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LITTLE KNOWN GROUPS OF INDIANS REPORTED IN 1696 ON THE RIO SÃO FRANCISCO, IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL

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One of the lesser known Jesuit expulsions occurred in the Rio São Francisco valley, which now divides the modern states of Bahia and Pernambuco. This episode of 1696 is noteworthy because it did not represent official government policy, which was later true of the eighteenth century banishments. The affair was due to the machinations of a great land-owning family who wanted no outside interference with their exploitation of lands given by the King to the Indians, which grants (usually of 4 square leagues each) were disputed by that family of squirearchs. the d'Ávilas.

The family in question, founded by García d'Ávila who came to São Salvador da Bahia in 1549, became in the course of time popularly known by the name of their mansion, Casa da Torre. In Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe d'El-Rei they ruled vast estates ; for example, on the Pernambucan side of the Rio São Francisco the Casa da Torre possessed one *sesmaria* (grant) of 250 leagues, about 1.000 square miles ¹.

The royal Alvará of April 1st, 1680, provided for land to be given to Indians settled in aldeias and made it clear that even if such Indian lands were within *sesmarias* granted to private persons, the Indian title to their own territory was held good because *sesmarias* were granted by the King with this proviso in mind. However. « Colonel » ² Francisco Dias d'Ávila, head of the Casa da Torre, disputed this principle, contending that *all* of the lands bordering the Rio São Francisco were given to him by the King, and he initiated a campaign to obstruct and discredit the missionaries who were the only local protectors of the Indians.

1. Calmon, 1939, and Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, 1929 : 90.

2. While other *fazendeiros* (ranchers) fought actively in the war against the Dutch, Francisco Dias d'Ávila contented himself with supplying beef to the Pernambucan forces, which act later furnished him the basis for new territorial demands on the government for his « patriotism ». He himself was no more than a *capitão de entradas*, during the function of which office he contrived excuses to provoke peaceable Indians into revolt so that they could enslave them in « punishment » (see Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, 1929 : 91-95).

Padre Martin de Nantes, a French Capuchin who wrote an account of the Carirí Indians, was one of the first to become involved with d'Ávila when the latter attempted to drive out the aldeia Indians established on lands of the Casa da Torre. When the priests protested they were labeled by the colonel as « public enemies ». However, the Jesuits were to suffer most from the activities of the Casa da Torres because they were its most aggressive critics ¹.

On the lower Rio São Francisco the Mission of Rodelas had only six years of peaceful existence because of repeated interventions by the Casa da Torre. Six months before he died, Francisco Días d'Ávila incited the local Indians to reject the Padres of the Society of Jesus, and the expulsion to come was carried out by his widow and sister. At that time the Jesuit area of control over Indian aldeias extended from the Rio São Francisco north to the Rio Paraguaçu or Paraíba, a vast region now comprising the five states of Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, and Ceará. In the old Capitânias of Pernambuco and Itamaracá (an island to the north of Recife) there were at one time seven to eight thousand Indians divided into five Jesuit controlled aldeias and administered by only twelve members of the Society. The « Residência do Rio São Francisco » of 1692 two years later appears to have been divided into two separate aldeias, that of Rodelas and that of Oacarás or Achará, both of which figure in our account ².

The document that treats of the Jesuit expulsion from their missions is entitled : « Relação da maneira com que se botarão os PP^{es} d^a Comp^a de JESVS fôra das suas missões no Rio de S. Francisco. » The original Ms. is in the Arquivo Provincial Português, *pasta* 188, 17 : *Brasília* 4, 24v-25. Public notice was first given of this document in the *Jornal do Commercio* of Rio de Janeiro, for November 1st, 1942, which version differs slightly from that later included in the *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil* by Padre Serafím Leite, S. J.

Summarizing this document very briefly, the Superior of the Missions of Rodelas on the Rio São Francisco, Padre Felipe Bourel, a German from Cologne, arrived in the region in order to mark out lands of the Indian aldeias as he was ordered to do by the Padre Provincial at Bahia, Alexandre Gusmão. From June 19th to June 24th, 1696, Bourel was occupied in setting up crosses (land-markers) indicating Indian lands for the aldeias of Achará, Kurumambá, and Sorobabé. These crosses were subsequently demolished by white *curraleiros* ³ of the Casa da Torre. Notice of impending trouble was received by the

1. Martin de Nantes, 1707 : 134.

2. Leite, 1945, V : 296, 299, 332-33. The « Residência do Rio São Francisco » was not the same as the « Missão de São Francisco », the first Jesuit mission in Pernambuco, founded in 1561 and later moved to a new location where it was known as Beijú-guaçu.

3. *Curraleiro* means rancher, the word stemming from *curral*, an enclosure. According to Padre Antonil, in 1711 there were 106 *curraes* on the Bahia bank of the Rio São Francisco and probably many more on the Pernambucan side. In all Bahia

Jesuits on July 22nd when the Indian chief Fernandinho of Vargé aldeia, administered by French Capuchins, passed by the Jesuit aldeia of Achará, boasting that the padres would soon be ousted from the lands of the Casa da Torre. On July 25th Padre Bourel met with a white acquaintance eight leagues below Rodelas and learned that it was common knowledge that the *curraleiros* under Sergeant-Major Antonio Gomes de Sá, Procurator of the Casa da Torre, had determined to drive out the Jesuits once and for all instead of merely knocking down crosses.

On July 26th the Indian chief Fernandinho suddenly appeared at dawn before the aldeia of Achará with one hundred fifty Indians, who were subordinate to Antonio Gomes de Sá, « bedecked with feathers, painted, and blowing their flutes in sound of war ». They drove out the priests with swords and guns, which were furnished by the Casa da Torre, and their own hardwood clubs. After wrecking the mission the Indians repaired to the three *fazendas* (ranches) of the Casa da Torre which lay between Achará and Kurumambá where they were fed on beef thoughtfully provided for them by the *curraleiros*. That same afternoon the missionaries of Kurumambá were expelled from that mission, during which action the local Indian sergeant-major, Francisco Pereira Rodelas¹, attempted to rescue the Padres, who dissuaded him, however, in order to prevent bloodshed. The following day (27th) the Jesuit missionary to the Kararúzes Indians on Ilha de Sorobabé was warned in advance by the chief of the « Takarúba Nation » on the same island that the *curraleiros* were coming to drive out the Jesuits, offering to ferry the priest across the river. The Padre's own Indians refused to accompany him downstream because they had been forbidden to do so by the Casa da Torre's men on pain of being passed under the blade (*cutelo*). The church and other buildings were looted and burned by the raiding Indians, while the only white lay witness to the affair was forcibly restrained by the *curraleiros* from accompanying the Jesuits in their exodus so that there would be no testimony save that of the plaintiffs.

Upon the Jesuits' complaint, the King ordered the immediate restitution of their lost aldeias in a Carta Régia dated January 20th, 1698, and directed the « Ouvidor (Justice) da Comarca de Sergipe d'El-Rei » to prosecute Dona Leonor Marinho Pereira, widow of Colonel Francisco Días d'Ávila, and his sister, Dona Catarina Fogaça. However, after the widow went in person to plead her case with the Jesuit authorities in Bahia, they thought there was so

there were more than 500 *curraes* and in Pernambuco over 800. Loreto Couto 50 years later wrote that 40,000 head of cattle were driven to markets outside of Pernambuco alone every year (Antonil, 1923 : 262-63 ; Loreto Couto, 1904, I : 58). The term *curraleiro* is rarely used in present-day Pernambuco, being substituted by *fazendeiro*.

1. Francisco Pereira Rodella headed a force of 200 « Tapuya » Indians under general command of the Indian leader Camarão in the war against the Dutch, for which services he was appointed *capitão de aldeia* by the Portuguese in 1674.

little guarantee of her good faith and no hope that future incidents might not be repeated that they decided against returning to the missions, which were subsequently taken over by other missionaries. Apparently, however, the Jesuits did return for a short time, at least, to the Rio São Francisco, because there are records of three Jesuit missions in 1698. The first was near Rio das Rodelas, 11 leagues above the Paulo Afonso Falls, and the other two, Curral dos Bois and Os Carurús, were located 100 leagues above Paulo Afonso Falls ¹.

Sixty-four years after their experience with the Casa da Torre, on May 1st, 1760, the majority of the Jesuits remaining in Pernambuco embarked for Lisbon, Portugal, following the Crown's decision to banish the Society of Jesus from Portuguese colonies and possessions. Following this exodus, some of the old Jesuit Indian aldeias continued under new administrators while other aldeias were completely abolished as « inconvenient » by Luiz José Corrêa de Sá, thirty-first Governor of Pernambuco ².

In the Jesuit account of their expulsion in 1696 the following aldeias are named: Rodelas ³, Kurumambá, Sorobabé, and Vargé. At Rodelas were Indians called variously Aroderas (the name registered by Piso and Marcgraf in 1648), Rodellas, and Rodelleiros. Estevão Pinto, whose claims we must view with suspicion, classes them as Carirí, a convenient catch-all for any unidentified tribe in northeastern Brazil ⁴. However, according to the 4^a Inspeção Regional do Serviço de Proteção aos Índios at Recife, the few Indian survivors living today at the Rodelas Indian Agency are the Tushá, presumably a linguistically independent group, and not Carirí.

We do not know the name of the Indians living at Kurumambá aldeia in 1696, and the name fails to appear in later lists of Pernambucan and Alagôan aldeias. It is possible that the name has undergone subsequent changes, a common enough practice in this region.

As to the other Indian aldeias on the lower and middle Rio São Francisco ⁵ under Jesuit control, some of our information as to tribal names, even though confusing, comes from aldeia lists dated after the Jesuit expulsion of 1696, when these villages were administered by other Catholic orders.

On Ilha de Sorobabé, at least from 1702 to 1761, was the Aldeia de Nossa Senhora de Ó, the Indians controlled by Franciscans being Procázes (Porcães,

1. Leite, 1945, V : 308.

2. Fernandes Gama, 1844, IV : 351.

3. The majority of these mission aldeias were on islands in the Rio São Francisco, and some of them in aboriginal times were regularly populated, like Rodellas which had 600 inhabitants. It is suggested by Barbosa Lima Sobrinho (1929 : 78-80) that the name Rodellas comes from the small circular shields used by the Indians of that region.

4. Pinto, 1935, I : 135-39.

5. Brazilians refer to the river near Rodelas and the Paulo Afonso *cachoeira* as the *médio* (middle) Rio São Francisco, whereas I would still refer to this stretch as the *lower* Rio São Francisco, based on that stream's overall length.

Porções, or Porús) and Brancararús (Bancarús, Pancararús or Pancarús). However, according to the Jesuit relation of 1696 the Indians on Sorobabé Island were the Kararúzes (Cararús) and the Takarúbas, which suggests to me that either the Jesuits did not bother to mention other Indian groups on Sorobabé (an assumption supported by the fact that Indians from other aldeias involved in the expulsion were not named either), or that a movement of native populations occurred to or from the island. It seems unlikely that a complete change in tribal name would take place within six years time (1696-1702), although it is true that Indian tribes here were often known by more than one name. However, these names generally were but variants. On the other hand, it is unquestionable that shifting around of tribes from one aldeia to another went on for we have ample evidence of this procedure in Pernambuco alone. Today, for example, the Pancararús are living at Brejo-dos-Padres, municipality of Tacaratú, on the Rio São Francisco, some distance upstream from where they were reported in the eighteenth century ¹.

During the years 1702-1761 the Procázes and Brancararús also lived at Aldeia do Beato Seraphim on Ilha do Vargé, according to manuscripts of that period, being administered by Italian Capuchins ². The aldeias of Sorobabé, Achará, and Vargé were within the *termo* (a political division) of Vila de Penedo on the Rio São Francisco. The position of Kurumambá is unknown. The Procázes and Brancararús likewise lived at Aldeia de Nossa Senhora de Belém on Ilha do Achará, administered by Capuchin friars.

As yet the Procázes have not been identified by me. In 1716 Padre Monterroyo wrote that the « Orízes Procázes are a nation of Tapuyas and they live in the mountains of Nhumarama and Cassuca, 180 leagues from São Salvador da Bahia » ³. He added that while they were called Procázes, they were distinct from other peoples, also *gentio*, of the same name, and that they used to fight with the Caimbé Indians of Ribeira de Massacara.

It is clear that the Brancararús are the modern Pancararús. Oral tradition of the latter tribe indicates that they moved (when, it is not known) from Curral dos Bois, now Santo Antonio-da-Glória, in Bahia, to their present location of Brejo-dos-Padres on the Pernambucan side of the Rio São Francisco ⁴. It will be recalled that Curral dos Bois was an ephemeral Jesuit mission in 1698 (see page 34), but what is curious is that according to Lowie ⁵, there were Carirí at Curral dos Bois in 1759.

1. Couto, 1904 : 170-71 ; Pereira da Costa, 1918 : 10 ; Ms. 1-12-3-34 (n. d., period 1760-62), *folhas* 56-63, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

2. The French Capuchins stayed in the Rio São Francisco valley until the end of the seventeenth century, when they left because of discord between Rome and Lisbon over the question of an oath of fealty to the Portuguese King. They were followed in the region by missionaries of Santa Theresa, who were substituted in 1709 by Italian Capuchins.

3. Monterroyo, 1867 : 497-501.

4. Pinto, 1938 : 58-63.

5. Lowie, 1946 : 557-59.

The « Takarúba Nation » of Ilha de Sorobabé are also as yet unidentified, but there is a strong possibility that the Kararúzes (Cararú) of the same island can be identified as a group of the Camarú Carirí, who were at Pedra Branca from 1740-1865 ¹. Perhaps a variant name of this group is Cajurú, indicated by Padre Medeiros Neto ² as a tribe of the Rio São Francisco during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These tentative identifications, and *lacunae* in our knowledge, clearly indicate that tribal identifications and relations in northeastern Brazil are by no means settled as yet, and that conceivably in the future our understanding of the aboriginal situation in that region will have to be revised.

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1. *Ibid.*

2. Medeiros Neto, 1941 : 183.

- dos indómitos Orízes Procázes, povos habitantes e guerreiros do sertão do Brazil, novamente reduzidos á fé catholica e á obediencia da corôa portugueza, com a qual se descreve tambem a aspereza do sitio da sua habitação, a cegueira da sua idolatria e a barbaridade de seus ritos.* (Lisbon, 1716). In *Revista Trimensal do Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro*, vol. 8 : 494-512 (1^{er} trimestre de 1846), 2^a edição. Rio de Janeiro.
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