law.

and populous valley of the Solimões River, the main stream of the Amazon, to trade. The goods they brought were small platelets of gold for fashioning into ornaments, manioc graters, finely woven hammocks of plant fiber, war clubs, leather shields, and quantities of *onoto* or *urucú*, a red dye for cloth and for faces. Some of these were the products of their own artisanry; others they obtained from trading partners living to the north and west of their home country. The Solimões tribes would provide the Manao traders with certain highly prized shell necklaces, and presumably with cargoes of manioc, smoked fish, pottery, basketry, tree-cotton cloth, and curare for poisoning the tips of their arrows.<sup>1</sup>

Late in the seventeenth century, this traditional pattern of intertribal trade underwent a process of rapid change. By that time the Portuguese had been established for several decades in a series of small settlements around the mouth of the Amazon in Pará, and the Dutch in even smaller settlements around the mouth of the Essequibo River on the Caribbean coast just north of the lower Negro basin. Both groups of European colonists were endeavoring to extract their fortunes from the tropical forest hinterland. They exchanged trade goods for forest products such as wild cacao, vanilla, sarsaparilla, and certain sweet-smelling barks that could be substituted for East Indian cinnamon and clove, and they corraled Indian men and women as slaves to serve as domestic and plantation workers and as crewmen for the canoes that provided the only available means of transportation into the far interior.

The Dutch were organized as a commercial company, concerned exclusively with profit and anxious to keep both personnel and defense commitments at a minimum. They could deliver large quantities of quality trade goods regularly and at low cost to their factors on the Essequibo. As a result they were able for the most part to stay put and have both Indian slaves and forest products delivered to their trading posts by Indian middlemen, principally the Carib of the lower Orinoco Valley. Other trading peoples in contact with the Dutch roamed inland to the Manao country and acquainted the Manao with such revolutionary technological innovations as the steel axe, knife, and cutlass, the fishhook, the needle, the

metal arrowhead or harpoon point; firearms; distilled beverages; and magnificently colored and textured glass beads and pieces of cotton or woollen cloth. Like Native American people everywhere, the Manao quickly incorporated these apparently useful and value-neutral artifacts into their way of life. By so doing they became utterly dependent on their trade with the foreigners, who alone could supply them. This had a far-reaching impact on the commercial activities and ultimately on the social organization and the very destiny of the Manao as a people. Soon they began to barter for slaves rather than for artifacts with their traditional trading partners to the west. When slaves were scarce, they raided other tribes' villages with the purpose of capturing men, women, and children to sell up the Branco to the friends of the Dutch. Among those caught up in this incipient process of social disintegration in the Negro region was the girl Francisca.

During this same era the Portuguese, less organized and less unanimous in purpose than the Dutch, had settled and erected a new exploitative social order on American soil, rather than simply extracting goods from it. They were obliged to obtain most of their trade goods at high prices from the Dutch and other northern European suppliers rather than from manufacturers in their own country, and so they operated at a serious competitive disadvantage. More numerous than the Dutch, the Portuguese settlers quickly required more slaves. By the same token, they could not help but infect more of their Indian neighbors sooner with the same devastating Old World epidemic diseases that had wrought havoc among the native peoples everywhere else in America. The result was that the Portuguese soon had no Indian collaborators who might hope to ensure their own survival by carrying on the Europeans' upriver trade for them. The men of Pará were therefore obliged either to pack up and go home or to try and lay claim to the vast Amazon Valley and its treasures by dint of brute force and sheer audacity. Undaunted, they set out cheerfully on the path of conquest.

By the 1690s, these two frontiers of European expansion had moved close to one another in Francisca's homeland, the lower Rio Negro Valley. There the Indians who traded up the Rio Branco with the Essequibo Dutchmen vied with the

Portuguese and *mestiço* transfrontiersmen who traded with the merchants of Belém do Pará. Around the mouth of the Branco were the Carajá people, who seem to have traded Dutch goods for slaves with the Manao who lived up the Negro from them to the west. Just downriver from the Carajá were the Tatumã people, also long-distance traders, who exchanged Dutch goods for slaves (or simply raided for slaves) along the main stream of the Amazon. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the Manao made war on the Carajá, either enslaved and sold them or drove them to migrate, and extended their own territory down to the Isle of Timoni, just above the mouth of the Branco. At about the same time the Portuguese transfrontiersmen made war on the Tatumãs, carrying many of them off to Pará, driving others into permanent retreat far up the Branco, and providing a dubious refuge for the survivors in a Jesuit mission village, later run by Carmelites, which was set up to house them on the lower Negro. Not long afterward the Portuguese erected a small fort at the mouth of the Negro (ancestor to the modern city of Manaus), to protect the mission and keep watch on the movements of their new neighbors, the Manao. This westward thrust by the men of Pará was accomplished just a few years before Francisca was born, and as we shall see it was a major factor in determining the course of her life.

Missionaries and soldiers had ostensibly been sent to the Negro to help make the region Portuguese and Christian, to break the trade link with the hated Dutch, and to redirect the entire regional trade in forest products and people toward Belém. Given the vast distances and the limited resources of the authorities in Pará, however, neither group could be either supervised or subsidized on a regular basis. Both were thrown back on their own devices. For a living they competed with the Manao as traders up the Branco to the Dutch, while at the same time they tried to channel the Manao trade in slaves brought from the populous upper reaches of the Negro through their own hands to Pará. They were happy to exchange forest products for Dutch goods, but they were bound that no Rio Negro slaves should make their way to the Essequibo. This would in the long run bring them to war against the Manao, but it was several years before that confrontation came to pass.

Before the fort on the Negro had even been built, an adventurous Portuguese sergeant pushed beyond the mission frontier to establish himself as resident trader in a Manao village across from the mouth of the Branco. The sergeant made friends with the chief there and took his daughter to wife in an effort to cement the commercial alliance. The Manao had already had some violent encounters with the men from Pará and were deeply suspicious of them. They had also been visited by some of the outlanders' tonsured medicine men; and they had had occasion to make it clear to them that as the spiritually powerful rulers of the Negro country they saw no reason to take an interest in the white men's religion. But they were a people who lived by trade; and though the chiefs preferred dealing indirectly with the Dutchmen up the Branco, they could not resist the opportunity that the sergeant and others like him represented. Soon they were exchanging small numbers of slaves, whom they could easily obtain by raiding their weaker neighbors to the west, for occasional shipments of the precious white men's goods from Pará. The sergeant was only the first of a series of "squaw men"<sup>2</sup> through whom this desultory trade was conducted during the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

What the Manao did not understand, to their great misfortune, was that the Portuguese demand for slaves, unlike that of their Indian trading partners, was insatiable. The white men would always require more slaves than the Manao could ever hope to deliver without destroying the entire regional network of intertribal relations. In the end, the men of Pará would lose patience and make war on the Manao, enslaving a great many of them in the process, in order to gain direct access to the populous upper Negro Valley. By 1730 the power of the Manao would be broken forever, and the Manao survivors reduced to working as guides and canoe men for the Portuguese slavers. A century later the tribe would be extinct. But none of this could be foreseen when Francisca was a young woman and the Manao were lords of the Rio Negro.

Francisca's girlhood was spent in the frontier village of the Manao chief Anu, on the Isle of Timoni in the Negro. The name by which she was known there has not come down to us. Her mother appears to have been a woman captured from

another tribe and attached to the chief's household either as a servant (if that category of person existed for the Manao) or as one of a number of wives. Whichever was the case, Francisca was Chief Amu's property to dispose of as he pleased. She may have been born among the Manao, as she herself claimed years later, or born elsewhere and brought to the village as a little girl. It seems likely that the date of her birth was between about 1700 and 1705, since she was an adolescent (*mossetona*) when she was taken to Pará in 1718.

In Amu's village Francisca must have lived in a cool circular house loosely constructed of saplings lashed with vines, and with a conical roof woven of palm leaves. She slept in a hammock slung close by those of the many other members of an extended family. Although possibly consigned to some sort of a subordinate status within the village, she undoubtedly enjoyed an easy daily interaction with both children and adults and was probably never flogged by an adult in anger. She bathed once or twice a day in the river. Around her neck she wore an amulet with a bit of wood or a bird's claw, which was designed to protect her against the fearsome demons of the forest and the river and the small *motacu* people with their turned-up feet. By the time she was a young woman, she had learned to tend the corn and manioc plants in the chief's garden; and she could prepare fish, game, and the large manioc pancakes (*beijú*) that Manao men preferred to the manioc meal eaten by most other Amazonian peoples. At the time of her first menstruation, she was wrapped in a hammock, painted, and had her skin incised with the distinctive marks of womanhood. Every year she attended the festival of the first full moon in March, for which the village prepared by storing manioc and smoked fish for months in advance; and during this festival, once she had been initiated, she joined the women in undergoing flogging, with arms crossed over her breasts, to demonstrate her ability to endure pain.

While Francisca was growing up on the Rio Negro, the households and plantations of Portuguese Pará were in chronic need of servants. The several hundred Indians brought there as slaves each year for a century had for the most part failed to reproduce themselves. They tended to die quickly of disease or hunger, and of general discouragement with the forced laborer's life. Each time there was a serious



14. Warrior and hunter of the upper Rio Negro, late eighteenth century.

epidemic, the colonial economy experienced a real crisis from the shortage of working people. Laborers, boatmen, and domestic servants could sometimes be obtained on loan from the Jesuit and Franciscan mission villages near the capital; but they were scarce there as well, and for the same reasons. The result was that rounding up Indians in the backlands had come to be one of the fundamental concerns, year in and year out, of the settlers of Pará.

Each year a few scores of great sailing canoes with forcibly conscripted Indian crewmen would set out for the upper valley to gather the "precious drugs of the backlands," which constituted the colony's only exports. These collecting expeditions



ditions made a practice of bringing back as many Indians as they could buy or kidnap. When the upriver tribes committed some act of violence against white men, government slaving troops would be sent out against them as punishment. Finally, beginning in the 1680s, an official system of labor recruitment was devised under which an occasional slave-buying expedition was outfitted and sent up the river by the royal treasury itself. Each expedition was accompanied by a Jesuit chaplain, who was in principle to see to it that no slaves were acquired except through barter with friendly chiefs for the legitimately enslaved prisoners whom they had taken in their customary intertribal wars. This system was of course very readily abused; but once it was established the law required that every slave brought down the river be accompanied by a certificate of legitimate enslavement drawn up and signed by a Jesuit. Any slave found without such a certificate was in theory a free person.

Such people were in fact seldom discovered; and when they did turn up they were never allowed to return home to enjoy their freedom. The labor shortage in Pará was always too critical for that. The few who were intercepted on their way to the slave markets were either released as "free wage laborers" to the custody of an employer in Pará, or they were placed under the jurisdiction of one of the mission villages near the capital—and then made available on a rotating basis as wage laborers to the settlers. The circumstances of life for "free" and slave laborers in the colony were so similar as to be indistinguishable. In practice, the law regulating the slave trade was little observed; and slaves continued to be brought down to Belém under all three traditional systems of recruitment each year and held as captives whether "certified" or not, until long after the trade was officially abolished in 1755.

In September 1717, the season when the cacao-collecting crews sailed forth, a canoe captain by the name of Anacleto Ferreira received a quantity of trade goods from Dona Anna de Fonte, the widow (or at that time perhaps still the wife) of settler Nicolau da Costa of Belém. Ferreira was about to leave for the *sertão* with a canoe belonging to Captain Manoel de Goes of Pará. He signed a receipt for four bundles of white glass beads, two bundles of blue, a dozen pounds of tobacco, a dozen pounds of sugar, two dozen pieces of china, two dozen all-purpose hunting knives, and six matchlocks for muskets.

This was a standard transaction that allowed the stay-at-home settlers and those too poor to outfit their own canoes to take part in financing the forest trade and to have a share in its proceeds. In this case the widow also assisted the expedition by intervening with her uncle, José Velho de Azevedo, the captain-major and acting governor of Pará, to obtain for Ferreira the necessary license for a cacao-collecting trip to the *sertão*. Dona Anna had reason to expect that when Ferreira returned he would bring her a valuable portion of cacao or other "precious drugs," or even better an illegal shipment of slaves to the value of her investment and with a tidy margin of profit.

Some months later a curious transaction took place at the village of Chief Amu on the Isle of Timoní in the Negro. As a gesture of his peaceful intentions toward the slave traders of Pará, the chief gave his daughter (later christened Rosaura) in "marriage" to Anacleto da Costa Rayol, a visiting canoe captain from Belém who had traveled to Manao country in the company of Anacleto Ferreira. According to the several witnesses to this event who were assembled more than twenty years later in Pará, Amu then gave the young woman whom we know as Francisca to the same slave trader as "companion" or personal servant to Rosaura. Ferreira's and Rayol's were illegal private slaving expeditions. They had no Jesuit chaplain with them to interview Francisca, determine the circumstances of her captivity, and draw up the required certificate of legitimate enslavement. If they had brought such a collaborator, he might well have found that she was a free person who might be transported and put to work but could not legally be held as a slave. As it was, Francisca was taken down the river without papers. In the eyes of the transfrontiersmen of Pará she was as surely a slave as any other Indian they might acquire in the *sertão*. It may be assumed that in the eyes of Chief Amu and in her own eyes as well, at that point in her life, she was the property of Anacleto da Costa Rayol or of any other person to whom he might give her, from the day of their transaction and for as long as she might live.

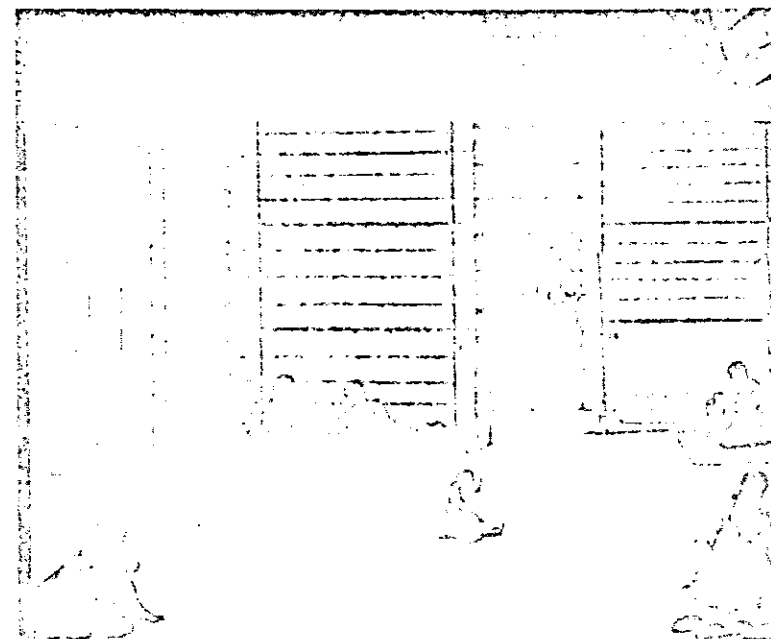
Not long afterward the great canoe commanded by Anacleto Rayol was loaded with a gang of male and female slaves and launched on the river for Pará. In addition to the captain there were probably a dozen crewmen aboard, themselves

slaves or involuntary recruits from the mission *aldeias*. These men were kept in docile obedience by a combination of genial treatment with the constant threat and frequent example of brutal physical punishment for the smallest infraction. Their families were held hostage in Pará, and each man knew well that to escape was to throw oneself into a lonely struggle for survival in the unfamiliar forests of the inhospitable Negro, a thousand miles from home. The crewmen received meager rations of manioc meal and salt fish, which they gobbled down hastily with gulps of water from the river during brief interludes in the long days of bending sweating backs to their paddles in the sun. At night they slept on the hard benches of their canoes, and only occasionally were they given the opportunity to fish, hunt, and gather the forest fruits and grubs with which they might restore their exhausted bodies. These men talked little, but they did sing in unison as they worked, a monotonous song that blended with the monotonous rhythm of their work and seemed to lend strength to their aching arms and backs. Francisca sat still in the canoe as it glided down the broad river day after day. She was afraid and had no idea what awaited her, and she must have wished that she understood the crewmen's tongue so that she might ask them what lay ahead.

The slaves being transported were tied to the canoe to prevent their escaping. The strong young men among them had their arms tied behind them around a length of tree-trunk, which exhausted them and lacerated their flesh and thereby discouraged them from even trying to work themselves free. The slaves were fed even less than the crewmen, and after many days of hunger and exposure to the elements several of them were ill and on the verge of dying. Canoe captains in the official trade complained that they often lost a third or a half of a shipment of slaves during the several weeks' journey from the Negro to Pará. The private traders did no better. The dead and the severely ill among both slaves and crew were simply abandoned on the beaches or thrown into the river—food for the alligators and the omnipresent buzzard *urubú*. These horrors of transportation to Pará were comparable to those of the Atlantic "middle passage" of Africans to America, but the slaves of Amazonia were considerably less able to resist them. Francisca was fortunate to survive the journey.

Along the way Anacleto da Costa Rayol seems to have sold Francisca to Anacleto Ferreira for some of Dona Anna de Fonte's trade goods. Farther down they met up with a slaver from São Luiz do Maranhão named Estevão Cardoso, who was returning home by way of Belém with a load of captives from the Negro. Ferreira's canoe was by this time short of crewmen, so he traded Francisca to Cardoso for an Indian man capable of paddling. This was done with the understanding that on his way Cardoso would deliver the girl to Ferreira's employer, Manoel de Goes, in Belém, so that Goes might hand her over to Dona Anna de Fonte in partial payment for the trade goods with which she had supplied him. This was duly done, and within a few weeks' time Francisca had begun the painful process of her "seasoning" as a servant girl of Belém do Pará.

Francisca served in Anna de Fonte's house for twenty years before she brought her petition for freedom before the authorities. What she did there we can only surmise. Undoubtedly her daily routine included assisting in the laborious preparation of food from the manioc plant, and from the variety of



15. Indian women at domestic work in a village on the lower Amazon, late eighteenth century.

fresh fruits, meats, and fish that was available on good days to be fetched from the open-air market by the city's canoe landing along the river. She must have spent a good deal of time laundering clothing to keep her mistress and her mistress' family presentable in the tropical heat. She probably became deeply involved in the religious life of the capital, with its gaudy annual round of festivals and processions and its obligatory frequent attendance at Mass. Little by little she forgot her Manao language and became proficient in the Tupian *lingua geral* of Amazonia, though she never had occasion to learn Portuguese. Unlike her mistress and the other respectable ladies of the town, she was probably free to come and go in the streets during off-hours and on holidays and to maintain her own circle of male and female friends among the teeming population of free and slave Indians and blacks, *mestiços*, and déclassé white people who made up the great bulk of the inhabitants of the town. During her suit for freedom Francisca appeared in person before the judge who was hearing her case, as did all the witnesses on both sides, most of them men. But the widow Anna de Fonte was too ladylike for such public goings-on and had her testimony recorded by a scrivener in the privacy of her home.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Francisca's life in Pará was the mere fact that unlike many another slave she managed to survive there for at least two decades and retain some life-affirming spirit and determination about her in the process. Among other things, she survived the terrible epidemic of smallpox that devastated the town in 1724 and 1725, brought the economy to a standstill, and drove the population into the streets in mournful processions of penitence. Many of her friends must have died then, horrible deaths with bodies covered by stinking pustules that made it seem as if they were rotting before the life had quite gone out of them. Francisca may somehow have avoided the plague altogether; she may even have been among the fortunate few who benefited from the pioneering experiment with inoculation (the transfer of pus from the sores of the ill into incisions made in the arms of the healthy), which was carried out by a Carmelite friar of the city during that time. It is more likely that she came down with the pox but somehow managed to survive, probably with her face disfigured, like many of her

contemporaries in America and Europe and elsewhere, with the pockmarks that served as the badge of triumph over the principal killer of the age.

Some very dim light is shed on Francisca's life in Pará by the collection of witnesses who were assembled to testify both for and against her in the hearings resulting from her suit for freedom in 1739, when she was nearing forty. Angelico de Barros Gonçalves, her lover, was a master tailor some ten years her junior, who would seem to have been the *mestiço* son or grandson of an Angelico de Barros who had served a term as *comandante* of the Fortress of the Rio Negro some thirty years before. With family ties to the slave trade, like those of nearly everyone else in Pará, he seems to have preferred the less adventurous urban style of life for himself. Angelico recalled having heard from Anacleto da Costa Rayol himself the story of his paramour's being handed over as a free woman to the slave traders by Chief Amu. But the tailor's testimony was given little credit because he was an interested party determined to obtain freedom for his "concubine," one who had in fact petitioned the government in his own right to have Francisca removed from Dona Anna de Fonte's house not long before. Similarly, little attention was paid to Angelico's illiterate brother-in-law and housemate, Manoel Dias, who claimed under oath to have heard the same story from the Indian woman Rosaura herself. Unaccountably Rosaura, who appears to have been alive in Belém at the time of the inquiry, was not called to testify. Also disregarded was the contribution of a Portuguese volunteer witness named Ignacio Caldeira Lisboa, who was identified as Francisca's lawyer interested only in his fees.

Another of Francisca's prime witnesses was a free Indian woman named Apolinaria, of about thirty years of age. Apolinaria testified through an interpreter, an old transfrontiersman and slaving captain named Diego Pinto de Gaya, because like Francisca and most other inhabitants of the colony of Maranhão and Grão Pará—a century after the establishment of Portuguese rule there—she was unable to make herself understood in Portuguese and was comfortable only in the *lingua geral*. Apolinaria asserted that as a girl of ten she had come down to Pará with Francisca, from the same village of Chief Amu and with the same expedition under Anacleto

de Costa Rayol. She had been an eyewitness, she testified, to the handing over of Rosaura and Francisca to Rayol. But she was deemed a witness of "little credibility" because not only was she an "Indian woman of the country" and a "poor person of the lowest degree" (*pobre, vil e infame*), but she was also a whore—and as such she was seen as a person whose testimony could readily be bought and who could be "corrupted by the slightest material interest."

The documents contribute nothing toward our understanding of the meaning of *whore* and *concubine* in the early eighteenth-century society of Pará. Many an Indian or African slave woman of Pará was put to work at the prostitute's trade by her mistress, as a source of steady cash income to a "respectable" household. Either term may well have been loosely used by the clergy and officialdom of the day to refer to patterns of sexual behavior other than those prescribed by the canons of matrimony—canons seldom fully observable by men and women of the impoverished class of *viles e infames* in colonial society. Perhaps the most remarkable implication of this collection of testimonies and comments is that there existed within the tiny urban society of early eighteenth-century Pará a network of friendship and mutual support that might unite an Indian slave housemaid, a free Indian whore, a hard-working tailor, and some others in a joint effort to challenge the system and free one of their number from the oppressive burden of chatteldom. No less remarkable is the suggestion that in the real world of Pará the social barriers erected by slavery and official racial discrimination were less influential in ordering social relations than were the natural bonds of friendship.

Dona Anna de Fonte defended her property rights in Francisca by calling together a number of rather more respectable citizens, people in their forties or older, and all but one of them both white and literate, to affirm that they knew the slave woman to have been brought down in return for Dona Anna's investment of trade goods with Anacleto Ferreira, and that for two decades she had generally been known as a slave in the Fonte household. None of these people was an eyewitness to the events on the Isle of Timoni, and several admitted to having derived their information from Dona Anna de Fonte herself. But no questions were raised about the reliability of their testimonies.

The most remarkable of the widow Fonte's witnesses was a male Indian slave belonging to her brother-in-law, one Clemente, who appears somehow to have been induced to perjure himself for her cause. Clemente insisted through an interpreter that he was a Manaó himself and that he remembered the time when his uncle, a chief named Mabiary, had captured Francisca as a teenage girl from one of his enemies and then handed her over to another chief named Exa, who in turn had sold her to Estevão Cardoso of Maranhão. According to Clemente, Cardoso had then brought Francisca down directly to sell in Pará. Despite the lack of any certificate of legitimate enslavement, which he explained by the fact that there had been no official slaving troop on the Negro at the time of this transaction, Clemente thought that Francisca ought to be thought of as a slave just like all the rest.

Francisca's case was first heard by the chief justice of the colony, who found that the woman should be declared a free person. This was because Dona Anna had been unable to produce a certificate of legitimate enslavement and because Francisca had been brought from the *sertão* by people licensed not to go slaving but only to go up after cacao. The widow Fonte then appealed the case to the Council of Missions, a body consisting of the heads of all the religious orders established in Pará, which held final jurisdiction in matters involving the administration of the Indians. The council reversed the justice's decision on the grounds that Francisca's witnesses (and in particular Apolinaria) were unreliable, and that since Francisca had been given to Rayol as a kind of dowry to accompany his bride, Rosaura, she had clearly been viewed as a slave by Chief Amu. Expressing its belief that justice was better served by attending to the "truth" than to the confusing details of the evidence assembled in the case, the council ordered that Francisca return obediently to the service of her mistress. When all was said and done, she was no more or less than an ordinary *escrava resgatada*, a slave bought and delivered by the traders of Pará, who was by custom obliged to work for a lifetime to repay the cost of her purchase.

No more than that can now be known of Francisca and of her life and times in the slave society of Pará. The chances are that her days were numbered, since more than half the population of the colony was to die in the terrible epidemic of



...at swept the valley in 1749. But dim though the reflection of the living person has become, it is an image worthy of a moment's thoughtful attention. Francisca was a member of what was perhaps the most despised, dehumanized, and least vigorous human group that existed in colonial America—the caste of Indian slaves. The intelligence, resourcefulness, vitality, determination, and love of life that moved people like her was seldom acknowledged (at least in writing) even by their contemporaries. Francisca's kind were short-lived, shamelessly exploited, and quickly forgotten. But Francisca was a survivor and a woman who made her mark on several other people's lives and managed in some measure to steer her own course. The result is that we may know her name, and wonder about what sort of human being she must really have been.

### Notes

1. Samuel Fritz, S. J., *Journal of the Travels and Labours of Father Samuel Fritz in the River of the Amazons between 1686 and 1723*, Hakluyt Society, 2d series, no. 51 (London, 1922), pp. 62–63.
2. Literal translation of Tupi-Guarani *cunhamena*, the standard term in Brazilian histories for these transfrontiersmen.

### Sources

Most of the original documents for the study of Indian slavery and other aspects of the social history of Pará in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have perished since Francisca's day. They have been lost or fallen victim to the humid heat and mold and borer worms. A good many of them were sold by the pound to a firecracker manufacturer not so many years ago, by a director of the State Archive less appreciative of their contents than of the commercial value of the fine rag paper on which they were written. But the file concerning Francisca's suit for freedom has survived because it was collected with other official papers on the Indian slave trade by a governor sent out to abolish that trade and carry out other administrative reforms in the 1750s. The governor took the papers back to Lisbon when he returned, and they may be consulted there today in the Pombal Collection at the National Library. It is from this slender sheaf of notarized depositions and lawyers' resumes, Codex 642, ff. 100–142, that it is possible to reconstruct at least the bare outlines of Francisca's story today.

Background information for the Indian slave trade from the Rio Negro basin was taken from my dissertation, "A Rich Realm of Nature Destroyed: The Central Amazon Valley, 1640–1750" (University of Wisconsin, 1974), chs. 9–11. Ethnographic notes on the

Manao may be found in Alfred Métraux, "The Indians of the Upper Amazon," *Handbook of South American Indians*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C., 1947), pp. 687–712.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

The best published treatment in English of the Amazon Indian slave trade and labor system, as well as of other aspects of the struggle between Amerindians and Europeans in that part of the colonial world, is John Hemming, *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians, 1500–1760* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), esp. chs. 11, 15, 18 and 19. Legal aspects are discussed in Mathias Kiemen, *The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614–1693* (Washington, D.C., 1954), esp. ch. 5. For a broader view of colonial Amazonian society, see Charles R. Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil* (Berkeley, Calif., 1969), ch. 11; Caio Prado, Jr., *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley, Calif., 1971), pp. 69–72 and 242–55; and the articles by David M. Davidson and Colin Maclachlan in Dauril Alden, ed., *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley, Calif., 1973).