



Borzoi Books ON LATIN AMERICA

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LEWIS HANKE
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A
Documentary
History

O F

B R A Z I L



EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

E. Bradford Burns

University of California at Los Angeles

19



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NEW YORK: Alfred A. Knopf



2. The Letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha*

King Manoel I decided to follow up Vasco da Gama's discovery in 1498 of an all-water route to India with a larger expedition. Under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral, a fleet of thirteen vessels sailed from the Tagus River on March 8, 1500. Veering westward from their course for some, as yet, unexplained reason, the Portuguese sighted land at 17° latitude south on April 22. Cabral at once claimed the land for his sovereign and spent about a week reconnoitering the coast. Aboard the fleet was an educated government official named Pero Vaz de Caminha, who wrote the king a glowing report of a beautiful land and innocent natives. Dated May 1, 1500, this letter is the first chronicle of the newly-found land of Brazil, a name derived from its first important export, brazilwood.

This same day, at the hour of vespers we sighted land, that is to say, first a very high rounded mountain, then other lower ranges of hills to the south of it, and a plain covered with large trees. The admiral named the mountain Easter Mount and the country the Land of the True Cross.

He ordered them to drop the plumb-line, and they measured twenty-five fathoms. At sunset, about six leagues from the shore, we dropped anchor in nineteen fathoms, and it was a good clean anchorage. There we lay all that night. On Thursday morning we set sail and made straight for land,

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* From the book *Portuguese Voyages 1498-1663* edited by Charles David Ley. Everyman's Library No. 986 (New York: Dutton & Co., 1947), pp. 42-45, 53-54, 56-59. Reprinted by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

The Letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha † 21

with the smaller ships leading, the water being seventeen, sixteen, fifteen, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, ten and nine fathoms deep, until we were half a league from the shore. Here we all cast anchor opposite a river mouth. It must have been more or less ten o'clock when we reached this anchorage.

From there we caught sight of men walking on the beaches. The small ships which arrived first said that they had seen some seven or eight of them. We let down the longboats and the skiffs. The captains of the other ships came straight to this flagship, where they had speech with the admiral. He sent Nicolau Coelho on shore to examine the river. As soon as the latter began to approach it, men came out on to the beach in groups of twos and threes, so that, when the longboat reached the river mouth, there were eighteen or twenty waiting.

They were dark brown and naked, and had no covering for their private parts, and they carried bows and arrows in their hands. They all came determinedly towards the boat. Nicolau Coelho made a sign to them to put down their bows, and they put them down. But he could not speak to them or make himself understood in any other way because of the waves which were breaking on the shore. He merely threw them a red cap, and a linen bonnet he had on his head, and a black hat. And one of them threw him a hat of large feathers with a small crown of red and grey feathers, like a parrot's. Another gave him a large bough covered with little white beads which looked like seed-pearls.

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Thus we sailed along the coast, and, ten leagues from the spot where we had weighed anchor, the aforesaid small ships found a ridge of rock which contained a very good, safe port with a very large entrance. So they went in and struck sails. The bigger ships came up behind them, and, a little while after sundown, they struck sails also, perhaps at a league from the rocks, and anchored in eleven fathoms.

Our pilot, Afonso Lopes, was in one of the small ships, and he received orders from the admiral to go in the skiff to take the soundings inside the port, for he was a lively and

capable man for the work. He took up two of the men of the country from a canoe. They were young and well formed and one of them had a bow and six or seven arrows. There were many others on the shore with bows and arrows, but they did not use them. Later, in the evening, he took the two men to the flagship where they were received with great rejoicings and festivities.

They are of a dark brown, rather reddish colour. They have good well-made faces and noses. They go naked, with no sort of covering. They attach no more importance to covering up their private parts or leaving them uncovered than they do to showing their faces. They are very ingenuous in that matter. They both had holes in their lower lips and a bone in them as broad as the knuckles of a hand and as thick as a cotton spindle and sharp at one end like a bodkin. They put these bones in from inside the lip and the part which is placed between the lip and the teeth is made like a rook in chess. They fit them in in such a way that they do not hurt them nor hinder them talking or eating or drinking.

Their hair is straight. They shear their hair, but leave it a certain length, not cutting it to the roots, though they shave it above the ears. One of them had on a kind of wig covered with yellow feathers which ran round from behind the cavity of the skull, from temple to temple, and so to the back of the head; it must have been about a hand's breadth wide, was very close-set and thick, and covered his occiput and his ears. It was fastened, feather by feather, to his hair with a white paste like wax (but it was not wax), so that the wig was very round and full and regular, and did not need to be specially cleaned when the head was washed, only lifted up.

When they came, the admiral was seated on a chair, with a carpet at his feet instead of a dais. He was finely dressed, with a very big golden collar round his neck. Sancho de Toar, Simão de Miranda, Nicolau Coelho, Aires Correia, and the rest of us who were in the ship with him were seated on this carpet. Torches were lit. They entered. However, they made no gesture of courtesy or sign of a wish to speak to the admiral or any one else.

For all that, one of them gazed at the admiral's collar and

began to point towards the land and then at the collar as if he wished to tell us that there was gold in the country. And he also looked at a silver candlestick and pointed at the land in the same way, and at the candlestick, as if there was silver there, too. We showed them a grey parrot the admiral had brought with him. They took it in their hands at once and pointed to the land, as if there were others there. We showed them a ram, but they took no notice of it. We showed them a hen, and they were almost afraid of it and did not want to take it in their hands; finally they did, but as if alarmed by it. We gave them things to eat: bread, boiled fish, confits, sweetmeats, cakes, honey, dried figs. They would hardly eat anything of all this, and, if they tasted it, they spat it out at once. We brought them wine in a cup; they merely sipped it, did not like it at all, and did not want any more of it. We brought them water in a pitcher, and they each took a mouthful, but did not drink it; they just put it in their mouths and spat it out.

One of them saw the white beads of a rosary. He made a sign to be given them and was very pleased with them, and put them round his neck. Then he took them off and put them round his arm, pointing to the land, and again at the beads and at the captain's collar, as if he meant they would give gold for them.

We took it in this sense, because we preferred to. If, however, he was trying to tell us that he would take the beads and the collar as well, we did not choose to understand him, because we were not going to give it to him. Then he returned the beads to the man who had given them to him. Finally they lay on their backs on the carpet to sleep. They did not try to cover up their private parts in any way; these were uncircumcised and had their hairs well shaved and arranged.

The admiral ordered one of his cushions to be put under either of their heads, and the one in the wig took care that this should not be spoiled. They had a cloak spread over them. They consented to this, pulled it over themselves, and slept.

The admiral ordered the exile¹, Afonso Ribeiro, and the two other exiles to mix in amongst them. And he told Diogo Dias, of Sacavém, to do the same, since he was a merry fellow and knew how to amuse them. He told the exiles to stay there that night. So they all went in amongst those people.

As they afterwards related, they went a good league and a half to a hamlet of nine or ten houses. They said those houses were each as big as this flagship. They were made of wooden planks sideways on, had roofs of straw, and were fairly high. Each enclosed a single space with no partitions, but a number of posts. High up from post to post ran nets, in which they slept. Down below they lit fires to warm themselves. Each house had two little doors, one at one end and one at the other. Our men said that thirty or forty people were lodged in each house, and they saw them there. They gave our men such food as they had, consisting of plenty of *inhame*², and other seeds there are in the country which they eat. It was getting late, however, and they soon made all our men turn back, for they would not let any of them stay. They even wanted to come with them, our men said. Our men exchanged some varvels and other small things of little value which they had brought with them for some very large and beautiful red parrots and two small green ones, some caps of green feathers, and a cloth of many colours, also of feathers, a rather beautiful kind of material, as Your Majesty will see when you receive all these things, for the admiral says he is sending them to you. So our men came back, and we returned to our ships.

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The admiral had said when we had left the boat, that it would be best if we went straight to the cross which was leaning against a tree near the river ready to be set up on the next day, Friday; we ought then all to kneel and kiss it so

¹ As a form of punishment, criminals were exiled to distant parts of the empire [ed.].

² A species of manioc [ed.].

that they could see the respect we had for it. We did so and signed to the ten or twelve who were there to do the same, and they at once all went and kissed it.

They seem to be such innocent people that, if we could understand their speech and they ours, they would immediately become Christians, seeing that, by all appearances, they do not understand about any faith. Therefore if the exiles who are to remain here learn their speech and understand them, I do not doubt but that they will follow that blessed path Your Majesty is desirous they should and become Christians and believe in our holy religion. May it please God to bring them to a knowledge of it, for truly these people are good and have a fine simplicity. Any stamp we wish may be easily printed on them, for the Lord has given them good bodies and good faces, like good men. I believe it was not without cause that He brought us here. Therefore Your Majesty who so greatly wishes to spread the Holy Catholic faith may look for their salvation. Pray God it may be accomplished with few difficulties.

They do not plough or breed cattle. There are no oxen here, nor goats, sheep, fowls, nor any other animal accustomed to live with man. They only eat this *inhame*, which is very plentiful here, and those seeds and fruits that the earth and the trees give of themselves. Nevertheless, they are of a finer, sturdier, and sleeker condition than we are for all the wheat and vegetables we eat.

While they were there that day they danced and footed it continuously with our people to the sound of one of our tambourines, as if they were more our friends than we theirs. If we signed to them asking them if they wanted to come to our ships they at once came forward ready to come. So that, if we had invited them all, they would all have come. We did not, however, take more than four or five with us that night. The admiral took two, Simão de Miranda one whom he took as a page, and Aires Comes another, also as a page. One of those whom the admiral took was one of the guests who had been brought him when we first arrived here; on this day he came dressed in his shirt and his brother with

him. That night they were very handsomely treated, not only in the way of food, but also to a bed with mattress and sheets, the better to tame them.

To-day, Friday, 1st May, in the morning, we went on shore with our banner. We made our way up the river and disembarked on the southern bank at a place where it seemed best to us to set up the cross so that it might be seen to the best advantage. There the admiral marked the place for a pit to be made to plant the cross in. Whilst they were digging this, he and all of us went for the cross, down the river to where it was. We brought it from there as in a procession, with the friars and priests singing in front of us. There were a quantity of people about, some seventy or eighty. When they saw us coming, some of them went to help us to support the cross. We passed over the river along by the beach. We then went to set up the cross where it was to be at some two bow-shots from the river. When we went to do this a good hundred and fifty of those people and more came up. The cross was then planted, with Your Majesty's arms and motto on it, which had before been fastened to it, and they set up an altar by its side. Friar Henrique said Mass there, and the singing and officiating was done by the others who have been already mentioned. About fifty or sixty of the people of the place were at the Mass all on their knees as we were. When the Gospel came and we all stood with uplifted hands, they arose with us, lifted their hands, and stayed like that till it was ended. After which they again sat, as we did. When God's Body was elevated and we knelt, they all knelt and lifted their hands as we did and were so silent that I assure Your Majesty it much increased our devotion.

They stayed with us thus until the Communion was over. After the Communion, the friars and priests communicated, as did the admiral and some of us. Since the sun was very strong some of them arose whilst we were communicating, but others stayed to the end. Amongst those who stayed was a man of fifty or fifty-five years old—or rather he came up amongst those already there and also called others to come. He went in amongst them and spoke to them pointing to the

altar and afterwards at Heaven, as if he were speaking to a good purpose. We took it so.

When Mass was over, the priest removed his vestments, and mounted on a chair near the altar in his surplice. He preached to us on the Gospel and about the Apostles whose day it was. At the end of the sermon he referred to the aim of your most holy and virtuous quest, which caused much devoutness.

The men who stayed all through the sermon looked at him as we did. The one I have spoken of called others to come. Some came and some went. At the end of the sermon Nicolau Coelho brought a number of tin crucifixes which had remained over from his former journey. It was thought well that those people should each have one hung round their necks. Friar Henrique stood beside the cross for this purpose. There he hung a crucifix round each of their necks, first making him kiss it and raise his hands. Many came for this. All who came, some forty or fifty, had crucifixes hung round their necks.

At last, a good hour after midday, we went to the ships to eat. The admiral took with him the man who had pointed out the altar and Heaven to the others; he also took a brother of his. The admiral did him much honour and gave him a Moorish shirt and his brother a shirt like the others had had.

My opinion and every one's opinion is that these people lack nothing to become completely Christian except understanding us; for they accepted as we do all they saw us do, which makes us consider that they have no idolatry or worship. I believe that if Your Majesty could send someone who could stay awhile here with them, they would all be persuaded and converted as Your Majesty desires. Therefore, if any one is coming out here, let him not omit to bring a clergyman to baptize them. For, by that time, they will have knowledge of our religion through the two exiles who are remaining with them, who also communicated to-day.

Only one woman came with those who were with us to-day. She was young and stayed throughout the Mass. We

gave her a cloth to cover herself with and put it around her. But she did not pull it down to cover herself when she sat down. Thus, Sire, the innocence of Adam himself was not greater than these people's, as concerns the shame of the body. Your Majesty will judge if people who live in such innocence could be converted or no if they were taught the things that belong to their salvation.

Our last action was to go and kiss the cross in their presence. We then took our leave and went to eat.

I think, Sire, that two cabin-boys will also stay with the exiles we are leaving here, for they escaped to land in the skiff to-night and have not returned again. We think, I say, that they will stay, because, if God be willing, we are taking our departure from here in the morning.

It appears to me, Sire, that the coast of this country must be a good twenty or twenty-five leagues in length from the most southerly point we saw to the most northerly point we can see from this port. In some parts there are great banks along by the shore, some of which are red and some white; inland it is all flat and very full of large woods. All the coastal country from one point to the other is very flat and very beautiful. As to the jungle, it seemed very large to us seen from the sea; for, look as we would, we could see nothing but land and woods, and the land seemed very extensive. Till now we have been unable to learn if there is gold or silver or any other kind of metal or iron there; we have seen none. However, the air of the country is very healthful, fresh, and as temperate as that of Entre Douro e Minho³, we have found the two climates alike at this season. There is a great plenty, an infinitude of waters. The country is so well-favoured that if it were rightly cultivated it would yield everything, because of its waters.

For all that, the best fruit that could be gathered hence would be, it seems to me, the salvation of these people. That should be the chief seed for Your Majesty to scatter here. It would be enough reason, even if this was only a rest-house on the voyage to Calicut. How much more so will it be

³ A northern province of Portugal [ed.].

if there is a will to accomplish and perform in this land what Your Majesty so greatly desires, which is the spreading of our holy religion.



3. The Royal Letter Granting Powers in Brazil to Martim Afonso de Sousa*

Early Portuguese trading expeditions, mostly of a private nature with governmental authorization, were active in the wood trade along the Brazilian coast after 1501. Their reports of the presence of French merchant ships trading with the Indians caused João III to pay greater attention to the vast stretch of coast he claimed in America. In 1530, turning his attention from spice-laden Asia, he dispatched Martim Afonso de Sousa with a fleet of five small ships and 400 crewmen and colonists to Brazil. His instructions were to explore the coast, establish a colony, and drive away the French. To carry out those ambitious tasks, the king granted extensive powers to his first deputy in the New World.

To Whomever it may concern, I make known that I am sending Martim Afonso de Sousa of my council as Chief Captain of the Fleet, which I am sending to the land of

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* Translated from Carlos Malheiro Dias (ed.), *História da Colonização Portuguesa do Brasil* (Porto, Portugal: Litografia Nacional, 1924), III, pp. 159-160. Printed by permission of the publisher.

or sixty feet high where he lived. On both sides of that rock we flattened and prepared small spaces where there were constructed not only the hall where we met for praying and dining but various shelters which can accommodate about eighty persons, including the committee of Villegagnon. While the house is constructed of wood and some fortresses for the artillery of rough stonework the rest is nothing more than huts of rough logs and straw built in the fashion of the savages, who, in fact, built them. This is what, in a few words, composed the fort that Villegagnon gave the name Coligny in order to offer homage to M. Caspar de Coligny, Admiral of France, without whose aid . . . it would have been neither possible to make the journey nor to construct any fort in Brazil.



7. The Jesuits and the Indians*

One of the most perplexing problems confronting the Portuguese was the treatment to be accorded the Indians. In a labor-scarce colony, the settlers looked upon them as a source of cheap manpower and began to enslave them. The crown and the religious regarded them as free souls to be saved by the Catholic Faith. The first to agitate for an enlightened policy toward the indigenous population were the Jesuits, who, under the able leadership of Manuel da Nóbrega and José de Anchieta, became the dedicated protectors of the Indians. Opposing their enslavement by the colonists, the Jesuits sought to incorporate them into the Portuguese empire by

* From E. Bradford Burns, "Introduction to the Brazilian Jesuit Letters," *Mid-America* (July, 1962), pp. 181-186. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Christianizing and civilizing them. To accomplish this task effectively, it was necessary to concentrate the scattered and wandering Indians into mission settlements, the aldeias, where they could more easily be indoctrinated in the beliefs of the Faith and taught useful trades and occupations as well as the customs of European life. The two letters below, the first written by Padre Antônio Pires from Bahia on July 19, 1558, and the second written anonymously from Bahia on September 12, 1558, describe the experiences of the Jesuits in establishing and administering these aldeias. They contain valuable information concerning initial Indian-Portuguese relations.

Pax Christi

Your Paternity already will have understood from the two communications written from here during this year of 1558 what Our Lord has done in this His indigent vineyard through the Fathers and Brothers of the Company of Jesus. Although it will not differ greatly from what was said in the past, I will write in this letter about the fruit which subsequently has been harvested with divine aid and favor. Father Ambrósio Pires, who was with Governor Dom Duarte da Costa, will be able to give more details and clearer information.

First of all, Your Paternity must know that we always exert the greatest diligence possible to bring these Indians to a true knowledge of our Holy Faith. In order to do this we seek the simplest and most pleasant means possible since we hope for greater reward from our work than until now we have seen. Of course in proceeding with this work we never lose the propriety which it demands. The Governor, also, with the zeal and good will which Our Lord gave him does not leave undone one thing which he deems necessary to complete his work. Some means are sought so that larger number of Indians can be taught and indoctrinated with greater ease in the matters of the Faith. In order to proceed with this intention, it is necessary to get rid of some impediments which the Indians themselves have raised. The first

step, which is already a great success, was to concentrate the Indians from four scattered villages into one large village. Whereas before many of us were needed to teach and indoctrinate them because they were scattered about, now that they are concentrated together fewer of us are needed. In this way it is also easier to correct their errors and sins which they committed before because they were so inconveniently located. We hope that with this good order and harmony, which Our Lord has given, we will have much success among them which will result in the honor and glory of His Holy Name and a clearer understanding of Him everywhere.

The impediments which we earnestly desired to get rid of were the continuous and very cruel wars which they carry on among themselves. Their restlessness was the principal impediment to a mutual understanding with them. From their constant wars many deaths resulted; and they would eat each other, something that was very difficult to prohibit although now they no longer do it. At least it is not known that they do it, because if it is known, they are severely punished for it in a manner merited by such a grave sin so foreign to the laws of nature. If this progress continues from now on, as it seems that it will with Divine Favor, we will be able to reap an even greater harvest in the future.

At the very beginning, when the Governor determined to put the land at peace and to forbid all those evil customs of war, murder, and the eating of human flesh, and when he issued a law forbidding all this, some Indians ridiculed it. Previously they were not punished much for doing it, and so they did not stop eating human flesh, rather they merely pretended that they did. As soon as the Governor learned of it, he ordered arrested the first one who ate flesh. Without consulting anyone except the Holy Spirit the Governor (we believed him to be learned in this business because he knew that the Devil would come with his denials which he never lacks), ordered the people and boats made ready. Then he ordered two chiefs, father and son, arrested. A great fear was felt by all the Indians, and much greater was the Devil's grief because he was prevented from keeping so many lost souls.

Then, in this conjunction, a similar event occurred in the

time of Governor Dom Duarte da Costa. Another Indian, the haughtiest of this land in whose village we intended to construct a building for indoctrination, lived in such liberty that he seemed to fear no one, and he did not want the building constructed there. Before, as well as now, judging the times by one set of standards, he disdained the laws, and he ate human flesh with his subjects at great feasts. For this the governor ordered him to appear before him; and in case he would not come, the governor said he would order the Indian arrested. The Indian upon hearing this came immediately believing that he would be put to death as the messenger, who came to inform him of the governor's orders, told him. Before leaving his people, he spoke to them advising that they work to become good and they stay where they now were because he would pay for them all. It happened that when the Indian came to the Governor's residence, he was badly received by him, and the Indian threw himself at the Governor's feet and kissed them and begged him pardon offering to receive the Fathers in his village where they would carry out all the Fathers' orders. He said all this with such signs of contrition that he merited pardon. Then another chief came to do the same thing. These are the fruits which the Lord is harvesting from this field that until now was sterile, and for the service of Our Lord it was decided to go immediately to that Indian's village to construct a building where the Indians could be indoctrinated.

At this time, a church was built one league from this city. There, four of the Indian villages, which were closest to this town and in which we had previously been indoctrinating, were joined together. It was the first Indian reduction that we made, and it has the name of São Paulo.¹ It certainly shows that Our Lord wants to open the door which has been closed for so long because, besides the Indians being subjugated and awed, they cease committing some of the sins which were frequently very common among them. In the

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¹ Not to be confused with the present, well known, Brazilian city of the same name. The São Paulo mentioned here was an Indian reduction about one league from Bahia.

construction of the church and houses into which the Fathers, teachers of this new Christianity, gathered together the Indians, Our Lord manifested His pleasure, because, although they were built in the winter during which time it rains frequently in this land, the work was completed in four months. The first mass was said in that church on St. Peter and St. Paul's Day with the greatest solemnity possible. The Governor, accompanied by the most honorable men of the city, visited the church where a dinner was given for all. The solemnity began with the new catechumens. At the beginning of the mass, the Father, dressed in priestly robes, blessed the church and then began the solemn baptism during which he baptized eighty-four innocents. Of all these, the Governor was the godfather. In this ceremony, he demonstrated clearly the zeal and favor he has for such works because there he was next to the baptismal font touching his godchildren with much love as one must feel when he sees the salvation of a soul. Brother Antônio Rodrigues, their teacher and translator, was also their godfather.

Later, on the day of the Visitation, some thirty more were baptized. On the following Sunday, some twenty more were baptized to bring the total to 144. All of them are school children who have been indoctrinated. The older people are baptized more slowly. In former times the parents did not want to allow their children to be baptized; and, if they became ill, they hid them. Now, by the Lord's kindness, if they fall ill, they come offering the children for baptism; and after the first baptism was held in the new church, there were many who complained because we did not baptize their children on that day. They believed it would never be possible again to have their children baptized.

During this solemnity the Governor made one of the principal Indians the bailiff of the village, and he ordered him to be suitably dressed, and he handed to him his staff of office which caused considerable amazement among them because it was new. This good order affected many, not only those who live close to us but those who live ten leagues from here came to ask for the same laws and for us to teach them

saying they will do all that is commanded of them. It would seem that they are adjusting to the Christian manner of living. Confident that the Lord will send from the homeland many laborers for these works of His service, we continue to expand our activities always asking the Lord for aid and help to be able to accomplish our tasks to the greater glory and honor of His Divine Majesty. We ask for His Holiest Grace so that aided by it we can work faithfully in His service as we are obliged. Amen.

Since the letter written on July 19, 1558, from Bahia, the Governor has continued zealously in his efforts and Our Lord has given him rewards for his efforts.

He continued to punish the wrongdoers with such prudence and temperance that he builds up the community and does not destroy it, and for that reason he has been able to subjugate all to the law and servitude whom he wasted.

Thus, from far away they [the Indians] send requests for priests to indoctrinate them because they want friendship with Christians and to change their habits for ours. In this way four large settlements are already constructed for them, but for the present only two of us reside among them in the newly constructed churches because there are only three of us in this Captaincy who can say mass and we are scattered in the following three areas: in the College of Bahia resides João Gonçalves with a few Brothers, Father Nóbrega is in São Paulo,² and Antônio Pires is in São João.³ The other two settlements are awaiting aid.

Besides these, other settlements are being prepared in more remote parts where the Christians never imagined it possible to enter and subjugate, and we are taking care of this slowly until there are enough Fathers to reap the great harvest there. It is certain that if there were enough people

² São Paulo here again refers to the Indian reduction about one league from Bahia.

³ São João was an Indian reduction about five leagues from Bahia.

to teach and to maintain them, we could easily establish twenty or thirty churches around which we could settle all the Indians from an area many leagues square. ✓

All these are losing their habit of eating human flesh; and if we learn that some are about to eat flesh, we order them to send it to us. They send it, as they did several days ago, and they bring it to us from a long distance so that we can bury or burn it. In this way they all tremble with fear of the Governor, a fear which, although it may not last a lifetime, is enough so that we can teach them; it serves us so that we can tell them of Christ, and the kindness which Our Lord will show them will cause all human fear to flee so that they will remain a strong and stable people. This fear makes them more capable of being able to hear the word of God. Their children are instructed; the innocent ones about to die are all baptized; they are forgetting their habits and exchanging them for good ones. Proceeding in this way a noble Christianity will be inculcated at least among the youngsters. ✓

With much diligence the children are being taught good habits, reading, and writing, and there are some very intelligent ones among them. From these we hope to have some good students, because, since they can no longer wander around and now remain among us, they will not be able to forget what they have learned. Those of São Paulo, the first settlement built, are all Christians, that is the children up to fourteen years of age, and every day more are baptized because those who are born again bring others for baptism and there are more than two hundred of these. We do not baptize the older ones who may already have committed some mortal sins unless they confess and live in a manner acceptable to Our Lord, and of these older ones many are living orderly lives so that already we have baptized and married a large number. This good order is encountered throughout the other Indian settlements we have created.

There are a great many things which I could tell your Paternity and all the Brothers which would please you very much, but I will concentrate only on two things. The first is that one of the boys whom we brought up some years ago and taught to weave is in São Paulo with his loom and is

making cloth. The concern which before they all had for their feasts of human flesh and for their wars and ceremonies has been converted to the planting of cotton. They weave it and thus dress themselves. This now is their principal concern. All have begun to clothe themselves and many of them go around dressed now. The second is that in the settlement of São Paulo there is a young Indian girl who, for the love of virtue, determined to live a life of chastity and cleanliness. After the fathers praised and commended her intention and told her various examples of Holy Virgins, she became even more set in her purpose. This is truly a novelty in this generation in which the flesh corrupts their lives so much that it frightens us; *sed manus Domini non est alligata*. ✓

Not only is there an understanding with these Indians, who are here associated with us, but also with those around Bahia who are opposed to these [Indians] and have done harm to the Christians and have murdered many. These came once again to steal a boat from the Christians, and for this and other reasons war was declared against them because they refused to make the necessary satisfactions. Consequently the Governor commanded that they should be fought, and they [the Portuguese] entered the land of those Indians and killed all the men in one large village and took the women and children captive without losing one Christian. Such a feat amazed and frightened not only those Indians but those all along the coast because such a thing had never happened there before.

Then the Governor with many people set about to subjugate them and to make them understand the only path by which they can come to have an understanding of their Creator. Therefore, it is necessary that many laborers come to reap such a great harvest, and we hope in Our Lord that beside those of the Company of Jesus, His Highness will send people here who will be able to help to maintain the beginning which has been made and will finish subjugating this land which promises so much.

In this city many confessions are made now that celebrations are coming up. In this college many people, among those whom we are able to confess, confessed. They are

women and the poor who do not have the hindrance of owning [Indian] slaves. Father João Gonçalves, who now resides in this college with a few Brothers, is very industrious in hearing confessions.

Now there is nothing else to write except to ask your blessing for all these who are yours and your prayers for us to Jesus Christ Our Lord.



8. The Rediscovery of the Amazon*

Portuguese energy in the sixteenth century was absorbed in the conquest of the coast. Conflicts with truculent Indians and with French, British, and Dutch interlopers increased the difficulty of expansion, but slowly the Portuguese moved northward from their base in Pernambuco. In 1585 the town of Filipéia in Paraíba was founded; in 1599 Natal in Rio Grande do Norte; in 1613 Ceará was pacified and incorporated into the colony; in 1615 the French were driven out of Maranhão; in 1616 Belém was established. By the end of the third decade of the seventeenth century, Lisbon held the coast around the mouth of the Amazon River. That "river-sea" was still largely unknown. Discovered by Francisco de Orellana in 1539-1541 and revisited by the expedition of Lope de Aguirre in 1559-1561, the river had been neglected until 1636, when two Spanish Franciscans and six soldiers descended the Amazon from Quito to Belém. Their arrival spurred the Portuguese to take a greater interest in the river,

* From Father Cristóval de Acuña, *A New Discovery of the Great River of the Amazons*, in Clements R. Markham (ed.), *Expeditions into the Valley of the Amazons* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1859), pp. 60-61, 64-68, 74-77, 79-81, 83, 85-86, 133.

whose mouth they then controlled, and coincided with a new phase in Brazilian colonial history: the expansion into the interior of the continent. Accordingly, in 1637, the governor dispatched Pedro Teixeira to explore the river. With forty-one large canoes, seventy soldiers, some priests, and 1,200 Indians, he paddled up the Amazon, Solimões, and Napo to Quito. On his return in 1639, he founded Tabatinga, the most distant claim of Portugal in the heartland of South America, the place where today Peru, Colombia, and Brazil meet. Accompanying him on the return voyage was Father Cristóval de Acuña, a Spanish priest, who wrote the first thorough chronicle of the Amazon.

*

THE VOYAGE

On the 16th February 1639, they commenced their long voyage, which lasted for a space of ten months, when they entered the city of Pará, on the 12th of December of the same year. After they had crossed those lofty mountains on foot, which, with the liquor of their veins, feed and sustain that great river; they voyaged on the waves to where, spread out into eighty-four mouths, it pays its mighty tribute to the sea. They, with particular care, took notes of all that was worthy of remark, measured the heights, noted down all the tributary rivers by their names, became acquainted with the nations who dwell on their banks, beheld their fertility, enjoyed the resources of the great river, experienced its climate, and finally left nothing of which they could not say that they had been eye-witnesses. As such, as persons whom so many considerations oblige to be accurate, I pray to those who read this narrative that they will give me the credit that is just, for I am one of those, and in the name of both I took up my pen to write. I say this because other accounts may be brought to light, which will not be so truthful as this narrative. This will be a true account, and it is an account of things which, with face uncovered, not more than fifty Spaniards and Portuguese can testify to, namely, those who made the same voy-

age. I affirm that which is certain as certain, and that which is doubtful as such, that in an affair of so much importance, no one may believe more than is stated in this narrative.

The River of Amazons is the Largest in the World

The famous river of Amazons, which traverses the richest, most fertile, and most densely populated regions of Peru, may be, from this day forth, proclaimed as the largest and most celebrated river in the whole world. For if the Ganges irrigates all India, and, with the great volume of its waters, eclipses the sea itself, which loses its very name and is called the Gangtic Gulf (or sometimes the Bay of Bengal): if the Euphrates, the famed river of Syria and Persia, is the joy and delight of those countries: if the Nile irrigates and fertilizes a great part of Africa: the river of Amazons waters more extensive regions, fertilizes more plains, supports more people, and augments by its floods a mightier ocean: it only wants, in order to surpass them in felicity, that its source should be in Paradise; as is affirmed of those other rivers, by grave authors.

The narrowest part in which the river collects its waters, is little more than a quarter of a league wide. A place, doubtless, which has been provided by divine Providence, where the great sea of fresh water narrows itself, so that a fortress may be built to impede the passage of any hostile armament of what force soever; in case it should enter by the principal mouth of this mighty river.

The depth of the river is great, and there are parts where no bottom has yet been found. From the mouth to the Rio Negro, a distance of nearly six hundred leagues, there is never less than thirty or forty brazas¹ in the main channel; above the Rio Negro it varies more, from twenty to twelve or eight brazas, but up to very near its source there is sufficient depth for any vessel; and, though the current would impede

¹ Fathoms.

the ascent, yet there is not wanting usually, every day, three or four hours of a strong breeze, which would assist in overcoming it.

Islands, Their Fertility and Products

All this river is full of islands, some large, others small, and so numerous that it is impossible to count them, for they are met with at every turn. Some are four or five leagues, others ten, others twenty in circumference, and that which is inhabited by the Tupinambas (of whom I shall speak hereafter), is more than a hundred leagues round.

There are also many other very small ones, on which the Indians sow their seeds, having their habitations on the larger ones. These islands are flooded by the river every year, and are so fertilized by the mud which it leaves behind, that they can never be called sterile. The ordinary products, which are maize and yuca, or manioc, the commonest food of all, are in great abundance; and though it would seem that the Indians are exposed to great loss, on account of the powerful floods; yet nature, the common mother of us all, has provided these barbarians with an easy means of preserving their food. They collect the yucas, which are roots from which they make the *casava*, the ordinary substitute for bread in all parts of Brazil; and forming caves or deep holes in the earth, they bury them, and leave them well covered up during all the time of the floods. When the waters subside, they take them out, and use them for food, without their having lost any part of their virtue. If nature teaches the ant to store up grain in the bowels of the earth, to serve for food during a whole year: how much more will she suggest a contrivance to the Indian, how barbarous soever he may be, to protect him from harm, and to preserve his food: for is it not certain that Divine Providence will take more care of men than of dumb animals?

The Kinds of Liquor Which They Use

This [yuca?] is, as I have said, the daily bread which always accompanies their other food; and it not only serves for food, but also as a drink, to which all the natives are usually much inclined. For this purpose they make large thin cakes, which they place in an oven and bake, so that they will last for many months: these they keep in the highest part of their houses, to preserve them from the dampness of the earth. When they wish to use them, they melt them in water, and having boiled the liquor at a fire, they let it stand as long as is necessary; and, when cold, it is the usual wine which they drink. It is sometimes so strong that it might be taken for grape wine, and intoxicates the natives, making them lose their judgment.

With the help of this wine they celebrate their feasts, mourn their dead, receive their visitors, sow and reap their crops; indeed there is no occasion on which they meet, that this liquor is not the mercury which attracts them, and the riband which detains them. They also make, though they are not so common, other kinds of wine, of the wild fruits which abound on the trees; so fond are they of drunkenness. They put the juice into water, and produce a liquor which often exceeds beer in strength, that beverage which is so much used in foreign countries. These wines are kept in large earthen jars, like those used in Spain; also in small pipes made of one piece of the hollowed trunk of a tree; and in large vases woven from herbs, and so smeared with bitumen, that not one drop of the liquor which they contain is ever lost.

The Fruits Which They Have

The food with which they accompany their bread and wine is of various kinds—not only fruits, such as plantains, pine apples, and guavas, but very palatable chestnuts, which in Peru they call “almonds of the Sierra,” for in truth they more resemble the latter than the former. They name them chestnuts, because they are enclosed in shells which resemble

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the prickly husk of the real chestnut. The Indians also have palms of different kinds, some of which produce cocoa nuts, others palatable dates which, though wild, are of a very pleasant taste. There are also many other different kinds of fruits, all proper to tropical climates. They have likewise nourishing roots such as the potatoe, the *yuca mansas*, which the Portuguese call *macachera*, *garas*, *criadillas de terra*, and others which, either roasted or boiled, are not only palatable, but also very nutritious.

Nature of the Land, and of Medicinal Drugs

From this mildness of the climate arises without doubt the freshness of all the banks of this river, which, crowned with various beautiful trees, appear to be continually delineating new countries, in which nature brightens, and art is taught. Although for the most part the land is low, it also has tolerably high rising grounds, small plains clear of trees and covered with flowers, valleys which always retain moisture, and, in more distant parts, hills which may properly receive the name of Cordilleras.

In the wild forests the natives have, for their sicknesses, the best dispensary of medicines; for they collect the largest cañafistula, or fruit of the purging cassia, that has even been found; the best sarsaparilla; healing gums and resins in great abundance: and honey of wild bees at every step, so abundant that there is scarcely a place where it is not found, and it is not only useful medicinally, but also very pleasant and palatable as food. The wax, though black, is good, and burns as well as any other.

In these forests too are the oil of *andirova*, trees of priceless value for curing wounds; here too is the *copaiba*, which has no equal as a balsam; here too are found a thousand kinds of herbs and trees of very peculiar qualities; and to find many others a second Dioscorides or a third Pliny should come out, to investigate their properties.

Timber and Materials for Ships

The woods of this river are innumerable, so tall that they reach to the clouds, so thick that it causes astonishment. I measured a cedar with my hands, which was thirty *palmas* in circumference. They are nearly all of such good wood that better could not be desired; there are cedars, cotton trees, iron wood trees, and many others now made known in those parts, and proved to be the best in the world for building vessels. In this river vessels may be built better and at less cost than in any other country, finished and launched, without the necessity of sending anything from Europe, except iron for the nails. Here, as I have said, is timber; here are cables made from the bark of a certain tree, which will hold a ship in the heaviest gale; here is excellent pitch and tar; here is oil, as well vegetable as from fish; here they can make excellent oakum which they call *embira*, for caulking the ships, and also there is nothing better for the string of an arquebuss; here is cotton for the sails; and here finally is a great multitude of people, so that there is nothing wanting, for building as many vessels as may be placed on the stocks.

Of Four Valuable Products Found on the Banks of This River

There are on the banks of the great river of the Amazons four products, which, if cultivated, would undoubtedly be sufficient to enrich not only one, but many kingdoms. The first of these is the timber; of which, besides there being so many curious kinds, of great value; there are such quantities fit for building that while as much may be cut as is wanted, there will be the certainty that the supply can never be exhausted.

The second kind is the *cocoa*, of which the banks of this river are so full that in some places the wood of it would suffice, if cut, for lodging a whole army. There is scarcely any difference between this tree, and that which yields this much

valued fruit in New Spain; which, when cultivated, is of such value that the trees, growing a foot apart, are every year worth eight silver rials, after all expenses are paid. It is clear with what little labour these trees may be cultivated on this river, when, without any help from art, nature alone covers them with abundance of fruit.

The third kind is *tobacco*, of which great quantities are found, in all the country near the banks of this river, and if it were cultivated with the care that this seed requires, it would be the best in the world. In the opinion of those who understand the subject, the soil and climate are all that can be desired to produce prolific harvests.

The product which, in my view, ought to be most cultivated on this river is *sugar*, which is the fourth kind. It is the most noble, most productive, most certain, and most valuable to the royal crown; and many farms ought to be established, which in a short time would restore the losses on the Brazilian coast. For this purpose neither much time nor much labour would be necessary, nor, what now-a-days is more dreaded, much outlay, for the land for sugar cane is the most productive in all Brazil, as we can testify who have visited those parts; and the floods, which never last more than a few days, leave it so fertile that it might be thought to be too rich. Nor will it be a new thing to raise sugar cane on the banks of this river; for along its whole vast length, from its first sources, we were always meeting with it: so that it seemed from that time to give signs of its future increase, when mills should be established to work it. These would not be expensive, because all necessary timber is at hand, with water in abundance. Copper is alone wanting, which with great ease might be supplied from Spain, in anticipation of the rich return which would be afterwards received.

Of Other Valuable Products

Not only may these four products be promised, from this newly discovered land, to supply the whole world; but there are also many others, which, though in less quantities, would

not fail to enrich the royal crown. Such, among others, is the cotton which is picked in abundance; the *uruca*,² which gives the best dye, and is much valued by foreigners; the fruit of the cassia; the sarsaparilla; the oils which rival the best balsams in curing wounds; the gums and sweet resins; the agave,³ whence the best cord is obtained, which is plentiful, and many others; which necessity, or the desire of riches, are bringing to light every day.

*

THE INDIANS

All this new world, if we may call it so, is inhabited by barbarians, in distinct provinces and nations. . . .

They exceed one hundred and fifty, all with different languages. These nations are so near each other, that from the last villages of one they hear the people of the other at work. But this proximity does not lead to peace; on the contrary, they are engaged in constant wars, in which they kill and take prisoners great numbers of souls every day. This is the drain provided for so great a multitude, without which the whole land would not be large enough to hold them.

But though, among themselves, they are so warlike, none of them shewed courage to face Spaniards, as I observed throughout the voyage, in which the Indians never dared to use any defence against us, except that of flight. They navigate in vessels so light that, landing, they carry them on their shoulders, and, conveying them to one of the numerous lakes near the river, laugh at any enemy who, with heavier vessels, is unable to follow the same example.

All those who live on the shores of this great river are collected in large villages, and, like the Venetians and Mexi-

² *Achiote*, heart-leaved *bixa* or *anotta*.

³ The American aloe.

cans, their means of communication are by water, in small vessels which they call canoes. They are usually of cedar wood, which the providence of God abundantly supplies, without the labour of cutting it or carrying it from the forest; sending it down with the current of the river, which, to supply their wants, tears the trees from the most distant Cordilleras of Peru, and places them at the doors of their habitations, where each Indian may choose the piece of wood which suits him best.

The rites of all these infidels are almost the same. They worship idols which they make with their own hands; attributing power over the waters to some, and, therefore, place a fish in their hands for distinction; others they choose as lords of the harvests; and others as gods of their battles. They say that these gods came down from Heaven to be their companions, and to do them good. They do not use any ceremony in worshipping them, and often leave them forgotten in a corner, until the time when they become necessary; thus when they are going to war, they carry an idol in the bows of their canoes, in which they place their hopes of victory; and when they go out fishing, they take the idol which is charged with dominion over the waters; but they do not trust in the one or the other so much as not to recognize another mightier God.

I gathered this from what happened with one of these Indians, who having heard something of the power of our God, and seen with his own eyes that our expedition went up the river, and, passing through the midst of so many warlike nations, returned without receiving any damage; judged that it was through the force and power of the God who guided us. He, therefore, came with much anxiety to beseech the captain and ourselves, that, in return for the hospitality he had shown us, we would leave him one of our gods, who would protect him and his people in peace and safety, and assist them to procure all necessary provisions. There were not wanting those who wished to console him by leaving in his village the standard of the cross, a thing which the Portuguese were accustomed to do among the infidels, not with so

good a motive as would appear from the action itself. The sacred wood of the cross served to give color to the greatest injustice, such as the continual slavery of the poor Indians, whom, like meek lambs, they carried in flocks to their houses, to sell some, and treat the others with cruelty. These Portuguese raise the cross, and in payment of the kind treatment of the natives when they visit their villages, they fix it in the most conspicuous place, charging the Indians always to keep it intact. By some accident, or through the lapse of time, or purposely because these infidels do not care for it, the cross falls. Presently the Portuguese pass sentence, and condemn all the inhabitants of the village to perpetual slavery, not only for their lives, but for the lives of all their descendants.

For this reason I did not consent that they should plant the holy cross; and also that it might not give the Indian, who had asked us for a god, occasion for idolatry, by attributing to the wood the power of the Diety who redeemed us.

It is worthy of notice that they all hold their sorcerers in very great estimation, not so much on account of the love they bear them, as for the dread in which they always live of the harm they are able to do them. These sorcerers usually have a house, where they practice their superstitious rites, and speak to the demon; and where, with a certain kind of veneration, the Indians keep all the bones of dead sorcerers, as if they were relics of saints. They suspend these bones in the same hammocks in which the sorcerers had slept when alive.

These men are their teachers, their preachers, their counselors, and their guides. They assist them in their doubts, and the Indians report to them in their wars, that they may receive poisonous herbs with which to take vengeance on their enemies.

After having bathed with its waters a distance of thirteen hundred and fifty-six leagues of longitude, after sustaining on its banks an infinite number of barbarous tribes, after fertilizing vast territories, and after having passed through the centre of Peru, and, like a principal channel, collected the largest and richest of all its affluents, it [the Amazon] renders its tribute to the ocean.

Such is the sum of the new discovery of this great river, which excludes no one from its vast treasures, but rewards all who wish to take advantage of them. To the poor it offers sustenance, to the labourer a reward for his work, to the merchant employment, to the soldier opportunities to display his valour, to the rich an increase to his wealth, to the noble honours, to the powerful estates, and to the king himself a new empire.



9. An Eyewitness Account of the First Battle of Guararapes*

The Dutch emerged as the major challenge to Portuguese control of Brazil. They had cast covetous eyes in that direction in the sixteenth century; but as they rose to the rank of a first-rate sea power in the early seventeenth century, their designs became more overt and ambitious. After the formation of the Dutch West India Company in 1621, incorporated to encourage colonization and commerce through con-

* Translated from a manuscript written by Francisco Barreto found in the Library of Évora, Portugal, and printed in *Documentos dos Arquivos Portugueses que Importam ao Brasil*, No. 2 (Lisbon: Oficina Gráfica. Secretariado Nacional da Informação de Portugal, 1944-45), pp. 1-3. Printed by permission of the publisher.